



## THE "OLD LINER" NEWSLETTER

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### Notes from the President

By Robert Ford, President of the Baltimore Civil War Roundtable

Summer is here, which usually means many people are travelling to points near and far. Hopefully, members of the BCWRT will take the warmer weather as an opportunity to visit sites related to the Civil War. Places such as Antietam, Harper Ferry, Arlington Cemetery, Bull Run, and Gettysburg are just a short drive from the Baltimore area. Speaking of Gettysburg, the annual Gettysburg reenactment will occur on the actual dates of the original battle- July 1-3. It is always an exciting event.

A number of speakers are scheduled for the next several months. Author Edward Bonekemper, originally slated to speak in February (think blizzard) will make his presentation on the Lost Cause on June 26. Dr. Thomas Holmes is a name that may not be familiar to many of you; however, his research and work affected thousands of CW soldiers and touches our lives today. Annette T. Khawane, Adjunct Professor of Mortuary Sciences at Catonsville Community College will enlighten you to the work of Dr. Holmes at the July 26 meeting.

Maryland native Harriet Tubman's life before, during and after the Civil War can truly be described as amazing. On August 23, actress, musician Taryn Weaver embody Ms Tubman, whose image will soon be featured on the \$20 bill. On September 27, historian, author William Connery provide details on John S. Mosby's raids in northern Virginia during the war.

The October 25 meeting is still being finalize; however, both the November 22 and the December 13 meeting will focus on the Battle of Gettysburg.

Frank Arming feature an extensive Power Point presentation of the first and second day of the noted battle during consecutive meetings. The Day III presentation will be scheduled for 2017.

We have received confirmation from Daniel Toomey that the NPS Johnson/Gilmore Raid tour planned for July 9 has been cancelled. Perhaps the tour will be rescheduled for a later time.

Look for our advertisement in the Civil War News to begin running on August. Hopefully, this three month ad will help us make contact with potential new members. We are open to suggestions of how to add to our membership. The best recruitment tool is current members making personal contact with their family and friends. Mention the BCWRT in your regular conversations and generate the interest in the good, informative times shared by this organization.

### Washington National Cathedral to Rid Windows of Confederate Battle Flag

By LIAM STACK, New York Times, JUNE 9, 2016

The Washington National Cathedral, one of the nation's most prominent houses of worship, said on Wednesday that it would remove two images of the Confederate battle flag that have been part of its stained-glass windows for more than 60 years. The windows that depict the two flags were installed in 1953 to pay tribute to Gen. Stonewall Jackson and Gen. Robert E. Lee of the Confederate Army. The cathedral said in a statement that, while the flags will be removed shortly, the windows would remain to "serve as a catalyst for the difficult and uncomfortable

conversations about race that we need to have on the road to racial justice."

"Instead of simply taking the windows down and going on with business as usual, the cathedral recognizes that, for now, they provide an opportunity for us to begin to write a new narrative on race and racial justice at the cathedral and perhaps for our nation," the Rev. Dr. Kelly Brown Douglas, the cathedral's canon theologian, said in the statement.

The two small areas of the bay of windows that depict the Confederate battle flag will be removed "as soon as we can do it," said Mariann Edgar Budde, bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of Washington and the interim dean of the cathedral. She said it would take no longer than a few weeks.

Bishop Budde said that neither she nor the previous dean, the Very Rev. Gary Hall, knew that the windows contained images of the flag until last summer. It was a shock to learn they were there, the bishop said, and Father Hall called for their removal last year.

"They were brought to our attention after the Charleston massacre last year," Bishop Budde said, referring to the mass shooting by a white supremacist who killed nine people at a historically black church in South Carolina. "That's when it resurfaced in our consciousness that the Confederate flag was part of our stained-glass artistry."

The cathedral is one of many prominent institutions in the United States that have grappled in recent years with the legacy of racism and slavery. The Confederate battle flag was removed from the grounds of the South Carolina Statehouse one month after the shooting, and Georgetown University, which is not



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far from the cathedral in the nation's capital, has publicly struggled with the fact that it sold 272 slaves to southern plantation owners in 1838.



