Victory in Defeat: 
The Ascendancy of the Lost Cause in Appomattox Memory

By

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INTRODUCTION

The United States cannot escape the memory of the Civil War. In fact, the flag that flies above my home state’s capital building today prominently features Confederate symbols. During the Civil War, many residents of my state—some of whom held slaves—flew a red-and-white flag outside their homes to proclaim their support for the Southern war effort. After the war, state politicians incorporated this pro-Confederate design into the official flag to represent the reconciliation and reunion of the state’s citizens. This flag, first created in the 1880s, is still in use today.¹ I am not from Mississippi, whose citizens controversially decided in a 2001 referendum to keep the Confederate battle cross (the battle flag popularly recognized as the Confederate symbol) on their flag.² I am from Maryland, a state that reluctantly remained in the Union despite being a slave state, and you probably had no idea that its flag celebrated Confederate history too.

For all intents and purposes, the Confederate States of America ceased to exist almost 150 years ago when General Robert E. Lee surrendered his Army of Northern Virginia to Union commander Ulysses S. Grant on April 9, 1865. Lee’s capitulation signaled the end of the Southern states’ attempt to create a separate nation; the Union was victorious and the United States of America had abolished slavery within its borders. The Confederacy only lasted for four years, but its memory has proved indefatigable. The idea of postwar national reconciliation—the sentiment that inspired Maryland’s flag design—is a significant aspect of our collective Civil War memory. This romantic conception of reconciliation conflicts with many other features of post-bellum American history, namely the tumultuous years of military-enforced Reconstruction in the South and African Americans’ protracted struggle to claim full citizenship rights. Nevertheless, we cling

¹ “Flag History,” Maryland Office of the Secretary of State, accessed March 21, 2014,
to this idea of the Civil War’s happy ending because it gives meaning to a conflict that ended over one million American lives.\(^3\) Nothing quite encapsulates our attachment to this idea like cultural memory of Lee’s surrender to Grant at Appomattox on April 9, 1865.

There is no shortage of published work on the Civil War, and most texts that survey the war in its entirety devote considerable attention to Appomattox. To understand the general consensus on Appomattox memory, I consulted the classics in Civil War history: Shelby Foote’s *Civil War: A Narrative* (1974) and the third volume of Bruce Catton’s Civil War series, *Never Call Retreat* (1965). I examined James McPherson’s treatment of Appomattox closely in his Pulitzer Prize-winning *Battle Cry of Freedom: The Civil War Era* (1988), as this book is arguably the most current definitive text on the war. Jay Winik’s *April 1865: The Month that Saved America* (2001) was a national bestseller; I considered his account because it likely influenced recent popular opinion of surrender. Finally, I pored over Elizabeth Varon’s *Appomattox: Victory, Defeat, and Freedom at the End of the Civil War* (2013), as she has written the most recent close analysis of surrender at Appomattox.

Although the publication of these scholarly works spans approximately fifty years, my analysis revealed a relatively consistent narrative about the days leading up to—and immediately following—Robert E. Lee’s surrender to Ulysses S. Grant on April 9, 1865. It goes something like this: the Army of Northern Virginia’s last series of offensives, the Appomattox Campaign, began on March 25. The Army was spent, malnourished, and depleted in manpower, and Union forces quickly overpowered the haggard troops; the campaign was a decisive Confederate failure. Several of Lee’s lieutenants suggested that the Army of Northern Virginia take to the forest and begin a campaign of guerrilla warfare; Lee adamantly refused. On the night of April 7, citing his desire to

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avoid further bloodshed, Grant sent Lee a note asking for his surrender. Lee was initially unwilling to yield to Grant’s singular, non-negotiable condition—that the Army of Northern Virginia be henceforth disqualified from taking up arms against the United States—but agreed to a peace negotiation nonetheless. On the morning of April 9 (Palm Sunday), Union and Confederate troops engaged in one final skirmish. En route to Appomattox Court House, the town where Lee had headquartered his campaign, Grant (suffering from a splitting headache) received one final battlefield note: Lee was ready to discuss surrender terms. Grant’s headache vanished.

In the early afternoon, Grant and his personal staff of six men arrived at Wilmer McLean’s farmhouse in Appomattox. This was not the first time McLean had hosted Civil War drama, as—entirely coincidentally—four years earlier his Manassas property had served as a Confederate headquarters during the First Battle of Bull Run. Lee took a seat in the parlor; next to him stood his military secretary, Colonel Charles Marshall. Grant entered and the two generals shook hands and exchanged pleasantries; they had, after all, both attended West Point military academy and served together in the Mexican-American War. But while the men had much in common, they appeared startlingly different. Lee towered over the much shorter Union general and was dressed immaculately in his best uniform, complete with a jewel-encrusted sword. By contrast, Grant was muddy and disheveled from his hurried ride to the farmhouse. Perhaps in accordance with their manner of dress, Lee sat at the distinctly fancier marble-topped desk while Grant sat across from him at the humbler wooden table. There was no peace treaty, nor an official surrender document bearing the signatures of the two men. Rather, they sat in McLean’s parlor and wrote letters to one another establishing the terms of surrender. Grant’s terms were undeniably generous: the surrendered Confederate soldiers would be paroled and allowed to return home, not to be disturbed by Union forces as long as they “observed their paroles and the laws in force where they

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4 In nineteenth-century Virginia, it was common practice to name a town that contained a county’s courthouse after the county itself; “Appomattox Court House” was such a town in Appomattox County, VA.
may reside.” This clause was significant, as it meant that no soldier of the Army of Northern Virginia would be subject to prosecution for treason. Grant also allowed the Confederate soldiers to keep their animals and provided rations for 25,000 men. When they finished signing the letters, Grant introduced Lee to his staff. Upon seeing General Ely S. Parker, a Native American, Lee said, “I am glad to see one real American here,” to which Parker responded, “We are all Americans.” Lee and Grant shook hands, left the parlor, and rode back to their respective headquarters. As news spread of Lee’s surrender, joyful Union soldiers began cheering and firing their rifles. Grant immediately ordered them to stop the celebration.

The formal surrender ceremony, the “stacking-of-arms,” occurred three days later on April 12. Joshua Lawrence Chamberlain was the Union officer in charge of this ceremony, and John B. Gordon led the Confederate procession. When Chamberlain saw Gordon’s depressed demeanor and weary troops, he ordered his men to “carry arms”: the salute of honor. Gordon responded to Chamberlain’s gesture of respect by ordering his own men to carry arms.

Most historians depict Lee’s surrender to Grant as the de facto end of the Civil War, but not the official one. Lee surrendered only the Army of Northern Virginia, not all of the Confederate forces. Joseph Johnston’s Army of Tennessee, the largest of the armies, did not surrender until April 26. The last Confederate general to surrender was a Cherokee named Stand Watie, who gave up his arms in Oklahoma on June 23, and the last major clash resulted, ironically, in a Confederate victory on May 13 at the Battle of Palmito Ranch in Texas. Two state capitals remained under Confederate control and Jefferson Davis, the president of the Confederate States of America, did not dissolve his cabinet until May 5. Nevertheless, historians have argued, surrender at Appomattox was the symbolic end of the war; Northerners and Southerners alike understood that

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Lee’s capitulation meant Union victory. Pursuant with this public sentiment, President Abraham Lincoln delivered a speech on April 11 celebrating Union victory and his plans for national reconstruction.8

The persistence of this narrative is unsurprising, as it is an appealing story of the nation’s reconciliation under the stewardship of two great men. The goal of this thesis is not to argue that prior historians have misunderstood Appomattox, nor to declare that this traditional version of events is incorrect. Rather, I aim to prove that our understanding of Appomattox today is the product of historical memory, not historical fact. There is a reason certain tropes about this moment appear in almost every retelling: its occurrence on Palm Sunday, Lee’s rejection of guerrilla tactics, Grant’s disappearing headache, the McLean coincidence, Lee’s clean uniform and Grant’s muddy one, the two generals’ cordial meeting, Parker’s “We are all Americans” declaration, and Chamberlain’s and Gordon’s salutes at the stacking-of-arms. At some point since surrender, each of these details has served a particular purpose for whomever is telling the story.

Appomattox memory initially developed along sectional lines, as Northerners and Southerners emphasized certain details to burnish their own interpretations of what surrender meant. I refer to these sectional interpretations as “myths,” “narratives,” and “stories” somewhat interchangeably. Although each term may colloquially suggest a different level of “truth” (with a “myth” as perhaps the most unreliable), they are designations of memory, not fact.

In recent decades, scholars have turned their attention to the subject of Civil War memory. And for good reason: the legacy of our nation’s bloodiest conflict remains front-and-center in our national consciousness, as the popularity of Ken Burns’ 1990 PBS miniseries The Civil War—which

8 McPherson, Battle Cry of Freedom, 851.
drew approximately 40 million viewers—and the more recent \textit{Lincoln} (2013) can attest.\textsuperscript{9} For every generation since 1865, collective memory of the Civil War has remained a powerful presence in everyday life. In their studies of war memory, historians have examined how individuals have manipulated facts to craft certain narratives about why the war was fought and what it meant. These narratives appear in veterans’ memoirs, political rhetoric, journalism, art, and military monuments—all public expressions of historical memory that influence our collective understanding of this particular event. And because memory is by its very nature intangible, it is always subject to change and reinterpretation.

Historians agree that the turn of the twentieth century was an important moment for Civil War memory. In his book \textit{Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory} (2001), David Blight argues that by the semi-centennial of the Civil War in 1915, “sectional reunion after so horrible a civil war was a political triumph.”\textsuperscript{10} The challenge of putting the nation back together after a bloody war led to the emergence of the “Reconciliation” narrative, which posited that both Union and Confederate soldiers fought with courage and honor. This narrative allowed white Northerners and Southerners to find common ground in their wartime experiences; they unified in respect for their mutually sacrificed soldiers. The underside of this Reconciliation myth, however, was the re-subjugation of African Americans after a war that had become about emancipation.\textsuperscript{11} Blight argues, “the memory of slavery, emancipation, and the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments never fit well into a developing narrative in which the Old and New South were romanticized and welcomed back to a new nationalism.”\textsuperscript{12} Reconciliationists did not meaningfully engage with questions of racial equity because these questions complicated swift sectional


\textsuperscript{11} Blight, \textit{Race and Reunion}, 5.

\textsuperscript{12} Blight, \textit{Race and Reunion}, 4.
reunion. This particular Civil War narrative flourished even as violence and mob rule terrorized black populations during and after Reconstruction.\textsuperscript{13} Reconciliationists prioritized national healing over racial justice, and their narrative of war’s end—which assigned blame to neither side—was inclusive (of whites) and appealing.\textsuperscript{14}

Blight hints at, but does not fully develop, another crucial aspect of the Reconciliation myth at the turn of the twentieth century: its Unionism. Literature in this period had powerful influence over the American public, but Blight argues that few reminiscences published by nostalgic and aging veterans had the same impact as Ulysses S. Grant’s \textit{Personal Memoirs of U. S. Grant} (1885).\textsuperscript{15} In his \textit{Memoirs}, Grant presents the fullest expression of late-nineteenth-century Reconciliation in his emphasis on the heroism and courage of soldiers on both sides of the conflict. However, his interpretation of Reconciliation is a definitively Northern one. Even as Grant writes about his respect for Lee and his Confederate soldiers—especially during his account of Lee’s surrender at Appomattox—he maintains his belief that Southern secession was unjust. He is relatively vague about the exact nature of Confederate wrongs but often mentions the evils of slavery and argues for the importance of preserving the Union. Blight notes that the publication of Grant’s memoirs solidified the dominance of the Reconciliation myth in American culture, which was characterized by “a politics of forgetting.” But as this thesis will show, Grant’s Reconciliation was not simply a story of sectional reunion, but rather a story of how he personally facilitated Northern forgiveness of the South.\textsuperscript{16} Forgiveness implies wrongdoing, and although Grant clearly expresses his interest in reuniting the country in his \textit{Memoirs}, he also demonstrates that Reconciliation in this period included the conviction that Northerners were in the right, and Southerners in the wrong.

\textsuperscript{13} Blight, \textit{Race and Reunion}, 110.
\textsuperscript{14} Blight, \textit{Race and Reunion}, 3.
\textsuperscript{15} Blight, \textit{Race and Reunion}, 211.
This Unionist version of the Reconciliation myth may explain the emergence of another late-nineteenth-century narrative. If Reconciliation was a story of the Union’s outstretched hand of friendship, not a collaborative effort to move forward, then it is understandable that the former Confederacy developed their own version of events. In fact, historian Gaines M. Foster has argued that while most Southerners realized they had to accept readmission to the Union without slavery once Lee surrendered to Grant, they did not do so quietly. In the postwar years, former Confederates maintained the constitutionality of secession and the nobility of their cause. The Lost Cause, as the South’s postwar interpretation came to be known, was the method by which they grappled with their unsuccessful war. Historian Caroline Janney, in *Remembering the Civil War: Reunion and the Limits of Reconciliation* (2013), claims that the Lost Cause consisted of four main beliefs: the valor of Confederate soldiers, the insurmountable odds they faced against Northern aggressors, the constitutional justification for Southern states’ decision to secede, and—most of all—the supremacy of Robert E. Lee’s leadership. Some aspects of this myth emerged soon after (and even during) the war; for example, former Confederate general Jubal A. Early, who published his *Memoir of the Last Year of the War for Independence, in the Confederate States of America* (1867) just two years after surrender, had a hand in shaping Lee’s godlike reputation, which only intensified after Lee’s death in 1870. While the Reconciliation myth allowed Northerners to retain their moral high ground while graciously accepting former foes back into the Union, the Lost Cause enabled Southerners to proudly remember their failed rebellion. Both versions offered combat-weary Americans an attractive way to remember an ugly war.

While historians agree that Reconciliation and Lost Cause interpretations dominated Civil War memory at the turn of the twentieth century, they disagree about which was more powerful.

Blight believes Reconciliation was the reigning narrative of this period, while Alice Fahs and Joan Waugh have argued that, “Lost Cause ideology achieved dominance in the late nineteenth century.” Most likely, each myth’s influence varied at different times and in different parts of the country. Reconciliation and the Lost Cause were both quite powerful, perhaps because they have several key similarities: they both romanticize the war and its soldiers while ignoring the legacy of slavery and emancipation. Moreover, each myth adheres to a “great man” theory of history in which individuals rather than abstract forces impacted the war’s outcome. In some applications of the Reconciliation myth in Civil War history, martyred President Abraham Lincoln emerges as the “great man”; in others—like at Appomattox—Grant is the focus. Lost Cause interpretations of war universally recognize Lee as its protagonist and he towers over all other Confederate actors, including (but not limited to) Confederate president Jefferson Davis. Perhaps Lee’s consistent centrality to the Lost Cause myth explains why its popular appeal has increased, especially in the twentieth century.

Historians have written about the events at Appomattox in Civil War syntheses, and recent scholarship has examined the formation of different strains of memory, including Reconciliation and the Lost Cause. David Blight has revised African Americans’ history during what he argues was a triumph of the Reconciliation tradition, and Gary Gallagher, in his Causes Won, Lost, & Forgotten: How Hollywood and Popular Art Shape What We Know About the Civil War (2008), has probed the media’s role in recent Lost Cause ascendency. Yet these two subjects—the events of Appomattox and the development of Civil War cultural memory—have not been examined in conjunction with each other. This thesis tells the story of cultural memory of Appomattox, which demonstrates the interplay between Reconciliation and the Lost Cause and the centrality of “great

19 Alice Fahs and Joan Waugh, Memory of the Civil War in American Culture (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), Kindle location 57.
men”—Robert E. Lee and Ulysses S. Grant—to each myth. In the 150 years since Lee surrendered his army to Grant the story has changed; details have been added, emphasized, or minimized in order to suit the needs of those doing the storytelling. Immediately after the surrender, Appomattox was a moment of pro-Union Reconciliation, in which the magnanimous Grant forgave the Confederacy and welcomed former foes back into the nation. Today, however, Appomattox is a shining embodiment of the Lost Cause; Union and Confederate forces reconciled, but Lee’s magnificence was the true importance of the moment. Historical narratives can be communicated in many different ways, but at Appomattox, three forms of expression have been particularly influential in shaping our collective memory of the event: literary culture, visual representations, and historical landscape. In my examination of these “sites” of memory, I trace the Appomattox myth from war’s end to the present to determine how interpretations of the same event have changed and collided.

In Chapter One, I analyze Appomattox memory in literary culture at the turn of the twentieth century. During this period, Ulysses S. Grant, Edward Porter Alexander, James Longstreet, and Joshua Lawrence Chamberlain wrote memoirs about their Civil War experiences, Adam Badeau wrote a postwar biography of Grant, and although Union general Ely S. Parker did not publish his own memoirs, his great nephew wrote his biography based on Parker’s personal accounts. All six men were witnesses to some aspect of surrender at Appomattox and yet they tell very different stories of that moment. Personal motivations led each man to draw upon Reconciliation or the Lost Cause to craft a narrative that suited his individual interests and in so doing, canonized these popular myths.

While memoirs and biographies legitimized surrender narratives, they did not create them. In Chapter Two, I turn from words to images, and the producers of popular wartime visuals (newspaper publishers and single-sheet printing firms) who strove to deliver believable and
enjoyable images to their (mostly Northern) customers. In their entrepreneurial zeal, printers and publishers depicted news of surrender with the pro-Union iconography their audience had come to expect. Yet these first images of Appomattox also exhibited powerful reconciliatory symbolism, suggesting that printers and publishers sensed a widespread desire for national healing. This visual narrative of Union victory and sectional reunion bolstered the Reconciliation myth created in Northern memoirs yet these images circulated decades before Grant, Badeau, Chamberlain, and Parker published their accounts. The media first expressed the pro-Union Reconciliation myth at Appomattox; their version of events reflected immediate postwar attitudes about surrender.

Chapter Two then moves into the late twentieth century, tracing a shift in visual renderings of Appomattox. Rather than creating pro-Union and Grant-centric Reconciliation interpretations of surrender, contemporary artists focus on Lee in their paintings. Their elevation of Lee above Grant aligns with a Lost Cause version of Appomattox, and while themes of Reconciliation still permeate images of this event, they are no longer presented in Northern terms. This change in visual representation of Appomattox over the last 150 years does not necessarily mean that the general public now embraces a pro-Confederate memory of surrender, but it does demonstrate that the Lost Cause has increased in influence and appeal.

In Chapter Three, I analyze how both words and images have shaped Appomattox memory as it exists today at Appomattox Court House National Historical Park (ANHP). Here, the National Park Service (NPS) and the general public do embrace a pro-Confederate memory of surrender. Under the guise of objectivity, NPS presents a version of Lee’s surrender to Grant at ANHP that emphasizes Lost Cause themes. The power of historical landscape and material culture, combined with the credibility derived from their association with a federal government agency, makes ANHP’s narrative difficult to refute: the Park’s version of Appomattox appears to be the “official” one. Their version of Appomattox is almost a perfect inverse of the narrative that first appeared in
the 1860s media: today, at this historic site, Lee’s surrender to Grant does not symbolize a Union-initiated Reconciliation, but rather a reconciliatory Lost Cause.

Cultural memories are constantly changing, especially those circulating around events as significant to the national psyche as the Civil War. An examination of the words, images, and places that have shaped and communicated these cultural memories illuminates important trends that help us to understand American cultural developments. The Civil War era is arguably one of the ugliest chapters of American history, and yet we remember it proudly, nostalgically, and actively. There is nothing inherently wrong with emphasizing the best of a bad situation, but the memory of the Civil War and its end remains, in many ways, whitewashed, and this should give us pause.
The closest we can get to the “real” Appomattox—the events that transpired in the small Virginia town in April 1865—is through the recollections of the men who were there. The written memories of eyewitnesses to the Appomattox moment are surely the most accurate portrayals of Robert E. Lee’s surrender to Ulysses. S. Grant, and close analysis of these men’s stories will reveal what really happened.

Not quite. This chapter examines the accounts of six men present at Appomattox in early April 1865: Ulysses S. Grant, Adam Badeau, Edward Porter Alexander, James Longstreet, Joshua Lawrence Chamberlain, and Ely S. Parker. Broadly speaking, these men’s narratives aligned with one of the two dominant stories of the war, its causes, and its meanings: Reconciliation and the Lost Cause. These two myths were not entirely opposed in their depictions of Appomattox, as both lauded this moment as one of national healing and emphasized white Northerners’ and Southerners’ shared heritage as Americans. However, Reconciliation’s Appomattox was a distinctly pro-Union interpretation of war’s end, in which Grant exercised his influence to generously welcome the South back into the country. The Lost Cause, by contrast, credits Lee with honorably ending a war that was noble yet unwinnable. Both myths also erase slavery as a cause of war or a relevant factor in Lee’s surrender. Except for a few oblique references to the Confederacy’s “unjust cause” in Grant’s memoir, Northern victory is divorced from African-American emancipation in both narrative traditions.

Thus, it is no surprise that the social, economic, and cultural outcomes of war—the implementation of the Thirteenth, Fourteenth, and Fifteenth Amendments in the South—do not appear in these first-person accounts. Rather, each man depicts Appomattox in specific ways for...
personal reasons: Grant and Badeau attempted to rehabilitate Grant’s image at the end of his life by crediting him with Reconciliation while Alexander and Longstreet engaged with the Lost Cause to either deify or demonize Lee. Chamberlain and Parker promoted sectional reunion and highlighted their personal contributions to it. Together, these published accounts are the foundation of Reconciliation and Lost Cause mythmaking at Appomattox because of their status as memoirs and biographies. First-person accounts are inherently biased toward the perspectives of those crafting them, yet we tend to trust them because of an author’s proximity to the events described. These works, more than any other texts on Lee’s surrender to Grant, are cited in authoritative histories of the war, such as those by Bruce Catton, Shelby Foote, and James McPherson. These memoirs also shaped other depictions of Appomattox in visual images and historic landscapes (as discussed in Chapters Two and Three). As the first “official” records of Lee’s surrender to Grant, they legitimized existing myths; consequently, they are the starting point for my analysis of Appomattox memory.

1.1 “Grant’s Appomattox”: Ulysses S. Grant and Adam Badeau

It is hard to reconcile the perception of Grant as a bumbling politician with the magnanimous figure he cuts in the cultural memory of Appomattox. While his military career was illustrious, Grant’s political legacy did not match his Civil War reputation and toward the end of his life, Grant sought to restore his tarnished public image. In his autobiography, Personal Memoirs of Ulysses S. Grant (1885), Grant chronicles only his military experiences, and his account of Appomattox reveals his desire to be remembered as the heroic yet benevolent hero of the Civil War. His friend and fellow participant in the Appomattox proceedings, Adam Badeau, continued the campaign to rehabilitate Grant’s image after his death in 1885. The two men created “Grant’s Appomattox,” a version of events in which Grant enables the reconciliation between Union and
Confederate forces in Wilmer McLean’s parlor.

In order to understand why Grant framed Appomattox as a triumph of Unionist Reconciliation in Memoirs, one must fully grasp the implications of his troubled political career. Following Andrew Johnson’s tumultuous three years in office after Abraham Lincoln’s assassination, Grant was the clear choice for the 1868 Republican presidential nomination. The former general had demonstrated his leadership and tactical skills on the battlefield and he had the support of the majority of Union veterans, a strong voting block during Reconstruction. Moreover, Grant’s close relationship with Lincoln bolstered the public’s confidence in him. Unified Republican backing, along with the support of newly enfranchised African Americans—approximately 400,000 new voters—Grant handily defeated Democratic challenger Horatio Seymour in the election of 1868.20

Republicans rallied around Grant as their symbol of a restored Union because of his battlefield successes. He was widely recognized as a war hero: during the election, newspapers ran campaign slogans reminding voters that Grant forced Lee’s surrender at Appomattox.21 Historian Joan Waugh has argued that, “no man other than George Washington had come to the office with expectations as high as those that accompanied the forty-six-year-old Ulysses S. Grant.”22 However, his military genius had never before translated to success in other ventures: he had not excelled academically at West Point, failed as a farmer in Missouri, and before the outbreak of the Civil War in 1861 had resorted to working as a clerk in his father’s Galena, Illinois store.23 Nevertheless, postwar voters had immense confidence in Grant’s ability to adapt his militaristic leadership style to politics.

Since the end of the war, however, Grant had been a reluctant participant in politics

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21 Waugh, U. S. Grant, 121.
22 Waugh, U. S. Grant, 122.
23 Waugh, U. S. Grant, 1.
because of his inherent distrust of politicians.\textsuperscript{24} He preferred the military chain-of-command system to the status-seeking network of politics, stating, “it was more difficult to command two generals desiring to be leaders than it was to command one army officered intelligently and with subordination.”\textsuperscript{25} Grant believed ambition hindered effective governance and that the hidden agendas of “generals desiring to be leaders” made management difficult. One particularly telling anecdote from \textit{Memoirs} typifies his distaste for politics. Before the outbreak of the war, when a senator named Philip Foulk offered to lobby Congress for a favorable position for Grant in the Union army, Grant “declined to receive endorsement for permission to fight for my country.”\textsuperscript{26} He planned to fight for the Union regardless of his military status and was insulted that Foulk believed otherwise. Grant’s election to the presidency did not change his attitude; he believed it was his duty to protect the country from politicians, whom he felt valued their personal interests above those of the country.\textsuperscript{27} In short, Grant thought he was the best man for the job, even if—and perhaps because—he did not want it. On Election Day, Grant reportedly informed his wife, “I am afraid I am elected.”\textsuperscript{28} Grant became the country’s eighteenth president, but entered political life with no intention of becoming a “politician.” This fact, along with the scandals that later plagued his administration, illuminate why Grant would seek to reemphasize his military legacy in \textit{Memoirs}.

