WHEN THIS ANTI-WAR NORTHERNER CHALLENGED LINCOLN, THE PRESIDENT EXILED HIM TO THE SOUTH

In May 1863, a U.S. military court did the unthinkable and exiled Copperhead Clement Vallandigham to the South. Confederate perspectives on that remarkable period have finally come to light.

By Christopher Young HistoryNet 6/17/2022

It took no time for word of Clement L. Vallandigham's astonishing "banishment" to the Confederacy in May 1863 to reach newspapers across the country. The coverage was understandably imbalanced, however, with Union-loyal editors and correspondents the predominant voices behind narratives detailing the peculiar fate of the country's most famous, anti-administration Copperhead. Just two days after Vallandigham's Abraham Lincoln-sanctioned exile, an article titled "Vallandigham Sent South," appeared in the May 27, 1863, issue of *The Pittsburgh Gazette*. Even then, questions and debates surrounding the legality of Vallandigham's arrest and subsequent expulsion swirled on both sides of the Mason-Dixon Line. Was it lawful for the U.S. government to order one of its own citizens found guilty of treason by a military court extradited to the care of the government against which it was fighting?

In the 159 years since, Confederate perspectives about the incident and its aftermath have been rare. The earliest manuscript, *Speeches, Arguments, Addresses, and Letters of Clement L. Vallandigham*, was published in 1864, and notably did not even name the Confederate officer with whom Vallindigham primarily interacted during his three-week exile. More recent scholarship—Frank L. Klement's *Clement L. Vallandigham's Exile in the Confederacy, May 25–June 17, 1863*, for example—only cursorily investigated his Confederate reception, and even then, Klement cited merely two primary Southern sources: newspaper articles published in *The Chattanooga Daily Rebel*, in which the unnamed correspondent provided no account of the actual transfer on May 25, 1863.

Klement's 1999 biography *The Limits of Dissent: Clement L. Vallandigham and the Civil War* used an additional postwar account by Confederate Stephen F. Nunnelee, yet information about the location and manner of the transfer seems misinterpreted when compared in light of other contemporary Southern documents. Meanwhile, in his 2020 book *Opposing Lincoln: Clement L. Vallandigham, Presidential Power, and the Legal Battle Over Dissent in Wartime*, historian Thomas Mackey briefly addresses Vallandigham's banishment in his introduction, but he does not take advantage of additional Confederate sources to unpack this important chapter of the controversial Copperhead's life.

What follows is a needed examination of the thoughts and experiences of the gray-clad

soldiers who reluctantly accepted and ushered Vallandigham into Dixie in the middle of the 1863 Tullahoma Campaign.

On May 25, 1863, Private Stephen Nunnelee of Company H, 51st Alabama Partisan Rangers, found himself in "neutral ground" between the Union and Confederate lines in Tennessee, sitting anxiously astride his horse. Intense skirmishes erupting on a daily basis and the growing likelihood of an all-out Union advance made Nunnelee's job all the more dangerous. The bright rays of sunlight beat down upon him as he impatiently sat, unarmed and alone, on the Shelbyville Pike, just north of Old Fosterville, awaiting the unknown Yankee cargo entrusted to him for safe passage into Confederate lines.

About dawn that day, 51st Alabama commander Lt. Col. James D. Webb received a dispatch addressed "to the officer comdng forces on Shelbyville Pike" that read: "Head Qrs Department of the Cumberland Murfreesboro Ten May 24 1863. Sir. By order of the President of the United States it is directed that the Hon C.L. Vallandingham [*sic*] shall be placed outside the lines of the Army of the Cumberland. A flag of truce will accompany him & he is consigned to your respectful attention. By order of Genrl Rosecrans – J.C. McKibbin Col & ADC."

Mounting their horses, Webb and Captain Nelson D. Johnson of Company F rode three miles from regimental headquarters to the vedette post, where they found 1st Lt. William Fain of Company A, commanding the picket, seated upon a log and casually conversing with two U.S. officers: Colonel Joseph McKibbin (Maj. Gen. William S. Rosecrans' senior aide-de-camp) and Major William Wiles (the Army of the Cumberland's provost marshal general). After formal introductions, Webb expressed astonishment that McKibbin had approached the Confederate lines with such an ostentatious intention, but if the Union colonel vouched for its truthfulness on assurance of his honor, he would accept their flag of truce. The officers assured Webb of the veracity of their orders, and also expressed expectation that the Confederate officer easily relent and allow their political prisoner to be ousted into Rebeldom without fuss.

A successful attorney and legislator before the war, Webb was not about to overlook the nuances of protocol in this tense tactical, operational, and increasingly political situation. He skeptically pointed out that the official letterhead read "Department of the Cumberland – Provost Marshal's Office," thus questioning the dispatch's validity, as it appeared to come from the provost marshal and not directly from Rosecrans. The two men confessed they had requested the document be altered, which McKibbin had done in pencil. The hasty edits spurred Webb to dismiss their claims of sincerity and to threaten cutting off further communications, but the Federal officers reiterated that their orders came directly from Lincoln.

