

“The Last Notable American Duel”: California and its influence on the Civil War

Posted on [June 26, 2018](#) by [Meg Groeling](#)

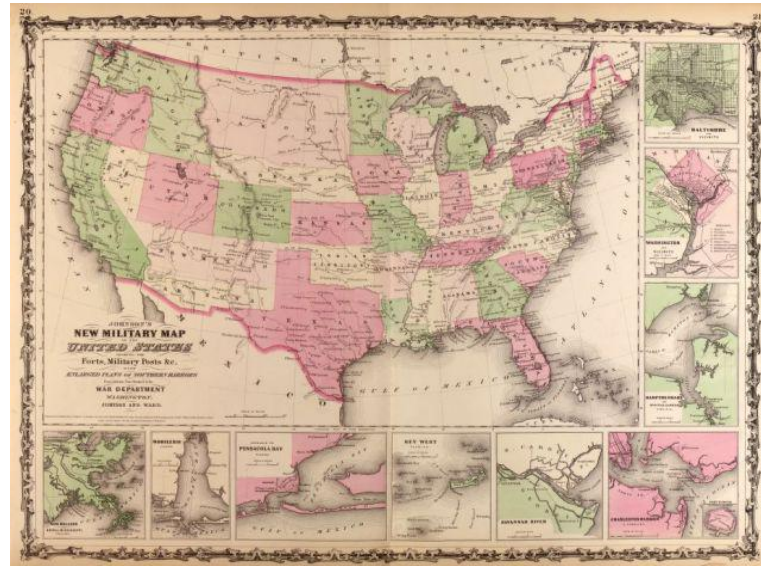


The obelisk marking the general area of the duel

Part of a series about California & The Civil War

Lately, there has been a rumble here in California that cannot be attributed to another earthquake. As Civil War historians widen their scope, it must be observed that the real West had a great deal to do with the American Civil War. Writers such as Alvin M. Josephy (*The Civil War in the American West*), Jerry Thompson (*Civil War in the Southwest: Recollections of the Sibley Brigade*), and Glenna Matthews (*The Golden State in the Civil War: Thomas Starr King, the Republican Party, and the Birth of Modern California*) are teasing this important information out of the national fabric bit by bit. Even the American Battlefields Trust has honored California by including the Golden State in their series of broadcasts about important places.

Because I live in California, I have been asked by several folks why I don't write about the influence my home state had during the Civil War. I usually just mumble something about Elmer Ellsworth and pivot the conversation, but the time has come for me to take this topic in hand and see how badly I can mangle it.

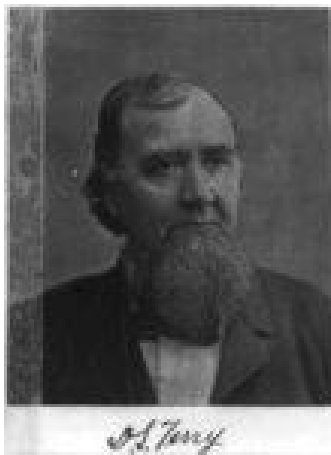


California was far away from the seat of the fighting in the Civil War, but it had its own issues going on. Compare the map of California to the East Coast and take a guess as to which end of Cali was pro-Union and which was pro-Confederate. Additionally, the same divisions that split the East split the West, especially the issue of slavery. California was admitted to the Union as a free state, but that didn't stop Californians from disagreeing. This post will focus on two men who were both Democrats but on opposite ends of that party.



David Broderick

David C. Broderick came to California from Washington, D.C. where he was born in 1820 to a stonemason who worked on the Capitol Building. Choosing opportunity and politics over stonemasonry, Broderick left the East in 1849, joining the California Gold Rush. He settled in San Francisco and quickly made a fortune in real estate.[1]As a Democrat Broderick was elected to the California state senate in 1850 and rapidly became a power broker within the antislavery wing of the California Democratic Party. In 1857 he was elected to the U.S. Senate.[2]



David Terry

David S. Terry was also a Forty-niner, coming to California from Texas, where his family had moved from Kentucky. He was nominated for a seat on the California State Supreme Court as a Know-Nothing in 1855 and served as the 4th Chief Justice of California from September 1857. At some point during his term, he became a Democrat. On June 25, 1859, the State Democratic Party nominated another man over Terry, as Terry's pro-slavery views became better known.[3]

For a while, Broderick and Terry were friends. However, Senator Broderick was a Douglas Dem (anti-slavery) while Judge Terry was pro-slavery. They supported each other's political efforts until Terry ran for reelection to the state bench in 1859. He was defeated and very bitter about it. He publically accused Broderick of marshaling Democratic support against him. This led to bitter words between the two men. According to a 1905 edition of Munsey's Magazine, a popular-though-not-necessarily-historically-accurate publication of stories and articles, Broderick replied to Terry's vitriol with some of his own:

I see now that Terry has been abusing me. I now take back the remark I once made that he is the only honest judge in the (state) supreme court. I was his friend when he was in need of friends, for which I am sorry. Had the vigilance committee disposed of him as they did of others, they would have done a righteous act.[4]

The incident to which Senator Broderick referred was one in which Judge Terry was accused of knifing a man in order to free another man from arrest. Since no one died, Terry—with the help of the press, the Masons and, apparently, Broderick—was released.[5]

Terry and Broderick fought back and forth in the press. Things got worse when Judge Terry tried to gain a re-nomination to the California Supreme Court, an unpleasant occurrence in which Terry ascribed his failure to obtain the re-nomination to the efforts of his former friend, who had actively been speaking about the Kansas-based Lecompton Constitution and its possible influence in California. Terry made a speech accusing convention delegates of following orders issued by Broderick and denying him the bench.[6] Gossip ensued and feelings were hurt all around. "Betrayal" was the epithet being used on both sides. After Broderick lost the 1859 senatorial bid to William M. Gwin, things got even worse . . . if that is imaginable.

