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Experiencing Defeat, Remembering Victory
The Army of Tennessee in War and Memory, 1861-1930

A Dissertation Presented for the
Doctor of Philosophy
Degree
The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Robert Lamar Glaze
August 2016

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Abstract

This dissertation explores the meaning of the Civil War in the South by examining white Southerners' perceptions of the Army of Tennessee from 1861 to 1930. While scholarship on the war's memory is immense and growing, little of this literature examines the memory of the Confederacy's war effort in the western theater—the area of operations military historians now deem central to the war's outcome. This project rectifies that oversight by examining white Southerners' memory of the Army of Tennessee in the post-war decades. Unlike Robert E. Lee's Army of Northern Virginia, the Confederacy's primary western field army suffered a near endless string of battlefield defeats and a revolving door of incapable, egotistical, and irascible commanders. Its wartime record is hardly complimentary to the Lost Cause which insisted on the martial, moral, and masculine superiority of Confederate officers and soldiers.

An examination into the popular historical memory of the Army of Tennessee reveals two significant developments that change our understanding of how post-war white Southerners conceptualized the Confederate war-effort and processed the trauma of defeat. First, despite historians' insistence that white Southerners focused their attention and memories on Lee and his army, the western theater occupies a more prominent place in the post-war Confederate mind than previously thought. Second, unlike that of the eastern army, the Army of Tennessee's memory was constructed in a fragmented manner that allowed for the circumvention of its wartime record. For the army to maintain both prevalence in Confederate memory and synchronicity with the Lost Cause narrative of the war, it could not be remembered in the same holistic manner as "General Lee's Army." In focusing their memories on isolated moments, contingencies, units, or individuals—as opposed to the army as an inclusive institution—ex-Confederates succeeded in reconciling the army's record with the Lost Cause.

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Introduction:
The Fragmented Memory of the Army of Tennessee

On May 26, 1900, the Roger Hanson Camp of the United Confederate Veterans and the Virginia Hanson Chapter of the United Daughters of the Confederacy convened in Winchester, Kentucky, to observe Confederate Memorial Day. The date, long recognized in many Southern states, was selected to commemorate the Army of Tennessee's surrender to William T. Sherman at Durham Station, North Carolina, in 1865. Attorney L. H. Bush's oration was similar to countless others given by former Rebels and their descendants in the thirty-five years since the capitulation of the Confederacy's primary army of the western theater. Confederate soldiers had been brave and pious, Bush reminded the crowd. They had faced unflinchingly a numerically and materially superior enemy. They had fought not for the perpetuation or expansion of slavery but for the principle of states' rights, and did so with the steadfast support of white Southern women. We have gathered this day, he went on, to "draw aside the curtain from some of the beautiful pictures which hang high on memory's walls. . . . The chiefest [sic] picture in our group of treasures is the picture of that spotless, that immortal Virginian, the hero of Appomattox, the ideal of our heart of hearts, for the very sound of the name of Robert Edward Lee fills every true Southern heart with an indescribable charm." Lee was not the only Lost Cause idol Bush invoked; Stonewall Jackson, John Pelham, and Jeb Stuart were all cited as proof of Confederate martial superiority, valor, manhood, and Christianity. But Bush then reminded his audience of something memorialists and historians would later forget: "Virginia is not the only State that weeps for her children that are gone."¹

¹ *Confederate Veteran* 8 (1900): 310-12. Hereafter *Confederate Veteran* will be cited as *CV*.

Bush was one of many white Southerners in the postwar decades with a memory of the Confederate war effort that encompassed more than Robert E. Lee, his army, and the Old Dominion. In 1866 a popular Southern periodical published a flattering profile of General Sterling Price, a Confederate cavalryman who had served primarily in the trans-Mississippi theater. Before chronicling Price's Civil War career, the author asked his readers: "Who with the soul of a man, though he be the most unconditional advocate of the Union of the States, can fail to have his loftiest admiration kindled, in studying the life and characters of such men as Lee, Jackson, the Johns[t]ons, Beauregard, the Hills, Cleburne, Forrest, and Price?" In these men, veterans of every theater of the war, "we find Washingtonian dignity and virtue, piety, science, energy, valor, dash and love of country in most eminent relief."²

On October 10, 1900, Virginia veteran Claudius Baker Denson spoke before the North Carolina Division of the United Daughters of the Confederacy in Raleigh. Acknowledging the powerful role of women in shaping Confederate memory, he told the audience that should the hundreds of thousands of dead Rebel soldiers rise from their graves their first words would be: "Thank God for the Daughters of the Confederacy." He then proceeded to the main topic of his speech, Jefferson Davis. The Confederate president should be commemorated for many things, argued Denson: not only his abilities as a soldier, statesmen, and orator, but also his Christian faith. One of Davis's greatest achievements, he asserted, was his record as commander in chief. "It has been well said, 'Men judge Napoleon by his marshals.' Judge Jefferson Davis and his cause by his chosen chieftains." The great chieftains of the Confederacy, in Denson's opinion, were "Robert E. Lee, Stonewall Jackson, Albert Sidney Johnston, Joseph E. Johnston, . . . Stuart, Beauregard, . . . Forrest, . . . Polk, Pender, Longstreet, Hardee, Hampton, . . . Stephen D. Lee,

² *The Land We Love* 1 (1866): 364. Hereafter *The Land We Love* will be cited as *TLWL*.

Hood, . . . Cleburne, . . . Gordon, . . . Pickett—where shall we pause in the role of the immortals?”³

Six years later, Army of Northern Virginia veteran James Britton Gannt gave a speech in New Orleans at the sixteenth annual reunion of the United Confederate Veterans. With a nationwide reconciliatory spirit gaining ascendancy in the years following the Spanish American War, Gannt assured the men in his audience that their conduct in the Civil War had earned them the North’s admiration. It was not only the veterans of Gannt’s army who had impressed the Yankees, he said, but also those who had served in the Army of Tennessee. “[T]he men who rode with Forrest . . . and Wheeler, and those that charged with Hood and Cleburne, and Stewart and Cheatham . . . at Franklin and Nashville, and who, under Bragg at Chickamauga and Joseph E. Johnston from Chattanooga to Atlanta, won imperishable glory.”⁴

Despite these examples and a multitude of others that could be cited, historians have long argued or implied that white Southern memory of the Confederate military experience was narrowly focused on Robert E. Lee and his Army of Northern Virginia. However, for those who lived through the Civil War and to a lesser extent their descendants, this was not true. The Army of Tennessee, despite its lackluster wartime record, occupied a prominent place in postwar white Southern memory. This is not to argue that Lee was not the former Confederacy’s most popular hero; he most certainly was. As the only truly brilliant army commander the South fielded during the war, he stood foremost in the Rebel pantheon.⁵

³ C. B. Denson, *Address of Captain C. B. Denson, upon the Invitation of the Daughters of the Confederacy of North Carolina, Delivered before the State Chapter, U.D.C., in Raleigh, October 10, 1900* (no place: no publisher, 1900), 7.

⁴ *Minutes of the Sixteenth Annual Meeting and Reunion of the United Confederate Veterans, Held in the City of New Orleans, LA. on Wednesday, Thursday and Friday, April 25th, 26th and 27th, 1906* (New Orleans: Schumert and Warfield, 1906), 42.

⁵ Gary W. Gallagher, *The Confederate War* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1997), 8-11; Gary W. Gallagher, *Lee and His Generals in War and Memory* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1998), 3-20; Emory M. Thomas, *The Confederate Nation: 1861-1865* (New York: Harper and Row, 1979), 282;

After the war, the image of Lee and his army was especially suited to embody multiple aspects of the rapidly developing myth of the Lost Cause—a narrative of the Confederate experience that developed as a result of the South’s defeat in the war. Numerous historians have analyzed the origin, evolution, and legacy of the Lost Cause. While acknowledging that the myth was neither monolithic nor static, most believe it is best conceptualized as a collection of convictions or tenets: states’ rights, not slavery, was the foundational ideal of the Confederacy; secession was a legal and justified response to Northern domination of the federal government; Confederate soldiers and generals, especially Robert E. Lee and Stonewall Jackson, were martially and spiritually superior to their Yankee counterparts; the war was lost solely because of the Union’s numerical and material advantages; the Old South was an idyllic society destroyed by the war; and the Confederate homefront had consisted of contented slaves and white women who fully supported the war effort. In constructing the story of the Lost Cause, white Southerners performed what historian David Goldfield calls “mental alchemy” on the history of the Civil War: “they spun the straw of defeat into a golden mantle of victory. Not that they refused to accept the verdict of the war—the end of slavery and of southern independence—but they rejected the idea of defeat and the guilt such a result implied.”⁶

Caroline E. Janney, *Remembering the Civil War: Reunion and the Limits of Reconciliation* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2013), 18.

⁶ David W. Blight, *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2001), 34; Janney, *Remembering the Civil War*, 134; Karen L. Cox, *Dixie’s Daughters: The United Daughters of the Confederacy and the Preservation of Confederate Culture* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2003), 1-2; Gaines M. Foster, *Ghosts of the Confederacy: Defeat, the Lost Cause, and the Emergence of the New South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), 4-8, 120-22; Thomas L. Connolly and Barbara Bellows, *God and General Longstreet: The Lost Cause and the Southern Mind* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1982), 4-5, 119-24; Gary W. Gallagher, *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, 2008), 17-24; Alan T. Nolan, “Anatomy of the Myth,” in *The Myth of the Lost Cause and Civil War History*, eds. Gary W. Gallagher and Alan T. Nolan (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000), 11-31; W. Stuart Towns, *Enduring Legacy: Rhetoric and Ritual of the Lost Cause* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2012), x-xi, 72-84; Keith D. Dickson, *Sustaining Southern Identity: Douglas Southall Freeman and Memory in the Modern South* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2011), 226; Stephen W. Berry, *All That Makes a Man: Love and Ambition in the Civil War South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 9; LeeAnn Whites, *The Civil War as a Crisis in*

The Lost Cause myth helped white Southerners cope with the trauma of defeat. It did so by providing a public memory that confirmed the white South's cultural convictions. It justified white supremacy as well as gender and class hierarchy. In a society that equated bravery and battlefield prowess with manhood, it assured the defeated Rebel soldiers that they were still men. It provided a sympathetic, escapist, and pious narrative that would, with time, give the white South substantial influence over national history and memory and a way to cope with the threat of industrialization and secularism. It was a story that perfectly suited the white South in the postwar decades. As historian Michael Kammen points out, "societies . . . reconstruct their pasts rather than faithfully record them, and . . . they do so with the needs of contemporary culture clearly in mind—manipulating the past in order to mold the present." The post-Civil War white South was no exception.⁷

It is perhaps understandable that historians have assumed, and at times insisted, that the white South always centered its memories of the war on Lee and the Army of Northern Virginia. As W. Fitzhugh Brundage notes, "campaigns to remember the past by exorcising parts of it have occurred in many times and places. Within collective memories a dialect exists between the willfully recalled and deliberately forgotten." It is not unreasonable to assume that Lee and his army would have been "willfully recalled," while other, less successful Confederate commanders

Gender: Augusta, Georgia, 1860-1890 (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1993), 3; David Goldfield, *Still Fighting the Civil War: The American South and Southern History* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2004), 19.

⁷ Blight, *Race and Reunion*, 65, 258; Janney, *Remembering the Civil War*, 154; Caroline E. Janney, *Burying the Dead but Not the Past: Ladies Memorial Associations and the Lost Cause* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008), 3; William Blair, *Cities of the Dead: Contesting the Memory of the Civil War in the South, 1865-1914* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 4, 131; Foster, *Ghosts of the Confederacy*, 28, 35, 142-43; Connelly and Bellows, *God and General Longstreet*, 10, 13, 27; Kirk Savage, *Standing Soldiers, Kneeling Slaves: Race, War, and Monument in Nineteenth-Century America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), 167-77; Charles Reagan Wilson, *Baptized in Blood: The Religion of the Lost Cause, 1865-1920* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1980), 14-17; Sarah H. Case, "The Historical Ideology of Mildred Lewis Rutherford: A Confederate Historian's New South Creed," *Journal of Southern History* 68 (2002): 601; Michael Kammen, *Mystic Chords of Memory: The Transformation of Tradition in American Culture* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1992), 3.

and armies would be “deliberately forgotten.” However, a close look at the evidence documenting the white South’s public memory in the six decades or so after the war—which is what this dissertation offers—shows that the Army of Tennessee was not forgotten.⁸

This dissertation argues for the prominence (but not the primacy) of the Army of Tennessee in Confederate memory. Moreover, it reveals that the Army of Tennessee’s memory was constructed, quite unlike that of the Army of Northern Virginia, in a fragmented manner that allowed for the circumvention of its actual wartime record. In focusing their memories on certain moments, contingencies, units, and individuals in the Army of Tennessee’s experience, rather than its dismal record as a whole, postwar white Southerners managed to reconcile the story of that army with the tenets of the Lost Cause.

Chapter one of this dissertation is a narrative overview of the army’s wartime operations. Each of the four succeeding chapters examines a specific fragment of the memory of the army. Chapter two looks at the postwar image of the army’s first commander, Albert Sidney Johnston, who ascended to the highest echelon of Lost Cause idols. His untimely death won him a universal popularity that was denied his successors and his passing became one of the most significant contingencies in Confederate memory—one that proved therapeutic for a society wrestling with the trauma of defeat. Chapter three focuses on the memory of the high command. In remembering the army’s generals white Southerners constructed four archetypes that circumvented defeat and confirmed Lost Cause convictions: the scapegoat, the unappreciated military genius, the genteel man of faith, and the hyper-masculine anti-hero. Chapter four is about the men of the army, as remembered both collectively (as units) and individually. This memory looked past the army’s sorry record as a whole to celebrate the bravery, piety, nobility,

⁸ W. Fitzhugh Brundage, *The Southern Past: A Clash of Race and Memory* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005), 5.

and military prowess of selected soldiers and units and thus told a story of victory rather than defeat. Chapter five examines particular moments and contingencies in the army's history that white Southerners pointed to when explaining defeat or proclaiming their cultural and martial superiority over the Yankees. Chapter six, unlike its predecessors, is concerned with forgetting. While the Army of Tennessee enjoyed prominence in postwar memory for several decades, by the 1930s Lee, Jackson, and the Army of Northern Virginia had wholly displaced it. A number of factors, some incidental and some the result of human agency, led to the banishment of the Army of Tennessee from the realm of memory.

Chapter One:
Failure in the Heartland:
Wartime Operations of the Army of Tennessee

In the waning days of the Civil War, the Army of Tennessee—the Confederacy’s primary army in the western theater—held its final grand review. Encamped around Smithfield, North Carolina, it was a shadow of its former self. Years of campaigning, a nearly unbroken string of battlefield defeats, and a revolving door of incapable, egotistical, and irascible commanders had wrecked the army. This sad state of affairs was not lost on its soldiers. B. L. Ridley, a staff officer, observed the review with a heavy heart. “I witnessed to-day the saddest spectacle of my life,” he wrote in his journal, “the review of the skeleton Army of Tennessee.” It “filed by with tattered garments, worn out shoes, barefooted, and ranks so depleted that each color was supported by only thirty or forty men.” This stood in sharp contrast to the condition of the army just one year before when it was encamped in Dalton, Georgia, looking to the coming campaign with renewed confidence. Now devastated by “desertion, sickness, deaths, hardships, perils and vicissitudes,” the army in its final review “looked like a funeral procession. The countenance of every spectator . . . was depressed and dejected. . . . Oh! It is beginning to look dark in the east, gloomy in the west, and almost a lost hope when we reflect upon that review of to-day!”¹

Although the Army of Tennessee would not be permanently named that until November 1862, its genesis lay in the formation of the Provisional Army of Tennessee, organized by Governor Isham G. Harris in spring 1861 and commanded by Gideon J. Pillow. The state army’s life was short; in July it was turned over to the Confederate government. Over the next several

¹ Bromfield L. Ridley, *Battles and Sketches of the Army of Tennessee* (Mexico, Missouri: Missouri Printing and Publishing, 1906), 456.

months this force fought as part of a larger army operating under a number of titles, including the Army of the West and the Army of Mississippi.²

From the war's outset the army faced a daunting task. Its theater of operations stretched four hundred miles from east to west and encompassed 225,600 square miles—ten times the size of the Virginia theater. In further contrast to Virginia, rivers in the west generally flowed north to south or south to north, serving as avenues of invasion as opposed to natural defensive barriers; and, too, the region's rail network was less developed. Early in the war, western commands struggled to arm their soldiers; later they struggled to equip them with modern arms. Even in the war's last year, 11 percent of the infantrymen were fighting with smoothbore muskets. Furthermore, because the Confederate government focused on defending Richmond, its capital, it often neglected the western theater. At any given time the Army of Tennessee typically numbered twenty to twenty-five thousand fewer men than Lee's army.³

The army's high command also suffered by comparison with the Army of Northern Virginia. Not only had fewer of its generals served in the antebellum army or militia, but fewer of its officers had college or military education. Also unlike Lee's force, the Army of Tennessee was constantly embroiled in political squabbles involving Confederate president Jefferson Davis. Of its five commanders, two—Albert Sidney Johnston and Braxton Bragg—had the unyielding support of their friend Davis. Arguably a third, John Bell Hood, could be added to the list.

² Following Thomas L. Connelly's lead, to avoid confusion I will refer to it throughout this dissertation as the Army of Tennessee. See Thomas L. Connelly, *Army of the Heartland: The Army of Tennessee, 1861-1862* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1967), xiv; Richard McMurry, *Two Great Rebel Armies: An Essay in Confederate Military History* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1989), 73-86.

³ Connelly, *Army of the Heartland*, xi; Stephen E. Woodworth, *Jefferson Davis and His Generals: The Failure of Confederate Command in the West* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1990), xii, 21-22, 54; Larry J. Daniel, *Soldiering in the Army of Tennessee: A Portrait of Life in a Confederate Army* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991), 44-47; McMurry, *Two Great Rebel Armies*, 14-16, 26-29, 56; Bradley R. Clampitt, *The Confederate Heartland: Military and Civilian Morale in the Western Confederacy* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2011), 2.

However, two others—Joseph E. Johnston and P. G. T. Beauregard—were among the administration’s harshest critics and feuded incessantly with Davis. Suffering repeated battlefield defeats, all these generals found themselves at odds with pro- or anti-administration political blocs within the Confederacy. The Army of Northern Virginia, with its numerous victories and universally revered commander, was free of such liabilities. Furthermore, from the war’s beginning the Army of Tennessee had to face at the very least capable, and often superb, federal commanders.⁴

While the Army of Tennessee’s soldiery was in most ways like that of its counterpart in Virginia, it did have a distinctive character. The typical soldier in the west was poorer, less educated, more egalitarian, and less disciplined than he who fought in Virginia. If the higher rate of venereal disease in the western army is any indication, its troops were also more susceptible to temptation. At one point the army’s chaplains, convinced they were fighting an unwinnable war against vice, considered resigning in mass. Some men of the cloth went so far as to argue that the army’s lack of piety in the ranks, especially when compared to its sister army, was the primary cause of the battlefield defeats.⁵

In the war’s early months the army, commanded by Albert Sidney Johnston, was tasked with shielding the Confederacy from invasion along the Tennessee-Kentucky border. However, after Union forces captured Forts Henry and Donelson, the army was forced to abandon this line of defense and retreat, eventually consolidating with other Confederate forces at Corinth, Mississippi. The people of the Confederacy expected great things from Johnston, and these

⁴ McMurtry, *Two Great Rebel Armies*, 34-43, 98-105, 109-115.

⁵ Daniel, *Soldiering in the Army of Tennessee*, 12-15, 99; G. Clinton Prim Jr., “Born Again in the Trenches: Revivals in the Army of Tennessee,” *Tennessee Historical Quarterly* 43 (1984): 251; Traci Nichols-Belt, “Chaplains in the Army of Tennessee, C.S.A.: Warring Disciples Carrying the Gospel,” *Tennessee Historical Quarterly* 63 (2004): 239-40.

setbacks hurt his public image. (Johnston's reputation and role early in the war will be explored in chapter two.)⁶

Hoping to reverse the army's fortunes, Johnston planned a surprise attack against Ulysses S. Grant's federal army encamped at Pittsburg Landing, Tennessee. While this strategy was Johnston's decision, the specific battle plan was the brainchild of P. G. T. Beauregard, his recently arrived second-in-command. Born into a Creole family in Louisiana and trained at West Point, Beauregard had served with distinction as an engineer in the Mexican War. In command of successful Confederate operations at Fort Sumter and the Battle of Manassas, he emerged as the South's first military hero. He eventually butted heads with President Davis, however, and was consequently sidelined for much of the war. In fact, it was likely his conflict with Davis, even more than the government's desire to salvage the war in the west, that prompted Beauregard's transfer from the east. Regardless, his arrival in the west was hailed enthusiastically by soldiers and civilians.⁷

An ardent admirer and emulator of Napoleon, Beauregard devised a plan that was overly complex, especially for an untested army. Moreover, it was markedly different from what Johnston had envisioned and communicated to Davis. Beauregard also seemed to lose confidence in his own designs and, on the eve of battle, advocated calling off the attack,

⁶ The best treatments of the Forts Henry and Donelson Campaign are Benjamin Franklin Cooling, *Forts Henry and Donelson: The Key to the Confederate Heartland* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1988), and Stephen D. Engle, *Struggle for the Heartland: The Campaigns from Fort Henry to Corinth* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2001).

⁷ Connelly, *Army of the Heartland*, 129-130; Woodworth, *Jefferson Davis and His Generals*, 72-78; McMurtry, *Two Great Rebel Armies*, 121-22. Beauregard's sole scholarly biography is T. Harry Williams, *P. G. T. Beauregard: Napoleon in Gray* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1955). For a balanced assessment of his wartime generalship see Charles P. Roland, "P. G. T. Beauregard," in *Leaders of the Lost Cause: New Perspectives on the Confederate High Command*, eds. Gary W. Gallagher and Joseph T. Glatthaar (Mechanicsburg, Pennsylvania: Stackpole Books, 2004), 43-69.

convinced that Grant was aware of the Confederate's approach. Johnston would hear none of it, and the attack commenced.⁸

The Battle of Shiloh initially went well for the Confederates, but the initiative slowly slipped from their grasp. Although the enemy army was surprised, most of Johnston's men were novice soldiers lacking the training, discipline, and combat experience necessary to continue the attack. Union resistance stiffened, Johnston was killed in action, and Beauregard soon ordered his forces to halt. Confident that his army would defeat Grant's force the following morning, Beauregard informed Richmond that he had achieved victory. But that night Grant received reinforcements and prepared to go on the offensive at daybreak. Beauregard, failing to appreciate his own army's disorganization and the growing strength of the Union forces, made few preparations. The next day, the Rebels resisted strongly but were ultimately unable to repel Grant's attack. Beauregard ordered a withdrawal.⁹

The army retreated to Corinth and eventually to Tupelo, thus surrendering fifteen thousand square miles of territory to Union control. Plagued by a chronic throat ailment, Beauregard took an unapproved medical leave and turned command temporarily over to corps

⁸Connelly, *Army of the Heartland*, 157; Earl J. Hess, *The Civil War in the West: Victory and Defeat from the Appalachians to the Mississippi* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2012), 45; Bruce S. Hass, "Beauregard and the Image of Napoleon," *Louisiana History* 5 (1964): 185-86; John R. Lunderg, "'I must save this army': Albert Sidney Johnston and the Shiloh Campaign," in *The Shiloh Campaign*, ed. Stephen E. Woodworth (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2009), 19-21; Woodworth, *Jefferson Davis and His Generals*, 96-97.

⁹ Timothy B. Smith, *Shiloh: Conquer or Perish* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2015), 247; Hess, *Civil War in the West*, 46-48; Daniel, *Soldiering in the Army of Tennessee*, 150; Connelly, *Army of the Heartland*, 171; Woodworth, *Jefferson Davis and His Generals*, 102-104; Grady McWhiney, "General Beauregard's 'Complete Victory' at Shiloh: An Interpretation," *Journal of Southern History* 49 (1983): 433. Smith's book is the best analysis of Shiloh to date; other strong works are Larry J. Daniel, *Shiloh: The Battle that Changed the Civil War* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1997); Wiley Sword, *Shiloh: Bloody April* (Dayton, Ohio: Morningside, 1974); and James Lee McDonough, *Shiloh: In Hell Before Midnight* (Knoxville, University of Tennessee Press, 1977). On the battle's effects on soldiers see Joseph A. Frank and George A. Reaves, "*Seeing the Elephant*": *Raw Recruits at the Battle of Shiloh* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1989). T. Harry Williams defends Beauregard's generalship at Shiloh in his biography and "Beauregard at Shiloh," *Civil War History* 1 (1955): 17-34. For a more negative assessment of the general's role see, Wiley Sword, "General G. T. Beauregard's Role at the Battle of Shiloh: Hero or Villain?," in *Confederate Generals in the Western Theater*, eds. Lawrence Lee Hewitt and Arthur W. Bergeron Jr. (3 vols. to date, Knoxville, University of Tennessee Press, 2011), 3: 39-59.

commander Braxton Bragg. President Davis, long dissatisfied with Beauregard and now persuaded that the defeat at Shiloh was his fault, relieved him and placed Bragg in permanent command.¹⁰

A North Carolinian of humble origins, Bragg too was a graduate of West Point and a veteran of the Mexican War. Unlike Beauregard, however, he enjoyed Jefferson Davis's favor. Methodical, gruff, and prickly, Bragg would command the Army of Tennessee longer than any other general. His insistence on strict discipline and thorough training did not endear him to the rank and file but it did help the army maintain cohesion through the remainder of the war. Although he was an ardent patriot and a capable strategist, Bragg lacked the ability to inspire his lieutenants and soldiers and displayed severe deficiencies as a field commander; in battle, he often seemed disengaged and indecisive.¹¹

In the fall of 1862 Bragg's army joined that of Edmund Kirby Smith in an invasion of Kentucky. Happy to be on the offensive, the army was in good spirits and Bragg was confident the tide would soon turn in the west. Moreover, the rapid Confederate advance caught Union forces off guard. But Bragg's supply and communication lines became more tenuous the more deeply he advanced into the Bluegrass State, and he confronted a numerically superior Union army under General Don Carlos Buell. Worst of all, disputes between Bragg and Smith led to the two forces operating independently of one another.¹²

¹⁰ Woodworth, *Jefferson Davis and His Generals*, 104-106; McMurry, *Two Great Rebel Armies*, 122-24.

¹¹ Connelly, *Army of the Heartland*, 178-79; Hess, *Civil War in the West*, 49; Daniel, *Soldiering in the Army of Tennessee*, 101; Connelly, *Autumn of Glory*, 70, 220; Woodworth, *Jefferson Davis and His Generals*, 90-94, 96; McMurry, *Two Great Rebel Armies*, 124-27; Grady McWhiney, "Braxton Bragg at Shiloh," *Tennessee Historical Quarterly* 21 (1962): 30. For full biographical treatments of Bragg see Grady McWhiney, *Braxton Bragg and Confederate Defeat* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1969) and Judith Lee Hallock, *Braxton Bragg and Confederate Defeat* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1991). For a balanced assessment of his wartime generalship, see James I. Robertson Jr., "Braxton Bragg: The Lonely Patriot," in *Leaders of the Lost Cause*, eds. Gallagher and Glatthaar, 71-100.

¹² Connelly, *Army of the Heartland*, 193-97, 204-13; Hess, *Civil War in the West*, 95-98; Woodworth, *Jefferson Davis and His Generals*, 131, 135-40; Kenneth W. Noe, *Perryville: The Grand Havoc of Battle* (Lexington:

Further complicating matters was the army's command structure. Bragg divided his force into two wings commanded by Leonidas Polk and William J. Hardee. At the time this seemed a wise decision, for both generals were West Pointers and had solid reputations as leaders. However, the two were prickly personalities in their own right, exerted a poisonous influence on the army for the duration of the war, and would display insubordination inconceivable in other Civil War armies.¹³

Dubbed "the Fighting Bishop," Leonidas Polk in fact had little aptitude for military affairs. The North Carolinian had resigned from the army just months following his graduation from West Point to pursue a calling to the Episcopal clergy—and thus did not serve in the Mexican War as did many of his comrades of equal rank. Had it not been for the Civil War, Polk would likely have spent the remainder of his life as an educator (he cofounded the University of the South) and man of the cloth. But with the outbreak of hostilities he offered his services to his old West Point classmate and friend, Jefferson Davis, who immediately bestowed on Polk responsibilities beyond his talents. Perhaps confident in Davis's protection, Polk rarely hesitated to criticize and disobey his superiors and had a penchant for submitting his resignation whenever he felt slighted.¹⁴

Georgian William J. Hardee also had an undeserved nickname. "Old Reliable" had studied military tactics in Europe following his education at West Point and served with

University Press of Kentucky, 2001), 22, 68. See also Lawrence Lee Hewitt, "Braxton Bragg and the Confederate Invasion of Kentucky in 1862," in *Leadership During the Civil War: The 1989 Deep Delta Civil War Symposium: Themes in Honor of T. Harry Williams*, eds. Roman J. Heliak and Lawrence Lee Hewitt (Shippensburg, Pennsylvania: White Mane Publishing, 1992), 55-72. Noe's book is the most comprehensive study of Perryville to date. Another strong work is James L. McDonough, *War in Kentucky: From Shiloh to Perryville* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1994).

¹³ Connelly, *Army of the Heartland*, 223.

¹⁴ Ibid., 47; Woodworth, *Jefferson Davis and His Generals*, 26-29. For a biographical treatment of Polk, see Joseph H. Parks, *Leonidas Polk, C.S.A.: The Fighting Bishop* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1962). See also Grady McWhiney, *Confederate Crackers and Cavaliers* (Abilene, Texas: State House Press, 2002), 209-21.

distinction in the Mexican War before returning to his alma mater as commandant of cadets. While teaching at the Academy he authored what became the most popular infantry manual of the era, *Rifle and Light Infantry Tactics* (generally called *Hardee's Tactics*). Although this publication brought him acclaim, it was merely a regurgitation of what he had read while in France. Like Polk, Hardee found himself with great military responsibilities soon after secession. Twice in the ensuing years he was offered command of the Army of Tennessee and twice he refused, leading historians to surmise that he feared responsibility. Hardee and Polk formed the nucleus of an anti-Bragg bloc that disrupted command relations in the Army of Tennessee.¹⁵

On October 8, 1862, Bragg fought a clumsy battle at Perryville, Kentucky, against Buell. Unsure of the enemy's strength, Bragg attacked an isolated wing of Buell's army, forcing it to retreat nearly two miles. Thanks to a curious "acoustic shadow" the remainder of Buell's army was unaware that a battle had commenced. However, despite this tactical success, Bragg could not maintain the initiative and as the federal force began receiving reinforcements he ordered a retreat into east Tennessee—over the protests of some of his lieutenants. There Bragg's force was reorganized, joined by other Confederate forces in the region, and renamed the Army of Tennessee.¹⁶

Polk and Hardee, although themselves at least partly responsible for the Perryville defeat, now commenced anti-Bragg machinations in earnest. Polk, via a secret correspondence with influential figures in Richmond, criticized Bragg's leadership and urged his removal from command. In November he took these complaints directly to Davis, who ignored them for now.

¹⁵ Connelly, *Autumn of Glory*, 289; Woodworth, *Jefferson Davis and His Generals*, 162-165, 256. See also Nathaniel Cheairs Hughes, *General William J. Hardee: Old Reliable* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1965).

¹⁶ Connelly, *Army of the Heartland*, 264; Hess, *Civil War in the West*, 102; Woodworth, *Jefferson Davis and His Generals*, 158-60. For a concise survey of this stage of the war, see Early J. Hess, *Banners to the Breeze: The Kentucky Campaign, Corinth, and Stones River* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2000).

Meanwhile, Hardee did what he could to denigrate the commander within the officer corps. Bragg's reputation among the rank and file and the civilian population also began to decline. Moreover, due to Davis's support of Bragg, the general became the target of anti-administration politicians and presses.¹⁷

In addition to political intrigue, the army underwent a flurry of reorganization. In an effort to improve his cavalry, Bragg appointed Joseph Wheeler to command it. In doing so he passed over the more experienced and accomplished Nathan Bedford Forrest. Born into poverty in rural Tennessee, Forrest made a fortune selling slaves and real estate and became one of the wealthiest men of the Old South. He had no prewar military training or experience but revealed a natural aptitude for war and through his skillful reconnaissance and raiding became an invaluable asset to the Confederacy. Oftentimes his relatively small-scale victories offset, in the minds of Confederates, more strategically significant defeats. But his volatile and often violent temper, coupled with his lack of military decorum, led to numerous conflicts with his superiors and lieutenants.¹⁸

Deeming Forrest's lack of military training a liability, Bragg turned to the West Point-educated Wheeler, who shared Bragg's fondness for drill. Only twenty-six years old in 1862, Wheeler was a gifted writer and exceptional self-promoter. He had a cordial personal relationship with Bragg and remained loyal to him—an increasingly rare phenomena in the upper ranks of the Army of Tennessee. Although Wheeler's early career was unexceptional, and he

¹⁷ Thomas L. Connelly, *Autumn of Glory: The Army of Tennessee, 1862-1865* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1971), 20-23; Woodworth, *Jefferson Davis and His Generals*, 160-61, 165-66; McMurry, *Two Great Rebel Armies*, 134.

¹⁸ Clampitt, *Confederate Heartland*, 21-23, 35-37, 64-65. The best analyses of Forrest's life are Brian Steel Wills, *A Battle from the Start: The Life of Nathan Bedford Forrest* (New York: Harper Collins, 1992), and Jack Hurst, *Nathan Bedford Forrest: A Biography* (New York: Knopf, 1993).

turned out not to be the disciplinarian Bragg hoped, the young Georgian became one of the war's more capable cavalry commanders.¹⁹

While Bragg restructured his army, the War Department interceded in the Rebel war effort in the west. The failure in Kentucky indicated deficiencies in the Confederate command structure. Many, including Davis, believed that if Bragg and Smith had been forced to cooperate the campaign could have succeeded. To avoid repetition the president now appointed a theater commander to direct the various forces operating in the Confederate heartland. The only two generals with rank commensurate with the responsibility were Beauregard and Joseph E. Johnston. The former was still persona non grata in the Davis administration and thus the latter was appointed on November 24.²⁰

Another West Pointer and Mexican War veteran, Virginian Joseph E. Johnston was quartermaster general of the U.S. Army at the Civil War's outbreak. The highest ranking officer to resign his commission to enter Confederate service, he expected to be the senior officer in the Confederate army, and was chagrined when Davis commissioned others ahead of him. The president justified this decision by pointing out that Johnston had been a staff officer as opposed to a field commander. And thus began a decades-long feud. Nevertheless, Johnston, along with Beauregard, emerged as one of the South's first heroes due to the victory at First Manassas in 1861. Until his wounding at Seven Pines in May 1862, Johnston commanded in Virginia, where he consistently retreated in the face of larger Union forces. Seemingly paralyzed on occasion by

¹⁹ Connelly, *Autumn of Glory*, 27-28. Biographies of Wheeler include Edward G. Longacre, *A Soldier to the Last: Maj. Gen. Joseph Wheeler in Blue and Gray* (Washington, D.C.: Potomac Books, 2007), and John P. Dyer, *From Shiloh to San Juan: The Life of "Fightin' Joe" Wheeler* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1961).

²⁰ Connelly, *Autumn of Glory*, 32-35; Woodworth, *Jefferson Davis and His Generals*, 173.

fear of failure, Johnston could be prideful, secretive, paranoid, and jealous. Nevertheless, on assuming command in the west, he enjoyed a superb, if undeserved, reputation.²¹

What he lacked was clear authority. So ambiguous was his mandate that Johnston believed his promotion to theater command was part of Davis's effort to keep him out of the war. Individual commanders under Johnston, including Bragg, were allowed to communicate directly with the War Department and were under no obligation to keep the theater commander apprised of their location or plans. Moreover, when Johnston failed to do what Davis wanted—such as dispatching troops from Bragg's army to Vicksburg—the president sometimes did so himself. Johnston chafed under these conditions and from the first day of his command petitioned Richmond for reassignment. Indeed, Johnston played no meaningful part in the Army of Tennessee's forthcoming campaign.²²

Attempting to protect Chattanooga, Bragg dug in at Murfreesboro, Tennessee, and awaited the arrival of William Rosecrans's Union Army of the Cumberland. However, because his cavalry was mismanaged, Bragg was ignorant of Rosecrans's location and route of advance and thus had to widely disperse his army.²³

The ensuing Battle of Murfreesboro was rife with command confusion. It began on December 31, when Bragg struck the approaching federals, forcing their right flank back. Although some of Bragg's subordinates failed to execute their orders, the battle seemed

²¹ Connelly, *Autumn of Glory*, 34-35; Woodworth, *Jefferson Davis and His Generals*, 173-76; McMurry, *Two Great Rebel Armies*, 127-28. The best biography of Johnston is Craig L. Symonds, *Joseph E. Johnston: A Civil War Biography* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1992). For a balanced assessment of his wartime generalship and personality flaws see Robert K. Krick, "'Snarl and Sneer and Quarrel': General Joseph E. Johnston and an Obsession with Rank," in *Leaders of the Lost Cause*, eds. Gallagher and Glatthaar, 165-203. For a more positive assessment of Johnston's leadership in the war's early months, see Steven H. Newton, *Joseph E. Johnston and the Defense of Richmond* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1999).

²² Connelly, *Autumn of Glory*, 37-41; Woodworth, *Jefferson Davis and His Generals*, 182-83; McMurry, *Two Great Rebel Armies*, 65-66. For more on the difficulties facing Johnston as theater commander, see Archer Jones, "Tennessee and Mississippi, Joe Johnston's Strategic Problem," *Tennessee Historical Quarterly* 18 (1959): 134-47.

²³ Connelly, *Autumn of Glory*, 47-54.

promising at first. Bragg hoped to interdict the Union supply line, forcing Rosecrans to retreat. However, the Confederate momentum could not be sustained and by nightfall the armies had disengaged and were eyeing each other from their trenches. Assuming that Rosecrans would retreat in the night, Bragg telegraphed Richmond that he had achieved a great victory. But when the new year dawned the Union army was still on the field. On January 2, Bragg tried to regain the initiative, but to no avail. With the concurrence of Hardee and Polk, he ordered a retreat to Tullahoma, Tennessee. There the Army of Tennessee remained until summer.²⁴

Meanwhile the army's internal feuding continued unabated. Bragg's popularity, shaken by Perryville, crumbled following Murfreesboro. As always, Polk and Hardee led the charge against their commander. Bragg did himself no favors by issuing multiple circulars to determine if he still held the army's confidence. Hardee and his division commanders responded emphatically in the negative; Polk—a shrewder politician—dodged the question while still secretly advocating Bragg's removal to friends in Richmond. Even Bragg's own staff, when confronted with the question, advised him to resign.²⁵

Jefferson Davis now stepped in, ordering Johnston to Tullahoma to deal with the discord. Again, however, Davis gave his theater commander ambiguous instructions. It was implied that, if necessary, Johnston should assume direct command of the army, but he had no clear authority to remove Bragg. Johnston was in an awkward position. He was unhappy with his current position and craved a field command, but he had no desire to be associated with the anti-Bragg coalition, for it offended his sense of military decorum. In fact he seemed rather sympathetic

²⁴ Hess, *Civil War in the West*, 129-130; Connelly, *Autumn of Glory*, 61-62; Woodworth, *Jefferson Davis and His Generals*, 192-94. The best studies of Murfreesboro are Peter Cozzens, *No Better Place to Die: The Battle of Stones River* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1989); Larry J. Daniel, *Battle of Stones River: The Forgotten Conflict between the Confederate Army of Tennessee and Union Army of the Cumberland* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2012); James L. McDonough, *Stones River: Bloody Winter in Tennessee* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1981).

²⁵ Connelly, *Autumn of Glory*, 74-76.

toward Bragg, arguing that the army's recent campaigns had been handled with skill given the circumstances. Consequently, Johnston conducted a half-hearted investigation, concluding that although the army's confidence in Bragg was shaken he should retain his command.

Unsurprisingly, reports of the army's instability continued to pour into Richmond. Davis therefore ordered Johnston to take command of the army. Concerned for his reputation, however, and physically unwell, Johnston declined. Johnston's feeble intervention in the Army of Tennessee's feud had managed to alienate both sides. Polk and Hardee were miffed at his refusal to join their conspiracy, while his mere presence was an affront to Bragg's honor.²⁶

Bragg, unaware of the extent of disaffection in the army's high command, fired back at his enemies. In doing so, he alienated more officers, including two who were especially popular and influential. Kentuckian John C. Breckinridge, one of Hardee's division commanders, was criticized in Bragg's reports for poor generalship during the Kentucky invasion and at Murfreesboro. Breckinridge had had a long career in politics, serving in the House of Representatives before becoming James Buchanan's vice president and subsequently a senator. As the Southern Democratic presidential candidate in the 1860 election, he emerged victorious in nine of the eleven states that became the Confederacy. These political credentials, more than any military acumen, led to his commission. Although his war record was unremarkable, he had influential friends in Richmond and great popularity among troops and officers from the Upper South. Bragg, nevertheless, succeed in temporarily removing him from the army.²⁷

Tennessean Benjamin F. Cheatham also found himself in Bragg's crosshairs. The wealthy Mexican War veteran had had great success in the antebellum years as a politician in

²⁶ Ibid., 77-80, 91-92; Woodworth, *Jefferson Davis and His Generals*, 196-98

²⁷ Connelly, *Autumn of Glory*, 72, 81-84; Woodworth, *Jefferson Davis and His Generals*, 117-20. Breckinridge's sole biography is William C. Davis, *Breckinridge: Statesman, Soldier, Symbol* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1974).

California and the Volunteer State. After the war's outbreak, he quickly earned a reputation as an egalitarian, profane, hard-drinking, and aggressive general. One of Polk's division commanders, Cheatham was accused of drunkenness at Murfreesboro. Whether the charge was true or not, Cheatham's drinking was common knowledge and his unprofessional demeanor made him a natural enemy of Bragg. While his tactical skill was questionable, he was a bold fighter and wielded considerable influence within the army—especially among Tennesseans. While Bragg did raise questions about Cheatham's character and generalship, he failed to get him removed and did not damage his popularity with the troops.²⁸

Conflicts in the high command were not the army's only problems as the spring of 1863 approached. Confederate prospects at Vicksburg deteriorated, forcing Bragg to dispatch 11,500 men to Mississippi. Furthermore, Johnston's ambiguous position continued to confuse Rebel strategy. Transferred to Mississippi, he subsequently insisted that Bragg's army was no longer under his jurisdiction; Davis and the War Department, however, continued to regard him as theater commander. Consequently, Johnston—who had previously urged reinforcing Bragg—began neglecting the Army of Tennessee. Johnston's terse, pessimistic communications with Richmond during this period did nothing to improve his standing with Davis. Moreover, Bragg's efforts to get reinforcements from elsewhere failed.²⁹

Unsurprisingly, the Army of Tennessee again retreated. Rosecrans moved against Tullahoma, and due to the confusing road network, lack of communication in the high command, and misuse of cavalry and scouts Bragg was again uncertain of Rosecrans's route. Command

²⁸ Connelly, *Autumn of Glory*, 84-85; Woodworth, *Jefferson Davis and His Generals*, 188-91; Christopher Losson, "Major-General Benjamin Cheatham and the Battle of Stone's River," *Tennessee Historical Quarterly* 41 (1982): 292. For a fuller treatment of Cheatham's life and wartime command see Christopher Losson, *Tennessee's Forgotten Warriors: Frank Cheatham and His Confederate Division* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1990).

²⁹ Connelly, *Autumn of Glory*, 95-100, 102-103, 105.

problems affected not only the infantry but also the cavalry. Wheeler, commanding the army's horsemen, was more interested in conducting flashy raids than reconnoitering or hampering Rosecrans's advance. Bragg had other cavalry at his disposal, but for a number of reasons these commands were little help. The famous raider John Hunt Morgan, primarily concerned with getting his name in the papers, showed little interest in following orders. Earl Van Dorn, temporarily attached to Bragg's command, was dead before the campaign began—shot by a jealous husband. By this stage of the war Bragg's best cavalryman, Forrest, had quarreled bitterly with numerous officers, including a hot-tempered lieutenant who shot the general in his own headquarters, putting him temporarily out of action.³⁰

Worse, Bragg declined to share his plans with his lieutenants, for he now thoroughly distrusted them. Moreover, when it came time to act he balked, repeatedly reversing his own orders. Consequently, in a near bloodless campaign Rosecrans maneuvered his army into positions that forced Bragg to retreat eastward to Chattanooga. Bragg thus surrendered middle Tennessee and north Alabama to Union occupiers with almost no opposition.³¹

Meanwhile low morale, desertion, and illness were wreaking havoc on the army and on Bragg's ability to formulate strategy and conduct operations. The army underwent a flurry of changes while in Chattanooga. Johnston's ambiguous office of theater command was abolished and his influence on the Army of Tennessee, nominal as it may have been, ceased for a few months. Much to Bragg's delight, Hardee was transferred—a mixed blessing, for while Hardee's

³⁰ Ibid., 122-27; Woodworth, *Jefferson Davis and His Generals*, 224-25.

