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NATIONALIZING THE DEAD: THE CONTESTED MAKING OF AN AMERICAN  
COMMEMORATIVE TRADITION FROM THE CIVIL WAR TO THE TO THE GREAT  
WAR

by

SHANNON T. BONTRAGER

Under the Direction of Dr. Ian Christopher Fletcher

ABSTRACT

In recent years, scholars have emphasized the importance of collective memory in the making of national identity. Where does death fit into the collective memory of American identity, particularly in the economic and social chaos of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries? How did death shape the collective memory of American national identity in the midst of a pluralism brought on by immigration, civil and labor rights, and a transforming culture? On the one hand, the commemorations of public figures such as Ulysses S. Grant, William McKinley, and Theodore Roosevelt constructed an identity based on Anglo-Saxonism, American imperialism, and the “Strenuous Life.” This was reflected in the burial of American soldiers of the Spanish American and Philippine American wars and the First World War. On the other hand, the commemorations of soldiers and sailors from the Civil War, Spanish American War, and Great War created opportunities to both critique and appropriate definitions of national identity. Through a series of case studies, my dissertation brings together cultural

and political history to explore the (re)production and (trans)formation of American identity from the Civil War to the Great War. I am particularly interested in the way people used funerals and monuments as tools to produce official and vernacular memory. I argue that both official and vernacular forms of commemoration can help historians understand the social and political tensions of creating national identity in a burgeoning industrial and multicultural society.

INDEX WORDS: Death, Burial, Commemoration, Collective memory, Identity, Imagined Community, Tradition, Civil War, Philippines, Cuba, Great War

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WAR

by

SHANNON T. BONTRAGER

A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in the College of Arts and Sciences

Georgia State University

2011

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2011

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by

SHANNON T. BONTRAGER

Committee Chair: Ian Christopher Fletcher

Committee: Joe Perry

Larry Youngs

Michel Reid-Vazquez

Electronic Version Approved

Office of Graduate Studies

College of Arts and Sciences

Georgia State University

May 2011

## DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to Frank Woodruff Buckles, Charlotte Louise Berry Winters, and all the servicemen and women of the United States Armed Forces who died in anonymity or whose bodies were never recovered.

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This dissertation would not have been possible were it not for the help of many people. The many librarians and archivists at the Library of Congress and at the National Archives gave me invaluable help in navigating the enormous collections at the College Park and Washington, D.C. locations. I would like to extend special thanks to Senior Military Archivist Richard L. Boylan who spent several hours with me helping me fill out request forms, escorting me to the stacks, and alerting me to sources that only someone with his 20-years of experience could locate. I appreciated his willingness to treat a new researcher with the same professionalism and exuberance as that of a seasoned scholar. I would also like to thank Mary Poland, a Library Specialist in Access Services at the Library Technology Center at North Georgia College and State University in Dahlonega, Georgia. Her willingness to work with the Interlibrary Loan officer at the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C. was invaluable to access the Clara Barton Papers on microfilm. My requests were new opportunities for Mary and she always delivered with consideration of my demanding schedule as an adjunct instructor. I would also like to extend special thanks to Elijah Scott, Director of Libraries at Georgia Highlands College in Cartersville, Georgia. His ability to secure funding and access to JSTOR at a small school during an economic recession was nothing short of brilliant and it made the completion of my dissertation a reality.

Many friends and colleagues also have their imprints on this dissertation. Dr. Steve Blankenship, my close friend and colleague at Georgia Highlands College, has read several chapters. We continue the discussion started many years ago as Graduate Teaching Instructors at Georgia State University in Atlanta, Georgia. His friendship and mentoring have made me a better instructor and without his encouragement and critical eye, my work would be much



poorer. Drs. Abou Bamba and Fakhri Haghani likewise have significantly influenced my work. Their respective postcolonial critiques, as well as their friendship throughout our doctoral programs, proved invaluable. They were, and remain as alumni, treasures of the Georgia State history department. The members of the Trans-Empire Research Cluster also provided valuable assistance and encouragement through this process. The members, too many to name here, always provided critical insights and valuable exchanges of ideas and knowledge. We read each others' chapters over coffee and pastries and helped each other move through our respective doctoral and masters programs. I was very happy to participate in this group and I was very happy to get to know all the people who came to the monthly meetings over the years. My colleagues who participate in the Faculty Association for Interdisciplinary Research and Pedagogy at Georgia Highlands College also deserve special mention. It is wonderful to work with fellow historians who support each other and who are willing to work together for the benefit of each other. My colleagues have always been professional and helpful as they too have read chapters and provided many valuable observations that I was able to include in successive drafts.

I would like to acknowledge the committee members who worked with me on this project. Without their insights and observations this dissertation would have been much different. Besides the hard work that they put into reading and editing this dissertation, they also put much of their energy into me. I learned many things from Dr. Joe Perry, Dr. Michele Reid Vazquez, Dr. Larry Youngs, and Dr. Ian Christopher Fletcher. Each of these individuals demonstrated not only the skills of successful historians but they also demonstrated the skills of being successful teachers. Without their professionalism and encouragement I would not have completed this degree. I would like to extend a special note of thanks to Dr. Youngs who

mentored me in the classroom and on the golf course. Without his willingness to go out of his way to connect with me outside of the classroom, I would have never finished. His passion, his interpersonal communication, and his empathy for those going through the graduate school experience match his knowledge of U.S. history and he has been an excellent model of the gentleman-scholar. Dr. Fletcher has likewise been a fine example to learn from. He was willing to step into an advisor role when my two previous advisors left the department to take jobs elsewhere. He helped mold my dissertation (and me) in new and interesting ways that brought new life to my work and new energy to me. It was perhaps one of his more difficult tasks but one that I am thankful he was willing to take on because he was able to completely redefine what I understood to be a student-teacher working relationship.

Finally I would like to thank my wife Eleanor, our daughter Mairi, and our new son Adam. Eleanor moved to the United States from her native home of Scotland to be with me. As this doctoral program began to lengthen much longer than we had anticipated, she gave me the encouragement, tenderness, and toughness that I needed. I am very grateful to her willingness to be so steadfast as well as her ability to discuss my dissertation with the level of insight shared by many others mentioned above. Mairi and Adam have provided countless moments of tenderness and comedy that has served me both as a needed distraction and a focus of concentration in completing this dissertation. I am greatly anticipating Mairi's rise to big sister and Adam's new life that brings a spirit of excitement, anticipation, and a sense of new beginning that I will surely embrace as I bring this dissertation project to a close. To all of these people and the many others who I was not able to name, thank you.

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## CHAPTER 1—INTRODUCTION

Man is an animal suspended in webs of significance that he himself has spun.

— Clifford Geertz

Community is just such a boundary-expressing symbol. As a symbol, it is held in common by its members; but its meaning varies with its members' unique orientations to it. In the face of this variability of meaning, the consciousness of community has to be kept alive through manipulation of its symbols. The reality and efficacy of the community's boundary—and, therefore, of the community itself—depends upon its symbolic construction and embellishment.

—Anthony Cohen

Every human society is, in the last resort, men banded together in the face of death. The power of religion depends, in the last resort, upon the credibility of the banners it puts in the hands of men as they stand before death, or more accurately, as they walk, inevitably, toward it.

—Peter L. Berger

In the buildup to the invasion of Iraq in the spring of 2003, Representative Virginia “Ginny” Brown-Waite, a Republican from Florida, sponsored legislation that would use American taxpayer dollars to bring home the remains of World War I and World War II soldiers buried in France. Congresswoman Brown-Waite came up with the legislation after listening to one of her constituents. She claimed, “I, along with many other Americans, do not feel that the French government appreciates the sacrifices men and women in uniform have made to defend the freedom that the French enjoy today.” Her response came in the wake of the French government’s threat to block a United Nations resolution that would allow the U.S. to invade Iraq. She introduced her proposal shortly after the U.S. House of Representatives under Republican control approved several other bills ranging from preventing French firms from getting postwar reconstruction contracts to Republican and Ohio Representative Bob Ney’s bill to change the names of French fries to “freedom fries” and French toast to “freedom toast” in the Congressional cafeterias. Brown-Waite’s reprimand of the French government was more symbolic than real and very unpopular. The House Subcommittee on Veteran Benefits never took action on it. This underscored the sentiments of individuals such as Steve Thomas, a

spokesman for the American Legion, who said “a lot of people may not want to repatriate their fallen loved ones, separating them from their comrades, to make a statement about the French government.”<sup>1</sup>

Representative Brown-Waite’s bill politicized the military dead and represented the continuation of what historian Jackson Lears has described as the “militarist fantasy” that he argues had been used by politicians to “regenerate” America since the Civil War. The so-called regenerative militarism had been the foundation to American cultural and political machinery in both world wars, the Cold War, and the War on Terrorism.<sup>2</sup> Militarism was the regenerative tissue that helped renew the American experience and transform it from a Republic to a nation to an Empire. Brown-Waite’s bill was the latest attempt to pronounce this regenerative militarism in the United States. But one reason why Representative Brown-Waite’s bill proved unpopular was that the proposed bill actually diminished the sacrifices made by American soldiers in the two world wars of the twentieth century. Men died to protect France and other European nations from the threat of German militarism and fascist totalitarianism; Brown-Waite’s critique of the contemporary state of the Franco-American alliance through the politicization of the war dead thus violated the traditions of American collective memory. American soldiers since the Civil War died in the context of a national mythology of a noble cause; the living traditionally buried their comrades together thus creating a “community of the fallen” that was noble, honorable, and venerable. Traditions dating back to Abraham Lincoln’s Gettysburg Address made it the duty of the living to remember the sacrifices of the fallen by incorporating them into the memory of the national community. Congresswoman Brown-Waite proposed a new tradition; one that allowed

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.cnn.com/2003/ALLPOLITICS/03/13/sprj.irq.congress.france/index.html>, 13 March 2003, accessed 5 February 2006.

<sup>2</sup> Jackson Lears, *Rebirth of a Nation: The Making of Modern America, 1877-1920* (New York: Harper, 2008), 1-3, 353-4.

descendents of individuals to break up the communities of the dead that had defended France and helped expand the American empire. This legislation threatened the mourning strategies developed over the previous century-and-a-half since the Civil War. These traditions formed the structures of individual and collective mourning and preserving the social bond. As psychologist and religious studies scholar Peter Homans suggests:

In the case of individual mourning, the ability to mourn requires a certain amount of psychological structure or integration. If that is missing, then the individual is unable to mourn, and the condition is that of trauma. In the case of collective mourning, the same is true, but in a group sense. Collective mourning requires a certain amount of group integration. What Erikson calls 'the basic tissues of social life' cannot be too badly damaged. If this network of bonds is destroyed, then the condition is traumatic. In both the individual and the group examples, the identifying feature of trauma is the absence of, or great destruction of, psychological structure (the social bond).<sup>3</sup>

By repatriating American remains buried in French soil as a critique of the French stance against an invasion of Iraq, the Congresswoman offered to untangle the first fiber of a social network that weaved together the collective memory of how Americans had come to remember the men who made the ultimate sacrifices in the First and Second World Wars.

Examining the way that Americans remembered the military dead provides an opportunity to explore how politics of race, class, and gender shaped the rituals of commemoration and collective memory as the American Republic gave way to the American nation-state and eventually transformed again into an American empire. This transition was never complete. Americans, from the very beginning of the country's history, constructed, utilized, and negotiated overlapping layers of republicanism, nationalism, and imperialism. Of these three aspects of the American imagined community, one usually dominated depending on the historical period and socio-economic reality of the time. One of the key structures of the

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<sup>3</sup> Peter Homans, *Symbolic Loss: The Ambiguity of Mourning and Memory at Century's End* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2000), 29.



nation-state was nationalism, which government officials and the social and economic middle-class constructed parallel to the emerging bureaucratic institutions of the federal government. This included the bureaucratic officials chose to commit the nation and its people to war. The bureaucracy of the military, operating inside the bureaucracy of the nation-state, was not capable of handling the deaths of soldiers from the Civil War or from overseas wars in the Caribbean, in the Pacific, or in Europe. Leaders, both military and civilian, had to work to build an infrastructure that allowed for the respectful treatment of the dead. Examining this American style of nation-building will allow for what anthropologist Clifford Geertz described as “thick description” of institutional and cultural nationalization. This dissertation will consider how New England elites built a republican way of death that remembered Protestant, nativist, and capitalist values and how this evolved into a way of bereavement that remembered sacrifices and contributions made to republican, national and imperial manifestations of the imagined community. This study will examine the government’s willingness to recover the dead from the Civil War, the Spanish American War and the Great War and how the bureaucracies associated with these efforts crafted “new” traditions of American commemorative practices and collective memory. This study suggests that dead soldiers become important symbols in the fashioning of American identity as Americans confronted and experienced the layers of republicanism, nationalism, and imperialism.

Constructing and maintaining an American collective memory was a fundamental aspect of the imagined community that helped justify the construction of the bureaucratic nation-state in the period from the Civil War to the Great War. Agents of American mourning traditions constructed nationalistic commemorative traditions that could reduce collective trauma of war and economic devastation by reconnecting “the basic tissues of social life” through a mourning

process that espoused nationalization. In this process, Americans constructed the traditions of nationalization through the language of democracy and republicanism but often overlooked the tendency that a national mourning culture would isolate and exclude individuals and groups based on race and class; the mourning rituals espoused by the bureaucratic leviathan often crushed local mourning culture based in regional agrarianism on which American republicanism was based. Thus invigorating social bonds and reducing trauma through new mourning traditions connected some groups to the imagined community while other groups of people experienced severed social bonds and exclusion from the official criteria of national identity. American expansion in the West, in the Caribbean, and the Pacific often produced trauma for historical figures that could not align their interests with those of the United States even if members of those communities fought and died for the security of the American economic and political system. The language and practice of death and burial in the military is one way to explore these issues. Rising bureaucratic and technological reform in the way the military took care of its dead took individual and collective mourning and grief out of the small-scale individual context of early nineteenth-century republicanism and placed it in the context of new bureaucratic traditions of large-scale organization of the War Department. If Americans officially understood their experiences as part of a democratic-republican nation but military agents of the nation engaged in imperialistic and (neo)colonial expansion based on racial subordination and exclusion, then this discrepancy will repeatedly manifest itself in ways shaped by specific historical situations in experiences of *national* identity, evocations of *collective* memory, and performance of *public* commemoration.

## The Historiography of Commemoration and Nationalization

The American traditions of commemorating dead bodies underwent dramatic change on a massive scale during the nineteenth century. They reflected what the *Annales* School historian Philippe Ariès, looking at the *longue durée* of death from the medieval period to the modern period described: death gradually became managed, and by the nineteenth century, coinciding with the rise of nationalization, was increasingly taken out of its religious context.<sup>4</sup> This process of nationalization followed a two-fold progression. On the one hand, nationalization was a bureaucratic, institutional, logistical process reflecting the growth of the federal government. On the other hand, nationalization was a political, ideological, and cultural process reflecting the recuperation of post-Civil War “sectional” conflict, the marginalization of ongoing racial inequality, and the enfolding of colonial overseas conflict into an ostensibly “national” project of American consolidation and expansion. This process had significant impact on bereavement for nineteenth- and twentieth-century Americans because the more American institutional agents managed death, the less ability Americans had to heal their grief through the use of spontaneous mourning traditions based on local religious customs. Instead societies invented new traditions to go along with the process of nationalization and the new management of death.

The rise of nationalization coincided with a fracturing—but not complete separation—of the religious and secular spheres; this had significant meaning for the individual body and for its location inside the imagined community. Literary critic Mary Poovey’s *The Making of the Social Body* discusses how religious and secular domains disaggregated in the transformation of the Body Politick of the seventeenth century to the Social Body of the nineteenth century. She traces the genealogy of the Social Body to Thomas Hobbes’s *Leviathan* and suggests that the seventeenth-century philosopher conceived of the Commonwealth, or artificial man/state, as an

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<sup>4</sup> Philippe Ariès, *The Hour of Our Death* trans. Helen Weaver (New York: Knopf, 1981).

isotropic space where all humans had worth inside the Commonwealth.<sup>5</sup> As the Scientific Revolution and the move toward liberalism unfolded in the eighteenth century, she argues, the religious domain separated incompletely from the secular domain so that the two spheres of influence competed but also complimented each other. Individuals' bodies no longer had meaning exclusively in the context of salvation and duty to the monarch; they now also had meaning as bodies in the context of the state.<sup>6</sup> Nineteenth-century reformers formalized the relationship of the social body. For example, Belgian mathematician Adolphe Quetelet advanced probability theory beyond Malthusian and utilitarian concepts to formal statistics that "made it possible to distinguish scientifically various stages in the evolution of nations, corresponding to the stages of growth of the individual organism."<sup>7</sup> Bodies in Europe and in America now served their respective nation-states and therefore became important sites used by these states to promote nationalization. The importance these bodies held to the nation-state did not end with their deaths. Death, especially heroic deaths, allowed living Americans to mourn the individual, forget malignancies based on historic boundaries, and embrace the new reality of the imagined community through the languages of Christianity and nationalism. The dead symbolized the integrity of the nation and the social body. If the ability to forget, according to French historian Ernst Renan, paved the way for people to construct the nation, so did the ability to mourn.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Mary Poovey, *Making A Social Body: British Cultural Formation, 1830-1864* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1995). For example, Euclidean geometry imposes value on all angles in a triangle. By applying this mathematical theory to society, Poovey suggests that Hobbes politicized the meaning of individuals in society who could be valued through the measure of money and the relationship to government. Of course, Poovey reminds her readers, this was not a democratic apparatus but a spatial/geopolitical arrangement that rationalized the monarchy.

<sup>6</sup> Russ Castronovo, *Necro Citizenship: Death, Eroticism, and the Public Sphere in the Nineteenth-Century United States* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2001), 53-61.

<sup>7</sup> David G. Horn, *Social Bodies: Science, Reproduction, and Italian Modernity* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1994), 22-3, 30.

<sup>8</sup> Ernst Renan, "What is a Nation?" in Eley, Geoff and Suny, Ronald Grigor, ed. *Becoming National: A Reader*, (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), pp. 41-55.

Renan's understanding of the nation paved the way for what historian Benedict Anderson has described as "imagined communities," where people produced various forms of nationalism through the social and cognitive processes of remembering and forgetting.<sup>9</sup> While Americans certainly defined themselves from a "position to think of themselves as living lives *parallel* to those of other substantial groups of people—if never meeting, yet certainly proceeding along the same trajectory," they also defined themselves at intersections that had a counter-trajectory to other groups of people.<sup>10</sup> The power of the imagined community helped nineteenth-century Americans remember and forget cultural boundaries and political borders. Secular and religious forces often shaped the process of nationalization in the U.S.; the result was the construction of an expanding nation-state based on Protestantism, capitalism, and nativism.<sup>11</sup>

An important aspect of this imagined community, claims Anderson, was for actors of the nation-state to construct a genealogy of the nation. Although his work focused mostly on print capitalism, he suggested that the culture of death posed another way to produce this genealogy.

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<sup>9</sup> Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* 3rd. (London: Verso, 2002).

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 188.

<sup>11</sup> Robert Craig, "Christianity and Empire: A Case Study of American Protestant Colonialism and Native Americans" *American Indian Culture and Research Journal* 21 (1997): 31-2; Carola Wessel, "Missionary Diaries as a Source for Native American Studies: David Zeisberger and the Delaware" *European Review of Native American Studies* 10 (1996): 35; Nathan O. Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1989); George Marsden, *Fundamentalism in American Culture* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1980); Jeffrey Cox, *The English Churches in a Secular Society: Lambeth, 1870-1930* (Oxford University Press, 1982); Hugh McCleod *Religion and Society in England, 1850-1914* (Palgrave Macmillan, 1996); Callum Brown, *Death of Christian Britain* (London: Routledge, 2001); Dale K. Van Kley, "Christianity as Casualty and Chrysalis of Modernity: The Problem of Dechristianization in the French Revolution" *American Historical Review* 108 (October 2003): 1081-1104; Jonathan Sheehan, "Enlightenment, Religion, and the Enigma of Secularization: A Review Essay" *American Historical Review* 108 (October 2003): 1079-80. Jon Butler, "Jack-in-the-Box Faith: The Religion Problem in Modern American History" *The Journal of American History* 90 (March 2004): 1357-1378; Harry S. Stout and Robert M. Taylor, Jr., "Studies of Religion in American Society: The State of the Art" in *New Directions in American Religious History* ed by Harry S. Stout and D. G. Hart (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 36; Catherine Hall, *Civilising Subjects: Metropole and Colony in the English Imagination, 1830-1867* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2002); Robert Wuthnow and Tracy L. Scott, "Protestants and Economic Behavior" in *New Directions in American Religious History* ed by Harry S. Stout and D. G. Hart (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 272; Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (London: Routledge, 1992 first published in 1930). This work has formed the bases of secularization theory and the relation to industrialism and the marketplace. See also Peter Berger and Thomas Luckman, *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge* (New York: Anchor Press, 1967); R. Laurence Moore, *Selling God: American Religion in the Marketplace of Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 5.

Speaking of Fernand Braudel's *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II*, Anderson writes:

For Braudel, the deaths that matter are those myriad anonymous events, which, aggregated and averaged into secular mortality rates, permit him to chart the slow-changing conditions of life for millions of anonymous human beings of whom the last question asked is their nationality. From Braudel's remorselessly accumulating cemeteries, however, the nation's biography snatches, against the going mortality rate, exemplary suicides, poignant martyrdoms, assassinations, executions, wars, and holocausts. But, to serve the narrative purpose, these violent deaths must be remembered/forgotten as "our own."<sup>12</sup>

Those who participated in building imagined communities willingly subscribed to the death of an individual, or group of people, ideas associated with a specific society; whether or not those who died associated with that community while alive became irrelevant. Living people could use dead bodies in the pedigree of national identity-making.<sup>13</sup>

Although national biographers invented rituals and traditions largely through representations of the dead, those representations often had real political consequences. Anthropologist Katherine Verdery contends "symbolic capital" of dead bodies became powerful currency in the political domain.<sup>14</sup> From this she posits that "nationalism is thus a kind of ancestor worship, a system of patrilineal kinship, in which national heroes occupy the place of clan elders in defining a nation as a noble lineage."<sup>15</sup> Individuals and groups build lineages because it helps them mourn and construct an identity out of their grief. In other words, the "political lives of dead bodies" help form a genealogy that justifies the politics of the nation.

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<sup>12</sup> Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 206.

<sup>13</sup> Rogers Brubaker and Frederick Cooper, "Beyond Identity," *Theory and Society* 29 (2000): 1-47. Brubaker and Cooper see a significant problem in looking at a reified "identity" which authors often describe as fluid, semi-porous, and flexible. They suggest that scholars view "identification" as an ever changing process and use the terms "identification" and "identity-making" instead of the more common term "identity".

<sup>14</sup> Katherine Verdery, *The Political Lives of Dead Bodies: Reburial and Postsocialist Change* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999).

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 41.

The dead body as a site of the nation carried over to the burial site and the ritual of the funeral. Dead bodies as representations of identity-making allowed Americans to symbolically distinguish between national and profane space.<sup>16</sup> Verdery claims, “Thus burying or reburying ancestors and kin sacralizes and nationalizes space as ‘ours,’ binding people to their national territories in an orderly universe.”<sup>17</sup> In the United States, the anonymous masses became the building blocks for making national identity. From these anonymous masses “the nation’s biography [or, rather, the nation’s biographers] snatched” “poignant” deaths “to serve the narrative purpose.” Thus Americans in the nineteenth century who espoused nativist politics based on Anglo-Saxonism and Protestantism built a genealogy that included, among others, Abraham, Jacob, Jesus of Nazareth, Christopher Columbus, the Puritans, George Washington, and Thomas Jefferson. Through these bodies Americans understood the history of the nation; they synchronized the nation’s biography with the history of Protestant Christianity and imposed this national history on the spaces of North America.<sup>18</sup> This aligning of religion with history depoliticized race, class, and gender and politicized patriotism thus creating racial “Others” consisting of anyone who did not or could not be aligned with this religio-historical definition. Those outside this constructed boundary could be swept away. For example, nineteenth-century expansionists used seventeenth-century Puritans of the Massachusetts Bay Colony to explain

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<sup>16</sup> See Emile Durkheim, *Elementary Forms of the Religious Life* trans. by Karen E. Fields (London: Free Press, 1995)

<sup>17</sup> Verdery, *Political Lives of Dead Bodies*, 110.

<sup>18</sup> John Higham, “Ethnicity and American Protestants: Collective Identity in the Mainstream” in *New Directions in American Religious History* ed by Harry S. Stout and D.G. Hart, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997). Native-born Americans were those who could chart a direct cultural lineage or genealogy back to the founding fathers. They tended to be anti-Catholic and anti-immigrant and formed the political Know-Nothing Party. Robert Craig, “Christianity and Empire: A Case Study of American Protestant Colonialism and Native Americans” *American Indian Culture and Research Journal* 21 (1997): 31-2; Charles Sellers, *The Market Revolution: Jacksonian America, 1815-1846* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991); David H. Unser, Jr., “Iroquois Livelihood and Jeffersonian Agrarianism: Reaching Behind the Models and Metaphors” in *Native Americans and the Early Republic* ed. by Frederick E. Hoxie, Ronald Hoffman, and Peter J. Albert (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1999): 200, 213. Robert Abzug, *Cosmos Crumbling: American Reform and the Religious Imagination* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994). Abzug discusses how elites of America constructed specific cosmological views that “crumbled” under excessive social stress (such as the American Revolution).

how their “errand into the wilderness” was similar to the nineteenth-century’s Manifest Destiny.<sup>19</sup> During the unfolding of the American Republic, Americans extended the institution of slavery, conducted a War against Mexico, and removed Indians to areas west of the Mississippi River; all of which they incorporated into a collective memory of republicanism. Dead bodies helped produce a genealogy that could be used to explain American expansion while simultaneously excluding Native Americans, African Americans, and Irish Catholic immigrants.

The practice of forgetting and remembering created imagined communities in which individuals could identify themselves as part of the nation-state through collective memory. The nature of collective memory was malleable and dynamic. Sociologist Maurice Halbwachs challenged the traditional idea that memory was based in experience of a past event. His 1925 study claimed a “collective memory” existed among groups of people. He understood people to remember things based on their current political context. People, he claimed, also needed to validate their memories by corroborating them with other people; memory performed a social function. The political and social nature of remembering persuaded Halbwachs to claim that people socially constructed their memories to help them understand the present and not necessarily to recall the past as it actually happened.<sup>20</sup> Thus collective memory helped Americans rethink, recall, and restate their recollections of past events in terms that helped them explain their current experiences. The problem of collective memory was that it was elastic and continually adjusting thus making the process of building the imagined community a never-ending project of pinioning the social fabric to the edifice of nationalism. Thus the American

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<sup>19</sup> For an example see John Seelye, *Memory’s Nation: The Place of Plymouth Rock* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998).

<sup>20</sup> Maurice Halbwachs, *The Collective Memory* trans. by Francis J. Ditter Jr. and Vida Yazdi Ditter (New York: Harper Collins, 1980).



collective memory was instrumental in aiding Americans in explaining such things as the massive loss of life from the Civil War, their uncomfortable feelings about extending African Americans civil rights during Reconstruction, the need for northern and southern whites to reconcile the violence of the Civil War through the construction of racial violence against blacks, the need to reconcile the rhetoric of democracy and republicanism with the practice of imperialism and colonization in Cuba and the Philippines, and the justification of the ascendant American nation in the global world after the Great War despite the failures of Wilsonianism and laissez-faire capitalism.

Those seeking to build an American imagined community constructed new commemorative traditions around the dead and this gave them access to the collective memory of disparate groups. These sorts of dynamic and elastic commemorative traditions operated on a more basic tension of memory; how to keep memory of the moment from fading into tableau or from being completely forgotten? New commemorative traditions had to accommodate what French historian Pierre Nora has described as *milieu de mémoire*, or environment of memory, in which an event was remembered and commemorated through the experience of those who lived through it.<sup>21</sup> Eventually, Nora argues, once the living generation, who witnessed an event dies, the memory and the memorial will lose its *milieu de mémoire* and become *lieu de mémoire*, where the memorial will no longer be lived but the memory of the event will be disconnected from the everyday practices of the citizens and become a site of memory.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Pierre Nora, Laurence Kritzman, and Arthur Goldhammer ed. *Realms of Memory* (New York: Columbia University, 1996). Although Nora's translators have described his concept of *milieu de mémoire* as a "realm of memory," I have used the term "environment of memory," as others have, to accentuate the lived experience of commemorative practices.

<sup>22</sup> Maria Todorova, "The Mausoleum of Georgi Dimitrov as lieu de mémoire" *The Journal of Modern History* 78 (June 2006): 377-411. Richard Pyle, "Six Feet Under: New York City's Forgotten History," *Newsday*, 4 February 2006; New York Public Library, *African Burial Ground*, <http://www.nypl.org/research/sc/afb/shell.html>,

This process makes commemorative traditions vulnerable to a bureaucratic take-over of monuments and traditions. In this synthetic and even artificial collective memory, Americans often lost the power to control the memory of past events through organic experiences. These sorts of vulnerabilities gave representatives of the bureaucracy opportunities to redefine the collective memories of individuals and groups in the context of nationalization. Collective memory of the Civil War, Reconstruction, Imperial America, and a global Americanism was fundamentally shaped by the tension of who controlled the collective memory. As the early decades of the twentieth-century unfolded, this became more and more under the control of the federal government.

Those in the nineteenth century “invented traditions,” claim historians Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, in order to define the nation-state as having some authentic ancestral memory.<sup>23</sup> Historical actors in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries sometimes struggled, and sometimes accepted, the superimposition of the new traditions about death to commemorate ideas that spoke to their group’s socially constructed ideas, politics, and culture. The process of nationalizing death by continually constructing new commemorative traditions for the dead helped Americans maintain the ritual and the myth of the nation that spoke to the collective memory of prosperity and tragedy. The most important evolutionary aspect of the national way of death was its ability to expand its parameters in exchange for people’s loyalty to the memory of the nation. Thus to be remembered by the American nation, an individual or a group must only remember the continual updating of national traditions: funerals, graves and monuments dominated spaces that helped make this sort of Americanism possible.

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accessed 27 August 2006. Spaces and monuments could also be forgotten when no one could remember them such as what happened in New York City as the city’s infrastructure built around and on cemeteries effectively removing the burial of slaves and immigrants from the urban landscape.

<sup>23</sup> Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, eds. *The Invention of Traditions* (Cambridge University Press, 1992).

Death became imbued with “traditions” that Americans used to construct their history; cemeteries and burial grounds became archival locations for the history of the nation. The ability to archive has created a “memory of the modern” claims historian of France Matt K. Matsuda, in which so many opinions are communicated through the modern archival technologies, such as mass media that vast interpretations of the past contest and eventually reshape memory to fit the needs of the larger imagined community.<sup>24</sup> But as historian John R. Gillis counters “while memory has become more democratic, it has also become more burdensome.”<sup>25</sup> Gillis claims that “we are under obligation to remember more and more, due in large part to the fact that in modern society everyone belongs simultaneously to several different groups, each with its own collective memory.”<sup>26</sup> Gillis argues that people’s ability to remember has not changed but the pluralism that underscores modern times has made it virtually impossible to keep track of all the events that have affected an individual who belongs to multiple groups. “Dependent on several collective memories, but masters of none, we are only too aware of the gap between the enormous obligation to remember and the individual’s incapacity to do so without the assistance of mechanical reminders, souvenirs, and memory sites.”<sup>27</sup>

This makes it difficult for the historian to analyze the meaning that people place on death. To help deconstruct this meaning, we can view funerals, graves, and monuments as sites of memory that formed what Murray Edelman described as condensation symbols in which symbols “condense into one symbolic event, sign, or act patriotic pride, anxieties, remembrances of past glories or humiliations, promises of future greatness.”<sup>28</sup> These symbols influenced the

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<sup>24</sup> Matt K. Matsuda, *The Memory of the Modern* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996); Lawrence R. Levine, *The Opening of the American Mind: Canons, Culture, and History* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1996).

<sup>25</sup> John R. Gillis, ed. *Commemorations: The Politics of National Identity* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1994).

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 15.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>28</sup> Murray Edelman, *The Symbolic Uses of Politics* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1964), 6.

basic structure of ritual and myth that groups used to build their identity(ies) in what philosopher Antonio Gramsci described as historical blocs seeking cultural hegemony. Thus these commemorative moments become opportunities for historians to examine a group's understanding of their cosmic relation to the nation precisely because "where condensation symbols are involved, the constant check of the immediate environment is lacking."<sup>29</sup> It is these moments of unchecked reality that groups, responding to modern memory, find the inspiration to reformulate the symbols of death into a national identity to serve their current cosmology. Death and the meaning of death thus provide important evidence of human ability to produce culture. Rituals and symbols constructed by the living demonstrate how people(s) spin webs of significance to find meaning out of loss. Managing death helped people make culture out of the intersection between the destruction of the physical body and the psychological healing found in mourning. As Homans writes, "Grief is a painful emotion that is, so to speak, looking for a 'cure.' Mourning is a ritual that, so to speak, 'heals' the pain of grief."<sup>30</sup> Grieving and mourning dead bodies contributed to the production of American national identity.

### The Context of the American Imagined Community

This new national identity unfolded in the midst of a bureaucratic transformation. Robert Wiebe's *The Search for Order, 1877-1920* argues that the shift from a "distended society" to a bourgeois nation-state drove American development in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Sectional identity was being replaced by middle-class definitions of the role of

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid. Also see Renato Rosaldo, *Culture and Truth: The Remaking of Social Analysis* (Boston: MA: Beacon Press, 1989); *Ilongut Headhunting: 1883-1974: A Study in Society and History* (Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 1985). The interpretation and analysis of the moment is influenced by the immediate life experiences of the observer and the observed. See also Greg Sarris, *Keeping Slug Woman Alive: A Holistic Approach to American Indian Texts* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993).

<sup>30</sup> Homans, *Symbolic Loss*, 2.

government. The bureaucracy of the government increased and small businessmen, local culture, and traditional values gave way to corporate behemoths and government officials who enacted policies designed to govern politics, economics, and culture. Bureaucratic reform severed the social bonds of community. But this bureaucratic transformation was not absolute. Historian Jackson Lears points out that many people embraced thoroughly anti-modern strategies that opposed bureaucracy and the rising middle class value system.<sup>31</sup> Practitioners of the Arts and Crafts Movement, the new field of Psychology, and Catholic traditions all served to cultivate a “therapeutic world view” that eschewed “modernity” in favor of personal fulfillment. This anti-modernism did not, however, stop the rumbling toward modernization; an economic reorganization based on the marketplace model replaced the agrarian model as the United States industrialized and transformed into a consumer society. This was less about bureaucracy, argues historian Alan Trachtenberg in *The Incorporation of America*, and more about the cultural reproduction of corporations that ran big business as applied to societal frameworks.<sup>32</sup> Mass production and mass consumerism now reigned supreme; gone was the yeoman subsistence farmer and the small-scale entrepreneurial spirit. The impetus behind this incorporation of culture and the entire Gilded Age and Progressive Era claims historian Steven Diner was technology.<sup>33</sup> The advance of science, machines, and new inventions drove the period from the transportation revolution to the era of Fordism and Taylorism. With this entire new infrastructure, the best way to alleviate overproduction was through consumption. Historian Lizabeth Cohen argued that indeed the rise of government bureaucracy eroded the spirituality of

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<sup>31</sup> T. J. Jackson Lears, *No Place of Grace: Antimodernism and the Transformation of American Culture* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1994).

<sup>32</sup> Alan Trachtenberg, *The Incorporation of America: Culture and Society in the Gilded Age* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1982).

<sup>33</sup> Steven J. Diner, *A Very Different Age: Americans of the Progressive Era* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1998).

traditional America and inhibited small communities and individuals from controlling their own destiny.<sup>34</sup> She suggested that the consumer marketplace replaced this spiritualism with materialism. For some this further eroded the control people had over their own lives but for others, materialism gave them a new therapeutic model with which to escape the stress of a bureaucratic government that refused to listen to the needs of its citizens.<sup>35</sup>

Underlying all of this reform, claims Lears in *Rebirth of a Nation*, was an ethos of “regenerative militarism” that Progressive politicians used to pursue “the managerial dream: an administrative state that would supervise but also cooperate with big business.”<sup>36</sup> From the Civil War to the early twentieth century, American politicians pursued a policy of militarism in the West, in Cuba and the Philippines, and in Europe to regenerate an American administrative state that laid down the framework for the later welfare state. Echoing Nell Painter’s thesis, the Progressive spirit ended abruptly with America’s entry into World War I and the failure of Wilson to cement his fourteen point plan.<sup>37</sup> With the failure of the Progressive spirit at the expense of so many dead from the Great War, claims Lears, the United States Progressive rebirthing project was an exercise in “dying in vain.” “The Western Front,” claims Lears, “was the graveyard of the politics of regeneration.”<sup>38</sup>

As the stresses and rigors of regenerative militarism accompanied by a bureaucratic government gripped hold of industrial society in America and stripped communities of their social bonds, people found in collective memory a way to reconnect those social fibers by

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<sup>34</sup> Lizabeth Cohen, *Making a New Deal: Industrial Workers in Chicago, 1919-1939* 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 2008); Lizbeth Cohen, *A Consumer’s Republic: The Politics of Mass Consumption in Postwar America* (New York: Vintage, 2003).

<sup>35</sup> For a brief review of these historiographical themes see Alan Brinkley, “Prosperity, Depression, and War,” *The New American History: Revised and Expanded Edition* ed. by Eric Foner (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 1997): 133-158.

<sup>36</sup> Lears, *Rebirth of a Nation*, 341.

<sup>37</sup> Nell Irving Painter, *Standing at Armageddon: A Grassroots History of the Progressive Era* 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (New York: W. W. Norton, 2008).

<sup>38</sup> Lears, *Rebirth of a Nation*, 344.

asserting individual identity and relating it to a homogenous group. Thus American memory developed along four major fault lines, argues Michael Kammen in *Mystic Chords of Memory*. Whether or not individual and collective memory could alleviate the trauma created by the broken social bonds stemming from government bureaucracy depends, alleges the cultural historian, on the social position of an ever-changing scale of four major themes: 1) the role of American government as “a custodian of tradition”; 2) the ability to publicly challenge those traditions; 3) the desire to reconcile “tradition with a democratic ethos”; and 4) the “never-ending dialectic between tradition and progress.”<sup>39</sup> Kammen works these issues out largely in the cultural realms of literature, art, and material objects of Americana and stresses themes of tradition, democracy, progress, and consensus. He concludes by asserting that what is distinctive about American memory and culture is:

The American inclination to depoliticize the past in order to minimize memories (and causes) of conflict. That is how we healed the wounds of sectional animosity following the Civil War; and that is how we selectively remember only those aspects of heroes’ lives that will render them acceptable to as many people as possible.<sup>40</sup>

The artifacts of Americana formed a consensus for Americans in which they minimized conflict to maximize the social bonds of the nation.

But not everyone was willing to depoliticize the past. Historians such as Charles Blight, Kirk Savage, Nina Silber, and John Bodnar have critiqued the consensus at the heart of Kammen’s work by foregrounding race, class, and gender as the categories that influence memory and identity. Charles Blight and Kirk Savage suggest that the memory and monuments of Reconstruction America produced and reinforced the reunion of North and South by

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<sup>39</sup> Michael Kammen, *Mystic Chords of Memory: The Transformation of Tradition in American Culture* (New York: Vintage Books, 1993), 700.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 701.

privileging white men and attempting to eliminate blacks from the narrative altogether.<sup>41</sup>

Likewise, in *The Romance of Reunion*, Nina Silber suggests gender crises for both men and women brought on by the Civil War and Reconstruction shaped national reconciliation.<sup>42</sup>

Northern and southern men, claims Silber, had to redefine their notions of masculinity in the context of winning or losing the Civil War and winning or losing jobs. The main way that white men accomplished this was by differentiating themselves from African American masculinity, women, and immigrants.<sup>43</sup> These historians suggest that the bureaucratic functions of the nation-state did not liberate women or black men; the use of memory by white men only further disenfranchised subaltern groups. Thus Jon Bodnar contends that immigrants and minority groups produced a vernacular memory that successfully contested and remade the official memory produced by agents of the nation-state.<sup>44</sup>

Collective memory became a powerful political apparatus of protest but also a tool for government officials to bring order to the American experience. As historian David Thelen claims, American memory (and tradition) provides “security, authority, legitimacy, and identity in the present.”<sup>45</sup> If America was under rapture of a regenerative militarism then the collective memory surrounding the martial dead and the fallen community can help explain how Americans constructed and experienced Americanness—which can be defined as the cultural, economic, and political “stuff” of being American based on the elements of Protestantism, nativism, and capitalism. This collective memory was flexible enough to incorporate different groups of

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<sup>41</sup> David W. Blight, *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory* (Boston, MA: Belknap Press, 2002); Kirk Savage, *Standing Soldier, Kneeling Slave* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1999).

<sup>42</sup> Nina Silber, *The Romance of Reunion: Northerners and the South, 1865-1900* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997).

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 164-178.

<sup>44</sup> Jon Bodnar, *Remaking America: Public Memory, Commemoration, and Patriotism in the Twentieth Century* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1993).

<sup>45</sup> David Thelen, “Memory and American History,” *Journal of American History* 75 (Mar. 1989): 1117-1129 quote on p. 1124.



individuals into the collective memory of the nation yet rigid enough to produce exclusive notions of Americanness based on race, class, and gender. Funerals, graves, and monuments of the fallen community produced sites of condensation symbols that were malleable to the construction of imagined communities. Socially constructed notions of anxiety, pride, humiliation, and patriotism played the chords of grief and mourning and together formed the music of an artificial environment of nationalism. The collective memory surrounding the war dead, then, is a useful category of analysis for historians to explore how people used a moment of crisis—when social bonds were threatened—to reconnect their identity to the social fabric of the imagined community and collective memory of the nation born out of regenerative militarism.

Some historians have already used the dead as sites of memory and have looked at dead martial bodies as sites of contested memories. Historian Jay Winter's *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning* describes European bereavement culture in France, Germany, and Britain after the Great War as relatively unchanged from that of the Victorian management of death. Winter's continuity thesis examines language, spiritualism (including communing with the dead), art, literature, film, and memorials to suggest that western culture remained largely unchanged until after the Second World War.<sup>46</sup> In an echo of Theodor Adorno's lamentation of poetry after Auschwitz, Winter suggests that only after the holocaust did people lose the ability to heal their grief because they could not explain Nazi senselessness. Winter's study was a response to the theorists of modernity, particularly Paul Fussell's *The Great War in Modern Memory*, which suggests the beginning of modernity occurred during World War I.<sup>47</sup> So many people died in the futile assaults throughout the war, claims Fussell, that the Victorian patterns and modes of belief

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<sup>46</sup> Jay Winter, *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning: The Great War in European Cultural History* (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 10.

<sup>47</sup> Paul Fussell, *The Great War and Modern Memory* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1975).

and knowledge shifted dramatically because they could not fathom the meaninglessness of mechanized death. Examining English-language letters and diaries, he suggests that this was the moment that soldiers and the trenches began experimenting with the literary technique of irony. Fussell's discontinuity thesis was one of the key works in the historical discussion of modernization theory and one of the key departures of Winter's use of sites of bereavement culture.<sup>48</sup>

These sorts of debates have carried over into the American historiography of the fallen community. Historian Drew Gilpin Faust echoes Fussell's argument in her examination of meanings derived from dead bodies of Civil War soldiers. Faust suggests that death during the Civil War marked a crucial transformation in American culture and politics. In a war where 620,000 deaths occurred, which is proportional to six million when adjusted for population totals in the twenty-first century, Faust asserts that mass death brought on an inability to mourn; unresolved grief brought on mass doubt in religion and humanism.<sup>49</sup> While African Americans could find meaning in the Civil War, she argues, because the struggle for liberty was embroiled in their struggle against slavery, whites became disillusioned and lost the ability to find meaning out of such massive losses. Faust's discontinuity thesis suggests the Civil War interrupted the Victorian patterns of the "Good Death" and shook the Victorian mode of belief and knowledge of divine providence, which lead to an American modernity in the wake of the Civil War.<sup>50</sup>

Anticipating the secularism that Darwinian science brought to the later nineteenth-century, Faust suggests that the Civil War first weakened the Christian bonds of Victorian

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<sup>48</sup> Ibid; Lynne Hanley, *Writing War: Fiction, Gender, and Memory* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1991); Faust, *This Republic of Suffering*.

<sup>49</sup> Faust, *This Republic of Suffering*, 210. See also G. Kurt Piehler, *Remembering War the American Way* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian, 2004); Franny Nudelman, *John Brown's Body: Slavery, Violence, and the Culture of War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003). G. Kurt Piehler examines some of the key continuities of how American memory of war has affected American traditions while English studies scholar Francis Nudelman examines the impact that John Brown's body had on disrupting the national consciousnesses.

<sup>50</sup> Faust, *This Republic of Suffering*, 86-90, 110-111.

morality and assuredness in a heavenly afterlife. So many people died, she claims, that “Civil War carnage transformed the mid-nineteenth-century’s growing sense of religious doubt into a crisis of belief that propelled many Americans to redefine or even reject their faith in a benevolent and responsive deity.” Victorian notions of death, such as the Good Death, were interrupted by the widespread disillusionment with massive numbers of dead people both military and civilian, men and women, adults and children. Faust claims for most Americans, “Civil War death and devastation also planted seeds of a more profound doubt about human ability to know and to understand.”<sup>51</sup>

Like Faust, historian Lisa M. Budreau agrees that American military deaths in the modern age marked a break with the past. But her study suggests this fissure came not during or just after the Civil War rather, it came after the First World War. Despite that only 116,000 Americans lost their lives in the Great War, compared with the much higher numbers of the Civil War, Budreau suggests that the latter war initiated a “radical revision” of American commemorative tradition. Her examination of the return of the war dead to American soil, the creation of National Cemeteries on European soil, the American Battle Monuments Commission, which produced monuments in these National Cemeteries, the 1927 American Legion Pilgrimage, and the federal government financing of the Gold Star Pilgrimages, which allowed for mothers and widows of the American dead buried in Europe to travel to their loved one’s gravesite marked a democratic evolution of American collective memory. This process, claims the historian, was refracted through politics. “American collective remembrance of the First World War was largely a politically motivated exercise” that “consisted of a series of negotiations and compromises sustained by democratic principles that, by their nature, systematically promoted self-interest, provided that national solidarity emerged relatively intact.”

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<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 210.

The ritual surrounding the collective memory of the dead was taken out of the hands of nineteenth-century citizens, suggests the author, and seized by politicians. The citizenry, the soldiers, and even the War Department lost control of the ability to shape collective memory of World War I as Senators, Congressmen, and Presidents took over the role of establishing commemorative formal procedure. Thus, she suggests that commemorating the dead became a political act and not a process of building a durable national identity for Americans. She contends that “although European memory theorists may offer their hypotheses for reflection, their abstract and theoretical cultural approaches are insufficient for the messy nature of American democracy.” Instead Budreau suggests that “Democratic process responds to the current wishes of its citizens and, as such, cannot by its very nature readily contribute to an enduring national remembrance.”<sup>52</sup>

The discontinuity thesis of Faust’s study of American dead in the Civil War seems to counter the continuity thesis of Winter’s examination of European dead from the Great War. Yet more people died in the European conflict than did Americans in the U.S. Civil War. In 1865, the U.S. lost approximately 2% of its population due to the war while in the Great War France lost over 4%, Britain over 2%, and Germany lost nearly 4% of their populations. Despite enduring heavier proportional losses than in the American Civil War, Winter contends that Western European culture fundamentally remained unchanged from its Victorian antecedents. The contrast between the two studies may lie in the difference between Winter’s notion of bereavement culture in which he focused on many sites of memory and Faust’s focus on the actual bodies of the dead.

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<sup>52</sup> Lisa M. Budreau, *Bodies of War: World War I and the Politics of Commemoration in America, 1919-1933* (New York University Press, 2010), 241.

Likewise, Budreau's examination of the American dead from the Great War also challenges Winter's understanding of continuity. She contends that the American collective memory was exceptional to European understanding of commemorative ritual. She suggests Americans were more interested in the political meaning that could be attributed to the dead rather than the language and tradition of bereavement that fascinated Europeans. Thus Americans broke with nineteenth century tradition and embarked on a new one. Yet others, such as Daniel T. Rodgers have suggested that vibrant political, economic, and cultural transatlantic connections existed before, during, and after the Great War.<sup>53</sup> Americans were influenced by European ideas and were able to weave them into the American collective memory.

Some American historians, such as Mark S. Shantz, have found similar strains of continuity in the Civil War dead. He contends that "Americans came to fight the Civil War in the midst of a wider cultural world that sent them messages about death that made it easier to kill and to be killed." He examines antebellum literature, sermons from the Second Great Awakening, the culture of the Good Death, and depictions of soldiers' graves in Currier and Ives lithographs to suggest that antebellum Americans had produced a culture of death which remained familiar and intimate through the war. He suggests that people embraced the Good Death and the "heavenly country" that awaited them in the afterlife. The historian argues, "They celebrated particularly political martyrs who died in the service of a higher cause. Above all, Americans celebrated a disposition of resignation and acceptance in the face of death." A culture of death caused Americans to pursue war, and as the Civil War unfolded, Americans experiencing loss often times found ways to relieve their grief by associating the heavenly country with the nation-state. "'The Soldier's Grave,' contends Shantz, "begins to take us into

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<sup>53</sup> Daniel T. Rodgers, *Atlantic Crossings: Social Politics in a Progressive Age* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2000).

an ideological terrain in which the national government has taken the place of the church.”

Although the move to more secular justifications for the dead played out the continuity of death remained; the Civil War, suggests Shantz, did not shock people into disillusionment rather it marked the continuation and the evolution of how Americans came to manage death and how it aided their belief in religion and in the nation-state.<sup>54</sup>

Despite their different theses and subject matter, Winter, Fussell, Faust, Budreau, and Shantz share a significant commonality; all five accept the notion of modernity as a Eurocentric rather than global invention. Modernity as a construct that Western civilization discovered at the Somme or at Gettysburg did not account for larger patterns that also shaped societies around the world. In limiting their analysis to German, French, British, and American troops, Fussell, Winter, and Budreau do not escape the criticism of people like W.E.B. Du Bois, who wrote nearly a century earlier. The African American sociologist and thinker found “The African Roots of War” in the Great War. Du Bois’ article published in the *Atlantic Monthly* in the spring of 1915 understood the events in Europe not as a “civil war” among Europeans but as a fight between colossal colonizers over who would control the periphery.<sup>55</sup> War and death, whether marking continuity or discontinuity in Western civilization, certainly helped shape the continuity of colonialism after the 1919 Peace of Paris. Faust and Shantz project modernity onto their subjects void of the underpinnings of colonialism. Although Faust examines the effects of the Civil War dead on African American communities, America had intervened in China, Africa, and Native American spaces well before the Civil War began in 1860. In placing the Civil War at the center of the American experience of death, Faust and Shantz suggest that American culture was developing mourning traditions in isolation from other parts of the world that also

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<sup>54</sup> Mark S. Shantz, *Awaiting the Heavenly Country: The Civil War and America’s Culture of Death* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2008), 2, 19, 179.

<sup>55</sup> W.E.B. Du Bois, “The African Roots of War,” *Atlantic Monthly* 115 (May 1915): 707-714.

experienced massive death: the Crimean War in 1853, the Mutiny in India in 1857, the Muslim Rebellion in China beginning in 1862 and lasting until 1877 in which over 10 million lost their lives, the War of the Triple Alliance in South America between Paraguay and Argentina, Brazil, and Uruguay in which 400,000 soldiers and civilians died between 1864-1870. Indeed, as French historians Luc Capdevila and Daniele Voldman suggest, trends in commemorating the war dead in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries were far more transnational in their makeup and this continued in the American experience of death as people responded to the Spanish American War, the Philippine American War, the Punitive Expedition into Mexico, and the First World War.<sup>56</sup>

Mourning traditions reflected the way Americans thought about their role in the world. By examining the way these traditions developed, one can see that they marked both continuity and discontinuity in the early twentieth century. On the one hand, official guardians of the imagined community had to change the meaning of language—even if they did not change the words—in order to prop up the rhetoric of nationalization. The language of liberty and equality began with the founding of the nation and was used to reinforce the dominance of white, Protestant, capitalists from the Revolutionary War throughout the Civil War and the latter Reconstruction period. The Lost Cause movement cloaked itself in the language of individualism, freedom, and equality but included the devastating concepts of racism and segregation. President William McKinley used the same language as Abraham Lincoln, but gave the language different meanings so as to include neo-Confederates into the American memory and exclude immigrants, African Americans, Native Americans, Cubans, Filipinos, Hawaiians, and others. The fundamental elements of American collective memory were imbricated in the

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<sup>56</sup> Luc Capdevila and Daniele Voldman, *War Dead: Western Societies and their Casualties of War* (Edinburgh University Press, 2006).

politics of imperialism and global capitalism. This caused guardians of the collective memory to continually break with the past in order to maintain the power of nationalization. This amounted to what historian Jackson Lears has described as a rebirth of the nation; Americans had to form new meanings out of the same old language to produce new concepts that reinforced nationalization.

On the other hand, these new concepts of nationalization, particularly when used in the language of mourning, were consistently used from the Civil War to the Great Depression. Lincoln, McKinley, Roosevelt, Wilson, Harding, and Hoover consistently used time and time again the language of liberty, democracy, republicanism, freedom, and individualism. The tomb of the Unknown Soldier, of which Harding gave the official eulogy, symbolized the freedom-fighting nameless individual as just as important to the notions of Americanness as Lincoln had described the community of the fallen in his Gettysburg Address. Soldiers who died in a noble cause would be remembered by the nation-state for as long as the American nation would exist. These were a few of the examples of how the white, Anglo-Saxon, Protestants continued to reconfigure and recombine the language and practice of Protestantism, capitalism, and nativism to make and remake national identity; the work of producing the nation-state was a never-ending process.

## Methodology

The methodology of this dissertation is comparative, juxtaposing case studies from the United States between 1865 and 1933. This structure will allow this dissertation to expose the “thick description” of specific themes without losing chronological order or narrative flow. The spirit of recuperating memory as a category of analysis instead of a medium of doing research



will influence each case study. As Thelen reminds us, “in a study of memory the important question is not how accurately a recollection fitted some piece of a past reality, but why historical actors constructed their memories in a particular way at a particular time.”<sup>57</sup> Thus the methodology combines archival research into the institutional or bureaucratic history of recovering dead martial bodies, funeral arrangements, monument-building, and cemetery management with the interpretive analysis of rhetoric and symbols associated with interdisciplinary cultural studies. There are some concerns regarding a comparative approach.<sup>58</sup> It is difficult to compare things that are different. In a comparative methodology it is important to take care to eliminate dynamics that can cause distortion from the final analysis. This study will focus on condensation symbols as a way to measure the process of constructing memory and nationalism. Condensation symbols will become very important in comparing funerals, graves, and monuments because scholars can unpack the different ideas of race, class, gender, religion, and nationalism that people took from similar symbols. Did groups use condensation symbols to gain inclusion or to exclude others from the national memory? How did these symbols invoke the categories of race, class, and gender? How did groups manipulate condensation symbols of death to broaden Lincoln’s pledge of national memory? How did death shape the collective memory of American national identity in the midst of a pluralism brought on by immigration, civil and labor rights, and a transforming culture? How did people choose who to remember and why did they choose to remember them while forgetting others? How did they develop rituals and symbols that spoke to national commemoration? How did these symbols change over time

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<sup>57</sup> David Thelen, “Memory and American History,” 1125.

<sup>58</sup> Thomas Bender, “Introduction: Historians, the Nation, and the Plenitude of Narratives” in *Rethinking American History in a Global Age* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002); Prasenjit Duara, “Transnationalism and the Challenges to National Histories” in *Rethinking American History in a Global Age* ed. by Thomas Bender (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002); Louis A. Pérez Jr., “We Are the World: Internationalizing the National, Nationalizing the International” *The Journal of American History* (September 2002): 558-566; Ann Laura Stoler, “Tense and Tender Ties: The Politics of Comparison in North American History and (Post) Colonial Studies” *The Journal of American History* (December 2001): 829-865.

and how did ritual reinterpret the new meaning of these symbols? What affect did these decisions have on politics and culture? How did the politics of imperialism affect American memory? These are some of the questions that this study will consider.

The sources of this dissertation are primarily archival and cultural. The type of sources that will help answer these questions are obituaries, funerary memorabilia, monument architecture, public commemorations, private letters, newspaper accounts, poetry, photographs, personal papers, government collections dealing with specific groups and individuals, and presidential speeches. These sorts of sources do not illustrate a “Great Man” approach to the study of the fallen community. On the contrary, I use presidential speeches, for example, as one way to measure consistently the way political elites attempted to portray the dead to Americans. Likewise archival files relating to the construction of cemeteries, Burial Parties, Graves Registration Service, the Army Corps of Engineers, the American Battle Monuments Commission, and the Gold Star Mothers Pilgrimage provide a way to consistently measure—by comparing institutions to institutions—the changing discourses and attitudes about commemorating the fallen community. There are numerous ways to interpret these files; they contain information about recovery efforts, hygienic disposal of bodies, immigration, diplomacy, politics, the military, and civilians. This dissertation hopes to examine individual and institutional records by employing the analytical tools of political, institutional, and cultural history. This type of analysis remains wide open for further analysis as the political lives of many have influenced national identity. There is much more to be done and from the perspective of any number of other disciplines including law, philosophy, anthropology, geography, political science, religious studies, sociology, architecture, and art to name a few. The sources and the methodology of this project will not contribute to the discussion of death studies, biography, or

hagiography. This dissertation is not about individual deaths as much as it is about the way the living commemorated death. The sources will allow for an examination of the meaning of death and commemoration in the evolution of the nation-state. They will permit a comparison of the different ways people used these symbols for political and cultural inclusion but they will also allow a cross-comparison of these symbols. For example, these sources will allow the historian to examine how one group responded to the symbols that other groups created as well as constructed their own. When compared, these symbols should show how groups differentiated themselves from other groups but also fit themselves into the larger national rituals that superimposed American myths onto the socio-political reality.

## Organization

This dissertation is organized into three main parts. The first part examines deaths from the Civil War and Reconstruction. The second part examines the American mourning practices in the era of official American imperialism and the third part looks at the commemorative traditions after the Great War. The second chapter discusses the language of American commemorative traditions beginning with an early recounting of burial and commemoration in the antebellum period and progressing through the execution of John Brown, the assassination of Abraham Lincoln, and the death of Ulysses S. Grant. The death of each of these men surrounded the early process of nationalization. Brown exemplified the beginning of this transition while Lincoln posed a second act of nationalism—one of crisis—and Grant suggested a third act of transformation that incorporated tropes of reunion and reconciliation. The chapter compares these three men to uncover some of the language of bereavement associated with nationalistic ideas that produced the poetics of American death. This language was full of rhetorical

annunciations of secularism, nationalism, and imperialism and was embedded in the tenets of nativism, Protestantism, and capitalism. Chapter Three discusses the politics of death in the early nationalization process. It examines national cemeteries at Andersonville, Georgia, Marietta, Georgia, and Arlington, Virginia. This chapter discusses attempts by the federal government to produce a bureaucratic memory of the Civil War primarily through the construction of Lincoln's promise which Lincoln outlined in his Gettysburg Address.

Chapter Four addresses the problems and reformulations of new traditions emerging from the Civil War. The onset of an overseas war in 1898 required that President William McKinley reintroduce the Confederate dead into the imagined community, something that was not possible before the Spanish American War. Northerners and southerners fought side-by-side on the frontiers of Cuba and the Philippines and this sort of new loyalty allowed neo-Confederates to lobby for and receive official recognition of the Confederate dead as no longer being outside the fold of Americanness. Many Confederate sympathizers took advantage of this new government policy to secure recognition of Confederate dead in cemeteries in Chicago, where the remains of Confederate men who died in the Camp Douglass prison rested and likewise in Johnson's Island, Ohio where imprisoned Confederate officers were buried. Commemorative traditions, as formed out of the Gettysburg Address, could not incorporate this. Instead individuals such as ex-Confederate General John Gordon and Presidents of the United States William McKinley and Theodore Roosevelt transformed the meaning of the Gettysburg Address to incorporate the actions of imperialistic conquest as noble deeds that deserved commemoration.

The second part of this dissertation begins with Chapter Five, which examines the recovery of the dead from Cuba in the Spanish American War. McKinley used the success of the "splendid little war" to underscore not only the importance of the new nationalism that

incorporated former Confederate soldiers into the American collective memory but also used it to justify American occupation in Cuba and the Philippines. The rhetoric of the new nationalism was not congruent, however, with the reality of recovering the dead. Most of the soldiers in Cuba died from disease, not military adventure. Local hygiene laws required specific handling of the dead including chemical treatment designed to sterilize putrefying bodies of any residue of smallpox, malaria, or yellow-fever. Thus while Americans built their understanding of Americanness in Cuba on the dead bodies of their sacrificial heroes, they often failed to consider the dead as artifacts of imperial conquest. Likewise Cuban independence moved from the center to the periphery of American involvement in the war as financial investment and the Platt Amendment gave the U.S. a permanent presence in Cuba. This continued into the twentieth century as Americans salvaged the sunken battleship *U.S.S. Maine* and recovered the remains of dead sailors from Havana Harbor and, contrary to the evidence, refused to accept that no one had sabotaged the ship.

Chapter Six examines the problems of imperialism at the American frontier in the Philippines and in the 1916 Punitive Expedition against Mexico. Unlike Cuba, the Philippines became a quagmire of mismanagement and brutality. But the new nationalism instituted by the likes of McKinley required that Americans recover the dead from the Philippines. In Cuba it was easier to demonstrate how the dead were nationalistic heroes; in the Philippines it was much more difficult. The horror of Balingiga and the attempt to turn Samar into a “howling wilderness” brought significant criticism of the nationalization process and exposed the weakness of the new nationalism. How could American soldiers acting brutally be incorporated into the new traditions of American collective memory? This proved doubly difficult in President Wilson’s invasion of Mexico in 1916. Not only was the invasion seen as a

comprehensive failure that did serious damage to Wilson's domestic and global initiatives but black soldiers had died in the Battle of Carrizal making black bodies the dominate symbols of Americanness. In the days of segregation and Jim Crow this was difficult for many Americans—and for Wilson personally—to comprehend. In the Philippines and in Mexico government officials responded to these tensions by attempting to obscure the contradictions between nationalism and imperialism—instead blurring them together. This process of nationalization is evident in the way that government officials handled the dead from both conflicts.

The third part of the dissertation begins with Chapter Seven in which the recovery of the dead from the Great War marked the arrival of the United States on the global scene but also underscored the failure of self-determinism and Wilsonianism in general. If government officials exported Americanness to the rest of the world, Americans would have to reformulate the collective memory that undergirded their commemorative traditions as well as the larger notions of Americanness. They were largely able to obscure the contradictions of nationalism and imperialism in the short term. This leads to Chapter Eight's examination of the American Battle Monuments Commission (ABMC) created by President Warren G. Harding in 1923 and headed by General John J. Pershing. This commission sought to construct monuments and chapels in the national cemeteries in Europe to commemorate the American contributions in the Great War. This chapter suggests that new commemorative traditions were indicative of imperial soft power used to help "sell" the American system (economic, political, and cultural) to Europeans devastated from the ravages of war. In the wake of the failure of the Peace of Paris and Wilsonianism this did not succeed as perhaps Pershing would have liked but the ABMC did suggest that Americans were engaged in exporting Americanness to the European frontier.

Chapter Nine examines the Gold Star Mothers Pilgrimages from 1930 to 1933 in which the U.S. government spent nearly \$5 million providing for the transportation, accommodation, and boarding of nearly 7,000 mothers and widows of American soldiers buried in Europe. It explores the reasons behind the pilgrimage as another attempt by American politicians to use soft power as part of the selling of Americanism to Europe. This was especially important as the global depression began to unfold and many people in Europe and elsewhere around the world simply lost faith in the American capitalist system. Mothers and widows going to Europe to visit the graves of their sons and husbands were supposed to communicate to the world that the American system was moral and humane, sensitive and empathetic, honorable and profitable. But the pilgrimages were segregated, once again exposing the limitation of American commemorative traditions that attempted to obscure the contradictions between American nationalism and white supremacist imperialism. This undermined the collective memory that the U.S. government was trying to produce through the pilgrimages. African Americans found this very problematic and one more reason to change party allegiance in the 1932 election, while Europeans were reluctant to accept an American system based upon the American model of racial discrimination.

What emerged from the Civil War, and continued through the Great Depression, were the beginnings of a bureaucratized state with new technologies and a new corporate mantra that could be employed to control the process of bureaucratization. But this process came with large costs and social unrest; not everyone appreciated these new developments and many tried to resist them. What also emerged out of America's wars were moments of reflection over consequences, intended and unintended. Many had to consider what was lost and what was gained from military conflicts. Government officials and social and economic elites had to

consider the elimination of a small-scale agrarian and entrepreneurial America but while military families expended vast amounts of psychological energy grieving the loss of a loved one who died doing the hard work of transforming the American edifice. If war caused the technological changes of American politics, economics, and culture, the aftereffects of war helped produce the context of these changes. As the nineteenth century folded into the twentieth century the evolution of the American leviathan allowed people to continue to think about these themes as the onset of imperialism, colonialism, and globalism became manifest. The themes of rapid development tempered with the deep intimate contemplation of the consequences of that development moved Americans through the difficulties associated with the themes of the period. Death, funerals, monuments, and gravesites were ways that people could practice and experience the somber realities of republicanism, nationalism, and imperialism.



## CHAPTER 2—CRISIS AND COMMEMORATION: FROM A REPUBLICAN TO A NATIONAL WAY OF DEATH

The death of General Grant, the greatest man of our century, is not America's loss only: it is an international bereavement. The memorial to be erected to his honor, therefore, should be so comprehensive in its conception as to admit of being so international in its execution that it would provide for the reception of art contributions from the governments of every civilized nation. As America is the greatest of modern nations, to be a truly national memorial, it should excel in grandeur any existing monument.

—Karl Gerhardt

The monument of death will outlast the memory of the dead. The pyramids do not tell us the tale that was confided to them; the living fact commemorates itself. Why look in the dark for light? Strictly speaking, the historical societies have not recovered one fact from oblivion, but are themselves, instead of the fact, [that] which is lost. The researcher is more memorable than the researched.

—Henry David Thoreau, *A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers*

On Monday, the third day of Henry David Thoreau's week-long trip on the Concord and Merrimack rivers, Thoreau came upon the Dunstable burial ground. "It is a wild and antiquated looking grave-yard," he noted as he began contemplating the absurdity of marking the spaces of the dead. Tombstones seemed strange to the transcendentalist, "But why these stones, so upright and emphatic, like exclamation points!" and continued, "Why should the monument be so much more enduring than the fame which it is designed to commemorate,—a stone to a bone?" True to the transcendentalist theology in which the material world was a fiction and mankind's destiny rested in the "reality" that the divine combined with the corporeal in the souls of men, Thoreau asked, "'Here lies,'—'Here lies';—why do they not sometimes write, There rises? Is it a monument to the body only that is intended? Having reached the term of his *natural* life';—would it not be truer to say, Having reached the term of his *unnatural* life?" Thoreau disliked the way people in Europe and America commemorated their dead. According to him, they had missed the entire point of life and death. "I confess that I have but little love for such collections as they have at the Catacombs, Père la Chaise, Mount Auburn, and even this Dunstable grave-yard. At any rate, nothing but great antiquity can make grave-yards interesting to me. I have no

friends there.” Instead, he argued, the whole point of death was that dying brought forth more life. Thoreau ended his tour of Dunstable discussing, “The farmer who has skimmed his farm might perchance leave his body to Nature to be plowed in, and in some measure restore its fertility. We should not retard but forward her economies.”<sup>1</sup>

But American mourning traditions did not follow Thoreauvian anecdotes. His view of commemoration was the exception and not the rule. In fact, American mourning traditions, argues historian Drew Gilpin Faust, had ill-prepared Americans for the slaughter of the Civil War; the American Republic had suffered mightily during the war.<sup>2</sup> People, ranging from giants of American literature, such as Ambrose Bierce, Herman Melville, and Emily Dickinson, to countless numbers of ordinary Americans, she claims, experienced extreme anxiety, doubt, and even disillusionment in trying to explain the casualties of war. American mourning traditions had so poorly prepared Americans for death, she Faust, that they soon become embroiled in disillusionment with culture, politics, and even religion.

But as Bierce, Melville, and Dickinson were embroiled in doubt, others were, as historian Mark Shantz suggests, able to understand the context of death as a national sacrifice. The traditions and experience of death before the Civil War had encouraged people to interact with the dead. “Antebellum Americans,” he claims, “did not recoil in fear or in horror from the touch of a dead body.” Rather, nineteenth-century Americans approached the Civil War “carrying a cluster of assumptions about death that,” he suggests actually, “facilitated its unprecedented destructiveness.” Rather than disillusionment with politics and religion, Shantz argues that the

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<sup>1</sup> Henry David Thoreau, *A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers* (New York: Book of the Month Club, 1996, original publication 1849), 207-9.

<sup>2</sup> Drew Gilpin Faust, *This Republic of Suffering: Death and the American Civil War* (New York: Knopf, 2008).

Civil War generation believed that “Eternal life is to be found not merely in the memories cherished by family and friends, but in the endurance of the nation-state.”<sup>3</sup>

The suffering Republic was giving way to a regenerated nation-state. In this respect, Thoreau’s description of an authentic burial of regeneration provided a fitting plenitude for mourners to think about the deaths of John Brown, Abraham Lincoln, and Ulysses S. Grant. More than any others, these three men became symbols of fertility and renaissance of the American nation. People participated in their funerals, experienced collective grief, and yearned to share a collective memory that made sense of loss. In short, people commemorated them through what historian of France Pierre Nora has described as a realm of memory (*milieu de memoire*).<sup>4</sup> Through their interaction with notions of liberty, war, sentimentality, hero worship, and romanticism, Americans built new commemorative traditions that helped them understand the violence of war in the context of a newly emerging imagined community.

The residue of republicanism still lingered in this *milieu de memoire* but that republicanism was just as surely also dissipating. Supporters transported Brown’s body on a final pilgrimage via train, boat, and horse-drawn cart to his farm in the Adirondack Mountains of New York. Radical and religious, it was a fitting Thoreauvian tribute that more people sang that “John Brown’s body lies a’ mouldering in the grave,” to the tune of the “Battle Hymn of the

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<sup>3</sup> Mark S. Schantz, *Awaiting the Heavenly Country: The Civil War and America’s Culture of Death* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2008), 182, 2-3.

<sup>4</sup> Historian Pierre Nora reminds just how difficult this process of building collective memory actually was. The memorial defined what Nora has described as *milieu de memoire*, or realms of memory, in which an event was remembered and commemorated through the experience of those who lived through it. Eventually, Nora argues, once the living generation, who witnessed an event dies, the memory and the memorial will lose its *milieu de memoire* and become *lieu de memoire*, where the memorial will no longer be lived but the memory of the event will be disconnected from everyday practices of life and become a site of memory. Pierre Nora, ed., *Realms of Memory* (New York: Columbia University, 1996). See also Maria Todorova, “The Mausoleum of Georgi Dimitrov as lieu de memoire” *The Journal of Modern History* 78 (June 2006): 377-411.

Republic,” than actually visited his “exclamation point” tombstone.<sup>5</sup> The body of Abraham Lincoln, the wielder of the power of the nation-state was also transported by train back to his homeland, where mourners commemorated him as the father of a new nation. Similarly to Thoreau’s dislike of monuments, transcendentalist Walt Whitman’s *This Dust Was Once the Man* argued that Lincoln was best remembered as a man and not a monument: “This dust was once the man, / Gentle, plain, just and resolute, under whose cautious hand, / Against the foulest crime in history known in any land or age, / Was saved the Union of these States.”<sup>6</sup> But Ulysses S. Grant’s death in 1885 marked the production of a new commemorative tradition and a new Northern memory of the Civil War; one that was reconciliatory, conservative, imperialistic, and monumental. Americans built for Grant a grand tomb that would not have satisfied Thoreau; Grant’s tomb was to demonstrate the vitality of a nationalism fully recovered from civil war and sectional rivalry.

This chapter compares the funerals and gravesites of John Brown, Abraham Lincoln, and Ulysses S. Grant through the lens of nationalization. This is not a hagiography or history from the perspective of “great men.” Theirs were provocative examples that marked, in symbol and in language, the transition from a Republic to a Nation. The commemoration of Brown’s body in the first section marked the crisis of disunion and the beginning disintegration of a collective memory built upon a foundation of sand—that of republicanism; the commemoration of Lincoln’s body, which makes up the second section, was an admonishment that the nation would rise from the depths of Civil War. If Brown was a (dis)honored prophet, Lincoln was both the

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<sup>5</sup> Franny Nudelman, *John Brown’s Body: Slavery, Violence, and the Culture of War* (Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press, 2003), 14-39. Julia Ward Howe heard the troops in Washington, D.C. singing “John Brown’s Body” and rewrote the lyrics that became “The Battle Hymn of the Republic.” It became extremely popular throughout the North after it was published.

<sup>6</sup> Walt Whitman, “This Dust Was Once the Man” *Leaves of Grass* ed. by Sculley Bradley and Harold W. Blodgett (New York: W.W. Norton, 1973), 337-9. Whitman’s famous piece *O Captain! My Captain!* became recited throughout the United States as a memorial to Lincoln’s catastrophic death.

mourner and the mourned at the end of a civil war that brought emancipation and also demanded enormous sacrifices from the victors. The commemoration of Grant's body discussed in the third section was an assertion that ascent from the brink of destruction was complete. As president as well as general, he helped change the narrative of the Civil War from slavery and emancipation to the (trans)formation of a reunified nation. What made Grant's funeral so remarkable beyond its gaudy spectacle was that this was a watershed moment, at least symbolically, in the reunion efforts of Northerners. It was an assertion that Northerners believed that American democracy had resolved its internal systemic issues and was ready to project that system onto the world. Lost in this debate entirely was the recognition that African Americans played a decisive role in ending slavery and reviving liberty. Northerners built rituals of commemoration out of the Civil War that they would use to memorialize an American identity in the coming rise to global hegemony; those traditions had built into them the discourse of nationalization.

#### Captain John Brown—The Last Calvinist and the First Transcendentalist

John Brown was far from a moral giant. He was an extremely hard father and he failed at business numerous times including heavy economic loss in the Panic of 1837.<sup>7</sup> A puritan in an abolitionist family, Brown moved to Kansas in 1855 following five of his sons who moved there the previous year after Congress passed the Kansas-Nebraska Act. Both proslavery and free labor people moved into Kansas after Congress declared that popular sovereignty would determine Kansas' destiny as a free or slave state. The political situation quickly dissolved into violence as tension mounted and a proslavery army raided the free labor city of Lawrence. John

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<sup>7</sup> Peggy A. Russo and Paul Finkelman, *Terrible Swift Sword: The Legacy of John Brown* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2005), xxiv, xxvii.

Brown helped defend the city and then retaliated by killing, or at least ordering the killing, of five proslavery men who attacked Lawrence. Brown continued to fight in the violence of what became known as “Bleeding Kansas” and then returned east. In 1856, he attended the anti-slavery convention in Chatham, Ohio which dedicated the immediate abolitionist movement to the ideals of equality found in the Declaration of Independence and rejected the pro-slavery articles found in the Constitution. The convention was the latest of many attempts to formulate a codified counter-memory that challenged the political reality of a Constitution that guaranteed civil rights to white men and slavery to black men and women. The Chatham convention papers articulated the rationale that Brown used to intellectually legitimize his radical invasion of Virginia.<sup>8</sup> He believed that the Constitution violated the original spirit of the nation laid out in the Declaration of Independence.

This tension occurred at a time when the politics of the nation were polarizing rapidly. Throughout the early Republic, states entered uneasy compromises with the federal government, particularly concerning the issue of slavery, which usually exacerbated the divergent northern and southern economies. From the very beginning the Constitution imposed a federal policy of slavery as a legitimate right for white Americans.<sup>9</sup> Despite the constitutionality of slavery, northern industrialism threatened southern agrarianism with tariffs, free soil, and free labor. In the face of these threats, Southerners succeeded in preventing the overturn of the peculiar

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<sup>8</sup> Scott J. Hammond, “John Brown as Founder: America’s Violent Confrontation with its First Principles,” in Peggy A. Russo and Paul Finkelman eds., *Terrible Swift Sword*, 70-2. Hammond reminds his readers that Lincoln later used the logic of the Declaration of Independence as the founding document of the nation to emancipate slaves. The author also points out that southern slaveholders argued for slavery in the Constitution based on economics and politics and not liberty. This rationale, particularly from abolitionists views, betrayed the founding principles of the Declaration of Independence as creating a nation based on the ideal of slavery. Eric Foner points out that the Articles of Confederation had no language codifying slavery. He suggests that the replacement of the Articles of Confederation with the Constitution gave southern slaveholders the platform in which to codify slavery as a federally protected right. See Eric Foner, “Blacks and the U.S. Constitution” *Who Owns History?: Rethinking the Past in a Changing World* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2002), 167-188. See also Gary Alan Fine, “John Brown’s Body: Elites, Heroic Embodiment, and the Legitimation of Political Violence” *Social Problems* 46 (May 1999): 231

<sup>9</sup> Foner, *Who Owns History?* 167-188.

institution. Southern legislators resisted northern industrialism not with a strategy of states-rights but with a strategy of federalism by strengthening slavery through the federal government. This strategy usually proved successful. Although the political compromise of 1820 gave northern states protection from federal slavery legislation by establishing the northern border of slavery at the southern border of the state of Missouri, it further codified the institution, on a federal level, south of the Missouri border. The Fugitive Slave Act of 1850 constituted an attack on the Underground Railroad that enslaved African Americans used to escape to the northern states and Canada. By setting up a federal commission, the legislation subverted northern states' anti-slavery laws and especially the power of activist northern judges who had routinely ruled in favor of runaway slaves.<sup>10</sup> The Dred Scott case in 1856 and 1857 further federalized slavery; it overturned the Missouri Compromise and provided a constitutional basis for the expansion of slavery in the territories of the West and its restoration in states that had already outlawed slavery and emancipated enslaved people.<sup>11</sup>

Southern legislators, contrary to their postwar arguments of "states' rights," had adjudicated successfully federal protection of slavery and subverted northern businessmen, free soil, and abolitionist attempts at de-nationalizing slavery. It was in this context that John Brown decided to raid the federal arsenal at Harpers Ferry, Virginia in 1859. Once the federal government demonstrated there was no hope in legal abolition, Brown decided to pursue insurrectionary violence as a legitimate method of eliminating slavery. Southerners and Democrats tried to pin Brown's insurrection on the Republican Party. Newly elected President Abraham Lincoln condemned Brown's actions and spoke of the "mystic chords of memory" that

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<sup>10</sup> Bruce Levine, *Half Slave and Half Free: The Roots of Civil War* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1992), 186-7.

<sup>11</sup> Levine, *Half Slave and Half Free*, 210-211.

bound American collective memory. But polemics and politics made it difficult for Americans to agree on common collective memories.

If Brown's actions while alive had in them the remnants of a Calvinist sense of the struggle between morality and immorality, then the construction of his memory had a sense of transcendentalism. The state of Virginia tried Brown for treason against the state (despite Brown's conducting the raid on federal property); this move allowed Governor Henry A. Wise, a Democrat, to put not only Brown, but also militant abolitionists and the Republican Party on trial.<sup>12</sup> But during Brown's imprisonment, Governor Wise made a peculiar concession, allowing Brown to see over eight hundred visitors—both friend and foe—and to write and receive letters during his incarceration. While yet alive, Brown began sculpting the way supporters would remember him: as a man who held unbending beliefs and suffered martyrdom. His letters and others' eye-witness accounts portrayed him as anything but mad. His demeanor was calm and his tone calculated throughout his trial and execution. He spoke rationally about his actions and insisted that he was acting morally. After his execution on the gallows, his supporters, particularly elites in Boston, built upon this image and used it as political fodder to support action against slavery.

Among these was James Redpath, a journalist born in Scotland who supported abolitionism and became Brown's first biographer; transcendentalists Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry David Thoreau, Walt Whitman, and Louisa May Alcott; abolitionists Frederick Douglass, William Lloyd Garrison; and authors Henry Wordsworth Longfellow, Herman Melville, and John Greenleaf Whittier.<sup>13</sup> Elites in New England memorialized Brown while he remained in prison. Henry David Thoreau's "Plea for Captain John Brown" likened the radical to minutemen

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<sup>12</sup> Fine, "John Brown's Body," 229.

<sup>13</sup> Fine, "John Brown's Body," 230-237.



at Concord and Lexington and lamented journalists in the North who likened Brown to a madman. Thoreau's mentor, Ralph Waldo Emerson, reluctantly supported John Brown's raid. He wavered publicly between support and rejection, initially believing that Brown had gone too far. Thoreau, however, was different. He wholeheartedly supported Captain Brown; he challenged New Englanders to embrace his commemoration as a radical. Thoreau was not beseeching Americans to fight for Brown's life—he, as well as Brown, believed his martyrdom, not his life, was more beneficial to abolitionism—Thoreau implored his audience, "I am here to plead his cause with you. I plead not for his life, but for his character—his immortal life."<sup>14</sup> The transcendentalist believed that Brown was probably the most Christian, the noblest, despite his simple education, and the most American man that the United States had produced. He saw in Brown, the beginning of the end of slavery:

I foresee the time when the painter will paint that scene, no longer going to Rome for a subject; the poet will sing it; the historian record it; and, with the Landing of the Pilgrims and the Declaration of Independence, it will be the ornament of some future national gallery, when at least the present form of slavery shall be no more here. We shall then be at liberty to weep for Captain Brown. Then, and not till then, we will take our revenge.

The sculpting of the memory of John Brown had begun before he had suffered the hangman's noose.<sup>15</sup>

Although New Englanders made Brown into an authentic American, the hegemonic memory of Brown remembered him as a crazed man sought on destroying the Republic. Southerners who despised Brown's actions used his dead body to attack what they saw as Northern aggression. In the realm of politics, Southerners and Democrats attempted to link

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<sup>14</sup> Nudelman, *John Brown's Body*, 26-7.

<sup>15</sup> Henry David Thoreau, "A Plea for Captain John Brown," in *Civil Disobedience and Other Essays*, ed. Philip Smith (New York: Dover, 1993), 40. Not everyone in the North agreed with Thoreau and Emerson particularly their claim that tied Brown to a type of Christ. See David S. Reynolds, *John Brown, Abolitionist: The Man Who Killed Slavery, Sparked the Civil War, and Seeded Civil Rights* (New York: Vintage, 2006), 403-437.

Brown to the Republican Party using the term “Brown Republicans” to replace the anti-slavery descriptor “Black Republican.” Richard S. Gladney’s *The Devil in America* blamed Republicans for Brown’s actions while northern Democrat Stephen Douglass made similar accusations in the U.S. Senate.<sup>16</sup> Lincoln and others quickly deflected these accusations by distancing the Party from Brown and touting that the radical was reckless and execution was justified.<sup>17</sup> Brown’s actions were a godsend for secessionists in the South. If northern abolitionists could use Brown to fit their cause, so too could southern secessionists.<sup>18</sup> The Florida, Mississippi, and Georgia state legislatures resolved that the Republicans had deceptively sponsored Brown to invade the South so as to start a race war among southern whites and blacks. The legislatures began entertaining secession due to Northern aggression; they made official the instrumentalized memory that Southern identity was threatened by Northern belligerence.<sup>19</sup> By the time the debate over slavery and Harpers Ferry climaxed, Abraham Lincoln had moved to the highest echelon of the Republican Party and South Carolinians were at the threshold of secession. A divergent memory re-shaped the collective memory in the North and the South.

In addition to his radical politics, one reason John Brown’s death and commemoration was so significant was that his was one of the few occasions that, not only a failure, but also a common man, had made such an impact on American genealogy. Usually common people had little interpretive license when it came to the pre-Civil War nativist, Protestant, Anglo-Saxon pedigree of the United States. Brown had fought to free blacks and, to a certain extent, when militant abolitionists commemorated Brown’s body, they radicalized the official lineage of American identity based on the bodies of elite heroes such as George Washington, Thomas

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<sup>16</sup> Reynolds, *John Brown, Abolitionist*, 455-7, 424-5.

<sup>17</sup> Fine, *John Brown’s Body*, 239-240.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 235.

<sup>19</sup> Reynolds, *John Brown, Abolitionist*, 424.

Jefferson, and John Adams. That is not to say that Brown's death significantly critiqued the racial edifice from which republicanism had been built rather, it was remarkable more simply because Brown de-mystified the notion that American collective memory was produced only by elites.

After his execution, Brown's body became the important site in the battle over his memory. The State of Virginia sent the bodies of African American raiders John Copeland and Shields Green to the dissection table; the bodies of fighters were thrown into the Shenandoah River. But Governor Wise released Brown's body to his wife Mary so she could bury her husband in New York. Despite his radicalism, even Governor Wise recognized the need to commemorate Brown. He was too white and too Christian to be dissected and disposed of. Thoreau wanted a memorial of the radical built in Boston, but many of Brown's supporters wanted to bury him in Mount Auburn Cemetery outside of the city. His widow refused, choosing instead to bury him on their farm in the Adirondack Mountains near Elma, New York. Many of his supporters worried that this out-of-the-way location would dissuade pilgrims from visiting his gravesite.<sup>20</sup>

The debate over what to do with Brown's body came, in part, out of the early nineteenth century debate over how best to commemorate the dead and an overlapping debate that considered who should be commemorated. The American nation after the Revolutionary War had some heroes to worship. From George Washington to the soldiers at Bunker Hill, from Paul Revere to Patrick Henry, the unfolding of the Republic provided opportunities to commemorate simultaneously the dead and the nation. These, and numerous figures like them, set up the Articles of Confederation and expanded the American territory through the Northwest Ordinance in 1787. Congress created the new territories without consent of Native Americans who lived

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<sup>20</sup> Fine, *John Brown's Body*, 233.

there and so the Indian Wars of the Northwest Territory resulted in General Anthony Wayne defeating indigenous tribes at the Battle of Fallen Timbers and imposing the Treaty of Greenville. The failure of America's first government oversaw the consolidation of state power in the form of a federal government at the behest of Alexander Hamilton and many other Federalists who supported strong centralized authority outlined by the U.S. Constitution. The War of 1812 produced heroes such as Andrew Jackson who was known as much for his ability to fight Native Americans as for his defeat of the British at New Orleans. But by the time Jackson became President, many of the first-generation American heroes had died and it seemed that they were not being replaced as quickly.

One of the most notable early biographers of the United States to notice this was the transcendentalist Ralph Waldo Emerson. Rising to prominence at a time when the Revolutionary spirit seemed to wane, this second-generation nationalist insisted that individualism and the active soul would produce boundless opportunities. In America, Emerson believed "A nation of men will for the first time exist, because each believes himself inspired by the Divine Soul which also inspires all men."<sup>21</sup> Emerson's comments in "The American Scholar" forecast just how troubled he believed the American nation had become. Speaking to Harvard graduates, he issued the call for American men to become great or else risk being gobbled up by European empires riddled with war and famine.<sup>22</sup> What America needed was a mythology and a biography that would inspire a new class of American leadership.

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<sup>21</sup> Ralph Waldo Emerson, "The American Scholar: An Oration Delivered Before the Phi Beta Kappa Society, at Cambridge, August 31, 1837 in *Basic Selections from Emerson: Essays, Poems and Apothegms* ed by Edward C. Lindeman (New York: Mentor Book, 1954), 119.

<sup>22</sup> Louis Hartz, *The Liberal Tradition in America* 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (New York: Harcourt, 1991). See also Herbert Baxter Adams, *The Germanic Origin of New England* (Baltimore, MD: The John Hopkins University Press, 1882). A debate about the nature of American nationalism permeated the historiography in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Was America a unique invention or was it simply modeled after the European nation-state. See also Michael Adas, "From Settler Colony to Global Hegemon: Integrating the Exceptionalist Narrative of the American Experience into World History," *American Historical Review* (December 2001): 1692-1720.

American myth was intrinsically linked to American space. An American mythology would have to be carved out of the North American continent and this was exceedingly difficult. Europeans had accumulated centuries' worth of dead people who had fallen in war and could rise again as national heroes. Americans, in comparison, had very few such figures. Even more difficult was that diverse groups of Native Americans had long ago claimed commemorative spaces for their own social, cultural, and political means. For centuries before European contact, Native Americans had buried their dead in religious ceremonies that marked the sacredness of the ground. Indigenous peoples marked spaces important to them with cemeteries and mourning traditions. As American Methodist missionary James B. Finley noted one example, The "Je-bi naw-ka-win" or the feast of the dead was a feast that was "eaten at the graves of their deceased friends. They kindle a fire, and each person, before he begins to eat, bites off a small piece of meat, which he casts into the fire. The smoke and smell of this attracts the *Jebi* (or spirit) to come and eat with them."<sup>23</sup> Finley witnessed this Wyandot ritual in the late 1810s and believed it was superstitious nonsense; he actively called for its eradication.

But the fact remained that Native American commemorative spaces stood in the way of the production of American sites of memory that could help produce an American mythology. Wyandot chiefs, for example, explicitly referred to their burial grounds when they argued against the idea of removal in front of the U.S. House of Representatives in 1812. Government agents threatened the Wyandot leaders that they would lose the rights to their land in fifty years. They protested, in part, by asserting their sacred connection to the land. "Fathers, Listen! We the Wyandots have taken hold of this good work, and peaceably have cultivated the land we have

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<sup>23</sup> James B. Finley, *History of the Wyandot Mission at Upper Sandusky, Ohio* (Wright and Swormstedt: Cincinnati, OH, 1840), 51-2; Keith Widder, "The Convergence of Native Religion, Roman Catholicism, and Evangelical Protestantism at Mackinaw Mission, 1823-1837" *Journal of Presbyterian History* 77 (Fall 1999): 170-1. Widder suggests that Native Americans allowed very few whites to view these traditions and rituals.

lived on, time immemorial, and out of which we sprung: for we love this land, as it covers the bones of our ancestors.”<sup>24</sup> Nevertheless, the Wyandots eventually succumbed to American removal policies and the land that covered their ancestors became “empty” just as the U.S. government had emptied the land of Indian presence. This effectively de-sacralized Native American space and produced “empty” space that could now be transferred to settlers. Americans rushed in and re-sacralized “uncontextualized” spaces of North America with their own cemeteries and their own mourning traditions. This was using death as a tool of colonialism. As frontier and borderland communities sprang up, settlers ignored Native American burial sites and instead built their own small churchyard burial grounds where the living and the dead lived in proximity to the church and individual plots accentuated the individual’s relationship to Christianity—cemeteries were very important in eradicating Native American sacred space and claiming it as an American border.<sup>25</sup>

The re-contextualized “empty” spaces became an opportunity for Americans to reinterpret the natural surroundings of death and nature. Henry David Thoreau noted this in his travels on the Merrimac River. As he passed by “some graves of the aborigines,” he noted, “Time is slowly crumbling the bones of a race.” Thoreau predicted, “These bones rustle not. These mouldering elements are slowly preparing for another metamorphosis, to serve new masters, and what was the Indian’s will ere long be the white man’s sinew.”<sup>26</sup> Near Amoskeag Falls was the grave of “the famous Sachem Passaconaway” and his son Wannalancet, not far from the resting place of John Stark, whose grave and monument in Manchester commemorated, “a hero of two wars, and survivor of a third, and at his death the last but one of the American

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<sup>24</sup> “The Wyandots, Communicated to the House of Representatives, 28 February 1812, *American State Papers, 1789-1838*, Indian Affairs, V. 1 [www.loc.gov](http://www.loc.gov), accessed 1 June 2008.

<sup>25</sup> Jeremy Adelman and Stephen Aron, “From Borderlands to Borders: Empires, Nation-States, and the Peoples in Between in North American History,” *American Historical Review* 104 (1999): 814-841.

<sup>26</sup> Thoreau, *A Week*, 296.

generals of the Revolution.” But whereas Stark’s erected monument overlooked the Merrimack, “the graves of Passaconaway and Wannalancet are marked by no monument on the bank of their native river.” The comparison of Stark and Passaconaway, remarked Thoreau, “suggested how much more impressive in the landscape is the tomb of a hero than the dwellings of the inglorious living.” With this thought in mind, he asked, “Who is most dead,—a hero by whose monument you stand, or his descendents of whom you have never heard?”<sup>27</sup>

At least for Thoreau, John Brown’s death and entry into the American genealogy bore great symbolic value, especially because Brown’s widow resisted the cultural and intellectual elites of Boston who wished her to bury him in the famous Mount Auburn garden cemetery near Boston—a cemetery constructed to represent the ideals of the American Republic. Instead she took his body back to her home in the Adirondack Mountains now stripped of their Native American context. In a remarkable final journey that amounted to the beginning of what historians Eric Hobsbawm and Terrence Ranger have described as an invented tradition, the state of Virginia placed Brown’s body in a coffin, released it to his wife, Mary Brown, and sent it from Charles Towne to Harpers Ferry. In the very location that Brown committed the actions for which he was executed, Governor Wise authorized the transfer of the corpse to a train heading north to Philadelphia. Philadelphians came out in droves to met Brown’s funeral train.<sup>28</sup> From here, Mary Brown, seeking to avoid further publicity, placed her husband’s body on a boat heading to New York while she continued by train. In New York supporters removed his body from the “southern coffin” and placed it in a “northern” one.<sup>29</sup> From New York, Mary Brown oversaw the transportation of her husband’s corpse to North Elma. Brown’s funeral train

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 317.

<sup>28</sup> Eric Hobsbawm and Terrence Ranger, *The Invention of Traditions* (Cambridge University Press, 1992).

<sup>29</sup> Reynolds, *John Brown, Abolitionist*, 399-400; Stephen B. Oates, *To Purge This Land With Blood: A Biography of John Brown* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1984), 356-8; Robert Gordon, “A Mournful Trip,” *Adirondack Life* 15 (Jan-Feb. 1984): 16-32.

demonstrated a new tradition in response to new technological possibilities created by rapid overland transportation. After this precedent, the distance between the location of the actual death and the location of sacred ground became significantly shorter. Individuals who died far away from home could be returned to a location that had sacred meaning for the survivors. It was certainly an ironic twist that Governor Wise helped produce this new tradition.

Eventually Brown's body was laid to rest in North Elma where his scenic farm reinforced his gathering myth. Historian Eyal Naveh remarks:

His grave became another medium of legend. Contemporaries ascribed a certain cosmic significance to the fact that he was buried at the foot of a huge boulder out in the open amid vast mountains: Merged forever with the authentic forces of American nature, he had been transformed from a human being into a cosmic, transcendental force.<sup>30</sup>

Indeed, the American neo-Raphaelite William Trost Richards's *Adirondack Landscape* (1864) included a depiction of John Brown's grave. According to art historian Linda S. Ferber, such paintings were an attempt to construct a national landscape.<sup>31</sup>

It was this landscape into which Brown would be commemorated. John Brown's burial was only possible because he had accessed the American mythology carved out of previously sacred Native American space in the Adirondack Mountains. The martyr, liberator, radical, madman, and Calvinist became the symbolic space for many to commune with the individuality of an authentic American and many others to ridicule the actions of a lunatic. Secluded from the mainstream of tourism, people would remember the actions of Brown more than they would remember his tomb. He had become immemorial. Thoreau noted in his travels along the

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<sup>30</sup> Eyal Naveh, "John Brown and the Legacy of Martyrdom" in Peggy A. Russo and Paul Finkelman ed. *Terrible Swift Sword*, 86.

<sup>31</sup> Linda S. Ferber, "John Brown's Grave and Other Civil War Themes in William Trost Richards' *Adirondack Landscapes*, *Magazine Antiques* (July 2002). Linda S. Ferber and Caroline M. Welsh, "In Search of a National Landscape: William Trost Richards and the Artists' Adirondacks, 1855-1870" *American Art Review* (July-August 2002).



Merrimack that a loss of a friend was not entirely a terrible thing. “Even the death of Friends will inspire us as much as their lives. They will leave consolation to the mourners, as the rich leave money to defray the expenses of their funerals.” He added, “And their memories will be incrusting over with sublime and pleasing thoughts, as their monuments are overgrown with moss.”<sup>32</sup> Brown had fit into the transcendental view of death for his memory not his monument. That memory was one of the first that marked the end of a Republican way of death and marked the beginning of a *national* way of death.

### The Omnipresence of Abraham Lincoln

If Brown's was the first then the death of Abraham Lincoln became the second act in the transition from a republican to a national way of death. And if the language of nationalization could explain the death of a radical and violent man, so too, could this sort of discourse explain calamity. Contrary to the notion that catastrophe, even on a massive scale, undermined the role of religion in American society, tragedy and upheaval often gave Americans an opportunity to explain their sufferings through a religious and nationalistic discourse. The evolution of nationalization through the competition and cooperation of religious and secular spheres actually produced a more diverse language with which communities could explain individual calamity or collective catastrophe. Ironically the diversity of language often led to a homogenizing and hegemonic collective memory. Native Americans, for example, could be threatened by religious and secular forces working in concert. There was a rooted tradition in America of this very tendency. In the early days of the Republic sacred space was contested space. Political revolution in America and France, coupled with Industrial Revolution begun in Britain, helped

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<sup>32</sup> Thoreau, *A Week*, 356-7.

de-Christianize the public sphere.<sup>33</sup> This contributed to what cultural historian Mary Poovey has described as the breaking up of the Christian-dominated religious domain and the incomplete separation of the secular sphere from the religious sphere. Now religious ideas competed with secular ideas, particularly when it came to the site of the human body.<sup>34</sup> The effects of urbanization and sanitation reform resulted in locals creating new sacred spaces of burial to challenge the authority that the church held over the body. For centuries, Christianity in Western civilization held control over the last rites of individuals. But by the nineteenth century, burial grounds became fresh targets for secularists' views of corruption and incompetence in church authority. The nineteenth-century scientific theory of miasma, in which diseases such as cholera were believed to be spread through bad air (germ theory had not been developed until later in the nineteenth century) added to this critique of Christianity. Miasma theorists suggested that deteriorating church burial grounds were not only spreading moral decay but also were the chief element in spreading physical disease. Especially in urban centers, overcrowded church burial

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<sup>33</sup> See Dale K. Van Kley, "Christianity as Casualty and Chrysalis of Modernity: The Problem of Dechristianization in the French Revolution" *American Historical Review* 108 (October 2003): 1081-1104. Jonathan Sheehan, "Enlightenment, Religion, and the Enigma of Secularization: A Review Essay" *American Historical Review* 108 (October 2003): 1079-80. Sheehan writes, "Secularization—understood as the passive demotion of religion to the corners of human experience—has lost its luster. Instead, it must be treated as a contingent and active set of *strategies* that change religion over time. This is as true of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries as it was of the eighteenth." Religious Historian Jon Butler claims the same is true when applied to United States History. Butler claims the discipline suffers from "Jack-in-the-Box Faith," in which scholars have held "erroneous views about religion's ubiquitous power in the preindustrial, preurban West, including America, [religion in the West] defies classification as a privatized religion irrelevant to public life." Jon Butler, "Jack-in-the-Box Faith: The Religion Problem in Modern American History" *The Journal of American History* 90 (March 2004): 1357-1378. Mark Noll ed, *God and Mammon, Protestants Money and the Market, 1790-1860* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002).

<sup>34</sup> Mary Poovey, *Making A Social Body: British Cultural Formation, 1830-1864* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1995). Poovey discusses how religious and scientific domains can disaggregate. She examines this process in the transformation of the Body Politick to the Social Body. Many religious people perceived a radical disaggregated religious domain in which secular forces divided sharply from religious forces and began competing with them. See R. Laurence Moore, *Selling God: American Religion in the Marketplace of Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994). Other religious figures celebrated this fissure by using science to "prove" God's existence. See Craig James Hazen, *The Village Enlightenment in America: Popular Religion and Science in the Nineteenth Century* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2000); Philippe Ariès, *Western Attitudes Toward Death: From the Middle Ages to the Present* trans. by Patricia Ranum (Baltimore, MD: The John Hopkins University Press, 1975).

grounds became spaces for putrefied flesh and rotting corpses to spoil the atmosphere and infect walkers-by who inhaled the foul-smelling air with disease.

Thus while unofficial nation-state biographers such as Emerson sought to write a narrative of the Republic out of the tombstones of the states' heroes, a rising middle class attempted to secure burial space from the control of the church. This might be described as the competition between religious and secular spheres. This process coupled with Romanticism of English gardens and the new scientific paradigm of the mid-nineteenth century, claims historian James Farrell, turned the cemetery into a capitalist enterprise.<sup>35</sup> The popularity of the rural, or garden, cemetery coincided, not only with new scientific ideas about disease and sanitation, but also with the beginning of life insurance companies, which helped privatize and individualize the ritual of mourning.<sup>36</sup> Farrell suggests that "The establishment of rural cemeteries was part of a larger effort to shape and maintain a middle-class community based on family, volunteer associations, and commonly accepted cultural ideas." These privatized garden cemeteries were designed to accentuate local history and to connect it to the larger national and Christian genealogy.<sup>37</sup>

But this separation of religious and secular space was never totally complete. In the context of republicanism, Americans built cemeteries that would speak to the civil religion of states united by common values of capitalism, Protestantism, and nativism. Sacred spaces of the

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<sup>35</sup> James Farrell, *Inventing the American Way of Death, 1830-1920* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 1980), 7-8. Farrell uses the terms "romantic naturalism" and "scientific naturalism" to describe the romantic and scientific influences on the shift in attitudes towards death.

<sup>36</sup> Farrell, *Inventing*, 9, 73. See also Homans, *Symbolic Loss*, 6.

<sup>37</sup> David Charles Sloane, *The Last Great Necessity: Cemeteries in American History* (Baltimore, MD: The John Hopkins University Press, 1991), 94; Michael Sappol, *A Traffic of Dead Bodies: Anatomy and Embodied Social Identity in Nineteenth-Century America* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2002). The scientific discovery of the body meant that medical students needed cadavers to dissect. As historian Michael Sappol suggests, the need of cadavers led to grave robbers stealing corpses and selling them to medical schools; middle-class people sought to protect their loved ones' remains from body snatchers. Ruth Richardson, *Death, Dissection, and the Destitute* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2000). While middle-class people could avoid dissection, the working class usually could not.

Republic now competed with and cooperated with sacred spaces of Christianity. Newly developed garden or rural cemeteries became places to venerate American heroes and experience the commemoration of American values especially after Americans “emptied” previously occupied space through Indian removal.<sup>38</sup> People thus spent their leisure time in these garden cemeteries contemplating their Christian mortality while breathing unspoiled air; meanwhile they walked, talked, picnicked, exercised, and experienced the “museum” of the local community.<sup>39</sup> As “sites of celebration,” garden cemeteries sprung up in Boston, Atlanta, Chicago, and New York; they had significant advantages over churchyards and private burial grounds when it came to building a collective memory of the Republic. Historian David Sloane points out that although the family plot was the cornerstone, the new garden “cemeteries were designed to heighten cultural consciousness about the past and about salvation.” He continues, “The creation of a national past was inextricably linked to the establishment of local histories throughout America. Communities searching for a local history used the rural cemetery as a repository and a shrine.” Sloane adds, “The cemetery, by definition a place of memories, became a location for the memory of the community. Cemetery associations took several steps to link the cemetery to the community’s memory, the most obvious of which was to bury and honor the nation’s war dead or the place that they died.”<sup>40</sup> Garden cemeteries provided exercise, fresh air, and a

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<sup>38</sup> John Claudius Loudon, “Hints respecting the manner of laying out the grounds of the Public Squares in London, to the utmost picturesque advantage,” *Literary Journal* 2 (Dec 1804) reprinted in Peter Willis, ed., *Furor Hortensis: Essays on the History of the English Landscape Garden in Memory of H.F. Clark* (Edinburgh, 1974); *The Boston Common, or Rural Walks in Cities. By a Friend of Improvement* (Boston, 1838), 21-2. Both the author of *Boston Common* and Loudon use “lungs of the city” to describe the parks and garden-cemeteries in nineteenth century London and Boston. Stanley French, “The Cemetery as Cultural Institution: The Establishment of Mount Auburn and the “Rural Cemetery” Movement,” *American Quarterly* 26 (March 1974): 37-59.

<sup>39</sup> See David Schuyler, *The New Urban Landscape: The Redefinition of City Form in Nineteenth-Century America* (Baltimore, MD: The John Hopkins University Press, 1986). Schuyler traces urban landscape from the garden-cemeteries to the development of Frederick Law Olmstead’s design of Central Park. John H. Rauch, *Intramural interments in populous cities* (1866); *Public Parks: their effects upon the moral, physical, and sanitary condition of the inhabitants of large cities: with special reference to the city of Chicago* (Chicago, IL: S.C. Griggs, 1869). Rauch connected health to public parks and inner city burial.

<sup>40</sup> Sloane, *The Last Great Necessity*, 70, 80.

therapeutic mourning that allowed people to contemplate national identity, religious salvation, and local culture while experiencing the healthy vibrant remedy of nature.

At the heart of this transformation of death in the early nineteenth century was an attempt by middle-class Christian Victorians to control death by sanitizing it and commodifying it. They created the ritual of the so-called “Good Death” in which the perishing on his or her deathbed, surrounded by his or her loved ones in his or her home, resisted demonic temptations. Ideally, the dying would utter reassuring words with the last few breaths of mortal life that signified his or her acceptance of salvation. Afterwards, witnesses claimed, calmness usually expressed itself in the eyes of the dying. This process was very important as it gave witnesses valuable clues as to whether the soul had accepted salvation.<sup>41</sup> This fear of being excluded from the kingdom of heaven reinforced social discipline. If one did not fit the definitions of Christian republicanism while alive, his or her body was excluded from its community after death. Rural cemeteries and the Good Death thus became middle-class rituals that helped protect their corpses from vandals and simultaneously control the local history of a community by weaving local experiences into the genealogy of the Republic. This failure to democratize death at a time when Americans championed republicanism as a break from European elitism underscored the capitalist, nativist, Protestant American genealogy.

This fit the observations of the French writer Alexis de Tocqueville, who saw the strength of American democracy in the nation’s local institutions.<sup>42</sup> Although de Tocqueville was referring to churches, schools, and politics, burial spaces also proved important enough in the local community that anyone who could afford to embrace the ritual of the Good Death usually

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<sup>41</sup> For a discussion of the Good Death and its history see Ralph Houlbrooke, ed., *Death, Religion, and the Family in England, 1480-1750* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989); Patricia Jalland, *Death in the Victorian Family* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996); Faust, *This Republic of Suffering*, 6-17.

<sup>42</sup> Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America* trans. by Arthur Goldhammer (New York: Library of America, 2004).

would. Dominated by the local bourgeoisie, local farmers, artisans, mechanics, and laborers would usually participate in the social norm of burial even if it was meager. But some fell outside this definition. Although rural cemeteries included slaves, paupers, and other subalterns, organizers placed these bodies in separate sections of the cemetery giving them their own community. Often buried in mass graves and nameless, these bodies, if commemorated at all, were remembered as part of a group that was different from the definitions of bourgeois society that the Republic honored. These potter's fields became sites where body snatchers routinely obtained cadavers and sold them to medical students for dissection.<sup>43</sup> Dissecting and dismembering the body, many believed, made it impossible for God to resurrect the body. Dissection became a useful tool especially when slaves revolted; Nat Turner's body, for example, suffered dissection after his execution.<sup>44</sup>

Rural cemeteries constituted a therapeutic treatment of loss through the remedies of Christianity, fresh air, and community that underscored the infrastructure of republicanism. No overarching government had the power to construct a comprehensive collective memory at the national level. The lack of official government attempts at making memory, and at making identity, gave local elites the opportunity to spend their accumulated cultural capital in which to make memory and produce identity. Rural cemeteries were supposed to provide a therapeutic treatment of mourning. But the United States was undergoing a process that historian Robert Wiebe has described as "the search for order" in which the country moved from a "distended society" built up around the idea of the Republic to implementing the infrastructure of a modern

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<sup>43</sup> Richardson, *Death, Dissection and the Destitute*; Sappol, *A Traffic of Dead Bodies*.

<sup>44</sup> Nudelman, *John Brown's Body*, 40-70. The scientific and religious communities not only used dissection as a form of discipline they also dissected black bodies to reinforce racial ideas about the superiority of the white race and the inferiority of the black race. These dissections played an important role in the accumulation of "scientific evidence" for the doctrines of Social Darwinism of the late nineteenth century.

nation-state.<sup>45</sup> As the nineteenth century unfolded, privatization of burial and mourning weakened the reified power of death to tie together the imagined community to the Republic. Rural cemeteries became jumbled with numerous unique and gaudy tombstones and monuments which reminded people—at a time when society privileged republicanism—of the inequality of death, and thus the inequality of life. Middle-class and elite families had the cultural power to access the American genealogy and the financial power to build monuments and were thus chiefly responsible for the cluttering of the cemeteries. Meanwhile those without power and money were relegated to the corners of the cemetery just as they were relegated to the corners of society. Within a few decades, the rural cemeteries of Emerson's republicanism had become the very symbols of the inequality of capitalism. As rural garden-like cemeteries filled with elaborate monuments became places of overcrowded sepulchers with muddled memories of the past, it became difficult for people to contemplate the national history and experience the therapeutic benefits of the natural environment when walking among the dead. The rural cemetery had lost its romanticism; it had become cluttered and unseemly. Thus the collective memory that was supposed to connect locals with national identity became disrupted and strained. This disruption was made perhaps most apparent with the assassination of President Abraham Lincoln, which cemented the acrimonious relationship between Northerners and Southerners that would dominate the rest of the nineteenth century.<sup>46</sup>

As President, Lincoln had helped transform the Republic into a Nation. Not only had Lincoln helped establish national bureaucratic government through the Homestead Act of 1862, a federal draft, the wartime income tax, and land grant colleges but his execution of the Civil War was a repudiation of the sort of republicanism where states could challenge federal

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<sup>45</sup> Robert Wiebe, *The Search for Order: 1877-1920* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1966).

<sup>46</sup> Sloane, *The Last Great Necessity*.

authority. In addition his Gettysburg Address sought a new birth of freedom in which slaves received liberty guaranteed through the federal government. As historian Gary Wills notes, “Up to the Civil War, ‘the United States’ was invariably a plural noun: ‘The United States are a free government.’ After Gettysburg, it became a singular: ‘The United States is a free government.’”<sup>47</sup> Lincoln oversaw a decisive moment that transformed the old republicanism into a new nationalism.

The catastrophe of Lincoln’s death provided another opportunity for Americans to produce a national way of death. The war had given Americans significant amount of practice using religious and secular language to take munificent meanings from their individual and collective losses. Lincoln’s death was a culmination of this practice and from it came the most developed discourse of explaining loss through the auspices of Christianity and nationalism. On Good Friday, 14 April 1865, Abraham Lincoln finally stopped breathing nine hours after the assassin John Wilkes Booth shot the President in Ford’s Theater. In the succeeding weeks Lincoln’s body was embalmed and eulogized in Washington, D.C. before being taken to Springfield, Illinois. The funeral train that carried the President’s body included three hundred mourners and traveled from the nation’s capital through Philadelphia, New York, Cleveland, Chicago, and numerous smaller towns and cities in between. Like Brown’s funeral train, the new technology of transportation afforded people across different time zones to take part in Lincoln’s commemoration as part of a new commemorative tradition. The journey took fourteen days and thousands of mourners came to the major cities or lined the railroad tracks to express their grief for the fallen President. But despite this influx of national participation, Lincoln’s

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<sup>47</sup> Gary Wills, *Lincoln at Gettysburg: The Words that Remade America* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1992), 145.



funeral also used the burial spaces of the earlier epoch of republicanism. The President's body was finally laid to rest in a rural cemetery on the outskirts of Springfield.<sup>48</sup>

Secretary of War Edwin Stanton organized Lincoln's funeral. The Secretary controlled every aspect of the commemoration with the exception of Lincoln's final resting place, which was chosen by Lincoln's widow. The publicity of the funeral was astounding. Lincoln's body would move via train from Washington, D.C. to Springfield, Illinois taking the same route practically that Lincoln had travelled when he arrived in Washington as President-elect. The funeral pilgrimage would last three weeks and began with a Washington funeral service. On the first day of the journey, officials met in the East Room of the White House which had been "hung with black everywhere. All glitter and gay color, save in the carpet beneath our feet, had been covered with the emblem of grief." A multitude of official people from around the nation gathered in the room, among them only six women, "save one or two nurses of the household, Mrs. Sprague, Miss Nettie Chase, Mrs. Stanton, Mrs. Usher, Mrs. Welles and Mrs. Dennison." Reverend Dr. Gurley of the New York Avenue Presbyterian Church delivered a sermon in which he argued that Lincoln's assassination was evidence that God's invisible hand existed in American politics. He eulogized:

It was a cruel, cruel hand, that dark hand of the assassin, which smote our honored, wise and noble President, and filled the land with sorrow. But above and beyond that hand there is another, which we must see and acknowledge. It is the chastening hand of a wise and faithful Father. He gives us this bitter cup, and the cup that our Father has given us shall we not drink it?

Gurley did not try to explain the catastrophe; he argued instead that the nation was in God's hands and that "Despite the great, and sudden, temporary darkness, the morning has begun to

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<sup>48</sup> Thomas J. Craughwell, *Stealing Lincoln's Body* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 2007); Scott D. Trostel, *The Lincoln Funeral Train: The Final Journey and National Funeral for Abraham Lincoln* (Fletcher, OH: Cam-Tech Publishing, 2002); Carolyn L. Harrell, *When the Bells Told for Lincoln: Southern Reaction to the Assassination* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1997).

dawn, the morning of a bright and glorious day such as our country has never seen.” The Reverend added:

The language of God’s united providence is telling us that though the friends of liberty die liberty itself is immortal. There is no assassin strong enough and no weapon deadly enough to quench its inexhaustible life or arrest its onward march to the conquest and empire of the world. This is our confidence and this is our consolation as we weep and mourn today.

The benevolent deity, argued Gurley, would lead the nation in its darkest hour. After the ceremony, pallbearers moved the corpse to a hearse and began the trip to the U.S. Capitol where the body would lie in state.<sup>49</sup>

Throngs of people lined the streets from the White House to the Capitol. Black troops lead the procession followed by representatives from the rest of the military service. Then came the pallbearers and the hearse followed by Lincoln’s doctors and family. After which walked politicians, diplomats, military generals, and cabinet members. The end of the procession included firemen, the Sons of Temperance, the Colored Benevolent Association, and “a battalion of scarred and maimed veterans, with bandaged limbs and heads, with an arm or leg gone, but hobbling along on crutches determined that their homage to their great chief should be as sincere as that of their companions.” The procession lasted two hours and “had actually begun to disperse at the Capitol before the rear of the column had passed beyond the Treasury Department.”<sup>50</sup>

Lincoln’s body remained in the Capitol building until Friday 21, April; pallbearers took Lincoln’s body from the Capitol to the train depot. Escorted by government and military dignitaries, the pallbearers placed Lincoln in a special funeral car decorated in the somber colors of a mournful pilgrimage. The entourage moved through the city without music. Mrs. Lincoln

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<sup>49</sup> “The Obsequies: Funeral of Abraham Lincoln,” *New York Times*, 20 April 1865.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*

also had the remains of their son Willie placed in the funeral car to be taken along and buried nearby the President's grave. The train departed and passed through Baltimore, Maryland where overcast skies made a fitting metaphor. "The gloom in the atmosphere accorded with the gloom in the hearts of our citizens." As a testimony to this, "Almost every house is a house of mourning. Houses and public buildings, homes and churches are everywhere draped in black. Everywhere the flag is wreathed in crape." The city of Baltimore performed similar mourning rituals to those of Washingtonians. The President's encoffined body was removed from the train and taken to the Exchange where it lay in state before being reloaded onto the train the next day and transported to Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. From Harrisburg, the procession moved to Philadelphia, where the body lay in Independence Hall and onto New York, where it lay in City Hall. The funeral train carried the body through the rest of New York and onto Cleveland and Columbus, Ohio.<sup>51</sup>

In Columbus, Lincoln's remains were placed in the State Capitol rotunda. Ohio State Senator Job E. Stevenson delivered a eulogy on the East Terrace of the Capitol. The Republican legislator praised Lincoln, who "stood firm, trusting in God and the people, while the people trusted in God and in him." He likened Lincoln to George Washington, Napoleon, Wellington, Jefferson, and Hamilton. He accused all Southerners of destroying their only friend. "With charity for all, he had forgiven the people of the South, and might have forgotten their leaders, covering with the broad mantle of his charity their multitude of sins." The Senator continued, "But he is slain, slain by slavery; that fiend incarnated did the deed. Beaten in battle, the leaders sought to save slavery by assassination. Their madness has proved their destruction." He described Lincoln as the South's "true friend," adding, "He was their friend, as Jesus is the friend of sinners, ready to save when they repent." He reasoned, "Let them feel remorse and dismay,

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<sup>51</sup> "The Obsequies," *New York Times*, 30 April 1865.

while the cause for which the President perished, sanctified by his blood, grows stronger and brighter.” Similarly to describing Lincoln as a type of Christ who saved mankind, Stevenson also described the Union as, “made by man; it was created by God. If it has wounds in the members of its body, they will heal and leave no scar. There is no need of the opiate of compromise. Let there be no compromise with treason.”<sup>52</sup>

The trip from Columbus to Indianapolis, Indiana was an overnight journey. Thousands lined the way building bonfires and lighting torches in the night. Musicians and chorales performed mourning music. Church bells rang as the train passed through small towns and people fired their guns into the air as a tribute to the slain President. From Indianapolis, the train ventured north to Chicago, Illinois, and finally to Lincoln’s hometown of Springfield where the President’s remains were again dedicated at Oak Ridge Cemetery. Here Lincoln’s final preparation for entombment brought the spectacle to a climax as clergymen, politicians, family members, and well-wishers paid their final respects. Along the entire path—from Washington to Springfield—well-wishers and mourners lined the tracks to catch a glimpse of the train and participate in the new mourning tradition that technology and patriotism helped produce.<sup>53</sup>

Most Northerners believed that Lincoln underwent a version of the Protestant Good Death. After John Wilkes Booth fired into Lincoln’s brain, supporters removed the stricken president from Ford’s Theater across the street into William Peterson’s house. Lincoln’s wife Mary, son Robert, and several friends and government officials stood around the deathbed.<sup>54</sup> The dying President’s silence did not dilute the resolute acceptance of a martyr’s death. If Lincoln, suffering from a grievous head wound, could not utter the words that assured his own

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<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> “The Obsequies,” *New York Times*, 22 April 1865; “The Obsequies,” *New York Times*, 23 April 1865; “The President’s Obsequies,” *New York Times*, 1 May 1865.

<sup>54</sup> “Our Late President,” *New York Times*, 21 April 1865.

salvation, the witnesses uttered them for him. His assassination became for much of the country evidence that his salvation, as a man and as a symbol of the nation, was guaranteed. After his passing, news of his death spread around the country inciting immediately the real and symbolic connection between Lincoln and the nation. The editors of the *New York Times* found in Lincoln's death Americans unshakeable confidence in democracy. "No nation ever existed that practically realized the principles which constitute the life of our government," claimed one editor. He added, "This is the American stability. It reposes on intelligent patriotism, and is no more to be shaken than the adamantine hills."<sup>55</sup> One editor claimed that Lincoln's abolishment of slavery ushered in "an era like the Reformation in Europe, or the establishment of a republic on this side of the Atlantic." He added, "Mr. Lincoln will be especially remembered as the great emancipator, and the leader of the American republic when she first shook off the fearful burden of slavery."<sup>56</sup>

Meanwhile, authorities prohibited blacks from joining in the public mourning of Lincoln. Frederick Douglass spoke at the Cooper Institute in New York in June 1865. Douglass took the opportunity of eulogizing Lincoln to criticize the authorities of New York who conspired to prevent blacks from the obsequies when Lincoln's body arrived and mentioned that blacks "were the only people prohibited from publicly expressing their regret and sorrow." He added that the exclusion of blacks was, "the most disgraceful and scandalous proceeding ever exhibited by people calling themselves civilized." Douglass refused to acknowledge Lincoln's all-pervading mythology. He tempered his praise of Lincoln. The President evoked ambivalence given his reluctance to support black soldiers fighting in the front lines of battle. Freedmen, claimed Douglass, "loved him even when he smote and wounded them. They thoroughly trusted and

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<sup>55</sup> "Public Confidence Unshaken—Another Lesson to Europe," *New York Times*, 18 April 1865.

