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### Memory and Memoirs: A Study of Civil War Soldiers' Perspectives on the Battle of Shiloh

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# SENIOR THESIS APPROVAL

This Honors thesis entitled  
*"Memory and Memoirs: A Study of Civil War Soldiers' Perspectives on the  
Battle of Shiloh"*

written by Brianna Taylor

and submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for completion of  
the Carl Goodson Honors Program meets the criteria for acceptance and  
has been approved by the undersigned readers.

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Dr. Chris Mortenson , thesis director

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Dr. Kevin Motl, second reader

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Mrs. Autumn Mortenson, third reader

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2/7/2022

Memory and Memoirs:

A Study of Civil War Soldiers' Perspectives on the Battle of Shiloh

Carl Goodson Honors Program

Advised by Dr. Chris Mortenson

Written by Brianna Taylor

## Introduction

The most acceptable answer in today's political climate is that the Civil War was fought over slavery. Even in the rural South where I grew up, academics cast a wary eye when it is suggested that the Civil War was fought for any other reason. Historical writing is often careful to mention that other causes of the war are still interrelated with slavery, thus adding nuance<sup>1</sup>. Yet still, slavery was the central cause of the Civil War, as there would have not been a war without the presence of institutionalized slavery in America. What history may remember as the spirit of the war and the reality of the war can be very different.

History often favors the key players, such as the generals of the Civil War who can be listed off and studied extensively in libraries. Figures such as Lincoln, Grant, and Lee receive the limelight of historical research, and their letters and diaries have been studied with scrutiny. Lower ranked soldiers, simply because of their sheer numbers, do not receive this same treatment. Civil War soldiers were predominantly white, and many did not own slaves, even in the Confederacy. A common argument from Confederate apologists is that most Confederate soldiers did not own slaves. This is true, however the average Confederate soldier was more likely to own a slave than the average civilian: Historian Joseph T. Glatthaar observed that: "slightly more than one in ten [soldiers] owned slaves personally. This compared favorably to the Confederacy as a whole, in which one in every twenty white persons owned slaves."<sup>2</sup> Some Confederate soldiers even sympathized with the African Americans they encountered, even though they were

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<sup>1</sup> For further reading:

Michael A. Morrison, *Slavery and the American West: The Eclipse of Manifest Destiny and the Coming of the Civil War* (Univ. of North Carolina Press, 2002).

<sup>2</sup> Joseph T. Glatthaar, *General Lee's Army: From Victory to Collapse* (New York: Free Press, 2009). 19.

fighting a war over the right to enslave them. It may seem tempting for new students in history to point out these discrepancies as evidence that slavery was not the key cause of the Civil War. Nonetheless, I also argue that the Civil War was fought over slavery, even if the everyday soldier did not see slavery as their personal inspiration to fight. The diaries and letters of both Confederate and Union soldiers will be analyzed to observe what stood out to soldiers at the time of battle and how these memories were altered by ideology such as the Lost Cause and other influencing factors. To deepen my study, I also wish to compare soldiers' wartime writings to memoirs of the same battle to see if there are any differences or exceptional observations to be made about soldiers' writing long after the war.

I anticipated that the soldier's memoirs would be less accurate than diaries and letters written during battle. The passage of time can deteriorate memory, but more importantly biases can form after the war's end. The Lost Cause is a famous example of Confederate revisionist history, and the memoirs of Confederate soldiers likely will contain plenty of examples of this ideology. The entries written shortly after the battle of Shiloh likely would have less of this hindsight bias, which would make the diaries the more accurate method of identifying a soldier's thoughts and feelings about the battle.

After conducting my research, I was surprised to discover that this was not always true. In fact, the diaries and letters typically had less consistent and less factually correct information than that of the memoirs written after the war. As this essay will divulge, rumor dispersed misinformation throughout soldiers. Often, soldiers were unaware if their army was winning or losing - both at the battle of Shiloh and in the overall war. Soldiers were convinced that they were winning the war since Shiloh took place early on in the Civil War. Shiloh was one of the first battles that made soldiers

come to realize just how gruesome the war would be, which thus makes Shiloh significant to Civil War memory. Topics linked to emotion, such as trauma, religion, and thoughts about scenery also persisted with soldiers both during and after the battle of Shiloh. The specifics about these emotions vary based upon the time soldiers wrote about them, however the emotional aspects of war overall demonstrate the importance of Shiloh in the memory of soldiers. Memoirs largely were written for a broad audience and were more inclined to convince readers of an agenda.

For Confederate soldiers, this agenda may be the perpetuation of white supremacy or the superiority of the Southern army. The Lost Cause and the association of the Confederacy with 'Southern Heritage' meant that once the Civil War had ended, soldiers could continue the legacy of the Confederacy in their authorship. Soldiers would thus be motivated to retroactively promote a narrative about the battle of Shiloh that may not be accurate to what they initially thought during the conflict. Literature published several decades after the war, especially from Confederate soldiers, typically exaggerated or misconstrued the circumstances at Shiloh in order to defend their regional honor.

On the other hand, diaries and letters were published more often as Civil War artifacts and thus did not have as much of a specific motive or message to promote. This observation was contrary to my expectations prior to this study. Diary and letter entries often were less factually correct than memoirs, however memoirs were also more likely to contain hindsight bias and revisionist perspectives to the battle of Shiloh.

## Soldier's Expectations of the Battle

In April 1862, most soldiers had not yet “seen the elephant” and were inexperienced at war. The Confederate and Union armies were also composed primarily of eager volunteers, as neither country had created a military draft this early into the Civil War. The expectations of these raw recruits were thus a notable aspect of the literature written on the Battle of Shiloh.

Soldiers attributed the surprise attack against the Union to a greater sense of naivety about the duration and severity of the Civil War. Just a few days after the battle of Shiloh, one journalist offered his overall impression of the state of the Union army:

You see that the army does not expect to be attacked. The cavalry ought to be out six or eight miles on picket; but they are here, the horses quietly eating their oats. The infantry pickets ought to be out three or four miles, but they are not a mile and a half advanced from camp. The army is in a bad position to resist a sudden attack from a superior source... They did not dream that fifty thousand Rebels were ready to strike them at daybreak.<sup>3</sup>

The overconfidence of the Union army revealed their underestimation of their opponent. One Union soldier wrote in his diary that the Union army gathered at Pittsburg Landing was “destined to invade the Confederacy by way of the Mississippi Valley.”<sup>4</sup> The northern soldiers saw their victory, in both Shiloh and in the overall war, as inevitable. Before Shiloh, the Union had experienced several consecutive triumphant battles, which likely inflated the egos of new recruits. A month before the battle, a

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<sup>3</sup> Coffin, Charles Carleton. *My Days and Nights on the Battle-field*. (United States: Estes and Lauriat, 1864). 165-166.

<sup>4</sup> Boyd, Cyrus. *The Civil War Diary of Cyrus F. Boyd, Fifteenth Iowa Infantry*. (United States: LSU Press, 2015.) 27.

soldier who later fought at Shiloh wrote that “We are giving them fits on all sides and as sure as the sun shines it will be over in two or three months at furthest.”<sup>5</sup> The Union did eventually win the Civil War, but the war was won after a brutal four years. Before Shiloh, soldiers did not anticipate the long journey before them.

Confederate troops were equally confident in their chances of victory at both Pittsburg’s Landing and in the overall war. The element of surprise gave Confederate soldiers confidence, and many believed that the Union would quickly tire out of war. After the battle, cannonfire would trigger traumatic memories and would be agonizing for soldiers to hear. Before Shiloh, however, Confederate soldier James Williams cheerfully wrote to his wife, “Oh! It is glorious music to hear the heavy throb-throb of a vigorous cannonade!”<sup>6</sup> Like those in the Union, Confederate soldiers also underestimated the willpower and grit of their opponents. Both anticipated a swift end to the war. Southern soldier John Thornton predicted to his brother that “I have given the U.S. government 60 days from the convening of Congress to proclaim peace.”<sup>7</sup> Both sides expected the other to give up purely out of exhaustion. Soldiers generally underestimated their opponent's bravery and strength, which is ironic considering that the Union was ambushed for underestimating their enemy. Regardless, the Union still won at Shiloh, and thus many Northern soldiers did not learn their lesson. Union medic George Templeton surmised in his diary after the battle that the “moral effect on the

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<sup>5</sup> Able Griffith. *Griffith Family Papers*. (Iowa State Historical Department: February 13th, 1862.).

<sup>6</sup> Williams, James. *From That Terrible Field* (Univ of Alabama Press: 2011).

<sup>7</sup> John Thornton. *A Sparrow Along Upon the Housetop*. (Museum of Mississippi History: 1861).



rebels must be disheartening and decomposing. They are not made of the stuff that bears failure well.”<sup>8</sup> This sentiment was a common one amongst soldiers.

In a memoir, Union soldier Jacob Smith looked back on the state of the army before the horrific battle and observed that “we were young in age, though old as veterans, and had never turned our backs onto the enemy, therefore the men marched with eagerness and light hearts, believing, as the sequel proved, that the boast of the enemy was not well founded.”<sup>9</sup> The Union victory swelled the confidence of the young soldier. In hindsight, the soldier may have remembered this confidence more than he had felt in the moment. The battle of Shiloh was brutal and gruesome, and on the second day of battle, the ground was already littered with moaning dead. It is likely that the gore from the first day had shaken the confidence of a number of soldiers. Despite this, in memory, the soldier recognized the victory as an example of the Union army’s superiority to the Confederates.

Before the battle, Confederate soldiers typically recalled an optimistic atmosphere. Confederate soldier William Bevens wrote that “the constant rains had made the roads so bad that we had to pull the cannon by hand as the horses mired in the mud. But by this time we were used to hardships, and nothing discouraged that superb commander, General Albert Sidney Johnston.”<sup>10</sup> In retrospect, Bevens remembered the Confederates as high-spirited workers and fondly remembered his commander. Because this was written in a memoir, it is possible that the soldier remembered the situation as more pleasant than he actually felt in the moment. This is especially likely for his

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<sup>8</sup> Strong, George Templeton. *Diary of the Civil War*. (Macmillan Company: 1862). 217.

<sup>9</sup> Smith, Jacob H. *Personal Reminiscences Three Weeks Prior, During and Ten Days After the Battle of Shiloh*. (Winn & Hammond Printers: 1894). 4.

