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The Life of A Reputation: The Public Memory of Ulysses S. Grant

Richard G. Mannion

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THE LIFE OF A REPUTATION: THE PUBLIC MEMORY OF ULYSSES S. GRANT

by

RICHARD G. MANNION

Under the Direction of Wendy Hamand Venet

ABSTRACT

At the time of his death in 1885, Ulysses S. Grant was widely regarded by his contemporaries as one of the great Americans of his age. Along with George Washington and Abraham Lincoln, his name was frequently included among the most accomplished heroes of the then still-young republic. Both nationally and internationally Grant was widely regarded as one of the world's great military leaders. He was elected to the presidency of the United States during one of the most divisive epochs in American history and won a decisive electoral victory to earn a second term. In his final years he embarked on a comprehensive world tour to great personal acclaim as well as the acknowledgement of this nation's ascendancy as a world power. And literally hours before his death, he completed a literary work that stands today as one of the finest pieces of writing in American military history.

Yet today, the remembrance of U.S. Grant bears little resemblance to the one he enjoyed among his contemporaries. As noted in a recent biography of Grant, his reputation has fallen

into “disrepair.” In current popular memory, mention of Grant’s name frequently invokes images of a drunk, a failed and corrupt presidency, and a “butcher” who gained victory in America’s great Civil War only as a result of superior resources and manpower.

The intent of this study is to examine the evolution of Grant’s reputation from the American Civil War to recent times. It is intended to tell the story the storytellers told about Grant and how his reputation developed and was forged in popular memory. During his lifetime, this will include the study of a multitude of sources including newspaper accounts, political cartoons, diaries, and letters that reflected prevailing thought about Grant. In the years since his death, research will focus on those numerous factors that shape reputation. These will include delving into historical scholarship, literature, changing cultural nuances, political influences, and the wide range of popular entertainment vehicles so important in shaping public remembrance, to conclude with the suggestion that Grant’s reputation has been miscast in this nation’s popular memory.

INDEX WORDS: U.S. Grant, Reconstruction, Political corruption, Grant’s Tomb, “Negro” suffrage, Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments, Stalwarts, Liberal Republicans, Alabama Claims Issue, Military commanders, Presidential polls, Presidential reputations

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by

RICHARD G. MANNION

A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in the College of Arts and Sciences

Georgia State University

2012

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by

RICHARD G. MANNION

Committee Chair: Wendy Hamand Venet

Committee: Charles Steffen

Larry Youngs

Electronic Version Approved:

Office of Graduate Studies

College of Arts and Sciences

Georgia State University

December 2012

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my fabulous family; to the love of my life, the incredible Janet B. Mannion, and to our amazing, beloved children, Grant, Mary Elizabeth, Brad, and Katie Rose. Thank you all for making my life such a joy and for making all of my lifelong dreams come true. I am so blessed to have each and every one of you.

I would also like to dedicate this work to members of the Armed Forces of the United States, past and present, for serving, sacrificing and protecting the freedoms we all hold so dear.

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1 A REMEMBRANCE DENIED

“Grant’s legacy disappeared from popular memory with shocking rapidity.”

Joan Waugh

Ulysses S. Grant died on July 23rd, 1885. He was 63-years old. His successful race to complete his memoirs before he passed away left his beloved family the financial security he was never able to earn during his lifetime. His battle to finish his life’s story while dying from a very painful throat cancer captured the nation’s imagination and sympathies.¹ He managed to complete his two-volume memoirs on July 21st, just two days before he expired. Press coverage around the nation and the world reflected the importance of the event and the esteem in which Grant was held. The failing health of the general dominated the nation’s press coverage for days before his death and for weeks after it. From July 20th, 1885, three days before Grant’s death, until early August, days after his funeral, articles about Grant proliferated throughout the *New York Times*. Every issue during this three-week period had at least one cover story on Grant. In the July 24th issue, the day Grant’s death was reported, the *Times* devoted every column on the first seven pages of the paper to the story. With the exception of July 26th and July 27th, every issue between July 24th and August 1st devoted all seven of its front-page columns to stories about Grant.²

News coverage was not limited to the *New York Times*. Dominated by a multi-columned picture of him, the July 24th edition of the *Atlanta Constitution* devoted its entire front page to stories about Grant. “The men in Gray as well as the Blue place immortelles upon the Bier of the Dead,” ran the headline from a paper whose city had been ravaged, in large degree, by Grant’s

¹ The New York cottage in which Grant lived out his final days “swarmed with reporters writing daily reports to their newspapers” and was besieged by “people – from nearby and far away,” who came in hopes of seeing Grant before he died, from Joan Waugh, *U.S. Grant: American Hero, American Myth* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009), 200.

² *New York Times*, July 20-August 1, 1885.

strategy of total war. Dispatches from all across the South were printed in the *Constitution* and without exception, heaped praise on the deceased general. From the *Richmond Dispatch*: “his is one of the still fewer names that are entitled to immortality upon earth;” from Little Rock: “The announcement of General Grant’s death was received here with deep regret by all classes;” from Louisville in a dispatch dated July 23rd, “The bells are tolling throughout the city...government flags were hung at half mast.” In Harrisonburg, Virginia, another region devastated by Grant’s strategic decimation of the South, the newspaper reported that the news of General Grant’s death, though not unexpected, was received with “profound regret throughout the valley of Virginia.” “General Grant was a great soldier,” ran the editorial in the Savannah, Georgia *Morning News*, suggesting that in “the opinion of many, he was the greatest soldier developed by the Civil War.” And with the nation’s grief knowing no region or no race or no color, the *New York Freeman*, an African American publication, reported “the whole nation is called upon to mourn one of the greatest men who has lived in this century. The services he rendered the Union and the cause of universal freedom will forever remain one of the rarest and richest pages in our annals.”³

American cities in the South manifested their remorse through tangible displays of sorrow. In Nashville, “The bells of the city are tolling in token of the nation’s loss.” In Ashville, North Carolina, “All public flags (are) at half mast.” In Chattanooga, scene of one of Grant’s great victories, “...all the bells were tolled, the flags were put at half mast, and the public buildings draped.” And despite some very minor opposition in that austere body, the Georgia state legislature unanimously passed a joint resolution honoring Grant. “Resolved,” read the language, “by the general assembly of Georgia that the demise of this great and distinguished citizen and soldier of our common country is regarded by us with profound regret as a national

³ *Atlanta Constitution*, July 24, 1885; *New York Freeman*, July 25, 1885.

calamity.” In Atlanta, the *Journal* reported that “managers of all the leading theatres in the city have decided to close their places of amusement on the evening of Gen. Grant’s funeral.”⁴

Editorials from prominent southern newspapers also found their way into the *New York Times* and a litany of other Northern newspapers. From the *Vicksburg Commercial Herald*, a newspaper representing a city that had been bludgeoned into submission by Grant’s tactics a generation earlier, came high praise and plaudits. “Excepting, perhaps, Washington, no American occupies so conspicuous and enduring a place in the world’s history as General Grant. His name and fame are the world’s heritage and will be kept in remembrance through all time.” His death was “a national affliction” stated the *Columbia (South Carolina) Daily Register* and from the *Richmond Dispatch*, the capitol of the short-lived Confederate nation came the following: “He was an Agamemnon – a king of men. He was so pervaded by greatness that he seemed not to be conscious that he was great.”⁵

Reportage and tributes to Grant were not confined to the national press. Overseas publications weighed in with high praise and condolences for the fallen leader. *The London Times*’ correspondents in the United States reported to readers on July 24th that “expressions of sorrow are universal,” and on July 25th, “General Grant’s death still exclusively absorbs public attention.... Emblems of mourning are to be seen throughout the country. Almost every governor of a state, every legislature, and every mayor has taken appropriate action....Flags are floating everywhere at half mast.” A few weeks later, the *Times*, ever mindful of the adulation with which Grant was received by the English working class less than a decade earlier, editorialized that “General Grant loomed larger in the people’s eyes than any of his rivals or

⁴ From dispatches printed in the *Constitution*, July 24, 1885; *Atlanta Journal*, July 24, 1885.

⁵ Editorials from each paper’s July 24th edition, reprinted in the *NY Times*, July 25, 1885.

contemporaries.”⁶ The English periodical *Public Opinion* declared that “no Englishman who has lived and died within the last half-century fills so large a place in the hearts of Englishmen as Lincoln and Grant fill in the hearts of Americans.” The *London Spectator* editorialized that “the United States will never forget that to General Grant chiefly they owe the victory of the North and the collapse of the slave-power.” And the *London Daily Telegraph* wrote, “yesterday the greatest and most successful soldier that the United States has produced breathed his last.”⁷

Personal remembrances and testimonials filled both national and international papers. From Gainesville, Georgia, old friend and Lee lieutenant James Longstreet declared of Grant, “he was the truest as well as the bravest man that ever lived...the figure of Grant will stand out in bold relief, second only to that of Washington.” Union General Philip Sheridan, the brilliant cavalry leader who served so well under Grant at the end of the war, said that Grant “was the greatest soldier in our history.”⁸ No greater testimony of love or respect for Grant came from Civil War foe General Joseph E. Johnston, regarded by Grant as perhaps the most capable of all Confederate Civil War generals. The *Washington Post* quoted General Johnston: “His appointment as general in chief of the armies of the United States certainly brought the Civil War to a close sooner than it otherwise could have been accomplished. After he assumed full command of the federal forces he organized two armies against which we were unable to contend with any degree of success.”⁹ Such was Johnston’s respect and admiration for Grant that for the funeral, the *London Times* reported that the elderly Johnston, “after a railway journey

⁶ *London Times*, July 24 and July 25, 1885, August 10, 1885.

⁷ *Public Opinion*, 22, 1885; *London Times Spectator*, 58, 1885; Reprinted in the *Constitution*, July 24, 1885.

⁸ *Constitution and NY Times*, July 24, 1885; *NY Times*, August 1, 1885.

⁹ Joseph E. Johnston, *Washington Post*, quoted in the *Constitution*, July 24, 1885.

of 3,500 miles overland from Portland, Oregon, arrived in New York on Friday night as a pallbearer.”¹⁰

Such was the nation’s grief and outpouring of emotion that Grant’s funeral procession in New York City was the largest such spectacle that city had ever witnessed. Of one day’s public viewing of Grant’s remains at City Hall, the *London Times* reported, “when the casket was closed at 1:00 o’clock in the morning, 120,000 (people) had passed through, and over 2,000 were still waiting in line when the doors were shut. The line of people was longest at about nine o’clock last night, stretching in a circuitous route for nearly two miles....” In total, the *Times* reported that “270,000 had passed through City Hall to see Grant’s remains.”¹¹

The list of attendees for the funeral was unparalleled in the history of New York. Veterans from both the Union and the Confederacy, as well as from the Mexican War turned out by the thousands. The *New York Times* reported “1,500,000 people in the streets” to pay homage to General Grant, “Broadway moved like a river into which many tributaries were passed.” For days, the front pages of the *Atlanta Journal* were replete with testimony to Grant. “The Nation’s Great Hero at Rest at Riverside” read one sub-headline. A multitude of people turned out early and stayed late. “An Immense Concourse of People Present at the Ceremonies,” read one and another reported on the “Ten Miles of Moving Humanity.” According to the press releases, the *Journal* reported that “75,000 men marched in the parade,” the “entire North Atlantic squadron formed in the Hudson River” and an “estimated 150,000 alone” waited at the cemetery for the burial ceremonies. It was a ceremony unprecedented not only in New York, but in the United

¹⁰ *London Times*, August 10, 1885. General Johnston would die of pneumonia after catching a cold while serving as honorary pallbearer at the funeral of Grant lieutenant William T. Sherman seven years later.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, August 8 and 10, 1885.

States as well, for as the *Journal* further reported, “Not in the history of the metropolis or of the nation has there been such universal mourning as on this occasion.”¹²

Twelve years after his temporary burial in Central Park, Ulysses S. Grant was re-interred in his permanent burial site in a magnificent granite and marble tomb just off Riverside Drive on the upper west side of Manhattan, which to this day remains the largest mausoleum in North America.¹³ Incredibly, the turnout for the removal of Grant’s remains to his final resting place rivaled that of the funerary ceremony held in 1885. Of the more than 50,000 marchers who took an active part in the procession, *Harper’s Weekly* wrote that “it took this long line something over six hours to pass anything that stood still and waited.” Ten pictures, including a full double page illustration, dominated the periodical. *Harper’s* reported that “the elevated railroad is confident that it alone carried a million people in the course of the day.”¹⁴ Both *Harper’s* and the *New York Times* as well as numerous other organs wrote about the scores of ships, including over a dozen battleships representing five foreign countries, that occupied the Hudson River. Twelve years after his death, the nation once again turned out to honor a man recognized as one of the greatest heroes in American history.

In retrospect, Grant’s credentials and accomplishments are impressive and many of his accomplishments set historical precedent. He graduated from the United States Military Academy at West Point, one of the premier institutions of higher learning in America, in a day when a very small percentage of the American population attended college. He was widely recognized as one of the greatest horsemen of his day; perhaps the best at the academy during his four years there. Less than three years removed from civilian life he served as commanding

¹² *NY Times*, August 9, 1885; *Journal*, August 8, 1885.

¹³ And the second largest in the world, from the National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior, “General Grant National Memorial, New York,” available at: <http://www.nps.gov/gegr/>, accessed on April 28, 2008.

¹⁴ *Harper’s Weekly*, May 8, 1897.

general of all the armed forces of the United States during the greatest threat to the nation's sovereignty in its short history. He subsequently served his nation as General of the Army, a position created for him by the United States Congress, and as such, joined George Washington as the only two Americans to preside over America's armed forces with such power and prestige. He secured the faith, gratitude and friendship of Abraham Lincoln; he earned the respect and admiration of both Robert E. Lee and Frederick Douglass, counted the irrepressible Mark Twain amongst his closest of friends, and signed into law the most comprehensive civil rights legislation the United States would experience for almost a century.

Grant earned a stellar reputation as a leader of rare ability and success in the press during the Civil War, especially in its later stages. During the post-war years and in the aftermath of his death, Grant's reputation was subsequently fortified with ample testimony to his valor, courage, and unparalleled skill and success as a field commander in numerous memoirs and letters written by military leaders who both fought with and against him during the Civil War.¹⁵ And those veterans who fought under his leadership would form the Grand Army of the Republic after the war, a pro-Republican Party organization described by historian Joan Waugh as a "powerful interest group whose influence extended widely and deeply into the country's political, social

¹⁵ During the war frequent reference was made in both the national and international press referring to Grant as America's Napoleon and Wellington. General William T. Sherman was effusive in his praise of Grant, both for his command of the entire scope and grand strategy of the Union war effort as well as for his extraordinary attention to the smallest of details. Besides lauding Grant for his brilliance of field command, Sherman wrote of Grant's clear and concise handwritten orders prescribing routes of march for his commanding generals' detachments, as well as specifying "even the amount of food and tools to be carried along," from Sherman, *Memoirs of General William T. Sherman* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1875), 1: 334. General Philip H. Sheridan wrote of Grant's "eminent abilities" and how he was perceived as a "tower of strength to the Government," from Sheridan, *Personal Memoirs of P.H. Sheridan* (New York: Charles L. Webster and Company, 1891), 2: 203. Confederates leaders also recognized Grant's ability. General James Longstreet wrote of Grant, "As the world continues to look at and study the grand combinations and strategy of General Grant, the higher will be his award as a great soldier," from Longstreet, *From Manassas to Appomattox: Memoirs of the Civil War in America* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1895, 2nd ed. 1908), 630. And though Robert E. Lee did not publish his memoirs, he did write that Grant "possesses magnanimity as well as ability," from *Recollections and Letters of Robert E. Lee*, ed. Captain Robert E. Lee (Garden City: Garden City Publishing Co., Inc., 1904, reprint 1924), 219.

and economic sectors;” a Republican party “bulwark” that would actively support Grant during his presidential years and feverishly work in defense of his reputation after his death.¹⁶

He served two terms as president of the United States during the bitterest reconciliation this nation has ever known amidst scandal and corruption of an unprecedented nature. In the twilight of his life he was wildly celebrated on an extensive three-year world tour of great notoriety. He was wined and dined at Windsor Castle by Queen Victoria of England, broke bread with the great German nationalist Otto Von Bismarck, was the first westerner to personally meet with and shake the hand of the Emperor Meiji of Japan in the Imperial Palace, and was enthusiastically received with the highest of accolades by the working masses of Great Britain.¹⁷ He was an accomplished author. The only book he ever wrote sold over 300,000 copies, earning his family approximately \$450,000, an amount, according to the Consumer Price Index, worth over nine million in today’s dollars. He was a loving, devoted family man who shared an intense and lasting love with his wife of 38 years and their four children. He left his family a fortune both in legacy and in money that would sustain them for generations after his death. By any estimation, the memory of a man of such grand stature and accomplishment would have secured for himself a reputation in popular memory undiminished by time. Unless that name happens to be Ulysses S. Grant.

So what then, has happened since those memorable events of just over a century ago? What has happened to the reputation of this nineteenth-century American icon, of a man regarded and revered by many during his lifetime as one of the saviors of the young Republic;

¹⁶ Joan Waugh, “Ulysses S. Grant, Historian,” *The Memory of the Civil War in American Culture*, ed. Alice Fahs and Joan Waugh (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 18; David Blight wrote that the G.A.R. was the “principle Union veterans’ organization,” from *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001), 62.

¹⁷ Grant’s visit to Japan remains “one of the most frequently mentioned events in the annals of Meiji history,” from Richard T. Chang, “General Grant’s 1879 Visit to Japan,” *Monumenta Nipponica*, 24 (1969): 373.

one whose name was routinely included in that select pantheon of the greatest of Americans that included only George Washington and Abraham Lincoln. In large part, today's pop culture defines Grant as a coarse, foul-mouthed, disheveled drunkard who needlessly sacrificed thousands of men and succeeded on the battlefield only due to superior numbers, in both manpower and material; a failed President of no remembered accomplishment who presided over one of the most corrupt administrations in American history. Grant biographer Brooks Simpson wrote that today, in this heyday of parsed verbiage designed to insulate contrived and slickly maintained public personas, and cultural inurements such as Wikipedia, the image many Americans hold of Grant "is a caricature: someone 'uniquely stupid,' an insensitive butcher as a general, an incompetent mediocrity as president, and a drunk."¹⁸ Yet as the evidence bears out, this certainly is not the Grant recognized by his contemporaries.

This dissertation examines the evolution of Grant's reputation beginning with his service in the Civil War and will explain and analyze those forces that shaped it through the decades. In "Resurrecting the Red: Pete Seeger and the Purification of Difficult Reputations," sociologist Gary Alan Fine and social activist Minna Bromberg wrote that "Reputational change can occur both posthumously and within a person's lifetime. Championed by reputational entrepreneurs, reputations emerge from competitive fields of interpretive possibilities."¹⁹ From Grant's immense popularity at the time of his death to the beginning of his reputational diminution a scant generation later to a modest resurrection in the past few decades, no greater testimony to Fine's and Bromberg's supposition can be found than in Grant's ever-changing reputation, his descent from nineteenth-century "hero" to early twentieth-century "zero."

¹⁸ Brooks Simpson, *Ulysses S. Grant: Triumph Over Adversity, 1862-1865* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2000), front inside jacket.

¹⁹ Bromberg and Fine, "Resurrecting the Red: Pete Seeger and the Purification of Difficult Reputations," *Social Forces*, 80 (June, 2002): 1135.

In Grant's case, those "reputational entrepreneurs" were and are as disparate as they are numerous, all coalescing to reshape and formulate the perception of Grant in popular memory, a dynamic and fluid process that continues today. From politically driven interpretations to historical revision and myth to fictional embellishment and hyperbole so frequently found in popular entertainment to an insidious blatant racism that would stain America's legacy for so many decades, Grant's reputation suffered from no shortage of component parts that would define who he is in popular culture.

Even before Grant died, "entrepreneurial" forces were at work, and successfully so, at creating a memory of a glorified antebellum South, an old, pristine, noble South occupied only by chivalrous gentleman of untrammelled gallantry, women of chaste and purity, and happy and content "darkies" laboring under their kind and benevolent masters. By association, those who were instrumental in destroying this specious reincarnation, this idyllic bastion of virtue and honor, were cast aside as sinister evil-doers; as agents of darkness who, through only the use of brute force and callous disregard of human life, were able to overcome. Perpetuated by those such as *Richmond Ledger* editor Edward Pollard and Confederate general Jubal Early, the impact on America's psyche of the "Myth of the Lost Cause" was further legitimized by provocative popular literary works in the early 1900s, such as Thomas W. Dixon's, *The Leopard's Spots* and *The Clansman*, which gave Lost Causers an "enduring romantic mythology."²⁰

Alan T. Nolan explained the need for the myth and its purpose in his book (co-authored with Gary Gallagher), *The Myth of the Lost Cause and Civil War History*. In his first chapter, entitled "Anatomy of a Myth," Nolan wrote:

Despite the undisputed essentials, the war is surrounded by vast mythology. Indeed, it is fair to say that there are two independent versions of the war. On one hand there is the *history* of the war, the account of what in fact happened. On the

²⁰ Waugh, *American Hero*, 187,189; Blight, *Race and Reunion*, 111.

other hand, there is what Gaines Foster calls the ‘Southern interpretation’ of the event. This account, ‘codified’ according to Foster, is generally referred to by historians today as the ‘Lost Cause.’ This version, touching almost all aspects of the struggle, originated in Southern rationalizations of the war. Then it spread to the North and became a national phenomenon. In the popular mind, the Lost Cause represents the national memory of the Civil War; it has been substituted for the *history* of the war. The Lost Cause is therefore an American legend...²¹

The crux of the “Lost Cause” as Nolan further explained it is that the war was basically a “romantic and heroic melodrama, an honorable sectional duel” that pitted a superior and noble, genteel South against the ravaging mongrel hordes of the North. The South, a superior culture, was doomed to failure only because of inadequate resources and in the defense of “Southern Rights,” fought to exhaustion rather than capitulate and surrender its principles to the Yankee vermin. The leader of the glorious Southern cause was the indomitable Robert E. Lee, that bastion of Southern manhood and perfect representation of Southern honor, dignity and morality. By comparison, the boorish leader of the Union forces, held second in contempt only to the “apelike” Abraham Lincoln, was of course, the foul-mouthed, hard-drinking butcher, Ulysses S. Grant, who succeeded only by sacrificing his men, of which he had an unlimited supply. Grant tried to remain above the fray regarding the emergence of the “Lost Cause” myth and would not comment on the allegations nor would he defend himself against the “Lost Cause” proponents while he served in the White House.²²

Dixon’s works, and similar others, turned the Ku Klux Klan into heroes in the early twentieth century and denigrated the freedmen to such an extent that the basic humanity of the black man was questioned. As such, the roles of those such as Grant who supported Reconstruction and was instrumental in effectively using the U.S. military to pursue the Klan were diminished. *The Clansman* would eventually be made into a silent movie in 1915, the

²¹ Gary Gallagher and Alan Nolan, *Myth of the Lost Cause and Civil War History* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000), 12.

²² *Ibid.*, 161-162.

controversial “The Birth of a Nation,” the blockbuster of the era, which found wide support and immense popularity throughout the nation.

The politics and world events of the late 1910s and early 1920s would further lend credence to those supporters who identified with the Klan as the defenders of the faith; as the defenders of the American way of life. As the spearhead of a substantial nativist, anti-European movement that emerged in the aftermath of World War I, the Klan reached the pinnacle of its power in the 1920s, with up to eight million members nationwide. A Klan march in 1925 down Pennsylvania Avenue in our nation’s capital, numbering up to 35,000 members, was a tangible manifestation of both Klan power and the support the different Klan groups enjoyed throughout the nation. Most dressed in full regalia, their whitest of whites used for such a special occasion, and with many holding hands in a display of solidarity, the march was a powerful reminder of the “evils” of Reconstruction and those who supported it.



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Figure 1.1 Ku Klux Klan march in Washington, D.C., August, 1925

This sentiment found itself fully ensconced in a large part of the American psyche and would fully reveal its “truth” as it found a wide audience in the American public in the form of such vapid yet popular works as *Gone With The Wind*, published in 1936 and immortalized on the big screen to great acclaim three years later.

Even in death, Grant could not escape controversy that would cause some distress to both his family and to his reputation. Temporarily buried in a vault in New York’s Central Park upon his death, an extended, acrimonious controversy emerged over the location in which Grant’s remains would ultimately reside. So bitterly embroiled in competition were those urban areas in the North that laid claim to his remains, that when all but New York City were left disappointed, slander and innuendo surrounded the general and his family. The resulting collective

²³ Ku Klux Klan march in Washington D.C., August, 1925, image available at: <http://users.humboldt.edu/ogayle/hist111/CivilRights.html>, accessed on July 18, 2011.

disappointment from cities such as Washington, D.C., and Chicago that did not win the right to house his remains created a media excitement that would have a detrimental effect on the Grant name.²⁴

In the early twentieth century, William Archibald Dunning, an American historian of substantial reputation and influence who earned his Ph.D. at Columbia University, was the driving force behind academia's interpretation of the Reconstruction era. At the crux of Dunning's thesis was the alleged inevitable failure of Reconstruction. According to the Dunning school, African Americans and the "scalawags and carpet baggers" in league with them, were incompetent, entirely incapable of governing themselves much less white society. Accordingly, Reconstruction as it occurred was never a viable option to properly resurrect the American South after the Civil War; rather it was a colossal mistake, doomed to failure due in large measure to the biological failure and amoral qualities inherent in black African Americans. Anyone who supported blacks during Reconstruction, so Dunning's argument went, had only political or personal gain at stake. Succor finally came to the South, according to Dunning, in the sweeping defeat of the Republicans in the 1874 Congressional elections, a complete repudiation of Grant and his Reconstruction politics. "The end was single," wrote Dunning, "the rescue of the states

²⁴ Joan Waugh writes of the "shock" of many New Yorkers to those nationwide who opposed New York as Grant's final resting place and "of the curious jealousy excited by General Grant's desire" to be buried in New York, from *American Hero*, 277-279. Waugh cites David Kahn, former curator of Manhattan's national memorials, who detailed the controversy surrounding the design and building of Grant's Tomb in *General Grant National Memorial Historical Resource Study*, unpublished manuscript (New York: National Park Service, 1980). Kahn wrote that "New Yorkers took no notice of the carping of the rest of the nation," and detailed the "intense opposition in the rest of the country to Grant's having been interred in New York," *Ibid.*, 21, 33. Press coverage in the immediate aftermath of Grant's death reflected the regional competition and jealousies regarding Grant's final resting place. In their August 17th, 1885 editions, both the *Boston Daily Advertiser* and the *Atchison (Kansas) Daily Globe* reported that G.A.R. commander-in-chief General S.S. Burdette proclaimed that Union veterans were "unanimous" in their desire to see the Grant national monument housed in Washington and envisioned the day when "Grant's remains will be placed for final rest in Washington." Three days earlier, the *Los Angeles Times* printed an editorial favoring a national monument to Grant in Washington, D.C., and the *Vermont Watchman and State Journal* on August 26, 1885, printed a report from an unidentified Chicago newspaper stating that if New York wanted a Grant monument, "let New York pay for its own monument."

from the scandalous misrule of the carpet-baggers and the negroes,”²⁵ and those who promoted their cause, President Ulysses S. Grant first and foremost amongst them. Dunning inspired a whole school of revisionist history and though almost entirely repudiated today, he was at the leading edge of academia’s assault in forming the nation’s racial attitudes throughout the first half of the twentieth century.²⁶

One of the most significant popular influences emerging from the Dunning school of Reconstruction was a 1929 work entitled *The Tragic Era*, by quasi-historian Claude Bowers. Kenneth Stampf wrote that *The Tragic Era* “attracted more readers than any other dealing with this period.” For Bowers, according to Stampf, Reconstruction was a time of relentless corruption and vulgarity in public and private life; “whole regiments of villains march through his pages,” including “corrupt politicians...crafty, scheming northern carpetbaggers who invaded the South after the war for political and economic plunder..., and the ignorant, barbarous, sensual Negroes who threatened to Africanize the South and destroy its Caucasian civilization.”²⁷ By association, the managers of Reconstruction, Grant and the Radical Republicans were the architects of this insidious plot to destroy the South.

Aside from the work of Dunning and his disciples, other factors outside of the academic community coalesced to continue to stain Grant’s memory in the late 1920s and early 1930s.

Combined with post-World War I anti-war sentiment, the perceived similarities of Warren G.

²⁵ William A. Dunning, *Reconstruction, Political and Economic, 1865-1877* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1907), 267.

²⁶ Academia and pop culture are replete with testimony to Dunning’s influence in the early twentieth century. Dunning’s interpretation of the Reconstruction era formed the prevailing historical ideology of the day and such sentiment was shared in popular culture in a profound way. Claiming the book to be “an authentic human document” author Thomas Dixon Jr. published a work entitled *The Leopard’s Spots* (New York: A Wessels Company, 1906) that depicted blacks as little more than subhuman and northern carpet-baggers as the villains of Reconstruction. Though lacking any kind of documentation, *The Leopard’s Spots* was very popular, selling about 200,000 copies. Dixon wrote two other novels and his work was the basis for the 1915 movie, “Birth of a Nation,” by D.W. Griffith. “Birth” was a blatantly racist, highly controversial film yet it set box office records that stood for twenty years.

²⁷ Kenneth Stampf, *The Era of Reconstruction* (New York: Vintage Books, 1967), 4-5.

Harding and his less than austere presidency in the 1920s further diminished Grant's reputation. At the nation's helm during the Teapot Dome scandal, and by association, tainted with the stain of corruption, Harding shared a number of similarities with Grant. Both were Republican, both were regarded as personally likeable, both were from Ohio, both were aggressive in opposing the Ku Klux Klan, and though neither was deemed to be personally liable, both led administrations racked with scandal. As such, throughout the twentieth century fellow Ohioans Grant and Harding would share the dubious distinction of leading perhaps the two most corrupt administrations in American history in the estimation of many.²⁸

Having reached rock bottom in the early 1930s, Grant's reputation was the beneficiary of work from a contrarian association of historians who had the temerity to challenge the Dunning school. Most notable was W.E.B. DuBois, who wrote his classic, *Black Reconstruction*, refuting many of Dunning's assertions and stereotypes while elevating those in support of Reconstruction. However, since he was African American, DuBois' work did not resonate with the masses as much as it might have. Nevertheless, *Black Reconstruction* was recognized as a significant work in the historical community and served as a thoughtful voice leading to the ultimate discreditation of the Dunning school.²⁹ Further, emerging amidst a flourishing New Deal liberalism in the 1930s, other revisionists "began to give new life and a new direction to the study of reconstruction," and subsequently, a new, more enlightened interpretation of Grant.³⁰

The post World War II years which witnessed the apex of consensus history and the rise of the modern Civil Rights movement lent further credence to the revision of the Dunning

²⁸ William McFeely, *Grant: A Biography* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1981), 521. Corroborated in 2012 by Robert Merry, *Where They Stand* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2012), xv, xvi.

²⁹ W.E. Burghardt Du Bois (*Black Reconstruction in America: An Essay Toward a History of the Part Which Black Folk Played in the Attempt to Reconstruct Democracy in America, 1860-1880* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and Co., 1935).

³⁰ Stampp, *Reconstruction*, 8.

school, and continued on through the twentieth century until currently little regard is paid to his school of thought. African-American participation in World War II further shattered some of the myths perpetuated by the Dunningites and prompted a new school of thought regarding African-American potential and capability. The war was instrumental in shifting attitudes about racial separation and alleged black inferiority. Black service men and women proved their worth in a noble cause, albeit as part of a segregated army, and some of the old stereotypes began to fade away.³¹ Further, the indigenous nature of the modern Civil Rights movement, that found its genesis in World War II, was testimony to the accomplishment, determination, dignity and potential of African-Americans.³² By association, those such as Grant who actively supported and influenced Reconstruction policy were looked upon in a new, more enlightened frame of reference. The Dunning depiction of African-Americans as subhuman beasts became an anachronism.

The peace and prosperity of the immediate post World War II years combined with the work of consensus historians also led to favorable comparisons between Grant and war hero Dwight Eisenhower. As Republicans and as commanding generals who ascended to the presidency, both were recognized as champions in the cause of freedom, albeit for disparate groups of oppressed people. And while Grant and Eisenhower were being favorably compared in the popular culture, the academic community was also at work initiating a new, fresh look at Grant. A spate of favorable biographies on Grant was written in the immediate postwar years. Published in 1950, Lloyd Lewis' *Captain Sam Grant*, the first book of what was to be his trilogy on Grant, painted the picture of a more personal Grant than had been discovered before.

³¹ Richard Wormser, *The Rise and Fall of Jim Crow*, (New York: St. Martin Press, 2003), 161.

³² A good study of the indigenous nature of the Civil Rights movement is by Aldon Morris, *The Origins of the Civil Rights Movement* (New York: The Free Press, 1984). Another excellent, though more narrow work is by Winson Hudson and Constance Curry, *Mississippi Harmony: Memoirs of a Freedom Fighter* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2002).

Though Lewis died an untimely death and was unable to finish his work, historian and popular writer Bruce Catton finished Lewis' work with *Grant Moves South* and *Grant Takes Command*, both published in the 1960s. Cumulatively, these works gave a more detailed picture of the personal side of Grant and greatly enhanced his reputation as a military leader. J.F.C. Fuller, a British military historian of some note, shared both Lewis' and Catton's beliefs that Grant was under appreciated as a military leader. In his book comparing Grant and Lee's generalship, Fuller wrote "I much doubt whether in Grant's place Lee would have done half as well as Grant."³³ Further, in their book *How the North Won*, Herman Hattaway and Archer Jones wrote that "the major military contribution to victory remains the strategy of Grant."³⁴

Over the last two decades, a number of prominent historians have or are taking a serious look at Grant, and in the process, a more complex, accurate assessment of Grant is beginning to emerge. It seems as though a battle of histories is emerging with such noted historians as James McPherson, Gary Gallagher, Brooks Simpson, Bruce Chadwick, and Joan Waugh, among others, aggressively attacking false perceptions largely created by the myth of the "Lost Cause" in an attempt to correct popular myth constructed by Confederate apologists and fortified by such cultural icons as "Gone With the Wind." Of Grant's memory and his reputation, Jean Edward Smith, Professor of Political Science at Marshall University wrote, "There's no question that a re-evaluation is under way. And that has several roots. The first is the re-evaluation of the Civil War and the aftermath and the whole question of slavery and our reassessment of the white South."³⁵

³³ J.F.C. Fuller, *Grant and Lee: A Study in Personality and Generalship* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1957, 2nd ed., 1982), 278.

³⁴ Herman Hattaway and Archer Jones, *How the North Won: A Military History of the Civil War* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1983), 700.

³⁵ Jean Edward Smith quoted in the *NY Times*, "Admiring U.S. Grant More, Robert E. Lee Less," November 20, 2000.

Gary Gallagher takes Smith's point one step further by suggesting that "the idea that historians should take elements of the Lost Cause interpretation seriously is unsettling."³⁶ Nevertheless, whether such a reputation created in large degree by historical myth can be resurrected from the slagheap of popular ignominy remains to be seen. Noted historian James McPherson ruminated about the mystery of manipulated perceptions regarding Grant in his poignant booklet, *Hallowed Ground: A Walk at Gettysburg*. McPherson wrote:

Pickett's Charge – excuse me, the Pickett-Pettigrew assault – is viewed not only as the Confederacy's high-water mark, but also as one of the most courageous and praiseworthy events in military history. For decades the hearts of surviving veterans swelled with pride when they recounted their deeds in that attack. Southern honor knew no finer hour. I have always been struck by the contrast between this image and that of the Army of the Potomac's frontal assault against Confederate lines at Cold Harbor exactly eleven months later. In that attack, ordered by Lieutenant General Ulysses S. Grant, fifty thousand Union soldiers suffered seven thousand casualties, most of them in less than half an hour. For this mistake, which he admitted, Grant has been branded a 'butcher' careless of the lives of his men, and Cold Harbor has become a symbol of mule-headed futility. At Gettysburg, Lee's men also sustained almost seven thousand casualties in the Pickett-Pettigrew assault, most of them also within a half hour. Yet this attack is perceived as an example of great courage and honor. This contrast speaks volumes about the comparative images of Grant and Lee, North and South, Union and Confederacy.³⁷

Though much of the academic work on Grant over the past several decades has enhanced his reputation, one notable anomaly stands out, William McFeely's *Grant: A Biography*. Published in 1981, McFeely's *Grant* won great acclaim though his assessment of Grant ran decidedly counter to post-World War II historiography which had begun to resurrect Grant's reputation. A product of the immediate post-Vietnam War era, the book won a Pulitzer Prize for biography as well as the Francis Parkman Award from the Society of American Historians and was "showered (with) praise in both academic journals and publications targeted to a broader

³⁶ Gary Gallagher, "Shaping Public Memory of the Civil War: Robert E. Lee, Jubal A. Early, and Douglas Southall Freeman," *The Memory of the Civil War in American Culture*, ed. Alice Fahs and Joan Waugh (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 58.

³⁷ James M. McPherson, *Hallowed Ground: A Walk at Gettysburg*, (New York: Crown Publishers, 2003), 124.

audience.”³⁸ Yet despite the plaudits and awards, McFeely nevertheless was accused of including a number of factual errors in *Grant* that certainly challenged the credibility of some of his work. In his lengthy 1981 review of McFeely’s *Grant* in *Civil War History: A Journal of the Middle Period*, James McPherson wrote of the “large number of careless errors that have found their way into this book,” which to McPherson raised doubts about McFeely’s understanding of this history. “Most of these errors, standing alone, would be of small consequence and not worth mentioning, but their cumulative impact is distressing” continued McPherson, who would eventually detail over twenty specific factual errors that he found in *Grant*.³⁹

Since McFeely’s work, a few biographies of note have succeeded in resurrecting Grant’s reputation to some degree. Brooks Simpson’s detailed account of Grant in his *Ulysses S. Grant: Triumph Over Adversity, 1822-1865*, purports to delve into an “extended examination of Grant the soldier, the president, and the man.”⁴⁰ His first volume attempts to and in large degree succeeds in addressing and shattering a number of myths surrounding Grant. Jean Smith, a political scientist and Josiah Bunting, an educator with a military background both wrote favorable analyses of Grant, shedding some widely held notions of Grant as a “butcher” and reporting more favorably than has been represented regarding Grant’s presidency.

The most recent serious study of Grant is produced by historian Joan Waugh in her work, *U.S. Grant, American Hero, American Myth*, published in 2009. In her chapter “Pageantry of Woe,” Waugh details the immense outpouring of emotion at Grant’s funeral and then offers explanations of why his reputation suffered over the succeeding decades. To frame Grant’s reputational decline, Waugh writes in the larger context of how the Civil War has been viewed

³⁸ Ethan S. Rafuse, “Still a Mystery? General Grant and the Historians, 1981-2006,” *Journal of Military History*, 3 (July, 2007): 854.

³⁹ McPherson, James, “Review of Grant: A Biography”, *Civil War History*, 27 (Dec. 1981): 362-366.

⁴⁰ Simpson, *Triumph Over Adversity*, xviii.

and in many cases, obfuscated through the lens of popular memory. Waugh delivers a synthesis of Grant's presidency as it continues to experience a very modest resuscitation in the past few decades. Waugh uses symbols to explain Grant; using the phrase "pageantry of woe" to describe the outpouring of emotion over his death and equating the physical deterioration of his tomb in the early to mid-twentieth century with the continuing decline of his reputation during the same time span.

In addition to Waugh, a number of other significant recent works published during the last decade have been devoted to Civil War memory studies. Included are Alice Fahs, who co-edited a book with Waugh entitled "*The Memory of the Civil War in American Culture*," Eric Foner's "*Who Owns History?: Rethinking the Past in a Changing World*," and works by Gary Gallagher and others re-evaluating Robert E. Lee both during the Civil War and as part of the Myth of the Lost Cause. In particular, David Blight's opus to Civil War memory, *Race and Reunion*, provides a detailed analysis of how the need and desire for national unity and reconciliation in the half century following the Civil War necessitated the sacrifice of racial justice and equality at the almighty altar of American racism, ultimately leading to a skewed, and, by harmonious necessity, specious understanding of both the fundamental causes of the war and the reasons it was fought. "By 1913," wrote Blight, "racism in America had become a cultural industry, and twisted history a commodity."⁴¹

Cultural residue from such immensely popular entertainment vehicles that began with *Birth of a Nation* and continued two decades later with such as *Gone With the Wind*, dated though they are, still resonate in popular perception.⁴² And despite the best efforts of academia

⁴¹ Blight, *Race and Reunion*, 391.

⁴² Bruce Chadwick wrote that Margaret Mitchell was a big fan of "Birth of a Nation," so much so that she "asked her family to take her back to see it a dozen times." Chadwick described "Birth of a Nation" as a movie guilty of

to set the record straight, images of Grant in more recent media characterizations continue to confuse and clutter the nation's collective memory by perpetuating old myths, rumor, and innuendo. Culture aids and abets "history," contend both Bruce Chadwick and Jim Cullen, who write of the immense influence popular culture in general and the motion picture in particular have in shaping perception in the popular mind. As such, exercises in entertainment will be evaluated to understand how these various influences have driven and shaped popular perception of Grant. And to the detriment of Grant's reputation, much in today's popular culture continues to romanticize the "Lost Cause," and by association, continues to diminish Grant's accomplishments.⁴³

In his book, *Who Owns History: Rethinking the Past in a Changing World*, Eric Foner considers the wildly popular television miniseries seen by millions, "The Civil War," by Ken Burns.⁴⁴ Acknowledging its great degree of popular success and the daunting challenge Burns faced in producing such a monumental effort, Foner nevertheless describes part of the series' military history, specifically the close of the war, as "remarkably impoverished." Foner chides Burns for failing to explain why the North won the war, suggesting that Burns continues to promulgate the tired, trite refrain of superior numbers and resources, reasons, say Foner, that do not guarantee victory as history has proven time and again. Foner also scolds Burns for oversimplifying the corruption of Grant's administration without explaining the system of patronage that existed back then and without noting its successes, one of which was Grant's

"dreadful distortions and assumptions about history and people," from Chadwick, *The Reel Civil War* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 2001), 113, 150.

⁴³ Joan Waugh writes that although "Lost Cause ideology has been thoroughly discredited by scholars, it retains a powerful grip on popular imagination," from "Grant, Historian," 17.

⁴⁴ PBS claims that viewership exceeded forty million when the series first aired in the 1990s. Ironically enough, the show also won an award in the name of D.W. Griffith. A few less than forty million have probably read Foner's book, which is critical of the series. One aspect of the series that Foner applauds is the interest in created in the Civil War. Facts about viewership, the documentary itself, and the interest that it generated can be found at: <http://www.pbs.org/civilwar/filmmakers/>.

“willingness to use the power of the federal government to suppress the Ku Klux Klan’s heinous acts of violence against Southern Republicans.”⁴⁵

Based on his lifetime of service to his country and in the esteem in which he was held upon his death, Ulysses S. Grant's place in American memory would seem to be secure. From the humblest of beginnings to the peak of institutional power, his was the quintessential American story. Yet such is not the case. A profoundly different number of widely divergent perceptions of Grant have seen the light over the decades. Some died ignominious deaths, some continue to linger on. Grant did little ill to the reputation his name is burdened with today; rather his reputation did and continues to do ill to his once revered name. In his review of *U.S. Grant, American Hero, American Myth*, Sean Wilentz, he of the much heralded epic *American Democracy*, wrote that “No great American has suffered more cruelly and undeservedly at the hands of historians than Ulysses S. Grant.”⁴⁶ This dissertation is designed to understand why Grant enjoys the reputation he does today and how he earned that reputation. This work has the decided objective of providing a foundation for the understanding of how Grant’s reputation developed by chronologically detailing its development both during his lifetime and in the decades after his death.

This is a narrative of Grant’s reputation, not of his life. It will be the story the story-tellers – the press, the historians, authors, correspondents, politicians, pundits, film makers – told about Grant and how they portrayed him. It will include perceptions of Ulysses S. Grant as seen through the eyes of his contemporaries, those who fought with him and those who opposed him, both on the battlefield and in the nation’s capital. Further study will then examine how he has

⁴⁵ Eric Foner, *Who Owns History?: Rethinking the Past in a Changing World* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2002), 192, 197.

⁴⁶ Sean Wilentz, “Return of Ulysses,” Online review of *U.S. Grant: American Hero, American Myth*, by Joan Waugh, *The New Republic*, January 25, 2010, available at: <http://www.tnr.com/book/review/the-return-ulysses-s-grant>, accessed on June 4, 2011.

been and how he is currently portrayed by those who sought to and continue to try to explain this man. By necessity, many elements of his public and private life will be thoroughly analyzed. Beginning with his military service through his death in 1885, contemporary accounts of his service to America in the armed forces and as President of the United States, as well as elements of his life as a private citizen will be examined to understand the reputation he enjoyed during his lifetime. After his death, contemporary accounts of those forces that shape memory will be studied and evaluated to determine how his reputation evolved, why it evolved the way it did, and where it stands today. Memory is shaped not so much by events but rather by perception of those events and accordingly, the perception of Grant during his lifetime will be the focus of this study rather than on Grant or the events with which he was associated. Sufficient detail, however, will be included to allow the reader to evaluate for his or herself whether the concomitant reputation is deserved.

By necessity, chapters two and three, Grant's service during the Civil War years, will include some detail for it was during these years that Grant would become the man most recognize him as today. These chapters will offer contemporary accounts of Grant's role in the war, and as such, is replete with numerous first-hand, eye-witness observations of Grant by his superiors, his staff officers, that multitude of men who served under him, by private citizens and by the press. The reader will witness Grant's reputation as it developed and with just enough narrative included, will be able to decide if the reputation he emerged with after the war was justified. The reader won't be told that Grant is a hero or a butcher; the reader should be able to make those evaluations his or herself. In the production of these chapters as well as the other chapters covering Grant while he was alive, great care is taken to avoid post-war recollections, memoirs, or other reminiscences – except when and where they can be used to clarify or to

elucidate contemporary accounts - or other post mortems befogged and tainted by the lens of wistful remembrance. Modern-day commentary of what is perceived to have happened will be avoided. Rather than a retrospective on his life or reputation, it will be the shaping of Grant's reputation as it actually occurred and will include biographical glimpses that will shed light on Grant's character and nature.

Chapters four, five, and six will detail the perceptions of Grant as he assumed the highest office in the land during one of America's most turbulent epochs and carry through his subsequent world tour, his declining years, and his death in 1885. While the focus of Grant's presidency will again be of the perceptions of Grant and will not be a narrative of his presidency, enough information will be detailed to help allow the reader determine if the contemporary reputation Grant earned justified and reflected the reputation he would garner over the course of the next century and a half.

Subsequent chapters will detail and examine the multitude of forces that converged to reinterpret and revise the reputation Grant enjoyed at the time of his death and to understand how Grant became the man described by Simpson and Wilentz. Chapter seven will examine the dynamic behind the Lost Cause birthers who continued to nurture their myth through its infancy, fostering a specious abstraction of Southern pretense that will do irreparable harm to Grant's memory at, ironically, the same time his honored and human remains were being laid to rest. Almost simultaneously, the manufactured controversy regarding the selection of Grant's final resting place and its physical deterioration over the subsequent decades will be examined to determine how this process also besmirched Grant's reputation.

Chapter eight will explore the academic ambush of Grant's reputation by Dunning and his influential followers and how this affected the scholarship during the first few decades of the

twentieth century. Included will be a review of the accepted history of the day to include what was being published in history texts and what was being taught at the university level and in secondary schools. In an article printed in the *New York Times*, historian Henry Steele Commager wrote that the “influence of William A. Dunning on the teaching and writing of American History was profound and lasting.”⁴⁷ And so to its great detriment, was Grant’s reputation as well. Further, elements of popular culture and the politics of the era will be examined to determine how such components further influenced Grant’s reputation.

Chapter nine will examine the beginning of Grant’s reputational turnaround, at least in the world of academia and serious literature, which include the discrediting of the Dunning school, and a modern resurgence of his reputation in the post-World War II era. Favorable comparisons were made between Grant and General Dwight D. Eisenhower as both were regarded as defenders of freedom and liberty. Further, both were viewed as decisive, imbued with good common sense, and were humble and cautious in victory. This relationship, the nature of World War II and its similarities to the Civil War, provided fertile ground for consensus historians who once again turned to America’s heroes and wrote about them in a positive light. Grant profited accordingly, though certain images in the popular mind would remain hard to change.

This work will conclude with a discussion of modern scholarship on Grant with a focus on historical memory, including a detailed look at a number of works previously mentioned, and describe the current atmosphere in which Grant’s reputation continues to be shaped. Attention will be paid to the dualistic nature of Grant’s image in public memory as well as interpretation of where the study of Grant currently resides and what forces should shape future academic study on Grant.

⁴⁷ *NY Times*, February 13, 1938.

Sean Wilentz wrote that "the revision of Grant's reputation would seem to be an uphill battle." Yet as current interest in Grant appears to be high, now is a good time to take a new look at Grant. Wilentz goes as far as to suggest that Grant may eventually be recognized as one "of the greatest presidents of his era, if not of all American history" and suggests that the Civil War sesquicentennial provides fertile ground for a "full recasting" of both the popular and scholarly undertaking of the war and its major figures, none more so than Ulysses S. Grant.

This dissertation will add a fresh perspective to the scholarly discussion about Ulysses S. Grant's image in popular memory and the ways his reputation has changed over time. Parts of this project are similar in some degree to recent works on the study of the popular memory of Grant. Of note and crucial to my analysis are the recent and important works of Brooks Simpson, Ethan Rafuse, Gary Gallagher, James McPherson, and especially Joan Waugh, whose scholarship was indispensable to this project.

Building on the work of these scholars, I have broadened their chronology and added more sources, including newspaper accounts representing many regions and perspectives. Further, I have used a wide range of eclectic sources to delve into all of those wildly divergent forces that are so crucial to molding reputations and shaping popular memory. They include interesting and whimsical peeks at movies projected onto the side of Grant's mausoleum, John Wayne movies, Broadway plays, websites promoting liquor and the pursuit of pleasure, and comic book heroes.

Ulysses S. Grant was a uniquely typical American; quietly unique in what he did and extraordinarily typical in whom he was. His record as a military leader during the Civil War stands alone in the annals of American history. As a field commander, he led the United States to victory in the greatest, costliest war in its history. He entered the war as a civilian, never lost a

battle, and defeated the iconic Robert E. Lee after so many others with Grant's same advantage had failed. As such, Grant should be remembered as the greatest military commander in the history of the United States. Yet ironically, in a nation that celebrates its wars and loves its winners, it is an oddity of contrived circumstance that its greatest warrior is too often remembered as a failed president, too often portrayed as a maligned "enigma," cast in the image of an historical accident.⁴⁸ Not only does such an image do a disservice to Grant it also does a disservice to the historical record.

⁴⁸ "Without any marked ability, . . . without fortune, without influence," Edward Pollard wrote that Grant was "one of the remarkable accidents of the war," from Pollard, *The Lost Cause: A Southern History of the War of the Confederates* (New York: E.B. Treat and Co., 1866), 509; Joan Waugh wrote that Grant has been portrayed as "only having luck on his side" and "only the advantage of vast numbers and unlimited resources," from "Grant, Historian," 17.

2 CLERK TO COMMANDER

“...he fights.”

Abraham Lincoln

In the spring of 1861, a non-descript 39-year old leather goods clerk from America’s heartland volunteered his services to help the United States government suppress an armed rebellion instigated by the Confederate States of America. Less than three years later, this man, Ulysses S. Grant, was given the command of all U.S. armed forces by President Abraham Lincoln. Thirteen months later, the insurrection would be crushed and Grant would be perceived as America’s pre-eminent military leader of the nineteenth century and arguably, the greatest in its young history. These next two chapters examine the circumstances behind Grant’s meteoric rise and analyze contemporary accounts including letters, diaries, and newspapers to understand how and what type of reputation Grant enjoyed during his precipitous ascendancy to the height of military success. Certainly a virtual unknown as the opening salvos of the War Between the States were fired, Grant’s rise as a military leader is unparalleled in American history.

Grant’s circuitous route as America’s first active General of all U.S. Armed Forces would begin with a solid but undistinguished four-year enrollment at the United States Military Academy in West Point, New York, from 1839 until 1843.¹ He would then serve in the army for about a decade, including a tour of duty in the Mexican-American war, before resigning and returning to his family and civilian life in 1854. The circumstances under which Grant resigned would cause him a great deal of reputational distress that would haunt his legacy into modern times.

¹ Grant was a strapping 5’1,” 117 pound 17 year-old when he entered the academy. He would serve a stint as the President of the Academy’s Literary Society, the Dialectic, would develop a reputation as perhaps the premier horseman at the West Point and would eventually graduate 21st out a class of 39, from Lloyd Lewis, *Captain Sam Grant* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1950), 93 and Jean Edward Smith, *Grant* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2001), 27.

Stationed in the remote West Coast in 1852, his isolation and separation from his beloved wife Julia Dent Grant and growing family wore heavily on Grant; he did not endure his tour on the coast well. His distress at being separated from Julia was evident in the numerous letters he sent her. Just four short months after arriving in California in August of 1852, Grant speculated on how long he could wait before seeing her again. “It cannot be a great while however,” Grant wrote Julia on December 19th, “because I would prefer sacrificing my commission and try something to contin[ue]ing this separation.” Grant’s desperation grew as weeks turned into months. “You do not know how forsaken I feel here!,” wrote Grant to Julia on February 2nd, 1854, “how very much I want to see all of you.” Then on March 6th an exasperated Grant wrote, “I sometimes get so anxious to see you, and our little boys, that I am almost tempted to resign and trust to Providence, and my own exertions, for a living where I can have you and them with me.” And again, to Julia, in a letter dated March 25th, 1854, “How very anxious I am to get home once again. I do not feel as if it was possible to endure this separation much longer.”²

As such, deciding he could “endure this separation” no longer, Grant resigned his commission on April 11th, 1854. Of his son’s reason for resigning, his father Jesse, the driving force inducing Grant to take on a military career, speculated that “I suppose in his great anxiety to see his family he has been induced to quit the servis.”³ Accordingly, in the summer of 1854, with an uncertain future in front of him and his family, Captain Grant became Citizen Grant after 15 years of military service to his country.

² John Y. Simon, *The Papers of Ulysses S. Grant* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1967), 1: 278, 316, 323, 327. Beginning with his departure to the West Coast in July, 1852, and throughout his stay there until spring, 1854, 35 letters from Grant to Julia are documented in the Papers of U.S. Grant. All 35 letters contained the same missive to his wife, “kiss the child or children (after the birth of Ulysses, Jr.)” and rare was the letter that did not include the admonition of “1,000 kisses for yourself” or “Give my love to all at home,” or “write often.”

³ *Ibid*, 331.

Of Grant's decision to separate himself from the service due to his loneliness and yearning to be reunited with his family there can be no doubt. Yet other, more ephemeral reasons may have helped influence him, for it was also during these lean times that, rightly or wrongly, Grant earned a reputation as a drinker. Growing daily more despondent due to separation from his family and the boredom of army life, Grant, like many others that shared his situation, found solace in the bottle.⁴ Voicing what appears to be a relevant and cogent consensus of selected Grant biographers, Jean Edward Smith wrote, "Separated from his wife and children...Grant began to drink more than was good for him. The army was a hard drinking outfit in those years, especially on the frontier where officers were without family. Virtually everyone drank, and drank quite a lot, but in Grant's case a little liquor went a long way...A couple of swallows slurred his speech, and a drink or two made him drunk."⁵

Perhaps the best summation of Grant's experience on the West Coast can be attributed to Grant authority and editor of the *Ulysses S. Grant Papers*, Dr. John Y. Simon, late of Southern Illinois University:

Old Army gossip ran that Grant had been drinking heavily on the Pacific Coast in the years 1852-1854, and that this had something to do with his resignation from the Army. Separation from his wife and children for years with no prospect of acquiring the money to reunite the family, recently promoted but not likely to rise

⁴ Evidence of Grant's drinking habits on the West Coast are speculative at best. Among others, Grant's propensity to drink during his West Coast years is mentioned in Hamlin Garland, *Ulysses S. Grant, His Life and Character* (New York: Doubleday and McClure Co., 1898), 124, Simpson, *Triumph Over Adversity*, 59-61, and McFeely, *Grant*, 55. Garland wrote that due to his loneliness, his separation from his family, and "an uncongenial commander in Colonel Buchanan...the result was a common one: he took to drink." Garland added, "he drank much less than other officers whose reputation for temperance was unsullied; but with his peculiar organization a little did the fatal work of a great deal. A single glass of liquor visibly affected him." Further, William McFeely wrote "no eyewitness accounts of his drinking at the time exist, but rumors that he drank were widespread in headquarters in San Francisco then..." Acknowledging that what happened at the time was "encrusted in myth and rumor," Brooks Simpson wrote that a depressed Grant's "reaction to alcohol was erratic and apparent." The myth and rumor Simpson writes about was addressed by General Ulysses S. Grant, III in his work, *Ulysses S. Grant: Warrior and Statesmen* (New York: William Morrow and Co., 1969). Of the perception that Grant was forced to resign due to his acquiescence to the bottle, Grant III wrote that this perception "was generally accepted by the army at that time, but lacks confirmation by any evidence of a contemporaneous eyewitness..." 98. The evidence that does exist, however, clearly showed Grant's clear desperation to be united with his family.

⁵ Smith, *Grant*, 83.

again for many years, in poor health, assigned to a small and isolated post with a commanding officer he had disliked for years, Grant had plenty of reasons to resign, and documentary evidence proves that the resignation was his own choice. If, on the Pacific Coast, he drank more than was necessary...the evidence is too meager and contradictory for any sound conclusion.⁶

Grant's resignation and impending end to their long separation came as welcome news to his wife Julia. "After an absence of over two years, Captain Grant, to my great delight, resigned his commission in the U.S. Army and returned to me, his loving little wife,"⁷ wrote Julia in her memoirs. For the record, Julia was thrilled to be reunited with her husband. "Sam" Grant, husband and father of two young boys, now planned his transition back to civilian life. "I was now to commence, at the age of thirty-two," Grant would later write, "a new struggle for our support."⁸

For the next several years, Grant labored in a variety of different fields, one quite literally, in order to provide for his family. He worked in real estate, farmed, chopped and hauled wood, clerked, and worked in the family tannery. Certainly it was not the most bountiful of times for Grant and his family, yet much of the hardship the Grants endured in the late 1850s was shared by millions of other Americans as a result of debilitating effect the Panic of 1857 had on the nation. With financial stability eluding him and options becoming more and more limited, Grant would move his family to Galena, Illinois, in 1860 where he would work as a clerk for his younger brother in his father's tannery. It was here that he would meet and become lifelong friends with Elihu Washburne, a Republican Congressman from Illinois who would have a profound impact on Grant's life.⁹

⁶ John Y. Simon, quoted from his article, "The Rediscovery of Ulysses S. Grant," *Inland: The Magazine of the Middle West*, January, 1974, found in Charles Ellington, *The Trial of U.S. Grant: The Pacific Coast years, 1852-1854* (Glendale, Cal.: The Arthur H. Clarke Company, 1987), 187.

⁷ John Y. Simon, *Personal Memoirs of Julia Dent Grant* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1957), 75.

⁸ Ulysses S. Grant, *Personal Memoirs of U.S. Grant* (New York: Charles Webster and Company, 1885), 1: 210.

⁹ Simon, *Papers*, 2: 5.

Grant's introduction into the maelstrom of public life began unceremoniously enough less than one year after he moved his family to Galena. On April 15th, 1861, President Abraham Lincoln issued a call for 75,000 volunteers in response to the Confederate shelling of Fort Sumter just days earlier on April 12th. Within the week, Grant, recognized as an ex-army captain, presided over a rally to recruit volunteers from the Galena area and subsequently would serve as an aide to Illinois Governor Richard Yates mustering in volunteer state regiments for the rest of April and most of May. On May 24th, caught up in the patriotic fervor sweeping much of the North, and seeking to secure a position in the regular Army, Grant wrote then Adjutant-General of the Army, Colonel Lorenzo Thomas, offering his services. Citing his 15 years in the army as well as his current work as a volunteer with the Illinois state militia, Grant hoped to secure the command of a regiment.¹⁰

Failing to elicit a response to his query, Grant traveled to Cincinnati in early June in hopes of gaining an audience with Major General George McClellan, then at his headquarters in Cincinnati. Grant had known McClellan "slightly" when they both served in the Mexican War of 1848 and Grant hoped that his brief acquaintance with McClellan would earn him a position on the general's staff.¹¹ Announcing his attentions in McClellan's office, Grant fruitlessly waited the whole day to meet with him. After a similar lack of response the next day, Grant returned to Springfield disappointed but still anxious to earn a commission in the U.S. Army.

Upon his return to Illinois, Grant received a bit of good news. As a result of his work with the state regiments he had mustered in, Grant was offered a position with a state volunteer unit. He was appointed colonel of the 21st Illinois volunteer infantry regiment, "composed in

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 240.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 241.

large part of young men of as good social position as any in their section of the State.”¹² It was not a commission in the regular army that he so eagerly sought, yet literally and figuratively speaking, he was now back in the saddle.

Several weeks later at the behest of the Illinois Congressional delegation, prominent among them Elihu Washburne, Grant was appointed brigadier general of volunteers by President Lincoln in July of 1861. The promotion surprised Grant, who thanked Washburne in a letter dated September 3rd, 1861. “Mr. Washburne,” Grant wrote, “allow me to thank you for the part you have taken in giving me my present position. I think I see your hand in it, . . . and I pledge myself that, if equal to the task before me, you shall never have cause to regret the part you have taken.”¹³ Less than two months into his second stint with the service, the former captain and late tannery clerk was a brigadier-general of volunteers in the U.S. Army.

General Grant would begin to win early accolades in the war soon after he and his command of “not fewer than 20,000” found themselves in occupation of Paducah, Kentucky, from mid-September through early November, 1861.¹⁴ As a border state, it was important to maintain a positive and non-threatening presence with the local population while at the same time ensuring that the Union retained control of the crucial juncture of the Tennessee and Ohio rivers where they jointly flow into the Mississippi, a crucial pathway into the Confederacy. By tact and diplomacy, Grant was determined to accomplish the first goal and by force win the second. To assuage the local population, Grant displayed acute political acumen and sensitivity when he wrote and distributed a proclamation that read, in part:

I have come among you not as an enemy, but your friend and fellow citizen. . . . An enemy in rebellion against our common Government. . . . has fired upon our flag. . . . I am here to defend you against this enemy. . . . The strong arm of the Government is here to protect its

¹² *Ibid*, 243.

¹³ Ulysses S. Grant, *General Grant's Letters to a Friend* (New York: T.Y. Crowell and Company, 1897), 2.

¹⁴ Grant, *Memoirs*, 1: 269.

friends and punish only its enemies. Whenever...you are able to defend yourselves and...protect the rights of loyal citizens, I shall withdraw the forces under my command. Signed, A.J. Grant.¹⁵

In early November, to accomplish his second goal of securing the river confluence, Grant and part of his command would engage Confederate troops in their first major action of the war at the Battle of Belmont, in eastern Missouri, just down the Mississippi River from Paducah, Kentucky. As part of a joint operation with the U.S. Navy and supported by federal gunboats, Grant's contingent of approximately 3,000 men was ferried across the Mississippi from Columbia, Kentucky, and routed a Confederate encampment in Belmont despite Grant having had his horse shot out from under him. Grant's men were subsequently counter attacked by Confederate reinforcements and were forced back to their transports where they were whisked away back to Paducah after heavy losses were sustained by each side; about 600 killed, missing, or wounded, a not insignificant number of casualties so early in the war.

Initial press reports declared Belmont a victory for the Confederate forces. The partisan *Fayetteville* (North Carolina) *Observer* declared that "The defeat of the enemy was overwhelming and disastrous, leaving the field strewn with their dead and wounded, to say nothing of the overcoats, knapsacks, guns, etc., they threw aside, the better to facilitate their glorious flight."¹⁶ The decidedly Democratic *New York Herald*, a frequent critic of President Lincoln, tried valiantly to find some morsels of encouragement for its Northern readers, declaring that, "The Battle of Belmont would have been a decisive victory for the federal troops but for the rebel reinforcements, which compelled their retreat." The article stated that the attack by a Union force which ended up engaging a much larger force of Confederates was ill-conceived and stated that the "generalship (without mentioning Grant's name) was therefore, at

¹⁵ Printed in the *Scioto* (Ohio) *Gazette*, September 17, 1861. "A.J." Grant was not another name change, rather it was an error by the paper.

¹⁶ *Fayetteville Observer*, November 18, 1861.

fault.” Nevertheless, while asserting that Belmont was “the Battle of Bull run on a reduced scale,” the *Herald* did acknowledge “the pluck and heroism of our men,” and declared that with equal numbers, “we are more than a match for our enemies.”¹⁷

Grant himself would write in his memoirs years later that, “Belmont was severely criticized in the North as a wholly unnecessary battle, barren of results, or the possibility of them from the beginning.” Yet Grant further wrote that the Confederate strategy to build up its forces at Columbus, a potential stronghold on the Mississippi River had been eliminated and perhaps more importantly, “National troops acquired a confidence in themselves at Belmont that did not desert them through the war.”¹⁸ Further, though hardly a Union victory, the Battle of Belmont caught the eye of Lincoln, so belabored by the ineffectiveness of General George McClellan in the Eastern theater, that any sign of Union aggression was most welcomed. Just days after the battle the president wrote a letter to fellow Illinoisan, political “friend” and Democrat General John McClernand, with whom Grant served, congratulating him on the outcome. “You have had a battle, and without being able to judge as to the precise measure of its value, I think it is safe to say that you, and all with you have done honor to yourselves and the flag and service to the country. Most gratefully do I thank you and them.” Further, Lincoln was careful to mention that he took great pride in the fact that most of the Union troops engaged in the battle were from Illinois.¹⁹ Though met with mixed results, this first battle helped Grant and his men get over their case of collective nerves and displayed the aggressive nature of Grant in combat that would fully reveal itself as the war progressed.

¹⁷ *New York Herald*, November 10, 1861.

¹⁸ Grant, *Memoirs*, 1: 281.

¹⁹ Roy Basler, *Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln* (New Brunswick, New Jersey, 1955), 5: 20; letter to McClernand dated November 10, 1861.

A scant three months later, in early February, 1862, Grant would begin to receive national recognition with two decisive Union victories, capturing Confederate Forts Henry and Donelson on February 6th and 16th respectively. The combined victories were of great strategic importance as the Mississippi River was secured for the Union all the way down to Southern Tennessee. It was this victory at Fort Donelson that Grant would earn the sobriquet “Unconditional Surrender” Grant, for it was no less than these terms that he would demand and ultimately accept from titular Confederate commanding General Simon Bolivar Buckner. On February 16th, in response to an offer from Buckner to discuss terms of the capitulation of Fort Donelson, Grant responded, “Sir: – Yours of this date, proposing armistice and appointment of Commissioners to settle terms of capitulation, is just received. No terms except an unconditional and immediate surrender can be accepted. I propose to move immediately upon your works. I am, sir, very respectfully, Your ob’t se’v’t, U.S. Grant, Brig. Gen.”²⁰

Despite Buckner’s annoyance with the “ungenerous and unchivalrous terms,” he surrendered the fort to Grant the same day.²¹ The Northern press, desperate to report some good news, screamed out with its headlines. The *New York Times* wrote of the surrender of Donelson to “Gen. Grant,” the subsequent capture of 15,000 Confederate troops, and of 10,000 additional rebel forces, “killed and wounded, or otherwise disabled.” Cross-town rival *New York Herald* wrote of the “Brilliant Conduct of Six Hundred Raw Illinois Union Troops.”²² Conceding the “Yankee” victory but trying to mitigate the damage, North Carolina’s *Fayetteville Observer* wrote that only by superior numbers were Federal forces able to win the day. “There was in the Federal forces,” reported the paper, “eighty regiments of infantry, exclusive of cavalry and

²⁰ Grant, *Memoirs*, 1: 311.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 312.

²² *NY Times*, February 18, 1862; *NY Herald*, February 16, 1862.

artillery, against which our little band of ten thousand fought for three days.”²³ Further, just weeks later, the *Raleigh Register* printed a report from Confederate General Lloyd Tilghman revealing to its readers Grant’s magnanimous nature, a portend of how he dealt with Confederate forces for the duration of the war. Tilghman wrote, “I also take great pleasure in acknowledging the courtesies shown by Brig. Gen. U.S. Grant and Commander Andrew Foote, and the officers under their command.”²⁴

Less sanguine and perhaps unwilling to face the reality of the situation, the partisan *Savannah Daily Morning News* merely gleaned reports of the battle from the Northern press and reported, “We place no confidence in the statements of the lying Yankee press.”²⁵ Nevertheless, Grant’s superiors apparently believed the “lying Yankee press” and on February 16th, the same day Fort Donelson fell, Grant was promoted to the position of Major General of Volunteers, mention of which came in a newspaper article that heaped praise on Grant and other Union generals including Henry Halleck, Don Carlos Buell, and oddly enough, George McClellan, who would become a continuous source of aggravation for President Lincoln. “Gen. Grant has received a quick and well-deserved acknowledgment of his valiant services at Fort Donelson, in the promotion which the President and Senate have just conferred upon him,” read the article which identified the Union commanders as “Joint Heirs of Fame.” “Certainly a more gallant and determined officer never led an invincible soldiery to victory, and his prestige is second now to that of no General in our Army. It is true, he fought with large odds in his favor, but he fought skillfully, persistently, humanely, and successfully.”²⁶

²³ *Fayetteville Observer*, March 17, 1862.

²⁴ *Raleigh Register*, April 2, 1862.

²⁵ *Savannah Daily Morning News*, February 21, 1862.

²⁶ *NY Times*, February 25, 1862.

Two weeks later, Grant's picture, or more accurately, a full page rendition of what someone thought looked like Grant, would appear on the cover of the March 8th issue of the widely circulated *Harper's Weekly*. Desperate for some good news in light of events in the Eastern theater of the war under the lethargic McClellan, the pro-Republican press might have found its hero for an anxious yet apprehensive readership. In no small way, the initials "U.S.," with its connotation of "Unconditional Surrender" and "United States" surely must have enhanced the growing legend of Grant. And an impressive looking young man was certainly portrayed in the illustration, though it looked little like Grant, who would never be seen in such ostentatious garb:

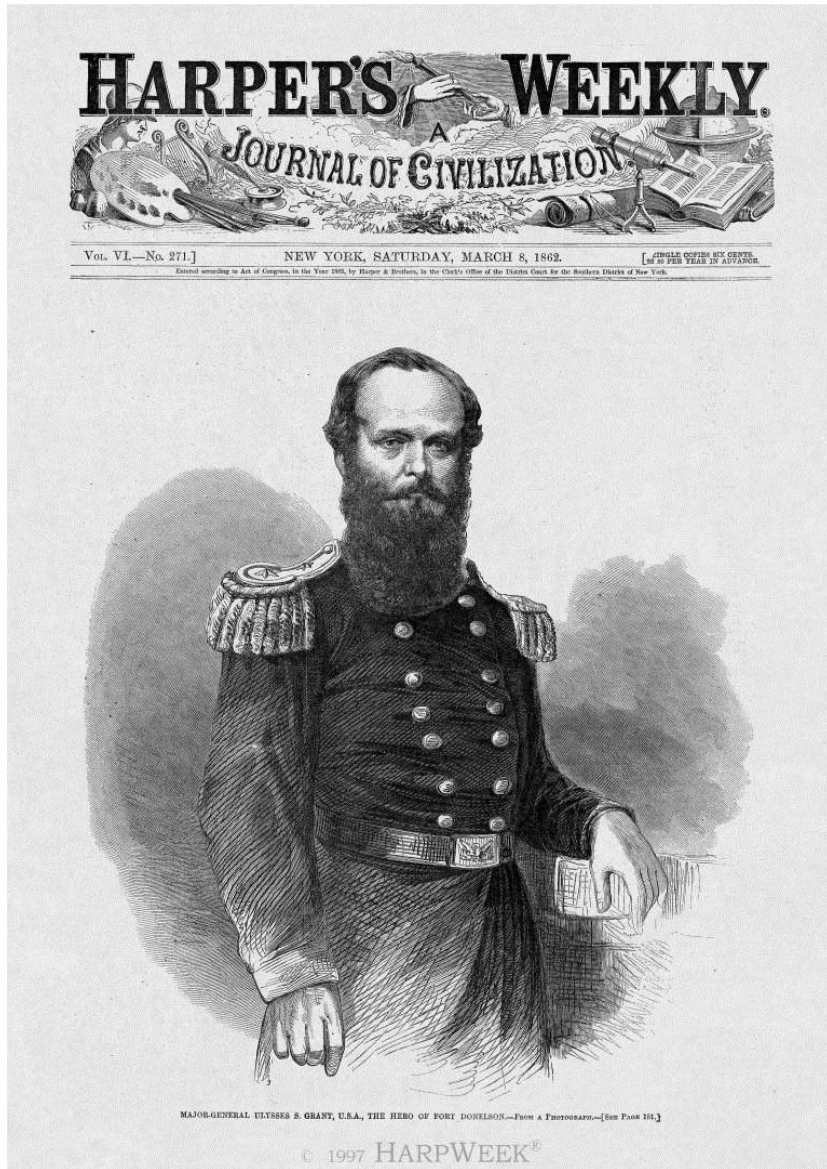


Figure 2.1 Illustration of Ulysses S. Grant

If Grant was a newly found darling of the press, that attitude certainly was not shared by his superior officers. Just weeks after his promotion to Major General, Grant received a letter from his commanding officer, Henry Halleck, ordering Grant to remain at Ft. Henry, ceding his command to General C.F. Smith. Halleck also asked Grant to explain why “do you not obey my

²⁷ *Harper's*, March 8, 1862.

orders to report strength and positions of your command?”²⁸ Halleck’s missive caught Grant completely off guard, both by receipt of and the acerbic tone of the message. He would later write in his memoirs that he “was surprised” by the letter, noting that “this was the first intimation I had received that General Halleck had called for information as to the strength of my command.”²⁹ Perplexed about being confined to his quarters just two weeks after having been promoted to Major General, Grant seemed unsure of what to make of the order, writing immediately to Julia on March 5th, “I was ordered to command a very important expedition up the Tennessee river and now an order comes directing one of my juniors to take the command whilst I am left behind here with a small garrison. It may be all right but I don’t now see it.”³⁰

A day later Grant found that it was not “all right.” He received another letter from General Halleck, this one dated March 6th, 1862, accompanied by a copy of a letter from an anonymous author that Halleck would identify only as “a man of integrity and perfectly reliable.” The letter was highly critical of Grant at Fort Donelson. “The want of order and discipline and the numerous irregularities in your command since the capture of Fort Donelson are matters of general notoriety,” wrote Halleck, “and have attracted the serious attention of the authorities at Washington. Unless these things are immediately corrected I am directed to relieve you of the command.” Just hours later, Grant would receive another severe admonition from Halleck, receiving a telegram which read in part, “Your neglect of repeated orders to report the strength of your command has created great dissatisfaction and seriously interfered with military plans. Your going to Nashville without authority...was a matter of very serious complaint at

²⁸ General Halleck to General Grant, March 4, 1862, *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies* (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1880-1901), 10, pt. 2: 3.

²⁹ Grant, *Memoirs*, 1: 326.

³⁰ Simon, *Papers*, 4: 326-327.

Washington, so much so that I was advised to arrest you on your return. H.W. Halleck, Major General.”³¹

By now, both a bit rattled and perplexed, the normally imperturbable Grant immediately responded, writing Halleck on March 7th, “I have done my very best to obey orders and to carry out the interests of the service. If my course is not satisfactory, remove me at once.” Grant speculated that intermediaries between him and Halleck were trying to sabotage his work and in a fit of exasperation requested that he “be relieved from further duty in the department.” With Grant’s seemingly perilous status unresolved, he again requested to be relieved of duty under Halleck’s command on March 9th, March 11th, and again on March 13th.³²

Forced to make a decision on Grant, Halleck acknowledged that he had finally received the desired information, and as such, advised Grant that “you cannot be relieved from command. There is no good reason for it...Instead of relieving you, I wish you as soon as your new army is in the field to assume the immediate command and lead it on to more victories.”³³ Concluding the matter after admitting that he thought it impossible to continue to serve without a court of inquiry exonerating him, Grant responded on March 14th to Halleck’s letter by writing, “I will again assume command, and give every effort to the success of our cause.”³⁴ Literally and

³¹ *OR*, 10, pt. 2: 13,15.

³² *Ibid.*, 15,21,30; Simon, *Papers*, 4: 353. Grant’s note on March 11th indicated he did not want his command restored until he “could be placed right in the estimation of those higher in authority.”

³³ *OR*, 10, pt. 2: 32.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 36. Of the miscommunication with Halleck, Grant would later write in his memoirs, “I was reporting regularly to the chief of staff...but many of those addressed to me were sent to the operator at the end of the advancing wire and he failed to forward them. This operator afterwards proved to be a rebel; he deserted his post after a short time and went south taking his dispatches with him. A telegram from General McClellan to me of February 16th, the day of the surrender, directing me to report in full the situation, was not received at my headquarters until the 3rd of March,” from Grant, *Memoirs*, 1: 325. Corroboration came from General C.F. Smith who wrote, “The reason why both McClellan and Halleck were down upon him was they had no information from him for two weeks, although he always wrote once and sometimes twice or thrice a day and sent daily reports of the strength of his force. Why these reports were not received is not known, but the moment Halleck had Grant’s explanation he was restored to command,” FN from Simon, *Papers*, 4: 344. Further, to dispel allegations and rumors that part of the reason Grant may have been demoted was because of drinking, Smith further wrote, “The public are all astray about Gen. Grant. His habits (drink) are unexceptional.”

figuratively, Grant was back in the saddle and placed in command of the Tennessee River expedition.

Despite his reinstatement of command and early favorable press, questions about Grant's past and fitness to serve continued to fuel public controversy. On March 25th, 1862, an editorial printed in the *Lowell (Mass.) Daily Citizen and News* rekindled old rumors. "We learn from a trustworthy source that the difficulty in relation to Gen. Grant, the hero of Donelson, to which the telegraph has lately made allusion, grows out of his gross habits of intemperance. It is said that he left the army for this cause, some years ago, and afterwards in a good degree, reformed, but that, since he returned to military duty, the old thirst has seized upon him, the old thirst has yielded to its cravings."³⁵ This reportage came within a matter of days of General George McClellan being relieved of his role as General in Chief of all U.S. armies by an increasingly exasperated President Abraham Lincoln, anxious to find a leader who would fight and who could win. Perhaps the reports of Grant's malfeasance were true and perhaps they were not. Yet Grant had displayed an aggressive nature, a stolid determination to fight and win, and with two important victories on his balance sheet, Lincoln took note. And in less than three weeks time, Grant would again find himself in the spotlight and embroiled in more controversy after his role in the most destructive, costliest battle between English speaking people in the history of the North American continent.

Grant's next military endeavor would occur in the lowlands of western Tennessee. It would earn him accolades but also add controversy to Grant's emerging reputation. After success at Forts Donelson and Henry, and with the upper Mississippi River secured, Union strategy demanded Grant and his command continue south along the Mississippi River. The strategic initiative was known as the "Anaconda Plan," first voiced by General Winfield Scott at

³⁵ Editorial from the *Buffalo Commercial Advertiser*, printed in the *Lowell Daily News*, March 25th, 1862.

the beginning of the war. The plan was to cut the Confederacy in half by securing the Mississippi River and deny the Confederacy east of the Mississippi numerous foodstuffs and supplies provided by the Confederacy west of the Mississippi. Grant's immediate target would be Corinth, Mississippi, where Union intelligence indicated the concentration of a large Confederate force.

In early April, subsequent to a movement on Corinth, Grant's troops would occupy an innocuous, non-descript piece of land in western Tennessee, known as Pittsburgh Landing, about 40 miles north of Corinth, to use as a staging point. Grant and his force of approximately 45,000 troops would then wait for the impending arrival of General Don Carlos Buell and his 25,000-man Army of the Ohio and together, they would invest Corinth. While his troops camped on Pittsburgh Landing, Grant quartered himself nine miles north at Savannah, Tennessee, waiting to meet with Buell.

On April 4th Grant wrote one of his generals, William T. Sherman, commanding his lead corps at Pittsburg Landing, to be on the lookout for any Confederate forces near Pittsburgh landing. "I would direct, therefore, that you advise your advance guards to keep a sharp lookout for any movement in that direction, and should such a thing be attempted, give all the support of your division..."³⁶ One day later, on April 5th, while still waiting for the imminent arrival of Buell, Grant received a message from General Sherman: "Sir: All is quiet along my lines now," followed shortly thereafter by another message from Sherman, "I have no doubt that nothing will occur to-day more than some picket firing. The enemy is saucy, but got the worst of it yesterday, and will not press our pickets far...I do not apprehend anything like an attack on our position." Other than reports of minor skirmishes between advance pickets, Grant was satisfied all was well

³⁶ *OR*, 10, pt. 2: 91.

on his Southern front. He settled down for a good night's sleep after reporting to General Halleck that "the enemy at and near Corinth are probably from 60,000 to 80,000."³⁷

In the early morning hours of April 6th, just after Grant retired for the night, Confederate forces numbering about 40,000 under the command of General Albert Sidney Johnston launched a surprise attack that caught Northern forces completely off guard.³⁸ Cyrus Boyd, of the 15th Iowa Infantry, witnessed thousands of Union troops, some "wounded and covered with blood from head to foot," running pell mell back towards Federal positions, many shouting "we are all cut to pieces, we are whipped."³⁹ The battle of Pittsburgh Landing, or, Shiloh as the North would come to call it, had begun. Grant would write Halleck, "the attack on my forces has been very spirited from early this morning," and estimated Rebel forces at over 100,000.⁴⁰

The battle would last two days. By all accounts, including Boyd's, the Confederates won the first day and almost literally drove the Union forces into the Mississippi River. Yet that evening Grant and Sherman were able to stabilize the situation as Union forces rallied enough to maintain a sliver of the battlefield albeit with backs precariously wedged against the Mississippi River. The next morning, fortified by the timely arrival of Buell and his 25,000 troops overnight, Grant counterattacked and was able to drive rebel forces from the field and back down to Corinth. It was a Pyrrhic victory for the Union Army. "The enemy has retreated and left all his dead and wounded on the field," Boyd wrote in his diary. "We have whipped him but at no awful sacrifice...both armies are exhausted and worn out. One has crawled away to lie down

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 93-94.

