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“Confederate Soldiers in the Siege of Petersburg and Postwar:
An Intensified War and Coping Mechanisms Utilized, 1864- ca. 1895”

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts at
Virginia Commonwealth University.

by
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Table of Contents

List of Figures	iv
Abstract	v
Introduction.....	1
Chapter 1: Confederate Soldiers during the Siege of Petersburg: The Evolution and Responses to the Changing Nature of War	15
Chapter 2: Confederate Veterans after the Siege of Petersburg: Readjustment to the Postwar South, 1865- ca. 1895	76
Bibliography	156
Appendix.....	169

List of Figures

1. Petersburg, Virginia. Confederate breastworks in front of Petersburg	169
2. Petersburg, Virginia. Confederate breastworks in front of Petersburg. (The small mounds with chimneys are soldier's quarters under ground)	170
3.1. Photograph of the Crater as it appeared in February 2017	171
3.2. Interior Angle of the Crater as it appeared in February 2017	172
4. Sketch of the Entrenched Lines in the Immediate Front of Petersburg	173
5. Robert G. Byers Envelope from the siege of Petersburg	174
6.1. Confederate Soldier's Bible	175
6.2. Confederate Soldier's Bible Inscription.....	176
7. Battlefield guide owned and signed by Brig. General David A. Weisiger	177
8.1. Mahone's Brigade Veterans Reunion Badge, Front	178
8.2. Mahone's Brigade Veterans Reunion Badge, Inscription.....	179
9. Confederate Veterans Posing at the R.E. Lee Camp Soldiers' Home	180

Abstract

“CONFEDERATE SOLDIERS IN THE SIEGE OF PETERSBURG AND POSTWAR:
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Virginia Commonwealth University, Richmond, Virginia, 2017.

Major Director: Dr. Kathryn Shively Meier
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This thesis crafts a narrative about how Confederate soldiers during the siege of Petersburg experienced an intensified war that caused them to refine soldierly coping mechanisms in order to endure. They faced increasing deprivations, new forms of death, fewer restrictions on killing, dwindling fortunes, and increased racial acrimony by facing African American soldiers. In order to adjust, they relied on soldierly camaraderie, Southern notions of honor, letter writing, and an increasingly firm reliance on Protestant Christianity to cope with their situation. Postwar, these veterans repurposed soldierly coping mechanisms and eventually used institutional support from their states. Camaraderie, honor, literary endeavors, and Christianity remained prevalent postwar, such as through the various emerging veterans' organizations. However, institutional support took considerable time to appear, such as disability, pension, and soldiers' home benefits. This required the veterans to fall back onto earlier learned mechanisms, illustrating that the status of veteran began during the conflict.

Introduction

The eventful morning of July 30th, 1864, began early for Sergeant B.F. Whitehorn and his comrades in the 41st Virginia Infantry. A predawn calamitous explosion had jolted them awake, as thousands of pounds of powder were detonated in an attempt to initiate a decisive breakthrough against General Lee's position. Orders began to arrive for General William Mahone's Brigade, of which the 41st Virginia was a member, to counterattack and drive out the Union invaders. The situation was dire, they needed to reestablish Lee's lines, or Petersburg would fall, ensuring the possibility of Richmond being taken in rapid succession. Sergeant Whitehorn gained his composure and mentally prepared himself for the melee that was soon to follow. As a resident of nearby Sussex County, Whitehorn realized that defending Petersburg meant both defending his local community and country. His fighting spirits up, Whitehorn and his men charged towards the Crater and entered hand to hand combat with Union soldiers, many of whom were African American, trapped in the traverses. Chaos swirled around Whitehorn and his men as the specter of death encompassed them. The explosion had created an unearthly backdrop for the fighting in which Whitehorn was engaged. Corpses of the poor South Carolinians blown into the Petersburg sky, war material strewn haphazardly about, and now dying victims of an intensified war lay at his feet. Around him, soldiers killed each other through whatever means were expedient. The racial animosity and urgency of recapturing the works was not lost on any Confederate soldier. Suddenly, within a few steps of him, a charging Union soldier dropped dead at his feet, shot by a comrade of his. By this stage of the war, camaraderie was especially necessary to bolster morale and endure in an increasingly bitter struggle. In the carnage of the Crater, Whitehorn suffered a severe wound to his face, but ultimately survived.¹

¹ George S. Bernard, *War Talks of Confederate Veterans: Addresses delivered before A.P. Hill Camp of Confederate Veterans, of Petersburg, Va., with Addenda giving Statements of Participants, Eye-Witnesses and others, in respect to Campaigns, Battles, Prison Life and other War Experiences* (Petersburg: Fenn & Owen, Publishers, 1892), 326.

Slightly more than a decade later, Whitehorn picked up the latest edition of the local *Petersburg Daily Index Appeal* and a sense of fulfillment came to his countenance. His mind instantly flashed back to the siege of Petersburg and he was again grateful to be alive. Whitehorn remembered the soldierly camaraderie and sense of honor that sustained him during one of the most challenging phases of his life. Now, in an article titled “The Brigade Re-Union, Large Assemblage of ‘Mahone’s Men,’” it proudly listed his name as a representative of his unit, the 41st Virginia Infantry, tasked with the goal of establishing a veterans’ organization.² It had been difficult postwar making ends meet and readjusting to a thoroughly transformed South, however the memory of his comrades rekindled his spirits and morale. Sergeant Whitehorn initially relied upon soldierly camaraderie to ease his readjustment in spite of disabilities sustained during the siege. Perhaps, Whitehorn contemplated to himself, this veterans’ organization offered validation for their sacrifices as a unit and would place an incentive for Virginia to begin providing assistance to needy and deserving Confederate veterans.

While soldierly camaraderie assisted men during the siege and postwar, other coping mechanisms provided a sense of divine reassurance in the midst of grave dangers. John Malachi Bowden, a soldier in Company B, 2nd Georgia Infantry, had narrowly avoided death at Petersburg. After recognizing the dreadful sound of an incoming shell, Bowden dove for cover in the maze of trenches. However, it was a near miss as fragments of the exploding projectile touched his ear before slamming into the earth.³ Bowden reached inside his threadbare pocket and pulled out his New Testament, searching for scripture to reassure his soul after almost being dispatched to eternity. While he lacked many supplies or sources of comfort, God’s word became his treasured possession as the uncertainty of death hovered around the lines. The previous day, Bowden witnessed a shell take the life of an unsuspecting comrade, and he reflected how it could

² “The Brigade Re-Union, Large Assemblage of ‘Mahone’s Men,’” *Petersburg Daily Index Appeal*, May 11, 1875.

³ John Malachi Bowden, quoted in Hess, *In the Trenches at Petersburg: Field Fortifications and Confederate Defeat* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2009), 76.

have been him. Bowden realized that he must take as many precautions as he could against death, however it would ultimately come to chance with the drastic proliferation in shelling and vile sharpshooting. After he finished his devotions, Bowden felt spiritually refreshed and reassured that good would come out of his dismal circumstances, therefore he must endure.

For this Georgia soldier, religion was not something to take lightly and his commitment to his faith, refined during the hardships of Petersburg, manifested itself postwar as well. Rev. John Malachi Bowden, of the Methodist Episcopal Church South, put down his pen from writing his wartime memoirs, deeply occupied by memories of Petersburg. He had just finished describing the nature of the conflict by the time of Petersburg: “These were bloody battles, and in some of them nearly every man in sight of me was either killed or wounded. As to myself, the hand of Providence seemed strangely to protect and save me from harm in many instances.”⁴ Looking back upon his piece of paper, Bowden visualized the horrors of the siege of Petersburg, uncertainties as a prisoner of war, and how his faith carried him through it all. While raised a believer, his Christian faith became stronger as a result of his experiences at Petersburg. In fact, these experiences were the primary reason he entered the ministry in 1868, embarking on over a half century of service. His ability to readjust immediately postwar resulted from his philosophy of service to God first and remembrance of his Confederate experiences, as “[m]y status is still that of a paroled Confederate Soldier.”⁵ For Confederate soldiers such as B.F. Whitehorn and John Malachi Bowden, the siege of Petersburg became a defining influence in their lives as it was truly the last, lengthy campaign of the war in which they faced prolonged suffering. In the midst of this, they along with the majority of Confederate soldiers, chose to overcome first through soldierly coping mechanisms used during the siege and later as veterans postwar.

Petersburg, Virginia, on the banks of the Appomattox River, had been on the doorstep

⁴ John Malachi Bowden, n.d., 6, in John Malachi Bowden Civil War Memoirs, MSS 537f, James G. Kenan Research Center at the Atlanta History Center, accessed March 18, 2017, <http://ahc.galileo.usg.edu/ahc/view?docId=ead/ahc.MSS537f-ead.xml;query=mss537f;brand=default>.

⁵ Ibid., 27.

of momentous campaigns early in the war as Union and Confederate forces grappled for possession of the capital at Richmond. By the middle of June 1864, it was Petersburg's turn to become the primary focus of two determined armies in a desperate struggle to decide if the country were to be reunited and what kind of society would ultimately endure. Beginning on June 15, 1864 with a pitched battle in which Union soldiers failed to capture the hastily defended city, and lasting until the city capitulated on April 2, 1865, the siege of Petersburg was a lengthy campaign unrivaled in both scale and intensity. While many historians have recognized the importance of Petersburg in a strategic or military sense, the siege represents more than just periods of action and inaction, but rather one which demands analysis of the human experiences there. It is necessary to look at the siege from the perspective of the Confederate soldiers who had to endure increasing hardships and the prospects not only of defeat there, but also of the larger cause. Additionally, no scholarship directly connects the perspectives and experiences of Confederate soldiers at Petersburg to the next challenging phase, the postwar era.

The grueling nature of siege warfare amplified individual suffering through soldiers having to endure exposure to the elements, low food supply, improper clothing, increased danger of death from different forms, increased racial acrimony, and declining Confederate fortunes. Given these challenges, distinctive coping mechanisms were refined from earlier campaigns to meet the new intensity of war, such as relying on soldierly camaraderie, Southern honor, letter writing and a strong reliance on Christianity. While desertion became a solution for some, the majority of the soldiers chose to endure. Additionally, after the war coping mechanisms became repurposed, such as through unit camaraderie and Southern honor in joining veterans' organizations, literary endeavors as veterans, and a continued firm reliance on the Protestant Christian faith. Postwar, Confederate veterans also needed the support of state governments for artificial limbs, commutation or pension payments, and Confederate soldiers' homes benefits. However, often these sources were decades in the making, such as with pensions and soldiers'

homes, therefore necessitating an instant reliance on repurposed wartime coping mechanisms. Additionally, these forms of institutional support required Confederate veterans to demonstrate honorable service and character, thereby ensuring those recipients felt worthy and appreciated in the midst of their hardships and inability to care for themselves. State sponsored institutional assistance, which was ultimately more bureaucratic and less personal than the military, became nonetheless necessary as advancing age and lingering disabilities compounded postwar troubles.

Historiography

Scholars have studied the siege of Petersburg during the war, but the focus is typically more on a strategic military focus. Richard J. Sommers, author of *Richmond Redeemed: The Siege at Petersburg*, was one such historian who focused on the military campaigns, particularly the early phases in 1864.⁶ Historian Earl J. Hess, author of *In the Trenches at Petersburg: Field Fortifications and Confederate Defeat*, approached the siege from a strategic and tactical angle, and was beneficial to describing the layout of the campaign.⁷ Additionally, historian Joseph T. Glatthaar, author of *General Lee's Army: From Victory to Collapse*, provided a good overview of the conditions of the siege in his sweeping account of the Army of Northern Virginia.⁸ While these works prove essential in understanding the strategic nature of the siege of Petersburg and general conditions, they do not go far enough into the intimate experience of being a Confederate soldier for months on end in the face of increasing hardships. My thesis seeks to transition from military history to that of social history in order to fully understand the experiences of Confederate soldiers at Petersburg. Scholars such as A. Wilson Greene have done an in-depth job of presenting the siege of Petersburg from the viewpoint of civilian experience within the strategic nature of the campaign.⁹ However, while covering the civilian perspective is admirable,

⁶ Richard J. Sommers, *Richmond Redeemed: The Siege at Petersburg* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, 1981).

⁷ Earl J. Hess, *In the Trenches at Petersburg: Field Fortifications and Confederate Defeat* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2009).

⁸ Joseph T. Glatthaar, *General Lee's Army: From Victory to Collapse* (New York: Free Press, 2008).

it does not extend further into an analysis of the defenders of Petersburg, the thousands of weary Confederate soldiers protecting them under tremendous hardships and unrelenting pressure.

Scholars have also written about soldier experience during the Civil War, and these sources are useful as points of comparison with the Confederate soldier experience during the siege. Historians such as Frances M. Clarke, Gerald F. Linderman, and Aaron Sheehan-Dean, have authored books that cover the motivations and experiences of being a soldier in the Civil War.¹⁰ Additionally, historians such as Aaron Sheehan-Dean have edited publications such as *The View from the Ground: Experiences of Civil War Soldiers*, which provide insight into soldier experience from the viewpoints of various historians.¹¹ Building upon these works, this thesis seeks to contribute to soldier experience literature through uniting personal survival strategies from during and postwar with institutions available in terms of the army and the state. Through this arrangement, the status of veteran began during the war, in this case the siege of Petersburg, and then carried over postwar for successful readjustment.

Over the recent years, historians have placed greater emphasis on writing about Civil War veterans, and these works provide context on the analysis of Confederate veterans within this thesis. Historians such as James Marten and Jeffrey W. McClurken have studied the transition into postwar life for Civil War veterans.¹² These authors have analyzed the challenges facing returning veterans, as well as the structures and support systems that were formed to ease their transition. This thesis seeks to expand upon their analysis through the lens of specifically

⁹ A. Wilson Greene, *Civil War Petersburg: Confederate City in the Crucible of War* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2006).

¹⁰ Francis M. Clarke, *War Stories: Suffering and Sacrifice in the Civil War North* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2011); Gerald F. Linderman, *Embattled Courage: The Experience of Combat in the American Civil War* (New York: The Free Press, 1987); Aaron Sheehan-Dean, *Why Confederates Fought: Family and Nation in Civil War Virginia* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2009).

¹¹ Aaron Sheehan-Dean, ed., *The View from the Ground: Experiences of Civil War Soldiers* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 2007).

¹² James Marten, *Sing Not War: The Lives of Union and Confederate Veterans in Gilded Age America* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2011); Jeffrey W. McClurken, *Take Care of the Living: Reconstructing Confederate Veteran Families in Virginia* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2009).

focusing on Confederate veterans of the siege of Petersburg who readjusted postwar and utilized some or all of the support systems available to them. While the challenges varied for the returning Confederates, many of the institutional or structural support systems described would have been familiar to these men and therefore utilized to varying extents.

Within the context of scholarship on veterans is the subcategory of works concerning Confederate veterans and institutional support. Mark E. Rodgers, author of *Tracing the Civil War Veteran Pension System in the State of Virginia: Entitlement or Privilege*, analyzed the progression of Confederate disability and pension support within Virginia.¹³ R.B. Rosenberg analyzed the creation and purposes of the emerging Confederate soldiers' homes throughout the South postwar.¹⁴ The practice of Christianity was both intimately personal and also institutional in nature, as evident through the abundance of Protestant denominations to which these men joined, which often greatly affected them as veterans. Daniel W. Stowell, author of *Rebuilding Zion: The Religious Reconstruction of the South, 1863-1877*, analyzed the transformation of Christianity postwar and provided a window into one method through which many Confederate veterans successfully readjusted.¹⁵

The Cambridge Dictionary defines readjust as “to change the way you live or behave to fit a new or different situation.”¹⁶ This thesis seeks to apply this definition to the analysis of Confederate veterans postwar. While every veteran was unique, the successful readjustment to the postwar South did involve many common themes. In spite of individual suffering and differing levels of physical disability, Confederate veterans who successfully readjusted postwar were those who lived their lives in a reunited country and community in as exemplary

¹³ Mark E. Rodgers, *Tracing the Civil War Veteran Pension System in the State of Virginia: Entitlement or Privilege* (Lewiston, NY: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1999).

¹⁴ R.B. Rosenberg, *Living Monuments: Confederate Soldiers' Homes in the New South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993).

¹⁵ Daniel W. Stowell, *Rebuilding Zion: The Religious Reconstruction of the South, 1863-1877* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998).

¹⁶ “readjust Definition in the Cambridge English Dictionary,” Cambridge Dictionary, accessed January 27, 2017, <http://dictionary.cambridge.org/us/dictionary/english/readjust>.

manner as possible. In many ways, the majority of Confederate veterans who survived the harrowing siege of Petersburg fit this description in the years after the conflict ceased.

Sources and Methodology

Because this project is primarily a social history of Confederate soldiers in General Lee's Army of Northern Virginia during the Petersburg campaign, personal letters, diaries, and postwar memoirs make up the bulk of the primary sources. Of these primary sources, the majority come from common infantry soldiers and lower ranking officers. This was done with the goal of obtaining a more accurate analysis of the siege through the accounts of common soldiers who literally bore the hardships of an intensified war most directly. Some of these accounts have been published, such as "Letters of Luther Rice Mills- A Confederate Soldier," which captured the misery of siege warfare and hardships he faced as a soldier.¹⁷ Additional soldier accounts published include *Letters Home: Letters of Lt. Wm. F. Baugh Co. G 61st VA Infantry 1861-1865*, which captured the sense of isolation from loved ones, and *The Allen Family of Amherst County, Virginia Civil War Letters*, which covered one family in their commitment to the Confederacy and conditions of the siege of Petersburg.¹⁸ Robert G. Evans has put together compilations of primary sources from Mississippi soldiers during the siege of Petersburg and postwar, which provided many valuable accounts.¹⁹ Soldier letters from the time of the events described will be analyzed to show what their responses were or reactions to the events that were unfolding around them. Other published sources include individual memoirs, such as those of soldiers Edgar Warfield and David Holt.²⁰ However, it is important to note that with postwar

¹⁷ Luther Rice Mills, "Letters of Luther Rice Mills- A Confederate Soldier," *The North Carolina Historical Review* 4, no. 3 (July 1927): 285-310.

¹⁸ William Fielding Baugh, *Letters Home: Letters of Lt. Wm. F. Baugh Co. G 61st VA Infantry 1861-1865* (Powhatan, VA: Roy N. Cain, 2003); *The Allen Family of Amherst County, Virginia Civil War Letters*, ed. Charles W. Turner (Berryville, VA: Rockbridge Publishing Company, 1995).

¹⁹ Robert G. Evans, ed., *The 16th Mississippi Infantry: Civil War Letters and Reminiscences* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2002).

²⁰ Edgar Warfield, *Manassas to Appomattox: The Civil War Memoirs of Pvt. Edgar Warfield, 17th Virginia Infantry* (McLean, VA: EPM Publications, 1996); Thomas D. Cockrell and Michael B. Ballard, eds., *A Mississippi Rebel in*

memory accounts, there was a span of time since the events described and time of writing, often resulting in themes of national reconciliation, at least among white Americans. Memoirs written in the 1890s, for example, will often stress the valor of both sides in hopes of creating greater national unity. Actions taken by soldiers in 1864 might suddenly appear more civil in the hopes of improving relationships between white Americans, especially concerning racial accounts such as with the Battle of the Crater. Memory accounts, such as through individual memoirs, will be analyzed to see what aspects of events changed over time or became more important. Memoirs often involve the author attempting to propagate their legacy, so it is crucial to check what was written with the historical facts at the time of the actual event.

Many primary sources are unpublished and located at the Virginia Historical Society or the Library of Virginia. Some of the collections at the Virginia Historical Society include the diary of James Thomas Petty, John William Burch papers, and the Joseph D. Stapp letters.²¹ Some of the Library of Virginia's extensive collections include the Younger Longest letters, Whitehorne Family Papers, and the T.W.G. Inglet letters.²² Newspaper articles also provide important insight into events from the siege of Petersburg and postwar, in regards to veterans' organizations and legislation, especially newspapers from the Richmond and Petersburg vicinity. These unpublished primary sources and newspaper accounts are used to provide details and firsthand experiences to connect individual accounts to a larger narrative. Additionally, soldier letters home will be analyzed to see what aspects of the siege of Petersburg the soldiers decided to share with their loved ones, and what remained unsaid. This will be used to demonstrate how letters were an important emotional connection to the home front.

the Army of Northern Virginia: The Civil War Memoirs of Private David Holt (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1995).

²¹ James Thomas Petty, *The War Between the States Diary of James Thomas Petty*, Virginia Historical Society, Richmond, VA [hereafter cited as VHS]; John William Burch Papers, 1864-1890, VHS; Joseph D. Stapp Letters 1864 January 27- 1865 March 4, VHS.

²² Younger Longest Letters, 1864, Library of Virginia, Richmond, VA [hereafter cited as LVA]; Whitehorne Family Papers, 1844-1865, LVA; T.W.G. Inglet Letters, 1862-1865, LVA.

Additionally, while letters contained many themes of the siege within the text, they also often focused deeply on the role of Christianity. However, it is important to note that when addressing the term “Christianity,” this thesis is demonstrating the mainstream Protestant Christian denominations which dominated throughout the South, such as the Baptists, Methodists, and Presbyterians. This term is applied broadly when analyzing the written records of these soldiers, so as to not focus on differences of doctrine between the denominations and lose track of the larger argument. While my sources are expressive of soldiers from traditional Protestant Christian denominations throughout the South, soldiers of other religious affiliations used their faith to cope with Petersburg as well. Groups such as the Catholics and Jews also sent men into the Confederate military service and these soldiers relied heavily on their religious traditions to help remedy the intensified war that occurred at Petersburg.²³

It is also essential to look at sources written exclusively by veterans, with the purpose of communicating with each other and spreading their legacies on their own terms. George S. Bernard’s *War Talks of Confederate Veterans: Addresses delivered before A.P. Hill Camp of Confederate Veterans, of Petersburg, Va., with Addenda giving Statements of Participants, Eye-Witnesses and others, in respect to Campaigns, Battles, Prison Life and other War Experiences*, is one such postwar account.²⁴ This publication contains the various addresses given by Confederate veterans, many of whom affected by the Battle of the Crater. It is important to note that accounts such as these were published in a time of national reconciliation and also as a means to propagate their legacy of worthy service. Other sources directly related to Confederate

²³ For analysis of Jewish Confederates, including some who participated directly at Petersburg, see Robert N. Rosen, *The Jewish Confederates* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2000). For recent scholarship on the contributions of Catholics to the Confederate war effort, see the following: Gracjan Kraszewski, “Dogma and Dixie: Roman Catholics and the Southern Confederacy during the American Civil War” (PhD diss., Mississippi State University, 2016). Of particular interest is Chapter 3, “ON THE BATTLEFIELD: CATHOLIC CHAPLAINS AND CATHOLIC SOLDIERS, 1862-1864,” which argued that though a religious minority, the Catholics who fought for the Confederacy were committed to the cause and similar in conduct to other soldiers, such as the majority Protestant Christians.

²⁴ George S. Bernard, *War Talks of Confederate Veterans* (Petersburg: Fenn & Owen, Publishers, 1892).

veterans postwar, such as the printing of *Second Re-Union of Mahone's Brigade, Held on the Anniversary of the Battle of the Crater, in the Opera House, Norfolk, July 31, 1876*, and was designed to celebrate the legacy of General Mahone's Brigade, who played an instrumental role during the siege of Petersburg.²⁵

A final area of sources used in this thesis are institutional records at the state level. The individual applications for Confederate disability, commutation or pension payments, and the soldiers' home are state records. The electronic files make available individual veterans' applications for postwar assistance, such as those relating to specific legislative acts on pension related payments. Files also often include letters or statements of individual need, allowing the researcher to gain a greater understanding of the amount of postwar suffering a veteran was undergoing. Additionally, the terminology will be analyzed to see how by applying for disability or pension assistance it legitimized their suffering and ensured they were viewed as honorable. In terms of applications to the soldiers' home, many of the same elements carry over, but there also began to be a heavier emphasis on the effects of old age and inability to provide for themselves.²⁶ These applications will be analyzed to show how residence at a facility indicated a reciprocal relationship in which care would be provided, but that the veterans had to remain honorable. Collectively, these applications are used as a main source of evidence for understanding how beneficial veteran related legislation was, once it arrived largely in the 1880s and 1890s, for many former Confederates affected by the siege of Petersburg. For the veterans it was possible to locate, grave markers also provided a source as to what messages were inscribed that reflected how they wanted to be remembered. Several of these markers were for veterans who, while alive had to rely on state sponsored institutional assistance to some extent. Lastly, the primary sources analyzed in this thesis provide the best possible window into

²⁵ *Second Re-Union of Mahone's Brigade, Held on the Anniversary of the Battle of the Crater, in the Opera House, Norfolk, July 31, 1876* (Norfolk: The Landmark Book and Job Office, 1876), VHS.

²⁶ See the Library of Virginia section under Bibliography for examples of the various electronic files regarding Confederate veteran related applications.

understanding their existence, both during the desperate siege of Petersburg and postwar, as they sought readjustment with dignity and a renewed sense of Southern honor.

Organization

Chapter one will examine the intensified Civil War that Confederate soldiers dealt with at Petersburg, as well as the use of various coping mechanisms which helped remedy the effects of siege warfare. As the siege of Petersburg wore on, Confederate soldiers had to deal with inadequate rations, dwindling supplies, combat with African American soldiers, increasing setbacks on other fronts, and the continual danger of death from a variety of forms. As the months passed, Confederate soldiers faced a crisis in which they either adjusted psychologically or chose to desert. This thesis focuses heavily on those who remained to fight in the midst of numerous setbacks and personal travails that would have tested the best of any soldiers. Chapter one begins by discussing the relationship between Confederate soldiers and their natural environment, continues into the drudgery of tasks they had to perform, and shifts into the components of siege warfare to which they were daily subjected. This chapter also includes an analysis of desertion during the siege of Petersburg, especially as the living conditions worsened. Chapter one then shifts into the various coping mechanisms utilized during the siege, such as the proliferation of letter writing and practice of Christianity, before transitioning into an analysis of Southern honor. Finally, chapter one ends with an in depth analysis of the Battle of the Crater, with particular focus on the racial element, and concludes with Lee's surrender at Appomattox Court House. In ultimate defeat there, Lee's dejected soldiers faced tremendous uncertainty regarding their future both individually and as a society.

Chapter two continues to examine the utilization of coping mechanisms although in a postwar context. The Confederate defeat at Petersburg and subsequent surrender of Lee's army at Appomattox ushered in a new era in which Confederate soldiers began the painful transition of rebuilding their lives in a thoroughly devastated South. This chapter seeks to analyze the

readjustment of Confederate veterans from the siege of Petersburg up to approximately 1895, although some material is dated several years later. Chapter two begins with the Confederate demobilization process after the war, then shifts into a historiography on sources regarding the postwar South. As an agricultural society, many Confederate veterans were farmers, so an analysis of the changes to Southern agriculture and labor, caused by the conclusion of the war is warranted. Chapter two shifts into an analysis of the widespread practice of Christianity. For many Confederate veterans of the siege, the practice of Protestant Christianity and firm reliance on God assisted them in their difficult transition to postwar life, just as it served as a sustaining force during the Petersburg campaign. With institutional support not immediately available, due to a devastated region and national government that had deemed them as traitors, the fervent reliance on faith served as a bedrock of their successful readjustment to postwar life. Many veterans even felt called to enter the ministry of various denominations postwar, often as a result of their wartime experiences. Chapter two then progresses into an analysis of how soldierly coping mechanisms, such as Southern honor and unit camaraderie became repurposed postwar. The thesis analyzes the advent of local Confederate veterans' organizations, as well as the larger United Confederate Veterans and their corresponding goals. Letter writing, whether to others or oneself, which was initially a coping mechanism during the siege that enabled soldiers to mentally rise above their present dismal situations, became repurposed postwar as well. As Confederate veterans, they now used literary endeavors to redeem themselves and their cause in the midst of agonizing defeat, while also conveying their valor to a new generation. Writing also served as a coping mechanism in which veterans could correspond with each other about Confederate service and the challenges facing them as they aged.

Chapter two progresses into an analysis of the emergence of postwar state sponsored institutional support for Confederate veterans, such as the rise of the pension system and soldiers' homes. Confederate disability and pension assistance, appearing several years and

often decades after the conflict ended, provided needy Confederate veterans with both financial support and psychological support in the sense that they could finally feel their sacrifices were dignified. Corresponding with the growth of disability and pension assistance was the emergence of Confederate soldiers' homes throughout the South. These homes were created for honorable veterans who were beyond being able to care for themselves, however it would not be until the mid-1880s before these emerged. Most of the veterans who applied were without a wife or family to care for them, or simply financially destitute. Chapter two then includes an analysis of those Confederate veterans who were not able to cope, illustrating that despite the soldierly camaraderie and institutional resources available to them, not everyone would ultimately make it. An analysis of postwar veterans' suicides, mental health crises, and an example of the consequences of prolonged grief is warranted in this section. Through the challenging postwar decades, it became clear that successful readjustment, at least in part, required the repurposing of coping mechanisms that were important to sustaining themselves during the earlier siege of Petersburg. Therefore, the notion of veteran status began during the siege itself and repurposed coping mechanisms became immediately vital after defeat. As time progressed, these repurposed soldierly coping mechanisms worked in conjunction with institutional support sources, allowing the majority of Confederate veterans to ultimately readjust successfully to the challenges facing them throughout the postwar South.

Chapter 1

Confederate Soldiers during the Siege of Petersburg:

The Evolution and Responses to the Changing Nature of War

The siege of Petersburg, Virginia, lasted over nine months from the middle of June 1864 to early April 1865. Petersburg fell under siege due to its economic, and most importantly, transportation significance to the Confederacy. A. Wilson Greene, author of *Civil War Petersburg: Confederate City in the Crucible of War*, wrote that by mid-June 1864, Union General Ulysses S. Grant “reasoned that by choking off the flow of supplies into Petersburg, he could deny the food, fodder, munitions, and medicine necessary to sustain Richmond’s citizens and Lee’s army. Only the Richmond & Danville Railroad served the Confederate capital without first passing through Petersburg.”²⁷ Lee A. Wallace, Jr., author of *A History of Petersburg National Battlefield to 1956*, described some of the railroads associated with Petersburg and their significance. Wallace wrote that the Weldon Railroad “proved to be a tremendous boost to the Petersburg cotton and tobacco markets.”²⁸ Additionally, railroads ran from Petersburg to places such as City Point, Richmond, Lynchburg, and Norfolk.²⁹ Therefore, by the latter stages of the war, Petersburg’s transportation prowess meant that wealth, goods, and soldiers could move not only to sustain General Lee’s Army of Northern Virginia, but also the Confederate capital of Richmond itself. The shift towards destroying General Lee’s logistics, rather than his army outright, effectively determined that the final grand struggle of the eastern theater would occur at Petersburg. (See Figure 4.)

²⁷ A. Wilson Greene, *Civil War Petersburg: Confederate City in the Crucible of War* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2006), 190.

²⁸ Lee A. Wallace, Jr., *A History of Petersburg National Battlefield to 1956* (Washington, D.C.: National Park Service, Department of the Interior, 1983), 3.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 3-4.

By the time June of 1864 rolled around, Americans both North and South had grown accustomed to brutal campaigns and mounting casualties that would have seemed inconceivable only a few years earlier. Despite this, the style of warfare that manifested itself at Petersburg would be dramatically more challenging than anything the soldiers had previously faced. Instead of earlier campaigns with pitched battles, rapid troop movement, and seasons of campaigning, Petersburg would become something more ominous and in the mold of continual, unrelenting warfare. Continual yet relatively confined campaigning and increased pressure would become hallmarks of the Petersburg campaign. Richard J. Sommers, author of *Richmond Redeemed: The Siege at Petersburg*, described this new nature of warfare that would come to define the perilous campaign. Sommers wrote “[t]he siege ended six weeks of incessant battles, yet the pressure did not lessen. Grant kept his forces up against the Graycoats to fix them in place strategically and tactically . . . To maintain the pressure between these battles, shelling, sharpshooting, and picket forays flared daily.”³⁰ The war in Virginia thus turned into a continual campaign, at a time in which Confederate fortunes were clearly falling, due to military setbacks in the face of advancing Union armies, manpower shortages, and ever increasing material difficulties.

Confederate soldiers at Petersburg responded to this new reality of warfare in a variety of ways. The nature of siege warfare required soldiers to alter the natural environment surrounding them. Additionally, the long duration of time spent in the trenches enhanced the effects of the weather, and often for the worse. It also changed the psychological outlook of many soldiers as the nature of siege warfare provided more time for questioning motivations and constantly having to cope with the danger of death. Given these challenges, several distinct coping mechanisms were reassessed to meet the new intensity of the conflict, such as a renewed emphasis on letter writing and a reliance on Christianity for providing a sense of comfort and justification for the war in a time void of comfort and seemingly any earthly solutions. Finally,

³⁰ Richard J. Sommers, *Richmond Redeemed: The Siege at Petersburg* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, 1981), 2.

the siege of Petersburg contained offensive moments, such as the Battle of the Crater, which provided a different psychological experience for Confederate soldiers, not just in the sense that it broke the monotony of waiting, but through facing African American soldiers, illustrating how the war had evolved into a personal affront to the Confederate social and economic systems. The new reality of siege warfare at Petersburg thus altered the natural environment, created periods of action and inaction, and required various psychological coping mechanisms to endure the intensified nature of the Civil War. The novelty of extensive and prolonged trench warfare created a continual state of uncertainty regarding when conflict would break out. Those who remained to face these challenges used letter writing, the practice of Christianity, animosity towards African American soldiers, Southern notions of honor, and unit camaraderie, instead of desertion to remedy their suffering. The perilous experiences of the siege forced these men to adapt to a wide range of hardships, and their refined coping mechanisms and personal survival strategies enabled the majority of them to successfully readjust postwar as well.

Historiography

As a result of a dramatically intensified Civil War at Petersburg, Confederate soldiers reconciled their present situation with socially acceptable views on both suffering and courage. Various historians have evaluated mental health in the war context, such as Frances M. Clarke, author of *War Stories: Suffering and Sacrifice in the Civil War North*. Clarke firmly placed soldier experience in the context of commonly held societal beliefs on suffering. While writing of Union soldiers, Clarke's analysis is relevant to the Confederates: "Exemplary sufferers became the Civil War's quintessential patriots- men who embodied the Union cause- not simply because they suffered for their nation, but because they suffered *well*."³¹ This notion of suffering nobly through hardships is important to understanding the experiences of Confederate soldiers at Petersburg. Gerald F. Linderman, author of *Embattled Courage: The Experience of Combat in*

³¹ Frances M. Clarke, *War Stories: Suffering and Sacrifice in the Civil War North* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2011), 54.

the American Civil War, analyzed the transformation of courage throughout the Civil War. In regards to the latter stages of the war, Linderman wrote, “[a]nother consequence of the new complexity of combat experience following the displacement of the simple courage of 1861-62 was that it allowed distinctions impermissible earlier . . . those strict definitions of the courageous and cowardly began to blur and to merge.”³² These distinctions were important factors in a soldier’s decision to desert or remain in the ranks at Petersburg.

In the book, *The View from the Ground: Experiences of Civil War Soldiers*, various historians explore how the evolving war led to newfound acrimony between soldiers, as well as the increased influence of the racial element.³³ Lastly, Peter S. Carmichael’s *The Last Generation: Young Virginians in Peace, War, and Reunion*, analyzed the motivations for Virginians to fight for the Confederacy. Carmichael wrote, “[a]s the conflict entered its final two years, young Virginians . . . gradually started to see the contest for political independence as a holy war. They believed they were fighting a depraved Yankee race of rapists and plunderers.”³⁴ Indeed, this ideological shift would directly influence the savageness of the fighting at Petersburg and also led to a challenging readjustment as veterans postwar.

This thesis builds on the previous scholarship by illustrating how suffering, courage, cowardice, and the increased acrimony between the two sides all manifested themselves at Petersburg. The gap in historiography is that no other published accounts are detailed enough about what it actually meant to be a Confederate soldier in the trenches around Petersburg for months on end. Furthermore, it appears that no published sources link the various coping mechanisms described in this thesis together with the goal of personifying the internal and external struggles of Confederate soldiers at Petersburg. While building on existing scholarship,

³² Gerald F. Linderman, *Embattled Courage: The Experience of Combat in the American Civil War* (New York: The Free Press, 1987), 166.

³³ Aaron Sheehan-Dean, ed., *The View from the Ground: Experiences of Civil War Soldiers* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 2007), 4.

³⁴ Peter S. Carmichael, *The Last Generation: Young Virginians in Peace, War, and Reunion* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2005), 202.

this thesis seeks to contribute to the literature on soldier experience by analyzing Confederates specifically involved in the siege of Petersburg, in order to understand how the campaign represented a vast escalation of the Civil War. Finally, this thesis seeks to build a figurative bridge from the coping mechanisms refined during the campaign by transitioning to an analysis of the coping mechanisms utilized after the war. This twofold purpose should illustrate that Petersburg was not just a unique campaign of escalated intensity with weighty consequences, but also an experience that shaped many veterans for the rest of their lives.

Confederate Soldiers and the Natural Environment

One of the most striking differences with the siege of Petersburg and earlier campaigns is with how the soldiers altered their natural environment, and that a reciprocal relationship formed in which the altered natural surroundings greatly affected them. Earl J. Hess, author of *In the Trenches at Petersburg: Field Fortifications and Confederate Defeat*, described how the early phases of the campaign changed the natural environment. Historian Hess wrote that as massive earthworks were constructed, any surrounding trees or bushes were removed in order to provide obstructions or simply to clear a line of fire.³⁵ Once the Confederate soldiers were in place, they set into motion a continual pattern of constructing new fortifications. According to Sommers, “[t]he numbing danger and grinding drudgery of trench warfare seemed greater perils than Yankee onslaughts. How the men longed to get out of those trenches! Even if only to dig new fortifications, a trip into the unravaged countryside could restore their spirits wonderfully.”³⁶ Therefore, the alteration of the natural environment to construct massive networks of trenches and fortifications both provided the Confederate soldiers with an added degree of security, but also increased their misery at the same time.

The siege of Petersburg created a different dynamic from earlier campaigns for Confederate soldiers trying to seek relief through nature. Kathryn Shively Meier, author of

³⁵ Hess, *In the Trenches at Petersburg*, 65.

³⁶ Sommers, *Richmond Redeemed*, 10.

Nature's Civil War: Common Soldiers and the Environment in 1862 Virginia, described the notion of straggling as a self-care technique. Historian Meier wrote that while various factors influenced straggling, “only two reasons are relevant to self-care: first, straggling for relief from environmental strain [which soldiers feared might lead to sickness and diminished spirits], and second, straggling to pursue self-care techniques, such as locating clean water.”³⁷ Straggling differed from desertion as soldiers viewed it “a temporary hiatus,” as compared to a definitive absence.³⁸ Therefore, straggling was not a repulsive activity to the soldiers or affront to one’s honor as with desertion. Historian Meier also presented the notion that orchestrated straggling might have had a positive net effect on a military unit. Meier wrote, “[s]ome men who fell back in pursuit of self-care could recover sufficiently to resume duty as effective soldiers, whereas if they had remained in the ranks they might have deteriorated or even died.”³⁹ William Fielding Baugh, a 2nd lieutenant in the 61st Virginia Infantry, illustrated what the rare opportunity for straggling could do. In a letter written to his wife on November 9th, 1864, Baugh wrote, “My darling wife . . . I am at camp again after a long and tedious walk. I stayed within four miles of town last night, slept in a very comfortable house and felt very much refreshed this morning. I had the blues so very badly yesterday that I was about to turn back home.”⁴⁰ This powerful example epitomized how straggling for self-help meant a great deal, both physically and psychologically, however many Confederates were not as fortunate as Lt. Baugh.

These lines of analysis are important because it shows how the strategic reality of siege warfare made it difficult to pursue self-care. The complex maze of trenches and fortifications that characterized siege warfare restricted the movement that soldiers enjoyed during more mobile earlier campaigns, and brought the soldier into a direct and more consequential

³⁷ Kathryn Shively Meier, *Nature's Civil War: Common Soldiers and the Environment in 1862 Virginia* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2013), 127.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ William Fielding Baugh to Mary Frances Coker Baugh, November 9, 1864, William Fielding Baugh Papers, 1861-1905, LVA.

relationship with the weather. (See Figure 1.) The new nature of siege warfare meant Confederate soldiers remained fixed in place for longer periods of time, due to an entrenched and fortified enemy, as well as declining troop numbers which made rotation difficult or impossible, both of which combined to increase the exposure to the elements.

Various elements caused strain and hardships for the Confederate soldiers, but the majority of them endured. Natural weather occurrences such as heat, cold, rain, snow, and dust are frequently mentioned in Confederate soldier accounts from the entire Civil War. However, the altered landscape, increased duration of time spent in an forbidding environment, and material hardships by this point in the war intensified the effects on the Confederates. Historian Meier wrote about the significance of rain: “It was difficult to decide in which scenario rain was a worse tormentor, when trying to achieve a night’s rest or when trekking through the viscous mud with full gear. In either case, rain dampened soldiers’ spirits.”⁴¹ James Thomas Petty, a soldier in Company B, 17th Virginia Infantry, made frequent mention to weather in his war diary. Writing around Petersburg, he described October 22, 1864, as “Raw. Cold rain this afternoon preceded by a sprinkle of snow.”⁴² Petty continued to describe weather conditions throughout his diary, but interestingly mentioned rain along with the future of his country. On December 21, 1864, Petty entered into his diary, “Rained very hard all day . . . The sky looks dark but my hope burns brightly still my resolution to serve my country while life shall last is unaltered and unalterable.”⁴³ Reading between the lines, Petty implied that the dark sky which brought rain was also above the Confederacy and had dampened his spirits some, but he also reaffirmed his commitment to fighting for the Confederacy.