This letter was sent from Terry to Broderick:

Oakland, September 8, 1859.

Hon. D. C. Broderick—Sir: Some two months since, at the public table of the International Hotel, in San Francisco, you saw fit to indulge in certain remarks concerning me, which were offensive in their nature. Before I had heard of the circumstance, your note of 20th of June, addressed to Mr. D. W. Perley, in which you declared that you would not respond to any call of a personal character during the political canvass just concluded, had been published.

I have, therefore, not been permitted to take any notice of those remarks until the expiration of the limit fixed by yourself. I now take the earliest opportunity to require of you a retraction of those remarks. This note will be handed to you by my friend, Calhoun Benham, Esq., who is acquainted with its contents, and will receive your reply.
D. S. Terry.[7]

Both men were easily able to identify the offensive remarks, and things escalated. A duel was scheduled. The infamous Code Duello was alive and well, even 3,000 miles west of the eastern end of the Mason-Dixon line.



The California State Marker for the Broderick-Terry Duel

The odd thing about the duel was that it had to be scheduled twice. The first attempt was scheduled to take place in early September but was halted by the San Francisco Chief of Police, Martin J. Burke. Although the police arraigned the would-be duelists, they were discharged on the grounds that there had been no active misdemeanor.[8]

Terry and Broderick, miffed that they had been denied their duel, made plans to continue the hostilities. They agreed to move the place of the duel to an area near Lake Merced. The date was set for September 13, and the chosen weapons were Belgian .58 caliber pistols. The type of gun was Terry's choice, and he spent some time before the duel practicing, whereas Broderick did not see the guns until the appointed time. It was reported by onlookers

that, at the moment of the duel, Broderick's gun fired into the dirt. Terry then took aim at Broderick's chest and pulled the trigger. Although Judge Terry later claimed that he had only grazed Broderick, the bullet entered Broderick's chest and lungs. The wounded senator was rushed to the nearby home of Leonidas Haskell and despite the best efforts of a doctor, David Broderick succumbed to his wound three days later. He reportedly claimed that "They killed me because I am opposed to the extension of slavery and a corrupt administration." [9]



Close-up of the name engraved on the place marker for David Terry



Close-up of the name engraved on the place marker for David Broderick

Senator Broderick was remembered in the California Police Gazette, September 17, 1859:

Not only does a State mourn for its champion and defender, not only does the population of the Pacific slope wail for the loss of its favorite, but a whole confederacy—a whole people, are full of sorrow and regret for his death. As was said of another, "The heart of a nation is throbbing heavily at the portals of his tomb." [10]

Senator Broderick's funeral was held in San Francisco, attended by thousands of mourners. Senator Edward Dickinson Baker, a friend of Abraham Lincoln who would later be killed at the Battle of Ball's Bluff, presented a moving eulogy. The duel drew national attention, turning Broderick into a martyr for the antislavery movement. Terry and his supporters were accused of assassination. [11] The duel reflected the more violent divisions afflicting the entire nation, and many count this tragedy in "far-away California" as one of the events that pushed the country into war by 1861.



Where each man stood—Terry was on the right, Broderick on the left

[1]United States Senate, “Senator Killed in Duel,” https://www.senate.gov/artandhistory/history/minute/Duel_By_The_Lake.htm (accessed May 14, 2018).

[2]Ibid.

[3]”The Late Affair in San Francisco,” Sacramento Daily Union, June 28, 1859. California Digital newspaper Collection, <https://cdnc.ucr.edu/cgi-bin/cdnc?a=d&d=SDU18590704.2.7&srpos=7&e=01-06-1859-14-09-1859-185-en-20-1-txt-txIN-broderick+terry-1859-1> (accessed May 15, 2018).

[4]Cyrus Townsend Brady, “Famous American Duels,” Munsey’s Magazine, Frank A. Munsey and Company, January 1, 1905, Vol. 33, 615-616.

https://books.google.com/books?id=sy0AAAYAAJ&pg=PA608&dq=famous+duels&hl=en&ei=69GDTMf2L4-isQPvIn4Bw&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=2&ved=0CCkQ6AEwAQ#v=onepage&q=flake%20merced&f=false (accessed May 16, 2018).

[5]Ibid.

[6]”Senator David Colbreth Broderick 1820-1859,” The Virtual Museum of the City of San Francisco Francisco, <http://www.sfmuseum.org/hist6/broderick.html> (accessed May 16, 2018).

[7]Thomas Samuel Duke, Celebrated Criminal Cases of America, (San Francisco, CA: John H. Barry Company, 1910), 53. https://books.google.com/books?id=M1ocAAAMAAJ&pg=PA9&dq=duel+at+%22lake+merced%22&hl=en&ei=IO2DTP30JYOosAO118T2Bw&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=9&ved=0CFIQ6AEwCA#v=onepage&q=terry&f=false (accessed May 17, 2018).

8”Chiefs of the SFPD,” website of the City and County of San Francisco, <https://sanfranciscopolice.org/chiefs-sfpd> (accessed May 18, 2018).

[9]”The Broderick-Terry Duel,” National Park Service-Golden Gate National Recreation Area—California, <https://www.nps.gov/goga/learn/historyculture/broderick-terry-duel.htm> (accessed May 14, 2018).

[10]Senator David Colbreth Broderick 1820-1859,” The Virtual Museum of the City of San Francisco Francisco, <http://www.sfmuseum.org/hist6/broderick.html> (accessed May 16, 2018).