The Washington National Cathedral plans to remove Confederate battle flags from two stained-glass windows. Credit: Washington National Cathedral

The windows depicting General Lee and General Jackson were installed in the cathedral almost a century after the end of the Civil War with the financial assistance of the Daughters of the Confederacy and a donor from the North, Bishop Budde said. She described it as part of "the way the Civil War memory was encoded in American history in the 20th century." "At the time it was publicized as a reconciliation effort between daughters of the North and the South — basically white people on both sides of the Mason-Dixon line — coming together to memorialize heroes from the Civil War in heroic, and in Lee's case really mythic, language," she said.

The decision to remove the images was made after a six-month study by a five-person task force, the cathedral said. That group also recommended an audit of all art and iconography on the premises, it said.

The cathedral will also devote "significant liturgical, artistic and programmatic resources" over the next two years to a series of

discussions to decide whether the entire bay of windows should be removed.

"Whatever the chapter's ultimate decision, the windows will not live in the cathedral in the same way they have in the past," the task force wrote in a report that was published online Wednesday.

### Big-box development plans stir ill will around Gettysburg Battlefield site

By Tom Knapp, Lancaster online, May 21, 2016

A new battle is brewing in Gettysburg over development rights to an area surrounding the battlefield's only preserved Confederate site.

According to an article Friday in The Sentinel, the Gettysburg Battlefield Preservation Association spent 17 years and more than \$2 million restoring the Daniel Lady farm on Hanover Road in Gettysburg.

The farm, according to association president Barbara Mowery, was a field hospital for the Confederates during the pivotal, three-day battle that turned the tide of the Civil War.

Association member Keith Foote told The Sentinel that "there are still bloodstains in the barn from the Confederate soldiers that were treated here," and Mowery said it's the only Confederate site north of the Mason-Dixon Line that's open to the public.

Now, Mark Gettysburg Associates has submitted plans to build a big-box store just off Route 30 in Straban Township, along with more than a dozen commercial plots, on a property bordering the Lady farm.

"We plan on having a national campaign to stop the development," Mowery told The Sentinel. "This is

hallowed ground as far as the Civil War goes."

Camp Letterman, as it was known at the time, was the site of the largest field hospital in the Civil War that treated both Union and Confederate soldiers. Mowery said the association believes the bodies of Civil War soldiers could still be buried on the site.

The association also has concerns about how the development would change the view for tourists visiting other historic battlefield sites, such as Benner's Ridge.

"Your view from (Benner's Ridge) looking across Hanover Road would end up being a box store and parking lots," Foote said in the interview.

### 'Rare' Civil War Shipwreck Discovered Off North Carolina Coast

BY Avianne Tan, ABC News, March 8, 2016

Maritime archaeologists and researchers in North Carolina recently discovered one of the most significant shipwrecks found off the East Coast in recent years.

During a routine sonar assessment of known wrecks off the seaside town of Oak Island in North Carolina on Feb. 27, researchers and archaeologists stumbled upon the well-preserved wreckage of a blockade runner steamer from the Civil War, according to Billy Ray Morris, North Carolina's deputy state archaeologist-underwater and director of the North Carolina Department of Natural and Cultural Resources' Underwater Archaeology branch.

"This finding is incredibly exciting because it's so intact," Morris told ABC News. "The sonar image shows almost the entire vessel. That's very rare."

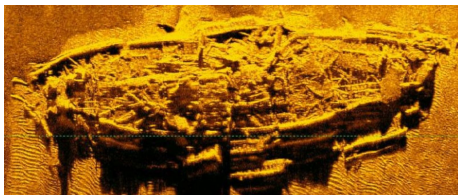


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The iron-hulled vessel, about 225-feet long, is likely over 150 years old and is the first mid-19th century wreck to be found in the area in decades, Morris said.

He explained that the vessel was a blockade runner for the Confederacy during the Civil War. Blockade runners were "speedy steamers" used to get around Union war fleets, which sought to cut off the Confederacy from overseas trade.

"These were some of the most sophisticated ships of their day, comparable to the high-speed cigarette boats that modern-day drug smugglers might use now," Morris said.



On Feb. 27, 2016, researchers and archaeologists from the Underwater Archaeology Branch of the North Carolina Office of State Archaeology and the Institute of International Maritime Research discovered what they believe is the shipwreck of a blockade runner from the Civil War.

He added the runners often contained war materials for the Confederate army and luxury items -- including "cases of wine, Paris fashion and nice books" -- which sold for a lot of money at the southern docks.

Three blockade runners are known to have been lost in the area: the Agnes E. Fry, Spunkie and Georgianna McCaw, Morris said.

