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The following is the despatch in detail from the Philadelphia Press :

HAGERSTOWN, September 17.

A battle has been raging furiously for the past two days on the Antietam creek, a tortuous stream, having its source in the mountains, and running down to the Potomac river midway between Robertsville and Sharpsburg.

The rebels, cut off from the iron bridge at Harper's Ferry by the advance of Gen. Franklin's corps, and fearing to cross the Potomac at any of the fords, with Gen. McClellan pushing down hard upon them, took this creek for a line of defence.

During yesterday the battle raged with great spirit, and the firing on either side was very heavy until towards sundown, when the rebels were flanked by Porter and Hooke, and were being severely punished. Their firing became desultory, and it was evident that their ammunition was giving out.

This morning the battle was renewed by the rebels with redoubled vigor; they acted as if they had been reinforced and furnished with ammunition.

The battle lasted till four o'clock this afternoon, when the rebels retreated, leaving General Longstreet and the remnant of his division in our hands as prisoners of war.

Our victory is sure, but it has cost us many officers and men. Major General Hooker was wounded in the foot by a Minié ball while leading a second brilliant bayonet charge to-day, and Gen. Mansfield is either killed or taken prisoner. He fought most heroically during the entire affair up to the time he was missing.

The loss of the rebels was much greater than ours. Longstreet's division of ten brigades cannot muster seven thousand men.

The entire rebel army will be captured or killed. There is no chance left for them to cross the Potomac, as the river is rising, and our troops pushing them continually, and sending prisoners to the rear by scores.

Stonewall Jackson is now in command of the rebel forces in Maryland.

It is reported here that Gen. Miles re-enacted his Bull Run scene at Harper's Ferry, which was surrendered to the rebels in a shameful manner.

Six batteries of artillery, belonging to Longstreet's division, were captured yesterday and to-day; and it is said we have taken nearly fifteen thousand prisoners since Sunday.

Jackson's army, with Lee and other distinguished wounded officers, will be forced to surrender in a day or two at the farthest.

Our immense army is all in motion, and our general are certain of ultimate and deserved success.

Stores for our army are coming by way of Harrisburg and Baltimore.

Gen. Burnside has taken possession of Harper's Ferry, and is advancing on a special mission with his corps.

Every one here is jubilant over the news, and people talk about seeing the "beginning of the end."

American Battlefield Trust Announces Members of Inaugural Youth Leadership Team

Ten teens from across the country will spend the next year advocating for historic preservation nationally and in their own communities

Jim Campi, American Battlefield Trust

September 11, 2019

Washington, D.C. — The American Battlefield Trust's first-ever Youth Leadership Team (YLT) has begun its year-long advocacy engagement with a whirlwind, three-day trip to Washington, D.C. for orientation and training. The 10 participants will now return to their communities with newfound knowledge, eager to begin preservation and interpretation projects of their own, communicating the importance of battlefield preservation and making a tangible impact.

"By supporting this group of emerging leaders, we hope to create a ripple effect for battlefield preservation, visitation, and history education in our nation," said Trust president James Lighthizer. "They are the face of battlefield preservation for a new generation, empowering other young people to create change within their own schools and communities."

YLT participants were chosen through a competitive application process, beginning last spring. Successful candidates were notified and invited to Washington in early August to meet the staff, learn more about the Trust vision and refine their individual project proposals in consultation with these experts.

“History is such an interesting subject that gets overlooked,” said participant Makayla Decker. “It is very important know our history and by being part of this organization, I hope to spark interest in not only the people of my community but also my younger generation.”

The group will return to Washington in late September to meet with their elected officials as part of the Trust's first Youth Lobby Day.

“At a time when popular opinion holds that young people are not interested in subjects like history, the testimony of these passionate teens will bear powerful witness to the contrary,” said Connor Townsend, the Trust's associate for audience development and the YLT project lead. “They are articulate and eager to share this message with the world.”

During the course of the academic year, they will pursue individual projects in their home communities, supported by Trust staff. Among the initiatives being undertaken by YLT members are organizing living history events, raising funds toward land acquisition and establishing clean-up gatherings — plus more 21st-century offerings like a podcast series. During the organization’s 2020 Annual Conference next May in Chantilly, Va. they will present their findings and results broader membership.

“Many teens and adults don’t even know that an important Civil War battle occurred in Hart County, Kentucky,” said participant Taylor Bishop. “So what I am going to do is try to fix that. In early October I'm going to take at least 30-35 high schoolers and a few 8th grade students to the battlefield at Munfordville, giving them a name of a man that was either killed, wounded or fought in

that battle. So that way they get a closer connection to the Civil War.”

The full roster of the 2019 Youth Leadership Team includes: Taylor Bishop, 15, of Greensburg, Ky.; Olivia Brinkman, 17, of Patchogue, N.Y.; Makayla Decker, 16, of Dillsburg, Pa.; Jessica Grajeda, 17, of Goodyear, Ariz.; Owen Lanier, 15, of Gloucester, Va.; Scott Lee, 15, of Los Angeles, Calif.; John Mugabe, 16, of Rock Hill, S.C.; Sarah Schwartz, 16, of Fort Myers, Fla.; Hays Turner of Middleburg, Va.; and Karalyn Viszoki , 16, of Monroe Township, N.J.



Maggie Holmgren

Top Row (left to right): Sarah Schwartz, Owen Lanier, John Mugabe, Makayla Decker, Hays Turner

And bottom row (left to right): Olivia Brinkman, Jessica Grajeda, Taylor Bishop, Karalyn Viszoki, Scott Lee

Judge: Confederate statues will stay in Charlottesville

By Associated Press
September 13

CHARLOTTESVILLE, Va. — A Virginia judge has blocked the city of Charlottesville's effort to remove Confederate statues.

The Daily Progress reports the three-day civil trial that ended Friday included a judge's ruling preventing the removal of statues of Robert E. Lee and Stonewall Jackson.

The planned removal of the Lee statue prompted a white nationalist rally in 2017 in which counter protester Heather Heyer was killed.