The General: A Diminutive Bay Stater Became a Legend for His Pre-World War II Battlefield Trips

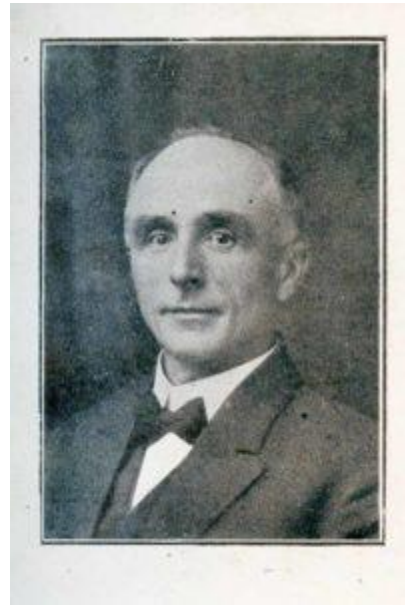
By John Banks

AUGUST 2018 • [CIVIL WAR TIMES MAGAZINE](#)

Fred Wilder Cross was so knowledgeable about the Civil War history of his home state of Massachusetts that a friend swore he could call the roll of many of its regiments from memory. He greatly admired the heroics of John Mosby—Cross owned at least six books on the Confederate guerrilla—and relished walking Civil War battlefields, often with a half-dozen or so friends from Virginia and Maryland, whom he called “The Battle-field Expeditionary Force.” Cross, who stood only about 5’2” or 5’3”, was always the “General” of the force, while his friends in the merry band he called “colonel,” or “major,” or a lesser rank.

In the decades before World War II, Cross traveled from his Cape Cod-style house near railroad tracks in South Royalston, Mass., to his second home in Florida. He went by bus because trains didn’t stop at battlefields. A first-class Civil War geek, Cross sometimes stayed in private hotels, but preferred historic homes on battlefields, where he enjoyed talking with descendants of those who lived at the sites during the war.

“He would not sponge on any of the battlefield folks he stayed with,” insisted Cross’ friend, Jim Clifford, a major in the expeditionary force, years later. And although he was a Yankee and “one hundred percent Massachusetts,” Southern hosts liked Cross. “I’ll say this for General Cross,” Clifford remembered, “he appreciated a good soldier and a brave man on either side and said so!”



Fred Wilder Cross (William Christen Collection)

And when you walked hallowed ground with General Cross, oh, what an experience that was. “He never stopped talking of what happened at that spot, at that instant, and who did what to who,” Clifford recalled of excursions with Cross in the 1930s and ’40s. “And he was waving his arms around and walking fast as he could travel! I mean, he was going a streak and you better listen to him and not interrupt the flow of facts.”

Cross’ resumé was impressive—he was a Phi Beta Kappa graduate of Williams College in 1900, a principal of Massachusetts high schools, and served as a member of the Massachusetts General Court in 1914-18 and as a state senator representing South Royalston in 1917-18. From 1918 to 1938, he was the military archivist for Massachusetts, compiling in his tenure a 6,500-page history of the state’s men who served during the Civil War.



People He Met: Cross encountered many individuals impacted by the conflict. 76th New York veteran Uberto Burnham surveys the Fox's Gap battlefield and the Reno Monument. (Fred Cross/William Christen Collection)

But Cross' real calling was as a "battlefield trumper." Of all the battlefields Cross visited, Maryland's Antietam and South Mountain were easily his favorites. His love affair with the Civil War history of western Maryland may have begun with his first visit there in July 1903, when he was 34. On summer vacation in 1919, he was accompanied to the state by his wife, Ida May, and daughters Bertha May and Dorothy. On other trips in the 1920s, he traveled to the region alone, documenting his experiences with a camera he had purchased in Fredericksburg, Va., in 1912.



Carlton Gross shows off an artillery shell that pierced his family home during the Battle of South Mountain. (Fred Cross/William Christen Collection)

"There are few places that I have visited or of which I have ever dreamed that have such a hold upon my heart as the picturesque hills and broad valleys of Western Maryland," Cross wrote in 1926. "A most beautiful and romantic country, much of it rich in agricultural resources, its low mountains not too lofty to be ascended with ease, their summits presenting to the traveler most wonderful landscapes, every hill and road and stream abounding in historic associations; there is a lure to this section, which calls me back to it again and again."

Eager to follow in the footsteps of Massachusetts soldiers, Cross walked Fox's Gap, Crampton's Gap, Turner's Gap, Antietam, and other battlefields. He was keen to visit with the locals there, interviewing them about what happened in the area during the war. Sometimes, an interview subject had first-hand knowledge of wartime events.

In Sharpsburg, a resident told of aiding the clean-up at Henry Rohrbach's farm, used as a makeshift hospital by the Army of the Potomac's 9th Corps. The smell of the wounds of a dying Federal Maj. Gen. Isaac Rodman became so offensive in the house, the man told Cross, that he had to eat outside on Rohrbach's porch. "Such incidents as these are not pleasant to relate," Cross wrote, "but they represent the actual and terrible character of war."

During a visit to Antietam in 1919, Cross spoke with Alexander Davis, who said he worked for the Nicodemus family at the time of the battle. The Nicodemus farm lent its name to battlefield landmark Nicodemus Heights, and "Uncle Aleck" told of burying soldiers days after the fighting. While digging graves alone, Davis told Cross he was approached by a soldier who asked if he had seen the body of Jimmie Hayes, a private in the 19th Massachusetts. Davis turned over a body in a blanket to reveal Hayes, who was identified by letters that had fallen from the 18-year-old private's blouse. The soldier wept at the sight of his brother.

Cross' real calling was a 'Battlefield Tramper'

"Incidents, ludicrous as well as pathetic, the old gentleman often told me," Cross wrote about Davis, whose tales included the story of a stubborn battlefield bull. The night before major fighting erupted at Antietam, according to Davis, the "bovine majesty" refused to leave the barnyard of farmer David R. Miller, whose cornfield became site of horrific fighting on September 17. "In the morning, doubly excited and maddened by the artillery fire which began before dawn," Cross wrote, "the bull smashed through the barnyard gate, and with flaming eyes and waving tail charged along through the entire length of the cornfield which that

day won its bloody name, and never stopped in his mad course until he had reached the banks of Antietam Creek." "Some of the soldiers," claimed Cross, "who were lying on their arms in the edge of the cornfield, and in the early gray of the morning saw the terrible apparition sweep past, laughed over it until their dying day."