James Webb (Alabama Department of Archives and History)

"[T]he President of the U States had not right to attempt to transfer to our lines any person with out our consent," Webb succinctly reminded them. "[I]f you are charged with the safety of Mr Vallandingham [*sic*] keep him. surely you do not propose to transfer to your foe your responsibility. Keep Mr V & his baggage if you are responsible for him & for it."

Webb was quick to point out that the Confederacy "owed no allegiance to the Constitution or the government of the United States…" and that it "did not now have or ever here after intended to have any conncexion [*sic*] with it or the people thereof except as a foreign power & nation of people."

Although the Confederate commander vowed not to recognize Vallandigham's existence in cooperating with the Union officers, if the Ohioan did appear outside Confederate lines and request permission to enter, Webb promised he would answer. With that, McKibbin and Wiles reiterated their determination to dump Vallandigham on the Confederacy's doorstep. They requested that Webb provide a single escort to ensure Vallandigham and his baggage passed through the lines unmolested and, in turn, they promised the escort's safe return. Webb acquiesced.

Lieutenant Fain selected Nunnelee as the escort. Although a relative newcomer to the mounted Alabama unit, Nunnelee had seen action during the Mexican War. Until 1861, he owned and published *The Independent Observer*, a pro-secession newspaper in Alabama. He also served as a lieutenant in the 11th Alabama Infantry early in the war. Most recently, he had, as a captain in the 4th Alabama Volunteer Militia, aided in the defense of Mobile.

"Colonel Webb sent for and ordered me to go to the outpost and escort a flag of truce between the lines," Nunnelee recalled, "and to put on my best 'bib-and-tucker.' I changed my wool hat for a new, home-made gray jeans cap, or bonnet, which my wife had made, and proceeded, having a very indefinite idea as to the purpose of my mission."

Not long after arriving at the vedette, he observed two men in a wagon thundering down the pike, "driving like Jehu." Two Union officers pulled up under a large oak tree and Nunnelee advised them of his orders to protect their flag of truce. Turning their wagon around, the officers and Nunnelee sped down the pike at breakneck speed. At the same time, Webb sent Captain Johnson to the headquarters of Colonel James Hagan, his brigade commander, with verbal instructions to report what had transpired between him and the Union officers and to seek permission for Vallandigham's admittance if requested.

Upon reaching the outskirts of the Union lines, McKibbin asked Nunnelee to remain and await their return. "I was protecting his flag, which he bore away, leaving me without one," Nunnelee recalled, "and I asked myself, 'Who is protecting me?' Of course, I had no arms and didn't know the fellow who was posted a hundred yards ahead of me." Thankfully, in less than 30 minutes he witnessed the flag's return over the ridge and also noticed the wagon now had an additional passenger, Vallandigham.

Before disembarking from the wagon, the Ohioan stood erect and announced: "In the presence of this gentleman I protest against

being forcibly taken from my State and my family." Unsurprisingly, Vallandigham's plea fell upon deaf ears. His escort, Wiles and a Captain Goodman, cooly remarked that they were merely obeying orders. Nunnelee assisted Vallandigham with his trunk and watched him hand several letters to one of the officers, requesting it be mailed to his family. Then, for a second time, Vallandigham protested his forced expulsion.

Nunnelee remains nameless in most Vallandigham biographies, portrayed simply as one of Webb's orderlies who had no knowledge of the plans for dealing with the infamous political prisoner. The newspaperman-turned-soldier told a different story, however, relating that he stepped forward and offered Vallandigham his hand. Nunnelee noted to Vallandigham that he had sent him a copy of his *Independent Observer* while the Ohioan was in Congress. Vallandigham immediately remembered the Confederate printer's name, and the two engaged in cordial conversation. Vallandigham queried Nunnelee, asking why he was in the Confederate Army, what position he held, and how many of "his sort" were in the army? The trooper retorted he was "playing soldier…trying to keep Rosecrans from running over us"; that he was "a high private in the front rank,"; and that "nearly all of us were there."

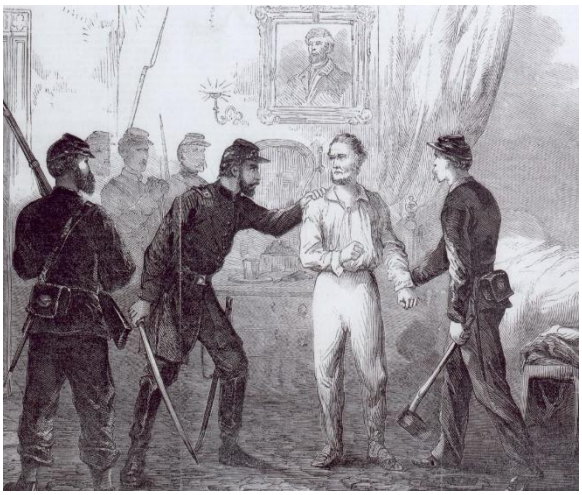
"They can never whip you," replied Vallandigham.