In an expression of his dislike of politics, Grant held himself apart from even members of his own party. He tended to appoint friends and former army acquaintances to his cabinet and other government posts. Grant often made these appointments without consulting the Republican leadership, a violation of a longstanding tradition of political courtesy. Grant appointed

\textsuperscript{24} Waugh, \textit{U. S. Grant}, 108.
\textsuperscript{25} Ulysses S. Grant, \textit{Personal Memoirs of Ulysses S. Grant} (New York: Charles L. Webster & Company, 1885-6), 199.
\textsuperscript{26} Grant, \textit{Personal Memoirs}, 88.
\textsuperscript{27} Waugh, \textit{U. S. Grant}, 119.
\textsuperscript{28} Waugh, \textit{U. S. Grant}, 122.
businessmen who had given him gifts to civil service posts and bestowed positions on his family members, prompting charges of graft and cronyism.\textsuperscript{29} Grant even appointed his friend and Confederate general-turned-Republican James Longstreet as customs surveyor of the port of New Orleans.\textsuperscript{30} Although these staffing decisions attracted criticism, Grant continued nepotistic hiring practices throughout his presidency.\textsuperscript{31}

Other, more serious scandals threatened Grant’s reputation. For his part, Grant’s ardent trust in his associates—necessary in war but a hindrance in politics—kept him from recognizing corruption within his own administration. The “Black Friday,” the Crédit Mobilier scandal, and the “Whiskey Ring” all led to charges of collusion among the upper echelons of the Grant administration. When Orville E. Babcock, Grant’s personal secretary and fellow participant in the surrender proceedings at Appomattox, was accused of participating in the “Whiskey Ring,” Grant’s fervent defense of his friend called into question his involvement in the scandal and his choice of associates.\textsuperscript{32} Grant was not exclusively or personally responsible for any of these crises, but his connections to them and position as chief executive during a major depression in the 1870s cast doubts on his ability to lead. Grant was reelected in 1872 but toward the end of his second term, the press, once so eager to remind Americans of Grant’s victories on the battlefield, used the term “Grantism” as a synonym for corruption.\textsuperscript{33} Republicans lost control of Congress in the midterm elections of 1874 and at the end of Grant’s second term, he did not seek a third. A moderate Republican, Rutherford B. Hayes, narrowly won the presidential election of 1876 in a deal that ended political Reconstruction in the South. Not surprisingly, the scandals and controversies endemic in Grant’s administration distracted from the Reconstruction goals of integrating freed slaves into society and promoting cultural reunion of North and South. In Grant’s

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{29} Waugh, \textit{U. S. Grant}, 125.
  \item \textsuperscript{30} Waugh, \textit{U. S. Grant}, 126.
  \item \textsuperscript{31} Waugh, \textit{U. S. Grant}, 126.
  \item \textsuperscript{32} Waugh, \textit{U. S. Grant}, 148.
  \item \textsuperscript{33} Waugh, \textit{U. S. Grant}, 151.
\end{itemize}
final address, he effectively apologized for his time in office, saying, “It was my fortune, or misfortune, to be called to the office of Chief Executive without any previous political training.” Grant admitted to personal mistakes and errors in judgment, but always maintained that he had good intentions.\(^{34}\) Grant’s political career had tarnished his public image and in the 1880s he set out to write *Memoirs* in order to repair it.

*Magnanimity in Memoirs*

Grant certainly had personal motivations for crafting *Memoirs* as an account of the Civil War, but his narrative also reinforced the Reconciliation myth of Appomattox that pervaded public memory. Grant had enjoyed his life as a private citizen after 1876 and embarked on a lavish world tour with his wife. This expensive trip (which he financed personally), combined with several bad investments, left him near destitute in 1885; Grant began publishing short wartime recollections in *Century* magazine to make money. Emboldened by the popularity of his pieces, Grant decided to write and publish his memoirs. Shortly after beginning his autobiographical project, however, Grant was diagnosed with inoperable throat cancer.\(^{35}\) Thus the writing of his memoirs took on weighty significance: it could serve to mend his broken public image and secure his family’s financial future. In the final year of his life, Grant seized the opportunity to take control over his own legacy. In *Personal Memoirs of Ulysses S. Grant* the former president emphasizes his role as the victorious Union general and omits mention of his political career entirely. Grant’s description of Appomattox in particular reveals his desire to cast himself in the best possible light. By stressing his own magnanimity, Lee’s dignity, and the overall civility of their exchange, Grant frames Appomattox as a triumph of sectional reunion—one that he created.

By emphasizing the generosity of the surrender terms Grant offered to Lee, he bolsters his

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\(^{34}\) Waugh, *U. S. Grant*, 151.

image as a merciful, rather than vindictive, leader. Following the twelve day-long Appomattox Campaign, Grant began a correspondence with Lee on April 7, 1865; while at first, Lee was reluctant to surrender the Army of Northern Virginia, by April 9, when Confederate defeat was certain, Lee agreed to meet.\textsuperscript{36} During Lee and Grant’s correspondence, Lee asked Grant about the surrender terms. Grant’s reply was simple: his only insistence was that soldiers in the Army of Northern Virginia pledged to never “take up arms again against the Government of the United States.”\textsuperscript{37} Grant did not provide Lee with a list of conditions, but rather left many details to be negotiated when the men met face-to-face.

The significance of Grant’s desire to meet Lee in person, “at any point agreeable to [Lee],” should not be overlooked.\textsuperscript{38} This gesture demonstrates respect, especially as Grant clearly believed he was in a position to dictate terms. “Lee’s army was rapidly crumbling,” writes Grant, “Many of his soldiers…were continually dropping out of the ranks and going to their homes.”\textsuperscript{39} Grant records the following incident at his headquarters in Farmville on April 8:

    When I came out I found a Confederate colonel there, who reported to me…he was the only man of [his] regiment remaining with Lee’s army, so he just dropped out, and now wanted to surrender himself. I told him to stay there and he would not be molested.\textsuperscript{40}

This anecdote evidences Lee’s weakened forces, as well as the low morale and hopelessness among his soldiers. Moreover, Grant’s gracious acceptance of the Confederate colonel’s surrender and promise of his protection highlights his benevolence.

Grant does not record his conversation verbatim with Lee in McLean’s parlor in Memoirs, but the details Grant does include emphasize his own role as a compassionate hero. Taking into account that the majority of Confederate soldiers were farmers, Grant remembers telling Lee that

\textsuperscript{36} Elizabeth Varon, \textit{Appomattox: Victory, Defeat, and Freedom at the End of the Civil War} (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 23; 44.
\textsuperscript{37} Grant, \textit{Personal Memoirs}, 350.
\textsuperscript{38} Grant, \textit{Personal Memoirs}, 350.
\textsuperscript{39} Grant, \textit{Personal Memoirs}, 350.
\textsuperscript{40} Grant, \textit{Personal Memoirs}, 350.
his men “were permitted to take their private property” and could retain their horses and mules.\footnote{Grant, \textit{Personal Memoirs}, 354.} Grant remarked that he allowed this because he cared for the wellbeing of Confederate soldiers in the future, since “it was doubtful whether they would be able to put in a crop to carry themselves and their families through the next winter without the aid of the horses they were then riding.”\footnote{Grant, \textit{Personal Memoirs}, 355.} Grant also mentions that upon hearing about the condition of Lee’s men, he offered extra food and rations for them.\footnote{Grant, \textit{Personal Memoirs}, 355.} Grant presents himself as the leader of the surrender proceedings by evidencing Lee’s “crumbling” army and then enumerating his conciliations to them. All of these details—the colonel’s individual surrender, Grant’s permission for Confederate soldiers to keep their personal property, and his offer to feed the troops—create a magnanimous image of Grant.

In discussing his receipt of surrender from Lee, Grant clarifies that the generosity of his terms did not stem from pity, but rather from respect; he does not disguise his admiration for the Confederate general. He also paints a picture of a very civil exchange, one that establishes the Appomattox moment as a triumph of sectional reconciliation because it focuses on the men’s many similarities rather than their differences. Before and after surrender terms were discussed, Grant and Lee discussed their shared experience fighting in the Mexican-American war in the 1830s. Grant waxes effusively about their conversation, which “grew so pleasant I almost forgot the object of our meeting.”\footnote{Grant, \textit{Personal Memoirs}, 353-4.} Grant writes that after Lee’s surrender, his staff and other officers were eager to see their old Confederate friends; Grant happily facilitated this reunion.\footnote{Grant, \textit{Personal Memoirs}, 356.}

In his flattering description of the Confederate general, Grant mentions Lee’s sharp appearance: his clean uniform, tall stature, and “faultless” physique.\footnote{Grant, \textit{Personal Memoirs}, 353.} Grant declares Lee too
“manly” to exhibit either positive or negative emotions regarding the surrender of his army. He also expresses confidence in Lee’s earnest desire to stop the bloodshed between North and South. The reverence with which Grant describes Lee is notable because of the bitterness with which the previous four years of war had been fought; he repeatedly states his belief in Lee’s “good faith” and “dignity.”

Whatever [Lee’s] feelings, they were entirely concealed from my observation; but my own feelings, which had been quite jubilant on the receipt of his letter, were sad and depressed. I felt like anything rather than rejoicing at the downfall of a foe who had fought so long and valiantly, and had suffered so much for a cause, though that cause was, I believe, one of the worst for which a people ever fought, and one for which there was the least excuse. I do not question, however, the sincerity of the great mass of those who were opposed to us.

Grant’s summation of his feelings about surrender encapsulates the Reconciliation myth. He does not romanticize the Confederate cause (he implicitly condemns slavery) but he expresses admiration for the Confederate spirit and “sincerity.” Grant’s opinion of his former enemy is anything but rancorous and he seems eager to welcome these men—who “fought so long and valiantly”—back into the Union. He later writes that when Union soldiers heard the news of Lee’s surrender, they began firing their guns to celebrate the victory. He immediately put a stop to the celebration, claiming he did not want to “exult [the Army of Northern Virginia’s] downfall.”

Grant’s choice to silence the Union cheer suggests that he saw himself as the architect of Reconciliation. It was his decision to forgive the Confederate soldiers—although they supported a cause that was “the worst for which a people ever fought”—because of the good he believed would come from sectional reunion. “Grant’s Appomattox” serves as the baseline of the Northern Reconciliation myth; a kind and authoritative Grant recognized the honor and courage of Lee and his men and chose, at the moment of surrender, to foster reunion.

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47 Grant, Personal Memoirs, 353.
48 Grant, Personal Memoirs, 352; 353.
49 Grant, Personal Memoirs, 353.
50 Grant, Personal Memoirs, 356.
Grant hoped to remind the American public of the event for which he was most widely praised—his victory in the Civil War—and the Appomattox narrative in Memoirs does just that. At face value, this account suggests that Lee and Grant achieved a form of sectional reconciliation in Wilmer McLean’s parlor, mainly because of Grant’s efforts. However, the tumultuous years of Reconstruction, during which Grant served as the widely criticized chief executive, suggest otherwise. Grant’s version of the Appomattox moment is disconnected from the events that followed because he “re-remembered” it at the end of his life, when the restoration of his public image was his central goal. However, his emphasis on certain aspects of the surrender meeting does not suggest a conscious conspiracy to alter the past. Rather, his personal circumstances led him to craft a published narrative that codified the Grant-centric Reconciliation myth.

A Faithful Friend

Adam Badeau, a Colonel in the Union Army and Grant’s close friend, also sought to repair Grant’s image at the end of his life by publishing another iteration of “Grant’s Appomattox.” Badeau and Grant met in 1863 after the Vicksburg campaign and Badeau served as Grant’s personal secretary and aide-de-camp for the duration of the war and the Johnson administration; he was one of Grant’s personal staff present in the McLean parlor at surrender.51 During Grant’s administration, Badeau was a beneficiary of Grant’s propensity for cronyism, serving as U.S. Consul in London; he also accompanied Grant on his world tour in 1877-78, another indication of their close and enduring friendship. The former colonel was a writer, and the titles of his publications—Military History of Ulysses S. Grant (1881) and Grant in Peace: From Appomattox to Mount McGregor (1887)—illustrate his proximity and continuous allegiance to the general-turned-president. Badeau participated in Grant’s mission to restore his image particularly through this

publication of *Grant in Peace*. His account of Appomattox closely resembles Grant’s, as they both
seek to recapture and re-emphasize Grant’s glory and his role as the agent of sectional reunion.

*Grant in Peace*, published two years after Grant’s death in 1885, is a continuation of
Grant’s rehabilitation campaign. The book, which outlines Grant’s political career, begins with an
entire chapter describing Appomattox. Its literary structure suggests that “peace” began at
Appomattox; the surrender was not an act of war, but rather the first act of a newly reunited
nation. This version echoes Grant’s claim that sectional unity was achieved at Appomattox rather
than at the end of Reconstruction, as David Blight has argued. Badeau credits Grant entirely with
the surrender terms at Appomattox, claiming that the Lincoln administration had forbidden Grant
to seeking peace with the Confederacy.\(^{52}\) Grant “had indeed long felt that when the war was
ended there should be no vindictive policy toward the vanquished,” Badeau writes, and he
informed Lee at once when they met that he meant to accept paroles.\(^ {53}\) Grant, acting without
clear orders from the Lincoln administration, personally ensured that the Army of Northern
Virginia would not be subjected to “vindictive” policies. The author emphasizes that the generous
surrender terms were not a strategy, but rather an expression of Grant’s benevolence:

> [The surrender terms] were the legitimate outgrowth of Grant’s judgment and feeling; the
> consequence of all that had gone before; embodied then for the first time, because then for
> the first time the necessity for the embodiment had arrived. In this way Grant always did
> his greatest things.\(^{54}\)

In this description, Grant’s terms are indicative of his moral character. The decision to accept
paroles was consciously spontaneous yet the “consequence of all that had gone before”; this was
the way “Grant always did his greatest things.” The structure of *Grant in Peace* suggests that the
author considers Appomattox one of the first “great things” of Grant’s career, rather than the last.
Badeau describes a dignified defeated Confederacy, but their welcome back into the Union was

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\(^{52}\) Badeau, *Grant in Peace*, 18.
\(^{53}\) Badeau, *Grant in Peace*, 19.
\(^{54}\) Badeau, *Grant in Peace*, 19.
mainly the product of Grant’s beneficence.

As in Grant’s Memoirs, Appomattox emerges as a moment of reconciliation in Grant in Peace. Badeau echoes the familiar tropes of Grant’s muddy uniform contrasting with Lee’s impeccable dress and Grant’s allowance of Confederate soldiers to retain their personal sidearms.\(^{55}\) Most importantly for the Reconciliation narrative, however, is the author’s description of Confederate soldiers’ reaction to surrender:

Lee assured Grant of the profound impression the stipulations of the surrender had made upon his army, and declared that the entire South would respond to the clemency he had displayed. Scores of the captured officers had already visited Grant, many of them his comrades at West Point, in the Mexican war, or on the Indian frontier, and thanked him for their swords, their liberty, and the immunity from civil prosecution which he had secured them.\(^ {56}\)

This anecdote suggests that the Army of Northern Virginia was just as pleased with the outcome of Lee and Grant’s meeting as the Army of the Potomac was. The image of Confederate soldiers, “many of them his comrades,” immediately expressing their personal gratitude to Grant, is powerfully reconciliatory. Moreover, Badeau suggests that all men, including former Confederate soldiers, believed that Grant was responsible for surrender. Stretched to its furthest interpretation, Badeau is implying that Grant’s benevolence was so profound that he singlehandedly healed the nation at Appomattox. While this claim is perhaps fanciful, the fact remains that Badeau romanticized Lee’s surrender to serve Grant’s personal interests by emphasizing his centrality to the Reconciliation tradition.

In Grant in Peace, surrender is an introduction Grant’s life in politics; the author refers to Grant’s actions at Appomattox as part of a reconciliatory “policy” that he maintained.\(^ {57}\) Again, Badeau is claiming that Grant was the initiator of Reconciliation. The surrender moment symbolized all of Grant’s positive attributes and Badeau uses this narrative—which highlights

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\(^{55}\) Badeau, Grant in Peace, 20.
\(^{56}\) Badeau, Grant in Peace, 11.
\(^{57}\) Badeau, Grant in Peace, 25.
Grant’s chivalry and forgiveness—in his description of Grant’s life in politics. After a detailed account of Grant’s two terms in office, Badeau admits that Grant’s political career is often criticized but places the blame for the many Grant administration failures on those around the president, whose association “conferred neither honor on [Grant] nor benefit on the country.”

“Though there were acts in his Administration which he publicly admitted were blunders,” Badeau states, “history will be far from recording his political career as a failure.” At the end of his account of Grant’s presidency, Badeau sums up the administration as follows:

[It] can at least be said that after eight years of power he handed over to his successor the Government of a country so far pacified and reconciled that even the awful shape of a disputed election had been appeased. The States were all restored to the Union, and Reconstruction, whatever its merits or demerits, was accomplished.

Whatever Grant’s shortcomings, Badeau argues that the most important goal of his presidency was to reconcile the Union, which he accomplished. When Badeau writes that Grant “handed over” the country to Rutherford B. Hayes in 1877, he is suggesting that, up until that point, he was in control of it. Moreover, the structure of Grant in Peace indicates that Badeau believed that control began at Appomattox. The nation’s condition in 1877, “so far pacified and reconciled,” was entirely due to Grant’s military leadership. Other “blunders” were either a result of the challenging circumstances Grant inherited upon taking office or the poor judgment of his associates. Grant in Peace is an extended narrative of postwar Reconciliation, which Grant began at Appomattox and continued as President.

The final chapter of Grant in Peace, titled, “The Last Days of General Grant,” chronicles the end of Grant’s life and reemphasizes his role as the father and arbiter of Reconciliation. Its title notably refers to Grant as “General” rather than “President,” which is a subtle distinction that suggests that Badeau wanted his readers to prioritize Grant’s military legacy rather than his

58 Badeau, Grant in Peace, 256.
59 Badeau, Grant in Peace, 256.
60 Badeau, Grant in Peace, 256.
political one, despite the fact that the subject of the *Grant in Peace* is his postwar life. For example, Badeau frequently compares Grant to other military heroes, such as Julius Caesar and Napoleon. In this final chapter, Badeau mostly avoids discussion of Grant’s disastrous political reputation; his only mention of Grant’s lost popularity is to declare that Grant’s health improved “after his place in the affections of the people was restored.” Badeau’s overarching point in this chapter is that the public’s affection for Grant in his last days again promoted a sense of national unity, which Badeau considers a “fitting sequel” to Grant’s actions at Appomattox. *Grant in Peace* crafts a full-circle narrative of Grant’s political career, in which Reconciliation triumphed throughout.

Badeau and Grant, through their respective publications of biography and autobiography, sought to repair Grant’s public image in the wake of a troubled political career. They both witnessed the Appomattox moment and recognized its rhetorical power: the surrender exemplified how Grant’s kindness, dignity, and civility propelled national Reconciliation. Both authors’ attempts to cast it as the defining moment of both Grant’s life and postwar America suited the contemporary needs of the dying, destitute, and disheartened former president. Grant wanted to be remembered as the great Union general he was rather than the hapless American politician he became, and his and Badeau’s framing of Appomattox as the beginning of sectional reunion—and reminder that Grant enabled it—provided the definitive Reconciliation narrative at the end of the nineteenth century.

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61 Badeau, *Grant in Peace*, 461.
1.2 A CONFEDERATE CLASH: THE COMPETING NARRATIVES OF E. P. ALEXANDER AND JAMES LONGSTREET

Former Confederates did not quietly accept a passive role in narratives of war’s end. The Appomattox accounts of Confederate generals Edward Porter Alexander and James Longstreet exhibit another tradition that emerged after the Civil War: the Lost Cause. Both Alexander and Longstreet engage with the Lost Cause, albeit in vastly different ways; Alexander supports the interpretation of the Civil War that romanticizes the Southern cause and the soldiers who, outmanned and outgunned, valiantly waged an unwinnable war against their Northern aggressors. Longstreet, by contrast, claims that Lee’s poor leadership led to the Confederates’ downfall, an interpretation that directly contradicts the Lost Cause. Although both fought for the Confederacy, their political allegiances after the war differed significantly and their recollections of the Appomattox moment illustrate those differences.

After the war, Longstreet became a Republican, endorsed Grant’s presidency, and engaged in local Republican politics until Grover Cleveland’s administration. By contrast, Alexander avoided politics until the Cleveland administration. He was then appointed the arbiter of the commission to negotiate the boundary between Nicaragua and Costa Rica in 1897. Both Longstreet and Alexander witnessed the moments immediately before and after Lee and Grant’s meeting and spoke with the Confederate general about the prospect of surrender. On one level, the differences between Alexander’s and Longstreet’s versions of Appomattox and their engagements with the Lost Cause narrative illustrate their postwar political experiences. On another, they demonstrate the prominence of the Lost Cause tradition in postwar American culture and how Appomattox was used to either bolster or undermine it. Alexander and Longstreet place Lee at the center of the Lost Cause, and each use Appomattox to make a statement about his

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personal character as representative of the character of the Confederacy. Alexander’s Appomattox, compatible with other contemporaneous Lost Cause writing, frames Appomattox as a mutually respectful occasion but prioritized Lee’s role in it. By contrast, Longstreet’s personal anger about his postwar reputation led to his argument that Appomattox was a shameful defeat for the Confederacy in general and Lee in particular. The accounts of these two generals, who once fought for the same cause, illustrate how personal biases and political investments can influence cultural memories. Moreover, their engagement with the Lost Cause at Appomattox demonstrates that a Grant-centric Reconciliation narrative was not universal.

The Lost Cause Found

Edward Porter Alexander’s postwar life sheds light on why he was a proponent of the Lost Cause narrative. He was a Brigadier General in the Confederate army and although he was never as well known as contemporaries Lee, “Stonewall” Jackson, and James Longstreet, Alexander had a prominent role in many major Civil War battles. Notably, he led the artillery bombardment before Pickett’s Charge at Gettysburg.65 Alexander attended West Point and served in the United States Army, but ties to his home state of Georgia ensured that at the onset of the Civil War, he resigned from the army and took up arms for the Confederacy. After the war, Alexander accepted a professorship at the University of South Carolina and did not enter politics until the election of Grover Cleveland in 1892. Cleveland was the first Democrat to occupy the White House since the pre-Civil War Buchanan administration and was popular in the South for attempting to return captured Confederate battle flags to former Confederate states. Alexander and Cleveland forged a friendship, and Cleveland rewarded his friend’s support with a plush appointment as “boundary

65 Gettysburg was also the battle that drove a wedge between Lee and Longstreet, as Longstreet opposed the rash tactical maneuver of Pickett’s Charge and preferred more defensive tactics.
arbitrator" in the modern-day Isthmus of Panama, between Nicaragua and Costa Rica.\footnote{Gallagher, introduction, xvi.} Alexander’s successful postwar life and close association with a sympathetic Democrat president explain his continued allegiance to the Lost Cause narrative.

Alexander’s writing about Appomattox is representative of the Lost Cause rhetoric that had begun soon after war’s end, and when Alexander was writing his *Military Memoirs of a Confederate: A Critical Narrative* (1907) he contributed to—and legitimized—this discourse. While Grant sought to restore his own image as the founding Reconciliationist in his personal memoir, Alexander—like other contemporary Southern writers—sought to enhance the overall image of the Confederacy. He did this by elevating Lee in his account of Appomattox and stressing his leadership and beloved status in the army. While Grant uses Lee as a reflection of his own magnanimity, Alexander employs Lee as a symbol for the honor and dignity of the entire Confederate cause.

In Alexander’s depiction of Lee’s mood before the surrender, he stresses Lee’s determination and good humor. At the end of the Appomattox Campaign, when the Army of Northern Virginia was assessing its options for continued resistance, Alexander suggested that the army employ guerrilla warfare tactics and avoid surrender. But Lee’s resolve to surrender to Grant was unwavering: “the only dignified course for me would be, to go to Gen. Grant and surrender myself,” Lee reportedly told Alexander. “[As] Christian men, we have no right to consider only how this would affect us. We must consider [surrender’s] effect on the country as a whole.”\footnote{Edward Porter Alexander, *Military Memoirs of a Confederate: A Critical Narrative* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1907), 605.} Lee believed guerrilla warfare would dishonorable, and Alexander quotes him as saying, “[the soldiers] would be compelled to rob and steal in order to live. They would become mere bands of
The dignity of the Confederacy was paramount at this moment, and Lee was certain in his decision to surrender. Lee was also in good spirits during his conversation with Alexander, and in response to Alexander’s suggestion of guerrilla warfare replied that he was too old to go “bushwhacking.” For Alexander, Lee as a commander symbolized a nation noble in defeat.