³¹ Connelly, *Autumn of Glory*, 117-19; Woodworth, *Jefferson Davis and His Generals*, 225-26. The Tullahoma Campaign, despite its significance, has received little attention. One of the few studies is Robert S. Brandt, "Lightning and Rain in Middle Tennessee: The Campaign of June-July 1863," *Tennessee Historical Quarterly* 52 (1993): 158-169.

insubordination hampered the army, he was the general with the most knowledge of the region's terrain, an asset Bragg would desperately need in the coming months.³²

Hardee's replacement, Daniel Harvey Hill, had a short tenure with the Army of Tennessee. However, as a postwar writer and editor he had considerable influence on Civil War memory. Born in South Carolina, he was a West Point graduate and Mexican War veteran. Serving in Virginia for the war's first two years, he earned a reputation as an aggressive commander. However, his bouts with depression, his religious zealotry, and his fierce sense of pride alienated many officers in Lee's army. Unsurprisingly, from their first meeting Hill's relationship with Bragg was strained and the anti-Bragg coalition welcomed him with open arms.³³

Once again, by shrewd maneuvering, Rosecrans forced Bragg to abandon his position. The Army of Tennessee retreated into north Georgia and the Union army occupied Chattanooga. Both commanders craved battle following the city's fall. Rosecrans had captured much territory but had still not destroyed the Army of Tennessee; Bragg was desperate to turn the tide in the west and recapture Chattanooga. As Rosecrans's army moved south out of the city it divided to travel on parallel roads. Bragg saw an opportunity to attack and defeat it in detail. However, the mutual lack of confidence between the commander and his lieutenants prevented him from seizing the advantage and three times he missed the chance to pounce on one of Rosecrans's isolated columns. Thus, Bragg faced a united federal army when he clashed with Rosecrans on September 19, 1863, along Chickamauga Creek.³⁴

³² Connelly, *Autumn of Glory*, 137,146,152-54.

³³ Ibid., 154-55. Hill's sole biography is Hal Bridges, *Lee's Maverick General: Daniel Harvey Hill* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1961).

³⁴ Connelly, *Autumn of Glory*, 189-90; Hess, *Civil War in the West*, 185-186; Woodworth, *Jefferson Davis and His Generals*, 230-33. Chickamauga is one of the most studied battles of the western theater. Among the best works are Peter Cozzens, *This Terrible Sound: The Battle of Chickamauga* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1992); Stephen E. Woodworth, *Six Armies in Tennessee: The Chickamauga and Chattanooga Campaigns* (Lincoln:

A number of factors besides its outcome made the Battle Chickamauga an exceptional engagement for the Army of Tennessee. Having received reinforcements, the army fought with numerical superiority for the only time in its history. Moreover, most of these reinforcements came from Robert E. Lee's Army of Northern Virginia. Bragg, Johnston, and Davis had long desired such a troop transfer, but Lee's reputation and active operations prevented it until the fall of 1863. Now, for the first time in the war, the Confederacy conducted a rapid inter-theater transfer of troops to gain local numerical superiority.³⁵

These reinforcements were commanded by James Longstreet, Lee's senior corps commander. Along with thousands of soldiers and many capable officers, Longstreet brought to the west immense prestige, an air of confidence, and more than a little ambition. A West Point graduate and veteran of the Mexican War, he had a superb reputation as Lee's second in command. That reputation suffered after the war, but in 1863 he was considered one of the South's finest generals. Aware of the army's internal problems, he likely hoped to replace Bragg.³⁶

When the battle commenced on September 19, Longstreet and many of his men had not yet arrived on the field. Consequently, that day was like many others in the army's history.

University of Nebraska Press, 1998); David A. Powell, *The Chickamauga Campaign—A Mad Irregular Battle: From the Crossing of the Tennessee River Through the Second Day, August 22-September 19, 1863* (El Dorado Hills, CA: Savas Beatie, 2014); David A. Powell, *The Chickamauga Campaign—Glory or the Grave: The Breakthrough, Union Collapse, and the Retreat to Chattanooga, September 20-23, 1863* (El Dorado Hills, CA: Savas Beatie, 2015); David A. Powell, *Failure in the Saddle: Nathan Bedford Forrest, Joe Wheeler and the Confederate Cavalry in the Chickamauga Campaign* (El Dorado Hills, CA: Savas Beatie, 2010); Stephen E. Woodworth, ed., *The Chickamauga Campaign* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2010); and Evan C. Jones and Wiley Sword, eds., *Gateway to the Confederacy: New Perspectives on the Chickamauga and Chattanooga Campaigns, 1862-1863* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2014).

³⁵ Woodworth, *Jefferson Davis and His Generals*, 233-34.

³⁶ Connelly, *Autumn of Glory*, 151, 161; Woodworth, *Jefferson Davis and His Generals*, 235. Biographies of Longstreet include Jeffry D. Wert, *General James Longstreet: The Confederacy's Most Controversial Soldier* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1993), and William Garret Piston, *Lee's Tarnished Lieutenant: James Longstreet and His Place in Southern History* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1988).

Bragg, distrustful of his generals, issued few orders to them and those he did issue were vague, poorly conceptualized, and often reversed. His corps commanders, for their part, showed little initiative. Thus the army barely held its own on the nineteenth and the sole Confederate success that day resulted from the individual initiative of a division commander, Alexander P. Stewart, who was frustrated with the indecision and lack of communication in the high command.³⁷

Stewart was a West Point graduate and he became Tennessee's highest ranking Confederate general but in the prewar years he had been a math and science professor. This respite from the military apparently did no lasting harm to his martial abilities, for by 1863 he had established himself as one of the most reliable division commanders in the army. At Chickamauga, while his superiors sat idle, Stewart marched his men to the heart of the battle, ordered his brigades to attack, and broke through the center of the Union line. Unfortunately his superiors failed to exploit this success; none of his fellow division commanders came to his support, and a good opportunity was squandered.³⁸

Despite brutal fighting, the first day of Chickamauga was inconclusive. As night fell the armies remained on the field, preparing to resume battle in the morning. Luckily for the Rebels, Longstreet arrived during the night with more reinforcements. Bragg, however, went to bed without sending any guides to Longstreet, who therefore had to rely on local citizens and the sound of gunfire to find his way to the field. With Longstreet on hand, Bragg divided his army into two wings commanded by Polk and Longstreet and ordered the former to attack at dawn.

³⁷ Connelly, *Autumn of Glory*, 201-203.

³⁸ Ibid., 203-206; Woodworth, *Jefferson Davis and His Generals*, 264. For a biography of Stewart, see Sam Davis Elliot, *Soldier of Tennessee: General Alexander P. Stewart and the Civil War in the West* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1999).

But the “Fighting Bishop” opted not to share this information with his subordinates and no dawn attack was made.³⁹

The battle was decided in Longstreet’s sector. Confident he could drive back the Union right flank, and left to his own devices by Polk’s inaction and the lack of communication in the high command, Longstreet attacked. Serendipitously for the Confederates, Rosecrans simultaneously created a gap in his line. Consequently, Longstreet pierced the Union line and Rosecrans and much of his army retreated toward Chattanooga. Determined resistance by federals under George Thomas allowed the rest of the Northern army to escape, but the Army of Tennessee could finally claim a major victory. This, coupled with the prospect of going on the strategic offensive, buoyed the army’s morale.⁴⁰

Some of Bragg’s lieutenants urged him to pounce on the retreating federals, but he chose instead to place Chattanooga under siege, hoping to starve the enemy into surrendering. It seemed that Bragg initially could not believe that his army had really won the battle. In any event, he became more concerned with attacking enemies within his own army than those taking refuge in Chattanooga.⁴¹

Unsurprisingly, Bragg’s first victim was Polk, whom he suspended from command, charging him with insubordination and neglect of duty, and ultimately transferred him out of the Army of Tennessee. With Polk gone, Longstreet assumed leadership of the anti-Bragg bloc, holding secret meetings and drafting petitions to President Davis to have the commander

³⁹ Connelly, *Autumn of Glory*, 211, 215-219; Woodworth, *Jefferson Davis and His Generals*, 235-36. For more on insubordination in the high command see Stephen E. Woodworth, “Soldier with a Blunted Sword: Braxton Bragg and His Lieutenants in the Chickamauga Campaign,” in Stephen E. Woodworth, *No Band of Brothers: Problems of the Rebel High Command* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1999), 70-80.

⁴⁰ Connelly, *Autumn of Glory*, 223-24; Hess, *Civil War in the West*, 190-192; Woodworth, *Jefferson Davis and His Generals*, 236-37; Robert W. Ikard, “Lieutenant Thompson Reports on Chickamauga: A Comparison of Immediate and Historical Perceptions of the Battle,” *Tennessee Historical Quarterly* 44 (1985): 437.

⁴¹ Connelly, *Autumn of Glory*, 225, 228-29, 234; Woodworth, *Jefferson Davis and His Generals*, 237-38.

removed. Forrest, increasingly critical of Bragg following Chickamauga, was ordered by Bragg to turn over his command to Wheeler. Forrest responded by threatening Bragg's life, declaring he would never again serve under him, and resigning. Davis, interceded, however, and granted the fiery cavalryman a transfer and promotion. Thus, Forrest's relationship with the Army of Tennessee ended for the time being.⁴²

Jefferson Davis, concerned Bragg was more focused on purging his own army than whipping the enemy, visited the Army of Tennessee, although he admitted privately that he had no intention of removing the general. Arriving at Bragg's headquarters, he called a meeting of the corps and division commanders to discuss the army's future. The meeting opened with a discussion of strategy but degenerated into a lambasting of Bragg. Longstreet slammed Bragg's leadership and called for his removal, seconded by Cheatham, Hill, and others. But Davis sided with Bragg, issued a public statement of support for him, and returned to Richmond.⁴³

His confidence boosted, Bragg renewed his counterattack against his critics. D. H. Hill was his next target. He held Hill responsible for some of the delays and confusion at Chickamauga and, unfortunately for Hill, many others agreed. Having antagonized officers in both main Confederate armies and thus devoid of allies, Hill was sidelined for the rest of the war. More damaging to the army's immediate prospects was Longstreet's transfer. Now Bragg's chief critic, Longstreet became increasingly insubordinate, and when Davis suggested sending him to Knoxville to recapture that town, Bragg readily agreed. Bragg also reorganized the army to disperse his lower-ranking critics.⁴⁴

⁴² Connelly, *Autumn of Glory*, 235-41; Woodworth, *Jefferson Davis and His Generals*, 238-41, 243-44.

⁴³ Connelly, *Autumn of Glory*, 241-42, 245; Woodworth, *Jefferson Davis and His Generals*, 241-42.

⁴⁴ Connelly, *Autumn of Glory*, 247-49, 250-51, 255-63; Woodworth, *Jefferson Davis and His Generals*, 243, 245, 248; McMurtry, *Two Great Rebel Armies*, 135-36. For more on Longstreet in the west, see Alexander Mendoza, *Confederate Struggle for Command: General James Longstreet and the First Corps in the West* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2008), and Alexander Mendoza, "'The Harmony and Subordination Essential to Success': General James Longstreet, Braxton Bragg, and the Army of Tennessee, 1863-1864," in *Confederate*

While the army high command feuded, the siege of Chattanooga disintegrated. Ulysses S. Grant, now commanding all federal forces in the west, took command at Chattanooga and devised a plan to break the siege. He managed to open an effective supply line, meanwhile summoning reinforcements under William T. Sherman. The Army of Tennessee was now severely outnumbered and had ceded the initiative to the enemy. Morale in the ranks plummeted to an all-time low.⁴⁵

The subsequent Battle of Chattanooga was a disaster for Bragg and his army. Driving back the Confederate left at Lookout Mountain on November 24, Grant turned his attention the next day to the Rebel's right flank. Grant, hoping to envelope Bragg's army, ordered Sherman to attack the Confederates on Tunnel Hill commanded by Patrick R. Cleburne. An Irish-born British army veteran, Cleburne had immigrated to the United States in 1850, eventually settling in Arkansas and pursuing a career as a pharmacist and then a lawyer. With the coming of the war, he cast his lot with his adopted state. A skilled and popular commander, he rose rapidly through the ranks in the war's early months, emerging as one of the best division commanders on either side. His ability was clearly displayed at Chattanooga, where he repulsed numerous attacks by Sherman.⁴⁶

Generals in the Western Theater, eds. Lawrence Lee Hewitt and Arthur W. Bergeron Jr. (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2010): 2, 95-130.

⁴⁵ Hess, *Civil War in the West*, 194-195; Connelly, *Autumn of Glory*, 274; Woodworth, *Jefferson Davis and His Generals*, 246-48.

⁴⁶ Hess, *Civil War in the West*, 196-197; Connelly, *Autumn of Glory*, 27; Woodworth, *Jefferson Davis and His Generals*, 140-44, 248-49. Cleburne's strongest biography is Craig L. Symonds, *Stonewall of the West: Patrick Cleburne and the Civil War* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1997). See also Craig L. Symonds, "Patrick Cleburne's Defense of Tunnel Hill Revisited," in *Confederate Generals in the Western Theater*, eds. Hewitt and Bergeron (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2010), 1: 135-47. For the best studies of Chattanooga see Peter Cozzens, *The Shipwreck of Their Hopes: The Battles for Chattanooga* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1994); Wiley Sword, *Mountains Touched with Fire: Chattanooga Besieged, 1863* (New York: St. Martins, 1995); James L. McDonough, *Chattanooga: A Death Grip on the Confederacy* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1984); and Stephen E. Woodworth and Charles D. Great, eds., *The Chattanooga Campaign* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2012).

The decisive action at Chattanooga came in the Confederate center on Missionary Ridge. Union troops under George Thomas rose from their trenches without orders and charged the section of the Rebel line held by Breckinridge's men. Crying "Chickamauga! Chickamauga!," the Yankees overran the line, routing the Confederates. Hoping to exploit his victory, Grant ordered Joseph Hooker to pursue the broken Rebel army as it retreated into northwest Georgia. To counter this, Bragg sent Cleburne's Division—one of the few units in the army still in one piece—to act as rearguard. For five hours on November 27, Hooker's men tried to break Cleburne's line at Ringgold Gap to no avail. Cleburne's stand allowed the Army of Tennessee and its supply train to escape to safety.⁴⁷

The army settled in to winter quarters at Dalton, where Bragg resigned from command and was replaced by Johnston. Despite his continued feud with Davis and lack of battlefield success, Johnston managed to maintain his sterling reputation. During the early months of 1864 he worked hard to drill the troops and raise morale. He improved the food supply and instituted a system of furloughs that the homesick soldiers hailed enthusiastically. When campaigning resumed in the spring the army was arguably the most confident it had ever been. This renewed hope in the ranks spread to the home front; Confederates looked to the coming campaign with optimism.⁴⁸

While the army's conditions were improving, relations between its commander and Richmond were deteriorating. Johnston and Davis still distrusted each other, communicated infrequently, and declined to share their thoughts. Furthermore, Davis—ever loyal to his friends—appointed Bragg as his personal military advisor and brought him to Richmond. Thus

⁴⁷ Hess, *Civil War in the West*, 197-198; Woodworth, *Jefferson Davis and His Generals*, 250-53.

⁴⁸ Daniel, *Soldiering in the Army of Tennessee*, 10, 57, 60, 138; Connelly, *Autumn of Glory*, 286-87; McMurtry, *Two Great Rebel Armies*, 129; Clappitt, *Confederate Heartland*, 8, 25-29, 50-51.

Davis, Bragg, and Lee developed grand strategy for the coming spring without consulting Johnston. Meanwhile Bragg's few friends in the army were sending him misleading information from Dalton. Bitter over his experiences with the army and jealous of Johnston's popularity, Bragg began suggesting that Johnston do things that just a few months earlier he had argued were impossible. In the coming months, he would be one of the primary advocates for Johnston's removal.⁴⁹

In addition to Johnston's training regimen, there were three notable developments at Dalton. Two would be remembered, one forgotten. On January 2, Cleburne, responding to the Confederacy's manpower shortages and deteriorating strategic position, called a meeting of the army's high command in which he advocated emancipation for any slave who would serve as a soldier in the Rebel army. While the officers of Cleburne's division largely agreed with him, reactions throughout the rest of the high command were divided; some accused Cleburne of treason. Because Cleburne had been in the anti-Bragg camp, his proposal also got intertwined with the army's old command factions. President Davis was so alarmed by the idea that he ordered it censored and it was decades before Cleburne's motion became common knowledge. The proposal was, at least in part, the reason Cleburne was passed over for corps command multiple times.⁵⁰

In late March, after five inches of snow blanketed the army's camp, a snowball fight broke out involving up to six thousand men. For soldiers from the Deep South, snow was a novel sight. Units squared off against each other, with high-ranking officers such as Cleburne,

⁴⁹ Connelly, *Autumn of Glory*, 295-99, 410-20; Woodworth, *Jefferson Davis and His Generals*, 272-74.

⁵⁰ Connelly, *Autumn of Glory*, 318-20; Woodworth, *Jefferson Davis and His Generals*, 262-63; Paul R. Fessler, "The Case of the Missing Promotion: Historians and the Military Career of Major General Patrick Ronayne Cleburne, C.S.A.," *Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 53 (1994): 229; Barbara C. Ruby, "General Patrick Cleburne's Proposal to Arm Southern Slaves," *Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 30 (1971): 211; Clappitt, *Confederate Heartland*, 141-43.

Cheatham, and Stewart joining in the fun. For a few hours the culture of hierarchy and deference found in any army was set aside as men from the rank of private to major general engaged in harmless yet rejuvenating competition.⁵¹

A religious revival swept the army at Dalton, as well. While a similar phenomenon had occurred during its encampment at Tullahoma, harsh weather and a shortage of chaplains had limited it. The Dalton revival was massive and lasted well into the ensuing Atlanta Campaign. The high command was not immune to the fervor: Polk, who rejoined the army in May 1864, personally baptized Johnston, Hardee, and John Bell Hood. Some historians argue that the revival was instrumental in maintaining the army's morale for the remainder of the war. Had the army's fortunes reversed in 1864, its winter encampment at Dalton would, no doubt, be remembered as its Valley Forge.⁵²

With the arrival of spring, the reenergized Confederates faced three combined Union armies under Sherman. The massive federal force marched south from Chattanooga in May 1864 with the goals of crushing Johnston's army and capturing Atlanta, the most important city in the Confederacy next to Richmond. Johnston, aware of his numerical inferiority, assumed a defensive posture, hoping Sherman would launch costly frontal assaults against fortified positions. Unfortunately for Johnston, Sherman preferred to win through maneuver.⁵³

During the ensuing Atlanta Campaign, Sherman executed a series of flanking maneuvers that forced Johnston to continually retreat south until he was locked in a siege at Atlanta. Johnston chose not to attack as he retreated, all the while hoping Sherman would lose patience and order an assault. With one exception, however, the Battle of Kennesaw Mountain, Sherman

⁵¹ Daniel, *Soldiering in the Army of Tennessee*, 94.

⁵² Ibid., 117, 122-25; Prim, "Born Again in the Trenches," 271; Nichols-Belt, "Chaplains in the Army of Tennessee," 245; Clappitt, *Confederate Heartland*, 43-47.

⁵³ Connelly, *Autumn of Glory*, 288, 293.

refused to oblige him. While Johnston's retreats were well executed, many feared he would surrender the Gate City without a fight. The troops' confidence in Johnston's leadership also waned the closer they got to Atlanta. Johnston seemed oblivious to these concerns. The army's morale had already suffered a severe blow in June when Polk was killed; despite his disastrous record as a corps commander, he had been popular with the men. Making matters worse for Johnston, some of his lieutenants were undermining his leadership.⁵⁴

Most notable among these was John Bell Hood. Thirty-two in 1864, Hood was one of the younger general officers in the Confederacy. Despite his youth, the Kentuckian had achieved a stellar reputation as an aggressive brigade and division commander in Lee's army. Transferred west with Longstreet, he was partially responsible for Rebel victory at Chickamauga, where he lost a leg (having previously lost the use of an arm at Gettysburg). By late 1863 he had emerged as one of the South's great military heroes. While convalescing in Richmond he became friends with President Davis and rubbed elbows with other leading politicians.⁵⁵

Recovered from his amputation, Hood was promoted to corps command and rejoined the Army of Tennessee at Dalton. His promotion was greeted with near-universal approval; even Johnston expressed his desire for Hood to join his command. However, as time would reveal, Hood—like so many other generals in the army—had been promoted beyond his abilities.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 358-60, 371; Woodworth, *Jefferson Davis and His Generals*, 276; Daniel, *Soldiering in the Army of Tennessee*, 14; McMurry, *Two Great Rebel Armies*, 129-30; Clampitt, *Confederate Heartland*, 58-60, 66. The best works on the Atlanta Campaign are Albert Castel, *Decision in the West: The Atlanta Campaign of 1864* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1992); Stephen Davis, *Atlanta Will Fall: Sherman, Joe Johnston, and the Yankee Heavy Battalions* (Wilmington, Delaware: Scholarly Resources, 2001); and Richard M. McMurry, *Atlanta 1864: Last Chance for the Confederacy* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2000). For a superb study of Kennesaw Mountain, see Earl J. Hess, *Kennesaw Mountain: Sherman, Johnston, and the Atlanta Campaign* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2013).

⁵⁵ Woodworth, *Jefferson Davis and His Generals*, 266-72. For biographical treatments of Hood see Richard M. McMurry, *John Bell Hood and the War for Southern Independence* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1982), and Brian Craig Miller, *John Bell Hood and the Fight for Civil War Memory* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2010).

Nevertheless, in 1864 he was confident and ambitious. Even before the Atlanta Campaign, he began a secret correspondence with Richmond criticizing Johnston's abilities, overestimating the army's capabilities, and urging an offensive campaign. Basically, he disregarded reality and told Davis what he wanted to hear.⁵⁶

Davis, frustrated by Johnston's repeated retreats and refusal to share his plans, removed the general from command on July 17 and replaced him with Hood. Johnston had done little to aid his own cause. The few communications he had sent Richmond were vague, secretive, and petulant. After the war he insisted he had been preparing to go on the offensive, but there is little evidence to support this claim. Furthermore, he seemed oblivious to the political significance of Atlanta. Should the city fall, it would prove a great boon to Abraham Lincoln's reelection campaign and thus disastrous to the Confederacy's hopes for a negotiated peace.⁵⁷

For decades the conventional narrative of the Atlanta Campaign insisted that Johnston's removal was unpopular within the army. However, while Hood was never as widely admired as Johnston, some recent scholarship shows that Hood's appointment and his subsequent aggressive actions were hailed by the army and that many soldiers interpreted his tactical defeats as victories. Abandoning caution, Hood launched a series of attacks around Atlanta. While bold in conception, the assaults were weak and poorly coordinated. Having failed to raise the siege, Hood was forced to abandon the city on September 2.⁵⁸

⁵⁶ Connelly, *Autumn of Glory*, 321-24; Woodworth, *Jefferson Davis and His Generals*, 276; McMurry, *Two Great Rebel Armies*, 130. For more on how Hood's tenure in the Army of Northern Virginia shaped his generalship in the west, see Keith S. Bohannon, "'A Bold Fighter' Promoted beyond His Abilities: General John Bell Hood," in *Leaders of the Lost Cause*, eds. Gallagher and Glatthaar, 249-87.

⁵⁷ Hess, *Civil War in the West*, 213-217, 222; Connelly, *Autumn of Glory*, 391, 398-400, 404-405.

⁵⁸ Connelly, *Autumn of Glory*, 423, 439-47, 456-69; Richard M. McMurry, "Confederate Morale in the Atlanta Campaign of 1864," *Georgia Historical Quarterly* 54 (1970): 239; Hess, *Civil War in the West*, 223-26, 230-32; Woodworth, *Jefferson Davis and His Generals*, 286-90; Daniel, *Soldiering in the Army of Tennessee*, 144, 149; McMurry, *Two Great Rebel Armies*, 130. The exception among recent scholars is Clampitt, who argues that "the abundant evidence that the soldiers of the Army of Tennessee initially overwhelmingly disagreed with the removal

As was custom in the Army of Tennessee following a defeat, the months after the fall of Atlanta witnessed backbiting, deflection of responsibility, and the inefficient intercession of Richmond. Hood proved no more adept than Bragg at making friends and a considerable contingent of officers campaigned for his removal. Refusing to accept any responsibility, Hood lashed out at his lieutenants and even the enlisted men. Jefferson Davis again visited the army and again opted to maintain the army's current leader while appointing a general as theater commander. Having just relieved Johnston from field command, Davis had little choice but to appoint his other long-time enemy, Beauregard, to the position. But he gave Beauregard unclear directions and little practical power. Hood, in turn, felt little obligation to keep Beauregard apprised of his plans or movements, and the theater commander was often ignorant even of the army's location.⁵⁹

The disaster in Georgia did nothing to dissuade Hood from launching another bold, aggressive campaign. Hoping to turn the tide of the war by recapturing Nashville, he invaded middle Tennessee. Now attempting to liberate the army's home state, the troops were heartened, cheering as they crossed the border. When Sherman embarked on his "March to the Sea," he left forces under George Thomas and John Schofield to deal with Hood. Knowing that his best chance of victory lay in attacking the two before they united, Hood ordered an assault on Schofield at Spring Hill on November 29. The Confederate attack was poorly coordinated, however. Schofield's force escaped and entrenched at Franklin.⁶⁰

of Johnston should be plain even to readers who consider Davis's decision proper and to the staunchest of Hood devotees." See Clampitt, *Confederate Heartland*, 76-77, 95-96.

⁵⁹ Connelly, *Autumn of Glory*, 471-73; Woodworth, *Jefferson Davis and His Generals*, 290-96.

⁶⁰ Daniel, *Soldiering in the Army of Tennessee*, 150; Hess, *Civil War in the West*, 253; Connelly, *Autumn of Glory*, 492-93; Woodworth, *Jefferson Davis and His Generals*, 298-99; Clampitt, *Confederate Heartland*, 9, 107-109, 112-17. For more on Hood's decision to invade Tennessee, see Frank E. Vandiver, "General Hood as Logistician," *Military Affairs* 16 (1952): 1-11.

Enraged at his army's failure to destroy Schofield and desperate to keep the two Union forces from uniting, Hood ordered a frontal assault the next day on Schofield's entrenchments at Franklin. This attack would be unsupported by artillery and would take place before the whole Confederate army was in position. Moreover, a combination of geography and fortifications made Schofield's position a strong one. Hood's lieutenants were appalled by the rashness of this planned assault and tried to dissuade their commander. In a fiery exchange, Forrest—recently reunited with the army—pleaded with Hood to delay the attack and allow him to outflank Schofield with his cavalry. Hood was unmoved and nineteen thousand infantrymen began the charge.⁶¹

They were decimated. While Union lines were temporarily broken, the federal troops rallied and repulsed the Confederates. Six Rebel generals were killed, including Cleburne, and five were wounded. The army's senior officer corps never recovered. During the night, Schofield escaped to Nashville. The Army of Tennessee suffered over six thousand casualties, losses that by this stage in the war could not be made up. But some soldiers again interpreted defeat as victory and boasted that Hood's northward movement would continue; after all, at battle's end the Army of Tennessee was in possession of the field.⁶²

Hood too claimed Franklin as a victory, despite sacrificing nearly a quarter of his army there, and he continued his march toward Nashville. He placed the city under siege, but his

⁶¹ Connelly, *Autumn of Glory*, 502-503. For decades historians have blamed Hood's behavior during the campaign, at least in part, on his supposed addiction to opiates. Recently, however, scholars have dismissed this claim. See Stephen Davis, "John Bell Hood's Historiographical Journey; or, How Did a Confederate General Become a Laudanum Addict?," in *Confederate Generals in the Western Theater*, eds. Lawrence Lee Hewitt and Arthur W. Bergeron Jr. (3 vols. to date, Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2010), 2: 218-35.

⁶² Hess, *Civil War in the West*, 254; Daniel, *Soldiering in the Army of Tennessee*, 146-47, 149; Woodworth, *Jefferson Davis and His Generals*, 300-301; Clappitt, *Confederate Heartland*, 117-18. Works on the Battle of Franklin include James L. McDonough and Thomas L. Connelly, *Five Tragic Hours: The Battle of Franklin* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1983); Wiley Sword, *The Confederacy's Last Hurrah: Spring Hill, Franklin, and Nashville* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1992); and Anne J. Bailey, *The Chessboard of War: Sherman and Hood in the Autumn Campaigns of 1864* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2000).

depleted force was unable to fully surround it. Thus, at the Battle of Nashville in December, George Thomas achieved one of the most decisive victories of the war, shattering Hood's army. Only a well-conducted fighting retreat by the rearguard under Forrest allowed the broken remnants of the army to escape into Alabama. After this disaster the soldiery turned completely against Hood and he resigned from command.⁶³

The double disasters of Franklin and Nashville destroyed not only Hood's career but the Army of Tennessee. The remnants of the army eventually retreated into Mississippi. From there, units were transferred to various departments. The primary field army in the western Confederacy no longer existed; comparisons were made between Hood's retreat from Nashville and Napoleon's withdrawal from Moscow. Many units went to North Carolina, where they joined up with other broken Rebel commands to form the Army of the South, which had the task of trying to stop Sherman's march through the Carolinas; Joseph E. Johnston was given command. This army fought only one battle, a defeat at Bentonville in March, before being reorganized and once again christened the Army of Tennessee. Following Robert E. Lee's capitulation at Appomattox Courthouse, Johnston surrendered the army to Sherman at Durham Station, North Carolina, on April 26, 1865.⁶⁴

⁶³ Connelly, *Autumn of Glory*, 507; Hess, *Civil War in the West*, 255-57; Daniel, *Soldiering in the Army of Tennessee*, 147; Woodworth, *Jefferson Davis and His Generals*, 301; Clampitt, *Confederate Heartland*, 122. On the Battle of Nashville, see above works by Sword and Bailey, and James L. McDonough, *Nashville: The Western Confederacy's Final Gamble* (Knoxville, University of Tennessee Press, 2004).

⁶⁴ Daniel, *Soldiering in the Army of Tennessee*, 161, 147; McMurry, *Two Great Rebel Armies*, 130-32; Clampitt, *Confederate Heartland*, 10, 123-26; Stephen V. Ash, *Middle Tennessee Society Transformed 1860-1870: War and Peace in the Upper South* (Baton Rouge, 1988), 168. Although it was a relatively small battle, Bentonville has been well analyzed by historians. Some of the best studies are Nathaniel Cheairs Hughes, *Bentonville: The Final Battle of Sherman and Johnston* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996); Mark L. Bradley, *The Battle of Bentonville: Last Stand in the Carolinas* (Campbell, CA: Savas Publishing, 1996); and John G. Barrett, *Sherman's March through the Carolinas* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1956). See also Craig L. Symonds, "Joseph E. Johnston in North Carolina," in *Confederate Generals in the Western Theater*, eds. Hewitt and Bergeron Jr., 2: 238-51.

During four years of war under five commanders the Army of Tennessee had lost twelve thousand men killed and sixty-five thousand wounded in battles that were almost all defeats. It had left its dead strewn across six different states and had failed in its herculean task of protecting the Confederate heartland. John Schofield, who spent considerable time fighting the Army of Tennessee, said of the ill-fated Rebel force after the war that “I doubt if any soldiers in the world ever needed so much cumulative evidence to convince them that they were beaten.” Now, as the army’s soldiers returned home, they along with their families and other former Confederates would have to confront that “cumulative evidence.” They would do so in a way shaped by the emerging myth of the Lost Cause, which insisted, among other things, on the martial, moral, and masculine superiority of Confederate soldiers. The former Rebels who identified with the Army of Tennessee experienced little but defeat during the war; in the coming decades they would remember little but victory.⁶⁵

⁶⁵ Daniel, *Soldiering in the Army of Tennessee*, 166; John M. Schofield, *Forty-Six Years in the Army* (New York: Century, 1897), 248.

Chapter Two:

“His death may have lost the South her independence”:

Albert Sidney Johnston and Civil War Memory

On April 6, 1862, Confederate general Albert Sidney Johnston, commanding the soon-to-be christened Army of Tennessee, was seemingly on the cusp of a great victory over Union general Ulysses S. Grant. Despite recent defeats that had tarnished his once sterling reputation, Johnston managed to surprise Grant with an attack at Shiloh Church. Union forces soon recovered from their initial shock, however, and began offering stiffer resistance. Johnston, hoping to maintain the initiative, inspire his men, and no doubt restore his reputation and honor, led from the front all day. Around two o'clock in the afternoon he took charge of a battered and demoralized regiment. After riding along its line, tapping the tips of the men's bayonets with a tin cup, he called out, "I will lead you!" With their commanding general guiding them, the reenergized troops surged forward, driving back the Union forces in their front. Despite this localized success the battle continued, Johnston in the thick of it. But suddenly he reeled in the saddle, having been struck in the right calf by a spent round. Quickly losing consciousness, the general was helped off his horse by a staff member. Having sent his personal surgeon to tend to Union wounded, Johnston was without medical aid and at two thirty died of blood loss. The tide soon turned and Shiloh became one of the most significant Union victories of the war and an indispensable step in the ascendance of U. S. Grant.¹

¹ Charles P. Roland, *Albert Sidney Johnston: Soldier of Three Republics* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1964), 335-39; Timothy B. Smith, "To Conquer or Perish: The Last Hours of Albert Sidney Johnston," in *Confederate Generals in the Western Theater: Essays on America's Civil War*, eds. Lawrence Lee Hewitt and Arthur W Bergeron Jr. (3 vols., Knoxville, University of Tennessee Press, 2011), 3: 21-35.

Twenty-one years later, aging Confederate veterans gathered in New Orleans's Metairie Cemetery to decorate the graves of fallen comrades and observe the laying of the cornerstone of an equestrian statue of Johnston. Charles E. Hooker, a Mississippi congressman and former Rebel officer, gave the oration. “The records of the war show no more knightlier [sic] warrior” than Johnston, Hooker declared. He went on to name the “triumvirate” of great Southerners who he believed ranked above all others: Robert E. Lee, John C. Calhoun, and Albert Sidney Johnston. On the platform with Hooker was former Confederate president Jefferson Davis who in response to the crowd's demands rose to further eulogize Johnston. Davis had been friends with the general in the antebellum years and his sentiments were well known. Like many others, he believed that Johnston's death at Shiloh was an irreparable loss to the South—one that led to ultimate defeat in the Civil War. Voicing a belief common in the postwar South, the old commander-in-chief assured the crowd that “had [Johnston] lived but half an hour longer, Grant would have been a prisoner.”²

Albert Sidney Johnston occupies an anomalous position as a Lost Cause icon. Several prominent historians have noted that his untimely death at Shiloh, one of the war's great contingencies, made Johnston a Confederate idol. Thomas L. Connelly argues that, for postwar white Southerners, “Johnston would epitomize the might-have-been situation” while T. Harry Williams likens him to “the promising artist who dies young.” Yet assertions such as these, usually appended as a coda or mentioned in passing, are where historians' analyses stop. Moreover, foundational studies of Civil War memory and the Lost Cause have altogether ignored

² Fayetteville (North Carolina) *Observer*, April 26, 1883; St. Louis *Globe-Democrat*, April 8, 1883.

Johnston's place in the ideology of the former Confederacy, insisting on the primacy of a trinity of supreme Confederate heroes: Robert E. Lee, Stonewall Jackson, and Jefferson Davis.³

While Johnston's image never eclipsed those of other Lost Cause deities like Lee or Jackson, it did occupy a prominent place in late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century Confederate memory that historians have ignored. Moreover, Johnston, who commanded the Army of Tennessee for less than a year and never won a battle, enjoyed a postwar fame far more disproportionate to his accomplishments than did many other generals. While the “might-have-been” aspect of Johnston's image undoubtedly explains its postwar allure, historians have yet to place that posthumous image under the scholarly microscope. Several important questions need answering. What purposes did the myth of Albert Sidney Johnston serve? Who were its architects? What were their motivations? And why, despite its overwhelming presence, have historians failed to acknowledge it?

Johnston has received little historiographical attention compared to most Rebel officers of comparable rank. His sole scholarly biography is half a century old, and serious discussion of Johnston has been largely devoted to his and P. G. T. Beauregard's respective culpability for Rebel defeat at Shiloh. Regardless of who was responsible, for many ex-Confederates there was a direct link between Johnston's death and Confederate defeat, both in the battle and the war. Southern whites after the war constructed an image of Johnston that not only helped explain their defeat in the Civil War but helped assuage the shame that accompanied it.⁴

³ Thomas L. Connelly, *The Marble Man: Robert E. Lee and His Image in American Society* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1977), 23; T. Harry Williams, *P. G. T. Beauregard: Napoleon in Gray* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1955), 116; Stephen D. Engle, “Thank God, He Has Rescued His Character,” in *Leaders of the Lost Cause: New Perspectives on the Confederate High Command*, eds. Gary W. Gallagher and Joseph T. Glatthaar (Mechanicsburg, PA: Stackpole Books, 2004), 153-55; Wilson, *Baptized in Blood*, 48-52. Connelly is the historian most aware of the ubiquity of Johnston's image; his page-and-a-half discussion in *The Marble Man* of the general's popularity is the most sustained analysis of the Johnston myth to date.

⁴ For an introduction to this decades-old historiographical debate see Roland, *Albert Sidney Johnston*, 326-51 and Williams, *P. G. T. Beauregard*, 133-49.

Johnston's image, in addition to being useful to the Lost Cause, fit comfortably within nineteenth-century white Southern culture. Few qualities were more valued by white Southerners than masculinity and honor. Johnston's posthumous advocates relied heavily on the tropes of masculinity when crafting his mythology, and his noble death in battle made easier his incorporation into the ranks of Confederate idols. As one historian argues: "Death in combat assured an eternal life on earth. A man's death and subsequent rebirth in the masculine community of fellow fallen soldiers manifested itself in the community's collective memory, where he achieved immortal manhood." If, as some historians have argued, the outcome of the Civil War provoked a crisis of manhood in the former Confederacy, Johnston's image served as welcome evidence that the South could produce masculine heroes.⁵

While the myth of Albert Sidney Johnston reached its full flowering only in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, its foundations predated the Civil War. By 1861 Johnston was a soldier of considerable reputation. He had graduated eighth in his class of 1826 at the United States Military Academy and subsequently served as an officer in the Black Hawk War, as a brigadier general in the Texas army, and as Texas's secretary of war during its period of independence. Leading a regiment of Texas volunteers during the Mexican War, he earned distinction at the Battle of Monterrey and won the high praise of both Winfield Scott and Zachary Taylor, the most prominent American commanders of the war. In 1855, then Secretary of War Jefferson Davis, Johnston's former West Point classmate, appointed him colonel of the 2nd U.S. Cavalry Regiment—a famed unit that claimed Robert E. Lee, George Thomas, John

⁵ Harry S. Laver, "Refuge of Manhood: Masculinity and the Militia Experience in Kentucky," in *Southern Manhood: Perspectives on Masculinity in the Old South*, eds. Craig Thompson Friend and Lorri Glover (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2004), 15; Leanne Whites, "The Civil War as a Crisis in Gender," in *Divided Houses: Gender and the Civil War*, eds. Catherine Clinton and Nina Silber (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 21; Craig Thompson Friend and Lori Glover, "Rethinking Southern Masculinity: An Introduction," in Friend and Glover, *Southern Manhood*, vii.

Bell Hood, Edmund Kirby Smith, and William J. Hardee among its antebellum officers.

Johnston led federal troops in a successful and largely bloodless campaign against the Mormons during the Utah War before being breveted a brigadier general and appointed commander of the Department of the Pacific. Lee, an accomplished soldier in his own right, was among those who praised Johnston in the prewar years. Johnston's achievements even garnered him a flattering profile in an 1857 issue of *Harper's Weekly*.⁶

Johnston was at his headquarters in San Francisco during the secession crisis. Although born in the politically divided border state of Kentucky, he considered himself a Texan and when his adopted state seceded he resigned from the army, offered his services to the Confederacy, made a daring overland journey to Texas, and ultimately reported to his old friend Confederate president Jefferson Davis in Richmond. Johnston's star was on the rise even before he arrived at the capital. The Richmond *Enquirer*, on learning of his resignation, reported that Johnston was "one of the most skillful and accomplished officers in the U.S. Army" and other papers recounted his trek to Virginia. A Confederate officer in Texas at the time later recalled that "for days I had been looking to the West as for a Military Messiah in the person of Albert Sidney Johnston." A group of Memphians petitioned Davis to give Johnston command of the western theater.⁷

The president needed no prodding. Convinced that Johnston was the South's best soldier, Davis commissioned him a full general and placed him in command of Department No. 2, a vast area stretching from the Appalachians to the Mississippi River. News of this appointment was greeted with universal approval. "It is useless to reiterate what we have repeated over and over

⁶ Robert E. Lee to W. H. F. Lee, February 28, 1858, George Bolling Lee Papers, Virginia Historical Society, Richmond; *Harper's Weekly*, September 19, 1857.

⁷ Richmond *Enquirer*, May 10, 1861; CV 2 (1894): 116; Roland, *Albert Sidney Johnston*, 258-60.

again—that this appointment will give the most universal satisfaction throughout the Southwest as one most eminently fit to be made,” declared the *Memphis Appeal*. A Georgia newspaper wrote that the people of the South were confident in Johnston's abilities and looked to his department “feeling assured that there no disaster will be encountered which energy of character, military skill or superior generalship can in any manner avert.” Others bestowed on Johnston the sobriquet “lion of the west.” A year after the war, Richmond journalist Edward Pollard recalled that Johnston “was popularly expected . . . to take Cincinnati and march to the Northern Lakes.” Many Southerners, especially those threatened with Union invasion, were coming to see Johnston not just as a good soldier, but as a deliverer.⁸

As departmental commander, Johnston was responsible for defending the heartland of the nascent Confederacy along a line of roughly four hundred miles. As discussed in chapter one, the western theater presented the Confederacy with daunting challenges. Despite his impressive record, Johnston had never exercised such responsibility. As one historian of the western theater has noted, Johnston “faced a situation unprecedented in his experience or in that of any other living American.”⁹

The Confederacy's fortunes in the western theater, unpromising to begin with, quickly waned. The department's greatest asset at the war's commencement was Kentucky's neutrality. As long as that state remained noncommittal on secession and barred the entry of troops of either side, the Confederacy would not have to defend Tennessee's northern border. Unfortunately for the soon-to-arrive Johnston, Leonidas Polk was in temporary charge of the department.

⁸ *Memphis Appeal*, September 13, 1861; *Macon Daily Telegraph*, September 14, 1861; Engle, “Thank God, He Has Rescued His Character,” 148; Edward A. Pollard, *The Lost Cause: A New Southern History of the War of the Confederates* (New York: E. B. Treat, 1866), 378.

⁹ Steven E. Woodworth, *Civil War Generals in Defeat* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1999), 4, 9-10; Connelly, *Army of the Heartland*, xi.

Convinced that the Union army was preparing to enter the state, Polk decided to preempt that move by occupying Columbus, Kentucky. This disregard for the Bluegrass State's neutrality gave the Union army the excuse to do the same and left Tennessee open to Yankee invasion.¹⁰

Johnston arrived on the scene a week after Polk's ill-advised move. Thereafter the Confederate position in the west continued to deteriorate, further tarnishing Johnston's reputation. In September 1861 he spread his roughly forty thousand men along a defensive perimeter across southern Kentucky and northern Tennessee in a desperate attempt to shield the Volunteer State from invasion. This fragile line held only a few months. When Northern forces captured Forts Henry and Donelson in February 1862, opening the Tennessee and Cumberland rivers to Union incursion, Johnston's position became untenable and he ordered his forces to retreat into middle Tennessee. The subsequent abandonment of Nashville was an even greater blow to Confederate morale. One of the most valuable cities in the Confederacy, it was the first Rebel state capital to fall to the Union. That Johnston had failed to protect it was a profound disappointment to the Confederate people.¹¹

The press, the politicians, and the people, who just weeks before had sung the general's praises, now called for his removal. Citizens stormed Johnston's headquarters demanding action, concerned commentators insisted that Jefferson Davis take personal command of the western army, and others argued Johnston should be replaced by another general. Aware of the impending invasion of their state, Tennessee politicians were especially energetic in calling for his removal. "The people, the army under General Johnston's command, and the people of Tennessee had lost confidence in the military capacity of General Johnston," insisted members of Confederate Congress. A former Rebel officer reflecting on this deterioration of Johnston's

¹⁰ Connelly, *Army of the Heartland*, 46-55; Woodworth, *Jefferson Davis and His Generals*, 36-39.