Icon in Ruins: Cross photographed the dilapidated Dunker Church in 1922, a year after a violent storm flattened the deteriorating structure. The Antietam battlefield landmark was not restored to its wartime appearance until 1962. (Fred Cross/William Christen Collection)

In the 1920s, Cross gathered his experiences at South Mountain, Antietam and other battlefields into self-published reports that included the many photographs he had taken of the sites. He later shared the reports with friends. In his South Mountain report, Cross included a photo of Carlton Gross, whose family's house was struck by Rebel artillery during the battle. "This little house was under fire during the artillery duel that proceeded the infantry attack, and a Confederate cannonball is preserved in the house, which was fired into it on the morning of September 14, 1862," Cross wrote. "It came in at the right end of the house...pierced the westerly wall and the open front door, and wedged itself in the wall beside the door casing. I have a section of the shattered door casing in my collection at home."

End of An Era



Jerry Summers (Fred Cross/William Christen Collection)

At Antietam, Cross met Jerry Summers, the last survivor of the six slaves who lived on the Henry Piper Farm in 1862. The farm and

its slave quarters are preserved by the National Park Service. Cross later typed up his description of the encounter:

"Jerry Summers was the last of the slaves of Sharpsburg. He was the property of Henry Piper who owned the famous Piper farm which was fringed on its northerly and easterly edges by the "Sunken Road" or "Bloody Lane". In war time Jerry was carried off by the Union Army but later recovered by his indulgent master who regarded him almost like one of his children.

At Henry Piper's death Jerry was given the use for life of a small cottage and garden plot facing the northerly stretch of the "Bloody Lane", and here I found him in 1922 and in 1924....He died in 1925 aged about 76 or 77 years."

Labors of love, the reports included images of Union Maj. Gen. Jesse Reno's monument at Fox's Gap; the Middletown house where 23rd Ohio Lt. Col. Rutherford B. Hayes, a future president, recovered from his South Mountain wounds; and a New York veteran's visit to a farmer's field where he had fought decades earlier. Cross' Antietam report included a remarkable, undated image of the ruins of Dunker Church, flattened in 1921 by a violent storm. The church was rebuilt in time for the 100th anniversary of the battle, in 1962.

In one of his reports, Cross wrote: "I have prepared and annotated this collection of pictures because of the pleasure that I enjoy in revisiting in fancy the scenes, which hold for me such surpassing interest, and because of the feeling that, perhaps, long years to come my children may like to view again in these pages the scenes, which they once visited with me—scenes that are so intimately and pathetically connected with our Country's history, and that have always

filled and thrilled me with such absorbing interest.”



Here and There: The color photo of Cross was taken in 1944 during a visit to the Chancellorsville, Va., battlefield. In an era before chain hotels, Cross stayed at places like the Mountain Glen Hotel in Boonsboro, Md. The building, which stands at the intersection of Maryland Routes 34 and 40–Alternate, is known today as Inn BoonsBoro. (William Christen Collection)

After Cross’ death in 1950, Jim Clifford and John Winters, a “colonel” in the expeditionary force, traveled separately from Virginia to their friend’s house near the railroad tracks in South Royalston. Cross had put his friends in his will, designating each to receive some of the many Civil War relics and books he had collected during his lifetime.

In wood boxes, Winters and Clifford packed up hundreds of books from Cross’ collection as well as cannonballs and projectiles by the dozens. Clifford was bequeathed a large, oak bookcase that held belt plates, bottles, buttons, pieces of exploded shells and scores of war relics Cross had collected from Virginia, Maryland, and Pennsylvania battlefields.

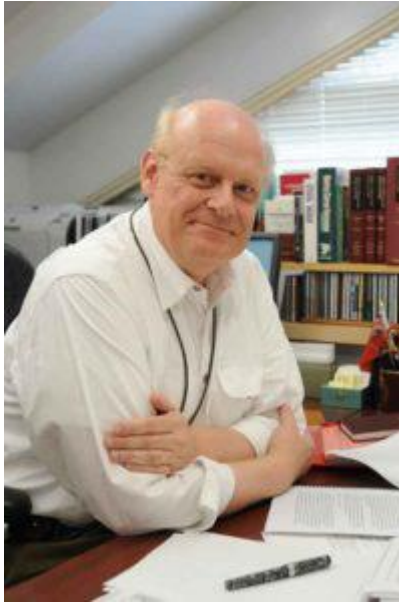
Later, Clifford visited Cross’ grave, only 50 yards from the house where he was born. It says so right on his gravestone. “His tombstone [was] erected and carved to his specifications,” Clifford recalled in 1987. “It was tall, maybe four feet and five or six inches thick, and made of pure black slate. Beautiful and solid looking. His wife’s, too.” Next to his friend’s grave, Clifford found a marker for a homeless Union veteran, whom Cross had befriended and aided. “Wonderful of Mr. Cross,” Clifford wrote. “This alone should get him into the kingdom of heaven.”

John Banks is author of two books on the Civil War, Connecticut Yankees at Antietam and Hidden History of Connecticut Union Soldiers, both by The History Press. He also is the author of a popular Civil War blog (johnbanks.blogspot.com/). Banks lives in Avon, Conn.

Interview with Allen Guelzo: Reconstruction's Lost Cause

By Sarah Richardson

OCTOBER 2018 • [CIVIL WAR TIMES
MAGAZINE](#)



(Courtesy of Allen Guelzo)

Allen Guelzo, Director of the Civil War Era Studies Program at Gettysburg College (allenguelzo.com), is the author of six Civil War histories and his most recent book, *Reconstruction: A Concise History*, details the problems afflicting the reintegration of the Confederacy into the Union. Optimism in the North was strong at first, he says. While reading John Greenleaf Whittier's 1866 narrative poem *Snowbound*, he realized that the poet's celebrated New England rural life was a template for Reconstruction. Many Northerners believed that creating a capitalist economy in the South was the first priority and felt, naively, that racial and political problems arising from emancipation would solve themselves.