Alexander also writes that Lee was sure of Grant’s benevolence. During their conversation about guerrilla tactics, Lee says, “Grant will not demand an ‘unconditional surrender.’ He will give us honorable and liberal terms, simply requiring us not to take up arms again until exchanged.” Here, Lee possesses prodigious foresight, as he predicts the exact conditions Grant will offer at their meeting on April 9. Lee’s certitude was a significant part of his success as a commander; Alexander writes that once Lee explained that surrender was the best option for the Army of Northern Virginia, all of the Confederate commanders with whom Alexander “had planned to make an escape on seeing a flag of truce,” changed their minds immediately and accepted Lee’s decision.

Further emphasizing Lee’s beloved status in his army, Alexander describes the Confederate troops’ cheer upon Lee’s return from Appomattox Court House:

As [Lee] was seen approaching...[the troops] broke their ranks and overwhelmed all with a great crowd, wrought to a high pitch of emotional affection for its beloved leader of the cause now forever lost. With alternate cheers and tears they flocked around him so that his progress was obstructed, and he presently stopped and made a few remarks to the men...and advised all to go to their homes, plant crops, repair the ravages of the war, and show themselves as good citizens as they had been good soldiers.

Lee’s soldiers not only cheered him in defeat but also looked to him for postwar direction. This anecdote also shows how the Lost Cause and Reconciliation narratives are not entirely opposed. Lee advises his men to be “good citizens” of the Union; this is a sentiment Reconciliationists like

68 Alexander, Military Memoirs, 605.
69 Alexander, Military Memoirs, 605.
70 Alexander, Military Memoirs, 605.
71 Alexander, Military Memoirs, 605-6.
72 Alexander, Military Memoirs, 612.
Grant and Badeau would have wholeheartedly embraced. However, Lee’s advice is nuanced: former Confederates should be “good citizens as they had been good soldiers.” In the Lost Cause narrative, Confederate soldiers were “good” because of their unwavering commitment to their way of life and valiant commitment to fight in the face of impossible odds. Thus Lee’s ideas of a “good citizens” and “good soldiers” are distinctly Southern, suggesting that the Lost Cause—not a Northern conception of Reconciliation—still held sway in Alexander’s account.

According to Alexander, defeat was inevitable by April 1865 and Lee’s surrender was “gentlemanly” compared with the dishonor of guerrilla tactics.\textsuperscript{73} Alexander’s elevation of Lee and his role at Appomattox typifies Lost Cause rhetoric, which sometimes complimented—and other times problematized—Reconciliation. Southerners like Alexander embraced the idea of an honorable surrender and persistent Confederate spirit, and this idea colored the way they remembered Civil War moments like Appomattox. But James Longstreet—a man with a bone to pick with his former countrymen—eschewed the Lost Cause in his description of the same moments Alexander chronicles in his Appomattox account.

\textit{A General Scorned}

Lieutenant General James Longstreet’s experience at Appomattox was very similar to Alexander’s: he interacted with Lee before and after his meeting with Grant. However, the two men’s accounts of their interactions with Lee differ wildly. Longstreet did not embrace Lost Cause rhetoric and even defected to the Republican Party during Reconstruction. Many former Confederates viewed this as the ultimate form of betrayal; Longstreet had held a high-ranking position in the Confederate army and enjoyed a close relationship with Lee.\textsuperscript{74} During the war, Longstreet was Lee’s right-hand man; the beloved General often referred to him as his “Old War

\textsuperscript{73} Foster, \textit{Ghosts of the Confederacy}, 11.
\textsuperscript{74} Foster, \textit{Ghosts of the Confederacy}, 19.
Horse.” Like Lee, Grant, and many other Civil War generals, Longstreet attended West Point Military Academy. He became friends with George Pickett, who led the infamous Pickett’s Charge at Gettysburg and his years at West Point overlapped with Thomas Jonathan “Stonewall” Jackson. He also befriended Ulysses S. Grant and attended his 1848 wedding to Longstreet’s fourth cousin, Julia Dent. Longstreet did not initially support secession, but his staunch belief in the principle of states’ rights led to his resignation from the United States Army 1861 and his decision to fight for the Confederacy. In his memoirs, Longstreet wrote, “It was a sad day when we took leave of lifetime comrades and gave up a service of twenty years.” Longstreet’s hesitant acceptance of secession, along with his long friendship with Grant, perhaps foreshadowed his post-war allegiance to the Republican Party and subversion of the Lost Cause narrative in his wartime accounts.

Although Longstreet was an important and revered Confederate leader for much of the war, his reputation began to suffer after the battle of Gettysburg in July 1863 and further plummeted during Reconstruction. He was largely blamed for the loss at Gettysburg due to his disagreements with Lee and other Confederate generals regarding tactics. After the war, Longstreet was appointed Republican governor of Louisiana; after Grant’s election to the presidency in 1868, the former Union general, “in the bigness of his generous heart” named Longstreet surveyor of customs at New Orleans. Longstreet’s involvement with the corrupt Grant administration further harmed his reputation. Moreover, in response to the longstanding criticism of his actions at Gettysburg, Longstreet in turn blamed Lee for the defeat. Considering Lee’s revered status in Lost Cause discourse, Southerners again felt the sting of Longstreet’s betrayal. At the end of his life,

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79 Longstreet, *From Manassas to Appomattox*, 654.
Longstreet—like Grant—sought to revise his public perception through the publication of an autobiography.

In the introduction to *From Manassas to Appomattox: Memoirs of the Civil War in America* (1896), Longstreet impresses upon his reader that his account of the Civil War is written in the spirit of “sincerity, “fairness,” and “truth.” While he does not explicitly state that he wrote his memoirs in response to the vitriolic criticism he had received from former Confederates in the post-bellum years, he vaguely alludes to “misrepresentations” of his military service and how his critics have accepted them as fact. Longstreet stresses that his account is accurate and fair, and states his hope that “the public may judge between [his account] and its detractors.” In his attempt to defend himself against his critics, Longstreet undermines the Lost Cause most aggressively in his negative depiction of Lee.

In *From Manassas to Appomattox*, Longstreet directly addresses those who blamed him for the Confederate loss at Gettysburg. He refers to them as “knights of the quill” and argues that their criticisms were not rooted in the facts of the battle, but rather in their desire to find a “scapegoat.” Longstreet also refers to his critics as “Virginia writers”; this designation is particularly revealing. Longstreet, who hailed from South Carolina, had always felt like an outsider in the Army of Northern Virginia; the majority of Lee’s generals were from Virginia, Lee’s home state, including “Stonewall” Jackson, Major General J.E.B. Stuart, Lieutenant General A.P. Hill, Lieutenant General Richard Ewell, Lieutenant General Jubal Early, Major General George Pickett, and Brigadier General Lewis Armistead. Longstreet’s reference to “Virginia writers” reveals his suspicion that it was Virginians, who had somewhat of a superiority complex regarding the rest

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80 Longstreet, *From Manassas to Appomattox*, x.
81 Longstreet, *From Manassas to Appomattox*, xi.
82 Longstreet, *From Manassas to Appomattox*, 384.
83 Longstreet, *From Manassas to Appomattox*, 389.
of the South, who were the chief destroyers of Longstreet’s reputation. One way Longstreet responded was by crafting a devastating critique of Lee’s leadership:

   It does not look like generalship to lose a battle and a cause and then lay the responsibility upon others…Some claim that [Lee’s] only fault as a general was his tender, generous heart. But a heart in the right place looks more to the cause intrusted [sic] to its care than for hidden ways by which to shift its responsibility to the shoulders of those whose lives hang upon his word.

This description acknowledges Lee’s power in the postwar South; Longstreet, after all, concedes that “lives hang upon [Lee’s] word.” However, Longstreet argues that Lee’s cowardly refusal to accept blame at Gettysburg characterized his shortcomings as a leader, and that his centrality to the Lost Cause narrative renders it erroneous. Longstreet suggests that Lee, instead of embodying the Confederate spirit, destroyed it.

   In his account of Appomattox, Longstreet emphasizes Grant’s superior character and the Confederate army’s low morale. Like Alexander, Longstreet was not in McLean’s parlor on April 9 but writes about his interactions with Lee directly before and after his meeting with Grant. Longstreet’s portrayal of Lee’s mood contrasts with Alexander’s; in From Manassas to Appomattox, Lee’s surrender is a moment of extreme sadness for the general, not one of transcendent dignity. Longstreet includes no mention of Lee’s refusal to adopt guerrilla tactics and no mention of good humor. As in most Appomattox accounts, Longstreet makes note of Lee’s clean uniform and sharp appearance on the morning of April 9, but further states that “the handsome apparel and brave bearing failed to conceal [Lee’s] profound depression.” Longstreet’s Lee emerges as a pitiable figure in defeat. “‘There is nothing left me but to go and see General Grant,’” Lee reportedly told Colonel Venable, a member of Lee’s staff. “‘And I would rather die a thousand deaths.’” This famous quote, in the context of Longstreet’s version of events, paints Lee as a man with few

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84 Longstreet, From Manassas to Appomattox, 332.
85 Longstreet, From Manassas to Appomattox, 412-3.
86 Longstreet, From Manassas to Appomattox, 639.
87 Longstreet, From Manassas to Appomattox, 639.
options and no agency.

Longstreet also discusses Lee’s uncertainty regarding Grant’s surrender terms, which starkly contradicts Alexander’s description of his foresight. According to Longstreet, Lee was not only depressed but he also “expressed apprehension”; he feared Grant would demand harsh terms of surrender. Longstreet writes that he “assured [Lee] that I knew General Grant well enough to say that the terms would be such as [Lee himself] would demand under similar circumstances, but yet he still had doubts.” Moreover, when Lee received Grant’s first letter urging him to surrender on April 7, Longstreet contends that it was he who originally told Lee not to comply. Longstreet depicts himself as comforting his commander, whereas in Alexander’s account Lee was the one reassuring his men. In the final blow against Lee’s character, Longstreet claims that only “the thought of another round” of battle stiffened Lee’s resolve to meet with Grant. This could be interpreted as Lee’s desire to avoid more bloodshed but in the context of Longstreet’s critique of Lee, it reads as an accusation of cowardice. This characterization of Lee—as defeated and apprehensive in the moments before surrender—undermines the Lost Cause idealization of Lee and attempts to lift the blame of Confederate loss off of Longstreet’s own shoulders.

In addition to Lee’s shortcomings as a leader, low Confederate morale is another theme of Longstreet’s Appomattox. By the end of the Appomattox Campaign, the Army of Northern Virginia was exhausted and hungry, and Longstreet’s portrayal of his troops as “troubled and faint of heart” suggests his belief that surrender was inevitable. Longstreet stresses that it was his soldiers who were unable to continue the fight, many of them were “without arms,—all asking for food.” He comments on the rain and mud hindering their march on April 8 and even writes, “our animals

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88 Longstreet, *From Manassas to Appomattox*, 643.
89 Longstreet, *From Manassas to Appomattox*, 643-4.
90 Longstreet, *From Manassas to Appomattox*, 634.
91 Longstreet, *From Manassas to Appomattox*, 644.
92 Longstreet, *From Manassas to Appomattox*, 635.
93 Longstreet, *From Manassas to Appomattox*, 635.
were worn and reduced in strength." The overall picture Longstreet paints of the Army of Northern Virginia echoes his description of Lee before surrender: tired, uncertain, and hopeless.

The troops’ low morale and Lee’s depressed countenance, two key themes in Longstreet’s Appomattox, collide in Longstreet’s account of Lee’s reception by the troops after his surrender to Grant. When Lee rode back into the Confederate camp, writes Longstreet, “from force of habit a burst of salutations greeted him, but quieted as suddenly as they arose.” According to Longstreet, the cheer is perfunctory, abrupt, and awkward; it is merely a custom, not an overwhelming expression of emotion. In Alexander’s account, rather, this cheer symbolized the Southern soldiers’ enduring love of Lee. In From Manassas to Appomattox, Lee and the rest of the Army of Northern Virginia recognized the Appomattox moment as one of defeat, not admiration of Lee’s generalship. The only rosy words Longstreet has about Appomattox are reserved for Grant; this both demonstrates his subversion of the Lost Cause narrative and his enduring friendship with the Union general. At the end of his chapter about Appomattox, Longstreet remarks, “As the world continues to look at and study the grand combinations and strategy of General Grant… Confederates should be foremost in crediting him with all that his admirers so justly claim, and ask at the same time that his great adversary be measured by the same high standards.” Longstreet implies that a direct comparison of Lee and Grant reveals the latter to be a superior soldier and man, contradicting Lost Cause idealizations of Lee’s unparalleled generalship.

Both Longstreet and Alexander wrote their memoirs many years after the Appomattox moment: Longstreet’s text was published in 1896 and Alexander’s even later in 1907. Both claim that their version of events is correct and they quote Lee, among others, directly; this tactic creates

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94 Longstreet, From Manassas to Appomattox, 635.
95 Longstreet, From Manassas to Appomattox, 645.
96 Longstreet, From Manassas to Appomattox, 646.
the illusion of authenticity. But the discrepancies in Longstreet’s and Alexander’s accounts of the Appomattox moment cannot be attributed to time alone. Their personal politics differed distinctly after the war, and while Longstreet sought to subvert the Lost Cause narrative, Alexander strengthened it. Despite significant differences, the two men agree that Lee and Grant were the central figures at Appomattox and devote their accounts to descriptions of them. Other versions of Appomattox—ones that illuminate trends in cultural memory yet introduce new protagonists—further complicate the story.

1.3 Claiming Their Places: Joshua Lawrence Chamberlain and Ely S. Parker

Grant and Badeau aimed to repair Grant’s image at the end of his life and promote a Reconciliationist view of Appomattox, while Alexander and Longstreet engaged with the Lost Cause tradition to different ends. All four men used their reminiscences of Appomattox to highlight the aspects of the moment that best suited their personal interests while subscribing to larger collective memories of the war. Joshua Lawrence Chamberlain and Ely S. Parker, both Union brigadier generals by the time of Appomattox, joined these men in their efforts. Their stories differ from the others because unlike Grant, Badeau, Alexander and Longstreet, who simply framed their Appomattox reminiscences to suit their own ends, Chamberlain and Parker’s narratives are most likely entirely fictional. Nevertheless, their stories have gained prominence in the “official” Appomattox narrative and the two men claimed central roles in the surrender while fueling the larger Reconciliation myth. While their narratives substantiate Reconciliation, they also dilute its Unionism in their minimization of Grant’s role at surrender.

The Professor at War

Chamberlain’s nonmilitary background perhaps partially explains why his Appomattox
account reads so differently from the others. Unlike the many career-soldier officers, Chamberlain was a professor before the Civil War, a professional intellectual who worked at Bowdoin College and spent many more years reading and writing than he did fighting. A prolific writer, Chamberlain detailed his Civil War experiences in The Passing of the Armies (1916), which he wrote at the end of his life and was published posthumously. Chamberlain has become somewhat of a folk legend in the years since the publication of Michael Shaara’s Pulitzer Prize-winning The Killer Angels (1967), a novelized version of the Battle of Gettysburg in which he emerges as a central hero. Ken Burns, in his hit miniseries The Civil War (1990), has further elevated Chamberlain, including him in his pantheon of Civil War figures along with Grant, Lee, Frederick Douglass, and Abraham Lincoln.

Certainly, Chamberlain received contemporaneous praise for his actions at Little Round Top, but he was not as influential or militarily connected as popular histories of the Civil War would suggest. For example, Chamberlain was not one of the six people Grant brought into Wilmer McLean’s parlor to witness his meeting with Lee. However, Chamberlain was selected to receive the first Confederate flag of surrender during the “stacking of the arms” ceremony on April 12, 1865, an event that has become part of the larger Appomattox moment in Civil War memory although it took place three days after Lee’s meeting with Grant. This ascendency is due to the combination of Chamberlain’s poetic prose and Shaara’s and Burns’ modern burnishing of his account. For Chamberlain, the ceremony was a crucial aspect of Appomattox because it emphasized the triumph of sectional reunion.

Chamberlain’s personal life certainly contributed to the way he remembered his wartime experience. After the war, he served four consecutive terms as governor of Maine and twelve as president of his alma mater, Bowdoin College. Chamberlain’s postwar life was, however, largely

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unfulfilling. His marriage to Fannie Adams was long but unhappy, and Fannie even asked her husband for a divorce in 1868. The couple remained together until Fannie’s death in 1905 but spent much of their later years traveling separately. Chamberlain’s brother Tom, with whom Chamberlain fought at Gettysburg on Little Round Top, died in 1896 from complications from alcoholism.  

At the outbreak of the Spanish-American war in 1898, Chamberlain offered to serve in the U.S. Army but was rejected due to his age and health; this desperate attempt demonstrates the nostalgia Chamberlain felt for his military past. In the early 1900s, Chamberlain failed in a business venture and received an appointment as the surveyor of port in Portland, Maine, a lower-ranking position than former governors usually received. Historian Thomas A. Desjardin has argued that Chamberlain sought comfort in his wartime accomplishments to cope with the many disappointments in his life. The purpose of writing *The Passing of the Armies*, a 300-page tome dedicated to the end of the Civil War, was to reminisce about his wartime experience and exaggerate his significance to the war effort in general and at Appomattox in particular. He situates himself—rather than Lee or Grant—at the center of the Reconciliation narrative as a form of self-promotion.  

Chamberlain’s interest in romanticizing his wartime experience is evident in his flowery eloquence, which contrasts with Grant’s frank prose and Longstreet’s terse documentation. Chamberlain’s *The Passing of the Armies* reads more like a novel than an autobiography. For example, he describes the town of Appomattox Court House as an “obscure little Virginia village now blazoned for immortal glory.” Chamberlain wanted to communicate to his readers the significance of the events at Appomattox and further declared that, “graver destinies were

determined on that humble field than on many of classic and poetic fame.” He draws significance from the fact that Lee surrendered to Grant on Palm Sunday, which fell on April 9 of 1865. Palm Sunday, in Biblical tradition, was the day on which Jesus triumphantly entered Jerusalem on the Sunday before his crucifixion. Religious imagery appears several times in Chamberlain’s description of the Appomattox moment: he depicts Lee and Grant as “Instruments of God’s hands,” for example, and their task in McLean’s parlor as “God’s decree.” Chamberlain invokes the idea of a divinely inspired meeting to mark the occasion as momentous and perhaps even predestined. These religious allusions, like his grandiose language, undermine the authenticity of his novelized description because it does not read as a straightforward military account.

Chamberlain not only waxes effusively about Lee and Grant at Appomattox but he also overemphasizes the importance of his designation as commander of the formal surrender ceremony parade. Chamberlain writes, “Some people have naturally asked me if I knew why I was designated.” After several ostensibly modest statements about his junior rank and presumed unpopularity among the high officers, Chamberlain enumerates his battlefield accomplishments at length, and emphasizes his “peculiarly trying ventures,” all the while seeking “no petitions for advancement.” Although Chamberlain was never told why he was chosen to oversee the parade, which he considered a high honor, he concludes that Grant’s “kind remembrance” of Chamberlain’s heroism at the Battles of Gettysburg and Petersburg led to his selection. Chamberlain declares, “tout vient a point pour qui sait attendre” (“everything comes in good time to him who knows how to wait”). This line serves two purposes: it demonstrates his high literary culture (and his translation from French means he assumes his readers do not share this culture)

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102 Chamberlain, The Passing of the Armies, 184.
and also communicates that his promotion in the Union army was inevitable.

Through his detailed description of the surrender ceremony Chamberlain bolsters the Reconciliationist narrative of Appomattox. He states that “the momentous meaning of this occasion impressed me deeply” and notes that he considered the parade to be an act of sectional reunion. Confederate troops were “the embodiment of manhood” in their “proud humiliation” at this moment. He stresses the “memories [of the war] that bound us together as no other bond” and asks the rhetorical question, “was not such manhood to be welcomed back into a Union so tested and assured?”

Reconciliation is possible because of the deep respect Chamberlain and his fellow officers have for Confederate soldiers and a belief in their shared “manhood.” He describes the Confederate flag reverentially, even poetically—“the great field of white with canton of star-strewn cross of blue on a field of red.”—and empathetically recounts how the Confederate soldiers treated their surrendered standards, writing that “[the soldiers] tenderly fold their flags, battle-worn and torn, blood-stained, heart-holding colors, and lay them down…clinging to them, pressing them to their lips with burning tears.”

Just as Grant described Lee’s surrender as a solemn act engaged in by equals, Chamberlain discusses the formal Confederate surrender as a respectful proceeding.

Chamberlain particularly focuses on his encounter with Confederate Lieutenant-General John B. Gordon as evidence of reconciliation between the armies. Chamberlain writes that he ordered his men to “carry arms” in a gesture of salute to the Confederate troops. In response, [Gordon] at the head of the column, riding with heavy spirit and downcast face, catches the sound of shifting arms, looks up, and, taking the meaning, wheels superbly, making with himself and his horse one uplifted figure, with profound salutation as he drops the point of his sword to the boot toe; then facing to his own command, gives word for his successive brigades to pass us with the same position of the manual—honor answering

Gordon’s “heavy spirit” was lifted when Chamberlain’s men showed the Confederate soldiers respect, and Gordon ordered his men to reciprocate the gesture. The “honor answering honor” line is strongly Reconciliationist; it stresses the equality between the two armies and glorifies their gentlemanly reunion. This story is as emotionally powerful as it is most likely fictional; in Gordon’s own Appomattox account, he mentions no such encounter. The Confederate general only references the surrender ceremony in passing, alluding to “the impressive formalities which followed [Lee and Grant’s meeting]” and the fact that the two armies “parted without the slightest breach of strict military courtesy.”

In reality, the formal “stacking of the arms” ceremony that Chamberlain was so honored to preside over was just that: a formality. Neither Lee nor Grant was present at the ceremony, both having left Appomattox the night before. It is April 9, not April 12, that is considered the “official” date of surrender. Moreover, Chamberlain was not as important to the proceedings as he might have believed; he is not mentioned in Longstreet’s, Alexander’s, nor Grant’s accounts of Appomattox. Chamberlain’s details here suggest that he wants to increase his personal importance in this moment—which he clearly believes to be uniquely significant—and also romanticize his experience at the formal surrender. Chamberlain’s version of Appomattox complements “Grant’s Appomattox” in its emphasis on the dignity of the defeated Confederates, and the Union’s role in promoting Reconciliation (as it is Chamberlain who initiates the “honor answering honor” salute). However, in Chamberlain’s view, it was not Grant who encouraged his men to support Union-Confederate reunion; rather, Chamberlain and the other Union soldiers embraced it spontaneously.

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Are We All Americans?

Chamberlain was not the only man at Appomattox whose narrative enhanced his position in Civil War memory; the seminal “we are all Americans” story attributed to Brigadier General Ely S. Parker is another example of this type of revisionist history. As Grant’s personal secretary, Parker was present in McLean’s parlor during the surrender meeting. His famed exchange with Lee, in which he assures the Confederate general that “We are all Americans,” has strong reconciliatory implications. Clearly, this story is consistent with the “mutual respect” aspect of the Reconciliation myth of Appomattox: the Confederate general treats Parker with respect, and Parker’s declaration that all men in the room are “Americans” also suggests a pervasive feeling of Unionist Reconciliation at the Appomattox proceedings.

Parker’s story has become cemented in the “official” narrative of Appomattox. In James McPherson’s Battle Cry of Freedom: The Civil War Era, which has become one of the definitive texts about the Civil War, the author includes the “we are all Americans” story as a point of fact. Parker’s story differs from the other Appomattox narratives because it was not enshrined in a memoir (or a biography written by another eyewitness to surrender, like Grant in Peace); rather, Parker relayed this story to friends and family many times throughout his life. Ely S. Parker’s “we are all Americans” story has key similarities to Chamberlain’s “carry arms” narrative: both fuel the aspects of the Reconciliation myth at Appomattox, both situate their protagonists importantly in the Appomattox moment, and both are most likely apocryphal.