Heat was also a dreaded occurrence and influenced both mental and physical well-being.⁴⁴ Earl J. Hess quoted Captain Will Biggs of the 17th North Carolina Infantry on

⁴¹ Ibid., 46.

⁴² James Thomas Petty, *The War Between the States Diary of James Thomas Petty*, VHS.

⁴³ Ibid.

June 27, 1864: “[T]he heat and the dust will in some manner get to us . . . we are almost burnt up.”⁴⁵ Younger Longest, a soldier in Company I, 26th Virginia Infantry, recorded some of the difficulties caused by heat in a letter to his brother. In an August 4, 1864, letter Longest wrote, “I am in the weather [it] is very hot and dry and we have no shade to go under nor can get any fresh air nor any water that is fit to drink.”⁴⁶ Captain James E. Whitehorne of Company F, 12th Virginia Infantry also described the heat in a letter to his sister. Whitehorne wrote, “[w]e are having a right hard time, we are in line of battle behind the breastworks- in an open field, and it is so intensely dry and dusty that we almost suffocate, it is as dry as I ever saw it in my life. We have not had any rain for over a month.”⁴⁷ Heat dried the bare ground beneath the Confederate soldiers, leading to misery amidst the dry and dusty conditions. However, rain and heat were not the only natural weather occurrences that altered their vulnerable environment.

Confederate soldiers also frequently made mention of cold weather and their actions to diminish the effects of winter weather. David Lawson Cole, a soldier in Company F, 61st Alabama Infantry, wrote in his diary: “I leave on picket the night of the 21st it were the coldest weather that I ever saw in my life I suffered greatly.”⁴⁸ Virginian Younger Longest wrote to his brother about the cold weather: “the weather have been quite colde hear for several days, and we can’t get but little wood.”⁴⁹ John William Burch, a soldier in Company A, 11th Virginia Infantry, wrote extensively about cold weather and trying to remedy it in a letter to his wife. Burch wrote, “I have just come from the Woods after fire wood and my hands are nervous. I tell you what a large stick of wood to carry on one shoulder a quarter of a mile gets very heavy before he gets home. We all have it to do so suffer with cold.”⁵⁰ In the same letter, Burch gave some direct

⁴⁴ Meier, *Nature’s Civil War*, 47.

⁴⁵ Will Biggs to Pat, June 27, 1864, Biggs Papers, Duke University, Special Collections Library, quoted in Hess, *In the Trenches at Petersburg*, 65.

⁴⁶ Younger Longest to his brother, August 4, 1864, Younger Longest Letters, 1864, LVA.

⁴⁷ James E. Whitehorne to his sister, July 8, 1864, Whitehorne Family Papers, 1844-1865, LVA.

⁴⁸ David Lawson Cole, December 23, 1864, Civil War Diary of David Lawson Cole, Co. F, 61st Alabama Infantry, VHS.

⁴⁹ Younger Longest to his brother, October 23, 1864, Younger Longest Letters, 1864, LVA.

instructions for a jacket: “[Y]ou said in your letter you intended to make me a jacket. I think if you will put another back on my old white one it will be warm enough but use your own pleasure and judgment.”⁵¹ Lieutenant Luther Rice Mills, of the 26th Virginia Infantry, wrote extensively about many aspects of soldiering in the trenches, including dealing with cold weather. In a letter to his brother, Mills wrote, “[i]t is quite cold and wood is very scarce. Blankets and overcoats are scarcer- some men have neither. The men are veterans ‘worn but not subdued.’”⁵² In a following letter to his brother, Mills wrote, “[t]he effect that one cold wet night has upon the boys is a little remarkable. They are generally for *Peace on any terms* towards the close of a cold wet night but after the sun is up and they get warm they are in their usual spirits.”⁵³ Writings such as these accounts suggest that without adequate clothing and firewood, dealing with the winter campaign could be a brutal challenge. Finally, the cold weather frequently made Confederate soldiers reflect on the cause for which they were suffering. James Thomas Petty wrote that November 2, 1864, was “[c]loudy and raw . . . the cold rain and sleet beating in my face and the colder wind searching me through with eyes and ears strained through the pelting of the storm . . . [and] I contrasted the present with other days and happier times, but I did not murmur for every tendency to complain or repine vanished in the reflection it is all for liberty.”⁵⁴

Another central weather element that irritated the soldiers around Petersburg was mud. According to historian Meier, mud was one of the most often repeated soldier complaints of the entire Civil War.⁵⁵ Robert Krick, author of *Civil War Weather in Virginia*, stated that Richmond newspapers complained in March 1865 that “[t]he mud keeps everything at a standstill in the armies before Richmond and Petersburg,” and that “[t]he rain and mud lasts, and of these there

⁵⁰ John William Burch to Sallie, December 14, 1864, John William Burch Papers, 1864-1890, VHS.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Luther Rice Mills to his brother, John, November 16, 1864, in Luther Rice Mills, “Letters of Luther Rice Mills- A Confederate Soldier,” *The North Carolina Historical Review* 4, no. 3 (July 1927): 303.

⁵³ Ibid., November 26, 1864.

⁵⁴ James Thomas Petty, *The War Between the States Diary of James Thomas Petty*, VHS.

⁵⁵ Meier, *Nature’s Civil War*, 50-51.

seems to be no end.”⁵⁶ Historian Hess stated that for the soldiers in the trenches, heavy rains could flood lines, causing a considerable deposit of mud to remain behind.⁵⁷ Virginian William Fielding Baugh, homesick for his wife, mentioned mud in a letter to her. Baugh wrote, “I believe I want you to send a horse for me next Tuesday morning . . . If not convenient do not say any thing about it at all. The nights are so pretty I would not mind walking home to see you if the mud is [not] very deep.”⁵⁸ Confederate soldiers desired water, chiefly for drinking purposes, but too much rain caused bothersome mud that added another dimension of suffering within the trenches. The delicate balance of nature regarding rain was easily upset at Petersburg as the landscape was void of much vegetation, thanks to the entrenched armies who frequently removed trees and brush to create obstacles for attacking enemy soldiers.

While these weather elements troubled Confederate soldiers earlier in the war, they were uniquely magnified by the topography and combination of both physical and emotional suffering that took place at Petersburg. Largely, the coping mechanisms used by Confederate soldiers elevated them up and out of their present conditions as much as possible. However, coping with the natural environment was only one demand placed upon the soldiers. As a soldier in the trenches, there were various duties and expectations to meet, both individually and collectively, and the new nature of siege warfare challenged these expectations through the continual danger of death and inclination to doubting one’s motivations for continuing the fight in the midst of declining Confederate fortunes.

Life in the Petersburg Trenches: The Duties of Confederate Soldiers and Dangers Faced

Confederate soldiers were also responsible for constructing shelters, preserving their health and well-being, manning the works, going on picket duty, and contending with false

⁵⁶ *Richmond Dispatch*, March 2-4, 1865, quoted in Robert K. Krick, *Civil War Weather in Virginia* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2007), 153.

⁵⁷ Hess, *In the Trenches at Petersburg*, 65.

⁵⁸ William Fielding Baugh to his wife, January 12, 1865, in *Letters Home: Letters of Lt. Wm. F. Baugh Co. G 61st VA Infantry 1861-1865* (Powhatan, VA: Roy N. Cain, 2003), 185.

alarms of enemy activity. In addition, these tasks had to be conducted under the constant danger of death from Union sharpshooters and artillery projectiles. In effect, as the two armies faced off in a more confined setting, life in the trenches quickly deteriorated and became painstaking. For those who soldiers who endured, various internal and external coping mechanisms had to be reshaped to match the new intensity of the conflict, while for others, dishonorable alternatives like desertion were increasingly practiced.

One of the most basic obligations for soldiers was constructing adequate shelter, especially as it became apparent that the siege of Petersburg would be an extended campaign. William Allen, a soldier in Company E, 13th Virginia Infantry, wrote to his mother from Camp Petersburg, Virginia, describing the living conditions of their huts. In a letter from March 17, 1865, William wrote, “Ma, I forgot to tell you about our cabins. They are entirely underground, just long enough for about four to stay in.”⁵⁹ In a letter from March 24, 1865, William wrote to his brother describing his suffering caused by the confinement. According to William, “I have been in service for some time, though this place bangs out any that ever I was in. Our shebangs are some ten or fifteen feet under the earth, though some of us have small cabins that are not under the earth that we can stay in when they are not shelling . . . This is one of the most confining places that I ever I was.”⁶⁰ In a letter to his mother, Joseph D. Stapp, a soldier in Company C, 41st Alabama Infantry, described a hut he was sharing with a few other soldiers as “a neat little hut in the ground with a chimney, which makes it very warm.”⁶¹ (See Figure 2.) Despite apparently having a suitable hut and positive mindset, Joseph was “getting tired of Old Virginia, it is too far from home.”⁶² Confederate soldiers also made mention of the labor involved with constructing these shelters. Virginian James Thomas Petty described the strenuous

⁵⁹ William Allen, *The Allen Family of Amherst County, Virginia Civil War Letters*, ed. Charles W. Turner (Berryville, VA: Rockbridge Publishing Company, 1995), 81.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 83.

⁶¹ Joseph D. Stapp to his mother, October 25, 1864, Joseph D. Stapp Letters 1864 January 27- 1865 March 4, VHS.

⁶² *Ibid.*

nature of building huts and chimneys: “Carried logs for a chimney to our tent half a mile on my shoulders. Pretty tough work. Pitched the tent this morning.”⁶³ Henry Martyn Trueheart, a soldier in McNeill’s Rangers, described some of the living conditions at Petersburg in a letter from January 16, 1865. According to Trueheart, “[t]he many thousands of troops on and near the front line [are] almost entirely underground. Of course their quarters are very dark . . . [and] in case of an alarm thousands of brave men rush from their holes in the ground to the surface of the earth ready to repel the attack. The scene reminded me of an ant-bed. You see only a few stragglers around the entrance while all’s quiet- but stir them up, and [to me] untold thousands rush to the surface.”⁶⁴ Cavalryman Henry Trueheart’s firsthand account illustrated how shelters had evolved into complex bunkers in the ground versus earlier and more mobile campaigns, where tents were a primary shelter. In addition to building and adapting to living underground, Confederate soldiers had to look after their individual health and general well-being, despite the increasingly meager resources now available to them.

One of the most basic human necessities that had to be addressed at Petersburg was obtaining an adequate amount of food. In the book *General Lee’s Army: From Victory to Collapse*, historian Joseph T. Glatthaar described some of the problems with rations facing Lee’s army at Petersburg. Glatthaar wrote, “[f]or months, rations consisted of bread and salt beef, clearly deficient of proper nutrients, doled out in quantities insufficient to satisfy hungry troops. Portions of food in each ration were so meager that soldiers sometimes ate the entire amount in one sitting and fasted the next day.”⁶⁵ Glatthaar continued describing how the problem only worsened as the siege wore on: “Throughout 1864, rations seldom exceeded a pound of corn meal and a quarter pound of beef or bacon, and only occasionally did men receive

⁶³ James Thomas Petty, *The War Between the States Diary of James Thomas Petty*, VHS.

⁶⁴ Henry Martyn Trueheart to John Overton, January 16, 1865, in Henry Martyn Trueheart and Charles William Trueheart, *Rebel Brothers: The Civil War Letters of the Truehearts*, ed. Edward B. Williams (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1995), 212.

⁶⁵ Glatthaar, *General Lee’s Army*, 383.

vegetables. By early 1865, the commissary could not sustain even that meager bounty.

Many days, the government could supply troops with either meat or a starch . . . but not both.”⁶⁶

Furthermore, the food supply problem was exacerbated by transportation problems throughout the Confederacy, questions of civilian food impressment, and Confederate currency inflation.⁶⁷

The end result was weakened Confederate soldiers, both physically and psychologically, and the concern over inadequate rations was a dominating theme among many letters sent home.

Confederate soldiers frequently wrote home to express their dismay at the cost of buying food and their inability to obtain it. Jefferson J. Wilson, a soldier in Company C, 16th Mississippi Infantry, wrote to his father about the cost of food around Petersburg: “Things is very high up here. A month’s wages will not get a man’s dinner. Peas is selling at two dollars a quart, onions a dollar fifty and two dollars a piece, and every other thing at the same proportion. I don’t see how some people do to live at such prices.”⁶⁸ David Holt, a soldier in Company K, 16th Mississippi Infantry, wrote about one expedition made while at Petersburg in order to find food. Holt wrote how he, along with some comrades, snuck behind enemy lines in order to search for available food. On their journey, Holt and the other soldiers located a dilapidated shack with a small garden that contained potatoes.⁶⁹ According to Holt, “Haynes proposed to cook the potatoes by a small fire on the hearth . . . [t]he captain stood guard while Haynes did the cooking and the rest of us grabbed the potatoes and washed them in a slough. We soon got every potato in the patch . . . We ate fast as we were in a hurry to get out of the cabin.”⁷⁰ Mississippian David Holt’s adventure behind the lines in search of food was not the norm, but it illustrated the dangers that Confederates would face in search of available food for their famished bodies.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 446.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 447.

⁶⁸ Jefferson J. Wilson to James E. Wilson, July 24, 1864, in Robert G. Evans, ed., *The 16th Mississippi Infantry: Civil War Letters and Reminiscences* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2002), 278-279.

⁶⁹ Thomas D. Cockrell and Michael B. Ballard, eds., *A Mississippi Rebel in the Army of Northern Virginia: The Civil War Memoirs of Private David Holt* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1995), 290-291.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 291.

Confederate soldiers also wrote about the specific meager quantities received and their hopes of being sent desired items from loved ones as a remedy. Edgar Warfield, a soldier in Company H, 17th Virginia Infantry, described the winter of 1864-1865 as difficult due to “receiving as rations one pound of flour, one-third of a pound of bacon, and one tablespoon of rice per man per day.”⁷¹ Virginian Younger Longest wrote in a letter to his brother that “we get one pinch of flour [to] be worked in a bread for a day and night and that makes us six and sometimes seven little biscuits.”⁷² In a letter to his brother, Virginian Luther Rice Mills touched on the various food products he desired but was unable to obtain: “You can send me a small box of vegetables if convenient, onions, taters cucumbers &c. some vinegar if possible.”⁷³ As the siege wore on, Mills witnessed the increasing desperation of his fellow soldiers: “We have rats and mice and something else in abundance . . . I saw a man catch a large rat and eat it about week ago.”⁷⁴ Thomas Wilkes Inglet, a soldier in Company C, 28th Georgia Infantry, wrote back to his family in Richmond County, requesting something unfeasible, bread mailed within a letter. Inglet wrote, “Mattie tell your Ma that I would like to be at her house to charge that loaf of bread but there is no chance but if I had the chance I could make a hole in it. Tell her she must send me a loaf in a letter.”⁷⁵ Soldiers such as John William Burch used letters home to vent about their food situation: “I have to live on one pound of flour a day and that cooked into one cake in a skillet without soda or fat [,] and five ounces of fat meat a day [,] sometimes a little rice or potatoes the last time I drew potatoes I got four about the size of a hen egg for three days rations . . . I like a little more variety. I want vegetables, biscuits, butter, etc.”⁷⁶

⁷¹ Edgar Warfield, *Manassas to Appomattox: The Civil War Memoirs of Pvt. Edgar Warfield, 17th Virginia Infantry* (McLean, VA: EPM Publications, 1996), 153.

⁷² Younger Longest to his brother, October 23, 1864, Younger Longest Letters, 1864, LVA.

⁷³ Luther Rice Mills to his brother, John, June 12, 1864, in Luther Rice Mills, “Letters of Luther Rice Mills- A Confederate Soldier,” *The North Carolina Historical Review* 4, no. 3 (July 1927): 302.

⁷⁴ Luther Rice Mills to his brother, John, January 3, 1865, in Luther Rice Mills, “Letters of Luther Rice Mills- A Confederate Soldier,” 306.

⁷⁵ Thomas Wilkes Inglet to his wife, Martha, September 18, 1864, T.W.G. Inglet Letters, 1862-1865, LVA.

⁷⁶ John William Burch to Sallie, December 14, 1864, John William Burch Papers, 1864-1890, VHS.

Food was quickly running very low and this affected not just the psychological condition of the Confederate soldiers, but also their physical abilities to endure. Lisa Laskin in her article, “‘The Army Is Not Near So Much Demoralized as the Country Is’: Soldiers in the Army of Northern Virginia and the Confederate Home Front,” described one major cause of the food shortage. According to Laskin, soldiers already had been accustomed to meager quantities of food and remedied it by purchasing local goods, however the rapid depreciation of Confederate money made it almost impossible by this time.⁷⁷ As mentioned earlier, Confederate soldiers noticed the high prices and reported back home on their inability to purchase goods. In a letter to his brother on March 24, 1865, William Allen wrote, “[w]e are permitted to visit Petersburg on a pass, though there is no use in our visiting that place. All of our men are entirely out of money and everything is so awful high . . . I will tell you that I am not satisfied here by no means. This is one trying place. Our rations are awful short.”⁷⁸ The disruption of vital transportation networks and rampant inflation due to the collapse of Confederate currency meant the government could no longer provide an adequate amount of food for the soldiers, and this coupled with the impracticality of buying from outside sources, led to scores of hungry Confederate soldiers.

Corresponding with the difficulties of obtaining an adequate amount of food was the continual problem of finding a proper supply of clean water. James Johnson Kirkpatrick, a soldier in Company C, 16th Mississippi Infantry, wrote in his diary that “[a]ll would welcome a rain. Companies C and A engaged in digging a well. Some of the others who have preceded us, struck good water at about twenty feet.”⁷⁹ Mississippian David Holt described the personal ordeal of digging a well in his postwar memoirs. According to Holt, “[n]ot a fellow would help me, and I went to digging alone in my spare time. It was no hard job as the soil was sandy. My

⁷⁷ Lisa Laskin, “‘The Army Is Not Near So Much Demoralized as the Country Is’: Soldiers in the Army of Northern Virginia and the Confederate Home Front,” in *The View from the Ground: Experiences of Civil War Soldiers*, ed. Aaron Sheehan-Dean (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 2007), 105.

⁷⁸ William Allen, *The Allen Family of Amherst County, Virginia Civil War Letters*, 83-84.

⁷⁹ James Johnson Kirkpatrick Diary, July 12, 1864, in Robert G. Evans, ed., *The 16th Mississippi Infantry: Civil War Letters and Reminiscences* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2002), 275.

idea was to dig a well four feet square with a flight of steps leading down to it. Whenever I went to digging, a lot of fellows lay around with one eye on the battery that had our range and one eye on me.”⁸⁰ Holt continued his description, “[w]e ran into a root of an oak tree at fifteen feet and found water at seventeen. It was a great find, and, if it had been the custom of Company K to enthuse over any performance whatever, I could have come in for some credit, which I did not want or get.”⁸¹ Holt’s account captured the length to which soldiers were willing to go in order to find water by continuing in his quest despite being in the range of Union artillery. Of course, water had other purposes too, such as for washing clothes. Virginian Younger Longest wrote, “lying in the trenches day and night and never [to] be released to wash our shirts . . . to war [wear] them three and fore weeks and over before we can get the chance to pull them off to wash.”⁸² Water was therefore essential not just as a drinking source, but also for cooking and personal hygiene. The lack of clean, pure water caused great suffering for the Confederate soldiers in the trenches at Petersburg. Confederate soldiers had to devote leisure time to searching for water and, as Holt’s account attested, preferably required the assistance of several soldiers. The situation can be viewed as both entertaining, in the case of Holt’s recollections, and also depressing. Perhaps the struggle for a basic necessity of life gave the soldiers a reason to view it as a competition of sorts, in order to relieve some of the psychological strains.

The siege of Petersburg, in particular during the beginning months, increased the difficulties that Confederates had in obtaining water. Joseph T. Glatthaar wrote in *General Lee’s Army: From Victory to Collapse*, that “[a] late spring to midsummer drought parched the earth [at Petersburg] and transformed dirt into dust ten inches deep in some areas. Movement by man or beast stirred up huge, choking clouds of dust.”⁸³ Furthermore, the nature of siege warfare intensified soldiers’ suffering and increased their desire to drink something clean and satisfying.

⁸⁰ David Holt, *A Mississippi Rebel in the Army of Northern Virginia*, 285.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Younger Longest to his brother, August 4, 1864, Younger Longest Letters, 1864, LVA.

⁸³ Glatthaar, *General Lee’s Army*, 381-382.

Glatthaar wrote that the sprawling earthworks around Petersburg not only shielded Union bullets, but also the much desired breeze, making already hot days even worse.⁸⁴ Lastly, even the desire for a basic human necessity became affected by the increasing savageness of the war. According to Glatthaar, “Yankee sharpshooters targeted water sources, which discouraged soldiers from venturing out in the daytime. Troops would simply have to endure their thirst until nightfall.”⁸⁵ Therefore, the desire to obtain clean and pure water at Petersburg was influenced by various factors, such as the early drought, relatively static nature of siege warfare, and increased barbarity among the two sides that no longer made allowances out of human empathy.

Picket duty at Petersburg brought added responsibilities to the Confederate soldiers and also reflected the emerging complexities of the war. Historian Hess described picket duty as soldiers being sent out ahead of their fortifications to serve as a guard against enemy attacks and to ward off any further advancements of the enemy.⁸⁶ While pickets had been a part of the Civil War before, the siege of Petersburg brought a new and provocative dimension to the affair for the Confederates, notably through the presence of Union African American pickets. Aaron Sheehan-Dean, author of *Why Confederates Fought: Family and Nation in Civil War Virginia*, described what this dramatic change meant for many Confederates. Sheehan-Dean wrote, “[t]he Union’s use of former slaves and free blacks as soldiers only exacerbated this hostility. As the fruits of the Emancipation Proclamation ripened . . . Confederates understood that the stakes in the war had escalated.”⁸⁷ William A. Penn, a soldier in Company E, 24th Virginia Infantry, wrote to his sister about the new Union pickets. According to Penn, “We have to go every third night and remain on duty, twenty four hours. We have had firing on the picket line for about two weeks or more. Negro troops on picket our front . . . I have fired several times but do not know whether I done any execution or not.”⁸⁸ Later in his letter, Penn wrote that “[t]he Yankees

⁸⁴ Ibid., 382.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Hess, *In the Trenches at Petersburg*, 73.

⁸⁷ Aaron Sheehan-Dean, *Why Confederates Fought: Family and Nation in Civil War Virginia*, 155.

have removed the negroes from our front now, and everything seems to be very great again.”⁸⁹

Willis Michael Parker, a soldier in the 9th Virginia Infantry, also alluded to the presence of African American pickets. In a letter to his friend, Peter Guerrant, Parker wrote, “the firing, it was caused by the presence of Negro pickets in our front Sunday before last, me did not fire on them at that time but on Monday morning, at a given signal, our whole line of pickets poured a volley into them. It is not known what damage was done, but it must have been considerable, as they were . . . not suspecting anything.”⁹⁰ Clearly, the presence of African American soldiers served to remind Confederate soldiers of how the Civil War had evolved into a personal affront against Southern institutions and societal norms while also heightening their anxiety.

Picket duty also required tremendous resilience against the elements in addition to mental toughness, as false alarms of larger engagements were always a possibility. George S. Bernard, a soldier in Company E, 12th Virginia Infantry, made frequent mention of the toll taken on him by performing picket duty. Bernard wrote in his diary for July 25, 1864: “On picket last night- a most disagreeable tour of duty- a cold driving rain falling all night. I returned to the entrenchment in very bad plight.”⁹¹ Furthermore, picket duty required a degree of psychological control in the midst of constant reminders of death. On September 22, 1864, George S. Bernard entered a rather chilling description when vividly reminded of death while on picket duty. According to Bernard, “Our last tour of picket duty was at the new line about 400 yds in advance of the old line at that point where our reg’t did duty. We saw lying about in the woods, the unburied bodies of Yankee soldiers killed in the action of Wednesday June 22nd [1864] . . . They were clad in uniforms just as they fell.”⁹² It was much more common for soldiers to stress

⁸⁸ William A. Penn to his sister, December 8, 1864, William A. Penn Letter, LVA.

⁸⁹ Ibid. Penn’s letter implied that the removal of negro soldiers made things better, illustrating the racial animosity.

⁹⁰ Willis Michael Parker to Peter Guerrant, December 6, 1864, Guerrant Family Papers, 1788-1915, VHS.

⁹¹ George S. Bernard Diary Entry, July 25, 1864, in Bernard, *Civil War Talks: Further Reminiscences of George S. Bernard and His Fellow Veterans*, ed. Hampton Newsome, John Horn, and John G. Selby (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2012), 250.

⁹² George S. Bernard Diary Entry, September 22, 1864, in Bernard, *Civil War Talks*, 296.

the weather or false alarms associated with picket duty, however Bernard's entry is a reminder of what these soldiers faced fighting in a rather confined location for months of combat. David Lawson Cole, a soldier in Company F, 61st Alabama Infantry, described much of his picket duty experiences in his diary. Cole described much of January and February 1865 as very cold, but precisely noted when the battlefield was "all quiet," such as on January 27, or active with "heavy firing on the picket line last night," such as his entry for February 19.⁹³

The occurrences of false alarms were rather numerous due to the close nature of siege warfare at Petersburg. Historian Hess believed that the close proximity of the picket lines at Petersburg caused random outbursts of firing, often due to an unexplained noise from within the enemy's side.⁹⁴ Virginian James Thomas Petty described many such alarms in his diary. On November 28, 1864, Petty described firing along the division line toward negro pickets, but also noted that his prayer meeting was disrupted by a false alarm on the line.⁹⁵ On December 2, 1864, Petty was again assigned picket duty, in which an alarm occurred at 10, followed by "firing quite heavy for a few minutes."⁹⁶ However, adding to the complex nature of picket duty was the fact that actual attacks could occur while out in between the lines. Virginian George S. Bernard wrote that on the night of September 9, 1864, the "enemy made a raid on picket line in front of Finnegan's and Harris's brigades and proceeded in capturing it with how many prisoners I have not heard . . . Our pickets hold at these points lines a little behind their old lines."⁹⁷ If picket duty, with its false alarms and potential for actual danger, was not tedious enough, the nature of siege warfare created the continual danger of death from sharpshooters or artillery projectiles.

Sharpshooters had long since played a role in the Civil War, but by the time the siege of Petersburg began, new norms began to become commonplace, reflecting more of an open

⁹³ David Lawson Cole, January 27, February 19, 1865, *Civil War Diary of David Lawson Cole, Co. F, 61st Alabama Infantry*, VHS.

⁹⁴ Hess, *In the Trenches at Petersburg*, 74.

⁹⁵ James Thomas Petty, *The War Between the States Diary of James Thomas Petty*, VHS.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

⁹⁷ George S. Bernard Diary Entry, September 10, 1864, in Bernard, *Civil War Talks*, 295.

disregard for human life and increasingly savage nature of the conflict. Historian Gerald F. Linderman wrote that by Petersburg a change in warfare was clearly underway as old restrictions subsided.⁹⁸ In effect, the intensified nature of the war made taking shots at a distant enemy more justified or acceptable. Linderman also stated that the continual cycle of skirmishing combined with complex fortifications only served to increase sharpshooting activity.⁹⁹ Historian Joseph T. Glatthaar seemingly reaffirmed that the nature of siege warfare increased sharpshooting, as “[s]harpshooters on both sides heightened the tension by firing with uncanny accuracy, exploiting the slightest openings and taking down soldiers who barely exposed themselves.”¹⁰⁰ Historian Aaron Sheehan-Dean quoted J.J. Hill, a Virginia soldier near Petersburg: “In places, ours and the yankee pits are in fifty steps of one another, if either one raises his head above the pitt his adversary shoots at him, in this way, almost a constant fire is kept up. . . .”¹⁰¹ Captain Will Biggs dramatically captured the psychological strain of sharpshooting in a letter to his sister. According to Biggs, “we have been in the trenches exposed to all kinds of weather, without scarcely any sleep at night, cooped up in narrow pits, and fearful every moment to be struck by a bullet from their sharp shooters.”¹⁰²

Many other Confederate soldiers also made mention of sharpshooters and what effect it had on them personally, or what they hoped to convey to their loved ones. Lieutenant Charles C. Harrison, a soldier in Company I, 46th Virginia Infantry, wrote to reassure his girlfriend, Cornelia E. Rives. According to Harrison, “we are stationed upon a very good portion of the lines- sharpshooting is kept up almost continually in our front, but being protected by good earthworks there is but little danger. I intend using every precaution for my safety- both for myself and my little girls sake- so you need feel no uneasiness about me.”¹⁰³ Mississippian

⁹⁸ Linderman, *Embattled Courage*, 148.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 147.

¹⁰⁰ Glatthaar, *General Lee's Army*, 379.

¹⁰¹ J.J. Hill, quoted in Sheehan-Dean, *Why Confederates Fought*, 171.

¹⁰² Will Biggs to his sister, June 5, 1864, quoted in Glatthaar, *General Lee's Army*, 381.

James Johnson Kirkpatrick, in the early stages of the siege, expressed some formerly held views on sharpshooting that were soon jettisoned at Petersburg. Kirkpatrick wrote, “[l]ively and continuous sharpshooting on our left. None in front. The pickets here had come to a mutual agreement to stop the ‘barbarous practice’ of sharpshooting.”¹⁰⁴ Mississippian Jefferson J. Wilson seemingly suggested the defensive positions just led to a protracted siege fight instead of a more conventional battle, as “[t]here has not been any regular engagement for the past two weeks but sharpshooting and cannonading going on both night and day.”¹⁰⁵

Sharpshooters themselves could also fall victim to the enemy in a rather ironic twist. Charles W. Arrington was a soldier in Company B, 46th Virginia Infantry, who became a sharpshooter. Charles wrote his wife, Catherine, about some of the difficulties of his duties at Petersburg: “We have a great deal of hard duty to do. I have to go out sharp shooting every other day . . . This is a hard old place but it is all nothing . . . Day before yesterday one of our men was shot on his way from the rifle pits.”¹⁰⁶ In a following letter, Arrington admitted his difficulty coping with the brutally cold weather, but also included the confident message that “I believe I can sharp-shoot with Lincoln’s [Lincoln’s] best at any time.”¹⁰⁷ Tragically, Arrington’s life would be cut short by a rival Union sharpshooter on January 9, 1865, reflecting the realization that death could strike anyone at Petersburg, even concealed sharpshooters.¹⁰⁸

Sharpshooters at Petersburg intended to bring death to their targets from concealed locations, representing the fact that one did not have to be in battle to die a soldier’s death. It was unpredictable, random, and simply demoralizing to those soldiers hunkered down in the

¹⁰³ Charles C. Harrison to Cornelia E. Rives, October 5, 1864, Rives Family Papers, 1841-1865, LVA.

¹⁰⁴ James Johnson Kirkpatrick Diary, July 2, 1864, in Robert G. Evans, ed., *The 16th Mississippi Infantry: Civil War Letters and Reminiscences* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2002), 275.

¹⁰⁵ Jefferson J. Wilson to James E. Wilson, July 24, 1864, in Robert G. Evans, ed., *The 16th Mississippi Infantry: Civil War Letters and Reminiscences*, 278.

¹⁰⁶ Charles Arrington to his wife, Catherine, November 26, 1864, in Darrell L. Collins, *46th Virginia Infantry*, The Virginia Regimental Histories Series (Lynchburg: H.E. Howard, Inc., 1992), 66-67.

¹⁰⁷ Charles Arrington to his wife, Catherine, December 13, 1864, in Collins, *46th Virginia Infantry*, 67.

¹⁰⁸ Collins, *46th Virginia Infantry*, 93.

sprawling earthworks around Petersburg. While utilized earlier in the war, sharpshooters added to the intensity of the siege, creating tremendous uncertainty through whom they may fire upon, gradually wearing down one's psychological state. However, it embodied the larger Union war aims by this point of the conflict. According to historian Linderman, "Grant's war insisted that no loss of soldier life was without significant effect on the results of the war. He may also have understood that continuous fighting would more firmly establish the habit of killing."¹⁰⁹ In this drudgery of siege warfare, taking any soldier's life, such as through sharpshooting, became justified as the Union sought to continually wear down Lee's already dwindling numbers.

Sharpshooting proliferated at Petersburg because it fit both the environment of siege warfare and goals associated with an intensified, prolonged campaign aimed at achieving a decisive outcome.

The fact that the conditions of siege warfare gridlocked the two armies at Petersburg meant that Confederate soldiers also had to contend with traditional artillery fire and mortars. Historian Hess stated that becoming a victim of artillery fire was really a matter of chance, nevertheless it was a constant reality for soldiers at Petersburg.¹¹⁰ Mortars were unpredictable, both in where they would land and whether they would detonate, which made the danger of death from them all the more uncertain. The Union also possessed the most intimidating one of the campaign, The Dictator, which was fired from a mounted position on a railroad car. The unpredictable nature of mortar fire perplexed many soldiers and is therefore reflected in their written correspondence. John Malachi Bowden, a soldier in Company B, 2nd Georgia Infantry, suffered a concussion from a close call and left a rather dramatic recollection.¹¹¹ Hess quoted Bowden, "as I was in the act of lying down, it drove me against the bottom of the ditch with tremendous force. A piece of the shell as large as a man's fist brushed my ear and went twelve or fifteen miles into the ground."¹¹² Mississippian David Holt also described the threat from

¹⁰⁹ Linderman, *Embattled Courage*, 149.

¹¹⁰ Hess, *In the Trenches at Petersburg*, 74.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, 75, 76.

incoming artillery projectiles. According to Holt, “[t]he artillery, with the exception of that one fort, kept up a constant fire, and a battery on the left of our battle line had the range on our works down fine. It was far enough off that we could see the flash and get under cover before the shell came.”¹¹³ Charles William Trueheart described the artillery barrages as almost a kind of lethal play: “[s]hells screaming or bursting over head . . . and [the] boom of artillery is the music that we have to sleep, eat, and fight to. Of course everybody is tired of this state of things; and the men and officers often wish that a grand battle- a grand finale to the campaign might come off and put an end to this killing by piecemeal.”¹¹⁴ Writings such as these reveal how the continual threat from artillery projectiles and mortars gradually wore down the Confederate soldiers, altering their psychological state and making them desirous for an open field engagement. Virginian Willis Michael Parker wrote about the magnitude of the shelling and the precautions he took to avoid it. Parker wrote that “nearly every day the Yankees treat us to a few hundred lbs. of iron in the shape of shell, canister and schrapnell, which I assure you keeps us justly close under our works and which I must offer as an excuse for not answering yours [letter] of Nov.”¹¹⁵

Virginian Luther Rice Mills also could attest to the randomness of the shelling and the difficulty of focusing on his letters. In a letter to his brother, John, Mills wrote that the “shelling rarely ceases here. Three shells passed over whilst I was writing the preceding sentence of seven words . . . The Yankees shoot more strange projectiles over here. They shoot some rifle shells which sound almost like an old Turkey gobbler flying over.”¹¹⁶ In addition to the strange sounds and constant interruptions with missiles of death, these shells never followed a precise course, going several directions and increasing the uncertainty of whom it would strike.¹¹⁷

¹¹² John Malachi Bowden, quoted in Hess, *In the Trenches at Petersburg*, 76.

¹¹³ Holt, *A Mississippi Rebel in the Army of Northern Virginia*, 284.

¹¹⁴ Charles William Trueheart to Robert H. Howard, September 14, 1864, in Henry Martyn Trueheart and Charles William Trueheart, *Rebel Brothers: The Civil War Letters of the Truehearts*, ed. Edward B. Williams (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1995), 121.

¹¹⁵ Willis Michael Parker to Peter Guerrant, December 6, 1864, Guerrant Family Papers, 1788-1915, VHS.

¹¹⁶ Luther Rice Mills to his brother, John, December 5, 1864, in Luther Rice Mills, “Letters of Luther Rice Mills- A Confederate Soldier,” 304-305.

The continual bombardment and uncertainty of whether one would meet death this way weighed heavily on Confederate soldiers' psychological conditions. This tremendous uncertainty, combined with the other elements facing Confederate soldiers in the trenches, required an adjustment in order to cope. Sometimes honorable methods were found and widely utilized, such as the practice of letter writing and the increased reliance on Christianity, both in an individual sense through faith and collectively as a social network. In other circumstances, dishonorable methods became practical given the tremendous strain of suffering in the trenches amidst personal distress, declining Confederate fortunes, and an increasingly bitter war. The majority of Confederate soldiers at Petersburg overcame and coped with the intensified nature of the Civil War, however the hardships of siege warfare became too much for some, and directly influenced the epidemic of desertion in the war's closing months.

Desertion during the siege of Petersburg

As the hardships of life in the trenches increased and the war grew more ominous elsewhere, some Confederate soldiers resorted to the dishonorable act of desertion. William Blair, author of *Virginia's Private War: Feeding Body and Soul in the Confederacy, 1861-1865*, described some of the reasons desertion became a viable option by the siege of Petersburg, as well as the risks associated with desertion. Blair wrote that "life was equally bleak during the winter of 1864-1865. Absenteeism ballooned during this period after the reverses in the Shenandoah Valley, Lincoln's re-election, and Sherman's march through Georgia. Many lost hope and left the army."¹¹⁸ News from other campaigns could either uplift or crush one's hope in the possibility of Confederate success. In this case, deserters became convinced that their suffering was in all likelihood in vain. Reverses elsewhere for the Confederacy and pressure from distant family only served to intensify one's inner turmoil, causing desertion to look more

¹¹⁷ Ibid., 305.

¹¹⁸ William Blair, *Virginia's Private War: Feeding Body and Soul in the Confederacy, 1861-1865* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 129.

and more as a viable option. However, Confederate soldiers also could not be certain if their attempt to desert would ultimately prove successful. Blair wrote that the best option was running into enemy lines, but it was not that simple as fellow Confederates could become insulted and fire at their own men.¹¹⁹ While the option of running towards Union lines was one method for desertion, a soldier's distance from home should be taken into account as a factor also.

Reid Mitchell, author of *Civil War Soldiers*, described some of the other options available for deserters. An alternative to running into Union lines was for Confederate soldiers to remain within their lines and gradually head home or go to some location to get purposefully lost.¹²⁰ However, the siege of Petersburg created a different dynamic for soldiers trying to get home, especially those from a great distance away. Mark A. Weitz, author of *A Higher Duty: Desertion among Georgia Troops during the Civil War*, described how the complexities of the war by this time made it more difficult for some Confederate soldiers to desert. According to Weitz, Confederate leaders tightened up their furlough system out of the fears that Confederate soldiers may take advantage of it to desert in Georgia, or some other distant locality.¹²¹ Weitz stated that General Robert E. Lee was conscious of desertion patterns when Georgia soldiers were stationed closer to home, such as those in the Army of Tennessee. For Lee, maintaining the Georgia regiments in his army became a priority, which was reflected by the fact that for Georgians in Virginia, only two percent could get a furlough by August 1864.¹²² Bell Irvin Wiley, author of *The Life of Johnny Reb: The Common Soldier of the Confederacy*, described the disconnect between the military leadership and soldiers over furloughs. According to Wiley, requests for a furlough "had to run a long gamut of approvals, and frequently action came only after months of delay. While soldiers waited they naturally chafed. When their requests were finally acted on

¹¹⁹ Ibid., 130.

¹²⁰ Reid Mitchell, *Civil War Soldiers* (New York: Viking, 1988), 170.

¹²¹ Mark A. Weitz, *A Higher Duty: Desertion among Georgia Troops during the Civil War* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2000), 72.

¹²² Ibid., 73.

they were generally refused. This led to a conviction that those in authority were heartless and unreasonable.”¹²³

Despite the growing disconnect between the military leadership and common soldiers, both Union actions and the nature of siege warfare influenced the occurrence of desertion at Petersburg. Historian Weitz wrote, “Grant believed that desertion by the enemy should be both encouraged and rewarded . . . As the Petersburg siege continued, Grant rewarded Confederate deserters with freedom, subsistence, and transportation home if they lived within Union lines.”¹²⁴ Clearly, Grant threw out the incentives of food, freedom from their struggles in the Confederate army, and the possibility of going home to wind up the war faster. Grant’s policies could be seen in contrast to the Confederate policies that seemingly took their soldiers for granted. However, the length of the siege and intensification of the conflict over time probably provided a greater motivation for deserting than Union incentives. Historian Wiley wrote that “[a]dded to military disaster, deprivation of food, clothing and pay . . . Some soldiers whose spirit remained strong under all other hardships were revolted by the apparently futile slaughter of the war’s last years; others were crushed by the repeated lamentations of their homefolk; still others were broken by the stench and filth of their surroundings.”¹²⁵ Despite these Union incentives aimed at Confederate soldiers suffering from personal travail and declining devotion to the cause, due to the hardships of the siege warfare, a further analysis is needed of the correlation between Confederate desertion and General Lee’s army during the siege.

Ella Lonn, author of *Desertion during the Civil War*, examined the plague of desertion facing Confederate armies by the fall of 1864. According to Lonn, “[f]rom October 1, 1864, to February 4, 1865, a period of four months, it was stated in Richmond that nearly 72,000 had taken French leave from the Confederate armies east of the Mississippi.”¹²⁶ While these figures

¹²³ Bell Irvin Wiley, *The Life of Johnny Reb: The Common Soldier of the Confederacy* (Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1943), 139.

¹²⁴ Weitz, *A Higher Duty*, 57.