<sup>10</sup> Bevens, William. *Reminiscences of a Private: William E. Bevens*. (University of Arkansas Press: 1999). 63.

comment about Johnston. Generals were a favorite target of soldiers to complain about, and Johnston had actually just lost a battle not too long before Shiloh.

The battle of Shiloh is considered a turning point in the Civil War today because it changed soldiers' expectations. This is evident in the writing of soldiers at Shiloh, as well. The same Union soldier, who believed that the Confederate invasion of the Mississippi was destiny, later in the battle surmised that "every indication seemed to point to a great and terrible defeat."<sup>11</sup> A Confederate soldier wrote after the battle of Shiloh that "I can not believe that the South will be subjugated, but I see the future red with blood."<sup>12</sup> Whereas before soldiers anticipated a swift end to the war, now they had a glimpse of the long war ahead. Shiloh had been a wake-up call for Confederate soldiers who realized that inflated egos and optimism would not carry them to the end of the war. A Confederate lieutenant admitted in his diary that "we have been fearfully underating [sic] the strength and number of our foe," indicating that some soldiers were aware of the gap between their expectations and the reality of war.

### Shiloh in Memory with the Rest of the Civil War

Both Confederate and Union soldiers recognized Shiloh as a turning point of the Civil War. The bombardment of Fort Sumter was the first armed conflict of the Civil War, happening in April of 1861. The Confederate victory at the first Battle of Bull Run is remembered by many historians as the first major battle of the war. This, however, may be an indicator of hindsight bias; this battle is significant historically because the Union loss suggested that the Civil War would last much longer than Lincoln and the

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<sup>11</sup> William E. Bevens. *Reminiscences of a Private: William E. Bevens*. 33.

<sup>12</sup> Lunsford Yandell. *There is no Sunday in the Army*. (Filson Historical Society: 1862).

Union had originally predicted.<sup>13</sup> Despite the importance of Bull Run, many soldiers had not experienced combat by 1862 when the battle of Shiloh took place. Lincoln originally called up an army of 75,000 volunteers to quickly end the war, and the Confederate states initially mustered a volunteer army of 100,000 by March of 1861. The majority of both armies did not actually see combat until much later in the war. Both armies only had about 18,000 men fight in the battle of Bull Run. By the battle of Shiloh, only a small percentage of Confederate and Union soldiers had “seen the elephant,” or engaged in combat, at that point in the war.

Confederate soldiers had a greater tendency of identifying Shiloh as the first pivotal battle of the Civil War, likely because it was an important defeat for the South. For example, Tennessean Confederate DeLong Rice claimed that “Shiloh was the first great battle of the Civil War; it was the first great battle of this continent, within the view of history. More Americans perished here in two days than were killed in all the years of the Revolutionary War.”<sup>14</sup> Rice’s perspective may be exaggerated due to the fact that Shiloh was fought in his home state, but his statement is not untrue. Only around 6,800 Americans died in the Revolutionary War; the Civil War’s estimated death count was 650,000, or more. The Battle of Shiloh alone had 23,000 casualties, and at that point was the bloodiest battle in American history. Shiloh was undoubtedly gruesome; however, earlier Civil War battles also had casualties that rivaled the American Revolution. Confederate soldier Thomas Duncan also called Shiloh the “first grand battle of the great war” because troops were relatively unseasoned and inexperienced

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<sup>13</sup> Lincoln first promised the Union to win the war in 90 days or less; volunteers were only recruited under a contract for this time.

<sup>14</sup> Rice, DeLong. *The Story of Shiloh*. (Brandon Printing Company: 1919). Foreword.

with battle.<sup>15</sup> Both DeLong Rice and Thomas Duncan wrote their memoirs about 60 years after the war. It is interesting that they remembered Shiloh as one of the most important battles in American history when the battle was quickly eclipsed by others in bloodiness. Gettysburg and Antietam are the first to come to mind; these battles both took place in the Eastern theater of the Civil War, however. The battle of Shiloh could be more significant to westerners like DeLong Rice because it took place on their home turf, even though there were other battles in the West where a greater percentage of soldiers died than at Shiloh.

Many other significant conflicts in the Western theater are often less studied by Civil War historians than Shiloh. For example, the Battle of Stones River was very similar to the Battle of Shiloh. It was a Union victory and also took place in Tennessee. The Confederate Army under Braxton Bragg even used a similar surprise attack strategy as Johnston did at Shiloh. Stones River and Shiloh are both remembered as the bloodiest encounters in the West. At the battle of Stones River, “Nearly 29% of the approximately 81,000 troops from both sides were either killed, wounded, or captured during the battle, giving the Battle of Stones River the highest casualty rate of any major engagement during the Civil War”.<sup>16</sup> Despite these facts, Shiloh is remembered more traumatically by Southerners -both today and in the Civil War era. In 2006, the Shiloh National Battlefield Park received a little over 300,000 visitors; in 2005, Stones River National Battlefield Park received only 200,000 visitors.<sup>17</sup> The park facilities could

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<sup>15</sup> Duncan, Thomas. *Recollections of Thomas D. Duncan*. (McCann Publishing: 1922). 63.

<sup>16</sup> “The Battle of Stones River”. (*Tennessee State Library and Archives*: 2013).

<https://sharetn.gov.tnsosfiles.com/tsla/exhibits/1863/stonesriver.htm>

<sup>17</sup> Sean M. Styles, *Stones River National Battlefield Historic Resource Study* (National Park Service: 2004). 1.

factor into these numbers, but it is unlikely that the impact is significant. If facilities were that different in quality, then it would bring the government funding of the parks into question. One of the main reasons to allocate less money to the park is possibly because it is simply not as popular.

For Civil War soldiers, the Battle of Stones River may simply be less important than Shiloh because of each battle's aftermath. Strategically, Shiloh was a more significant battle because it gave the Union army control of the Tennessee River, which assisted the North in blockading the South - part of Lincoln's Anaconda Plan. Stones River was a much less conclusive victory, and the only real effect this battle had was in morale. For Union soldiers, Stones River became a way to brag of Northern bravery and heroism: The *Nashville Union* newspaper heralded that "In the gallant charge, the regiment lost about one-third of their active members engaged, but drove back a force outnumbering them at least ten to one."<sup>18</sup> Morale may not seem like an important advantage, but many Union soldiers emphasized the importance of the victory at Stones River as a part of the overall war. Union soldier J.T. Gibson wrote the following:

Before this battle took place, the outlook for our country was very dark and threatening. Our armies had gained no signal [important] victories for many months, and there was very great danger that some of the Nations of Europe would recognize the Southern Confederacy, and that it would be impossible for us to maintain our blockade. Had General Rosecrans' Army been defeated at the battle of Stones River... it would not only have prolonged the War, but would have greatly increased our danger of conflicts with foreign countries.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> *The Nashville daily union*. 15 Jan. 1863. *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*. Lib. of Congress.

<sup>19</sup> Logsdon, David R. *Eyewitnesses at the Battle of Shiloh*. (Kettle Mills Press: 1994). iii.

One could argue that foreign aid was not very likely for the Confederacy, regardless, due to the poor finances of the country; however, to Union soldiers, this perceived advantage was enough to push through a losing streak.

Another Union soldier Alexander Stephenson described the carnage at Stones River and its effect on morale in his memoir, written 20 years after the war. Stephenson identified the immediate importance of Stones River in context with the Emancipation Proclamation, announced just a few months before the battle. Lincoln's controversial legislation swung Union votes to a more conservative leaning Congress, and Stephenson recalled that "this party at that time was opposed to the continuation of war... it is well to pause and reflect what the result might have been if the Army of the Cumberland had been less gallant, and if... it had been compelled to fall back in full retreat to Nashville... perhaps even as far as the Ohio river."<sup>20</sup> Certainly, the Union army would be less likely to receive necessary supplies without the government's confidence, won by the battle at Stones River. The victory at Stones River was thus psychologically rewarding for the Union army, perhaps more so than the battle was materially rewarding, and other battles could have resulted in the same morale boost to the Union.

Shiloh, nonetheless, is discussed much more in today's historical community, and is preserved more completely in the letters and memoirs of the soldiers who fought in it. Historians often claim that Shiloh led soldiers to believe the war would last much longer than they originally anticipated. This was not so for all soldiers, however. James Wall Scully told his wife after the Union victory at Shiloh that "I think Secession is about played out now, they based all their hopes on this battle and lost and are now utterly

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<sup>20</sup> Stephenson, Alexander F. *The Battle of Stone's River Near Murfreesboro*. (Kessinger Publishing: 1884). 151.

dispersed.”<sup>21</sup> Clearly this was not the case - the Civil War continued for three more brutal years. During the Civil War, information simply travelled slower and less accurately than it does today. It likely was not until several battles after Shiloh that soldiers realized that this war would be a long haul. It was also likely that each soldier came to this conclusion at a different time, and thus no distinct “turning point” can truly be identified. Instead, the battle of Shiloh (and all other battles of the Civil War) were merely events that could shift individual opinions on the outcome of the war in a positive or negative way.

### Rumors and the Role of Misinformation in Memory

There is conspicuously less literature from the Confederate soldier’s perspective of this battle. The primary reason is that as a new nation, the Confederacy had a much more difficult time keeping formal documentation during and after the war. Another factor for the lack of Confederate literature is rumor. The Civil War was a unique time period because it overlapped pre-modern and Victorian eras. New methods of communication were primitive at best, and the Confederacy had to produce its own infrastructure as a new country while the Union had the advantage of longer-established systems, such as an extensive Northern railroad system. It soon became clear to the Confederacy that “News transmitted over the wires was often incomprehensible; train travellers [sic] spread stories that were blatantly wrong; newspapers functioned as rumour mills; and war correspondents admitted that they had no idea what they were

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<sup>21</sup> McCan, Antony. “A Kilkenny Soldier in the American Civil War”. *The Irish Sword: The Journal of the Military History Society of Ireland*. (2002).

doing.”<sup>22</sup> Essentially, there was little reliable information about the Confederate Civil War aside from official battlefield reports from army personnel themselves. This official information was simply not as accessible to the public as modern communication forms, and thus the Confederacy lived off of uncertainty. As some say, ignorance is bliss.