CWT: What was the goal of Reconstruction?

AG: There are four options: 1) Occupy large portions of the South, and wipe out whatever was there. The problem is there is absolutely no constitutional authority for that. 2)

Territorialization: Reduce the former states of the Confederacy to the level of federal territories, supervise the creation of their new regimes, and then readmit them to the Union. That would have conceded the legitimacy of secession, which Abraham Lincoln opposed until the day he died. 3) Seize the land of those involved in the rebellion and redistribute it to the freed slaves. The Constitution stands in the way of that, and all the legislation and all the jurisprudence after the war marches in the opposite direction. 4) Resettle the freed slaves in the West. The difficulty is that not everybody who was a freed slave wanted to be relocated to the West, and Southern whites wanted the black labor force to stay where it was.

CWT: Even the North was divided.

AG: The Northern Democratic Party is dead set against any of these notions because they are thirsting for the return to power and that won't happen until their Southern Democratic brethren are fully restored to Congress. They're not going to go along, and they will fight it tooth and nail, which they do.

CWT: What are the Democrats' tools?

AG: After secession, you have a hiatus where Republicans find themselves the majority. They pass all kinds of legislation during the war years—national banking, tariff legislation, and put in place the old American system Henry Clay had been promoting 20 years before as leader of the Whig Party. After the war, the Southern states can come back into the Union, and

you have the possibility of a Democratic majority that can repeal all that wartime legislation. Now the war is over, slavery has been abolished and each black is now going to be counted as 5/5ths, not 3/5ths, of a person for the purpose of representation in Congress, without a single one of those Southern states conceding the vote to the freed slaves. So you have the prospect of Southern Democrats coming back more powerful than ever on the basis of a black population—because none of the Southern states will permit them to vote.

CWT: What happens then?

AG: When the roll is called in the opening session in December 1865, the clerks of the House and Senate exercise Congress' right to decide who to seat and omit the names of those who have been elected from Southern states. Lyman Trumbull from Illinois develops a civil rights bill to recognize citizenship and voting rights for freed slaves. You have an attempt to invert the situation. Disenfranchise the ex-Confederate leadership and enfranchise the newly freed slaves. That will be the beginning of a completely new political world. Now does it work? That is what becomes the story of Reconstruction.

CWT: Rebuild the South without reinvigorating the Confederacy?

AG: Trumbull's civil rights bill passes, and a Freedmen's Bureau is created to give immediate assistance to freed slaves. But something more permanent is needed. That's when the movement takes place for the 14th and 15th amendments. Together the two amendments establish the definition of citizenship that includes the freed slaves and secures federal voting rights for them. Then there are four Reconstruction Acts in 1867 that Congress passes with new provisions for electing state governments, the first time we create voter registration lists. They exist

in the Reconstruction South to identify black slaves who can vote and to bar former Confederates.

CWT: Does it have a chance to work?

AG: At first. The optimism in the first several years of Reconstruction is almost palpable, not only political optimism but economic optimism. Here's a story that has really been missed in Reconstruction. Northerners, these carpetbaggers as they were known by a snarky epithet, really came as investors to re-create capitalism in the South. These bourgeois virtues of competition, of meritocracy, are what the Northerners want to transplant.

CWT: What happened?

AG: It doesn't work because of the physical destruction and the elimination of capital. The impact of the Civil War on the South is like three or four Great Depressions put together. But you find that the people who owned property in the South at the beginning of the war own the same amounts of property in the 1870 census. If you can't budge the economic order, you're not going to be able to budge the political order.

CWT: But there was education reform?

AG: The new Southern regimes formed under the Reconstruction Acts move to create large systems of public education, but unfortunately that requires tax rates that those states have never experienced before and the tax burden falls most heavily on poor whites. The old landowners come to the poor whites and say, 'See these new regimes are taxing your life away and all for the benefit of blacks.' That's what recruits the poor whites to the KKK and the Knights of the White Camelia and the side of the landowners. Otherwise they have everything in common with the poor blacks.

CWT: You write that Reconstruction was overthrown. How?

AG: The oligarchs pull the strings, but the poor whites, who see themselves as victims of the taxation needed for schools and public works projects, perform the actual work of terror. Reconstruction doesn't fail, it is an attempt at a capitalist democratic order overthrown by an oligarchy that consigns the South to yet another 80 years of what amounts to feudal economics. I don't think abolitionist Wendell Phillips was exaggerating when he said to make Reconstruction work we needed a 40-year military occupation. Ulysses Grant reaches something of the same conclusion. ☆

Interview conducted by Senior Editor Sarah Richardson

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Women's Mourning Customs in the Civil War

Posted on 07/12/2016 by [Maggie MacLean](#), Civil War Women Blog

Honoring the Dead in Civil War America



Image: Deep mourning clothing
Veil on top of bonnet was lowered over face while in public

Mourning is the process of grieving the death of a loved one. During the Civil War, Americans observed an elaborate set of rules that governed their behavior following the death of a spouse or relative. After the loss of a husband, the widow was not to leave home without full mourning garb and weeping veil for one year and a day.

Mourning Etiquette

During the 19th Century, most funerals were held in the home. In preparation for visitation and funeral services, the home of the deceased would show the community that there had been a death in the family. Draping the front door in black fabric was the most common practice. Inside the home, anything reflective or shiny would be covered, such as mirrors and glass of any kind, including picture frame glass.

People believed that when a person died time stood still and a new realm of existence began where the concept of time did not exist. Therefore, pendulums on clocks were stopped at the hour of the deceased's death. To permit the clock to continue marking time was synonymous with inviting the spirit of the deceased to haunt the home.

Widow's Weeds

The custom of wearing black after a death in the family has been observed for centuries, possibly to draw less attention to the mourners to avoid becoming Death's next victim. A woman donned what was known as "widow's weeds" within twenty-four hours of her husband's death. Black crepe or crape typically referred to a silk or wool fabric with a distinctively crinkled or pebbled texture that was specifically used for mourning clothing.