¹²⁵ Wiley, *The Life of Johnny Reb*, 141.

clearly encompassed a larger region than just Petersburg, the portion pertaining to the Petersburg campaign negatively affected Lee's fighting abilities against Grant. On November 18, 1864, Lee issued a dispatch that read "[d]esertion is increasing in the army notwithstanding all my efforts to stop it . . . The great want in our army is firm discipline."¹²⁷ Lee's concerns only mounted as the Petersburg campaign entered the pivotal year 1865. On January 27, 1865, Lee fired off a dispatch to the Confederate Secretary of War with the following dire message: "I have the honor to call your attention to the alarming frequency of desertions from this army . . . I have no doubt that there is suffering for want of food. The ration is too small for men who have to undergo so much exposure and labor as ours."¹²⁸ On February 28, 1865, Lee again wrote to the Secretary of War in Richmond with specific numbers of deserters and what patterns like this could mean for the cause. According to Lee, from February 15-25, 1865, a total of 1,094 Confederate soldiers left, primarily in groups taking their weapons also.¹²⁹ If the government could not put a stop to these desertions, Lee believed that it would "bring us calamity."¹³⁰

Historian Lonn stated that the worst aspect of desertion was that "no reliance could be placed on the troops which remained, as they could not be trusted to obey orders, or be relied on to stay."¹³¹ However, desertion became a common discussion point among the Confederate soldiers that remained, as many of their letters attest. It appears that most Confederate soldiers seemed disappointed in their comrades who chose to desert, while at the same time being keenly aware of the stresses that caused desertion. Writing from Petersburg on March 17, 1865, to his mother, Virginian William Allen described the occurrences of desertion. According to Allen, "[o]ur men are deserting awful bad at this time. Before we moved down here our brigade deserted awfully. Three from Capt. Burks's deserted night before last . . . There was four more

¹²⁶ Ella Lonn, *Desertion during the Civil War* (Gloucester, MA: Peter Smith, 1966), 27.

¹²⁷ *Official Records of the War of the Rebellion*, Series 1, Volume 42, Part III, 1213.

¹²⁸ *Official Records*, Series 1, Volume 46, Part II, 1143.

¹²⁹ *Official Records*, Series 1, Volume 46, Part II, 1265.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*

¹³¹ Lonn, *Desertion during the Civil War*, 29.

started and they were caught and brought back. They will be sentenced to be shot.”¹³² Other soldiers wrote of desertions more in a matter of fact manner, such as David Lawson Cole. In his diary entry for January 28, 1865, Cole wrote, “[t]he desertions last night two from Company I, and one from Company C.”¹³³ Several weeks later, on February 19, 1865, Cole reported that on a night of heavy firing from the picket line “five men deserted from our regiment last night to the yankees.”¹³⁴

The breakdown of order and the growing toleration of desertion from some segments of the population, such as civilians, had a negative influence on morale in Lee’s army. One of the most significant negative effects was psychological, as it became easier to doubt one’s own motivations for remaining after witnessing numerous desertions. Historian Glatthaar wrote that the exodus of deserters “challenged those who stayed to rethink their commitment . . . The mere fact that the Confederacy had to post pickets in the rear of the army spoke volumes.”¹³⁵ Furthermore, sympathetic Confederates on picket duty occasionally “refused to fire on comrades who were deserting to the enemy or deliberately fired away from them.”¹³⁶ Lieutenant Luther Rice Mills of the 26th Virginia Infantry wrote about the breakdown of order and what effect it was having on the Confederacy. In a letter to his brother, Mills wrote, “[m]any of our people at home have become so demoralized that they write to their husbands, sons and brothers that desertion *now* is not *dishonorable* . . . I have just received an order from Wise to carry out on picket tonight a rifle and ten rounds of cartridges to shoot men when they desert.”¹³⁷ Mills pointed out that letters from home could transform a soldier’s conception of desertion. However, individual motivations must be taken into account and most soldiers who chose to desert

¹³² Allen, *The Allen Family of Amherst County, Virginia Civil War Letters*, 81.

¹³³ David Lawson Cole, January 28, 1865, *Civil War Diary of David Lawson Cole*, Co. F, 61st Alabama Infantry, VHS.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*

¹³⁵ Glatthaar, *General Lee’s Army*, 451.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*

¹³⁷ Luther Rice Mills to his brother, March 2, 1865, in *The Civil War: The Final Year Told by Those Who Lived It*, ed. Aaron Sheehan-Dean (New York: Literary Classics of the United States, Inc., 2014), 610.

probably did so for a combination of reasons.¹³⁸ Nevertheless, it is necessary to point out that just as individual motivations compelled some men to leave, they also compelled others to stay and fight. As Reid Mitchell stated, many Confederates did not desert due to the beliefs that suffering created a “shared misery of combat,” which strengthened bonds with those fellow soldiers facing similar circumstances.¹³⁹ In essence, desertion was an individual decision that was inspired by a host of influences, all in the attempt to find a better existence elsewhere.

Letter Writing during the siege: A Coping Mechanism to Transcend Suffering

Of the ways that Confederate soldiers participating in the siege of Petersburg coped with their miserable conditions one was through letter writing. Just as some literally took to desertion to find a better place elsewhere, others remained in the service and used the power of literacy to transcend their present suffering. Historian Clarke stated that many soldiers would tailor their messages to the intended civilian audience. According to Clarke, soldiers often did not stress the grim details of battle, but rather shaped their writing to conform to standards of martyrdom where death was defined by religious or noble ideas.¹⁴⁰ Despite this overall exercise of caution, letter writing was a powerful psychological boost to the Confederate soldiers. Historian Clarke wrote that when soldiers responded to a letter, it was a testament “that an emotional exchange had taken place . . . emotional exchanges like this one were the currency that rewarded them for their efforts.” Furthermore, letters were a connection to home, which Clarke believed were “a force that could immediately recall a man to an earlier state, no matter how dreadful his surroundings.”¹⁴¹ For soldiers who were illiterate, it was a coping mechanism in which they could not directly partake, but one which influenced them indirectly, such as through hearing

¹³⁸ See Moses Barker’s letter to his wife, February 11, 1865, in *Moses Barker Letters, 1861-1865*, LVA, for an example of a soldier writing about the execution of a deserter who professed to being better off once in Heaven.

¹³⁹ Mitchell, *Civil War Soldiers*, 172.

¹⁴⁰ Clarke, *War Stories*, 45.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 104, 105, 110. Despite focusing on Union soldiers, Clarke’s book is relevant because letters did not just serve as an emotional outlet for Union soldiers. For Confederates, writing might have been more essential to successfully enduring by this stage of the war as increasing hardships plagued them individually and also collectively.

a letter read or having a fellow soldier write one for you. The fact that it served as a psychological boost for soldiers was not Union or Confederate specific, but possibly became more essential to Confederate soldiers by 1864-1865 given the dismal circumstances of the war.

Letter writing exemplified the individual nature of Confederate soldiers and brought them temporary relief from the tumult of an intensified Civil War. In his book, *All That Makes a Man: Love and Ambition in the Civil War South*, Stephen W. Berry II analyzed questions of love, masculinity, and what Southern men saw inside themselves. Berry described why letter writing mattered so much to the Confederates as “men’s individuality, which was their dignity, threatened always to dissolve in the impersonal relations of figurative or literal battles. In returning home, men became individuals again, heroes even, for their labors on behalf of their households.”¹⁴² With this point in mind, it became apparent that letter writing served as one of the few resorts remaining for men to maintain their individuality in an increasingly desperate war. Confederate soldiers used letter writing to reach beyond their immense daily hardships. Berry referred to this as a journey that “was a psychic rather than a physical one, but it was no less important. Confederates were all the time writing, imagining, and dreaming home, not merely because they wanted to be there but because they found there compensations for all the indignities they daily endured.”¹⁴³ (See Figure 5.) The combination of connecting with home, retaining their individuality, and transcending suffering all were major incentives for writing.

Confederate soldiers in the trenches at Petersburg could easily attest to these themes as their vivid letters illustrate. Lieutenant William F. Baugh, of Company G, 61st Virginia Infantry, wrote to his wife regarding mail service: “I am quite well so far and anxious to get home all the time. I hope to hear from you every day but feel it will be a long time before the mail will be regular.”¹⁴⁴ Alabamian William Cowan McClellan wrote to his brother about his happiness in

¹⁴² Stephen W. Berry II, *All That Makes a Man: Love and Ambition in the Civil War South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 224.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*

receiving mail: “I was very agreeably surprised yesterday at the reception of your letter of the 18th inst. This is the first news I have had from you in five months since your letter written at Gadsden . . . Bob I am low down. I can see but little hope for these confederate states in these times. My kindest regards to all the Boys. Write each opportunity possible.”¹⁴⁵ McClellan’s letter revealed that even with the recognition that the Confederacy was likely to fail, letters from loved ones still represented a source of happiness that could not be matched. In a letter to his brother John, Luther Rice Mills stressed the importance of letter writing and also his concern for affairs at home: “Yours of the 28th was received last night. I was really glad to get a letter once more. It has been three weeks since I left home and I have received only two letters. I am very glad to hear that you made so much corn. I expect that you made more than Brother Robert did.”¹⁴⁶

Confederate letters from the siege of Petersburg illustrate that despite the tasks involved with soldiering in the trenches, the desired emotional connection with loved ones separated by physical distances was restored through the power of the pen. Virginian William A. Penn, in a letter to his sister on December 8, 1864, wrote “I received your much esteemed letter about a week or ten days ago, and would have answered it sooner but have scarcely had an opportunity at any one time to write a letter.”¹⁴⁷ Despite describing the mundane burdens of siege warfare and his jobs such as “cooking, working around our cabins, drilling, cleaning up our guns, and various other things,” Penn signified the important emotional value of receiving a letter from a loved one.¹⁴⁸ In his diary, James Thomas Petty also expressed the importance of writing letters in spite of the hardships of being a soldier. On November 24, 1864, Petty wrote that he “[c]ommenced a letter to Sallie. Was interrupted by orders to ‘pack up and be ready to march at a moment’s

¹⁴⁴ William F. Baugh to his wife, December 15, 1864, in *Letters Home: Letters of Lt. Wm. F. Baugh Co. G 61st VA. Infantry 1861-1865*, 183.

¹⁴⁵ William Cowan McClellan to his brother, Robert Anderson McClellan, March 24, 1865, in *Welcome the Hour of Conflict*, 275-276.

¹⁴⁶ Luther Rice Mills to his brother, John, December 5, 1864, in “Letters of Luther Rice Mills- A Confederate Soldier,” 304.

¹⁴⁷ William A. Penn to his sister, December 8, 1864, William A. Penn Letter, LVA.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

notice.’ The impression prevails that we are on the eve of a battle.”¹⁴⁹ On an extremely cold day, December 22, 1864, Petty recorded that he “[w]rote letters all day.”¹⁵⁰ Virginian William Allen also attested to the important psychological connection that letter writing had with memories of home. On March 24, 1865, in a letter to his brother Henry, William wrote “I would be glad to hear from you all. Since I left home I has written Ma two letters though I cannot tell if she has gotten them or not though I am in the hopes that she has.”¹⁵¹ Before closing, William instructed his brother that he “must be sure to write as soon as you get this letter and give me the points about everything.”¹⁵² Tragically, William was killed during the last ditch Confederate assault the following day at Fort Stedman. Nevertheless, concern over letters from his family were a central component in his thinking in the dwindling hours remaining for him to live.

In addition to the connection to home, letter writing also served to connect the soldiers in the trenches around Petersburg to distant campaigns, thereby transmitting them mentally to another location. At times the letters conveyed the hope that Confederate victories elsewhere would assist the cause, and at other times, the knowledge of defeat had already set in. John Marshall Martin, a soldier in the 9th Florida Infantry, wrote several times to his future wife, Sarah Waldo, or Sallie, while stationed in Petersburg. In a letter from October 8, 1864, Martin wrote that “[u]nless Atlanta is uncaptured, thereby electing McClellan, I think we may reasonably prepare for four years longer of blood shed and war.”¹⁵³ Virginian James Thomas Petty also frequently mentioned distant campaigns while writing to himself in his diary. On December 21, 1864, Petty entered that “Thomas has whipped Hood at Nashville and Sherman has reached the coast in safety and triumph.”¹⁵⁴ In a letter to his wife, Georgia soldier Thomas Wilkes Inglet wrote about the fall of Atlanta: “I am not surprised at the fall of Atlanta

¹⁴⁹ James Thomas Petty, *The War Between the States Diary of James Thomas Petty*, VHS.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁵¹ Allen, *The Allen Family of Amherst County, Virginia Civil War Letters*, 82.

¹⁵² *Ibid.*, 84.

¹⁵³ John Marshall Martin to Sallie, October 8, 1864, John Marshall Martin Papers, 1863-1864, VHS.

¹⁵⁴ James Thomas Petty, *The War Between the States Diary of James Thomas Petty*, VHS.

for all the troops that you rote [wrote] to me had got wounded in the back all of ours gets it in the head or brest [breast]. I think Georgia is gon up if we don't come to its assistance but I hope not.”¹⁵⁵ Virginian Willis Michael Parker, presented a contrasting viewpoint, by illustrating the hope that distant campaigns might fulfill the promise of Southern independence. In a letter to his friend, Peter Guerrant, Parker wrote “[t]here seems to be some light breaking through the dark clouds of the Southern and Western sky. Thomas, I think, has been whipped by Hood and a part of Shermans army by somebody, [Hardee, I suppose.] God, grant that it may be the turning point in our fortunes in that section.”¹⁵⁶ While accounts about distant campaigns were not often a source of joy particularly as the siege wore on, Confederate soldiers utilized letter writing to express their own concerns, frustrations, and hopes. However, setbacks for the Confederate armies in other theaters often prompted greater self-examination for soldiers at Petersburg.

Nevertheless, for Confederate soldiers mired down in the trenches around Petersburg, letter writing became the best viable method for seeking to express one's deepest feelings, connect with loved ones at home, analyze distant campaigns and their implications, and escape the monotony of soldiering in the trenches. While soldiers wrote throughout the war, the prolonged and intensified campaign at Petersburg, amidst rapidly deteriorating conditions, influenced many soldiers to write both to connect with others as well as to alleviate suffering, even if only temporarily. It was the process of putting thoughts into a tangible form that made letter writing, whether to others or to oneself in diaries, a crucial activity during the siege of Petersburg. After the war, Confederate veterans used literary endeavors for different purposes, although still through the perspective of a coping mechanism. However, the origins of this valuable outlet for veterans came from when, as Confederate soldiers, they refined this coping mechanism and placed greater emphasis upon it to remedy the new intensity of siege warfare at Petersburg.

¹⁵⁵ Thomas Wilkes Ingle to his wife, September 18, 1864, T.W.G. Ingle Letters, 1862-1865, LVA.

¹⁵⁶ Willis Michael Parker to Peter Guerrant, December 6, 1864, Guerrant Family Papers, VHS.

Blessed Assurance: Confederate Soldiers and Christianity during the siege of Petersburg

The practice of Protestant Christianity became one of the most widespread coping mechanisms used by Confederate soldiers during the siege of Petersburg. There were several ways in which the Christian faith helped Confederates at Petersburg. First, the practicing of Christianity strengthened a soldier's devotion to the Confederate cause by making them one. Secondly, Christianity still offered the best possible hope for a soldier's individual comfort. In a sense, Christianity in the trenches around Petersburg had become more dominant as Confederate military fortunes declined rapidly. This transformed the soldiers fighting and served to justify the increasing hardships of siege warfare better than any other available coping mechanism. Additionally, regardless of denomination, Protestant Christianity offered the majority of Confederate soldiers a two piece approach towards finding reassurance above the earthly realm. The faith aspect was unique to each individual soldier and it uplifted Confederate soldiers in the trenches through a personal, intimate connection with one's creator. Lastly, Christianity offered a social network, a support system and sense of community that could be enhanced through group prayer meetings, chapel services, and revivals.

Confederate soldiers came from a tradition of Christianity that predisposed them to the goals of the Confederate cause. Historian Peter S. Carmichael described the linkage of Christianity to the Confederate cause: "[T]hese men came of age believing that Southerners had created a unique Christian community that defended orthodoxy against Northern apostasy . . . [p]olitical allegiance to the nation, as the war progressed, increasingly became a religious duty in their minds."¹⁵⁷ Carmichael believed that "Christian martyrdom rescued young Virginians from the brutal dehumanization of war while instilling in them a religious devotion to the political goal of Southern independence." Therefore, the political ambitions of the infant Confederacy and one's spiritual state were thus linked as the war became more malicious in nature. This

¹⁵⁷ Carmichael, *The Last Generation: Young Virginians in Peace, War, and Reunion*, 205-6.

allowed the Confederate soldiers to face the continual danger of death with a degree of dignity. In addition to linking the causes, the renewed emphasis on Christianity also helped to make sense of the suffering. Carmichael wrote, “[t]heir religious background instructed them that God chastised the ones he loves . . . [y]oung Virginians warned that submission to the North would end a way of life that they cherished, respected, and, most of all, believed God had ordained. In other words, losing made no sense if God had blessed the South’s way of life.”¹⁵⁸ By the time of the siege of Petersburg, all of these patterns had fallen into place. The political and spiritual connection merged, suffering became part of having true faith, and fighting on became God’s ultimate will.

In his extensive book, *God’s Almost Chosen Peoples: A Religious History of the American Civil War*, historian George C. Rable described the importance of Christianity to events throughout the entire conflict. Reflecting on the changed state of Christianity in the war for Confederate soldiers, Rable wrote “revivals in the Confederate camps had been going on for more than two years . . . [a]t the same time, more continuous fighting and 1864’s long casualty lists may have simultaneously thwarted evangelism and made the need for saving souls seem ever more urgent.”¹⁵⁹ Rable also described how Christianity comforted the Confederate soldiers: “piety and specifically prayer still offered comfort for the individual soul if not for the nation . . . In the Petersburg trenches during the fall and winter, the praying, singing, and preaching all proceeded despite general misery and occasional shelling.”¹⁶⁰ During the fall and winter, soldiers turned out in large numbers for religious services and many converted or were baptized, with significant consequences then and postwar. According to Rev. John William Jones, author of *Christ in the Camp; or, Religion in Lee’s Army*, “during the winter of 1864-65 [revivals] were as general and as powerful as any we had at all, and only ceased when the

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., 207, 209, 210.

¹⁵⁹ George C. Rable, *God’s Almost Chosen Peoples: A Religious History of the American Civil War* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2010), 340.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid., 342.

army was disbanded. Really they did not cease then, for in the great revivals with which our Churches in Virginia and the South were blessed during the summer and autumn of 1865 a very large proportion of the converts were from among our returned soldiers.”¹⁶¹ Frequently, Confederates would use stories of revivals in the press to propagate the Southern beliefs of their superior morals. However, despite their desire for having unsurpassed morals, Confederates could not avoid the reality of their miserable circumstances and diminishing prospects for eventual victory.

As fortunes declined, the turn towards finding personal comfort and caring for other individuals accelerated. Historian Rable stated that after many late 1864 setbacks, “[t]he emphasis shifted from military or political triumphs to spiritual ones; saving souls had become more important than even saving a nation.” While perhaps not accounting for those who still believed the Confederacy could be saved, Rable is correct that by late 1864 there was a tremendous shift towards both individual redemption and salvation for the lost. Consequently, “[t]here had been plenty of murmuring during the war against politicians and against generals . . . and as Confederate fortunes had declined, thoughts had turned both inward and upward.”¹⁶² Indeed, despite linking the religious to the political motives, the real power of the practicing of Christianity late in the war was how it transformed the Confederate soldiers to accept and endure their suffering. It was an inward turn that allows historians a greater understanding of how many Confederate soldiers, in the most trying of circumstances, came to adjust to the deprivations of siege warfare and find inner peace.

Letters written to loved ones illustrate how the pressures of warfare had produced a reevaluated conception of Christianity. Virginian John William Burch wrote an interesting letter to his wife that seemingly acknowledged the siege had changed his approach to

¹⁶¹ Rev. John William Jones, D.D., *Christ in the Camp; or, Religion in Lee's Army* (Richmond, VA: B.F. Johnson & Co., 1887), 353-54. Rev. John William Jones was a Confederate chaplain, Southern Baptist minister, and wrote extensively on religion in the Army of Northern Virginia, among other topics.

¹⁶² Rable, *God's Almost Chosen Peoples*, 350, 393.

Christianity: “[P]ray that I may become a better man and more fitted to meet my darling little angels who have gone before me to that home where war and rumors of war are not heard.”¹⁶³

Later on in his letter Burch continued, “this may seem strange to you coming from me but Ma it is all so and it is my feeling now . . . I have learned to pray a right good prayer, I think so myself. Rose and Mrs. Yancey talked with me upon the subject at my request. Rose gave me the Book of Mathew, Mark, Luke & John to read and try and profit by them. . . .”¹⁶⁴ (See Figures 6.1, 6.2.)

Burch also acknowledged a past lifestyle that seemingly was not very religious: “I laugh and talk in my old style and enjoy myself and have my fun but as brother Vaughan said there were times for all things [,] I can enjoy myself in my way and then pay homage to my creator.”¹⁶⁵ Burch’s letter seems to be an example of either a new believer or one who has been led back to the practice of Christianity after drifting apart. Burch’s letter also revealed that his interest in Christianity led to an enhanced faith through his prayer life, while providing a sense of community through talking with other believers on the subject. It is interesting how in the midst of a difficult winter during the siege of Petersburg, Burch chose to explain to his family that he intended to become a better man, and a more serious follower of Christ. At the same time, he indicated difficulty giving up his old habits of talk and activities. Nevertheless, it is fair to say that the tremendous challenges and daily deprivations of being a Confederate soldier during the siege caused an intensive inward look at his faith and at what kind of man he wanted to be known as.

Virginian Luther Rice Mills, who wrote numerous letters from Petersburg concerning aspects of the siege, also provided a window into his thinking about how the war by 1864 might have been influencing his postwar career decisions. Luther Rice Mills was the son of Baptist minister John Garland Mills of Halifax County, Virginia.¹⁶⁶ Clearly, being raised in a

¹⁶³ John William Burch to his wife, Sallie, December 14, 1864, John William Burch Papers, 1864-1890, VHS.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid.

minister's home led Luther Rice Mills to have a Christian upbringing. In a letter before the siege of Petersburg, Luther wrote to his brother concerning his calling and potential career: "I think however that I will not decide positively [whether to preach] until the war is over, when I can give the subject a prayerful consideration, and be better able to weigh the matter as I ought. It is true that I have the same earnest desire to be a preacher, yet I am fully convinced that I have not the necessary qualifications."¹⁶⁷ By May of 1864, Mills would not have much more time to reflect on career options due to the increasing frequency of combat. In a letter from May 27, 1864, Mills almost predicted the strategic nature of the siege of Petersburg, for "[w]hen Petersburg falls Richmond is bound to fall . . . I would feel much more so [confident], did I know that those we have left behind are fasting & praying and putting their iniquity far from them, are bearing our cause, our country & our soldiers upon their prayers to a throne of Grace."¹⁶⁸ Despite his fear about the outcome at Petersburg, Mills acknowledged reliance on God before the hardships there even began: "I know that it may be the Will of God that I should offer up my life upon my Country's Altar, yet God's Grace will be sufficient for me in that hour of trouble . . . 'The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.'"¹⁶⁹ Mills had little doubt as to how desperate the fighting would be for Petersburg and relied on his steady faith and convictions for assurance. Despite this reliance on his faith and surviving the conflict, Mills did not decide to preach postwar, and instead becomes a Professor of Mathematics at Wake Forest.¹⁷⁰ However, his involvement postwar with the Board of Education helped to aid in their goals of assisting young preachers to become more effective in proclaiming the word.¹⁷¹ Luther Rice Mills is a prime example of a Confederate soldier who was brought up in the faith and was sustained by it

¹⁶⁶ R. Hargus Taylor, "Mills, Luther Rice," NCPedia, accessed October 22, 2016, <http://ncpedia.org/biography/mills-luther-rice>.

¹⁶⁷ Luther Rice Mills to John Mills, April 6, [?], in "Letters of Luther Rice Mills- A Confederate Soldier," 290.

¹⁶⁸ Luther Rice Mills to John Mills, May 27, 1864, in "Letters of Luther Rice Mills- A Confederate Soldier," 299.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 299-300. See James 5:16, KJV.

¹⁷⁰ R. Hargus Taylor, "Mills, Luther Rice," NCPedia, accessed October 22, 2016, <http://ncpedia.org/biography/mills-luther-rice>.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*

during the brutal siege, eventually using his postwar position to serve others.

The fervent interest in religion during the siege of Petersburg created a rich atmosphere for the proliferation of revivals, prayer meetings, and other activities that captured the power of Christianity in providing a sense of support for many soldiers. Moses Barker, a soldier in Company A, 38th Virginia Infantry, wrote numerous letters to his wife regarding Christianity. Barker described the Christian environment of his camp: “Every night this week, we have able good sound preaching here . . . whether he is a Baptist, Methodist, or Presbyterian, they preach the Bible . . . Dr. Stiles said yesterday that if God was not with our Army there would not be so strange a thing as a revival of Religion in our Army . . . if God intended our destruction.”¹⁷² This echoed many Protestant Christian Confederates who simply could not believe or understand that God could let their cause falter. Barker also presented how religion had to compete with other forms of entertainment, perhaps the kind with which John William Burch might have been involved with. In another letter to his wife, Barker wrote, “we were holding our [prayer] meeting last night while the performances was going on at the theatre, we could hear the fiddle and other instruments of music, and could hear roars of laughter, but I thought ours was the best meeting.”¹⁷³ Barker’s writing revealed that Christian prayer meetings and preaching opportunities abounded at Petersburg, but that soldiers would still have to consciously attend them. For the Confederate soldiers who chose to attend these meetings, it offered a sense of community and was a valuable social network among fellow believers. Despite the traditional camp amusements, Barker seemed to be more representative of typical Confederate soldiers, paying more attention to spiritual matters over secular pleasures, as the war turned drastically against them and the suffering increased due to the deteriorating conditions of siege warfare.

Some Confederate soldiers devoted extensive time towards recording their religious endeavors during the siege, leaving rich accounts to posterity. One of the more striking accounts

¹⁷² Moses Barker to his wife, Sarah (Sallie) J. Barker, November 1, 1864, Moses Barker Letters, 1861-1865, LVA.

¹⁷³ Ibid., February 19, 1865.

came from the diary of Captain Joseph Richard Manson, a soldier in Company I, 12th Virginia Infantry. Manson was unique because from late 1864 through early 1865, he kept a diary devoted entirely to issues of Christianity. All of his entries reflect the inward turn towards understanding one's soul that many soldiers were making by the time of the Petersburg campaign. On November 19, 1864, Manson wrote, "I strive to do the will of God in all things. My time is taken up with the interests of my soul, I love those men most and those books most that lead me nearer to God. Oh for increased faith!"¹⁷⁴ The stalled campaigning of the winter season also offered soldiers like Manson the increased opportunity for self-reflection. On December 1, 1864, Manson wrote, "I feel that I gave as much of my time to the consideration of eternal things as I could consistent with other demands upon me. I will be more earnest during the present month as I apprehend we will be more free from the active duties of the service. Help me oh God to a firmer trust in Thee."¹⁷⁵ Manson also described the element of prayer that was so important to many Confederate soldiers: "Through great and sore troubles He has brought me. I have prayed for deliverance and my poor prayers have been heard. I have aimed unto God the homage of my heart. . .".¹⁷⁶ Manson's diary reflected an extreme example of the turn towards Christianity at the expense of all else. His soul and spiritual condition became more important than mentioning battles, generals, politics, or anything else related. As the Confederacy withered away, Manson looked both inward and above for consolation and ultimate reassurance.

Other soldiers recalled practical applications of the faith and how it was used during the siege as a coping mechanism. Virginian James Thomas Petty also devoted a considerable amount of his diary to discussions of Christianity, though not to the extent of Manson. In Petty's diary, there are excellent descriptions of building chapels, listening to uplifting sermons, and devoting energy in trying to save others. On November 25, 1864, Petty described himself a "privileged

¹⁷⁴ Joseph Richard Manson, *A Spiritual Diary*, November 19, 1864, Joseph Richard Manson Diary, 1864 October 27- 1865 March 9, VHS.

¹⁷⁵ Manson, *A Spiritual Diary*, December 1, 1864, VHS.

¹⁷⁶ Manson, *A Spiritual Diary*, February 9, 1865, VHS.

listener” to a message from Rev. Perkins conducted in their chapel that “proved the very bread of life to my hungry soul.”¹⁷⁷ The following month, Petty was fortunate to hear Dr. Stiles preach on the book of 1 Peter. Petty described the great effect of the message: “Language is simply powerless to describe the sermon, the manner of the speaker and the rapt attention of the audience. His description of the last day and the doom of the lost soul . . . could not have been surpassed.” Within a few days, this message was beginning to pay dividends as Petty spoke to other soldiers about Christianity. On December 14, 1864, Petty wrote, “[h]ad a conversation with Isaac Rudd of Co. E about religion. Also spoke a word of advice and warning to Casper Myears, a most faithful soldier of his country. May he become equally faithful as a soldier of the cross!” Petty’s numerous conversations with fellow soldiers on Christianity undoubtedly led to him being behind the push to build a company chapel. As Petty stated, “I engaged to be leader until the faith of the young believers shall be strong enough to take up their cross and relieve me in turn.”¹⁷⁸ Confederate chaplain John William Jones also commented on the increased enthusiasm for constructing chapels: “There were forty chapels built along the Rapidan in the winter of 1863-64, and over sixty the next winter along the Richmond and Petersburg lines, notwithstanding the fact that at this last period timber was very scarce and transportation hard to obtain on a large part of the lines, and the men had to bring the lumber at great distances on their shoulders.”¹⁷⁹ Diary accounts such as those of James Thomas Petty provide a window into the sense of community and social network that Christianity brought, largely through attending services, witnessing to others, and group projects such as constructing chapels.

Other Confederate soldiers discussed Christianity as a tool for their ultimate vindication despite the odds against them. Virginian Younger Longest felt compelled to close his letter from October 23, 1864, with a catchy phrase: “The holy gospel we process so let our works and

¹⁷⁷ James Thomas Petty, *The War Between the States Diary of James Thomas Petty*, VHS.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁹ Jones, *Christ in the Camp*, 261.

virtues shine to prove thy doctrine divine.”¹⁸⁰ Florida soldier John Marshall Martin, in a letter to his future wife, included a discussion of Christianity in a lengthy letter. The most captivating part of his letter is when he linked the military problems facing the Confederacy with Christianity. According to Martin, “Our forces though cheerful and hopeful, are small in comparison to those confronting us. They may by excess of numbers overwhelm us, but in the God of Fathers we trust, and upon his story ever we rely.”¹⁸¹ Giles Buckner Cooke, a staff officer under General Robert E. Lee, was reflective in his diary entry on December 25, 1864: “If we as a people deserve our independence and freedom, it will be granted us, by the God of battles. May he change the hearts of our people and soldiers who have not named Him as their God and may they be brought to answer of their guilt . . . Help us to do that which is right in thy sight oh God.”¹⁸² Confederate soldier accounts such as these illustrate how with the intensified nature of the Civil War and increasing hardships, many Southerners took a new and deeper look at the role of Christianity. Personal redemption, trust in the Almighty God, and concern for each other’s salvation weighed heavily on the minds of many Confederate soldiers at Petersburg. Others also began to use Christianity to give hope or at least understanding to a declining military situation that seemed without human remedy.

The effect of Christianity on the Confederate soldiers at Petersburg was influenced by the work of chaplains. In the book *The Spirit Divided: Memoirs of Civil War Chaplains: The Confederacy*, editor John Wesley Brinsfield, Jr., compiled the accounts of many Confederate chaplains. Chaplain John James Hyman, of the 49th Georgia Infantry, described some of his experiences in Petersburg: “During the months of July and August, 1864, our meetings were truly interesting. I was the only chaplain present in our brigade, preaching both night and day; I visited almost daily Scales’s North Carolina Brigade, also Third and Fourth Virginia Regiments,

¹⁸⁰ Younger Longest to his brother, October 23, 1864, Younger Longest Letters, 1864, LVA.

¹⁸¹ John Marshall Martin to Sallie, October 8, 1864, John Marshall Martin Papers, 1863-1864, VHS.

¹⁸² Giles Buckner Cooke, December 25, 1864, Giles Buckner Cooke Diary October 12, 1864- January 3, 1865, VHS.

preaching as I went, seemingly with much effect.”¹⁸³ Chaplain Hyman also described helping to build a large chapel and baptizing many soldiers during February 1865.¹⁸⁴ Chaplain Alexander D. Betts, of the 17th and 30th North Carolina Infantry regiments, recorded some of his duties around Petersburg. Betts wrote that January 1, 1865, brought a great deal of snow but he still conducted four sermons in his unit’s cabins.¹⁸⁵ In addition to preaching, Betts also performed assignments for soldiers, such as retrieving boxes sent from home. According to Betts, “[t]he soldier seldom could go to the station to claim his box. The chaplain was often a convenient, cheerful agent.”¹⁸⁶ While the materials inside varied from morbid, such as burial clothes, to simply thoughtful items, the chaplain extended goodness to his soldiers beyond his messages. In this way they reflected the servanthood creed of Christianity, doing for others from a good heart and strong moral character. While it is difficult to say the extent to which chaplains motivated the Confederate soldiers to continue on enduring hardships in the trenches, it is likely that they were a supplement to the Christian faith and served a positive role in the lives of many men.

Some Confederate soldiers even made the transition from fighting to following God’s calling as a chaplain during the war. In the book, *Faith, Valor, and Devotion: The Civil War Letters of William Porcher DuBose*, the story of a former soldier turned chaplain comes to life through his rich letters. After a period of active combat with the Holcombe Legion, DuBose became a chaplain to Brigadier General Joseph B. Kershaw’s brigade in 1863.¹⁸⁷ In a letter to his wife from Petersburg on July 7, 1864, DuBose wrote, “Our sick and wounded have been removed from our own hospital to the S.C. Hospital . . . I ride out there about every morning and spend several hours with our men and sometimes those of other brigades, who are always glad to

¹⁸³ John James Hyman, quoted in John Wesley Brinsfield, ed., *The Spirit Divided: Memoirs of Civil War Chaplains: The Confederacy* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2005), 202.

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 203.

¹⁸⁵ Alexander D. Betts, quoted in *The Spirit Divided*, 242.

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁷ William Porcher DuBose, *Faith, Valor, and Devotion: The Civil War Letters of William Porcher DuBose*, ed. W. Eric Emerson and Karen Stokes (Columbia: The University of South Carolina Press, 2010), xxiii.

see a chaplain.”¹⁸⁸ DuBose’s letter reflected that chaplains were expected to look after the spiritual needs of wounded soldiers, and it appeared that he gladly performed in this capacity during the siege of Petersburg. This was in addition to his other responsibilities such as keeping the services going. In a letter to his wife on July 13, 1864, DuBose reminded her that “[w]e still have service everyday in the brigade . . . [and] [t]he prayer meetings are still kept up too.”¹⁸⁹ As agents of the cross, chaplains were expected to perform various tasks all with the goal of improving the spiritual conditions and morale of the Confederate soldiers. Baptist minister and Confederate chaplain John William Jones cautioned against overlooking the role of Christianity: “But any history of that army which omits an account of the wonderful influence of religion upon it- which fails to tell how the courage, discipline and *morale* of the whole was influenced by the humble piety and evangelical zeal of many of its officers and men-would be incomplete and unsatisfactory. The Army of Northern Virginia has a *religious* history as distinct and as easily traced as its *military* exploits.”¹⁹⁰

Southern Honor: Sustaining Motivation during the siege of Petersburg

Confederate soldiers were products of their nineteenth century upbringing and the notion of honor held immense importance in the South. Bertram Wyatt- Brown, author of *Southern Honor: Ethics and Behavior in the Old South*, described some of the elements that comprised the Southern concept of honor, such as celebrating valor, having a strong self-worth from other people’s opinions, a strong sense of will, defense of manhood, and a reliance on taking oaths to uphold one’s honor.¹⁹¹ Furthermore, Southern men came to define the military version of honor not out of personal beliefs, but rather out of the context of community norms.¹⁹² Wyatt-

¹⁸⁸ William Porcher DuBose to his wife, July 7, 1864, in *Faith, Valor, and Devotion: The Civil War Letters of William Porcher DuBose*, 290.

¹⁸⁹ William Porcher DuBose to his wife, July 13, 1864, in *Faith, Valor, and Devotion: The Civil War Letters of William Porcher DuBose*, 292.

¹⁹⁰ Jones, *Christ in the Camp*, 5-6.

¹⁹¹ Bertram Wyatt-Brown, *Southern Honor: Ethics and Behavior in the Old South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), 34.

Brown believed that struggles such as the Civil War had a refining influence on Southern men: “Through warfare . . . white Southerners constantly found reasons to trust one another and to punish the untrustworthy. The overcoming of hardships enhanced personal and group fellowship. War was ennobling, and the necessity for discipline strengthened character.”¹⁹³ Consequently, the notion of honor was embodied by the military structure in which Confederate soldiers were direct participants. In his book, *The Union Soldier in Battle: Enduring the Ordeal of Combat*, historian Earl J. Hess described how the military structure stressed the importance of honor and camaraderie with fellow soldiers. According to Hess, “[t]hey stood next to their comrades, shoulder touching shoulder, forming an unbroken chain across the contested and deadly field. They shared the same dangers, stood the same chances of getting hit, fired their muskets in unison or at least as individuals supporting one another’s fire.”¹⁹⁴ As a result of these tactical formations and the disciplined soldiers it took to maintain them, “[t]his feeling of belonging to a special group of men grounded them, providing a sense of stability, security, and trust. It created a working environment in the field that was essential for their survival . . . tied together by something different from blood, [but] by unique common experiences.”¹⁹⁵ Honor applied within the military also meant the preservation of the Southern social structure, as Bertram Wyatt-Brown described in his book, *The Shaping of Southern Culture: Honor, Grace, and War, 1760s-1890s*. According to Wyatt-Brown, “[j]ust as honor was posed against shame, so liberty’s opposite was slavery . . . Racial bondage did not signify hypocrisy according to the values of white Southerners. Instead, it was the very underpinning of their concept of liberty.”¹⁹⁶ Honor also meant that despite whatever deprivations and hardships, it could be used towards a greater

¹⁹² Ibid., 39.

¹⁹³ Ibid.

¹⁹⁴ Earl J. Hess, *The Union Soldier in Battle: Enduring the Ordeal of Combat* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1997), 111-12. While writing of the linear tactical formations for the Union army, Hess’s analysis is relevant to the Confederate experiences as both sides practiced these tactical formations.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid., 117-118.

¹⁹⁶ Bertram Wyatt-Brown, *The Shaping of Southern Culture: Honor, Grace, and War, 1760s-1890s* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2001), 209.

end, as something that could be controlled.¹⁹⁷

Southern honor as displayed within the siege of Petersburg exemplified that it could serve as a collective sustaining motivation for weary soldiers in the midst of increasing hardships. Aaron Sheehan-Dean, author of *Why Confederates Fought: Family and Nation in Civil War Virginia*, described how honor was defined by the beginning of the siege of Petersburg. Sheehan-Dean wrote, “[t]he longer the war lasted, and the more shamefully Union soldiers behaved, the more necessary Confederate victory became. To lose at this point to so unworthy a foe would be regarded by the world, and southerners themselves, as a mark of shame. In this way, the duration and the momentum of the war itself reinforced . . . masculine honor.”¹⁹⁸ James McPherson, author of *For Cause & Comrades: Why Men Fought in the Civil War*, linked the notions of honor to a collective group. According to McPherson, “[t]he survival of the group depends on the steadiness of each individual. It is the primary group that enforces peer pressure against cowardice.”¹⁹⁹ McPherson also articulated that for most individual soldiers, “the values of duty and honor remained a crucial component of their sustaining motivation to the end. Their rhetoric about these values was the same in the war’s last year as in its first.”²⁰⁰

Confederate soldier letters often contained messages about Southern honor, and sometimes these messages expressed the psychological outlook of the army. Alabamian William Cowan McClellan wrote to his sister that “[t]he army of Northern Va. has met and beat back the most numerous and powerful army ever martialled upon a field for some months. They have fought day and night being victorious in every engagement . . . [and] [t]he Soldiers of this army don’t doubt the courage or gallantry of the army of Tennessee but deplore the misfortunes.”²⁰¹ While being fairly sympathetic to the common soldier in the Army of the Tennessee,

¹⁹⁷ Ibid., 209-210.

¹⁹⁸ Aaron Sheehan-Dean, *Why Confederates Fought: Family and Nation in Civil War Virginia*, 164.

¹⁹⁹ James McPherson, *For Cause and Comrades: Why Men Fought in the Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 85.

²⁰⁰ Ibid., 168.

²⁰¹ William Cowan McClellan to his sister, September 25, 1864, in *Welcome the Hour of Conflict*, 267.

McClellan's letter touched on the themes of honor and courage, which he believed to be partially responsible for Lee's army having thwarted Grant's plans up to this point. Later in the siege as Confederate soldiers started to face the inevitable, they fell back upon fighting for their honor. James E. Whitehorne, a captain in Company F, 12th Virginia Infantry, wrote "I suppose you have heard that the Blair mission has turned out a complete failure . . . We have all resolved to fight them to the bitter end- We will give them war to the knife, a great reaction has taken place among our soldiers and I am glad to say it. They have all resolved to fight it out."²⁰² Another influence by this stage of the war was when honor was challenged, such as through the use of African American soldiers in combat. Confederate soldiers came from an antebellum social system that viewed blacks challenging white authority as an affront to one's honor, both in a personal and collective sense, and this required a strong response. This would produce bitter results, as this thesis demonstrates later with the Battle of the Crater.