¹¹ Connelly, *Army of the Heartland*, 103-32.

image stated later that he went from being “Alexander, Hannibal, Caesar, Napoleon” to “a miserable dastard and traitor, unfit to command a corporal's guard.” Even Johnston's own lieutenants doubted his fitness for command. Davis was one of the few dissenting voices; his confidence in his old friend never wavered. He responded to one demand for Johnston's removal, “gentlemen, I know Sidney Johnston well. If he is not a General, we had better give up the war, for we have no general.” Johnston accepted the criticisms. “The test of merit in my profession, with the people is *success*,” he wrote to Davis in March, “it is a hard rule, but I think it right.” Johnston sometimes sided more with his critics than his president; at one point he attempted to relinquish command to Beauregard.¹²

Aware of his reputation's downward spiral, Johnston also knew that further disaster loomed on the horizon. Federal armies under Grant and Don Carlos Buell were in the process of uniting. Combined, they would make a force of seventy-five thousand men. Johnston's only hope of regaining the initiative was to attack these armies before they united. He ordered his forty thousand spread-out troops to concentrate at Corinth, Mississippi, thirty miles southwest of Grant's camp at Pittsburg Landing, in preparation for a counterstrike—the one that would culminate in the surprise attack against Grant at Shiloh and Johnston's death.¹³

With Johnston dead, Beauregard took command and soon ordered his forces to halt. The next day, Grant, reinforced by Buell's army, turned the tide. The Battle of Shiloh, despite premature pronouncements of victory, ended in Confederate defeat. For the next three years, the

¹² Roland, *Albert Sidney Johnston*, 298-99; Engle, “Thank God, He Has Rescued His Character,” 147-49; Richmond *Examiner*, March 11, 1862; Richard Taylor, *Destruction and Reconstruction: Personal Experiences of the Late War* (New York: D. Appleton, 1879), 284; CV 2 (1894): 82, 137; William Preston Johnston, *The Life of Gen. Albert Sidney Johnston, Embracing His Services in the Armies of the United States, the Republic of Texas, and the Confederate States* (New York: D. Appleton, 1879), 496. For more on Johnston's reputation at this juncture see Larry J. Daniel, “The Assaults of the Demagogues in Congress: Albert Sidney Johnston and the Politics of Command,” *Civil War History* 37 (1991): 328-35.

¹³ Woodworth, *Jefferson Davis and His Generals*, 96.

South suffered defeat after defeat in the west. Success had not come under Albert Sidney Johnston. Nor, however, did it come under his successors. The South possibly lost a major battle because Johnston fell, but it certainly gained a martyr. Johnston's significance in Confederate history rests more on how others shaped his image after his death than on anything he did in life. Military historians disagree about the role of Johnston's death in Shiloh's outcome, but there was no debate among former Rebels in the postwar period. The myth of Johnston, like many other myths, did not distinguish between correlation and causation: the Confederacy lost Shiloh, and the war, when Albert Sidney Johnston breathed his last.

While Johnston's prewar reputation allowed his myth to take root, his death allowed it to flower. His prestige, destroyed by his brief wartime career, was resurrected quickly in the wake of his death. A poem published very soon after his passing chronicled the hardships facing the South before concluding:

Yet a bright ray of sunshine,
Breaks through the vast darkness;
'Tis the spirit of Johnston,
Looking down from above;
He bids his brave soldiers,
To be firm and undaunted,
And trust in their God,
Full of truth, might and love!¹⁴

¹⁴ *Lines on the Death of Confederate Gen. Albert Sidney Johnston, of KY* [sic] (No place, no publisher, 1862).

Journalists, who just weeks earlier had ridiculed Johnston and called for his resignation, now grieved his death. “The hero of the battle of Shiloh is fallen!,” lamented a North Carolina paper; “The Confederacy contained few such men as Albert Sidney Johnston.” His death in battle, the same paper stated days later, “will cause his name to be handed down as one of the most illustrious of freedom’s martyrs.” Reporting on his death, the *Charleston Courier* praised Johnston’s manliness and generalship and blamed the “cloud . . . lately cast over his fame” on “the ignorant licentiousness of demagogues and . . . critics.” The *Southern Literary Messenger* praised his “great military talents and chivalrous character” and ranked him first among officers it lauded for selflessly resigning their commissions in the U.S. Army to come to the South’s aid. In a matter of months, Johnston had made the transition from deliverer to pariah to martyr.¹⁵

Over the next several decades former Confederates, and to a lesser extent their progeny, elaborated and expounded the Johnston myth, which came to present the general as a potential savior. This myth was especially suited for the Lost Cause, which in addition to serving immediate political and social purposes explained Confederate defeat and helped whites cope with it. The postwar Johnston myth argued that the Confederacy lost the war because the general was killed before he could destroy Grant and his army. Moreover, for the war’s survivors, ultimate defeat was easier to accept knowing it was the result of fate and not the actions of the high command, the soldiers, or the people on the home front. As the general’s son and biographer William Preston Johnston stated, victory was all but assured before Johnston fell “by the chance of war.”¹⁶

¹⁵ *The Weekly Raleigh Register*, April 16, 23, 1862; *Charleston Courier*, April 10, 1862; *Daily Mississippian* (Jackson), October 14, 1862; *Daily Morning News* (Savannah), January 16, 1863; *Southern Literary Messenger* (Richmond), July 1, 1862.

¹⁶ Wilson, *Baptized in Blood*, 13; Foster, *Ghosts of the Confederacy*, 11-35, 196; Connelly and Bellows, *God and General Longstreet*, 10-20, 93-94, 108; David W. Blight, *Race and Reunion*, 77, 258, 261; Thomas J. Brown, *The Public Art of Civil War Commemoration: A Brief History with Documents* (Boston: Bedford/St. Martins, 2004), 10-13; James C. Cobb, *Away Down South: A History of Southern Identity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005),

Jefferson Davis did more than any other person to foster the Johnston myth. Less than two weeks before Shiloh, the commander in chief told his beleaguered general that “my confidence in you has never wavered, and I hope the public will soon give me credit for my judgment rather than arraign me for obstinacy.” Johnston's passing did nothing to change Davis's opinion. “Without doing injustice to the living,” he remarked on learning of Johnston's death, “it may be safely asserted that our loss is irreparable.” Davis also supposedly claimed that “upon the brittle thread of that one man's life hung the destinies of the South”—perhaps an apocryphal statement, but one similar to others he is known to have made. Nearly twenty years after Johnston's death, Davis wrote in his memoirs: “In his fall the great pillar of the Southern Confederacy was crushed, and beneath its fragments the best hope of the Southwest lay buried.”¹⁷

Davis expressed these opinions for three reasons. First, he was genuinely convinced of Johnston's abilities. Second, the two men had been friends for decades. Third, the Johnston myth was inextricably linked to Davis's own image. While his postwar imprisonment aided his popularity, Davis was still a divisive figure during and after the war; two of Johnston's successors, Beauregard and Joseph E. Johnston, were his harshest critics. However, neither of them, nor Braxton Bragg nor John Bell Hood, was able to turn the tide in the west. Quite the contrary, they led the Army of Tennessee from one disaster to the next. Davis has been censured

62-66; Janney, *Remembering the Civil War*, 134; Alan T. Nolan, “The Anatomy of the Myth,” in *The Myth of the Lost Cause and Civil War History*, eds. Gary W. Gallagher and Alan T. Nolan (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000), 11-34. The most comprehensive study of the political uses of Civil War memory in the former Confederacy is Blair, *Cities of the Dead*; William Preston Johnston, “Albert Sidney Johnston at Shiloh,” in *Battles and Leaders of the Civil War* (4 vols., New York: Century, 1887), 1: 564.

¹⁷ U.S. War Department, *War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies* (70 vols. in 128, Washington D. C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1880-1901), Series One, 10 (2): 365; Macon (Georgia) *Daily Telegraph*, April 12, 1862; T. H. Bowman, *Reminiscences of an Ex-Confederate Soldier; or, Forty Years on Crutches* (Austin: Gammel-Statesman, 1904), 41; Jefferson Davis, *Rise and Fall of the Confederate Government* (2 vols., New York: Appleton, 1881), 2: 67.

by contemporaries and historians for appointing these commanders and for his conduct of the war in the west. But as Davis saw it, none of these men would ever have commanded the Army of Tennessee had Johnston lived. Praising Johnston was a subtle way for Davis to rebuke his critics and defend his record as commander in chief. Davis had trumpeted Johnston's abilities from the war's beginning; the Johnston myth confirmed his wisdom.

Davis's pronouncements about Johnston were well received; most former Rebels agreed with him. Veteran John Garland James, the superintendent of the Texas Military Institute, included one of Davis's eulogies of Johnston in his 1879 textbook *The Southern Student's Hand-Book of Selections for Reading and Oratory*. Nearly twenty years later, a contributor to the *Confederate Veteran* magazine remarked that, "though Mr. Davis has been most severely criticised [sic] for his determined upholding of Albert Sidney Johnston, his attitude towards that great soldier was ably vindicated by the battle of Shiloh."¹⁸

Certain other members of the Confederate high command likewise fostered the Johnston myth in their postwar writings. "With him at the helm," claimed Richard Taylor, "there would have been no Vicksburg, no Missionary Ridge, no Atlanta." Despite having served under both Lee and Jackson, Taylor insisted that Johnston was "the foremost man of all the South; and had it been possible for one heart, one mind, and one arm to save her cause, she lost them when Albert Sidney Johnston fell on the field of Shiloh." Similarly, Basil Duke stated that "it would be difficult to induce the people of the South to admit that any other man . . . is worthy to be ranked on the same level with General Lee. But if any of the great men of the Confederacy shall, in the estimation of his countrymen or by the verdict of history, be accorded that extraordinary eminence, it will be, I believe, Albert Sidney Johnston." Officers of the Army of Northern

¹⁸ John Garland James, *The Southern Student's Hand-Book of Selections for Reading and Oratory* (New York: A. S. Barnes, 1879), 263-64; CV 4 (1896): 10, 347.

Virginia echoed these pronouncements. William C. Oates of Little Round Top fame thought Johnston “perhaps the greatest general the war would have developed.” John Brown Gordon compared him to Lee and George Washington and lamented that “a great light had gone out when Albert Sidney Johnston fell. . . . [I]n him more than in any other man at that period were centered the hopes of the Southern people.”¹⁹

Lesser officers joined the chorus. Scarcely a year after the war’s end, Edward Fontaine, Patrick Henry’s grandson and an ex-captain of a Mississippi regiment, wrote an impassioned letter to the Natchez *Daily Courier*. With the wounds of defeat still fresh, Fontaine proclaimed that “if [Johnston] were living, and in arms with Stonewall Jackson; and Robert E. Lee, Joseph E. Johnston and Beauregard ready to take the field again, and I had to appoint one of these illustrious heroes the generalissimo of our army, I would not hesitate to give him command of the whole.” Convinced that Johnston would have been the South’s savior, John T. Crisp, former commander of a Missouri cavalry regiment, compared him to William Wallace. In a postwar interview, F. A. Shoup, William J. Hardee’s chief of artillery, was asked if Shiloh would have ended differently had Johnston lived. “It would indeed,” he replied. “In my opinion Johnston was a new man from the moment he sent his Generals whirling to their posts with orders to advance at dawn. . . . That battle won, he would have shown himself the great man he was.” Fifty years after the war a former Confederate captain visiting Shiloh was reminded that “Napoleon, standing by the grave of Frederick the Great, said: ‘If you were living, I would not be

¹⁹ Taylor, *Destruction and Reconstruction*, 283-85; Basil Duke, *The Civil War Reminiscences of General Basil W. Duke*, C. S. A. (New York: Doubleday and Page, 1911), 100; William C. Oates, *The War Between the Union and the Confederacy: and Its Lost Opportunities* (New York: Neale Publishing, 1905), 309; John Brown Gordon, *Reminiscences of the Civil War* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1904), 125.

here.' I imagined General Grant at Johnston's monument . . . saying 'If you had not fallen, I would not have been President of the United States.'"²⁰

While Jefferson Davis and former officers had a hand in creating the Johnston myth, rank-and-file veterans also proved indispensable in deifying Johnston. One of many ex-Confederates to pay tribute to Johnston in verse following the war was C. E. Merrill, who had served in the 49th Alabama Infantry Regiment at Shiloh. In 1895 he published these lines:

On Shiloh's field of death and blood
His bolted thunders fell at length!
The fires of vengeance, hot and red,
Far flashed where rode his knightly form;
And wreck and rout, and ruin spread
Where swept that day his battle storm.²¹

The most physically prominent display of veterans' adoration of Johnston is the general's bronze equestrian statue in Metairie Cemetery in New Orleans. The Association of the Army of Tennessee raised twelve thousand dollars to construct the monument. Unveiled in 1887 on the twenty-fifth anniversary of Johnston's death, the statue sits atop a tumulus containing the remains of over two hundred veterans. As W. Fitzhugh Brundage points out, historians should pay special heed to how groups take ownership of public space: "By insinuating their memory into public space, groups exert the cultural authority, express the collective solidarity, and achieve a

²⁰ Natchez *Daily Courier*, June 29, 1866; CV 2 (1894): 116, 139; CV 23 (1915): 173. Statements akin to these are common in the pages of the *Confederate Veteran*. See, e.g., CV 8 (1900): 500, 9 (1901): 166-67.

²¹ CV 3 (1895): 135.

measure of the permanence that they often crave. To infuse objects and places with commemorative significance is to combat the transitory nature of memories and underscore the connectedness of the past and present.”²²

For the crowd gathered in New Orleans there was to be nothing transitory about Johnston’s image. Senator and former Confederate general Randall Lee Gibson gave the oration. The veterans in the crowd, insisted Gibson, knew that Johnston's generalship and character would be recorded “on the brightest pages of our country's history.” The orator also seemed to be aware of the “what if?” appeal of Johnston's image, asking “who can look upon this bronze image without recalling the early days of the war[?]” Of his leadership at Shiloh, Gibson argued that “in any war,” you could count “on the fingers of your left hand” the number of commanders with comparable abilities. Gibson evoked Johnston's masculinity as well, lauding him as “the perfect type of manly grace and power. . . . [A] man who is a man . . . is the lordliest thing in the universe.” Moreover, he insisted that Johnston was the Confederacy's Agamemnon and, besides Robert E. Lee, the only leader who truly appreciated the difficulties the South faced after secession. The orator criticized the Confederate people for turning against Johnston in his final months and credited the general with carrying that burden with “trust in God” and “moral courage.” Like many other Johnston storytellers, Gibson concluded his speech proclaiming that it was “in the full tide of victory, that Albert Sidney Johnston received his death wound, and fell like Wolfe on the heights of Abraham—as a true soldier would love to die—on the edge of battle, in the moment of triumph.”²³

²² Brundage, *The Southern Past*, 6.

²³ Randall Lee Gibson, *Shiloh. Equestrian Monument, Erected by the Veterans of the Army of Tennessee: Unveiled April 6th, 1887. Metairie Cemetery, New Orleans, La.* (New Orleans: Picayune Job Print, 1887), 2-9.

The equestrian statue was not the only way veterans commemorated their former commander. Two simple acts by a former private and unnamed mourner were especially enduring. While Johnston was temporarily buried in New Orleans, John Dimitry, a Shiloh survivor, penned an epitaph on a plank and placed it at the grave. Johnston, it said, was

a man tried in many high offices and critical enterprises, and found faithful in all. His life was one long sacrifice of interest to conscience. . . . Not wholly understood was he while he lived; but, in his death, his greatness stands confessed in a people's tears. . . . In his honor—impregnable; in his simplicity—sublime. No country e'er had a truer son—no cause a nobler champion, no people a bolder defender—no principle a purer victim than the dead soldier who sleeps here.

When a later graveside visitor discovered the fading paean she transcribed it and submitted it to local newspapers. This brought it to the attention of the memorial committee in charge of Johnston's grave, which subsequently designated it the official epitaph engraved at the base of Johnston's statue at Metairie. Years later Marie Louise Benton Bankston, United Daughters of the Confederacy (UDC) historian, called the epitaph “one of the most exquisite specimens of English verse in our language.”²⁴

While prevalent in stone, the Johnston myth was ubiquitous in print. The story of the paean on the plank was the first tribute to a Rebel officer published in the *Confederate Veteran*. Founded in 1893, this magazine had a circulation of over twenty thousand by the turn of the

²⁴ CV 1 (1893): 3; Mary Louise Benton Bankston, *Camp-Fire Stories of the Mississippi Valley Campaign* (New Orleans: L. Graham, 1914), 37. For more on Johnston's burial and reburial see Jerry Thompson, “When General Albert Sidney Johnston Came Home to Texas: Reconstruction Politics and the Reburial of a Hero,” *Southwestern Historical Quarterly* 103 (2000): 452-478.

century. Its editor in chief, S. A. Cunningham, a veteran of the Army of Tennessee, accepted contributions from other veterans, their wives, their widows, and their progeny. Even a cursory examination of the magazine reveals that Johnston's memory had a prevalence historians have failed to appreciate. In an article entitled "To Whom Honor Is Due" the *Veteran* posited that "in all the war the man whose life was most tried, perhaps was that of Albert Sidney Johnston. . . . Such agonizing as must have been his is hard to comprehend, and to him personally death at Shiloh must have been great relief." At the dawn of the twentieth century, Cunningham proclaimed that "if Gen. Johnston had lived but three hours longer, the result of this battle would have been differently written, and the eagles of victory would have perched upon the banner of the Confederacy."²⁵

Former soldiers were eager to assume the panegyrist's role in the pages of the *Veteran*. Tennessean George E. Purvis recounted the military trials of the Confederacy. "The student," he stated, "in reviewing some of the great battles of our civil war . . . can scarcely resist becoming a fatalist. He will be impelled to the conviction that the dismemberment of the American Union was *just not to be*." Illustrating yet again the centrality of contingency to the Johnston myth, Purvis affirmed that, "Southern soldiers . . . won great victories on many fields. But there was always that 'something' which prevented the reaping of the fruits of their victories." Conspicuously absent is any mention of often cited "somethings" such as Stonewall Jackson's death or Pickett's Charge. Purvis's first "something" was "Gen Johnston's death at Shiloh, just when the field was won." Quoting Oliver Wendell Holmes, he concluded that "there are battles with Fate that can never be won."²⁶

²⁵ Blight, *Race and Reunion*, 181; Janney, *Remembering the Civil War*, 180-81; CV 3 (1895): 208, 9 (1901): 22. For more on Cunningham and the *Confederate Veteran* see John A. Simpson, *S. A. Cunningham and the Confederate Heritage* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1994).

²⁶ CV 5 (1897): 262.

Other aging soldiers expressed similar sentiments. In 1894, A. S. Horsley, a veteran of the 1st Tennessee Infantry Regiment, told of Johnston spurring the morale of troops at Shiloh: “The spectacle was an imposing one,” and “the soldiers were deeply impressed by the majestic presence, the noble and kindly face, and impressive words of the commanding general. I would give much, hard as times are, for a picture of that scene.” After inspiring the troops, the “king of men” rode off toward the sound of battle. Had he lived, “all the histories of America today would have to be rewritten.” Five years later, another Shiloh veteran came to a similar conclusion. Had Johnston survived the battle, insisted James A. Jones, the Rebels would have captured Grant's army, “chased Buell back into Kentucky and retaken Nashville and the State of Tennessee. Let the result . . . be imagined.” However, “the God of battles was against us.” In a memorial address the next year a former regimental surgeon declared that “had Albert Sidney Johnston lived . . . Grant would have been annihilated . . . and history might have told a different story.”²⁷

Lowly privates who never more than glimpsed their commander and staff officers who served by Johnston's side alike expressed such convictions. Thirty-five years after Shiloh, George Withe Baylor, of Johnston's staff, reflected on the general's final hours: “I thought of the dauntless warrior . . . whose very presence was an inspiration to those under its magic influence, the personification of Southern chivalry. . . . He died as a soldier must like to die: at the moment of victory.” Pondering the contingencies of the battle Baylor concluded that “if Gen. Johnston had not been killed . . . why there would have been no 'ifs' about it; but the chances are that Gen. Grant would have shared the fate of our own gallant leader and the horrors of the war would probably have been prolonged for several years.” Similarly, J. B. Ulmer, an enlisted man at

²⁷ Ibid., 2 (1894): 234, 7 (1899): 556, 8 (1900): 362.

Shiloh, insisted that had Johnston lived “General Grant would not have been at Appomattox to receive General Lee’s surrender.” By referring to Grant as the “vanquisher of Lee,” Ulmer subtly argued that Johnston was Lee’s superior as a general; had fate not interceded, Grant would never have been the vanquisher of Johnston.²⁸

R. R. Hutchinson, another staff officer, expressed a similar sentiment in his reminiscence of Shiloh. He believed that “there was no man, not even excepting Robert E. Lee, who was more loved and trusted by those under his command than Albert Sidney Johnston.” Like other Johnston storytellers Hutchinson insisted that the general had died assured of victory and died a good death—one that any soldier would desire. Moreover, Johnston’s passing “was one of those fateful incidents which seem to change the whole course of contemporary events. In all human probability it alone saved one great army . . . and doomed another.”²⁹

Civilians were also active in constructing the Johnston myth. Few individuals of the wartime generation were more influential in shaping the public’s perceptions and memories of the Civil War than Mary Boykin Chesnut. Initially serialized in the *Saturday Evening Post*, her *A Diary from Dixie* was published in book form in 1905. (Despite its title, the book was largely written in the 1880s with the aid of Chesnut’s wartime journals.) Chesnut was one of the most prominent consumers and distributors of the Johnston myth. On learning of Johnston’s death, she recorded that “my heart stands still. I feel no more. I am, for so many seconds, so many minutes, I know not how long, utterly without sensation of any kind—dead.” Reflecting on Confederate fortunes following his death, Chesnut observed that “there is grief enough for Albert

²⁸ Ibid., 5 (1897): 610-11; J. B. Ulmer, “A Glimpse of Albert Sidney Johnston through the Smoke of Shiloh,” *Quarterly of the Texas Historical Association* 10 (1907): 287-88.

²⁹ CV 6 (1898): 311-13.

Sidney Johnston now; we begin to see what we have lost. . . . Without him there is no head to our Western army.”³⁰

Johnston's image loomed large in her mind for the remainder of the war. Cautiously optimistic about Lee's success in the Seven Days Battles, Chesnut admitted that “we do hope there will be no 'ifs.' 'Ifs' have ruined us. Shiloh was a victory if Albert Sidney Johnston had not been killed. . . . The 'ifs' bristle like porcupines.” Following the Army of Tennessee’s defeat at Chattanooga and subsequent retreat into Georgia she exclaimed, “oh, for a day of Albert Sidney Johnston out West!” As victory seemed less and less likely, Chesnut reflected on the character of Confederate generals, asserting that in contrast to the uncivilized Lincoln and Grant, “General Lee and Albert Sidney Johnston show blood and breeding. They are the Bayard and Philip Sidney order of soldiers.” According to Chesnut, had Johnston lived the Deep South would have been spared the onslaught of William T. Sherman; as the Yankee general prepared to embark on his March to the Sea she exclaimed, “if Albert Sidney Johnston had lived! Poor old General Lee has no backing.”³¹

The ubiquity of the Johnston myth, for a time at least, spanned generations. Born in Kentucky in 1862, Joseph A. Altsheler, author of the popular “Young Trailers Series” of juvenile historical fiction, espoused the Johnston myth in another series that dramatized the Civil War. In *The Guns of Shiloh: A Story of the Great Western Campaign* readers are thrust into the war's early months through the eyes of Dick Mason, a young Union soldier fighting with Grant's army. The narrator praises not only Mason's chieftain but also Johnston, whom he portrays as a tragic

³⁰ Isabella D. Martin and Myrta Lockett Avery, eds., *A Diary from Dixie, as Written by Mary Boykin Chesnut, Wife of James Chesnut, Jr., United States Senator from South Carolina, 1859-1861, and Afterward Aide to Jefferson Davis and Brigadier General in the Confederate Army* (New York: D. Appleton, 1905), 156, 182. On the authorship and publication history of *A Diary from Dixie* see C. Van Woodward, ed., *Mary Chesnut's Civil War* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981), xv-xxix.

³¹ Martin and Avery, eds., *A Diary from Dixie*, 196, 265, 270, 299, 331.

hero and potential Rebel messiah, “the most formidable foe of all,” and “a general upon whom the South, with justice, rested great hopes.” Mason’s sergeant, cautioning his men against overconfidence on the eve of Shiloh, says:

An’ I tell you that General Johnston, with whom we’ve got to deal, is a great man. I wasn’t with him when he made that great march through the blizzards an’ across the plains . . . to make the Mormons behave, but I’ve served with them that was. An’ I never yet found one of them who didn’t say General Johnston was a mighty big man. Soldiers know when the right kind of a man is holdin’ the reins an’ drivin’ ‘em.

In the novel’s final chapters, the narrator, resuming the omniscient perspective, remarks that “it seemed that nothing could deprive the Southern army of victory, absolute and complete.” Nevertheless, “fate in the very moment of triumph that seemed overwhelming and sure was preparing a terrible blow for the South,” which resulted in “the most costly death, with the exception of Stonewall Jackson’s, sustained by the Confederacy in the whole war.”³²

Although most famous for his novel *The Clansman* and its film adaptation *The Birth of a Nation*, Thomas Dixon echoed the Johnston myth in his later book *The Victim: A Romance of the Real Jefferson Davis*, published in 1914. In it Dixon asserts that Davis, through his unyielding support of Johnston, “inspired him to begin the most brilliant campaign on which the South had yet entered.” Dixon’s portrayal of Shiloh has Grant’s army retreating in panic in the face of Johnston’s onslaught. “The first great battle of the war had been fought and won by the genius of

³² Joseph A. Altshelter, *The Guns of Shiloh: A Story of the Great Western Campaign* (New York: D. Appleton, 1919), 242, 266, 306-307.

the South's commander” and Johnston's critics “stood dumb before the story of his genius.”

While fighting Johnston, Dixon claims, Grant and the rest of the Union army realized what the Rebels were capable of. Shiloh was the bloodiest battle in U.S. history at the time and both sides suffered tremendous casualties; however, “great as the losses were to the North they were as nothing to the disaster which this bloody field brought the Confederacy. Albert Sidney Johnston alive was equal to an army of a hundred thousand men—dead; [sic] his loss was irreparable.”³³

The Johnston myth spanned generations in more than just fiction. Those who had lived through the war were eager to pass their version of it down to their progeny. In the decades after Appomattox Confederate heritage organizations such as the UDC, the United Confederate Veterans (UCV), and the Sons of Confederate Veterans (SCV) exercised remarkable control over the selection of textbooks used in Southern schools. In striving to insure that white Southern children were taught a Lost Cause narrative, one Rebel hero they exalted was Johnston. In 1898 the UCV Committee on History declared that “to brand such men as Albert Sidney Johnston, Stonewall Jackson, Robert E. Lee, or Jefferson Davis as traitors is not to stain the whiteness of their lives, but rather to spoil the world for any useful purpose, to make of traitor a title which Hampden and Washington might have born as well had the fortunes of war gone against them.” Two years later a similar organization censured the popular children’s text *Student's Cyclopedia*, which “devotes two columns to Gen. U. S. Grant” but “spares only one-third of a column to Gen. Albert Sidney Johnston.”³⁴

Heritage organizations not only condemned texts hostile to the Confederacy but countered with a salvo of their own in the form of officially sanctioned schoolbooks that

³³ Thomas W. Dixon, *The Victim: A Romance of the Real Jefferson Davis* (Toronto: Copp Clark, 1914), 305, 313-14.

³⁴ CV 6 (1898): 478, 8 (1900): 398.

espoused the Lost Cause. For example, Susan Pendleton Lee, daughter of Robert E. Lee's chief of artillery, authored *A Brief History of the United States*, an apologia for secession, slavery, and the Confederacy that offered a streamlined version of the Johnston myth to Southern youth. Johnston is presented as the hero of the Utah War and as a martyr whose death at Shiloh when Confederate victory seemed certain “was an irretrievable loss to the Southern army and cause.” Lee chose not to burden her young readers with any mention of the thrashing of Johnston's reputation in the months preceding his death.³⁵

Like most other Civil War generals, Johnston was especially popular in his home state. *Footprints in Texas History*, a widely used textbook for second graders first published in 1901, insisted that “every child should read History Stories at an early age, because they have great value in forming the character of the young.” The author, schoolteacher Minnie G. Dill, chose Johnston as the final biographical subject to include in her book. Chronicling his death, she granted Johnston final words in verse that he was denied in life:

"Now, away," he cried, "your aid is vain.
My soul will not brook recalling;
I have seen the tyrant enemy slain.
And like autumn vine leaves falling.
I have seen our glorious banner wave
O'er the tents of the enemy vanquished;
I have drawn a sword for my country brave.

³⁵ Fred Arthur Bailey, “The Textbooks of the 'Lost Cause': Censorship and the Creation of Southern State Histories,” *Georgia Historical Quarterly* 73 (1991): 508; Cobb, *Away Down South*, 101-103; Susan Pendleton Lee, *A Brief History of the United States* (Richmond: B. F. Johnson Publishing, 1896), 210, 254.

And in her cause now perish.
Leave me to die with the free and brave,
On the banks of my noble river,
Ye can give me naught but a soldier's grave,
And a place in your hearts forever.”³⁶

In another state history for grade-schoolers, Katie Daffan, president of the Texas Division of the UDC, ranked Johnston alongside Stephen Austin, David Crockett, and Sam Houston as exemplars of “heroic achievement, adventure . . . sacrifice and martyrdom.” Johnston's generalship, she avowed, was matched only by “his loving, tender heart, unaffected modesty and purity of character.” She furthermore told her young readers that Johnston's leadership abilities, self-control, and courage were evident as a child and that as commander of the west he faced nearly insurmountable odds. At Shiloh he was struck down “when it seemed that Grant's army would certainly be annihilated . . . and victory was crowning every attempt made by the Confederates.” Daffan concluded her biographical sketch with the assurance that “men like Albert Sidney Johnston make us proud of our kind.”³⁷

School children outside of Texas were also instructed in the Johnston myth. Berrien McPherson Zettler, in his book *War Stories and School-Day Incidents for the Children*, published in New York in 1912, informed readers of the value of hard work, education, and

³⁶ Minnie G. Dill, *Footprints of Texas History* (Austin: Ben C. Jones, 1901), i, 103-105. Dill's text was in its sixth edition by 1916.

³⁷ Katie Daffan, *Texas Hero Stories: An Historical Reader for the Grades* (Boston: Benjamin H. Sanborn, 1908), ix, 111-18. Johnston's presence in state histories was not restricted to those of Texas. Other texts suggest, either explicitly or implicitly, causation between Johnston's death and Rebel defeat. See G. R. McGee, *A History of Tennessee From 1663 to 1900: For Use in Schools* (New York: American Book, 1900), 204; Gustavus W. Dyer, *A School History of Tennessee* (Chattanooga: National Book, 1919), 120; William Robertson Garrett and Albert Virgil Goodpasture, *History of Tennessee: Its People and Its Institutions* (Nashville: Brandon Printing, 1900), 211-12.

states' rights while assuring them that, had abolitionists not started the Civil War, Southern slavery would have faded away. Moreover, Zettler, a veteran of Lee's army and superintendent of schools in Macon, Georgia, wanted children to know of two fateful moments in Confederate history. One was Stonewall Jackson's death at Chancellorsville, which led directly to Rebel defeat at Gettysburg. The second was Johnston's death: "if Albert Sidney Johnston had not received a mortal wound at a critical moment in the Battle of Shiloh . . . General Grant would never have been heard of after that battle."³⁸

John Lesslie Hall, an English professor at the College of William and Mary most famous for his 1892 translation of *Beowulf*, embraced and propagated the Johnston myth in his book *Half-Hours in Southern History* (Richmond, 1907). Taking readers from the colonization of Roanoke island to Reconstruction, Hall intended to highlight "the salient features of Southern heroism and achievement." To him, Johnston was the paragon of Southern manhood. The general is one of only sixteen men in all of Southern history honored with an illustration in the book, and, aside from Lee and Jackson, the only Confederate commander to whom a whole chapter is devoted. Hall insisted that "every Southern boy and girl should know about General Albert Sidney Johnston. His death may have lost the South her independence." Borrowing and modifying a line from Thomas Campbell's poem "The Pleasures of Hope," Hall averred that "freedom shrieked when Johnston fell." Like many other Johnston storytellers chronicled thus far, Hall linked him with the Confederacy's supreme hero, Robert E. Lee: Johnston "was the brother of Jackson. The latter was 'Lee's right arm;' [sic] the former, the greatest soldier of the Southwest." Johnston was the man capable of defeating Ulysses S. Grant before he became the North's greatest hero and ultimate vanquisher of Lee; "if Johnston had lived to follow up his

³⁸ Berrien McPherson Zettler, *War Stories and School-Day Incidents For the Children* (New York: Neale Publishing, 1912), 88.

victory, there would have been no Vicksburg, no siege of Petersburg, no capture of Richmond, no Appomattox.”³⁹

In a 1901 memorial address, a former Confederate officer ranked Johnston in the highest echelon of Rebel heroes, asserting that had the South had the manpower and resources of the North, Lee, Johnston, Jackson, and Forrest “would have 'licked' them in almost as many months as it took them years to 'lick' us.” Eccentric Kentucky-born columnist and essayist Eugene W. Newman, publishing under the pseudonym Savoyard, saw in Johnston not only a peer of Lee but also a useful role model of Southern manhood. An unreconstructed Rebel, Newman believed “in a hell with fire unquenchable . . . where all Republicans are sure to go when they die.” His goal was to write for the “benefit of intelligent boys,” for “youths of today must come to be the future public servants of our great country.” He claimed that “if Robert E. Lee, the man, was as noble as Sidney, and if Robert E. Lee, the soldier, was as brilliant as Montrose, Albert Sidney Johnston, the man, was as heroic as Bayard and Albert Sidney Johnston, the soldier, was as formidable as Conde.” Johnston was “the ideal cavalier of the South” and “a king of men. Perhaps not even in the history of that war did any other commander accomplish so much with means so inadequate.” Finally, “his career culminated and closed at Shiloh. It was a brilliant victory. No Southern man can read the story of that first day without closing the volume with the thought: 'It might have been.’”⁴⁰

Government-sanctioned shepherds of memory likewise espoused the Johnston myth. Tennessean DeLong Rice, the first non-veteran superintendent of Shiloh National Park, expressed his admiration for Johnston after assuming his official duties. “It was [Johnston’s]

³⁹ John Lesslie Hall, *Half-Hours in Southern History* (Richmond: B.F. Johnson Publishing, 1907), 5, 262-64.

⁴⁰ CV 9 (1901): 72; “Interesting People: Savoyard,” *American Magazine* 61 (1911): 735-37; Savoyard, *Essays on Men, Things and Events: Historical, Personal and Political* (New York: Neale Publishing, 1904), 202-203.

mission,” declared Rice, “to bring to its highest pinnacle of hope, this new-born Nation of the South. . . . That hope . . . [would] never again, in all the bloody years to follow, reach the altitude of [that] hour” on the first day of Shiloh. As Johnston fell, Rice assured his readers, “the latest sounds that [came] to him [were] sounds of victory.” Like many other white Southerners, Rice saw fate or the hand of God in the bullet that felled Johnston. “It was here [at Shiloh] that Destiny which is but the will of God, began the execution of plans then so veiled, yet now so plain”⁴¹

Although her brand of Civil War memory was not as fixated on martial themes as those of Rice and other Johnston storytellers, journalist Edith D. Pope also propagated the Johnston myth. In 1913 S. A. Cunningham died and Pope, his long-time secretary and the daughter of a Rebel soldier, became editor in chief of the *Confederate Veteran*. She subsequently feminized the magazine by increasing coverage of UDC events and the number of profiles of prominent Southern women; narratives of the “moonlight and magnolias” Old South abounded at the expense of tales of battlefield heroics and great generals. Nevertheless, Johnston did not vanish from the pages of the magazine. UDC member F. A. Inge, of Corinth, Mississippi, provided a piece in 1915 asserting that when Johnston died “many seemed to think it but the beginning of the end.” In 1928, A. M. Herald of the Tampa UDC submitted a short history of Shiloh in which she claimed that “the death of General Johnston changed the result . . . and prevented the capture of Grant's army.” Quoting an unnamed officer, she continued: “Sometimes the hopes of millions of people depend upon one head and one arm. The West perished with Albert Sidney Johnston

⁴¹ DeLong Rice, *The Story of Shiloh* (Nashville: Brandon Printing, 1919), 5, 40-41, 58. Timothy B. Smith has chronicled the history of Shiloh National Battlefield Park in his books *The Great Battlefield of Shiloh: History, Memory, and the Establishment of a Civil War National Military Park* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2004), *The Untold Story of Shiloh: The Battle and the Battlefield* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2006), and *Rethinking Shiloh: Myth and Memory* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2013).

and the Southern country followed.” Furthermore, editor Pope chronicled in exhaustive detail UDC’s effort to raise fifty thousand dollars for a Johnston monument at Shiloh—a goal it accomplished by May 1917.⁴²

Johnston was also present in visual expressions of Confederate memory. Civil War-themed artwork proliferated after the war. While some historians argue that “only Beauregard and [Joseph E.] Johnston shared some real iconographic importance with Lee and Jackson,” Albert Sidney Johnston’s image in fact graced a number of canvases and prints. Aside from simple portraits, such as the 1867 *Albert Sidney Johnston* by George Edward Perine, Johnston appears side by side with other Confederate heroes in multiple prints. In the most popular of these, *Lee and His Generals*, by G. B. Matthews (1907), Johnston occupies a more prominent position in the foreground than J. E. Johnston, Beauregard, and other Confederate heroes including Nathan Bedford Forrest, J. E. B. Stuart, and Wade Hampton. In 1867 the Southern Publishing House of New Orleans produced a series of three portraits: Robert E. Lee, Stonewall Jackson, and Albert Sidney Johnston; the publisher’s advertisement claimed that “three more remarkable Generals than these—more able as commanders, or more noble as men—never graced the pages of any history.”⁴³

As time progressed and the reconciliationist spirit grew, some aspects of the Lost Cause infiltrated the Northern memory of the war. Although historians disagree about how pervasive that spirit was in practice, it is clear that Northerners and Southerners did at times come together to express admiration for noble commanders and brave soldiers of both sides—often at the

⁴² John A. Simpson, *Edith D. Pope and Her Nashville Friends: Guardians of the Lost Cause in the Confederate Veteran* (Knoxville, University of Tennessee Press, 2003), 43-44, 62-63; *CV* 23 (1915): 413, 534, 26 (1918): 335-36, 25 (1917): 474, 36 (1928), 335-36.

⁴³ *Charleston Courier, Tri-Weekly*, December 7, 1867; Mark E. Neely, Harold Holzer, and Gabor S. Borrit, *The Confederate Image: Prints of the Lost Cause* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1987), 206. For more on the ubiquity of Matthews’s print see Gary W. Gallagher, *Causes Won, Lost, and Forgotten*, 152-54.

expense of confronting the war's racial legacies. As David W. Blight argues, "Blue-Gray fraternalism crystallized around the values of manliness, valor, sacrifice, and a mutual sense of honor." Although Johnston never became a national hero in the same way Lee did, his image embodied these traits. On the fiftieth anniversary of Shiloh, members of the National Association of Survivors gathered on the battlefield to commemorate the heroism of both blue and gray. The oration, a discussion of the battle, its importance, and the bravery displayed there, was given by Union veteran Samuel M. Howard. Of Johnston's death he said that "the greatest Commander in all America, North or South, East or West, had joined the untold millions which throng the Great Beyond. . . . [T]he South lost its greatest chieftain and military commander; and throughout all the war, they were never able to replace him with an equal." Veterans were not alone in recognizing the reconciliationist potential of Johnston's image: the UDC saw to it that during the First World War wounded soldiers of the American Expeditionary Force in France could find themselves convalescing in hospital beds named in Johnston's honor.⁴⁴

Why have historians failed to recognize Johnston's prominence in postwar memory? The primary reason is likely the magnetic power Virginia has exercised on Civil War scholars for a century and a half. Only in recent years have military historians turned to the western theater to explain Union victory. Johnston's obscurity in more modern expressions of Confederate identity is another possibility. A century and a half has done little to lessen white Southerners' fascination with the Civil War or identification with the Confederacy; yet Johnston has all but vanished from sight while Lee, Jackson, Davis, and Forrest still stand tall. No organization is more energetic in propagating Confederate memory than the SCV. Of its thousands of camps

⁴⁴ Blight, *Race and Reunion*, 199; Samuel M. Howard, *Fiftieth Anniversary of the Great Battle of Shiloh, Held at Pittsburg Landing, Tenn. April 6, 1912 by the National Association of Survivors: Oration* (no place, publisher, or date), 16; CV 26 (1918): 225.

nationwide only three are now named after Johnston, while eleven are named after Lee, nine after Jackson, and thirteen after Forrest. Even James Longstreet, longtime Lost Cause pariah, has four camps named in his honor.⁴⁵

Johnston is conspicuously absent from another modern display of Confederate identity, Civil War-themed artwork. Popular artists such as Mort Kunstler, Don Troiani, John Paul Strain, and Don Stivers have illustrated countless episodes and leaders of the war. Gary W. Gallagher, in his statistical analysis of modern Civil War art, shows that Confederate leaders are 250 percent more popular than Union leaders. Nevertheless, Johnston—the highest ranking officer to perish in the Civil War—is almost completely absent in these paintings. Lee and Jackson are the most often portrayed; Forrest, Jeb Stuart, and George Pickett also appear frequently. With the notable exception of Forrest, Virginia's magnetic hold on Civil War enthusiasts remains evident in these prints. Troiani's *Men of Arkansas*, which depicts Johnston rallying troops shortly before his death, is the only modern illustration of the general to achieve any popularity.⁴⁶

The Lost Cause identified by past scholarship regards Lee, Jackson, and Davis as the holy trinity of Confederate heroes. The Johnston image has been a sort of historiographical Apocrypha—acknowledged, but marginalized. However, former Confederates themselves idolized the fallen Johnston and summoned his memory as they tried to come to terms with defeat. In the decades following the Civil War, when those who identified with the Confederacy, whether Jefferson Davis, a veteran, or a member of the UDC, struggled to explain the failure of their cause they often pointed to the death of Albert Sidney Johnston. The appeal of his postwar image is anchored in contingency. It may be tempting to argue that Johnston's storytellers were

⁴⁵ Sons of Confederate Veterans, “Camp List,” <http://www.scv.org/services/campList.php>.

⁴⁶ Gallagher, *Causes Won, Lost, and Forgotten*, 138; Don Troiani, *Men of Arkansas*, <http://www.historicalartprints.com/viewgallist.php?id=147>.

simply suffering from the shame of defeat and grasping at straws, for nothing in Johnston's actual Civil War career suggested that he would emerge as the Confederacy's savior; his short stint as commander of the west was a disaster. However, many of the war's most capable commanders were less than successful early on. For example, had Robert E. Lee died in April 1862 he would be remembered primarily for a failed campaign in western Virginia. While it is uncertain whether the Confederacy's fortunes would have improved had the general lived, it is certain that Albert Sidney Johnston meant more to the people of the Confederacy in death than he ever did in life.

Ever cognizant of the Civil War's hold on the white Southern mind, William Faulkner evoked, in *Intruder in the Dust*, the most famous contingency of the Lost Cause narrative, taking his readers back to the third day at Gettysburg in the moments before Pickett's Charge. Lee's army had "all this much to lose and all this much to gain: Pennsylvania, Maryland, the world, the golden dome of Washington itself to crown with desperate and unbelievable victory." Unbelievable victory would not be achieved, but, as Faulkner knew, that would not prevent white Southerners in succeeding years from revisiting that moment in time when it was still possible. In an oft-quoted passage, Faulkner wrote that "for every Southern boy fourteen years old, not once but whenever he wants it, there is that instant when it's still not yet two o'clock on that July afternoon in 1863." Likewise, for many white Southerners of the postwar decades it was still not yet two thirty on that April afternoon in 1862 and Albert Sidney Johnston had not yet fallen.⁴⁷

⁴⁷ William Faulkner, *Intruder in the Dust* (New York: Random House, 1948), 190.