Based on the ship's size and several parts missing from the vessel, Morris believes the wreck is likely the Agnes E. Fry, he said.

"The Fry has the best story, too," he added. "The owner, Thomas Fry, had the ship renamed for the wife.

Thomas was also an interesting character. He was later killed while running a blockade in Cuba, where he was helping to supply guns to Cuban rebels."

Morris said he and his team will try diving down to see the shipwreck tomorrow to do further research and confirm the ship's identity.

### **Petersburg Civil War battlefield looted, described as 'crime scene'**

By Andreas Preuss, CNN, May 28, 2016

Authorities are investigating looting at the Petersburg National Battlefield, just south of Richmond, Virginia. The battlefield describes itself as the site of the war's longest siege, lasting nine months between 1864-1865, and claiming 70,000 casualties.

"Earlier this week, one of the park employees was out doing landscape work and noticed some things were out of place," NPS spokesman Chris Bryce said.

The looting happened in the eastern part of the park, the National Park Service said, citing a large number of excavated pits. Marked graves were not disturbed.

Park officials have not described what type of items or relics were stolen in the theft.

"They are probably doing their homework of the area, probably did research on Civil War ...They were in the ground, they likely would have used a metal detector and a digging tool," Bryce said.

Civil War relics, like uniform buttons, rifle parts and other metallic battlefield items regularly show up on internet auction sites.

The Park Service says looting a National Battlefield is a federal crime,

carrying up to a \$20,000 fine and two years in prison for a conviction.

The siege of Petersburg is known as the longest military event of the Civil War, pitting Union General Ulysses S. Grant against Confederate Gen. Robert E. Lee.

The Petersburg siege and battle over supply lines led to the eventual fall of the Confederate capital of Richmond, Virginia and the surrender of the Confederacy.

In one of its most infamous battles, called The Crater, Union troops detonated a mine underneath a Confederate fortification.

But poorly led Union troops were gunned down in the advance.

Grant called the Battle of the Crater "the saddest affair I have ever witnessed in war."

### **Civil War spy lived to tell the tale**

By John Stanley, the Republic Pauline Cushman was a spy. Not an especially effective one, but good enough to win a commendation from President Abraham Lincoln and tour with P.T. Barnum. For a decade she and her husband lived in Arizona, first in Casa Grande, then in Florence. Although she died a pauper, hundreds of people attended her funeral.

Harriet Wood was born in New Orleans in 1833 and spent much of her childhood in Michigan. Determined to make a career as an actress, she moved to New York when she was 18 and changed her name to Pauline Cushman. With her dark hair, dark eyes and buxom figure, she quickly landed several small roles. In 1853 she married Charles Dickinson, a member of the orchestra, and they moved to Cleveland, where he taught music. They had two



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children.

Dickinson joined the Union Army when the Civil War started, but died in 1862 of "camp fever" (probably typhus).

Cushman promptly left the kids with her in-laws and returned to the theater.

Her career as a spy began in 1863, while performing in Union-held territory in Kentucky. Confederate sympathizers offered her \$300 — a substantial sum in those days — to make a toast from the stage lauding Confederate President Jefferson Davis.

Cushman promptly informed local Union officials, and together they concocted a plan. During a performance shortly thereafter, Cushman stood and made the toast.

As expected, the theater fired her. As hoped, she gained credibility from Southern sympathizers.

Soon she was moving in high Confederate circles. With her sultry good looks and skills as an actress, she managed to garner information on troop movements, battle plans and other useful information from Confederate officers eager to show off.

Despite strict orders never to write anything down, Cushman made a sketch of troop positions and hid it in her shoe.

Caught red-handed, she was taken to Gen. Braxton Bragg, summarily tried and sentenced to death. But with Union troops advancing, Confederate forces abandoned Shelbyville, Tenn., just days before Cushman was to be hanged, leaving her behind.

Union General (and later President) James Garfield, perhaps sensing some good PR could help the Northern cause, gave Cushman the

rank of Brevet-Major, and President Lincoln commended her for her service.

After the war "Miss Major" Cushman toured with P.T. Barnum, appearing in the uniform of an Army major and describing, likely with much embellishment, her exploits as a spy. Before long the public lost interest and Cushman found work in California, managing hotels. In 1879 she married Jeremiah Fryer, 15 years her junior. They moved to Casa Grande, where they ran a hotel and livery stable.