Despite the majority of Confederate soldiers falling back on principles of honor, it did not mean that they were completely excluded from questioning this motivation. Virginian Willis Michael Parker also provided a look into the mindset of a Confederate soldier over the question of how honor factored into the increasing miseries of soldiering in the trenches. In two different letters Parker wrote, "[t]his is a hard life and I am getting awfully tired of it," before posing a revealing question to a friend, "[a]re you not getting tired of this kind of life, I am glad you take your duties so easy, it is the best way."²⁰³ Confederate soldiers looked inward at honor in both a personal and communal sense to remind them of past victories, redefine reasons for fighting, and find ways to handle fulfilling military obligations despite their increasing misery over time.

A Momentous Occasion: Confederate Soldiers at the Battle of the Crater

While the lengthy siege had several memorable events of renewed combat, perhaps none were more so famous as the Battle of the Crater. The Battle of the Crater represented not just the

²⁰² James E. Whitehorne to his sister, February 1, 1865, Whitehorne Family Papers, 1844-1865, LVA.

²⁰³ Willis Michael Parker to Peter Guerrant, October 1864, December 6, 1864, Guerrant Family Papers, VHS.

new face of combat in the midst of siege warfare, but more importantly, the increasingly bitter nature of an intensified war. In order to understand the changing nature of war and the corresponding psychological implications for the Confederate soldiers at the Battle of the Crater, one must first look at what combat meant for Civil War soldiers. Earl J. Hess, author of *The Union Soldier in Battle: Enduring the Ordeal of Combat*, explored the nature of combat effectively. While Hess focused on Union soldiers, his book is nevertheless relevant to an analysis of the Confederate experience. Hess described some important attributes of combat: “Soldiers sometimes were thrilled by the color, excitement, and drama of battle. Such a grandiose human endeavor, no matter how lethal, had the potential to awaken an appreciation that was based on stimulation of the senses.”²⁰⁴ In addition to stimulating their senses, combat also tested the reasoning capability of soldiers. Hess wrote, “[t]he sights, sounds, and emotions assaulted their senses, nearly wrecked their ability to perceive coherent patterns in the world around them . . . [therefore] [c]ombat tested their sensory, their emotional, and even their moral abilities to the fullest.” In addition to providing general background to how combat challenged soldiers, Hess described the changing nature of the war by the time of the Petersburg campaign, and what implications it had on the soldiers there.

Historian Hess wrote that the campaigns of 1864-1865, including the siege of Petersburg, were the result of a shift towards continual campaigns versus earlier pitched battles. The armies now remained in closer contact with each other thanks to the rapid proliferation of field fortifications. This new defensive nature of the war had great consequences for the soldiers at Petersburg. Hess described the evolution into this version of warfare: “Previous pitched battles had been traumatic experiences, but the rank and file had always had an opportunity to recuperate between confrontations. Now they had no time to physically rest or to recover their spirits.”²⁰⁵ In effect, campaigns such as the siege of Petersburg marked a different version of

²⁰⁴ Earl J. Hess, *The Union Soldier in Battle: Enduring the Ordeal of Combat*, 14.

warfare once combat broke out. There could be no rest or escape from the war, because it encompassed all the surrounding environment. The traditional stimulation of combat combined with the effects of an intensified war make the Battle of the Crater a worthy place for analysis.

In order to understand the events of the battle, it is imperative to look at the events leading up to that day, such as the unconventional adoption of a mine for breaking the enemy defenses. Charles R. Bowery Jr., author of *The Richmond-Petersburg Campaign, 1864-1865*, presented a good overview of the Battle of the Crater. Bowery described the construction of the Union mine by Lt. Col. Henry Pleasants and the 48th Pennsylvania Infantry: “Laboring under the supervision of Sergeant Henry Reese, a Welsh-born professional miner, the men of the 48th Pennsylvania started work in Poor Creek Ravine about 100 feet behind the Union front line. Working in two-hour shifts around the clock, they were able to dig over 40 feet of tunnel a day.”²⁰⁶ Bowery continued to describe the specifics, “[t]he mine was, on average, about four and a half feet high, four feet wide at the bottom, and two feet wide at the top. Pleasants also designed a ventilation system for the mine, expelling gases and bringing in fresh air.” Confederates received rumors of this project and constructed a series of countermines trying to locate the Union mine. However, they were unable to locate it and by July 28th, the mine was loaded and ready to detonate. Despite the successful completion of the mine, it would be worthless without a successful Union attack following the detonation. The Union high command bumbled around, initially giving the assault to an African American division under Edward Ferrero. However, Meade was concerned with the public perception about using African American soldiers to lead the assault given the high probability of immense losses. The task eventually fell to the incompetent James Ledlie, further adding to the chaos and decreasing the prospects for Union success.²⁰⁷

²⁰⁵Ibid., 46, 64, 65, 67.

²⁰⁶Charles R. Bowery Jr., *The Richmond-Petersburg Campaign, 1864-65* (Santa Barbara, CA: Praeger, 2014), 49-50.

In order to understand the magnitude of the Battle of the Crater, it is important to analyze the event that initiated the battle, the mine explosion. Historian Hess, author of *Into the Crater: The Mine Attack at Petersburg*, analyzed the effects of the explosion and the ensuing battle. After Henry Pleasants lit the first fuse and it failed to detonate, two other soldiers had to reenter the mine and inspect the fuses.²⁰⁸ After relighting the fuse, several minutes passed before the explosion occurred at 4:44 AM. While inspiring shock and awe for the Union soldiers, Hess described the event as a moment of life or death for the Confederates holding the positions. Initial Confederate responses stressed comparisons to an earthquake with dirt, debris, men, and war materials all blown forcefully into the Petersburg sky.²⁰⁹ Private David Holt wrote in his postwar memoirs that “I was sitting down with my gun in my lap and looking toward the left, when suddenly I saw a large section of earth shoot up in a cloud of dust and smoke. The men who were standing were thrown down, and I distinctly felt the shock.”²¹⁰ Alabamian William Cowan McClellan wrote to his brother describing the Crater: “In this mine he [Grant] had six tons of powder, which is twelve thousand pounds. The explosion took place about daylight shaking the earth for miles around. This cavity swallowed up a Battery of ours and most of the 18th S.C. Regt & created a good deal of confusion in our lines.”²¹¹ The Confederate soldiers affected most severely were a Virginia battery under Pegram and Elliot’s South Carolina Brigade, which bore the brunt of the explosion. Confederate losses range from 278 to 352 due to the explosion, and it created an unconventional backdrop for the ensuing fierce battle.²¹²

The use of African American soldiers under Ferrero brought to light the racial dynamic that had been festering since questions over emancipation began. By facing African American

²⁰⁷ Ibid., 50, 52.

²⁰⁸ Earl J. Hess, *Into the Crater: The Mine Attack at Petersburg* (Columbia: The University of South Carolina Press, 2010), 79.

²⁰⁹ Ibid.

²¹⁰ David Holt, *A Mississippi Rebel in the Army of Northern Virginia*, 287.

²¹¹ William Cowan McClellan to his brother, August 10, 1864, in *Welcome the Hour of Conflict*, 262.

²¹² Earl J. Hess, *Into the Crater*, 83, 84, 85.

soldiers, Confederates fully realized the increased stakes of the war as their honor was directly challenged. Historian Hess wrote that after waiting for over two hours to advance, Ferrero's soldiers moved towards the Confederate position by 7:30 AM.²¹³ Despite the enthusiasm from their commander, other Union units viewed the use of African American soldiers here as a burden. Hess wrote that "[m]any of Ledlie's and Potter's men claimed that Ferrero's attack disrupted their efforts to expand out of the breach." The insertion of more Union soldiers into an already confined situation added to the confusion on the part of the attackers. Hess wrote that "[t]he crowding of about ten thousand Federals in the five-hundred-yard breach destroyed command and control. It was an interracial force as well."²¹⁴ Adding to the chaos, some African American soldiers tried to escape their confinement, but losses were high, especially among the officers. Therefore, many African American soldiers were disoriented and coherent command quickly disintegrated. This would have disastrous consequences as General William Mahone's Confederate counterattack commenced.

The Confederate counterattack, led by the Virginia Brigade commander, Col. David A. Weisiger, soon anxiously awaited orders for the grand assault. (See Figure 7.) General William Mahone reminded the Confederate soldiers that they would have to face black soldiers and that the defense of Petersburg rested in their abilities. According to Mahone, "[i]n a tone of voice, so raised that the whole of the Virginia brigade might hear, I said . . . 'Tell Weisiger to forward.' . . . [and] as if on dress-parade, and with the steadiness and resolution of regulars . . . moved forward to meet the desultory advance of the Federal host."²¹⁵ The Virginians charged towards the Crater, largely following the instructions of not slowing their advance by firing. As the two sides drew very close to each other, the Confederates fired volleys at the Union soldiers packed densely together. While many African American soldiers fought in the battle, others fled

²¹³Ibid., 123.

²¹⁴Ibid., 128, 135.

²¹⁵ William Mahone, "The Battle of the Crater" (Petersburg: The Franklin Press, 1864), 7-8.

and further increased the confusion facing the Union side. Historian Hess wrote that “[m]any black troops stayed in the captured works and offered resistance to the Confederates. Others stayed in the captured works only because they did not have an opportunity to run. Those hundreds of blacks who caused so much disruption in their retreat were those who happened to be close to the rear of the Union position. . . .”²¹⁶ Regardless of intent for staying or leaving, the Battle of the Crater quickly turned into a very ugly affair. Fighting turned into hand to hand combat around the Crater as captured traverses were cleared of Union soldiers. Historian Hess wrote, “[a]s the 12th Virginians penetrated the maze of bombproofs, the fighting intensified to a fever pitch . . . [m]any members of the 61st Virginia experienced similar episodes of enraged combat in the confined spaces of the works.”²¹⁷ Men desperately bayoneted, clubbed, and killed each other by whatever means were expedient. Clearly, the reality of fighting African American soldiers reaffirmed the racial ideals of the Confederacy and stiffened the resolve to fight on. It is important to note that in this context, the Confederates were not just fighting a new type of enemy, but also a new social order that brought African Americans closer to racial equality. This affront to Southern honor was something that necessitated a strong militaristic response.

As the battle raged around the Crater, the remaining obstacle for the Confederates were the Union soldiers still trapped inside. George S. Bernard, of the 12th Virginia Infantry, wrote in his diary that after arriving in place, Mahone’s Brigade rose and “with a yell we rushed forward & got into the works, about 100 yds distant, receiving but little fire from the enemy, who turned out to be negroes! . . . Our brigade not driving the enemy from the inner portions of the exploded mine, Saunders & Wright’s brigades finished the work.”²¹⁸ Alfred Lewis Scott, a soldier in the 9th Alabama Infantry, wrote in his postwar memoir that a message from Gen. Lee came through to the effect that “we were the only troops he had to spare for the purpose and that we must

²¹⁶ Hess, *Into the Crater*, 160.

²¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 162-163.

²¹⁸ George S. Bernard, *Civil War Talks: Further Reminiscences of George S. Bernard and His Fellow Veterans*, ed. Hampton Newsome, John Horn, and John G. Selby (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2012), 251.

accomplish it. If the first charge did not succeed we must reform and charge again and keep it up till we drove them back.”²¹⁹ Scott continued, “Our first charge carried the enemy back and swept everything except the crater itself, which became crowded with the remnants of the different divisions, black and white, which had taken part in the advance. Here some desperate hand to hand fighting took place till they finally gave it up and surrendered.”²²⁰ Adding to the complexity of the Confederate counterattack was the terrain created by the explosion. (See Figures 3.1, 3.2.) Hess described the final obstacle as a “twelve-foot-high clay rim [which] served as the final barrier to Confederate success, and as the last refuge of the exhausted, frightened inhabitants of the hole.”²²¹ Alabamian William Cowan McClellan proudly described how the Alabama soldiers overcame this difficulty by killing “all the negroes and drove the Whites into the cavity of the explosion. [O]ur men then ran up to this big hole throwing clods of dirt, yankee guns with bayonets and cannon balls over in the hole. The poor fool negroes would stick their heads over the works to look for our Boys, next moment his hat would fly about 6 feet in the air.”²²²

Adding to the horrors, a savage inferno ensued in which African American soldiers were killed, not only by Confederates, but also by Union officers trying to curry favor with the victorious Confederates. Hess wrote, “[i]ncredibly a handful of white Union officers participated in the killing, hoping to prove to their captors that they deserved to live.”²²³ The savage Battle of the Crater ended with losses totaling around 3,798 for the Union and 1,140 for the Confederates.²²⁴ While the human scale of death was tragic, the Battle of the Crater was not unique in that sense compared to other bloody Civil War battles, but rather when it is viewed through the dual lens of an intensified war with an added racial dimension, thereby illustrating

²¹⁹ Alfred Lewis Scott, *Memoir of service in the Confederate Army [1861-1865]*, 1910, 25-26, VHS.

²²⁰ *Ibid.*, 26.

²²¹ Hess, *Into the Crater*, 186.

²²² William Cowan McClellan to his brother, August 10, 1864, in *Welcome the Hour of Conflict*, 262-263.

²²³ Hess, *Into the Crater*, 188.

²²⁴ *Ibid.*, 200.

the heightened acrimony between Union and Confederate soldiers at Petersburg.

The Battle of the Crater was not just any battle, it was also a battle over deeper questions of race and identity that few Confederates had to directly face beforehand. The catastrophic effect that the introduction of African American soldiers into the battle had upon Confederates is well documented by historians. Jason Phillips, author of “A Brothers’ War? Exploring Confederate Perceptions of the Enemy,” analyzed this shift towards an intensified war. Phillips wrote, “[t]he Union’s hardening war policy and the Emancipation Proclamation amplified the barbaric image . . . For many Confederates, restoring the Union seemed to be a Northern excuse to pillage and subjugate the South.”²²⁵ Following this sentiment Phillips continued, “[t]he emancipation and Federal enlistment of thousands of former slaves further enraged Confederates and confirmed their perceptions of Yankees. Total warfare proved white Southerners’ suspicions that Northerners were barbaric oppressors.” Additionally, Phillips wrote that many Confederate soldiers believed the combination of total war and black troops were the “evil portents” of the future if they lost.²²⁶ Kevin M. Levin, author of the article, “The Devil Himself Could Not Have Checked Them: Fighting with Black Soldiers at the Crater,” described what it meant to both sides having black soldiers fighting. Levin wrote that “[t]he Confederates instantly had been transformed by their first sight of a large number of black men in uniform . . . [and] [f]ighting at the Crater took place just beyond an area densely populated by white civilians and African Americans [enslaved and free].”²²⁷ Confederate soldiers thus had their worst fears realized at this battle and echoing the words of William Dobak, the Battle of the Crater descended into a “cycle of atrocity and vengeance.”²²⁸ M. Keith Harris, author of the article, “We Will Finish the War

²²⁵ Jason Phillips, “A Brothers’ War? Exploring Confederate Perceptions of the Enemy,” in *The View from the Ground: Experiences of Civil War Soldiers*, ed. Aaron Sheehan-Dean (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 2007), 73.

²²⁶ *Ibid.*, 79, 81.

²²⁷ Kevin M. Levin, “The Devil Himself Could Not Have Checked Them: Fighting with Black Soldiers at the Crater,” in *Cold Harbor to the Crater: The End of the Overland Campaign*, ed. Gary W. Gallagher and Caroline E. Janney (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2015), 271-72.

Here: Confederate Morale in the Petersburg Trenches, June and July 1864,” wrote about the feelings Confederate soldiers had about facing black soldiers at the Crater. According to Harris, “Rebels perceived the use of black troops in the attack as both an outrage and an indication of Union desperation.”²²⁹ This sense of desperation and outrage to Southern honor are echoed in the words of soldiers such as Joseph Banks Lyle of the 5th South Carolina Infantry, when describing how the Confederates “beat back Grant’s whole army, sappers, miners, negroes, powder & all.”²³⁰ Lyle’s writing suggested that for the Battle of the Crater, Grant was down to trying desperate measures to destroy Lee’s army and had failed miserably. Included in this consideration is the emphasis on sending African American soldiers against Lee’s veteran army. The battle created an environment not only for escaping monotony, as in earlier battles, through open combat, but also of releasing suppressed anger against Northern war policies that intentionally undermined the Confederate racial hierarchy. In order to understand the feelings and emotions that Confederate soldiers had regarding the Battle of the Crater, it becomes imperative to analyze their written records.

Private David Holt stressed the racial and religious elements in his writings on the Crater. According to Holt, “[t]hey were the first we had seen and the sight of a nigger in a blue uniform and with a gun was more than ‘Johnnie Reb’ could stand . . . They [Union] forgot that the poor nig had been a slave in Africa before he was brought to the United States . . . No people in either religious or economic slavery can develop the highest qualities.”²³¹ It is interesting that in his memoirs, Holt admitted that the rage many Confederate soldiers felt transformed them and that it was rooted in their Southern social and religious identities. Alabamian William Cowan McClellan in a letter to his brother, provided more details of some of the atrocities that took

²²⁸ William Dobak, *Freedom by the Sword*, 353, quoted in Levin, “The Devil Himself Could Not Have Checked Them,” 272.

²²⁹ M. Keith Harris, “We Will Finish the War Here: Confederate Morale in the Petersburg Trenches, June and July 1864,” in *Cold Harbor to the Crater*, 223.

²³⁰ Joseph Banks Lyle, July 31, 1864, Diary of Joseph Banks Lyle, Joseph Banks Lyle Papers, VHS.

²³¹ Holt, *A Mississippi Rebel in the Army of Northern Virginia*, 287-289.

place. McClellan wrote, “[w]e captured 250 Negroes, all of whom were wounded in some way: Bayoneted, knocked on the head by the butts of muskets. all would have ben killed had it not ben for Gen Mahone, who would beg our men to spare them. one fellow in our Brigade killed several. The Gen told him for gods sake stop.”²³² Alabamian Alfred Lewis Scott also wrote about the killing that occurred after some of the African American soldiers had already attempted to surrender to the Confederates:

On account of their battle cry of ‘No quarter’ there was a strong determination on the part of some of our men to insist on the terms and there was considerable stabbing and shooting even after the enemy had thrown down their arms. Some of the officers tried to stop it, while others encouraged it. It was the first time our command had run against negro troops, and most of our boys seemed particularly incensed against them. For my part, I was even more so against the whites, as having put arms in their hands and brought them there . . . I remonstrated with some of my comrades saying, ‘Oh boys, let the poor devils alone; if I had it in me to kill a man after he was unarmed and at my mercy, I would kill the white men who armed them.’²³³

Both William Cowan McClellan and Alfred Lewis Scott attest in their writings to the passions that led to atrocities being committed after the battle had ended. Scott’s postwar memoir also explained the seemingly unthinkable, why some of the white Union officers would partake in the killing of their own fellow soldiers in hopes of gaining favor with the victors.

In the minds of some Confederate soldiers, the racial animosities unleashed at the Crater bolstered their cause and increased their morale. Lieutenant Colonel William Pegram, whose battery was greatly affected by the mine explosion, wrote a letter to his sister concerning the Battle of the Crater and race. Pegram wrote, “I saw on that portion of the line- for a good distance in the trenches, the Yankees, white & black, principally the later, were piled two or three or four deep . . . As soon as we got upon them, they threw down their arms to surrender, but were not allowed to do so. Every bomb proof I saw, had one or two dead negroes in it. . . .”²³⁴ Pegram described the psychological effect on the Confederate soldiers: “I have always said that

²³² William Cowan McClellan to his brother, August 15, 1864, in *Welcome the Hour of Conflict*, 264.

²³³ Alfred Lewis Scott, *Memoir of service in the Confederate Army [1861-1865]*, 1910, 26, VHS.

²³⁴ William Pegram to his sister, August 1, 1864, in *The Civil War: The Final Year Told By Those Who Lived It*, 292.

I wished the enemy would bring some negroes against this army. I am convinced, since Saturday's fight, that it has a splendid effect on our men."²³⁵ While the Confederate victory clearly boosted morale for many, other soldiers responded to the event from a different psychological perspective.

In a lengthy letter to his future wife, John Marshall Martin wrote, "we are at a loss, to know what are Grant's intentions . . . I scarcely think he will lose so much time and devote so much labor upon another effort to blow us up."²³⁶ While clearly stating he did not expect another incident like the Crater, Martin also opened a window into his mind for the modern reader. The fact that Union soldiers had already detonated a mine successfully under Confederate lines made any possibility of it reoccurring in the future plausible. In other words, the threat of being consumed in an explosion emerged and added to the complexities of the Petersburg campaign. It was yet another form of mental stress that weighed down Confederate soldiers at Petersburg in the increasingly bitter Civil War. Given these soldier accounts, the Battle of the Crater emerged as a combat experience that reflected the new reality of siege warfare, as well as one which both challenged and reaffirmed Confederate racial views through the direct assault upon Southern honor.

For Confederate soldiers participating in the siege of Petersburg, the Civil War had entered a new and more arduous phase, one of siege warfare that accelerated the increasing hardships while also transforming into an intensified conflict. Confederate soldiers lived in foul conditions while facing the ever present danger of death due to the armies being so close to one another, as well as the breakdown of any remaining civility. The siege of Petersburg was an incredibly lengthy campaign, lasting almost ten months, which required the Confederate soldiers to alter their natural environment for survival. Additionally, the physical setting in which the soldiers lived intensified the effects of various weather elements, such as heat, cold, rain, snow,

²³⁵ Ibid.

²³⁶ John Marshall Martin to Sallie, July 31, 1864, John Marshall Martin Papers, VHS.

and mud. Soldiers took on responsibilities such as building winter quarters, going on picket duty, locating sources of water, and managing hunger due to small rations. The close proximity to Union lines only intensified their suffering, largely through the proliferation of sharpshooting and artillery or mortar barrages. The unpredictability of siege warfare required the soldiers to examine their motives for fighting in the midst of rapidly increasing hardships, as well as reshape coping mechanisms in order to adjust to the new intensity of the campaign.

For some Confederate soldiers at Petersburg, desertion became the most viable alternative to their present suffering. The sense of desperation brought on by the confined conditions, hunger, ever present danger of death, and sense of declining Confederate fortunes prompted some men to leave the ranks. For those who remained in the trenches, different coping mechanisms had to be utilized, such as the abundance of literary activity. Letter writing, always popular in the war, took on a newfound significance as soldiers became eager to connect with loved ones at home. The firm reliance on Christianity should not be underestimated either as religious and political goals became fused together. Confederate soldiers at Petersburg viewed their fight as a holy struggle, attempted to convert others to the religion, and placed great value on religious messages. Other soldiers went beyond that and kept spiritual diaries or led the construction efforts on chapels. As the fortunes of the Confederacy declined, many Confederate soldiers chose to turn inward for spiritual self-reflection and upwards towards God.

Southern concepts of honor also influenced many of the Confederate soldiers who chose to face the deprivations of the siege of Petersburg. Upholding one's sense of honor mattered not just for the individual but also to the community he represented. Personal bravery and a defense of home appealed to Southern conceptions of men as protectors of their families and, in some cases, property. Additionally, cowardice was shunned under Southern conceptions of honor, so avoiding bringing shame was an important incentive. Southern men were expected to abide by their oaths as well, so in a military sense, this bound many soldiers to keep fighting even

when the cause was clearly being lost. Honor also fostered a sense of group camaraderie among the soldiers who remained to fight in the midst of a faltering Confederacy. Honor was therefore formed culturally in the South and it influenced the soldiers both individually and collectively.

Lastly, the siege of Petersburg witnessed periodic outbursts of renewed combat, which provided Confederate soldiers with a break from the monotony of siege warfare. Faced with African American soldiers at places like the Crater, Confederate soldiers realized the stakes in the war had greatly increased. It confirmed their worst fears about the Union's goals to conquer the South, upend the established racial order, and transform it in their ideal image. This helps to explain why the fighting was brutal at the Crater, as well as why atrocities occurred after the surrender. Battles became more than just winning and losing on a field, they became symbolic of larger cultural and societal norms at stake in the war. The experiences of Confederate soldiers at Petersburg attest to the fact that unlike other prior campaigns, it represented an increasing intensification of both internal and external pressures, requiring a refining of various soldierly coping mechanisms to help make sense of themselves and the cause for which they fought.

Appomattox and the Uncertainties Ahead

While the siege of Petersburg represented the testing of many of these veterans' souls, they would have to endure one final campaign before their readjustment to postwar life began. Elizabeth R. Varon, author of *Appomattox: Victory, Defeat, and Freedom at the End of the Civil War*, explored the competing visions of the surrender at Appomattox and what that meant for the newly reunited nation. Varon wrote that "Confederate troops rallied around the sentiments expressed in Lee's Farewell Address and drew out its premises. The Yankee army, mercenary in its very nature, had vastly outnumbered the Confederates and had practiced a barbarous form of warfare befitting the ruthlessness of Northern society."²³⁷ Unsurprisingly, the fierce nature of the closing phases of the war led the majority of Confederate soldiers to

²³⁷ Elizabeth R. Varon, *Appomattox: Victory, Defeat, and Freedom at the End of the Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 79.

denounce the victors, viewing them “as a fundamentally unworthy foe.”²³⁸ Soldier accounts captured the agony of defeat and hard feelings towards the Union. Varon quoted Captain Henry Chambers of the 49th North Carolina Infantry: ““These worthless fellows whom we have so often whipped, whose cowardly backs we have so often seen, have at last by sheer force of numbers, numbers swelled by contributions from almost every race and color on the face of the globe, have compelled us to come to this.”²³⁹ According to Varon, the “[c]laims of Northern barbarity and Southern righteousness were the twin pillars of a culture of invincibility that had sustained Confederate soldiers, Lee’s men especially, over the course of the war.”²⁴⁰ With the crushing defeat at Petersburg and final surrender at Appomattox, the belief in Confederate invincibility was revoked and the Southern narrative for defeat was set, with important consequences for the returning veterans.

In the whirlwind of activity surrounding Lee’s surrender at Appomattox, Confederate soldiers had to process many thoughts. Varon articulated many thoughts that would endure to help influence their postwar readjustment. Varon wrote “Confederate hopes that their sacrifices would be rewarded were awkwardly intertwined with their fears of earthly punishment. Over the course of the retreat, Lee’s men had been haunted by visions of what retributions Grant might exact.”²⁴¹ This uncertainty hung as a dark cloud over the soldiers during the retreat and surrender proceedings. Once it became clear that the surrender terms were not overly harsh, Confederate soldiers began to realize that peace was possible. Varon wrote that this fit a notion that “Grant’s terms were both a gesture of respect to the Confederate troops and a blueprint for the peace that was to follow.”²⁴² Perhaps no physical object exemplified the varying emotions surrounding the surrender better than the parole passes home. Varon wrote how they fit both

²³⁸ Ibid., 103.

²³⁹ Henry A. Chambers, *Diary of Captain Henry A. Chambers*, ed. T.H. Pearce (Wendell, N.C.: Broadfoot’s Bookmark, 1983), 262, in Varon, *Appomattox*, 103.

²⁴⁰ Varon, *Appomattox*, 103.

²⁴¹ Ibid., 109.

²⁴² Ibid., 110.

Southern notions of honor and coming to terms with defeat as they illustrated “not just the consciousness of duty performed but also the case for duty performed- the case that the bearer had not skulked, straggled, or deserted, and had not doubted or despaired . . . They became emblems of a particularly stoic and heroic kind of service.”²⁴³

Essentially, while the surrender at Appomattox contained a myriad of evidence as to the bitter feelings of defeat and despair, it also contained a glimmer of hope towards national reconciliation among white Americans. As Confederate veterans returned home from Appomattox, they would have to find ways to cope with the raw emotions surrounding defeat. The siege of Petersburg contained many soldierly coping mechanisms that they could and often did draw from in the postwar years. The final surrender and terms at Appomattox did not ensure an easy transition to the postwar South, but it did provide an initial framework through which Confederate veterans viewed both their experiences as soldiers during the siege of Petersburg and the challenges that awaited them throughout the South once they returned home.

²⁴³ Ibid., 112.

Chapter 2

Confederate Veterans after the Siege of Petersburg:

Readjustment to the Postwar South, 1865-ca. 1895

The Confederate defeat at Petersburg and subsequent surrender of General Lee's army at Appomattox Court House initiated a new phase of challenges for the weary soldiers, the process of demobilization. William B. Holberton, author of *Homeward Bound: The Demobilization of the Union and Confederate Armies, 1865-66*, described the condition of the defeated Confederates and related challenges of demobilization. Holberton wrote, "[t]he Confederate veteran thus entered into his final phase of service in defeat and rejection, hungry, nearly naked, with no definite travel provisions, penniless, and with the prospects of destruction and despair waiting for him on the home front."²⁴⁴ Corresponding with these personal travails was the lack of an orderly demobilization process. Holberton wrote that Confederate demobilization was largely informal and unorganized as compared to their Union counterparts.²⁴⁵ Adding to the complexities of no central planning for demobilization, most of the Rebels "were eager to complete their journeys in order to rejoin their families and friends."²⁴⁶ The widespread destruction of Southern railroads during the war forced the returning Confederates to use any means expedient to get home, which usually meant walking. Additionally, Confederate veterans often had to rely on the faithfulness of the local citizenry to provide them with something to eat on their journey home.²⁴⁷ Holberton wrote that though the veterans endured these setbacks and anxiety for the psychological reward of returning home, "no doubt the men were willing to put up with inconveniences and dis-comfort. Their war experiences had been far worse."²⁴⁸

²⁴⁴ William B. Holberton, *Homeward Bound: The Demobilization of the Union and Confederate Armies, 1865-66* (Mechanicsburg, PA: Stackpole Books, 2001), xiv.

²⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 15.

²⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 37.

²⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 91.

A sense of unit camaraderie was also often both essential and beneficial to the demobilizing Confederate soldiers. Holberton wrote that “the tendency was for men to travel in groups small enough to encourage local people to donate food and yet large enough to discourage any violence on the part of roving gangs. For the most part, there was no semblance of military organization among the returning Confederates.”²⁴⁹

Despite their desire to make it home, returning Confederate veterans trudged along under a tremendous cloud of uncertainty regarding the future. Defeated, destitute, hungry, and with no easy way to return home, Confederate veterans adapted to the complexities of demobilization as best they could. Successful demobilization ushered in the next and perhaps more complex phase of challenges, remaking one’s existence in the postwar South. Sergeant James Whitehorne of the 12th Virginia Infantry captured the sentiments of many Confederates about the uncertainties that lay ahead: “The war has been going on so long I can’t realize what a man would do now it’s over. How can we get interested in farming or working in a store or warehouse when we have been interested day and night for years in keeping alive, whipping the invaders, and preparing for the next fight?”²⁵⁰

The Confederate soldiers who had gone through so many deadly encounters and suffered countless personal deprivations now faced head-on the challenge of coming to terms with defeat and readjusting to a transformed South. As the Confederate soldiers who survived the siege of Petersburg transformed into veterans, they faced a myriad of challenges immediately after the surrender. They had to return to their home communities often decimated by the war and some had to find solutions to an agricultural order that was no longer based on slave labor. Many Confederate veterans also returned with grievous and nagging wartime injuries, some more severe and debilitating than others. According to the National Park Service, approximately

²⁴⁸ Ibid., 52.

²⁴⁹ Ibid., 146.

²⁵⁰ James Whitehorne, quoted in Holberton, *Homeward Bound*, 147, from Gregory A. Coco, *The Civil War Infantryman: In Camp, on the March, and in Battle* (Gettysburg, PA: Thomas Publications, 1996), 151.

194,026 Confederate soldiers were wounded in action during the entire war.²⁵¹ More specifically, the siege of Petersburg produced an estimated 28,000 total Confederate casualties, which included a significant number of wounded soldiers, although a precise figure is difficult to determine.²⁵² The extent of veterans wounded during the siege and Civil War created a crisis not seen in our nation's history prior to the war. This would lead to the push for forms of disability and pension assistance, thereby creating a special welfare status for Confederate veterans, which would have been unthinkable years earlier. Additionally, as the veterans aged or lacked family members to take care of them, the need arose for the creation of Confederate soldiers' homes throughout the region. This furthered the idea that Confederate veterans were worthy recipients of public welfare and essentially made them into iconic symbols of a lost cause. Additionally, Confederate veterans returned home not as mighty victors, but as subdued fighters of a nonexistent government. This required a psychological adjustment on their part as to how to grapple with being on the losing side while remembering the honor and sacrifices of service. While almost all Southern households were affected by the death of loved ones during the Civil War, perhaps the harder challenge was overcoming a social order that had vanished overnight with the Union victory. In theory, whites and African Americans were now placed on a pathway to equality due to the Union victory, which cemented the results of emancipation.

In order to cope with these extensive difficulties and drastic changes, Confederate veterans applied learned coping mechanisms from the siege of Petersburg, in addition to receiving institutional support, which often appeared many years later. Confederate veterans wrestled with doubts about if their Southern honor had been lost by being unable to defeat the Union foe and protect their families. In order to cope with this uncertainty and retain the brotherhood of service that had strengthened them during the siege, various Confederate

²⁵¹ "Facts- The Civil War," National Park Service, accessed January 28, 2017, <https://www.nps.gov/civilwar/facts.htm>.

²⁵² "10 Facts about the Petersburg Campaign," Civil War Trust, 2014, accessed January 28, 2017, <http://www.civilwar.org/battlefields/petersburg/10-facts-about-the-petersburg.html>.

veterans' organizations and commemorations were created in the postwar years. Additionally, literary endeavors shifted from temporarily taking them out of their wartime difficulties to establishing their legacy as honorable veterans, worthy of admiration from the South despite the outcome of the war. The firm reliance on Protestant Christianity was of utmost value to many veterans who successfully transitioned postwar, and some men felt the calling into the ministry. Since Confederate war aims and Christianity became intertwined during the latter stages of the Civil War, it is no surprise that the veterans continued to rely on their faith in the postwar years. While some coping mechanisms did not carry over to the same extent, concepts of camaraderie, Southern honor, and a firm reliance on God provided the essential foundation for a successful readjustment. As the decades progressed, Confederate veterans eventually were able to take advantage of institutional support, such as disability, pension, and soldiers' home benefits, however they were often slow in the making, requiring these veterans to rely on each other and earlier wartime coping mechanisms. Most who endured the hardships of the siege of Petersburg adjusted to postwar life. A few found the readjustment to be too difficult, likely due to long term psychological effects of the war and/or mental health issues. Regardless, those who served in the trenches at Petersburg experienced an intensified war that would touch them the rest of their lives in many capacities.

Historiography

The historiography on the postwar South is detailed on the topics of societal changes, the emergence of Southern pension or welfare systems, and veterans literature. The book *Virginia at War, 1865*, edited by William C. Davis and James I. Robertson Jr., contains a wealth of essays that discuss the turmoil involved with the defeat of the Confederacy. One article captured this theme when describing Virginia: "The economy essentially collapsed, due to the destruction of railroads, bridges, and farms as well as antebellum debt, abolition, and investments in Confederate currency. African Americans, though free, faced an uncertain future

with the advent of a new labor system accompanied by a legal purgatory.”²⁵³ This notion of a ruined economy, social order, and unpredictable future are a reoccurring theme throughout the work. Other works look at the societal changes that veterans had to face in terms of labor questions and agricultural practices.²⁵⁴ The book *Before the New Deal: Social Welfare in the South, 1830-1930*, edited by Elna C. Green, analyzed various societal changes with welfare distribution in the South. Of particular importance is the article, “Confederate Pensions as Southern Social Welfare,” by Kathleen Gorman. According to Gorman, “[a]s losers of the war, Confederate veterans were not eligible to participate in the federal system. Therefore any support had to come from the southern states themselves . . . [and] there was no single, central agency available to distribute pensions.”²⁵⁵ Mark E. Rodgers, author of *Tracing the Civil War Veteran Pension System in the State of Virginia: Entitlement or Privilege*, provided a more comprehensive look at the forerunners to Confederate pensions, and the various amendments enacted over the years. Rodgers wrote that “[d]uring the war and shortly thereafter, the social welfare needs of these Confederate veterans demanded attention . . . This, in turn, enabled Southern States to explore policy options to meet those needs. These states adopted public relief programs which were unprecedented in Southern history.”²⁵⁶

There is also scholarship available on the founding of various Confederate soldiers’ homes, reflecting that state sponsored assistance extended well beyond disability and pension assistance. *Living Monuments: Confederate Soldiers’ Homes in the New South*, by R.B. Rosenburg, provided an analytical look at how Southern society viewed the inhabitants of these homes and cultivated their memory.²⁵⁷ While there are several works that look at Confederate

²⁵³ John M. McClure, “‘So unsettled by the war’: The Aftermath in Virginia, 1865,” in William C. Davis and James I. Robertson Jr., eds., *Virginia at War, 1865* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 2012), 133.

²⁵⁴ Gavin Wright, *The Political Economy of the Cotton South: Households, Markets, and Wealth in the Nineteenth Century* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1978).

²⁵⁵ Kathleen Gorman, “Confederate Pensions as Southern Social Welfare,” in Elna C. Green, ed., *Before the New Deal: Social Welfare in the South, 1830-1930* (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1999), 25-26.

²⁵⁶ Mark E. Rodgers, *Tracing the Civil War Veteran Pension System in the State of Virginia: Entitlement or Privilege* (Lewiston, NY: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1999), 3.

veterans organizations and commemorations, two have been of particular importance in dealing with the siege of Petersburg. George S. Bernard's *War Talks of Confederate Veterans* explored the war from the experiences of a Petersburg Confederate soldier and his comrades.²⁵⁸

Expanding upon this work is *Civil War Talks: Further Reminiscences of George S. Bernard and His Fellow Veterans*, which provided previously unpublished letters and additional recollections from the campaign.²⁵⁹ Both also offer the unique vantage point of providing recollections from veterans who, in many cases, were defending their own local community during the siege.

This thesis consolidates and builds upon the literature by demonstrating that Confederate veterans applied many of the coping mechanisms used during the siege to their postwar lives. Though they eventually did receive institutional support, as outlined in the literature, this did not come fast enough in many cases, requiring them to first fall back on previously established coping mechanisms. After the war ended, it would be approximately a decade before extensive commutation payments occurred in Virginia, and almost two decades before annual pension assistance. Even after various legislation passed, it often did not provide adequately for the immense volume of needy applicants. These veterans returned to civilian life having to face the dual challenges of remaking one's existence and also adapting to a newly reunited country. It appears that no published sources link the coping mechanisms from the siege to Confederate veteran readjustment postwar. These coping mechanisms, such as camaraderie, honor, and the reliance upon their faith, were tremendously beneficial to helping veterans readjust to the immense challenges postwar. A further gap exists in which no published account exists that traces veterans who were wounded during the siege of Petersburg, applied for Confederate disability or pension assistance, and determines the effect of that assistance on readjustment.

²⁵⁷ R.B. Rosenberg, *Living Monuments: Confederate Soldiers' Homes in the New South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993).

²⁵⁸ George S. Bernard, *War Talks of Confederate Veterans* (Petersburg: Fenn & Owen, Publishers, 1892).

²⁵⁹ Hampton Newsome, John Horn, and John G. Selby, eds., *Civil War Talks: Further Reminiscences of George S. Bernard and His Fellow Veterans* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2012).

Therefore, my thesis seeks to contribute to the scholarship on Confederate veterans by analyzing specifically how the experience of being a soldier at Petersburg carried over in their readjustment to postwar life, as compared to other scholarship only analyzing veteran readjustment in a postwar context. Consequently, this thesis seeks to alleviate the divide that exists between analyzing the forms or resources for Confederate veteran readjustment and the catalyst, the unique experience of having served during the waning hours of the Confederacy at Petersburg.

Postwar Labor and Agricultural Changes

The South remained a predominately agricultural society after the Civil War. As the defeated Confederates trickled back to their home communities, it became imperative for many to resume their traditional vocation of farming. However, the entire social structure of farming and race relations had been upended by the Union victory and readjustment was not a given. In the book *Gilded Age City: Politics, Life and Labor in Petersburg, Virginia, 1874-1889*, author William D. Henderson described some of the immense changes to the region. According to Henderson, “[v]isitors to Virginia’s farmlands, especially Northerners . . . spoke of the desolation, the uncultivated, bare, and brown fields; they saw forests cut down by wartime armies, unpainted houses, broken fences, and utterly discouraged people.”²⁶⁰ Furthermore, valuable crops such as tobacco and corn entered a period of decline. Henderson wrote that the decade from 1860 to 1870 witnessed a production decline of 66 percent for tobacco and 50 percent for corn.²⁶¹ In addition to the decline in wealth due to crop production, the value of property in the form of slaves evaporated with Confederate defeat. Henderson connected the financial problems around Petersburg to the larger South: “In 1860 slaves made up 45.8 percent of the wealth of all of the Southern states. Agricultural real estate and equipment constituted only 25 percent of the wealth of the South. Thus, the emancipation of the slaves

²⁶⁰ William D. Henderson, *Gilded Age City: Politics, Life and Labor in Petersburg, Virginia, 1874-1889* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1980), 42.

²⁶¹ Ibid.

had an unusually devastating effect on the prosperity of the counties.”²⁶² While many common Confederate soldiers did not own slaves, they were participants in a largely agricultural society in which the elite owned slaves, and this sudden loss of wealth at the top ruined the interconnected economy for all. Lastly, Henderson connected the problems with Southern agriculture after the Civil War with an emerging labor system born out of emancipation. Henderson wrote that “[f]armers, lacking money, made few technological improvements. And since the emancipation of the slaves had not been accompanied by any redistribution of the land, tenant farming, an inefficient system of land use, began to expand.”²⁶³ Henderson’s book revealed that as the weary Confederate veterans returned home, many of which to resume their agricultural vocations, they faced many forces beyond their control that made a successful recovery all the more challenging.