Chapter Three:

“On what models shall we mold the characters of our children?”:

Remembering the Army of Tennessee’s High Command

Over three days in June 1897, the United Confederate Veterans held its annual reunion in Nashville, the site of the Army of Tennessee’s most disastrous defeat. Now it was a place for aging soldiers to reconnect with old comrades, remember those who had died, and memorialize the cause for which they had fought. If the 36,800 meals the hosting hotel prepared are any indication, the event was well attended. In the activities of the reunion, it was apparent that former Rebels remembered the Civil War beyond the campaigns of Robert E. Lee and his Army of Northern Virginia. Governor Robert Love Taylor led the crowd in singing “Dixie” and gave a welcoming address in which he reminded the attendees that they had convened to honor those who had followed Albert Sidney Johnston and Stonewall Jackson, those who had died at Shiloh and Gettysburg.¹

After two more speeches in which a bishop and a judge assured the old soldiers that defeat in the war had not degraded their masculinity, John Brown Gordon, the UCV commander, took the stage. Noting that this was the second time Tennessee had hosted the organization’s annual reunion, he asked his audience: “What state of those which formed the Confederate Union is more worthy of this repeated tribute from these Confederate survivors? What state in the whole American Union can boast a prouder record in war and peace?” Despite being divided in sentiment during the Civil War, the state “furnished to the Southern army some of its most dauntless divisions and brilliant leaders. Among these latter were her Frank Cheatham, whose fiery ‘Forward, boys!’ sent his yelling ranks with resistless fury against the foe; her quaint and

¹ CV 5 (1897): 340.

unrivaled Bedford Forrest, that wizard of war, that wiliest knight that ever straddled horse or leveled lance; her bishop-soldier, Leonidas Polk, worthy to bear the name and be forever associated in history with that great Grecian Leonidas, who won an immortality of fame in defense of Greek freedom and the Greek confederacy.” The wartime record of the army that bore the state’s name was seemingly inconsequential; in the Army of Tennessee there had been generals who embodied Lost Cause tenets of martial superiority, piety, and masculinity.²

While Albert Sidney Johnston was the only commander of the Army of Tennessee to ascend to the supreme echelon of the Lost Cause pantheon, other members of its high command played important roles in the army’s memory. Perhaps nowhere was the phenomenon of circumvention more prevalent than in the ways white Southerners remembered the army’s generals. As a whole, the high command had been dysfunctional, contentious, and incompetent. Its actual performance during the Civil War fell considerably short of the Lost Cause ideal of Confederate leaders as selfless and pious patriots and capable and manly generals. But after the war former Confederates constructed images of individual generals that circumvented the sad historical truth. Four distinct archetypes emerged in the commemoration of the army’s high command: the scapegoat, the unappreciated military genius, the genteel man of faith, and the hyper-masculine anti-hero. Some leaders embodied multiple archetypes. For example, former Confederates lauded Nathan Bedford Forrest for his rough-and-tumble upbringing and violent wartime behavior while lamenting his relatively limited responsibilities during the war.

Some generals did not fare as well as Forrest in the decades following the conflict. If, as Thomas L. Connelly and Barbara Bellows posit, postwar white Southerners rationalized Lee’s defeat by ascribing it to “God and General Longstreet,” then “God and General Bragg” could, for

² Ibid., 341-42.

many, explain the Army of Tennessee's failure. While his rank and service won him some admirers (and some military historians have recently begun rehabilitating his reputation as a general), Braxton Bragg largely assumed the role of scapegoat in Confederate memory. The Bragg fragment of the army's memory, instead of circumventing defeat, confronted it head on and laid the blame on the cantankerous North Carolinian.³

Bragg's wartime reputation as a curmudgeon and a bumbling commander followed him into the postwar period; his inaction following Chickamauga earned him the most scorn. George E. Purvis, in the same *Confederate Veteran* article in which he identified Albert Sidney Johnston's death as the Confederacy's most disastrous contingency, insisted that "the hesitation and fatal delay of Bragg at Chickamauga" also contributed to ultimate defeat. Although Chickamauga was a Confederate victory—the only important one in the Army of Tennessee's history—Purvis refused to give Bragg credit, claiming instead that the victory belonged to the soldiery. Ignoring Forrest's advice to immediately pursue the retreating Yankee army, Bragg displayed a "stubborn refusal" that was "simply inexplicable" unless one acknowledged that the Confederacy was fated to lose. William Mercer Otey, a staff officer under Polk and Forrest, expressed similar bewilderment in his serialized reminiscences: "Why Gen. Bragg did not press forward and reap the fruits of his victory is a matter of wonderment now as it was then."⁴

While some storytellers gave credit to the men in the ranks, for others James Longstreet was the hero of Chickamauga. In an 1893 speech to the Confederate Survivors' Association in Augusta, Georgia, former colonel Charles C. Jones presented the battle as a titanic clash between noble adversaries. It was Longstreet's initiative, not Bragg's, that won the battle. Bragg had not only failed to attack the Union army in detail prior to the battle but "in like manner he neglected

³ Connelly and Bellows, *God and General Longstreet*, 1-38.

⁴ CV 5 (1897): 262, 8 (1900): 343.

to reap the legitimate fruits of this dearly-bought victory, contenting himself with seizing and occupying the heights encircling Chattanooga.” Thanks to Bragg, the army’s singular triumph was wasted.⁵

Similar convictions were conveyed to a younger audience a few years later in Susan Pendleton Lee’s grade-school textbook. She awarded the laurels of victory at Chickamauga to Longstreet and censured Bragg for failing to pursue the retreating federals. He had shirked responsibility and, “unfortunately for the South, he was retained in his position, notwithstanding the dissatisfaction of his army.” Lee also faulted Bragg’s generalship earlier in the war. She did acknowledge that he had improved the army’s discipline after assuming command and that the Southern people had expected great things from him at the outset of the Kentucky Campaign. However, she credited Leonidas Polk for the Confederate success on the first day of Perryville, asserted that “the South justly felt that with more rapid movements Bragg could have accomplished more,” and concluded that Bragg “had misused his opportunities.” Likewise, after Murfreesboro “the whole South was astonished to find him again falling back. Both the country and the army lost confidence in him.”⁶

Other critics likewise attacked Bragg for blunders besides those immediately following Chickamauga. An anonymous “ex-Kentuckian,” chronicling the 1862 invasion of Kentucky for the *Veteran* in 1915, admitted that Bragg had conducted the early stages of the campaign well and thus gained “some brilliant successes for the Confederates.” However, when it came time to seize the initiative, Bragg had balked. A more aggressive general would have captured

⁵ Charles C. Jones and Joseph B. Cumming, *Address Delivered before the Confederate Survivors’ Association in Augusta, Georgia, upon the Occasion of its Fifteenth Annual Reunion on Memorial Day, April 26th, 1893, by Col: Charles C. Jones, Jr., LL. D., President of the Association, and Chickamauga, by Col: Joseph B. Cumming, a Member of the Association* (Augusta: Chronicle Job Printing, 1893), 18-19.

⁶ Lee, *A Brief History of the United States*, 278-80, 282, 306.

Louisville: “a Stonewall Jackson or an Albert Sidney Johnston would have dashed upon the city and taken it by assault.” Moreover, the campaign’s climactic battle at Perryville “was a burlesque.” The ex-Kentuckian lamented that the Confederate army had not been commanded by “a Napoleon, a Frederick the Great,” or, again, “a Stonewall Jackson.”⁷

Two of the most often cited first-hand accounts of the Civil War also took aim at Bragg. Reflecting on the Battle of Chickamauga, Mary Boykin Chesnut remarked that “Bragg and his generals do not agree. I think a general worthless whose subalterns quarrel with him. Something is wrong about the man. Good generals are adored by their soldiers. See Napoleon, Caesar, Stonewall, Lee.” The subsequent siege of Chattanooga and defeats at Lookout Mountain and Missionary Ridge only confirmed her low estimate of the North Carolinian. “Bragg begs to be relieved of his command,” she opined; “the army will be relieved to get rid of him. He has a winning way of earning everybody’s detestation. Heaven’s how they hate him!” Less vitriolic than Chesnut, Sam Watkins presented Bragg not as detestable but as pitiable. Discussing the battles at Chattanooga he recalled that “I felt sorry for Bragg. The army was routed, and Bragg looked so scared. Poor fellow, he looked so hacked and whipped and mortified and chagrined at defeat.” Bragg never gained the rank-and-file’s respect, wrote Watkins; had he done so “the result would have been different.”⁸

Bragg was not entirely without defenders. An anonymous 1873 letter to the editor of the North Carolina periodical *Our Living and Our Dead* insisted that “had Gen. Bragg been born in the ‘Old Dominion’ . . . he would be classed somewhat higher by the people of that State than he is now, and North Carolinians would have then rendered him justice, which they have not done,

⁷ CV 23 (1915): 408-409.

⁸ Chesnut, *Diary from Dixie*, 248, 259; Sam Watkins, *Company Aytch: Or, a Sideshow of the Big Show*, ed. M. Thomas Inge (New York: Plume, 1999), 95.

as a son of their own State.” Like some modern military historians, the letter writer believed that many of the Army of Tennessee’s failures resulted not from Bragg’s blunders but from insubordination among his lieutenants. Others were only lukewarm in their defense of Bragg. An 1895 tribute praised his industry, organization, sobriety, and clear and concise writing but concluded that “if he only had suavity of manner commensurate with his self-denying patriotism and untiring industry, what a grandly successful man he would be!”⁹

While a few of Bragg’s contemporaries had kind words for him, he existed in postwar Confederate memory largely as a pariah and a scapegoat. Former colonel William Oates encapsulated Bragg’s postwar image in his 1905 history of the war, claiming that “the victory of Chickamauga, won at a fearful cost, was rendered barren by the inaction and lack of enterprise of the commanding general. I never did see or hear of any good excuse for it.” His image was the inverse of Albert Sidney Johnston’s: instead of lamenting that he did not command longer, many ex-Confederates regretted that he had risen to command at all.¹⁰

Interestingly, white Southerners’ memories of Bragg’s predecessor, P. G. T. Beauregard, were much less negative, at least as they pertained to the Army of Tennessee. The logical extension of the Albert Sidney Johnston myth would make Beauregard a pariah like Bragg, but with a few exceptions this was not the case. This is probably because his relationship with the western army was so fleeting and tenuous. When he was discussed in the postwar period he was generally linked with Fort Sumter or First Manassas or cited simply as an exemplar of martial ability and manhood without reference to specific military actions. Thus, Beauregard’s role in the Army of Tennessee’s memory was less significant than that of any of the army’s other

⁹ *Our Living and Our Dead* 1 (1873): 1; CV 3 (1895): 132. For another positive portrayal of Bragg see Emily Todd Helm, “Gen. and Mrs. Braxton Bragg,” CV 4 (1896): 102-104.

¹⁰ Oates, *War Between the Union and the Confederacy*, 265.

commanders. Nevertheless, on occasion his character and generalship were lauded in connection with his short tenure as leader of the western army.

Colonel George C. Porter, former commander of the 6th Tennessee Infantry, embraced the Albert Sidney Johnston myth without blaming Beauregard for Rebel defeat at Shiloh. Portraying the scene in the immediate aftermath of Johnston's death, Porter wrote dramatically that "the supreme moment has arrived. The crisis is at hand. A painful silence is both seen and felt. But no bugle charge is sounded." However, he blamed Beauregard's failure to maintain the initiative not on his shortcomings as a general, but on the fact that he was "sick and feeble." In editorial commentary following Porter's narrative, S. A. Cunningham further rose to Beauregard's defense, making it clear that this critique of Beauregard's generalship, as mild as it had been, would not have been published "except in explanation that General Beauregard was ill. We are all human, and General Beauregard's action was doubtless influenced by sympathy for his men." (Unfortunately for Braxton Bragg, the *Veteran* showed less hesitation when publishing material that denigrated his reputation and generalship.) Susan Pendleton Lee offered a different but still sympathetic explanation of Beauregard's failure to press the attack. Children reading her *Brief History of the United States* were assured that Beauregard was concerned for the safety of his men as they would be coming into range of Union gunboats on the Tennessee River.¹¹

Beauregard did have detractors. In his 1918 reminiscences of the war, Army of Tennessee veteran Lot D. Young insisted that as evening approached on the first day at Shiloh Grant's men were huddled in fear on the banks of the Tennessee River and Confederate soldiers were clamoring for the order to attack; "what a moment of grand anticipation and oh, how quick the heart beat!" But the order did not come. Fully embracing the Albert Sidney Johnston myth,

¹¹ CV 18 (1910): 63; Lee, *Brief History of the United States*, 255.

Young believed that Beauregard was “unwilling to finish the day’s work so gloriously begun and so successfully executed up to the hour of [Johnston’s] fall,” and that “here in this hour was sacrificed the opportunity of the Southland’s cause, here was thrown away, so to speak—the grandest opportunity ever offered to any general in modern times. . . . [H]ere was lost the opportunity of the ‘Lost Cause.’”¹²

Unlike Bragg, Beauregard had any number of defenders willing to come to his aid on the relatively rare occasions that he was blamed for failure in the west. Y. R. Le Monnier, a former Louisiana private and Shiloh veteran, did so in a 1913 pamphlet. He took exception to William Preston Johnston’s (and others’) insistence that Shiloh was lost when Beauregard took command. Le Monnier dismissed that claim as “most preposterous and ridiculous.” Instead, he wrote, defeat could be explained largely by the army’s numerical inferiority, inexperience, and lack of supplies. Moreover, Johnston was not blameless for Rebel defeat at Shiloh. Le Monnier also argued that Jefferson Davis was a millstone around Beauregard’s neck, preventing the Creole from accomplishing what he was capable of as a commander.¹³

Like other Confederate military heroes, Beauregard was lauded and defended in language using masculine tropes. In his address to the Confederate Survivors’ Association in Augusta, Charles C. Jones told his audience that Beauregard, who had recently died, was “of noble lineage.” He was also a capable officer, as he proved in the Mexican War and at Fort Sumter, and during the course of the Civil War became “a trusted leader of armies,—moved by valiant impulses,—imbued with the loftiest patriotism,—observant of the most exalted conceptions of civilized warfare.” Jones also reminded his listeners that he was present when the first and last

¹² Lot D. Young, *Reminiscences of a Soldier of the Orphan Brigade* (Louisville: Louisville Courier-Journal Job Printing, 1918), 33-35.

¹³ Yves Reni Le Monnier, *General Beauregard at Shiloh* (New Orleans: Graham Press, 1913), 1, 3, 15-16.

shots of the Civil War were fired, but chose not to mention that Beauregard was largely marginalized in the interim. He had always exhibited “the valor of the accomplished soldier and the knightliest traits of the defender of the rights and honor of a beleaguered nation.” He was “without controversy one of the greatest of modern generals.”¹⁴

While Bragg’s image was largely negative and Beauregard’s, at least in its relation to the Army of Tennessee, was somewhat ambiguous, postwar perceptions of certain other high-ranking western generals were undeniably positive. (Because their images were most often linked with specific contingencies and moments, Joseph E. Johnston and John Bell Hood will be discussed in chapter five). No general exemplified the unappreciated military genius archetype better than Patrick R. Cleburne. Despite his stellar command record, Cleburne’s Irish heritage, lack of a West Point education, and censored proposal to emancipate slaves in exchange for military service led to his being passed over for promotion on numerous occasions. Nevertheless, he was beloved by his men and in the postwar period he became an exemplar of white Southern martial abilities. In 1866 a tribute to Cleburne appeared in the pages of *The Land We Love*, a popular periodical edited by Army of Tennessee veteran Daniel Harvey Hill. Devoted to agriculture, Civil War history, and literature, the magazine had a circulation of twelve thousand by 1867. Cleburne, it said, “was the soul of honor, of courage, and of every manly quality.” Unfortunately for the Confederacy, his introversion and humility “prevented his extraordinary merits from being fully known”; yet twice he saved the “luckless” Bragg from destruction. While he never rose above the rank of major general, “on the field of battle, he had

¹⁴ Jones and Cumming, *Address Delivered before the Confederate Survivors’ Association*, 6.

an eye as rapid to take in every object as that of Forrest himself, and in the drill and handling of his troops he had no superior and probably no equal in the Confederate service.”¹⁵

Sam Watkins’s oft-quoted *Company Aytch* also depicted Cleburne as a military genius, pointing especially to his role at Ringgold Gap. Following the Chattanooga battles, said Watkins, the Yankee pursuers were bent on capturing the entire Rebel army, marching on Atlanta, and ending the war. Luckily for the Confederacy, Cleburne was assigned to stop their pursuit. His men repulsed so many attackers that the battlefield “had the appearance of the roof of a house shingled with dead Yankees.” Ringgold Gap was the army’s Thermopylae and Cleburne its Leonidas. The battle proved Cleburne to be “the best General of the army of Tennessee,” the “Stonewall of the West,” and his generalship during the subsequent campaign was characterized by bold planning, “nerve,” and “pluck.” While the Army of Tennessee was defeated at the Battle of Atlanta in July 1864, Cleburne’s performance there “was the finest piece of generalship, and the most successful of the war.” Similar language was used by another veteran, Missouri private Phillip D. Stephenson. Writing his memoirs in 1896, he claimed that in the war’s early months Cleburne, despite his reticence and modesty, was “looked up to by the whole army, as the ‘rising star!’” He was one of the true military geniuses the war produced; “like Stonewall Jackson or Grant or Sherman, he never would have been heard of if it had not been for the war. He was a born soldier—and nothing else. . . . [T]he army was his proper sphere and war his necessary atmosphere.”¹⁶

¹⁵ Ray M. Atchison, “*The Land We Love: A Southern Post-Bellum Magazine of Agriculture, Literature and Military History*,” *North Carolina Historical Review* 37 (1960): 508; *The Land We Love* 1 (1866): 298. Hereafter *The Land We Love* will be cited as *TLWL*.

¹⁶ Watkins, *Company Aytch*, 99-100, 129, 152; Philip Dangerfield Stephenson, *The Civil War Memoir of Philip Dangerfield Stephenson, D. D.: Private, Company K, 13th Arkansas Volunteer Infantry and Loader, Piece No. 4, 5th Company, Washington Artillery, Army of Tennessee, CSA*, ed. Nathaniel Cheairs Hughes, Jr. (Conway: University of Central Arkansas Press, 1995), 111, 283.

Other veterans likewise lauded Cleburne. In 1893, T. O. Moore, formerly of the 7th Texas Volunteer Infantry, penned a letter to the *New Orleans Picayune* offering anecdotes about the general during the Atlanta Campaign. Cleburne “was a gallant soldier,” he wrote, and “a hard fighter, always kind and courteous to his men, who almost worshiped him.” Moreover, his men had absolute faith in his generalship and “believed ‘old Pat’ could whip all creation.” Cleburne was also a man of good humor who punished the deserving and rewarded the meritorious; “how could we help admiring him?” Reflecting on Cleburne’s death at Franklin, Moore concluded that “had he lived and the war continued, he was bound to have risen to great distinction as an officer.”¹⁷

Southerners too young to have served in the war echoed such sentiments. Novelist, humorist, and editor John Trotwood Moore was moved by the display of one of Cleburne’s battle flags at the 1897 UCV reunion to write the poem “Cleburne’s Banner.” He made it clear that the flag witnessed the finest moments in the Army of Tennessee’s history:

Shiloh saw it sweep from under
Like a tempest in its wrath;
Chickamauga heard its thunder,
Felt the lighting of its path.
Ringgold Gap, New Hope, and Dalton,
Peachtree Creek—Atlanta, too—
Till it kissed the bloody Harpeth,
Where it broke the ranks of blue—

¹⁷ New Orleans *Picayune*, July 2, 1893.

Till it kissed the bloody Harpeth,
And its blue was turned to red,
When it floated from the breastworks
Over gallant Cleburne—dead!

Moore concluded his poem with the claim that Cleburne's banner, "fearless, and without a flaw," would always answer the call when freedom was threatened.¹⁸

Although not as prominent in Confederate memory as Cleburne, Alexander P. Stewart was also praised for his martial abilities. Stewart had spent most of the war at the head of a brigade or a division, but was thrust into corps command during the chaos of the Atlanta Campaign. His actual record as a lieutenant general was checkered, but the memory of it was laudatory. D. W. Sanders, in a serialized history of Hood's Tennessee Campaign published in the *Southern Bivouac*, discussed Stewart's generalship in relation to the Spring Hill debacle. Hood insisted that his subordinates, including Stewart, had failed to carry out his orders, but his generals claimed that such orders were never issued. Sanders came to Stewart's defense, writing that he "was an able and accomplished general, with a reputation won on the fields of battle that reflected the heroic deeds of the army of Tennessee in its grandest efforts." Moreover, he commanded brave troops who never failed in their duty; had Hood in fact ordered Stewart to attack, it would have resulted in "one of the most brilliant and bloody episodes of the late war."¹⁹

In 1895, B. L. Ridley, a former staff officer of Stewart's, paid his commander tribute in his serialized reminiscences. Ridley recalled that even as a major of artillery Stewart was a thorn in the side of Ulysses S. Grant, and that it was on Albert Sidney Johnston's recommendation that

¹⁸ CV 5 (1897): 569.

¹⁹ *Southern Bivouac* 3 (1884): 365. Hereafter *Southern Bivouac* will be cited as *SB*.

he received his brigadier general's commission. While the 1864 campaign in Georgia was disastrous for the Confederacy, Stewart's generalship, particularly at New Hope Church, was invaluable, resulting in the near destruction of a Union corps and the salvation of part of Johnston's army. "When other commanders found that Stewart was supporting them, on right or left," said Ridley, "all was well; and when he struck the enemy, there were frequently heartrending scenes of carnage and of blood." Stewart was also beloved by his men, who called him "Old Straight"; they knew that "he would not willingly sacrifice them, whenever he said to do so, they would leap into the very jaws of death."²⁰

Philip Stephenson too held Stewart in high regard. Although Stewart was "never regarded by the men as having the qualities of greatness," his steady climb through the ranks was the result of merit; "he never seemed to make a mistake!" He was "of high Christian character," always concerned with his soldiers' well-being, unflinching in battle, and an inspiration to anyone who glimpsed "his calm tranquil face in a time of peril or doubt." Reflecting on Hood's indecisiveness following the disaster at Nashville, Stephenson said that Stewart "seemed to be our real leader."²¹

A devout Christian who pursued a career as a professor before and after the war, Stewart also embodied the genteel man of faith archetype. Members of the Association of the Army of Tennessee paid tribute to the general after his death in 1908. They said that, as one who educated young Southerners in his positions as chancellor of the University of Mississippi and commissioner of the Chickamauga and Chattanooga National Military Park, he "showed the great weight of his knowledge." Modest and dutiful, he eschewed notoriety—as befitted a Christian patriot. When Stewart's wife, "a true specimen of the charming Southern lady," died

²⁰ CV 3 (1895): 260-61.

²¹ Stephenson, *Civil War Memoir*, 212.

he shouldered the devastating grief “with that beautiful resignation characteristic of the true Christian.”²²

Other veterans likewise fondly remembered Stewart’s faith. In 1909 James W. Lee, veteran of the 3rd Texas Regiment, provided the *Veteran* with an anecdote illustrating Stewart’s piety. During the Atlanta Campaign some three thousand Confederate soldiers gathered for a prayer meeting. An officer wearing general’s insignia arrived, dismounted from his horse, and joined the soldiers. Always modest and unassuming, Stewart was unknown to many who saw him there; “as he left every man stood in silence and lifted his hat . . . but before the sun went down that day they all knew that it was Lieut. Gen. Alex P. Stewart, one of the bravest and best corps commanders in the Army of Tennessee. The simple act of unostentatious humility and piety on the part of an earnest Christian soldier did more good than many eloquent sermons.” Lee concluded his tribute by noting that “many silent prayers, ‘God bless that general,’ went up that day.”²³

Some of Stewart’s admirers feared that his modesty and reticence would obscure his image in the postwar decades. “Gen. Stewart,” wrote a Tennessee veteran in a 1904 tribute, “with his lifelong persistency in avoiding notoriety, has kept himself out of sight.” But now “the time has come when it is due Tennessee and the men he commanded that he allow those of us who knew him long and well to speak the truth in part at least. He must permit the State to bear the honors he won for her.” With Stewart’s health declining, the author feared that the general would go to his grave without receiving his just praise; “he must grant the request of his old students and soldiers to crown his closing years with at least a modest statement of the truth evidenced by our best generals that there was no conflict between Christian faith and

²² CV 16 (1908): 595.

²³ Ibid., 17 (1909): 485.

Confederate service. Of this fact there has been through the years no brighter example than Gen. Alex P. Stewart.”²⁴

The generalship and gentility that formed the foundation of Stewart’s image were best captured in a tribute after his death by former Tennessee governor James D. Porter. The general had been with the army from its inception as the Provisional Army of Tennessee until its surrender at Durham Station, Porter noted, “and he never went upon the battlefield that he did not distinguish himself.” Stewart loved his men and they loved him and he always had the confidence of his superiors. He was courageous and modest; “a fine specimen of a man.” Simply put, “Tennessee never produced a better soldier nor a more perfect gentleman.”²⁵

In addition to serving as a symbol of white Southern martial ability, gentility, and piety Stewart played a role in shaping the public’s memory of his fellow officers. In 1890 the Secretary of War appointed him commissioner of the Chickamauga and Chattanooga National Military Park. For the next decade the aging general worked tirelessly to ensure that his old comrades were immortalized in stone on those battlefields. On May 12, 1898, when representatives from Stewart’s home state of Tennessee unveiled monuments and regimental markers at Chickamauga, Stewart delivered an address. “Neither this nor any other country,” he proclaimed, “has ever produced a race of men and women superior to the Southern men and women of the Confederate times.” He praised the people of the South for their progress since the war and assured the members of the audience that if they provided their children with role models who displayed piety, intelligence, and morality the region would continue to prosper. He continued: “Perhaps you will ask: ‘On what models shall we mold the characters of our children?’” The South would never lack idols for its young, he said. They “will study the life and

²⁴ Ibid., 12 (1904): 393.

²⁵ Ibid., 17 (1909): 485.

character of the peerless, the magnanimous, the majestic, the kingly Lee. . . . They will study the life and character of the great Albert Sidney Johnston” and “that other astute, sagacious, skillful Johnston whose men loved him.” There were other models as well—many of them associated with the Army of Tennessee:

Then there was the chivalrous and scientific Beauregard, the brave Hood, the gallant Frank Cheatham; the intrepid Christian soldier, Leonidas Polk . . . and that untutored genius of war, ‘the wizard of the saddle,’ Nathan Bedford Forrest, who bade defiance to every known rule of the science of war and created a science of war for himself. . . . Let your sons study the lives and characters of these and of many others of our great heroic men.²⁶

Other “heroic men” who embodied the unappreciated military genius archetype could be found among lower-ranking generals. William B. Bate began the Civil War as a private, but after being elected colonel of the 2nd Tennessee Infantry he rose through the ranks, finishing the war as a division commander under Benjamin F. Cheatham. Seriously wounded at Shiloh, he recovered and went on to fight at Tullahoma, Chickamauga, Chattanooga, Atlanta, Franklin, Nashville, and Bentonville. Testifying to Bate’s martial prowess, George T. Fry, a colonel who had served under him, stated in 1894 that “Mars was the god of war. Bate is Mars. I have seen him on the battle’s crest leading Tennesseans to victory, to glory, and to death.” At Chickamauga, despite still suffering from his Shiloh wounds, he behaved “like the lion-hearted hero he was.” Fry concluded his tribute by expressing the conviction that had Bate commanded

²⁶ Davis, *Soldier of Tennessee*, 293; B. L. Ridley, *Battles and Sketches of the Army of Tennessee* (Mexico, Missouri: Missouri Printing and Publishing, 1906), 618-23.

the Army of Tennessee at Chickamauga “Rosecrans’s army would not only have been routed from the field . . . but would to a man have been captured at Chattanooga or drowned in the Tennessee River, and thus would have changed the fortunes of the war.”²⁷

After the war, Bate served as governor of Tennessee and U.S. senator. Upon his death in 1905 his colleagues in Washington eulogized him effusively. A Missouri representative called him “a Christian gentleman of the old school.” Edward W. Carmack, Bate’s fellow Tennessee senator, portrayed Bate’s life as “full of strivings and honorable ambitions. . . . In addition to all this, and higher and better than all this, the Christian’s faith and hope were his; so that his peaceful death, met with calm and quiet resignation was a fitting close to such a life.” Carmack made it clear that Bate was also a man of war: “the martial, the military instinct in General Bate was strong.” To go over his specific military accomplishments was unnecessary for “there are volumes of eulogy in the simple statement that he entered the army as a private soldier and left it as a major-general.” Such sentiments were echoed by others. A Virginia senator stated that “the war records make enduring pedestal for the statue of his fame,” while a Tennessean noted that from Shiloh to Nashville Bate “was a conspicuous and distinguished figure . . . always dashing, gallant and courageous”—so much so that one of the army’s other unappreciated generals, A. P. Stewart, bestowed on him the sobriquet “the Indomitable Bate.”²⁸

Tennessee representative Walter P. Brownlow situated his praise of Bate within a discussion of Confederate generalship and soldiers’ bravery. “If Tennessee’s Confederate soldiers were less successful in battle than were their comrades of the Army of Northern Virginia,” he professed, “it was not because they were inferior in any respect, but because it was

²⁷ CV 2 (1894): 337.

²⁸ U.S. Congress, *William Brimage Bate (Late Senator from Tennessee) Memorial Addresses*, 59th Cong., 2nd sess., 1907, Committee Print, 102, 10, 14, 55.

not their fortune to have Lee, Jackson, Longstreet, and Gordon for leadership.” However, it was their fortune to have such brave and capable lower-ranking generals as Bate. In fact, said Brownlow, Bate was second only to Nathan Bedford Forrest in Tennessee’s pantheon of Confederate icons. Perhaps the most energetic advocate of Bate’s generalship was Arkansas representative Joseph Taylor Robinson, who took his audience through every battle in which Bate participated. While the Army of Tennessee lost nearly all these engagements, Robinson said, there was always a regiment or a brigade commanded by a capable commander, in this case Bate, which stood firm and undaunted amid the chaos of defeat.²⁹

While some generals were remembered primarily for their military acumen, others were lauded more for their gentility and piety. Chief among these was Leonidas Polk. Few ex-Confederates applauded explicit episodes in his military record and even fewer felt that he should have held greater command responsibilities. As Phillip Stephenson stated, Polk “was a living monument to the purity of our cause” but, as a corps commander, “not brilliant, nor great in any sense.” White Southerners focused on that perceived “purity” and constructed a memory of Polk centered on his career as a man of the cloth and educator. After all, Christian piety was a key tenet of genteel masculinity in the Old South. These themes were evident immediately following the Bishop’s death during the Atlanta Campaign. His funeral service, held in St. Paul’s Church in Augusta, Georgia, on June 29, 1864, was replete with the tropes of gentility and faith. The eulogizer, Stephen Elliot, bishop of the diocese of Georgia, made many references to Polk’s bravery and abilities as a soldier, insisting that Polk was an asset to the Confederate war effort. Nevertheless, it is clear that Elliot and his audience were more moved by Polk’s Christian character. Elliot told of the Fighting Bishop’s final minutes, in which he reconnoitered the

²⁹ Ibid., 113-15, 143-44.

enemy's position with Joseph E. Johnston and William J. Hardee. At one point the general paused, perhaps to take in the scenery, "or, as is more probable to spend a short interval in silent communion with his God." He was killed "as he stood thus occupied, his arms folded upon his breast, and his face wearing the composed and reverent look of an humble and trusting worshipper." Even the violence of his death, argued Elliot, did not rob the Bishop of his spiritual stoicism.³⁰

Certain that Polk's image would never vanish from history, Elliot assured his audience that the general was an example for the ages and an instrument of God's will. He was "of heroic lineage, with the fiery blood of the Revolution coursing in his veins, of independent fortune, of chivalric tone," and "of high and noble impulses." Polk's genteel manhood made him the ideal educator and minister. His decision to leave the military for the clergy was irrefutable proof of his devotion to God. He was selected as the missionary bishop of the southwest because "the Church needed a man of high social position, with the carriage and manners of a gentleman, with the courtesy and grace of a well-bred Christian, to commend her to the consideration of men of hereditary wealth, of great refinement, of cultivated accomplishments." But Polk could minister not only to his social equals but also to the lower classes; and he was the only man capable of corralling the greed and immorality in the region. He wielded influence with those representing the "extremes of established position, and of struggle for position—of old settled landholders and of needy adventurers—of men with all the polish of foreign refinement and of men with all the strength of unpolished intelligence. The Bishop who should go forth to conquer that country for the Church must possess manners as well as energy—cultivation as well as Christian courage."

³⁰ Wyatt-Brown, *Southern Honor*, 108; Stephenson, *Civil War Memoir*, 191; *Funeral Services at the Burial of the Right Rev. Leonidas Polk, D. D. together with the Sermon Delivered in St. Paul's Church, Augusta, GA., on June 29, 1864: Being the Feast of St. Peter the Apostle* (Columbia, S.C.: Evans and Cogswell, 1864), 5-6.

For decades after the war, clergymen such as Elliot found in Polk's image a useful example for their flock.³¹

Two years after Polk's death he received tribute in *The Land We Love*. While there was little love lost between D. H. Hill and Polk during the war, the editor still found much to praise in the latter's gentlemanly and Christian character. The profile suggested that Polk's character was marked by gentility even in his childhood and that "his sole aim at first was to do what was becoming a *gentleman*." At West Point, Polk was "admired for his character, which was free from everything low and bad." While a student, he was lucky enough to befriend Albert Sidney Johnston, who became his surrogate older brother. Like those who emphasized that Stonewall Jackson, J. E. B. Stuart, and John Brown Gordon were esteemed by Lee, Hill made it clear that Johnston found Polk "worthy." After sharing several anecdotes illustrating the Bishop's gentility, patriotism, wit, and piety, Hill concluded that "the memory of his single-minded devotion to God and to his duty will never be forgotten." Absent was any discussion of Polk's role in the Civil War. Perhaps Hill realized that mentioning that would mar the Bishop's memory. Or, because Polk had blamed Hill for some of the mishaps in the army's career, the latter may have realized he would be implicitly criticizing his own generalship if he discussed the war.³²

William M. Polk, the bishop's son and first significant biographer, wanted to make sure his father's image as a Christian gentleman was well engrained in public memory. The majority of his two volumes were spent chronicling and defending Polk's Civil War career; yet the author believed that his father was a clergyman first and a soldier second. Even amid the grand drama

³¹ *Funeral Services at the Burial of the Right Rev. Leonidas Polk*, 15-16; Wilson, *Baptized in Blood*, 54-55.

³² *TLWL* 2 (1867): 12-16. Another tribute noting Johnston's high opinion of Polk's piety and gentility is in *CV* 3 (1895): 82.

of the Civil War, “his dearest wish was to return to that chosen field [the ministry] as the shepherd of a Christian flock.” The final words in the biography come not from the author but from Stephen Elliot’s oration at the Bishop’s funeral. At least for the Bishop’s son, words first heard just days after Polk’s death still best described his father in 1915. “Born to large hereditary estates,” Elliot stated, Polk “lived a life of almost entire self-denial.” While his career as a soldier was characterized by violence and struggle, the battles “he waged against the pomps and vanities of the world and the pride of life . . . were far more terrific than Belmont, or Shiloh, or Perryville. These required qualities which were natural to him; those qualities which came from the grace of God and the spirit of Jesus.” The son’s estimate of his father’s true contributions to the South was shared by some of his readers. One reviewer, troubled by the number of pages devoted to the war years, said “it was, perhaps, undesirable that so much space was given to the military career of General Polk at the expense of the ecclesiastical career of Bishop Polk.” Cutting to the heart of Polk’s postwar image, the reviewer concluded: “His military work has gone; his episcopal and educational work remain.”³³

Susan Pendleton Lee conveyed similar sentiments to the next generation of white Southerners in her schoolbook. Perhaps as concerned with her readers’ moral education as she was with their historical instruction, Lee assured students that Polk was a “brave” and “good man.” Once again absent was any discussion of his generalship. Nevertheless, in his final days, “he had been most earnest in the discharge of his religious duties.” She chronicled Polk’s baptism of Johnston and Hood during the Dalton revival and mentions that, at his death, he had four religious tracts in his pocket that were “soaked with his heart’s blood.” She concluded her

³³ William M. Polk, *Leonidas Polk: Bishop and General*, 2nd ed. (New York: Longmans and Green, 1915), 2: 386, 394; Stephen B. Weeks, review of *Leonidas Polk: Bishop and General* by William M. Polk, *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 5 (1894): 151.

discussion of Polk by affirming that “all who knew him testified that he was a noble, pure, sincere, Christian man.” Revealing the true lesson of Polk’s life for children in the New South, at the end of the chapter Lee suggested this quiz question: “How had [Polk’s] last days been spent?”³⁴

Another element of Polk’s memory was his image as an educator. For many in the Old South, formal education was a key tenet of genteel masculinity; historian Bertram Wyatt-Brown argues that “learning, especially of the venerable kind, marked the possessor as a gentleman.” In Suwanee, Tennessee, in 1857, Polk and several other episcopal bishops founded the University of the South, whose purpose was to provide white Southern students with collegiate education free from Northern influences. While the disruption of the Civil War delayed the opening of the institution until 1866, this scholarly endeavor was lauded by many former Confederates. An 1895 profile of the university stated that “had it not been for the war, Bishop Polk would unquestionably have realized all his hopes for the University of the South!” While the war robbed the South of one of its greatest philanthropic educators, the university eventually flourished. It was a collaborative effort, yet “its foundation is undoubtedly due to the Right Reverend Leonidas Polk, Bishop of Louisiana.”³⁵

The pious gentleman archetype was exemplified in commemorations of lower-ranking generals as well. Yale-educated Randall Lee Gibson was a colonel and brigadier general in the army, serving at Shiloh, Perryville, Chickamauga, Atlanta, Franklin, and Nashville. After the war he was elected to both the House of Representatives and the Senate and he was invited to give the oration when the Association of the Army of Tennessee unveiled the equestrian statue of Albert Sidney Johnston in New Orleans in 1887. After Gibson’s death, his colleagues in

³⁴ Lee, *Brief History of the United States*, 321.

³⁵ Wyatt-Brown, *Southern Honor*, 94; CV 3 (1895): 54-55.

Washington were effusive in their praise; Gibson, they said, represented the best of what the South had to offer civilization. No fewer than seventeen representatives and senators eulogized him. As president of the board of administrators at Tulane University and a regent of the Smithsonian Institution, Gibson, like Polk and Stewart, was lauded for his commitment to education. One eulogizer called him “a great and good man” and an “example of a useful, honorable, and patriotic life,” and noted that he was of “Revolutionary stock” and that “no defect of early education was his.” His formative years were spent in a “refined and cultivated atmosphere”; he was “born of a race of country gentlemen.” Despite his lack of military training, he had served the army dutifully, honorably, and courageously. After the war, “the charm of his personality” and “the breadth of his cultivation” aided Gibson in his goal of helping reunite the North and South.³⁶

In addition to emphasizing his gentility, Gibson’s eulogizers made clear that he was a man of faith. One of his colleagues, Edward Douglas White of Louisiana, mentioned coming across Gibson reading the Psalms in the days before his death. This had led to a conversation about the hereafter in which Gibson revealed that he had “reached the conclusion that outside the broad principles of religion there is no hope for mortals here below or hereafter.” Thus, the speaker guaranteed his audience, “as the Angel of Death came to bear [Gibson] from the land of Time to the land of Eternity, he passed fortified and blessed by the consolation of a faith in the infinite mercy and wisdom of God.” White concluded by quoting Matthew: “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.” These sentiments were echoed by former Army of Tennessee cavalry commander Joseph Wheeler of Alabama, who told his colleagues and the deceased’s friends and family that when he passed from this world he did so with “confidence in

³⁶ U.S. Congress, *Memorial Addresses on the Life and Character of Randall Lee Gibson, a Senator from Louisiana*, 53rd Cong., 2nd sess., 1893, Committee Print, 7, 14, 15, 16, 22, 36, 69, 83.

all that Christians believe of the life to come.” Charles J. Boatner of Louisiana encapsulated Gibson’s memory in the closing lines of his eulogy: “A brave and loyal soldier, a faithful representative of the people, a devoted husband and father, a benevolent and self-sacrificing friend and Christian gentleman has gone to his rest.” While his eulogizers praised his military service, it is clear that the traits in Gibson that they found most worthy were his faith and gentility.³⁷

The masculine ideal in the South wore two faces. Some leaders were lauded not for their piety and gentility but for their temper, vices, and violent behavior. The purest example of this hyper-masculine, anti-heroic archetype was Nathan Bedford Forrest. The language employed to describe Forrest in the postwar decades contrasted starkly with that describing such generals as Lee, Jackson, and Polk. For example, in 1896 the Reverend John R. Deering, a former Rebel scout, wrote a letter to the Harrodsburg, Kentucky, *Democrat* criticizing the lack of reconciliationist spirit in the ranks of the Grand Army of the Republic. It was only a matter of time, he claimed, until all humanity recognized the virtues of Confederate leaders. Jefferson Davis was “stainless,” Lee was “peerless,” Jackson was “mighty,” Turner Ashby was “modest,” Polk was “sainted”—but Forrest was “terrible.”³⁸

Scholars have noted the “terrible” image of Forrest; the controversial cavalryman is one of the few aspects of the western theater whose memory has been analyzed by historians. Court Carney posits that “to many [white Southerners], he was the quintessential Confederate hero,

³⁷ Ibid., 29-31, 93, 102. For a biography of Gibson, see Mary Gorton McBride and Ann Mathison McLaurin, *Randall Lee Gibson of Louisiana: Confederate General and New South Reformer* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2007).

³⁸ CV 4 (1896): 66. On the culture of violence in the antebellum South see John Hope Franklin, *The Militant South, 1800-1861* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1965); Dickson D. Bruce, Jr., *Violence and Culture in the Antebellum South* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1979); and Kenneth S. Greenberg, *Honor and Slavery: Lies, Duels, Noses, Masks, Dressing as a Woman, Gifts, Strangers, Humanitarianism, Death, Slave Rebellions, the Proslavery Argument, Baseball, Hunting, and Gambling in the Old South* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996).

whose rough-hewn, unschooled martial style reflected the virtues of the southern ‘plain folk’; others, in contrast, found him an ambiguous figure at best, preferring instead the stoicism of Robert E. Lee over the more unruly Forrest.” Ironically, as Carney points out, the qualities that earned Forrest scorn in the North—his “reckless ruffianism and cut-throat daring”—earned him praise in the former Confederacy; some white Southerners saw in Forrest “an antidote to the elitist eastern military institutions.” Paul Ashdown and Edward Caudill reach similar conclusions in *The Myth of Nathan Bedford Forrest*. They identify three tenets of the “Forrest myth.” First, what they label “the great if”: Would the war’s outcome have been different had Forrest been given more strategic responsibility? Second, his “tough guy” image and Horatio Alger-like life story. Third, his natural aptitude for war.³⁹

Forrest was also the only Confederate leader in the western theater to receive ample attention from biographers in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. While these storytellers lauded his martial abilities, rags-to-riches life story, and fiery temper they also emphasized the role of the frontier in Forrest’s formative years. In these biographies and other stories of Forrest the primitiveness of his upbringing was overstated. While middle Tennessee and north Mississippi were certainly rural in the 1820s and 1830s they were not the untamed wilderness presented by his storytellers, who insisted that Forrest came into the world on the fringes of civilization. For some white Southerners trying to set themselves apart from the North, there was something appealing about a man untainted by the niceties of established society. An 1866 biography written by former officers Thomas Jordan and J. P. Pryor began and

³⁹ Court Carney, “The Contested Image of Nathan Bedford Forrest,” *Journal of Southern History* 67 (2001): 601, 608; Paul Ashdown and Edward Caudill, *The Myth of Nathan Bedford Forrest* (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman and Littlefield, 2005), xiv-xix. Carney discusses Forrest’s appeal in more recent expressions of Confederate identity in “‘The Most Man in the World’: Nathan Bedford Forrest and the Cult of Southern Masculinity,” in *White Masculinity in the Recent South*, ed. Trent Watts (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2008), 172-85.

ended by emphasizing these tropes. During his formative years in rural Tennessee and Mississippi Forrest was “trained to the hardest manual toil, practiced as a hunter of the game of the country, and hardened by the manly exercises of the border.” Likewise, John Allan Wyeth, the general’s most influential biographer of the nineteenth century, wrote that “for three generations the Forrests had belonged to that restless race of pioneers who in search of home and fortune had followed close upon the heels of savages.” Former captain J. Harvey Mathes, in his 1902 biography of the general, also emphasized the role of the frontier in Forrest’s youth. “The Forrests were plain, honest people who were in the vanguard of fearless pioneers,” he claimed; “they followed the bridleways of civilization.” Forrest and his family survived the frontier only through hard work, practicality, and daring. Like the Southerner stereotyped in W. J. Cash’s *Mind of the South*, Forrest was individualistic, violent, practical, and ruled by his passions. And white Southerners loved him for it.⁴⁰

A product of his “frontier” origins, Forrest’s particular brand of primal masculinity was another key aspect of his postwar image. He was not like the chivalrous and saintly Lee or Polk. Reflecting on his Civil War career, Jordan and Pryor concluded that Forrest was “endowed by nature with as stormful, fiery a soul as ever blazed to heat and flame in any soldier. . . . A strong man of action, of sleepless temper, strenuous, aggressive, and to whom war was a killing manner of thing.” W. H. Brands, one of Forrest’s former staff officers, published a lengthy tribute to the general in August 1866 in which he expressed similar assessments. Unlike other famed Confederate horsemen such as Turner Ashby, who had “an inborn love of glory” and a “love of the chivalrous, not practical,” or John S. Mosby, who reveled in senseless danger, Forrest

⁴⁰ Thomas Jordan and J. P. Pryor, *The Campaigns of General Nathan Bedford Forrest and of Forrest’s Cavalry* (New Orleans: Blelock, 1868), 21; John Allan Wyeth, *Life of Nathan Bedford Forrest* (New York: Harper, 1899), 2; J. Harvey Mathes, *General Forrest* (New York: D. Appleton, 1902), 3; W. J. Cash, *The Mind of the South* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1941), 31-39.

possessed the practical grit to be successful in any walk of life. Brands maintained that Forrest's rise from obscurity to greatness through his own resolve paralleled that of the South as a whole. He painted a violent image of Forrest's generalship, describing it as "dash, mingled with chivalric recklessness," a "furious plunge, vivid as lightning and unexpected as the thunder's crash." Moreover, "his doggedness of resolution . . . was like the grasp of death"; his victims often witnessed "terror in the charge."⁴¹

Forrest's ferocity was manifested in both his character and his generalship. Of the former, Brands admitted that "rough he undoubtedly was. This roughness we do not admire—do not defend." Nevertheless, the author proceeded to spill much ink defending this "roughness," if not overtly lauding it. Forrest was "truly a diamond of the first water—rough, unpolished, just from its native quarry." While he lacked "the culture of a Stuart or [Wade] Hampton," his roughness was the result of his hardscrabble formative years, not any inherent character flaws. His violence and temper were bestowed by nurture, not nature. He was "frequently filled with passion," "knowing no control," and "quick as powder," and he indulged in personal combat "oftener than wisdom justified." However, his temperament moderated as the war progressed. While he was impetuous, he was also calculating. And despite, or perhaps because of, his ferocity, Forrest "was every inch a man in the darkest hour of the storm."⁴²

Forrest's supposed lust for close-quarters combat was very much a part of his postwar image. Reportedly having personally killed thirty Union soldiers and having had twenty-nine horses shot out from under him, Forrest liked to jest that he came out of the war a horse ahead. In 1897 Arkansas minister E. C. Faulker wrote of his last encounter with Forrest, shortly before the war's end. During an engagement at Dixie Station, Alabama, Forrest, having just killed a

⁴¹ Jordan and Pryor, *Campaigns of General Nathan Bedford Forrest*, 684; *TLWL* 1 (1866): 268-71.

