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The War That Does Not Leave Us: Memory of the American Civil War and the Photographs of Alexander Gardner

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The War That Does Not Leave Us: Memory of the American Civil War
and the Photographs of Alexander Gardner

Katie Janae White

A thesis submitted to the faculty of
Brigham Young University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts

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ABSTRACT

The War That Does Not Leave Us: Memory of the American Civil War and the Photographs of Alexander Gardner

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In July of 1863 the photographs *A Harvest of Death*, *Field Where General Reynolds Fell*, *A Sharpshooter’s Last Sleep*, and *The Home of a Rebel Sharpshooter* were taken after the battle at Gettysburg by a team of photographers led by Alexander Gardner. In the decades that followed these images of the dead of the battlefield became some of the most iconic representations of the American Civil War. Today, Gardner’s Gettysburg photographs can be found in almost every contemporary history text, documentary, or collection of images from the war, yet their journey to this iconic status has been little discussed.

The goal of this thesis is to expand the general understanding of these Civil War photographs and their legacy by considering their use beyond the early 1860s. Although part of a larger scope of influence, the discussion of the photographs presented here will focus particularly on the years between 1894 and 1911. Between those years they were made available to the public through large photographic histories and other history texts as well. The aim of these texts, which framed and manipulated Gardner’s images, were to disseminate a propagandistic history of the war in a way that outlined it as a nationally unifying experience, rather than one of division. These texts mark the beginning of the influence the Gettysburg photographs would have on American memory of the war. Within these books the four photographs became part of a larger effort to reconnect with the past and shape the war into a source for a unified American identity.

Keywords: Alexander Gardner, battlefield photography, Gettysburg, American Civil War, turn of the century, photographic histories, American identity, memory
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Introduction

Some one hundred and fifty years have passed since the time of the Civil War, yet its memory does not fade. The flurry of sesquicentennial celebrations, reenactments, and exhibitions of the last three years show how, even today, it is deeply engrained in the fabric of American society. In his 1961 centennial work *The Legacy of the Civil War*, Robert Penn Warren wrote “The Civil War is, for the American imagination, the great single event of our history… Before the Civil War we had no history in the deepest and most inward sense … The Civil War is our felt history—history lived in the national imagination … It is an overwhelming and vital image of human, and national, experience.”¹

How is it that a war, which destroyed more than 623,000 lives and created ongoing political and social bitterness has become the pinnacle of American memory? Indeed, the nationally united vision of the war that Warren alludes to did not surface until nearly thirty years after its conclusion. At the turn of the century the United States was still a country steeped in the deep divisions left over from the war and, in many regards, lacking in a cohesive national identity. It has been argued that a country’s sense of unified identity leads to a perceived state of stability within that country.² Historian Allen Megill points out, “when identity becomes uncertain, memory rises in value.”³ This was certainly the case with America’s post-civil-war society at the end of the nineteenth century. Interestingly, as the 1890s began to unfold the United States turned to its past in an effort to secure a stronger sense of stability. Out of a desire to quell the leftover sense of division within the country, social thought and attentions returned to

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the contentious memory of the Civil War. Even so, that memory would be reformed in such a way that it would be allowed to play a major role in the needed development of a united national identity.

The rebirth of interest in the war and the development of its memory at the turn of the century manifested itself most noticeably in popular culture. This took the form of literature, varieties of public entertainment, and eventually the reproduction and sale of photographs taken during the war. A prominent example of this popular culture was the literary work *Red Badge of Courage*, by Stephen Crane. This fictional tale of a young soldier’s experience at the Battle of Chancellorsville has often been considered alongside the development of a national American memory of the war in the decades following its end.\(^4\) However, the reproduced Civil War photographs have been largely undiscussed beyond their original creation dates in the 1860s.

Several scholars, such as Allan Trachtenberg, Keith Davis, and, more recently, Bob Zeller, have produced vital research that has shed light on the production and the original social context of battlefield photography created in the United States between 1861 and 1865. Nevertheless, they have only touched on the use and influence of such photographs following the war years. For instance, a large part of Trachtenberg’s discussion is spent on understanding photographic works by photographers Alexander Gardner and James Gibson within American society of the 1860s. He does launch into a brief discussion of their use beyond the war years but only lightly touches on the ways in which they were used and understood by the end of the nineteenth century.\(^5\) Davis and Zeller, on the other hand, spend much more time on the use of

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Civil War photographs beyond the years of their creation, considering the movement of collections of historical negatives and their later process of reproduction. However, both of Davis’s and Zeller’s arguments lack a fuller discussion of how the presence and use of these images at the turn of the century were widely contextualized within the United States, and how they may have influenced the development of the nation’s memory of the war. The goal of this thesis is to expand the general understanding of Civil War photographs and their legacy by considering their use beyond the early 1860s. Although part of a larger scope of influence, the discussion of the photographs presented here will focus particularly on the years between 1894 and 1911. Between those years they were made available to the public through large photographic histories and other history texts as well. This thesis will concentrate on just four of the many photographs produced by the Civil War photographer Alexander Gardner, as these four have been held in prominent interest by the American public throughout the last one hundred and fifty years.