The “we are all Americans” story probably emerged in response to Union officer Horace Porter’s account of Lee and Grant’s meeting. Porter was a lieutenant Colonel on Grant’s personal staff and was present in McLean’s parlor. In his Campaigning with Grant (1907), Porter writes of

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111 McPherson, Battle Cry of Freedom, 848.
112 Arthur C. Parker, General Ely S. Parker: Last Grand Sachem of the Iroquois and General Grant’s Military Secretary (Buffalo: Buffalo Historical Society, 1919), 149.
the following interaction between Lee and Parker:

Parker being a full-blooded Indian, when Lee saw his swarthy features he looked at him with evident surprise, and his eyes rested on him for several seconds. What was passing in his mind no one knew, but the natural surmise was that he at first mistook Parker for a negro, and was struck with astonishment to find that the commander of the Union armies had one of that race on his personal staff.113

Porter’s account of Lee and Parker’s interaction ends here—with Lee’s astonishment and possible disdain for Grant’s dark-skinned staff member. Porter’s account does not mention a handshake or conciliatory exchange; this version of Lee and Parker’s interaction does nothing to further Reconciliation, nor does it enhance Parker’s role in the Appomattox moment. It is simply a confirmation of what readers might expect: that Lee was a racist. It is thus unsurprising that Parker vehemently denied this version of his interaction with Lee. According to The Life of Ely S. Parker, Last Great Sachem of the Iroquois and General Grant’s Military Secretary (1919), a biography of Ely Parker written by Arthur Caswell Parker, his great nephew, Ely Parker himself told the “we are all Americans” version to friends and family throughout his life.114 Caswell Parker acquiesces that “this brief conversation occurred in the rear of the room and as Lee has his back to the rest of the room except Marshall, no one of the several eye-witnesses of the surrender who wrote of the incidents seemed to have noted it.”115 Caswell Parker’s apologetic explanation for why Porter and other memoirists left out the “we are all Americans” exchange affirms that it cannot be verified. However, Caswell Parker writes he heard “this personal version of the incident” from a woman named Harriet Maxwell Converse, who was “an intimate friend of Parker’s.”116 The “we are all Americans” version of events is therefore historically dubious and Horace Porter’s version of the exchange, in which Lee is “struck with astonishment” at Parker’s dark features, is more likely to have occurred.

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113 Horace Porter, Campaigning with Grant (New York: The Century Co., 1907), 481.
114 Parker, General Ely S. Parker, 134.
115 Parker, General Ely S. Parker, 133-4.
116 Parker, General Ely S. Parker, 134.
Porter’s Civil War memoirs are similar to the other works of Union officers we have examined in its adherence to the Reconciliation narrative of the Appomattox moment. Porter details Lee and Grant’s reminiscences of the Mexican-American War, remarks on their “pleasant” conversation about peace, and emphasizes how Lee was “evidently touched by [Grant’s] act of generosity” in allowing Confederate soldiers to retain their personal property.\textsuperscript{117} If the “we are all Americans” exchange truly happened in McLean’s parlor, Porter would have surely included it in his detail-rich account. And one would think that Badeau and Grant, who both strongly promulgate Reconciliation at Appomattox, would have included it in their narratives. Parker’s version of his exchange with Lee is the embodiment of Union-Confederate reunion and its absence in other eyewitness accounts—accounts that also seek to further a vision of Reconciliation—undermines its authenticity.

Parker’s promulgation of the “we are all Americans” story can be partially ascribed to self-agrandizing motivations, like Chamberlains “honor answering honor” salute. But a more practical reason for the story’s Reconciliatory tone could be attributed to Parker’s postwar political career. Grant and Parker maintained their friendship after the war and Grant even walked Parker’s wife, Minnie Sackett, down the aisle at their wedding.\textsuperscript{118} As president, Grant nominated Parker for the position of Commissioner of Indian Affairs, a job well suited to the former lawyer, soldier, and administrator.\textsuperscript{119} Grant and Parker worked to improve the relationship between Indians and whites, especially as westward expansion increasingly brought the two groups into contact. Grant and Parker favored the establishment of permanent reservations for Indian populations in order to avoid violent clashes between tribes and white settlers. They also supported paths to citizenship for Indians, who were at the time considered wards of the state, and replaced corrupt officials with

\textsuperscript{117} Porter, \textit{Campaigning with Grant}, 478.
\textsuperscript{119} Armstrong, \textit{Warrior in Two Camps}, 139.
those who would manage Indian affairs “justly.” Parker’s role in the brokerage of peace at Appomattox gave him legitimacy in presiding over national Indian affairs, as did his Seneca ancestry. His reputation as the source of Reconciliation at Appomattox would certainly help him pursue peace between Native Americans and whites; the “we are all Americans” story would have furthered his political career.

Despite its dubious origins, the “we are all Americans” story has earned a prominent place in the “official” Appomattox narrative, and the story has clearly become historical fact and the defining moment in Parker’s military career. In James’ McPherson’s Battle Cry of Freedom, he not only relays the story but also footnotes it. His reference is to Porter’s Civil War memoir, which does not contain the words “we are all Americans.” And in William H. Armstrong’s biography of Parker, Warrior in Two Camps: Ely S. Parker, Union General and Seneca Chief (1978), the author titles his chapter on Appomattox, “One Real American.” Parker’s Appomattox narrative aligns with the Reconciliation myth but as in Chamberlain’s account, Grant is not the instigator of this sentiment. Presumably, though, Parker intended—like Grant and Badeau—to present a view of Reconciliation at Appomattox that credited Northerners with its success. However, another aspect of Parker’s story—Lee’s role—would eventually change how it was interpreted.

Historian Caroline Janney has written that “memory is not a passive act.” In the case of Appomattox, six men—Ulysses S. Grant, Adam Badeau, E. P. Alexander, James Longstreet, Joshua Lawrence Chamberlain, and Ely S. Parker—remembered their wartime experiences actively and relayed them in ways that engaged with existing end-of-war narratives. Reconciliation and the Lost

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120 Armstrong, Warrior in Two Camps, 137-140.
121 Armstrong, Warrior in Two Camps, 135.
122 McPherson, Battle Cry of Freedom, 848.
123 Armstrong, Warrior in Two Camps, 108.
Cause were explanations of the war, and therefore acted as stories through which Americans grappled with end of military conflict and attempted to move forward. As we have seen, these traditions were not entirely opposed, as both praised the honor and courage of Confederate soldiers. However, Reconciliation, as first codified by Grant and Badeau, expresses Northerners’ choice of the proverbial high road. Grant undoubtedly respected Lee and his men and wanted to welcome them back into the Union, but he did not acquiesce that their cause was just. At Appomattox, Grant was magnanimous: he had all the power, but chose to act generously towards his former foes. By contrast, proponents of the Lost Cause like E. P. Alexander maintained that Lee was the dominant figure of the war and its conclusion. Longstreet’s specific critique of Lee’s generalship legitimizes (probably unintentionally on his part) the power of Lost Cause interpretations of the war. Chamberlain’s and Parker’s narratives do not contradict “Grant’s Appomattox,” but they do not entirely support it. While both men emphasize the respect between Union and Confederate soldiers, they do not credit Grant with this phenomenon. Instead, in accounts that can be interpreted as self-promotional, Chamberlain and Parker dilute the Northern origin of the Reconciliation myth. By removing Grant as the protagonist at Appomattox, Chamberlain and Parker lesson Grant’s significance at surrender. These six accounts of Appomattox demonstrate two myths that have certain similarities but different regional valences; their adherents had different visions of what Appomattox meant—during and after the war.

The fact that these men published their recollections rather than simply writing them for family or friends is important to bear in mind. Publication suggests veracity, especially if the author claims to have witnessed the events. These published memoirs and biographies have become extremely important to Civil War scholarship; historians often refer to these men’s memories as accurate records of the past. Thus their narratives, arguably more than any other texts, have contributed to the popular American understanding of Appomattox. Yet, however influential
eyewitness accounts have become in Appomattox discourses, Americans did not first receive news of Lee’s surrender to Grant in the pages of memoirs or biographies because these publications did not enter circulation until decades after surrender. The literary culture of Appomattox legitimized the Reconciliation and Lost Cause myths in the moment, but it was Northern visual culture that originated them.
It is difficult to pinpoint the exact origin of the Reconciliation and Lost Cause myths of the Civil War. In this chapter, I will argue that visual sources are one viable way to track the evolution of these narratives. Visual sources had an unprecedented influence on Americans during the Civil War era and, when published in newspapers and magazines as sources of “War News,” informed public opinion about the war. But like memoirs, they reflected artists’ and publishers’ views on wartime events as well as the preferences of American readers. These sources—which included newspaper illustrations, single-sheet prints, and photographs—were produced at a time in which images became increasingly accessible and the distinction between art and reality became blurred. The publishers, artists, and buyers of these visual sources were overwhelmingly Northern, and the images therefore reflect a pro-Union sentiment. Initial images of Appomattox emphasize the mutual respect between Grant, Lee, and their armies—a key component of the Reconciliation myth that Grant, Badeau, Chamberlain, and Parker articulate in their publications. Yet these images also credit Grant as the instigator of this respect and the victor of the war. Thus a “proto-Reconciliation” myth emerged in early images of Appomattox produced in the North; the South was forgiven, but the Union victorious.

Reconciliation imagery initially dominated the visual culture of Appomattox, but this vision has not remained unchallenged. Beginning in the mid-twentieth century, prominent artists have increasingly produced Civil War paintings that exude Lost Cause themes. This shift in visual culture has occurred—at least in part—because of Lee’s deified status in Civil War memory. Unlike Grant, whose postwar career damaged his popularity, Lee did not participate in politics and died before he could damage his own reputation. His death allowed him to transcend messy
Reconstruction politics and forever remain the symbol of a noble South. Because of Lee’s elevated reputation in overall Civil War memory, twentieth-century artists have painted Lee’s surrender to Grant in a way that ignores the Unionist undertone of the Reconciliation myth. Rather, artists preserved the respect between Union and Confederate soldiers, but prioritized Lee’s role at Appomattox over Grant’s. Thus more recent—and extremely prolific—visual interpretations of Lee’s surrender to Grant demonstrate a change in the Reconciliation myth in the twentieth century. In today’s Appomattox visual culture, Reconciliation is still reconciliatory, but no longer Unionist.

2.1 GRANT AND LEE IN BLACK AND WHITE

Prints were powerful communicators of myth because of their association with “the news.” The Civil War era coincided with the rise of illustrated newspapers, most notably Frank Leslie’s Illustrated Newspaper and Harper’s Weekly. While newspapers had covered prior wars, the Civil War was the first major American crisis chronicled in images of army life, battles, and portraits of war heroes. Printmaking techniques improved rapidly in the years before the war, courtesy of entrepreneurial British-trained artists and engravers who capitalized on a public thirst for visual news.125 Lithographs and engravings—based on artists’ sketches—were common methods of printing images and allowed publishers to feature illustrations alongside news articles.126 The popularity of illustrated newspapers, as well as independent printing firms that sold individual images separately, signaled an increasing acceptance of illustrations as trustworthy sources of news.

When the war began, newspaper editors sent artist-reporters, or “special artists” to the battlefields in order to rapidly execute images of army life. However, publishers initially encountered a shortage of artist-reporters and therefore offered free subscriptions to soldiers and civilians who produced sketches of the battlefield. Frank Leslie and Fletcher Harper, the publishers of *Frank Leslie’s Illustrated Newspaper* and *Harper’s Weekly* (respectively), paid handsomely for crude and often unreliable soldier sketches.

These strategies allowed them to recruit a sufficient number of young civilian artists who witnessed and then visually recorded the war’s events. Corps of reporters and special artists such as the “Bohemian Brigade,” who traveled with the Union army in the trans-Mississippi West, sent back sketches of soldier life to their publishers. Engravers and lithographers would then use similar methods to convert these sketches into “stamps” that attached to printing presses and mass-produced images. In the engraving process, a specialist would copy a sketch onto a wooden block, carve away an image’s negative space, and then replicate the wooden stamp on a metal block.

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127 Budd Leslie Gambee, Jr. *Frank Leslie and his Illustrated Newspaper* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 1964), 42.
128 Thompson, “Illustrating the Civil War,” 12.
129 Thompson, “Illustrating the Civil War,” 13.
plate. They then dipped the plate in ink, like the letters of a printing press, making multiple copies of the same image. Lithographers, on the other hand, would copy a sketch directly on a metal plate with an oil-based ink, skipping the step of carving the image into a wooden block. The plate was first dipped in water and then in printing ink; because water and oil do not mix, the ink would only cling to the lithographer’s marks and could be used as a “stamp” as effectively as an engraved plate. Although engraving and lithography were both used in the printing process, the latter was a faster method of preparing images for print. To audiences thirsting for information from the battlefield, these quick and cheap techniques for disseminating news images were a welcome advancement.

By publishing prints based on special artists’ sketches alongside news stories, publishers held wartime artists to the same standards as reporters. They also went to great lengths to convince readers of their special artists’ journalistic legitimacy. Because magazines like Frank Leslie’s Illustrated Newspaper and Harper’s Weekly advertised themselves as sources of accurate reporting, it was important for their readership to trust their information and thus continue to buy papers. Fletcher Harper, for example, sought to increase public trust in his artists’ sketches by emphasizing the close relationship between special artists and Union generals. To that end, an account of Alfred R. Waud’s own experiences while traveling with the Army of the Potomac appeared in the October 3, 1863 issue of Harper’s Weekly, in which he emphasized his close relationship with General George Meade. “[I] was the only person connected with the newspapers permitted to go upon the recent advance to the Rapidan,” he wrote to the editors of Harper’s Weekly, “An order of General Meade’s sent all the reporters back.” This remark was intended to suggest that Waud’s relationship with the Union general provided him with better information.

Gambee, Frank Leslie and his Illustrated Newspaper, 46.

increased battlefield access, and consequently more accurate sketches. Frank Leslie’s Illustrated Newspaper similarly promulgated the idea of an “on the spot” reporter who personally witnessed the events he sketched. In the event that special artists sketched events they did not witness, Leslie published articles detailing the meticulous methods by which artists would recreate a scene. Like journalists, special artists would interview eyewitnesses, read battlefield reports, and examine environmental settings. Leslie impressed upon his readers that he valued accurate images; he quoted himself in the August 2, 1856 issue as saying, “there can be no indolence or ease about such as establishment [as an illustrated newspaper],” and called his mission to verify the truth as a “Herculean task.”

Newspaper publishers also sought to familiarize their readers with their special artists because they believed that if their readers could identify the source of the news, they would be more inclined to believe it. Thus, Leslie published the names and biographies of special artists in his magazine so readers could become acquainted with them. The first example of artist bylines occurred in a May 1861 issue of Frank Leslie’s Illustrated Newspaper; he printed the names of Eugene Benson, Arthur Lumley and William Waud in captions beneath their images. Some artists even drew themselves into the scenes they recorded to (counter-intuitively) bolster an image’s credibility. Although an artist’s own image was obviously not in his own line of vision, his appearance in the image reminded viewers that the sketch was a first-hand account. Leslie also commended the courage of special artists who placed themselves in dangerous situations to publicize the “truth.” One three-image series entitled “The Perils of our Special Artist in the West,” impressed upon readers the lengths to which special artists went to report on the war.

132 Pearson, “Innovation and Imitation,” 100.
133 Gambee, Frank Leslie and his Illustrated Newspaper, 41.
134 Gambee, Frank Leslie and his Illustrated Newspaper, 40.
135 Pearson, “Innovation and Imitation,” 87; 108.
136 Gambee, Frank Leslie and his Illustrated Newspaper, 42.
137 Pearson, “Innovation and Imitation,” 108.
army life was dangerous; although only one artist was killed over the course of the war, several were wounded in the line of duty.\footnote{Thompson, “Illustrating the Civil War,” 18.} Removing artists’ anonymity and emphasizing their self-sacrifice allowed publishers to further their claims of pictorial accuracy.

Despite increasing acceptance of images as legitimate sources of news, there were clear limitations to the accuracy of wartime prints. For example, converting a sketch into a print took time and manpower, meaning that images of events were often published several weeks after they occurred.\footnote{Thompson, “Illustrating the Civil War,” 11.} Also, publishers sometimes changed images to make them more relevant. For example, a print of General Nathaniel Lyon valiantly leading his men into the Battle of Wilson’s Creek appeared in an 1861 issue of \textit{Frank Leslie’s Illustrated Newspaper}. Artist Henry Lovie’s sketch, on which the print was based, actually showed Lyon falling from his horse with a mortal wound. \textit{Frank Leslie’s Illustrated Newspaper} had already printed two images of Lyon’s death, and changed this third image to avoid repetition.\footnote{National Gallery of Art, \textit{The Civil War: A Centennial Exhibition of Eyewitness Drawings} (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, 1961), 89.} Other times, publishers made minor alterations to special artists’ sketches in order to cater to the tastes of their audience. In 1861, Frank Leslie—who initially tried to remain neutral in order to attract readers on both sides of the conflict—published an idealized front-page image of Jefferson Davis. In the print Davis is depicted with darker hair, more youthful features, and softer facial expression than in contemporary photographs. Lithographers and engravers also often added symbolic touches not present in original sketches or photographs around the edges of their prints.\footnote{Gregory A. Borchard, Lawrence J. Mullen and Stephen Bates, “From Realism to Reality: The Advent of War Photography,” \textit{Journalism & Communication Monographs} 15, no. 2 (2013): 91.} Readers were not informed of changes to special artists’ sketches and probably assumed the published prints were unaltered.\footnote{Pearson, “Innovation and Imitation,” 89-90.}

Because of the popularity and increased acceptance of images as sources of news, independent printmakers also thrived; firms like Currier and Ives, Major and Knapp, and J. Kelly...
and Sons sold single-sheet images of news events with captions but without accompanying articles.\textsuperscript{143} New York City-based firm Currier and Ives became a top seller of wartime prints because of its timely publication of these prints, such as one image, “Bombardment of Fort Sumter, Charleston Harbor,” the first to depict the attack in April 1861.\textsuperscript{144} Single-sheet prints, more so than newspaper illustrations, tended to evoke the patriotism, courage, and romance of war; they often included American flags and scenes of individual heroism. This was because single sheet prints were stand-alone works; they had limited caption space and printers communicated themes visually rather than textually. Single-sheet prints were therefore both sources of news and reflections of popular culture; historians Mark Neely and Harold Holzer have even gone so far as to claim that many popular prints were “valueless” as accurate illustrations of events.\textsuperscript{145}

Nonetheless, they were cheap and ubiquitous, and many families could afford to buy and display these prints in their homes. Consequently, printing firms often published images customers would want to buy: a mostly Northern audience would favor images that glorified the Union cause.\textsuperscript{146}

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{image.png}
\caption{Fig. 2.2 Sarony, Major & Knapp, \textit{Fate of the Rebel Flag}, painting by William Bauly, 1861.}
\end{figure}

\textsuperscript{143} Borchard et al., “Realism to Reality,” 76.
\textsuperscript{145} Neely et al., \textit{Union Image}, 17.
\textsuperscript{146} Neely et al., \textit{Union Image}, 19.
The Sarony, Major & Knapp lithograph, *Fate of the Rebel Flag* (1861) pictured above is one example of a single-sheet print that Union families may have displayed in their parlors. A William Bauly painting of the same name inspired the print, and both depict a military event—the sinking of a Confederate vessel. As the ship sinks, the flames emanating from the wreckage take the shape of the “Stars and Bars” flag, the first official flag of the Confederate States of America. The printer notably included the label of “Rebel Flag”; most likely because this Confederate flag looked strikingly like the United States’ flag. This image strongly hints at the South’s downfall even though this print was published in the early months of the war. The source of the conflagration also seems to be the bolt of lightning in the top left of the image, suggesting divine wrath. Though certainly propagandistic in content, this print was not printed by the U.S. government, suggesting that while artists and lithographers strove to deliver newsworthy images to their audiences, they could also communicate certain—and often Northern—ideas about the war.

Single-sheet prints and newspaper illustrations allowed civilians to follow the war visually. Publishers like Fletcher Harper and Frank Leslie worked hard to convince their audiences that prints were reliable sources of news and that visual representations of war were as valuable as written ones. The success of both *Harper’s Weekly* and *Frank Leslie’s Illustrated Newspaper* suggests public acceptance of this new kind of reporting: between the years of 1861 and 1865, the circulation of both papers often exceeded 100,000 per issue. Independent printing firms capitalized on news images’ increasing legitimacy and sold single-sheet prints depicting war events, although their reporting methods were seemingly less rigorous than those of their magazine counterparts. These Northern-based publishers sought to report the news, but the profit motivation

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147 Neely et al., *Union Image*, 14.
148 The recognizable “Confederate Flag” of popular culture was actually never an official national flag; rather it served as the battle flag for various armies including the Army of Northern Virginia and the Army of Tennessee.
149 Pearson, “Innovation and Imitation,” 81.
of catering to their predominantly Union audiences meant that prints could not be objective. Moreover, the long process from battlefield event to press—which involved special artists, engravers, and editors—led to increased subjectivity in published prints. These images offered Americans a literal glimpse into the Civil War, but a glimpse through the refracted lens of Northern bias.

Like printmaking, photography allowed Americans to visually experience war. The Civil War was the first major American crisis to be captured on camera, ushering in an era that historian Alan Trachtenberg terms “historicism-by-photography.” Because a photograph appeared to capture a scene exactly as it would have appeared to the photographer, Trachtenberg has argued that, in public perception, “photographs are the popular historicism of our era; they confer nothing less than reality itself.” Yet however marvelous and incontrovertible photographs may have seemed to audiences in the 1860s, photography provided another visual medium that—like printing—was susceptible to manipulation. Photographers were, in essence, artists with new technology; their shots reflected their vision rather than an objective “truth.”

Photographs, while imperfect purveyors of “truth,” were indeed popular with Civil War Americans. Photojournalism mirrored the special artist correspondence in illustrated newspapers and printing firms, as enterprising publishers hired photographers to go into the field and capture battlefield visuals. One of these publishers was artist and entrepreneur Mathew Brady, the most prominent photography mogul in the 1850s and ’60s and one of the first to popularize photojournalism. He owned several studios in New York City, and upon the outbreak of war, Brady seized the opportunity to visually capture it. He told a reporter that in April 1861 he switched from “commercial business to pictorial war correspondence,” a comment that suggests

that Brady, like Harper and Leslie, considered his images to be reliable news sources.\textsuperscript{151} Brady dispatched photographers such as Alexander Gardner and Timothy O’Sullivan to the front lines of the Union army to capture scenes from the war as they were happening; certainly, the portraits of dead soldiers at Antietam and Gettysburg relayed the grim reality of war for crowds of New Yorkers at Brady’s studio.\textsuperscript{152} Rather than the action and heroism of battle Brady’s photographs were still-lifes of the war dead, images that left little room for romanticism. This was a harsh and unsettling reality; thus to Americans, photographs seemed to convey an unmatched level of wartime veracity.

However, photography was not a practical method for disseminating the news. First, it was ill suited to capturing action. Photographic equipment was large and cumbersome, and exposure times were anywhere between three and twenty seconds.\textsuperscript{153} This meant a subject had to remain still while the picture was taken; battle action would have been blurred. Second, photographs could not be printed in newspapers (which still relied on the printing press method), meaning that viewership for illustrations and single-sheet prints was much greater than viewership for photographs.\textsuperscript{154} Third, photographers clearly composed their shots. Like sketch artists, they chose the angles, perspectives, and foci of their images, and thus even seemingly candid photographs were staged. Some photographers even repositioned dead bodies while composing their photographs to dramatize or aesthetically improve their shots.\textsuperscript{155} Because of these limitations, photographs were not only incapable of capturing the chaos of battle but were also subject to artists’ interpretations.

In addition to the accuracy problems inherent in the photographic process, presentation of the photographs in archival form was also suggestible. Trachtenberg has posited that Brady’s

\textsuperscript{152} Panzer, \textit{Mathew Brady and the Image of History}, 108.
\textsuperscript{153} Borchard et al., “Realism to Reality,” 72; 81.
\textsuperscript{154} Borchard et al., “Realism to Reality,” 76.
\textsuperscript{155} Borchard et al., “Realism to Reality,” 69.
presentation of his collection in “war albums” as complete visual records of the Civil War lent undue credibility to each image.¹⁵⁶ “[T]he list [table of contents] suggests something sweeping and epic,” Trachtenberg argues, and these presentations indicate “a motive as much rhetorical as inventorial, as much to tell as to show, to encompass a great struggle as if from the grand perspective of Providence.”¹⁵⁷ The guise of objectivity and completeness in photographs erased the fact of the photographer’s intervention: the manipulation of corpses, positioning of subjects, and framing of images. Thus, photographs provided a new way to visually capture the war, but not one that was any more objective than prints and illustrations. Civil War prints and photographs represented a particular perspective rather than a reality, and because of the Northern monopoly on these visual forms, this perspective was overwhelmingly pro-Union.

**Recognize to Legitimize**

During the Civil War era, if viewers recognized the public figures in an image, they were more likely to trust its contents. Thus photographs and prints were not mutually exclusive media; often, lithographers and engravers based their illustrations on photographs of recognizable individuals. Detail-rich and realistic faces brought newsworthy events to life and increased confidence in a print’s accuracy. Because photography was a relatively new technology, few photographs of even the most famous Civil War figures circulated at the onset of the war. And because lithographers and engravers often used the same few pictures for inspiration, similar facial expressions and body positioning appeared in different prints. Images of Robert E. Lee serve as one example. The two most recognizable images of Lee’s face are a Minnis and Cowell photograph from around 1862 and a Mathew Brady portrait taken several days after Appomattox, on April 16, 1865. Historians Mark Neely, Harold Holzer, and Gabor Boritt have determined that these two

photographs of Lee inspired lithographers and engravers more often than other photographs from the period.  