While conflict during the siege of Petersburg brought white Southerners into combat encounters with African Americans, emancipation brought different provocative experiences to the realm of agriculture. In his article, “‘So unsettled by the war’: The Aftermath in Virginia, 1865,” John M. McClure explained the new structure of labor relations. McClure wrote that “[w]hile reconciled to military defeat and emancipation, many landowners either failed to understand or refused to concede that blacks’ freedom required a fundamental alteration of the labor-capital relationship.”²⁶⁴ This new labor relationship largely took shape in the form of signed contracts, which would be up to federal agents to enforce.²⁶⁵ Additionally, as Gavin Wright noted in his book, the eventual shift towards tenancy farming also contained an element of white Southerners trying to reinstall the plantation structure.²⁶⁶ David Herbert Donald, author of the article, “A Generation of Defeat,” analyzed what defeat meant to Southerners, and in

²⁶² Ibid., 334.

²⁶³ Ibid., 335.

²⁶⁴ John M. McClure, “‘So unsettled by the war’: The Aftermath in Virginia, 1865,” in William C. Davis and James I. Robertson Jr., eds., *Virginia at War, 1865* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 2012), 140.

²⁶⁵ Ibid., 141.

²⁶⁶ Wright, *The Political Economy of the Cotton South*, 161.

particular, concerning the end of slavery and labor. Donald attributed part of the problem with restoring agriculture postwar to white Southerners having “to abandon their cherished belief in slavery as a patriarchal system, which mutually linked whites and blacks in ties of friendship and loyalty.”²⁶⁷ Consequently, Donald believed that the challenges in coping with this reality might explain the slow recovery of the region.²⁶⁸ Perhaps the upending of the racial hierarchy and confusion with the state of agriculture lengthened the recovery phase of the South. Nevertheless, as historian Kevin Levin stated in his article, “‘When Johnny comes marching home’: The Demobilization of Lee’s Army,” most of Lee’s returning veterans rebuilt both their lives and their homes, despite taking an approximate hiatus of “between fifteen and twenty years . . . to arrive at a point where they could begin to put pen to paper and make sense of their war experiences within a postwar world that now included a revival of confidence and a sense of regional identity.”²⁶⁹

Confederate Veterans and Postwar Christianity: In Order to Cope, In Order to Answer the Calling

The fervent reliance on Christianity was not just an important mechanism for surviving the siege of Petersburg, but also undeniably beneficial in assisting Confederate veterans in their readjustment to the postwar South. However, the defeat of the Confederacy and sweeping societal changes postwar challenged Southerners to the core in their understanding of the Christian faith. In the book, *Rebuilding Zion: The Religious Reconstruction of the South, 1863-1877*, Daniel W. Stowell analyzed what defeat meant to the former Confederates and essentially how they reinvented their religious conceptions. Stowell stated that defeat made Southerners have to reassess God’s purposes for them: “Even before the war ended, some ministers were

²⁶⁷ David Herbert Donald, “A Generation of Defeat,” in Walter J. Fraser Jr. and Winfred B. Moore Jr., eds., *From the Old South to the New: Essays On the Transitional South* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1981), 11.

²⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 13.

²⁶⁹ Kevin Levin, “‘When Johnny comes marching home’: The Demobilization of Lee’s Army,” in William C. Davis and James I. Robertson Jr., eds., *Virginia at War, 1865* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 2012), 89, 97.

developing a framework within which they could accommodate both the assurance of God's continued favor and the military defeat of the Confederacy."²⁷⁰ Therefore, military defeat in the Civil War invoked a natural response that God's favor was not upon their cause, because surely he would not abandon his chosen people to defeat. Stowell wrote of the core principle that was used to overcome postwar doubts, a "firm belief that the defeat of the Confederacy did not signal God's absolute disapproval shaped most white religious southerners' responses."²⁷¹ This belief once put into practice was aided by the returning Confederate veterans, many of whom had deepened their faith during the perilous siege of Petersburg. Stowell wrote that "[r]evivals flourished in some areas, and many returning soldiers became more faithful to the churches in the aftermath of their wartime experiences."²⁷² Postwar, churches provided the social network and sense of community so desired by many Confederate veterans. According to Rev. John William Jones, "certainly a very large proportion of our most efficient church-members within the past twenty years have been those who found 'Christ in the camp,' or had the pure gold of their Christian character refined and purified by the fiery trials through which they were called to pass."²⁷³ Indeed, as broken civilians and demoralized returning veterans reunited after the war to face the mutual challenges of rebuilding their lives and communities, the redefining of their Christian faith became paramount to enduring.

In the aftermath of the war religious periodicals, newspapers, and minutes of Protestant denominational meetings provided a multitude of writings aimed at lifting the white South back up spiritually. Publications such as *The Central Presbyterian*, also illustrated the intense misery in the South that would only be solved through a greater adherence to the Christian faith. According to an article written a few months after the war, "it is difficult indeed to withdraw

²⁷⁰ Daniel W. Stowell, *Rebuilding Zion: The Religious Reconstruction of the South, 1863-1877* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 40.

²⁷¹ *Ibid.*

²⁷² *Ibid.*, 103.

²⁷³ Jones, *Christ in the Camp*, 396.

our attention from the realm of the seen and temporal, so as to fix it with due engagedness on the unseen and eternal. And yet it *must* be done . . . Difficult as it is to grasp the truth, nevertheless it is the truth that the unseen is the real, and the invisible the enduring.”²⁷⁴ The article continued on to say that “its kingdoms with their shifting boundaries, now darkened and now illumined by successive disasters and glories, like flitting clouds obscuring and then revealing the sun- all, all, are evanescent as those clouds, while the kingdom of God, like that sun, alone endures.”²⁷⁵ Essentially, the paper reminded dispirited Southerners that only the Kingdom of God stands forever, and that as challenging as it was to focus on God while having so many worldly hardships, it remained the duty of every righteous believer to do so.

Religious articles also appeared that both seemed to mourn the defeat of the Confederacy and move towards acceptance of the results, even if grudgingly. One paper admonished readers that in the midst of Confederate defeat and perplexing societal uncertainties, there was only one solid foundation that mattered:

[T]he last act in the four years’ drama of blood is over, and the curtain of peace has fallen upon the scene. Yet sorrow sits brooding over the land. Many a heart has lost its treasure never to be restored, and many a home the light that once gave brightness to all its joys. . . The foundations of Southern society have all been upheaved, and like a city upturned by a mighty earthquake, our prosperity for the time is gone, and a wide waste of ruin and desolation meets our eyes whatever way we turn. The past is filled with bitter recollections, the present with sad realities, and the future with uncertainties into which no human wisdom is able to penetrate . . . They forget that a righteous cause does not imply a righteous people, and that a nation, though contending for the dearest and most sacred rights ever given to man, may fail to secure them, because their iniquities separate between them and their God, and their wickedness demands the intervention of heavy judgements and grievous punishments . . . Whatever, though, may be the design of God in those dispensations of his Providence, by which our country is now affected, we know enough to vindicate them to our reason and our conscience . . . We must accept the results of the late protracted and bloody war as the will of Providence.²⁷⁶

²⁷⁴ *The Central Presbyterian*, July 20, 1865, Vol. 1, No. 1, Union Presbyterian Seminary Archives, Richmond, Va., (hereafter cited as UPSA).

²⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁷⁶ “Comfort for the Saints,” *The Central Presbyterian*, December 21, 1865, Vol. 1- New Series, UPSA.

In this sweeping piece, the author portrayed a thoroughly broken South, literally shaken to its core by the fall of the Confederacy, while at the same time providing some evidence of hope for future reconciliation with the North. However, it acknowledged that the problems facing them were simply too great for mankind to solve alone. The article placed the emphasis squarely on God, whose actions must be trusted and adhered, in spite of not understanding his ways. Only a few months after the end of the lengthy siege of Petersburg and surrender at Appomattox, and papers such as this one were already moving, even if somewhat reluctantly, towards accepting defeat, but only through having sincere faith in God.

For many Southerners and veterans of the siege, Christianity would need to be reinvented in the midst of defeat and therefore repurposed to serve as a guide for all areas of their lives, not just the spiritual realm. Charles Reagan Wilson, author of *Baptized in Blood: The Religion of the Lost Cause, 1865-1920*, wrote that the South faced a host of problems: “which were cultural but also religious- the problems of providing meaning to life and society amid the baffling failure of fundamental beliefs, [and] of extending comfort to those suffering poverty and disillusionment.”²⁷⁷ In response to this, white Southerners formulated a version of Christianity that looked to the future while not forgetting the past or present: “The stress was on the future, the need for communal solidarity, and the conviction that God would demand great achievements from Southerners . . . They would have to demand even higher standards of themselves and their society.”²⁷⁸ In effect, as a people they did not want to be chastened again by God, so they would have to strive to be more righteous. This blending of Christianity both inwardly and publically served as an important stimulus to rebuilding their lives individually and also as a society.

Religious publications abound with themes of Christianity being used as a moral force for rebuilding the depressed region. According to a circular letter from the Dover Baptist

²⁷⁷ Charles Reagan Wilson, *Baptized in Blood: The Religion of the Lost Cause, 1865-1920* (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1980), 10.

²⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 77-78.

Association of Virginia, “[t]he whole South, ravaged and ruined by the barbarities of war, is to be physically, socially and morally regenerated. Our churches are to be repaired and rebuilt . . . our empty barns to be re-plenished with grain, and our empty pockets with money . . . We must rise with the emergency . . . Let us invoke the God of might to help us through the crisis.”²⁷⁹ This urgency towards rebuilding both individual lives and Southern society would be met with God’s approval as “[w]e remember what anguish we suffered when we beheld our true condition as rebels against God. We profess to have repented of sin, to have obtained divine forgiveness, and to have dedicated ourselves solemnly to God.”²⁸⁰ This religious atmosphere was one in which returning veterans of the siege of Petersburg largely immersed themselves in, and some veterans began the process of answering the call into the ministry.

For the Confederate veterans who were physically able, their readjustment to postwar life largely started where they left off, returning to their agricultural and Christian roots. Charles B. Fields, a veteran of Company D, 1st Virginia Cavalry, returned home to Abingdon, Virginia, and immediately continued practicing his Christian lifestyle and resuming agricultural work. In his diary, Fields wrote of his farming tasks and also of his church attendance. According to Fields, April 30, 1865, involved him attending “worship at Baker Chapel.”²⁸¹ On May 7, 1865, Fields “[a]ttended worship at Spring Creek . . . [and] entered the Bible class.”²⁸² His religious activities all seemingly fit around his agricultural work, which included planting corn and breaking up the ground for crops.²⁸³ By summer, Fields was devoting time for two religious functions by attending a Bible class at Spring Creek and regular services at Baker Chapel.²⁸⁴

²⁷⁹ R. Ryland, Circular Letter, *Minutes, Eighty-Second Session*. Dover Church, Goochland, Tuesday, Sept. 12, 1865, in *Minutes of the 78th, 79th, 80th, 81st and 82nd Annual Meetings of the Dover Baptist Association, Held at Leigh Street, Beulah, Berea, Dover and Colosse Churches, 1862, 1863, 1864, 1865, and 1866*. (Richmond: Laughton & Fore, Printers, 1866), Virginia Baptist Historical Society, Richmond, Va., (hereafter cited as VBHS).

²⁸⁰ R.A. Fox, Circular Letter, *Minutes, Eighty-Third Session*. King William County, Va., Tuesday, Sept. 11, 1866, in *Ibid.*, VBHS.

²⁸¹ Charles B. Fields, April 30, 1865, Diary, 1865 January 6- September 1, VHS.

²⁸² *Ibid.*, May 7, 1865.

²⁸³ *Ibid.*, April 20, 22, 1865.

While written more in a matter of fact style and not particularly captivating, Field's diary is nonetheless useful. It revealed a Confederate veteran who immediately returned home and picked up life where it left off before the war dawned, just as many other Confederate veterans did if they were physically able to do so.²⁸⁵ The diary was reflective of the agricultural roots of so many Confederate veterans, as well as their devotion to their faith and willingness to readjust.

The utilization of Christianity postwar as a coping mechanism is further illustrated in the lives of the numerous veterans who decided to enter the ministry. During the siege of Petersburg, Giles Buckner Cooke served as the assistant adjutant and inspector general on General Robert E. Lee's staff.²⁸⁶ Cooke's postwar religious involvement did not just involve outreach to fellow white citizens, but also African Americans, reflecting the capacity for Christianity to improve racial and societal relations. According to the Encyclopedia Virginia, "[c]oncerned with the educational plight of the former slaves and believing that they needed to be prepared to carry out the responsibilities of citizenship, Cooke in 1867 became head of a Sunday school for blacks at Saint Paul Episcopal Church in Petersburg."²⁸⁷ This eventually led to the "founding [of] Saint Stephen's Episcopal Church, the first African American congregation of that denomination in the city."²⁸⁸ In his commonplace book from 1870, Cooke expounded his Christian calling and provided clues as to what led him to serve God, for the "[s]inner's misery is, that having forsaken God and lost His grace and love, he can now find nothing but poverty, misery and want. How empty is that soul, which God does not fill: what a famine is those in that heart which is no longer nourished by the bread of life."²⁸⁹

²⁸⁴ Ibid., June 18, 1865.

²⁸⁵ For example, see William Henry Stewart in Trask, *61st Virginia Infantry*, 92, on his religious involvement. Also, see William Fielding Baugh in *Letters Home*, xv, on his religious involvement postwar and readjustment.

²⁸⁶ William B. Obrochta, "Giles Buckner Cooke (1838-1937)," Encyclopedia Virginia, last modified February 19, 2015, accessed December 12, 2016, http://www.encyclopediavirginia.org/Cooke_Giles_Buckner_1838-1937#start_entry.

²⁸⁷ Ibid.

²⁸⁸ Ibid.

²⁸⁹ Giles Buckner Cooke, *Commonplace book-1870*, VHS. Appears after a class roster on August 14, 1870.

Perhaps the best way to analyze the legacy of a soldier turned minister like Giles B. Cooke is through what his contemporaries said about him. In the address, “Giles Buckner Cooke: Member of the Staff of General Robert E. Lee, 1864-1865. Teacher and Minister of the Gospel for Over Fifty Years,” John Skelton Williams described his worthy virtues and legacy. Reflective of a model veteran in postwar readjustment, “Major Cooke sheathed his sword and vowed his life-long allegiance and service to the King of Kings . . . As a soldier of the Cross he has been faithful, tireless, endless in endurance and labor as he was when a soldier of the Southern Stars and Bars.”²⁹⁰ Cooke’s faith was also a virtue in the postwar South, for “he has so lived and wrought as to prove that the fire of combat was not needed to develop the grandeur of his soul; that the horrors of civil strife, and the bitterness of defeat, could not dim the luster of his ideals nor daunt his resolution to go right forward in the path of duty.”²⁹¹ In effect, Giles Buckner Cooke personified what the religious presses throughout the South were calling the people to become. While his religious focus was enlightened for the time period, Cooke devoted himself wholeheartedly to serving God and helping his fellow man, including in his case, the African American population in Petersburg.²⁹²

Confederate veterans who were either wounded in the siege of Petersburg or who experienced near death encounters also found themselves answering the call to enter the ministry postwar. Alexander P. Odom, a veteran of Company F, 9th Alabama Infantry, was wounded during the siege of Petersburg and afterwards discharged on August 4, 1864.²⁹³ According to an article on him in the *Confederate Veteran*, Rev. Odom “gave to his country four years of service marked by true courage and patriotism. He was wounded once in battle,

²⁹⁰ John Skelton Williams, “Giles Buckner Cooke: Member of the Staff of General Robert E. Lee, 1864-1865. Teacher and Minister of the Gospel for Over Fifty Years” (Address, Confederate Battle Abbey, Richmond, Va, February 2, 1924), 2-3, VHS.

²⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 4.

²⁹² Giles B. Cooke became an Episcopal deacon in 1871 and a priest in 1874.

²⁹³ “Appendix E: 9th Alabama Regimental Roster for Companies F and H,” in *Welcome the Hour of Conflict: William Cowan McClellan and the 9th Alabama*.

and from this wound he was a great sufferer all the remainder of his life. He loved the cause for which he fought . . . [and] [t]he Confederate Re-unions were to him always occasions of pleasure.”²⁹⁴ Despite his wounding at Petersburg and devotion to remembering the Confederacy, it was not his primary passion to remain engaged in the past. The article continued, “[t]he sphere of life in which he showed most distinction and was most deeply interested was his Church life. At the age of twenty-four years he was licensed to preach in the Methodist Episcopal Church, South . . . He felt that no higher honor was ever given him, and he bore it worthily.”²⁹⁵

The death of Rev. Odom was symbolic of the Southern ideals for honorable veterans with honor to God first and also remembrance of their Confederate service. His obituary reads in part, “[h]is time and best service was not considered too precious for the cause of God, who gave him amply of this world’s goods as well as a rich spiritual experience . . . [and] the elevation of mankind to the honor and glory of God being his desire.”²⁹⁶ While alluding to Rev. Odom also having made money postwar in business, it is clear that his primary legacy was through his ministry. Before closing the obituary, it is apparent that his Confederate service was also to be celebrated as “Mr. Odom was a brave confederate soldier who did whatever duty [was] imposed upon him.”²⁹⁷ Therefore, the postwar life of Rev. Odom reflected a wounded veteran who chose to overcome his injuries, chiefly through his strong faith in God and work in the ministry, but also through the ties of soldierly camaraderie as a Confederate veteran.

As a result of harrowing experiences during the siege of Petersburg, some Confederate veterans decided to enter the ministry, clearly convinced they were left on earth for a higher purpose. John Malachi Bowden, a veteran of Company B, 2nd Georgia Infantry, entered the ministry postwar and described some of his recollections in his memoirs. Bowden reflected on the intense nature of the Petersburg campaign with his postwar writing: “These shells were

²⁹⁴ “Rev. A.P. Odom,” *Confederate Veteran*, Volume 25, (Nashville: United Confederate Veterans, 1917), 421.

²⁹⁵ Ibid.

²⁹⁶ “Death of Rev. Alexander P. Odom,” *The Florence Herald* (Florence, AL), March 16, 1916.

²⁹⁷ Ibid.

loaded with grapeshot, canister . . . [and] would come with a rotary motion, and at a certain point burst, throwing death in all directions.”²⁹⁸ Consequently, in correspondence between Bowden and his mother, the reliance upon faith in facing the unpredictable nature of death was apparent. Bowden’s mother wrote “for ever since you have been in the army I have prayed the Lord to be your breast-works. His hand was in it, and that is the best protection you can get.”²⁹⁹ Bowden responded by writing, “I have always felt that this was a direct answer to prayer, and evidence that God at times intervenes as a special Providence.”³⁰⁰ God’s protection extended to Bowden during his capture by Union forces on September 28, 1864, and subsequent imprisonment at notorious Point Lookout.³⁰¹ It was at Point Lookout that the seeds for Bowden’s future career were sown. Bowden wrote, “here was an opportunity to be preparing for my life’s work, should I escape death, and not have to fight anymore. I therefore immediately took steps to enter a first class high school . . . At the head of this school was a learned Methodist minister by the name of Morgan.”³⁰² John Malachi Bowden would enter the ministry postwar, influenced strongly by his experiences at Petersburg and immediately after, which he carried to the grave. Inscribed proudly upon his tombstone is the inscription, “A Confederate Soldier for four years in the Army of Northern Virginia- A soldier of the Cross and a preacher of the Gospel for fifty-two years in the North Georgia Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church South.”³⁰³

Confederate veterans of the siege of Petersburg who entered the ministry postwar also hoped that their efforts would not only restore the South, but also move the region towards

²⁹⁸ John Malachi Bowden, n.d., 20, in John Malachi Bowden Civil War Memoirs, MSS 537f, James G. Kenan Research Center at the Atlanta History Center, accessed March 18, 2017, <http://ahc.galileo.usg.edu/ahc/view?docId=ead/ahc.MSS537f-ead.xml;query=mss537f;brand=default>.

²⁹⁹ Mary Anne Bowden to John Malachi Bowden, n.d., 17, in John Malachi Bowden Civil War Memoirs, MSS 537f, James G. Kenan Research Center at the Atlanta History Center, accessed March 18, 2017, <http://ahc.galileo.usg.edu/ahc/view?docId=ead/ahc.MSS537f-ead.xml;query=mss537f;brand=default>.

³⁰⁰ John Malachi Bowden, n.d., 17, in John Malachi Bowden Civil War Memoirs, MSS 537f, James G. Kenan Research Center at the Atlanta History Center, accessed March 18, 2017, <http://ahc.galileo.usg.edu/ahc/view?docId=ead/ahc.MSS537f-ead.xml;query=mss537f;brand=default>.

³⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 23-25.

³⁰² *Ibid.*, 25.

³⁰³ “Rev. John M. Bowden,” Find A Grave, September 7, 2012, accessed December 12, 2016, <https://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?page=pv&GRid=96687813&PIpi=81803115>.

feelings of reconciliation with the North, while maintaining pride in their sacrifices. James K. Galt, a veteran of Company H, 5th Virginia Infantry, became an itinerant Baptist minister after the war, before requiring the assistance of the Lee Camp Soldiers' Home in old age. Rev. Galt wrote his thoughts and hopes for the year 1890: "A new year. May God bless all of my loved ones and myself with a . . . newness of life and draw us all closer and more earnestly to our Blessed Saviour and may he bless me in my work for him."³⁰⁴ On February 2, 1890, Galt "[p]reached at New Prospect at 11 AM. Damp, raw and rainy day, but a very good turn out for the weather. Text 78 Psalm, last part 41st verse . . . It stirred up the church very much."³⁰⁵ Rev. Galt's writing revealed a minister who was hoping to make a significant effect on his listeners, even expressing thankfulness for their attendance during bad weather. On September 20, 1891, Rev. Galt recorded that he "[p]reached at Walnut Grove and administered the Lord's supper. had a full house and good attention."³⁰⁶ Rev. Galt was always apparently grateful for those who came out to listen to his messages, such as when he "[p]reached to the largest congregation at New Prospect I ever had there at 11 AM."³⁰⁷ What Rev. Galt's diaries reveal is that as the time passed, the reliance on Protestant Christianity remained important to many Southerners, both for their own individual benefit and that of reconciling the past defeat in the war.

Peter Nathaniel Stainback, a veteran of Company B, 59th Virginia Infantry, survived the siege and readjusted postwar in part due to entering the ministry and his camaraderie with fellow veterans. According to the *Southern Historical Society Papers*, "Rev. P.N. Stainback, of Weldon, is one of the survivors . . . Mr. Stainback entered the company a private, and for bravery was made a lieutenant. He was with his company in every engagement, and followed in the march to Appomattox, where he laid down his arms. He was in the trenches around

³⁰⁴ James K. Galt, January 1, 1890, "Diary of My Work & Movements Beginning on Nov. 1st, 1889," Volume 1, in James K. Galt Diary, 1889-1892, VHS.

³⁰⁵ Ibid., February 2, 1890.

³⁰⁶ James K. Galt, September 20, 1891, Volume 2, in James K. Galt Diary, 1889-1892, VHS.

³⁰⁷ Ibid., November 1, 1891.

Petersburg and at the Crater.”³⁰⁸ Postwar, Rev. Stainback was the treasurer for the Weldon, North Carolina, United Confederate Veterans chapter and gave a brief talk at the camp’s formation.³⁰⁹ Rev. Stainback is also listed as a lay delegate for the Warrenton District at the 1891 Methodist Episcopal Church South Conference, an elected deacon for the Weldon circuit, and as an ordained deacon.³¹⁰ Therefore, Rev. P.N. Stainback was representative of the Confederate veteran who had endured to the end of the war, exhibited traits of courage, Southern honor, and who had successfully readjusted to postwar life. His involvement with a United Confederate Veterans chapter and his ministry postwar are symbolic of the Christian veterans who chose both to remember their sacrifices and soldierly camaraderie, while also working to fulfill God’s calling for their lives.

Some Confederate veterans who entered the ministry postwar were particularly well remembered for both balancing their memory of Confederate service and working towards national reconciliation in areas outside the South. David Holt, whose wartime memoirs were full of details concerning his experiences during the siege of Petersburg, entered the Episcopal ministry postwar. According to the American National Biography Online, David Holt was originally a deacon at St. Paul’s Episcopal Church in Woodville, Mississippi, before becoming enthusiastic about pursuing full-time ministry work. The Episcopal Church ordained him in 1890, after which point he moved to California a few years later and became a rector at St. Luke’s Church in Woodland.³¹¹ In their church history, St. Luke’s Church viewed the ministry of Rev. Holt favorably because despite his Confederate past, he acted as a conciliator when local

³⁰⁸ “The Brunswick Blues,” Weldon, N.C., April 11, 1900, in *Southern Historical Society Papers*, Volume 28, (Richmond: Wm. Ellis Jones, Printer, 1900), 261.

³⁰⁹ “Confederate Veterans: A Camp Organized Here and Officers Elected,” *The Roanoke News*, June 25, 1896, 3, accessed March 18, 2017, <http://newspapers.digitalnc.org/lccn/sn84026524/1896-06-25/ed-1/seq-3/>.

³¹⁰ *Journal of the North Carolina Annual Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, Fifty-Fifth Session, Held at Greenville, N.C., Wednesday, November 25th, to Monday 30th, 1891* (Raleigh: Christian Advocate Print, 1891), 4, 9, 53, accessed March 18, 2017, <https://archive.org/stream/minutesofsession91meth#page/n1/mode/2up>.

³¹¹ Thomas D. Cockrell, “Holt, David Eldred,” American National Biography Online, October 2007, accessed December 12, 2016, <http://www.anb.org/articles/06/06-00886.html>.

tensions still remained strong over the Civil War. Furthermore, the church referred to him as “beloved”, which led to his promotion to Archdeacon of the Diocese of Northern California.³¹² Therefore, it can be inferred that David Holt was a practicing Christian early, going back to his upbringing in Mississippi and that as he grew older, a more definitive call to the ministry was impressed upon him. Rev. David Holt represented how many Confederate veterans used their literary endeavors and Christianity to not only ensure their sacrifices as Confederate soldiers were not forgotten, but also to heal both individually and communally postwar.

Perhaps the most important aspect of one’s existence are the fundamental beliefs and convictions that person holds. In the case of religion, many Confederate veterans returned home with a deeply instilled Christian faith, even if it had to be reassessed in the aftermath of defeat. Just as Christianity served as a spiritual anchor for these men during the siege of Petersburg, it also enabled them to endure the challenges and uncertainties faced while readjusting postwar. While a portion of returning veterans chose to enter the ministry, Protestant Christianity in the postwar South had a wide ranging moral effect on many, uplifting them both individually and collectively. Other wartime coping mechanisms found their application postwar, such as notions of unit camaraderie and Southern honor in the emerging veterans’ organizations. While these weary and needy veterans waited for institutional assistance, they had each other to rely on, which both assisted their readjustment and helped eventually propagate their legacy.

Southern Honor Exemplified: Soldierly Camaraderie in Veterans’ Organizations

Upon returning to their various communities, Confederate veterans maintained their camaraderie and reshaped their perceptions of Southern honor through the creation of various veterans’ organizations. As members of a defeated cause and viewed by the reunited government of the United States as traitors, returning Confederate veterans needed immediate reassurance that their sacrifices were not in vain. The emotional and psychological support desired was

³¹² “History,” St. Luke’s Episcopal Church, Woodland, California, accessed December 12, 2016, <http://www.stlukewoodland.org/history>.

brought to fruition with the creation of smaller veterans' organizations, sometimes a particular unit, and later with a larger and more encompassing organization, the United Confederate Veterans. Institutional support through disability, pension, and soldiers' home benefits was often decades in the making, requiring Confederate veterans to repurpose notions of camaraderie and Southern honor used during the war to the postwar period. Essentially, these organizations offered Confederate veterans a support network, composed of other similar veterans that helped to sustain them during the difficulties of postwar readjustment. While the later financial support, housing, and other institutional based support was significant, as this thesis analyzes, the creation of Confederate veterans' organizations and their functions should not be underestimated as they uplifted the men and served as a pillar for their postwar communities.

One of the earliest movements involving veterans of the siege of Petersburg was the reorganization of General Mahone's Brigade in 1875. The *Petersburg Daily Index Appeal* ran an interesting article exactly ten years to the day of General Lee's surrender. According to the article, "[t]he movement sometime ago started, looking to a reorganization of Weisiger's Brigade, Mahone's Division, C.S.A., for social and benevolent purposes, has taken a definite form. It is said that a call will soon be issued for a convention of the brigade to be held in Petersburg."³¹³ The following month a larger article ran that announced the official formation of a veterans association for General Mahone's men. According to the article, "[t]he trains from the North, the East and the South yesterday morning brought in large delegations to the Re-union Convention of Mahone's Old Brigade . . . [t]he members of the several delegations wore badges of different colors- some of them very neat in design and handsomely gotten up."³¹⁴ The article continued on to say that some of the badges read "Mahone's Old Brigade, in Good Standing."³¹⁵ Clearly, Southern honor and warm feelings of unit camaraderie carried over into the design ideas

³¹³ "Weisiger's Brigade," *Petersburg Daily Index Appeal*, April 9, 1875.

³¹⁴ "The Brigade Re-Union, Large Assemblage of 'Mahone's Men,'" *Petersburg Daily Index Appeal*, May 11, 1875.

³¹⁵ Ibid.

for various badges. (See Figures 8.1, 8.2.) The badges also symbolized something real, a bolster of self-esteem through feeling that despite defeat, your service was both dignified and honorable. Wearing these badges must have been liberating and psychologically rewarding to these veterans, temporarily masking the injuries of war or inward doubts of one's service. It was a symbol that they mattered individually, and also collectively, in a sense ensuring Mahone's Brigade would not be forgotten in the eyes of the community. Additionally, the crowd of veterans assembled in Petersburg was "one of the most respectable ever gathered . . . It spoke more forcibly than words the deep interest felt in the reorganization of that famous brigade, and in the perpetuation of its brilliant history."³¹⁶

Clearly, within a decade of the Civil War's conclusion, the veterans of Mahone's Brigade and other units throughout the South, were ready to solidify their soldierly camaraderie and define what their sacrifices meant. Keith S. Bohannon, author of the article, "'These Few Gray-Haired, Battle-Scarred Veterans': Confederate Army Reunions in Georgia, 1885-95," evaluated the early importance of localities in forming organizations. Despite focusing on Georgia, Bohannon's point is applicable to Petersburg as "[r]eunions also helped communities preserve a collective memory of the past, [and] honor local veterans . . . Some Confederate survivors' associations enrolled veterans living in a specific locale . . . but most included only members of a specific army unit."³¹⁷ The pivotal aspect about Mahone's Brigade forming in Petersburg is that it represented the interconnectedness of these factors. According to the article in the local paper, "[a]bove all, here are the men who hurled back the foe from within a few hundred yards of where we now sit . . . In view of this fact, and of many other incidents in the history of the brigade . . . it was very proper that we should meet here."³¹⁸ For many of these veterans, the reunion

³¹⁶ Ibid.

³¹⁷ Keith S. Bohannon, "'These Few Gray-Haired, Battle-Scarred Veterans': Confederate Army Reunions in Georgia, 1885-95," 89-90, in *The Myth of the Lost Cause and Civil War History*, edited by Gary W. Gallagher and Alan T. Nolan (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000).

³¹⁸ Capt. Thomas F. Owens, "Gentlemen of Mahone's Brigade," *Petersburg Daily Index Appeal*, May 11, 1875.

represented the assemblage of honorable men who should shape the area's collective memory, establish honoring mutual sacrifices, as well as reestablish unit camaraderie of a specific unit, who happened to gain fame defending their community.

In order to understand their overall purpose for the reunion, it becomes necessary to analyze some of their mission statements. The local newspaper went to great length to report on their goals and decisions made at the reunion. Lt. Laughton, who years later wrote a recommendation letter for a fellow veteran to enter the Lee Camp Soldiers' Home, acted as the new temporary secretary.³¹⁹ A committee was to be formed consisting of three veterans of each unit that was originally in Mahone's Brigade, thereby forming a fifteen person committee.³²⁰ Sergeant B.F. Whitehorn, who in later years would need the institutional support of a soldiers' home, was one of three chosen to represent the 41st Virginia Regiment.³²¹ A mission statement was released to describe the purpose of the organization: "We, the survivors of Mahone's Old Brigade, Army of Northern Virginia . . . [on] this 10th day of May, 1875, in the city of Petersburg, have met together for the purpose of perpetuating its history. We are actuated in this by a manly pride, in its record, and are specially stimulated by the conviction that we are performing a pious duty to the noble dead."³²² Therefore, the shaping and perpetuation of their legacy was important, as well as expressing concepts of Southern manhood, honor, and memory. Reflective of their commitment to creating a coherent structure, Mahone's veterans made provisions for members being of an honorable record, membership dues of fifty cents, the creation of a seal, and the appointment of a President and several vice-Presidents.³²³ The memorial association also settled on annual meetings that fell on July 30th, the anniversary of the Battle of the Crater which immortalized their legacy.³²⁴ Unsurprisingly, General William

³¹⁹ "The Brigade Re-Union, Large Assemblage of 'Mahone's Men,'" *Petersburg Daily Index Appeal*, May 11, 1875.

³²⁰ *Ibid.*

³²¹ *Ibid.*

³²² *Ibid.*

³²³ *Ibid.*

Mahone was elected as President of the memorial association, reflecting the admiration of his men for his wartime leadership and gratitude for his enthusiasm in organizing the veterans.³²⁵

The formation of the Memorial Association of Mahone's Old Brigade of the Army of Northern Virginia in 1875 was reflective of the changing ways of viewing the war's significance, especially among veterans. In his article, "'On That Day You Consummated the Full Measure of Your Fame': Remembering the Battle of the Crater, 1864-1903," historian Kevin M. Levin described the attributes of the formation of this organization, as well as explaining why the Crater continued to mean so much to their purpose. Levin wrote that the formation of the memorial association in Petersburg was part of a broader movement that began with Confederate veterans taking an active role in shaping public memory, while honoring those lost, all while maintaining that they were principled with their war objectives.³²⁶ Confederate veterans realized that if they wanted to define themselves on their terms, they would need to become proactive in that effort and bolster the spirit of unit camaraderie that got them through another difficult and earlier phase, the siege of Petersburg. Levin also stated why the Crater was more than just the site of a famous battle: "Focusing on the battle of the Crater sought to help veterans deal with the psychological scars of defeat and remind them of the common soldiers' achievements despite overwhelming numbers and resources."³²⁷ In other words, it accomplished the stated purposes of the organization while also reminding the veterans of their admirable tenacity in the face of difficult, and ultimately insurmountable odds.

The second reunion of Mahone's Brigade is worthy of analysis in order to assess the application of the themes stated by the association at its formation the previous year. The second reunion was held at the Opera House in Norfolk, Virginia, on July 31st, 1876. A regimental

³²⁴ Ibid.

³²⁵ Ibid.

³²⁶ Kevin M. Levin, "'On That Day You Consummated the Full Measure of Your Fame': Confederates Remember the Battle of the Crater, 1864-1903," *The Southern Historian* 25 (2004): 25.

³²⁷ Ibid., 26.

history described the imagery associated with the second reunion: “[B]anners and bunting echoed the past deeds of the regiments along with an array of flags of the brigade’s members . . . About 400 survivors attended the emotional reunion. No detail was overlooked.”³²⁸ The publication of *Second Re-Union of Mahone’s Brigade, Held on the Anniversary of the Battle of the Crater, in the Opera House, Norfolk, July 31, 1876*, went to great lengths to convey the atmosphere and speeches of the event. According to the publication, “[f]rom the front of the gallery were suspended shields bearing the numbers of the regiments . . . Around the walls and over the stage appeared miniature flags of all nations and suspended midway the stage was a Confederate flag which was presented to Company F. Sixth Regiment, during the war.”³²⁹ The famous Rebel Yell also illustrated how camaraderie was enthusiastically revived at the reunion: “The veterans had not forgotten the yell with which they made their matchless onsets during the years of the war, and it sounded again and again through the lofty building.”³³⁰ General Mahone’s brief remarks that followed consisted largely of the themes of Southern honor and reflection upon the lost: “[I]t is for the sacrifice to duty made, the valor and patriotism illustrated, that we owe these attestations of proud and grateful remembrance . . . This occasion, full as it is of proud joys and happy reflections, yet sadly freshens the memory of that hour . . . [when] friendships [were] silenced by the grave.”³³¹

Additional speakers focused on themes of the Confederate soldiers as heroes, while not known in the annals of history to the extent of more famous individuals. Col. William Cameron, Mayor of Petersburg, gave an address in which he articulated his desire to have the memorial association celebrate the unsung hero: “To us belongs an humble task, but one as sacred and as useful . . . we shall refute the charge that treats these illustrious names as rare exceptions, and we

³²⁸ Trask, *61st Virginia Infantry*, Epilogue, 35.

³²⁹ *Second Re-Union of Mahone’s Brigade, Held on the Anniversary of the Battle of the Crater, in the Opera House, Norfolk, July 31, 1876* (Norfolk: The Landmark Book and Job Office, 1876), 4, VHS.

³³⁰ *Ibid.*

³³¹ “General Mahone’s Speech,” *Second Re-Union of Mahone’s Brigade*, 5.

shall prove to all who care to know the truth, that every hamlet had its hero, each household its willing martyr . . . worthy of remembrance.”³³² Col. Cameron’s message was that the true heroes of the South were the common soldiers who left home and fought for a cause deemed greater than their own self-interest. Col. Cameron stressed the importance of fostering a legacy out of defeat, because “[h]istory must deal with facts in mass, and dwell upon the shining and the prominent features of each picture.”³³³ Therefore, the memorial association must find a way to foster the noteworthy legacy of Mahone’s Brigade, or they would risk becoming overlooked in history. Even the Battle of the Crater, the paramount engagement, did not seem to be their legacy, according to Col. Cameron. Their legacy seemingly was their ability to endure and overcome the odds, “as our volunteers donned the soberness and quietness of veterans . . . They had grown accustomed to meet the enemy with success, and each new trail seemed to them only the repetition of an invariable experiment.”³³⁴ Initially formed out of the desire to remember and perpetuate the legacy of Mahone’s Brigade, the association acted as a coping mechanism for both the veterans and their communities. For the veterans and the citizens who witnessed these events, their legacy became meeting trials with a strong resolve, which meant they could continue to face the immense difficulties of the postwar South with the same spirit that carried them through the siege as soldiers.

Literary Endeavors and Confederate Veterans’ Organizations

Veterans of the siege of Petersburg eventually became engaged with a newer and more encompassing organization, the United Confederate Veterans. According to historian Henderson, the later part of the 1880s witnessed the veterans of Confederate armies unite together in a large organization to compete with the Union veterans’ Grand Army of the Republic.³³⁵ The United Confederate Veterans was instrumental not only for serving as an outlet for soldierly

³³² “Col. Cameron’s Address,” *Second Re-Union of Mahone’s Brigade*, 9.

³³³ Ibid.

³³⁴ Ibid.

³³⁵ Henderson, *Gilded Age City*, 263.

camaraderie and propagating a legacy, but also for encouraging literary activities and influencing Confederate veterans' legislation, which this thesis addresses later. Therefore, the United Confederate Veterans served as both an extension of the learned wartime coping mechanisms and as a bridge to the institutional coping mechanisms, which they also influenced.

In order to assess the literary endeavors by veterans of the siege of Petersburg, it is first imperative to look at the goals established by the United Confederate Veterans. General John B. Gordon, Commander of the UCV, restated some of the organization's constitution in an address from Atlanta, the purposes "of this organization will be strictly social, literary, historical, and benevolent. It will endeavor to unite in a general federation all associations of the Confederate veterans . . . to gather authentic data for an impartial history of the war between the states . . ." ³³⁶ General Gordon's address, which followed the first convention held in New Orleans on June 10th, 1889, was reprinted in 1891 for the explicit purpose "of calling the attention of Veterans in every Southern State, to the importance of forming without delay."³³⁷ The crafting of a worthy legacy to posterity was fundamentally important as "to cherish such memories and recall such a past, whether crowned with success or consecrated in defeat, is to idealize principle and strengthen character, intensify love of country and convert defeat and disaster into pillars of support for future manhood and noble womanhood."³³⁸ Essentially, the United Confederate Veterans was to be the voice of the wartime generation, by uplifting veterans, molding a legacy, and inspiring the next generation. Crafting a legacy meant recording it for posterity, and the use of writing that sustained these men as soldiers now reemerged with a distinct focus and mission.

Virginian George S. Bernard took note of General Gordon's call to action, publishing his compilation, *War Talks of Confederate Veterans: Addresses delivered before A.P. Hill*

³³⁶ General John B. Gordon, "Address of the General Commanding," Atlanta, Ga., Sept. 3, 1889, in Reports and resolutions, Annual Meeting, 1891, Box 6, Folder 5. United Confederate Veterans, Virginia Division Records, 1890-1903, LVA.

³³⁷ Ibid.

³³⁸ Ibid.

Camp of Confederate Veterans, of Petersburg, Va., with Addenda giving Statements of Participants, Eye-Witnesses and others, in respect to Campaigns, Battles, Prison Life and other War Experiences, only three years after his statement.³³⁹ *War Talks* provided another angle in which to view the veterans of the siege of Petersburg. It captured their innermost thoughts towards each other, while actively shaping the story of their service as they wanted it to be recorded. The emergence of the United Confederate Veterans camps throughout the South and literary endeavors, such as Bernard's, meant that Confederate veterans could cope collectively while also actively shaping Southern public memory on the war.