Residents had sued Charlottesville, citing a state law that protects war memorials. The city said that law violated the U.S. Constitution because the statues send a racist message.

Circuit Court Judge Richard Moore ruled Wednesday that the law's intent was historic preservation not discrimination. He issued a permanent injunction preventing the removal.

Moore said Friday he'll award the plaintiff's attorneys' fees but will weigh arguments before determining the amount.

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Norfolk officials sue Virginia in effort to remove Confederate monument

By Paul Duggan. Washington Post
August 19

The city of Norfolk, which wants to remove a Confederate monument from its downtown business district, filed a federal lawsuit Monday challenging a Virginia law that city officials say is blocking their plan to relocate the statue to a cemetery.

The law, enacted in 1904 and amended several times in the past century, bars the removal or alteration of public war memorials in the state. In Charlottesville, Confederate-heritage enthusiasts have relied on the preservation law in litigation that has stopped officials there from taking down two Confederate statues.

The efforts in Norfolk, Charlottesville and elsewhere are part of a broad push in recent years throughout the South to banish Confederate imagery from public spaces. Critics argue that rebel statues and other iconography honoring Old Dixie are symbolic of institutionalized white supremacism.

In 2017, the Norfolk City Council passed a resolution saying it intended to move a towering, city-owned Confederate monument from a downtown intersection to Elmwood Cemetery. But the resolution said no action would be taken while the state preservation law remained in effect, because

violating it could expose the city to financial penalties.

The lawsuit filed Monday in U.S. District Court in Norfolk alleges that the preservation law unconstitutionally hinders Norfolk's right to free expression.

"The purpose of this suit is to unbuckle the straitjacket that the Commonwealth has placed the City and the City Council in," the complaint said. "Because the Monument is the City's speech, the City has a constitutional right to alter that speech" by moving the statue to a less conspicuous location.

It is "a right that the Commonwealth cannot take away," the lawsuit said.

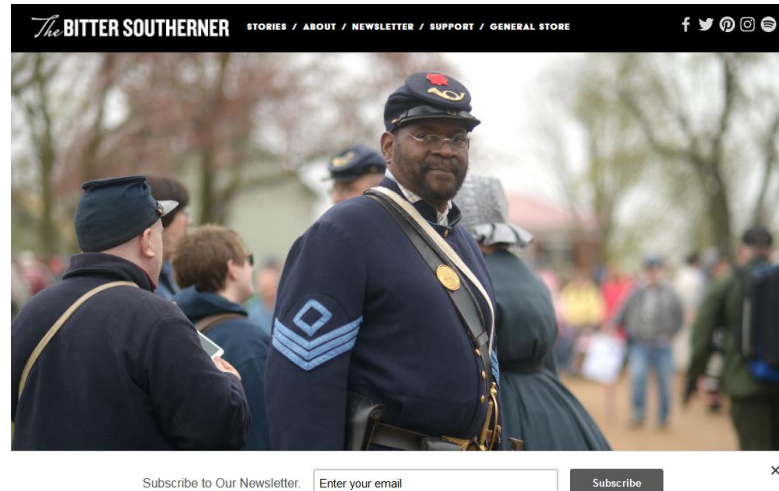
After the Charlottesville City Council voted to remove a statue of Confederate Gen. Robert E. Lee, statue defenders sued the city in March 2017, citing the preservation law.

Five months later, on Aug. 11 and 12, hundreds of white supremacists descended on Charlottesville for the Unite the Right rally. Stunned by the deadly street violence and outpouring of racist and anti-Semitic hate that weekend, the Charlottesville council voted to also remove a public statue of rebel Gen. Thomas J. "Stonewall" Jackson.

In rulings this year, a judge in Charlottesville Circuit Court decided that the preservation law applies to the Charlottesville statues. The next step for the city is an appeal to the Virginia Supreme Court.

The Norfolk City Council reacted to the 2017 Charlottesville violence by passing the resolution to remove the 112-year-old statue from a downtown intersection. Two activists

then sued the city in state court, trying to force it to act on the resolution, even with the preservation law in effect. That state lawsuit was dismissed last month.



Telling the Untold History

When Civil War reenacting began in the 1960s, it was largely the province of folks who wished to uphold the Old South myth. Folks like that are still on the battlefield, but lately, a more diverse group of people — with a broader understanding of Southern history — have begun to push reenactments toward deeper, truer purposes.

Story by S.E. Curtis | Photos by Pat Jarrett



When I walked into the bathroom to wash some Lee-Jackson Day cake from my hands, I saw two teenage girls primping in the mirror: fixing their skirts and slipping tiny pearl buttons into eyelets on their gloves. One blonde. One brunette. Both very serious about their outfits. The brunette said, “You know, I think my bonnet would go better with your dress.” The blonde replied, “Well, we don’t really wear straw bonnets indoors in January, do we?” Her accent was somewhere between Scarlett and Melanie instead of what should have been her native Shenandoah Valley twang. With that comment, the blonde smoothed the fabric of her sleeves and walked out the door. The brunette untied the bow of her vintage chapeau and left it on the sink’s counter before following her friend into the carpeted ballroom of the Holiday Inn Express in Lexington, Virginia.

In the South, we are affected by history in a way no other region in this country can claim. While the Northeast builds up and over its reminders of the past and the rest of

the country is too young to understand, the South is lousy with artifacts, memorials, historical markers and the names of “heroes” branding our municipal buildings, parks and streets. In fact, we rely economically on the preservation of said past and the constant conversation generated by it. Tourists spend millions of dollars on tours of antebellum estates and carriage rides through historic neighborhoods.

I don’t think I’ve ever had a conversation about the history of this region without it devolving into an argument over interpretation. When I lived in New York, I found myself constantly defending the history of the South, not because I believe in the glory of the antebellum era, but because I was convinced that my Yankee friends didn’t have the whole story. They had been misled or at least not given all the facts. But, of course, so had I.

After I moved back to the South — specifically Staunton, Virginia — in 2011, I decided I want to understand the dissonance between the way we see our history and ourselves and how the rest of the country sees us. So I began conversations.