In July of 1863 the photographs *A Harvest of Death* (1863) (Fig. 1) *Field Where General Reynolds Fell* (1863) (Fig. 2), *A Sharpshooter’s Last Sleep* (1863) (Fig. 3), and *The Home of a Rebel Sharpshooter* (1863) (Fig. 4) were taken at Gettysburg only days after the battle’s conclusion by a team of photographers led by Gardner. In the decades that followed these images became some of the most iconic representations of the war. Today, Gardner’s Gettysburg photographs can be found in almost every contemporary history text, documentary, or collection of images from the war. The popularity of these four images is by no means a recent phenomenon, but stems directly from a turn-of-the-century interest in connecting with the

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memory of the war. For this reason, these images make an excellent case study through which to investigate the influence of Civil War photographs beyond the 1860s.

From 1894 to 1911 four quarto-sized texts on the war’s history, filled with reproductions of several Civil War photographs, including the Gettysburg images, were published and sold. These were George F. William’s *The Memorial War Book* (1894), Benson J. Lossing’s *A History of the Civil War* (1895), Francis Trevelyan Miller’s collection of *Original Photographs Taken on the Battlefields During the Civil War of the United States* (1907), as well as his *Photographic History of the Civil War* (1911). The aim of these texts, which presented Gardner’s images, was to disseminate a propagandistic history of the war in a way that outlined it as a nationally unifying experience, rather than one of division. These texts mark the beginning of the influence the four Gettysburg photographs would have over the development of American memory of the war. Within these books the four images became part of a larger effort to reform the war into a moment that defined the United States as a country. By examining the contexts within which these images functioned this thesis will expand the understanding of the use of Civil War photographs beyond the war itself and their relationship to the formation of the war’s memory from the end of the nineteenth century to the years prior to World War I.

As part of popular culture the four Gettysburg photographs were used within a larger framework that strove to secure a united and positive memory of a bitter and long war. In examining the influence of these four photographs this thesis will look to theories surrounding photography’s connection to memory and the development of collective memory at a national level. It will also consider the ways in which a culture takes a traumatic history and transforms it by turning tragedy into a moment of triumph.7 In examining these ideas within the context of

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1894-1911, this thesis will first begin with a brief outline of the Gettysburg photographs’ original creation and context, as both influenced their use beyond the war years. The larger portion of the discussion will then focus on the circumstances behind the rebirth of interest in the war, the process of formulating a reconciled memory of it at the turn of the century, and the part these photographs played within this formulation.
The Gettysburg Photographs

By the time the American Civil War broke out in April of 1861, photographic processes such as the decade-old wet plate collodion process, had made it possible for photographers to venture out of their studios and capture the world around them. Such technological advancements allowed photographs of the battlefront to be placed into the hands of the public in the form of albumen prints and stereographs. The stereograph presented viewers with a double image of a photograph which could be examined three dimensionally through a special viewer.  

Stereographs, along with albumin prints, became a popular form of entertainment through which Northerners came to visually understand the war. One individual who greatly benefited from the public’s interest in war views was the famous American entrepreneur of photography, Mathew B. Brady. Through his work in fine photographic portraiture and his business ventures surrounding his photography studios he shaped the way that Americans interacted with and understood the place of the photograph within society. In the two decades leading up to the Civil War he ran a very successful studio in New York and was well known for his photographs of some of America’s most prominent citizens. Soon though the beginning of the 1860s would shift Brady’s focus from portraiture onto subject matter that was new to the American photograph.

During the Civil War, Brady and the photographers he employed, became well known for their documentation of important military figures as well as the battlefront. This was not the first time that war had been explored by the camera’s lens. Both the British photographers Roger Fenton, in the Crimean War, and Felice Beato in India’s Sepoy Uprising and the Second Opium war in China, had captured various battlefields (Fig. 5- Fig. 6). On July 21st 1861, Brady himself

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8 See Oliver Wendell Holmes’s description of the stereograph and its public perception in “The Stereoscope and the Stereograph” in Soundings from the Atlantic (Boston: Ticknor and Fields, 1864).
9 Trachtenberg, 77-78, 33.
ventured out to the battlefield with the hopes of capturing similar imagery. Instead he found himself in the middle of the Northern retreat from the First Battle of Bull Run. In the panicked rush of troops and civilians he failed to capture a single photograph.\(^\text{10}\) Though this first attempt at American battlefield photography was a failure, Brady was enthralled by the idea of war photographs. By 1862 he brought such subject matter to the American public through the work of his employee Alexander Gardner.