Since the Battle of the Crater secured the legacy of Mahone's Brigade, it is imperative to analyze how their members' experiences of that fight were transmitted to the public. Bernard presented his version of the Battle of the Crater in an address which he delivered to the A.P. Hill Camp of United Confederate Veterans in 1890. Bernard recalled with great clarity the address he received that July day by Captain Richard Jones, he "stepped out in front of us, as we lay on the ground, and, with great coolness of manner, said: 'Men, you are called upon to charge and recapture our works, now in the hands of the enemy . . . every man is expected to rise and move forward at a double-quick and with a yell.'"³⁴⁰ Bernard reflected on how Captain Jones's "words and manner of the speaker sank deep in my memory."³⁴¹ Bernard, ever aware of conveying this to future generations, made sure to capture the gallantry of his unit. Bernard continued, "[t]he charge was probably as splendid as any of which history has made record . . . I will ever carry a vivid impression of the rapid, but steady and beautiful, movement of the advancing line of some 800 men . . . [with] their five battle-flags, borne by as many gallant color-bearers, floating in the bright sun-light of that July morning."³⁴² With a view of posterity in mind, Bernard also

³³⁹ Bernard, *War Talks of Confederate Veterans* (Petersburg: Fenn & Owen, Publishers, 1892).

³⁴⁰ George S. Bernard, "The Battle of the Crater, July 30, 1864: An Address delivered before A.P. Hill Camp of Confederate Veterans, of Petersburg, Va., on the 24th of June, 1890, by Mr. George S. Bernard," in *War Talks*, (Petersburg: Fenn & Owen, Publishers, 1892), 154.

³⁴¹ *Ibid.*

mentioned the infamous racial component: “I discovered near me, at my feet, a negro soldier, who immediately began to most earnestly beg me not to kill him. ‘Master, don’t kill me! Master, don’t kill me! I’ll be your slave as long as I live. Don’t kill me!’ . . . ‘Old man, I do not intend to kill you, but you deserve to be killed.’”³⁴³ Bernard’s narrative also went to great lengths to denounce the acts of murder that took place after African American soldiers attempted to surrender, perhaps in the hopes of easing tensions in a time of growing national reconciliation, at least between white Americans.³⁴⁴

War Talks was not just successful because of Bernard’s recollections, but also for the outpouring of correspondence from other veterans of the siege. John E. Laughton, Jr., a veteran of Company D, 12th Virginia Infantry, reflected about the Crater in September of 1890: “I was desperately wounded in three places when within thirty feet of the breast-works . . . [t]he fire was not only from the direct front, but was also an enfilading fire, which came from those of the enemy in the Crater.”³⁴⁵ Richard Davis, a veteran of Company E, 12th Virginia Infantry, wrote a statement in January 1891: “I shall never forget the magnificent appearance of that long line of tattered uniforms as it swept in splendid form across the field in the face of a tremendous fire that with every step was thinning our ranks. Among the first, Lieut. John E. Laughton fell, shot through the breast. The next man struck, as well as I now remember, was B.F. Eckles.”³⁴⁶ Davis’s account illustrated how despite the passage of time, veterans often still had rather sharp recollections of those comrades close to them who fell, either killed or wounded. By reflecting on these past experiences and publishing them, it reinforced their deeds as heroic and deepened a sense of soldierly camaraderie initiated years earlier during the conflict.

³⁴² Ibid., 155. While Bernard clearly recalled the charge in terms that can be viewed as sensational or self-glorifying, it nevertheless illustrated the important role that writing had in the lives of veterans making sense of their war experiences and also actively attempting to shape public memory on their terms.

³⁴³ Ibid., 157.

³⁴⁴ Ibid., 159.

³⁴⁵ John E. Laughton, Jr., Statement from September, 1890, in *War Talks*, 185-186.

³⁴⁶ Richard B. Davis, Statement from January, 1891, in *War Talks*, 187.

Confederate veterans also wrote to each other in a transparent manner about psychological strains postwar, such as reoccurring images or visions. Putnam Stith, a veteran of Company E, 12th Virginia Infantry, wrote how the traumatic images of war had the potential to remain decades later. According to Stith, “I remember seeing a negro who had the most fiendish countenance that I have ever seen . . . There was a malicious grin on his face. I expected him to fire before I could strike him, but I struck him over the head with the butt of my gun and knocked him down before he could accomplish his manifest purpose.”³⁴⁷ Despite this incident occurring in the heat of battle, it brought to fruition the long-held fears that many Southerners held about vengeful blacks murdering their white masters. Stith also described the immense, lingering psychological toll: “I will state here that several times in my dreams in the twenty odd years that have elapsed since the battle of the Crater I have seen this same negro with the same horrible countenance.”³⁴⁸ For veterans such as Stith who survived close calls during the siege, haunting memories could linger for years, or for the rest of their lives. Publications such as *War Talks* and other literature written by veterans allowed for a forum of sorts where veterans could be open and transparent with each other about the struggles they still faced, while also showing that they bore it in a manly way on the altar of their country’s defense.³⁴⁹

The literary endeavors of veterans of the siege of Petersburg were reflective of broader trends among veterans North and South during the late 1880s and 1890s. Organizations such as the United Confederate Veterans inspired them to put pen to paper in order to shape their legacies. Whether writing to newspapers, each other, or for publications such as *War Talks*, it allowed Confederate veterans an outlet to help mold a particular historical interpretation, reinforce unit camaraderie and Southern honor, as well as cope with unforgettable events. Just

³⁴⁷ Putnam Stith, Statement from November, 1891, in *War Talks*, 188.

³⁴⁸ Ibid.

³⁴⁹ For scholarship on Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), see Eric T. Dean, *Shook over Hell: Post-Traumatic Stress, Vietnam, and the Civil War* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997). However, I caution against the trend of applying modern terminology or medical conditions to 19th century Americans who would not have comprehended it as a diagnosis.

as the proliferation of letter writing and diary entries from the siege of Petersburg helped them cope, writing as aging veterans helped them cope with newfound challenges, such as finding ways to promulgate their legacies to a new generation and deal with lingering disabilities. By fulfilling some of the goals of the United Confederate Veterans, they transmitted their accounts to a new generation, ensured the stories of honor, manhood, and sacrifice were not forgotten, as well as secured their reputations despite Confederate defeat.

Veterans' Organizations and the Shift towards Institutional Support

Finally, the United Confederate Veterans represented an evolution from earlier organizations like Mahone's Brigade, which focused primarily on reigniting veteran camaraderie and friendship, as well as shaping the public memory of their sacrifices. While a fundamental mission of the United Confederate Veterans was in shaping the memory of Confederate veterans, the group also became intimately concerned with acting as an advocate for disabled and suffering veterans as institutional assistance became readily available, in effect serving as a lobbying force in the postwar South. By using their influence as honorable veterans of the noble, yet defeated Confederacy, they placed pressure upon their communities and state governments for various forms of assistance to remedy the effects of lingering disabilities, poverty, and advancing age.

In General John B. Gordon's address, he called attention to their role in acting on behalf of struggling veterans. One of the tenets of their organization was "to cherish the ties of friendship that should exist among the men who shared common dangers, common suffering and privations . . . [and] to care for the disabled and extend a helping hand to the needy."³⁵⁰ According to General Gordon, the United Confederate Veterans were "a brotherhood over which the genius of philanthropy and patriotism, of truth and of justice will preside; of philanthropy, because it will succor the disabled, help the needy, strengthen the weak and cheer the

³⁵⁰ General John B. Gordon, "Address of the General Commanding," Atlanta, Ga., Sept. 3, 1889, in Reports and resolutions, Annual Meeting, 1891, Box 6, Folder 5. United Confederate Veterans, Virginia Division Records, 1890-1903, LVA.

disconsolate.”³⁵¹ Therefore, it became apparent that the United Confederate Veterans chapters were to take a proactive stance in alerting the general public and legislative bodies to the continued suffering of the veterans. Soldierly bonds and camaraderie, important coping mechanisms during the siege, also prevailed within the veterans’ organizations, assisting the veterans with complex challenges postwar. This postwar brotherhood was not for all, but only “all honorable men must approve and which heaven itself will bless.”³⁵² Lastly, General Gordon hoped to advance the goals of the United Confederate Veterans while working on other endeavors, such as fostering a spirit of national reconciliation through his speeches. John W. Primomo, author of *The Appomattox Generals: The Parallel Lives of Joshua L. Chamberlain, USA, and John B. Gordon, CSA, Commanders at the Surrender Ceremony of April 12, 1865*, wrote “[b]y 1893, Gordon developed a public lecture about the Civil War . . . He talked of the Petersburg retreat and the surrender, the courage and bravery of soldiers on both sides . . . [and] He used the speech to further his efforts at national reconciliation, and he did it masterfully.”³⁵³ For General Gordon, the ideals of the United Confederate Veterans were best publicized while also viewed as working in the interests of fostering national unity.

In order to ascertain the ways in which the organization assisted fellow veterans in the age of growing institutional support, more detailed information was needed by the various former Confederates states on their suffering Confederate veterans. In Virginia, the United Confederate Veterans chapters followed the heed of Surgeon-General Joseph Jones, who had called for Southern governors to supply him with information pertaining to veterans.³⁵⁴ Some of the requested information included: how many wounded Confederates were living in that

³⁵¹ Ibid.

³⁵² Ibid.

³⁵³ John W. Primomo, *The Appomattox Generals: The Parallel Lives of Joshua L. Chamberlain, USA, and John B. Gordon, CSA, Commanders at the Surrender Ceremony of April 12, 1865* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers, 2013), 188-90.

³⁵⁴ Dr. Joseph Jones, “Circular No. 2 Office of the Surgeon-General, United Confederate Veterans, 156 Washington Avenue, 4th District. New Orleans, La., April 9, 1890,” in United Confederate Veterans Virginia Division, By Laws, 1890, Box 1, Folder 10, LVA.

particular state, how many surviving veterans were alive in that particular state, how much money was paid out for supporting survivors, how many facilities were devoted to the care of the maimed or indigent veterans, as well as detailed figures on how much money went “for the support of the maimed, disabled and indigent survivors of the Confederate Army.”³⁵⁵ However, by the following year, progress was slow in the making. In his following “Report of the Surgeon-General,” Dr. Jones explained the urgency and obligations of the various states: “The Southern States are morally bound to succor and support the men who were disabled by the wounds and diseases received in their service . . . The survivors have no government . . . [and] in the loneliness and suffering of advancing years and increasing infirmities, they can look alone to the States.”³⁵⁶ Following this heed, many of Virginia’s camps focused on assisting the R.E. Lee Camp No. 1 Confederate Soldiers’ Home in Richmond.

The headquarters for the Grand Camp of Confederate Veterans in Virginia sent out post cards informing members who were appointed to a committee for the explicit purpose of petitioning “the Virginia Legislature for an additional annual appropriation for the maintenance of our Soldiers’ Home.”³⁵⁷ General William B. Shands, a veteran of Company B, 4th Virginia Reserves and commander of the Gillette Camp in Courtland, wrote a letter regarding his appointment to the committee. According to Shands, “I write to say that I am cordially with you in asking for a larger appropriation and you may sign my name to any petition for that purpose. Ask for fifty thousand dollars a year at least my camp is one hundred and sixty strong, and I speak for them.”³⁵⁸ Shands also provided an insightful portrayal of the financial state of his camp’s members as “it has many worthy and honorable men who are not blessed with many of this world’s goods.”³⁵⁹ Despite many of the members having limited financial means, Shands

³⁵⁵ Ibid.

³⁵⁶ Dr. Joseph Jones, “Report of Surgeon-General,” 1891, in Reports and resolutions, Annual Meeting, 1891, Box 6, Folder 5. United Confederate Veterans, Virginia Divisions Records, 1890-1903, LVA.

³⁵⁷ “Headquarters Grand Camp, C.V., Department of Virginia,” November 17, 1891, postcards petitioning the General Assembly for Soldiers’ Home, in Ibid.

³⁵⁸ General William B. Shands to Thomas Ellett, December 7, 1891, in Ibid.

compared their predicament to the North: “Thank God that while the North swarms with veteran beggars on the other side I have not seen as yet one Confederate veteran begging his bread in this county.”³⁶⁰ Therefore, it can be assumed that Shands viewed it imperative to increase appropriations to keep worthy Confederates from having to take up begging.³⁶¹ As commander of a United Confederate Veterans camp in Courtland, Virginia, Shands’ letter revealed not just the financial necessity of increasing aid to aging and disabled Confederate veterans, but also the Southern psychological outlook towards honor in the midst of decades of postwar suffering.

Petersburg veterans abounded in a meeting designed to secure greater financial assistance for Virginia’s soldiers’ home. In attendance on December 11, 1891, was Col. H.R. Smith and J.R. Turner, representing the A.P. Hill Camp in Petersburg. Smith was a veteran of Company C, 12th Virginia Infantry, survived the siege and returned home to Petersburg to establish himself as a respected citizen in business, civics, and politics.³⁶² Turner was a veteran of Company C and later Company E, 12th Virginia Infantry and was wounded in the Battle of Burgess Mill on October 27, 1864.³⁶³ Turner would also be chosen to serve as the secretary for the occasion and write the report for posterity. According to the proceedings, “a committee of four [is to] be appointed by the Chairman, to memorialize [petition] the Legislature for an appropriation of \$30,000 to the Soldiers’ Home, which notion was unanimously adopted.”³⁶⁴ H.R. Smith was one of the four men then chosen to petition the Virginia General Assembly.³⁶⁵

³⁵⁹ Ibid.

³⁶⁰ Ibid.

³⁶¹ While perhaps written in a way to express the common belief Southerners had of their moral superiority, some Confederate veterans did have to resort to begging. See for example, James Marten, *Sing Not War: The Lives of Union and Confederate Veterans in Gilded Age America* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2011), 5-6. Historian Marten stated that while few Civil War veterans had to resort to this practice, it nevertheless existed in some circumstances and many veterans remained on the brink of financial ruin.

³⁶² Hampton Newsome, John Horn, and John G. Selby, eds., *Civil War Talks: Further Reminiscences of George S. Bernard and His Fellow Veterans* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2012), 275. (See footnote 30)

³⁶³ Ibid., 142, 303. (See footnote 30 on p. 142)

³⁶⁴ “Proceedings of a Meeting of the Delegates Appointed by the Grand Camp, C.V., Department of Va. from each camp to secure Legislative action for a larger appropriation to the Soldiers’ Home, held Friday- December 11th, 1891,” in Reports, 1891. Box 6, Folder 4, LVA.

³⁶⁵ Ibid.

The following year both H.R. Smith and J.R. Turner were chosen for the Committee on Soldiers' Home, in addition to siege veteran Edgar Warfield, one of two chosen to represent the R.E. Lee Camp No. 2.³⁶⁶ These veterans of the siege of Petersburg, among many others, chose to become involved with petitioning for greater assistance to the soldiers' home. For them, they had all borne the cost of battle, hunger, and other deprivations during the siege. Now, again as veterans, they chose to make a difference in the lives of other comrades of honorable record who went through similar hardships and were in need of increasing institutional assistance.

Confederate veterans' groups fostered a sense of soldierly camaraderie, celebrated Southern honor, and worked to instill their stories to future generations. They offered support to each other and reflected the continuation of a coping mechanism that had sustained them while soldiers at Petersburg. In addition, they also worked to motivate veterans to pursue literary endeavors, cementing their legacy and also cherishing the ties between them. As Confederate veterans' organizations unified around the United Confederate Veterans, these pursuits continued. However, the United Confederate Veterans was adaptable to changing times and recognized their value in advocating on behalf of veterans assistance as the age of increasing institutional support dawned. The lobbying efforts, particularly for the soldiers' home, are an example of how they served as a figurative bridge to the burgeoning institutional support offered to veterans. Nevertheless, soldierly camaraderie as refined and applied to remedy the intensity of the siege, inspired the formation of organizations such as this, which allowed the flexibility to later utilize coping mechanisms in the best interests of veterans in their postwar lives.

The Emergence of Institutional Support: Confederate Disability and Pension Assistance for Veterans of the siege

The widespread reliance on Christianity, reapplication of wartime coping mechanisms such as relying upon Southern honor and unit camaraderie, assisted these men with the arduous

³⁶⁶ "Committee on Soldiers' Home," Reports and resolutions, 1892. Box 6, Folder 6, LVA.

tasks of remaking one's existence and renewing a sense of purpose in the postwar South. However, the carnage of the war, psychological toll, and natural progression of age meant that these veterans needed another form of assistance to rely on. As time passed, it became clear that institutional support at the state level was needed for many Confederate veterans. As defeated members of a vanquished cause, they had no central government to rely on for this assistance. Instead, it would be up to their individual states to pick up the burden of providing these men with disability and pension benefits. This represented a reversal of antebellum thinking, effectively joining these men to the state in a form of public welfare. However, disability and pension benefits ensured these men maintained their dignity and honor as worthy sufferers, while improving their lives through forms of a financial and psychological stimulus.

This movement towards institutional support for wounded and needy Confederate veterans began during the war itself. According to Rodgers, the Virginia General Assembly “on October 31, 1863, passed Chapter 31, which was ‘An Act for Relief of Indigent Soldiers and Sailors.’ The act offered benefits to Virginia servicemen who had been disabled in the military or who had died in military service . . . [and was] the act that anticipated all future Confederate Veteran Pension Acts.”³⁶⁷ Rodgers also stressed the societal viewpoint of Confederate veterans: “The Confederate veteran was considered by his government [state] and his neighbors to be worthy of assistance, but resources were very limited.”³⁶⁸ Additionally, the number of applicants for assistance was unlike anything the South had experienced before. Rodgers wrote, “social welfare benefits that accrued to Confederate veterans were provided on a local and state level. Aid to Southern servicemen and their families was beyond the scope of poor relief laws.”³⁶⁹ Essentially, returning Confederate veterans with wartime injuries overwhelmed the existing arrangements for poor relief, rooted in the antebellum past, and created a special

³⁶⁷ Rodgers, *Tracing the Civil War Veteran Pension System in the State of Virginia: Entitlement or Privilege*, 2.

³⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 4.

³⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

category of worthy veterans that required the financial assistance of various state governments in the place of a national one that had deemed them as traitors.

One of the most visible types of injured veterans were those who had lost a limb in the Civil War. Perhaps nothing served as a better reminder of the human cost of war than a veteran missing an arm or a leg. On January 29, 1867, the General Assembly of Virginia passed “An Act to provide Artificial Limbs for citizens of the Commonwealth who lost their Limbs in the Late War.” According to the act, a board was established “to contract for and furnish to every citizen of this commonwealth who has lost a limb in the late war, an artificial limb, to supply the place of the one so lost, provided that the applicant furnish a certificate from the court of his county, showing that he is a citizen of this state, and that he lost his limb. . .”.³⁷⁰ Furthermore, the act provided for “[t]he sum of twenty thousand dollars [if so much is required for the purpose] . . . to defray the charges and expenses attending the execution of the provisions of the foregoing section, to be paid by the treasurer.”³⁷¹ The fact that Virginia would appropriate twenty thousand dollars barely less than two years after the war ended attested to the fact that finding solutions to caring for disabled Confederate veterans was a considerable social priority.

As time progressed, states shifted away from artificial limb provisions and went towards commutation and pension payments. On February 23, 1875, the General Assembly of Virginia passed “An Act to provide Artificial Limbs for Soldiers Maimed in War or to allow Commutation therefor.” The key passage is from the preamble, for “[w]hereas the sum of money heretofore appropriated for artificial limbs, and commutation therefor, has been exhausted, and several soldiers entitled to limbs or commutation have not received either.”³⁷² This act admitted that the Commonwealth of Virginia had already exhausted its funds providing for injured

³⁷⁰ *Acts of Assembly- Acts of the General Assembly of the State of Virginia, Passed in 1866-67, in the Ninety-First Year of the Commonwealth* (Richmond: James E. Goode, 1867), Chap. 126.

³⁷¹ *Ibid.*

³⁷² *Acts of Assembly- Acts and Joint Resolutions Passed by the General Assembly of the State of Virginia, at the Session of 1874-5.* (Richmond: R.F. Walker, supt. of Public Printing, 1875), Chap. 120.

Confederate veterans. In addition to providing an additional three thousand dollars, it stipulated that the act applied to “[a]ny soldier permanently disabled, either in arm or leg by amputation, by paralysis of either, induced by wounds or by surgical operation rendered necessary thereby . . . shall be entitled to be furnished an artificial limb, or the commutation therefor, in the manner provided for other cases.”³⁷³ Essentially, additional funding was provided and veterans could decide between a furnished artificial limb or taking a commutation payment.

As time continued to progress, more funds were allocated towards taking care of disabled Confederate veterans. In Virginia on February 14, 1882, the General Assembly passed “An Act to provide commutation to such maimed soldiers, sailors, and marines, in lieu of artificial limbs or eyes, or otherwise disabled, as may not heretofore have received the same under the provisions of former acts.” Again, the preamble specified that existing funds have been depleted and that a larger amount is to be appropriated.³⁷⁴ Thirty thousand dollars was now allocated for “[a]ny such soldier, sailor, or marine, disabled in such manner as to prevent the use of his limbs or eyes in manual labor, or otherwise disabled from performance of manual labor, induced by wounds or surgical operations rendered necessary thereby.”³⁷⁵ This act allowed individual payments “at the rate of sixty dollars each, in lieu of the limb or eye provided by law; and upon satisfactory proof that an artificial limb has been worn out, or destroyed by accident, such soldier, sailor, or marine shall be entitled to the same commutation.”³⁷⁶ This act exemplified Virginia’s willingness to continue to provide more financial resources for disabled Confederates, as well as stressed how the inability to perform manual labor distinguished them from traditional poor aid recipients. The language also spoke to how commutation payments provided much needed assistance for disabled Confederate veterans in a region where manual labor still

³⁷³ Ibid.

³⁷⁴ *Acts of Assembly- Acts and Joint Resolutions Passed by the General Assembly of the State of Virginia during the Session of 1881-82.* (Richmond: R.F. Walker, supt. of Public Printing, 1882), Chap. 126.

³⁷⁵ Ibid.

³⁷⁶ Ibid.

fueled the agriculturally based economy.

The most significant legislation touching the lives of Confederate veterans in Virginia was approved by the General Assembly on March 5, 1888. The legislation, titled “An Act to give aid to soldiers, sailors, and marines of Virginia maimed or disabled in the war between the states, and to the widows of Virginia soldiers, sailors, and marines who lost their lives in said war in the military service,” was a sweeping undertaking that deserves analysis here. It stipulated payments based upon personal loss, with thirty dollars annually going for veterans who lost only one arm, leg, foot, or hand.³⁷⁷ If a veteran lost two eyes, feet, hands, or a combination of a hand and foot, it meant they would be awarded sixty dollars annually.³⁷⁸ Disability that was perceived as total meant an annual award of thirty dollars, partial disability meant an annual payment of fifteen dollars, and widows of Confederate soldiers received thirty dollars annually if they remained unmarried.³⁷⁹ The legislation also stipulated personal property with the goal of only helping the needy veterans: “[N]o person holding a national, state, or county office which pays him in salary or fees over three hundred dollars per annum, or whose income from any other source amounts to three hundred dollars, or who owns in his or her own right . . . of the assessed value of more than one thousand dollars . . . shall be entitled.”³⁸⁰ The application process involved asking a series of questions regarding the applicant’s military service and details of injuries. A judge would then verify the truthfulness of the applicant’s application for processing.³⁸¹ In order to clarify, total disability was that which “wholly incapacitates the applicant for manual labor,” while partial disability was that which incapacitated one’s ability to earn a livelihood through manual labor “equivalent to that which would be occasioned by the loss of a limb.”³⁸² This

³⁷⁷ *Acts of Assembly- Acts and Joint Resolutions Passed by the General Assembly of the State of Virginia, during the Session of 1887-8.* (Richmond: J.H. O’Bannon, supt. of Public Printing, 1888), Chap. 398.

³⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

³⁸¹ *Ibid.*

³⁸² *Ibid.*

sweeping legislation also allocated sixty-five thousand dollars of state money towards making these payments.³⁸³

While the Virginia Confederation pension is noteworthy for its scope, it was essentially the evolution of earlier legislation that had routinely proven inadequate to the number of veterans needing assistance. According to Rodgers, “[t]he continued linkage in eligibility to servicemen maimed or disabled in the war reflects the same philosophy . . . The act did not establish a pension for individual servicemen, but focused upon the disabled servicemen as a group.”³⁸⁴ Just as camaraderie mattered to the Confederate soldiers during the siege, a different version emerged from a societal perspective when they returned as disabled veterans. The scars of battle and missing limbs became a new source of camaraderie as Confederate veterans evolved into a unique, venerated welfare category. According to Rodgers, “there was a latent value represented in the execution of the act, given the fact that the veteran needed to verify that he was unable to do manual labor.”³⁸⁵ Therefore, the passage of the Virginia Confederate pension in 1888 represented the long evolution of legislation aimed at providing for disabled veterans, helped to create a special category of worthy recipients for having borne the scars of battle and been unable to labor, as well as illustrated the scale to which Virginia, and Southern society, would go to honor their Confederate veterans.

While the evolution of the Confederate pension system in Virginia has been discussed at length, due to the considerable effect it would have on veterans of the siege of Petersburg, other works help explain overall themes of an analysis of disabled Confederate veterans. Veterans who returned with an amputated limb wrestled with many predicaments in Southern society. Brian Craig Miller, author of *Empty Sleeves: Amputation in the Civil War South*, addressed the concerns many returning Confederate veterans had regarding their amputations. According to

³⁸³ Ibid.

³⁸⁴ Rodgers, *Tracing the Civil War Veteran Pension System in the State of Virginia: Entitlement or Privilege*, 16.

³⁸⁵ Ibid.

Miller, “[t]his concern for a postwar livelihood also framed wounded Confederates decisions regarding amputation. The removal of a limb could prevent a man from continuing an occupation that had been pivotal in providing for his wife and children.”³⁸⁶ Additionally, gender relations were altered as disabled men were not able to provide as before the war. Miller wrote “[d]isabled men faced chronic health issues, usually related to their amputation . . . Southern women, who stood by their amputated men and sacrificed a portion of their own livelihood, faced rampant poverty and limited means for survival.”³⁸⁷ Thus, the effects of amputation from wartime injuries cast a wide net as to whom was affected postwar. Miller stated that the shift towards pensions as a remedy was a gradual one and that lawmakers came to the realization that it was now their responsibility to uplift the veterans who had given so much of themselves during the war.³⁸⁸ Miller also noted features shared across state lines and confirmed notions of camaraderie and Southern honor, as “veterans needed to verify honorable military service, residency, and the nature and condition of their injuries that incapacitated them. Applicants again remained dependent on comrades to serve as eye-witnesses to their military service.”³⁸⁹ Miller’s work is important in illustrating how returning amputee veterans faced perhaps the greatest uncertainty of all, which applied directly to soldiers who had lost limbs during the siege.

In order to understand how the siege of Petersburg served as the catalyst for many Confederate veteran applicants, it is imperative to present a realistic analysis of how the evolution of pensions reflected a changing South and what the assistance meant. In his book *Declarations of Dependence: The Long Reconstruction of Popular Politics in the South, 1861-1908*, Gregory P. Downs wrote that “the Civil War sparked a revolution not just in what the state did but in what people believed it could do.”³⁹⁰ Confederate veterans believed that the

³⁸⁶ Brian Craig Miller, *Empty Sleeves: Amputation in the Civil War South* (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 2015), 57.

³⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 111-112.

³⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 160.

³⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 161.

only institution capable of providing aid was their state governments, which reflected the aftermath of the war as being a revolution in what people expected. Jeffrey W. McClurken, author of *Take Care of the Living: Reconstructing Confederate Veteran Families in Virginia*, wrote that “[t]he massive economic, physical, and psychological impact of the Civil War on Confederate veteran families caused the most needy to slip through the cracks of the older, local system.”³⁹¹ Essentially, the volume of disabled Confederates simply proved too much for local support networks and caused the revolution that Downs wrote of, which was the shift toward expecting state assistance. In terms of results, Confederate disability and pension payments meant not only financial help, but also “a public acknowledgement of the worthiness of families who had forfeited health and wealth for the Confederate cause.”³⁹² Economically speaking the effects were significant, for example, “[a] pension of \$30 a year could mean the difference between complete abject poverty and just being poor . . . Virginia’s Civil War pensions never paid enough to replace the income of a healthy male agricultural laborer, but that does not mean that the money was not important to those who applied for it.”³⁹³

While not getting wealthy from the established programs, Confederate disability and pension payments accomplished the additional goal of restoring Southern honor, as noted by Kathleen Gorman in her article, “Confederate Pensions as Southern Social Welfare.” According to Gorman, “veterans had to be ‘honorable’ to make it through . . . [and] Pension benefits served this dual purpose, honoring the mythic heroes and providing for their economic support. These purposes cannot be separated.”³⁹⁴ Indeed, returning disabled and wounded Confederate veterans entered a society turned upside down. In addition to many needing outside assistance in order to

³⁹⁰ Gregory P. Downs, *Declarations of Dependence: The Long Reconstruction of Popular Politics in the South, 1861-1908* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2011), 11.

³⁹¹ Jeffrey W. McClurken, *Take Care of the Living: Reconstructing Confederate Veteran Families in Virginia* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2009), 6.

³⁹² *Ibid.*, 166.

³⁹³ *Ibid.*

³⁹⁴ Kathleen Gorman, “Confederate Pensions as Southern Social Welfare,” in Elna C. Green, ed., *Before the New Deal: Social Welfare in the South, 1830-1930* (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1999), 36.

survive, there was also the psychological cloud of defeat that hung over them. The evolution of Confederate disability and pension payments in the South was a remedy that clearly served economic, as well as psychological ends. By states enacting legislation, it said that Confederate veterans and their families were not just paupers, but a special class of worthy sufferers who, now in their hour of need, were fully deserving of state support in order to help alleviate the financial and psychological consequences of disability, injury, and defeat.

Confederate veterans in immediate need of artificial limbs provided a preview to the growing realization that extensive disability and pension assistance at the state level was needed. Columbus J. Rush, a veteran of Company C, 21st Georgia Infantry, was one such veteran but his story remains unfortunately incomplete. *The History of the Doles-Cook Brigade: Army of Northern Virginia, C.S.A.* listed Columbus as having “[I]ost both legs above the knee at Petersburg, Va. Died since the war in Fulton county, GA.”³⁹⁵ According to the National Museum of Health and Medicine, Rush sustained his injuries during the desperate Confederate assault on Fort Stedman, endured amputation the same day, was released from Washington, D.C., in August of 1865, and eventually supplied with artificial limbs in 1866 at New York.³⁹⁶ In an article titled, “Maimed Confederate Soldiers,” Columbus Rush appeared in a list “of maimed Confederate soldiers to whom limbs have been supplied, or the money in lieu thereof given them.”³⁹⁷ Furthermore, the article stipulated that of those on the list, many of the names had received such serious wounds “that artificial limbs were useless, and to all such- about half the number- the price of the limb was given in stead.”³⁹⁸ Therefore, Columbus J. Rush appeared as a young Confederate soldier who suffered a completely catastrophic injury at Fort Stedman,

³⁹⁵ Henry W. Thomas, *The History of the Doles-Cook Brigade: Army of Northern Virginia, C.S.A.* (Atlanta: The Franklin Printing and Publishing Company, 1903), 398.

³⁹⁶ “To Bind Up the Nation’s Wounds: Trauma and Surgery,” National Museum of Health and Medicine, last modified October 21, 2014, accessed November 29, 2016, http://www.medicalmuseum.mil/index.cfm?p=exhibits.past.nationswounds.page_02.

³⁹⁷ “Maimed Confederate Soldiers,” *Daily Intelligencer*, May 15, 1867.

³⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

before transitioning into a veteran in dire straits for artificial limbs from the North. After returning to Georgia, he either needed replacement artificial limbs or an equivalent commutation payment within a year, before disappearing from the records. Perhaps his traumatic injuries resulted in complications that took his life, but we do know that he was among the neediest early recipients of Georgia's artificial limb or commutation assistance, personifying the magnitude of suffering for wounded amputee veterans throughout the South.

The siege of Petersburg led to numerous injuries for the Confederate soldiers engaged and would cause them to become partakers in the state based pension systems postwar. Only through a careful analysis of individual Confederate veterans' disability and pension applications does a clearer picture emerge of the enormous scale of human suffering caused by the siege, as well as the corresponding need to take advantage of related legislation. Robert G. Byers, a veteran of Company C, 52nd Virginia Infantry, was wounded in action during the assault on Fort Stedman. According to his 1884 application for disability assistance, "at Fort Stedman a cannon ball shot his arm off entirely . . . [and] that about 1874 he received \$60 from the state and has never received anything else from this or any other state."³⁹⁹ Unfortunately for Byers, he was turned down due to having already received \$60 under previous legislation.⁴⁰⁰ Byers would also apply for a Confederate pension in 1896. According to Byers on his pension application, the loss of his left arm "by a shell from a cannon shot fired by the Federal army in battle on March 25, 1865," rendered his disability as total.⁴⁰¹ In April 1896, his application was approved, rendering him a pension of fifty dollars.⁴⁰² Francis M. Estes, a veteran of Company D, 34th Virginia Infantry, applied for a Virginia Confederate pension in 1888. According to Estes, on July 30, 1864, at the Battle of the Crater, he "lost my right leg which was amputated 6 inches below knee

³⁹⁹ R.G. Byers, Augusta County, Act of 1884, Auditor of Public Accounts, Confederate Disability Pension Applications, LVA (hereafter cited as Commutation Applications, Pension Applications, LVA).

⁴⁰⁰ Ibid.

⁴⁰¹ Robert G. Byers, Augusta County, Act of 1888, Pension Applications, LVA.

⁴⁰² Ibid.

about 4 hours after being struck.”⁴⁰³ The exact cause of the injury was being “struck by a mortar shell on the leg below the knee.”⁴⁰⁴ Interestingly, Estes did not indicate whether the disability was partial or total. Nevertheless, in May of 1888, Estes was awarded a pension payment of thirty dollars.⁴⁰⁵ Anderson B. Grubbs, of the Richmond Fayette Artillery, was also struck by the enemy’s artillery at Petersburg. In his 1882 application for commutation, it is stated that “A.R. Woodson testified that he knew the applicant; that he was a resident of Richmond, that he lost a leg in the late war, and that the leg heretofore received by him has been worn out.”⁴⁰⁶ His application also reads, “lost a leg need one leg good class.”⁴⁰⁷ In his 1888 pension application, Grubbs wrote that on April 2, 1865, the day that Petersburg fell, he lost his “[r]ight leg by a cannon ball,” causing total disability, before inserting that he “can’t walk well.”⁴⁰⁸ In April of 1888, his application earned him a pension payment of thirty dollars.⁴⁰⁹ Perhaps no injury was more catastrophic than the complete loss of a limb, and these examples illustrated how disability and pension assistance was vital for veterans who were significantly handicapped in their ability to provide for themselves as before the war.

Confederate disability and pension applications abound with themes of Southern honor and camaraderie carrying over from their wartime days. James E. Bobo, a veteran of Company E, Holcomb’s South Carolina Legion, was wounded at Hatcher’s Run on March 29, 1865, and consequently lost his leg. Interestingly with the Texas Confederate pension application, a section titled “Ex-Parte,” contained interrogation questions that were to be completed by Jim and John Woodruff of Mississippi, that would be “indispensable to applicant in furnishing the required proof of his claim for a pension.”⁴¹⁰ Questions revolved around

⁴⁰³ F.M. Estes, Albemarle County, Act of 1888, Pension Applications, LVA.

⁴⁰⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁰⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁰⁶ A.B. Grubbs, City of Richmond, Act of 1882, Commutation Applications, LVA.

⁴⁰⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁰⁸ Anderson B. Grubbs, Henrico County, Act of 1888, Pension Applications, LVA.

⁴⁰⁹ Ibid.

standard themes of how they knew the applicant and aspects of his military service, all with the goal of reinforcing Southern honor through the pension system. Of particular importance was cross interrogation 4, which asked “[d]o you know whether or not the said James E. Bobo deserted his command, or voluntarily abandoned his post of duty or the service during said war?”⁴¹¹ Both men responded that they knew him since childhood in South Carolina, served with him in the Civil War, and that they did not know of him ever abandoning his post.⁴¹² The War Department in Washington, D.C., verified that as a soldier, he enlisted at seventeen in April 1864, was captured at Hatcher’s Run on March 29, 1865, and was released from Washington, D.C. in June of 1865 after taking the oath of allegiance.⁴¹³

John W. Addison, a veteran of Company A, 10th Florida Infantry, suffered extensive injuries at the Battle of the Crater, resulting in the loss of his left leg. Addison’s pension application revealed that he upheld Southern honor while a soldier and that he had the appreciation and approval of his community for assistance. In a document signed by the county commissioners, themes of Southern honor and veterans as being worthy sufferers is apparent, as John W. Addison “of the 10th Regiment of Florida Volunteers . . . is unable to labor and support himself by reason of wounds received in the line of duty while so serving . . .”⁴¹⁴ This 1887 document illustrated how Florida, and other Southern states, placed key emphasis on disabled veterans’ honorable service while performing their soldierly duty, inability to labor, and thus worthiness for state assistance. Additionally, Addison’s pension showed how the reliance on institutional support through pensions was necessary. By the time he applied for an additional Confederate pension in 1909, Addison owned 160 acres of land, 18 cattle, and a horse worth

⁴¹⁰ James E. Bobo, Lamar County, Texas, Act of 1913, Pension Application, Texas State Library and Archives, Austin, Texas (hereafter cited as TSLA).

⁴¹¹ Ibid.

⁴¹² Ibid.

⁴¹³ War Department, The Adjutant General’s Office, February 12, 1915, in Bobo Pension Application, TSLA.

⁴¹⁴ John W. Addison, Bradford County, Florida, Act of 1885, Pension Application, State Library and Archives of Florida, Tallahassee, FL (hereafter cited as SLAF).

approximately \$725.⁴¹⁵ In August of that year he was awarded an annual pension payment of \$125, but it was still not enough to support him and his family, forcing him to submit another application in 1913 for an increase to \$150 per year.⁴¹⁶ Furthermore, by 1923, one year before his death, Addison applied for a \$5 per month increase under a new provision for soldiers who lost a foot in the war.⁴¹⁷ While Addison's pension applications extend beyond the years this thesis primarily focuses on, it does show how even with the land to sustain himself, Addison was forced to rely increasingly on notions of Southern honor and the institutional relief system postwar to remedy his physical limitations.

Amputee veterans suffered the greatest visible physical loss and needed immediate assistance in order to reintegrate into civilian life. The readjustment to civilian life as an amputee veteran in the South was difficult, as one's very appearance embodied the costs of war.⁴¹⁸ Confederate veterans of the siege also returned home with injuries not as dramatically visible, but nevertheless debilitating, which led to growing dependence on the state. Wartime wounds also affected other areas, such as internal organs, sight, hearing, reproductive areas, as well as injuries to limbs that diminished their usefulness but fell short of necessitating amputation. For these Confederate veterans, the provision of artificial limbs or commutation payments was not enough. The natural progression of age and lingering side effects drew Confederate veterans closer and closer to the state for their very survival. Collectively, their applications illustrate their suffering, challenges, and firm resolve to readjust to the postwar South. This process required years of adjustment, adaptation, and increased state assistance in order to remake their own existence postwar.

⁴¹⁵ John W. Addison, Bradford County, Act of 1909, Pension Application, SLAF.

⁴¹⁶ Ibid.

⁴¹⁷ John W. Addison, Union County, Acts of 1923, Pension Application, SLAF.

⁴¹⁸ For more Confederate veterans who underwent amputations and needed state assistance through commutation payments and/or pensions, see the following: Charles P. Bigger, Henrico County, Act of 1888, Pension Applications, LVA; H.W. Beaver, Mecklenburg County, Acts of 1884, 1888, Pension Applications, LVA; James S. Mason, Mecklenburg County, Act of 1884, Commutation Applications, LVA; William H. Rainey, Princess Anne County, Act of 1884, Commutation Applications, LVA.

David F. Haley was a veteran of Company C, 46th Virginia Infantry, and sustained severe internal injuries during the siege of Petersburg. According to his pension application, in a “fight near Petersburg, in lower part of bowels,” he was severely wounded and “his stomach was badly smashed and he was badly ruptured, which continually interferes with his performing labor.”⁴¹⁹ Additionally, the injuries to his stomach were so great that the applicant felt “such injury is equal to the loss of a leg, incapacitating him from performing manual labor.”⁴²⁰ Signed with his mark and not his name, reflecting his illiteracy, one can imagine the years of suffering since the war for the 64 year old applicant who was a farmer by occupation.⁴²¹ His injuries were not initially covered under the provisions of the existing pension legislation, which led to House Bill No. 768, *A Bill for the relief of David F. Haley, of Pittsylvania county, a disabled Confederate veteran.*⁴²² Among the language of the special provision:

Whereas David F. Haley, a Confederate soldier and a resident of Pittsylvania county, was, by reason of services in the army, severely mashed while in the trenches near Petersburg, which resulted in double hernia and incapacitates him from performing manual labor; therefore: 1. Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia, 2. That the auditor of public accounts be, and he is, hereby 3. directed to list said David F. Haley for the pension of thirty dollars.⁴²³

The act continued on to prove state acknowledgement of what was written on the application, as David F. Haley was “suffering from a wound and disability equal to the loss of a leg or an arm with respect to incapacitating him from manual labor.”⁴²⁴ David F. Haley’s unique pension application was finally approved “under [the] act of March 4, 1896 for his relief.”⁴²⁵ Haley’s case illustrated that Virginia, and other Confederate states, faced a situation where disabled veterans did not always fall under clearly defined categories for existing provisions. Virginia’s

⁴¹⁹ D.F. Haley, Pittsylvania County, Special Act of 1896, Pension Applications, LVA.

⁴²⁰ Ibid.

⁴²¹ Ibid., Collins, *46th Virginia Infantry*, 113.

⁴²² House Bill No. 768 in D.F. Haley, Pittsylvania County, Special Act of 1896, Pension Applications, LVA.

⁴²³ Ibid.

⁴²⁴ Ibid.