³⁸ The attack began at 5:14 a.m., at which point commanding Confederate General Albert Sidney Johnston was reported to have said, "tonight we will water our horses in the Tennessee River," from Herman Hattaway and Albert J. Meek, *Gettysburg to Vicksburg* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2001), 86. Less than 12 hours later General Johnston suffered a mortal wound and died before the sun set that evening.

³⁹ Throne, Mildred, ed., *The Civil War Diary of Cyrus F. Boyd, Fifteenth Iowa Infantry: 1861-1863* (Iowa City: The State Historical Society of Iowa, 1953), 28-29.

⁴⁰ *OR*, 10, pt. 2: 95. Shades of McClellan?

and the other cannot follow. We are glad to hold the ground and let him retreat.”⁴¹ Writing in her diary on April 10th, just days after the battle concluded, Kentuckian and Unionist Frances Peter would give a keen and perceptive assessment of what had just happened, noting that “a terrible battle has been fought at Pittsburg Tenn.... Our troops had the worst the first day.... But we beat in the end.”⁴²

It was the bloodiest battle of the war to date, with casualties dwarfing those of any previous engagement of the Civil War. Its ferocity shocked a nation that was wholly unprepared for the savagery unleashed on the fields of Western Tennessee; unprepared for this new kind of warfare, a modern warfare that would engage both sides indelibly and completely.⁴³ As was usually the case, initial press reports were mixed and unsubstantiated, yet revealed the nature of the fighting. The *New York Times* reported that the battle at Pittsburgh Landing was the “most formidable and destructive of modern times. The conflict sets at rest forever the doubt whether courage is a national trait.”⁴⁴ A dispatch from the *Atlanta Confederacy*, dated April 10th, appeared in the *Raleigh Register* describing Shiloh as, “the most terrible battle ever known.”⁴⁵

The *Savannah Morning News* reported a tremendous victory for Southern forces, describing a battle that “ended with the complete defeat of the enemy’s forces.” The *Camden* (South Carolina) *Confederate* reported that as a result of the battle and the death of Union General Buell (erroneously reported as such), “in consequence of these disasters, the Federal army is reported to be in disorder.” Even more demonstrative in its reportage of Union slaughter, the *Fayetteville Observer* reported that, based on reports from “Northern” news

⁴¹ Throne, *Boyd Diary*, 38-39.

⁴² John David Smith and William Cooper, Jr., eds., *A Union Women in Civil War Kentucky: The Diary of Frances Peter* (Lexington: The University of Kentucky Press, 2000), 14.

⁴³ Not only the costliest battle of the Civil War to date but the costliest battle in American history, causing more casualties than in all previous American wars combined, from Hattaway and Meek, *Gettysburg to Vicksburg*, 95-96.

⁴⁴ *NY Times*, April 10, 1862.

⁴⁵ *Raleigh Register*, April 16, 1862.

sources, “the Federal loss at Shiloh was twenty thousand, including many field officers killed. Gen. Buell was mortally wounded. Generals Crittendon, Sherman and the two Wallaces were killed.” The *Raleigh Register* claimed a Southern victory but reported with a bit more objectivity, writing that, “Although the Yankees are forced to admit that they suffered a most disastrous defeat in the first day’s fight at Shiloh, they insist upon it that they gained a brilliant victory on the following day.”⁴⁶

In agreement with the Southern press regarding the horrific scope of the battle but at the same time remaining true to partisan form, the Northern press saw the outcome of the battle differently from its Southern brethren. The *New York Times* reported that “The greatest battle of the war has just closed, resulting in the complete rout of the enemy....” The *Times* would go on to report that “the Hero of the fight at Pittsburgh is evidently Ulysses S. Grant. Throughout the action he is reported as constantly on the perilous edge of battle, rallying the men, and leading them upon the enemy, in contempt and danger... Will Congress consider the propriety of altering the gallant commander’s name? It should be Achilles, not Ulysses.”⁴⁷

Basing their story on Grant’s official report, *The Daily National* (Washington, D.C.) *Intelligencer* wrote, “it substantiates the accounts which we have heretofore published, that this most desperate conflict of the war resulted in a victory for the Union forces, the enemy having been driven from the field....”⁴⁸ If any humor could have been found in such a situation, the *Louisville Journal*, intended or not, managed to evoke such sentiment in a dispatch printed in the *Charleston Courier*. “On Sunday, the first day of the fight, the rebel army was all drunk, and

⁴⁶ *Savannah Morning News*, April 14, 1862; *The Camden (S.C.) Confederate*, April 18, 1862; *Fayetteville Observer*, April 17, 1862. Had reports of the demise of both Sherman and one of the Wallaces, Lew, been true, history would not have witnessed William T.’s infamous march through Georgia, nor would popular culture have recognized the movie, *Ben Hur* for the 11 Oscar awards it would subsequently win in the 1950s; *Raleigh Register*, April 26, 1862.

⁴⁷ *NY Times*, April 10, 1862.

⁴⁸ *The Daily* (Washington, D.C.) *National Intelligencer*, April 17, 1862.

that they fought like demons, reckless and regardless of life, causing great slaughter among the Federal troops, whose loss the *Journal* estimates at 17,000. Sunday night, however, the rebels got sober, and on Monday were badly whipped and pursued to within six miles of Corinth.”⁴⁹

Despite the accolades and accompanying notoriety, the days and weeks that followed Shiloh would not be good ones for Grant. As commanding general in charge of Northern forces, the battle and Grant’s role in it would come under increased scrutiny and criticism as the relative calm and weeks of inactivity that followed Shiloh prompted the press to further analyze and reflect upon the carnage. As more updated and accurate assessments were reported the ferocious nature of the battle shocked America, both North and South alike. For once, the normally hyperbolic press reports and personal accounts regarding the scope and casualties printed in the immediate aftermath of the battle seemed to have been accurate. The nation was trying to come to terms with what at the time had been the largest military engagement on the North American continent in recorded history. “Our papers are now filled with the melancholy lists of killed & wounded at Pittsburg Landing,” wrote prominent Washingtonian Elizabeth Blair Lee to her equally prominent husband and Union Naval officer Samuel Phillips Lee, “which battle in all its details and phases are discussed & the Generals on our side somewhat roughly handled and Sherman is in spite of Grant’s bolstering disgraced.”⁵⁰

Of its description of the fighting, the *Camden Confederate* printed a dispatch from the *Richmond Enquirer*, which read, “the battle of Shiloh was...one of the greatest and bloodiest conflicts of latter days—decidedly the most sanguinary ever fought upon this continent, if we except those of the Conqueror Cortez. Manassas and every other battle of the war pales before

⁴⁹ *The Charleston Courier*, April 29, 1862.

⁵⁰ Virginia Jeans Laas, ed., *Wartime Washington: The Civil War Letters of Elizabeth Blair Lee* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1991), 131. Newspaper criticism varied widely and was shared equally, dependent on region and a particular paper’s political affiliation.

it.” The *Boston Liberator* reported that “dead men were lying thickly everywhere for miles.... No such scene ever before witnessed in America.... Wounded men, mangled horses, crushed bodies, extended so interminably that it was impossible to pass through them...Certainly a greater scene of wide-spread misery never existed.” And a dispatch from the *Memphis Avalanche*, printed in the *Savannah Daily Morning News*, described Shiloh as “the most terrible battle ever fought upon this continent, or possibly in the world, for desperation and ferocity.”⁵¹ Cyrus Boyd confirmed the accuracy of such reports when he wrote on April 7th, “No pen can tell, no hand can paint, no words can utter the horrors of last night.”⁵² And for the ages, Grant’s name would be inextricably linked to Shiloh, both for his resolve and ability to turn defeat into victory as well as for his willingness to wage and usher in the era of modern warfare.⁵³

The primitive nature of the battle and the tremendous number of casualties evoked a good deal of backlash in some quarters towards those in command of such a terrible conflict. The *Cincinnati Gazette*’s Whitelaw Reid was relentless in his criticism of Grant’s performance at Shiloh, falsely reporting that Grant had been placed under arrest and editorializing, in part, on April 14th, 1862, that Grant’s official report on the battle was written by “such as one as a General, conscious that he had sacrificed his army by his incompetency and neglect, and desirous to cover it up, would make.”⁵⁴ Exacerbating the situation would be the anonymous release to

⁵¹ *Camden Confederate*, May 2, 1862; *The Boston Liberator*, May 16, 1862; *Savannah Morning News*, May 19, 1862.

⁵² Throne, *Boyd Diary*, 35.

⁵³ Gary Gallagher wrote that Robert E. Lee viewed Shiloh as one of a series of “Confederate disasters” in the West, from *Lee and His Army in Confederate History* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2001), 172; James McPherson wrote that “Shiloh was a Union victory,” from *Tried By War: Abraham Lincoln as Commander in Chief* (New York: The Penguin Press, 2008), 84; “As Shiloh’s numbers of killed and wounded exceeded the combined totals of all the major engagements of the war that preceded it,” Drew Gilpin Faust wrote, “Americans recognized that they had embarked on a new kind of war,” from *This Republic of Suffering* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2008), 56-57; according to Joseph A. Frank and George A. Reaves, the “new kind of war” that emerged after Shiloh would be one of “extermination, a total war against traitors and confiscation of their property, and if it took more killing, so be it,” from *Seeing the Elephant: Raw Recruits at the Battle of Shiloh* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2003), 177.

⁵⁴ Simon, *Papers*, 5: 79.

the press of a personal letter written by Ulysses on April 26th, 1862, to his father Jesse both defending and explaining his actions at Shiloh. Publication of the letter would heap more criticism on Grant from Democratic newspapers, “unfriendly to USG,” such as the *Chicago Times* and *Cincinnati Commercial Appeal*.⁵⁵

Further, headquartered at Savannah when the attack commenced, rumors that Grant had been caught completely off guard demanded further scrutiny of the commanding general and generated more criticism of Grant’s role. Of the Confederates’ surprise attack early on Sunday, the first day of the battle, *The Fayetteville Observer* printed that “the Austrians in Italy who thought Napoleon had fallen from the clouds, were not more surprised than Grant.”⁵⁶ A letter from a Union soldier who participated in the battle stated that Grant was caught completely off guard. Described as one of “the brave boys of the gallant First Ohio,” and identified only as A. Y***** in a letter to his father, the *Daily Cleveland Herald* printed the letter that read, “The Battle commenced Sunday morning, the enemy attacking Gen. Grant, who was encamped here, took him by surprise, and by Sunday night had nearly driven him into the river, taken his camp and nearly all his cannon.” Further, in trying to diminish Grant even more, an adjoining article, under the heading “Military Correspondence,” reported, “To General Buell belongs the credit of saving the Union Army at Pittsburgh Landing....”⁵⁷ Even those who appreciated and recognized Grant’s role at Shiloh inadvertently cast dispersions on his effectiveness. Alluding to the future promising prospects with Grant in command, Elizabeth Blair Lee wrote her husband of the great

⁵⁵ *Ibid.* Grant would be embarrassed and profoundly perturbed that the personal letter he wrote to his father had found its way into the newspapers. Of the fact that Jesse is the one that released the letter to press there can be little doubt. Ulysses would write Julia on May 11th, “I have seen with pain two publications, one from Hillyer and the other from myself, to father bearing our respective names. This should never had occurred,” *Ibid.*, 5: 116.

⁵⁶ *Fayetteville Observer*, April 17, 1862.

⁵⁷ *Daily Cleveland Herald*, April 26, 1862.

exultation over Grant's victory and of Grant's continued prospects for success, "even if he should be drunk for the rest of his life."⁵⁸

Personal doubt and negative press notwithstanding, Grant felt that when the facts of the battle were understood, he would be fully exonerated. In a letter dated May 4th to Julia, Grant suspected that posterity would get it right and that eventually, "the papers will get done with this thing after awhile and look upon the first days fight at Pittsburgh Landing as one of the best resistances ever made. The enemy outnumbered us three to one that day and we held the field."⁵⁹ Yet neither the papers nor General Halleck were "done with his thing" just yet, and one week after he tried to comfort himself in his letter to Julia, Halleck, certainly influenced by press criticism of Grant, replaced him as commanding general of the expedition and took personal command of Grant's, Buell's, and John Pope's forces in continued pursuit of Corinth. Immediately, Grant wrote a similar reprise to Halleck that he had written less than two months earlier, suggesting there was a small but "studied persistent opposition" to him by a small coterie "outside the army," and perhaps even a small group within it. Again, as in March, Grant asked to be relieved of his command or at the least, sought to "have my position so defined that there can be no mistaking it."⁶⁰

Certainly the criticism and the appearance of a demotion bothered the normally stoical Grant. Obviously distressed, he wrote to wife Julia and Congressman Washburne to voice his exasperation over the situation and perhaps cultivate a bit of sympathy and support for his cause. "I am thinking seriously of going home," Grant wrote Julia, "I have been so shockingly abused

⁵⁸ Lass, *Elizabeth Blair Lee Letters*, 270.

⁵⁹ Simon, *Papers*, 5: 111.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 114, letter dated May 11, 1862.

that I sometimes think it almost time to defend myself.”⁶¹ Grant would follow up with another letter of similar sentiment to Washburne, whose opinion counted most and who would continue to hold Grant in a favorable light. Ultimately, Grant would not carry out his threat to return home.

In spite of the ferocious nature of the fighting at Shiloh, the controversy surrounding it, and the aspersions cast upon him, Grant’s ability to respond to adversity and to drive Confederate forces from the field surely must have come as welcome news and inspiration in Washington D.C., where President Lincoln was becoming increasingly dissatisfied with General McClellan’s lack of activity and success in the eastern theater with his massive Army of the Potomac. In Grant, Lincoln saw an aggressive fighter who was having more difficulty battling his commanding general, the command bureaucracy, the press, and rumor rather than the Confederate Army. And by comparison, this determined commander in the West must have looked pretty good to Lincoln, alleged warts and all.

Ultimately, Grant’s press had not all been negative on Shiloh, and on June 2nd, 1862, the *Bangor Daily Whig and Courier* summed up some cold, hard facts. “Beauregard, in his official report of the battle of Shiloh,” read the article, “admits that he did not succeed in his object, which was to overwhelm Grant, and lost his Commanding General and 10,000 men in the conflict. He was compelled to retire to his intrenchments; and yet he speaks of the affair as a great success.” Further support came from the decidedly pro-Confederate *Natchez Courier*, which despite reporting to its readers of the South’s “brilliant victory” on the first day’s battle, acknowledged that Confederate forces eventually “yielded to the fate of the day and...retired

⁶¹ Simon, *Papers*, 5: 116, letter written on May 11, 1862. At about the same time that Grant was seeking solace and support from Julia, he would also advise his family and friends in a letter to home that, “we are all well and as sober as a deacon no matter what is said to the contrary,” from Simon, *Papers*, 5: xiv.

from the field,” though only because “the valor of few could not withstand the shock of accumulating ghosts.”⁶²

Despite the ever-growing realization that Shiloh had been a success under Grant’s command, General Halleck, or “Old-Brains” as he was not quite so affectionately known, decided to take personal command of all Western forces, including Grant’s, and under his leadership, federal troops would make a very cautious and deliberate advance on Corinth. Union armies would take almost a month to negotiate the twenty miles or so it would take to get to Corinth, and when they finally arrived, they occupied a town that had already been evacuated by Confederate forces. Halleck’s imposition over Grant did not find favor with the troops. Alfred Lacey Hough, for one, was disgusted with Halleck’s plodding slow pace. “To sum up the whole,” Hough wrote to his ‘Dearest Wife’ on May 31st upon finally entering Corinth, “we have been out-generalled, and there is a feeling of intense disgust at everybody and everything that leads our Armies.”⁶³

Subsequent to the occupation of Corinth, the Federals captured Memphis in early June, and shortly afterward, on June 21st, Grant would get his wish, leave his ethereal status under Halleck’s command, and establish his headquarters at Memphis. Soon thereafter, General Halleck would be summoned to Washington to assume his new role as General in Chief of all U.S. Armed Forces, and as a result, Grant would earn the independent command over all Union forces adjacent to the Mississippi River from Southern Illinois all the way down to Mississippi. Unfortunately, Grant would serve as little more than an occupation force in his assigned territory, stating that this period, ““was the most anxious period of the war.””⁶⁴ Grant had displayed a

⁶² *Bangor Daily Whig and Courier*, June 2, 1862; *Natchez Courier*, June 18, 1862.

⁶³ Robert G. Athearn, ed., *Soldier in the West: The Civil War Letters of Alfred Lacey Hough* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1957), 68.

⁶⁴ Simon, *Papers*, 5: xiv.

propensity to attack, not defend, and would chafe at the relative inactivity for the next two months.

In the fall of 1862, Grant's fortune would begin to change dramatically. He was given command of the Department of Tennessee as Union forces in the West continued on their mission to secure control of the Mississippi River, which would sever the Confederacy and split it in two. This command, and Grant's subsequent activity over the next nine months would culminate in a victory that would prove to be a major turning point in the war and would firmly establish Grant's reputation as the pre-eminent general in the United States army.

Looming largest amongst Grant's potential targets in his theater of operations was the city of Vicksburg, Mississippi, a key Confederate citadel commanding the heights overlooking the Mississippi River. Without its capture, the Union could not claim ownership of the Mississippi and with its dug-in entrenchments, cannon and fortified position, Vicksburg was the last Union obstacle on the river and its most formidable in the western theater. As long as the Stars and Bars flew over Vicksburg, Northern commercial traffic would be prevented from traversing the Mississippi River with goods from the Midwestern heartland down to the port of New Orleans. The capture of Vicksburg was a key strategic component and with it, the Union would have complete control of the Mississippi River and the Confederacy would be split right down through its midsection. Further, the psychological ramifications of a physically divided South would be incalculable.

Grant's command counted approximately 30,000 troops, led by Generals C.S. Hamilton, James Birdseye McPherson, and that ever-irascible red-head, William Tecumseh Sherman. Sherman had written a somewhat disparaging note about Grant and the overall generalship of the Union Army, remarking on September 25th, 1862, that General Halleck was “the only real Great

man thus far. McClellan is next.- All others are Mediocre.”⁶⁵ Yet Sherman’s evaluation of his current superior would drastically change as the two would establish a relationship that would transcend their shared Civil War experiences.

With Grant’s command came the albatross of jurisdictional obfuscation, for about the same time Grant assumed command of the Army of the Tennessee, President Lincoln granted permission for General John McClernand to raise an army and invest Vicksburg, which fell within the purview of Grant’s command. McClernand was an ardent Illinois Democrat; a political necessity whose support Lincoln needed and whose favor Lincoln curried. McClernand was also the one who allegedly spread rumors of Grant’s drinking in the days surrounding Forts Henry and Donelson. Both had been commissioned the same day as brigadier generals, on May 17th, 1861, but as the *New York Herald* announced on November 9th, 1861, “General Grant’s name preceding that of General McClernand on the army list, the War Department has decided that the former, therefore, outranks the latter on the field, and of course takes command.”⁶⁶ Nevertheless, the accident of the alphabet was not about to deter McClernand from trying to reverse protocol and win his own independent command.

To ensure that he, indeed, would have control of the investiture of Vicksburg, Grant would move as rapidly as possible as he embraced support from Halleck, who funneled Grant reinforcements originally intended for McClernand.⁶⁷ Preempting any potential movement by McClernand, Grant advised General Sherman on December 8th to move to Memphis, take command of all troops at that place and, “as soon as possible, move with them down the river to

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 6: xv.

⁶⁶ *NY Herald*, November 9, 1861.

⁶⁷ Grant would later write in his Memoirs that , “I was very much disturbed by newspaper rumors that General McClernand was to have a separate and independent command within mine, to operate against Vicksburg by way of the Mississippi River. Two commanders on the same field are always one too many, and in this case I did not think the general selected had either the experience or the qualifications to fit him for so important a position....But on the 12th (November) I received a dispatch from General Halleck saying that I had command of all troops sent to my department and authorizing me to fight the enemy where I pleased,” from Grant, *Memoirs*, 1: 426-427.

the vicinity of Vicksburg, and, with the cooperation of the gunboat fleet under the command of Flag-Officer Porter, proceed to the reduction of that place in such manner as circumstances and your own judgment may dictate.”⁶⁸

Sherman’s subsequent attack on Chickasaw Bayou was a disaster for the North. Grant’s supply lines had been cut, Confederate Calvary raids had forced Grant’s forces to retreat, and Sherman’s force never had a chance. “Sweeping them (Union forces) away like chaff,” the *Weekly Mississippian* reported that Chickasaw Bayou was “a complete victory for the South.” The partisan *New York Times* wrote of the “Vicksburgh failure,” despite the “glorious heroism of our troops.” The *New York Herald* acknowledged Chickasaw Bayou had been a precipitous defeat for the Union, comparing it to the disaster at Fredericksburg months earlier and bemoaning the significance of the loss. “The Battle of Chickasaw Bayou has been a repetition on a smaller scale of the great battle of Fredericksburg, a month ago. Had it been a success... It would have opened up the Mississippi river, the highway of America, now closed for nearly twenty months.... Our failure has dashed the hopes of the nation, and delayed for weeks the progress of our arms.” Further, the paper fanned speculation of the flames of internecine warfare between Grant and McClellan reporting, “how unfortunate that General McClellan had not arrived a week earlier. Had such been the case Vicksburg would now doubtless be in our possession, and the way open to the Gulf.”⁶⁹ Beaten but not bowed, stung by press criticism, and with McClellan’s role in the Vicksburg campaign not yet fully resolved, Grant was forced to withdraw his force northward and regroup.⁷⁰

⁶⁸ Sherman, *Memoirs*, 1:283.

⁶⁹ *The Weekly Mississippian*, January 14, 1863; *NY Times*, January 19, 1863; *NY Herald*, January 18, 1863.

⁷⁰ Though most accounts suggest that Grant was more popular both in Washington, D.C. and with Union soldiers in the Western theater, McClellan was certainly not without his supporters. On a march near Oxford, Mississippi in December of 1862, Cyrus Boyd wrote in his diary that, “men were ordered to give ‘three cheers’ for Genl Grant. In our regiment only a scattered few cheered. But I could not hear the men say in a low voice damn Genl Grant. The

In mid-January of 1863, just weeks after the disastrous defeat at Chickasaw Bayou, Grant would receive welcome news regarding at least one thorn in his side. Halleck relieved McClelland of duty and not one to pass up the opportunity to fully engage the enemy in a manner he deemed appropriate, Grant's campaign to take Vicksburg, the jewel of the South, would begin in earnest. Grant would embark on a six-month long protracted struggle that would test his perseverance, ingenuity, and fortitude and almost cost him his command yet would eventually earn him recognition as the architect of one of the greatest strategic and tactical military victories in the annals of American military history. Grant's work at Vicksburg would secure his place as President Lincoln's most trusted and able commander.

Genl bowed and did not seem to care whether we cheered or cursed.... It seems to be a wonder to all why he should be kept in command since the battle of Shiloh. Then men have no confidence in him," from Throne, *Boyd Diary*, 94. Yet just a week earlier, one of Boyd's comrades, a soldier named John of the 10th Iowa wrote from Oxford on December 10th, "Gen. Grant was never more popular with the army than now. As he rides along the lines on review, you can see confidence depicted on every countenance, and his eye sparks with pride as he looks upon his noble army," as reported in the *Des Moines Iowa State Register*, 12/24/1862; FN in Throne, *Boyd Diary*, 94.

3 THE DAY HE DROVE OLD DIXIE DOWN

“...he was the steadfast centre about and on which everything else turned.”

Philip H. Sheridan

The battle at Vicksburg would define Ulysses S. Grant as the pre-eminent military commander in the Union Army. He would be praised in the press, fully embraced by his troops and the Northern public, and would earn both promotion and the everlasting gratitude of a beleaguered president and government in need of a proven military leader to stimulate the North's moribund war effort. Grant would endure despite significant topographical impediments, internecine warfare and professional jealousies and slanderous attacks in the press on his character regarding his alleged addiction to alcohol. His resilience, his audacity and his brilliance in military maneuver would earn him favorable comparisons with the greatest captains in the history of warfare and would set him on a path to assume leadership of all U.S. forces in the concluding year of this nation's most terrible war.

Grant faced a most formidable obstacle in Vicksburg. With its commanding presence on the heights looking down on the Mississippi River and its heavy fortifications, the “Gibraltar of the South” was virtually immune to an attack from the river. Further, coming in from the northwest, any vessel trying to run Vicksburg would have to make a dangerous south-westerly hairpin turn into a narrow neck of the river just a little over a mile due north of the city making the passage particularly hazardous.¹ Vicksburg was “fortified and defended at all points,” Grant would later write in his memoirs, “the rebel position was impregnable against any force that could be brought against its front.”² Additionally, Grant would have to interpose himself between two Confederate armies east of the Mississippi River, defeat them both, and then

¹ Referred to as such in Northern ranks and in the *Macon Telegraph*, January 29, 1869; United States Military Academy, *Civil War Atlas to Accompany Steele's American Campaign* (West Point, 1941), Map 88.

² Grant, *Memoirs*, 1:437.

institute a withering siege of the city, an act of militarism unprecedented in North American history for its scope and effect.

Swamps and wetlands to the north of Vicksburg made any kind of sustained attack from that direction virtually impossible and the meandering and shifting nature of the Mississippi River and its numerous tributaries impeded movement west of the river. Reporters traveling with the army who had the opportunity to inspect the defenses around Vicksburg and environs reported in a dispatch published in the *New York Herald*: “we rode through the extensive defences on and about the bluff. Although we expected to find the position a strong one, still we did not anticipate that such extensive preparations had been made for the enemy’s reception as loomed up before our gaze for miles. Indeed, we found the defences so stupendous as to force us to exclaim, as did Macbeth, ‘will the line stretch out till the crack of doom?’”³ Further, with the railroad connecting Vicksburg to Jackson, some 60 miles east, there was also the threat of Vicksburg being expeditiously reinforced with manpower and supplies. As Grant evaluated the situation in January of 1863, “the problem was to secure a footing upon dry ground on the east side of the river from which the troops could operate against Vicksburg.”⁴ And so in lay Grant’s challenge for this could only be accomplished from the southern approaches to Vicksburg and this necessitated Grant’s troops moving west of the Mississippi through swampy terrain and then somehow being transported back across the Mississippi to its eastern bank.

Not content to sit and remain inactive, Grant would devise a number of schemes to gain access to Vicksburg and to keep his troops active. These included the building of canals, the cutting of levees and dikes, and the digging of trenches. Both Grant’s successes and failures were reported to a widespread readership. “Grant...is not idle,” blared a report from the

³ Dispatch from the *Vicksburg Whig* printed in the *NY Herald*, January 17, 1863.

⁴ Grant, *Memoirs*, 1: 442.

Charleston Mercury in mid-February, “in the midst of obstacles apparently insurmountable, he is laboring on, controlling circumstances, and will, in my opinion, finally overcome all opposition and take possession of Vicksburg.”⁵

Canals to gain access to the eastern shore of the Mississippi were built “but abandoned because the low water of the river prevented its filling.”⁶ Grant appreciated the enormity of the task in his memoirs, written years later, and would reveal his doubts about the effectiveness of his men’s efforts, yet he would “let the work go on, believing employment was better than idleness for the men.”⁷ Henry Bear, of the 116th Illinois Volunteer Infantry, would describe the tedious work of canal digging in a letter to his wife and friends. “We are digging it about ten feet wide,” wrote Bear, . . . we have to dig by Regt. two hours at a time. We come on every six hours. Two Brigades works at a time. It is pretty hard work but I would sooner dig than fight if it will accomplish anything.”⁸

As the weeks turned into months and winter gave way to spring, 1863, Grant, despite his best intentions and Herculean attempts to alter the geography, found himself no closer to Vicksburg than he had been several months earlier. And with no apparent progress evident, a

⁵ *Charleston Mercury*, February 21, 1863.

⁶ *The Dakotian*, January 27, 1863. A hopeful Northern press was replete with stories in January and February, 1863, of efforts at building canals and the movement of Grant’s forces in their attempts to subdue Vicksburg. On January 21, the *Colorado Miner’s Register* reported on the failure of a ditch that would soon be inundated by waters from the Mississippi to no useful Union advantage. The *Milwaukee Daily Sentinel* published a report on January 23 of a channel Union forces had dug in hopes of diverting the Mississippi River and leaving “Vicksburg some three or four miles inland.” In its February 4, 1862, edition, *The NY Herald* reported that, “our forces are actively at work opposite that city (Vicksburg);” *The Lowell News* reported on February 5 that “the work of widening and deepening the canal is progressing. From the *Vermont Watchman* of February 13, “the canal project is fully adopted, and that the largest possible force will be kept at work . . . until it is completed.” And on March 13, from the *Boston Advertiser* on a plan of attack on Vicksburg, “Everything is deferred until the completion of the canal . . .”

⁷ Grant, *Memoirs*, 1: 449. Grant was keenly aware of the effect idleness had on his troops. He believed hard work would dissuade the temptations his troops faced. Testimony to Grant’s recognition of such came from Cyrus Boyd of the Fifteenth Iowa Infantry who wrote of the harsh conditions near Vicksburg: “one year ago times as these would have made us all sick. But we are pretty tough and are not much affected by such small matters . . . whiskey and sexual vices carry more soldiers off the field than the bullet,” from Throne, *Boyd Diary*, 123, 125.

⁸ Wayne Temple, ed., *The Civil War Letters of Henry C. Bear* (Harrogate, Tenn: Lincoln Memorial University Press, 1961), 33-35, letter dated January 26, 1863, from the “Opposite Side of the River from Vicksburgh.”

small but vocal minority with influence disproportionate to their numbers both publicly and privately shared their discontent with General Grant. Finding nothing more than sheer folly in Grant's efforts they commenced with attacks on his command and his character as once again old rumors resurfaced. Important not as representation of public perception of Grant, for which it was not, such sentiment was important as allegations of intemperance and incompetence would hound Grant throughout his public career and would remain a small yet indelible stain on his reputation in public memory.

On February 11th, a Major General Charles S. Hamilton wrote to Wisconsin Senator James R. Doolittle, "I will now say what I have never breathed. *Grant is a drunkard*.... He tries to let liquor alone-but he cannot resist the temptation always.... When he come to Memphis, he...was beastly drunk, utterly incapable of doing anything."⁹ On February 19th, Joseph Medill, editor of the Democratic organ *Chicago Times*, wrote of Grant to Elihu Washburne, "his army now is almost in a state of insubordination. He has...lost the confidence and respect of the loyal officers and privates.... No man's military career in the army is more open to destructive criticism than Grant's. We have kept off of him on your account. We could have made him stink in the nostrils of the public like an old fish had we properly criticized his military blunders."¹⁰ As demonstrative as they were and despite the vitriol, Medill's bitter words would pale in comparison to the diatribe aimed at Grant by the influential editor of the partisan Democratic *Cincinnati Commercial*, Murat Halstead, who would remain a bitter antagonist of Grant for the rest of his life.

On February 19th, Halstead forwarded a letter one of his correspondents had written about Grant after the Battle of the Chickasaw Bayou to the Secretary of the Treasury, Salmon Chase.

⁹ Footnoted in Simon, *Papers*, 7: 308, from the *W.Doolittle Papers*.

¹⁰ Footnoted in Simon, *Papers*, 7: 318, from the *Elihu Washburne Papers*.

It was highly critical of Grant and Halstead agreed in kind with its sentiment. “There never was a more thoroughly disgusted, disheartened, demoralized army than this is, and all because it is under such men as Grant and Sherman. Disease is decimating its ranks, and while hundreds of poor fellows are dying from smallpox and every other conceivable malady, the medical department is afflicted with delirium tremens....How is it that Grant, who was behind at Fort Henry, drunk at Donelson, surprised and whipped at Shiloh, and driven back from Oxford, Miss., is still in command?”¹¹ Halstead added his own note to the correspondent’s letter, adding, “...these things are true. Our noble army of the Mississippi is being wasted by the foolish, drunken, stupid Grant. He can’t organize or control or fight an army....There is not among the whole list of retired major generals a man who is not Grant’s superior.” Weeks later, Halstead described Grant as “a jackass in the original package. He is a poor drunken imbecile. He is a poor stick sober, and he is most of the time more than half drunk, and much of the time, idiotically drunk.”¹²

¹¹ First-hand accounts detail the disease and squalid living conditions Grant’s troops had to endure during the Vicksburg campaign in 1863. A member of the U.S. Sanitary Commission wrote in early 1863, “General Grant’s army in danger of scurvy. Rush forward anti-scorbutics,” from J.S. Newberry, *Sanitary Commission, No. 96: The U.S. Sanitary Commission in the Valley of the Mississippi, During the War of the Rebellion, 1861-1866* (Cleveland: Fairbanks, Benedict, and Co., 1871), 222. Trooper Nelson Stauffer testified to the misery he witnessed. On January 20, 1863, Stauffer wrote, “John Carson died in the Hospital in LaGrange Tenn.” On February 8th, “James Eckly died in the Hosp Memphis.” On March 7, “Mart Scaggs died at the Small Pox hospital...” On March 29th and June 8th, respectively, “Eugene Dobbins died in Washington Hospt...” and “Thomas Colterel died of the Small Pox hospitle in Memphis Tenn.” In July, Stauffer himself “got very sick...had a bilious attack,” from Nelson Stauffer, *Civil War Diary* (Northridge: California State University, 1976), dates as indicated, no pages numbers, edited by Norman Tanis; Stauffer survived the war. Understanding the bad press he received, Grant later wrote that his “troops could scarcely find dry ground on which to pitch their tents. Malarial fevers broke out among men. Measles and small pox attacked them. The hospital arrangements and medical attendance were so perfect, however, that the loss of life was much less than might have been expected. Visitors to the camps went home with dismal stories to relate; Northern papers came back to the soldiers with these stories exaggerated. Because I would not divulge my ultimate plans to visitors, they pronounced me idle, incompetent and unfit to command men in an emergency, and clamored for my removal,” Grant, *Memoirs*, 1:458. Conditions for Confederates within the city of Vicksburg were no better. Chaplain William Lovelace Foster of the Thirty-fifth Mississippi Infantry described the following unsettling scene to his wife, “On passing through the hospital what a heart-rending spectacle greets the eye? Here we see the horrors of dreadful war!... flies swarm around the wounded.... Never before did I have such an idea of the cruelty and the barbarism of war,” quoted from Hattaway and Meek, *Gettysburg to Vicksburg*, 138.

¹² Brayton Harris, *Blue and Gray in Black and White*, (Washington, D.C.: Brassey’s, 1999), 258-259; cites J. Cutler Andrews, *The North Reports the Civil War*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1955), 384; cited in Simpson,

In between Halstead's missives to Washington, General McClellan continued the speculative assault on Grant and wrote a letter to President Lincoln, dated March 15th, 1863, which read, "'on the 13th of March, 1863, Genl. Grant I am informed was gloriously drunk and in bed sick all next day.'"¹³ Again, as earlier in the war, Grant found himself an easy target of a number of allegations regarding his personal habits and his military acumen. Caught in the web and treachery of political appointment and promotion, rumors of his earlier drinking habits again came back to haunt him at the most propitious of moments.¹⁴ Rumors of these alleged indiscretions surely were received with great consternation in Washington by President Lincoln. He had just sacked General McClellan as commanding general four months earlier and had since been considering a litany of undistinguished, mediocre candidates in a vain attempt of finding a steady, dependable and aggressive commander for his Army of the Potomac. At the very least, Grant was bold and aggressive and the string of victories he had rung up since Belmont was quite impressive and despite the unsubstantiated allegations, his record would not allow him to be ignored.

Triumph Over Adversity, 177, from *The Salmon P. Chase Papers*. In an article dated June 19, 1878, the rival *Cincinnati Times* declared that "every time Murat Halstead sees the name of Grant he gets the stomach-ache." Further, *The Chicago Daily Inter Ocean* of May, 16, 1887, two years after Grant's death, wrote that reasons for Halstead's "vindictive and slanderous attacks on the memory of General Grant" may never be known to the public.

¹³ McPherson, *Tried by War*, 167, cites *Lincoln Papers*, Library of Congress. No first-hand witnesses are identified.

¹⁴ Mary Livermore and her party from the U.S. Sanitary Commission visited Grant at his headquarters at Young's Point. Livermore found Grant "unsurrounded" by any circumstance of pomp and state. After describing Grant as "laconic," Livermore made the following evaluation: "This interview decided two points which had been discussed among ourselves and others. One was, that General Grant was not a garrulous man; and the other, that he was not intemperate....Our faith in all this twaddle had been somewhat feeble, to be sure; but, as we went out from our first audience...that reticence, patience, and persistence were the dominant traits of General Grant....we would as soon have undertaken a *tete-a-tete* with the Sphinx itself as with this quiet, repressed, reluctant, undemonstrative man;...Neither was General Grant a drunkard, - that was immediately apparent to us...the clear eyes, clean skin, firm flesh, and steady nerves of General Grant gave the lie to the universal calumnies, then current, concerning his intemperate habits." Later, Livermore wrote, "For a moment he seemed the most bashful man I had ever encountered," from Livermore, *My Story of the War: A Woman's Narrative of Four Years Personal Experience As a Nurse in the Union Army* (New York, Arno Press, 1972, reprint De Capo Press, 1995), 309-310, 316.

Word of Grant's alleged improprieties indeed must have caused Lincoln and War Secretary Stanton great angst for certainly Grant's record of success would have made him one of Lincoln's prime candidates for promotion. His critics in the press as well as some political pundits had a field day chiding Lincoln for his inability to find a suitable commander for his Army of the Potomac. In a political cartoon printed in the February 28th, 1863 edition of the *Southern Illustrated News*, the cartoonist mocked Lincoln as he continued to shelve worn out and defeated generals as he turns to his new messiah, "Fighting" Joe Hooker, to lead his beleaguered Army of the Potomac.



Figure 3.1 Mocking Union Generals

Yet despite the substantial element of truth regarding failed generalship portrayed in the cartoon, Lincoln could not ignore these missives about Grant's intemperate behavior, for he

certainly could not risk another embarrassing failure as head of his Army of the Potomac. It was demoralizing enough to get rid of McClellan and to have a litany of reasonably competent generals fail; to elevate one to such a position who eventually turned out to be a drunk would cast more aspersions on Lincoln's abilities to lead the war effort. Accordingly, on Lincoln's behalf, Secretary of War Stanton sent Charles Dana, a former newspaper editor and aide to Stanton, to travel with Grant and report back to both Lincoln and Stanton on Grant's behavior and alleged malfeasance. Ostensibly sent to investigate the performance of western paymasters, Dana's mission was to keep an eye on Grant regarding his drinking habits and later, his political inclinations.¹⁵ Dana would subsequently report back to Washington that Grant proved to be no cause for concern on either account, and as their relationship developed, Dana would recognize Grant not only as a great general but as a man of great depth, character, and integrity. He would also bear witness and testify at great length to Grant's strategic brilliance around Vicksburg.¹⁶

Out of Dana's mission would come one of the grand ironies of the Civil War, for General John McClelland, the man who in large degree cast enough doubt on Grant to have someone

¹⁵ Simpson, *Triumph Over Adversity*, 179. William McFeely wrote that "Stanton had sent Dana to spy on him," from *Grant*, 128. McPherson wrote that Dana was sent to "determine whether Grant deserved the administration's continued support," from *Tried by War*, 169. Lincoln and Stanton had their eyes on Grant for possible promotion. Dana's report would help determine Grant's suitability for an expanded command.

¹⁶ As early as the spring of 1863, Grant was a viable option to replace McClellan as head of the Army of the Potomac. Comparisons between Grant in the West and McClellan in the East were frequently made as Grant's success around Vicksburg seemed imminent. Judge John Codman Ropes, a self-proclaimed historian of the war wrote the following to friend and Judge Advocate John Chipman Gray in late May, 1863: "How well Grant has done, hasn't he? When you consider the distance from Port Gibson to Jackson is as far as from Fort Monroe to Richmond, and that from Jackson to Vicksburg is as far or farther than from West Point (Virginia) to Richmond, the campaign assumes rather a peculiar interest by comparison with the campaign of a certain popular Eastern general." From Gray and Ropes, *War Letters 1862-1865 of John Chipman Gray, Major, Judge Advocate, and John Codman Ropes, Historian of the War* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1927), 117-118. Gadfly and Polish "Prince" Adam Gurowski, no admirer of McClellan wrote on May 24th, "Grant and the Western army before Vicksburgh unfold endurance, and fertility of resources, which, if shown by a McClellan and his successors, having in their hands such a powerful engine as was and is the Potomac Army, would have made an end to the rebellion," from Gurowski, *Diary From November 18 1862 To October 18 1863* (New York: Burt Franklin, 1864, reprint, 1968), 235. Days after Vicksburg surrendered, Gurowski wrote "Grant has overpowered men, soil – and elements. Grant, Porter, Farragut, and their men overpowered land and waters. They overpowered the Mississippi, ... McClellan caved in before a brook, as the Chickahominy. McClellan had the most gigantic resources in men and material ever put in the hands of a commander, and caved in. O, worshippers of heavy incapacity, take and digest it if you can," *Ibid.*, 267.

like Dana spy on him, would be relieved of duty in large measure due to Dana's reports back to Washington about his performance. Soon after joining Grant, Dana revealed his doubts about McClelland leading a movement against Port Hudson, just down the Mississippi River from Vicksburg, writing to his boss Stanton on April 12th, "I have remonstrated, so far as I could properly do so, against intrusting so momentous an operation to McClelland." Again, on April 25th, Dana wrote, "I am sorry to report that there is much apparent confusion in McClelland's command, especially about his staff and headquarters, and that the movement (against Grand Gulf) is delayed to some extent by that cause."¹⁷

In between his letters criticizing McClelland, Dana's correspondence portrays a decisive, clear-thinking unpretentious, aggressive Grant, firmly in command, a paradigm for successful military leadership. At this point, in no small part to Dana's glowing reports about him, Grant appeared to have the full support of Washington. A letter from Stanton to Dana on May 5th, 1863, established that General Grant "has the full confidence of the Government, is expected to enforce his authority, and will be firmly and heartily supported." The letter served as a not so subtle reminder that if he saw fit and had reason enough, Grant would finally be able to get rid of his nemesis, John McClelland. And as prelude to forever sealing McClelland's fate as a commanding general, Dana wrote on May 24th, "My own judgment is that McClelland has not the qualities necessary for a good commander, even of a regiment." Subsequently, on June 18th, just weeks before Vicksburg would capitulate, McClelland was relieved of the command of his corps for "repeated disobedience, of important orders, his general insubordinate disposition, and his palpable incompetence."¹⁸

¹⁷ *OR*, 24, pt. 1: 74, 80.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 84, 87, 103.

As the summer of 1863 progressed, Dana found himself an avid supporter of Grant, writing Congressman Elihu Washburne,

My impressions concerning Grant do not differ from yours. I tell everybody that he is the most modest, the most disinterested and the most honest man I have ever known. I have met hundreds of prominent and influential men to whom I have said that and other things in the same direction. To the question they all ask, ‘Doesn’t he drink?’ I have been able from my own knowledge, to give a decided negative.¹⁹

Further, Dana said of Grant, that he was possessed of a temperament that “‘nothing could disturb and a judgment that was judicial in its comprehensiveness and its wisdom.’”²⁰

The forthcoming investment of Vicksburg would be a most formidable task yet despite the obstacles facing him, Grant remained true to his core values and never doubted his own success, expressing his self-confidence and determination in a letter to his friend James Wilson on March 10th, 1863. “We are going through a campaign here such as has not been heard of on this continent... the men are in good spirits, and feel confident of success. The health of this command is a subject that has been very much exaggerated by the press. I will venture the assertion that there is no army now in the field showing so large a proportion of those present with their commands being ready for duty.”²¹

Increasingly frustrated with failed attempts to rearrange the terrain to suit his needs, and fully understanding the strategic and psychological importance of taking Vicksburg, Grant decided to take more direct action in spring, 1863. He would march his troops south through the swampy lowlands west of the Mississippi River while Admiral David Porter’s ships would risk running Vicksburg’s batteries and sail down the Mississippi below Vicksburg. If successful, Porter’s boats would then ferry Grant’s troops from the west side of the Mississippi to its east

¹⁹ Janet Steele, *The Sun Shines for All* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1993), 55, cites Dana to Elihu Washburne, Aug. 29, 1863, from the *Elihu Washburne Collection*, Library of Congress.

²⁰ Charles Dana, “Reminiscences of Men and Events of the Civil War,” *McClure’s Magazine*, X (January, 1898): 256.

²¹ Grant, *Letters to a Friend*, 25.

bank, and invest Vicksburg from the south and east. Though such risky tactics had worked before in other theaters, never had the defense been so stout and formidable as they were at Vicksburg. Further, Grant was taking another gamble by facing the prospect of having to cut his supply lines as his troops crossed from Louisiana into Mississippi.²²

The gamble worked. Newspapers expressed confidence and optimism and Northern partisans would read of the great Union success in dispatches such as that printed on April 17th: “last night was a very eventful one, and pregnant with great results.”²³ In the weeks to come, Grant would push his forces up in a northeasterly direction in between two Confederate armies, win a number of battles and eventually capture Jackson, the capital of Mississippi. He would then turn west, and begin his drive towards his ultimate goal, Vicksburg. As Grant recorded one victory after another – at Port Gibson, at Raymond, at Champion Hill, at the Big Black River - the Northern press hailed his achievements and proclaimed him America’s Napoleon. Yet expectations for this “Napoleon” were that he just might never meet his Waterloo.

From the *Boston Advertiser*, May 11th, “Great Victory at Port Gibson: The Rebels Routed and Driven Towards Vicksburg.” Within the week, from Wisconsin, “Gen. Grant is making clean work in Mississippi and will soon bring the knotty question of Vicksburg to a solution.” And from New York on May 25th, the *Times* erroneously proclaimed, “An Official Announcement to the President that Vicksburgh has fallen.”²⁴ In fact, such was the *Times*’ confidence in Grant that in a spasm of exuberance, it reported, “The Stars and Stripes Floating Over the Rebel Stronghold,” and “Victory Complete,” while the *New York Herald* chimed in with similar headlines and declared such victory “is regarded here as worth more than the capture of a thousand Richmonds.” A bit premature, nevertheless, the point was made, it was

²² McPherson, *Tried By War*, 169-170; details of Grant’s plan can be found in his *Memoirs*, 1: 460-464.

²³ *Cleveland Herald*, April 28, 1863.

²⁴ *Boston Advertiser*, May 11, 1863; *Wisconsin State Register*, May 16, 1863; *NY Times*, May 25, 1863.

only a matter of time before Vicksburg would fall to Grant. Two days later, the *Herald* would write of Grant, “he is the only Union general now in the field the celerity of whose operations can bear a comparison with the achievements of Napoleon in his campaign in Italy and Germany.” The newspapers were not the only ones reporting the good news of Grant’s progress. On May 20th, Charles Dana wrote Edwin Stanton, “Grant won a great and momentous victory over the rebels, under Pemberton, on the Jackson and Vicksburg Railroad, at Baker’s Creek on the 16th instant.”²⁵

Grant’s relentless march toward Vicksburg continued. His troops, “buoyant with success, were eager for an assault,” and accordingly, in mid-May, Grant conducted two unsuccessful attacks upon the works of Vicksburg.²⁶ Convinced that he was just wasting manpower and resources after two failed frontal assaults, the normally aggressive Grant, with some trepidation, decided to lay siege to Vicksburg. Troops were strategically positioned, all supply routes into Vicksburg were cut, and with the Mississippi River secure, the always tenacious Grant would tighten the noose until Vicksburg would capitulate.

General Grant was fast approaching the zenith of his military career. The *New York Times* singled him out as the one most notable of all Union generals who had maintained his high place “in the public regard,” declaring that he had delivered “the Confederacy blows such as no arm has dealt,” and left alone, “will in due time, bring the whole concern to the dust.” His clarity of thought, alacrity of movement and bold decision making inspired and infused his troops with confidence. “As General Grant rode to the front to-day,” reported the *Herald*, “he was

²⁵ *NY Times*, May 25, 1863; *NY Herald*, May 24th and 25th, 1863. Apparently the truth never got in the way of a good war story and ironically, when the fall of Vicksburg was accurately reported, it evoked skepticism from certain of its readers. A week after Vicksburg fell, Virginian Lucy Rebecca Buck wrote of the “unpleasant news of the fall of Vicksburg (which by the way, we didn’t believe...)” her comments reflected, in part the partisan nature of war reporting and reluctance of some to entertain the veracity of bad news, from Elizabeth R. Baer, ed., *Shadows on My Heart: The Civil War Diary of Lucy Rebecca Buck of Virginia* (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1997), 230; *NY Herald*, May 27, 1863; *OR*, 24, pt. 1: 86.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 170.

everywhere greeted with tremendous and uproarious cheering.”²⁷ A Dr. Warriner of the United States Sanitary Commission confirmed the paper’s reporting. “The *morale* of the army is pronounced,” wrote Warriner on May 27th, “by those who have the best opportunity of knowing, is *excellent*. The same is true as to its sanitary condition. It is indeed not a little remarkable that the health and vigor of the troops should have been kept up to so high a pitch through such adverse circumstances.”²⁸

As both sides languished in the extraordinarily hot early summer of 1863, a smattering of reports regarding Grant’s alleged intemperance resurfaced although Grant seemed to be insulated from such rumors by his success and good press.²⁹ Headlines such as “GEN. GRANT’S VICTORIES,” and “Brilliant Victories by Western Troops,” continued to dominate the headlines of Northern newspapers while residents of an increasingly desperate Vicksburg made do as best they could, some even living in caves and all subsisting on a meager and rapidly dwindling supply of food.³⁰ Mini-biographies of Grant appeared in several Northern newspapers during

²⁷*NY Times*, May 26, 1863, the *Times* was effusive in its praise of Grant, crediting his success to, among other characteristics, his “singleness of purpose,” “freedom from jealousy,” “manly bearing,” “sound judgment,” “Spartan simplicity of character,” and “a most extraordinary combination of energy and persistence;” *NY Herald*, May 26, 1863. Some of the cheers in honor of Grant came from Union troops with black faces for weeks later, on June 16th, Grant would report to U.S. Adjutant General Lorenzo Thomas that troops of African ancestry had fought in a “most gallant manner,” from *OR*, 24, pt. 2:446.

²⁸Newberry, *Sanitary Commission*, 91.

²⁹Of the rumors that continually followed Grant, Mrs. Maria Lydig Daly, an “inimitable purveyor of gossip” on the New York social scene, wrote in 1863, “Lincoln is reported to have said when he heard of his failing, ‘I would like to know what the brand of whiskey he drinks is, to send it to other Union generals.’ It is lamentable that drunkenness is so common among our officers,” from Harold Earle Hammond, ed., *Diary of a Union Lady: 1861-1865* (New York: Funk and Wagnalls Company, Inc., 1962), xv, 265. This oft-repeated of Lincoln quotes surrounding Grant’s drinking habits is found in many Grant biographies. However, it is not supported by any documented evidence. According to James McPherson, the anecdote is “probably apocryphal,” from McPherson, *Tried By War*, 168.

³⁰*Evening* (San Francisco) *Bulletin*, June 19, 1863. Despite popular identification of General William T. Sherman as the one who inflicted so much damage on the South, it was Grant who embraced and encouraged the concept of total war and urged the destruction of all material that could aid enemy forces. Witness to this is a letter to Grant in the end of May from Brigadier General Peter Osterhaus, operating near Vicksburg. “Your order of to-day to burn the railroad bridges and track east of here is just received. . . . I had almost every bushel of corn destroyed along the railroad line and the public road as far as Bolton.” In a letter to Rawlins, Osterhaus added, “for about 4 miles the ties and iron are destroyed by fire, besides the burning of all wooden structures as far as Bolton.” From the *OR*, 24, pt. 2: 211,213. As to the burning of the railroad ties, one suspects that since “Sherman’s Neckties” is a much catchier phrase than “Osterhaus’ neckties” and as such, Sherman’s legacy in popular memory is safe.

the quiet days of June into early July. Paying testimony to both his reticent nature and the slings and arrows Grant suffered on occasion in the press, the *Herald* wrote, “no phrases of his live in the popular memory, and he does not even electrify the nation or the troops under his command with congratulatory orders. But he fights a great deal. He has been sneered at; he has been maligned; he has been neglected, and has done more against the rebellion than any other general now in the field.”³¹

In a moment of typically refreshing candor, none other than Grant lieutenant, General William T. Sherman commented on press coverage of Union forces in a letter to his wife. “The Northern papers bring accounts of our late movements very much exaggerated, but still approximating the truth.” Yet of Grant’s role, Sherman saw no hyperbole. “Grant is now deservedly the hero.” Sherman continued on to his wife, “He is entitled to all the credit of the movement which was risky and hazardous in the extreme and succeeded because of its hazard.” Sounding like someone who found himself a target of the press as he often himself was, Sherman finished his point to Ellen, writing: “he is now belabored with praise by those who a month ago accused him of all the sins in the calendar, and who next week will turn against him if so blows the popular breeze.”³²

By the beginning of July, such was the effectiveness of Grant’s siege, the city of Vicksburg was on the verge of collapse. Its inhabitants were starving, disease was rampant and there was no hope of relief. Facing the inevitable, commanding Confederate General John Pemberton forwarded a message of desperation to one of his division commanders. “Unless the siege of Vicksburg is raised,” he notified General C.L. Stevenson, “it will be necessary very shortly to evacuate the place.” Three days later, on July 4th, Grant sent a message to Washington.

³¹ *NY Herald*, June 8, 1863.

³² M.A. DeWolfe Howe, ed., *Home Letters of General Sherman* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1909), 265.

“The Enemy surrendered....The only terms allowed is their parole as prisoners of war.”³³

Grant’s timing was impeccable. Vicksburg and approximately 27,000 prisoners were in the hands of “U.S.” Grant on America’s greatest holiday. The Mississippi River, from the Great Lakes to the Gulf of Mexico was under Federal jurisdiction. Grant had cut the South in two. On the same day, Robert E. Lee’s Army of Northern Virginia was retreating from the hills of Pennsylvania towards home in war-ravaged Virginia. It was a great day for these United States of America.

It was also a great day for Ulysses S. Grant, “hero of the Mississippi Valley.”³⁴ The consensus of opinion on the importance of Grant’s role in taking Vicksburg was voiced by soldiers including Benjamin McIntyre of the 19th Iowa who wrote on July 4th, “I believe Gen Grant has conducted and planned the downfall of the strongest hold in rebeldom, and with loss of life and fullest confidence in his carrying out his designs to an ultimate and most complete success.”³⁵ Four days later, on July 8th, Grant would learn of his promotion to the position of major-general in the Regular Army.³⁶

The Northern press heaped congratulations on Grant. The *North American and United States Gazette* reported on July 8th that General Halleck, in a brief speech to a large, jubilant gathering in Washington, D.C., said of Grant that he, “had now fought fifteen battles and won fifteen victories.” Subsequently, at the behest of Secretary of War Edwin Stanton, the crowd

³³ *OR*, 24, pt. 2: 347; Simon, *Papers*, 8: 469.

³⁴ So described by the *NY Times*, July 8, 1863.

³⁵ Nannie M. Tilley, *Federals on the Frontier: The Diary of Benjamin F. McIntyre* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1963), 177. The collective distress suffered by the citizens of Vicksburg as a result of having surrendered on July 4th was such that the city would not celebrate that day as a national holiday until 1945.

³⁶ John Y. Simon wrote “the promotion meant that Grant, already a major general of volunteers, would retain his rank when the war ended. Only three other officers on active duty held this rank, none of them commanding in the field,” from *Papers*, 9: xiii. After Vicksburg, comparisons of Grant to Napoleon were frequently found in press reports. The August 26th edition of the *National Intelligencer* favorably compared Grant’s success at Vicksburg with Napoleon’s success at Austerlitz, reporting that Grant’s spoils in terms of captured men and munitions was the greatest in modern history: “the greatest capture of men mentioned in modern history was made by Bonaparte at the battle of Austerlitz, where he took 20,000 prisoners. Gen. Grant took 31,277 at Vicksburg. Napoleon’s spoil at Austerlitz was one hundred and fifty pieces of artillery; Grant’s at Vicksburg was three hundred and thirty-nine.”

shouted out three cheers to Grant (as well as to General George Meade and the Union.) From the *Milwaukee Sentinel*, “The name of General Grant is now inseparably connected with our national holiday.” And citizens in Maine read of “General Grant, whose brilliant exploits since the commencement of hostilities have fairly won for him the title of hero of the Mississippi Valley.”³⁷

Rumors of drinking subsided and many Northern press reports were written in an attempt to scotch allegations of Grant’s past intemperance. A scant week after the fall of Vicksburg, the *New Haven Daily Palladium* reported, “the *Evening Post* now states that it has satisfactory reason to believe that the charges which have been made against this our most successful general are entirely without foundation in truth. He does not drink strong drink; he is not the slave of that or any other habit; he is temperate--abstemious even—and neither at Fort Henry nor at Fort Donelson, nor at Shiloh, nor before Vicksburg, nor at any time since the opening of the war, was he ever seen or known by any one to be under the influence of liquor.”³⁸ America loves its winners.

Any residual doubts remaining about Grant were dissipated with the fall of Vicksburg. He had established himself securely and indelibly as the pre-eminent military leader in the Union Army. Sharing the nation’s headlines with other glorious news of events further to the north in the rolling hills of Pennsylvania, many wrote that the fall of Vicksburg was of greater significance and more important to federal prospects than was the Union victory at Gettysburg. Though perhaps still too early to call the weekend of July 4th the turning point in the war little doubt remained that for once, Federal forces were on the offensive in one theater, had stopped

³⁷ *Milwaukee Sentinel*, July 10, 1863; *Bangor Whig*, July 17, 1863.

³⁸ *New Haven Daily Palladium*, July 9, 1863.

the great Lee in the other, and more importantly, had found the man that could possibly lead them to victory.³⁹

In the weeks and months to come Grant would be hailed by most of the Northern press, explained in the Southern press and be the recipient of public and private honors and awards. Valued in the day at \$1,000, a sword with a solid silver scabbard ensconced in rosewood box inlaid with ivory was presented to Grant by General James McPherson's staff. A torchlight procession in Belleville, Illinois, honored Grant by playing on and parading the General's patriotic initials on a number of transparencies being carried by the crowd. He was referred to as "United States Grant," "Unparalleled Success Grant," "Union Saver Grant," "Undeniably Superior Grant," "Unshackle Slave Grant," and of course, the old and familiar sobriquet "Unconditional Surrender Grant." Even elements of the Southern press would engage its audience with details of the silent warrior, reporting how Grant distinguished himself as a horseman at Monterey in the Mexican American War.⁴⁰

The remainder of the summer would prove to be a quiet one for Grant, the newly anointed "Hero of the West."⁴¹ After consolidating his gains and organizing his command, Grant had his first face to face meeting with Secretary of War Edwin Stanton in the fall. It was then

³⁹ In its July 8, 1863 edition, the *Milwaukee Sentinel* wrote that the fall of Vicksburg was "the severest blow, by all odds, yet dealt the rebellion. The Sentinel stated that Vicksburg was of greater importance than Gettysburg, suggesting that Lee could regroup in Virginia, while Vicksburg was a much more "decisive result," cutting the Confederacy in half, from which there would be "no discount" and "no drawbacks." On the same day, the *New York Herald* reported that the joy at the news of Lee's retreat from Gettysburg "was not to be compared to the wild enthusiasms everywhere exhibited" when news broke that Vicksburg had fallen. Grant, never one prone to hyperbole, would later write in his memoirs that the "fate of the Confederacy was sealed when Vicksburg fell," *Memoirs*, 1: 567. Recently, Brooks Simpson wrote that Vicksburg was the "greatest triumph to that date secured by a Union general," from *Triumph Over Adversity*, 214.

⁴⁰ *Philadelphia Ledger*, July 17, 1863; *NY Herald*, July 20, 1863. Some of the others included "Unequaled Smasher Grant," "Unflinching Surmounter Grant," "Ultimate Subjugation Grant," "Utterly Solid Grant," "Unusually Sober Grant," and "Uncommon Smart Grant;" *Camden Confederate*, July 24, 1863. Grant was acknowledged as an excellent horseman, perhaps the best in his days at West Point.

⁴¹ Grant's star continued to rise if for no other reason than in comparison of his success in the West to the constant Union failures in the East. Dubbing him the "Hero of the West," the San Francisco *Bulletin* compared "the beautiful and masterly strategy, the heroic fighting, the grand successes of Gen. Grant," to the "failure to achieve anything whatever in the meaningless promenade of the Army of the Potomac," from its December 31, 1863 edition.

that Grant learned that he had been given command of the Military Division of the Mississippi, to include the Departments of the Ohio, the Cumberland, and the Tennessee, and a substantial chunk of territory along the Mississippi River. As a result, and true to his nature, Grant decided to personally lead the charge to lift the siege of Chattanooga. He relieved General Rosencrans of command in that city, replaced him with General George Thomas, and one day later, on October 19th, Grant wrote Thomas in his usual perfunctory manner to “hold Chattanooga at all hazards. I will be there as soon as possible.”⁴²

Grant’s arrival breathed a new spirit in the demoralized federal force. With a two-year string of successes attached to his resume, Grant’s arrival was welcomed by besieged federal troops. “Grant is here now,” wrote 21-year old Illinoisan Edwin Cort of the Army of the Cumberland on October 30th, 1863, and reflecting a growing sentiment within the ranks, concluded that “he is just as good as can be found.”⁴³ Grant would be good enough to reverse Federal fortunes in Tennessee. Within a week after his arrival, Grant opened what was then called the “cracker line,” a supply route that would provide food and equipment for besieged Union forces. Due to the mountainous terrain surrounding Chattanooga, the cracker line was a feat of logistical brilliance and immediately raised the morale of the trapped Union forces. Within a month, Grant was ready to take back the offensive, move Confederate forces off of their seemingly impenetrable positions, and assume control of Chattanooga.

In late November, General Joseph Hooker, under Grant’s command, captured Lookout Mountain. A day later, General George Thomas, again under Grant’s command, took Missionary Ridge as Union forces literally ran uphill driving Confederate forces from their positions. Central Tennessee was now securely in Federal hands. Northern newspapers shouted

⁴² Grant, *Memoirs*, 2: 18; Simon, *Papers*, 9: 302.

⁴³ Helyn W. Tomlinson, ed., *Dear Friends: The Civil War Letters of Edwin Cort* (Helyn Tomlinson, 1962), 112-113.

out Grant's latest conquest. "Brilliant Union Victories...information was received...from Gen. Grant of a great battle fought yesterday, resulting in a complete victory over the rebels." "Glorious News From Grant," "Grant Victorious at Chattanooga: The Rebels Driven at All Points;" "From Chattanooga – Most Glorious News – Utter Route of Bragg – Our Army Enthusiastic," "The Results of General Grant's Victory: The Rebels Retreating in great disorder;" and "Grant's Great Victory – A Complete Victory Announced by Gen. Grant – Splendid Conduct of Our Troops – Bragg's Army Completely Crushed," screamed the headlines all throughout the North and the West Coast.⁴⁴ Word from the field did not take long to get to the folks back home in the North. "We have glorious news from the West," wrote Cora Beach Benton after receiving a letter from her husband with the 17th New York Independent Light Battery, "Grant has cut Bragg's army all in pieces."⁴⁵ With Chattanooga secure in Union hands and having been proclaimed as "master of the field," Grant seemed invincible.⁴⁶ And he had opened the door for his trusted lieutenant William Tecumseh Sherman to head south and secure his place in the history books for his march to the sea through Georgia.

In December, Congress granted Ulysses S. Grant promotion to the rank of Lieutenant General. Ostensibly, the position was designed expressly for Grant. On February 29th, 1864, President Lincoln signed the subsequent bill into law and on March 2nd, the Senate confirmed Grant as Lieutenant General of the United States Armed Forces. He would become only the third American to be afforded such an honor; the others being George Washington and Winfield

⁴⁴ *National Intelligencer*, November 26, 1863; *Milwaukee Sentinel*, November 26, 1863; *Newark (Ohio) Advocate*, November 27, 1863; *Cleveland Herald*, November 27, 1863; *Boston Advertiser*, November 28, 1863; and *NY Times*, November 27, 1863, respectively. Commentary and praise for Grant would come from the international press as well. In its December 29th edition, the *Lowell News* reported that *The London Morning Star* wrote that the fall of Chattanooga was "the Waterloo of the South," and that *The London Times* wrote that Grant was "the most active and successful commander whom the federals possess, whose presence has turned the fortunes of the campaign...."

⁴⁵ Thomas Taber, ed., *Hard Breathing Days: The Civil War Letters of Cora Beach Benton* (Albion, New York: Almeron Press, 2003), 260, letter dated November 29, 1863.

⁴⁶ *Lowell News*, November 30, 1863. The article stated that "Grant is master of the field, and it is difficult to conjecture any probable turn of events, which can improve the prospects of the rebels."

Scott. Grant was ordered to Washington D.C. on March 3rd, and on March 8th, he and his 13-year old son Fred checked into the Willard Hotel in Washington D.C. From there both Grants made the short stroll over for a reception at the White House. It was at that time that Grant would meet President Lincoln at a formal reception at surely what must have been a somewhat humorous sight for the gathered dignitaries who witnessed the contrast in appearance as the gangly 6' 4" President welcomed the diminutive 5' 8" Grant.

Ever parsimonious with his words and never given to make a spectacle of himself, Grant stood up on a White House couch at the request of Lincoln and gave a typically brief, unemotional speech to a room packed with curious White House dignitaries, guests and onlookers:

I accept the commission with gratitude for the high honor conferred. With the aid of the noble armies that have fought on so many fields for our common country, it will be my earnest endeavor not to disappoint your expectations. I feel the full weight of the responsibilities new developing on me and know that if they are met it will be due to those armies, and above all to the favor of that Providence which leads both Nations and men.⁴⁷

Press reaction to Grant's appointment was what Lincoln had hoped for. In its March 24th edition, the *New York Herald* wrote of Grant's appointment, "A most excellent and confident feeling has been inspired by the presence of the distinguished and popular hero; and there is a general anticipation of an early and effective movement of the gallant but hitherto unfortunate Army of the Potomac, now that it is to be handled by this uniformly successful commander."⁴⁸

As commander of all U.S. armies, Grant would do what had not yet been attempted. He would work all Federal armies in coordination with each other, take advantage of the North's

⁴⁷ Simon, *Papers*, 10: 195, from a speech at the White House on March 9, 1864.

⁴⁸ *NY Herald*, March 24, 1864. Understanding his reticent nature, the Herald reported: "He has been most enthusiastically received whenever and wherever he has shown himself; but as usual, he avoids all display and devotes himself to the duties and labors of his position..." In its May 29th edition, the *Herald* would continue in its effusive praise: "No army ever had more confidence in its leader than the Potomac army has in Lieutenant General Grant. I hear this confidence expressed alike by officers and men, and with this unanimous and growing confidence no one anticipates any fear as to the future."

superiority of numbers, and set out to finish the war. His strategy, he would write in his memoirs, was to “concentrate all the force possible against the Confederate armies in the field.”⁴⁹ Refusing to be confined to a desk in the nation’s capital, Grant attached himself to General George Meade’s Army of the Potomac and would command all U.S. armies from the field as he attempted to chase down Robert E. Lee and his vaunted Army of Northern Virginia. Of the sense of optimism that pervaded the Nation’s Capital, Colonel Charles Francis Adams, he of a pedigree unmatched in American history wrote, “I find unexampled military confidence prevailing in Washington, under an impression that Grant means to be, in fact as well as name, the head of the Army.”⁵⁰ It was to be the apocalyptic moment of the Civil War. Grant vs. Lee; the irresistible object versus the immovable force. Meade would maintain his role as titular commander of the Army of the Potomac but it was Grant who, in reality, would direct Federal forces.

In short order, Grant was clear in his understanding of his objective. Meetings with Lincoln prior to joining Meade in the field had left no doubt as to his mission. “Lee’s Army will be your objective point,” Grant wrote General Meade on April 9th, 1864 from his field headquarters in Culpepper, Virginia. “Wherever Lee goes there you will go also.” The destruction of Confederate armies would be Grant’s goal and when accomplished, he knew the costliest war in American history would be over. Similar missives urging coordination and engagement were sent to Grant’s other commanding generals. He was determined to follow through on his “design” to “work all parts of the Army together, and, somewhat, towards a

⁴⁹ Grant, *Memoirs*, 2: 129.

⁵⁰ Worthington Chauncey Ford, ed. *A Cycle of Adams Letters, 1861-1865* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1920), 123. Charles Francis Jr. claimed a direct lineage to great-grandfather John Adams as well as to grandfather John Quincy Adams.

common center,” to destroy the capacity of the Confederacy to maintain the fight.⁵¹ It was the first time during the Civil War that all Union armies would work in conjunction with each other. And Grant, a clerk in a nondescript leather goods store just 3 years earlier, would now coordinate the efforts of the largest military force on Earth. Grant would use the Army of the Potomac to keep Lee constantly engaged so that he could not send any of his seasoned veterans to support any of the other Confederate armies in the South. This strategy would allow his field commanders to inflict as much damage as possible on the South to force it to surrender. It would be the concept of total war; it was a concept in which, as Lincoln was fond of saying, of “those not skinning can hold a leg.”⁵² Grant was content to hold, Sherman, Sheridan and his other subordinates would skin.

Despite all the press accolades and the support he found in Washington, the parochial nature of Meade’s inner circle mandated that Grant win them over as well. As such, he took great pains to give the appearance that Meade was still in command of the Army of the Potomac as he attached himself to that austere outfit. Yet despite such efforts, Grant’s presence was met with a good deal of skepticism from Meade’s command staff as well as by many veterans of the numerous campaigns against Lee.⁵³ It was as though an eminently successful minor league manager was now moving up to the big leagues. “Every other officer I have seen, says as to the vast inferiority of the Western armies on both sides compared with those here...,” wrote Colonel

⁵¹ Simon, *Papers*, 10: 274, 251.

⁵² A quote, according to John Y. Simon that Grant was quite fond of and appropriated, without giving proper credit to Lincoln, on a number of occasions, from Simon, *Papers*, 10: xiv. The original quote credited to Lincoln can be found in Tyler Dennett, ed., *Lincoln and the Civil War in the Diaries and Letters of John Hay* (New York, 1939), 179; Grant, *Memoirs*, 2: 143, footnoted in Simon, *Papers*, 10: 254.

⁵³ Not all of Meade’s staff had doubts about Grant. Colonel Theodore Lyman of Massachusetts, on Meade’s staff since late 1863, was quite impressed with what he saw. “Grant is a man of a good deal of rough dignity; rather taciturn, quick and decided in speech. He habitually wears an expression as if he had a determination to drive his head through a brick wall, and was about to do it. I have great confidence in him,” wrote Lyman on April 12th, shortly after Grant met with Meade’s staff, from George Agassiz, ed., *With Grant and Meade From the Wilderness to Appomattox*, (Boston: Atlantic Monthly Press, reprint, Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1994), 81.

Charles Wainwright, a New York artillery officer attached to the Army of the Potomac.⁵⁴ This was Lee and his marvelous Army of Northern Virginia that Grant now faced; it was not a Pillow or a Pemberton who turned tail in the face of Grant's stolid determination. Grant acknowledged the doubt and skepticism he would face years later in his memoirs. "It was not an uncommon thing for my staff officers to hear from Eastern officers," Grant would write, "'Well, Grant has never met Bobby Lee yet.'"⁵⁵ From McClellan to Hooker to Burnside to Pope, Lee had decisively defeated each of them despite a disadvantage in numbers and many thought the outcome with Grant in command would be no different.

Yet despite such skepticism, Grant lost none of his confidence. He succeeded in the West, he would now succeed in the East; true to his nature, he never doubted his own abilities. His self assurance was borne out of the relationship he had with his soldiers over the past three years; men who had faith that he would lead them to victory. Private John F. Brobst of the 25th Wisconsin Infantry Regiment had every expectation that he would be transferred from the Western theater and follow Grant as he attached himself to the Army of the Potomac. Displaying Western pride and his rock-solid confidence in Grant, Brobst wrote to future wife Mary in late March, 1864, from Cairo, Illinois, "We always take every place that we attempt to take down here, and if our Grant goes down with us there (to Virginia), we will take Richmond for them (the Army of the Potomac), and get them started and see if they will help themselves."⁵⁶

⁵⁴ Allan Nevins, ed., *A Diary of Battle: The Personal Journals of Colonel Charles S. Wainwright, 1861-1865* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1962, reprint, 1998), 210.

⁵⁵ Intra-region press could be just as partisan as inter-region press. To explain the failure of Confederate armies in the West relative to that of the success of the Army of Northern Virginia, Edward A. Pollard, author and editor of the *Richmond Enquirer* lay the blame on inferior western troops and the symbiosis between Lee and his Virginians rather than acknowledge Grant's value as a leader. "The army of Virginia is undoubtedly superior in composition to that of the west," wrote Pollard, who called Confederate forces under Lee's command "the best soldiery in the world," from Pollard, *Southern History: The Third Year of the War* (New York: Charles B. Richardson, 1865), 107; Grant, *Memoirs*, 2: 292.

⁵⁶ Margaret Brobst Roth, ed. (*Well Mary: Civil War Letters of a Wisconsin Volunteer* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1960), 40-41.

Grant chided his generals for elevating Lee to an exalted status that he did not believe Lee deserved. ““Oh, I am heartily tired of hearing about what Lee is going to do,”” Grant told his commanding officers during an evening respite in the midst of the Battle of the Wilderness. ““Some of you always seem to think he is suddenly going to turn a double somersault, and land in our rear and on both of our flanks at the same time. Go back to your command, and try to think what we are going to do ourselves, instead of what Lee is going to do.””⁵⁷ To further mitigate any resistance he faced in the ranks and properly anticipating the mood of the men in his new command, Grant left most of General Meade’s command structure in place and left many of his top commanders in the West, most notably William Tecumseh Sherman and James Birdseye McPherson.

From the Southern perspective Grant’s promotion to Lieutenant General was met with great interest and curiosity. Southern partisans were all too familiar with Grant’s success in the West, most notably at Vicksburg and Chattanooga, yet they maintained an unrelenting faith in Robert E. Lee. Accordingly, Confederate sentiment seemed to reflect equal parts bravado mixed with hopes that Grant would prove a dismal failure in the face of Lee’s tactical brilliance, just as his predecessors had been. The Southern press, preying on old rumors and allegations, put little stock in Grant’s ability to rally the Army of the Potomac. “The unanimous declaration of our officers and soldiers is,” reported the *Richmond Examiner* in mid-May, “that they had rather fight the army of the Potomac under Grant than under any of the Generals who have hitherto commanded it. He makes his men drunk with whiskey, and brings them to the muzzle of the guns in masses. In that state, men are insensible to danger, but are also incapable of fighting....There is little reason to fear for the result of the coming struggle.” Sounding a bit more of an ominous note to his Southern brethren, Confederate Calvary Colonel William L.

⁵⁷ Horace Porter, *Campaigning With Grant* (New York: The Century Co., 1906), 70.

Nugent, himself a battlefield eyewitness who understood Grant's aggressive nature, would write to his wife Nellie from Montevallo, Alabama, in late April, 1864 of Grant's impending assignment. Grant "will return to Virginia," warned Nugent, "and precipitate his horde of outlaws upon us in every direction."⁵⁸

Initial trepidation turned into optimism and perhaps a bit of wishful bravado as Lee prepared a stout defense in May for Grant, prompting Confederate Lieutenant Colonel Barrington King to report to his "Darling Mother" that "Grant will be the worse whipped Gen that has ever tried to take Richmond. We have the largest and the best army that has ever been collected in the Confederacy & if so peace God we can not be whipped." Such was King's exuberance at Confederate prospects two months later that he again wrote to his mother that, "U.S. Grant is certainly dead," and as a result, "It will have a very demoralizing effect upon the army & the whole yankee nation. Meade, his successor, is a very cautious & almost a timid man...."⁵⁹

Grant would not have to wait long to prove himself and to win the respect and admiration of his troops. Lee would make sure that Grant's baptism under fire would come soon enough. After crossing to the southside of the Rapidan River from Culpepper, Virginia, on May 4th with Lee's stout Army of Northern Virginia between him and Richmond, both armies engaged in bloody fighting on May 5th and May 6th in the dense thickets and underbrush just west of Chancellorsville. It would be known as the Battle of the Wilderness. It was the scene of a resounding Confederate victory just one year earlier and many expected similar results.

⁵⁸ *Richmond Examiner*, May 17, 1864. Two weeks later, in its May 30th edition, the *Examiner* had a change of heart and referred to a "crafty" Grant as he tried to outmaneuver Lee on the way to Richmond; William H. Cash and Lucy Somerville Howorth, *My Dear Nellie: The Civil War Letters of William L. Nugent* (Jackson: University of Mississippi Press, 1977), 172.

⁵⁹ T.H. Galloway, ed., *Dear Old Roswell: Civil War Letters of the King Family of Roswell, Georgia* (Macon: Mercer University Press, 2003), 65, 82.

Casualties were heavy on both sides. As the battle subsided Grant reported to General Halleck, now his chief of staff, that “our losses to this time in killed, wounded & prisoners will not probably exceed 12,000 of whom an unusually large proportion are but slightly wounded.” Further, as Grant saw it, “at present we can claim no victory over the enemy, neither have they gained a single advantage.”⁶⁰

At the conclusion of the second day’s desperate fighting, Grant made a decision that instantaneously galvanized the Army of the Potomac and earned him the respect and admiration of his troops. He would order his troops to continue south to continue after Lee’s Army of Northern Virginia. It would be an unprecedented turn for the Army of the Potomac after suffering heavy casualties. Grant would remain engaged with Lee at all costs. Despite being bloodied and battered, Grant’s troops were not going to retreat back north as had been the case under so many different commanding generals in the past. For once, the Army of the Potomac was not going to cut and run. Grant was determined to pursue Lee and take advantage of his superior numbers until the outcome was determined.

It was the quintessential Grant; it was the only way he knew how to fight. Sixteen-year old enlistee Frank Wilkeson of the Army of the Potomac confirmed the importance and impact of Grant’s decision. Recalling the moment when he realized his company was heading south, Wilkeson wrote, “Grant’s military standing with the enlisted men this day hung on the direction we turned at the Chancellorsville House. If to the left, he was to be rated with Meade and Hooker and Burnside and Pope – the generals who proceeded him. At the Chancellorsville

⁶⁰ Simon, *Papers*, 10: 405.

House we turned to the right. Instantly all of us heard a sigh of relief. Our spirits rose. We marched free. The men began to sing.”⁶¹

The significance of Grant’s decision to turn south cannot be understated. It surely was the seminal moment of the war for the long suffering Army of the Potomac. In a moment, Grant won over the troops. They understood the nature and determination of their new leader. ““It flashed upon us, like lightning, that there would be no more ‘falling back,’ and the troops broke into the wildest enthusiasm,” one officer recalled.”⁶² Grant was not McClellan, not Hooker, not Burnside, not even Meade. Grant would fight. In the instant it took to turn right instead of left, the long suffering troops of the Army of the Potomac understood that this was a general who might just live up to his reputation. The woods erupted in a cacophony of cheers as Grant rode by. Soldiers threw up their hands, tossed their hats in the air, and shouted as their commander passed by on horseback.⁶³ This one act, bereft of drama, of great pomp and ceremony, energized the Army of the Potomac and infused the ranks with a self-confidence they had not experienced

⁶¹ Frank Wilkeson, *Turned Inside Out: Recollections of a Private Soldier in the Army of the Potomac* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1997), 80. Faith in Grant and evidence that he had won over his troops came from a number of sources. One of Grant’s soldiers was quoted as saying just weeks later that, “Ulysses don’t scare worth a damn,” from Simon, *Papers*, 1: xxi. Traveling with Grant towards Spotsylvania Courthouse on March 8th, Charles Dana echoed the prevailing sentiment, writing, “As the army began to realize that we were really moving south, and at that moment were probably much nearer Richmond than was our enemy, the spirits of men and officers rose to the highest pitch of animation. On every hand I heard cry, “On to Richmond,”” from Dana, *Recollections of the Civil War* (New York: D. Appleton and Co., 1902), 194. Grant aide General Horace Porter described what he saw as a result of Grant’s decision to head south: “Soldiers weary and sleepy after their long battle,” wrote Porter, “with stiffened limbs and smarting wounds, now sprang to their feet, forgetful of their pains, and rushed forward to the roadside. Wild cheers echoed through the forest, and glad shouts of triumph rent the air. Men swung their hats, tossed up their arms, and pressed forward to within touch of their chief....The night march had become a triumphal procession for the new commander,” from Porter, *Campaigning With Grant*, 79.

⁶² Simpson, *Triumph Over Adversity*, 300.