The inferior communication methods of the Confederacy may have been a cause for the infamous Lost Cause ideology left in the wake of the war. The Lost Cause was a negationist portrayal of the Confederacy that depicted the South as repentant and doomed to fail from the start. From this perspective, the Civil War was fought for heroism and God himself, not for slavery. The Lost Cause implied that the South was always going to lose the war, yet Confederate soldiers were loyal to their punishment and continued fighting until they were defeated. In reality, most Confederates earnestly believed that they would win the Civil War for most of its duration. Rumors contributed to this confidence, as it created false hope for the Confederacy and made the South genuinely believe that they would win the war. It is no wonder that the Confederacy mentally could not process losing the war when they had been told by newspapers and soldiers writing home that the Confederacy had been winning battles. By retroactively thinking that the Confederacy was destined to lose, the embarrassment of this false hope can be swept under the rug and ignored by ex-Confederates. This may be a reason why Confederate accounts of losing battles, such as Stones River and Shiloh, are more scarce than Union accounts.

The Confederacy was not the only army to struggle with inaccurate information. Soldiers from both armies struggled with the accuracy of information, especially after

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<sup>22</sup> Sternhell, Yael A. “Communicating War: The Culture of Information in Richmond during the American Civil War.” *Past & Present*. (2009). 175.



the Civil War. After reading countless Civil War memoirs, the same opening paragraphs greeted me each time. One Union soldier named Milo Hascall opened his memoir with the following paragraph:

As will be perceived by the above caption to this paper, it is proposed to relate what happened to me, and what I observed during the battle alluded to, and might not inappropriately be styled "*What I know about the battle of Stone River.*" In doing so I shall not undertake to give a general account of the battle, but shall confine myself to that portion which came under my own observation, and to necessary inferences as to what happened elsewhere... In setting out it will be well to give a brief account of the history of the Army of the Cumberland, and its commanders, so far as I know.<sup>23</sup>

Hascall is quick to remind his readers that his account of the battle of Stones River is only a limited recollection. Soldiers at Shiloh also frequently introduced their writings with this disclaimer. Confederate soldier Thomas Duncan prefaced his memoir by declaring that he was only a witness of the battle, and that "There has been so much written about the battle of Shiloh that it is not in order for me to seek to contradict or confirm any of the various claims and theories."<sup>24</sup> Why do Civil War soldiers feel compelled to remind their readers that their memoirs are only written from their own perspective? Is that not implicit in the form of a memoir? I can propose a few theories for this compulsion.

One theory is that because of the general confusion of battle and long distance communication, rumor ran rampant in the Civil War. The telegraph, invented just a few

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<sup>23</sup> Hascall, Milo. *Personal Recollections And Experiences Concerning The Battle Of Stone River.* (Library of Alexandria, 1889).

<sup>24</sup> Duncan, Thomas. *Recollections of Thomas D. Duncan.* 44.

decades before the war, made communication more accessible in the 19th century. Unfortunately, this was not always a good thing. Soldiers could pay to telegraph families back home, and thus misinformation was abundant. In an exasperated edition of the Confederate newspaper the *Richmond Enquirer*, editors complained that the telegraph “covers us all over with lies... makes us doubt of everything we read, because we know that the chances are ten to one it is false [sic].”<sup>25</sup> Rumor disguised the actual state of the war to soldiers of both sides, but it is possible that Confederate soldiers especially were prone to believing rumors.

Rumors about the Union army leadership especially were debilitating to the Confederate army, who had prematurely assumed that they would win the war. In July of 1864, rumors that General Grant had died in battle gave Confederate soldiers a morale boost. The confusion of battle made soldiers jump to premature conclusions in order to make sense of their enemy. One Texan soldier reported to his father that Grant was dead, as he had “heard the rumor from a friend who claimed that a captain saw an official dispatch from General Lee” reporting that Grant had been killed in battle.<sup>26</sup> This friend-of-a-friend method of communication clearly was not a reliable form of information. Although believing that Grant had died may have improved Confederate morale, it meant that they were eventually surprised by Grant’s return, which could have hurt Confederate chances in battle.

Confederate Generals also were the subject of confusing rumors. Union soldier James Wall Scully reported to his wife in a letter that “Prisoners report Beauregard

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<sup>25</sup> *Richmond Enquirer*, 10 July 1863.

<sup>26</sup> Phillips, Jason. *Diehard Rebels: The Confederate Culture of Invincibility*. ( University of Georgia Press, 2010). 122.

dying, he had a leg and arm shot off.”<sup>27</sup> Clearly, that was false - Beauregard outlived the war and replaced General Johnston when he died at Shiloh as the commanding general of the Confederate army. The same rumor clearly had circulated, though, as a Union medic wrote in his diary a similar story that “Sidney Johnston is killed and Beauregard minus an arm.”<sup>28</sup> It is possible that Beauregard and Johnston were confused in Scully’s letter, which shows how easily misinformation was spread amongst soldiers of both armies. Other rumors were partially true, such as Strong’s correct assertion that Johnston was killed, yet incorrect claim that Beauregard had been crippled. Confederate soldier Joseph Dimmit Thompson wrote that “our Commander-in-Chief, General Johnston, was shot near the heart and soon expired.”<sup>29</sup> His information was only partially correct, as Johnston actually bled out from an artery in his knee. Even when information spread amongst soldiers was partially true, misinformation confused soldiers of both armies. This explains why so many Confederate soldiers wrongly believed after the battle of Shiloh that they held the victory.

The constantly changing leadership of the Union army also possibly contributed to these rumors. Thomas Duncan wrote that before the battle of Shiloh, the Confederate army had confidence because “Gen. Van Dorn, stationed at Little Rock, Ark, had been ordered to report with his army at Corinth, but for some reason he did not reach there.... It was reported that... General Halleck... and General Grant... were not in harmony.”<sup>30</sup> Duncan cites the unstable leadership of the Union army as the primary reason for launching a surprise attack; however, the Union army was able to stabilize under the

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<sup>27</sup> McCan, Antony. “A Kilkenny Soldier in the American Civil War”.

<sup>28</sup> George Templeton Strong. *Diary of the Civil War*.

<sup>29</sup> Joseph Dimmit Thompson, *THE BATTLE OF SHILOH: From the Letters and Diary Of Joseph Dimmit Thompson*. (Tennessee Historical Quarterly, 1862). 263.

<sup>30</sup> Thomas Duncan, *Recollections of Thomas D. Duncan*. 46.

authority of General Grant. Today, we know the role of Ulysses S. Grant was pivotal for the Union army; however, Civil War soldiers did not have this hindsight and merely thought that a power struggle left the Union vulnerable. Shiloh was Grant's debut as major general, and thus Confederate soldiers simply assumed the new Union leadership would be an advantage for the Southern army.

Soldiers were not the only cause of rumor in the war. Newspapers such as the exasperated *Richmond Enquirer* also played a huge role in the rumor mill of the Civil War. Local newspapers especially were eager to expedite stories without proper confirmation; "if they printed the story without waiting for confirmation, they could get the scoop before competing papers reached the street." Additionally, "because editors wished to be the first not only to announce the battle but also to declare it a victory, they were tempted to embellish" the stories they heard from the battle.<sup>31</sup> Generals were rarely available for newspaper interviews after battle, and thus any soldier could be pulled from the aftermath for this purpose.

One of the most famous newspaper accounts from the battle of Shiloh was reported by Northern editor Whitelaw Reid. His account in the *Cincinnati Gazette* is notorious for its inaccuracy. In the article, Reid wrote that "into the just aroused camps thronged the rebel regiments, firing a sharp volley as they came and springing forward upon our laggards with the bayonet."<sup>32</sup> This sentence implies to readers that the Union army was completely taken by surprise by the Confederate army, which made the eventual Union victory all the more impressive. In reality, however, the Union and Confederate armies had been skirmishing with one another for days before the battle of

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<sup>31</sup> Phillips, Jason. *Diehard Rebels*. 140.

<sup>32</sup> Sacramento Daily Union. *The Great Battle at Pittsburg Landing*. 21st May, 1862.

Shiloh. Union soldier Cyrus F. Boyd wrote in his diary on April 6th that “rumor came that Rebel General Beauregard with a large force had attacked our Pickets who are being driven back.”<sup>33</sup> This proves that both armies were aware that the other was nearby. The Union army was only unaware of the size of their enemy gathered near Pittsburg Landing. The journalist Whitelaw Reid was not even present for the initial Confederate attack, and wrote his report from several miles away from Shiloh. The inaccuracy of his information has caused historiographic debates that last even today about the extent to which the Union army was actually “surprised” by the Confederate army at Pittsburg Landing.

Higher status did not necessarily make a soldier more informed; General Beauregard estimated that the Union had lost at least 20,000 men in the battle, “for it was apparent to all that their dead left on the field outnumbered ours two to one.”<sup>34</sup> In reality, the Union had similar casualties to the Confederate army, around 10,000 men. Generals who trickled down misinformation such as this contributed to the rumors spread during the Civil War. If Generals misunderstood the facts of battle, then soldiers had an even harder time reporting accurate information. In Beauregard’s case, his information may have been altered by bias. Because he strategically lost the battle, it served him best to exaggerate the estimated size of the enemy he was up against. Whether intentionally or unintentionally, Generals who reported inaccurate information in the wake of battle confused and altered the hopes of the soldiers in their armies.

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<sup>33</sup> Boyd, Cyrus F. *The Civil War Diary of Cyrus F. Boyd, Fifteenth Iowa Infantry, 1861-1863*. 28.

<sup>34</sup> Beauregard, P.G.T. *The Battle Of Shiloh General Beauregard’s Official Report*. (The New York Times Archive, May 30th 1862).

General Grant wrote in his memoir that “the distant rear of an army engaged in battle is not the best place from which to judge correctly what is going on in front.”<sup>35</sup> Confusion made it difficult for a single narrative about Shiloh to emerge, both in the recent written accounts of soldiers or in memoirs published long after the war. While trying to write an accurate summary of the battle, journalist Charles Coffin admitted that “It will be a difficult task, however, for the stories are conflicting. No two persons see a battle alike; each has his own stand-point.”<sup>36</sup> Coffin had been one of the first journalists to make it to the battlefield after the carnage. One would think his early arrival would make Coffin’s report much more accurate, however the chaos of battle left most soldiers confused about what had even happened. The newspaper accounts of most soldiers were thus unreliable, either accidentally due to misinformation and confusion or on purpose, to overemphasize their regiment’s bravery and contribution to the battle. The soldiers’ accounts were then embellished once more by newspaper reporters, contributing further to the chaos post-battle.