<sup>56</sup> "The Mourning of the Slaves," *New York Times*, 19 April 1865.

believed in him; but it was no blind belief unsupported by reason.” Douglass reminded his audience that Lincoln was slow to act and many blacks viewed his early actions with suspicion. Despite this sort of criticism, he went on to argue that, compared to other white leaders of the U.S., Lincoln was the greatest because “he was the first of the long line to show any respect to the rights of the black man.” Douglass related the story of a black woman crying near the White House. “When asked why she wept, she replied, ‘We have lost our Moses.’ The answer was given, ‘God will send you another.’ The woman quickly said, ‘I know that, but we had him already.’” Even Douglass’s criticism of Lincoln did not prevent him from casting the President as an imposing biblical figure who helped end slavery; it was a narrative deserving of the Good Death.<sup>57</sup>

Added to these sorts of eulogies, which underscored middle-class Christian themes, eulogizers also sought to explain Lincoln’s death as a metaphysical force and they often indulged in racial stereotypes to explain this sort of mysticism. Freedmen lamented Lincoln’s loss but the *New York Times* and other newspapers conjured up a metaphor that governed the way whites viewed African American reception of Lincoln’s death as simplistic and gullible. The editor related a story filled with stereotypical language of a slave at Hilton Head, South Carolina pondering the chance for liberty during the war. An older slave was overheard referring to Lincoln, “De President! Why ob course he knows! He is ebrywhere! He is like the debressed Lord; he walks the waters and de land!”<sup>58</sup> The editor described this as typical “superstitious reverence” of a “simple-minded” inferior race. Because they thought superstitiously that Lincoln was omnipresent, the editor argued, freed people would be the most reverent mourners of Lincoln. Ralph Waldo Emerson echoed the sentiment in his eulogy claiming that, “The poor

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<sup>57</sup> “Fred Douglas on President Lincoln, *New York Times*, 2 June 1865.

<sup>58</sup> “The Mourning of the Slaves,” *New York Times*, 19 April 1865.

Negro said of him: on an impressive occasion, ‘Massa Lin’kum am ebrywhere.’” But this was more than a stereotype invoked by white men speaking on behalf of subaltern figures; it was how whites actually constructed their memory of Lincoln. Lincoln was, just as the slave allegedly described, omnipresent. Emerson described the fallen President:

He is the true history of the American people in his time. Step by step he walked before them; slow with their slowness, quickening his march by theirs; the true representative of this continent; an entirely public man; father of his country, the pulse of twenty millions throbbing in his heart, the thought of their minds articulated by his tongue.<sup>59</sup>

Mourners remembered Lincoln precisely as the ubiquitous figure of the nation; he was everywhere, in every heart, and in every mind.

Much of the rhetoric associated with Lincoln’s death and funeral obscured reality. Being made omnipresent gave Lincoln’s remains more than the notion of being sacred; they were approaching the notion of being holy. His body seemed to become a central site where the symbolism of the nation-state and Christianity intersected. Some observers, for example, saw the entire funerary event from Washington, D.C. to Springfield as a modern manifestation that mimicked the biblical account of Jacob’s funeral. Shortly after Jacob and his sons made the life-saving journey to Egypt where Jacob’s son Joseph spared them from starvation, Jacob died. Joseph instructed Egyptian servants to embalm Jacob’s body while Joseph mourned his father for forty days in Egypt before taking his body to Canaan where he mourned another seven days. Accompanying Joseph was a tremendous funeral cortège including all of Pharaoh’s servants “elders of his house, and all the elders of the land of Egypt, as well as all the house of Joseph, his brothers, and his father’s house.” Joseph laid his father to rest in a burial ground of Jacob’s ancestors. This marked the burial spot of the man known as Israel and also symbolically marked

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<sup>59</sup> “Our Late President,” *New York Times*, 4 May 1865.

the space that would become Israel. Joseph shared his mourning with the community of ancestors and future generations.<sup>60</sup>

Many clergymen did not miss the resemblance to Lincoln's final journey. Methodist Reverend Matthew Simpson gave the eulogy at Lincoln's burial stating, "Such a scene as his [Lincoln's] return to you was never witnessed. Among the events of history there have been great processions of mourners. There was one for the patriarch Jacob, which went up from Egypt." He continued, "The Egyptians wondered at the evidences of reverence and filial affection which came from the hearts of the Israelites." But Simpson reminded his audience, "Never was there in the history of man such mourning as that which accompanied the funeral procession, and has gathered around the mortal remains of him [Lincoln] who was our loved one."<sup>61</sup> Reverend Richard Steele of the First Dutch Reformed Church likened Lincoln's funeral to Jacob's and Napoleon Bonaparte's. The latter's body was brought back to France with grand displays of mourning.<sup>62</sup> In Worcester, just outside of Boston, Massachusetts, one eulogizer claimed:

I do not suppose that in all the intervening period, fretted and gilded as it has been with art and culture, anything like the passage of the herald-corpse of Jacob from his death-bed to the field and cave of his fathers, in public turn-out, and general lamentation, and sincerity of grief, has occurred before until now.

Speaking of Jacob but alluding also to Lincoln, the speaker continued, "Chariots and horsemen, men and maidens, the grim visages of age and the dusky beauty of youth, in lengthened procession, with palms, and music, and benediction, in behalf of that early world paid the last

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<sup>60</sup> *The Holy Bible*, New King James Version, Genesis 50: 1-14. Moses would later take Joseph's bones to the cave in Canaan as part of the Hebrew exodus from Egypt. This real and symbolic gesture placed Joseph (but not his brothers) in the pantheon of Hebrew and Judeo-Christian ancestry. Exodus 13:19

<sup>61</sup> Mathew Simpson, "Funeral Address Delivered at the Burial of President Lincoln" Springfield, IL, 4 May 1865, p.4 at the *Martyred President* Emory University, Atlanta, GA  
[http://beck.library.emory.edu/lincoln/sermon.php?id=simpson.001&term\[\]=jacob](http://beck.library.emory.edu/lincoln/sermon.php?id=simpson.001&term[]=jacob) accessed 19 July 2007.

<sup>62</sup> Richard H. Steele, "Victory and Mourning," New-Brunswick, NJ, 1 June 1865, p. 9 at the *Martyred President* Emory University, Atlanta, GA  
[http://beck.library.emory.edu/lincoln/sermon.php?id=steele.001&term\[\]=jacob](http://beck.library.emory.edu/lincoln/sermon.php?id=steele.001&term[]=jacob) accessed 19 July 2007.



tribute to a great and just benefactor, to a builder of empire.”<sup>63</sup> Jacob’s burial in Canaan held symbolic meaning for the Hebrews for when they escaped slavery in Egypt, they searched for the Promised Land, in which they could build an empire, marked by their graves of their fathers. Likewise, Lincoln led the United States out of legal bondage in search of a promised land of liberty. Such status placed Lincoln in the pantheon of ancient biblical prophets as well as the modern national creators.

Stressing the omnipotence of Lincoln and relying on biblical language to eulogize and mythologize his death made the acrimony of American memory even more divisive. Although sometimes raw, northern observers and commentators wielded a hegemonic discourse that artistically and passionately explained Lincoln’s death but also unsheathed Northerners’ wrath against Southerners’ malfeasance. The only way that clergymen in the North could explain the tragedy was through the biblical language of good, evil, the guidance of a benevolent deity, and the assuredness that the United States was the chosen nation of God. In New York, on the day of Lincoln’s Washington funeral service, New Yorkers gathered in churches and synagogues to pay their respects to the fallen President. Preachers throughout the city vindicated divine providence as the invisible hand that guided the nation through difficult times. Preachers likened the United States to the nation of Israel, Southerners to “traitorous Jews” and Abraham Lincoln to the Christian messiah. Such rhetoric did little to ease tensions; in fact, it reaffirmed that the Nation so conceived could never be destroyed by demonic influences. At St. George’s Church, Reverend Dr. Tyng likened the assassination to a rebellious war against God and against the Nation. “Not Israel was more truly a nation divinely collected, divinely governed, divinely commissioned, divinely prospered than have been the United States of America.” He continued,

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<sup>63</sup> Alex H. Bullock, “Abraham Lincoln, the Just Magistrate, the Representative Statesmen, the Practical Philanthropist” 1 June 1865, p. 4 at the *Martyred President* Emory University, Atlanta, GA [http://beck.library.emory.edu/lincoln/sermon.php?id=bullock.001&term\[\]=jacob](http://beck.library.emory.edu/lincoln/sermon.php?id=bullock.001&term[]=jacob) accessed 19 July 2007.

“It is no boastful nationalism to say that this nation, in its establishment and prosperity was the last hope of a weary world, that man could ever on earth enjoy a peaceful and protected liberty.” Tyng accused the conspirators of attempting to wipe out the President and his cabinet, “in the hope of creating an unexpected anarchy of a nation without a ruler and involving us, in the suddenness of despair, in an inextricable and hopeless revolution.” But this failed. He suggested, “Satan was not more deceived when he plunged the Jewish mob into the murder of their Lord, than when on this very commemoration of His crucifixion he has aimed a traitorous bullet against the exalted ruler of this people.” Reverend J. R.W. Sloan of the Third Reformed Presbyterian Church chose to view Lincoln as a religious reformer as much as a political reformer. He argued, “His last inaugural was the most profoundly religious document that has emanated from any public man of this country.” The Reverend praised the fallen for his study of scripture, his “dependence upon Divine Providence,” and his calling the nation “to the duty of fasting and thanks.” Sloan accused Southerners of not only destroying Lincoln’s body but also trying to destroy the social body of the government: “It is because the President of the United States, our official representative of republican liberty before the world of nations, is stricken down by the hand of an assassin worse than those who crucified our Savior, for they knew not that they did.” Meanwhile, James A. M. La Tourette, the chaplain at Governor’s Island, claimed, “From the blood of righteous Abel, to the death of the proto-martyr St. Stephen, through the long line of ages to the present time, men have died in the mysterious dispensation of Divine Providence, as martyrs in the cause of right and truth.” Just as many other men of the cloth, La Tourette explained the tragedy through the language of divine providence. He noted, “Let it be our part to follow the counsels which he [Lincoln] prescribed, to pursue the path . . . under the control of Divine Providence, who holds the destiny of this nation in His hand.”<sup>64</sup> Reverend

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<sup>64</sup> “The National Mourning,” *New York Times*, 21 April 1865.

Thomas Armitage, whose sermon at the Fifth Avenue Baptist Church in New York noted that Booth was a condemned man, “The hand of Cain is upon him, and the hand of God must clutch him by the vitals, take shelter where he may.” He then argued that what was important was how Americans conducted themselves in their sorrow. He added, “Such an act would have given birth to a revolution in the republics of the olden times. Such an act would probably overthrow the throne of any European power to-day. But it will not inaugurate anarchy here, if the people abstain from crimination and recrimination.”<sup>65</sup>

Lincoln’s funeral exhibited how Northerners constructed collective memory of the Civil War and emancipation. They viewed Lincoln through the Protestant ritual of the Good Death and cast the dead President as the personification of righteousness and nationalism. They often used religious language to explain the importance of the nation. This is not to say that nationalism and religious belief were synonymous but that the construction of the Republic and the Nation had been mixed with the mortar of religion. Lincoln became a condensational symbol in that his death expressed for many the importance of the nation and the centrality of divine providence guiding that nation. This was best summed up in Emerson’s published eulogy:

There is a serene Providence which rules the fate of nations, which makes little account of time, little of one generation or race, makes no account of disasters, conquers alike by what is called defeat or by what is called victory, thrusts aside enemy and obstructions, crushes everything immoral as inhuman, and obtains the ultimate triumph of the best race by the sacrifice of everything which resists the moral laws of the world.<sup>66</sup>

This was a distinctly northern memory of the war; it formed a *milieu de memoire* that was passionate, nationalistic, and hegemonic. It was experienced by millions who used it to condemn all Southerners. Lincoln’s death marked the irreconcilable differences Northerners held against Southerners which would go unresolved until the death of the greatest northern general of the

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<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

<sup>66</sup> “Our Late President,” *New York Times*, 4 May 1865.

Civil War. If Lincoln's death marked the transition of republicanism to nationalism in the realm of calamity, Grant's marked the transformation in the realm of reconciliation.

#### "Euthanasia—A Happy Death"

Former Union general and American president, Ulysses S. Grant spent the last days of his life in 1885 broke and broken as bad business deals depleted his finances while cancer robbed his ability to speak. Despite his debilitating condition, the commanding general, who had received Robert E. Lee's surrender at Appomattox Courthouse in 1865, desperately tried to finish his memoirs. Completing this work kept the Grant family from financial collapse as its immediate success in the marketplace guaranteed financial security for the family after the President died. Grant's memoirs were a retrospective of the Civil War but also an attempt by a dying man to cultivate a usable public memory about his own legacy, the legacy of the war, and the promise of a new nation. Grant declared that the cause of the war was slavery.<sup>67</sup> Although the former President admitted that he did not think so at the beginning of the war, his perspective had changed over the years.

But the man whose own Presidential administration was mired in corruption as well as the politics of race and reconstruction did not use his final opportunity to mold the collective memory of the war in terms of eliminating slavery. Instead, he used it to produce reunion and make national identity. The general's conclusion focused little on slavery and much on the ascendant American nation, particularly when compared to Europe. The President noted that

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<sup>67</sup> William Dunning, a New Jersey born historian whose position at Cornell University allowed him to significantly shape the history of the Civil War and Reconstruction. His adoption of the so-called "Lost Cause" Movement provided the intellectual foundation needed to legitimize the historiography established by southerners in the immediate aftermath of the Civil War that attempted to make the war into a conflict over State's Rights and unification and cover-up the legacy that the Confederacy fought for slavery and against emancipation. See Foner, *Who Owns History*, 16-17.

“our republican institutions were regarded as experiments up to the breaking out of the rebellion, and monarchical Europe generally believed that our republic was a rope of sand that would part the moment the slightest strain was brought upon it.” But the Civil War demonstrated to the world that “it has shown itself capable of dealing with one of the greatest wars that was ever made, and our people have proven themselves to be the most formidable in war of any nationality.” He then went on to discuss the limitations of European monarchy and European culture that failed to embrace a community based on individualism. He believed that Europe was always trying to “give us a check” in power. Thus he criticized Europe for trying to oversee the American nation by establishing domination over neighboring Mexico.<sup>68</sup>

For Grant, at the time of his death, it was neither slavery nor emancipation but the European presence in the world-system that signified the ultimate meaning of the Civil War. Despite the military strength built during the war, the United States, Grant believed, had become too complacent in its ability to generate wealth and power. This made the American nation vulnerable to European encroachment. Grant warned Americans that the United States, just twenty years after the internal crisis, was “without the power to resist an invasion by the fleets of fourth-rate European powers.” The army general admonished Americans to invest in a naval fleet that could engage in war, when needed, and establish and protect American business interests at home and abroad. It was the Navy, Grant believed that could mitigate the “check” that European nations sought to hold on the United States. From this perspective, Grant’s memoirs seem to cast the Civil War as a valuable case-study providing ample lessons for America’s ascendancy to its semi-peripheral role in the world-system. The lesson that Americans should remember from the Civil War, Grant insisted, was that “To maintain peace in

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<sup>68</sup> Ulysses S. Grant, *Personal Memoirs of U.S. Grant* (New York: Charles L. Webster, 1886), 542-554.

the future it is necessary to be prepared for war.”<sup>69</sup> Grant’s memoirs were an important statement that helped shift the memory of the Civil War away from the controversies of slavery and toward a narrative of reunification and imperialism; it seemed that he was letting go of the Republic. They articulated a new *milieu de memoire* from the Civil War—one that would serve Americans as they embarked on an ascendant trajectory in the world-system. The best way to remember the Civil War, suggested Grant, was to remember it as an experience that unified and prepared the United States to participate in the global community.

Despite this globalization of the Civil War, Grant’s memoirs acknowledged that there remained in the U.S. multiple internal problems from which there seemed to be only difficult solutions. Reconstruction, the Radical Republicans, and the elusive promise of “forty acres and a mule” had failed to bring racial justice to the United States. As a sort of compromise solution to what W.E.B. Du Bois would later describe in *The Souls of Black Folk* as the “color line,” Grant’s reiterated his proposal for the annexation of Santo Domingo as a new state governed by blacks for blacks. He reminded his readers that he had tried to pursue this policy while he was President. He asserted that the fertile coastline could support fifteen million people. “They would still be States of the Union, and under the protection of the General Government; but the citizens would be almost wholly colored.” Westward expansion also posed a problem as profitable lands that could be exploited for farming, mining, and the emerging cattle industry needed to be secured from Native Americans. The 1846-48 War with Mexico—although Grant was ideologically opposed to it—had proved beneficial in the pursuit of expansion. “It is probable that the Indians would have had control of these lands for a century yet but for the war. We must conclude, therefore, that wars are not always evils unmixed with some good.”<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

Despite these internal challenges, Grant believed the Civil War also produced “some good,” such as a new American ethos. He wrote, “The war begot a spirit of independence and enterprise.” Whereas before the war, sectionalism was measured by regional dialects, subsistence farming, and sedentary lifestyles, “The feeling now is, that a youth must cut loose from his old surroundings to enable him to get up in the world.” Connected by railroads, a new geography, and a continental commerce, Grant believed, “The war has made us a nation of great power and intelligence.” He continued, “We have but little to do to preserve peace, happiness and prosperity at home, and the respect of other nations. Our experience ought to teach us the necessity of the first; our power secures the latter.” The divisiveness of the war seemed to be fading from memory. His final thoughts in his memoir included the notion that “we are on the eve of a new era, when there is to be great harmony between the Federal and Confederate.” Even beyond this distinction, it seemed to the man with barely one month left to live that the entire nation was on the brink of reunification. He claimed that the good feelings he had received represented the universality of the nation. “They came from individual citizens of all nationalities; from all denominations—the Protestant, the Catholic, and the Jew; and from the various societies of the land—scientific, educational, religious or otherwise. Politics did not enter into the matter at all.”<sup>71</sup> Of course absent from Grant’s citizenry were African Americans and Native Americans among others. Grant’s memoir not only reflected, but also helped define the emerging belief in a reunified American nation. The two-volume work stimulated the collective memory of millions of readers. To this end, Grant’s attempt to bring closure to the war, and closure to his own life, directly linked the fulfillment of white American nationalism to the suppression of racial minorities. For the man who won the Civil War and later presided over Reconstruction, the conflict was the penultimate moment that defined the nation and its future

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<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

position in global politics. For him, and for many who shared his views, the lessons of the Civil War were about making an American identity that could compete in a world that Europe dominated and eventually usurp that domination.

This type of racialized memory was similarly depicted by the poet Walt Whitman, inheritor of the transcendentalist legacy of Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry David Thoreau, which viewed the world through a particularly American energy, and sense of individualism. Whitman's *Leaves of Grass*, first published in 1855, had become very popular by the time of Grant's death. Undergoing several editions over the years, Whitman continually added and removed poems. But the theme of producing identity remained throughout the editions. Whitman's poems were the product of a reflection on transcendentalism and also a hope for making a national identity that would lead the world toward a culture and politics of individualism and democracy. Literary scholar Lawrence Buell claims Whitman's writing was haunted by the presence of European stereotypes of America. Buell claims, "What Whitman has done [in *Leaves of Grass*] is to make grotesque a trope from the Eurocentric repertoire . . . to render it hairy and gross (reversing the stereotype of the colony as the place without culture)." "Turn, O Libertad" expressed Whitman's view of the post-Civil War world in which the stereotype was reversed. Echoing Grant's conclusion to his memoirs, Whitman wrote of Liberty:

Turn from lands retrospective, recording proofs of the past; / From the singers that sing the trailing glories of the past; / From the chants of the feudal world—the triumphs of kings, slavery, caste; / Turn to the world, the triumphs reserv'd and to come—give up that backward world; / Leave to the singers of hitherto—give them the trailing past.<sup>72</sup>

American liberty usurped outmoded European feudalism and monarchism with ideas of liberty and the individual. In Whitman's "To a foil'd European Revolutionaire" he described himself as the "sworn poet of every dauntless rebel, the world over." And when revolution failed

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<sup>72</sup> Walt Whitman, "Turn, O Libertad," *Leaves of Grass* (Philadelphia, PA: David McKay, 1900), 154.



in Europe, Whitman's advice was to maintain "courage yet! my brother or my sister!" For liberty only died, according to the poet, "When there are no more memories of heroes and martyrs, / And when all life, and all the souls of men and women are discharged from any part of the earth, / Then only shall liberty or the idea of liberty, be discharged from that part of the earth." Thus the resolution for the world, even in the face of defeat was to "revolt! and still revolt! revolt!"<sup>73</sup>

Whitman believed the empowerment of the individual and the spread of democracy was the universal answer to the world's problems. In "Salut au Monde!" Whitman became democracy personified as a deity transcending time and space to greet the world. "Within me latitude widens, longitude lengthens . . . Within me is the longest day, the sun wheels in slanting rings, it does not set for months." The poet continued, "What do you hear Walt Whitman?" The response was a superhuman ability to hear simultaneously the "shouts of Australians," "fierce French liberty songs," "locusts in Syria," "the chirp of the Mexican muleteer," "the Arab muezzin" "Christian priests," Cossack sailors, shackled slaves, "the rhythmic myths of the Greeks, and the strong legends of the Romans," and "the Hindoo teaching his favorite pupil." Whitman could see every hill, glen, desert, and iceberg, every city and country in the world, as people rose to work and endure the crushing exploitation of an old world. He claimed, "I descend upon all those cities, and rise from them again" as "I salute all the inhabitants of the earth." This anthropomorphic spread of democracy was inevitable as it was inevitable that the sunlight reached every corner of the earth. He concluded:

What cities the light and warmth penetrates I penetrate those cities myself, / All islands to which birds wing their way I wing my way myself. / Toward you all, in America's name, / I raise high the perpendicular hand, I make the signal, / To remain after me in sight forever, / For all the haunts and homes of men.

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<sup>73</sup> Walt Whitman, "To a foil'd European Revolutionaire," *Leaves of Grass* (Philadelphia, PA: David McKay, 1900), 170.

This was a call for the democratic ideals formed in the Civil War to spread throughout the world to every nook and cranny of inhabitable earth. It stated America's contribution to the world-system and it asserted America's intention to become a global hegemon. Ironically Whitman heard the cries of neither lynch victims in segregated America nor saw the suffering Native Americans on shrinking reservations.<sup>74</sup>

Grant's political memory coupled with Whitman's cultural legacy represented the emergence of a new public collective memory. But as much as Grant and Whitman wanted to assert American democratic principles, the so-called Gilded Age was full of undemocratic practices ranging from lynching and Jim Crow laws to the Chinese Exclusion Act, Wounded Knee, the Haymarket affair, and the denial of women's suffrage. These internal fissures, despite Grant's claims, demonstrated that the American system remained vulnerable. The ailing General constructed his last memory in the context of these internal fissures: susceptible from his own financial despair and defenseless before his impending death, he represented the collective despondency of over a decade of economic instability beginning with the Depression of 1873 and culminating in the financial panic of 1883. The dichotomy between democratic rhetoric and non-democratic practices likewise influenced the way people looked at the dead to construct collective memory. By the time of Grant's death, the nation was ripe for a new symbol of hope and a new meaning for the American experience. Grant's death came at a precise moment that spoke to the need of Northerners, Southerners, bourgeoisie, and working class people to foment a new democracy out of the systemic fault lines inherent in the transformation of a republic into a

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<sup>74</sup> Walt Whitman, "Salut au Monde!," *Leaves of Grass* (Philadelphia, PA: David McKay, 1900), 74. Charles I. Glicksberg, "Walt Whitman and the Negro," *Phylon* 9 (1948): 326-341, quote on 326; Dana Phillips, "Nineteenth-Century Racial Thought and Whitman's 'Democratic Ethnology of the Future,'" *Nineteenth-Century Literature* 49 (1994): 289-320; Michael Mosher, "Walt Whitman: Jacobin Poet of American Democracy," *Political Theory* 18 (Nov. 1990): 587-595; Nina Silber, *The Romance of Reunion: Northerners and the South, 1865-1900* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993).

nation. In this respect, Grant's idea that the United States had resolved its systemic problems during the Civil War seemed correct; all that was left to do was fine-tune the system, rebuild the navy, and assert the individualism that would lead to America's ascendancy.

This was evident in General Grant's death and funeral. Just before 8 A.M. on 23 July 1885, "Henry, the nurse stepped hastily upon the piazzae and spoke quietly to the physicians." Doctors Douglass, Shrady, and Sands entered Grant's room and sent for the family to assemble around Grant's bedside.<sup>75</sup> What happened next was a reenactment of the Good Death; accounts similar to this were printed in newspapers around the country.

Mrs. Grant, calm, but with intense agitation bravely suppressed, took a seat close by the bedside. She leaned slightly upon the colonel [her son, Colonel Fred Grant], resting upon her right elbow, and gazed with tear-blended eyes into the General's face. She found there, however, no token of recognition for the sick man was peacefully and painlessly passing into another life.

Behind Mrs. Grant was Mrs. Satoris (Nellie Grant's mother-in-law) and behind her were the doctors. "At the opposite side of the bed from his mother and directly behind" was U.S. Grant, Jr. and Jesse Grant. Mr. Dawson, the General's stenographer, was near U.S. Grant, Jr. Mrs. Fred Grant, Mrs. U.S. Grant, Jr. and Mrs. Jesse Grant were at the foot of the bed. "Somewhat removed from the family circle Henry, the nurse, and Harrison Tyrrell, the General's body servant" stood. U.S. Grant Jr. (III) and Nellie (the President's daughter) were asleep in the nursery above. The family watched Grant slip into unconsciousness. Grant turned blue, his respiration and heart rate fluttered and his body grew cold.<sup>76</sup>

As Grant quickly slipped into unconsciousness, the family surrounding the bed anticipated the fatal moment. While Mrs. Grant "stroked the face, forehead and hands of the dying general" and "tenderly kissed the face of the sinking man," Colonel Grant "sat

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<sup>75</sup> "By a Soldier's Bedside, Gen. Grant's Vigorous Bally," *Baltimore Sun*, 14 April 1885.

<sup>76</sup> "Grant's Dying Hour," *Summit County Beacon* (Akron, Ohio), 29 July 1885), 2.

silently but with evident feeling though his bearing was that of a soldierly son at the deathbed of a hero father.” U.S. Grant, Jr. “was deeply moved, but Jesse bore the scene steadily.” Their wives, “while watching with wet cheek, were silent as benefited the dignity of a life such as was closing before them.” The moment of assuredness, rather than temptation, seemed to take effect.

A peaceful expression seemed to be deepening in the brave, strong-lined face and it was reflected as a closing comfort in the sad hearts that beat quickly, under the stress of loving suspense. A minute more passed and was closing. As the general drew a deeper breath there was an exhalation like that of one relieved of long and anxious tension. The members of the group were impelled each a step nearer the bed and each waited to note the next inspiration, but it did not come then; it never came.

All the conditions of the Good Death were evident in the newspaper accounts of Grant’s death. He died peacefully and assuredly. His family surrounded him and the whole story concocted by the press served to show that the language and narrative of death after the Civil War reflected the same narrative of middle-class American notions of death before the war.<sup>77</sup>

This carried through into Grant’s funeral. Within the hour of his death, the family sent for sculptor Karl Gerhardt who made a death mask of the former President. Grant’s body remained on Mount McGregor for ten days where it was embalmed. Soldiers from Fort Wheeler and then the Brooklyn post of the Grand Army of the Republic (GAR) stood watch over Grant’s body and guarded the house during this period. The GAR had eight former soldiers who split up into four details and took three-hour watches day and night. Soon representatives of the GAR from Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, Connecticut, New York, Michigan, Wisconsin, and New Mexico made it to Grant’s home and set up their tents along the mountain. They were accompanied by a company of infantry from Fort Porter.<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

<sup>78</sup> “Gen. Grant’s Remains. In Care of a Guard of Honor,” *Baltimore Sun*, 27 July 1885, 1.

While preparations for the funeral were being made, sympathies began pouring in from all over the country. The *Summit County Beacon* reported that in Atlanta, “The legislature passed resolutions of regret at the death of Gen. Grant and adjourned for the day, out of respect to his memory.” On 24 July, “Confederate soldiers of Helena, Ark., to-day sent a message of sympathy.”<sup>79</sup> General Hancock, along with Colonel Fred Grant, organized the funeral. On 4 August, they moved the General’s body and placed it on a train headed to Albany where Grant’s corpse lay in state at the State Capital. Some 80,000 people paid their respects while in Albany. They then moved Grant’s body to New York City where it laid in state at City Hall until 8 August. Grant’s funeral was an incredible moment that easily outdid Lincoln’s. The procession included 60,000 marchers and over one million spectators. City officials at the time believed that over 440,000 travelers came to New York for the occasion. President Cleveland and his entire Cabinet as well as the GAR led the procession. At 9:45 A.M. Grant’s coffin was removed from City Hall for transport to the temporary tomb and a service in Riverside Park. The service itself lasted about an hour while the entire time from City Hall to interment in the vault took about seven-and-one-half hours.<sup>80</sup>

President Grover Cleveland, the only Democrat to be elected President between Lincoln and Woodrow Wilson chose Grant’s pallbearers on Mrs. Grant’s request. Cleveland, who had paid for a replacement when he was drafted in 1863 and who would later famously veto Congressional attempts—led by Republicans—to expand military pensions for former soldiers, elected to include among Grant’s personal friends, Cabinet officers, and military personnel, two

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<sup>79</sup> “Grant’s Dying Hour,” *Summit County Beacon* (Akron, Ohio), 29 July 1885, p.2.

<sup>80</sup> “In Grant’s Honor. Religious Bodies to be Represented at His Burial. The Clergymen Invited,” *The Washington Critic* 1 August 1885; “General Grant’s Pallbearers,” *The Washington Critic* 31 July 1885, 1. President Cleveland picked General Johnston because “General Johnston was held in high esteem by the Union commander, who regarded his military abilities as equal, if not superior, to those of Lee.” Grant and General Buckner had been classmates together at West Point. “The Hero Rests. General Grant’s Body Laid in the Tomb,” *Philadelphia Inquirer* 10 August 1885; David M. Kahn, “The Grant Monument,” *The Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 41 (3 October 1982): 212-231.

former confederate Generals. In 1885, the United States was in the midst of a long period of economic crisis. Grant's death evoked sorrow for the loss of perhaps America's greatest general at a time when American power seemed weakened. Cleveland thus chose pallbearers who would represent an American Empire of strength. General William T. Sherman and General Philip Henry Sheridan carried Grant's casket alongside former Confederate Generals Joseph E. Johnston of Virginia and Simon Bolivar Buckner of Kentucky. This was fairly controversial because Cleveland omitted former Presidents Rutherford B. Hayes and Chester A. Arthur in favor of the former southern generals. It was an obvious symbolic gesture of reunion. But it was also a symbolic nod to American Imperialism. Sherman and Sheridan were Civil War heroes who applied their "War is Hell" strategy to the Plains Indians during Grant's Presidency. Sheridan's famous quip, "The only good Indian is a dead Indian," guided the American Army in its rapid expansion of American borders at the expense of Native Americans; General Sherman helped Sheridan ruthlessly expand these western borders.<sup>81</sup> Johnston and Buckner represented the unification between Northerners and Southerners that the United States desperately needed in the pursuit of an ever-expanding American empire abroad. Admiral David Dixon Porter, Superintendent of the U.S. Naval Academy after the war, and Vice-Admiral Stephen C. Rowan represented the imperialistic naval power that Grant spoke of in his memoirs. Rowan, in fact, headed the Asiatic Squadron in 1867-1870, which not only monitored but also intervened in Chinese, Japanese, Korean, and Filipino politics. Also included as pallbearers were Hamilton Fish, Grant's Secretary of State from 1869 to 1877 and George S. Boutwell, the Secretary of the Treasury from 1869 to 1873. These men ran two important cabinet positions that facilitated American economic and political expansion during the period of Reconstruction period and the

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<sup>81</sup> James Welch, *Killing Custer: The Battle of Little Bighorn and the Fate of the Plains Indians* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1994), 29-36. The quote attributed to Sheridan was actually misquoted. He apparently actually said, "The only good Indians I ever saw were dead."

Plains Indian Wars. Grant's personal friends, George Jones, owner of the *New York Times* and the man principally responsible in the railroad speculation that ruined Grant financially, Oliver Hoyt, a New York businessman, and publisher George W. Childs seemed to underscore the economic vitality of the United States at a time when the Panic of 1883 remained on the minds of many. There was no Frederick Douglass or Booker T. Washington. The closest that Cleveland came to acknowledging Grant's role in ending slavery was by including former military General and Congressman John A. Logan. Logan served under Grant and aligned his postwar politics with the Radical Republicans. But Logan was a very weak symbol of African American liberty during a period marked by the restoration of white supremacy.

Grant's body was laid in a temporary tomb while New York authorities planned for the building of a permanent burial site. The completion and dedication of Grant's tomb demonstrated a transformation of memory. People began thinking of Grant and the Civil War less and less as a moment of liberty and more and more as a moment of reunion that marked the beginning of imperialism. This transformation began almost immediately after Grant was placed in his temporary tomb but it only reached culmination around the time the Grant Memorial was finally completed in 1897, nearly twelve years after his death. However, the debate about how to commemorate him began in 1885. "Whatever we build, it will be everywhere known and will be everywhere accepted as the great typical example of American art," explained one commentator.<sup>82</sup> The problem was that no recognizable American art style existed. Many critics began comparing Grant, and by extension America, to what the great monuments of Europe represented. Journalists, sculptors, and artists mentioned memorials dedicated to names such as Wellington, Nelson, Frederick the Great, Prince Albert, Napoleon and monuments such as the Arc de Triomphe de L'Etoile, the Dome des Invalides, the tower of St. Jacques in Paris, and the

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<sup>82</sup> "The Grant Memorial," *The Century: A Popular Quarterly* 31 (6, April 1886): 953-957.

German Niederwald monument on the Rhine commemorating the Franco-Prussian War. Some believed that Grant represented America's image to the world even better than Lincoln. One editor reminded his readers that Lincoln ruled as an executive, not a monarch or a prime minister: "How indeed should he be understood in lands where *to rule* means something so different?" The author continued, "But with Grant the case stands otherwise. A great organizer of armies, planner of campaigns, winner of victories—this is easily enough understood in any country." He concluded:

And thus, as he himself during his foreign tour stood in the eyes of Europe as the symbol of his country in her hour of reunion and reinstatement in the great family of nations, so his monument, whatever we may make it, will assuredly stand as the type of the highest his countrymen can wish to do in art and the very best they can accomplish.<sup>83</sup>

The main problem was that American art was formless; in fact many artists—not just Mark Twain—despised the gaudy style of the gilded age. Editors of *The Century* magazine claimed that American art was in a transitional phase and patrons as well as artists were experimenting with new forms and styles. They believed Grant's death provided a perfect opportunity for channeling American art in new directions. But others were more critical. Architect Henry van Brunt, speaking of the soldier monuments springing up all across the nation, wrote, "No nation ever had such an opportunity for pure artistic expression, and, we are constrained to say, none could have so misused it." Local communities typically erected this sort of monument which included a shaft and a soldier mounted on top of a pedestal. Also known as shaft monuments, they sprang up all across the U.S. in the years after the war. They usually took the form of a base supporting a single vertical shaft on top of which was often a sculpture of a common soldier or local hero of the Civil War. They were simple, inexpensive, and easily reproduced in small communities across the country. They actually expressed local, if not

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<sup>83</sup> Ibid.



consensus-driven, expressions of how to commemorate the war. Van Brunt believed the soldier monuments, although well intentioned as an expression of the democratic spirit, were “dumb and cold,” “destitute of any quality to excite emotion,” “illiterate in detail,” “poor in invention,” and “common.” Designs were “conceptions of untaught stone-cutters derived from a narrow range of conventional grave-yard types.”<sup>84</sup> While the *North American Review* claimed, “We are ignorant of the meaning and use of *style*—that spontaneous but concurrent mode which races of men have devised and accepted as the fittest expression of their *race* ideals. Till there is an American race there cannot be an American style.” The editor continued:

So and so many millions of English, Germans, Irish, Africans, Italians, and Chinamen, getting prosperous and fat on a rich new continent, may, for the purposes of popular expression, be called a people; bound loosely together by a system of government they become a nation, but they do not make a *race*, and until they do, all talk of an American style is empty and idle.<sup>85</sup>

The author chided that Americans did not understand the elements of style, rather “We use them only to abuse them; we adopt them only to mutilate and burlesque them.”<sup>86</sup>

But a style-less American art form was of little concern to others who were more interested in demonstrating what historian Michael H. Hunt has called the American ascendancy.<sup>87</sup> American art critic Clarence Cook claimed of Grant, “His battles were nothing but the clumsy enginery by which his noble work of reconciliation was accomplished.”<sup>88</sup>

Sculptor Karl Gerhardt, who created Grant’s death mask, believed “As America is the greatest of modern nations, to be a truly national memorial, it should excel in grandeur any existing

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<sup>84</sup> Letter, Henry van Brunt to the Editor, *The North American Review* 141 (346, September 1885): 282-283.

<sup>85</sup> “Style and the Monument,” *North American Review* 141 (November 1885): 443-462.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid. This was reflective of Ralph Waldo Emerson’s plea for an American scholar delivered earlier in the century. The concerns about dynamic men who would lead the American nation in politics, as well as art, remained undeveloped according to such rhetoric.

<sup>87</sup> Michael H. Hunt, *The American Ascendancy: How The United States Gained and Wielded Global Dominance* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007).

<sup>88</sup> Letter, Clarence Cook to the Editor, *The North American Review* 141 (346, September 1885): 290.

monument.”<sup>89</sup> The Englishman landscape designer and architect Calvert Vaux added, “It is evident that the result must be in some sense an illustration of the law of the survival of the fittest.”<sup>90</sup> Indeed, Grant’s Plains Indian Wars epitomized this sort of Social Darwinism. The early discourse of Grant’s monument thus communicated numerous meanings. It asserted America’s rightful place in the world and demonstrated American might in a cutthroat world of competition. It was an expression that America had resolved systemic weaknesses through the Civil War that threatened the Union. It also represented that the United States was overcoming the long economic depression of post-Reconstruction America in a similar fashion that overcame the difficulties of internal war. No wonder then that Grant’s death posed a symbol to numerous different groups who were invested in U.S. politics, economics, and culture. As one editor reminded audiences, Grant posthumously received:

A burst of popular affection and respect, bringing the country back to an attitude even more sympathetic than it had held when first it chose him President, and to be glad that over his dying bed the South clasped hands with the North, and signed our articles of brotherhood anew. Euthanasia—a *happy death*.<sup>91</sup>

The Good Death of Grant produced a “happy death” of reunification. As one commentator noted:

The bitterest passions are engendered by civil wars, and our great conflict was no exception, being the terrible culmination of years of political and social strife, followed by complications incident to race problems and political reconstruction. But as Americans we can well take pride that the soldiers of the South and the defenders of the Union now unite in rejoicing in the glories of a common country.<sup>92</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> Letter, Karl Gerhardt to the Editor, *The North American Review* 141 (346, September 1885): 281.

<sup>90</sup> Letter, Calvert Vaux to the Editor, *The North American Review* 141 (346, September 1885): 278.

<sup>91</sup> “The Grant Memorial,” *The Century: A Popular Quarterly* 31 (6, April 1886): 953-957.

<sup>92</sup> John R. Proctor, “A Blue and Gray Friendship (Grant and Buckner),” *The Century, A Popular Quarterly* 53 (6, April 1897): 942-949, quote on 949, Making of America: <http://cdl.library.cornell.edu/cgi-bin/moa/moa-cgi?notisid=ABP2287-0053-196>, accessed December 2007.

But this was neither complete nor immediate with Grant's funeral. The lack of an authentic American style was just one of the issues impeding the construction of a grand memorial to the former President. Architect John H. Duncan won the right to design the Grant Memorial in 1890. After five years of speculation and wrangling over which design would best commemorate the former general, New York authorities had held a competition and Duncan submitted a winning proposal that incorporated Egyptian, Greek, and Roman influences but primarily modeled his mausoleum after Napoleon at Les Invalides. He included equestrian statues of the four generals who ran his army, panels with portraits of Grant's Major Generals, a Memorial Hall that would provide a meeting place for future commemorative acts, inner and outer galleries, two staircases, and a dome. Duncan also included an arch that would take visitors from the tomb over the railroad tracks and down to the Hudson River to a platform where boats could land. Moreover, he proposed changing or building several approaches in the park leading up to the tomb. The estimated cost of completing the structure came to \$500,000.<sup>93</sup>

Despite New York authorities awarding the contract to Duncan in September 1890, delays continued as city officials struggled to raise the necessary funds. Some U.S. Congressmen believed that Grant's body should be removed from New York and reburied in Arlington National Cemetery. Republicans had been "waving the bloody shirt" as a political *modus operandi* since the end of the Civil War. They continued to remind Americans that they were the party that won the war and they were the party that supported Union soldiers. This dynamic helped Republicans dominate national politics and turn Democrats into a party of local and regional importance. New York was a battleground state where northern Democrats could win. Although New Yorkers voted for the Republican President Benjamin Harrison in 1888, they had voted for Democrat Grover Cleveland in 1884 and would vote again for Cleveland in

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<sup>93</sup> "Gen. Grant's Monument," *New York Times*, 13 September 1890.

1892. One of the symbolic battles that rallied Republicans around the “bloody shirt” revolved around government pensions for soldiers. Republicans tended to support this type of legislation and Democrats tended to oppose them.

By 1890, New York had not raised the funds necessary to build General Grant’s tomb. And in the mid-term elections earlier that year, Republicans lost 93 seats in the House of Representatives making it the minority party and in the Senate they likewise slipped from 51 seats to 47. In December of 1890, before the new Congressmen were sworn in, some in the flickering Republican-majority Senate saw this as a last opportunity to nationalize Grant’s commemoration by moving his body to Arlington National Cemetery. If Republicans outside of New York could succeed, they hoped they would further symbolize their commitment to war veterans and convince many across the country that the Democrats would support the interests of New York rather than defend the quintessential symbol of the Civil War. Senator Preston B. Plumb, a Kansas Republican, sponsored the bill and the Senate approved it without opposition from the two Republican New York senators. Congressman Charles O’Neill, a Republican from Pennsylvania, sponsored the measure in the House of Representatives. These Congressmen believed that Grant was a national symbol and should receive national recognition. Representative Byron Cutcheon, a Republican from Michigan, who served as a Lieutenant Colonel in the Civil War and was awarded the Medal of Honor from Congress, claimed that “Grant belonged to the Republic.” He added that Grant had become the symbol of his generation and should be buried where “pilgrims from every part of the country could come and visit his tomb without being offended by unfitting surroundings.” Congressman O’Neill reminded his colleagues that the “demand for removal did not come from Pennsylvania alone. The whole newspaper press of the country except the New York papers spoke of it as the proper thing to

do.” Representative Joseph “Uncle Joe” Cannon of Illinois believed that the remains should be deposited “at some place where the greatest number of the American people could most readily visit the last resting place of the great commander.”<sup>94</sup>

The failure to raise enough money in the five years since his death was further proof; detractors claimed that New Yorkers were ambivalent to honoring Grant properly.

Representative John Quinn, a Democrat and Irish immigrant from New York, railed against the accusations of the Republican Congressmen. Quinn was outraged at the very suggestion that Grant be taken from New York. In a speech to fellow Representatives, he admitted that not enough money had yet been raised. He claimed the reason for this was that the Johnstown, Pennsylvania flood that killed over 2,000 people in 1889 had diverted much of the fundraising efforts away from Grant’s tomb and towards the welfare of the people of Johnstown. He reminded his colleagues that New York had also aided Chicago, Illinois, Boston, Massachusetts, and Charleston, South Carolina all of which suffered natural disasters while simultaneously raising \$150,000 for the Grant memorial. “The resolution,” argued Quinn, “was an insult to Gen. Grant and to the Grand Army of the Republic, and to every man who had a relative who died adding to the glory of this Republic.” Quinn was shocked that Congressman O’Neill would attempt to stain the honor of the state of New York after New Yorkers had performed so brilliantly at Gettysburg in defense of Pennsylvania. “Call the roll,” added Quinn, “of the regiments who stood for three days at Gettysburg, and it would be found that one third of them were from New York.” Quinn reminded O’Neill that New York had spent \$200,000 in monuments that dotted the landscape of Pennsylvania. Quinn’s fellow Democrat from New York, Amos Jay Cummings, another Medal of Honor winner, also railed against the legislation. He argued, “There was something more in the resolution than a spirit of envy, something that

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<sup>94</sup> “To Remain at Riverside,” *New York Times*, 10 December 1890.

savored of a rancorous spirit, something that challenged every sense of pride, something that flew in the face of tradition, something abnormal and monstrous.” He added that Grant’s “name and his fame belonged to the Nation . . . His bones did not belong to the Nation.” This was a new level of desecration, claimed the Representative, and Congress had no business getting involved. He reminded his colleagues that it took twenty-five years to build the Bunker Hill monument and a half-century to construct the Washington Monument. Grant and his family chose New York, claimed Cummings, and that was where his bones should stay; he concluded, “Let the dead hero sleep undisturbed.”<sup>95</sup>

Scottish immigrant, Republican Congressman, and Medal of Honor winner John Farquhar agreed with his Democratic congressmen: “As a Representative of New York, he protested against it. As a Republican Representative, he protested against it. As a personal friend of Gen. Grant and family he protested against it. As a soldier of the Republic he protested against it.” Republicans like Farquhar understood the importance of New York in the upcoming general election; Harrison needed to carry the state if he were to win reelection. He argued that the fundraising efforts were inadequate and called for a reorganization of the committee overseeing the efforts. Together the New York delegation succeeded in keeping Grant’s tomb in Riverside Park. New York Republicans convinced enough of their colleagues against the moving of Grant’s remains and Quinn persuaded enough Democratic colleagues to vote with those Republicans who were against the measure. The House defeated the bill by 61 votes despite the lingering Republican majority. Grant’s remains would remain in New York and the job of building his monument would remain outside the folds of the federal government. But this was not an argument between Northerners and Southerners; rather it was a debate between westerners and easterners in the North over where Grant should be remembered. Democrats

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<sup>95</sup> Ibid.

carried the state in the 1892 election and helped elect Cleveland for a second time. Meanwhile the collective memories of Grant become more and more reified.<sup>96</sup>

The New York delegation succeeded in reforming the fundraising efforts by helping create the Grant Monument Association. Led by Horace Porter, who served on Grant's staff during the war and became his personal secretary while President, the new association targeted city merchants and businessmen. Porter also waged a propaganda program that shamed New Yorkers for allowing the "humiliating spectacle" of neglecting Grant's remains. Enough money had been raised to lay the foundation of the tomb but the Association needed to raise about \$350,000 more.<sup>97</sup> In March of 1892, Porter called for an assembly of city businessmen and persuaded them to pledge the rest of the money. He persuaded businessmen to form forty committees; each represented a trade. These committees represented, among others, the industries of Dry Goods, Woolens, Importers of White Goods, Importers of Dry Goods, Importers of Straw Goods, Importers of Tailors' Trimmings, Wholesale Toys, Umbrella Manufacturers, Straw-Hat Manufacturers, Wholesale Furs and Furriers, and Wholesale Corsets.<sup>98</sup> The committee members would actively seek donations from fellow workers and members of society that gave them patronage. Meanwhile Porter arranged for the laying of the cornerstone on 27 April 1892 to commemorate what would have been Grant's seventieth birthday. He worked with the Governor of New York and city authorities to sponsor a parade culminating in the laying of the cornerstone by President Benjamin Harrison.<sup>99</sup> By April, Porter had "2,000 men" serving on committees, "all well known among their business or professional competitors

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<sup>96</sup> Ibid.

<sup>97</sup> "Gen. Grant's Tomb," *New York Times*, 21 March 1892.

<sup>98</sup> "For the Grant Tomb Fund," *New York Times*, 22 March 1892.

<sup>99</sup> "Ready for the Ceremony," *New York Times*, 26 April 1892

or allies. Each one of these committeemen is scouring the city with a subscription book.”<sup>100</sup> On the day of the dedication and the laying of the cornerstone, Porter announced that his Association raised over \$200,000.<sup>101</sup> By the end of May, the committees raised a total of \$321,000 and needed only \$29,000. Shortly thereafter the Association completed raising the rest of the money. Most workers gave twenty-five or fifty cents but some contributors donated ten dollars and as much as twenty-five dollars. “The ‘Boys of Harlem’ Grammar School 39,” contributed six dollars and forty cents.<sup>102</sup>

The rededication in completing Grant’s tomb reinvigorated the way people remembered him. Northern and southern Civil War veterans gathered at the nearby Waldorf hotel for the annual Grant Banquet Association’s dinner.<sup>103</sup> The tomb itself became an important site for people wishing to pay their respects to the man and to what he represented. Despite his ill health, Field Marshal Marquis Yamagata, the head of the Japanese army, visited the temporary tomb while on official visit to New York.<sup>104</sup> Likewise, Viceroy Li Hung Chang of China arrived and spent little time outside the Waldorf Hotel except to visit Grant’s burial site. Viceroy Li’s visit was taken to an incredible level. His visit to Riverside Park included a large entourage of twelve carriages escorted by a squad of mounted police.<sup>105</sup>

When the permanent tomb was finally completed in the spring of 1897, New York City began planning the dedication ceremony of the new mausoleum. The Commissioner of Public Works issued permits “to residents and property owners for the erection of observation platforms over the sidewalks, and within the curb line on the route of the parade.” Organizers planned a

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<sup>100</sup> “For the Grant Tomb Fund,” *New York Times*, 22 March 1892.

<sup>101</sup> “Laid by the President,” *New York Times*, 28 April 1892.

<sup>102</sup> “The Fund Nearly Raised,” *New York Times*, 27 May 1892.

<sup>103</sup> “Grant’s Memory Honored,” *New York Times* 28 April 1895.

<sup>104</sup> “Paid Tribute to Grant,” *New York Times* 15 April 1896.

<sup>105</sup> “The Start for the Tomb,” *New York Times* 31 August 1896.



parade. The Grant Monument Association removed Grant's body and placed the remains in the new resting place with a simple ceremony.<sup>106</sup> Thousands came to witness the transfer and "brought their lunches with them, which gave the scene a holiday appearance."<sup>107</sup> Later that month, again on Grant's birthday, the final dedication took place. A parade of nearly 60,000 people and a naval parade of warships from the U.S. and from foreign countries preceded a simple dedication ceremony that nearly one million people attended.<sup>108</sup> President William McKinley, who as Congressman from Ohio had voted to move Grant's remains to Arlington National Cemetery, gave the dedication address. McKinley described his predecessor as "calm and confident as President of a reunited and strengthened Nation which his genius had been instrumental in achieving." McKinley claimed that Grant had been, "Victorious in the work which under Divine Providence he was called upon to do." Finally he surmised, "With Washington and Lincoln, Grant has an exalted place in history and the affections of the people. Today his memory is held in equal esteem by those whom he led to victory and by those who accepted his generous terms of peace."<sup>109</sup>

Horace Porter then addressed the crowd. He complimented the people of New York, for over 90,000 of them donated money to the Grant Monument Association. He claimed the monument did not commemorate Grant. The former General and President was commemorated for what he left behind, "A Nation's prosperity is his true monument: his name will stand immortal when the granite has crumbled and epitaphs have vanished." The monument, argued Porter, reflected Americans who "owed a sacred duty" to the former President. Porter then gifted the monument to the Mayor of New York who gratefully accepted. The entire spectacle

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<sup>106</sup> Ceremonies of Grant Day," *New York Times*, 6 April 1897.

<sup>107</sup> "Gen. Grant's Body Removed," *New York Times*, 18 April 1897.

<sup>108</sup> "Grant Tomb Accepted," *New York Times*, 28 April 1897.

<sup>109</sup> "At Gen. Grant's Tomb, *New York Times*, 28 April 1897.

went extremely well. The only groups that could complain were members of the Congressional Committee who were barred from the lunch tent until President McKinley finished eating and the numerous people who lost money building sidewalk stands. Many were haphazardly built and city inspectors deemed them unsafe. Others simply could not fill the stands along the parade route and “the majority of those who erected stands lost hundreds of dollars.”<sup>110</sup>

Grant’s death represented a new beginning in American memory. In the wake of the Civil War, Northerners blamed Southerners and sought to dominate the symbolism of the war as much as they had the actual war. Grant’s funeral and monument-mausoleum marked the shift in memory that began influencing the rhetoric and politics of reconciliation. As economic and political ills converged in the capitalist crisis beginning in 1873 and lasting well into the 1880s, the traditional meaning of symbols began shifting and Grant’s death and commemoration took on more importance. Commemorators cast the former President as a savior of the Union and a hero of the American nation that, some argued, surpassed even Lincoln’s importance. The factional rivalries kept alive through the symbolism of Brown and Lincoln began to dissolve. A new hope of reconciliation usurped the importance of racial justice. This was a long and arduous resolution that was not completed by Grant’s commemoration. In fact much ill will between Northerners and Southerners remained. But these occasions showed both Northerners and Southerners that they could unify around the ideals of reunion. Until then, this was a contested notion. The overcoming of disunion was necessary for the United States to enlarge its empire.

## Conclusion

Northern memory of the war shifted from radical to reformist to reconciliatory. This was perhaps best summarized by the burial and commemoration of Robert Gould Shaw.

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<sup>110</sup> Ibid.

Confederates buried native Bostonian Colonel Shaw's body among the fallen black soldiers of the Fifty-Forth Massachusetts he commanded at the Battle of Fort Wagner. Many in Boston claimed the rebels purposely buried Shaw, the white officer, with the black subaltern soldiers as a double insult to his race and his rank. When some Boston Brahmins demanded that the Southerners return their lost son to the North, Colonel Shaw's father quelled critics' voices by claiming that the greatest tribute one could offer his son was to leave him buried where he fell among the men he served. Shaw's father invoked a radical memory of his son whose honor his son attained because he was an officer buried with the black soldiers he commanded.

Shaw's father produced an environment of memory that would have pleased Henry David Thoreau. Shaw's body had meaning not from a concrete structure but because it was buried surrounded by black soldiers; it was they who gave Shaw a radical "monument." But the radical nature of Shaw's burial, many in Boston believed, deserved a material commemoration; a site of memory. Just a few days after New Yorkers dedicated the Grant Monument, Bostonians dedicated sculptor Augustus Saint-Gaudens's bronze piece *The Shaw Memorial* on Decoration Day at Boston Common. Although Saint-Gaudens depicted Colonel Robert Gould Shaw marching to the massacre at Fort Wagner alongside the black troops of the Fifty-Fourth Massachusetts regiment, speakers at the dedication did not criticize the failure for the nation to enact emancipation and equality. Booker T. Washington took the opportunity to reiterate his Atlanta speech of accommodation as a policy for blacks to put off civil rights in exchange for access to the white marketplace. According to historian Stephen J. Whitefield, philosopher William James's speech echoed Washington's call for accommodation: "it is nevertheless striking that James ignored the question of race except as a historical datum associated with the Civil War. He failed to draw attention to the price that was already being paid for the sake of at

least one version of *civitas*. . . [that of] subjugation.”<sup>111</sup> Despite the striking juxtaposition of black soldiers marching beside a white officer on horseback, people accentuated Shaw’s sacrifice while the black soldiers remained in the background. Instead of black soldiers giving meaning to Shaw’s memory, Saint-Gaudens’s monument depicted Shaw giving meaning to the black soldiers. This was evidence of how Shaw’s memory became inverted by 1897. It was clear that the nation would remember white men but would the nation remember equally black men who sacrificed for the nation? It seemed the answer would be no.

The commemoration of death in the nineteenth century carried great symbolic and political meaning. This significance only grew after the Civil War. The symbolic meaning of the dead shifted with the play of power and politics. This was true of individuals such as John Brown, Abraham Lincoln, and Ulysses S. Grant. Elite and subaltern individuals commemorated the dead using intimate symbolism full of mourning and meaning. This suggests mourners were not disillusioned. Many did not experience a crisis of belief in religion or the role that providence played in guiding the nation through the massive loss of human life. In fact, many white Protestants in the North saw reconciliation as divine providence designed to produce a prosperous nation. This was true in times of crisis and in times of reconciliation. Commemorating Civil War heroes ultimately became an exercise in justifying white political dominance. Thoreau described it best: Americans had commemorated dead heroes of the Republic “in some measure [to] restore its fertility,” so that a new life of the Nation could “forward her economies” through the guise of imperialism.

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<sup>111</sup> Stephen J. Whitfield, “‘Sacred in History and in Art’: The Shaw Memorial” *The New England Quarterly* 60 (March 1987): 3-27 quote on pages 18-19. Whitfield suggests that others such as William’s brother Henry and William Vaughn Moody noted that Bostonians found indifference in the monument. Indifference on issues of race and morality seemed to continue as a theme in twentieth-century Boston as evidenced by Robert Lowell’s “For the Union Dead” *For the Union Dead* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1965).

### CHAPTER 3—THE BATTLE OF THE BONES: CONTESTED SITES OF MEMORY

Let me hasten to commend to the grateful consideration of this noble, generous people, alike the soldier who has given his strength, the prisoner who has sacrificed his health, the widow who has offered up her husband, the orphan that knows only that its father went out to battle and comes no more forever, and the lonely, distant grave of the martyr, who sleeps alone in a stranger soil, that freedom and peace might come to ours.

—Clara Barton

Who lays a flower on those little lost graves today? / 'Far down by the yellow Rivers / In their oozy graves they rot / Strange vines, and strange flowers grow over them and their far homes know them not.' / 13,000 dead in one prison / 300,000 dead in one war!

—Clara Barton

During the chaos of war, little was done but to quickly bury the dead in designated areas before the next battle. In July 1862, Congress authorized President Abraham Lincoln to purchase land for the burial of fallen soldiers. The new science of embalming developed during the war proved too new and too inaccessible to perform on a massive level. Although the government permitted the embalming of some officers, most soldiers' bodies were not preserved and had to be buried in the locations where they fought and died rather than returned home. In addition, no real bureaucratic infrastructure existed that could reclaim bodies and take them home. The military had no record-keeping system of identifying the dead or their burial location such as individual identification tags for soldiers. Congressional authorization to build new national cemeteries came at a moment when Lincoln was about to articulate a new official meaning of the war. His Gettysburg Address delivered in the autumn of 1863 promised to dedicate the Gettysburg battlefield as a place that, along with many other locations, brought forth a new birth of freedom. The President's speech was delivered, in part, as a promise to the soldiers that the living would remember them as a noble community who furthered the cause of slave emancipation and democratic government. Many citizens took this promise seriously and found themselves supporting the federal government as officials assumed control over Union—

but not Confederate—bodies after the war and supplied grave-markers, superintendents, and finances to keep cemeteries in pristine condition. This sort of early institutionalization of the spaces of the dead continued after the war as northern Congressmen consistently sought the politics of “waving the bloody shirt”; one way to achieve these political ends was the continual expansion of the National Cemetery system that not only endured the era of Reconstruction but became a permanent feature of the American commemorative landscape over the course of the nineteenth century.<sup>1</sup>

Historian Garry Wills has suggested that Lincoln’s words at Gettysburg remade the nation; indeed his Address articulated the solemn rhetoric associated with what historian Jackson Lears has called regenerative militarism.<sup>2</sup> Lears has described this martial regeneration as a rebirth of the United States in which Americans used a military ethos to construct interconnected economic, political, and cultural systems between Reconstruction and the Great War—often producing great development and great anxiety.<sup>3</sup> One way to measure this regenerative militarism is through the cult of personality of militaristic individuals such as John Brown, Abraham Lincoln, and Ulysses S. Grant. The funerals of these three men expressed an abstract understanding of Americanness at the national level. These individuals symbolized a cult of the Civil War dead that was rhetorical and symbolic but also esoteric and distant for most people in the U.S. But what happened to the practical lives of people when the symbols of this Americanness were applied to the practical and symbolic spaces of their local communities? Another way to measure this martial rebirth at the local level by examining what historian

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<sup>1</sup> Edward Steere, “Genesis of American Graves Registration, 1861-1870,” *Military Affairs* 12 (Autumn 1948): 149-161.

<sup>2</sup> Garry Wills, *Lincoln at Gettysburg: The Words that Remade the America* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1993).

<sup>3</sup> Jackson Lears, *Rebirth of a Nation: The Making of Modern America, 1877-1920* (New York: Harper, 2009), 2-5.

George Mosse has described as the cult of the fallen soldier.<sup>4</sup> This cult following was reflected in national cemeteries as veterans who formed the Grand Army of the Republic, family members who had lost loved ones to the war, ladies memorial societies that sought to keep the memory of the dead alive, local communities that profited from the tourism but also sought to protect hallowed ground, superintendents and their staffs who sought new professional careers as caretakers, landscapers, clergymen, schoolteachers, historians, and other interested professionals all could find in the national cemeteries a place that spoke to their individual and collective understanding of sacrifice, liberty, and nationalization. Forgotten in these struggles over representations of the dead were the individuals who most benefitted from the war. African Americans and civil rights moved to the subalternity of these arguments—despite their centrality in the Gettysburg Address—as these national spaces became imbued with the symbols of reconciliation and reunion based on nativism, Protestantism, and capitalism. The collective memories of emancipation and reconciliation coexisted in what Pierre Nora has described as an environment of memory of the Civil War. As official bureaucrats and ordinary citizens, who lived through the war, argued over how best to commemorate the fallen community through the experience of commemoration, the narrative of emancipation was lost and forgotten.

This chapter fits into the work of Lears, Mosse, and Nora as the cult of the fallen soldier underwent an institutionalization of collective memory that folded into the emerging national identity. The first section analyzes Lincoln's promise formed out of the Gettysburg Address and how this promise defined the process of coproducing collective memory. The rest of the chapter examines three cemeteries and how they relate to this promise. Although the U.S. Army carved many of the national cemeteries out of battlefields such as Antietam, Gettysburg, and Cold

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<sup>4</sup> George L. Mosse, *Fallen Soldiers: Reshaping the Memory of the World Wars* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991). George L. Mosse, "National Cemeteries and National Revival: The Cult of the Fallen Soldiers in Germany," *Journal of Contemporary History* 14 (January 1979): 1-20.

Harbor, some of the cemeteries were created in places where no military conflict took place. The second section looks at Andersonville National Cemetery in Andersonville, Georgia, the site of the infamous Confederate prison, and explores tension between official and popular understanding of the war exuded by the controversies surrounding the intentions of federal authorities and local citizens as well as the personal and political pursuits of Secretary of War Edwin Stanton and the self-interested actions of Clara Barton. The third section studies Marietta National Cemetery in Marietta, Georgia where local elites used the cemetery as part of their attempt to influence the city's postwar economic and political agenda. The fourth section examines Arlington National Cemetery in Arlington, Virginia and how, over time, it became the American "Valhalla."

All three of these cemeteries—Andersonville, Marietta, and Arlington—present an opportunity to evaluate the interaction between the federal authorities' attempts to influence collective memory and the responses of local Americans primarily in the South. They mark the contradictory yet overlapping spheres of influence encapsulated through the ideas of secular and religious, sacred and desecrated, northern and southern, blue and gray, black and white, privatized and nationalized, symbolic and political. This chapter examines these three National Cemeteries to explore the way grief and mourning was practiced and politicized in the years just after the Civil War. Grief dominated the consciousness of many who had lost loved ones during the war. Northerners and Southerners brought their grief to these places and hoped that the language of religion and nationalism would heal their sorrow. In explaining their losses, they exacerbated the acrimony that had characterized the relationship between North and South since Lincoln's assassination. These places quickly transformed into locations where the symbolic



Civil War was fought over meanings and intentions because the meanings of these places intersected in quite controversial ways.

### The Democratization of Grief

On the evening of 3 July 1863, Corporal Alfred P. Carpenter of the 1st Minnesota fell asleep after an exhausting battle near Cemetery Hill at the Battle of Gettysburg. Wounded twice at the famous battle, Carpenter had been one of the 252 men who had charged advancing Confederate soldiers trying to take the Union artillery pieces stationed on Little Round Top. It was a costly battle for the thread-bare regiment, which lost over eighty percent of its men but stopped the Rebel advance and set the stage for the Union Army's victory by thwarting General Pickett's and General Pettigew's infamous charge. But on this night Carpenter's fallen comrades remained on the field as the Union troops prepared for another attack that never came. "Hospital attendant[s] must take care of the wounded till darkness closes down about us. Then we go supperless [sic] to sleep, our bed, Mother Earth; our covering, the broad canopy of the starry decked Heavens; the unburied dead sleeping around us." Carpenter rose on Independence Day to help the living of the regiment bury their dead. He took stock of the decimated regiment; "where are the other fourteen hundred whose names are borne upon our rolls? Some are sleeping on nearly all the Eastern battlefields from 1<sup>st</sup> Bull Run to Gettysburg. They have gone to rest; they are sleeping in soldiers' graves, among the unknown and unnumbered dead."<sup>5</sup>

Carpenter's journal entries represented an attempt to explain the high cost his regiment paid not only at Gettysburg but through the entire war. Sleeping with the dead produced, for Carpenter, a community of soldiers—living and dead—who sacrificed in every major battle of

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<sup>5</sup> Alfred P. Carpenter, "Letter on the Battle of Gettysburg," *A Civil War Journal: Company K, 1<sup>st</sup> Minnesota Volunteer Infantry Regiment At Gettysburg July 1-4, 1863*  
[http://www2.smumn.edu/deptpages/~history/civil\\_war/](http://www2.smumn.edu/deptpages/~history/civil_war/) accessed 18 June 2007.

the Civil War. The corporal seemed to have found comfort in that Minnesota soldiers spilled their blood out over the entire landscape of the war. This was not the case for everyone, particularly those at the home front waiting for news of someone dear. Carrie Chamberlin of Westfield, Pennsylvania wrote Captain James Moore in 1866 asking Moore if he had any news of her husband's body. After the war, Quartermaster General C. M. Meigs had placed Moore in charge of dealing with all incoming letters inquiring about the missing or the dead. Isaac Chamberlain had been captured 30 September 1864 and died December 27 as a prisoner at Salisbury, North Carolina. His widow wrote "trusting you have a heart full of sympathy for the afflicted" asking the captain if Isaac's grave could be identified and if she could return his body to her home. In despair she wrote, "The expense will be nothing . . . for nothing in the world can give me the peace and consolation which would be in having his grave where I could know it were taken care of. I visit it in my loneliness."<sup>6</sup> Not knowing whether or not Isaac's body was cared for kept Carrie from mourning and her affliction prevented her from understanding the meaning of her husband's death. Losing a loved one and not mourning a body made the war seem meaningless for many. Chamberlin and certainly thousands of others who never recovered their loved one's body suffered from a chronic unhealed soul.

Grief and mourning rituals began to change as new technology and the privatization of funeral rituals forced people to abandon traditional practices of communal mourning. People had to address their grief through individualism and were losing the comfort of the community—of local friends, neighbors and even enemies whose function was to comfort the bereaved. This constituted a crisis of the Good Death. These new rituals did not mean necessarily that people turned away from religion; in fact, people often turned to religious explanations of divine

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<sup>6</sup> Letter Carrie Chamberlin to James Moore, NA, RG 92, Office of the Quartermaster General, Letters Received Relating to Cemeteries, 1873-82, Box 1.

providence to help them come to terms with their grief in this new world of individualized and privatized mourning. But they also explained their loss through the language of nationalism. This nationalization—competition and cooperation between the religious and nationalist spheres—occurred at the same moment as the democratization of memory made the individual soldier become at least as important to explaining the war as the policies of President Lincoln or the strategy of General Grant. This produced a tension between the need for individual and democratic forms of grief and memory and the need of the growing government bureaucracy to produce new national mourning traditions.

The speech, of which Lincoln hand-wrote while on the train from Washington, D.C. to Gettysburg Pennsylvania, served Lincoln's political agenda. As a wartime speech, the Commander-in-Chief harnessed the battlefield sacrifices to public opinion and the need for his administration to continue persecuting the war. But Lincoln's speech also signaled a reorganization of the relationship between government and the people. Understanding grief as a fundamental human need and placing it in the context of nationalization was one of the most enduring legacies of Lincoln's Gettysburg Address.<sup>7</sup> Although Lincoln was not an evangelical Christian, historian Mark Shantz suggests that the language of the Gettysburg Address "culled the language of theology," especially Lincoln's utterance of a "new birth of freedom."<sup>8</sup> His speech helped reinvigorate the comfortable notions of the eroding Protestant Good Death by stripping it of its religious content and applying it to the politics of nationalization. Historian Garry Wills claims that Lincoln crafted his speech out of a long democratic tradition of Greek funeral eulogies that included Pericles's tribute to the Athenian dead from the Peloponnesian War. But Lincoln's Address, he contends, also dramatically shifted the emphasis of American

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<sup>7</sup> Wills, *Lincoln at Gettysburg*, 37-8.

<sup>8</sup> Mark S. Shantz, *Awaiting the Heavenly Country: The Civil War and America's Culture of Death* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2008), 92.

identity away from the Constitution and toward the Declaration of Independence. “The Gettysburg Address,” he suggests, “had become an authoritative expression of the American spirit—as authoritative as the Declaration itself, and perhaps even more influential, since it determines how we read the Declaration.”<sup>9</sup> Lincoln’s Gettysburg Address voiced the public yearning to remember the dead who fought for the noble causes of slave emancipation and unification of the United States.<sup>10</sup>

But the enduring legacy of reinterpreting the Good Death was not Lincoln’s immediate goal at the Gettysburg cemetery. The Gettysburg Address initially accomplished specific political goals. One of these was to shore up the eroding support of abolitionists and radical Republicans who had begun to criticize Lincoln’s handling the war. Lincoln notoriously acted slowly in employing emancipatory rhetoric in the first few years of the war. His refusal to allow black freedmen to enlist brought significant criticism from abolitionists like Frederick Douglass. But Lincoln also used the Gettysburg Address as a foreign policy statement to counter the Confederacy’s diplomatic courting of Great Britain. The Confederacy’s cotton culture was intricately tied to the British textile industry and Confederate leaders hoped to exploit that

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<sup>9</sup> Wills, *Lincoln at Gettysburg*, 146-7; Eric Foner, *Who Owns History?: Rethinking the Past in a Changing World* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2003), 172. Foner claims that the Constitution endorsed slavery on three different levels: 1) the three-fifths compromise which bolstered Southern representation in the House of Representatives 2) the endorsement of the international slave trade for twenty years, and 3) the requirement to return fugitive slaves to their owners. Wills, *Lincoln at Gettysburg*, 37-8. Wills places the Gettysburg Address in the tradition of ancient Greek funeral oratory and the elite intellectual politics of the Antebellum period without considering popular and working class voices who were speaking of similar intellectual ideas. Linda Selzer, “Historicizing Lincoln: Garry Wills and the Canonization of the ‘Gettysburg Address,’” *Rhetoric Review* 16 (Autumn 1997): 128. Professor of English Linda Selzer likewise contends that Lincoln’s speech dramatically reshaped American legal and cultural thought by making official ideas expressed by non-elites and subaltern people. She reminds, “Indeed, Lincoln’s address might be best understood as wedding these two [elite and popular] great traditions—one of them, as we have seen, with a long history of *popular* veneration for the Declaration as America’s original ‘founding’ text.”

<sup>10</sup> Wills, *Lincoln at Gettysburg*; Selzer, “Historicizing Lincoln, 120-137. Selzer reminds us that the ideas of the Gettysburg Address were very much a part of national culture well before Lincoln uttered them. For the purposes of this dissertation, it is important to realize that Lincoln was not the originator of the ideas in the Address but the moment when these ideas became recognized by what John Bodnar has described as official memory. John Bodnar, *Remaking America: Public Memory, Commemoration, and Patriotism in the Twentieth Century* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1993).

connection to bring Britain into the war as an ally. Lincoln hoped to block this potential alliance and the Gettysburg Address posed a diplomatic obstruction. Echoing Lincoln's earlier Emancipation Proclamation, he made the war specifically about a "new birth of freedom." Britain would find it nearly impossible to participate in a war for the right of saving the institution of slavery when abolitionists in Britain had already eliminated slavery over a quarter-century earlier. Thus politics and race intersected with Lincoln's delivery of the speech.

Certainly the address spoke to Lincoln's domestic and foreign political agendas and it commemorated the Declaration of Independence. But it also venerated the soldiers who fought and died at Gettysburg and elsewhere. Lincoln used the ideals of the Declaration to justify emancipation as the cause of war. In a moment of national crisis, Lincoln reached for the Revolutionary ideals of liberty and self-government and attached them to the sacrifice of the dead, not just re-stating the ideals but obliging the living to honor the dead by recommitting themselves to the ideals of "a new birth of freedom." Although Lincoln's earlier Emancipation Proclamation first attempted to glean from the war a noble cause, it could not fully accomplish what the dead soldiers at Gettysburg could. Their sacrifice gave the war a tangible political meaning and the President charged the state with the obligation to remember those who paid the final sacrifice. Remembering the dead gave new meaning and a sense of urgency to the idea that self-government meant the abolition of slavery. This produced a *milieu de memoire* of emancipation and liberty because all who visited Gettysburg, all whose loved ones died, all who were never able to reclaim their loved ones' dead bodies could remember the war as an exercise—and experience—of emancipation. Lincoln thus took the language of American radicalism constructed at the edges of American societies and moved it to the center of the American political tradition.

This was the beginning of a new tradition and constituted what can be described as Lincoln's promise, a promise to the dead and a promise for the living. This promise contained three important provisions. Firstly, Lincoln's speech transformed Gettysburg from a battlefield to a sacred space that venerated the ideals of the bureaucratic Nation by reshaping the relationship between the state and the citizenry.<sup>11</sup> By placing the burden of memory on American citizens to remember the sacrifice of the community of fallen soldiers Lincoln secondly expressed a living memory; this marked a considerable transition in American collective memory and the meaning of the Civil War. He burdened the nation-state and the citizens to a project of memory. The President condensed feelings of patriotism, glory, and liberty onto the actual sacrifice of soldiers and used their corpses thirdly as a symbolic community to explain the political need to end slavery by defeating the Confederacy. Hundreds of thousands of fallen soldiers became symbols that condensed feelings of democracy, nationalism, and liberty into politics of modern warfare.<sup>12</sup> In one speech, Lincoln had articulated a living national memory of the United States that up to then had been absent in American identity; the nation-state and the world would remember "the brave men, living and dead" who fought for the principles of liberty. The Gettysburg Address democratized the sanctification process by claiming that the thousands who died there—not founders and framers, generals and statesmen, sages and poets—produced sacred space; it commemorated the best that American

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<sup>11</sup> Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1991); Andy Merrifield, "Henri Lefebvre: A Socialist in Space" in *Thinking Space*, ed. Mike Crang and Nigel Thrift (London: Routledge, 2000), 167-182; Philip Sheldrake, *Spaces for the Sacred: Place, Memory, and Identity* (Baltimore, MD: The John Hopkins University Press, 2001.); Belden Lane, *Landscapes of the Sacred: Geography and Narrative in American Spirituality* (Baltimore, MD: The John Hopkins University Press, 2002); Kenneth Foote, *Shadowed Ground: America's Landscapes of Violence and Tragedy* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2003). Sheldrake, Lane, and Foote give examples of spaces made sacred by Christianity (and for Foote) tragedy. These authors suggest that these spaces ground people to a place of sacredness. Places where humans can practice ancestor worship such as cemeteries would fit into their definition of a sacred landscape. Steere, "Genesis of American Graves Registration," 149-161.

<sup>12</sup> For a discussion on condensation symbols see Murray Edelman, *The Symbolic Uses of Politics* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1964); for a discussion connecting dead soldiers to the democratization and nationalization of politics and culture see Mosse, *Fallen Soldiers* and Faust, *This Republic of Suffering*.

democracy had to offer to modern civilization. Thus Lincoln used the deaths at Gettysburg to symbolically defeat the Confederacy, slavery, and the Jeffersonian Agrarianism that privileged states' rights over federalism.

While some, like Carrie Chamberlin, could not find solace in this sort of commemoration, others found in this process of nationalization the ability to grieve despite the absence of a body. Some were able to speak of a meaningful death from the loss of their loved one knowing that he rested in a national cemetery. William Garrard of Beaver County, Pennsylvania wrote to Captain Moore on 19 October 1865. Garrard had seen Moore's report in the local paper in regards to "the interment of our Brave Patriot Boys [sic] who fill martyr's graves at Andersonville, Geo." His son, William W. Garrard, was taken prisoner at Chattanooga on 20 November 1863 and later moved to Andersonville where he died in the fall of 1864. Garrard's son was a member of the Sixth Ohio Volunteer Infantry. "He was my only son, a noble boy but I am reconciled to any loss for my Glorious Country's causes . . . especially if he had been so fortunate to get such a Grave with his Bro [ther] Martyrs as you have given them." He continued, "It will be a place where I and many a Parent can drop a tear . . . and pray . . . for my Country's welfare."<sup>13</sup> Garrard's assuredness that his son's grave marked his son's bravery suggests that he retained his belief in a benevolent nation-state even if it meant his son had to pay the ultimate sacrifice. Garrard's ability to grieve for his son underscored what the Gettysburg Address codified on the national level through the realignment of the individual's relationship to the state.

Historian David Sloane suggests that the U.S. government took Lincoln's promise seriously in the years after the war. He claims, "The U.S. government's decision immediately after the war to reinter vast numbers of soldiers who died on battlefields or in hospitals was an

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<sup>13</sup> Letter William Garrard to James Moore, NA, RG 92, Office of the Quartermaster General, Letters Received Relating to Cemeteries, 1873-82, Box 1.

original act of a democratic government.”<sup>14</sup> By 1870 the army successfully recovered almost three hundred thousand union soldiers although only fifty to sixty percent of the dead could be identified.<sup>15</sup> No doubt this was more democratic than previous burial traditions, but this was the democracy of Anglo-Saxonism and Protestantism. The President promised at Gettysburg to commemorate the sacrifice of soldiers who fought for “a new birth of freedom” not necessarily equality.<sup>16</sup> Whites could extend emancipation to slaves but extending equality to black freedmen was another story. Thus although the Gettysburg Address breathed new life into the old traditions of the Good Death and created a new Lincolnian tradition based on a national promise of commemoration, from the very utterance of Lincoln’s speech, a controversy of memory arose out of the rhetoric of commemoration. This rhetoric reflected the politics of the Reconstruction era. The Lincolnian tradition created a realm of memory for Americans to contemplate and commemorate emancipation. The federal government, seeking to institutionalize the realization of black liberty passed several pieces of legislation: the Thirteenth Amendment in 1865, the Civil Rights Act of 1866, the Fourteenth Amendment in 1868, the Fifteenth Amendment in 1870 and the Civil Rights Act of 1875 in response to the numerous state legislations that repeatedly restricted equal rights to African Americans, such as the black codes in Mississippi and later the Mississippi Plan that restricted blacks’ voting rights. Eventually, the failed Freedmen’s Bureau and land redistribution, Jim Crow segregation, and state laws limiting the power of federal legislation coupled with growing northern ambivalence to Reconstruction policies helped shift commemorative traditions away from emancipation as the dominant environment of collective memory.

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<sup>14</sup> Sloane, *The Last Great Necessity*, 114.

<sup>15</sup> Steere, “Genesis of American Graves Registration.”

<sup>16</sup> Barry Schwartz, “Collective Memory: How Abraham Lincoln became a Symbol of Racial Equality,” *Sociological Quarterly* 38 (1998): 469-496; Martin Tullai, “Abraham Lincoln: Racist, Bigot, or Misunderstood?” *Lincoln Herald* 103 (2001): 85-92.



## The Politics of a National Way of Death

Immediately after the Civil War the many graves of the Union dead at Fort Sumter near Andersonville, Georgia formed a most potent national cemetery. Filled with the bodies of prisoners of war, it even overshadowed the Gettysburg battlefield cemetery and Arlington National Cemetery. The politics of memory surrounding the prison camp, which operated from February 1864 to May 1865, produced seething bitterness and a contested collective memory of the nation. The Andersonville scandal polarized opinions because of its origins as much its brutal nature. At the closing stages of the war, Union General Ulysses S. Grant and Secretary of War Edwin M. Stanton suspended the prisoner transfer system that had previously returned captured soldiers back to their homes. With the suspension of the prisoner exchange cartel in place, both northern and southern armies accumulated prisoners beyond their capacity to adequately care for. Both the Union and the Confederacy created numerous temporary prisons designed to alleviate overcrowding in established prisons. Fort Sumter, outside of Andersonville, Georgia, became one of these makeshift prisons due to its remote location and proximity to the railroad line. Originally organized to hold no more than 10,000 Union prisoners, the Confederates quickly expanded the original sixteen acres to just over twenty-six acres. At the height of its operation, the detention center included approximately 32,000 prisoners making it larger than most major southern cities.

The outdoor prison consisted of a perimeter of fifteen-feet high pikes buried into the ground enclosed by a second similarly built boundary. Inside the first border, there existed a so-called "deadline" near the inner boundary in which Confederate guards prevented escape by shooting prisoners who crossed the line, touched it, or approached it too closely. A single stream of water bisected the prison in which the prisoners drank, bathed, and relieved themselves. As

the overcrowding became extreme, the refuse of 30,000 men polluted the only source of drinking water and eventually stopped the natural flow of the stream. With water backed up and no alternative source for water, disease spread among the prisoners. On top of this, the camp had no shelter. Some inmates came with tents while others dug holes in the ground to escape Georgia's extreme heat in summer and freezing temperatures in winter. Rainstorms would turn the red clay of the camp into a virtual mud pit. Prisoners got the worst quality food and very little of it; most of what little the Confederacy produced went to southern civilians and soldiers.

The human toll exacted by the conditions at Andersonville prison was almost 13,000 dead in a mere fourteen months of operation. As the captives died, climaxing at a rate of over 100 per day, their captors took the corpses out of the stockade and buried them shoulder to shoulder in long trenches in a nearby wooded area. The prison guards selected a prisoner from Connecticut, Dorrence Atwater, to keep records of the dead. Atwater joined the Union army in August 1861 and was captured near Gettysburg on 6 July 1863. He went to Staunton, Virginia and then to Libby prison near Richmond, Virginia and then on to Bell Isle prison near Richmond. On 1 March 1864, Atwater and 400 other federal prisoners arrived by train at Andersonville. He stayed in the stockade for two months before moving into the hospital due to chronic diarrhea. On 15 June, he recovered and received parole in exchange for becoming a clerk in the surgery documenting prisoner deaths. As Atwater began documenting the names of the dead, he suspected that the prison authorities were purposely not keeping an accurate count of the deceased. He took it upon himself to make a second list of the prisoner dead. Next to the names on his list he matched the corresponding number to the gravesite of the individual soldier so that, in the future, one would be able to connect the name of the soldier to his appropriate grave. When General Sherman took Atlanta in 1864, the Confederate army relocated many of the

prisoners. But once Sherman began his march to the sea, most of the prisoners were returned to Andersonville where they stayed until the spring of 1865, when both governments agreed to reopen the prisoner exchange cartel and most of the prisoners were released. Atwater carried out his exercise until he was released with other soldiers in the closing moments of the war; he smuggled his list back north underneath his coat. Eventually the Union Army took control of Andersonville in May 1865. When Atwater arrived home, he notified the War Department about his death record. In an attempt to secure control of the list, the Adjutant General's office first threatened to confiscate it but then eventually agreed to pay three hundred dollars and give Atwater a clerkship in exchange for permission to copy the roll. Once the new copy was complete, the War Department promised to return the list to Atwater. Instead officials kept the record despite Atwater's continual protest.

Meanwhile, in early 1865, Clara Barton, the famous nurse and future founder of the American Red Cross in America sought and received President Abraham Lincoln's sanction to begin the long arduous search for missing soldiers whose whereabouts were unknown. While a nurse serving in the hospitals of the front line, Barton had become very influential and well-known to soldiers and their families. People from around the country would write to Barton asking her if she had any knowledge concerning their lost loved one. In many cases, Barton used her connections to search for information about the missing. As more and more letters seeking information about missing soldiers came in—over one hundred per day—Barton became overwhelmed. With the help of her Senator, Henry Wilson, who also served as chairman of the Committee on Military Affairs, she sought and gained approval from the President to organize the Office of Correspondence with Friends of the Missing Men of the U.S. Army in March 1865 and the War Department recognized this organization two months later. Barton's new office,

funded without government money but solely from her own inheritance, performed an important task. As letters continued to flow in, Barton compiled lists of missing men and then paid to have them posted in Northern post offices and newspapers.

She continued this work until she came into contact with Atwater and his list. Barton lobbied the Secretary of the War Department, Edwin M. Stanton, to sponsor a trip to Andersonville to do the work of identifying the nameless dead in the cemetery. Stanton agreed and ordered Assistant Quartermaster General, Captain James A. Moore, to execute the building of the cemetery and the identifying of the dead. Stanton allowed Barton to accompany Moore's expedition that ran in July and August 1865. Barton, in turn, requested that Atwater also go with the convoy but the Secretary never returned Atwater's death record. Captain Moore, however, had in his possession an inaccurate death record captured from the Confederate government. When Atwater pointed out that his record was more complete, Moore sent for Atwater's original list. Thus when the expedition went to Andersonville, Atwater had regained control over the Confederate list and his own expanded list through the duration of the mission.

Afterwards, Atwater, kept his copy. When the War Department demanded the return of the list, Atwater refused. War Department officials accused Atwater of engaging in profiteering by attempting to publish the list; Atwater was arrested, court-martialed, and imprisoned in the Old Capital Prison and then transferred to Auburn Prison in New York for 18 months of hard labor. According to historian Stephen Oates, this infuriated Barton. The Andersonville death roll was as important to her as it was to Atwater because it symbolized her legitimacy as a woman working for the federal government at a time when few women were in a position to operate in the public sphere in such an official capacity. In gaining permission from President Lincoln to search for missing soldiers, Barton embarked on a mission that overlapped with the

Quartermaster General under the War Department. In fact, at a place like Andersonville, it ended up placing Barton, who was responsible for documenting missing soldiers, in direct competition with Captain Moore, who was in charge of recovering bodies and burying the dead. To make matters worse, she was running out of money. She paid the costs of producing the missing soldiers' lists out of her own pocket, which left her financially strapped. If her missing soldiers work proved valuable, perhaps she could receive government reimbursement. She believed her most important work was identifying the Andersonville dead.<sup>17</sup>

Captain Moore, however, stood in her way. According to Oates, Barton believed that Moore "had accused and imprisoned Atwater as a way of hurting Clara, of deprecating her role at Andersonville, so that Moore could claim all the credit for the expedition and thereby win a promotion."<sup>18</sup> Indeed, Moore never acknowledged Barton's participation in his official report to the Secretary of War and he later testified against Barton. In a letter to Senator Wilson, she wrote, that "they [Moore et. al.] 'did not know what I went for, that they didn't see any object, that they had understood that I had the permission of the Secretary of War to go and search for names of Missing Soldiers,' but didn't know that even this were so."<sup>19</sup> Infuriated, she continued, "Why the jealousy of a little worthless petty officer should be allowed to trample me speechless in the dust, I cannot understand."<sup>20</sup>

Barton's personal agenda conflicted with Moore's. But her seeking legitimacy through association with the Andersonville dead also conflicted with the aims of Secretary of War Edwin Stanton and the Radical Republicans. According to historian Charles W. Sanders, Jr., Radical

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<sup>17</sup> Stephen B. Oates, *A Woman of Valor: Clara Barton and the Civil War* (New York: The Free Press, 1994), 303-4, 317, 340.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 343.

<sup>19</sup> Clara Barton to Senator Henry Wilson, 27 October 1865, LOC, Clara Barton Papers, Reel 63, General Correspondence, Wilson, Henry January 1863-April 1867.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*

Republicans, as early as 1862, attempted to dominate the “meaning” of postwar reconstruction using Confederate officers as symbols. This Radical Republican agenda—significantly different than Lincoln’s—articulated a strategic political disenfranchisement of Confederates and a simultaneous political enfranchisement for African Americans. They continued to pursue this agenda after the war and Secretary Stanton worked closely with them especially after Lincoln’s assassination. In fact, radicals came to Stanton’s aid by impeaching President Andrew Johnson when he violated the Tenure Act by attempting to fire Stanton without Congressional approval. Thus, with support of the Radical Republicans, Stanton hoped to depict the Andersonville debacle as part and parcel of the Confederate leadership’s abuse of power that begun with Secession. Sanders states that the radicals’ “message was clear: men who would order the desecration of Union dead and the murder of Union prisoners were completely undeserving of positions of leadership in a reconstructed South.”<sup>21</sup>

The controversy over Andersonville helped frame the struggle over memory and politics in which no precedent had been established. As the U.S. government gained control over the places of the dead, officials attempted to regulate how the fallen community was commemorated. For Stanton, the Andersonville dead focused politicians and the public to fault Confederate leaders. This strategy of faulting Confederates—rather than Southerners—helped isolate experienced Confederate politicians and helped prevent their reelection to postwar political positions. It would also speed up the incorporation of Southerners into the political system without threatening the gains that Republicans had made in the South. From the very early stages of Reconstruction Stanton operated the levers of the nation-state to regulate the memory of the war and to further his political agenda.

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<sup>21</sup> Charles W. Sanders, Jr., *While in the Hands of the Enemy: Military Prisons of the Civil War* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2005), 240.

But using the dead to pursue a political agenda was not an easy task and John Wilkes Booth's assassination of President Lincoln made it more difficult. Booth was a Southerner who sympathized with the Confederacy. He was not a Confederate political or military leader. Booth's theatrical bravado and freelance status, however, undermined the War Department's thesis that only Confederate leaders and not southern people were the problem; Northerners began turning their anger against all Southerners in the wake of Lincoln's death. Underneath the rising northern anger, citizens in the North and the South contemplated massive death in an environment of disaggregating yet overlapping religious and secular spheres; people experimented with new traditions of mourning that reconceptualized the role of divine providence and stressed the embodied Nation over the ethereal Republic. The political consequences of publishing the Andersonville death list could not be fully anticipated. In the milieu of what Northerners constructed as a malfeasance of Southern, and not just Confederate, culture, publishing Atwater's list might be construed by the public as another example of Southern carnage. This would exacerbate the hard feelings some already held against Southerners and make it more difficult for the Radical Republicans and Stanton to pursue their political objectives. The list of the dead thus became a contested site of memory in the bureaucratic representation of memory. Barton and Atwater inadvertently stood in the path of Stanton because they had access to the grief of thousands of families and they were highly motivated to unleash that grief.

Stanton had his own personal and legal motivations beyond the political agenda of the Radical Republicans from keeping the death list out of the public realm. He was, in part, responsible for the Andersonville catastrophe. During the war, the initial prisoner exchange cartel did not begin until 1862. Lincoln did not originally allow for this cartel because he tried to

avoid recognizing the Confederacy as a legitimate state. But overflowing prisons persuaded Lincoln to agree to exchanges, which alleviated the stockades for both sides. Stanton placed General William C. Hoffman in charge of Northern prisons and the General insisted that federal penitentiaries were superior to Southern prisons and that guards treated the Southern prisoners with decency. To prove this, Hoffman and Stanton relied on a heavily flawed 1864 report from the U.S. Sanitary Commission.<sup>22</sup> The reality was that Union stockades were just as bad as Southern ones and Stanton, with Hoffman's aid, was ruthless when dealing with rebel prisoners. For example, after Confederates, under Nathan Bedford Forrest, massacred surrendered black soldiers at Fort Pillow, Tennessee, Stanton implemented a series of retaliations against rebel soldiers held in Northern prisons. He continued his retaliation policy throughout the war, reducing food rations, medicine, and clothing allowances and causing many to suffer needlessly.<sup>23</sup>

When Stanton closed the exchange cartel, prison populations swelled forcing the South to construct hastily many more prisons including Andersonville. This policy, as General Ulysses S. Grant and Stanton argued, indeed prevented Southern parolees from reenlisting in the rebel armies. But it also doomed thousands of Union soldiers. Stanton received intense criticism for this course of action. The Secretary of War tried to divert attention away from his role in this strategy when, replying to an 1865 congressional inquiry, he claimed that Grant, not he, had directed and oversaw the ban on prisoner exchange. Although technically correct, "the ultimate control of Union prisoner-of-war policy had always rested with Stanton."<sup>24</sup> Although the Secretary's policy had a military rationale, it contributed to the deaths of many prisoners on both sides. When the prisoner exchange program began again near the end of the war, Northern

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 248-93

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 240-65, 311.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 273.



parolees made it back to their homes and began telling people about the atrocities of Andersonville. As the war ended, the word “Andersonville” struck fear in the hearts of tens of thousands of families who had not yet heard of their loved one’s status.

This posed a difficult problem for Stanton. As condensational symbols, the names of soldiers would have brought multiple interpretations from people struggling to find meaning in the futile deaths of Andersonville prisoners. Americans might have begun questioning not only the catastrophic conditions at the prison but also the War Department’s direct and indirect role in the tragedy through the politics of the prisoner exchange cartel. If Americans implicated the federal government in the 13,000 deaths at Andersonville, it might become vulnerable to the splintering of the ideological and representational meaning that Lincoln so effectively produced with his Gettysburg Address. This would put the government in a similar position to that of the church when it came to constructing meaning out of dead bodies and would weaken the Radical Republicans’ ability to manage Reconstruction. It certainly was in Stanton’s interest to keep the death list from the public as well as to keep secret the true conditions of Northern prisons.

The intersection of politics and memory crossed each other in May 1865 when federal troops in Georgia captured both Jefferson Davis, the President of the Confederate States of America, and the Swiss-born Andersonville Commandant Henry Wirz. The government placed Wirz on trial in August. This trial was a rehearsal for the eventual prosecution of Davis. They provided the opportunity for Stanton and the Radical Republicans to blame the Civil War, and prison abuses, on a handful of Confederate leaders rather than white Southerners as a whole. Prosecutors laid out the details of the devastating environment of the prison. Yet the War Department neither entered the death record as evidence nor called Barton and Atwater as witnesses during Wirz’s trial. To make sure the Andersonville death list would not be used, the

War Department leaked false stories to Washington papers claiming that Atwater had stolen the list. Many newspaper editors began calling Atwater a criminal and a thief. One government source claimed that Atwater had been imprisoned for stealing the death registry. The editor suggested, "It is thought by some that if the records were stolen instead of lost, it was for the purpose of preventing them being used as evidence against Wirz, the keeper of the Andersonville prison, now being tried by court martial here."<sup>25</sup> Meanwhile, the failure to include Barton among the witnesses in the trial undermined her authority as the civilian chiefly responsible for identifying missing soldiers. After learning that she would not testify at Wirz's trial, she claimed, "still studied measures to have them, and myself ignored, were taken, by those whose object and interest it is, to bury me, so far as possible, in all connection with the Expedition."<sup>26</sup> In any case, the former commandant was found guilty on 6 November and was executed on 10 November.

During this entire process, the War Department continually pushed Barton and Atwater to the periphery as Stanton tried to gain more control over the fractured postwar politics of memory. The War Department publicized that Captain Moore had access to the Andersonville death rolls. Once publicized, people searching for lost loved ones began sending their letters to Moore instead of Barton, completely negating her role.<sup>27</sup> Newly promoted to head of the government's Burial Board, Colonel Moore refused to answer individual letters concerning Andersonville but claimed that the entire list would be forthcoming around 1 October 1865.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> "Records Missing," LOC, Clara Barton Papers, Reel 63, Subject File Civil War, Atwater, Dorrence Newspaper Clippings, 1865-1905.

<sup>26</sup> Clara Barton to Senator Henry Wilson, 27 October 1865.

<sup>27</sup> *Daily Chronicle*, 14 September 1865, LOC, Clara Barton Papers, Reel 63, Subject File Civil War, Atwater, Dorrence Newspaper Clippings, 1865-1905.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

But it never came and Northerners became increasingly angry over the stories they heard from paroled Andersonville survivors.

While Stanton attempted to direct Northern anger against Wirz and Davis as war criminals, Barton was losing her legitimacy in the public domain.<sup>29</sup> She needed to publish the Andersonville death roll to regain it. Atwater, her ally, had hidden the original list in a secret location before he had been arrested. Now he was in jail and so Barton had appealed to numerous authorities to get him pardoned, including personally asking Secretary Stanton. When Stanton refused, Senator Wilson convinced President Andrew Johnson, on behalf of Barton, to look into the affair. Johnson referred the matter to a military council who sent the matter back to the President with the recommendation that the Executive not pardon Atwater. Despite initially denying Atwater's specific pardon, President Johnson later issued a general pardon in which all those court-martialed, with the exception of those court-martialed for murder, be released from prison. This general order allowed Atwater to slip past bureaucratic controls without Secretary Stanton or Captain Moore knowing of his release.

With Atwater free, Barton retaliated against her enemies. On Christmas 1865, Barton wrote a letter to Senator Wilson concerning Colonel Moore. She had a pre-published copy of the January 1866 *Atlantic Monthly* in which appeared an article documenting the Wilderness campaign and the burial parties afterwards. The article accused them of deliberate negligence; instead of burying all the bodies as they claimed to have done, they left corpses exposed in the nearby woods because the dead were from North Carolina. Moore's official report to the Secretary of War, however, suggested he had faithfully done his job. He detailed his overseeing of the burials at the Wilderness and Spotsylvania. He reported, "Careful search was made over the above-mentioned battle-fields, and the remains of all the soldiers, both Union and rebel,

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<sup>29</sup> Sanders, *While in the Hands of the Enemy*, 240-65.

interred, and headboards, with name, rank, and regiment, placed at each grave.” He went further, arguing that “The improvement of the national cemeteries has been a source of great gratification to all who visit them, and entirely dissipate the prevailing opinion of those living remote from Washington, that soldiers were irreverently or carelessly buried.”<sup>30</sup> Barton disagreed. After asking Wilson, who was chairman of the Senate Committee on Military Affairs to read the article, Barton noted, “This was Capt. Moore’s work.”<sup>31</sup> In her letter to Wilson, she continued, “The facts which could be stated regarding the work done, and not done, there, [Andersonville] would constitute a far worse commentary upon Capt. Moore than this article upon ‘The Wilderness.’” She added, “The knowledge of these shocking facts, and the holding of them quiet during the last four months has nearly cost me my reason. What an insult to the people! What wanton desecration of the dead!”<sup>32</sup> She asked Senator Wilson to see to it that Moore was denied the promotion he was seeking as Head of the government’s Burial Board.

Barton also requested that the Senator use his committee to investigate the War Department’s handling of the dead. She warned Wilson that “These things will be better understood two months hence, and the spirit of the people will cry out against the continuance of such outrages upon decency and humanity.” She continued, “Public opinion will yet rake this business fore and aft, for by the martyred souls of our Country’s dead these things cannot sleep or die.”<sup>33</sup> Barton was alluding to her press campaign to expose the mishandling of the dead. In a letter to her sister, Barton tipped her secret strategy. As far as the Secretary of War erroneously knew, Atwater remained in Auburn prison. Barton counseled Atwater to remain in hiding and

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<sup>30</sup> Captain James A. Moore, “No. 48—Extract from annual report of Captain J. M. Moore, Assistant Quartermaster, United States Army, for the year ending June 30, 1865, 258 in LOC, Clara Barton Papers, Reel 63, Subject File Civil War, Andersonville Prison Printed Matter, 1865-1912.

<sup>31</sup> Clara Barton to Senator Henry Wilson 25 December 1865, LOC, Clara Barton Papers, Reel 63, General Correspondence, Wilson, Henry January 1863-April 1867.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

work on publishing his list. She confided to her sister, “And now I will whisper in your private ear what is up, but not a word must come back here till after, as my nearest friends here don’t know a word of my mischief?” She “telegraphed him [Atwater] to not come near Washington, nor say a word but play possum, act dead.” She suggested that he present his list to the New York newspapers: “he could not afford to sell it, but to give it to the country, and give the lie to their little shameful suspicions that he wanted to make money out of it.” She insisted on secrecy because, “If the War Dept. or Moore had the least idea that any such thing was in the wind, they would bring it out [the government’s copied list from Atwater’s records] in two days, but the thing has been managed so quietly.” She hoped that once the *New York Times* published the roll, Congress would thank Atwater, reprimand the War Department, give Atwater an honorable discharge and reward him for his services and lost time in prison and her for her work documenting missing men at Andersonville. She took control of this entire effort, confessing that “I couldn’t trust my partner’s cards, and I have taken up this hand and am playing it alone, and if there is any luck in my hand I shall win for I have played it well, and I know it has been closely watched.” Thus Barton stole Atwater’s court martial transcripts and gave it to Senator Ira Harris, who was chairman of the Committee on Private Land Claims, for his inspection, hired a lawyer to construct Atwater’s public persona, and even refused to leave Washington to visit her sister in Massachusetts for fear that her visit would tip-off the War Department to Atwater’s release from prison.<sup>34</sup>

As a lead-up to the climax of releasing the death list, Barton organized a press campaign by a group of New England and New York newspaper editors depicting Atwater not as a criminal but as a wronged American hero. One editorial in a Boston newspaper claimed that

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<sup>34</sup> Clara Barton to her sister, 29 December 1865, LOC, Clara Barton Papers, Reel 63, Subject File, Civil War, Atwater, Dorrence, Miscellany, 1865-68 and undated.

Colonel Moore should be “crushed” and that “the gallant boy . . . hourly risked his life that the loyal people at home might know the sad truth.” This sham seemed a travesty to the writer, especially when he considered that:

Jeff. Davis is fed well, has bulletins issued about his health, a book published to enlist and manufacture sympathy, and will in all probability, be finally set free. The contrast is great. Let the press demand justice for both—the outraged loyal volunteer and the petted traitor chief.<sup>35</sup>

Chase G. Halpine, editor of *The New York Citizen* headlined the controversy: “Greatest Outrage of the War. Case of Young Atwater. A Soldier Sent to State Prison for Devotion to his Dead Comrades.”<sup>36</sup>

*The Independent* in New York accused Washington of falsely claiming Atwater was in league with his Confederate captor:

Such paragraphs as these were daily thrown into the Washington papers during the month of September, 1865, and his intentions in keeping the roll vilified. He was charged with complicity with rebels, with endeavoring to screen from justice that fiend in human shape, “Wirz,” who has since paid the penalty of his crimes by death upon the gallows.

The paper blamed these false reports on the War Department, specifically mentioning Moore who continually promised and failed to give the public access to the death record. The article further accused the War Department of “incarcerating him in a state-prison, where, doubtless, it was intended to smother his cry for help from the waiting ears of the world, as surely as did the rebel guard who surrounded him in ‘Andersonville.’<sup>37</sup> The *Daily Union and Advertiser* in Rochester, New York claimed this type of behavior had been typical of the War Department.

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<sup>35</sup> R. J. H., LOC, Clara Barton Papers, Reel 63, Subject File, Civil War, Atwater, Dorrence, Newspaper Clippings, 1865-1905.

<sup>36</sup> Chase G. Halpine, “Greatest Outrage of the War,” *The New York Citizen*, LOC, Clara Barton Papers, Reel 63, Subject File, Civil War, Atwater, Dorrence, Newspaper Clippings, 1865-1905; Stephen B. Oates, *A Woman of Valor*, 362-366.

<sup>37</sup> “The Dead at Andersonville,” *The Independent*, 29 February 1866, LOC, Clara Barton Papers, Reel 63, Subject File, Civil War, Atwater, Dorrence, Newspaper Clippings, 1865-1905.

The column read, “The arrest and punishment of this soldier for such an offense is an outrage that would not be looked for in the most despotic governments of Europe.” It continued, “But the sequel will show that this is a mild act compared with many that have been perpetrated through the machinery of the War Department.” And then the author accused the War Department of numerous cover-ups by concluding, “Many will never come to light for the victims have gone to their long account and none are left to tell the tale of their sufferings but the guilty who will not tell.”<sup>38</sup>

With an alternative depiction of Atwater established, Barton moved forward with her plan. She contacted Joseph Sheldon, a lawyer in New Haven, Connecticut, near Atwater’s home, to discuss a strategy for publishing the death record. She suggested that he publish it as soon as possible before Captain Moore had a chance to publish the War Department’s copy. Then she asked Sheldon to “help him write of course, or write for him just such things as will touch the hearts of the ‘peoples.’” Next she wanted Sheldon to “draw up a memorial” asking Congress to grant Atwater an honorable discharge “and place it in the hands of such men as will ask with it that a vote of thanks be rendered and the suitable remuneration,—this is his only chance of reward, and if properly managed he will get it.” After this Barton suggested that Atwater include a history of the Andersonville mission to identify the dead. In this history he should “connect me with the origin of the expedition, and not as ‘searching for Missing men,’—this is Moore’s false accounts of me.” She reminded Sheldon:

Dorr[ence] should be guarded in what he writes, not bitter, not as if disposed to fight his way, but the prominent features are to [ha]ve a firm determination to carry out his original intention and great design of laying before the people of his country the record of their dead, all told in a spirit of subdued sorrow, not caused by his own suffering so much as the great grief they had been subjected to by

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<sup>38</sup> “An Outrages Case of Arbitrary Imprisonment—A Union Soldier the Victim,” *Daily Union and Advertiser*, 27 June 1866, LOC, Clara Barton Papers, Reel 63, Subject File, Civil War, Atwater, Dorrence, Newspaper Clippings, 1865-1905; Stephen B. Oates, *A Woman of Valor*, 362-366.

these long delays—not pitying himself, but them . . . he isn't to bewail the hardships of Dorrence Atwater, but the calamities and griefs [sic] and hopes of the people of his country.<sup>39</sup>

This elaborate set-piece culminated in Atwater successfully publishing his death record on 14 February 1866 with the New York Tribune Company charging only twenty-five cents per copy—the cost of publication. Once editors published the list, along with Atwater's personal indictment of the War Department, the government faced outrage over the War Department's delays. Despite promises to do so five months earlier, the War Department printed the official list within weeks of Atwater's publication and only after Atwater forced officials into a position where they could no longer regulate the symbolism of the prison dead. According to historian Stephen B. Oates, "Atwater's pamphlet enjoyed a huge circulation and relieved the families and friends of the men who had perished at Andersonville." The list, he continues, alleviated, "the pain of not knowing anything at all, of nurturing some faint and fleeting hope that somehow, somewhere, a missing husband, son, or brother would turn up again."<sup>40</sup> The episode and the politics behind the death record brought severe criticism to the point of congressional intervention. The *New York Herald* reported in June 1866 that the House Committee on Military Affairs, with subpoena power, would open an inquiry into the court martial of Atwater "and whether certain officers of the army have not been guilty of oppression, cruelty, injustice or other conduct unbecoming officers and gentlemen."<sup>41</sup>

Barton and Atwater received significant rewards from the government after the Tribune Company published Atwater's list. Barton received \$15,000 reimbursement from Wilson's committee and she used the money to continue her work on missing soldiers. After she

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<sup>39</sup> Clara Barton to her sister, 29 December 1865.

<sup>40</sup> Oates, *A Woman of Valor*, 365.

<sup>41</sup> "Atwater," *New York Herald*, 26 June 1866, LOC, Clara Barton Papers, Reel 63, Subject File, Civil War, Atwater, Dorrence, Newspaper Clippings, 1865-1905.



completed her mission, she participated in a speaking tour in which she traveled around the country relating her wartime experiences as a nurse.<sup>42</sup> Atwater received an honorable discharge and became U.S. Consul to the Seychelles Islands. Later, after transferring to Tahiti, he married Western-educated Tahitian Princess Moetia.<sup>43</sup> But his reputation remained a contested one. When Atwater's hometown of Terryville, Connecticut attempted to build a memorial to the still-living former soldier, the Grand Army of the Republic in nearby Bristol, Connecticut protested. Despite Congress revoking Atwater's dishonorable discharge, some in the GAR considered him to be "no better than a deserter, in as much as he served as a clerk in Andersonville Prison, thus releasing an able-bodied Confederate soldier to fight against the Union Army."<sup>44</sup>

The death roll was important; it provided some closure for grieving families. As long as one hoped that a son, a father, a brother, or a husband was alive, the hope that he would return home remained. Atwater's list guarded access to the fallen community; thus the list also became a site of memory that demonstrated the controversy between the bureaucratic memory of the government and popular memory associated with Barton and Atwater. Withholding the soldiers' individual identities meant that the War Department could monopolize the meaning of the community of Andersonville victims. In mobilizing the symbolism of the community of the dead against Confederate leadership, Stanton suppressed the list and prevented many families from mourning their individual loss. Stanton's efforts, however, at using the mechanisms of the nation-state to regulate memory ended up failing. With the list published, Northerners could

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<sup>42</sup> Oates, *A Woman of Valor*, 367-375.

<sup>43</sup> "Career in the Civil War," LOC, Clara Barton Papers, Reel 63, Subject File, Civil War, Atwater, Dorrence, Newspaper Clippings, 1865-1905; "Atwater's Bride LOC, Clara Barton Papers, Reel 63, Subject File, Civil War, Atwater, Dorrence, Newspaper Clippings, 1865-1905.

<sup>44</sup> "Bitter Row Over Memorial Project," LOC, Clara Barton Papers, Reel 63, Subject File, Civil War, Atwater, Dorrence, Newspaper Clippings, 1865-1905.

begin thinking of their individual dead soldier through their own interpretation of the symbolism of the community of fallen soldiers.

As the government lost the ability to manage the symbolism of the dead at Andersonville, Jefferson Davis escaped his tribunal. Thus Wirz remained the only Confederate officer whom the federal government tried and executed; Stanton's plan failed. The "martyrs of the Republic," meanwhile, became associated not with the government but with Barton. As one poet wrote:

Our land is one vast sepulchre—see rise / The swelling mounds; the dust which in them lies / Is the rich price which cherished Freedom claims, Our Nation's sacrifice. / These shall not now be nameless; he shall read / Who views them hence, traced by a woman's hand, / Each hero's name; in future years untold / Mute records they shall stand— / Mute records, they, of valor, courage, love, / Of stern endurance amid sufferings ended; / And with each name upon those patriot graves / *Hers* shall be blended.<sup>45</sup>

The symbols of patriotism became connected to Barton's work in identifying their names, not Moore's or the War Department's. This meant that Barton's interpretation of the burial ground would usurp Stanton and the government's interpretation; "Northern righteousness" and "Southern iniquity" would come to define the Andersonville burial ground.

Barton used her connection to these dead to demonize the entire South, something to which Stanton was opposed. This was not the work of immoral Confederate leaders, as the War Department suggested. Bankrupt immoral Southern culture, claimed Barton, produced the crimes against humanity. While on her speaking tour, Barton depicted Southern culture as hideously barbaric. Her experiences during the war, especially at the prison and cemetery, gave her telling evidence with which to demonize their culture. After relaying to her audience the abuses of the stockade, she asked:

Why? A thousand times I have asked one that question and it is still unanswered—Anglo Saxons—Americans—our own flesh and blood—how came

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<sup>45</sup> "Our Dead at Andersonville," *Massachusetts Spy*, 24 November 1865, reprinted from *Harper's Weekly*, LOC, Clara Barton Papers, Reel 63, Subject File, Civil War, Atwater, Dorence, Miscellany, 1865-68 and undated.

they by this demon spirit of cruelty? God only knows. Can it be that like Pharaoh [sic] of old their hearts were hardened that they should not let the people go. And like that nation do they suffer?

Barton believed that “justice was born of God” and that the postwar South—starving, sick, unclothed—was evidence that “Vengeance [sic] is mine saith the Lord, I will repay.” She believed that the North should give the South what Southerners needed in terms of food, medicine, clothing, and human mercy but no more. A woman with the heart of a nurse, who would later be instrumental in founding the American Red Cross and building the women’s movement, claimed, “Friends have we not followed this terrible phantom far enough. There be our martyred dead their blood crying to Heaven for their wrongs—there sit their murderers crying to the mothers of their victims for bread.” She added, “Oh the crushing weight of the Almighty’s hand, who shall withstand?”<sup>46</sup>

This was wholly the product of Southern malfeasance, believed Barton, and she used religious language to express it. While Andersonville could have been remedied through “either common honor or common humanity,” Northern prisons were different. Her statement seems ominous to modern readers, “I am sure no American will regret that our prisoners were treated in conformity with the laws and usages of the most civilized nations . . . we never would treat anyone so.” Southern depravity, claimed Barton, turned Northern soldiers at Andersonville into “early Christian martyrs who faced the torments of the Coliseum rather than by the slightest act acknowledge a foul and heathen superstition.” Thus, she concluded, “Wherever stretched the form of a Union prisoner, there rose the signal for cruelty, and the cry of agony—and there day by day grew the skeleton graves of the nameless dead.”<sup>47</sup> Stressing the patriotic and religious

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<sup>46</sup> LOC, Clara Barton Papers, Reel 105, Articles and Other Writings, Manuscripts, Undated.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

symbolism of the dead proved an effective method in convincing people that divine providence guiding the nation-state would make such wrongs right.

The book of names became the penultimate symbol of the Union dead. It demonstrated the moral superiority of federal troops and the truly national claims of Northern culture. As Barton wrote, "The martyrs of Andersonville are the children of the Republic, who, for the Republic's sake, and by the devil malice of her enemies endured such deaths of agony as no battle-field ever witnessed."<sup>48</sup> The list gave people access to the sacred ground of Andersonville. Even if they could not make the journey to southwestern Georgia they could read the name of someone dearly lost and remember them. The transmutation of the sacred burial space to the distant home of the soldier was one of Barton's driving reasons for constructing the list. In the publication of Atwater's roll, Barton wrote, "Remember, mother, that the pitying tear of the old-time slave, whom your son helped to freedom, is the only tear that falls upon his distant grave to-day."<sup>49</sup>

In this symbolic Civil War the Andersonville dead became an important key in discrediting any noble "Southern" meaning of the war. Barton and Atwater wrested power away from the War Department and asserted an alternative version of Northern collective memory: that Southern culture in its entirety was decrepit and depraved. In the wake of Lincoln's death, this version gained significant credence. This made Reconstruction an even more difficult task to accomplish because it heightened anti-Southern propaganda among Unionists. For her part, Barton was much more effective at producing her version of the way soldiers should be

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<sup>48</sup> LOC, Clara Barton Papers, Reel 63, Subject File, Civil War, Atwater, Dorence, Miscellany, 1865-68 and undated.

<sup>49</sup> "A List of the Union Soldiers Buried at Andersonville," LOC, Clara Barton Papers, Reel 63, Subject File, Civil War, Andersonville Prison, "A List of the Union Soldiers Buried at Andersonville," 1868; "Memorial Day Address," LOC, Clara Barton Papers, Reel 107, Writings File, Speeches and Lectures, Lecture and Lecture Notes, 1865-1868, Reel 107.

remembered, in the case of Andersonville. The meaning that she placed on the martyrs of Andersonville reinterpreted the collective memory of national identity-making. Barton used Lincoln's promise—the war of liberty that Lincoln asserted in his Gettysburg Address—to denounce Southern immorality that had led to secession and civil war. This memory was antagonistic and vengeful and focused the collective memory of the war completely on white Southern culture and away from the freedmen and freedwomen for whom the war was waged. This version of collective memory claimed that a benevolent deity would repay for the sins at Andersonville. It was a collective memory, in part, created by Barton and her work at Andersonville, her success in redeeming her personal reputation, and her attempt at healing the grief of thousands of Northern mourners.

But Barton's interpretation of Andersonville would not go unchallenged during Reconstruction as Southerners and Northerners began waging symbolic war on sacred ground. This became the scene of military officials slowly winning back the meaning of the cemetery. Winning the war meant that the North could influence Southerners through collective memory and also through awarding jobs. In the case of Andersonville, the government needed a caretaker to protect the meaning of its relics. Shortly after the Andersonville expedition, Moore hired local Georgian Mr. Griffin as Superintendent. In the time that the Confederates abandoned the prison until the time that Moore's expedition arrived, Griffin had taken it upon himself to look after the cemetery. He took care of the grounds, replaced wooden stakes over the graves, and reburied the bodies that had become exposed. He helped the expedition and in turn Moore placed him as temporary Superintendent over the cemetery until a permanent Superintendent could be appointed. While holding this post, Griffin employed Mr. Welton, a former Union soldier who had been imprisoned at Andersonville and had not been able to secure a job after the

war ended. Major General James H. Wilson, who orchestrated the capture of Columbus, Georgia on Easter in 1865 and whose cavalrymen had captured the fleeing Jefferson Davis, had jurisdiction over the region that included Andersonville and replaced Griffin with Mr. Welton because Griffin was “unfit” for the post. Wilson investigated Griffin and discovered that either he or his brother allegedly had been an officer in the Confederate army. Wilson deemed Griffin unfit because “visitors are shocked and offended by finding a rebel in authority over the bones of their relatives.”<sup>50</sup> When Colonel Moore returned to Andersonville to oversee the continued work on the cemetery, he reinstated Griffin and fired Welton because the latter had been unwilling to do some of the labor that went along with the position.

Welton, upset at his firing, began writing letters justifying his conduct and accusing Griffin. He complained to Colonel Van Schroeder of the District of Georgia. According to Welton, Griffin passed the time drinking and “the Rebels have taken advantage of this state of things to get in his favor.” Welton described these men as “vicious rebels” including a “rope dancer known as limber Tim, who was a paroled prisoner here and has recently . . . married the daughter of one of the justices who sent me to jail.” The rebel conspiracy to control Andersonville, claimed Welton, culminated in Griffin’s alleged support of Mr. Gilbert who bought the adjoining land from the original owner B. B. Dykes. During the war, Dykes had allowed the Confederacy to use his land for the prison but retained his rights to the land. When Union forces took over the grounds, they mistakenly claimed it as contraband property and confiscated it. Gilbert bought the land from Dykes and claimed that the U.S. Army had to purchase the land from him to own it legally. Of course the cemetery was already established and the prison had been turned into sacred ground by Moore and Barton. It was doubtful that

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<sup>50</sup> C.M. Meigs, “Memo Andersonville” NA, RG 92, Office of the Quartermaster General, General Correspondence “Cemetery File,” 1865-1914, Box 3, Folder Andersonville.

Gilbert and Dykes were doing much more than speculating on the National Cemetery hoping the military would pay them for the rights to the now sacred space. Welton claimed that Gilbert bought the land to build a monument to the Confederate cause adjacent to the cemetery and that Griffin was an accomplice in this scheme to tarnish the space. Contrary to these reports, Captain S. Greene of the Fifteenth Infantry reported that Griffin rebuffed Gilbert's proposal and that he had information that "entirely exonerate[d] [sic] Griffin from accusations of drunkenness."<sup>51</sup> "This is all humbug," claimed Welton. He stated that their intention was to "drive us union people and the col'd people out of the place." Instead, of the Confederate monument, Welton believed he should have access to the adjacent land to build a school for the black schoolchildren. He reminded Van Shroeder, "I hope for the sake of the nation you will use your influence to have the next Supt. a man who is neither a so[u]t[hern]. rebel or coperhead. [sic]" Welton finally reminded Van Shroeder that he was not interested in the Superintendent's position but was interested in back pay for his role as Superintendent before Moore ousted him in January.<sup>52</sup>

Brevet Brigadier General C. H. Howard visited Andersonville for a single day in early 1866 and never met Griffin. Yet Howard, relying on Welton as an informant, complained that Griffin drank too much and had stolen tools and materials from the U.S. government and had given them to his local friends. Colonel Moore responded on behalf of Griffin claiming that Welton overly influenced Howard and was mistaken. Moore claimed that Griffin's brother had loaned Griffin the money to do the work in repairing the cemetery in May 1865, withouth which

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<sup>51</sup> Report S. Greene to Inspector General's Office 13 July 1866, N A, RG 92, Office of the Quartermaster General, General Correspondence "Cemetery File," 1865-1914, Box 2, Folder Andersonville.