⁶³ James McPherson, ed., *Civil War Atlas* (New York: MacMillan Publishing Co., 1994), 152; McPherson estimated that Grant lost about 18,000 in killed, wounded and missing at Wilderness from May 5th through May 7th. Yet despite the high casualty count, Union troops welcomed the continued engagement and movement south. In contrast, almost exactly one year earlier, Union forces under General Joseph Hooker suffered approximately the same number of casualties in almost the same location at the Battle of Chancellorsville. According to McPherson, Union casualties numbered about 17,000 (*Civil War Atlas*, 115), to no good effect, as Hooker withdrew from the field and retreated back north of the Rappahannock River. Corroborating McPherson’s numbers, Joseph Cullen estimated Union casualties at Chancellorsville to be 17,187 killed, missing, and wounded, from *The Battle of Chancellorsville*, Eastern Acorn Press, 1981, first published in the *Civil War Times Illustrated*, by The Historical Times, Inc, 1968.

since the beginning of the war. Illustrator and artist Edwin Forbes, on the scene, captured the dramatic moment:

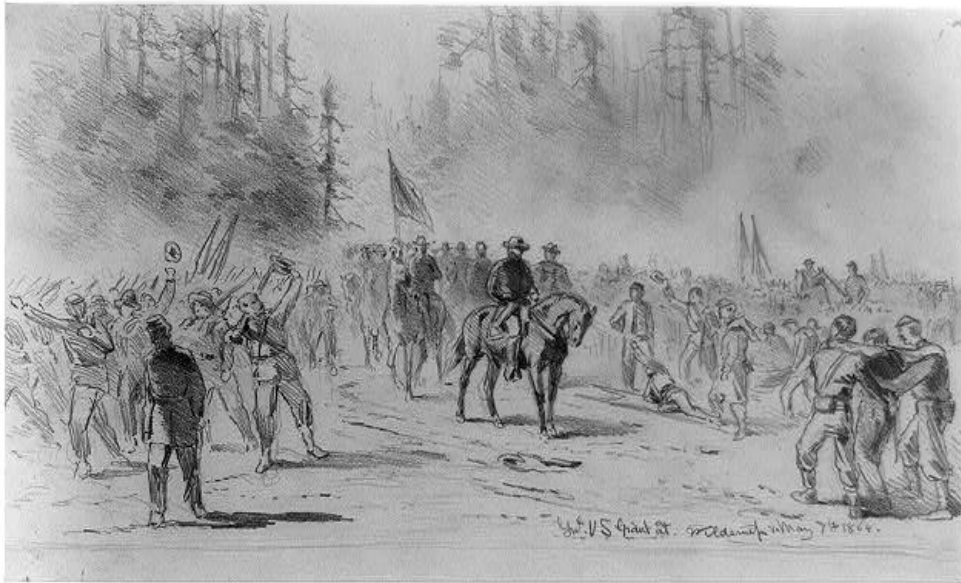


Figure 3.2 Edwin Forbes' "Grant at Wilderness"

Just days after the carnage at the Wilderness, Grant would again engage Lee at Spotsylvania Courthouse, a sleepy little town about 10 miles southeast of Chancellorsville. Again the fighting was intense. Reporting to Secretary of War Edwin Stanton on May 11th, Grant stated that, "our losses have been heavy as well as those of the enemy. I think the loss of the enemy must be greater." Yet Grant's determination was evident, for he would finish the letter with a message that would again find its way into the papers and add to his legend. "I propose to fight it out on this line if it takes all summer," Grant, depicted as a beacon of somber vigilance over his quote, assured Stanton.⁶⁴

⁶⁴ Simon, *Papers*, 10: 422; *Harper's Weekly*, May 28, 1864.



Figure 3.3 Ulysses S. Grant in *Harper's Weekly*

As was the case at the Wilderness, the two-week long battle at and around Spotsylvania Court House was inconclusive, though the partisan press continued to see it as a victory for each's respective side. Failing to secure a decisive victory over Lee's forces, Grant disengaged and continued to move his army in a south-easterly direction to gain by maneuver what he could not gain by frontal assault. Over the next several weeks Grant continued to probe, engage, and reposition his army in pursuit of Lee. The May 20th edition of the *Richmond Enquirer* wrote of the typically aggressive General, "Grant still presses, still assaults, still struggles for the prize.

So far, he has, at least, done no worse than his predecessors; indeed, he has done more than any of them.”⁶⁵

In less than a month Grant had made converts out of his doubters. He was up to the task of taking on Robert E. Lee. Of Grant, the prevailing sentiment in Washington, D.C. was echoed by Charles Francis Adams, Jr. when he wrote his father on May 29th: “He took command under the most unfavorable circumstances-jealousy between East and West; the Army of the Potomac and the Army of the Southwest...All this passed away and now Grant has this army as firmly as ever he had that of the Southwest. He has effected this simply by the exercise of tact and good taste...The result is that even from the most jealously disposed and most indiscreet of Meade’s staff, not a word is heard against Grant. The result is of inestimable importance. The army has a head and confidence in that head.”⁶⁶ Once again, as he had done after Belmont and Shiloh, Grant had overcome petty internecine jealousies and resistance to his leadership within the Union Army that again seemed as formidable to his success as was the Confederate Armies he faced in the field.

Unfortunately for Grant, the *Enquirer’s* words in their May 28th edition would serve as an ominous and ironic foreshadowing of what was soon to come. After a sharp battle along the North Anna River in late May, Grant would engage Lee at a place called Cold Harbor, about ten miles northeast of Richmond. In historical memory, Cold Harbor would be remembered as Grant’s “Pickett’s Charge” for the exceedingly high number of casualties the Army of the Potomac would suffer in a little over an hour on June 3rd, during the most intense fighting of the

⁶⁵ *Richmond Enquirer*, May 20, 1864. As he sought to flank Lee, testimony to Grant’s maneuverability came at the end of the month when his whereabouts were unknown to the Richmond press. “It is hoped that General Lee possesses better information of the purposes of Grant,” reported the *Richmond Examiner* on May 30, 1864, “and the precise locality now occupied by his army, than the public....The crafty Ulysses appears now to have laid aside the armour of Achilles and returned to his original character of an ARTFUL DODGER.”

⁶⁶ Ford, *Adams Letters*, 133-134.

campaign. Yet an interesting dynamic was at work and contemporary accounts in the Northern press made little mention of the carnage of this day. With Grant having earned a good measure of public relations capital in the Northern press for his military exploits to date, coverage was couched in the much larger scope of Grant's continued efforts to flank Lee and get around his right in his attempt to take Richmond. "Our army continues to in the very best of spirits and condition and is enthusiastically devoted to Grant," reported the *North American and United States Gazette* just days after the battle. With reference to Cold Harbor, the *New York Times* reported that the fighting around the Chickahominy River, just south of the battlefield, "was an experiment," designed to test the feasibility of an assault on Richmond from the North. And with lesson learned and despite the losses, "it was an experiment perfectly proper to be made."⁶⁷

Perhaps because the army had suffered massive losses for three years with little to show for it, the Northern press chose to focus on Grant's resolve to move forward and not on the amount of casualties taken in early June. The day after the battle, the *Bangor Whig* reported to its readers of Grant's effort to flank Lee as "one of the most successfully executed and brilliant facts of the campaign, by which Gen. Grant out generated his adversary." Three days after the battle, when sufficient time had passed to filter out the sordid details of June 3rd, the *Cleveland Herald* reported that "Grant is leaving no grass beneath the feet of his army. The enemy are not allowed to rest one moment, and are...bewildered by his rapid and unexpected movements." On the same day of the *Herald* report, the *New Haven Palladium* praised Grant's continued success. "Another grand flank movement," and "more successes from Grant," proclaimed the paper, reporting that "the news is generally regarded in Europe as disastrous to the rebel cause."⁶⁸

⁶⁷ *NA Gazette*, June 8, 1864; *NY Times*, June 18, 1864.

⁶⁸ *Bangor Whig*, June 4, 1864; *Cleveland Herald*, June 6, 1864; *New Haven Palladium*, June 6, 1864; in its June 18th edition, the *NY Times* wrote that Grant's continuous flanking movement was a "splendid stroke, comparable only to Moreau's passage of the Rhine and flank march on Ulm."

Certainly there was mention of the severe casualties the Army of the Potomac suffered, but these reports in the Northern press were limited and were stated with little detail. Such was the nature of the optimistic reports emanating from Northern papers that a chagrined *Richmond Examiner* reported to its readers two weeks after the battle that post-battle Northern press accounts had “deluded the North” about Grant’s “reported victories.”⁶⁹ Further, citing a report from the exceedingly partisan yet short-lived *Atlanta Confederacy*, the *Charleston Mercury* took Grant to task and painted a picture diametrically opposed to what the Northern public was reading. “The hero of spades and unconditional surrenders,” read the article, “has...endangered the safety of his army.... His force now, wasted by disease, desertion, straggling and the slaughter of Southern grape and bayonets, is in no condition to overthrow a veteran army like LEE’S, or to wrest it from our heroic Capital.”⁷⁰

From lessons learned during his investiture of Vicksburg and the carnage of Cold Harbor indelibly etched in his mind, Grant quickly realized the futility of further direct frontal assaults on Lee’s entrenched positions. Recent history convinced him that outflanking Lee would be his most successful course of action. On June 11th, Grant advised General Benjamin Butler, already positioned with his forces south of Richmond, of his strategy. “The movement to transfer this army to the south side of the James River will commence after dark to-morrow night,” wrote Grant, whose plan was to combine Butler’s force with his own and advance on to Petersburg and

⁶⁹ *Richmond Examiner*, June 17, 1864; the *Evening Bulletin* reported of “dreadful losses,” but added little more, from June 9th, 1864, while the *Vermont Chronicle* acknowledged that Grant’s operations had “cost us very dearly,” yet “had won a point of the highest value,” June 18, 1864.

⁷⁰ *Charleston Mercury*, July 6, 1864; Grant would later write of Cold Harbor, “I have always regretted that the last assault on Cold Harbor was ever made.... No advantage whatever was gained to compensate for the heavy loss we sustained,” from Grant, *Memoirs*, 2: 276; Grant would lose about 7,000 men, killed, wounded, or missing, compared to Confederate losses of about 1,500, from McPherson, *Civil War Atlas*, 158-159.

then to Richmond. Grant's maneuver caught Lee by surprise and delighted the political cartoonist of *Harper's Weekly* who portrayed Grant's ability to flank Lee as such.⁷¹



Figure 3.4 Grant “Whips” Lee

Unsure where Grant's army was going to reemerge, Lee rushed his forces south towards Richmond and beyond. Grant saw the opportunity to take the city of Petersburg, just 20 miles to the south of Richmond, before Rebel troops could get there to defend it. On June 14th, Grant wrote Halleck “I will have Petersburg secured if possible before they get there in much force.”⁷² He assigned the task to one of his corps commanders, Major General William Smith. After initial success, Smith failed to press his advantage and the opportunity to occupy Petersburg was

⁷¹ Grant, *Memoirs*, 2: 284; Kristen Smith, ed., *Political Cartoons of the Civil War* (Athens, Ga.: Hill Street Press, 1999), 120, originally published in *Harper's Weekly*, June 11, 1864.

⁷² Simon, *Papers*, 11: 45.

lost. Lee's reinforcements arrived and within days the battle of Petersburg bogged down into a siege.

Chafing as Lee's troops dug in around Petersburg, Grant had no other choice and accordingly, "reluctantly settled down for a siege along the Petersburg-Richmond front that would last nine grueling months, punctuated by frequent battles and skirmishes that would force Lee to lengthen his supply lines until they grew so thin that they would break."⁷³ And though almost entirely resigned to the inevitability of a long, protracted siege, Grant just could not help himself and in late July would make one more attempt to force the issue. Grant replicated a tactic he used at Vicksburg and tried to blow a hole in Confederate lines just southwest of Petersburg. It would be known as the "Crater." Soldiers who worked the mines of Pennsylvania in previous lives would dig a tunnel under Confederate lines and on July 30th, 1864, a terrible explosion shook the Virginia countryside around the rolling hills of Petersburg. Confederate forces were caught entirely off guard but once again, Union surprise and initiative was squandered. Grant would call it the saddest affair of the war.⁷⁴

As in the past, when Grant found himself temporarily stalled in the field, allegations of malfeasance found him an easy mark. This time, however, it was not intemperance; this time it was assertions that Grant found it too easy to wantonly sacrifice his men to secure victory. Some observers believed that Grant indeed had little concern for his men and was willing to sacrifice them in prodigious numbers for victory's sake. Richmond resident Mary Chesnut voiced such concerns early in the year as it became evident that Grant would be promoted to Lieutenant

⁷³ McPherson, *Civil War Atlas*, 142.

⁷⁴ Grant later acknowledged in his memoirs that "The effort was a stupendous failure" that cost him approximately 4,000 men, most of whom were captured. Grant blamed the failure on the "inefficiency on the part of the corps commander (Burnside) and the incompetency of the division commander who was sent to lead the assault," from Grant, *Memoirs*, 2: 315. Grant would subsequently ease Burnside out of his command while "never officially relieving him from command," from Simon, *Papers*, 11: xxvi.

General. Describing him as “a bullheaded Suwarrow,” Chesnut wrote that Grant “don’t care a snap if they fall like their leaves fall. He fights to win, that chap.”⁷⁵ Descriptions of Grant as little more than a “butcher” also came from a more surprising source; one that must have caused great consternation to the man who promoted Grant to commander of all U.S. forces. That source was none other than the First Lady, the irrepressible Mary Todd Lincoln. According to former slave and White House attendant Elizabeth Keckley, “Mrs. Lincoln had her opinion of Grant which she voiced in her usual vehement terms to her husband. If McClellan had been a ““humbug,”” then Grant was a ““butcher’ . . . ‘He has no management, no regard for life.’”⁷⁶ Besieged on all fronts at all times regarding decisions made and not made, it appears that the much beleaguered President Lincoln could not even find succor in his own bedroom.

Grant’s reputation became a political issue as such allegations reached a crescendo during the height of the 1864 campaign season when Lincoln was fighting to maintain office against the challenge of Democrat Presidential candidate George McClellan. In July of 1864, the Democratic organ *New York World*, wrote an article comparing McClellan favorably with Grant and diminishing Grant’s accomplishments by attributing whatever success he had found to only his superiority in numbers. Printed in the *Newark (Ohio) Advocate*, the *World’s* dispatch read, in part, “In spite of the disadvantages under which he labored, General McClellan managed to get much closer to Richmond than has General Grant. . . . (General McClellan’s) superior abilities should not be overlooked. . . . We do not desire to underrate General Grant. . . . though to be frank, (Grant has been) altogether too lavish of human life.”⁷⁷

⁷⁵ C. Vann Woodward, ed., *Mary Chesnut’s Civil War* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981), 520.

⁷⁶ Justin G. and Linda Levitt Turner, eds., *Mary Todd Lincoln: Her Life and Letters* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1972), 161; quoted from Elizabeth Keckley, *Behind the Scenes or Thirty Years as a Slave and Four Years in the White House* (New York: G.W. Carleton, 1868), 133, 134.

⁷⁷ *Newark Advocate*, July 22, 1864. The article suggests that Grant had more experienced men and resources than McClellan and won only because he was willing to sacrifice them. The *World* confuses requests for “additional forces” with “forces sufficient.” According to the article, Grant had “sufficient” forces because he rarely asked

Numerous responses to the *World's* assertions would come in the weeks and months to come. Under the heading, "WHO WAS THE BUTCHER, MCCLELLAN OR GRANT," the *North American and United States Gazette*, quoting from the *National Intelligencer*, totaled the number of casualties in Grant's campaign up until the beginning of the siege on Petersburg at 68,200 while reporting McClellan's casualties on the Peninsula at 70,835. Further, the article stated that Grant sustained 35,000 casualties at the battles of the Wilderness and Spotsylvania, "about the same number that General McClellan lost by disease alone in the Warwick and Chickahominy marshes." Three days later and using the same source, the *Bangor Whig* would quote the same numbers that appeared in the *Gazette* article and added the obvious, reporting that "McClellan lost more than 70,000 men and after all, lost the campaign," while adding that "Grant, with smaller losses, has inflicted upon Lee not only a greater loss in men and material, but has proved the superiority of our troops over the best army of the enemy...."⁷⁸ Supporters of Grant would acknowledge that he normally had superiority in numbers but used those numbers to full advantage and subsequently won the war eleven months after engaging Lee in battle. Those same supporters would suggest that McClellan suffered tens of thousands of casualties to no good end.⁷⁹

Regardless of the politics, the next several months would be exceedingly frustrating for Grant. He found out that indeed, he would have to fight it out all summer as he had professed months earlier. And he would have to fight it out all fall. And all winter. And even in to the

Lincoln for more. Conversely, the *World* suggests that McClellan never had "sufficient" forces because he kept asking for more. In fact, McClellan usually had superiority in numbers despite his protestations to the contrary.

⁷⁸ *NA Gazette*, September 23, 1864; *Bangor Whig*, September 27, 1864.

⁷⁹ Civil War casualty statistics provided by the Ohio State University list the total number of dead in the Civil War at 364,511 for the North and 260,000 for the South; a total of 624,511. Of this total, 388,580 died of disease, 61,192 died in POW camps, 24,881 suffered non-battle related deaths, and 3,000 died of accident. This total of 477,653 represents 76.9% of all Civil War deaths. Grant's experience, especially at Vicksburg, helped him understand the nature of casualties and was one reason why he remained aggressive in the field. Available at: <http://ehistory.osu.edu/uscw/features/medicine/cwsurgeon/statistics.cfm>, accessed on July 12, 2010.

following spring. But not without slow, grinding success. And not without hope of certain victory. Lee's forces were being ground down, the number of his desertions increased daily. As he did at Vicksburg, Grant remained busy outside of Petersburg in the summer of 1864, maneuvering, feinting, probing and extending siege lines in order to cut off all avenues of redress. Grant would allow no supplies to reach Lee nor would he allow Lee to break out any of his beleaguered troops to aid other Confederate armies engaged elsewhere.

Like the portrayals of him in the press, Grant would hold on like a tenacious bulldog, endure the kicks and punches to his face, and shake the Confederacy in his grasp until it capitulated. Under Grant's direction, a coordinated Union Army advanced on all fronts and reflected Grant's reluctance to allow the enemy to breathe while aggressively pursuing and engaging. Lincoln understood and appreciated what Grant was doing. On August 3rd, Lincoln telegraphed Grant, approving his strategy, "'wherever the enemy goes, let our troops go also'.... this, I think, is exactly right, as to how our forces should move." In Grant, Lincoln knew he had found his Moses who would lead the Federals to the promised land. He knew he had found a general who had never taken a backward step in the war and was not about to ease up on the enemy in any manner, shape or form. Lincoln sensed that as long as Grant maintained his holistic strategy, the end of the war was near. "I have seen your dispatch expressing your unwillingness to break your hold where you are. Neither am I willing," telegraphed President Lincoln on August 17th, "hold on with a bull-dog gripe, and chew & choke as much as possible." The press and political cartoonists found the resemblance between Grant and a bulldog too tempting, and as such, the following political cartoon emerges:⁸⁰

⁸⁰ Basler, *Lincoln*, 7: 476, 499; Created by Currier and Ives, Robert E. Lee, Jeff Davis, and other Confederate leaders are trapped in Richmond, represented by the doghouse, under the watchful eye of the ever-tenacious bulldog Grant, during his siege. A diminutive George McClellan pleads with President Lincoln to call Grant off. This cartoon appeared during the election season of 1864 and associated McClellan with the Copperheads, Northern



Figure 3.5 Grant the Bulldog

The fall months proved eventful for the fortunes of the Union Army and rewarded Lincoln for his absolute faith in Ulysses S. Grant. Though his siege of Petersburg prevented him from aggressively engaging the enemy in battle as was his nature, Grant continued to shift his forces, probe for weaknesses in the Confederate lines, and keep his command occupied. Edward Bacon, a white officer who commanded black troops wrote from New Market Heights, Virginia, in late October: “Grant’s presence means action,” and siege or no, Grant would continue to look for any opportunity that presented itself against the stubborn, recalcitrant Lee.⁸¹

With Grant holding firm around Petersburg, Union cavalry under General Phil Sheridan continued to clean up the Shenandoah Valley and secured victory after victory, running

Democrats who wanted to end the war. From Abraham Lincoln’s Classroom, The Lincoln Institute, available at: www.abrahamlincolnsclassroom.org/cartoon_corn_put_in_bibliog, accessed on August 4, 2010.

⁸¹ George S. Burkhardt, ed., *The Letters of Sailor and Soldier Edward W. Bacon* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2009), 137. Bacon’s quote is eerily similar to that of Charles Cort’s exactly one year earlier in the Chattanooga campaign when Cort wrote that “Grant is here”...and “as good as can be found,” from Tomlinson, *Cort Letters*, 112-113. By late 1864, Grant had very few doubters among Union forces.

unfettered through the hills and fields of Virginia destroying anything of use for the Confederacy. Union victories were gained in the more remote parts of the Western Theater; more Union troops were recruited from a seemingly inexhaustible supply of men and in the Deep South, General William Tecumseh Sherman would impose his will on Atlanta and later, the state of Georgia. Most importantly, with the fortunes of war turning in his favor, Abraham Lincoln would again win the Presidency in the 1864 election, defeating George McClellan.

The winter of 1864-1865 was a mixed blessing for Grant although on balance the prospects for Federal success were more positive than they had ever been before. Lincoln's election meant Grant would continue in his efforts to hammer the Confederate Army into submission and though Grant became increasingly frustrated with his inability to root Lee out of Petersburg and force him into a final, conclusive battle, the news on all other fronts was good. And it would be particularly good in the Deep South, where his hand-picked replacement, General William T. Sherman was prepared to carve up Georgia and the Carolinas like a well-done Thanksgiving turkey.

Sherman's plan was to evacuate Atlanta with his 60,000 man army and march to the Atlantic Coast where he would turn north through South and North Carolina and link up with Grant to finally subdue Lee. Just where on the Atlantic coast was yet to be determined. In his correspondence with Sherman to determine the exact strategy to be employed, even the most casual of observers notice Grant at his military best and witness in microcosm his extraordinary military capability and grand strategic command. Grant was in total command; he was clear, concise, and able to grasp and act upon the big-picture complexities at hand. And though Grant and President Lincoln had serious reservations about Sherman's plan, Grant had enough faith in his subordinate to allow him to proceed as he planned it. "I say, then, go as you propose," Grant

advised Sherman on November 2nd, and the results are Civil War lore. Sherman bullied his way through Georgia, did indeed make Georgia “howl” as he had promised, and captured Savannah as a Christmas “present” for Lincoln. He and his army would subsequently work their way up through South Carolina where his troops would exact retribution on that state’s capital, Columbia, and then eventually move up into the woods surrounding Durham, North Carolina.⁸²

In his typically magnanimous manner, Grant, made it clear that the credit for the conception and execution of the plan belonged solely to Sherman. “The question of who devised the plan of march from Atlanta to Savannah is easily answered,” Grant would later write in his memoirs, “it was clearly Sherman, and to him also belongs the credit of its brilliant execution.”⁸³ And all the while he allowed Sherman to “skin,” Grant was content to sit and keep Robert E. Lee holed up in Petersburg.

As winter of 1864-1865 came to a close, Grant’s frustration shifted to exhilaration as the Confederate army began to disintegrate in front of him. Still besieged in and around Petersburg, rebel forces were in shambles, holding on by little more than an indomitable will and spirit that perhaps only one such as the great Lee could evoke. Grant continued to extend his siege lines around Petersburg until eventually all rail service was cut off. Any remaining hope that Lee may have had to escape south and hook up with General Joseph Johnston, commanding the last

⁸² Sherman, *Memoirs*, 2: 166, 152, 231, 286-287.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 2: 231; Grant, *Memoirs*, 2: 375. President Lincoln also lavished Sherman with praise. On December 26th, he wrote Sherman in part, “Now the undertaking being a success, the honor is all yours;...But what next? I suppose it will be safer if I leave General Grant and yourself to decide,” from Sherman’s *Memoirs*, 2: 166. For his part, Sherman acknowledges his respect and admiration for Grant in the euphoric aftermath of the fall of Savannah. Responding to rumors of Sherman’s promotion to Lieutenant General as a result of his role in Savannah, Sherman wrote his to his brother, Senator John Sherman of Ohio on June 22nd, 1865, “I deem it unwise to make another Lieutenant General, or create the rank of General.... I will accept no commission that would tend to create a rivalry with Grant. I want him to hold what he has earned and got.” from Rachel Thorndike, *The Sherman Letters: Correspondence between General and Senator Sherman from 1837-1891* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1894), 245.

Confederate force of any size remaining in the Confederacy evaporated in February. As spring of 1865 emerged, the end of the war was a given. It was just a matter of when.

In late January, 1865, Grant was surprised by the arrival of three peace commissioners representing the Confederate States of America – R.M. Hunter of the Confederate Senate, Judge Campbell, Assistant Secretary of War for the Confederacy, and the diminutive Alexander Stephens of Georgia, Vice President of the Confederate States of America.⁸⁴ Since discussing peace terms was not within his purview, Grant did not converse with them about anything of substance and upon instructions from Washington, would send the three on to Hampton Roads where they would meet with President Lincoln. The meeting was for naught.

Though the meeting did not produce anything substantive, it did reveal to Lincoln and Grant the desperation of the Confederate cause. Despite this, however, it was a time of great apprehension and trepidation for Grant. He would later reveal that late winter and early spring of 1865 was “one of the most anxious periods of my experience during the rebellion,” for fear that Lee would somehow manage to break through Grant’s siege lines and link up with Confederate General Johnston in North Carolina. Grant had no illusions at this point of losing the war but Lee’s escape would surely lengthen the war and add to the list of the already ungodly number of casualties each side had suffered.⁸⁵

Grant’s fears would be partially realized when Lee made one final attempt to break the siege lines when he attacked Fort Stedman, just east of Petersburg on March 25th. After some initial success, Lee’s offensive was halted by a Federal counter-attack and Lee’s final hope to extricate himself from the noose around Petersburg was lost. As such, events began to unfold quickly. Grant eliminated the charade of issuing orders through Meade and launched what would

⁸⁴ In his memoirs, Grant refers to these three as representing the “so-called Confederate States.” As did Lincoln, Grant never recognized that C.S.A. as a legitimate sovereign nation, from Grant, *Memoirs*, 2: 420.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 2: 424.

become his final campaign of the war. Forced to withdraw from Petersburg, Lee and the remnants of his once great army evacuated Richmond and fled west, hoping at some point to turn south and unite with Johnston's army. A partisan Yankee press was exultant and was again effusive in its praise of Grant. An article printed in the *National Intelligencer* was typical of Northern press coverage. "The evacuation of Petersburg and Richmond," read the April 4th edition, and "the capture of an immense amount of the munitions and property of the rebels, and the destruction or dispersion of Lee's great army are the results of Grant's campaign."⁸⁶ Reacting quickly, the Army of the Potomac followed closely after Lee and prevented any southerly movement. Decimated daily by scores of deserters, Lee's impoverished army continued moving westward in hopes of securing the most basic of supplies, food in particular, which never came. Sensing his hopelessness, Grant forwarded a letter to Lee on April 7th, reminding him of the dire condition of his situation and inviting Lee to surrender.⁸⁷

On April 8th, Grant suffered from a headache so severe that he "spent the night in bathing my feet in hot water and mustard, and putting mustard plasters on my wrists and the back part of my neck, hoping to be cured by morning." The remedy for his headache arrived at 11:50 the next morning. It was administered not by a doctor, but by a general, General Robert E. Lee. It was administered in the form of a letter to Grant requesting a meeting to discuss Grant's "proposal of yesterday with reference to the surrender of this army." Grant's headache disappeared immediately. "The instant I saw the contents of the note I was cured," Grant would write in his memoirs.⁸⁸ Grant responded in kind and later that day met Lee at the home of Wilbur McLean at Appomattox Court House, in western Virginia, and accepted the surrender of the gallant Army of Northern Virginia. Grant notified Washington of Lee's surrender in

⁸⁶ *National Intelligencer*, April 4, 1865.

⁸⁷ Simon, *Papers*, 14: 361.

⁸⁸ Grant, *Memoirs*, 2: 483, 485.

typically concise fashion, telegraphing Secretary of War Edwin Stanton, that “General Lee surrendered the Army of Northern Virginia this afternoon on terms proposed by myself.”⁸⁹

As the somber ceremonies concluded, Grant put an immediate end to what he perceived as excessive celebration amongst his own troops when word of Lee’s surrender reached his forces. “When news of the surrender first reached our lines,” Grant later wrote in his memoirs, “our men commenced firing a salute of a hundred guns in honor of the victory. I at once sent word, however, to have it stopped. The Confederates were now our prisoners, and we did not want to exult over their downfall.”⁹⁰

Though General Joseph Johnston’s small Confederate force would remain in the field for two more weeks, the American Civil War was over. Recognized as such, the news dominated the front page of the *New York Times* and other tabloids all across the country. “The Victory,” “Thanks to God the Giver of Victory,” “Honors of General Grant and his Gallant Army,”⁹¹ reported the *Times* and so eleven months after he engaged Robert E. Lee in the field, this tanning clerk at war’s beginning would lead the United States Armed Forces to victory in the apocalyptic moment of the American Republic. The irresistible force had indeed overwhelmed the immovable object.

True to his character, Grant was gracious and magnanimous in victory. He did not ask Lee to surrender his sword. He issued orders to provide provisions for undernourished, impoverished rebel troops. After listening to Lee, he granted permission to allow every Confederate who claimed ownership of one to return home with his horse to facilitate spring

⁸⁹ In one of the most ironic twists of fate in the war, McLean lived in Manassas, Virginia, in July, 1861. His house was severely damaged during the first Battle of Bull Run and as a result, he moved his family to Appomattox Court House to escape the war; Grant, *Memoirs*, 2: 495.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 496.

⁹¹ *NY Times*, April 10, 1865. Based on his generous terms to Lee, which he understood would have a “great effect upon the South,” Grant wrote, “if advantage is taken of the present feeling in the South I am greatly in hopes an early peace will be secured,” from a letter to Edwin M. Stanton, dated April 10th, 1865, Simon, *Papers*, 14: 379.

planting. And he sent Lee's soldiers home with the promise to "not be disturbed by United States authority so long as they observe their paroles and the laws in force where they may reside."⁹²

The press was replete with reports of Grant's generous terms and the good effect they had on rebel forces. The "terms are as mild as the rebels could hope for," reported the *Cleveland Herald* and Grant's "generous spirit" was duly noted by his former adversaries. Grant's comportment "does honor" to the "head and heart of the victorious commander," reported the *National Intelligencer* of April 11th.⁹³ *The New York Times* reported that Lee's officers "expressed great satisfaction at the leniency of the conditions" and the "liberal terms" proposed by Grant, terms described by the paper as "of a very liberal character." The *Times* both acknowledged and applauded each leader for the proper and respectful tone they set during the proceedings which would hopefully foreshadow the establishment of a lasting regional reconciliation. "General Lee, therefore, next to Grant, becomes the most efficient peace-maker in the century.," reported the *Times*, and though certainly Grant was carrying out the wishes of President Lincoln, his gracious manner and lack of pretense surely added to the spirit of a peaceful reconciliation at a most difficult moment for the defeated rebels.⁹⁴

Grant's magnanimous nature, evident in his very first success at Belmont and fully illuminated at Appomattox would serve both him and the country well in the future. Revered and honored in the North for his relentless commitment to winning on the battlefield, his

⁹² Grant, *Memoirs*, 2: 492.

⁹³ *Cleveland Herald*, April 10, 1865; *Milwaukee Sentinel*, April 19, 1865; *National Intelligencer*, April 11, 1865;

⁹⁴ *New York Times*, April 14, 1865. Two weeks later, citing the eyewitness account of a *New York Times* correspondent, the April 29 edition of the *Vermont Chronicle* reported that "General Lee expressed a great sense of gratification for such a generous consideration, and said would have a very good effect." Grant would later write in his memoirs that Lee twice noted Grant's conditions would have a "happy effect" on his army," from *Memoirs*, 2: 492, 493.

compassion and magnanimity was so noted and appreciated, if not fully embraced in the South. It would be these attributes and these memories of Grant that would hasten the reunification of a troubled nation a generation later.

4 AN ELECTION WON AT APPOMATTOX

“It requires a heavy impetus to drive forward a sluggish people.”

Thaddeus Stevens

With a sustainable national peace born of their victory on the battlefield in 1865 yet fully unrealized three years later, the Republican Party selected General Ulysses S. Grant as its candidate for the presidency of the United States on May 21st, 1868. With a continually evolving reputation as a beacon of strength and resolve enhanced by Northern press accounts, Grant emerged as the only Republican prominent enough to unite its disparate factions and as a bona fide war hero, he was an overwhelming favorite of party regulars. His nomination was a “foregone conclusion,” reported the *New York Times* in its May 22nd edition, seen by Republican Party managers as “not only a necessity” but also an act of the highest political wisdom.” One week later, on May 29th, Grant formally accepted the nomination and closed out his acceptance letter with the missive, “Let us have peace.” It was a resoundingly simple statement but one that resonated with a nation weary of four years of bitter war and the assassination of a popular president, followed by the political evisceration of an unpopular one. Yet at the moment, it was a nation not yet fully reconciled to its sectional differences.¹

The next four years would pose daunting challenges for even the most seasoned of politicians, much less an inexperienced chief executive such as Grant, who lacked a clear political identity. Yet the president would persevere, act on his Constitutional responsibility as he saw it, and proceed in a manner that would ensure the Republican imperative gained at so dear a cost during the Civil War would not be surrendered during the peace. From an ideological

¹ *NY Times*, May 22, 1868; Simon, *Papers* 18: 264, printed in the June 3, 1868 edition of the *NY Times*, who described Grant’s acceptance letter as a “gem.” Grant won the nomination unopposed, garnering all 650 of the assembled delegates. On the date Grant accepted the nomination, Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, North Carolina, and South Carolina had yet to be formally readmitted back into the United States.

standpoint most political observers did not know what Grant represented. The leadership of the Republican Party had little indication of where Grant stood on the issues. Even Grant himself was vague on matters of policy, writing that while promising to “endeavor to administer all the laws, in good faith,” he admitted that “it is impossible, or at least eminently improper, to lay down a policy to be adhered to, right or wrong.”² Grant had not sought the nomination, had not even suggested he wanted to assume any type of political leadership role. It was his association with President Abraham Lincoln and his service in the war that tied him in with the Republican Party. No one could have accused Grant of being an “offensive partisan.” He “had voted but twice in his life,” wrote Republican Senator George Hoar, “the Whig ticket once and the Democratic ticket once.”³ Grant accepted the nomination out of a sense of duty, a sense of moral obligation to ensure that what he worked so hard to achieve on the battlefield would not be lost in the halls of Washington, D.C. As John Y. Simon wrote of Grant’s mindset, “duty demanded that he serve lest Democrats surrender the results of victory.”⁴

Despite concerns of the various factions within the Republican Party, its leaders understood Grant’s appeal to the voting public.⁵ His personal popularity was unrivaled in the North and he was held in high esteem in the South for his magnanimity towards the defeated South and its leaders at the conclusion of the Civil War. Grant was perceived as honest and forthright, an apolitical oasis in a storm of political intrigue and turmoil. Accordingly, many in

² Simon, *Papers* 18: 264.

³ George Hoar, *Autobiography of Seventy Years* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1903), 1: 245. Mark Wahlgren Summers also wrote of Grant’s voting habits, making brief mention that he had voted only once before the war, from Summers, *The Era of Good Stealings* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 252.

⁴ Simon, *Papers*, 18: xiv.

⁵ A quote from *Harper’s Weekly* succinctly captures the difference of opinion within Republican Party ranks concerning Grant’s stance on the issues: “The Conservative Republicans think him too much in the hands of the radicals,” one reporter noted, “while the Radical Republicans think him too slow, yielding, and half-hearted.” This quote is from 1863 and is a direct reference to President Abraham Lincoln and is evidence of a divide within Republican Party ranks that will grow over the next two decades. Citation from *Harper’s Weekly*, August 29, 1863, Lounger’s Column, from McWhiney, ed., *Grant, Lee, Lincoln, and the Radicals* (Chicago: Northwestern University Press, 1964), 113.

the Republican Party saw Grant as their only hope to defeat the Democrats in the presidential election; he was the only man to remedy sectional strife. “We can only win with Grant,” noted one Republican observer and, accordingly “it is neither wise nor prudent to nominate any one but Grant.”⁶

The General’s nomination was received with a mixed chorus of opinion, much of it driven by party and regional affiliation. Republican newspapers promoted Grant unhesitatingly. The partisan Republican *Union and Dakotian* welcomed the nomination for as a political outsider Grant was “far superior to the majority of the farsighted ruling politicians who have been ruling the nation without bringing peace or economy to our legislation.” Others in the press took a more studied approach and suggested that even within the Republican Party many were not quite sure what to make of Grant’s nomination. The *Boston Daily Advertiser* reported, “at present, the party organs are greatly divided. Some of them insist that the general is not a republican; others that he is in favor of the most radical measures. Some maintain that he is a weak candidate...others that he will be hard to beat with any democratic candidate.”⁷ And such was Grant’s appeal; political ambiguity sufficient enough to provide a glimmer of hope for proponents of all different political shades combined with the respect and admiration of a voting populace fed up with politics as usual.

Clearly recognizing his popularity with Northern voters, reportage in the largely pro-Democratic Southern press ran the gamut from hopeful resignation to downright utter contempt for Grant’s nomination. To the former, a bit of hope was gleaned in Grant’s simple closing statement in his acceptance letter. “General Grant’s demand - ‘Let us have Peace!’” reported

⁶ Republican Party official Harry B. Stanton to Elihu Washburne, October 21, 1867, from *Elihu Washburne Papers*; Michael Les Benedict, *A Compromise of Principle: Congressional Republicans and Reconstruction, 1863-1869*, 276, both found in Brooks Simpson, *Let Us Have Peace* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991), 220.

⁷ *Union and Dakotian* (South Dakota), June 20, 1868; *Boston Advertiser*, June 2, 1868.

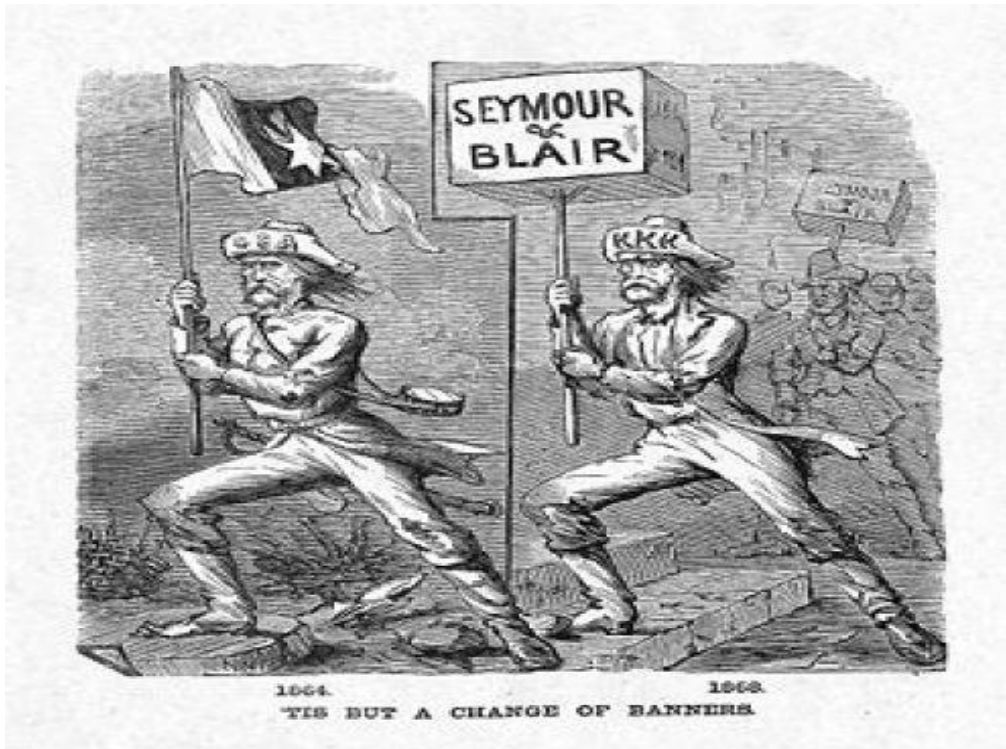
the *Savannah News*, “means a good deal more than the words themselves express. It means...the withdrawal of military rule, and the substitution of military authority.” To some hopeful Southern whites it meant the end of the hypocrisy they saw in the agency of black suffrage under Federal protection in the South, a condition denied blacks in most Northern states. It was the “crime of the age,” declared the *Savannah News*, that the North would “sustain that monstrous partiality which forces negro suffrage upon the South and leaves the North free to reject it.” Others in both the Southern and national press displayed downright contempt and consternation about Grant’s lack of political credentials or the meaning of his nomination. Labeling Grant a “stupid boor,” the *Arkansas Gazette* suggested the Grant would become a mere tool of the “radical party,” to be maneuvered and manipulated by “Stevens, Sumner, Greeley, Washburn & Co.,” who would serve as the power behind the figure. Further warning came in an editorial published in the *National Intelligencer* which editorialized that, “to elect General Grant is to perpetuate these men (Radical Republicans) in power, and stamp their tyranny permanently on the country.”⁸

As was the custom of the day Grant did little to further his own presidential aspirations. As he noted in his memoirs, the office had sought him and if duty called, he would serve. But he would not campaign nor would he attempt to sell himself to the American public. Further, Grant and Republican Party managers understood there was little he could say or do to enhance his reputation. Given his aversion to making speeches and making a public display of himself, Grant found this was one political tradition that he could scrupulously embrace. Understanding

⁸*Savannah News*, June 15th, 1868, reprint of an undated article from the *Richmond Dispatch*; *Daily Arkansas Gazette*, July 23, 1868; *National Intelligencer*, July 31, 1868. Such sentiment existed in the election campaign of 1868 although the official genesis of the campaign slogan “waving the bloody shirt” would not come until 1871, when Republican Senator Benjamin Butler “dramatically held aloft the bloody shirt of a Mississippi school superintendent beaten by Klansmen,” from Michael Les Benedict, *The Fruits of Victory: Alternatives in Restoring the Union, 1865-1877* (Philadelphia: J.P. Lippincott Company, 1975), 138. The bloody shirt was a campaign slogan used by Republicans as representation of martyrdom for those Northerners and scalawags who fought against slavery and supported political equality for the freedmen during Reconstruction.

the esteem in which he was held, Grant suspected that he was one of the few men of the era who could effectively influence the healing of the nation. He viewed the opportunity to serve as president more as a moral and ethical obligation to his countrymen rather than as a career choice or a need to satisfy any political ambition.

Yet Republican politicians who supported Grant would not remain quiet and immediately after his candidacy was announced made clear the distinction between voting for him and voting for the Democratic ticket of Horatio Seymour and Francis Blair. Invoking what would later become officially pronounced as “waving the bloody shirt,” a political cartoon in *Harper’s Weekly* suggested that a vote for the Democrats would be a vote for the Confederate army. It would be a vote for the unrepentant rebels and the white supremacy that characterized the antebellum South. If Grant were to lose the election to the Democrats, so stated the Republican party line, the sacrifice of four years of Civil War would have been in vain.



9

Figure 4.1 “Tis But a Change of Banners”

On a trip “out west” and despite his best attempts to the contrary, Grant often found himself in awkward public displays from whence he was unable to extricate himself, displays which surely caused him a great deal of discomfort and angst. At various locales throughout his journey the press wrote of an exuberant public eager to see their hero in person. The *Boston Advertiser* reported that Grant had “steadily avoided all public demonstrations in his favor on his journey westward” although “the people poured in from all the country round to pay him their respects.” On the same day, the *Arkansas Gazette*, a paper opposed to Grant, reported that the General had been goaded into giving a speech, the extent of which, reported by the paper, was, “Gentlemen: I am very glad to see you, but you must not expect any speech from me. I leave

⁹ “Tis But A Change Of Banner,” *Harper’s Weekly*, September 26, 1868.

that with my old schoolmate, Mr. Wardsworth.” With that, Grant moved on, shook a few hands, and was on his way once again.¹⁰

Despite Grant’s indifference to the proceedings as the election drew near, press reports reflected a prevailing sentiment that Grant’s victory in November seemed inevitable. “While the presidential canvass is progressing so quietly to its consummation, General Grant, the coming man, lingers among his friends at the West, seemingly avoiding any parade or fussy demonstration.” In mid-October, the *Boston Advertiser* declared Grant the victor in the forthcoming election, writing that, “after the general election there will be little need of surrender, as the election of General Grant will give to all good citizens and patriots equal occasion for rejoicing.”¹¹ And just a scant two weeks before the election the collective optimism in the northern press was reflected in the decided pessimism in the Southern press. Reporting that “the election of Grant is a bad business,” an article in the pro-Democratic *Weekly* (Georgia) *Telegraph* wrote of the “despair” Southerners felt about Grant’s chances while at the same time reflecting upon, perhaps wishfully so, the inevitability of the results. “If General Grant, should he be elected, will give the Southern whites the benefit of a fair construction and an administration honestly designed to promote the interests of good government, he may expect the support and confidence of the people.” To meet this desired end, so suggested the paper, men of “moderate and conservative views” had to be appointed to the Cabinet. And recognizing that Grant’s path to victory lay more in his personal popularity rather than the ideological support of

¹⁰ *Boston Advertiser and Arkansas Gazette*, July 23, 1868. In the same article, the decidedly pro-Democratic *Gazette* retreated from its whimsical nature and wrote that “half the people in the land above the age of twenty-one, irrespective of sex, are the peers” of Grant “on questions of finance, law, diplomacy, political statesmanship.”

¹¹ *Lowell News*, October 15, 1868; *Boston Advertiser*, October 19, 1868.

any particular wing within the Republican Party, there appeared to be real hope in some Southern circles that such a course would be pursued.¹²

The presidential election of 1868 was unlike any other in American history because the demographic profile of the voting public experienced a dramatic change. Americans in three states – Mississippi, Virginia, and Texas – would not be allowed to vote since Congress had not yet recognized these states as part of the Union. And for the first time, hundreds of thousands of former slaves – freed black men - had been granted the franchise and would be voting in large measure for the Republican Ulysses S. Grant, the man most closely associated with their freedom other than Abraham Lincoln.¹³ Political fortunes in the South lay not exclusively with an overwhelmingly white, Democratic majority but rather with the substantial influence of a black electorate that was voting for the first time.

In opposition to Grant, Democrats nominated New Yorker Horatio Seymour, a compromise candidate who appeared to be the least odious to a wide range of fractured Democratic Party politicians. To the white South, Seymour's marginal appeal lay only in the fact that he was a Democrat and that he opposed the Republican candidate. This alone would engender little more than tepid support from the limited number of Southern whites who still held the franchise. An unenthusiastic white South would support Seymour not for what he represented but rather for whom he opposed.

¹² *Weekly Georgia Telegraph*, October 23, 1868. Anything associated with Grant resonated in most of the North. At the Vermont State Fair, "The most noticeable animal on the Ground, a very handsome animal...the heaviest ox of which there is any authenticated record, in any country," was named Gen. General Grant. From the *Free Press* published in the *Vermont Chronicle*, October 3, 1868.

¹³ In an essay entitled "Election of 1868," historian John Hope Franklin estimated that "more than 500,000 Negroes voted" in the 1868 election, certainly a large percentage of which were freedmen, from Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., and Fred L. Israel, *History of American Presidential Elections* (Philadelphia: Chelsea House Publishers, 2002), 3: 1265; in Georgia alone, there were 98,507 "colored registered voters," from U.S. Congress, *Testimony Taken by the Joint Committee to Inquire Into the Condition of Affairs in the Late Insurrectionary States: Georgia* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1872) 1: 456.

As anticipated, Ulysses S. Grant was elected President of the United States of America on November 3rd, 1868. It was, as James Barber would later write, an electoral victory “gained by overwhelming display of presence.”¹⁴ Grant garnered roughly 53% of the popular vote and just shy of 73% of the electoral vote. He carried every Northern state save New Jersey and Seymour’s home state of New York and due to thousands of votes from former slaves, captured every former Confederate state with the exception of Georgia and Louisiana, where allegations of voter fraud were rampant.¹⁵ Yet as has oft been reported and written of, it was not the vote of the freedmen in the South that won the presidential election for Grant. Even had Seymour won all the electoral votes from all the former Confederate states as well as the so-called border states, Grant still would have won by a comfortable 157-137 electoral margin.¹⁶

From the North’s perspective, Grant’s ascension to high office was a coronation as much as it was an election. “The loyal people of the country looked to Grant with an almost superstitious hope,” wrote George Hoar; testimony to Northern acknowledgment of Grant’s prior service to the nation and the high esteem in which he was held throughout the region.¹⁷ Never lost in the election reportage were the numerous references made to Grant’s military service. It was another victory for General Grant, not politician Grant; much to the delight of Republican partisans it was viewed as another in a long string of victories for Grant over a still-defiant

¹⁴ James G. Barber, *U.S. Grant: The Man and the Image* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois U. Press, 1985), 56.

¹⁵ Grant lost New York by exactly 10,000 votes out of a total of 849,766 cast and lost New Jersey by less than 3,000 votes out of a total of 163,122 cast, from Schlesinger, Jr., and Israel, *Presidential Elections*, 3: 1300. Evidence of voter fraud in Georgia during the 1868 presidential election was presented to Congress by National Republican Election Committee. The committee provided a “tabular analysis” that divided Georgia’s 132 counties into twelve groups, eleven counties per group. In the first grouping of 12 counties - Appling, Bullock, Coffee, Early, Irwin, Jones, Lincoln, Miller, Montgomery, Tatnall, and Telfair - all rural, the total number of registered voters was 7,833. 4,264, or 54.4% of these registered voters were white and 3,569, or 45.6% were “colored.” In the vote for president for these counties, Seymour received 4,116 votes and Grant received no votes. In another grouping of 11 counties in which “colored” represented 54% of the registered voters, Seymour took 98.4% of the presidential vote, 5,497 to 87. In the 6 groups in which “colored” registered voters outnumbered white registered voters, Grant won only one of these groups; from U.S. Congress, *Joint Committee Testimony: Georgia*, 1: 456-459.

¹⁶ Schlesinger, Jr., and Israel, *American Presidential Elections*, 3: 1300.

¹⁷ Hoar, *Autobiography*, 1: 246.

South. “The battle is over and the victory won,” crowed the *Daily National Intelligencer*.¹⁸

Southern Democrats lost the Civil War and with “Unconditional Surrender” Grant’s election they were going to lose the peace as well.

And not letting the facts of the electoral vote count get in its way in its post-election analysis, the decidedly partisan Democratic *Cincinnati Enquirer* wrote, “it seems probable that General Grant is elected President by the so-called vote of Southern States. We say ‘so-called’ for no one believes that there is a state south of the old Mason and Dixon’s line, either ‘Confederate’ or Border, that would vote for him....No fact is better known that the people of these States are almost unanimously hostile to the Republican candidate. It is by a trick – by a shameless fraud – that their votes are counted for General Grant.” Yet the Northern press countered such charges by reporting on alleged voter fraud and intimidation throughout much of the South. The *Milwaukee Sentinel* reported that, “The Southern states were carried for the Democracy not by persuasion, not by a fair count of parties, but by the revolver and the bludgeon.”¹⁹

Due to his independence from the influence of party managers, Grant remained a political enigma both in the collective mind of an inquiring press and an apprehensive public. His victory at the polls was his own, and as such he was not obliged to any particular faction within the Republican Party that would determine his political agenda. As Grant’s inauguration date grew near, a disparate press continued to reflect upon his independence from factional influence while at the same time a number of pro-Democratic and Southern organs cautioned its readers about the undue influence the Radicals might have on Grant, a potential source of great angst in the South regarding Grant’s political expression. Though not tightly defined, the Radical’s focused

¹⁸ *National Intelligencer*, November 5th, 1868.

¹⁹ *Cleveland Herald*, November 6, 1868, reprint of undated article from the *Cincinnati Enquirer*. Again, Southern votes had no bearing on the outcome, F.N. 16; *Milwaukee Sentinel*, November 9th, 1868.

on the political and social rights of the freedmen, issues which had to take “precedence over other political questions.” “Bringing to politics the moral sensibility of abolitionism,” the Radical message enunciated a complete political and socio-economic overhaul of the South that would bring an end to a strictly defined white-supremacist caste system that had characterized the South for generations.²⁰

“As the 4th of March approaches,” reported the *Hinds County (Mississippi) Gazette*, “the country manifests increased anxiety as to the policy which is likely to mark the administration of the incoming President. Gen. Grant is as reticent as ever, and not even his most prominent and personally intimate political friends dare assert what course he is likely to adopt.” Such sentiment was also evident in the Northern press. “With him,” reported the *Union and Dakotian*, “there will be no ‘power behind the throne greater than the throne itself.’” And within hours of Inauguration Day, the *Natchez Daily Democrat* captured the collective angst and “most intense anxiety” of the “Southern States.” “The persistent reticence of Gen. Grant, with regard to the great questions that convulse the country, has so completely masked his political views, as to baffle all attempts to discover them with any degree of accuracy.”²¹

On March 4th, 1869, nine years after clerking for his younger brother in their father’s leather goods store, Ulysses Simpson Grant was inaugurated as the 18th President of the United States. Remaining true to his nature, Grant gave the second shortest inauguration address in the history of the Republic for an elected first-term president.²² He assured the audience that he would serve the best interests of the people, not the party and reminded them it was their call to

²⁰ Eric Foner, *Reconstruction: America’s Unfinished Revolution, 1863-1877* (New York: Harper and Row: 1988), 229.

²¹ *Hinds County (Mississippi) Gazette*, January 27, 1869; *Union and Dakotian*, February 27, 1869; *Natchez Daily Democrat*, March 4, 1869.

²² His 17-minute speech exceeded Andrew Jackson’s inaugural speech by a mere 10 words, from Joint Congressional Committee on Inaugural Ceremonies, “President Ulysses Simpson Grant,” available at <http://inaugural.senate.gov/history/chronology/usgrant1869.cfm> (*Inauguration facts*), accessed on March 3, 2011.

duty that brought him to his place of immense responsibility. “The office has come to me unsought,” Grant explained, “I commence its duties untrammelled.”²³

Much of Grant’s address was consumed with fiscal concerns and the need to retire the nation’s “great debt.” He spoke of returning to a hard money policy and retiring the greenbacks that had been issued to finance the war. To “protect the national honor,” Grant insisted that “every dollar of Government indebtedness should be paid in gold.” He spoke of foreign policy in the most general of terms, stating that “I would respect the rights of all nations, demanding equal respect of ours.” In regard to relations with Native Americans, Grant allotted two brief sentences, stating that he would “favor any course...which tends to their civilization, christianization and ultimate citizenship.”²⁴

Grant’s comments regarding sectional differences were brief, ambiguous, and at times, a bit contradictory. In referring to the tenuous status of the nation’s reunification and delicate state of mind since the “great rebellion,” Grant said, “many questions will come before it for settlement in the next four years which preceding Administrations have never had to deal with. In meeting these it is desirable that they should be approached calmly, without prejudice, hate, or sectional pride, remembering that the great good to the greatest number is the object to be attained.” He pledged that all the laws of the land would “be faithfully executed, whether they meet my approval or not,” and promised he would be outspoken with his recommendations but would not enforce policy “against the will of the people,” a phrase that certainly resonated with much of the white South. In closing, however, Grant retired any doubts the freedmen and Congressional Radicals may have had concerning the question of black suffrage. He voiced his

²³ Simon, *Papers*, 19: 139.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 140-142.

unequivocal support for universal manhood suffrage, declaring “this question should be settled now...by the ratification of the fifteenth article of amendment to the Constitution.”²⁵

Immediate press reaction to Grant’s address was mostly favorable and reflected a wide range of regional hope and concerns. Papers from different regions interpreted the message differently. Substantively, the *New York Times* mentioned only “Payment of the Public Debt” and “Economy and Faithful Collection of Revenue,” in its sub-headlines. From an aesthetic perspective, the *Times* gushed over the proceedings which were “carried out with a completeness and a degree of brilliant success which is a most auspicious augury for the success of the Government, now transferred to such earnest and patriotic hands.”²⁶

The Southern press was not quite as giddy in its analysis of the proceedings. Other than his stance on payment of the public debt and on “universal suffrage,” the *Natchez Democrat* editorialized on the vague ambiguity of Grant’s speech. “It is a concatenation of generalities and commonplace platitudes,” reported the paper, although it did interpret what Grant left unsaid as a positive sign for the future. Giving hopeful pause to fears in the South that Grant would come under the control of the Radicals, the editorial stated, “it is consoling to reflect that extreme Radicalism may search it in vain for any expression of adhesion to its principles, beyond the endorsement of the 15th Constitutional amendment.”²⁷

Elements of the Western press had a different agenda and despite characterizing Grant’s speech as “not what critics would call a brilliant rhetorical production,” Colorado’s *Daily Central City Register* gave Grant high marks for his “plain, straightforward statement of facts...leaving no one to doubt concerning his principles and position.” Of specific concern to the *Register*’s readers were Grant’s two brief sentences on Native American relations. “His

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ *NY Times*, March 5, 1869.

²⁷ *Natchez Democrat*, March 5, 1869.

utterances on the Indian question are more in accordance with those entertained in the east than with ours,” reported the paper while simultaneously assuring its readership that Grant would not embrace “the insane peace policy hitherto pursued.” Concluding with praise for Grant, the article stated, “we cannot but believe his elevation to the Presidency as most fortunate.”²⁸

Grant inherited a presidency greatly weakened, eviscerated by Congress in the wake of the impeachment of President Andrew Johnson. He acknowledged the primacy of the “will of the people,” and as typical of the so-called Gilded Age presidents, viewed the office of the President as subordinate to Congress.²⁹ Yet regardless of the promises and the rhetoric, and despite the best of intentions, it was clear that Grant would begin his term of office over a nation not only burdened with a litany of domestic and foreign concerns but also a nation deeply divided by a seemingly insurmountable racial fault line.

Grant’s first charge was to fill his Cabinet and so he did in a most expeditious manner. Due to his apolitical construct, the nation eagerly awaited to see whom Grant would nominate in hopes of ascertaining his political expression. Reporting that all of Grant’s nominations of March 5, 1869, had been “immediately ratified by the Senate,” the *Hinds County Gazette* listed Grant’s cabinet selections.³⁰ “These announcements were a surprise,” reported the *Lowell Citizen*, “yet they have been received by the Senate, as by the people in a confiding and friendly spirit.” While confounding potential cabinet appointees and disgusting “those gentlemen who

²⁸ *Daily Central City (Colorado) Register*, March 5, 1869.

²⁹ And to each political party’s respective leaders. Consensus historian Richard Hofstadter later wrote of Gilded Age politics: “It was not the Presidents who gave the machine its dynamic force, but the factional leaders and bosses of the Republican Party, men like Roscoe Conkling and James G. Blaine.” Hofstadter singled out the Republican Party because there was only one “Gilded Age” Democratic president, Grover Cleveland, from Hofstadter, *The American Political Tradition and the Men Who Made It* (New York: Vintage Books, 1948, reprint, Alfred Knopf, 1989), 224.

³⁰ *Hinds County Gazette*, March 10, 1869. As reported in the *Gazette*, Grant’s choices were E.B. Washburne of Illinois as Secretary of State, A.T. Stewart of New York as Secretary of Treasury, J.D. Cox of Ohio as Secretary of the Interior, A.J. Cresswell of Maryland as Postmaster General, E.D. Hoar of Massachusetts as Attorney General, and A.D. Borie of Pennsylvania as Secretary of the Navy. General Schofield would retain his position as Secretary of War.

kindly volunteer to assist every fresh President in the making up of ‘the slate,’ the *Cleveland Herald* reported that, “the great mass of the people have hoped General Grant would go outside the ranks of professional politicians; and he has done so. In this there is nothing grateful or unwise...he has carried out the principle the people recognized when they nominated him for President.” Even papers skeptical of the new President offered their readers at least a glimmer of hope for the future. “There is no doubt,” reported the *Natchez Democrat*, “that in the selection of his Cabinet, President Grant has sadly disappointed the Radical Party, or, at least the Radical wing of the party.” Accordingly, the paper assured its readers that we are “disposed to believe” that the members of the cabinet “will all assist the new President to secure the blessings of peace and a more perfect Union.”³¹

Reporting to a nation failed by its political system in the wake of the tumultuous 1860s, the *New York Times* applauded Grant for his independence on such choices, reporting to its readers, “as no one of them is a representative of a class or clique to whom he owes his place, they are all untrammelled. Their first ‘loyalty’ is due to the country; their second, very properly to the President.” Further, never forgetting General Grant’s success during the war, the *Times* reported that “Grant’s judgment of men and selection of the right man for the right place has always been his strong point. It would be strange if he should fail at this day. We can afford to wait and see.”³²

³¹*Lowell News*, March 6, 1869; *Cleveland Herald*, March 8, 1869; *Natchez Democrat*, March 7, 1869. Mark Wahlgren Summers would later write that to a certain degree, all the Republican factions were disappointed with the cabinet selections, writing that “some reformers were disappointed, too, but not all, and half as badly as regular Republicans.” Describing it as a “reform” Cabinet, Summers would add that “Grant’s selections would include some of the most mediocre and slipshod nonentities of his time, and a few robbers, but to the end, of his Presidency, they shared the Cabinet with able, honest men, dedicated to reform.” Yet by the end of 1870 Summers suggests that Grant’s interest in reform “may have been no more than accidental,” from *Good Stealings*, 187-189.

³²*NY Times*, March 7, 1869. The *National Intelligencer* did not share the *Times*’ enthusiasm for Grant’s Cabinet, reporting of the “disappointment” and “profound regret” shared by some of Grant’s “staunchest supporters.” Yet the paper was of a “cheerful willingness to wait and see the wisdom of the selections demonstrated,” from the *Intelligencer*, March 8, 1869.

Unfortunately for Grant, the wait would not be long. His lack of political experience and limitations as a politician began to emerge early in his first term. Unforeseen circumstance combined with a pronounced lack of due diligence would become a source of embarrassment for the new president and would earn him mixed reviews in the press in the matter of his appointments. Grant had chosen his Cabinet as though he was filling out his staff during the war, with little outside counsel or investigation. “No one knew anything about the Cabinet,” declared former New York Republican Governor and Senator Hamilton Fish, “for Grant had refused to consult a single person, even – in most instances – those whom he intended to name! When politicians remarked that they wish they knew his choices, he grimly replied, ‘So does Mrs. Grant.’”³³ Yet if Grant’s selection process was welcomed by many for its independence from the influence of party regulars, it was also evidence to some of Grant’s political naivete as well as a lack of foresight, negligence, and a perhaps a bit of bad luck in properly evaluating his nominees.

Ratified by the Senate on March 5th, Secretary of the Treasury Alexander T. Stewart was almost immediately forced to withdraw his acceptance due to a conflict of interest. On March 9th, he informed Grant that “I regret that circumstances beyond our control compel me to decline.”³⁴ A day later, on March 10th, Grant received word that his new Secretary of State, longtime friend and political mentor, Elihu Washburne had tendered his resignation as Secretary of State after just five days in office. Grant accepted his resignation the next day acknowledging that Washburne’s “health will not permit you to continue in the office, or in some Cabinet

³³ Allan Nevins, *Hamilton Fish: The Inner History of the Grant Administration* (New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing Co., 1936 revised, 1957), 1: 106, from a conversation on February 3, 1869, citation attributed to *Hamilton Fish Papers*. Joan Waugh wrote that some Republican regulars worried that “Grant’s independent predilections threatened the future of the Republican Party,” from *American Hero*, 126.

³⁴ Simon, *Papers*, 19: 148. Stewart was a wealthy merchant in New York City, and as such his appointment was considered a conflict of interest as detailed in Section 8, of the 1789 Act of Congress which established the Treasury Department. Grant sought an exemption to the act for Stewart but was denied by Congress.

position.”³⁵ Just six days into his presidency, fully one-third of Grant’s Cabinet appointments had already turned over.

Compounding the embarrassment of Washburne’s hasty departure was the desperate manner in which an addled Grant attempted to fill Washburne’s post. On March 10th, the day before he officially accepted Washburne’s resignation, Grant moved quickly and offered the State Department position to Hamilton Fish. Grant asked Fish “to answer by telegraph tomorrow to the effect that you will be in Washington soon.” Early the next day, March 11th, without yet hearing back from him, Grant submitted Fish’s name to the Senate as his nominee for Secretary of State. Subsequently, it was with a good deal of angst and chagrin that Grant learned later that same day that Fish had declined the position. A desperate Grant immediately wrote back to Fish that same afternoon advising him that he had not only sent his name forthwith to Congress, but that the Senate had already ratified his appointment. “Not receiving your dispatch until about 1:50 p m,” wrote a most anxious President, “I sent your appointment of Sec. of State to the Senate. Immediately upon receipt (of Fish’s message) however I sent to the Senate to withdraw but was too late.” And in an effort to disabuse himself the embarrassment of having two ex-Secretaries of State within the first week of his tenure, Grant pleaded with Fish to change his mind. “Let me beg of you now to avoid another break,” wrote a frantic Grant, “to accept for the present and should you not like the position you can withdraw after the adjournment of Congress.” Sparing Grant further humiliation, Fish relented, accepted the position and would remain as Grant’s Secretary of State through the completion of his second

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 19: 151, letter written from Grant to Washburne on March 11, 1869. In resigning his post on March 10th, Washburne somewhat sheepishly advised USG that when he accepted the office, he “‘felt constrained to state to you that my health would prevent me from holding the position for any considerable length of time...a proper discharge of the duties of the office would involve more labor and responsibility that I am unwilling to undertake, in justice to the public interest and myself,’” F.N. source from Washburne ALS, Rutherford B. Hayes Library.

term in March, 1877.³⁶ With the State Department fiasco resolved, Grant moved rapidly to replace Stewart and round out the rest of his top posts. He appointed his wartime aide John Rawlins and Massachusetts' Republican Senator George Boutwell, commissioner of internal revenue under President Lincoln, as heads of the War and Treasury Departments, respectively. In response, the *New York Times* reported on March 12th that Grant's Cabinet was "satisfactorily completed."³⁷

With key positions filled, Grant immediately turned his attention towards one of the more odious tasks faced by any newly elected presidents of the pre civil-service age; that of meeting and greeting the hundreds of office seekers, that "horde of plunderers," who would pollute the White House in hopes of securing federal employment.³⁸ Grant's political inexperience in such matters would antagonize a number of powerful Republicans regarding patronage appointments. Ensclosed in a political spoils system formulated back in the days of President Andrew Jackson, Grant's unwillingness to seek the counsel of party managers in consideration of their endorsements for position reflected his profound disinterest in gaining political advantage or assuaging bruised egos within the Republican Party. Grant, "has commenced business," reported the *Lowell News*, "as though he did not mean to be...worried to death by the influx of office seekers into his office-room." The paper applauded such action, declaring that Grant and the

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 19: 149–152. So desperate was Grant for Fish to accept the appointment that he was willing to allow Fish to quit a scant month later since the 41st Congress was set to convene only through April 10, 1869. As it turned out, Fish would be Grant's longest serving and most successful Cabinet official in the course of his two terms. Later, Richard Hofstadter would write of Fish's importance in Grant's Cabinet that he was "a man of conspicuous rectitude who adorned the group like a jewel in the head of a toad," from *American Political Tradition*, 222.

³⁷ *NY Times*, March 12, 1869. Always loyal to his friends, Rawlins had served as Grant's chief of staff during the war. The *Christian Recorder*, an African American paper published in Philadelphia, praised Grant for his diversity in filling his key posts with "men of all colors, creeds, and professions...would that this course of action would control all future Presidents...President Grant has given us the precedent...as a man of the nation," placing nation above party, from the *Recorder*, May 1, 1869.

³⁸ Described as such in the *Bangor Whig*, March 13, 1869.

nation would be better served by having him attend to more “weighty matters requiring profound and undisturbed attention.”³⁹

Yet Grant’s indifference to such matters would have early and lingering consequences within elements of the party’s leadership. After reporting that influential Republican General Carl Schurz had “boldly protested against the appointments as made as proposed by the President,” an article in the *Charleston Courier* proclaimed that, “the politicians have been greatly disturbed by the manner in which President Grant snubbed General Schurz yesterday, as it leaves them in great doubt as to what influence they are to have in controlling local appointments.”⁴⁰ Literally within days of establishing his first administration, seeds of discontent within his own party were already being sewn and would come to fruition as Grant would attempt to secure a second term of office.

One agency in which Grant did take a personal interest in assigning position was the Bureau of Indian Affairs. He aggressively sought to devise a policy that would be fair and equitable to Native Americans while also satisfying white settlers who, in constantly increasing numbers, were establishing themselves in lands traditionally claimed by Native Americans. Based on letters Grant wrote to “certain Friends in Philadelphia,” the *Cleveland Herald* reported that it was Grant’s desire to inaugurate a policy “to protect the Indians in their just rights, and enforce integrity in the administration of their affairs, as well as to improve their general condition.” As such, embracing their egalitarian proclivities, Grant aggressively sought out

³⁹ *Lowell News*, March 10, 1869. According to an article written in the March 17, 1869 edition of the *Vermont Watchman*, “letters, applications, and recommendations were presented, not one of which was opened by him (Grant), all being turned over to General Babcock, to be forwarded to the several departments where they belong.”

⁴⁰ *The Charleston Courier*, March 16, 1869.

Quakers, historically very supportive and tolerant of Native Americans, to serve as “Indian” agents and commissioners.⁴¹

The *Central City Register*, whose apprehensive readers had a vested interest in the state of Native American affairs, reported that “the territorial appointments made by President Grant thus far appear to be satisfactory to everybody interested.” Subsequently, two weeks later, Grant appointed Ely Parker, a wartime staff officer to Grant and part Native American, as Commissioner of Indian Affairs. In response, the *Register* reported that Parker’s appointment was “a novel one,” that he was a “man of ability and thoroughly educated,” and as a result of being a “half-blood,” his “predilections will naturally be divided between the two races.” Further, as a result of Parker’s influence, “there will be no more defrauding of Indians by corrupt officers.”⁴² Grant’s policies towards the Native Americans were well meaning as he remained fully committed to implementing policy that would promote the best interests of both the Indians and a relentless steam of white settlers. Yet the inevitable cultural clashes resulting from such a situation would place great pressure on his ability to secure an acceptable condition for both sides. Newspaper reports that described the death of “twelve miners” at the hands of the Blackfeet and the “killing of two” by Indians who attacked a “mail rider and his big guard in Arizona,” certainly did not make Grant’s job any easier.⁴³ Grant even earned plaudits for his work in promoting gender equality in the workplace. The *Lowell News* praised Grant for making “a good practical advance in the way of promoting women’s rights, by appointing quite a number

⁴¹ *Cleveland Herald*, March 24, 1869; Grant’s determination to appoint Quakers to deal with Native Americans was received with a certain amount of scorn in some Western communities. An article in the May 8, 1869 edition of the *Owyhee Avalanche* declared it would be more effective for the federal government to deal with the Indians with “Henry rifles,” rather than pacifist Quakers who carried with them only “broad-brimmed hats or New Testaments.”

⁴² *Central City Register*, April 9, 1869 and April 21, 1869.

⁴³ The incident in Arizona occurred on July 17, 1869, as reported in the *Vermont Chronicle*, September 4, 1869.

of women to the charge of post offices and other positions,” a step in the right direction that would “have a potent influence on the popular mind.”⁴⁴

In *totus*, Grant was both condemned and praised by a highly partisan press for the sum of his appointments in 1869. Much of the stated sentiment reflected a “wait and see attitude,” as Grant was both criticized and defended for appointing officials with limited or no government experience. His attempt to fill a Supreme Court vacancy in 1869 seemed to sum up both the mistakes and bad luck Grant would endure in his public appointments. Late in the year, Grant nominated Ebenezer Hoar, Grant’s Harvard-educated Attorney General, as Associate Justice to the Supreme Court. Denied appointment by the United States Senate, Grant immediately nominated his friend and former War Secretary Edwin M. Stanton to fill the position. Quickly approved by the Senate, Stanton died suddenly on December 24th, before he took the oath of office. Through no fault of his own, Grant’s misfortune with his appointments would continue.

As the expedient necessities of a newly formed presidential administration faded into quick memory as weeks turned into months after his inauguration, Grant was confronted with the defining issue of post-Civil War America, that of a true and real reconciliation with the South; of making the nation whole once again. Grant’s duty was to oversee that sectional reunion. To what level or degree should Grant pursue individual rights of the freedmen without pushing unreconstructed white Southerners – certainly a majority of Southern whites – away from the table of peaceful reconciliation and meaningful reunion? And at what point should Grant abandon the primacy of the Constitution in order to placate the general will of the white South? Grant’s first few hectic months in office provided evidence that he would be a strong supporter of political equality for the freedmen. He urged Congress to push for passage of the Fifteenth Amendment, granting the right to vote for all American men of age, regardless of color. In

⁴⁴ *Lowell News*, April 26, 1869.

March, 1869, he signed a bill securing a measure of equal rights for blacks in Washington D.C., by “striking out the word ‘white’ from the laws of the District of Columbia;” such bill having the effect of putting “black citizens on the same footing as white citizens, as regards sitting in juries and similar privileges.”⁴⁵ Such efforts gained recognition for Grant in the press where it was reported that “President Grant proves the strongest where many Republicans feared he would be weak – that is, as to the status of the colored man.”⁴⁶

To identify the racially-charged dilemma was simple; to craft a solution would be profoundly difficult. Grant was under no illusions as to what he was up against. “It cannot be expected that the opinions held by men at the South for years can be changed in a day,” stated Grant in a prophetic moment in December of 1865, “and therefore the freedmen require for a few years, not only laws to protect them, but the fostering care of those who will give them good counsel, and on whom they can rely.”⁴⁷ And as theirs to rely on, the nation hired Grant.

From one prominent Republican instrumental in crafting the reconstruction policy that was in play when Grant was elected, the solution was simple. “The whole fabric of Southern society must be changed,” proclaimed Thaddeus Stevens in a speech in late 1865, a paradigm shift that “requires a heavy impetus to drive forward a sluggish people.” And as was Grant under no false pretense as to the difficulty of the task involved, neither was Stevens. Stating that a “doctrine of Restoration” rather than a complete reconstruction of the South shocked him, Stevens declared that, “this remodeling the institutions, and reforming the rooted habits of a

⁴⁵ *Bangor Whig*, March 20, 1869. Grant’s active support for the Fifteenth Amendment would come to fruition when it was ratified in February, 1870.

⁴⁶ *Vermont Watchman*, May 5, 1869. Quote attributed to “a Washington correspondent of the *New Bedford Mercury*.”

⁴⁷ William Loren Katz, *Report on the Condition of the South: Carl Schurz* (New York: Arno Press and the New York Times, 1969), 107.

proud aristocracy, is undoubtedly a formidable task...required at our hands by God and our country.”⁴⁸

Essential to this reconstruction or this complete overhaul of the South that Stevens spoke of was the right of the freedmen to vote. Part of the need to “protect them” that Grant spoke of was in the form of military rule designed to enforce the law and to ensure political equality for blacks in the South. And to this end lay the great difficulty in affecting any real reconciliation between the regions. The real purpose of the “cruel” policies of Reconstruction on white Southerners, according to former postmaster of the Confederacy John Reagan, was to “coerce them into the acceptance of the policy and political opinions of the Republican party,” and as such was simply unacceptable.⁴⁹ The South had been conquered on the battlefield but changing hearts and minds would prove a sterner test.

“Sooner than see the colored people raised to a legal and political equality” Virginia Judge John C. Underwood quoted a “candid gentleman of Alexandria” in front of the Joint Committee on Reconstruction, “the Southern people would prefer their total annihilation.” When asked if he had heard “similar expressions” from white Southerners of “lower condition,” Underwood responded, “one man remarked to me that he would kill a nigger as soon as he could see him.” In front of the same committee, Frederick H. Bruce, a United States mail agent from Rappahannock County, Virginia, was asked how whites in his part of the state would respond to the prospects of “negro voting.” “They consider it too monstrous a proposition even to debate,”

⁴⁸ Furman University, “Speech Delivered in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, September 6th, 1865, *from Stevens Papers Online*, available at: <http://history/furman.edu/benson/hst41/red/stevens2.htm>, accessed on August 21, 2011.

⁴⁹ Walter Flavius McCaleb, ed., *Memoirs: With Special Reference to Secession And the Civil War By John H. Reagan, LL.D.* (New York: The Neale Publishing Co., 1906), 237.

proclaimed Bruce, it “is one of things they imagine they will never submit to,” and as such, “will suffer confiscation and everything before they will endure the degradation.”⁵⁰

Such interpretation of the meaning of black suffrage in the white South appeared to be universal and was not limited to the testimony of a few select civic and public officials. Accordingly, Grant faced a monumental challenge in trying to enforce his and the Republicans’ determination to ensure political equality for men of color. Even from the Southern pulpit, the message of white supremacist rule was a familiar one, ingrained in Southern religiosity. Former Confederate churchmen “stoutly opposed the postwar movement to accord black people political and civil equality,” wrote historian Shelton Smith, not only to adhere to Southern ideology but also because the “drive of radical politicians and abolitionist preachers to enfranchise blacks and to grant them equal political privileges deeply enraged religious leaders of the white South.”⁵¹

Anglican Church Reverend Steven Elliot warned his congregation of the threat and degradation posed to the Southern way of life by the imposition of a Northern-controlled reconstruction led by one many Southerners feared would become an agent of Radicalism, such as Ulysses S. Grant. Elliot spoke of the loss of “property,” “caste,” sovereignty,” and personal freedom.” He had warned his flock of what may lay ahead under Republican rule; a condition of serfdom, which “our children will be made ‘hewers of wood and drawers of water,’ to the paupers of Europe, the Negroes of Africa, and last and lowest of all, to the Black Republicans of the North.”⁵² Moses Drury Hoge, Confederate Chaplain during the war, wrote with great angst and despair of the “negroes,” the “depraved men” who were assuming office in 1868. “Nothing

⁵⁰ United States Congress, *Report of the Joint Committee on Reconstruction at the First Session Thirty-Ninth Congress: Virginia-North Carolina-South Carolina* (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1866), testimony of Judge Underwood taken January 31, 1866, Part II, 7, testimony of Frederick Bruce taken February 28, 1866, Part II, 154.

⁵¹ H. Shelton Smith, *In His Image, But...: Racism in Southern Religion, 1780-1910* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1972), 252.

⁵² Reverend Steven Elliott, DD., “A Sermon Preached in Christ Church, Savannah” (Macon: Burke, Boykin, and Company, September 16, 1864).

would induce me to enter our Capitol,” he wrote his sister in January, 1868, “I wish to escape the spectacle of beastly baboons sitting where sages and patriots once sat.”⁵³ The message transcended religious denominations. “We believe and contend that this is a white man’s government,” wrote Catholic Priest Abram Ryan in his periodical, *Banner of the South*, “made by white men, for white men, and never otherwise contemplated by its founders.”⁵⁴ His message failed to resonate with radical Reconstructionists, who found such distasteful expression in a political cartoon published in *Harper’s Weekly* on September 5th, 1868.



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Figure 4.2 “This Is a White Man’s Government”

⁵³ Peyton Harrison Hoge, *Moses Drury Hoge: Life and Letters* (Richmond: Presbyterian Committee of Publication, 1899), 239.

⁵⁴ David O’Connell, *Furl That Banner* (Macon: Mercer University Press, 2006), 102, F.N. from *Banner of the South*, July 9, 1870, 4.

⁵⁵ “This is a White Man’s Government: ‘We regard the Reconstruction Acts (so-called) of Congress as usurpations, and unconstitutional, revolutionary, and void.’ – Democratic Platform,” from *Harper’s Weekly*, September 5, 1868.

While even the most unapologetic white Southerners accepted the demise of slavery, accepting blacks as political, much less as social equals, was never in the Southern narrative. The demand placed on the South by the 13th Amendment to the Constitution “is conceded by all,” said Georgia Senator Ben Hill in a speech to his constituents in Georgia in 1870. Yet two years earlier in a speech to a group of Democrats in New York City, Hill revealed the true sentiments of the vast majority of white Southerners when he declared, “Southern whites will never consent to the government of the negro. Never! All your money spent in the effort to force it will be wasted. The Southern whites will never consent to social and political equality with the negro.”⁵⁶ It was this concept of white unity, white supremacy forged out of what W.J. Cash would later describe as a proto-Dorian bond that Hill spoke of. It was a “sacred” bond between white Southerners that permeated all strata of society; designed to maintain and reduce the black man to a state of perpetual inferiority in a racially mandated caste system unilaterally appropriated from the slagheap of a centuries old tradition of white supremacy. For the poorest class of Southern whites, it was this cloak of racial superiority, so falsely worn, that would forge a united front against Yankee intrusion and the persistent effort of President Grant. It was “the dear treasure of his superiority as a white man, which had been conferred on him by slavery,” that made him, along with the “angriest planter, . . . determined to keep the black man in chains.”⁵⁷

The Ku Klux Klan, the Knights of the Golden Circle, and the so-called numerous rifle clubs and white terror groups that sprang up across the South were the most visible manifestations of the attitudes held towards the Freedmen as well as white Republicans.⁵⁸ The

⁵⁶ Benjamin Hill Jr., *Senator Benjamin Hill of Georgia: His Life Speeches and Writings* (Atlanta: H.C. Hudgins and Co.), 56, 329. Hill’s address in Georgia dated December 8, 1870. The address to the New York Young Men’s Democratic Union was on October 8, 1868.

⁵⁷ W.J. Cash, *The Mind of the South* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1941, reprint, New York: Vintage Books, 1991), 66.

⁵⁸ *Report of the Joint Committee on Reconstruction*, Part II, 27. As early as January of 1866, the existence of a white terror group known as the “Knights of the Golden Circle” was confirmed by Virginian Lysander Hill, in testimony

white South was not going to surrender its tradition of white supremacy; was simply not going to grant any measure of political power or social equality to Southern blacks. In the face of political impotence that resulted from military rule in the South as dictated by the Reconstruction Acts of 1867 and 1868, “the Reconstruction Klansman,” stated historian William Banks, “saw himself as the only vehicle to restore the Southern way of life and social order that had been disrupted by the Civil War.” As such, Klan members positioned themselves squarely on a collision course with President Grant, who was determined to guarantee full political rights for the freedmen, which in the mind of many white Southerners, was the “most devastating consequence of Radical Reconstruction.”⁵⁹

“The instinct of self-protection,” General John B. Gordon told a Congressional Committee investigating the Klan, “prompted that organization.” It developed “out of a sense of insecurity and danger, particularly in those neighborhoods where the negro population largely predominated.”⁶⁰ Accordingly, Klansmen became powerful agents of intimidation used to enforce a white-supremacist social order in the aftermath of the Civil War. To this end, the Klan embarked on a region-wide campaign of terror which included whippings, beatings, burnings, mutilations and threats against anyone, black or white, who dared support the Republican Party. And though their night-riding and violent tactics were certainly not embraced by the majority of Southern whites, their resistance was perceived as the South’s only weapon against a second invasion from the North and a disruption of that unique caste system that had identified the South

given on January 31, 1866. Hill declared that this group and its supporters were “more hostile to the government of the United States today than they were a year ago.”