The diary of Edmund Ruffin provides some insight into how easily soldiers could become confused. The Confederate soldier wrote in his diary that Shiloh was a “complete” victory for General Beauregard and that the Union was in “full retreat” up the Tennessee River.<sup>37</sup> This, as we know, was not quite true. While discussing the death of General Johnston, Ruffin described how rumors could confuse the Confederate army even when the rumors were intentionally created. Ruffin recalls in his diary how at

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<sup>35</sup> Ulysses S. Grant, *The Complete Personal Memoirs of Ulysses S. Grant*. (Charles L. Webster & Company, 1903). 284.

<sup>36</sup> Coffin, Charles Carleton. *My Days and Nights on the Battle-field*. (Estes and Lauriat, 1864). 154.

<sup>37</sup> Ruffin, Edmund. *The Diary of Edmund Ruffin*. (Louisiana State University Press, 1976). 276.

Bowling Green, Johnston's army "had been designedly exaggerated by reports made to deceive the enemy,"<sup>38</sup> The goal of these exaggerated numbers was to intimidate the Union, however the exaggerated numbers also adversely affected the Confederate army who also received this intentional misinformation. Because they thought Johnston had many more men at Bowling Green, and thus should have won that battle, soldiers such as Edmund Ruffin lost confidence in Johnston. This possibly could have affected the performance of Confederate soldiers under him in the battle of Shiloh. Even intentional rumors were thus harmful to each army as it only confused soldiers' expectations.

With this in mind, it is no surprise that soldiers felt the need to emphasize their limited perspective in the war. They had witnessed the adverse effects of rumor on both soldiers and civilians during the war, which possibly even was a factor in the Confederacy's loss of the war. What is thought of today as trivial gossip clearly became detrimental misinformation across the divided America, and directly impacted soldier morale.

When I initially began this study, I hypothesized that the memoirs of soldiers would be less accurate than diary entries. Time inevitably tarnishes the details of memory, and post-Civil War ideological movements such as the Lost Cause in the South could alter how soldiers remembered the war. Despite this, when it comes to the specific movements of armies, the size of the armies combatting, and the overall outcome of battles, the memoirs appear to be more accurate. Rumor is the likely culprit. One of the benefits of memoirs published long after the end of the war is that veterans can fact-check the specifics of a battle. Intentional misinformation spread by generals made it difficult for soldiers to maintain a factually correct diary of these battles. The facts

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<sup>38</sup> Ruffin, Edmund. *The Diary of Edmund Ruffin*. 277.

were learned only by word of mouth, and thus the soldiers could only make do with what they could. Generals such as Beauregard, who were more likely to know the finer details of each encounter, also could alter statistics to protect their egos or to attempt to confuse the other army. In the end, confusion tactics had an adverse effect on soldiers. It only created false hope for the Confederate army, who was certain they had won battles like Shiloh and overall believed that they were winning the Civil War.

One essay written by James H. Madison attempts to explain the conspicuous absence of slavery in many primary documents from Shiloh. In his essay, Madison explains that “The horrible events of this war did not simply fade gently into memory's twilight as its survivors aged and died. Their forgetting seems to have been more deliberate and the remembering more consciously selective. As Alan Nolan writes, many of the aging Civil War generation were ‘moved to manufacture a history of the event,’ so as to convert ‘their tragedy into a Victorian melodrama, a mawkish romance.’”

<sup>39</sup>Americans tried to use these rumors to create a history that they could stomach before the Civil War even ended.

## Scenery and the Pathetic Fallacy at Shiloh

Civil War soldiers, both Confederate and Union, identified the Sunken Road as one of the pivotal sites of battle. This is unsurprising, considering the carnage that occurred at the infamous Hornet's Nest, but rumors likely exaggerated this scene in the memory of soldiers. This portion of the Shiloh battlefield was immortalized in the

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<sup>39</sup> Madison, James H. “Civil War Memories and ‘Partnership Forgittin’,’ 1865–1913.” *Indiana Magazine of History* 99, no. 3 (2003): 198–230. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/27792486>.



writings of previous soldiers, and revered through religious rhetoric. DeLong Rice, one of the first superintendents of the Shiloh battlefield park, wrote that “the ‘Hornet’s Nest,’ through which chance or God has carved that fateful ‘Sunken Road’ within whose banks the brave line of blue seems to have its back against some invisible wall of fate.”<sup>40</sup>

Claiming that God himself carved the Sunken Road, instead of just some ordinary farmer’s wagon, attributes that God had a preference in the Civil War. In reality, the Union soldiers were defending Pittsburg’s Landing, so it would be natural for them to find the best defensive positions in the terrain. Rhetoric like this contributes to the Lost Cause ideology that many Confederates adopted after the Civil War.

Southerners were so convinced that they would be victorious that they only could attribute losing the Civil War to fate itself. Confederate soldier Thomas Duncan wrote that “And so this long-hidden and almost forgotten road, with its fringe of greening woods, proved a pitfall of death and disaster to the Confederate Army and, in my opinion, the salvation of the Union army.”<sup>41</sup> For many Confederates, it was easy to look to the Sunken Road as an insignificant cause of failure for their army. In reality, however, strategic and defensive positioning was essential in battle. Generals like Stonewall Jackson in the Confederacy knew of this and used the terrain of battlefields to their advantage by taking to the higher ground. In the instance of Shiloh, however, the Confederacy simply did not get the favorable position.

Evidence suggests that the Sunken Road was exaggerated in many soldiers’ writings. Although this location is remembered as the bloodiest site of battle, casualty reports do not coincide with this information. Confederate soldiers dubbed the site as a

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<sup>40</sup> Rice, DeLong. *The Story of Shiloh*. 42.

<sup>41</sup> Thomas Duncan, *Recollections of Thomas D. Duncan*. 59.

“Hornet’s Nest” for the brutal flurry of Union fire that they faced. Soldiers in this location described it as a deeply entrenched and fortified spot, which would explain why soldiers experienced such brutal resistance to their charges. David W. Reed, a soldier who later became a historian, fought in this location and came back to analyze the terrain after the battle. In his analysis of the battle of Shiloh, published fifty years after the Civil War, Reed determined that the location was “in fact an ordinary country lane and while, no doubt, offering some protection did not form an extensive trench or rifle pit.”<sup>42</sup> General Grant’s report of the battle conspicuously does not mention the Hornet’s Nest as he described the layout and occurrences of battle. This indicates that although soldiers like Thomas Duncan remembered the Sunken Road as a significant turning point in the battle of Shiloh, it is more likely that this location was exaggerated in the writings of soldiers published after the Civil War.

General Beauregard wrote in his post-battle report on Shiloh of the difficult terrain at the battle site. A few days before the battle, Beauregard wrote that “the men... were unused to marching; the roads narrow, and traversing a densely wooded country, became almost impassable after a severe rain-storm on the night of the 4th.”<sup>43</sup> The physical beauty that so many soldiers wrote about in diaries and memoirs was ironically the detriment of the Confederate army during the battle. Dense woods and hilly vales made it miserable for soldiers to travel in an organized fashion. The difficult terrain possibly could have contributed to the rumors previously discussed in this essay. Foliage would have obstructed soldiers’ view, which already was poor due to the smoke and shrapnel flying in battle. Furthermore, soldiers had to split up more often in wooded

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<sup>42</sup> Dosch, Donald F. “The Hornets’ Nest at Shiloh.” *Tennessee Historical Quarterly* 37, no. 2 (1978). 176.

<sup>43</sup> Beauregard, P.G.T. *Official Report on the Battle of Shiloh*.

battles like Shiloh. As a result, there are less eyewitness accounts of what happened in Shiloh, allowing soldiers to tell tall tales and exaggerate the events they witnessed at greater rates.

Soldiers repeatedly mention the idyllic scenery of Shiloh in their letters and memoirs. The juxtaposition between the location's beauty and the gruesome battle that occurred at Shiloh is thematically intriguing. In his diary entry written on the day of battle, Joseph Dimmit Thompson notes that "The day is beautiful. The sun shines brilliantly from a clear blue sky upon this field of carnage below."<sup>44</sup> Likewise, Thomas Duncan wrote that "The sun was just coming up over the hilltop, its bright rays touching the half-green forest with a golden beauty that could not but charm the eye and thrill the heart even in the presence of death."<sup>45</sup> The beauty on that morning seemed to many Confederate soldiers, like Thompson, to be a good omen. Homesick chaplain Samuel D. Lougheed wrote to his wife the following:

How beautiful is the spring time. How joyous is nature on its return. Here in the south every thing is truly beautiful. The trees are all loaded with loveliest green. The valleys are covered with a soft velvet green, and the birds, from every group of trees warble forth their sweetest songs. How much I would enjoy a walk with my Jennie this evening along the "Levee", if the war was only over.<sup>46</sup>

For soldiers like Lougheed, the beauty of their surroundings was an example of indifferent nature. The irony of such beauty amidst chaos made some despair, or at least pine for the comfort of loved ones as Lougheed did. For others, Shiloh's scenery seemed

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<sup>44</sup> Thompson, Joseph Dimmit. *THE BATTLE OF SHILOH: From the Letters and Diary Of Joseph Dimmit Thompson*.

<sup>45</sup> Thomas Duncan, *Recollections of Thomas Duncan*, 52

<sup>46</sup> Lougheed, Samuel D. *Letter to His Wife Jane Lougheed*. 1863.

to mock them. Union physician Arminus Bill sardonically wrote that “Birds were singing all nature was smiling, even gay. Those ominous shots borne to our ears on the fragrant air, spoke of a discord, not now in nature’s heart, but in man’s.”<sup>47</sup> For Bill, the birdsong seemed to mock the distant canon shots.

As the rain poured over the battlefield, soldiers quickly lost hope in their good omen. In memory, this could be an example of the pathetic fallacy, or how one’s setting reflects the mood of the situation. The weather has little to do with the actual outcome of the battle, aside from making the terrain more difficult to move around - but this is a disadvantage to both armies, and thus should not have affected the battle one way or another. The rain was a considerable wound to morale. Union physician Arminus Bill wrote in his diary of one patient who nearly died from the rain alone:

He had not noticed a tin water discharge water pipe which came down there conducting much of the water from the cabin roof emptying it right there. He had fixed himself this blanket so as to cover the mouth of the pipe the entire column of water poured in around his neck flowed through his clothes out his trouser legs. Yet so tired was he that he never awakened until nearly drowned.<sup>48</sup>

The physical exhaustion of fighting through the night made the rainy conditions unbearable - and even deadly - for soldiers. As the battle went on, soldiers remembered the power of nature rather than it’s beauty. Union soldier Alexander Varian wrote in a letter that “I can’t describe to you the awful grandeur of a raging battle. I could compare it to nothing else but Thunder and Lightning.”<sup>49</sup> Conflict continued on the Shiloh battleground until 4am for some brigades, and thus the torrent of rain made Shiloh

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<sup>47</sup> Bill, Arminus. *Civil War Diary*. 10.