Nunnelee listened intently as Vallandigham provided an account of his arrest and all that had transpired up to his conviction and banishment. On May 24, the Copperhead recalled the he had boldly requested that Rosecrans assemble his men "in a hollow square tomorrow morning and announce to them that [he] desires to vindicate himself," although Rosecrans had demurred. Vallandigham claimed that many of the general's soldiers already opposed the war and would have mutinied. Rosecrans indicated, however, that he had denied the request because he "had too much regard for the life of the prisoner to try it."

By the summer of 1863, many Union soldiers embraced emancipation's necessity, as Lieutenant Orville T. Chamberlain of the 74th Indiana Infantry would write, "the labor of the copperheads" effectively "*abolitionize[d]"* the Army of the Cumberland and that even Democratic officers in his own company began sounding like "black hearted abolitionists." Whatever the reason, Vallandigham did not receive permission to argue his case before the Army and presently found himself awaiting Webb at the home of Mr. [Jeremiah] Odell, a mere 600 yards beyond Confederate lines.

While awaiting Johnson's return from brigade headquarters, Nunnelee arrived with news of Vallandigham's appearance and of his request to speak to the officer in charge. Webb, then engaged in formally writing Hagan, paused the correspondence and rode out to see Vallandigham. After dismounting at Odell's home, Webb approached the Copperhead, who then indicated he wished to surrender as a prisoner of war. After briefly questioning the Ohioan, Webb informed him that since he was a loyal citizen of the United States—a noncombatant, brought to the lines against his wishes, and not a spy—no charges could be levied against him by the Confederacy. He offered, however, that if Vallandigham wished "to enter our lines as a refuge[e] from this tyranny & oppression from which the government of the U States have forced

you for the last two years, I will make known your wishes to the commander of my Brigade & ask his instruction & inform you."



The arrest of Vallandigham. (Alamy Stock Photo)

After their conversation, Webb returned to Confederate lines, completed his correspondence to Hagan, sent it via Nunnelee, and awaited further instructions. In the meantime, Johnson returned and passed along an order from Hagan not to admit Vallandigham until further notice. The captain advised that General Braxton Bragg, commander of the Confederate Army of Tennessee, had been telegraphed at his headquarters in Shelbyville. As soon as Brig. Gen. William T. Martin, Webb's division commander, received an answer, it would be forwarded to the front.

According to Webb, the answer came about 1 p.m.: Vallandigham was ordered admitted to the Confederacy. Mounting his horse, Webb rode to Odell's home and relayed the news. While there, he congratulated Vallandigham "on his escape from a land of tyranny & oppression & was proud to welcome him to the Confederate States, the land of Constitutional & religious liberty."

With the news, the men rode safely through the vedette into Confederate lines. At the house of a Mr. Newman, Webb and the newly accepted exile met Martin, Hagan, and Captain Charles Force, commander of the 51st Alabama's Company E (the company chosen as Vallandigham's escort). The entourage mounted and continued their trek to Martin's headquarters, where, shortly after 3 p.m., Vallandigham met Lt. Col. J. Stoddard Johnston, Bragg's assistant adjutant general. Vallandigham's transfer to Johnston would be the final time Webb would encounter the Copperhead.

Vallandigham was escorted by carriage to army headquarters. As a testament to his popularity among some Confederates, Johnston requested the Ohioan's signature as "a memento of the event which has brought you among us—a banished Exile, forced from your home by despotic power."

Within days, the entire incident made its way into countless newspapers, even landing a column in the obscure *The Cecil Whig* of Elkton, Md. The printed dispatch stated that upon arrival at the Confederate lines, Vallandigham told the Union officers charged with escorting him that "he was a loyal citizen of the United States." It further reported that "he made the same remark to Colonel Webb of the 8th Alabama, to whom he was handed over" and continued by stating that "the Colonel told him he had read his speeches, but did not like him; he would however, permit him to remain at his post until the pleasure of the authorities should be known."

One of these numerous printed accounts found its way to Webb's headquarters in Old Fosterville. In response, he penned a letter to

his wife, Justina, correcting the erroneously printed dispatch:

You will see it reported in some of the papers that Col Webb of the 8th Ala Regt told him Vallandingham [*sic*] that he had read his speeches & I do not like you. The number of my Regt is incorrectly given[;] it should be the 51st Ala Regt (PR). I told the officers McKibbin & Wiles I had read Vallandingham's speeches. [H]e was no friend of ours. [H]e was a Union man. [A] reconstructionist. [W]e were opposed to that. [W]e did not like him as a representative of that principle. Mr. Vallandingham was not present at the interview with the Federal officers[;] he was then three miles off, at their picket line. He parted with me wishing me great happiness & again thanked me for my kindness & for the manner in which I had acted. I have given you this lengthy statement to place myself right. You know it is not for print or publication."