<sup>52</sup> Letter H. B. Welton to Colonel van Shroeder, NA, RG 92, Office of the Quartermaster General, General Correspondence "Cemetery File," 1865-1914, Box 3, Folder Andersonville. An investigation into Gilbert's claims showed that the U.S. could not prove that Dykes had not given up all rights of the land to the Confederacy and thus would have to compensate Gilbert for the land.

Moore's expedition would not have succeeded when it began work in July 1865. But testimony began piling up against Griffin. Mr. Plumb repeated the accusations against Griffin of drunkenness and thievery to the Quartermaster General and included "that he has since tried to obtain possession of remains by fraud; that he is known to have been disloyal, to have declared the oath not binding, and to have spoken of the buried heroes there as 'nothing but trash.'" Just like General Howard, Plumb requested that Welton be re-instated and Griffin be dismissed. Moore again defended Griffin and reported that just as Howard had been influenced by Welton, so had Plumb. Moore conceded that this would continue as long as Griffin remained Superintendent and so recommended that the Quartermaster General relieve Griffin and replace him with a discharged union soldier. Quartermaster General Montgomery Meigs agreed, "Whatever the truth may be regarding Griffin such a prejudice and clamor has arisen against him that his usefulness is destroyed." Meigs distrusted Welton as a "base man" who betrayed the man who had given him a job when he was destitute. With the elimination of Griffin and Welton, the military placed a former soldier in charge who would help mitigate the contested meanings of the space.<sup>53</sup>

Despite Northerners using this sacred space to produce a typecast of Southerners, Andersonville cemetery also gave Southerners an opportunity to subvert this stereotype. On Decoration Day in 1870, for example, the Commander-in-Chief of the Grand Army of the Republic (GAR) declared that Andersonville graves would be decorated. Republican Governor Rufus Bullock of Georgia and large numbers of Georgians accompanied the GAR and officers of the U.S. Army by train to Andersonville for the ceremony. Born in New York, Bullock came to

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<sup>53</sup> Letter James Moore to C.M. Meigs, NA, RG 92, Office of the Quartermaster General, General Correspondence "Cemetery File," 1865-1914, Box 3, Folder Andersonville. Report C.M. Meigs to Edwin Stanton, NA, RG 92, Office of the Quartermaster General, General Correspondence "Cemetery File," 1865-1914, Box 3, Folder Andersonville.



Augusta, Georgia in 1859 and became governor in 1868. His view that African Americans should vote and that the federal government should continue martial law in Georgia placed him in a precarious position with Georgia Democrats and members of the Ku Klux Klan. Bullock oversaw the state's adoption of the Fifteenth Amendment in February 1870 after receiving Republican majorities in the legislature with the help of General Alfred H. Terry and the federal military presence mandated by the Military Reconstruction Act. In July 1870, Georgia gained readmittance to the Union but Bullock lost the general election later that fall. Thus the trip to Andersonville carried with it much symbolic meaning and real anxiety. By the end of May, Georgia was not yet readmitted and therefore this trip was an opportunity to underscore that Georgia accepted the terms of the fifteenth amendment and could be loyal to the union. It also symbolically confronted the Ku Klux Klan and its leader, former gubernatorial candidate John B. Gordon, who had narrowly lost to Bullock in the 1868 election. Bullock's attendance also gave him the opportunity to disassociate Southern culture from the abuses of the prison.

Despite being called by the GAR, Bullock took advantage of this Decoration Day ceremony to stress Georgia's leading role in the commemoration symbolized even in the organization of the ceremony.

First, His Excellency the Governor, accompanied by the officers of the State government, followed in order by distinguished citizens of Atlanta and Macon, with ladies; officers of the United States Army; officers and members of the Grand Army of the Republic, citizens generally, and marched to the flagstaff in the centre of the cemetery.<sup>54</sup>

After the opening comments by General Kryzyanowski of the GAR and appropriate music, Reverend Dr. H. W. Pierson gave the prayer. In his offering, Reverend Pierson asked God to

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<sup>54</sup> "Andersonville," LOC, Clara Barton Papers, Reel 110, Scrapbook, 1870-1871.

bless “the foundations of our government, as Thou hast given to us.” He then spoke of the Civil War saying that, “As a nation we have incurred Thy just displeasure.” He continued:

Thy Omnipotence is pledged for the protection of the humblest of Thy creatures—made in Thine image—and Thou wilt avenge all their wrongs, whether inflicted by nations or by men, by the roar and clash of contending armies, by burning cities, by desolated fields and households, by the groans of the wounded and the dying, and by the graves of thousands upon thousands of our beloved dead. Thou hast taught us that whosoever shall offend one of these little ones made in Thine image, it were better for him that a mill-stone were hanged about his neck, and be drowned in the depths of the sea.<sup>55</sup>

After this allusion to slavery and the decrepit South, Governor Bullock addressed the audience. He did not speak long. He paid his tribute to the GAR and to the dead soldiers in the surrounding ground. Then he made his point.

While referring to the horrors which have been endured by the brave hearts who died in this prison to secure the blessing of liberty to this whole section of our country, I feel that it is proper for me to say that I believe the great responsibility for the wrongs done here rests upon the officers who were placed in command, and not upon the whole people of this State or of the South. But they are gone. The Great Commander of us all has ordered a court-martial, and these dead witnesses will put in their charges and specifications. Let us leave them to that just judgment. Let the “dead past bury its dead” so far as this wrong is concerned.<sup>56</sup>

After the Governor concluded, all sang the hymn “America.”

Bullock, as a state governor who relied on federal military presence, articulated an epitaph that could begin to dull the grief of Southerners and the prejudice of Northerners in the very space that was supposed to keep the memory of tortured prisoners alive. Many people in Southwest Georgia, nevertheless, did not believe in the power of rhetoric, especially from a Republican Governor born in the North. By 1873, Bullock was out of power and the Democrat “Redeemers” had reassumed control of the Georgia Legislature. The protest at the National

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<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

Cemetery at Andersonville continued. Gilbert and Dykes had threatened to build a Confederate monument near the prison site. Although the people in Andersonville and the surrounding area supported this project, the economic collapse of 1873 made an improbable monument all but impossible. Military lawyers still could not prove that Dykes had not given up his rights to the land and Gilbert could not raise the needed funds. Ownership reverted back to Dykes, who sued the U.S. government. O.A. Lochrane, a lawyer working for the Department of Justice, informed Secretary of War William Belknap that the government should settle with Dykes as they would not win the case pending in the U.S. Court in Savannah, Georgia. Meanwhile Dykes continued to farm the disputed land and tried to force a government reaction by threatening to plow up the remains of the dead while making several provocative claims including that union skeletons made good wine. Military officials found this pretentious and offensive but could not risk Dykes de-sacralizing the space. Eventually in 1875 the War Department paid Dykes for the land thus securing the sacredness of the space. This was an important moment because the elimination of Dykes's land claim enabled the U.S. military to gain control of official memory over the cemetery.<sup>57</sup>

By 1877 Reconstruction was officially over, but some continued to make poignant, if more polite, examples using the few Confederate bodies buried at Andersonville Cemetery. In 1879 Mary Granberry of the Ladies Memorial Association in nearby Americus, Georgia wrote to Quartermaster General Meigs requesting that they remove the dead at Andersonville and rebury them with their fellow Confederate dead at Americus. The Association asked Meigs for “permission to remove the remains as they are buried on Government property and while we

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<sup>57</sup> Letter O.A. Lochrane to Secretary of War, 7 February 1873; Letter Department of Justice to Secretary of War, 20 January 1873; Letter O.A. Lochrane to U.S. District Attorney, 11 June 1872; Report S. Greene to Inspector General's Office 13 July 1866, NA, RG 92, Office of the Quartermaster General, General Correspondence “Cemetery File,” 1865-1914, Box 2, Folder Andersonville.

suppose there can be no objection to our doing so, we desire to do nothing improper.”<sup>58</sup> In March 1880 Superintendent James Dunbar reported that the Association took two days to move the remains to Americus ten miles away from Andersonville.<sup>59</sup> It simply was unacceptable and impractical, members of the Association believed, to leave these bodies mixed with Union soldiers. Although the government insisted that the Confederate graves were kept to the same standards as the Union markers, the Association took it upon themselves to care for the graves. By 1880 it became too much of a burden to travel the ten miles to tend to the graves. Besides, symbolically it was better, believed members of the association, to have these Confederates lie with other rebel dead rather than among the fallen Northern prisoners whom they had guarded. The U.S. military, likewise, no longer had to incorporate Confederate narratives into the meaning of the cemetery; it now was a completely national cemetery under federal management. This made it much easier to disseminate the official memory of the space. In the early transformative period—from Republic to Nation—representatives of the federal government had difficulty directing and even influencing the collective memory of nationalism. Stanton’s interpretation of Andersonville waned while Clara Barton’s waxed brightly, influencing the nature of Northern collective memory. But Barton, a civilian woman, had to rely on men in the public sphere to do much of the visible official work for her. She had to operate behind the scenes. As Barton moved on to the issues of Europe and the American Red Cross, government agents were able to eliminate Southern and Confederate critics and consolidate the meaning of Andersonville cemetery as a sacred national space. The dead at Andersonville certainly applied to the emerging Lincolnian tradition of commemoration that made the state and the public duty-bound to

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<sup>58</sup> Letter Mary Granberry to M.C. Meigs, 2 July 1879, NA, RG 92, Office of Quartermaster General, General Correspondence “Cemetery File,” 1865-1914, Box 3, Folder Andersonville.

<sup>59</sup> Letter James Dunbar to Captain A.F. Rockwell, 24 March 1880, NA, RG 92, Office of Quartermaster General, General Correspondence “Cemetery File,” 1865-1914, Box 3, Folder Andersonville.

remember the dead. But even in the first years after the war, this realignment between government and citizens was practiced in ways that eroded the fallen community as a symbol of emancipation. At Andersonville, Stanton, Barton, Bullock, the GAR and others were commemorating the strengthened realignment between the state and its citizenry while minimizing the emancipatory language of Lincoln's promise.

### Fissures of Mourning

The National Cemetery in Marietta, Georgia provided an example of just how real the symbolic civil war could be. A Union sacred space in the heart of Southern soil, the National Cemetery in Marietta suggested how regenerative militarism played out in local politics. Marietta was important because it challenged Atlanta for dominance in the region and included both a National Cemetery and a Confederate Cemetery within the city limits. While Atlanta had the important North/South and East/West rail lines running through the town, Marietta had a higher population and a military college and lay astride the rail line connecting Atlanta to Chattanooga. In fact, Marietta played an important part in the defense of Atlanta as General Sherman's army made its way down from Chattanooga. Thus the contested national sacred space of the national cemetery overlay the local politics of Confederate memory. The federal government succeeded in establishing a national site that required local respect but it failed to eliminate competing interpretations of memory. At the crossroads of the national and the local the discourse of emancipation also evaporated from the environment of memory.

As much as Marietta was part of the Confederacy, it also included a significant pocket of Union loyalists. One such individual was Henry Green Cole. Henry Cole was a very complex and well connected man from New York. He moved to Georgia in 1838. He made his money

through railroad construction and real estate. He purchased the Marietta Hotel and accumulated numerous rental properties early on and also built the Allatoona railroad as part of the Western and Atlantic railroad for the State of Georgia. In building the rail line Cole surveyed much of the North Georgia region himself and by the time of the war completely understood the geography of the region. He was very well connected to politicians including U.S. Senator Alexander Stephens, who would serve as the Vice-President of the Confederate States of America. Cole also owned slaves. The 1860 census documents that his home was the domicile of several African-Americans before the Civil War.<sup>60</sup> He married into the Fletcher family, which had moved from Massachusetts to Georgia; together the Coles and the Fletchers dominated much of Marietta's socio-economic development.

Despite his owning slaves and his ties to the Confederacy, Cole believed that Georgia should not have seceded. This brought scorn from fellow townspeople. Not only had his family exploited many in Marietta economically through his many businesses, but his uncommitted stance to the Southern Cause produced much anxiety. In fact, locals accused Cole of being a Union spy. The Confederacy imprisoned him for nearly a year in Atlanta and then Charleston, South Carolina. Although he denied being a spy during the war, he exuberantly claimed in front of the United States Claims Commission after the war that he had helped Union General George H. Thomas defeat the Confederate forces at Chickamauga.<sup>61</sup> Although they had no evidence of

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<sup>60</sup> *United States Census, 1860*. Henry Cole, Marietta, Georgia. In prison letters to his wife, Cole tells his wife that Bill and Mollie should plant peas, mend fences, and not ride the horses. After Union troops took Marietta in 1864, Cole's wife states in a letter to her husband "I tell you that our once good and faithful Mollie has left us." She continues, "Mollie has never been the same good servant since the Yankees came. She got to be very insulting and neglectful of me. I always treated her as kindly as possible. My friends say that I spoiled her." Letter Mrs. Henry Cole to Henry Cole, 22 November 1864, Marietta History Museum, Henry Cole Box.

<sup>61</sup> Commissioners of Claims, *Henry G. Cole vs. The United States* Case No. 13312, 12 February 1873, Marietta History Museum, Henry Cole Box. Cole had learned that General James Longstreet was leaving Richmond, Virginia to reinforce General Braxton Bragg's troops at Chickamauga. Cole claimed he had spent five hundred dollars to get the information to Thomas. Cole stated to the Commission, "The General always gave me a great deal of credit for that act and said that what was saved at Chickamauga was saved by that means."

his spying, pro-Confederate Marietta townspeople entrapped him by getting him to utter pro-Union rhetoric. The Confederate Army imprisoned him in Atlanta for two months while troops searched Cole's house and other properties looking for incriminating evidence but found none. Cole then demanded a trial believing this would prove his innocence but instead the army moved the prisoner to Charleston and suspended *Habeas Corpus*.<sup>62</sup> Vice-President Alexander Stephens, who had known Cole since 1840, attempted to use his influence to get Cole freed. "I did all I could," claimed Stephens, "to get his release, but no heed was paid to my letters." He continued, "I alluded to his case in my speech before the Confederate Senate, when referring to abuses of military power and suspension of Habeas Corpus [sic]."<sup>63</sup> It was clear that Stephens did not believe the charge of spying.

While imprisoned in Charleston in 1864, Cole claimed his innocence. In a letter to his wife, Cole wrote, "Believe me my dearest your husband had did nothing that is wrong, nothing if he has said that which was wrong, it was for no other purpose than that good might come from it in certain contingences." He alluded to the idea that he had only used his Northern contacts, not as a spy, but to protect the city of Marietta should federal troops seize control on their way to Atlanta. He reminded his wife that he spent twenty-five years constructing Marietta saying, "There I have lived, there I wish to die and I will exert every faculty I possess to its preservation." He continued, "I know I have enemies in Marietta, unreasonable enemies. I can't help it. I have done nothing to make them enemies. I shall do nothing to make them friends."

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<sup>62</sup> Letter Dix Fletcher to General Butler, 28 September 1864, Marietta History Museum, Henry Cole Box. The Charleston City Jail was a prison for union prisoners of war.

<sup>63</sup> Alexander Stephens, *Recollections of Alexander H. Stephens* ed. by Myrta Lockett Avary (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1998). After the war, Cole, finally freed, likewise tried to use his northern connections to get the captured Confederate leader freed from his Boston prison-cell.

Cole concluded, “There are a great many people that I don’t admire or respect, but I believe I possess a heart that beats no malice, political or personal to any human being.”<sup>64</sup>

On 21 May 1864, Cole sat in prison fretting about the Union advance on Atlanta. Soon, he feared, federal troops would take Marietta. He worried that his wife and children lacked the means to support themselves while he was in prison and told his wife to make the best of a Northern invasion. Because his “unreasonable enemies” had “misinterpreted” his “friendliness” with his Northern contacts for betrayal of the Confederate cause, Cole was at a loss to do anything. “Poisoned jealousies and narrow prejudices have deprived me of doing anything for the benefit of the people.” Since he could not protect Marietta, he decided he would protect his family. He told his wife, Mary, about several properties he owned. Women whose husbands served the Confederate army lived in the houses that “have all been rent free since the war commenced,” Cole wrote. Now that financial times became more desperate he told his wife to turn out these people and “rent these to people that can pay, and sell wood, your milk, your vegetables at the high prices this would bring, it will yield you and the children a pretty good living.”<sup>65</sup> This eviction of Confederate wives and widows certainly would not have endeared Cole’s critics.

Union troops finally captured Marietta in July 1864 and settled in for the Battle of Atlanta; conditions worsened for the Cole family. Marietta became a principal staging ground for the Atlanta campaign. Cole’s slaves left them and fled north almost immediately. His health continued to deteriorate while in prison, the Hotel was shut down, and Union forces used his property and resources while in Marietta. Mary Cole’s father, Dix Fletcher, appealed to General Benjamin Franklin Butler for Cole’s release. Asking a northern General to aid a release of a

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<sup>64</sup> Letter Henry Cole to Mary Cole, 14 May 1864, Marietta History Museum, Henry Cole Box.

<sup>65</sup> Letter Henry Cole to Mary Cole, 21 May 1864, Marietta History Museum, Henry Cole Box.



southern criminal held in a Charleston, South Carolina prison demonstrated how desperate Cole had become.<sup>66</sup> Fletcher asked Butler to initiate a prisoner exchange—Cole for a Confederate soldier. This would release Cole from bondage and allow him to rejoin his family in Union occupied Marietta. A prisoner exchange initiated by a Union general, however, only would have supported Confederate suspicions; it would have implied that Cole was employed, or at least connected, to the U.S. military, probably as a spy. Butler did not intervene and Cole remained in prison until he eventually received parole from the Confederate Department of South Carolina, Georgia, and Florida in January 1865. It was unclear why they released him but he probably gained his release due to the overstretched Confederate prison system and economic depression that would soon force Confederate authorities to also close Andersonville. Cole signed a parole of honor in which he promised to refrain from aiding the enemies of the Confederacy and, when called, to return to the South Carolina Judge Advocate General “without resorting to a Writ of *Habeas Corpus* or any other process to detain me in the State of Georgia.”<sup>67</sup>

When Sherman’s troops left Marietta they destroyed much of the city although they did not touch Cole’s Marietta Hotel. Cole told the Claims Commission that the Confederates had destroyed most of his property including his hotel. “It was entirely destroyed from wantonness while I was in Charleston.” He estimated the value of the hotel at \$100,000. The war ended a few months later and Cole set out to reassert his economic and political influence. Marietta had been a sort of tourist destination before the war. Northerners often stopped there on their way to Florida. It seems that Cole hoped to rebuild his fortune, in part, from a revitalized postwar Northern tourist industry. He and his family, including the Fletchers, even made an extended trip to Boston and New York, with a stop at Niagara Falls, to reestablish contact and secure funding

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<sup>66</sup> Letter Dix Fletcher to General Butler, 28 September 1864, Marietta History Museum, Henry Cole Box.

<sup>67</sup> Henry Cole, “Parole of Honor” 24 January 1865, Marietta History Museum, Henry Cole Box.

from his Northern interests. While in Boston, Cole visited imprisoned Confederate Alexander Stephens, gave him one hundred dollars in gold and one hundred dollars in cash, and lobbied for his release.<sup>68</sup> Upon returning home, he decided to donate some of his land to the City of Marietta to be used for a cemetery. He was willing to donate the land to bury the bodies of Union and Confederate soldiers who fought and died in the region. On 22 July 1866, Cole's mother-in-law noted in her journal,

He recently proffered a very eligible site to the citizens of Marietta for a Cemetery for Federal and Confederate soldiers which was rejected with scorn because they could not bury their dead with the Fed dead—he afterwards offered it to the government for a National cemetery and it has been accepted, he having been appointed Superintendent and has given employment to Mari [Dix Fletcher—Cole's Father-in-law] which I hope will relieve him some by giving him some income.<sup>69</sup>

Though Louisa Fletcher thought him “being one of the strangest kind” for this, Cole was able to secure government salaries of \$100 per month for himself and \$100 per month for his father-in-law.

Seeking a space to bury Union dead and to assert federal memory of the war, the U.S. government accepted the twenty-five acres of land in August 1866 as a “liberal and patriotic gift” from a union loyalist in the heart of Georgia. Cole received a commendation of thanks from the Secretary of the War, on behalf of the President. It is significant to remember that the United States would never have asserted this official memory had it not been for the donation of an unofficial but very public—and contested—citizen in Henry Cole. Thanks to Cole, the Marietta National Cemetery would include the bodies of seven thousand soldiers, black and white, who fought at almost every battle from Rome, Georgia to Columbus, Georgia. The

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<sup>68</sup> Stephens, *Recollections*, 418. The gold came from Mrs. Judge Erskine of Georgia while the cash came from Cole.

<sup>69</sup> Louisa Warren Fletcher, *The Journal of a Landlady* ed. by Henry E. Huggins, Connie M. Cox, and Jean Cole Anderson (Chapel Hill, NC: Professional Press, 1995), 173.

military also planned to close the national cemetery in Alabama and remove the bodies from there to Marietta. Work began in September; the military walled off the cemetery, built drainage ditches and interior roads, marked off the burial plots, and began burying Union dead. Among them were the remains of ten black soldiers, who were buried in graves “in the extreme South side of the [City] Cemetery” of Marietta, “none of which are marked.”<sup>70</sup>

This federal intervention in local politics did not set well with many in Marietta. The National Cemetery was so controversial in fact that the War Department had to secure workers from an adjacent county to perform the work.<sup>71</sup> Well before Cole donated his land, the townspeople had started their own cemetery for Confederate soldiers; Cole and the U.S. government knew this. On the other side of town the “Memorial Burying Ground at Marietta” began interring Confederates in 1863. The first man buried was medical doctor William Miller who had been working in a makeshift hospital in town. Soon after several troops who had died in a train collision between a troop carrier and a hospital train north of Marietta were buried near Miller’s grave. At least one cadet at the Georgia Military Institute in Marietta noted how unimpressive these burials were. In a letter to his mother Julia, bright-eyed S. Montgomery wrote:

I have lately seen a sample how they bury dead soldiers. About thirty have been buried here in the last two weeks. Most of whom [sic] were killed in a collision of trains about 20 miles above here. They dig a small hole just large enough to hold a box which contains the corpse and it is placed about two feet under the

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<sup>70</sup> These battles included Calhoun, Kingston, Rome, Kennesaw Mountain, Dallas, Vining’s Station, New Hope Church, Acworth, Peachtree Creek, Chattahoochie Bridge, Atlanta, Decatur, Jonesboro, Lovejoy’s, LaGrange, West Point, Columbus, Macon, Augusta, Lafitto, Gordon, Griswoldsville, Haynesboro. Letter C.M. Meigs to Edwin M. Stanton, 7 September 1866, NA, RG 92, Office of the Quartermaster General, “Cemetery File,” Box 43, Folder Marietta, GA. Edmund Whitman documented these ten graves in his journal. NA, RG 92, Office of Quartermaster General, Edmund Whitman, “Journal of a Trip Through Parts of Kentucky, Tennessee, and Georgia Made to Locate the Scattered Graves of Union Soldiers,” v. 2, Entry Marietta.

<sup>71</sup> Letter C.M. Meigs to Edwin M. Stanton, 7 September 1866, NA, RG 92, Office of the Quartermaster General, “Cemetery File,” Box 43, Folder Marietta, GA.

ground. The graves have no protection against hogs, dogs or anything of the kind. I think it is a shame as they have plenty of time and place for to bury them.<sup>72</sup>

Perhaps the ceremony was unimpressive but the developing Confederate cemetery proved meaningful for many in Marietta.

William Bosley owned the cemetery space and donated the two acres to the City. As the war continued, the cemetery continued to fill as soldiers from makeshift hospitals died.

Following the nighttime train collision in which one train was carrying Atlanta troops to reinforce General Bragg at Chickamauga, the Ladies Aid Society set out to secure more land.<sup>73</sup>

Mary Robarts, Catherine Winn, Caroline Hansell, Adelaide Reynolds, and Anna Whitlock were all politically-connected to the residents of Marietta. They persuaded Ann Moyer to donate five acres of land in 1864 and they oversaw the cemetery as it took in several hundred bodies from the Battle of Kennesaw Mountain.<sup>74</sup>

When Cole offered his land to the citizens of Marietta for a joint-burial cemetery, he was explicitly attacking the supporters of this Confederate cemetery. Perhaps retaliating for his imprisonment, Cole hoped to dominate the reputation as well as commerce of Marietta. Drawing Northern tourists to the National Cemetery, many of whom might stay in Cole's rebuilt hotel, was economically savvy and symbolically malicious. Mariettans protested. While women of the city secured the cemetery space and managed the commemoration of dead Confederate bodies, men of the city sent a letter to President Andrew Johnson opposing the National Cemetery. The "Memorial Committee" believed that Cole had donated the land inside the city without

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<sup>72</sup> Letter S. Montgomery to Julia Montgomery, 23 September 1863, Marietta History Museum, Henry Cole Box.

<sup>73</sup> Cole had alerted northern commanders to General Longstreet's movements from Richmond but the spy did not mention troop movements coming from Atlanta in his deposition to the Claims Commission.

<sup>74</sup> For a brief history of Marietta Confederate Cemetery see Curt Ratledge, "The Confederate Cemetery at Marietta Powder Springs Road Marietta, Georgia" (City of Marietta, Georgia, 1995). Ratledge includes a succinct overview of the cemetery and those involved in its construction, pages 1-5 and a history of the railroad collision, 6-15.

consulting the people of the community; the location, they believed, would assuredly cause them “material injury.” They also claimed the National Cemetery constituted “an unworthy motive . . . of prejudice to the Union dead.” Instead of the lush rolling hills that Cole donated, the committee suggested that President Johnson consider “sites more eligible” that were closer to the railroad station in the city. They proposed a site that was “out of view from the road, which could be obtained at a reasonable cost.” Mariettans claimed that Cole’s property would not do as a National Cemetery or a Confederate Cemetery and pleaded with Johnson that it was inappropriate for a nation-state with the financial resources to purchase space to accept donations from private citizens without considering the interests of the citizenry. Committee members asserted that accepting the donation “would prejudice the interests of the humblest of its citizens.” They reminded Johnson finally that Congress had appropriated money for this purpose and it would be more appropriate for the government to purchase grounds with the approval of the President. This battle over cemetery space seems to speak to how Marietta’s role in the war would be remembered as a Union staging ground or as a Confederate stronghold.<sup>75</sup>

The Memorial Committee certainly understood the politics of representation that were playing out in Marietta through an alliance between their chastised local villain and the victorious nation-state. They completely understood that the federal government, in conjunction with Cole, tried to coproduce the memory of the war from the Union perspective. They did not just object to the location of the National Cemetery. Cole’s land was on a small hill at the highest point in the city. Against this prime spot for a national cemetery they favored a location that could not be seen from the road. Their smaller Confederate burial ground would be dwarfed by the government’s cemetery and their funds could not match the government’s treasury. They

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<sup>75</sup> Letter Memorial Committee of Marietta, Georgia to His Excellency Andrew Johnson, NA, RG 92, Office of the Quartermaster General, “Cemetery File,” Box 43, Folder Marietta, GA.

understood that this was a symbolic war over memory and they would lose it just as they had lost the actual war; thus they accused the government and Cole of exacerbating local prejudices with a National Cemetery.

The citizens' complaint spawned an investigation. President Johnson passed the inquiry on to the War Department and the Quartermaster General assigned Brevet Major and Assistant Quartermaster General W.A. Wainwright to investigate. Wainwright's report recommended that there was no just cause for the complaint. He had interviewed several petitioners. When confronted, Dr. George W. Cleland, who lived on the same street as the national cemetery, rescinded his protest because he saw that the work begun on the cemetery, once completed, would beautify the street and dramatically improve his property value. Wainwright reported Dr. Cleland as stating that if Cole "as a neighbor—had told him that he intended giving the land for the purpose, he would not have opposed it at first." Many who signed claimed that their friends had brought the petition to them "and rather than to get in trouble with them signed it, but went to Mr. Cole within the day and told him the circumstances, and said it was not their wish that it be removed." Many signers did not own property in the city but lived in the country; many were boys. One petitioner, E. Denmead, allegedly borrowed a thousand dollars in gold from Cole and tried to repay him in Confederate dollars. Cole refused the currency and sued Denmead for the money.<sup>76</sup>

It is difficult to assess how much passion and how much pragmatism went into the petitioners' actions. How honest were the petitioners responding to a union soldier who represented the federal presence in the city? On the one hand, they certainly did not want the cemetery reminding them of the military catastrophe, which also reminded them of their

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<sup>76</sup> Report Brevet Major W.A. Wainwright to Major General J. Donaldson, 22 August 1866, NA, RG 92, Office of the Quartermaster General, "Cemetery File," Box 43, Folder Marietta, GA.

economic depression. On the other hand, many saw economic advantages to the cemetery. That protesters changed their minds suggests that they cultivated their protestations in the domain of the symbolic but had to face up to the economic reality of the city; Cole could prevent his enemies from getting jobs as much as he could help his friends with work in economically dire Marietta. Wainwright's report included an update on the construction of the burial ground. He noted "The labor is given to all as far as possible without reference to who or what they are or have been—but with a desire to help keep alive those, who must assuredly starve unless a helping hand is given them." Whether or not petitioners allowed economic reality to trump the political symbolism of the National Cemetery, Wainwright believed that the protest was "one of personal and spiteful nature against Mr. Cole." Considering Cole's reputation, this cannot be separated from the politics of Marietta during the war. Wainwright's report made it to the desk of Secretary Stanton who ordered that the cemetery construction continue.<sup>77</sup>

By the following summer of 1867, the cemetery had reached full capacity and more bodies were waiting burial. The government needed 402 additional spaces. Cole volunteered an additional six acres but the government was reluctant to accept unless it was "absolutely necessary." The land Cole was willing to donate would have cost the War Department much to develop. Cole could not use the ground because it was composed of very sandy dirt and accumulated water—this also made it bad for cemetery maintenance. The War Department would have to spend at least six thousand dollars, "a sum entirely disproportionate to the number of bodies now reported unprovided [sic] for." Rather, Inspector of Cemeteries Brevet Colonel C.W. Folsom recommended rearranging parts of the existing cemetery including using the space

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<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

between the front gate and the grave markers. Folsom believed the government only needed one acre to accommodate four hundred bodies and it would be approximately one-sixth the cost.<sup>78</sup> But Folsom had larger reservations about the government accepting an additional six acres from Cole. Folsom suspected Cole of donating the land not out of “patriotism” but out of a “reasonable amount of self-interest.”<sup>79</sup> One of the provisions for Cole’s donation was that he and his family receive a family plot inside the National Cemetery. Considering his reputation among some in Marietta, this was probably the only way to guard against desecration of Cole family tombs. As we have already seen, Cole also negotiated from the government an agreement that he be named Superintendent of the Cemetery and his father-in-law carry out day-to-day upkeep. Their salaries were much larger than what the Superintendent at Andersonville received. No doubt this income helped the Coles and the Fletchers at a time when few other business opportunities were available. Cole’s donation carried with it several other pecuniary and symbolic advantages, such as the repaving of roads around Cole’s home.

Although Folsom did not investigate his own accusations in depth—he relied heavily on the words of other officers who had spent more time in Marietta—he outlined several ways that Cole benefited from “the patriotism which he claimed.” The inspector admitted that some of his points were “only matters of supposition” but others were documented. The inspector worried that the U.S. government had expended thousands of taxpayer dollars in “ornamental improvements” and beautifying the space, which drove up the property value of Cole’s adjacent home and the space bordering the cemetery, much of which Cole also owned. The cemetery could further generate revenue through a nascent pilgrimage and tourism industry for those who

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<sup>78</sup> Report, C.W. Folsom to D.H. Rucker, 25 July 1867, NA, RG 92, Office of the Quartermaster General, “Cemetery File,” Box 43, Folder Marietta, GA.

<sup>79</sup> Report, “Confidential” addendum, C.W. Folsom to D.H. Rucker, 25 July 1867, NA, RG 92, Office of the Quartermaster General, “Cemetery File,” Box 43, Folder Marietta, GA.



wanted to visit the final resting place of a loved one or for those who wanted to see the National Cemetery before continuing on to Florida.<sup>80</sup> Although Confederate sympathizers burnt down his Marietta Hotel, Folsom said Cole planned to rebuild it and take advantage of cemetery tourists who would need a place to stay. Folsom stated that Cole gained an economic advantage when the U.S. rebuilt the bridges and paved Cole Street leading to the cemetery, by his house, and by his other property. The inspector also accused the Mariettan and his father-in-law of collecting salaries “without devoting so much of their time to the Cemetery as to hinder them from their other business.” The inspector also complained that Cole allegedly received compensation for helping the military contract labor resources. Perhaps this is why many who signed the protest petition recanted in person to Cole. The Brevet Colonel believed both men received too much money for the amount of work they did. Indeed, when Folsom inspected the cemetery, he only got to speak to Cole for a few minutes because the Georgian had been away to Atlanta for a political rally.<sup>81</sup>

The military inspector thus recommended that the U.S. should not expand the Marietta cemetery unless it was necessary because Cole held a “direct pecuniary interest” in the endeavor. Folsom concluded:

Giving him credit for a patriotic wish to see the U.S. soldiers well buried, his pleasure in seeing that is not lessened by finding that for every additional soldier buried, or every additional acre improved by the U.S., a sum far larger than the original value of the land finds its way into his own pockets.

Folsom was only half correct. For Cole, beyond any money he may have received, the cemetery was also a way to symbolically challenge those “poisoned jealousies” and “unreasonable

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<sup>80</sup> For a discussion of the politics of pilgrimage and tourism of World War I cemeteries in a British context see David W. Lloyd, *Battlefield Tourism: Pilgrimage and the Commemoration of the Great War in Britain, Australia and Canada, 1919-1939* (Oxford: Berg Press, 1998).

<sup>81</sup> Report, “Confidential” addendum.

enemies” of his who he would “do nothing to make them friends.” It was Cole, nevertheless, who made possible the government’s implementation of the Lincolnian promise.<sup>82</sup>

Those “friends” took notice of the symbolism that the U.S. government was asserting. As bodies poured into the National Cemetery in 1867, the Georgia legislature voted down the 14<sup>th</sup> Amendment guaranteeing equal protection of African Americans under the law. It also voted for the expenditure of monies to the Georgia Memorial Association to locate, gather, and rebury the bodies of Confederate soldiers in the Marietta Confederate cemetery. Headed by Phoebe Pender from Rome, Mary Jan Green from Atlanta, and Mrs. Charles J. Williams from Columbus, the Georgia Memorial Association located the remains of over two thousand soldiers at Kennesaw Mountain. The association also expanded the Confederate cemetery by securing two additional acres from Jane Porter Glover.<sup>83</sup> Historian of Marietta Curt Ratledge claims that the Association inadvertently buried some of these Confederates in the slave section of the adjoining City cemetery. He writes, “Later, when it became known—but not publicized—that this lot contained blacks—the Confederates were removed, so that no blacks were interred—in accordance with the customs of those days—next to white Confederate soldiers.”<sup>84</sup> This was in stark contrast to the National Cemetery where black soldiers were buried next to and among white soldiers. Funding trickled in and it took the Association almost two years to finally bury all the soldiers. They only accomplished this, claims Ratledge, with the aid of the “State-owned Western and Atlantic Railroad . . . [that] provided free transportation of the pine coffins to Marietta.”<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

<sup>83</sup> Curt Ratledge, “The Confederate Cemetery at Marietta Powder Springs Road Marietta, Georgia” (City of Marietta, Georgia, 1995), 2-3.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid, 30.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid, 3.

The Confederate cemetery never had the financial support that the U.S. government gave the National Cemetery. Although it initially demonstrated the symbolic rebellion over federal memory, the Confederate cemetery deteriorated over the years and only served to remind people of their losses. In contrast to the beautified national cemetery with marble grave markers, a Superintendent, and a staff receiving full pay, the Confederate cemetery's wooden grave markers wasted away, specific graves were lost, and the disarray of the cemetery demoralized pro-Confederates. As Ratledge states:

It must be remembered that most of the present marble headstones were not placed until 1902, and that few—if any—mark actual graves of slain soldiers. Those sites were lost late in the last century, when the original wooden headboards were allowed to deteriorate and decay. The pattern of headstones was created to provide an attractive panorama, not to indicate specific graves.<sup>86</sup>

The deteriorating cemetery became a symbol of a lost cause and its poor condition helped remind people that the Union had won the war. Despite the decrepit symbol of the ceremony, neo-Confederates may have made some efforts to desecrate the Union cemetery. In one example, the U.S. Army believed a circulating rumor that someone in Marietta had “kept the skeleton of a deceased Union Soldier” rather than giving the remains to the government.<sup>87</sup> Another example was articulated recently by a sympathetic Confederate commentator:

An apparently true story from the post Civil War period is that of the clever rebels, who, hearing that a reward was being paid for the rescue of the scattered and lost remains of deceased Federal troops, would gather up animal bones, sprinkle some uniform scraps and buttons among them and sell them to the Yankees. There can be no accurate accounting of how many pigs, cows and horses are buried in this place of honor, thanks to the enterprising larceny of these Southerners.<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>86</sup> Ibid, 27.

<sup>87</sup> Memorandum, 22 October 1867, NA, RG 92, Office of the Quartermaster General Office, General Correspondence and Reports Relating to National and Post Cemeteries, “Cemetery File,” 1865-1914, Box 3, Folder Andersonville.

<sup>88</sup> “History of Cole Manor,” Marietta History Museum, Henry Cole Box. This legend continues as while doing research, I heard this story more than once from different people at different times and locations.

The U.S. military never sponsored reward money for the location of dead soldiers. They used Union records to locate the bodies and officers in the Quartermaster's General Office and they military found, identified, and reburied soldiers in the cemetery. But as time went on, this myth turned into legend, the Confederate cemetery wasted away, and this sort of story became the most effective way to vandalize the federal cemetery.

Similar to the Andersonville National Cemetery, the Marietta National Cemetery ignored the meaning of the Civil War as a fight for emancipation. The controversy over the cemetery was a local one between whites. Such a cemetery included the remains of blacks lying with those of whites but these sorts of symbolic images lost their currency in the self-aggrandizement of Henry Cole and Marietta Confederate sympathizers. The government's inability to assert a centralized collective memory underscored the lost political potential to sculpt a usable collective memory of freedom triumphing over slavery in the early stages of Reconstruction. This was a lost opportunity that African Americans, through the symbolism of the dead, could gain access to the mainstream collective notions of Americanness. Had the Radical Republicans and Edwin Stanton been able to regulate better the way people collectively remembered the achievements of both black and white soldiers—perhaps by placing the duty under the charge of the Freedmen's Bureau—there was a chance that American collective memory might have included the poetics of emancipation. But local politics in Marietta subverted the cause of emancipation and the black bodies buried among the white bodies in the national cemetery, although honored, were reduced to oblivion.

## A Death in Valhalla

Arlington National Cemetery became a contested space where government officials, particularly Secretary Stanton, eventually came to dominate the meaning of the space without ordinary people interfering. Just as the living memory of the Gettysburg Address was homogenized into conservative interpretations at Andersonville and Marietta, so too did Arlington undergo a similar process. What made Arlington different from the other two was that it emerged as the preeminent national cemetery as the nineteenth century unfolded and while Andersonville and Marietta symbolized subaltern memory by omission—that is by not incorporating the narratives of African American liberty (although some black soldiers were buried in Marietta)—Arlington officials produced subaltern memory by actively forcing blacks out of the spaces of what would become the American Valhalla. This was a space where emancipation as an environment of memory lost out to conservative interpretations of reunion and reconciliation.

Confederate General Robert E. Lee's wife inherited the Arlington Estate from George Washington's adopted son G.W.P. Custis. General Lee only lived in his wife's home for a few years before the war. He and his family left Arlington when hostilities broke out and Lee rejected the Union for Virginia. In a symbolic attack on the South and on the symbol of Lee as the quintessential masculine Southerner, Secretary of War Edwin Stanton illegally seized the plantation and turned it into a fort and then a cemetery. He used the Arlington plantation as a fortification to defend Washington, D.C. and named the buttress Fort Whipple. In June 1862 and February 1863, Congress passed new property tax codes. George Washington Custis Lee, who actually inherited the land from his grandfather due to the fact that his mother was not legally allowed to own property, was not present to pay the property tax. The Tax Commissioner for

Virginia seized the land and the Department of the Treasury put the property up for public sale. The United States Government paid \$26,800 (well below fair market value) and received the title to the land.

After the war G.W.C. Lee disputed this illegal purchase and won a Supreme Court decision awarding Lee the land. But this decision came down in 1882. By then Fort Whipple, which eventually was renamed Fort Myers, had been used as a college to instruct officers. Adjacent to Fort Whipple, a national cemetery held the bodies of those who died defending Washington, D.C. and Alexandria, Virginia. Quartermaster General Montgomery Meigs authorized burying troops within a few yards of the house making it undesirable to live in. This included the first ever tomb of the unknowns, a mass grave of 2,111 soldiers whom authorities had been unable to identify and who were buried within the long shadow of the Lee mansion. This unknown “noble army of martyrs” became a central site for Union Decoration Day ceremonies as women from the capital district came to lay wreaths and flowers at the tomb of the unknowns.<sup>89</sup> These unknowns were buried as a matter of consequence and not as a matter of spectacle and national mourning like the Unknown Soldier from the First World War. Poor bureaucratic record-keeping, lack of soldier identification tags, and the politicization of the Lee plantation produced these unknown soldiers. Nevertheless, G.W.C. Lee could not hope to reclaim his property after so many burials had destroyed part of the plantation needed for farming. The cemetery made the plantation worthless agricultural land. Lee instead settled with the government for a lump sum payment of \$150,000. Sequestering the Arlington plantation and turning it into a military resource was an obvious symbolic battle that Stanton won. To have so

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<sup>89</sup> “Decoration of Soldiers Graves,” *Harper’s Weekly* 20 June 1868, 388. In 1868 the entire Decoration Day ceremony centered around the tomb of the unknowns. Organizers draped the large tombstone with Union flags and floral and greenery arrangements. Orphans from the asylum were handed flower-filled baskets and they began the procession of marchers. Children placed flowers on the graves as everyone marched through the cemetery. In the background, the U.S. Army fired cannon as a tribute to the dead.

many Union dead and no Confederate dead buried in the earth once occupied by the Confederacy's greatest symbol of masculinity—even though his wife owned the home—was Stanton's attempt at emasculating Confederate heroes and at the same time defeating the Jeffersonian Agrarianism that empowered Southern aristocracy and slavery. It was an effective political use of Stanton's interpretation of Lincoln's promise.<sup>90</sup>

Furthering the symbolic war against the agrarian slave system, the War Department turned part of the Arlington Estate into a Freedmen's Village. Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation freed slaves in locations that were in rebellion against the Union. It is important to remember that this was purely a military act and not a civil law. This did not free any slaves inside the Union but it did free slaves in the Confederacy once the federal army defeated rebel forces and conquered rebel territory. This proclamation also extended liberty to slaves who escaped their owners and made their way inside federal military lines; thus Washington, D.C. became a haven for so-called "contraband" people who escaped slavery in bordering Virginia by slipping into the heavily-defended Union capital. But the military did not have the necessary training or funding to handle the escaped slaves. Throughout the war, the new freed people depended on charitable Washingtonians and the military for food, education, and housing. For example, when the War Department seized Arlington, Secretary Stanton ordered, as early as 1862, the commanding officer of Fort Whipple to give "subsistence" to the "old and infirm negroes of the Arlington estate."<sup>91</sup>

In May 1863, Lieutenant Colonel Elias M. Greene of the Department of Washington wrote to the Chief Quartermaster of the department of a plan to eliminate "contraband" welfare.

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<sup>90</sup> "Fort Myers, Virginia (Arlington)," NA, RG 92, Office of the Quartermaster General, Consolidated Correspondence File, 1794-1915, Box 49, Folder Arlington Estate; "Arlington Estate," NA, RG 92, Office of the Quartermaster General, Consolidated Correspondence File, 1794-1915, Box 49, Folder Arlington Estate.

<sup>91</sup> Letter Adjutant General Thomas to Colonel J. Taylor, 3 January 1862, NA, RG 92, Office of the Quartermaster General, Consolidated Correspondence File, 1794-1915, Box 49, Folder Arlington Estate.

Greene proposed to turn the Arlington Estate into farmland that could support “500 to 750 field hands.” Green claimed, “The force of contraband males and females, now idle in this City, and a dead weight on the Government, can be employed to very great advantage in cultivating the above lands.” Although this seemed to resemble the institution of slavery, Greene went to great lengths to show that the freed people would benefit through “salutary effects of good pure country air, and a return to their former healthy vocations, as ‘field hands’ under much happier auspices than heretofore.” He also claimed that “The families need not be separated as they can still be united.” While the adults farmed the land to produce corn, millet, and hay, “younger contrabands” could tend a “large vegetable garden” and “old women” could tend produce stands in the city to sell the vegetables to urban dwellers. Greene also suggested that the War Department could use the produce to help feed the troops defending the city. Freed people would receive “sanitary and moral improvement” and the government would save “an immense amount of money.” The War Department accepted Greene’s proposal and moved hundreds of blacks from Washington D.C. into the village.<sup>92</sup>

Since the newly freed “contraband” people fell under the jurisdiction of the military, the War Department set up a freedmen’s village on the Arlington Estate. After the war the War Department handed this “abandoned” space over to the Freedmen’s Bureau. Of course, the freedmen remained dependent on the benevolence of Washingtonians and the military. Many freedmen built homes in the village and when they died, the U.S. military buried them near the Freedmen’s Village on the Arlington Estate. In one of the most radical expressions of Lincoln’s promise, Colonel James Moore oversaw the burial of the freed people. If a freedman or woman died nameless or anonymous, Moore simply labeled their tombstone with the identifier “civilian”

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<sup>92</sup> Letter Elias M. Greene to Chief of the Quartermaster, Washington D.C., 5 May 1863, NA, RG 92, Office of the Quartermaster General, Consolidated Correspondence File, 1794-1915, Box 49, Folder Arlington Estate.



or “citizen.” On the one hand, this was a remarkable transformation of the way government officials described African Americans. This can be charted through the linguistic categories used to describe former slaves; they moved from being described as “contraband” to “freedmen” to “citizen” in the space of the National Cemetery within a few short years. On the other hand, Freedmen’s Village represented a similar agrarian labor system of slavery. Before the war, this space had simply been inherited agricultural land that marked the inter-generational wealth of the landed elite. Within a few short years, U.S. military officials had turned it into sacred ground and buried noble military leaders next to enslaved subalterns who had become free citizens. The existence of the Freedmen’s Village in Arlington, and in other places throughout the country, served as a challenge to any narrowing of the meaning of the war and the boundaries of the nation. That is not to say that this village was egalitarian. Freedmen who died with names were usually buried with their slave names, although some may have changed their names upon receiving liberty. And the Freedmen’s Village received insufficient financial and educational support from surrounding government agencies. Although these limitations existed, a few of the residents of the village went on to become successful politicians, lawyers, and schoolteachers. These accomplishments were uneven as many others in the village were left to fend for themselves as meager resources supplied by the War Department could not include everyone. Despite these realities of inequality, the War Department could manipulate the symbolism of the village enough to critique Lee, his aristocratic wealth, and the slave plantation system that produced that wealth.

By the late nineteenth century, controversy engulfed the village as reconciliation between Northern and Southern whites became more acceptable in national politics. The Freedmen’s Village at Arlington Cemetery fell under threat. G. W. C. Lee handed the property over to the

government in early 1883 and the State of Virginia relinquished its control of the property to the federal government in 1884. Ironically, the relinquishing of the Lee family's claim to their former plantation actually signaled the beginning of the end for the Freedmen's Village as the War Department had gained complete control of the burial space. The successes of the village lay primarily on the willingness of Virginians to supply free education to the members of the village. By 1890, the local school district was no longer willing to subsidize the education of the freedmen children. The State of Virginia and the County of Alexandria withdrew their support in part because "the United States owned the reservation and had exclusive jurisdiction over the same; and that it was the duty of the United States to keep and maintain schools for the education of the children there on—said reservation being exempt from state or county taxation." The freedmen elicited lawyer A. H. Holmes to help them appeal to the War Department to supply a school; residents signed a petition sent to the Secretary of War claiming they needed a school so that "children on this reservation, so near the capital of so great a Nation may not grow up in utter ignorance but may be able to receive that which is guaranteed to every child in the United States, a free common school education." Holmes besieged Secretary of War Redfield Proctor, claiming "The citizens on that reservation are too poor to pay for private tuition," and added, "As things stand now we are worse off than the Indians for whose training ample provisions have been made." But Senator John W. Daniel from Lynchburg, Virginia believed that the War Department should not provide a school. The Democrat who served on the Committee on Corporations Organized in the District of Columbia and chaired the Committee on Revision of the Laws of the United States wrote to Secretary Proctor asking for information regarding the Freedmen's Village. Daniel, seriously wounded at the Battle of the Wilderness as a Confederate Major, was concerned upon learning "a number of persons who were originally placed there in

the days of the Freedmen's Bureau, and that some of them have built homes upon the property." He was mistaken; the War Department built the homes and rented them to the freed people. Freed people eventually bought the homes and made improvements in them. Daniel claimed, "The people of the vicinity," which were his constituents, "would like very much to open the way to improvement by having them removed, and at the same time, humane consideration would suggest that they be dealt with kindly." He did not know what proper action to take but he believed it was, "improper that Government property should be continually occupied by squatters, who have no interest in it such as to stimulate improvements."<sup>93</sup>

Senator Daniel represented just how much American memory had changed in less than thirty years. The dedicated Freedmen's Village had been a model for the transition from slavery to freedom during the years of Reconstruction. But by 1890, the people that the U.S. Army had originally called "contraband" had turned from "freedmen" and "citizens" to "squatters" with a few pen strokes of Senator Daniel's hand. Secretary Proctor from Vermont and newly appointed Quartermaster General Richard Napoleon Batchelder from New Hampshire did nothing to challenge the language. In fact, they embraced it. In October 1890, Quartermaster General Batchelder responded to A.H. Holmes's request for a school and schoolteacher. He wrote "You are respectfully informed that it is impracticable to comply with your request," because "no appropriation" existed for the purpose. He used Senator Daniel's language in a stern warning, "You are also advised that these people are squatters on the reservation, who have no rights or privileges whatever, there, and being on the border of the reservation adjoining the Virginia line, would enjoy all the school privileges of any citizen of that state if they should remove across that

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<sup>93</sup> Letter, Freedmen's Village to Redfield Proctor; Letter A.H. Holmes to Redfield Proctor, 27 September 1890; Letter John W. Daniel to Redfield Proctor, NA, RG 92, Office of the Quartermaster General, Consolidated Correspondence File, 1794-1915, Box 49, Folder Arlington Estate; United States War Department, *Annual Report of the Secretary of War* (U.S. Government Printing Office, 1888), 311.

line.” This was cruel. It was not certain, in the days of segregation, that the children of the village would be able to enroll in a school. If a school could be found, the residents would have to give up their homes in order to access the school system. But Secretary of War Proctor supported Batchelder’s position as he authorized the removal of some residents in 1890 and Batchelder claimed that “steps should be taken, either by the Department or by Congress looking to their removal therefrom.” The destiny of the village was set. Most of the residents managed to stay on the land while they argued that they should receive compensation for their homes. In late 1899 and early 1900, the remains of soldiers who had fought and died in Cuba began returning home. The freedman had to leave and the village was dismantled.<sup>94</sup>

The Quartermaster General in the summer of 1900 directed many of the bodies from Cuba to Arlington instead of their hometowns because “the Surgeon-General, U.S. Marine Hospital Service, has protested against the importation for delivery in the southern states of any bodies of soldiers who have died of disease in the West Indies, such shipments being dangerous to the public health.” Since transportation of diseased bodies across state lines violated state laws, the War Department ordered that “any remains are received at your port from the West Indies with casket marked for a point in the south...will be forwarded with those unclaimed to this City for burial in the Arlington, Va., National Cemetery.” Space was better used, argued many in the military, as a site to commemorate dead soldiers from Cuba than as a settlement for living citizens of the United States. Arlington, no longer a model of the transition from slavery to freedom, became the American Valhalla. The remains of the dead from the wars of the new imperialism were coming to Arlington and the War Department needed more space to

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<sup>94</sup> Letter Richard Batchelder to A.H. Holms, 27 October 1890, NA, RG 92, Office of the Quartermaster General, Consolidated Correspondence File, 1794-1915, Box 49, Folder Arlington Estate; Report Richard Batchelder, 20 December 1890, NA, RG 92, Office of the Quartermaster General, Consolidated Correspondence File, 1794-1915, Box 49, Folder Arlington Reservation.

accommodate the bodies. The War Department had to dissolve the Freedmen's Village. In 1900, the War Department finally received a Congressional appropriation to pay compensation to the residents and proceeded to force them off the space. The remains of the dead "citizens" and named freedmen remained inside the cemetery but their graves had become forgotten; the War Department maintained them and controlled them but never actively commemorated them. The transition of space was remarkable. From emancipation to imperialism, the space took on new meaning as geopolitics took on a new function and American memory took on a new narrative; the environment of memory that encapsulated the experiences of emancipation were obliterated in the spaces of the American Valhalla.<sup>95</sup>

## Conclusion

The Civil War, and Lincoln's speech at Gettysburg, transformed republican identity into a much broader middle-class national identity. New traditions emerged and melded with older ones. The Good Death was transformed by Lincoln's words beyond bourgeois private families and became much more democratic; by definition soldiers and martyrs suffered a good death for the nation even if nobody heard their last cries of assured belief in the national cause for which they suffered. Evidence of these new traditions was the creation of national cemeteries and the commemoration of Civil War soldiers, not as local heroes, but as national icons. Sometimes the bureaucratic version of Lincoln's promise was resisted, sometimes it could be implemented with the help of local elites, and sometimes it was hegemonic. In all cases, these national cemeteries expressed a Northern interpretation that failed to adequately incorporate the symbolism of African American liberation. Emancipation had fallen to the periphery of Lincoln's promise.

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<sup>95</sup> Letter, Chas Bird to Depot Quartermaster, New York City, 13 July 1900, NA, RG 92, Office of the Quartermaster General, General Correspondence "Cemetery File", 1865-1914, Box Arlington, VA, Folder, Arlington, VA.

Together black graves and the revolutionary idea of emancipation that they symbolized were being superimposed—they were becoming forgotten sites of memory; what historian Maria Todorova has described as *lieu d'oubli* as a description of a site of forgetting.<sup>96</sup> Certainly the War Department had allowed blacks soldiers to be buried in national cemeteries and even black citizens to be buried in Arlington National Cemetery. But as the politics of national sacred space and local southern soil became mixed and contested these gravestones became less and less important to the spaces of the cemetery. In fact, the politics of national cemeteries made black graves in national cemeteries vulnerable to historian Nikolai Voukav's maxim that "one forgets not by cancellation but by superimposition, not by producing absence but by multiplying presences." The accumulation of identical gravestones of mostly white soldiers and the preponderance of the cult of the fallen soldier as symbols of nationalization had the effect of multiplying presences of white Anglo-Saxon Protestantism onto the definitions of Americanism. As emancipation was moving to the periphery of American collective memory, black graves were becoming sites of forgetting.

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<sup>96</sup> Maria Todorova, "The Mausoleum of Georgi Dimitrov as lieu de mémoire" *Journal of Modern History* 78 (June 2006): 377-411; Nikolai Voukov, "The Destruction of Georgi Dimitrov's Mausoleum in Sofia: The 'Incoincidence' between Memory and Its Referents," in *Places of Memory*, ed. Augustin Ioan, special issue of *Octogon* (Bucharest, 2003), quoted in Maria Todorova, "The Mausoleum of Georgi Dimitrov," 411.

## CHAPTER 4—INCORPORATING THE CONFEDERATE DEAD INTO THE NATIONAL COMMEMORATION

Mr. Lincoln was right when, speaking of the black men, he said that the time might come when they would help to preserve and extend freedom. And in a third of a century you have been among those who have given liberty in Cuba to an oppressed people.

—President William McKinley, Speech at Georgia Agricultural and Mechanical College

Nothing gives me more satisfaction than to feel that as the President, called by the suffrages of the people, I am permitted to preside over a nation, rich with glorious memories of glorious deeds, now united in an unbroken and never-to-be-broken Union.

—President William McKinley, Remarks at Milledgeville, Georgia

In Sitka Alaska National Cemetery an engraved message on a headstone conveys a legend of love and loss. Lieutenant Kinny and his good friend, a captain whose name history forgot, allegedly fell in love with the same Russian woman, Nadia. As part of the Fourth Artillery, these two officers, veterans of the Civil War, were occupying territory purchased from Russia in 1867. Sitka served as the headquarters. Their main objectives were to oversee the geodetic survey of Alaska and to keep order among a diverse population of indigenous Tlingits, American gold speculators, and Russian fur traders. Nadia won the hearts of both men but she apparently chose Lieutenant Kinny over his friend and superior officer. Later Kinny and his friend went on a hunting trip; the captain returned a few hours later carrying Kinny's dead body saying he had died in a hunting accident. The Fourth Artillery built a cemetery just outside Sitka to bury the lieutenant. The captain then tried again to win Nadia's favor but she rejected him a second time. The loss of his friend and his beloved was too much and the captain killed himself. Underneath his body was a note that described Kinny's death. It appeared that the captain challenged the lieutenant to a duel for the love of Nadia. The hunting trip was a ruse. The captain was buried next to Kinny.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> "Sitka National Cemetery," *U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs*  
<http://www.cem.va.gov/CEMs/nchp/sitka.asp>, accessed 9 July 2008.

Without realizing it, Lincoln at Gettysburg committed the state to an unprecedented area of responsibility; that of commemorating the dead who fought in America's wars. In the aftermath of the Civil War, people actually expected the U.S. government to uphold this commemorative promise. This brought about new traditions based on Lincoln's promise. As Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger argued in *The Invention of Tradition*, many British twentieth-century "traditions" had their origins not in time immemorial but in the nineteenth century. In the United States, a sustained nation-building effort began around the time that Lincoln delivered his speech at Gettysburg battlefield and the federal government initiated national cemeteries across the nation. At the same time, these new traditions excluded significant portions of the population, particularly those who had fought for the Confederate States of America. As Nina Silber suggests in *The Romance of Reunion*, the disunion of northern and southern white men was eventually resolved through romantic and sentimental notions of masculinity as well as the historical fiction that interpreted the Civil War as a conflict to save the Union. Lost in this reunion movement were the harsh realities of racism. Indeed, the segregation and disenfranchisement of African Americans became the prerequisites of romantic reunion. The failure to incorporate emancipated peoples into the narrative of reunion significantly influenced the way Lincoln's promise evolved in that the discourse of emancipation and liberty flowed away from the center toward the periphery of the official American imagined community. This new tradition helped cement the foundations of nationalization by ritualizing the collective memory of the imagined community.<sup>2</sup>

This chapter examines the expansion of Lincoln's promise in the rhetoric and politics of the period between 1878 and 1912. Just as Lincoln used the rhetoric of liberty to justify the

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<sup>2</sup> Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger eds., *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge University Press, 1992); Nina Silber, *The Romance of Reunion: Northerners in the South, 1865-1900*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997).



sacrifice at Gettysburg, politicians supporting reunion and reconciliation used the language of freedom to realign the relationship between state and citizen as state actors simultaneously tried to heal the divisions of the Civil War while expanding the frontier. The onset of the federal government commemorating the dead was truncated after the Civil War. With the dedication of Civil War battlefields and the burial of most veterans who died immediately after the war, government agencies judged the work of remembering the noble dead to be completed. But war veterans continued to serve in a dramatically reduced military establishment after the war; what to do following their deaths became a question. As Congressmen in Washington, D.C. debated extending pensions to living veterans, soldiers who died in the outpost of Sitka, Alaska or in the Plains Indian Wars fought without the guarantee of being remembered. In the case of Confederate soldiers, it was understood that they would not be remembered as national heroes. Lincoln's promise applied to bodies in a specific place at a specific time. He had proposed to "dedicate a portion of that field [Gettysburg battlefield], as a final resting place for those who here gave their lives that that nation might live." This explicitly excluded the soldiers who died outside of the context of the Civil War's battle for liberty. In fact, the emerging tradition never anticipated American wars fought outside of the boundaries of the United States. But the Spanish American War produced an occasion to widen the initially limited scope of the promise.

The need to commemorate Southerners who died in Cuba and the Philippines brought with it the unintended responsibility of the federal government to include Southerners who died in the Civil War. Historian of France Pierre Nora suggests a *milieu de memoire*, or environment of memory, shapes the collective memory.<sup>3</sup> Monuments and commemorative traditions, claims Nora, are places of living memory for people who had experienced the event itself. The act of

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<sup>3</sup> Pierre Nora, ed., *Realms of Memory: Rethinking the French Past*, 3 vols. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996).

commemoration in an environment of memory is experiential, communal, and first-hand. The late nineteenth-century environment of memory saw Americans collectively remember the Civil War through their experiences of emancipation and reunion. While some like Frederick Douglass and Ida B. Wells struggled mightily to remind Americans of that the environment of memory was fundamentally a story of black liberation, the efforts were increasingly marginalized and subverted. In seeking the goal of reunion, white Southerners collaborated with white Northerners to facilitate an environment of memory that reduced and displaced the memory of emancipation. French historian Ernst Renan defined the nation-state as a process of citizens forgetting about a past that divided them.<sup>4</sup> This was fundamentally true when it came to Americans constructing Americanness based on nativism, Protestantism, and capitalism. Commemoration was the ritual of remembering and forgetting and it was on this racial narrative that the American nation was forged. This was neither complete nor universal, but it became the hegemonic collective memory.

Members of the Grand Army of the Republic (GAR) and the United Confederate Veterans (UCV) continued to transform the memory of the Civil War well into the twentieth century. No longer were they negotiating the war based on the discourse and experience of liberty over slavery. These sorts of groups began re-negotiating the memory of the Civil War based on the discourse of reconciliation and reunion. Dead bodies and the places where they were buried became reified as sites of memory that helped hide the meaning of the war as a conflict over emancipation. This occurred at precisely the moment that Republicans gave up their leadership on civil rights. Many lawmakers capitulated on the race question and instead turned their attention to the sectional problem between Northerners and Southerners. Together

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<sup>4</sup> Ernst Renan, "What is a Nation?" in Eley, Geoff and Suny, Ronald Grigor, ed. *Becoming National: A Reader* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), pp. 41-55.

these groups helped produce an environment of memory that was reconciliatory, Anglo-Saxon, and imperialist. Reconciliation as the dominant collective memory helped stifle a subaltern memory—one of emancipation that continually threatened to rise to the surface and one that nativist Protestant capitalists struggled to keep congruent with the rhetoric of democracy despite the reality that it might spin out of control. The main focus of this chapter is uncovering who was allowed to negotiate the environment of memory that fixed the American collective memory. Blacks and immigrants were excluded, while government agents and white Northerners and Southerners played a major role in producing the places of memory that helped shape the collective memory of national identity. By examining the fitful commemorations of Civil War veterans who died during garrison duty in Sitka, Alaska and Confederates who died during the war under the watchful eyes of federal troops in northern prisons near Chicago and Sandusky, Ohio, this chapter suggests that the unanticipated outcome of Lincoln's promise to bound the state and the citizenry to a project of memory was the inclusion of those who fell fighting against the emancipation of slaves.

### Lincoln's Promise and the Frontier of the Expanding American Empire

The controversy surrounding the commemoration of General George Armstrong Custer who died at the Battle of Little Bighorn, offers a telling narrative of how middle-class Americans and government bureaucrats transformed the American West into American space ripe for settlement. Perhaps the rhetoric of the West was most evident in artist John Gast's 1872 depiction of "American Progress." The famous painting evoked manifest destiny as an angelic female adorned in Greek robes and long-flowing locks striding across the Great Plains with pioneers, railroads, telegraph lines, and civilization in tow. This was a depiction of nationalizing

“wild” space by making space white. Native Americans and wild animals recoil from the radiant lady liberty and run for the darkened edges of the painting. These western spaces were impinged with white meaning after eradicating Native American meanings from the spaces. But this imagery did not fit the reality that white settlers experienced. Migrating to the “Great American Desert” believing that “rain would follow the plow” brought most settlers ruin and misery. They tried and failed to turn western places that received little rainfall into productive farming regions. The reality was a far cry from what Gast portrayed as progress. But in the early stages the image of progress was hard to dispel, especially when the army cleared the plains of Indians and left a seemingly vacant landscape to welcome “civilization.”<sup>5</sup> Sitting Bull, Crazy Horse, and a great band of Sioux and Cheyenne Indians near the Little Bighorn River briefly stopped American progress in its tracks. When General George Armstrong Custer and his cavalry unwisely advanced on the encampment of Native Americans in the summer of 1876, they were annihilated by an unforgiving adversary.

Despite the arrogance and incompetence that led to his comprehensive defeat, Custer became a mythic figure for white supporters of American progress. Much of this symbolism came from his reputation as a gallant and extravagant Civil War General. Custer had begun the war as a Lieutenant but had quickly gained promotion to Brigadier General by the age of 23 shortly before the Battle of Gettysburg. His military action was as daring as his uniform dress was extravagant. Usually wearing a red handkerchief tied around his neck, Custer would lead reckless, yet successful, campaigns at Gettysburg, the Overland Campaign, and the Battle of the Wilderness among others. He was a darling of journalists who understood politics and war. After his death at Little Bighorn, many viewed him as a quintessential and tragic American hero.

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<sup>5</sup> For an in depth discussion of John Gast’s “American Progress” see Michael Hunt, *The American Ascendancy: How the United States Gained and Wielded Global Dominance* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 11-44.

Military gravediggers originally had buried him near where he fell on the frontier as they had buried the men who had died under his command. Army officials ordered the disinterment of his remains the next year and they transported them from the distant frontier back to New York for a formal burial at West Point. Organizers including his surviving wife turned his funeral into an American spectacle which even elicited the admiration of former Confederates.

Unlike the fallen subalterns who remained buried scattered across the Little Bighorn battlefield, Custer's West Point funeral was completely scripted. As historian Adam Pratt notes, after returning Custer's body to New York in the summer of 1877, his widow Elizabeth postponed the burial ceremony for several weeks until enough cadets had returned from the summer break to make an audience suitably large enough to witness the general's burial. According to Pratt, it brought Southerners into the nationalistic fold with Northerners because they could identify with Custer as a manly white cavalier on the frontier despite having served in the Union army during the Civil War.<sup>6</sup> In the dwindling days of Reconstruction, claims Pratt, Southerners found an early symbol of reconciliation in Custer. In August organizers took the remains from a vault in Poughkeepsie, New York by ship to West Point just north of New York City. Thousands watched as pall bearers unleashed the catafalque and transported it to the chapel. At 2 PM on 10 October, the chapel doors were opened and mourners filed past the bier. The casket rested amongst "the dead chieftain's sabre and helmet," floral bouquets, a plaque that read "Seventh Cavalry," and a "large American flag." The funeral began with a eulogy by the West Point chaplain Dr. Forsyth after which the "choir of cadets chanted the thirty-ninth and ninetieth psalms." After the viewing, pall-bearers brought the remains out from the chapel and formed a funeral cortege that included everyone inside of the chapel and the thousands who had

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<sup>6</sup> Adam Pratt, "'A Curious Compound of the Hero and the Dandy.' George Armstrong Custer, the Cavalier Image, and White Masculinity in the Postwar South," in Lydia Plath and Sergio Lussana eds. *Black and White Masculinity in the American South, 1800-2000* (Newcastle, UK: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2009), 37-55.

been waiting outside the chapel. The march began to the small cemetery with the cadets presenting arms. As the pall-bearers lowered the body, “earth was sprinkled upon it, the burial service was completed by the chaplain, and the battalion of three hundred cadets fired three volleys over the grave. The echoes reverberated from side to side of the river, flung back from cliff to cliff, and died mournfully away.” The funeral mentioned nothing of Custer’s adventure at Little Bighorn. It wallowed in the symbolism of religion, nationalism, and valor. It was a mourning that stubbornly paired Custer with Gast’s pacific lady liberty, despite his self-destructive conduct of Indian-fighting.<sup>7</sup>

But the general’s dead body also represented how contentious this process actually was. While Sitting Bull believed Custer was foolish, Custer’s apologists believed he was an American hero who was mercilessly killed. While some argued that Custer’s body was found confronting an Indian onslaught others, such as Pretty-Shield, claimed he was found face down in the river shot in the back because he was running away from the enemy.<sup>8</sup> Some accused the Sioux and Cheyenne of mutilating his body while other sources claimed he was found naked in a sitting posture un mutilated.<sup>9</sup> Regardless of what actually happened, Americans recovered his body and buried him with much fanfare at West Point. But in commemorating Custer’s defeat, many Americans had to wonder how could uncivilized indigenous people defeat someone as grandiose as Custer? Those people who asked such a question implicitly acknowledged that perhaps American expansion was not a noble cause worth fighting for. Indeed, most of Custer’s men at the battle site remained buried in locations where they fell in battle rather than in a planned and beautified national cemetery such as those created during the Civil War. It made the limitations

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<sup>7</sup> “Funeral of General Custer,” *Harper’s Weekly*, 27 October 1877.

<sup>8</sup> Frank Lindeman, *Pretty Shield: Medicine Woman of the Crows*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Lincoln, NE: Bison Books, 2003), 128-141.

<sup>9</sup> James Welch, *Killing Custer: The Battle of Little Bighorn and the Fate of the Plains Indians* (New York: Penguin, 1995).

of Lincoln's promise apparent as the state's and the citizenry's commitment to remember the martial dead did not seem applicable to the frontiers of the burgeoning American empire. How could American soldiers doing ignoble work in Alaska or on the Western plains be celebrated according to the Lincolnian tradition that stressed the noble cause of liberty?

Indeed the emerging postwar traditions of commemoration were not intended to commemorate these sorts of individuals. Although Democrats and Republicans tussled over extending benefits and pensions to Civil War veterans, the burial sites at the Battle of Little Bighorn demonstrated how vague the War Department could be when it came to commemorating men who died in defeat. The politics of the post-Reconstruction period was one that did not engage global issues of empire rather, society and politicians were more concerned with the process of industrialization that was working its way through the pathways of the Gilded Age. The world of the American military was quiet; indeed, civilian leadership downsized it dramatically after the war when issues of nationalization and empire were not as important. The Gilded Age produced titans of industry, bust and boom cycles—particularly in 1873 and again in 1893, and class warfare along the way. Immigrants flowing into the country threatened “True Americanism” while they took jobs inside the industrial complex of the late nineteenth century. Historian Matthew Frye Jacobson's *Barbarian Virtues* suggests American capitalists depicted foreigners as uncivilized barbarians that brought unhealthy ideas of Catholicism, Judaism, anarchism, socialism, sex, and marriage to the United States. Middle-class Americans countered this “threat” by attempting to assimilate immigrants inside the U.S. and potential immigrants outside American borders with Christianity, capitalism, and overall Americanism.<sup>10</sup> Meanwhile segregation produced a color line that was not to be transgressed in any circumstances, real or

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<sup>10</sup> Matthew Frye Jacobson, *Barbarian Virtues: The United States Encounters Foreign Peoples at Home and Abroad, 1876-1917* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2000).

symbolic. With all these issues dominating the era and no major war to be fought, it was impossible to maintain a vast army in a world where the Atlantic and Pacific oceans kept the U.S. isolated from European and Asian military threats. The size of the army was dictated by the needs of invading the West and controlling workers such as during the Great Railroad Strike of 1877. Without national causes to fight and die in, soldiers' deaths and the cemeteries in which they were buried on the frontier became unremarkable because they could not incorporate the themes of American progress.

Industrial capitalism transformed the infrastructure of the United States and also thrust the American nation onto the global stage in unprecedented ways. The Spanish American War in 1898 required a new understanding of American memory that was neither ambiguous nor neglectful. The incredible enlargement of the military through volunteers and regular soldiers saw a new commitment to American military action. On the frontier, massacres had replaced battles on the plains, while in the U.S., society and politics had turned to the urban, industrial, and immigrant issues of the Gilded Age. Issues of war, nation, and empire had returned to haunt the country and this made patriotic and nationalistic sentiments ever more important. It became imperative for the War Department and President William McKinley's administration to take advantage of the quick defeat of Spanish forces in Cuba and the Philippines by seizing the opportunity to turn the complete victory into a "splendid little war." McKinley had experience in both the military and political worlds. He had fought in the Civil War rising to the rank of captain. After the war, he entered politics and became a Republican Congressman from Ohio before becoming Governor of the state and then going on to win the presidential election of 1896. McKinley understood completely that the War Department would not be able to treat American dead from Cuba in the same way that it had treated the dead in the soil near the Little



Bighorn River. This sudden and ascendant global presence also prompted a reevaluation of the Civil War dead alongside the war dead from Cuba. Veterans from both wars were now to be remembered in an imperial context.

These new traditions did not come from McKinley solely. In many respects, he was not inventing a new tradition so much as elaborating Lincoln's promise in a context of overseas empire-building that Lincoln never had to consider. Many of McKinley's propositions were articulated by others including neo-Confederates. In July 1898, for example, before the war had ended, ten thousand Confederate veterans descended on Piedmont Park in Atlanta, Georgia at their annual reunion. When General John Gordon, the main speaker, "entered the hall [,] the applause and cheering were deafening." With his former adversary, ex-Governor Rufus Bullock in attendance, the crowd "began to shout, 'Gordon! Gordon!' From all parts of the building the name was taken up, and the greeting was assuming vociferous proportions when the General rose and uplifted his hand. The audience was stilled instantly." Gordon used the opportunity to redress criticism that such reunions were evidence of southern disloyalty. He argued rather that "the protection of the Negro by Southern courts, his reliance for security upon Southern sentiment, and his education through white taxation in Southern schools" was evidence that Southern states accepted the verdict of the Civil War on the issue of slavery. He also contended that Southerners showed their loyalty to the Union by the "presence and prowess of her heroic sons at the front in the war with Spain." He added:

You, my Confederate comrades, would be there if the country needed you. Many of you assembled here would have been there but for impaired health and failing strength. But our sons and grandsons are there. With our prayers and blessings they are enlisted in this war for high and holy purposes. Among the great ends to be attained in this conflict with Spain—the freedom of oppressed islands in both oceans, the wider influence of America in the councils of the nations, the increased respect for their power on land and sea—there is still another achievement to be attained, no less glorious and far-reaching, namely, the

obliteration of all traces of distrust among ourselves and the complete and too long delayed unification of the American people, which shall be called in question no more forever.

This was a perceptive and astounding critique of the dominant terms of American collective memory. No longer would the collective memory inspired by Clara Barton and Henry Cole go unchallenged. Neo-Confederates such as Gordon invented a new memory—muddled up with suggestions that Confederate leaders such as Gordon actually supported black freedom as much as he supported the liberation of Cuba and the Philippines. The Spanish American War created an opportunity to redraw the boundaries of Americanness and reduce the power of the North to dictate the collective memory. Gordon was perhaps the first to articulate it, but the President of the United States made incorporating former Confederates into the American collective memory official with his speech before the Atlanta legislature in December 1898. Crucially, President McKinley committed the federal government to the commemoration of the Confederate dead.<sup>11</sup> Speeches like Gordon's were exactly what President McKinley needed. By the time he came to Atlanta for the Peace Jubilee, nearly six months after the Confederate reunion, the President was looking for support not only for his continued policy in Cuba but also for his policy of annexing the Philippines. Of course McKinley had carried the single Southern state of Kentucky in his 1896 election and it was important that the President gain support for the upcoming negotiations with Spain at the Treaty of Paris. He entered the Capitol and delivered his speech to the Georgia State Legislature after the Spanish American War had ended in Cuba but before events in the Philippines had turned dire. Here he articulated a compromise that gave Southerners access to Lincoln's promise in the form of official access to bureaucratic management of commemorating the dead in exchange for political support at least in terms of negotiating peace with Spain and annexing the Philippines. This also bound Southerners to the obligation to remember the dead

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<sup>11</sup> "The Confederate Reunion," *New York Times*, 21 July 1898.

through the discourse of the national imagined community but it did not commit them to commemorate the discourse of emancipation rather McKinley only required them to honor the discourse of reconciliation.

To boisterous cheering from Georgian legislators many of which who had fought in the Civil War or served in the Confederacy, McKinley insisted that “Fraternity is the national anthem,” and “the Union is once more the common altar of our love and loyalty, our devotion and sacrifice.” The President stated:

Every soldier’s grave made during our unfortunate Civil War is a tribute to American valor. [Applause.] And while, when those graves were made, we differed widely about the future of this government, those differences were long ago settled by the arbitrament of arms; and the time has now come, in the evolution of sentiment and feeling under the providence of God, when in the spirit of fraternity we should share with you in the care of the graves of the Confederate soldiers. [Tremendous applause and long-continued cheering.] The cordial feeling now happily existing between the North and South prompts this gracious act, and if it needed further justification, it is found in the gallant loyalty to the Union and the flag so conspicuously shown in the year just past by the sons and grandsons of these heroic dead. [Tremendous applause.]<sup>12</sup>

Similarly, in his Memorial Day speech in 1900 at the Antietam Battlefield and adjacent National Cemetery, McKinley, himself a Civil War veteran, was “glad that the Union was saved by the honorable terms made between Grant and Lee under the famous apple-tree; and there is one glorious fact that must be gratifying to all of us—American soldiers never surrendered but to Americans!” He praised Union and Confederate troops saying, “The valor of the one or the other, the valor of both, is the common heritage of us all.” He concluded:

The followers of the Confederate generals with the followers of the Federal generals fought side by side in Cuba, in Porto Rico, and in the Philippines, and together in those far-off islands are standing to-day fighting and dying for the flag they love, the flag that represents more than any other banner in the world the best hopes and aspirations of mankind.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> *Speeches and Address of William McKinley*, (New York: Doubleday, 1900), 158-9.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid*, 369-70.

The applause and cheers from the attendants underscored the firing of new collective imagination, one that now included white Southerners and silently consigned African Americans to oblivion past and present.

As a down payment on this promise to include the Confederate dead into Lincoln's promise, McKinley agreed to support the reburial of Confederate bodies in Arlington National Cemetery. Senator Joseph Hawley of Connecticut proposed a bill that appropriated \$2,500 for the disinterment of 128 Confederate dead from the Washington, D.C. Soldiers' Home Cemetery and 136 dead already inside the gates of Arlington with badly dilapidated gravesites. They would be reburied in their own Confederate section. The bill easily won Congressional approval and McKinley signed it on 6 June 1900. Thus at about the same time that the last African Americans were being pushed out of the Freedmen's Village at Arlington, a new section was being laid out at the top of the nearby hill and Confederate remains were being deposited with brand new marble tombstones. Meanwhile the local United Daughters of the Confederacy began fundraising for a monument to be sculpted by former Confederate soldier Moses Ezekiel. In 1903 for the first time Confederate dead were neatly buried in the Confederate section and former Confederates still living were included in the Memorial Day services. As writer Robert M. Poole notes, "Once unwelcome at the national cemetery, grizzled southern veterans realized how far they had traveled when they arrived to celebrate Memorial Day at Arlington in 1903."<sup>14</sup> After his speech to the Georgia Legislature, McKinley reiterated his policy of reconciliation with several speeches delivered the next day as part of the Atlanta Jubilee celebration marking the successful end of the Spanish American War and the return of American soldiers. Most major cities performed similar jubilee celebrations but McKinley chose to attend Atlanta's. He headed

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<sup>14</sup> Robert M. Poole, *On Hallowed Ground: The Story of Arlington National Cemetery* (New York: Walker and Company, 2009), 116-117.

the parade that went along Peachtree Street from downtown north to Ponce de Leon Avenue. Earlier in the day Georgia legislators passed resolutions praising McKinley's speech the day before. Crowds lining the street and cheered as the President made his way. After the parade, McKinley and his entourage were hosted at Piedmont Park by the Piedmont Driving Club and he spoke to a capacity audience in the same 10,000 seat auditorium that General Gordon had addressed six months earlier. He stated:

Under hostile fire on a foreign soil, fighting in a common cause, the memory of old disagreements had faded into history. From camp and campaign there comes the magic healing which has closed ancient wounds and effaced their scars. For this result every American patriot will forever rejoice. It is no small indemnity for the cost of the war. This government has proved itself invincible in the recent war and out of it has come a Nation which will remain indivisible forevermore.

McKinley used practically the same words as Gordon standing in the same spot as Gordon. This was not "a crusade of conquest," argued the President, but the "reward of temperate, faithful, and fearless response to the call of the conscience, which could not be disregarded by a liberty-loving and Christian people."<sup>15</sup>

The successes in Cuba did not mean that the struggle had ended. Despite the martial victories, the President tipped his hand to his administration's intention to occupy Cuba and the Philippines. He reminded his audience in Piedmont Park that "the task is not fulfilled. Indeed, it is only just begun. The most serious work is still before us, and every energy of heart and mind must be bent and the impulses of partisanship subordinated to its faithful execution." To this end, McKinley beckoned the memory of Bunker Hill and Gettysburg. "At Bunker Hill liberty was at stake; at Gettysburg the Union was the issue; before Manila and Santiago our armies fought not for gain or revenge but for human rights." Because of this, "the result [of the war] will be incomplete and unworthy of us unless supplemented by civil victories, harder, possibly,

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<sup>15</sup> "Atlanta's Peace Jubilee is Ended," *New York Times*, 16 December 1898.

to win, in their way no less indispensable.” The military success was evidence to the “millions of human beings who to-day call this Nation noble, and who, I trust, will live to call it blessed.” He reminded, “Thus far we have done our supreme duty. Shall we now, when the victory won in war is written in the treaty of peace and the civilized world applauds and waits in expectation, turn timidly away from the duties imposed upon the country by its own great deeds?” Three cheers for McKinley marked the end of his speech and he was followed by Southerners General Joseph Wheeler, Lieutenant Richmond Hobson, who served in the Navy, and Governor Joseph Forney Johnson of Alabama. The “ancient wounds” that were slipping from memory to history were necessary to heal if McKinley was to gain support for his plans in Cuba and the Philippines. In exchange for the federal government’s takeover of Confederate graves, Atlantans were willing to acquiesce to McKinley’s postwar policy, especially since they could stress the rhetoric of reconciliation and subvert the discourse of emancipation.<sup>16</sup>

Later that night at the Jubilee Banquet McKinley again had a chance to address prominent Atlantans. The editor of the *Atlanta Constitution*, Clark Howell, served as toastmaster for an evening attended by Governor Allen Candler, Governor Johnston, Governor Voorhees of New Jersey, and former Governor of Georgia Rufus Bullock. Secretary of the Treasury Lyman Gage, Secretary of the Navy J. D. Long, Postmaster General Charles Smith, Secretary of Agriculture James Wilson, Secretary of War R. Alger, as well as Generals W. R. Shafter, Wheeler, A. C. M. Pennington, among others, were all present. Howell introduced the evening with an invocation, “In the presence of God, with uncovered head and bowing reverently in acknowledgement of divine leadership, a Nation stands to-day upon the threshold of a new century, content in and conscious of the performance of a duty well done in His name.” Howell rejoiced that “the modern Saracen has been driven from the hemisphere” and acknowledged that

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

“the central figure of the story is the Chief Executive of this great nation.” McKinley rose to boisterous applause. “McKinley was compelled to stand and bow some minutes before those about the tables would permit him to proceed.” This echoed similar receptions when McKinley was in Piedmont Park, at the head of the jubilee parade, and in front of the state legislators. At the banquet he announced:

Reunited! Glorious realization! It expresses the thought of my mind and the long-deferred consummation of my heart’s desire as I stand in this presence. It interprets the hearty demonstration here witnessed, and is the patriotic refrain of all sections and all lovers of the Republic. Reunited! One country again and one country forever! Proclaim it from the press and pulpit, teach it in the schools, write it across the skies! The world sees and feels it; it cheers every heart, North and South, and brightens the life of every American home. Let nothing ever strain it again. At peace with all the world and with each other, what can stand in the pathway of our progress and prosperity?

McKinley identified himself as a patriot who could lead reconciliation efforts between North and South. It was a significant break with his party’s tradition of “waving the bloody shirt” and it pandered to a Confederate audience whose support he would need while conducting forthcoming military and nation-building operations in the Philippines.<sup>17</sup>

Secretary Long of the Navy addressed the crowd immediately after McKinley’s speech and he reminded the audience that soldiers, “pushing from day to day on to Santiago through the tropical jungles under a tropical sun, wet with tropical rains, exposed to unknown diseases, and only the coarsest fare to eat, you would agree with me that the typical hero is the American regular.” Long added, “He [the American soldier] is entitled to all the love and gratitude that a great and generous Nation can bestow upon him.” In a strange playing of the mystic chords of memory that Lincoln had spoke of in his first Inaugural Address, George Peck of Chicago reminded the audience of a pre-Civil War, shared Revolutionary heritage. He toasted that “there was a time when some who are here to-night did not love each other overmuch, and yet, when

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

the stress was fiercest and the fire seemed ready to consume, neither side gave up its memory of Lexington and Yorktown.” Peck added, “Tradition, language, literature, common hopes and common interests make a nation; and these are a thousand times stronger than the sanctions of written charters, or the authority of blood.” Peck then tied this new unity to the task that lay ahead. “Gentlemen, the flag cannot come down. The institutions and the policy of a free republic are equal to new conditions or they are worthless.” He concluded, “The new Union, which war has welded more firmly together, summons us and leads us forward.” Several other speakers addressed similar themes. The editor of the *Boston Globe* responded to the toast, “Santiago, the Plymouth Rock of Cuban Freedom,” while General Wheeler responded to “The South’s part in the war,” and Postmaster General Smith addressed, “The War as an Echo of Independence Hall.” Practically everyone in attendance shared McKinley’s view that the war gave birth to a new Union and that tougher work lay ahead in civilizing Cubans and Filipinos. If there was ever any doubt about America’s involvement in global politics, events like the Confederate reunion and the Atlanta Jubilee were quickly putting these doubts to rest.<sup>18</sup>

A new nationalization project with imperialistic aims had to be incorporated into the environment of memory to accommodate America’s growing role in global politics. The effects of this had not yet completely evolved; it was a project of unevenness. This was especially true of imperialistic spaces, such as the Sitka cemetery in Alaska which played no real important role in America’s emerging ascendancy and thus military officials found it exceedingly difficult to integrate the cemetery into the collective memory of Americanness. Harsh winters, short growing seasons, and the presence of Tlinglit indigenous peoples as well as Russians involved in the fur trade made Alaska an uncompromising territory. Few Americans were interested in settling the region because there seemed few economic opportunities outside of the fur trade.

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid.



Western Union Telegraph Company had tried and failed to build an overland telegraph line through the territory in the 1860s to connect with the Asian transcontinental telegraph system but abandoned the project when the Field's underwater trans-Pacific cable was completed in 1866. Without the telegraph system, companies were reluctant to invest in Alaska. Secretary of State William H. Seward believed his 1867 purchase of the territory, notes historian Walter LaFeber, would serve to reinforce American interests in the 1844 Sino-U.S. treaty, "which pledged an Open Door and equal opportunity for Americans" in China.<sup>19</sup> Stationing troops in Alaska could help keep doors open in China while protecting American settlers. But this never amounted to a successful strategy as American pioneers never came to settle the territory. Consequently, it remained a military outpost for ten years until the War Department evacuated Sitka completely and turned it over to the Treasury Department in 1877. The U.S. Navy took control of the District of Alaska from 1879 to 1884 and then turned it over to a civil government. It was during the first years of American occupation under General Jefferson C. Davis, who served as Commander of the Department of Alaska from 1867 to 1870 that Kinny and the captain died.<sup>20</sup>

General Davis infamously kicked the Russian residents out of their homes in Sitka so that Americans moving to Alaska could occupy them, but the Americans never came and the houses remained empty. When Davis left Alaska in 1870, he went to the western United States and fought in the Modoc Indian war. The Fourth Artillery remained in Sitka to carry out the geodetic survey and keep the peace between Russians, the few Americans, and Tlingits, while Washington deliberated over setting up a territorial civil government. In the meantime, following the depression of 1873, the political as well as economic situation began to change. The year 1877 saw the withdrawal of troops from both the South, where Reconstruction came to

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<sup>19</sup> Walter LaFeber, *The Cambridge History of American Foreign Relations Volume II: The American Search for Opportunity, 1865-1913* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 14-18.

<sup>20</sup> The U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs claims that General Davis first built the cemetery.

an end, and Alaska. Meanwhile troops were deployed to put down the Great Railroad Strike. Although Americans had renewed their pursuit of “Manifest Destiny” in the West, few were interested in “Seward’s Folly” as was noticed by the departure of the Forth Artillery from Sitka.

In 1879, however, a Tlingit uprising forced American Sitka residents to ask a British warship to defend them. Humiliated, the U.S. sent a permanent warship to Sitka and turned the District over to the U.S. Navy. But troops did not return. The Sitka military cemetery began to show signs of neglect. The Organic Act of 1884 established an appointed civil government for Alaska. The appointed U.S. Judge was Civil War veteran John H. Keately. He had just finished up his service and about to leave Alaska in 1888 when, from the judges’ chambers, he wrote the Quartermaster General in Washington D.C. about the Army cemetery: “The cemetery [sic] is not connected in any way with, nor is it in the same location with the Russian and Indian Cemeteries, but is off by itself about three-fourths of a mile east of the town proper.” The Judge believed the War Department should sanctify the space by turning it into a National Cemetery. Keately, who had served in the Army of the Potomac, believed that Lieutenant Kinny, the captain, and the others who fell while serving American interests in Alaska deserved commemoration because they had earlier fought in the Civil War. Keately implicitly recognized President Lincoln’s Gettysburg promise to commit the state to commemorate all soldiers who fought for the Union as part of the collective memory of the nation.<sup>21</sup>

But Alaska was not Gettysburg and it was difficult to justify the national importance of the military cemetery in Sitka. Few in the War Department saw the outpost as deserving significant recognition. In fact, nobody seemed to know exactly who was buried there. Captain

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<sup>21</sup> David Eric Jessup, “Connecting Alaska: The Washington-Alaska Military Cable and Telegraph System,” *Journal of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era* 6 (October 2007), 388-9; Letter, John H. Keately to General Holabird, 6 October 1888, NA, RG 92, Office of the Quartermaster General, Records Relating to Functions Cemeterial, 1828-1929, General Correspondence (Cemetery File), Box 67, Folder Sitka, AL.

J. B. Campbell of the Fourth Artillery, now stationed at Fort Warren, Mississippi, had served at Sitka during the military occupation. Campbell recalled the two officers from the Second Artillery whose remains were left in the cemetery—"Lt. Kinny was one,—I can't recall the name of the other." According to Campbell it was very difficult to maintain the cemetery even when military troops were present. "The Cemetery was enclosed with an ordinary picket fence; I had great trouble in keeping the fence up owing to the Russians and Creoles stealing pickets and rails to burn, and if no one has looked out for it since I left there, all trace of it has probably disappeared." Campbell reported that there was a record of deaths kept by the Assistant Quartermaster General at Sitka but he did not know where it was. He believed military commanders sent the book to the Department of Columbia upon abandoning the Sitka post. The Department of Columbia forwarded the record to the Adjutant General. But as different government agencies took control over Sitka, many names went unrecorded or neglected; some headboard inscriptions were erased by the Alaskan weather.

The poor condition of the cemetery offended Judge Keatley. He noted of his arrival in Sitka, "I found that no attention had been paid to this matter, because, none seemed to feel the same interest in the matter as I have by reason of having been a soldier myself." He requested that the War Department give him three hundred dollars to improve the cemetery and station a salaried Superintendent at the site. "There is not a civil officer here but would gladly discharge that duty, All [sic] have abundance of time to do so." Keatley felt a connection to this space because he was convinced that "some of them at least, were men who served throughout the Civil War, and are therefore entitled to as much consideration in that respect; as the thousands of others whose honored remains rest in the National Cemeteries elsewhere." The Quartermaster General passed the inquiry to Lieutenant Colonel N. H. Batchelder in San Francisco. Batchelder

believed that the War Department should exhume the bodies and rebury them at the National Cemetery in the Presidio. But Keatley insisted that this was too expensive and that the Sitka site should be declared a National Cemetery.<sup>22</sup>

Some repairs were needed, conceded the Judge, particularly the road leading to the site because the harsh Alaska winters froze the road and then the spring thaw turned the byway into an impassable mud bog. Keatley believed creating a road with railroad ties would eliminate this danger and allow pallbearers and mourners to easily access the burial ground. The judge claimed he could get free labor from the U.S. Marshall who oversaw the prison and only needed to buy the planks at twenty dollars apiece. He reported the Marines had volunteered to rebuild the fence and reorganize the grounds and the sailors of the U.S. Steamship *Pinta* would refurbish the headstones, which were made of wood and fast eroding.<sup>23</sup> The War Department appropriated the money and commissioned Judge Keatley to supervise the work. The Judge began the process of building a fence but left in April 1889 as his service ended without completing the work on the cemetery. He handed the project off to his successor but worried that, because his replacement was not a veteran of the Civil War, the work would remain unfinished. The cemetery quickly became dilapidated again. It was not converted into a National Cemetery until 1924.<sup>24</sup> The Sitka Cemetery reveals some of the limitations of Lincoln's promise and McKinley's reinterpretation of these commemorative traditions. The War Department's reluctance to sponsor a National Cemetery for Civil War veterans suggests that the military did not yet see peripheral Alaska as

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<sup>22</sup> Letter, John H. Keatley to General Holabird, 6 October 1888, NA, RG 92, Office of the Quartermaster General, Records Relating to Functions Cemeterial, 1828-1929, General Correspondence (Cemetery File), Box 67, Folder Sitka, AL.

<sup>23</sup> Letter, John H. Keatley to Lieutenant Colonel N. H. Batchelder, 17 March 1889, NA, RG 92, Office of the Quartermaster General, Records Relating to Functions Cemeterial, 1828-1929, General Correspondence (Cemetery File), Box 67, Folder Sitka, AL.

<sup>24</sup> Report, Lieutenant Colonel M. I. Ludington to Quartermaster General, 20 December 1889, NA, RG 92, Office of the Quartermaster General, Records Relating to Functions Cemeterial, 1828-1929, General Correspondence (Cemetery File), Box 67, Folder Sitka, AL.

American space. The building of the environment of memory that was both nationalistic and imperialistic was an uneven process that was not completely thought out by 1898. But as the nation turned to a global empire, nationalism and Americanness became more important to politicians and to nativists, Protestants, and capitalists. The quick expansion of the military and the industrial capacity of the nation was making people rethink the importance of the national identity-making project and the dead became one way to commemorate and celebrate the arrival of Americanness onto the global scene.

America's emerging global influence and the new nationalization that accompanied it helped transform the meaning of Lincoln's promise as well as contributed more generally to what historian Jackson Lears describes as the rebirth of the nation. He suggests a martial regeneration encompassed Americans in the late nineteenth century and individuals such as General Gordon and President McKinley helped revise American memory to accompany this nation reborn. McKinley's Atlanta speech served as a rhetorical prism through which to measure the distance from the meaning and reasoning of Lincoln's Gettysburg Address. Lincoln's speech dedicated space to those who died "that [the] nation might live," and gave resolve that the nation "should have a new birth of freedom." In a manifestation of the environment of memory, Lincoln used the religious understanding of the Good Death in the world of Victorian Christianity to explain the recent deaths of soldiers on the battlefield. They may not have died a peaceful death in the presence of their family and they may not have received assurances that their souls would reach heaven, but Lincoln guaranteed that their deaths for liberty were purposeful and that souls reached the Valhalla of the nation. McKinley, whose eulogizers would insist had inherited Lincoln's legacy as a Republican assassinated President, dramatically opened new commemorative spaces by extending a belated Good Death to those who fought against the

nation and that new birth of freedom. These Confederate bodies completely obscured the memory of the Civil War as a conflict fought over emancipation and thus signified the political transformation of collective memory. This permitted the President to argue that North and South, no longer divided by the memory of the Civil War, could look forward together to the new noble cause of American overseas imperialism. Southerners exchanged support for the global rise of the United States for recognition of the bodies of Confederate soldiers.

Remembering the Civil War as a necessary war to “save the union” and as a “fight amongst ‘brothers’” gained momentum in a world where Americans were reopening doors in Asia and acquiring colonies in the Caribbean and the Pacific. To sustain this imperial project, government officials were now prepared to share the environment of memory still surrounding the Civil War dead.

#### The neo-Confederate Environment of Memory

People who sympathized with the neo-Confederate cause saw the emerging American ascendancy in the world-system as an opportunity to further ensconce the new memory into American culture. Southern men had played just as important a part in waging war abroad as Northern men did; they sacrificed their lives, in part, so that Northern industrial corporations could generate more wealth. It was time, many believed, that the federal government reconcile itself to the past as well as present military history of Southerners. One of the most important ways to accomplish this was to incorporate the Confederate dead into the American Valhalla.

Previous efforts along these lines had failed. In 1887, Democratic President Grover Cleveland issued an executive order commanding the War Department to return all the captured

Confederate battle flags to the Southern states.<sup>25</sup> Many in the North ridiculed Cleveland for this. Although afterwards he attempted to smooth over Northern sentiment, the damage had already happened. The Grand Army of the Republic scoffed at him and reminded him that he was no soldier; he had paid someone else to take his place in the draft. The Republican Governor of Ohio and former Union soldier, Joseph B. Foraker, protested that the Democratic president had no authority on the issue and that only Congress could require such an action through legislation. He refused to hand over Ohio's captured Confederate flags.<sup>26</sup> This had significant local political meaning for Foraker. He had lost to Democratic Governor George Hoadly in 1883, but narrowly defeated him in 1885. Like Hoadly, Foraker had come from Cincinnati, Ohio's largest city nestled on the Ohio River; it marked an unofficial boundary between North and South with Cincinnati on the north side of the river and Kentucky on the south side of the river. Thus Cincinnati became a hotbed of proslavery ideas, abolitionism, Irish and German immigrants, and the Underground Railroad. As a region, this area was as much pro-slavery as it was anti-slavery. Hoadly had been a Democrat before the war, switched to the Republican side during the war, and switched back to the Democrats during Reconstruction. Both Hoadly and Foraker formed their political bases in Cincinnati, so their positions reflected the divided opinions of a city on the border between the upper South and the Midwest. Foraker defeated Hoadly, in part, because Hoadly's administration became embroiled in controversy. But he also gained political leverage over his Democratic adversary because by the end of Reconstruction, the memory of the Civil War seemed too divisive and people wanted reconciliation. Now Cleveland, a Democrat like Hoadly, had also instigated unnecessary controversy with the Confederate flags; Foraker's

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<sup>25</sup> For a history of the Confederate battle flag see John M. Coski, *The Confederate Battle Flag: America's Most Embattled Emblem* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2006), 65-70.

<sup>26</sup> For a discussion on Foraker and the battle flag controversy see John D. Weaver, *The Senator and the Sharecropper's Son: Exoneration of the Brownsville Soldiers* (College Station: Texas A&M Press, 1997).

opposition to the President's order helped him solidify his hold on the Ohio governorship. He won reelection in 1887 in part because of his hard stance on returning flags to the South. Returning battle flags to the South probably also hurt Cleveland politically on the national level. It was clearly an attempt to win Southern votes in the upcoming general election. In his reelection bid in 1888, Cleveland carried all of the Southern and Border states just as he had in 1884, despite hailing from New York. But he lost two states that he had won previously: both his home state of New York and the state of Indiana to his Republican challenger Benjamin Harrison. The great issue of the election was Cleveland's easing of the protective tariff, which favored Southern states but hurt Northern industries. But the battle flag issue certainly turned some people away from Cleveland and toward Harrison.<sup>27</sup>

The particular contestation in American collective memory continued until 1905, when Congress finally passed legislation requiring the War Department to return to Southern states' captured battle flags. This was best represented by now Ohio Republican Senator Joseph B. Foraker who had lost his governor's seat in 1889 but won the Senate seat in 1896. Foraker who, as Governor, did not support President Cleveland's executive order, as Senator, voted in favor of the measure. Reconciliation was at its height. Henry Grady, the Atlanta journalist, had spoken of a "New South" and Northern industrialists were resigned to leave white Southern elites to deal with the "race problem," particularly if it meant that they could exploit the industrialization of the South for their own profit. Foraker accumulated much political capital in voting to return

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<sup>27</sup> See Charles W. Calhoun, *Minority Victory: Gilded Age Politics and the Front Porch Campaign of 1888* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2008). Also see Joseph B. Foraker, *Ohio History Central*, <http://www.ohiohistorycentral.org/entry.php?rec=140>, accessed 10 May 2009.



battle flags to the South just as he did in resisting the executive order during Cleveland's administration.<sup>28</sup>

The first place to display a returned flag was during a parade at the Confederate Cemetery in Marietta, Georgia. The Ladies Memorial Association of Marietta and the United Daughters of the Confederacy, Kennesaw chapter raised money to produce a new monument dedicated to the dead soldiers in the cemetery. First conceived in 1900, the monument cost \$1,700 and donations of one dollar came from individuals across the South. Some United Confederate Veterans and United Daughters of the Confederacy chapters helped secure funds. On 7 July 1908 at 4 P.M., the two women's groups unveiled the monument to an audience over two thousand in attendance. The shaft monument stood twenty-four feet tall and the base was ten feet wide. On the pedestal rested eight-inch "cannon balls" made from Georgia granite. It included inscriptions from Catholic priest and pro-Confederate poet Abram Joseph Ryan. Several people gave speeches including Democratic Governor Hoke Smith.<sup>29</sup> Thirteen girls dressed in white cotton dresses with sashes and representing each state in the former Confederacy—all descendents of Confederate soldiers—accompanied the granddaughter of Georgia's Civil War governor, Joseph Brown, in dedicating the monument. Clement Anselm Evans, who was a Brigadier General in the Army of the Northern Virginia and the President of the United Confederate Veterans, gave the keynote address. This celebratory unveiling of a

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<sup>28</sup> See George W. Knepper, *Ohio and Its People: Bicentennial* (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 2003); also see Cincinnati, Ohio, *Ohio History Central*, <http://www.ohiohistorycentral.org/entry.php?rec=681&nm=Cincinnati-Ohio>, accessed 15 May 2009.

<sup>29</sup> In the nineteenth century, Smith bought the *Atlanta Journal* and used it as a Democrat media piece that helped encourage Georgians to vote for President Cleveland. Smith also used his own media to help his own election.

Confederate battle flag marked how uncontroversial such symbols were becoming not just in the “New South” but in the nation at large.<sup>30</sup>

In 1906, Senator Foraker took another step closer to reconciliation by sponsoring a bill that funded the marking of Confederate graves. This marked the legislative implementation of McKinley’s Atlanta Address. Foraker had introduced legislation in 1903 when it passed the Senate but failed in the House. The same thing happened in 1904. Foraker finally got his bill passed in both the House and the Senate in 1905. Immediately several groups applied to the War Department for beautification and reconstruction projects. Until the Foraker bill, state governments and local societies, particularly local chapters of the United Daughters of the Confederacy, took care of Confederate cemeteries.<sup>31</sup> But as economic conditions worsened in the 1890s, private organizations and state revenue were insufficient for the upkeep of the burial grounds; most became dilapidated or neglected in one way or another. Foraker’s bill not only financed the refurbishing of the environment of memory of military cemeteries, but also underwrote the cooperation of neo-Confederates and the War Department in producing a collective memory for national reconciliation.

One example of this collaboration was Oak Wood Cemetery in Chicago, Illinois, which contained the Confederate victims of the infamous Camp Douglass. During the Civil War, this prison had become notorious for abuses of prisoners. Sanitary conditions were terrible and many men suffered through the cold Chicago winters without appropriate clothing or shelter. It was also a prison where Secretary Stanton had targeted prisoners in retaliation for the massacre at Fort Pillow where Nathan Bedford Forrest murdered surrendering Union troops including African

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<sup>30</sup> Curt Ratledge, “The Confederate Cemetery at Marietta Poser Springs Road, Marietta, Georgia,” 1995, Marietta History Museum, Marietta, GA, 16-21.

<sup>31</sup> Caroline E. Janney, *Burying the Dead But Not the Past: Ladies Memorial Associations and the Lost Cause* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007).

American soldiers. Stanton had withheld blankets, clothing, and food from the men. Few people outside of Chicago knew about the cruelty. During and after the war, Stanton and other government officials suppressed information about Fort Douglass, in part, so that the Secretary could continue to wage a symbolic war against the South. Condemning Confederates for Andersonville would not have been as effective had most people known about Fort Douglass and conditions at other federal prisons.<sup>32</sup>

The Army initially buried Fort Douglass victims in the city cemetery. When the cemetery closed after the war, Chicagoans moved the Confederate remains to the nearby Oak Wood cemetery which had been used to bury Northern soldiers. The federal government purchased a special section for this purpose. Northern and Southern troops remained segregated inside the cemetery. The cemetery officials dug large trenches in concentric circles and buried the men without tombstones. In the city cemetery, records had identified the name, rank, state, date of death, date of interment, and grave number of each individual. In Oak Wood, caretakers recorded the same information in a book but did not identify each individual grave. In the trenches, cemetery officials placed stakes that identified a group of men and then they measured the distance from each individual grave to the group stake. By looking up the stake number, one could then locate the individual buried in the trench. This was a very faulty system. The record books disappeared during the Chicago Fire of 1871. Additionally, over time the stakes disintegrated and the final resting place of an individual man became lost. Although the identities of the Confederates were known at the time that their bodies were placed in the

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<sup>32</sup> George Levvy, *To Die in Chicago: Confederate Prisoners at Camp Douglass 1862-65* (New York: Pelican, 1999).

cemetery, they had now become unknown. This region of the cemetery became known as the Confederate Mound.<sup>33</sup>

As part of the reconciliation movement in the early 1890s, some Chicagoans raised money jointly with Major General John C. Underwood, Commander of the Northern Division of the United Confederate Veterans (UCV), to create and dedicate a monument made of Georgia granite in the center of the Confederate Mound in 1893. The forty-foot tall pedestal monument had a lone Confederate soldier on top made of bronze. It had four cast iron plaques with scenes depicting “Call to Arms” on the east façade, “The Veteran’s Return Home” on the west, and “A Soldier’s Death Dream” on the south side. The soldier was “a realistic representation of a Confederate infantry soldier after the surrender. The face expresses sorrow for the thousands of prisoners who are interred beneath.” Accompanying the monument was a bronze plaque that denoted the history of the monument and specifically cited Underwood and the UCV for its role in building the monument. Erected in 1893, the monument received official commemoration on Memorial Day in 1895 with President Grover Cleveland attending. Although the Cemetery was controlled locally, the Quartermaster General controlled the Confederate section in cooperation with the cemetery board.<sup>34</sup>

The 1906 Foraker Bill authorized the War Department to create the Office of Commissioner for Marking Graves of Confederate Dead under the authority of the Quartermaster General. This was a position appointed by the President. The next year, the Ex-Confederate Association of Chicago (ECA) appealed to Commissioner William Elliott to help them work with the Oak Wood Cemetery to identify the individual men buried under the mound. Elliott

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<sup>33</sup> Memo, Oak Woods Cemetery, 18 October 1907, NA, RG 92, Office of the Quartermaster General, Correspondence Relating to Cemeteries for Confederate Soldiers and Sailors Who Died as Prisoners of War in Northern Prisons, Box 1, Folder, Camp Douglas, IL.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid. For a discussion of the Memorial Day events see David W. Blight, *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2002), 203-5.

was from South Carolina and fought for the Confederacy. After the war, he served as a Congressman from South Carolina. President Theodore Roosevelt appointed him to the position in 1906. When Elliott died in 1907, Roosevelt appointed General William C. Oates of Alabama to the position. Oates fought for the Confederacy as well and lost an arm during the war; President McKinley awarded him a position of Brigadier General during the Spanish American War. In between the Civil War and the War with Spain, Oates became a Democrat, a U.S. Congressman, and then a Governor of Alabama. When Oates died in 1910, President William Howard Taft appointed James Berry who also served in the Confederate Army and was a former Governor and U.S. Senator of Arkansas. Commissioners tended to be older southern men who perhaps could be trusted not to stir up too much controversy but who played an important part in commemorating the cause for which they had fought; they were themselves symbolic of reunification efforts.

Although burial records of the Confederate Mound had disappeared, Major General Underwood compiled a list of names using the Official Records of the Civil War. The ECA appealed to the President and trustees of Oak Wood Cemetery to see what could be done about identifying the more than 4,000 individuals. After consulting with Oak Wood Cemetery's superintendent, the ECA decided to press the U.S. government for individual metallic plates engraved with all the names of the dead. The Ex-Confederate Association wanted the War Department to pay for it but Republican Congressman James Mann opposed it. Mann represented Illinois from 1897 to 1922 and aligned himself with progressives; he supported the Food and Drugs Act of 1906 and would later draw up the Mann Act of 1910, which prohibited the transportation of women across state lines for the purposes of prostitution. The Congressman was not opposed to improving the Confederate Mound. In 1904, Mann was able to appropriate

\$3,800 as part of “the first provision Congress ever made in caring for exconfederate graves.”

The Cemetery needed this money because the space around the mound had fallen into disuse. It was so dilapidated that cemetery officials found it hard to get people to buy burial plots near the mound. Mann’s appropriation allowed the Quartermaster General to raise the sunken ground around the monument and raise and clean the monument. The beautification of the mound made it easier for cemetery officials to do business.<sup>35</sup>

Despite this appropriation, Congressman Mann opposed the War Department adding any further embellishment to the monument. As Chairman of the House Committee on Elections Number One, Mann pressed then Secretary of War William Howard Taft on the issue. After serving as Governor-General in the Philippines, Roosevelt appointed Taft to the War Department in 1904. Mann wrote:

When the Bill in reference [Foraker Bill of 1906] to the marking of Confederate graves passed through the House, it did so by unanimous consent. At the time I reserved the right to object and stated, as I now remember it, that if it were intended to provide for the marking of graves in the Confederate Mound at Oakwood Cemetery, Chicago, I would be compelled to reject. I think I stated it privately to the persons in charge of the bill. It was the understanding and the statement at the time that this bill, if enacted, would not be applied to the Confederate Mound at Oakwood Cemetery.<sup>36</sup>

By voting and protesting simultaneously, Mann could argue that he supported the reunification movement as long as its consequences did not reach his constituents in Chicago. The fact that some Chicagoans supported the monument did not mean that all Chicagoans did. Evidence of this was found “on a granite block monument . . . on the eastern border of the Confederate Mound.” Thomas Lowther placed the monument there as a “Cenotaph” to Southerners who rebelled against the Confederacy. It stated:

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<sup>35</sup> Letter James Mann to William Taft, 24 December 2007, NA, RG 92, Office of the Quartermaster General, Correspondence Relating to Cemeteries for Confederate Soldiers and Sailors Who Died as Prisoners of War in Northern Prisons, Box 1, Folder, Camp Douglas, Il.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

To those unknown heroic men, once residents in the Southern States, martyrs for human freedom, who at the breaking out of the Civil War refused to be traitors to the Union; who, without moral, or material support, stood alone among ruthless enemies, and, after unspeakable suffering, either died at their post of duty, or abandoning home and possessions, sought refuge, and scant bread for their families among strangers at the North; to those pure patriots who, without bounty, without pay, without pension, without honor, went to their graves without recognition even by their country, this stone is raised and inscribed after thirty years of waiting, by one of themselves, an exiled Abolitionist.<sup>37</sup>

The proximity of the Cenotaph to the mound made this granite block a counter-memorial to the Confederate monument. Commemorated around the same time as the monument, this was representative of just how complicated the landscape of the cemetery could be.

The beautification project of 1904 was very uncontroversial. It found a middle way to make improvements that everyone could appreciate. It made the cemetery look better without acknowledging the dead soldiers anymore than what was already acknowledged. This allowed the ex-Confederate Association a space to make sacred and kept Union sympathizers relatively passive. Marking the graves of the mound threatened to undo all of that; it would, in Mann's opinion, "be a desecration of one of the most beautiful burial spots in the country." He continued, "The monument and the grounds, now constitute in the Confederate Mound, Oakwood cemetery, a spot which is the pride of all exconfederates and other people both from the south and the north who view it." Mann concluded his protest reminding Secretary Taft that the 1904 beautification project "suit the views and wishes of the ex-confederate Association of Chicago and I hope nothing further will be done, except the annual maintenance which is now provided for."<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Cenotaph, 18 October 1907, NA, RG 92, Office of the Quartermaster General, Correspondence Relating to Cemeteries for Confederate Soldiers and Sailors Who Died as Prisoners of War in Northern Prisons, Box 1, Folder, Camp Douglas, II.

<sup>38</sup> Letter James Mann to William Taft, 24 December 2007.

Not offending local voters was not reason enough to stop the War Department from acting on a Congressional mandate and the Commissioner was bound to act. The issue was so uncontroversial that the War Department actively tried to do everything possible to make the project a success. This became perhaps the best model of coproducing reconciliatory collective memory. Without undue offense or protest from the public, government agents and private organizations were able to craft a public-private coproduction of memory that stressed mutual regard and national reunification. After visiting Oak Wood and consulting with its President, Commissioner Elliott claimed that installing metal plates naming all the dead was impossible. Allowing for three-quarter inch letters and an average of forty letters for each individual dead soldier would necessitate erecting over fifty plates. Even the Ex-Confederate Association (ECA) agreed; this would turn the mound into an “iron yard” and obscure the view of the monument. Commissioner Elliott proposed an alternate idea. He suggested putting ten inch square marble markers flush with the ground all along the concentric circles. The integrity of the view and the landscape would remain intact and each individual would be recognized. Although this would be practical for the sake of space, problems arose because the individual markers would largely be symbolic and would not identify the actual gravesite of any single dead soldier. The confusion over the whereabouts of each individual meant that a marker would only symbolically mark the location of any given gravesite.<sup>39</sup>

With the exception of Congressman Mann, hardly any outside controversy arose from this proposal. Chicagoans did not protest and the government was actively engaged in recognizing the Confederate dead. In fact, the only real controversy over the proposal resulted

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<sup>39</sup> Memo, William Elliott, 23 October 1907; Memo, William Elliott, 24 October 1907; Letter, William Elliott to Ramsey Stewart, 1 November 1907, NA, RG 92, Office of the Quartermaster General, Correspondence Relating to Cemeteries for Confederate Soldiers and Sailors Who Died as Prisoners of War in Northern Prisons, Box 1, Folder, Camp Douglas, II.



from the selection of Confederate organizations to receive credit for the monument and associated work on identifying the dead. The negotiations between the ECA and the War Department continued for the next two years with significant headway made. They eventually scrapped Elliot's idea about individual markers in the ground in favor of upright plaques with smaller lettering and spacing. Near the conclusion of their negotiations Major General Underwood, who belonged to the UCV rather than the Ex-Confederate Association of Chicago, tried to influence the negotiations. This was a peculiar intrusion considering that Underwood had handed responsibility for the monument over to the ECA. Underwood had spearheaded the initial creation of the monument more than a decade earlier. He enlisted the fundraising help of General John Gordon. Former Confederate General, former Klansman, former Governor of Georgia, and first Commander-in-chief of the UCV, Gordon donated proceeds from his speaking tour to Underwood's monument. The ECA, which was civic and business orientated rather than military-minded, also played a role in raising money for the monument. After raising the money and finally building and dedicating the monument, Underwood ceded his and the UCV's influence over the Confederate mound to the ECA. But before doing this Underwood had built an iron tablet that explained the UCV's role in producing the monument. When giving up control to the ECA, Underwood also gave his list of names of the dead to ECA Vice-President Ramsey Stewart. Despite his giving up UCV influence over the Confederate Mound, the Major General wanted to be sure that the UCV continued to play a part in the commemoration of their fellow soldiers and received a clear acknowledgement of the organization's role in the history of the monument.

Without the consent of the UCV, the ECA and the War Department negotiated the design of a series of bronze plaques that listed the names of the dead at one-quarter inch height and no

space above or below the names. If they could reduce the average letter per name to below forty, they could fit all the names onto fifteen plates and fix them to a new pedestal recently added to the monument. This design would slightly modify the monument but keep the integrity of the landscape intact. The soldiers' locations would not be singled out—and thus they would remain known primarily by their association with the group—but their names would be listed on the monument. But this agreement with the War Department left out completely Major General Underwood.

The primary sticking point between Underwood and the ECA became the controversy over the history of the monument. Underwood believed that any addition to the monument should reiterate his and the UCV's original role in the building of the monument. But Vice-President Stewart of the ECA did not agree. There already was a plaque that recognized the UCV and Underwood; the name plaques had nothing to do with them and were entirely the idea of the ECA. In a letter to the Commissioner, Stewart tried to distance the ECA from Underwood, mentioning that he had “not met him [Underwood] or heard of him for the past three years.”<sup>40</sup> Because Stewart understood that the ECA had sole rights to the monument the ECA continued with their plans without consulting Underwood. By February 1911, they were negotiating the finishing touches to the name plates. The first plate would have an introduction giving all credit to the ECA for producing the monument and identifying the unknown soldiers. The trustees' preferred dedication claimed, “This monument was conceived and erected by the Ex-Confederate Association Camp No. 8, Chicago, Illinois,” and then listed the officers of the ECA. It made no mention of Underwood or the UCV. Underwood, who was also corresponding

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<sup>40</sup> Letter, Ramsey Stewart to Commissioner Oates, 30 November 1909, NA, RG 92, Office of the Quartermaster General, Correspondence Relating to Cemeteries for Confederate Soldiers and Sailors Who Died as Prisoners of War in Northern Prisons, Box 1, Folder, Camp Douglas, IL.

with the War Department's commissioner, received an advance copy of the proposal and objected that the ECA left out important contributors who deserved recognition.

In a series of letters, Underwood informed Commissioner James Berry, who had replaced the deceased Commissioner Elliott, of his concerns:

No personal objection to Camp # 8's receiving more credit than its [sic] entitled to obtain; but I shall present to the Congressional Library a duplicate copy of my autographic report-book, "The Confederate Dead at Chicago," that I may thereby place on public file, the exact conditions and facts relating to the whole matter.

Underwood was very anxious that the ECA trustees might eliminate his iron explanatory tablet. He asked Commissioner Berry to protect his contributions. Underwood wrote, "The burial plot belongs to the government, not to the ex-Confederates; and I wish the stamp of your authority, to go to the Cemetery people, that such officials may feel bound to respect your instructions." He claimed that the Ex-Confederate Association had made the ground worse over the years and accused them of taking down a small grove of trees near the monument. Although Underwood admitted he had not seen the monument for some years, he had heard that the trees had all been cut and "the monument now stands out in bold relief, without its natural grove ornamentation." He concluded his letter stating that the destruction of the grove made him fear even more that the ECA would tear down his iron explanatory tablet. "I want to guard against the possible removal of the 'outside tablet' ever being taken away, and that can only be done by mandate from the strong arm of the Government controlling." This was a striking moment: a member of the United Confederate Veterans asking the War Department of the United States to protect his commemorative legacy in a Chicago cemetery from another group of former Confederates who were seeking to remember the same fallen comrades as Underwood. Perhaps even more striking

was that representatives of the federal government successfully mediated the argument between the two Confederate organizations.<sup>41</sup>

Commissioner Berry, himself a member of the UCV, tried to intervene. He wrote the ECA trustees and asked that they consider General Underwood's proposal to change the inscription on the introductory panel. Underwood proposed the insertion of the following:

And erected under authority from said Association, by funds obtained from people of Chicago, embracing the net proceeds of the [General] Gordon Lecture, and various contributions by prominent citizens thereof, together with numerous donations made by various U. C. V. Camps throughout the Southern States, and by friends in all sections.

Berry believed that by including Underwood's desired words, there would not be enough space on the plate. The ECA agreed and added only the following to the dedication plate: "And dedicated May 30, 1895. Major General John C. Underwood, Commanding Northern Division, U.C.V., West of the Alleghenies."<sup>42</sup>

The actions of the War Department in 1911 were far removed from the actions of the War Department in the 1860s and 1870s. The debate between Underwood and the UCV and the ECA trustees demonstrates that the controversy over commemorating Confederate soldiers in the North was no more. Roosevelt and Taft handed the control of commemorating Confederate graves to Commissioners who were former Confederates and Democrats albeit with the oversight of the War Department. In fact the only voices that arose in this new realm of reconciliatory memory were those of former competing organizations of Confederates. The rivalry over which group should receive credit demonstrated how legitimate the neo-Confederate memory of the

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<sup>41</sup> Letter, John Underwood to James Berry, 30 March 1911; Letter, John Underwood to James Berry, 6 April 1911, NA, RG 92, Office of the Quartermaster General, Correspondence Relating to Cemeteries for Confederate Soldiers and Sailors Who Died as Prisoners of War in Northern Prisons, Box 1, Folder, Camp Douglas, II.