<sup>48</sup> Bill, Arminus. *Civil War Diary*. 2.

<sup>49</sup> Varian, Alexander. *Letters*. 1862.

particularly disheartening for soldiers worn by exhaustion. In the diary of Private Elisha Stockwell, the young boy writes that “I put my blanket over my shoulder, leaned my chin on the butt of my gun, and slept standing up” on the night of April 6th. This form of extreme exhaustion likely distorted the memories of soldiers at Shiloh and contributed to the overall confusion of the battle’s aftermath.

### Race and It’s Absence at Shiloh

It is useful in history to look for not only what is evident, but also what is conspicuously absent. James H. Madison, founder of the Colonel Eli Lilly Civil War Museum, wrote that in “*Silver Blaze*, Sherlock Holmes solves the mystery by recalling that the dog did not bark in the night. American history is filled with dogs that should be barking but are not.”<sup>50</sup> One particular dog that is not barking, but ought to, is slavery at the battle of Shiloh. I visited the Shiloh battlefield park in the fall of 2018, and among the many numerous monuments there is very little evidence of slavery at the battle of Shiloh. How can this be, when Tennessee was a slave state during the Civil War? In modern historiography, it is generally agreed by Civil War historians that slavery was the primary cause of the Civil War; without slavery, there would not have been a war to fight over. Regardless, if the Union army won at Shiloh, why is there no trace of slavery in the battlefield park - even to this day?

Nuance may shed light on this situation. While the Civil War began over slavery, the soldiers who fought in the war were not necessarily fighting over slavery. Most Northerners still perceived African Americans as a lower class, possibly even a lower

<sup>50</sup> Madison, James H. “Civil War Memories and ‘Pardnership Forgittin’,” 1865–1913.” *Indiana Magazine of History* 99, no. 3 (2003). 200.

species of human. Additionally, after the war, the legacy of Reconstruction did not fully deliver the final blow to racial divisions in America. By the time the battlefield was being memorialized as a national park in the early 1900s, “there was a concerted effort to forget the controversies that had separated the nation in the 1860s and concentrate on the heroism and courage of the soldiers who had fought over those issues. As a result, few debated the central themes of the Civil War, such as slavery and race.”<sup>51</sup>

Confederate soldiers were overwhelmingly complacent with and defensive of slavery in their society, though many Confederate soldiers expressed personal sympathy and regret for black men during the Civil War. One such soldier John Beatty expressed sympathy for his slave in his memoir:

Billy, my servant, tells me that a colored man was whipped to death by a planter... for giving information to our men... we worm out of these poor creatures a knowledge of the places where stores are secreted, or to compel them to serve as guides, and then turn them out to be scourged or murdered. There must be a change in this regard before we shall be worthy of success.<sup>52</sup>

The final sentence in this passage shows that Beatty, along with many other Confederate soldiers at Shiloh, linked their right to success with moral goodness. This could, however, be an indicator of Lost Cause retroactive arguments for the Confederacy. One of many myths that Lost Cause ideology perpetuates is the myth of the happy, grateful slave. Confederate soldiers - and even many Confederate sympathizers of the modern age - argue that Southern slaves were well-fed and taken care of by slave owners. This

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<sup>51</sup> Timothy B. Smith, *This Great Battlefield of Shiloh: History, Memory, and the Establishment of a Civil War National Military Park*. (University of Tennessee Press, 2006). 129.

<sup>52</sup> Beatty, John. *The Citizen-Soldier: The Memoirs of a Civil War Volunteer* (Lincoln, Neb.: University of Nebraska Press, 1879). 132.

type of thinking suggests that slaves were happy to be enslaved, and that the institution of slavery was a relative good in society. Evidence such as Beatty's memoir shows that this is quite untrue, however. In fact, it is more than likely that many atrocities against slaves will never go discovered, as they died with their victims. The Confederacy lost the overall war, and likewise lost the fight at Pittsburg Landing despite having the advantage of surprise at this battle. Confederate soldiers like John Beatty, who otherwise may have been indifferent to slaves, therefore may remember in their memoirs feeling more pity for colored victims of the Confederacy than they actually reflected at the time.

One of the consequences of this happy slave narrative was that it retroactively redefined the role and memory of slaves in the Confederate war effort. The Lost Cause narrative rewrote history to claim that "Slavery, they argued, was not a negative, but benefited the black race; it functioned as the foundation of a peaceful society before the war, a culture that stood far superior to the violent, industrial North. Therefore, African Americans showed unwavering support for the Confederacy through the very end of the war."<sup>53</sup> In the mythos of the happy slave narrative, African Americans were grateful for the "free" shelter, food, and stability that slavery provides for them. This is especially true when contrasted with the North, which was painted in these narratives as a cruel place that did not guarantee the basic necessities of life for its wage workers. Of course, African Americans did *not* unwaveringly support their slave owners, and the shelter and food provided for them were *not* free. The myth of the happy slave was disputed by

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<sup>53</sup> Labode, Modupe, and Kevin M. Levin. "RECONSIDERATION of Memorials and Monuments." *History News* 71, no. 4 (2016). 8.

Frederick Douglass, two decades earlier, in his book *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*. He wrote as follows in 1845:

The experience of FREDERICK DOUGLASS, as a slave, was not a peculiar one; his lot was not especially a hard one.... his case may be regarded as a very fair specimen of the treatment of slaves in Maryland, in which State it is conceded that they are better fed and less cruelly treated than in Georgia, Alabama, or Louisiana. Yet how deplorable was his situation! what terrible chastisements were inflicted upon his person!... thus demonstrating that a happy slave is an extinct man! <sup>54</sup>

Food and shelter were not enough for most former slaves to feel loyalty to their masters. In fact, slaves were not always guaranteed the proper nutrition needed to toil in the fields for a 12-hour workday. Booker T. Washington wrote that as a slave, he would receive his food as “dumb animals get theirs. It was a piece of bread here and a scrap of meat there... Sometimes a portion of our family would eat out of the skillet or pot, while someone else would eat from a tin plate held on the knees using nothing but hands... to hold the food.”<sup>55</sup> The inhumane method of delivering food scraps instead of giving proper meals made the treatment of slaves exceptionally undignified.

Another sign that slaves did not happily support their masters was the large number of fugitive slaves migrating North during the Civil War. Southern slaves would flee to the North to fight in the war effort or to simply gain their freedom. This would

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<sup>54</sup> Douglass, Frederick. *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave*. Boston Anti-Slavery Office, 1845. X.

<sup>55</sup> National Park Services. *A 19th Century Slave Diet*. U.S. Department of the Interior. <https://www.nps.gov/bowa/learn/historyculture/upload/the-final-slave-diet-site-bulletin.pdf>



especially become true after the Emancipation Proclamation was released. This bill made it possible for African Americans to fight in the Civil War in segregated units, and freed all slaves in rebelling territories. The 179,000-odd African American soldiers who fought for the Union is the starkest evidence that former slaves were not in support of the Confederacy.

These events nonetheless occurred after April 1862, and therefore happened after the battle of Shiloh. Were the few slaves at that battle in support of the Confederacy, especially since this battle took place in the earliest stages of the war?

Other soldiers mentioned African Americans as a form of comic relief from the mundane life of a soldier. Although these interactions were remembered fondly and include positive comments of African Americans, the compliments seem backhanded. The implication is that soldiers saw black people as a form of entertainment, and not as intellectual equals. Union soldier John Beatty recalled that on the march to Pittsburg's Landing:

a hundred or more colored people, consisting of men, women, and children, flocked to the roadside. The band struck up, and they accompanied the regiment for a mile or more... the boys were wonderfully amused, and addressed to the motley troupe all the commands known to the volunteer service: 'Steady on the right'; 'guide center'; 'Forward, double quick.'"<sup>56</sup>

The soldiers may not have been outright cruel to the African Americans that joined their march, but it does seem like they are infantilizing them as a joke. The implied notion was that black people could not be soldiers. Union soldiers like Beatty likely were racist and did not see African Americans as fit to be soldiers. Starting in July of 1862,

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<sup>56</sup> Beatty, John, *The Citizen-Soldier: The Memoirs of a Civil War Volunteer*. 131.

just a few short months after Shiloh, African Americans were allowed to enlist to fight for the Union. Written accounts like John Beatty's shows how not all Union soldiers were necessarily in support of allowing African Americans to fight in the Civil War. Beatty is not explicitly racist, but his impression is that the Civil War ought to be fought by the white men of both sides, and that a black battalion would be a "motley troupe."

Union soldiers at Shiloh actually wrote more racist and derogatory comments about African Americans than Confederate soldiers, which was surprising during my study. This is likely because the Confederacy owned slaves, and thus had a much higher concentration of African Americans living in the South than in the North. Confederates saw African Americans as subhuman and beneath them as a class, but they at least had been exposed to African American cultures for most of their lives. Northerners, on the other hand, often had only minimal interactions with other races before the Civil War. One Union soldier expressed disdain for slavery as a cause of the Civil War, as he thought, "It is not to free this justly hated negro race."<sup>57</sup> Northern soldiers, especially early on in the Civil War, had not thought much of slavery and did not tolerate African Americans as human beings. At Shiloh, the soldiers who fought on both sides likely did not have the preservation of slavery in mind.

Confederate soldiers recalled the presence of African American soldiers through a lens that romanticized the era of slavery in the South. Southern soldier Conrad Wise Chapman wrote in his memoir how "Negroes were hurrying to the rear with the spoils of the dead. One of the party sang out, Hellow Sam! have you seen the elephant. Lor bless you Massa, we just seen the tip of his tail and dat nearly scare the wits out of us and

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<sup>57</sup> Frank, Joseph Allan. "Profile of a Citizen Army: Shiloh's Soldiers." (United States: *Armed Forces & Society*, 1991). 97.

away they went.”<sup>58</sup> Chapman remembered the black men present at Shiloh as cowardly thieves. Stealing from the enemy dead was common for both armies, yet in this context Chapman highlights this detail to portray the African Americans as cheap and immoral. The man addressed Chapman as “massa,” indicating that Southerners still expected loyalty from their slaves. The infantilization of the black man in the Confederate consciousness shows that Southerners saw black men as incapable of rebellion. The diction that Chapman uses to describe the black man’s voice provides a thick accent, which distinguishes African American speech as both different from a white man’s voice and as less proper or correct.