My friend, Paul Singleton III, an African-American art therapist and poet, told me he felt constantly reminded of the brutal history of Staunton, where he grew up. There are obvious references, such as Robert E. Lee High School (one of [71 schools](#) around the South that are named for Lee), and more subtle anachronisms, such as the servants’ entrances built into the houses and mansions. Relics of this history are everywhere. Of course, in most of the South, these monuments (intentional or not) are common — a daily manifestation of a past we choose to suffer with, ignore or worship. Staunton holds tightly to this history in spite of its present progressive tendencies. The

history of the town and the surrounding area appeals to tourists. That appeal, of course, benefits the local economy.

When my conversation with Singleton turned toward Civil War reenactors, who are a common sight in the Shenandoah Valley, I assumed he would group them in with the other historical emblems. Instead, he had a different view.

“I have an interest in researching new ways to heal intergenerational trauma,” Singleton said. “I see in Staunton a community still grappling with the trauma of war. I think this is the purpose of the reenactments of battles; Civil War reenactments serve as public theater that aids the process of grief.”

Singleton told me a reenactment could be viewed as a ritual along the lines of Brazilian theater director Augusto Boal’s [Theater of the Oppressed](#). Boal’s idea was to create theater that literally engages the audience in struggles related to social and political issues. Similarly, in a reenactment, both the reenactors and the spectators are involved in the battle and everyone wants his or her side to win. Even if that means rooting for — against what should be their better judgment — the pro-slavery Confederacy. One of the techniques involved in the theater of the Oppressed is called “Breaking Repression.” Breaking Repression involves an actor submitting to a moment of oppression against his or her own desires. This process is repeated and re-enacted with different scenarios until the actor fully understands the ways in which their oppressor behaves, and learns to react effectively to those situations.

Singleton said that by dressing up and taking part in battles and other historical events, reenactors can work through the pain and loss their ancestors may have felt. White

Southern reenactors may feel oppressed and conquered because their Confederate ancestors lost the war. At worst, their families have had to suffer through not only defeat, but also Reconstruction and 150 years of socioeconomic hardship. So they use an aesthetic means in the present to examine this past in the hope of creating a different future. In their minds, they are the underdogs. Through this kind of performance, they are yearning for catharsis and a change in outlook.



In a way, reenactments and the ubiquity of Confederate memorials account for the way certain white Southerners view the United States, its history and its politics. We have been fighting these battles since 1861 and always expect that one day we will understand our “oppressors” in order to escape the disappointment of the future. Consider that, according to Robert Lee Hadden, who literally wrote the book on reenacting, “*Reliving the Civil War: A Reenactor’s Handbook*,” what we now know as modern reenacting took shape during the 1960s. This time period, of course, coincided with both the centennial of the Civil War and the Civil Rights movement. Perhaps in response to upheaval and change, these first modern reenactors took the opportunity to examine the moment in history when, in their minds, it all went

wrong: the moment the Confederacy surrendered.

Civil War reenactments are as popular now as they have ever been, and — odd though it may seem — they are no longer solely the province of white Southerners clinging to the “lost cause.” What does the changing demographic of participants in historical interpretations say about the way we learn and think about history? What do reenactments and reenactors teach us about our history, our present and what can we do to further our progress?



Over the last few years, the climate of reenacting and historical interpretation in the South has evolved and diversified. Perhaps most importantly, more African-Americans engage with Southern history through reenactment and want to be a part of how it is interpreted and used.

Pat Jarrett, whose photographs accompany this story, first met Louis L. Carter Jr. at the 150th anniversary of Appomattox, when he made a photo of him right before the moment in the reenactment when Gen. Robert E. Lee dismounts Traveller and hands over his saber. Carter, who lives in Washington, D.C., reenacts as Sgt. Maj. Christian Fleetwood, a free man of color who enlisted in the 4th Regiment of the

United States Colored Infantry. Fleetwood was awarded the U.S. Medal of Honor in 1865 because of his valor and courage during the [Battle of New Market Heights](#).



Louis L. Carter Jr.

Carter believes a Civil War reenactor’s goal should be to educate and to explain what actually happened and then to illustrate how that affects this country today. He says his personal role as a black Civil War soldier is to teach the public about the lifestyle, military service and general values through accurate and authentic presentations. Of course, there are many more white reenactors than African-American, just like there were more white soldiers 150 years ago. Carter asserts that the best outcome of a reenactment would be that the public is prouder of who they are and that their ancestors helped to make this great country. Most importantly, when he reenacts, he is given the chance to correct history and to tell the forgotten or untold American stories.

Carter believes that when these more difficult parts of history are overlooked, the South and the U.S. at large is held back. Carter calls slavery “our American

Holocaust” and says that his regiment reenacts to initiate conversation about that.

Unfortunately, much of the historical interpretation and reenactment of the Civil War glosses over slavery. Some of the worst and most violent episodes are left out to preserve the so-called honor and reputation of the Confederate dead. But this timeworn narrative is now being turned on its head by reenactors like Gates and his regiment, along with other individuals and groups who are investing their time and money into this hobby so history it portrays includes more diverse narratives.



The Is Not The American “Downton Abbey”

Michael Twitty, a culinary historian and food writer, uses his own kind of reenactment and historical interpretation to confront the typical narrative, as well. Twitty stages reenactments he calls “Antebellum Chef,” in which he uses food-preparation methods based on the practices of enslaved cooks throughout the South. Antebellum Chef is Michael Twitty’s “performance” in this Southern Theater of the Oppressed.

When he walks into a place where he is going to interpret, one of the first things he

does is to pour libations and ask permission from those who once occupied the space to help him to tell the truth. Through his dress, ingredients and tools, Twitty opens up the conversation and demonstrates what it was like for a slave in the kitchen of a plantation estate.

Twitty’s work is, in itself, a revolutionary act. Many of the plantations where he works have only recently started to acknowledge the estates’ slave populations, let alone add slave narratives to their tours and exhibits. But Louisiana’s Whitney Plantation, which focuses on the history of slaves and the slave culture born on its grounds, draws more African-American tourists than any other historical site of its kind. Twitty’s presence in the context of such plantations, as the embodiment of a slave, brings many different reactions.