<sup>42</sup> Letter James Berry to Ex-Confederate Association Trustees, 18 March 1911; Memo Ex-Confederate Association Trustees, NA, RG 92, Office of the Quartermaster General, Correspondence Relating to Cemeteries for Confederate Soldiers and Sailors Who Died as Prisoners of War in Northern Prisons, Box 1, Folder, Camp Douglas, II.

Civil War was becoming by 1911. The significance of these cemeteries no longer threatened Northerners or Republicans. Indeed they had helped perpetuate these locations. Needless to say, Chicagoans and African Americans were not consulted; it was an issue singularly between the War Department and Confederate organizations. This was a memory worked out largely by people who had served in one capacity or another on the side of the Confederacy. The cooperation between these groups further obscured the Civil War as a conflict over slavery and emancipation and highlighted instead a memory that facilitated the new American empire of nativists, Protestants, and capitalists.

#### Environment of Memory and the Resistance of the Federal Government

The Confederate Mound in Chicago demonstrated how the incorporation of the Confederate dead could follow from and further promote reconciliation. But the environment of memory surrounding the dead also made it possible for neo-Confederate organizations to resist attempts by the federal government to turn Confederate spaces into innocuous locations. While government and neo-Confederate agents cooperated in Chicago they were often at odds at Johnson's Island on Lake Erie, the location of a cemetery of Confederate officers who had died as prisoners of war. Perhaps this was because federal officials dealt with the United Daughters of the Confederacy (UDC) at Johnson's Island, which introduced a different set of gender dynamics into the negotiations. Women's memorial groups were the main agents of commemorating the Confederate dead. Although focusing on Ladies' Memorial Associations rather than the UDC, Caroline Janney argues in *Burying the Dead but Not the Past* that women's memorial associations in Virginia gave their members access to the public sphere, where they developed their own mourning traditions. These traditions were often connected to the

revanchist Lost Cause movement.<sup>43</sup> Marginalized by their femininity during wartime, yet bearing the conflict's costs as mothers, wives, and daughters of the dead, these women were more committed to the cause than the surviving men who could bond with their former enemies. The expansion of Lincoln's promise, in concert with the movement for reconciliation and reunion challenged those irreconcilables and their control of Southern collective memory. They understood that, by extending the promise to the Confederate dead, the Lost Cause would become effectively a dead cause. Perhaps this is why the Cincinnati chapter of the UDC, unlike the ECA in Chicago, resisted attempts by federal agents to cultivate a reconciliation of the clashing collective memories of the Civil War.

The Union Army had built a prison on Johnson's Island to secure Confederate officers during the war. Those who died were buried there. In the years following, the debate over whether or not the federal government should commemorate the Confederate dead erupted when Ohio Governor Joseph Foraker used state monies to repair the neglected Confederate prisoner cemeteries at Camp Chase near Columbus. It seems that the Governor's confrontation with Cleveland over battle flags did not mean that the Ohioan had no interest in commemorating Confederate soldiers. His political base in Cincinnati, and the desire for Americans to reconcile with the South, gave him the political motivation to support the commemoration of Confederate soldiers in Columbus. Camp Chase near the state capital demonstrated the Governor's ability simultaneously to oppose President Cleveland and the federal government at the national level while supporting the state's role in commemorating the Confederate dead. But as Senator Foraker shifted his political stance and endorsed the federal government's involvement, the controversy coalesced around whether or not the federal government should commemorate the dead on Johnson's Island. In part, this controversy stemmed from the War Department's historic

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<sup>43</sup> Caroline E. Janney, *Burying the Dead But Not the Past*.

ambivalence about the site. During the war, it had leased the land for the prison. Congress appropriated money to maintain the cemetery in the 1870s so long as the government could eventually take possession of the land. But the owner of the island, L. B. Johnson, refused to sell to the government. Eventually the lease ran out and federal funding dried up. Thus Johnson sold the cemetery to the United Daughters of the Confederacy in 1905, after the United Daughters of the Confederacy chapter from Cincinnati, in association with several Southern Mason organizations, raised the necessary funds. In taking control of the cemetery, the UDC was apparently in a position to construct its own meaning of the dead and the case for which they gave their lives.<sup>44</sup>

Across the bay in Sandusky, Ohio, Cedar Point Amusement Park became an important magnet for tourism. Founded in 1870, the peninsula jutting out into Lake Erie slowly developed from a beach area to a vacation destination. In 1897 developers attempted to capitalize on the popularity of the area by turning parts of nearby Johnson's Island into a hotel and resort. The initial hotel failed because it could not compete with Cedar Point. Developers tried again in 1904 but again eventually failed. The attempts to develop the island led the UDC of Cincinnati to step up its efforts to preserve the cemetery where a few hundred Confederates lay. They were especially concerned that tourists and the commercial interests luring them to the island would trample the gravesites or otherwise desecrate the cemetery. The Cincinnati UDC wanted to build a fence to protect the burial ground. Unlike the voluntary efforts of Southern women decorating and caring for Confederate graves in the postwar years, the 1906 Foraker Bill gave the UDC the chance to secure federal funds for this purpose. In 1907, the head of the Cincinnati Robert Patton chapter of the UDC was the newly elected Mary Patton Hudson. When she wrote to the

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<sup>44</sup> Department of Veterans Affairs, Johnson's Island, [http://www.cem.va.gov/CEM/cems/lots/confed\\_stockade.asp](http://www.cem.va.gov/CEM/cems/lots/confed_stockade.asp), accessed 22 December 2008.

War Department about fencing the cemetery, she quoted from the Foraker Bill and claimed that it required the War Department to build the fence at government expense. In the meantime the UDC had raised the money to commission a monument to the soldiers. Hudson wanted to dedicate the monument in October 1908 and she wanted the fence completed by the time of the dedication. Unable to pay for both the monument and the fence, she realized that the Foraker Bill provided an important source of additional funding. It allowed the UDC to maintain control of the property while using federal money to secure the space. Hudson clearly intended to use the Foraker bill as a way to enlist government aid without having to accept the requirement of Lincoln's promise that practitioners nationalize the dead.<sup>45</sup>

This was not how the War Department officials hoped to work with the UDC. The Johnson's Island cemetery, argued Secretary of War William Howard Taft, did not necessarily apply to the Foraker Bill. The UDC owned the cemetery, not the federal government. Many inside the War Department were willing to build the fence but only if the UDC agreed to sell the land to the federal government. In fact, Taft interpreted the legislation to mean that he could only act if the government explicitly owned the property in question. In other words, Taft believed that the bill authorized him to take on the responsibility of caring for the Confederate dead only if he could cover the dead in a manner envisioned by Lincoln as modified by McKinley and Foraker. Seeking to justify this interpretation of the bill, Commissioner Elliott investigated Hudson's claims. He forwarded Hudson's letter to the Judge Advocate General (JAG) and asked whether he should act on Hudson's request. JAG Major General George B. Davis investigated the matter. He recommended that despite the clause in the Foraker bill that required the War Department "to acquire possession or control" of the burial grounds to which it

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<sup>45</sup> Letter, Mary Patton Hudson to William Elliott, 4 April 1907, NA, RG 92, Office of the Quartermaster General, Correspondence Relating to Cemeteries for Confederate Soldiers and Sailors Who Died as Prisoners of War in Northern Prisons, Box 1, Folder, Johnson's Island No. 1.



improved, the Secretary of War could build a fence around the Johnson's Island cemetery without owning or administering the location.<sup>46</sup> Commissioner Elliott and the Quartermaster General did not agree with this judgment as they believed it threatened their ability to negotiate on advantageous terms the extension of Lincoln's promise to the Confederate dead. Elliott went to discuss the matter with Davis in person and Davis responded to his objections by backpedaling on his legal opinion. He claimed rather, "The whole thing is in the discretion of the Secretary, whether simply to get 'possession or control', or to take title; and also, whether or not to do the stipulated work according to the conditions of each case."<sup>47</sup>

Elliott came away from the meeting with the understanding that the War Department would need the deed to the land before undertaking any work at the cemetery. His final report associated the ideas of McKinley's Atlanta speech with the provisions of Foraker's bill. Elliott interpreted the President as referring only to Confederate soldiers and not Confederate prisoners who died while in prison and the Commissioner concluded that Johnson's Island was outside jurisdiction of Foraker's bill. The precedent for Johnson's Island, Elliot reasoned, was the creation of the Camp Chase cemetery in Ohio, which the government bought in 1879.

Quartermaster General Meigs had taken responsibility for that cemetery claiming that the United States could not guarantee security of the cemetery unless the government possessed the land. Improved cemeteries habitually fell into neglect once local Confederate societies ran out of money; to protect the remains forever, it was necessary, claimed Meigs, to own the property. This precedent convinced Elliott that the War Department should take possession of Johnson's

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<sup>46</sup> Report, George B. Davis to William Elliott, 10 April 1907, NA, RG 92, Office of the Quartermaster General, Correspondence Relating to Cemeteries for Confederate Soldiers and Sailors Who Died as Prisoners of War in Northern Prisons, Box 1, Folder, Johnson's Island No. 1.

<sup>47</sup> Report, William Elliott to Quartermaster General, 17 April 1907, NA, RG 92, Office of the Quartermaster General, Correspondence Relating to Cemeteries for Confederate Soldiers and Sailors Who Died as Prisoners of War in Northern Prisons, Box 1, Folder, Johnson's Island No. 1.

Island before it could build the fence around the cemetery. But Elliott seemed to overlook the fact that Meigs and the succeeding Quartermasters General had in fact also neglected the Camp Chase cemetery prompting then Governor Foraker to use state money to repair the federally-owned burial ground. Thus, despite that the Foraker Bill actually had significant connections with Camp Chase, Elliott asserted that the bill was never intended for the “temporarily remedying the evils complained of, with the result that in a few years everything would revert to the old condition of ‘old neglect.’” It is likely that Elliott was using his position to see to it that the cemetery of his fellow rebels was preserved; only government ownership could prevent neglect, he believed. The reality was that Foraker’s bill was supposed to force the War Department to maintain Confederate burial grounds; something that officials had been reluctant to do without Congressional oversight. But without understanding this context completely, Elliott reiterated, probably at Taft’s behest, that the Foraker Bill gave the Secretary of War, “power in his discretion” to implement the appropriation. This discretionary provision largely came out of Senator Mann’s protestations over the interference of the War Department in Oak Wood cemetery. The context of Mann’s concerns was that he was seeking to minimize the War Department’s ability to add to the Confederate Mound. He argued that the bill, without discretionary power, would require the Secretary of War to “put up a lot of little dinky slabs around this beautiful monument and then put a fence around it.” Commissioner Elliott believed that the same context applied to Johnson’s Island and that Secretary Taft should use his discretionary power and buy the cemetery before agreeing to build the fence to enclose it.<sup>48</sup>

The outcome of this policy review did not please Mrs. Hudson. Commissioner Elliott responded to Hudson informing her that Secretary of War Taft would build the fence but only after the UDC deeded the cemetery to the War Department. Elliott complimented “the

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<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

sacrificing spirit which, before the passage of the act, prompted you and your friends to acquire possession of the cemetery, and, also, the very efficient work done by you in carrying out your views.” He continued, “Now that Congress has legislated the subject he [Taft] feels it is his duty, without interfering with the good work usually done by such organizations as yours in similar cases.” He concluded by noting that the act “was intended to protect these graves from any possible disturbance in the years to come; that it looks to their care for all time; that the act contemplated ownership by the Government as being the best way to accomplish these purposes.”<sup>49</sup> This had been the model established in Chicago with the ECA and Elliott believed it could be used again in this context. Hudson and the UDC, however, believed these terms to be unacceptable. When she took them to her members and the male advisory board, they voted not to sell the space.

This turned into quite a dramatic standoff between officials of the federal government and the membership of the UDC. The tradition of Southern women taking care of Confederate dead was long established. The U.S. government had refused in the past to take care of these bodies, and it was left up to Southerners, particularly white elite women, to commemorate the soldiers’ actions and preserve their burial grounds. Without state or federal monies, this responsibility proved very difficult. Hudson was adamant about keeping control of the cemetery. She continued corresponding with the heads of various groups in the South, particularly local Masons, to raise money for the monument. This was an energetic refutation of the federal government and it demonstrated how keen Hudson, the UDC, and many Mason groups were at keeping the U.S. government from controlling the memory of Johnson’s Island. The government’s control of Johnson’s Island threatened to turn the burial grounds into a site of

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<sup>49</sup> Letter, William Elliott to Mary Patton Hudson, 10 May 1907, NA, RG 92, Office of the Quartermaster General, Correspondence Relating to Cemeteries for Confederate Soldiers and Sailors Who Died as Prisoners of War in Northern Prisons, Box 1, Folder, Johnson’s Island No. 1.

memory that would disallow the UDC from interpreting the dead bodies buried there. In this effort, Hudson also began communicating with the legislators of several Southern states. Interestingly, she also asked President Theodore Roosevelt to intervene. Addressing the president as “My dear Mr. Roosevelt,” Hudson wrote, “It would not be only very unpopular and unwise upon our part, to connect to a sale but to fail to resist the action of the Government if such an endeavor as mentioned should be made.” She suggested that, “We desire to retain peaceable possession of the cemetery and the chapter has a fund for caring for the same and no necessity has arisen for such measures upon the part of the Government, which would seem to me little less than piratical.” Since she could not reach Secretary of War Taft, she asked if the President would pass on her sentiments to the secretary. But Roosevelt never responded or acceded to her request.<sup>50</sup>

When Commissioner Elliott died in late 1907, Hudson thought she might try again with a new commissioner. Just ten days after Elliott died, Hudson wrote to newly appointed Commissioner Oates. She stated coldly, “I heard from Major [R.W.] Hunter that Col. Elliott was dead. I hope you will feel a more enthusiastic interest in the work being done in Ohio than Col. Elliott did. I say this in no unkind spirit toward the dead old soldier—a gallant Southerner. But he never seemed to realize that our work was far progressed.” She explained to Oates about her predicament with the government. Hudson asserted, “Senator Foraker can tell you that I was no small help to him toward getting the bill (under which you now hold commission) passed.” Foraker lost the bill in two successive sessions primarily due to Southern Representatives in the House; Hudson maintained, “Innumerable letters were written by me to Southern members begging their aid in the matter. Among these J. Sharp Williams, Champ Clark, and the Ky.

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<sup>50</sup> Letter, Mary Patton Hudson to Theodore Roosevelt, 24 July 2007, NA, RG 92, Office of the Quartermaster General, Correspondence Relating to Cemeteries for Confederate Soldiers and Sailors Who Died as Prisoners of War in Northern Prisons, Box 1, Folder, Johnson’s Island No. 1.

members. They yielded the point against the bill and it passed. J.S. Williams worked for its passage.” She explained the history of the UDC’s purchase of the cemetery and how her chapter raised \$1,500 to commission a monument from Sir Moses Jacob Ezekiel. The Jewish sculptor was born in Richmond, Virginia but studied art in Berlin and lived in Rome. He would go on to sculpt the Confederate monument in Arlington National Cemetery. She claimed that Senator Foraker supported her cause, the Tennessee legislature had given her chapter money, and Governor Hoke Smith of Georgia “has guaranteed Ga’s aid.” She warned that if Oates came to the same conclusion to that of Elliott, then she would seek new legislation that would help her get the fence built, even though “It would be a good thing to keep Southern money for other purposes, if possible.”<sup>51</sup>

Hudson was tenacious; what she did not understand, however, was that the Commissioner was bound by the Secretary of War’s interpretation of the Foraker Bill. Perhaps she overstated how much influence she actually had; Hudson had not given Oates his commission, the office held to a Presidential appointment. Nevertheless, in March 1908, Oates again initiated an investigation concerning, “the vexed question which has been so much agitated by Mrs. Hudson.” The JAG submitted the same opinion; it was the Secretary of War’s discretion as to whether or not he needed possession of the land to make improvements. When forwarded to the War Department, Taft maintained the government’s position. Without ceding land to the government, he would not intercede. Hudson solicited the Attorney General of the United States asking him if he could legally intervene. She again wrote Oates with the Attorney General’s letter in hand. The Attorney General agreed with her; the Foraker Bill did not prohibit the Secretary of War from building the fence even if the government did not own the property. But

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<sup>51</sup> Letter, Mary Patton Hudson to Commissioner Oates, 17 December 1907, NA, RG 92, Office of the Quartermaster General, Correspondence Relating to Cemeteries for Confederate Soldiers and Sailors Who Died as Prisoners of War in Northern Prisons, Box 1, Folder, Johnson’s Island No. 2.

in this letter Hudson was more conciliatory. Since Secretary Taft would not change his opinion, she proposed, “If we should acquire some six feet more around the property—or yield some 6 or 10 of what we now hold – as seems best according to position of graves and deed this to the U.S.” She concluded, “Do try to see a way clear to help secure that cemetery from destruction by means of a fence for we cannot sell to you.”<sup>52</sup>

Meanwhile Ezekiel had finished the monument and shipped it to the United States but the UDC still had to raise money to build the base of the monument. She gained many willing contributors including J. H. Michie, the grandmaster of the South Carolina Masons. He wrote in favor of all Southern Mason organizations contributing to the monument fund. He stated, “South Carolina being the first state to declare her intention of fighting for a principle she then thought, and now knows, was right, the masons of this Jurisdiction should be among the foremost to respond to your call for financial assistance to help you in your noble, unselfish, and patriotic work.” By this time Secretary of War Taft had handed the War Department over to Luke Edward Wright and begun his run for the presidency. Taft ultimately defeated Democratic nominee William Jennings Bryan in the election of 1908. The Commissioner’s office fell idle as Taft implemented the transition to his administration in the winter of 1908-09. Taft appointed Mississippian, former Assistant Attorney General of the United States, and lawyer for the Illinois Central Railroad Jacob M. Dickinson to his cabinet as Secretary of War. A month-and-a-half after his appointment, Commissioner Oates asked Dickinson for his opinion on the Johnson’s Island cemetery and Hudson’s proposal to deed a six-foot-wide perimeter to the United States. Oates recommended that the War Department accept the deed as proposed by Hudson. Secretary

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<sup>52</sup> Letter, Commissioner Oates to Secretary of War, 19 March 1908; Second Endorsement 20 March 1908; Third Endorsement, 23 March 1908; Fourth Endorsement, 26 March 1908; Letter, Mary Patton Hudson to General Wright, 11 November 1908; Letter, Mary Patton Hudson to Commissioner Oates, 22 November 1908, NA, RG 92, Office of the Quartermaster General, Correspondence Relating to Cemeteries for Confederate Soldiers and Sailors Who Died as Prisoners of War in Northern Prisons, Box 1, Folder, Johnson’s Island No. 1.

Dickinson being absent, Assistant Secretary of War Robert Shaw Oliver forwarded the proposal to Judge Advocate General Davis who, this time, recommended that buying the six-foot perimeter would completely fulfill the obligations of the Foraker Act. Despite the recommendations of JAG Davis and Commissioner Oates, Oliver refused the request. In order “to look to their care for all time,” claimed the Secretary, “the Government should in all cases like this take title in fee simple to the property.” It seems that Oliver followed department policy established previously by Taft. Oates responded to Hudson and quoted at length from both the JAG and Assistant Secretary Oliver. Oates concluded saying, “It is, however, the decision of the Department, which indeed I regret, but I cannot change it.”<sup>53</sup>

In July 1909, Hudson wrote to former Confederate soldier and member of the Johnson’s Island Cemetery advisory board Marcus J. Wright who was working in the Adjutant’s General Office collecting Confederate war records. She hoped to work around the bureaucratic hold up in the Quartermasters General Office by building up sympathetic support inside the War Department. But this did not work either as Wright asked Hudson to write directly to Secretary Dickinson, “You will get a respectful and careful hearing and if the matter appears to him to be right, he will act promptly. Hudson wrote Secretary Dickinson five days later asking him to intervene. She stated, “We found that the Masons, Confederate Veterans, and all Southerners objected to our disposing of our title to the Government.” She added, “Through what Gethsemanes and Calvaries our sacred work has been brought to so near a completion, only God and ourselves know.” And she finally reminded the Mississippi-born Dickinson, “We trust that you, a Southerner, will help us in our dire strait.” While the War Department deliberated, she

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<sup>53</sup> Letter, J. H. Michie to Mary Patton Hudson, 1 March 1909; Letter William Oates to Jacob Dickinson, 29 April 1909; 1<sup>st</sup> Indorsement, 1 May 1909; 2<sup>nd</sup> Indorsement, 4 May 1909; Letter, William Oates to Mary Patton Hudson, 18 May 1909, NA, RG 92, Office of the Quartermaster General, Correspondence Relating to Cemeteries for Confederate Soldiers and Sailors Who Died as Prisoners of War in Northern Prisons, Box 1, Folder, Johnson’s Island No. 1.

again wrote to her ally Commissioner Oates, “I have again applied to the Sec. of War for permission.” She added, “If you see proper write again to yourself to Mr. Dickinson. This is my last hope – you see I ‘die hard’ on the subject.” After receiving this letter, Secretary Dickinson met with Wright. They agreed that the Hudson’s chapter of the UDC should hand over the title to the cemetery. In his letter to Hudson, Wright explained that it “would be a clear violation of the law.” He reminded:

You and I and all now connected with the preservation of these graves, will in the course of time pass away, and that it is unlikely that your successors will feel the same interest that you do; that the Government like the brook “goes on forever” and will always take care of the graves, I fully agree with him [Dickinson].

He tried to reassure Hudson by telling her about the “three little Confederate cemeteries” near Washington D.C. The Foraker Bill, he argued, allowed the UDC near Washington to control the bodies removed from the small cemeteries and reburied in Arlington National Cemetery without any expense. They were placed in the “Confederate section” and “The Ladies of the U. D. C. are delighted with the change; no unnecessary restrictions are placed around them – they exercise the same control they did before the removal.” He mentioned that the government built temporary stands for Decoration Day ceremonies and “our Ladies have complete control and have not a dollar of expense.” The same would apply to Johnson’s Island, suggested Wright, if the UDC would hand over the deed. “The fence will then be built and all the needed improvements made at Government expense, and you will still be in practical control. I earnestly advise you to have the property conveyed to the Government.” This was a huge setback for Hudson; appealing to Wright was supposed to help her cause, but Secretary Dickinson enlisted Wright to solidify the government’s position. Based on Wright’s recommendation, the government was not seeking total control of the cemetery. Indeed, the War Department was extending the government’s obligation to commemorate the dead at Johnson’s Island and the cost of this inclusion was



simply the deed to the property. This was an attempt to negotiate a consensus on commemoration, not an attempt by the government to completely determine its terms.<sup>54</sup>

Hudson would not accept the offer. She responded to Wright quite sarcastically. She did not even want a response from Secretary Dickinson. “Kindly say to the Hon. Sec. that we could not if we would and would not if we could.” She claimed the government could not be trusted and reminded Wright that when the government tore down the prison, officials had the chance to buy the land encompassing the cemetery when the lease ran out, but did not. “The cemetery would have been made the site of a match factory but for our Chapter.” She added, “It strikes us – however – as queer that your Advocate Gen. differs as widely from your Sec. of War.” Hudson concluded, “So now we know the Govt [sic] will not build the fence. We will.” In 1913 Hudson appealed to Masonic readers of the *New York Times*. A short paragraph appeared in the paper on 26 March 1913 in which Hudson stated, “We have erected a monument of bronze in the graveyard made by Sir Moses Ezekiel of Rome, Italy who is a mason.” She described the role of the UDC in securing the cemetery but admitted, “We have no money with which to erect a fence, and by the advice of leading Masons of the South we make this appeal for aid.” The UDC eventually built the fence but it could not keep control over the cemetery. After Hudson’s death, funding dried up and the UDC chapter struggled unsuccessfully to keep up the cemetery. Eventually the UDC agreed to give control of the cemetery to the U.S. government in 1931. This marked the end of the UDC resistance to the federal government over Johnson’s Island and also

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<sup>54</sup> Letter, Marcus J. Wright to Mary Patton Hudson, 8 July 1909; Letter Mary Patton Hudson to Jacob Dickinson, 13 July 1909; Letter Mary Patton Hudson to William Oates, 12 July 1909; Letter Marcus Wright to Mary Patton Hudson, 19 July 1909, NA, RG 92, Office of the Quartermaster General, Correspondence Relating to Cemeteries for Confederate Soldiers and Sailors Who Died as Prisoners of War in Northern Prisons, Box 1, Folder, Johnson’s Island No. 1.

marked the completion of the transformation of the cemetery from an environment of living memory to a site of institutionalized memory administered by the federal government.<sup>55</sup>

The places of memory underwent a consensus-building process in the early twentieth century. Representatives of official memory interacted with, negotiated with, and worked with representatives of popular memory to shape the new American memory based on McKinley's reinterpretation of Lincoln's promise. Many people, such as Mary Patton Hudson and General Underwood may have believed that the federal government was trying to take over the control of memory. At the same time, these individuals also understood that they needed the help of the federal government to preserve the commemorative spaces that they cherished. There were disagreements and negotiations but no one ever suggested that the cemeteries, or the objects they contained, be forgotten. Secretary of War Taft and his successor, Secretary Dickinson, refused to build a fence at the Johnson's Island cemetery because they wanted War Department officials to control the space to ensure its maintenance and preserve its commemorative power. Rather than eliminate the control of local societies, Secretary Taft and other War Department officials sought out ways to accentuate and publicize the memory of reconciliation; the fallen Confederates were powerful symbols that made the collective memory of the Civil War one of reunification rather than permanent enmity. Rather than taking control of Johnson's Island, War Department officials were seeking ways to perpetuate a consensus of memory based on reconciliation. Indeed there was little room in this version of collective memory to use the dead as symbols of Confederate resistance and perhaps this was what Mary Hudson and her fellow members in the UDC were most concerned about. Government ownership of the property

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<sup>55</sup> Letter Mary Patton Hudson to Marcus J. Wright, 21 July 1909, NA, RG 92, Office of the Quartermaster General, Correspondence Relating to Cemeteries for Confederate Soldiers and Sailors Who Died as Prisoners of War in Northern Prisons, Box 1, Folder, Johnson's Island No. 1; *New York Times*, "A Confederate Burying Ground," 26 March 1913.

ensured that the symbols of reconciliation were preserved but the cost of this preservation was incorporating the dead at Johnson's Island into the national collective memory.

## Conclusion

The end of Reconstruction and the downsizing of the U.S. Army after the Civil War saw an environment of memory that was multifarious. While black leaders such as Frederick Douglass and Ida B. Wells were commemorating an environment of memory based on emancipation, Southern whites along with Northern whites who had lost the will to pursue civil rights were supporting commemorative activities that stressed reunion and reconciliation over emancipation. Without absolute control, government officials were forced to negotiate with citizens and build an environment of memory based on consensus. Although the intellectual shift began with McKinley's Atlanta speech, the actual association of the material objects of memory to this collective memory began in the twentieth century. The Foraker Bill proved an important piece of legislation in this memory of reunification. Symbols of the old Confederacy gained in value while symbols of freedmen and emancipation lost worth in the collective memory of post-Reconstruction Americans. But reunification also brought a greater role to the federal government. The War Department took an increasingly active role in the reconciliatory memory-making process. Although some people, like those associated with the Marietta Confederate Cemetery in Georgia, could continue to have a say in the way that memory was produced, they could only raise the old Confederate battle flag once Northern Senators agreed to turn over the flags. In places like Chicago, the veteran groups and pro-Confederate business groups could reinterpret the memory of Camp Douglass prisoner victims but only if the War Department funded it and agreed to construct it. On Johnson Island, the UDC could not coerce

the War Department to build a fence even though Congressional legislation seemed to make it obligatory. Every attempt that neo-Confederate sympathizers made to legitimize the places of memory of the Lost Cause were met by a government presence in the way memorials actually presented Lincoln's promise. This would have significant impact on the collective memory of Americans as the Civil War generation began dying off in the twentieth century. As the environment of memory shifted to sites of memory, the absence of memorials, gravesites, and commemorative traditions meant that there would be no physical artifacts or ritual practices to remind succeeding generations of the importance of emancipation; it would be erased and forgotten. If the cornerstone of nation-building was actively forgetting, then the ascendancy of the United States as an industrial and imperial global power was realized from the racialized context of forgetting the emancipatory meanings of the Civil War. It would be left to the generation of the 1960s Civil Rights Movement to recuperate the sites of memory that had been obliterated and forgotten by preceding generations.

In exchange for consensus with government and War Department officials, Southerners were able to access the official collective memory of the imagined community which helped legitimize the neo-Confederate interpretation of the war. This came at a cost. People such as Hudson and the grandmaster of the Masons were out of step in their clumsy negotiations with the government. Seeking to continue the irreconcilable mourning traditions of women societies of the nineteenth century, Hudson used the UDC to resist the implementation of Lincolnian traditions at Johnson's Island. What she wanted was the government to pay for upkeep but give up all access to control the meaning of the dead. This was unrealistic in an American empire and became an unsuccessful long term strategy. The War Department, as the keeper of the dead and simultaneously the keeper of the American empire, would not allow these cemeteries to be used

to resist the newly forged consensus of collective memory. The ECA had a more effective strategy; neo-Confederate businessmen let the government help them reinterpret the Confederate graves in the realm of reconciliatory memory and in exchange, government officials legitimized neo-Confederate interpretations of the war and found a way to incorporate Confederate dead into the American Valhalla as symbols of reconciliation. This allowed the ECA to play a significant role in how the government maintained the cemetery. Hudson and the UDC, however, lost this influence after Hudson died and funding dried up in the wake of the Great Depression. The new path involved a move away from the local and factional understandings of the Civil War dead to a federalized and nationalized meaning.

Commemorating the Confederate dead in Oak Wood and Johnson's Island cemeteries would not have materialized had President McKinley not used the Spanish American War to transform the Lincolnian tradition of the Civil War. The memory of the Civil War dead prior to McKinley's Atlanta speech only applied to those who died in the 1861-1865 conflict. Thus the cemetery at Sitka, Alaska was completely ignored except for the unsuccessful suggestion of Judge Keately. Alaska was a place still outside the imagined borders of the American nation and the novel Lincolnian ideal failed to penetrate it. Likewise the spaces of the American frontier posed a significant problem when it came to commemorating the dead at the Battle of Little Bighorn. The defeat of the 7<sup>th</sup> Cavalry brought an ambiguity to the Lincolnian tradition of commemoration. Government officials had difficulty commemorating defeated U.S. soldiers who were supposed to symbolize the virility of American progress and westward expansion. It was the resolution of these sorts of limitations to the obligation of the state and the citizenry to remember the dead that shaped the collective memory of Americans and the imagined community to which they identified with. These sorts of limitations were resolved with

McKinley's Atlanta speech and the incorporation of the American dead from Cuba to which this dissertation now turns.

## CHAPTER 5—THE DROWNED AND THE DEAD: RECOVERING THE RELICS OF A SPLENDID LITTLE WAR FOR AMERICAN EMPIRE

I heard somebody dying near me. He was dying hard. Hard. It took him a long time to die. He breathed as all noble machinery breathes when it is making its gallant strife against breaking, breaking. But he was going to break. He was going to break. It seemed to me, this breathing, the noise of a heroic pump which strives to subdue a mud which comes upon it in tons. The darkness was impenetrable. The man was lying in some depression within seven feet of me. Every wave, vibration, of his anguish beat upon my senses. He was long past groaning. There was only the bitter strife for air which pulsed out into the night in a clear penetrating whistle with intervals of terrible silence in which I held my own breath in the common unconscious aspiration to help.

—Spanish American War Correspondent Stephen Crane

With what reverent gratitude we should express our thankfulness to a divine Providence that has so tenderly cared for the American people! We have been at war with a foreign power. That war ended after one hundred and thirteen days of conflict—a conflict on two oceans, a conflict in the West and East Indies, twelve thousand miles apart; with fifty thousand of our own soldiers on distant shores and twenty thousand sailors and marines afloat; with a loss in army and navy of less than two thousand, and without the loss of ship or sailor or soldier or flag by capture. Never was there a more magnificent army mustered, and never was there an army mustered for a holier cause, or under a more glorious flag than the Stars and Stripes.

—President William McKinley, Speech at Macon, Georgia

After the Civil War, the downsized American army redeployed its 30,000 soldiers to the American frontier. Despite its much smaller size, the War Department was responsible for patrolling, guarding, and intervening in frontier spaces along the American border including the spaces beyond the Mississippi River and along the vast expanses of the Pacific Ocean. Honoring the valiant dead from the Civil War was necessary—Lincoln even required it in his Gettysburg Address—but honoring the unsung dead on the borderlands of the United States did not concern most Americans. The Lincolnian tradition of commemoration did not follow American troops to foreign lands; it seemed that Lincoln's promise to remember the dead who fought in a noble cause only applied to those who fell on familiar American soil. How were Americans to honor the dead at the frontier especially in Cuba and the Philippines after the Spanish American war? This war did not exhibit American valor—most soldiers died from disease rather than armed

conflict. Would Americans continue to expand the Lincolnian tradition and build national cemeteries near imperial outposts of the nascent American empire or would the War Department repatriate those bodies to the U.S.? Would the soldiers' bodies receive a spectacular or a surreptitious burial? What was the soldier's relationship with the American empire and its frontier?

American efforts in Cuba brought a new emphasis to the Lincolnian tradition. Government officials realized that they could not win the memory war against Southerners. The best they could hope for was that it would just fade away. Cuba provided an opportunity for officials to cease dwelling on the past and begin looking to the future. The war had helped officials recuperate national memory and now they hoped to sustain it. It was a successful war in the minds of Americans and the McKinley administration sought to use this victory to pursue domestic and foreign policies when critics were at their weakest. The War Department thus deployed the remains of dead soldiers to garner continued support for American empire building. The war dead played an important role in helping justify what Cuban historian Louis A. Pérez, Jr. describes as a "moral source of United States hegemony in Cuba," the projection of Americanness. Pérez describes this moral righteousness "simultaneously a source of moral entitlement and means of social control by which to transact assumptions of domination" among Cubans.<sup>1</sup> Unlike the commemoration of the Civil War dead, the War Department initially had unchallenged access to the bodies of the Spanish American War dead and thus had the power to determine how Americans should commemorate the remains when the War Department returned them to the U.S for burial in American soil. The War Department even dredged out the

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<sup>1</sup> Louis A. Pérez, "Incurring a Debt of Gratitude: 1898 and the Moral Sources of United States Hegemony in Cuba" *American Historical Review* 104 (April 1999): 359.



battleship *U.S.S. Maine*, which exploded in Havana Harbor, patched it up, and resunk it in deep international waters beyond the reach of critics.

Coupled with the small numbers of troops involved in the conflict, this bureaucratic control meant that the monuments and gravesites did not evoke *milieu de memoire*, or environments of memory, for many people but instead quickly became *lieux de memoire* or sites of memory. These places of memory were appropriated by officials representing the nation-state who used them to gain support for America's involvement in Cuba. The politics of these places of memory also reintroduced the bodies of Confederate soldiers into the Lincolnian tradition of commemoration while simultaneously obscuring the Cuban, Puerto Rican, and Filipino independence movement. The historian Paul Kramer has described the invention of Filipino and American identities through "colonial encounters" that amounted to "the blood of government." It was from these colonial maneuvers that the bodies of dead soldiers and sailors, wrapped in the colors, entered the collective memory and imagined community of turn-of-the-century Americans.<sup>2</sup> American bodies became important symbols in the expression of American imperialism; they helped further the process of nationalization based on nativism, Protestantism, and capitalism through what historian Ann Stoler describes as "tense and tender ties" between agents of the periphery and the core of the world-system.<sup>3</sup> To understand the construction of "healthy" bodies, contends Stoler, one must look at the periphery where the "healthy, vigorous

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<sup>2</sup> Paul A. Kramer, *The Blood of Government: Race, Empire, the United States, and the Philippines* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006), 2.

<sup>3</sup> Ann Stoler, *Race and the Education of Desire: Foucault's History of Sexuality and the Colonial Order of Things* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1995), 11; Ann Stoler, "Tense and Tender Ties: The Politics of Comparison in North American History and (Post) Colonial Studies" *The Journal of American History* (December 2001): 829-865; Ann McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender, and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest* (London: Routledge, 1995). Stoler examined Dutch Colonialism and the non-violent or intimate strategies of imperialism. These strategies range from hygiene to schooling as ways of disciplining bodies through racialized categories. She contends that Europe's discussion of "healthy" sexuality can only partially be understood by looking at European identity at the periphery that was constructed in opposition to the "other." Stoler claims, "the cultivation of a European self," constructed through "discourses of pedagogy, parenting, children's sexuality, servants, and hygiene" were racialized. The British and Americans conceived of healthy bodies at the core only after classifying bodies at the periphery as "unhealthy." These bodies became the impressions for constructing a healthy social body.

bourgeois body” was constructed in opposition to the “other.” Although Stoler focuses on race, gender, and sexuality in Europe and Asia, historian Gail Bederman has charted similar processes around American masculinity. According to historian Kristen Hoganson, an American understanding of masculinity and empire were explicitly developed during the Spanish American War.<sup>4</sup> Knowledge produced from the juxtaposition of healthy and unhealthy imperial bodies at the periphery likewise was re-produced through new sanitary practices surrounding dead American bodies and presented to American citizens at home. This could only be accomplished in the wake of a wildly successful war.

These places of memory controlled and constructed through the bureaucratic implementation of the “tense and tender ties” of empire impacted the way Americans conceived of what historian Benedict Anderson describes as the imagined community. Anderson reminds us of Ernst Renan’s thesis that nations must forget as well as remember their history.<sup>5</sup> This was all the more so in wars for overseas empire. Perhaps inauthentic, perhaps ostentatious, the recovery of the dead from Cuba nevertheless allowed millions of Americans to participate in a new phase of the expanding Lincolnian tradition. In the wake of the war in Cuba, the United States became the dominant power in the Western hemisphere and began its rise to hegemonic power in the world-system. The U.S. joined the overseas imperialist community in the late nineteenth century and was in competition to replace a deteriorating British empire. Americans

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<sup>4</sup> For a discussion of the male body and American culture see Gail Bederman, *Manliness and Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States, 1880-1917* (IL: University of Chicago Press, 1996); E. Anthony Rotundo, *American Manhood: Transformations in Masculinity from the Revolution to the Modern Era* (New York: Basic Books, 1994); John F. Kasson, *Houdini, Tarzan and the Perfect Man: The White Male Body and the Challenge of Modernity* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2001); Kristen L. Hoganson, *Fighting for American Manhood: How Gender and Politics Provoked the Spanish-American and Philippine American Wars* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1998); Men were supposed to be white, muscular, dominant, and Christian. Clifford Putney, *Muscular Christianity: Manhood and Sports in Protestant America, 1880-1920* (Boston, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003).

<sup>5</sup> Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* 11ed. (London: Verso, 2002); Ernst Renan, “What is a Nation?” in Eley, Geoff and Suny, Ronald Grigor, ed. 1996, *Becoming National: A Reader*, (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), pp. 41-55.

looked back on the easy victory over Spain as evidence of American greatness. For example, when the Army Corps of Engineers salvaged the wreck of the *USS Maine* in 1912, requests from all across the country came in asking for relics of the ship. The disposal of the relics of the battleship was one of many ways in which the war would be remembered and national identity redefined.

This chapter examines the War Department's handling of the dead from Cuba. After achieving some control over the meaning of national cemeteries during Reconstruction, the federal government discovered that the new imperialism exposed significant limitations in the rhetoric of liberty that accompanied Lincoln's promise. To remedy this, and to gain Southern support for the war, the government recognized the contributions of Southerners in the war in Cuba and acknowledged the Southerners who died in the Civil War. This entailed altering the Lincolnian tradition. At the conclusion of the Spanish American War, President McKinley called for the federal government to begin caring for Confederate graves. Thus supporters of the Confederacy were able to access official American collective memory. This compromise brought on a whole new phase of the memory project, one which the War Department intended to control as effectively as possible. Although crafted in the U.S., the compromise was founded on the frontier. The relationship between the national politics in the core and dead bodies in the periphery of the American empire helped produce a nationalist discourse that justified suppression of Cuban independence as well as reincorporation of Confederates into the American collective memory. In the years that followed, Americans became more comfortable with what historian Michael Hunt has described as an ascendant United States.<sup>6</sup> This chapter explores the new sites of imperial memory and how officials integrated them into the larger

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<sup>6</sup> Michael Hunt, *The American Ascendancy: How the United States Gained and Wielded Global Dominance* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007).

notions of American identity in the context of military victory in Cuba and the beginnings of global ascendancy.

### Recovering the Dead for the New Nation

The invasion of Cuba in 1898, according to several historians, was an attempt to set upright the depressed American economy by engaging in imperial expansion. But it was also the beginning of a new identity and a new memory unfettered by the politics and poetics of Civil War and Reconstruction. The conflict began with the suspicious sinking of the *USS Maine* and ended with a quick victory that issued from an effective U.S. naval blockade rather than Theodore Roosevelt's charge up San Juan Hill or the Army's siege of Santiago. The overall strategy of the war saw the U.S. Navy blockade Cuban ports and cut off the resupply or evacuation of Spanish troops by the Spanish Navy. Although few moments of intense combat gripped American soldiers, the U.S. Army's strategy simply was to prevent the Spanish Army from escape. Trapped between the U.S. Army and the blockaded ports the Spanish surrendered less because they were dominated by American prowess and more because they could not win a war without fresh troops and supplies. Meanwhile, American soldiers surrounding Santiago had little to do. They grew restless and sick from mosquitoes carrying malaria and yellow fever. The terrible siege ended after only a few months.

The original justification of the American invasion surrounded the *Cuba Libre* movement in which the U.S. promised to aid Cuban sugar and tobacco interests and nationalists who wanted independence from Spanish rule. But American private investment in the Cuban economy, the sinking of the *USS Maine*, and the eventual U.S. military victory prompted many Americans to begin constructing a narrative of a "splendid little war" in which a superior masculine force

defeated an “effeminate” European army. Americans largely forgot about their Cuban allies. “The proposition of war waged and won by the United States,” claims Pérez, “purported nothing less than to redefine Cubans’ relationship to their own independence. The denial of agency to Cubans served immediately to silence the Cuban voice in the discussions concerning postwar settlements.” Thus, with many Cuban voices silenced, the Americans insisted that Cubans express gratitude for American involvement. Pérez contends that “the salience of gratitude as a discursive motif of the North American representation of 1898 gave definitive form to the normative context in which the United States subsequently arranged the terms of its relations with Cuba.”<sup>7</sup>

American critics of the war may not have been enthusiastic about empire, but they shared widely-held assumptions about race. Anti-imperialists such as German-American and former Secretary of the Interior Carl Schurz and Senator Benjamin Tillman of South Carolina opposed the annexation of Cuba not because they cared much for the liberty of the Cuban people. Rather they based their anti-imperialism on the racial arguments of white supremacy and “True Americanism.” Although the anti-imperialists succeeded in their quest to keep the U.S. from formally annexing Cuba, Ambassador John Hay, Rough Rider and future President Theodore Roosevelt, and President McKinley all believed that the war would invigorate American manliness and the U.S. economy and help the United States ascend in the world-system. If not able to obtain a formal empire, these political power brokers would turn to innovation making Cuba a semi-colony that marked an informal American empire. Thus Cuba would form the centerpiece of American informal economic power in the Caribbean, and the securing of Guantanamo Bay through the Platt Amendment—despite severe criticism from Cuban nationalist politicians such as Juan Gualberto Gómez—established a formidable naval base protecting the

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<sup>7</sup> Louis A. Pérez, “Incurring a Debt of Gratitude, 359.

future Panama Canal—and the Western hemisphere—from European influence.<sup>8</sup> Thus the 60,000 plus American men who fought in Cuba embodied a vigorous American presence in the world.

This began almost immediately the moment the guns fell silent as government officials were quick to present casualty reports to the public. The U.S. Navy reported a single officer killed and 18 men “including Cadet Boardman, accidentally shot at Cape San Juan.” Three officers and 40 men were wounded. The Army lost 23 officers, 231 men killed and 87 officers and 1,316 men wounded. The government added, “The estimating of the number of American soldiers who lost their lives through sickness in the war is a more difficult matter, because of the lack of complete reports from all hospitals. At present the Navy Department has no sufficient data on the matter. As to the army, 250 deaths is a conservative estimate.”<sup>9</sup> Although these statistics were reported very soon after the end of the war, they were completely inaccurate. Historian Walter LaFeber notes that “Some two thousand Americans had died of disease, five times the number killed in battle.”<sup>10</sup> Yellow fever scourged U.S. forces during the later stages of the war where soldiers had little to do and the hot humid Cuban climate made it easy for mosquitoes to reproduce. The skewed numbers were perhaps reflective of incomplete reports or perhaps they were intended to steer public opinion towards the conclusion that the Cuban effort was a noble cause. It was one thing for the military to bring a body home as evidence of a military conquest; it was significantly more difficult to preserve the righteousness of American empire with bodies that had been destroyed by a mosquito bite. For some, to go all the way to Cuba to die not from a gunshot but an insect made a mockery of soldiers’ sacrifices.

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<sup>8</sup> Louis Pérez, *Cuba Under the Platt Amendment, 1902-1934*, (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1986).

<sup>9</sup> “Losses in 114 Days’ War,” *New York Times* 16 August 1898.

<sup>10</sup> Walter LaFeber, *The Cambridge History of American Foreign Relations*, 146.

These were important “moral sources” that U.S. military officials hoped to exploit through the recovery of the dead. Hoping to avoid the controversies such as those surrounding the death of Custer, the War Department took complete control over the entire recovery process in Cuba. As a symbol of American rectitude, the process had to be hygienic enough to sanitize the soldiers’ remains from any sort of pollution that spoke of that tropical racial world and immoral colonialism.<sup>11</sup> To accomplish this mission, the military appointed civilian C. E. Norton as Superintendent of the Burial Party recovery operation in Cuba. The large island became the perfect space for the War Department to experiment with the recovery of soldiers’ bodies and use in the production of a revived national identity. Norton had orders to include “General Prisoners . . . except those whose court martial sentences include dishonorable discharge.” Commanders ordered him also to exclude “insular employees and other employees paid from Insular funds” because they were “not considered within [the] category of War Department employees.”<sup>12</sup>

Unlike the Civil War, the war against Spain took place overseas. While soldiers from the Civil War could easily transform places inside the United States into national sacred spaces, it was more difficult to accomplish this in foreign territory. This meant that Norton and the military would have to demonstrate that the men died a Good Death on behalf of American benevolence. Re-presentation of the dead meant everything including the reverent respect for the

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<sup>11</sup> Michel Foucault, *History of Sexuality, Vol. 1: An Introduction* (New York: Vintage, 1990); Ann Laura Stoler, *Race and the Education of Desire*; Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather*. Michel Foucault and Ann Stoler describe “biopower” as the use of biological knowledge to produce power. Foucault described it in terms of bourgeoisie sexuality and Stoler used the trope to interrogate the power dynamics of biology and knowledge as they intersect with colonialism. For Stoler, the category of race—something that Foucault largely ignored—gave the colonizer the mechanism to build power relations that focused on the colonized body and always subordinated the colonized to the whims of the colonizer. Anne McClintock, for example, examined whiteness and the marketing of British soap Monkey Brand in Africa to suggest that hygiene, deodorant, and whiteness was desired and blackness was undesired. Instead of Monkey Brand or other soaps, the U.S. military used chemical disinfectants when handling the dead from Cuba.

<sup>12</sup> Telegram, Ludington to Major Baker, 4 December 1900, NA, RG 92, Records of the Office of the Quartermaster General, Records Relating to Cemeterial Functions, 1828 -1929, Box 1, Folder Operations of Burial Party under C. E. Norton in the Department of Cuba.

dead throughout the entire process. If soldiers died a Good Death, it was imperative to respect their remains as relics of the nation. If any element of the recovery process demonstrated disrespect, the abused relics might generate public criticism of the handling of the dead—and the war. The burial party in Cuba had to separate the Americanness of the soldier from the profaneness of Cuban soil. Cubans and others who supported the *Cuba Libre* movement, of course, revered Cuban soil. But the American presence transformed the status of this space, in the minds of many Americans, with the discourse of the “splendid little war.” Pérez claims that “the representation of a ‘Spanish-American’ war suggested in more than symbolic terms a conflict without a history, limited to only two parties.” “The North American representation,” continues the historian, “also changed the Cuban relationship to the United States.”<sup>13</sup> Instead of Americans fighting for Cuban liberty, this discourse left Cubans out completely and committed American soldiers to fight instead for American expansion. From the perspective of the War Department, this discourse along with the racial discourse of the “White Man’s Burden” made tropical Cuban soil profane and American bodies noble. But separating nationalized bodies from “profane” soil proved very difficult, particularly in cases where the remains lay buried for some time. The remains and the earth had already begun to mix in some cases. In other cases, the mortal remains had decomposed significantly and all that was left was a putrefied body and embalming fluid.

Thus the American military set out at separating the nationalized from the “profane”; this proved exceedingly tricky for many reasons. One important difficulty was securing good sources of labor. Deputy Quartermaster General Solon Massey oversaw Norton’s expedition in

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<sup>13</sup> Louis A. Pérez, “Incurring a Debt of Gratitude, 359. Pérez and others have described this conflict as a Cuban-Spanish-American War but I have retained the American descriptor “Spanish-American War” to accentuate the American hegemonic presence in Cuba. It is important to remember, however, that the conflict involved Cubans, Spaniards, Americans, Afro-Cubans, elitists, laborers, and women among others.



Cuba and Puerto Rico. Norton commanded several undertakers—these men did the work of locating the bodies, digging up the earth, and disinfecting the bodies making them hygienic enough to transport to Santiago or Havana and then on to the United States. But Massey had real concerns with the undertakers. He believed that most of the undertakers took advantage of the War Department's reimbursement policy. Instead of paying them \$125.00 per month plus expenses, Massey recommended paying them \$100.00 a month plus "actual expenses." "The fact is that all these men put in expenses for full \$3.00 a day. They dont [sic] limit themselves with 'subsistence'. In this way they have as a rule, been drawing about \$90.00 a month for expenses." Massey also recommended that William Abbot of Newport, Kentucky be dismissed because he was prone to "drunkenness" and John Walsh of New York City be replaced because he was "unreliable."<sup>14</sup> Drunkenness, unreliability, and wages had to fall in line with the solemnity of the process or else they would undermine the respect for the dead.

Re-presentation mattered immensely and for such an important mission, the burial party needed men with experience handling unhygienic bodies rotting away in the Cuban heat. Massey warned that "most of them [the undertakers] have to be carefully watched to prevent slighting work." Some, he believed, understood the basics of embalming and were experienced in dealing with bodies shortly after death. But he added, "Not one in ten of them understands theory of up-to-date disinfection or the chemistry of the operations employed in preparing the remains of persons that have been buried and are found in various stages of decomposition."<sup>15</sup> Massey insisted on reliably following procedures. Failing to use proper chemicals when handling decomposing flesh, he believed, could spread malaria and yellow fever to local

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<sup>14</sup> Letter, Solomon Massey to Quartermaster General, 6 November 2008, NA, RG 92, Records of the Office of the Quartermaster General, Records Relating to Functions Cemeterial, 1828-1929, Box 1, Folder "Operations of Burial Party Under C.E. Norton, in the Department of Cuba."

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

populations. This fear was predicated on the scientific knowledge of the day. In the mid-nineteenth century, scientists theorized that putrefying flesh could contaminate the air and spread disease. Thus the importance of clean air and the preference for sweet smelling herbs or chemicals were of prime importance when handling the dead. But miasma theory was giving way to germ theory. Scientists believed that disease was no longer spread through miasmatic bad air but through the transfer of germs. Thus dead bodies could not harm the living except in cases of illness and even in this the corpse remained contagious for only a few hours after death. But this was not entirely understood at the turn of the century. Although the scientific community had disproved miasma theory, it had not yet fully penetrated popular culture at the close of the nineteenth century. Thus separating nationalized bodies from profane soil meant that the bodies had to undergo a chemical process that sterilized the remains and made them hygienic enough for transportation and eventual interment following public funerals. In spite of the military's acceptance of germ theory, the lingering residue from the age of miasma theory shaped many of the procedures of the burial party. For this reason, Massey was very concerned about the stench of the dead and the threat of disease emanating from corpses.

Indeed, most of the targeted corpses had succumbed to disease. Thus Norton's party usually began in early February because the weather was cool and the War Department believed, based on its understanding of public health and disease prevention, this would help minimize the spread of yellow fever and malaria contracted from dead bodies. But the War Department's need to recover patriotic bodies in a timely manner transgressed both Cuban and Puerto Rican law when it came to recovering the corpses of individuals who had succumbed to disease. Military surgeon Colonel John Van Rennselaer Hoff noted that "the local laws of Puerto Rico forbid the disinterment of dead bodies until five years after death, and forever in case of contagious

disease.” Cuban laws were only slightly less restrictive. Hoff designed the initial recovery policies in Cuba. In cases where Norton recovered yellow fever and malaria bodies, Hoff recommended that burial parties follow specific practices including the requirement that the superintendent stay in constant communication with the commanding officer who would in turn act as a liaison with local authorities. Establishing a good working relationship with Cuban authorities allowed Americans access to the burial grounds to recover the dead despite the obstacle posed by local laws. Hoff also recommended that all the weeds, grass, and soil be taken from the site or be decontaminated, particularly if the soil came into contact with the coffin. He also suggested that the coffin be disinfected before and after use with mercuric chloride and the body should be “wrapped with a sheet saturated in biochloride solution.” When transferring the body, it should be placed in a metallic coffin and immediately hermetically sealed and then the metal coffin should be placed in a wooden box. When transported out of the country, the remains should be accompanied by a surgeon’s certificate and a “certificate of the shipping undertaker” stating that all safety precautions had been taken in transporting the body and preventing disease. Both certificates were to be fastened to the wooden exterior coffin. This would ensure the safety of everyone handling the corpses and the identification of the remains.<sup>16</sup>

These were necessary precautions, officers believed, because during the war, soldiers were often buried without concern of local laws or the possibility of spreading disease. Army surgeon Marion F. Marvin, one of the overseers who worked with Superintendent Norton and who submitted his report to the Army in 1901, and noted the numerous types of burial discovered in the retrieval process. He described four kinds of burial: metallic coffins, burial in a wooden casket encased in an outer pine box, burial in wooden caskets only, and burial without

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<sup>16</sup> Memorandum, John Van Renesselaer Hoff, January 1900, NA, RG 92, Records of the Office of the Quartermaster General, Records Relating to Cemeterial Functions, 1828 -1929, Box 1, Folder Operations of Burial Party under C. E. Norton in the Department of Cuba.

any sort of coffin at all. The biggest problem for Marvin was the bodies entombed in the metal caskets. Those bodies, even those buried at the beginning of the war, deteriorated much more slowly than bodies encased in the more porous wood caskets. The partially decomposed bodies were awash in “dark, red fluid, which was in each and every case exceedingly offensive.” Marvin noted “When the liquids of the decomposing body were cast off, they were all collected and held in the metal box, and not allowed to escape as in other styles of caskets.” The surgeon reported that chloride of lime had been placed in some metal coffins. He commented, “In such cases, instead of there being a lot of fluid in the casket, there was a mushy mess.” Marvin mentioned that one soldier’s body was placed in a metal casket and enclosed with a blanket, feather pillow, bed linen, and “several suits of outer and under clothing.” The medical doctor commented, “All of these articles were saturated with the fluid mentioned and it made the removal of the body very difficult.” Bodies buried in wood coffins fared a little better. Marvin noted that wooden coffins with an exterior pine box saw the drainage of the red fluid but the “soft parts of the corpse remained.” Where only the wood coffin was used and bodies recovered had been buried for over a year, Marvin “found only dry bones.” The same was discovered where no coffin was used at all. The cemetery at the Las Animas Hospital that treated yellow fever patients, meanwhile, posed a different scenario. Hospital officials buried victims “stripped, wrapped only in a sheet, saturated with mercurious chloride . . . the bottom and sides of the graves were filled with chloride of lime and some six inches or more laid on top of the body.” This process consumed the flesh and fluids of the body within “a very few months, leaving perfectly clean and sterile bones.”<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Report Marion F. Marvin to C.M. Norton, 9 February 1901, NA, RG 92, Records of the Office of the Quartermaster General, Records Relating to Cemeterial Functions, 1828 -1929, Box 1, Folder Operations of Burial Party under C. E. Norton in the Department of Cuba.

The metaphorical intersected with the medical in presenting dead soldiers with “clean and sterile bones” that would not threaten the general public. This was why, from a practical perspective, Marvin claimed the best way for the Army to bury soldiers was without a coffin. Coffin-less burial allowed the flesh to decompose and, according to miasma theory, prevent the spread of disease from the dead to the living. But such treatment of the dead would fail to impress an American public dubious about America’s military presence in foreign lands. Military officials keenly understood the contradiction between nationalized dead bodies and hygienic sterile bones. Marvin believed that a coffin-less burial went against tradition and common decency and “would be so bitterly condemned by the general public” that he conceded that the Army should use a thin pine box with half-inch drainage holes drilled in the bottom. Bodies should be covered in chloride of lime. Marvin contended that this would make the recovery process easier and more presentable. Within a few months “the disinterring corps would have nothing but clean bones to deal with” rather than “a foul putrid mass, that resembles nothing on earth.” Metallic coffins, claimed the surgeon, should never be used. Prohibiting them would eliminate foul odors and eliminate “the possibility of infection not only to those engaged in the work but to those living in the immediate vicinity of the place of burial.” These measures, argued the medical doctor, would consume the flesh faster and make it “safer to import it into the United States because our disinfection can be and is more thorough when we have dry bones to deal with, we have eliminated the possibilities of their being any offensive odor and from any possible damage to the casket en route.”<sup>18</sup> After receiving Marvin’s report, Norton asked the chief surgeon of Camp Columbia in Cuba, Dr. A. N. Stark, for his view. Stark agreed that wooden boxes with bored holes in the bottom should be used. He suggested,

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

however, that naked bodies be placed in the coffin and covered with quick lime.<sup>19</sup> Thus in order for the dead to be nationalized, their flesh, muscle, and sinew had to be devoured. The realities of recovering the dead were obscured by the re-presentation of the dead to the American public. This was a fitting metaphor for how the realities of imperialism could be obscured by nationalist rhetoric and symbolism.

Meanwhile Norton began the collection work directing superintendents under him to carry out a specific procedure for recovering bodies. His report to Chief Quartermaster of the Department of Cuba Major Chauncey B. Baker described the process. When soldiers were buried in a Cuban cemetery, superintendents worked closely with local governors but when the bodies were in military cemeteries, superintendents did not bother coordinating with local authorities. They simply violated local exhumation laws. Superintendents secured local labor and had the power to negotiate wages. Norton claimed that most Spanish workers would work for one dollar per day but many Cuban workers would refuse to work for anything less than one dollar and fifty cents per day. Norton had several disagreements with Cuban workers and replaced the Cubans with Spanish laborers whenever he could. This spoke to the complex racial hierarchies that American imperialists encountered in Cuba. As historian John Marshall Klein suggests, the Cuban-Spanish-American War brought about a triangulation of interests based on race, class, and nationality. Klein suggests that Americans actively intervened against Cuban nationalists opposed to the continued presence of Spanish immigrants. He states, "Throughout the island, the U.S. military played a major role in preserving Spanish lives and property from 1898 to 1902." This aided, claims Klein, the members of the Cuban elite, such as satirist Ramón Meza, who despite his criticism of Spanish colonial rule before the war, "specifically wanted

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<sup>19</sup> Letter C.M. Norton to A.N. Stark, 11 February 1901, Letter A.N. Stark to C. M. Norton, 13 February 1901, NA, RG 92, Records of the Office of the Quartermaster General, Records Relating to Cemeterial Functions, 1828 -1929, Box 1, Folder Operations of Burial Party under C. E. Norton in the Department of Cuba.

Spanish immigrants to offset the island's large Afro-Cuban population and to bolster Cuba's Hispanic culture in the face of increasing U.S. influence."<sup>20</sup> Isolating Cubans and handing jobs to Spaniards was another way for the U.S. military to legitimize the Spanish in Cuba, limit the cost of the recovery of the dead, and restrict Cubans who violated the discourse of gratitude by demanding higher wages.<sup>21</sup>

Undertakers had to open each grave was supposed to be opened in a specific way. After finding the coffin, workers sprayed Mercury Bichloride diluted at 1/500 ratio into the chasm. Workers then inserted metal hooks into the grave, grabbed the coffin with the hooks, and raised it to the surface with ropes. Then they inserted cross boards of wood beneath the coffin to suspend the casket in the air. They cracked the top of the casket and dumped five gallons of Mercury Bichloride and a pint of deodorizer Carbolic acid into the coffin. If it was a metal coffin, they drilled a hole in the top and inserted the chemicals and then drilled a hole in the bottom and let the fluids drain out and into the empty grave. In the wood caskets they broke apart the sides and allowed the fluids to spill out. Workers took a portable military toilet filled with water and diluted Mercury Bichloride and soaked the body wrappings in the solution. Then the laborers spread the sheet along the ground beside the coffin and rolled the body out of the casket and onto the sheet. They covered the remains with the chemical cloth and transferred the corpse to a metallic coffin that workers had doused with Carbolic acid. Sanitized remains could occupy new metallic caskets. Then the workers sealed the metallic coffin with a rubber seal and a joint made from white lead. Once hermetically sealed, undertakers lowered the metallic casket into a wood box and sprinkled it with saw dust and finally diluted it with Carbolic acid. Letters

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<sup>20</sup> John Marshall Klein, "Spaniards and the Politics of Memory in Cuba, 1898-1934," Ph.D Dissertation, University of Texas at Austin, 2002.

<sup>21</sup> Letter, C.M. Norton to Chauncey B. Baker, 11 February 1901, NA, RG 92, Records of the Office of the Quartermaster General, Records Relating to Cemeterial Functions, 1828 -1929, Box 1, Folder Operations of Burial Party under C. E. Norton in the Department of Cuba.

stenciled into the wood identified the soldier and the destination of the coffin. Workers strapped the box together and then shipped it to Havana to be taken to the United States.<sup>22</sup>

The War Department experienced several problems in transporting the bodies to the U.S. They had no bureaucracy and no military code to follow in recovering the dead. Military officials were often careless, naïve, and even negligent in their handling of the dead. American civilians wanted complete documentation that undertakers had purified the remains from disease and that the bodies posed no public health threat. But military officials found this task difficult to comply with. The burial party of 1900, for example, collected 167 civilians and soldiers but the bodies remained in Havana for sometime because the New York harbor authorities quarantined them when Havana experienced a yellow fever outbreak.<sup>23</sup> In 1901, Norton failed to document adequately the 171 caskets his party recovered. Norton had to send death certificates noting each soldier's name, rank, date of death, and cause of death a week ahead so that New York authorities had time to process the paperwork. Instead, Norton gave the paperwork to the Assistant Quartermaster who traveled with the bodies on the ship to New York. Authorities in New York usually refused entry to the bodies without a death certificate and absolutely refused to let the Army hold the bodies in the city while officials processed the paperwork.<sup>24</sup> Major Baker telegraphed Captain Palmer in New York trying to head off a disaster. Baker warned Palmer that there might be problems with New York authorities because the death certificates were held by the quartermaster on board and not attached to each casket. Baker asked Palmer to intercept the certificates and quickly fasten them to the caskets before harbor authorities received

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> War Department memo to Major Chauncey B. Baker, 6 November 1900, NA, RG 92, Records of the Office of the Quartermaster General, Records Relating to Cemeterial Functions, 1828 -1929, Box 1, Folder Operations of Burial Party under C. E. Norton in the Department of Cuba.

<sup>24</sup> Telegram, Humphery to Major Chauncey B. Baker, July 1901, NA, RG 92, Records of the Office of the Quartermaster General, Records Relating to Cemeterial Functions, 1828 -1929, Box 1, Folder Operations of Burial Party under C. E. Norton in the Department of Cuba.



the coffins. Baker also requested that Palmer inspect the caskets because they “were roughly handled” in Cuba and many suffered damage.<sup>25</sup>

It seems that Captain Palmer was able to intervene. After inspecting the documentation, New York harbor authorities agreed that the remains were purified. They allowed the caskets to enter the U.S. and proceed to their destinations to become reclaimed national heroes. Major Baker learned from this experience and he reorganized the process in an attempt to make it more efficient. The Army could not afford to have the remains held hostage to bureaucratic folly. At the end of 1901, Baker instructed Lieutenant Bruce Palmer in Cuba to be diligent in overseeing the loading of bodies onto the ship. Baker explained that Palmer would receive the bodies from the head Superintendent of the burial party. The Superintendent fixed a death certificate and a certificate of disinfection to the casket and handed two copies of each document to Lieutenant Palmer. The Lieutenant took one copy to the head surgeon at the Marine Hospital and the other copy became part of the cargo manifest. The Lieutenant was to oversee the loading of the caskets and made sure that “they are so stowed in the hold as to be secure against straining or breaking open from the motion of the vessel and thus avoid the possibility of their arrival at destination in improper condition.”<sup>26</sup>

The nastiness and haphazardness accentuated the poorly planned recovery of bodies in Cuba; this seemed to contradict the re-representation of the fallen community to the American public as nationalized relics. But this contradiction was necessary because the bodies contributed to the military’s efforts to affirm the wisdom of U.S. intervention in Cuba especially

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<sup>25</sup> Telegram, Major Baker to Captain Palmer, 12 March 1901, NA, RG 92, Records of the Office of the Quartermaster General, Records Relating to Cemeterial Functions, 1828 -1929, Box 1, Folder Operations of Burial Party under C. E. Norton in the Department of Cuba.

<sup>26</sup> War Department Memo, Major Chauncey B. Baker to Lieutenant Bruce Palmer, 28 December 1901, NA, RG 92, Records of the Office of the Quartermaster General, Records Relating to Cemeterial Functions, 1828 -1929, Box 1, Folder Operations of Burial Party under C. E. Norton in the Department of Cuba.

in response to critics of the war. Many of the bodies did not have valorous deaths but the re-presentation of the war, especially through the media and Theodore Roosevelt's own account of his charge up San Juan Hill in *The Rough Riders: A History of the First United States Volunteer Cavalry*, conveyed to the public a gallant and heroic victory. Not everyone in the United States believed such accounts. In a letter to the editor of the *New York Times*, for example, the author who called himself "An American," ridiculed U.S. involvement in Cuba. "The Fruits of War," the author claimed, produced for Cubans, "an American master in place of his Spanish one, and the supplanting of his native civilization with our American one." This included, argued the author, "the burial of the old ideals for which every Cuban has fought and loved and sung; the last refrain of 'Cuba Libre' and the first stanza of 'Hail Columbia' or 'God Save the Queen.'" For the Filipino, the writer argued sarcastically, the fruits of war meant that "Filipinos will have won life and liberty from the cruelty of the Spaniard only to fill a grave and a tradition prepared by the humanity of the American." Meanwhile for America the fruits of the war consisted of possibilities "that hang before her like the fruit on the tree of knowledge in the Garden of Eden that partaken of, may drive her out of the paradise of nations or may lead her into a better one. Her hesitation is natural, for forbidden fruit is proverbially stolen fruit." The author sarcastically conceded to two benefits that came from the war. The first was that "our fighting qualities have not degenerated, if our statesmanship has." The second was, "The ratio in which to compute the probable mortality of our future invading armies: namely, 5 to 1—5 commissaried and hospitalized to 1 shot to death by the enemy." He went on, "Contingent upon the action of Congress we may establish a repudiation of the no-slavery principle (established at the close of our civil war by the freeing of our negro slaves) by the purchase (in effect) of 10,000,000 free men at the close of our Spanish war." Finally he concluded, "We may also be entitled to the new coat of arms suggested

by the amalgamation of a victory by arms with a spoliation by treaty; namely the eagle couchant before the hog rampant.”<sup>27</sup> This seething criticism of the war came at a time when McKinley tried to justify it. “An American” was not alone.

To counter such sentiments, McKinley and the War Department amended Lincoln’s promise and interpreted it as a nationalist argument that justified American military action in Cuba. This justification could not be found in Cuba very easily because American soldiers ended up fighting not for *Cuba Libre* but for control of the Cuban marketplace and the occupation of Guantanamo Bay. On one hand, the fact that the War Department brought the bodies home to the U.S., rather than buried them permanently in Cuba, implied that no noble cause validated American intervention in Cuba. On the other hand, leaving American bodies in Cuba even temporarily served to remind at least some Cubans and Americans of U.S. territorial expansion and colonial occupation. Such bodies could not remain in Cuba and receive acceptance into the American Valhalla promised by Lincoln at Gettysburg. No matter how splendid the war, the American dead had little or no national meaning if they remained buried in Cuba. They could only be turned into national relics after they had been doused with chemicals, sanitized of profane soil, and returned to American spaces.

The reality of recovering decaying bodies drenched in fluids, emitting a terrible stench, and posing a threat of infection contradicted the way the remains were re-presented to an American public. Government officials wanted to be sure that they controlled the discourse over soldiers’ dead bodies to reinforce the justification of invading Cuba. But in order to do this, they would have to transform the parameters of the Lincolnian tradition of commemoration and redefine actions at the frontier as inherently noble. This sort of transformation exposed a

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<sup>27</sup> “Fruits of War,” *New York Times*, 15 January 1899.

fundamental dichotomy; Lincoln embedded the burden of memory in the discourse of liberty while happenings in Cuba tore down the notions of Cuban freedom.

The attempt to resolve this incongruity began with the return of the dead from Cuba. In March 1899 bodies from Cuba arrived in New York. The *New York Times* reported that “The bringing home of the dead to the land of their birth or adoption is regarded as an innovation in the world’s history of warfare.” The transport ship *Crook* with bodies on board moved through New York harbor and “anchored under the shadow of Liberty’s statue.” The entire harbor remained eerily silent as the ship moved through it. Fort Wadsworth and Hamilton, which guarded the harbor, lowered the fort flags to half mast. Harbor ships also lowered their colors and kept their whistles silent. Personnel began unloading the ship at 11:00 AM the next morning. Family members of the dead assembled on shore to collect their loved one’s remains. Representatives of the Seventy-first Regiment assembled to carry the bodies of their comrades to the local armory for their own memorial service. Company I of the Thirteenth Regular Infantry, stationed at Governor’s Island, moved onto the pier to serve as an honor guard. Some 110 bodies were unidentified and taken, along with 259 other bodies (presumably yellow fever victims), by special funeral train “draped in mourning” to Arlington National Cemetery. The reporter noted that the caskets of black and white soldiers laid side-by-side in the ship’s hold and that, “Side by side or piled on top of each other were names suggesting widely different nationalities and races, a strange conglomeration of the nations of the earth brought together with the common object of defending the unyielding rights of their common country.” “There was no music, no display of flags, no cheering by assembled multitudes. It was a pathetic picture of the ‘other side’ of the glorious story of war.” With each body that was slowly unloaded and lowered to the pier below, the Thirteenth Regiment “lifted their rifles in salute.” But even this planned

ceremonial return of the dead was wracked by poor planning and even poorer execution. Military officials in Cuba mixed all the caskets together and stacked them upon each other when they loaded the ship; unknown remains headed for Arlington laid next to the caskets of the Seventy-first Regiment staying in New York. In Hoboken it took time to separate the sarcophaguses. “The work of unloading the bodies was slow, as the greatest care was taken with the coffins.” Of course the unloading lasted the entire day until 7:00 PM when work stopped with less than 200 caskets unloaded. It would take almost three days to unload the nearly 700 caskets.<sup>28</sup>

While ceremonies in New York commemorated the dead of the Seventy-First Regiment, a funeral train full of bodies left New York and made its way to Washington, D.C. where they were unloaded and prepared for reburial. President McKinley and his entire cabinet attended the service in Arlington National Cemetery. McKinley authorized an executive order closing every government building in the city for the day and lowering flags to half-mast. The entire artillery in Washington, a battalion of cavalry and a battalion of marines, and the entire National Guard in and around the city escorted the bodies to the cemetery. The site inside Arlington cemetery was south of the Lee mansion and mounds of dirt stood by holes in the ground awaiting the arrival of the caskets, each covered with an American flag. The burial party had been able to identify nearly seventy percent of the bodies. First the military escorted the bodies and stood guard over the caskets and then “thousands of people” came to observe the ceremony. “Some sought vantage points in trees or on the ramparts of old Fort McPherson.” Finally McKinley and his cabinet arrived followed by military personnel and foreign diplomats. The troops marched into the grave enclosure and surrounded the mass of graves forming three sides of a rectangle. Then

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<sup>28</sup> “686 Dead Heroes,” *New York Times*, 30 March 1899; “Soldier Dead Removed,” *New York Times*, 31 March 1899.

the President, his cabinet, and the military officials took the space of the rectangle left open by the military. Then the few parents who were able to attend entered the rectangle and placed flowers and wreaths at the graves of their sons. After this the military band played “Nearer My God, to Thee,” while the chaplain of Fort Monroe, C. W. Freeland, and Reverend Father McGee of St. Patrick Church consecrated the ground. As Freeland uttered, “dust to dust, earth to earth” the soldiers picked up handfuls of dirt and cast them onto the caskets already lowered into the ground. A military detail fired three shots from their rifles after which a lone bugle man played “Taps.” Fort Meyer soldiers fired an artillery piece every half-hour for the rest of the day. After the ceremony, the President’s party and military personal left and the work of covering the graves began. Gravediggers completed the work three days later. The mass burial at Arlington was the culmination of a whole series of official actions suggesting that, whether killed by disease or gunshot, whether known or unknown, whether regular or volunteer, those who died in Cuba perished in a noble cause.<sup>29</sup>

This practical implementation of Lincoln’s promise to a new generation of Americans took place while American businesses launched a second invasion of the Cuban economy. Environmental historian Mark Smith has noted that Americans saw post-independence Cuba as a “New Frontier” in which investors “displaced Cuban landowners by quickly buying up, at bargain prices, bankrupt or foundering properties left in the wake of the war.” With U.S. sugar production lagging behind domestic demand, argues Smith, imported sugar from Cuba promised large profits. Over the longer term Cuba’s protectorate status allowed the U.S. to significantly influence land distribution, the development of infrastructure such as railways, and even

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<sup>29</sup> “Soldier Dead at Rest,” *New York Times*, 7 April 1899.

citizenship.<sup>30</sup> The Reciprocity Treaty gave Cuban commodities special tax-free or tax-reduced status in the domestic U.S. All of this amounted to an increase of Cuban sugar production and exports, claims Smith, from \$17 million prewar profits to \$38 million by 1905. The war with Spain had given American investors unprecedented commercial opportunities in Cuba.<sup>31</sup>

While businessmen were trying to carve up Cuba, Americans were more interested in celebrating the new nationalism. The commemoration of the dead from Cuba, coupled with McKinley's Atlanta speech effectively turned the Lincolnian tradition upside down. An overseas war had brought together a nation once divided by Civil War. Unlike the fallen of that conflict, the war dead from Cuba represented a single people, not two opposed sides. This new project first transformed the 258,000 Confederate dead into valiant heroes. Southerners who fought and died in the Spanish American War seemed to justify the Southerners who fought and died in the Civil War. With this transformation in place, the War Department re-presented the dead as part of an honored community of the fallen that now included Union and Confederate troops from the Civil War. But exclusions tend to accompany inclusion. We have already seen the displacement of black soldiers from the collective memory of the victorious North. Now, it was the Cuban patriots' turn to be marginalized. A war for empire became the basis for a reunited nation. The war dead could play one last service, through removal from the semi-colony of Cuba and reinterment in new sections of Arlington and the other national cemeteries.

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<sup>30</sup> Rebecca J. Scott, "Race, Labor, and Citizenship in Cuba: A View from the Sugar District of Cienfuegos, 1886-1909" *The Hispanic American Historical Review* 78 (November 1998): 687-728.

<sup>31</sup> Mark Smith, "The Political Economy of Sugar Production and the Environment of Eastern Cuba, 1898-1923," *Environmental History Review* 19 (Winter, 1995), 33-36.

## Engineering the Recovery of the *USS Maine*

Justifying imperialism by nationalizing the dead bodies from a war of empire helped produce a new collective memory and national identity for Americans. Many Americans began envisaging the United States as a reunified nation with a mission to the rest of the world. Americans began seeing themselves after the Spanish-American War as new players on the global scene. Cotton producers had open markets in China and steel magnates had strong business connections with Russia as the Tsar needed steel to build the Trans-Siberian Railway. Nevertheless Russia and Germany also posed formidable competition to the U.S. in Asia. Historian Walter LaFeber notes that historian Brooks Adams charted the earlier global ramifications of the conquest of the Philippines. LaFeber states:

Adams used trade figures and money-flow statistics to demonstrate that the 1898 war marked the point at which the world's money centers since 1815, London and Paris, were shifting either east to Berlin and St. Petersburg, or west to New York. The great question would finally be decided by which side controlled Asian markets; it would be a battle "between the maritime and unmaritime races."<sup>32</sup>

With this scenario in mind, the U.S. sent troops to help defeat the Boxer Rebellion in China. Had the Boxers won, America's "Open Door" access to China would be closed indefinitely. McKinley ordered a small number of U.S. troops to invade China and help European competitors prop up the ailing dynasty in China. The defeat of the Boxers and the relative, although in no way total, decline of violence in the Philippines after 1902 gave the U.S. confidence and power. By then American-born anarchist Leon Csolgosz had assassinated McKinley at the Pan-American Exposition in Buffalo, New York and Vice-President Theodore Roosevelt had moved into the White House. Once installed as President, he used Gunboat Diplomacy and an alliance with local conservatives who formed a minority in Colombia to help initiate a civil war that gave birth to Panama and enabled the United States to build and control the Panama Canal. The canal

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<sup>32</sup> Walter LaFeber, *The Cambridge History of American Foreign Relations*, 170.



formed the centerpiece of the U.S.'s Atlantic and Pacific naval power. The Roosevelt Corollary to the Monroe Doctrine allowed the U.S. to invade Caribbean countries whenever the security of the canal or the United States was threatened. From the Dominican Republic and Haiti to Cuba and Puerto Rico, the U.S. invaded and occupied anywhere that internal revolution or European alliance posed a threat. Roosevelt sent the Great White Fleet to tour the world as a statement that the American century was unfolding. The stage was set for a global competition where the United States had total domination of the Western Hemisphere and most of the Pacific Rim.<sup>33</sup> Domestic unity between the North and the South coincided with their rise to world power.

The raising and re-sinking of the *USS Maine* in 1912 made a fitting epitaph to this moment of Americanness. Simultaneously a symbol of the American steel industry, Gunboat Diplomacy, reunification, and American imperial power, the *Maine* in 1898 gave McKinley the excuse to invade Cuba after a military commission investigated the wreckage and determined that the Spanish had sabotaged the gunboat. Of the 355 officers, crew, and marines on board, 261 Northerners and Southerners died in the blast, three were officers. Seven crewman and one officer died later from injuries sustained in the tragedy. Only 165 bodies were recovered, the remaining 96 dead were either buried in the wreckage or lost in the harbor forever. Politicians, historians, and popular sentiment, claims Pérez, saw the *Maine* as the single overarching cause of the War with Spain. "According to the conventional historiographical wisdom," contends the historian, "the destruction of the *Maine* served to arouse public wrath, thereby creating a climate of opinion in which war became an acceptable if not inevitable course of action." The problem with this association asserts Pérez is that it paints the whole American invasion of Cuba—and American Empire—as an accident of history; a war of destiny rather than imperial design. This produced, he contends, the message that "newly acquired colonial territories are portrayed as an

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid, 170-200.

incidental and wholly fortuitous outcome of this accident—not the product of policy calculations, and certainly not the continuation of political relations by other means. There is no place for Clausewitz here.” But so many people in 1898—and Pérez insists this carries over into the twenty-first century—accepted the idea that the war with Cuba was an accident sparked by Spanish saboteurs sinking the *Maine* because, “it provides plausible explanation for a war that otherwise appears to lack both clear reason and compelling national purpose.” Thus people connected their nationalistic impulses to the gunboat to make sense out of an ambiguous war of imperialism. Pérez claims, “By implication, the destruction of the *Maine* introduced the electorate into the decision-making process, transforming an issue of foreign policy into a question of domestic politics.” This was why people tried to “Remember the Maine” and why its raising and resinking posed such a universal response from the public. “The *Maine* is thus refractory,” suggests the historian of its first sinking, “a convenient means through which to create a usable past that serves at once to reflect and reinforce generally shared assumptions about the beneficence of the American purpose.” This could also be said of its recovery and resinking.<sup>34</sup>

The hulk lay at the bottom of the shallow Havana Harbor for fourteen years and made the harbor difficult to navigate but it “provided a key emblem of American identity in Cuba and a focus for social cohesion among U.S. residents in Havana.” Portions of the bridge and mast rose out of the water as a reminder to the American presence in Cuba and the larger Caribbean. “The U.S. government and American community in Havana,” claims historian John Marshall Klein, “sought to craft the ship’s story into one of sacrifice and noblesse oblige that could legitimize

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<sup>34</sup> Louis Pérez, “The Meaning of the Maine: Causation and the Historiography of the Spanish-American War,” *Pacific Historical Review* 58 (3): 299, 319, 317, 300.

American influence in Cuba.”<sup>35</sup> But by 1910, this mythology was increasingly difficult to maintain.

Cuba received its independence from the U.S. in 1901 but in name only. In 1901, Cuba elected American-friendly Tomás Estrada Palma as its first president. Originally a revolutionary against Spanish colonialism, Palma secured his presidency after winning the election and signing the Cuban-American Treaty which included the Platt Amendment. This amendment allowed the United States to occupy Guantanamo Bay with U.S. troops and intervene in Cuban affairs whenever the U.S. deemed necessary. In 1906 Cuban revolutionaries who were not happy with Palma’s pro-American stance challenged his re-election bid. His relaxation of a tariff on American goods brought much American business and investment to Cuba but little of it helped the Cuban economy. When the revolutionaries threatened to depose Palma, the U.S. sent troops into the country.<sup>36</sup>

In the aftermath, President Roosevelt appointed Charles Edward Magoon as provisional governor of Cuba. Fresh off his position as Governor-General of the Panama Canal Zone, Magoon claimed to support the Cuban Republic and proceeded to crush the revolutionaries. He became wildly unpopular among Cubans because he continued to allow American companies to exploit Cuban resources. According to John Marshall Klein, the *Maine* was an important site of memory for Magoon and his compatriots in Cuba:

This second U.S. occupation invoked the legal authority of the Platt amendment and the moral mantle of U.S. sacrifices on Cuba’s behalf in 1898. In subsequent years, the U.S. government and American residents continued to use the memory of U.S. sacrifices in 1898, especially the *Maine*’s dead sailors, to demand Cuban gratitude.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> John Marshall Klein, “Spaniards and the Politics of Memory in Cuba,” 313, 366.

<sup>36</sup> John Marshall Klein, “Spaniards and the Politics of Memory in Cuba,” 312.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

Once Magoon eliminated any threats to American interests in Cuba, and opposition to conservative Cuban politicians, new elections were held in 1908 and José Miguel Gómez won.

These sorts of tensions signaled to many in Congress that Cuba could not be controlled. Unlike in the Philippines where the U.S. had instituted a formal colonial government and could impose its colonial will through brute force, America did not “own” Cuba and tensions would always be present in the Cuban semi-colony. The invasion of 1898, the invasion of 1906, the Race War of 1912 in which President Gómez had sanctioned the killing of thousands of black Cubans many of whom had formed the *Partido Independiente de Color* were a few of the most troubling moments for American neophyte imperialists’ attempting to operate an informal empire in Cuba. Thus the *Maine* as a symbol of American benevolence was fast becoming a symbol of tense relations between the U.S. and Cuba. The wreckage not only blocked off part of Havana Harbor it also reminded many Cubans of the continuing saga of American informal empire that consistently reopened the wounds of the Platt Amendment. Thus in 1910 Congress approved the raising of the ship to recover the dead bodies still inside, to remove the wreckage from the harbor and to re-investigate the initial commission’s findings as to the cause of the ship’s sinking. But this action also signaled a retreat of informal empire based on Gunboat Diplomacy. It was an admission that Cuban-U.S. relations had deteriorated, that Cuba was not part of the formal U.S. Empire, and that many Cubans were not grateful for America’s role in Cuban affairs. Although American officials believed that the recovery would surely validate the cause of war, the whole episode brought to life intense patriotism and scrutiny in the United States, Cuba, and in Spain. On the one hand, many people believed raising the ship would further reinforce American actions in Cuba. On the other hand, some had their doubts. Many Americans and pro-American Cubans became fearful that raising the ship and examining it in

broad daylight would show that no mine exploded and the United States invaded Cuba without cause. The very symbol of American power in the Caribbean—made with American steel and manned by American sailors—carried with it deep anxiety over the moral righteousness of Americanness and the American ability to become a leader in the world-system. Thus the whole process of recovering the battleship captured the minds of millions of Americans.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers began the work with a \$300,000 appropriation from Congress. The corps took proposals from private companies to do the actual raising. Several companies submitted ideas. The Arbuckle Company submitted a plan using compressed air. The corps rejected this plan because it posed too much of a threat to the *Maine's* damaged and now fragile structure. The Congressional legislation mandated a commission to investigate the wreckage. The compressed air would, experts believed, distort the structural analysis of the wreckage. The O'Rourke Construction Company submitted a screw lift plan. They proposed building a wharf out to the ship and then tunneling beneath the ship to put slings around it. The idea was to then slowly raise the ship out of the water. But this idea, claimed the corps, cost too much and consumed too much time. Another plan proposed to take the ship apart with the use of dynamite but this was “discarded as opposed to the sentiment of the nation.” Most Americans viewed the wreckage as an important historical object and destroying it piece by piece seemed like sacrilege. A fourth option submitted by the Lackawanna Steel Company called for building a cofferdam around the wreckage and pumping the water out so that investigators could examine the hulk. A fifth proposal from the U.S. Navy suggested using floating docks and hydraulic mining to sever the ship from the harbor floor. The War Department eventually chose the

cofferdam option as it was the least expensive and most able to preserve the wreckage so that it could be inspected.<sup>38</sup>

The War Department wanted control of the investigation without outside or independent oversight. To accomplish this, military officials sought complete control of the wreckage site. Although the ship rested in Cuban waters, it was U.S. property and therefore the U.S. Army wanted territorial rights and access to the ship. Cuba ceded those rights, temporarily, to U.S. engineers. Cuban President Gómez agreed to “admit, free of all duty, all materials and supplies required by the United States and the agents or agencies employed by it on this work.” He also granted the U.S. “extra-territorial jurisdiction over such a portion of the waters of Havana Harbor as are, or will be, occupied by the ‘Maine’, and the necessary engineering constructions, fixed or floating, required in the proposed work.” This included “extra-territorial” control over docks, wharfs, and warehouses.<sup>39</sup> Gómez agreed to aid the U.S. because he wanted the harbor cleared, he had received his presidency, in part, because of American involvement in Cuba, and he wanted to prevent a third American occupation.

The War Department had control of the waters around the hulk and wanted to have control of labor as well. Chief of Engineers William H. Bixby recommended from Washington, D.C. that “it is very essential that, when work is once started, the officer in charge shall be free from all interference by outside contractors and houses supplying material, and that he shall be free to direct labor and use any and all plant within reach without necessity of formal contracts.” Bixby recommended that the Congressional appropriation was not enough to complete the work.

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<sup>38</sup> Leonard M. Cox, “Plan for Raising U.S.S. Maine,” NA, RG 77, Records of the Office of the Chief of Engineers, General Correspondence, 1894-1923, USS Maine, Box 1266, Folder 1.

<sup>39</sup> Letter, William M. Black to The Chief of Engineers, 20 August 1910, NA, RG 77, Records of the Office of the Chief of Engineers, General Correspondence, 1894-1923, USS Maine, Box 1266, Folder 1; Letter, John Jackson to Secretary of State, 24 September 1910, NA, RG 77, Records of the Office of the Chief of Engineers, General Correspondence, 1894-1923, USS Maine, Box 1266, Folder 3.

He suggested that Congress levy another \$200,000. Completing the project within budget meant completing it on time. The only way to accomplish this was to allow the officer in charge “free to work as many hours per day as are found necessary and to add to his working force and to his plant; with as few restrictions as possible, both as to methods of employment, or purchase, and of hours of labor.” On top of controlling labor, Bixby wanted Cuba to supply most of the machinery—steam hoisters, dredges, pile-drivers, and pumping machines—free of charge.<sup>40</sup> The War Department expected to have control over this process with as little influence from the press or labor unions as possible.

Bixby and his fellow planners quickly learned that they would not have as much control as they hoped. Criticisms about the project plan and labor policies came from a variety of interested parties. Spanish-American War veterans voiced one concern over Bixby’s labor practices. Joseph Jacoby, Commander-in-Chief of the United Spanish War Veterans, became very nervous over the Corp of Engineers use of manpower. Jacoby had learned that private contractors had won the diving contracts to explore the ship and had found forty-five bodies already. Jacoby wrote to the Secretary of War that “I believe that the contractor, with his hands extended for quick returns, draws no dividends from sentimental attachments.” He added, “I know it has been a customary thing in Cuba to gather up the bones of the dead in a sort of promiscuous pile, and am sure you will agree with me that no such fate should overtake the remains of our beloved boys who went down with the Maine.”<sup>41</sup> Jacoby, as a veteran, was insinuating that the War Department did not care enough about the preservation of the remains of his fellow soldiers. Colonel William M. Black of the Army Corps of Engineers headed the

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<sup>40</sup> Memorandum, William Bixby to Secretary of War, 10 October 1910, NA, RG 77, Records of the Office of the Chief of Engineers, General Correspondence, 1894-1923, USS Maine, Box 1266, Folder 3.

<sup>41</sup> Letter, Joseph Jacoby to Secretary of War, 1 November 1910, NA, RG 77, Records of the Office of the Chief of Engineers, General Correspondence, 1894-1923, USS Maine, Box 1266, Folder 2.

project of raising the *Maine* and he made clear that “there are no contractors engaged in the work of removing the wreck.” He added that the Army planned, “as the unwatering” proceeded, to “prevent the occurrence of any wilful [sic] or inadvertent action which might throw a doubt on the findings” of the cause of the sinking. Black added, “No one should be permitted on the wreck excepting persons directly connected with the work of its removal.”<sup>42</sup> These sorts of letters reminded War Department personnel that although they had charge of raising the ship and recovering the remains of the dead they had to accomplish their tasks in ways that honored the dead and appeased the sentiments of veterans.

A more serious problem arose. The project team had completely underestimated the cost of the project. Despite the best efforts by the Army engineers to conserve money, the original appropriation quickly ran out. By the spring of 1911, the original \$300,000 appropriation had been exhausted. Colonel Black ran the project from his office in New York but the officer under Black overseeing the actual work in Havana was Lieutenant Colonel Mason M. Patrick. Patrick reported in late January that there had been huge delays in work. The delays mounted, for a combination of reasons. Weather was abysmal; rain and wind had forced Patrick to stop work for the safety of the workers. Equipment did not work properly. Patrick complained about the dredge boat “Sauga” being “good-looking” but was “badly designed” and it had “numerous break-downs.” But the biggest problem was due to the cofferdam. Patrick reported that the workers had no experience with pile-driving. “Instead of spending a little time in training the crews of the pile-drivers how to handle the piling, it seems that three shifts of green men were put on each machine, and that their efforts were ineffective, with resulting heavy expenditures of money and a very inadequate return.” Quickly running out of funds, Patrick and Black

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<sup>42</sup> 2<sup>nd</sup> Indorsement, William Black to Chief of Engineers, 15 November 1910, NA, RG 77, Records of the Office of the Chief of Engineers, General Correspondence, 1894-1923, USS Maine, Box 1266, Folder 2.



considered a year-long work stoppage until Congress approved further funds but they were very concerned about people stealing trinkets from the *Maine* and materials from the worksite. Black suggested that they send U.S. troops to guard the site but Patrick claimed the American Minister in Cuba recommended against it. “He tells me that he has given this matter considerable thought and that he feels it would be a mistake to send troops there now.”<sup>43</sup> The wounds from the intervention of 1906 seemed too fresh in the minds of many. Instead Patrick would have to hire local watchmen while Congress pondered over an additional \$700,000 appropriation submitted by the War Department to complete the project. This more than doubled the original appropriation and brought the total cost of the project to one million dollars.<sup>44</sup>

Congress eventually appropriated and disbursed the money but this did not necessarily help speed up the project. Building the cofferdam was more difficult than the engineers had imagined. The bottom of Havana Harbor was very hard and workers often bent the interlocking steel beams as they pounded them into the harbor. As the months went by, the work crews gained more experience with the work and they became more efficient. But early cylinders were often very low quality and leaking began. Newspapers began criticizing the entire project. One editor claimed, “A complete failure of the effort to raise the *Maine* is now generally predicted.” He claimed that workmen drove the cylinders too low and the outside water would wash over the dam at high tide. The quality of the dam was so poor that “when an attempt is made to pump out the caisson leaving the wreck visible, the water pressure from the outside will separate the piling and admit the water.” The editor continued, “It is believed that engineers have blundered.” This report prompted William Ellis, a foreman working on the cofferdam who had recently been

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<sup>43</sup> Report, Mason Patrick to William Black, 26 January 1911, NA, RG 77, Records of the Office of the Chief of Engineers, General Correspondence, 1894-1923, USS *Maine*, Box 1266, Folder 5.

<sup>44</sup> Letter, William Bixby to Secretary of War, 27 February 1911, NA, RG 77, Records of the Office of the Chief of Engineers, General Correspondence, 1894-1923, USS *Maine*, Box 1266, Folder 5. One million dollars in 1911 currency would be approximately \$22,738,000 in 2009 currency.

relieved of his duties, to write to the Secretary of War. Ellis claimed the work on the dam was woefully inadequate: "I have no griviences, [sic] I just feel that your administration is going to be led into a trap by Army Engineers who are sharp enough to cover up their own tracks." Ellis continued, "In my thirty years experience, I have never witnessed a more disgraceful state of affairs than that which has been practiced on the Maine Cofferdam work." He claimed "The steel sheeting which makes up the cylinders is not strong enough to hold the fill, they are bursting and to repair the break only means that when refilled with the same material will burst again if not in the same place in some other place." Ellis forecast that the water would eventually break the dam and "bury the Maine in mud."<sup>45</sup>

Captain Ferguson, who assisted Lieutenant Colonel Patrick in Havana, reported that Ellis had indeed served as a foreman and "his services were fairly satisfactory." He was let go because he asked for full pay during the month of May when the cofferdam was completed even though Ellis had not worked the full month. Ferguson told Ellis that "this could not be done." Ellis hired a lawyer to try to recoup the money. Ferguson stated, "Although he was a most excellent foreman in charge of a pile driver, his temperament was such that I considered him less valuable than other foremen that I retained for work of the general character now being done."<sup>46</sup> Despite the dispute between Ferguson and Ellis, Lieutenant Colonel Patrick seemed to have concerns similar to Ellis in his January report to Colonel Bixby. Patrick warned, "Cylinder "S," the first one finished, is rather poorly constructed; it leans badly, and, unfortunately, toward the

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<sup>45</sup> Letter, William Ellis to Secretary of War, 5 June 1911, NA, RG 77, Records of the Office of the Chief of Engineers, General Correspondence, 1894-1923, USS Maine, Box 1267, Folder 7.

<sup>46</sup> Letter, Captain Ferguson to William Bixby, 12 June 1911, NA, RG 77, Records of the Office of the Chief of Engineers, General Correspondence, 1894-1923, USS Maine, Box 1267, Folder 8.

interior of the coffer-dam; I think it will be necessary to reinforce this cylinder in some way, either with additional piling and filling, or by banking heavily inside of it.”<sup>47</sup>

In July 1911, Patrick reported that cylinder F began leaking. He reported that, “On investigation it was found that in the process of driving the piles some of the bolts of the fish plates joining the individual pile sections had fallen out, permitting the entrance of water.”<sup>48</sup> Although these leaks were plugged and the cofferdam braced, the press reports became so negative about the construction of the cofferdam that John Arbuckle sent a “night letter received by telephone” to Secretary of War Henry Stimson’s private residence on Long Island, New York. The War Department turned down Arbuckle’s bid to use compressed air to raise the ship. Now Arbuckle resubmitted an informal request for the Secretary of War to reconsider. Arbuckle wrote, “I am informed that the most eminent engineers say when the water and mud is removed, the sheet piling will collapse.” To prevent this, the engineers reinforced the interior of the dam with stone and dirt. But Arbuckle claimed, “There are now human remains under the stones dumped in to strengthen the sheet piling.” This was all conjecture on Arbuckle’s part, although he claimed his associate had made two trips to the site and had photographic evidence of “human bones under the stones dumped to strengthen sheet piling.” Stimson must have been intrigued enough to inquire about Arbuckle’s proposal. The contractor claimed his compressed air method had succeeded in raising the Navy ship *Yankee* and *Nero*. But when Stimson looked into the matter, the *Yankee* had not yet been raised and so Stimson decided to remain with the cofferdam method.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Letter, Mason Patrick to William Bixby, 23 January 1911, NA, RG 77, Records of the Office of the Chief of Engineers, General Correspondence, 1894-1923, USS Maine, Box 1266, Folder 5.

<sup>48</sup> Appendix KKK, NA, RG 77, Records of the Office of the Chief of Engineers, General Correspondence, 1894-1923, USS Maine, Box 1267B, 20.

<sup>49</sup> Letter, John Arbuckle to Henry Stimson, 13 September 1911, NA, RG 77, Records of the Office of the Chief of Engineers, General Correspondence, 1894-1923, USS Maine, Box 1267, Folder 12.

Even the workmen came under scrutiny from some observers. The project required divers to work significant hours underwater. At least one diver complained of illness due to long dives. The recommended length of a dive, at the time, was no more than four hours, and Theodore McMahon complained of temporary paralysis because Army officials required him to dive for over four hours. When Colonel Williard, a retired officer of the U.S. Army, wrote Bixby about the matter, Bixby assured him that if McMahon had been on dives longer than four hours, it was not due to the Army but to his own decision to remain underwater for that long. Bixby contended that McMahon worked as long as the other men but spent less than four hours underwater. He hoped that the diver would get over his illness but claimed it was no fault of the Army Corps of Engineers. McMahon's problems were symptomatic of the labor policy governing the project. The War Department had complete control over labor, but this control brought with it responsibility for any untoward consequences. These sorts of policies detracted from the transparency of the project.

Besides unblocking the harbor, the two main rationales for raising the ship was to recover the remains of those who went down with the ship and to re-affirm the *casus belli* of the U.S. invasion of Cuba. The cofferdam method chosen by the Army Corps of Engineers now threatened to undermine the entire project. It affected profoundly Americans who had connected the "accidental" American empire to the *Maine* and its destruction by an external explosion. The War Department's control and consequent lack of transparency produced anxiety among people who considered the *Maine* the symbol of Americanness. This was reflected in the rehashing of the causes of the sinking and the debate over the Corps of Engineer's plan to dispose of the wreckage. The editors of *The American Marine Engineer* in New York City argued that the army should "Raise, Not Sink, the Maine." They noted:

This nation wants the *Maine* raised, as nearly intact as possible, in order that its condition may be seen by all men, in order that all possible light may be thrown upon the origin and nature of the catastrophe of 1898, in order—as we hope and expect—that the contentions and reports of our officers concerning it may be proved correct, but in order, above all else and in any contingency, that the good faith and moral courage of the American government and nation may be vindicated.

The editors added, “In a deliberate and persistent suppression of the facts, or avoidance of their exposition, there would be a dishonor which we would not willingly see America incur.”<sup>50</sup> The Corps of Engineers responded to the accusations. It agreed with the editors that the “wreck should be seen just as it lies, before any part of it has been disturbed in any matter what-ever.” But the corps rejected the idea of not re-sinking the *Maine*. It was an obsolete class of ship and could not be recommissioned. The War Department expressed no interest in using it as a memorial, “it would be but a gruesome exhibit, an object of curiosity, a reminder of a national tragedy.” The War Department thus planned to “with appropriate ceremonies, give it honorable burial beneath the waves.”<sup>51</sup>

The anxiety over the *Maine* reached a fever pitch after engineers drained the cofferdam and inspectors investigated the wreckage. The initial findings of 1898 were called into question, for it was clear from the wreckage that the explosion had been internal not external. The keel and other parts of the structure bent outwards not inwards. Bixby even began making public comments about his doubts of an external explosion. The *Morning Star* of Newark, New Jersey reported his astounding admission that “the secret will never be known.” Bixby continued, “It has been clearly established that there was an internal explosion. But this does not disprove the

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<sup>50</sup> “Raise, Not Sink, the Maine,” *The American Marine Engineer*, September 1910, NA, RG 77, Records of the Office of the Chief of Engineers, General Correspondence, 1894-1923, USS Maine, Box 1266, Folder 2.

<sup>51</sup> Letter, War Department to Editor of the *American Marine Engineer*, 26 September 1910, NA, RG 77, Records of the Office of the Chief of Engineers, General Correspondence, 1894-1923, USS Maine, Box 1266, Folder 2.

theory of a mine or torpedo placed outside.”<sup>52</sup> In addition to this, Bixby claimed that recovery teams had only found between forty and fifty bodies and the rest were lost forever. Bixby’s comments set off a tidal wave of criticism as he undermined the two most important reasons for recovering the Maine. The ship as a “useable past” to describe the “beneficence of the American purpose” fell under attack with Bixby’s candid statements. The *Inter-Ocean* newspaper of Chicago claimed “General William H. Bixby, U. S. A., does little credit to his uniform by the manner in which he states his conclusions.” Bixby asserted the explosion came from inside the ship’s magazine but did not rule out completely that an outside force could have triggered the internal explosion, although he doubted the external theory. The editor continued, “All of which may be technically true. Yet, put as General Bixby puts it, the statement is one which disgraces its maker by propagating a falsehood and by giving aid and comfort to his country’s enemies, within and without her borders.” He then reiterated the mine/torpedo theory of the explosion and accused “Americans who are never so happy as in reviling their own country has sought then and ever since to blink the facts or lie out of them, with intent to make the American people feel ashamed of the righteous wrath.” Even more damning, in his eyes, Bixby’s remarks undermined the glorious cause of the war:

These lines are written in vindication of historic truth, and of the righteousness of the American people’s wrath when they sent forth their fleets and armies to “Remember the Maine!” As for the wreck of the Maine, here is what should be done with it: Fill in the walls about it with concrete and make an islet over those piteous bones and erect thereon a worthy monument to the 266 American citizens there treacherously slain. Let that monument be a perpetual witness to the tale of how the Maine was avenged and Cuba freed, that devoted Americans may tell their sons a hundred years hence and that these sons may know how to love their country and how to die for her honor!<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> “The Mystery of the Maine,” *Morning Star*, 27 June 1911, NA, RG 77, Records of the Office of the Chief of Engineers, General Correspondence, 1894-1923, USS Maine, Box 1267, Folder 11.

<sup>53</sup> “Remember the Maine!,” *Inter-Ocean* July 1911, NA, RG 77, Records of the Office of the Chief of Engineers, General Correspondence, 1894-1923, USS Maine, Box 1267, Folder 11.

This was a call to mark Havana Harbor forever as a symbolic boundary of an “accidental” American empire. And although the War Department remained uncommitted to this sort of symbolic value, others were. John Harvey sent the above newspaper clipping to Secretary Stimson and handwrote, “I fought through the war of the rebellion with a gun—it seems now our officers want to do all the fighting with their mouths—is it not about time for another reprimand?”<sup>54</sup>

Despite evidence to the contrary, such as the outwardly bent keel, that suggested an internal explosion happened, the 1911 military investigation panel deemed that an external detonation caused the internal explosion. Many accepted this decision because it eased their anxiety over remembering the war. With the cause of the explosion blamed on sabotage, the wisdom of invasion could be justified. Work on the hulk continued and as workers discovered bodies from the wreckage they took the remains to the shore and placed them in coffins stored in Cuban warehouses. There the dead remained until the wreck was ready to be removed. Sixty-five sets of remains were eventually reclaimed.

After salvaging the still useful parts and relics from the wreckage, engineers patched up the ship. The wreckage had finally been investigated and repaired, at least enough to float, by March 1912. To separate the wreckage from the mud-seal at the bottom of the cofferdam, engineers drilled “twenty-nine two inch holes” in the bottom of the wreck and connected them to pipes. Engineers then forced water through the pipes by a pump which weakened the seal enough that flooding the dam would raise the patched up ship. The plan worked. Engineers finally opened up the cofferdam to flood it while water pumped through the pipes and broke the

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<sup>54</sup> Letter, John Harvey to Henry Stimson, 8 July 1911, NA, RG 77, Records of the Office of the Chief of Engineers, General Correspondence, 1894-1923, USS Maine, Box 1267, Folder 11.

mud seal; the repaired hulk floated.<sup>55</sup> Engineers placed an official U.S. flag on the ship after flooding the dam. After final repairs, the workmen dismantled a section of the cofferdam and pulled the floating wreckage out of the enclosure.

What remained in Havana was the general cleanup of the worksite. The engineer corps began removing the cofferdam one pile at a time. After removing the dam, the engineers contracted from the Cuban Government to dredge 75,000 cubic yards of the harbor at forty cents per yard. Additional dredging cost Cuba eleven cents per yard. This included sinking the leftover wreckage of the Maine into the mud. Over two hundred tons remained; part of the bow remained because “it was jammed in close to the cylinders” of the dam. Colonel Black had the workers cut up the remaining wreckage, “shackled and buoyed, so that it ought not to be difficult to remove.” Additionally the starboard turret remained in the mud. The only solution was “very deep dredging around the turret” to sink it further into the mud and free up the harbor for navigation. Once the piles were finally removed the steel was returned to the Lackawanna Steel Company.<sup>56</sup> In addition to paying for the dredging of the harbor of which was caused by the sinking of an American battleship, the President of Cuba wanted to cement the reciprocal relationship between his government and the U.S. President Gómez opened the Cuban Congress in April 1912 and reminded the legislators that “I do not wish to conclude this message without recording an event that has demonstrated to the entire world the close ties of affection which bind us to the American people.” He referred to the “imposing obsequies and the manifestation of mourning” made necessary by the raising and re-sinking of the Maine. He concluded saying,

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<sup>55</sup> Addendum KKK, NA, RG 77, Records of the Office of the Chief of Engineers, General Correspondence, 1894-1923, USS Maine, Box 1267A, Folder 20.

<sup>56</sup> Letter, William Black to William Bixby, 16 May 1912, NA, RG 77, Records of the Office of the Chief of Engineers, General Correspondence, 1894-1923, USS Maine, Box 1267A, Folder 19; Addendum KKK, NA, RG 77, Records of the Office of the Chief of Engineers, General Correspondence, 1894-1923, USS Maine, Box 1267A, Folder 20.



“Our Government and the American Government consociated in this act and inspired by a common sentiment fulfilled a pious duty.”<sup>57</sup>

The logistics of raising the *Maine* spoke to the difficulty in the building of an informal American empire. The very symbol that Americans and sympathetic Cubans hoped would bolster U.S. and Cuban relations was dug up and resunk in international waters. It was suggestive that American officials had learned in the years between 1898 and 1912 that they would not be able to control Cuba the way empires of Europe had controlled their colonial possessions. This was not a symbol from the British Boer War. Americans, as neophyte imperialists, had to pursue their interests in Cuba in much more innovative and informal ways. The raising of the *Maine* was reflective of just how much the Americans had learned about operating an informal empire in the years since the war with Spain. Just as there were plenty of mistakes and mishandling of the *Maine* project, U.S. officials also made mistakes in their heavy-handed interventions in Cuba. Government and War Department officials were stretched just as the Army Corps of Engineers were overextended in the logistics of raising the wreckage.

“Remember the *Maine*”

When it came to the memory of the *Maine*, the War Department likewise planned to have complete control without influence from former veterans or the general public. American officials had finally learned how difficult it would be to maintain Cuba as a semi-colony while maintaining the wreckage in Havana Harbor. These government and military officials hoped to smooth over reopened wounds of the Platt Amendment, at least symbolically, by agreeing to remove the wreckage at the cost of over \$1,000,000. This very act threatened to turn the

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<sup>57</sup> Telegram, Beaupre to Secretary of State, 2 April 1912, NA, RG 77, Records of the Office of the Chief of Engineers, General Correspondence, 1894-1923, USS Maine, Box 1267A, Folder 19.

wreckage into a site of memory—one that was literally sunk in deep international waters and beyond the reach of veterans and citizens who saw the gunboat as a living memory of American benevolence. But the War Department did not gain complete control as officials had hoped; the American public began voicing their opinions on the reclamation project, revealing just how much they connected their memories of the war to the destroyed ship. The *Maine* still mattered to many Americans. They saw in the battleship an environment of memory that they wanted to access. What was at stake was the clashing of two polar interpretations of memory. American officials were interested in disposing of a symbol that made relations with the Cuban semi-colony tense while Americans citizens embraced the myth that the empire was temporary and that it would not enlarge. For them the tragedy of the *Maine* was a potent symbol of American benevolence.

The War Department was forced to wrestle with the difficulties of overseeing an informal empire. Unlike the Civil War where the dead could be buried in proximity to living citizens, most of the work of commemoration in Cuba and the Philippines took place overseas. Thus although the War Department had sought to transform the wreckage into a site of memory, too many Americans resisted these wishes. As public-spirited citizens, they too wanted a say-so in how the ship would be memorialized. In what can be seen as little criticisms of the recovery project, people sent thousands of letters voicing their concerns over the handling of the wreckage site. Some of the public sentiment was incredibly personal and saw in the raising of the hulk a chance to recuperate personal belongings of loved ones who had perished while on board. For example, Isaac Auchenbach asked Secretary of War Henry Stimson if the engineers had found his brother Harry's gold ring. It was gold with his initials engraved on it and Auchenbach asked that the War Department forward his brother's ring to him. "I am very anxious to recover my

brother's ring, as it would certainly be a most notable trinket to possess, both as to the memory of my brother, and as to the manner and circumstances under which the ring was returned to me."<sup>58</sup> Likewise Assistant Engineer Darwin Merritt died in the explosion. Divers discovered his body near the position where he was last seen alive. His father, a minister in Red Oak, Iowa, asked for his son's class ring. But divers found only a "skeleton that of young man over six feet tall[,] officers uniform and cap and buttons found with remains." His class ring was nowhere to be found and was listed as "probably stolen by workmen." Shortly thereafter the Cuban newspaper *El Mundo* came into possession of the ring and turned it over to American authorities who forwarded it to Mr. Merritt in Iowa.<sup>59</sup> The reclaiming of these sorts of personal objects demonstrates how the sunken hulk still powered a living memory for those who had lost their sons in the explosion no matter how much the government intervened.

The *Maine* wreckage also influenced many others and a general spectacle of patriotism poured forth as letters flooded in from all over the country asking the government for a *Maine* relic. William Ludwig, a jeweler and silversmith from Chamberburg, Pennsylvania had no relatives on board the ship but asked his Congressmen Benjamin K. Focht to "aid me in the effort to get a piece of 'The Maine', now being raised in Havana harbor. Want something from her—a nail—piece of iron—wood—anything. Will pay all expenses and reward you too."<sup>60</sup> Pencil maker Eberhard Faber requested that the recovery effort send his pencil company all the rubber bands and lead pencils recovered from the wreck.<sup>61</sup> The cities of Moline and Rock Island,

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<sup>58</sup> Letter, Isaac Auchenbach to Secretary of War, 11 August 1911, NA, RG 77, Records of the Office of the Chief of Engineers, General Correspondence, 1894-1923, USS Maine, Box 1267, Folder 9.

<sup>59</sup> Cablegram, Mason Patrick to William Bixby, 17 August 1911; Chief Clerk to the Secretary of War to Secretary of War, 5 September 1911, NA, RG 77, Records of the Office of the Chief of Engineers, General Correspondence, 1894-1923, USS Maine, Box 1267, Folder 9.

<sup>60</sup> Letter, W. H. Ludwig to Benjamin Focht, 24 June 1911, NA, RG 77, Records of the Office of the Chief of Engineers, General Correspondence, 1894-1923, USS Maine, Box 1267, Folder 11.

<sup>61</sup> Letter, Eberhard Faber to William Bixby, 12 October 1911, NA, RG 77, Records of the Office of the Chief of Engineers, General Correspondence, 1894-1923, USS Maine, Box 1267, Folder 11.

Illinois requested pieces of the ship for their citizens.<sup>62</sup> The curator of the Marine Room in the Peabody Museum in Salem, Massachusetts requested artifacts and photographs of the ship for a permanent exhibition.<sup>63</sup> The Order of the Knights of Pythion, San Diego, California chapter, requested relics from the ship.<sup>64</sup> The National Museum of Cuba petitioned the War Department for the rapid fire gun removed from the wreckage.<sup>65</sup> The Borough of Pompton Lakes, New Jersey requested the thirty inch ventilator from the ship to place in the city's square. Already sanctioned by the New Jersey Historical Society, the square was one of General George Washington's headquarters and the city already had a field artillery piece from the Wilderness campaign of the Civil War and shells from the Petersburg siege.<sup>66</sup> The city of South Bend, Indiana requested some bronze from the ship so that the city's Polish Falcons fraternal order could produce a "memorial tablet."<sup>67</sup> Officials from Ohio asked for mementos to be displayed in the Ohio State Fair.<sup>68</sup> The Secretary of the Navy requested the ship's instruments for the Naval Academy museum. Cuban authorities asked for a steel cupola from the conning tower. The Military Service Institution of the United States wanted the mast not destined for Arlington Cemetery. The mast was already stored at Casa Blanca and the War Department hired watchmen to "prevent the cutting off and carrying away of detached portions of the mast."<sup>69</sup> Part of the

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<sup>62</sup> Letter, Assistant Secretary of War to City of Moline, Illinois, 25 March 1912, NA, RG 77, Records of the Office of the Chief of Engineers, General Correspondence, 1894-1923, USS Maine, Box 1267A, Folder 18.

<sup>63</sup> Letter, John Robinson to William Bixby, 29 April 1912, NA, RG 77, Records of the Office of the Chief of Engineers, General Correspondence, 1894-1923, USS Maine, Box 1267A, Folder 18.

<sup>64</sup> 1<sup>st</sup> Indorsement, 20 June 1912, NA, RG 77, Records of the Office of the Chief of Engineers, General Correspondence, 1894-1923, USS Maine, Box 1267A, Folder 20.

<sup>65</sup> Letter, Emilio Heredia to F.A. Pope, 20 November 1912, NA, RG 77, Records of the Office of the Chief of Engineers, General Correspondence, 1894-1923, USS Maine, Box 1267B, Folder 22.

<sup>66</sup> Letter, Mayor of Pompton Lakes to Henry Stimson, 11 December 1912, NA, RG 77, Records of the Office of the Chief of Engineers, General Correspondence, 1894-1923, USS Maine, Box 1267B, Folder 22.

<sup>67</sup> Letter, H. Barnhart to Henry Stimson, 19 May 1914, NA, RG 77, Records of the Office of the Chief of Engineers, General Correspondence, 1894-1923, USS Maine, Box 1267B, Folder 22.

<sup>68</sup> Letter, William Bixby to Congressman E. L. Taylor, 12 February 1912, NA, RG 77, Records of the Office of the Chief of Engineers, General Correspondence, 1894-1923, USS Maine, Box 1267A, Folder 15.

<sup>69</sup> Report, William Black to William Bixby, 15 May 1911, NA, RG 77, Records of the Office of the Chief of Engineers, General Correspondence, 1894-1923, USS Maine, Box 1267, Folder 7.

Congressional legislation allowed for the War Department to disperse unneeded artifacts. People who served in the war, people who did not, businessmen who wanted access to Americana to make money, and fraternal organizations all wanted to access the material objects of the environment of memory that surrounded the ship and spoke to the collective memories of the war. So many requests came in from around the country that the War Department had to appoint a special board to determine who was most qualified to receive the relics. The board included an officer of the Navy and an officer of the Corps of Engineers. Together they decided where the pieces of the *Maine* should end up and although they retained much of the power as to who could access these relics, they also opened up the possibility for new interpretations by the public.

These requests demonstrated that the War Department would not be able to control entirely the commemorations surrounding the sunken ship. For example, some even saw in the wreck, an opportunity to spread patriotic pride to American schoolchildren. Money was running short for the project in 1911. But Dr. George Maines of New York felt that raising the ship would be a great opportunity for school children around the country. Maines wrote to President Taft and every governor in the U.S. in the hope of raising \$250,000 for the effort. He wrote, "I would like to see the school children of this country contribute the desired amount. If each one would give one penny, plenty of money would be forthcoming." Maines added, "Not only would a great good be accomplished but it will tend to arouse the spirit of patriotism which is so freely evinced in 'young America.'" He suggested that each state governor open an account for the purpose. Children could bring their pennies to their teachers at school who would then give them to their superintendent who would deposit them in the bank account. "With the aid of the associated press and the public dailies throughout the country this plan can be quickly and

successfully launched.”<sup>70</sup> This was an attempt at getting a new generation of youth to participate in the American collective memory.

This definition of patriotism did not go uncontested; others saw the opportunity to present an alternative patriotism. One writer, who called himself “A Patriot,” claimed that Maines’s proposal was preposterous and a scam: “Hardly any but gullible people will be willing to take hold of the plan.” The critic questioned Maines’s integrity and claimed he was untrustworthy, adding that “It is embarrassing to interfere with government projects unless one is fully versed as to government action.” This was not a wholesale denunciation of the government’s involvement in raising the gunboat. “A Patriot’s” interest was in demeaning Maines’s plan to create a Northern interpretation of memory that would trample on the critic’s lingering residue of sectionalism and Southern identity. Although this interpretation is not certain that “A Patriot” was a Southerner or a pro-Confederate, it is plausible. Accordingly, “A Patriot” believed the dead should remain onboard the ship and the hulk should remain in the harbor. “Were I a sailor,” claimed “A Patriot,” “I should prefer, when dead, to rest anywhere but in Arlington. To me Arlington stands as a persistent disgrace to the nation, a confiscated property of a great gentleman and a forcible robbery of his ancestral lands.” The critic claimed the federal government’s takeover of Arlington was inexcusable and unjustified and he would rather “lie in the quiet depths of the blue waters, and not rob a family of its garden spot or lawn.” “A Patriot’s” position, although reflecting the flickering remnants of men and women who continued to see Northern oppression in the new traditions of commemoration, was willing to commemorate the sailors, who died on the *Maine* no matter how distrustful he or she was of the federal government. The *Maine* could accomplish for some, what Arlington National cemetery

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<sup>70</sup> Letter George H. Maine to William Taft, 11 September 1911; NA, RG 77, Records of the Office of the Chief of Engineers, General Correspondence, 1894-1923, USS Maine, Box 1267, Folder 11.

could not—a memory of reconciliation albeit qualified. The critic’s comments reflected an individual who did not want to simply forget the Southern identity constructed out of the Lost Cause movement and overrun by government bureaucracy. It was a memory that remembered the *Maine* as a symbol of reconciliation that reintegrated Southern identity into the national collective memory. “A Patriot’s” critique also did not go uncontested. A letter from “Citizen” responded to “A Patriot’s” letter and defended George Maines. “Citizen” vouched for Maines’s character and thought it reprehensible for anyone to demean his character. “Citizen” claimed Maines started the school donation plan because of “his patriotism and love of children; and it is not at all probable that the least selfish thought has been entertained by him.”<sup>71</sup> Regardless of Maines’s patriotism and whether his plan was a scam or not, the War Department refused the proposal, claiming that officials could accept the school children fund only after receiving Congressional approval.<sup>72</sup> Although the War Department rejected the plan, in part to secure its own definition of the meaning of the ship, this sort of discourse was evidence as to how Americans viewed the parameters of the imagined community they were commemorating and celebrating.