Webb continued patrolling his key position along the Shelbyville Pike. Unknown at the time, the post was destined to bring him into contact with other significant individuals and events, such as "entertaining" Lt. Col. Arthur Fremantle, a British Army officer, during his personal sojourn through the Confederacy, as well as receiving the personal effects of the executed Confederate spies Colonel Lawrence W. Orton and Lieutenant Walter G. Peters, while under another flag of truce. Webb also managed to escape wounding or capture during the Confederate cavalry debacle at Shelbyville on June 27, 1863. (Nunnelee, it should be noted, was seriously wounded and subsequently captured in that engagement.)

Interestingly, Webb was not through entertaining questions about his well-known contact with Vallandigham. As the Battle of Gettysburg raged in Pennsylvania, the Army of Tennessee retreated across the Elk River outside Winchester, Tenn., where the 51st Alabama Partisan Rangers assisted in an effort to stymie a Union advance across the river at Morris' Ferry. According to Private Enoch Morgan of Company I, Webb was "wounded on the evening of July 2nd in a heavy cavalry fight about 3 miles below the ford of the Elk River on the Winchester & McMinnville road. The ball struck him in the right side in front, passing through the lower part of the liver & lodged under the skin behind." Unable to remove him from the field, several of his men, including Morgan, took him to a nearby house but were forced to abandon him to the pursuing Union cavalrymen.

That evening, Union Maj. Gen. David Stanley sent Jacob R. Weist, the 2nd Cavalry Brigade's acting surgeon, to check on the feasibility of transporting the wounded Confederate officer into Union lines. The wound's severity made moving Webb infeasible. Weist recalled, however, that "though the colonel knew that he was mortally wounded," he seemed more than willing to converse on the subject of Vallandigham.

As Weist wrote:

"I made some inquiries about the great copperhead. Among other things the colonel told me was that VALLANDIGHAM TOLD HIM THAT THE SOUTH DID NOT PURSUE THE RIGHT POLICY; THAT INSTEAD OF ALLOWING THE NORTH TO INVADE KENTUCKY AND TENNESSEE…, THEY SHOULD TRANSFER THE BATTLE-FIELDS TO OHIO AND INDIANA…; that the

Administration would be compelled to recognize the independence of the South."

The particulars of the Webb–Weist interview cannot be corroborated with other contemporary eyewitness accounts. In his meticulously written June 9, 1863, letter to his wife, Webb did not mention any such policy. Therefore, Weist's account could possibly have been strategically crafted to increase public disapproval of Vallandigham and his fellow extremist Peace Democrats.

Although an exact date cannot be confirmed, Webb likely died between July 4 and July 8. According to Weist, he died two or three days after being wounded. On July 8, Major Charles Seidel of the 3rd Ohio Cavalry concluded his official after-action report by stating that his "regiment, marching on the right, up the road, encountered the Fifty-first Alabama Cavalry" and "after a fight of ten minutes," the Alabamians "fled in confusion, leaving his dead and wounded behind. Colonel Webb, commanding the Fifty-first Alabama, was severely wounded, and has since died."

Fortunately, Vallandigham's story of exile did not die with Webb in Middle Tennessee. Acceptance of the exiled Vallandigham into the Confederacy for those three weeks in the late spring of 1863 might seem trivial in comparison to the general upheaval and embarrassment caused by the Copperhead's Mount Vernon speech, subsequent arrest, military trial, and banishment; however, the meeting between enemy contingents off the Shelbyville Pike on May 25, 1863, held potentially embarrassing political ramifications for the Confederacy and needed to be dealt with prudently. Webb exercised that prudence, and through his detailed and faithful correspondence to his wife, we can draw a more precise, holistic picture of this sensitive event when interspersed with other important narratives, such as those by Vallandigham and Nunnelee.

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After 16-Year Fundraising Effort, American Battlefield Trust Declares Victory at Slaughter Pen Farm

$12 million purchase required creative collaboration from array of partners and allies; remains watershed moment in the evolution of the modern battlefield preservation movement

Jim Campi, Mary Koik, June 6, 2022
American Battlefield Trust

(Fredericksburg, Va.) — Once billed as the most desirable property for industrial development in the Commonwealth of Virginia, the site that historians argue determined the Civil War Battle of Fredericksburg is saved forever following a 16-year, $12-million fundraising campaign to ensure its protection. To seal the deal on the largest and most complex private battlefield preservation effort in the nation's history, the American Battlefield Trust enlisted the participation of a preservation-friendly developer, a flexible financial lender and forward-thinking government officials, as well as tens of thousands of individual donors.