⁴²⁵ Ibid.

acknowledgement and special provision for his injuries reflect that he was a worthy sufferer and therefore rightfully entitled to state assistance.⁴²⁶

Confederate soldiers who sustained head injuries during the siege of Petersburg endured hardships as well postwar, altering both physical and mental health. George W. Crouch was a veteran of Company K, 34th Virginia Infantry, and suffered a traumatic head injury. In his 1882 application for commutation, it stated that “he received a wound in his head, which caused a removal of a part of his skull bone, which disqualifies him for manual labor.”⁴²⁷ Furthermore, his medical doctor stated that “[h]e has complained much of his wounds ever since I have known him. I have practiced on him and seen his brain much excited.”⁴²⁸ By 1893, Crouch would also need additional increased support from Virginia in order to sustain himself. According to Crouch, his head wound caused a “loss of considerable part of the brain organ,” which led to the “[i]nability to perform manual labor, on account of pain . . . in the head, and [he] can not stand exposure to the sun.”⁴²⁹ His immense and prolonged suffering awarded him only a \$15 pension later that year from Virginia.⁴³⁰ Perhaps it is little surprise then that on his tombstone in the Bruington Baptist Church cemetery, Crouch or a loved one chose the inscription, “A Brave Soldier.”⁴³¹ Indeed, Crouch’s involvement with the commutation and pension programs illustrated the dire need that Confederate veterans who suffered from head injuries had for state assistance. It also reflected how difficult readjustment could be for individuals such as Crouch who could no longer stand the elements, given that the South was still largely agricultural. In

⁴²⁶ For other Confederate soldiers who suffered from internal injuries, see Frank Deal, Gloucester County, Act of 1884, Commutation Applications, Act of 1888, Pension Applications, LVA. He sustained injuries to the groin and lower extremities. Also, see Valentine Roach, Greene County, Act of 1884, Commutation Applications, Act of 1888, Pension Applications, LVA. He sustained injuries to his back, spinal column, and a rupture. These are just a few of the examples of internal injuries that caused suffering for years after the siege of Petersburg.

⁴²⁷ George W. Crouch, King & Queen County, Act of 1882, Commutation Applications, LVA.

⁴²⁸ Dr. Thomas Latane statement in Crouch, Commutation Applications, LVA.

⁴²⁹ George W. Crouch, King & Queen County, Act of 1888, Pension Applications, LVA.

⁴³⁰ Ibid.

⁴³¹ “George William Crouch,” Find A Grave, October 1, 2007, accessed December 3, 2016, <http://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?page=gr&GSln=Crouch&GSiman=1&GScid=169605&GRid=21875483&>.

spite of it all, Crouch relied on Virginia to help sustain himself and must have felt that through his suffering, he exemplified Southern honor and bravery, which he fully intended to leave to posterity.⁴³²

The loss of hearing or sight impaired returning Confederate veterans from transitioning back to their communities and readjusting as successfully as they could have with full capacities. Tully S. Dozier, a veteran of Company G, 16th Virginia Infantry, sustained serious facial injuries during the Confederate counterattack at the Crater. According to his application for Virginia commutation, “I was seriously wounded at the ‘Crater’ in front of Petersburg by explosion of a shell near my face, from the effects of which my eyes are badly injured . . . I have never received any assistance from the state, and have a family to support.”⁴³³ Dozier’s pension application from 1888 further stated that during the fight at the Crater, his right hand was injured, as well as both eyes damaged, before stating that he considered his injuries to be the “partial loss of both eyes.”⁴³⁴ For his suffering in the military service, Dozier was granted a pension for \$15 in April of 1888.⁴³⁵ While records are sparse, Dozier returned to his home community of Princess Anne County to start civilian life again despite his diminished eyesight and probably resumed farming as his father had done.⁴³⁶ Nevertheless, state assistance was vital to helping prop up Dozier and his family both economically and psychologically.

William C. Purdie was a veteran of Company K, 6th Virginia Infantry, and was also wounded during the Battle of the Crater. According to Purdie’s application for a commutation payment, his wound came from “[t]he storming of the Crater . . . [and] he suffers permanently

⁴³² For more examples of Confederate veterans from the siege of Petersburg who sustained head injuries, see James H. Corbin, Madison County, Act of 1884, Commutation Applications, Act of 1888, Pension Applications, LVA. Corbin also was wounded in the head during the defense of Petersburg, even having a minnie ball lodged in the brain. Also see William A. Fastey, Bedford County, Act of 1888, Pension Applications, LVA. Fastey was shot in the head during the early stages of the campaign, and suffered lingering problems postwar, including the inability to stand the heat.

⁴³³ Tully S. Dozier, Princess Anne County, Act of 1884, Commutation Applications, LVA.

⁴³⁴ Tully S. Dozier, Princess Anne County, Act of 1888, Pension Applications, LVA.

⁴³⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴³⁶ Trask, *16th Virginia Infantry*, 85.

from his wound and is unable to expose himself to the sun or bad weather.”⁴³⁷ Furthermore, his wound that caused deafness also affected his livelihood, due to him being “permanently disabled from performing hard manual labor as a farmer which is his occupation.”⁴³⁸ Interestingly, Purdie’s application for a Confederate pension not only provided us with more details of his injury, but also contained terminology which reinforced themes of Southern honor, in the hopes of obtaining assistance. His wounding came from a Union bullet that entered around his right ear and exited around his left ear, not only ensuring deafness but also stiffening his jaw.⁴³⁹ Purdie’s pension application described him as a 46 year old veteran who was not only deaf, but unable to perform agricultural tasks as before the war. Despite these setbacks, Purdie knew that Southern honor mattered and he did not want to appear as just begging for assistance. When asked in a question about how he was wounded, Purdie’s response was “Crater at Petersburg whilst Confederates were charging the federals.”⁴⁴⁰ With his honor intact, Purdie was awarded a pension for \$30 in April of 1888.⁴⁴¹ Clearly, the loss of sight or hearing would be challenging enough anytime, but for the returning disabled veterans to whom this applied, it just made for another area where the state could hopefully lend a supportive hand to ease the readjustment.⁴⁴²

The advent of Confederate artificial limb, commutation, and pension programs grew out of the notion that the individual states must take an active role in helping to care for their Confederate veterans. The North viewed these men as traitors so it was up to individual Southern states to find ways to care for their returning wounded and disabled veterans. However, while

⁴³⁷ William C. Purdie, Amelia County, Act of 1882, Commutation Applications, LVA.

⁴³⁸ Ibid.

⁴³⁹ William C. Purdie, Amelia County, Act of 1888, Pension Applications, LVA.

⁴⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴⁴² For more Confederate veterans of the siege of Petersburg who experienced vision or hearing loss, see George W. Welton, Greensville County, Act of 1882, Commutation Applications, LVA. Welton was a veteran of the 12th Virginia Infantry who lost an eye at the Crater. See also J.H. Carner, City of Roanoke, Act of 1888, Pension Applications, LVA. Carner was a veteran of Company G, 34th Virginia Infantry who lost his right eye, became deaf in the right ear, and was shot in the shoulder. These examples illustrated that many injuries related to vision and hearing occurred, prompting applications for Confederate disability and/or pension assistance.

artificial limb assistance generally occurred only a few years after the war, disability assistance through commutation payments generally took at least a decade, and the vital annual pensions took several decades in many former Confederate states. Additionally, the application process was time consuming, often involving other individuals or peers, and required veterans to disclose their disabilities to provide for themselves. Countless veterans of the siege returned to their individual states with injuries that impaired their ability to work, maintain independence, and recover psychologically. While focusing heavily on Virginia veterans, these examples are representative of the South as a whole in the sense that being awarded a commutation or pension payment meant something very significant.⁴⁴³ While at its most fundamental level it provided an artificial limb or money, it also provided a psychological boost of immeasurable value. It was a purposeful message from individual Southern states that let these veterans know they were both appreciated and legitimately entitled to state assistance for their sacrifices and personal loss during their trial by fire.

A Worthy Asylum: The Movement to Establish Confederate Soldiers' Homes and Veterans of the siege

Corresponding with the advent of pension programs was the movement to establish Confederate soldiers' homes for veterans who were not able to care for themselves, which initially began in the mid-to late-1880s and accelerated into the 1890s. These Confederate soldiers' homes became places of care for needy and elderly veterans, but also reinforced the status of the Confederate veterans as worthy sufferers of a lost movement. While Southern states would typically house inmates or those deemed insane, soldiers' homes represented yet another exception to the rule, an institutional welfare program that was not to be ashamed of, but rather

⁴⁴³ The significance of honor, I contend, was reciprocal. Veterans used terminology on applications that appealed to Southern concepts of honor, manhood, and made their suffering worthy. See for example, A.L. Scott, Bexar County, Texas, Act of 1913, Confederate Pensions, Texas State Library and Archives, Austin, TX. Scott was a veteran of Company G, 9th Alabama Infantry, and fought at the Crater. His application noted that his service was "Four years and term before the first cap ever popped, clear to the end." Notions of honor and sacrifice carry through the applications and states reciprocated that by the legitimizing commutation and pension programs for veterans.

venerated by the community. While established throughout the region, my research has primarily analyzed the establishment of a home in Virginia, the R.E. Lee Camp No. 1 home in Richmond. The establishment of a Confederate soldiers' home in Virginia served as another structural support for several veterans of the siege, assisting them psychologically and physically in dealing with lingering injuries and the natural progression of advancing age.

In order to understand the importance of the R.E. Lee Camp No. 1 home in Richmond to veterans of the siege of Petersburg, it becomes imperative to analyze the broader movement towards establishing these homes, the goals and desired effects, as well as the results. R. B. Rosenberg, author of *Living Monuments: Confederate Soldiers' Homes in the New South*, analyzed these important themes. According to Rosenberg, the movement started primarily due to economic considerations and as a coping mechanism in terms of Southern honor. Rosenberg wrote that the leading citizens of the New South wanted to care for the less fortunate veterans partially because of Southern honor.⁴⁴⁴ In an economic sense, many of the Confederate veterans admitted were considered poor and struggling to sustain themselves by the time they hit middle age.⁴⁴⁵ For these unfortunate veterans, the first full two decades after the war, 1870-1890, were a time of increasing poverty and thus, growing dependency on external factors.⁴⁴⁶ Not surprisingly, Rosenberg found that 3/4 of veterans admitted to soldiers' homes claimed a war related injury and entered during the first decade of their existence.⁴⁴⁷ One goal was simply to provide housing and care for the veterans that replaced the stigma associated with older, substandard institutions.⁴⁴⁸ Additionally, the sheer fact of their existence created a powerful symbolism of the Confederate inmates who lived there.⁴⁴⁹ Historian Rosenberg believed that for those living in the

⁴⁴⁴ R.B. Rosenberg, *Living Monuments: Confederate Soldiers' Homes in the New South* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1993), 11-12.

⁴⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 14.

⁴⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 21.

⁴⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 23.

⁴⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 73.

⁴⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 5.

postwar South, Confederate veterans represented an almost mythic past in the public eye, and undoubtedly a home for them reinforced this view.⁴⁵⁰ Perhaps the main result of these homes was that it created a place for disabled and aging Confederate veterans to live as comfortably as possible. However, Rosenberg cautioned us that these were still institutions and veterans were viewed as inmates of sorts, as well as the fact they had to live in a created environment that often forced them to use reminiscing on the past as a tool to cope with their present situation.⁴⁵¹

Historian James Marten offered an analysis of soldiers' homes, while focusing on both Union and Confederate veterans, and serves as a point of comparison in *Sing Not War: The Lives of Union and Confederate Veterans in Gilded Age America*. Historian Marten also described some of the causes for the Confederate soldiers' homes, intended goals, and results of their existence. Marten wrote of the economic factor as the South experienced "worsening economic conditions in the 1870s and 1880s. The Panic of 1873, flat prices for southern cash crops, and the second depression in less than a generation in the early 1890s pushed already hard-pressed veterans to the edge, forcing them to rely increasingly on family members, local charities, and county poorhouses."⁴⁵² It is not much of a stretch to see how disabled Confederate veterans already were struggling to try and regain their economic independence postwar, before other forces beyond their control, such as market panics, compounded their seemingly endless difficulties. Another reason for the soldiers' homes was simply the volume of veterans crippled by the war who needed assistance in the various Southern states. Marten stated that roughly 200,000 Confederates returned from war still plagued by either wartime injuries or disease, a staggering number that clearly overwhelmed existing older relief systems, not just in terms of pensions but also with housing for the very neediest veterans.⁴⁵³

⁴⁵⁰ Ibid., 110.

⁴⁵¹ Ibid., 84, 106.

⁴⁵² James Marten, *Sing Not War: The Lives of Union and Confederate Veterans in Gilded Age America* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2011), 14-15.

⁴⁵³ Ibid., 78.

Marten also described an important societal goal for the homes throughout the South, as “Confederate homes . . . were intended to prop up veterans by providing . . . dignified living conditions . . . The failure to abide by the rules of the soldiers’ homes, to drop out of the ranks of the deserving poor, meant not only a fall from Confederate grace but also a dismissal from the social welfare systems meant to protect and support the very poorest.”⁴⁵⁴ In other words, they were partially created out of a reciprocal relationship. Confederate veterans were to be viewed as heroes of a lost cause and pillars of their communities, in spite of their inability to care for themselves, and in return the state would offer them assistance different from that for the dregs of society. Finally, Marten touched on the notion of camaraderie, which was important to soldiers during the siege of Petersburg, and also once they were inmates of soldiers’ homes. Marten wrote that “[t]hese men [veterans] continued to rely on the cohesion that developed among soldiers, on the relationships and communities they forged in camp and on the battlefield . . . such networks remained a way that soldiers identified and separated themselves from civilians after the war.”⁴⁵⁵ In other words, Confederate soldiers’ homes with their militaristic nature and honorable inmates were a continuation of an existence separate from that of the average civilian. The notion of camaraderie helped these veterans who, in a changing South amidst lingering injuries, retain a degree of their shared Confederate past.

The movement towards the establishment of a Confederate soldiers’ home in Virginia started during the war itself. The origins of the eventual R.E. Lee Camp No. 1 home came from a Confederate House bill of December 28, 1863, *A bill to be entitled an Act to provide for wounded and disabled officers and soldiers an asylum to be called “The Veteran Soldiers Home.”* The bill called for states to work together to assist disabled veterans: “[I]n order that the several Confederate States and the citizens, thereof, may have the opportunity of becoming identified with this philanthropic and patriotic enterprise . . . the Secretary of War, immediately

⁴⁵⁴ Ibid., 186.

⁴⁵⁵ Ibid., 246.

after the passage of this act . . . invite[s] the aid and co-operation of said states.”⁴⁵⁶ While addressed in terms of Southern patriotism, the legislation also indicated that “[t]he said funds, subject to the general approval of the Secretary of War . . . shall be expended by the Board of Managers . . . as the wants of the institution or the comfort and recreation of the inmates may suggest.”⁴⁵⁷ This bill represented an idealistic vision of donors, states, and a central Confederate government working together to provide a home for those who sacrificed a part of themselves for the cause. However, with the defeat at Petersburg and ensuing collapse of the government, there would be no central governing body to carry out such an ambitious undertaking, effectively ensuring that individual Southern states would have to come up with their own solutions.

Imperative to understanding soldiers’ homes is that from the end of the siege in 1865 to the mid-1880s, former Confederates did not have this form of institutional support. Instead, they had to rely on the repurposed coping mechanisms from the siege, their families, and their communities. The February 28, 1884 edition of the *Richmond Dispatch* announced that “[w]hereas next to the dead is the disabled soldiers in the affections of a brave and patriotic people; and whereas the financial condition of Virginia since the war has hitherto precluded any systematic effort to aid her disabled and maimed soldiers . . . therefore, the sum of \$30,000 per annum for two years be . . . appropriated.”⁴⁵⁸ Furthermore, the legislation reached out to the emerging veterans organizations, of which this thesis analyzed, for assistance with the home. According to the legislation, “[a]ll military and veteran associations and organizations in this State, and all citizens north and south favorable to this cause, are hereby invited to aid by their contributions and influence in the maintenance of this home.”⁴⁵⁹ For the Commonwealth of Virginia, the passed legislation, *A Bill to Establish a Home for Disabled Soldiers in the*

⁴⁵⁶ Confederate House of Representatives, *A bill to be entitled an Act to provide for wounded and disabled officers and soldiers an asylum to be called “The Veteran Soldiers Home,”* December 28, 1863, accessed March 18, 2017, <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=dul1.ark:/13960/t06x04g1c;view=1up;seq=1>.

⁴⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁵⁸ “Home for Soldiers,” *Richmond Dispatch*, February 28, 1884.

⁴⁵⁹ Ibid.

Southern States, was an enormous step forward towards providing state assistance beyond commutation payments to disabled Confederates. The R.E. Lee Camp No. 1 Soldiers' Home opened on May 20, 1885, to much fanfare in Richmond. In his "Address on the opening of Lee Camp Soldiers' Home," Col. Archer Anderson stated:

What was, what is that duty, my friends? It is to provide food, shelter and clothing for needy Southern soldiers of honorable record disabled by wounds or disease, and thus unfit to earn their own livelihood . . . In the first place, on the physical side, it was life reduced to its simplest expression. Never were men in like circumstances of climate and country, who lived with less food, flimsier clothing or scantier shelter. There was something ennobling in the ability to shake off the thousand artificial wants with which our modern life has hampered us; something in the rough contact with earth and the elemental powers which gave strength of heart and tempered body and mind to the sternest duties.⁴⁶⁰

This excerpt from Anderson's speech illustrated the themes that sustained Confederate soldiers during both the siege of Petersburg and as they readjusted to civilian life. In this excerpt, we can visualize a Confederate soldier in the trenches at Petersburg, enduring every kind of hardship, all for a cause deemed greater than himself. Anderson's speech reflected that now, some twenty years later, it was time for a reversal in the relationship and for Virginia to begin sacrificing for her deserving veterans.

After a successful launch, the R.E. Lee Camp No. 1 Soldiers' Home in Richmond ran into a familiar problem with welfare aimed at Confederate veterans, the demand was too great and the resources did not go far enough. Within a year, the General Assembly of Virginia would be forced to deepen its ties to the home financially. According to *An Act making an annual appropriation for the support of the home of R.E. Lee Camp No. 1 Confederate veterans*, which was approved February 12, 1886, the "home, near the city of Richmond, for the purpose of maintaining such disabled soldiers and are unable to provide for themselves . . . have at this time a considerable number of inmates."⁴⁶¹ Therefore, while the March 13, 1884 legislation

⁴⁶⁰ Col. Archer Anderson, *Address On the Opening of Lee Camp Soldiers' Home, May 20th, 1885* (Richmond: J.W. Fergusson & Son, Printers, 1885), 4, 5, 8, VHS.

appropriated for a two year period, by 1886 it was clear that this type of state assistance would have to be provided for annually. Additionally, the board was required to send reports to the General Assembly regarding the financial state of the home, signifying more dependence on Virginia to provide economically and less on charity.⁴⁶² Importantly, the act gave \$10,000 per year to assist in maintaining the home and helping the inmates there.⁴⁶³ The following year in his address to an extra session of the General Assembly, Governor Fitzhugh Lee, himself a Confederate veteran, stated “the boy who rushed to battle as to a banquet is the maimed veteran of to-day, in many instances, help-less and houseless . . . The time has come when the state should call together and support there . . . the soldier and sailor who, maintaining Virginia’s flag upon many a hard fought field, can no longer maintain himself.”⁴⁶⁴ Furthermore, Gov. Lee’s message was also tailored to the specific situation of the South and clearly stated the importance of aid to disabled Confederates. According to Gov. Lee, “aid to the Confederate Home for our poor and disabled soldiers, over whose shoulders rests no mantle of governmental protection . . . are some of the necessary obligations incurred.”⁴⁶⁵

In essence, the movement towards establishing soldiers’ homes for disabled Confederate veterans corresponded with the growth of the pension movement in the 1880s. However, it was one thing to receive a commutation payment or pension check, and it was quite another to expect the state to provide housing under honorable circumstances. Confederate soldiers’ homes represented an outgrowth of the movement for artificial limbs, commutation, and pension payments. However, the soldiers’ homes had to be created in a way that gave their residents a

⁴⁶¹ *Acts and Joint Resolutions Passed by the General Assembly of the State of Virginia During the Session of 1885-86* (Richmond: A.R. Micou, supt. of Public Printing, 1886), 96.

⁴⁶² *Ibid.*

⁴⁶³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶⁴ Gov. Fitzhugh Lee, *Message of the Governor of Virginia, to the General Assembly of Virginia* (Richmond: A.R. Micou, supt. of Public Printing, 1887), 16, in *Executive Papers of Governor Fitzhugh Lee, 1885-1889*, LVA.

⁴⁶⁵ Gov. Fitzhugh Lee, *Governor's Message to the Extra Session of the General Assembly of Virginia, with Accompanying Documents, March 16, 1887* (Richmond: A.R. Micou, supt. of Public Printing, 1887), 5, in *Executive Papers of Governor Fitzhugh Lee, 1885-1889*, LVA.

degree of dignity, or in other words, it had to be an agreeable asylum. For the veterans who turned to soldiers' homes, such as the R.E. Lee Camp No. 1 home in Richmond, it was truly one of their last recourses. Many lacked any ability to care for themselves due to wounds and natural decline with age, while others simply had no spouse or family to care for them. In order to make the best out of a bad situation, Southern states created these homes to provide shelter, food, and care to those who deserved it legitimately. There was also the dual purpose of raising up the disabled veterans to be lasting symbols to the New South of camaraderie, honor, and manhood. S.J.N. McCampbell, a resident at the soldiers' home, wrote a short piece titled, *The Ex-Confederate Soldiers' Home, Richmond, Virginia, In Verse, By an Inmate*. McCampbell wrote in a satirical fashion, but provided a great window into how the neediest soldiers who survived the siege of Petersburg, and eventually called this place home as veterans, would have viewed it. According to McCampbell, "[o]ld soldiers, like old maids, are often prudish and hard to please, They like to lie about in the sun, to smoke and take their ease. And some, in certain times of the moon, seem to get very cranky . . . [however] For our beautiful 'Sweet Home,' we thank our many dear friends, May they receive the richest blessings."⁴⁶⁶

Many of the inmates at the R.E. Lee Camp No. 1 Confederate Soldiers' Home were intimately connected to the siege of Petersburg. While the hardships of the entire war undoubtedly took their toll, the siege of Petersburg was specifically referenced on many of the applications. B.F. Eckles, a veteran of Company A, 12th Virginia Infantry, applied for the home and was wounded at the Crater. According to his 1889 application for admission, Eckles was 46 years old, not married, and a farmer in the Petersburg area.⁴⁶⁷ His reason for admission was the "said wound & general disability from rupture."⁴⁶⁸ Accompanying his application were letters of character reference, attesting to the importance of Southern honor. One letter, from Lt. John E.

⁴⁶⁶ S.J.N. McCampbell, *The Ex-Confederate Soldiers' Home, Richmond, Virginia, In Verse, By an Inmate*. (Richmond: n.p., 1886), 1, 4, 5, 7, VHS.

⁴⁶⁷ B.F. Eckles, Robert E. Lee Camp Confederate Soldiers' Home Applications for Admission, LVA.

⁴⁶⁸ Ibid.

Laughton, Jr., proudly stated that B.F. Eckles was “a member of my company of sharpshooters-attached to Mahone’s Brigade. He served with great distinction to him-self, and perfect satisfaction to his officers and associates and richly deserves any assistance that any ex Confederate soldier is entitled to.”⁴⁶⁹ Honor, valor, and a sense of entitlement summed up this letter on behalf of Mr. Eckles. Captain E. Leslie Spence also wrote a letter on behalf of Eckles, in which he stated that “[t]here was no one in that Regiment that showed more gallantry than Mr. Eckles. Anything you can do to assist in securing him a place in the home will be highly appreciated.”⁴⁷⁰

B.F. Whitehorn, a veteran of Company A, 41st Virginia Infantry, applied to the Confederate Soldiers’ Home in 1899. At the time of his application, Whitehorn was 62 years old, not married, and laboring as a carpenter in Sussex County.⁴⁷¹ While a later applicant than Eckles and thus reflective of his advanced age, Whitehorn made it clear that being “[w]ounded 30th July 1864. Battle of the Crater,” was a contributing factor to his inability to sustain himself.⁴⁷² Despite his injuries at the Crater, Whitehorn soldiered on from Petersburg and surrendered with Lee at Appomattox Court House.⁴⁷³ Nevertheless, it is safe to say that while Whitehorn survived the war, he returned to rebuild his life independently and as age and the effects of his injury at Petersburg intensified, he simply could not sustain himself without the assistance offered through the soldiers’ home at Richmond.

Confederate veterans who desired to live at the home were expected to obey commands, almost as if still in the military, or face the dire consequences. Charles Everett was a veteran of Company A, 38th Virginia Infantry, and was released due to bad behavior. Charles Everett’s

⁴⁶⁹ Lt. John E. Laughton, Jr. to Major Randolph, August 8, 1889, in B.F. Eckles, Robert E. Lee Camp Confederate Soldiers’ Home Applications for Admission, LVA.

⁴⁷⁰ Capt. E. Leslie Spence to Major Randolph, August 8, 1889, Ibid.

⁴⁷¹ B.F. Whitehorn, Robert E. Lee Camp Confederate Soldiers’ Home Applications for Admission, LVA.

⁴⁷² Ibid.

⁴⁷³ R.A. Brock, ed., *Paroles of the Army of Northern Virginia, R.E. Lee, Gen., C.S.A., Commanding, Surrendered at Appomattox C.H., Va., April 9, 1865, to Lieutenant-General U.S. Grant, Commanding Armies of the U.S.*, Southern Historical Society Papers (Richmond: Southern Historical Society, 1887), 15:355.

story began under an honorable start, as his main injury came from the Battle of the Crater where a pistol ball struck his left cheek and blinded his left eye, resulting in approval for an 1892 Virginia Confederate Pension.⁴⁷⁴ In his application to the soldiers' home, Everett stated that he was 68 years old, widowed, and was working as a miller.⁴⁷⁵ Apparently, his four children were not going to help him, so on account of "infirmity and loss of eyesight," he needed a place to live.⁴⁷⁶ His 1886 application to the home was accompanied by a letter from William Frost, a fellow Confederate veteran. According to Frost, "Everett was a faithful soldier and a Brave man on duty and of duty our company letter A 38 Va Regt . . . I recommend him to you as Being worthy of Being admitted in the Soldiers Home."⁴⁷⁷ Unfortunately for Everett, disobedience as an inmate would cost him. On January 19, 1891, Everett ran afoul of the leadership there after receiving an order "to send a detail of 8 men as guards to Lee monument. Charles Everett was detailed as one of them by the Adjt and Acting Supt and refused to go saying that he was going to the store to exchange his shoes. When told that he would have to go, he said 'I won't do it' and walked off."⁴⁷⁸ Consequently, in a court proceeding of January 29, 1891, Everett was found guilty and furthermore, "[t]he Court decided unanimously that Charles Everett be expelled from the Home, which sentence shall be carried into effect on February 10th 1891."⁴⁷⁹ Everett's experience is a vivid example that just because the aging and disabled veterans were found worthy of admittance to the home, it did not mean they could disobey authority and violations risked the loss of Southern honor through eviction.

For disabled and aging Confederate veterans like B.F. Eckles, B.F. Whitehorn, and Charles Everett, the R.E. Lee Camp No. 1 Confederate Soldiers' Home in Richmond represented the last remnant of hope for veterans, such as themselves, who were incapable of living

⁴⁷⁴ Rodgers, *Tracing the Civil War Veteran Pension System in the State of Virginia: Entitlement or Privilege*, 214.

⁴⁷⁵ Charles Everett, Robert E. Lee Camp Confederate Soldiers' Home Applications for Admission, LVA.

⁴⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷⁷ William Frost to Major [?], August 20, 1886, in Ibid.

⁴⁷⁸ "Charges and Specifications vs. Charles Everett," January 20, 1891, in Ibid.

⁴⁷⁹ Charles Everett, Robert E. Lee Camp Confederate Soldiers' Home Applications for Admission, LVA.

independently. It was a place where their basic needs would at least be met while being treated with the respect and dignity on account of their Confederate service. This was conditional though, as illustrated by Charles Everett. Confederate inmates were expected to be orderly, honorable, and virtuous citizens. The violation of these norms meant the possibility of being cut off from the assistance that was so desperately needed. However, for most accepted inmates the home in Richmond was a major benefit to them. Historian McClurken wrote of the home's legacy: "The Lee Camp Home admitted over three thousand Confederate veterans between 1885 and 1941, more than any other Confederate state home . . . [and] Virginia's home for veterans had about 250 residents for most of the 1890s."⁴⁸⁰ Many other Confederate veterans from the siege of Petersburg would have to call upon the home for assistance in the decades after the conclusion of the Civil War, thereby reinforcing how injuries from the siege greatly shaped their postwar lives and readjustment.⁴⁸¹

Beyond Remedy: Postwar Suicides, Mental Health, and Prolonged Mourning for Veterans of the siege

Despite the creation of Confederate disability, pension, and soldiers' home benefits, as well as the creation of various veterans' organizations, some veterans found postwar readjustment ultimately too difficult to cope with for a variety of reasons. Despite being seasoned veterans and the emergence of institutional support, a minority of Confederate veterans could not make the readjustment. For these veterans, the sources of support from the state level and camaraderie as veterans were just not enough to overcome deep psychological burdens fostered in the Confederate defeat. In the postwar South, some veterans who found themselves unable to readjust resorted to committing suicide or having to enter mental institutions. Others

⁴⁸⁰ McClurken, *Take Care of the Living*, 156.

⁴⁸¹ For more Confederate veterans affected by Petersburg and in need of housing in a soldiers' home, see John Pickerell, Robert E. Lee Camp Confederate Soldiers' Home Applications for Admission, LVA, Robert B. Ashby, Robert E. Lee Camp Confederate Soldiers' Home Applications for Admission, LVA, Anderson B. Grubbs, Robert E. Lee Camp Confederate Soldiers' Home Applications for Admission, LVA.

readjusted in part, but clearly displayed signs that the psychological trauma of personal loss during the siege profoundly shaped their postwar existences.

In her article, “‘A Burden Too Heavy to Bear’: War Trauma, Suicide, and Confederate Soldiers,”⁴⁸² Diane Miller Sommerville analyzed the changing Southern conceptions of suicide during the Civil War. While focusing on those Confederate soldiers who resorted to suicide during the war, it is an insightful piece that helps explain the factors leading to the postwar suicides of veterans. According to Sommerville, “[i]n nineteenth-century America, masculine courage was equated with fearlessness; acknowledging fear to one’s self or another amounted to cowardice.”⁴⁸² However, this clear cut view was reshaped by the horrors of the Civil War. Sommerville wrote that “the Civil War stands out as an important turning point in the way white southerners came to view suicide and helped usher in a more tolerant, sympathetic attitude toward those who died by their own hands, as evidenced by the published accounts of soldier suicides, which regularly treated the victims sympathetically.”⁴⁸³ This trend of published accounts treating the deceased with dignity or sympathy carried over in terms of veteran suicides. Sommerville also stated an important factor that led to some wartime suicides, and afterwards served as a contributing factor during the postwar years. Sommerville wrote that “[b]eing wounded in battle could also propel a soldier into a debilitating downward psychological spiral resulting in institutionalization or even suicide.”⁴⁸⁴ This served as an impetus for the suicides of two Confederate veterans, both wounded during the siege of Petersburg. Nevertheless, as during the war, postwar veteran suicides reflected a changing South in which “newspapers routinely reported sympathetic accounts . . . and seemed to function as self-appointed guardians of their posthumous reputations.”⁴⁸⁵

⁴⁸² Diane Miller Sommerville, “‘A Burden Too Heavy to Bear’: War Trauma, Suicide, and Confederate Soldiers,” *Civil War History* 59, no. 4 (December 2013): 464.

⁴⁸³ *Ibid.*, 472.

⁴⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 483.

⁴⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 490.

In his book, *Moments of Despair: Suicide, Divorce, and Debt in Civil War Era North Carolina*, historian David Silkenat addressed the changing conceptions of suicide by North Carolinians from the antebellum to postwar eras. Silkenat wrote that many citizens came to see suicide not out of an individual's moral weakness, but rather "as part of a divine plan that they could not fully comprehend," thereby correlating with the turbulent social changes postwar.⁴⁸⁶ While suicide never became a noble method for ending one's life, Silkenat revealed that the greater sympathy for its victims came as a result of changing "attitudes toward suicides [that] resulted from a collective realization that while individuals chose to commit suicide, the community as a whole shared in some measure for the conditions that drove them to end their lives."⁴⁸⁷ Additionally, Silkenat noticed a trend in which the circumstances of some suicides became purposefully ambiguous, perhaps reflective of a desire to shift from undesirable terminology. According to Silkenat, some obituaries mentioned the means of death vaguely, choosing instead to dwell upon an individual's abilities or virtues, instead of including the typically condescending term of suicide.⁴⁸⁸

One of the postwar suicides connected to a veteran of the siege of Petersburg was that of Captain Robert D. Graham, a veteran of Company D, 56th North Carolina Infantry. During the siege of Petersburg, Captain Graham and his brother, John, were wounded during the desperate Confederate assault upon Fort Stedman on March 25, 1865.⁴⁸⁹ Robert D. Graham wrote to his mother on April 25, 1865, about their respective conditions. Captain Graham wrote "I have about recovered the entire use of my leg and havent thrown away my crutch yet as I do not wish to suffer any further from my wound, if possible. John is improving much more rapidly than

⁴⁸⁶ David Silkenat, *Moments of Despair: Suicide, Divorce, and Debt in Civil War Era North Carolina* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2011), 25. While the book focused on a particular state, the changing conceptions of suicide during the Civil War and postwar is relevant to the larger South.

⁴⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 25-26.

⁴⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 38.

⁴⁸⁹ Captain Robert D. Graham to his mother, Susannah Sarah Washington, April 25, 1865, Folder 213, in the William A. Graham Papers, #285, Southern Historical Collection, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, accessed March 18, 2017, <http://blogs.lib.unc.edu/civilwar/index.php/2015/04/25/25-april-1865/>.

either had expected Uses two crutches and can get about the room very well.”⁴⁹⁰ Robert also attempted to put a positive message to his mother in the midst of defeat and personal suffering: “The trip to Appomattox Court House injured me considerably, but as I before said I have almost entirely recovered.”⁴⁹¹ While Captain Graham proclaimed he was getting better, his suicide years later revealed a much different picture. Nevertheless, in the years leading up to his death, Robert wrote the regimental history for the 56th North Carolina Infantry that appeared in *Histories of the Several Regiments and Battalions from North Carolina in the Great War 1861-'65*. According to the regimental history, “a solid column of blue appears upon the rising ground to our front and right . . . down they dash only to be repulsed by the steady volleys from our line . . . As a protection against the flank fire we dig the loose earth and form ridges between which to lie . . . Gates was instantly killed, and the Captain wounded in the leg.”⁴⁹² His brother, Major John Graham, was also wounded “[i]n this enfilade, Major Graham fell, pierced through both legs by the same ball.”⁴⁹³

Despite writing an account of his regimental history for posterity, thereby transmitting its bravery and sacrifices to a new generation, Captain Graham was ultimately unable to cope with lingering effects of the siege. The *Daily Press* from Newport News, Virginia, published an account of his suicide in 1905, only four years after his regimental history was published. The article, “Leaped Six Stories to Terrible Death: Confederate Soldier, Lawyer and Son of Former Cabinet Officer, Commits Suicide,” described the circumstances surrounding his death. Captain Graham was “a lawyer 65 years old, who served in the Confederate army throughout the Civil War and the son of a former cabinet officer, [who] leaped from the portico of a window of the sixth floor of an apartment house today and was so seriously injured that he died a few

⁴⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁴⁹¹ Ibid.

⁴⁹² Robert D. Graham, “Fifty-Sixth Regiment,” in *Histories of the Several Regiments and Battalions from North Carolina in the Great War 1861-'65*, ed. Walter Clark (Goldsboro, NC: Nash Brothers, Book and Job Printers, 1901), 3:391.

⁴⁹³ Ibid., 392.

minutes after being picked up.”⁴⁹⁴ Furthermore, the article attributed the cause to being “ill for some time and it is thought that he became despondent.”⁴⁹⁵ His suicide could be viewed in contrast to his brother, Major John Washington Graham, who lived until 1928 and is buried at Saint Matthews Episcopal Church in Orange County, North Carolina. Engraved upon his tombstone is the phrase, “The Souls of the Righteous are in the Hands of God.”⁴⁹⁶ No such religious inscription marks the grave of Captain Graham, although his Confederate service is acknowledged.⁴⁹⁷ For Captain Graham, it was important to set his honorable legacy as a soldier for posterity, however it was not enough to overcome lingering effects that drove him to feel despondent. For his brother, the focus upon Christianity postwar was one coping mechanism which assisted in dealing with lingering difficulties from the siege. However, it is impossible to know the extent of physical or mental suffering that might have plagued Captain Graham, leading to his eventual suicide. However, both brothers sustained injuries in the siege, applied various coping mechanisms in hopes of readjusting, however one could not readjust, reflecting that suffering was not uniform and for a variety of reasons, not everyone would make it.

Some Confederate veterans even shockingly resorted to suicide after having taken esteemed public positions in bettering the lives of their fellow veterans. Charles P. Bigger was a veteran of Company A, 46th Virginia Infantry, and likewise chose to commit suicide postwar. According to a regimental history, Bigger was promoted to captain on June 17, 1864 and was also wounded in combat that day by fracturing his left humerus in the defense of Petersburg.⁴⁹⁸ His 1888 application for a Virginia Confederate pension described his injury as happening “[i]n

⁴⁹⁴ “Leaped Six Stories to Terrible Death: Confederate Soldier, Lawyer and Son of Former Cabinet Officer, Commits Suicide,” *Daily Press*, June 28, 1905, accessed March 18, 2017, <http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83045830/1905-06-28/ed-1/seq-1/>.

⁴⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹⁶ “Maj John Washington Graham,” Find A Grave, July 26, 2007, accessed December 11, 2016, <http://findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?page=gr&GRid=20645924>.

⁴⁹⁷ “Capt Robert Davidson Graham,” Find A Grave, August 22, 2007, accessed December 11, 2016, <http://findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?page=gr&GRid=21077356>.

⁴⁹⁸ Collins, *46th Virginia Infantry*, 96.

repelling an attack of the Enemy in front of Petersburg, Va.”⁴⁹⁹ Furthermore, his injury required a “[r]esection of left shoulder joint and Four & one half inches . . . of humerus removed.”⁵⁰⁰

According to Bigger, the injury sustained in the defense of Petersburg “wholly incapacitates me from performing manual labor, being equivalent to the loss of my arm.”⁵⁰¹ For Bigger, the injury effectively ended his combat career as he was moved to the Invalid Corp that fall, before being appointed to a court recorder position in January of 1865 at Raleigh, North Carolina.⁵⁰²

His life postwar reflected his willingness to use resources available for veterans to cope, both institutional and social. However, despite his apparent attempt to transition to postwar life, he remained a deeply troubled veteran who felt no recourse but to commit suicide. His obituary appeared in a lengthy article titled, “Bullet in His Head: Capt. Chas. P. Bigger Ends His Sufferings,” which made front page news in the *Richmond Dispatch*. The article provided details of his untimely death: “Captain Charles P. Bigger, commandant of the Soldiers’ Home for Confederate Veterans, committed suicide yesterday afternoon . . . by shooting himself through the head with a revolver. Captain Bigger’s mind has been affected for some time on account of a protracted ill-health, and his untimely end is attributed to this cause.”⁵⁰³ Apparently, this was not the first such attempt: “[H]e went to the room of one of the veterans . . . took a seat in a chair, and suddenly, without any warning, drew from his pocket the pistol, and, with trembling hands, thrust the muzzle of the gun in his mouth. Mr. James quickly grabbed the pistol from his hands and turned it over to Captain Bigger’s sister-in-law.”⁵⁰⁴ Witnesses reported that just before his suicide, Bigger appeared “to be in a disturbed frame of mind, and was rather incoherent in his talk and actions; but as he was known to suffer from severe nervousness and

⁴⁹⁹ Charles P. Bigger, Act of 1888, Pension Applications, LVA.

⁵⁰⁰ Ibid.

⁵⁰¹ Ibid.

⁵⁰² Collins, *46th Virginia Infantry*, 96.

⁵⁰³ “Bullet in His Head: Capt. Chas. P. Bigger Ends His Sufferings,” *Richmond Dispatch*, March 8, 1902, accessed March 18, 2017, <http://virginiachronicle.com/cgi-bin/virginia?a=d&d=RD19020308.1.1#>.

⁵⁰⁴ Ibid.

insomnia, his conduct did not especially attract the attention.”⁵⁰⁵

Nevertheless, Bigger’s obituary seemingly reflected Sommerville’s analysis that societal conceptions about suicides were changing in the South. While noting his recent “marked signs of physical and mental decline,” it also noted to readers that Bigger “wore the Confederate gray uniform at the time of his death.”⁵⁰⁶ The paper also reminded readers of his sacrifices as a Confederate soldier, as “Captain Bigger was severely wounded in the left upper arm, and it was found necessary to remove the greater portion of the bone from that member.”⁵⁰⁷ The obituary also intentionally reprinted the text of his promotion letter from General Wise: ““He has always proved a meritorious officer, competent, diligent, and without reproach, except the honor of his wound . . . I know of none better entitled to promotion for merit.””⁵⁰⁸ Clearly, the closing of the obituary wanted readers to remember the legacy of his Confederate service, in spite of his unfortunate end. By harkening back to his injury in the war, it reinforced the view that in spite of his death being through suicide, Bigger was still deemed a worthy Confederate. Bigger’s death also illustrated how despite running a Confederate Soldiers’ Home and being involved with the United Confederate Veterans in Richmond, it was still not enough to compensate for his prolonged suffering.⁵⁰⁹

Veterans who had difficulty adjusting to postwar life occasionally needed the services of mental institutions. For some, the existing forms of support, such as Confederate disability assistance, pensions, soldiers’ homes, and veterans organizations were simply not enough to restore them mentally. State mental institutions occasionally had to treat Confederate veterans who had become too problematic for their families, communities, or other institutions.