![Fig. 2.3 Minnis and Cowell Gallery, Robert E. Lee, ca. 1862-3.](image)

![Fig. 2.4 Mathew Brady, Robert E. Lee with two aides, 1865.](image)

The Minnis and Cowell photograph (fig. 2.3) depicts a neutral-faced Lee gazing upwards, while the Brady portrait (fig. 2.4) shows a visibly older Lee with whiter hair, sitting between two Confederate aides. The later photograph of Lee also captures a grim facial expression, with a furrowed brow and slightly clenched jaw. This Lee also stares directly at the camera in a way that seems almost defiant. But because the Minnis and Cowell photograph was produced in 1862, it was this image—not Brady’s—that inspired most wartime prints of Lee, including those issued soon after printing firms heard the news of the Army of Northern Virginia’s surrender.  

However, one Appomattox print published two years after surrender pictures a seated Lee who looks virtually identical to the subject of Brady’s photograph.

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159 Neely et al., *Confederate Image*, 64.
Wilmer McLean, the owner of the McLean house, commissioned this lithograph in 1867, probably in an attempt to profit from his proximity to the event that many considered the de facto end of the Civil War. In *The Room in the McLean House* (fig. 2.5) Lee is pictured as an almost-perfect inverse of his figure in Brady’s photograph, seated in a chair with his hat in his lap and a forlorn expression on his face. The other figures in this print also have detailed faces, and the names of each surrender participant appear below the image. This effort to visually and textually identify the names of each man further evidences how publishers used facial recognition to legitimize their prints.

Printmakers initially had a more difficult time accurately representing Ulysses S. Grant in lithographs because, although they had few photographs of Lee, they had even fewer of Grant. Grant’s victories in the Western theater of war made him a household name, but no one knew
what he looked like; in fact, East Coast-based firms often erroneously produced prints of Grant based on a photograph of an Illinois beef contractor, like the J.C. Buttre lithograph below.160

The J.C. Buttre lithograph (fig. 2.6) actually pictures a man who may have been named William Grant, and this inaccurate image was reproduced in Harper’s Weekly and Frank Leslie’s Illustrated Newspaper as late as 1864.161 By the time printmakers were imagining Appomattox, photographers had successfully taken portraits of Grant, including this Mathew Brady photograph of him at his headquarters in Cold Harbor, Virginia in June 1864 (fig. 2.7). The “false” lithographic Grant has a longer beard, receding hairline, and larger waistline. He also looks more refined and aristocratic than the disheveled Grant in the photograph, who leans casually against a tree with an unbuttoned coat. These uses of Lee’s and Grant’s visages demonstrate photograph-based prints were a good—but not foolproof—method for increasing public trust in an image’s contents.

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160 Neely et al., Union Image, 162-4.
161 Neely et al., Union Image, 164.
Publishers of prints and photographs faced the dual challenge of producing images that were both believable and compelling. Magazines like *Harper’s Weekly* and *Frank Leslie’s Illustrated Newspaper*, printing firms like Major & Knapp and Currier & Ives, and photographers like Mathew Brady all claimed to present their audiences with accurate visual representations of the war. Nevertheless, they were also motivated to please their audiences in order to sell more prints and newspapers. Because these companies were headquartered in the North, the majority of wartime prints represented a pro-Union vision of the war. Yet by the time publishers started selling images of Appomattox, Northern audiences seemed to prefer a more tempered view of war’s end, not just one that celebrated Confederate defeat. Early prints of Lee’s surrender to Grant emphasize peace and healing between former foes—but portray Grant as the war’s hero.

*Prints of Surrender, Northern-Style*

Visual depictions of Appomattox emerged within this context of rising public trust in images as reliable (although really, quite fallible) news sources. Images from Appomattox were even further removed from fact because there were neither artists nor photographers in McLean’s parlor when Lee surrendered to Grant. Because of the printing monopoly in the North, the first published images of Appomattox represent a proto-Reconciliation myth. Printmakers generally favored Grant and his role in orchestrating the surrender in these images, although Lee is also represented positively. Themes of respect and friendship appear, but the overall sentiment of immediate postwar Appomattox prints is Unionist.

An interesting exception to this trend appeared in Alfred R. Waud’s sketch of Lee leaving the McLean house. Waud, a special artist employed by *Harper’s Weekly*, was at Appomattox Court House on April 9th but remained outside the house while the surrender took place. He made this sketch of Lee after surrender, but provided no images from within the room.
The only word that appears is a small “Lee” written in the bottom left of the picture. This word is significant because it alone defines the picture textually. The word is not “surrender,” “Appomattox,” or “victory”; both the caption and the image communicate that this moment was about the Confederate general himself. Here, Lee is clearly the protagonist; he is placed in the center and is the largest figure in the scene. He sits erect on his horse in a neat dress uniform and hat and gazes directly in front of him. Behind Lee rides an unidentified Confederate aide, and further in the background the stately McLean house appears, with its wide staircase, wraparound porch and second-floor balcony. A group of men stand on the porch, presumably watching Lee’s departure, and another soldier a few feet in front of the house stands at attention, also focusing on Lee. The trees in the background are bare, suggesting the early April climate. The other main focus of this image is the group of soldiers to Lee’s right who salute him as he passes. It is unclear whether these are Confederate or Union soldiers, but they have cleared a path for Lee and his aide. None of the men are on horseback; rather, they stand next to their mounts and are looking
up at Lee. One man raises his arm respectfully, while another tips his hat to the passing general. Lee does not acknowledge the group of soldiers; his eyes are fixed ahead. The overwhelming sentiment of this sketch is Lee’s solemnity, dignity, and the respect he received from all soldiers, Union and Confederate. Waud’s sketch, which is likely the only contemporaneous image of the surrender at Appomattox, pictures Lee instead of Grant; this is unusual considering the pro-Union tone that publications like *Harper’s Weekly* often exhibited. This deviation from the overall trend in early depictions of Appomattox perhaps foreshadows Lee’s mythical transcendence in later visual culture.

Notably, Waud’s sketch was never published. This could be because its message did not align with *Harper’s Weekly* ideology at the time, but there is also a more practical explanation. By the time the magazine reported on Lee’s surrender to Grant at Appomattox (and certainly by the time editors received Waud’s sketch), John Wilkes Booth had assassinated President Lincoln in Ford’s Theater. That story, including a full-length lithograph of Wilkes Booth, was front-page news in the April 29, 1865 issue of *Harper’s Weekly* while news of surrender was relegated to a small mention within an article entitled “The Murder of the President.” By the time lithographers and photographers disseminated images of Appomattox, the American people were already circulating rumors and myths about what exactly transpired there. As I argued earlier in the chapter, publishers considered their audience’s tastes when producing wartime images, and Appomattox was no exception. Thus the earliest visual representations of Lee’s surrender to Grant—which exhibit the Unionist Reconciliation view of the occasion as mutually respectful but Grant as superior—suggest that *this* was how Americans (primarily Northerners) interpreted Appomattox.

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In early Appomattox prints, the meeting between Lee and Grant occurs either indoors or outdoors. When (accurately) illustrated as occurring indoors, these prints highlight the mutual respect between the two men. Grant and Lee are the central—and often the only—figures in each image; moreover, Grant is the clear architect of surrender.

![Image](image_url)

Fig. 2.9 J. Kelly and Sons, *Gen Lee Surrendering to Lieut. Gen. Grant*, sketch by H. Thomas, 1865.

An 1865 lithograph by J. Kelly and Sons pictures Grant as superior to a defeated—but not undignified—Lee. Predictably, the printing firm J. Kelly and Sons was based in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania and catered to a Northern audience. Because the artist could not have witnessed this event personally, it shows an imagined event that would have appealed to J. Kelly and Sons’ customers. The lithographer took great care in detailing Lee and Grant’s faces, based on photographic models. The depiction of Lee was likely inspired by the Minnis and Cowell photograph, as evidenced by his expressionless face, slightly longer and pointed beard, and collar
with three stars (indicating his rank). Grant has a clipped beard, demonstrating that lithographers were no longer peddling beef contractor William Grant’s face as that of the Union general. J. Kelly and Sons’ audience would have recognized the protagonists of this lithograph and would have been more inclined to accept it as accurate, despite the fact that other details of the image were imagined. Small details, such as the familiarity of a famous face, could also lend credibility to an otherwise unsubstantiated image.

But many details in *Gen Lee Surrendering to Lieut. Gen. Grant* are fanciful and therefore reflect how the printers and their audience interpreted surrender: as an expression of a proto-Reconciliation myth. In the image, Grant presents Lee with a scroll titled “Terms of Surrender.” There is only one quill and inkwell on the table, and Grant points to a line on the scroll as if explaining the terms to Lee. This scene suggests that Grant alone was the architect of the terms, and he uncompromisingly presents them to Lee for him to sign. In reality, the meeting in McLean’s parlor involved some level of negotiation, such as Lee’s request—and Grant’s acquiescence—that Confederate officers be allowed to retain their personal side-arms and property. Also, Lee prepares to offer Grant his sword, one of the rumors about Appomattox that Americans circulated at the time but which Grant later dismissed as “fiction.”

 Grant also holds out his right hand, symbolically extending the hand of friendship. Although Grant is the clear victor in this image, his respect for Lee suggests that the viewer should respect him as well.

The physical appearance of the two men furthers the impression of Grant as in charge of the surrender meeting but also allows Lee to appear dignified. Grant stands erect in this image, appearing even taller than Lee who is hunched over the table as he braces himself for surrender. In fact, Grant was several inches shorter than Lee, who stood over six feet tall while Grant was approximately 5’8”. By depicting Grant as taller than the stooped Lee, Grant again emerges as

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superior. However, the men are dressed in uniforms of similar color and style that both display the rank of three-star general, suggesting a measure of equality. Notably, Grant’s uniform is not mud-splattered and disheveled. However, this aspect of the surrender became central to the myth only after the publication of this print, and thus the lithographer at J. Kelly and Sons probably assumed his audience would want their hero to look urbane.

Finally, the indoor setting also includes significant details, which convey the cordial relationship between the two men. Historian Sally McMurry has posited that the parlor as a social space occupied a particular place in the nineteenth-century American mindset. Especially for members of the middle class, the parlor was a home’s “best room,” and often displayed a family’s most lavish possessions. The parlor was the room in which most social occasions occurred, and middle-class Americans associated a particular, genteel behavior with this room. Etiquette and civility was paramount, as it was a formal area. The depiction of McLean’s parlor in this image suggests that the artist understood what a typical middle-class parlor looked like and what it symbolized. The setting of surrender is pictured as civilized, even lavish. The floor is carpeted and a heavy drape hangs over the window behind Lee. The table over which Grant and Lee are standing is covered with a white tablecloth edged with fringe and embroidery. While the viewer may be distracted by the Confederate aide’s open distress and the Union aide’s somewhat haughty expression, it is significant that both Lee and Grant have the same number of witnesses to the surrender, who both stand in doorways behind their commanders. In reality, Lee only had one aide while Grant’s entire staff was present in McLean’s parlor. The lithographer’s assumption that both men were equal parties to the surrender again suggests that a proto-Reconciliation interpretations of surrender.

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In perhaps the most overt gesture to a pro-Union interpretation of Appomattox, a portrait of George Washington hangs on the wall behind Grant and Lee. The reconciliatory symbolism is obvious: the two men have a shared American heritage, and the portrait’s appearance in the parlor reminds the viewer that North and South were once united. However, this is still a Northern view: Washington’s profile is clearly aligned with Grant’s, creating a double image that closely associates the Union general with America’s Founding Father and most celebrated general. The appearance of Washington’s portrait conveys a desire for reconciliation, but its positioning signals Union victory and superiority; this sentiment pervades the print.

Fig. 2.10 Currier and Ives, *Surrender of Genl. Lee at Appomattox C. H. Va. April 9th 1865*, 1865.
Like the J. Kelly and Sons print, the New York-based Currier and Ives print, *Surrender of Genl. Lee at Appomattox C. H. Va. April 9th 1865* (1865), pictures an indoor surrender scene that focuses on the meeting of two individual men. Lee’s and Grant’s expressionless visages again demonstrate their photographic inspiration; due to this, they do not make eye contact and seem to gaze at points behind one another. The two men are alone, and are seated at a round table in a room similar to the parlor in the J. Kelly and Sons print in splendor but different in its details, suggesting that this artist also understood the general appearance of a middle-class parlor. A striped carpet appears beneath the unadorned but marble-topped table, and two ornately framed landscape paintings hang on the papered wall behind Lee and Grant. The men’s actions are familiar: Grant presents Lee with a piece of paper, presumably the terms of surrender, and Lee signs it. A notable difference between the Currier and Ives and the J. Kelly and Sons prints is the presence of two writing implements on the table instead of one, subtly suggesting that this surrender was a collaborative effort. Grant holds out his hand, either extending the hand of friendship or gesturing to and explaining the surrender terms. Lee’s sword is seemingly proffered—it is laid out on the table with the hilt facing Grant. These details establish Grant’s dominance at the meeting, although Lee is a stronger figure in this portrayal with his erect posture, inscrutable expression, and agency in signing the document.

Suggestions of equality between the two men are evident in their appearances: they are portrayed as mirror images of one another. They both wear knee-length double-breasted coats and high leather boots. Grant’s uniform is darker in color and his three-star insignia appears on his shoulder rather than his collar, but otherwise the generals’ uniforms are identical. They sit at either side of the round table in twin straight-back wooden chairs. They meet man-to-man; no aides appear in this image. This mirroring suggests both equality and a sense of respect between Grant and Lee; still, Grant has clear control over the proceedings. Like in the J. Kelly and Sons print, a
detail in the background adds a final, more subtle reconciliatory touch: an olive branch pattern, symbolizing peace, appears on the parlor’s wallpaper. Another interpretation could be that this pattern is not an olive branch, but rather a laurel wreath, which represents victory.¹⁶⁵ Perhaps the lithographer left this symbol deliberately ambiguous to demonstrate the proto-Reconciliationist view that the surrender meeting represented both victory and peace, and that the two themes were not entirely opposed. Although the Currier and Ives print, like the J. Kelly and Sons image, elevates Grant, its message is more subtly pro-Union. This image’s overall message is one of equality between two gentlemen, underscored by their meeting in a stately parlor.

Both the J. Kelly and Sons and Currier and Ives prints clearly betray their Northern biases. However, Lee’s dignity in defeat and Grant’s admiration for his former enemy evidences an ideological shift in Northern war prints, which no longer demonized their Southern enemy. This depiction of the Confederacy is much more generous than the 1861 Sarony, Major & Knapp lithograph, Fate of the Rebel Flag (fig. 2.2), in which a Confederate ship sinks and burns in flames that resemble its flag. The J. Kelly and Sons print communicates a softened Northern view of the Confederacy; it welcomes Southern sympathizers into their audience as Grant welcomes Lee back into Union. The war was over, and Northern audiences now responded to generosity rather than vitriol.

Surrender in the Great Outdoors

Depictions of the surrender occurring outdoors convey a slightly different meaning than those taking place in McLean’s parlor; although artists may have known that the surrender did not occur outside, this alteration allowed them to include the Union and Confederate armies in their

¹⁶⁵ For more on laurel wreath and olive branch iconography in American history, see E. McClung Fleming, “From Indian Princess to Greek Goddess: the American Image, 1783-1815,” Winterthur Portfolio 3 (1967): 37-66.
images. Thus Appomattox became more than simply the reconciliation of two men, but rather a larger mending of sectional differences. However, the message in these outdoor prints remain consistent with the images of parlor surrenders.

Fig. 2.11 Joseph Hoover, The Surrender of General Lee / And His Entire Army to Lieut. General Grant April 9th 1865, sketch by A.L. Weise, 1865.

The Philadelphia-produced Joseph Hoover print, The Surrender of General Lee and His Entire Army to Lieut. General Grant April 9th 1865 (1865), focuses on Lee and Grant but also includes each general’s army. A tree appears in the center of the image and the generals and their armies stand on either side of it; unlike in Waud’s sketch of the outdoor Appomattox (fig. 2.8), the tree and surrounding foliage are in full bloom. The surrender is depicted as taking place high up on a hill; the Confederate and Union armies stand in organized lines in the distance. The fact that Lee and Grant stand on elevated ground communicates the significance of their meeting. Geographer Jay Appleton, in his prospect-refuge theory of human interaction with landscape, has argued that
the presence of a “mount” in landscape imagery conveys heightened perspective, even omnipotence.\textsuperscript{166} Thus Grant and Lee’s authority over their armies—and the viewer—suggests that their reconciliation will lead to larger sectional reunion.

As in parlor images, outdoor scenes suggest equality between Grant and Lee—but Grant’s ultimate superiority. They are both recognizable and each wear clean, double-breasted long coats and hold their hats by their sides. Their uniforms resemble one another’s and are almost indistinguishable in color, although Lee’s leather boots are taller and his white gloves longer. Each general has two bearded aides standing behind him, also in dress uniforms and carrying swords. Grant and Lee’s armies, both bearing multiple flags, seem equally large and stretch into the horizon. Grant’s dominance at the surrender is subtle but evident. This time it is Lee who appears to extend the hand of friendship to Grant, but perhaps it is only to receive the document Grant is holding, clearly titled “Terms of Surrender.” Both men hold swords at their sides, but Lee clutches the hilt of his, suggesting that he is preparing to offer it to Grant. Moreover, the equivalent condition and size of the armies could reflect a subversion of the idea that the Confederacy was outmanned, outgunned, and underfed—a belief that became important to the Lost Cause narrative. The portrayal of an outdoor surrender allows the artist to depict the Union and Confederate armies, and their equitable sizes suggest that it was the Union’s innate supremacy (not their material advantages) that led to Lee’s surrender. The image’s allusions to Grant and Lee’s equality are the central focus, but the Joseph Hoover’s portrayal of the armies ground this image in a pro-Union vision that emphasizes the legitimacy of Northern victory.

\textsuperscript{166} For more on prospect-refuge theory and landscape symbolism, see Jay Appleton, \textit{The Experience of Landscape} (Chichester: John Wiley & Sons, 1975).
Joseph Hoover was not the only printing firm that chose to capitalize on an imagined outdoor surrender scene. Chicago-based firm Kurz and Allison produced a lithograph, *Capitulation & Surrender of Robt. E. Lee & His Army at Appomattox C. H., Va. To Lt. Gent. U.S. Grant*, ca. 1865, that also depicts the surrender outside. Grant and Lee stand in the center of this image and, like in previous surrender images, both appear clean and well dressed. Neither Grant nor Lee holds a surrender document, but they meet one-on-one: other soldiers surround the generals but none actively participate in the meeting. Lee is straight-backed and composed, but he has removed his hat while Grant’s is still on his head—perhaps to make him look taller—and Grant extends his hand while Lee offers his sword. The ground is flat and free of vegetation, the trees in the background bud more modestly, and while both armies are pictured in the lithograph, the meeting does not occur on a hill or under a tree.

The characterization of each army, however, is Kurz and Allison’s most significant departure from Hoover’s vision. Grant’s forces stand behind him in straight lines composed of identical mustachioed men. Those standing on the ground hold rifles tipped with bayonets or
rippling American flags, and those on horseback have swords at their waists. The Union soldiers look healthy, disciplined and organized. By contrast, Lee’s Army of Northern Virginia looks broken. The soldiers’ uniforms are mismatched and none of them hold rifles. A man standing behind Lee has his arm in a sling—he is one of several injured Confederates depicted—and he leans against another soldier for support. A cannon peeks out from the haphazard clump of men, but it appears unused; discarded rifles lean between the gun and the wheel and a broken drum sits in front. While one Confederate flag flies in the distant background, another lies on the ground beneath more rifles that appear to have been stacked in surrender. Nevertheless, the Confederate soldiers all stand with their heads held high, signifying their dignity in undesirable circumstances.

The Army of Northern Virginia’s pitiful physical condition as compared to Grant’s robust troops signals Grant as the victor of scene, but it also (probably unintentionally) corroborates the Lost Cause narrative that Joseph Hoover’s lithograph contradicts. Although the exact number of paroled soldiers in the Army of Northern Virginia is contested, Lee was quick to offer an assessment of the condition of his troops. “After four years of arduous service, marked by unsurpassed courage and fortitude,” Lee wrote in his General Orders No. 9, a letter that was circulated among his troops the day after surrender, “the Army of Northern Virginia has been compelled to yield to overwhelming numbers and resources.”167 The Hoover print suggests that the Union and Confederate armies were of similar size and strength, but Kurz and Allison’s interpretation seemingly accepts Lee’s account of the armies’ relative conditions. Although this print, like others produced in Northern firms, elevated Grant and his troops, its depiction of Lee and Grant as equals—and their armies as unequal—demonstrates a definitive shift from unabashed pro-Unionism to a more inclusive postwar vision.

167 Elizabeth R. Varon, 69.
It is likely that audiences in 1865 accepted these Appomattox prints as “news”—or at least as credible images of actual historical events. The rising popularity of illustrated newspapers, and publishers’ efforts to convince audiences of the veracity of their images, blended the worlds of art and journalism. Sales of single-sheet prints of wartime events, buoyed by the success of illustrated newspapers, demonstrate that Northern audiences preferred (pro-Union) patriotic themes. Producers of prints benefitted from the advent of photography, which allowed them to more accurately represent recognizable figures’ faces, and both exhibited identifiable Northern bias. However, themes evident in Appomattox prints represent a transition away from anti-Confederate themes and towards a proto-Reconciliation narrative. In its reverence for both Grant and Lee and respect for the Confederate army, this narrative of surrender offered a postwar ideal grounded in the similarities between North and South, but maintained Union supremacy. Printmakers achieved this ideal by either imagining an indoor surrender rife with symbolism or capturing the scope of the moment by placing it outdoors. This version of the Appomattox myth, which represented a Northern view, was much more prevalent in immediate postwar visual culture than any Southern interpretations. Witnesses to surrender, whose accounts I analyzed in chapter one, wrote about their experiences in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, during which a proto-Reconciliation interpretation of Appomattox dominated the public memory enshrined in visual culture. Grant, Badeau, Chamberlain and Parker all engaged with the theme of sectional reunion, and Grant and Badeau legitimized a Reconciliation myth that prioritized Grant. As I also discussed in Chapter One, a Lost Cause interpretation of surrender—in which Lee is central and the Confederacy courageous in fighting an unwinnable war—also appeared in written culture. E. P. Alexander articulated these ideas clearly in his Appomattox account, and Longstreet felt compelled to undermine them. However, at the turn of the twentieth century, memory of the Civil War in general—and Appomattox in particular—was largely on
Northern terms. In both written and visual culture, the Appomattox moment represented a Union-initiated turn toward national healing. But this view was temporary: by the mid-twentieth century, visual interpretations of Lee’s surrender to Grant had lost their pro-Union edge.

2.2 The South Will Rise Again (in Art)

Much of mid- to late-twentieth century Civil War visual culture is not only not pro-Union, but it is arguably pro-Confederate—or at least, sympathetic to the Confederate cause and its adherents. This phenomenon is not unique to Appomattox. Historian Gary Gallagher has posited that purchasers of Civil War artwork, especially in the latter half of the twentieth century, have favored pieces featuring Confederate themes. In his examination of advertisements for Civil War paintings in Civil War Times Illustrated, Blue & Gray Magazine, and North & South (periodicals Gallagher believes do not show partiality to Lost Cause themes in editorial content) he finds that from 1962 to 2006 there were approximately 2.5 pieces featuring Confederate subjects for every one glorifying the Union. 168 More specifically, advertisements from this period picture Grant in roughly 40 pieces of art, while Lee is featured in over 300. 169 Clearly, audiences’ tastes have changed since printers and publishers disseminated their end-of-war images in the 1860s. While Gallagher acknowledges and examines Lost Cause dominance in twentieth-century art, he does not fully explain why this is so. He mentions the 1965 centennial as a moment of increased interest in the Civil War, but also points out that this was the same era that saw the Civil Rights Movement and the Vietnam War—two events that soured public opinion toward memory of the Confederacy and its legacy of slavery. 170 Gallagher also offers an explanation that Hollywood has more successfully romanticized the Lost Cause, beginning with films like Birth of a Nation (1915)

168 Gary W. Gallagher, Causes Won, Lost, & Forgotten: How Hollywood and Popular Art Shape What We Know About the Civil War (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008), 137.
169 Gallagher, Causes Won, Lost, & Forgotten, 138.
170 Gallagher, Causes Won, Lost, & Forgotten, 4.
and *Gone With the Wind* (1939), as “many collectors with no ancestral ties to the Confederacy may simply find Lee, Jackson, and other Confederates more appealing or interesting than their Union counterparts,” but does not entirely credit Hollywood with Lost Cause ascendency.\(^{171}\)

While a thorough examination of Confederate memory’s rising appeal in American culture is beyond the scope of this thesis, in the case of Appomattox, Lee’s postwar deification led to an ideological shift in the visual culture of surrender.