"When we began this journey, the goal was beyond audacious," said Trust President David Duncan. "It was orders of magnitude beyond anything we had attempted, but the unparalleled historic significance of this land demanded that we stretch beyond what

had then been considered possible. This is a milestone moment in the historic preservation movement."

The sun sets over the Slaughter Pen Farm Battlefield in Fredericksburg, Virginia. Buddy Secor

Although the Battle of Fredericksburg is most famous for the doomed Union assault on Marye's Heights, the fight was won and lost further south, as troops in blue and gray struggled across an undulating farm field and toward the slopes of Prospect Hill. The intense fighting on the south end of the Fredericksburg Battlefield produced some 9,000 casualties, many of whom fell on a piece of ground dubbed the Slaughter Pen by soldiers and locals alike. Five Union soldiers were awarded the Medal of Honor for heroism there. Historian Frank O'Reilly, the author of The Fredericksburg Campaign: Winter War on the Rappahannock, calls the Slaughter Pen Farm "the very heart and soul" of the field, "the point where the battle was won and lost."

In the 1930s, the Confederate line along Prospect Hill was added to Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania National Military Park, but the open plain remained a dairy farm, becoming hemmed in by a highway, a railroad and a small airport as the decades passed. Time and again, developers came calling — including proposals for a hospital and elementary school, actively opposed by the Trust — but never struck a deal. When the longtime owner died in September 2005 at age 86, his niece made plans to sell. But she was hostile toward preservationists and Trust leaders were concerned that even a full cash offer from them might be rejected. Instead, they contacted Tricord Homes, a local firm with which they had worked to fashion a preservation-friendly development proposal on the nearby Chancellorsville Battlefield. Tricord and the Trust then worked closely together and successfully secured the property.

"Tricord Homes is built on a foundation of integrity and collaboration," said company co-owner Mike Jones. "We are long-term members of this community and know that its rich history is part of what makes the Fredericksburg region so special. Helping protect this battlefield land was the right thing to do in 2006, and we would make the same decision today."

The campaign to raise $12 million and protect the Slaughter Pen Farm began on March 28, 2006. Closing occurred in June thanks to the Trust's longtime banking partner, SunTrust, now Truist, agreeing to fund the entire acquisition. It was an unusual move, since banks normally finance land purchases to develop the properties, not preserve them. But the Trust was able to reduce the loan by taking advantage of land preservation tax credits available in Virginia. The transaction created $5 million in state income tax credits that the Trust sold over the next three years to help pay down the loan. As a non-profit, the Trust also took advantage of tax-exempt financing and refinanced the balance of the original loan into a long-term bond issue.

The project received significant governmental support, including a $2 million matching grant from the American Battlefield Protection Program (ABPP), which remains one of the largest awards ever made by that entity. The Commonwealth of Virginia also contributed $300,000 toward the acquisition, a process that directly led to the creation of a first-in-the-nation state matching grant program for battlefield preservation in 2006.

Ultimately, nearly half of the $12 million raised came via private funds, mostly donations from Trust members. The loan's terms required an annual payment of $400,000, and many donors scheduled a recurring gift to help pay down the balance, knowing that until the debt was paid off, the land could not truly be classified as "saved." The Central Virginia Battlefields Trust, an exceptional regional partner based in Fredericksburg pledged the monumental sum of $1 million, fulfilling its commitment in 2011.

"The preservation community is strongest when we work together," said CVBT President Tom Van Winkle. "It is what allows us to take on the most meaningful work and what ensures we leave a permanent legacy."

Deputy Director of Education Kris White leads a "Twilight Tour" of the Slaughter Pen Farm during the summer of 2021. American Battlefield Trust

Since taking ownership of the property, the Trust has focused on landscape restoration and interpretive initiatives. It has gradually removed a number of derelict farm outbuildings, and, in 2009, installed an almost two-mile educational walking trail. The route is popular with locals, students of history and military units participating in staff rides to study lessons in leadership and tactics.

The Trust was on track to complete the Slaughter Pen Farm fundraising campaign in 2024, when a longtime supporter who wished to remain anonymous issued a remarkable matching challenge: If individual donors could supply the next $400,000 annual payment, he would contribute the entirety of the $800,000 then remaining on the loan, paying it off two years early. Once again, Trust members answered the call and the final payment on the debt was made to Truist in May.

With the Slaughter Pen Farm now owned free-and-clear by preservationists, the Trust and its many partners turn toward celebrating the milestone. A festive Twilight Tour is scheduled for mid-July, with a larger celebratory event planned for autumn.

"More than once I've said, somewhat tongue-in-cheek, that after the property was paid off, I'd fire a copy of our mortgage out of a cannon," said the Trust's Duncan. "I think they might hold me to it."

The American Battlefield Trust is dedicated to preserving America's hallowed battlegrounds and educating the public about what happened there and why it matters today. The nonprofit, nonpartisan

organization has protected more than 55,000 acres associated with the Revolutionary War, War of 1812 and Civil War. Learn more at www.battlefields.org.