The War Department also had to adapt to the concerns of veterans groups. Every year since the end of the War, the United Spanish War Veterans travelled to Havana and held a dedication ceremony on 15 February to the victims of the *Maine*. For them it proved a powerful way of re-living memories of service and commemorating lost comrades. Few such opportunities existed for the veterans to gather because the War Department had removed practically all of the American dead bodies from Cuba for reburial in Arlington and elsewhere

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<sup>71</sup> Letter, Patriot to the editor, 24 October 1911, NA, RG 77, Records of the Office of the Chief of Engineers, General Correspondence, 1894-1923, USS Maine, Box 1267, Folder 12.

<sup>72</sup> Letter, Acting Secretary of War to George Maines, 3 October 1911, NA, RG 77, Records of the Office of the Chief of Engineers, General Correspondence, 1894-1923, USS Maine, Box 1267, Folder 12.

throughout the country. Thus veterans found it difficult to re-live the memory of the war in any large, collective setting. The *Maine* proved an exceptional opportunity for veterans, even those who had never served on the ship, to maintain the environment of memory. Commander-in-Chief Joseph Jacoby and his fellow veterans planned the dedication ceremony for 1911 while the military continued work on the recovery of the ship.

Usually attendees would hold memorial ceremonies on land and some would venture out to the sunken hulk to leave wreaths and other commemorative memorabilia onboard. But the tight control that Colonel Black held over the *Maine* made this impossible. Jacoby was not pleased. "In former years nobody could say us nay, but this year the ship is under the control of the U.S. Government." Since veterans would never venture to Havana again, Jacoby wanted to "place a small bronze tablet on the mast, bearing a fitting epitaph, to be left on the mast when it is removed to Arlington Cemetery."<sup>73</sup> But Colonel Black did not support this effort. He claimed a memorial service would unnecessarily hold up work and the bronze plaque went against the Congressional decree to take the mast to Arlington National Cemetery. He used the weather as an excuse. He noted, "The weather conditions continue to be abnormally bad and that heavy rains, which are almost unknown at this time of the year in Havana, continue to impede the work." He continued, "I would not desire to do anything which would offend any large body of our citizens in its wish to do a patriotic act, but I do not feel at all sure that either the personality or the methods of the petitioner are beyond question."<sup>74</sup>

Chief Engineer William Bixby agreed. But Jacoby persisted and Bixby finally compromised with the Commander-in-chief. Bixby did not object to the veterans group holding

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<sup>73</sup> Letter, Joseph Jacoby to Secretary of the Navy, 29 December 1910, NA, RG 77, Records of the Office of the Chief of Engineers, General Correspondence, 1894-1923, USS Maine, Box 1266, Folder 4.

<sup>74</sup> Letter, William Black to William Bixby, 24 January 1911, NA, RG 77, Records of the Office of the Chief of Engineers, General Correspondence, 1894-1923, USS Maine, Box 1266, Folder 5.



memorial services on shore, which was custom for the group to do. But he feared that going out to the ship would cause a loss in labor and resources amounting to as much as \$1,000.

Additionally he argued, “It will be difficult to prevent the wreck from being overrun by visitors if any exceptions at all be made to the already adopted and necessary rule that no visitors are to be admitted.” But Bixby conceded that if he allowed the veterans to visit the *Maine*, “stoppage be for not more than one hour, preferably at the time between shifts of the labor gangs, and that the visitors be restricted to one or two in number who shall place and also remove within the hour such wreaths or other temporary decorations.”<sup>75</sup> The War Department permitted the veterans to hold their annual tradition but refused to allow Jacoby to fasten the plaque to the mast.<sup>76</sup> This compromise gave the Spanish-American War Veterans access to the wreck over the initial objections of the War Department and showed that the Secretary of War and other officials did not have complete control of the memory-making process.

Many interpreted the wreckage as a justification for America’s involvement in Cuba and a sanctification of American benevolence. For many, the commemoration of the *Maine* was less personal, less about comrades, and more about nationalism. They too sought access to the wreckage. William Maybury, an “expert on oils and oil and water lands” from Los Angeles, California sent President Taft a poem “to place them [the words]” at the base of the mast that was to be erected in Arlington National Cemetery. He wrote “Remember the Maine” in March 1898 but the recovery of the *Maine* convinced him to submit it to the government. He penned:

She lies in the mud, mates / all tattred [sic] an [sic] torn / though the treacherous  
[sic] Spaniard / not far from her home / her mission was mercy / her friendship  
humane / that beautiful ship / they called her the Maine. / Her crew noble heroes  
[sic] / to the bottom have gone / through the mean dirty treachery / of that

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<sup>75</sup> 7<sup>th</sup> Indorsement, William Bixby to Secretary of War, 25 January 1911, NA, RG 77, Records of the Office of the Chief of Engineers, General Correspondence, 1894-1923, USS Maine, Box 1266, Folder 4.

<sup>76</sup> Letter, Secretary of War to Joseph Jacoby, 26 January 1911, NA, RG 77, Records of the Office of the Chief of Engineers, General Correspondence, 1894-1923, USS Maine, Box 1266, Folder 5.

Spaniard the, don. / Who delights in his tortures / to day as of old / for he has  
murdered ones / whilst, they slept in the hold.<sup>77</sup>

This poem underscored Maybury's belief that the United States was a benevolent power that was involved in Cuba because of destiny rather than design. The "beautiful ship" sullied by "dirty treachery of that Spaniard the, Don," who delighted in "murder" and "torture" demonstrated how easily Americans could cover up the difficulties of informal empire.

The raising of the *Maine* provided an opportunity to reinforce the myths of informal empire as many began dragging up old theories as to who set and detonated the mine or the torpedo that destroyed the ship. The *Philadelphia Press* ran an article in May 1911 by a secret service spy who, "Says American Blew Up 'Maine.'" An American spy in Havana alleged that George B. Boynton actually destroyed the ship. As the *New York Times* referred to him, Boynton was a "soldier of fortune, adventurer, pirate, and pirate hunter," known as "The War-Maker." Boynton had died in 1911 after spending much of his time in South America, particularly Venezuela and Brazil, where he had invented a torpedo to sink ships. According to the story, the Brazilian army apparently gave Boynton a commission as a Colonel and paid "The War-Maker" to use his torpedo against the Brazilian revolutionary General Mello's flagship. The spy from Havana claimed that the Spanish had captured Boynton and sentenced him to death. But in exchange for the death penalty, the Spanish awarded him his freedom if he agreed to use his torpedo to blow up the *Maine*. The *Philadelphia Press* claimed that Boynton, "who died recently, was the man who actually blew up the *Maine*."<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> Letter, William Maybury to William Taft, 14 June 1911, NA, RG 77, Records of the Office of the Chief of Engineers, General Correspondence, 1894-1923, USS Maine, Box 1267, Folder 11.

<sup>78</sup> "George B. Boynton, 'The War Maker,' Tells His Adventures," *New York Times*, 11 June 1911; "Says American Blew Up 'Maine,'" *Philadelphia Press*, 29 May 1911, NA, RG 77, Records of the Office of the Chief of Engineers, General Correspondence, 1894-1923, USS Maine, Box 1267, Folder 7.

Boynton, which was a pseudonym, clearly did not blow up the ship. But some newspapers picked up on the theory that some newspapers picked up on the theory upon the mercenary's death. Other opinions emerged. Some Cubans critical of the American presence claimed that the U.S. government blew up the ship in order to pursue its imperialistic agenda and thus Cubans owed Americans no gratitude.<sup>79</sup> Spaniards in Madrid likewise posited theories. The monthly magazine from Spain, the *El Hogar Espanol*, argued that someone not of Spanish extraction destroyed the ship and the raising of the *Maine* would prove it. Henry Clay Ide, former Governor-General of the Philippines in 1906-7 and current Ambassador to Spain, sent a translated copy of the magazine article ironically titled "Remember the Maine" to the Secretary of State. Ide claimed "The article is of no special importance except as illustrating the almost universal belief in Spain that the 'Maine' has already been raised, and that the fact has been demonstrated, and officially declared, that the 'Maine' was destroyed wholly by interior explosions." Ide assured the War Department that all the daily newspapers in Madrid included similar stories.<sup>80</sup> The author of the article appearing in the *El Hogar Espanol* claimed "Most certainly there has not been in the whole of Spain a single person that ever suspected that the catastrophe [sic] of the 'Maine' was the work of a Spaniard [sic]." The author also claimed that when the peace treaty ending the war was signed, Spanish authorities proposed a joint American-Spanish investigation into the explosion, which "the North-American Commissioners, decidedly rejected . . . undoubtedly because it did not suit their Government that this point should be cleared up." The author reminded readers "But truth, sooner or later, will overcome all obstacles on its way," and reported that exposing the wreck to sunlight for all to see "forced," American officials, "to publicly declare before the world, that the blowing up was caused by an explosion

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<sup>79</sup> John Marshall Klein, "Spaniards and the Politics of Memory in Cuba," 342.

<sup>80</sup> Letter, Henry Ide to Secretary of State, 24 August 1911, NA, RG 77, Records of the Office of the Chief of Engineers, General Correspondence, 1894-1923, USS Maine, Box 1267, Folder 9.

in the magazine.” He went on, “And now it is a wonder what the dictates of conscience of the Christian and Puritanical Yankee must be in order to give Spain due satisfaction for the harm that was caused them and the possessions that were snatched from them under the pretext that we had blown up the “Maine”? He finally concluded, “One is justified in thinking what would have happened had matters occurred in a reverse order, how many millions would that Government have claimed as a compensation for the injuries experienced?” Just like Americans, Spaniards were invested in memories of the sinking of the warship and its consequences for their country and empire.<sup>81</sup>

Some Cubans were likewise invested in the wreck. As Klein suggests, “Cubans responded to American views about the Maine in a variety of ways. The most common Cuban reactions encompassed a spectrum of attitudes that can be characterized as: open embrace, official ingratiation, tactical manipulation, veiled opposition, and outright hostility.” The mayor of Matanzas, Cuba, Isidoro Ojeda, wanted American authorities to turn the cofferdam into an island once the wreckage had been cleared. By piling dirt, stones, and cement, engineers could build an Island. It would be called Maine Island and serve as a permanent reminder to Cubans. The Mayor claimed,

The spot where these men were massacred they bought with their lives. There their bones have been resting for thirteen years and therefore it is a sanctuary, a sacred place, a consecrated spot, a holy and inviolable site that the United States has inherited from the victims and we must keep it forever, not allowing the place to be profaned in any time. To grant this in perpetuity, would be a magnificent idea.<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> “Remember the Maine,” *El Hogar Espanol*, August 1911, NA, RG 77, Records of the Office of the Chief of Engineers, General Correspondence, 1894-1923, USS Maine, Box 1267, Folder 8. John Marshall Klein, “Spaniards and the Politics of Memory in Cuba.”

<sup>82</sup> “Cuba desires a ‘Maine Island,’” *Lewistown Evening Journal* [Maine], 1 September 1911, NA, RG 77, Records of the Office of the Chief of Engineers, General Correspondence, 1894-1923, USS Maine, Box 1267, Folder 8.

Ojeda followed this up with a letter written directly to Secretary of War Stimson, claiming these sentiments were “genuine expressions of my feelings toward those sacred victims who lost their life in the sad catastrophe.” He reminded Stimson that thousands of Americans who came to Cuba made their first trip to the wreckage site, “as a first duty to go as on a pilgrimage to visit the holy place.” He claimed that it was not a burden in the harbor and that everyone who passed by the wreckage was respectful.<sup>83</sup> When the Chief of the Engineers, General William Bixby passed on the proposal, he suggested that legislative approval in both the U.S. and Cuba would be necessary before it could be acted upon.<sup>84</sup>

“Remember the Maine” as a metaphor to go along with the drumbeat of war was reinvigorated and reinterpreted with every inch of water pumped out of the cofferdam. The U.S. government lost control of the wreckage as a carefully guarded site of memory. Harry Gradel, a druggist from Cincinnati, likened “Remember the Maine” to “the battlecry of the Texans ‘Remember the Alamo’ which carried them to victory over Santa Ana at San Jacinto.” In response to the plan to sink the Maine in deep water, which Gradel did not support, He asked, “Would the Texans demolish the Alamo?”<sup>85</sup> Others saw in the wreckage a symbol that reflected the foundations of American republicanism. After reading General Bixby’s critical comments, reading comments from other government officials, and reading numerous newspaper accounts that claimed the ship blew up from an internal boiler and few remains would be found, James Wolferdern of Lamar Township in Clinton County Pennsylvania suggested that these “truths” would, “cause a greater downward trend of American character.” He warned of “dangerous

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<sup>83</sup> Letter, Isidoro Ojeda to Henry Stimson, 12 September 1911, NA, RG 77, Records of the Office of the Chief of Engineers, General Correspondence, 1894-1923, USS Maine, Box 1267, Folder 8.

<sup>84</sup> 2<sup>nd</sup> Indorsement, William Bixby to William Black, 25 October 1911, NA, RG 77, Records of the Office of the Chief of Engineers, General Correspondence, 1894-1923, USS Maine, Box 1267, Folder 8.

<sup>85</sup> Letter, Harry Gradel to Henry Stimson, NA, RG 77, Records of the Office of the Chief of Engineers, General Correspondence, 1894-1923, USS Maine, Box 1267A, Folder 16.

character to civic and public life” and asked Bixby to “uphold the constitution of equity, the privilege of the people to know national events if we are to preserve public safety.” What was the truth? [G]reater publicity” of the real cause would “aid the moral reform of the Republic. Let Truth be Known on cause of blowing up battleship Maine for humanity sake,” according to Wolfedern. His anxiety marked how much he had invested himself in the *Maine* disaster.<sup>86</sup>

Others had less traditional, but just as anxious, memories of the sinking of the ship. One of these individuals was Mrs. Helen Temple of Mexico, New York, who wrote General Bixby that she had special knowledge concerning the cause of the explosion. Temple stated that her correspondence with Bixby remain private as she was “not a public person.” She also wrote that “there was no charge nor will be for anything I may do in connection with this affair.” She mentioned that she was “well along in years of earth life” but she had a lifetime of experiences of dealing with people “from the other side of the river.” Temple stated that she spoke “face to face with anyone gone beyond, as I do with any person in world form.” Accompanying Temple’s letter was a newspaper article that included an update on the recovery operation. The article mentioned that Lieutenant Jenkins died in the explosion and divers recovered his body in 1898 from the torpedo chamber. After reading detailed news reports of the recovery operation in June 1911 when several feet of water had been pumped out of the cofferdam, she claimed that she had met the ghost of Lieutenant Jenkins while in her home. She informed Bixby that “in communication with the Maine disaster, he will answer and tell you what he knows about it.” She then related a story of a few weeks prior as her husband and her friends were sitting down to lunch. All of a sudden, “A man in his shirt-sleeves dropped [sic] down in front of me and said, I was killed on the Main[e].” She was perplexed because no one had been talking about the ship.

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<sup>86</sup> Letter, James Wolfedern to William Bixby, 29 June 1911, NA, RG 77, Records of the Office of the Chief of Engineers, General Correspondence, 1894-1923, USS Maine, Box 1267, Folder 11.

Once she recognized who the spirit was, she asked him, “Who destroyed the Main[e]?” The spirit replied, “The damn Spaniards placing explosives under the bow of the boat.” She described Jenkins: “He did not look like a common sailor. He seemed very frightened. His hair which was brown, stood in every direction. His pants were brown, but not plain, His shirt was white, or nearly so.” She added, “His face was smooth shaven, I think.” And she reiterated, “He seemed so frightened. I did not detain him.” She reminded Bixby that she, and the ghost, would help in any matter “which may help in the effort to raise the Boat.” Temple’s was a metaphysical remembrance of the ship but it was no less filled with anxiety over what the engineers would discover in relation to the explosion. It was a peculiar expression of the environment of memory, offering access to the “authentic” experiences of those who had perished during the explosion and sinking of the ship.

People still cared about the *Maine* after fourteen years. Early on people wanted relics but as the ship gradually emerged from the water many began calling for a proper memorial to the dead and the wrecked hulk. The Comet Film Company of New York wanted to film it.<sup>87</sup> Edwin Ray of Tacoma, Washington suggested that the ship “be covered with dredged material with a view to forming an island within the present cofferdam and the erection thereon of a monument to the memory of the men who lost their lives.”<sup>88</sup> Herbert Browne of Washington, D.C. believed that the “wreck of the Maine be beached somewhere west of the harbor entrance of Havana, instead of being sunk in deep water.” Browne claimed, “it will be always an object of great interest to tourists, will not be in the way of navigation, and it is as easy to beach as to sink.” Former classmate of President Taft, Charles Julius Funck, claimed that sinking the wreckage

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<sup>87</sup> Letter, Comet Film Company to William Bixby, 13 February 1912, NA, RG 77, Records of the Office of the Chief of Engineers, General Correspondence, 1894-1923, USS Maine, Box 1267, Folder 15.

<sup>88</sup> Letter, E. Johnston to Edwin Ray, 6 March 1912, NA, RG 77, Records of the Office of the Chief of Engineers, General Correspondence, 1894-1923, USS Maine, Box 1267, Folder 17.

“was not the sentiment of the American people towards the ship, an object of reverence equal to the battlefields of Gettysburg, Shiloh, Chickamauga, or the melancholy site of Andersonville.” Instead of disposal, Funck claimed the wreckage was sacred, particularly because it helped end the contentions between Northerners and Southerners built up during Reconstruction. Funck believed, “the ‘Maine’ played an historical role when for the first time since the surrender at Appomatox [sic] the South marched shoulder to shoulder with the North.” He contended, “That the American people ought to be allowed the comfort of showing their reverence to this venerated ship,” and suggested that it be permanently placed at Hampton Roads. Sinking the ship, argued Taft’s former classmate, was “to be only a sickly sentiment . . . as if to hide some oversight of the Board of Engineering and would furnish a vindication for the contention of its enemies in Spain, and sympathizers in Germany and elsewhere.” In fact, he argued, “It appears to be almost a sacrilege to sink the ship.” To “Remember the Maine,” was to remember “the South vindicating its reunion with the North.” Funck announced that the ship was “the symbol of the restored Union. Now to sink the ship forever from sight would be equivalent to sink all the monuments of the Revolutionary War and the War Between the States likewise into the ocean and obliterate them forever all but a dim recollection of them.” He asked Taft to reconsider the “hasty ill considered consummation,” and instead make the *Maine* an “ever present beacon of fidelity to the flag, the Union and the principle for which the Revolutionary War was fought, applied to Cuban independence.”<sup>89</sup>

Despite that government and military officials wanted to control the wreckage, they were sensitive to popular opinion. The entire project exposed the myth of Spanish sabotage and the uncovering of the wreckage threatened to expose the myth that American benevolence was not

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<sup>89</sup> Letter Charles Funck to William Taft, 20 February 1912, NA, RG 77, Records of the Office of the Chief of Engineers, General Correspondence, 1894-1923, USS Maine, Box 1267A, Folder 16.



an act of permanent presence and empire building. The public was demanding that the *Maine* be commemorated in the Lincolnian tradition. American officials were also sensitive to the difficulties of the Cuban semi-colony and the symbolism that the wreckage projected onto the informal empire. War Department officials navigated these disparate narratives by appeasing peoples' desire to participate in the collective memory surrounding the wreckage. But they also hesitated to turn the *Maine* into a national monument fearing that it would exacerbate the already tense Cuban-American relationship. The *Maine* had clearly dredged up peoples' memories. Thus in 1912, War Department officials discovered that they could enlist the popular will to further institutionalize the disguised imperial memories by creating a memorial ceremony that would both minimize criticism and appease the people. They set out to produce an elaborate recovery and resinking ceremony that would end speculation about the cause of the war and justify it as a war of Cuban liberation rather than a war of empire.

Despite numerous attempts by citizens to participate in the official commemoration of the *Maine*, government officials rejected them all. It fell to Beekman Winthrop, former Governor-General of the Philippines and former Governor of Puerto Rico, to make the final decision as to the disposal of the *Maine*. As Acting Secretary of the Navy, Beekman advocated the "propriety of towing the wreck out to sea beyond the three mile limit before sinking it, if this be practicable, in order that it may not find its last resting place within the territorial waters of a foreign country."<sup>90</sup> Congress approved and provided funds for the War Department to dispose of the wreck with appropriate funeral honors. Despite the wishes of the public, government officials would not allow the wreckage to become a source of perpetual controversy and perhaps in the future a critique of American empire building and war making.

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<sup>90</sup> Letter, Beekman Winthrop to Henry Stimson, 24 February 1912, NA, RG 77, Records of the Office of the Chief of Engineers, General Correspondence, 1894-1923, USS Maine, Box 1267A, Folder 15.

This included bringing the remains of the dead home from beyond the borders of the U.S. President Taft demanded that the War Department “make the transportation of these remains one of dignity, befitting the fact that they lost their lives for their country. I would like, if possible, to have the remains brought up in one of our large vessels, convoyed by another.”<sup>91</sup> But even returning the dead was wrought with difficulties. The transfer of the bodies to an American ship caused a diplomatic dilemma. The bodies on Cuban land had to be transferred to an American transport. But the political situation demanded some flexibility. At first the War Department planned to land an armed military force in Havana to retrieve the bodies from the warehouse. But American diplomats in Cuba feared that this would remind many inside of Cuba of the wounds from the two previous American invasions. U.S. Ambassador to Cuba Arthur M. Beaupré strongly warned against this. The transfer of the dead and the larger memorial ceremony also made it difficult on President Gómez’s administration. Gómez faced reelection in 1912 and had to undertake a difficult political triangulation. Klein suggests “His need to ingratiate himself to the U.S. government, promote his credentials as a Cuban nationalist, and satisfy Spanish community financial backers [from whom he had taken numerous campaign contributions] were not easy to reconcile.”<sup>92</sup> He defended American interests in Cuba and worked very closely to preserve the American symbolism in the *USS Maine*. Gómez viewed the *Maine* as symbolic of a “fate [that] is so closely connected with the history of the Independence of Cuba.” The Cuban President even requested a part of the ship for use in a monument “that will forever recall the union in love between the Great Republic of the United States and the Republic of Cuba.”<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>91</sup> Letter, William Taft to Secretary of the Navy, 16 December 1911, NA, RG 77, Records of the Office of the Chief of Engineers, General Correspondence, 1894-1923, USS Maine, Box 1267A, Folder 15.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, 345.

<sup>93</sup> Oscar Zanetti and Franklin Knight, *Sugar and Railroads: A Cuban History, 1837-1959* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998); Letter, José Miguel Gómez to William H. Taft, translated, 6 December 1910, NA, RG 77, Records of the Office of the Chief of Engineers, General Correspondence, 1894-1923, USS Maine, Box 1266, Folder 3.

Instead of Americans taking the remains, the Cuban President offered to have Cuban troops carry the caskets out to the anchored transport. But the Navy regarded the boarding of an American ship by armed foreign troops as unacceptable. Eventually diplomats overcame the impasse by allowing a small armed American force to come ashore. Their presence was only in relation to guarding the dead. In preparation for the handover, the Cuban government moved the dead bodies from the warehouse to Havana City Hall where they laid in state. Along the route Cuban navy and army men along with the national police lined the path from the city hall to the docks. With “proper honors,” they oversaw an American armed force escort the bodies through the streets of Havana. Once at the dock, the Cuban Navy officially handed over the remains to the U.S. battleship *USS North Carolina* and the American force loaded them.<sup>94</sup> President Gómez did not attend the ceremony but he ordered public buildings in Havana to lower their flags to half-mast.<sup>95</sup> He also ordered cannon fired every half hour from sunrise to sunset. The *North Carolina* and the *USS Birmingham* then escorted U.S. Navy tug boats as they pulled the *Maine* wreckage out of the cofferdam. The *North Carolina*, escorted by the *Birmingham* moved out of the harbor escorted by the Cuban Navy. Upon leaving the harbor, the Cubans fired a salute of “21-minute guns” and all the soldiers on land stood at attention while a funeral march played until the two ships passed completely out of the harbor. The two American battleships fired a “salute of twenty one minute guns” in response to the salute fired from the Cuban shore and then escorted the wreckage of the *U.S.S. Maine* to deep waters.

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<sup>94</sup> Letter, Beekman Winthrop to Secretary of State, 29 February 1912, NA, RG 77, Records of the Office of the Chief of Engineers, General Correspondence, 1894-1923, USS Maine, Box 1267A, Folder 17; Telegram, Acting Secretary of State to the American Legation at Habana, 2 March 1912, NA, RG 77, Records of the Office of the Chief of Engineers, General Correspondence, 1894-1923, USS Maine, Box 1267A, Folder 17; Telegram, American Minister to Cuba to the Secretary of State, 26 February 1912, NA, RG 77, Records of the Office of the Chief of Engineers, General Correspondence, 1894-1923, USS Maine, Box 1267A, Folder 16.

<sup>95</sup> John Marshall Klein, “Spaniards and the Politics of Memory in Cuba,” 346.

The Cuban Navy escorted the hulk to international waters alongside the U.S. naval vessels. The flagship of the Cuban Navy carried Cuban politicians and military personal that stood at attention as the band played “American and Cuban national airs.” Once they reached the three-mile international water mark, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers detonated a small set of explosives pre-rigged in the hull to blow out just the bulkhead. Colonel Black made sure that the use of dynamite was “proportioned as to open up the bulkhead with certainty while doing as little damage to the rest of the hulk as practicable, especially since the Navy proposes to have a number of moving pictures taken showing the operation of sinking.” Black warned, “There should be as little spectacular business about this as possible.”<sup>96</sup> The Army Corps of Engineers detonated the dynamite, water spread throughout the hulk for a second time, and the ship disappeared beneath the surface with the previously fastened American flag one of the last parts of the wreck to disappear beneath the water. As the ship began sinking, the U.S. military personal, all in white uniforms, stood “at quarters, with guard paraded,” and played a funeral march, which was “followed by three volleys as the wreck sinks, and the sounding of taps.”<sup>97</sup>

After the re-sinking of the *Maine*, the *North Carolina* and the *Birmingham*, with flags at half-mast, sailed up the Southeastern seaboard of the U.S. to Hampton Roads, Virginia. The remains of the men were then transferred from the *North Carolina* to the smaller *Birmingham* and taken up river to the Navy Yard at Washington, D.C. Here a special detail unloaded the

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<sup>96</sup> Letter, E. N. Johnson to Alfred King, 4 March 1912, NA, RG 77, Records of the Office of the Chief of Engineers, General Correspondence, 1894-1923, USS Maine, Box 1267A, Folder 15; Memorandum for the Secretary of the Navy, 15 February 1912, NA, RG 77, Records of the Office of the Chief of Engineers, General Correspondence, 1894-1923, USS Maine, Box 1267A, Folder 15; Letter, William Black to H. B. Ferguson, 24 February 1912, NA, RG 77, Records of the Office of the Chief of Engineers, General Correspondence, 1894-1923, USS Maine, Box 1267A, Folder 16.

<sup>97</sup> Letter, E. N. Johnson to Alfred King, 4 March 1912, NA, RG 77, Records of the Office of the Chief of Engineers, General Correspondence, 1894-1923, USS Maine, Box 1267A, Folder 15; Memorandum for the Secretary of the Navy, 15 February 1912, NA, RG 77, Records of the Office of the Chief of Engineers, General Correspondence, 1894-1923, USS Maine, Box 1267A, Folder 15; Letter, William Black to H. B. Ferguson, 24 February 1912, NA, RG 77, Records of the Office of the Chief of Engineers, General Correspondence, 1894-1923, USS Maine, Box 1267A, Folder 16; Letter, William Black to H.B. Ferguson, 7 March 1912, NA, RG 77, Records of the Office of the Chief of Engineers, General Correspondence, 1894-1923, USS Maine, Box 1267A, Folder 18.

bodies and transported them to Arlington National Cemetery. Once in the federal district, U.S. officials performed a memorial for the remains. A battalion of seamen escorted the caskets to the south side of the State, War, and Navy Department Building at 2:15 on 23 March. The service began at 2:30 PM and concluded at 3:15 PM. President Taft and Reverend Father Chidwick who served as the Chaplain on the *Maine* delivered addresses. Flags on all public buildings were lowered to half-mast for the entire day. The *USS Birmingham* fired a 21-minute gun salute. After the memorial service, the funeral procession moved from the State, War, and Navy Department Building to Arlington National Cemetery. The procession included a police escort followed by an Army escort, which included a band, a squadron of cavalry and a battalion of engineers. A naval escort made up of the Marine Band, a battalion of marines, a battalion of sailors, the Naval Band, and another battalion of sailors followed. After them came the clergy followed by the caissons carried by navy men followed by honorary pall bearers made up of the United Spanish War Veterans. After this came the mourners including President Taft, the Secretary of War, the Secretary of the Navy, members of the President's cabinet, and the Assistant Secretary of the Navy. Finally aides, members of interested societies, foreign officers, and citizens concluded the procession. At the grave site in the cemetery, the Navy Chaplain Bayard, Reverend Father Chidwick, and the United Spanish War Veterans conducted a second memorial service. After this, the bands played taps and the Marine Battalion fired three volleys of muskets. Finally the Army battery fired a twenty-one gun salute.<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>98</sup> Memo for Bureaus and Officers of the Navy Department, 20 February 1912, NA, Record Group 77, Records of the Office of the Chief of Engineers, General Correspondence, 1894-1923, USS Maine, Box 1267A, Folder 15. Program of USS Maine Memorial and Funeral Ceremonies, 25 March 1912, NA, RG 77, Records of the Office of the Chief of Engineers, General Correspondence, 1894-1923, USS Maine, Box 1267A, Folder 18. Telegram, American Minister to Cuba to the Secretary of State, 26 February 1912, NA, RG 77, Records of the Office of the Chief of Engineers, General Correspondence, 1894-1923, USS Maine, Box 1267A, Folder 16.

## Conclusion

President McKinley changed the collective meaning of the dead by opening up the national Valhalla to those who had fought against the Union in the American Civil War, and for American empire in Cuba and the Philippines. His 1898 Atlanta Address helped reunify Northern and Southern enemies and simultaneously justified the memory of oppression and colonialism. The American soldiers who died in Cuba became the symbols of American greatness while Americans forgot the Cubans who fought for *Cuba Libre*. The chemical sterilization of dead bodies posed a fitting metaphor for Americans to sanitize their own memories of exceptionalism, capitalism, and colonialism. American officials played major roles in shaping the commemoration of the 1898 war by their management, years later, in the recovery and re-sinking of the *USS Maine*.

Human remains and scrap metal became the relics of American memory in the context of American expansion in the early twentieth century. Engineers from the army investigated, authenticated, and imbued these relics with an aura that was magnified by the re-sinking of the scrap metal and the re-burial of human bones in Arlington National Cemetery. This coupled with the Cuban government's compliance in producing out of the wreckage a memory of redemption and justification further demonstrated the Cuban-American alliance in the face of Old European colonialism. But American officials were also experimenting with imperialism in the Caribbean and in the Pacific during the first two decades of the twentieth century. The relics of the *Maine*, substituted for the actual wreckage, helped people imagine American identity; they encouraged people to understand government officials as expanding the nation-state, not to oppress others, but to free them.

This served the immediate agenda of attempting to gather support of American actions in the frontier but also served a long term process of replaying the mystic chords of memory that Lincoln spoke of in his first inaugural address. Northerners and Southerners had finally come together, at the expense of African Americans, immigrants, and Native Americans, and now Cubans to see themselves as having a common collective memory. Government officials used this new collective memory to explain the necessity of the Spanish American War, to justify the expansion of the bureaucratized state beyond its borders, and to forget the *Cuba Libre* movement. The memory of emancipation expressed through Lincoln's promise had shifted and now stifled Cuban liberty. Dead bodies of the empire—re-presented to an American public dubious of the effectiveness that the imperial frontier had on their own individual lives—became effective places of collective memory that described the Civil War as a conflict that saved the Union, reunited former domestic enemies, and justified imperialist adventure in places where few welcomed the expansion of the American frontier. The negotiation between the government bureaucracy and the American public demonstrates that the collective impetus to “Remember the Maine” was coproduced. This was representative of how dire American neophyte imperialists were at operating an informal empire. Had they been able to leave the *Maine* or the cemeteries in Cuba, they may have had tighter relations in the long term. Instead the failure of Cuba was represented symbolically in the removal of important national relics. Politicians and War Department officials symbolically dismantled Gunboat Diplomacy in Havana Harbor. Military officials reburied the dead bodies from the explosion in Arlington National Cemetery along with the aft mast of the ship. They moved the foremast to the U.S. Naval Academy in Annapolis, Maryland, and reburied the seven who died in hospital from injuries received in the explosion in the Florida Keys, while they sank the ship in international waters. This symbolic remarking of

the Cuban-American boundaries foreshadowed the onset of a more sophisticated informal empire based on Dollar Diplomacy combined with symbolic and diplomatic cover. U.S. officials' strategy to focus on the *Maine* rather than geopolitics of the war critically helped explain the righteousness of the U.S. in a new global and imperial age. To protect this memory, the War Department found it necessary to raise up and resink the *USS Maine* in deep international waters, simultaneously revealing and obscuring an ambiguous symbol of American power.



## CHAPTER 6—THE IMPERIALIST DEAD: THE FALLEN COMMUNITY AND THE DISGRACE OF WAR

None but the dead have free speech. None but the dead are permitted to speak the truth.

—Mark Twain, *Mark Twain's Notebook*

As we entered the town, dead insurgents lay in the trenches. The smoke was thick and the din of battle deafening. Squads of men moved from house to house to clear out the remaining insurgents. Around the corner of the church wall I met the first men of the Twentieth Kansas coming in. There was a rush for the church, and with a cheer, up went the American flag. In the road dead Filipinos lay here and there like great disfigured dolls thrown away by some petulant child.

—John F. Bass, Special Correspondent of *Harper's Weekly* describing the Battle of Caloocan

The depression of 1893 demonstrated the instability of the rapidly industrializing American economy. Americans voted for Ohio Republican William McKinley in 1896 and again in 1900 largely because he promised everyone a “Full Dinner Pail.” One way McKinley and his advisors, especially campaign manager and future Senator Mark Hanna, sought to fulfill this promise was to engage in overseas expansion in Cuba, Puerto Rico, Hawaii, Guam, and the Philippines. After the U.S. defeated Spain in Cuba, it bought Spain’s colonial possessions in the Philippines for twenty million dollars. In a hotly contested debate in which the languages of Social Darwinism, racism, anti-imperialism, and imperialism were used on both sides of the aisle, Congress narrowly voted to annex the Philippines as a colony. This provided the U.S. with a military presence in the Western Pacific from where they could keep more easily the “Open Door” in China from shutting. Emilio Aguinaldo and other Filipino anticolonial activists sought instead self-determination and democratic government. These two narratives intersected on the battlefield as the U.S. military transformed almost overnight from a liberating to an occupying force designed to bring “benevolent assimilation” to what Governor-General William Howard Taft described as America’s “little brown brothers.” The program of benevolent assimilation outlined by President McKinley called for Filipino cooperation in exchange for U.S. military

protection. The agreement promised Filipino peoples security in exchange for subjugation to American power. Filipinos initially resisted the American occupation using conventional methods of warfare that doomed them. Aguinaldo, a major general in the Filipino anti-colonial movement, quickly shifted his strategy to guerrilla warfare. Unable to overcome American forces, he hoped harassing operations would demoralize U.S. soldiers and U.S. voters. The upcoming election of 1900 pitted McKinley against Democrat William Jennings Bryan who promised to end American imperialism in the Philippines. McKinley's victory thwarted Aguinaldo's strategy, but the unequal contest between Americans and Filipinos continued for years until 1913.

The eventual downturn in violence in the Philippines after 1903 allowed Presidents Theodore Roosevelt, William Howard Taft, and Woodrow Wilson to turn their attention to securing the American empire closer to home. The construction of the Panama Canal, the 1906 cruise of the Great White Fleet, Dollar Diplomacy, and a willingness to send the marines into Central American and Caribbean trouble spots served to strengthen the U.S.'s ascendant position in the Western hemisphere. Wilson's invasion of Mexico in 1916 seemed to run counter to his idealistic claims about a peaceful and just world order. Presidential rhetoric notwithstanding, empire building always came with costs and risks. The organizational, logistical, and even diplomatic difficulties that attended the recovery of the dead from these conflicts were symptoms of a profound shift from "national" to "imperial" war.

Following the successful military campaigns in Cuba, McKinley had extended the Lincolnian promise to all white American men regardless of the divided legacy of the Civil War. But the ongoing American occupation of the Philippines complicated the meaning of liberty embedded in Lincoln's promise, for Filipino resistance sundered the connection between

individual sacrifice and a “new birth of freedom” for the nation. Historian Stuart Creighton Miller reveals the inconsistencies with the American occupation of the Philippines.<sup>1</sup> Historian Paul A. Kramer calls the American occupation of the Philippines a race war, which utilized the designs of “otherness” to mold American identity in opposition to an invented “Filipino” nationality where no such identity previously existed.<sup>2</sup> Notions of race and empire fashioned in the Philippines thus became part of what Jackson Lears describes as the “martial regeneration” of the American nation. To uphold the rightness of American world policy, the government obscured the reality of imperialism in the Philippines with the mythology of nationalism. A new complication of nation and empire came with Wilson’s Mexico punitive expedition in 1916. Not a few of the soldiers who fought and died in Mexico were members of the black Tenth Cavalry regiment.

This chapter examines the changed Lincolnian tradition in the light of the less than magnificent campaigns in the Philippines and Mexico. These two episodes point to the limits of empire building in the early twentieth century, before the American entry into the Great War in Europe. Recovering the dead in hostile surroundings proved a very different experience from the recovery operations after a victorious war. Moreover, it was one thing to remember white soldiers who had died in the Philippines, but another thing to recognize black soldiers who gave their lives in Mexico. These bodies as sites of memory often permitted people to think about the nation and the empire in conflicting ways. On the one hand, the dead demonstrated the limits of empire and the meaninglessness of fighting in foreign lands. On the other hand, the dead became

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<sup>1</sup> Stuart Creighton Miller, *“Benevolent Assimilation”: The American Conquest of the Philippines, 1899-1903* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1984).

<sup>2</sup> Paul A. Kramer, *The Blood of Government: Race, Empire, the United States, and the Philippines* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006). Paul A. Kramer, “Violence in the U.S. Empire: The Philippine-American War as Race War” *The Asia-Pacific Journal : Japan Focus* [http://www.japanfocus.org/-Paul\\_A\\_Kramer/1745](http://www.japanfocus.org/-Paul_A_Kramer/1745), accessed 16 October 2009.

a substitute for the empire by justifying continued military action in order that soldiers not die in vain. Regardless of the interpretation, dead bodies were not meant to represent what actually happened in the Philippines or Mexico. Rather they were supposed to represent the layer of American nationalism that overlaid and obscured the reality of American imperialism.

### The American Dead between War and Counterinsurgency

Despite Bryan's anti-imperialism, McKinley won the election of 1900 and the re-elected President continued to miscalculate and mishandle the Philippine war. He contradicted his campaign promise that he would end the war in 60 days.<sup>3</sup> McKinley broke his campaign promise because he knew that the U.S. needed to control Manila if it wanted to influence events in Asia. One historian claims, "The president decided that Manila's defense against possible attacks from other powers (such as Germany) required all of Luzon, and that Luzon's defense required controlling the rest of the 7,100 Philippine islands."<sup>4</sup> The main problem was that McKinley had woven together military and civil power and placed them in the hands of General Wesley Merritt and later General Elwell Stephen Otis. This was a disaster as these generals disregarded local and cultural customs and lacked diplomatic and negotiation skills needed to assimilate colonized Filipinos. This signified the beginning of a much longer imperial process described by historian Paul Kramer in which American colonizers "invented Filipinos" by reacting to "barbaric" Muslim resisters and producing a transnational empire of race and brutality.<sup>5</sup> Thus in 1900, McKinley replaced Otis with General Arthur MacArthur and appointed William Howard Taft to establish a civil government in the Philippines. This proved disastrous

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<sup>3</sup> Miller, *Benevolent Assimilation*, 148.

<sup>4</sup> Walter LaFeber, *The Cambridge History of American Foreign Relations*, Vol. 2, *The American Search for Opportunity, 1865-1913* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 159.

<sup>5</sup> Miller, *Benevolent Assimilation*, 122-148; Kramer, *The Blood of Government*.

as well; Taft and MacArthur infamously failed to cooperate with each other. The death of hundreds of thousands of Filipinos and thousands of American soldiers ensued. First General Otis and then General MacArthur ordered and oversaw horrific military practices to counter Aguinaldo's guerrilla strategy. The military leadership then tried to censor journalists only giving access to those who would distort the information that Americans in the United States received through press outlets.

For a while, the propaganda was largely successful and even managed to mitigate calls by the Anti-Imperialist League to end the war in the Philippines. But eventually the execution of the Philippine-American War became a public relations disaster and news of war atrocities began leaking into American public consciousness. Many began critiquing America's ability to implement a benevolent assimilation. By 1901, McKinley again had to correct the American occupational strategy. He first split military from civil responsibilities. Then he replaced MacArthur with Major General Adna Chafee. This strategic victory for Taft enhanced his position and after McKinley's death President Theodore Roosevelt handed all civil authority to him and appointed him Governor-General of the Philippines. But this did little to change the circumstances on the ground. The split responsibilities actually produced tension between civil and military officials seeking authority to control the Philippines. Taft and Chafee cooperated worse than Taft and MacArthur had. And Chafee responded to Filipino insurrection with even greater vindictiveness than had MacArthur. Chafee unleashed a whole series of punitive measures that directly ignored Order Number 100 issued in 1863, which had set forth American rules of war. Chafee authorized the "water cure" to induce information about Filipino forces, implemented scorched earth tactics that razed entire villages as punishment for defying

American “authority,” and constructed concentration camps that were responsible for the deaths of some of the guilty and many of the innocents.<sup>6</sup>

This sort of war of imperialism called for a remembrance that was significantly different from the commemoration of the Civil War dead. Lincoln’s promise to commit the state and citizenry to remember the martial dead seemed inapplicable to the situation in the Philippines. Spaces like Manila, Balingiga, and Caloocan could not commemorate the dead the way that Gettysburg, Antietam, or Andersonville sanctified the spaces where the soldiers actually did the fighting and the dying. But McKinley’s Atlanta addendum mixed up notions of liberty with the creation of the Cuban semi-colony. This opened up national commemoration rituals to the Confederate dead and to U.S. troops who died in the act of expanding the American frontier. But even this seemed problematic when Americans desecrated Filipino sacred spaces at least as much as Filipinos desecrated American bodies. The first colonial governor of Tayabus, for example, claimed that American soldiers “looted everything and destroyed for the fun of it. Every church and some graveyards were thoroughly gone through.”<sup>7</sup>

But even when Americans respected Filipino spaces it became very difficult to overlay the symbolism of benevolent assimilation on the places of Filipino memory. One example of why Americans found it difficult to sanctify the space of colonial occupation was Paco Cemetery in the heart of Manila. Spanish colonizers originally built Paco Cemetery for Spanish citizens. It had an octagonal shape with an inner circle and a Roman Catholic chapel dedicated to St. Pancratius—a fourteen-year-old martyr of ancient Rome. But in 1820 a cholera outbreak forced its rushed completion and many Filipino families got access to the cemetery and buried their

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<sup>6</sup> Miller, *Benevolent Assimilation*, 207-8.

<sup>7</sup> Reynaldo C. Ileto, “The Philippine-American War: Friendship and Forgetting,” in *Vestiges of War: The Philippine-American War and the Aftermath of an Imperial Dream, 1899-1999*, ed. Angel Velasco Shaw and Luis H. Francia (New York University Press, 2002).

dead in this colonial space. They placed cholera victims in tombs in the walls of the cemetery. Because of this, by the end of the century the cemetery became a fitting place to challenge Spanish occupation and produce anti-colonial unity. It was also, by a dramatic mistake, the initial burial spot of the politician, poet, and non-violent anti-colonial José Rizal. The Spanish executed Rizal in 1896, which made him, similarly to St. Pancratius, a martyr, and helped set off the Philippine Revolutionary moment. Rizal's non-violent anti-colonialism became a powerful weapon against the Spanish empire—Mohandas Gandhi, for example, would later use a strategy based on Rizal's ideas to defeat the British Empire in India. In a pathetic attempt to erase the memory of Rizal and keep his burial space from becoming a shrine for protest, the Spanish refused to hand his body over to his family and secretly buried Rizal in Paco Cemetery. His sister, however, apparently located the spot after searching for several days and paying off Spanish guards who knew the location of the grave.

When the United States became the occupying power in Manila in 1898, American empire builders sought to differentiate their presence and purpose from that of Spanish colonial rulers. The Americans formally recognized Rizal's burial space and allowed his family to reclaim his remains. Rizal's family took his body but marked his burial space in Paco Cemetery with a monument; it became nationalistic sacred space. But this, coupled with American presence, produced numerous awkward tensions. Perhaps this was most evident in a burial ceremony conducted by American soldiers on 1 November 1898 on All Saints Day, a few months after the Spanish had surrendered and the Spanish American War had ended. Special correspondent to *Harper's Weekly* John Bass reported on Paco Cemetery as part of the sights and sounds of Manila after the war. Bass chose to spend part of All Saints Day in the cemetery in part because the religious nature of the day brought many Catholic Filipinos to the cemetery who

burned lights by the graves of loved ones and attended mass held throughout the day. He noted that one reason Filipinos were placed in the walls of the cemetery and not in the ground was because the water table was within two feet of the surface. Bass mentioned the religiosity of the place, briefly reporting that “The two concentric rings of walls blaze with the light of thousands of candles and small lamps,” with people milling about in conversation and commemoration of lost loved ones. But overall he chose not to describe the religious nature of the burial ground; rather he related the fashions of the people. Men wore “Derby hats of bygone years.” He described “Little native men in spick and span shirts with the tails floating to the wind, wear Derbys . . . of the Irish music-hall comedian.” Women did not escape his gaze either: “Little Philippine women with stiff clean piña dresses and black gauze veils over their heads, looking neat and wholesome, swing along with that peculiar undulatory motion of the body which reminds one a little of the snake.” He described “Mestiza girls” as being “not quite Philippine, and certainly not European,” yet they held “their heads high and stiff at the common people as befits their superior caste.” Meanwhile he noted that “Spanish women, in dresses after the Paris fashions in the sixties, hang indolently on the arms of gallant Spanish officers who carry themselves with the haughty pride of conquerors.” And finally he described “Jimmy Green, in an ill-fitting brown duck suit with a flannel shirt and a campaign hat, [who] slouches along to see the sights.”<sup>8</sup>

The cemetery as well as the people came in for satirical description. Despite the religiosity of the occasion, Bass related a story of meeting a “rather pretty Filipino girl, nonchalantly smoking a cigarette at the edge of the pit.” She “gave a ‘light’ to one of our party.” Behind the chapel in the cemetery, Bass described a bone-yard in which he claimed were the deposits of the dead who could not afford the burial spaces in the walls of the cemetery. The

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<sup>8</sup> John F. Bass, “Our New Possessions—The Philippines,” *Harper’s Weekly*, 4 February 1899.



women's "escort climbed down into the 'bone-yard,'" and picked up a skull and asked the woman if she thought it was the skull of a friend of theirs. An American with Bass asked the man if he could have the skull to take home as a souvenir. But the man in the pit claimed, "If you take it home, it will jump about at night, and give you no rest until you either break it or bring it back here." But the man relented and offered to get the priest to bless it with holy water, to which the woman replied, "Bah! What can the padre do?"<sup>9</sup>

This strange depiction of the people and the cemetery of Catholic and colonial Manila set the stage for what happened next. Just then:

Unexpectedly the familiar sound of the old hymn "Nearer, my God, to Thee" swelled through the cemetery. We hurried to the spot. There about a grave half filled with water stood a company of big American soldiers, singing, hat in hand, the last hymn over the grave of their comrade. To one side, rifle in hand, a squad of men awaited the moment to fire the last salute. In the uncertain light of the coming night, touched with the distant sheen of many candles, surrounded by strange people in a strange land, they let the coffin down with a splash into the grave. The volley startled the Spaniards and Filipinos, and when the trumpeter sounded taps a dense crowd had gathered around the soldier's grave.<sup>10</sup>

Bass's description noted how surreal and out-of-place the ceremony was. The juxtaposition of the two cultural views of death depicted the Americans implementing Lincoln's promise to commemorate the dead in the middle of an exotic and absurd scene. Even Bass noted his surprise that the event occurred and commented on the splash of the coffin lowered into the already flooded grave and the strangeness of Spaniards and Filipinos who gathered around the grave to observe the spectacle. He seemed to relate that the dead American was out of place in the cemetery; how could Americans bury the noble dead in a shallow water-filled grave surrounded by bone-yards and irreverent behavior?

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

This uncomfortable juxtaposition was even more evident in 1899, when American forces became official colonial overseers and the military needed to bury quickly the men who had died in the fighting against General Emilio Aguinaldo's forces on the outskirts of Manila. Perhaps U.S. representatives sought to overlap the sacredness of Rizal's martyrdom with dead American soldiers in Paco cemetery. Just as Rizal had died a martyr to Spanish colonialism, so too, believed U.S. officials, had Americans died in liberating Manila. But in time, most of the American dead buried there had perished while fighting Aguinaldo. A main leader of the Filipino independence movement, Aguinaldo and fellow *Ilustrados* had helped establish the *Katipunan* Society for a revolutionary movement, in part, out of the remains of Rizal's own organization *La Liga Filipina*. This, among other connections of class, ethnicity, and education, tied Aguinaldo to Rizal.<sup>11</sup> The U.S. Army's symbolic attempt to fuse the revolutionary spirit of Rizal with the benevolent assimilation symbolized by dead American soldiers in Paco Cemetery simply did not work.<sup>12</sup> The cemetery became instead a commentary on the U.S. American occupation of the Philippines. It formed an anti-colonial space that American presence could not sanctify. Thus military officials had to remove the American bodies and return them to the U.S. where Americans could control their symbolic meaning without the threat of Filipinos critiquing American relics.

Hostilities between Aguinaldo's forces and the U.S. army began in early February 1899, after an American soldier shot and killed a Filipino soldier over San Juan Bridge on the outskirts of Manila. The U.S. began sweeping Aguinaldo's forces out of metropolitan Manila and into suburban areas. Supported by Admiral Dewey's gunboats, which shelled the area from Manila

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<sup>11</sup> Kramer, *The Blood of Governmen*, 76-9; Filomeno V. Aguilar, Jr., "Tracing Origins: 'Ilustrado' Nationalism and the Racial Science of Migration Waves," *Journal of Asian Studies* 64 (August 2005): 605-37.

<sup>12</sup> Report, D. H. Rhodes to Quartermaster General of the Army, 30 September 1901, 3, NA, RG 92, Records of the Quartermaster General Office, Reports of D. H. Rhodes and F.S. Croggon, in charge of burial corps associated with interments and disinterments in the Philippine Islands, 1900-1903, Box 1.

Bay, U.S. forces pursued Filipino soldiers into the suburbs and soon overcame Filipino resistance. Within a few days the Americans controlled the Pasig River and various strategic locations surrounding Manila. On 10 February, American regiments began their assault on the suburbs of Caloocan where Aguinaldo had been sending reinforcements. Bass was embedded with the Twentieth Kansas regiment as they fought their way to Caloocan. Taking Caloocan proved difficult because the Americans had to negotiate a narrow strip of land leading into a wooded area that then opened up into a series of rice fields, reported Bass. Navy ships shelled the town as the Twentieth Kansas began its assault. The reporter likened it to an American holiday. “It was like a great Fourth of July,” reported Bass, “to hear the distant boom of the guns of the *Monadnock*, and the rushing shells cutting through the woods until they exploded with a thundering roar.” Bass followed the assault along with the nearby Montana regiment, which was moving in support of the Kansas regiment. He described a coordinated attack in which the Kansas volunteers would move forward and the Montana volunteers would come up in support allowing the Kansas regiment to again move forward under cover. They followed this pattern all the way to Caloocan.<sup>13</sup>

Bass’s report was full of patriotic stereotypes, especially the superiority of American forces over their Filipino adversaries. He noted the actions of Major Jones of the Quartermaster’s department who, against Army policy, rode his horse into the firing line: “‘Those fellows can’t shoot,’ he said; ‘as long as they aim at us, we are all right.’” He went on to describe the battle in glowing terms despite the tragedy unfolding in front of him: “It certainly was a stirring sight to see our line advancing in the open, driving the insurgents at every point, and gradually closing in on the doomed town.” When an American soldier fell near him, Bass noted, “He fell, not as we read of in books, throwing up his arms and clutching at his coat, but

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<sup>13</sup> John Bass, “Fighting in the Philippines—The Revolt,” *Harper’s Weekly*, 8 April 1899, 358.

sinking in a limp heap.” This sort of reporting was realistic rather than romantic but still served to blur the incongruity between nationalism and imperialism.<sup>14</sup>

Nevertheless, the devastation of American firepower was apparent. Once the advance reached Caloocan, Bass met up again with the Twentieth Kansas as the men went “from house to house to clear out the remaining insurgents.” He reported that “There was a rush for the church, and with a cheer, up went the American flag. In the road dead Filipinos lay here and there like great disfigured dolls thrown away by some petulant child.” But despite running up the colors at the church, the Filipinos continued to fight and the Americans pushed on through Caloocan all the way to nearby Malabon where the fighting stopped for the day. Heading back to Caloocan, he observed that Filipino sharpshooters had “lodged in the houses” and consequently “the town had to be burned.” He described the horrible scene poetically:

In the fading light of day the dry nipa huts, set afire, shot great gothic spires of flame into the sky. The main street of the town was roasting hot, and we rode through on a gallop. The Bambook huts bursting with flame crackled like musketry fire. Homeless dogs ran howling through the streets. Motherless broods of chickens peeped helplessly. As we rode back to town over the battle-field, the doctors were still wandering about in the darkness, calling into the night from time to time to make sure that they had left no wounded on the field.

It was a desolate scene that, despite the destruction, seemed to communicate the achievements of the Twentieth Kansas.<sup>15</sup>

### Recovering the Dead of a Forgotten War

At its height, American forces numbered nearly 125,000 troops. Over 4,000 died and another 3,000 were wounded. Most of those killed died from disease rather than battle. The military authorized initially two recovery missions to the Philippines. The Burial Party

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 348.

Superintendents were contractors D. H. Rhodes, who had previously served as Inspector of National Cemeteries and as register of marking American graves in Cuba and F. S. Croggon who took over from Rhodes the following year. Unlike the Civil War, when thousands of soldiers died as unknowns, these contractors vastly improved the ability to identify the dead by painstakingly documenting evidence and recommending new uniform policies that the U.S. military would later implement. Their reports detail how they located, recovered, and returned the dead to the U.S. In repatriating the bodies of the dead, the U.S. Army signified that the soil of the Philippines, like Cuba, could not adequately serve as a final resting place. The War Department did not propose a National Cemetery. The enormous distance between battlefield and military cemetery was an indication of the difference between the Civil War and a colonial war. The sheer number of American outposts throughout the Philippine islands made it difficult to recover the bodies. On top of this, the mix of volunteer soldiers and regular army men coupled with the friction between military officers and civilian contractors brought confusion and uncertainty to the process. Both Rhodes and Croggon complained numerous times about the uncooperative spirit of many post commanders and the complete lack of professionalism in taking care of the dead. To make matters worse, Rhodes and Croggon took directives from officers in Washington, D.C. and these often seemed impractical to execute. For example, the Adjutant General's office in Washington, D.C. provided the list of the dead and the location of the buried but this report had many errors. Uniform measures for reporting the whereabouts of the dead did not exist. Volunteer units and regulars often differed in the way that they marked the spaces of the dead. Some towns on the list did not exist while other locations where actual graves existed sometimes were not mentioned. It made it difficult for the superintendents to untangle the whereabouts of many gravesites. When they could not locate a town that was

supposed to exist, they could do nothing but move on to the next location. When they found a grave sometimes there was no body in it. Trying to coordinate the recovery from Washington D.C. was just one of Rhodes's and Croggon's worries. Before the days of identification tags, or "dog tags," the U.S. Army buried men with a sealed bottle. This began a new way of identifying the dead, an improvement over the methods used during the Civil War. Inside the bottle, a piece of paper identified the body. But sometimes the writing on the paper faded or the cork did not seal properly, destroying identification information. This was not a uniform process either; some units did not have bottles to bury and had to find other means of identifying the grave. Sometimes graves were unmarked, disturbed by people or animals, or became unknown due to bad record keeping by post commanders and assistant Quartermasters General. Some areas with abandoned posts remained hostile; Rhodes often required a military escort to protect his men but this sometimes was impossible to secure. Recovering bodies in the Philippines and returning them across the Pacific to the U.S. was difficult and wracked with poor military planning and neglect.<sup>16</sup>

After receiving his orders, Rhodes left Washington, D.C. on 20 September 1900, assembled his 15 assistants, secured supplies in San Francisco, and left California on 1 October on board the *Hancock*. The main mission was to recover bodies from the Philippines, but the War Department included excursions to Hawaii, Guam, and China. The party reached Honolulu, Hawaii on 8 October where they went to recover 37 soldiers' bodies. They left with the bodies on board on 11 October, but not before encountering obstacles. Rhodes planned to use local labor but this proved difficult in Hawaii. His use of racial stereotypes demonstrated the cultural insensitivity of a neophyte colonialist. In his report, Rhodes commented that he could not get

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<sup>16</sup> Letter, F. S. Croggon to Chief Quartermaster Division of the Philippines, 1 April 1903, NA, RG 92, Records of the Quartermaster General Office, Reports of D. H. Rhodes and F.S. Croggon, in charge of burial corps associated with interments and disinterments in the Philippine Islands, 1900-1903, Box 1.

native Hawaiians to help his team disinter bodies “Owing to native superstition and repugnance to working about the dead.” Instead of natives, he turned to thirty Japanese laborers who reported to work early in the morning and “struck” before lunch for higher wages. They wanted \$5.00 per day while Rhodes would only pay \$1.25 per day. Rhodes proclaimed, “I refused to comply with this exorbitant demand, notwithstanding the fact that the Jap’s and the Hawaiians are the only available laborers in Honolulu [sic].” Instead, he secured detachments from the 24<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> Infantry on board the *Hancock* “and immediately after lunch I proceeded with these men to complete the work.” With bodies secured, they sailed to Guam and likewise recovered seven more bodies. They finally arrived in Manila on 29 October 1900. The war had been raging for a year and a half.<sup>17</sup>

Rhodes unloaded coffins, tools, and supplies from the *Hancock*. On 14 November they began their mission concentrating on cemeteries around Manila. They secured 275 bodies at Malate and 89 from Paco Cemetery. For the rest of the year, Rhodes spent his time in Manila and the Laguna Bay area going about his mission. It was tedious work made worse by the ambivalence of U.S. officers in the field. For example, Rhodes sent a letter in late November to the Naval Commandant at Cavite asking for a list of sailors and Marines buried in the naval cemetery. He received no response. By December 4, Rhodes took two assistants and went to Cavite and met with Commandant Captain Freemont. The captain turned the men over to surgeon Dr. Wagner who was supposed to keep the burial records. But Wagner did not have them as his “responsibility ended when a body left the door of the hospital.” Incensed, Rhodes went back to Freemont who sent the civilian to Master-at-Arms Eckstrom, “who had charge of the graves.” Freemont gave Rhodes a list of names of fifteen dead men. When Rhodes arrived at the cemetery with Eckstrom, there were thirty graves but Rhodes only had fifteen names.

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<sup>17</sup> Report, D. H. Rhodes to Quartermaster General of the Army, 30 September 1901.

Eckstrom had no idea which gravesite went with which name as he had other duties to perform besides running the cemetery. Sometimes burials were completed without his knowledge and he would find out about them much later.

Rhodes made sketches of the graves and left. He returned two days later with the corps and coffins to reclaim the dead. When he asked Freemont again for the burial records, the captain said, "Dr. Wagner had charge of the records for the Navy dead." Freemont claimed he "knew nothing about graves, nor about the Marines, nor did he want to know anything about them." Rhodes opened the 31 graves but only 24 had bodies in them. After much work and cross-referencing, he was able to identify most of them but his experiences at Cavite caused him to report that "it will be observed that nothing short of gross carelessness or rank stupidity had had full sway with respect to the matter of the graves of the dead at this Naval Cemetery, during the past two years." The Quartermaster General noted in the margin of Rhodes' report next to this passage the word "omit;" this critique did not appear in the official report to the Secretary of War and thus never made it into public record. Consequently there was never any official inquiry to investigate the matter. But in his report to the Quartermaster General, Rhodes continued to level heavy criticism against Freemont and Wagner. "Common respect and decency, both for the dead and their relatives and friends, demands better treatment." The conditions at Cavite for reclaiming the bodies and the memory of the soldiers were "a disgrace to all concerned." Rhodes requested that the Quartermaster General forward this section of his report to the Secretary of the Navy but again, it was omitted from the Quartermaster's General report and no investigation was initiated.<sup>18</sup>

Rhodes diligently and efficiently carried out his duties and despite such setbacks, he kept his schedule fairly well. Around Manila railroads accessed the rest of Luzon. Rhodes and the

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid.



corps would travel by train to their destination. Before they left, Rhodes had organized the shipment of caskets by rail to intermittent locations along the railroad concluding at Dagupan-Pang terminus. The corps went to Daugupan, recovered the caskets, and then ventured to the interior to recover bodies. They brought the full caskets back to the train for delivery to Manila and eventual shipment back to the United States. Many would go to Arlington but most would be sent to the soldiers' home towns. The corps made their way back to Manila recovering bodies along the way. Again, Rhodes complained about the field officers' lack of urgency in keeping records. On 28 January 1901, Rhodes went to Tarlac on Luzon to investigate rumors of buried soldiers there, even though he had received telegrams claiming there were no bodies. Eventually he discovered two bodies: "one was found in a lately-plowed field about half a mile out of town, and the other in the native Cemetery, covered up by deposits of sand washed from adjacent roadways. Neither grave was marked in any way." Rhodes believed that "'Post Records', if there be any, are taken away with them to some other point." This made it extremely difficult to recover men who had died while one company controlled a garrison but were forgotten when another company relieved it. The corps nevertheless continued its work and returned to Manila on 26 February to prepare for the next segment of their mission.

From this point the Rhodes's burial party would completely utilize water transportation as there were no rail lines linking them to their destinations on Samar, Mindanao, Luzon, Leyte, Cebu, and Negros. The problem for Rhodes was that he could not obtain a suitable transport. The only available U.S. vessel, the *Sacramento*, was undergoing repairs in dry dock. He could find no other ship so Rhodes secured a private ship *El Cano* from the Compania Maritima Line. The corps left Manila on board *El Cano* on 27 March 1901. This posed a different logistical problem; they had to carry all the caskets and all the tools and supplies with them on the ship and

recovered bodies would remain in the ship's hold until they returned to Manila. No longer able to use the railroads, their jobs became significantly more difficult. For example, on 21 April the group had to use small boats to get to shore in the shallow harbor of Antimonan. Upon their return with filled caskets they "encountered a rough sea and a heavy ground swell which nearly swamped the small boats used, but they finally arrived at the ship with the bodies and the men on board." This also posed difficulties when Rhodes wanted a military escort. The next day, the corps requested the help of the commanding officer at Mauban to supply troops for a two day tour of hot spots at Binangonan and Baler. Troops arrived on board *El Cano* fully supplied but the ship had to wait several hours for a commissioned officer to report to the ship and take command of the military escort. In the meantime, the commanding officer at the base changed his mind and recalled the troops because "he was expecting an attack by insurgents, and would need his men." The troops disembarked from the ship and Rhodes was forced to skip Binangonan because "it was absolutely unsafe to attempt to visit it without a strong escort."<sup>19</sup>

A typical day for participants on the expedition included treacherous travel, hard work, and lots of downtime in between stops. The ship would leave a port in the evening and sail to the next destination. Rhodes would have his laborers on shore by six or seven in the morning but sometimes they made land before five. Rhodes would try to secure Army carts and horses but he usually had to commandeer local bull-carts to carry the coffins and tools to the gravesite. Occasionally locals did not have bull-carts and so the laborers would carry by hand the tools and empty coffins to the interior, locate the graves, disinter the body following similar procedures established in Cuba, place the remains in the coffin, and carry the full coffins back to the ship. Sometimes the burial spaces lay near the shore or in the town. Often the shallow harbors required the ship to anchor a mile or two away from shore and the corps would have to row their

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

launches full of coffins and supplies from the ship to the shore. Most of the time the bodies lay in the interior and the corps would have to march ten, twenty, as much as thirty-six miles into the interior negotiating incredibly rough terrain, monsoons, typhoons, mudslides, and the threat of attack before venturing back along the same route with the recovered bodies. When multiple locations were within several miles of each other, Rhodes split his corps into two or three groups and sent them out to the different sites. At times, no roads led to the locations and the corps would have to use flat-bottomed boats made by locals to navigate upstream of rivers. There was always the threat of capsizing from the hard-flowing currents. It was a daunting expedition but according to his reports, Rhodes remained disciplined, resourceful, and persistent.<sup>20</sup>

Despite every effort, recovery and identification remained difficult goals for the burial party to accomplish. On 27 April the *El Cano* returned to Manila to unload the 212 recovered bodies, took on 425 more caskets, and began the tour of the Southern Islands. When the tour resumed identification remained very difficult. At Torrijos, Marinduque the corps recovered three out of the four bodies they were looking for. They could not identify any of them, however, and so Rhodes placed the remains of the three men in a single coffin. At the next location Rhodes did not disinter two soldiers “by request of the officers present” because the deceased were “deserters” from the Army. It was as if they no longer belonged to the nation because they had deserted; instead of being commemorated, these American soldiers remained forgotten and buried in foreign soil. Rhodes avoided the next stop at the Catubig River due to “‘Lucaban’ and his ‘insurrectos.’” On the island of Leyte, Rhodes and his men went ashore to recover a body but could not locate the grave. The troops stationed nearby previously tried to find the missing soldier’s grave but could not discover it in the native cemetery. Rhodes commented, “In as much as the ‘Padre’ had been bitterly opposed to his burial in the Cemetery at

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

the time, they [the soldiers] supposed that the marker, if not the body, had purposely been removed.” In some instances, Filipinos refused to cooperate and burial locations consequently remained hidden to Americans and only known to locals. For example, on the island of Cebu, Rhodes secured a military escort and made shore at Sogod. When the party approached the village, “the native hombres all deserted their shacks and fled to the adjacent hills and ravines.” Clearly concerned that the American unit was an occupation force bent on military confrontation, local people fled to the interior probably to retrieve their weapons. No one remained who could point out the location of the grave. Eventually the corps found the single grave “about a mile back from the shore.” Rhodes noted that “No shots were fired and the party returned safely to the ship.”<sup>21</sup> In another instance, the body of Private Albin E. Carter of Company G of the 44<sup>th</sup> Volunteers was never recovered. A captured “muchacho” claimed “upon interrogation” that Carter was buried in a mountain near the Ibajay River near Pandan, Panay. But Filipinos hostile to the U.S. dug up the body “and the remains thrown in the Ibajay river to keep the searching party of Americans from finding them.” Indeed, the corps looked for Carter’s body but without success.

Rhodes’s tour continued until the end of June 1901. The Burial Corps traveled almost eight thousand miles by land and sea recovering bodies along the way. Rhodes and the rest of the undertakers returned to the United States in July after Rhodes released the Filipino laborers. Despite many hardships he was able to reclaim 1422 bodies; he was unable to identify only 11. But the remains of many other soldiers were left behind because they could not be located. His report to the Quartermaster General contained an important reminder for the public. He warned that “Relatives, friends, and others, interested in the return home of the remains of deceased

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid; Mark Twain, “To The Person Sitting in Darkness,” in *Vestiges of War: The Philippine-American War and the Aftermath of an Imperial Dream, 1899-1999*, ed. Angel Velasco Shaw and Luis H. Francia (New York University Press, 2002), 62-68.

officers and enlisted men of the army . . . can hardly realize what a tremendous task it is to reach many of the graves of our soldiers and return their remains safely to their homes.” Thus, reminded the Superintendent, “it is not at all surprising that the Burial Corps has been unable to reach every grave containing the remains of an American soldier, or to do more than it has done in practically covering the whole Archipelago once during the season’s operations.”

Nevertheless, Rhodes greatly improved the recovery practices of the U.S. Army. The Burial Corps was certainly much more effective at finding and identifying soldiers during the Spanish American and Philippine American conflicts than during the U.S. Civil War. But Rhodes’s criticism of the Army’s poor administration never reached the press or the public.

In the meantime, the war became more violent. A notorious illustration of the failure of Americans in the Philippines was the events at Balingiga in September 1901. Company C of the 9<sup>th</sup> U.S. Infantry had occupied the town and apparently established a relationship with the local people. However, Presidente of Balingiga Pedro Abayon and Police Chief Valeriano Abanador, among others, planned to attack the Americans. The citizens smuggled in bolos and men into a church on the night of September 26 by hiding them in coffins and feigning a funeral for victims who suffered from cholera. But there were no dead bodies in the coffins, only weapons. Women and men dressed as women carried the arsenal into the church. A few days earlier, the mayor and the police chief had convinced Captain Thomas Connel who was in charge of Company C to allow rural men to clean the town as payment for “tax evasion.”<sup>22</sup>

That very night a mailboat arrived with news of President McKinley’s assassination. Upon hearing the report, Captain Connel lowered the U.S. flag to half mast and prepared his men for a morning reveille in honor of the fallen Commander-in-Chief. But before the men assembled, Balingiga’s police chief approached Company C’s sentry guard and began talking to

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<sup>22</sup> Miller, *Benevolent Assimilation*, 200-6.

him. In an instant he grabbed the guard's gun and shot him. In another moment, bolomen came rushing out of the church where they had spent the night and the "tax evaders" also rushed into Company C's camp armed with bolos. In the fighting that followed, Connel lost his life as did most of the Company; all but six men of the 74 soldiers were either killed or wounded. The six survivors made it down to the water and secured a boat and made it to the next U.S. garrison at Basey commanded by Captain Edwin Bookmiller. Shocked after hearing the report of the survivors, Bookmiller and fifty-five men of his Company G, along with the six survivors of Company C, picked up weapons, secured a boat, and went back to Balingiga.

When they made shore, the soldiers were stunned. As they entered the camp they saw their former comrades' bodies dead and mutilated. They saw Connel's decapitated body. His head had been set on fire. "Bodies were split open and stuffed with flour, jam, coffee, and molasses." Even the company's dog had been killed and mutilated. Bookmiller and his men continued to search for perpetrators. They stumbled upon a Filipino funeral service commemorating the 28 bolomen who had died in the morning's raid. Their bodies lay in a trench. Bookmiller stopped the funeral and decided to replace it with a spontaneous memorial service of his own. His men found the twenty Filipino gravediggers who were hiding in the bush. The captain forced the gravediggers to pull out of the trench all the dead bolomen and stack them in a pile. Then he coerced them at gunpoint to gather the U.S. dead and ordered them to put the mutilated carcasses in the trench. Bookmiller, who upon his own death in 1946 would be buried in Arlington National Cemetery, began reading scriptures as a memorial service. Then he ordered the Filipinos to fill the trench with dirt and he read more scriptures while his bugler played *Taps*. Afterwards, the company soaked the 28 dead with kerosene and set the pile of flesh alight. As the flames consumed the bodies, Bookmiller handed the 20 gravediggers over to

the six survivors of Company C who took them and executed them. While this was going on, Bookmiller ordered his men to burn the village of Balingiga.<sup>23</sup>

Such a terrible scene: the somber bugler's notes from *Taps* wafting the ears of soldiers as they executed and burned—a striking juxtaposition. Certainly, as the press claimed, Balingiga “was the worst disaster for the United States Army since Custer’s fate at Little Big Horn.”<sup>24</sup> But what was more striking than the military defeat of Company C was the way the Americans treated the dead. Bookmiller’s funeral service was a perverse enactment of Lincoln’s promise. He extended the state’s commitment to commemorate members of the fallen community but he achieved this by simultaneously desecrating Filipino bolomen. This gave an additional brutal meaning to the Lincolnian tradition in the context of American overseas imperialism.<sup>25</sup>

The bloody events at Balingiga and the American effort to turn Samar “into a howling wilderness” did not end the war. A second tour was needed as more Americans died fighting the insurgency and the Quartermaster General appointed F.S. Croggon to run it. This new round of recovery operations went from April to August 1903. Croggon covered ground missed by Rhodes and recovered bodies from military engagements that occurred after the Rhodes Burial Corps concluded its activities. Croggon’s corps had ten undertakers and forty Filipino laborers; the workers were paid \$1.25 per day. Like Rhodes, Croggon had to overcome difficulties. The main problem was locating graves and identifying bodies. Locals sometimes desecrated or robbed the graves, particularly when men were buried in local or “native” cemeteries. On several occasions Croggon found that locals had opened an American gravesite and deposited other bodies in it. “Many of the small native cemeteries kept absolutely no records of the

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid, 204.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> *Annual Reports of the War Department for the Fiscal Year Ended June 30, 1902* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1902), 607-8.

interments made, nor the cause of death of the deceased,” reported the superintendent. He claimed, “Too much cannot be said in favor of each post having its own cemetery.”<sup>26</sup>

The corps handled the bodies of many soldiers who had perished from diseases such as cholera, malaria, or plague. Although the science of the day accepted germ theory, ordinary people were only beginning to understand the way germs spread disease. The military’s position was that disease such as cholera and smallpox could be spread from dead to living bodies. Modern scientists understand that cholera is water-borne and does not live on human tissue. Likewise, smallpox and malaria die shortly after the death of the host. Dead bodies do not actually pose a threat but many in the military, including Croggon, believed at the time that the bodies of persons who died from disease should remain untouched for several months and even years before any attempt to disinter them was made. Even then, “diseased” remains should be kept in hermetically sealed caskets and the caskets should be made hygienic with lye and other chemicals.

Croggon recommended the development of post cemeteries to keep American dead bodies safe from desecration and to prevent disease. He did not trust local cemetery officials, particularly in areas where disease was rampant, to bury bodies in ways that prevented its spread as he understood the infection process. He believed they indiscriminately placed bodies, whether “healthy” or “sick,” in the same gravesite. Thus Croggon called for the separation in post cemeteries of cholera victims from “adjoining those in which are buried the bodies of those whose death was caused by non-contagious or non-infectious diseases.” In circumstances where a post commander could not build a cemetery, American bodies should be placed “outside, but close to, the boundary of the native cemetery.” This was very different from early on in the war,

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<sup>26</sup> Report F.S. Croggon to Chief Quartermaster, Division of the Philippines, 31 August 1903, 3-4, NA, RG 92, Records of the Quartermaster General Office, Reports of D. H. Rhodes and F.S. Croggon, in charge of burial corps associated with interments and disinterments in the Philippine Islands, 1900-1903, Box 1.



when American soldiers who fell in the fighting in Manila were buried in Paco Cemetery along with remains of cholera victims from the early nineteenth century. Americans had to segregate the “sick,” whether alive or dead.<sup>27</sup>

Creating post cemeteries would also make it easier eventually to recover the remains of the dead. Despite Croggon’s hard work, he failed to recover at least 61 bodies. Some were very difficult to find and some corpses simply disappeared. For example, Private Clayton Allard, of the 9<sup>th</sup> Infantry was never recovered. Although the corps found his grave and identification bottle near DapDap on Samar, the body was missing. The group believed “that the grave was desecrated by wild animals.” The remains of Joe Corren and Walter Mickler, both privates in the 29<sup>th</sup> Volunteers, were located but not recovered. These men were the “deserters” left by Rhodes. Croggon, who “was governed by precedent,” left them as well. Otto B. Loose, a private of the 43<sup>rd</sup> Volunteers, died near the Catubig River on Samar. Croggon could not find him and locals would not help. “Natives living in the vicinity were questioned but claimed to know absolutely nothing regarding the whereabouts of the grave.” At Balingiga, Croggon discovered the graves left by Captain Bookmiller and recovered all but three of the bodies. The Lincolnian tradition, as enacted by Bookmiller near Balingiga, was incomplete; the men received an American burial but in foreign soil. To complete the tradition Croggon had to recover the bodies. Private John D. Buhrer could not be identified. Although they found remains in the grave that Buhrer was supposed to be in, the paper in the identification bottle listed the body as unknown. All that was written on the paper was “Body of an Unknown American Soldier, 9<sup>th</sup> Inf., found back of the Company sink, Balingiga, Samar, Jan. 7<sup>th</sup>, 1902.” That the body had remained unburied for over three months was disconcerting. Croggon had no choice but to label the body as unknown and Buhrer, at least officially, was never recovered. The corps likewise failed to recover privates

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

Litto Armani and Charles Powers. Croggon could not find their graves and there was “reason to believe the remains were never recovered.”<sup>28</sup>

After Balingiga, newly promoted General Jacob H. Smith had ordered Major Littleton Waller of the Marines to “turn Samar into a howling wilderness” and to kill every Filipino over the age of ten. Although Waller largely ignored these unlawful orders, he did attempt to subdue the island. He won some battles but he could not control the island from the coast. It was necessary to occupy the interior if Waller wanted to suppress Samar insurgents. In January 1902 Waller led his company and several Filipino guides and laborers inland on a march from Lanang to Basey. It was a horrific mistake. The rains had pushed the rivers ever higher, there was no trail, and the men began to run out of food. On top of this, Waller got lost. He decided to split up his force. He would lead the healthy forward to Basey, while the sick and weak would try to make it back to Lanang. Waller placed Captain David Porter in charge of the second group. After a few days, Waller made it to Basey, immediately re-supplied, and led men back into the interior to find the others. But Porter was having problems retracing his steps. His men grew weaker and the Filipino guides grew more aggressive and eventually mutinied. This placed the men in a perilous position. Porter split his men up and left Lieutenant Williams in charge of the weakest men while he looked for a route back to Lanang. Porter made it. He sent a relief party after Williams. When they were finally found, most of the Filipinos had either run away or revolted against Williams. Ten marines had wandered away from the group and were left in the interior presumably dead.<sup>29</sup>

Croggon attempted to find these ten men but failed. His report cited the Adjutant’s General report documenting the location of the men, “Last seen in dense forest; mountains of

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Miller, *Benevolent Assimilation*, 220-225.

Samar, in hopeless condition.” The Burial Corps had no location to even begin looking for the men. The superintendent reported, “At every town visited by the Burial Corps in Samar, inquiry was made regarding these cases, but no information was obtained.” His report listed Lockett A. Bailey, Joseph Baroni, Morgan Bassett, Thomas Brett, Francis F. Brown, Patrick J. Connell, George N. Foster, Timothy Murray, Eugene Sanjule, and James Woods as “members of the U.S. Marine Corps.” They were listed as dying in the “Mountains of Samar” of “starvation” and they were noted as “Last seen Jan. 1902.”<sup>30</sup> The recovery of the dead by the burial corps was a remarkable story of dedication and perseverance but it was also a story of bodies misidentified or left behind. Very little information regarding the travails of recovery reached the American public. In a distant colonial war where military officials controlled information from the battlefronts, government officials could use the memory and honor of the war dead to mitigate domestic criticism.

The tension caused by a badly run and increasingly bloody war was evident on Memorial Day in 1902. Just a few weeks earlier, Major Waller faced a court-martial trial for his conduct on Samar and the public began learning about the actions of the U.S. military in turning the island into a “howling wilderness.” Although the tribunal acquitted Waller, this trial did significant damage to the public’s perception of the war. To counter public criticism, President Theodore Roosevelt opened an investigation into the military leadership in the Philippines. This investigation ended with a handful of court-martials of regular army officers. To demonstrate further his commitment to the U.S. mission in the Philippines, Roosevelt also used the dead to justify the war. This marked the first time in U.S. history that a President went to Arlington National Cemetery to address an audience on Memorial Day. Some 30,000 thousand people

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<sup>30</sup> Report F.S. Croggon to Chief Quartermaster, Division of the Philippines, 31 August 1903, 13-15.

were present, many of whom were Civil War veterans and their families.<sup>31</sup> “Decoration Day was observed here to-day perhaps more generally than ever before,” announced the reporter for the *New York Times*. The day included a parade by the Grand Army of the Republic, the decoration of graves, and the gathering at the old amphitheater to listen to speeches of government officials. Roosevelt’s address was the most anticipated. “Roosevelt’s arrival was the signal for an outburst of applause, which continued for some time after he had taken his seat on the platform.” One speaker set the Lincolnian context by reading aloud the Gettysburg Address after which Roosevelt took the podium to cheers “of the immense audience, which stretched outside the limits of the amphitheater.”<sup>32</sup>

Roosevelt began by praising the Civil War veterans. “You did the greatest and most necessary task,” claimed the President, “which has ever fallen to the lot of any men on this Western Hemisphere.” He praised the men who “left us a reunited country. You left us the right of brotherhood with the men in gray, who with such courage and such devotion for what they deemed the right, fought against you.” He added, “But you have left us much more even than your achievements, for you left us the memory of how it was achieved.” After establishing how the Civil War should be remembered, the President turned his attention to the “small but peculiarly trying and difficult war which is involved not only the honor of the flag, but the triumph of civilization over forces which stand for the black chaos of savagery and barbarism.” Roosevelt conceded that conquest of the Philippines was not as grand of an accomplishment as what the Civil War veterans had achieved but the soldiers abroad “are your younger brothers, your sons. They have shown themselves not unworthy of you, and they are entitled to the support of all men who are proud of what you did.” Just as General John B. Gordon and

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<sup>31</sup> Kramer, *The Blood of Government*, 155-7.

<sup>32</sup> “President Strikes at Army Critics,” *New York Times*, 30 May 1902.

President William McKinley had found connections between the Civil War and the Spanish American War, Roosevelt also claimed that the Philippine War and the Civil War were two wars linked in purpose and in nobility of white reconciliation. Then Roosevelt responded to the Waller trial, admitting that there were some soldiers who had “so far forgotten themselves as to counsel and commit, in retaliation, acts of cruelty.” But these were just a few individuals, insisted the President, and not typical of the U.S. military mission in the Philippines. He reminded his audience “that for every guilty act committed by one of our troops a hundred acts of far greater atrocity have been committed by the hostile natives.” Roosevelt promised that any American soldier who had committed excesses would be found out and disciplined.<sup>33</sup>

Justifying the war meant that the President had to uphold and praise the actions of the majority of soldiers doing their duty. Historian Paul A. Kramer’s interprets Roosevelt’s speech as evidence of a race war between American “Civilization” and Filipino “barbarism,” Kramer’s emphasis is the trans-Pacific nature of the conflict.<sup>34</sup> But there was a second aspect of the speech that also deserves mention. Roosevelt went on to discuss domestic racial violence as a wedge against his critics inside the United States. Critics, he argued, should not be so quick to condemn the soldiers in the Philippines, particularly because, “from time to time, there occur in our country, to the deep and lasting shame of our people, lynchings . . . a cruelty infinitely worse than any that has been committed by our troops in the Philippines.” He continued, “The men who fail to condemn these lynchings, and yet clamor about what has been done in the Philippines, are indeed guilty of neglecting the beam in their own eye while taunting their brother about the mote in his.” He accused detractors who “afford[ed] far less justification for a general condemnation of our army than these lynchings afford for the condemnation of the

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Kramer, *The Blood of Government*, 155-7.

communities in which they have taken place.” In comparing alleged war crimes abroad and lynchings at home, Roosevelt did not condemn the American character. He associated all anti-imperialists with those anti-imperialists who were also outspoken white supremacists, such as Senator Ben “Pitchfork” Tillman of South Carolina. According to the President, “in every community there are people who commit acts of well-nigh inconceivable horror and baseness.” Concentrating only on the bad, he argued, without considering the “countless deeds of wisdom and justice and philanthropy,” would encourage most people “to condemn the community.” He insisted that the United States was obeying rules of engagement in the Philippines established during the Civil War. This provided another rhetorical move for Roosevelt to exploit. In the spirit of Lincoln’s promise, Roosevelt justified the war by comparing detractors of the Philippine war to the old Confederacy. He noted that the Confederate Congress called General Grant a “butcher” and accused Lincoln of engaging in “contemptuous disregard for the usages of civilized war.” Roosevelt added that these old-Confederate men, “who thus foully slandered you have their heirs to-day in those who traduce our armies in the Philippines, who fix their eyes on individual deeds of wrong so keenly that at last they become blind to the great work of peace and freedom that has already been accomplished.”<sup>35</sup>

Roosevelt expanded his upside-down interpretation of Lincoln’s promise. The great work of “conquering” the Filipinos would bring them peace and stability without the threat of an “‘independent’ Aguinaldian oligarchy.” The Americans could “teach the people of the Philippine Islands not only how to enjoy but how to make good use of their freedom.” And in performing this duty to Filipinos, Roosevelt promised not to “forget our duty to our own country”:

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<sup>35</sup> “President Strikes at Army Critics,” *New York Times*, 30 May 1902.

The Pacific seaboard is as much to us as the Atlantic; as we grow in power and prosperity so our interests will grow in that farthest west which is the immemorial east. The shadow of our destiny has already reached to the shores of Asia. The might of our people already looms large against the world-horizon; and it will loom ever larger as the years go by. No statesman has a right to neglect the interests of our people in the Pacific.

This was the global vision that Roosevelt saw unfolding in the Philippines. He justified American expansion on the frontier of the empire because it enhanced or protected American national interests. There could be no nobler cause than this. The speech received raucous applause and “three cheers to our brave President.”<sup>36</sup>

Some of the public supported this sort of rhetoric. At least one letter writer to the *New York Times* demanded that Americans support the war effort in the Philippines, despite the death and destruction it entailed. “To denounce the army of any country is to strike a defenseless man,” claimed Gerald Homer Knight of Buffalo, New York who had just recently returned from the Philippines. Citizens should not criticize the soldiers, argued Knight, because they were simply doing their duty by fighting for “all that ‘Old Glory’ stands for—civilization, education, justice and progress.” They suffered all kinds of privations and danger:

without any food but roots and wild fruit, sometimes for three days; at the same time to endure forced marches or ‘hikes’ through a pathless, tropical jungle or swamp, slipping and sliding at every step in soft mud or up to the waist in slimy water, with great cobras 15 to 20 feet in length, alligators galore, and wild monkeys vying with the leaf-covered brown manikins in dealing death or torture to our soldiers.

Using exaggeration and stereotype, Knight presented the gory details of Americans confronting what he described as a barbaric and immoral enemy. “Do you know how many of our boys, whom some one loves, have been murdered in their sleep?” Knight asked, “Do you know how many have been buried alive or up to their necks, with food left just outside their reach; or their ears and nostrils smeared with honey that the awful insects, the like of which you never saw,

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

might further add to such torture that insanity sometimes comes before merciful death?" He related one story of a Moro Muslim—a fighter from a group of “religious fanatics” who believe they “must kill as many Christians as possible.” An American soldier allegedly ran his bayonet through the heart of an attacking Moro. While impaled, the Moro, “by wiggling and pulling, actually slid himself up on the bayonet,” and came close enough to the American to “split his head open by one sweep of his bolo, both bodies falling dead together.” The barbarism of the Filipinos seemed to underscore the sanctity of American soldiers in Knight’s account. “Truly the American soldier,” suggested Knight, “must become as shrewd and keen as a razor if he wishes to ever again see ‘God’s country.’”<sup>37</sup> Supporting the troops and respecting the dead made effective strategies for answering critics of the war. Thus President Roosevelt and Gerald Knight both found ways to politicize the soldiers and politicize the dead in order to justify support for the war. We should remember that protracted wars are rarely popular, and war-weariness affects people who are not disposed to antiwar or anti-imperialist sentiments. It may be that pro-war rhetoric was also aimed at those discontented simply by the loss of American life and the ineptitude of American government.

The soldiers’ remains that the U.S. Army returned to “God’s country” communicated a less than inspiring interpretation of American imperialism. The military unloaded the bodies in San Francisco or New York and then shipped them to their kinfolk, who asked for a full military funeral in a local cemetery or a nearby national cemetery. In 1900, some of the 1,900 bodies were repatriated home from foreign lands. The vast majority came from the Philippines. The War Department sent 984 home, buried 487 in the Presidio in San Francisco, and interred 320 in

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<sup>37</sup> George Knight, “Soldiers in the Philippines,” *New York Times*, 27 July 1902.



Arlington National Cemetery.<sup>38</sup> But a major problem arose when state governments refused to allow the military to ship the “diseased” dead across state lines. When the remains of smallpox victims arrived at San Francisco, local authorities refused the bodies because they could not obtain the proper permits from inland state governments whose laws “forbid the transportation of bodies when death was due to this [small pox] disease.” The dead men had been buried in the Philippines for over a year, their flesh was gone and all that remained were bones. The military had documented these facts, which eliminated the risk of disease with the authorities in Manila. But state sovereignty interrupted the commemorative tradition thus the military was “compelled to inter in the Presidio National Cemetery at San Francisco 142 of such remains, many of which otherwise would have been sent to their former homes for private burial.”<sup>39</sup>

People who were not necessarily anti-imperialist began criticizing the War Department for delays in bringing the dead home. Deputy Quartermaster W. S. Patton noted these criticisms in his annual report. He stated, “As might be expected, the department has suffered some criticism from relatives and friends of officers and soldiers at delay in shipment of remains, due to failure to fully understand existing conditions.”<sup>40</sup> Failure on the part of Americans to understand the reasons behind the delays demonstrated just how much they misunderstood the nature of the counterinsurgency in the Philippines. On top of the difficulty of recovering the bodies, it was necessary to identify, prepare, and transport the remains half-way around the world. This took time and the War Department officials desperately wanted to make sure that they could identify as many men as possible. In the Philippines, unlike Cuba, Rhodes’s and Croggon’s efforts were often hampered by inclement weather, difficult terrain, and far from

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<sup>38</sup> Annual Report, Deputy Quartermaster-General M.I. Ludington, *Annual Reports of the War Department Fiscal Year 1900* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1900), 302-3.

<sup>39</sup> Annual Report, Deputy Quartermaster-General W.S. Patton, *Annual Reports of the War Department Fiscal Year 1901* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1901), 362-3.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 364.

pacified districts. To mitigate the criticism from Americans, the War Department established a permanent burial party in the Philippines, complete with an official morgue in Manila, so that “the entire group [of islands] will be visited annually, or oftener when practical,” allowing for “the least possible delay after death.” This would end the burial parties being organized in the U.S. and transported to the Philippines and instead allow for military officials stationed in the Philippines to recover, identify, and document bodies more efficiently.<sup>41</sup>

Although many of the “healthy dead” were shipped throughout the U.S. to hometowns where they received honorable funerals, the “sick dead” had to be taken to San Francisco or New York. This again showed how unprepared the military was at handling the dead from an unpopular war. In November 1903, the transport ship *Sumner* reached New York harbor with 171 dead on board and much of the returning 5<sup>th</sup> Infantry regiment. The military removed the bodies on dock 12 on the East River in full view of the public so people could claim their loved ones on the dock and return them home with them. Those who remained unclaimed were shipped to Arlington National Cemetery to receive burial there. The *Sumner* had sailed through the Indian Ocean to the Suez Canal and the Mediterranean before crossing the Atlantic Ocean to New York. The voyage took over two months to complete. The 5<sup>th</sup> Regiment barracked in New York and so disembarking in New York was easier than San Francisco. But many of the 171 dead had succumbed to disease, making it impossible for their bodies to be transported from San Francisco overland to their hometowns in the East.<sup>42</sup> The same factor determined the route of the transport ship *Kilpatrick*, which returned 302 dead from Manila including the bodies of Captain Connel and others from Balingiga. Although some had died in battle, most of the three

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 362.

<sup>42</sup> “Brings 173 Soldier Dead,” *New York Times*, 22 November 1903.

hundred had died from disease. Most of them, as well as the unclaimed, ended up in Arlington National Cemetery.<sup>43</sup>

Once recovered and identified, the remains of most of the dead were shipped home and received traditional burials with full military honors. The War Department received significant criticism when the process of repatriation went awry. For example, Charles Seigal died in the Philippines in 1900. The War Department shipped his remains home and buried them in a cemetery on Staten Island. He remained buried there for weeks before his family found out that his body had been returned to the U.S. They immediately petitioned for a disinterment but could not pay for the transportation expense. A local charitable organization, not the War Department, helped pay for the removal of Seigal's body and its shipment home.<sup>44</sup> Another example that brought forth embarrassing criticism was the "Many Journeys" of Private Fitzmaurice's remains. The Fitzmaurice family lived in Oklahoma but requested his remains be shipped to St. Louis, Missouri for burial. The War Department shipped the corpse to St. Louis but no one immediately claimed the body. The St. Louis authorities shipped it back to New York, where it was forwarded to Philadelphia for interment. His sister wrote the War Department about the body and military officials sent the remains to her home in Oklahoma. But the family wanted it buried in St. Louis, so she forwarded the casket via the War Department to St. Louis. When she arrived in St. Louis to claim the body a half-hour late, she learned that local officials had again shipped it to Philadelphia. Eventually Fitzmaurice's remains were delivered to St. Louis and buried there.<sup>45</sup>

Lincoln's promise was extended to the dead from the unwelcome Philippine American War. The practical and logistical difficulties tested the durability of the promise. The nature of

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<sup>43</sup> "Brings 302 Dead Soldiers, *New York Times*, 13 September 1903.

<sup>44</sup> "A Soldier's Reburial," *New York Times*, 29 July 1901.

<sup>45</sup> "Dead Body's Many Journeys," *New York Times*, 29 November 1903.

the war became a political challenge to the promise. Not everyone agreed with McKinley and Roosevelt that the U.S. pacification and occupation of the Philippines, over the resistance of Filipino nationals and the suffering of many more Filipino civilians, was consistent with the “new birth of freedom” heralded for Americans at Gettysburg forty years earlier. The dead, as symbols of American righteousness, were a powerful counterattack to such arguments. The reality was that the War Department was as unprepared for recovering the dead as they were for administering an empire. Neglect, incompetence, desecration became manifest all too often but government officials obscured the realities of recovering the dead. They went on to obscure the realities of imperialism with the rhetoric of nationalism. They prevailed, and changed the meaning of what Lincoln meant when he committed the state and the citizenry to commemorate the fallen community as well as Americans’ sense of their place in the world and their nation’s mission to the world.

#### Commemorations between the Philippine American War and the Great War

The complications of America’s place in the world grew in the years after the Philippine American War, which was largely over by 1907. Both Republican and Democratic administrations experimented with various strategies to pursue U.S. interests and promote American ascendancy. Theodore Roosevelt continued McKinley’s policy in the Philippines while issuing his Roosevelt Corollary to the Monroe Doctrine and implementing “gunboat diplomacy.” He helped instigate a civil war in Colombia that ended with the independence of Panama and gave the U.S. control over the Panama Canal project. It would connect the Atlantic and Pacific oceans and allow U.S. fleets to move rapidly to destinations where they were

needed.<sup>46</sup> Even before the canal was opened, Roosevelt sent the Great White Fleet on a worldwide cruise as a demonstration of American naval power. He also sent U.S. forces into Honduras, the Dominican Republic, Cuba, and Nicaragua. President Howard Taft embraced “dollar diplomacy,” but also approved interventions and occupations of Honduras, Panama, Cuba, and Nicaragua. Such moves not only protected American interests but also increased economic and financial integration between the U.S. and Latin American and Caribbean countries. By the eve of the Great War, the U.S. dominated the Western Hemisphere and challenged any unwanted European involvement in the region.

The 1912 election saw Woodrow Wilson, the Virginia-born former President of Princeton University and Governor of New Jersey, defeat Roosevelt and Taft. The first Southerner to serve as president since the Civil War, Wilson brought a new emphasis on self-determination and collective security, dubbed the “New Freedom,” to U.S. foreign policy. But the Wilson administration hardly repudiated the quest for American hegemony. Not surprisingly, the president sounded like his predecessors when it came to justifying his shows of force abroad and commemorating the dead from these actions. What was distinctive was the fact that a Southerner now spoke words redolent of Lincoln, revealing the triumph of reunion and reconciliation in the context of empire.

Wilson signaled his acceptance of the Lincolnian tradition within a few months of taking office. In 1913, the State of Pennsylvania hosted one of the largest ever Civil War reunions to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the Gettysburg battle. Fifty thousand members of the Grand Army of the Republic and the United Confederate Veterans returned to meet and camp on

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<sup>46</sup> For an overview of U.S. interventions in Latin America and elsewhere, see Stephen Kinzer, *Overthrow: America's Century of Regime Change from Hawaii to Iraq* (New York: Henry Holt, 2006).

the battlefield. They ate together, talked together, and lived together from 25 June to 4 July.<sup>47</sup> Wilson arrived on Independence Day. Just as Lincoln had dedicated the country to a “new birth of freedom” fifty years earlier, Wilson renewed the national spirit in his address. Standing nearly in the same spot where Lincoln had spoken, Wilson told the crowd, “I need not tell you what the Battle of Gettysburg meant.”<sup>48</sup> Noting that “fifty years have gone by,” he said “I crave the privilege of speaking to you for a few minutes of what those fifty years have meant.” In his view, “They have meant peace and union and vigor, and the maturity and might of a great nation. How wholesome and healing the peace has been!” The U.S. now stood unchallenged: “There is no one within its borders, there is no power among the nations of the earth, to make it afraid.”<sup>49</sup>

In spite of the nation’s growing strength, it still required a warlike sense of purpose and willingness to sacrifice from its citizens. He asked, “Have affairs paused? Does the Nation stand still? Is what the fifty years have wrought since those days of battle finished, rounded out, and completed?” He acknowledged the soldiers in the audience by saying that they had “set us a great example of devotion and utter sacrifice,” but went on to suggest that their work for reunion was a beginning and not an end. While “government had now at last been established . . . to serve men, not masters,” Wilson declared that “We have harder things to do than were done in the heroic days of war.” The Civil War had shown “what it costs to make a nation.” There were still more burdens and challenges, even in peacetime: “In armies thus marshaled from the ranks of free men you will see, as it were, a nation embattled, the leaders and the led, and may know, if you will, how little except in form its action differs in days of peace from its action in days of war.” He continued, “War fitted us for action, and action never ceases.” His call to action

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<sup>47</sup> “Voices of Battle: The Great Reunion of 1913,” *National Park Service* <http://www.nps.gov/archive/gett/getttour/sidebar/reunion13.htm> accessed 20 December 2010.

<sup>48</sup> Woodrow Wilson, “Address at Gettysburg,” *Woodrow Wilson: Essential Writings and Speeches of the Scholar-President*, ed. Mario R. Di Nuzio (New York: New York University Press, 2006), 370-2.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 370, 371.

against “principalities and powers and wickedness in high places” maintained the martial metaphor, even as he referred to citizens and children rather than men under arms:

What we strive for is their freedom, their right to lift themselves from day to day and behold the things they have hoped for, and so make way for still better days for those whom they love who are to come after them. The recruits are the little children crowding in. The quartermaster’s stores are in the mines and forests and fields, in the shops and factories. Every day something must be done to push the campaign forward; and it must be done by plan and with an eye to some great destiny.

He admonished Americans to act like soldiers as their pursued their civic endeavors:

Lift your eyes to the great tracts of life yet to be conquered in the interest of righteous peace, of that prosperity which lies in a people’s hearts and outlasts all wars and errors of men. Come, let us be comrades and soldiers yet to serve our fellow-men in quiet counsel, where the blare of trumpets is neither heard nor heeded and where the things are done which make blessed the nations of the world in peace and righteousness and love.<sup>50</sup>

The demands of industrial civilization and globe-straddling empire blurred the old republic’s simple distinctions between war and peace or slavery and liberty. Lincoln had dedicated the Gettysburg battlefield to the men who fought and died there so that the world “could never forget what they did here.” By contrast, Wilson made the battlefield ubiquitous for Americans, even if the country’s struggles were not always military in nature.

Early in his tenure, Wilson proposed a “Pan-American Pact” between the U.S. and the republics of Latin America. The historian Thomas J. Knock suggests that Wilson understood that, “Whereas the Monroe Doctrine was ostensibly intended to check European aggression in Latin America, there was nothing in it to restrain the United States.” Departing from the military and financial interventionism of the Roosevelt and Taft administrations, Wilson explained to Latin Americans that “The Pan-American Pact was, alas, ‘an arrangement by which you would

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<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 371-2.

be protected from us.”<sup>51</sup> Latin Americans “have not been certain what the United States would do with her power. That doubt must be removed.”<sup>52</sup> If adopted, the Pan-American Pact would allow collective security rather than U.S. suzerainty against European encroachments. Based on his notion of the New Freedom, the pact could also promote reform and democracy in Latin America.<sup>53</sup> Not surprisingly, given years of bullying, not all Latin American leaders were sold on Wilson’s proposal.<sup>54</sup>

Wilson had not yet won over Latin Americans when “untoward developments in the Mexican Revolution conspired to ruin the credibility of the United States in the eyes of practically every Latin American government and dealt the Pan-American Pact a mortal blow.”<sup>55</sup> The Mexican Revolution, which began with the overthrow of President Porfirio Diaz in 1910, unfolded into a vast decade-long struggle among factional and popular forces across the country. The politics as well as fighting spilled over the U.S.-Mexico border.<sup>56</sup> The Pan-American Pact proposal notwithstanding, Wilson sent the U.S. Navy to occupy Veracruz in April 1914. The marines succeeded in taking over the city after battling soldiers and civilians. With the Americans occupying Mexico’s most important seaport for seven months and seeking to influence the country’s leadership, Venustiano Carranza became the new President of Mexico. He enjoyed the support of the peasant-backed popular leaders and guerrilla fighters Pancho Villa

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<sup>51</sup> Thomas J. Knock, *To End All Wars: Woodrow Wilson and the Quest for a New World Order* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992), 84.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, 71.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 41, 44.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 41-2.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 81.

<sup>56</sup> Meanwhile American investors dreaming of land accumulation in Mexico and construction of a railroad that would connect American producers to Latin American natural resources proved too tantalizing. American immigrants already owned vast amounts of Mexico. Instability in Mexico damaged the dreams of American land holders in Mexico and American developers in New York and Washington D.C. and so outgoing President William Howard Taft sanctioned Mexican General Victoriano Huerta’s coup d’état and seizure of the Mexican presidency, which Taft believed would bring stability to Mexico in the manifestation of an American-friendly military President. For an in depth study of the Mexican Revolution and the role of Americans and the U.S. government in it see John Mason Hart, *Empire and Revolution: The Americans in Mexico Since the Civil War* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002).



and Emiliano Zapata, but it did not take long before his failure to enact land reform broke up the alliance and the revolution entered another bloody phase. The Great War, which began in August 1914, raised the stakes because of the danger that European great powers might seek to take advantage of the turmoil in Mexico.

Nineteen marines had died in the fighting in Veracruz. U.S. Navy officials returned their bodies on the battleship *Montana* to New York and buried the remains of seventeen in the grounds of the Brooklyn Navy Yard and delivered those of the other two casualties to their hometowns for burial in local cemeteries. The Brooklyn funeral, planned by the U.S. Navy, was scheduled for 11 May. A few weeks earlier, Wilson had indicated that he would make the ceremony. But as the day approached, Wilson boarded the presidential yacht and sailed to New York. Beginning at the Battery, an elaborate funeral procession observed by tens of thousands of onlookers took the dead through Manhattan and across the Manhattan Bridge to Brooklyn. Wilson traveled in a carriage. At City Hall, Mayor John Mitchell delivered a eulogy and laid a wreath on one of the coffins. He had worked with the religious and business communities to have churches ring bells and for businesses to suspend activity during the funeral. When the procession reached the Navy Yard, the public as well as the marchers filled the area. Accompanying Wilson to the stage was the Congressional Committee, the representatives of the New York State Assembly, Wilson's secretary Joseph Tumulty, Mayor Mitchell, the Secretary of the Navy, the Governor of New York, and numerous other representatives of the Navy, city and state government, and the churches. Pallbearers then carried in the flag-draped coffins to a military salute.<sup>57</sup>

Wilson rose to commemorate the dead with a list of their names in his hand:

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<sup>57</sup> "Nation Honors Vera Cruz Dead in Grieving City," *New York Times*, 12 May 1914.

I have a singular mixture of feelings. The feeling that is uppermost is one of profound grief that these lads should have had to go their death, and yet there is mixed with that grief a profound pride that they should have gone as they did, and, if I say it out of my heart, a touch of envy of those who were permitted so quietly, so nobly, to do their duty.<sup>58</sup>

These men had fulfilled the call to duty that Wilson had spoken of at Gettysburg. What made their sacrifice noble was that “They did not give their lives for themselves. They gave their lives for us, because we called upon them as a nation to perform an unexpected duty.” This, he claimed, demonstrated “the way in which men grow distinguished.” He asked the audience, “Are you sorry for these lads? Are you sorry for the way they will be remembered? Does it not quicken your pulses to think of the list of them?” And then Wilson firmly put the Veracruz dead into the pantheon of those who had gone before them: “I hope to God none of you may join the list, but if you do, you will join an immortal company.” Turning to the causes of the men’s deaths, Wilson claimed that “We have gone down to Mexico to serve mankind if we can find out the way. We do not want to fight the Mexicans.” Rather, the President claimed, “We want to serve the Mexicans if we can, because we know how we would like to be free and how we would like to be served if there were friends standing by ready to serve us.” Wilson ennobled the Veracruz operation as well as the Veracruz dead, saying “A war of aggression is not a war in which it is a proud thing to die, but a war of service is a thing in which it is a proud thing to die.”<sup>59</sup>

Thus a questionable military intervention in a foreign country became a demonstration of national identity and purpose. The American nation “consists of all the sturdy elements and of all the best elements of the whole globe.” Having listened to the roll call of the dead before he rose to speak, Wilson reminded the audience that those who died were “not Irishmen or Germans

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<sup>58</sup> “War is a Symbol of Duty,” *New York Times*, 12 May 1914.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*

or Frenchmen or Hebrews any more. They were not when they went to Vera Cruz; they were Americans, everyone one of them, and with no difference in their Americanism because of the stock from which they came.” He added “they were in a peculiar sense of our blood and they proved it by showing that they were of our spirit.” And then he returned to the theme of sacrifice first set forth in his Gettysburg address. “I never went into battle, I never was under fire,” admitted Wilson,

But I fancy that there are some things just as hard to do as to go under fire. I fancy that it is just as hard to do your duty when men are sneering at you as when they are shooting at you. When they shoot at you they can only take your natural life; when they sneer at you they can wound your heart, and men who are brave enough, steadfast enough, steady in the principles enough, to go about their duty with regard to their fellowmen.

Patriots, civilian as well as military, were “enlisted to serve the country, no matter what may come.” Wilson expected citizens to “put the utmost energy of every power that we have into the service of our fellow-men, never sparing ourselves, not condescending to think of what is going to happen to ourselves, but ready, if need be, to go to the utter length of complete self-sacrifice.” He concluded “May God grant to all of us that vision of patriotic service which here in solemnity and grief and pride is borne in upon our hearts and consciences.”<sup>60</sup>

The Veracruz dead embodied for Wilson the subjects of Lincoln’s promise, but they were the sacrifices made in a very different era than the Civil War. The intervention in Mexico flowed from an imperial project thinly disguised in Wilson’s rhetoric as a national cause. But the proof was in the context of the commemoration. As in the essentially colonial and counterinsurgency wars waged in Cuba and the Philippines, the dead had to return to American soil if they were to receive an honorable burial.

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<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

Just a few weeks after the ceremonies for the Veracruz dead in New York, Wilson continued Roosevelt's practice of attending services at Arlington National Cemetery on Memorial Day. On this occasion, Wilson commended Civil War veterans who had fought to "save the union." Just as he had done at Gettysburg, he commented that Union and Confederate soldiers "Not only reunited States, they reunited the spirits of men. That is their unique achievement, unexampled anywhere else in the annals of mankind, that the very men whom they overcame in battle join in praise and gratitude that the Union was saved."<sup>61</sup> Of course, this rhetoric of reunion and reconciliation between white Southerners and Northerners was familiar. It had been uttered before by Confederate General John B. Gordon in Atlanta's Piedmont Park as well as by Presidents McKinley and Roosevelt. What was perhaps new was Wilson's suggestion five days later that the effort of reconciliation was more or less complete. The occasion was the dedication of the Confederate monument in Arlington National Cemetery. Its designer was Moses Ezekiel and it had been funded through the Washington, D.C. chapter of the United Daughters of the Confederacy. Organizers placed the monument at the center of the section reserved for Confederate dead from the Civil War. The government established this section shortly after McKinley's 1898 Atlanta speech, which promised federal maintenance of Confederate graves. Now Ezekiel had finished the monument. In a speech that stressed the "Union of spirit between North and South," Wilson accepted the "emblem of a reunited people" and went on to bury the past:

My privilege is this, ladies and gentleman: To declare this chapter in the History of the United States closed and ended, and I bid you turn with me your faces to the future, quickened by the memories of the past, but with nothing to do with the contests of the past, knowing as we have shed our blood upon opposite sides, we now face and admire one another.

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<sup>61</sup> Woodrow Wilson, "The Men Who Fought for the Union," *Selected Addresses and Public Papers of Woodrow Wilson*, ed. Albert Bushnell Hart (New York: The Modern Library, 1918), 32.

Wilson had completed what McKinley had started, the reunion of the nation through the building of an empire, but he also foreshadowed a further shift from the imperial to the global project of U.S. expansion. “It is our duty and our privilege to be like the country we represent,” claimed the President. At the same time, he looked forward to a mission that transcended the borders of nation and colony: “Speaking no word of malice, no word of criticism even, stand shoulder to shoulder to lift the burdens of mankind in the future and show the paths of freedom to all the world.”<sup>62</sup>

Renewed intervention in Mexico revealed the pitfalls on these paths. Fighting between the forces of President Carranza and Pancho Villa led the rebel leader, who could not win on his own, to adopt a risky strategy of provoking U.S. entry into the conflict. Villa began raiding American cities across the border in hopes of luring superior U.S. forces into a direct and devastating confrontation with Carranza’s federal troops. For his part, Wilson could not allow America’s vulnerable underbelly in the Southwest to be exposed to the view of unfriendly powers in Europe. He ordered troops under the command of General John J. “Blackjack” Pershing to invade Mexico in 1916.<sup>63</sup>

Pershing never succeeded in capturing the elusive Villa, who could hit his column and then disappear into the mountains while leading the American forces ever closer to Carranza’s forces. The biggest clash of the campaign happened in the summer of 1916 at Carrizal. Pershing sent Company C and Company K of the black Tenth Cavalry under the command of a white officer, Captain Charles Boyd, to investigate a reported sighting of Villa. Boyd missed Villa’s

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<sup>62</sup> Woodrow Wilson, “Union of Spirit Between North and South,” *Selected Addresses and Public Papers of Woodrow Wilson*, ed. Albert Bushnell Hart (New York: The Modern Library, 1918), 35,6.

<sup>63</sup> Knock, *To End All Wars*, 41-2. The Veracruz occupation happened just over a year after the U.S. raised the *U.S.S. Maine* in Havana Harbor. Wilson’s ideology was congruent with his politics at this moment claims Knock. The historian asserts that Wilson was able to claim support with the revolutionaries Zapata and Villa while simultaneously supporting the rights of Mexicans in pursuit of self-determinism.

fighters but skirmished with Mexican federal troops. Boyd died in the battle, and the Mexicans bested the Americans. The Carranza government claimed that Mexican *federales* had killed twelve Americans and captured another seventeen. Wilson demanded the immediate release of the prisoners, but Carranza had to balance this demand with Mexican criticisms of his government's close association with the U.S. While Carranza delayed, the drumbeat grew in the U.S. for a full-scale invasion of Mexico.<sup>64</sup>

Meanwhile, the American public lionized the black soldiers of the Tenth Cavalry despite the fact that they had lost a skirmish on an expedition that violated Mexican sovereignty. The *New York Times* described the men as heroic and reported, "American negro troopers faced almost certain death at Carrizal with smiles on their lips, and they burst into song once or twice as they fought their grim fight against odds." Captain Lewis S. Morey, who accompanied the men, reported that "For forty-five minutes the men fought, joking among themselves all the while, even though they realized we had been trapped and had little chance of getting out alive." Morey described the hard fight between the African American and Mexican soldiers, saying that "He had never seen such valor" and that "it was not until their ammunition was exhausted that the troops were finally cut to pieces."<sup>65</sup> Historian James N. Leiker points out that "public praise of this magnitude" had not been heard by black citizens since 1898.<sup>66</sup>

The Wilson administration eventually succeeded in negotiating the return of the captured men. The transfer took place at the international bridge between Ciudad Juarez and El Paso. In the stereotype-filled account of the *New York Times*, "Marching erect in spite of their rags and

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<sup>64</sup> "Mexicans Dug Pitfall, Used Flag of Truce," *New York Times*, 23 June 1916; "Americans to Blame Says Mexican Official," *New York Times*, 23 June 1916; "Seek Only Nation's Peace," *New York Times*, 23 June 1916; "Describe Troops in Hopeless Fight," *New York Times*, 24 June 1916; "Praises Courageous Band," *New York Times*, 27 June 1916.

<sup>65</sup> "Praises Courageous Band," *New York Times*, 27 June 1916.

<sup>66</sup> "No Quarter at Carrizal," *New York Times*, 30 June 1916; James N. Leiker, *Racial Borders: Black Soldiers Along the Rio Grande* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2002), 163-170.

tatters came the American negro troopers.” They had formed two lines side-by-side and stepped onto the bridge “with a flanking line of Carranza soldiers on each side of them.” While the black Americans paraded smartly, “the diminutive Carranza soldiers almost had to trot to keep up and the fat, greasy Captain in command perspired from every pore as he dog-trotted along, with his sword flopping between his legs.” When the Mexican captain had ordered the prisoners to halt, “The negroes all stopped at the same time, while the Carranza soldiers stopped in bunches.” Sergeant Page, “a big buck negro,” stood at attention and saluted General Belt who was there to receive the men. Despite his tattered clothes, beard, and unkempt hair, Page “stood as erect as if on dress parade at Fort Myers.” Mexican General Gonzales gave General Belt the list of prisoners and Belt called the roll. As Belt read each man’s name, the soldier crossed to the U.S. side of the bridge to raucous cheers from American civilians who had come out to welcome the men home. Once on American soil, the men proceeded to a holding area where they underwent “kerosene and vinegar” baths “to kill germs” and then showers before receiving clean clothes while their old clothes were burned. The Superintendent of the El Paso Negro schools gave each man a bouquet of flowers as the ex-prisoners boarded ambulances for transport to the nearby army fort for debriefing.<sup>67</sup>

Black cavalymen of the West were a far cry from the white marines who had died in Veracruz and been eulogized by Wilson two years earlier. There was, in fact, a long history of mistreatment and misrepresentation of black soldiers. In 1906, President Roosevelt had played an active role in the outrageous punishment of black soldiers who had defended themselves from white attackers in Brownsville, Texas.<sup>68</sup> In his study of black attitudes to Wilson’s Mexico policy, historian David Hellwig observes that “by far the most distinctive feature of the black

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<sup>67</sup> “No Quarter at Carrizal,” *New York Times*, 30 June 1916.

<sup>68</sup> Leiker, *Racial Borders*, 118-145.

press's response was its emphasis on the discrepancy between Woodrow Wilson's eagerness to help the poor and establish democratic institutions in Mexico and his silence on the treatment of black Americans."<sup>69</sup> Surprisingly, the black survivors from the skirmish at Carrizal were heroes of the moment. Now the question became how would the U.S. handle the repatriation of the remains of their dead comrades?

Most of the dead were black and the army initially did little to recover their bodies. In fact, military authorities did not know where they were buried. Mexicans had buried them in a common pit after removing their identification tags. The foreman of the Santo Dominguito ranch, who was likely American or an American sympathizer, located and disinterred the bodies and returned them to U.S. forces operating on the Mexican side of the border. Major General Frederick Funston, who had previously served in the Philippines, reported that he had identified the bodies of the two white officers Captain Boyd and Lieutenant Henry Adair but that the others remained unidentified. Although Funston recommended that "this report should not be given to the press as it would endanger the life of the owner of the ranch," news that the army had come into possession of the remains of the dead reached the American public. Nine of the bodies arrived in Juarez on 6 July and were taken across the border to El Paso the next day.<sup>70</sup>

War Department officials determined to make these bodies into heroic symbols. In El Paso, Funston placed the bodies in coffins covered with an American flag, wreaths, and flowers. He placed them in the morgue where a detachment of black soldiers from the Tenth Cavalry stood guard over them. Citizens of El Paso honored the dead and women from the Soldiers Comfort Guild provided more flowers for the caskets. Almost immediately Boyd's remains were

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<sup>69</sup> For an overview see David J. Hellwig, "The Afro-American Press and Woodrow Wilson's Mexican Policy, 1913-1917" *Phylon* 48 (Winter 1987): 264.

<sup>70</sup> Telegram, Funston to Adjutant General, 6 July 1916, NA, RG 92, Office of the Quartermaster General, Cemeterial Division, 1917-1922, Box 3, Folder, General.



sent to Arlington National Cemetery for burial there, while Adair's were shipped to his family in Portland, Oregon. Adair was buried next to his father, who had died just days earlier.<sup>71</sup> The process of identifying the remains of their black subordinates by fingerprints took time. The delay was not entirely for forensic reasons. One obstacle was the public health authorities in El Paso, which "refuse[d] to open the metal boxes" supposedly because the "condition of [the] bodies when placed in the sealed cases was such as to render the taking of finger prints an impossibility."<sup>72</sup> The delay caused suspicion in the African American community, given the speed with which Boyd's and Adair's bodies had been shipped from El Paso. The Henderson National Memorial Civil Rights League petitioned President Wilson, stating that "We the colored population of the District of Columbia, representing 12,000,000 citizens of the United States of America" ask for the bodies to be brought to the nation's capital for a proper memorial as "sainted dead" who "shed the first blood in the defense of the American flag and upholding the dignity of the United States in the crisis in Mexico." The committee resolved that the soldiers' deaths caused "sustained and unretrievable [sic] loss; to the race and to the nation, they bear mute testimony of their virtues at home and on foreign shores." It called for "a united effort" to bring the dead home and asked "that their final resting place be in Arlington National Cemetery."<sup>73</sup> The National Evangelical Ministers' Alliance of America joined the group in another petition to the War Department calling for the men's remains to be immediately dispatched to Washington and outlining a plan for the coffins to lie in state at the Cosmopolitan

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<sup>71</sup> "El Paso Honors Dead from Carrizal Battle," *New York Times*, 7 July 1916.

<sup>72</sup> Telegram, Funston to Adjutant General, 9 July 1916, NA, RG 92, Office of the Quartermaster General, Cemeterial Division, 1917-1922, Box 14, Folder Corrizal, Mexico.

<sup>73</sup> Letter, Henderson National Memorial Civil Rights League to Woodrow Wilson, 27 June 1916, NA, RG 92, Office of the Quartermaster General, Cemeterial Division, 1917-1922, Box 14, Folder Corrizal, Mexico.

Baptist Church in the district.<sup>74</sup> Now with criticism mounting, the Adjutant General ordered the expedited removal of the remains from El Paso to Arlington, without identifying the men.

In the days before the men's remains arrived, "Congress unanimously approved a resolution that all House members who had served the Union and Confederate armies and the Spanish-American War would form a committee to attend the funeral at Arlington."<sup>75</sup> It was suggested that President Wilson himself would deliver the memorial address.<sup>76</sup> However, his personal secretary, Joseph Tumulty, refused to confirm these reports.<sup>77</sup> Wilson had of course established a precedent by commemorating the Veracruz dead in 1914 and the rising tensions with Mexico supported a stirring speech from the commander in chief. Tumulty pointed out that the War Department had charge of the ceremony and the Secretary of War would plan the event. In the end, Wilson did not speak. He attended the funeral on 10 July and laid wreaths on the caskets.<sup>78</sup> On the one hand, Wilson's presence was a muted acknowledgement that black soldiers who died in service abroad were to be beneficiaries of Lincoln's promise. On the other hand, Wilson's silence spoke volumes about a nation that aspired to global as well as imperial ascendancy but had strangled the Civil War's "new birth of freedom" with a reunion that restored white supremacy over people of color.