Robert E. Lee died on October 12, 1870 at the age of 63, a little over five years after his surrender to Grant in McLean’s parlor. His postwar career was short and uneventful; he supported President Johnson and opposed Radical Republican racial integration policies in the South, but took no active role in politics and instead accepted a position as President of what would become Washington and Lee University.\(^{172}\) Unlike his Union counterpart, Lee did not write a memoir about his Civil War experiences; consequently, it is not his voice—but rather the voices of those who revered him—that have shaped popular conceptions of Lee. Douglass Southall Freeman, the author of the seminal four-volume *R. E. Lee: A Biography* (1934-5), was one such voice. In his biography, which is still an authoritative text in its field, Freeman describes Lee’s death in the following way:

> There he lies, now that they have shrouded him, with his massive features so white against the lining of the casket that he seems already a marble statue for the veneration of the South...Robert Lee was one of the small company of great men in whom there is no inconsistency to be explained, no enigma to be solved... Fortunate in his ancestors, Lee was fortunate most of all in that he inherited nearly all their nobler qualities and none of their worse.\(^{173}\)

Southerners elevated Lee to legendary status immediately upon his death; he was “a marble statue for the veneration of the South” and the personification of the Lost Cause. He was entirely as he

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\(^{171}\) Gallagher, *Causes Won, Lost, & Forgotten*, 136.
\(^{173}\) Freeman, *R.E. Lee*, Kindle location 10557.
seemed—not an “enigma to be solved”—and a great man who possessed no negative qualities. The “whiteness” of his features in death is another of Freeman’s telling observations; Lee, in life and in legacy, was the ideal white gentleman. Freeman essentially describes Lee as the perfect Southern man. This characterization of Lee is hyperbolic, but it was not an unprecedented way to describe iconic figures. Certainly, Adam Badeau exhibited the same kind of overly laudatory descriptions of Grant in *Grant in Peace* (1887). However, there is a crucial difference between the two generals’ legacies, one that explains the shift from Grant- to Lee-centricity in Appomattox memory: Lee died before he could tarnish his image.

In twentieth-century artistic renderings of Lee’s surrender to Grant, the theme of sectional reunion remains as important as it was in postwar prints, but Lee’s portrayal has improved dramatically. Instead of a pro-Union perspective that holds Grant in highest esteem, these works exhibit the view that Lee was the hero at Appomattox. Due to the wealth of information available to twentieth-century artists and purchasers, including both earlier visual images and published memoirs and biographies, there is a higher standard of “truth” to which artists must adhere in their portrayals of surrender. Because these paintings appear more “realistic,” artist bias is harder to detect in modern artwork than in postwar prints. Just as recognizable faces leant legitimacy to otherwise inaccurate news images, the inclusion of well-known details have allowed recent artwork to appear objectively historical. Twentieth-century additions to Appomattox visual culture remain—at their core—reconciliatory, but they no longer embody the Reconciliation myth as Northerners intended it.
Like the prints that depict the surrender indoors, modern paintings of Lee and Grant’s meeting focus on the men themselves. Lee and Grant remain the central figures in each painting, although they are accompanied by a number of other soldiers.

One of the most well known artistic renderings of Appomattox is Tom Lovell’s *Surrender at Appomattox* (1965) (fig. 2.13) commissioned by the National Geographic Society. Except for the detail of George Armstrong Custer’s appearance in the background, the National Park Service (NPS) considers this painting to be the most accurate image of Appomattox in existence and displays it in many different contexts at the Appomattox Court House National Historical Park (see Chapter Three). In fact, Elizabeth Varon’s recent book *Appomattox: Victory, Defeat and Freedom at the End of the Civil War* (2013) features this painting on the cover, although she strategically crops Custer from the image. Lee is the central focus of this painting: he dominates the left foreground of the scene, is bathed in light, and is in the process of writing at a marble-topped desk. Lee’s writing is the only action depicted; every other figure simply watches the Confederate general. Lee’s aide, Charles Marshall, looks over his shoulder and holds another piece of paper.
Grant sits at a smaller, plainer wooden desk on the other side of the room and behind him stands his staff of eight men. Grant too has paper in front of him, but none of his aides except Ely S. Parker look down at his desk the way Marshall does Lee’s. Rather, the Union officers—including and especially Grant—gaze intently at Lee. The entire scene, like the parlor lithographs produced soon after the event, is dignified and refined. The splendor of McLean’s parlor is evident in the patterned carpet, ornately framed paintings on the walls, fireplace, and gleaming wooden furniture. In fact, the only rugged aspects of the scene are the Union soldiers, all of whose boots are muddy. While Lee’s appearance is stately—his high boots shine and his hat and gloves lie neatly on his desk—Grant’s uniform is rumpled and he has neither hat nor gloves. Moreover, Lee is not pictured with a sword and certainly does not offer one to Grant. All of these details suggest that Lee is the protagonist of this event; his dominance is subtle yet evident. He is the visual focus of the painting as well as the only man in action; all other figures in the image gaze passively at him. Although the image clearly demonstrates an amended Reconciliation myth (in which Lee takes Grant’s place), NPS hails Lovell’s painting as an extremely realistic—and objective—recreation of Appomattox.

![Image](image_url)  
*Fig. 2.14* Keith Rocco, *The Surrender*, ca. 1990.
The other popular and well regarded Appomattox painting, Keith Rocco’s *The Surrender*, similarly elevates Lee above Grant. Like Lovell’s, Rocco’s painting was commissioned: NPS hired the artist to produce a “historically accurate depiction of the surrender.”¹⁷⁴ This painting also evidences the shift to a Lee-centric memory of Appomattox, but its endorsement by NPS supports Gallagher’s claim that this is a near-universal trend. As in Lovell’s piece, Lee is the focus. He is positioned in the center-left of the frame and is clearly the taller of the two men. While Lee’s face is mostly turned toward the viewer, Grant is in profile, making his face harder to see. Lee’s uniform also catches the light in a way that draws the eye to him rather than Grant; although he is shaking hands with the Union general, Grant almost blends into the sea of Union aides behind him. These aides provide the other focus of the picture. The sheer volume of Union soldiers in the room, compared to the single aide accompanying Lee, is notable. Rocco paints the Union soldiers as surrounding Lee and the overall impression is reminiscent of the words from General Order No. 9, emphasizing the North’s “overwhelming numbers and resources.” Minor differences in detail between Lovell’s and Rocco’s paintings underscore the fact that neither artist has a clear idea of what, exactly, the surrender looked like—Rocco’s carpet is more intricately patterned while the art on the walls of the parlor have simpler frames—but the general theme is consistent. Grant and Lee’s respectful relationship is glorified, but both artists favor Lee in their visual interpretations of surrender.

The “Grantless” Outdoors

Further evidence of Grant’s devaluation of in twentieth-century artistic renderings of Appomattox appears in outdoor portrayals. These artists presumably imagined outdoor scenes for the same reasons as nineteenth-century printers did: armies, not just individual men, could be included in the images. However, the availability of surrender details in written works precludes modern artists from painting Lee and Grant’s meeting “realistically” if they place the men outside. The result is a large body of Appomattox art that omits Grant completely and instead focuses either on Lee’s return to his troops or Joshua Lawrence Chamberlain’s “honor answering honor” narrative. Paintings of Lee’s return to his troops demonstrate adherence to the Lost Cause tradition, as the focus of these images is Confederate troops’ love for their commander. The story of Chamberlain and John B. Gordon’s salute at the formal stacking of the arms, as noted in Chapter One, aligns with the sectional reunion aspect of the Reconciliation myth but does not elevate Grant above Lee. Consequently, it is this story that has survived the recent increase in preference for Confederate idealization in modern artworks.

Fig. 2.15 Mort Künstler, We Still Love You, General Lee, 1982.
Mort Künstler’s *We Still Love You, General Lee* (1982) (fig. 2.15) depicts Lee’s return to the Confederate lines after his surrender to Grant and was originally displayed in a New York City Gallery. According to Gallagher, Künstler is the most widely collected Civil War artist of the late twentieth century, and thus his depiction of Appomattox arguably represents popular trends and tastes in Civil War memory.\(^\text{175}\) In the painting, Lee sits atop his white horse, surrounded by tattered soldiers of his Army of Northern Virginia. Lee’s clean uniform contrasts with his men’s clothing; all other soldiers wear mismatched gray shirts and pants smudged with dirt and filled with holes. They appear downtrodden: one man on the same visual plane as Lee hangs his head, two behind him crouch in the mud with their heads in their hands, and another assumes the same pose on the other side. The Confederate soldiers’ sorrow, however, only underscores their love of their commander. All have removed their hats in a show of respect, and those not bowed in grief gaze up at Lee with reverence. The two men on either side of Lee’s horse reach out to touch him, and one behind him proudly bears a Confederate flag. Lee’s pose, fixed gaze, and position in the center of the frame in *We Still Love You, General Lee* are reminiscent of Alfred R. Waud’s sketch of Lee leaving the McLean house on April 9, 1865. In both images, Lee’s aide trails behind and neither acknowledges the crowd watching their procession. The tree in the background of *We Still Love You, General Lee* is devoid of foliage, like the trees in Waud’s sketch. Although the soldiers on the ground differ—this painting depicts Confederates while Waud’s sketch most likely pictures Union men—the impression that Lee was the central figure in surrender is the same.

Künstler’s description of this painting on his website, on which he sells prints of the original painting, reflects his interpretation of Appomattox:

Returning to his camp after meeting with U.S. Grant at Appomattox, Lee rides his beloved Traveller through the Southern lines. He wears a full dress uniform, sash, and ceremonial

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\(^{175}\) Gallagher, *Causes Won, Lost, & Forgotten*, 143.
sword. He wanted to look his best for the encounter with Grant, which he had faced with characteristic dignity.

Although defeated, Lee had negotiated generous terms that paroled his men and allowed them to keep their horses. As he rides past them, the soldiers, many with tears in their eyes, cheer and press toward him, touching his leg or even his horse out of affection. Künstler communicates several details in this description that further illuminate his interpretation of Appomattox beyond the content of the painting. First, Lee is described as exhibiting “characteristic dignity,” in his meeting with Grant rather than simply “dignity.” Künstler is clarifying that Lee’s behavior in surrender was reflective of his moral character, a sentiment that may not be evident to a viewer of only this image. Second, Grant is—at best—a secondary character in this Appomattox narrative. According to Künstler, it was Lee who negotiated the “generous terms” allowing Confederate soldiers to keep their horses, not Grant who bestowed them. This shift in agency further places Lee at the center of the proceedings. Third, Künstler elaborates Lee’s soldiers’ emotions, describing the “tears in their eyes” and “cheers” that the painting’s audience would not be able to see or hear. Künstler’s *We Still Love You, General Lee* and the artist’s description of the scene demonstrate adherence to a Lost Cause interpretation of Appomattox in which Lee’s status in his army is paramount and Grant is essentially irrelevant.

Lee’s return to his troops after surrender is also captured in Don Troiani’s *Soldiers Tribute* (2003). Troiani is another prolific modern Civil War artist who, according to Gallagher, has established a reputation for strict attention to historical detail in his paintings. His website masthead reads “Don Troiani: America’s Most Respected Historical Artist.” The goal of Troiani’s unverified self-designation is clearly to lend legitimacy to his paintings and it seems to work: along with Künstler, Troiani is one of the five most advertised artists in *Civil War Times Illustrated, Blue &

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177 Gallagher, *Causes Won, Lost, & Forgotten*, 142.
Gray Magazine, and North & South. His Soldiers Tribute presents an even more emotional image of this moment at Appomattox than in We Still Love You, General Lee.

Fig. 2.16 Don Troiani, Soldiers Tribute, 2003.

Many details are the same in Künstler’s and Troiani’s paintings: Lee’s stately appearance on horseback followed by a single aide, his soldiers’ haggard visages and expressions of sadness, the soldiers’ desire to reach out and touch their beloved commander. However, Soldiers Tribute (fig. 2.16) offers a more dynamic scene in which the viewer, rather than a field away from Lee, is placed in the crowd of adoring Confederate soldiers. Lee is at the center of the frame, but soldiers clamoring for his attention press him on all sides. One man is covering his face with his hand—presumably in grief—but his emotion is utterly eclipsed by the soldiers’ fervent desire to reach for Lee. Thus the focus of the piece is not Lee himself but rather the love his army bore for him.

Moreover, Lee is a more active participant in this image. In Künstler’s We Still Love You, General Lee (fig. 2.15), Lee is aloof and disconnected from his troops. In Soldiers Tribute, by contrast, Lee

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grasps the hand of one of his men and looks down at the crowd. The Army of Northern Virginia’s love for their general—and Lee’s response to their love—is the central theme of this painting. And not coincidentally, the soldiers’ emotion and tattered condition are both crucial tenets of the Lost Cause.

Further demonstrating Grant’s waning importance in Appomattox memory, Mort Künstler’s only other Appomattox painting, Salute of Honor (1991) (fig. 2.17) illustrates the formal stacking of the arms ceremony that occurred on April 12, 1865. Gallagher has commented on the recent rise in Joshua Lawrence Chamberlain’s popularity, writing, “A subject of no importance in Civil War artworks produced in the nineteenth century, Chamberlain has become the most-painted United States military officer.” Gallagher is no doubt alluding, in part, to the fact that no contemporary Appomattox prints depict Chamberlain as an important part of the surrender.

As I argue in Chapter One, Chamberlain’s “honor answering honor” story has become central to Appomattox discourse because his self-serving portrait of the ceremony, which was of minor significance at the time, fueled the sectional reunion aspect of the Reconciliation myth. In

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Gallagher, Causes Won, Lost, & Forgotten, 136.
his account, Chamberlain glorified himself more than Lee or Gordon and his larger theme alludes to mutual respect between the two armies. However, his contribution to the Reconciliation tradition is easily married to the Lost Cause, which explains its survival in twentieth-century Civil War art. Artists like Künstler—who gravitate towards Confederate themes—can illustrate this moment in a manner consistent with their other pieces, chiefly by representing the Army of Northern Virginia’s pitiable condition yet dignity in defeat.

*Salute of Honor* depicts Union and Confederate soldiers lined up to face one another at the formal surrender ceremony. Presumably, Confederate general John B. Gordon is present in the image, but it is unclear which of the Confederate soldiers is in command. Chamberlain is the only man on horseback, and an American flag and the battle standard of the 32nd Massachusetts, the regiment with which Chamberlain rode during the ceremony, frame his figure. The Union soldiers lined up behind him on the right side of the painting stand at attention in straight lines, wearing muddy but intact identical blue uniforms and holding bayonetted rifles by their sides. By contrast, the Confederate soldiers on the left side of the image are hunched and weary, standing in a disorganized cluster in mismatched coats and hats. Most of the men, hanging their heads, stack their rifles by leaning them on each other, while two soldiers, positioned in the center of the frame, carefully fold a Confederate flag. A muddy path separates the armies from one another, suggesting recent rain, an assumption corroborated by the overcast sky above. The tone of this painting is sorrowful; rather than a celebration of Union victory, is a solemn scene of loss.

Künstler also provides commentary and additional interpretation of this painting on his website. He explains why he has not painted Lee and Grant in the McLean house, writing, “Tom
Lovell, a dear friend of mind and a master artist, had already painted that scene to perfection. In Künstler’s words, *Salute of Honor* commemorates another crucial aspect of surrender:

Brigadier General Joshua Lawrence Chamberlain led the Northern troops in a salute to their honorable enemies, who were now former foes. It was a gracious gesture that helped establish the spirit of reconciliation that reunited the North and the South as one nation...

[The Confederate soldiers] fix bayonets, stack arms; then, hesitatingly, remove cartridge-boxes and lay them down. Lastly—reluctantly, with agony of expression—they tenderly fold their flags, battle-worn and torn, blood-stained, heart-holding colors, and lay them down; some frenziedly rushing from the ranks, kneeling over them, clinging to them, pressing them to their lips with burning tears.

This description again illuminates the intention behind the painting. Moreover, the description of the stacking-of-arms is a direct quote from Chamberlain’s *Passing of the Armies*. While Chamberlain is described as leading a “gracious” gesture, the majority of Künstler’s comments are devoted to the Confederate soldiers in the scene, the “honorable enemies.” He selects Chamberlain’s most evocative language to convey the Confederate soldiers’ emotions—“tender” flag folding with “burning tears”—but includes little about their Union counterparts. Although the artist seemingly bases his depiction on Chamberlain’s own account of the ceremony, the Confederate flag, rather than Chamberlain or Gordon, emerges as the central subject of this painting. Moreover, Künstler’s interpretation of this event, which highlights reverence for the Confederate flag, mean that this painting a continuation of the Lost Cause themes present in *We Still Love You, General Lee*.

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181 “Salute of Honor.”
Interestingly enough, Don Troiani’s other Appomattox painting also depicts the “honor answering honor” salute; this phenomenon again evidences Grant’s disappearance in Appomattox myth. *The Last Salute* shows Chamberlain and the 32nd Massachusetts facing Gordon and his troops on a muddy field on an overcast day. The Union soldiers are robust and organized, while there are far fewer Confederate soldiers and they do not stand in straight lines. Troiani’s interpretation differs from Künstler’s in his focus on the equality between Gordon and Chamberlain, rather than the sorrow or broken condition of the Army of Northern Virginia. In fact, the body language and appearance of Gordon and Chamberlain are reminiscent of images of Grant and Lee in McLean’s parlor. Both men sit straight atop their horses and look each other in the eye. Their uniforms even look alike: both wear long double-breasted coats, wide-brimmed hats and forearm-high gloves. The emphasis on equality in this painting is consistent with the sectional reunion aspect of the Reconciliation tradition, but—crucially—does not prioritize (or even picture) Grant.
Troiani’s and Künstler’s choices of scenery in illustrating Appomattox are telling. Because they are two of the most prolific and well-respected modern Civil War artists, their gravitation toward Lost Cause themes represents a larger trend in modern Appomattox visual culture. Their paintings adhere to the idea that surrender was a triumph of national unity but prioritize Lee’s role at Appomattox; when they paint Chamberlain’s “honor answering honor” salute they emphasize Confederate dignity. Lovell’s and Rocco’s paintings of the surrender meeting similarly demonstrate a Lee-centric interpretation. The artists’ preference for Lost Cause themes is tempered by the necessity of including historical details—such as the fact that the Grant and Lee’s meeting occurred in a parlor with several witnesses—as twentieth-century audiences have ready access to several Appomattox accounts. Nevertheless, these paintings evidence a tangible shift in visual culture: reconciliation at Appomattox no longer resembles the pro-Union Reconciliation myth. Rather, a Lost Cause interpretation of surrender has become the dominant visual mode.

The availability of surrender details (based on the proliferation of first-person accounts I examine in Chapter One) have made more recent depictions of the event appear more accurate than nineteenth-century prints, which can be misleading for the viewer. While postwar prints exhibited proto-Reconciliation themes that portrayed former Confederates respectfully, they nonetheless communicated that Grant was the victor at Appomattox; these prints expressed the dominant end-of-war sentiment in nineteenth-century America. Recent artwork, rather, favors a Lost Cause interpretation of surrender by emphasizing Lee’s beloved status and diminishing Grant’s importance. The changing themes in Appomattox visual representation mirror a larger trend in twentieth-century Civil War art, which historian Gary Gallagher has demonstrated embraces a Lost Cause memory of the war. Gallagher theorizes that the general public increasingly enjoys pro-Confederate themes and attributes this shift to Hollywood’s romantic
idealization of the antebellum South. However, in the case of Appomattox visual culture, there is another explanation: Grant’s tarnished postwar persona—which he tried to rehabilitate in his memoirs—cannot compete with America’s deified conception of Lee.

Lee is a more compelling hero than Grant, hence his prioritization in twentieth-century Appomattox visual culture. Lee is a legendary figure, while Grant was ultimately perceived as a “bumbling politician.” However, today’s visual art does not have the same level of influence on Americans as illustrations and photographs did in mid-nineteenth-century American culture. These paintings cater to a niche audience of Civil War buffs (or at least, those who subscribe to Civil War Times Illustrated, Blue & Gray Magazine, and North & South) and tend to be quite expensive; a print of Tom Lovell’s Surrender at Appomattox (fig. 2.13) retails at $225, and an original Don Troiani can cost in the thousands.¹⁸² Thus, the existence and proliferation of these images alone does not meaningfully challenge a pro-Union interpretation of Appomattox. What does complicate this narrative is an even more powerful engagement with the past, in the form of historic landscapes like Appomattox National Court House National Park.

On the National Park Service’s introductory web page on historic sites, the anonymous author describes them as “authentic places of history [that] offer opportunities to experience where real history really happened.” Appomattox Court House National Historical Park (ANHP) is one such “authentic place of history,” and although NPS staunchly advocates its version of history as “real,” ANHP—like biographies and autobiographies and nineteenth- and twentieth-century visual representations—serves as a medium for the expression of Appomattox myth. ANHP is a product of Americans’ long history of designating certain land as “sacred,” which in the context of the Civil War began before the war was even over. National Military Parks, initially administered by the War Department, were battlefield sites that aimed to honor and had Union and Confederate dead, equally. By contrast, America’s National Parks (managed by the Department of the Interior) were intended for natural preservation and visitors’ enjoyment. When the two entities combined in 1933 as part of an all-encompassing NPS, their goals also merged. Two years later, Congress signed the Historic Sites Act of 1935 into law, expanding the definition of sacred land to include all “historic sites, buildings, and objects of national significance for the inspiration and benefit of the people of the United States.” Today, all National Parks—sites of natural, military, and historic importance—share several goals: to preserve, honor, and entertain.

ANHP, authorized by Congress in 1940, is both a historic and a military site. No battle occurred here, but Robert E. Lee’s surrender of his Army of Northern Virginia to Ulysses S. Grant on April 9, 1865 was certainly an event of military significance. Through Park literature, tours of

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Wilmer McLean’s reconstructed house, and a small museum, ANHP expresses the Reconciliation myth, but only those aspects that laud sectional reunion and ignore slavery. Rather than emphasize Grant’s role, the Park presents Lee as the hero of surrender. In Chapter Two, I argued that the existence of Confederate-sympathizing images does not alone legitimize a Lost Cause interpretation of surrender. But ANHP’s incorporation of these images—and transformation of them into a three-dimensional experience—does. The proverbial stamp of approval from the federal government has made NPS’s version of Appomattox today’s official narrative of surrender.

### 3.1 National Parks in the Early Period

*Military Memorialization*

The first Civil War “sacred grounds” often represented more than one idea; this coexistence of different forms of memorialization served as a prelude to the cross-sectional National Military Parks that were founded years later. Throughout the war, soldiers usually buried the dead on the same ground on which they fought, effectively turning battlefields into cemeteries. Thus many of the earliest state-sanctioned Civil War monuments were established at these battlefield cemeteries—but they only honored the Union dead. On July 17, 1862, President Abraham Lincoln signed legislation that allowed him to purchase private lands and turn them into national cemeteries at his discretion; that year, he created fourteen national cemeteries for fallen Union soldiers.¹⁸⁵ The most famous of these was Arlington National Cemetery, which was built on Confederate General Robert E. Lee’s estate in Arlington, Virginia. In 1864, the federal government seized Arlington and removed the Lees’ names from the title to prevent the family from reclaiming it after the war. That same year, as soldiers’ cemeteries in Washington, D.C. reached capacity, the estate became a cemetery for the Union dead. Some Confederate soldiers were buried on the...
property, but their graves lay in the northeast corner of the estate, where African-Americans were also interred. This clear segregation at Arlington National Cemetery burial sites, established before the war’s end, demonstrates that early material commemoration of the Civil War’s history was far from reconciliatory.

The establishment of national cemeteries at battlefields began as a matter of convenience and ultimately resulted in the creation of sites with dual importance: the memorialization of the individual dead and how they died. Battlefields (even those without cemeteries) also became spaces of complex commemoration, as soldiers placed plaques and obelisks to honor the sacrifices of the soldiers in their regiments and mark their maneuvers. These battlefield memorials were funded by private groups and tended to exhibit the biases of their financiers. One such example of private memorialization occurred in Gettysburg; town residents began commemorating the bloody battle almost immediately after the last shot was fired. They created the Gettysburg Battlefield Memorial Association in 1864, and after the war, the Pennsylvania legislature appropriated the organization money to purchase land tracts for preservation. Other private groups erected monuments at Gettysburg in the years after the war, including the Union veterans’ group the Grand Army of the Republic (GAR). Moreover, many Northern states appropriated funds in the 1880s to build monuments to their regiments at Gettysburg; as the park grew, it increasingly presented a Union narrative of the battle. In addition, the Gettysburg Battlefield Memorial Association prevented Confederate veterans’ groups from marking battle lines or installing commemorative tablets, and former Confederates were rarely invited to events at the park. Nevertheless, Gettysburg became a popular tourist destination for all Americans—both Northern and Southern—and visitation increased each year. The success of Gettysburg’s preservation as a

186 William A. Blair, Cities of the Dead: Contesting the Memory of the Civil War in the South, 1865-1914 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 175.
188 Smith, The Golden Age of Battlefield Preservation, 27.
memorial site prompted a national push for the creation of more battlefield memorials, with a new and different emphasis.