⁵⁹ Steve M. Gillon and Cathy D. Matson, *American Experiment: A History of the United States*, “Reconstruction and the New South.” Reel History for the Classroom DVD (Houghton-Mifflin Company, 2006); Mitchell Snay, *Fenians, Freedmen, and Southern Whites: Race and Nationality in the Era of Reconstruction* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2007), 159.

⁶⁰ Benedict, *Fruits of Victory*, 119; from U.S. Congress, *Joint Committee Testimony: Georgia*, 1:308. An article published in the April 7, 1868 edition of the *Daily News and Herald* said associations such as the Klan “are natural results of bad government.”

for over a century. “The majority of public opinion was in sympathy with the objectives of the Klan,” suggests historian Steve Gillon, “if not always the methods they used.”⁶¹

Despite admonitions in the Southern press that the Klan was nothing more than a “charitable, social institution,” their methods indeed, were brutal and violent.⁶² Sworn testimony revealed both the nature and extent of the terror as well as possible justifications of such activity from a Southern white perspective. Appearing before a joint Committee of Congress convened to address Klan atrocities on June 15, 1871, A. Webster Shaffer, a U.S. Commissioner assigned to the Raleigh, North Carolina, district, described what happened to Frances Gilmore, a woman of color who lived in his district. “Disguised persons...whipped her with a board,...taken her clothes off,...burned the hair from her private parts and cut her with a knife.”⁶³ C.D. Forsyth, an ex-Confederate officer who served as the Solicitor General of the Rome Judicial Circuit after the war described incidents of terror and even the killing of “negroes” as commonplace. Of a specific incident in which a “negro” from Marietta had been wantonly killed, Forsyth told the committee, “these things occur frequently – so frequently that really I never pay attention to them.”⁶⁴

Thomas Allen, a “colored” 38-year old pastor of the Baptist Church in Jasper County was told that whites would not submit to ““negroism”” in Georgia. Pastor Allen produced a note written to him by members of the Klan, warning him to cease his support of the Republican Party. “Tom, your are in great danger,” began the note, “just go vote or use your influence for the radicals or for the constitution, and you go up (hanged) certain....Stay at home if you value

⁶¹ Gillon and Matson, *American Experiment*: “Reconstruction and the New South.” Many in the Southern press promoted such images. An article from the April 4, 1868, edition of the *Charleston Courier* reported that the night riders “seem to be disembodied spirits rather than actual men.”

⁶² *Savannah Morning News*, April 3, 1868. In the same issue, an article reprinted from the *Atlanta Intelligencer* stated of the Klan, “peace, not war, is its vocation; but if needed, the Klan has the power and will make war for the maintenance of peace.”

⁶³ U.S. Congress, *Joint Committee Testimony: North Carolina*, 31,36-37.

⁶⁴ U.S. Congress, *Joint Committee Testimony: Georgia* 1: 67.

your life, and not vote at all, and advise all of your race to do the same thing.” The missive was signed, simply, ““By order of Grand Cyclops.””⁶⁵

The problem for Grant was not so much the violent activity as it was the inviolable attitudes that such a cause represented. Perpetrators and offenders could be arrested and perhaps even convicted in some cases; the attitudes that engendered such clandestine activity could not. From the Southern white perspective, Northern support for black suffrage was viewed as pure hypocrisy; as a crass political strategy designed to impose Republican rule on the South. Of the nature of Reconstruction foisted on an unrepentant South by a determined North, white North Carolina attorney Plato Durham regaled the Joint Committee on Reconstruction about the general dissatisfaction throughout the state of North Carolina. “The people were not prepared for that policy, and they looked upon it as a measure of aggression wholly unwarranted,” stated Durham. What the typical white North Carolinian found even more insidious, according to Plato, was the hypocrisy of Northern Republicans fomenting black suffrage in the South while denying it in most states in the North. Describing anti-Republican Klan activity in North Carolina as beginning as early as 1867, Durham decried the fact “that in the Northern States, where this same party had for years had the power to confer suffrage upon the negro, they had not done it; and it was very strange that they should come down there and all at once fall so much in love with the black man.”⁶⁶ And with Grant’s aggressive support of the 15th Amendment and perceptions of him as being the most powerful agent of black suffrage, white

⁶⁵ U.S. Congress, *Joint Committee Testimony: Georgia 2*: 607, 608-610. Testimony given referred to incidents that happened before the 1868 election.

⁶⁶ U.S. Congress, *Joint Committee Testimony: North Carolina*, 304, 311-313. Southern Democrats cited the contradiction in the second plank of the Republican Party platform which guaranteed blacks in Southern states the right to vote while leaving that prerogative in the North to the individual states. In part, the plank read, “The guaranty by Congress of equal suffrage to all loyal men at the South was demanded by every consideration of public safety, of gratitude, and of justice, and must be maintained; while the question of suffrage in all the loyal States properly belongs to the people of those States.”⁶⁶

supremacist fears of a befouled political system dominated by former slaves would remain a potent threat to an unrepentant South.

With its overwhelming Republican majority on the committee, cynics would argue that certain members had political motive in clearly defining the political affiliation of those who were carrying out the violence and those who were being victimized by it. Accordingly, in some instances, the committee actively sought to identify both perpetrator and victim and as such, solicited testimony to prove the point. Though unsure of the political affiliation of one man whipped in North Georgia, Solicitor Forsyth testified that “all others that I know belong to the republican party.” In response to a question posed to him by committee members about who was being “mistreated” by night riders, Sheriff C.V. Brand of Gwinnett County, Georgia, testified on October 20, 1871, that it was, “the republican party generally; I have never heard of a so-called democrat being mistreated by them; I do not think I have.”⁶⁷ The committee also learned of specific incidents in which the ultimate price had been paid simply because of party affiliation. Abram Turner, a colored legislator, Thomas Allen told the committee, was “shot down in broad open day,” and subsequent to that, “a democrat was elected in his place.”⁶⁸

Such activity compelled Grant, working in conjunction with Congress, to protect black and white Republican voters in the South. Proposed in 1869 to prohibit states from denying the right to vote “on account of race, color, or previous condition of servitude,” the Fifteenth Amendment to the Constitution was ratified in February, 1870.⁶⁹ It was a Constitutional coup of epic proportions. In an address to Congress on March 30th, Grant declared that “the adoption of the Fifteenth Amendment to the Constitution completes the greatest civil change, and constitutes

⁶⁷U.S. Congress, *Joint Committee Testimony: Georgia* 1: 19, 25, 350-351.

⁶⁸ U.S. Congress, *Joint Committee Testimony: Georgia* 2: 611.

⁶⁹ Lee Epstein and Thomas G. Walker, *Constitutional Law For a Changing America* (Washington, D.C.: Congressional Quarterly Press, 5th ed., 2004), 846.

the most important event that has occurred, since the nation came into life.”⁷⁰ Grant had fulfilled his inauguration pledge and was determined to protect the freedmen’s rights; he was going to make sure that their newly won Constitutional guarantee did not founder on the shoals of racially-motivated violence and terror.

To protect the “life, liberty, political rights and the safety of our citizens against the wickedest conspiracies that ever disgraced a nation professedly at peace,”⁷¹ Congress, with Grant’s support, passed a series of bills in 1870 and 1871 designed to enforce the provisions of the Fifteenth Amendment, as well as the Fourteenth Amendment, ratified in 1868, which granted freedmen equal protection under the law. Variouslly called the Ku-Klux Klan Bills, the “Fifteenth-Amendment Act,” or “more properly called the Enforcement Act,” the legislation was designed to provide a number of protections, including “equal protection to life and property, and “equal access of citizens to the ballot-box.” The legislation specifically targeted Klan and Klan-inspired organizations, providing penalties “against terrorism,...” and other “methods for preventing rightful suffrage.”⁷²

Over the next several months, the South howled in collective protest. Charges of Caesarism against Grant abounded. Not content to merely impose policies designed to orchestrate a new Southern way of life, the *Natchez Courier* reported that now Grant wanted “complete power to carry fire and sword anywhere in our broad land.”⁷³ From his opponents’ perspective, Grant was viewed as an unkempt version of Napoleon, sharing his aggression yet lacking his style and aplomb. Carl Schurz stated that those who bowed down to Napoleon were

⁷⁰ Simon, *Papers*, 20: 131.

⁷¹ *Yankton* (South Dakota) *Press*, April 19, 1871.

⁷² *Evening Bulletin*, June 3, 1870.

⁷³ *Natchez Courier*, April 15, 1871. On May 13, Grant authorized Secretary Belknap to “order the troops in S.C. to aid in making such arrests as the U.S. Com. for S.C. may ask, and in all cases to arrest and break up disguised night riders,” from Simon, *Papers*, 21: 355.

“bowing their heads before the magnificence of towering intellect and wonderful activity,” while those similarly deferring to Grant “cannot give an excuse for his abasement,” and as such, suffer a “loss of self respect.” Though not published until 1880, such an image of Grant sitting in his carpet bag, under guard of his military, placing a crushing burden on the South resonated with disgruntled Democrats.⁷⁴



Figure 4.3 U.S. Grant and “The Strong Government”

In late 1871, in response to numerous reports of an upsurge of white terrorist activity, Grant acted on the power invested in him by the Force Acts and took the extreme measure of declaring martial law and suspending habeas corpus in several South Carolina counties, “so that

⁷⁴ Frederic Bancroft, ed. *Speeches, Correspondence, and Political Papers of Carl Schurz* (New York: G.P. Putnam’s Sons, 1913), 2: 424-425.

⁷⁵ “The Strong Government,” by James Albert Wales, published in 1880.

the rebellion may be overthrown.”⁷⁶ The outrage in the Southern press was predictable. “The Dungeon,” read the headline of a front page story in the *Atlanta Sun* on October 27th, 1871, was the place where Grant was intent on placing white Southerners. It was “radicalism in full operation,” as “one hundred arrests have been made.” And with numbers leaving, the “county is being deserted. Families are suffering. Business of all kind is suspended.” Grant’s proclamation created a “reign of terror,” reported the *Georgia Telegraph*; terror directed at white Southerners as anarchy begins to clutch “at the peaceful homes and innocent people of that devoted section.”⁷⁷

In response to a predictable Southern outcry, the *Little Rock Morning Republican*, an appropriately named partisan organ, said nothing that Grant had ever done had “been so fervently anathematised as his declaration of martial law in certain counties of South Carolina.” Pro-southern press reports, suggested the paper, made it appear that Grant’s proclamation “was the greatest outrage ever perpetrated upon the people of the United States;” an exercise of power which the “autocrat of Russia” and “the Sultan of Turkey” would be envious of. Additional support came from the *Milwaukee Sentinel* which declared that Grant was justified in taking such actions, reporting that “no sane person can doubt the wisdom of the President’s course,” lest “these indicted persons would be brought before some Confederate judge, and discharged from arrest.”⁷⁸

As the convoluted nature of the chaos and animus between the regions continued to play itself out, Grant faced a political as well as a practical conundrum of grand scope. To both enhance the prospects of the Republican Party in the South as well as contribute something

⁷⁶ Simon, *Papers*, 22:177, by proclamation issued on October 17th, 1871.

⁷⁷ *Atlanta Daily Sun*, October 27, 1871; *Georgia Telegraph and Journal*, October 31, 1871. That “devoted” section includes Spartanburg, York, Marion, Chester, Laurens, Newberry, Fairfield, Lancaster, and Chesterfield Counties, South Carolina, from Simon, *Papers*, 22:171.

⁷⁸ *Little Rock Morning Republic*, November 6, 1871; *Milwaukee Sentinel*, November 9, 1871.

proactive to that peaceful reconciliation he talked about in his inauguration, Grant considered granting pardons to a number of prisoners arrested for Klan activity while at the same time demanding continued obeisance from those yet committing similar atrocities and disregarding the primacy of the Constitution. Grant believed that reaching out and implementing some form of limited amnesty would be perceived as a conciliatory gesture yet at the same time might be construed as political sophistry so soon before the election. Such was his state of mind as he wrote Gerritt Smith about granting pardons in July, 1872. “Any pardon now,” wrote Grant, would be “misinterpreted,” though Grant would eventually pardon a number of perpetrators after the election. Nevertheless, as Eric Foner declared, combined with Grant’s determination and the zealous leadership of Attorney General Amos Akerman and Solicitor Benjamin J. Barstow, federal authority had “broken the Klan’s back and produced a dramatic decline in violence throughout the South.”⁷⁹

⁷⁹ Simon, *Papers*, 23: 211, letter dated July 28, 1872; Foner, *America’s Unfinished Revolution*, 458-459.

5 FOREIGN INTRIGUE AND SWEET REDEMPTION

“You...have shown the world that great official life need not deaden the better instincts of our common humanity.”

Sinclair Tousey

Despite the transcendent nature of the racial divide and its overwhelming challenge to Grant’s task of forging a national unity, other issues and events demanded Grant’s time and attention during his first term. His aggressive support for the annexation of territory in the Caribbean would earn him mixed reviews in the press and in the arena of public opinion while at the same time he would earn plaudits and praise for his aggressive posture in settling an international dispute with England. He would subsequently face and defeat the challenge of a liberal insurgency to his candidacy within the Republican Party and then win a decisive mandate in his bid for a second term in office. Grant’s popular and electoral margin would serve as personal vindication for the overzealous and slanderous abuse that he was forced to endure.

In the summer of 1869, Grant resurrected a foreign affairs proposal at once supported by President Lincoln’s Secretary of State William Seward and other prominent government officials, the annexation of the Dominican Republic on the island of what was known as Santo Domingo. “For many years our Government has been desirous of having a harbor in the Antilles suitable for a naval station,” reported *Frank Leslie’s Illustrated* and as such, Grant was ready to act, finding the idea of acquiring the island republic alluring for a myriad of reasons.¹

Grant initiated the process in a letter to President Baez of the Dominican Republic, dated July 13th, 1869. Deeming it “desirable to satisfy my curiosity in respect to your interesting country,” Grant advised Baez of his appointment of General Orville E. Babcock to serve as his

¹ *Frank Leslie’s Illustrated Newspaper*, January 15, 1870.

agent during a proposed visit to the Dominican Republic.² Ostensibly sent to report on the condition of the island and discern the feasibility of the project, Babcock was an enthusiastic proponent of the plan even before he set foot on the island. Upon his return and despite associating himself with men of “questionable morals and motives who sought to manipulate the process to their own advantage,” Babcock was so ardent in his zeal to effect the annexation that he returned to Washington with a draft treaty rather than merely a recommendation.³

The following January, Grant sent his annexation proposal to the Senate for debate. “It was an island of unequaled fertility,” stated Grant; it was the “gate to the Caribbean,” it is “weak and must go somewhere for protection,” and, in Grant’s mind, “it is capable of supporting the entire colored population of the United States, should it choose to emigrate.” The idea of the Dominican Republic serving as a refuge for American blacks was especially appealing to Grant. He saw the opportunity as a remedy to the “prejudice of color” which permeated the United States; a reality which, in Grant’s mind, “is a senseless one but it exists.”⁴ Grant saw the potential of blacks opting to relocate to the Dominican Republic as an opportunity to enhance black labor in the American South. He believed that the threats of blacks leaving would create a market for their labor in the South and would help change attitudes in the region and throughout the nation as a whole. It was a bargain at the price, trumpeted supporters of annexation, for “the Dominicans are all in favor of joining their big brother on the North, and only ask Uncle Sam to pay \$1,500,000.”⁵

² Simon, *Papers*, 19: 209, letter dated July 13, 1869. The island the Dominican Republic shared with Haiti was collectively known as Santo Domingo, often referred to as San Domingo.

³ Brooks D. Simpson, *The Reconstruction Presidents* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1998), 146.

⁴ Simon, *Papers*, 20: 74 -75, from a memorandum completed in early 1870.

⁵ *Union and Dakotian*, April 7, 1870; earlier in the year the *Christian Recorder*, an African American paper published in Philadelphia who supported annexation, cited a poll that, by a vote of 1,006 to 9, residents of the city of San Domingo supported annexation. The paper, however, could not testify “as to the purity of the ballot,” from the *Recorder*, April 2, 1870. Both as a Republican party man “par excellence” and also believing that the “miserable condition of the people of that island” could be improved by the United States, Frederick Douglass was a staunch

There was a good deal of intra-regional political support in the United States for annexation yet there were those equally opposed and in this case Grant made a political enemy he could ill afford. A good many in opposition viewed the acquisition of the island and its people of color as a burden on the United States, an attitude unblushingly reflected in an article published in the *Arkansas Gazette*, which described the Dominican Republic as “an island in the tropics, inhabited exclusively by African barbarians.”⁶ Even with the racial component aside, others simply did not view the economic and strategic interests that Grant did. And unfortunately for Grant, one of those who ardently opposed the annexation plan and did not buy into the altruistic theme of Grant’s message was Senator Charles Sumner of Massachusetts, a staunch radical and unwavering advocate of full and complete political and social equality for black Americans. Where Grant saw economic opportunity for Southern blacks, Sumner saw condescension and exploitation. Where Grant saw the Dominican Republic as a bastion from which to spread freedom to the slave populations of Cuba and Puerto Rico, Sumner saw annexation as a threat to the free black population of both island nations. The relationship of the President and the prominent irascible Senator was highly contentious at best and evidence suggests that perhaps Sumner saw in Grant somewhat of a condescending great white father

supporter of annexation. And though Douglass certainly “encountered opposition from some of his peers” on the issue, evidence suggests that there was strong support in the black community for the annexation of Haiti. Hiram Revels and John Rainey, U.S. Senator and Congressman, respectively, “voted consistently for the proposal of annexation,” from Merline Pitre, “Frederick Douglass and the Annexation of Santo Domingo,” *Journal of Negro History*, 62 (Oct., 1977), 390, 393, 396. Further, in 1869, the National Convention of the Colored Men of America endorsed the annexation of San Domingo. A proclamation issued over the name of President John B. Sampson, read: “Resolved, that we ask Congress to institute negotiations for the annexation of Cuba and Hayti, or of the acceptance of the American flag,” from the *Proceedings of the National Convention of the Colored Men of America* (Washington, D.C.: The Great Republic Book and Newspaper Printing Establishment, 1869), 24.

⁶ *Arkansas Gazette*, September 13, 1871.

figure in the mold of an Andrew Jackson, leery of his motives and suspect of this tactics to attain his goal.⁷

Sumner had paid a terrible physical price under the cane of South Carolinian Preston Brooks in 1856 for his unrelenting and unequivocal condemnation of slavery and its supporters and was not about to back off of a fight with the President of the United States regarding issues of race. Sumner and Grant had not gotten along with each other for some time and since Sumner was not easily disabused of his notions and beliefs, the forthcoming debate over the San Domingo question greatly exacerbated their already acrimonious relationship. The irony attached to this dispute is that both Grant and Sumner were on the same side of the black rights issue. Perhaps more principled but certainly less pragmatic than the President, Sumner would assign sinister motives in Grant's determination to annex the island and would not defer to presidential influence or coercion.

As the Senate vote on the proposal neared, Grant became increasingly concerned over the likelihood of its passage and of Sumner's considerable influence on the outcome. Sumner "is an enemy of the treaty," wrote Grant in late March, and "will kill it tomorrow if he can."⁸ Grant

⁷ Grant was convinced that managing and moving Native American populations onto reservations for their own protection was critical to their survival. As Heather Cox Richardson wrote, "for Grant, the destruction of the Indian culture was the only possible chance tribes had to survive," from Richardson, *West From Appomattox* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), 115. Similar motives were assigned to Andrew Jackson and his "treatment of Indians...described as paternalistic." Robert Remini wrote of Jackson: "he came to the unshakeable conclusion that the only policy that benefited both peoples, white and red, was removal. The extinction of the Indian, to his mind, was inevitable unless removal was officially adopted by the American government. Remini points out that Jackson referred to himself as the "Great Father," the term white being added only later by historians who "wish to be contemptuous," from Remini, *The Legacy of Andrew Jackson* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana University State Press, 1988), 46, 57, 46. Such attitudes surely must have found disapproval with Sumner whose egalitarian nature can be found in a speech he delivered New York City on May 9, 1855. While presuming to find the "stamp of permanent inferiority" in the physical form and intellect of the "African," and while conceding that the different races of man emerged from different stock, Sumner at once was resolute in his belief that there was "but one great Human Family, in which Caucasian and African, Chinese and Indian, are all brothers...alike on earth and in heaven...entitled to all the rights of man," and, as such, "you can claim nothing for yourself, as man, which you must not accord to him," from Charles Sumner, *Recent Speeches and Addresses By Charles Sumner* (Boston: Higgins and Bradley, 1856), 488.

⁸ Simon, *Papers*, 20: 123.

was prophetic. Sumner would not kill the annexation the next day but partially behind his powerful leadership, Grant's concerns bore fruit on June 28th when the Senate rejected the treaty with a 28-28 vote. It was both a political and personal blow for Grant and would do irreparable damage to the relationship between two acknowledged leaders of the Republican Party. Yet, just days after the vote, signals emanating from the White House indicated the matter was far from over. "It is stated that the President does not at all abate his determination to force through the San Domingo treaty," reported the *Milwaukee Sentinel*. On the same day, the *Evening Bulletin* supplied evidence of how Grant planned to proceed, reporting of a "rumor that an attempt will soon be made to annex San Domingo by resolution, as Texas was annexed."⁹

Press reports reflected Grant's refusal to concede defeat on a matter of such importance to him. He was not to be denied. His reputation for dogged determination and perseverance was not earned lightly. Grant's resolve to carry out his San Domingo annexation plan was driven by a larger, grander vision for the entire Caribbean region that would have made Teddy Roosevelt proud. It was more than just the acquisition of the Dominican Republic. Grant intended for the United States to play a prominent role in the Western Hemisphere as well as secure a defensive periphery in the Caribbean. Included in Grant's grand design was a canal cut across Central America to expedite the free flow of American commerce as well as to provide quick access for a growing American Navy should the need arise. As such, consumed with imperial designs, Grant submitted such a treaty to Congress for the construction of an "Interoceanic canal across

⁹ *Milwaukee Sentinel* and *Evening Bulletin*, July 1, 1870. The plan to annex San Domingo in the manner in which Texas was annexed was not just rumor but rather Grant's plan. David Currie wrote that Grant's plan "contemplated a major agreement between two sovereign nations, and as in the case of Texas, it was argued that it could only be made by treaty." Grant and his supporters in the matter "pointed to Texas as a precedent for the acquisition of San Domingo by joint resolution," from Currie, "The Reconstruction Congress," *The University of Chicago Law Review*, 75 (Winter, 2008): 474, 475. Further corroboration comes from David C. Hendrickson, who wrote that Grant "wished to annex Santo Domingo, through a joint resolution of Congress, on the model of Texas in 1845," from Hendrickson, *Union, Nation, or Empire: The American Debate over International Relations, 1789-1941* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 2009), 246.

the Isthmus of Panama and Darien,” just days after once again expounding on the advantages of acquiring the Dominican Republic.¹⁰

Laying dormant for much of the remainder of the year, Grant reopened the San Domingo question during his annual address to Congress in December, 1870. He also made mention of another lingering foreign affairs concern of great concern regarding the prestige of the nation, that of a simmering dispute with Great Britain regarding its alleged involvement in the American Civil War. Although what would become known as the Alabama claims issue had festered to the point where it no longer could be ignored, Grant placed greater emphasis in his speech on the San Domingo question. He tried to posit the idea that it was San Domingo who actively sought the annexation and again enumerated the advantages of such an acquisition. “The government of San Domingo has voluntarily sought this annexation,” explained Grant, who added condescendingly of the people of San Domingo that they “are not capable of maintaining themselves,...and must look for outside support. They yearn for our free institutions and laws; our progress and civilization.” As such, Grant presented the rhetorical question and asked, “Shall we refuse them?” He went on to sell the idea to Congress by again describing what the United States would gain from the acquisition of San Domingo. Its “geographical position...the richest soil, best and most capricious harbors, ...most valuable products of the forest, mine, and soil,” and then in an appeal to national pride, Grant declared that the Monroe Doctrine permitted such an acquisition “as a measure of national protection.”¹¹

Soon after enunciating his message to Congress, Grant wasted no time in renewing his efforts to acquire the Dominican Republic. Grant worked with political allies Senator Oliver Morton and Representative Nathaniel Banks who, at Grant’s urging, co-sponsored a joint

¹⁰ Simon, *Papers*, 20: 135.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 21: 51.

resolution to send a commission to Santo Domingo designed to again recommend annexation. This time, Grant acted more prudently and with more forethought and appointed a group of prestigious commissioners who he hoped would mute some of the substantial opposition to the plan.¹² Further, in an attempt to deflect Sumner's stout opposition, Grant took a somewhat conciliatory gesture and wrote of his concerns about Sumner to *New York Tribune* editor John Russell Young: "Your friend Sumner has been on the warpath ever since the treaty of Santo Domingo was sent to the Senate," stated Grant, "and perfectly rabid since the removal of (John) Motley," whom Grant removed from his post as ambassador to Great Britain.¹³ Whatever measure of advantage Grant attempted to gain from such communication came to naught yet Grant's resolve was not shaken and despite the much-anticipated opposition, the president proceeded with relentless determination.

It was not so much the goal of the initiative as it was the process that Grant crafted that so angered much of the opposition. Sumner felt that Grant was far too autocratic and was acting in a manner disrespectful of Congress. He saw in Grant an unkempt, uncouth bully who would employ any means to achieve his goals; he saw the general who was planning to storm the ramparts at Fort Donelson at take it all costs rather than a president who was duty bound to consult and work with Congress. Sumner was disinterested in Grant's benign paternalism towards the Dominicans and found Grant's motivations to be demeaning to men of color. He

¹² Simpson, *Reconstruction Presidents*, 148. By naming Ben Wade, Franz Sigel, and Frederick Douglass, among others, Grant tried to deflect some of the opposition from the radicals, German-Americans, and from some of those opposed to his plan in the black community. The *Wisconsin Register* also reported that attempts were made by friends of each to craft a reconciliation between Grant and Sumner. Quoting from the *Daily* (New Hampshire) *Patriot*, the *Register* on December 31, 1870, reported that "an attempt had been made within the last ten days by mutual friends to bring about a reconciliation, or at least a better understanding" between the two.

¹³ Simon, *Papers*, 21: 173, letter written on February 8, 1871. "Motley" was John Lothrop Motley, political ally of Charles Sumner, relieved from his position by Grant after the Senate vote in June, 1870. Well after the fact, the August 7, 1872 edition of the *Bangor Whig* presented a story gleaned from the *Philadelphia Press* about how Grant could have secured the friendship of Sumner had only he invited him to dinner, sought his counsel on matters of state, etc. The article stated that Sumner wanted to be a "king-maker," but that Grant was "not politic enough to fawn upon him," and as such, became an enemy of Sumner's, and "no enemy of Mr. Sumner has, in his estimation a right to live."

was thoroughly disabused of the notion that Grant wanted to craft an egalitarian relationship with the people of color in the region. Part of Sumner's fear was that if the Dominican Republic became a part of the United States, the sovereignty of its island neighbor Haiti, the only black-run independent nation in the Western Hemisphere would be endangered. And apparently that opinion was shared by many in Haiti, for on May 11th, 1871, the *Lowell News* reported that Sumner would be presented with a token of the estimation in which the Haytien government holds his services in opposing the annexation of San Domingo."¹⁴

The *Daily* (New Hampshire) *Patriot* and other organs opposed to annexation were quite creative in describing Grant's machinations as a "scheme," then a "job," then a "project" and a "conspiracy," and finally a "usurpation."¹⁵ Yet whatever it was and however it was described, as 1871 progressed it was apparent that Grant's passion for annexation was not shared by his countryman and as such, was not supported by the peoples' representation in Washington. The proposal would never even be voted on in Congress and accordingly, Grant's pet project would die a slow, ignominious death. The ramifications of the San Domingo episode would not bode well for Grant and would exacerbate his already bitter relationship with Charles Sumner as well as several other powerful Republican Party members, including Carl Schurz and Horace Greeley. That November, he wrote of what he felt was the betrayal of "those influential men of the republican party who have, voluntarily, set themselves up against me." He had especially bitter words for Sumner, who he described as "unreasonable, cowardly, slanderous, unblushing false,"

¹⁴*Lowell News*, May 11, 1871. One man's award winner is another man's hind-quarter, for weeks earlier, a reporter in the April 15 edition of the *Owyhee Avalanche* wrote that Sumner, "although one of the ablest statesman in the Republic, has shown himself to be a consummate ass by his actions on the San Domingo question."

¹⁵*Evening Bulletin*, June 23, 1871; *Daily Patriot*, July 20, 1871; *Georgia Telegraph*, July 25, 1871; *Daily Patriot*, July 27, 1871 and August 19, 1871.

and revealed some uncharacteristically bitter personal feelings when he concluded that “I feel a greater contempt for him than for any other man in the Senate.”¹⁶

Occurring simultaneously with much of the San Domingo fiasco, the other major foreign affairs concern facing Grant was the festering situation with Great Britain known as the Alabama claims issue. The resolution of this crisis would bring Grant before the European press and earn him and his administration the respect of the world’s leading statesmen. It was the position of Grant’s administration that during the Civil War, a number of Confederate privateers and sea-going raiders had done a substantial amount of damage to the Federal naval fleet and had received both aid and shelter in British seaports. As such, at the very least, the Federal Government expected an acknowledgment of such illicit activity from the British as well as compensation for damages. The English government had been reluctant to address the matter and now Grant informed Congress that he would press the issue. “I regret to say that no conclusion has been reached,” Grant said on Capitol Hill, “for the adjustment of claims against Great Britain, growing out of the course adopted by that government during the rebellion.” Grant went on to recommend the establishment of a Congressional commission to pursue the issue while chiding John Bull for its failure to concede that it was “guilty of any negligence.”¹⁷ A day after his speech, a sub-headline in the *New York Times* reflected Grant’s bellicose tone - “The Alabama Claims; England Must Move First.” Grant had served notice to Great Britain; he had publicly thrown down the gauntlet on the world stage as well as staked the prestige of this still young republic as he challenged the greatest empire in the world. The matter would be entrusted to the able hands and under the studied guidance of Secretary of State Hamilton Fish.

¹⁶ Simon, *Papers*, 22: 231-232. Grant also described Schurz as an “ungrateful man,” and Greeley as “a disappointed man at not being estimated by others at the same value he places upon himself.” Grant wrote the letter about November 15 but it was never mailed.

¹⁷ Simon, *Papers*, 21: 55, annual message to Congress, December 5, 1870.

Within days of Grant's speech, some members of the British press made it appear that a recalcitrant Parliament was ready to resolve the situation and establish better relations with the United States at the moment ominous clouds of war were once again gathering over Europe. On December 8th, the London correspondent of the *New York Times* reported in his piece of "a striking and conciliatory editorial on the subject of the Alabama claims," published in the *London Times*. The purpose of the editorial, according to the correspondent, was that Great Britain "craves a settlement of the claims...for the purpose of inaugurating an era of better feeling and closer unity between the United States and Great Britain."¹⁸ Just weeks later on December 27th, the *New York Times* printed a report published in the *Pall Mall Gazette*, stating that "Americans should know that England is heartily tired of the Alabama controversy, and is ready to pay any impartial money award, if an adjustment can be continued thereto."¹⁹

Press reports notwithstanding, it appeared that the British government had turned a deaf ear to Grant's stern admonitions. On December 18th, 1870, the *New York Times* reported that "the British Government are not disposed to make even an admission" of guilt or negligence of any sort, yet Grant's resolve was not shaken. Since the war ended, the article continued, had the Brits "been willing to acknowledge any error of negligence in all this, it would have certainly smoothed the way to a peaceful settlement." Without such acknowledgement, the *Times* briefly speculated that an appropriate remedy for the United States would be to annex Canada. Such a threat was not unwarranted, for as David Hendrickson wrote, "after 1865...everyone understood that Canada had become a hostage to British good behavior," and as such, Grant and Fish were

¹⁸ *NY Times*, December 11th, 1870, from the correspondent's article dated December 8, 1870. Damage in U.S.–British relations had reached such a stage that it was reported in the December 20 edition of the *Cleveland Herald* that Grant had written a letter to the Czar of Russia, "proffering the aid of the American navy in case of a rupture with England on the Black Sea question." In the same article the paper also reported that just days later, Washington denied the cable had been sent. The article then posed the rhetorical question of why the Czar, who allegedly became indignant when the letter was made public, would become indignant if said letter had never been sent.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, December 27, 1870.

able to leverage such speculation in their dealings with the British government. In the end, however, Grant's more pragmatic solution to seek redress was to appoint a Congressional commission to press financial claims against Great Britain for "arming, supplying, and sheltering of the rebel cruisers," as well as the associated collateral damage done the Federal cause.²⁰

Over the next several months, the rhetoric was toned down just a bit as the British, already "practiced at the art of dodging confrontations with the American government," engaged the United States in quiet diplomacy to try and resolve the situation. In February of 1871, Grant advised the Senate of the formation of a joint commission, to "be composed of Members to be named by each Government," to resolve the crisis.²¹ Months later, on May 2nd, Grant issued a proclamation declaring that his commission of five was authorized to meet with the British commission and later in May the Senate ratified the Washington Treaty, which dictated that the claims would be submitted to an arbitration panel in Geneva Switzerland. Then on July 5th, some evidence that actual progress was being made appeared in the *Yankton Press*, which reported that representatives of the United States submitted a claim of just over \$13,600,000 to the tribunal, for damages sustained by the Alabama and thirteen other "rebel cruisers."²²

It would take well over a year for the process to come to fruition but when it did, the result was a lucrative bounty won by the United States. The tribunal ruled in favor of the United States on the most substantive charges. "The Alabama Claims," proclaimed the *New York*

²⁰ Hendrickson, *Union, Nation, or Empire*, 246; *NY Times*, December 18, 1870.

²¹ Hendrickson, *Union, Nation, or Empire*, 246; Simon, *Papers*, 21: 175. As Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations committee, Charles Sumner was determined to influence the negotiations with Great Britain, and in his "vitriolic Anglophobia," demanded an exorbitant, totally unrealistic amount of 2.5 billion dollars in "indirect" damage done by the Alabama, from McFeely, *Grant*, 334. Joan Waugh wrote that one of the collateral successes for Grant and Fish was how they "deftly minimized what they considered Sumner's baneful influence and later engineered his removal from the chairmanship," from Waugh, *American Hero*, 136. Jay Sexton wrote that in order to "make the concessions necessary to ensure a diplomatic settlement with Britain" and to achieve its financial goals, it was critical to shed the proceedings of Sumner's demagogic influence, writing "the Grant Administration was willing to back away from the extreme demands articulated by Charles Sumner in 1869," from Sexton, *Debtor Diplomacy: Finance and American Foreign Relations in the Civil War Era, 1837-1873* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 240.

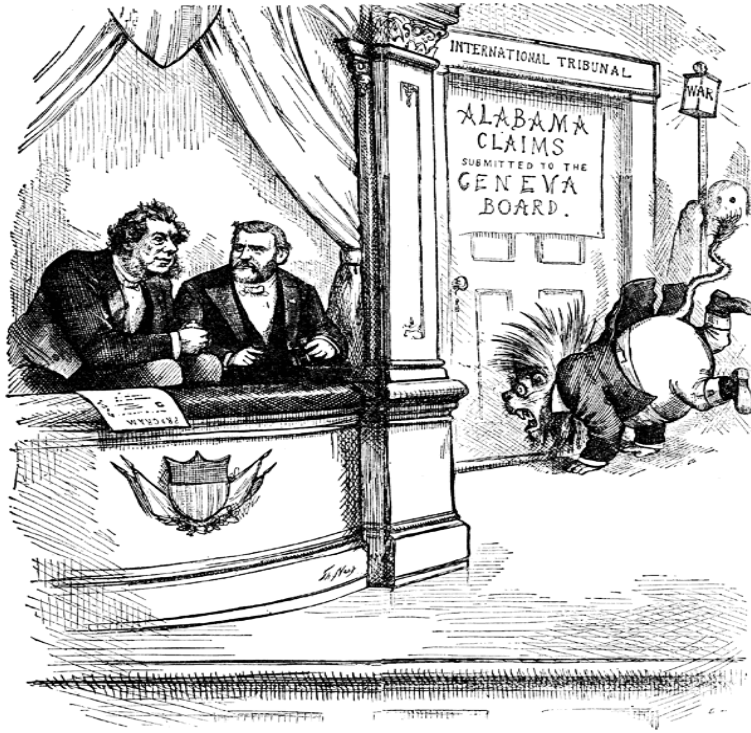
²² *Yankton Press*, July 5th, 1871.

Times, “award to the United States: \$15,500,000....payable in gold at Washington within one year from the date of the award.” So galling was the verdict to the British, their representative on the tribunal, Sir Alexander Cockburn refused to sign the decision.²³

After two years of maneuvering and pressing the issue, it was a decision that allowed Grant a great deal of personal satisfaction and blunted some of the criticism of the San Domingo disaster. It also provided Grant a good deal of political capital, coming just six weeks before the presidential election in November and as such, the story was reported with distinctively different regional perspectives. Even before the official pronouncement was made, the *North American and United States Gazette*, published in Philadelphia, reported that “the American case is sustained....the Administration is most decisively justified, ...and (the outcome) is a substantial triumph for this country, and one that will raise our standing in every European capital.”²⁴ In much of the press, Grant appeared presidential; he was portrayed as a firm, decisive leader who had brought the British Lion to his knees and turned him into the sniveling whinner as portrayed in an earlier 1872 Thomas Nast cartoon.

²³ *NY Times*, September 15, 1872. According to Tom Bingham, Cockburn’s dissent was expressed in “immoderate and unjudicial language’ and caused understandable offense.” “In Britain, the award had a mixed reception,” and was not unexpected since Britain had tacitly acknowledged its culpability by declaring its “expression of regret” before the proceedings were fully underway, from Bingham, “The Alabama Claims Arbitration,” *The International and Comparative Law Quarterly*, 54 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, Jan., 2005): 23.

²⁴ *NA Gazette*, September 7, 1872; The London correspondent of the *New York Times* quoted a Mr. B. Osborne, member of the House of Commons, over his displeasure with his own government’s failure in the face of the American government, bemoaning the reality of “astute lawyers...of the United States...who walked round the ‘amateur diplomats’ with the greatest of ease,” from the *NY Times*, Feb. 22, 1872; Josiah Bunting called the Washington Treaty a “landmark in the history of western diplomacy...a resolution for the last serious threat to what was becoming a special relationship between the world’s oldest surviving democratic powers.” And while Bunting relegates most of the credit for the process and outcome with Hamilton Fish, whom he compares with John Quincy Adams, he does acknowledge that Grant is entitled to “respect as a president who quietly superintended the nation’s foreign policy at a quiet time,” from Bunting, *Ulysses S. Grant* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2004), 106.



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Figure 5.1 John Bull Howls in Geneva

Despite such accolades, the Democratic press took a different tack and was much less effusive in its praise for the administration. In Atlanta, *Daily Sun* readers read a much briefer account of the judgment. In its one-sentence summary, the *Sun* reported that the judgment went against Great Britain only for its “alleged want of due diligence in not preventing the Confederate cruisers which were built in the kingdom during the war from leaving her waters.”²⁶

Indeed, as the election drew near, it appeared that political capital was exactly what Grant needed, for the Republican Party was not united. Early in his administration pronounced evidence of a nascent challenge within the Republican Party to a second term of office for Grant was already emerging. Described as a “Liberal Republican movement,” the devoutly pro-Democratic *Charleston Courier* would declare that this eclectic consociation of diverse characters represented the sentiment “of the respectability and intelligence of the Republican

²⁵ Morton Keller, *The Art and Politics of Thomas Nast* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1968), Plate 88.

²⁶ *Atlanta Sun*, September 22, 1872.

Party,” and as such, had the “sympathy, encouragement and support of the leading Republicans of the West and East,” along with the support of the nation’s “staunchest Republican journals.”²⁷ And indeed, Grant would come to face a vocal if not sizeable opposition to his candidacy in 1872, a prospect he apparently was as ambivalent about as he was in 1868.²⁸

This liberal faction, or “liberal insurgency” as Frederick Douglass biographer Waldo Martin would later label it, represented a litany of different interests and would seem to be united only in their opposition to Grant as party standard bearer. Of prime concern to the incumbent was the stated goal of a reconciliation with the South; a “New Departure” from current Reconstruction policy that would certainly put at risk the rights of the freedmen. This “New Departure,” claims Martin, was a crucial component to the political ideology of the liberal “insurgency” and as such, most of the leaders of the cause, even to some degree Charles Sumner to a certain degree, were willing to forsake the “freedmen” in order to reunite the nation.²⁹

“Every state is represented in the Senate and every District is represented in the House, . . . and among the members are fellow citizens of the African race,” declared Sumner, “and amnesty, nearly universal has been adopted.” “Reconstruction is complete,” he continued, so why then, he asked rhetorically, “is it not time for the Executive Mansion to be changed from

²⁷ *Charleston Courier*, September 29, 1870. As Grant himself indicated, Democrats and Southern newspapers would exaggerate the influence of the liberal movement. On May 22, 1872, Grant wrote Elihu Washburne that “the movement was egged on by the Democrats,” and that “many of the Democratic papers, particularly in the South, have committed themselves so thoroughly that they will have to go to Baltimore on the 9th of July (date of the Democratic convention) in support of Greeley,” from Grant, *Letters to a Friend*, 70.

²⁸ “He would gladly have relinquished the burden of the presidency,” wrote John Y. Simon, but he “remained committed” to Republican Party principles, and as such, “reluctantly accepted unanimous renomination,” from Simon, *Papers*, 23: xi.

²⁹ Waldo Martin, Jr., *The Mind of Frederick Douglass* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1984), 86. Despite Sumner’s lifelong commitment to black rights, Frederick Douglass would support Grant both for his unwavering support for the freedmen and for political advantage in recognition of Grant’s preeminence within the Republican Party and overwhelming likelihood of his second term electoral victory. Quoting from Douglass’s *Life and Times of Frederick Douglass: Written By Himself*, p. 417, Martin wrote that “Douglass had supported him (Grant) for reelection in 1872 because of his efforts on behalf of the freed people as well as the nation,” 85.

a barrack cesspool to a life-giving fountain.”³⁰ And while Sumner’s support for the rights of black Americans was unwavering and unquestionable, perhaps his assessment of conditions in the South was.

An assortment of other parochial concerns and reasons helped unite the liberal movement. Initially, wrote Eric Foner, the reform movement was little about Reconstruction but rather was about “corruption that seemed to pervade Northern politics,” by what the reformers considered to be the “degradation” of a party “increasingly under the control of local political machines and bosses and susceptible to manipulation by the corporate elite.” Some were angered that Grant refused to recognize their endorsements for political patronage. As a Midwestern man of little pedigree, many felt Grant just was not presidential enough; he did not fit their image of what they thought a president should look, talk and act like. Liberal coalition objections “were largely to his personal characteristics, which were alleged to be unbecoming in a chief magistrate.”³¹ Some thought true reconciliation with the South was not possible with Grant in office; believing that Grant was too zealous in his demands for black equality. Others believed he was not pushing hard enough for the rights of the freedmen. As a representation of the Union Army, Grant would be too intractable in dealing with the South, that he could not nor would not betray the sacrifice of thousands of soldiers lost on the battlefield by granting any kind of concessions to unrepentant Southern veterans. And if remembered only as General Grant many in the so-called liberal cartel believed that white Southerners would never be able to reconcile their differences with their battlefield conqueror. “The time for the soldier has passed,”

³⁰ Charles Sumner, *Charles Sumner: His Complete Works* (Lee and Shepard, 1900, reprint, New York: Negro Universities Press, 1969), 20: 253-254.

³¹ Eric Foner, *Forever Free: The Story of Emancipation and Reconstruction* (Alfred Knopf, 2005), 178; Edward L. Pierce, *Memoir and Letters of Charles Sumner* (Boston: Roberts Brothers, 1893), 4: 514.

proclaimed Charles Sumner, “especially when his renewed power would once more remind fellow-citizens of their defeat.”³²

Emerging as leaders were, among others, former Union General and leading German-American spokesman Carl Schurz, *New York Tribune* editor Horace Greeley, and the always intractable Charles Sumner of Massachusetts, now a bitter enemy of Grant. Once political allies, Grant had offered up his opinion of Greeley earlier in his presidential career by stating, “Mr. Greeley is an honest, firm, untiring supporter of the republican party. He means its (the party’s) welfare at all times....But,” continued Grant, he “jumps at conclusions; does not get the view of others who are just as sincere as himself in the interest of the party that saved the country....”³³

Much of the movement’s support came from the elite New England intelligentsia and Boston Brahmins, elements of the New York City press including the *New York Sun* and Greeley’s hometown paper, the *Tribune*, parts of the southern Midwest, and other Northern Democrats who had supported the Republicans only in the face of a Civil War.³⁴ The purpose of this bloc, according to the largely supportive *Newark Advocate*, was to withhold “encouragement or support to the corrupt regime” currently occupying the White House as well as “to prevent any man’s getting the Republican nomination for the Presidency who seeks it as General Grant is seeking it.”³⁵

Making much of the charges of alleged nepotism involving Grant and his family, the liberal faction seized upon the emerging issue of civil service reform as they painted the picture of an administration rife with the stench of graft and corruption. Though never personally tied to

³² Sumner, *Complete Works*, 20: 254.

³³ Simon, *Papers*, 21: 8, from a letter to *New York Standard* editor John Russell Young, dated November 15, 1870. A scant month later, on December 10th, Grant would invite and meet with Greeley for dinner at the White House.

³⁴ Joseph Benson Foraker, *Notes of a Busy Life* (Cincinnati: Stewart and Kidd Company), 1916, 1: 88. A former Union officer and Ohio Republican, Foraker suggested that many of those who professed to be Liberal Republicans were actually Democrats before the war and had only “been affiliated with the Republican Party since the outbreak of the rebellion,” in support of the Union.

³⁵ *Newark Advocate*, December 2, 1870.

any of the malfeasance, Grant's perceived lack of oversight and continued loyalty to those who had appeared to betray his trust allowed the party malcontents an opportunity to co-opt the issue. The liberals and a small but supportive press declared that Grant was sluggish on the issue and wasn't progressive enough in reforming civil service, yet the evidence suggested otherwise. Grant's propensity towards some form of civil-service reform revealed itself in his draft for his December, 5th, 1870 annual address to Congress. After declaring that there "is no duty which so much embarrasses the Executive, and heads of departments as appointments...(that do) not secure the best men...for public place," Grant, acting upon the authority given him by Congress, appointed a commission to develop a tangible plan to reform the system so that he might submit it to Congress.³⁶ As such, Grant was so pictured in a political cartoon taking the initiative and pressing the issue on elements of a reluctant political establishment. Thomas Nast's mellifluous pen depicts Grant dispensing the bitter medicine of reform to a peeved Carl Schurz while an obedient Charles Sumner and a chagrined Horace Greeley look on in bewilderment.

³⁶ Simon, *Papers*, 21: 40-41.



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Figure 5.2 Grant Dispenses the Medicine of Civil Service Reform

A year later, its work completed, Grant pronounced in his 1871 annual address to Congress that the rules proposed by the commission “have been adopted and will go into effect on the First day of Jan.y 1872.”³⁸ Yet despite Grant’s work and the best intentions of those in support of some type of reform, a somewhat reluctant Congress, party affiliation aside, was hesitant to make such sweeping reforms

³⁷ *Harper’s Weekly*, February 3, 1872; The caption reads, “Children Cry for It: If you can stand it so can I.” Of Grant’s pursuit of civil-service reform, William Archbold Dunning, later a severe critic of a Grant-led Reconstruction, would nonetheless write that Grant “evinced a lively interest in the rising movement for civil service reform,” From Dunning, *Reconstruction*, 193.

³⁸ Simon, *Papers*, 22: 297, annual address delivered on December 19th, 1871.

Regardless of reason, regardless of his stance on civil-service reform, regardless of his stance on any matters substantive, members of the Liberal movement were anxious to see the incumbent ousted. “Grant and his faction carry at present everything by force majeure,” wrote Carl Schurz, one of the leaders of the splinter group, “to avert the calamity of another four years, . . . we must act with energy.”³⁹ Initially there was some concern within Republican ranks that a split party vote might jeopardize the election and hand it to the Democrats, a potentially apocalyptic outcome that future president Rutherford B. Hayes declared in January of 1872 would “give the Government to the enemies of the recent amendments and to unsettle all.”⁴⁰ This prospect was quite unsettling to former Union Army officer Joseph Benson Foraker, who desperately wanted to see Grant re-elected so “there should be no frittering away of the results of the struggle for the Union.”⁴¹ Agreed in sentiment with Foraker was General William T. Sherman, who just months before the election in August of 1872, suggested to his brother, Republican Senator John Sherman of Ohio, that the “chief interest . . . in the canvass is the preservation of the Republican party, which I think essential to secure the fair enforcement of the results of the war.”⁴² So where Charles Sumner had declared Reconstruction over, all goals achieved, and the time for unqualified reconciliation had come, most Republican loyalists did not see it as Sumner did. And why then, suggested Grant supporters, if all such as Sumner described was true and had been achieved under President Grant, why would he want to deny Grant a second term after such monumental accomplishment if not for only personal reasons.

³⁹ Carl Schurz, *The Reminiscences of Carl Schurz* (New York: The McClure Company, 1907), 3:338.

⁴⁰ Charles Richard Williams, *Diary and Letters of Rutherford Birchard Hayes, Nineteenth President of the United States* (The Ohio State Archeological and Historical Society, 1924, reprint, New York: Kraus Reprint Co., 1979), 2: 193.

⁴¹ Foraker, *A Busy Life*, 1: 87.

⁴² Thorndike, *Sherman Letters*, 338.

During the first week of May, the Liberal Republican party nominated Horace Greeley for president in Cincinnati, home of long-time Grant antagonist Murat Halstead, editor of the decidedly partisan *Cincinnati Enquirer*. “He represents a reformed civil service,” stated Charles Sumner, and “he represents reconciliation, not only between the two sections, but between the two races...”⁴³ Weeks later the Republican Party unanimously endorsed Grant as their candidate for a second term. Just over a month later, on July 9th, a disjointed Democratic party, devoid of a candidate with any hopes of winning an election, somewhat reluctantly adopted Horace Greeley to represent their ticket as well. It was an odd choice, one that confounded a good many political observers. “As you say,” William T. Sherman wryly commented to his brother, “the Republicans are running a Democrat and the Democrats a Republican.”⁴⁴ Greeley was somewhat of a whimsical figure who, though quite effective in managing the *Tribune*, was regarded as a bit of an eccentric lacking the public bearing to be president. Greeley’s elevation as Democratic Party standard bearer was greeted with both a good deal of derision and enthusiasm by mainstream Republicans who regarded his candidacy as a guarantee that Grant would win the election. Grant himself appeared to take great comfort in the turn of events. “His nomination has had a good effect,” Grant wrote in a personal note to Elihu Washburne, “it has apparently harmonized the party by getting out of it the ‘soreheads’ and knaves who made all the trouble because they could not control.”⁴⁵

The irony of Greeley serving as the Democratic candidate was not lost on Republican supporters who took great comfort in exposing and exploiting what they perceived as Greeley’s hypocrisy. On numerous occasions in the past Greeley had railed against the Democrats in the press, and just one year earlier, in the summer of 1871, an article gleaned from his own *New*

⁴³ Sumner, *Complete Works*, 20: 213.

⁴⁴ Thorndike, *Sherman Letters*, 338.

⁴⁵ Grant, *Letters*, 69-70, letter written from Washington D.C., on May 26, 1872.

York Tribune, published in the *Evening Bulletin*, enumerated the personal views of Greeley regarding the prospects for Grant's re-nomination. "I favor one term on principle, and believe that another Republican candidate for President can be selected," ran the article, "but should Grant (be) nominated, I hold his election infinitely preferable to that of any candidate whom the Democrats may nominate." Greeley went on to declare in the article that a Democratic victory in the 1872 election would be of "the gravest national calamities...."⁴⁶ As such, it was with an unrestrained glee that political cartoonist and avid Grant supporter Thomas Nast immediately produced the following political cartoon, entitled simply, "Red Hot."⁴⁷

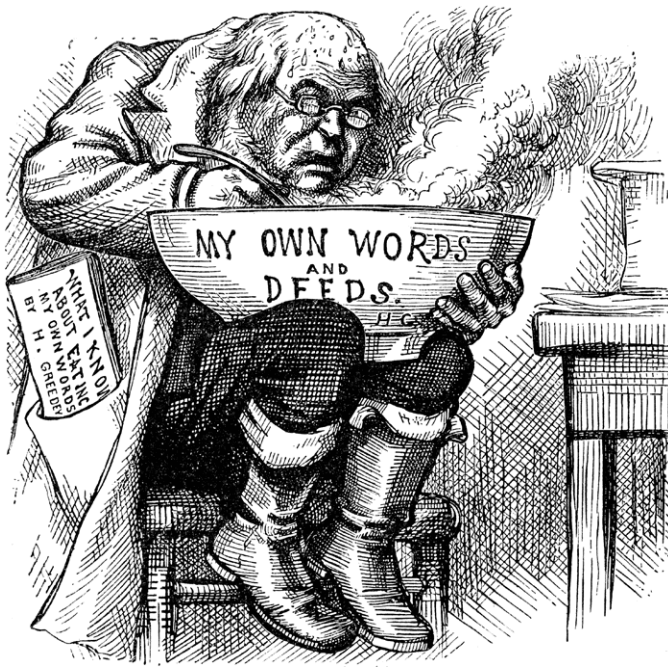


Figure 5.3 Horace Greeley eats his own words

Though the white South took comfort in the liberal opposition to Grant in the North, support of Southern Democrats for Greeley was tepid at best.⁴⁸ Again, as was the case four years earlier, Southern voters would vote not for Greeley, who had in the past voiced his opposition to

⁴⁶ *Evening Bulletin*, August 19, 1871.

⁴⁷ *Harper's*, July 13, 1872.

⁴⁸ Eric Foner wrote that the liberals choice of Greeley as its candidate fell upon Southern Democrats like a "wet blanket," from *Reconstruction*, 505.

slavery, but rather against what Grant and his administration represented, against Republican orthodoxy that demanded that what had been won on the battlefield was not lost in Washington D.C. Southern preachers expounded to their congregations and approving audiences on the “appalling corruption which has suddenly spread like a gangrene over the whole land,” . . .and of the “lawless Radicalism which has sprung like a winged dragon upon the earth, devouring everything stable in the eyes of man.” Theologians spoke of a “body politic rotten to the core,” yet despite such dire assessments of their current state of affairs, few white Southerners embraced Greeley as their political savior. Such sentiment was voiced by Georgia Senator Lamar in a conversation he had in a pre-election conversation with a “prominent” though unnamed “lawyer of Mississippi” in a letter dated May 6th, 1872, almost six months to the day of the presidential election. “There is not much enthusiasm for Greeley and Brown,” Lamar stated, “It will require a great deal of eloquence on the part of their advocates to get it up.”⁴⁹

Two months before the election, in early September, in a particularly propitious moment for Greeley supporters, the *New York Sun*, a decidedly partisan Democratic newspaper, published details of a financial scheme of great magnitude known as the Credit Mobilier scandal.⁵⁰ The alleged impropriety had its roots back into the early stages of the Lincoln administration and involved the Union Pacific railroad and subsequent financial difficulties it encountered in its attempts to build its portion of the transcontinental railroad. At the root of the problem lay a phantom holding company named the Credit Mobilier, designed to raise funds to facilitate construction for the Union Pacific. Part of the funding came from selling stock below par value

⁴⁹ Reverend Benjamin Morgan Palmer, *The Present Crisis and Its Issues: An Address Delivered Before the Literary Societies of Washington and Lee University* (Baltimore: John Murphy and Company, 1872), 13.; Pamela Elwyn Thomas Colbenson, *Millennial Thought Among Southern Evangelicals: 1830-1885, Dissertation*, 214, quote from E.H. Myers, ed., “Notes on the Times,” *Southern Christian Advocate*, 34, 1871, 164.; Edward Mayes, *Lucius Q.C. Lamar: His Life, Times, and Speeches* (Nashville: Publishing House of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, 1896), 170.

⁵⁰ *NY Sun*, September 4th, 1872.

to certain members of Congress and government officials, including then Vice-President Schuyler Colfax. The net result was that the public was defrauded while several influential government officials enjoyed hefty payoffs.

The Credit Mobilier would become one of the biggest scandals of the nineteenth century but it would not effect the election. And although there was no evidence that tied Grant to the scheme, his opponents continued to parlay administration missteps into political advantage. In a speech in Indianapolis in late September, Greeley selectively parsed his words suggesting that Grant was culpable even though he might not have been directly involved. While careful not to mention Grant by name, it was reported in the *Evening Bulletin* that Greeley commented that the corruption “could not have been accomplished, could not have been effected, without the connivances and support of men high in authority, and these facts assure you that purification is urgently needed.”⁵¹ If Greeley could not tie Grant directly to the Credit Mobilier, he would certainly use the scandal as evidence of Grant’s lack of oversight, lack of attention to detail, and lack of institutional control of those within his administration.

As the campaign season for the 1872 presidential election approached, the rhetoric became more heated as Grant was subjected to a number of personal attacks. Senator Charles Sumner, never one to mince words, lit into Grant at a gathering of Liberal Republicans in September condemning Grant for almost every sin a politician could possibly commit. He castigated the president for “violations of international law, . . . unconstitutional usurpations, . . . indignity to the Black Republic, . . . nepotism, . . . gift taking, . . . and personal misrepresentations.” He added that Grant was “unfit” for the office he sought and warned his audience that a vote for a vote for Grant “would be regarded as the sanction of abuses and

⁵¹ *Evening Bulletin*, September 30, 1872.

pretensions unrepublican in character.”⁵² Yet support for Grant was far reaching and intractable. In a speech to a wildly receptive audience of Republicans, James Blaine, the famed “Plumed Knight,” warned the “insurgency” of their political heresy in attacking Grant, of the “most unwise of policies when they seek to make personal warfare on him.” The people, proclaimed Blaine, “will not hear him maligned and insulted by a *sojdisant* general Carl Schurz without hot resentment at the wrong.”⁵³ Aware of such support and his sustained popularity with the Northern public, Grant had no doubts as to the outcome of the election. So sure of his own victory and even doubting whether Greeley would even be in the running on election day, Grant told longtime friend Elihu Washburne on August 26th, “I do not think he will carry a single Northern State.”⁵⁴

On November 4th, Grant’s bold prediction would be realized in fact and in degree. Grant lost nary a Northern state, won over 81% of the electoral vote, and enjoyed the largest popular vote percentage of any Republican president in the nineteenth century. “General Grant’s majority for President is surprisingly large,”⁵⁵ reported Boston’s *Congregationalist*, and was sweet redemption for Grant who viewed much of the criticism of him as a slanderous affrontary to his character rather than as legitimate disagreement over his policies.

The election results provided strong evidence to suggest that the so-called Liberal-Republican movement was simply a canard, an over-hyped creation of a disgruntled but vocal minority within the Republican Party. It found no real support of any kind with Republican

⁵² Sumner, *Complete Works*, 20: 211-218.

⁵³ James G. Blaine, *Political Discussion: Legislative, Diplomatic, and Popular, 1856-1886* (Norwich, Conn.: The Henry Bill Publishing Company, 1887), 115.

⁵⁴ Simon, *Papers*, 23: 237. Grant would have made an excellent political prognosticator. Just one week before the election, he told Elihu Washburne that besides winning every Northern state, he would win the South, losing only Texas, Georgia, Tennessee, and the border states of Maryland, Missouri, Kentucky, and West Virginia. He was exactly right on all counts with the exception of West Virginia, whose 5 electoral votes went his way, from Simon, *Papers*, 23: 267, letter to Washburne dated October 25, 1872.

⁵⁵ *Congregationalist* (Boston), November 7, 1872.

Party ranks and the election results were of no surprise. William T. Sherman's contention that Grant would "be fairly supported by the great mass of Republicans" would be proven correct.⁵⁶ And while Greeley was certainly not the strongest of candidates, he did represent a party where Humpty Dumpty could have run and won the white vote in the South.

Polling numbers by both state and geographical region provide illuminating evidence that the movement had virtually no impact on Grant's candidacy within the Republican Party. Grant won the vote of every state in the Union save those that constituted the Confederacy or those designated as "border" states during the Civil War. He will eventually share this distinction with Dwight Eisenhower as being one of only two presidents in United States history to face opposition and win every one of these states. Compared with his polling numbers from 1868, Grant increased his popular vote percentage in every region of the country where the Liberal Republicans threatened to take votes. He experienced at least a three-point increase in his popular vote percentage in fourteen states and suffered at least a three-point decrease in percentage points in only two states, both "border" states, one of them being Missouri, Carl Schurz's home state. He even experienced a substantial percentage point increase over his 1868 performance in the New England and Northeastern states, where much of the support for the liberal cause emanated. And in Massachusetts, running in the face of Sumner's bitter opposition, Grant's percentage of the popular vote in the 1872 election was less than one-half of one percentage point lower than what it was in 1868. Further, due to the federal government's efforts to ensure "peace and order," the 1872 election according to historian James McPherson, "was the fairest and most democratic presidential election in the South until 1968."⁵⁷

⁵⁶ Thorndike, *Sherman Letters*, 338.

⁵⁷ James M. McPherson, *Ordeal by Fire: The Civil War and Reconstruction* (New York: McGraw-Hill, Inc., 2nd Ed., 1992), 560.

Table 5.1 Polling Numbers: 1868-1872 Presidential Elections

		U.S. Grant 1868 % of Popular Vote	U.S. Grant 1872 % of Popular Vote	Point Change Plus or Minus 1872 over 1868
New England	Connecticut	51.5%	52.5%	+ 1
	Maine	62.4%	67.9%	+ 5.5
	Massachusetts	69.7%	69.3%	- .4
	New Hampshire	55.0%	54.2%	- .8
	Rhode Island	66.5%	71.9%	+ 5.4
	Vermont	78.6%	79.2%	+ .6
	Total	63.9%	65.0%	+ 1.1
Northeast	New Jersey	49.1%	54.5%	+ 5.4
	New York	49.4%	53.2%	+ 3.8
	Pennsylvania	52.2%	62.2%	+ 10
	Total	50.5%	56.6%	+ 6.1
Midwest	Illinois	55.7%	56.7%	+ 1
	Indiana	51.4%	53.2%	+ 1.8
	Michigan	57.0%	63.9%	+ 6.9
	Ohio	54.0%	53.6%	- .4
	Wisconsin	56.2%	54.8%	- 1.4
	Total	54.6%	55.7%	+ 1.1
Plains	Iowa	61.9%	64.9%	+ 3
	Kansas	68.9%	67.0%	- 1.9
	Minnesota	60.8%	61.6%	+ .8
	Nebraska	64.1%	70.1%	+ 6
	Total	62.7%	65.0%	+ 2.3
Border	Delaware	41.0%	52.1%	+ 11.1
	Kentucky	25.5%	47.0%	+ 21.5
	Maryland	32.8%	49.7%	+ 16.9
	Missouri	58.9%	44.0%	- 14.9
	West Virginia	58.8%	52.3%	- 6.5
	TTL	41.7%	47.0%	+ 5.3
West	Cal.	50.2%	57.0%	+ 6.8
	Nev	55.4%	57.4%	+ 2
	Ore	49.6%	60.5%	+ 10.9
	TTL	50.6%	57.6%	+ 7
All Regions	TTL	52.7%	55.9%	+ 3.2

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⁵⁸ Schlesinger, Jr., and Israel, *Presidential Elections, 1789-2001*, 3: 1244, 1300, 4:1375.

Thomas Nast, staunch Grant supporter, took much joy in the outcome in Massachusetts, previously lampooning Sumner's apparent political weakness and lack of influence within his home state. With a sinister "Senator" Carl Schurz looking on in resigned exasperation, the arrow of "malice and hate" pointed by the dour Senator towards the great "Caesar" Grant falls far short of its mark, its delivery rendered ineffective by a shattered, impotent bow delivering such messages once too often.⁵⁹



Figure 5.4 A Political misfire

As was the case in the 1868 presidential election, the vote of the freedmen in the South was of no consequence; it just padded an already overwhelming victory. The 228 electoral votes

⁵⁹ Morton Keller, *Art of Thomas Nast*, 36; J. Chal Vinson, *Thomas Nast: Political Cartoonist* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1967), 24: Plate 67.

Grant garnered from the North and the West alone were 51 more than needed to win the election. Even with a third-party candidate in the race, Grant's percentage of the popular vote, 55.6%, was almost three points higher than it was in the 1868 election. Grant's was also the second highest percentage of the popular vote won in the nineteenth century for any presidential candidate since the electorate was expanded in 1828. It would also be the highest percentage of the popular vote for any second-term presidential candidate in any election between 1828 and 1936 and represents the highest popular vote percentage of any second-term Republican presidential candidate from the party's inception in 1854 until the presidential election of 1956. Overall, in all states save the border states and/or those in the former Confederacy, Grant increased his popular vote over his 1868 percentage in sixteen states and suffered a decrease in only five, and in three of these the decrease was less than one percentage point.

Despite his electoral success, Grant's enthusiasm was tempered a bit when he learned of the death of General George Meade, whom he described in letter to General William T. Sherman as a "distinguished" and "gallant" soldier.⁶⁰ Three weeks later, Horace Greeley died a sudden death on October 29th. Despite the acrimonious campaign, Grant attended his funeral in New York City in December, much to the gratitude of New York journalist and Greeley supporter identified as Sincian Tousey (actually Sinclair Tousey), who wrote, "for your remembrance of Mr. Greeley, dying; for your attendance at his funeral; for the tearful attention you paid to the sad ceremonies of the occasion, Mr. President, I thank you with all earnestness...By such acts," continued Tousey, "you have removed prejudices, changed opponents into friends, and have shown the world that great official life need not deaden the better instincts of our common humanity."⁶¹

⁶⁰ Simon, *Papers*, 23: 280, letter to Sherman dated November 6, 1872.

⁶¹ In an "open letter," published in the *Boston Investigator*, December 18, 1872.

6 SECOND-TERM HEMORRHAGE

“The Southern whites will never consent to social and political equality with the negro.”

Ben Hill

With “Providence” having called upon him a second time to “act as executive of this great nation,” Grant readied himself for the challenges he knew he would be facing during his second term. “I have been the subject of abuse and slander scarcely ever equaled in political history,” Grant told the freezing crowd on inauguration day, “which today I feel that I can afford to disregard in view of your verdict which I gratefully accept as my vindication.”¹ Yet any personal succor Grant enjoyed after his smashing electoral victory in November soon dissipated in early 1873, even before he officially began his second term. Events over the course of the next several months would foreshadow yet another extremely difficult four years in office. 1873 would be a trying year for Grant as would the remainder of his term. The political corruption endemic to the age, the racism that enveloped post-Civil War America and the personal abuse that Grant endured during his first term would continue unabated in the second. All these elements would conspire to bedevil Grant’s efforts to secure a meaningful national reconciliation while at the same time protecting the Constitutional rights of all Americans, including those of color. Grant’s administration would be wracked by corruption, his Republican party would suffer defeat of epic proportions in the 1874 Congressional elections and a wholly intransigent white South would continue to battle Republican rule and deny the freedmen those rights guaranteed by the Constitution. Despite such, Grant’s name would be prominently mentioned

¹ From Grant’s inaugural address, reported in the *Arkansas Gazette*, March 7, 1873; It was “responsibility to the nation kept Grant at his post,” wrote John Y. Simon, “but he loathed the reality of politics,” from Simon, *Papers*, 24: xi; *Ibid.*, 64. March 4, 1873, was the coldest inauguration day in American history, before or since. At noon the temperature was 16 degrees, with gusts of up to 40 mph. Perhaps an ominous foreboding of what was in store for Grant over the next 4 years, from *Joint Committee on Inaugural Ceremonies*, “Inaugural History, Firsts and Facts,” available at: <http://inaugural.senate.gov/history/factsandfirsts/index.cfm>, accessed on March 9, 2010.

early and often as candidate for a third consecutive term in office. And despite the trials and travails, the Republic never lost its faith in Grant as a good and decent man, a hard working man of integrity and estimable character.

In the decades immediately following the Civil War, political corruption was firmly entrenched at all levels of government – national, state, and local. The period would become known as the “Gilded Age,” coined as such by Mark Twain and Charles Dudley Warner in *The Gilded Age: A Tale of Today*, described by Heather Cox Richardson as “a biting satire of the greed and the speculative mindset of the day.” It was an era of fastidiously constructed opulence and perceived rampant greed, a grand celebration of ostentation and political malfeasance unlike ever witnessed before in the history of the republic.² And it was within this pervasive atmosphere of such excess and political dysfunction that Grant would have to operate in the highest office in the land. Thomas Nast captured the extent and scope of a nation beset by rampant public corruption in a political cartoon published in *Harper’s Weekly* in June, 1875.

² Heather Cox Richardson, *West From Appomattox* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), 139. Of the nature of corruption, Eric Foner wrote “Much of the corruption of the Grant era involved payments to public officials by businesses seeking state aid, and as in the Reconstruction South it often proved difficult to tell where bribery left off and extortion began,” from Foner, *America’s Unfinished Revolution*, 486. Of the scope of the corruption, Richard Hofstadter wrote, “standards of success in politics changed. It was not merely self-expression or public service or glory that the typical politician sought – it was money....Never before had the motive been so strong; never before had the temptations been so abundant.” Hofstadter added, “a disgruntled Congressman from Ohio declared in 1873 that ‘the House of Representatives was like an auction room where more valuable considerations were disposed of under the speaker’s hammer than in any other place on earth,’” from *American Political Tradition*, 219, 220; John Y. Simon would write that Grant would “cast his lot with the captains of industry,” and as such, his reputation would be tainted by mere association, from Simon, *Papers*, 25: xiv.



Figure 6.1 Political corruption

The residue from such a state of affairs atmosphere would prove deleterious to Grant's reputation for in each year of his second term in office, scandal would reveal itself, consume much of his efforts and find popular play in the national press. And each year the paradigm for corruption would ring the same. Though never found to be personally involved, it was Grant's appointments and close acquaintances that would taint his image and reputation, and in the some quarters, cast the value of his judgment in doubt. Of the corruption associated with Grant's administration, Republican Congressman and future Massachusetts Senator George Hoar would write, "it never got so dangerous a hold upon the forces of the Government, or upon a great

³ "This Tub Has No Bottom To Stand On: The bottom fell out and the rest came tumbling after," Thomas Nast, published in *Harper's Weekly*, June 5, 1875. Perceived as the most visible and most egregious manifestation of the political corruption endemic to the age, Nast was relentless in his criticism of the notorious William Marcy (Boss) Tweed and his corrupt New York City Tammany Hall Democratic Party machine. Tweed and Tammany were the focus of much of the nation's scorn which deflected criticism from others.

political party, as in the Administration of General Grant.” Yet Hoar would reflect the prevailing sentiment of the age by adding, “General Grant was an honest and wise man,...(yet) very easily imposed upon by self-seeking and ambitious men in civil life.”⁴

Grant’s introduction to scandal manifested itself almost immediately into his first term and would bedevil him through the entirety of his presidency. Committed to paying down a substantial national debt and re-establishing a sound credit rating, Grant was an avid proponent of a hard-money policy. As such, just weeks into his first term, he signed his first piece of legislation, a bill intended to use Treasury gold to retire greenbacks that were issued to finance the war. “It was a remarkable and happy coincidence,” reported the *Bangor Whig*, “that the first bill to receive the approval of President Grant should be that to strengthen the public credit.”⁵ Then months later, in September of 1869, coming on the heels of this publicly perceived successful initiative, Grant was advised of a scheme led by financiers Jay Gould and James Fisk to corner the gold market by quickly buying low, thus inflating its price, and then selling off at artificially high rates to make a large profit. When advised of the scheme, Grant ordered the Treasury Department to sell part of its gold reserves in order to increase supply and reduce the price of gold to end the speculation.

With Treasury reserves stabilizing the gold market, the panic subsided almost as suddenly as it had emerged, yet Grant faced residual damage in the press. Allegations were made that the President, along with some of his family members and aides, may have been part of the conspiracy and were perhaps even in league with Gould and Fisk. In an article printed on October 4th regarding a possible combination between Grant and the speculators, the *New York Times* reported that “the President conversed with the utmost frankness on the subject, and

⁴ Hoar, *Autobiography*, 1: 305.

⁵ *Bangor Whig*, March 20, 1869.

said...he had done nothing whatever to influence the money market or to afford any advantages to private parties.”⁶ Satisfied that Grant indeed, had nothing to do with the nefarious scheme, the *Times* exonerated Grant of any alleged malfeasance while simultaneously reporting that others still held Grant responsible for the alleged participation of his family members, including a brother-in-law and even his wife Julia, who was alleged to have earned \$25,000 from the proceedings. “Having failed to connect General Grant, directly, with the gold gambling scheme,” reported the *Times*, “it is proposed to hold him responsible for the alleged participation of his brother-in-law, Mr. Corbin....”⁷ Grant would personally address the allegations in a letter to *New York Ledger* editor Robert Bonner in mid-October. Of the “late gold excitement in New-York City” Grant wrote, “I ordered the sale of gold to break the ring engaged,” and went on to completely disavow any prior knowledge of the scheme, any association with its perpetrators, or any benefit from its results.⁸

Despite the *Times*’ proclamation and Grant’s personal assurances, elements of a skeptical press were yet unwilling to absolve Grant or his family of complicity in the plot. Convinced that Grant himself had no personal connection with the plan since charges “were never credited,” the *Charleston Courier* went on record declaring that evidence of members of Grant’s family being connected “scarce admits of a dispute.”⁹ However, the *National Intelligencer* took a much harsher view of Grant’s involvement, reporting that “it is plain enough that President Grant and

⁶ *NY Times*, October 4, 1869.

⁷ *Ibid.*, October 6, 1869. In a follow-up, the *Bangor Whig* reported on October 12 that “failing to find any real fault with the President that weakens his standing with the American people, they (Grant’s detractors) seek to implicate his distant relatives, as the fellow who could not whip the big brother content himself making faces at his sister.”

⁸ Simon, *Papers*, 19: 255, letter written to *New York Ledger* editor Robert Bonner, dated October 13, 1869. Grant’s note was in response to a query from Bonner asking Grant to make a “brief denial over your own signature of all foreknowledge” of the scheme. With Grant’s letter in hand, Bonner telegraphed Grant that ““Your letter has already done a vast deal of good. People who were themselves yesterday circulating the report (of Grant’s alleged malfeasance), now swear that they never believed it...,”” from F.N., Simon, *Papers*, 19: 256, source attributed to RG 107, Telegrams Collected, National Archives, Washington, D.C.

⁹ *Charleston Courier*, October 21, 1869. Many in the South, South Carolina in particular, had difficulty in recognizing Grant as the legitimate President of the United States. The reference to “General” Grant is no accident.

his family are complicated in the most serious manner in these gold and bond speculations,” and that Grant’s role was “not in a remote manner, but by his closest associations, in the allegations made.”¹⁰

It would take some time for the furor to die down, but over the course of the next several months, both Grant and his family were exonerated of all alleged wrongdoing in the court of public opinion. The reservoir of good will that Grant had built up as a man of integrity and resolute honesty during his years in public service would pay big dividends. An indication that the matter had fully come to rest by the summer of 1870 was reflected by an article in the *Boston Advertiser*. It read, in part, “Mr. James Fisk, Jr., has stricken the name of President Grant from his free list...indicating (with genuine pleasure) beyond a doubt that Mr. Fisk has finally abandoned his hopes of lifting himself to either honor or fortune by the Presidents’ skirts.”¹¹ Nevertheless, residual damage had been done and too soon into his tenure, the 1869 gold panic served as both a paradigm and portend of similar episodes to come; incidents of scandal that would rock Grant’s administration while never tying him to any personal wrongdoing.

Breaking just weeks before the 1872 Presidential election, details of another major government scandal known as the Credit Mobilier would emerge in the press early in 1873. And though the genesis of the scandal had its roots long before Grant first took office, the aroma of such malfeasance did collateral damage to Grant and some of those associated with his administration. And if Grant was not a party to the misconduct of those involved with the Credit Mobilier, the scandal reflected negatively on a political system in which he held a most prominent position. With the focus of preliminary investigation on members of Congress rather than Grant, San Francisco’s *Evening Bulletin* printed a report from the Washington

¹⁰ *National Intelligencer*, October 25, 1869.

¹¹ *Boston Advertiser*, July 26, 1870.

correspondent of the *Nation*, who wrote in an article dated January 25th, that “all is serene in the White House,” where looks are cast with “cool indifference at the slaughter going on ‘at the other end of the avenue.’” Lady Liberty is depicted scolding numerous senators and congressmen for their role in the scandal and their “evasions and falsehoods,” with President Grant nowhere in sight.¹²



Figure 6.2 Lady Liberty scolds Congress

Later in 1873, aspersions would again be cast Grant's way and he would be held partially accountable for another political misfortune that found him on the periphery looking inward. It would become known as the “salary grab” – a public relations nightmare and a politically disastrous attempt by Congress to increase the salary of the highest of federal officials, including

¹²*Evening Bulletin*, February 10, 1873. Yet later in the year, elements in the Southern press would remind its readers of Grant's complicity in the “grab.” “Republicans in every part of the country denounce not only the men who aided in the passage of the measure but all men who took money,” reported the *Georgia Telegraph*, adding “a single Congressman could not have prevented the bill becoming a law; that power did rest with President Grant,” from its edition dated October 21, 1873; Nast cartoon from *Harper's Weekly*, March 15, 1873.

the president, the Supreme Court justices, and U.S. senators and representatives. Requiring Grant's signature on March 3, the day before his inauguration, the act doubled the President's salary to \$50,000 while granting Congress a 40% retroactive pay increase. Though coming under criticism for his hefty increase, Grant put up a stout defense for his share by stating it was the first executive pay raise since George Washington was President and as justification for the increase cited the decline in executive pay relative to the legislative branch of the government since the nation's founding.¹³

To round out a perfectly dreadful year for Grant, the nation was stricken in the fall with an economic crisis of epic proportions known as the Panic of 1873. Caused in large degree by "unstable financial markets and overproduction," Grant quickly "recognized the gravity of the panic" and immediately took steps to minimize its impact. Advising the banking and financial community that his government was "desirous of doing all in its power to relieve the present unsettled condition of business affairs," Grant warned of the importance of the need to generate "confidence on the part of the people" as the first priority in attempting to defuse the situation.¹⁴ Much of the nation's press portrayed a president and government acting with an appropriate resolve and calmness in the face of economic downturn. The *Lowell News* found "admirable" Grant's "coolness and discretion," and in a dispatch printed in the *Milwaukee Sentinel*, the *New*

¹³ Simpson, *Reconstruction Presidents*, 164; Foner, *America's Unfinished Revolution*, 523. The salary grab was not just a Republican issue nor was it a sectional issue, rather it spoke to the collective mindset of Congress. E. Merton Coulter wrote that "Southern Democrats participated in the Salary Grab of 1873," from Wendell Holmes Stephenson and E. Merton Coulter, eds., *A History of The South, The South During Reconstruction, 1865-1877* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1947), 8: 153. Josiah Bunting wrote of the "salary grab" that Grant "had done nothing wrong; but he had responded passively, accepting the bill as a fait accompli when he could and should have made it an issue," from Bunting, *Grant*, 135. In April, 1876, Grant vetoed a Congressional bill that would reduce the president's salary from \$50,000 to \$25,000. In defense of his veto, Grant cited the pay differential between members of Congress and the president since the nation's founding. The Constitution first set presidential pay at \$25,000 per annum while the salary of Congressman was set at \$950 annually, "less than one twenty-seventh part of the salary of the President." Since then, Grant pointed out, Congressmen's salaries had been raised to \$5,000 per year, "one-fifth that of the President," while the presidents pay remained static, from Simon, *Papers*, 27: 90-91.

¹⁴ Waugh, *American Hero*, 147; Simon, *Papers*, 24: xii, 219.

York Evening Post reported that the “National Government has behaved with a proper degree of prudence and resolve.”¹⁵

In the end and in spite of an extended depression that would follow, Grant’s good press, prompt attention to the country’s finances and perceived sterling character allowed him to deflect much of the blame and criticism that would normally fall on the chief executive’s shoulders in such a financial calamity. It was Grant’s good fortune to have the enthusiastic support of popular and influential political cartoonist Thomas Nast. Nast held wide appeal for America’s “middlebrow” community, that “core” constituency of mainstream Republican opinion, and his partisan characterizations of Grant in Harper’s Weekly not so subtly reflected his views that “Grant was the greatest man of the age after Lincoln.”¹⁶ Committed to keeping the country on a specie-based hard money policy to pay off a substantial post-war debt and to firm up the nation’s credit, Grant had earned a reservoir of good will regarding financial issues and as such, was perceived as a bastion of steady confidence and resolve.¹⁷ “I am glad to see that you are not seriously hurt,” Grant calmly assures ‘Lady Liberty,’ a representation of the American public in

¹⁵ *Lowell News*, September 23, 1873; *Milwaukee Sentinel*, September 30, 1873.

¹⁶ Morton Keller, “The World of Thomas Nast,” available at http://cartoons.osu.edu/nast/keller_web.htm, accessed on November 1, 2012. Keller further wrote that Nast’s most productive work came in the 1860s and 1870s and his work on Grant “struck a chord” with a large middle class audience. According to Keller, Nast was “sufficiently” backed by Harper’s publisher Fletcher Harper, who shared some but by no means all of Nast’s portrayals of Grant.