## Conclusion

Commemorating the dead could mitigate the untoward aspects of war and empire. It allowed the government to explain to American citizens that expansion was necessary and even noble, if inconvenient and costly. Unlike Cuba, which had been celebrated as a "Splendid Little

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<sup>74</sup> "El Paso Honors Dead From Carrizal Battle," *New York Times*, 7 July 1916; Letter, National Evangelical Ministers' Alliance to Captain Baldwin, 10 July 1916, NA, RG 92, Office of the Quartermaster General, Cemeterial Division, 1917-1922, Box 14, Folder Carrizal, Mexico.

<sup>75</sup> Leiker, *Racial Borders*, 163-170.

<sup>76</sup> "President May Speak at the Graves," *New York Times*, 8 July 1916.

<sup>77</sup> "President May Speak at the Graves," *New York Times*, 8 July 1916.

<sup>78</sup> "Carrizal Dead Honored," *New York Times*, 8 July 1916; Leiker, *Racial Borders*, 163-170.

War,” the causes and aims of the conflicts in the Philippines and Mexico were dubious. The brutality of counterinsurgency warfare in the Philippines and the failure of the punitive expedition in Mexico did not generate strong popular support and obliged officials to resort to considerable patriotic rhetoric and symbolism. Perhaps those Americans who lost sons, fathers, or husbands were able to fold their individual grief into what they were told was a larger national calling to freedom, won at Gettysburg and supposedly expanding along America’s frontiers. But the leaders of a rising American power were experimenting with ways to build and govern an empire. It is significant that they were as yet unable or unwilling to establish overseas military cemeteries for the dead from conflicts abroad. The nation remained within its continental borders and to be properly honored the fallen had to be returned to American soil.

The recovery and return of the dead from the Philippines was episodic. The War Department awarded contracts to people who were sent out on an expedition of their own with little military support. They often had to locate graves in hostile situations. The planning for these burial parties was piecemeal. Each year, as more soldiers died, the War Department again sent out a burial party without proper planning or recovery methods in place. This was completely inadequate because in a tropical world where troops died more often from disease than from battle, semi-annual burial party expeditions simply were not the answer. These recovery operations suggest that American officials had not come to terms with their mission in the Philippines or the nature of the insurgency they faced after the defeat of the Spanish. The eventual establishment of a morgue in Manila was a significant step, but many of the practices developed during the Civil War, such as a permanent cemetery system, had been either forgotten or ruled inappropriate for a still foreign setting.

Pershing's expedition south of the border revealed again a lack of preparation on the part of the army and the War Department to deal with the dead. It was sympathetic local people, not American search parties, who retrieved the bodies of those who died in the skirmish at Carrizal. Had the growing likelihood of American entry into the Great War not constrained him, Wilson might have ordered an all-out invasion of Mexico. By early 1917, Pershing had made absolutely no headway in suppressing Villa's rebels and the Pan-American Pact proposal had lost its luster in the eyes of the hemisphere's governments and peoples. Historian Kendrick Clements argues that "The proposed treaty thus died, a victim of a belief by Latin America that although Wilson had renounced overt imperialism, his interventionism, the growth of American economic influence, and his insistence on political conformity all added up to a sort of informal imperialism that was just as objectionable as the cruder colonialism of an earlier day."<sup>79</sup> Instead Wilson decided the best way to promote his New Freedom of self-determination and collective security was to pursue "Peace without Victory" on the other side of the Atlantic. The withdrawal of U.S. soldiers from Mexico and the end of an imperial adventure there was to be the prelude to a global mission that would demand a much higher price in lives but yield a much greater prize in power and wealth.

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<sup>79</sup> Kendrick A. Clements, *The Presidency of Woodrow Wilson* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1992), 96.

## CHAPTER 7—THE AMERICAN DEAD IN EUROPE: LINCOLN’S PROMISE AND GLOBAL WAR

We have buried the gallant and now immortal men who died in this great war of liberation with a new sense of consecration. Our thoughts and purpose now are consecrated to the maintenance of the liberty of the world, and of the union of its people in a single comradeship of liberty and of right. It was for this that our men conscientiously offered their lives. They came to the field of battle with the high spirit and pure heart of crusaders.

—Woodrow Wilson

There is something better, if possible, that a man can give than his life, and that is his living spirit to a service that is not easy, to resist counsels that are hard to resist, to stand against purposes that are difficult to stand against, and to say, “Here stand I, consecrated in the spirit of the men who were once my comrades, and who are now gone, and who left me under [e]ternal bonds of fidelity.”

—Woodrow Wilson

I sent these lads over here to die. Shall I—can I—ever speak a word of counsel which is inconsistent with the assurances I gave them when they came over? It is inconceivable.

—Woodrow Wilson

Laurence Kent served as a sergeant with the Forty-Second Engineers of the Second Division during the Great War. He had suffered gas attacks on six different occasions. Although he survived the war, the exposure to chemical weapons would plague him for the rest of his life. After the war Kent became a historian of the Graves Registration Service (GRS). The War Department charged this new service with registering the graves of the American dead. Kent’s job helped military officials’ document the institutional history of recovering the dead that would play such an important part in the postwar bureaucratic memory-making project. But he continued to suffer from physical agony. In July 1921 Kent went to the American hospital in Paris again for treatment for his ailments. A few days later, no longer willing to deal with his chronic condition, he shot himself in his heart while lying in bed. Kent was just another example of the horror of trench warfare. American families had paid the ultimate sacrifice because they believed they were part of an imagined community that had been threatened. They

had entrusted the lives of their sons and husbands to government officials who formed out of these men a scale of military force never before seen in the U.S. But the postwar climate remained horribly polluted by the massive amount of death. Not only numbers of the dead made an impression on the minds of millions around the world, but the way they died—gas, machine-guns, barbed wire, artillery, and mud—seemed to violate the basic core doctrines of humanity. In fact the governments that took on the responsibility of these armies became associated with the complete disregard and disrespect of human beings through the wanton destruction of humanity at unprecedented levels. Such misuse of the soldiers eventually won the war but also threatened the social tendons that kept imagined communities in Europe fastened together. The same applied to the American experience of the Great War. As historians Fred Anderson and Andrew Cayton suggest American imperialistic and martial expansion was fundamentally predicated on the rhetoric of liberty and American officials consistently chose war to achieve these means.<sup>1</sup> In making the world “safe for democracy” Wilson committed millions of Americans to the most horrific war in human history and sought to limit the liberties of war critics, immigrants, and labor unions at home. Wilson had to demonstrate to the postwar American electorate that the cause was worth the turmoil.

Kent’s suicide was suggestive as to how Wilson and his fellow world leaders would hope to ameliorate the disregard for human life shown during the war. Despite his suffering, next to his body Kent left a letter asking his commanding officer to bury him in the American cemetery at Belleau Wood amongst his comrades of the Second Division. Perhaps one of Kent’s last comforting thoughts was that he would receive induction into the fallen community and the American commemorative tradition that was associated with these new national cemeteries

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<sup>1</sup> Fred Anderson and Andrew Cayton, *The Dominion of War: Empire and Liberty in North America, 1500-2000* (New York: Viking Adult, 2004).

abroad. These nationalized commemorative traditions were supposed to help convince the imagined communities of Europe and America that participants should suspend belief over the methods of executing the war. In the American version of this President Woodrow Wilson hoped to heal wartime wounds by recommitting Americans to the commemorative traditions surrounding Lincoln's promise. This was a process, argues historian Drew Gilpin Faust, begun during the American Civil War that sought to define the beginnings of a new republicanism where Americans could look to the dead as symbolic representations of religiosity, republicanism, and modernism.<sup>2</sup> As historian Jackson Lears has suggested, the American rebirth from a Republic to a Nation had undergone significant transformations of race, empire, and bureaucracy since the years of the Civil War.<sup>3</sup> Traditions based on Lincoln's promise to bind citizen and state together in a project of memory that commemorated noble sacrifices of liberty, hoped American officials, could be used again in the twentieth century to find meanings of prosperity, democracy, and civilization from the losses of the Great War; the Republic of suffering had become the Nation of suffering.

Wilson hoped not only to convince his fellow Americans of the righteousness of Americanness, he also hoped to convince Europeans that the moment was ripe for American global leadership. Wilson's refashioning of the American infrastructure through centralized control of industrial production and economic prosperity argues historian Michael Hunt, contributed to the ascendancy of the American empire; the President hoped to continue this trajectory by eliminating global economic barriers and advocating self-determination.<sup>4</sup> As

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<sup>2</sup> Drew Gilpin Faust, *This Republic of Suffering: Death and the American Civil War* (New York: Knopf, 2008).

<sup>3</sup> Jackson Lears, *Rebirth of a Nation: The Making of Modern America, 1877-1920* (New York: Harpers, 2009).

<sup>4</sup> Michael Hunt, *The American Ascendancy: How the United States Gained and Wielded Global Dominance* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 56-62.

historian Erez Manela suggests, the only viable alternative to colonialism other than Wilsonianism was the Leninism implemented by the Bolsheviks in the Soviet Union.<sup>5</sup> And to this end, Wilson also offered Lincoln's promise to make the sacrifice of war meaningful to the purpose of collective memory and national identity to Europeans as an expression of Americanism—packaged in commemorative ritual—that could be exported beyond the borders of the United States and to the European continent.

Even if Americans took comfort in the fallen community it was an altogether more difficult task to convince Europeans—based on symbolic gestures—that they should trust the ascendant American empire. Historian Jay Winter's examination of the bereavement culture of the major European belligerent countries suggests that very little changed in the years after the war.<sup>6</sup> Europeans, found Winter, commemorated the war dead using language and traditions of the pre-war period. Winter's study exposed the resilience of European commitments to mourning practices born out of European traditions. Extending Lincoln's promise to Europeans who had their own trusted bereavement and cultural customs would prove difficult, especially in light of historian Lisa M. Budreau's suggestion that American postwar commemorative efforts were ambiguous, confused, and strained.<sup>7</sup>

Despite Budreau's description of an American commemorative tradition that was vague and indistinct after the Great War, she describes the handling of the dead from the war as a break with the past. The "unrestrained erection of monuments and the unquestioned return of the war dead, were abruptly threatened by radical revision" after 1918. She suggests that "the Great War

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<sup>5</sup> Erez Manela, *The Wilsonian Moment: Self Determination and the International Origins of Anticolonial Nationalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006); for a shorter introduction see Manela's essay "Imagining Woodrow Wilson in Asia: Dreams of East-West Harmony and the Revolt against Empire in 1919" *American Historical Review* 111 (December 2006): 1327-8.

<sup>6</sup> Jay Winter, *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning: The Great War in European Cultural History* (Cambridge University Press, 1995).

<sup>7</sup> Lisa M. Budreau, *Bodies of War: World War I and the Politics of Commemoration in America, 1919-1933* (New York University Press, 2010), 2.



demanding a revision of former practice since the past could not be relied on to guide future policy.”<sup>8</sup> Instead of building a national collective memory, she contends that this revision centered on politicians co-opting commemorative practices to pursue political agendas. This chapter includes three sections and offers an alternative interpretation. The first section examines the work of the GRS in marking and recovering the dead. Rather than ambiguity, new national cemeteries in Europe became focal points to the reconstitution of Lincoln’s promise; this was made evident by Woodrow Wilson in his Memorial Day speech in 1919 at Suresnes cemetery in which he politicized the American dead and offered the world Lincoln’s promise as a down-payment on the League of Nations. The second section studies the dead who were brought home to the United States after the war. While Wilson was in Paris using the dead to advocate American leadership, Americans were reworking commemorative traditions at home. The public accused the government of mishandling the dead and mismanaging the recovery process. These accusations forced a response from military leadership that ended up seeing the military avoid embarrassment by taking a more active role in shaping the Lincolnian tradition. The third section focuses on the new invented tradition—borrowed from European officials—of the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, his recovery, selection, and burial in Arlington National Cemetery. The Unknown Soldier was invented by Europeans to reify the Great War. American officials likewise incorporated the idea of the Unknown Soldier into the Lincolnian promise to reify the American commemorative tradition. It allowed individuals to reassert the rituals of American commemorative tradition in a modern and global age. In each case Americans and government officials attempted to update Lincoln’s promise and apply it to the bureaucratic management of war in an industrial age.

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

## The Pure Heart of Crusaders

The silence of 11:00 AM, 11 November 1918, did not produce a new memory for men at the war front or for their families at the home front. Despite the nationalism that helped instigate the war, the tried and tested tributes of nationalism came under threat from groups and individuals around the world who did not see the Great War as a conflict to save Western Civilization but rather viewed the war as an unprecedented massive tragedy. The United States entered the war officially in 1917 and sent four million soldiers to the battlefield in 1918 where over 116,000 men died in action. The buildup for the war was monumental and unprecedented. Wilson, a product of a Southern Presbyterian family, viewed the war in terms of an American crusade in which his progressive agenda and the League of Nations would guarantee “Peace without Victory” and “self-determinationism” to the world. To make the American crusade a reality, the Wilson administration had to increase the armed forces and increase production of war goods. Wilson and his cabinet set about implementing a centralized bureaucracy so that they could control the upsurge. Wilson instituted a draft to swell the military and handed General John J. Pershing command of the American Expeditionary Force (AEF). Wilson also put journalist and publicist George Creel in charge of the newly-formed Committee of Public Information with the explicit job of “selling the war” to the American people. Creel used media in all forms including “four-minute men” who would speak at public functions around the country soliciting support for the war and advocating that Americans buy war bonds. In an effort to control dissenters—including immigrants and labor leaders—Wilson supported Congressional measures in 1917 and 1918 including the Espionage Act, the Alien Act, and the Sedition Act allowing the government to arrest and prosecute individuals for spying, deport immigrants, and

jail dissenting voices.<sup>9</sup> Further centralizing the war effort White House officials worked with Congress to raise income taxes and to levy a tax on war profits. The President also established the National War Labor Board to help prevent strikes by mediating labor disputes, the War Industries Board to coordinate industrial production and eventually “had to suspend the antitrust laws for the duration of the war.”<sup>10</sup> The United States Railway Administration nationalized railroads to keep coal trains moving. “By any reasonable standards,” asserts historian Thomas J. Knock, “one had to conclude that the total mobilization reflected certain traditional American liberal and socialist values.”<sup>11</sup>

Despite constant consternation from Republican Party members that some programs did not work as effectively as hoped, the Wilson administration largely succeeded in building the first American military industrial complex in American history. The amateurish armies of the past sent to Mexico, the Philippines, and Cuba would not suffice in trench warfare on a massive scale. Families contributed their loved ones to the trenches of Europe and in exchange they demanded of government and military officials a responsible and appropriate handling of the armed forces. But the new trench warfare was extremely effective—and gruesome—at creating unprecedented numbers of casualties and extreme psychological trauma. Austrian psychoanalyst Sigmund Freud published his essay “On Murder, Mourning, and Melancholia” in 1917.<sup>12</sup> Trying to explain the psychological implications of loss, Freud’s essay suggested a fine distinction between mourning and melancholia. The former involved a positive psychological ability to mourn by one’s willingness to separate his or her libidinal energies from the individual or object

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<sup>9</sup> Kendrick A. Clements, *The Presidency of Woodrow Wilson* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1992), 143-155.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 89.

<sup>11</sup> Thomas J. Knock, *To End //All Wars: Woodrow Wilson and the Quest for a New World Order* (Princeton University Press, 1992), 129-135, quote on 130.

<sup>12</sup> Sigmund Freud, *On Murder, Mourning and Melancholia*, trans. Michael Hulse (New York: Penguin Modern Classics, 2005).

that was lost and the latter was the unwillingness to disassociate one's libidinal energies from the lost object or person producing unresolved grief in the individual. This psychological turn toward mourning and grieving made state-actors ever more aware that their armies of democracy brought with them a public expectation that soldiers did not die in vain. If soldiers did die, there was no way for Americans to begin the mourning process. The War made it extremely difficult for American families to disassociate their libidinal energies from an object that they had never seen—their loved one's grave and remains were on the other side of the Atlantic Ocean. Thus the public demanded that state agents commemorate the dead in meaningful ways that addressed their psychological trauma as well as their physical loss.

To justify a military buildup that was responsible for the deaths of tens of thousands, the Wilson administration and the War Department needed to adapt the nationalistic commemorative tradition to incorporate the individual psychological trauma that came from loss on an industrial scale. This massive undertaking required the hard work of standardizing the imprecise nature of collecting the dead killed in the brutality of trench warfare. Keepers and builders of the commemorative tradition had to recover dead bodies in ways that preserved individual identity but also tied the remains to the fallen community and their noble sacrifice for the nation. But too many died too quickly and it became difficult to preserve the identity of the individual man. To keep up with the ever-increasing body count, the War Department created a new organization called the Graves Registration Service (GRS) in the summer of 1917. Once American officials committed soldiers to the battlefield, the GRS had the sole responsibility of registering graves; they had no obligation to bury or rebury soldiers, although they often did. When bodies could be recovered, soldiers usually buried the dead in makeshift cemeteries near the trenches. Thus the military entrusted GRS men with registering the burial spaces of soldiers who were actually

recovered. Those that remained in no man's land or those that were obliterated by artillery shells could never be recovered or registered. The GRS registered graves in nearly 2,400 cemeteries resting in seventy-one departments of France; 15,000 soldiers were buried in isolated graves. It was a daunting task that was not completed. One historian suggested, "Many grave markers had been destroyed in subsequent fighting, or removed by farmers squatting on their ruined land in primitive shelters and desperate to begin ploughing and replanting. As a result, all trace of tens of thousands of graves had been obliterated."<sup>13</sup> After the war, the GRS units would recover as many of the dead as they could and consolidate them into more centralized locations. By early 1920 the number of cemeteries had been reduced to nearly 1,600. GRS leadership refused to separate individual bodies from the community or leave bodies in cemeteries that the War Department did not control. Thus by Memorial Day of 1921, the GRS reduced the 1,600 cemeteries that guarded American dead to 489. By August of that year, the Fine Arts Commission had submitted to President Warren G. Harding for his approval the plans for six permanent cemeteries—four in France, one in Belgium and one in Great Britain—later on two more would be added in France. Harding approved of the proposal and the GRS began consolidating the remains of the dead into one of these eight cemeteries. Shrinking the number of cemeteries from 2,400 to 8 in two-and-a-half years had its cost. By this time some of the bodies had been disinterred and reburied more than once before finally reaching an American military cemetery in France. The bureaucracy employed to keep track of bodies buried multiple times was rife with negligence and error, contends Budreau.<sup>14</sup> The original six cemeteries, nevertheless, were in Brookwood Cemetery just outside of London, England, near Flanders Field in Belgium, and at Suresnes near Paris, Aisne-Marne at Belleau Wood, the Meuse-Argonne near

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<sup>13</sup> Neil Hanson, *Unknown Soldiers: The Story of the Missing of the First World War* (New York: Vintage, 2005), 254.

<sup>14</sup> Budreau, *Bodies of War*, 40-6.

Romagne, the Somme near Bony in France—all (with the exception of Brookwood) on or near locations where American forces fought. The two added cemeteries were Oise-Aisne near Chateau-Thierry and St. Mihiel not far from Verdun.<sup>15</sup>

The creation of the GRS significantly changed the recovery process from previous American wars. Commanding Generals of the Civil War took control of the burial process and frequently cared little for the recovery and identification of bodies, particularly when they interfered with planning the next battle or campaign. During World War I, commanders in the field continued this tradition when it came to “emergency acquisitions” but “ordinary acquisitions” now fell under the responsibility of the GRS and would “not be attempted by individual officers or commands.” The head of the GRS was the Chief of the Service. The War Department handed this responsibility to Colonel Charles C. Pierce who had served as a chaplain in the Plains Indian Wars and had headed up the morgue in Manila during the American Philippine War. Thus he brought with him significant experience of handling the dead on foreign shores. His responsibilities covered the entire program in Europe. He worked with all the chaplains in the AEF who were “designated by G.O. (General Order) No. 30, as Sub-inspectors of the G.R.S.”<sup>16</sup> In addition to the chaplains, the Chief coordinated the efforts of GRS Units, who did the work of identifying the graves and Liaison Officers who worked with French and Belgian civil and military officials. Liaison Officers coordinated the transfer of American bodies from French and Belgian control to the AEF and vice-versa. None of the GRS soldiers were assigned to a specific regiment; rather their assignments were based on geographic zones. Each group received a sector and they took their immediate orders from the General in charge of

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<sup>15</sup> “Plan 6 Cemeteries for A.E.F. Abroad,” *New York Times*, 23 August 1921; “War Graves in France,” *New York Times*, 29 May 1921.

<sup>16</sup> Report, “Proposed Technical Instructions” 30 September 1918, NA, RG 92, Office of the Quartermaster General, Cemeterial Division, 1917-1922, Box 3, Folder General 1919-1922.

each respective sector. Although GRS men fell under the immediate supervision of the General in charge of their zone, they received their “technical instructions” from the Chief of the Service. This added a degree of consistency to each GRS unit because when the military leadership left the sector, the GRS Unit remained in the sector taking orders from the Chief until a new General assumed command of the zone.<sup>17</sup>

This arrangement allowed GRS units to work consistently and immediately without the problems outlined by F. S. Croggon who headed the second burial party in the Philippines. The main problem of inconsistent documentation, claimed Croggon, led to significant confusion in identifying the dead. Croggon claimed that death records kept by base commanders who often transferred to different locations and took their records with them caused this. Thus the new commanders had little knowledge of who was buried or where the gravesites actually were. Thus burial parties in the Philippines had to rely on records from the Adjutant General in Washington, D.C. which contained numerous errors. To solve this, Croggon suggested that each American base commander in the Philippines create a military cemetery completely separate from local cemeteries and that records of the dead be kept permanently at the base. Incorporating Croggon’s observations from the Philippines, the GRS system accounted for the complexity of shifting troop movements as this system allowed for AEF commanders to enter and leave zones at will without the GRS losing account of the locations of the graves and the identification of the dead.

At the head of each GRS Unit, a Unit Commander supervised work directly and coordinated his unit’s efforts with the Liaison Officer. Each unit received “one light Ford delivery car” and “one light Ford truck.” Soldiers in each unit would move through the “Zone of Advance” to locate and note the graves with informal identification measures and they would

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

usually return to the back lines to complete the formal work. After hostilities ended in the sector, working parties would then venture to the region and formally identify each gravesite. The entire strategy of the system was built around the desire to keep the bodies of American dead together. The Chief of the Service instructed GRS units to “prevent by every means the making of isolated interments and the use of any but proscribed places of burial. Every isolated burial endangers the loss of a soldier’s body, and such a menace to the comfort of bereaved friends must be prevented at all hazards.” The GRS built the community of the fallen, in part because innate in their work was a pragmatic efficiency needed to recover so many dead bodies. This sort of efficiency, however, proved extremely important, especially from the perspective of individual families who took comfort knowing that their lost loved one played a role in the community of soldiers; the meaning of nationalization was carved out of the community of the fallen and not the individual.<sup>18</sup>

Identifying the graves of Americans had a specific process. When in the field searching for gravesites, GRS men used name pegs, which were “nothing more than V shaped wooden pegs or boards, 1 cm. in thickness, 9 cm. wide at top, and 38 cm. in length.” Chaplains were expected to always keep a good supply of name pegs. Attached to the peg was a label in which Chaplains and GRS men could write “in BLOCK letters, with hard, black lead pencil,” the identification information of each man buried below. “The name pegs are to be securely fixed in the ground at an angle of 45 degrees, with the labeled side underneath to protect the inscription from the weather.” GRS workers attached soldiers’ duplicate identification tag (“dog tags”) to the name peg and took the other one for official record keeping. Although identification bottles, such as those used in the Philippines, could also be used, this was only done if no name pegs were available. The system of identification tags was much more efficient and effective at

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid.



identifying the remains than the bottles used in the Philippines. All graves were not deemed “fully reported” “until a G.R.S. officer or a responsible N.C.O. [Non-commissioned officer] acting under his orders had visited the grave, is reasonably satisfied of its identity and has affixed to the cross, about one foot above the ground, an aluminum strip . . . bearing the letters ‘G.R.S.’” Once a GRS unit “fully reported a grave and the Chief of the Service had found an acceptable burial space, GRS men or other military personal removed the bodies from the field to the new cemetery. In all of these new burial spaces, the GRS required a Burial Officer to supervise the process and a Chaplain had to be present at all burials including those not of the Christian faith. GRS men then had to re-check the battlefields to make sure that they had left no grave behind and no soldier was to remain in an isolated burial spot.<sup>19</sup>

So many men died during the war that there was not enough space to bury everyone; new locations were needed. Although the intent was to bring the remains of the dead home, the French government was reluctant to allow American military officials access to the country’s railroad infrastructure. French authorities believed that transporting the American dead through numerous departments of France would cause low morale among French citizens and prohibit economic recovery.<sup>20</sup> Recovering the dead would have to be a postwar operation. Historically the War Department buried individual bodies that made up the community of the fallen in American soil. The Civil War dead had always been buried in American soil and the dead from America’s wars of imperialism, if found, were returned also to U.S. soil. As demonstrated by the *Maine*, bodies were recovered and even the damaged hulk (with the exception of a few unrecoverable pieces) was removed from foreign waters and re-sunk in international waters. The conditions in Europe, however, were unprecedented and meant the GRS had to locate and

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Budreau, *Bodies of War*, 46.

commandeer French soil, at least temporarily. If they needed a new cemetery, the commanding officer notified the Chief of the Service who would then order the Chaplain in the area to investigate possible new locations. The Chief of the Service would then use Liaison Officers to pursue the legal acquisition of land with representatives of the host nation. Once they achieved this, GRS Units would disinter bodies, place them in a new casket, load them onto trucks and bury them in the new cemeteries being sure to register each new grave.<sup>21</sup>

French law from the beginning of the war stipulated that new cemeteries could only be approved through the Minister of War's office. His approval required that all current cemetery space be completely exhausted and that the local Sanitary Commissioner or the Departmental Council of Hygiene and the local Municipal Council consent to any new site. This gave local officials significant leverage in identifying spaces that would not hamper the local economy or ecology. Additionally, although "municipalities and societies . . . whether in France or in Allied countries" could petition the Minister of War to take over the upkeep costs of burial spaces, foreign nations had to pay for the "acquisition, occupation, enclosure, and upkeep" of any the cemetery. French policies made it difficult for the GRS to implement the tenets of Lincoln's promise for three reasons. First it meant that sometimes they could not keep the dead together; they had to exhaust current burial spaces including local cemeteries in small villages before they could petition for a new burial space. This threatened not only the efficiency of the GRS but also the symbolism of the fallen community that the dead were supposed to represent. Second, French policy opened the possibility for soldier societies from respective states to gain control of American burial spaces. Although the traditions of the Civil War encouraged respective states and ultimately the federal government to commemorate their citizens, these sorts of dispersive commemorative traditions threatened the integrity of the fallen community as representative of a

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<sup>21</sup> Report, "Proposed Technical Instructions" 30 September 1918.

national ethos. Government authorities hoped to showcase American values, not Pennsylvania values. Third, on top of these restrictions, Americans could only select land “with a view to economy, bearing in mind that the owners of the land must be compensated.” Likewise cemeteries had to have good access to roads and “where there is any choice of land, the poorer quality should be selected rather than the more fertile.” This meant that dead bodies remained temporarily buried in out-of-the-way places and in locations that had poor drainage or poor access. The fallen community could not override the economy and ecology of local French authorities who had no interest in the symbolic value of the dead but instead concerned themselves with the traditions and the efficiency of local villages. Authorities in Belgium required very similar arrangements and Italian authorities included most of the same requirements except that the local Commune would control the maintenance of the burial space while the nation paid for its acquisition and development.<sup>22</sup>

These sorts of provisions made it difficult for the War Department via the GRS to control completely the location of burial. But once French authorities approved a site, the GRS gained complete control of the size and shape of new cemeteries regardless of the wishes of local authorities. “It must be remembered,” claimed a GRS internal report, “that this [cemetery plans] is not a matter to be decided by any local authority. Fanciful schemes for plotting cemeteries in accordance with the whims of individuals or organizations have already caused difficulties and cannot be permitted.” Cemeteries and graves symbolized utilitarian tropes that transcended religion, ethnicity, and class. Graves had to be “no more than 6 feet 6 inches long, 2 feet in width, and 5 feet in depth, and should not be more than 12 inches apart.” Paths between graves should be no more than “3 feet in width.” GRS officials segregated the dead by rank. They separated the officers of the AEF from officers of the allied nations while “enemy dead will be

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

buried in segregated or isolated sections of authorized A.E.F. Cemeteries. If buried by Americans, these bodies should remain in the custody of and be cared for by the G.R.S.” For those soldiers deemed outlaws, “any man who suffers the extreme penalty of the law may be buried in a cemetery (preferably in a segregated part), the cross of headboard being marked with name, rank and date of death only.”<sup>23</sup>

In some jurisdictions, GRS units buried non-American bodies too. They gave French and British soldiers the “same reverent care” that they gave American bodies. When possible they tried to return the bodies to British or French authorities but when this proved impossible they gave them their own section in American spaces. But other bodies, particularly those from the periphery, received different treatment based on the traditions of empire and racial stereotypes. Taken directly from the “Technical Instructions” of the British Directorate of Graves Registration, the Chief directed GRS units to bury “East Indians” in “existing Indian cemeteries and not to start new ones.” The GRS instructed its men that “No Indian should be buried in a French Communal Cemetery except in cases where there is a plot specially set aside for Indian graves.” The report added that, “Indians are not to be buried in the same plot as Christians, but in separate enclosures.” Indians did not receive crosses marking their burial spots but stakes. An exception was made for “Indian Christians” who could “be buried in the same cemeteries and plots as British troops” and who would have their graves marked with a cross. They buried Chinese soldiers in spaces designed to play to stereotypical superstitions that westerners believed dominated Chinese life. “The ideal site,” referring to Chinese burials, “to secure repose and drive away evil spirits is on sloping ground with a stream below, or gully down which water always or occasionally passes.” GRS units received instructions that Chinese graves “should not be parallel to the North, South, East or West. This is especially important to Chinese

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

Mohammedans.” Authorities instructed the GRS to keep Chinese soldiers out of Christian cemeteries and if they had to bury these men in a local cemetery care should be taken so that their graves “are not completely surrounded by graves of Europeans or other races.” Native South Africans received burial “in the same cemeteries and in the same manner as British soldiers, but [in] separate plots.” It is important to note that GRS officials attempted to respect these dead but they did so with their own understanding of burial traditions. Instead of investigating the actual burial traditions of cultures at the periphery, the GRS based their practices from the British manual that viewed multicultural mourning traditions as a distinguishing boundary of metropole and colony. Even in death, the GRS maintained, as best as possible, the boundary between European colonizer and the colonized; despite that they fought for the empire, dying in the Great War was reflective of the boundaries that those at the periphery had to endure in the regime of European colonialism.<sup>24</sup>

GRS men similarly attempted to implement outsiders—with limitations—into American burial spaces. The white Anglo-Saxon Protestant traditions that gave birth to the American culture of mourning incorporated Jewish soldiers who had fought for the nation. It proved an awkward association. American soldiers and officers who were Jewish—listed as “Hebrews” in the GRS manual—were marked not with a cross but a stake that was “four feet long, ten inches wide, one and three-eighths inches thick.” In cases where a cross mistakenly marked a Jewish body, “such crosses will be replaced as promptly as possible by the regulation head board specified for such burials.” If it was a field cemetery where no proscribed stakes could be found, GRS men removed the cross section of the marker and left the vertical stake to mark the grave.<sup>25</sup> The GRS worked diligently to include Jewish Americans into the cemeteries and in this way,

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

they included Jewish soldiers asymmetrically in the traditions of American nationalization; they incorporated Jewish bodies into the American cemetery without following Jewish traditions. GRS unit commanders did not consult Rabbis, did not prepare bodies, and did not consider the traditions of avoiding Sabbath burial. The War Department had consulted with the Jewish Welfare Board. Colonel Harry Cutler—whose parents had fled Russia and came to New York in the 1880s—was Chairman of the Board and successfully negotiated with the War Department that the Star of David—“a double triangle”—would mark the Jewish dead.<sup>26</sup> Cutler had served as Pershing’s aide during the Mexican punitive expedition; the General agreed to his former aide’s proposal and the GRS marked Jewish graves with this insignia once the bodies reached their final resting place.<sup>27</sup> This was quite an achievement by Cutler and other Jewish leaders as they had carved a space out of the Protestant traditions on which Lincoln issued his promise; few minority groups had achieved such similar recognition. Despite this achievement, Jewish leaders had to compromise with Pershing and the War Department. The dead would not be celebrated for their religious identity rather they would be commemorated for their national identity.

To be sure that the American public, including those families that actually lost someone, derived the appropriate symbolic meaning from the dead the War Department seized virtually complete control of access to the dead bodies. This went far beyond simply planning and laying out the new cemeteries. Photographs of all the dead were completely prohibited unless channeled through GRS officials. Neither reporters nor family members could take photographs. The GRS ordered its own photographers to document gravesites for two reasons: the first was to “provide relatives of the dead with photographs of graves,” and the second was so that officials

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<sup>26</sup> “Jewish Soldiers’ Graves,” *New York Times* 25 July 1918.

<sup>27</sup> “Harry Cutler,” *Universal Jewish Encyclopedia*, <http://www.publishersrow.com/Preview/PreviewPage.asp?shid=0&clpg=1&per=100&pid=1&bid=2872&fid=31&pg=447&o=1258080904466>, accessed 12 November 2009.

could reconstruct cemeteries in case they were destroyed “by shell fire or otherwise.” Other than GRS photographers, “No photograph of cemeteries or individual graves shall be taken except by written permit approved by the Chief of the G.R.S.” Negatives of any photograph could only be developed at the Signal Corps laboratory in Paris and all prints, “will be censored and stamped by the Press Officer, Intelligence Section, General Staff, G.H.Q.” Even the cameras used to take images had to be “listed in the office of the Chief.” It was a complete takeover of all representations pertaining to the dead. Despite that the principal reason of taking pictures was to send back to loved ones images of the graves, photos of gravesites were “issued to relatives of the dead only upon their request,” and were subject to, “additional censorship.” Furthermore, GRS soldiers were forbidden from disclosing information to private individuals about the location of their loved ones. The office of the Chief of the Service maintained the sole archives of information pertaining to the dead and his office actively censored all information. If a GRS soldier received a personal inquiry about a gravesite, he had to forward it to the Chief’s office. If he disclosed any information to the private citizen he was considered to be in a “breach of trust, even though the information is not prohibited by ordinary censorship.” That the War Department viewed American war graves as intelligence sites subject to censorship demonstrated just how much military officials felt compelled to control the meaning of the dead.<sup>28</sup>

With this level of control, the GRS dressed the dead in all the ornaments of nationalism from the moment of death, to the initial burial, to the body’s disinterment and final reburial. Americanism, Protestantism, and capitalism became meaningful meta-narratives that organized and interpreted the fallen community of the Great War. This was one reason why President Woodrow Wilson chose to deliver his Memorial Day speech in 1919, just a few months after the armistice, at the dedication of the Suresnes American Military Cemetery. Just four miles outside

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<sup>28</sup> Report, “Proposed Technical Instructions” 30 September 1918.

of Paris the cemetery was an exact representation of the fallen community and the landscape of the burial ground became the perfect setting for Wilson to make a final case for Americanism. Wilson was in France attempting to convince the Paris Peace Conference to accept his Fourteen Point plan. The Peace conference was not going well for Wilson and his American crusade was losing momentum. By the end of May British Prime Minister David Lloyd George and French Prime Minister Georges Clemenceau had rejected thirteen of Wilson's fourteen points. It was a foreign policy disaster for the President; it took incredible energy to keep his fourteenth point—the creation of the League of Nations—on the negotiation table. The President dedicated the Suresnes American Military Cemetery in the context of desperately trying to retain the public interest in the League of Nations.<sup>29</sup>

Thousands of American soldiers and foreign dignitaries, including Marshall Foch, attended the ceremony. After the playing of the “Star Spangled Banner,” the “Marseillaise,” “Taps,” and a statement read on behalf of the absent Prime Minister Clemenceau, Wilson spoke. He referred to the dead as “a unique breed. Their like has not been seen since the days of Crusades.” He likened the men who died as fighting “the cause of humanity and of mankind.” Wilson's opening move of comparing the men of the AEF to Christian Crusaders of the Middle Ages underscored the rest of his comments. The ethos of the speech was a moral argument embedded in the utopian rhetoric of Americanism. To the American crusaders, he linked the French and the British, “Joining hands with these, the men of America gave that greatest of all gifts, the gift of life and the gift of spirit.” Further acknowledging this spirit of camaraderie the President recognized French women who had taken care of the American graves at Suresnes and throughout the country. The threadbare GRS units brought the bodies to the cemeteries but

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<sup>29</sup> “Suresnes American Cemetery and Memorial,” American Battle Monuments Commission, [http://www.abmc.gov/cemeteries/cemeteries/su\\_pict.pdf](http://www.abmc.gov/cemeteries/cemeteries/su_pict.pdf), accessed 26 October 2009.



could not always care for the graves fulltime. This often fell to French women who also cared for American graves in remote locations before the GRS were able to disinter the remains. The work of these women, claimed the President, meant that the American dead “though buried in a foreign land, are not buried in an alien soil.” French women, the President suggested, had protected the honor of the American crusaders. The President then referenced the letter from Georges Clemenceau, the Prime Minister of France and Wilson’s adversary at the negotiation table of military allies. He suggested that Clemenceau’s letter spoke to the true intention of the French government—“a message of genuine comradeship, a message of genuine sympathy.”<sup>30</sup>

After setting the context of Franco-American solidarity, Wilson claimed the war was just the beginning; the peace was what would complete the crusade:

But it would be no profit to us to eulogize these illustrious dead if we did not take to heart the lesson which they have taught us. They are dead; they have done their utmost to show their devotion to a great cause, and they have left us to see to it that that cause shall not be betrayed, whether in war or in peace.

These comments inched Wilson toward the real objective of his speech. He likened the war to a crusade against German militarism in the hopes of generating a mythology in which his contested allies, along with his avid supporters, would hold up his peace plan as the process that would prevent war in the future:

These men did not come across the sea merely to defeat Germany and her associated powers in the war. They came to defeat forever the things for which the Central Powers stood, the sort of power they meant to assert in the world, the arrogant, selfish domination which they meant to establish; and they came, moreover, to see to it that there should never be a war like this again. It is for us, particularly for us who are civilized, to use our proper weapons of counsel and agreement to see to it that there never is such a war again. The nation that should now fling out of this common concord of counsel would betray the human race. So it is our duty to take and maintain the safeguards which will see to it that the mothers of America, and the mothers of France and England and Italy and Belgium, and all other suffering nations, should ever be called upon for this sacrifice again.

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<sup>30</sup> Wilson’s speech taken from “Soldiers Hear President,” *New York Times*, 31 May 1919.

The President used the Memorial Day dedication at Suresnes as a political speech; he used the occasion to speak to the Americans in France, the French public, and hesitant Congressmen back in the United States about the necessity to accept a peace treaty that saw the war as the war to end all wars.<sup>31</sup>

Lincoln's long shadow fell over Wilson. Just as Lincoln had helped dedicate Gettysburg, Wilson dedicated an American military cemetery in France. Just as Lincoln had politicized the dead to make the war about "the new birth of freedom" and the abolishment of slavery so Wilson politicized the sacrifice of the dead to promote his League of Nations. Wilson's most adamant and most memorable statement concerned the League: "This can be done. It must be done. And it will be done," perhaps echoed Lincoln's "government of the people, by the people, for the people," in the ears of American listeners. Wilson certainly understood his speech in the context of Lincoln's famous address and even quoted from it. The "great instrument" of peace claimed Wilson, "The League of Nations is the covenant of Government that these men shall not have died in vain." Although not quite as eloquent or brief (Wilson spoke for nearly thirty minutes), Wilson made sure to cast his dedication in the traditions of the American Civil War. A Southerner ensconced in what historian Nina Silber describes as the "Romance of Reunion," where white Southerners and white Northerners sought reconciliation at the expense of black civil rights, Wilson suggested the "sons of America [from the Great War] who were privileged to be buried in their mother country will mingle with the dust of the men who fought for the preservation of the Union." The metaphor of the Civil War became the metaphor of the Great War in the President's mind. He stated, "Those men [Civil War veterans] gave their lives in order that America might be united, these men have given their lives in order that the world

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

might be united.” He added, “Those men gave their lives in order to secure the freedom of a nation. These men have given theirs in order to secure the freedom of mankind.” His next comment focused his political message further: “I look for the time when every man who now puts his counsel against the united service of mankind under the League of Nations will be just as ashamed of it as if he now regretted the union of the States.”<sup>32</sup>

*New York Times* reporter Richard Oulahan reported that passages like these illustrated Wilson’s direct challenge to Senators in Washington, D.C. who opposed the peace terms and the League of Nations. The journalist noted that, “throughout the address there was a note condemnatory of those who sought to realize their own selfish ends through the treaty, or were endeavoring to defeat the League of Nations.”<sup>33</sup> But Wilson did not focus his criticism solely on the American opposition. He spoke also of his concern that the “airs of an older day are beginning to stir again.” He claimed that some advisors at the peace conference tried to “insert into the counsel of statesmen the old reckoning of selfishness and bargaining and national advantage,” and pronounced that, “any man who counsels these things advocates a renewal of the sacrifice which these men have made.” Instead of private counsel, the President argued, “the peoples of the world are in the saddle.” No longer would courtiers and lobbyists be able to dictate the parameters of the world system, everyone would have a stake in the system through the League. Wilson issued, “a challenge that no previous generation ever dared” to undertake. The sacrifice of the men buried beneath Wilson’s feet provided the urgency, “We all believe, I hope, that the spirits of these men are not buried with their bones. Their spirits live. I hope—I believe—that their spirits are present with us at this hour. I hope that I feel the compulsion of their presence. I hope that I realize the significance of their presence.” These men, suggested

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> Richard Oulahan, “Americans Applauded Wilson’s Criticisms,” *New York Times*, 2 June 1919.

Wilson, underscored the purpose of America's involvement in the war which was "to show mankind the way to liberty," and to "make this great gift a common gift." On all of this Wilson admonished his listeners to consider "all the great traditions of America, to make yourselves soldiers now once for all in this common cause, where we need wear no uniform except the uniform of the heart, clothing ourselves with the principles of right and saying to men everywhere, You are our brothers and we invite you into the comradeship of liberty and peace." He concluded with a personal note that he hoped would underscore the legitimacy of his purpose. "I sent these lads over here to die. Shall I—can I—ever speak a word of counsel which is inconsistent with the assurances I gave them when they came over? It is inconceivable."<sup>34</sup>

In many ways the President's speech was similar to Lincoln's at Gettysburg, McKinley's at Atlanta, and Roosevelt's at Arlington. All of these men attempted to articulate the meaning of American sacrifice in time of war and each built upon the notions of nationalization begun in Lincoln's text. McKinley succeeded in redefining Lincoln's promise in a way that spoke to the necessity of the wars of imperialism. Wilson's attempted to extend Lincoln's promise to a war torn Europe. The rhetoric of his speech seemed to fit into the rhetoric of the Gettysburg text; a noble effort of freedom and peace seemed to extend out of Lincoln's new birth of freedom and into the pursuit of the League of Nations. But even if his rhetoric was correct, Wilson had difficulty translating the sacrifice of the fallen community into real political action. Lincoln had made his speech about the idea that the Civil War had been a conflict to emancipate slaves. The irony of this was at Suresnes the President had summoned the images of reconciliation and reunification—a process at odds with the African American quest for civil rights in the Reconstruction and Progressive eras—and tried to sell the process to Europeans. Wilson had a

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<sup>34</sup> Wilson's speech taken from "Soldiers Hear President," *New York Times*, 31 May 1919; Richard Oulahan, "Americans Applauded Wilson's Criticisms," *New York Times*, 2 June 1919.

chance to incorporate African Americans into the meaning of Americanness but he failed to take it at Suresness just as he failed to take it when commemorating black soldiers in Arlington from the Battle of Carrizal. Had he reinvigorated the emancipatory tradition of Lincoln's promise to commemorate the noble cause of liberty by using the dead to acknowledge the importance of black troops in the war effort, the yoke of colonialism around the world, and the plight of oppressed peoples seeking authentic self-determinationism, the rhetoric might have better underscored the connection between the League of Nations and the sacrifice of the dead. Wilson failed to find any new interpretations from Lincoln's promise; his dedication speech lacked vision and leadership domestically as well as internationally. It was an address that spoke to the inherent weaknesses in Wilson's leadership and the inherent weakness in exporting Americanness to Europe at least as it was expressed in Lincoln's promise to remember the fallen community.

### Returning the Dead

There was much at stake in the immediate postwar milieu. Despite Wilson's negotiations at the Paris Peace Conference, the U.S. Senate and the American people rejected the role of the United States as a global leader at least as Wilson saw it. Particularly those who agreed with Massachusetts Republican Senator Henry Cabot Lodge, the League of Nations required the U.S. to give up some of its sovereignty and they believed this price was too much to pay in exchange for greater American global hegemony.<sup>35</sup> Meanwhile the threat of widespread disruption, chaos, and even revolution had already occurred in Russia and was threatening the rest of Europe and the United States—government officials in America and Western Europe acted quickly to

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<sup>35</sup> For an in depth discussion of this see Knock, *To End All Wars* and Clements, *The Presidency of Woodrow Wilson*.

preserve capitalism and the colonial order as they jockeyed for prime position in a postwar colonial world-system that promised the spoils of empire. There were significant financial risks as American bankers had underwritten massive wartime loans to belligerents and now beneficiaries feared losing their investments. Incredible domestic risks existed as well. Wives, parents, and children had given their loved ones over to a government that wanted to build a democratic army and were left to wonder if their husbands, children, and fathers would return home. The end of the war meant returning soldiers, job losses, rapid inflation, and the “Red Menace” that dominated the summer of 1919. It also meant mourning the dead on a massive level.

New commemorative traditions emerged from the attempts to manage these risks. Americans expecting reverent treatment of the dead negotiated with government officials who sought to keep citizens invested in the values of Americanness. Nearly forty percent of families elected to keep the dead buried in Europe but sixty percent chose to return the dead to the United States. Those bodies that remained in Europe became the centerpiece of a new tradition that had the effect of producing sentimental European-American connections as they encouraged Americans to participate in a trans-Atlantic pilgrimage that would demonstrate American respect for the dead and American values as a trusted resource in the postwar world. But few Americans could make this pilgrimage; families that chose to bring home the remains of their loved ones reproduced the ritual of reverse pilgrimage that came out of the practices of the Spanish-American and Philippine-American wars. War families and an electorate demanded a responsive and responsible reclamation of the nation’s dead. At the conclusion of the war, the War Department continued to locate and collect the remains of U.S. servicemen. With the threat of warfare gone, registration and recovery teams could work much more efficiently. But this milieu

also produced a whole new set of difficulties for GRS units operating in France as the GRS now expected to return bodies to the U.S. In October 1918, the American Ambassador to France negotiated with the French Foreign Office to petition the return of American bodies to American soil. But these negotiations ended up going only so far as to cover the embalming and burial of soldiers in France; returning the bodies to the U.S would be discussed after the war. In the meantime the French government prohibited all such activity. France's reconstruction efforts would take precedence and French authorities needed to use the railways to transport building materials and men; American use of the railways to transport the dead would have to wait the logistical bottleneck.

But the War Department felt mounting pressure from American families to return bodies home to their loved ones as they had promised families before the war. On top of this, the War Department faced a public relations nightmare in the making. Colonel Henry in the Quartermaster's General office explained, "The temporary coffins in which the bodies have been interred in the National Cemeteries [in Europe], have been made of unseasoned wood as it was impossible at that time to purchase seasoned lumber." The results, reported Colonel Henry, were that, "The coffins have shrunk enormously, leaving cracks and are unsuitable for the purpose of sending remains to the United States." This translated into a significant problem for the symbolic value of the American dead. Colonel Henry understood exactly what was at stake. He suggested immediate retrieval of all U.S. remains. He suggested that the military place experienced officers in charge of the process who would document, in triplicate form, every movement of the remains from the cemeteries in Europe to the U.S. Henry wanted the best officers because he believed "the smallest mistake would be greatly exaggerated in the newspapers and in the minds of the people of the United States." In addition, Colonel Henry

suggested that bodies be transferred to new coffins and “each coffin should be wrapped” in the “National Colors (storm flags).” This marked a clear intent to intensify the symbolic value of the dead and mitigate any perceived mishandling of their sacred remains on the part of the military.<sup>36</sup>

By October 1919, the coffins had deteriorated even more and the American government wanted to reclaim the nation’s lost sons immediately. But the French government remained in opposition to the American plan and did not want a “general removal of the soldier dead in or out of France.” The Secretary of War Newton Baker described it as the “determined opposition of the French Government.” Baker felt quite a bit of pressure on the domestic front. The U.S. government promised families that the remains of the lost would be returned to them. Yet a year after the war ended, no bodies had made it back. Baker claimed, “Our Government should do its utmost to keep faith with the relatives of our soldier dead in France, who have been led to believe that, when the war ended, the bodies of such soldiers, if desired by their next of kin, would find their final resting place in their own country.” Baker asked the Secretary of State Robert Lansing to press French officials into “a modification of that . . . policy as will permit the removal of our dead from France.” To help Secretary Lansing, Secretary Baker urged Lansing to make the following arguments. These points included the distance between the U.S. and France made grave visitation “impracticable,” “the comparatively small number of American soldiers” to be recovered should, claimed Baker, allow French officials to make an exception for American bodies. Baker estimated that only 65,000 Americans would be returned out of an estimated 4.5 million “(including enemy)” dead. Most of the American bodies lay near battlefields, therefore “transportation of their bodies over any considerable portion of France so as to interfere with traffic to any great extent or create in any marked degree the depression in the

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<sup>36</sup> Memorandum, Colonel M. J. Henry to Chief Quartermaster of France, 19 August 1919, NA, RG 92, Office of the Quartermaster General, Cemeterial Division, 1917-1922, Box 3, Folder General 1919-1922.



morale of the population” could be avoided. Baker pointed out that American soldiers had already been returned from the United Kingdom, Belgium, Russia, Italy, Germany, and Luxembourg. And finally Baker reasoned that the War Department had already sent out inquiries to nearest of kin asking them if they would like their loved ones returned. Failure to return the bodies would “place the War Department in a very embarrassing situation to be compelled to inform such relatives that France now refuses to permit such action.” He concluded, “Such information, it is feared, will, moreover, arouse the resentment against France of the relatives of those Americans who gave their lives in defense of France.”<sup>37</sup> Such arguments did not seem to sway French government officials nor change the situation on the ground that France could not spare the rails for transporting the dead when the national government needed them to bring stability to French citizens.

On top of these failed negotiations, the War Department faced an even larger problem made evident by the return of the dead from Russia. The transportation of bodies from Russia was very important because it formed a test case for the later repatriation of bodies from Western Europe; it failed miserably. The USS *Lake Daraga* was an American freighter built just outside of Detroit in Wyandotte, Michigan in July 1918. The freighter spent the war hauling coal from Wales to France for the U.S. Army. In October 1919, after the war, the *Daraga* made its final voyage for the U.S. Army from Brest, France to New York and included the cargo of the dead who had fought at Archangel in Siberia.<sup>38</sup> Using a coal ship to transport the dead did not succeed. Rough seas had dominated the transatlantic voyage and produced unwelcome results. Major Charles Elliott sent a report to the Commanding General at the Port of Embarkation at

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<sup>37</sup> Letter, Secretary of War to Secretary of State, 20 October 1919, NA, RG 92, Office of the Quartermaster General, Cemeterial Division, 1917-1922, Box 3, Folder General 1919-1922.

<sup>38</sup> “USS *Lake Daraga* (ID # 4428),” Online Library of Navy Ships, Naval Historical Center, <http://www.ibiblio.org/hyperwar/OnlineLibrary/photos/sh-usn/usnsh-l/id4428.htm>, accessed 23 October 2009. Also see Lisa M. Budreau, *Bodies of War*, 64-7.

Hoboken in response to the failure. He recommended, “After experience with the remains of 115 soldiers and sailors recently returned from Archangel on the S. S. “Lake Daraga,” specific changes to the process. He claimed that the ship was “palpably unfit [sic] for such work.” The ship had, “no side ports, low free board, and as a result, salt water got into the hold and into the boxes, leaking out on the piers and producing a very disagreeable odor and erroneous impression concerning the contents.” Just as had been done in the Philippine and Cuban conflicts, dock workers unloaded the decomposing bodies off of the ship and directly onto the pier for the public to see. What ensued was a carnival of military officials sorting and unloading bodies off of the ship, military officials organizing the bodies on the pier, and loved ones claiming the bodies and arranging transportation to take them home; all in full public view. This sort of chaos horribly embarrassed military officials. Instead of a celebration of nationalism, the saltwater had spoiled the human remains and turned the pier into a stench-ridden wharf of brine and human remains for the public to see and smell. This was an unacceptable episode that could not be tolerated when the port authorities of Hoboken, New Jersey began receiving the dead from Europe. Elliott suggested immediate changes including that cargo ships be outfitted, “for transporting bodies in good condition,” and recommended the use of cargo ships *Aeolus*, *Antigone*, and *Huron*. Cargo ships would have the necessary side ports and free board to keep the sea from washing into the hold. He suggested that these ships be outfitted “with ‘ice boxes’ [used] for shipping quantities of beer,” and that the refrigeration containers, “be used for bodies in a poor state of preservation.”<sup>39</sup>

The use of beer coolers as a practical method to transport nationalized remains did not seem, at least to Elliott, to contradict the soberness of the task at hand. In fact his purpose was to

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<sup>39</sup> Report, Charles Elliott to Port Utilities Officer Hoboken, 19 November 1919, NA, RG 92, Office of the Quartermaster General, Cemeterial Division, 1917-1922, Box 3, Folder General 1919-1922.

make the entire transportation process a smooth expression of reverence for relics that symbolized the hallowed memory of nationalism and avoid embarrassment. To prevent another episode like that of the *Daraga*, Elliott recommended that the War Department establish a “Disposition of Remains Section” at Hoboken and place Major Edwin R. Sharpe in charge of the new office. This section dealt only with the bodies—and no other cargo—coming to New Jersey from Europe. Elliott also recommended that the head of the new section set up a new morgue in Hoboken as an overflow. The one currently used could only accommodate three hundred bodies; certainly many more than three hundred would be in Hoboken at any given time. Without the overflow morgue, Sharpe would have to put the dead in plain view of the public and risked embarrassment should anything go wrong. Elliott stated it was “absolutely necessary that these remains be handled with the greatest care and accuracy,” and therefore recommended it unwise, “to use one or more of the Piers for this purpose as there will be too much publicity and proximity to active operations on the piers.” Damaged unloaded caskets were not handled by Longshoremen but by “some other force,” presumably military personnel under Sharpe’s command handled the damaged caskets, “in a secluded place, away from those in good condition, to avoid the prying eyes of reporters and other morbidly inclined individuals.” For this purpose, Elliott recommended a warehouse in Weehawken, New Jersey that had previously been used by the Heckers Flour Company. The advantage of the warehouse was that railroad tracks ran directly into it and bodies could be moved from ship to train to warehouse with minimal exposure to the public. The carnival atmosphere of the return of the dead from previous wars lost out to the complete control of the military.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Report, Charles Elliott to Port Utilities Officer Hoboken, 19 November 1919, NA, RG 92, Office of the Quartermaster General, Cemeterial Division, 1917-1922, Box 3, Folder General 1919-1922.

Once the bodies arrived in Hoboken and passed inspection, workers unloaded them and placed them in the warehouse where they underwent another inspection and prepared for their final transportation to their home town. Initially individual bodies went straight from New Jersey to their final destination, “with an enlisted attendant accompanying them from Hoboken to destination.” But once shiploads of bodies began arriving, this would no longer work; there were too many bodies. The Quartermaster General changed this process in 1920. He established several distribution centers throughout the country and required bodies “be forwarded in group or carload shipments” to the centers. The commanding officers in New Jersey telegraphed the distribution center Depot Officer ahead of forwarding the bodies to one of the distribution centers. Once the Depot Officer made preparations to receive the shipment, the Hoboken center mailed the identification information of the remains to the Depot Officer. Forty-eight hours after the identification papers left Hoboken through the mail, the Hoboken office shipped the bodies. Once the Depot Officer received the mailed identification lists, he organized the final leg of the journey from the depot center to the local cemetery and made final arrangements for the funeral. This included obtaining burial permits, transportation permits, baggage checks for the coffin, and receipts for the body. The centers were in Washington, D.C., Chicago, Illinois; Louisville, Kentucky; Atlanta, Georgia; St. Paul, Minnesota; Omaha, Nebraska; Little Rock, Arkansas; San Antonio, Texas; Cheyenne, Wyoming; El Paso, Texas; Portland, Oregon; and San Francisco, California.<sup>41</sup>

Despite these arrangements, “numerous complaints” filtered into the War Department. Early complaints focused on the “failure to furnish proper convoy” to the dead. People expected the dead to be escorted and respected. The main problem lay in large urban areas that did not

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<sup>41</sup> Memorandum, Quartermaster General to Depot Officer, San Francisco, CA, 16 June 1920, NA, RG 92, Office of the Quartermaster General, Cemeterial Division, 1917-1922, Box 3, Folder General 1919-1922.

have enough trained military personnel to perform these services consistently. “These complaints,” warned the Adjutant General, “are hurting the standing, prestige and honor of the Army.” To prevent this, the Secretary of War put in place measures to “furnish suitable escort at distribution points, and firing squads at funerals...when the relatives of the deceased request it.” To secure more labor, the Secretary of War authorized general soldiers to fill the role of attendants. “A liberal policy will be followed in furnishing these details even at the expense of training and other activities.” In large urban areas, “arrangements can probably be made to have one soldier accompany the body from the house to the grave, and to station during the necessary hours on funeral days, one firing squad and bugler to render the last military honors, at each of the cemeteries where interments take place.” The autumn of 1921 witnessed the greatest volume of bodies returning from Europe. The military’s staffing resources came under great strains as a consequence.<sup>42</sup>

Despite the best attempts by Elliot and the Quartermaster’s General Office to control the return of the dead, they could not eliminate entirely the criticism of their procedures regarding the way the military was handling the recovery of the dead. Removing the dead from Europe was a delicate task, especially when it was necessary to transport bodies over national borders. Critics quickly passed judgment that the recovery system did not work efficiently. A newspaper report appeared in the *Washington Post* in the summer of 1921. Some American prisoners of war died while incarcerated in Germany and the U.S. received permission from the government to recover their bodies. The GRS retrieved the bodies and sent them by overland vehicles to Leipzig and then onto Antwerp where they disembarked for the U.S. But the *Washington Post* depicted the process as a “wastfurl [sic] inefficiency with which the work has been conducted.”

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<sup>42</sup> Memorandum, Adjutant General to All Corps Area Commanders, 8 August 1921, NA, RG 92, Office of the Quartermaster General, Cemeterial Division, 1917-1922, Box 3, Folder General 1919-1922.

The column published on 5 June charged that “Twenty-seven men with a touring car and nine trucks have been touring Germany since April recovering the scattered remains of 47 American dead.” The author continued, “Five trucks and touring cars were sent all the way to Poland for the single body there,” and cited members of the work detail who said, “the work could have been done very simply and expeditiously by the use of trains and streamers [sic] instead of transporting the bodies in trucks through an alien country.”<sup>43</sup> When questioned about it, Colonel H. F. Rethers responded that the land vehicles were the only way to recover the bodies. Rethers cited the Ministerial Decree of 22 July 1920 that forbade the shipment of bodies through Germany. The GRS, acting on the Secretary Baker’s desire to retrieve bodies from Europe, proposed to the German Government the use of “motor transportation, which would avoid any expense to the German Government, or burden to the railways.” German officials granted the proposal, “but with the further precaution that the exhumations were to be carried out with the least publicity possible and that no information regarding the work be disseminated,” because German officials did not want to grant “Similar authority to other foreign countries.” Rethers reported that the newspaper report unfairly criticized the mission and he insisted that he used only one Cadillac, one White truck, and eight GMC trucks.<sup>44</sup>

Most complaints originated from the surrounding controversy of whether or not the government should return dead soldiers to the U.S. Diverse opinions came from numerous people arguing that the bodies should remain in France. One argued, “After the war there will be an increased number of business relations between the United States and France and England and each citizen who visits these countries would have an opportunity of paying the respect due to

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<sup>43</sup> “To Bring Bodies From Germany,” *Washington Post* 5 June 1921, NA, RG 92, Office of the Quartermaster General, Cemeterial Division, 1917-1922, Box 19, Folder Germany.

<sup>44</sup> Letter, H. F. Rethers to Quartermaster General, 27 June 1921, NA, RG 92, Office of the Quartermaster General, Cemeterial Division, 1917-1922, Box 19, Folder Germany.

the dead soldiers.”<sup>45</sup> William Whitman of Chicago, Illinois accused the War Department’s plan to return bodies as “interesting itself in the Chinese plan for bringing back bodies to this country for burial after the war. Many of us have considered this barbaric. It cannot be true that this country would slip back to such an extent.” Whitman added, “The soul of man is not bound up in the putrid flesh nor scattered bones.”<sup>46</sup> It seems Whitman believed that returning the bodies violated somehow the honor of their sacrifice. Dr. H. A. Hewlingo of San Bernardino, California likewise did not favor the plan. He asked the Secretary of War, “If you have humane feelings would it not be well to manifest it by prohibiting the shipment of the dead bodies of soldiers? Having these dead bodies brought home for burial, can be of no possible good; and the excitement which it entails is conducive of much sorrow, and also bitterness.” Dr. Hewlingo argued that the dead posed health problems to the living and should be cremated. He argued, “The Battle-fronts are liable to be Pest Fields in the no distant future. The soil is already contaminated—Pure drinking water will be an impossibility—And [sic] it is thro [sic] this source diseases are communicated.”<sup>47</sup> Despite the complaints of these individuals, the War Department needed to capitalize on the symbolic value of the dead. The death industry in the United States—undertakers, casket builders, cemetery officials—pressured private citizens to encourage the government to bring the dead home.

This sort of critique hit fever pitch when the *New York Times* published a letter cabled from novelist Owen Wister detailing what he described as the “desecration that would shock mothers” in the American cemeteries in France. The author of the 1902 novel *The Virginian* and

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<sup>45</sup> Memorandum for the Adjutant General, 9 August 1918, NA, RG 92, Office of the Quartermaster General, Cemeterial Division, 1917-1922, Box 3, Folder General 1919-1922.

<sup>46</sup> Letter, William Whitman to Secretary of War, 11 September 1918, NA, RG 92, Office of the Quartermaster General, Cemeterial Division, 1917-1922, Box 3, Folder General 1919-1922.

<sup>47</sup> Letter, Dr. H.A. Hewling to Secretary of War, 8 October 1918, NA, RG 92, Office of the Quartermaster General, Cemeterial Division, 1917-1922, Box 3, Folder General 1919-1922.

close friend of Theodore Roosevelt—one of Wilson’s most vocal critics—Wister believed the dead should remain buried in Europe and claimed the cemeteries were a disgrace due to the massive removal of bodies. En route to visiting Quentin Roosevelt’s grave, who crashed his plane in rural France and whose father insisted that his body remain buried near the site of his death, Wister claimed that the nearby American military cemetery had numerous craters and that bodies, only recognizable as “things without shape” were regularly pulled out of the ground as the cemetery officials readied them for their return to the U.S. The author claimed that the necessity of burying the dead quickly meant that cemetery officials put bodies in the ground without coffins and often buried them only in blankets or baskets. “Mud has filled these baskets,” claimed Wister, “and in winter has frozen to a hard cake.” When gravediggers disinterred bodies, claimed the author, they “often place the basket on top of a stove to melt the mud off and find something to send to America.” His accusations continued as he suggested that most of the dead were not embalmed but only “sprinkled with disinfectant and shipped to Hoboken. Those who sprinkle,” he noted, “never embalmed in their lives. They came from slums and anywhere, and they look it.” Wister claimed that many of the bodies, once they reached Hoboken, lay unclaimed and so military and municipal officials buried them in Potter’s fields in local cemeteries. The problem, believed the novelist, was the death industry in America was adept at “exploiting mothers’ grief to put money in certain pockets.” The end result was that soldiers were taken “from the soil their sacrifice made sacred.” The massive disinterment spoiled the once beautiful national cemeteries. He claimed that the Romagne American Military Cemetery was a beautiful site, “Its grass was green, its crosses white. Peace and beauty filled it.” But after forty percent of the dead were dug up and shipped to America, Romagne looked like,



“an old mouth, half teeth, half gums.” Wister asked, “Can nothing stop this hideous mockery of the living and the dead?”<sup>48</sup>

Beneath Wister’s letter the *Times* published a letter from Wilson’s Ambassador to Italy Thomas Nelson Page of Virginia. The Ambassador had just returned from a visit to the France where he had visited several cemeteries including Romagne. Page claimed, “No more impressive tribute to American valor and American love of freedom can be imagined than these cemeteries.” At Romagne, Page viewed the white grave markers and noted the American flag flying above; he noted, “One felt personal pride in every gallant spirit whose mortal dust reposes there.” When he found out that the War Department would return many of the bodies to the U.S., Page responded, “It seemed desecration to dig them up.” A graduate of Washington and Lee University, Page looked to the quintessential Southern gentleman for guidance on the subject of removal. “When General Lee was asked to lend his name to a plan to remove the Confederate dead from Gettysburg he replied that he had always felt that the fittest resting place for a soldier was the field of honor on which he had nobly laid down his life.” He insisted that the dead should not be brought home but rather remain in France.<sup>49</sup>

These accusations echoed the sentiments of Wilsonianism by persuading the public that the dead powerfully symbolized Americanism in Europe. But the implication of these arguments suggested negligence on behalf of the GRS units in their responsibilities of returning the dead. It prompted a response from the newly appointed Chief of the Service, Colonel H. F. Rethers, who wrote to the newspaper to correct the “flagrant falsehood and insult” that came from Wister’s letter. Rethers claimed that “This solemn duty is performed silently and without ostentation, with every precaution taken by means of orders and instructions and direct supervision by

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<sup>48</sup> Owen Wister, “Plead for Our Dead in France,” *New York Times* 15 April 1921.

<sup>49</sup> Letter, Thomas Nelson Page to *New York Times*, 15 April 1921.

commissioned officers of the army to insure careful and reverent handling of the dead.” He cited a Massachusetts State Memorial Commission report that investigated the cemeteries in 1920 with the permission of the War Department. The commissioners claimed “that every effort has been made to do the business part accurately, decently, and with all respect and after that to bestow the honors due to the heroic dead.” Rethers pointed to cemetery records that showed that Wister had visited the cemetery at Seringes-et-Nesles before disinterment began. When he returned a few weeks later, disinterment had begun but he was not allowed to see the operations because “the work is screened from the public.” He continued to point out that GRS supervisory embalmers had to be at least twenty-eight years of age and have three to five years experience as an embalmer. Assistant embalmers had to be at least twenty-one and be a graduate of an embalming school. None, claimed Rethers, came from the dregs of society. The GRS had weeded out the unprofessional embalmers in the years prior and what remained were “skilled operators with a high sense of appreciation of the reverence of the duty” of their work. Nearly 90 percent of the workers actually fought on the frontlines.<sup>50</sup> The GRS office in Hoboken also issued a statement denouncing Wister’s letter and solicited support from the American Legion—founded in 1919 by returning soldiers from Europe. The American Legion National Commander Colonel F. W. Galbraith, Jr., did not believe Wister’s accusations but claimed that Legionnaires would never allow soldiers to be buried in Potter’s Field should the U.S. Army fail in its responsibilities. Captain R. E. Shannon who headed the Hoboken office for the GRS asserted that out of 14,852 so far coming through his jurisdiction, only two had been unclaimed and they were shipped to Arlington National Cemetery to receive burial with full military honors. Shannon quoted the report submitted by Major William F. Deegan who was Vice-Commander of

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<sup>50</sup> Letter, H. F. Rethers to *New York Times*, 8 June 1921.

the New York American Legion that stated his investigation had found no cases of neglect and only one case of oversight.<sup>51</sup>

Public opinion split when it came to the issue of bringing the dead home. A. B. Pouch was President of the Bring Home the Soldier Dead League, a group that actively lobbied Congress to return the dead at government expense. Pouch denounced Wister's "cowardly propaganda" and attested that in his visitations to the cemeteries "work that is being carried out by the Government is all that any one could reasonably expect." Nevertheless, Pouch, and others like him, remained "more convinced and more determined than ever not to have a single bone left in France." Reverend Paul D. Moody who served as Assistant Senior Chaplain of the AEF during the war agreed with Wister. He shared the observations of one of his fellow chaplains who did not serve at the front but had visited it a couple of times. The chaplain recounted that on one occasion he saw six hundred grave diggers making graves; so many died that sometimes, the chaplain claimed, a few weeks passed before individual corpses were buried. Former Captain in the AEF, Theron J. Damon wanted his fallen comrades to remain buried in France. It was too "ghoulish" he suggested, for bodies to be brought back to America to "tear off the healing scab of time and reopen some of the deepest wounds which humanity knows." Mary Gates of New York complained that her friend, who had lost her son in the war, had to respond to the government on four occasions that she did not want her son moved from his gravesite in a Catholic cemetery of a rural French village. When notified that they moved her son to a larger cemetery and again to another cemetery she became quite distressed. Gates blamed this on the people intent on returning the dead home. "It is about time someone did something toward

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<sup>51</sup> "Only Two Unclaimed, *New York Times*, 16 April 1921.

finding out who is back of the movement of bringing home our dead,” wrote the indignant Gates.<sup>52</sup>

Many found great satisfaction in the newly developed military ritual of reverse pilgrimage when it went well. H. F. Richards reburied his son, Sergeant Joseph Clifford Richards, on 11 November 1920 in Williamsport, Pennsylvania. Richards and his wife participated in the early “Bring Home the Soldier Dead” movement. Richards wrote Colonel C. Pierce, head of the Cemeterial Division, a letter stating, “The casket was entirely satisfactory and my wife and I are greatly pleased because of the manner in which it was delivered. The flag that draped the casket is being preserved by us as a sacred souvenir.” The undertaker inadvertently broke the handles of Sergeant Richard’s coffin when removing it from the exterior packaging. This, claimed Richards, was the only problem in the entire ceremony. Richards and his wife met the body at Williamsport on 8 November and “It had been taken to the cemetery immediately upon its arrival. The day of the funeral the undertaker provided a hearse, acted as master of ceremonies at the chapel during the religious services and also had charge of things at the grave.” The Richards family kept the casket closed during their entire time in Williamsport and relied “solely on the identification made by the representatives of the war department.” Mr. Richards continued, “The knowledge that the body of our son now lies in the homeland is a great solace to the lad’s mother and myself. I have great hope that his mother now soon will regain her normal [sic] health. It has been a long and anxious two years for both of us, as the boy died Nov. 15, 1918.”<sup>53</sup>

The debate about returning the dead or keeping their remains buried in Europe occurred in an uneasy space between what Nora described as *lieu de memoire* and *milieu de memoire* that

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<sup>52</sup> “Writers Disagree on Soldier Dead,” *New York Times*, 17 April 1921.

<sup>53</sup> Letter, H. F. Richards to C. C. Pierce, 27 November 1920, NA, RG 92, Office of the Quartermaster General, Cemeterial Division, 1917-1922, Box 3, Folder General 1919-1922.

allowed for Americans to critique the War Department and coproduce with the government new traditions of nationalization. Embedded in the discourse of returning the dead, Americans sought to preserve the environment of memory. Each camp argued that their methods best reflected the way that Americans should commemorate the dead. Many who wanted the soldiers to remain in Europe believed that the best way to revere the dead was to allow them to form a community of the fallen in the place where they sacrificed their lives even if that sacred ground was French soil. But the majority of families wanted their dead returned to them. Those that chose this way were interested less in the platitudes of Wilsonianism than in an authentic mourning process. These families believed they had given their sons and husbands to the nation and this entitled them to access Lincoln's promise through their proximity to the gravesite. Most acknowledged the government had control of their loved ones' bodies as sites of memory from the moment they enlisted to the moment they were permanently buried. In exchange for this recognition, officials of the nation-state allowed families limited choices as to how their loved one would be remembered.

The sort of critical interplay between government management and popular expectations included the symbols that accompanied commemorative traditions. Perhaps the most important symbol, other than the body, in the nationalization of the dead was the American flag. Before the Great War, flags did not have a universal presence in the death culture of the United States. A flag flew from the wreckage of the *U.S.S. Maine* and sank with it to the bottom of international waters. Flags flew at national cemeteries and were lowered to half-mast when someone notable died. Some of the dead returning from Cuba and the Philippines had flag-draped coffins but this was neither consistent nor a formalized procedure. The democratization of the flag as applied to the death of soldiers happened during the recovery of the dead from First World War battlefields.

The War Department, under recommendation of Colonel M. J. Henry of the Quartermaster's Office, issued a "storm flag" to cover every returning casket.<sup>54</sup> This became an important object in the emerging ritual of death. Just as Mr. Richards had done with his son's casket flag, many Americans decided to keep them as a material relic. But this was not universally practiced. In fact many individuals and veterans groups kept the flag that accompanied their loved one's casket draped over the coffin while lowered into the ground. Some removed the flag after the coffin nestled into the dirt but others buried the flag with the sarcophagus. The American Legion, however, habitually removed the flag before lowering the casket into the ground. When asked about the issue in January 1921, Lieutenant Conner of the Cemeterial Branch of the Quartermaster General Office informed all funeral directors that "this office does not consider it proper to bury the flag with the casket." Conner added, "The flag should be turned over to the next of kin of the deceased soldier to be retained as a memorial. The Adjutant General of the Army in approving this action states that the flag is fulfilling its best mission when it is being properly cared for and exposed to view." The mission of the flag did not consecrate the burial space, it spread the death ritual beyond the grave and gave the living an interactive object for which they could remember their loved one.<sup>55</sup>

But many continued to bury the flag with the body. Although H. J. Conner, Chief of the Cemeterial Branch, suggested that the flag could be, "lowered in the grave on top of the shipping case, but will be removed immediately after the ceremonies and turned over to the nearest relative," the Secretary of War decided to stop this entirely in the National Cemeteries. He ordered that "the flag which drapes the casket will not, in any case, be lowered in the grave, but

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<sup>54</sup> Memorandum, M. J. Henry, 19 August 1919, NA, RG 92, Office of the Quartermaster General, Cemeterial Division, 1917-1922, Box 3, Folder General 1919-1922.

<sup>55</sup> Letter, H.J Conner to Quartermaster General of the Army, 8 January 1921, NA, RG 92, Office of the Quartermaster General, Cemeterial Division, 1917-1922, Box 8, Folder General.

may be removed and retained by the nearest relative of the deceased.” If the next of kin did not want the flag, it was to be kept by the Superintendent of the National Cemetery.<sup>56</sup> But the common practice in Arlington National Cemetery was to “conform to the custom and ritual of the Loyal Legion and perhaps other patriotic societies, and allow the flag covering the casket, lowered with it into the outside box and so buried.” Military caskets of the day usually had an internal box inside of an external box with a small space in between. The Loyal Legion, a military and civilian order that originated with Lincoln’s funeral, had traditionally placed the government flag in between the two boxes and buried it with the body. They did not “bury the flag on top of the outside box, or...allow dirt to be thrown in the grave onto the flag.” Quartermaster General H. L. Rogers reported that for this reason, “The Loyal Legion officers are insistent that they be permitted to continue this custom; that it is in honor of their deceased comrade, and the reverse of disrespect to the flag and those sentiments it represents.” Rogers recommended that “the decision be modified to allow the flag to be placed on top of the casket or around the casket” and covered with an outer box, then lowered into the earth and covered with dirt.<sup>57</sup> The Secretary of War would not relent and the tradition of the flag being handed to the next of kin before the flag-draped casket was lowered into the ground became established. The symbolism of the flag proved potent enough that later that year, Congressman John L. Cable authored a bill that appropriated money and authorized the Secretary of War to “furnish American flags for funeral purposes at the burial of honorably discharged soldiers, sailors and

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<sup>56</sup> Letter, H. J. Conner to Quartermaster General, 19 January 1921, NA, RG 92, Office of the Quartermaster General, Cemeterial Division, 1917-1922, Box 8, Folder General.

<sup>57</sup> Letter, Quartermaster General to Adjutant General, 15 May 1921, NA, RG 92, Office of the Quartermaster General, Cemeterial Division, 1917-1922, Box 8, Folder General.

marines of the United States forces.” This included former soldiers from the Civil War, Spanish American War, and the Great War.<sup>58</sup>

Although there were many ideas about the appropriate role of the flag, the tension between popular practice and government policy in regards to the symbolism of the funeral reflected the larger negotiation over the meaning of the dead. Government officials controlled new commemorative traditions and the public often criticized them. Suspicion of mishandling the dead surfaced almost immediately. This stemmed from the War Department’s inability to return the dead in a timely manner. Military officials found it difficult to recover so many dead spread out across the French landscape and had to invent a bureaucracy along the way. Negotiating with foreign governments and negotiating the treacherous Atlantic Ocean brought unanticipated inefficiencies. But military officials did little to smooth over the concerns of a worried public. Instead of transparency, the War Department kept a high level of secrecy surrounding the recovery and return of the dead and this added intrigue and mystery to the process. Media outlets, various societies, and individuals such as Wister attempted to force the War Department to be more forthcoming with their bureaucratic measures. But the facts were that military leaders developed the process often as they went along. Justifying the war went hand in hand with representing the dead and officials avoided embarrassment at every turn. Military officials felt they could best accomplish this by accommodating the expectations of the public through the gradual control of the recovery, return, and representation of the fallen community.

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<sup>58</sup> Memorandum, H. J. Conner, 16 August 1921, NA, RG 92, Office of the Quartermaster General, Cemeterial Division, 1917-1922, Box 8, Folder General.



## The Making of the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier

The chaos of 1919 had revealed many of the deep-seated American prejudices that the war effort on the home front had covered over; the turmoil exposed just how disunited Americans actually were. The return of black men from a segregated battlefield somehow threatened white masculinity at the home front and racial violence intensified. The Centralia Massacre in November 1919 pitted lumber barons against workers who had joined the Industrial Workers of the World in Centralia, Washington. The Palmer raids, authorized by Attorney General Alexander Mitchell Palmer and executed by J. Edgar Hoover, utilized the Espionage Act of 1917 and the Sedition Act of 1918 to arrest, interrogate, and imprison immigrants and those allegedly associated with socialist politics and labor unions. One way to help bottle up this sort of disunity was to produce postwar symbols that condensed unity and massaged nationalistic feelings. The commemorative tradition initiated by Lincoln and amended by Lincoln and Roosevelt could easily incorporate the tropes of nativism, Protestantism, and capitalism into new commemorative traditions but the United States had become increasingly multicultural. Different groups of people played an ever-increasing role on the home front and in the battle front. What the collective memory needed was a symbol that suggested Americanness was open to all groups but also was specific enough that each group of individuals could claim symbolic—but perhaps not real—access to Americanism. Commemorative traditions based on Lincoln's rhetoric of liberty and government for the people had to appear to have the stuff of diversity by the end of the Great War. The success of commemorating an unknown soldier was that the ceremony subtly inverted the communal aspects of Lincoln's promise. As an individual soldier, the unknown violated Lincoln's original principle that the community of the fallen, not individual soldiers would be remembered. But as a metaphor the unknown warrior inverted "the

community” replacing the fallen soldiers with a mirror-like effect. These diverse groups could look at the unknown and see a reflection of themselves as part of a national community. African Americans and immigrants could plausibly believe that the unknown was one of them.

The original idea for a monument dedicated to an unknown soldier came from Brigadier General William Durward Connor who had learned of the French plans to dedicate a monument to an unknown French soldier. Connor suggested that the U.S. likewise commemorate an American unknown but U.S. Army Chief of Staff Peyton C. March did not favor the idea. March believed that the GRS might eventually identify most, if not all, of the unidentified American dead and did not want to commemorate someone whose identity would later be found out.<sup>59</sup> But the incredible public response to the British and French unknowns who were reburied on 11 November 1920 convinced American politicians that they could recuperate similar nationalistic sentiments through the dedication of an unknown warrior. New York Congressman Hamilton Fish, Jr. reintroduced the idea to the War Department and eventually won concessions from military leaders. Congress authorized the return of a single unknown soldier in the spring of 1921; President Wilson signed the legislation in the last month of his presidency.<sup>60</sup> Although the plans for an American tomb were discussed before the end of the war, America had no central location like London or Paris to commemorate such a symbol. The Cenotaph in Whitehall formed a monument of the people. Sir Edwin Lutyens had designed and constructed a casket and pedestal built out of wood and plaster for the 1919 Allied Victory Parade celebrating the Peace of Paris and the official end of the war. Lutyens built the temporary structure in the middle of the street. It proved so popular that the government replaced the temporary structure with a permanent structure a year later in 1920. The same day as the rededication of the

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<sup>59</sup> Hanson, *Unknown Soldiers*, 331-3.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, 332-3.

Cenotaph, British authorities also buried the remains of the Unknown Warrior in Westminster Abbey; the anonymous warrior rested next to England's monarchs, poets, and scientists of renown. Both of these locations were constructed in the heart of London in the heart of the British Empire.

Likewise France had buried the *Poilu Inconnu* in the heart of the French Empire. The *Place de l'Étoile* was the intersection of Paris's twelve major roads and the center of the *L'Axe historique* that connected the Louvre Palace through Paris to *La Defense* (a monument dedicated to the French defenders of Paris in the Franco-Prussian War) on the outskirts of the city. Napoleon Bonaparte commissioned the magnificent victory arch as a dedication to the soldiers of the Napoleonic Wars. France chose this location to bury the Unknown Soldier as the center of *L'Axe historique*, the center of Paris, and the center of the French Empire. These sorts of locations in London and Paris reified the entire British and French imperial histories to a specific place on which the subjects of Britain and the citizens of France honored their nameless unidentifiable soldiers from the Great War. The United States had no such location. American officials faced other limitations to produce an American unknown soldier. The French and British commemorated the unknown as a spectacle of empire while Americans had cast the war as a conquest that made the world safe for democracy. These two narratives would be difficult to reconcile. An unknown tomb also violated the tenets of Lincoln's promise. At Gettysburg, Lincoln had promised that individuals who made up the nation would commemorate the fallen community and not individual soldiers. The new traditions may have been popular in London and Paris but they violated the commemorative traditions of the American collective memory. As an editorialist from *Life* magazine wrote, "A ceremony of this kind is an imitation and seems rather too likely to be a cheap one." The author continued, "The [American] ceremony is not

instinctive nor based on overwhelming facts, but the burial seems a thing to do because it has been done somewhere else.”<sup>61</sup> About this time GRS officials had come out in opposition to the Congressional legislation that would produce the Unknown Soldier. The GRS had slowly reduced the number of unknown dead through the use of dental records which had to be sent to military officials in Washington to be compared with dental charts taken at the time of enlistment. Although a pragmatic rather than an ideological opposition, GRS officials claimed “The time is not yet ripe for the selection of the unknown hero to be honored.”<sup>62</sup>

Added to this controversy, there was little consensus on where the unknown warrior should be buried. Although the National Cemetery at Arlington was a location for the burial of the Philippine and Cuban dead and for the dead of the Civil War who died near Arlington and Alexandria, Virginia, it had not yet become reified as the center of the American empire. The United States had no parallel space to the Westminster Abbey and the *Arc de Triomphe*. Americans had decentralized commemorative space and dispersed it throughout the nation. By 1920 Arlington served as just one of ninety cemeteries that the War Department oversaw from San Francisco, California to Santa Fe, New Mexico to Elmira, New York to Marietta, Georgia. Military officials shipped bodies home where they buried the remains in a local cemetery or in a nearby national cemetery. The War Department used Arlington only for victims of disease, the unclaimed, and those whose families explicitly requested that they bury their loved ones there. There were other suggestions for the burial location of the unknown. Philadelphians wanted the soldier buried in Independence Hall or at least in Independence Square.<sup>63</sup> Some New Yorkers planned to bring to the city a second unknown soldier but Secretary of War Newton Baker did

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<sup>61</sup> “The Unknown Soldier,” *Life* 17 March 1921, 385.

<sup>62</sup> “Asks Unknown Hero Delay,” 17 February 1921.

<sup>63</sup> “The Unknown Soldier,” *Life* 17 March 1921, 385.

not support this proposal.<sup>64</sup> Many disagreed with sentiments that accentuated such local importance over nationalism. Bringing back an unknown American soldier, argued the editors of the *New York Times*, “should not be associated with any State nor with any particular army organization. As in England and France, it is the nation that should do honor to the unidentified soldier, and his tomb should be a shrine for the Americans of all the States and all the lands under the flag.” The editors argued that the body should be placed in Arlington, “where the bravest lie, men of the South as well as men of the North, who fought for the Stars and Stripes.”<sup>65</sup>

Arlington had caused controversy for some. There already existed a tomb for unknown Civil War soldiers in the cemetery. Dedicated in September 1866, the very first tomb for the unknowns marked a mass burial for over two thousand unidentified Union dead. It served the central location for Decoration Day ceremonies in the early years after the war and became one of the most important locations in the cemetery. But by the twentieth century the cemetery had also become the location for a Confederate section first authorized in 1900 after McKinley’s Atlanta speech the previous year. Confederates from surrounding areas around Washington, D.C. had been disinterred and reburied in the national cemetery. Later Jewish American, Confederate soldier, and sculptor Moses Ezekiel completed a monument to the Confederate dead funded by the Confederate Memorial Association in 1914. President Woodrow Wilson received the monument as a welcomed example of reunification. For some the placing of the unknown from the Great War just yards away from the Confederate monument in Arlington cemetery was too controversial. Soldiers from the North and South had fought shoulder-to-shoulder in the War with Spain but the unknown from France, some feared, might arouse feelings of regionalism not

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<sup>64</sup> Hanson, *Unknown Soldiers*, 333.

<sup>65</sup> “Unknown Soldier,” *New York Times*, 9 December 1920.

nationalism; was the unknown a Northerner or a Southerner? Editors of the *New York Times*, despite their initial feelings, shifted their call for the burial space to be in Arlington and suggested the U.S. Capitol building instead. “The revival of memories that affect national unity and concord should be guarded against,” they claimed. For this reason the editorial also lobbied for the dedication ceremony to take place on April 6, the anniversary of the Declaration of War, instead of on Memorial Day as Congressman Hamilton Fish, Jr. had wanted as a further symbolic reconciliation between Northerners and Southerners.<sup>66</sup> The author argued that not everyone who visited the nation’s capital visited Arlington but “All America finds its way to the Capitol.” The rotunda’s “historical paintings and its traditions has been a shrine of the American people,” and the structure created “an irresistible impulse of interest and patriotism.” The location in the Capitol rotunda “would have a more solemnizing and reverential effect than if the sepulture were in the cemetery at Arlington across the Potomac.”<sup>67</sup>

Delays continued through 1921 making 6 April and even Memorial Day impossible to meet. As the spring of 1921 gave way to the summer months, the GRS had finally reduced the number of unknowns down as far as possible to less than two thousand. Military officials began planning the exhumation and transportation of an unknown from the cemeteries of France. American officials based much of their procedures on the British and French precedents. The British selected the dead from British cemeteries in the Aisne, the Somme, Arras, and Ypres—the four major British zones of battle. Military officials instructed gravediggers to select an unknown gravesite from an early part of the war thus ensuring that the remains would be “Anglo-Saxon” and not “one of Kitchener’s New Army of civilian volunteers or one of the

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<sup>66</sup> Hanson, *Unknown Soldiers*, 333.

<sup>67</sup> “The Unknown Soldier’s Tomb, *New York Times*, 3 February 1921.

hundreds of thousands of soldiers drawn from the far-flung reaches of the Empire.”<sup>68</sup> The four recovery parties independently loaded the respective body onto an ambulance and delivered it to General Headquarters near Arras. All the ambulances arrived at different times and the recovery details reported immediately back to their units. These procedures ensured anonymity in the selection process. At midnight on 8 November 1920, Brigadier General L. J. Wyatt selected the soldier that would serve as the unknown. Lieutenant Colonel E. A. S. Gell assisted Wyatt and together they transferred the selected remains to a plain pine coffin, sealed it, and placed a Union flag on top of the coffin; a small burial detail buried the other three soldiers in a nearby cemetery. The remains were transported to London with French and British escorts solemnly paying respects along the long slow journey by land and by sea. Despite King George V’s reluctance to accept the Unknown Warrior, especially the location of his burial among the monarchs of England in Westminster Abbey, Prime Minister David Lloyd George convinced the King that this sort of ceremony served an important symbolic act in the hearts and minds of British subjects.<sup>69</sup> With the King persuaded, British officials buried the Unknown Warrior in the abbey on Armistice Day 1921 just hours after the dedication of the permanent Cenotaph on Whitehall. While the British were selecting the British unknown, the French were also selecting the *Poilu Inconnu*. On 9 November 1921, eight flag-draped caskets of unknown French soldiers lay in the basement chamber of the Verdun citadel. Throughout the day citizens filed past the eight coffins silently. Unlike the British who allowed an officer to choose the unknown, the French military chose Private Auguste Tain, whose father had died at Verdun, to select the casket by placing red, white, and blue flowers on one of the coffins. The remains came from every French sector on the front except one where the French and German bodies lay buried too

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<sup>68</sup> Hanson, *Unknown Soldiers*, 283.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, 278.

closely together to safely determine if the body was French or not. The selected body was then sent to Paris to be interred under the *Arc de Triomphe*.<sup>70</sup>

Both the British and the French precedents had influenced the shaping of the American ceremony of selecting an unknown soldier. Quartermaster General Harry Lovejoy Rogers, who planned and oversaw the ceremonies in France and Washington D.C., took elaborate measures to preserve the anonymity of the remains. Rogers ordered men of the GRS to take four bodies from four major American cemeteries in France in October 1921. They also took four more bodies as alternatives should any information arise in the exhumation process that could identify the original selections. The unknown remains of these servicemen came from Aisne-Marne, Meuse-Argonne, Somme, and St. Mihiel cemeteries. The GRS disinterred the bodies on 22 October and they arrived at the Hotel de Ville in Chalons in the region of Champagne on 23 October, each escorted by an officer. Each body took a different route to the Hotel de Ville. Once the bodies arrived, each accompanying officer took the A-16 form that identified the location of each unknown's grave in the original cemetery and handed it to Major R. P. Harbold of the Quartermaster General Corps. Major Harbold handed the A-16 forms to his colleague Lieutenant Colonel G. V. S. Quackenbush who "in the presence of Major Harbold, destroyed by fire the four forms. This was done so that no one could trace the bodies back to their original cemetery and to their original grave location. In addition, the GRS destroyed all of its records in the headquarters "so that the four bodies have no record on file showing from whence they

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<sup>70</sup> Walter Duranty, "France's Unknown Chosen for Honor," *New York Times*, 11 November 1920. For a detailed description of the selection and ceremonies surrounding the British Unknown Warrior and the French *Poilu Inconnu* see Hanson, *Unknown Soldiers*, 282-291.



originally came and from which cemetery they were exhumed for shipment to Chalons-sur-Marne.”<sup>71</sup>

Once arriving at the Hotel de Ville, workers unloaded the coffins and draped American flags on them. The next morning, “Major Harbold, with some French and American soldiers, rearranged the caskets by placing them on different cases other than the ones on which they reposed during the night.” They did this so that no one, not “even the employees of the American Graves Registration Service present at Chalon-sur-Marne [could] recognize, through the order of arrangement, the bodies from the various cemeteries.” Later that morning, at 9:30 French troops assembled and at 10:00 “a French military band played ‘The Death of Ase’ from ‘Peer Gynt.’” American and French officers entered the town hall where the caskets lay followed by Sergeant Edward Younger who picked the casket of the official Unknown Soldier. Among them were General Duport of the French 6<sup>th</sup> Army Corps, the Prefect of the Marne, the Mayor of Chalons-sur-Marne, the Town Council, French guards and officer, American officers, Quartermaster General Rogers, Chief of the American GRS Colonel H. F. Rethers, Lieutenant Colonel William G. Ball, Major Harbold, Captain E. LaRoch of the French Army, and Mr, Keating Chief Supervisory Embalmer. Younger “slowly entered the mortuary room, carrying a spray of roses which had been donated by M. Brasseur Brulfer, a former member of the City Council.” The Sergeant passed the officers, entered the chamber, and “circled the caskets three times, then silently placed the flowers on the third casket from the left. He faced the body, stood

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<sup>71</sup> Historical Data, Selection of Unknown Soldier World War I, NA, RG 92 Office of the Quartermaster General, General Records Relating to the Selection and Interment of the Unknown Soldiers of WWII and Korea, 1957-58, Box 2, Folder USAREUR, Annex, 1-2. Also see Neil Hanson’s detailed description of recovery, transportation, and commemoration of the American Unknown Soldier in *Unknown Soldiers*, 328-354.

at attention and saluted. General Duport stepped forward at the other end of the casket, and saluted in the name of the French people.”<sup>72</sup>

After the other officers paid their respects, the GRS whisked the casket off to an adjoining room. The agents transferred the remains to a prepared casket engraved with the words “An Unknown American who gave his life in the World War,” sealed the coffin, “and then draped [the coffin] with the Stars and Stripes.” The “transfer was made in the presence of” Quartermaster General Rogers, Chief of the GRS Rethers, Lieutenant Colonel Ball, and Major Harbold. The now empty casket that formerly contained the remains of the Unknown Soldier was brought back into the chamber with the other three unknown soldiers. The remains of one of the other unknowns were removed from his original casket and placed inside the empty coffin. “The purpose of this transfer was to have the casket buried (which originally contained the body that had been selected) and thus preclude the possibility of any mark of identification being left which might in any way show from what cemetery that body had been exhumed.” Workers then repackaged the three caskets, which “were sent immediately to Romagne Cemetery” and buried the same day, “in graves numbered 1, 2, 3, Row No. 1., Block G.” The reporter added, “The only record now pertaining to these bodies is the reburial record showing an Unknown Soldier buried in the three graves above enumerated.”<sup>73</sup>

Unlike earlier years when the French government reluctantly accommodated the Americans in their attempts to commemorate the American dead, French military officials and civilians participated in the cemetery. Times had changed by 1921; the French had loosened their restrictions on the Americans returning the dead in the early part of the year. On top of this the American unknown reflected the ties that bound France and the U.S. together as allies. Back

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<sup>72</sup> Ibid, Annex, 2-9; “Edwin L. James, Unknown Soldier Chosen in France,” *New York Times*, 25 October 1921, 13.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

in the Hotel de Ville, the transferred remains of the Unknown lay in a new coffin. As the French military band played Chopin's "Funeral March," six American non-commissioned officers acting as pallbearers took the casket "and bore it to the catafalque in a shrine erected in the center of the large hall facing the principal entrance gate of the Hotel de Ville." An honor guard kept watch made up of "six French soldiers, five non-commissioned officers from the American Forces in Germany, and a representative of the American Legion." From 1:00 until 4:00 in the afternoon, residents of Chalon-sur-Marne passed by the bier as the body lay in state. At 4:00 PM, French troops including the 106<sup>th</sup> Regiment, squadrons of cavalry, and the military band stood outside for the "official ceremonies which had been prepared by the Mayor of the city of Chalons." General Duport addressed the audience in French and Quartermaster General Rogers responded in English. After the ceremonies, "the march to the station began." Everyone stood at attention and officers saluted as "the casket was being carried out and placed on the gun carriage appropriately draped with flags." The "French infantry and cavalry lined in the streets from the Hotel de Ville to the station along the route of the procession." The funeral cortege consisted of the French "9<sup>th</sup> Dragons, 106<sup>th</sup> Infantry, 40<sup>th</sup> Field Artillery, 25<sup>th</sup> Field Artillery, 140<sup>th</sup> Motor Transportation Co., 6<sup>th</sup> Section of Q.M.C., Boy Scouts, Firemen, Delegations of various veterans societies, and other local societies, Students of Arts and Trades School, and School Children."<sup>74</sup>

At the train station, pallbearers loaded the casket into a "funeral car of the special train which was tendered by the French Government." The train left Chalons en route to Paris where it arrived around 10:00 PM at the Gare Batignolles. The next morning the funeral train left Gare Batignolles with Andre Maginot, Minister of Pensions, on board. The train made its way to Le Havre stopping at Rouen so that Major General Duchesne, who commanded the 3<sup>rd</sup> French Army Corps, could join the procession. The train arrived in Le Havre in the early afternoon, where "A

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<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

guard of one Machine Gun Company of the 129<sup>th</sup> French Infantry and a detachment of French sailors presented arms as the train drew into the station.” The men of the 129<sup>th</sup> also carried “palms, wreaths, bouquets and flowers.” As the coffin came off the train, some American soldiers moved in front of the sarcophagus. “On each side of the coffin were eight American sergeants, among whom was Sergeant Edward Younger.” Beyond the American soldiers followed men of the French 129<sup>th</sup> regiment and they were followed by “orphans belonging to the ‘Fraternite Franco-Americaine’, each carrying a flower.”<sup>75</sup>

As the funeral procession moved through the streets of Le Havre from the train station to the docks, policemen, firemen, customs officials all gave their respects. Civilians were present as well: “A reverent and deeply-moved crowd lined the way, which had been decorated with flags flying at half-mast.” The procession made it to the docks about an hour after the funeral train arrived in Le Havre. Awaiting the Unknown was the cruiser *Olympia* with “the American flags half-mast and the French flag hoisted half way up the foremast.” Escorting the *Olympia* was the destroyer *Reuben James*.<sup>76</sup> All the officers, marines, and sailors of both ships stood on the wharf. The procession stopped at the wharf in front of the *Olympia* and the Mayor of Le Havre addressed the audience. After the Mayor, Minister Maginot spoke followed by Major General Henry T. Allen. Minister Maginot awarded the Unknown Soldier the Cross of the Chevalier of the Legion of Honor while the French military band played “Ouvrez le Ban” and the “Marseillaise.” As American soldiers took charge of the remains and placed the casket on board the *Olympia*, the American military band also played the “Marseillaise” followed by the “Star Spangled Banner.” While these songs played the American Army pallbearers carried the casket

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<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

<sup>76</sup> The *U.S.S. Reuben James* would be the first American ship torpedoed and sunk by a German submarine in October 1941 killing 115 of the 160 men on board. Folk singer Woody Guthrie’s “The Sinking of the Reuben James” would commemorate the men who did not survive.

to the American Navy and Marine pallbearers at the gangplank. “The Navy took over the Unknown from the Army without lowering the casket, a sailor or marine relieving a soldier one at a time and so quietly and promptly that few realised [sic] the change had been made.” Pallbearers passed into the *Olympia* as the rest of the Marines presented arms and laid the remains “on the stern of the cruiser, which had been beautifully decorated with wreaths, flowers and flags.” After the casket came to rest, “The school children of Le Havre went aboard and banked flowers around the casket.” Once the children disembarked, the *Olympia* left the dock and made for the open sea. As the cruiser made its way across the harbor, a French destroyer fired a seventeen gun salute; the *Olympia* responded and slipped off into the horizon carrying “America’s cherished Hero” to his “last resting place in the land of his birth.”<sup>77</sup>

In Arlington National Cemetery the amphitheater became the venue for the dedication. Behind the amphitheater, a burial space marked the final resting place of the unknown. By 10 November 1921, the *Olympia* had already finished the transatlantic journey and the Unknown Soldier had been transferred from the ship to lie in state at the U.S. Capitol building. The next day, Armistice Day, the commemoration of the Unknown led by the Master of Ceremonies, the Secretary of War John Wingate Weeks who had replaced Secretary Baker after the 1920 election, took place at the Arlington amphitheater. The funeral procession full of mourners made its way from the Capitol to Arlington National Cemetery. The *New York Times* reported that “Washington had witnessed many notable ceremonies, but never one like this.” The funerals of Lincoln, Garfield, and McKinley were impressive, reminded the reporter, but the tears shed for the Unknown were “carried away by the emotion of the symbolism of patriotism which this unknown American embodied.” The casket was “taken from that central spot in the Capitol’s

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<sup>77</sup> Historical Data, Selection of Unknown Soldier World War I, Annex, 9-11; Edwin L. James, “Unknown Soldier Chosen in France,” *New York Times*, 25 October 1921, 13.

rotunda where before this only the bodies of Presidents had lain in state, and where it had been designed to place the body of George Washington.” The procession lasted three hours and participants walked seven miles from the Capitol onto Pennsylvania Avenue and passing by the White House before making the trek across the Potomac River to Arlington. Following the caisson along the route were President Harding and other dignitaries including Field Marshal Foch, Premiere Aristide Briand of France, General Diaz of Italy, Arthur J. Balfour—former Prime Minister of Great Britain who was now serving as Lord President of the Council in Prime Minister Lloyd George’s government, and Prince Tokugawa of Japan, who as “the last of the militant Shoguns, watched closely this occidental scene, which had all the elements of appeal to the Oriental imagination.” Along the march, crowds witnessed the spectacle. They cheered when the Gold Star Mothers walked by and cheered louder when Woodrow Wilson and his wife passed. Wilson’s poor health, the remnants of a stroke suffered during his Presidency in 1919, prohibited him from reaching Arlington but he made it as far as the White House “and received an ovation all along the route.” The *New York Times* reporter noted the sobriety of the crowd, “But when they saw this stricken man who had been Commander-in-Chief of the forces with which the Unknown Warrior fought they broke into cheers.”<sup>78</sup>

This was a significant recognition of the former President. A defeated body, defeated in politics, and some argued defeated by Lloyd George and Clemenceau in Paris, the recognition of Wilson perhaps demonstrated just how unifying the symbolism of the Unknown could be. Those who cheered for the President certainly understood the role he played in committing the nation to war and must have understood the irony that if not for his decision, and the decision of Congress

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<sup>78</sup> Program, “Ceremonies at Memorial Amphitheater,” 11 November 1921, NA, RG 319, Records of the Army Staff, Records of the Office of the Chief of Military History, Records of the Historical Services Division, Publications, Unpublished Manuscripts, and Supporting Records, 1943-1977, “The Last Salute, Studies of State Official and Special Military Funerals,” Box 001, Folder, WWI Unknown Soldiers; “Solemn Journey of the Dead,” *New York Times*, 12 November 1921.

to declare war, the ceremony on that Armistice Day would have never taken place. Despite his failure at getting European allies and Republican Senators to accept his peace plans the great compliment from the crowd suggested that Wilson held a special place in the American collective memory of the Great War. Wilson played an integral role in spreading Americanism as a basis of American imperialism. Despite the failure to convince Americans of his personal vision of collective security and the League of Nations, those who cheered Wilson seemed to suggest that they agreed with him that the American nation should play a leadership role in the world-system and the Tomb of the Unknown symbolized of the American values of unity and sacrifice that typified Americanism even if the cheerers could not support Wilsonianism. When the funeral parade arrived at Arlington pallbearers lifted the casket and carried it to the amphitheater while the Marine band played Chopin's "Funeral March." Everyone with tickets, nearly five thousand dignitaries and leaders in Washington, were seated inside the amphitheater when the hallowed casket entered. Those thousands without tickets sat outside the theater. The pallbearers carried the remains to the catafalque in front of officials such as General John J. Pershing, Senator Henry Cabot Lodge, former Secretary of War, Secretary of State, and emissary to Russia Elihu Root, Vice-President Calvin Coolidge, six Indian chiefs, and numerous other American and foreign dignitaries. The Marine band played for fifteen minutes when at six minutes to twelve President Warren G. Harding and his wife entered the amphitheater to the National Anthem. After the invocation, delivered by Chief of the Chaplains, John J. Axton, a trumpet call signaled the beginning of two minutes of silence. The Marine band signaled the end of the silence by playing "America" and accompanied by the audience and a quartet. After this, President Harding addressed the audience.<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> Ibid.

After finishing his eulogy, the President sat down and a quartet from the Metropolitan Opera Company of New York accompanied by the Marine Band sang the hymn "The Supreme Sacrifice." The quartet included four of the biggest stars of the Metropolitan Opera: world-famous soprano and Italian-American Rosa Ponselle, rising star and contralto Jeanne Gordon, Welsh tenor Morgan Kingston, whose son was wounded in the Great War, and bass William Gustafson. After the hymn, American and foreign dignitaries decorated the corpse with numerous medals. The Unknown Soldier received the Congressional Medal of Honor and the Distinguished Service Cross from President Harding, the Belgian Croix de Guerre from Lieutenant General Baron Jacques, the British Victoria Cross from Admiral of the Fleet Earl Beatty, the French Medaille Militaire and the French Croix de Guerre from Marshal Foch, the Italian Gold Medal for Bravery from General Armando Diaz, the Romanian Virtutea Militara from Prince Bibesco, the Czechoslovakian War Cross from Dr. Bedrich Stepanek, and the Polish Virtuti Militari from Prince Lubomirski. The quartet then sang "O God, our Help in Ages Past," after which a chaplain read a psalm and then Rosa Ponselle sang "I Know that My Redeemer Liveth." After a chaplain read again from scripture, the quartet and the audience sang "Nearer, My God, to Thee." Eventually the pallbearers took the decorated casket behind the amphitheater to the prepared grave made out of marble. All the dignitaries followed the Unknown to the gravesite. They paused at his grave as Representative Hamilton Fish Jr. laid a wreath on the tomb as did Mrs. R. Emmett Digney, President of the American War Mothers. Mrs. Julia McCudden of the British War Mothers did the same and finally Chief Plenty Coos, a Crow Indian representing all Indians in the United States, placed his headdress and war stick on the tomb. Chief Plenty Coos stated, "I feel it an honor to the red man that he takes part in this great event because it shows that the thousands of Indians who fought in the Great War are appreciated



by the white man.” He added, “I hope that the Great Spirit will grant that these noble warriors have not given up their lives in vain and that there will be peace to all men hereafter. This is the Indians’ hope and prayer.” Finally the mourners lowered the casket into the ground as three artillery shouts rang out followed by “Taps” and the National Salute. A bit of French soil was thrown onto the casket before it was buried in the American ground.<sup>80</sup>

### Conclusion

The Tomb of the Unknown Soldier signified that the consummation of reunification was complete and it helped resolve any lingering controversies, symbolic or real, between the North and the South. It monumentally announced America’s arrival on the global stage and Americans’ willingness to participate in a global community. The classic design of the tomb emanating out into the pleasant surroundings of a manicured field of green grass bordered by smooth marbled walkways leading to a portico fountain helped people who looked upon the monument forget the effects of the war but remember the patriotism of all who sacrificed their lives for the nation. Northerners could believe the unknown came from the North while Southerners could claim he had a southern birth. In this respect, the symbolism of the Tomb of the Unknown inverted Lincoln’s promise by stressing the individuality and the regionalism of the American imagined community. But this allowed disparate groups to experience also a presence in the nationalized community and thus overlaid Lincoln’s notion of government for the people with a heterogeneous and cosmopolitan symbol. Maybe the unknown was native born and white but perhaps he was an immigrant or as African American poet James Weldon Johnson’s “Saint Peter Relates an Incident of the Resurrection Day” suggested, perhaps the

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<sup>80</sup> Ibid.

resurrection day would show that the soldier was black.<sup>81</sup> Possibly he was Native American, as the presence of Plenty Coos might imply or perhaps he was Catholic or Jewish. A single “American Soldier Known But to God” allowed immigrants, African Americans, and white Americans to infer that the unknown might be one of them. The unknown took Lincoln’s promise to remember the fallen community as a national project of memory and reflected back to the individual symbolic messages of nation, democracy, and empire; the Tomb of the Unknown helped diverse people experience the living national community.

Lincoln’s promise had pledged to commemorate the fallen community and yet here an entire nation revered a single individual; the subaltern had been lifted up posthumously to the new national pantheon. The fallen community communicated messages of honor, sacrifice, and fraternity while the Unknown represented the message that individual sacrifice was the cost of national community. Thus American collective memory could recognize the efforts of individuals who contributed to the national identity but would not consider the efforts of groups to assert their collective identity into the national identity. There were no Northerners, Southerners, African Americans, immigrants, or Native Americans in the Tomb of the Unknown; there was only an American whose identity was unknowable. The symbolism helped assimilate minority groups into the mythology of nationalization in a similar way that GRS officials assimilated Jewish bodies into the national cemeteries. These groups had to give up their communal traditions and reinvest them into the new traditions of Americanism. In exchange minority groups were allowed to believe that they had symbolic access to Americanness even when the reality was that they did not have access to the politics of Americanness. The inversion and decontextualization of Lincoln’s promise meant that the traditional structures of the

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<sup>81</sup> James Weldon Johnson, *Saint Peter Relates an Incident of the Resurrection Day* (New York: Viking Press, 1931).

American commemorative practice of nativism, Protestantism, and capitalism could be reasserted into the American identity as universal values.

This was evident six months after the dedication of the Tomb of the Unknown when Washington politicians and socialites dedicated another monument on Memorial Day in 1922. The Lincoln Memorial, like the Tomb of the Unknown, symbolized the success of reunification of North and South, the economic wealth brought by industrialization and urbanization, and the strong global position of postwar America. To celebrate these triumphs, many had to ignore the fact that these achievements stemmed, in part, from the segregation and disenfranchisement of African Americans. Thus the discourse surrounding the Lincoln Memorial saw scholars and politicians such as William Howard Taft turn Lincoln the “emancipator” into a “unifier” by “sculpt[ing] him into a ‘pro-Southern conservative’ honored on both sides of the Mason-Dixon line.”<sup>82</sup> Robert R. Moton, Booker T. Washington’s successor at Tuskegee Institute in Alabama, spoke at the dedication of the Lincoln Memorial. He planned to highlight how the nation had failed to extend civil rights to blacks in the years since the Civil War. But white organizers pressured him to make more accommodating statements that accentuated African Americans in the context of Lincoln as unifier rather than as emancipator.<sup>83</sup>

The recovery of the Great War dead helped produce these traditions. Democracy posed as an American value-system that could be communicated both to Europeans abroad and to

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<sup>82</sup> Scott A. Sandage, “A Marble House Divided: The Lincoln Memorial, the Civil Rights Movement, and the Politics of Memory, 1939-1963,” *Journal of American History* 80 (June 1993): 135-167, quote on p. 139.

<sup>83</sup> Adam Fairclough, “Civil Rights and the Lincoln Memorial: The Censored Speeches of Robert R. Moton (1922) and John Lewis (1963),” *Journal of Negro History* 82 (Autumn 1997): 408-416. A similar censoring of John Lewis’s speech happened at the Lincoln Memorial in 1963. Barry Schwartz, “Postmodernity and Historical Reputation: Abraham Lincoln in Late Twentieth-Century American Memory,” *Social Forces* 77 (Sep. 1998): 63-103. This conservative interpretation of the Lincoln Memorial largely went uncontested until the late 1930s when the black gospel singer Marian Anderson performed *My Country ‘tis of Thee* after being barred from the Daughter of the American Revolution’s Constitution Hall. In a single performance Anderson was able to challenge the memory of sacrifice for emancipation and begin the process of reshaping the Lincoln Memorial as a place for Americans to express their demands for freedom, equality, and peace for the rest of the twentieth century.

Americans domestically through the commemorative traditions built around the war dead. These coproduced traditions also concealed other American values that were not so desirable including racial violence, segregation, and inequality. Couched in the rhetoric and ideology of Lincoln's promise, the registering of graves, the return of the dead, and the production of the Unknown Soldier marked solemn expressions of nationalization. In exchange for the ultimate sacrifice of their loved ones, families were promised that government officials would respect and return the dead. This pledge included commemorating the dead as a fallen community that magnified the sinews of American values. These social tissues not only helped rally support and help undermine disunity and dissension in the postwar milieu they also constructed by grieving families and government officials. GRS men collected the bodies and consolidated them into American national cemeteries in Europe. Those bodies that stayed buried in Europe helped remind Europeans and Americans who traveled to Europe that the United States was capable of leading a postwar world now made safe for democracy but also made safe for an American-led capitalist world-system. The bodies that were returned home reminded Americans of the cost of democracy and prosperity and reiterated the need to repair the rifts between North and South; unity, not disunity allowed the U.S. to ascend in power and in wealth. To this end, the classic white design of the Tomb of the Unknown was a work of art that represented simultaneously the ideas of republicanism, nationalism, and imperialism.

## CHAPTER 8—THE ILLUSION OF AMERICANNESSE: EXPANDING THE AMERICAN FRONTIER INTO POSTWAR EUROPE

I would have you day by day fix your eyes upon the greatness of Athens, until you become filled with the love of her; and when you are impressed by the spectacle of her glory, reflect that this empire has been acquired by men who knew their duty and had the courage to do it, who in the hour of conflict had the fear of dishonor always present to them, and who, if ever they failed in an enterprise, would not allow their virtues to be lost to their country, but freely gave their lives to her as the fairest offering which they could present at her feast. The sacrifice which they collectively made was individually repaid to them; for they received again each one for himself a praise which grows not old, and the noblest of all tombs—I speak not of that in which their remains are laid, but of that in which their glory survives, and is proclaimed always and on every fitting occasion both in word and deed. For the whole earth is the tomb of famous men; not only are they commemorated by columns and inscriptions in their own country, but in foreign lands there dwells also an unwritten memorial of them, graven not on stone but in the hearts of men.

—Pericles

We do not know the eminence of his birth, but we do know the glory of his death. He died for his country, and greater devotion hath no man than this. He died unquestioning, uncomplaining, with faith in his heart and hope on his lips, that his country should triumph and its civilization survive. As a typical soldier of this representative democracy, he fought and died, believing in the indisputable justice of his country's cause.

—Warren G. Harding

Sleeping in these hallowed grounds are thousands of Americans who have given their blood for the baptism of freedom and its maintenance, armed exponents of the nation's conscience. It is better and nobler for their deeds. Burial here is rather more than a sign of the Government's favor; it is a suggestion of a tomb in the heart of the nation, sorrowing for its noble dead.

—Warren G. Harding

Theodore Roosevelt's son Quentin died in July 1918 while flying a reconnaissance mission as a pilot for the 95<sup>th</sup> Aero Squadron. Before he died in January 1919, the former President of the United States left seven thousand dollars to pay for a monument to his son. Theodore insisted that his son's body not be returned to the U.S. and that his grave and memorial be erected near the location where his plane went down. This decision alone convinced many unsure Americans to likewise leave the remains of their loved ones resting in French soil. Quentin's mother Edith oversaw the construction after Theodore died and she hired Dr. Paul Cret, a French-American architect and professor at the University of Pennsylvania who had

fought in the French Army during the war to build the shrine. Chamery, near where Quentin's plane crashed, was a village in the Champagne countryside. Cret decided that, "True to Roosevelt ideals, this isn't to be merely ornamental, but a thing of great usefulness." Thus Cret constructed a monument fountain near Quentin's grave.<sup>1</sup> He believed that locals could use the fountain in this rural area to water crops and livestock and simultaneously commemorate the sacrifice of Quentin Roosevelt. This sort of functional ideal marked a break from previous attempts at American commemorative traditions. But this monument also hearkened back to the tradition of the Civil War. Like Colonel Shaw's body from the Civil War, Quentin Roosevelt rested at the location where he died. Just as Shaw had fought for the liberty of African Americans so had Roosevelt fought for the liberty of French people. And just as Bostonians and Augustus St. Gaudens had dedicated a memorial to Shaw in the heart of Boston Commons, a fitting monument was turning Roosevelt's place of death into a regenerative irrigation fountain for the farmers of Chamery. But the memorial also marked a shift in the American tradition. Lisa M. Budreau suggests that this shift was a political one that "moved control of the nation's war remembrance out of the hands of the War Department into the laps of public representatives." Unlike the nineteenth century, the politics of remembrance after the Great War in America "consisted of a series of negotiations and compromises sustained by democratic principles that, by their nature, systematically promoted self-interest, provided that national solidarity emerged relatively intact" but did not "readily contribute to an enduring national remembrance."<sup>2</sup> But as George Mosse has described, the cult of fallen soldiers from the Great

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<sup>1</sup> NA, RG 117, Records of the ABMC, WWI Monument and Memorial Files, Box 23, Folder Roosevelt Fountain, Chamery.

<sup>2</sup> Lisa M. Budreau, *Bodies of War: World War I and the Politics of Commemoration in America, 1919-1933* (New York University Press, 2010), 114, 241.

War became key sites for producing national identity in Europe.<sup>3</sup> Memorials such as the one built for Quentin Roosevelt, which was one of the first monuments constructed outside the bounds of the American nation-state, demonstrated how nationalists could export American nationalism to Europe. This added a whole new layer to Americans commemorative traditions; how could Americans remember soldiers if their bodies lay buried in foreign soil? How would people remember the sacrifices of the dead without their remains close by? How would these commemorative places become symbolic pediments? A new commemorative tradition began to unfold as Americans demonstrated to their European allies that American economics and politics would add to, and not detract from, the postwar recovery effort.

Even more important than producing symbols of Americanness for European consumption, the sort of monument dedicated to Quentin Roosevelt also served as a symbol of Americanness to Americans. The Great War demonstrated to most Americans that European-style colonialism did not work. The colonial world-system had instigated, not prevented, war. U.S. President Woodrow Wilson understood this through his esoteric pronouncements of self-determination and the League of Nations. Thus the United States stood in a new relationship to Europe and the world after the First World War; American isolationism was a misnomer. Though the U.S. did not join the League of Nations, America continued to form what historian Victoria de Grazia has suggested was an “irresistible empire” that would dominate much of the twentieth century.<sup>4</sup> Government officials aided the development of this empire. President Wilson told American businessmen that “salesmanship and statesmanship were ‘interrelated in

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<sup>3</sup> George Mosse, *Fallen Soldiers: Reshaping the Memory of the World Wars* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991).

<sup>4</sup> Victoria de Grazia, *Irresistible Empire: America's Advance through Twentieth-Century Europe* (New York: Belknap Press, 2005). The recent work of historians, such as Michael Hunt's *The American Ascendancy: How the United States Gained and Wielded Global Dominance* complements earlier works such as Walter LaFeber's and Akira Iriye's contributions to the *Cambridge History of American Foreign Relations* focus on America's foreign policy during the World War I and postwar periods.

outlook and scope,” at the World’s Salesmanship Congress in Detroit on 10 July 1916. He insisted that salesmen “go out and sell goods that will make the world more comfortable and more happy, and convert them to the principles of America.” This speech, claims de Grazia, marked “America’s most renowned foreign policy idealist . . . authorizing a global traffic in values as well as commodities” that would “bring down the ‘barriers of taste’” and “promote America’s ‘peaceful conquest of the world.’”<sup>5</sup> President Warren G. Harding continued the themes of irresistible empire as he sought to downsize the military while simultaneously extending the reach of informal empire with an emphasis on soft power.

Meanwhile U.S. business and finance sectors, as historian Michael Hunt has described, became ascendant in the 1920s and U.S. cultural presence—through tourism, cinema, and consumerism—was evermore present. The new wealth and power of Americans made possible a new form of commemorative tradition. Flush with U.S. dollars, a large constituency existed for postwar battlefield tourism and pilgrimage. Just as George Creel and the Wilson administration had sold the war to Americans, so the Harding administration sought to advertize American expansion to Americans at home and those traveling abroad. One way to accomplish this was through the government’s financial and moral willingness to commemorate the fallen soldiers of the Great War. The only way to accomplish this was through a centralized interpretation of the Lincolnian tradition. This did not contribute to an isolationist agenda rather, it contributed to the implementation of a rudimentary form of globalism. By dressing the war dead in the symbols of the Lincolnian tradition, cemeteries and monuments constructed in Europe could help Americans feel more comfortable with the expansion of the United States and the perception that America led the world away from a New World-Old World divide. The American commemorative tradition helped shape a nationalist agenda after the Civil War, an imperialist agenda after the

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<sup>5</sup> De Grazia, *Irresistible Empire*, 1-3.



Spanish-American-Cuban War and Philippine-American War; now it helped justify a globalist agenda after the Great War. It would represent national and even democratic themes, which meant American families could feel better about their sacrifice while other Americans could weave their business interests into the global potential and capability of an ascendant United States. During the nineteenth century, government and military officials never succeeded in gaining absolute control of the collective memory of war. But now the cult of fallen soldiers accompanying the irresistible empire in Europe brought officials much closer to their goal.