Dyeing and Mourning

During the Civil War, especially in the South, fabric and ready-made clothing were extremely scarce. Therefore, women dyed their clothing at home in large wash tubs in the backyard. The dyeing agent was often created by boiling walnut husks, which created a pungent odor that permeated the air for miles. A Virginia woman noted in her diary in 1864, "the entire town smells of the dye pots."

Stages of Mourning

The length of a woman's time of mourning was dictated by the relationship of the deceased. For the loss of a husband, the mourning period lasted no less than two years and most often lasted two and a half years. A woman mourned the loss of her husband in three stages: deep mourning, full mourning, and half mourning, with gradually loosening requirements of dress and behavior.

Deep Mourning

While in deep mourning a widow wore all black clothing; while in public, she also wore black gloves and a long black veil over her face. She wore bonnets covered in black crepe rather than hats. She did not wear jewelry for the first few months and thereafter, jet jewelry was permitted. Black glass and India rubber were also used to make mourning jewelry which consisted of rings, broaches, bracelets, lockets, and earrings. Mourning rings served as keepsakes.

Depending on the specific practices of her community, a widow did not leave her home and did not receive any visitors for specific periods of time, during which she spoke only to her family and closest friends. She could then send out black edged cards advising friends and family that her time of deep mourning had passed and she could now receive visitors. Parties, weddings, and other social affairs were forbidden during the first two stages of mourning.

By contrast, a widower was expected to mourn his deceased wife for only three months, simply by displaying black crepe on his hat or armband. A man might wear a black cockade on his lapel as well. Because the family depended on his financial support, he returned to his occupation as soon as the deceased was buried.

[Flora Stuart](#) remained in deep mourning for fifty-nine years after the death of her husband, CSA Cavalry General J.E.B. Stuart in May 1864. She wore black and remained in seclusion until her death in 1923.



Image:

Young women in full mourning

Full Mourning

Full mourning followed deep mourning and lasted nine to twelve months. During this time, a widow could wear white collars and cuffs, add lace to her wardrobe and shorten her black veil. She was allowed to wear gold and silver jewelry, as well as pearls and gemstones.

Half Mourning

The final stage of a widow's mourning ritual was called half mourning and lasted three to six months. During this stage she was allowed to add more elaborate fabrics with touches of lilac, lavender, violet, mauve, and gray. Subtle prints in any combination of these colors were also allowed. Bonnets were white, lavender silk or straw.

In general, a woman completed the mourning process for a deceased husband in two and a half years. With each stage she slowly became part of society again. Once the three stages of mourning were complete,

a widow could store her mourning clothes and begin wearing normal clothing as she slowly joined society again.

Death Hospitals in Field and Town

Soldiers in Civil War hospitals died at an alarming rate, more frequently from disease than from battle wounds. Excerpt from *Walt Whitman Complete Prose Works*, *The Real War Will Never Get in the Books*:

The dead in this war - there they lie,
strewing the fields and woods and valleys
and battle-fields of the south - Virginia, the
Peninsula - Malvern hill and Fair Oaks - the
banks of the Chickahominy - the terraces of
Fredericksburgh - Antietam bridge - the
grisly ravines of Manassas - the bloody
promenade of the Wilderness ... Gettysburgh,
the West, Southwest - Vicksburgh -
Chattanooga - the trenches of Petersburg ...
our young men once so handsome and so
joyous, taken from us - the son from the
mother, the husband from the wife, the dear
friend from the dear friend ...

The hospital part of the drama from '61 to
'65, deserves indeed to be recorded. Of that
many-threaded drama, with its sudden and
strange surprises, its confounding of
prophecies, its moments of despair, the
dread of foreign interference, the
interminable campaigns, the bloody battles,
the mighty and cumbrous and green armies,
the drafts and bounties - the immense money
expenditure, like a heavy-pouring constant
rain - with, over the whole land ... an
unending, universal mourning-wail of
women, parents, orphans - the marrow of the
tragedy concentrated in those Army
Hospitals - it seem'd sometimes as if the
whole interest of the land, North and South,
was one vast central hospital ...

Changes in Mourning Customs During the Civil War

Although women had always played prominent roles in mourning rituals, the enormous number of casualties brought on by the Civil War necessitated significant changes in mourning customs. During the first year of fighting, Confederate women maintained the rituals of dress and behavior that accompanied death.



Image: Half mourning clothing
Still black, but no veil
Photo Credit: John Cunliffe
Scope Enterprise

However, as the war and increasing economic hardships progressed, many Southern women simply could not afford to abide by mourning etiquette. With the death of one out of every four Confederate soldiers, women across the region were thrown into a perpetual state of mourning and were often forced to abandon rituals of dress and self-imposed seclusion.

On April 30, 1864, five-year-old Joseph Davis, son of Confederate President Jefferson Davis and First Lady [Varina Davis](#), who broke his neck when he fell from a balcony at the Confederate White House in Richmond. When the First Lady went into mourning for her son, she wore a black dress of inexpensive cotton, in lieu of the lush black fabrics that were no longer available.

After John Wilkes Booth assassinated her husband in April 1865, [Mary Todd Lincoln](#) wore mourning clothes for the rest of her life. Years later, she recorded her grief in a private letter to a friend:

Time brings so little consolation to me and do you wonder when you remember whose loss. I mourn over that of my worshipped husband, in whose devoted love, I was so blessed, and from whom I was so cruelly torn. The hope of our reunion in a happier world than this, has alone supported me, during the last four weary years.

Not until the end of the Civil War in 1865 was the vast human toll realized as the number of casualties became apparent (estimated at 620,000). Most families were affected in some way, especially in the Southern states where so many battles were fought. The devastation to the nation's infrastructure became obvious as whole cities lay in ruin, communication lines were severed, and transportation routes had been damaged. Amongst all this chaos, personal

appearance remained a central focus for those women who could gather enough clothing despite the deprivations of war.