¹⁷ Throughout both terms, Grant received good press on his resolve to pay off the country’s massive wartime debt and maintain the Treasury Department on a sound fiscal bearing. The *Daily Central (Colorado) City Register* called substantial reductions of the national debt a “happy circumstance,” July 14th, 1870; the *Milwaukee Sentinel* reported of Grant’s policy “which has reduced and continues to reduce the public debt as national obligations never were before,” November 7th, 1870; the *Bangor Whig* reported of a reduction of annual government expenses by \$85,163,096.61,” February 22, 1872; the *Little Rock Daily Republican* wrote of the \$17,598,034 in yearly interest of the debt wiped out and canceled,” by Grant’s policies, February 28th, 1872; The *Christian Recorder* reported to its readers that the administration of “President Grant has paid \$350,000,000 on the National Debt..., a pretty good recommendation, that,” May 11, 1872;” and again in 1872, the *Milwaukee Sentinel* reported on a speech made by U.S. Senator John Sherman, who “drew a magnificent picture of the financial success of President Grant’s administration,” September 24, 1872. Some of Grant’s political enemies, however, were reluctant to assign Grant credit for reducing the nation’s debt. In a report published in the *NY Times*, Charles Sumner stated credit was not due to Grant “but to the American people and Congress,” June 1st, 1872. In a rating of presidents conducted early in the 21st Century, economists rated Grant higher than other academicians, ranking him as the 18th best president, compared with his overall ranking of 29th. The poll was taken by groups of history, law, economics and political science professors, from James Taranto and Leo Leonard, eds., *Presidential Leadership: Rating the Best and Worst in the White House* (New York: Free Press, 2005), 265, 267.

a cartoon printed on the cover of *Harper's Weekly* in October, 1873, advising her that “the ‘Houses’ in this street have been Shaky and on false bases for a long Time, and yu’ve had a very Narrow Escape.” It was Grant the savior being presented to the American public, an image of strength and calm determination in the midst of the carnage of Wall Street collapse.

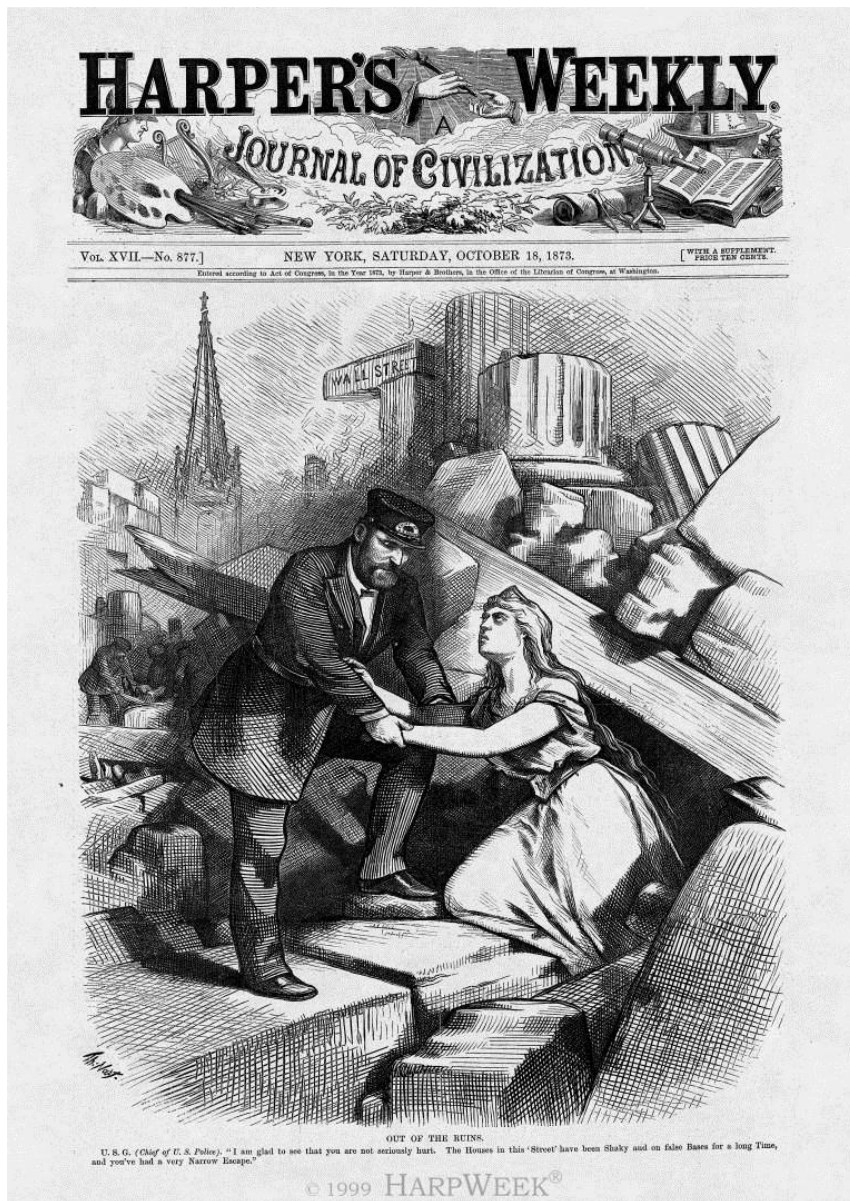


Figure 6.3 “Out of the Ruins”

¹⁸ *Harper's Weekly*, October 18, 1873.

In the spring of 1875, another scandal of major proportion descended on the Grant administration, revealing more evidence of the President's misguided loyalty to those who increasingly betrayed him. This time it involved charges brought against U.S. Treasury agents and high level officials who were allegedly being bought off by distillers of alcoholic beverages. Referred to as the "Whiskey Ring," Kenneth Stampf would describe the scandal, along with the Credit Mobilier, as the "most spectacular of them – involving members of Congress as well as men in high administration circles." When evidence of the scandal began to emerge, "let no guilty man escape," was Grant's response as reported in the press, "be especially vigilant, or instruct those engaged in the prosecutions of fraud to be, against all who insinuate that they have high influence to protect, or to protect them." Yet when the press later reported that General Orville Babcock, Grant's private secretary was implicated, Grant went to the extraordinary length to write a deposition in support of his friend though solid evidence of Babcock's guilt seemed to be irrefutable. Further, so convinced was Grant of his innocence that he reassured Babcock's wife several days after his indictment, writing "I have the fullest confidence in his integrity, and of his innocence of the charges made against him." And due in large part to Grant's intervention, Babcock would indeed be found innocent but would leave office in the immediate aftermath.¹⁹

Babcock's acquittal was testimony to both Grant's sterling character during the malfeasance that surrounded many of those closely associated with him as well as his lack of judgment and his continued misguided loyalty to those who continued to betray him and the

¹⁹ Stampf, *Reconstruction*, 177; reported in the *Independent (New Hampshire) Statesman*, among others, on August 19, 1875; Simon, *Papers*, 26: xiii; Heather Cox Richardson wrote that Babcock escaped conviction "only because the president stepped in to vouch for Babcock's honesty," from *West From Appomattox*, 153.

public trust.²⁰ It was his stolid defense of Babcock in the face of evidence from his own Treasury Secretary Benjamin Bristow that would taint Grant with yet another brush stroke of alleged corruption, not any connection to the scandal itself, which purportedly “robbed the government of millions of dollars in internal revenue.”²¹

Coming on the heels of the Whiskey Ring, Grant would suffer yet another blow as one more member of his inner circle would be accused of illegal activity in early 1876. This time it was his longtime Secretary of War William Belknap, a member of Grant’s Cabinet since 1869. Belknap was accused of taking bribes from private enterprises in exchange for appointments to manage western trading posts which were used to facilitate trade and commerce with Native Americans. Of Belknaps’s guilt there was little doubt, and as such, he resigned post haste to spare himself the embarrassment of being sanctioned by Congress. Grant quickly accepted Belknap’s resignation although the secretary would subsequently be impeached by the House of Representatives. He escaped conviction in the Senate only because he had removed himself from office before the proceedings could begin.²² Again, and as always had been the case in the past, Grant had nothing to do with the wrongdoing, yet it was more evidence to Grant’s critics that he displayed poor judgment and false loyalty to a duplicitous crook who once again betrayed his and the nation’s trust for his own enrichment.

It was not these peripheral ties to corruption that tarnished Grant’s reputation so much as it was the continuing maleficent eruptions surrounding him that elicited charges of “Grantism,” a term his critics had long used to describe a government designed solely for the enrichment for

²⁰ According to Joan Waugh, Grant’s stout defense of Babcock “made him seem naïve to the point of stupidity,” from *American Hero*, 148.

²¹ Foner, *Reconstruction*, 566. Foner labeled Babcock and Treasury superintendent General John A. McDonald, Grant’s “close friend” as the most important and highest ranking miscreants connected with the plot. Morton Keller identifies McDonald as the “central figure” in the Whiskey Ring, from Keller, *Affairs of State*, 245.

²² Summers, *Era of Good Stealings*, 261-263.

Grant and his “cronies.”²³ It was Grant’s continuing loyalty to men who continued to betray him that had worn thin with the American public. As Thomas Nast depicted in one of his rare political cartoons criticizing the president, Grant’s staunch loyalty to those close to him, so long praised as one of Grant’s most positive attributes, now seemed to drag him down. It was testimony to a virtuous trait gone sour as Grant was continually betrayed by those in whom he had placed the public trust. It was good to “stand by one’s friends” and associates, posited Nast, but please, no more.

²³ Covering his speech entitled “Republicans vs. Grantism,” the *NY Times* quoted Charles Sumner as defining “Grantism” as a presidency turned into a mere “plaything,” little more than “personal government and personal pretension.” The article went on to quote Sumner that future historians would remember Grant as “first, in war, first in nepotism, and first in gift taking,” from *NY Times*, June 1st, 1872.



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Figure 6.4 No more bad appointments

As part and parcel to the sordid political corruption of the age, both real and imagined, there was a growing movement to reform the hiring process in the federal government in an attempt to curtail and eliminate much of the malfeasance many felt was caused by a partisan political system ushered in back during the presidency of Andrew Jackson. Those who supported such a system of civil-service reform believed that government employ should be

²⁴ Published in *Harper's Weekly*, July 18, 1874, from Ohio State University Libraries, *The Billy Ireland Cartoon Library and Museum*, available at: http://cartoons.osu.edu/nast/keller_web.ht, accessed on September 28, 2011. Such sentiment was reflected in an obscure article buried in the July 23rd, 1874 edition of the *Rocky Mountain News* which wrote an indictment of Grant for some of his appointees, chiding Grant for "being in sympathy with one of the worst gangs of public robbers that ever put their hands in the nation's treasury."

based on merit, not political connection, and as such, supported a reorganization which included the testing and ranking of candidates to determine ones fitness for position. On several occasions, Grant himself had spoken to the issues civil service reform was designed to remedy. In February of 1872, the President recorded his conviction that some sort of reform was needed. He wrote that true reform “will leave the offices to seek the man,” rather than limiting a particular search only to men who were seeking office. Months later, Grant wrote of his expectations that “honesty and efficiency, not political activity, will determine the tenure of office.” And again, in his message to Congress after the November, 1872 elections, Grant affirmed his commitment to some sort of reform, by speaking to the “earnest desire...to correct abuses which have grown up in the Civil Service of the country, through the defective method of making appointments to office.”²⁵

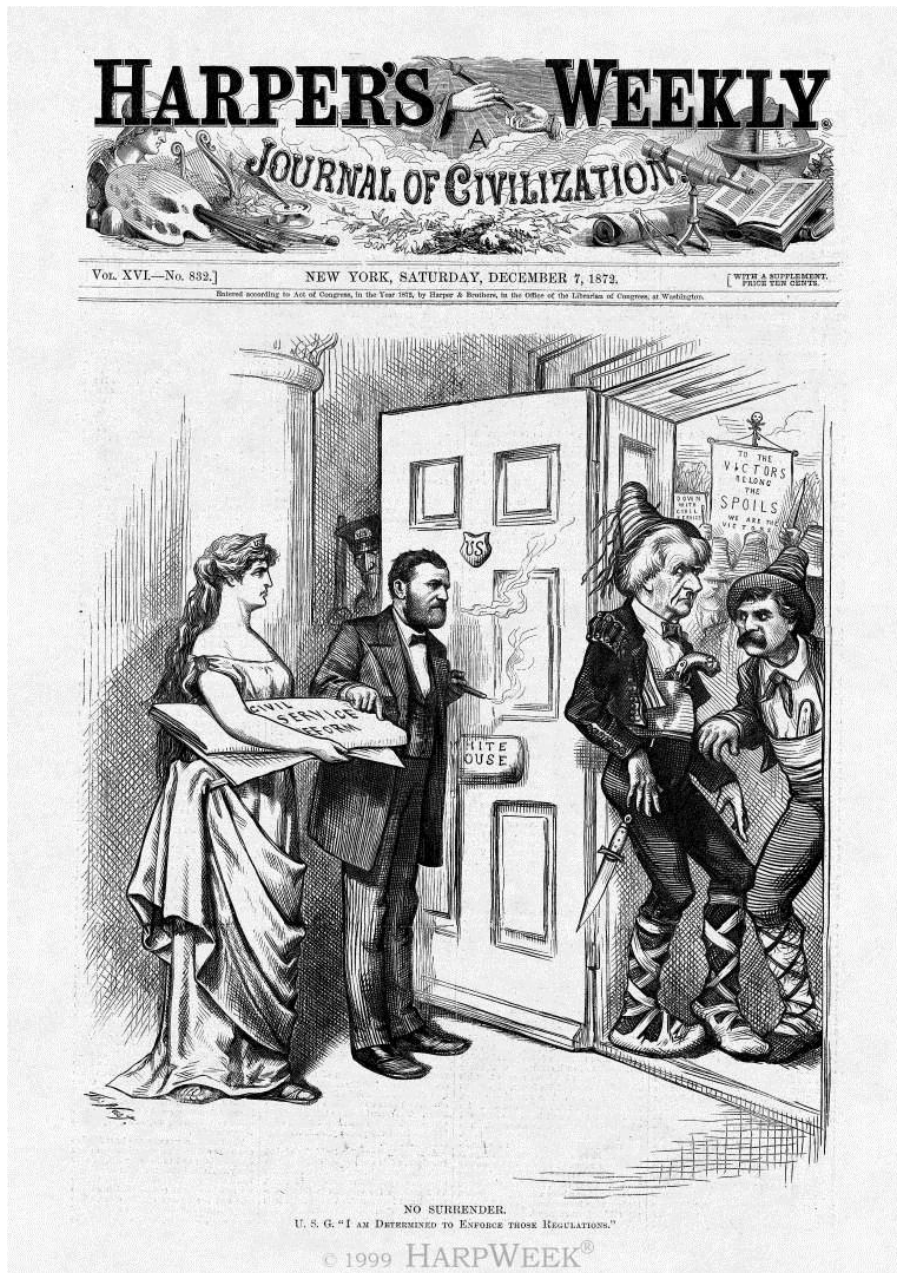
Talk of civil service reform in an era of rampant political corruption was easy. The concept of individuals serving their government who actually were qualified to do so resonated with a substantial portion of the American public. Yet action on true reform by those entrenched and who benefited in such a system was another. With a half-century long system of patronage and political spoils indelibly etched into the American body politic, those with the power to change the system were also those who had the most to lose by facilitating such a change. And despite the best of intentions and demonstrations that Grant would pursue the matter, a joint collaboration of the chief executive and Congress necessary to affect such reform seemed to wither in the face of the political and financial exigencies of the day. Such tone was reflected in an article written by Henry Adams in 1869 in which Adams was unequivocal in assigning the

²⁵ Simon, *Papers*, 23: 3, from a letter dated February 1st, 1872; 23: 62, from an order dated April 16, 1872; 23: 300, from his annual message draft, dated Dec. 2, 1872. Grant straddled the fence a bit on how the evaluation process should work. Rather than testing and then ranking all potential candidates for any position, Grant stated a preference for a system in which a candidate was selected for a position and then given a “thorough examination to test whether the person selected was fully qualified,” *Ibid*.

blame to a lack of will to institute meaningful reform. It was “the indifference of the better senators and to their natural and proper spirit of common pride in the dignity of their House” Adams wrote, for “the experience of the present government has shown that even a President so determined in character and so strong in popular support as General Grant shrank from the attempt to reform the civil service as one which was beyond his powers.” As such, suggested Adams, the only recourse for reformers is to “act outside of all party organizations, and to appeal with all the earnestness that the emergency requires, not to Congress nor to the President, but to the people...to shut off forever this source of corruption in the state.” And indeed, on the campaign trail, civil service reform found widespread appeal with the voting public. Accordingly, eager campaigners embraced the concept of reform yet, as Mark Wahlgren Summers wrote, “everyone professed his love for reform in general and found excuses for rejecting any change in particular.”²⁶

After his electoral victory in late 1872, Grant was still perceived as an unflinching champion of civil-service reform, pictured as such on the cover of *Harper's Weekly* in December of 1872. “No surrender,” reads the caption title, with Grant proclaiming that “I am determined to enforce those regulations.”

²⁶ Henry Adams, “Civil Service Reform,” *North American Review*, 109 (October, 1869): 459-460; Summers, *Era of Good Stealings*, 101.



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Figure 6.5 Civil Service champion

Soon after his second inauguration in March, 1873, Grant continued to receive more favorable press regarding the issue. “The signs multiply,” reported the *Boston Congregationalist*, “that President Grant means business in the matter of civil service reform.” Yet a little over a year later, when little of substance had been accomplished., the partisan Democratic *Arkansas Gazette*

²⁷ *Harper's Weekly*, December 7, 1872.

reminded Grant of his “firm stand taken before the last presidential election, in favor of purifying the service,” and chastised the president by reminding him of the “difference between making promises and keeping them.”²⁸ Yet Grant was not alone in his failure to pursue any type of meaningful reform. His lack of zeal to press the issue found a sympathetic ally in Congress, that engine of the people ultimately responsible for funding any type of civil-service measures. Once again, Thomas Nast captured the collective mindset of a reluctant Congress to change a system so firmly ensconced in the political landscape of the era; suggesting that both the Democrats and the Republicans, both anxious to give rise to such an event, were somewhat reluctant to embrace the idea as it came to fruition.



Figure 6.6 Grant delivers a baby neither party wants

²⁸ *Congregationalist*, March 20, 1873; *Arkansas Gazette*, April 23, 1874.

²⁹ *Harper's Weekly*, April 3, 1875. John Eaton wrote that proponents of the spoils system would not appropriate any funds for serious civil-service reform despite Grant's statements in 1871, 1872, and 1873 that he was serious about reform, from Eaton, *Grant, Lincoln, and the Freedmen: Reminiscences of the Civil War, With Special Reference to the Work for Contrabands and Freedmen of the Mississippi Valley* (New York: The Negro Universities Press, 1969), 280, 281.

In a scathing contemporary indictment of systemic opposition to civil-service reform, Reverend Henry W. Bellows, founder of the U.S. Sanitary Commission during the Civil War and the first president of the Civil Service Reform Association, assigned blame to a multitude of parties. While writing that “it is difficult to account for the lull in interest which civil service reform had awakened during the last presidential canvass,” Bellows blamed lack of reform on an “indifference of the press, the supercilious contempt of our leading politicians of both parties, the silence and apathy of Congress, and the tentative and inconsistent course of the President and the Cabinet.”³⁰ “Congress would not approve legislation that would make reforms permanent,” wrote Josiah Bunting, and “despite repeated urgings from Grant, there would be no substantial reform of Civil Service.” Civil Service rules would die an ignominious death in 1875 and it would not be until almost a decade later, with the passage of the Pendleton Civil Service Reform Act in 1883 that some semblance of an organized, effective Civil Service reform would emerge.³¹

Reform in government was not the only instinctively progressive measure on Grant’s agenda as the Republicans sought to win Grant a second term. Emboldened by egalitarian sensibilities generated in the wake of the abolition of slavery and the government’s aggressive prosecution of rights for ex-slaves, supporters of women’s rights found renewed hope and

³⁰ Bellows, D.D., Henry W, “Civil-Service Reform,” *North American Review*, 130 (March, 1880): 247.

³¹ Bunting, *Grant*, 125-126; Morton Keller wrote that after Grant’s initial efforts to promote civil service reform, “opposition from the politicians forced the repeal in 1875 of this halting effort.” Keller suggests that the “real point of contention between reformers and regulars was political control,” with advocates of reform including “reform publicists, intellectuals, and professional men” contending for power with “professional, organizational politicians,” from Keller, *Affairs of State*, 273-275; Andrew L. Slap wrote that while Grant advocated civil service reform in principle, the most he did in practical terms was “create a special commission to study the problem.” Yet Slap also wrote that liberal Republicans acknowledged the difficulty of reforming such a deeply entrenched system and cited reform Republican Lyman Trumbull who “found Congress more complicit in the corruption of the spoils system than Grant,” from Slap, *The Doom of Reconstruction: The Liberal Republicans in the Civil War Era* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2006), 120. Even Reconstruction critic William A. Dunning, would assign Grant a modicum of credit for his work on Civil Service reform, writing that initially Grant “evinced a lively interest in the rising movement for civil service reform,” from Dunning, *Reconstruction*, 193. Further reference to the demise of civil service reform in mid-1875 can be found in Eaton, *Grant, Lincoln, and the Freedmen*, 280-281.

opportunity in promoting gender equality. Accordingly, in an attempt to address and placate a growing call for granting women the right to vote, Republicans sent out the clarion call for women's suffrage. As the party representing a powerful federal government, the Republicans would take, or give the appearance of taking a more forceful role in promoting the individual rights of certain groups at the expense of what state rightists believed fell under the purview of state sovereignty. Accordingly, many suffragists found the immediate post-war egalitarian proclivities to be the ideal time to pursue equal rights for women, the exercise of the ballot the most prominent among them. Yet the social climate of the day presented barriers. To insure "national virtue and social order," Paula Baker wrote, "on one subject all of the nineteenth-century antisuffragists and many suffragists agreed: a woman belonged in the home."³² Rather than offering her opinion on what she believed to be the proper role for women, Baker was commenting on the political reality of the early years of post-Civil America. As such, the Fourteenth plank of the 1872 Republican Party platform raised some eyebrows. It read: "The Republican party is mindful of its obligations to the loyal women of America for their noble devotion to the cause of freedom. Their admission to wider fields of usefulness is viewed with satisfaction, and the honest demand of any class of citizens for additional rights should be treated with respectful consideration."³³ Certainly not a ringing endorsement for women's suffrage, it

³² Paula Baker, "The Domestication of Politics: Women and American Political Society, 1780-1920," *American Historical Review*, 89 (June, 1984): 620; Baker wrote that women's suffrage was considered a "radical departure" from the accepted norm and would bring "social disorder, political disaster, and most important, women's loss of position as society's moral arbiter and enforcer," *Ibid.*; A generation later, Patricia L. Richard would write that this moral superiority would serve as an "offensive and defensive weapon to both expand women's roles in public and defend bold behavior that crossed gender lines," from "Listen Ladies, One and All: Union Soldiers Yearn for the Society of Their 'Fair Cousins' of the North," Paul A. Cimballa and Randall M. Miller, eds., *Union Soldiers and The Northern Home Front: Wartime Experiences, Postwar Adjustments* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2002), 169.

³³ Republican Party Platforms: "Republican Party Platform of 1872," June 5, 1872. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*, available at: <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=29623>, accessed on September 10, 2010. Melanie Susan Gustafson wrote that with the aid of Susan B. Anthony and others, suffragists "were able to maneuver through the platform committee and assemble a plank that gave women their first

was little more than a tepid commitment designed in large measure to gain support for the Republican Party in the election. And while it contained only an ethereal promise to promulgate the vote for women it was the first time in American history that any political party made such an acknowledgement of women's concerns in its party platform prior to a national election.

Yet such hopeful sentiment and the tease of the Fourteenth Amendment, in which some suffragists found a wellspring of hope for the franchise, did not represent the prevailing political mindset of postwar America.³⁴ In the aftermath of the Civil War, the American political system dripped with testosterone. It was a male-only club and party platform aside, the leadership of the Republican Party, including Ulysses S. Grant, was not about to change the status quo. The practice of politics in the late 1860s and 1870s was a transmutation of the bitterness and tactics of the Civil War. "Party leaders commonly used imagery drawn from the experience of war" wrote Paula Baker, "parties were competing armies, elections were battles, and party workers were soldiers." Political theater in the form of torchlight parades where manliness and masculinity prevailed was the norm. Women had a role as well, but to suffragists it was at best peripheral and designed to keep women in deferential roles. Accordingly, wrote Nina Silber, as long as this postwar relationship was viewed in a military context, "Northerners interpreted Reconstruction strategies...in terms of gender and manhood," especially "in regard to tempering and controlling the passions of southern men."³⁵

official recognition by the party," a circumstance that gave women's rights activists a "cause for celebration," from Gustafson, *Women and the Republican Party, 1854-1924* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2001), 48.

³⁴ The notion that the Constitution "recognized women as full citizens was an unsettling and potentially revolutionary proposition," from Allison Sneider, *Suffragists In An Imperial Age: U.S. Expansion and the Woman Question, 1870-1929* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 45; Eric Foner wrote that suffragists saw "Reconstruction as a golden opportunity to claim for women their own emancipation," yet offers up his nonsequitor when he declared that, as did black Americans, "advocates of women's rights likewise encountered the limits of Reconstruction's egalitarianism," from *Forever Free*, 123, 124.

³⁵ Baker, "Domestication of Politics," 628; Baker wrote of these parades: "women participated, too, by illuminating their windows and cheering on the men," *Ibid.*, 629; Nina Silber, *The Romance of Reunion: Northerners and the South, 1865-1890* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993), 42; according to Silber, a woman's role

Grant's attitude was reflective of the era and he appeared to reveal his true proclivities and dismissive attitude on the subject in a report printed in the *Evening Bulletin*. Just before his inauguration in March, 1873, Grant was alleged to have been engaged in conversation with a Mr. Howe, a Mr. Sargent, and a Mr. Willard, a "member of Congress." When asked to insert some words of support for women's suffrage into his inaugural speech, Grant was alleged to have said "he was opposed to it." When reminded of the Fourteenth plank in the Republican platform, Grant purportedly winked and replied "well, that was for buncombe," and dismissed the subject with a laugh, saying he would see about it."³⁶ Whether real or contrived, Grant's alleged comments certainly seemed to reflect his views on the matter as well as the prevailing political reality of the immediate aftermath of the Civil War. Suffragists did not accept or understand the Republican party's rejection of their cause yet the public was not ready for female voting and Grant understood that.

Politically, there were numerous similarities between the quest for women's suffrage and the pre-war antislavery cause. Such topics became important prior to every presidential election, but once elected, the issue "was lost sight of." It became a political albatross, a non-issue that

in the aforementioned parades was generally confined to turning "out for the ceremonies and especially to make floral tributes," *Ibid.*, 59.

³⁶ *Evening Bulletin*, March 26, 1873; Eric Foner believed that members of Congress shared Grant's conviction, writing "no one in Congress, moreover, seemed willing to consider allowing women to vote," from *Forever Free*, 148. Oddly enough, the very next day after this report of Grant's flippancy appeared in the *Evening Bulletin*, the *Little Rock Republican* published a letter written to Grant from Elizabeth Cady Stanton, first reminding the President that his triumph was the first ever in which "women of the nation" had "taken an active role," and then admonishing Grant for not mentioning in his inaugural speech the plight of the "20,000,000 disenfranchised women who are classed in all the state constitutions with idiots, lunatics, paupers, and criminals who are taxed without representation," from the *Republican*, March 27, 1873. J. Matthew Gallman wrote that Stanton, Susan B. Anthony and other suffrage leaders supported Grant "in exchange for his nominal support of woman suffrage," from Gallman, "Is the War Ended?: Anna Dickinson and the Election of 1872," from Alice Fahs and Joan Waugh, eds., *The Memory of the Civil War in American Culture* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 164. And though described as a "staunch defender of women's rights in general," Julia Grant did not publicly support women's suffrage. Having a keen sense of the "politics of a situation," Julia certainly understood the political exigencies of the day and the political capital it might cost her husband should she be to vocal on the matter, from *The University of Virginia Miller Center*, "American President: A Reference Resource, Julia Dent Grant," available at <http://millercenter.org/president/grant/essays/firstlady/julia>, accessed on January 12, 2011..

would tease and tantalize but ultimately produce no tangible results for its supporters. It was, as Morton Keller wrote, the emergence of a “distinctive and pervasive pattern” that emerged in post-Civil War social policy, where the rhetoric and political discourse designed to “implement the war born ideal of a unified, more egalitarian nation” would eventually founder on the shoals of “countering nineteenth-century American values; laissez-faire, individualism, assumptions racial and sexual inferiority.” Nevertheless, despite the reluctance of the regular Republicans to further the cause of those suffragists who had supported them in 1872, many women did come to support the Republicans again in 1876, partially because of an emerging temperance issue, with which candidate Rutherford B. Hayes would become associated.³⁷

Politics aside, the problem of reconstructing the South dogged Grant more than any other issue since he staked his claim to the presidency. Particularly vexatious to Grant and his administration as he began his second term was the continued reluctance of an overwhelming majority of white Southerners to grant any modicum of political or social equality to the freedmen, crucial elements central to the goals of Republican Reconstruction. Violence and intimidation against blacks and white Republicans continued unabated in the South and white supremacists would become more emboldened by a growing Northern apathy toward the plight of persons of color. Grant would come to face a “trifecta” of resistance in his attempts to uphold his constitutional responsibilities as he defined them. In addition to an intransigent South and the growing strength of the Democratic Party in the North, he would also face a Supreme Court whose decisions in the mid and late 1870s would defang his and prior legislative attempts to

³⁷ Gustafson, *Women and the Republican Party*, 45; Keller, *Affairs of State*, 161; Gustafson reported that Hayes was a member of the Sons of Temperance but was reluctant to advertise as such fearing it would cost him votes, from *Women and the Republican Party*, 55; in February, 1871, it was reported that then President Grant had “contributed \$300 in aid of the Congressional Temperance Society,” from the *Vermont Watchman*, February 22, 1871.

protect blacks in the South and render impotent legislation designed to foment his “Constitutional Revolution.”³⁸

To sustain Republican regimes under fire and to protect the Constitutional rights of the freedmen, Grant, at various times, vacillated between sending troops to curtail such activity, threatening to send troops and flat out denying requests to send troops. As such, his actions were alternately praised in the Northern press and condemned in the Southern press. Of special concern to Grant was the degree of violence perpetrated in Louisiana and South Carolina, among the last of the former Confederate states to regain “home rule.”

In Louisiana in particular, there was little doubt as to where most of the state’s white residents stood regarding the administration’s reconstruction policies and Republican Governor William Kellogg. Supported by Grant in the face of both Democratic and even some Republican opposition at the state level, the President’s allegiance to Kellogg would face stiff opposition and would require aggressive federal intervention to allow Kellogg to maintain some semblance of rule.³⁹ In March of 1873, just a week after Grant’s inauguration, the *Milwaukee Sentinel* published an editorial printed in the *New Orleans Picayune* questioning the legitimacy of Kellogg’s government. State government was up to Louisianans not Grant, declared the paper,

³⁸ A term appropriated during dinner with former Grant Monument Association president, Frank Scaturro, December 16, 2010. Among the decisions rendered by the Court were: The 1873 *Slaughterhouse Cases*, which decided that “the privileges and immunities clause of the Fourteenth Amendment (granting full citizenship rights to black males) was not meant to expand federal power over states;” *Texas v. Gaines* (1874) weakened a number of components of the 1866 Civil Rights Act; *Minor v. Happersett* (1875) declared the “Fifteenth Amendment did not confer a general right to vote,” and that states could regulate voting, a condition which would witness the genesis of state-sanctioned poll taxes, literacy tests, grandfather clauses, etc., all mechanisms designed to prevent blacks and later poor whites with populist inclinations from voting; and *United States v. Cruikshank* (1876), which “severely limited” the scope of the Enforcement Act of 1870, from Donna A. Barnes and Catherine Connolly “Repression, the Judicial System, and Political Opportunities for Civil Rights Advocacy during Reconstruction,” *The Sociological Quarterly*, 40 (Spring, 1999): 337. Ironically, the four Supreme Court justices appointed by Grant, all Republicans, Bradley, Strong, Hunt, and Chief Justice Waite, frequently voted against legislative measures supported by Grant and designed to protect black voting rights, including unanimous concurrence in *Minor v. Happersett*.

³⁹ Brooks Simpson, *Reconstruction Presidents*, 166; Simpson wrote that the Democrats set up a rival legislature and that both sides to the contest sought relief from Washington. Grant’s choice of Kellogg would engender opposition that “would continue to contest Kellogg’s claim to office by all available means.”

and as such, the political difficulty that plagued the state was a result of a contest “between different organizations of white race in Louisiana – the people of Louisiana on one side, the carpetbaggers, and scalawags – usurpers, robbers, and tyrants on the other.”⁴⁰

Within weeks after the *Picayune* article appeared in the newspaper, one of the “most violent episodes in Reconstruction history” occurred in Colfax, Louisiana. In a dispute over which party controlled local office, Democratic partisans armed themselves and stormed the Colfax Courthouse on Easter Sunday in an attempt to remove Kellogg’s supporters. The net result was that over 100 blacks and 3 whites were killed in the name of local political supremacy, a manifestation of what Donna Barnes and Catherine Connolly called the “white supremacist countermovement.”⁴¹ In the aftermath of what would become known as the “Colfax Massacre,” and with passions remaining inflamed as long as Kellogg was in office, Grant issued a resolution on May 22nd, ordering “said turbulent and disorderly persons to disperse” and “to submit themselves to the laws and the constituted authorities of said State,” and threatened federal intervention should his order go unheeded.⁴²

Despite such warnings and the appearance of federal resolve, unrest in Louisiana would continue throughout most of Grant’s second term. In late 1874, Grant was again confronted with reports of violence in Louisiana and as he continued to despair and “hope that the nation could move to a politics rooted in principles rather than race,” he ordered federal forces to New Orleans.⁴³ In December and again in early 1875, Grant would take more extraordinary measures to subdue an obstinate local white populace by sending General Phillip Sheridan to defuse the

⁴⁰ *Milwaukee Sentinel*, March 11, 1873.

⁴¹ Barnes and Connolly, “Civil Rights Advocacy during Reconstruction,” 329, 332; the authors suggest that white resistance in Louisiana and South Carolina was so determined due to the large black populations of each state. In particular, Louisiana had a slight majority black population as well as “many prosperous and well-educated individuals who formed a significant pool of potential black leaders,” *Ibid.*, 329.

⁴² Simon, *Papers*, 24: 122.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 25: xxii, xxiv.

lawlessness. Sheridan was not encouraged by what he found and the *New York Times* reported that Sheridan referred to the white population as “banditti,” reporting back to Washington “that since 1868 between three and four thousand men were murdered in the parishes because of the political views entertained by them.”⁴⁴

Reaction to Grant’s aggressive action in Louisiana in the press was predictable. The staunchly pro-Democratic *Hinds County (Mississippi) Gazette* reported that “Kellogg is a fraud and a usurper, but having recognized him in 1872, President Grant must continue to recognize him in 1874.” “Recognition,” asserted the *Gazette*, was in the form of continued federal intervention, the only mechanism in which Grant could keep his “mistake in 1872” in office. Reaction in the northern press was different. “Concerning this Louisiana business,” reported the *Independent (New Hampshire) Statesman*, “the President had been right from the outset.” Then invoking the name of abolitionist William Lloyd Garrison to support its contention, the paper continued, “Mr. Garrison maintains the President could not have acted differently in the premises without being false to his pledges to enforce equal rights and free speech and freedom of opinion in the South.”⁴⁵

To the majority of white Louisianans and to Southern white Democrats in general, Grant’s use of force was seen as an attempt to use federal power to prop up illegitimate Republican regimes throughout the South, an unconstitutional subversion of the will of the people and a usurpation of state authority. Further, the makeup of the Republican Party in the South, which included a large number of blacks, did little to appeal to any “true” white

⁴⁴ *NY Times*, January 11, 1875; Despite numerous threats on his life in the weeks following Sheridan’s arrival in New Orleans, Grant defended his policy in a message to the Senate, stating that “the spirit of hatred and violence is stronger than the law,” from Simon, *Papers*, 26: xxxiii, 8. Sheridan was no stranger to the racial violence turmoil in New Orleans. In 1867 he found himself serving in New Orleans where he described “the pernicious influence” of the press, office holders, and office seekers, describing them as “agitators” who “condemned everybody and everything connected with the Congressional plan of reconstruction,” from Sheridan, *Memoirs*, 2: 271.

⁴⁵ *Hinds County Gazette*, October 7, 1874; *Independent (New Hampshire) Statesman*, January 28, 1875.

unreconstructed Southern Democrat. Politics were racially polarized as the party of Lincoln became known as the “Black” Republican Party, where race came to define party affiliation. And as such, the worst fears of such a state of affairs was given life by the mellifluous pen of Thomas Nast, who used buffoonish black caricatures and a prominent reference to Grant’s missive for “peace” to caustically portray what political equality for the freedmen might mean in the political arena, a condition certainly not lost on an increasingly disenchanted white North.

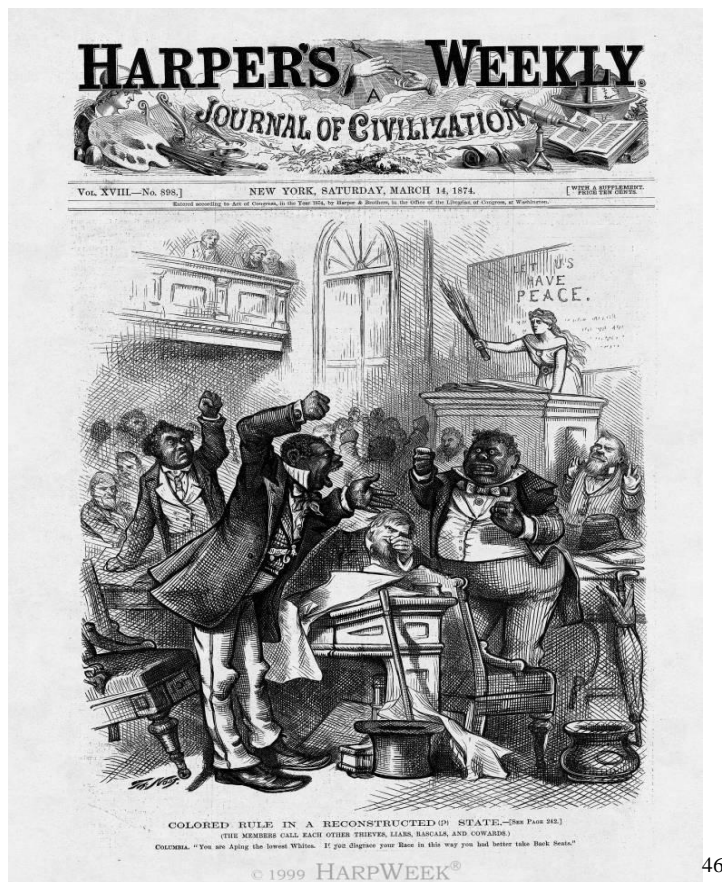


Figure 6.7 “Colored Rule in a Reconstructed State”

⁴⁶ *Harper's Weekly*, March 14, 1874. Brooks Simpson suggests that some Northern Republicans found little appeal in being associated with the “black” Republican Party, writing that “republicans were coming to view Reconstruction as a political albatross,” from *Reconstruction Presidents*, 179, 184. As were some Northern whites becoming disenchanted with the Republican Party, so were a number of Southern Blacks, at least in Louisiana in the 1876 presidential election. “The Negroes of Louisiana had been promised much by the Republican Party; they had received very little. The bulk of the Negro population found that their station in life was little improved after eight years of Republican rule,” and accordingly, Negroes in not insignificant numbers voted the Democratic ticket, from T.B. Tunnell, Jr., “The Negro, the Republican Party, and the Election of 1876 in Louisiana,” *Louisiana: The Journal of Louisiana Historical Association*, 7 (Spring, 1966): 108.

To Grant and his aides, federal action was warranted in an attempt to enforce the Constitution and protect voting rights for all. Just two months before the Congressional election in 1874, Grant wrote to Secretary of War Belknap, “the recent atrocities in the South, particularly in Louisiana, Alabama, and South Carolina, show a disregard for law, civil rights and personal protection that ought not to be tolerated in any civilized government.” Accordingly, acting under the provisions of the Enforcement Act, Grant instructed Belknap to “so order troops as to be available in case of necessity.” Two weeks later, Grant ordered lawless elements in Louisiana “to disperse and retire peaceably” and to submit themselves to the laws and constituted authorities.”⁴⁷ As expected, press reports again reflected regional differences. The *Daily Arkansas Gazette* described Grant’s “interference in the domestic affairs of the southern states” as wholly mischievous, reporting that “even the ballot, the peaceful weapon of free men, has become under his management the instrument of political tyranny, social discord, and financial ruin.” In lockstep was the *Hinds County Gazette*, which sarcastically praised Grant for his actions in Louisiana, such effect being “as to count out the State officers actually chosen by the people and count in a band of robbers who were rejected at the polls.” But again, true to form, much of the Northern press supported Grant. The *North American and United States Gazette* reported to its readers that “the more the situation at the south is investigated, the more clearly it is proven that the action of the President in Louisiana put a stop to widespread and carefully prepared uprising.” Further, the *Wisconsin Register* reported that Grant has “simply performed his duty under the law” in Louisiana and elsewhere throughout the South.⁴⁸

⁴⁷ Simon, *Papers*, 25:188, 214, correspondence from September 2nd and 15th, 1874. As could be expected, reports of violence in the press increased dramatically before elections.

⁴⁸ *Arkansas Gazette*, September 23, 1874; *Hinds County Gazette*, September 30, 1874; *NA Gazette*, October 31, 1874; *Wisconsin Register*, January 23, 1875. Partially to refute some of the extravagant claims of some in the Southern press regarding the scope of federal intervention in the South, the *Southwestern Christian* (New Orleans) *Advocate* reported in its December 17, 1874 edition that the total number of federal troops in Kentucky and Maryland and all the former Confederate states save Alabama and Texas was 4,082.

As the November, 1874, election season played itself out, Grant and the Republican Party were consumed by a myriad of problems. In addition to the usual reports of violence throughout the South, continued economic suffering in the aftershock of the Panic of 1873, and charges of administration corruption and Caesarism, the stream of personal attacks against Grant continued unabated. Consequently, the Congressional elections of 1874 were disastrous for the Republican Party. Even in an off-year election when the incumbent majority can always count on losing some Congressional seats, the results were of epic proportion. The Republicans lost 96 seats, or 47.3% of those seats they held after the 1872 election. The Democrats picked up 93 seats, more than doubling their total from 1872. The outcome was a complete repudiation of all that regular Republicans represented and served as a public referendum on Reconstruction, the economy, and government corruption amid continued regional tensions. The message was clear. A substantial portion of Northern whites had evinced their weariness of Reconstruction policy, had grown tired of hearing about atrocities perpetrated on the black man and on white Republicans, real or imagined, and signaled their willingness to let the South get back in the business of running the South. Further, with passage of a denuded version of the Civil Rights Act of 1875, evidence suggests that advocacy in the North for the freedmen diminished quite substantially. Capturing the essence of a growing Northern sense of disillusionment over the battle for political voice for the freedmen, especially with the suggestion that black “equality” might be heading north, a political cartoon in *Harper’s Weekly* cynically displayed a fleeing white flock once a black member is admitted to their world.



THE GOOD (PURE WHITE) SHEPHERD.

It was known here Sunday morning that the Civil Rights Bill had passed both Houses of Congress, and needed only the signature of the President to become a law. On that very morning, in Manchester, just across the river from Richmond, a negro woman marched into the Meade Memorial Episcopal Church, just before the services began, and took a front seat beside a lady. The lady at once rose, went into the vestry-room, and informed the pastor, Rev. Mr. SARGENT. Mr. SARGENT considered the situation for a few moments, and then determined that, as the easiest way out of the difficulty was perhaps the best way, he would dismiss the congregation without having any services, which he did promptly.—New York Times.

(The first three Chapters of this story were published in HARPER'S WEEKLY dated February 20, 1875.)

The Romance of a Back Street.

By F. W. ROBINSON,

AUTHOR OF "LETTER-KING ELLER," "FOX-HUNTER SAM," "THE HUNTERS," "CLARENCE'S CONFESSION," "ROBERT-CORNEUS SARGENT," ETC.

CHAPTER IV.

CURT SCENE.

JOHN DAX was completely prostrated by Ellen Morrison's avowal. The strength for a while entirely deserted him, and he collapsed into the old cane-bottomed chair, wringing his hands together piteously, and gazing at her who had bewitched him by a strange and awful statement.

What could it mean? What terrible secret did it portend? Beneath the every-day exterior of this monstrous business, the placid surface of what had ever seemed to him two gentle, patient, unworldly girls, what deadly grievance or cruel ill feeling had prevailed?

He was in a dream, and startled by all his wanderings. What mystery of the past, what irreparable wrong, could have held those two young women in silence for three years, living and working together, and sleeping under the same roof, and yet never exchanging a word with one another?

"For three years," he faltered forth at last, "and you two not speaking all the time?"

"We have grown used to the position; it is not painful to either of us now."

"But—Will you tell me—"

"John, I can not tell you any thing more."

said Ellen, finally: "I have betrayed too much already. You are never likely to know what has estranged my sister from me or me from her, and why we hate each other very bitterly."

"No, no—don't say that; it is not possible—you two!" he exclaimed.

"Ask her presently, if you will. Hear what she says; repeat to her what I have told you," said Ellen Morrison, excitedly again, "and then tell her your own story if you dare."

John felt already that he dared not, that in any confession of the wild dream that he had had, and to any hope which he had formed. It would have been wiser if he had not told the old or sister—if his avowal had not, as it were, wrenched forth the secret which those two silent women had jealously guarded from the world. He thought he would have been happier to have

lived on in ignorance of so terrible a truth. He rose and walked toward the door in a dream-like fashion, as though the vision lasted still that had opposed him. This was not real life yet—the open reality of all his after-time.

At the threshold he turned, for the first time since the face of Mary was looking toward him from the half-open door leading into the little parlor; he felt that she had left her work and was never him before he had glanced round. She remembered him, too, and that was marvellous, considering how Ellen had been pleased at the first sight of him. She came toward him at once with hands extended and a faint smile of welcome flickering at her lips.

"Surely it is my old friend John Dax!" she cried; "and he has not deserted us for good."

"Not for good, Miss Mary," stammered the

Figure 6.8 The White Flock departs

Grant himself understood the growing weariness of prevailing Northern attitudes regarding the civil rights legislation and other federal attempts to promote black equality. In an

⁴⁹ "The Good (Pure White) Shepherd," *Harper's Weekly*, April 3, 1875.

article published in the *Yankton Press*, he attributed the disastrous electoral results squarely to the Republican party and its “unwise attempt to force upon the American people the theories of Senator Sumner, embodied in the Civil Rights bill. . . . firmly convinced that the Civil Rights Bill had more to do with the defeat of the party than all other causes combined.”⁵⁰ Emboldened by such sentiment, the omnifarious white supremacist “counter movement” manifested itself in continued episodic incidents of violence throughout the Deep South, not just in Louisiana. In April of 1874, Grant had sent troops to Arkansas to protect telegraph lines in a hotly contested battle between gubernatorial candidates. In September, less than two months before Congressional elections and in response to “recent atrocities in the South, particularly in Louisiana, Alabama, and South Carolina,” Grant advised Secretary of War William Belknap to “so order troops as to be available in cases of necessity.”⁵¹ While considering another request from a Republican governor, this time Governor Adelbert Ames of Mississippi in late summer, 1875, Grant’s exasperation manifested itself in a letter he wrote to Attorney General Edwards Pierrepont. “The whole public are tired out with this annual autumnal outbreaks in the South,” Grant advised Pierrepont, adding “the great majority are ready now to condemn any interference on the part of the government.” Yet still determined to carry out his constitutional duty, Grant further advised his attorney general that he “did not see how we are to evade the call of the

⁵⁰ *Yankton Press*, November 12, 1874; as originally proposed by Sumner, the Civil Rights bill was much more potent than the one that eventually passed in 1875. Most of the African American press was supportive of Grant and the Republican Party. Julius Thompson wrote that “most black newspapers of the period” supported Grant and the Republicans during Reconstruction, especially those publications from the South, from Thompson, *Black Press in Mississippi, 1865-1985* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1993), 4. Further, Catherine Squires wrote that many black papers were owned by black Republicans, and as such had a personal stake in supporting Grant, from Squires, *African Americans and the Media* (Cambridge, U.K.: Polity Press, 2009), 28. Yet occasionally, articles from the pro-Grant black press would take issue with Grant on specific initiatives. One such example comes from the *Christian Recorder*, an African American Publication from Philadelphia. While praising him for his longtime support for the rights of the freedmen, the *Recorder* gently chided Grant for pulling back a bit on the Civil Rights Bill as originally proposed by Sumner. While reporting that Grant “has so repeatedly pledged himself to Civil Rights,” and during his six years in office “has done so many good things,” “we are loathe to believe that he will go back on the record he has made,” from the *Recorder*, June 25, 1874.

⁵¹ Simon, *Papers*, 25: xxii, xxiii, 187, 188, letter to Belknap dated September 2, 1874.

governor,” if his request was made “within the Constitution and acts of Congress.”⁵² After assessing the situation, no new troops were sent to Mississippi.

Events in South Carolina became especially egregious in 1876, as so-called white league “rifle clubs” wreaked havoc amongst its black population, including an attack in July, 1876, in which five members of black militia were “summarily executed.”⁵³ Such activity prompted Grant to convene a series of meetings with his cabinet as an eager press revealed what action the administration was forced to take. “The cabinet was in session for over two hours yesterday,” proclaimed the *Lowell Citizen*, where it was “unanimously decided that a proclamation from the president be issued, commanding the rifle clubs to disperse.” On the same day, the *North American* (Philadelphia) reported the same story, defining the “rifle clubs” as the terror of the state, and as such, “the loyal people of the country will sustain the Administration in this movement to sustain the laws and defend the weak.”⁵⁴

Not unexpectedly, the Southern press disputed the allegations regarding the violence and instead assigned a purely political motive for the actions of the administration. The *Arkansas Gazette* reported that the “insurrection” in several South Carolina counties mentioned by Grant did not exist and the false outrage perpetrated by the government and spread by the Northern press was little more than an excuse to send federal officials in to control the election in favor of the Republicans. “The outrage mill has been set to work,” reported the *Georgia Telegraph*, “and

⁵² Simon, *Papers*, 26: 312, letter dated September 13, 1875; within days, the letter was printed verbatim in numerous newspapers, including the *Chicago Inter Ocean*, September 17, 1875. Eric Foner wrote that “given this license by the president to intimidate, Democrats intensified their campaign” and began to operate in 1875 “with impunity, without costumes,” and “to flaunt their lack of fear and reprisal,” from *Forever Free*, 196.

⁵³ Simon, *Papers*, 27: xxvi; in the immediate aftermath of the incident, Grant wrote to South Carolina’s Republican Governor Daniel Chamberlain describing the incident as “cruel, bloodthirsty, wanton, unprovoked, and as uncalled for as it was, is only a repetition of the course that has been pursued in other Southern States within the last few years,” *Ibid.*, 27:199.

⁵⁴ *Lowell Citizen*, October 18, 1876; *North American*, October 18, 1876.

the same old falsehoods concerning Mississippi, Louisiana, and South Carolina are now being furnished to the partisan press to give them the greatest prominence.”⁵⁵

Despite the disastrous November results for Congressional Republicans, despite the Supreme Court’s attacks on his programs and despite continued assaults on the corruption associated with his administration and on him personally, the evidence strongly suggests that Grant remained personally popular in the North. Even his political opponents understood the nature of the Grant persona and what he represented to Republicans. Fully cognizant of the indelible popular hold Grant had on much of the Northern populace, Georgia Senator Lucius Lamar warned his fellow Southerners in 1875 to tread lightly on Grant and not misread the 1874 election results. “The Northern people have more pride in General Grant than they have in any other living man,” Lamar cautioned a “prominent lawyer” from Mississippi, “animadversion upon the President of the United States should be marked by dignified moderation.”⁵⁶ Lamar’s concerns reflected his belief that continued assaults on Grant by intemperate Southerners both in the press and in the political arena could possibly resurrect a severely worn-out “bloody shirt” and would again stiffen Northern resolve to impose reconstruction measures odious to the South.

Such sentiment towards Grant was reflected in a continued fascination in the press with the possibility of his running for a third term. Grant’s refusal to address the issue fueled rumors in some quarters that he would be interested in serving a third term. Some in the press decided that Grant’s aspirations regarding a third term were best captured in an article printed in early November, 1874. Digging up an old letter Grant had written to the editor of the *Cincinnati Gazette* in 1872 declaring that he would not seek the office but would serve if chosen, the

⁵⁵ *Arkansas Gazette*, October 26, 1876; *Georgia Telegraph*, October 31, 1876. In its October 18th, 1876 edition, the *Galveston Daily News* was more blunt in its assessment of the matter, writing that Grant’s interference in South Carolina was a “trumped up” effort to “impose of Northern prejudice and credulity during the last days of the presidential campaign.”

⁵⁶ Mayes, *Lucius Q.C. Lamar*, 212, from a letter dated January 18, 1875.

Arkansas Gazette paraphrased those same Grant words and declared that similar sentiment held true in 1876. “While he may not openly seek the nomination for election the third time, he cannot refuse it if tendered...(which) means simply that if a sufficient force shall rally at this back in 1876, he will cross the Rubicon.”⁵⁷ In a political cartoon published on the cover of *Harper’s Weekly* in October, 1874, Thomas Nast, convinced that Grant should and would not be a candidate, rhetorically asked his readers why anyone in such a position would seek a third term. As Lady Liberty consoles herself in the background over the state of affairs in the United States, a weary Grant shoulders the burden of office, some of it surely self-induced, with the determination of a man dedicated to serving his country regardless of personal cost. Of particular note is the snake around Grant’s ankles, surely representing those many in whom he had placed his trust yet had been betrayed.

⁵⁷ *Arkansas Gazette*, November 4, 1874.

HARPER'S WEEKLY

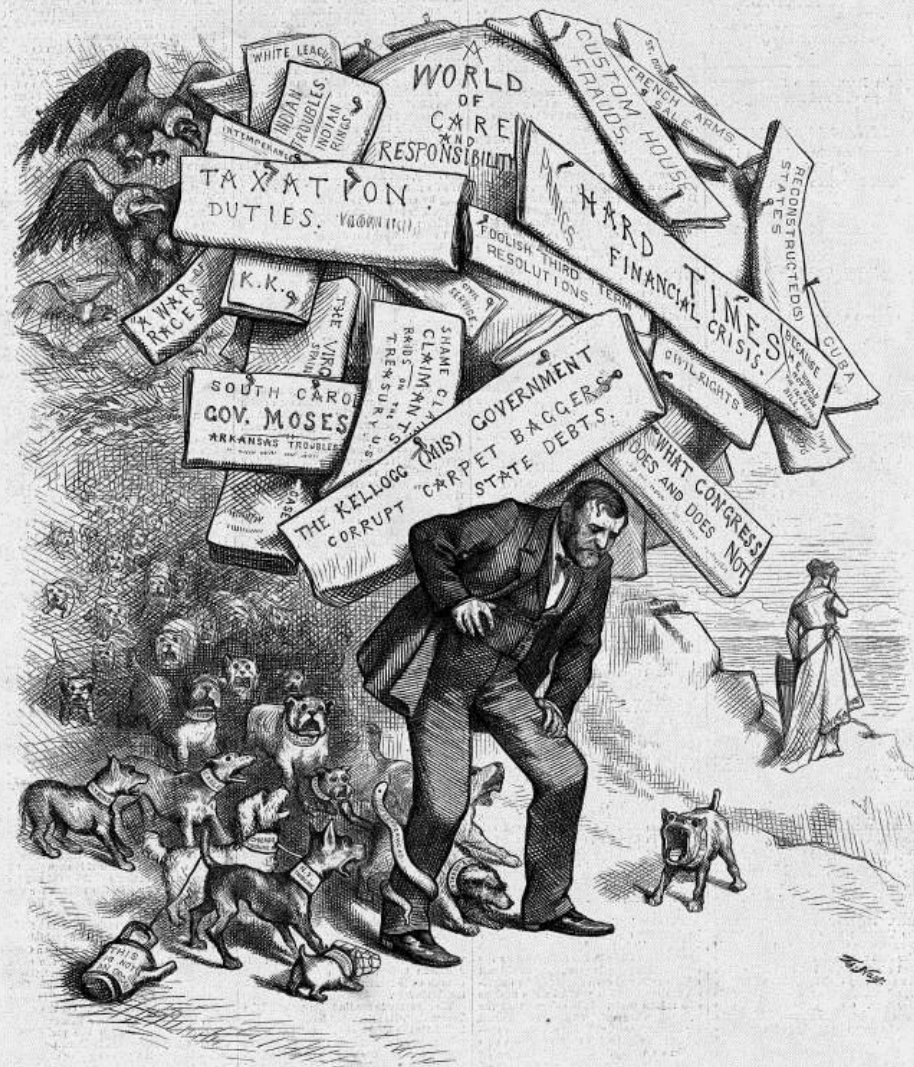
A JOURNAL OF CIVILIZATION

Vol. XVIII.—No. 930.]

NEW YORK, SATURDAY, OCTOBER 24, 1874.

[WITH A SUPPLEMENT.
PRICE TEN CENTS.]

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A BURDEN HE HAS TO SHOULDER.
And they say, "He wants a Third Term."

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Figure 6.9 The Burdens of Office

⁵⁸ "A Burden He Has To Shoulder: And they say, 'He wants a Third Term,'" *Harper's Weekly*, October 24, 1874.

In May of 1875, Grant attempted to end speculation regarding a third term. After stating that he had “never sought the office for a second, nor even for a first, nomination,” Grant wrote Harry White, president of the Pennsylvania State Republican convention, “I am not, nor have I been, a candidate for a re-nomination. I would not accept a nomination if it were tendered....”⁵⁹ Had Grant ended with the word “tendered,” all speculation would have been laid to rest. But he did not. He continued and said, “unless it should come under such circumstances as to make it an imperative duty, circumstances not likely to arise.” It was this phrase, Grant’s “unless” quid pro quo that proved to be “frustratingly evasive for some people,” and befuddling even to some of his friends.⁶⁰ Six months later on December 15, 1875, Congress effectively rendered the speculation mute. By a vote of 233-18, the House of Representatives passed a resolution declaring that a third term would be “unwise, unpatriotic, and fraught with peril to our free institutions.”⁶¹ Beaten down by over six years in office and never giving any indication that he sought a third term, Congress’ action may have come as a huge relief to Grant.

Rutherford B. Hayes would be the Republican Party candidate in the 1876 election, “the year,” according to Donald Chidsey, “of the bitterest, dirtiest national election in our history, when the party system showed at its worst, and we came breathlessly close to a second, calamitous, and final civil war.”⁶² It would be an election unprecedented in American history. Samuel Tilden, the Democratic candidate won the popular vote but his 184-181 electoral vote margin was one short of what was required to win the election. The source of the problem was the disputed electoral vote count in four states, Louisiana, South Carolina, Mississippi, and

⁵⁹ Simon, *Papers*, 26: 133, 134.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*; Ian Polakoff, *The Politics of Inertia: The Election of 1876 and the End of Reconstruction* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1973), 19.

⁶¹ Walker Lewis, “The Hayes-Tilden Election Contest,” *The American Bar Association Journal*, 47 (January, 1961): 36. A lively contemporary account of the pros and cons of the third-term issue can be found in the March, 1880 edition of *The North American Review*, 130. In his article “The Third Term, Reasons For It,” an E.W. Stoughton writes in favor, while in “The Third Term: Reasons Against It,” a Judge Black argues against.

⁶² Donald Chidsey, *The Gentleman From New York* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1935), 198.

Oregon. As such, the *New York Times* reported on November 8th that the “presidential election is still in doubt,” and cited Florida as the one state whose electoral votes were still a matter of contention.⁶³

Determined to display strength and resolve during the confusion surrounding the election, Grant took a number of measures to assure the public of a calm and orderly process to sort out the discrepancy in the vote count. He instructed General Sherman to use troops where needed in South Carolina, Louisiana, and Florida “to insure entire quiet and a peaceable [count] of the ballots actually cast.” Fully grasping the national anxiety regarding both the results and process to determine a winner, Grant made it perfectly clear to Sherman that “the Country cannot afford to have the result tainted by the suspicion of illegal or false returns.”⁶⁴ Grant’s actions were welcomed by a jittery financial community, with the *New York Times* reporting “in Wall Street, yesterday, President Grant’s recent orders to General Sherman were commented upon favorably,” adding that Grant’s response was “both prudent and well timed.”⁶⁵

With the situation yet unresolved in early 1877, Congress turned its attentions to resolving the electoral crisis. For his part, Grant ordered federal troops to Washington as a precautionary measure. His reasons were explained in the *Bangor Whig*, which commented favorably on Grant’s actions. Citing the “millions of dollars of public property” located therein, the paper advised its readership “that it is the duty of the President to see that no harm comes to it.” And while acknowledging “there may be no occasion to anticipate disorder,” the paper felt it

⁶³ John Y. Simon mentions these four states as the ones with electoral vote count irregularities, from *Papers*, 28: xi; *NY Times*, November 8, 1876.

⁶⁴ Simon, *Papers*, 28: 17, 19, 20, correspondence dated November 10, 1878; Simon suggests that Grant tried to distance himself from the validation process in order to eliminate the appearance of any undue presidential influence, but could not in response to “distracted politicians and concerned army commanders,” *Ibid.*, 28: xi.

⁶⁵ *NY Times*, November 12, 1876; in addition to his request for federal troops, Grant also asked James Garfield, General John Logan, General Philip Sheridan, and U.S. Senator (Ohio) John Sherman on November 10th and 11th to go to Louisiana to ensure a fair vote count, from Simon, *Papers*, 28: 30, 32, 36, 38.

was incumbent upon Grant to take such measures “in view of the popular excitement which has been manifested throughout the country.”⁶⁶

With Grant’s active support and encouragement, Congress would soon pass legislation creating a special electoral commission charged with the task of determining who won the election. The commission would include five U.S. Senators, five representatives, and five Justices of the Supreme Court. By party affiliation, eight Republicans and seven Democrats would eventually serve on the commission. In his message to the Senate, Grant praised Congress after signing the legislation, declaring “the act affords a wise and constitutional means of escape” to settle the crisis, unprecedented in American history.⁶⁷

The results of the commission’s work manifested itself in what would become known as the Compromise of 1877. Among its many determinations, two would emerge most prominently. The Republican Hayes would win the presidency and in exchange, federal troops would be removed from the South. It would be the official end of the era known as Reconstruction. It was as C. Vann Woodward would later write, the “abandonment of principles and of force, and a return to the traditional ways of expediency and concession.” Grant’s Constitutional revolution, the “tremendous experiment” that the Reverend Benjamin M. Palmer wrote of was over.⁶⁸

⁶⁶ *Bangor Whig*, January 12th, 1877.

⁶⁷ Simon, *Papers*, 28:xii, 143; Even Murat Halstead’s highly partisan and bitterly anti-Grant *Cincinnati Commercial* found something to compliment Grant on, praising him for his encouragement in the fight to pass the bill, “putting himself on the right side,” of the people; report from the *Commercial* printed in the *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, January 30, 1877.

⁶⁸ C. Vann Woodward, *Reunion and Reaction* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1951 reprint 1966), 3; Thomas Cary Johnson, *The Life and Letters of Benjamin M. Palmer* (Richmond: Presbyterian Committee of Publication, 1906), 354-355; prior to emancipation, Palmer wrote that the relations between whites and blacks had been simple, “the bonds were those of guardianship and control on the one side, of dependence and service on the other,” and that the suddenness of the transition from bondage to freedom, “without any educational preparation for the new position, was a tremendous experiment,” and by implication, doomed to failure.

Despite later pronouncements of a “retreat from Reconstruction,” Grant had worked diligently to live up to his Constitutional responsibility. “Between 1865 and 1870,” wrote Michael Vorenberg, “three constitutional amendments were adopted, securing the most far-reaching personal rights ever written into the nation’s charter.” Two of these, the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments were ratified and actively promoted under Grant’s watch, as were the subsequent mechanisms designed to enforce their provisions. As W.E.B. Du Bois would write years later, “the attempt to make black men American citizens was in a certain sense all a failure, but a splendid failure.”⁶⁹ In its place would arise the phoenix of Jim Crow, state sanctioned segregation, and the nadir of black America until well into the twentieth century. America would forfeit both its constitutional and moral imperative and sacrifice the political equality of a part of its citizenry in order to forge a tenuously acceptable regional reconciliation. These “impulses towards egalitarian constitutionalism,” so fervidly and actively supported by Grant, eventually “lost their traction in the face of more traditional, formalistic modes of constitutional practice and theory.” And in the face of resolute white resistance as life in the Deep South over the next 80 years for persons of color would bear ample testimony.

Grant was justifiably proud of his service to his country during his presidential years. Reflecting back in his final annual message, he acknowledged mistakes, but announced to Congress, “I have acted in every instance, from a conscientious desire to do what was right, constitutional, within the law, and for the very best interest[s] of the whole people. Failures have been of judgment, not of intent.”⁷⁰ Yet despite the seemingly endless corruption associated with his administration and government in general, lost in the unabated vicious personal attacks he

⁶⁹ Michael Vorenberg, “Reconstruction as a Constitutional Crisis,” from *Reconstructions: New Perspectives on the Postbellum United States*, Thomas J. Brown, ed., (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 141; Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction in America*, 708; Vorenberg, “Reconstruction as a Constitutional Crisis,” 144.

⁷⁰ Simon, *Papers*, 28: xii, 63, from draft of Grant’s annual message, December 5, 1877.

endured, and lost in his continued battle against white Southern resistance that would not allow blacks their Constitutional prerogatives, Grant had nevertheless orchestrated a series of successes and accomplishments that made the United States of America not just relevant in global politics, but as an emerging world power to be reckoned with.

His administration's work in foreign affairs, under the able leadership of his Secretary of State Hamilton Fish was perceived as exemplary. As such, Grant became somewhat of a cause celebre in international diplomatic circles. The resolution of the Alabama claims issue was an important prestige builder for the United States and was the first time in the history of western diplomacy that two nations were able to successfully resolve a dispute under the aegis of an international arbitration panel.⁷¹ In the midst of a long simmering feud in America's back yard, the administration was able to defuse a potential foreign affairs crisis with Spain over Cuba at a time when the press was certain a declaration of war was imminent. Headlines and press reports such as "the Most Important Cabinet Meeting of President Grant's Administration," "War Inevitable," and "almost everywhere the opinion prevailed that war with Spain was now inevitable," filtered through the nation's press and fanned the flames of war in the latter stages of 1873 through 1874 and into 1875.⁷² The root of America's contentious relationship with Spain was a decade long revolt in Cuba against Spanish authority. Ultimately war would be avoided as Secretary of State Hamilton Fish, acting under the direction of Grant, "adeptly maneuvered

⁷¹ Bunting, *Grant*, 106.

⁷² *Rocky Mountain News*, November 15th, 1873; *Milwaukee Sentinel*, November 22, 1873; *NY Times*, November 22, 1873. Public perception was that Grant, understanding the implications of what was at stake for national prestige of the United States, took a firm stance with Spain, yet was able to avoid war. *The Milwaukee Sentinel* printed a report stating that the *Chicago Tribune*, a decidedly anti-Grant organ, "was yesterday pleased to inform its readers that the President was fiercely in favor of war." Since no such evidence existed, the *Sentinel* chided the *Tribune* for printing such a report "to make the ignorant believe it," from its November 27th, 1873 edition. In a dispatch published in the *Milwaukee Sentinel* in 1875, the *London Times* wrote of a strongly worded, "vigorous" note that Grant purportedly sent to the Spanish Government. "A war between the United States and Spain on account of Cuba," offered the *Times*, "would be all but inevitable if American dispatches could be construed as literally as those of European countries," from the *Sentinel*, November 18, 1875.

between the interventionist clique in America and Spanish warmongers to preserve a position of United States neutrality.”⁷³

In particular, it was Grant’s handling of the so-called *Virginius* affair that earned him high praise and added respect for America in the international community. Sailing under the American flag though ostensibly owned by indigenous Cuban rebels, the *Virginius* was a munitions runner used to help support the Cuban revolt against Spain. A target of the Spanish navy for years, the *Virginius* was finally captured in the fall of 1873, and dozens of its crew, including eight Americans were summarily executed by the Spanish. Americans were outraged and demanded a response. As such, “caught between the need to defend American values and the need to protect trade,” as well as to defend America’s reputation, Grant was deftly able to avoid war and salvage national pride by placing a number of demands on Spain, most of which were met to the satisfaction of the American public. The surrender of the Spanish “miscreants and their ship to the American justice system,” one of the demands placed on the Spanish by Grant, “firmly established the rule of American law over Spanish interests.” And by demanding that Spain declare they had no intention to insult the American flag, which they did, Grant earned points as a tough negotiator and stout defender of American republican values.⁷⁴

⁷³ Waugh, *American Hero*, 137.

⁷⁴ Richardson, *West From Appomattox*, 311-312; on November 22nd, 1873, just days after details of the *Virginius* affair emerged in the press, the *Wisconsin Register* reported that Grant was “indignant,” and “determined to protect American citizens, and to compel respect for the American flag.” Waugh writes of the “*Virginius* affair in 1871,” when in actuality, it was in late 1873. A vivid report detailing the chase and capture of the *Virginius* by the Spanish war steamer *Tornado* is provided in the November 13th 1873 edition of the *NY Times*. Mention of the *Virginius* in context with Spain appears as early as August, 1871 in the *NY Times*, but only describes how the Spanish intended to follow and capture the *Virginius* as she sailed from Grenada. Despite all the posturing, Secretary of State Hamilton Fish soon learned that the *Virginius* was a “Cuban gunrunner illegally flying the U.S. flag and carrying fraudulent papers along with munitions and rebels,” from from Howard Jones, *Crucible of Power: A History of American Foreign Relations to 1913* (Wilmington, Del.: Scholarly Resources Inc., 2002), 225. Brian Loveman corroborated Jones, adding that besides “illegally” flying the American flag,” the *Virginius* also carried war supplies to Cuban rebels, from Loveman, *No Higher Law: American Foreign Policy and the Western Hemisphere since 1776* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010), 80. But since the ire of the American citizenry had already been raised, the U.S. Government could not stand down without losing face.

International legitimacy of the United States bore fruit in 1874 when Japan sought out Grant to arbitrate a dispute between it and China. Implicit in the invitation was a perception of America as a world leader and recognition for its ability to settle such disputes with proper diplomatic protocol. “The Formosan difficulty between Japan and China is to be submitted to President Grant,” reported the *North American and United States Gazette*, “as we are on friendly terms with both countries...(and) as the Republic may be considered to have assumed the paternity of arbitration as a mode of settling international disputes.”⁷⁵ Such sentiment was captured in a Thomas Nast cartoon from 1874, depicting Lady Liberty, under the approving gaze of President Grant, embarking from the good ship “Arbitrator,” to adjudicate and solve the world’s problems as she meets with Europe’s most powerful leaders.

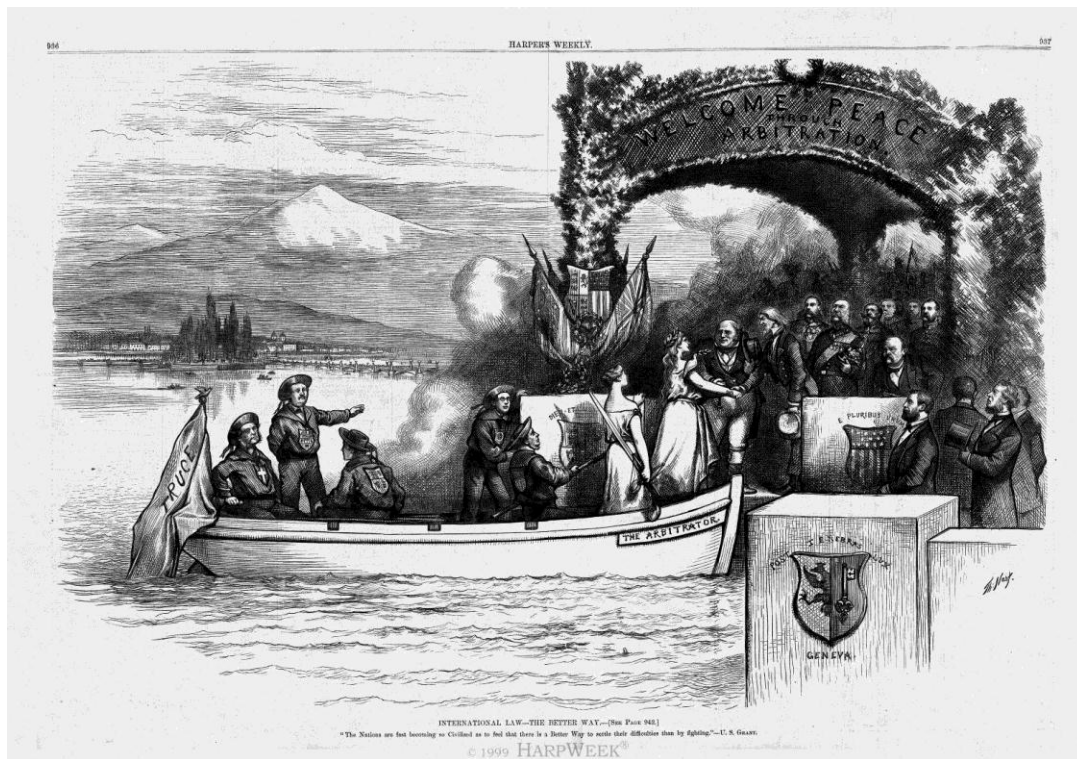


Figure 6.10 World Peacemaker

⁷⁵ *NA Gazette*, September 14, 1874.

⁷⁶ “International Law – The Better Way,” from Keller, *The Art of Thomas Nast*, 90-91, illustration published in *Harper’s Weekly*, November 14, 1874.

In addition to its emergence as a world power, Grant left Washington D.C., as a capital city worthy of such an emerging colossus, as noted in contemporary periodicals. “The improvements in the District of Columbia within a few years have been marked,” reported the *Graphic* in 1875, “people who remember it as it was in the old days before the war can hardly believe that it has been transformed into the new and elegant city of to-day.” In 1880, *Century Magazine* reported that “within the past ten years Washington has ceased to be a village” and has become “a place quite out of the ordinary run.” It was the Republicans, wrote Kenneth R. Bowling, “inspired by Ulysses S. Grant,” who reconstructed Washington D.C., “physically, constitutionally, and symbolically in the minds of the American people.” Through Grant’s active promotion of infrastructure and quality of life improvements, the word “capital” gradually replaced the term “seat of government” in the lexicon of the American public. Little more than a large swampy, fetid village before the war, the District of Columbia was physically and psychologically transformed from a “provincial town into a cosmopolitan capital.”⁷⁷

As his tenure in office came to a close, Grant looked forward to Hayes’ inauguration with eager anticipation. He was happy to remove himself from the trials and tribulations of office, and looked forward to returning to private life, a circumstance denied him for a decade and a half. “The next four weeks,” Grant was quoted in the *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, “will be very long to me, and I am impatient for the end.”⁷⁸ And it was during these last, long, lingering days in office that a litany of press reports and editorials reflecting upon Grant’s eight years in office

⁷⁷ From *The Graphic*, November, 1875, found in *The City of Washington: An Illustrated City*, ed. Thomas Froncek (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1985), 236; quote from the *Century* found in *Ibid.*, 239; Kenneth R. Bowling, “Federal Town to National Capital: Ulysses S. Grant and the Reconstruction of Washington, D.C.,” *Washington History, Historical Society of Washington, D.C.*, 14 (Spring/Summer, 2002): 9, 16, 17, 19; In the 1850s and 1860s, Washington D.C. wasn’t much to behold. Federal government operations were housed in “very insignificant-looking houses which might have been the dwellings of some well-to-do shopkeepers who did not care for show,” and the city’s residents were plagued with “cows, pigs, geese, and chickens” that ran loose in the streets, as well as “mosquitoes, cockroaches, bedbugs, and lice,” which also tormented the town’s citizenry, from Richardson, *West From Appomattox*, 23-24; Froncek, *City of Washington*, 241.

⁷⁸ *Globe-Democrat*, February 7, 1877.

appeared in newspapers all over the country. He was cast in the press at once both as a resolute symbol of power and a sympathetic figure. Certainly lacking an established set of political and negotiating skills when he assumed office in 1869, most press accounts spoke to Grant's naiveté when he first entered office. He displayed an inability to manipulate and maneuver, to use those political skills that had served Lincoln so well during the war. Yet it was his lack of these same tools that had endeared him to much of the American public fed up with politics as usual when he first ran for office. Further, his reluctance to defend himself in the press made him an easy target for his critics. Too easy, thought Thomas Nast, who to the end portrayed Grant as a lion of a man, indomitable of spirit and self-determination, who would yet be slandered by lesser personages, including Democrats who would grovel at his feet while providing support for those who would cast Grant as the source for all the nation's ills. First pictured as one who devours those who falsely come to accuse him with trumped-up investigations and then as a scapegoat constructed by the Democrats, Grant may have been short on political aplomb and skill but in Nast's mind, continued to be long on resolve, honesty and resolute will, and remained true to himself and his nation and performed exactly as advertised.

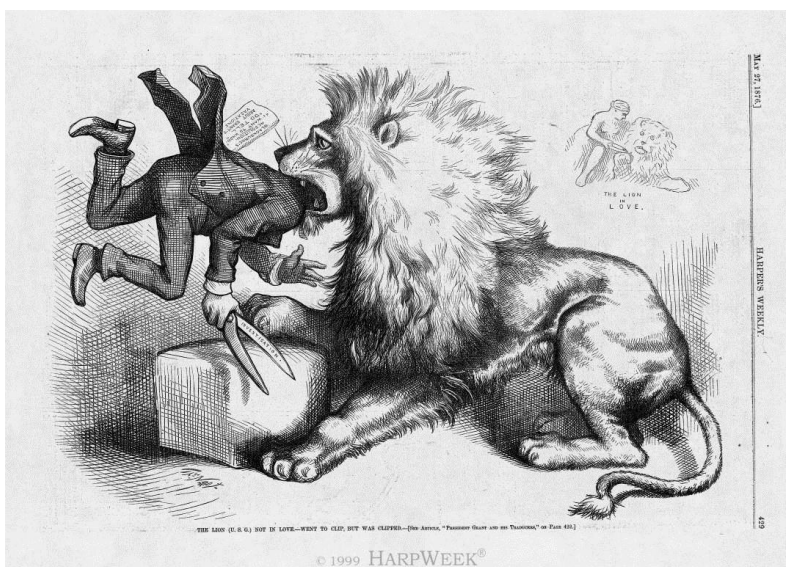


Figure 6.11 Devouring False Accusers



79

Figure 6.12 The Scapegoat

An editorial from the *Boston Herald*, no friend to Grant during his presidency, published in the *Lowell Citizen*, appeared to sum up what the more moderate of Grant's critics had to acknowledge. "His worst mistakes have been made by sticking too faithfully to unworthy friends and relatives," read the report, while conceding "that his position has been a hard one," having to contend with the flood of corruption that followed the great war and, and "with the grave problems of reconstruction." Then describing Grant as "obstinate and pig-headed on occasion," the paper suggested that he "will be remembered kindly by the American people after

⁷⁹ *Harper's Weekly*, May 27, 1876 and May 13, 1876; Joseph Clay Stiles Blackburn, Democratic Congressman from Kentucky and former Confederate Officer, replete with his shears of "investigation," is being consumed by Grant, the Lion, with the caption, "Blackburn's Resolution: I Want to Know – Do Tell About Grant's Vacations." In 1876, Blackburn attempted to draw up a resolution to impeach President Grant. The resolution foundered in Congress after the 1876 presidential election.

the passions of the hour shall have passed away.”⁸⁰ On the day he left office, the *Inter* (Chicago) *Ocean* wrote of Grant that “probably no man has ever occupied the Executive office under greater difficulties or at a more vexatious time.” And while acknowledging mistakes “here and there,” the article would go on to praise Grant for leaving the nation “vigorous and upright,” for eliminating its enormous debt, reducing taxes, leaving it at peace with the world, and its “reputation brighter than ever before in our history.” In conclusion, the *Inter Ocean* wrote that Grant “leaves his office with the respect of friend and foe alike,” and will be fully appreciated for his eminent services.⁸¹

Perhaps the most apropos summary of Grant’s presidency came in a lengthy editorial published in the *New York Times*. As in most other press accounts, the *Times* acknowledged Grant’s mistakes, lay blame for most of those mistakes on his inexperience and his questionable appointments and associations but generally spoke well of a presidency conducted through a most difficult epoch in American history. “His worst mistakes have been made in the matter of appointments,” stated the author, and decrying Grant’s “certain coarseness of taste,” argued that the “defects of his administration have been made due rather to inexperience in civil administration than to wrong headedness.” Nevertheless, continued the editorial, despite finding himself “in the meshes of an evil system, which were too strong to be broken except by a moral Hercules,” Grant’s good name “has never been tarnished,” and “he has been uniformly actuated by honest and patriotic motives.” In the matter of reputation, the *Times* also found that Grant the

⁸⁰ *Lowell News*, February 2, 1877.

⁸¹ *Inter Ocean*, March 5th, 1877; in comparing Grant’s trials and tribulations to Lincoln’s, the article stated that Lincoln had benefit “of an aroused public sentiment and the exhilaration of a great contest to lend him support and confidence.” While Lincoln was charged with the task of crushing a portion of the country, Grant’s more difficult charge was to “rebuild and rehabilitate it.”

president suffered in comparison with Grant the general. The “lustre of his military record will doubtless far outshine that of his civil career,” declared the *Times*, though adding that “his name will never be classed among the weak or corrupt rulers of the Republic.”⁸²

⁸² *NY Times*, March 3, 1877.