“He who controls the interpretation of the history controls the narrative completely and what people walk away with,” he says. “I’m going against this narrative. My job is to bring to life what the life of an enslaved person looked like so that you can take a picture of it with your iPhone and share this knowledge.”



Michael Twitty, photo courtesy of Michael Twitty

The simple act of Twitty wearing period-accurate clothing and standing over a 60-pound pot of soup as it boils over a fire has been met with resistance from those who prefer the history of the South to remain whitewashed. He often tells a story about a docent at a plantation who asked him not to share any stories about slavery and to just say that he is the cook and that's it. But to leave out the stories of and facts about the slaves, who built the buildings in which he stands and worked the gardens from which he pulls ingredients, is not only a lie, he says, but also an act of aggression toward those who need to learn and understand our shared past.

During a demonstration, if Twitty stumbles on a brick floor and spills whatever he carries, people often laugh at him.

“They see me as a big black oaf,” he says, “but I ask them, ‘Do you know what you would have done to me if I would have tripped back then? You would have whipped me for spilling your soup.’” One of his main goals during an interpretation is to confront the history in people's heads, holding nothing back.

“This is not the American Downton Abbey,” he declares.

An uncomfortable feeling permeates the air when it comes to the “peculiar institution” of slavery. Twitty says African-Americans have only recently become more involved in preserving the history of slavery and attempting to work through the trauma. He welcomes the black community's slow gravitation toward historical sites that were once visited mainly by white tourists. African-Americans have begun holding

family reunions and events for companies and schools at antebellum sites where their ancestors may have been enslaved. They don't visit these sites or participate in interpretations or reenactments to be reminded of or shamed by the painful history, but instead to work through the trauma and measure progress.



photo courtesy of Michael Twitty

Battling the Confederates in the Attic

At first glance, one might think most white Civil War reenactors are committed to the Lost Cause, that they fight these battles over and over in hopes of someday seeing Grant finally handing his sword over to Lee.

But Waverly Byth Adcock, a phlebotomist and devout reenactor, had no dream of living in the antebellum South. When he began to research his own family's past in preparation for reenactments, he discovered that, despite his own simple, middle class upbringing, his family not only owned slaves, but also committed brutal acts as punishment. Unlike some of his reenacting compatriots, Adcock's genealogy made it impossible for him to argue that the Confederate cause was simply home and hearth.

Then, last year, Virginia Quarterly Review contributing editor Jesse Dukes wrote a remarkable piece called “Lost Causes,” a

story in which Adcock was a major character. Dukes praised Adcock for his “well-researched, complicated and thoughtful view of the war,” but concluded that Adcock and reenactors like him were “willfully innocent.” Dukes specifically called out Adcock for using the arguments that the entire nation is guilty of slavery and that the Confederate battle flag can be used as a learning tool. Dukes asserted that reenactors such as Adcock ignore the larger implications of this way of thinking.

Instead of taking offense, Adcock began to step back from his previously held convictions concerning the old “heritage not hate” argument.

Adcock began, instead, on a quest of honesty and a more holistic view of history. He said it was important to him to stay true to both sides of his history. Though he could have dismissed the damning parts of his family’s past, he said, he decided to err on the side of the whole truth.

After that article was published, Adcock told me, he put on his uniform to remind himself and his audience about how far we’ve come as not only a region, but also a country. For him, reenacting was a way to remember and grow from the sins of his ancestors. It was not only a hobby, but also a kind of penance: “Dressing up in a blue uniform or a grey uniform is our way of owning up to a mistake that we made — that the nation made. We own up to the responsibility of what our ancestors did.”

Adcock also said the act of taking part in these interpretations of history is what attracted him in the first place. Being able to share history with an audience is important to him.

“It goes back to that tangible history,” he said. “Kids really respond to that. They respond to being able to put their hands on a wet rifle, touch a uniform, wear a hat, drink out of a canteen, and see how people lived.... Then you get them thinking. That’s the important thing.”



Waverly Byth Adcock

Of course, the ancestors of most reenactors around here were tenant farmers and the working class. Arguably, their ancestors heeded the call to take up arms for the Confederacy while being misled by the Confederate government: Businessmen, landed gentry and politicians stood to lose more than they did. There is little doubt that, for the Confederacy, it was a rich man’s war and a poor man’s fight.

But at tourist destinations like battlefields and plantations, the narrative leans heavily on the idea of the Southern Aristocracy. Because of the longstanding influence of Confederate heritage organizations (such as the United Daughters of the Confederacy) on the way history has been presented in the South, some people may be under the impression that there was a strict two-class system: the white aristocracy and the black slaves. This, of course, causes more trauma than progress.

But those who are thoroughly steeped in the “glory” of the antebellum South are not fazed. They cannot grasp the idea that their ancestors probably have more in common with the slaves they fought to keep chained than the social elite they fought to keep in power. Perhaps this is the subconscious grief these reenactors are working through. Not only did their ancestors fight and die for a dubious cause, but also their sacrifices neither affected the outcome of the war nor bettered the future of their families.

At last April’s celebration of Confederate Memorial Day in Staunton, Adcock made a speech in front of a crowd of Sons of Confederate Veterans, United Daughters of the Confederacy and other organizations, as well as a smattering of reenactors, including some playing the parts of Gens. Lee and Thomas “Stonewall” Jackson. Adcock told the crowd their organizations should not focus on arguments about where a flag should hang or what the exact cause of the secession was, but instead on preserving what makes the South great.

“We cannot pick our history,” he told the crowd. “In order for us to learn from our mistakes or triumphs, we must embrace the entire story of our past. The good and the bad, all of these things make us who we are today.”

But Adcock seems to be an exception when it comes to the community of reenactors. It is true that many seem to be in it primarily for the joy or reenacting, even if they tend to conveniently “forget” the embarrassing parts. These reenactors sip coffee made of burnt corn, wear \$100 period-accurate buttons, and spin yarns about how their patriarchs fought for home and hearth.