This chapter traces the soft power of commemoration during the 1920s through an examination of various government efforts to centralize the remembrance of American military dead. President Warren G. Harding's dedication speech at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier in November 1921 signaled the beginning of this new effort. Meanwhile Congress established the American Battle Monuments Commission (ABMC) in 1923, which took over care of American national cemeteries in Europe from the War Department. One of the duties of the commission was to build monuments in the national cemeteries. The ABMC constructed chapels and monuments in the national cemeteries at Brookwood in England, Flanders Field in Belgium, the Somme, Oise-Aisne, Aisne-Marne, Suresnes, Meuse-Argonne, and St. Miheil, all in France. But the ABMC also built monuments at Andenarde and Kemmel in Belgium and Bellicourt, Cantigny, Tours, Brest, Chateau-Thierry, Sommepy, Montfaucon, Souilly, Montsec, and Chaumont in France where the American Expeditionary Force had important wartime roles. Some monuments, such as one in Rome, Italy, the ABMC planned but never built. This chapter examines the files of the ABMC to explore several aspects of how American officials exported commemorative traditions to Europe and used them as a form of soft power. The first question will consider what was new and unprecedented about the ABMC. Americans had never before

laid men in their final resting place in a foreign nation. This chapter will also ask who were the bureaucratic and diplomatic patrons of the ABMC and what did they gain from their support of the organization. It will also consider who the constituencies of the ABMC were. Monuments and cemeteries in Europe were supposed to speak to American citizens abroad and the citizens of European nations. What ideological and symbolic work was done by the monuments is another question to consider as well as what controversies arose during their construction and what did they signify as far as U.S. collective memory of war dead was concerned. This chapter does not consider all of the monuments that the ABMC constructed but examines three select locations—the monuments constructed at Montfaucon in France, at Audenarde, Belgium as well as the monument proposed for Rome, Italy—to help explain the relationship between commemoration of the dead from the Great War and the projections of American soft power in postwar Europe.

### Postwar Americanism

Nationalization unfolded in the context of bureaucratic state expansion and increasing global reach. The culture of commemoration surrounding the Great War did not mark the end of this process, but it demonstrated a significant advance in the federal government's insistence on commemorating its own war dead. Pennsylvania State officials, for example, continued to see the United States as a plural collection of states with unique claims to sovereignty and so the Pennsylvania Commission designed monuments, bought real estate, and built structures in Europe for the purpose of commemorating Pennsylvania dead just as the state had done since the days of the Civil War. One could argue that Pennsylvania—the state that encompassed the Gettysburg battlefield—better expressed the spirit of Lincoln's promise than did the federal government. It was the states, particularly Pennsylvania that came to the aid of the federal government during the Civil War and not the other way around. Other states, most notably

Missouri and Massachusetts, followed Pennsylvania's lead after the Great War. So did veterans groups. The American Legion and the Veterans of Foreign Wars raised monies necessary to commemorate the dead as they believed proper.

But unlike state authorities and soldiers' associations, federal officials, both military and civilian, had come to see the traditions of commemoration surrounding Lincoln's promise in terms of national sacrifice and a centralized bureaucracy. These officials insisted on the singularity of the United States and not its plurality and believed only the federal government had the capacity to truly honor the soldiers of the AEF. They envisioned America as a largely white Anglo-Saxon Protestant nation under an increasingly confident and strong centralized state. This chimera of Americanism, however, was not completely formed by the end of the war in 1919. In fact, state governments constructed monuments much faster and more efficiently in Europe. The efficacy of state bureaucracies suggests that the older traditions of state commemoration still operated while the federal infrastructure had not yet completely formed. The Pennsylvania legislature approved monies to the state commission shortly after the war ended. This gave state organizers an early opportunity to craft a memory of the war free of federal influence on regulation. Thus, within a few years of the armistice, the Pennsylvania Commission had already planned and constructed several commemorative monuments in Europe. Other states and organizations followed but Pennsylvania officials were the most committed and most active at commemorating Pennsylvanians who had served in the war. The keystone state attempted to live up to the historical precedents of commemoration. The state where colonists signed the Declaration of Independence also had a significant record of using state monies to commemorate Pennsylvania soldiers. The most notable, perhaps, was the Pennsylvania monument at the Gettysburg battlefield. Thus the construction of monuments in

Europe took place as two versions of Americanism—one of precedent and state autonomy versus one of evolving federal sovereignty—competed over the commemoration of the community of the fallen.

The Pennsylvania Commission took the lead and state officials were prepared by 1919 to make decisions about commemorating the 28<sup>th</sup> Division and parts of the 79<sup>th</sup> and 80<sup>th</sup> divisions, which had either been founded in the state or enlisted many Pennsylvanians. The commission proposed monuments at Fismes, just outside of Chateau-Thierry, by building a commemorative bridge. State planners also oversaw a small monument at Nantillois, near Verdun, to the 79<sup>th</sup> Division, and at Varennes they built a monument to all Pennsylvania soldiers. They also proposed to build a small monument near Audenarde (Oudenaarde), Belgium. State organizers enlisted Paul Cret to build the monuments. Cret and his associate Thomas H. Atherton collaborated with the Parisian architectural firm Lahalle and Levard for the Pennsylvania monuments. They desired to “avoid the somewhat overdone type” of sculpture piece and instead wanted “to make of these monuments an embellishment of the little towns where they are placed, without, at any time, losing sight of their principal aim, which is to recall the memory of the combatants of 1918.”<sup>6</sup>

At Varennes the architectural team tried to produce a “‘place publique’ destroyed by the war with a more monumental composition.” They constructed a concrete open terrace with parallel Greek revival columns opening up and “overlooking the valley through which the 28<sup>th</sup> Division advanced.” In between the columns a field of grass was divided into quadrants by concrete paths leading up to an altar set on a concrete foundation in the middle of the terrace. They also constructed a road leading to the terrace with two rows of young poplar trees.

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<sup>6</sup> “War Monuments of Pennsylvania in France,” NA, RG 117, Records of the ABMC, WWI Monument and Memorial Files, Box 22, Folder Papers given to the commission by Mr. Harlbern.

Thus the “composition will not be complete until the rows of trees shall have grown to a sufficient height.” The monument terrace, from Cret's perspective, provided for three specific functions. As an attempt to commemorate the advance of the 28th Division, the monument allowed onlookers a prime vantage point to overlook the space used by the division. This also produced a structure that aided how people would remember the contribution of Pennsylvania soldiers; a stunning view of the valley would hopefully conjure strong republican associations between the citizens of Varennes and Pennsylvania. Thirdly this structure was functional. Just as Cret had hoped to influence French inhabitants surrounding the spot where Quentin Roosevelt died with a useable fountain, so he sought to provide a pleasant meeting place for the people of Varennes to come together and carry on the interactions of everyday life.<sup>7</sup>

Cret's architectural design, although Pennsylvanian in nature, probably fit fairly well into the architectural and monumental traditions that grew rapidly in postwar France. Historian Daniel J. Sherman has observed that “memorials to the World War I dead have an omnipresence in France.” In fact the postwar period saw the construction of over 36,000 Great War monuments and tributes usually in small towns throughout the nation. This stemmed from French tensions between the local and the national. When the French government in Paris, Sherman suggests, wanted to bury the dead near the frontlines of battle, citizens unanimously protested forcing the government to return the bodies to their local towns. With the dead buried in local places, the local municipalities produced local monuments that were quite different from the American national style. Sherman notes, “What Americans call war memorials the French call *monuments aux morts*, monuments to the dead, and with inscriptions dedicating them *to* the

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<sup>7</sup> “War Monuments of Pennsylvania in France,” NA, RG 117, Records of the ABMC, WWI Monument and Memorial Files, Box 22, Folder Papers given to the commission by Mr. Harlbern.

dead of a particular town, they evoke community unified in mourning and tribute.”<sup>8</sup> Although some local communities occasionally placed the monuments in cemeteries, Sherman states, “The rest chose to place them in more or less open spaces...such a public position served clearly to identify the community with this monument, and to claim for the locality a privileged place in the hierarchy of postwar commemorations.”<sup>9</sup> By placing functional monuments in open spaces, such as that of Varennes, the Pennsylvania Commission attempted to fit into the newly emerging French traditions by constructing a monument in a key public space of the town and dedicating it to Pennsylvania soldiers and the 28th Division who had helped defend the town for the sake of liberty.

At Nantillois, the commissioners continued this tradition and authorized the construction of a retaining wall with a commemorative tablet marking the 79<sup>th</sup> Division “surmounted by the State arms.”<sup>10</sup> Just as with similar monuments, this small work, designers hoped, would make practical improvements to the village. At Fismes, the Pennsylvania Commission wanted to reconstruct a bridge on the Vesle River used by the 28<sup>th</sup> Division. The French government, however, had already reconstructed the bridge using concrete. But the Pennsylvania commissioners wanted to commemorate the bridge; they negotiated with local authorities and gained permission to “cover the concrete beam with stone. This system of facing is more used in the United States, since it is seen how badly reinforced concrete withstands great changes in temperature.” Just as with the Varennes monument, the Pennsylvania Commissioners attempted to make the monument functional by improving the infrastructure of an already reconstructed bridge; this would fundamentally and metaphorically reinforce the everyday lives of inhabitants

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<sup>8</sup> Daniel J. Sherman, “Art, Commerce, and the Production of Memory in France after World War I,” in *Commemorations: The Politics of National Identity*, ed. John Gillis (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1994), 188.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 190.

<sup>10</sup> “War Monuments of Pennsylvania in France,” NA, RG 117.

of Fismes, especially those who needed to use the bridge in their daily commerce. The commissioners also added a traditional pedestal monument at the end of the bridge with a female figure at the top that represented lady liberty. People entering and exiting the town via the bridge could remember the 28th Division in monumental form while benefiting from its practical use.<sup>11</sup> Similarly to the Varennes and Fismes monuments, the Pennsylvania Commission hoped to commemorate Pennsylvania soldiers who had fought near Ypres. They held negotiations with local Belgian authorities and had obtained permission to begin construction of a monument nearby. They had selected the Tacambaro square in Audnernerde and began designing a small monument that they hoped would turn the open space into a park. Tacambaro square was a small open space in the town surrounded by thoroughfares near a business district. People used it as a common space but the local government had not developed it. The Pennsylvania commissioners planned to turn the square into a small park and at one end place a modest monument so that people using the park would seek the benefits of the location while commemorating the sacrifices of the 28<sup>th</sup> Division. Just as in Varennes, the Pennsylvania Commission created a commemorative and recreational space that would allow people to experience the commons while simultaneously commemorating the actions of Pennsylvania soldiers.<sup>12</sup>

The Pennsylvania commissioners also planned a monument to the 79<sup>th</sup> Division at Montfaucon in France. The small village not far from Verdun had played an important role in French history since the middle ages but laid practically destroyed by the war. True to the ideas of functional commemoration, the Pennsylvania commissioners proposed to build a fountain near the village for the villager's use. Access to water became the practical and symbolic way for Pennsylvanians to commemorate their soldiers in Europe. Not able to completely rebuild the

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Letter, Lieutenant North to Major Price, 2 September 1926, NA, RG 117, Records of the ABMC, WWI Monument and Memorial Files, Box 10.

village, the commissioners were willing to construct a monument that would help cool villagers during the summer and provide a symbolic connotation of renewal and regeneration. Just as the Quentin Roosevelt memorial fountain that Cret designed would help the people of Chamery, so the Montfaucon fountain would aid nearby villagers in their rebuilding efforts.

The commissioners viewed their mandate from the Pennsylvania State Legislature in traditional terms. States had built monuments to their soldiers at Vicksburg, Gettysburg, and other Civil War battlefields. During the Cuban and Philippine wars, despite the fact that some national monuments were built in Arlington and the recovery and re-sinking of the *U.S.S. Maine* was largely a national event, states and local communities built their own monuments in local public places. In some cases, local communities secured relics from the battleship *Maine* to be used as part of the local context. For the first time Americans were attempting to produce commemorative spaces outside the confines of the United States and its dependent territories; Pennsylvania, as well as other states, made an early statement that these spaces should be commemorated by state governments which would find practical and useful ways to commemorate their dead while helping improve the local infrastructure where Pennsylvanian men had served. Although state-level commemorations began springing up in France, the spaces of Europe had much more important national meaning to the United States government. Its officials came to believe that traditions instituted by the War Department and other federal agencies were the most acceptable expression of the American national identity.

### The Politics of Exporting American Commemorative Traditions

The 1920 election brought the Republican Warren G. Harding to the White House and overwhelming majorities in both the House and the Senate. The Republicans opposed many of



Woodrow Wilson's policies and quickly disentangled the wartime centralization of business and government. They also reorganized the military, dramatically reducing its wartime numbers. Although Wilson's economy brought a wartime boom economy, it had also contributed to labor unrest, overproduction, and economic stagnation after the war. Railroads, agricultural production, and factories were again privatized under the Republicans. Fordism, an industrial system in which business corporations predominated, labor received higher wages but remained unorganized, and government promoted prosperity, became a model of mass production and mass consumption for the postwar American economy.<sup>13</sup> Despite this domestic change in emphasis, Republicans ultimately agreed with Wilson that the United States should significantly influence the world system. The Republican dislike of Wilson's League of Nations and the Peace of Paris, as one historian describes, was that they desired to "avoid the policy of collective security on the grounds that it might easily weaken the United States, both defensively and offensively, by tying it to various features of the status quo that were sure to disappear—and others that ought to be altered by America itself."<sup>14</sup> Thus the Harding administration rejected Wilsonian collective security and favored instead an expanding American "informal empire." Harding and his advisors sought something much closer to the prewar "Dollar Diplomacy" of Republican President William Howard Taft, in which the soft power of American business and American democracy was more important than the hard power of the American military.

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<sup>13</sup> For a discussion of Wilson's military industrial complex and its dismantling see Kendrick A. Clements, *The Presidency of Woodrow Wilson* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1992). For a brief discussion of Herbert Hoover's work as head of the new bureaucratic division of commerce and his work building the triumvirate of private interests, government negotiation, and unorganized labor see William Appleman Williams, *The Tragedy of American Foreign Policy*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (New York: Dell Publishing Co., 1962), 114.

<sup>14</sup> Williams, *The Tragedy of American Diplomacy*, 108. See also Erez Manela, "Imagining Woodrow Wilson in Asia: Dreams of East-West Harmony and the Revolt against Empire in 1919" *American Historical Review* 111 (December 2006): 1337, 1340, 1348; Antony Lentin, "The Treaty that Never Was: Lloyd George and the Abortive Anglo-French Alliance of 1919," in *The Legacy of the Great War: Peacemaking 1919* ed. by William R. Keylor (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin, 1998); William R. Keylor, "The Rise and the Demise of the Franco-American Guarantee Pact, 1919-1921, in *The Legacy of the Great War: Peacemaking 1919* ed. by William R. Keylor (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin, 1998), 96-105.

Thus Harding and his Secretary of State Charles Hughes cultivated an international “community of ideals, interests, and purposes” in response to the rise of the Soviet Union and other threats to the American ideal of a world safe for democracy.<sup>15</sup> This “community of interests” did not amount to a Wilsonian “League of Nations” that restricted the sovereignty of nation-states. It framed a smaller group of great powers that worked together against common threats, particularly communism. The Arms Limitation Conference, or Washington Naval Conference, that began in November 1921 and ended in February 1922 was one of the Harding administration’s first attempts at cultivating a community of interests. It was the first conference of its kind and posed a model for other conferences that would take place throughout the interwar period. The talks created a multinational agreement in which the U.S., Britain, France, Italy, and Japan committed to limiting their naval armaments and preventing an arms race like the rivalry between Britain and Germany before World War I. But it also circumvented the League of Nations and revived pre-war diplomacy, in which great powers acted in concert to impose limits on their shared adversaries.

Set to begin on 12 November 1921, the Washington negotiations promised to be complicated, difficult, and fragile. Despite its ascendancy, the U.S. worked from a subordinate position particularly when it came to the Pacific world. The British had no intention of giving up their imperial advantages while the Japanese had solidified their claim to Germany’s possessions in China and became a significant factor in the Asia Pacific region.<sup>16</sup> If organizers hoped the conference would succeed, the Harding administration would have to make the case that peace interested everyone and that American leadership would prevent war and restore the world

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<sup>15</sup> William Appleman Williams, *The Tragedy of American Diplomacy*, 125.

<sup>16</sup> Erik Goldstein and John Maurer eds. *The Washington Conference, 1921-1922: Naval Rivalry, East Asian Stability and the Road to Pearl Harbor* (London: Routledge, 1994). Henry Kissinger, *Diplomacy* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1994), 373.

economy. Most conference delegates found American leadership suspect going back to the failure of the U.S. to join the League of Nations.

From this perspective, one can view President Harding's opening move at the Washington conference as actually happening the day before the limitation talks formally began. This, of course, was 11 November 1921, when Harding gave his speech dedicating the Tomb of the Unknown. Foreign representatives from every participating nation attended the ceremony. Among those present were Prince Iyesato Tokugawa, chief of the Japanese delegation, Marshall Foch and Prime Minister Aristide Briand of the French delegation, Sir Arthur Balfour of the British Empire delegation, and the Italian delegation made up of Count Commander David Constantini, General Diaz, and Senator Carlo Schanzer.<sup>17</sup>

President Harding's address was not impressive. Historians have long chastised the former Senator from Ohio as a poor orator and his speech on this occasion was no exception. Perhaps the rhetoric did not overly inspire, but the electric transmission of his words gave Harding the ability to project his voice in real time to a much wider audience than any President before. Thanks to AT&T's newly developed electric public address system, which transmitted the speech simultaneously to an audience of fifty thousand New Yorkers in Madison Square Garden and a twenty-thousand member audience in San Francisco, California, Harding could speak directly to American citizens without the journalistic filters of newspaper and magazine editors.<sup>18</sup> He reiterated the trends of American nationalism established by his predecessors including the tropes of reconciliation, reunion, and liberty. Similar to the way Lincoln had viewed the fallen community at Gettysburg as sacrifices for liberty, Harding viewed the

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<sup>17</sup> "Solemn Journey of the Dead," *New York Times*, 12 November 1921; "Seven Nations Laud Work of Red Cross," *New York Times*, 14 November 1921.

<sup>18</sup> "President Harding's address at the Burial of an Unknown American Soldier, *New York Times*, 12 November 1921.

Unknown Soldier as a symbol of American liberty that now extended beyond the borders of the United States. The Tomb of the Unknown became a grave to end all graves as the body of the unknown stood in for all the other American bodies that remained buried in Europe, lost at sea, or never recovered. Of course Britain, France, and other countries had also used the remains of unknown soldiers to commemorate the dead of the nation. But Harding argued the American unknown typified an Americanism that could lead the world. Unlike the officials of Britain and France, who took extra steps to insure that their unknowns were authentic representatives of Englishness and Frenchness, Harding celebrated the American unknown as a metaphor for the cosmopolitanism of the American people. Harding noted that the dead man before him “may have been a native or an adopted son; that matters little because they glorified the same loyalty, they sacrificed alike.”<sup>19</sup>

The American unknown, in Harding’s mind, spoke to a uniquely American consensus formed out of the willingness of diverse Americans not only to defend the liberty of the United States but also to extend that liberty to a recovering Europe and a Pacific world in turmoil:

The loftiest tribute we can bestow today—the heroically earned tribute—fashioned in deliberate conviction out of unclouded thought, neither shadowed by remorse nor made vain by fancies, is the commitment of this Republic to an advancement never made before. If American achievement is a cherished pride at home, if our unselfishness among nations is all we wish it to be, and ours is a helpful example in the world, then let us give of our influence and strength, yea, of our aspiration and convictions, to put mankind on a little higher plane, exulting and exalting, with war’s distressing and depressing tragedies barred from the stage of righteous civilization.<sup>20</sup>

The intersection for Harding’s view of American nationalism and the expansion of America’s postwar informal empire was located at the “heroically earned tribute” to the Unknown Soldier.

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

The cosmopolitanism and the sacrifice symbolized by the unknown, at least for the President, was evidence of America's ability to lead the new world order. The President concluded:

Standing today on hallowed ground, conscious that all America has halted to share in the tribute of heart and mind and soul to this fellow-American, and knowing that the world is noting this expression of the republic's mindfulness, it is fitting to say that his sacrifice, and that of the millions dead, shall not be in vain. There must be, there shall be, the commanding voice of a conscious civilization against armed warfare.<sup>21</sup>

The implication of this last line suggested that the lessons of peace taken from the Great War lacked a strong voice in the international community. An American voice, he implied, spoke clearly on behalf of civilization. Thus American soft power became manifest through the commemoration of the Unknown Soldier. The world could yet be made safe for peace as well as democracy.

Several individuals saw implicit and explicit connections between the unknown and the conference. At least one editor of the *New York Times* praised Harding's speech, claiming that the world was, "'a world awakened,' of 'a wider freedom.' This objective, vaguely seen, led us [the U.S.] into the Great War. It should lead us on into the Great Peace."<sup>22</sup> Others saw an implicit connection between the Unknown Soldier and the limitation talks. "A charming atmosphere is prevailing," claimed one observer. "It is an atmosphere of good-will. Nobody has anything to ask for himself and everybody is ready to make the happiness of humanity."<sup>23</sup> Meanwhile the Japanese delegation's official statement, issued the same day as the dedication ceremony, agreed that "All the nations of the world, with their war wounds still sore, are clamoring for peace. And, though some of these wounds are of the flesh, there are equally deep economic wounds." On the same day Prime Minister Briand similarly declared that, "France

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> "Why We Went to War," *New York Times*, 21 November 1921.

<sup>23</sup> "Advises Delegates to Watch Senate," *New York Times*, 9 November 1921.

wishes to arrive at an accord that will create an atmosphere of peace, in which the nations may work in complete security.” Senator Schanzer of Italy reflected on the conference just an hour or two after the ceremony: “Now, the supreme condition in order that the equilibrium of the world may be re-established and in order that the countries more severely struck by the war may rise and reconstruct their economy is peace.” He continued, “That is why all our efforts must be directed toward creating political guarantees for the lasting maintenance of peace.” Perhaps the British Empire delegation’s official statement made the strongest connection between the unknown and the conference:

The stately and impressive symbolism of America’s mourning for her sons and daughters dead in the cause of liberty had deeply moved the hearts of their British comrades in the Great War. It is a worthy prelude to the labors of the conference which begins tomorrow, and to this end the British Empire delegations, representing all parts of the empire, look to aid in the task of extricating the world from the unhappy conditions into which war has plunged it, and to make the peace, secured at so great a cost, a heritage of mankind.

A reporter noted, “Among the statesmen and diplomats of the visiting nations the great topic of interest tonight was the address made at Arlington today by President Harding, who summoned the conference into being and who will welcome it to American soil tomorrow.” He continued, “Upon every hand were heard expressions of satisfaction that in paying his tribute to America’s soldier dead the Chief Executive grasped his opportunity to renew the pledge of the United States to take its full share of leadership in the attainment of a better order.” In fact, Secretary Hughes called together the American delegation for a meeting immediately after the dedication ceremony concluded and they worked into the evening preparing their final proposal.<sup>24</sup>

By the beginning of the conference all the member states except Japan had similarly produced unknown tombs and dedicated them as national icons. Harding used the American unknown as a powerful and nearly universal symbol that justified peace. The next day the

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<sup>24</sup> “Leaders Hail Conference,” *New York Times*, 12 November 1921.

President officially opened the conference by welcoming the delegates to the Pan-American building. He reminded them, “Here in the United States we are but freshly turned from the burial of an unknown American soldier, when a nation sorrowed while paying him tribute.” Americans across the country, he claimed, “were summarizing the inexcusable cause, the incalculable cost, the unspeakable sacrifices, and the unutterable sorrows, and there was the ever-impelling question: how can humanity justify or God forgive?” The dedication of the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier was a valuable exercise that Harding could use to represent America’s unique selling point that arms limitation would prevent war and allow for trade and industry to revive the world economy. From this perspective, the Tomb of the Unknown can be seen as an adept diplomatic monument meant to impress upon foreign delegates that the U.S. could lead the world<sup>25</sup>

But Harding also had a domestic need to link the unknown to the limitation talks; he sought to legitimize his administration in the minds of many Americans critical of the aftermath of war and his handling of the postwar period. The end of the War and the dismantling of the Wilsonian military industrial complex had brought short-term economic recession. Thus

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<sup>25</sup> After nearly three months of negotiation, the United States finally realized significant—albeit short-term—advantages from the conference: U.S. officials obtained a limitation on naval armaments that kept the British naval yards from producing ships at too great of rate that would leave the U.S. behind, while negotiating for the U.S. to match British armament production. American diplomats also negotiated significant limitations on French, Japanese, and Italian naval forces. Harding also got the Japanese to acknowledge America’s Open Door Policy in China. If the world system operated on the notion that security of the high seas was the most important aspect of empire building, the U.S. was able to further its imperial interests at the Washington conference while checking its competition. The U.S. was able to persuade other leading nations with imperial interests to share resources and limit armaments; this was very advantageous to the short-term imperial interests of the U.S. Meanwhile the Four Powers Treaty, which was signed by Britain, France, Japan, and the U.S. in December at the conference, did not commit the U.S. to enforce the Washington Naval Treaty; thus the U.S. maintained its sovereignty. Erik Goldstein and John Maurer eds. *The Washington Conference, 1921-1922: Naval Rivalry, East Asian Stability and the Road to Pearl Harbor* (London: Routledge, 1994). Kissinger, *Diplomacy*, 373. “Why We Went to War,” *New York Times*, 21 November 1921; Warren G. Harding, “Address of the President of the United States at the Concluding Session of the Conference on Limitation of Armament, 6 February 1922, NA, RG 319, Records of the Army Staff, Records of the Office of the Chief of Military History, Records of the Historical Services Division, Publications, Unpublished Manuscripts, and Supporting Records, 1943-1977, “The Last Salute, Studies of State Official and Special Military Funerals,” Box 001, Folder, WWI Unknown Soldiers

Harding's dedication speech spoke to several different audiences and had multiple layers of meaning. It was a speech of reassurance that reminded Americans of their sacrifice during war and the need to stay committed to Harding's plan for economic recovery. It was a speech that again, just as McKinley and Wilson had done, underscored the politics of reconciliation and extended the symbolic gesture of citizenship without, however, offering any real political power to minority populations. It was the furthest that people operating in a paradigm of Jim Crow America would go toward acknowledging a symbolic American citizenship to disenfranchised people. But Harding also used the tropes of liberty found in Lincoln's promise to commemorate the war dead who had perished in a horrific conflict. He thus assigned meaning to those individuals who had made the ultimate sacrifice and to their grieving families. Although the U.S. had not joined the League of Nations, the Unknown Soldier and his dead comrades would not have died in vain if peace and a new American-led world order emerged from the ashes of the Great War.

The final thing that Harding realized with this dedication speech was something much more meaningful to the way Americans would remember the Great War. He signaled the triumph of a centralized and national commemorative tradition. Up until this point, centralizing the memory of the dead by the federal government had been incomplete and uneven. Although the federal bureaucracy played an integral role in remembering the dead, government officials had never dominated how the community of the fallen should be remembered. Clara Barton, Henry Cole, the Ex-Confederate Association, the United Daughters of the Confederacy, and the Grand Army of the Republic had played significant roles in shaping the memory of the war dead from the Civil War. The War Department handled the remains of soldiers from Cuba and the Philippines but received sharp criticism when they mishandled those remains. Even when the



War Department tried, its officials could not control completely the relics and the recovery of the *U.S.S. Maine*. After the Great War, American citizens demanded that the remains of their loved ones be returned to their hometowns and they made sure that the War Department treated the dead with respect and dignity; they were quick to condemn when the War Department was found lacking. States such as Pennsylvania continued to lay claim to the way the American war dead would be remembered as sons of Pennsylvania. Up until this point, American commemorative traditions were shared between a range of civic, religious, and government bodies. Local constituencies cultivated traditions out of an uneasy but necessary relationship with the federal government. The Unknown Soldier marked a significant change to this relationship. The unknown was neither a son of Pennsylvania nor of Georgia or California; he was a son of America. Lincoln's promise as a centralized expression of American memory began with the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier.

The Harding administration continued this process into the postwar era. In fact the centralized shaping of memory surrounding the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier initiated a larger effort inside the Harding administration. Fresh from the success of the Washington Arms Limitation Conference, President Harding formally asked Congress on 2 March 1922 to authorize the creation of the American Battle Monuments Commission (ABMC).<sup>26</sup> Preparations for their proposal actually began a year earlier in early 1921, when the Commander-in-Chief had recommended that Secretary of War John Wingate Weeks authorize an internal committee to formulate a bill to send to Congress. General John J. Pershing's *Aide-de-Camp*, Colonel John Palmer headed the committee. Palmer included on the committee an officer from the Corps of Engineers, an officer from the historical section of the War Department, an officer from the Adjutant's General Office, a Judge Advocate General, and Major Xenophon Price, who had

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<sup>26</sup> "Harding Proposes Battle Monuments," *New York Times*, 2 March 1922.

charge of Pershing's official battle maps during the war and thus had an expert understanding of American operations. Palmer made an excellent choice to head this committee. He had been the War Department's main representative in discussions with Congress over postwar reductions in the military. Thus he had significant experience in giving Congressional testimony.<sup>27</sup>

Palmer testified that Weeks, at Harding's request, had authorized the committee to begin meeting in late 1921 because of embarrassing complaints heard by the American Ambassador to France. Embassy officials in Paris had received numerous requests for information about producing commemorative monuments but officials had no government policy. This set off alarms with French officials who sought tight control over where and what type of foreign monuments would be created inside of France. The lack of an overarching U.S. federal policy had threatened to produce a diplomatic controversy. French officials trying to control the traditions of commemoration might restrict French citizens from producing local monuments but could not stop Americans from making unofficial sites of memory. Confusion multiplied for embassy officials when organizations such as the Pennsylvania Commission looked to the War Department for guidance in conducting their own attempts at memorializing American troops and discovered that it had very little advice to give. On top of this, "Certain organizations [soldier organizations] before they left France put up monuments, generally out of more or less perishable materials, and sometimes of questionable artistic value." In fact, Palmer claimed, many of these monuments erected by soldiers "presented certain alleged facts with reference to performance of the unit that were not justified by the records." Palmer continued, "There is no way now to prevent any American association from going over to France and erecting a monument, no matter what the design may be, provided it purchases land and keeps within the

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<sup>27</sup> "Colonel Palmer Before the Military Committee" *Journal of the United States Artillery* 54 (July-December 1919): 609-648.

French law.” It was important that legislation empower the War Department to exercise centralized control over American memorials in order to avoid diplomatic misunderstandings with the French government.<sup>28</sup>

Thus Palmer’s committee recommended a sweeping change in the way that the United States commemorated fallen soldiers. This recommendation was explicitly a reaction to the memorializing efforts exhibited at the Gettysburg battlefield and “the haphazard manner that followed the Civil War.” Palmer recounted that the original Gettysburg Battlefield Memorial Association, a private charitable endeavor charged with raising money to commemorate the battlefield had “accomplished practically nothing up to 1880.” In the meantime, Pennsylvania officials had commissioned and completed several monuments to dedicate the ground to the sacrifices of Pennsylvanian soldiers. The only other monument was one from Minnesota. When northern veterans arrived to tour the battlefield in 1880, Palmer claimed, they became rather upset “because it appeared that, ‘the battle of Gettysburg was fought between the Confederate States and Pennsylvania.’” Early commemorative efforts were neither uniform nor representative. By 1895 several other states had constructed monuments but the battlefield remained a misleading commemorative place. While Pennsylvania and Minnesota legislatures spent \$90.00 per casualty, testified the Colonel, Wisconsin spent only \$5.00 per casualty on commemorative monuments. Likewise, New Jersey and Wisconsin each had 600 casualties but New Jersey spent \$44,000 on Gettysburg monuments compared to \$3,000 spent by Wisconsin. “Thereupon a casual visitor to the battle field would have received an entirely erroneous

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<sup>28</sup> House Committee on Foreign Relations, *American Battle Monuments Commission House Committee on Foreign Relations*, 67<sup>th</sup> Congress, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Sessions, 15-20 March, 28 November, 7-9 December 1922, (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1922), 19-20. “Colonel Palmer Before the Military Committee,” 609-648.

impression of the battle if he regarded the monuments as documents indicating what took place there,” claimed Palmer.<sup>29</sup>

To regulate efforts at memorializing the dead and to prevent traditions from being practiced unevenly, Palmer’s committee recommended that Congress authorize the creation of the American Battle Monuments Commission to which the President of the United States would appoint a Congressman, a Senator, and the Commander of the American Legion. Originally Palmer’s committee recommended only War Department personnel make up the committee. But Palmer adjusted the terms of membership after receiving feedback from powerful members of the House Committee on Foreign Affairs. The rest of the committee members, indeed, would originate from the War Department as the commission would include the General of the Armies—General Pershing—and an executive secretary appointed by the Secretary of War who had to be an Army officer. Palmer did not recommend the inclusion of any civilians or subaltern soldiers who actually did the fighting in the trenches; this proposed a committee drawn from the military and political elites. Palmer asked Congress to appropriate over half-a-million dollars for the commissioners to use. This amounted to just under \$5.00 per dead American soldier.

But before Palmer had completed his committee’s findings, Republican Congressman James W. Husted of New York proposed a different bill in December 1921. Husted introduced H.R. 9634, also known as the Memorial Roads Bill, to the House Committee on Foreign Affairs. Husted had crafted his bill independent of the War Department. He based his request on the recommendations of the American Historic and Scenic Society (AHSS) in New York City. The AHSS began around 1895 as part of the Progressive movement and sought to preserve the urban spaces of New York, in part as artifacts of American culture that would impress and educate

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<sup>29</sup> House Committee on Foreign Relations, *American Battle Monuments Commission*, 19-20.

immigrants on the meanings of being American.<sup>30</sup> At the turn of the twentieth century, the AHSS spread its influence beyond New York to areas across the nation that it believed was ripe for historic preservation. This included an emerging interest in commemorating the battlefields of the last war. Husted's proposal called for a memorial roads commission in which U.S. diplomats would negotiate with French and Belgian authorities to construct memorial highways connecting the important American battle sites together. This would allow American as well as European tourists, easy access to sites showcasing American contributions to the war. The Memorial Roads Commission would not pay for the upkeep of the roads—that would be left to France and Belgium—but the roads would be permanent memorial highways. Along the roads the commission would place tablets denoting the history of American troops in each location. Husted suggested that Congress appropriate only \$10,000 and the rest would be sought through private donations.

Before debate began on Husted's bill, the Chair of the House Committee on Foreign Relations, Republican Stephen G. Porter of Pennsylvania, forwarded the bill to the Secretary of War for his approval. Secretary Weeks took the bill directly to President Harding. Instead of agreeing to Husted's proposal, Harding and Weeks created their own bill, H.R. 10801, which largely took the findings of Palmer's committee. The two bills did have much in common. In fact, Husted seemed to suggest that Harding and the War Department had borrowed most of his ideas. He told committee members, "The bill of the War Department seems to have been based upon the bill which was prepared by the American Society. It follows it very closely. There are not many points of difference." One similarity concerned style; both bills called for artistic

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<sup>30</sup> Rucha Desai, "American Scenic and Historic Preservation Society," Fordham University History Department, [http://www.fordham.edu/academics/colleges\\_graduate\\_s/undergraduate\\_colleg/fordham\\_college\\_at\\_l/special\\_programs/honors\\_program/honors\\_history/homepage/expressions\\_and\\_infl/american\\_scenic\\_and\\_32214.asp](http://www.fordham.edu/academics/colleges_graduate_s/undergraduate_colleg/fordham_college_at_l/special_programs/honors_program/honors_history/homepage/expressions_and_infl/american_scenic_and_32214.asp), accessed 4 February 2010.

oversight from the American Fine Arts Commission. This commission was made up of artists and architects who judged government projects on their artistic merit. The panel had to approve all government buildings, for example, before they could be erected. This provision would “protect France and the feelings of America from the mass of hideous looking things that will be put up over there if you do not appoint somebody to censor the different propositions.” Indeed, authors predicated both bills on the same purpose of exporting American commemorative traditions “to cement the bonds of friendship between the two countries.”<sup>31</sup>

Several differences existed, however, between the two proposals. Harding had called for the commission to be composed of military men, Congressmen, and the heads of veterans organizations. Husted and his associates wanted the commission to be made up of non-military people. “It should be done under direction and by men competent to direct it,” claimed the Congressman, which he implied, did not mean the War Department. Instead Husted wanted talented civilian professionals in the fields of art, design, and philanthropy. Husted testified that the commission:

be composed of men who are qualified to do the work by training, by education, and by experience, and it is going to be, it seems to me, almost impossible to get such a commission—a commission which may give its time to the work sufficiently, and which is sufficiently qualified to do the work adequately.

The AHSS wanted ten commissioners and the group had specific appointees in mind. For example, they wanted to appoint to the commission the President of Columbia University, Nicholas Murry Butler, who had raised \$500,000 through private donations to preserve historic buildings at Lorraine University in New York and had raised \$200,000 for the rebuilding of Rheims in France. They also wanted President Koontz of the AHSS, former President of Harvard Charles William Eliot, and the son of former President Rutherford B. Hayes, Colonel

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<sup>31</sup> House Committee on Foreign Relations, *American Battle Monuments Commission*, 5-18

Webb C. Hayes, a member of the AHSS and the bill's unnamed author. In fact, Hayes had tried to introduce similar legislation in 1918 but failed.<sup>32</sup> The appointment of member of the social elite, reasoned Husted, would save the government, and American taxpayers, hundreds of thousands of dollars as well as lend prestige to the whole effort. However, the social elite of New York was at odds with the political elite in Washington. Harding and the War Department were leery of civilians having control over appropriated tax dollars to commemorate what was a military campaign. The President submitted a bill that gave the power of memory making to the nation's military and political leadership.<sup>33</sup>

Colonel Hayes was the key to winning Congressmen over to Husted's bill. He had participated in some capacity in every war since the Civil War (where he was present as a young boy in his father's encampment), including the Philippines, China, and the Great War. The sixty-six year old man detailed his experiences with preserving historical monuments of American soldiers in the Pacific. From past experience, claimed Hayes, "we find we can get very little money from Congress, especially at times like this, but there is any quantity of money that can be secured from the States, counties, and municipalities, and especially from private corporations and friendly societies." Hayes had received \$13,500 from Congress to do the work of marking the temporary places where Americans had been buried in Cuba, the Philippines, and China. The rest of the money came from private donations. This included all of his travel as well as the production of historical tablets. It had taken him twenty years to complete and he still had a few hundred dollars left over from the appropriation. Hayes and Husted envisioned a similar plan for the memorial highways. Hayes did not want the War Department to run the commission because he feared that it would be filled with men who knew nothing about

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<sup>32</sup> Lisa M. Budreau, *Bodies of War: World War I and the Politics of Commemoration in America, 1919-1933* (New York: New York University Press, 2010), 108.

<sup>33</sup> House Committee on Foreign Relations, *American Battle Monuments Commission*, 4.

commemorating the dead and that its costs would spiral out of control. “I do not know whether I am interested in saving the United States large sums,” claimed Hayes, “but you take their bill and you might have a tremendous bill. My idea is we can get it from the public.” Private donations would, claimed Hayes, produce patriotic feelings among donors, something the War Department would not be able to accomplish. He concluded, “I think if you will compare the two bills, you will see possibly our bill is a little more careful of the interests of the Government than the other.”<sup>34</sup>

Despite Hayes’s best efforts, Congressmen remained skeptical of Husted’s bill; the more they investigated, the more they found matters not to their liking. For example, the bill proposed to name the memorial highways after American presidents such as the Lincoln Highway and the Roosevelt Highway. Democratic Congressman William Bourke Cockran of New York, who had been born in Ireland but spent many of his formative years in France before coming to the U.S., asked about the appropriateness of the United States building roads in France. Dr. Edward H. Hall, who as an executive officer of the AHSS had helped Hayes and Husted write the bill, testified that “It would not be in the nature of interference. The whole idea of Mr. Husted's bill is to secure absolutely harmonious cooperation. There would be an interchange of suggestions.” Cockran, who clearly did not favor the proposal responded, “How can you cooperate without interfering in some degree with the management or administration of purely internal highways?” Republican Congressman Henry Allen Cooper of Wisconsin interjected on behalf of Hall. Cooper had lost his seat in the 1918 election because of his unwillingness to support America’s involvement during the war, but he regained his seat in the 1920 election.<sup>35</sup> He declared:

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 5-18, quote on 16.

<sup>35</sup> Henry Allen Cooper, Wisconsin Historical Society [http://www.wisconsinhistory.org/dictionary/index.asp?action=view&term\\_id=2490](http://www.wisconsinhistory.org/dictionary/index.asp?action=view&term_id=2490), accessed 4 February 2010.



They did not consider it an interference when our boys went over there to help them, and I do not think they would consider it at all an interference if we were mildly to suggest the desirability of a road like this to connect up the points where their troops and our troops displayed their heroism.<sup>36</sup>

But Tom Connally, a Democrat from Texas, asked, “Do you not imagine that France would say ‘Why not let it be the Foch or Joffre highway?’” Hall responded that his primary concern was to build memorial highways and names were secondary. Despite his attempt to deflect controversy, some Congressmen were not convinced. Cockran claimed that Husted’s proposal interfered too much: “the management of the highways is a matter of purely domestic concern and internal-public administration.” Republican Benjamin Fairchild of New York agreed, saying “You are proposing to create a commission called the highway commission, and there is inference in that of the kind you suggest, in so far as future appropriations; that is a highway commission.”<sup>37</sup>

Another criticism arose from Husted’s involvement of the State Department. Chairman Porter suggested to Colonel Hayes that the War Department knew better than the State Department the engagements of the AEF. Hayes responded:

I have been in Massachusetts the last few days, or about a month ago, and the Twenty-sixth Division does not wish to have—I do not like to show we have dissensions in the Army, but the Twenty-sixth Division does not like to have the General Staff telling where they did not fight. They say they fought everywhere, and so they did.<sup>38</sup>

Hayes’s criticism spoke to a larger issue. Lost in the language of both bills were the experiences and memories of the soldiers who fought in the trenches. Husted’s and Harding’s bills made the Fine Arts Commission or the War Department the final arbiters and excluded soldiers’ accounts of what happened in battle.

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<sup>36</sup> House Committee on Foreign Relations, *American Battle Monuments Commission*, 7.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 16.

Indeed this reflected the controversy between ordinary soldiers and military officers heard by the committee in November 1922. Chairman Porter's committee heard testimony from representatives of the Reserve Officers' Association (ROA), the American Legion, and the Veterans of Foreign Wars. Henry J. Reilly, who was President of the ROA supported Harding's bill because:

There have been a number of controversies about the position of different troops on different dates; and the tendency of each division is to go there and put up their own monuments in their own way. They are perfectly honest about it; but there should be somebody to consider all sides of these claims and come to a reasonable conclusion and see that the markings are historically correct.

Such soldiers' disputes, claimed Republican Congressman Merrill Moores of Indiana, were troublesome. The American Legion's headquarters were in Indianapolis and Moores asserted that he had heard of "a perpetual war going on, as I understand it, between the American Legion and the World War Veterans." The World War Veterans had a much smaller group that did not allow officers into its organization, while the American Legion allowed officers in its ranks. Congressman Cooper added, "I have heard soldiers and minor officers dispute—there was one colonel, too, one of the disputants—very earnestly and with considerable acrimony, as to whether certain officers had rendered such and such service, or whether they were at such and such a point at certain times." This led many committee members to believe that the War Department, and not the State Department, would resolve such disputes as the military had control of official war records.<sup>39</sup>

Despite the concerns of the World War Veterans, who did not testify, the leadership of the largest veterans' organizations supported Congressional action. While the ROA supported the Harding bill and the American Legion and VFW were non-committal, they shared the

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 27.

concern that historical inaccuracies were spreading in France. These inaccuracies threatened to harm the reputation of American veterans. Reilly of the ROA submitted:

I have been abroad for almost a year; and I have been over most of the American battle fields. And I found that there are many people there who purport to be guides, who lead tourists around and fill them with misinformation; and the American tourists who are going over there in large numbers, are not getting the right idea of what really happened.

In addition to misleading tour guides, Reilly claimed there were also guidebooks with inaccurate information. “There are lots of guidebooks gotten out in French or in English; and without accusing them of prejudice, I can say that, from ignorance of what actually went on, these books do not tell the correct details.” These sources gave erroneous accounts of American involvement in the war, which Reilly suggested had the effect of diminishing the American effort in the minds of Europeans. Although he believed that the misinformation did not result from malicious intentions, it needed to be corrected. If the government built monuments in France, tourists and pilgrims would benefit from an official interpretation of what happened in the battlefield before them. He added:

Another good result would be the effect on the Europeans themselves. The Europeans are visiting the front all the time; and they have very erroneous ideas as to where the Americans fought and what they really did. And I do not think it would do any harm if the average European who went over the battle fields should see the markings showing the tremendous line which the American troops did have when the Armistice was signed.

These corrective official measures helped resolve disputes among soldiers and reminded Europeans that Americans played an important role in the Great War. Thus the collective memory of the war had important political uses in the postwar period. It seemed to the Congressmen that the War Department and not the State Department was best suited for this type

of official memory. The military had conducted the war and now it should commemorate the war.<sup>40</sup>

Historian Lisa M. Budreau has chastised Hayes's memorial highway plan: "The Hayes plan reflects much of America's former prewar innocence. By current standards and perhaps even to some of Hayes's contemporaries, this attempt to forge another Gettysburg-like memorial park in Europe appears naive, idealistic, and internationally intrusive." This could also be said of the legislation behind the ABMC. The Hayes plan actually fulfilled the spirit of Lincoln's promise. Private donors and societies, as well as state and federal agencies had worked jointly since the Civil War to coproduce monuments that justified America's wars. This was not naïve. Hayes followed a precedent established first at Gettysburg but reinterpreted at Atlanta with McKinley's speech. Tellingly, his experience at monument making came not from Civil War monuments but out of Cuba, the Philippines, and China. Hayes's plan reflected the notion that the government could not deliver Lincoln's promise by itself and only private-public cooperation could properly commemorate the soldiers. Figures like Hayes did not want the government completely controlling the commemoration of the war dead. They too wanted to play an active role in the endeavor. To Hayes's disbelief, what unfolded before his eyes on the House Committee on Foreign Affairs amounted to a bipartisan agreement with the White House and the War Department on a new, much more centralized, interpretation of the commemorative tradition that Lincoln initiated.

Major Xenophon Price's testimony largely ended the contest between the two bills. An officer in the Corps of Engineers and a member of Palmer's War Department committee, he had been very instrumental in delivering the details of the Battle Monuments proposal. Once Congressmen heard Price's presentation they immediately favored the Harding bill. Price began

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<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 27-8.

his testimony with a map of the entire battlefield marked with locations where the War Department planned to erect between 80 and 100 monuments, 100 relief maps, and 50 sketch maps denoting American positions and advancements. The entire project would cost an estimated \$540,000 to complete and Price estimated that it could be completed in three years. Each map would be oriented to the direction of the battlefield so that tourists could look at the map and then imagine the battlefield before them. Maps oriented to the battlefield were not a new idea but using bronze relief maps to show the topography of the landscape was new. Not only would tourists be able to orient their views of the battlefield but they could use the relief map to interpret the landscape in front of them. Price proposed using bronze from captured German military equipment to make the maps. He stressed that the series of relief maps would mark the beginning lines of every battle where the AEF first engaged and also would demonstrate how far and over what sort of terrain the soldiers were able to advance the frontline until the armistice. All the information would be taken from the official records of the war.<sup>41</sup>

The Congressmen became very interested. Congressman Cockran asked, "It will show the entire war, as I understand it, from day to day, so any person can stand on the battle field and bring back to his mind how the battle progressed and the number of days it took to make so much ground. Am I right?" Price confirmed this statement, to which Cockran exclaimed "that is astounding, I am amazed." Congressman Hamilton Fish, Jr. agreed, "It is astounding." On top of this, Price stated that the War Department would produce an official guidebook to the monuments and relief maps. "The idea," stated Price, "is that a person going to France finds out what he wants to see from the literature and goes to see it. It saves time." It also would serve as a corrective to the inaccurate unofficial guidebooks that had generated so much criticism. When tourists and pilgrims visited the monuments, looked at the relief maps, and read from their

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 44-5.

official guidebooks, it was hoped that they would be missionaries for the positive contributions of the AEF.<sup>42</sup>

On top of this, Price suggested that this bill cost much less and had more efficacies to the designs of historical accuracy than the Husted bill. He estimated that the Husted bill would cost between \$30,000 and \$60,000 per mile for new roads in France. At the lower estimate, this would only produce eighteen miles of highway for the same cost of the Harding bill. When asked if the War Department would need to build roads so as to make it easier for tourists and pilgrims to move from monument to monument along the American frontlines, Price responded that the roads in France were already in excellent condition and did not require any improvement. Visitors could easily move from site to site as they toured the American battle monuments. This must have impressed the committee members because they began praising the War Department's bill with almost one voice. Congressman Cockran summed up the ideas of most committee members when he stated, "We have a chance, in my judgment, to do something that has never been done in the world before, to commemorate the original history in bronze of the greatest war ever waged, upon the scene of it, so that to the end of time any man can come and see how that war was waged." Some Congressmen proposed turning the commission into a permanent one that would erect monuments and take care of them forever. Congressman Cockran favored doing away with a commission entirely and allowing the War Department to have complete control over the execution of Price's plans. He stated,

To me it seems the most splendid scheme, so thoroughly original and coordinated, to make a permanent history of this war in bronze on the very theater of it, and the conception of it leaves me without words further than this, that I do not see why we should not adopt it now. It is thoroughly well thought out and recommended, and has the approval of everybody. Why not adopt it and let the War Department carry it out without a commission?

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<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 44-8.

Congressman R. Walton Moore of Virginia exclaimed, “Let the Major carry it out.” The rest of the committee members were also interested in taking the temporary commission envisioned in the Harding bill and making it permanent.<sup>43</sup>

One problem remained. Despite his enthusiasm for the project, Congressman Moores of Virginia noted that Price’s plan did not provide any mechanism to control the erection of monuments by private interests. The Major pointed out that the bill allowed for the absolute control of space inside the American national cemeteries but the War Department only had limited power outside these places. But Congressman Cockran wanted badly to enact Price’s proposal and he suggested that the committee re-write the bill. He asserted, “Why could we not adopt this [censorship of private monuments] as the plan and appoint a commission to carry it out? I should be very reluctant to entrust the power of modifying this [Price’s proposal] in any way to anybody. We are as good judges of it. We are originating this bill and could authorize carrying it out.” The rest agreed and they redrafted the bill recommending a permanent commission that could enact Price’s proposal as is but could also serve as the authority to control and even suppress undesirable monumental art. A few Congressmen hesitated, because this measure might unnecessarily interfere with worthy local efforts to build monuments. But Price convinced committee members doubtful of such federal control that other organizations—he cited the Pennsylvania Commission specifically—as well as AEF units smaller than the division would be able to construct their own monuments in the shadow of the War Department’s own productions. Thus popular art would have to fit into the context of national art and official history promoted by the War Department. Price persuaded the committee that his proposal would be accurate, representative, and official.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 45-7.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 48-9

Finally the committee heard testimony from Walter Irving McCoy, former Democratic Congressman and current associate Justice on the Supreme Court of the District of Columbia.<sup>45</sup> McCoy was supportive of Harding's bill but asked the House Committee to consider two further issues: the national cemeteries in Europe and the Gold Star Mothers. He recommended that the ABMC have jurisdiction over the national cemeteries. These cemeteries had not had any major renovations since the War Department had completed laying them out in the months after the war. McCoy quoted from a Fine Arts Commission report, which advised that the government needed to upgrade the cemeteries:

Either the cemeteries should be well developed and well maintained or they should be abandoned. To-day they are simply expectations and promises. It is true that now the white wooden crosses are kept well painted and that the exhumations and reburials are being conducted decently and in order. But that is not enough. If our cemeteries are not to fall behind those of Great Britain and France, we must adopt some comprehensive plans and carry them out thoroughly, as those nations are doing.

McCoy asked the committee to amend the bill and allow the ABMC to take over control of the cemeteries, beautify them with marble headstones and permanent buildings and monuments, and see to their perpetual maintenance. The justice also asked for an amendment that would expand the commission to include a representative from the Gold Star Mothers with a personal and direct interest in commemorating the dead buried in Europe.<sup>46</sup>

After taking this testimony, the committee members crafted a final bill that drew from the Harding bill but included some significant additions. House of Representatives Bill 14087 created a permanent commission of which the President of the United States appointed members. To the original proposal, the committee members added places on the commission for the commander of the VFW and a representative of the Gold Star Mothers. They believed that

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<sup>45</sup> The Supreme Court of the District of Columbia is now called the United States District Court for the District of Columbia.

<sup>46</sup> House Committee on Foreign Relations, *American Battle Monuments Commission*, 40-42.



including these groups as well as the commander of the American Legion would mitigate any opposition from war veterans and mothers and fathers opposed to federal control of the memorialization of the dead. The committee members also recommended that care of the national cemeteries be handed over to the ABMC and charged this body with beautifying these cemeteries with monumental architecture. The transformation from a temporary commission to a permanent commission was complete with full congressional approval. Left out of this process were Colonel Hayes and the AHSS and the vast majority of ordinary veterans. Needless to say, this meant that immigrant, African American, and Native American veterans were excluded.

In July 1923 Harding appointed the General of the Armies, John Pershing, to the commission; his fellow commissioners elected him chairman of the commission, a position he held until his death in 1948. Pershing appointed his long-time assistant Xenophon Price as the executive secretary. The President also appointed Congressman Thomas W. Miller, a Republican from Delaware who was a Purple Heart recipient, a Lieutenant-Colonel with the 79<sup>th</sup> Division during the war, and a founding member of the American Legion. Also on the commission was Senator David Aiken Reed, a Republican from Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania who was perhaps best remembered for his role in the 1924 Immigration Act that continued to exclude Asian immigrants from entering the U.S. and set quotas for southern and eastern European immigrants. He had also voted against the 1923 Soldier Bonus Bill, which drew the ire of veterans groups around the country.<sup>47</sup> David John Markey also received a Presidential appointment. He had served as a Brigadier-General in the Great War and was part of Pershing's General Staff. He had also been the Chairman of the American Legion Committee on Military Affairs and testified before Porter's committee hearings that he and his fellow Legionnaires approved of the Harding bill. Robert G. Woodside, who was Commander-in-Chief of the VFW

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<sup>47</sup> Budreau, *Bodies of War*, 114.

and a war veteran, as well as a representative of the Gold Star Mothers rounded out the committee.

This was a commission firmly in the control of military and political elites. The members largely deferred to General John J. Pershing. He fought vigorously against anything that did not fit his view of the war, and his own views usually carried considerable weight when the commission made decisions on projects. His chief executive secretary Major Xenophon Price, who also served as the ABMC secretary, carried out Pershing's decisions with the tenacity and efficiency of an experienced professional bureaucrat. Thus the ABMC gave General Pershing, who had chosen the places to deploy the American Expeditionary Force during the war, the power to choose the places of commemoration after the war. The ABMC never built the bronze relief maps that Price had proposed to Congress.

#### The ABMC and the Spread of Americanism

General Pershing tried to shape the way monuments and national cemeteries would strike the imaginations of Europeans as well as American tourists and businessmen living and working in France, Belgium, and Italy. In addition to the building program, Pershing and the ABMC provided *A Guide to the American Battlefields in Europe* as a tool for tourists and pilgrims. The hard cover book, originally published in 1927 with revised editions in 1938 and 1992, had 500 pages of descriptions, panoramic photographs, and maps of every battlefield; it served as the first official history of the AEF. It displayed the order of battles and gave readers an official interpretation of every American engagement. Some of the ABMC monuments included towers, so that visitors, guide book in hand, could scale the heights and get a good view of the terrain in front of them. The monuments, relief maps, and guidebook helped tourists imagine the

battlefield as it had been in 1918. American tourists now could avoid, or correct, ill-informed local inhabitants and tour guides, and everyone could appreciate the decisive American contribution to Allied victory in 1918.

But the ABMC did not monopolize the American production of memory in postwar France. One of the biggest competitors to Pershing was the State of Pennsylvania. The keystone state attempted to live up to the historical precedents of commemoration. The state where colonists signed the Declaration of Independence also had a significant record of using state monies to commemorate Pennsylvanian soldiers. Many men from Pennsylvania fought in the trenches of Europe and the State government funded efforts to celebrate their achievements. However, state monuments diverged from Pershing's personal view of the war and the larger nationalization and centralization of Lincoln's promise. Pennsylvania monuments tended to exemplify Pennsylvania soldiers in Europe just as they had at Gettysburg. State commemorations could not symbolize the unity of American memory that government officials engineered. As General of the Armies, Pershing had commanded the entire AEF and not a coalition of state-based units. In fact, Pershing had resisted Allied commanders' insistence that he distribute his forces to European commanders in 1918. The AEF fought as an American force under Pershing's generalship. Pershing's military victories represented not only his individual ability but also the unity of a nation that had overcome sectional rivalries and now hoped to lead the postwar world system. From this perspective it seemed inappropriate for states to memorialize their own when what was needed were symbols of America in Europe. Thus Pershing used the levers of the ABMC to persuade, cajole, and overcome those with competing memories of the AEF in the Great War.

This was not an easy task for Pershing. The Pennsylvania Commission also had a sympathizer in Senator David A. Reed serving on the ABMC. And Senator Reed oftentimes tried to push against Pershing's desires. As Budreau suggests, "Although General Pershing was officially the organization's chairman, he rarely attended meetings."<sup>48</sup> This allowed Reed to steer discussion in the committee in Pershing's absence. The historian contends that by dominating the committee meetings, Reed controlled most of the ABMC agenda. But Reed did not necessarily control the administration of the ABMC. Major Xenophon Price, the Executive Secretary and Pershing's personal assistant, attended most of the meetings. And even when Reed got what he wanted from the committee he was rarely in France to oversee the projects. By contrast, Pershing spent much of his time in France and usually succeeded in bending the will of the ABMC members towards his views. Together Pershing and Price formed a formidable force that could undo at ground level almost anything Reed produced at committee level.

About the time that the Pennsylvania monuments were being completed at Varennes, Nantillois, and Fismes, the ABMC had begun to identify places to build its own American monuments. Functionality did not interest ABMC members; rather it targeted locations near where the AEF fought and aimed to produce monumental structures that spoke to American national ideals. Two of the places where the interests of the ABMC and the interests of the Pennsylvania Commission directly crossed were at Montfaucon, a site for commemorating the Meuse Argonne offensive in France, and Audenarde, a site for commemorating U.S. participation in Flanders Field in Belgium. Although the Pennsylvania Commission had gained approval for its proposal for a monument in Audenarde from Belgian officials, the ABMC, and the Fine Arts Commission, the site had not yet been finalized. The Pennsylvania Commission

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<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 134.

deliberated over the plan to build a fountain at Mountfaucon. Meanwhile, the ABMC also sought to build at these locations but also experienced difficulties securing property.

In Belgium, the Americans were interested in a location in the village of Edelaere at the edge of Audenarde in Eastern Flanders. The city government, however, wanted to charge one hundred thousand francs for the site. Major Price balked at the cost.<sup>49</sup> Lieutenant Thomas North who often scouted possible monument locations and reported back to Major Price was concerned that the town of Edelaere was “quite a small village, inhabited almost entirely by Flemings, whose process of thought and action are very deliberate.” In fact the Lieutenant did not “anticipate an immediate conclusion of the negotiations.” But North did not like Audenarde site anyway. He reported that the town “is off the track of tourists. A monument there will be sought out by the Americans of our generation who fought there. Thereafter it will be unseen save by such very few Americans who have the time to ramble around smaller towns.” North argued instead that the monument should be in Ghent, “a city famous for its architectural excellence, and is a tourist center. An American monument placed at Ghent would not be overlooked.” North added, “It was on the battle line at the time of the armistice.”<sup>50</sup> Indeed it was but it was not near where the Americans did most of their fighting. And so the ABMC resisted North’s recommendations and continued negotiations with locals in Audenarde. Despite this, the owner of the proposed site in Edelaere did not want to sell his land.<sup>51</sup>

The ABMC directed North to begin examining other locations in case the Edelaere site fell through. The Pennsylvania Commission also began exploring alternative sites. The

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<sup>49</sup> Letter, Major Xenophon Price to Lieutenant Thomas North, 23 June 1926, NA, RG 117, Records of the ABMC, WWI Monument and Memorial Files, Box 10.

<sup>50</sup> Letter, Lieutenant Thomas North to Major Xenophon Price, 27 April 1926, NA, RG 117, Records of the ABMC, WWI Monument and Memorial Files, Box 10.

<sup>51</sup> Letter, Lieutenant North to Major Price, 25 May 1926, NA, RG 117, Records of the ABMC, WWI Monument and Memorial Files, Box 10.

competition between these two entities represented the fundamental problem of building monuments in Europe; local leaders in Belgium became confused as to who represented the official American monument project. The Governor of Eastern Flanders was very concerned. He received proposals from both the Pennsylvania Commission and the ABMC, in the process becoming confused over the authority and the intentions of the two commissions. He suggested combining the two monuments into a single one but neither the ABMC nor the Pennsylvania Commission thought this acceptable. Moreover, the Governor disagreed with the proposed site of the ABMC monument. Lieutenant North wanted the monument built along the river near the Hotel de Ville. The Governor, however, suggested another location that was less accessible to American tourists as well as local inhabitants, which did not please Lieutenant North.<sup>52</sup> The Governor thus resisted the ABMC approach while accepting the Pennsylvania Commission's proposal. Certainly desiring to accommodate the memory of the American troops, the Governor approved a memorial representing American actions in the war; he was not interested in too many monuments dotting the landscape of Flanders.

To resolve this issue, Lieutenant North, on the orders of General Pershing via Major Price, attempted to undermine and sabotage the Pennsylvania Commission's proposal. North decided to use American Ambassador to Belgium William Phillips to appeal to Belgian authorities on behalf of the ABMC. This seemed to work. Phillips reported of his diplomatic intervention, "The Belgian Government promised that no authority would be granted for the erection of an American war monument in Belgium, unless it had been approved by the American Battle Monuments Commission."<sup>53</sup> Meanwhile the ABMC hired the Parisian architectural firm of Lahalle and Levard, which had been working for the Pennsylvania

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<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> Letter, Lieutenant North to Honorable William Phillips, 22 May 1926, NA, RG 117, Records of the ABMC, WWI Monument and Memorial Files, Box 10.

Commission at Audenarde, out from under the Pennsylvania Commission to help negotiate the interests of the ABMC in Edaelaere.<sup>54</sup> This proved very successful as the French architects, certainly unaware that they were helping the ABMC work against the interests of the Pennsylvania Commission, influenced local governments and local property owners to accept an ABMC proposal.

But despite all of this controversy, the confusion persisted on the side of Belgian officials as to which organization would build a monument in Audendarde. The Pennsylvania Commission still posed a threat to the ABMC particularly with local officials. Pershing wielded the authority of the ABMC and put an end to the threat. Lieutenant North had traveled to Varennes and heard unfavorable reports about the Pennsylvania monument from the people there. North claimed that the concept of functional commemorative architecture had made the Pennsylvania monument there very unpopular. Lieutenant North reported:

After our visit to the Prefect of the Department de la Meuse wherein this official pointed out the unfortunate effect which the erection of the Pennsylvania monument at Varennes had created upon French public opinion in the region, General Pershing directed me to suggest to Mr. Levard that he suspend further activities upon the erection of the Pennsylvania monument at Audendarde.<sup>55</sup>

Whether or not the people of Varennes disliked the monument, Pershing used the report to his full advantage. Pershing ordered North to pressure Levard, who was working on the Audendarde monument for the Pennsylvania Commission and simultaneously aiding the ABMC in their effort to obtain land, to cease work on the Pennsylvania monument. Although Levard agreed initially, he soon after argued that he should restart the work. He claimed that the local government accepted his proposal and expected it to be completed. He insisted that the

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<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

<sup>55</sup> Letter, Lieutenant North to Major Price, 2 September 1926, NA, RG 117, Records of the ABMC, WWI Monument and Memorial Files, Box 10.

monument would not interfere with the ABMC, rather “the monument will be insignificant” and most of the work involved transforming the site into a park.<sup>56</sup>

Despite Levard’s efforts on behalf of his original employers, the ABMC prevented him from restarting the project. In fact, the ABMC gained Belgian approval, took the site and the plans over, and built a small monument instead. They secured the entire Tacambaro square, albeit a small one, in the heart of Audenarde and transformed it into a park in that closely resembled the Pennsylvania proposal. In fact, designer Harry Sternfeld of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania built the monument out of yellow stone with a sculpted shield denoting the actions of the 37<sup>th</sup> Division, the 91<sup>st</sup> Division, and the 53<sup>rd</sup> Field Artillery brigade. On either side of the shield Sternfeld placed sculptures of American eagles. Below the eagles lay the inscription, “Erected by the United States of America to commemorate the services of the American troops who fought in this vicinity, Oct 30—Nov 11, 1918.” Although French and Flemish translations appeared next to the English inscription, the monument gave no acknowledgement of the larger Allied effort to win the war. The ABMC secured high quality real estate in the town nearest to where the AEF operated and they commemorated American soldiers on Belgian soil while eliminating the influence of the Pennsylvania commission.

But this was not the last place that the Pennsylvania Commission would challenge the ABMC. The Pennsylvania commissioners had also gained approval from the ABMC and French authorities to build a monument to the 79<sup>th</sup> Division at Montfaucon in France. But the Pennsylvania proposal was steeped in controversy. Senator Reed, who represented Pennsylvania and served as a commissioner on the ABMC, pushed through his state commission’s proposal for the Montfaucon site in an ABMC meeting in which General Pershing was absent. Although some commissioners on the ABMC tried to postpone the vote, Reed succeeded in forcing it

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<sup>56</sup> Ibid.



through. “Upon hearing of this action of the Commission, General Pershing expressed his great disapproval of it and his concern over the effects of such action by the commission.” Pershing took it upon himself to “consult with the members of the Commission again and reopen the question.” The general also asked Major Price to communicate with ABMC consultant and Pennsylvania Commission architect Dr. Cret. In addition to his work with the Pennsylvania Commission, Cret also worked as an advisor to the ABMC. Price wrote to the architect, in a letter “not to be considered as official notification of any action of the American Battle Monuments Commission,” asking him to intervene in the Pennsylvania Commission to “find a satisfactory solution.” In other words, Cret had to convince the Pennsylvania Commission to withdraw the Montfaucon proposal.<sup>57</sup>

Pershing had several reasons for wanting the Pennsylvania Commission’s plans for Montfaucon overturned. In his unofficial letter to Cret, Price argued that, “The State of Pennsylvania has already, in view of the present policies of the Commission, erected too many memorials in France.” In addition, Pershing feared that too many Pennsylvania monuments opened the ABMC up to criticism because “three members of the Commission are from Pennsylvania” and “two other members served either in the 79<sup>th</sup> Division or from a state that furnished troops to this division.” In a moment of considerable openness, Price related that the General of the Armies also believed that the 79<sup>th</sup> did not deserve such a grand monument at this location because during the war, “due to a lack of training and poor leadership, [the performance] was not exceptionally good.” Price noted, “In fact the General had to personally order the division commander to take Montfaucon which had been evacuated by the Germans on the first day as well as about an hour before it was actually taken.” A monument there to the 79<sup>th</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> Letter, Major Price to Paul Cret, 11 June 1926, NA, RG 117, Records of the ABMC, WWI Monument and Memorial Files, Box 22, Folder Papers given to the commission by Mr. Harlbern.

was a “commemoration far beyond what its performances in the vicinity warranted.” Lastly, “The proposed memorial of a fountain located at the place indicated seems absurd as there is no real need for a fountain there.” Price threatened finally that if the Pennsylvania monument was erected, the ABMC would look somewhere else to place its monument.<sup>58</sup>

Pershing experienced a lot of pressure over the Montfaucon monument. The ABMC had planned to place its largest monument at this location. The budgeted some four hundred thousand dollars there alone. French authorities, however, made it difficult for the ABMC to produce the monument that it wanted. “We are already having a lot of trouble with Montfaucon,” admitted Price. He added, “Our difficulties will be increased if we tried to erect two memorials so close together.” Thus he asked Cret to have the Pennsylvania Commission vote down the Montfaucon monument to the 79<sup>th</sup> particularly because they had already commemorated this division at Varennes.<sup>59</sup> These strong-armed tactics on the part of ABMC officials to force out the state monument contradicted Major Price’s Congressional testimony promising that the ABMC would allow organizations such as the Pennsylvania Commission to build monuments nearby. The Pennsylvania delegation would not acquiesce and members of the state commission refused to withdraw their proposal. Representatives of the Pennsylvania National Guard reminded Price that they had the authority of the Pennsylvania State Legislature and approval from the ABMC. Commissioners “prepared our plans, and submitted them to the American Battle Monuments Commission. Our plans were approved; detailed drawings were prepared; permission secured from the necessary authorities in France and Belgium, and some of the work put under contract.” Now, claimed the representatives, the work “at Audenarde and Montfaucon [was] ‘up in the air,’ so to speak, because of the request of your commission.” The

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<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> Letter, Major Price to Paul Cret, 11 June 1926, NA, RG 117, Records of the ABMC, WWI Monument and Memorial Files, Box 22, Folder Papers given to the commission by Mr. Harlbern.

representatives claimed that their discussions with Senator Reed suggested that “the matter had been approved by the American Battle Monuments Commission and they expected its erection.” Ceasing construction would bring “an avalanche of criticism.” The representatives would not stop production of the memorial but they did say that they would work with the ABMC and would continue to negotiate “because the gentlemen on the Commission would like to do that which General Pershing wants done.”<sup>60</sup>

With the Pennsylvania Commission reluctantly willing to work with Pershing, the ABMC now concentrated on gaining access to the Montfaucon location for the monument. This was to be a grand space and a grand monument. The problem remained that the hill at Montfaucon served not only as the location of the battle, but also as the site of an ancient French village destroyed during the battle. It had been a location of the Cathar influence, for example, and probably held very important artifacts of French history. In addition, this site included the remnants of German trenches that the French wanted to preserve. In the spirit of the “community of interests,” the French government gave the ABMC permission to obtain land near the battle site but this was not good enough for Pershing who believed it too small for the grand monument that he wanted to build. The ABMC wanted the land where the actual fighting took place but this spot had been given to the French Beaux-Arts Commission—the French national historic and artistic commission similar to the American Fine Arts Commission—to control the war vestiges and preserve the archaeological evidence of the ancient village. Lieutenant North spoke to the head of the Beaux-Arts Commission to negotiate a deal and reported, “This official seems to feel that the Beaux-Arts will not wish to turn over these ‘vestiges’ and ruins to us for maintenance and intimated that we might be expected to do our part

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<sup>60</sup> Letter, Pennsylvania National Guard to Major Price, 20 August 1926, NA, RG 117, Records of the ABMC, WWI Monument and Memorial Files, Box 22, Folder Papers given to the commission by Mr. Harlbern.

by a lump-sum donation to the Beaux-Arts or by an annual subvention.” The Beaux-Arts wanted to keep the entire hill. The French commission would allow the ABMC to build a monument, but the Beaux-Arts would have final approval over anything proposed by the ABMC.<sup>61</sup>

These terms were not acceptable to Pershing and the ABMC. Just as he had demanded that the AEF remain independent of allied command, Pershing insisted that the ABMC operate without French oversight. Lieutenant North succeeded in negotiating a larger portion of the hill in February 1926 but this still was not sufficient for the monument envisioned by the commission. The ABMC continued to press the Beaux-Arts Commission and Price directed North to again engage French officials. Major Price claimed that French and German “vestiges ought not to interfere with the erection of our memorial.” The importance of the American monument, in the mind of Price, trumped the importance of French national artifacts. But if this remained a sticking point Price instructed North to propose to the French that “we can agree to maintain those [vestiges] on land controlled by us.”<sup>62</sup> Advising North to conduct “our end of the negotiations in a diplomatic way,” Price pointed out that “if they mention maintaining the aspect of the hill as it was during the war, you could point out that the Triangulation Tower and new house have already destroyed it to a considerable extent.” Price conceded that the American monument would include the names of the French divisions that had operated in the sector. He even cast the negotiations in terms of dollar diplomacy:

In all negotiations you might point out the fact that we are planning to do this work, insofar as possible, with French material and labor and that if these negotiation are rapidly concluded this money will be spent in France in the near

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<sup>61</sup> Letter, Lieutenant North to Major Price, 3 August 1927, NA, RG 117, Records of the ABMC, WWI Monument and Memorial Files, Box 16, Folder Montfaucon.

<sup>62</sup> Letter, Price to North, 19 August 1926, NA, RG 117, Records of the ABMC, WWI Monument and Memorial Files, Box 16, Folder Montfaucon.

future and will have a very favorable effect on the French exchange, which is now in such a precarious position.<sup>63</sup>

But Price remained anxious about the site. The ABMC had already signed contracts with architectural firms that were very expensive to cancel and the commissioners had planned to spend significant funds on this single monument. Price confessed that “I do not like to spend such a great amount of money on this memorial if the setting is not perfect.”<sup>64</sup>

Meanwhile North had discovered that the “Woodmen of America had an option for monumental purposes on the entire top of Montfaucon for several years ending in 1922.” North continued, “This fact shows that any objections that the French authorities give to our erecting a monument on the hill are not well founded and are made with another purpose in view rather than that of friendliness. As you can see by this letter I am getting quite concerned over the French attitude on these sites.”<sup>65</sup> Although the Woodmen of America—a fraternal order in the insurance and real estate industries—had held a temporary option on the space, the current stand of the French government did not mean that it had ulterior motives when it came to the ABMC. In fact, given the historic significance of the space, it seemed completely reasonable for the French to place limitations on the ABMC. That North, Price, and Pershing had become so preoccupied with building their largest monument here despite understandable French concerns suggests just how the ABMC wanted to shape and influence collective memory. Ironically, Pershing wanted to commemorate American soldiers who had fought poorly, according to his own estimate, rather than surrender the hill to a deeper, richer, history that belonged to France.

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<sup>63</sup> Letter, Price to North, 15 June 1926, NA, RG 117, Records of the ABMC, WWI Monument and Memorial Files, Box 16, Folder Montfaucon.

<sup>64</sup> Letter, Price to North, 19 August 1926, NA, RG 117, Records of the ABMC, WWI Monument and Memorial Files, Box 16, Folder Montfaucon.

<sup>65</sup> Letter, Price to North, 8 June 1926, NA, RG 117, Records of the ABMC, WWI Monument and Memorial Files, Box 16, Folder Montfaucon.

French authorities made a generous compromise. From the very beginning they permitted Americans to build at Montfaucon. When Lieutenant North argued for a larger space, the Beaux-Arts yielded and gave the Americans a bigger plot of land. This was not big enough argued the Americans. “Half of the impressiveness of a memorial,” argued Price, “consists in the surroundings and I am not in favor of a memorial built to conform to the present situation.” This caused Price to think about scraping the entire proposal. He wrote to Lieutenant North, “In my mind it would be absurd to build a memorial in such a way as not to interfere with all of the existing vestiges. I believe such a restriction is unnecessary and might be cause for our looking for another site.” But Price had an ulterior motive for threatening to pull out of the Montfaucon monument. The Pennsylvania Commission had not yet yielded fully to the ABMC, and Price and Pershing could use the argument that the ABMC should abandon its monument to gain leverage over the Pennsylvanians. Price confided to North:

I have pointed out the obstacles we are running into concerning the Montfaucon site for another reason. It seems to me by having this monument on 79<sup>th</sup> Division territory that they are getting far more commemoration than they deserve for their operation in the vicinity. I believe that the division itself appreciates this and that if they were required to choose between having our large memorial on their territory and a small monument of their own that the vote would be unanimous for the large memorial. I have, therefore, in the last month or so pointed out the possibility that the large memorial might have to go to a different locality. This idea seems never to have occurred to the people pushing the 79<sup>th</sup> Division memorial, whom I think are unreasonable in their demands.

The threat to retreat from 79<sup>th</sup> Division territory accomplished the desired end. The men of the division preferred the larger monument even if it did not directly commemorate their actions. The Pennsylvania Commission thus yielded its position and the ABMC became the sole representative of American commemorations at Montfaucon. With the rival Pennsylvania project now eliminated, Pershing had a stronger negotiating position with the French. Although the ABMC had to make some further compromises, it finally built a major monument in the

location where American forces made an important contribution. Thus Pershing gained a significant stake in how nation-states and their public's remembered the battle of Montfaucon.<sup>66</sup>

Here Pershing and the ABMC built a monument to the American forces that fought in the Meuse-Argonne offensive with steps leading up to a single Doric column reaching up two hundred feet. On top of the monument was a female figure signifying liberty. Of course this liberty was a gift from the Americans to the people of France, not unlike the French gift of the Statue of Liberty to New York City in 1886. Visitors could climb the pedestal to view the liberty figure and to view below them the actual battlefield and the remains of the ancient village of Montfaucon. By establishing this intersection of modern and ancient sensory perception, the ABMC seemed to suggest to American and French visitors that the fighting done by Americans in the trenches below had protected the medieval French village and, by extension, France's place and power in the world system. France's future, this monument seemed to symbolize, was now bound up with the United States.

The ABMC had succeeded in asserting a new centralized American commemorative tradition, checking the efforts of the Pennsylvania Commission and prevailing over the French government's Beaux-Arts Commission. Limitations remained, however, to American commemoration and to American power. One place that Pershing and the ABMC chose to build a monument was in Rome. It was to be dedicated to the American sailors and soldiers who served in Italy, but the ABMC never constructed it. The ABMC proposed the monument the government of Italy in 1925, three years after the Fascists marched on Rome and Benito Mussolini became Prime Minister. This was a peculiar location, as Pershing had sent only one regiment, the 332<sup>nd</sup> Infantry, to Italy, and it saw only sporadic action. But Pershing proposed a

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<sup>66</sup> Letter, Price to North, 19 August 1926, NA, RG 117, Records of the ABMC, WWI Monument and Memorial Files, Box 16, Folder Montfaucon.

monument placed in Rome to “perpetuate the bond of fellowship which existed between the Italian forces and ours at that period.” Pershing was “very anxious” that the memorial “please the Italian people as well as fittingly represent the United States.”<sup>67</sup> It was a hard sell to convince the Italians that they should allow a monument dedicated to a few thousand men. Thus the American Ambassador to Italy, Henry Fletcher, suggested that the memorial should also commemorate “the Italians who served in the American Army in the World War.”<sup>68</sup> But Pershing claimed that to do this would prove to be an “embarrassing precedent which would be created in the case of our memorials which are also to be erected in France, England and Belgium” and rejected the suggestion.<sup>69</sup>

The Governor of Rome, Prince Ludovico Spada Potenziani, meanwhile resisted the plan because he believed that the Americans had already chosen an American buffalo as the design of the monument. But after repeated assurances that they had not yet chosen a design and convincing him that the ABMC wanted the monument only for a “permanent record of the cooperation between the two armies,” the Governor finally approved of the plan. He suggested they should build it on the Italian battlefields outside of Rome because it “would help to increase the importance of these battlefields in the eyes of the world.” But the ABMC wanted it in Rome because “it would be seen there by the most American tourists and because it was jointly to the operations of the American army and navy,” and the Governor eventually relented.<sup>70</sup> Apart from the public rationale, Pershing knew that many American expatriates lived

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<sup>67</sup> Letter, John J. Pershing to Gorham P. Stevens, 21 March 1925, NA, RG 117, Records of the ABMC, WWI Monument and Memorial Files, Box 23, Folder Rome, Italy.

<sup>68</sup> Letter Ambassador Fletcher to General Pershing, 20 July 1925, NA, RG 117, Records of the ABMC, WWI Monument and Memorial Files, Box 23, Folder Rome, Italy.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

<sup>70</sup> Letter, ABMC to Gorham Stevens to NA, RG 117, Records of the ABMC, WWI Monument and Memorial Files, Box 23, Folder Rome, Italy.



and carried on business in Rome. A monument would underscore the permanent, not just transitory, American presence in the city.

Governor Potenziani suggested a place near the Baths of Caracalla but after scouting out the location, representatives of the ABMC recommended against the idea. Major Price ventured to Rome in the spring of 1928 to help select the location. The Baths of Caracalla were not acceptable to him. He wanted the modern monument “in a modern part of the city where people live, rather than surrounded by ruins of an ancient day.”<sup>71</sup> He observed that “Visitors to the Coliseum, the Forum, and the Palatine Hill, the most interesting of the Roman ruins, do not come near this plaza. It is only passed by those who make a trip to the Baths of Caracalla and other places further out.” He even complained that the location was “unbelievably dusty.”<sup>72</sup> More generally, he did not believe that the monument should rest near the ancient ruins of the city. Although the edifice would “be seen by a considerable number of tourists . . . its location is such that the impression made by it on the tourists would be small.” He likened the effect to what “the monument to John Paul Jones receives in Washington from the casual visitor who is traveling between the Washington Monument and the Lincoln Memorial.” Price claimed this location “has almost the same reaction on me as proposing that it be located in the center of the Coliseum.” He added, “The average Roman would receive no enjoyment from the monument.” Instead, Price recommended the Borghese Gardens.<sup>73</sup>

Near the city center, the Borghese Gardens were not devoid of controversy. They had been built during the Renaissance, but were largely remodeled in the English style during the nineteenth century. But according to Price, the gardens were “the center of foreign life in Rome

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<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

<sup>72</sup> Memorandum, X. H. Price, 6 April 1928, NA, RG 117, Records of the ABMC, WWI Monument and Memorial Files, Box 23, Folder Rome, Italy.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

for hundreds of years,” and they were near “the best residential section of Rome . . . practically every tourist makes a trip to these gardens, as the drive through them is the most attractive in Rome.” He noted that “From there the sun is seen setting almost directly behind the dome of St. Peters.” Taken together, this location proved very desirable because “the park and gardens are much frequented by Italians and our monument, if placed there, would be part of the active living life of the city, which I think is desirable.”<sup>74</sup> But new postwar architecture seemed out of place in such an environment and Potenziani did not like the contrasting style that the monument brought to the gardens. The Governor only accepted the location after Ambassador Fletcher agreed to recognize “the many Italians who died in France while fighting in American armies” as part of the monument.<sup>75</sup> Pershing did not want to make this concession, but Ambassador Fletcher, keen on good relations with Mussolini’s government, pushed it through in order to get final approval from Governor Potenziani in September 1928.

Just three days after Fletcher secured the Borghese Gardens location, Ambassador Fletcher learned that Potenziani’s had resigned and been replaced by Francesco Boncompagni Ludovisi. Further investigation revealed that Potenziani had been dismissed by Mussolini’s government and that Prince Ludovisi was much more nationalistic. Indeed, the new governor sought to cancel the monument. In March 1929, Ludovisi notified the ABMC that the Italian Antiquities and Fine Arts Commission never approved of the proposal and that its chairman, Professor Munoz, claimed that a modern World War monument was not appropriate for “esthetic reasons.” This decision forced Ambassador Fletcher and the ABMC to quickly devise a new proposal.

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<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

<sup>75</sup> Letter, Gorham Stevens to Governor Potenziani, 21 September 1928, NA, RG 117, Records of the ABMC, WWI Monument and Memorial Files, Box 23, Folder Rome, Italy.

Ambassador Fletcher met with Governor Ludovisi and persuaded the Governor to reconsider after again promising that the memorial “was intended to commemorate the services of Italians who fought in our Armies in the Great War.” This completely went against the ABMC plans, but Fletcher argued that “it is this feature of the Memorial that has made it possible for us to secure the permission to have it erected.” Most Italians “believed that the American war effort in Italy itself would not justify a monument in Rome.” Furthermore, Fletcher agreed that the ABMC would submit the proposal to the Fine Arts Commission and “to the Superior Authorities of the Government,” because “The Italian Government might find embarrassing the establishing of a precedent of an allied monument in Rome.”<sup>76</sup> After meeting with Mussolini, the Governor approved the monument but insisted on a new location.<sup>77</sup>

But delays continued and Major Price returned to Rome to investigate in May 1929. He agreed that the monument would seem out of place and noted Professor Munoz’s comment that “several remarks had already appeared in the Press criticizing the former city government for its action in giving its approval to the erection of our monument in this part of the gardens.” Price also reported that Fletcher had misrepresented the purpose of the memorial to the government by suggesting that it would also “commemorate the services of the soldiers of Italian descent who served in the American Army.” But “this was not the Commission’s intention.” The reluctance on the part of the ABMC to recognize Italians and Italian-Americans in the memorial certainly influenced Italian unwillingness to accommodate the Americans. It also influenced General Pershing, who had by 1929 developed a “neutral attitude” to the memorial and was probably

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<sup>76</sup> Letter Governor Ludovisi to Ambassador Fletcher, 13 March 1929, NA, RG 117, Records of the ABMC, WWI Monument and Memorial Files, Box 23, Folder Rome, Italy; Letter, Henry Fletcher to Secretary of State, 15, March 1929, NA, RG 117, Records of the ABMC, WWI Monument and Memorial Files, Box 23, Folder Rome, Italy.

<sup>77</sup> Letter, Governor Ludovisi to Ambassador Fletcher, 11 April 1929, NA, RG 117, Records of the ABMC, WWI Monument and Memorial Files, Box 23, Folder Rome, Italy.

“more inclined to recommend against the memorial than for it.” When Price pointed this out to Fletcher, the Ambassador “hesitated before replying, as though the question were embarrassing to him.” When pressed, Fletcher believed that the Italians were only interested in the monument because “the Italian Government would feel that they were doing a favor to the United States.”

He explained:

The present government in Italy was exerting great efforts to develop a strong national feeling in the Italians and that one of the methods adopted for doing this was not to allow other countries to be advertised in Italy in a manner which might make them appear superior or even equal to Italy. . . . the Government had even gone so far as to require the removal of signs in foreign languages from the shops and hotels in Rome and that the news items in the moving picture shows in Italy rarely showed foreign events. If these did appear they were mainly those of disasters, such as floods, which did not present the country concerned in a favorable light.

He concluded by insisting that if the ABMC erected a memorial, “the only inscription on it should be a Latin one.” He added that “The authorities would consider their approval as a great concession.”<sup>78</sup>

The Italian authorities consistently told Price that they would welcome the monument, but he interpreted this to be a series of polite responses without any real meaning. He asserted that “Any additional features in Rome which would tend to change its appearance or be out of keeping with the existing architecture” would not be wanted. The monument must fit in with the architectural history of the city. After investigating the sites and interviewing numerous officials and other key people, Price recommended against pursuing the memorial. Although he still favored the Borghese Gardens location, he recognized that Italian approval would not be forthcoming. He reported, “In my opinion, a memorial of that nature will not be welcomed by the Italian Government and will be no more than neutrally received by the Italian people.”

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<sup>78</sup> Report of Major X. H. Price on Visit to Rome May 1929, NA, RG 117, Records of the ABMC, WWI Monument and Memorial Files, Box 23, Folder Rome, Italy.

Pershing and the ABMC accepted Price's recommendation and closed the project down completely in December 1929.

The symbolism of the monument should not be underestimated in the context of diplomatic and political relations between the U.S. and Fascist Italy. Mussolini had been pursuing ultra-nationalist policies ever since becoming Prime Minister. That the Americans tried to place a monument in Rome that would remind Italians of American efforts during the Great War was not appreciated by Mussolini's government. But the rise of Fascism did not lead to a breakdown in U.S.-Italian relations. As historian Philip V. Cannistraro contends, Mussolini needed American recognition in order for his regime to gain international legitimacy. The main ways Mussolini accomplished this was through respecting Italy's war debts and accommodating U.S. restrictions on immigration. The Immigration Act of 1921 placed quotas on Italians seeking to immigrate to the U.S. This quota system was later made permanent by the 1924 Immigration Act of which Senator Reed, who was also serving on the ABMC, was a chief architect. Mussolini saw Italian immigrants and Italian-Americans as a potentially helpful force in his government's dealings with the U.S. For this reason, argues Cannistraro, Mussolini sacrificed his own ideological commitments to personally lobby in favor of the anarchists Nicola Sacco and Bartolomeo Vanzetti under sentence of death in the U.S. Mussolini believed that supporting them would gain him Italian-American support over the longer run. From the American perspective, Mussolini's leadership brought stability to Italy and undertook the repayment of war loans. The U.S.-Italian relationship remained uneasy but both sides saw benefits from maintaining it.<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> Philip V. Cannistraro, "Mussolini, Sacco-Vanzetti, and the Anarchists: The Transatlantic Context, *The Review of Italian American Studies* ed. by Frank M. Sorrentino and Jerome Krase (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2000), 109-148.

The ultimately unsuccessful bid to build a monument to American soldiers and sailors in Rome highlights the limits of American soft power in postwar Europe. The international appeal of American nationalism, as conveyed in commemorative acts and symbols, was uneven. In the case of Italy, it collided with Fascism's own imperial agenda. But the ABMC's failure in Rome also stemmed from the schizophrenic nature of the proposed monument. While Ambassador Fletcher compromised the purpose of the monument in order to massage U.S.-Italian relations, General Pershing remained single-minded in his view of what was to be commemorated. The achievements of American arms, pure and simple, were more important than the messy possibilities enabled by diplomatic concessions. Giving way to the nationalist sensitivities of Italian Fascists compromised the whole notion of America's mission to the world, underwritten by blood and treasure. At the same time, Americans could not take for granted that other Europeans would remain grateful or forever follow U.S. leadership. By its very nature, soft power required give and take.

## Conclusion

Like the Civil War and the Spanish-Cuban-American War, the Great War changed the way Americans commemorated the dead and understood their sacrifice. Officials based it on Lincoln's promise at Gettysburg and the cultivation of collective memory within the experiences of American presence in Cuba, the Philippines, and Europe, which was most succinctly articulated by William McKinley at Atlanta and reiterated by Theodore Roosevelt at Arlington, Woodrow Wilson at Suresnes, and Warren Harding at the dedication of the Tomb of the Unknown. Incorporating the American cemeteries of Europe into the Lincolnian tradition marked the continuity that tied interwar monuments to nineteenth-century collective memory.

The work of the ABMC did not radically break with the traditions of American collective memory; rather it helped centralize the Lincolnian tradition that enabled American officials to interpret the memory of the Great War in the context of an American global presence.

This chapter has examined the work of the American Battle Monuments Commission. The ABMC was unprecedented in several ways. It maintained cemeteries and produced monuments in foreign countries. Planners intended the battle monuments to serve as projects of pilgrimage and tourism and also as a projection of a sacred spirit of sanctification. The U.S. government spent hundreds of thousands of dollars in their construction and millions of people visited them. The work of the ABMC also represented the United States and not individuals or states. Rather than isolation, the American government engaged in exercising soft power with European governments and populations by producing monuments that accentuated the American memory of the Great War. It also reflected an American postwar commitment to Europe rather than withdrawal. American monuments and cemeteries in Europe symbolized the desire of American diplomats, military men, and politicians to cultivate a cultural and economic community in Europe as well as an infrastructure of tourism and trade. The improved postwar technology of transportation facilitated an increase in the number of Americans in Europe while the monuments and cemeteries controlled by the ABMC became symbolic locations of American presence as well as a marker for American tourists who brought money into Europe which then could be used to further the economic interests of American businessmen or to aid European regimes in repaying American war loans.<sup>80</sup> The ABMC thus constructed an important commemorative system of soft power that dotted the landscape of America's wartime allies and reminded Europeans of American commitment to the success of the war effort.

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<sup>80</sup> Nancy L. Green, "Expatriation, Expatriates, and Expats: The American Transformation of a Concept" *American Historical Review* 114 (April 2009): 317.

What made this centralization as well as nationalization of the meaning of the American dead from the Great War possible was not just the will power of Pershing or the bureaucratic power of the ABMC. Larger forces were at work, beginning with the transatlantic influences from Europe. The most notable example was the effort in Britain, France, and elsewhere to commemorate unknown soldiers as embodiments of the nation. The U.S. followed suit with the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier in Arlington National Cemetery. But the transatlantic relationship ran both ways, and the ABMC exemplifies the continued and expanding presence of the U.S. in Europe after the war. Memory and commemoration became what historian Daniel T. Rodgers described as a progressive trans-Atlantic crossing.<sup>81</sup>

As we have seen, war can be an anvil for shaping and reshaping national identity and collective memory. The Civil War created at least two conceptions of identity, even if it ended in the territorial reunification of the country. The Spanish-Cuban-American War accelerated the drive toward reunion and reconciliation, in a context in which American sailors and soldiers died in foreign and, arguably, colonial wars. The Great War marked a further move in American expansion from imperial to global power. Commemorating the dead and giving meaning to this sacrifice now meant envisioning America and Americans in a frame far wider than a continent or a hemisphere. The work of the ABMC expressed a globalist, rather than an isolationist trajectory of American power—financial and cultural, not just military or technological—in the 1920s. Battlefield tourists were as important for soft power as business executives when it came to projecting America into Europe, still very much the core of the world-system. Our next chapter will explore the pilgrimage of the Gold Star Mothers and the effort to shore up the American position when the world economy it led began to crumble at the end of the 1920s.

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<sup>81</sup> Daniel T. Rodgers, *Atlantic Crossings: Social Politics in a Progressive Age* (Boston, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998).



## CHAPTER 9—GOLD STAR MOTHERS AND WIDOWS PILGRIMAGES: THE GREAT DEPRESSION AND THE CRISIS OF LINCOLN'S PROMISE

We hold the record, unchallenged, for forming clubs and organizations for no earthly reason at all; for every kind of 'goofy' project, both national and international, but occasionally somebody does come through with a great idea, and having these gold star mothers visit their sons' graves at government expense is a masterpiece and makes up for all the 'cuckoo' other things we do. That will be by far the most representative American pilgrimage that ever left our shores. There goes your real "good will" delegation. No diplomacy, no schemes to put over, just mothers, the same the world over. We can't wish them happiness, but we do wish them contentment.

— Will Rogers

After walking through those white fields of honor, where sleep our soldier dead, in France, so cared for so guarded, we are returning home with a full realization—glorified. Their sacrifice is the climax of our whole history. The purpose and integrity [sic] of those, who fell on the battlefields of France, marks the passing of the Melting Pot Era and the Dawn of a purely American Civilization

— Gold Star Mother, Lillian Hayward Boggs

The segregation based mainly and specifically on race and color which the United States Government carries on is despicable, illogical and uncivilized. To perpetuate it in the case of Gold Star mothers who are visiting great cemeteries where the putrid remains of their dead sons were buried very largely by Negro soldiers, is the last word in this national disgrace.

— W. E. B. DuBois

Taking their name from the wartime tradition of mothers hanging a gold star in the window to mark the death of their soldier-sons, the Gold Star Mothers was a group of mothers in Washington, D.C. who had lost their sons in the Great War and held a government charter. They allied with the American War Mothers, the American Legion and several politicians and businessmen in 1929 to lobby successfully Congress to fund a pilgrimage to Europe for mothers and widows who had lost sons and husbands in World War I but had never seen their loved ones' final resting place and had never been able to pay their final respects. Congress authorized these pilgrimages, financed them with taxpayer dollars, and charged the U.S. Army to operate them from 1930 to 1933. This remarkable legislation saw Congress appropriate over five million dollars for 6,674 mothers and widows to see the gravesites of their sons and husbands who had been buried in Europe. The legislation provided first class transportation, boarding, and

accommodation for women to travel from their hometowns across the United States to Europe and back. Nearly 11,500 women were eligible for the benefit and 58 percent took advantage of the legislation. In 1930, 3,653 women journeyed to France, 1,766 made the trek in 1931, 566 women traveled in 1932, and 689 went in 1932. During this time mothers and widows from around the country converged on New York City in groups of between 20 to upwards of 200 where the U.S. Army formed them into “Parties.” These parties made the transatlantic journey continually usually from May until August of each given year. Many times parties overlapped as one would arrive in Paris within a day or two of the previous party returning home. All the parties arrived in Cherbourg, France and then traveled by train to Paris where they were reorganized into smaller groups based on which cemetery their loved one was buried. The only exception to this was the parties that were destined for the Brookwood military cemetery outside of London. Instead of disembarking at Cherbourg, they arrived in Portsmouth, England and went on to London and Brookwood. The groups destined for France and Belgium spent time in Paris before travelling by bus to the Meuse-Argonne, St. Mihiel, Oise-Aisne, the Somme, Flanders Fields, or Suresnes military cemeteries.

It marked an Atlantic crossing that harnessed Lincoln’s promise and American commemorative tradition as an expression of soft power at the end of a decade that historian Daniel T. Rodgers has described as an “American invasion of Europe” through Fordism, commercialism, and progressivism.<sup>1</sup> The entire trip took nearly six weeks with members of the U.S. Army escorting the women. They remained in France for two weeks meeting French mothers and widows, diplomats, and military men. While American and French citizens read about them in the papers, mothers and widows spent one week touring the Louvre, the Eiffel

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<sup>1</sup> Daniel T. Rodgers, *Atlantic Crossings: Social Politics in a Progressive Age* (Boston, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998), 367-372.

Tower, the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier at the Arc de Triomphe, and the Champs-Élysées and another week visiting their son's or husband's grave at the American overseas military cemeteries. The pilgrimages reclaimed overseas gravesites as part of the domestic feminine duty dating back to the Civil War. Similar to Decoration Day traditions, pilgrims now ventured to Europe and decorated her loved one's grave with a bouquet of flowers and posed for a formal picture standing beside the headstone.<sup>2</sup> The mothers and widows represented to communities on both sides of the Atlantic the diversity of the American people and the homogeneity of American nationalism.

Although they were pilgrimages of women who carried with them the notions of citizenship as well as motherhood, they also marked, for the first time, the government's willingness to officially extend Lincoln's promise to families. Here politicians assimilated the traditional commemorative rituals of women into the bureaucratic tradition of commemorating the fallen community. As historian G. Kurt Piehler argues in his study of the Gold Star Mothers, "The First World War, combined with the momentum of the women's suffrage movement, impelled American society, and women themselves, to define an identity for women as citizens."<sup>3</sup> Previously only fallen soldiers could access the bureaucratic tradition of Lincoln's promise. Now their mothers and widows were fully enfranchised citizens having gained the vote in 1920 under the nineteenth amendment. Of course the pilgrimages were highly symbolic: soldiers received actual benefits from the government while women received a trip. Yet the authorization of the Gold Star Pilgrimages reflected a "progressive" extension of Lincoln's promise on the eve of the Great Depression.

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<sup>2</sup> For example see Caroline E. Janny, *Burying the Dead but Not the Past: Ladies' Memorial Associations and the Lost Cause* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007).

<sup>3</sup> G. Kurt Piehler, "The War Dead and the Gold Star: American Commemoration of the First World War," in *Commemorations: The Politics of National Identity* ed. by John R. Gillis (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1996), 170.

The Gold Star Mothers were not the only ones to make transatlantic trips in the years after the Great War. The American Legion sponsored a major pilgrimage for legionnaires to the battlefields and cemeteries of France in 1927. Many civilians also toured the sites of the war. Historian Lisa M. Budreau's examination of American commemorative traditions and the Gold Star Pilgrimages after the First World War suggests that these sorts of commemorations marked a break with the past and were largely politically motivated.<sup>4</sup> But British historian David W. Lloyd argues that British, Canadian, and Australian pilgrims, in part, looked to the language and traditions of the past to explain their memories of the war: "Religion provided more than a language and imagery; it was at the heart of the pilgrimages made by the bereaved." Older traditions could serve modern purposes, for "pilgrimages merged the secular rhetoric of service to the State with the religious language of sacrifice."<sup>5</sup> This was the intended meaning of the Gold Star Mothers as Mathilda Burling, a controversial figure who represented the Gold Star Mothers Association admonished the Secretary of War, "I want to say we must not let this Pilgrimage be turned into a junket trip or pleasure or sight seeing trip, it must be a pilgrimage Holy and Honorable, only fitting to a one hundred percent American ideals. There are no great patriotic ideals in the whole world greater than the American ideals."<sup>6</sup> The Gold Star pilgrims had experienced maternal and spousal relationships with the soldiers that were mystical,

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<sup>4</sup> Lisa M. Budreau, *Bodies of War: World War I and the Politics of Commemoration in America, 1919-1933* (New York: New York University Press, 2010), 2.

<sup>5</sup> David W. Lloyd, *Battlefield Tourism: Pilgrimages and the Commemoration of the Great War in Britain, Australia, and Canada 1919-1939* (New York: Oxford Press, 1998), 142, 173.

<sup>6</sup> Letter, Mathilda Burling to Patrick Hurley, 14 February 1930, NA, RG 92, Office of the Quartermaster General, Misc. File 1922-1935, Gold Star Pilgrimages Box 379, Folder Misc. February 1930. There were several Gold Star Mother groups in the wake of the World War. Controversy arose as each group attempted to assert an authentic legitimacy for their group. The Gold Star Mother's in Washington, D.C., however, were able to receive a government charter which gave them a notion of being official. Other groups, such as the Gold Star Mothers America, lost membership as the Gold Star Mother's Association was able to win the favor of the U.S. Congress and they stumped for membership by using the pilgrimages to drive up members. For a detailed history see John W. Graham, *The Gold Star Mothers Pilgrimages of the 1930s* (New York: McFarland and Company, 2005).

spiritual, and patriotic. The pilgrimages were the federal government's recognition of these women's special relationship with the dead.

Not surprisingly, the pilgrimages expressed a highly gendered view of the expanded democracy of postwar America. Mothers and widows took with them to Europe tropes of what cultural studies scholar Amy Kaplan has described as "imperial domesticity," a "mobile and often unstable discourse that can expand or contract the boundaries of home and nation." It was "language of empire suffused [in] the rhetoric of domesticity."<sup>7</sup> But the pilgrimages also took place in a context of worldwide economic calamity. President Calvin Coolidge signed the legislation on one of his last days in office in March 1929. Although the stock market crash in late 1929 did not derail the program, what supporters understood initially to be a symbol of nationalism and motherhood became symbolic of an obsolete government bureaucracy that spent millions on pilgrimages to Europe while millions at home were losing their jobs. Meanwhile the United States War Department charged with overseeing the pilgrimages played an integral part in the process of incorporating traditional feminine mourning rituals into the nationalized commemorative traditions of Lincoln's promise. But this was not a simple task as women had to meet specific criteria, based on the Congressional legislation, in order to participate. Thus War Department officers and Judges Advocate General based their understanding of motherhood, widowhood, and womanhood on a male version of "Victorian" morality that they had grown up with during the late nineteenth century in determining who could and who could not participate in the pilgrimages; they turned away hundreds of women who did not meet their gender-specific definitions of appropriate motherhood or widowhood. These were pilgrimages also of racial segregation. Black soldiers had fought and died in the war and their mothers and widows

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<sup>7</sup> Amy Kaplan, *The Anarchy of Empire in the Making of U.S. Culture* (Boston, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003), 26.

received invitations to participate. But African American mothers and widows would not travel with their white counterparts or have the same experiences; the government would segregate the pilgrimages. As another sign of a civil rights movement, some accepted the invitation and used the pilgrimage as an opportunity to remind white America that black Americans had also spilled blood in France. Others, meanwhile, rejected the invitation to see their loved one's gravesite as a protest against segregationist policies.

Previous examinations of the pilgrimages have focused on motherhood, nationalism, and segregation. This chapter places the Gold Star Pilgrimages in the longer story of the extension and limits of incorporating the traditional mourning rituals of women into the bureaucratized Lincolnian tradition. These pilgrimages show, on the one hand, the inclusion of a previously disenfranchised group in national rites of mourning and remembrance, while exposing, on the other hand, just how undemocratic American traditions of commemoration could be. The first section of this chapter examines the legislative history of pilgrimages and how they were created. The second section explores the practices and policies of the pilgrimages under the War Department. The third section investigates who actually went and what their experiences were like and the final section explores Lincoln's promise in crisis.

#### Diplomacy and Remembrance—Extending Lincoln's Promise

After the war, many Americans decided to have their sons and husbands buried in France rather than have their remains returned to the United States. This was controversial but it was part of a longer tradition in American history: what was a more sacred way to implement Lincoln's promise: to return the body home or to leave the body near the spot where the soldier made the ultimate sacrifice? Although many Americans had their loved ones' remains returned

to the United States, over twenty thousand families decided to have their sons and husbands buried in American military cemeteries in France. Sacred relics in sacred soil meant that many mothers never received the chance to visit her son's grave. The purpose of the pilgrimages primarily allowed these mothers and widows to go to France and see the burial spot of their loved one before they themselves passed away. It amounted to a "debt owed by the nation" as many statesmen described.

Many believed that mothers and widows represented the most potent figures to redress American cultural wanderings. Mother's Day, for example, became an official national holiday in 1914 honoring mothers whose sons had died in war. In 1920 women achieved the vote with the ratification of the nineteenth amendment. As part of this new politicization of women and mothers, women's groups built what historian Theda Skocpol has described as a successful "maternalist welfare state" during the 1920s.<sup>8</sup> Historian Molly Ladd-Taylor's examination of the United States Children's Bureau in the 1910s and 1920s discusses the role that progressive maternalists played on behalf of women and their children's welfare.<sup>9</sup> Their efforts culminated with the passing of the Sheppard-Towner Act in 1921, which helped mothers' and their children gain access to healthcare. Although the Supreme Court ruled the act unconstitutional the following year, it showed that mothers and those who supported mothers could influence federal policy without holding public office. Historian Gwendolyn Mink's *Wages of Motherhood* suggests that women's status as mothers prohibited them from accessing government welfare; this was true particularly along racial lines. She finds that the Children's Bureau's policies and programs largely followed white middle-class ideas that isolated black mothers completely. The

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<sup>8</sup> Theda Skocpol, *Protecting Soldiers and Mothers: The Political Origins of Social Policy in the United States* (Boston, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992).

<sup>9</sup> Molly Ladd-Taylor, *Mother-Work: Women, Child Welfare, and the State, 1890-1930* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1995).

experience gained from the failed Sheppard-Towner Act, argues Mink, empowered many of these same maternalists in the New Deal era to craft legislation that would survive constitutional tests but was no better at incorporating black women into government welfare.<sup>10</sup> The Gold Star Mothers Association fit into the milieu of maternalist politics in the 1920s. The national organization in Washington, D.C. received its charter in 1928 and assimilated most of the local and regional Gold Star Mothers groups across the U.S. Members affirmed nationalistic ideas tied to motherhood and widowhood and recognized how important mothers and widows were in the conscience of the nation. The Gold Star Mother's Association also had a policy of segregation and excluded African-American mothers from membership.

Mothers and widows became powerful symbols of patriotism for most Americans but it was difficult politically to explain the necessity of using tax-payer money to send them to Europe. Republican Congressman Fiorello LaGuardia sponsored the original bill in 1919 that would have allowed mothers, fathers, or next of kin to travel to Europe at taxpayer expense. But he reintroduced this bill at a time when tensions rose high about the repatriation of the dead. He later recalled that, despite his party's control of both the House of Representatives and the Senate, he "was criticized very severely" and "abused," receiving "a great number of letters" of protest from Washington, Oregon, South Carolina and states in the Midwest. He claimed that his bill "did not take hold" because advocates of the repatriation movement succeeded in defeating his effort to allow mothers, fathers, and widows of soldiers to visit graves overseas. "Everything was concentrated on getting these bodies back," claimed LaGuardia and repatriation supporters

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<sup>10</sup> Gwendolyn Minks, *Wages of Motherhood: Inequality in the Welfare State, 1917-1942* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1995).



blocked his bill from even receiving a hearing because the pilgrimages were interpreted to be a measure that might undermine the repatriation movement.<sup>11</sup>

After the American Battle Monuments Commission received Congressional authorization in 1923, Congressmen again tried to introduce a pilgrimage bill. Democratic Congressman of New York Samuel Dickstein sponsored a bill “To Authorize Mothers of Deceased World War Veterans Buried in Europe to Visit Graves in 1924” to a Republican-controlled House and Senate. Dickstein seemed to have bipartisan support. Democrats Emmanuel Celler and Charles Stengle of New York, John Mackenzie of Illinois, and Harry Hull of Iowa all signaled support of the bill. In fact Dickstein believed that his bill would gain unanimous congressional support. But this was overly optimistic. Some Congressmen estimated that nearly 30,000 people would be eligible under Dickstein’s proposal and Dickstein insisted that the cost would be \$200.00 per person. Dickstein reported that the final cost for the project would be nearly 9 million dollars. Congressman Hull suggested that they limit eligibility to only 1500 mothers at a cost of \$500,000.<sup>12</sup> Republican Congressman John McSwain of South Carolina believed the bill cost too much no matter who was restricted from participating. He argued that the government was not required to look after mothers and widows because, “those people will have the American Legion that will see that they get the money to go, and they will have neighbors who will see they get money to get some clothes to take this trip on.” Clearly opposed to government involvement in commemorative traditions, McSwain complained, “We are getting in the habit of getting the Government to build all the monuments now which used to be built by private

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<sup>11</sup> “To Authorize Mothers and Unmarried Widows of Deceased World War Veterans Buried in Europe to Visit the Graves,” H.R. 5494, House Committee on Military Affairs 14 May 1928 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1928), 13; “To Authorize Mothers and Unmarried Widows of Deceased World War Veterans Buried in Europe to Visit the Graves,” House Committee on Military Affairs, 27 January 1928 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1928), 27. See also Budreau, *Bodies of War*, 190-197.

<sup>12</sup> Samuel Dickstein HR 4109, Congressional Record, Committee on Military Affairs, 68 Congress, 1<sup>st</sup> session, 19 February 1924, p. 1-16.

subscriptions.” When Dickstein argued that women’s groups would only “chip in” for the pilgrimages, McSwain retorted, “I will chip in and would be glad to.”<sup>13</sup>

Congressman Dickstein had another obstacle besides cost to overcome. Secretary of War John W. Weeks also resisted the legislation. In a letter submitted to the committee Weeks had conveyed the War Department’s objections to administering the pilgrimages. Weeks claimed that the bill offered “authorization but no appropriation” and thus the financial burden would fall solely to the War Department. He also argued that there were not enough sea transports at the War Department’s disposal and the transports available to the military were not suitable for passenger travel as they were fitted for troops and cargo. Finally the Secretary claimed that the project would take too many Army officers away from essential military efforts. Dickstein challenged the Secretary’s claims. He testified

He [Weeks] speaks about the project, that it would require the assignment of a considerable number of officers. Now, look at that wonderful point. He says it “would require the assignment of a considerable number of officers and other military personnel thus necessitating the withdrawal from essentially military duties.” In other words, the point that he makes is that the United States has not the forces to carry out this project because by taking a few officers away it will cripple our Army.<sup>14</sup>

Weeks still had not completed the process of downsizing the postwar military and he opposed any new commitments of men and funds.

The mothers mobilized in favor of the bill. Republican J. Mayhew Wainwright of New York argued that the mothers who had left their sons buried in Europe saved the nation millions of dollars and the federal government should pay for them to travel to Europe to see their sons’ graves. Gold Star Mother Effie Vedder testified, “I want to begin by telling you that you are all men and you have not and can not feel the way a mother does.” She continued, “It is a part of

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid, 11.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 14.

her body that is lying over there. She spent 20 years, anyway, in bringing up that boy; she gave her time, both day and night, and none of you can realize what a mother's loss is.” Gold Star Mother Jennie Walsh of Brooklyn, New York argued that this legislation should not be an issue of money:

It is not a question of money with your Government; they have plenty of money. They have money for everything else--they had money for the war; they had money for guns; they had money to kill them, and then why have they not the money to help these poor mothers, whose hearts are just breaking for the sight of the grave of their boy?

But without limiting cost by restricting the number of women who would be eligible and without the consent of the War Department, Congressmen would not authorize the legislation even if they spoke out in favor of it.<sup>15</sup>

In 1928 Republican Congressman Thomas S. Butler and Republican Senator David A. Reed, both of Pennsylvania, again introduced pilgrimage bills. By now mothers of soldiers themselves began dying in alarming numbers and still Congress had not addressed their desire to see their sons' graves. In this last attempt, Butler and Reed implemented a new strategy. Congressman Butler's bill placed the burdens of finance and implementation on the American Red Cross and only sought a Congressional appropriation of funds for transportation costs. Senator Reed's bill added to Butler's bill a proposal for the creation of a Gold Star Pilgrimage Bureau—a government office—with a Director who would receive \$12,000 per annum to organize, implement, and oversee the pilgrimages.<sup>16</sup> Butler's bill limited the pilgrimages to mothers and widows and suggested that the French Red Cross would take care of the mothers and widows once they arrived in France. The Congressman spoke against putting the pilgrimages under control of the War Department. Meanwhile, on the Senate side, the Gold Star

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 15, 21.

<sup>16</sup> According to the United States Department of Labor inflation calculator, \$12,000 in 1929 would equate to \$152,000 in 2010.

Pilgrimage Bureau came under attack. Republicans Hiram Bingham of Connecticut and William H. McMaster of South Dakota interrogated witnesses supporting Reed's bill and the new government bureau that would come from it. These two were opposed to the proposed director's high salary and the fact that this position would need the resources of administrative and secretarial staff. Instead McMaster introduced New York Democrat Robert F. Wagner's bill that envisioned the War Department conducting the pilgrimages. McMaster and Bingham also brought forth witnesses who supported Wagner's bill while attacking witnesses who supported Reed's bill. Even Senator Reed conceded that the War Department should play a larger role than what his bill allowed.<sup>17</sup>

As Senators moved toward Wagner's bill, an important question remained, however, and that pertained to the constitutionality of using taxpayer money to fund the pilgrimages. In fact Senator Bingham included a letter he received from the Women's Club of Montclair, New Jersey, which called the use of taxpayer money to fund the pilgrimages "a flagrant misappropriation of funds" that was "highly objectionable to American ideals." To answer such questions, Senator Wagner prepared, with the Senate Legislative Counsel, a memorandum. It saw the pilgrimages as being more than just a moral necessity, but also having a practical benefit in U.S. diplomacy. The memo referred to the 1896 case *United States versus Gettysburg Electric Railway Co.* In this case the Gettysburg Electric Railway Company had proposed to build part of their railway on part of the actual battlefield and cemetery. The case hinged over whether or not Congress could prohibit the rights of the private corporation. Congress had the right to use

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<sup>17</sup> David A. Reed, "To Authorize Mothers and Unmarried Widows of Deceased World War Veterans Buried in Europe to Visit the Graves," S. 5332, S. 2661, HR. 5494, Senate Committee on Military Affairs 12 February 1929 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1929); "To Authorize Mothers and Unmarried Widows of Deceased World War Veterans Buried in Europe to Visit the Graves," H.R. 5494, House Committee on Military Affairs 14 May 1928 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1928); "To Authorize Mothers and Unmarried Widows of Deceased World War Veterans Buried in Europe to Visit the Graves," House Committee on Military Affairs, 27 January 1928 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1928)

land that promoted, “patriotic sentiments which is ‘necessary and proper’” to the “general welfare” of the people. Using both “Hamiltonian and Madisonian Theories as to General Welfare,” the authors asserted that Congressional endeavors at Gettysburg were “[a] successful effort to preserve the integrity and solidarity of the great Republic,” and promoted general welfare because it “impressed upon everyone who looks over the field.” The legal team asserted that the language used in the 1896 case suggested “the proposal of a gold star mothers’ pilgrimage would seem to be as directly related . . . to the preservation of a battle field and commemoration of the historic events that took place there.” The memo continued, “Any act of Congress which plainly tends to enhance respect and love of the citizens for the institutions of his country and to quicken and strengthen his motives to defend them” was appropriate legislation because “fostering of patriotism is a valid object of the power to make appropriations for the general welfare.”<sup>18</sup> It was explicit that the pilgrimages aided the general population because they were supposed to produce patriotism at home while healing any lingering feelings of grief amongst mothers and widows.<sup>19</sup>

Supporters of the bill viewed the pilgrimages to Europe as an appropriate expression of American patriotism stemming from the Civil War. Moreover, in the new circumstances of the U.S.’s position in the postwar world, the pilgrimages represented a global projection of American commemoration under War Department management. Congressmen could thus argue that the pilgrimages spoke to the general welfare of the American people and therefore deserved federal funding. Democrat Senator Royal S. Copeland of New York claimed, “I resent the idea that the purpose of Government is to protect property.” He argued:

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<sup>18</sup> NA, RG 92 Office of the Quartermaster General, Miscellaneous Files 1922-1935, Gold Star Pilgrimages, Box 345, Folder Proposed Amendment and Hearing to Congress prior to Passage of Bill, Hearing U.S. Senate Subcommittee on Military Affairs, 12 February 1929, 13.

<sup>19</sup> Reed, To Authorize Mothers and Unmarried Widows, 11-15, 23.

Under no circumstances would I have Government made a nursing bottle. Under no circumstances would I have Government do for the citizen the things that he can do for himself. But there are many times when there are things which are beyond the ability of the individual. Here we have one of them. These mothers, most of them, are very poor. They made great sacrifices when they permitted these boys to go abroad.

Copeland concluded, “At least our great, rich Government can show, even though it is a gesture, its appreciation for the sacrifices made by these mothers.”<sup>20</sup> This argument supposed that even in a period where government was not to play a large role in individuals’ lives, it was the government’s responsibility to support and sustain the practice of remembrance. The final bill authorized by both the Senate and the House redressed the pilgrimages in morality, urgency, and pragmatic diplomacy. It charged the War Department to carry out the pilgrimages and appropriated the necessary monies including money for hiring non-military ships to transport the pilgrims. The War Department would have none of the expense and only the responsibility of executing the legislation.

This was more than just a commemoration of the dead akin to the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, Armistice Day, and Memorial Day that created opportunities for national grief and healing. Politicians attached other goals to the pilgrimages, particularly their pursuit of political and diplomatic interests. LaGuardia testified in 1928 in front of the Senate Committee of Military Affairs that he was happy to see Congress finally take up his proposal ten years later. He claimed the pilgrimages were much more than a debt owed to mothers and widows:

When these American mothers arrive in France, they will come in contact with the Gold Star Mothers of France, and they will create a common understanding that will be far more lasting than any peace treaty that we can negotiate. In other words, the companionship of sorrow is more enduring than the comradeship of victory, because, after all, even in the comradeship of victory, there is always certain little petty jealousies that human nature cannot avoid, but these women have absolutely everything in common, and I think that the contact that will be established is the best representative that the United States could send to France in

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<sup>20</sup> Bill H.R. 5494—Gold Star Mothers Bill, 14 May 1928, 3.

these mothers meeting and coming in contact with women of France, and it will bring the two Nations closer together, and it will create a thought on the part of the whole world as to the uselessness of war. I know that in a matter of this kind it is not one that should be figured in dollars and cents. The cost should not be taken into consideration at all. We will never feel it.<sup>21</sup>

The “companionship of sorrow” tied nations as well as mothers together through the shared remembrance of dead soldiers. These connections were spiritual but also pragmatic, sacred but also profane.

Relations with France remained solid, but the U.S. operated outside the League of Nations and the mechanisms it provided for international security and cooperation. As historian William Appleman Williams notes, France played an important role—as did Britain, Germany, and Japan—in thwarting Soviet communism. Williams explains, “American leaders concluded that the best way to reconcile necessary expansion of the American economic system with the necessity of peace was by working out a general concert of policy” with the other great powers. This amounted to what Williams describes as a “community of interests” against communist and other revolutionary influences. In this respect, the “companionship of sorrow” between American and French mothers was underpinned by the “community of interests” between the United States and France. It popularized the community of interests without having to speak of controversial alliances or adversaries. At the same time, pilgrimages underscored the sacred duty of remembrance not only of the dead but what they ostensibly died for: civilization and democracy. But to the extent that diplomats and politicians defined the meaning of the ideals and the nature of threats to them, the community of interests was bound to trump the companionship of sorrow.

When Congress passed the pilgrimage legislation in the spring of 1929, the American-led world economy began to crumble. As historian Michael Bernstein has suggested, the economy

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 13-4.

stumbled in a moment of transition from old to new sectors of investment and business. The new sectors had not fully developed and so this new industrial capacity, “caught in heavy deflation,” was powerless to help prevent the crisis. Thus Bernstein suggests, “The Great Depression must be viewed as an event triggered by random historical and institutional circumstances, but prolonged by the timing of a process of long-term industrial development in the United States.”<sup>22</sup> The crisis affected tens of millions of people in the United States and challenged their confidence in the political as well as economic system. Despite adhering to a worldview of laissez-faire economics and small government, President Herbert Hoover dramatically increased spending to shore up the system.