7 A WORLD AT HIS CALL AND A NATION AT HIS TOMB

“Wherever General Grant's body lies, that is national ground.”

Samuel Clemens

Politically damaged but still personally popular in the North and respected in the South, President Grant became Citizen Grant in March, 1877, when fellow Republican Rutherford B. Hayes took residence at 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue. Grant would travel the world on an extensive and highly publicized tour, emerge as a candidate for a third term as president and, failing that, retire to New York in hopes of leading a quiet, fulfilling life that he and his family so richly deserved. Yet Grant's final years would be trying. He would suffer financial ruin and physical debilitation as a sympathetic public bore witness, yet he would yet display his true nature under the most tragic of circumstance by completing the story of his life in the Civil War under the most extreme physical duress just days before he succumbed to the inevitable at the age of sixty-three. His subsequent funeral would draw the largest audience in the history of the Republic and would serve as a national catharsis, helping to heal the union he had fought so hard to preserve. Yet even in death, controversy shrouded the general and his family as well-meaning intentions to memorialize his good name would devolve into petty political and regional bickering that would cause his family a significant amount of distress and demean the stature of a man many considered to be the greatest American of his age.

On May 17th, 1877, seventy-three days after leaving office, Ulysses S. Grant, wife Julia, and son Jesse embarked on a world tour that would keep them overseas for well over two years. Grant's departure was a cause celebre. As the good ship *Indiana* departed the port of Philadelphia, the *New York Times* reported that “General Grant had the finest ovation on the

occasion of his departure for Europe today that has ever been accorded to any citizen of the United States.”¹ The raucous occasion was prominently depicted in *Harper’s Weekly*.

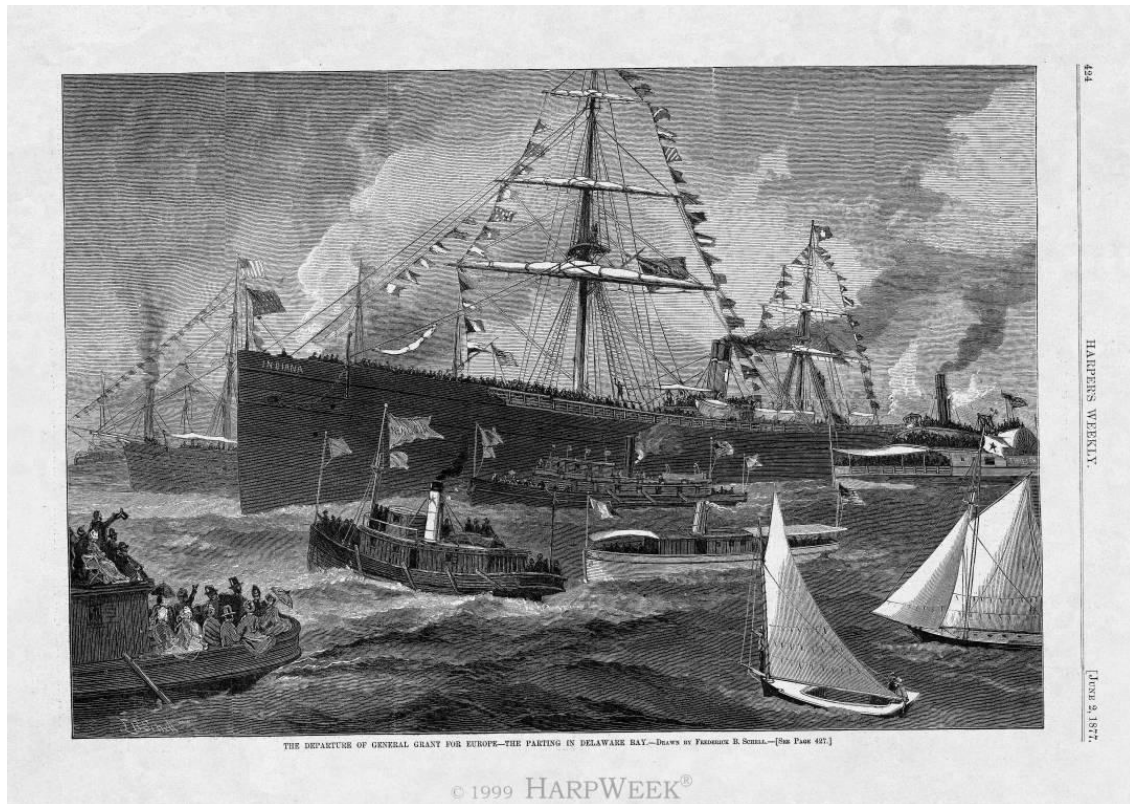


Figure 7.1 Departing for Europe

Grant would stay abroad as long as his modest finances would allow and accordingly, no detailed itinerary had been planned out. As aide and biographer Adam Badeau related, “when he first arrived in England, he told me that he had only \$25,000 to spend in foreign travel; if that would last two years he could stay abroad two years, but if it became exhausted sooner he would be obliged to return.”³ The trip could not come soon enough for Grant. It would be a welcome

¹ *NY Times*, May 18, 1877.

² *Harper’s Weekly*, June 2, 1877.

³ Adam Badeau, *Grant in Peace* (Hartford: S.S. Scranton and Co., 1887), 316.

respite after sixteen years of public service at the highest levels and what biographer William McFeely described as a “crescendo of criticism for the corruption of the administration.”⁴

Grant and his party arrived in Liverpool, England, on May 28. Grant’s small entourage was joined by Adam Badeau, then U.S. Consul at London and *New York Herald* reporter and future Librarian of Congress, John Russell Young, who would document Grant’s travels.⁵ Yet any illusions the Grant party may have had of a quiet, relaxing trip were shattered as they were greeted by “an enormous cheering crowd on the dock.”⁶ The tumultuous welcome was unexpected as were all the crowds that turned out in droves across England. Public and private response was overwhelming. Normally sedate English of all ilk and class went to extraordinary lengths to pay their respects. Grant was under siege with requests to attend dinners, receptions, and grand openings in addition to a multitude of public and private functions. It became a matter of great importance for English dignitaries, politicians, and men of substance, real and imagined to be seen with Grant. From the secretary of the Crystal Palace in London came a “request that you and Mrs. Grant will honour them with your company at an entertainment and dinner on Friday the next 15th instant.” Upon the charge from its directors, Maurice Smith on June 15th asked Grant to “honour the Brighton Aquarium by a visit during your stay in this country.”

⁴ McFeely, *Grant*, 453.

⁵ Young’s presence in the Grant entourage would prove problematic and suggest to some that the vacation was simply an overseas campaign tour, with Young documenting and embellishing Grant’s reception across the world for an eager public back in the United States. An article in the April 23, 1873 edition of the *Galveston News* asserted “under good authority” that the “programme” was to get Grant out of the states to avoid complications by his “ill-advised utterances” and to play upon his popularity to win the nomination for a third term in 1880. Young was alleged to have been Grant’s mouthpiece as he conducted a series of interviews with the general for publication in the United States that would enunciate Grant’s views on contemporary politics as well as would publicize Grant’s world tour. Yet no evidence suggests that Grant had any desire to seek a third term. Some historians wrote that Young “accompanied” Grant, from Waugh, “U.S. Grant Historian,” 20 and Gallagher and Nolan, *Myth of the Lost Cause*, 159, while John Y. Simon and Josiah Bunting wrote that Young was “assigned” to accompany Grant, from Simon, *Papers*, 28: xv and Bunting, *Grant*, 147. William McFeely suggested that Grant’s trip “began as a personal adventure” and then consciously or unconsciously morphed into a campaign trip, from McFeely, *Grant*, 453. McFeely’s supposition is backed up by Simon who wrote that Young’s interviews “attracted considerable attention in the United States” and fueled speculation about Grant’s political ambitions, from Simon, *Papers*, 28: xv.

⁶ McFeely, *Grant*., 454.

Some requests for Grant's time and presence turned desperate. W. Showersby of the Royal Botanic Society of London wrote that "the special fete of the season will take place in these gardens on Wednesday next July 4th. It is the only day during the whole year on which the gardens are illuminated, and the council thought it probable that General Grant or the members of the General's family might be pleased to honour the Society by visiting the Gardens on the occasion if ever only for a short time."⁷

Considering the ill will between the United States and Great Britain over the *Alabama* claims issue just a few years earlier, official recognition of the general and his party was extraordinary. Desiring to "pay a compliment to General Grant and the United States," Queen Victoria extended an invitation to Grant and his family to dine at Windsor Castle. From the civic leaders of the "Royal Burgh of Wick," Grant was, by "unanimous voice," received as an "Honorary Free Burgess and Guild Brother of the said Council and Community of the Royal Burgh of Wick, in respectful testimony of the high respect they entertain for him as a great soldier and as a statesman." And in a formal ceremony in London, Grant received an honorary doctorate from Oxford University and was presented with the "freedom of the city in a gold box."⁸

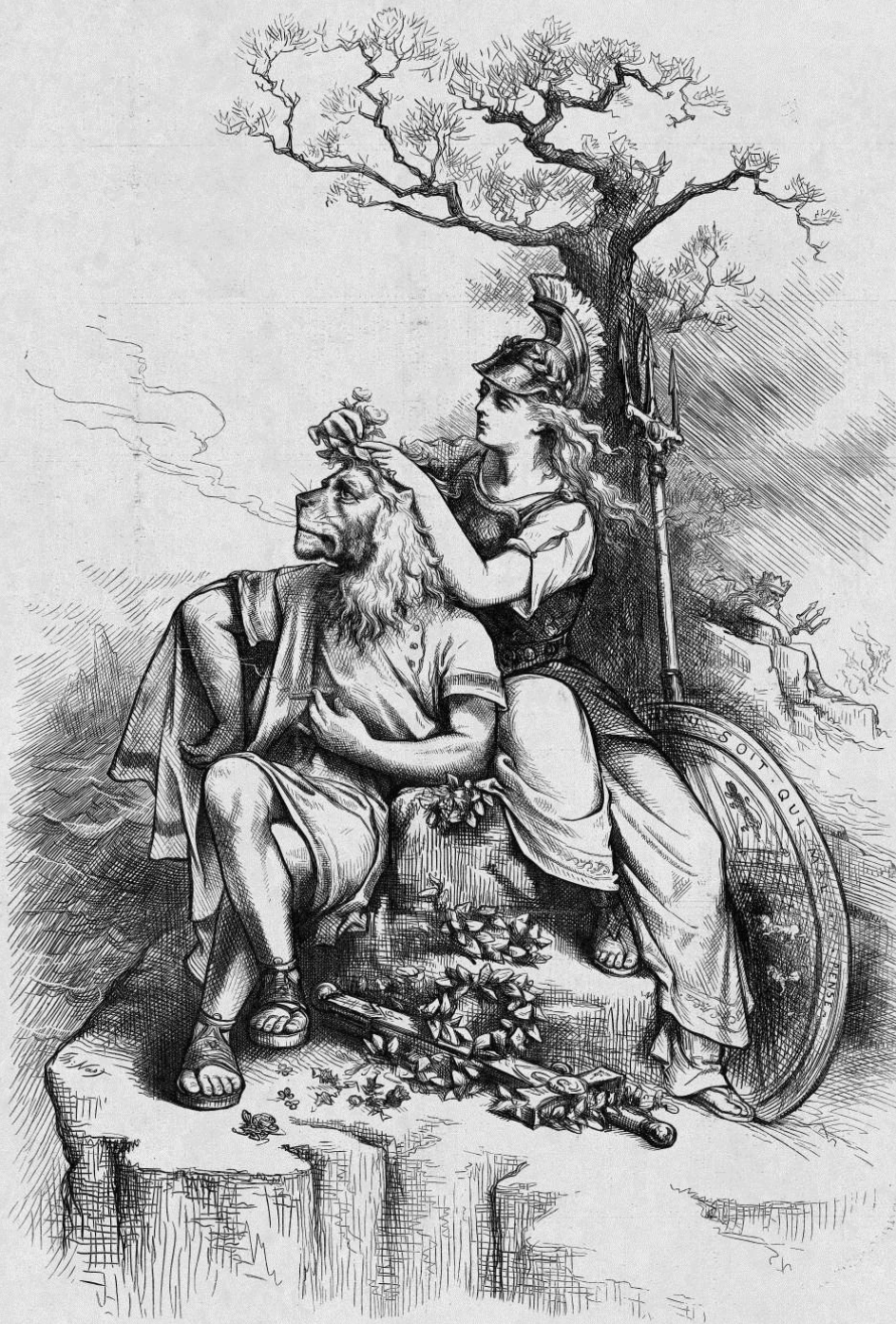
As to be expected, Grant's reception in England received wide press in the states. The *New York Times* reported that "England welcomes him as a sign and pledge that the two nations of the Anglo-Saxon race are still one in heart and spirit." The *North (Philadelphia) American* reported that "the reception extended to ex-President Grant in England is a striking contrast to that given any of his predecessors. He was met by distinguished attentions at Liverpool on

⁷ L. Floodsage to U.S. Grant, June 12, 1877; Maurice Smith to U.S.G., June 15, 1877; W. Showersby to U.S.G., June 24, 1877, *Ulysses S. Grant Papers*, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

⁸ John Russell Young, *Around the World With General Grant* (New York: The American News Company, 1879), 1: 32; *Grant MSS*, William Rae, Esq., to Ulysses S. Grant, June 5, 1877; *Philadelphia Inquirer*, June 11, 1877.

landing; was officially entertained there and in London; and the... honours paid to and prepared for him include dinners by the Queen, the Prince of Wales, Earl Derby, and other leading personages, at each of which he is given precedence of all members of the royal family.” The *Southwestern Christian Advocate* reported that “never before has there been such a perfect burst of applause and such profuse displays of honor of any American. President Grant is the one on whose head all this honor appropriately falls. The English press was equally effusive in its praise of Grant. A London-based correspondent for Chicago’s *Inter Ocean*, identified only as J.W.P., forwarded a story from the *London Echo* describing Grant as a “personage beside whom even the ambassadors (sic) of the Chinese Emperor sink into insignificance.” Even the small-town press in the heart of the former Confederacy embraced Grant’s recognition and the prestige it afforded the United States. The *Roanoke Valley Virginian* editorialized that “the reception that has been accorded to General Grant is a source of gratification to the American people, irrespective of party. It is too, in wide contrast to the mousing ambition in his own country, which would undermine his great reputation, and detract from the fame justly his by reason of deeds in war and peace. He will stand out in history as one of the great characters in the world.” It was “Brittania Lionizing Our Modern Ulysses,” boasted Thomas Nast, who characterized such adulation in a full page illustration in *Harper’s Weekly*.⁹

⁹ *NY Times*, June 4, 1877; *North American*, June 20, 1877; *Southwestern Christian Advocate*, June 28, 1877; *Inter Ocean*, June 13, 1877; *Roanoke Valley Virginian*, June 7, 1877; *Harper’s Weekly*, June 30, 1877.



BRITANNIA LIONIZING OUR MODERN ULYSSES.

"My heart burns for the prudent, ill-fated Ulysses, who, in a sea-girt island, where is the centre of the sea, a woody island, and in her mansion a goddess dwells, the daughter of all-wise Atlas, who kens the depth of the whole sea. But his daughter detains (Ulysses) unhappy lamenting (?) and she continually soothes him with soft and winning words."—THE OLYMPIAN or HEZEK.

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Figure 7.2 Britannia Honors Grant

Grant's stay in England was prelude of what was to come. Public reaction from all corners of the world was equally celebrated, both from government officials as well as from the public. He would be enthusiastically welcomed by all the world's prominent leaders. From the Queen of England to the King of Spain; from Pope Leo XIII to the great German nationalist Prince Otto Von Bismarck; to the Khedive of Egypt to the Imperial Emperor of Japan – all turned out to satisfy their curiosity and to pay homage to both the man and the representation of American freedom and democracy. Yet Grant was perceived as far more than just abstract notions of “American freedom and democracy.” At a time of global apprehension and “great power crises” where “serious statesmen constantly saw war as possible, probable, or even inevitable,” Grant was well regarded and welcomed as one of the great military captains in the Western world.¹⁰

As Grant's trip progressed each nation or region found cause to celebrate Grant and his America. In England, he was hailed “as the man who had saved the world's leading experiment in democratic self-government” and elevated the primacy of free labor around the world, not just in the United States. In Germany, Bismarck found common cause with Grant and regarded him as the paradigm of a successful nation builder who had “accomplished something on the battlefield – national unity...,” a condition Bismarck was “attempting to create” for his own people. “You had to save the Union” Bismarck told Grant, “just as we had to save Germany.” And in Asia, Grant, “an outstanding goodwill ambassador in Japan,” was seen as a powerful manifestation of “America's continued support and sympathy for Japan's quest for equality with

¹⁰ Walter Russell Mead, *Special Providence: American Foreign Policy and How It Changed the World* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 2001), 24.

the West.”¹¹ “Grant represented the wave of the future to many admiring nations,” wrote Joan Waugh and symbolized an “American identity” born of power, economic prosperity, freedom and a “nationalism and internationalism leavened with democratic ideals.”¹² The trip’s comprehensive itinerary would eventually include over twenty-five countries covering three continents. The Grant entourage passed up few of the world’s most famous attractions and fewer of its most accomplished people. It was, as William McFeely wrote, “perhaps the grandest tour an American couple had ever made.”¹³

Grant noted that “the Hollanders are a great people, good looking, industrious, rich and free.” He “found Vienna one of the most beautiful cities in Europe,” and at the pyramids in Egypt, Grant was “kept in constant wonder (at) how many people could have moved such immense blocks, in such large numbers, for so great a distance.” Grant marveled at his reception in China, which he described as “the most cordial ever extended to any foreigner no matter what his rank.” Of Japan, Grant wrote that “the country is most beautiful and charming,” and commented with envy on the Japanese educational system.¹⁴ Grant’s travels were not without their share of irony and humor as well; the peculiarity of Grant, tone deaf and in his own words

¹¹ Eric Foner, “The Civil War in ‘Postracial’ America,” *The Nation Online*, Oct. 10, 2011, available at: <http://www.ericfoner.com/articles/101011nation.html>, accessed on August 19, 2012; Bismarck’s musings from a conversation with Grant on June 30, 1878, from Simon, *Papers*, 28:409; Chang, “Grant’s Visit to Japan,” 374.

¹² Waugh, *American Hero*, 156.

¹³ McFeely, *Grant*, 450. Adam Badeau took it one step further and wrote at the time that “Grant was undoubtedly the greatest traveler that ever lived,” since he visited “more countries and saw more people, from Kings down to lackeys and slaves, than anybody who ever journeyed on this earth before,” from Badeau, *In Peace*, 297. Grant met with and/or dined with the Queen of England, Pope Leo XIII, Prince Bismarck, the Kings of Belgium, Greece, Rome, Italy, Spain, Portugal, Norway, Sweden, and Siam, the President of France, the Emperor of Austria, Tsar of Russia, Khedive of Egypt, Maharajahs of Jaypore and Burtpoor, the Viceroy of India, the Regent of China and was the first westerner to have been granted an audience with the Emperor and Imperial family of Japan. Among others, Grant visited London, Brussels, Glasgow, Paris, Naples, Alexandria, Cairo, Thebes, Memphis, Jerusalem, Nazareth, Damascus, Constantinople, Athens, Rome, Florence, Venice, Milan, Genoa, Malta, Rotterdam, Amsterdam, Zurich, Berlin, Hamburg, Frankfurt, Copenhagen, Stockholm, St. Petersburg, Moscow, Vienna, Munich, Madrid, Lisbon, Dublin, Belfast, Bombay, Delhi, Calcutta, Burma, Singapore, Saigon, Hong Kong, Peking, Nagasaki, and Tokyo.

¹⁴ *USG MSS*, Grant to General E.F. Beale, July 7, 1878, October 9, 1878; Badeau, *In Peace*, 495, USG letter to Badeau dated February 4th, 1878; 515, USG to Badeau, June 22, 1879; *USG MSS*, USG letter to Beale, August 10, 1879.

being able to identify two tunes – one of which was Yankee Doodle Dandy and the other of which was not – meeting with renowned composer Richard Wagner in Heidelberg. In Venice, Grant is alleged to have commented about how nice that particular city would be if only the water was drained. And in early 1879 a specialty shop in Paris delivered, “in accordance with instructions received from General Grant, six dozen clarets, 2 dozen Sherry, and twenty-five dozen Bass Pale Ale.”¹⁵

Keys to cities were granted, awards and honors bestowed, and much to Grant’s chagrin, requests for speeches were received almost daily. The outpouring of respect and adulation was epic. Regardless of region, American newspapers screamed out Grant’s successes. Such front-page headlines as “General Grant Visits Queen Victoria,” “Consulting Bismarck,” “The Most Eminent Men of France Among the Callers,” “General Grant’s Interview with the Emperor of Japan,” and “The Prince (of China) asks Grant to Mediate with Japan,”¹⁶ caught the nation’s attention and flattered its collective psyche. Never in its young history had an American been received with such universal worldwide acclaim; been afforded the honors accorded Grant. It was both vindication and a personal triumph for Grant but also a tour de force for the United States as well. The world court of public opinion had spoken. Grant’s success was America’s success; the United States was emerging as a legitimate world power and Grant represented the world’s recognition of such. Grant had given pause for Americans to celebrate not only their late

¹⁵ *USG MSS*, Bill of Lading, January 7, 1879.

¹⁶ From a sampling of unidentified and undated newspaper headlines, *USG MSS*. Grant’s reception in Japan was unprecedented for a Westerner. The San Francisco *Evening Bulletin* reported in its August 5th, 1879 edition that “no event since the opening of this Empire to friendly intercourse with the nations of the West has produced so marked an impression upon the national mind of Japan as the arrival of General Grant on these shores.” And from the *Colorado Daily Register*, in its August 9th, 1879 edition, “Never, in the history of Japan, has a foreigner been received with such honor, either by the government or people of that wonderful land.” Grant’s visit has “evidently stirred deeply the jealousy and envy of some of the European states.”

president but themselves and their powerful democracy as well.¹⁷ He was a vivid image of American pride and a symbol of a powerful sense of American nationalism. And this perception of Grant certainly did not go unheeded back home.

With positive images of Ulysses S. Grant dominating America's newspapers, there were those eager to parlay his personal success into political advantage. Forces beyond Grant's control and not of his making were conspiring to thrust the reluctant general back into the political limelight. Associates who had lost much of their clout within the Republican Party as a result of the election of Rutherford B. Hayes in 1876 looked to Grant as their vehicle to political resurrection in 1880. These were Republican hard-liners, political "Stalwarts" who had found themselves mired in a party led by those whom they felt were too conciliatory towards the South and too interested in promoting civil-service reform, a condition they were decidedly against. Conservative Republican Stalwarts referred to this group as "Half-Breeds," deemed only partially committed to what they felt was the true Republican cause. The Half Breeds supported "lenient treatment of the South and supported moderate civil-service reform," wrote William T. Horner, while the Stalwarts under the leadership of the irascible and bombastic Roscoe Conkling of New York continued to wave the "bloody shirt" in defiance of what they felt was a still unrepentant South and continued to oppose any effort to "dismantle" the system of patronage so firmly ensconced in the American political system.¹⁸ The Half-Breeds were nothing more than

¹⁷ Always of modest nature, Grant wrote Elihu Washburne from London on June 9, 1877, "The reception I have had in England so far has been very gratifying, and I think very complimentary to our country. I recognize the fact that it is more for the country all the compliments I am receiving are intended, than for me personally," from Grant, *Letters*, 77. Of the Grant phenomenon across the world, Roscoe Conkling biographer, Donald Barr Chidsey, would later write, "Kings and emperors and mikados and suchlike had bobbed before him, and dukes and earls and barons had fought for a look at him, while he made his trip around the world. This was incalculably flattering to the vanity of a democratic nation," from Chidsey, *Gentleman From New York*, 244; besides describing him as the "most famous living American," Joan Waugh wrote that wherever he traveled, "Grant represented the emergent power and democratic possibilities of the United States," from Waugh, *American Hero*, 159, 161.

¹⁸ William T. Horner, *Ohio's Kingmaker: Mark Hanna, Man and Myth* (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 2010), 46.

sissified “man milliners,” according to Conkling, who were serving up a political stew unpalatable to him and other prominent Stalwart leaders such as John Logan, and Don and Simon Cameron; proud bearers of the “bloody shirt;” those not willing to forgive a yet unrepentant South. These men envisioned Grant as their Moses; the one who lead them out of the wilderness of political obscurity back to the promised land of hard-line Republican Party politics as they interpreted them.

The conviction that this coalition held regarding a real chance for a third term for Grant was not without merit. The worldwide hue and cry instilled a belief in many that Grant, always personally popular, had matured politically and was now capable of dealing with the intricacies of the office as well as working with the world’s most prominent leaders. It was quite obvious to even his greatest detractors that Grant was in demand and most importantly, that he appeared presidential. From thousands of miles away and through the cacophony of cheers that accompanied him around the world, the warts on his presidency were awfully hard to spot.

The letters began to reach Grant not long after he began his tour. They appealed not to his personal political ambitions, for which he had displayed none, but rather to his sense of service to his country. The nature of the letters spoke to his “popular appeal and party needs,” despite his indifference and complete lack of enthusiasm for such talk. From Grant’s perspective, the trip was supposed to erase the scars of eight years in political service, not serve as a protracted campaign for four more years of such misery.¹⁹ Certainly Grant did nothing consciously to encourage the support or enthusiasm of his followers and during his world tour

¹⁹ H. Wayne Morgan, *From Hayes to McKinley* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1969), 60. In a somewhat convoluted manner, McFeely would describe the tour as a strategy for winning the election yet provides no evidence that Grant had any inkling to seek another term

repeatedly expressed his reluctance to reenter politics. Nor however, did Grant seem to do anything to discourage those who wanted to promote his candidacy.²⁰

In March of 1878, as the crescendo began to build, Grant complained to Adam Badeau that ““they have designs for me which I do not contemplate myself.””²¹ On May 20, 1878, the *Burlington (Iowa) Hawkeye* ran an interview that state favorite son General Grenville Dodge had with Grant in Paris earlier that month. Dodge concluded that “I don’t believe that any interviewer, of the most subtle faculties, could draw from him a word as to the future so far as he is personally concerned. He seems determined to complete his sightseeing, do it thoroughly, go home, and find a quiet place, and settle down.”²² Less than two months later, Grant followed up with a letter to General E.F. Beale, “I note what you say about prospects for 80, and hear the same thing from other sources – letters and papers. But with the revival of business this will be forgotten, and I am very sure it will be gratifying to me. I have had all the vexations of political life for the future. Although not sensitive to abuse of opponents – who slander without regard to facts – I do not care to be a constant antagonist. I have children – and children’s children, in a small way – who may be effected by these things and I want to spare them.”²³ Nevertheless, despite his protestations, the rhetoric and momentum for a third term for Grant continued to ratchet up as his world tour continued to play to rave reviews.

The combination of his personal popularity, worldwide recognition, favorable press, political maneuvering by his associates and President Hayes’ resolve to serve only one term placed Grant squarely into the political arena. Many considered him the frontrunner for the 1880 nomination as early as 1878. In October of 1878, A.V. Dookery, a Republican delegate from

²⁰ Waugh, *American Hero*, 163. Waugh wrote: “Grant refused to openly encourage his supporters, following his pattern in 1868 and 1872. But he did not categorically ask them to stop.”

²¹ USG to Adam Badeau, 22 March 1878, Badeau, *Grant In Peace*, 316.

²² *The Burlington (Iowa) Hawkeye*, 20 May 1878.

²³ USG to Beale, July 7, 1878, *USG MSS*.

North Carolina and vice president of the state's James Blaine Association, wrote former Grant Cabinet official Hamilton Fish, "It looks to me just now if the convention took place, Grant would be nominated by acclamation, but of course it is too soon to bring about candidates."²⁴

Though still on tour Grant had a keen sense of such sentiment and expressed his chagrin at the prospects of returning to public life. In April, 1879, with the end of his tour in sight and in anticipation of what awaited him back home, Grant wrote longtime friend and mentor Senator Elihu Washburne, "I am both homesick and dread going home." Again, four months later, on the eve of his return to San Francisco, Grant expressed similar sentiment to Adam Badeau, writing "at the end of twenty-six months I dread going back, and would not if there were a line of steamers between here and Australia. But I shall go to my quiet little home in Galena, and remain there until the cold drives me away."²⁵

As Grant and his entourage arrived in San Francisco in late September, 1879, "Grant was undoubtedly the most popular man in America, if not the world."²⁶ A full page illustration in *Harper's Weekly* captured the nation's prevailing mood. It was a triumphant, yet ever-humble "modern-day" Ulysses returning home to Lady Liberty as the "whole nation greets you."²⁷

²⁴ A.V. Dookery to Hamilton Fish, October 10, 1878, *Hamilton Fish Papers*, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

²⁵ US Grant to Elihu Washburne, April 4, 1879, from Grant, *Letters*, 91; USG to Badeau, August 29, 1879, Badeau, *In Peace*, 318.

²⁶ David Muzzey, *James Blaine, A Political Idol* (Port Washington: Kennikat Press, 2nd ed., 1963), 161.

²⁷ "The Return of Ulysses," Thomas Nast, *Harper's Weekly*, October 11, 1879. On the scroll under Lady Liberty, it is written, "To Thee My Country, The Honors Received Abroad I Regard As A Tribute To My Native Land, U.S. Grant."



Figure 7.3 America Welcomes Back a Hero

Newspapers in all regions reported on the festivities. The *New York Times* wrote of “an enthusiastic throng” that met Grant with “prolonged and tremendous cheers.” The *Arkansas Gazette* described the fervor of “the excited and hurrying crowds,” as “the entire city turned out to greet him.” The *Rocky Mountain News* reported that “thousands of school children strew flowers in his path” in a manner reminiscent of the conquering heroes parading through the streets of ancient Rome. And from dispatches from its San Francisco “specialists,” Chicago’s

Inter-Ocean made mention of “extraordinary enthusiasm with which General Grant was received on the Pacific slope.”²⁸

The overland trip back east produced similar outpourings of emotion. Donald Chidsey would later write that “people shrieked, shouted, and sobbed Grant’s name; people waited for hours at obscure railroad stations to cry him on his way, they wined and dined him, and presented him with almost everything conceivable; people stepped on one another’s toes and jabbed one another in the ribs and punched one another’s faces for the privilege of getting close enough to have one peek at the soundless bearded hero.”²⁹ For Grant, the overwhelming display of affection was the ultimate irony. The trip designed to shed him of the memory of the political burden that he wore so heavily during his eight years in office had at once thrust him back into that same political cauldron.

At the continued urging of his political supporters and perhaps seeking a bit of personal vindication, a somewhat reluctant Grant would finally relent and allow his name to be entered as a candidate for the Republican Party nomination for the presidency of the United States. A litany of assurances from Stalwart leaders convinced him that he would win the party nomination and as such, he would afford the Republicans the best chance of winning the election. Yet the proposition still remained a considerable gamble for Grant. After his triumphant tour Grant had little to gain and much to lose. In an article printed in the *New York Times* in 1878, General Benjamin Butler articulated the risk for Grant. “General Grant had reached the highest elevation which an American citizen could possibly attain,” the article quoted Butler as saying, “and while

²⁸ *NY Times*, September 22, 1879; *Arkansas Gazette*, September 21, 1879; *Rocky Mountain News*, September 26, 1879; *Inter-Ocean*, September 27, 1879.

²⁹ Chidsey, *Gentleman From New York*, 275-276.

an election for a third term would not materially add to his laurels, defeat would inevitably detract from his fame.”³⁰

As he had before accepted the nomination out of a sense of duty to the nation and the Republican Party yet again, he would adopt a similar stance and again do nothing to promote his own candidacy. In a letter to Elihu Washburne just months before the convention, Grant revealed his mindset regarding his prospects in a letter to Elihu Washburne. “There are many persons I would prefer should have the office to myself,” Grant advised Washburne. “I owe so much to the Union men of the country that if they think my chances are better for election than for other probable candidates in case I should decline, I cannot decline if the nomination is tendered without seeking on my part.”³¹

As Grant’s support began to coalesce, so did the collective voice of those opposed to a third term for Grant. “Anti-Grant Republicans are in consultation by correspondence,” reported the *Louisville Courier Journal*, “with the view of the organization of their forces to assure the defeat of Grant.”³² A battle was shaping between Grant’s Stalwart supporters and all other elements of the Republican Party. Anti-third term clubs formed and a substantial anti-third term press began to mobilize in opposition to Grant and those who were pushing his candidacy. The strategy was to defeat Grant and then sort through the options of the remaining elements of the party to find an acceptable candidate.

Opposition to the general’s potential candidacy appeared to be directed more against a third term and especially those managing his campaign rather than at Grant himself, who still

³⁰ *NY Times*, July 30, 1878.

³¹ Grant, *Letters*, 106, letter written to Washburne on March 25, 1880. Grant would never make a formal announcement declaring himself a candidate. Even as late as May 26, 1880, just days before the convention, the *Arkansas Gazette* reported that “he has never yet declared himself a candidate or authorized anyone to announce him as such; but if the people chose to take him up and carry his name to the Chicago convention, and that convention chooses to nominate him for the presidency, he will accept the nomination.”

³² *Louisville Courier Journal*, January 5, 1880.

held wide appeal for the American public. While acknowledging Grant's unchallenged popularity, President Rutherford B. Hayes wrote that, "many dislike the third term; and many more fear a return to the unfortunate methods and men of General Grant's former administration." In particular was the animus directed at the leader of the Grant faction, Roscoe Conkling. "Conkling has ruled...with so much arrogance and insolence," wrote Republican George Jones, "that he has forsaken the best of our party into an opposition that is personal to him and anything that he favors." As such, an epic battle was brewing at the Republican Party nomination convention in Chicago in June, 1880.³³ It would be Grant's party managers and his name and reputation versus the field and the paradox of such a confrontation was not lost on political observers and scribes. An personally popular man was being managed by an almost equally unpopular group of associates.³⁴

The most galvanizing moment of the convention came on June 5th, 1880, three days after the proceedings were called to order. In full sartorial splendor, a vision of imperious majesty, the physically imposing Roscoe Conkling, senator from New York, announced his candidate:

*If asked what state he hails from
Our sole reply shall be
He hails from Appomattox*

³³ Williams, *Hayes Letters*, 582, diary entry submitted December 12, 1879, Jones to Elihu Washburne, February 28, 1880, from *Elihu Washburne Papers*, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. Many of those who opposed a third term for Grant understood his substantial popularity and continued to hold him in high esteem. John Russell Young received a letter dated April, 12, 1880, from a man identified only as M. McDermott who stated that he would do anything for Grant "except support his nomination for the presidency; from *John Russell Young Papers*, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington D.C.; liberal reform Republican Thurlow Weed remarked that no man stood as high as Grant in the public estimation, yet "there is not a man among the Republicans in our township who desire to see him nominated in Chicago," letter from Thurlow Weed to Simon Cameron dated April 26, 1880, from *Simon Cameron Papers*, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. And just two weeks before the convention opened, Ebenezer Hoar, while professing his great admiration for Grant, wrote Hamilton Fish that, "the character, history and relations of the men who are most prominent in pressing his nomination are such as to excite undue anxiety and distrust in a considerable portion of the Republican Party;" letter from Hoar to Fish dated May 19, 1880, *Fish MSS*.

³⁴ Just weeks before the convention, *The Daily (New York) Graphic* reported that Grant could not withdraw himself from the contest even if he wanted to, because he was "devoted to the interest of his friends, and it is due to them that he remain a candidate," from the *The (New York) Daily Graphic*, May 12, 1880.

*And its famous apple tree.*³⁵

That wartime remembrance created instantaneous explosion of raw emotion which overwhelmed the convention hall. “For five minutes the roar of human voices shook the crowd,” reported the *Cincinnati Commercial Appeal*. “The opening sentence was as magnetic as the occasion was great.” Conkling’s twenty-one words, wrote biographer Donald Chidsey “had rendered the delegates insane with enthusiasm.”³⁶

Yet Conkling’s speech would not be enough. Boisterous enthusiasm would not win the day for Grant. The party had broken down into two seemingly irreconcilable factions, the Stalwarts who supported Grant, and the more moderate and reform-minded “Half-Breeds,” who supported the candidacy of James Blaine. A third marginally-viable candidate, far removed from the leaders in terms of delegate count, was Ohio Senator John Sherman, brother of Union General William T. Sherman.³⁷ And despite his immense personal popularity, the stench of political corruption from Grant’s eight years in office continued to hang over him like a foul wind on a warm summer’s eve. Further, Conkling, Logan and Cameron proved to be “inept” as campaign managers, and alienated a number of those whose support would be crucial to Grant’s nomination.³⁸ As such, as vote count after vote count was taken, neither the Stalwarts nor the Half-Breeds would budge from support of their candidate.

Over the course of two intensely acrimonious days and over thirty ballots, James A. Garfield of Ohio began to emerge from the shadows as a potential dark horse as the convention entered its third day. Not even a consideration when the convention opened, Garfield was

³⁵ Alfred Conkling, *The Life and Letters of Roscoe Conkling: Orator, Statesman, Advocate* (New York: Charles Webster and Company, 1889), 598.

³⁶ *Cincinnati Commercial Appeal*, June 6, 1880; Chidsey, *Gentleman From New York*, 286.

³⁷ According to William Horner, Sherman was perceived as a moderate, “more or less” a half-breed type candidate, from *Ohio’s Kingmaker*, 46.

³⁸ Waugh, *American Hero*, 163.

Sherman's campaign manager and shared many of Sherman's moderate views. When placing Sherman's name in nomination in consideration for his candidacy, Garfield distinguished himself (some would say at Sherman's expense) with a gracious, conciliatory speech that established himself as the most powerful voice of reconciliation and moderation in a convention stonewalled by the intransigence of the two major factions. Subsequently, with the moderates outnumbering the Stalwarts, Garfield was regaled in many quarters as the "party pacificator" who would become the "champion of the anti-Grant forces" as the two main competing factions, Grant's and the supporters of perennial candidate James Blaine, fruitlessly battled it out.³⁹

On the 36th ballot, convinced that their candidate could never win, the Blaine delegates shifted their votes to Garfield, and included in with the smattering of delegates loyal to Sherman, gave the nomination to Garfield. Remaining true to their name, the Stalwarts never wavered; 304 votes for Grant on the first ballot, 306 votes on the 36th ballot. Garfield seemed to fit the paradigm as a perfect compromise candidate. He had a certain amount of cachet with all Republicans although at best he was only "tolerated by the large faction of Stalwarts." Yet his stellar service as Union general during the war earned him the respect of most Republicans and his earlier pronouncements on the political dynamics during the Civil War must have even satisfied the most ardent of the Stalwarts to some degree. "Until the day he died," wrote Robert Kagan, Garfield "remembered the Democratic Party in the North as 'the cowardly peace party,' and the South as a 'bastard' civilization."⁴⁰

³⁹ *Charleston Courier*, June 6, 1880; Alan Peskin, *Garfield: A Biography* (Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 1978), 464. A non-factor at the opening of the convention, Garfield served as candidate John Sherman's (Ohio Senator and brother of William Tecumseh Sherman) floor manager. Garfield received one vote on the second ballot and then when Blaine's supporters cast their votes for Garfield, he won with 399 votes on the 36th ballot. Grant biographer Adam Badeau wrote that Blaine's followers had "thrown their votes for Garfield rather than consent to the nomination of Grant," from Badeau, *Grant in Peace* (Hartford: S.S. Scranton and Co., 1887), 325.

⁴⁰ Horner, *Ohio's Kingmaker*, 50; Robert Kagan, *Dangerous Nation: America's Foreign Policy from Its Earliest Days to the Dawn of the Twentieth Century* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 2006), 282, Kagan cites Justus D. Doenecke,

When the carnage was over, “Alas for ‘Lys.’ Imperial Caesar,” screamed out the headline of the *Louisville Courier*, “the slaughter of the saviour of the Republican Party” had been affected. The baggage of eight years in office as well as the animus directed towards his party managers finally caught up with Grant. The outcome must have devastated both Grant and his family. “Every bone in Grant’s body, from the crown of his head to the sole of his foot is sore,” reported the *Rocky Mountain News*, the inability to win the nomination “in the house of his pretended friends...is wormwood and gall. His is a sensitive nature, and this keen rebuff will cut him to the marrow of his soul.” And certainly it must have. Yet if Grant was embittered he would not show it. Both he and Julia were certainly disappointed yet accepted the result with exasperated resignation. “I am satisfied,” Grant responded when he heard the news, left the house in Galena, Illinois, where he awaited the news and returned home. And once the convention had closed, upon his arrival at the Palmer House Hotel in Chicago, the *Philadelphia Times* reported that one observer never saw Grant “look more gentle or composed” as he “chatted pleasantly” with those in the crowd before meeting privately with some of his party managers.⁴¹

Grant and Julia rationalized the outcome as though it were a type of Pyrrhic “defeat;” his nomination would have been a *cause celebre* in the short term yet both fully understood the personal cost Grant would have paid during four more years in office. Grant reflected just such sentiment in a letter to nomination manager Roscoe Conkling. “I feel very grateful to you and the three hundred odd,” wrote Grant just days after the convention ended, “I am much relieved at the result, having grown weary of constant abuse – always disagreeable, and doubly so when it

The Presidencies of James A. Garfield and Chester A. Arthur (Lawrence: Regents of Kansas Press, 1981), 47, 22. “Cowardly peace party” also found in Peskin, *Garfield*, 244.

⁴¹ *Louisville Courier*, June 9, 1880; *Rocky Mountain News*, June 10, 1880; *Evening Bulletin*, June 10, 1880; report from the *Philadelphia Times*, cited in Simon, *Papers*, 29: 416, 417.

comes from former professed friends.” Adopting a similar public front, Julia Dent Grant was quoted in the *Atlanta Constitution* as saying the loss of the nomination saved her husband “six months abuse and four years of hard labor – and therefore it is probably best.”⁴²

After the convention Grant spent time in New York City, at his summer home in Long Branch, New Jersey, and traveled a bit visiting old friends. During the campaign season he did what he had never done before – he hit the campaign trail and actively supported James Garfield. Over the next couple of years Grant kept busy in a wide range of activities. He traveled to Mexico doing work for the federal government in promoting commerce with Mexico, briefly served as the head of a commission engaged in preparing for world’s fair to be held in New York, and served a stint as the president of the National Rifle Association. In August of 1881, Grant and Julia bought a house on East 66th Street in New York City and made it their permanent residence.⁴³

To secure his financial future, Grant invested \$100,000 and became a full partner in the Wall Street brokerage firm of Grant and Ward, co-owned by his son, Ulysses S. Grant, Jr. With the company appearing to do well, Grant and Julia were able to live comfortably in their Manhattan brownstone as Grant gradually weaned himself off of government service. Then late in 1883, things would begin to unravel for the general. On Christmas eve, Grant slipped on a patch of ice in front of his home and would spend the next several months in a difficult recuperation. Months later, in May, 1884, injury of a much more serious nature would afflict the General. With little warning, the brokerage firm of Grant and Ward collapsed, and

⁴² Simon, *Papers*, 29: 416; *Atlanta Constitution*, June 11, 1880. Julia later wrote in her memoirs that she had urged Grant to show up at the convention to make a speech on his behalf. She wrote, “He said he would rather cut off his right hand,” from Simon, *Memoirs of Julia Dent Grant*, 321.

⁴³ Simon, *Papers*, 30: xi, Simon wrote that Grant “actively campaigned for the first time in his life,” in support of Garfield and the Republican ticket. Also in active support of Garfield during the election campaign, was Roscoe Conkling, spurred on by the addition of vice-presidential candidate Chester Arthur to the ticket, “the price demanded by Stalwarts” for their support of Garfield,” from Philip Abbott, “Accidental Presidents: Death, Assassination, Resignation and Democratic Succession,” *Presidential Studies Quarterly*, 35 (Dec., 2005): 629.

“instantly plunged his entire family into financial ruin.”⁴⁴ Exacerbating the situation was a development that Grant initiated just two days earlier, on May 4th. In a last-ditch attempt to keep the firm solvent, Grant, on his good name and reputation alone, had borrowed \$150,000 from railroad magnate William Vanderbilt. Now finding the entirety of his savings lost, Grant was also indebted to Vanderbilt for over \$150,000.

Investigation would determine that the default of Grant and Ward lay with Ferdinand Ward, who admitted ““that he had been a wicked thief and a great rascal.”⁴⁵ Within weeks, Ward would be arrested for fraud. The younger Grant had not been party to the scheming and was not implicated. It was a sadly fitting denouement for the former President. Once again, one in whom he had placed great faith and trust – and the financial future of his family, had betrayed him. Though not tied to the firm’s malfeasance in any form of manner, his judgment of character had again failed him. Vanderbilt would offer to release Grant of his debt but the general refused. He repaid Vanderbilt in memorabilia and possessions. “Vanderbilt returned home from a trip to Europe in 1884 to find-deposited in the foyer of his 5th Avenue mansion...the trove of Grant family keepsakes offered in partial payment of their debt to him.”⁴⁶ Grant had defaulted in material wealth but would not be defaulted of name.

As Grant sought ways to earn income, he remained at once both a very powerful representation while becoming a most sympathetic figure. Much to his chagrin, the press was quite zealous in detailing his financial woes and while the coverage was of a sympathetic nature, the intense scrutiny certainly was a source of great embarrassment to the proud former president.

⁴⁴ Simon, *Papers*, 31: xviii.

⁴⁵ *NY Times*, January 4, 1885.

⁴⁶ James G. Barber, *U.S. Grant: The Man and the Image* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1985), 68. Vanderbilt filed suit against Grant which evoked great sympathy in the press for Grant. However, on December 9th, the *St. Louis Globe-Democrat* reported that the two ““remained on the pleasantest terms and have always been so...this is merely a business matter between the two gentlemen.”” In part, Vanderbilt filed the suit to protect Grant’s assets and property. Vanderbilt would later erase the debt, despite protestations from Grant, and returned the possessions to Julia who forwarded most of the collection to the government, from Simon, *USG Papers*, 31: xviii.

Immediately after the collapse of Grant and Ward, an admirer of Grant by the name of Charles Wood sent Grant a \$500 gift, writing, “General, I owe you this for Appomattox.” Grant responded by thanking Wood and ensuring him that he would return the full amount in the future. In his letter, written on May 12th, Grant revealed his alarming financial condition by writing Wood that he was currently “without \$100 in my pocket and nothing to come in until August.”⁴⁷

Scrambling to earn an income, Grant quickly consented to write a series of articles for *Century Magazine* about his war experience for which he would be paid a modest but much needed sum. It had become fashionable to put wartime remembrances in print in the 1880s, especially in Southern circles where Confederate veterans seemed to co-opt the genre as they couched their memories within the envelope of Lost Cause perceptions of why and how the war had been fought. “The Confederacy lost the war on the battlefield,” wrote Eric Foner, but “won the battle over historical memory.” Southern apologists had gained the advantage of defining the war in terms of a “reconciliationist” narrative, a specious account of a “tragic” conflict that “deemphasized slavery and saw both sides as fighting for noble causes.” Grant saw it differently. He embraced the “emancipationist” narrative that “emphasized black freedom and equality as essential to the war’s meaning” and despite prevailing sentiment to the contrary, was not reluctant to express his views.⁴⁸ As he pointedly told Bismarck years earlier, the war was not just about union, but also about ridding the nation of slavery. Accordingly, hearing enough of the “wonderful performance of Confederate arms” and intent on “disabusing” notions that the South had not lost, but rather “gave out from sheer exhaustion,” Grant dove into his new task

⁴⁷ Simon, *Memoirs of Julia Dent Grant*, 328. Wood would send him \$1,000 more, “to be repaid at his convenience.” That “convenience” would come on January 5, 1885, when Grant returned \$1,000 with “profound pleasure” to Wood, stating he would return the remaining \$500 “in the near future.” Details of the letters between Wood and Grant were made public in the August 8th, 1892 edition of the *New Orleans Daily Picayune*.

⁴⁸ Foner, “In ‘Postracial’ America.”

with great enthusiasm and remarkable alacrity.⁴⁹ The success of these articles would stir in Grant a desire to eventually write his memoirs of the war and perhaps earn a publishing deal to provide for his family.

His writing seemed to rejuvenate the ailing Grant a bit, but events of 1884 continued to take a toll on him. The physical debilitation of his fall and mental anxiety of his financial collapse robbed him and Julia of the joys and delights of their autumn years. The litany of stories detailing both his physical condition and his finances continued to be a source of angst while also garnering a great deal of sympathy from the American public. In December, the *North American* reported that Grant looked “careworn and old.” Grant was “under the hammer,” and his finances were “in a most deplorable condition” read the reports. The outpouring of affection for Grant in response to these and similar stories, while certainly gratifying yet continued to embarrass Grant. Offers and requests for assistance flooded in from all quarters. Friends and acquaintances raised and donated money, appeals to the government and charitable efforts were made on Grant’s behalf. In an editorial entitled, “Let the Colored People Help General Grant,” the *New York Freeman* urged its readers to enroll in a “subscription fund of \$1,” to be “contributed to by colored people alone,” which would have the net effect of raising at least \$50,000 for the general.⁵⁰

After enduring a crescendo of misfortune, Grant would suffer the unkindest blow of all in the summer of 1884. In early June, while resting at his vacation getaway in Long Branch, Grant took a bite out of a peach. Instantly, he experienced sharp, excruciating pain in his throat. When

⁴⁹ Gallagher and Nolan, *Myth of the Lost Cause*, 163.

⁵⁰ *NY Freeman*, December 13, 1884. The article further stated that “such a fund . . . would be a most handsome acknowledgment on the part of the colored people of the country of the great service General Grant rendered them in the conduct of the war, upon the final issue of which more than 4,000,000 slaves were made freedmen.” Grant was at once touched by the outpouring of emotion but also embarrassed by the many efforts to raise money in his name. “Objects to Charity,” ran a headline in the *Rocky Mountain News*, which reported that the effort “to raise a fund to pay off the mortgage upon General Grant’s personal effects has been summarily stopped by the General himself,” article dated January 8, 1885.

he drank some water, it “hurt him like liquid fire,” Julia would later write. Despite his wife’s admonitions, Grant refused to see a doctor until several weeks later, when a Dr. Jacob M. Da Costa of Philadelphia checked out the general and advised him to seek attention forthwith. Again, Grant deferred although his throat continued to cause him a good deal of discomfort. Upon arrival back at their permanent residence in New York City in October, Grant finally sought consultation with a Dr. Fordyce, at which point he learned that he had a serious case of throat cancer. Failing to share the tragic news with Julia, she sought out Dr. Fordyce on her own and soon “learned the dreadful truth” although she would not accept the fact that “the malady was a fatal one.” In mid-November, Grant wrote daughter Nellie to inform her of the diagnosis. “I have had a sore throat now for more than four months,” he advised Nellie, and in mid-December he confirmed to a friend that “I am now a great sufferer from my throat. It is nearly impossible for me to swallow enough to sustain life, and what I do swallow is attended with great pain.” The *Milwaukee Journal* reported on Grant’s debilitated condition, noting the rapid graying of his hair and beard and the distinct decline in his physical appearance, writing that he “looked very unlike his former self.”⁵¹

Grant’s ill health created a sense of urgency as he sought to complete his wartime reminiscences. A book deal seemed imminent, for as Julia reported, “the General’s memoirs occupied every leisure moment.”⁵² Grant’s condition, both financial and physical, received great play in much of early 1885 as prospects for both appeared to stabilize and at times, improve. A good deal of press coverage was devoted to reports about private citizens and groups that had sought to help Grant, as well as a bill pending before Congress that would grant the general a full military pension. In February, Grant would contract with Charles Webster and Sons, under the

⁵¹ Simon, *Memoirs of Julia Dent Grant*, 329; *Ibid.*; Simon, *Papers*, 31: 235, letter dated November 18, 1884; *Ibid.*, 244, letter dated December 16, 1884; *Milwaukee Journal*, December 29, 1884.

⁵² Simon, *Memoirs of Julia Dent Grant*, 330.

leadership of Samuel Clemens, to publish his memoirs under very generous terms. In regards to his health, the *Evening Bulletin* quoted Grant in a letter he wrote to friend George Childs, reporting, “I am feeling quite well, except for a soreness at the root of the tongue and the tonsil over it....I have not smoked a cigar since November 20th.” Two weeks later, the *Galveston Daily News* offered another glimmer of hope on February 20th, when it reported that “all the more serious and alarming symptoms...have virtually disappeared.”⁵³

On March 1, the public suddenly and tragically learned the shocking truth of a world turned upside down for Grant and his family. As one, a bewildered and sympathetic national press reported on the nature of Grant’s illness. The somber, sympathetic tone of all reports, regardless of region, was universal. His “condition is critical,” reported the *Raleigh News and Observer*. Grant is a “very sick man,” reported the *St. Louis Globe Democrat*. “General Grant sinking,” he is “critically ill,” and “his physicians pronounce his case hopeless,” screamed headlines from every region of the country. The front-page image of Grant in *Harper’s Weekly* put a face on the seriousness of Grant’s condition.⁵⁴

⁵³ *Evening Bulletin*, February 11, 1885; *Galveston Daily News*, February 20, 1885; article also appeared in the *Milwaukee Sentinel*, the *Atchison Daily Globe* and a host of other papers.

⁵⁴ *The Raleigh News and Observer*, March 1, 1885; *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, March 1, 1885; *Rocky Mountain News*, March 2, 1885; *Boston Advertiser*, March 2, 1885; *Los Angeles Times*, March 1, 1885, *Harper’s Weekly*, April 11, 1885.

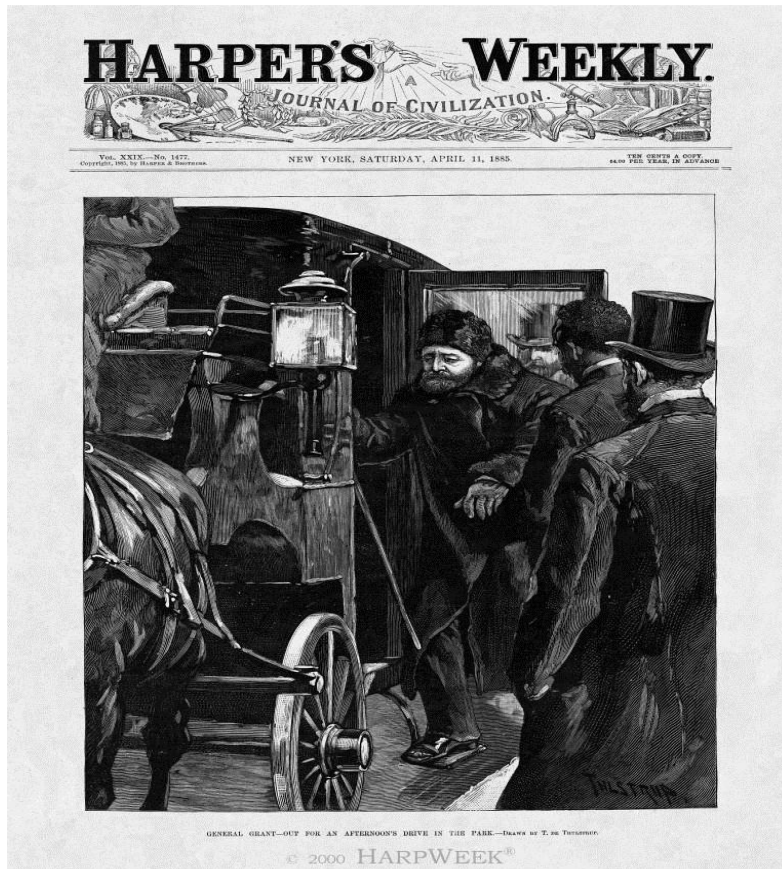


Figure 7.4 Stricken

The *North American Gazette* reported that “physicians say that he will not live over three months,” and the *New York Times* reported that Grant is “sinking into the grave.” Four days later, the *Times* reported that, with just minutes to go before the end of its session and with the clock pushed back six minutes to affect the work in progress, the Senate received and approved a request from President Chester A. Arthur to place Grant “on the retired list of the army with the full pay of such rank.”⁵⁵

To escape the oppressive New York City heat in June of 1885, Grant and Julia moved to a loaned cottage on Mt. McGregor, just outside of Saratoga, in upstate New York. Under the constant care of his physician, he labored on his memoirs as moments of lucidity became

⁵⁵ *NA Gazette*, March 2, 1885; *NY Times*, March 1, 1885; *Ibid.*, March 5, 1885.

increasingly rare. On July 16th, after completing a key stretch of his book, Grant wrote Dr. Douglas, “I am not likely to be more ready to go than at this moment.”⁵⁶ One week later, on the morning of July 23, 1885, Grant, “the hero of his age,” died while his family remained at his bedside. Once again, the pen of Thomas Nast seemed to capture the nation’s mood and its unrestrained grief.



Figure 7.5 A Nation Mourns

⁵⁶ Barber, *The Man and the Image*, 71, citation from *Douglas Papers, Box 1*, Library of Congress.

⁵⁷ *Harper's Weekly*, August 1, 1885.

Though the family knew it was just a matter of time, Julia was completely devastated by the finality of her husband's death. "Mrs. Grant Prostrated," reported the *Atchison Daily Globe*, "She has not left the room since the morning of the death," and would not leave until Grant's body was finally placed in his casket.⁵⁸ The rest of the nation, however, was quick to act upon the sad news and honor the memory of a man most considered the greatest American of his age. *The Raleigh Observer* reported just days after Grant's death that "the funeral will undoubtedly be the largest and most magnificent ever witnessed in America," and indeed it was. All across the nation, cities, villages, and towns – large and small - dressed up for Grant's funeral. An article appearing in the San Francisco *Evening Bulletin* just days before the formal ceremony was typical of the nation's collective reaction. "Pretty much every shop of any pretension in the city displays some kind of mourning, and many of the large buildings have been...elaborately decorated."⁵⁹

The day of the funeral – August 8th, 1885 – broke under the threat of ominous weather, with a forecast of "local rains, followed by fair weather, nearly stationary temperature." Yet the multitudes who sought to honor Grant were undeterred. It was "A Nation at A Tomb," reported the *New York Times* on August 9th, "An Unequaled Outpouring of The People" unprecedented in American history. "Every balcony, window, and door commanding a view of the line of march was teeming" with saddened onlookers paying their respects to the greatest hero of the age. The *Times* further reported that it was a fair assessment to declare that the procession and burial of a

⁵⁸ *Atchison Globe*, July 27, 1885; Mrs. Grant remained so distressed that she would not attend the funeral, from Thomas Pitkin, *The Captain Departs: Ulysses S. Grant's Last Campaign* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1973), 110.

⁵⁹ *Raleigh Observer*, July 26, 1885; *San Francisco Bulletin*, August 6, 1885; *Evening Bulletin*, August 6th, 1885; On August 9th, the *Los Angeles Times* reported on "How One of a Thousand Cities Paid the Last Token of Love" and the *Raleigh Observer* of the same date "detailed the special services and honors" afforded Grant in Southern cities such as Richmond, Atlanta, Norfolk, Jacksonville, and Pensacola, among others; Joan Waugh reported that the funeral ceremony held in New York was but one of "thousands of memorial ceremonies" held on that day, from Waugh, *American Hero*, 216.

man who personified, “more conspicuously than any other,” government and leadership “of the people by the people and for the people,” was fully witnessed by “one-fiftieth part of the population of these United States.”⁶⁰ It was a production of epic proportion, garish in the most pronounced Victorian style of the era, lavish, somber and deeply sentimental. It also served in large degree as a national catharsis, allowing North and South to come together and honor a man that served the Union so nobly and treated the Confederacy so magnanimously. It was, as reported in the *Philadelphia North American*, “The Greatest Funeral Ever Seen in America” and as headlined in the *Boston Advertiser*, it was “Our Country’s Greatest Burial Pageant” as “North and South Unite.”⁶¹

In the immediate weeks and months prior to his death, as is so oft the case in such matters, Grant’s family did not put a great deal of forethought into deciding where Grant’s remains would ultimately rest. Julia in particular, was not predisposed to embrace that reality of her husband’s final calling and when the moment finally arrived, she was in no state of mind to logically determine which burial site would be most appropriate for her husband’s body. Accordingly and in an unfortunate turn of events for the Grant family name and to a certain degree, Grant’s reputation, urban areas large and small throughout the North would immediately become embroiled in a bitterly partisan dispute to secure for its own Grant’s remains and memorialize in perpetuity his memory with a national monument. The resultant turmoil would

⁶⁰ *NY Times*, August 8 and 9, 1885; Also on August 9, the *Rocky Mountain News* reported that “the crowds were so dense and the procession so unexpectedly long.” Contemporaries paid tribute to a man they considered on equal footing with George Washington and Abraham Lincoln. “Americans honored Washington the Father, Lincoln the Martyr, and Grant the Savior,” wrote Joan Waugh, from “‘Pageantry of Woe’: The Funeral of Ulysses S. Grant.” *Civil War History* 51 (June, 2005), 157.

⁶¹ *Philadelphia North American* and *Boston Advertiser*, August 10, 1885. David Blight and Joan Waugh, among others write extensively of the healing effect Grant’s funeral had on the nation. “Grant’s funeral provoked a flood of reconciliationist symbolism,” wrote Blight, from *Race and Reunion*, 216, while Waugh wrote that by 1885 Grant had become a “symbol of national reconciliation” and that his funeral “became a vehicle for a religiously tinged emotional and political reconciliation of North and South,” from “‘Pageantry of Woe,’” 174, 152.

witness a barrage of charges and counter charges speculating on family motives and would cause collateral damage to the Grant family name, if not to Grant's reputation itself.

A number of sites had been discussed for a national memorial to Grant including West Point, Washington, D.C., New York City, and a couple of cities in the Midwest, including St. Louis and Galena, Illinois. All lay legitimate claim to one degree or another, although Grant himself had removed West Point from the list of options fearing that Julia could not be buried alongside him in that venue. Much of the decision making fell upon eldest son Frederick Dent Grant, who, serving as family spokesman and guided by his father's and mother's wishes, announced soon after Grant's ultimate demise that New York would be Grant's final resting place and an appropriate location for a monument to Grant.⁶²

As plans to house his remains in a temporary brick vault in Riverside Park in Manhattan's upper west side proceeded and despite Frederick's pronouncement, a regional battle was brewing to determine where Grant's body would be permanently memorialized. Samuel Clemens, a friend and confidant of Grant offered his support for New York as the site for a national memorial to Grant and believed the looming argument over such as divisive and counter-productive to Grant's memory. "I observe that the common and strongest objection to New York is that she is not 'national ground' wrote Clemens in late July to the editor of the *New York Sun*. And then to make the point moot, Clemens continued: "Let us give ourselves no uneasiness about that. Wherever General Grant's body lies, that is national ground." Clemens further went on to speculate on the removal of the Washington, D.C., as the seat of the nation's capital to a point further west sometime in the country's future and declared that "as long as

⁶² Joan Waugh suggests that one of the main reasons that Frederick Grant ultimately chose New York as Grant's final resting place was a guarantee that Julia would be buried alongside her husband. Further, "above all others, New Yorkers were organized and aggressive in pressing their case," from Waugh, *American Hero*, 271.

American civilization lasts New York will last” and was the only logical place for Grant’s remains to come to rest.⁶³

In what many outsiders might call a typically haughty display of New York City hubris, the city’s press crowded over the family’s decision. “His Tomb should be here,” reported the *Tribune*, New York is the “fittest place for the remains of the illustrious hero to rest,” reported the *Herald*, and as the “greatest resort of the greatest city in America,” New York is the most appropriate cite to house Grant’s remains. And as such, reported the *New York Times*, “Washington people are keenly disappointed” to learn that Grant would not be buried in The District of Columbia, or just across the Potomac River in Arlington National Cemetery.⁶⁴ Such perceived New York arrogance, combined with the fact that the remains of the hero of the Republican North would lie in the Democratic enclave of New York City, created a great deal of resentment across the rest of the North towards Gotham’s endeavor. Additionally, though it ranked as the nation’s largest and most populous city, New York was not considered America’s “national” city and as such, many outside of New York denied that city’s legitimacy to house a national monument for Grant.⁶⁵ Subsequently, fund-raising attempts for the New York monument would be met with a good bit of resistance infused with a large dose of downright hostility across the rest of the nation.

Once announced, opposition to New York as host to a Grant national monument began to find voice in the press. The *New York Times* reported that the Washington press was unanimous in “opposing the choice by Gen. Grant’s family” preferring “to secure the burial of Gen. Grant in

⁶³ S.L. Clemens’ letter to the editor of the *New York Sun*, July 30th, 1885. Clemens went on to remark: “Twenty centuries from now New York will still be New York, still a vast city, and the most notable object in it will be the tomb and monument of General Grant.”

⁶⁴ Reports in the July 25th, 1885 editions in the *New York Tribune*, *New York Herald*, and *New York Mail and Express*; *New York Times*, July 26th, 1885. The “greatest resort” was an erroneous reference to speculation that Central Park would be the burial site rather than Riverside Park, several blocks to the west.

⁶⁵ Joan Waugh wrote that “a majority of Americans rejected New York’s self-proclaimed status as a national city,” from *American Hero*, 276.

Washington.”⁶⁶ Other papers weighed in with its opposition to New York, proclaiming Washington, D.C., or Arlington National Cemetery to be the most logical site. Countless press reports from all sections of the nation supported Washington’s claim to house the Grant Monument while at the same time taking great joy in the lack of initial success New York had in generating funds for what was largely perceived as “New York’s” monument. The *Idaho Avalanche* wrote of the many papers around the country that suggested Arlington National Cemetery was the most appropriate spot and speculated that the site was rejected because the Grant family could not receive assurance from the federal government that Julia would be buried next to her husband. If such was the case, the paper suggested then that the “Soldiers’ Home cemetery” in Washington was a viable option, and despite such conjecture about Arlington, papers from as far away as California suggested that Washington was still indeed the most appropriate sight for Grant’s final resting. In addition to the support from much of the nation’s press, another powerful influence joined the cacophony of voices supporting Washington’s bid to serve as home to Grant’s National Monument. Articulating the wishes of the Grand Army of The Republic, that powerful political organization of Union veterans ever so staunchly loyal to Grant, its Commander in Chief, General S.S. Burdette unequivocally voiced his organization’s support for the nation’s capital, claiming that the veterans he spoke to “were unanimously in favor of its location in Washington.”⁶⁷

For the sake of Grant’s legacy, it was unfortunate that the selection of a site to appropriately honor his memory should become such a source of consternation and regional division. Ironically, it appeared that the national unity Grant had worked so hard to accomplish during his life was foolishly being squandered in the petty bickering of which region, which city,

⁶⁶ *New York Times*, July 28, 1885.

⁶⁷ *Idaho Avalanche*, August 1st, 1885; *Los Angeles Times*, August 14, 1885; As reported in the *Boston Daily Advertiser* and *Atchison Daily Globe* and a number of other newspapers, August 17, 1885.

and which state should house his remains. What should have become a national catharsis in honor of a man who had done so much for his nation morphed into a splintered battle of local and regional civic entities more concerned with their right to a tangible display of Grant's legacy rather than a unified effort to establish a lasting, genuine memorial. In fund raising efforts, "Chicago papers have been boasting of the generosity and enterprise of Chicago people," proclaimed the *Milwaukee Journal*, while "New York was getting ready to think about it." And from *Frank Leslie's Illustrated History*, "New York is far behind Chicago in the amount of its gifts to the Grant Memorial Fund."⁶⁸

To properly honor its fallen hero, the Grant Monument Association had been created within days of Grant's death. Its mission was to raise funds, plan, build and manage a national monument "which shall appropriately testify to future ages, the appreciation by the civilized world of the genius, valor and deeds of the grandest character of the century."⁶⁹ The G.M.A. selected former president Chester A. Arthur as its president and Richard T. Greener as its secretary. Greener would be charged with much of the hands-on responsibilities while Arthur would serve as more of a figurehead. Yet in the immediate aftermath of Grant's death and throughout the remainder of the decade, the group would struggle with its mission. The reasons were legion. A monument to a Republican in a Democratic-party enclave, home to the infamous Tammany Hall political machine, was not fully embraced by the New York City public and as David Quigley noted, both the planning and the eventual construction of Grant's Tomb, as it would come to be known, was "a profoundly political project." Further, Greener, the one single individual most responsible for raising the funds was both a Republican and an African

⁶⁸ *Milwaukee Journal* and *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Journal*, August 15, 1885.

⁶⁹ David M. Khan, *General Grant National Memorial Historical Resource Guide* (Unpublished Manuscript, 1980), 29.

American and accordingly, was not fully embraced by either the city's or the nation's public.⁷⁰ Further, outside of New York City, questions still persisted regarding its legitimacy to host such a memorial and as such, few outside of New York contributed, preferring to fund monuments in their own jurisdictions.

With questions regarding the city's legitimacy to house such an edifice still front-page news, the nation's press had a field day at New York's expense. Once the campaign was fully underway to generate funds for the Grant monument, papers across the nation took great joy in mocking New York's attempts to raise money. "Let NY pay for its own monument" read the report printed in the *Vermont Watchman* referring to what the Chicago press was telling its readers, reflecting a strong Midwestern sentiment that it was New York speculation and greed that was fueling its desire to build its so-called "national" monument. "It is estimated that Grant's tomb will cost \$1,000,000," reported the *Rocky Mountain News*, "and the generous people of New York have succeeded by a mighty effort in collecting \$10,000." A month later, the *Raleigh Observer* joined the chorus, sarcastically reporting that New York was well on its way in raising money for the million dollar monument by noting "the total receipts for the day were three dollars." Yet amidst all the animus being played out on the national scene, there was yet room enough for a bit of levity, the *Idaho Avalanche* reporting in early October, 1885, of the completion of the first documented memorial to Grant. Constructed expeditiously but apparently not to last, it was "forty feet high and was built entirely of ears of corn."⁷¹

⁷⁰ David Quigley, *Second Founding: New York City, Reconstruction and the Founding of Democracy* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2004), 180; Richard T. Greener was the first black graduate from Harvard and strong political supporter of Grant's, from *Grant's Tomb History: The Grant Monument Association*, available at: <http://www.grantstomb.org/ind-gma.html>, accessed on February 9, 2012; Quigley wrote that Greener would work "tirelessly to raise funds for construction," from *Second Founding*, 180.

⁷¹ *Vermont Watchman*, August 26, 1885; *Rocky Mountain News*, August 10, 1885; *Raleigh Observer*, September 24, 1885. *Idaho Avalanche*, October 3, 1885.

Years into the campaign, even the New York press criticized the lack of production generated by the Grant Monument Association. With no monument designs having yet been considered by the G.M.A. a full two years after Grant's death, the *New York Times* speculated that New Yorkers would not donate if they don't know what they are donating for and then scolded the committee by asking "cannot some kind of life be put into the Grant Monument Association?" By the turn of the decade, little progress had yet been made and the G.M.A. continued to be profoundly lacking in generating funds. "New York has \$141,000 for the Grant Memorial monument and hall, but needs \$500,000," reported the *St. Paul Daily News* in April of 1890. An article in Chicago's *Daily Inter Ocean* in June, 1890, took direct aim at the organizing team, declaring that after New York had "assumed an air of superiority and offered to build a grand monument," now finds itself "begging the rest of the country to furnish the money to carry out her plans."⁷² And of those plans, or lack thereof, and with still no memorial design having yet been selected a full five years after Grant's death, the lack of progress on the project continued to inhibit the fund raising and served as a cause for great concern both amongst the city fathers as well as Congress. Accordingly, a change in the leadership of the G.M.A. was in the offing.

Compounding perceptions of New York's inability to adequately provide a tangible tribute to Grant was the wide play an offer by Confederate veterans to donate money for a Grant memorial received in the press. After a late spring, 1890 meeting in Richmond, it was reported that ex-Confederate officers pledged \$50,000 for a Grant monument in just a matter of minutes, an action which "should shame the North." And the *Milwaukee Sentinel* quoted a Confederate veteran as claiming that within six months, "every man who wears a gray hat south on Mason and Dixon's line will have put in his dollar for the Grant Monument." The press even reported on

⁷² *New York Times*, November 27, 1887; *St. Paul Daily News*, April 19, 1890; *Inter Ocean*, June 6, 1890.

an offer both by Confederate veterans to build a Grant monument in Richmond and a proposal by the “exclusive subscription of Southern soldiers” to build a monument to Grant in Baltimore, a hotbed of secessionist activity during the war.⁷³

To exacerbate New York’s collective embarrassment, monuments and memorials to Grant were being completed all across the Northern landscape. In early 1890, the *Atchison Globe* reported on the unveiling later in that year of a “masterpiece” of a monument to Grant on Lake Shore drive in Chicago. In July, the *Inter Ocean* reported on the unveiling of a monument to Grant in Galena, Illinois, scheduled for April of the following year. And in late winter of 1891, the *Atchison Globe* again reported on the completion of a Grant monument, this one in Fort Leavenworth, Kansas.⁷⁴ Monuments to Grant were appearing all over the countryside, it seemed, except in New York City.

Finally, in late summer of 1890, “stimulated by public indignation,” and finally showing “a sign of life,” the “committee decided unanimously to adopt the (monument) design presented by John H. Duncan.”⁷⁵ Several months later, on April 27th, 1891, on what would have been Grant’s 69th birthday and almost six long years after Grant’s death, a ground breaking ceremony finally took place in Riverside Park. Notable was both the prominent role the Grand Army of the Republic played in the ceremony and the absence of New York Governor David Hill and New York Mayor Hugh Grant, both Democrats, who chose to opt out of the ceremony, so as to not “promote” the interests of Grant or the Republican Party.⁷⁶

⁷³ *Milwaukee Journal*, June 4, 1890; *Milwaukee Sentinel*, June 9, 1890; *New Orleans Picayune*, June 9th, 1890, the Richmond monument would include the inscription, “To a generous foe, by his late adversaries”; *Rocky Mountain News*, June 29th, 1890.

⁷⁴ *Atchison Globe*, January 23, 1890; *Daily Inter Ocean*, July 3, 1890; *Atchison Globe*, March 7, 1891.

⁷⁵ *Boston Advertiser*, September 11, 1890; *Rocky Mountain News*, September 12, 1890; *Irish World and American Industrial Liberator*, September 13, 1890.

⁷⁶ The April 27th edition of the *St. Paul News* as well as the April 28th editions of the *Atchison Champion*, *Morning Oregonian*, and *New York Times* detailed the event and all made significant mention of the prominent role members of the G.A.R. played in the ceremony; David Khan also suggested that the G.A.R. was asked to play a prominent

The *Boston Advertiser* described a flawless ceremony. “Nothing was overdone...nothing was lacking,” declared the paper, it was “simple, dignified and impressive.” And while commenting favorably on the appropriateness of the affair, the *Advertiser* could not refrain from criticizing New York suggesting the city’s collective lethargy and delay in finally staging the ground breaking had a deleterious effect on the memory of Grant. In its impassioned soliloquy, the *Advertiser* opined “that at length a duty too long delayed will be delayed no longer,” and the paper urged New York to complete the task in “keeping fresh” the memory “of the chief captain of our Civil War.”⁷⁷

The “profoundly political project” as so described by David Quigley became much less polarized with a complete overhauling of the Grant Monument Association leadership in early 1892. “Against a backdrop of mounting congressional criticism of the slow pace of fund-raising and design in New York,” Richard Greener lost his job as secretary of the association. The African American Republican was “removed” by a “coalition of Democrats in City Hall and Washington, D.C.,” and soon thereafter it was reported in the press that Horace Porter, former wartime aide to Grant was “elected President of the Grant Monument Association” in the wake of Greener’s departure and the “resignation” of “ex-president” New York Mayor William Grace.⁷⁸ Just two months later, on April 27th, 1892, the occasion of what would have been Grant’s 70th birthday, the *New York Times* reported that President Benjamin Harrison, “gold trowel” in hand, laid the cornerstone of Grant’s Tomb in front of a massive “throng of spectators,” which “was one of the largest ever known in the city.” With this infusion of new

role “in the hope of arousing the group’s interest in the project,” having previously supported Washington, D.C. in its attempts to house the monument, 95.

⁷⁷ *Boston Advertiser*, April 29, 1891. While applauding the groundbreaking itself, several other papers continued to castigate New York and the G.M.A. for its slow action and implied disrespect to Grant’s memory. “The New York Monument Association Finally Made a Move,” reported the *St. Paul Daily News* on April 27, 1891; “At Last the Citizens of New York Finally Begin Work on the Grant Monument,” reported the *Atchison Globe* on April 28, 1891, and even the *New York Times* editorialized that “Work Has Begun at Last,” April 28th, 1891.

⁷⁸ Quigley, *Second Founding*, 180; *Inter Ocean*, February 19, 1892.

leadership, a building plan decided upon, and a rekindling of enthusiasm with the ground breaking the previous April, fund raising improved dramatically. On June 1st, 1892, the *Times* reported that Horace Porter announced that \$350,700 had been raised in a mere sixty days, an amount more than double of that which had been raised since the fund raising began in 1885.⁷⁹

April 27th, 1897, the 75th anniversary of Grant's birthday, was chosen as the day Grant's remains would be re-interred into what became popularly known as Grant's Tomb. The national press was giddy in anticipation of the grand event. "A Million Visitors Expected," declared the *Milwaukee Journal*, adding that the "Grant Celebration Will Attract Immense Crowds." The *Rocky Mountain News* reported that officials of the Grant Executive Memorial Committee are "being deluged with requests from all parts of the country for tickets of admission..., many of the writers expressing their willingness to pay any figure demanded for the privilege." The *New Orleans Picayune* predicted the forthcoming event would be "one of the most imposing demonstrations ever witnessed in New York City." And though neither rain nor snow nor sleet nor hail could ever keep the United States mail from being delivered, Ulysses S. Grant could. Fourteen-hundred letter carriers from New York City would be in attendance and would not be able to make their rounds on that glorious Tuesday.⁸⁰

No detail regarding the event was too small for print. The *Boston Advertiser* meticulously described the two coffins made of copper and cedar surrounded by a burglar-proof outer steel case that had contained Grant's remains in the temporary vault. And with the steel case to be removed, Grant's remains would permanently rest within a several-ton granite sarcophagus, "more enduring" than its steel predecessor. In an apparent effort to assuage any lingering

⁷⁹ *NY Times*, April 28, 1892, June 1, 1892; The *Morning Oregonian* reported that only \$150,000 had been raised between 1885 and April, 1891, from its issue of April 28, 1891.

⁸⁰ *Milwaukee Journal*, April 7, 1897; *Rocky Mountain News* and *Denver Post*, April 9, 1897; *New Orleans Picayune*, April 26, 1897; *Milwaukee Sentinel*, March 29, 1897, from an article dated March 27, 1897.

bitterness those may have held towards New York City for its aggressive posture in securing Grant's body, a letter the General had written to son Fred in June, 1885, a month before he died, was published in the *New York Times*. In it the senior Grant stated that West Point had been his first choice but since he could get no guarantee that Julia would be buried next to him, he indicated he was favorably disposed towards New York "because the people of that city befriended me in my need."⁸¹ With a regional North-South reconciliation already in the mix, hopes now that a similar détente between competing cities who fought over the rights to Grant's national memory could finally be effected.

After a night of heavy rains and a forecast for "fair weather with brisk northwesterly winds," April 27th broke "with a cheerless sky, overhung with dark clouds." And although the rain stayed away as the day progressed, a wickedly cold and raw "sharp cutting wind blowing from the northwest," more reminiscent of early March than late April consumed the ceremony. Yet despite the poor weather, neither the size of the crowd or the ceremony proved disappointing. It was about 1,000,000 strong reported the *New York Times*. It was a "Grand" and "Most Imposing Spectacle." With Julia Dent Grant and her extended family receiving "courtesies equal to those extended to the Presidential party," and despite the massive turnout, it was a solemn event. "Never before in the history of parades were there fewer accidents or did the police have less trouble in keeping the throng within the lines;" the vast crowd "behaved with perfect decorum." Due to the nasty weather, noses were turning "blue," speeches were shortened, prayers were brief and by the time the last marchers had paraded past the reviewing stand, the vast crowd "had dissolved like a chunk of ice in July." At the end of the day, the mortal remains of a man, a "real man," who was considered the greatest American of his age were finally laid to rest in a grieving nation's largest mausoleum. Grant's Tomb would become

⁸¹ *Boston Advertiser*, April 10, 1897; *NY Times*, Feb. 21, 1897.

the most popular tourist attraction in New York City through the early years of the next century and would symbolize “New York’s now-central position in the nation’s politics.”⁸²

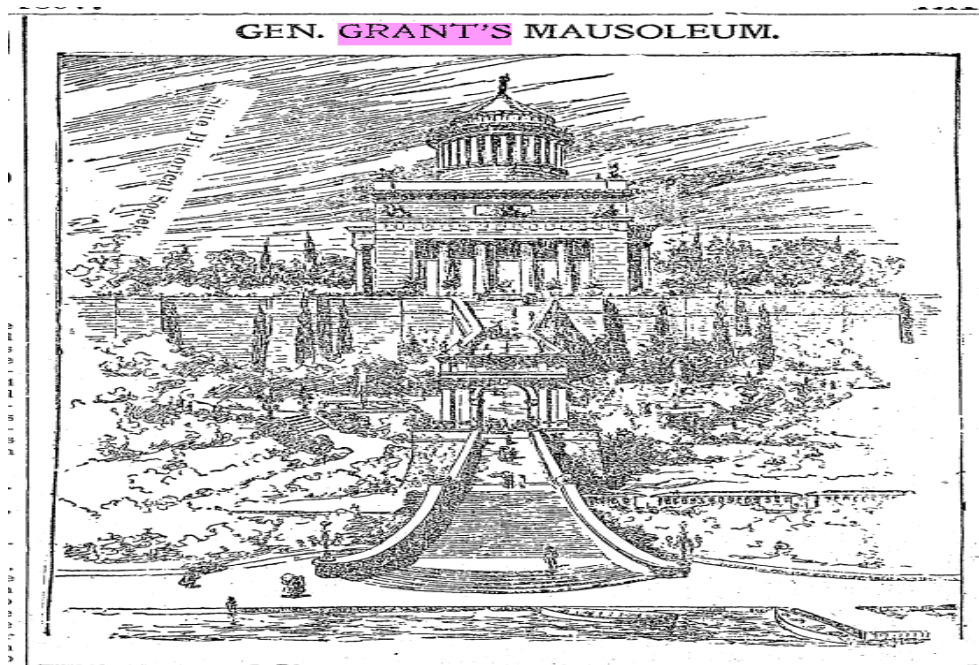


Figure 7.6 Grant’s Mausoleum

The day after his funeral back in 1885, the *St. Louis Globe-Democrat* prophesized that Grant’s stellar reputation was secure, that as a “soldier, statesman, and a citizen,” no revelations could “disturb the verdict” that had rendered Grant one of the pre-eminent forces in the history of this young Republic. “There is no such chance of future harm to Grant’s fixed and imperishable fame,” the paper assured its readers, “his was the quality of greatness that time and study and comparison will tend to enlarge and exalt.”⁸³ The day after his re-interment twelve years later, the *New York Times* similarly editorialized on the nature of Grant’s lasting legacy. “Great deeds are imperishable, great names immortal. Gen. Grant’s services and character will continue

⁸² *Ibid.*, April 27 and 28, 1897; Described as such by James Crane, former Chaplain of the Twenty-First Illinois, U.S. Volunteers; Quigley, *Second Founding*, 181; According to the G.M.A., 90,000 individuals donated more than \$600,000 to fund the construction, from *Grant’s Tomb History: The Grant Monument Association*, available at: <http://www.grantstomb.org/ind-gma.html>, accessed on November 11, 2011; Illustration from the *Milwaukee Journal*, April 27, 1897.