Then there are others, reenactors whom Adcock calls “Polyester Confederates,”

people who are, in his words, “basically Klansmen without the hoods.” Those reenactors are concerned with political and social ideologies connected to the Confederacy and offer no apology for fighting for slavery or racism. But on the field, there’s no real delineation between one kind of reenactor and the next. All of these men and women share camps and “serve” in the same regiments without conversation or consequence. This weighed on Adcock’s conscience.

The massacre at Charleston’s Emanuel A.M.E. Church and the ensuing controversy over the battle flag came two months after Adcock’s speech in Staunton. The negative and defensive reaction from his own community was the final straw for Adcock. He decided to put away his uniforms and rifles and give up the hobby. He confessed that the amount of “hate and vitriol” spewing out from the media, his friends and other reenactors was incredibly exhausting. At the risk of being ousted from his community and group of friends, Adcock expressed what was on his heart.

His words were met with even more vitriol and insults. Adcock told me he felt like a hero for sticking to his guns in the face of adversity.

Hero or not, a man who listens to and learns from discourse, evolves and stands by his convictions does deserve respect. Adcock keeps a low profile these days and, though he feels the loss of friends and his hobby, still stands by his convictions and hopes to continue to teach others about this period as an amateur historian. He hopes to combat miseducation and ignorance.



The Normative Narrative

Reenactors are such a common sight in the Shenandoah Valley because many battles of the Civil War took place here. Two of the Confederacy's most famous generals, Lee and Jackson, made their homes in Lexington. The Shenandoah Valley was called the "breadbasket of the Confederacy" and continues to be a destination for Civil War buffs and tourists.

In Staunton, the sign for the Stonewall Jackson Hotel is neon red and 30 feet tall. As you crest the hill between the old asylum (now condos) and the abandoned power plant, the sign is a beacon announcing your arrival in the Queen City of the Valley. It is a highlight of the downtown Staunton skyline and has been indivisible from the identity of the town for more than 60 years. Even in the latter half of the 20th century, when the building had fallen into disrepair and had a reputation as a flophouse, the sign remained, though unlit.

When the hotel was renovated and reopened in the early 2000s, the owners decided to keep the sign and the name. When I asked why, a representative simply told me that the

name was recognizable in the Valley and that the owners were capitalizing on already established branding. It's true that the name "Thomas 'Stonewall' Jackson" is one of the most recognizable monikers here.



I live in a building that sits catercornered to the hotel, and, honestly, it never really crosses my mind. To me, the Stonewall Jackson represents the fancy accommodations in town for rich tourists and business people. But to a visitor who doesn't see the names and imagery of the Civil War every day, the luminescent name of a slaveholder lighting up the sky on the corner of Richmond Road and the Lee-Jackson Highway might be a cause for pause.

Staunton has garnered national attention from Travel + Leisure, GQ, Smithsonian Magazine and other media outlets for our food, arts scenes, museums and architecture. On the first floor of another building named after Jackson, the Stonewall Jackson Schoolhouse, there's a cafe that serves grass-fed beef burgers from the famous Polyface Farms here in Augusta County and craft beer from all over the United States. The Stonewall Jackson Hotel offers package deals in partnership with the American Shakespeare Center next door.

And yet, my friends from Up North never want to come visit me because they are wary of lynch mobs. I admit that I stumble when trying to explain the nuances of why living in Staunton is preferable when a slave owner's name welcomes all visitors who drive into town.



“We as White Southerners....”

More Stonewall Jackson ephemera can be found 30 miles south of Staunton in Lexington. Both Jackson and Lee are visibly revered in this town's churches, memorials, municipal buildings and institutions of higher learning. Lexington is also one of a handful of cities across Virginia that still openly celebrate Lee-Jackson Day. When the city refused to allow Confederate flags to hang on the main street through town during one Lee-Jackson Day celebration, opponents of the decision hired a plane to fly the message “Shame on Lexington — Honor Lee & Jackson” over the parade.



East of Staunton, in Charlottesville, Councilwoman Kristin Szakos led the charge earlier this year to repeal Lee-Jackson Day as a paid city holiday.

“On Facebook and in emails during the past month, Charlottesville residents have expressed their dismay that we publicly honor two men who bravely fought for the cause that would have kept the ancestors of one in five of our neighbors in bondage,” Szakos told the council. She grew up in Mississippi as the daughter of Civil Rights workers and is intimately familiar with the controversy that surrounds historical interpretation. When she suggested in 2012 that Confederate statues be taken down, “balanced out” (with other statues) or simply moved from downtown Charlottesville to a more historical or educational setting, both she and her children were the targets of threats.

Concerning Lee-Jackson Day, most of the opposition, she said, came from neo-Confederates from outside of the Charlottesville area. A man from Richmond, Indiana, asked her why she “would even consider any action to remove anything ‘Confederate’ from [her] city” (the formatting is his, not mine). She replied that there isn't any problem with someone celebrating whatever heroes they choose. But she was going to vote against having the City of Charlottesville celebrate that particular history through a paid local holiday. She also suggested that, if he felt

the need, the Indiana man should approach his own city council and talk to them about instating Lee-Jackson Day as a city holiday.

“We as white Southerners have the luxury of ignoring monuments and markers of Confederate history and heritage,” she told me. That statement stuck with me after our conversation.

To white Southerners, the statue of Robert E. Lee in Lee Park in Charlottesville (or any of the other 500-plus Confederate monuments all around the South) might seem only a statue of a man who fought for what he believed in and lost. But to African-Americans, it is a statue of a man who fought to keep their ancestors enslaved. We can argue all day about Gen. Lee’s merits on the battlefield, but it’s impossible to extricate him from that fact.