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Wives of U.S. Colored Troops

Posted on 02/17/2016 by [Maggie MacLean](#)

Wives Fought to Keep Families Together

Wives of U.S. Colored Troops and the Civil War

As the news of the attack on Fort Sumter spread, free black men hurried to enlist in the Union Army, but a 1792 Federal law barred African Americans from bearing arms for the United States. However, by the summer of 1862 the escalating number of former slaves and the pressing need of men to fill the ranks for the Union Army caused the government to reconsider.



Unidentified African American soldier in his Union Uniform

His wife in dress and hat and two daughters in matching coats and hats.

Backstory

African Americans have volunteered to serve their country in time of war since the American Revolution. The National Archives and Record Administration (NARA) in Washington DC holds military service records. According to those documents, approximately 185,000 men served with the United States Colored Troops (USCT) during the Civil War. This figure includes the officers who were white.

In 1861 at Fort Monroe in Virginia, a few slaves escaped to the lines of USA [General Benjamin Butler](#). The Confederate colonel who owned the slaves demanded that his slaves be returned to him under the Fugitive Slave Law of 1850. Butler informed him that since Virginia had left the Union, the Fugitive Slave Law no longer applied to him. Butler kept the runaway slaves and declared them contraband of war; this was made the policy throughout the Union Army.

Letters from Home

Many wives of black recruits were not accustomed to having their husbands away from them for so long. Letters from wives in military service records detail the suffering war brought - illness, hardship, and lack of funds. Letty Barnes wrote this letter to her husband Joshua of the Thirty-eighth USCI (United States Colored Infantry):

My dear husband

I have just this evening received your letter sent me by Fredrick Finich. You can imagine how anxious and worry I had become about you. And so it seems that all can get home once in awhile to see and attend to their family but you. I do really think it looks hard. Your poor old Mother is hear delving and working like a dog to try to keep soul and body together and here am I with two little children and myself to support and not one soul or one dollar to help us. I do think if your officers could see us they would certainly let you come home and bring us a little money.

I have sent you a little keepsake in this letter which you must prize for my sake. It is a set of Shirt Bossom Buttons whenever you look at them think of me and know that I am always looking and wishing for you. Write to me as soon as you receive this. Let me know how you like them and when you are coming home and believe me as ever,
Your devoted wife,
Letty Barnes

Of course, African American men in the Union Army also worried about their families on the home front. Absolom Harrison wrote this letter to his wife January 19, 1862:

Camp Morton
Near Bardstown, Nelson County, Kentucky

Dear Wife,

I take my pen in hand to write you a few lines. I am tolerable well at present and I hope these few lines may find you and the children and all the rest of the folks well. I started to write to you the other day but I had only time to write a few lines. I had to expedition and I had been out two days so I concluded to write again. There is a good many of our men sick and there will be a good sick yet for we have been laying on the wet ground ever since we have been here without any straw under us. And the water runs under us every time it rains. ...

[Our camp] was very nice in a woods pasture place when we first came here. But it is knee deep in mud now. You must write as soon as you get this if you have not already wrote. I would like to know how mother is and how you and the children are and if folks are getting along.

I would like to be at home but I have got myself in this scrape and I will have to stand it. But if I live to get out of this I will never be caught soldiering again that is certain. We did not know what hard times was until we come to this place. We don't get more than half enough to eat and our horses are not half fed and everything goes wrong.

So nothing more at present but remaining your affectionate husband until death.
A. A. Harrison

Second Confiscation and Militia Act

The Second Confiscation and Militia Act of July 17, 1862 officially authorized the employment of African Americans in federal service, and allowed [President Abraham Lincoln](#) to use persons of African descent for any purpose "he may judge best for the public welfare."

Military officials raised three Union regiments of African Americans in New Orleans, Louisiana in the fall of 1862. These units were originally named the First, Second, and Third Louisiana Native Guard, but they later became the First, Second, and Third Infantry, Corps d'Afrique, and they were finally designated the Seventy-third, Seventy-fourth, and Seventy-fifth United States Colored Infantry (USCI).

However, the President waited until after he issued the Emancipation Proclamation on January 1, 1863 to authorize the use of African Americans *in combat*:

And I further declare and make known, that such persons of suitable condition, will be received into the armed service of the United States to garrison forts, positions, stations, and other places, and to man vessels of all sorts in said service.

Recruiters officially organized the First South Carolina Infantry (African Descent) in January 1863; they would become the Thirty-third USCI. The First Kansas Colored Infantry was mustered into service in January 1863, later the Seventy-Ninth USCI. These early unofficial regiments received little federal support, but they illustrated the black men's desire to fight for freedom.



Image: 33rd U.S. South Carolina Regiment Colored regiment in their famous red pants

To speed up the process of recruiting more regiments, Union officials sent General Lorenzo Thomas to the lower Mississippi Valley in March. Thomas was ordered to enlist volunteers and white officers to command them, and he was successful in this endeavor. Stanton did authorize African Americans to serve as surgeons and chaplains, and by the end of the war, there were at least eighty-seven black officers in the Union army. In late January 1863, they gave Governor John Andrew of Massachusetts permission to raise a regiment of African American soldiers, the first black regiment organized in the North.

Bureau of Colored Troops

In May 1863, Union [Secretary of War Edwin Stanton](#) issued General Order Number 143, creating the Bureau of Colored Troops, which was authorized to organize and coordinate regiments throughout the

nation. The designation United States Colored Troops (USCT) replaced the names of various state titles previously given to African American soldiers, but a few retained their state names, like the Corps d'Afrique in the Department of the Gulf.