Southerners remembered their former slaves as loyal, yet also incapable of rebellion. This sentiment remained common until a year later, when the Emancipation Proclamation formally freed Southern slaves and the North began to raise black battalions to fight in the Civil War. These events proved to the South that their former slaves were both capable and willing to fight against them. During the battle of Shiloh, African Americans were still seen as mere accessories of war and not as legitimate players in combat. The Civil War was primarily caused by slavery, but at the battle of Shiloh, soldiers did not particularly pay much attention to the slaves present. By the end of the war in 1865, Abraham Lincoln had defined in his second inaugural address that “These slaves constituted a peculiar and powerful interest. All knew that this interest was somehow the cause of the war.”<sup>59</sup> At the time of Shiloh, however, this consensus

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<sup>58</sup> Chapman, Conrad Wise. *Ten Months in the Orphan Brigade*. (Kentucky: Kentucky State University Press, 1867). 65.

<sup>59</sup> Abraham Lincoln, Second Inaugural Address; April 10, 1865, March 4, 1865; Series 3, General Correspondence, 1837-1897; *The Abraham Lincoln Papers at the Library of Congress*, Manuscript Division (Washington, DC: American Memory Project, [2000-02])

about the war had not yet been reached. Instead, soldiers focused more popularly on the issues of states rights and sectional tensions. The soldier's writings at Shiloh reveal that both Northern and Southern attitudes towards African Americans were largely indifferent or dismissive. Soldiers of both sides of the war saw African Americans as subhuman and irrelevant to their day-to-day activity. Once slaves were given freedom and rights, the racial class divisions were thrown upside down, causing veterans to cling to white supremacy after the war. The conflict of African American memory in the Civil War is ongoing even today as historians combat revisionists perspectives. Slavery is the cornerstone cause of the Civil War, yet most soldiers at Shiloh would not be concerned with the peculiar institution. They still perceived the war as a conflict between sectional tensions rather than as a battle for the greater good of what white Americans would have believed to be a subhuman race.

### Traumatic Responses to Violence at Shiloh

Inevitably, one of the topics that remained burned in soldiers' minds in diaries and memoirs was the gore of the scene they witnessed. Disfigurements and exposed viscera were commonly mentioned in the writings of soldiers, both during and years after the battle. Physician Arminus Bill recalled one scene of horrific violence in his diary. He had stumbled upon seven Union soldiers, all wounded from a piece of exploding shrapnel. He describes the horror of the scene as follows:

The shot struck near the foot of the tree some 8 feet from the nearest man, ploughing up the earth + striking the first man just above the knees, cut off both his legs, he probably died from shock + bleeding. The next man's thighs were cut

out, the third man's bowels were completely torn away, the 4th man's stomach + surroundings – the 5th man had a hole as large as a stove pipe squarely through his chest, the 6th + 7th had their heads taken off. The 7th man's skull was cleft into as squarely as a cocoa nut shell is cut + the face of the 6th man, cut off precisely like a mask, lay over the 7th man's half skull. The fragments of the bodies lay around under that tree. I never saw such mutilation from one shot before or afterward.<sup>60</sup>

For many soldiers, Shiloh was the first battle in which they had “seen the elephant,” or participated in actual armed conflict. Being a soldier no longer was an exciting and manly task, but an obligation and gruesome duty. Shiloh, in particular, was noted as one of the most gruesome battles in the war by the armies who fought in it, likely because Shiloh was one of the most violent Western theater conflicts. This scene was frozen in Arminius Bill's memory because it was the most violent he had seen in the aftermath of a single shot.

Other soldiers likewise noted when they had experienced violence for the first time, or if a particular scene was the worst they remembered from the war. In his diary, a Union soldier described how “Here I noticed the first man shot. He belonged to Co “K” ... He was close to us and sprang high in the air and gave one groan and fell *dead*.”<sup>61</sup> Soldier Thomas Duncan wrote in his memoir that at Shiloh, “I saw, for the first time, a soldier killed.... The bullet came from a point several degrees to the right of his front and cut his throat.”<sup>62</sup> The gruesome death, especially as the first one Duncan had seen, stuck

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<sup>60</sup> Bill, Arminius. *Civil War Diary*. (Connecticut: 1862).

<https://collections.ctdigitalarchive.org/islandora/object/350002%3A153>

<sup>61</sup> Cyrus F. Boyd. *Civil War Diary of Cyrus F. Boyd, Fifteenth Iowa Infantry, 1861-1863*. 30.

<sup>62</sup> Thomas Duncan, *Recollections of Thomas Duncan*,. 51.

with Duncan as a lightbulb memory. Diaries and memoirs alike frequently mention these memories enhanced by trauma due to their excessive gore and sudden drama. In memoirs, soldiers often recalled that the first dead soldier they found was one of the most gruesome. Odds are that there were other more gruesome deaths; however, later on in the war, soldiers were likely desensitized to gory scenes. One soldier wrote that on April 6th, “The first dead man we saw was a short distance from the clearing... he was leaning against a big tree as if asleep, but his intestines were all over his legs and several times there [sic] natural size.”<sup>63</sup> This scene was especially traumatizing because it was the first time Stockwell had seen swollen viscera, and thus it made it into his memoir as an especially memorable moment.

Dramatic scenes of violence were consistently detailed in both diaries and memoirs. This seems to suggest that gory scenes traumatized soldiers, and these memories permanently stuck with soldiers long after the war. Documents written the day after the war, or sixty years later, had the same emotional depth and detail when focusing on injuries in combat. Whereas other details about the Civil War eventually faded in the minds of veterans, such as the general strength and morale of their armies, gruesome wounds and casualties remained clear. Post Traumatic Stress Disorder was not formally defined until almost a full century later during World War II, but the preservation of violent memories in soldier’s writing implies that the Civil War certainly caused many cases of PTSD in veterans.

Soldiers fighting at Shiloh responded emotionally to this trauma in a variety of ways. Soldiers remembered this flurry of emotions in both letters and long after the war

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<sup>63</sup> Stockwell, Elisha. *Private Elisha Stockwell Jr. Sees the Civil War*. (United States: University of Oklahoma Press, 1958). 16.

in memoirs. Sam Watkins wrote in his memoir of these feelings: “Down would drop just one fellow and then another, either killed or wounded, when we were ordered to charge bayonets. I had been feeling mean all morning as if I had stolen sheep, but when the order to charge was given, I felt happy. I felt happier than a fellow does when he professes religion at a big Methodist camp-meeting.”<sup>64</sup> Happy reactions to combat, such as laughter, were often memorable to soldiers because of how out of place such emotions felt.

Other soldiers, especially in near-death circumstances, recalled the extreme fear that they experienced. In the Civil War, abandoning one’s regiment was considered one of the most atrocious offenses. Desertion was worthy of execution, according to the Articles of War. Soldiers who fled the battle recalled the extreme emotions that motivated them to run away from combat. These soldiers likely tied these strong emotions to the action of running away in order to defend their honor, as it was typically shameful to escape battle. Warren Olney wrote how a “ball struck me fair on the side just under the arm. I felt it go through my body, I struggled on the ground with the effect of the blow for and in an instant, recovered myself, sprang to my feet... felt I was mortally wounded and took to my heels.” After running for some distance, Olney realized that he could not have made it far if his wound was that severe. He investigated the wound and realized that it had only gone through his shirt, not his body.<sup>65</sup> Soldiers responded with fight-or-flight due to fear at the battle of Shiloh, and associated conflicting emotions with their actions on the battlefield in order to justify their choices.

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<sup>64</sup> Watkins, Samuel. *Company Aytch*. (Penguin Publishing Group. 1882). 42.

<sup>65</sup> Olney, Warren. “The Battle of Shiloh: With Some Personal Reminiscences.” (*The Overland Monthly*, 1885). 115.

An especially traumatic place that soldiers remembered in both letters and memoirs was the army hospital. At Shiloh, neither side anticipated the massive casualties that the battle would bring. Makeshift hospitals had to be erected to deal with the many wounded soldiers, typically with less than ideal conditions. A soldier wrote in a letter to his wife that “the Railroad platform is almost covered with coffins and wounded soldiers,” describing one of the many improvised hospitals raised in the wake of battle.<sup>66</sup> Many civilians in Corinth had to offer their homes to accommodate the numerous wounded, and “were horrified at the ghastly spectacle as the trains of army wagons lumbered in from the battlefield dripping blood from their heaped-up piles of groaning, suffering wounded. Maimed and suffering men lay everywhere - on porches, on sidewalks, on platforms of railroad stations.”<sup>67</sup> The inefficient and public display of the wounded dashed civilian and soldier morale in the wake of battle. By April 9th, a soldier observed that “wounded and sick men were lying around on the muddy ground and the dead were being tramped over as if they were logs of wood.”<sup>68</sup>

The lack of supplies were detrimental to wounded soldiers, and likely spiked the already larger than expected losses seen at Shiloh. The Union surgeon general wrote in his official report of the battle that his physicians were struggling with “the impossibility of getting a sufficient number of tents pitched, or in the confusion which prevailed during and after the battle to get hay or straw as bedding for the wounded or to have it transported to the tents.”<sup>69</sup> Pittsburg Landing was still damp from the rain during battle,

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<sup>66</sup> Johnson, Charles J., *Johnson Letters*, (Louisiana State University Library, 1862).

<sup>67</sup> Stanley F. Horn, *The Army of Tennessee*. (University of Oklahoma Press, 1952). 148.

<sup>68</sup> Boyd, Cyrus F. *The Civil War Diary of Cyrus F. Boyd, Fifteenth Iowa Infantry, 1861-1863*. 41..

<sup>69</sup> Robert Murray. *Report From the Union Medical Director at the Battle of Shiloh*. (Ohio State University Archive, April 21st, 1862.) 299.



and the excessive moisture could make wounded men sick. Without insulation and proper shelter, a minor wound could become deadly, and severe wounds became insurmountable.