⁴² *TLWL* 1 (1866): 268-71.

Union soldier in personal combat, had gashes on his face, a horse near death, and a bloody saber. “Boys, I have bloodied this old blade again,” Faulker quoted the general saying, “and the first man that runs I will stick it through him.” The “boys,” for their part, were offended that the general could think men of their unit, the 8th Kentucky, were capable of such cowardice.⁴³

That Forrest embraced violence was well known and often celebrated in postwar memory. In a lengthy profile written for *Confederate Veteran*, J. P. Young lamented that Forrest, despite being “a central figure in the great martial drama of the war between the states,” had not received more biographical treatments. While he praised the work of Jordan and Pryor, he was convinced that only those who had fought beside Forrest could be capable of conveying “the heroic mold and fiery energy of this equestrian son of Mars.” Alluding to Forrest’s violent proclivities, he stated that “no general officer ever dreamed of taking liberties with his hair trigger temper.” Those under his command knew that to “disobey orders” or “abandon the field in the presence of the enemy” would provoke “a wrath that was truly frightful.” Nevertheless, Young made clear that these outbursts were not arbitrary and never directed at women; moreover, Forrest was always approachable and appreciated a good joke, even if at his own expense. Although not a pious man during the war, Forrest never disrespected religion and eventually became “devout.”⁴⁴

In addition to his egalitarian and anti-heroic qualities, Forrest’s natural gift for warfare was a key aspect of his postwar memory and, in that respect, his image exemplifies the unappreciated military genius archetype. Senator John W. Daniel of Virginia encapsulated this in his 1892 address at the annual reunion of the UCV in New Orleans. Forrest was a natural warrior, Daniel averred; “he felt the field as Blind Tom touches the keys of a piano. ‘War means

⁴³ CV 5 (1897): 83.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 5 (1897): 277-78.

killing,' he said, 'and the way to kill is to get there first with the most men.' There is military science—Napoleon, Stonewall and Lee—in a nutshell. He was not taught at West Point, but he gave lessons to West Point.” Similarly, J.P. Young’s tribute praised Forrest as a soldier “without training, but by instinct a very master of the art of war.” His rearguard action following the defeat at Nashville, for example, saved the army from destruction and prolonged the Confederacy’s life; “Forrest’s mailed hand was everywhere and struck steady, deadly blows.” Moreover, “this masterly achievement has only its parallel in the heroic Ney, who covered Napoleon’s beaten columns in the retreat from Russia.”⁴⁵

While the rough-hewn Forrest was never as popular with white Southern women as were the gentlemanly leaders like Lee, he did have his female admirers. In 1900 Mrs. T. J. Latham, on becoming president of the Tennessee Division of the UDC, proclaimed that the erection of a Forrest monument was her first priority; subsequently the Women’s Forrest Statue Association was formed. The *Veteran* helpfully publicized the association’s efforts. A general of “matchless genius,” “most daring courage, indomitable will and marvelous success,” said Cunningham, Forrest should be immortalized in stone for the benefit of future generations. The editor added that “it is well known that the military genius of Forrest was acknowledged in Europe before it was recognized in America and that both Gens. Grant and Sherman realized his wonderful capacity before it was appreciated by the Confederate generals.” A similar conviction was expressed fifteen years later in a short piece about Civil War contingencies that stated that “the greatest ‘if’ of all of the Confederacy was: If—they had recognized the true worth of Forrest before it was too late.”⁴⁶

⁴⁵ Ibid., 2 (1894): 1, 23 (1915): 278, 281. George I. C. McWhirter of the 52nd Georgia made similar claims about Forrest’s rearguard action after Nashville; see *ibid.*, 5 (1897): 623.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 8 (1900): 302, 23 (1915): 572.

Latham accomplished her goal on May 16, 1905, when an equestrian statue of Forrest was dedicated at Forrest Park in Memphis. Thirty thousand spectators watched as the general's great-granddaughter unveiled the monument and Judge J. P. Young, called on once again to eulogize his former commander, gave the address. The Forrest he presented to the audience was a man of contradictions, capable of both "vehemence in battle" and "soulful tenderness." For those under his command the war "was no holiday parade. It cost something to ride with Forrest." It meant suffering hardships and inflicting violence with a ferocity few outsiders could understand. "It meant . . . to plunge, mounted, into the seeming vortex of hell. . . . It meant to meet death face to face like a drillmaster, to look into his dread eyes, to toy with the horrid trappings of his trade, to scorn the deadly chill of his breath, and to turn away unscathed or sink into the oblivion of his eternal embrace."⁴⁷

The dual themes of violence and military brilliance were part of Forrest's image throughout the postwar decades. A 1900 tribute to his chief of artillery, Captain John Watson Morton, marveled at Forrest's use of cannon: "He entered the army knowing no more about artillery tactics than a crusader of the Middle Ages." Moreover, he succeeded in passing something of his own gifts to the men under his command. Forrest was not leading professional soldiers but common citizen volunteers who answered their country's call and became, under his firm guidance, warriors. "Who [else] could take a body of men, as did he, untutored, undrilled, and unskilled, and make them to the enemy's imagination so dreadfully persuasive and, in fact, so terribly effective?" H. R. Hill of the 3rd Mississippi Infantry stated in a short submission to the *Veteran* that "had Stonewall Jackson lived and been given 50,000 infantry, and Forrest given

⁴⁷ Carney, "Contested Image of Nathan Bedford Forrest," 616-17; CV 13 (1905): 389. Young's language seems to challenge Carney's contention that "the 1905 unveiling revealed a newly domesticated image of Forrest" and that the speeches "scarcely mentioned the more outlandish and reckless stories that would be relished by the general's admirers later in the century."

15,000 cavalry, they would have wiped the thing out and ‘carried the war into Africa,’ instead of standing on the defensive and being worn out, as we were.”⁴⁸

There was an anti-intellectual appeal in Forrest’s image as well. An oft-repeated anecdote had Forrest supposedly saying, “I never see a pen but what I think of a snake.” Colonel John Laws, Forrest’s former school teacher, presented the general in a similar light. Asked about Forrest’s behavior in the classroom, Laws responded, “Bedford had plenty of sense, but would not apply himself. He thought more of wrestling than his books.” While gentility stressed education over ignorance, frontier masculinity stressed practicality over the theoretical. Having explained the link between education and gentility, Bertram Wyatt-Brown goes on to point out that “there was a strongly anti-intellectual streak in Southern society.” Some white Southerners found this aspect of Forrest’s image highly appealing; exaggerated stories of Forrest’s ignorance were repeated over and over. His oft-quoted military axiom “get there first with the most,” for example, became “get there fustest with the mostest.” While the general did struggle with the English language, there is no evidence that he ever expressed his personal military doctrine in that manner. Not all of his admirers, however, were comfortable presenting their hero as a bumpkin. J. G. Witherspoon, a member of the 9th Tennessee Cavalry, freely admitted that “Forrest was a man of limited education” and used language that was “stronger and more impressive in times of excitement . . . than it is necessary for a teacher of a Bible class in a Sunday school to use.” Still, he found the folksy reinvention of Forrest’s famous maxim absurd. In fact, he had doubts that even the unmodified dictum was accurate, for General Forrest’s bravery and abilities were not influenced by the enemy’s numbers. And like many other

⁴⁸ CV 8 (1900): 171, 2 (1894): 40

disseminators of the Forrest myth, Witherspoon felt that Richmond failed to appreciate Forrest's abilities until it was too late.⁴⁹

In Confederate memory Nathan Bedford Forrest was a violent, profane, practical, common man with a natural aptitude for war that went unappreciated. John Allan Wyeth summed up the Forrest image well, characterizing him as "not an angel by any means." And therein lay Forrest's appeal.⁵⁰

Another officer who fit the anti-hero archetype was Benjamin F. Cheatham. The hard-drinking, card-playing, profane, aggressive general who often treated his men as brothers was never depicted as a man of gentility, piety, or strategic brilliance; but former Rebels loved him anyway. Nashvillian Philip B. Spence, of Polk's staff, recounted in his 1900 reminiscences what was allegedly a reoccurring scene involving Cheatham and Polk. "On the battlefield Gen. Cheatham's favorite expression was: 'Give them hell, boys! Give them hell!'" This language obviously offended the Bishop's piety. Nevertheless, Polk often energetically responded with "boys, give it to them like Cheatham says!" Cheatham's proclivity for profanity was known even among former Confederates who had served in Lee's army. John Brown Gordon reflected fondly on Cheatham in his reminiscences, calling him "one of the most furious fighters of Johnston's army." The Georgian continued: "Cheatham, when the furor of battle was on him, was in the habit of using four monosyllables which were more expressive than polished, but in his case they expressed with tremendous emphasis the 'gloria certaminis.' These four

⁴⁹ Wyeth, *Life of Forrest*, xxxvii; Wyatt-Brown, *Southern Honor*, 94; CV 8 (1900): 173, 23 (1915), 317, 2 (1894): 40.

⁵⁰ Wyeth, *Life of Forrest*, 553.

monosyllables, which became notable in the army as ‘Cheatham’s expression,’ were: ‘Give ’em hell boys!’”⁵¹

Cheatham was the subject of a lengthy 1883 profile in *The Southern Bivouac* written by James D. Porter, former Tennessee governor and the general’s wartime chief of staff. The general’s top priority, said Porter, was the care and comfort of his troops. “The men observed this and very soon were so identified with him in feeling and sympathy that they knew no organization but his division, and to this day the veterans of his command will tell you that they belonged to Chatham’s division, never mentioning brigade or regiment.” Moreover, Cheatham was humble and devoid of personal ambition. His folksy image was captured in an anecdote shared in the profile. After Joseph E. Johnston assumed control of the army at Dalton, Cheatham presented the new commander to the men of his division. “With a heartiness as genuine as it was unmilitary,” Cheatham placed “his hand upon the bare head of the chief of the army, he patted it two or three times; looking at the men, he said: ‘Boys this is old Jo.’” A later version of the story added that Cheatham was the only officer in the Army of Tennessee who could have gotten away with such a breach of military decorum. Despite his unprofessional manner, Porter argued that Cheatham’s sole character defect was his eagerness to accept blame for mistakes made by those under his command.⁵²

The egalitarian relationship between Cheatham and his troops was a key aspect of his postwar image. A story appeared in the *Veteran* in 1897 about the general and his men in the days before Johnston’s surrender to Sherman at Durham Station. The soldiers, sensing something

⁵¹ CV 8 (1900): 373; Gordon, *Reminiscences*, 79. Sam Watkins also shares this anecdote; see Watkins, *Company Aytch*, 86.

⁵² *SB* 2 (1883): 145-50. An expanded version of this anecdote was quoted almost three decades later in *Confederate Veteran* in a piece written by Colonel E. J. Harvey, former assistant inspector general of the Army of Tennessee; see CV 18 (1910): 522.

was amiss, knew they could count on Cheatham for answers. He was indeed frank with them, even though, as he told them, he “would jeopardize his position as their commander” and “might be cashiered under usual conditions.” He assured the men that he trusted them; “he knew them; he knew that if he told all that was going on, and they were called upon to go into battle the next day, they would do it.” The soldiers were devastated on hearing of the surrender negotiations, but assured Cheatham that he could “continue to depend upon them under all circumstances.”⁵³

Others had similar recollections. The Reverend M. B. De Witt, former chaplain of the 8th Tennessee Regiment, told of running into Cheatham in Nashville after the war. The ex-general “marched straight to me and put those strong arms around me and squeezed me, and said to the gentlemen present: ‘This is one of my boys, who, whenever I wanted him, could be found.’” Like Cheatham’s other “boys,” De Witt was forgiving of the general’s questionable habits: “Dear old Frank! He had his faults, but we boys loved him.” Philip Stephenson encapsulated the Cheatham image best, describing “Old Frank” as “the personification of your bluff, cursing, swearing trooper—a sort of Blucher. A good soldier and fighter . . . but too fond of whisky and a brawler when drinking . . . fond of his men . . . and they fond of him!”⁵⁴

In stark contrast to the genteel Robert E. Lee, Leonidas Polk, and A. P. Stewart, men like Cheatham and Forrest exemplified W. J. Cash’s “hell of a fellow.” While historians and literary critics have refuted many of his conclusions, Cash convincingly shows that gentility was not the only masculine ideal in the Old South. He sums up the appeal of Forrest’s and Cheatham’s more primal, anti-heroic masculinity:

⁵³ CV 5 (1897): 364.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 8 (1900): 299; Stephenson, *Civil War Memoir*, 110-11.

Great personal courage, unusual physical powers, the ability to drink a quart of whisky or to lose the whole of one's capital on the turn of a card without the quiver of a muscle—these are at least as important as possessions, and infinitely more important than heraldic crests. In the South, if your neighbor overshadowed you in the number of his slaves, you could outshoot him or outfiddle him, and in your own eyes, and in those of many of your fellows, remain essentially as good a man as he.⁵⁵

In 1905, Arkansan and former colonel Asa S. Morgan gave an oration at a monument dedication in Little Rock. Like many other Southern speeches of the era, Morgan's was an apologia for secession and a tribute to the steadfast devotion of Confederate women, the bravery of the common soldier, and the character and brilliance of Southern generals. Morgan, a veteran of the western and trans-Mississippi theaters, found heroes in all Confederate armies. Not only did he evoke Robert E. Lee and Stonewall Jackson; he also listed Forrest, Stewart, Cheatham, and Cleburne as "immortal names not born to die." With the notable exception of Forrest, the Army of Tennessee's generals have largely vanished from popular Civil War memory. But for the wartime generation, and to a lesser extent their descendants, they were powerful symbols that validated white Southerners' cultural convictions. Collectively, the Army of Tennessee's high command failed in war. However, in memory it proved to be greater than the sum of its parts. In fragmenting the popular memory of the army's generals into archetypes, former Confederates could prove to themselves and their progeny that their leaders had been capable, pious, genteel,

⁵⁵ Cash, *Mind of the South*, 38.

masculine, and warlike. The scapegoat, the unappreciated military genius, the genteel man of faith, and the anti-hero helped make the Lost Cause victorious.⁵⁶

⁵⁶ CV 13 (1905): 355.

Chapter Four:
“That gallant, human rampart”:
Remembering the Army of Tennessee’s Common Soldiers

On August 13, 1900, Company C of the 16th Louisiana Infantry Regiment held a reunion in Shreveport. When the unit marched to war in 1861 it had numbered 113 soldiers. Nicknamed the “Caddo Fencibles,” it fought in all the Army of Tennessee’s major campaigns before surrendering at Meridian, Mississippi, in 1865 with fourteen men. Thirty-five years later only eight survivors were able to attend the reunion. Despite the paltry turnout, for four hours the veterans reminisced and listened to former officers give speeches. The company, proclaimed former lieutenant T. G. Pegues, was “as gallant a body of men as ever shouldered muskets.” When they marched to the front, Pegues insisted, they had only one thought: “If it were a sin to covet honor, then we were the most offending souls alive.” Aware of the paucity of survivors, Pegues asked his audience, “Where are our comrades who stepped forth so gayly [sic] to battle for Southern rights?,” then answered his own question: “ask the spirits that keep vigil over the gory fields of Shiloh, Perryville, Murfreesboro . . . Chickamauga, Missionary Ridge, Dalton, Resaca, New Hope Church, Kennesaw Mountain, Atlanta, Jonesboro, Franklin, [and] Nashville.” Most of these battles were defeats for the Army of Tennessee, but that fact did not tarnish the memory of the fallen men of Company C. In the minds of these former Rebels, they had fought bravely and capably for a just cause, “for a principle that is as eternal as the stars.” They might lie in unmarked graves, said Pegues, “but they lay [sic] like warriors taking their rest, with their martial cloaks around them.”¹

¹ Arthur W. Bergeron, Jr., *Guide to Louisiana Confederate Military Units, 1861-1865* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1989), 112-15; CV 8 (1900): 405.

The common soldier's centrality to Civil War memory has been recognized since the conflict's end. Those who lived through the war believed that the soldier would be the exemplar for future generations. In 1898 the UDC declared that the "nobleness, the chivalry, the self-denial, the bravery, and the tireless endurance of the Confederate soldier should be instilled into every Southern child." Historians also acknowledge the common soldier's pivotal role in the war's popular memory. As David Blight argues, commemorating the valor of white Civil War veterans helped foster a sense of reconciliation between North and South while relegating race to the margins of national memory.²

Scholars have noted other purposes in memorializing the men in the ranks. Kirk Savage says that in commemorating the common white combatant both North and South endeavored to rehabilitate the image of the citizen-soldier. This image had long been central to American mythology but, according to Savage, it did not survive the Civil War. The regimentation and hierarchy of army life challenged the masculine ideals of independence and personal agency, while the horrors of battle destroyed men physically and mentally. Moreover, the slavery-like subordination of the enlisted men blurred the line between privileged whites and servile blacks. By creating monuments of idealized white males, standing ever vigilant, white Americans could counter these threats. Gaines Foster, in his foundational study of the Lost Cause, argues that commemorating the discipline of the Rebel private was a tool with which the white middle class sought to shape the behavior of the lower classes. Others historians suggest that the image of a warrior from a bygone era brought comfort to a nation in the throes of industrialization.³

² CV 6 (1898): 29; Blight, *Race and Reunion*, 5, 22-23, 26, 172, 201, 206, 209. Alice Fahs notes a similar phenomenon in the portrayal of soldiers in children's literature; see Fahs, "Remembering the Civil War in Children's Literature of the 1880s and 1890s," in *The Memory of the Civil War in American Culture*, eds. Alice Fahs and Joan Waugh (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 86.

³ Kirk Savage, *Standing Soldiers, Kneeling Slaves: Race, War, and Monument in Nineteenth-Century America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), 167-77; Foster, *Ghosts of the Confederacy*, 142-43; David Currey, "The Virtuous Soldier: Constructing a Usable Confederate Past in Franklin, Tennessee," in *Monuments to the Lost*

The Army of Tennessee's common soldiers certainly served all these purposes in the postwar decades. But they also served another: circumventing the army's dismal wartime record. Just as the high command as a whole had failed, the army as a whole had failed. However, in selectively remembering brave individual soldiers and steadfast individual units, the Army of Tennessee was transformed into a capable military force, one that confirmed Lost Cause convictions. By conceptualizing the army's wartime operations microscopically rather than macroscopically, ex-Confederates constructed a counter-narrative that told a story of victory instead of defeat. Moreover, this perspective was a natural consequence of the army's repeated defeats and turnover in command, which (as noted by historians such as Larry J. Daniel, Thomas L. Connelly, and Keith S. Bohannon) discouraged the soldiers from identifying with any unit above the division level both during and after the war.⁴

Of all the Army of Tennessee's "common" soldiers, none was more exalted in white Southerners' memories than Sam Davis. Born in Rutherford County, Tennessee, in 1842, Davis was only nineteen when the Civil War broke out. A private in the army, in 1863 he joined Coleman's Scouts. With middle Tennessee occupied by Union forces, the unit largely operated behind enemy lines. In November, while attempting to deliver valuable information regarding Union troop movements to Braxton Bragg, Davis was captured near Minor Hill, Tennessee. He found himself in a perilous position between scout and spy. Like the former, he wore a Rebel uniform and carried Confederate identification papers. But he was operating behind enemy lines

Cause: Women, Art, and the Landscapes of Southern Memory, eds. Cynthia Mills and Pamela H. Simpson (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2003), 144.

⁴ Connelly, *Army of the Heartland*, xiii, 37-38; Daniel, *Soldiering in the Army of Tennessee*, 21, 23; Keith S. Bohannon, "'These Few Gray-Haired, Battle Scarred Veterans': Confederate Army Reunions in Georgia, 1885-95," in *The Myth of the Lost Cause*, eds. Gallagher and Nolan, 92-93.

and collecting confidential information, as would a spy. During the Civil War a clear distinction was made between scouting and spying; the latter could be punished by death.⁵

Davis was delivered to Union general Grenville Dodge, who was anxious to learn who was leaking information to Rebel scouts. When Davis refused to reveal his source Dodge charged him with espionage and ordered a court martial. In a matter of days Davis was found guilty and sentenced to hang. Numerous times he was offered a pardon in exchange for naming his source; each time he refused. The night before his execution he sang hymns and prayed with a Union chaplain. While he was being marched to the gallows Union soldiers reportedly lined the road pleading with him to divulge his source so they would not have to go through with the execution. Moments before his death, he was once again offered a deal, to which he allegedly responded: "I would rather die a thousand deaths than betray a friend or be false to duty." He was then executed.⁶

Davis's story was relatively obscure in the immediate postwar period; historians have shown that it was due to the tireless efforts of *Confederate Veteran* editor-in-chief S. A. Cunningham that Davis's image became ubiquitous. However, it was making its way into Confederate memory even before Cunningham became its chief disseminator. Joseph Buckner Killebrew, a Tennessee planter, lawyer, and editor, published a tribute to Davis in 1871 that was widely reprinted in the following years. Sometimes titled "Every Inch a Hero," the piece presented Davis's final days much as they would be presented for the next several decades. He had been a scout carrying letters, not a spy; thus his execution was an atrocity. He was a brave,

⁵ Owen Nichols Merideth, "The Sam Davis Home: Where too soon sleeps a boy Who died too soon a man," *Tennessee Historical Quarterly* 24 (1965): 304-15

⁶ Ibid. For another examination of Davis's image, see Edward John Harcourt, "'The Boys Will Have to Fight the Battles without Me': The Making of Sam Davis, 'Boy Hero of the Confederacy,'" *Southern Cultures* 12 (2006): 29-54.

loyal boy on the cusp of manhood who had spent his final days in spiritual self-reflection with only one regret: he would not live to continue fighting at his comrades' sides. "He died," Killebrew assured his readers, "with the calmness of a philosopher, the sternness of a patriot, the serenity of a Christian, and the courage of a martyr."⁷

While his tribute was widely disseminated, Killebrew's efforts to deify Sam Davis paled in comparison to those of Cunningham. First hearing of Davis at a lecture in 1894, Cunningham immediately took it on himself to use his magazine to spread the story to former Confederates and raise money for a monument to Davis. In short order, Davis evolved from heroic common soldier to the "Boy Hero of the Confederacy." Not only did Cunningham publish his own narratives of Davis's life and death, he also solicited contributions from his readers. These submissions came in droves. Veterans who had served beside him at Shiloh and Perryville wrote in attesting to his bravery and manhood, fellow scouts insisted that he had been unjustly accused, and even Union veterans provided pieces affirming the nobility Davis displayed in his final days and expressing regret for the actions the war forced on them. Well into the early twentieth century former Confederates, led by Cunningham, were sanctifying Davis. There are too many inconsistencies in these anecdotes for them all to be true. Nevertheless, certain themes are common to all of them: manhood, sacrifice, duty, morality, and—most importantly—Christian faith. Indeed, the religious imagery in commemorations of Davis rivaled that in laudations of Lee, Jackson, and even Polk.⁸

⁷ For the publication history of Killebrew's tribute see Harcourt, "'The Boys Will Have to Fight the Battles without Me,'" 52n8. Aside from reprints noted by Harcourt, it was also published in *SB* 6 (1887): 772. At the turn of the century the tribute was still being reprinted. See, for example, Ben LaBree ed., *Camp Fires of the Confederacy: A Volume of Humorous Anecdotes, Reminiscences, Deeds of Heroism, Thrilling Narratives, Campaigns, Hand-to-Hand Fights, Bold Dashes, Terrible Hardships Endured, Imprisonments, Hair-Breadth Escapes, Exploits of Scouts and Spies, Perilous Journeys, Daring Raids, Boarding and Capturing Vessels, Sea Fights, Tragic Events, etc.* (Louisville, Kentucky: Courier-Journal Job Printing, 1898), 157-62.

⁸ Simpson, S. A. *Cunningham*, 146-48.

While Davis had admirers all over the South, he was especially popular in Tennessee. In 1897 the Nashville UDC was presented with Davis's overcoat. During the ceremony the Daughters recited the Lord's Prayer. The sight of the coat overwhelmed them with emotion. "When it was shown," said Mackie Hardison, the chapter's secretary, "every heart was melted to tears, and there we sat in that sacred silence. . . . It was a time too sacred for words, for we seemed almost face to face with that grand and heroic man, the noblest son of the South and our own Tennessee."⁹

Others insisted that Davis was a national hero. An anonymous veteran in Knoxville submitted a tribute in 1896 lauding Davis, despite his humble origins, as one of America's greatest sons. Davis's refusal to divulge secrets, said the author, was especially valorous given his age. Unlike a child who thinks only of the present or an old man who thinks only of the past, Davis must have had his potentially bright future on his mind as he marched to the gallows: "Wealth holds out in seductive promises all its magnificence and luxury. Love stretches forth her arms to embrace him. The vision of a loving and lovely wife and frolicsome babes, in a peaceful home, looms up before him, and the music of their voices sounds in his ears. He hears the benedictions of his aged parents, who are receiving his tender care. " Such prospects would have made a lesser man give in; "if this was an age of saints, Sam Davis would be a saint." ¹⁰

Even "saint" was praise too faint for some of Davis's admirers; for many former Confederates he became nothing short of a Christ-like figure. In one of his earliest tributes to Davis, Cunningham assured his readers in 1895 that the young man's sacrifice had "never been excelled in the history of man. In faith to principle it is almost divine, and recalls even the sacrifice of the Galilean whose hands and feet were nailed to a cross." Similarly, at a speech

⁹ CV 5 (1897): 358.

¹⁰ Ibid., 4 (1896): 412.

given at the unveiling of Davis's monument in Nashville in 1909, Governor Malcolm Patterson portrayed Davis as a stainless martyr: "He seemed to have filled every conception of the flower and chivalry of young manhood, and his very presence was suggestive of romance and valorous deeds." When Davis walked to the gallows "his heart was pure as Arthur's of the Round Table" and "his courage as high as all the legions of Julius Caesar"; as he breathed his last breath, he did so "unspotted with sin." Making explicit the similarities between Davis and Christ, the governor declared that

On Calvary the Son of God died with cruel nails driven through his quivering
flesh, the crown of thorns pressing down upon his agonized brow, and since then
the cross has been the Christian's sign in every land; and which of us has the right
to say that He who created the earth and the sky and every living thing on sea and
land, whose mysteries baffle, but whose providence is over all, could give the Son
of Mary to teach men how to live could not also give this son of Tennessee to
teach men how to die?¹¹

Thanks in part to its themes of piety and masculinity, the Davis image fit comfortably into the larger Lost Cause myth. At the UCV's 1929 reunion, A. T. Goodwyn, the organization's president, gave a speech that took his audience practically step by step through the Lost Cause. The South had not wanted war, he insisted, nor had it fought to maintain slavery. He called for an unbiased history of the war—one undistorted by Northern lies. In unabashedly white-supremacist language he mocked the notion of arming African Americans as soldiers. He

¹¹ Ibid., 3 (1895): 240; Bettie Alder Calhoun Emerson, ed., *Historic Southern Monuments: Representative Memorials of the Heroic Dead of the Southern Confederacy* (New York: Neale Publishing, 1911), 328-29.

also insisted on the cultural supremacy of the Old South, which had produced men such as Robert E. Lee and Jefferson Davis. This same “rich heritage” had also “enabled our dear comrade, Sam Davis, to symbolize to the world that honor is more sacred than life. I challenge the student of military history to recall such supreme self sacrifice to exalted duty as displayed by this martyred hero.”¹²

White parents saw in Sam Davis a useful role model for their children. An 1895 tribute argued that while some soldiers had been motivated to enlist by ambition, desire for adventure, or lust for glory, Davis had been driven by “a passionate love for the South and Tennessee.” Spurning the temptation offered by his Union captors, he had chosen death over dishonor. “He knew not that his sacrifice would ever be known.” Nevertheless, he “mounted the scaffold, looked for the last time at the skies of Tennessee, refused for the last time the offer of life and safety, closed his eyes and swung off into eternity to meet that God who has said ‘whosoever loseth his life shall find it,’ . . . leaving to all generations an example as priceless as it is unique.” Similar sentiments were expressed by a Nashvillian two years later when he donated to the Sam Davis Monument Fund in the name of his two sons. “If at any time my boys are ever reminded of the importance of maintaining their integrity in the time of some great temptation,” he said, “I shall feel that the money could be put to no better use.” A monument to Davis, he went on, would serve as a constant reminder of true courage and make young children better citizens. “I wish that every boy in the Southland knew of the sad and glorious death of this Pulaski hero.” Three years later the *Atlanta Constitution* declared that Davis’s bravery rivaled that of anyone throughout human history. “Had he lived in Roman Times, he too would come down to us a sainted hero. There are the Knights of Damon and Knights of Pythias, and there ought to be

¹² A. T. Goodwyn, *Address of General A. T. Goodwyn, Commander-in-Chief of the United Confederate Veterans at their 39th Reunion Held at Charlotte, N. C., June 5th, 1929* (Montgomery: United Confederate Veterans, 1929), 8.

Knights of Sam Davis.” If only Abraham Lincoln had known of Davis’s circumstances, the editorialist lamented, Davis would have been spared. At the end of the 1800s the Women’s Club of Atlanta was offering prizes to school children who wrote the best essays about “The Idea of Duty as Illustrated in the Life of Sam Davis.” Nearly twenty years later a Tennessee history schoolbook concluded its brief discussion of Davis by telling its young readers that “such a life should be regarded as Tennessee’s most priceless possession.”¹³

Students seemed to accept Davis as their role model. In 1900, William Leidtke, speaking at his graduation from Gainesville High School in Texas, proclaimed Davis his generation’s “best example of true courage, true manhood, [and] true patriotism.” Moreover, he was a reminder of more heroic times, when the students’ fathers went to war to defend hearth and home. “The name of Samuel Davis” he continued, “stands without parallel in history.” Just as white Southerners remembered Stonewall Jackson as a “noble Christian soldier,” they should remember Davis. And he should be a hero not just for Tennessee but for the whole country; Texas in particular “should cherish his memory as she cherishes the martyrdom of [James] Fannin, [James] Bowie, and David Crockett.”¹⁴

While all argued that Sam Davis’s character was laudable, some former Rebels insisted that it was not exceptional. In 1896 Cunningham wrote that “he is acknowledged as the typical patriot and his death a patriot’s death.” The ranks of the Rebel army boasted many men as heroic as Davis, but “no other was offered such a shining opportunity to manifest fealty to honor and the Southern cause.” He continued to remind his readers of this fact, a year later declaring that “the heroic death of Samuel Davis deserves attention in the *Veteran* until every son and daughter

¹³ CV 3 (1895): 258, 5 (1897): 414, 8 (1900) 208 (quoting *Atlanta Constitution*), 100; Gustavus Walker Dyer, *A School History of Tennessee* (Chattanooga: National Book, 1919), 127.

¹⁴ CV 8 (1900): 300.

of the South is elevated by his sacrifice.” Davis’s actions were “typical of the Confederate soldier’s valor and character. However, while his name deserves the highest place on the scroll of fame, it should not be isolated from his fellow Confederates. Under a similar test, many others would have sacrificed life deliberately and ‘in cold blood’ as he did.” An anonymous Tennessean contributing to the *Veteran* seemed to agree with Cunningham, expressing satisfaction in the ubiquity of Davis’s story and the erection of a monument to his honor but also frustration because other Confederate heroes were vanishing into obscurity. He argued that David Dodd, for example, had died under similar circumstances. “Alike they were young; alike arrested, court-martialed, convicted, and executed because they refused to betray their respective trust,” he wrote; “alike they should be honored after death.”¹⁵

B. L. Ridley echoed these sentiments in his 1906 history of the Army of Tennessee. He quoted at length one of Davis’s fellow scouts, who declared Davis “one of the sublimest and noblest characters known in history,” whose martyrdom “in future ages will be pointed to as an act worthy of emulation.” Then, in his own words, Ridley assured his readers that Davis “died the death of honor in the arms of glory. There may have been soldiers who would have done as he did, yet we know that under the most trying circumstances he sealed his faith with his blood and offered up his life on the altar of duty rather than betray his friends and country.” Suggesting that Davis had become somehow both exceptional and unexceptional, Ridley claimed that “the coming ages will place his character forward as a typical Confederate and as an American—it will enlist the admiration of the world.”¹⁶

¹⁵ Ibid., 4 (1896): 402, 5 (1897): 414, 18 (1910): 266. David Dodd was a seventeen-year-old Confederate soldier captured near Little Rock, Arkansas, while carrying information regarding Union troop locations. Like Sam Davis, Dodd refused to divulge the source of his information and was executed.

¹⁶ Ridley, *Battles and Sketches*, 266, 272.

Many white Southerners appreciated Cunningham's crusade. The *Nashville Christian Advocate* opined that "whoever rescues from oblivion the name of a noble man performs a service to humanity. We therefore commend with all our heart the effort now making by Mr. S. A. Cunningham." This Methodist newspaper, like other Davis storytellers, saw in the pious, selfless, brave, and youthful-yet-manly "Boy Hero" a useful role model. "In due time," it confidently predicted, "we may look to see a proper monument of the stainless young hero set up in the capital city of Tennessee, to teach our young men forever that it is better even to die rather than prove false to a trust." A Georgia judge wrote to the *Veteran* expressing similar gratitude. "You are doing good work for the South," he stated; "the memory of our gallant dead should be perpetuated in song and story, to officer and private alike." Linking Davis with the supreme Confederate martyr of the western theater, he concluded: "Albert Sidney Johnston and Sam Davis both died heroically, gloriously, for the same cause, and each in his sphere represented true Southern manhood and patriotism. They were heroes, and not traitors, and our children should be taught to honor their memories."¹⁷

Although Cunningham and the *Veteran* were the most powerful forces in converting Sam Davis into a folk hero, he was commemorated elsewhere as well. W. D. Fox, a lawyer and politician from Murfreesboro, Tennessee, wrote a stage play dramatizing Davis's life. Fox's Davis is loved by his comrades, by women on the home front, and by slaves. On learning of his court martial, Davis replies, "I quail not from your sentence. . . . I do but what my God and much-loved country do require of me." Davis's love interest in the play calls him "God's noblest man." Performed across middle Tennessee, the play received rave reviews from ex-Rebels. Cunningham, initially doubtful that the play would be sufficiently reverential,

¹⁷ CV 5 (1897): 359 (quoting *Nashville Christian Advocate*), 624.

eventually endorsed it in the pages of the *Veteran*. A similar Davis appears in Judge Christopher W. Tyler's 1911 novel *The Scout*. "The Boy Hero" marches bravely up the gallows's steps harboring no bitterness toward his executioners. The scene could not help but remind the author of "another lonely Being, who with conscience void of offense, upon an eminence where all might behold, died an ignominious death begirt by foes. This was in a far-off land, and nearly two thousand years ago." Tyler concluded his narrative of the execution averring that "when the eyes of Sam Davis were closed for the last time to the scenes of earth, and his dauntless spirit passed through the portals of death, Jesus of Nazareth was the first to greet him on the other side."¹⁸

S. A. Cunningham's biographer posits that the editor identified with Davis and fought so tenaciously for his memory because it "released [him] from the psychological burden of [his own] dismal war record through his identification with a hero." Perhaps other Confederates who identified with the ill-fated Army of Tennessee were doing something similar. From their perspective, an army composed of such men as Sam Davis was an army of which to be proud.¹⁹

While Sam Davis was the Army of Tennessee's most lauded individual common soldier, none of its units was more commemorated for its wartime record than the Orphan Brigade. Originally commanded by John C. Breckinridge, this band of Kentucky infantrymen fought in most of the army's campaigns. Although its sobriquet was ubiquitous by the last decade of the nineteenth century, during the war and into the Gilded Age the unit was known simply as the First Kentucky Brigade. The nickname's origin is uncertain. Many have claimed that following a disastrous charge at Murfreesboro in which the brigade was decimated and lost its commander,

¹⁸ W. D. Fox, *Sam Davis: The Confederate Scout: A Drama* (Nashville: Publishing House of the M. E. Church, South, 1896), 63-64, 76; CV 4 (1896): 399, 402; Christopher W. Tyler, *The Scout: A Tale of the Civil War* (Nashville: Publishing House of the M. E. Church, South, 1911), 296.

¹⁹ Simpson, *S. A. Cunningham*, 154.

Breckinridge rode along the lines crying out “my poor Orphans! My poor Orphans!” Regardless of its origin, the nickname’s meaning was explained by one of the unit’s earliest storytellers: “Its attitude toward its native State—expatriated by reason of identification with a cause which Kentucky had not formally approved; its complete isolation from its people.” Although their state remained in the Union during the war and furnished the North with far more soldiers than it did the South, after the war white Kentuckians largely embraced a Lost Cause narrative of the war—one in which the Orphan Brigade played a prominent role. The brigade’s former soldiers set about enthusiastically to record their wartime experiences and honor the unit in which they served.²⁰

Some veterans began commemorating the brigade even before it gained its famous nickname. In his 1867 memoir, Conrad Wise Chapman, a former enlisted man, remembered his tenure with the unit as the most formative experience of his life. Living in Italy as an artist in 1861, Chapman had returned to the United States after the outbreak of hostilities. He claimed to have begun his journey to manhood only when marching off to war with soldiers from the Bluegrass State. Recalling his feelings after enlisting, he professed that “it was a proud moment to me when I could stand up and my hand in the air, swair [sic] to serve and never desert the Confederate cause so help me God. I felt every inch a man, and a soldier.” While his time with the Kentuckians was largely filled with drill, boredom, marching, hunger, and sickness, he reminisced that “every day I felt more and more the reckless careless devil of a soldier, which do

²⁰ Edward Porter Thompson, *History of the Orphan Brigade* (Louisville, Kentucky: Lewis N. Thompson, 1898), 29. The first edition of Thompson’s history was published as *History of the First Kentucky Brigade* (Cincinnati: Caxton Publishing House, 1868). For a narrative of the unit’s wartime exploits see William C. Davis, *The Orphan Brigade: The Kentucky Confederates Who Couldn’t Go Home* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1980). For more on the ubiquity of the Lost Cause in Kentucky’s memory of the Civil War see Anne W. Marshall, *Creating a Confederate Kentucky: The Lost Cause and Civil War Memory in a Border State* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010), and Luke E. Harlow, *Religion, Race, and the Making of Confederate Kentucky, 1830-1880* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

what I ever will in life I shall always be. My character was formed in the armies of the south and for better or worse I must abide by it.” Chapman went on to serve in Virginia and South Carolina, but his several months in the First Kentucky Brigade was the only period of his Civil War career that he chronicled in his memoirs.²¹

Just one year later, former lieutenant Edward Porter Thompson published what was for generations the definitive history of the unit. A 931-page tome, *History of the First Kentucky Brigade* was revised and expanded into an even larger volume thirty years later. Thompson began conceptualizing his book before war’s end. Even then he seemed aware of how the unit’s veterans would recall their service. “However this war may terminate,” he predicted, “if a man can truthfully claim to have been a worthy member of the Kentucky Brigade he will have a kind of title of nobility.” Just as Cunningham assured his readers that Sam Davis was the typical Rebel, Thompson argued that while the brigade was full of brave, “proud,” “self-respecting” men of “old pioneer stock” they were but “representatives of their people.” The brigade fought at Shiloh, Murfreesboro, Vicksburg, Chickamauga, Chattanooga, and Atlanta. The hardships and defeats it suffered in those actions and others “could not seriously depress and could not at all disguise the intrepid spirits who were as ready in the almost hopeless days of 1865 to spring to action at a word as they were in the first flush of their martial experience, when they had no thought but that battle meant victory.”²²

In returning to his work three decades after its initial publication Thompson provided an addendum that he hoped would draw greater attention to the brigade’s common soldiers. He

²¹ Conrad Wise Chapman, *Ten Months in the ‘Orphan Brigade’: Conrad Wise Chapman’s Civil War Memoir*, ed. Ben L. Bassham (Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 1999), 30, 38. For a biography of Chapman see Ben L. Bassham, *Conrad Wise Chapman: Artist and Soldier of the Confederacy* (Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 1998).

²² Thompson, *Orphan Brigade*, 21-22.

acknowledged that military historians had to refer to large groups of men by the name of their commander or unit, but he feared that in doing so the heroism of the man in the ranks would be lost. Thus he added 320 pages of brief biographical sketches of the brigade's soldiers. These, he hoped, would provide future generations with role models. Thompson planned to leave "indisputable evidence to posterity that they were of the gallant band, and that their offspring may justly claim the honor of descent from those who best illustrated Kentucky's old renown for adherence to principle, scorn of wrong and oppression, and a gallant defense of rights assailed." While he lamented that he could not grant each soldier equal attention and admitted that it might make dry reading, he believed that his addendum "will form a kind of heraldic repository, where future generations of men may seek for proof in support of claims to hereditary honors. It may be a means of imbuing the children with the spirit of the fathers, and of teaching them that they who rally at the bugle-blast, in the day of their country's calamity, and stand fast by the banner of their choice, shall 'in nowise lose their reward.'"²³

Although Thompson's book is still the most exhaustive account of the unit's wartime exploits, it was far from the last word on the Orphan Brigade. Former private Gervis D. Grainger published his memoir in 1902. In it he recounted one of the most often retold stories in the unit's history: its charge on the third day at Stones River. This battle ended in yet another retreat for the Army of Tennessee, but Grainger made it clear that the Orphans distinguished themselves on the field. Once the brigade was unleashed, he recalled, "our intrepidity demoralized the enemy and they began to flee like blackbirds. Then came our turn. We mounted their works from end to end and poured forth a deadly volley into the ranks of our flying enemy. It was terrific! The ground for a hundred yards was covered with their fallen. . . .

²³ Ibid., 543.

[I]t seemed not one of them would be left to tell the story.” Unfortunately for Grainger and his comrades, they soon found themselves in the sights of Union artillerymen and were decimated, losing nearly a third of their number in the charge.²⁴

The *Southern Bivouac* was particularly active in commemorating the Orphan Brigade. Published in Louisville, Kentucky, the periodical achieved a circulation of fifteen thousand before being purchased by the Century Company in 1887. With its emphasis on the western theater and submissions from common soldiers, it was a kind of mirror image of the much more often cited *Southern Historical Society Papers*. No group of soldiers was more highly praised in its pages than the Orphan Brigade—a fact perhaps unsurprising given that four out of five men on the initial editorial board were veterans of the unit.²⁵

Fred Joyce of the 4th Kentucky Infantry became a regular contributor. In an 1883 letter he lamented that so many of his old comrades had passed, but he assured readers that they were “buried with our cause, in glory, but not forgetfulness. . . . [I]t is said with truth that war will bring out the character of a man quicker than any thing [sic] else. We were fortunate in finding so many good true men as we had with us. No wonder we love them and feel bound to them as if with ties of blood.” Despite the bloodshed, hunger, hard marching, and boredom of the war, Joyce insisted that veterans remembered those years fondly: “we were gay and happy, and indulged in all the sarcasm and repartee that the rich enjoy in their opulence.” A few months later Joyce told of the glee club of the First Kentucky Brigade. This “jolly, light-hearted ‘band’” spread joy “from the hills of Tennessee and Georgia” to “the pines of Mississippi and South Carolina.” In the midst of horrible conflict, the club was “petted by the ladies and flattered by

²⁴ Gervis D. Grainger, *Four Years with the Boys in Gray* (Franklin, Kentucky: Favorite Office, 1902), 14.