Pauline Cushman

After Fryer was elected sheriff of Pinal County in the mid-1880s, he and his wife moved to Florence. No hothouse orchid, Cushman was handy enough with a rifle to help Mike Rice, the town's jailer, hold off a lynch mob one night while her husband was out of town.

By the end of the 1880s, though, Fryer's philandering had broken their marriage.

In her later years, Cushman lived in a boarding house in San Francisco, working occasionally as a seamstress and housekeeper. She was using opium to ease the pain of arthritis and rheumatism. She died of an overdose

— possibly intentional — on Dec. 2, 1893.

About 800 people attended her funeral, including hundreds of veterans.

In 1910, her body was re-interred in the Officer's Circle of the national cemetery at the Presidio of San Francisco.

### A Confederate Dissident, in a Film With Footnotes

By JENNIFER SCHUESSLER, New York Times, JUNE 15, 2016

The forthcoming Matthew McConaughey drama "Free State of Jones" lays claim to being the first Hollywood film in decades to depict Reconstruction,

the still controversial post-Civil War period that attempted to rebuild the South along racially egalitarian lines.

But the movie, written and directed by Gary Ross, might also lay claim to a more unusual title: the first Hollywood drama to come with footnotes.

The film recounts the true story of Newton Knight (Mr. McConaughey), a Confederate deserter who led a ragtag dissident army from the swamps of Jones County, Miss., and continued to fight for the rights of African-Americans after the Civil War ended.

In advance of the film's release, on June 24, Mr. Ross, whose credits include "Seabiscuit" and the first installment of "The Hunger Games," is posting an elaborate website annotating some three dozen topics and scenes from the movie, allowing audiences to click through and evaluate for themselves his historical sources, including many primary documents.

"I stopped my life to read and study for two years before I even started writing a script," Mr. Ross said during a recent interview in his office in



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Manhattan. "If people want to pick apart this history, they can. But they should know that this wasn't the glib work of a screenwriter who was inventing things."

"Free State of Jones" arrives nearly a year after the massacre in a church in Charleston, S.C., renewed debate about the Confederate flag that Knight battled against. But it also lands in the wake of bruising, racially charged debates about whether movies like "Lincoln" and "Selma" give whites too much, or too little, credit for black progress.

While Knight is a hero, Mr. Ross said emphatically, he is not a white savior of African-Americans, but a white ally. "I think we need to celebrate alliances," he said. "And it is demonstrably true that Newt was allied with African-Americans all through Reconstruction after a lot of white people in the South had bailed." In carrying the Newton Knight story through the violent rollback of the promise of Reconstruction, Mr. Ross is taking on the negative image of the period driven deep into American consciousness by films like "Gone With the Wind" and D. W. Griffith's "The Birth of a Nation," as well as the Lost Cause nostalgia that has infused many movies since.

"This is not your granddaddy's Civil War movie," said the Yale historian David Blight, one of 11 historical consultants listed prominently in the closing credits. "It doesn't in any way sentimentalize any element of the Confederate cause. Quite the contrary."

Mr. Ross first encountered the Knight story when a colleague showed him a film treatment around 2006, when he was coming off "Seabiscuit."

"I had no idea there was dissent within the Confederacy," he said. "That immediately fascinated me."



The actual Newt Knight, who is played by Matthew McConaughey in "Free State of Jones."

He read and eventually optioned Victoria E. Bynum's "The Free State of Jones" (2001), the first modern scholarly book to piece together the scattered evidence of Knight's story. To get the bigger picture, he also approached leading scholars of Reconstruction, starting with the Columbia professor Eric Foner.

"I'm normally skeptical about Hollywood history, so I sent him off with a reading list," Mr. Foner, who has not yet seen the movie, said by email. "He diligently read the books and came back, so I was happy to consult with him."

Eventually Mr. Ross met John Stauffer, a Harvard professor who has written extensively about abolitionism. He set the director up with visiting-scholar credentials and created what Mr. Stauffer described as a rigorous syllabus. "It was like working with grad students you really like," he said.

The website Mr. Ross has created from his research covers topics

ranging from material details like the horrifying spiked collar worn by a runaway slave to broader issues like the racial makeup of Knight's military company and whether Knight ever formally declared an independent State of Jones that seceded from the Confederacy.