⁸³ *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, August 9, 1885.

undiminished in influence and advance in the estimation of mankind so long as liberty remains the cornerstone of free government....”⁸⁴ Yet the authors of those grand sentiments would be proven profoundly wrong, for as Grant’s human remains were being laid to rest, the illustrious reputation Grant earned during his years of service was buried as well. Forces were already set in motion that would diminish, not enlarge or exalt Grant’s memory. Time would deteriorate and tarnish the tangible manifestation of Grant’s remembrance, fabricated “study” would assault Grant’s record, concocted comparisons would trivialize Grant’s accomplishment and resurrected myth would alter the historical verdict. For it would be an apocryphal memory known as the “Lost Cause” that would emerge, ensconce itself firmly within the American psyche and foist a reconsidered, specious and deeply racist “history” on the American public for well into the next century.

⁸⁴ *NY Times*, April 28, 1897.

8 REPUTATION GONE SOUTH

“No living person symbolized both the hopes and the lost dreams of the war more fully than Grant.”

Joan Waugh

Seemingly so secure amongst his contemporaries and a grateful nation at the end of the nineteenth century, Ulysses S. Grant's reputation foundered at the confluence of historical fabrication, popular culture, the need for a national reconciliation, and academic revision well into twentieth century. Before the ink on Robert E. Lee's surrender to Grant was dry, a movement to distort and define the history of the American South would begin to emerge, grow over the next several generations, and lay claim both to the public's imagination and to academia's interpretation of American "history." This movement, which became known of late as the "Myth of the Lost Cause," would forge an apocryphal memory of the culture of the glorified antebellum South, provide a rationale for the defeat of the Confederacy during the Civil War, and at once minimize and justify the role of the peculiar institution in Southern society. The Lost Cause would become an all-enveloping phenomena. It hijacked the nation's collective memory, endeared itself to both white Northerner and Southerner alike and would both consciously and indirectly do great harm to Grant's memory in the public eye. In addition, the story of the building and maintenance of the Grant Monument, known more familiarly as Grant's Tomb in the modern lexicon, would become the story of Grant's reputation. Dedicated with great reverence and recognized as the most popular tourist destination in New York City for a generation after its dedication in 1897, Grant's Tomb would eventually fall into disrepair and become a decrepit national embarrassment, literally lost to sight, lost to mind, and lost to memory.

Given birth by unrepentant rebels such as journalist and *Richmond Examiner* editor Edward Pollard and Confederate General Jubal Early, among others, the Lost Cause script created a wistful remembrance of an aristocratic, orderly, and pristine South of chivalrous gentleman, loyal women, and content “negroes” happily laboring for kind and altruistic masters.¹ The need for the myth is articulated by Alan T. Nolan in his book (co-authored with Gary Gallagher), *The Myth of the Lost Cause and Civil War History*. In his chapter entitled “Anatomy of a Myth,” Nolan wrote that “despite the undisputed essentials, the war is surrounded by vast mythology.” This “mythology,” according to Nolan, includes two independent versions of the war, one which is an account of what actually happened, the other a “Southern Interpretation” of the event, born out of Southern rationalizations of the war.” It is this Southern “legend” of the war that has been “substituted for the history of the war,” and according to Nolan, accepted in popular memory as historic gospel.²

The “legend” elevated the Confederate cause and those who fought for it while diminishing and denigrating the Union cause and its captains. They were “the vilest fanatics of the age,” Reverend Steven Elliott told his congregation, those such as Ulysses S. Grant, described as “the principal war hero of the Union cause” and “the popular idol” in the immediate aftermath of the war.”³ The South was doomed to failure only because

¹ Constantly denigrating Grant’s merits as a commanding officer, Gary Gallagher wrote that General Jubal Early and other Lost Cause entrepreneurs nourished an “undiminished hatred of the North”, from *Causes Won, Lost and Forgotten: How Hollywood and Popular Art Shape What We Know About the Civil War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008), 35; Early had a wide though selective audience for his version of the Civil War, with his “truthful” history published in “the influential *Southern Historical Society Papers*,” where he labeled Grant a butcher, not remotely equal to Robert E. Lee on the battlefield. Not only was Lee’s status elevated in Early’s “history,” but his negative portrayal of Grant tarnished his “national and military stature,” from Waugh, *American Hero*, 186.

² Gallagher and Nolan, *Myth of the Lost Cause*, 12.

³ Reverend Steven Elliott, “Vain is the Help of Man,” *A Sermon Preached in Savannah Christ Church*, September 15, 1864 (Macon: Burke, Boykin, & Company, 1864); Blight, *Race and Reunion*, 99; Edward A. Pollard, *The Lost Cause Regained* (New York: G.W. Carleton and Company, 1868), 67, Gary Gallagher also referred to Grant as “the preeminent union idol” after the death of Abraham Lincoln, from *Causes Won, Lost and Forgotten*, 28; Grant was one of the “most remarkable accidents of the war,” proclaimed Edward Pollard in an earlier work, “without any

of inadequate resources and limited manpower and as soldiers for God and virtuous Victorian womanhood, fought to exhaustion rather than forfeit its principles and capitulate to the Yankee vermin. “Without ships; without money; without machinery that could produce a knife, a blanket, or a tin cup; without an ally; without even the sympathy of a single nation,” wrote Lost Cause author Thomas Nelson Page, the South “withstood to the final gasp the vast forces thrown against her,- enduring all things...until she was not only overthrown, but was actually destroyed.”⁴

The leader of the glorious Southern cause was the indomitable Robert E. Lee, the quintessential Southern gentleman and perfect representation of Southern honor, dignity and morality.⁵ By comparison, the brutish, unkempt leader of the Union forces, Ulysses S. Grant, that agent of an idyllic Confederacy’s destruction, was portrayed as a hard drinking, cigar chomping slovenly butcher, able to secure victory only by the callous sacrifice of his men. “Lee’s defenders sought to magnify Union strength and minimize their own” wrote Gary Gallagher, while portraying Lee as a “noble chieftan” possessing all those noble and enduring qualities that fellow Virginian George Washington possessed. And yet, “it would not be enough to lionize Lee,” Joan Waugh wrote, “Grant’s reputation had to be destroyed” as well.⁶

Within a few years of Lee’s surrender, the Lost Cause script found a receptive audience in the white South, its message had been “permanently incorporated in the common language of

marked ability...without fortune, without influence,” a circumstance “inexplicable among any other people than the sensational and coarse mobs of admiration in the North” circumstance from Pollard, *The Lost Cause: A New Southern History of the War of the Confederates* (New York: E.B. Treat and Co., 1866), 509.

⁴ Thomas Nelson Page, “The Southern People During Reconstruction,” *Atlantic Monthly*, 88 (Oct., 1901): 292.

⁵ He was, Joan Waugh wrote, the “patron saint” of the Lost Cause,” he was a “Virginia gentleman of impeccable lineage,” who was never defeated but rather “just worn out by numbers,” from *American Hero*, 185.

⁶ Gary Gallagher, *Causes Won, Lost and Forgotten: How Hollywood and Popular Art Shape What We Know About the Civil War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008), 16; Waugh, *American Hero*, 186.

the people” wrote Edward Pollard in 1868.⁷ It was more than just a political statement, more than a fancied remembrance or a yearning for better times, more than just an excuse for losing the Civil War on the battlefield. For white Southerners the Lost Cause narrative was deeply embedded in their core religious beliefs and as such, the story was actively promoted by the Southern clergy. It was, quite simply, their story. “Following the war, clerical thought continued to praise the merits of the Southern cause by romanticizing racial relations in the Old South and the gallantry of the Confederacy’s failed crusade. In constructing a nostalgic, ‘Southern friendly’ memory of the war and sustaining its racist rhetoric even after slavery’s abolition, the pulpit contributed in no small part to authoring the mythology of the Lost Cause.”⁸ The Lost Cause narrative was a deeply relevant message. It was inculcated into the white Southern psyche; its “truth” was a necessity. It was also needed to maintain a society based on a racial hierarchy, the clergy leading the charge “to sentimentally reflect upon fabricated notions of racial harmony in the Old South.” The Lost Cause would become an omnipotent force in Southern lore in the early years of the 20th Century and would grow and impregnate national memory as well. For the importance of maintaining Southern tradition and identity, theirs was a past that required “a present which shall be correspondent with its fame and harmonious with its character.”⁹

A key component to the sustainability of the Lost Cause tale was the need to both marginalize black Americans and establish and promote their alleged inferiority while

⁷ Edward Pollard, *The Lost Cause Regained* (New York: G.W. Carleton and Co., 1868), 13.

⁸ Grant Mannion, “The Georgia Clergy, Slavery, and the Defeat of the Holy Confederate Republic, 1863-1870,” Honors Thesis, 2011, available online at: https://etd.library.emory.edu/file/view/pid/.../mannion_dissertation.pdf, accessed on March 8, 2012. References to Confederate soldiers as “crusaders” were not isolated. Charles Wilson wrote that the “most profound and lasting interpretation of the myth of the Lost Cause was the religious one,” with significant notice made of the “Crusading Christian Confederates,” Charles Reagan Wilson, *Baptized in Blood: The Religion of the Lost Cause, 1865-1920* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1970, 2nd ed., 2009), 37.

⁹ Mannion, “The Georgia Clergy,” 43; Rev. Stephen Elliott, “Vain is the Help of Man,” *A Sermon Preached in Savannah Christ Church*, September 15, 1864 (Macon: Burke, Boykin, & Company, 1864).

elevating altruistic notions regarding slavery. Blacks were “of an alien race,” they were supposed to serve whites, not be granted the vote much less lead them politically, as had been the fear under President Grant, a staunch supporter of the Fifteenth Amendment to the Constitution. The “value of the fact of the Negro’s inferiority is very great,” wrote Edward Pollard, peremptorily dispensing any argument contrary to the point while using this “fact” as a binding agent to solidify the structure of the Lost Cause.¹⁰ Further, the institution of slavery had been divinely inspired and was a blessing to both whites and blacks alike. “Southerners stood in a relationship of benefit and obligation with God ,” and that as a “providential institution,” it was “mutually advantageous to slaveholder and slave.”¹¹ It was clear that such dogma cast a damaging light on Grant’s reputation for both his having the temerity to support the right of black Americans to fight for the Union cause during the Civil War and for his unwavering support of black voting rights during Reconstruction.

Ulysses S. Grant’s connection and association with the fortunes and rights of black Americans and freedmen during and after the Civil War and Reconstruction are indisputable and undeniable. As commanding general, he supported the rights of blacks to serve in the Union Army during the war and as president, he was demonstrative and forceful in his protection of black equality and political rights during Reconstruction. He was, as Joan Waugh wrote, a “stalwart supporter of African-American civil rights, as he was during the war of emancipation.”¹² Of his prominence as the enabler for the rights of black Americans there can be no doubt. “As he was the leader during the war,” wrote novelist Hamlin Garland, “so he

¹⁰ As so described by Samuel Chiles Mitchell, *History of the South*, X:31; Pollard, *Lost Cause Regained*, 113.

¹¹ Drew Gilpin Faust, *The Creation of Confederate Nationalism* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1989), 87-88; Alfred M. Pierce, *A History of Methodism in Georgia, February 5, 1736-June 24, 1955* (Atlanta: North Georgia Conference Historical Society, 1956), 154.

¹² Joan Waugh, “How the ‘Lost Cause’ Poisoned our History Books,” *Salon Magazine*, May 1, 2011, available at: http://www.salon.com/2011/05/01/joan_waugh_grant/singleton/, accessed on June 3, 2012.

remained the leader during reconstruction.” And in these roles, Grant was the “rock bound coast against the angry and gnawing waves of a storm-tossed ocean,” wrote Frederick Douglass, and under his stewardship, “we are assured, in due time, not only all of our rights, but of our privileges.”¹³ Grant would be the most ardent supporter of black equality and black rights to sit in the White House for almost a century, until Lyndon Johnson assumed office in 1963. After the war, “no living person symbolized both the hopes and the lost dreams of the war more fully than Grant,” wrote Waugh of Grant and as such, his name and reputation would pay a terrible price in the face of prevailing Lost Cause ideology. For trying to live up to his constitutional imperative, Grant’s causes of emancipation and freedom would wither in the face of this specious racist mythology. Grant was the orchestra leader, the Lost Causers proffered, who led the Republican symphony in an attempt to destroy this vision of an idyllic South that existed only in their wistful remembrances. As such, it would be Grant that would be targeted and be perceived as the conductor of a “failed” Reconstruction.

¹³ Garland, *Grant*, 351; Frederick Douglass, “U.S. Grant and Colored People,” from *Grant’s Tomb: The Website of the Grant Monument Association*, available at: www.grantstomb.org/ind-gma.html, accessed on May 4, 2012.

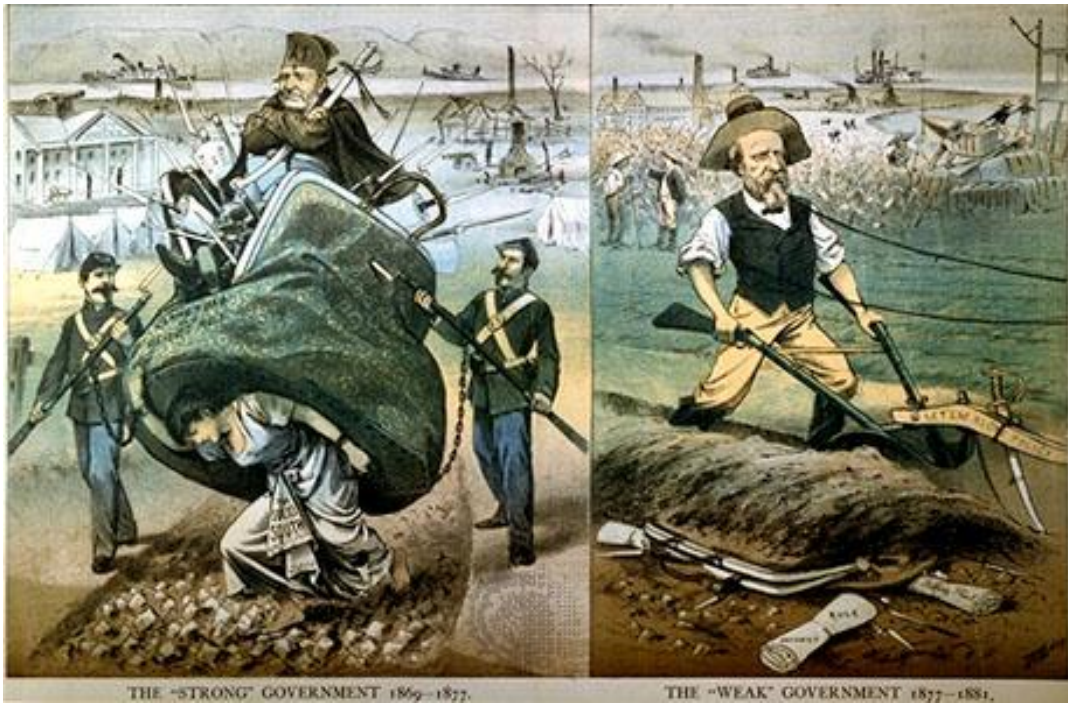


Figure 8.1 “Strong Government” and “Weak Government”

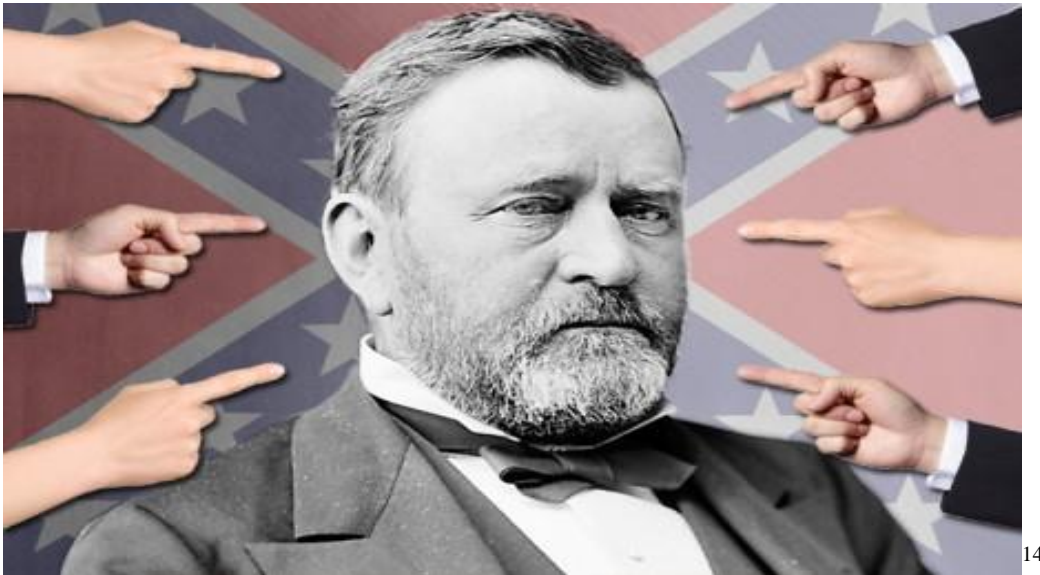


Figure 8.2 Blaming Grant

¹⁴ Political cartoon from James Albert Wales, “The Strong Government of Grant” and the “weak” government of Rutherford B. Hayes, Grant’s successor, after the removal of federal troops from the South, available at <http://primarysourcenus.org/tag/grant/>, accessed on January 8, 2011; Quote and illustration from Waugh, “How the Lost Cause Poisoned our History Books.”

In addition to making the white South feel good about itself, the Lost Cause epic contained enough particulate matter to help forge a regional reunion and unite the nation after decades of bitter strife. A reconciliationist theme was part and parcel to the Lost Cause message for as a precondition to a truly national reconciliation, a Northern embrace of the Lost Cause story seemed to be a necessity. And indeed, the theme had many appealing elements to a Northern populace ready to reunite with its Southern neighbors. It was the quintessentially American story of a determined, noble underdog fighting with grace and dignity against overwhelming odds. The myth defined a glorified South in many Northern minds. The South, as represented by Lost Causers, was a land that possessed a “charm of chivalry, the mellowness of a classic culture, the exultation of womanhood, a delicate sense of personal honor, intense love of home, devotion to church...the refinements of a feudal society” with “African slavery” forming the backdrop of the whole idyllic vision, a vision that was becoming more and more popular with the nation’s masses.¹⁵

The South’s posture both on the nature of slavery and its significance as a causal factor for the war made the Lost Cause more palatable to a receptive American public. The memory of the institution needed to be whitewashed; a “selected white forgetfulness” had to be forged in the construction of a shared memory in the name of national harmony. Lost Cause writers understood slavery was their biggest impediment and as such, had to marginalize the institution as “peripheral to the decision for secession” as well as marginalize blacks.¹⁶ The war was all about “states’ rights, not slavery” professed the Lost Causers; it was an inevitable conflict left by Founding Fathers to resolve “the unfinished question” of the “proper relation of the states to the federal government,” and according to the *Richmond Dispatch*, the South had “sacrificed itself”

¹⁵ Samuel Chiles Mitchell, ed., *The South in the Building of the Nation* (Richmond: The Southern Publication Society, 1909.) 10:xxiv.

¹⁶ Waugh, *American Hero*, 238; Gallagher, *Causes Won, Lost*, 19.

in order for the country to find its answer. According to David Blight, Lost Causers not only came to see the establishment of the Confederacy as right and proper, but by the 1890s also as a “sacred act,” defended by its “patron saint,” Robert E. Lee, who fought to moral and physical exhaustion against the brutality of the culturally and morally challenged Ulysses S. Grant.¹⁷ Yet this collective specious memory regarding the causes of the war, so seamlessly embraced by many in the North, and so crucial to forge a fashionable reconciliation between Northerner and Southerner, did not gibe with Grant’s pronounced assessment of the war. Grant was unequivocal in his belief of what he fought for. “The cause of the great War of the Rebellion against the United States,” wrote Grant without any qualms or qualifications, “will have to be attributed to slavery.” “That cause was,” Grant continued, “one of the worst for which a people ever fought, and one for which there was the least excuse.” “The Civil War had its uses,” wrote Jim Cullen, but Grant would not allow his cause to be used and twisted into a convoluted rationalization even in the face of national reconciliation.¹⁸

A spate of commemorative activities and reunions, as well as a litany of numerous reminiscences written in the 1880s and 1890s further lent credence to the Lost Cause theme as Confederate veterans were honored for fighting in defense of their homeland. The spirit of a national reconciliation that manifested itself at Grant’s funeral continued to grow in the late nineteenth century and though long buried and in spite of his proclamation regarding the cause of the war, the memory of Ulysses S. Grant continued to evoke “a memory tradition imbued with reconciliationist sentiment and symbols.”¹⁹ Press reports from all across the nation were especially keen on reporting any and all events involving the Grant name and reconciliation. Described as a “striking scene in the parlors of the Hotel Aragon” in Atlanta, Georgia, in 1895,

¹⁷ Blight, *Race and Reunion*, 37, 257.

¹⁸ Grant, *Memoirs*, 2: 542, 489; Cullen, *The Civil War in Popular Culture*, 3.

¹⁹ Waugh, “Pageantry of Woe,” 169.

the *Emporia Daily Gazette* commented on the “free and easy interchange of compliments and reminiscences” between Confederate veterans and Julia Dent Grant. Of the same meeting, the *Raleigh Observer* reported on the numerous Confederate veterans who paid their respects to “the Widow of the Hero of the North.”²⁰ Combined with Grant’s re-interment in 1897, the stage was set for a national love-in between two formerly bitter foes that would bring the country closer together than it had been in over half a century.

Efforts at reconciliation between Union and Confederate veterans and the nation as a whole came to full fruition in the summer of 1913. In the early days of July, approximately 53,000 Civil War veterans descended on Gettysburg to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the nation’s largest battle.²¹ It was the culmination of that generation’s efforts to forge a lasting reconciliation. Union veterans celebrated their role in preserving the union and what it stood for while Confederate veterans celebrated their negotiated cause as well as their courage, sustainability and devotion to manufactured principle. “Soldiers’ nostalgia for the war came increasingly to be wrapped in patriotic visions of what they had accomplished for the larger society,” wrote David Blight, and as such, noble visions perpetuated by the Lost Causers that the war had little to do with slavery became “crystallized” in myth and would become “history” in the hearts and minds of a receptive public.²²

At the conclusion of this storied and somber 3-day occasion and over the course of the succeeding years, “reconciliation joined arms with white supremacy in Civil War memory” while the “emancipationist memory” that Grant fought so hard to win in the 1860s and maintain in the 1870s, “lived on to fight another day.” As caretaker of the Reconstruction policy so effortlessly cast aside and as a key component of the drive towards emancipation, the cause that

²⁰ The *Emporia (Kansas) Daily Gazette*, January 30, 1895, *Raleigh Observer*, January 30, 1895.

²¹ Edmund Fong, “Reconstructing the ‘Problem’ of Race,” *Political Research Quarterly*, 61 (Dec., 2008): 662.

²² Blight, *Race and Reunion*, 189.

Grant fought for was diminished and perceived to be in “bad taste at best, and bad politics at worst.”²³ The nation bore witness to and celebrated these veterans for their bravery, their devotion to duty, for their ability to come together and in large part, forgot about the real meaning or significance of the war while the fragile hopes and aims of Reconstruction were “all but eclipsed and rendered absent by southern narratives.” It was a reconciliation forged in blatant racism. The “exorcism of sectional strife” required the “resubordination of blacks; hopes and prospects of black Americans had to be sacrificed at the altar of white national harmony and white reconciliation. At a time when “American apartheid” had fully entrenched itself, “white supremacy might be said to have been the silent, invisible master of ceremonies.”²⁴

The impact of the Lost Cause on America’s collective psyche both influenced and was at once further legitimized by provocative and racially charged literary works in the early 1900s, such as Thomas W. Dixon’s *The Leopard’s Spots*, and *The Clansman*. Such fodder for public consumption found wide press in American popular culture and lent support to those who sought to diminish Grant’s reputation by glorifying and casting the Ku Klux Klan, a group that Grant had so aggressively fought during Reconstruction, as “an organization which is now the sole guardian of society.”²⁵ Dixon’s pseudo-historical fabrication portrayed Klan members as heroes and denigrated the freedmen to such an extent that the basic humanity of black Americans was put into question. As such, the roles of those such as Grant who supported Reconstruction and was instrumental in effectively using the U.S. military to pursue the Klan were diminished.

Described as an “historical romance of the Ku Klux Klan,” the *New York Times* book review of *The Clansman* offered the following assessment: “Only too true is the picture which

²³ *Ibid.*, 397, 189.

²⁴ Fong, “Reconstruction,” 662, 663; Blight, *Race and Reunion*, 9.

²⁵ Thomas Dixon, Jr., *The Clansman: An Historical Romance of the Ku Klux Klan* (New York: Doubleday, Page and Co., 1905, reprint, New York: A Wessels Co., 1907), 327.

the author draws of the horrors” that befell Southern whites in the wake of the “bestowal of arms and civic rights upon the Negroes of the South.” As such, the “endurance” of Reconstruction must have been so horrible that one “marvels how the men who suffered it made peace with those who imposed it upon them.” God bless the white supremacists. And then editorializing on what he read, the reviewer stated that “it is little wonder that today the white people of those same States passionately resent the least hint of a return to the days when negro Legislatures and negro officials cast their terrible shadow over the land,”²⁶ a “shadow” constructed by the “negroes” most prominent enabler, Ulysses S. Grant.

The message of *The Clansman* would eventually be brought to the big screen and made into a controversial silent movie in 1915 by innovative filmmaker D.W. Griffith entitled “Birth of a Nation.” It was the blockbuster of the era, albeit a deeply flawed account of history. It found wide support and immense popularity throughout the nation, at least in white America, and reinforced the prevailing racial attitudes of the time.²⁷ Griffith “wholeheartedly embraced lost cause themes” going to great lengths to authenticate the cinematography of the film, giving the viewer the impression that Griffith’s account of history was as accurate as the fastidiously constructed portrayals and physical resemblance of some of the actors to actual historical figures. And with the motion picture still an emerging phenomena, the unsophisticated and naïve audiences of the day were presented with nothing to counter Griffith’s version of Reconstruction and the message that “emancipation had been America’s greatest and most dangerous disaster.”²⁸

²⁶ *NY Times*, January 21, 1905. The reviewer quoted Dixon as stating that the aims of the KKK were “wholly admirable,” and designed to protect white Southerners, “with whom appeal to the law was useless when negroes held all offices.” *The Clansman* sold for \$1.50.

²⁷ Brian Steel Wills, *Gone With the Glory: The Civil War in Cinema* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2007, 1st paperback ed., 2011), 2, 16, 197.

²⁸ Chadwick, *Reel Civil War*, 42; Blight, *Race and Reunion*, 395; Eric Foner wrote that the most powerful and influential portrayal of Reconstruction in the era was “Birth of a Nation.” So convincing was its message, according to Foner, was that even Jane Addams, one of the co-founders of the N.A.A.C.P. “accepted the accuracy of Griffith’s account of Reconstruction,” from *Forever Free*, xxii; Bruce Chadwick wrote that the power of movies to influence

The identification of the South as a pristine, idyllic culture was further entrenched in the nation's collective psyche with the release in the late 1930s of a motion picture for the ages, *Gone With the Wind*, based upon the 1936 novel of the same name by Atlantan Margaret Mitchell. It was a "moonlight and magnolias" saga, where the stability and gallantry of a benign paternalistic society held sway over the public's imagination, with "gentleman drinking mint juleps on the veranda, women prettying themselves for the ball and countless soldiers becoming instant heroes."²⁹ Released at the end one of the most pessimistic, distressed decades in American history, where many Americans came to lose faith in the so-called "American Dream," *Gone With the Wind* was a gloriously imagined account of a bygone era that existed no where else other than in the minds of romantics, movie producers, and Lost Cause proponents. The book was an instant best seller and along with the movie, the impact on the collective memory of the American public was unprecedented in filmography. Jim Cullen estimated that 90% of the American public has seen the movie since its release, calling it an "icon of U.S. culture." As a vehicle that would and continues to "shape historical understanding more widely than do academic studies of the war," it was a celluloid monument of legitimacy to the Lost Cause.³⁰

Other literary works in the early twentieth century lent further credence to Lost Cause mythology and further denigrated African Americans. And though not normally specifically singled out, such continued prejudices reinforced prevailing notions that Grant's Constitutional and political experiment was an abject failure. Reconstruction was a "desolate time," noted

the people up through the 1930s was "enormous," and, testifying to the movies message, Chadwick further wrote that with revenue adjusted for inflation, "Birth of a Nation" is "among the top five box-office films of all time," from *The Reel Civil War*, 11, 12.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 6.

³⁰ Cullen, *Civil War in Popular Culture*, 67,2; With the issue of slavery "muted" and emphasis placed on a "reciprocal loyalty between the principal black characters and their (white) owners," Bruce Chadwick wrote that *Gone With the Wind* "almost certainly has been the single most powerful influence on American perceptions of the Civil War." And with most of the movie's profits being generated in northern and western cities, it appears as though the public from those regions were buying into the legend on a grand scale, from *Reel Civil War*, 45,50.

author Joel Chandler Harris wrote in the widely read *Saturday Evening Post*, in which “Negroes had been given hope to understand that they had Government to lean upon,” a circumstance that left Southern whites “without any hope for the future.” Further, as the “poorest kind of politician,” Chandler suggested blacks who entered politics were hurting their own interests since there were so many other ways in which they could “benefit their race.”³¹

Popular Southern author Thomas Nelson Page espoused the same gospel as Harris. Prevent blacks from voting, suggested Page, and the “negro problem” would resolve itself. The great mistake of the age, according to Page, was support of black political equality during Reconstruction. “Negroes were hopelessly mired in matters where right direction was vitally necessary to their permanent progress,” wrote Page, not so subtly implying the “wrong” direction provided under the stewardship of Grant. Rather than praise Grant for his support of the rights of all Americans, Page suggested the nation owed a debt of gratitude and thanks to white Southerners for staving off a policy of “misguided fanatics and politicians” who would have the South under permanent Negro control.³²

Grant’s politics and support for the freedmen aside, his perceived personal habits also provided fertile ground for those who sought to further diminish his reputation. Some drivers of popular culture continued to play havoc with and promote Grant’s image as an intemperate lush who could not turn himself away from a stiff drink. During a time in the early twentieth century when alcohol consumption was considered immoral in much of rural America and a battle for prohibition raged on, Grant’s name and images were frequently associated with liquor. It was

³¹ Joel Chandler Harris, “The Negro Problem: Can the South Solve It – And How?” *Saturday Evening Post*, Feb., 1904, 6,7.

³² Thomas Nelson Page, *The Negro: The Southerner’s Problem* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1904), 124; Page gives special relevance to one of the sacred notions of the Lost Cause, stating that “the Negro does not generally believe in the virtue of womanhood,” and that “negroes furnish the great body of rapists,” *Ibid.*, 112, xi; David Blight wrote of it as the “Southern victory over Reconstruction,” from *Race and Reunion*, 361.

the “demon rum” that polluted and corroded our society religious fundamentalists declared and by association, reminders that Grant was perceived to have been no stranger to the bottle proliferated. Amidst the heated discussion surrounding prohibition during the latter stages of World War I, a beer and spirits trade journal even invoked Grant’s name to promote its products. “No war can be won without alcohol,” the *Brewers’ Gazette* editorialized in 1917, proclaiming that George Washington, a distiller, and his troops frequently drank on the front lines, as did “Ulysses S. Grant and his volunteers and regulars.” A brand of whiskey was even named after Grant. “Grant 63” was the “perfect whiskey,” and to add to its allure, it is being served up in the following advertisement by the caricature of a grinning “negro,” of a type that Grant had done so much for forty years earlier.



Figure 8.3 “The Perfect Whiskey”

Such images prompted the likes of Ernest Hemingway character Robert Jordan to remember that his grandfather had stated that Grant “was always a little drunk by four o’clock in the afternoon,” yet “functioned” normally though sometimes “it was very hard to wake him.”³⁴ As such, caricatures and images of Grant associated with alcohol were never far removed from the public eye and images of Grant promoting liquor were frequent.

The dual edged ambush launched by the memory and cultural assault on Grant’s reputation turned into a full-bore broadside when the academic community both legitimized and fortified the further corrosion of Grant’s remembrance and what he stood for. Columbia

³³ Blotter advertising Grant 63 Whiskey, issued by Joseph Spang, distributor, circa 1910, available at: <http://www.twainquotes.com/Prohibition.html>, accessed on April 7, 2012.

³⁴ *The Brewer’s Journal and Barley, Malt and Hop Trades’ Reporter and American Brewers’ Gazette* 41, May 1, 1917: 279; Ernest Hemingway, *For Whom the Bell Tolls*, rep. (New York: Scribner’s, 1948, rep., 1968), 233.

University's William Archibald Dunning, an American historian of substantial reputation and influence, was the driving force behind academia's interpretation of the Reconstruction era in the early twentieth century. Dunning was the product of a culture that had been steeped in the notion of white supremacy and of alleged black inferiority and his work both reflected and promoted such beliefs, lending a finely-honed scholarly veneer to such widely-held popular sensibilities. Early in his career, Dunning had proclaimed Reconstruction a failure, perhaps the darkest epoch in American history. His voice found much support among a litany of his fellow academicians and students and under his auspices authored an historical fabrication that would become known as the Dunning School of History, which became the definitive word on Reconstruction in the academic community. Unlike the Lost Cause writers of an earlier generation such as Jubal Early who personally disliked Grant, Dunning, reflective of an era of rampant racism, was more opposed to Grant's policies rather than the man himself. Nonetheless, he was still "propelled" by that all-consuming memory of the Lost Cause, and as such, "figuratively whitewashed history to portray Reconstruction as the 'tragic era'."³⁵

According to the Dunning school, African Americans and those whites in league with them were no more than incompetent political opportunists entirely incapable of governing themselves much less a noble Southern white society. Accordingly, Radical Reconstruction as it played out was never a viable option to properly resurrect and reconcile the American South after the Civil War, rather it was a colossal mistake, doomed to failure in large part due to the biological deficiency and amoral qualities inherent in black Americans. According to Joan Waugh, Dunning found Reconstruction to be an "utter dismal failure," a disembowling of Southern tradition and way of life carried out by "ignorant African Americans, evil

³⁵ Waugh, *American Hero*, 108.

carpetbaggers, and turncoat scalawags.”³⁶ Anyone who supported blacks during Reconstruction, so Dunning’s argument went, had only political or personal gain at stake. Succor finally came to the South, according to Dunning, in the sweeping defeat of the Republicans in the 1874 Congressional elections, a complete repudiation of Grant and his Reconstruction politics. “The end was single,” wrote Dunning, “the rescue of the states from the scandalous misrule of the carpet-baggers and the negroes.”³⁷ The Constitutional revolution conducted, managed and supported by Grant was over and was applauded as such by Dunning and his disciples. Dunning was at the leading edge of academia’s assault in forming the nation’s racial attitudes and by heavy-handed implication, perceptions of Grant throughout much of the first half of the twentieth century. “For decades, the Dunning school shaped scholarly writing on Reconstruction,” wrote Eric Foner, and as such, “nearly all white Americans embraced the Dunning version of history.”³⁸

Dunning’s exasperation with and perceptions of Grant most certainly were driven in large part by his deeply held racist conviction that blacks were indeed inferior to whites and that as an institution, slavery was the proper paradigm for blacks. He firmly believed that whites and blacks could never exist as equals in a free society and that absent slavery, some other political relationship or system needed to be developed to keep blacks in a subordinate role. Citing Thomas Jefferson, Henry Clay and Abraham Lincoln, the relationship between blacks and whites wrote Dunning, “must be taken by some set of conditions which, if more humane and beneficent in accidents, must in essence express the same face of racial inequality.”³⁹ As the face of the

³⁶ *Ibid.*; though not specifically referencing Grant, Waugh wrote that “much of the antipathy toward Grant arose from scholars, led by William Dunning,” *Ibid.*

³⁷ William Dunning, *Reconstruction, Political and Economic* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1907), 267.

³⁸ Foner, *Forever Free*, xxii, xxiii.

³⁹ William A. Dunning, “The Undoing of Reconstruction,” *Atlantic Monthly*, 88 (October, 1901): 449. A condensed version of the same article was published in *Public Opinion*, 31, (Oct. 17, 1901): 488.

historical community on Reconstruction, Dunning's pronouncement was a stunning reflection that both mirrored and shaped the tenor of the time. As such, Dunning must have been both mystified and revolted by Grant's support of political equality of blacks. Dunning's racial bias is "unquestionably present in all of Dunning's own books on the Reconstruction era," wrote David Donald, and clearly the one individual in United States' history most closely associated with the forceful protection of black rights during Reconstruction is Ulysses S. Grant.⁴⁰ Accordingly, white Southerners connected "Grant's brutal generalship with his so-called imposition of Republican rule on the defeated region." And, as James McPherson noted, it would not be until 1968, over 90 years after Grant left office, that black Americans in parts of the Deep South would enjoy the same opportunities to vote as they had under Grant.⁴¹

Dunning's impact on the historical community was indeed formidable. Upon his death in 1922, the *New York Times* provided ample testimony to Dunning's great influence on the "history" of Reconstruction. "His books are regarded by authorities as master works," wrote the *Times*, and "are used as reference and study books in all the American universities and in many foreign institutions." A week later, the *Times* would follow up with another article proclaiming that "many historical investigators, (and) professors... got their first impulse from the guidance and stimulus of Professor Dunning." Historians and authors competed with each to find adjectives sufficient enough to define the Reconstruction era in Dunning-esq terms. Don Seitz called his study of history "*The Dreadful Decade*." Claude Bowers' "*The Tragic Era*," one of the most significant pseudo-historical popular condemnations of Reconstruction emerging from the Dunning school of Reconstruction, "attracted more readers than any other dealing with this

⁴⁰ Introduction from David Donald found in William A. Dunning, *Essays on the Civil War and Reconstruction*. New York: The MacMillan Co., 1897, rep., New York: Harper and Row, 1965), xii; Bruce Chadwick followed suit, writing that Dunning was singularly driven in his thinking regarding the Civil-War era, believing that "black incapacity was responsible for the failure of Reconstruction," from *The Reel Civil War*, 30.

⁴¹ Waugh, *American Hero*, 187; McPherson, *Ordeal by Fire*, 560.

period.” According to historian Kenneth Stampp, Bower’s “tragic era” was characterized by “unrelieved sordidness in public and private life; whole regiments of villains march through his pages.” The administration of Ulysses S. Grant was “dominated by corrupt politicians” while “ignorant, barbarous, sensual Negroes...threatened to Africanize the South and destroy its Caucasian civilization.”⁴² By association, the managers of Reconstruction, Grant and the Radical Republicans were the architects of this insidious plot to destroy the South.

A litany of textbooks published in the 1910s and 1920s also reflected both Dunning’s version of history and his profound influence. Samuel Eagle Foreman, in his *Advanced American History* proclaimed that the Ku Klux Klan was formed only to prevent Negroes from voting, “to compel him to work at reasonable wages, and to lead a quiet, peaceable life.” And as such, after Grant left office in 1877, “the evils which followed in the wake of the Civil War were vanishing.” In his work *Recent History of the United States*, University of Wisconsin History Professor Frederic Paxson wrote that Reconstruction under Grant was an era of “panic and maladministration” leaving “wounds that needed healing. “Reconstruction times were darker for the South than the darkest days of the Civil War,” wrote Purdue and Indiana University collaborators James Albert Woodburn and Thomas Francis Moran, describing “negroes” as “unfit to rule” and “good for nothing loafers.” Under the aegis of President Grant, carpetbaggers and scalawags were used to “help the negroes administer their criminal rule,” and as a result, “self-respecting Southerners” turned to the Klan for succor wrote Vassar College Professor Emerson David Fite. And William Mace, Professor Emeritus from Syracuse University, after citing Dunning as the preeminent source on Reconstruction and writing that “the ex-slaveholder

⁴² Don C. Seitz, *The Dreadful Decade: Detailing Some Phases in the History of the United States from Reconstruction to Resumption, 1869-1879* (Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Co.,1926), Stampp, *Era of Reconstruction*, 4-5; Bruce Chadwick wrote that *The Tragic Era* was “the most widely read book on Reconstruction” for about a decade after it was published, from *Reel Civil War*, 49.

was a better friend to the colored man than either the non-slaveholder or the carpetbagger,” defended the disenfranchisement of black voters in some Southern states by stating it was done because these states had “suffered from the government of the...negroes who had taken their freedom as a license for misrule and robbery of the state treasuries.”⁴³ And a scant two decades after his death, even though questions began to arise about Dunning’s version of history, Henry Steele Commager wrote that the “influence of William A. Dunning on the teaching and writing of American History was profound and lasting.”⁴⁴ With such prevailing homogeneous and definitive pronouncements from academia’s best and brightest being foisted upon an eager and trusting educational community, it would be difficult to overstate the damage done to Grant’s reputation by Dunning’s body of work.

In addition to the broadside leveled at Grant’s reputation from the academic community, success of the Lost Causers to promulgate their story, specious memory of the causes and meaning of the war, as well as popular entertainment vehicles, other more abstract issues and incidences coalesced to continue to further stain Grant’s memory in the late 1920s and early 1930s. A number of striking similarities between Warren G. Harding and his corruption-stained presidency in the 1920s and that of Grant’s contributed to the denigration of each man’s reputation. Both were Republican, both were fiscal conservatives, both were personally popular and regarded as kindly, if not just a bit naïve souls, and both were from Ohio. Further, both shared similar backgrounds, the *New York Times* reporting on a visit Harding made in April of

⁴³ Samuel Eagle Foreman, *Advance American History* (New York: The Century Company, 1914, 4th printing, 1922), 499, 500, 505; Frederic L. Paxson, *Recent History of the United States* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1921), 1; James Albert Woodburn and Thomas Francis Moran, eds., *Elementary American History and Government* (New York: Longmans, Green and Co., 1919, 8th reprinting, Nov., 1922), 389, 394; Emerson David Fite, *History of the United States* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1916, 2nd ed., 1919), 417; William H. Mace, *American History* (Chicago: Rand McNally and Co., 1927), 223, 574.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, Aug. 26, 1926, Sept. 3, 1922, Feb. 13, 1938; Such was Dunning’s reputation while he lived that he was called as an expert in highly publicized *Henry Ford v Chicago Tribune* libel case in 1919, from *NY Times*, Jul. 30, 1919.

1922 to Point Pleasant Ohio, Grant's modest birthplace, that "Mr. Harding himself grew up in a community where there were no marked social distinctions."⁴⁵ More importantly, both men shared the dubious distinction of presiding over amongst the most corrupt presidential administrations in American history and accordingly, frequent comparisons were made. "Thorough" and recent "events at Washington lead many to recall the scandals of General Grant's presidency," reported the *New York Times* in the wake of the Teapot Dome scandal, and such recent disclosures "evoked days of the Whiskey Ring and Credit Mobilier," events indelibly attached to the legacy of Grant's presidency.⁴⁶ In recent times, Political Scientist Michael Genovese suggested that up until the 1970s Watergate scandal, historians have generally considered Harding's presidency as the most corrupt of the twentieth century, if not in all of American history. Yet despite the malfeasance, "nothing has surfaced that suggested Harding was involved in or profited from the graft and corruption so prevalent in his administration," wrote Genovese. "His biggest faults were trusting his friends too much, of being a poor judge of character, and of maintaining loyalty to people who clearly did not merit his trust."⁴⁷ Substitute Grant's name for that of Warren G. Harding and the legacy remains exactly the same.

Frequent comparisons were made between the two when it came to their legislative pursuits as well. Both directed a policy of fiscal austerity, and in July of 1921, the *New York Times* compared Harding's veto of a bonus bill for World War I veterans with similar action Grant took almost a half century earlier, reporting the "President's view Found to Align With

⁴⁵ *NY Times*, April 29, 1922; It was as though the connection to each other brought nothing but trouble for each, for on this occasion, as Harding was visiting Point Pleasant on the occasion of Grant's birthday centenary, the boat that was supposed to take Harding suffered an accident when the observation deck collapsed, injuring 28, 2 seriously. As a result of anticipated fears of overcrowding due to Harding's presence, the Secret Service changed plans at the last minute and found a smaller vessel for Harding, from the *NY Times*, April 28, 1922.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, Jan. 30 and Feb. 10, 1924.

⁴⁷ Michael Genovese, *The Watergate Crisis* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1998), 83, 85.

Civil War Leader's Action on Own Men.”⁴⁸ Further, both were perceived as defenders of the interests of black Americans and were driven to oppose white supremacist groups, Grant pursuing the Ku Klux Klan under the auspices of the Force Acts, while Harding was proactive in improving the racial mosaic in the 1920s, especially in pursuing the Klan and pushing for federal anti-lynching legislation. “He was the first president since U.S. Grant to suggest the need for national action to improve race relations,” wrote biographer Phillip G. Payne, yet was largely befuddled in his efforts in the face of intransigent political opposition such as Grant faced during his second term.⁴⁹ Yet for at least the remainder of the century, the stain of corruption followed each man around like a dog after a two-day old pork chop. Up until just the most recent of times, fellow Ohioans Grant and Harding shared the dubious distinction of being perceived as perhaps the two worst or amongst the worst presidents in American history. As late as 1997, “the Failures have always been Grant and Harding,” reported Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., an historian with close Democratic Party ties who further described a “hapless” Grant and “feckless” Harding, as “favorite Failures,” having been consistently perceived as such since over the course of decades past.⁵⁰

Politics aside, other circumstances over which Grant had no control would continue to do harm to Grant's reputation, even those designed to pay him homage. Described in recent years as America's “Angkor Wat” on the Hudson, the story of Grant's Tomb from its dedication in

⁴⁸ *New York Times*, July 17, 1921.

⁴⁹ Phillip G. Payne, *Dead Last: The Public Memory of Warren G. Harding's Scandalous Legacy* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2009), 123.

⁵⁰ Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., “Rating the Presidents: Washington to Clinton,” *Political Science Quarterly*, 112 (Summer, 1997): 182, 185; William McFeely included Grant, Harding and Richard Nixon as the great triumvirate of those leading the most damaging presidencies of the Republic, from *Grant*, 521-522; Joan Waugh includes James Buchanan with Grant and Harding as having been consistently considered amongst the worst American presidents; *American Hero*, 222; According to Bose and Landis, Grant and Harding have been viewed historically as the two conspicuous failures among American presidents, from Meena Bose and Mark Landis, eds., *The Uses and Abuses of Presidential Rankings*, (Hauppauge, NY: Nova Science Publishers, 2003), 98; Citing a poll in the 1962 *NY Times Magazine*, Phillip Payne wrote that “Ulysses S. Grant and Warren G. Harding vied for worst president,” from “*Dead Last*,” 4.

1897 to present day serves as a graphic metaphor for the legacy of Grant's reputation.⁵¹ A spectacular edifice that was dedicated with great fanfare and reverence, it slowly became degraded during a long period of benign neglect and decline to the point of downright desecration and derision, and then finally enjoyed a modest resurrection in the last couple of decades. The story of Grant's Tomb is the story of Grant's reputation. This tangible symbol of Grant's memory would tarnish his legacy and by association, would taint his memory with succeeding generations. The tomb would become an unwanted piece of neighborhood furniture that some would offer should be transformed or even removed. "We have to remove Grant," wrote *New York Times* columnist John Tierney, almost 100 years after he was permanently laid to rest. And if such was not feasible, Grant's Tomb would better serve New York and the public by being turned into a centerpiece for a "café and a bar," or "perhaps even a nightclub," allowing the public to "rediscover a lovely spot by Riverside Park."⁵²

Upon its opening and early into the first decades of the twentieth century, Grant's Tomb was the most visited tourist destination in New York City, enticing 500,000-600,000 visitors annually during its peak years and outdrawing the Statue of Liberty despite being described as a "monstrosity" and a "necrological nightmare" by a city resident.⁵³ The tomb remained a popular tourist attraction even during World War I, the *New York Times* reporting that "Grant's Tomb Draws Many," anywhere from 900 to 1,100 visitors daily, amounting to about 400,000 a year. "It would seem that no stranger to the city fails to visit the shrine," reported the *Times*, illuminating the story of an 87-year old "Negro," who knelt reverentially before the sarcophagus

⁵¹ *NY Times*, July 19, 1998, described as such in a letter to the editor from New Yorker Edward Hochman. Angkor Wat is a once grand and ancient temple structure in Cambodia "lost" for several centuries due to jungle overgrowth.

⁵² John Tierney, "The Big City: Grant Us Peace," *New York Times Magazine*, May 7, 1995; according to Tierney, a nightclub or a bar would be especially appropriate because Grant "would have appreciated a place that sold liquor."

⁵³ Joan Waugh, *American Hero*, 262; Waugh wrote that Grant's Tomb maintained "extremely high levels of visitation until 1929," the onset of the Great Depression; *NY Times*, July 29, 1910, described as such by a W.J.L. in a letter to the editor.

and wept bitterly.” When asked, the “servitor” told the *Times* correspondent that he had served Grant during the war, describing him as a “good boss, . . . modest and unassuming.”⁵⁴ And despite the deteriorating condition of the tomb itself, the city’s neglect of its maintenance, and the development of the surrounding neighborhood, it would remain a reasonably popular tourist destination over the next several decades although it would not attract the numbers it had in its early years. Yet as those of Grant’s and succeeding generations passed on, the tomb would become more of a burden to Grant’s memory than serve as a somber memorialization to a great American as it was originally intended.⁵⁵

At times, even when it was used as a backdrop to glorify Grant’s name, the tomb would become a symbol of distress to Grant’s reputation, even by those well intended. No better manifestation of such a seemingly perverse paradox can be found than in a speech honoring Memorial Day given by then Secretary of War, soon to president, William Howard Taft in May, 1908. Though ending his speech with great praise for Grant, and much to the chagrin of the gathering of Grant’s family and supporters, Taft’s opening statements seemed unduly harsh for a man whom he was there to honor. Stating that Grant had “yielded to the weakness of a taste for strong drink, and rather be court martialed,” had left the army in 1854, Taft further offered that “though everything looked dark” for Grant and his family later in the 1850s, “he overcame in great measure his weakness for strong drink.” Taft further stated that, as constituted, “it seemed impossible” for Grant to be able to earn a livelihood. By implication, Taft was lending credence to a key tenet of the Lost Cause creed, that Grant was nothing more than an accident of the war. The inappropriate language, especially with members of Grant’s family standing so closely to

⁵⁴ *NY Times*, Nov. 2, 1919.

⁵⁵ It was about this time, during the World War I years, with the aforementioned increased development, that the Grant Monument Association and its care for the tomb “began to see some reverses in their fortunes and those of the tomb,” from Kahn, *Historical Resource*, 148.

Taft, was not lost on the *New York Times* reporter who noted that the president's comments were "startling under the circumstances."⁵⁶

Reaction to the speech was swift and in at least one case, its defense was as convoluted as Taft's comments had been. The *Times* reported in its June 2nd edition that Louis Hay, the head of Taft's New York state Republican party organization stated that Taft had nothing but kind intentions towards Grant, that he was simply trying to convey the message that Grant had won two great victories in his lifetime, "one over the Confederate forces and the other over himself." Yet those who thought Taft's comments to be inappropriate were equally as quick in voicing their displeasure. Stunned at both the speech and Hay's defense of such, a "Veteran of 1864" was outraged by the "unhappy and inopportune words," to the point where he "is no longer disposed" to support Taft in his bid to win the presidency in the forthcoming presidential election.⁵⁷

Though declining a bit, visitation remained relatively strong in the 1920s although a disturbing trend regarding the purpose of the edifice began to manifest itself as it apparently became fashionable for young men in the neighboring area to use the memorial for purposes otherwise intended, such as turning the tomb into a makeshift athletic venue. City resident Seymour Danzig condemned a group of young men who had made it a habit of playing handball against tomb walls, citing their "lack of decency." A year later a *Times* correspondent added to the chorus of growing complaints, citing the vandalism perpetrated on the tomb by Columbia University students who were indeed using monument walls to play handball.⁵⁸

⁵⁶ *NY Times*, May 31, 1908; the reporter noted that Frederick Dent Grant and Ulysses S. Grant, II were "mere feet" from Taft when he made his speech.

⁵⁷ *NY Times*, June 2, 1908; letter to the editor dated June 3, 1908.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, Oct. 22, 1925 and June 18, 1926; David Quigley wrote that by the mid-1920s, "local students used the memorial's walls as a preferred arena" for games of handball, from *Second Founding*, 182; Khan wrote that 24-hour police protection had been pulled by the early 1900-teens, which led to "unruly people," "kids on roller skates," and "relic hunters" all doing their particular damage to the tomb and its surroundings, from *Resource Study*, 149.

At the turn of the decade in the face of the onset of the Great Depression, “Grant’s Tomb and the Statue of Liberty are still the foremost points of interest,” at least in the minds of non-resident New York University students who took part in an informal poll to identify the city’s major attractions.⁵⁹ Yet as expected, as the nation became enveloped in hard times, both visitation to and the condition of Grant’s Tomb experienced a notable decline during the economic distress. Visitation in 1933 plummeted “to levels never experienced before,” with only about 95,000 attending for the year.⁶⁰ During the 1930s the tomb also became a focal point for activists as well as a stage for utilitarian and political expression. Amidst widespread poverty endemic to the age, veterans in droves tried to earn a buck “selling tawdry souvenirs at his tomb.” Further, radicals disenchanted with America desecrated the tomb with political epithets and slogans. Tomb custodian George Burnside, identified by the *New York Times* as a second cousin to General Ambrose Burnside, blamed a lack of a police presence for the increased vandalism. Burnside related that years back when the New York City police force had only 5,000 men on the force they were able to station an officer at the tomb around the clock, seven days a week. But now with 20,000 on the force Burnside complained that they “‘can’t spare a man for the job.’” Burnside’s sentiments were confirmed by John Buchner, hired to rid the tomb of graffiti, who said the most recent act of tomb desecration was just the “latest in a long series of acts of vandalism at the tomb.”⁶¹

In July, 1935, 80-year old George Upshur, described by the *New York Times* as Robert E. Lee’s cousin, was invited to speak at the memorial on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of Grant’s death. Reflective of both the deteriorating condition of both the tomb and Grant’s memory, Upshur spoke in “indignation” that “‘the memory of this great American and patriotic

⁵⁹ *NY Times*, Aug. 11, 1932.

⁶⁰ Khan, *Resource Study*, 162.

⁶¹ *NY Times*, August 20 and 29, 1932.

soldier should have been so forgotten,” reminding those in attendance that ““next to Washington himself should U.S. Grant be held in grateful remembrance by all true Americans.”” Such words seemed prophetic, for as the decade progressed, New Deal Work Project Administration funds became available for a badly needed refurbishing of the 50-plus year old memorial, to include fixing a roof that had been “leaking for years.” In the summer of 1938, the *New York Times* reported that \$200,000 in tomb renovations were planned, including the addition of a state of the art air conditioning system for the comfort of the 200,000 who were visiting the tomb each year, making it the only artificially cooled monument in the world. Less than a year later, a “New Grant’s Tomb” opened on the anniversary of his 127th birthday, the *Times* reporting that the “gloomy” atmosphere that permeated the previous structure was gone. The *Times* further reported that nine million people had visited the Tomb since its dedication in 1897, an impressive average of over 214,000 visitors per year.⁶²

With the nation’s attentions focused on events overseas during much of the 1940s and into the 1950s, little mind was paid to Grant’s Tomb other than the usual anniversary celebrations with various veterans’ groups, most of which drew small crowds. The message at many of these dedications, was as it had been so often in the past, a plea for understanding and a righting of the record for what Grant had accomplished. In April of 1952, in a speech about his great grandfather, this message was articulated by Major-General Ulysses S. Grant III, who spoke harshly of the current ““conspiracy to tear down the reputations”” of those who had served their country so well and “brought it forward,”” a message that seemed to resonate with a public late of a war declared to save the world from tyranny and repression. Accordingly, as a tourist attraction, the memorial (and Grant’s memory) seemed to regain a bit of its former cachet,

⁶² *NY Times*, Jul. 24, 1935, May 30, 1937, Aug. 17, 1938 and April 28, 1939.

drawing a goodly amount of visitors, the *New York Times* reporting in 1952 that the tomb was still drawing about 250,000 a year.⁶³

In spite of the nation's prosperity in the aftermath of World War II and into the 1950s, the physical condition of Grant's Tomb, now past the half-century mark in age, continued to be neglected by civic officials and continued to deteriorate as funds for its maintenance remained woefully inadequate. In 1954, the *New York Times* reported that "the management of Grant's Tomb" was the only city agency out of 32 that did not request a budget increase over its previous year's allotment. According to the *Times*, an appropriation of \$10,685, the same as the previous year, was requested. To place both the dollar amount and the request in the proper context of the day, the Queen's Borough Library by itself requested a \$5,500 increase from \$9,500 to \$15,000 for its chief librarian. Further, the \$10,685 requested from New York City for Grant's Tomb was a paltry \$3,685 increase over what had been appropriated 57 years earlier in 1897. All of this suggests that the city of New York did not have an abiding interest in preserving the memory of this native-Midwesterner whom New York never really embraced as one of its own.⁶⁴ Yet despite such attitudes, and despite its financial difficulties and occasional press reports detailing its continued deteriorating condition, the "Tomb remained a landmark often inspected by visitors to the city" throughout the staid 1950s.⁶⁵

Historian David Quigley wrote that "New York has never been a city to dwell in its past," and as such, and even in spite of the meager amount it was spending to maintain the monument, state and city officials nevertheless sought to rid itself of its fiduciary responsibility to Grant's

⁶³ *Ibid.*, Apr. 28 and June 4, 1952.

⁶⁴ Years later, *New York Times* columnist John Tierney would write that "Grant has really never really belonged to New York," his most noteworthy achievement in the city being a "bad business deal that bankrupted him," from "The Big City: Grant Us Peace," *New York Times Magazine*, May 7, 1995.

⁶⁵ *NY Times*, Jan. 9, 1954; The city's contribution to the maintenance expenses for the tomb was \$7,000 in 1897, from Kahn, *Historical Resource*, 145; in its Nov. 5, 1954 edition, the *Times* reported that a dead body, apparently a suicide, was found in the shrubs near Grant's Tomb; *Ibid.*, Jan. 24, 1956.

memory and his tomb.⁶⁶ Accordingly, in March of 1956, New York Governor Averill Harriman signed a bill authorizing the state of New York to turn the tomb over to the federal government. The *New York Times* reported that the total Grant Monument Association budget for maintenance of the tomb for the entire year was a paltry \$14,722, \$11,165 coming from New York.⁶⁷ Three years later in April, 1959, Grant's Tomb became a "national shrine" as the National Park Service took over jurisdiction of the edifice. And despite the fact that the memorial had attracted "almost 300,000 visitors," in 1958, it appeared that the transfer was welcome news to New Yorkers, the *Times* reporting that that "Grant's Tomb is ceded," relieving New York of \$11,635 in yearly maintenance fees.⁶⁸

Almost from the moment the National Park Service took over its management, the fortunes of Grant's Tomb began a precipitous decline. This occurred despite the fact that there appeared to be a good bit of residual cachet for the monument left over from earlier years, especially from conservative Americans who indulged in such popular entertainment as the popular television series "Leave It to Beaver." For in an episode produced and aired in 1963, Theodore "Beaver" Cleaver, that precocious 1950s icon to millions of Americans, listed Grant's Tomb as first on his list of tourist attractions when told he would be spending several weeks of his summer months touring America.⁶⁹ Yet despite the Beav's pronounced enthusiasm for visiting the monument, the 1960s would usher in a generation of hard times, neglect, and even derision for Grant's Tomb.

⁶⁶ Quigley, *Second Founding*, 175.

⁶⁷ *NY Times*, March 4, 1956.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, April 24, 1959 and May 2, 1959; according to the *Times*, New York's share of the expenses for the tomb increased by only \$470 between 1956 and 1959.

⁶⁹ "Leave it to Beaver," right after Grant's Tomb, Beaver expressed a desire to see the Grand Canyon, from Episode 228, "Beaver Sees America," originally aired June 6, 1963; this comes 27 years after Longfellow Deeds proclaimed his desire to visit Grant' Tomb as well, from the movie "Mr. Deeds Goes to Town."

An increase in crime and growing anti-war sentiment of the late 1960s and 1970s did little to help Grant's Tomb restore any of its earlier lost cachet as the memorial was subjected to a precipitous decline in both its physical condition as well as the memory of what it stood for. The memorial and the areas immediately adjacent to it increasingly became recognized as areas of criminal activity as well as a focal point for local students protesting the Vietnam War, which had the net effect of reducing already diminishing crowds.⁷⁰ In July, 1969, press reports lauded the efforts of New York City police officers Peter Porrello and Bill O'Rourke, who arrested two teenagers near Grant's Tomb after a passerby had been fatally stabbed. Described by the *Times* as an "Indian or Pakistani," the victim had been stabbed with a ten-inch kitchen knife, recovered by police near the tomb. In 1972, citing public apprehension in the face of anti-Vietnam war rallies by Columbia University students, a grand total of about 30 spectators were present for the occasion of Grant's 150th birthday anniversary. "The audience was outnumbered by a 40-man band from the United States Military Academy," reported the *Times*, an embarrassment that quickly brought a number of the city's civic leaders to the conclusion that as a monument to a great American, Grant's Tomb had outlived itself and had become an anachronism.⁷¹ Accordingly, plans were made in late 1972 and 1973 to make the best out of a bad situation and turn the previously revered property into a gathering place for neighborhood cultural activities. Grant's Tomb, unlike any other American memorial to its deceased heroes, was now to be turned into little more than an amusement park.

Neighborhood involvement was solicited in attempts to "liven up the monument" and turn it into a utilitarian gathering place rather than keep it as a dedicated memorial. Plans

⁷⁰ Joan Waugh wrote that with the amount of continued development in the area, once pristine park land had turned into a "dangerous crime-ridden neighborhood" of Morningside Heights in the 1960s, from *American Hero*, 262.

⁷¹ *NY Times*, July 24, 1969 and April 28, 1972; Reverend Neale Secor of neighboring St. Mary's Episcopal Church called Grant's Tomb "a piece of an isolated past," *Ibid.*, Sep. 3, 1972.

included art festivals, dance groups, movies and live performances, all activities falling within the purview of neighborhood cultural activity. Pedro Silva, spokesman for an art group leading a project to beautify the area, spoke of the addition of numerous tiled benches to the grounds immediately surrounding Grant's Tomb. The benches were a concession to the modern artistic whims of the day and had absolutely nothing in common with the stately architecture nor the somber mood of Grant's Tomb. Yet citing the high crime area in which the tomb was located and the \$10,000 in annual fees it cost New York to rid the monument of its seemingly ever-present graffiti, Silva and others sang the praises of the funky, tiled benches stating that "even raucous youths like to have a place to sit down and enjoy parkland." And apparently rest up for theft by taking, the *Times* reporting that a cement mixer used to mix the foundations for the benches was stolen.⁷²

Two years later in 1974, with loudspeakers "perched on the side of the monument below the granite eagles that flank the bottom steps," a crowd of about 300 enjoyed Cary Grant in "Bringing Up Baby" and "The Philadelphia Story" on the big screen, a 25' by 40' panel set up at the base of the monument steps. Sponsored by the National Park Service, it was the first double feature in a four-week summers series of popular movies. The opportunity to enjoy such big-screen entertainment was irresistible for librarian Barbara Heenan, a nearby Yonkers resident who claimed it was her first visit to the tomb, stating that she had "driven by a hundred times" but had never gone in, which seemed to be the anthem for most New York residents.⁷³

In the post-Vietnam war years, Grant's Tomb was becoming a "vibrant public site for uptown residents," wrote David Quigley, perceived as important only for "hosting a range of

⁷² *NY Times*, Sept. 3, 1972.

⁷³ *NY Times*, Aug. 6, 1974; a New York City travel guide produced by the Federal Writers' Project stated "it is said that few New Yorkers have ever visited the tomb, and no visitor has ever missed it," also mentioned in Quigley, *Second Founding*, 182.

performances each summer.⁷⁴ As such activity throughout the 1970s continued to obfuscate the true meaning of Grant's Tomb, the membership of the Grant Monument Association sought to restore the memory of the memorial to its original intent. In 1979, taking umbrage at the reality of being turned into little more than a neighborhood amusement arcade and arts center, Ralph Newman, president of the association, voiced his organization's support for removal of the tile-clad benches in an effort to begin to restore the solemnity to the meaning of the monument. In a *New York Times* article entitled "Skirmish at Grant's Tomb Over Benches," Newman protested what the memorial had become, stating "its like having a roller coaster ride running up and down the Lincoln Memorial." The article went on to report that in resistance to the association's position, a committee to keep the benches in place was formed under the leadership of Manhattan Democrat Franz Leichter.⁷⁵

Garnering support from the press, those who wanted to keep the benches where they were found an ally in the form of prominent architecture critic and author Paul Goldberger. In his "Design Notebook" column in the *New York Times*, Goldberger took issue with those who felt the benches detracted from the "solemnity" of the monument. He described them as "witty, joyous...inventive and even exuberant" as a depiction of city life, stating that the benches are "surely Manhattan's finest piece of folk art of our time," in contrast to the "heavy, dry," Grant's Tomb, "pompous beyond even the requirements of a Mausoleum for a national hero." Further, Goldberger stated that a lesson could be learned from the placement of such folk art, stating that while the monument has been "tarred" with graffiti in recent years, "it seems no accident that the

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

⁷⁵ *NY Times*, July 23, 1979.

benches have been free of graffiti.” “There is a lesson in this” wrote Goldberger, “and one hopes that the lesson will be learned and the benches left where they belong.”⁷⁶

Yet despite the controversy, the tomb remained a center of cultural entertainment with other artistic components being added to the agenda, including the addition of the “Dancemobile,” a product of the Harlem Cultural Council, which announced that five dance companies would be performing on Thursdays at Grant’s Tomb during its summer season. In spite of Silva’s and Goldberger’s optimism regarding the addition of so many cultural accoutrements to literally jazz up the area, for Grant traditionalists and supporters, it was like applying cheap makeup to a pig. The tomb itself, reported the *Times*, was “out of sight of most citizens’ gaze and out of the minds of public officials.”⁷⁷

In January of 1964, the *New York Times* published a writer’s offering that the condition of Grant’s Tomb “disgraces Grant’s memory and New York City.”⁷⁸ Shortly thereafter, the New York City press began to report on the work of a coterie of Grantophiles, described as “descendants and admirers,” of Grant, who had had enough of the neglect of Grant’s Tomb and were determined to force the federal government to correct the situation. Led by 21-year old Columbia University student Frank Scaturro, described as the “Hero of Grant’s Tomb,” the group brought suit against several “Federal agencies and officials” to restore it to pre-1959 condition, the year the NPS took it over. Scaturro was the driving force, the “prime mover” behind attempts to publicize the horrible conditions of the tomb and force the National Park Service to action. The *Times* reported that Scaturro had written a 325-page report detailing the sordid conditions at the memorial including urine-stained walls at the memorial, a never-ending

⁷⁶ *NY Times*, Aug. 16, 1979. Many, including the author, would suggest that any type of graffiti would be an improvement to the benches as they were designed.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, July 21, 1981 and Oct. 13, 1984.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, Jan. 1, 1994.

parade of skate boarders, graffiti artists and various other vagrants who continued to desecrate the tomb.⁷⁹ Months later, to add to the uproar, Major General Ulysses S. Grant Dietz, Grant's great-great grandson promised the definitive answer to the time-worn question of "who is buried in Grant's Tomb." "No one," was the general's reply as reported in the *New York Times*, both an admonition for the state to update and restore the tomb and a threat by Dietz to remove the bodies to another location if such action was not taken.⁸⁰

The justifiably aggressive action of the G.M.A. stirred up those who saw the tomb as other than it was originally intended to be, igniting a battle of "Causes" which was subsequently played out in the press. It featured those in support of returning the monument and its grounds to the formerly austere atmosphere for which it was originally designed to represent against modern-day cultural awareness advocates who continued to see it as relic of the past, to be used to better serve the community by continuing to be turned into a focal point for the work of the local artistic community.⁸¹ Grant's Tomb and both its concept and design are "no longer working," *New York Times* correspondent John Tierney told his readers in 1995, and responding to his own question of "who is buried in Grant's Tomb" Tierney answered "'who cares.'" Joining forces with Tierney in vocalizing contempt for the Tomb and disdain for the man, essay author Jonathon Rosen described the memorial as "undeniable sepulcher gloom," suggesting that the "capacity to stomach horrendous losses and keep on going was part of Grant's disturbing greatness."⁸²

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, Apr. 27, 1994 and May 1, 1997.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, Oct. 16, 1994.

⁸¹ Though concessions would be made on both sides, press reports indicated public opinion for the G.M.A.'s point of winning was gaining strength, reporting in 1996 of large and unruly Jazzmobile crowds at the tomb, and then of a proposed city crack down on more "unruly crowds," "blasting their stereos," and precipitating a goodly number of fights, from the *NY Times*, Aug. 25, 1996 and March 23, 1997.

⁸² Tierney, "The Big City: Grant Us Peace," *NY Times*, May 7, 1995; Jonathon Rosen, "Peace Infuses Grant's Tomb," *NY Times*, April 23, 1999.

Scaturro's and the Grant Monument Association's effort paid off with the rededication of a newly refurbished Grant's Tomb in April, 1997, the centennial celebration of the dedication of the memorial. Included in the official program were then Mayor Rudy Giuliani, Ulysses Grant Dietz, great-great grandson of the general, and a smattering of other descendants and politicians. Notably uninvited to speak or take part in the ceremony was "gadfly" Scaturro, the individual most responsible for facilitating the tomb's 1.8 million dollar facelift as well as for resurrecting the Grant Monument Association, which had disbanded in the mid-1960s. When asked about his omission, a N.P.S. representative responded that Scaturro's "efforts were helpful," but that he "simply could not be squeezed into the program."⁸³ Despite the substantial improvements to the memorial and the hard work of this determined group and newly reformed Grant Monument Association, the edifice still needs some touch ups and still remains somewhat of an isolated oasis within the confines of one of the nation's most populous metropolitan areas. It is, according to Joan Waugh, the least visited major monument in New York City, now only hundreds visiting per day when once there were thousands. This despite the easy access to the tomb from just off the West Side Highway or a short walk from 2 subway stations. And as David Quigley suggests, as the memory of Ulysses S. Grant's reputation continues to fade away, this still most famous of New York City's monuments is more and more known only "as a vaguely remembered one-liner from our grandparent's generation."⁸⁴ But at least today, a refurbished and cleaned-up one liner.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, April 28, 1997, article entitled "Ceremony at Grant's Tomb Notes Gadfly's Triumph: Man's Battle Helped Save a Landmark."

⁸⁴ Waugh, "Pageantry of Woe," 153; Quigley, *Second Founding*, 176.

9 A BLURRED IMAGE RESTORED

“His remarkable self-confidence, stubborn determination and basic integrity reflected the strengths of the American people.”

John Y. Simon

Under the culturally sanctioned weight of Lost Cause mythology, the academic broadside launched by the Dunning school of history, and visages evoked by the conditioning of popular memory, Grant’s reputation reached its nadir as the United States was locked in the throes of the Great Depression in the mid-1930s.¹ Having reached such a condition, Grant’s image would begin to experience a modest resurrection and would be restored, in part, to levels that would be recognizable to his contemporaries. His memory would benefit from America’s uncertainty and search for heroes during World War II and as a symbol of resolute will his reputation would reap the rewards of an unadulterated celebration of “Americanism” amidst the tensions of the Cold War era. Benefiting first from a trickle and then a profusion of newly discovered primary source literature long thought to be nonexistent, a new, improved Grant would be dusted off and paraded in front of the American public. Postwar consensus historians would elevate his military capabilities and by century’s end, Grant’s reputation as a military commander of the highest order would be unquestioned. Yet aided and abetted by ill informed perceptions advanced in popular culture, other aspects of his career and personal life would continue to be questioned. Grant’s reputation would not be rescued from those images that portrayed him as a failed president and in much of popular culture, a prodigious drinker of epic proportion.

¹ Grant historian John Y. Simon wrote that 1935, the 50th anniversary of Grant’s death, was the “low point for Grant’s reputation,” from “Ulysses S. Grant One Hundred Years Later,” *Illinois Historical Review*, 79, no. 4. (Winter, 1986): 256; Joan Waugh wrote that Grant’s reputation reached its nadir in the 1920s and 1930s, due in part to the romantic images of the Old South suggested by such vehicles as *Gone With the Wind*, from *American Hero*, 210.

With Grant's memory evoking images of failure and incompetence, 1935 was a convenient moment for the publication of the University of Wisconsin Professor William Hesselstine's biography, *Ulysses S. Grant: Politician*.² Acknowledging that "historians and biographers" consider Grant "the least worthy of presidents," Hesselstine purported to "reexamine Grant's political career impartially." And in the minds of many predisposed to accept the standard dogma of the day regarding Grant, he was successful albeit with a pronounced bias that revealed itself in the *New York Times* book review of his work that suggested Hesselstine "does not reveal great admiration for the character in question."³ Hesselstine's work seemed to be more of a compilation of all the stereotypes and simplified images that had bedeviled Grant's reputation since his death. And despite his stated goal to the contrary, just a few short pages into the book it is soon apparent that the reader is condemned to share the same conclusion on Grant that the author does. Explaining that it was difficult to assess Grant because of "the almost complete lack of manuscripts" and the "singularly barren" documentary evidence pertaining to Grant's presidency, Hesselstine's book fit perfectly the pre-conceived Grant paradigm developed over the past half century and rather than shed any of these notions, would add to the diminution of Grant's memory. It was as though Hesselstine was accumulating the "best of the worst" of Grant, a compilation of all those hackneyed catch phrases and clichés that had been used at every turn to denigrate and disparage Grant's memory.⁴

²John Y. Simon suggested that Hesselstine wrote his biography with "verve and contempt," from "Grant: One Hundred Years Later," 256.

³William Hesselstine, *Ulysses S. Grant: Politician* (Dodd, Mead and Co., 1935), vii; *NY Times*, Sep. 22, 1935, the reviewer wrote that Hesselstine gives "a conscientious compilation of the sources of controversy surrounding the least effective part of General Grant's career."

⁴Assuming there to be little in the way of Grant documents or manuscripts, Hesselstine did a disservice to historical research by basing his conclusions on lazy research and false assumptions. As Joan Waugh later wrote, "Hesselstine's statement about the dearth of Grant materials was simply wrong, as later publications proved," from *American Hero*, 107. Josiah Bunting wrote that Hesselstine and other writers of his ilk "could no more escape the clichés of the Grant Myth" than the memory of popular culture could," from Bunting, *Grant*, 3.

Hesseltine's Grant was, Samuel Clemens' opinion to the contrary, a "poor writer," a "plastic person," a "failure" devoid of "dynamic force" and of any "definite direction." His "mental endowment was not great," he was "peculiarly ignorant of the Constitution," and his "personality was essentially colorless." Notwithstanding his success at West Point, his admirable record in the Mexican War and his personal success in the embrace of a loving family, Grant's first 40 years on earth was a story of "dismal failure" and up until the Civil War, Grant found nothing but "four decades of futile existence." And all this before the reader turns to the second page. From thence forward, the reader finds a fatally flawed president, a silent sphinx who was little more than an accident of history, unable to parlay his success during the Civil War into any type of meaningful advantage in his postwar years. Such was Grant's pitiful condition, according to Hesseltine, that even "dogs did not like him."⁵ One cannot get through the first chapter, "Forty Years of Failure," without wondering how Grant managed to get out of bed in the morning.⁶

Evidence suggests there may have been a number of reasons why Hesseltine appeared to be so hostile to Grant and the emancipationist cause which he and President Lincoln both represented. One of Hesseltine's students, historian Richard Current, wrote that some critics labeled Hesseltine as a follower in the best of the William Dunning tradition, and as a native-born Virginian educated at and teaching in Wisconsin, was condemned by a Columbia University historian for "corrupting Midwestern youth with some kind of Southern taint." Further, much of Hesseltine's later writings reflected his embrace of Lost Cause mythology regarding the nature of the Civil War. The war had little to do with slavery, asserted Hesseltine,

⁵ Hesseltine, *Grant*, vii, viii, 1,6,304.

⁶ David Blight wrote of the "terse, captivating prose of Grant's memoirs" as "one of the most remarkable deathbed writings of all time," from *American Oracle: The Civil War in the Civil Rights Era* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2011), 157, 175.

rather it was a struggle between an all consuming nationalistic fever in the North against Southern states' rights and was waged by President Lincoln to solve the "Constitutional riddle of whether the states or the nation was sovereign." At its end, a manipulative Abraham Lincoln, leader of the "apostles on nationalism," was a "master architect of the new nation" who trampled over the Constitution to embrace his form of a new nationalism at the expense of the Southern states' rights. Further, as a pacifist who nurtured a "life-long hatred of militarism," Hesseltine may have been naturally inclined to find little if any merit in Grant's leadership during the war. Or, as Joan Waugh suggests, since Hesseltine's claim "about the dearth of Grant materials was simply wrong," perhaps he was content to write about Grant out of ignorance, preferring to rehash tired stereotypes rather than research resources that might have been available.⁷

Having been slandered, ridiculed, and abused with almost every adjective imaginable, Grant's reputation had no where to go but up in the late 1930s. Prominent African American historian W.E.B. Du Bois would write a voluminous opus of Reconstruction that helped promote a reconsideration of the prevailing academic stance on Reconstruction, and, by implication, lay the groundwork for a fresh new analysis of Grant. Collaborating with other black historians in the 1910s and 1920s, Du Bois had written a number of articles portraying blacks in a positive light during Reconstruction. Yet it was Bowers' *Tragic Era*, the "most tremendous indictment" of black people during Reconstruction" that prompted Du Bois, at the behest of "educated people

⁷ Richard N. Current, "Recollections of the Man and the Teacher," *The Wisconsin Magazine of History*, 66 (Winter, 1982-83):119; William Hesseltine, "Lincoln's War Governors," *The Abraham Lincoln Quarterly*, 4 (Dec., 1946): 153, 200, Hesseltine, *Lincoln's Plan of Reconstruction* (Tuscaloosa: Confederate Publishing Co., 1960, rep. Gloucester, Ma.: Peter Smith, 1963), 42; two other former students, historians Richard Gunderson and Frank Freidel both wrote of Hesseltine's pacifism as well as his loathing of anything military, from Gunderson, "William Best Hesseltine and the Profession of History: A Retrospective," from the same issue of *Wisconsin Magazine of History*, 107 and Frank Freidel, *The Teacher and His Students*, *Ibid.*, 114, available at: <http://quod.lib.umich.edu/a/alajournals/>, accessed on Sept. 3, 2012. Author Michael Burkheimer wrote of all the books deemed essential on President Lincoln, Hesseltine's was "the most negative in attitude about Abraham Lincoln." Hesseltine didn't see Lincoln as "wholly evil," wrote Burkheimer, but something close to it, from *100 Essential Lincoln Books* (Nashville: Cumberland House Publishing, Inc., 2003), 111; Waugh, *American Hero*, 107.

of color” to write his epic *Black Reconstruction* in the mid-1930s.⁸ In large measure, Du Bois refuted what he felt was Dunning’s revisionist view of history. He set about to explain that the so-called “tragic era” was not as it had been portrayed and that its leading figures, the freedmen and those who supported them were simply trying to live out the intent of the promise of the American dream as promised in its Constitution. While acknowledging Dunning as a “kindly and impressive historian,” Du Bois felt that his scholarship was adversely influenced by a revisionist Southern interpretation wholly foreign and in “conscious opposition to the classic interpretations of New England.” Du Bois did not question Dunning’s credentials but did question his method, suggesting it was a blatantly racist and opinionated revision of history, “one-sided and partisan to the last degree.” In trying to render his version of Reconstruction, a version firmly ensconced within the throes of Lost Cause ideology, Du Bois expressed his frustration when he opined “I write then in a field devastated by passion and belief.”⁹

Finding himself “literally aghast” at historical misinterpretations of Reconstruction by those “discarding” government reports and documents while “substituting selected diaries, letters, gossip,” Du Bois set out to “establish the Truth” about Reconstruction. His stated purpose was to understand the “authentic facts of our history, 1860-1880,” a position in which he felt he stood “virtually alone” in his interpretations. The only excuse for maintaining such a blind eye to the historical truth of Reconstruction, posited Du Bois, was racial bias and “loyalty to a lost cause.”¹⁰ Yet in the immediate end, Du Bois’ work would be beguiled by that same

⁸ *Black Reconstruction*, xxvii, xxviii; historian David Levering Lewis wrote that Du Bois’ supporters felt that only he had the “unique ability to mount a credible counterattack” against what they perceived to be Bowers’ contemptuous characterizations of African Americans during Reconstruction. Levering described Bowers, editor of the *New York Post*, as a “fiercely partisan Democrat who believed in states’ rights and raged against a recrudescing southern GOP,” *Ibid.*, xxvii.