²⁵ For more on the *Southern Bivouac* see Gary W. Gallagher’s introduction to the *Southern Bivouac* (repr., Wilmington, North Carolina: Broadfoot Publishing, 1992), 1: i-xvi; and Rayburn S. Moore, “‘A Distinctively Southern Magazine’: The *Southern Bivouac*,” *Southern Literary Journal* 2 (1970): 51-65.

our comrades.” Lest the magazine’s readers forget the Orphan Brigade’s martial accomplishments, Joyce’s next article chronicled the unit’s role in the Atlanta Campaign. “The ‘Orphans,’” he claimed, “were not like hot iron, but more like steel well tempered.” Although the Battle of Resaca ended with the Army of Tennessee retreating, “it was harvest time with the Orphan brigade, and every available contrivance was used for reaping the field before us.” As waves of Yankee soldiers approached the brigade’s lines “we turned loose on them, and death in all its appalling forms, commenced by hundreds.” At battle’s end the men of the brigade “peacefully laid down in the bottom of our trenches, and slept or listened dreamily to [the enemy’s] incessant, though ineffectual cannonading.”²⁶

The brigade was also remembered for playing a starring role in the army’s singular victory, Chickamauga, where the Orphans were part of Polk’s wing. While the battle was decided in Longstreet’s sector, Joyce insisted that the Kentucky regiments fought with such ferocity that they drove the Yankees from their front. So successful was their advance that they lost contact with the rest of the wing and were ordered to fall back to rejoin it. Later that day “the Kentuckians once more drove everything across the Chattanooga road, and the Federal army was in retreat to Chattanooga.” After the fall of Atlanta, the Orphan Brigade was converted into a cavalry unit and its relationship with the Army of Tennessee ended. While many were relieved to be joining the mounted arm, Joyce was not. “It was sad to think that our name would disappear from the glorious achievements of the Army of Tennessee. . . . It was sad to think of heroes we were leaving in the trenches to face the storm of twice their number, and to know that Cleburne’s and Cheatham’s boys would miss us when they started for the enemy.”²⁷

²⁶ *SB* 2 (1883): 30-32, 413-15, 499-501.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 3 (1884): 29-32, 161.

In Owensboro, Kentucky, in 1900 the John C. Breckinridge Chapter of the UDC erected a monument to local Confederate soldiers who had been mustered into the First Kentucky Regiment. Congressman and Orphan Brigade veteran William T. Ellis gave the dedication address, which highlighted the exploits of his old unit. “We stand again to-day,” he told his audience, “with uncovered heads in honor of their unsurpassed gallantry as they followed their immortal leader, John C. Breckinridge, in the bloodiest charge of the war over the frozen fields of Stone River.” The unit was present at, and in many cases responsible for, the Army of Tennessee’s brightest moments, said Ellis. Subtly scapegoating Braxton Bragg, he stated that “we tenderly remember them as they charged over the enemy’s breastworks at Chickamauga, where . . . many another valiant Kentucky knight fought and perished just in the dawn of victory which if pursued to its logical results would have sent Rosecrans’s army flying like chaff before a storm out of the States of Georgia and Tennessee.” The youth of today, he added, should be directed toward the men of the Orphan Brigade when looking for role models. Well exemplifying how ex-Confederates, through commemorating a unit, could construct a narrative of victory out of a disastrous campaign, Ellis informed his audience of five thousand that “there is not to be found in the military annals of the world a record which excels that which the Orphan Brigade made in its last great campaign of one hundred days from Dalton to Atlanta.” Furthermore, the brigade’s soldiers fought selflessly for their country, not out of a lust for wealth, glory, or excitement. In erecting the monument white Kentuckians were ensuring that the memory of the brigade would “defy the tide of time.” Indeed, he believed that “as time drifts us farther away from that thrilling period . . . the splendid prowess and military fame of the

command to which those in honor of whose memory this monument is erected belonged will continue to grow brighter and brighter.”²⁸

In 1918 Lot D. Young, a former lieutenant, joined Chapman, Granger, and Thompson in writing a memoir. Dedicating it to the Kentuckians fighting in the American Expeditionary Force in the First World War, he told his readers that the Orphan Brigade would be remembered “as one of the brightest and most interesting pages in [Kentucky’s] history. And why not, since [its soldiers included] so many of the noblest and best young men of the state and were led by such men . . . whose names are a synonym of glory and greatness.” The brigade had suffered staggering casualties in the war, but “as ‘the blood of martyrs is the seed of the church,’ so the sacrifice of these Kentuckians is a diadem in the wreath that encircles her history.” While the brigade was praised most for its deeds at Murfreesboro, Chickamauga, and Atlanta, Young took more pride in its role at Shiloh. “Here,” he recalled, “were enacted scenes of sublime courage and heroism that elicited the admiration and comment of the civilized world; here the soil of Tennessee drank freely the blood of her elder sister, Kentucky.” In Young’s memories the unit’s bravery was on display later in the war as well, particularly in the charge at Murfreesboro. Holding Bragg accountable for the bloodletting the unit experienced there, Young derided him as “a man that had never known anything of the art of war” and called the unit’s charge a “sacrifice to stupidity.” Nevertheless, there the brigade earned a “name that will live throughout the annals of time and crown the history of that dear little band with everlasting immortality.” At Chattanooga, he lamented, the brigade was not put to good use due to Bragg’s “unwisdom.” At another of the army’s defeats, the Battle of Dallas in the Atlanta Campaign, the brigade acquitted itself well, in Young’s opinion; “But here again was displayed that daring, regardless of

²⁸ CV 8 (1900): 389-90.

consequences, which had been so often displayed by this little band of Kentuckians on so many fields from Fort Donaldson [sic] to this eventful day.” During that whole campaign, he declared, General Sherman lived in fear of the brigade’s sharpshooters.²⁹

These are but two examples. Every remembered episode in the Army of Tennessee’s history had its Sam Davis and its Orphan Brigade. Regardless of the ultimate results of any given battle, former Confederates recalled that there was always an individual or a unit on the field displaying bravery, piety, or martial prowess.

At the Battle of Shiloh the army suffered over ten thousand casualties, including its commander, and thus endured the first in what became long series of defeats. Nevertheless, in the 1890s Methodist minister D. Sullins gave a lecture to the Nathan Bedford Forrest Camp of the UCV in which he recounted the heroism of the 19th Tennessee Infantry during the battle’s first day. He recalled that with a Louisiana regiment being decimated by Union artillery, General John C. Breckinridge, desperate to help the Louisianans, cried out “is there a regiment here that can relieve those men and take that battery!” The 19th’s colonel volunteered his regiment “and in another moment a thousand East Tennesseans sprang to their feet with a yell and swept down the hill like an unbridled cyclone.” Despite heavy casualties, they accomplished the task Breckinridge gave them. “The hill is taken and those death dealing guns are hushed,” Sullins wrote, “Hallelujah! Listen to that shout! And then cheer after cheer from the surrounding heights made the young April leaves quiver with the vibrations. Well done brave men! You assumed fearful responsibilities for home and honor, and have met them.”³⁰

²⁹ Lot D. Young, *Reminiscences of a Soldier of the Orphan Brigade* (Paris, Kentucky: no publisher, 1918), 96, 97, 25, 35-36, 46, 51, 71, 74, 98.

³⁰ CV 5 (1897): 10. For a history of the 19th Tennessee see John D. Fowler, *Mountaineers in Gray: The Nineteenth Tennessee Volunteer Infantry Regiment, C. S. A.* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2004).

A similar narrative was constructed around the 2nd Tennessee Regiment at a monument dedication in 1905. Commanded by William B. Bate at Shiloh, the unit suffered heavy casualties among enlisted men and officers. In one of the many speeches given on the battlefield at the dedication, Judge S. F. Wilson, one of the regiment's veterans, proclaimed that his fallen comrades' "bones and their patriotic blood enrich and ennoble the soil around and under us." While the 2nd Tennessee was the particular subject of the day's commemorations, its behavior was illustrative of the Confederate martial spirit. "We believe," Wilson continued, "that their heroism, their devotion to their cause and country, their endurance and sacrifices, illustrated, exemplified, and exhibited as well by most all Confederate commands, constitute a heritage of immortal glory for the present and future generations." And yet there was still something exceptional about the unit, "a regiment, whose men, although its government was overthrown and its armies overpowered, never felt and acknowledged that they were whipped—we know it was brave and heroic. . . . Aye, I believe that if each member of it on this field had possessed a thousand lives, and their sacrifice would have won their cause, the sacrifice would have been cheerfully made. Their record demonstrates what I say." But again, this record "was duplicated in spirit by the great rank and file of the early volunteers as well as by most of the later volunteers in the Confederate armies." In another speech, Basil Duke assured the audience that "the gallant soldiers of the Tennessee Confederate infantry . . . never in all their history turned back from a stricken field and never looked on one they did not consecrate by acts of heroic courage . . . and among them all none were braver and more ardent or more entitled to immortal remembrance than those in whose honor this shaft is uplifted."³¹

³¹ CV 13 (1905): 437-43.

Conflicts between Braxton Bragg and Edmund Kirby Smith had seemingly doomed the 1862 Confederate invasion of Kentucky from the start. But postwar Army of Tennessee memorialists were able to claim victory even in defeat. An anonymous history of the 48th Tennessee Infantry, which had served under both commanders during the invasion, gave the minor victory at Richmond, Kentucky, more prominence than the campaign's climax at Perryville. The article insisted that men such as Cleburne, Forrest, and Jackson had attained greatness only because of the soldiers who served under them. The soldiers of the 48th "were brave and gallant men . . . whose blood made rich the soil on nearly every battle field [sic] of the war, and who contributed so much to the honor and glory and just renown of General Patrick R. Cleburne." The field at Richmond "drank the blood of the bravest of the brave," but the 48th nevertheless drove the Yankees from their positions and chased them off the battlefield. Although the regiment saw heavy action later at Perryville, that battle received only passing mention in the article. A role in a victorious insignificant battle was a more satisfying memory than a role in a strategically significant defeat.³²

At Perryville, Bragg and his lieutenants had managed to snatch defeat from the jaws of victory while suffering 3,400 casualties and dashing Confederate hopes of "liberating" Kentucky. But twenty-two years later B. P. Steel, a former captain in the 1st Tennessee Infantry, remembered proudly his unit's deeds in the battle:

'Twas there, held in reserve, impatiently lay,
The First Tennessee, the 'Knights of the Kid Glove,'
Eager and chafing to join the bloody fray—

³² *SB* 2 (1883): 246-51.

Help their brave comrades, and their own powers prove.

Soon was their impatient valor to be tried,

Soon were they to charge the cannon's grim mouth—

Soon upon the battle's crimsoned wave to ride—

Soon to prove themselves worth 'Sons of the South.'

Once the regiment was unleashed, Steel recalled, his comrades “hurl[ed] death into the blue links before them” and the Yankees fled in terror. It was only when things went wrong in another sector of the battlefield that the 1st Tennessee was forced to retreat; and even then it was “sending back defiance and death.” The battle ended in Rebel defeat and the men mourned their dead comrades, but Steel concluded his poem on a triumphant note: “the height had been carried.”³³

Similar sentiments were expressed in regard to an individual soldier a decade later at a Memorial Day service in Savannah, Georgia. Veteran and former senator Middleton Pope Barrow gave the oration. He railed against the concept of the “New South” for its secularism and materialism. The eras of the Old South and the Confederacy, he asserted, were the region’s golden years, when its true heroes achieved glory. One of them was Tom Mosely, whose valor was on display at Perryville. “Leading his company in a second, and then a third charge against a battery of the enemy,” Barrow recounted, “his beardless face ablaze with the animation of battle, and his youthful figure transformed into a hero’s stature, he fell as he mounted the works of the enemy.” Though fierce in battle, Mosely was at heart a gentle lad; “the blue grass of Kentucky was never reddened with nobler blood, and a braver boy or man never died.”³⁴

³³ Ibid., 3 (1884): 67-69.

³⁴ CV 3 (1895): 130.

The Battle of Murfreesboro, despite its promising start, had ended in yet another defeat and retreat for the Army of Tennessee. However, in 1900 J. M. Dunn, a veteran of the 29th Mississippi Infantry, wrote to the *San Antonio Express* recalling the bravery of a common soldier at the battle. Sam Moss “was a genial, social companion, always full of droll fun, but quiet and unobtrusive. No duty was too hard for him to perform, and no privation too hard for him to endure, without murmur or complaint.” These laudable character traits were on clear display at Murfreesboro. At one point Moss found himself separated from his unit. Stumbling across six Union soldiers filling their canteens in Stones River, he seized the initiative and ordered them to surrender. By the time he returned with his prisoners to Rebel lines he had captured a federal colonel as well. “True to his original characteristics,” Dunn concluded, “he never told his brother or sister of his daring exploit on Stone’s River.”³⁵

Moss was not the only soldier remembered for gallantry at Murfreesboro. After W. A. Lowe of Cheatham’s Division died in 1899 he was eulogized by former colonel Josiah Patterson. Lowe was a doctor; “he could have easily have avoided the duties of a soldier on the fighting line, but, choosing the post of honor and patriotism, enlisted as a private.” He “was an epitome of the life of a man as modest, brave, tender, and true as ever wore uniform of a Confederate soldier.” This was illustrated by his actions at Stones River, where he was shot through the eye and carried to the rear by his brother James. Regaining consciousness, he “immediately required his brother to abandon him to his fate and return to the firing line. ‘Go back,’ he said; ‘you are needed there.’” More concerned with his comrades at the front than with his own injury, Lowe “displayed heroism almost without parallel.” In what was surely the highest praise for a

³⁵ *San Antonio Express*, quoted in CV 8 (1900): 61.

Confederate veteran, Patterson maintained that “it was such men who made Lee, the Johnstons, and Jackson possible.”³⁶

Even during the retreat from Tullahoma, as the army surrendered a vast swath of territory without a fight, bravery was on display. In 1897 the *Veteran* published a eulogy to James R. Cumming, veteran of an Alabama artillery battery and brother of diarist Kate Cumming. “A truer, braver soldier never enlisted in the Southern cause,” declared the anonymous author; “he was brave to rashness.” On sick furlough when the army began its retreat, Cumming roused himself in order to join his comrades. His sister tried in vain to get him to complete his convalescence. She recalled that “he looked astonished at me and said: ‘Do you think I would miss a battle?’” After several days with the army he returned home, even sicker than when he left. Nevertheless, he seemed more frustrated with the army’s ill fortune than his own, exclaiming: “This retreat was worse than the one from Kentucky! . . . [I]f Bragg had only let us fight . . . I know that we would have whipped the Yankees.”³⁷

Unsurprisingly, the memory of Chickamauga—the army’s only signal victory of the war—is replete with examples of Confederate martial spirit and sacrifice. (The Battle of Chickamauga as a memory that served to prove the army’s capabilities will be discussed in chapter five.) In 1915 Mrs. J. D. Rudd recalled the bravery of Jimmie Arnold at the battle. A fifteen-year-old Texas orphan, he “was the pet of his company and of his regiment. They were proud of his courage and fidelity.” Rudd claimed that Arnold had a premonition of his own death and pleaded with his colonel to let him sit out the battle. But, on being reminded of his duty, he stoically marched into battle and to his death. He was “as brave as Leonidas, who defended the pass of Thermopylae with his three hundred Spartans against Xerxes’s myriads of Persians. Who

³⁶ Ibid., 8 (1900): 368-69.

³⁷ Ibid., 5 (1897): 108.

will say that his death was not as heroic as the Spartan king's?" Leonidas was not the only military leader whose heroism was rivaled by Arnold's sacrifice. Rudd continued: "Who will say that General Lee, Stonewall Jackson, Albert Sidney Johnston, Joseph E. Johnston, or any other of our brave leaders was a greater hero than the little orphan boy, Jimmie Arnold[?]"³⁸

Taking part in the Army of Tennessee's only major victory of the war was not enough for some participants; they wanted their unit recognized as the most important of the battle. In 1904 the Literary and Historical Association of North Carolina reported on the accomplishments of its state's soldiers in the Civil War. A. C. Avery, former major and Chickamauga veteran, investigated the role of Tar Heel soldiers in the battle. He concluded that North Carolina regiments advanced farther than any other Confederates on both days of the battle. The association believed that Avery's report "will have a peculiar interest because the deeds of North Carolina soldiers in the Army of the West are less well known than the dauntless courage of the North Carolina veterans in the Army of Northern Virginia." One of the state's slogans in the postwar period was "first at Bethel, farthest to the front at Gettysburg and Chickamauga, and last at Appomattox."³⁹

At the battles of Chattanooga the army was overwhelmed by forces under Ulysses S. Grant and forced to retreat into north Georgia. An 1897 tribute to the 27th Mississippi Infantry, however, remembered Lookout Mountain as proof of Confederate bravery, comradery, and martial superiority. The unit was in the thick of things, it said, and contested every inch of ground, losing multiple color bearers. At day's end several men in the unit gathered around their flag "and pledged that no 'Yank' should ever lay hands on it without passing over our dead

³⁸ Ibid., 23 (1915): 225.

³⁹ "North Carolina in the War Between the States," *State Literary and Historical Association, Literary and Historical Activities in North Carolina, 1900-1905* (Raleigh: E. M. Uzzell, 1907), 416-490.

bodies, and they never did. Strong men unused to tears, although accustomed to the cruel scenes of war, cried like children.” Like many other regimental tributes it insisted that the battle was lost in a different sector: “the next day the colors were fastened to a hickory pole and carried triumphantly until the crisis came, and then the little remnant that was left of the Twenty-seventh Mississippi followed that flag down the Mountain in perfect good order, while other regiments left the Ridge in disorder.”⁴⁰

Even on “the Ridge” there could be found steadfast and triumphant Rebel soldiers. In 1883 an anonymous former private published an article in *Southern Bivouac*. While he largely approved of the periodical’s earlier pieces on the battle he felt that his unit, Maney’s Brigade, had not received due credit. Although Missionary Ridge had culminated with George Thomas’s Corps crashing through the Army of Tennessee’s lines, the private remembered his unit as being victorious: “the issue of the conflict at this point was not, for an instant, doubtful. Numbers of the Federals dropped their guns, and, with hands over head, rushed through our lines to surrender. . . . The Confederates were, in all cases, the gainers.” The Yankees fled in confusion. The private made it clear that his brigade bore no blame for the outcome of the battle. “Noon had long since passed,” he recalled, “and still the private soldier on the right knew nothing of disaster, and thought that a victory had been gained.”⁴¹

The Atlanta Campaign is now identified by historians as the Confederacy’s last real chance to gain its independence, for a different result could have cost President Lincoln reelection. But the city fell to the enemy, and did so on the Army of Tennessee’s watch. This incurred no shame, however, in the minds of its veterans. In 1889, Company K of the 34th Georgia Infantry held a reunion in Cany Head, Georgia. The orator, former lieutenant A. J.

⁴⁰ CV 5 (1897): 73.

⁴¹ SB 2 (1883), 303-304.

Hollingsworth, proclaimed that “although the army of Tennessee failed to accomplish the gigantic task assigned to it, yet I ask no greater honor than to have it said to me: ‘He belonged to the army of Tennessee.’” He went on to tell of the sorrow he felt when visiting the battlefields around Atlanta. He asked his audience, “Where are all those who stood as a bulwark around that devoted city?,” then answered his own question: “like the leaves of the forest assailed by the bitter, biting blasts of autumn . . . [they fell] to enrich the soil from whence they sprang, [and] so fade[d] that gallant, human rampart that disputed inch by inch every foot of the soil of their native land.”⁴²

As Sherman approached the Gate City, sixteen-year-old Isaac Newton Giffen was convalescing from wounds, received probably at Murfreesboro. Under the care of Dr. and Mrs. Francis O. Ticknor the boy was slowly nursed back to health before returning to the front. Giffen’s noble character and bravery moved the doctor to author one of the more widely reprinted poems of the era, “Little Giffen, of Tennessee.” Even while convalescing, the boy, “smitten of grape-shot and gangrene,” thought only of his comrades at the front. His concern for his fellow soldiers would lead to his death. News of Sherman’s advance on

Atlanta were too much for the boy:
Word of gloom from the war, one day;
Johnston pressed at the front, they say;
Little Giffen was up and away!
A tear, his first, as he bade good-by,
Dimmed the glint of his steel-blue eye.

⁴² *Carroll* (Georgia) *Free Press*, November 8, 1889.

"I'll write, if spared!" There was news of fight,
But none of Giffen—he did not write!⁴³

Some tributes honored a dying soldier who had displayed not only selfless bravery but also piety. An 1897 *Confederate Veteran* article by G. H. Blakeslee, a Union soldier, chronicled the final moments of William Hughes Parks of the 12th Tennessee Infantry in June 1864. The two wounded soldiers found themselves lying side by side in a Union field hospital. As they conversed, Parks, mortally wounded in the gut, expressed gratitude toward his captors, remembered fondly his home and family, expressed sorrow over his fallen comrades and seemingly doomed country, and humbled himself before God. "He fervently implored God to be a father to his orphan sisters and protect them from the days to come. In feeling supplication, he asked the Great Ruler to bless his beloved land and the rulers thereof, and prayed that the days of danger and trouble would soon end in peace. . . . [D]uring the dark hours of night his soul went back to his God."⁴⁴

Giffen and Parks were not the only boy soldiers remembered for their ultimate sacrifice in the battles for Atlanta. In 1893 former officer E. L. Drake paid tribute to Billy Youree of the 2nd Tennessee Infantry. When he joined the army "he was [a] puny, sallow, undeveloped youth . . . seemingly too weak to handle a musket or endure a march, but he never missed a battle." Despite feeble health, Youree "did his duty like the strongest." As the Atlanta Campaign progressed his health altogether failed and Drake ordered him to the hospital. Youree soon returned to the front, however, protesting that he "would rather stay with the boys." The decision

⁴³ Francis Ticknor, "Little Giffen of Tennessee," in Henry Jerome Stockard, ed., *A Study in Southern Poetry: For Use in Schools, Colleges and the Library* (New York: Neale Publishing, 1911), 109-10.

⁴⁴ *CV* 5 (1897): 476.

cost him his life at Peachtree Creek. Drake assured readers of the *Veteran* that “Billy Youree was a model character. He had none of the vices of camp. His Bible was his constant companion and his morals pure; indeed he shamed us all by his example of patient, uncompromising fortitude under the most trying circumstances.”⁴⁵

In addition to bravery and piety, some individual soldiers were remembered for their humor amid death, defeat, and deprivation. An anecdote published in 1868 told of a veteran giving advice to a raw recruit during the Atlanta Campaign. The novice soldier held lofty ideas about sacrifice and patriotism that the veteran found quaint. “That’s all well enough,” he told his young comrade, “but I tell you a fellow may as well look out a little for himself.” Yesterday, he went on, he had been tempted to shoot a Yankee soldier he had spotted; however, noticing the man’s diminutive size, he concluded that he would not be able to wear any of his clothes and thus opted to let that particular enemy live to fight another day. The next Yankee he encountered was not so lucky: “I waited till a fellow of about my own girth showed himself, when I took a sure aim upon him and *here’s his boots!*” More than three decades after the campaign’s end, *Confederate Veteran* published a tribute to Lieutenant Isaac Lightner, a Missouri artilleryman and “A gentleman by birth and by instinct.” Mortally wounded at Kennesaw Mountain, as he was being carried from the field he supposedly crossed paths with Patrick Cleburne, saluted the general, and “gaily asked: ‘General Cleburne have I not won promotion to-day?’”⁴⁶

While military historians do not grant Hood’s Tennessee Campaign the same strategic importance as Atlanta, for the Army of Tennessee it was even more disastrous. The dual bloodlettings at Franklin and Nashville annihilated the army. Still, valor and martial ability were on display. An 1884 piece in the *Southern Bivouac* hailed the ferocity of Ross’s Texas cavalry

⁴⁵ Ibid., 1 (1893): 371

⁴⁶ *TLWL* 5 (1868): 274; *CV* 4 (1896): 252.

brigade at Franklin. Skirmishing with federal horsemen around the Harpeth River, the unit was in danger of being overrun. In an effort to turn the tide, orderly sergeant “Old Billy Hell” called out to his comrades: “Front into line, and holler like Hell!” Apparently this had the desired effect; the piece concluded: “The Yanks fell back.” In 1897 a former member of the 6th Tennessee Infantry wrote to the *Veteran* paying tribute to H. Clay Barnes, a diminutive soldier in his unit. During the battle, the author recalled, Barnes mounted the Union breastworks, clubbed an enemy color bearer, and dragged him and his flag back to Rebel lines. In another piece, the selfless bravery of Sergeant Robert Bringhurst was chronicled. Although wounded during the Atlanta Campaign, officially on furlough, and reliant on crutches, Bringhurst refused to part with his brigade at Franklin. When asked what he hoped to accomplish, he replied that he wanted simply to “cheer the boys on.” He was wounded eight times and died a few days later.⁴⁷

Some former soldiers saw unit tributes as a zero-sum game; to exalt the role of one unit in a given action was to denigrate another. A letter in the January 1900 issue of *Confederate Veteran* praised the men of Cheatham’s Division at Franklin. W. H. Sales, a veteran of Cleburne’s Division, took it as an insult to the men of his unit and responded with a letter of his own, portions of which were published in the February issue. The editor, realizing that he had inadvertently shamed some soldiers by honoring others, responded: “The *Veteran* would not willingly be the cause of disparity between the gallantry and the faithfulness of these two divisions, which ranked second to no others who fought for the Confederate side. During their long, hard service in many terrible battles there was never aught but pride and good will for each other.”⁴⁸

⁴⁷ *SB* 3 (1884): 398; *CV* 5 (1897): 38, 130.

⁴⁸ *CV* 8 (1900): 11-12, 81. See also *ibid.*, 3 (1895): 37, 245.

While the Battle of Nashville was a disaster for the Confederacy, there could still be found in it shining examples of Rebel pluck. In 1905 former artilleryman E. W. Tarrant recalled the difficulties facing his Alabama battery at the battle. Unlike other batteries, Tarrant insisted, his was without infantry support, yet it still managed to hold off the Yankees for an hour and a half and could have done so longer had the Confederate forces to its left not retreated in panic. Only when they had no choice did Tarrant and his comrades spike their guns and join the retreat. Apologizing to his commander, Tarrant was assured that he “had done everything that a man could do.” Half a decade later, former major G. W. Garret recalled the valor of his regiment at the battle. As the men prepared for action Garret addressed them: “I have been with you in many battles, and have ever found you at your places ready for duty as courageous soldiers. Let this day add fresh laurels to the fame of the 23rd Mississippi.” Although the Army of Tennessee was virtually annihilated, the soldiers of the regiment “did their duty, and did it well, as the long line of the enemy’s dead and wounded in our front was a solemn testimony.”⁴⁹

In Confederate memory, valor had been displayed even in the battle’s chaotic aftermath. Former captain F. G. Terry paid tribute in 1905 to his unit’s role in covering Hood’s retreat from Nashville. In the Army of Tennessee’s dying moments, Crossland’s Kentucky cavalry brigade (fighting as part of Abraham Buford’s division) was its guardian angel. “From Hollow Tree Gap through Franklin to Spring Hill, to Columbia, to Pulaski, there was not a day that Buford’s division did not ‘lock horns’ with [Union general James H.] Wilson’s cavalry and not a night they did not stand between Hood’s infantry and the enemy . . . but they could never break or stampede us.” Indeed, Terry recalled that the brigade had earned “an enviable reputation for its

⁴⁹ Ibid., 13 (1905): 66, 18 (1910): 470.

loyalty, its fighting and staying qualities from the time it was assigned to Forrest's Corps until its surrender."⁵⁰

Even at Bentonville, where the meager remnants of the Army of Tennessee fought a losing battle as part of the hastily assembled Army of the South, Confederate martial glory was manifest. In 1878 G. B. Guild paid tribute to the valor of the 8th Texas Cavalry and 4th Tennessee Cavalry, which counterattacked the advancing Union lines: "there can be no doubt that this charge saved our little army from destruction at Bentonville. . . . It is almost incredible to believe that two small regiments of cavalry could have accomplished this." In 1895, G. K. Miller, a former captain, recalled the same counterattack: The two units "with a yell bore down upon the advancing Federals in as brilliant a charge as the war furnished," capturing many of them. "At Bentonville," Miller concluded, "the last battle of the army of Tennessee, its halfclad, ragged, footsore, hungry veterans displayed all of the high soldierly qualities that had distinguished them from Belmont to Averagesboro, and no part of it with more signal gallantry than the 8th Texas and 4th Tennessee Cavalry." These were not the only units remembered for their intrepid deeds in the army's final battle. "Comrades of the Army of Tennessee, do you recollect Col. Anderson Searcy, who commanded the Forty Fifth Tennessee[?]," B. L. Ridley asked readers of the *Veteran* in 1900. Although the battle ended in defeat and led to the army's capitulation, the colonel and his unit were remembered for how "they charged through the Yankee lines in the battle." This was not an exceptional episode in the unit's history, claimed Ridley: "follow [Searcy] and his regiment in the records of the rebellion, and you will find them knocking away with credit to themselves from Bowling Green to Bentonville."⁵¹

⁵⁰ Ibid., 13 (1905): 161.

⁵¹ *Annals of the Army of Tennessee and Early Western History* 1 (1878): 64; CV 3 (1895), 71, 8 (1900): 263.

In postwar Southern memory the largely unsuccessful Army of Tennessee became a gallant legion of heroes who whipped the Yankees on every field. The army's historical record, examined with an impartial eye, belied some of the central myths of the Lost Cause. But the selective memories of Sam Davis, Little Giffen, Jimmie Arnold, the Orphan Brigade, the Caddo Fencibles, the 19th Tennessee, and others kept the myth alive.

In May 1905, the *Confederate Veteran* reprinted a letter by Brigadier General R. C. Tyler of Cheatham's Corps supposedly written in February 1865. Having just gone through disastrous engagements at Franklin and Nashville, the Army of Tennessee for all intents and purposes had ceased to exist. But Tyler was undismayed. He pledged that when the war was over he would acknowledge without shame his membership in the army. "[T]he old Army of Tennessee is a grand organization," he wrote. "[I] am proud to be a member of it. . . . It is composed principally of veteran troops, battle-scarred heroes, bronze visaged, sturdy sinewed, iron-willed, brave, and self-sacrificing. They are a noble band." In the memories of former Confederates, this "noble band," much like the army's high command, proved to be greater than the sum of its parts.⁵²

⁵² CV 13 (1905): 225.

Chapter Five:
“The battle fields rendered illustrious by your victories”:
Contingencies and Moments in the Army of Tennessee’s Memory

On July 10, 1878, the Association of the Army of Tennessee convened in Mississippi City to bestow on Jefferson Davis honorary membership. James Ligan, veteran of the 11th Louisiana Infantry and president of the association, informed the crowd that “we have assembled here for the purpose of looking back on the past, in order to learn a lesson for the future. We have assembled for the purpose of doing honor to the past, reviving memories of the dead and paying honor to the living.” He then presented Davis with a badge and certificate and surrendered the podium to the aging former commander in chief. Davis’s acceptance speech was similar to countless others he gave in the postwar period; he reminded the crowd of the legality of secession, the numerical superiority of the Yankee invaders, and the moral and martial superiority of Confederate generals. He eulogized Albert Sidney Johnston, assuring the veterans that they had “followed the greatest soldier, the ablest man, civil or military, Confederate or Federal, then living. . . . When he fell, I realized that our strongest pillar had been broken.” Before moving on to a sketch of American history as he saw it and a scathing indictment of the federal government he told his audience: “I will not follow you through your long career of honorable service, or pause to exult with you over the battle fields rendered illustrious by your victories.”¹

Battles, moments in time, and military contingencies loom large in Civil War memory. Because the South was defeated, this is especially true of the memories of former Confederates. The most famous and often evoked moment in the war’s popular memory was the Battle of

¹ *Southern Historical Society Papers* 6 (1878): 162-71. Henceforth cited as *SHSP*.

Gettysburg—“the eternal southern moment” as it is labeled by historians of the Lost Cause. Because the defeat at Gettysburg threatened Robert E. Lee’s stainless record as military leader and, in turn, the Lost Cause, white Southerners espoused memories of the battle that laid the blame elsewhere, whether it be the recalcitrance of James Longstreet or the fateful bullet that felled Stonewall Jackson months earlier at Chancellorsville. White Southerners constructed a narrative of Gettysburg that validated their belief in Lee and Confederate martial superiority. Similarly, those who identified with the oft-trounced Army of Tennessee constructed memories of episodes in its history that served to validate Lost Cause cultural convictions and explain how the army or the Confederacy was defeated.²

Despite its wartime record, victorious moments abounded in the memory of the Army of Tennessee. As chapter two shows, the most prominent moment was the death of Albert Sidney Johnston on the first day of Shiloh. However, other episodes in the army’s history also played important roles in its popular memory. The Battle of Chickamauga, the Dalton bivouac, the change of command during the Atlanta Campaign, and the Battle of Franklin were all often recalled in the postwar period. In white Southern memory, these moments served to prove Confederate martial ability, piety, and manhood and, in some cases, to explain defeat.

Given the army’s dismal wartime record it is unsurprising that the Battle of Chickamauga loomed large in Confederate memory. Indeed, in Davis’s 1878 speech before the Association of the Army of Tennessee, Chickamauga was the only battle he cited as “one of the many proofs” of the army’s capabilities. Over two days in September 1863 the Army of Tennessee, in memory, demonstrated two things: first, that it was indeed capable of achieving a victory—one that, for a

² Connelly and Bellows, *God and General Longstreet*, 32-38; Foster, *Ghosts of the Confederacy*, 58; Nolan, “Anatomy of a Myth,” in *Myth of the Lost Cause*, eds. Gallagher and Nolan, 17; Jeffry D. Wert, “James Longstreet and the Lost Cause,” in *Myth of the Lost Cause*, eds. Gallagher and Nolan, 127-46.

time, assured the Confederacy's survival; and second, that it had taken part in one of the great military clashes of modern times.³

A number of poets sought in the battle's immediate aftermath to capture its drama. One anonymously written poem presented Chickamauga as a climactic battle fought by brave Rebel soldiers who were weary of defeat and aware that their cause was at a crossroads:

Long, with hearts subdued and saddened,
As th' oppressor's host moved on,
Fell the arms of freedom backward,
Till our hopes had almost flown;
Till outspoken stern valor's fiat—
“*Here* th' invading wave shall stay;
Here shall cease the foe's proud progress;
Here be crushed his grand array!”

The poem conceptualized the battle much as it would be remembered for the next several decades. It was climactic. And, even by Civil War standards, it was shockingly violent, and it was thus described in near-apocalyptic terms. In addition to brave troops, Chickamauga was fought by “Southern battle-giants” such as Breckinridge, Cheatham, Polk, Cleburne, Hill, and Hood. The soldiers, whether in the ranks or the high command, had declared “ever will [we]

³ *SHSP* 6 (1878): 167. On the history of Chickamauga battlefield and its uses in Civil War memory see, Bradley S. Keefer, *Conflicting Memories on the “River of Death”: The Chickamauga Battlefield and the Spanish-American War, 1863-1933* (Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 2013); Timothy B. Smith, *A Chickamauga Memorial: The Establishment of America's First Civil War National Military Park* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2009); and Caroline E. Janney, “‘I Yield to No Man an Iota of My Convictions’: Chickamauga and Chattanooga National Military Park and the Limits of Reconciliation,” *Journal of the Civil War Era* 2 (2012): 394-420.

unconquered be!” However, for the poet, the battle was more than anything a warning to the Yankee invaders, who should “heed the story” and “ponder well your fearful lesson,” for it was at Chickamauga they met their doom. Moreover, should they persist in trying to conquer the South they would be whipped again and again:

Learn to shun the Southern vengeance,
Sworn upon the votive sword,
“Every stream a Chickamauga
To the vile invading horde!”⁴

Mollie E. Moore, a prolific young Texas poet, expressed similar sentiments. Seventeen when the war began, she published poems in numerous Southern newspapers during the conflict. *Minding the Gap and Other Poems*, the first anthology of her work, appeared in 1867. Despite “those panting [Yankee] hosts,” her poem “Chickamauga” proclaimed, “our banner kept its pride.” The “blood-stained stars” of their battle-flags proved the Rebel soldiers’ bravery. After four stanzas her verses assumed the perspective of a manly Texas soldier who thought only of home and family as he marched to battle. At Chickamauga he fell “as only Freedom’s own can fall!” While his wife and children mourned his death, his comrades chose to remember his valor:

The camp-fire in the distant wood gleams red,

⁴ “Chickamauga—‘The Stream of Death,’” in *War Songs and Poems of the Southern Confederacy, 1861-1865: A Collection of the Most Popular and Impressive Songs and Poems of War Time, Dear to Every Southern Heart, Written and Sung by Many Known and Unknown Writers*, H. M. Wharton, ed. (Philadelphia: no publisher, 1904): 147-50. Historian Cynthia Wachtell dates the publication of the poem to circa 1863. See Cynthia Wachtell, *War No More: The Antiwar Impulse in American Literature, 1861-1914* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2010), 15.

The soldiers group about the ruddy light,
And count in softened tones the noble dead—
The dead! “It thinned our ranks so, that last fight!
The brave who fell like brothers, side by side!”
And then his comrades tell how well he fought, who died
By the River of Death!⁵

Like the anonymous poet mentioned above, veteran W. M. Marriner, in an essay published in the *Southern Bivouac* in 1884, affirmed that the Confederacy was at a crossroads in September 1863. Tennessee had largely been lost and Georgia was threatened by invasion. The Army of Tennessee’s soldiers had these gloomy thoughts on their minds as they marched to battle and, according to Marriner, were also burdened by their wartime record. “This is what every soldier in the ranks could not but see,” he wrote, “but history says that a stunning Confederate victory was necessary to give the Western army that prestige of victory that rendered the army of Lee well nigh invincible.” While he acknowledged that Chickamauga was a pyrrhic triumph, he maintained that “the victory is not forgotten” and “the rout of the enemy is remembered.”⁶

Other veterans of the battle also remembered it in climactic terms; after all, the higher the stakes the more impressive the victory. After attending a reunion in 1892 at which Raphael Semmes’s widow requested that aging veterans recreate the “Rebel Yell,” Orphan Brigade veteran Keller Anderson wrote a bitter column in a Memphis newspaper insisting that recreating

⁵ Wachtell, *War No More*, 18-19; Mollie E. Moore, *Minding the Gap and Other Poems* (Houston: Cushing and Cave, 1867), 221-24.

⁶ *SB* 3 (1884): 8.

the cry in civilian life was foolhardy. In fact, he implied that the yell, in its purest and fiercest form, was heard only at Chickamauga—"one of the best contested battles of the times."

Anderson recalled the battle's climax after two days of bloodletting:

Then arose that do-or-die expression, that maniacal maelstrom of sound; that penetrating, rasping, shrieking, blood-curdling noise, that could be heard for miles on earth, and whose volume reached the heavens; such an expression as never yet came from the throats of sane men, but from men whom the seething blast of an imaginary hell would not check while the sound lasted.

Rebuking Semmes, Anderson concluded his letter thus: "dear Southern mother, that was the Rebel yell."⁷

In 1894 W. J. McMurry, who had taken part in A. P. Stewart's attack on the battle's first day, wrote that "no field of carnage was more stubbornly contested than was that of Chickamauga during our civil war. There the flower of the West and the chivalry of the South clashed in deadly combat." The battle, once again, took place at a pivotal time; Tennesseans longed to return home and Georgians were desperate to stave off Yankee invasion. McMurry pondered: "What more incentive could patriots have to make them give grand battle?" After Stewart's attack began, "it seemed as if the earth had opened up all of her magazines, and not a man would be left to tell the tale. . . . In five minutes all the horrors of war that a soldier ever witnessed were there."⁸

⁷ CV 1 (1893): 15.

⁸ Ibid., 2 (1894): 329.

Using similarly apocalyptic language three years later, former colonel George E. Purvis remembered Chickamauga as a moment “when the very demons of hell seemed abroad, armed and equipped for the annihilation of mankind.” Again and again Confederate brigades attacked but “like great waves of the sea, [were] dashed and broken in pieces against lines and positions that would not yield to their assaults.” In the face of Union artillery Forrest’s men “saw their ranks melt as snowflakes.” Elsewhere on the field, the Orphan Brigade persevered “until three men out of every four were either wounded or dead, eclipsing the historic charge at Balaklava and the bloody losses in the great battles of modern times.” At Chickamauga Union soldiers witnessed all that the Confederate soldier was capable of; “they looked down again on those slopes, slippery with blood and strewn thick as leaves with all the horrible wreck of battle, over which and in spite of repeated failures these assaulting Confederate columns still formed and reformed, charging again and again with undaunted and undying courage.”⁹

In his 1918 memoirs Lot D. Young of the Orphan Brigade remembered Chickamauga in mythical terms as well. “Early, very early,” he recalled, “the Fourth Kentucky Skirmishers had the honor of firing the first shots in the opening that day of the greatest battle ever fought on the American continent, if not the greatest in modern times.” Acknowledging the subjectivity of such a claim he admitted that “this assertion may be called in question by critics, but if I mistake not there were more men killed and wounded at Chickamauga than in any other engagement of the war. . . . [H]ere the old and somewhat sacrilegious saying of ‘Hell broke loose in Georgia’ was fully and forcefully emphasized.”¹⁰

At times former Confederates’ conceptions of Chickamauga were confirmed by the recollections of Union veterans. In 1886 former federal general Gates P. Thruston provided the

⁹ Ibid., 5 (1897): 11.

¹⁰ Young, *Reminiscences of a Soldier*, 62.

Southern Bivouac with a lengthy narrative of the battle. Suggesting that certain publications (presumably including the *Southern Historical Society Papers*) were enamored with battles that featured Lee, Jackson, Grant, or Sherman, Thruston insisted that Chickamauga was exceptional: “the war furnished no better test of the fighting metal [sic] of the American soldier.” Like other survivors of the battle, Thruston drew parallels between Chickamauga and important battles in European history. Longstreet’s attack on the second day was compared to Napoleon’s at the Battle of Wagram. “No! there was no severer battle, east or west, than Chickamauga,” he opined; “the history of the war will furnish no better illustration of the brilliant fighting qualities and the enduring courage of the American soldier on *both* sides.”¹¹

Similarly, an 1893 article by former Union general Henry V. Boynton insisted that “nothing could exceed the valor of these [Rebel] troops”; they faced battle “with a courage seldom equaled and which it was impossible to surpass. . . . [P]raise of the Confederate fighting is in no sense exaggerated. In truth, language cannot exaggerate it.” Nevertheless, in clear exaggeration, Boynton claimed that Chickamauga was not only the bloodiest battle of the Civil War but bloodier than any battle in modern European history. (With 34,000 casualties in total, it was indeed a bloody battle, but neither of those assertions was true.)¹²

Thruston, Boynton, and Purvis were not the only veterans who compared Chickamauga to climactic battles in European history. In that respect, memories of the battle served to prove not only that the Army of Tennessee was capable of victory but that it had participated in one of the great military clashes of western civilization. In 1876 Joseph Wheeler incorrectly claimed that “at Chickamauga we inflicted a loss on Rosecranz [sic] as great as the loss sustained by Napoleon at Waterloo.” A 1914 military history of the war for students presented the battle in a

¹¹ *SB* 5 (1886): 406, 409, 412, 415.

¹² *CV* 1 (1893): 297.

similar light. Chickamauga, it claimed, “is considered one of the greatest battles of modern times. It was exceeded in our Civil war [sic] only by Gettysburg and the Wilderness; [it] compares with Waterloo, and [was] twice bloodier than Wagram or Austerlitz.” Moreover, “the personal daring and courage displayed in the ranks of both armies has never been excelled on any battlefield.”¹³

Memories of Chickamauga as a pivotal battle of grand-historic scale survived the wartime generation. Thomas W. Dixon presented an exaggerated Chickamauga in his 1914 novel *The Victim*. “At the end of two days of carnage,” he wrote, “the Union army was totally routed, right, left, and center and hurled back from Georgia into Chattanooga.” The book, an apologia for Jefferson Davis, even granted the typically scapegoated Braxton Bragg credit for the Rebel victory, describing the battle as the most “brilliant achievement of military genius.” While the two armies were, in fact, numerically about equal, Dixon claimed that “Rosecrans’ army of eighty thousand men was literally cut to pieces by Bragg’s fifty thousand Southerners.” The battle was not only exceptional among those of the Civil War but “was in every way as desperate a battle as Arcola—and in all Napoleon’s Italian campaigns nothing more daring and wonderful was accomplished by the Man of Destiny.”¹⁴

Similar sentiments were expressed by C. P. J. Mooney, the managing editor of the *Memphis Commercial Appeal*, in a Memorial Day address in 1914. Mooney, who was born in 1865, pondered the tenacity of the Confederacy after the disasters of July 1863: “The marvel to me is that after Gettysburg and after Vicksburg the Confederate soldier had the heart to fight at Chickamauga. And yet before the shouts of victory and joy had ceased in the North . . . the Confederates brought a magnificent fighting machine into play against another Federal army . . .