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American Battlefield Trust Targets 45 Acres at Chancellorsville, Scene of Jackson's Flank Attack

As development swarms Central Virginia's hallowed ground, the nation's leading battlefield preservation nonprofit launches a fundraising effort to save land that played a pivotal role in the 1863 battle

Mary Koik, May 19, 2022. American Battlefield Trust

(Washington, D.C.) — Long known to historians as "Lee's Greatest Victory," the Battle of Chancellorsville has also become one of the great success stories of the modern battlefield preservation movement. Working alongside exceptional partner groups and with support of the federal and Commonwealth government, the American Battlefield Trust has saved more than 1,322 acres on the Spotsylvania County battlefield. Now, faced with a new generation of fast-acting developers, the Trust has launched an urgent fundraising campaign to protect 45 additional acres that witnessed the ferocious flank attack set forth by Confederate forces under Gen. Thomas "Stonewall" Jackson. The race to save hallowed ground around Fredericksburg is notably fierce, with the region named the Old Dominion's fastest-growing for the last five consecutive years.

Chancellorsville Battlefield, Spotsylvania Courthouse, Va. Theresa Rasmussen

"Unprotected battlefield lands have never been more threatened. The land has never been more expensive, and the competition to buy it has never been more intense," said Trust President David Duncan. "Securing these hallowed grounds ensures protection over one of the most studied, and most successful military actions in American history."

Encompassing three tracts, the 45 acres at stake are valued at a mighty $1,656,000. However, with anticipated federal and state matching grants — as well as other gifts — the Trust's private fundraising need boils down to $157,500 — a multiplication factor of $10.50-to-$1 on all gifts to the campaign.

At Chancellorsville, on May 3, 1863, Gen. Robert E. Lee divided his force in the face of a numerically superior Union force, instructing Jackson to undertake an audacious 11-mile flanking march to spring a surprise attack on the unprotected Union right flank. The massive risk paid dividends and dealt a devastating blow to the Union. But it exacted a high price from the victors too; Jackson was wounded by friendly fire and died 10 days later.

The largest of the three tracts — 43 acres situated along the Orange Turnpike (now Virginia State Route 3) — was once the site of Dowdall's Tavern, where Federal troops from New York, Pennsylvania and Ohio formed the "Buschbeck Line" in an agonizing effort to stem the tide before ultimately being overwhelmed by the Confederates. Then the home of Reverend Melzi A. Chancellor, the tavern marked the headquarters of Union Gen. Oliver O. Howard, commander of the XI Corps. In the heat of the battle, Georgia regiments charged across the targeted tract toward Federals near the tavern. Following the fighting, the structure became a field hospital, witnessing further scenes of blood and heartbreak.

"The survival, undeveloped, of a tract this large in this crucial location is nothing short of miraculous," noted historian and Chancellorsville expert Robert K. Krick. "Saving it would be a spectacular preservation coup."

The campaign also aims to protect two smaller, but no less important, tracts on the Chancellorsville Battlefield. A nearly two-acre tract, surrounded by land saved by the Trust, will serve as a critical puzzle piece that fills in key gaps in the preserved historic landscape. Meanwhile, a sought-after sub-acre between the then Orange Turnpike and Orange Plank Road represents a key project for longtime Trust partner Central Virginia Battlefields Trust. Both parcels will contribute to the protection of a contiguous stretch of preserved hallowed ground. To learn more about the battle's history, the Trust's work to protect and interpret it, as well as the latest 45-acre campaign, visit www.battlefields.org/45AcresChancellorsville.

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Cannon to Roar July 4th Weekend

Living historians in period uniforms fire cannon
NPS Photo/Mekow

Chris Mekow, June 22, 2022, NPS

"In honor of the July 4th holiday, Shiloh National Military Park will present Civil War cannon firing demonstrations on Saturday, July 2, and Sunday, July 3," announced Superintendent Allen Etheridge. The scheduled firing demonstrations will be presented by the Shiloh cannon crew, firing a 6-pounder field piece across the street from the park visitor center.

The cannon firing demonstrations will take place on Saturday at 10:00 am, 11:30 am, 1:30 pm, and 3:00 pm, and on Sunday at 11:00 am, 1:00 pm, and 2:30 pm. Each program will last approximately 20-minutes, and interpret the weapons, projectiles, and procedures Civil War artillery crews used during the war.

In addition, on Saturday, July 2, historian Mark Zimmerman will speak about the "Gunboats of Pittsburg Landing" at noon in the visitor center auditorium. A book

signing will be held afterward from 1:00 pm to 2:00 pm in the park's bookstore.

Zimmerman is a retired newspaper man and publications manager and the author of *Iron Maidens and the Devil's Daughters*: *US Navy Gunboats versus Confederate Gunners and Cavalry of the Tennessee and Cumberland River, 1861-1865.*

All programs are free and open to the public. For more information please contact the park visitor center at 731-689-5696

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The Civil War Drastically Reshaped How Americans Deal With Death. Will the Pandemic?