In December 1929, soon after the stock market collapse, Congress amended the pilgrimage legislation to allow more women to participate. The original legislation only allowed for mothers and widows whose sons were buried in graves to take part. However, there still remained hundreds of bodies that the Graves Registration Service could not identify. Although the ABMC had arranged for the names of unknown soldiers to be listed inside the chapels or on special monuments in the military cemeteries in Europe, hundreds of men lacked designated gravesites. Likewise many sailors and soldiers lost or buried at sea had no graves in Europe or America. To include the mothers and widows of men in these categories, the House of Representatives Committee on Military Affairs voted to amend the law to include all soldiers killed between 5 April 1917 (the day before the U.S. declared war on Germany) and 1 July 1921 (the day Congress declared the war over) and to cover those men who were unknown or buried at sea. The Senate soon agreed; this increased the number of women eligible for the pilgrimage by

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<sup>22</sup> Michael A. Bernstein, “Why the Great Depression was Great: Toward a New Understanding of the Interwar Economic Crisis in the United States,” in *The Rise and Fall of the New Deal Order, 1930-1980* ed. by Steve Frazer and Gary Gerstle (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1989), 47-8.



2,800.<sup>23</sup> Increasing the number of women who could attend, and thus also increasing the appropriation during a worsening economic depression was controversial. But supporters hoped that spending so much money on the pilgrimage, would boost patriotic sentiment at a time of uncertainty and demoralization. The Gold Star Pilgrimages, by highlighting the sacrifices of mothers and widows as well as fallen soldiers, could exercise a powerful and positive influence over people's attitudes to the nation and its prospects.

### Lincoln's Promise and the Problem of "Fit" Mothers and Widows

Not every mother or widow was entitled to participate. The attempt to make these pilgrimages sacred—and the added stipulation that mothers and widows only participate in the program—meant that the Army excluded many women they deemed not fit for pilgrimage. The language of "fitness" or "unfitness" opens a window on the gendered nature of implementing the nationalized and bureaucratized collective memory surrounding Lincoln's promise and, more generally, the conception of "deserving" and "undeserving" recipients of social welfare. In many cases the War Department had to determine who was acceptable as a mother and a widow and who was not. To determine this, Judges Advocate General used the legal definition of *in loco parentis*, which had been deployed in the legislation to enlarge the pool of women who could participate. This language allowed women who fulfilled roles as stepmothers, common law wives, and adoptive as well as birth mothers. But government authorities did not guarantee an invitation to women in these roles. Hundreds of women sought and were denied invitations based on their legal relationship to the dead. This made Judges Advocate General (JAG) Major Allen Gullion, Major A. M. Burdett, and Colonel Arthur Winton Brown, among others, key

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<sup>23</sup> NA, RG 92 Office of the Quartermaster General, Miscellaneous Files 1922-1935, Gold Star Pilgrimages, Box 345, Folder Proposed Amendment and Hearing to Congress prior to Passage of Bill, Committee on Military Affairs House of Representatives, 17 December 1929, 15.

figures in defining who constituted an appropriate mother or widow to represent the United States as a Gold Star Pilgrim. But these military lawyers failed to recognize changes in gender norms and women's lives. They applied "Victorian" prewar and white Anglo-Saxon Protestant ideas to their interpretations of the legislation. Over 400 women claimed entitlement to the pilgrimage through *in loco parentis* but the JAG only agreed with 35 of these cases.<sup>24</sup> Such legal and administrative exclusions in many instances subverted the patriotic and sacred ideal of the bereaved mother and widow and her relationship with the dead.

One category of "unfit" mother was those whose sons had committed crimes while in overseas military service. Mrs. Mary Buckner was one such woman. The Army executed her son in France on 6 September 1918 for "willful misconduct—crime not stated." The Assistant Secretary of War determined that she was not eligible to visit her son's grave based on the recent case of Philip Jackson, a black man, honorably discharged, who in civilian life allegedly raped a white woman. He was executed in the District of Columbia and Assistant Secretary of War Patrick Jay Hurley "denied permission for the burial of his remains in Arlington or any other national cemetery." Based on the Jackson case, Mrs. Buckner was deemed ineligible.<sup>25</sup> Ironically Mrs. Buckner's son's remains, despite his "misconduct" while alive, were interred in the military cemetery in France, while Mrs. Buckner was punished for her son's misconduct. The mother of such a son, authorities believed, could not make a good representative of America.

When it came to further defining motherhood and widowhood based on non-criminal conduct, the War Department sought legal counsel from its team of JAGs. Major Allen Gullion determined that Mrs. W. D. Rock of Morristown, New Jersey could go. She had earlier at her own expense visited the Bony cemetery in France, where her son's remains had not yet been

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 11.

<sup>25</sup> Index Sheet, 9 January 1930, NA, RG 92 Office of the Quartermaster General, Miscellaneous Files 1922-1935, Gold Star Pilgrimages, Box 349, Folder Pilgrimage, Gold Star.

buried. The body was still in the morgue when she was there. But Gullion judged that Mrs. Edward Doocy was not entitled to a trip at government expense because when she visited her son's grave in the unfinished St. Mihiel cemetery in 1922 the body had been buried.<sup>26</sup> The legislation had promised a trip to those women to view the graves of their sons. Thus Rock was entitled to an additional trip at government expense because her son was in the morgue and not yet buried. The legislation helped produce the sacredness of the soil. This seemed to imply that a soldier and his mother were not truly sanctified until the body was actually buried. This was quite a contrast to bodies taken from the corrupt soil of tropical Cuba and the Philippines.

Congress had amended the legislation to permit mothers and widows of unknowns and those lost at sea permission to join the pilgrimage.<sup>27</sup> But this revision had the unintended consequence of including seamen who died between 1917 and 1921 while serving in the Coast Guard even if they were not in proximity to Europe. Gullion's colleague Arthur Winton Brown pointed out that the Coast Guard fell under the legislation as a branch of the military. He also noted that the legislation included the language "buried at sea" but did not stipulate which seas. Thus women whose sons and husbands died and were buried at sea, "in any part of the world, such as Alaskan waters," were now eligible to travel to Europe. Not only could women with unknown sons and husbands visit Europe but so could Coast Guard mothers and anyone else whose loved one was buried at sea. "The mothers and widows," claimed Brown, "are eligible to make a pilgrimage to Europe, if they so desire, irrespective of the geographic location at the time

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<sup>26</sup> Memorandum, Allen Gullion to Assistant Secretary of War, 26 April 1929, NA, RG 92 Office of the Quartermaster General, Miscellaneous Files 1922-1935, Gold Star Pilgrimages, Box 346, Folder J.A.G. Decisions.

<sup>27</sup> Memorandum, Allen Guillon to Assistant Secretary of War, 19 September 1929, NA, RG 92 Office of the Quartermaster General, Miscellaneous Files 1922-1935, Gold Star Pilgrimages, Box 346, Folder J.A.G. Decisions.

of death.”<sup>28</sup> This interpretation reflected a Eurocentric view of the war, even though soldiers and sailors had served in many theaters around the world.

Stepmothers gained eligibility so long as the individual held such status at the time of her stepson’s entry into the military and at the time of his death. This was considered to fall under the stipulations set forth by *in loco parentis*.<sup>29</sup> Private Alva Cressmire’s stepmother was not eligible because, although she was his stepmother at the time of enlistment, she had divorced his father and remarried by the time of his death. Private James Forrester’s stepmother was likewise ineligible. “Forrester had a step-father who remarried.” Forrester’s sister claimed that she and her brother called this woman “mother” and this justified her inclusion. But JAG Guillon disagreed claiming that she did not meet the requirements for the pilgrimage.<sup>30</sup> Alice Crane, who was the stepmother of Lealine Crane, was not eligible either. Although she had married Lealine’s father in 1882, he had died in 1908. This had severed the marriage relationship, argued Guillon, as well as “the relationship by affinity between the stepmother and stepson.” The reason for this, argued the JAG, was that U.S. law provided that “a man may contract a valid marriage with his stepdaughter by a dissolved marriage.” Although Guillon recognized that some state and local statutes did not allow this, U.S. law provided the precedent. Thus, “the legal status of the stepmother in the instant same terminated with the death of deceased’s father and did not exist either at the time the deceased entered the military service or at the time of his death.” Thus Mrs. B. M. Hayes was also not eligible to participate as the stepmother of Robert Hayes. She had married Robert’s father in October 1917 and was Robert’s stepmother at the

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<sup>28</sup> Memorandum, A. W. Brown to Assistant Secretary of War, 5 June 1930, NA, RG 92 Office of the Quartermaster General, Miscellaneous Files 1922-1935, Gold Star Pilgrimages, Box 346, Folder J.A.G. Decisions.

<sup>29</sup> Memorandum, Allen Guillon to Assistant Secretary of War, 6 September 1929, NA, RG 92 Office of the Quartermaster General, Miscellaneous Files 1922-1935, Gold Star Pilgrimages, Box 346, Folder J.A.G. Decisions.

<sup>30</sup> Memorandum, Allen Guillon to Assistant Secretary of War, 17 September 1929, NA, RG 92 Office of the Quartermaster General, Miscellaneous Files 1922-1935, Gold Star Pilgrimages, Box 346, Folder J.A.G. Decisions.

time of enlistment but Robert's father died before Robert died, making Mrs. Hayes ineligible.<sup>31</sup> JAG officials based their decisions for ineligibility on patriarchal precedent; the father of the child determined the status of the stepmother's relationship with the soldier and the stepmother had no independent relationship with the dead even if she had raised him from youth and he had called her "mother."

But a stepmother whose husband and stepson had died sometimes gained eligibility. Zora McLean claimed that she had the right to participate because she was George McLean Jr.'s stepmother since he was the age of two years and nine months. George McClean Sr. died in November of 1917, well before his son died in Europe. Under previous interpretations this made Zora McClean ineligible. JAG official A. M. Burdett was aware of these previous decisions, but he was also aware of some jurisdictions that ruled that death of a natural parent did not terminate the stepmother/stepchild relationship. Burdett advised that if Zora had remained unmarried since her husband's death and continued to treat his son as her stepson, she was eligible.<sup>32</sup> This decision seemed to suggest that the legal termination of stepmother was subordinate to the duration that the stepmother acted *in loco parentis*. She was practically George McClean's actual mother because she had been *in loco parentis* since he was a very young age. But this advice marked an inconsistency in government policy, for it suggested that women who had been stepmothers for only a few years were not as qualified to be a Gold Star Mother as women like Zora McClean.

Stepmothers also held a priority over other natural female family members. Private Clarence Swindle of Birmingham, Alabama died in Europe and both his stepmother, Emma

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<sup>31</sup> Memorandum, Allen Guillon to Assistant Secretary of War, 21 November 1929, NA, RG 92 Office of the Quartermaster General, Miscellaneous Files 1922-1935, Gold Star Pilgrimages, Box 346, Folder J.A.G. Decisions.

<sup>32</sup> Memorandum, A. M. Burdett to Assistant Secretary of War, 8 October 1930, NA, RG 92 Office of the Quartermaster General, Miscellaneous Files 1922-1935, Gold Star Pilgrimages, Box 346, Folder J.A.G. Decisions.

Swindle and his sister, Eula Wier claimed they were rightfully in the position of *in loco parentis* during the year before Clarence Swindle's enlistment. Emma Swindle married Clarence's father, Early Swindle, in 1898 and he died in 1924, making her Clarence's stepmother at the time of Clarence's enlistment and death. But Eula Wier claimed that she and not her stepmother stood *in loco parentis* the year before Clarence enlisted in the Army. Gullion argued, however, against Wier's eligibility. Clarence enlisted at the age of 21 making him an adult for over a year. Gullion pointed out that one cannot serve *in loco parentis* to an adult. Thus, despite any role, either primary or secondary, that Eula Wier played in the raising of Clarence, Emma Swindle "takes priority under the statute."<sup>33</sup> Despite the fact that Eula Wier was Clarence Swindle's blood relative, she was not acceptable as a pilgrim; her stepmother was.

This was the case, however, even when no stepmother was present; sisters were not allowed to be pilgrims even if they had fulfilled the terms behind the concept of *in loco parentis*. Mrs. Chester Green of Santa Monica, California petitioned the War Department to be a pilgrim and visit her brother's grave. Green was originally from Iowa and there her name was Lucille Siberts. She claimed to have raised her three brothers, Carl, Lyle, and Earl, from the age of fourteen when their mother died. Carl and Lyle had died in the war and Green believed "that our family is entitled to recognition." She claimed that "I was the only mother the two boys had and nobody knows how those black war days stunned us and what grief it brought to our already broken home." She went on to point out that Carl had not been married and following the death of their mother "I am the next in line to pay my respects to that certain white cross in Flanders Field. It is the one and only opportunity I feel sure for any of the Siberts family to visit the grave." Gullion judged that Green was not entitled to the trip to her brother's grave. Based on

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<sup>33</sup> Memorandum, Allen Guillon to Assistant Secretary of War, 18 January 1930, NA, RG 92 Office of the Quartermaster General, Miscellaneous Files 1922-1935, Gold Star Pilgrimages, Box 346, Folder J.A.G. Decisions.

his research on a series of cases in American and English law, he argued that in the absence of a mother the only way to assume status of *in loco parentis* was to “act the part of a lawful father in performing the duty of providing for him.” This was impossible for Green to fulfill. Gullion also noted that legal precedent established that “One person cannot stand *in loco parentis* to another person who is an adult and not incapacitated, either mentally or physically, from providing for himself.” Since the Siberts brothers had joined the military after the age of 21, the law did not allow for Green or anyone to act as their parents. Gullion stated that the facts of the case did not prove that the Siberts’ father had died; Green had not established that she had provided for her brothers in the ways that she had claimed. Since the brothers were neither insane nor physically disabled, Green would not be included in the pilgrimage.<sup>34</sup>

Stepmothers usually could not usurp the position of natural mothers, however. Private Nathaniel McBride was killed in action in July 1918. His natural mother, Sara Troxcill of Nebraska, married McBride’s father but divorced him on 7 June 1898. She married Lorenzo Troxcill in July 1899. Just six days after Troxcill divorced, McBride’s father married Belle McBride on 13 June 1898. Belle McBride divorced McBride’s father in August 1926. Thus under the established policy, Belle McBride was eligible because she was his principal caregiver and she was Nathaniel McBride’s stepmother when he enlisted and when he died. Both women wanted to participate in the pilgrimages. Gullion advised, against the established policy, and judged that the birth mother had the legitimate right to the Gold Star benefit in this case.<sup>35</sup> But Gullion gave different advice in the case of Private Leo Bittner. In this case, the JAG ruled in favor of the stepmother over the natural mother. Clara Bishop gave birth to her son Leo out of

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<sup>34</sup> Memorandum, Allen Guillon to Assistant Secretary of War, 8 June 1929, NA, RG 92 Office of the Quartermaster General, Miscellaneous Files 1922-1935, Gold Star Pilgrimages, Box 346, Folder J.A.G. Decisions.

<sup>35</sup> Memorandum, Allen Guillon to Assistant Secretary of War, 5 December 1929, NA, RG 92 Office of the Quartermaster General, Miscellaneous Files 1922-1935, Gold Star Pilgrimages, Box 346, Folder J.A.G. Decisions.

wedlock. But her sister, Caroline Bittner, “took complete custody and control of the child almost from the time of his birth; reared, maintained, and educated him until he entered the military service, and was regarded by the boy, from the standpoint of natural affection and obligation, as his mother.” This happened quite often in nineteenth-century America, where unwed mothers were stigmatized. Bishop, meanwhile, married when Leo Bittner was seven years old and “established a separate home, reared a family, and exercised none of the obligations and duties of a mother toward a son.” The Quartermaster General believed that both women should qualify and asked JAG Gullion as to whether the War Department could invite both Bishop and Bittner. Gullion claimed that the legal definition of motherhood was singular. An individual could not have more than one mother and so only one woman could receive the benefit. Bishop “abandoned the child, contrary to the natural instincts and obligations of motherhood, leaving the child to be reared, maintained and educated by another.” Gullion continued, “This office held that as between natural mother, and a mother by legal adoption, the latter [Mrs. Bittner] succeeded to all of the rights and obligations previously devolved upon the natural mother,” and thus Bittner “would be legally eligible” while Bishop “under those circumstances was not eligible.”<sup>36</sup> Because Bishop acted “unnaturally,” this decision suggested, she had forfeited her status as natural mother. The decision completely ignored the difficult situations of unwed mothers and their illegitimate children.

Corporal Albert Suess posed an additional case. George and Ida Owen of Missouri adopted him from Suess’s natural mother Gertrude Pyle who lived in Illinois. Both Ida Owen and Gertrude Pyle wanted to go to France. The Owens adopted Suess when he was two and he lived with them until he joined the military. The Owens did not have a certificate of adoption

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<sup>36</sup> Memorandum, Allen Guillon to Assistant Secretary of War, 31 March 1929, NA, RG 92 Office of the Quartermaster General, Miscellaneous Files 1922-1935, Gold Star Pilgrimages, Box 346, Folder J.A.G. Decisions.



but had the testimony of their attorney and the foster parents. But these testimonies were taken in 1923, well after the war. Gullion again argued that the law allowed every individual only one mother. Thus the military could only recognize the contributions that one woman made to Corporal Suess by inviting only one. Gullion suggested that Congress had intended this. The wording in the legislation insisted that a woman *in loco parentis* incorporated a broad concept of “motherhood” that included stepmothers, adopted mothers and the like. Guillon reasoned that it was not reasonable to assume that “Congress intended by the above definition to create the legal fiction that several women may occupy the status of ‘mother’ to the deceased soldier at the same time.” On the contrary reasoned the JAG, “it is reasonable to assume that Congress intended to authorize but one mother” to attend the pilgrimage. Gullion interpreted the law regarding adoption to be a termination of the natural mother-son relationship. Thus, he asserted, since Owen “succeeded in all the duties, rights and obligations previously devolving upon Mrs. Pyle” she should receive the benefit provided her legal status had remained uninterrupted until Corporal Seuss’s death.<sup>37</sup>

But in another case, JAGs did not grant eligibility to a stepmother of an adopted boy. Anton Sveen adopted an illegitimate child, Clarence, and later married in 1914. His wife petitioned the War Department to become a pilgrim as Clarence Sveen’s stepmother. But JAG official Archibald King advised against her claim. He cited several court cases that ruled that “When a child is adopted by only one spouse he does not become the heir of the other.” In a second case, King cited a ruling that stated “A man who marries the mother of a bastard child does not become the stepfather of such child.” With these two precedents in mind, King claimed

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<sup>37</sup> Memorandum, Allen Guillon to Assistant Secretary of War, 28 November 1929, NA, RG 92 Office of the Quartermaster General, Miscellaneous Files 1922-1935, Gold Star Pilgrimages, Box 346, Folder J.A.G. Decisions.

that “when Anton Sveen married[,], his wife did not become the stepmother of Clarence Sveen,” and thus she was ineligible.<sup>38</sup>

This controversy over stepmothers, natural mothers, and adoptive mothers gave natural mothers precedence over stepmothers unless the natural mother had “abandoned” her child. This was a dubious claim because of both the social stigma and the social arrangements that came with children born out of wedlock in the nineteenth century. Giving the child to a relative was not uncommon. But adoptive mothers could trump natural mothers, particularly if they had raised the child from a young age. JAGs interpreted motherhood, at least in regards to those women who would commemorate the dead, on a morality attuned to *in loco parentis*, which gave the War Department enough flexibility to include those women who they believed would make the best pilgrims. But this interpretation of law failed to recognize the different forms of motherhood as well as the contributions that several women could make to the rearing of a child or youth. It suggested that only one mother figure could enjoy the sacred relationship with a fallen soldier-son.

Wives also had to meet certain criteria established by JAG officials. Marriage and female citizenship had a long controversial history in American law and politics. Since the beginning of the nineteenth century, law tied the nationality of married women to their husbands’. Thus, while foreign women who married an American citizen gained citizenship, single women born in the United States lost their nationality once they married an unnaturalized foreigner. Feminist groups successfully lobbied Congress to pass the Married Woman’s Act of 1922, which allowed American women married to foreigners, except Asians, to retain their U.S.

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<sup>38</sup> Memorandum, Archibald King to Assistant Secretary of War, 4 November 1932, NA, RG 92 Office of the Quartermaster General, Miscellaneous Files 1922-1935, Gold Star Pilgrimages, Box 346, Folder J.A.G. Decisions.

citizenship.<sup>39</sup> JAGs understood marriage between husband and wife to express a national, not just private and domestic relationship. Thus they interpreted remarriage as a change that prohibited women from the pilgrimage. This included cases where a widow remarried, “divorced and resumed the name of her first husband.” The act of remarrying gave her a status “[t]hat subsequent change in her status cannot have the effect of restoring her eligibility.”<sup>40</sup>

Despite having a sacred relationship through marriage at the time of the soldier’s death, a widow’s remarriage profaned the relationship she held with her late husband. In other cases soldiers had become involved with more than one woman before the war and as the lines of marriage sometime blurred through common law marriage and divorce, it became essential for JAG officials to determine which woman should be able to go to France as a pilgrim. One such soldier was Private Preston Robinson. He married Marie Singleton in January 1917 and lived with her for three months before applying for a divorce. Understanding that his divorce was settled, he married Roxan Lucas in January 1918. He enlisted in April of that year and “named his wife, Roxan Lucas Robinson as beneficiary of his insurance.” He died of pneumonia in February 1919 in France. Roxan Robinson received her husband’s insurance payments until 1929 when Red Cross investigators claimed that Preston’s divorce had never been finalized and that his widow was not Roxan Robinson but Marie Singleton. Based on this report the government ceased insurance payments to Robinson and in turn she sued the government in the state of Louisiana. The District Court in Shreveport ruled that “half the insurance be paid to each woman.” The pilgrimage posed a similar problem because both women wanted to go to France.

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<sup>39</sup> Women who married foreign men, however, would be reclassified as naturalized citizen by this bill. Nancy Green, “Expatriation, Expatriates, and Expats: The American Transformation of a Concept,” *American Historical Review* 114 (April 2009): 307-328; Candice Lewis Bredbenner, *A Nationality of Her Own: Women, Marriage, and the Law of Citizenship* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998).

<sup>40</sup> Memorandum, Allen Guillon to Assistant Secretary of War, 6 September 1929, NA, RG 92 Office of the Quartermaster General, Miscellaneous Files 1922-1935, Gold Star Pilgrimages, Box 346, Folder J.A.G. Decisions.

The Quartermaster General asked JAG Colonel W. A. Graham which one should go or if both should be invited. Meanwhile Singleton appealed to the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals, which ruled that Robinson was not Preston Robinson's legal wife and should not receive insurance money. Graham took the ruling of the Court of Appeals and claimed that Preston Robinson's widow was Marie Singleton and should rightfully be invited to France. Surely Preston Robinson would not have agreed with this decision had he been alive. That the woman that he thought he divorced after three months of living together was his beneficiary certainly was not what he intended; he had listed Roxan Robinson as his beneficiary on his enlistment papers. But the legislation did not take into account the actual feelings between spouses or ex-spouses. Rather, the legislation and its interpretation were concerned with ramifications in law and policy.<sup>41</sup>

Other women deemed fit to go included common law wives from the thirty states and the territories of Alaska and Hawaii that recognized common law marriage.<sup>42</sup> But common law legislation did not exist in every state and women from those states were not included. In order to participate, such wives had to produce evidence that she and her husband had entered into a common law marriage. Lucy Robinson was such an individual. Her partner Corporal Clifford Robinson died in France, and Lucy Robinson was listed as his common law wife. But Clifford Robinson's enlistment records noted that he was single and that he lived in Maryland—a state that did not recognize common law marriage—although his emergency contact was Lucy Robinson who lived in Pennsylvania—a common law state. Upon his death, Lucy applied for insurance benefits and claimed that she was his common law wife.<sup>43</sup> But she could produce no

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<sup>41</sup> Memorandum, W. A. Graham to Assistant Secretary of War, 10 October 1932, NA, RG 92 Office of the Quartermaster General, Miscellaneous Files 1922-1935, Gold Star Pilgrimages, Box 346, Folder J.A.G. Decisions.

<sup>42</sup> Memorandum, A. M. Burdett to Assistant Secretary of War, 26 April 1929, NA, RG 92 Office of the Quartermaster General, Miscellaneous Files 1922-1935, Gold Star Pilgrimages, Box 346, Folder J.A.G. Decisions.

<sup>43</sup> Memorandum, U.S. Veterans Bureau to Secretary of War, NA, RG 92 Office of the Quartermaster General, Miscellaneous Files 1922-1935, Gold Star Pilgrimages, Box 380, Folder Eligibility of common law wives.

evidence that she and Clifford had entered a common law agreement. So despite the fact that she had lived with him for two years before he entered the service, JAG official A. M. Burdett reasoned that she was not entitled to a pilgrimage. Lucy and Clifford never had a ceremony, “because she did not wish to marry him,” neither individual considered themselves married, and the Veterans’ Bureau had her sign an affidavit claiming that she did not consider herself a widow and as such had no rights to compensation for his death. This was more than enough evidence to prevent her from participating. JAG Burdett suggested, “The validity of an alleged common law marriage is dependent upon the law of the state in which the marriage was entered into.” Burdett continued, “If the marriage was valid where contracted, and so continued until the death of the husband while a member of the military or naval forces . . . [and] if she has not since remarried,” only then was she eligible for the pilgrimage.<sup>44</sup>

Viola Townsend lived in a state that recognized common law marriage but she was not invited to be a pilgrim. Jack Townsend’s enlistment papers listed Viola Townsend as his emergency contact but he listed her relationship to him as “unknown.” After he died, Viola made insurance claims to the Veterans’ Bureau claiming she was Jack’s common law wife. But although she lived with him for a considerable time, she was actually legally married to Ernest Hamlin and her marriage to him had never been dissolved. She was therefore not entitled to benefits of insurance or pilgrimage. Another soldier Oscar Smith married Anna Long in 1911 but soon after separated from her. He then married Stella Eardley Smith in 1918, “who, it appears, was ignorant of his prior marriage.” Therefore Anna Long was the legal wife of Smith,

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<sup>44</sup> Memorandum, A.M. Burdett to Assistant Secretary of War, 13 August 1929, NA, RG 92 Office of the Quartermaster General, Miscellaneous Files 1922-1935, Gold Star Pilgrimages, Box 346, Folder J.A.G. Decisions.

but she had since remarried. Consequently, neither woman received the opportunity to visit Oscar Smith's grave in France.<sup>45</sup>

As historian G. Kurt Piehler has noted, the Gold Star Mothers Pilgrimage stressed the role of women in American commemorative traditions.<sup>46</sup> There was a long tradition of women tending to the graves and the memories of dead soldiers. Mothers and widows supposedly possessed a sacred and mystical relationship with their dead sons and husbands that linked their individual grief to national loss. Given this gendered understanding, only "authentic" mothers could participate. The U.S. Army refused invitations to women who did not meet its legal definitions of motherhood and widowhood. Many women who perhaps held intense maternal or spousal emotional connections to the soldier while alive were excluded. Meanwhile, women whose sons died in Alaskan waters or as part of the Coast Guard won a trip to Europe to commemorate a gravesite that did not exist. The gendered implementation of Lincoln's promise occurred at a time when, as Theda Skocpol suggests, social welfare benefits were becoming a major issue and the real complexity of American households was becoming more visible. In this light, we can see that officials of the state were using the Gold Star Pilgrimages to reinforce norms when the lives of real persons had become only more varied and fluid in the years during and after the Great War.

### Practices and Policies of Pilgrimage

Although only about half of the women eligible to make the trip accepted the government's offer, those who did represented much of the social, regional, ethnic, and cultural

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<sup>45</sup> Memorandum, U.S. Veterans Bureau to Secretary of War, NA, RG 92 Office of the Quartermaster General, Miscellaneous Files 1922-1935, Gold Star Pilgrimages, Box 380, Folder Eligibility of common law wives.

<sup>46</sup> G. Kurt Piehler, *Remembering War the American Way* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian, 2004). Also see Piehler, "The War Dead and the Gold Star."

diversity of the country. Immigrants, African Americans, and even one Native American woman made the journey along with the majority of women who were white and Protestant. Some 3,653 women took part in the first 1930 pilgrimage. Their average age was 61. When broken down between mothers and widows, the average age of mothers was 68 while the average age of widows was 40. Some of the most elderly participants suffered from severe physical and even mental health difficulties. Religion was an important marker of identity for many of the women. “Some of the women,” commented Captain Robert E. Shannon, who handled the transportation of pilgrims, “wanted to be placed in the same cabin with women of their own religion.” He recounted one traveler who followed Aimee Semple McPherson and the Four Square Gospel. The pilgrim wrote, “If you could arrange for me to be in a cabin for two, some one that is a Christian that does not smoke or play cards, I will appreciate it very much, as tobacco smoke makes me very sick. I like some one jolly that can have a good time, in a wholesome way.” She continued, “If you can quarter me with someone from Angeles [sic] Temple the Church of the Four Square Gospel, all the better, but anyone that is nice and does not smoke. God bless you.”<sup>47</sup>

The pilgrims seemed to be profoundly affected by their experiences in France, which allowed the participants to feel patriotic about their decisions to leave the remains of their sons and husbands in France. They also expressed gratitude to the government for its generosity. This was exactly what government officials hoped for. By going to France and meeting French people, the “companionship of sorrow” enhanced the “community of interests.” Even American women who did not admire France remained grateful that their loved ones rested where they and their compatriots had given their lives for their country and accepted, at least by implication, American involvement in foreign wars.

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<sup>47</sup> “Address of Captain Robert E. Shannon to the Washington Transportation Club,” 15 September 1932, NA, RG 92, Misc. Files 1922-1935, Gold Star Pilgrimage, Box 349, Folder Press Releases Speeches 1930-1932.

The pilgrimages, however, had an embedded tension; they were simultaneously a sacred mission of remembrance and a profane mission of diplomacy. A new Secretary of War, Dwight F. Davis, who had been an Olympian tennis player, did not protest the pilgrimages like his predecessor had. In fact, the War Department established a temporary military presence in Europe by escorting the pilgrims. Handing the mission to the Army, in particular the Quartermaster General, had the potential for calamity. The trip exhibited military precision, but also, surprisingly, care and empathy. The military understood that the women would tell everyone in their hometowns about the pilgrimages and so wanted to produce an effect that would make each pilgrim completely satisfied with her experience. Colonel Richard Ellis, who ran the pilgrimages for Quartermaster General John L. DeWitt, established an Army Pilgrim Office in Paris from where he could oversee day-to-day operations and handle public relations. The office staff included a Press Secretary, who “at eleven o’clock each morning gives out an authorized statement.” Ellis reported that “all other officers have been cautioned to refrain from imparting information” to do with the effort. With DeWitt’s authorization, Ellis established control over the pilgrimages and censorship of the media. For example, he attended a luncheon at the Press Club in Paris just as the first pilgrims were reaching France. He announced to everyone there that the Army desired “fair and honest treatment.” He claimed “We had nothing to conceal” but he, “requested co-operation of the press that nothing be published which might give offence or affect the feelings adversely of the Mothers themselves, or their relatives or friends.”<sup>48</sup>

Journalists who contributed favorable news stories could have access to the women and join them on their travels to the cemeteries. The newspapers in Paris as well as in the rural

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<sup>48</sup> Personal Memorandum, Richard Ellis to John DeWitt, 5 June 1930, NA RG 92 Office of the Quartermaster General, Miscellaneous Files 1922-1935, Gold Star Pilgrimages, Box 379, Folder Colored Vol. 1.



provinces of France were “extremely cordial and pleasant,” reported Ellis. He also noted that the journalists of the Associated Press, United Press International, International News Service, and the Hearst Syndicate received press privileges as did a reporter for the American Legion. In agreeing to publish nothing that would adversely affect the feelings of the pilgrims, the media also agreed not to publish any criticism about the Army’s handling of the program. In this way, the representation of the pilgrimage was tightly controlled and people read what the War Department wanted them to read.<sup>49</sup> When the *Chicago Tribune Paris Edition*, for example, printed sensationalized reports of one pilgrim receiving a blood transfusion in a Paris hospital, General DeWitt became very concerned and asked Ellis to pressure the media. Colonel Ellis confronted the editor, Spencer Bull, and accused him of violating “a gentleman’s agreement” between the Army Pilgrim Office and the newspaper. Ellis threatened to revoke the paper’s press privileges and Bull backed down.<sup>50</sup> The U.S. Army, largely through Ellis’s efforts, successfully censored much of the media and was able to present a sanitized story of Americanness to millions of readers both in the U.S. and France. Mainstream newspapers in France and the U.S. as well as motion picture newsreels carried news of pilgrims’ every event. Filmmaker John Ford’s *Pilgrimage*, based on the Gold Star pilgrimages and released in August 1933 brought new media and critical acclaim to the government program.

The Army placed experienced and well respected officers as escorts for the Gold Star women. They organized everything in detail from itineraries, to transportation, to handling luggage, to obligating hotels in France to provide “American food.”<sup>51</sup> Women from across the nation would board a train near their hometown and make their way to New York. From here

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<sup>49</sup> Report, Richard Ellis to John DeWitt, NA, RG 92, Misc. Files 1922-1935, Gold Star Pilgrimage, Box 363, Folder Party A, 1930.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

<sup>51</sup> Hotels in Paris and near the military cemeteries signed contracts with the U.S. Army promising to provide certain fish, coffee, bread, etc. Failure to do so resulted in penalties of non-payment.

they would stay in a hotel for a night until their ship left the next morning. Even undocumented immigrants could participate. The Secretary of War secured a promise from the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) and the Secretary of the Treasury that the IRS would not “examine” immigrants returning from Europe for “federal income tax purposes.” In addition officials suspended the eight dollar head tax upon reentry to the U.S.<sup>52</sup> The Army contracted with the United States Line of luxury passenger ships. The United States Line had never been profitable and the economic crisis had only worsened business. The company was delighted to gain this government contract. The mothers and widows received cabin-class passage including lounge chairs, towels, and other accoutrements at government expense. They mixed with first-class passengers, some of whom were not happy to share their space with the pilgrims. When one complained within earshot of pilgrim Lydia Lindsay, “these women should have a boat to themselves, really. They make so much noise,” Lindsay responded, “Yes, we do make noise, but the guns that killed our boys made noise, too, I ‘spect.”<sup>53</sup>

Other passengers saw the pilgrims as important symbols of America. Myron T. Scudder, who ran a private girls school in New York City, had coincidentally sailed with one of the pilgrimages to and from France on the *George Washington* in the summer of 1930. He wrote to Quartermaster General DeWitt of his experience. Scudder was thoroughly impressed with the efficiency and care of the military and he was also quite inspired by the women. After relating several plaudits, Scudder mentioned that some of the first-cabin passengers “were not in sympathy with the project and did not hesitate to express annoyance.” “Others,” related Scudder, “were good-naturedly tolerant, more or less.” The pilgrims impressed a few

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<sup>52</sup> Letter, Secretary of Treasury to Secretary of War, 18 April 1930, NA, RG 92, Misc. Files 1922-1935, Box 351, Folder 012.3 Pilgrimages, Gold Star Mothers.

<sup>53</sup> “Puzzled First Class,” *Chicago Tribune Paris Edition*, 17 May 1930, NA RG 92 Office of the Quartermaster General, Miscellaneous Files 1922-1935, Gold Star Pilgrimages, Box 348, Scrapbook—Press Clippings.

passengers. Scudder reported, “One of the latter observed that the Government, in promoting and financing them, is making a long term investment in good will and patriotism which may prove important should activities of the Reds and their like become at all alarming.” Scudder concluded, “The people’s representatives at Washington are doing something very human and characteristically American, and are doing it in truly American style.”<sup>54</sup>

Despite the sort of patriotic meaning derived from these women, behind-the-scenes, participants could become embroiled in the politics of the pilgrimage. In covering the first voyage of pilgrims in 1930, journalist Grace Robinson of *Liberty Magazine* booked passage with the pilgrims. One of the first female national journalists, Robinson worked for the *New York Daily News* prior to her work for *Liberty Magazine* and had published articles throughout her career on a whole host of women’s issues ranging from Vice Girls to women in politics (eventually becoming part of Eleanor Roosevelt’s press corps) to her coverage of “Gasoline Gypsies”—stories of women recounted from a cross-country trip Grace took with her sister Esther in 1928. The government had not chartered the ship; spaces remained available for private citizens to purchase; Robinson bought a ticket and gained unofficial access to the pilgrims. Colonel Ellis and Quartermaster General DeWitt had already implemented their rules of censorship from their headquarters in Paris. After disembarking in Le Havre, Robinson published immediately a report accusing the War Department of censorship because the officers would not let her use the wireless telegraph while at sea. Once she reached Paris, she published a story that reported on the pilgrims who were fighting with each other over who should lay the wreath at the French Tomb of the Unknown in Paris. She reported that in a meeting to decide who should receive the honor, New York and Western mothers were upset with the Nebraska

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<sup>54</sup> Letter, Myron T. Scudder to Quartermaster General John L. DeWitt, 30 August 1930, NA, RG 92, Office of the Quartermaster General, Misc. File 1922-1935, Gold Star Pilgrimages Box 376, Folder Letters of Commendation.

and Ohio contingents who outnumbered them. Nebraska mothers claimed Minnie Throckmorton of Nebraska should have the honor because she was the first woman from the state to join the Gold Star Mothers Association. As a sort of compromise, some of the mothers voted for Mary Kelly of New Jersey to have the honor but this caused Nebraska and Washington, D.C. mothers to walk out of the meeting. They claimed Kelly was only a sister and not a mother and so she did not deserve the honor. In the chaos, someone stole the wreath. It “turned up in Mrs. Throckmorton’s room tagged, ‘Gold Star Mother’s do your duty.’”<sup>55</sup> Robinson’s article was a point-blank critique of the “companionship of sorrow” and debunked any notion of the sacredness of the pilgrimage. Upon reading the story, Ellis clamped down on the media and made sure that Robinson in particular received no other opportunities to cover the pilgrims while she was in France.

The pilgrims disembarked at Cherbourg in France and had special visas that permitted “American and alien” pilgrims to enter France without formal inspection. In the spirit of the pilgrimage, the French government also suspended visa fees and many other requirements.<sup>56</sup> The Ministry of Hygiene allowed U.S. Army doctors to oversee the medical needs of pilgrims despite that “under the French Law authorization could not be granted for foreign physicians to practice in France.” The Director of Customs, “contrary to the Laws of France,” exempted pilgrim luggage from examination by custom officials. The Beaux Arts Commission made arrangements that allowed “Pilgrims to visit [national museums] at times not ordinarily open to public and furthermore reduced entrance fees were granted.” Regional police departments provided “special police protection” and special parking “in spaces usually prohibited.” The

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<sup>55</sup> Grace Robinson, *Chicago Tribune Paris Edition*, 17 May 1930, NA RG 92 Office of the Quartermaster General, Miscellaneous Files 1922-1935, Gold Star Pilgrimages, Box 348, Scrapbook—Press Clippings.

<sup>56</sup> “European Visas,” NA, RG 92, Misc. Files 1922-1935, Gold Start Pilgrimage, Box 351, Folder 012.3 Pilgrimages, Gold Star Mothers.

police also allowed automobile travel through the Bois de Boulogne, a wilderness park outside of Paris. American officials reported, “The granting of this last authorization was most unusual as never before had it been granted and when first spoken of it was said to be impossible.” The Director General of the state-run railway system provided special trains to take pilgrims from Cherbourg to Paris and back. In Paris, the women were accommodated in first-class hotels at the Carlton, d’Iena, Lutetia, Ambassador, Commodore, or de Paris, all “rated as ‘A.’”<sup>57</sup>

The Parisian hotels had suitable accommodation but unsuitable food, according to the Army Pilgrim Office. “The food in first class French hotels leaves little to be desired by the gourmand but is not very well suited to the impaired digestive apparatus of a seventy year old stomach,” reported one military adviser. The French diet had a “preponderance of carbohydrates and protein, rich heavy food, highly seasoned and well calculated to tax the digestive ability of anyone.” And French people, claimed the adviser, could digest this because they ate only twice and six or eight hours usually separated the meals. The pilgrims, instead, enjoyed three meals per day consisting of American staples of bacon, eggs, cereal, meat, vegetables, salads, cheese, and deserts. The military also provided special meals for diabetics and “cardio-renal-vascular cases” and provided kosher food for Jewish pilgrims. This amounted to doing away with “French food.” Contracts stipulated what could and could not be served to the women. Hotels in Paris were forbidden from serving mineral water and instead could only serve “ordinary drinking water, iced when necessary.” Additionally, “only American blend coffee, sold by Corcellet” in Paris was acceptable. “If it is desired to use another coffee than Corcellet, a sample must be submitted to this office for test and approval.” Fresh milk from France was not to be served and

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<sup>57</sup> “Gold Stare Europe Report 1930—Official Dealings with the French Government,” NA, RG 92, Misc. File 1922-1935, Gold Star Pilgrimage, Box 360, Folder 319.1.

instead hotels were to substitute Libby's brand condensed milk mixed with water. "Only fish dishes without bones will be served."<sup>58</sup>

Once in Paris, French mothers and widows received the American mothers and widows at a welcoming tea. The American women also had dinner with General Pershing and various French and American diplomats and military men. In a welcoming speech, Colonel Ellis sounded themes of nationalism, motherhood, and Christianity. "Never in the history of the world," claimed Ellis, "has such a pilgrimage been undertaken. To find anything approximating it in importance we must go back—far back in the past—to the days of the Crusades." Ellis mentioned the skeptics of the trips who called them a waste of money and a "joyride," he claimed, "I feel that there is nothing the Government has ever done for which the Nation will receive such great benefit as this sacred and solemn pilgrimage. If only one mother found that great peace of soul, the Nation will be fully repaid for all its expenditure." He announced, "I consider it sacrilegious to speak of cost when the love of motherhood is involved." This use of religious language underscored patriotic purpose and importance of the pilgrimage. "The Nation," continued the Colonel, "will be a better Nation. For it is true that as the Mothers of the Nation believe and act, so will the Nation be." Ellis added, "You have materially assisted the War Department in this pilgrimage. The keeping of the nation is in your hands and I know it is not misplaced." Not unlike a speech given before an important military mission, these words set the tone for the rest of the pilgrimage.<sup>59</sup>

While in Paris, the pilgrims laid a wreath at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier at the Arc de Triomphe and took in the sights of the city. A French journalist reported of a pilgrim,

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<sup>58</sup>"Gold Stare Europe Report 1930—Official Dealings with the French Government," NA, RG 92, Misc. File 1922-1935, Gold Star Pilgrimage, Box 360, Folder 319; "Specifications for Paris Hotels," NARA, RG 92, Misc. File 1922-1935, Gold Star Pilgrimage Box 346, Folder Hotel and Bus Agreements Europe 1932.

<sup>59</sup>"Speech to Gold Star Mothers," NA, RG 92, Misc. File 1922-1935, Gold Star Pilgrimages, Box 349, Folder Press Releases Speeches 1930-1932.

“Another, after having visited Paris and come in contact with the works of art and of our civilization, cried: ‘I can better understand now why it was necessary for my son to die.’” The reporter added, “French-American friendship can but gain by these pilgrimages, born of personal losses to these mothers which will result in a higher and greater mutual understanding.”<sup>60</sup> The pilgrims ventured in small groups by autobus out to the military cemeteries where each woman had the opportunity to see her son’s or husband’s grave. If it was the Meuse-Argonne, Oise-Aisne, or St. Mihiel military cemetery, the Army built temporary rest houses for the women as there was no suitable hotel nearby that could be used for shelter or for toilets. The rest houses were one-story and “furnished somewhat along the lines which one would expect to find in an attractive country club.”<sup>61</sup> Each cost \$5,000 to build.<sup>62</sup> After lunch in the rest house, each mother and wife went back out to their respective gravesites and laid a wreath and a bouquet of flowers, provided by the government, at the gravesite of her son or husband. They also posed for an official photograph at the gravesite, which the Army made available to them after the pilgrimage. They spent the night at a nearby hotel; after a few days visiting the cemetery, they returned to Paris. Once everyone completed their pilgrimage, the mothers left Paris by train for Cherbourg and returned on the same steamer to the U.S. They disembarked in New York and boarded trains for their hometowns.

Army officials planned the trips to the smallest detail and most of the participants enjoyed them. Mrs. C. C. Wiens of Los Angeles, California shared her fairly typical experience with local newspaper outlets. Her account indicates that the pilgrimage did exactly what it was

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<sup>60</sup> Micheline Resco, *France-Amerique du Nord*, 21 September 1930, NA RG 92 Office of the Quartermaster General, Miscellaneous Files 1922-1935, Gold Star Pilgrimages, Box 348, Scrapbook—Press Clippings.

<sup>61</sup> “Gold Stare Europe Report 1930—Official Dealings with the French Government.

<sup>62</sup> “Expenses of Pilgrimage to American Cemeteries in Europe,” House Committee on Appropriations, 21 January 1930, NA, RG 92 Office of the Quartermaster General, Miscellaneous Files 1922-1935, Gold Star Pilgrimages, Box 345, Folder Proposed Amendment and Hearing to Congress prior to Passage of Bill, Committee on Military Affairs House of Representatives.

supposed to do—produce patriotism. She contrasted the United States in favorable terms to France and suggested that her patriotism had been rejuvenated upon her return. She also presented her trip in the language of divine providence and expressed her religiosity numerous times. When she left Los Angeles to begin her journey she recognized “the guidance of God in my past life and I was able also to believe my future destiny lay at his feet.” She recounted her time in New York and on board the *S.S. Roosevelt*. All of this was expressed in glowing language but this language turned critical upon reaching France. In a sort of travelogue that espoused to the tenets of Americanness, Wiens described the French as the most peculiar of people. She complained about the food being overly seasoned, the lack of fruit and vegetables, and the “chicory [sic] mixture” of coffee. She commented, “We did not like their wine[;] the French could not understand and they almost drove us crazy.” Women on the street, commented Wiens, “wear almost all black or dark blue [clothes] and dressed with great simplicity.” She noted the department stores were not as grand compared to the ones in Los Angeles and stated, “It was not clear to me why fashions should originate in Paris. I think they are made up in America, sent to France and then they are imported again by us as something quite outlandish.” She was amazed that the “bread almost half a yard long was being pedaled on the street from a protected cart. Nothing is known of the art of wrapping.” She noted, “France appeared to me in everything at least fifty years behind the times.”<sup>63</sup> It seems that Wiens had a strong sense of American nationalism before she ever landed in Cherbourg; it was easy for her to describe the foreignness of France and the French.

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<sup>63</sup> “A Visit to the Grave of My Son in France,” NA, RG 92, Misc. File 1922-1935, Gold Star Pilgrimages, Box 349, Folder Press Releases Speeches 1930-1932.



Wiens went on to comment on her visit to her son's grave in the Meuse-Argonne cemetery. The sacredness that she attributed to the cemetery contrasted sharply with her criticism of Paris. She recounted the moment that her group approached the cemetery grounds:

As we drew near the sacred city on the 10<sup>th</sup> [June] and just as we came over a small knoll we suddenly saw the American flag waving high in the air. We wanted to go on at once. Soon we saw on a smooth slope a large, white field glittering in the sun. It was the 14,185 white marble markers.

She continued, "Everything was quiet in our bus," and noted that "every mother who had prayed and wept at the grave of her son went from here an advocate of peace and as a decided enemy of war." Wiens's personal time in the cemetery was a powerful moment. She remembered, "For me these were consecrated hours. When I was able to pray to my Master for the first time 'Lord, not mine, but thy will be done' my trembling heart was quiet." And she missed her son as she lamented, "Would that my dear son were with me or that at least I had his strong support. I must tread the wine press alone. God alone has heard the prayers of the mothers and counted their tears." This was quite a commentary on the power of the pilgrimage. For Wiens, the experience proved sacred as well as patriotic. She was very grateful for the opportunity.<sup>64</sup>

But she had to return to Paris and again Wiens contrasted the quiet ordered cemetery where her son lay with the chaos and loudness of the city. "We went back to unsympathetic Paris, where the autos blow insanely the whole night and where there is evidently very little control of traffic." She even criticized the famous St. Madeleine Church as a poor representation of Christianity. "Alas," Wiens remarked, "we find this splendid house of God full of money changers and traders, for every other step we are asked to buy something." It was doubtful that the "moneychangers" were sponsored by church officials, but her dislike of French culture allowed her to equate the biblical narrative of Jesus of Nazareth overturning the moneychangers

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<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

in the temple grounds with street salesmen selling souvenirs for visitors and tourists near the church. Despite this criticism, Wiens “looked for a trinket for my child, but I soon found out that being American, they asked a ridiculously high price.” Moneychangers or not, Wiens would have purchased something had she been offered what she alleged to be the “local price” instead of the “American price.”<sup>65</sup>

Wiens’s narrative of France ended abruptly with her failure to buy a souvenir for her daughter. The rest of her account concentrated on her return to the U.S. and her reflections on visiting her son’s grave. She recollected, “I was happy and thankful that I had visited my son’s grave, that his last resting place was in such good hands and so well cared for and especially that the United States flag which he loved so warmly and for which he gave his life was waving over his grave every day.” Despite this, she thoroughly enjoyed returning to the U.S. “When finally on the 28<sup>th</sup> of June we beheld the outline of New York City stretching towards the blue sky and the Statue of Liberty welcoming us, we were quite proud of our American citizenship.” She concluded, “We Americans have much to criticize and rave about but still there is no country in the world that can compare with it.”<sup>66</sup> Wiens’s account typified the sentiments that organizers hoped the pilgrims received from the experience. The government’s grand gesture of taking them on such a journey often brought praise from the mothers and widows. What might have been a bitter experience revealed instead the degree of investment American women had made in the cause of the nation, of which most of them were now enfranchised citizens.

The pilgrims were likewise thankful for the reassurance that came with visiting the cemeteries. As Agnes Gass of Bell Fourche, South Dakota stated, “It has been a dream, come true, and we feel more satisfied. Our loved one rests in a beautiful place and his life was not

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<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

given in vain.”<sup>67</sup> Another recollected, “As our thoughts turn back to that Sacred Spot ‘Gods Acre’ on the Hillside, with its long rows of marble stones, symbolic of service and sacrifice, we are proud of our boys and thankful to Uncle Sam that he made it possible for us to lay our flowers at their feet.”<sup>68</sup> Blanche Dickson of Altus, Oklahoma exclaimed, “I had never been exactly satisfied about leaving the body over there but since [the pilgrimage] I am very glad I left him sleeping beside his comrades.”<sup>69</sup> Ethel Sill of Detroit, Michigan recalled:

Our trip was a wonderful one, and we stood by those wonderful white crosses that mark the last resting place of our loved ones we were made to feel that our sacrifice was not in vain and that a grateful nation had been thoughtful of us. Only words of praise can be given to our nation and to those who had our care and our comfort in hand.<sup>70</sup>

Callie Laird of Little Rock, Arkansas stated, “I am so glad now after this visit that I decided to leave the remains where they are buried, in such sweet, restful and well groomed place.” She continued, “And when I say this I am sure I am voicing the views of the other mothers, as I heard nothing but praise for Our Government, the best in the world, the Land of the Free and the Home of the Brave.”<sup>71</sup> Even the French government shared these sentiments. When General Henri Gouraud, the military governor of Paris and member of the Superior Council of War, learned that the pilgrimages would end in 1933, he called it “the news I have dreaded.” He commented:

I must admit that this decision is one that I fail to understand. These pilgrimages of remote mothers crossing at times all of your immense Continent and immense Ocean to come and meditate and pray upon the graves of their sons, in one corner of the soil of France—such was one of the beautiful things of the present times.

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<sup>67</sup> Letter, Agnes Gass to Lieutenant Colonel G. G. Bartlett, NA, RG 92, Misc. File 1922-1935, Gold Star Pilgrimage, Box 376, Folder Letters of Commendation.

<sup>68</sup> “On Board the United States Lines,” 25 June 1930, NA, RG 92, Misc. File 1922-1935, Gold Star Pilgrimage, Box 376, Folder Letters of Commendation.

<sup>69</sup> Letter, Blanche Dickson to Lieutenant Colonel G. G. Bartlett, 11 July 1930, NA, RG 92, Misc. File 1922-1935, Gold Star Pilgrimage, Box 376, Folder Letters of Commendation.

<sup>70</sup> Letter, Ethel Still to Colonel Richard Ellis, 18 July 1930, NA, RG 92, Misc. File 1922-1935, Gold Star Pilgrimage, Box 376, Folder Letters of Commendation.

<sup>71</sup> Letter, Callie Laird to War Department, 21 July 1930, NA, RG 92, Misc. File 1922-1935, Gold Star Pilgrimage, Box 376, Folder Letters of Commendation.

The graves are still there; but the Mothers shall never come over again! I can only bow in respectful resignation, but I am very sorry.<sup>72</sup>

At least in public, the pilgrimages strengthened the community of interests between France and the U.S.

While the Army and the War Department were gratified by the response of the pilgrims, there were significant behind-the-scenes criticisms of the military's deficiencies in dealing with the health concerns of the pilgrims. Most of the pilgrims consulted military doctors at least once during the voyage. The War Department estimated 17,600 days in the hospital and budgeted \$352,000 for medical needs. This amounted to \$20 per day.<sup>73</sup> During the 1932 and 1933 pilgrimages, sixty-nine percent of pilgrims required medical attention. Sometimes mothers had significant psychological concerns that required the escorts to separate them from the group. In severe cases, the military "employ[ed] the services of a Neuro-Psychiatrist to determine the advisability of their making the pilgrimage."<sup>74</sup> While in France, "Medical tours of all hotels were made twice a day, morning and night."<sup>75</sup> The Army even provided free dental care for the pilgrims, with an American dentist in Paris benefitting from the arrangement. Reports mentioned that most women suffered fatigue at one point during the voyage and added, "Those with chronic heart lesions were sometimes in a rather critical condition; borderline mental cases were in a state of excitation and cardio-renal-vascular cases invariably showed a rise in blood pressure." It was a taxing trip on anyone, let alone someone who was advanced in years and unused to the climate of Europe. Of the 3,653 women who traveled in 1930, doctors made 2,785

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<sup>72</sup> Translated letter, General Gouraud to Lieutenant Colonel R. H. Jordan, 21 August 1933, NA, RG 92, Misc. File 1922-1935, Gold Star Pilgrimage, Box 361, Folder 319.1

<sup>73</sup> "Expenses of Pilgrimage to American Cemeteries in Europe," House Committee on Appropriations, 21 January 1930, NA, RG 92 Office of the Quartermaster General, Miscellaneous Files 1922-1935, Gold Star Pilgrimages, Box 345, Folder Proposed Amendment and Hearing to Congress prior to Passage of Bill, Committee on Military Affairs House of Representatives.

<sup>74</sup> "1933 Report," NA, RG 92, Misc. File 1922-1935, Gold Star Pilgrimage, Box 352, Folder Pilgrimages of Mothers and Widows to Cemeteries of Europe during 1933.

<sup>75</sup> "Gold Stare Europe Report 1930—Official Dealings with the French Government.

visits. Some 420 women were restricted to their rooms and 211 were held back from their original group; they either visited cemeteries later or remained in a Parisian hospital through the duration of the trip. Doctors dealt with all sorts of health issues ranging from diabetes to asthma, from corns and abscess to “dementia.” In 1930 U.S. Army doctors diagnosed 99 cases of cardio-renal-vascular disease, 21 cases of “Valvular Heart Disease,” and 19 cases of “Myocarditis.” They also encountered 500 cases of constipation, which according to military doctors was due to diet, overeating, old age, and a schedule so tightly planned that many did not have time to relieve themselves after breakfast. There were 220 upper respiratory infections. Doctors also diagnosed 94 women with senility, while 11 were said to have “Dementia unclassified,” 54 had “Neurasthenia,” and 20 had hysteria that was controlled through “sedatives and suggestion.”<sup>76</sup> Many of these women had never before accessed professional healthcare and modern medicine.

These health concerns, however, seemed unbecoming to the sacredness of the women’s mission, let alone the reputation of the Army and the program it had developed for the pilgrimage. To prevent criticism, none of this information was released to the press. In fact, Quartermaster General DeWitt censored the media. In a memo issued to Colonel Ellis, he complained about an Associated Press article “published throughout the United States” about the health of one of the pilgrims. DeWitt noted that “while it is not my desire to hinder the news gathering services from securing such information . . . I think it better policy not to publish the illness of any pilgrim.” Instead, if a pilgrim suffered a health problem, DeWitt directed Ellis to communicate with the pilgrim’s family directly via cable. DeWitt informed Ellis, “I wish you

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<sup>76</sup> Ibid.

would warn all the Officers under your command relative to this, and caution them that nothing must be given out that would in any way cause embarrassment to the various pilgrims.”<sup>77</sup>

But the health of the pilgrims made the pilgrimage inadvisable for many. The Army understood this and even included caskets on all of the vessels in preparation that some might die during the journey. They projected that 21 women would die and budgeted \$4,725 for burial expenses.<sup>78</sup> In 1930, one woman died in New York City before boarding her ship to France while another woman died en route to New York. Five women became so ill in New York that they had to return home. During the voyage one died at sea returning to the United States while two women died in Verdun—one just after and one just before seeing the graves of their sons.<sup>79</sup> General DeWitt, always nervous about depictions of the pilgrimages in the media, escaped criticism by turning these deaths into productions that further underscored the purpose of pilgrimage and the care and efficiency of the government. An example of this was the death and funeral of one pilgrim from the town of Smith Center, Kansas. She arrived in Cherbourg in September 1930. The medical staff visited her room, as was customary, that evening and the next morning and she seemed in good health. She had made the trans-Atlantic journey without ailment. She participated in all the events in Paris including the dedication at the Tomb of the Unknown. On 7 September, she went by autobus to the Meuse-Argonne region and checked into the Hotel Verdun with the other women in her group. The next morning the group went to the Meuse-Argonne cemetery and she visited her son’s grave. After a few minutes, she returned to the rest house and had her lunch with the rest of the widows and mothers. After her lunch she returned to her son’s grave for the photographer to take her photo next to the grave. While

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<sup>77</sup> Memo, Major General DeWitt to Colonel Ellis, 20 May 1930, NA, RG 92, Misc. File 1922-1935, Gold Star Pilgrimage, Box 349, Folder Pilgrimage, Gold Star 1930.

<sup>78</sup> “Expenses of Pilgrimage to American Cemeteries in Europe,” House Committee on Appropriations.

<sup>79</sup> “Summary Report” NA, RG 92, Misc. File 1922-1935, Gold Star Pilgrimage, Box 361, Folder 319.1

waiting she felt a severe pain in her head, became nauseous, and collapsed. At that moment the photographer discovered her and called for help. She was rushed to the rest house, where medical staff gave her stimulants, and she told them that she had suffered a stroke in December 1928.<sup>80</sup>

From the rest house, the medical and military staff took her back to the Verdun Hotel and monitored her for the next four days. The officers never took her to a hospital as there was no facility nearby. She did not survive her stroke, dying in her bed at the Verdun Hotel. The doctor's final diagnosis was that given her previous health conditions, "with the excitement of the trip from the United States to France and the visit to the son's grave, there arose a crisis resulting in a uremic condition which she was not able to overcome."<sup>81</sup> This was not something that could be publicized without calling into doubt the wisdom behind the entire program as well as the handling of the woman's death. Colonel Ellis cabled the pilgrim's husband in Smith Center, Kansas directly and made preparations for the return of her remains. He had a French undertaker, Mr. Bernard Lane, "with whom these headquarters had tentative arrangements," travel on the midnight train to Verdun. The undertaker arrived at six in the morning and embalmed the woman's body. By noon, Lieutenant John J. Binne had gathered and inventoried her belongings and returned to Paris with them. The body arrived by hearse in Paris soon after on 15 September; it was placed in a casket and laid in the Mortuary Chapel of the Protestant Church of the Holy Trinity until noon the next day. Then the casket was draped with an American flag and placed in a railroad luggage car, which French law required, and escorted by Lieutenant Binne to Cherbourg. Captain Morrell Ross then escorted the remains on board the *S.S. President Harding*, which made it to New York on 26 September, and then continued on by

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<sup>80</sup> "Report on the Death," NA, RG 92, Gold Star Pilgrimage, Box 83, Folder Funerals and Burials Death of Pilgrims.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid.

train to Kansas on 28 September. The funeral was held on 30 September and Captain Ross, assisted by a local member of the American Legion, removed the flag from the coffin, folded it into corners, and presented it to the family.<sup>82</sup>

Anticipating criticism, the military kept almost all of the details from the press. A short statement was issued on the day of the woman's death and journalists obliged the officials by not demanding more information. But it was important that the Pilgrimage Office show complete respect for the pilgrim's body, especially since she died performing the work of memory under their supervision. Escorting her remains and draping her casket in the flag demonstrated the sacredness of the event. That a mother should die near the same spot as her son, thousands of miles away from home, was a double sacrifice. The deaths of a handful of other mothers added a new layer of patriotic meaning to the pilgrimage, further enfolding women in the nation and its mission to the postwar world.

### Segregated Mothers and Widows

The Gold Star Pilgrimages was a racialized as well as a gendered exercise by government and civil society. In keeping with separate and unequal Jim Crow segregation, the Gold Star Mothers Association practiced segregation and restricted membership to white women. But black sons and husbands died in the war and so the government offered their black mothers and widows the opportunity to join the pilgrimage, albeit in segregated format. Although none of the congressional bills ever mentioned segregation, black women nevertheless traveled on different—commercial rather than luxury—steamers and participated in completely separate contingents. Military records showed that 1080 black women met eligibility requirements, but only 220 expressed an interest in going on pilgrimage. Not wanting to risk embarrassment, the

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<sup>82</sup> Ibid.



War Department targeted these 220 women only as invitees.<sup>83</sup> The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) accused the War Department of discrimination. In 1930 and 1931, 5,251 white women made the pilgrimage but only 168 black women made the trip.<sup>84</sup> In May 1930, of the 220 who originally favored the trip, 52 declined the offer when invited and objected to the segregated nature of the pilgrimage. Many of them sent a very similarly worded letter, which infuriated Colonel W. R. Gibson who believed that the women were unduly influenced by the NAACP: “It is a known fact that these colored women are below the average in intelligence and it is my opinion that many of them have signed this letter without intending to decline the invitation to make the pilgrimage.”<sup>85</sup>

Protests continued throughout the spring of 1930. In February, Republican Governor Frank Allen of Massachusetts wrote directly to President Hoover claiming that the policy was “ill-advised, unfair and contrary to the ideals of our American government.” He asked Hoover to “rescind all orders which in any way establish a color line in connection with the coming pilgrimage of Gold Star Mothers.”<sup>86</sup> The NAACP leader Walter White asked the War Department to overturn the segregation policy. Ordinary people also wrote to the White House and the War Department. One from Pontiac, Michigan adamantly protested the “Jim Crow ships.” It was a dishonor not only to the mothers and wives but to the dead soldiers and proved to be “evidence of American inhumanity and ingratitude.” And it showed how “heartless a great nation can be.” This was not just a claim that African Americans would make: “France must see

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<sup>83</sup> Memorandum, W. R. Gibson to Secretary of War, 27 May 1930, NA RG 92 Office of the Quartermaster General, Miscellaneous Files 1922-1935, Gold Star Pilgrimages, Box 379, Folder Colored Vol. 1. Of course this larger number of 1080 would include individuals who declined out of necessity as well as individuals who would have declined out of protest of segregationist policies.

<sup>84</sup> Letter, John DeWitt to Lee Davis, 16 March 1932, NA, RG 92 Office of the Quartermaster General, Miscellaneous Files 1922-1935, Gold Star Pilgrimages, Box 345, Folder Colored M & W Correspondence related to segregation, etc.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid.

<sup>86</sup> Letter, Frank Allen to Herbert Hoover, 21 February 1930, NA RG 92 Office of the Quartermaster General, Miscellaneous Files 1922-1935, Gold Star Pilgrimages, Box 379, Folder Colored Vol. 1.

their shame the shame of American [sic] even the World [sic] at large must be or to be treated to the operation of American prejudice abroad.” In a stinging criticism, the author suggested the War Department use German warships to transport the black Gold Star mothers. “Even their war ships,” added the author, were “preferable to American Jim Crow ships.”<sup>87</sup> A letter from “Ex. Soldier” to the Quartermaster General asked, “Is not your dead colored soldier’s grave worth as much as the white? They both lost their lives for the same cause.” Instead of segregation, the author admonished:

Let us all raise our heads and eyes heavenward, and pray to God, to guide the ship with mothers of both races through the perils of the great deep Atlantic, to the graves of their loved ones. And on this great ship’s return, sing praise to God Almighty, and do honor to those mothers who’s sorrow have been greatly lightened. Why can’t this be done instead of trying to insult our Gold Star Mothers and Negro race in general?

The soldier used Christian imagery to make his point crystal clear: “Do you believe the Lord admitted these boys [sic] souls into heaven through separate gates?” It was the mothers and wives whose loyalty allowed their boys to fight for the American flag, the author argued. It was a shame “that our own Federal Government would insult and segregate its own citizens on account of color.”<sup>88</sup> These criticisms brought significant pressure on the War Department and the Hoover Administration to change course on segregated pilgrimages.

The pilgrimages were supposed to produce national unity and not showcase racial discord. If the NAACP, long criticized for only appealing to the liberal elite, succeeded in influencing public opinion at home and abroad, the “community of interests” between France and the U.S. could be weakened. Moreover, an outcry over segregated pilgrimages had the potential at accelerating the shift of black political allegiances from the Republicans to the

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<sup>87</sup> Letter, Pontiac, Michigan to War Department, 22 April 1930, NA RG 92 Office of the Quartermaster General, Miscellaneous Files 1922-1935, Gold Star Pilgrimages, Box 379, Folder Colored Vol. 1.

<sup>88</sup> Letter, Ex. Soldier to Quartermaster General, March 1930, NA RG 92 Office of the Quartermaster General, Miscellaneous Files 1922-1935, Gold Star Pilgrimages, Box 379, Folder Colored Vol. 1.

Democrats. Although the number of black Gold Star mothers was not high, their cause was fraught with significance for the realization of Lincoln's promise.

Inside the War Department a serious conversation unfolded in late April and early May 1930 about what could be done. In a meeting with Quartermaster General DeWitt, Acting Secretary of War F. Trubee Davison, and Assistant Secretary of War Frederick Payne, President Hoover noted that he faced "considerable political pressure" about the segregated pilgrimages. Hoover's intention in the meeting was to inquire, "whether or not some way could be devised whereby the mothers and widows themselves could bring about the segregation." Hoover believed that the Quartermaster General could send invitations to white mothers and widows still to be invited that gave them the choice of sailing on a ship with black mothers and widows or on a ship with white pilgrims. Hoover believed that "the white women would all select the boat other than that on which the colored women would be sent, thereby themselves making the decision rather than leaving it up to the Secretary of War." DeWitt stated that this plan was possible but it too posed political risks. He feared that "intelligent white women who received such an invitation would feel, in view of the published information that the colored mothers were to go on a separate boat, it more or less of an insult; and that the reaction would be worse politically than the present reaction was." DeWitt believed that a better course of action was to keep the pilgrims segregated and to produce an overwhelming experience for the black pilgrims. He told the President that black pilgrims were to be treated the same as white pilgrims in all matters except their accommodation in New York City the night before they left for Europe. Because no hotels in New York would "accept colored guests," the pilgrims would have to stay at the YMCA. But, he reminded the President, "After the women reach France even that would

disappear.” DeWitt hoped that “it would be found that these colored women had been so well treated that those who had declined would want to go next year.”<sup>89</sup>

The continuing rise in decline letters throughout May 1930 forced the War Department to consider changing its policy more drastically. In one letter drafted by the Secretary of War Hurley, but apparently never sent to the NAACP, the War Department seemed to offer a concession. Although Hurley preferred to keep the black women separate from the white women, he softened his position: “The War Department, of course, has no objection to members of one group joining other groups provided they are welcome by other groups concerned.” He added the provision that, “without such welcome you will understand that his action would not be conducive to the peace and comfort of the pilgrims of either race.”<sup>90</sup> The Secretary of War went so far as to order DeWitt to draw up contingency plans to integrate the pilgrims, which would have forced the Quartermaster General to renegotiate contracts, reorganize hotels and reconfigure the entire machinery of the program. DeWitt noted that the United States Lines had already sold tourist packages to fill the remaining occupancy of the steamers carrying the pilgrims. He observed that “The carrying of colored women as passengers in this way will have a detrimental bearing on their regular and tourist business.” The War Department would have to notify white pilgrims of the change of plans: “If we do not do this we will be accused of misrepresenting the facts.”<sup>91</sup>

DeWitt also noted in his official diary that this was a bad business practice for the United States Line and the U.S. government. His meeting with Acting Secretary of War Davison and

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<sup>89</sup> “Memorandum for Diary,” John DeWitt, 29 April 1930, NA RG 92 Office of the Quartermaster General, Miscellaneous Files 1922-1935, Gold Star Pilgrimages, Box 379, Folder Colored Vol. 1.

<sup>90</sup> Letter, John Hurly to Walter White, NA RG 92 Office of the Quartermaster General, Miscellaneous Files 1922-1935, Gold Star Pilgrimages, Box 379, Folder Colored Vol. 1.

<sup>91</sup> Memorandum, John DeWitt to Secretary of War, 1 May 1930, NA RG 92 Office of the Quartermaster General, Miscellaneous Files 1922-1935, Gold Star Pilgrimages, Box 379, Folder Colored Vol. 1.

General Van Horn Moseley, executive to Davison, brought an end to the talk of renegotiating contracts. Moseley was very concerned about the negative publicity that would accompany the change of plans. Davison quizzed DeWitt as to the consequences of the matter. At a time when the United States Line was already on the brink of collapse, DeWitt recounted, “The United States Line would unquestionably lose their business, which would go to foreign ships, and would, in my opinion, be justified in bringing a claim against the Government to the extent of a very large sum.” The Quartermaster General added, “I thought their business would be ruined—not only this year, but probably next year as the pilgrimage would last until 1933.” Finally he explained to Davison, “a decision to change or not change the plan already decided upon would spell the success or failure as far as the pilgrimage was concerned.” Should the War Department integrate the pilgrims, DeWitt believed the entire program would fail.<sup>92</sup>

Acting Secretary Davison attempted to find alternative ways to enforce segregation without the War Department’s involvement. In a confidential memo to Assistant Secretary of War Frederick Huff Payne, Davison proposed putting the blame on the railroads and steamships. He asked Payne to investigate “beyond doubt” whether the Pullman Company would agree to transport individual black pilgrims as well as whether the United States Line would place such women in third class. Davis noted that “under the circumstances we could state that the railroads and steamship lines themselves were compelling the segregation, and that under the law it was necessary to carry out the plan as originally outlined by the War Department.”<sup>93</sup> This produced the solution for which Davison was searching and allowed the Secretary of War to reject completely the accusations from the NAACP, claiming that, from the perspective of the War

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<sup>92</sup> Memorandum for the Diary, John DeWitt, NA RG 92 Office of the Quartermaster General, Miscellaneous Files 1922-1935, Gold Star Pilgrimages, Box 379, Folder Colored Vol. 1.

<sup>93</sup> Memorandum, Confidential, F. Trubee Davison to Colonel Payne, NA RG 92 Office of the Quartermaster General, Miscellaneous Files 1922-1935, Gold Star Pilgrimages, Box 379, Folder Colored Vol. 1.

Department, “No discrimination whatever is made between the groups of white and colored pilgrims, each group receiving like accommodations at hotels and on steamships, and the attending personnel being as solicitous of the welfare of the colored pilgrims as of those of the white race.”<sup>94</sup>

By the end of May 1930, the Secretary of War replied to White that the policy did not produce discrimination and that it would not be changed. White then wrote to President Hoover, unaware of Hoover’s complicity—even craftsmanship—of the segregation policy, asking him to intervene directly and order the War Department to integrate the trips.<sup>95</sup> Hoover refused to respond to White’s appeal. Thus black women and the NAACP mounted an impressive level of mobilization against the segregated pilgrimages. By 17 July 1930, the Army had sent out 233 invitations and received 102 acceptances and 122 declines while nine did not reply. Of those who declined, the Army counted seven who “alleged discrimination,” ten who declined “without comment” but “sent form letter,” and twenty-three who did not accuse the Army of discrimination but sent in the NAACP letter. Another eighty-two declined but gave a reason other than discrimination, such as age or health. The Army memo also noted that of the eighty-two, thirty women initially accepted the invitation before later declining.<sup>96</sup> The NAACP form letter sent with many of the rejections noted the service of black men in the military and the unjust actions taken by the Army to commemorate the lives of those black men by sending their mothers and widows abroad in segregated groups. It stated, “Ten years after the Armistice, the high principles of 1918 seem to have been forgotten. We who gave, and who are colored, are

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<sup>94</sup> Letter, John Hurley to Walter White, NA RG 92 Office of the Quartermaster General, Miscellaneous Files 1922-1935, Gold Star Pilgrimages, Box 379, Folder Colored Vol. 2.

<sup>95</sup> Letter, Walter White to Herbert Hoover, 23 May 1930, NA RG 92 Office of the Quartermaster General, Miscellaneous Files 1922-1935, Gold Star Pilgrimages, Box 379, Folder Colored Vol. 1.

<sup>96</sup> Memorandum, “Colored Gold Star Pilgrimage, 17 July 1930, NA, RG 92 Office of the Quartermaster General, Miscellaneous Files 1922-1935, Gold Star Pilgrimages, Box 345, Folder Colored M & W Correspondence related to segregation, etc.

insulted by the implication that we are not fit persons to travel with other bereaved ones.” It continued, “We are set aside in a separate group, Jim Crowed, segregated and insulted.” They would not travel unless the Army permitted them to travel with white Gold Star Mothers and Widows.<sup>97</sup>

Thus the pilgrimages remained segregated throughout the existence of the program. Staying in the YMCA in New York was not the only form of discrimination that the women endured. The ship contracted to take the black pilgrims, the *American Merchant*, was an economy liner not as luxurious as the *SS George Washington* or the *SS President Harding* used by the white pilgrims. In addition, the African American pilgrims had different accommodations in Paris. Reverend Joseph Wilson Cochran of the American Church of Paris was very unsure of the treatment the African American pilgrims would receive in France. In a letter to DeWitt, he reported, “I am particularly concerned with the group of several hundred negro women who must find accommodations here and there during their stay. I do not believe it possible to arrange accommodations in hotels frequented by white people even here in Paris.”<sup>98</sup> But the Army Pilgrimage Office in Paris secured the Hotel Imperator, which was not as luxurious as the hotels where the white pilgrims stayed. Trying to justify this different accommodation, Colonel Ellis of the Pilgrimage Office in Paris noted that the Imperator hotel was used previously by returning soldiers of the 27<sup>th</sup> Division, touring Naval cadets, and the American Legion pilgrims of 1927. Besides these elements, the African American pilgrims received similar treatment to that of the white pilgrims. They met the French mothers and shook hands with the American Ambassador to France and General Pershing. They laid a wreath at the Tomb of the Unknown and visited the

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<sup>97</sup> Letter, Walter White to Herbert Hoover, 23 May 1930, NA RG 92 Office of the Quartermaster General, Miscellaneous Files 1922-1935, Gold Star Pilgrimages, Box 379, Folder Colored Vol. 1.

<sup>98</sup> Letter, Joseph Cochran to John DeWitt, 30 January 1930, NA RG 92 Office of the Quartermaster General, Miscellaneous Files 1922-1935, Gold Star Pilgrimages, Box 379, Folder Colored Vol. 2.

cemeteries where their sons and husbands lay buried. Given the different ways in which racism worked in France, they could maneuver around Paris without the stringent forms of racial segregation that they regularly encountered in the United States.

Those African Americans who accepted the invitations went to Europe and visited the graves of their loved ones; most had very positive experiences. The first group of African American Gold Star pilgrims sailed in 1930; their tour was typical of most of the other black pilgrims. They shared some experiences that the white pilgrims did not. For example, some black soldiers remained in France after the war. One such individual was Noble Sissle, who led an orchestra that headlined at the Hotel Ambassador. He and several other black musicians sought and gained permission to meet the pilgrims on arrival in Paris. When the train carrying the pilgrims pulled into the station, Sissle's orchestra broke into "Onward Christian Soldiers." Other black expatriates also met the women at the train station and gave each woman a purple star. As the women left the station, Sissle's orchestra played "The Star Spangled Banner" and "The Marseillaise." At the Arc de Triomphe, the pilgrims were met by General Gouraud and "an unusually large assemblage of people." After visiting the cemeteries, the pilgrims were entertained by Sissle and an orchestra of black expatriates. After visiting Napoleon's tomb, the pilgrims returned to their hotel for dinner and entertainment. Sissle's entertainment troupe consisted of "singing, dancing, and short Vaudeville acts by the leading colored artists in Paris and was of a very high order, the talent being undoubtedly the very best obtainable as it was personally selected by the leading colored Vaudeville and music-hall entertainers of Paris." Colonel Ellis invited several guests and the Parisian media to witness the evening.<sup>99</sup> Despite such fanfare, the pilgrims could not escape reminders that they were regarded as racial Others,

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<sup>99</sup> Report, NA RG 92 Office of the Quartermaster General, Miscellaneous Files 1922-1935, Gold Star Pilgrimages, Box 363, Folder Party L, 1930 (African American).



even in Paris. The *Chicago Tribune Paris Edition* noted that the women were served “a real fried chicken dinner, with all the fixings,” and that “a whole car loaded of *pusteques* better known to Americans as watermelon, has been ordered from Algeria.” In the attempt to satisfy the black pilgrims, the Army Pilgrimage Office could not help but fall into cliché and stereotypes.

In fact, Colonel Ellis used this as an opportunity to dispel accusations that black pilgrims were being treated unfairly. He sent a copy of a letter written by one of the pilgrims to black media outlets including the *New York Age*, *Atlanta Independent*, and *Chicago Defender*. The pilgrim wrote:

Everything that is possible was prepared for our comfort and entertainment. It is hoped by all on this pilgrimage that you who are eligible will accept the invitation extended by the U.S. Government to Gold Star Mothers and Widows. We the Pilgrims who left New York City July 12<sup>th</sup> assure you that you will have nothing to regret. To refuse the invitation only means the loss of a wonderful opportunity of pleasure and luxury to the individual and nothing gained by the race.<sup>100</sup>

This seemed to be the sentiment of many of the pilgrims, and Ellis wanted to use it to counter the accusations leveled by the NAACP. As an extension of wartime Army intelligence surveillance and manipulating black media and black politics, Ellis planted stories in French newspapers and black newspapers in the U.S. In particular, Ellis approved the distribution of an article by newspaperman J.A. Rogers to the black newspapers. The article included the letters of commendation from black pilgrims, but also claimed that segregation, “which we will be forever unreconciled,” should not stand in the way of the opportunity for black women to be “treated equally” while in France. Upon her return, one black pilgrim in Baltimore, Maryland reported to the *Afro American* that “It was in this manner that spoke all the rest, each saying that segregation or no segregation, she had done the right thing in making the trip. Some declared that while they

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<sup>100</sup> Ibid.

opposed segregation, the white man had the upper hand, and that accepting the trip did not prevent their fighting segregation when they returned.”<sup>101</sup>

Mary Williams, a Tuskegee graduate and scholarship recipient of Boston University and Harvard University, worked as a nurse for the black pilgrims in the summer of 1931. She claimed that the experiences of the pilgrims were very positive. Back at Tuskegee, she told summer school teachers who came from various parts of the South that the pilgrimages were “the best thing that the U.S. Government has ever done for the Negro Race.” She added, “I asked them [pilgrims] if they would have been much happier traveling with white mothers, and ALL of them said NO indeed. Because when the time came to sit in the dining room, it would be a very unhappy time.” Williams believed that “all our people need is some one who has actually been over to tell them the truth. I would like to see at least two hundred mothers and widows go over, and let those who are fighting the movement see what Tuskegee’s influence can do.”<sup>102</sup> In a veiled critique of Walter White and the elitism of the NAACP, Williams offered up a sign of progress that the government would continue to include black women inside the boundaries of the nation. That is not to say that Williams agreed with the segregationist policies. What was important to her was that mothers and widows received something from the government that had never offered them anything before. The pilgrimages suggested to her that black women were recognized even if they were not considered the equals of white women. In fact, those pilgrims who took advantage of the benefit were able effectively to remind white Americans that black soldiers—their sons—had sacrificed during the war too. Very few pilgrims seemed to complain at all. And the War Department took advantage of the lack of complaints to claim that there was

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<sup>101</sup> “Gold Star War Mothers Talk for the Afro,” *Afro American* 9 August 1930, NA RG 92 Office of the Quartermaster General, Miscellaneous Files 1922-1935, Gold Star Pilgrimages, Box 348, Scrapbook—Press Clippings.

<sup>102</sup> Letter, Mary Williams to Colonel F. H. Pope, 28 July 1931, NA RG 92 Office of the Quartermaster General, Miscellaneous Files 1922-1935, Gold Star Pilgrimages, Box 379, Folder Colored Vol. 2.

no discrimination in the segregation of white and black pilgrims. Walter White of the NAACP nevertheless continued to inquire about the segregationist policy throughout the duration of the pilgrimages. In 1933, the War Department felt comfortable in responding to White “that the colored pilgrims themselves have failed to voice protest against the arrangements made for them, justifies the conclusion of the movement in accordance with the plan heretofore followed.”<sup>103</sup>

But the War Department misunderstood the symbolism of the pilgrimages. The efficacy of the Gold Star Pilgrimages as a moment of civil rights history probably was made evident by both protestors and participants in the black pilgrimages. While the efforts of Walter White and the NAACP actually caused the War Department to bend—although not break—in their behind-the-scenes planning of the pilgrimages, the efforts of the women who went to Europe did much to reinvigorate the memory of black soldiers. While those who went abroad came home with very positive feelings about the experience, the African American men who did not go viewed the pilgrimages as a demonstration of how unwilling the United States was to institute equality for all citizens. More symbolic than real, the pilgrimages communicated powerful messages to African Americans that the Republican Party would never bring civil rights to America. One historian suggests that Hoover’s failure to disavow segregation among the pilgrimages was one of the major reasons why black voters bolted for the Democratic Party in the 1932 election, but this was just the most recent episode in the many failed opportunities to eliminate segregation practices.<sup>104</sup> Even when black Americans voted for Democratic presidential candidate Franklin D. Roosevelt in 1932, the New Dealer could not escape completely the political consequences of segregated pilgrimages. The editor of the *Chicago Review*, Perry Thompson, wanted the newly

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<sup>103</sup> Letter, Secretary of War to Walter White, NA, RG 92 Office of the Quartermaster General, Miscellaneous Files 1922-1935, Gold Star Pilgrimages, Box 345, Folder Colored M & W Correspondence related to segregation, etc.

<sup>104</sup> George F. Garcia, “Black Disaffection from the Republican Party during the Presidency of Herbert Hoover, 1928-1932” *Annals of Iowa* 45 (Winter 1980): 462-497.

elected Roosevelt to stop the black pilgrims from being transported in a “cattle ship.” Thompson reminded the President that his black newspaper had supported Roosevelt in the 1932 election and that “you and your promises will be on trial when you send these Gold Star mothers to Europe.” He urged Roosevelt to disavow “The stigma of color hovering about their almost holy pilgrimage” by ordering the Secretary of War to integrate the pilgrimages.<sup>105</sup> Thompson also wrote to the Secretary of War about the issue: “I hope that you are as broad in dealing with this situation as the Negroes in this country were in helping to elect Mr. Roosevelt to office. The people of this country expect your policy to be different from that of your predecessor.”<sup>106</sup> But for Roosevelt the politics of segregating pilgrims was not as potent as it was for Hoover. Only a few hundred women went in 1933, the last year of the program. Like most of the country, Roosevelt was concentrating on dealing with the Depression and chose not to spend political capital on a controversy that was about to be closed by the expiration of the program.

The NAACP was not alone in noticing that the United States was advertising an American system founded on racial hierarchy and discrimination. The nationalist pro-veteran evening Parisian newspaper *L'Intransigeant* was at least one French newspaper that noticed too. In an article translated into English by the U.S. Army, the editor covering the women in France noted, “There are numerous groups of Colored Mothers, (black mammies) who are carefully segregated from the others. Alas! The antipathy of the races still holds, even in the similitude of woe.” The editor continued:

The Mothers of America have come to awake our memories. May they on their return home, wake up those of their country-fellows and remind them that we have had during many months, ideal hope and common deep sorrow. On our soil

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<sup>105</sup> Letter, Perry Thompson to Franklin Roosevelt, 5 May 1933, NA RG 92 Office of the Quartermaster General, Miscellaneous Files 1922-1935, Gold Star Pilgrimages, Box 379, Folder Colored Vol. 2.

<sup>106</sup> Letter, Perry Thompson to George Dern, 9 May 1933, NA RG 92 Office of the Quartermaster General, Miscellaneous Files 1922-1935, Gold Star Pilgrimages, Box 379, Folder Colored Vol. 2.

their blood was shed with ours. Holy Golden Stars of the dead of two countries, [sic] do not cease to enlighten the way of living.<sup>107</sup>

Segregation undermined the “companionship of sorrow” which allowed critics, in France and America, to point to the pilgrimages as spectacles that demonstrated the differences between France and America and little about their similarities. How could the “community of interests” accept American segregation?

#### From the Pilgrimages to *Pilgrimage*

Although a year earlier Hoover had continued the recent tradition of Presidents delivering their Memorial Day speech from Arlington National Cemetery, Hoover broke with tradition in 1930 and chose to deliver his eleven paragraph speech at Gettysburg battlefield. In what can be described as Hooverism—a blatant attempt to reinvigorate nationalism through Lincoln’s promise and reapply it to the economic condition of the American nation, Hoover spoke at Cemetery Hill at 2:30 in the afternoon and his voice was transmitted over all the national radio networks. “We stand today amidst monuments to the valor and glory of a generation of Americans, North and South, now well-nigh gone,” he began. He quickly invoked Lincoln’s Gettysburg Address as “immortal words” that were far “greater than the tribute of granite or bronze.” He continued, “That appeal for the unity of our people and the perpetuation of the fundamentals of our democracy is as vital today in our national thinking as it was when Lincoln spoke.” The solution to America’s problems, insisted Hoover, was moderation. “Ours is a new day and ours new problems of the Republic,” but he advised Americans to look back and heed the advice of Lincoln who advocated “moderation” in “his far greater task.” Lives would have been saved, chaos averted, religious dissension prevented, suggested Hoover, if “our leadership

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<sup>107</sup> *L’Intransigeant*, NA RG 92 Office of the Quartermaster General, Miscellaneous Files 1922-1935, Gold Star Pilgrimages, Box 348, Scrapbook—Press Clippings.

had always been tempered by the moderation and calm vision of Lincoln.” Hoover was the latest in a long line of Republican politicians whose ideals envisioned a “common heritage as Americans, and the infinite web of national sentiment—these are the things that have made us a great nation, that have created a solidarity in a great people unparalleled in all human history.” He continued, “The light that guides our souls remains the same as that whereby our fathers were led. It is the store of knowledge, the great inspirations of men's souls, the ideals which they carry forward, that have lifted the Nation to ever greater heights.”<sup>108</sup> Lincoln’s promise had led America out of the Civil War through the Wars of Imperialism and even the Great War, implied the President, and Hooverism would lead America through the economic war that the nation was currently experiencing. This was an uncreative even clichéd move on Hoover’s part. The reality was that Lincoln’s promise articulated at Gettysburg was ill-equipped to commemorate the war dead in such a dire economic situation. Lincoln’s promise had been compromised and millions of Americans knew it.

Two years later, Hooverism and Lincoln’s promise were in freefall. In a striking juxtaposition in the summer of 1932, pilgrims were being escorted by military officers in France while the Bonus Army—economically depressed Great War veterans—camped out in Washington D.C. The government promised veterans in 1924 a cash payment in the form of a “Service Certificate” that would mature in 1945. But many of the marchers had been unemployed and could not find work and so they demanded that the government pay their bonus payments early. They camped in Washington insisting on their own version of Lincoln’s promise, one that committed the federal government to remember the living and not the dead. Congress refused their demands leaving President Hoover to deal with the consequences. With

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<sup>108</sup> Herbert Hoover, “Memorial Day Address,” 30 May 1930, The American Presidency Project, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=22214>, accessed 16 April 2010.

Hoover's consent, the War Department evacuated by force the former soldiers using tear gas, bayonet, and cavalry under command of Douglas A. MacArthur and George S. Patton and then burned down their makeshift dwellings destroying much of the little property that they had. It marked a dramatic moment when government officials reneged on Lincoln's promise.

Pilgrims were also beginning to doubt the effectiveness of the pilgrimages as the depression worsened. Rural Americans had suffered for nearly over a decade from the agricultural crisis of the 1920s. Some pilgrims returned home from the pilgrimage to find conditions worse than when they left. Unemployment rates near 25%—even higher in some areas—affected millions of people. The deepening depression called for a different kind of relationship between citizen and government. Minnie Throckmorton of Red Cloud, Nebraska, who had been the very first pilgrim to lay a wreath at the tomb of the French unknown, thanked Colonel Ellis in July 1931 for her trip the previous year but her letter suggests the pilgrimages were ineffective in light of hard economic times in Nebraska. She complained that there was very little coverage of the succeeding pilgrimages in her "Western Daily Papers." She looked for news about them but could not find any articles:

About all we can read now is our President giveing [sic] all his time and thought trying to help Germany out and from the look of the torn condition of France and the No. of White Crosses resting on her breast I think Germany ought to suffer until they get the idea all out of their heads that they can whip and rule the world.

The pilgrimages had not improved economic conditions in rural America and in turn her trip to France had not increased her "companionship of sorrow." Instead it had produced, for her, a return to protectionism. Instead of helping Germany, she argued, Hoover should be helping Americans. Throckmorton continued with even more protectionist rhetoric.

I doubt if there is any of the European countries that have more unemployed men and it has made tramps and beggers [sic] out of them by the hundred than America has to-day and our farming class of people are simply frontic [sic] over

the prices they are receiving for their wheat stock and produce it seems to me our President has got a fair sized mans [sic] job here at home and let Europe solve her own problems, so now, and I am neather [sic] a Red as [sic] a Socialist but just a woman and Wimen [sic] must talk you know and I had to have something to rite. [sic]

Times were hard in Nebraska and Throckmorton expressed the anxiety of the time. That her desperation had caused her to conclude that the U.S. should abandon the “community of interests” was probably not what many officials wanted to hear. Throckmorton, nevertheless, successfully demonstrated the weakness in the pilgrimage as the nationalism it was supposed to produce could not overcome the fact that too many people were suffering from the economic collapse.<sup>109</sup>

The same could be said of mothers and widows who just a few short years before had gained access to the Lincolnian tradition of memory. In a tactic not too dissimilar from the Bonus Army, some women began writing the War Department asking for money in lieu of the trip. Senator Bronson Cutting, a Republican from New Mexico, inquired of the Secretary of War on behalf of one of his constituents:

Because of the depression she finds herself in a precarious financial condition. She is in danger of losing her little home. She could not afford to make this trip, because she lacks the small amount required for even the incidental expenses. In view of the fact that the money has been appropriated, would there be anything wrong in the Government giving to her the cash for such a trip, in order that she might save her home? She makes the point that she is asking for nothing additional, merely the portion of the total appropriation which would have been spent on the trip, if she goes.”<sup>110</sup>

Lucia Ames Mead of Brookline, Massachusetts asked the editor of the *Boston Globe*, “would it not be kinder and more sensible to offer to all of these the same amount of money which the trip would cost to be used at their option for their comfort?” She argued:

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<sup>109</sup> Letter, Minnie Throckmorton to Colonel Richard Ellis, 25 July 1931, NA, RG 92, Misc. File 1922-1933, Gold Star Pilgrimage, Box 376, Folder 330.13.

<sup>110</sup> Letter, Senator Bronson Cutting to Secretary of War, 22 February 1933, NA, RG 92, Misc. File 1922-1935, Gold Star Pilgrimage, Box 381, Folder Money in Lieu of Trip.



Can there be great satisfaction to these mothers to go in great crowds across the ocean to visit great cemeteries with their thousand of monotonous white crosses beneath one of which they are told lies the body of a son? Surely each mother must feel herself far closer to her son in his old home surrounded by his photographs and memorial than in that desolate place.<sup>111</sup>

Of course the money could not be delivered in this fashion. But these writers asked the question: what was a better way to commemorate the loss of a son or a husband, a pilgrimage awarded to mothers and widows or financial help given to them to help them keep their livelihood? This was symptomatic of the conditions of the pre-welfare state examined by Skocpol. Her study on Civil War pensions as a progenitor of the American welfare state enlightens the pilgrimage benefit extended to women in the early 1930s. But this program, conceived in a time of apparent prosperity, was not renewed when it expired amid an unprecedented economic crisis and a far broader government effort to rally Americans to a national recovery effort. Letters such as Senator Cutting's, Mead's and actions such as those of the Bonus Marchers suggested that this form of relief was obsolete and a new system would have to replace it.

Fox Film Corporation released filmmaker John Ford's portrayal of the Gold Star Pilgrimages in August 1933 just as the final contingents of pilgrims were returning from France. Ford biographer and film critic Joseph McBride describes *Pilgrimage* as Ford's "first great film."<sup>112</sup> Considered a box office success in an era when emotional power could sell a film, *Pilgrimage* had no proven stars. Philip Klein and Barry Connors wrote the screenplay from a story that Ford had bought from Australian writer and poet Ida Alexa Ross Wylie who had

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<sup>111</sup> Letter, Lucia Ames Mead to the editor, NA, RG 92, Misc. File 1922-1935, Gold Star Pilgrimage, Box 381, Folder Money in Lieu of Trip.

<sup>112</sup> Joseph McBride, *Searching for John Ford: A Life* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2001), 195, 194. McBride also provided the voice-over commentary to the DVD release of the film. Film preservationist David Shepard has described the film as Ford's "masterpiece." The film has rarely been seen by postwar television audiences. McBride argues this quite possibly is because of the lack of recognizable actors with star power. He hesitates to call the film Ford's magnum opus but does describe it as "without question on a short list of the director's greatest films" in part because it had "tremendous emotional power."

written a fictional account of the pilgrimages for *American Magazine*. Fox also released the film in France under *Deux Femmes* as well as Spain (*Peregrinos*), Italy (*Pellegrinaggio*), Portugal, and Finland. It met largely with critical and financial success but Ford directed the film under very adverse conditions. One of the outspoken leaders of the Screen Director's Guild, Ford described himself as a "socialistic democrat" and advocated that his fellow guild members ally with other Hollywood organizations to oppose the pay cuts imposed by the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences. This helped lead to a shutdown of every Hollywood film studio, including Fox studios, right in the middle of Ford's making of *Pilgrimage*.<sup>113</sup> To avoid bankruptcy, Fox stopped production of *Pilgrimage* and all other films in March 1933. By shutting down, the studio would not pay their contracts. Eventually work began again and the film was completed and released at the end of the summer. But this successful release must have been bittersweet for the director. His mother, Barbara Curran Feeney, had endured a long terminal illness and died shortly after the film was released.<sup>114</sup> Her illness may have significantly influenced Ford's vision for the film as the principle theme of the film was motherhood.

The film's principal star is Henrietta Crossman, a stage actress with some previous film experience. Crossman plays the role of Hannah Jessop from Cedar Falls, Arkansas. Hannah's son Jimmy, played by Norman Foster, grew up fatherless on their farm. He and his mother keep the small farm going but Jimmy succeeds in gaining the admiration of a local girl Mary, played by Marion Nixon.<sup>115</sup> Jimmy and Mary fall in love and Mary becomes pregnant. When Hannah finds out that Jimmy had proposed to Mary, the mother-figure declares, "If you love her, you

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<sup>113</sup> McBride, *Searching for John Ford*, 190-4.

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*, 196.

<sup>115</sup> For a list of the entire cast see *The Pilgrimage* IMDb database, <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0024453/fullcredits#cast>, accessed 16 April 2010.

can't love me." In a fit of anger, disappointment, and perceived betrayal Hannah goes to the local barber, who is also an Army recruiter, and enlists her son in the military. In a moment of hesitation before Hannah signs the enlistment paper, the barber states, "You know Hannah, you're the first woman to come in here and give up her own son. And you've got to love your country to do that." Hannah retorts, "What do you know about loving anything," as she signs the papers. This proves to be her son's death sentence as he dies on 10 November 1918, one day before the armistice, when a German artillery shell punctures the trench and collapses it.

Not only does Hannah become a "bad" mother for "giving her son up" but she also becomes haunted by the memory of her son. She tries to forget him. She hides his photographs and removes objects of memory from her life. But Mary gives birth to a son, who she names Jimmy after his father. As the years unfold Hannah cannot forget her son, and her role in his death, in part because little Jimmy has to pass by Hannah's farm everyday as he comes home from school. Then representatives of the Gold Star Mothers come to Hannah's home to try to persuade her to visit Jimmy's grave in France. She rejects the benefit calling the whole thing a "Crazy idea, me laying flowers on the grave of him. After ten years of remembering to forget." Nevertheless she eventually accepts the benefit as county officials persuade her to go because her son was the only one to die from the county. At the Three Cedars train station, Mary and Jimmy show up to bid farewell to Hannah and to give her some flowers to place on Jimmy's grave. She reluctantly accepts them as the train leaves the platform.

On board the ship heading for France, Ford turns away from the shocking nature of Hannah as mother and finds comic relief in the pilgrims as spectacles of patriotic motherhood. Arkansas and Oklahoma women in their advanced years mingle with the rich and famous on luxury liners. They are treated to fashion shows, dancing girls, and other high accoutrements.

Hannah befriends Oklahoman Kelly Hatfield played by the famous stage actress Lucille La Verne. Ford portrays them as crafty, witty old cranks who smoke pipes and celebrate their provincial world view of common sense. But once they arrive in France Ford returns to the melancholy of Hannah's unresolved grief over Jimmy's death and her part in it. At a dinner with the other pilgrims, Hannah confesses her sin to the other women and claims that she is not a good mother. Despite the attempts of the other mothers to absolve her, she flees the group and runs into the streets of Paris. Lost, disoriented, and on the brink of despair, she coincidentally runs into a drunk American man who would have been about the age of her son. Actor Maurice Murphy plays Gary Worth, a well-to-do American; he is drunk because his mother has rejected his fiancée Suzanne who is a French girl without a pedigree. Hannah takes Worth as her surrogate son; she takes him home, sobers him up, and passionately pleads with his mother to accept his choice for a wife. When Worth's mother has a change of heart, Hannah realizes there is still time for her to change her heart. She decides to seek out Jimmy's grave in the military cemetery.

In an emotional scene full of drama and unlikely redemption, foreboding dark skies sit in the background as Hannah appears alone in the cemetery. The wooden crosses have not yet been replaced with marble ones. The cemetery has not yet been beautified and no evidence of work from the ABMC appears in the background. Fog rolls along the ground emphasizing the uniformity of the grave markers and the mysteriousness of Hannah's task. It is an ominous place reminiscent of purgatory rather than heaven or hell and an unlikely place for redemption. She walks alone through the fog-covered cemetery searching for her son's name. She locates his grave marker, lays Mary's flowers on the grave, and then collapses on it while confessing her sin to the site of memory. The redemption is almost immediate as she rises from the dirt she realizes

that her boy was a good man and that she was a “stupid old woman.” With her redemption intact, she returns to Three Cedars and atones for her transgressions by claiming her love for Mary and little Jimmy “clasping the inert little boy in her arms, hugging and kissing him fiercely and possessively. Even in her moment of redemption,” claims McBride, “Ford shows that there is something terrifying and oppressive about the power of Hannah’s love.”<sup>116</sup> Nevertheless this was a story of a family broken apart and coming back together as Jimmy the soldier was “reincarnated” in the body of his son.

Ford was acutely aware of the meaning of motherhood at the time he was making this film. His mother’s long term illness and impending death must have caused much reflection on the mystical relationship between mother and son. But Ford also found sacredness in the pilgrims. The themes of grief, failure, confession, and redemption can be found from his Irish Catholic heritage.<sup>117</sup> The tragic but ultimately redeeming relationship between Hannah and her son Jimmy certainly could be felt by the audience of the 1930s. In fact Ford’s film contributed to the public themes of motherhood and nationalism. Though he never mentions the War Department’s running of the program, military officials probably felt overjoyed at the popular representation of their work. But the film also helps distort the reality of the pilgrimages and the environment in which they occurred. One thing the film helped distort was the changing roles of women and mothers since World War I. This was a sacred pilgrimage that symbolized American righteousness. For this reason the War Department deemed some women authentic mothers and widows while others were considered tainted women and not invited. Although the film depicts Hannah and Mary as repeating generations of single mothers, it is ironic that Hannah Jessop, “the bad mother,” would be able to participate in the pilgrimage while JAGs prohibited other

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<sup>116</sup> McBride, *Searching for John Ford*, 198.

<sup>117</sup> Maria Elena de las Carreras Kuntz, “The Catholic Vision in Hollywood: Ford, Capra, Borzage, and Hitchcock,” *Film History* 14 (2002): 121-135.

“better” mothers from participating based on a series of legal fictions. Hannah’s enlistment of her son prevents Mary from marrying him. Her child is born out of wedlock and she cannot participate in the Pilgrimage because she is not a widow in the strict legal sense. Hannah is a “bad mother” who got to go and Mary is a good woman who had to stay behind. Just as JAG decisions, this depiction seems to reinforce, rather than challenge, the changing roles of women since World War I.

*Pilgrimage* largely ignores the role of the U.S Army in the endeavor. In one scene on board the ship transporting the mothers and widows to France, Hannah’s friend Kelly Hatfield consoles a volunteer nurse who has herself is experiencing homesick and despair. This is a complete reversal of how most interactions went on the ships. Nurses and Army officers usually comforted the mothers. But Ford’s vision serves as an artistic device that signals the self-reliance of American motherhood and the effacement of military personnel operating the pilgrimages. The film also uses artistic license when it comes to the interactions between the American mothers and widows and the French public. Colonel Ellis had tight control of every pilgrim group as well as the press that reported on them. There were few opportunities for the pilgrims to interact with the French public. When they toured Parisian sites they were usually escorted by U.S. Army officers. But Ford produces an alternative depiction. While in Paris and before Hannah confesses her sins to her fellow pilgrims, Hannah Jessop and Kelly Hatfield tour the city on their own without military escorts. Part comedic relief, part commentary on the vitality of American motherhood, Hannah and Hatfield demonstrate their vivacity by stopping at a carnival shooting gallery. Ford uses the scene for a brief respite from the somberness of Jessop’s mission. Here she and Hatfield laugh heartily at the incompetence of the French shooters. In fact none of the Parisian men present can hit the targets with the carnival rifles.

With knowing glances and the exuberance of provincial agrarian women, the American mothers take the rifles and proceed to shoot every target in the gallery with ease and amusement. Hannah even takes aim at and successfully shoots the corn cob pipe out of the mouth of the dismayed carnie. It was a scene that beckons to the regenerative spirit brought to France by mothers with American know-how and common sense. But again, the depiction of the pilgrimages did not quite meet the reality. They were not designed to take pot shots at the French; they were designed to expand the “companionship of sorrow” as well as the “community of interests” between French and American mothers and widows.

The film ignores the crushing economic calamity that befell rural American women and their families during the 1920s. The Gold Star Mothers and Widows pilgrimage was billed initially as a diplomatic and sacred investment in Americanness. It was a product of American wealth. Politicians only succeeded in creating legislation after a decade of economic prosperity. It was an extravagance that demonstrated just how powerful the United States had become that it could afford to produce a state-funded pilgrimage. The pilgrimages came at a moment, however, when the limits and failures of the American system were becoming all too visible. The sacredness of the pilgrimages was losing out to the hard reality of economic depression. Ford’s depiction hardly mentions any of these hardships. Just a few years after the release of the film, Dorothea Lange photographed Florence Owens Thompson anxious in thought and sitting in a makeshift shelter on the side of the road with two of her children’s faces buried in her shoulders as an unredeemed “Migrant Mother.” At the height of this sort of economic depression, however, Ford was depicting Hannah Jessop’s journey as a pilgrimage of redemption. For many such as Throckmorton, Mead, and others, the Gold Star Pilgrimages program seemed to be less about emotional liberation and more about an obsolete government program that marked the

fissures in the body politic and noted how Lincoln's promise to bind citizen and state to a project of collective memory had been compromised

Ford also leaves out any mention of racial hierarchy of the pilgrimages. No black women or black soldiers appear in the film; it operates as an erasure of a segregated memory at a popular culture level. It ignores the original intention of Lincoln's promise to weave the "new birth of freedom" into the American collective memory. Segregation, lynching, ignored disenfranchisement—the pilgrimages were just the latest in a litany of racial fractures that black Americans had to endure. The pushback by African Americans was an example of the changing political alliance and one more sign of an already well established civil rights movement. Lincoln's promise could not accommodate inequalities brought on by power politics. In fact the promise had been compromised almost from the moment that Lincoln uttered it. Although Ford's *Pilgrimage* capitalized on the pure emotion of redemptive motherhood, the Gold Star Pilgrimages were a façade of Lincoln's promise and suggested that future politicians would have to configure Lincolnian language again to justify a comprehensive new relationship between the nation and its soldiers as well as government and its citizens. Ford's vision signals that redemption felt good. But the contrast between Ford's vision and the reality of the American economy suggested that something big was happening and the world was changing. Lincoln's promise would have to be recast into a new kind of Keynesian system that was not about the dead but about the living. It would be a forerunner in the shift from welfare done through charity and local government to welfare done through the national government.



## EPILOGUE: THE LEGACY OF LINCOLN'S PROMISE

"With the help of *Almighty God, Right, Truth, Justice, Freedom, Democracy, the Selfdetermination of Nations, No indemnities no annexations*, and Cuban sugar and Caucasian manganese and Northwestern wheat and Dixie cotton, the British blockade, General Pershing, the taxicabs of Paris and the sevetyfive gun, we won the war."

—John Dos Passos, *1919*

"Enie menie minie moe plenty other pine boxes stacked up there containing what they'd scraped up of Richard Roe and other persons or persons unknown. Only one can go. How did they pick John Doe? Make sure he ain't a dinge, boys. Make sure he ain't a guinea or a kike, how can you tell a guy's a hundredpercent when all you've got's a gunnysack full of bones, bronze buttons stamped with the screaming eagle and a pair of roll puttees?"

—John Dos Passos, *1919*

The silence that fell in the forenoon of 11 November 1918 did not produce a new American identity any more than it produced a new world order. The end of the war led people back to the times before the war and to the collective memory of the American past. Novelist John Dos Passos pointed this out in *1919*, the second part of his *U.S.A.* trilogy published in 1932 in the midst of the Great Depression and the Gold Star Pilgrimages. He had been an ambulance driver during the war, and *1919* became his critique of "Meester Veelson" (Woodrow Wilson). One scholar claims that Dos Passos, "kept a grudge against the great war leader who separated America forever from its supposed age of innocence."<sup>1</sup> At the end of the novel, he depicts the American Unknown Soldier not as the embodiment of the nation but as the symbol of the calamity of Wilson's war. In the last chapter, "The Body of an American," Dos Passos provides a fictional biography of the unidentified soldier who would be entombed in Arlington. He imagines that the soldier had lost his dog tag in the Marne River after roughhousing with his fellow soldiers and now he met his fate when the battle resumed:

The shell had his number on it. The blood ran into the ground. The service record dropped out of the filing cabinet when the quartermaster sergeant got

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<sup>1</sup> Alfred Kazin, "John Dos Passos and His Invention of America" *Wilson Quarterly* 9 (January 1985): 154-66, quotation on 158.

blotto that time they had to pack and leave the billets in a hurry. The identification tag was in the bottom of the Marne. The blood ran into the ground, the brains oozed out of the cracked skull and were licked up by the trenchrats, the belly swelled and raised a generation of bluebottle flies, and the incorruptible skeleton, and the scraps of dried viscera and skin bundled in khaki they took to Châlons-sur-Marne and laid it out neat in a pine coffin and took it home to God's Country on a battlefield and buried it in a sarcophagus in the Memorial Amphitheater in the Arlington National Cemetery and draped Old Glory over it and the bugler played taps and Mr. Harding prayed to God and the diplomats and the generals and the admirals and the brasshats and the politicians and the handsomely dressed ladies out of the society column of the *Washington Post* stood up solemn and thought how beautiful sad Old Glory God's Country it was to have the bugler play taps and the three volleys make their ears ring.<sup>2</sup>

Dos Passos understood that the cleavages in the American imagined community made it far from democratic or even republican. The body of an unknown man could easily be desecrated for the sake of producing a patriotic celebration of national greatness. His iconoclasm, although looking to the past, was in fact a sign of the increasingly contested future as the U.S. rose to global hegemony and the tension among Americans grew correspondingly.

The symbolism of the unidentified body, Dos Passos claimed, made elite men and their "handsomely dressed ladies" feel good about nationalism. But he suggested that what was being buried alongside the Unknown Soldier was the American republican tradition. Just as Thoreau had lamented the tombstones in the Dunstable Burial Ground along the Merrimack River, so Dos Passos mourned the American who had come, by personal misadventure and historical accident, to symbolize the nation that was unworthy of his sacrifice. The Tomb of the Unknown Soldier did not produce an environment of memory that encouraged people to remember, but became a site of forgetting that allowed people to feign republican virtue and subvert the original intent of Lincoln's promise to remember the fallen community who died for a noble cause. Perhaps better than any other member of the "Lost Generation," Dos Passos grasped the power of mourning traditions to shape the way Americans thought about their role in the world.

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<sup>2</sup> John Dos Passos, *1919* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1932), 466.

This dissertation has examined these mourning traditions and the policies, the politics, and the popular pressure associated with Lincoln's promise through the use of a wide array of archival and published primary sources as well as visual material. It traces the changing meaning and uses of war dead as the U.S. emerged from the Civil War and expanded to become an imperial and global power. Society used memory in rituals to "heal" the wounds of the past and invented traditions that helped ease the transition from republic to nation to empire. Yet this transformation was never wholly complete as Americans continually interpreted the ever-present and overlapping layers of republicanism, nationalism, and imperialism through the ages. The unfinished nature of national identity meant that collective memory was an ongoing project of (re)negotiating the rhetoric and the practice of Lincoln's promise and the imagined community. From the Civil War to the Great War, commemorative rituals underwent continual reinterpretation and renewal as each generation had to reinvent the environment of memory in order to produce a useable past. Civil war, colonial war, and global war gave way in turn to memory wars. The patriotic language of liberty and equality that accompanied the founding of the republic was exclusive, limited to white, Protestant men of property for the most part before the Civil War. The tradition that emerged from the Civil War had applied republicanism to the national level and stressed union and emancipation. The Lost Cause movement recycled some of this language but justified the restoration of white supremacy and black subordination. Meanwhile the Spanish-Cuban-American War and the Philippine American War saw the extension of Lincoln's promise to wars for empire that facilitated national reunion and reconciliation. President McKinley used the same rhetoric as Lincoln but gave it different meanings to weave neo-Confederates into the American collective memory, while marginalizing people of color, immigrants, and new colonial subjects in the Caribbean and the Pacific. The

Great War saw Lincoln's promise extended once again in the context of global ascendancy. President Wilson and President Harding accomplished similar reinterpretations with their dedications of the overseas military cemeteries and the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. And yet the script of collective memory was written and rewritten by more hands than those of the political and cultural elite. Even as the collective memory was used to restrict membership in the imagined community, the boundaries of who belonged gradually expanded.

Despite Dos Passos's protestations, the themes of the Gettysburg Address appealed to many Americans throughout the twentieth century. The War Department and government officials continued the work of national commemoration. For example, the mission of the American Battle Monuments Commission was renewed after the Second World War. It opened new cemeteries and commissioned new architectural work marking places where another generation of Americans had fought and died. Second World War cemeteries were built in Britain, Luxembourg, Italy, the Netherlands, and Tunisia as well as France and Belgium. Unlike the wars of empire in Cuba and the Philippines, the ABMC built cemeteries in Manila to hold the dead of the Pacific War and opened a cemetery in Corozal in 1982 in connection with the Panama Canal Zone. Monuments likewise commemorated both defeats and victories of American arms: Cabanatuan American Memorial in the Philippines, the Guadalcanal Monument in the Solomon Islands, the Honolulu Memorial in Hawaii, the Saipan American Memorial, the Marker at Papua New Guinea, the Santiago Surrender Tree in Santiago, Cuba, and the Western Naval Task Force Marker in Casablanca, Morocco, among others, all were built or came under the control of the ABMC in the years after the Second World War.

The work of commemoration obscured as well as elevated aspects of the American nation and empire. Although Hawaii was a territory of the U.S. at the time of Japan's attack on Pearl

Harbor in December 1941, it had been acquired following the U.S.-assisted overthrow of the Hawaiian monarchy in 1893. The sinking of the *U.S.S. Arizona* during the attack thus held tremendous significance for Americans after the war. The process of memorialization surrounding the wreckage and its dead sailors helped conceal the narrative of empire including the American settlers who overran the monarchy in 1893 and the U.S.'s later decision to annex the republic in 1898. It also helped screen the rivalry between the U.S. and Japanese empires in the Pacific. While the *U.S.S. Arizona* memorial helps Americans remember Japan's surprise attack on December 7, it also helps Americans forget that the Japanese attacked the Philippines—America's other significant Pacific colony—at the same time. While the Philippines became independent and left the U.S. national narrative in the aftermath, the meaning of Pearl Harbor has become even more fixed with the 1959 statehood of Hawaii—its liminal status as a colonial territory now erased for more than 50 years.<sup>3</sup>

Following the “good war” of 1941-1945, the government extended benefits such as the G.I. Bill to millions of living veterans and then combined the costs of the Cold War and the military-industrial complex with an expanded welfare state. This guns and butter program came to grief with the Vietnam War. Social movements, generational revolt, and television prevented the sort of management by the political and military elite that had worked so well in previous overseas wars. The consequent disillusionment with a counterinsurgency war was crystallized in the black granite wall of Maya Lin's extraordinary Vietnam War Memorial on the National Mall between the Washington Monument and the Lincoln Memorial. While Vietnam continues to generate debates according to the state of political and cultural rivalry between conservatives and

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<sup>3</sup> Emily S. Rosenberg, *A Day Which Will Live: Pearl Harbor in American Memory* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003); Geoffrey M. White, “National Subjects: September 11 and Pearl Harbor,” *American Ethnologist* 31 (August 2004): 293-310.

liberals, the tens of thousands of names on the wall offer their own mute verdict on the war and on the sacrifices asked of those Americans who were called upon to fight it.

Meanwhile many Americans were beginning to question the cost of American expansion even in the face of Communism and the Soviet Union. With a public still healing from the war and extremely hesitant to engage in further Cold War and imperialistic activities, veterans groups and Congressional legislators advocated adding the unknown remains of a Vietnam War soldier to the tomb at Arlington cemetery. They hoped this sort of symbol would help heal a nation of people still grieving over the mistakes and failures of Vietnam. Not everyone was in favor of a Vietnam Unknown. Prisoner of War (POW) and Missing in Action (MIA) families criticized the attempts of expanding the tradition of unknown soldiers because they believed it would distract government officials and help Americans forget about seeking the return of their loved ones from Vietnam still believed to be alive.<sup>4</sup>

The Reagan administration, nevertheless, finally agreed to the proposal and President Reagan dedicated the remains in 1984. The Vietnam Unknown helped build a community of Unknowns with his Korean, Second World War, and Great War comrades. This dedication produced an arc of history by incorporating the memory of the Vietnam dead into the grand narrative of American history and Lincoln's promise and helped soften the critique of America's empire and American actions during the Cold War. But unlike Dos Passos's time, the advent of new technology eventually ruined this dedication. DNA-testing on the Vietnam Unknown later revealed that the remains were those of Lieutenant Michael Blassie of the U.S. Air Force. This brought much relief to Blassie's family. They petitioned cemetery officials to disinter their son's remains from Arlington and they reburied him near their home in St. Louis, Missouri. But the

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<sup>4</sup> Arlington National Cemetery Website, "The Vietnam Unknown Controversy," <http://www.arlingtoncemetery.net/vietnam.htm>, accessed 25 February 2011.

identification of Blassie's remains revealed considerable popular mistrust of the government and significantly damaged the integrity of the tradition surrounding the Tomb of the Unknowns. POW/MIA groups began suggesting that military officials had known Blassie's identity before they buried him but chose to conceal it because they wanted to mute the controversies surrounding the POW/MIA soldiers who would never return.<sup>5</sup> Blassie's identity, similarly to the evidence revealed by the unsinking of the *Maine*, revealed an anxiety of empire marked by the reopening of wounds by POW/MIA families and others who long accused military and government officials for mishandling the dead and mishandling the war. Historian Michael Nass points out that the tradition of unknowns has now become defunct because DNA evidence allows families to reclaim the identity of anyone and thus the unknown is stripped of its power as a symbol of Lincoln's promise.<sup>6</sup>

The wars in Afghanistan and Iraq further wore down the power of Lincoln's promise. When French officials refused to go along with the American invasion of Iraq in 2003, Florida Congresswoman Virginia Brown-Waite proposed legislation that would bring soldiers buried in France from the two world wars back to the United States. This proposal threatened to break up and separate the fallen community buried in French soil and strip the national meaning already attributed to their burial sites. Her proposal was never adopted but about the same time that she was introducing her legislation to the Congress, the United States Pentagon made a formal policy forbidding the publishing of photographs of returning dead to Dover Air Force Base in Maryland and in all other U.S. bases. This halted a tradition begun shortly after the Vietnam War, in which the government used caskets draped with the American flag to remind Americans of the

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<sup>5</sup> "Unknown' Vietnam Soldier Now Has a Name," *New York Times*, 30 June 1998.

<sup>6</sup> Michael Naas, "History's Remains: Of Memory, Mourning and the Event," *Research in Phenomenology* 33 (2003): 75-97; Jacques Derrida, "By Force of Mourning," trans. Pascale-Anne Brault and Michael Naas, *Critical Inquiry* 22 (Winter 1996): 171-192.

communal sacrifice of the nation's soldiers. Presidents, including Jimmy Carter and Ronald Reagan, often attended ceremonies honoring the returning dead at Dover and Andrews Air Force Base. The forbidding of all media images depicting the returning dead from Iraq and Afghanistan brought this thirty-year tradition to an end and radically transformed the way people thought about soldiers who sacrificed their lives for a noble cause. Americans could still attend the funerals of individual soldiers in their local communities but the government prohibited the public from remembering the community of fallen soldiers as national symbols. The isolation of the community of the living from the community of the dead at the national level was a direct contradiction of Lincoln's decree that "It is for us the living, rather, to be dedicated here to the unfinished work which they who fought here have thus far so nobly advanced."<sup>7</sup>

Lincoln's promise, which anointed the sacrifice of the dead with a "new birth of freedom" as well as remembrance of the sacrifice by the nation has been exhausted. Interventions in Lebanon and Somalia, wars in Afghanistan and Iraq have not conformed to this conception of the purpose and result of war. Paradoxically, the extraordinary efforts to save soldiers' lives have brought home the trauma, both psychological and physical, of war. Citizens may accept the necessity of war but have become incredibly sensitive to the sacrifice that goes along with overseas wars. The weakening of Lincoln's promise has meant that many Americans are no longer equipped to resolve the grief that comes with expanding and defending the American empire.

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<sup>7</sup> Dana Milbank, "Curtains Ordered for Media Coverage of Returning Coffins," *The Washington Post* 21 October 2003, p. A23. <http://www.washingtonpost.com/ac2/wp-dyn/A55816-2003Oct20?language=printer> accessed 28 October 2006. Maytag Aircraft Corporation, a government contractor, fired Tami Sillicio and her husband for taking the photos and releasing them. See *CBS News* "Pentagon Defends Photo Ban" 23 April 2004, <http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2004/04/23/iraq/main613365.shtml> accessed 28 October 2006.



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