In the late nineteenth century, politicians and veterans set out to create a “national military park” that would equally honor Northern and Southern soldiers. The creation of the first National Military Park at Chickamauga and Chattanooga demonstrated a reconciliatory spirit that pervaded the military parks movement of the 1890s. Union veterans Henry Van Ness Boynton and Ferdinand Van DerVeer first proposed the idea of a park at Chickamauga and Chattanooga in 1887. The park would include two sites of battle that had opposite results—Chickamauga was a Confederate victory; Chattanooga, a Union one—and would therefore honor both armies. Moreover, unlike previous battlefield memorials, the federal government rather than states or private organizations would fund its creation. Under the administration of the War Department, then, Chickamauga and Chattanooga would be a unified monument to all “American veterans.”

The House Committee on Military Affairs, which endorsed the 1890 congressional bill proposing the Chickamauga and Chattanooga National Military Park (CCNMP), bluntly stated that, “the political questions which were involved in the contest do not enter into this view of the [creation of a national military park at Chickamauga and Chattanooga], nor do they belong to it.” Thus CCNMP’s stated mission was to promote national reconciliation by equally celebrating both Union and Confederate soldiers.

It is unclear whether or not this new turn in battlefield preservation was a reflection of popular sentiment or a centralized push for national unity. Historian Timothy B. Smith has argued that by the 1890s, after years of addressing cultural differences between the North and South

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189 Caroline E. Janney, “‘I Yield to No Man an Iota of My Convictions’: Chickamauga and Chattanooga National Military Parks and the Limits of Reconciliation,” The Journal of the Civil War Era 2, no. 3 (September 2012): 400.  
focused on race relations, Americans were tired of sectionalism. In a decade marked by territorial expansion and the United States’ increased relevance on the world stage, Americans sought to emphasize national unity and patriotism. As Smith posits, “What could be more honorable and reconciling than to concentrate on the passing veterans of the Civil War and their courage, bravery, and manliness on Civil War battlefields?” Honoring of Civil War dead, Smith argues, was the common ground on which both former Confederates and Unionists could agree. Historian David Blight agrees with Smith’s assessment that the 1890s was a time of widespread national reconciliation, but adds that this was made possible by the re-subjugation of African-Americans in the post-bellum America. Both Blight and Smith agree that “national unity” only included white Americans; African-American soldiers who fought for the Union, other Northern blacks, and freed slaves had no place in this discourse. Yet they both contend that by the time Congress was creating National Military Parks, Reconciliation was the preferred popular memory of the Civil War. This myth is different from the pro-Union version in the literary culture I examined in Chapter One; proponents of National Military Parks strove to be apolitical.

Although historian Caroline Janney agrees with Smith and Blight that Reconciliation was the official narrative employed in National Military Park formation, she argues that Union and Confederate veterans’ wholehearted embrace of this idea has been overstated. Politicians’ goal in establishing CCNMP was undoubtedly to promote sectional unity, but Janney cites many examples of veterans who still held—and publicly voiced—their beliefs in either the Union or Confederate cause at park dedications. Senator Edward Cary Walthall, for example, a former Confederate general who participated in the CCNMP dedication, wrote that he was “a poor hand at Blue and Gray gush.” Even Henry Van Ness Boynton, one of the initial proponents of Chickamauga and

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192 Blight, Race and Reunion, 3.
Chattanooga as a national, non-sectional military park, maintained that “[my convictions] are as
dear to me, as clear in my mind, as when we fought for them.”

According to Janney, Reconciliation was the ideal, but not the reality, for veterans and their remembrance of the war.

Nevertheless, in pursuance of this ideal of Reconciliation, Congress created four other National Military Parks in the 1890s—Shiloh, Antietam, Gettysburg, and Vicksburg—with the same goal of equally honoring Confederate and Union dead (despite the fact that these are the sites of Union victories). And in 1890, Senator Joseph R. Hawley of Connecticut introduced a bill to turn Gettysburg into a National Military Park that would include Confederate memorials, stating that “nothing has been done to mark the positions of the Confederate troops, and if done it must be by the National Government.” Although Hawley’s bill did not pass, his statements support Janney’s theory that Americans believed it was the federal government’s responsibility to promote Reconciliation. A bill to create the Gettysburg National Military Park did pass in 1895 and a commission comprised of Union and Confederate veterans worked together to further restore the battlefield and memorialize Confederate soldiers.

Indeed, all five 1890s-era National Military Park commissions included former Confederates, a fact that testifies to the overarching goal of promoting national unity among whites, an expression of what Smith believes was “the true reconciliation of the age.”

The sentiment that National Military Parks could serve as spaces of national unity even reached the United States Supreme Court in this era. The importance of battlefield preservation to American national identity was codified in law in an 1896 Supreme Court decision that the United States Congress—not just the president—could set aside land for historical preservation purposes.

The Gettysburg Electric Railway Company had sued the government for preventing their

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construction of railroad tracks, arguing that such a condemnation of land was unconstitutional. The Supreme Court ruled in favor of the government, and Justice Rufus W. Peckham declared in the majority opinion that battlefield preservation was in the public interest. The decision of the Court, which was comprised of justices who sided with business interests more often than not, exemplifies the hold National Military Parks had on the national consciousness. Moreover, the Supreme Court’s decision signaled to the American people—once and for all—that military memorialization was a project worth pursuing.

Once created, National Military Parks became powerful public communications of myth and memory. Historian Edward Tabor Linenthal has argued that monuments of war, like battlefields and other sites of national historical importance, have a particular “sacred” status in American culture and they shape what Linenthal terms our “patriotic landscape.” Battlefields dominate the martial aspect of this landscape and are popular tourist attractions for “those who seek environmental intimacy in order to experience patriotic inspiration.” Battlefield visitors can feel physically close to the events that transpired; they can be geographically, if not temporally, connected with the power of war. This reverence for American battlefields perhaps explains why visitors often use religious language to describe their experiences; words like “consecrated,” “hallowed,” and “sanctified” are routinely associated with battlefields. Since the 1890s, the federal government has portrayed their military memorialization as a responsibility that transcends politics; American “sacred ground” has become a material expression of patriotism.

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200 Linenthal, Sacred Ground, 4.
Military Parks, Historic Sites, and the National Park Service

While Americans revered spaces that celebrated the American past, they also admired National Parks like Yellowstone, Yosemite, and Niagara Falls for their awesome demonstrations of natural power. Although today, National Military Parks and “natural wonder” parks are both part of the National Park Service, this was not always the case. In 1872, President Ulysses S. Grant signed into law the act that created the United States’ first national park at Yellowstone. From its inception, Yellowstone National Park was intended to promote tourism, and the Act stated that parklands were to be “set apart as a public work or pleasuring-ground for the benefit and enjoyment of the people.” This goal was different from that of National Military Parks, which veterans themselves created to honor their war: former soldiers, not average Americans, were their target audience. The 1872 Act was vaguely worded to protect the “wonders” and “natural curiosities” of Yellowstone, but permitted construction of roads and trails so tourists could easily navigate the landscape. The Act placed the park under the jurisdiction of the Department of the Interior and provided Congress with broad discretion in the Park’s administration. After Yellowstone’s creation in 1872, Congress established several other parks—such as Yosemite, Sequoia, and Mount Rainier—through legislation supported by a few ardent conservationists. The creation of these parks was more due to a lack of opposition than outright support; consequently, National Parks existed but were improperly maintained. In response, several motivated individuals lobbied for the creation of a National Park Service (NPS), which would be a more specialized bureau for park administration. Thus the protection of natural wonders—different kinds of “sacred” American land—was, like military memorialization, widely considered a federal

201 “An Act to set apart a certain Tract of Land lying near the Head-waters of the Yellowstone River as a public Park,” American Memory from Library of Congress, accessed March 4, 2014, http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?ammem/consrvbib:@field(NUMBER+@band(amrvl+vl002)).
202 Horace M. Albright (as told to Robert Cahn), The Birth of the National Park Service: The Founding Years, 1913-1933 (Salt Lake City: Howe Brothers, 1986), 5.
responsibility. It was NPS that would ultimately absorb the War Department’s National Military Parks, and this conglomeration would lead to the creation of ANHP.

In 1916, President Woodrow Wilson signed a Parks Act into law on August 25, 1916 that appropriated federal money for a National Park Service (NPS), established a basic administrative hierarchy, and gave the Secretary of the Interior broad discretion to create park rules and regulations. Almost immediately after its creation, lobbyists began to push for NPS to take control of National Military Parks. They argued that it was inefficient for several different agencies to administer parks—National Military Parks were then still maintained by the War Department. In fact, it was the War Department’s oversight—or lack thereof—of the five 1890s era National Military Parks that gave each its own unique character. The War Department only occasionally intervened in matters of land acquisition or monument erection, so the day-to-day construction and administration fell to each Park’s individual commissions. The lobby to consolidate park operations was ultimately successful; on June 10, 1933, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt signed Executive Order 6166, which provided that the administration of all “public buildings, reservations, national parks, national monuments, and national cemeteries” would be transferred to the Department of the Interior and NPS. Through this order, NPS assumed jurisdiction over 48 new areas, including eleven national military parks. Two years later, Congress passed the Historic Sites Act of 1935 and expanded NPS even further.

The inclusion of National Military Parks in NPS initially presented a challenge for park administrators previously not required to “interpret” the sites they maintained. Military parks and historical sites require more context than natural wonders, so that visitors can fully grasp their significance. Natural parks like Yellowstone and Sequoia need little explanation: visitors can enjoy

204 Albright, The Birth of the National Park Service, 299.
205 Albright, The Birth of the National Park Service, 300.
the aesthetics of such places without situating them in a historical context.\textsuperscript{206} Like National Parks, battlefield cemeteries were beautiful and visitor-friendly: they usually included manicured grounds and paths between graves.\textsuperscript{207} However, aesthetics alone could not fully communicate a cemetery’s importance. Graves displayed headstones with the name and rank of each fallen soldier and, in battlefield cemeteries, the War Department erected monuments to mark brigade positions.\textsuperscript{208} Moreover, visitors continually reaffirmed a cemetery’s significance: on the annual Decoration Day, the GAR would decorate the graves of Union soldiers.\textsuperscript{209} And it was not the appearance of a battlefield and/or cemetery that inspired a pro-business Supreme Court to rule against the Gettysburg Electric Railway Company. Rather, it was the enormity of the events that transpired there that made military parks worth preserving—and these events needed to be explained.\textsuperscript{210}

When NPS first absorbed National Military Parks and then authorized the preservation of purely historic sites, administrators understood that their audiences would expect a degree of certainty in historical interpretations of these places. Verne E. Chatelain, the first director of NPS’s historical program, instructed park historians to “disseminate accurate information in an interesting manner” and prepare brochures that read like the “nature notes” of park naturalists.\textsuperscript{211} However, authenticity was not the only goal, as Chatelain expressed in a speech to the American Planning and Civic Association in 1935. “The task is to breathe the breath of life into American history for those to whom it has been a dull recital of meaningless facts,” he explained. “To recreate for the average citizen something of the color, the pageantry, and the dignity of our national past.”\textsuperscript{212} Chatelain believed that NPS’s historical interpretations should “recreate” the past, but his remarks

\textsuperscript{206} Barry Mackintosh, “The National Park Service Moves into Historical Interpretation,” \textit{The Public Historian} 9, no. 2 (Spring 1987): 51.
\textsuperscript{207} Smith, \textit{The Golden Age of Battlefield Preservation}, 17.
\textsuperscript{208} Smith, \textit{The Golden Age of Battlefield Preservation}, 17.
\textsuperscript{209} Blair, \textit{Cities of the Dead}, 177.
\textsuperscript{210} Mackintosh, “Historical Interpretation,” 52.
\textsuperscript{211} Historical conference record, November 27, 1931, History Division, quoted in Mackintosh, “Historical Interpretation,” 53.
\textsuperscript{212} Mackintosh, “Historical Interpretation,” 54.
suggest that he prioritized his audience’s level of enjoyment over an interpretation’s level of historical accuracy. It was not simply the chronological “national past” he sought to publicly display; rather, Chatelain wanted to specifically present the “color, the pageantry, and the dignity” of that past through narration. Moreover, the idea of the “average citizen” viewer informed NPS’s historical interpretations. Although Chatelain states that a historic park’s goal was to both educate and entertain, his mention of an “average” audience suggests that the entertainment portion of the goal was paramount. Chatelain’s contemporary and the superintendent of Sequoia National Park, John R. White, recognized the challenge of NPS’s new mandate. In a 1941 memorandum, he wrote, “For the average visitor it is necessary to compress the event into a comprehensive whole, and if possible to color and dramatize it to create interest and make lasting impressions.”

The new NPS that emerged in the 1930s, with its inclusion of sites of natural, military, and historic significance, created spaces of “public history.” Public history can be defined as a field in which academic historians curate and interpret historical sources and present certain narratives to a general, non-academic audience. Although historian Cathy Stanton has argued that the “public history movement” did not formally begin until the 1970s, she posits that the federal government actually implemented such programs in the 1930s—like NPS’s historical program under Chatelain—designed to “stimulate community and national identity.” These initial public history sites were intended to attract audiences and promote “national identity”; in other words, spaces of public history are another form of “sacred” land.

According to Stanton, expressions of public history that blend stories, images, and environments are “invaluable assets” in associating a narrative with a certain place or event.

Public and private investors in public history recognize that guidebooks and museum exhibits are

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213 Memorandum to Director, December 6, 1941, History Division, National Park Service, Washington D.C., quoted in Mackintosh, “Historical Interpretation,” 52.
215 Stanton, The Lowell Experiment, 10.
particularly appealing to audiences; consequently, public historians seek to deliver complex information in these forms in a digestible and multi-sensory way. ANHP administrators employ these effective public history techniques in presenting their Appomattox narrative. Moreover, as a historic site with military significance under the purview of NPS, ANHP is undoubtedly a convincing space for the communication of a particular narrative—or historical myth.

**Building Appomattox Court House National Historical Park (ANHP)**

Because NPS was not yet in the business of historical interpretation in the early twentieth century, the War Department might have been more able to properly preserve and memorialize Appomattox. However, prior to 1933, the War Department only created National Military Parks at cemeteries and battlefields; Appomattox did not qualify as “sacred land.” On April 30, 1902, a bill “to establish a national park and erect a peace monument at Appomattox” came before the Committee on Military Affairs—but it was rejected. In his explanation of the decision, Secretary of War Elihu Root wrote, “There was no battle or engagement at old Appomattox Court House...no events of importance occurred upon the tract of 2,500 acres which it is proposed to acquire.” Root agreed that the McLean house was worth preserving as a historic site, but the War Department ultimately suggested in their committee report that any action at Appomattox “be indefinitely postponed.”

Although national politicians were seemingly uninterested in preserving Appomattox, veterans were. Soldiers present at the 1865 surrender had recognized the importance of the moment, taking souvenirs from McLean’s parlor; by the time Union and Confederate troops

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217 Senate Committee on Military Affairs, *National Park and Peace Monument at Appomattox, VA, United States Senate, 57th Congress, S. REP. NO. 1344 (1902).*
withdraw from Appomattox Court House, McLean’s parlor was entirely picked over.\textsuperscript{219} Four years later in 1869, the local bank repossessed McLean’s house—he had failed to repay a loan—and sold it at public auction. The house changed hands several times until 1891 when Myron Dunlap, an entrepreneur from Niagara Falls, New York, acquired it. Dunlap planned to dismantle the house and display it either in Chicago at the 1893 World’s Columbian Exposition or in Washington, D.C. as a pay-per-visit exhibit.\textsuperscript{220} He understood the potential tourist value of the McLean house, but he also knew that the location of Appomattox Court House—200 miles south of Washington, D.C. and 100 miles west of Richmond, Virginia—was too remote to attract many tourists. Dunlap’s plans were never fully realized because of his personal financial woes; the house was dismantled and packed for shipping, but then sat on its own front lawn for almost fifty years. The house’s deterioration did not stymie later efforts to preserve the site, however. Although the 1902 bill failed, local Virginia businessmen took up the cause in the 1920s, lobbying their U.S. Senator to push for the preservation of Appomattox as a national historical site. These efforts, combined with the 1933 expansion of NPS, ultimately led to the federal government’s authorization of Appomattox as a National Historical Park on April 10, 1940.\textsuperscript{221}

The federal government’s approval of ANHP did not mean the site was ready for public display; preservation at ANHP did not simply mean interpretation, but also reconstruction. By 1940, much of Appomattox Court House as it had existed in 1865—not just the McLean house—no longer stood. This necessity of reconstruction was not unique to ANHP; throughout the twentieth century, NPS hired historians to help reconstruct historic sites that had since deteriorated. One of these historians told the American Planning and Civic Organization in 1936 that an important part of administering historic parks is “physical development, which seeks a

\textsuperscript{219} William Marvel, \textit{A Place Called Appomattox} (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008), 240.
\textsuperscript{220} Nina Silber, \textit{Landmarks of the Civil War} (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 123.
\textsuperscript{221} Marvel, \textit{A Place Called Appomattox}, 317.
rehabilitation of the site or area by means of restorations and reconstructions. Archeological work to restore the village of Appomattox Court House began in 1941 but was halted by the United States’ entrance into World War II. Construction of the park resumed in 1947 and was finally completed in 1950.

On April 9, 1950, eighty-four years to the day since Lee’s surrender to Grant, NPS opened the reconstructed McLean house to the public. Two direct descendants of Grant and Lee cut the ceremonial ribbon and Douglas Southall Freeman, Robert E. Lee’s biographer and the son of a Confederate soldier who laid down his musket at the formal stacking of the arms, gave the dedication speech. Freeman’s speech, in which he reminisced about “the reunion of brothers,” encapsulated ANHP’s mission, which was the same mission that characterized National Military Parks in the 1890s: to celebrate the reconciliation between the Union and the Confederacy and allow visitors to experience it as well.

The history of natural parks, National Military Parks, historic site preservation, and the creation of the National Park Service provides crucial context for how and why ANHP presents its version of Appomattox myth. Because of its status as a historic site, the Park strives to preserve and interpret history; because of its association with military memorialization, it honors both Confederate and Union soldiers; and because it is a National Park, its ultimate goal is to entertain visitors. And NPS maintains that its Parks are “authentic places...where real history really happened.” The narrative conveyed at ANHP is one that more closely resembles the Reconciliationist nature of the first National Military Parks than the Unionist view of surrender Grant, Badeau, Chamberlain, and Parker articulated in their memoirs (see Chapter One). But as

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222 Paper before American Planning and Civic Association, January 1936, quoted in Mackintosh, “Historical Interpretation,” 52.
224 Marvel, A Place Called Appomattox, 317.
Janney has argued, complete removal of sectional bias was as impossible then as it is now. Like other twentieth-century depictions (see paintings in Chapter Two), AHNP expresses a Lost Cause interpretation of surrender. But, unlike paintings, ANHP represents the official version of Appomattox to visitors. The promulgation of this version—which minimizes the importance of slavery even more than Grant’s original Reconciliation myth—is detrimental to overall Civil War memory because of its failure to address a crucial aspect of the war.

3.2 A NOT-SO-NATIONAL PARK

When the direct descendants of Grant and Lee cut the ceremonial ribbon in April 1950, AHNP opened as a monument to fraternity and reunion. However, its actual significance is much more complex. The Park’s version of Reconciliation ignores slavery as a cause of the war—rendering it irrelevant to its end—and celebrates Lee as the surrender’s central figure, effectively making ANHP a monument to a Lost Cause interpretation of Appomattox. ANHP prepares a visitor for the historical landscape she is about to experience by disseminating their narrative in Park pamphlets and guidebooks, and on their official website. Rangers then repeat that narrative as they guide the visitor in her Park experience (I have visited ANHP twice and been twice informed that the McLean house tour is mandatory) and then encourage her to visit the Park’s museum, which again reinforces this Lost Cause interpretation of Appomattox.

ANHP’s surrender narrative has remained relatively stable since the Park’s creation; early literature evidences the Park commissioners’ commitment to promoting a romanticized version of Lee’s surrender to Grant. A 1961 guidebook, for example, argues that

After Appomattox, the destiny of America, a vast and powerful democracy extending 3,000 miles from ocean to ocean, could be fulfilled by the reconciled brothers, magnanimous [sic] in victory and proud in defeat, both sharers in the same heritage.225

This flowery language emphasizes the similarities between the men on both sides of the conflict, including their shared “heritage” and future “destiny.” The author of the guidebook presents Appomattox as the end of the Civil War era and the beginning of America’s fulfillment of Manifest Destiny. The language of predetermination further suggests that the surrender was inevitable: “brothers” with intertwined pasts and futures were destined to reunite peacefully. The characterization of the Confederacy and the Union in this quote removes Grant’s centrality to surrender; reconciliation was a fated event, not an act of Northern forgiveness.

The guidebook further declares the Civil War was, overall, a positive period for the country, stating that “the result of the American War between the States, proving to the world that a great democracy can survive internal dissention and rise above disaster to larger strength, makes the year 1865 one never to be forgotten.” The author of the guidebook here subtly endorses both Northern and Southern causes, as it was the conflict between the two that led to the “War between the States” that resulted in a more powerful America. Moreover, the reference to the war as the “War between the States” lends legitimacy to Southern secession; in the Confederacy’s view, their states were sovereign entities entitled to secede, not traitors to their federal government. Slavery is mostly ignored in the guidebook’s treatment of Appomattox and the Civil War; it is briefly mentioned as an issue of “secondary importance.” In overall tone, this guidebook presents an Appomattox narrative consistent with Reconciliation, but details about the surrender present Lee as the dominant figure:

Whatever [Lee’s] thoughts, faithful old Traveller standing before him brought him back to the present. He swung slowly to the saddle...The men filled the road, shouting and crying, clutching at the horse and rider...Many crowded up to take his hand, or failing that, to touch him or his horse.

226 “1961 Appomattox Court House Tour Guide.”
227 “1961 Appomattox Court House Tour Guide.”
The author’s editorial about Lee’s return to his troops is the most detail-rich portion of the
guidebook, and he includes no parallel section about Grant’s men’s reaction to surrender. This
elevation of Lee and his beloved status in his army substantiates the idea that Confederates were
“proud in defeat,” but also brings to mind the Lost Cause paintings I analyzed in Chapter Two,
namely Mort Künstler’s We Still Love You, General Lee (1982) and Don Troiani’s Soldier’s Tribute
(2003) (see figs. 2.15 and 2.16).

Appomattox NHP’s presentation of historical “facts” has changed little since Rangers
distributed this guidebook in 1961; the website today promotes this same reconciliatory Lost
Cause interpretation of surrender. Park information caters to the “average citizen,” and assumes no
prior knowledge of the Civil War, let alone knowledge of the events that transpired at Appomattox
Court House on April 9, 1865. The authors of introductory information at Appomattox NHP,
which is readily available to Park visitors, employ a guise of objectivity when they summarize the
Civil War and Appomattox, but their comments clearly demonstrate subscription to their version of
events. The home page of the Park’s website, for example, is titled, “Beginning Peace and
Reunion” and provides a brief overview of the events that occurred:

On Palm Sunday (April 9), 1865, Lee’s surrender at Appomattox Court House, Virginia
signaled the end of the Southern States’ attempt to create a separate nation. It set the stage
for the emergence of an expanded and more powerful Federal government. In a sense the
struggle over how much power the central government would hold had finally been
settled.228

While the title of the Appomattox summary suggests that the surrender was an expression of
Reconciliation, its description of the war’s cause and resolution demonstrates Lost Cause rhetoric.
First, the unnamed author does not mention Grant in this description at all; rather, he or she refers
to Appomattox as “Lee’s surrender.” This phrasing portrays Lee as a dominant figure who chose to
surrender, rather than as a man defeated. Second, the author does not describe the Civil War as a

228 “Appomattox Court House National Historical Park: Park Home,” National Park Service, accessed
rebellion (as Northern politicians and Union forces called it throughout the war) but rather as an “attempt to create a separate nation,” and a “struggle over how much power the central government would hold.” This explanation for the causes of the war suggests that the Union, not the Confederacy, initiated the war. In essence, the author of this summary argues that the Civil War was fought between individual states over states’ rights, echoing the sentiments of the 1961 guidebook. This brief description of the war reflects a central tenet of the Lost Cause: that the war was about encroaching federal power rather than the preservation of slavery. Moreover, its Lee-centric view of the surrender suggests that ANHP is a monument to the Confederacy—or at least, its most celebrated hero.