Less than ideal hospital conditions inevitably resulted in a greater number of amputations at Shiloh, which unsurprisingly soldiers discussed in gruesome detail in their diaries and memoirs. The Civil War took place during an awkward transition in the history of medicine and technology. Rifles and the introduction of minie ball bullets enhanced the accuracy and range of weapons, which increased their deadliness. On the other hand, the germ theory of disease had not been embraced by most doctors yet. Surgeons typically used the same saws on multiple amputation procedures, which cross contaminated wounds and increased the rate of infection. The shortcomings of modern medical knowledge during this time, combined with the bone-shattering technology of new weaponry, made wounds especially lethal and difficult for surgeons to deal with. Even minor wounds would often end in amputation merely as a way to prevent infection, which was common due to cross contamination and lack of shelter from insects and the elements. Although later wars such as World War I had higher casualty rates than the Civil War, amputations were much more frequent in the 1860s due to this lack of medical knowledge. In the Confederate army alone, “some experts believe the total [number of amputations] could have been as high as 70,000, a stunning figure compared with the 4,000 total amputations among American soldiers during World War I, and 16,000 in World War II.”<sup>70</sup> Soldiers universally remembered amputations

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<sup>70</sup> Trammel, Jack. “Life is Better Than Limb”. (*World History Group*. 2009). <https://www.historynet.com/life-better-limb.htm>

with abundant detail, whether witnessing or experiencing them, due to the trauma that such gory scenes caused.

## Religion and Its Importance to Soldiers at Shiloh

Not all soldiers were religious during the Civil War, but religion inevitably had a strong presence on the battlefield for both sides. Religious doctrine preached kindness, humility, and meekness - all qualities that soldiers had to shed in combat. The internal confusion surely affected many soldiers at Shiloh. Confederate soldier Liberty Nixon wrote that “Well thought I to myself here I am ready to take the life of my fellow man when the scriptures of eternal truth positively declare “Thou shalt not kill,”” displaying the dilemma between religious loyalty and patriotic loyalty.<sup>71</sup> Another Southern Methodist soldier wrote to his wife, “I feel that I would like to shoot a Yankee, and yet I know that this would not be in harmony with the Spirit of Christianity.”<sup>72</sup> It may be important to note that this inner monologue took place in a diary, written in real time during the battle. Memoirs and other accounts written after the war likely saw religion as a more positive element of battle.

Both armies used religion to justify the necessity of going to war against the other, and thus soldiers twenty years after the end of the Civil War probably did not struggle with the notion of killing another human like they did in the early days of battle. In the same diary entry, Nixon observed that “I noticed a dead Yankee whose coat pocket was ripped [sic] open with a ball a deck of cards had fallen out of the rent I could

<sup>71</sup> Nixon, Liberty. *Liberty Independence Nixon Diary*. United States: Auburn University Archives. 1861.

<sup>72</sup> Nugent, William L. *The Civil War Letters of William L. Nugent to Eleanor Smith Nugent*. (University of Mississippi Press. 1977).

not help believing that God was determined to expose his true character.”<sup>73</sup> Habits such as gambling and drinking were considered by religious soldiers to be a huge flaw in character. Associating the enemy with these immoral habits was a coping mechanism for soldiers struggling with religious conviction. If soldiers could convince themselves that the enemy were too immoral for society, they had a much easier time killing the opposing side.

Especially in memoirs, religion was retroactively cited as cause for the successes and failures of both armies. Confederate veterans especially cited God’s influence in their defeat during the Civil War, likely because in looking back on the battle they could see no other reason as to why they lost the war. One Confederate soldier wrote that “As I look back over the past, I cannot but believe that Fate had decreed that the Southern Confederacy should fail... we were preparing for the greatest pitched battle of the war, and apparently had all the advantage, and yet from an almost insignificant cause we were robbed of the fruits of complete victory.”<sup>74</sup> Historians today can explain numerous reasons why the South lost the Civil War. For example, the North had more manpower, a larger economy, and a long-established infrastructure that simply trumped the South’s new attempt at nationhood. Veterans like Duncan remembered the Confederacy as formidable and highly capable of defeating their enemies, however, likely because they themselves witnessed firsthand the valor of the Confederate armies. To accept a natural defeat is to admit that the Confederate army was simply disadvantaged and less impressive than the Union’s, and so instead veterans cite fate itself as the reason for a Southern loss.

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<sup>73</sup> Nixon, Liberty. *Liberty Independence Nixon Diary*.

<sup>74</sup> Thomas Duncan, *Recollections of Thomas D. Duncan*. 49.

Soldiers often cited religious reasonings in their writing when observing the humanity in their enemy. In these rare scenes, opposing soldiers referred to the Christian ideal to *love thine enemy*. A Union soldier, who encountered a mortally wounded Confederate soldier pleading for water, “at once thought of that command ‘If thine enemy thirst give him drink’ and I halted and tried to get my canteen.”<sup>75</sup> Soldiers may have written about these moments in order to alleviate their conscience and to feel as if they were obeying God’s commands. This would especially be helpful for soldiers who struggled with killing the enemy, as the Bible commands *thou shalt not kill*. By showing kindness to an enemy, soldiers could relieve themselves partially of guilt.

Soldiers also referenced religion in their writing in an attempt to make sense of the seemingly meaningless carnage that they witnessed. One soldier wrote “Oh my God! Can there be anything in the future that compensates for this slaughter? Only Thou knowest.”<sup>76</sup> Shiloh was a remarkable battle to witness because it crossed the threshold of violence in the minds of soldiers. This excess of pain and suffering at the battle challenged the faith of religious soldiers, who struggled to find a loving and protective God present on the battlefield.

## Remembering the War through Monuments

The Shiloh Battlefield National Park does not look the same as it did 150 years ago; that much is expected, of course. The park has been landscaped to be a pleasant walking experience, and the brush that obstructed soldiers in battle is no longer present.

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<sup>75</sup> Cyrus F. Boyd, *Civil War Diary of Cyrus F. Boyd, Fifteenth Iowa Infantry, 1861-1863*. 31.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, 38.

New fruit trees have been planted by the park even in the last decade, and modern facilities with plumbing and air conditioning are present to make the park more enjoyable for visitors. The park does not even contain the entire scope of the battlefield. The entire park covers almost 4,000 acres, but some areas of combat were lost to industrialization and commercial growth before the park was established in the 1890s. When it was first established, the park was barely 2,000 acres. The House of Representatives called the battlefield an “unsightly tract of land.” Today, the park is well-manicured and polished for foot traffic.<sup>77</sup> Even the Shiloh church, which the battle was named after, is only a replica of the original church that stood during the Civil War. Of all the changes to the battlefield park, however, the most obvious and possibly the strangest new additions to the site are the many monuments that were erected by each state in honor of their regiments’ participation at the battle.

Most of these state monuments were actually finished in the early 1900s, several decades after the Civil War. Northern and Southern states alike erected dozens of monuments to the infantry, cavalry, and artillery units that had fought at the battle of Shiloh just shy of fifty years earlier. Illinois spent over \$40,000 on its forty different monuments, while other states like Wisconsin only offered two monuments. Nonetheless, Wisconsin spent \$13,000 on these two monuments alone. Only two southern states provided Confederate monuments from the government, one of which being Tennessee. The others were funded by veterans and the United Daughters of the Confederacy, whose largest monument cost a total of \$50,000 dollars to create.<sup>78</sup> These

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<sup>77</sup> Smith, Timothy B. “Historians and the Battle of Shiloh: One Hundred and Forty Years of Controversy.” *Tennessee Historical Quarterly* 62, no. 4 (2003). 333.

<sup>78</sup> Smith, Timothy B. *This Great Battlefield of Shiloh: History, Memory, and the Establishment of a Civil War National Military Park*. 138.

monuments had an odd culture to them. Veterans pushed for their creation, possibly in fear that their brave efforts at Shiloh would not be remembered. Furthermore, they became a way for states to continue fighting at the battle of Shiloh. Instead of bullets, however, the weaponry in this fight were dollars and marble slabs. The competition allowed for the South to show their state pride and to commemorate the valiant efforts of the Confederate soldiers, which possibly contributed to Lost Cause narratives after the Civil War had ended.

The United Daughters of the Confederacy's largest memorial is latent with symbolism. The monument was erected in 1917, sixty years after the battle of Shiloh, and reflects how southerners remembered the battle of Shiloh. One major theme of the memorial is sudden changes and dualities. On one side of the memorial, eleven men look up towards Lady Victory, who stands in the center of the monument. These eleven men represent the states who fought for the Confederacy, and they look to Victory because on the first day it seemed like the South had won at Shiloh. On the other side of the memorial, however, the soldiers look down and away from Victory. By representing the battle in two days - one victorious and one in defeat - the South shows how they fully expected to win at Shiloh.

The memorial also cites reasons for Confederate failure at Shiloh, and possibly the overall Civil War. Lady Victory is surrounded by two other figures, which she passes the laurel of victory to shamefully. The two figures are Death and Night. Below Lady Victory is a bust of Albert Sidney Johnston, the fallen general at Shiloh. Since his death, many southerners theorized that the battle of Shiloh (and possibly many other battles) would have happened very differently if Johnston had survived. Jefferson Davis once

famously said that “if Albert Sidney Johnston is not a general, I have none.”<sup>79</sup> Did the Confederacy simply lose because the Union cut off the head of their opponent? Many soldiers *did* blame Beauregard, Johnston’s successor, for the loss at Shiloh.

Veterans undoubtedly wanted to preserve their own memories of the battle and wished to commemorate their fallen friends from many years ago. The rise of industrialization also made the mass production of monuments possible in a way that may not have been possible in the pre-Civil War era. Regardless, there is a simultaneous cultural message upheld by these many monuments in the Shiloh battlefield park besides simple commemoration. Madupe Labode phrased the importance of monuments in historical memory as so:

These monuments shifted from cemeteries to civic spaces such as parks and courthouse squares. These obelisks, plaques, and statues not only honored individuals or common soldiers, but also asserted that the values for which the Confederacy fought, including white supremacy, had not been defeated. This monument building was part of a social, political, and cultural movement that celebrated the Lost Cause in official and popular culture.<sup>80</sup>

The subject material of these monuments, and of course their sheer size, contributed to this Lost Cause ideology - especially in Confederate monuments. For one, the United Daughters of the Confederacy were the ones who commissioned most of these monuments. The marble creations thus were crafted through the lens of wealthy

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<sup>79</sup> Ulmer, J. B. “A Glimpse of Albert Sidney Johnston through the Smoke of Shiloh.” *The Quarterly of the Texas State Historical Association*. 1907. 287.

<sup>80</sup> Labode, Modupe, and Kevin M. Levin. “RECONSIDERATION of Memorials and Monuments.” 8.

southerners, most of whom benefited from white supremacy and would be interested in preserving the legacy of white supremacy in America.