Around 750,000 people died during the conflict—2.5 percent of the country's population at the time

Gary Laderman, The Conversation, May 20, 2022 Smithsonian Magazine

Last September, an installation of almost 700,000 white flags on the National Mall paid tribute to the Americans who have died of Covid-19. Photo by Chip Somodevilla / Getty Images

More than one million people living in the United States have died of Covid-19 during the past two years.

The numbers paint a clear picture of devastation, though they can't capture the individual and familial pain of losing loved ones—a loss that will no doubt transform many more millions of Americans' lives.

The impact of this mass death on American society as a whole is less clear, especially since the pandemic is not over. While there have been a few moments of public remembrance—700,000 white flags placed on the National Mall, and President Joe Biden's brief words noting the "one million empty chairs around the dinner table"—the country is only beginning to grapple with the shared grief of so many deaths.

Instead, there is public discord surrounding those who died. In a country divided over basic facts about the virus, deaths have been exploited for political purposes or wrapped into conspiracy theories.

As a scholar of religion who has studied the history of death in America, I am quite preoccupied with how the country makes sense of, honors and remembers the Covid-19 dead. The magnitude of death today immediately brings to my mind the event that killed the second-highest number of Americans: the Civil War.

My first book, *The Sacred Remains*, looked at the conflict's impact on Americans' attitudes toward death, during another period of extreme division and overwhelming loss of life.

Preserving the dead

Roughly 750,000 people died in the Civil War, or 2.5 percent of the country's

population at the time—the equivalent of seven million Americans dying today.

The unprecedented death toll had profound consequences on American cultures of death for generations, particularly through the emergence of the funeral industry.

Throughout the 19th century, most Americans died, and had their bodies tended to, at home. Last moments with the corpse were with loved ones, who were responsible for washing and preparing it for the final rituals before burial, generally in local churchyards.

Abraham Lincoln's hearse passes under an ornamental arch during his funeral procession in Chicago. Public domain via Wikimedia Commons

But the Civil War provided an opportunity for a game-changing development. Embalming was an innovative method of preserving bodies that allowed some Northern families to have their war dead retrieved from the mostly Southern battlefields and brought back to be buried in Northern soil.

The display of President Abraham Lincoln's embalmed body after his assassination was a pivotal moment in this transformation. His corpse was transported on a train from Washington, D.C. to Springfield, Illinois, with frequent stops in many Northern cities where it was put on display for grieving Americans.

As embalming became more common, it helped legitimize a new class of professional experts: funeral directors, whose homes became a mix of business, mortality, religion and their own domestic life. By the early 20th century, this new business had established a fairly standard American way of death, centered on the viewing of an embalmed body to bring a community together.

Americans' relationship with their dead would never be the same. The intimacies the living had with the dead before the Civil War gradually disappeared, as funeral homes managed the care of more and more bodies.

Meaning-making

One of my intellectual heroes, sociologist Robert Hertz, wrote a famous essay about death and society in 1907. He argued that social groups represent themselves as immortal, capable of overcoming the death of any member. The community's survival depends greatly on transcending death, so it transforms the dead into sacred symbols of group identity and social cohesion.

Hertz's studies focused on death in small societies in Borneo. Yet his exploration of the relationship between the death of the individual and the life of the social group is pertinent now, in the context of the pandemic—as it was in the aftermath of the Civil War.

The victorious Union turned dead soldiers into symbols of the nation. Their deaths

were seen as sacred sacrifices to preserve the country. For religion scholars, this is a clear example of American civil religion. In the U.S., civil religion is a patriotic culture that sees America as a sacred, exceptional country, built on shared ideals, myths and traditions.

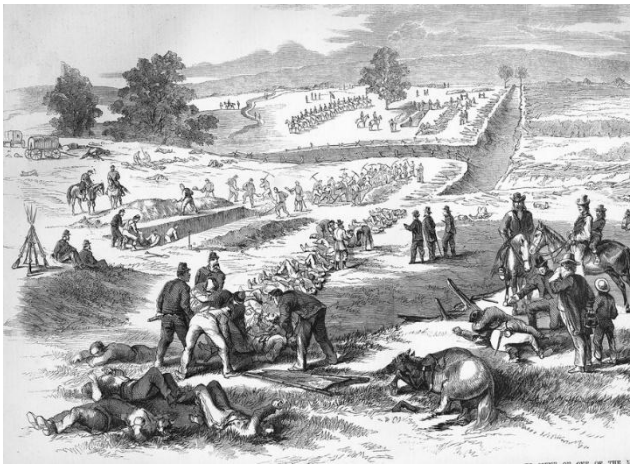

Illustration of the burial of the dead on the Antietam battlefield Public domain via Wikimedia Commons

But the Northern victors did not "control the narrative," as we say these days. Indeed, a very striking and still-present counternarrative soon developed among the vanquished Confederates after the war. The losers built an alternative civil religious culture, what historians refer to as "the religion of the Lost Cause."