The NPS website’s more detailed summary of the surrender can be found on an information page titled “The Meeting: The Gentlemen’s Agreement”; it too evidences the elevation of Robert E. Lee. This page provides a hyperlink to Keith Rocco’s The Surrender (see Chapter Two, fig. 2.14), a twentieth-century rendering of Lee’s surrender to Grant that subtly elevates Lee above Grant. After describing the events that occurred in McLean’s parlor, the author concludes his or her view of “The Meeting” with the following sentiment:

In a war that was marked by such divisiveness and bitter fighting, it is remarkable that it ended so simply. Grant's compassion and generosity did much to allay the emotions of the Confederate troops. As for Robert E. Lee, he realized that the best course was for his men to return home and resume their lives as American citizens… The character of both Lee and Grant was of such a high order that the surrender of the Army of Northern Virginia has been called “The Gentlemen's Agreement.”

The title and content of this description of Appomattox presents Grant and Lee as equals; specifically, as “gentlemen” whose meeting was cordial and mutually respectful. Although the summary lauds Grant's “compassion and generosity,” Lee still emerges as the protagonist of the occasion, as “he realized that the best course” was surrender. The comment about the war as

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“marked by such divisiveness and bitter fighting,” seems out of place in the civilized parlor scene that the author describes, suggesting that the author viewed the “Gentleman’s Agreement” as more reflective of Northern and Southern soldiers’ character than the war they fought. For the reader, it is not “remarkable that it ended so simply”; in fact, the simple and courtly surrender seems perfectly aligned with the descriptions of Union and Confederate soldiers. What emerges as remarkable is the existence of conflict at all between men with so much in common. Since ANHP’s website maintains that “the struggle over how much power the central government would hold” was the central cause of the Civil War, the author portrays the surrender as a victory for both the Union and the Confederacy, as it was ultimately an “Agreement.” Moreover, the assertion that the surrender “has been called ‘The Gentleman’s Agreement’” is most likely an invention of ANHP: this phrasing appears nowhere else in Appomattox discourse.

The content of Park literature that introduces the “facts” about Appomattox indicates that ANHP is intended for average-citizen viewers, rather than the niche audience National Military Parks attracted in the early twentieth century. Furthermore, the comparison between the 1961 guidebook and today’s website demonstrates continuity of message at ANHP: the surrender was a moment in which Lee and Grant met as equals and reunited the country—on Confederate terms. The Park’s delivery of this narrative through its literature emphasizes certain tenets of the Lost Cause—the ideas that the war was not about slavery and of Lee’s superiority to Grant—which ultimately makes this historic landscape an expression of a reconciliatory Lost Cause.

The McLean House

ANHP promulgates its particular Appomattox vision even more forcefully inside the physical structure of McLean’s house. Here, Park officials retain ultimate control over a visitor’s experience: she can only enter the McLean house with a tour group. The tours occur hourly and
consist mostly of a ranger’s recitation of details about the surrender, which follow along the same general lines as the narrative presented on the ANHP’s website. It begins on the front lawn of the McLean house, and the Ranger explains how the house came to be chosen as the site of surrender. On the morning of April 9, Lee tasked his aide-de-camp Lieutenant Colonel Charles Marshall with finding a place for Lee and Grant to meet to discuss the terms. Marshall saw Wilmer McLean, a town resident, and asked if he knew of a suitable place for the two generals to meet. McLean initially brought Marshall to an empty storage house without furniture, which Marshall immediately rejected. McLean then offered his own home as the venue and within several hours, Grant and Lee were sitting in McLean’s parlor.230

The Ranger’s presentation of this story on the front lawn, in full view of the other reconstructed buildings of Appomattox Court House, impresses the viewer with the dignity of the occasion. The McLean house was the largest and most lavish single-family home in the village, with an outdoor kitchen, slave quarters, and ice house. Its size rivals the public buildings in the village, which perhaps explains why Marshall accepted McLean’s offer to host the surrender in his parlor (see fig. 3.2). Of course, the Ranger points out the irony of McLean’s participation in surrender. Four years earlier in 1861, the McLean family lived on Bull Run Creek near Manassas, Virginia, where the Confederate and Union armies met for their first major engagement of the Civil War. Confederate General P. G. T. Beauregard established his headquarters on McLean’s property, and after the battle McLean—in an attempt to escape the tumult of war—moved south to Appomattox Court House.231 Thus the fact that Lee and Grant’s final meeting as enemies occurred on yet another McLean property seems divinely ordained; like the Park Rangers, Ken Burns also exploits this full-circle coincidence in the first episode of his 1990 hit PBS miniseries, The Civil

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230 “Appomattox Court House National Historical Park: The Meeting: The Gentlemen’s Agreement.”
231 Silber, Landmarks, 117.
This narrative is pleasing because it alludes to the predetermination of the Civil War, suggesting that it was a positive period that resulted in America’s increased power (as mentioned in the 1961 guidebook). For the “average viewer” who John R. White (a former superintendent of Sequoia National Park) predicted would visit NPS’s historical sites, this narrative is appealing.

Fig. 3.1 View of the reconstructed Appomattox Court-House village from the front of the McLean House. *Photo by the author.*

Fig. 3.2 View of the reconstructed McLean house. *Photo by the author.*

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After the dramatic presentation of the McLean coincidence on the front lawn of the house, the Ranger ushers the tour group inside. He maintains command of a visitor’s experience in the interior of the house, where visitors fully experience the “environmental intimacy” Linenthal argues is a major component of war memorialization. Visitors enter the ground floor through a back entrance into a house that has been entirely restored and furnished. Only a few items from the original house have survived (for example, in McLean’s parlor, the Ranger states that only the vases above the fireplace are original) and the rest are period-specific recreations. Nonetheless, each fully furnished room is roped off as if it contains priceless artifacts. The dining room table is fully set and electronic candles flicker at the walls, creating the impression that the McLean family is about to sit down for supper. This is a powerful sensation for the visitor; because the house looks and feels “historic”—like it might have on April 9, 1865—she can feel close to Grant and Lee and the events that occurred in Wilmer McLean’s house. After pausing for a moment to allow visitors to peer inside the ground floor rooms and fully absorb the historic setting, the Ranger then leads the tour up a narrow set of stairs to the first floor, which contains the parlor where Lee and Grant actually met.

Here, the Ranger begins to tell the story of the “Gentlemen’s Agreement.” It follows the basic structure of the surrender narrative presented on ANHP’s web page and includes many of the tropes I have discussed in my first two chapters, including the polite conversation about shared experiences during the Mexican-American War and the juxtaposition of Grant’s mud-spattered uniform with Lee’s clean one. The Ranger emphasizes that Grant’s disheveled appearance did not indicate a lack of respect for Lee, but rather an abundance of it; rather than make the Confederate general wait for him to clean up, Grant had rushed to the village immediately upon hearing that Lee was ready to meet. ANHP posits this particular detail of Lee and Grant’s meeting ostensibly to reinforce the idea of respect between the two men (a key aspect of Reconciliation), but it also
places Lee in the position of power, as Grant rushed to meet him at McLean’s house. Again, through this emphasis on the Southern commander the Park presents a reconciliatory Lost Cause interpretation of surrender.

Fig 3.3 Ranger in the McLean house. Photo by the author.

As the Ranger told this story in the McLean house’s small foyer on my first visit to ANHP, he stood a few steps up on the staircase to the second floor, which allowed him to tower over the ten-or-so members of the tour group and to therefore assert his authority over them. As we stood in the cramped entrance, he repeated the story of sectional reunion and made only oblique references to slavery; if he commented at all on this aspect of the Civil War, it was along the lines of the 1961 guidebook’s characterization of slavery as an issue of “secondary importance.”

The one divergence from the website the Ranger presented was his insistence that “the war did not end here,” as Lee only technically surrendered the Army of Northern Virginia, not the whole of Confederate forces, to Grant. Whereas the website argues that the war “ended so simply” at Appomattox, the Ranger at ANHP holds up a map showing the sites of battle that occurred after
April 9, 1865, including the Battle of Palmito Ranch, the last military engagement of the Civil War. Ironically, the battle that occurred in Cameron County, Texas on May 12-13, 1865 was a Confederate victory. After informing the tour group of this piece of trivia, the Ranger then concludes that Appomattox was not the “real” end but the symbolic end of the war; the spirit of reunion that began at Appomattox characterized the months that followed. This presentation of a counterargument to the Park’s message in the literature that the war did end at Appomattox—the Ranger’s admission that the war technically continued after Lee and Grant’s meeting—serves to bolster ANHP’s symbolic argument. The Ranger presents Palmito Ranch as relatively insignificant: the reunion at Appomattox was the end of the war that really mattered.

![View of the McLean parlor. Photo by the author.](image)

After the Ranger’s brief talk, members of the tour are then invited to walk up to the edge of the famed parlor, which is also roped off. Park historians used the memoirs of Ulysses S. Grant, Adam Badeau, Edward Porter Alexander, James Longstreet, Joshua Lawrence Chamberlain, and Ely S. Parker, to determine the arrangement of the room. They likely also consulted the Major and

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234 In fact, the National Park Service has deemed Palmito Ranch a site of “Class D” preservation priority.
Knapp lithograph *The Room in the McLean House, at Appomattox C. H., in which GEN. LEE Surrendered to GEN. GRANT* (see Chapter Two, fig. 2.5), as Wilmer McLean—who commissioned the lithograph in 1867—likely knew the layout of his own parlor better than men who visited only once. At the edge of the doorway, a framed copy of Lovell’s *Surrender at Appomattox* appears on a waist-high bookstand, much in the same fashion that explanatory plaques appear before museum exhibits. The painting’s caption reads, “There are no photos of this event” and the Ranger posits that this image is the most accurate rendering of the surrender. The visual pairing of Lovell’s print and the reconstructed parlor bolsters the credibility of each, as the room in the painting is identical to the reconstruction right down to the carpet design, the papers on Grant’s desk, and the single pen on Lee’s. However, this similarity is not coincidental; rather, Tom Lovell painted his surrender scene in the room that the Park Service had *already* reconstructed. The composition of the reconstructed parlor exhibits much of the same symbolism I analyzed in Chapter Two, including the splendor of the parlor and Lee’s dominance of the surrender meeting. The viewer is invited to imagine Grant and Lee painted into a three-dimensional version of Lovell’s painting; the pairing of the room and the image demonstrates the Park’s adherence to an Appomattox narrative that favors a Lost Cause interpretation of this moment.

The tour of the McLean house, although it aligns closely with the narrative presented on ANHP’s website, provides the visitor with a tangible setting for the surrender. As Cathy Stanton has argued, the association of images and settings with certain histories is a powerful technique in the sphere of public history. Visitors on the tour—who listen to the story while standing in the foyer of a reconstructed house inside a reconstructed village—are quite literally enveloped in the nineteenth-century world in which Lee met with Grant. The Rangers insist that this recreation of McLean’s house and the surrounding town is accurate and based on Park historians’ careful research; this evidences NPS’s mission of providing visitors with “environmental intimacy” and
contending that this experience is authentic. The combination of Park literature with a Ranger-led tour renders ANHP a powerful space of public history.

**Fig. 3.5** Print of Tom Lovell’s *Surrender at Appomattox* (1965) just outside the reconstructed McLean parlor. *Photo by the author.*

*The Museum*

But the Appomattox experience does not end with the tour. The Park’s small museum, which is located on the second floor of the Visitor’s Center inside the reconstructed courthouse, further demonstrates how the Park promulgates a version of Appomattox that embraces a Lost Cause interpretation of surrender. As Stanton has argued, museum exhibits add credibility to a presented narrative. When a visitor first walks upstairs, she is ushered into a small theater where Park officials screen two orientation videos, entitled “The Appomattox Campaign,” and “Honor Answers Honor.” The Park even loans these videos to teachers for educational purposes.235 The second video’s title refers to the story Joshua Lawrence Chamberlain popularized about his salute to John B. Gordon at the formal stacking of the arms ceremony. As I argue in Chapter One, Chamberlain’s account of the “honor answering honor” salute aligns with the Reconciliation myth because of its focus on mutual respect between the armies. And, as I explain further in Chapter Two, this subject has remained popular for twentieth-century artists because it does not conflict

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with Lost Cause interpretations of surrender. In fact, Mort Künstler’s *Salute of Honor* (ca. 1991) (see Chapter Two, fig. 2.17) appears twice in the museum: once above an exhibit of Confederate battle standards, and (much enlarged) behind a display of Union and Confederate uniforms.

![Image](image.jpg)

**Fig. 3.6** Enlarged image of Mort Künstler’s *Salute of Honor* behind display of Confederate and Union uniforms. *Photo by the author.*

After the orientation videos, the visitor enters a narrow hallway lined with glass-encased exhibits; this hallway, which snakes around a corner and abruptly ends with a staircase leading back down to the visitor center, comprises the entire museum. It is dimly lit but exhibits and artwork are illuminated for emphasis. The incorporation of twentieth-century Appomattox art into the museum—and a corresponding lack of nineteenth-century Unionist images—evidences the Park’s embrace of an Appomattox memory that elevates Lee above Grant. The majority of the paintings I analyzed in Chapter Two hang in the museum, which suggests that not only are these the most popular and ubiquitous depictions of surrender, but also that NPS considers them to be the most accurate. The few nineteenth-century images that do hang on the walls of the museum feature Lee, including the lithograph that Wilmer McLean commissioned in 1867. Tom Lovell’s *Surrender at Appomattox* (1965) appears several times in the museum, including a life-sized version accompanied by an audio recording of Grant and Lee’s meeting, which follows the script
from ANHP’s website and the Ranger’s tour. As the narrator speaks about a character in the painting, a spotlight focuses on that figure.

![Fig. 3.7 Wallpaper version of Tom Lovell’s Surrender at Appomattox (1965). Photo by the author.](image)

Like the Ranger’s presentation of the Park’s Appomattox narrative, this audio recording-and-spotlight exhibit presents this visual representation as historically accurate and objective. Moreover, the repetition of this story with this particular image (which the Park consistently posits as “factual”) reinforces the Park’s version of Appomattox: Reconciliation is evident in the respect between Grant and Lee, but Lee emerges as the central figure in surrender.

The other artifacts in the museum are varied: nineteenth-century muskets, household items from the village, and army uniforms. One artifact in particular, Wilmer McLean’s daughter Lula’s original rag doll (called “the Silent Witness” by Park staff) is displayed prominently in the museum; moreover, the ranger mentions this doll in the McLean house tour and it has its own page on the ANHP website.236 Although no members of the McLean family were present during Lee and Grant’s meeting, Lula had left her doll on the sofa. Thus, she “witnessed” the surrender. According to the Park, the doll was one of the items stolen by Union soldiers anxious for souvenirs of

surrender: it remained with the family of Captain Thomas W. C. Moore until 1992 when they donated it to ANHP, in what can be interpreted as an act of Reconciliation. The Park’s possession and display of the doll further bolsters their version of the story; as Stanton has argued, tangible representations of historical narratives—in this case, the doll’s symbolic knowledge of the surrender—has a powerful impact on visitors of historic sites.

Museum displays featuring central figures in the Park’s version of Appomattox also line the walls. One exhibit highlights the presence of Ely S. Parker and includes a cropped image of Keith Rocco’s *The Surrender*, in which Parker appears in the background conversing with Marshall. Also on the display are two sentences in bolded text, which summarize Parker’s significance to ANHP’s narrative of surrender:

> At the surrender meeting, seeing that Parker was a Native American, General Lee remarked to Parker, “I am glad to see one real American here.” Parker later stated, “I shook his hand and said, ‘We are all Americans.’”

![Fig. 3.8 Ely S. Parker exhibit. Photo by the author.](image)

As I argued in Chapter One, the “We are all Americans” myth is most likely fabricated, as none of the other men in McLean’s parlor wrote about this exchange between Parker and Lee. However, it

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237 “Appomattox Court House National Historical Park: The Silent Witness.”
has become part of Appomattox canon because of its alignment with both Reconciliation and the Lost Cause. Parker’s reassurance to Lee that they were “all Americans” alludes to the shared heritage of Confederate and Union soldiers. This particular background image of Parker and Marshall conducting a polite conversation—and the quote referring to Lee extending his hand—suggest that Lee and his Confederate soldiers were not necessarily racist; hence, the Civil War’s cause and conclusion are disassociated with slavery. This assertion about Lee’s attitude in particular is important for proponents of the Lost Cause who contend that the war was not about slavery nor important to Confederate soldiers. Thus this display, which legitimizes an apocryphal story, demonstrates the Park’s commitment to reconciliatory Lost Cause narrative of surrender at Appomattox.

A 2008 “State of the Parks” assessment by the National Parks Conservation Association report suggested that ANHP “explore the roles of African Americans” in the Virginia village; it is also imperative that ANHP expand the role of slavery in their presented narrative of the Civil War. ANHP has the weighty task of presenting the “real” history in an “authentic” way, since on its website, the National Park Service essentially claims that its version of the past is the correct one. As a venue for public history, a field that caters to an audience of “average citizens,” the Park’s confidence in their Appomattox narrative is a powerful source of credibility for visitors. But ANHP, as a site of Civil War memory, it is inextricably linked with the history of National Military Parks. These sites, which began as battlefields preserved by locals in the late nineteenth century, developed into spaces in which the federal government honored Union and Confederate soldiers equally. Legislators and military park advocates intentionally excluded politics—especially issues related to race relations and slavery—from Civil War memory in these places. When Congress

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238 National Parks Conservation Association, State of the Parks.
239 “Discover History: Places.”
placed military parks under the administration of NPS in 1933, this legacy of sectional balance persisted. Thus the Park exhibits a version of the Reconciliation myth at Appomattox that diverges from its Unionist origins: Grant and Badeau’s expression of Reconciliation had placed Grant and the Union victory at the center of the narrative but at ANHP, Reconciliation is expressed through emphasis on Grant and Lee’s respect for one another while Lee emerges as the protagonist of surrender. Hence, Appomattox becomes an exemplar of a reconciliatory Lost Cause, a case the Park makes in its literature, tour, and museum. ANHP instills this “real” historical narrative repeatedly during a visitor’s time at the Park; she leaves with a confident feeling that she understands what really happened.

I argued in Chapter Two that twentieth-century artistic renderings of the surrender, though exhibiting a Lost Cause interpretation of surrender, do not meaningfully undermine the Reconciliation narrative. However, the way ANHP presents these images as the most accurate depictions of surrender does, in fact, suggest that this interpretation is correct. As individual pieces, the works of Troiani, Künstler, Rocco, and Lovell—although dominant in the realm of Civil War art—still only express the artists’ perspectives. At ANHP, these images (present in literature, the house, and the museum) represent the overall narrative the Park promulgates: reconciliation on the Confederacy’s terms, as expressed in Lost Cause symbolism. The Reconciliation that Grant and Badeau espoused and nineteenth-century printers published was a reunion on Northern terms: a magnanimous gesture of setting aside the Southern states’ cause, which Grant called “one of the worst for which a people ever fought,” as a tool to reunite the country. Yet ANHP presents a narrative of inevitable Reconciliation in which Lee is the main character; in today’s “official” version of surrender, a Lost Cause interpretation dominates. This historical landscape, presented as

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objective and accurate, communicates a vision of Appomattox—and by extension, the Civil War and its end—that constitutes a final Confederate victory.
CONCLUSION

As I drove home after my second visit to Appomattox Court House National Historic Park (ANHP), I passed the same wooden sign I had seen on my way in: “Welcome Historic Appomattox County: Where Our Country Reunited.” The sign’s location at an Exxon-Mobil gas station amused me, as did its glaring lack of prepositions. Nevertheless, I recognized the seriousness of what I had just witnessed and turned my thoughts to the National Park Service’s—and the sign’s—claim that surrender equaled reunion.

Is history written by the victors? This is an axiom we are all familiar with, and it certainly holds up in examination of many conflicts of the past. Yet after visiting ANHP, I wasn’t so sure. Robert E. Lee’s surrender to Ulysses S. Grant on April 9, 1865 signaled the end of the Civil War; not long after Appomattox, the Confederate States of America ceased to exist and the Southern states prepared to reenter a Union in which slavery was abolished. In other words, the North won. ANHP, however, tells a story that does not seem to be written by the victors. In today’s cultural memory, surrender at Appomattox is a pro-Confederate narrative with several crucial components: the inevitable reconciliation between the North and the South, Lee’s honor and dignity, and the righteousness of the lost Confederate cause—one that had nothing to do with slavery.

As these three different forms of myth-making (literary culture, visual representation, and historic landscape) attest, our collective understanding of Appomattox has changed in the 150 years since Lee surrendered to Grant. The first narratives of surrender—Reconciliation and the Lost Cause—appeared at the turn of the twentieth century in the memoirs and biographies of men who witnessed the events at Appomattox. While each myth had different regional origins, they lauded Confederate valor and ignored the legacy of slavery. Ulysses S. Grant presented a Reconciliation narrative in his Personal Memoirs that placed himself at its center and his friend and fellow eyewitness Adam Badeau, corroborated that narrative in his biography Grant In Peace. E.P.
Alexander, on the other hand, emphasized Lee’s transcendence at surrender (and over the entire course of the war); his memoir serves as one of the first published expressions of the Lost Cause at Appomattox. James Longstreet also corroborated the power of the Lost Cause in his specific denunciation of Lee in his own memoir, although his aim was to discredit it. Northern generals Joshua Lawrence Chamberlain and Ely S. Parker presented personal narratives of Appomattox (in Parker’s case, his story was enshrined in a biography written by a relative), and while their accounts emphasize sectional reunion, they also diminish Grant’s importance on that day.

These memoirists and biographers legitimized surrender narratives that had already been present in visual representations. Popular postwar newspaper and single-sheet prints portrayed Appomattox as a Union triumph secured by the Northern hero Ulysses S. Grant; however, twentieth-century artwork illustrates the ascendency of the Lost Cause at Appomattox. This shift can be partially explained by the niche audience to which contemporary Civil War art caters, and partially to the relative importance of Lee and Grant in each myth. While Lee’s death in 1870 only increased his deified status in Civil War memory, Grant’s presidential administration tarnished his reputation. Grant’s postwar image was linked to political scandals; Lee’s reputation continuously improved through the memoirs of former Confederate officers like Jubal Early and E.P. Alexander, and biographers like Douglas Southall Freeman. Moreover, Grant’s and other Union veterans were also culpable in creating this divergence; their insistence on Lee’s dignity and honor signaled to Northerners that Lee’s status as a former slaveholder and traitor was of little consequence. Simply put, over time Lee became the most universally appealing figure in Appomattox memory.

ANHP’s presentation of surrender mirrors this sentiment. Appomattox—and, by extension, the end of the war—has become a moment that embodies a Reconciliatory Lost Cause interpretation of the Civil War. ANHP’s mandate of preserving, honoring, and maintaining Appomattox memory emerged out of the complex history of the National Park Service and its
relationship to military and historic memorialization. Park literature has presented a relatively consistent narrative about surrender from 1950 to the present, and repetition of this narrative in tours, images, and exhibits in the reconstructed McLean house and in the Park museum concretizes their version. A visitor leaves ANHP with a thorough understanding of the “official” Appomattox, which is a version that prioritizes Robert E. Lee and Confederate memory.

I spent the three-and-a-half hour drive home from Appomattox, VA musing about the implications of ANHP’s Lost Cause interpretation of surrender. While historians like Gary Gallagher have noticed increased public interest in Confederate leaders and themes in recent years, this is certainly not a trend that entirely dominates Civil War memory. In David Blight’s discussion of the Lost Cause and Reconciliation myths in the twentieth century, he also mentions a third strain of memory: the emancipationist vision. This vision, argues Blight, was “embodied in African Americans’ complex remembrance of their own freedom, in the politics of radical Reconstruction, and in conceptions of the war as the reinvention of the republic and the liberation of blacks to citizenship and Constitutional equality.” 241 Gallagher also identifies this strain, whose “adherents almost always paid homage to the Union, but they considered the emancipation of more than 4 million slaves to be the conflict’s most important outcome.” 242 Just as popular media embraces the Lost Cause in many Civil War depictions, it also exhibits this emancipationist vision. The films Glory (1989, about the first all-black unit of the Union army), Lincoln (2012, the story of the passage of the Thirteenth Amendment), and 12 Years A Slave (2013, about the horrors of antebellum slavery), were all box-office hits with Academy Award nominations and wins. These films’ popularity demonstrates that, in many cases, the American public supports prioritization of African-American history over the Lost Cause. Does it matter that this one site of memory, a small

241 Blight, Race and Reunion, 2.
242 Gallagher, Causes Won, Lost, & Forgotten, 29.
National Park in rural Virginia, celebrates Confederate history without acknowledging the emancipationist vision?

As I exited Arlington, Virginia’s Robert E. Lee Highway, crossed into Washington D.C., and caught a glimpse of the Lincoln Memorial in the distance, I came to the conclusion that it does matter. If history is actually written by the victors—and we accept ANHP’s version of surrender—surely Lee and his Army of Northern Virginia were not defeated at Appomattox in 1865. Rather, it is those whose stories are untold who truly lost the Civil War. The freed slaves, African-American soldiers, and other Northern blacks who play virtually no role in this story of national reconciliation have been silenced in these narratives and in many forms of Civil War memory. Thus, cultural memory of Appomattox represents a final Confederate victory over those they would have enslaved; if left unrevised, this method of recollection sets a dangerous precedent for remembering what actually happened at the bloodiest moment in our nation’s history.
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