Reenacting vs Reacting

In contrast to the reenactors and politicians who seek to confront the accepted white Southern narrative, the Virginia Flaggers are an organization that use protest as a form of performance. They show up at any event they perceive as an “attack” on Confederate history and heritage. I use the word Confederate here because this is where the rift lies. The so-called “history and heritage”

of a group like the Flaggers is not the Southern or Confederate history that I have been taught. As a member of one of the first generations of Southern schoolchildren to learn from (less) censored textbooks, I’m a little skeptical of the “facts.”

I met with Barry Isenhour, who is often the public voice of the Flaggers, on a cool Sunday morning outside of Richmond’s Museum of the Confederacy. Isenhour wore a leather vest adorned with Confederate-related patches and buttons, which made him pretty easy to spot from down the block. He greeted me with a firm handshake and a press packet. My name was handwritten at the top of the envelope above the sticker of the seal of the Virginia Flaggers. The seal bears the phrase “Sic Semper Tyrannis” and has three sets of hands (each with a different skin tone) holding the flag of Virginia, the Confederate battle flag and the first flag of the Confederate States of America.

The contents of the packet included two pamphlets: “Why Some Are Attacking the Flags” and “The Virginia Flaggers.” There was also a flyer for this year’s Lee-Jackson Day in Lexington and a CD called “The Truth Concerning The Confederate Battle Flag: A Commentary by Pastor John Weaver.” We sat on a bench in the backyard garden of the Confederate White House (which, for the record, is gray). Luckily, it was warm enough to conduct the interview outdoors since Isenhour was recently kicked out of the museum for carrying the battle flag into its foyer.

After easing into the conversation through the awkward channels of “we don’t call it the Civil War” and “Lee didn’t have slaves, Jackson taught them how to read and write, and Jefferson Davis adopted a black child,” Isenhour and I waded into the topic of what exactly the Virginia Flaggers do.

He explained to me that the Flaggers aim to educate people: “A lot of myths came out of the 1990s when the NAACP found that this could be a good fundraising thing. These people started deconstructing Southern Pride ... and you get into this stereotype that everyone with a Cross of St. Andrews hates the government and wants to kill every black person.”

Isenhour says his group approaches history in a more authentic way than the rest of the country.

“It’s easy to point a finger at the bogeyman than it is to look at history,” he said. “We stand on a corner and try to explain to you who the Confederate veteran was ... and we want to explain the history of this flag.”



Barry Isenhour

When I brought up slavery, he was quick to correct me on how slaves were treated. He said that in the North, if a man got his arm cut off at his job, he would be out of luck, but if a slave suffered the same, he would have been taken care of and given another job. He used a slave named “Toby” as the example for this situation and spoke of him

using a voice that sounded like a mix between Foghorn Leghorn and Uncle Remus from “Song of the South.”

But we kept running into impasses.

“But they were slaves,” I said.

“Yes, but they were treated better than most white people in other parts of the country,” he replied.

“But they were still owned by white people...”

“Yes, but they had health care!”

“But they had no rights. It was against the law for them to read or write. And they were bought and sold like animals.”

“But not everyone owned slaves!”

“But the economy was built on free labor.”

“See, that’s the brainwashing. It wasn’t free. Again, they had health care, free clothes, room and board!”

“But they were still slaves, right?”

I asked him why it was important to keep monuments of Civil War soldiers around and to celebrate men like Lee and Jackson. He said, “These two men, in my opinion, represent the best of America and their generation. This is the same as celebrating Veterans Day. Memorial Day is actually a Confederate holiday. To us — it’s about history and honoring. If someone wants to do Martin Luther King Day, I don’t care. He was great. He was an American and had an incredible impact on the country.”

Keep in mind that the Virginia Flaggers are often seen “flagging” around Richmond,

Virginia. This capital city has three buildings that are part of the Museum of the Confederacy System: the Museum, the Confederate White House and the Confederate War Memorial Chapel. Not to mention other Civil War tourist attractions like Hollywood Cemetery, Monument Avenue, and the American Civil War Museum at Historic Tredegar. There is no shortage of tangible Confederate history in this capital of the Confederacy.

The Flaggers and other neo-Confederate groups are so bedeviled by any move toward broadening the view of history in the South, they can't see that the inclusion of different stories doesn't make them wrong, but shows the complexities of this region and its people. They are so busy claiming tragedy that they can't see the play isn't over yet. There are better and richer scenes to come. There will always be cause to revisit our past, but we should take care not to revise it. The kind of preservation the neo-Confederates seek is the enemy of growth.

But Isenhour is performing his own drama in this Southern Theater of the Oppressed. He feels literally attacked by dominant American culture and those who would interpret history differently. I think we can see from the events of the last few months that a little backlash concerning these symbols and interpretations can be a positive thing. Isenhour accused my generation of being both brainwashed and drugged concerning Confederate history and culture. He said that the most ignorant and unwilling audience is "... white liberal kids between the ages of 20 and 30 who come at us with such viciousness; they will not talk with you, they just spit on you and call you horrible names."

The irony is not lost that this kind of behavior is reminiscent of the people who

waved Confederate flags during the Civil Rights Movement.



The Contentiousness of History

As I reported this story, I wanted to understand why people such as Barry Isenhour feel so threatened by a more inclusive version of history. People like Councilwoman Szakos cannot take Civil War memorials away; laws forbid it. Though she voted to take Lee-Jackson Day off the city's paid holiday list, that doesn't mean celebrating it is illegal. As Adcock told me, "If you want to go spend Jan. 21 at Lee's grave, then you should go do it. Lexington needs the tourist money."

Historian David Goldfield writes in his book, "Still Fighting the Civil War": "What is needed is not so much a merger of Robert E. Lee and Martin Luther King Jr. as a better understanding of both, an appreciation that one can accept the other's past without distorting it or denigrating others." I don't know if the celebration of Gen. Lee's composure, brilliance, honor and devotion to Virginia is a good enough reason. There have been many composed, brilliant, honorable and devoted men and women in history who do not have a holiday named after them or dozens of statues of their

likenesses. Maybe this is what Barry Isenhour hates most about people my age — our reluctance to suspend disbelief. He thinks just because we don't have Confederate pride, we don't have Southern pride either.