Where Mr. Ross has invented characters or episodes or made guesses about motivations, he explains why, pointing to justifications in the historical record. For example, the film depicts Knight's decades-long relationship with Rachel (played by Gugu Mbatha-Raw of "Belle"), a former slave who once belonged to his grandfather and with whom he had several children. The site shows an 1876 document in which Knight (who remained married to his white wife) deeded her 160 acres of land — an indication, Mr. Ross writes, that theirs was "a loving relationship that grew over time," rather than manifesting a "Thomas Jefferson/Sally Hemings power dynamic." Knight did not own slaves.

The extent of Knight's collaborations across the color line has been a point of sometimes hot debate among scholars, including those on Mr. Ross's team. In 2009, after Mr. Stauffer and Sally Jenkins published "The State of Jones," a book inspired by Mr. Ross's screenplay, Ms. Bynum posted a blistering three-part review on her blog, questioning what she called its "highly exaggerated claims" that Knight had fought for racial equality before and after the war.

Ms. Bynum, who also consulted on the film, said in an interview that she didn't want to revisit the controversy, but noted that since her review, new documents had surfaced that lent support to the film's interpretations.



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"I would not characterize Newt as a civil rights activist, but the factual ground is solid, and there is room to interpret beyond that," she said.

Mr. Ross said he carefully considered how to depict Knight's relationships with African-Americans. In a scene showing the meeting of the Union League (which in the South functioned as a black secret society promoting the Republican Party and voting rights of freedmen), Mr. Ross noted that Moses Washington, a fictional African-American character, leads the meeting while Knight sits to the side.

The Union League, he writes on the site, was "an incubator of black political agency."

Another fictionalized scene — in which Knight leads a group of African Americans into town to attempt to vote in the fraud-ridden state election of 1875 — may smack to some of white saviorism. But it can be justified, Mr. Ross said, by a document showing that in 1875 Knight was made a colonel in a unit set up by Mississippi's radical Republican governor Adelbert Amisto to protect the voting rights of African-Americans — "incontrovertible proof," he said, of Knight's "commitment to racial justice."

It remains to be seen how Mr. Ross's film will land with audiences. Kellie Carter Jackson, an assistant professor of history at Hunter College and the author of the coming book "Force and Freedom: Black Abolitionists and the Politics of Violence," said there was a need for a more accurate depiction of Reconstruction, but noted that Hollywood "has a hard time divesting white men from the center of the universe."

"If it's really about Knight being an ally, then shouldn't McConaughey be

the supporting actor and not the lead?" she said.

Mr. Ross said that Knight's story was just one story and that he welcomed more films like Nate Parker's "The Birth of a Nation," about Nat Turner's rebellion, which will be released this fall.

"I wish someone would also make a film about Denmark Vesey, a film about Tunis Campbell, a film about Robert Smalls, a film about Albion Tourg e," he said, rattling off the names of undersung 19th-century African-American heroes and white allies. "There are a lot of stories that need to turn the lights on so we can have an objective view of history."

### Houston School District approves name changes for seven schools

By Tracy Clemons, ABC13, May 12, 2016

HOUSTON (KTRK) --

The HISD Board of Trustees voted Thursday night to rename seven schools that were named after people with ties to the Confederacy. Dozens of people walked out of the meeting angry. Some believe their history was being rewritten. But they all say the renaming process was never about the community the trustees serve.

Here's a list of the schools that were renamed, along with their new names:

- \* Lee High School to Margaret Long Wisdom High School
- \* Albert Sidney Johnston Middle School to Meyerland Performing and Visual Arts Middle School
- \* Thomas "Stonewall" Jackson Middle School to Yolanda Black Navarro Middle School of Excellence
- \* John Reagan High School to Heights High School

\* Richard Dowling Middle School to Audrey H. Lawson Middle School

\* Sidney Lanier Middle School to Bob Lanier Middle School

\* Jefferson Davis High School to Northside High School

### An Unlikely Friendship

By Kenneth Weisbrode, New York Times

Social scientists tell us that soldiers fight for one another more than for any other reason. Defending your unit has been shown to exceed a willingness to die for family, cause or country, and even the fear of capture. Yet unit cohesion in battle is a tricky thing to measure, let alone compare.

A related quality — a subset of unit cohesion, let's say — is person-to-person friendship. Military friendships and loyalties are among the strongest because in many cases they are literally ones of life and death. But again, they are not very well understood or discussed.