For many white Southerners, the battlefield dead did not signal that God had abandoned their cause, but rather illuminated his support for values associated with the Confederacy—values the United States is still grappling with today. They saw the loss as a temporary setback but believed that ultimate victory would come if they maintained some form of Southern cultural purity based on notions of racial, regional and religious superiority.

Looking ahead

The politicization of death is not uncommon in American history, particularly during times of profound social crisis. And since the start of the pandemic, the same has happened with Covid-19 victims.

Death during a pandemic is obviously different from death during a civil war. In both cases, however, it is difficult for a divided country to experience unity in the face of an enormous loss of life and to agree on what those deaths mean for the nation.

Unique aspects of the pandemic make national mourning, and united healing, even more complicated. For example, the virus has not taken an equal toll across the country. The death toll shows significant disparities among different economic and racial groups. And the need to prevent contagion has intensified the physical separation between the living and the dead, making some meaningful rites of mourning difficult or impossible.

Gravediggers wearing protective suits bury a man suspected to have died of Covid-19 in the cemetery of Vila Alpina, east side of São Paulo, Brazil, in April 2020. Gustavo Basso via Wikimedia Commons under CC BY-SA 4.0

Many communities have made efforts to commemorate the pain of the pandemic,

such as through Día de los Muertos, a Mexican holiday honoring those who have died. But there have been minimal efforts to help make sense of the deaths on a national level: to rally around a compelling public narrative about the tremendous loss of life and grief. It remains to be seen if Americans will eventually incorporate the losses into a unifying civil religion, or only use them to reinforce polarization.

One million dead and counting will certainly require more efforts, more reflection and more soul-searching to help American society overcome and indeed draw strength from this unimaginable number.

Gary Laderman, Goodrich C. White Professor of American Religious History and Cultures at Emory University, recently published Don't Think About Death: A Memoir on Mortality *(2020).*

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Whistler's Mother and Her Connections to the Civil War

By Norman Dasinger, Jr., June 3, 2022, blueandgrayeducation.org

"Whistler's Mother" by James Whistler | Musée d'Orsay

In 1871, in London, Anna McNeill Whistler sat for the creation of what would become a very famous painting. The artist was her son, James, and the artwork has been described as "an American icon and a Victorian Mona Lisa."

Anna was born in 1804 in Wilmington, North Carolina. Her uncle was Zephania Kingsley. He was a prolific slave trader who married an African princess and lived near Jacksonville, Florida. In 1831, Anna McNeill married George Whistler, a former U.S. Army officer. Anna gave birth to two sons, James and William. In 1842, her husband moved the family to Russia where, on the request of Czar Nicholas I, George became a railroad engineer. He died in 1849 and Anna returned to the United States and settled in Connecticut. In 1863, Anna moved to England to be closer to her son, James.

Self-portrait of James Whistler | public domain

James Whistler

The now-famous James Whistler has an interesting record. He was born in Massachusetts and, while the family lived in Russia, he took private art lessons. At the age of 11, he enrolled in the Imperial Academy of Art located in St. Petersburg, Russia. He was seldom seen without his sketchbook, but once his widowed mother moved back to the U.S., she was convinced that James needed some direction. So, he applied to the United States Military Academy at West Point, where his father had graduated and once taught. He was admitted in 1851. While there, he was known as "curly" for his hair length. He also racked up demerits because he was considered to shun authority. Col. Robert E. Lee was the superintendent, and he dismissed James after a sarcastic comment made during a chemistry class. Now, he could focus on his art.

William Whistler

William (Willie) Whistler was his little brother, born in 1836. In 1860, William graduated as a doctor from the University of Pennsylvania. In 1862, swayed by his strong Southern family roots and his wife being from the powerful King family of Georgia, Dr. Whistler joined the Confederate Army. Appointed an assistant surgeon operating in Richmond, he was charged with visiting the sick at places like Libby Prison. In 1864, he was assigned to the 1st South Carolina Rifles as a surgeon.

He was known to be fearless in performing his duties and made a favorable impression on his new compatriots. In a November 2011 article, Ron Coddington wrote, "During a raid outside Petersburg in December 1864, the roads were covered with snow and ice, and the suffering of the men was great, for many were without shoes, and the broken ice lacerated their feet most painfully. Dr. Whistler gave up his horse to one of these wretched men, and marched on foot with the line."

In February 1865, he was given leave to visit his family in England. A week after his arrival, he learned of Lee's Appomattox surrender. William never returned to the United States. He continued his medical career, becoming the senior physician at the London Throat Hospital. He died in 1900 and is buried at Hastings Cemetery, East Sussex, England.

The house in which James and his brother were born in Lowell, Massachusetts, is preserved as the Whistler House Museum of Art.