But my own complacency toward those who want to celebrate the Lost Cause is inherent. Am I brainwashed because I attended Joseph Finegan Elementary in Atlantic Beach, Florida, which bears the name of a Confederate brigadier general? Or because I live down the block from the Stonewall Jackson Hotel? I consider myself a progressive person, but I don't think twice about these relics of a Southern narrative.

Like any good Southern gal, my childhood was spent going to historic battlefields, monuments, and museums, as well as learning about the inhumanity of slavery and the trials and tribulations of the Civil Rights movement. However, my photographer partner on this story, Pat Jarrett, is from Ohio. His father was a history teacher who made it a point to teach his children about these subjects, but my education was way more steeped in Civil War knowledge and myth. I understood the paradox of the “duality of the Southern thing” from a young age and have been troubled by it since.

There are Southerners who feel this topic has been talked about too much. To them, the statues are charming anachronisms and neo-Confederates aren't even worth a “bless his heart.” They believe if the conversation could finally stop, so would the extremist voices. I'm not sure that “close your eyes and they'll go away” is the best reaction. There will always be people in this country who worship Confederate heroes, call kitchen slaves “just cooks” and who wish to preserve a mythical Southern Way of Life.

In the end, I walk away with this: the Civil War is over. The Confederate States of America no longer exists as a sovereign nation (if it ever did). But racism and the subjugation of human beings live on in this country. Therefore, the interpretation must go on.



Michael Twitty uses our obsession with history to wipe the sheen off old interpretations of the antebellum South, instead demonstrating the immense amount of hard work, struggle and toil required of slaves. By simply taking part in a reenactment, Louis L. Carter Jr. expands the narrative of a battle and broadens the scope of history. When Waverly Byth Adcock teaches elementary school children about the Civil War, it's about the hardships of war and the time period; he's not preaching the disgruntled opinions of those who revere the Lost Cause.

When I spoke to Michael Twitty on the phone, he asked: “What does the South have anymore? We're running out of fields. We're running out of nature. What we have left is the food, the music and the history.... This is a world we made together, not apart. But the interpretation of our history up until this point keeps us separated.”

History is contentious. Howard Zinn, an historian and writer who taught at Spelman College in the late 1950s and early 1960s and wrote a book about the South called

“The Southern Mystique,” writes in his essay “Objections to Objectivity” from his book “Failure to Quit”:

There’s no such thing as impartial history. The chief problem in historical honesty is not outright lying. It’s the omission or de-emphasis of important data. The definition of “important,” of course, depends on one’s values.

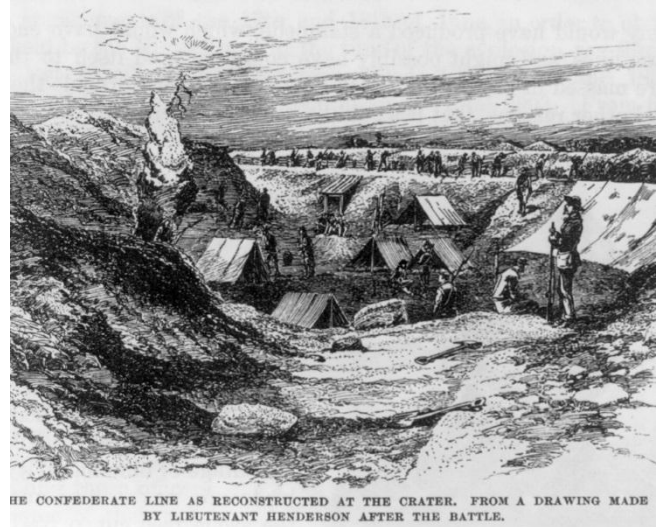
In the past few years, a more diverse group of people has taken up historical interpretation and reenacting. They are broadening the scope of history, to include what was missing or glossed over — not only the violence against and degradation of African-Americans, but also of the lower classes. They do it not only to work through the trauma of their ancestry, but also for everyone else’s benefit.

Now, on the battlefield or in a plantation’s kitchen, many different voices and narratives can be heard. African-American reenactors can win battles or “die” for the future of their people, while white Southerners dressed in gray can come to terms with the complacency, ignorance or worse of their Confederate ancestors. Through their work, the neoclassical architecture of antebellum homes and the sacred grounds of the battlefields take on new, broader meaning. We can preserve these sites without preserving the attitudes that founded their construction and consecration.

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History Rewind: The Petersburg Campaign, with Wilson Greene

August 25, 2019 by Mike Kennedy .Blue and Gray Education Society



THE CONFEDERATE LINE AS RECONSTRUCTED AT THE CRATER. FROM A DRAWING MADE BY LIEUTENANT HENDERSON AFTER THE BATTLE.

*Battle of Petersburg Crater / From a drawing made by Lieutenant Henderson after the battle
Battles and Leaders of the Civil War [ca 1887] / NPS*

In September 2019, the Blue & Gray Education Society will host an intriguing new tour focused on the Petersburg Campaign, A Campaign of Giants: The Battle for Petersburg. The host is none other than Wilson Greene, a world traveler and well-known Civil War historian. Greene has written some two-dozen articles on the topic, plus six books, including A Campaign of Giants, the first of a three-volume history of the Petersburg Campaign.

Greene’s interest in the Civil War was sparked in his childhood, and grew in intensity after a family trip to Gettysburg. After graduating from Florida State University, he studied as a grad student at LSU under noted historian T. Harry Williams. Greene is a co-founder of the American Battlefield Trust, originally known as the Association for the Preservation of Civil War Sites, and spent five years as the organization’s first director. He also served as director of Pamplin Historical Park in

Virginia. Greene talked with us about the Petersburg Campaign and the BGES tour.



A. Wilson Greene

BGES Blog: You refer to the Petersburg as a “Campaign.” Others call it a Battle or even a Siege. Why do you believe Campaign is the most accurate term?

Wil Greene: Really, it’s a matter of semantics. But a battle is a single action, and Petersburg consumed nine and a half months. So I believe calling it a battle is out of the question.