This is true especially for those at the highest levels. There are many famous generals and admirals, but very few famous friendships in American military history. Those we know about are atypical and asymmetrical, such as the one between George Washington and the Marquis de Lafayette, or between George Marshall and Sir John Dill. Most senior commanders tend to be solitary figures, at least in public.

This is one reason the friendship between Gen. James Longstreet and Gen. Ulysses S. Grant is so remarkable. Neither man was known for being an extrovert; one of their few commonalities was a love for horses over people. Even more stunning was the fact that they fought on opposite sides — Longstreet for the Confederacy and Grant for the Union.



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Their backgrounds could not be more different: Grant grew up in small-town Ohio; Longstreet was born in South Carolina and was raised a Southern gentleman in Georgia. By the time he entered West Point, "Pete" Longstreet was over six feet tall, well built and handsome. "Sam" Grant, when he arrived a year later, stood just an inch over five feet, and was slight, scrappy and silent – "A plodding enigma," as one of his biographers described him. And yet, somehow, Sam and Pete became good friends.

After graduation both were posted to Jefferson Barracks, Mo. Longstreet's West Point roommate and cousin, Fred Dent, was from nearby, and a visit to the Dent house led to a meeting between Fred's sister, Julia, and Grant. The two married in 1848, with the newlywed Longstreets in attendance and, according to some accounts, with Longstreet himself as groomsman.

Both men then went their separate ways. Sometime later they ran into each other in St. Louis when Grant, having left the Army, "had been unfortunate," and, in Longstreet's recollection, "really in needy circumstances." They joined a few other Army men in "an old time game of brag." Later, Grant insisted on repaying a 15-year-old debt of \$5 to Longstreet. The latter refused but Grant insisted: "You must take it. I cannot live with anything in my possession that is not mine." So he took it.

The two friends would finally meet again following the Confederate surrender at Appomattox Court House. It was Longstreet, according to various accounts, who persuaded Lee that Grant would offer generous terms there. When Grant did just that, the mood in the room was one of stiff relief. It was the same when Grant

met a few Southern officers shortly after. But as soon as he saw Longstreet in the group, he approached him warmly, grabbed his hand and said, "Pete, let us have another game of brag, to recall the days that were so pleasant."

Longstreet was overcome: "Great God! I thought to myself, how my heart swells out to such magnanimous touch of humanity. Why do men fight who were born to be brothers?"

That sentiment, alas, was not widespread. When time came to weigh amnesty for Confederate officers, Grant put in a strong recommendation for Longstreet. It was vetoed by President Andrew Johnson, who said to the Southern general, "There are three persons of the South who can never receive amnesty: Mr. Davis, General Lee, and yourself. You have given the Union cause too much trouble."

"You know, Mr. President, that those who are forgiven most love the most," replied Longstreet.

"Yes," said Johnson, "you have very high authority for that, but you can't have amnesty."

Longstreet eventually got his amnesty and Grant became president. Grant even appointed Longstreet, then his "political friend and adherent," to the position of surveyor of customs at New Orleans. It was something of an achievement because Longstreet had made himself very unpopular in that city by publishing positive views on Reconstruction, which went against those then prevailing throughout much of the South. Longstreet remained in the job until 1873 and went on to accept other appointments: as a federal marshal, a collector of revenue, a commissioner of railroads and even as a minister to the Ottoman Empire, just two years after

Grant visited there on his post-presidential world tour. Longstreet died at age 82, in 1904.

Grant died nearly two decades earlier, following two difficult terms as president and a fatal bout with throat cancer. In spite of a vivid memoir, he did not say much about his friendship with a man he described as "brave, honest, intelligent, a very capable soldier, subordinate to his superiors, just and kind to his subordinates, but jealous of his own rights, which he had the courage to maintain." Longstreet, he concluded, "was never on the lookout to detect a slight, but saw one as soon as anybody when intentionally given."

As with many friendships, the thoughts expressed about the other may say as much or even more about oneself. Good friendships, even those as vexed by history as the one between Grant and Longstreet, tend to do this from both sides and "between the lines." They are akin, as Grant implied, to the bidirectional and organic loyalty necessary for good leadership – and not only in battle. They speak to the qualities that leaders honor and lack in the estimation of themselves, and those they seek, want and even need from others. And they point to a neglected aspect of our own "leaderless" political culture, which remains obsessed with the foibles and failures of leaders.