⁹ Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction*, 588, 589, 593.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 592-595; Du Bois was clear in pointing out what he felt were “gross misrepresentations of Blacks and their role in Reconstruction” as he clearly understood the adverse impact of the Dunning school of thought on textbooks

racism that he railed against, for as a man of color, Du Bois' work would not receive the same legitimacy it was entitled to within the academic community at the time had it been written by a white male.¹¹ And oh the indignity to the Dunningites, for now they were being challenged within the academic arena by a representative of those whose intellectual capacity and even basic humanity they had long denied. And though Du Bois' work did little to specifically amplify Grant for his role in promoting the interest of blacks during Reconstruction, the seeds of discontent that Du Bois helped plant, in concert with those others who pronounced similar skepticism helped pave the way for the beginning of the end of the Dunning perspective as a serious determinant of American historical thought.¹²

With Dunning's interpretation of Reconstruction increasingly being questioned as a result of the work of Du Bois and others, Grant's reputational star would begin a quite modest ascendancy in the early 1940s with the onset of World War II and would continue onward and upward during the Cold War years that immediately followed. Enveloped in patriotic fervor at mid-century, Grant's name would evoke images of an earlier era in which the United States had once before fought and ultimately prevailed in a war for liberty and freedom. As commanding general and "hero" of the greatest war in its history, Grant would share many of the same characteristics of America's similarly constructed new war hero, Dwight David Eisenhower and his role in the greatest war in the world's history. And then in the throes of Cold War tensions in the aftermath of the Great War, Grant would be celebrated and hailed as a representation of that

of the era, which represented "a clearly constructed discourse on race," from Provenzo, Shaver, and Bello, ed., *The Textbook As Discourse: Sociocultural Dimensions of American Schoolbooks* (New York: Routledge, 2011), 74, viii.

¹¹ Andrew Diemer wrote that "though black historians, most prominently W.E.B. Du Bois," countered the views of the Dunningites and those influenced by Lost Cause mythology, "scholars largely ignored them," from Diemer, "Reconstructing Philadelphia: African Americans and Politics in the Post-Civil War North," *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, 133 (Jan., 2009): 31.

¹² Other aspects of Dunning's work was under scrutiny as well, such as the suggestion from consensus historian Henry Steele Commager writing in 1938, that "few now would be inclined to agree with Professor Dunning that records of the Wilson Administration contrasted favorably with that of Lincoln's or gave any 'satisfaction' to those who seek an abiding reign of law," from the *NY York Times*, Feb. 13, 1938.

steely grit and determination needed to confront and stare down an unrelenting ideological enemy.

On the eve of engulfing itself in the greatest conflagration in recorded history, Rear Admiral Clark H. Woodward, the son of a Confederate veteran, used the Grant Memorial as a pulpit to warn about of the perils of an unprepared military. In a service commemorating Grant's 118th birthday in April of 1940, Woodward declared that the "god of War still stalks the earth unrestrained," and then invoked the name of Ulysses S. Grant and his early struggles in climbing through the ranks as an abject lesson to better anticipate such a threat and to "make ourselves so strong that no nation dare to challenge us."¹³ A year and a half later, the Admiral's warning bore fruit as the United States suffered its most humiliating defeat and introduction into a major war since Fort Sumter some 90 years earlier.

Reasons for United States' involvement in World War II, as they had been in the Civil War, were clear cut, enumerated, and similar in nature. These were wars of freedom from the oppression and tyranny of those of self-proclaimed superior racial stock. Both would be fought against those who sought to enslave peoples whom they felt were unfit to live amongst them, and both were wars in which the United States would subsequently impose the benign will of its democratic sensibilities, albeit laden with all its inherent hypocrisies, on its totalitarian antagonist. These wars were different from World War I, when reasons for American participation seemed much more abstract, far too vague to sacrifice tens of thousands of this nation's young men and to waste so much of its treasure. But not so in the Civil War or in World War II. In both cases, the United States had suffered seemingly unprovoked attacks and as the two bloodiest and costliest wars in American history, U.S. involvement for each began in the second year of the decade and ended in the sixth year. Both lasted just under four full years, and

¹³ *NY Times*, Apr. 29, 1940, article entitled "Grant's Struggle Viewed as a Lesson."

in both cases, the United States rallied from early setbacks and confusion to secure convincing and overwhelming victory followed by the employ of the United States military to occupy hostile ground in an attempt to secure stability and security for the local citizenry. And in both cases, America would be led to victory by Midwesterners of distinct unpretentious and determined nature.

Over the next two decades, as part and parcel to this heightened interest with all matters that were military, a spate of articles and books were published about Grant that would, in part, begin to resurrect his reputation, at least his military persona. In the early 1940s and throughout the war years, some of these early works would shed some light on this purported “sphinx,” illuminate matters of a more personal nature and assure the American public of the simple nobility and goodness of its military heroes. Then in the late 1940s and 1950s, fostered in large degree by favorable comparisons with Eisenhower and his wartime success, works of more substantial academic merit regarding Grant’s military endeavors would be produced. The early publications were more stylized and less scholarly works, “novelized” biographies designed to reveal the more intimate side of the man who was Ulysses S. Grant. One prominent example of such a work was Helen Todd’s *A Man Named Grant*, published in 1940. Suggesting that her characters and significant events were “historic fact,” Todd assured her readers that her imagined dialogue “seemed to me the probabilities.” Satisfied enough with the historical content and so compelling was her depiction of Grant, the reviewer for the *Atlanta Constitution* wrote that for the first time in his life “Ulysses S. Grant has been made an interesting and appealing figure.”¹⁴

A week later, *Los Angeles Times* reviewer Edward Sabin commended Todd for presenting such an “intimate and sympathetic story of a human being” and noted that the book

¹⁴ Helen Todd, *A Man Named Grant* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1940), preface; *Atlanta Constitution*, Aug. 25, 1940.

had earned Todd the first literary fellowship award bestowed by Houghton Mifflin for work in nonfiction. Yet despite Todd's well-intentioned romantic notions in bringing to life a new, personable and likeable Grant to the public, she also seemed to fall into a trap by perpetuating old rumor and innuendo that had and continued to do damage to Grant's reputation. Todd's Grant, according to both reviewers was certainly likeable and appealing yet at the same time, he was a man who continued to be caught up in a vortex over which he had no control. He was a "failure, with the inhibitions laid on men by failure;" a man resigned to obscurity and misery for all his life except for that accidental happenstance of the Civil War. According to the *Atlanta-Constitution's* review, Grant "is a man in a web which is stronger than he," acting out a destiny over "which he has no control." Sabin found the same in Todd's Grant. He was "the tool of circumstances" he wrote, a "spiritually broken man" whose "shame of his presidency was no dishonor to him." And with a script that would do Dunning, Hesseltine and the most dedicated of Lost Causers proud, Todd's Jesse told Ulysses in her imagined conversation between father and son, "'Ye're lazy and ye're stupid,'" perpetuating a standard characterization by proclaiming that even those closest to Grant regarded him as a failure. Further, regarding Grant's purported intemperance, Todd wrote that although ashamed of his drinking, Grant was not alone for "many an officer drank himself into a coma at night."¹⁵

Well into the war and in its immediate aftermath, the public was provided further revelation into this new and more personable, albeit tainted Grant. He was a wonderful family man, a great husband; it was common knowledge "that the Grant's got along famously," read the article about Julia Dent Grant in the *Washington Post*. Yet to make a point of Julia's fidelity at his expense, the author was quick to act on old stereotypes. Julia was ever the faithful wife who

¹⁵ *Atlanta Constitution*, Aug. 25, 1940; *Los Angeles Times*, Sep. 1, 1940; Todd, *Man Named Grant*, 9, 7, and although he did report for duty on those following mornings, he was, according to Todd, "never impeccable" as "his clothes always looked accidental on him," *Ibid*.

stood by Grant as he tried to cure himself of his alcohol habit and with her staunch support, “he did finally at least partially lick the Demon Rum.”¹⁶

Of similar nature as Todd’s book was Shirley Seifert’s self-described “novel,” *Captain Grant*, published in 1946. In her voluminous 606-page account, Seifert boldly trod on unprecedented territory and explored the life of Grant prior to the Civil War, before he had gained any notoriety of sort. Described in one book review as a “biographical romance,” Seifert’s book attempted to reach a wider, more eclectic audience than that which may have previously been inclined to read up on Grant. She revealed more of Grant’s personal side and delved into his pre-war relationship with Julia while frequently describing him as a hero “whose true character has generally been too little known.” Testimony to its potential as a serious piece of literature was the acclaim earned by and the reputation of one of the books reviewers, none other than William Du Bois, who wrote his review for the *New York Times*. Du Bois found Seifert’s effort tiresome yet despite his description of her work as a “conscientious failure” with little historical value, suggested that her work had appeal for those interested in the more personal side of Grant and his family.¹⁷ A year later another author of more pronounced renown, Gertrude Stein, would acknowledge her admiration for Grant, declaring in her own inimitable style that he was an “interesting very interesting” great American, “a great man often of course, and not feeling that General Lee was a great man at all.” So moved was Stein by these new more personal emerging images of Grant, she wrote “I cannot think of Ulysses Simpson Grant without tears.”¹⁸

¹⁶ *Washington Post*, June 7, 1943.

¹⁷ *Los Angeles Times*, May 12, 1946; Shirley Seifert, *Captain Grant* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1946), in her dedication, Seifert wrote, “To the memory of a hero, as unassuming as he was great, as great as he was unassuming;” Du Bois review in the *New York Times*, June 2, 1946.

¹⁸ Gertrude Stein, *Four in America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1947, reprint, 1969), 78, 75, 49, 81.

With this newly won respectability beginning to emerge on the pages of some elements of American literature, images of a more humane, kinder Grant became somewhat popular. One who personally witnessed the image of this gentler Grant in popular culture was none other than Kid Eternity, a short lived cartoon character from the 1940s. It was Kid Eternity's good fortune to meet with this newly appealing and even somewhat dapper Ulysses S. Grant, who, reflective of the Grant known to his contemporaries, ably and concisely dispensed some sound advice to the kid on how to successfully resolve a conflict.¹⁹



Figure 9.1 Kid Eternity meets General Grant

As World War II came to a successful conclusion for the United States, both the nature of the fighting and the similarities between General Grant and General Dwight Eisenhower became self evident. There had been little “chivalry” in World War II, little concern for pomp and

¹⁹ From the “Kid Eternity” comic series, Summer Issue #2, 1946, published by Quality Comic Books, available at: http://dc.wikia.com/wiki/File:Ulysses_S._Grant_Earth-S_001.jpg, accessed on August 25, 2012. Apparently the Kid did not take heed of Grant's advice, for not long after this issue was published, Kid Eternity proved not to be so eternal and disappeared from the pantheon of comic book “legends.”

ceremony. It was a brutal war in which the United States was able to marshal superior resources and use all force necessary to pound the enemy into submission. It was a war such as Grant had waged a century earlier – a modern war that consumed all before it with relentless attack and devastating tenacity. And in both cases, the end result was exactly the same - overwhelming and decisive victory for the United States and the freedom of an oppressed people marginalized by each's respective Aryan "masters." Further, numerous personal similarities between the two also engendered frequent comparisons with the highly popular Eisenhower which also benefited Grant's reputation. Both were Midwesterners, both commanded their particular theater of operations, both were perceived as men of action rather than words, both were bereft of the pomp and the bloviation associated with many of their contemporaries, and most importantly, both were victorious in two of the nation's greatest and most costly wars.²⁰ Further, in the aftermath of military service, both would eventually serve the same political party as two-term presidents of the United States and both would remain personally popular despite being dogged by accusations of political inexperience and ineptitude.

Because their paths would remain similar in their postwar years, comparisons between the two would continue unabated well on after the war and through the Cold War. In the *New York Times* article "Gen. Ike Gets Tip From U.S. Grant," it was one four-star general meeting another as the United States' most prominent nineteenth-century military hero met its most prominent twentieth-century counterpart. It was a "bearded Civil War soldier," a Ulysses S. Grant look-alike, who offered General Eisenhower some advice in typical Grant fashion when he simply told Ike "Don't" as the latter was initiated into the Circus Saints and Sinners club, a charitable organization organized in the late 1920s to initially help aging circus performers. And depending upon one's perspective, one could find no better representation of a saint or a sinner

²⁰ Though born in Texas, a barely two-year old Eisenhower was moved to and subsequently raised in Kansas.

than Ulysses S. Grant. For his part, Ike would write fondly of Grant, stating that he was impressed with Grant's "general plan for the defeat of the Confederacy at the moment he was called upon to assume charge of all the Northern armies." Ike also helped turn opinion around on Grant by writing "my respect for Grant has been high, in spite of bitter criticisms that I have read both of his military ability and of his personal habits."²¹

This newly emerging Grant seemed the perfect representation of "the inflated manly bravado" that reflected an "old-fashioned masculine posturing" that seemed to pervade the male-dominated 1940s and 1950s. References to a "sturdy and well muscled" Grant, both literally and figuratively, proliferated in the press. In an age when the indestructible Superman caught the imagination of the nation's youth, part of Grant's reputation continued to emerge from his own telephone booth of rumor and obfuscation and soar into the stratosphere where only American military icons reside. As a bastion of strength Grant represented the ultimate in "Americanism," and all associated with that eclectic term, that steely resolve and determination America needed to confront and defeat its Cold War enemies.²² Grant's war record was celebrated and his reputation as a military leader soared.

²¹ *NY Times*, Nov. 30, 1946, one assumes the Grant character meant "don't" become a sinner, such as Grant had been oft portrayed; Louis Galambos, ed., *The Papers of Dwight David Eisenhower: The Chief of Staff* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978), VIII: 1372; Eisenhower would also question the prevailing sentiment of the day regarding Grant's intemperance by declaring "it never seemed possible to me that a man who was constantly under the influence of liquor could have pursued a single course so steadfastly, could have accepted frequent failures of subordinates without losing his own equilibrium, could have made numbers of close decisions which involved a nice balance between risk and advantage, and could have maintained the respect of such men as Sherman, Sheridan, Meade, and above all, President Lincoln," from *Ibid*. In the throes of the early Cold War, while Grant's military reputation was on the rise, he was still often regarded in historical circles, in the press, and in popular mind as still wed to the bottle. Ike's letter was written on Nov. 12, 1946, to a William Brooks, who delivered a presentation on Ulysses S. Grant.

²² Cuordileone, K.A. "Politics in an Age of Anxiety:" Cold War Political Culture and the Crisis in American Masculinity, 1949-1960. *The Journal of American History*, 87, No. 2 (Sep., 2000), 522; Besides being "sturdy and well muscled," Grant displayed "audacity, rare courage, and relentless energy." He was also "one of the world's greatest soldiers," as described to his readers by columnist Frank Klingberg in the *Los Angeles Times*, Sep. 25, 1952.; Once again using the Grant Monument as a backdrop and Grant as a symbol, a New York state legislator made reference to "Americanism" and all the good the term implied, from *NY Times*, April 25, 1948.

Speaking before the Illinois State legislature on the eve of Grant's 129th birthday in April of 1951, *Chicago Tribune* publisher Colonel Robert McCormick sang Grant's praises before an enthusiastic crowd of politicians and spectators. It was much more than sheer numbers that earned Grant his success McCormick told the crowd of approximately 500. It was his ability to adapt to different situations, to solve different problems that exposed "Grant's military genius." His "dogged resistance" at Shiloh, his "brilliant defeat of a superior enemy at Vicksburg," and his "brilliant maneuvers" at Wilderness were only a few of the factors that distinguished Grant as he defeated an "overmatched" Robert E. Lee to secure final victory for Federal forces. According to McCormick, Grant was, borrowing a phrase from General Philip Sheridan, "the steadfast center about and on which everything else turned." The paper reported that McCormick received a standing ovation. Almost exactly one year later the same paper would reflect its publisher's influence and report that General Grant is "universally regarded as the savior of the Union."²³ Further, testimony to Grant's newly "found" reputation was evident over two years later when the *Tribune* reported that for the year ending June, 1954, 353,802 people visited Grant's Tomb, down slightly from the 417,000 that visited the previous year, which the *Tribune* declared a "peak year,"²⁴ up dramatically from visitation in the 1930s when Grant's reputation languished in the doldrums.

Further aided and abetted by historical documentation in the form of a smattering of newly emerged documents, letters, and manuscripts, a true and lasting turning point in the reclamation of Grant's reputation – at least as a military leader – would find its voice at mid-century. As a representation of the "quintessential American success story," in America's optimistic "afterglow of World War II," both the academic and literary community was at work

²³ *Chicago Daily Tribune*, April 26, 1951 and April 27, 1952.

²⁴ *Ibid*, Oct. 29, 1954; the paper also announced that the 17th million visitor had entered Grant's Tomb since its dedication in 1897.

initiating a new, more robust and scholarly analysis of Grant's role during the Civil War.²⁵ More substantial in scholarship than the novels written in the 1940s, his success as a military commander was being revealed to an approving American public in the literature of the 1950s, when, as a "quiet and simple" American, Grant was the epitome of both American strength and American values of the era. Historians and biographers of the age wrote within the atmosphere of a "powerful resurgence of anti-intellectualism" of the Truman and Eisenhower years and as such, appreciated Grant's "decency," and "lack of pretension," as well as his disdain for "formulaic approach to soldiering."²⁶

Among the more prominent and noteworthy of the Grant biographers and Civil War writers in the late 1940s and 1950s who did much to resurrect Grant's reputation were Lloyd Lewis, Bruce Catton, T. Harry Williams, and Kenneth William, all respected writers though not all professional historians. Published in 1950, Lloyd Lewis' *Captain Sam Grant* was the opening salvo of what was to be a proposed trilogy on Grant. Lewis painted the picture of a thoughtful man, a shrewd strategist and tactician, a man in control of his circumstance rather than suffering from its consequences as a helpless bystander. Fortified by the discovery of newly emerging primary source documents related to Grant, including letters, manuscripts and other miscellaneous documents, Lewis proclaimed that there was no mystery to his "sudden emergence in 1862 as a rival to Napoleon and Caesar" in the echelon of the world's greatest military leaders. Among some of the letters that he found were sufficient proof to "offer new facts about Grant and new interpretations of his career." Additionally, as a result of studying

²⁵ Ethan S. Rafuse, "Still a Mystery? General Grant and the Historians, 1981-2006," *Journal of Military History*, 71 (July, 2007): 853, 851; Diemer, "Reconstructing Philadelphia," 31.

²⁶ Rafuse, "Still a Mystery?" 851.

numerous Grant letters, Lewis wrote “I have the evidence clear, now, that Grant’s superb style of writing is what Sherman and Twain thought it – the best of any general’s since Caesar.”²⁷

Lewis also seemed eager to embrace the task of disabusing some of the questionable aspects of Grant’s early life, such as the long-held contention of Grant’s alleged dire poverty before the war. After finding a letter written by Julia Dent Grant disclosing that the Grants were well enough off to have hired a girl to do household chores in Galena during the late 1850s and early 1860s, Lewis questioned “some of the myths” surrounding Grant’s alleged hopelessness and desperation during the immediate pre-war years. Further, Lewis claimed that many of the letters displayed “fine examples of Grant’s humor” and as a “big kibitzer” during card games, Grant was as garrulous as anyone at the table. Lewis even tried to put some moderation to long-held views of Grant’s intemperance by qualifying the circumstances under which Grant might have imbibed. Of Grant’s isolation on the West Coast in the early 1850s Lewis concluded that Grant was the “America of his time – he drinks because he can’t make enough money to bring his wife to him,” and suggested that Grant drank rarely, and when he did, did not drink much since a little liquor seemed to have had a powerful effect.²⁸ Lewis’ revelations were evidence that there was substance to Du Bois’ pronouncements, that previous history of Grant had been written from a decidedly biased point of view, without historical documentation, and those caricatures of Grant had been based on little more than innuendo, rumor and Lost Cause mythology.

Lewis’ *Grant* received high praise in the press. It is a “superb portrait of U.S. Grant,” proclaimed a *Washington Post* review, a “superb book” that portrays a “man gentle by nature,” a

²⁷ NY Times, Apr. 2, 1950, from an article by Lloyd Lewis entitled “*A Biographer’s Letters on His Life of Ulysses S. Grant: Lewis’ Letters of Ulysses S. Grant.*”

²⁸ *Ibid.* As did others, Lewis made frequent the comparisons between Grant and “Americanism,” by writing that Grant was “ordinary” and “like Truman, he looked like Mr. America.”

“conscientious, industrious man; one with more capacity than he was usually called upon to exert.” Further, and quite significantly, the *Post* review embraced Lewis’ heretical notion that perhaps it was something other than sheer numbers that allowed Grant to claim eventual victory after victory, success after success. Early in his career, Grant learned that “over-matching does not pay,” continued the review, and “disease, not gunpowder, is the great killer of soldiers.” Accordingly, in the mind of the reviewer, Lewis suggested that Grant was keenly insightful enough to apply early lessons learned and constantly adapted his tactics throughout the forthcoming war and was not the great butcher he was so long portrayed. And though his trilogy would remain incomplete due to Lewis’ untimely death, the reviewer felt Lewis’ “unfinished work stands alone.”²⁹ Reviews in the *New York Times* and *Los Angeles Times* echoed much the same sentiment found in the *Post*. Lewis rescued Grant “from the shadows” proclaimed the New York paper; Grant emerged as “a well-drawn, three-dimensional character, quiet, unassuming, kindly, courageous, solid – foreshadowing the general to be;” he was a “far more interesting human being than most of us suspect.” And from the West Coast paper, “we get to know Grant on warmly intimate terms, to laugh with him over his early blunders” and come to admire Grant for his “humanism” and “for the keen yet humane mind he developed as he grew.”³⁰

In the wake of Lloyd Lewis’ death in 1949, even before the first book of his trilogy was published, Bruce Catton, a long-time journalist and quasi-historian, picked up where Lewis left off and produced a prodigious amount of literature on both Grant and the Civil War over the course of the next three decades. Catton’s work would popularize the war while continuing to elevate Grant’s reputation in the mind of public of memory. Catton was arguably the most widely read Civil War author of the twentieth century and like no other, was more responsible

²⁹ *Washington Post*, May 21, 1950.

³⁰ *NY Times*, May 21 and 23, 1950; *LA Times*, June 11, 1950.

for inspiring Civil War enthusiasts and creating a generation of Civil War “buffs.” He became as David Blight described, “the face and voice of Civil War history,” the “most prolific, popular historian of the war.” And though not a formally trained historian, Catton nonetheless was able to combine “what appeared to be the authority of research...with a sense of drama” that appealed to his reading public and earned him a large and loyal following along with numerous awards.³¹

With their combination of research and popular appeal, it was this formidable combination – Lewis and Catton – that “helped launch the modern revival of Grant studies.” In an age when “seeing the USA in a Chevrolet” was becoming the national pastime, Americans, “conditioned by their own military experience,” flocked in record numbers to battlefields and monuments to its heroes in record numbers to learn more about these men who had such a dramatic impact on America’s history.³² And as more of Grant was revealed, the more the Grant remembered by his contemporaries would emerge. And combined with the solid scholarship emanating “in the midst of Cold War consensus,” Grant’s reputation would continue a resurgence that would elevate him into the upper echelon of America’s greatest military leaders.³³

Other works of substance as well as a mostly favorable press in the 1950s continued to elevate Grant’s military reputation. Historian T. Harry Williams suggested that “fundamentally, Grant was superior to Lee” because he understood and embraced the concept of modern warfare while Lee did not. Grant “did not believe in butchery as a principle of war,” asserted Williams, he would not take heavy losses only to inflict “corresponding losses on the enemy if he could win by fighting in some other way;” rather, he was willing to take heavy losses only “if they were

³¹ Blight, *American Oracle*, 121; Blight, “Bruce Catton Tribute,” *American Heritage*, 62 (Winter, Spring 2012): 73; Blight, *Oracle*, 95.

³² *Ibid.*, 90, 91.

³³ Blight, “Catton Tribute,” 78.

necessary for victory.”³⁴ Commending Kenneth P. Williams on his work in volume three of *Lincoln Finds a General*, for leaning heavily and “rightly so” on *War of the Rebellion Records* as well as on manuscripts of President Lincoln and Secretary of War Stanton, the *New York Times* reviewer discovered Grant to be an “aggressive, intrepid” commanding general, one with “energy and ability to work long hours” who did not hesitate to engage superior numbers. Four years later, in reviewing the fourth volume of the same series in which Grant is the “chief hero” of the entire work, David Donald wrote that Mr. Williams’ “cannot sufficiently praise Grant’s Vicksburg campaign” in which he displayed the most pronounced “courage, imagination, and judgment.” Donald then lends credence to Williams’ conclusions on Grant by commending him for supporting his judgments with the “massive weight of prodigious research.” A year later, adding to a growing list of Grant admirers, British military historian and author J.F.C. Fuller declared that Grant’s story was as amazing as Napoleon’s. He “fought some of the greatest campaigns in history; was never defeated” and it was Grant, not the Federals that “won the Civil War for the North.”³⁵

The work of these authors and historians – Lewis, Catton, the Williams’, and others - was crucial in elevating Grant’s reputation as a military leader to something close to what it had been during his lifetime.³⁶ Collectively, they “rescued Grant from the depths to which his reputation as a soldier and a man had fallen in the early twentieth century” and had shed much of that albatross of an image that had been created by the “ubiquitous influence of the Lost Cause school

³⁴ T. Harry Williams, *Lincoln and His Generals* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1952), 313, 318.

³⁵ *NY Times*, Nov. 2, 1952 and Oct. 28, 1956, Donald’s implied recognition of Grant’s brilliance as military commander is no small irony since, at the time of the review as Professor of History at Columbia University, he graced the same hallways that William A. Dunning did; Fuller, *Grant and Lee*, 57, 58.

³⁶ Of significant note is the regional affiliation of the authors who were instrumental in resurrecting Grant’s reputation and leading a counter attack against the Lost Causers and others who diminished Grant’s accomplishments. Virtually all were from the Midwest. Lloyd Lewis was born in Indiana and lived in Chicago for most of his life; T. Harry Williams was born in Illinois and earned his Ph.D. in Wisconsin; Kenneth P. Williams was born in Ohio and taught at the University of Indiana; Bruce Catton was born and raised in Michigan and though born in Mississippi, David Donald earned his Ph.D. at the University of Illinois.

of Civil War history,” an image which was “flat out wrong.” For Grant, “at least in scholarship,” his reputation was now being “restored to the high place he held in the hearts of his countrymen at his death.”³⁷ The new Grant, the one based on scholarship and research, not the one conjured up in the imagination of Dunning or Hesselstine, was being warmly embraced by the American public at a time when it was appropriate to celebrate its military heroes.

The work of these consensus historians foreshadowed more laudatory works over the course of a generation on Grant as a premier military leader at which point his reputation as a superior military commander was largely unquestioned. In their lengthy assessment of how the North won the Civil War, authors Herman Hattaway and Archer Jones are effusive in their praise for Grant. Though largely implemented by its “executor,” William T. Sherman, the strategy that caused the “debilitation in morale due to loss of faith in victory” in Robert E. Lee’s army was “distinctly” Grant’s. “Grant’s last campaign epitomized the best tradition of Napoleonic operations,” continued the authors and as such, “the major military contribution to victory remains the strategy of Grant.”³⁸ But despite all the accolades for Grant’s military genius, despite the unraveling of much of the mystery surrounding his personal life, some of which continued to tarnish elements of his reputation remained unchanged. Through mid-century and after, his role as president had not been seriously reexamined and despite evidence to the contrary from the historical community, he was still viewed in the popular mind as, if not an outright alcoholic, then certainly one who had a love affair with the bottle.

If, as David Blight suggests, it was Lloyd Lewis and Bruce Catton who launched the modern revival of Grant’s military reputation, it was certainly John Y. Simon who kept it in its ascendancy. At the Ohio State University at the time, Simon became the first director of the

³⁷ Rafuse, “Still a Mystery?” 850, 851.

³⁸ Hattaway and Jones, *How the North Won*, 675, 700.

Ulysses S. Grant Association in the 1960s and would become renowned for his lifelong work and tireless advocacy for Grant.³⁹ According to the *Chicago Tribune*, the purpose of the association was to “collect, edit, and publish Grant’s works” and under Simon’s leadership, the trickle of Grant manuscripts that had been collected by the mid-1960s would become a torrent. Funded in part by the National Historic Publications Commission to “collect, preserve, and celebrate” America’s great leaders, this effort in large measure represented the celebratory legacy that was Cold War American consensus history.⁴⁰

From the moment he became director, Simon aggressively took on the prodigious effort to build up the collection of Grant primary source material and documentation and at the time, Simon’s stated expectations were that the collected works should reach 15 volumes. With Simon serving as editor-in-chief, the *Grant Papers* would expand to 32 volumes, each filled with Grant’s crisp, clear, concise prose as well as the insightful analysis of Simon and his editorial staff.⁴¹ As such, Simon has established himself as the most significant historian, the indispensable man in providing a cogent, coherent record of Grant’s work and establishing a

³⁹ Ulysses S. Grant Dietz, great-great grandson of the general stated that “John Simon was U.S. Grant’s best friend in the modern world, and understood him better than any living American.” Accolades for Simon’s work were offered, by among others, Abraham Lincoln scholar Harold Holzer who wrote that Simon ““changed the ethos of presidential papers...He matched incoming correspondence with outgoing, so researchers would have a complete episode. He included editorial commentary that was more substantial than footnotes. He wrote introductions to each volume,”” and among the many rewards he received was a lifetime achievement award from the Lincoln Forum, from John Y. Simon, 1933-2008, *Grant: The Newsletter of the Grant Monument Association*, IX (Fall/Winter, 2008): 1.

⁴⁰ Other major financial support for the association came from Southern Illinois University, Civil War Centennial commissions and historical societies of Illinois, Ohio, and New York, Bruce Catton, and Major General Ulysses S. Grant, III, from Simon, *Papers*, xxvii; quote from Wendy Venet.

⁴¹ *Chicago Tribune*, May 1, 1966; the *Tribune* reported that the Ulysses S. Grant Association was formed in 1962 by the Civil War Centennial Commissions of Illinois, Ohio, and New York, the states in which he lived when the Civil War began, where he was born, and where he died and was buried, respectively; in the article, John Y. Simon is pictured with Richard Leekley, who had just sold his 300-piece collection of “first edition books, booklets, manuscripts, wood engravings and photos” to Simon and the association. Today, the collection stands at 32 volumes, and as of 1999, the Columbus Dispatch reported that the association had amassed over 200,000 documents. One of the most gratifying moments for this author came in a letter dated Feb. 5, 1987, which read in part, “Dear Mr. Mannion: I am very much in your debt for sending me the photocopy of the fine Grant letter in your possession. We certainly will be able to make good use of it in our volumes, though you know enough about our progress to have some apprehension about when this letter will appear....Sincerely Yours, John Y. Simon.” My letter now proudly resides on pages 429 and 430 in Volume 29 of the *Grant Papers*.

solid foundation for the modern scholarship of Grant while simultaneously disabusing the notion that Grant was an uncommunicative “sphinx.” In Grant, Simon saw a representation of all that was a great and strong America. “His remarkable self confidence, stubborn determination and basic integrity reflected the strengths of the American people,” stated Simon, who also suggested that Grant had been a much better president than given credit for.⁴²

With the first volume published in 1967, the *Grant Papers* were welcomed with great enthusiasm both in the press and in the academic community. “These works are creating a veritable arsenal of printed primary material,” reported the *Chicago Tribune* in its review in April of 1974 of Volume Five. They are “indispensable” to researchers and modern scholarship on Grant and though already blessed with a number of able biographies, the serious student “can peruse the actual writings of Grant and thereby gain a new insight into the man.” Further, the *Tribune* mentioned that this volume, like the four previous others, is “impeccably edited by John Y. Simon with aid from Thomas Alexander.”⁴³

Taking advantage of the work produced by Simon and the Grant Association, then under the auspices of Southern Illinois University, William McFeely produced a work of note entitled *Grant: A Biography*, published in 1981. McFeely’s Grant appeared to be darker and a bit more sinister than had been described by the consensus historians of the 1950s and 1960s. His was not an optimistic story of either America or Grant of the mid-nineteenth century. “McFeely’s story will not be comforting to those who look for strength and nobility in the history of the Civil War and its aftermath,” wrote reviewer Alan Brinkley for according to McFeely “Grant’s story yields a troubling picture of an America...that offered him and thousands of men like him no chance for

⁴² “Exhibitor fights for Grant, his role in history,” from the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, Nov. 28, 1985.

⁴³ *Chicago Tribune*, March 3, 1974; “Grant scholarship advanced under the publication of the Grant Papers, Ethan Rafuse would write over a generation later, under the “superb editorship of John Y. Simon,” from “Still a Mystery?” 857.

fulfillment other than war.”⁴⁴ McFeely found little of any inspirational value in Grant, and while conceding that Grant was all that America represented back in the age, it was not a “good and benevolent” America that had found but rather one of a “crudeness” in which America found itself enveloped. Indeed, as incapable as he was to feel the emotion or the pain of others, McFeely’s *Grant*, according to Rafuse, was simply a representation of the age-appropriate “necessary callousness to the human costs of the war.”

McFeely’s biography initially received rave reviews. “Grant stands inspection in all his glory and all his shame,” wrote reviewer Edward Wagenknecht in both the *New York Times* and *Chicago Tribune*, and commended McFeely for his laborious “patience and research,” noting that McFeely included over 100 pages of notes and documentation in his work. In the *Boston Globe*, reviewer Alan Brinkley described *Grant* as a “brilliant biography,” “the finest study yet of Grant himself,” a well-researched book of great importance to a society that “still lives with the failure of Ulysses S. Grant.” So well received was *Grant* both in popular literature and academic circles, William McFeely earned the 1982 Pulitzer Prize for biography as well as the 1982 Francis Parkman Prize for the best non-fiction American themed book, presented by the Society of American Historians under the aegis of Columbia University.

Yet despite the awards and accolades, McFeely was taken to task and subjected to a barrage of withering criticism from several notable rising young historians both for a number of factual errors as well as for what some academicians thought was a misinterpretation of data. “McFeely could not rough up an icon of the Civil War and American military history,” wrote Ethan Rafuse, “with becoming a target of criticism in his own right.” In particular, Rafuse cited James McPherson and Brooks Simpson for their stinging critiques of McFeely’s work. McPherson, wrote Rafuse, immediately “tore into McFeely’s treatment of Grant’s generalship

⁴⁴ *Boston Globe*, May 31, 1981, from a book review by historian Alan Brinkley; McFeely, *Grant*, xiii.

with conspicuous zeal.” While describing *Grant* as a “stimulating and readable biography,” McPherson scolded McFeely for rehashing the timeworn theme of Grant as a butcher and cites other authors who had shown that as a percentage of casualties, Robert E. Lee’s record was proportionally worse than Grant’s. Further, “the large number of careless errors,” McPherson wrote, “raises doubts” about McFeely’s “superficial” understanding of the nature of Grant’s generalship and the military history of the Civil War in general.⁴⁵

Simpson’s detailed critique appeared several years later after publication, in the March, 1987 edition of *Civil War History*. In it, he refuted point by point much of McFeely’s work including the notion that Grant was unconcerned about the human cost of his victories, allegations that Grant was a racist and that Grant did not concern himself with the plight of black Americans. Simpson raises so much legitimate doubt about so many of McFeely’s contentions that he asks rhetorically at the end of his piece whether McFeely’s *Grant* was actually “truthful history.” As to the stated intent of his book, McFeely postures that today’s “Americans...deserve to know a man they would recognize if they met him in a crowd,” and as such, in his imagined beneficence, he suggests he has produced such definitive recognition. But no, Simpson posits, the Grant Americans would meet in a crowd, the real Grant, may not have been the Grant McFeely describes.

After reading *Grant*, the author of this dissertation, though impressed with the prodigious amount of research put into the work, did not think that McFeely’s conclusions were logically supported by his own evidence and found it difficult to embrace what seemed to be an overly and unnecessarily dark portrayal of Grant. Expressing his perplexity with McFeely’s tone and analysis and to seek his appraisal, this student wrote a letter to John Y. Simon in early 1987. In

⁴⁵ Rafuse, “Still A Mystery?,” 855; McPherson’s scathing condemnation of McFeely’s grasp of Civil War facts and analysis appeared in *Civil War History*, 27, 4 (Dec., 1981), 362-365.

his response dated February 19th, 1987, Simon wrote, “It seems to me you have difficulty explaining why McFeely is so negative; I have the same difficulty myself,”⁴⁶ and suggested that McFeely may have been a bit too speculative in many of his “psychological” analyses of Grant. Of special irony is another letter Simon wrote this author just two months later, revealing Simpson’s aforementioned critique of Grant at about the time it was hitting the newsstands. “As I understand it,” wrote Simon, “there is going to be an article in the next *Civil War History* critical of McFeely for his treatment of Grant and the blacks which you may find suggestive.”⁴⁷ Years later, Ethan Rafuse was much less speculative in evaluating what he assessed as the nature of McFeely’s work. “McFeely’s book clearly bore the mark of post-Vietnam America,” suggested Rafuse, and his writing reflected the then prevailing “climate of cynicism and disenchantment with the American dream.”⁴⁸ Further, as one who “damned the president (Grant) for his inability to secure black civil rights,” McFeely may have held a predisposed prejudice towards Grant.⁴⁹

McFeely’s great contribution to Grant scholarship was not so much for what many considered his overly subjective analysis of Grant as it was for his prodigious research, well-written verse, and the notoriety and interest he generated in Grant scholarship. “Modern Grant scholarship can be said to have begun in 1981 with the publication of William S. McFeely’s *Grant*,” posited Rafuse, who was firm in his conviction that despite its flaws McFeely produced “a landmark study of major significance,”⁵⁰ and as such, a worthy contender for the awards it accumulated. There can be no doubt that McFeely’s *Grant* stimulated further study of the

⁴⁶ Letter from John Y. Simon, dated Feb. 19, 1987; mention must be made that for an aspiring Grant student, I cannot say enough about the generous nature of John Y. Simon – in the amount of time he spent both in reading the material I sent him and in the letters he sent me, the numerous materials he so generously forwarded to me, and the kind encouragement and support he offered me in pursuing my interest in Grant.

⁴⁷ Letter to the dissertation author from John Y. Simon, April 8, 1987.

⁴⁸ Rafuse, “Still A Mystery?,” 853.

⁴⁹ Quote from Waugh, *American Hero*, 109.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 850, 854.

general and despite some arguable portrayals of his subject, McFeely made Grant relevant again. At the very least his book piqued a renewed interest in Grant, albeit from a goodly number of scholars and students who may have been a bit confused by his depiction of Grant. Accordingly, over the course of the next two decades, and in concert with the numerous volumes Simon and the association the group continued to produce over the years, Grant enjoyed a renewed popularity as many took on the task of further studying and writing about his life and military and political careers.

By the 1970s, Grant's reputation as a military commander had been elevated in academia to approach the level that he enjoyed in his lifetime. And due to the academic community's work with solid research and the ever-growing amount of original manuscripts and other primary source documentation, a newer, kinder, gentler, and well rounded Grant was being celebrated in historical circles. Yet at the same time, the public's memory of Grant was being continuously bombarded with mixed cultural images that at times appeared to refute, but more often, continued to sustain the old stereotypes of Grant, specifically regarding perceptions of him as a drunk, his allegedly suspect mental capacity, the image of him as somewhat of a gruff, unkempt boor, and of course, the persistent dogma that his was a failed presidency. "Since 1885, Grant's historical reputation has been neatly separated in two," wrote Joan Waugh. "His presidential reputation is as dim as his military reputation is brilliant."⁵¹ Especially during the 1950s and 1960s, there seemed to be an ominous duality regarding Grant's reputation, for every instance of praise he received there seemed to be an equally healthy dose of innuendo or rumor that would continue to do damage to part of his story. And even though many of those who continued to promote those speculative perceptions of Grant were outside of academia, certainly their message was reaching a much wider audience on the big screen, in the press, and on the

⁵¹ Waugh, "Pageantry of Woe," 153.

television set than the historical community could hope to reach through well-documented research.

At times, Grant's reputation was the metaphorical innocent bystander sustaining drive-by collateral damage. In his assessment of a book about Zachary Taylor in 1947, the *New York Times* reviewer dragged Grant's political reputation through familiar territory by writing that Taylor was not the general that Grant would become, but was a "much more respectable president." Since one might suggest that many Americans did not even know there was a President Zachary Taylor, having served only sixteen months in office, one might allege the author's quote was designed more to sustain popular perception of Grant than to shed any light on the merits of Taylor's success as chief executive. And even in books about Grant that were favorably received and reviewed, the same old refrains kept appearing. In his positive assessment of Lloyd Lewis' *Captain Sam Grant*, Oliver Prescott wrote of Grant as "the great soldier and inept president," adding in the classic throwaway line reflective of popular memory, that, "he drank much too often."⁵² Such ensconced attitudes towards the dualist nature of Grant's public persona was even evident in the musings of Ernest Hemingway. In a personal letter he wrote in 1950, Hemingway offered up the quintessence of a double-edged compliment. "I do know that my grandfather told me," Hemingway informed friend Robert Cantwell, "that anytime you could wake Grant you could get a sound answer from him."⁵³ Even some of those who worked to elevate his reputation would, in one seemingly innocuous sentence, speak reflexively and continue to perpetuate some of the old tired stereotypes. In discussing a rare television special on Grant for which he was hired as a consultant, Bruce Catton described him as a "funny little general who could never keep his coat buttoned or get a shave or look at all

⁵² *NY Times*, Jan. 12, 1947; *Ibid.*, May 23, 1950.

⁵³ Carlos Baker, ed., *Ernest Hemingway: Selected Letters, 1917-1961* (New York: Scribner, 1981, rep., 2003), 710.

impressive.” And while expressing his admiration for Grant, Catton, with obvious reference to the current sitting president (Eisenhower) finished his interview by declaring that “Grant was not the last famous general to make a bad President.”⁵⁴

Any time there was even a hint of a presidential scandal, malfeasance or perceived ineptitude in the White House during the Cold War era, it would not be long before Grant’s name would be invoked. In reporting on President Harry Truman’s reaction to such alleged activity late in his administration, could, the *Washington Post* asked rhetorically, Truman’s “calmness over the current wave of scandals be due to his familiarity with the record of the Grant Administration?” And though personally popular like Grant, Eisenhower was frequently subject to attacks by the Democrats for his lack of experience and perceived failings in office. Printing a familiar refrain straight from the August, 1955, edition of the *Democratic Digest*, the *New York Times* reported the Democrats’ contention that there were strong parallels between Grant and Ike militarily and politically and that neither knew much or even cared to know much about the presidency. Reporting on a presidential poll conducted by a panel of historians a decade later, the *Washington Post* reported that as in Grant’s case, “fortunes had been kinder” to Eisenhower on the battlefield than in the Oval Office.⁵⁵ And of course, the media could barely contain themselves with numerous references to Grant during President Richard Nixon’s Watergate scandal. In 1973, before Nixon’s role in the cover-up was fully understood, the *Christian Science Monitor* bemoaned the many failures and misdeeds of some of Nixon’s key aides, adding that Grant was “another victim of his appointees.” Then in October, 1974, in the wake of Nixon’s resignation, the *Los Angeles Times* reported that in the annals of presidential scandals,

⁵⁴ Catton discusses the story of Grant in the “Our American Heritage Series,” from the *NY Times*, Feb. 21, 1960.

⁵⁵ *Washington Post*, Dec. 20, 1951; *NY Times*, Jul. 19, 1955, despite accusations from the Democrats, candidate Adlai Stevenson fared even worse than Grant’s Democratic opponent did in his bid to unseat Eisenhower, losing in a massive landslide; *Washington Post*, Oct. 10, 1965.

Watergate would be proven the worst in the United States' history, surpassing even "those surrounding Ulysses S. Grant and Warren G. Harding."⁵⁶

Grant's reputation could not even escape the indiscretions of Presidents Jimmy Carter and Bill Clinton. After Carter was criticized in some quarters for his "too democratic," folksy, down-home, "people's inaugural," mention was made of other inaugural disappointments, including of course, both of Grant's inaugural balls, described by the author as "grand catastrophes." And though it had long been said that Ulysses S. Grant's administration held the distinction of being the nation's most corrupt, a reader of the *Cincinnati Post* suggested that President Bill Clinton had entered the fray as a worthy contender for such a distinction, if not the new "title holder." Grant even found his name and reputation connected to Monica Lewinsky after her dalliance with Clinton. The *Wall Street Journal* reported that as Clinton reflected back "to past presidents" for models in times of crisis, he mused that much like himself, a "scandal-tarred" Ulysses S. Grant had gotten a "bum rap."⁵⁷

The most beguiling and perhaps most prevailing popular misperceptions, and that which seems to forever be indelibly etched in the public's memory of Grant is, indeed, his alleged intemperance during and after the Civil War. And once again, even those who would enhance elements of his reputation could not contain themselves when it came to the myth of Grant's heavy drinking. Symptomatic of such historical malfeasance can be found in Earl Schenck Miers' book, *The Web of Victory: Grant at Vicksburg*, published in 1955. Based on what he read in *Web*, the *Chicago Daily Tribune* reviewer Roy Basler, editor of *The Collected Works of*

⁵⁶ *Christian Science Monitor*, May 9, 1973; *Los Angeles Times*, Oct., 20, 1974; in one notable exception, comparisons with Nixon benefited Grant's reputation. A *NY Times* article dated Feb. 20, 1972, before news of the Watergate scandal broke, made favorable comparisons between Nixon's landmark and unexpected visit to China with Grant's visit to China after he left office, reporting that like Nixon, Grant saw as his mission to "throw open her (China) barriers and be one in commerce and trade with the outer world."

⁵⁷ *NY Times*, Jan. 14, 1981; letter to the editor in the *Cincinnati Post*, Sep. 8, 1997; *Wall Street Journal*, Aug. 17, 1998.

Abraham Lincoln, offered up the conclusion that “some of Grant’s most magnificent drunken sprees occurred during this campaign, and Miers’ records them, with documentation.” And “drunk or sober,” continued Basler, “Gen. Grant kept right on fighting and winning battles.” The book was highly praiseworthy of Grant during the Vicksburg campaign and such was so noted in a number of reviews, including one by Bruce Catton, who described it as “a genuine first-rate job, a permanent and valuable addition to the lore of the Civil War.” Catton added that Miers “produces a magnificent, unforgettable portrait.”⁵⁸

And unfortunately for the perpetuation of long-worn and hurtful stereotypes regarding Grant’s reputation as a drinker, therein lies the problem. For on the same back page in which Catton’s review lent credence to the efficacy of Miers work, a review from the *New Yorker* advised its readers “we not only get an unfolding picture of Grant’s design but a series of close-ups of the general...cavorting on horseback during the now famous three-day drunk that was one of the best kept secrets of the war.”⁵⁹ And as he suggested, Catton was indeed correct. This was the “unforgettable” portrait that the public understood about Grant. It was Grant the alcoholic binge drinker and military success aside, this was the man they understood and wanted to read about. Grant was unkempt, scruffy looking; he looked like a “typical” American in an age where typical Americans were celebrated. This image added to the “lore” that Catton mentioned, lore being something taught of a “traditional nature.” But indeed, it was lore for it was not documented fact. For Miers’ source to describe Grant’s alleged drinking spree while his troops invested Vicksburg was one Sylvanus Cadwallader, an English journalist for the *Chicago Times* who had been attached to Grant’s command.

⁵⁸ *Chicago Daily Tribune*, May 1, 1955, book review of Earl Schenck Miers by Roy Basler, *The Web of Victory: Grant At Vicksburg*. Catton’s review appeared on the back cover of Earl S. Miers, *The Web of Victory: Grant at Vicksburg* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1955).

⁵⁹ The *New Yorker* review also appeared on the back cover of *The Web of Victory*; the *New Yorker* also wrote: “This book makes it splendidly clear why Ulysses S. Grant was one of the greatest soldiers of modern times.”

As Grant did his best to occupy his and his troops' time outside of Vicksburg in early June, 1863, Cadwallader offered up a tale of Grant's activities during those three days that would have a lasting effect on his reputation as a drinker. "I was not long in perceiving that Grant had been drinking heavily," "recalled" Cadwallader, who claimed that Grant "became stupid in speech and staggering in gait." Taking "the General in hand myself," the journalist led Grant to his stateroom and proceeded to throw "bottles of whiskey which were on the table...into the river." Cadwallader then described how he refused Grant's order to leave the room, instead undressing him before he "fanned him to sleep." Once the general awoke, Cadwallader persuaded Grant, who had yet to recover "from his stupor," to countermand his own order to land a small party near Satartia, a speck of land near Vicksburg. Shortly thereafter, almost "thunderstruck" to discover that Grant had "procured another supply of whiskey," Cadwallader noted that Grant was again "quite as much intoxicated as the day before." Subsequently, after arriving at Chicksaw Bluffs, it was Cadwallader who chased down Grant as he charged willy-nilly in a drunken stupor "through camps and corrals," through the "dust, ashes, and embers from campfires," as "shouts and curses from those he rode down in his race." Once caught up to Grant, Cadwallader seized Grant's horse, convinced him that he, Cadwallader, was "master of the situation" and was eventually able to induce the "General to lay down in the grass," and go to sleep.⁶⁰ All according to Cadwallader and all without anybody knowing what Cadwallader had done.

Miers found merit enough in Cadwallader's story to cite it as basic fact. Reviews of *Three Years with Grant* had been largely favorable and some prominent names in the historical community accepted Cadwallader's story as gospel. It was one of the "great books of the Civil

⁶⁰ Thomas, Benjamin, ed. *Three Years With Grant: As Recalled by War Correspondent Sylvanus Cadwallader* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1956), 103-110.

War,” proclaimed Bruce Catton, and Cadwallader was a “superb reporter,” “keenly perceptive,” and “relentless in his pursuit of the news,” according to a review attributed to the *American Historical Review*.⁶¹ Yet in the immediate aftermath of its publication, questions began to emerge regarding Cadwallader’s story. In an article appearing in the *Wisconsin Magazine of History* shortly after Mier’s work was published, historian Gordon Parks described in detail a number of inconsistencies in Cadwallader’s story and declared the tale “about Grant’s two day drunk is in important particulars demonstrably false,” adding of its impact in Miers’ story that “it is regrettable that so much attention should have been paid to Cadwallader’s tale, for it has been unjust to both Grant and Cadwallader.”⁶² More recent scholarship has also discounted the entirety of the story and treated it as fanciful fabrication. Brooks Simpson describes Cadwallader’s “tall tale” as a “story hard to reconcile with the available evidence,” written, perhaps, “to impress others.” Simpson later added that it was “mythmaking,” a “concocted account” in which “fine scholars, always on the lookout for a colorful story or two to enliven their narratives, . . . have embraced it without batting an eyelash.” John Y. Simon offers documentation based on letters of contemporaries such as Charles Dana that Cadwallader was not with Grant during much of his alleged malfeasance, claiming that the evidence “discredits Cadwallader as a witness to the events of the day,” such as he described them.⁶³

Miers’ had no equivocation in citing Cadwallader’s provocative rendition of Grant’s purported activity in early June as gospel. He used this single, highly speculative source to write

⁶¹ Reviews from the back cover of the 1996 edition of *Three Years with Grant* (Lincoln: Bison Books, University of Nebraska Press, 1996).

⁶² Gordon Parks, “Three Years With Grant as Recalled by War Correspondent Sylvanus Cadwallader: An Appraisal,” *Wisconsin Magazine History*, 40 (Autumn, 1956): 52,55.

⁶³ Brooks Simpson, from his introduction to *Three Years With Grant* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1956, reprint, Lincoln: Bison Books, University of Nebraska Press, 1996), xiii-xv; Simpson, *Grant, Triumph Over Adversity*, 207,208; Simon, *Papers*, 8:324. One of those “fine scholars” mentioned by Simpson is William McFeely, who uses three pages to recount Cadwallader’s tale without mentioning the speculative nature of such a story, from McFeely, *Grant*, 133-135.

authoritatively on a highly controversial, under researched topic. His flawed method and lack of balance was reminiscent of the preconceived notions Hesseltine foisted on the public in his earlier work on Grant and in so doing continued to perpetuate and legitimize long-held beliefs characterizing Grant as a prodigious, unrestrained drinker.⁶⁴ It was a delicious, salacious dichotomy of Grant – the great general and the great drunk – it was too easy to pass up, even for an historian of some prominence who fell into the trap that early historians did by not relying on substantiated documentation. The net result from Miers’ and other literature with similar perspective was that Grant’s reputation as a drinker had become as indelibly etched in popular memory as his reputation as a military leader had now been accepted in the historical community. “Most historians” traditionally viewed Grant “as a whiskey-drinking, hard fighting soldier of the old school,” reported the *New York Times* in 1953, just as Miers was working on his *Web of Victory*, which surely did nothing to assuage those perceptions.⁶⁵

In addition to “most historians” of the early 1950s, those in pop culture gave wide play to Grant’s intemperance and even in vehicles as scholastically vapid as a Hollywood movie production or the product of a highly acclaimed satirist, such images continued to perpetuate fallacious notions about Grant. “There you are General,” the Ulysses S. Grant character told Robert E. Lee’s character in the ANTA Theater on Broadway throughout most of the 1960s as he handed him his sword in surrender. “We damn near licked you. If I’d been feeling better, we would have licked you.” On that day, before Grant surrendered to Lee, General George Meade was “up with the first streaks of crimson in the eastern sky” while Generals Ambrose Burnside

⁶⁴ A great source of controversy erupted within the historical community over the manner in which Benjamin Thomas edited Cadwallader’s work. Some, most notably T. Harry Williams, took great exception to the “uncorrected account of Grant on a drinking spree during the Vicksburg campaign,” a story, which to Thomas, seemed to settle once and for all the question of Grant and liquor. A good account of the firestorm this debate created can be found in “Benjamin P. Thomas,” *Journal of the Abraham Lincoln Association*, 19 (Summer, 1998), available on line at: <http://quod.lib.umich.edu/j/jala/2629860.0019.204?rgn=main;view=fulltext>, accessed on August 23, 2012.

⁶⁵ *NY Times*, April 24, 1953.

and Joseph Hooker were up and “had breakfasted, by a quarter after eight.” Then, much later, with “boots and bottles” strewn about in “unlikely places,” a grossly disheveled and hung-over Grant finally woke up out of his hammock at 11:25 in the morning. He then walked over to a table littered with glasses and different types of liquor and immediately took a pull from a bottle of Scotch before being reminded of the imminent surrender. The play, James Thurber’s, *The Thurber Carnival*, featuring a vignette entitled “If Grant had Been Drinking at Appomattox,” was a smash. Tom Ewell as Grant, “never looked so sad and confused.” It was, according to theater critic Brooks Atkinson, the “freshest and funniest show of the year.” It ran for 223 performances and when it ended its run in New York City in November, 1960, “a London production of the revue is being assembled to open in February.”⁶⁶

Although Thurber was widely recognized and highly regarded as a humorist, albeit with a somewhat sardonic tone, such images from his work certainly aided and abetted notions of Grant’s alleged problems with the bottle. “Lampoons and Satyrs (satires),” wrote essayist and *Spectator* co-founder Joseph Addison in the early eighteenth century, “that are written with Wit and Spirit, are like poison’d Darts, which not only inflict a Wound, but make it incurable.” And while it is certainly “impossible to enumerate the Evils which arise from these arrows that fly in the dark,” many a theater-goer must have left the playhouse musing on similar images of Grant so long held in popular memory.⁶⁷

⁶⁶ Dialog from James Thurber’s “If Grant Had Been Drinking at Appomattox,” from *The Thurber Carnival*, originally appearing in the *New Yorker*, Dec. 6, 1930; *NY Times* theater review, “Thurber Fete,” Feb. 27, 1960; *Ibid.*, Aug. 16, 1960; “A Thurber Carnival,” *The Guide to Musical Theater*, available at: http://www.guidetomusicaltheatre.com/shows_t/thurber.html, accessed on July 23, 2012; *NY Times*, Nov. 23, 1960.

⁶⁷ Joseph Addison, *Spectator*, 23, March 27, 1711, available through Rutgers University at: <http://www2.scc.rutgers.edu/spectator/text/march1711/no23.html>, accessed on July 23, 2012; *History Magazine* claimed that Joseph Addison was an “immensely popular and influential figure in his day” and his daily *Spectator*, “had an effect on English society and literature quite out of proportion to its brief run of less than two years,” from “‘To Enliven Morality with Wit’: The *Spectator*,” *History Magazine*, March, 2007, available at: <http://www.history-magazine.com/spectator.html>, accessed on July 25, 2012; of similar vent to Thurber’s piece was a San Francisco theater production in 1987, entitled “History According to Ulysses S. Grant.” The Grant character, while reciting his

Broadway was not the only pop culture venue where Grant could be found bottle in hand. Had the timing been just a bit better, those leaving the ATNA theater on West 52th Street could have strolled five short blocks down to the Astor Theater on West 47th Street to watch a much more muted, though similar image of Grant. For rare was the movie, or any other pop culture image, in the 1950s and 1960s that did not include a gruff, unkempt Grant with the ever-present bottle at his side. In a popular 1959 John Wayne vehicle entitled “The Horse Soldiers,” a long line of Union Calvary sing the praises of their commanding general as the credits roll in the movie’s rousing opening scene. Proclaiming twice their willingness to go “to hell and back for Ulysses Simpson Grant,” the credits fade and Wayne’s character, accompanied by Generals William T. Sherman and Stephen Hurlburt, meets with Grant to get his marching orders. Less than three minutes into the scene, with cigar clenched in mouth, a gruff, unkempt Grant throws down a cup of whiskey after Sherman hands him a near-empty bottle.⁶⁸

Prominently written up in a two-column review in the *New York Times*, replete with a photo of the Duke himself on horseback, “The Horse Soldiers” was well received and applauded for its authenticity. So epic in scope was it in the eyes of the reviewer that although it was not Fort Sumter or the “opening gun” of Hollywood’s celebration of the Civil War Centenary, “it could be.” It is “exciting” and “supremely graphic” proclaimed the reviewer, and under the superior direction of John Ford, “it has the look of history through the mists of time.” And so realistic was it that “Civil War buffs take notice,” advised the reviewer, “it comes close, thanks to Mr. Ford.”⁶⁹ Such characterizations of Grant seemed the norm in the 1950s and 1960s – and even well beyond. He was “always portrayed the same way,” wrote Bruce Chadwick, “unkempt

version of history, repeatedly stumbled over his words as, according to the San Francisco Chronicle’s theater critic, a result of his “notorious drinking,” from Jan. 15, 1987.

⁶⁸ “The Horse Soldiers,” starring John Wayne and William Holden, produced by the Mirisch Company, 1959, first aired at the Astor in June, 1959, seven months before “A Thurber Carnival” open at the ANTA.

⁶⁹ *NY Times*, June 27, 1959.

dirty blue uniform, hat tilted back, hair awry, cigar sticking defiantly out of the corner of his mouth.” Such “distortions,” according to Chadwick, were based on a “solid foundation of earlier, carefully crafted historical and cultural interpretations,” and as such “filmmakers seemed genuinely to believe they were telling true stories, and in their flickering images, offering honest characterizations.”⁷⁰ And as Gore Vidal observed of the powerful effect the cinema had in creating and perpetuating image in popular memory, “he who screens the history makes the history.”⁷¹ And despite the work of the serious academic community to the contrary, another generational layer of occluded veneer had been added to Grant’s reputation furthering the public’s predisposition to believe that Grant was a heavy drinker.

Even those in academia and some who wrote for the general public, those who acted to defend allegations of Grant’s intemperance added to the misconceptions. Case in point is the article “Grant’s Drinking: Diluting the Myth,” published in the *Washington Post* in 1970 and written by a reviewer who had all his life believed Grant to be a two-fisted drinker, a “bleary-eyed two-bottle genius who somehow managed to win victories where other Union generals failed.” Grant was not a drunk, proclaimed the *Post* reviewer, “at least not during the Civil War.” To substantiate his contention, the article invoked none other than Bruce Catton to help “dilute the myth.” “There is no evidence that he was ever unfit for duty as a result of drinking,” declared Catton, making it clear that the bottle was never a problem for Grant during the war, but

⁷⁰ Bruce Chadwick, *The Reel Civil War: Mythmaking in American Film* (New York: Knopf, 2001), 75, 9, 10. “Horse Soldiers” was directed by John Ford, one of the most highly decorated directors in Hollywood. Ford’s Grant, Sherman and Hurlburt all closely resembled their famous namesakes, although his Sherman was much shorter than the real William T. Yet such attention to detail may have lead some to believe that Grant’s pull on his cup of whiskey realistically portrayed him as well.

⁷¹ Gore Vidal, *Screening History* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992), 81.

then qualified his statement somewhat by suggesting “‘apparently it was also a problem in the immediate post-war years.’”⁷²

Even up through century’s end, the duality of Grant’s image continued to perpetuate itself. The great Grant and the seriously flawed Grant were one and the same, they were a package that could not be separated. “Without Grant, there would be no United States as we know it today, suggested author Emmett Watson in an article entitled “It Took a War to Make Ulysses S. Grant a Winner,” published in the *Seattle Times*. He was “some kind of man,” a “formidable tippler,” who would be regarded as a “white knuckle alcoholic” in modern parlance. And although he proved to be the savior of the union, an article in the *Tulsa World* reminded its readers of the oft-proclaimed notion that Grant was “‘the shabbiest soldier ever to disappoint an Army uniform.’”⁷³

In most recent times, despite historical evidence to the contrary, perceptions and images of Grant as a heavy drinker persist. Ignorant of the evidence or simply not caring to pay attention, many in popular culture continue to accept and even celebrate tales of Grant’s alleged prodigious drinking. In its article “What Heavy Drinkers Drink,” The *Boston Globe* included Ulysses S. Grant along with a number of notorious drunks, including W.C. Fields and Jack London, noting that “President Ulysses S. Grant slurped rye whiskey straight from the barrel during his early military career.”⁷⁴ In his online article “Ulysses S. Grant: His Whiskey History,” author Jack Sullivan relates that the “subject of whiskey comes up frequently,” when discussing Grant’s “story.” “He clearly was the Union’s most effective military leader,”

⁷² *Washington Post*, Feb. 4, 197; the reviewer wrote that his perception of Grant as a perpetual drunk was fortified by Thurber’s “hilarious account of Appomattox;” by using the term “also,” Catton suggests that Grant had a drinking problem before the war as well.

⁷³ *Seattle Times*, March 12, 1989; “Saving the Union: Examining the Facts and Foibles of Ulysses S. Grant,” in the *Tulsa World*, August 29, 1999.

⁷⁴ *Boston Globe*, July 26, 1981, perhaps a reference to Cadwallader’s story?

suggests Sullivan, despite the fact that “history tells us that he had a considerable problem with alcohol throughout much of his life.”⁷⁵

Websites and other pop culture outlets embraced the legend and even used Grant to both sell and promote their products and lifestyle. “Bush and Obama might have had some drinks,” proclaimed *Whiskey Goldmine*, a website dedicated to “the art and culture of eating and drinking,” but they couldn’t hold their liquor next to these heavyweights,” including, naturally, Ulysses S. Grant. “Grant was the biggest drinker of any U.S. President,” continued author Matt Goldstein, he was “most likely an alcoholic” who would sit and “watch the battles all day long and drink whiskey.” And the website *11 Points: Because Top 10 Lists Are For Cowards*, wrote that Grant had the “biggest drinking reputation of any U.S. President,” “sitting there, drinking, all day long,” during Civil War battles.⁷⁶ Grant’s purported drinking habits even helped elevate him to 18th in rankings of the “The Top 43 Sexiest U.S. Presidents,” a poll conducted in February, 2011 by *Nerve*, a website dedicated to “Love and Sex, Entertainment, Advice, and Confessions.” “He was not bad looking,” according to the article, “but his face doesn’t hide the fact that he was a degenerate drunk,” a condition, the author suggested, that some might find appealing.⁷⁷

Taken by themselves, many of these niche websites surely do not serve big audiences.

Yet taken collectively and in the numbers they exist, such outlets certainly reach a wide audience

⁷⁵ Jack Sullivan, “Ulysses S. Grant: His Whiskey History,” from *The Federation of Historic Bottle Collectors*, available at at: http://www.fohbc.org/PDF_Files/USGRANT_JSullivan.pdf, accessed on July 7, 2012.

⁷⁶ Matt Goldstein, “Drinking Drunken Presidents: George Washington, John Adams, Thomas Jefferson & Ulysses S. Grant,” from *Whiskey Goldmine*, available at: <http://whiskeygoldmine.com/downtown-bar-stories-lounge-club/crazy-drinking-stories-debauchery-wild-drinking-parties/drinking-drunken-presidents-george-washington-president-john-adams-president-thomas-president-jefferson-general-president-ulysses-grant-montecello-winery-whiskey-distillery-brewery-bee/>, accessed on July 11, 2012; “11 drunkest president in U.S. History”, from *11 Points*, March 25, 2009, available at: http://www.11points.com/News-Politics/11_Drunkest_Presidents_in_US_History

⁷⁷ “The Top 43 Sexiest U.S. Presidents,” from *Nerve*, available online at: <http://www.nerve.com/content/the-top-43-sexiest-us-presidents>, accessed on July 11, 2012; The poll had Richard Nixon as the least sexiest of all presidents and Theodore Roosevelt as the sexiest; The *Nerve* poll was subsequently posted in the May 25, 2011 edition of the *Huffington Post*, available at: http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2010/02/13/the-top-43-sexiest-us-pre_n_461541.html, accessed on July 24, 2012.

and though much is written tongue in cheek, the legend of Grant's drinking is constantly being reinforced in the public memory and it seems to be the one component part of Grant's reputation that can never be rescued despite evidence to the contrary. Yet despite all the nonsense, the mischaracterizations and caricatures of Grant, the work by the academic community to first repair and then elevate his reputation and image in the later stages of the twentieth century has been profound. Yet with the onset of the new millennium, challenges and opportunity still present themselves as the study of Grant must continue. His memory is owed that.

10 EPILOGUE

“Though much of the public and even some historians haven’t heard the news, the vindication of Ulysses S. Grant is well under way.”

Sean Wilentz

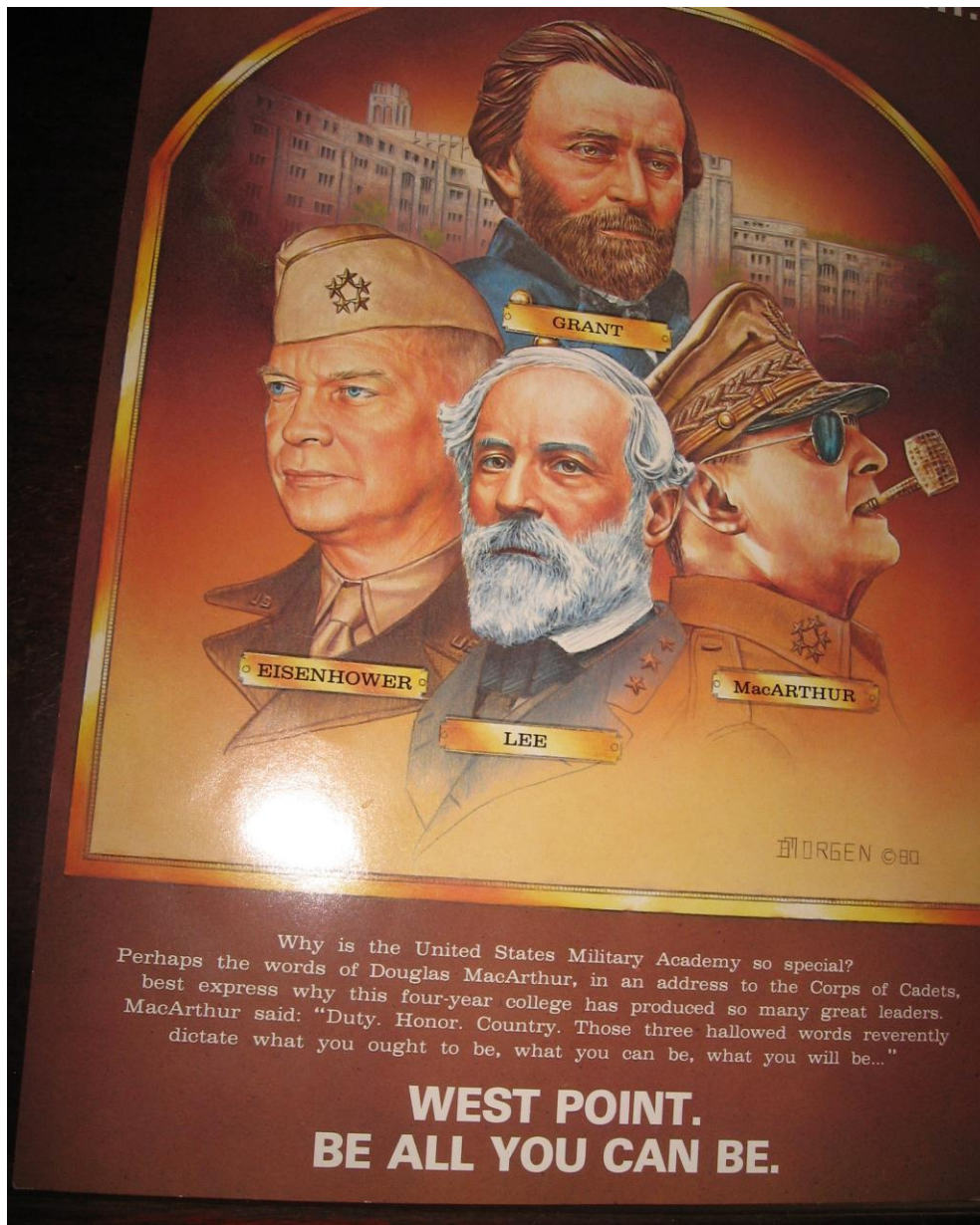


Figure 10.1 West Point Recruiting Poster

The illustrations of arguably the four greatest military commanders in the annals of American history adorn a recruiting poster produced for the United States Military Academy. Three of these leaders – Dwight D. Eisenhower, Robert E. Lee, and Douglas McArthur – share the same horizon. The fourth, Ulysses S. Grant, is the most prominently displayed, standing center alone above the three American military icons. This juxtaposition is no accident. Butchers do not receive such notoriety. Men of character “committed to the values of Duty, Honor, Country, and prepared for a career of professional excellence and service to the Nation as an officer in the United States Army” do.¹ Grant’s record earned him such prominence. His success as a military leader in the Civil War was no contrivance. His clear thinking under duress, his ability to expeditiously deliver clear concise orders, and his capacity to conceptualize and direct a strategy to simultaneously use all his resources to the greatest advantage in ultimate victory mark him as one of, if not the greatest commander in American military history. He earned all the accolades and praise that he received and as such, Grant has been so recognized in the academic community, if not in popular culture.

When asked the status of Grant’s current reputation, the answer would be, in modern parlance, “it’s complicated.” Grant’s reputation as a military leader stands secure. Most serious scholarship on the Civil War during the last half-century, and there is certainly a prodigious amount, has documented and celebrated Grant’s great success as a military leader. Grant consistently receives “high marks from historians,” wrote Ethan Rafuse, and has “few peers in the last two hundred years of world military history.”² Grant’s reputation as a president is another matter. He has always been perceived in an overwhelming degree as one of the worst presidents in American history. Lately, however, due to the scholarship of Brooks Simpson and

¹ U.S. Military Academy Mission, United States Military Academy, West Point, New York.

² Rafuse, “Still a Mystery?,” 871, 872. Rafuse further wrote: “it would seem rather foolish” to question “Grant’s merits as a general or military role model.”

Joan Waugh among others, the perception of his presidency is beginning to enjoy a modest resurrection and continues to be a fertile source of research and scholarship opportunity. Grant's reputation in popular culture, though elevated in slight degree by recent academia seems to be indelibly ensconced in a vacuum of misinformation, innuendo, rumor, and myth.

Grant's historical reputation has always "been neatly separated in two," Joan Waugh suggests, writing that perceptions of Grant as a failed president have been markedly consistent, surviving even the reclamation of his military reputation by consensus historians at mid-century and also by the "wave of revisionism" that consumed academia during the Civil Rights era.³ Yet within the last decade, Grant's presidential reputation has enjoyed "kind of a miniboomlet" of late, as both a collection of favorable biographies in the last generation as well as the changing political climate have forced a reconsideration of Grant's presidency. In *Presidential Leadership*, a book published in 2005 by the *Wall Street Journal*, Grant is ranked 32nd out of 39, not a monumental leap in the polls, but enough of a jump to put some distance between him and his former co-cellar dweller, Warren G. Harding, who remains next to last (tied with Franklin Pierce). Citing the *Wall Street Journal* poll, author and Congressional Quarterly editor Robert Merry suggests in his book that Grant's consistently poor standing in earlier academic polls throughout the decades did not seem fully credible in light of contemporary "voters' assessments" or "careful scrutiny of his presidential record." Further, Merry suggests that with the vocal support of historians such as Sean Wilentz and a spate of late favorable biographies, Grant's reputation as president "seems on the rise." Historian Eric Foner citing Merry's work, stated that indeed, Grant has "risen well above 'failure'" as a president, though suggesting that his ascendancy to the "highest category" is debatable. Such a state of affairs surely would have come as welcome news to Grant advocate John Y. Simon. Seeming to be alone, swimming

³ Waugh, "Pageantry of Woe," 153, 154.

upstream against the current of prevailing thought regarding the efficacy of Grant's presidency in the mid-1980s, Simon expressed his frustration with such perceptions. "I am tempted to rank Grant as the greatest president," Simon stated, perhaps wistfully so, "but I think he should be rated average or slightly below average rather than at the bottom. I can't tolerate Grant being at the bottom."⁴

In 2000, the *New York Times* published an article entitled, "A Bull Market for Grant, A Bear Market for Lee, History's Judgment of the 2 Civil War Generals is Changing." And indeed it has and continues to do so. Driven by a "string of books...more admiring of Grant and more skeptical of Lee" this reappraisal, according to the article, would not have been "imagineable only a short time ago." The article noted that the books on Grant "portray him as an extraordinary general" whose casualties were proportionally less than Lees's while fighting to "save the union and free the slaves." The author, citing historians James McPherson and Jean Smith, credits "shifts" in "scholars' attitudes toward the Civil War and Reconstruction and in public attitudes toward race" are credited by as the causal factors in the reassessment of the two leaders.⁵

Yet even with the advance of scholarship and changed perceptions regarding Grant, some of the old stereotypes about Grant continue to linger. In anticipation of the 150th anniversary of the onset of the Civil War, the *Washington Post* carried a full-page illustrated spread, briefly chronicling the pre-war years of its most important figures. Grant was a "failed farmer,"

⁴ Robert W. Merry, *Where They Stand* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2012), 84. Merry wrote that Wilentz rose to Grant's "defense a couple of years ago when a movement emerged to replace Grant's visage on the \$50 bill with a likeness of Ronald Regan." James Taranto and Leonard Leo, ed., *Presidential Leadership: Rating the Best and Worst in the White House* (New York: Wall Street Journal Book Published by Free Press, 2004), 94; Merry, *Where They Stand*, 107, 84; Eric Foner, e-mail received August 30, 2012; from an interview in the *Atlanta Journal and Constitution*, November 28, 1985.

⁵ *NY Times*, September 30, 2000. In addition to the imminent release of the aforementioned Smith's biography on Grant, subsequent to the article, additional and other favorable works on Grant such as those by Joan Waugh and Josiah Bunting would be published later in the decade.

reported the *Post*, “lonely, depressed, and alcoholic,” who did not have the wherewithal to even own a horse.⁶ And though the academic community has worked mightily to correct the historic record surrounding Grant’s service in the Civil War, vestiges of old stereotypes continue to find their way in modern print. Trying to make a point about the excruciating pressure President Abraham Lincoln faced during the Civil War, author Jay Winik, described on his website as “one of the nation’s leading historians,” uses specious logic at the expense of General Grant to make his point.

Detailing Lincoln’s intense angst throughout the beginning of Grant’s Overland campaign in Virginia in May, 1864, Winik reinforced notions that Grant was a butcher. “Grant suffered some 52,000 casualties in those six weeks alone,” wrote Winik, nearly as many as “were lost in the entirety of the Vietnam War.” Further, the author wrote that Grant lost 9,000 men in one hour at Cold Harbor, “three times as many as had died in Pickett’s Charge the year before.”⁷ In both cases, the author employs faulty logic and misrepresented language. Both comparisons are invalid, specious and outrageously made. Grant’s 52,000 casualties included killed, wounded, taken prisoner and missing in action. One must assume that Winik’s “lost” in Vietnam could only be those killed during the war, of which there were about 59,000, rather than the estimated 310,000 who were killed, wounded, captured, and missing in action. In the Cold Harbor reference, Winik compares Grant’s “lost,” which includes wounded and those killed and missing in action with only those under Lee’s command who “died.” In both instances, “lost” has two different connotations. As Winik explains it, “lost” in Vietnam means killed, while in Grant’s case at Cold Harbor, “lost” includes killed, wounded, missing in action and taken prisoner. Had Winik used the same logic but reversed his bias, he would have compared Grant’s

⁶ *Washington Post*, November 7, 2010.

⁷ Taranto and Leo, *Presidential Leadership*, 84.

7,000 killed during the Wilderness campaign with the 310,000 casualties during the Vietnam War and would have compared Grant's 2,600 killed in action at Cold Harbor with the 12,000 casualties Lee took in a similar time frame at Gettysburg, comparisons both as vapid and useless as his. Such a convoluted argument to make a point at the expense of the historical record serves no purpose other than to perpetuate misguided stereotypes and needs to be expurgated from future study. Using Grant as a throwaway component in such a manner does a disservice both to Grant and the historic record.⁸

Citing a litany of factors, Joan Waugh suggests that Grant's reputation has "entered another upswing." And indeed it has. The waning influence of the Lost Cause myth, "its powerful sway" no longer in fashion, a favorable reassessment from academia, a preponderance of late favorable literature, a "superb" Public Broadcasting documentary on Grant, and a reconsideration of the civil rights of all Americans have all contributed to the most positive perceptions of Grant since the reverence afforded him by his contemporaries. And though perceptions of him in the "drunken butcher" and "worst president" mode yet remain indelibly "mired" in popular culture's collective memory, continued diligent "academic examination" may indeed alter those perceptions as well. "Grant, like Washington before him, was seen as the indispensable man of his time," wrote correspondent Jed Graham, and such may yet be the case in the future. The hope here is that Sean Wilentz will indeed be proven correct, that Grant's "full vindication" will be the end result of the study of our complicated history.⁹

⁸ Jay Winik, "Abraham Lincoln," from *Presidential Leadership*, Taranto and Leo, ed., 84. In an earlier work, Winik stated that Grant "hurled his men into battle like giant chunks of fresh meat," and where Robert E. Lee "disciplined his emotions," Grant repressed his or "drank," from *April 1865: The Month That Saved America* (New York: Harper Collin, 2001), 173, 174.

⁹ Joan Wise, *American Hero*, 307. Ethan Rafuse cites Jean Smith's laudatory account of Grant in his biography, Brook Simpson's "provocative and well-supported analysis" in *Triumph Over Adversity*, and the "flood" of recent favorable Grant scholarship which includes Joan Waugh, Josiah Bunting, Edward H. Bonekemper, Michael Korda, Edward Longacre, Geoffrey Perret, to name a few, from Rafuse, "Still a Mystery?," 861, 863, 866; Jed Graham, "U.S. Grant, President of Peace," from the *New York Times*, September 24, 2010; Wilentz, "Return of Ulysses."

No matter how far Grant's reputation comes, no matter how much it is resurrected through the science and art of history, through solid scholarship and unbiased, reasoned logic, it seems as though his reputational heel will never be completely freed from that metaphorical muck that will always keep him firmly entrenched in popular memory's collective vision as that unkempt, drunken, brutish lout. Such visions seem to have grand appeal to so many amongst us. Such is human nature and as such, stereotypes that make people feel good about themselves don't ever seem to extinguish. Grant is in part of all us, a perfect mirror into the human condition. He was a common man, an ordinary man, whatever that means and however one wants to define that and yet at once, a man of extraordinary accomplishment, character and achievement, something each of us may have in us but probably not. Who, in early 1861, amongst his circle of family and friends would have thought Grant would have risen to the heights that he did. Who would have thought that he would be considered by many as one of two most prominently mentioned saviors of the Union.

Is such accomplishment in all of us? Perhaps so, perhaps not. But most certainly, we will never get the opportunity presented to Grant. It was a circumstance not of his making that confronted him and he was up to the challenge. More than up to the challenge, he succeeded where so many others had failed. Grant's appeal is as grand as it is great. His story should never be forgotten. As water always seeks its own level, so one day will history find its proper Grant. In the meantime those of us so enamored with him, so affected by him will continue to argue his case, continue to respectfully challenge non-believers, continue to know we are right about him, continue to try and persuade people to see what we see and continue to celebrate in future revelation what Sean Wilentz and others have predicted, that one day history will judge Grant for what he was. Those of us who find a great man in Grant will take great comfort in that.

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New Orleans Daily Picayune
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