¹³ AAT 1 (1878): 45; Vinyard, *Battles of the Civil War*, 104, 108.

¹⁴ Dixon, *The Victim*, 412-13.

and all but annihilated it at Chickamauga.” More than any of the Civil War’s other storied engagements, it was Chickamauga that “nearly struck terror into the hearts of the brave men of the North.”¹⁵

While Chickamauga was remembered for its climactic and even apocalyptic violence and bloodshed, the Dalton winter encampment would be commemorated largely for its tranquility, frivolity, and exhibition of Confederate piety. Historians argue that Joseph E. Johnston’s assumption of command and subsequent reorganization and training regimen, a months-long revival, and a massive snowball fight reenergized the army for its forthcoming work. Had it been successful in the succeeding campaign, the Dalton bivouac would surely be remembered as its Valley Forge.¹⁶

On March 22, 1864, with five inches of snow blanketing the army’s encampment, thousands of soldiers took part in a massive snowball fight. It might seem odd that men who suffered all the travails of Civil War soldiering would dwell on such a trifling episode, but for decades after the war officers and enlisted men alike reminisced fondly about this brief diversion. In history, the Army of Tennessee’s wartime experience was four years of irascible commanders, privations, defeats, and retreats. In memory the snowball fight served to sweeten this sour record.

Tennessean George W. Gordon, former general and one-time commander of the UCV, claimed that many times in the postwar period he was asked: “General, do you remember the snowball battle at Dalton?” Indeed he did, and he recounted it in a lengthy narrative that appeared in multiple publications at the end of the nineteenth century. The sham battle he

¹⁵ James W. Silver, “C. P. J. Mooney of the Memphis *Commercial Appeal*, Crusader for Diversification,” *Agricultural History* 17 (1943): 81; CV 22 (1914): 113-14.

¹⁶ Daniel, *Soldiering in the Army of Tennessee*, 10, 57, 60, 138; Connelly, *Autumn of Glory*, 286-87; McMurtry, *Two Great Rebel Armies*, 129; Clampitt, *Confederate Heartland*, 8, 25-29, 50-51.

recalled was one of Tennesseans versus Georgians. Gordon, initially just a spectator, was lured off the sidelines when some of his men assured him that he could lead them to victory. “The air was white with whizzing and bursting balls,” he recalled; “men were tripped up, knocked down, covered with snow, or run over.” It was all in good fun and at nightfall the soldiers “retired . . . with the fadeless memory of a glorious day.” Subsequently it proved to be “rather a bond of sympathy and union.” The bedrock of his reputation, Gordon testified, was not his actions on bloody battlefields but his leadership during the Dalton snowball fight. Georgians in the Army of Tennessee thereafter referred to him as the “Snowball Colonel.”¹⁷

In his 1868 history of the Orphan Brigade, Edward Porter Thompson was silent on the snowball fight, stating simply that the Dalton encampment “had many phases peculiar to soldiers long established in quarters, and it would require a little volume adequately to describe the employments and diversions.” But his recollections of the army’s winter in Dalton were more vivid when he revised his work three decades later, suggesting that the prominence of the snowball fight was largely an artifact of memory construction. “The fun was contagious,” he wrote, “and soon about every well man in the brigade was out and the Tennesseans also came on in force. The excitement extended to field and staff officers, who hastily saddled up and rode out to take command; and then there was shouting of orders with words of encouragement as well as pelting.” At times the friendly competition got heated and “something that seemed too solid for a snowball would hit a man, and of course there were charges that this or that side was violating

¹⁷ A. J. Vaughan, *Personal Record of the Thirteenth Regiment, Tennessee Infantry* (Memphis: S. C. Toof, 1897), 89-95; George W. Gordon, “The Famous Snowball Battle in the Confederate Army at Dalton, Ga., 1864,” in *Camp Fires of the Confederacy*, 48-53.

the rules of civilized warfare.” That evening before taps the men sat around campfires talking over the day’s exciting events.¹⁸

Thanks in large part to the temporary breakdown of the army’s hierarchy on that occasion, Sam Watkins remembered the snowball fight fondly:

The effect was electric, boyhood frolics were renewed and the air was full of flying snow balls. Brigades and divisions were soon involved, and such a scene was never before witnessed on earth. Many thousands of men were engaged in a snow ball battle. It began early in the morning; generals, colonels, captains, and privates were all mixed up. Private soldiers became commanders and generals were simply privates, and the usual conditions were reversed.¹⁹

The mock battle resulted in some casualties. “That snow-balling at Dalton,” wrote B. L. Ridley, “I will never forget. It was the biggest fight—for fun—I ever saw and there was so much rivalry between the troops that a number of soldiers had their eyes put out.” Fred Joyce, apparently aware of some of the unfortunate consequences of the melee, described it as “the heaviest snowball fight ever known—in which the whole army was engaged for hours, and divisions and brigades were officered just like a real engagement. I . . . missed this great struggle,

¹⁸ Edward Porter Thompson, *History of the First Kentucky Brigade* (Cincinnati: Caxton Publishing House, 1868), 231; Thompson, *History of the Orphan Brigade*, 239.

¹⁹ CV 1 (1893): 261-62.

for which I was—am yet I trust—properly thankful.” Nevertheless, most commentators remembered it as a much needed respite from war and military decorum.²⁰

The snowball fight was not the only episode of frivolity remembered from the army’s time at Dalton. Fred Joyce wrote that “all the devices known to the soldier, and they are legion, were brought into play for the entertainment of the army and smoothing down the rough and jagged routine of the soldier’s life.” He was referring to the cock fights, gambling, and rough-housing that abounded that winter. J. M Tydings likewise had fond memories of Dalton, recalling that “a few choice spirits of the Orphan Brigade associated themselves together for the purpose of relieving the tedium and monotony of camp-life by an occasional sociale [sic], musicale, concert, serenade, etc.” In an effort to spread joy to Dalton’s civilian population, the Orphans went caroling through town; “a number of ladies and gentlemen and a still greater number of belated soldiers and urchins, attracted to the spot, soon drew around, quiet and unobtrusive, but delighted auditors.” The men sang—at least in Tydings’s memory—like a choir of angels: “The song went on, gathering sweetness and volume . . . till finally as the full-voiced chorus burst out upon the tremulous air, it swelled into a perfect torrent of melody.”²¹

Dalton not only a site of fun, rest, and rejuvenation; in memory it was the scene of incontrovertible proof that the Army of Tennessee was a Christian army. An 1867 article, “Religion in the Army of Tennessee,” said of the Dalton revival:

The storm of war is hushed. The army goes into regular winter quarters. Four months or more of profound quiet is given to us.—

²⁰ Ridley, *Battles and Sketches*, 283; SB 2 (1883): 463.

²¹ SB 2 (1883): 463, 1 (1881): 270-71. For another anecdote, recalling frivolity at Dalton, see TLWL 6 (1868): 168-69.

It is the chaplain's time to work. In nearly every camp a church is erected. With sacred song, and prayer and instruction in holy things the men of God pursue their work. A revival is spoken of in a certain brigade. At the next chaplains' meeting we hear of others. The Spirit seems to visit every camp. A general revival is enjoyed. Then it is pleasant to see the *great* congregation. May we not trust that many who laid down their lives in that long four-months' battle from Dalton to Jonesboro' [sic] had made their preparation?²²

In 1883 Fred Joyce reminisced that at Dalton "a revival of religion was kept up in the army for quite a while, and hundreds were baptized. . . . Day and night one could hear the sweet songs of the gospel and the persuasive eloquence of our chaplains." Like others, Joyce believed that the revival had stiffened the moral fiber of the soldiers. "I went over to visit a college mate in a Louisiana regiment one day and expected, of course, to find him and his friends playing poker," he remembered. "What was my surprise to find him holding a prayer-meeting, surrounded by a large crowd of anxious listeners. There was good done at Dalton." A similar scene was conjured up in a 1904 regimental history: "Revival services were carried on most of the time while at Dalton, and many of the men professed religion and united themselves with the various churches; and none of them were ever known to repudiate their faith while soldiers or afterwards as citizens."²³

²² *TLWL* 4 (1867): 127, 131.

²³ *SB* 2 (1883): 464; William Josiah McMurry, *History of the Twentieth Tennessee Regiment Volunteer Infantry*, C. S. A. (Nashville: The Publication Committee, 1904), 138-39.

Sumner Cunningham wrote rapturously of the revival in an 1893 issue of *Confederate Veteran*: “[T]here has never been, even in the army of Cromwell or Gustavus Adolphus, a stronger religious feeling than there was in the army under Joseph E. Johnston.” The fervor seized him personally; after one meeting he retreated into solitude “in an agony of prayer,” seeking comfort in the face of “the uncertainties of life.” Like others, Cunningham saw Dalton as a turning point in the army’s moral history, claiming that “profanity, which is so common among soldiers, was almost entirely given up. There were no scoffers at the religion that had such a hold upon the army.”²⁴

Unsurprisingly, the revival loomed large in clergymen’s memories. In 1877 former chaplain and superintendent of the Soldiers’ Tract Association William W. Bennett published a history of revivals in Confederate armies. While devoting pages to each of the war’s theaters of operations and many prison camps, Bennett underscored the special nature of the Dalton revival. “The work at Dalton while the army lay there was almost without parallel. In the coldest and darkest nights of winter the rude chapels were crowded, and at the call for penitents hundreds would bow down in sorrow and tears.” So voracious was the army’s spiritual appetite that the chaplains could not distribute enough Bibles. But thanks to the chaplains’ tireless efforts “such a revival flame was kindled as is seldom seen in this sinful world. Dalton was the spiritual birthplace of thousands. Many are in heaven. Some still rejoice and labor on earth.” The anxiety that precedes any campaign, said Bennett, was powerless to weaken the army’s spiritual fervor. Quoting one of the army’s chaplains, he described a service in Dalton:

²⁴ CV 1 (1893): 15.

[M]any Christians wept, and sinners looked seriously and wonderingly on. It was so unlike the rude scenes of war. I shall never forget, and I shall always feel it, when I remember how these rough-bearded, war-worn, and battle-scarred veterans of three years' fierce conflict crowded around the log—the rude altar improvised for the occasion—to celebrate the death of their gracious and adorable Redeemer.

Thanks to its spiritual awakening, the army at the outset of the Atlanta Campaign was very different from that formed in 1861-62. “Twelve months after this revolution commenced,” declared another chaplain quoted by Bennett, “a more ungodly set of men could scarcely be found than the Confederate army.” But in the wake of the Dalton revival “the utterances of oaths is seldom, and religious songs and expressions of gratitude to God are heard from every quarter.” The men now marched to battle as “Christian patriots” confident in God’s protection. Clearly more concerned with the army’s spiritual than its terrestrial survival, the chaplain concluded that “such an army may be temporarily overpowered by vastly superior numbers, but they can never be conquered.”²⁵

The most influential nineteenth-century work on religion in the Confederate army was initially silent on the Dalton revival. The first edition of J. William Jones’s *Christ in the Camp* (1887) was concerned only with the Army of Northern Virginia. In the 1904 edition, however, Jones included appendices chronicling religion in other Confederate armies. He hoped this new

²⁵ William W. Bennett, *A Narrative of the Great Revival which Prevailed in the Southern Armies during the late Civil War between the States of the Federal Union* (Philadelphia: Claxton, Remsen, and Haffelfinger, 1877), 344, 366, 365, 377.

edition would “prove useful in showing our young people the power of religion to promote real manhood.” Quoting numerous Army of Tennessee chaplains and other witnesses, Jones conveyed to his readers the scope and energy of the Dalton revival. “Great crowds gather nightly,” one reported; “large numbers are seeking the Lord—forty to fifty every night.” Vice abated, the revival seized all denominations, and “the Spirit of the Holy One is present and felt.” J. J. Hutchinson, another chaplain serving at Dalton, made clear that the fervor took hold among the officer corps as well as the ranks. “Never have I seen such a field for preaching the gospel and inculcating religious truth,” he testified, “as the Confederate army now presents.” Even active campaigning could not bring the revival to a close. In May 1864 one meeting was interrupted with news of advancing Yankees, and in the words of a colporteur on the scene, “the soldiers were called from their camps to meet the enemy. . . . [T]hey literally went from the altar to their entrenchments—from their knees to the battle with their foes—singing the songs of Zion and supplicating the throne of grace as they surrounded the fires of the bivouac, or waited to receive the fire of the foe.” Jones also quoted a soldier in the ranks who was confident that in short order “we will have a brigade of Christian soldiers fighting for Christ and their country.” Furthermore, he said, the revival was spreading through the entire army. He looked to the future with renewed optimism: “I hope and trust in God that this army will be converted into a Christian army before this war is over.”²⁶

There was a significant episode during the Dalton bivouac notable for its relative absence in the Army of Tennessee’s popular memory: Patrick Cleburne’s motion to emancipate slaves in return for military service. While Jefferson Davis’s efforts to bury the proposal were never completely successful, it was not widely discussed in the immediate postwar period. Irving Buck,

²⁶ J. William Jones, *Christ in the Camp, or Religion in the Confederate Army* (Atlanta: Martin and Hoyt, 1904), 3, 554, 355, 583, 618.

Cleburne's adjutant general, claimed in 1904 that the "paper was suppressed by the Richmond authorities, and save to those to whom it was read at the time, and to the War Department, was only known by hearsay to the public until 32 years after." But this was an overstatement. In 1878 the short-lived Nashville periodical *Annals of the Army of Tennessee and Early Western History* publicized Cleburne's proposal; editor and former lieutenant colonel Edwin L. Drake acknowledged that it was "discussed at the time in the army . . . with bated breath" but claimed that word of it had "never appeared in print before that we are aware of." As shown in chapter three, Cleburne's emancipation plan was not an important factor in his postwar popularity. His memory was constructed solely to validate white Southerners' convictions of their martial abilities.²⁷

Cleburne's motion was not entirely without memorialists. Editor Drake maintained that "Cleburne's views on the subject of slavery in 1864, places [sic] the mental endowments of this splendid soldier in a light which strongly adds to his otherwise brilliant reputation." The foreign-born Cleburne "was better qualified to form a just and correct opinion on the proposed measure than our own people, whose feelings and interests were more deeply involved." An 1898 biography of Cleburne by Charles Edward Nash, the general's antebellum business partner, argued that his motion "would have been the best plan to have [been] adopted." Nash's endorsement, however, was motivated by his acceptance of Lost Cause arguments regarding the war's causes, white supremacy, and the benevolence of Southern slavery. His confidence in the plan stemmed from his conviction that slave owners cared for their slaves, "considered [them] a part of the household, and never allowed [them] to work in places of danger to life or health." Thus he claimed that the majority of conscripted slaves would have fought loyally for their

²⁷ Ruby, "General Patrick Cleburne's Proposal to Arm Southern Slaves," 208; Irving A. Buck, *Cleburne and His Command* (New York: Neale Publishing, 1908), 211; *AAT* 1 (1878): 50.

masters. Those who opposed the motion in 1864, according to Nash, did so because “they were not fighting for slaves but for a separate government.” B. L. Ridley was more restrained in his approval, postulating that “had General Cleburne’s idea been carried out, it perhaps would not have brought about the disintegration [of the Confederacy feared by some] and would have counteracted the Federal idea of enlisting [slaves] in their ranks.” Despite these examples, former Confederates identifying with the Army of Tennessee could have constructed a memory that laid claim to a racially progressive legacy; they chose not to. For Southern whites in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries who were aware of it, Cleburne’s motion was likely a stain on his otherwise pristine image. Consequently, the proposal was largely forgotten and Dalton was remembered solely in terms of frolicking and piety.²⁸

If Dalton was a safe port in the storm of war, Joseph E. Johnston was its harbormaster. His reforms of the army’s training regimen and organization and his generalship during the Atlanta Campaign were invoked by his numerous defenders to produce a postwar image of a paternalistic and capable general unfortunately removed from command before he could save the Confederacy.

Following Johnston’s death in 1891 the Association of Ex-Confederate Soldiers and Sailors eulogized him at a memorial service in Washington, D.C. Presiding over the ceremony, former Confederate general Eppa Hunton lauded Johnston as “one of the greatest and best of our leaders. . . . [He] led our armies to victory, or in defeat inspired them to greater deeds of valor. . . . [W]hether at the head of a victorious or vanquished army, he was always the brave, skillful and trusted leader.” Similar sentiments were expressed on that occasion by Virginia veteran Leigh

²⁸ AAT 1 (1878): 50; Charles Edward Nash, *Biographical Sketches of Gen. Pat Cleburne and Gen. T. C. Hindman, together with Humorous Anecdotes and Reminiscences of the Late Civil War* (Little Rock: Tunnah and Pittard, 1898), 190-93; Ridley, *Battles and Sketches*, 291.

Robinson, who gave the main address. “[T]he emulation of brave lives,” said Robinson, “and the preservation of their images, is the wise instinct of mankind.” Johnston was among those noble souls worthy of such recognition. Despite his Virginia roots, Robinson praised Johnston’s role in the west no less than his role in the east. “Johnston went to the West, not to do brilliant things for their own sake, but to win the cause of which he was the soldier.” Without mentioning any specific wartime episodes to prove his point, Robinson asserted that as a theater commander Johnston displayed strategic brilliance and consistently triumphed over larger enemy forces.²⁹

Johnston not only excelled in theater command, Robinson maintained, but also brought the army itself to its peak of efficiency. After assuming command at Dalton, he proved to be nothing short of a miracle worker. While his new position was “an unenviable throne” he “so reorganized and reassured his dispirited force, that, when the campaign opened in the spring, the poorest regiment he had was superior in effectiveness and drill to the best when he took command.” From that point on, “no army in the Confederacy excelled, if any equaled it, in drill and discipline.” Contemplating “the miracle which [Johnston] wrought in this transformation, from complete route to complete confidence, from fatal chaos and dismemberment . . . to compact order,” Robinson evoked the Book of Genesis: “As Johnston looked upon this work of his creative week, he saw that it was good.”³⁰

Like many other Johnston storytellers, Robinson marveled at the general’s masterful retreat from Dalton to Atlanta and presented his removal from command as one of the war’s great contingencies. His Fabian policy, condemned by some as cowardly or indecisive, was in truth brilliant, “the wise discerning stroke of the new regime.” As the armies neared the Gate

²⁹ Leigh Robinson, *Joseph E. Johnston: An Address Delivered Before the Association of Ex-Confederate Soldiers and Sailors of Washington, D. C., by Leigh Robinson, May 12, 1891, at the Memorial Service Held in Mt. Vernon M. E. Church, South, and the Proceedings of the Occasion* (Washington, D. C.: P. O. Polkinhorn, 1891), 7, 9, 22-23.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 34-35, 55.

City, “Johnston felt himself daily growing stronger against an adversary daily growing weaker.” Robinson’s Johnston was a chess master, always several moves ahead of Sherman, biding his time until he could reach Atlanta—“a place too strong to be taken by assault and too extensive to be invested.” There he would launch a counterstrike that would send Sherman reeling. But just as “the goal had been reached, the victory organized,” Richmond interceded. Had the Richmond authorities only been wiser and more patient and kept Johnston in command, “history would have engraved for him the epitaph: ‘Unus homo nobis cunctando restituit rem.’”³¹

In 1893 Virginia attorney Robert M. Hughes, Johnston’s grandnephew and personally selected biographer, echoed many of Robinson’s opinions. At Dalton, Johnston assumed command of a battered and broken army. His subsequent reforms worked wonders, “increasing the comfort and discipline of the troops. . . . [T]heir spirits returned, laggards rejoined their commands. . . . [The army’s] moral force had grown immeasurably.” Johnston, unlike Lee, was facing confident federal soldiers who had known little but victory. His retreats were calculated and “leisurely.” It was just as he was preparing to deliver Sherman a deadly blow that Davis foolishly interceded to replace him with Hood.³²

Such opinions were not mere platitudes expressed by friends and family in the wake of Johnston’s passing. Similar sentiments were voiced long before and after his death. In an 1866 tribute to George Washington, Daniel Harvey Hill could not help comparing Johnston to the American nation’s founder. “And how sublime too, was the conduct of that other Virginian, J. E. Johnston, when superseded at Atlanta after what the country now recognizes as a successful campaign.” Unselfish patriot that he was, Johnston surrendered his command with manly grace, concerned only for the well-being of his soldiers and his country. None of the Confederacy’s

³¹ Ibid., 38, 44-46, 57. “One man, by delaying, restored the state to us.”

³² Robert M. Hughes, *General Johnston* (New York: D. Appleton, 1893), 218-19, 224, 231, 247-48.

military mishaps could be laid at Johnston's feet, said Hill. Like Washington he realized the wisdom of a Fabian policy:

He retreated from Dalton; but he inflicted day by day such heavy losses upon Sherman that the disparity between their numbers had almost ceased to exist. He was decried for his retreats, just as Washington was for his. But time has already wrought a mighty change in men's opinion and we believe that history will enroll the name of Joseph E. Johnston beside that of the man he so much resembled in mind and character.³³

One year later, Edward Pollard, in his book *Lee and His Lieutenants*, told how Johnston devoted "himself with energy and assiduity" to the task of "creating an army from the fine material before him" at Dalton. Of Johnston's retreats, he opined that the general was "never in strength to justify an assumption of the offensive. To have done so, would have been to discard all the ideas of rational generalship and to gamble in the lotteries of war." Like others, Pollard believed Davis's removal of Johnston was a great turning point of the war, one that spelled the Confederacy's doom: "The measure did indeed prove to be 'the beginning of the end.' Then began the final and general ruin. It was like the opening of the fourth seal, and the appearance of the pale horse of the Apocalypse—'all hell followed.'" Sherman was overjoyed at the news and subsequently abandoned all caution, "and verily, the Furies were at that time let loose upon Georgia and the ill fated Carolinas." Johnston's removal was an "evil moment," and "the fall of

³³ *TLWL* 1 (1866): 93, 97.

Atlanta through the unskillful action of Gen. Hood was one of the worst calamities of the war.”

Hood went on to further disasters: “his army, after severe defeats in Tennessee, soon ceased to be, as an army, among the things of the earth.”³⁴

The replacement of the unpopular Bragg with the beloved Johnston was met with nearly unanimous approval by soldiers during the war; thus it is little wonder that the moment loomed large in their postwar memories. Orphan Brigade veteran Fred Joyce recalled in 1884 that “we had General Joe Johnston in charge, and we felt safe. . . . We fairly worshipped him, and love him yet, fondly and tenderly.” In short order, “Old Joe” transformed the dispirited and disorganized Army of Tennessee into a powerful fighting force. “The metal [sic] of the soldiers was plainly discernable, and never was a grander army led forth, or a grander chieftain at headquarters. We were handled with as much care seemingly as an accomplished colonel would drill a single regiment.” Like many other ex-Confederates, Joyce also lauded Johnston for his conduct of the Atlanta Campaign, “a retreat that has never been equaled, and a series of military movements unparalleled in any age.”³⁵

By the end of the century Johnston was being further defended by two of the Army of Tennessee’s most prolific and influential storytellers. In 1897 B. L. Ridley published a short piece on the Battle of Resaca arguing that the Atlanta Campaign “displayed more military strategy than any in the war between the states” and that “there was not a more skillful game upon the military chessboard.” In that great struggle, Johnston faced nearly insurmountable odds, yet displayed “vigilance and boldness.” Edward Porter Thompson expressed similar opinions, calling Johnston a “wonderful man” and asserting that from the time he assumed command “until

³⁴ Edward A. Pollard, *Lee and His Lieutenants; Comprising the Early Life, Public Services, and Campaigns of General Robert E. Lee and His Companion in Arms, with a Record of Their Campaigns and Heroic Deeds* (New York: E. B. Treat, 1867), 393, 395, 399, 401-03.

³⁵ *SB 2* (1884): 463, 465.

he was relieved, near Atlanta, the Army of Tennessee grew and strengthened.” Under Johnston’s leadership, even in retreat, the army’s “strength was not impaired, and its spirit was wholly unaffected—indeed, the men seemed to grow more and more confident that Gen. Johnston would yet prove the destruction of Sherman and his apparently overwhelming host.”³⁶

Praise of Johnston continued into the new century. Advocating for the erection of a Johnston monument in 1910, the Bryan M. Thomas Chapter of the UDC wrote to the *Confederate Veteran*: “Dalton is the logical site for a monument to him, as at Dalton he reorganized his army and began there his retreat, the most masterful in the annals of warfare. No general is more worthy of the respect and gratitude of the South than Joseph E. Johnston, and yet no general has received less.” Alabama soldier and politician John Witherspoon Du Bose Montgomery paid tribute to Johnston in a 1914 issue of the *Veteran*. Johnston’s confidence in ultimate victory, claimed Montgomery, was unshaken by Sherman’s steady southward advance and he would have triumphed but for the intercession of Jefferson Davis. Johnston “had issued the orders to his corps commanders to bring on the battle. . . . [H]e expected to put Sherman to rout equal to Napoleon’s retreat from Russia when . . . he received the telegram removing him from command.”³⁷

In 1918 Georgia veteran Frank Stovall Roberts praised Johnston’s reforms and proudly recalled the grand review of the revitalized army at Dalton—an event, he said that “while memory lasts I shall never forget.” Johnston had quickly gotten to work after assuming command. “In a short time the evidence of his master mind were [sic] seen in the improved condition of things . . . so that by the 1st of April a practically new machine had been evolved out of the broken one that came limping from Missionary Ridge a few months previously.”

³⁶ CV 5 (1897): 36; Thompson, *History of the Orphan Brigade*, 233

³⁷ CV 18 (1910): 55, 22 (1914): 177.

Johnston looked every bit the soldier as he reviewed his army “and the men thrilled with pride as they saluted their grand commander.” The general had infused the army with confidence, and “that confidence was never wanting to the hour when he was removed from command.”³⁸

For some, like Pollard, lauding Johnston went hand-in-hand with denigrating his successor. In Susan Pendleton Lee’s 1896 schoolbook, the South’s children were told that Sherman’s numerical superiority made it “impossible” for Johnston to do anything but retreat. But the army’s morale improved despite the retrograde movements. “Just at this time,” she concluded, “when Johnston was in a more favorable condition for fighting than he had been before, the authorities in Richmond, not understanding his difficulties, relieved him from command. . . . Events soon proved that the change was not a fortunate one for the South.” Students learned something similar from Thomas Vineyard’s 1914 history of the war. “The removal of Johnston from command is thought to have been a great mistake on the part of the Confederate Government,” Vineyard wrote, “as his tactics had been in this campaign on the defensive on account of his inferior numbers and equipment to that of Sherman, while that of Hood was on the aggressive, and he maintained the idea of attacking Sherman’s army, which proved to be the loss of Atlanta for the Confederacy.”³⁹

The Confederate pro-Johnston narrative of the Atlanta Campaign was bolstered by some reconciliationist Northern literature as well. Emma Wortman’s *A Child’s History of the United States*, for example, maintained that Johnston was “a man of will” and “soldierly skill” who held Sherman at bay until Richmond interceded. Biographer Gamaliel Bradford offered readers a much more nuanced, yet still sympathetic, Johnston in his 1914 work *Confederate Portraits*. Bradford argued that Johnston was capable yet cautious; his life was characterized by poor luck,

³⁸ Ibid., 18 (1918): 150.

³⁹ Lee, *Brief History of the United States*, 320-22; Vineyard, *Battles of the Civil War*, 134.

but oftentimes “a larger element of Johnston’s ill-luck was just simply Joseph E. Johnston.” Yet when the army was besieged at Atlanta, “at the greatest crisis of all, after retreating a hundred miles to draw his enemy on, he at last made his preparations with cunning skill for a decisive stand, which should turn retreat into triumph.” But “the order arrived, removing him from the command and robbing him once more of the gifts of Fortune.”⁴⁰

John Bell Hood suffered by comparison with Johnston in postwar memory. Historian Richard McMurry has shown that Hood’s assumption of command and subsequent actions won some approval among the men in the ranks, but their opinion of their erstwhile commander declined in the postwar period. This was partly because Hood was scapegoated in the pages of the *Southern Historical Society Papers* but mostly because he did something few other Civil War commanders did after the war—he publicly criticized the men in the ranks. Army of Tennessee veterans could hardly be expected to praise a general who questioned their courage, manhood, and abilities. Veteran D. W. Sanders wrote in 1885 that “it is a matter of regret, that General Hood, in writing the history of [the Tennessee] campaign, undertakes to stigmatize the courage and efficiency of the troops under his command.”⁴¹

Others would be more acerbic in their responses to Hood’s allegations. Ever protective of the men in the ranks, Benjamin Franklin Cheatham emerged as one of Hood’s fiercest critics after the war, stating in 1881:

No chieftain, since the world began, has ever commanded an army
of men more confident in themselves, more ready to endure and to

⁴⁰ Emma Wortman, *A Child’s History of the United States* (New York: the author, 1894), 110; Gamaliel Bradford, *Confederate Portraits* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1914), 7, 23.

⁴¹ McMurry, “Confederate Morale in the Atlanta Campaign of 1864,” 239; Miller, *John Bell Hood*, 209; *SB* 3 (1885): 202.

dare whatever might be required of them, or more capable of
exalted heroism, than that which obeyed the will of their general
from Peach Tree Creek to Nashville. The army of Tennessee needs
no defense against the querulous calumnies which disfigure
General Hood's attempt at history.

Another of Hood's former lieutenants, A. P. Stewart, while acknowledging that "Hood was a brave soldier, a man of many excellent qualities and a good subordinate," declared that "there was never a single occasion during the entire campaign, and during the period Hood was in command, and on to Bentonville, the last conflict of the war in which it was engaged, that the 'rank and file' of the Army of Tennessee failed in its duty."⁴²

While they were not as numerous as those of Johnston, Hood did have defenders. Sam R. Watkins, like many modern military historians, believed that Hood had simply inherited a disaster: "General Hood was just simply left in the lurch, and he, a poor cripple at that, who had lost in the war the greater part of his body." The Atlanta Campaign had already been decided by the time the army was besieged in the city. "General John B. Hood did all that he could. The die had been cast. Our cause had been lost before he took command."⁴³

Some commentators considered Hood superior to Johnston. In an 1893 address to the Confederate Survivors' Association in Augusta, Joseph Cumming criticized Johnston's Fabian policy, "which culminated in continued disappointment, and final disaster far reaching in its

⁴² SB 3 (1885): 346; Alexander P. Stewart, "The Army of Tennessee: A Sketch," in *The Military Annals of Tennessee, Confederate. First Series: Embracing a Review of Military Operations, with Regimental Histories and Memorial Rolls, Compiled from Original and Official Sources*, ed., John Berrien Lindsley (Nashville: J. M. Lindsley, 1886), 100-101.

⁴³ SB 2 (1883): 400-401.

baleful influence.” Noting that the terrain should have aided the Confederacy and hindered the federals, Cumming saw no justification for Johnston’s repeated retreats, which “impaired public confidence in the ultimate success of Confederate arms.” While he admitted that changing commanders in mid-campaign was “hazardous at best,” he judged Hood’s offensives “prompt and earnest” and suggested that they buoyed morale in the army. The loss of Atlanta, said Cumming, was largely Hardee’s fault. Georgia veteran Joseph Tyrone Derry echoed Cumming’s assessments in his 1895 *Story of the Confederate States*. Dismissing some of Johnston’s self-serving claims as unlikely, Derry pointed out that, unlike Lee during the Overland Campaign, Johnston had surrendered a vast amount of territory without offering battle. Hood, in his opinion, was a bold and potentially successful general; “an army consisting of men filled with his heroic spirit could never have been defeated except by annihilation.” He blamed the loss of Atlanta on Hood’s lieutenants.⁴⁴

No one defended Hood more rigorously than the veterans of his famed Texas Brigade. At the behest of Hood’s Texas Brigade Association, Angelina Winkler, wife of a former colonel who had served under Hood in Virginia, delivered an address in 1885 that lauded Hood’s character and career. In Hood’s “military genius,” she stated, “you felt the most implicit confidence.” It was thanks to his leadership that the brigade survived four years of war with its spirit undiminished. “I know in the estimation of the brave men forming now only a remnant of a once courageous band,” Winkler continued, “the Generals highest in your scale attaining human perfection, were Robert E. Lee and John B. Hood.” The latter was honorable, patriotic,

⁴⁴ Cumming, *Military Operations in Georgia*, 21; Joseph T. Derry, *Story of the Confederate States; or, History of the War for Southern Independence, Embracing a Brief but Comprehensive Sketch of the Early Settlement of the Country, Trouble with the Indians, the French, Revolutionary and Mexican Wars, and a Full, Complete and Graphic Account of the Great Four Years’ War between the North and the South, Its Causes, Effects, etc.* (Richmond: B. F. Johnson, 1895), 351.

and loyal; “around no life of all who had rendered the ‘Lost Cause’ such noble service lingered more poetry, romance and chivalry.”⁴⁵

Winkler specifically defended Hood’s actions from Atlanta to Nashville. He had not wanted command of the army, she insisted, and accepted it only reluctantly. Moreover, the army was at that point demoralized after years of defeats and retreats. Like Sam Watkins, Winkler believed that Atlanta was doomed before Hood assumed command. And even though the city was ultimately lost, Hood’s offensive maneuvers succeeded in reviving the army’s morale. She furthermore portrayed the Battle of Franklin as an unambiguous Confederate victory. The defeat at Nashville, she claimed, was no fault of Hood’s, given the overwhelming numerical superiority of the Yankees.⁴⁶

Two and half decades later, the organization’s opinions were unchanged. “When we reflect as to how and when General Hood consented to take command of the Army of Tennessee,” declared one of its publications, “our admiration for this great hero of the South becomes more intense, and his wonderful patriotism and love for the Confederacy, which far exceeded ordinary human comprehension, is made manifest.” Confederate defeat could not be ascribed to Hood. “That as commander of an army why he was not able to bring victory to the Southern cause has been long fully understood by all fair-minded people and General Hood, like General Lee, and like the gallant soldiers that fought under them, all did their best.” A combination of overwhelming Yankee might and the Army of Tennessee’s worn-down condition

⁴⁵ Mrs. C. M. Winkler, *The Life and Character of John Bell Hood*. By Mrs. C. M. Winkler, Corsica, Texas. Written at Request, and Published by Authority of Hood’s Texas Brigade Association, and Read before the Association by the Authoress, June 27, 1885 (Austin: Draughton and Lambert, 1885), 1-5.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 28-33.

due to its earlier wartime defeats absolved Hood of blame; “all that could have been done to avert the calamities that befell this army was done by Hood.”⁴⁷

In 1893 the *Confederate Veteran* featured one of the few postwar remembrances that portrayed both Johnston and Hood fondly—perhaps unsurprisingly, given its policy against publishing anything derogatory about Rebel leaders. Johnston, it said, was beloved by his troops and his removal from command hit like a thunderclap; “so devoted to Johnston were his men that [even] the presence and immediate command of Gen. Lee would not have been accepted without complaint.” They consequently resented Hood—until the eve of Franklin. The invasion of Tennessee and subsequent affair at Spring Hill “created an enthusiasm for [Hood] equal to that entertained for Stonewall Jackson after his extraordinary achievements.” As the charge at Franklin commenced the soldiers “had unbounded faith in Gen. Hood, whom [sic] they believed would achieve a victory that would give us Nashville.” (The article was silent on Hood’s standing with the rank and file following Franklin.)⁴⁸

Unlike Johnston’s replacement by Hood at Atlanta, the Battle of Franklin was not remembered as a great military contingency. Few former Confederates pondered the final result of the Civil War had Hood’s army triumphed at that battle. What was remembered instead was that the army marched undaunted into near-inevitable death at Franklin, a charge all the more poignant because it was doomed from the start. Much like Pickett’s Charge with the Army of Northern Virginia, Franklin was the grand tragedy in the memory of the Army of Tennessee, one that served to prove the valor and steadfast devotion of the Rebel soldier. Former Rebels who

⁴⁷ *Unveiling and Dedication of Monument to Hood’s Texas Brigade on the Capital Grounds at Austin, Texas Thursday, October Twenty-seven Nineteen Hundred and Ten and Minutes of the Thirty-ninth Annual Reunion of Hood’s Texas Brigade Association Held in Senate Chamber at Austin, Texas October Twenty-Six and Twenty-seven Nineteen Hundred and Ten, together with a Short Monument and Brigade Association History and Confederate Scrap book* (Houston: F. B. Chilton, 1911), 244, 295.

⁴⁸ CV 1 (1893): 31.

identified with the Army of Tennessee were especially energetic in their commemoration of Franklin.⁴⁹

Alabaman I. M. Porter paid tribute to her brother, a lieutenant who fell at Franklin, in her 1867 poem “Shot Thro’ the Heart.” The battle was fought in the fall of 1864, but to Porter it signaled the Confederacy’s winter. By that stage of the war “not half of the men who went to the front/Can answer the muster call.” She wondered if her brother’s final moments were marked by pain or pride and she longed to have his sword returned to her so she could give it to his son. Ultimately, however, she was confident that her brother died with honor, exemplifying Confederate valor:

Where, where is the sword whose gleaming blade
Flashed up against the sky?
And wrote in a broad, white steady line
How Southern men can die!
Thus martyrs grandly die!⁵⁰

Porter’s brother was one of many Confederates remembered for their bravery at the battle. Franklin’s participants described with particularly intense passion what they had witnessed. In an 1885 regimental history, former private Thomas A. Head recalled that “the Confederates came up to the work of death in a cool and fearless manner . . . and as darkness began to envelop the scene the work of carnage was desperate almost beyond description.” A

⁴⁹ On conflicting narratives of Pickett’s Charge, see Carol Reardon, *Pickett’s Charge in History and Memory* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997).

⁵⁰ *TLWL* 4 (1867): 111.

dozen years later, W. M. Cook of the 13th Tennessee Infantry recalled the ferocity of the hand-to-hand fighting at Franklin. “I was in every battle that the Army of Tennessee fought from Shiloh to Bentonville,” he wrote, “but Franklin was by far the closest quarters that I was ever in. Near and around this spot of which I speak the dead and dying were actually in heaps. God only knows how any of us escaped.”⁵¹

Higher-ranking Franklin veterans recorded similar memories. In 1889, William B. Bate gave an address celebrating the opening of Battle-Ground Academy, a preparatory school then located on part of the battlefield. “The assault was made on the whole line with a courage and vigor rarely equaled in ancient or modern warfare,” he declared; “that remnant of the army of Tennessee, the pride and plume of our fated but devoted South, moved with intrepid step, under a murderous fire, through the crucial ordeal of terrible battle, into the very jaws of death.” Bate hoped that the academy’s students would be mindful of the historical epic that had played out on the site of their own campus. “When the young student here, within the walls of Battle-ground Academy, reciting his Latin, is charmed with that historic romance, the *Aeneid*, let him turn the mirror of memory on this field, at the set of sun, on the 30th of November, 1864, and see the reality of modern warfare in its bloodiest type, as the departing spirits of grander and real heroes rise from the smoke of battle into their bright and eternal realms.” The Spartans had their Thermopylae and the Athenians their Marathon, he reminded his audience, and Southerners had their Franklin.⁵²

⁵¹ Thomas A Head, *Campaigns and Battles of the Sixteenth Regiment, Tennessee Volunteers, in the War Between the States, with Incidental Sketches of the Part Performed by Other Tennessee Troops in the Same War, 1861-1865* (Nashville: Cumberland Presbyterian Publishing House, 1885), 150; CV 5 (1897): 303.

⁵² William B. Bate, *Address Delivered by WM. B. Bate on Occasion of Dedicating the “Battle-Ground Academy,” on the Field of Franklin. Franklin, Tennessee, Saturday, October 5, 1889* (Franklin: the citizens of Franklin, 1889), 11, 14.

A decade later, thanks to the efforts of the local UDC chapter, a monument commemorating the battle was erected in the public square in Franklin. Reverend J. H. McNeilly, a chaplain at the battle, led his audience in prayer, thanking God “for the characters which were purified by the war and for the example of those who didst not measure duty by success, who preferred death to dishonor, and who showed to all the world how they valued the rights and liberties thou didst give their land.” He furthermore asked that God not let succeeding generations forget the example set by the men who had died at Franklin and who had gone to war with “patriotic devotion, with unyielding courage to dare, to do, to die for God and native land.”⁵³

Another witness to the battle also paid tribute to the dead at Franklin that day. Former brigadier general George Gordon sketched for the audience the events of November 30, 1864. As the Army of Tennessee moved into position for the charge “it presented the most magnificent and spectacular military pageant ever witnessed by that veteran army, or perhaps any other during that great international war.” This marshaling of troops was so sublime a sight, said Gordon, that the men forgot the impending danger. But as they advanced to the enemy lines the field became “a scene of surpassing terror and appalling grandeur.” Then, brandishing the blood-stained battle flag of the 11th Tennessee Infantry Regiment, he praised the “prowess, courage, and self-sacrifice that characterized the action of that valiant, war-worn, and battle-scared army known in history as the Army of Tennessee.” More bravery was displayed at Franklin, he claimed, than at Marathon, Waterloo, Balaklava, or Gettysburg. None should ever forget “the patriotic virtues and splendid manhood of the brave and self-sacrificing officers and men who died here.”⁵⁴

⁵³ CV 8 (1900): 5-6, 8.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 6-9.

Other veterans also remembered the valor displayed at Franklin as exceptional. In a 1908 history of the battle, Robert Webb Banks of the 37th Mississippi Infantry Regiment opined that “never . . . did men ever dare to do more than was done by the Confederates to whom it fell to bear the heat and burden of that fateful day.” However, to truly appreciate the “prowess of the Army of Tennessee at Franklin,” he said, one must acknowledge the army’s preceding trials and tribulations. Every mile between Dalton and Atlanta had been “marked by the blood . . . of that splendid body of men, composed of the flower and chivalry of the Southern States.” As the army marched into Tennessee it was hungry, footsore, and ill-equipped. But when the troops began their charge at Franklin “there were no recreants in their ranks. There was no dallying because of the dangers facing them.” Afterwards, the dead were innumerable; “how many color-bearers nobly died will never be accurately known until the Angel Gabriel sounds the last reveille to summon the quick and the dead to the final roll-call.” Motivated by the justness of their cause, the brotherhood of their comrades, and their love of home, Rebels at Franklin had displayed unparalleled valor. Encapsulating a key element in the memory of Franklin, Banks summarized the battle as “that day of ordeals in which the spirit of every Southern soldier was tested to the last extreme and, in every extremity found dauntless.”⁵⁵

Non-veterans also remembered Franklin for its display of bravery and sacrifice amid carnage. On the battle’s forty-fifth anniversary in 1910 Mrs. N. B. Dozier of the Franklin UDC proclaimed that “no other battle was ever more grandly fought.” While every Rebel soldier who served in the war deserved to be commemorated, Dozier said, those who fought at Franklin deserved special tribute. Four years later, C. P. J. Mooney, in the same speech in which he praised the Confederacy for persevering after Gettysburg and Vicksburg, compared Franklin to

⁵⁵ Robert Webb Banks, *The Battle of Franklin, November 30, 1864: The Bloodiest Engagement in the War between the States* (New York: Neale Publishing, 1908), 9-10, 24-25, 50-51, 85.

the former. “The Creator never put it into the hearts of men to do more than did those Confederates who for three days gave battle at Gettysburg. But,” he added, “let me say that the Confederate soldiers at Franklin gave an exhibition of courage, endurance, and daring which resulted in an engagement unparalleled in the history of warfare.” Acknowledging that the war’s outcome was already decided in November 1864, he asked his audience: “Why did men toss their lives away as though life was a vain and empty thing?” The Civil War, he answered, “was to be the epic tragedy of our country. And these Confederate soldiers were determined that its climax should be such that through all the ages it would be the glory of our people. . . . And how magnificently the Confederacy died!” Like others, Mooney believed that the Rebels’ efforts at Franklin were especially poignant because they were doomed to fail: “the stuff that was in the men who followed Hood into Tennessee was of that brand of courage that marks those who step from the ranks to lead a forlorn hope.”⁵⁶

In 1915, H. P. Figuers, a boy in 1864, published his reminiscences of the battle. Claiming to have witnessed the clash from the roof of his house, he testified that both sides had fought nobly: “no braver men ever met on any battle field.” But he gave the greater accolades to the Confederates, asserting that “the men who wore the gray had faced such scenes before and were not afraid. From the dawn of history until this day no braver army ever stood in line of battle.” Like George Gordon, he remembered the beginning of the charge for its martial splendor—a splendor that vanished when the Rebels came in range of the Union guns. “It is impossible to describe or even to have an adequate idea of the fearful carnage and horror of that great battle. . . . It was at once the glory and horror of war.”⁵⁷

⁵⁶ CV 18 (1910): 16, 22 (1914): 114-15.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 23 (1915): 4-5.