According to historian McClurken, “Virginia’s asylums took their place as part of a postwar

⁵⁰⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁰⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁰⁷ Ibid., 6.

⁵⁰⁸ General Wise, Letter recommending Bigger for promotion to captain, in Ibid.

⁵⁰⁹ “Bullet in His Head,” *Richmond Dispatch*, March 8, 1902, 6.

system in which the state took on responsibilities that families were unable to fulfill, caring for, or even ‘curing,’ men and women apparently affected by the war.”⁵¹⁰ Furthermore, while precise causes of mental illness are difficult to state, McClurken found that the trauma of fighting in the Civil War and postwar uncertainties led several to be admitted into Virginia’s mental institutions.⁵¹¹ According to McClurken, veterans often “found themselves forced to deal with the unpleasant legacies of the conflict, especially the daunting task of caring for one’s family in a postwar world dominated by economic hardship and poverty.”⁵¹²

John T. Williams, a veteran of Company C, 12th Virginia Infantry, was one such individual who faced these challenges postwar. In his 1887 application for a commutation payment, Williams stated that “I humbly ask if you will please be so kind as to let me have it as soon as you can consistently do so. I would not intrude . . . but for the fact that I really need it for family necessities.”⁵¹³ He closed his attached letter with the statement he was “[h]oping for approval and pardon I have the honor to remain.”⁵¹⁴ Despite his appeal for honor and stressing the urgency for financial assistance, it would not be enough to help Williams readjust. Williams would need the R.E. Lee Camp No.1 Confederate Soldiers’ Home in order to survive and was admitted in 1898. This began a series of stops for him that included time both at the home and also Eastern State Hospital in Williamsburg, a state mental institution. On admission to the soldiers’ home, his comrades in the A.P. Hill Camp of Confederate Veterans wrote that “[s]ince the war he has at times been a great sufferer . . . [and] has no strength for sustained labor, and can get no work on that account.”⁵¹⁵ However, his record at the soldiers’ home revealed a veteran with more challenges to overcome than just the inability to work. His record revealed that he was sent to the Eastern State Hospital on August 5, 1903, subsequently “healed” and sent back to

⁵¹⁰ McClurken, *Take Care of the Living*, 119.

⁵¹¹ *Ibid.*, 120, 124.

⁵¹² *Ibid.*, 123-124.

⁵¹³ John T. Williams, Act of 1882, Commutation Applications, LVA.

⁵¹⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵¹⁵ John T. Williams, Application for Admission to Lee Camp Soldiers’ Home, LVA.

Richmond on September 3, 1903, before being released later that week on his request.⁵¹⁶

Despite being wounded at Seven Pines and the Crater, as attested to on his application for admission, Williams appeared to have suffered with mental illness postwar, perhaps accelerated by his injuries in the war.⁵¹⁷ In a letter to the soldiers' home, his wife wrote that "I am going to ask you a favor please for my sake don't never send him to Williamsburg or any other Lunatic Asylum . . . he has a sister there been there for 15 years . . . I am Truly sorry I got in that family . . . William is going around here like a Vagabond."⁵¹⁸ Williams was sent to the Eastern State Hospital earlier that year for a variety of symptoms, such as having "Epileptic fits, and to show a quarrelsome disposition . . . signs of insanity to such a degree, that his room mates complained of him . . . soon after which he began to have hallucinations of various kinds."⁵¹⁹ Alice Williams letters revealed a husband who seemingly came from a family of prospect for mental illness, undoubtedly intensified by the inability to work postwar. He apparently was never cured as Eastern State Hospital stated, and unable to function normally in society. Within three years, Williams would again call upon the soldiers' home to help sustain himself. His 1906 application contained a letter to the secretary, O.B. Morgan, in which Williams explicitly stated the pain of feeling "my degradation very keenly."⁵²⁰ This application also included a letter in which Williams wrote "it would be a shame to the city to drive me to the Alms House, I want to go where I can receive medical treatment."⁵²¹ In this statement, Williams acknowledged the societal viewpoint that Confederate veterans were worthy receipts of aid, and not to be viewed as the typical poor of society.

John T. Williams represented the Confederate veteran who tried the various forms of assistance available to help veterans readjust to postwar life but still could not overcome. His

⁵¹⁶ Ibid.

⁵¹⁷ Ibid.

⁵¹⁸ Alice Williams to Commandant A.C. Peny, September 10, 1903, in Ibid.

⁵¹⁹ "Record of Veteran John T. Williams at Lee Camp Soldiers' Home," December 3, 1903, in Ibid.

⁵²⁰ John T. Williams to O.B. Morgan, July 2, 1906, in Ibid.

⁵²¹ John T. Williams, Application for Admission to Lee Camp Soldiers' Home, LVA.

complex records with the state reveal that he tried for Confederate disability assistance, as well as using resources such as the Lee Camp Soldiers' Home and mental institutions.⁵²² The difficult aspect is in deciding how much of a contributing factor the siege of Petersburg was to his postwar psychological and physical problems. While Alice Williams provided us a sense that mental health issues ran in the family, it is safe to state that the war did not help John T. Williams. In the article, "Physical and Mental Health Costs of Traumatic War Experiences Among Civil War Veterans," three medical researchers analyzed the role of traumatic wartime experiences and related it to postwar ailments, such as nervous diseases and physical diseases. One of their findings was that "[w]hile war trauma was moderately associated with developing signs of GI, cardiac, or nervous disease alone, it was strongly associated with developing signs of nervous and physical disease in combination."⁵²³ Additionally, the authors stated that postwar signs of disease included ailments such as "other mental health problems such as anxiety, depression . . . hysteria, insanity, and mania, as well as physical ailments of the nervous system."⁵²⁴ These physical ailments affecting the nervous system included both paralysis and epilepsy, which are referenced in the material on John T. Williams.⁵²⁵ In summary, Williams's service and experiences in the siege of Petersburg with the 12th Virginia Infantry might have served to aggravate his mental state, causing a combination of psychological and nervous system reactions that made it difficult for his wife, family, or any institution to manage.

For Confederate veterans of the siege who experienced profound personal losses, all the coping mechanisms available could not fully compensate for irrevocable loss. Veterans who dealt with profound loss were impaired in their ability to readjust as fully as possible.

⁵²² Confederate veteran John T. Williams had to return to Eastern State Mental Hospital in Williamsburg where he died on March 19, 1908. See William D. Henderson, *12th Virginia Infantry*, The Virginia Regimental Histories Series (Lynchburg: H.E. Howard, Inc., 1984), 165.

⁵²³ Judith Pizarro, Roxane Cohen Silver, and JoAnn Prause, "Physical and Mental Health Costs of Traumatic War Experiences Among Civil War Veterans," *Archives of General Psychiatry* 63, no. 2 (February 2006): 193-200. (Appears in Abstract, p. 7).

⁵²⁴ *Ibid.*, 5

⁵²⁵ *Ibid.*

The siege of Petersburg, and other intensive campaigns for that matter, meant that families often did not get the closure associated with burying a loved one. James Madison Hough was a veteran of Company K, 6th South Carolina Cavalry, and lost a brother during the siege of Petersburg. In an article entitled, “Visits Scenes of Battles of Half a Century Ago,” Hough described the loss of his brother, Amos, during the siege. Hough wrote of his relation to Petersburg, “I have a noble brother lost somewhere there around the trenches, but no trace could I find of him. A hired man, perhaps a Yankee, stays around the crater and pretends to know everything about it . . . I told him on principle I refused to pay it-[fee] a place I had helped to make historic by deeds of sacrifice.”⁵²⁶ Hough gave the modern reader a view of how the loss of relatives and comrades carried on for these veterans the rest of their lives. Hough continued, “our gallant boys sleep, lost and neglected, on the sacred soil of old Virginia, and must and can I forget the war, with its unequal contest and continued insults?”⁵²⁷ Hough’s writing reflected over half a century of loss and heartbreak from not knowing where the final resting place of his brother Amos was. Amos Hough was a member of Company E, 22nd South Carolina Infantry, and was apparently killed late in the siege, but perhaps his brother thought he died at the Crater. However, Amos Hough’s regiment suffered tremendous losses in the explosion of the Crater.⁵²⁸

In spite of his personal loss and lingering burden of not knowing where his lost brother’s remains rested, Hough attempted to turn it into a call for action. Hough wrote, “I would like to drop a few thoughts on the reconstruction period . . . If the great State of South Carolina can’t give the dependent Confederate boys a pension commensurate with their deeds and sufferings, just abolish what you have done- call it a shame.”⁵²⁹ His brother’s death at Petersburg and his own service in the siege as a cavalryman coalesced his mindset about postwar veterans

⁵²⁶ James Madison Hough, “Visits Scenes of Battles of Half a Century Ago,” in *Stories of the Confederacy*, ed. U.R. Brooks (Columbia: The State Company, 1912), 53.

⁵²⁷ Ibid.

⁵²⁸ “22nd Regiment, South Carolina Infantry,” National Park Service, accessed December 11, 2016, <https://www.nps.gov/civilwar/search-battle-units-detail.htm?battleUnitCode=CSC0022RI>.

⁵²⁹ “Last Days of the Confederacy,” *Stories of the Confederacy*, 307.

assistance. While never truly recovering from the loss of his brother, James Madison Hough readjusted as best he could. His tombstone inscription reads “A Statesman, A Christian, Who Loved His Fellowman.”⁵³⁰ While never able to forget the pain of the loss of his brother, Hough used what the siege of Petersburg took away from him in as constructive manner as possible, through his concern for fellow veterans and strong Christian faith. James Madison Hough, in at least partially coping, was more symbolic of the average Confederate veteran than the previous examples, as most fought to endure despite the hardships and limitations placed upon them in the postwar South.

Confederate veterans trudged wearily home to their communities having experienced both tremendous individual suffering and also societal upheaval. The agricultural order and society as they had known it was completely transformed. As members of a defeated cause with no existing central government, they needed assistance to readjust to postwar life, but would ultimately have to wait many years for their states to carry the mantle. In the meantime, they had to rely on their Christian faith, soldierly camaraderie, and coping mechanisms repurposed from the siege. In terms of Christianity, most endured and kept the faith postwar, reconciling that sin was to blame for defeat and that God would ultimately vindicate them. This thesis argues that the firm reliance on Protestant Christianity postwar was of paramount importance to who readjusted successfully and who did not. Christianity, therefore remained the anchor for most of these veterans postwar, even if it had to be reassessed in the midst of agonizing defeat. The number of veterans who chose to enter the ministry postwar demonstrated that faith was an individual and collective force in the South unlike any other. Unit camaraderie, notions of Southern honor, literary endeavors, and the emergence of veterans’ organizations could uplift their spirits and grant them dignity, but they could not solve everything. Structural support began to emerge in the decade after the war with artificial limbs, transitioned into disability assistance

⁵³⁰ “James Madison 'Matt' Hough,” Find A Grave, September 14, 2008, accessed December 11, 2016, <http://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?page=gr&GRid=29794668>.

through commutation payments, and eventually resulted in permanent pensions around the late-1880s to early-1890s, for most Southern states. The emergence of soldiers' homes in this same era served as an extension of this institutional support, further legitimizing these veterans as honorable despite defeat. However, for a small minority, the effects of the siege were simply too much, resulting in suicides, postwar mental crises, and prolonged grief that inhibited their postwar readjustment.

A Hallowed Place: The Commemoration and Preservation of the Petersburg Battlefields

The importance of the Petersburg campaign and its legacy undoubtedly influenced the eventual push for commemorating and preserving the battlefields for future generations. Initially, Petersburg became a place for seekers and tourists to flock to in order to catch a glimpse of the landscape for which so many had fought and died. In the publication *A Guide to the Fortifications and Battlefields around Petersburg*, readers learned about the complexities of the campaign and what Confederate soldiers had to endure. The guide was first published in 1866 for visitors to the area by the owner of Jarratt's Hotel in Petersburg, and even included an advertisement for coach tours since "[t]he bloodiest battles of the late war were fought in the vicinity of Petersburg, and all lovers of pleasure should visit the grounds."⁵³¹ The publication touched on important aspects that soldiers would have wrestled with during the siege, but that the general public would not have known to such an extent. In dealing with the intensified war and sharpshooters, "[c]an such a system of warfare be justifiable? Can the killing of an enemy, by the deadly aim of a sharp-shooter, be pardon-able, when two opposing armies are lying quietly in their entrenchments and not engaged in heated strife?"⁵³² Therefore, the publication attempted to place the psychological burdens and questions of life and death that continually faced soldiers during the siege of Petersburg to the broader public, with the goal of ensuring that the

⁵³¹ Phillip F. Brown, *A Guide to the Fortifications and Battlefields around Petersburg, with a Splendid Map, From Actual Surveys made by the U.S. Engineer Department* (Petersburg: John B. Ege's Printing House, 1869), insert advertisement, VHS.

⁵³² *Ibid.*, 9.

significance of what events transpired there were not lost upon them.

Battlefield visitor guides often contained language that spoke in sensational terms, meant to enthrall and captivate visitors. According to the guide, “leave it to the imagination of the reader to think over the deadly combat that surged like a mighty sulphuric billow over this memorable ground [Crater]. Wright’s brave Georgians, and Saunders’ immortalized Alabamians, participated in the conflict . . . [as] the Confederate banner floated defiantly over the vast chasm.”⁵³³ Finally, the guide also attempted to provide the visitor with a greater knowledge of the human suffering that soldiers endured there. Written in a rhetorical fashion, the guide continued, “[h]ow the men survived during the heat of the summer and the cold of winter, is incomprehensible. What can their habitation be likened unto? . . . It is a complete system of burrowing, in imitation of rats and moles . . . [and] the men became demoralized; want of good wholesome diet, combined with these causes, was enough to dispirit the bravest heart.”⁵³⁴

Illustrating that the horrors of the siege did not undermine the stronger feelings veterans had of fostering their legacies, they chose to return to the hallowed grounds they had once made memorable on account of their sacrifices. Lee A. Wallace, Jr., author of *A History of Petersburg National Battlefield to 1956*, wrote that about thirty five veterans from General Mahone’s command made a pilgrimage to the Crater on May 11, 1875.⁵³⁵ However, it was not until the 1880s and 1890s that significant steps towards preserving battlefields associated with the siege were made. Wallace wrote that the 1880s witnessed reunions of both sides that exemplified that “the feeling of animosity was dying out among the aging ex-soldiers and the public as well.”⁵³⁶ It was in this spirit of national reconciliation that progress began to occur towards preserving the sacred grounds at Petersburg. The first step of any significance was the formation of the Petersburg National Battlefield Park Association. The *Petersburg Daily Index Appeal* ran an

⁵³³ Ibid., 12.

⁵³⁴ Ibid., 15.

⁵³⁵ Wallace, *A History of Petersburg National Battlefield to 1956*, 34.

⁵³⁶ Ibid., 43.

article on March 26, 1898, outlining the goals for the organization and a plan of action. First, the committee that created the association was comprised of “the common council, the chamber of commerce, the tobacco exchange, A.P. Hill Camp of Confederate Veterans and George H. Thomas Post of the Grand Army of the Republic.”⁵³⁷ Therefore, it was truly a community and mutually supported effort done in the spirit of national reconciliation among white Americans. Not surprisingly, one of the paramount goals was forming a committee that would suggest locations and territory to preserve within the park.⁵³⁸

In the article, “Battlefield Park. Address to the People of Petersburg, Prince George and Dinwiddie- Action Taken at the Meeting Last Night,” Confederate veteran George S. Bernard’s address was reprinted on advocating for a park. Bernard, a veteran of the siege and member of the A.P. Hill Camp of Confederate Veterans, gave an address to local residents:

[F]rom that [day] on the 9th of June, 1864, when the old men and boys of Petersburg and Prince George distinguished themselves in their fight with the Federal Cavalry, to the assaults and counter-assaults made along the lines on Sunday, the 2nd day of April, 1865, the last day of the siege of Petersburg, deeds of splendid valor were done, and they were done by men of all ranks and by men of both armies, deeds whereof the people of the whole country are justly proud. It is proposed to mark, whilst the survivors of the great struggle still live, the places where these memorable acts were done, where these great armies confronted each other and wrestled for the mastery for more than nine months, in order that in after years the students of military history, the descendants, kinsmen and countrymen of the men who made these places famous, may better understand and appreciate.⁵³⁹

Clearly, Bernard’s forceful message was intended for readers of the paper to understand the pivotal role that the Petersburg campaign played, as well as the fact that the valor exemplified there must not be forgotten by succeeding generations. Bernard closed by reminding local residents that “the park will make the city of Petersburg and the portions of the counties of

⁵³⁷ “Plan of Organization,” *Petersburg Daily Index Appeal*, March 26, 1898.

⁵³⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵³⁹ “Battlefield Park. Address to the People of Petersburg, Prince George and Dinwiddie- Action Taken at the Meeting Last Night,” *Petersburg Daily Index Appeal*, April 5, 1898.

Prince George and Dinwiddie . . . a source of attraction, to the great benefit of their people, [and] cannot be questioned.”⁵⁴⁰ However, it would be years before Bernard’s vision was fulfilled.

On February 11, 1925, the United State Congress passed a bill entitled *An Act To provide for the inspection of the battle fields of the siege of Petersburg, Virginia*.⁵⁴¹ Essentially, the act “provided for the appointment of a commission by the Secretary of War to study the feasibility of preserving and marking the battlefields at Petersburg for historical and professional military study.”⁵⁴² The commission was comprised of Francis A. Pope, an engineer officer, Union veteran James Anderson, and Confederate “veteran” Carter R. Bishop.⁵⁴³ According to Wallace, Bishop served only days as a soldier, but was accepted as an honorable veteran by the local United Confederate Veterans camp and was dedicated to the task at hand.⁵⁴⁴ Once completed, the commission’s report called for “a hard surfaced road along the lines of both armies, with the acquisition of land which would include Union Forts Stedman, Haskell, Rice, Sedgwick, Davis, Wadsworth, and Fisher; and Confederate Forts Walker and Gregg, Battery Pegram and the Crater.”⁵⁴⁵ The park was to comprise approximately 185 acres with the estimated park development cost of \$1,035,000, which included landscaping, building roads, and installing monuments and memorials.⁵⁴⁶

On July 3, 1926, President Calvin Coolidge signed the legislation passed by Congress entitled, *An Act To establish a national military park at the battle fields of the siege of Petersburg, Virginia*.⁵⁴⁷ Stated in the legislation was the goal of commemorating “the campaign and siege and defense of Petersburg, Virginia, in 1864 and 1865 and to preserve for historical purposes the breastworks, earthworks, walls, or other defenses or shelters used by the armies

⁵⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁵⁴¹ Wallace, *A History of Petersburg National Battlefield to 1956*, Appendix C.

⁵⁴² Ibid., 58.

⁵⁴³ Ibid., 58-59.

⁵⁴⁴ Ibid., 59.

⁵⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁴⁶ Ibid., 59-60.

⁵⁴⁷ Ibid., 60, 81.

therein the battle fields at Petersburg.”⁵⁴⁸ Furthermore, the establishment of the park encouraged active participation of the states who had supplied soldiers during the siege. According to the legislation, representatives of the states who supplied soldiers for the siege may “enter upon the lands and approaches of the Petersburg National Military Park for the purpose of ascertaining and marking the lines of battle of troops engaged therein.”⁵⁴⁹ This is consequential when considering that the states would need these rights in order to create memorials honoring the sacrifices of their veterans, pending approval from the Secretary of War. With the Petersburg National Military Park thus established, the memories and sacrifices of the soldiers on both sides, who endured the immense challenges this thesis covers, gained their rightful place among this country’s preserved and hallowed parks. However, the establishment of the park in the 1920s did not mean that the siege became an irrelevant national topic.

The significance of the siege of Petersburg has not been lost on current Virginia politicians, reflected by the recent advocacy and legislation submitted for preserving more surrounding battlefields for future generations.⁵⁵⁰ According to a recent article by the Civil War Trust, in December of 2016, the United States Congress included legislation in the *National Defense Authorization Act*, H. Report 114-840, S. Rept. 114-255, which significantly increased the size of the Petersburg National Military Park.⁵⁵¹ Broadly speaking, the legislation allowed for “the National Park Service to incorporate historic battlefield lands previously located outside the park boundary,” such as those being currently preserved by the Civil War Trust.⁵⁵² The passage

⁵⁴⁸ Ibid., Appendix C, 81-82.

⁵⁴⁹ Ibid., 82-83.

⁵⁵⁰ The legislation for Petersburg National Battlefield is titled *The Petersburg National Battlefield Boundary Modification Act*, which was included in the *National Defense Authorization Act*, and introduced by Virginia Senators Mark Warner and Tim Kaine on March 11, 2015. “Warner, Kaine Introduce Legislation to Authorize Expanded Petersburg National Battlefield,” Mark R. Warner: U.S. Senator from the Commonwealth of Virginia, March 11, 2015, accessed February 20, 2017, <http://www.warner.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/pressreleases?ID=90F28CFA-9A45-42D7-A815-EBBE7D406319>.

⁵⁵¹ “Congress Approves Major Expansion of Petersburg National Battlefield: Legislation authorizes expansion of Petersburg National Battlefield by more than 7,000 acres, potentially making the battlefield one of largest national historical parks in the United States,” Civil War Trust, December 8, 2016, accessed February 20, 2017, <http://www.civilwar.org/aboutus/news/news-releases/2016-news/congress-approves-petersburg-battlefield-expansion.html>.

of the bill now allowed for “the lands preserved by the Trust – along with properties protected by other conservation organizations . . . [to] be seamlessly integrated into the park, to enhance the visitor and learning experience.”⁵⁵³ The bill was created by a delegation of Virginia politicians, including Senators Mark Warner and Tim Kaine, and Representatives Bobby Scott and Randy Forbes.⁵⁵⁴ According to the Civil War Trust, the bill applied to areas of significant importance such as “Five Forks, Peebles’ Farm, Ream’s Station, the Crater . . . and the Petersburg Breakthrough.”⁵⁵⁵ Currently, the park is responsible for preserving “approximately 2,700 acres, and includes sites such as Gen. Ulysses S. Grant’s headquarters at City Point in Hopewell, as well as other land in Dinwiddie County and the City of Petersburg, such as Poplar Grove National Cemetery.”⁵⁵⁶ Therefore, the potential to expand the boundaries over 7,000 acres means that the hallowed ground surrounding Petersburg on which soldiers valiantly fought and died can be preserved and set aside as sacred space for future generations of visitors.

The siege of Petersburg was the defining moment of a lifetime for many of the veterans who were fortunate to survive over nine months of intensified warfare. Others were not so lucky, and their deaths made the ground consecrated on the notion of honor and sacrifice. In the whirlwind of activity immediately after the campaign and Lee’s surrender, Petersburg became a destination of sorts to see what the ravages of war looked like. Over time, veterans began to realize that the ground on which they fought, many as young men, deserved commemoration and preservation. For the Confederate veterans, commemorating and preserving sites of the siege of Petersburg meant retaining Southern honor and manhood in defeat and instilling the importance of what they did there to a new generation, a generation in which their history would be written by the victors. For the Union veterans, it was a place to remember duty and sacrifice

⁵⁵² Ibid.

⁵⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁵⁶ Ibid.

as well, although as victors they were different than their Confederate counterparts. As united Americans, both sides realized in the interests of national reconciliation it was beneficial to honor and preserve what took place there during over nine months of siege warfare, the likes of which our nation had never before witnessed.

While the movement towards preserving the lands comprising the siege of Petersburg began when many veterans were still alive, they were rapidly aging and very few were fortunate to live to see the ultimate completion. However, many local former Confederates such as George S. Bernard worked diligently in the initial stages to create a sense of urgency and vision for preservation. Their labors undoubtedly served as a stimulus towards motivating the public and political leaders to preserve the battlefields around Petersburg. The recent legislation of the past few years is an example of how the importance and relevance of the siege of Petersburg is with us today as Americans. As this thesis demonstrated, it was the site of more than just battles, but rather of a struggle for the soul of the nation and what kind of society would ultimately endure. It is rightly fitting that the commemoration and preservation at Petersburg of some of the Civil War's most remarkable ground remains a contemporary issue, illustrating that the human experiences that occurred there, some of which are portrayed, are not lost but rather preserved for the good of the citizenry.

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Appendix



Figure 1: *Petersburg, Virginia. Confederate breastworks in front of Petersburg, April 3, 1865*, Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division, <http://www.loc.gov/pictures/resource/cwpb.02627/> (accessed February 13, 2017). This photograph, taken the day after the Union breakthrough, revealed the desolate landscape that Confederate soldiers inhabited for over nine months of grueling siege warfare. In this barren environment, Confederate soldiers were tested as never before, due to an intensified war with rapidly declining material resources and possibilities for eventual success. For the Confederate soldiers who endured in this environment, soldierly coping mechanisms were refined to match the new intensity of the war.



Figure 2: *Petersburg, Virginia. Confederate breastworks in front of Petersburg. (The small mounds with chimneys are soldier's quarters under ground)*, April 3, 1865, Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division, <http://www.loc.gov/pictures/resource/cwpb.02624/> (accessed February 13, 2017). This photograph, taken the day after the Union breakthrough, captured some of the living arrangements for Confederate soldiers at Petersburg. Numerous Confederate soldiers at Petersburg wrote letters home concerning living in cramped huts and their generally dismal, unforgiving environment.



Figure 3.1: Photograph of the Crater as it appeared in February 2017. This photograph was taken looking towards the direction of the Confederate counterattacks. These sharp ravines and depressions are all that remain to illustrate the explosion of approximately 8,000 pounds of powder beneath the Confederate position at this site early on the morning of July 30th, 1864. Photograph courtesy of Matthew R. Lempke.



Figure 3.2: Interior Angle of the Crater as it appeared in February 2017. Notice the cannon and fence towards the top of the photograph for a sense of the Crater's current depth. The fighting that occurred in this depression and through the connected traverses truly exemplified the intensified nature of the Civil War by this time. It was on this ground that the accelerated racial animosities, through the introduction of African American soldiers, was brought to fruition, both antagonizing and also motivating Confederate soldiers to endure. Photograph courtesy of Matthew R. Lempke.

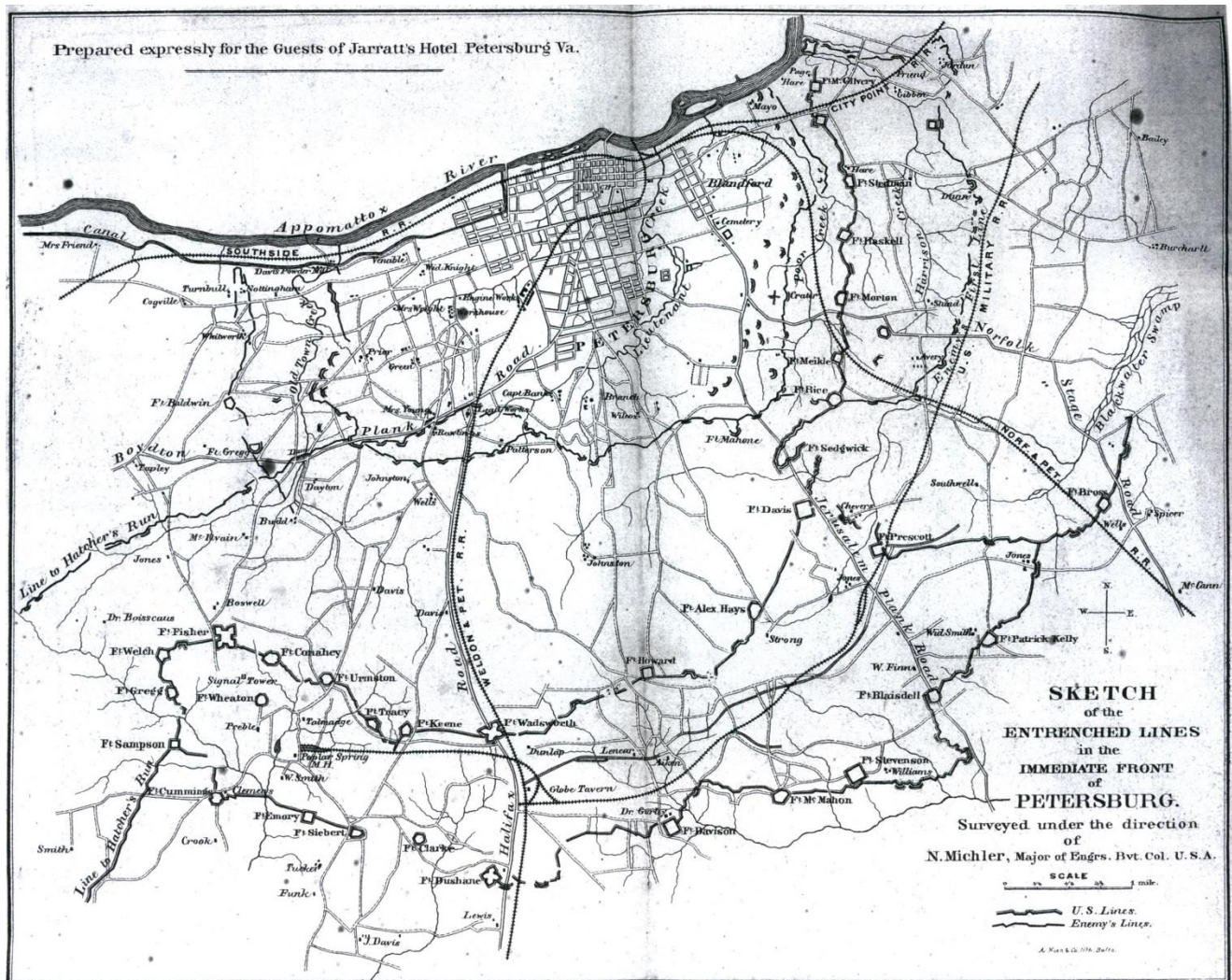


Figure 4: Sketch of the Entrenched Lines in the Immediate Front of Petersburg. Appears in Phillip F. Brown, *A Guide to the Fortifications and Battlefields around Petersburg, With a Splendid Map, From Actual Surveys made by the U.S. Engineer Department* (Petersburg: John B. Ege's Printing House, 1869). This version of a Union wartime map depicted the City of Petersburg and surrounding vicinity as it appeared during the siege. Notice the detailed focus on Union and Confederate siege lines, forts, and transportation networks such as roads and railroads. Courtesy: Virginia Historical Society, Richmond, VA.



Figure 5: Robert G. Byers Envelope from the siege of Petersburg. “Confederate Postal History – 52nd Virginia Infantry – A Captured Cover Taken from the 69th New York Irish Brigade – Great Story!,” Museum Quality Americana- Specializing in Original Civil War Memorabilia, http://www.mqamericana.com/52nd_Va_Cover_Captured.html (accessed February 13, 2017). This Civil War envelope was originally destined for the wife of a soldier from New York while at Petersburg. However, it fell into the hands of Robert G. Byers, a soldier in Company C, 52nd Virginia Infantry, who then addressed it to his mother, Letitia Byers, in Augusta County, Virginia. It appears this transfer of ownership took place only days before Byers was seriously wounded during the desperate Battle of Fort Stedman. This envelope illustrated the importance that letter writing had to soldiers on both sides, however it must have been considered a keepsake to send a captured envelope home to one’s mother or loved ones.



Figure 6.1: Confederate Soldier's Bible. This Bible belonged to A.P. Hubbard of the 4th South Carolina Infantry and was struck by a Union bullet at the Battle of First Manassas. This wartime era Bible, published by the New York American Bible Association in 1860, would have been similar to those used by Confederate soldiers during the siege of Petersburg. Christianity was often a determining factor in who endured the hardships of war, and in this case, it literally saved a soldier's life. Courtesy: The American Civil War Museum, Richmond, VA.

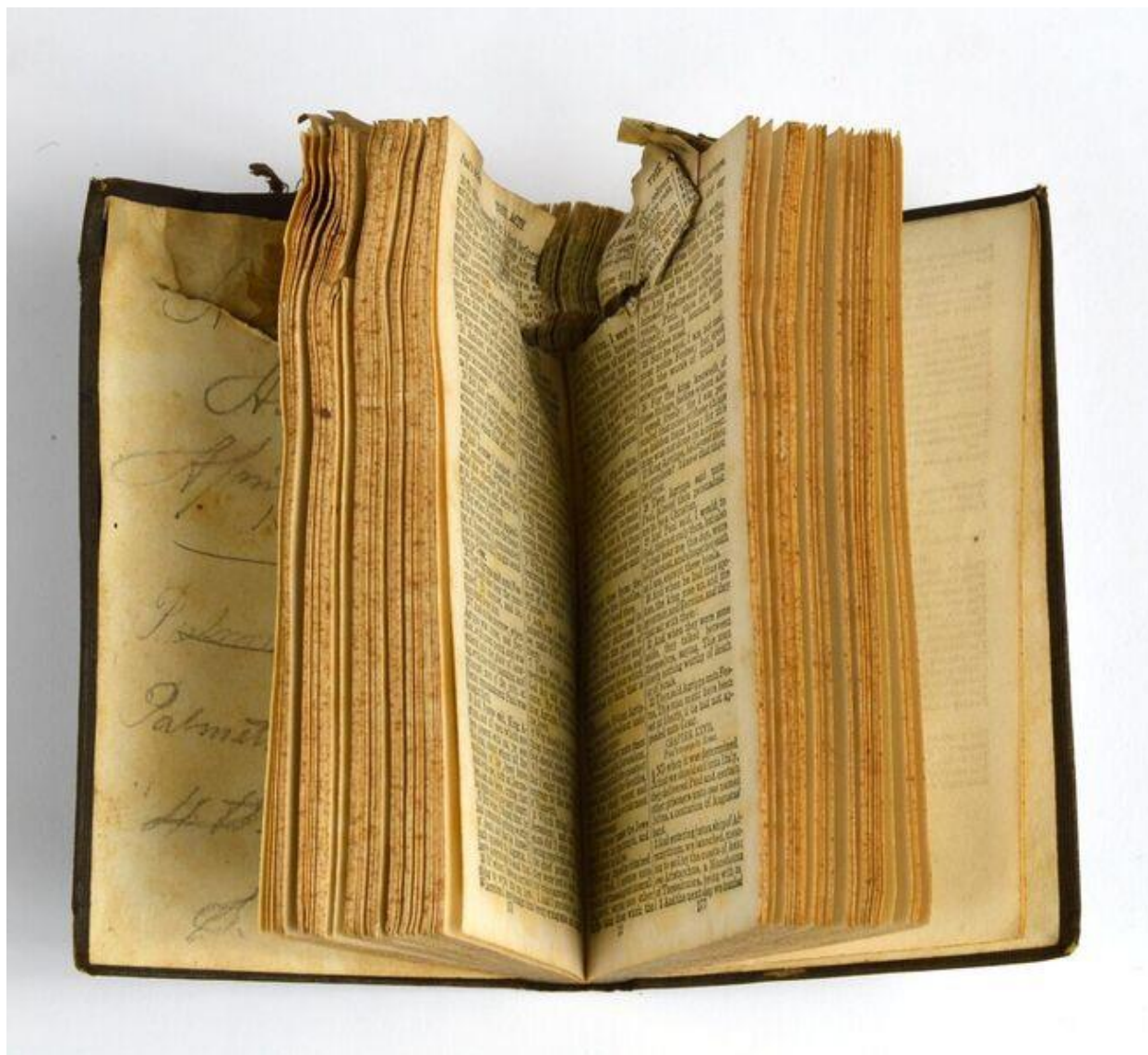


Figure 6.2: Confederate Soldier's Bible Inscription. The inscription reads: "A.P. Hubbard/
Anderson, S.C./ April 15, 1861/ Palmetto Riflemen/ 4th Reg./ S.C.V." Courtesy: The American
Civil War Museum, Richmond, VA.

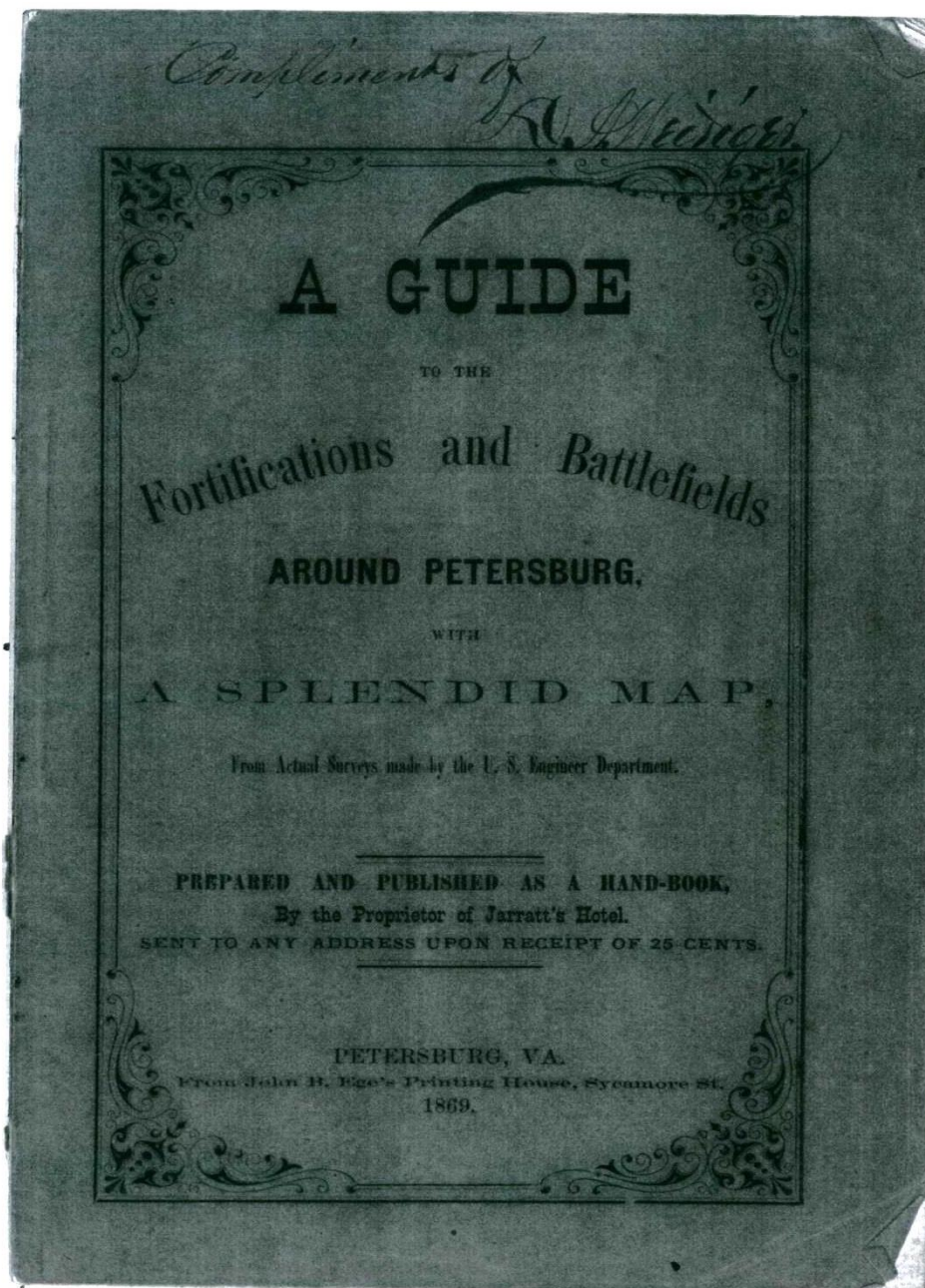


Figure 7: Battlefield guide owned and signed by Brig. General David A. Weisiger. General Weisiger led Mahone's old brigade in the Confederate counterattack at the Crater, suffering a bullet wound in the side during the charge, from which he later recovered. For Confederate veterans such as Weisiger, revisiting the Crater strengthened bonds of soldierly camaraderie developed during the siege, as well as helped to cement an honorable legacy despite defeat in the war. General Weisiger's copy reflected the lasting effect the siege had on these men for the rest of their lives. Courtesy: Virginia Historical Society, Richmond, VA.



Figure 8.1: Mahone's Brigade Veterans Reunion Badge, Front. This badge would have been worn proudly by members of Mahone's Brigade at the November 6th, 1903 veterans reunion. By wearing medals such as these postwar, Confederate veterans felt that despite defeat, their sacrifices were both appreciated and validated by the community. It was a symbol of many things, among them Southern honor, unit camaraderie, and ultimately endurance, both as a survivor of the siege and also postwar challenges. Courtesy: The American Civil War Museum, Richmond, VA.



Figure 8.2: Mahone's Brigade Veterans Reunion Badge, Inscription. Courtesy: The American Civil War Museum, Richmond, VA.



Figure 9: Confederate Veterans Posing at the R.E. Lee Camp Soldiers' Home. Appears in People: Virginia, Groups and Activities Confederate- Misc. folder, accession number 56.153.1. This undated photograph from the Richmond studio of W.W. Foster captured Confederate veterans, or inmates, of the R.E. Lee Camp Confederate Soldiers' Home in Richmond dressed in their uniforms and armed, as if ready for battle yet again. Several veterans of the siege of Petersburg had to rely on the assistance offered by this soldiers' home. While the home cared for the very neediest veterans, the relationship was essentially reciprocal. As residents, they were expected to live honorable lives, rekindle soldierly camaraderie, and ultimately through that process, craft a worthy legacy for Southerners despite defeat. Courtesy: The Valentine Museum, Richmond, VA.