## Conclusions about Shiloh and Memory

How soldiers remembered Shiloh reveals several things about the Civil War and about the soldiers who fought in it. The thoughts and ideas expressed by soldiers changed in only a few ways based upon the timing that the material was written. The content of soldiers' letters and diaries were actually very similar to the content written later in the memoirs of soldiers. Memoirs were surprisingly more accurate about the minute details of battle. The specific locations, numbers, and movement of armies were typically more accurate in literature written after the war. Written accounts just a few days or weeks after the war were significantly less accurate, likely due to the mass confusion that soldiers experienced in the wake of battle. The accuracy of these writings indicate how information travelled in the Civil War. Rumors distorted the accuracy of reports, and newspapers were motivated to get an account of a battlefield as soon as possible. Shortly after Shiloh, many Confederate soldiers fervently believed that they had won or reported inaccurate casualties. The big picture of war thus was better represented in the memoirs of soldiers than in their day-to-day writing.

It is debatable if the inaccuracies recorded in diaries and letters were intentional or accidental. The most probable answer is somewhere in the middle. Technological advances such as newspapers and the telegraph made communication during the war more efficient than it had been in the past. Soldiers and civilians could send messages from much farther, which should have improved the overall quality of communication. Instead, newspapers oversaturated civilians with an excess of contradicting accounts of



battle. Newspapers would sell more copies if they were the first ones to report the outcome of a battle, and journalists could pull aside any soldier available to get an official verdict of the attack. In the direct aftermath of fighting, most soldiers did not have a solid grasp of the overall battle. Chaos and trauma impacted the accounts that soldiers related to newspapers. Each individual soldier likely had different motivations for how they described the battle. Some may have given their best shot to describe the battle to the best of their knowledge, while others could have intentionally inflated their stories to defend their company's honor. The battle of Shiloh was exceptionally traumatic and gruesome for the primarily raw recruits, and thus exaggerating one's bravery in battle could have been a defensive reaction. Regiments across the battlefield were separated, and thousands deserted the battle. By exaggerating their individual bravery and the gruesome sights they saw, soldiers could confront their guilt for their disorder in battle.

Soldiers retroactively attributed grander meaning to the war and the battle of Shiloh. Memoirs frequently mentioned themes of fate, religion, and holy predestination. In letters and diaries, soldiers would have had no way of knowing the brutal future that awaited them after Shiloh. Most soldiers on both sides of the war believed that fighting would end in just a few months after April 1862. Before Shiloh, the army of Tennessee and Mississippi underestimated the opposing army's will to fight. After Shiloh, soldiers began to get a sense that this war would be much longer and gruesome than they had anticipated. The consequence of this is that soldiers retroactively considered the outcome of Shiloh as certain and predictable before battle. Memoirs attributed this certainty to a higher power, such as God or fate. Predestination narratives coincided with the Lost Cause ideology that Southerners adopted after the war. It benefited

southern veterans to believe that they were doomed to fail because this thinking alleviated themselves from personal responsibility. Defeat was thus not a result of being bested by the North, but it was a cross to bear for southern veterans and a way to memorialize the Confederacy. The defeat at Shiloh in particular proved this way of thinking. The South had the element of surprise and ought to have won at Pittsburg Landing, and yet lost nonetheless, seemingly due to fate itself.

The Lost Cause was unsurprisingly less evident in letters and diaries than it was in memoirs. This fact proves that the Lost Cause ideology developed after the Civil War, and was not present in the early stages. Confederate soldiers were equally as certain as Union soldiers that they would win the war at the time. In contrast, literature from after the Civil War portrayed Shiloh in a much less optimistic light. Confederate authors also cited a number of excuses for why they lost the battle, and almost all of these reasons alleviated veterans from personal responsibility. The terrain, fate, and even God himself were all referenced in Confederate writings as reasons for their defeat. Confederate authors were less likely to reference desertion, the physical size or prowess of their army, or generals as the cause of defeat. By claiming that the Southern army lost for reasons beyond their control, Confederate writing perpetuates the myth of the Lost Cause by portraying the defeat as inevitable.

Before Shiloh, both armies anticipated a swift end to the war. The Yankee army was confident after their victory at Shiloh that they would quickly defeat the Confederate army through their control of the Mississippi River. The Union did win the war, but this victory was earned three brutal years after Shiloh. Union soldiers retroactively remembered Shiloh as a turning point in the Civil War, as the difficult victory at Shiloh foreshadowed the arduous path to victory in the overall war. Entries

written shortly after the battle saw the triumph at Shiloh as merely a herald of good news, in contrast, indicating that Union soldiers remembered the battle of Shiloh differently after the overall war.

The Shiloh battlefield park itself reveals how the battle was remembered by veterans and the civilian population after the war. The park was established about thirty years after the war, around when many Civil War memoirs were being published by veterans. There was a rapid push in the aging veteran community to memorialize the battle of Shiloh, as many of the monuments in the park were erected within the same few decades in the late 19th century and early 20th century. The failure of Reconstruction in the 1870s encouraged southern states especially to make a presence on these battlefields. Most Union monuments were funded by the states who participated at Shiloh, whereas the Confederate monuments were largely funded by the United Daughters of the Confederacy. These extravagant monuments perpetuated the ideals of the Confederacy, such as white supremacy and the honorable burden of the Lost Cause. Through these monuments, Confederate veterans were able to cling to the remnants of national pride for the Confederacy long after the infant country had come and gone.

Even today in the 21st century, a number of southerners advocate to remember the brief country. The Confederacy was only a nation for four years, and yet a part of the population refers to it as “Southern heritage” and integral to the southern identity. This is why organizations such as the United Daughters of the Confederacy (UDC) were able to raise thousands of dollars all in the name of memorializing the defeated nation. Through battlefield parks such as Shiloh, the ghost of the Confederacy was able to live on. One such member of the UDC wrote in 1904 that southern children learning about

the Civil War must be “guarded from false shame as to the political actions of their ancestors.”<sup>81</sup> Southern states like Arkansas partnered with Confederate apologist organizations after the Civil War, and insisted that certain narratives of the Civil War be included in public education in order to preserve “national history.”<sup>82</sup> The nation in question, however, had not existed for several decades, and had only existed for a brief four years. The legacy of the Confederacy was able to live on through public education, including public parks like the Shiloh battlefield national park. By pleading for historical preservation, southern states inadvertently admitted that the ghost of the Confederate States of America was still alive and well in the South at the beginning of the 20th century.

At a veteran conference in July of 1900, a Union veteran gave a speech to convince southerners to teach “one idea of American citizenship” in public schools. This statement was met with widespread protests, largely platformed by the *Confederate Veterans* magazine. Confederate war hero John B. Gordon wrote a reply that exemplifies the implications of a preserved Confederacy after the war. The former general passionately replied:

In the name of the future manhood of the South I protest.... If we cannot teach them that their fathers were right, it follows that Southern children must be taught that they were wrong. Are we ready for that? ... I never will be ready to have my children taught that I was wrong, or that the cause of my people was unjust and unholy.<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> Richard B. Willis. *History Report of the Arkansas Division*. (Confederate Veteran, 1904).

<sup>82</sup> Bailey, Fred Arthur. “Free Speech and the ‘Lost Cause’ in Arkansas.” (*The Arkansas Historical Quarterly*, 1996).

<sup>83</sup> “Shall the History be Perpetuated,” (*The Confederate Veteran*, July 1900).

The national heritage that Confederate apologists perpetuated was a heritage built upon white supremacy, the justification of slavery, and the defense of the South's decision to secede from the Union. Gordon's response reflects the views of many Confederate veterans who lost the war but did not lose the ideals on which the war was fought. Material presented in public spaces like schools and parks thus advocated for the preservation of the Confederacy even after the country had long been dissolved.

Reconstruction failed to protect the rights that African Americans had earned after the Civil War. The failure of the postwar government, combined with the preservation of Confederate narratives in public spaces, contributed to the white supremacist Jim Crow laws that later plagued America. Literacy laws, poll taxes, and intimidation all limited the voting rights of African Americans. If Confederate veterans and civilians had not defended the ideals of their "national heritage," it is possible that separate but equal laws would never have come to fruition. The perpetuation of the Lost Cause and white supremacist beliefs are pivotal consequences of how the South remembered battles like Shiloh.

Union soldiers also had discrepancies in their writing based upon time, but these differences seem to be less politically motivated than the Confederacy. Incongruencies mostly had to do with rumors and inaccurate battle reports, which later were refined and fact-checked in memoirs written after the war. Confederate and Union soldiers remembered traumatic scenes the same over time, which proves that veteran authors were capable of recording accurate information consistently. Primarily, the ideas that changed over time in Union writing mostly had to do with how soldiers perceived how the war was going for them. Union soldiers in 1862 anticipated that they would swiftly end the war due to their victory at Shiloh. After all, the victory gave them access to

essential railroads and split the Confederacy in half along the Mississippi. Veterans, on the other hand, typically saw Shiloh as the omen of bad news for the bloodiness and length of the Civil War. This difference was not politically motivated, however, and was more of a matter of hindsight bias for Union soldiers.

Most soldiers at Shiloh were not necessarily fighting for or against slavery. Regardless, the memory of Shiloh had essential implications for racial injustice in America. The Lost Cause is alive and well, and trickles down into unexpected places in the American conscience. Public education is still a battleground for fights over how the Civil War is remembered today. The existence of Confederate memorials is another ongoing debate. Many southerners advocate that Confederate memorials preserve history, and that erasing these monuments from existence would serve as an injustice to the lessons learned after the Civil War. Right-wing writers tend to argue that the Confederacy is a key part of the South's regional history. In response to these arguments, more left-leaning figures see Confederate monuments as honoring an outdated and inappropriate ideology that should be left in the past. These debates about how we remember the Civil War are central to answering questions about racial injustice, memory, and the legitimacy of sectional differences in America today.

What soldiers wrote immediately about the battle of Shiloh was not always relevant to these historiographic debates. Soldiers more often remembered the day to day struggles, and not the overarching racial struggle that launched the country into the Civil War. The extreme patriotism that Confederate veterans experienced arguably increased after the Civil War. This is evident from the push to memorialize battles such as Shiloh in the 1900s, about three decades after the war's end. The way that veterans and the general public remembered the Civil War was arguably more important than the

actual war itself, as these veterans made decisions about public education, legislation, and racial equality in the years after Reconstruction.

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