The Army of Tennessee's wartime record was marked more by horror than by glory. Nevertheless, in the memories of former Confederates, victorious moments abounded. Climactic battles, contingencies, and moments of valor and piety were remembered and recounted in the postwar decades as proof of the army's triumphs even in defeat.

Chapter Six:
“The indifferent notice of neglected stepchildren”:
Forgetting the Army of Tennessee

In June 1929, the United Confederate Veterans’ rapidly thinning ranks convened in Charlotte, North Carolina, for their thirty-ninth annual reunion. Army of Tennessee veteran and UCV president A.T. Goodwyn gave an address that encapsulated the Lost Cause as it existed on the eve of the Great Depression. He asserted that Reconstruction, now a vital part of the myth, was an act of despotism by the federal government and the South had been right to overthrow it. Moreover, he said, the Civil War had ended only when the enemy’s overwhelming numbers forced the Confederacy to surrender. Robert E. Lee, unlike his Yankee counterparts, had waged gentlemanly war that protected civilians from harm. The South had not wanted a war, Goodwyn maintained, and secession had been a legal response to Lincoln’s election and subsequent military aggression. “[N]ow in sober retrospection, in prayerful introspection, . . . we can say, ‘We thank God that at Appomattox we were with General Lee and not with General Grant.’” He charged the veterans in the audience with writing true histories to show that the Confederacy’s cause was constitutionally and morally just. “These facts are clearly illustrated in Statuary Hall of our national capitol,” he declared, “where the statues of Washington and Lee stand side by side, Washington in his Revolutionary uniform and Lee in his Confederate uniform, high exponents of the same sacred principles.”¹

Lee’s link with Washington was not his only admirable trait. “We are proud of our leadership,” Goodwyn continued; “we confidently hold it up for the contemplation of the historian as typical of the highest manhood.” But the Confederate leadership he lauded consisted

¹ Goodwyn, *Address*, 1-7.

of Jefferson Davis, his cabinet, and Robert E. Lee. Like many other Lost Cause devotees in the 1920s, Goodwyn was at least as enamored with the character of his heroes as he was with their leadership ability: “We challenge the student of the ages to produce their equals, in cultural graces, in unselfish patriotism, in patient endurance, in inflexible integrity, in nobility of character. We point to them with pride as exemplars of future generations.” In one of his few allusions to aspects of the war beyond Virginia’s borders, he praised Sam Davis. When he noted events outside Virginia such as Benjamin Butler’s infamous Order 28 in New Orleans or Sherman’s March to the Sea, he used them to demonstrate Lee’s moral superiority. “Here you have a clear indication of two types of men differing in their sense of duty.” In unabashedly white supremacist language Goodwyn denounced the North’s arming of African Americans, insisted on the benevolence of slavery, and proclaimed that the South went to war for the principle of states’ rights, not to protect its peculiar institution. This was proven, he said, by the words of Robert E. Lee, which revealed that “he fought to preserve not only for Virginia, but every state in the Union—the American ideals of local self-government and a Federal Union built upon State Sovereignty, in other words, a government, of the people, by the people, and for the people.”²

By the end of the third decade of the twentieth century the embodiment of the Confederate experience in white Southern memory was Robert E. Lee. This chapter addresses two questions. First, why was the Army of Tennessee, which was so prominent in Southern memory for decades following the war, eventually overshadowed by Lee and the Army of Northern Virginia? And second, why have historians of the Lost Cause neglected the Army of Tennessee’s role in Confederate memory?

² Ibid., 7-21. On the March to the Sea and Civil War memory, see Anne Sarah Rubin, *Through the Heart of Dixie: Sherman’s March and American Memory* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2014).

The march of time and the passing of the wartime generation played a pivotal part in Virginia's ascendance. But even while the wartime generation lived, those who had experienced the western theater were aware of forces at work constructing a Virginia-centric narrative of the Confederate experience. In 1893, S. A. Cunningham received a letter commending him for paying "liberal attention to the Army of Tennessee." The writer, a veteran of the army named Vic Reinhardt, had noted that "in the papers it is not often the heroism and valor of our army under Sidney and Joe Johnston, Bragg, Hood, and other gallant leaders of our Western army are made known. It does me good to read these accounts of active service, much of it from the ranks, and bearing the impress of personal experience." A year later Reinhardt again expressed his gratitude: "It rejoices me to see for once some prominence given the Army of Tennessee, which I find in the VETERAN." While not desiring to detract from the reputation of the veterans of the eastern army, he did "want to see more mention of those boys who, without shoes, clothing, or food, almost, endured the hardships and faced the enemy in the Army of Tennessee." The Union troops in the west, he claimed, were especially tenacious, but the Rebel army had never wavered. Its veterans, he feared, were now in danger of becoming the unsung heroes of the Confederacy: "These men have so long stood by, and many of them gone on into eternity, without hearing the commendation their valor brought and the bravery and heroism their richest blood paid for. I rejoice, too, with all other veterans in their marvelous achievements, even though our flag is now lost in the folds of the stars and stripes."³

Cunningham himself feared that the army in which he had served was being marginalized in some expressions of Confederate memory. In 1910, his magazine published two articles about Hood's Tennessee campaign by George E. Brewer of the 49th Alabama Infantry. Cunningham,

³ CV 1 (1893): 281, 2 (1894): 120.

grateful for the submissions, appended to them his own editorial commentary. “It is remarkable how little appears in our published histories of the deeds of valor and endurance on the part of the soldiers of the Army of the [sic] Tennessee. All eyes seem centered on the defenses of Richmond and in history we of the Western Army receive the indifferent notice of neglected stepchildren, as we largely suffered the same fate in the campaigns of the war.” Cunningham reasoned that commemorating the Confederate soldier need not be a zero-sum game. “I would not detract one iota from the praise given to the valor and deeds of the Army of Northern Virginia,” he avowed, “for they deserve all the praise they get. But that is no reason we should be neglected, for I am sure soldiers never carried themselves better or did their duty more nobly than did ours throughout the ordeal narrated.” Whether they fought at Richmond, Vicksburg, or Nashville, all Confederate soldiers had earned the South’s praise: “Never was an army made of better stuff, and they ought to command the veneration of every lover of country.”⁴

Fear of a Virginia-dominated Confederate memory was manifested elsewhere as well. In response to the dedication of General Ulysses S. Grant’s tomb in 1897, New York businessman, native Virginian, and Rebel veteran Charles Broadway Rouss proposed that the UCV erect a “Temple to the Lost Cause.” Rouss’s proposal generated heated debate among different UCV chapters. One of the most contentious issues was the location of the proposed memorial. Nashville, Memphis, New Orleans, Washington, D.C., and of course Richmond were the most popular options. At the 1898 national UCV reunion in Covington, Kentucky, it was decided that the South’s “Battle-Abbey” would be built in the former capital of the Confederacy. A number of financial backers who had advocated for other sites subsequently asked for a refund of their donations. Ultimately, argues architectural historian William Rasmussen, “the memorial would

⁴ Ibid., 18 (1910): 328-29.

become less a southern one and more a Virginian one.” Indeed, when the Battle-Abbey was completed in 1921 it was revealed to be, in reality, a monument to Virginia’s Civil War. Its centerpiece mural, *The Four Seasons of the Confederacy*, illustrates a conflict that took place solely within the Old Dominion’s borders.⁵

The fears of Reinhardt, Cunningham, and non-Virginian supporters of the Battle-Abbey were not unfounded; there were in fact Virginians working to make their state and its leaders the focal point of Confederate memory. While their narrative of the Civil War did not reflect how the white South as a whole was remembering the war in the early postwar decades, they produced a voluminous literature that proved influential decades later, when professional historians began to investigate the Lost Cause and explore construction of memory in the postwar South.

No one exerted more influence on historians of Confederate memory than Jubal Early. A prominent architect of the Lost Cause, he remembered a war fought almost exclusively by Robert E. Lee and the Army of Northern Virginia. A Virginian himself, he had risen to corps command under Lee during the war. While public opinion forced Lee to remove him from command in the last months of the war, Early’s admiration for his chieftan never wavered in the succeeding years. Historian Thomas L. Connelly has judged Early “perhaps the most influential figure in nineteenth-century Civil War writing, North or South.”⁶

⁵ William Rasmussen, “Planning a ‘Temple to the Lost Cause’: The Confederate Memorial Institute and the Design Competition of 1910,” *ARRIS: Journal of the Southeast Chapter, Society of Architectural Historians* 8 (1997): 6-8; William Rasmussen, “Planning a Temple to the Lost Cause: The Confederate ‘Battle Abbey,’” in *Monuments to the Lost Cause*, eds. Mills and Simpson, 177-78.

⁶ Connelly, *Marble Man*, 51. For biographies of Early see Charles C. Osborne, *Jubal: The Life and Times of General Jubal A. Early, C.S.A., Defender of the Lost Cause* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1992); and Benjamin Franklin Cooling, *Jubal Early: Robert E. Lee’s “Bad Old Man”* (New York: Rowman and Littlefield, 2014).

Celebrating Lee's second posthumous birthday in 1872, Early gave an address at Washington and Lee University. Although Lee's early life and antebellum career "constituted a worthy prelude to the exhibition, on a larger theatre, of those wonderful talents and sublime virtues, which have gained for him the admiration and esteem of the good and true of all the civilized world," Early assured his audience that they would not be the focus of his speech. Nor would he expound on the "domestic virtues, the moral worth, the unselfish patriotism and Christian purity of General Lee's character." These aspects of Lee's life, said Early, already had their storytellers. But "few . . . have formed a really correct estimate of his marvelous ability and boldness as a military commander."⁷

Early's speech, which Gary W. Gallagher labels "the quintessential Lost Cause statement of Lee's greatness," took his audience battle by battle through the Army of Northern Virginia's campaigns demonstrating how the army repeatedly triumphed over Union armies superior in numbers and equipment but inferior in leadership. In Early's pantheon of Confederate heroes, Stonewall Jackson was second only to Lee. "As long as unselfish patriotism, Christian devotion and purity of character, and deeds of heroism shall command the admiration of men, Stonewall Jackson's name and fame will be revered." When the army did fail, as at Gettysburg, Lee was blameless. Comparing Lee to Grant was like "compar[ing] the great pyramid which rears its majestic proportions in the valley of the Nile, to a pigmy perched on Mount Atlas." Lee was superior not only to Grant but to Alexander the Great, Hannibal, Julius Caesar, Gustavus Adolphus, Marlborough, Napoleon, and even George Washington. Early did mention Albert

⁷ Jubal A. Early, *The Campaigns of Gen. Robert E. Lee. An Address by Lt. Gen. Jubal A. Early, before Washington and Lee University, January 19th, 1872* (Baltimore: John Murphy, 1872), 3-4.

Sidney Johnston, only to dismiss him by pointing out that he had died before revealing his true capabilities as a general.⁸

When Early assumed the presidency of the Southern Historical Society (SHS) in 1873 he gained a prominent platform from which to profess his version of the Confederate experience. Established in New Orleans in 1869 by former Rebel officers to preserve the history of the Southern nation, the SHS moved its headquarters to Richmond in 1873. There it came under the control of Early and like-minded ex-Confederates. On August 14 of that year, when members assembled for a meeting in White Sulphur Springs, West Virginia, Early gave an address outlining the society's mission. Many recently published histories of the war, he claimed, were more concerned with telling good stories than with conveying historical facts. "Let it be our task to strip the Muse of History of the tawdry vestments and meretricious ornaments by which her real beauty has been obscured, and present her once more to the world in her proper guise, as the patroness and guardian of truth." Like the Jews in Babylonian captivity, he said, the South had weathered the storm and proven its faith. It was the Confederate veterans' duty to chronicle the true story of the South's experience in the Civil War.⁹

It quickly became clear, however, that the South as it existed in the mind of Jubal Early was Virginia and the war was Virginia's war. The conflict Early recounted was fought at Manassas, Sharpsburg, Gettysburg, the Wilderness, Richmond, and Appomattox. The Confederacy's adversaries were George McClellan, John Pope, George Meade, and Ulysses S. Grant; its defender was Robert E. Lee and his sword was the Army of Northern Virginia. The

⁸ Gary W. Gallagher, ed., *Lee: The Soldier* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1996), xxiv; Early, *Campaigns of Lee*, 31, 47-50, 54.

⁹ Blight, *Race and Reunion*, 78-79, 158-60; *The Proceedings of the Southern Historical Convention, which Assembled at the Montgomery White Sulphur Springs, VA., on the 14th of August, 1873; and the Southern Historical Society, Reorganised [sic], with the Address by Gen. Jubal A. Early, Delivered before the Convention on the First Day of Its Session* (Baltimore: Turnbull Brothers, 1873), 20-21.

sole anecdote Early offered to prove Confederate devotion was the story of a Virginia mother who selflessly offered to the Rebel army her son, who subsequently lost his life in battle. “He died,” Early declared, “doing his duty as a Virginian and a Confederate soldier.” After a brief diatribe against unspecified Confederate “traitors,” Early made his singular reference to the war outside Virginia, assuring his audience that “we always have a glorious consolation in being able to point to the pure and unsullied lives and records of our great leaders, Robert E. Lee, Stonewall Jackson, and Sidney Johnston.”¹⁰

Gary Gallagher identifies five themes consistently present in Early’s voluminous writings and speeches on the Civil War:

- (1) Robert E. Lee was the best and most admirable general of the war;
- (2) Confederate armies faced overwhelming odds and mounted a gallant resistance;
- (3) Ulysses S. Grant paled in comparison to Lee as a soldier;
- (4) Stonewall Jackson deserved a place immediately behind Lee in the Confederate pantheon; and
- (5) Virginia was the most important arena of combat.

These tenets became, for all intents and purposes, the party platform of the SHA. Given that the society’s members were largely Virginians and veterans of Lee’s army, this is perhaps unsurprising. Moreover, as noted by historian Richard D. Starnes, there was significant overlap between the membership of the SHS and that of the Association of the Army of Northern Virginia, a veterans group headed for a time by Early. Although the SHS did not produce

¹⁰ *Proceedings of the Southern Historical Convention*, 41-43.

original works of history, Starnes points out that “by collecting and reprinting historical documents, the Society sought to reinforce its version of the Confederate memory by providing both an argument and concrete evidence for future professional historians.”¹¹

Second only to Early in his Old Dominion bias and his influence on future historians of the Lost Cause was J. William Jones. Born in Virginia, Jones served as a chaplain in the Army of Northern Virginia and at Washington and Lee University during Lee’s presidency (when it was called Washington College). In the SHS he wielded the power of the purse and the pen as the organization’s treasurer and editor of its journal, the *Southern Historical Society Papers* (SHSP). While Early was most concerned with proclaiming the military superiority of Lee and Jackson, Jones looked to the two primarily as moral and spiritual exemplars. He opened his 1875 *Personal Reminiscences of General Robert E. Lee* by declaring his intention to describe “those beautiful traits of character which made [Lee] seem even grander in peace than in war.”¹²

Jones devoted much of his career to sanctifying Lee’s memory. In his article “The Inner Life of Robert E. Lee” (1900), Jones called the general “a model man” and noted “his devotion to duty; his modest humility, simplicity and gentleness; his spirit of self-denial for the good of others; his firmness in carrying out his purposes, but respect for the rights and feelings of others; his social character; his love for children, and his beautiful domestic life.” But the focus of the article was Lee’s “Christian character.” An ardent reader of the Bible, advocate of prayer, and observer of the Sabbath, Lee “was a humble, devout Christian who trusted in Christ as his personal savior and tried to follow with firm tread the ‘Captain of our salvation.’” Moreover, “his life was ‘a living epistle, known and read of men,’ and death to him was but the welcome

¹¹ Gallagher, *Lee and His Generals*, 207; Richard D. Starnes, “Forever Faithful: The Southern Historical Society and Confederate Historical Memory,” *Southern Cultures* 2 (1996):177, 179, 188-89.

¹² J. William Jones, *Personal Reminiscences of General Robert E. Lee* (New York: D. Appleton, 1875), v.

messenger that the Master sent to call him to ‘come up higher,’ to lay aside his cross, and wear his fadeless crown.”¹³

Jones likewise praised Lee’s most famous lieutenant, whom he admired even more as a Christian than as a general. In the first edition of his book *Christ in the Camp* (1888) Jones wrote that “in the army [Stonewall Jackson’s] piety, despite all obstacles, seemed to brighten as the pure gold is refined by the furnace.” Thirteen years later, in a short biography of Jackson he wrote for the *Veteran*, Jones noted Jackson’s “manly bearing, quiet ambition, and emphatic expression of a purpose to succeed” and mentioned some of his military exploits, but again focused on Jackson “the humble, devout Christian, the ‘soldier of the cross,’ . . . the deacon of his church . . . so devoted and true, the man of humble prayer, and the diligent student of God’s word.” It was Jackson’s “simple trust in Christ, and full confidence in the promises of God’s Word,” said Jones, which allowed him to rise from anonymous orphan to the magnificent Stonewall.¹⁴

Jones’s Civil War, like Early’s, was Virginia’s crusade. In 1894 the Ladies Memorial Association in Charlottesville, Virginia, asked Jones to give a brief Memorial Day address commemorating the common soldiers of the Confederacy. He readily accepted the invitation, stating at the beginning of his speech that “there is never an hour of the day or night when I am not ready to talk about the ‘unknown and unrecorded hero’ of the rank and file of the Confederate armies.” But, he added, obliging the request for conciseness would be challenging: “how shall I compress within a ten minutes’ speech the hallowed memories of the brave old days of 1861-1865 which come trooping up as I stand on this spot . . . and recall the deeds of the

¹³ *The Chautauquan* 1900 (31): 187-90.

¹⁴ J. William Jones, *Christ in the Camp; or, Religion in Lee’s Army* (Richmond: B. F. Johnson, 1888), 88; CV 9 (1901): 235-37.

patriot heroes who, often with bare and bleeding feet, in ragged jacket and with empty haversack, bore our tattered flag on the forefront of a hundred victorious fields[?]" The address Jones then proceeded to give, ostensibly a tribute to all Rebel soldiers, depicted a war that took place only in the east. Davis, Lee, Jackson, Stuart, and Gordon were the leaders he eulogized, while the only geographic locations mentioned were Richmond and the James River.¹⁵

Jones gave a similar performance two years later in Richmond at the sixth annual UCV reunion. At this meeting, as at most of the organization's national gatherings, there was an effort toward ecumenicalism. For example, UCV president and former Lee lieutenant John Brown Gordon brought the meeting to order with a gavel made of wood from the Chickamauga battlefield. But Jones, then serving as the UCV's chaplain-general, opened the reunion with a prayer that reflected his personal view of the war:

Oh! God our help in the ages past, our hope for years to come. God
of Israel, God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob—God of the
centuries—God of our Fathers—God of Stonewall Jackson and
Robert Lee, and Jefferson Davis—Lord of Hosts—God of the
whole of our common country—God of our Southland—Our God!
We bring Thee the adoration of grateful hearts as we gather in our
Annual Reunion to-day.

Presumably the God he addressed was also the God of Joseph E. Johnston, John Bell Hood, Leonidas Polk, and Nathan Bedford Forrest; but for Jones the Confederate experience was

¹⁵ CV 2 (1894): 275.

embodied by Lee and Jackson. Perhaps aware that his selectivity might provoke criticism outside Virginia, at the next two reunions, held in Nashville and Atlanta, Jones added Albert Sidney Johnston to his prayer. Nevertheless, as historian Charles Reagan Wilson shows, Jones opened many of his postwar invocations with similar pleas—always evoking Davis, Lee, and Jackson.¹⁶

Jones, like Early, used the SHS to present the Old Dominion as the focal point of the war and the Lost Cause. The two were joined by others. Thomas L. Connelly and Barbara Bellows show that the organization's executive committee was composed exclusively of Virginia residents. Consequently, the society's publications offered a skewed version of the war. The *SHSP*, while claiming to document the breadth of the Confederate experience, proved to be, in practice, largely a record of Civil War Virginia. In some issues of the magazine, articles on the eastern theater outnumbered those on all of the war's other theaters by as much as four-and-a-half to one.¹⁷

As Gaines Foster notes, Early, Jones, and the other postwar Virginia chauvinists failed to convert the entire white South to their gospel of Confederate memory but they exerted an extraordinary influence on future generations of memorialists and historians. Gary Gallagher agrees, pointing out that while the *Confederate Veteran* had a wider circulation it “never approached the *Southern Historical Society Papers* in terms of influencing historians.” Many recent scholarly and popular histories of the Confederate war effort, says Gallagher, “would certainly bring a smile to Jubal Early's lips.”¹⁸

¹⁶ *Minutes of the Sixth Annual Meeting and Reunion of the United Confederate Veterans, Held in the City of Richmond, VA., Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday, June 30th and July 1st and 2nd 1896* (New Orleans: Hopkin's Printing Office, 1897), 7; Wilson, *Baptized in Blood*, 133.

¹⁷ Wilson, *Baptized in Blood*, 124; Connelly and Bellows, *God and General Longstreet*, 43.

¹⁸ Foster, *Ghosts of the Confederacy*, 5-6, 61-62; Gallagher, *Lee and His Generals*, 207-12. Also worth noting is that while the *Confederate Veteran* ceased publication in 1933, the *Southern Historical Society Papers* continued intermittent publication until 1959.

A survey of significant historiography confirms Foster's and Gallagher's arguments. Foundational studies of Civil War memory almost invariably turn to Early, Virginia, and the Southern Historical Society when explaining the ideology of the Lost Cause. "From the late 1860s to the late 1880s," writes David Blight in *Race and Reunion*, "diehards, especially though not exclusively in Virginia, tended to shape the Confederate memory." Indeed, his own discussion of the origin and evolution of the Lost Cause, despite brief forays into other states, is largely a Virginia story. A similar research methodology underlies Caroline E. Janney's more recent *Remembering the Civil War*. She goes so far as to argue that the date of Johnston's surrender to Sherman was widely selected as Confederate Memorial Day because Appomattox was too painful a memory. (A more likely explanation is provided in a 1924 history of the holiday's origin: in most Southern states, more flowers are in bloom later in April.) The research for Janney's earlier book on Ladies' Memorial Associations and the Lost Cause is restricted to Virginia. William Blair, in his superb study of the politics of Civil War memory, limited his research almost exclusively to Virginia in part because "arguably the greatest heroes of the Lost Cause, Robert E. Lee and Thomas 'Stonewall' Jackson, were native sons." Charles Reagan Wilson, who argues for the existence of a holy trinity of Confederate heroes in Lee, Jackson, and Jefferson Davis, states simply: "Richmond remembered. It had been the capital of the southern Confederacy, and when the drive for independence failed, Richmond became the eternal city of Southern dreams. It, in turn, preserved the memory of its past and catered to the activities of the Lost Cause." Even Gaines Foster, whose research is the most geographically inclusive, argues that while Early and company failed to convince the majority of white Southerners their ideas formed the nucleus of the Lost Cause myth. Simply put, if one looks solely to the *SHSP*, the records of the Lee Monument Association, J. William Jones's sermons, or Richmond newspaper

reports on Monument Avenue dedications when exploring Confederate memories of the war, Lee, Jackson, and the Army of Northern Virginia will of course seem omnipresent. Such narrowly conceived research has led to the assumption or argument that the white South justified its Lost Cause convictions regarding the Confederate military experience by looking almost exclusively to Virginia.¹⁹

Another reason historians have overemphasized Virginia's supremacy in the memory of the Confederate military experience is that, with time, it did become virtually absolute. A survey of modern expressions of Confederate identity reveals a narrative of the Civil War with Lee, Jackson, and the Army of Northern Virginia at its center. A case in point is the Civil War-themed artwork that has proliferated since the mid-1980s. Artists have produced and sold thousands of prints illustrating many of the war's storied episodes. However, the overwhelming majority of these depict operations in the eastern theater; Gallagher estimates that the east is nearly five times more commonly portrayed in such artwork than all other areas of operations combined. If illustrations of Nathan Bedford Forrest are discounted, the western theater would vanish almost completely from this illustrated narrative of the Confederate experience. "Modern artists and the Civil War public to which they cater," Gallagher concludes, "clearly join Early in considering the arena of Lee's activities the most important of the conflict."²⁰

If, as this dissertation has argued, the western theater was prominent in white Southern memory as late as the first decades of the 1900s, and if, as Gallagher and others have shown, modern Confederate memory is dominated by the eastern theater, a question arises: what occurred in the interim that led the virtual disappearance of the Army of Tennessee?

¹⁹ Blight, *Race and Reunion*, 258; Janney, *Remembering the Civil War*; 93, 139-48; *Miss Rutherford's Scrapbook* 2 (April, 1924), 3; Janney, *Burying the Dead but Not the Past*, 8; Blair, *Cities of the Dead*, 8; Wilson, *Baptized in Blood*, 18; Foster, *Ghosts of the Confederacy*, 62.

²⁰ Gallagher, *Lee and His Generals*, 224; Gallagher, *Causes*, 154-84.

A basic reason for the diminished role of the west in Confederate memory was the gradual disappearance of the wartime generation. Time's steady march took its toll on Civil War veterans. In 1914 the average age of veterans convalescing in Tennessee's numerous Confederate soldiers' homes was nearly eighty. Fewer than 15 percent of Civil War veterans who survived the war were still alive in 1920; of those, only 100,000 were former Confederates and most were over the age of seventy-five. Twelve years later, only 35,000 Rebel veterans were still among the living. Commenting on the diminishing turnout at UCV reunions, the *Confederate Veteran* lamented in 1932 that "it seems the thin gray line has reached the breaking point and cannot be stretched further. Of the many hundreds who were wont to meet in these State reunions hardly a 'corporal's guard' can now be mustered. . . . [M]uch will have been lost from the life of the South when their gray-clad figures are only a memory." (Indeed, the *Veteran* itself would soon be defunct.) With fewer and fewer to care for, most Confederate soldiers' homes closed during the 1930s. By the time of Pearl Harbor, perhaps as few as a thousand Rebel veterans lived. With the passing of the war generation, Civil War memory among white Southerners became less focused on the military experience; those aspects thereafter most prominent, as will be seen below, were largely related to Lee and Virginia. The torch of Confederate memory was passed to succeeding generations that found Lee and Virginia much more useful to their version of the Lost Cause.²¹

The reconciliationist turn in national Civil War memory and the Lost Cause also played a role in Virginia's eventual domination of the Confederate narrative. While some recent scholarship has challenged the notion of a ubiquitous reconciliationist spirit in the postwar

²¹ Janney, *Remembering the Civil War*, 268, 293, 302; R. B. Rosenburg, *Living Monuments: Confederate Soldiers' Homes in the New South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993), 132-52; Larry M. Logue, *To Appomattox and Beyond: The Civil War Soldier in War and Peace* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 1996), 137, 142; CV 40 (1932): 406.

period, it is clear that such a spirit did exist to some extent and that it grew in the early 1900s. National travails such as the Second Industrial Revolution, the Spanish-American War, and World War I strengthened the bonds between North and South. As elements of the Lost Cause (such as the romanticization of agrarian society) permeated Northern memory, Robert E. Lee proved to be the Confederate figure most palatable to a national audience. A pious, gentlemanly warrior from a vanished culture, driven by honor and sense of duty to draw his sword on Virginia's behalf against the Union he loved, Lee appealed to more than just ex-Confederates. He came to be seen, in the words of Connelly, "as the supreme representative of a virtuous society submerged by the Industrial Revolution."²²

Thus Lee evolved into a national hero. During the early 1900s, Connelly argues, "the new Lost Cause rationale was difficult to refute because the writers who described this civilization related it, not to the entire South, but to romantic Virginia. Virginia came to epitomize in secession a society that fought for finer virtues." The literature produced during this period, he shows, both reflected and shaped the reconciliatory image of Lee. "With Robert E. Lee as its central theme, it preached that Virginia was unlike the cotton South. Virginia (and Lee) hated slavery and secession. Virginia (and Lee) possessed a unique love for the Union born out of Revolutionary heritage. Thus secession was a more difficult task for Virginians . . . because they cherished the Union more."²³

In addition to the phenomenon of reconciliation, there was a gendered and class dimension to Virginia's ascendance in Confederate memory. Because mourning was seen as a

²² Blight, *Race and Reunion*, 1-5, 258; Janney, *Remembering the Civil War*, 3-11; Nina Silber, *The Romance of Reunion: Northerners and the South, 1865-1900* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993), 1-12; John R. Neff, *Honoring the Civil War Dead: Commemoration and the Problem of Reconciliation* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2005), 1-15; Foster, *Ghosts of the Confederacy*, 7; Cox, *Dixie's Daughters*, 157-58; Connelly and Bellows, *God and General Longstreet*, 70, 129; Connelly, *Marble Man*, 129.

²³ Connelly, *Marble Man*, 103, 106-108.

domestic matter, in the early postwar period women were the driving force behind Confederate memorialization—specifically, middle- and upper-class women, who had the financial wherewithal and leisure that enabled them to devote time to such activities. Subsequent developments, including the removal of federal troops and the end of Reconstruction, allowed veterans to take more control over the construction of Confederate memory. However, beginning around World War I, the momentum again shifted. As the ranks of the UCV thinned, those of the UDC expanded; in 1919 the latter organization claimed 64,000 members and by 1924 over 100,000. Whereas the UCV comprised men from all social classes, the UDC was an association of affluent women. The UDC not only took responsibility for memorializing the Confederacy but also for teaching younger generations of white Southerners what they needed to know about the past. The version of history remembered and propagated by the Daughters was distinctly different from that the wartime generation had espoused.²⁴

As the Daughters' control over the Lost Cause increased, Confederate memory became more feminized and purely military aspects of the war became less central. Justifications for secession, apologies for slavery, “moonlight and magnolias” reminiscences of the Old South, tales of the homefront, and diatribes against the perceived injustices of Reconstruction all assumed greater significance. Moreover, in the early twentieth century the Daughters drew parallels between their own travails and those of their Confederate ancestors. During World War I, for example, members of the UDC—many of whom worked for the Red Cross, sold war-bonds, or provided relief for wounded soldiers in Europe—evoked the steadfast devotion of Southern women on the Civil War homefront. And too, the Daughters became concerned about

²⁴ Blair, *Cities of the Dead*, 55; Blight, *Race and Reunion*, 77-79; Janney, *Burying the Dead but Not the Past*, 4; Janney, *Remembering the Civil War*, 91-98, 140, 265, 283, 293; Foster, *Ghosts of the Confederacy*, 107, 174-75; Fred Arthur Bailey, “Mildred Lewis Rutherford and the Patrician Cult of the Old South,” *Georgia Historical Quarterly* 78 (1994): 516.

what they perceived as the materialism of the younger generation of Southern men and thus sought to provide them with role models exemplifying Christianity and gentility. While memories that validated the white South's conviction of its own martial superiority never vanished, they became increasingly marginalized. When the Daughters did discuss Rebel chieftains, namely Lee, Jackson, and Davis, they highlighted their character more than their leadership. Lee could, better than any other Confederate leader, embody the ideals of the UDC. Prominent Confederates who had been lionized by Rebel veterans but whose character was not up to the standards of the Daughters, such as the rough-hewn Nathan Bedford Forrest and the profane, hard-drinking Benjamin Franklin Cheatham, now faded into obscurity. As elite Southern women became more central to Confederate memory construction, Lee reigned supreme.²⁵

No figure was more influential in this evolution of the Lost Cause than Mildred Lewis Rutherford (born 1851), whom one historian has labeled "the living embodiment of the South's reborn aristocratic tradition." A niece of Thomas R. R. and Howell Cobb, Rutherford had a distinguished Georgia pedigree. She served as the UDC historian-general from 1911 until 1916, the organization having amended its constitution's two-year limit on the term of that office to honor the popular and influential Rutherford. Under her stewardship, the UDC propagated a version of Confederate history that justified a social hierarchy and ethos that reflected the ideology of white Southern elites. Lee's image was especially suited to serve as figurehead of this patrician Lost Cause, for, as biographer Emory M. Thomas points out, Lee "believed in government by the rich, the well-born, and the able. He believed in government sufficiently

²⁵ Janney, *Remembering the Civil War*, 283; Cox, *Dixie's Daughters*, 45-46, 103-104; Case, "Historical Ideology of Mildred Lewis Rutherford," 611; Sarah E. Gardner, *Blood and Irony: Southern White Women's Narratives of the Civil War, 1861-1937* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 10, 212; Losson, *Tennessee's Forgotten Warriors*, 287; Carney, "Contested Image of Nathan Bedford Forrest," 624.

strong enough to keep the vulgar mob in its place and to ensure its deference to its betters.”

Rutherford and like-minded Daughters embraced Lee and Virginia, with their gentrified popular image, as avatars. In many ways, Virginia became the South and Robert E. Lee became the Confederacy.²⁶

Until her death in 1927 Rutherford produced voluminous literature and gave countless speeches setting forth the feminized, patrician version of the Lost Cause. In a 1914 address (subsequently published in pamphlet form with the title *Wrongs of History Righted*), she took issue with two college professors who had asserted “that the south had never produced a great man,” reminding her audience that the South was the “section that gave a Robert E. Lee, and a Stonewall Jackson.” Later in the speech, noting that some young Southerners seemed to have developed an admiration for Lincoln, she declared that “it is full time to call a halt.” This new generation of Southern youth, she said,

must now be taught that Lincoln can never measure up to many of our great men of the South, especially to our Robert E. Lee, a man who in every department of life measured up to the highest standard. Whether as son, husband, father, soldier, teacher, master, citizen, friend, scholar, or Christian gentleman, he presented the most rounded character found in all human history.²⁷

²⁶ Bailey, “Mildred Lewis Rutherford,” 516, 523; Blight, *Race and Reunion*, 279; Case, “Historical Ideology of Mildred Lewis Rutherford,” 608, 627-28; Cox, *Dixie’s Daughters*, 103; Emory M. Thomas, *Robert E. Lee* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1995), 79.

²⁷ Cox, *Dixie’s Daughters*, 105; Mildred Lewis Rutherford, *Wrongs of History Righted: Address Delivered by Miss Mildred Lewis Rutherford Historian General United Daughters of the Confederacy, Savannah, Georgia Friday, Nov. 13, 1914* (Athens, Georgia: McGregor, 1914), 4, 13, 28.

In 1919, at the UCV's request, Rutherford devised a list of requirements for textbooks to be allowed in Southern schools. No book was suitable for Dixie's classrooms and libraries, she decreed, unless it conformed to the tenets of the Lost Cause as defined by the UDC. Published as *A Measuring Rod to Test Text Books and Reference Books in Schools, Colleges, and Libraries*, it set forth a version of the Civil War that justified the Rebel cause mainly by linking it in various ways with the noble actions and beliefs of Lee. Had secession been unconstitutional, it quoted Lee as saying, he would not have joined the Confederacy. Lee had freed his slaves before emancipation, thus proving that slavery was not the cause of the war. Despite great efforts, Lee had been unable secure a prisoner exchange agreement with the Yankees, thus absolving the South of all guilt associated with the suffering of Union soldiers at Andersonville and other Southern prison camps. While Union leaders had encouraged their troops to plunder and pillage the Southern countryside, Lee had forbidden his soldiers to do so in Pennsylvania.²⁸

Aside from crusading for the use of Lost Cause-themed textbooks, the UDC saw to it that Lee's image had a physical presence in Southern (and some Northern) classrooms. In 1907, UDC president Lizzie George Henderson published an article in the *Confederate Veteran* telling of a letter from a veteran urging the Daughters to place a portrait of Lee (alongside one of Washington) in as many classrooms as possible. The merits of such a proposal, Henderson said, were undeniable:

Do we not owe everything we can do, to honor him and to inspire
our children to a like life, to the coming generations of that country
for which he gave himself, even were it merely of the fact that he

²⁸ Mildred Lewis Rutherford, *A Measuring Rod to Test Text Books and Reference Books in Schools, Colleges and Libraries* (Athens: no publisher, no date), 7, 9, 12, 20-21.

made it possible for the mothers of the South to point to him with pride as the ideal Christian Southern gentleman of the old school as we tell the children of the South how he gave himself and all he had for the South and her rights?

Historian Karen L. Cox estimates that the UDC subsequently distributed thousands of Lee portraits across the country. “Putting a face with a name such as Robert E. Lee, whose life example children were taught to emulate,” she argues, “was an effective way for the Daughters to achieve their goal of instilling respect and reverence for the Confederate past.”²⁹

The Lee image cultivated by Early, Jones, and the UDC continued to appeal to the America of the 1930s and 1940s. Nowhere was the supremacy of Lee and Virginia during this period more vividly illustrated than in the career of Virginia journalist and historian Douglas Southall Freeman. A son of one of Lee’s veterans, Freeman earned a Ph.D. in history from Johns Hopkins University before becoming editor of the *Richmond News Leader*. Between 1915 and 1944 he published widely-read books on Lee and gave numerous radio addresses and speeches in which he attested to the general’s greatness as a military leader and as a moral example to a nation going through the Great Depression and two world wars. Even before embarking on his professional career, Freeman had expressed a Lee-centric conception of Southern history. “Surely if there is an ideal in the Old South it is Lee,” he said to his mother in 1907, “he stands for all that was best and brightest there.” For the remainder of his life, Freeman

²⁹ CV 15 (1907): 103; Cox, *Dixie’s Daughters*, 134.

did all in his power to see that the narrative of the Confederate experience remained centered on Lee and his army.³⁰

In 1915 he published *Lee's Dispatches*, a collection of the general's correspondence with Jefferson Davis. Enough time had passed since the war, Freeman told his readers, that an objective analysis of Lee could be rendered: "the careless overstatements of partisans have given place to the cool analysis of impartial investigators." Nevertheless, the Lee whom Freeman portrayed was remarkably similar to the one portrayed in Jones's sermons, the pages of the *SHSP*, and the pronouncements of the UDC. Scholar Keith D. Dickson argues that in setting forth Lee's own words, "Freeman could confirm that Lee was endowed with all the qualities of physical and moral courage, character, intellect, faith, self-mastery, judgment, tact, and discretion that legend had bestowed upon him" and furthermore he could use Lee to "enhance the character of the people of the modern South."³¹

White Southerners proved receptive to Freeman's crusade. Impressed by the popularity of *Lee's Dispatches*, Charles Scribner's Sons contracted with Freeman for a seventy-five thousand-word Lee biography. Consumed with passion for his subject, Freeman spent nearly two decades researching and writing what became four volumes of over a million words, the Pulitzer Prize winning biography, *R. E. Lee*. It is a masterful hagiography written as if the ghosts of Jubal Early, J. William Jones, and Mildred Lewis Rutherford had been whispering in Freeman's ear. Like Early and Jones, Freeman argued that Lee was pure of character and unfailingly brilliant as a general. And like Rutherford, Freeman portrayed Lee as the ideal

³⁰ Connelly and Bellows, *God and General Longstreet*, 129; Connelly, *Marble Man*, 143-53; Blight, *Race and Reunion*, 291; Gallagher, *Lee and His Army*, 263.

³¹ Douglas Southall Freeman, ed., *Lee's Dispatches: Unpublished Letters of General Robert E. Lee, C.S.A. to Jefferson Davis and the War Department of the Confederate States of America, 1862-65* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1915), iii; Dickson, *Sustaining Southern Identity*, 74.

Southerner, a pious gentleman of Revolutionary stock. (It is worth noting that Freeman soon began working on an even longer biography of George Washington.)³²

R. E. Lee was a great critical and popular success. By 1948 thirty-five thousand sets had been sold—nearly nine times the publisher’s projection. Despite his intention to move on to his Washington biography, Freeman devoted the next several years of his life to studying the Army of Northern Virginia’s high command. This culminated in the three-volume *Lee’s Lieutenants: A Study in Command* (1942-43), which proved to be his most popular work. Keith Dickson sums up Freeman’s powerful impact on Civil War memory by noting that his professional bona fides and his skills as a biographer “allowed him to create works of history and memory that enabled southerners to merge their identities with Lee, the Army of Northern Virginia, and the people of the wartime South.”³³

Robert E. Lee was always the Confederacy’s most popular hero. He was not, however, always the embodiment of the Rebel cause nor was his army always the embodiment of the Confederate war effort. As this dissertation has shown, the Army of Tennessee was prominent in white Southern memory for decades after the war. But the passing of the wartime generation, sectional reconciliation, and the ascendance of the United Daughters of the Confederacy led to the eventual triumph of a Confederate memory centered on Lee and Virginia—a memory that misleads professional historians even today.

³² Connelly, *Marble Man*, 141; Dickson, *Sustaining Southern Identity*, 114, 121.

³³ Connelly, *Marble Man*, 143 ; Dickson, *Sustaining Southern Identity*, 134; Janney, *Remembering the Civil War*, 302-303; Gallagher, *Lee and His Army*, 263-66. For assessments of Freeman, see Alan T. Nolan, *Lee Considered: General Robert E. Lee and Civil War History* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1991); and Michael Fellman, *The Making of Robert E. Lee* (New York: Random House, 2000).

Conclusion:
“That other Immortal Army”

On March 27, 1900, George Moorman, the adjutant general and chief of staff of the United Confederate Veterans and a former Rebel officer, issued general orders calling on members to pay respects to “the Old Wearers of the Gray [who] are fast passing away.” Veterans of every theater of the war, the recently departed were men of “remarkable achievements,” “intrepid courage,” “military fame,” “great heart,” “humble surroundings,” “honor,” “kingly majesty,” and “republican simplicity.” One of those lately lost was Louis Arnauld, an artilleryman who had fought in the western theater. Moorman said of Arnauld:

His name is inscribed upon, and will be forever borne upon the
Roll of Honor of that other Immortal Army, which so long carried
the fortunes of the South upon the point of its glittering bayonets,
and only succumbed when worn out by attrition, and decimated in
the white heat of battle—the Army of Tennessee—and will be
handed down the streams of time linked indissolubly with the story
of the undying achievements of Albert Sidney Johnston,
Beauregard, Bragg, Hood, Stephen D. Lee, Bedford Forrest,
Leonidas Polk, Jos[eph] Wheeler and Jos[eph] E. Johnston.¹

“That other Immortal Army” and its “undying achievements” loomed large in the minds of the men and women of the wartime generation. When offering evidence of their martial,

¹ CV 8 (1900): 229.

spiritual, and masculine superiority over the enemy, former Confederates did not look only to Robert E. Lee and the Army of Northern Virginia. But they faced a challenge in reconciling the memory of the Army of Tennessee with their Lost Cause convictions. The historical record of that army was in many ways at odds with what they wanted to believe. They achieved the necessary reconciliation of fact and faith by fragmenting their memory of the army.

The historical Army of Tennessee was plagued by discipline problems and had a higher rate of venereal disease than any other Rebel army; at one point its chaplains, convinced that their cause was hopeless, considered resigning in mass. Yet, in memory it was a model of piety and dutifulness, claiming the “Fighting Bishop” Leonidas Polk as one of its corps commanders, Sam Davis as one of its privates, and the Dalton revival as one of its formative experiences. Moreover, the army lost nearly every engagement it fought in and its high command was full of incapable and egotistical generals; its wartime exploits could hardly be cited as evidence of Confederate martial superiority. Yet it was remembered as the army that triumphed at Chickamauga—supposedly one of the most climactic struggles in modern warfare—and counted brilliant, modest generals like Patrick Cleburne and Alexander P. Stewart among its division commanders and the dauntless Orphan Brigade among its units. In a culture that equated martial prowess with manliness, the army’s wartime record could be seen as shameful and emasculating. But in memory the army’s soldiers charged fearlessly into annihilation at Franklin and its high command included Nathan Bedford Forrest and Benjamin Franklin Cheatham, officers who fought, drank, or swore their way into the ranks of manhood. Moreover, the remembered army could lay claim to one of the war’s great contingencies—the death of Albert Sidney Johnston at the Battle of Shiloh. Like the mortal wounding of Stonewall Jackson, this sudden, random turn of events was seized on by a generation trying to explain the South’s defeat in the war, both to itself

and its children. In memory, the Army of Tennessee was greater than the sum of its historical parts.

Scholars of memory construction in the postwar South have focused narrowly on Robert E. Lee and Virginia and given short shrift to the western theater, assuming that that is how postwar Southerners themselves remembered the war. This dissertation has shown that that assumption is false and that these scholars have overlooked a key dimension of the Lost Cause myth and a significant way in which former Confederates coped with the trauma of defeat. Of course, as explained in the last chapter, as the twentieth century progressed and the torch of Civil War memory changed hands white Southerners expressing Confederate identity did become increasingly focused on Lee and the Old Dominion. But this was a gradual process. In the late nineteenth and into the twentieth century white Southerners grasped something akin to what modern military historians have finally come to see—that the Civil War cannot be understood by looking only at Virginia.

Whether they looked to Virginia or elsewhere in the former Confederacy, ex-Rebels refused to allow defeat in the Civil War to overturn their cultural convictions. While militarily the Army of Northern Virginia was the only consistently capable force the South fielded in the Civil War, it was not the only army whose memory could be put to use. Instead of remembering four years of defeats in the western theater, former Confederates created an incomplete mosaic, each tile a carefully selected leader, soldier, unit, or event. Thus the memory of the Army of Tennessee existed in fragments. It could not be made whole, lest it give the lie to the myth of the Lost Cause.

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