The NARA created the Civil War Conservation Corps (CWCC), a volunteer project with private citizens who compiled military service records for each USCT volunteer. The CWCC project revealed fascinating stories about the soldiers of the USCT. Samuel Cabbie, a private in the Fifty-fifth Massachusetts Infantry (Colored), was a twenty-one-year-old slave when he joined the army. The following letter is in his file:

Dear Wife:

I have enlisted in the army. I am now in the state of Massachusetts but before this letter reaches you I will be in North Carolina, and though great is the present national difficulties yet I look forward to a brighter day when I shall have the opportunity of seeing you in the full enjoyment of freedom. I would like to know if you are still in slavery; if you are it will not be long before we shall have crushed the system that now oppresses you. For in the course of three months you shall have your liberty. Great is the outpouring of the colored people that is now rallying with the hearts of lions against that very curse that has separated you and me, yet we shall meet again. And oh what a happy time that will be when this ungodly rebellion shall be put down and the curses of our land is trampled under our feet. I am a soldier now and I shall use my utmost endeavor to strike at the rebellion and the heart of this system that so long has kept us in chains.

I remain your own affectionate husband until death.

Samuel Cabbie

Among the documents in Cabbie's file is an application for compensation signed by his former owner, which would have been used as proof that his owner had offered Samuel for enlistment.

On October 3, 1863, the Union War Department issued General Order No. 329 to facilitate recruiting in the states of Maryland, Missouri, Tennessee, and Kentucky. Section 6 of that order states that any citizen offering his or her slave for enlistment into the military service would:

... if such slave be accepted, receive from the recruiting officer a certificate thereof, and become entitled to compensation for the service or labor of said slave, not exceeding the sum of three hundred dollars, upon filing a valid deed of manumission and of release, and making satisfactory proof of title.

Every owner was required to produce a title showing they owned the slave and to sign an oath of allegiance to the United States government.



Image: Colorized image of black soldiers greeted by wives after being mustered out of service.

Harper's Weekly, May 19, 1866

At the war's end, most of the African American regiments were mustered out and sent home. Here the troops of the 54th USCI (United States Colored Infantry) greet their wives and children upon their discharge at Little Rock, Arkansas.

Camp Nelson Expulsion

African American soldiers enlisted and trained at Camp Nelson, Kentucky. Most of these recruits were runaways who had left without their masters' permission, and they knew their families would be "subjected to the hands of their indignant masters." Therefore, wives routinely accompanied the men, hoping to find food, shelter and the opportunity to earn a living as cooks and laundresses in the camp.

Army officials were troubled by the presence of these refugees, and in July 1864, they ordered camp commanders to dismiss all African American dependents. Once removed, these families set up some type of shelter outside the camp and still sought support and protection from the Union army, but they quickly realized they had been abandoned.

For several months, Army leadership ordered troops to expel these refugees from the camp, but newcomers were continually arriving and those who had been previously dismissed often returned. The families were continually harassed until camp officials finally "turned four hundred women and children from their dwellings to face the wintry blast, with light and tattered garments, no food, and no home!"

After the "helpless women and sick children" were removed, armed soldiers demolished their dilapidated dwellings on the perimeter. But the problem lingered until late November when Camp Nelson commander General Speed Fry expelled all

refugees and destroyed the makeshift homes they had erected outside the Camp to prevent their return. Amid the turmoil, hundreds of refugees died of disease or exposure to the elements.

A black recruit named Joseph Miller brought his wife and four children with him when he came to enlist, assuming his master would mistreat them on the plantation once they discovered he was missing. They were assigned to a tent inside Camp Nelson, but a few days later they were removed from the fort. Later that night, Miller discovered that his family was six miles away, thrown together with many others in an old meeting house. Miller returned to duty at the camp that night but returned the following day to bury his son who had died from exposure to inclement weather.

In the November 28, 1864 issue of the New York Tribune published an article entitled "The Cruel Treatment of the Wives and Children of U.S. Colored Soldiers":

Over four hundred helpless human beings - frail women and delicate children - having been driven from their homes by United States soldiers, are now lying in barns and mule sheds, wandering through woods, languishing on the highway and literally starving, for no other crime than their husbands and fathers having thrown aside the manacles of slavery to shoulder Union muskets. The deluded creatures innocently supposed that freedom was better than bondage and were presumptuous enough to believe that the plighted protection of the Government would be preserved inviolate.

The northern press and the [U.S. Sanitary Commission](#) severely criticized General Fry. Washington officials directed Fry to establish a camp for the refugees within Camp Nelson. In March 1865, a

congressional act passed which freed the wives and children of these African American soldiers, a direct result of the November 1864 expulsion of refugees at Camp Nelson.

By June 1865, there were ninety-seven cottages in the refugee camp and numerous tents and shacks, which provided housing for more than three thousand refugees, primarily women and children. Several other buildings were erected in the camp, including a schoolhouse, a hospital, a mess hall, a laundry, a lime kiln, teacher's quarters and offices.

By the end of the Civil War in April 1865, the one-hundred seventy-five USCT regiments made up approximately one-tenth of the Union Army. Approximately ten thousand soldiers from the United States Colored Troops were killed or mortally wounded during the war; an astounding thirty thousand more died of infection or disease.

Thousands of African American women served as nurses, spies, cooks, laundresses and performed countless other jobs in support of the men on the front lines.

After the War, some USCT soldiers moved west and fought in the Indian Wars. Native Americans thought their hair looked the fur of bison and named them Buffalo Soldiers. On July 24, 1870, Emanuel Stance - former sharecropper, now United States Army sergeant - was awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor for Valor for his bravery in the Battle of Kickapoo Springs, Texas. He was the first African American to receive the highest military honor after the Civil War.



Image: African American Civil War Memorial

This monument, *The Spirit of Freedom*, is a nine-foot bronze statue by Ed Hamilton of Louisville, Kentucky, commissioned by the DC Commission on the Arts and Humanities in 1993. The memorial includes curved panels inscribed with the names of the men who served in the USCT during the war.

The African American Civil War Memorial Freedom Foundation and Museum in Washington, DC is a national facility dedicated to the service of the USCT during the American Civil War.

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