A siege, on the other hand, includes several key components. The army under siege has to be surrounded. That did not happen in Petersburg. Siege tactics are also very specific from engineering and strategic standpoints. Grant authorized siege tactics for a grand total of 36 hours, and they were never actually implemented. Finally, a siege suggests a static arrangement. Though Petersburg is often portrayed that way, it wasn’t really the case.

BGES Blog: The Petersburg Campaign Tour takes place in a month from now, from September 25 to September 28. Tell us a little about it.

Wil Greene: The tour coincides with the first volume of my Petersburg trilogy, [*A Campaign of Giants*](#). We cover the first three offensives of the Petersburg Campaign. I enjoy this tour because we take people to sites that they’ve likely never seen before. We really get off the beaten path. Even with something like the Crater, we offer a fresh perspective.

BGES Blog: Talk more about the three offensives you mentioned.

Wil Greene: We devote a full day to each offensive. The first took place from June 15 to 18, 1864. It starts with Union troops crossing the James River and launching their initial attacks on Petersburg’s eastern defenses. It was incredibly bloody. Union casualties numbered about 13,000, while there were about 4,000 for the Confederate army.

Day two of the tour covers two separate operations—one infantry and the other cavalry—that occurred from June 22 to July 1. The cavalry raid was one of the largest of the entire Civil War. Though the Union troops were defeated, they did manage to disrupt critical Confederate communication lines.

The final day of the tour traces two battles, First Deep Bottom and the Battle of The Crater. Both involved what would become Grant’s pattern: attack north of the James River and extend the Union reach south of Petersburg. The Battle of The Crater would be Grant’s last head-on offensive until April of 1865. He viewed this strategy as too costly in terms of casualties. In fact, Grant called The Battle of The Crater “the saddest affair” he had witnessed in the war.



Petersburg National Battlefield reenactors representing the Confederate Unit, Pegram's Battery demonstrate to visitors how a 12 pounder Napoleon cannon was fired / NPS

BGES Blog: The Petersburg Campaign saw the birth of the widespread use of trench warfare. Why? Was this in part due to what Grant's reaction to The Battle of The Crater?

Wil Greene: To maintain support for the Union effort, Grant understood that he had to show constant progress and prove that the Civil War was winnable. Deadly battles did not help that cause. Trench warfare allowed commanders on both sides to take a more defensive posture. For the Union, that meant the ability to hold lines with fewer troops. For the Confederacy, it meant the ability to simply hold on and survive.

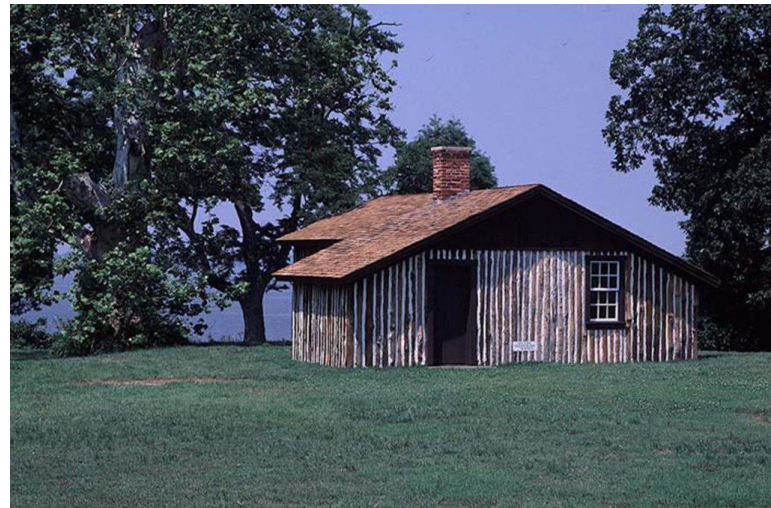
It's worth noting that quite a bit of these trenches remain, on public and private grounds alike. We'll take a good look at them during the tour.

BGES Blog: As you noted, the Petersburg Campaign was a long series of attacks and counterattacks that lasted 292 days. Did the change of seasons affect military strategy? How was morale on both sides?

Wil Greene: The change of seasons had a significant impact. During the winter in the Petersburg area—November through March—the temperature during the day was usually above freezing, but it fell below that at night. This created very difficult conditions for wheeled vehicles. Troops were often immobilized, and the Confederate army was relegated to a strictly defensive position.

Grant was well aware that he had to make continued inroads to sustain a winning strategy. In early February 1865, when the weather unexpectedly warmed up, the Union took the opportunity to launch an offensive resulting in the Battle of Hatcher's Run. It was part of Grant's strategy to cut off Confederate supply lines and take control of all the railroads.

Union morale was usually high despite very poor living conditions. The troops were definitely bolstered by the re-election of President Lincoln. The opposite was true for Confederate troops. They saw unprecedented levels of desertion during this time.



The cabin where General Grant made his headquarters / NPS

BGES Blog: Virginia had a large black population, more than 500,000 in all. What role did African-Americans play in the Petersburg Campaign?

Wil Greene: Many people forget that Petersburg was the second largest city in Virginia and the seventh largest in the Confederacy during this time. It also had the largest percentage blacks as a proportion of the free population. Interestingly, hundreds of these men volunteered for the Confederate army. They were perhaps trying to get on the “right” side if the Confederacy won. They were refused as soldiers, of course, but worked tirelessly to build trenches.

The Union employed two divisions of United States Colored Troops, some former slaves from Virginia and other Southern states. In fact, Petersburg was the first time in the war’s Eastern Theater that African-Americans made a significant contribution in battle.

BGES Blog: Place the Petersburg Campaign in proper context. How is it viewed historically in terms of its impact on the Civil War?

Wil Greene: We all know that eternal and unanswerable question of the Civil War: What was the turning point? I would argue for the Petersburg Campaign. Up until this point, the Confederate resistance seemed unconquerable to many and led to pessimism from the Union. Coupled with the re-election of Lincoln, Petersburg proved that the Union could and would win.



The sun breaking through the clouds at City Point, Petersburg / NPS

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