In 1856 Alexander Gardner, a well educated and talented Scottish emigrant, was hired to keep the books and run the business side of Brady’s New York studio. Being an ambitious man with a knowledge and talent for photography, his role in Brady’s studio began to expand rapidly. By the time the Civil War broke out in April of 1861, Gardner was running a second studio for Brady out of Washington DC. He also became one of his employer’s top field photographers along with Brady’s other employed photographers like Timothy O’Sullivan and James Gibson.\(^\text{11}\) Throughout the beginning of the war, Gardner was prudent about making connections for Brady with prominent members in the Union Military. In September of 1862, these connections paid off as Gardner’s communications with General George B. McClellan ensured that he was present on the field directly following the battle of Antietam.\(^\text{12}\) His timely arrival on the battlefield allowed him to do something that had yet to be done in American photography—capture images of the recently slain on the battlefield.

In October of 1862 Brady held an exhibition of Gardner’s images titled *The Dead of Antietam* in his New York and Washington studios. The exhibition seems to have been extremely


\(^{11}\) Ibid, 19. 7-15.

\(^{12}\) Ibid, 41-44.
popular. The *New York Times* reported that “crowds of people [were] constantly going up the stairs…” to see the displayed photographs on the second floor of Brady’s studio.\(^\text{13}\) Not only was this single exhibition popular, but since Gardner recorded the images from Antietam with a stereo-camera, Brady also produced large amounts of stereographs to sell to those outside of New York.\(^\text{14}\) These images, mailed to customers throughout the North, allowed people to study views from the warfront in 3D within the comfort of their homes.\(^\text{15}\) It was from this experience that Gardner learned just how popular images of the dead of the battlefield could be, and their ability to captivate an audience, an ability that would draw viewers to his images from Gettysburg for more than one hundred years.

In 1863 Gardner left Brady’s employment due to Brady’s lack of financial stability, and established his own studio in Washington DC. He did not forget the success of his Antietam photographs when a similar opportunity presented itself in the summer of that same year.\(^\text{16}\) As with Antietam, Gardner arrived directly following the battle of Gettysburg, which took place in and around the small Pennsylvania town from July 1st to July 3rd, 1863. Between July 5th and 6th, Gardner and his employees, Timothy O’Sullivan and James F. Gibson, captured the images he would later title *A Harvest of Death, Field Where General Reynolds Fell, A Sharpshooter’s Last Sleep* and *The Home of a Rebel Sharpshooter*. These four photographs of the dead of the battlefield were, and still are, some of the most powerful of the nearly sixty negatives taken by

\(^{13}\) Ibid.

\(^{14}\) Ibid, 19.

\(^{15}\) William Frassanito points out that aside from the fact that many of the stereographs from Antietam carry stamps with dates during and after the war the fact that E. & H. T. Anthony commissioned Thomas C. Roche to create stereo-views of the dead at Petersburg in April of 1865 shows that Gardner’s work had been a success. See William Frassanito, *Antietam: The Photographic Legacy of America’s Bloodiest Day* (Gettysburg, Pa: Thomas Publications, 1978), 286.

\(^{16}\) Zeller,101-102.
the Gardner team at Gettysburg. What made them so evocative was their subject matter—that is, the bodies of the dead.

The human body, whether living or dead, has the ability to evoke strong emotions from those that surround, interact with, or view it. It is through the body that humans communicate. Upon viewing the emotions or circumstances experienced by another’s body there is a natural desire towards empathy—to insert one’s self into another’s place and feel the weight of the conditions they occupy. It is because of this human connection to the bodies of others that Gardner’s photographs of the dead were, and still are, able to communicate the emotion and horror of battle. The bodies stiffened and bloated in the four Gettysburg photographs were once men, alive, with those that loved and cared for them, and those they shared life with. It is their connection to human empathy, as well as to life, death, and the unknown beyond death that makes the bodies of these soldiers such potent objects.17

At the same time despite the descriptive nature of the bodies and their fate in Gardner’s images, photographs capture but they do not explain. Explanation and meaning are not inherent in a photographic image. They are brought in through outside devices such as text or a photograph’s arrangement amongst other images. In the case of Gardner’s photographs, though the bodies themselves may provoke a myriad of emotions connected to the more abstract or personal, over time the depictions were given varied meanings through narratives constructed around them. The way they would be contextualized by Gardner during the 1860s, and those who followed him at the turn of the century, would point viewers to a particular understanding of the photographs. All of this was made possible through the subject matter of the bodies

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themselves. Verdery states that dead bodies have a “great advantage as symbols: they do not talk much on their own…Words can be put into their mouths.”18 In this way bodies are similar to photographs. Because of their silence they can be made to project specific ideas, ideas that would not necessarily be their own. It was through the silence of the deceased human body and the photograph that Gardner and others would begin to communicate specific perspectives on the war and be able to vastly shape national understanding and memory of it for decades to come.

Despite the perception in the years following the war of Gardner’s photographs as unadulterated documentation of war, they were highly constructed creations of his own design. The hands of Gardner and his team are in every aspect of these four photographs, from the angle at which they were taken to the number of bodies and their placement within the picture plain. Though Gardner would later write that each photograph depicted bodies only from either the Union or Confederate army, the subjects in A Harvest of Death and Field Where General Reynolds Fell have been identified as the same Union soldiers merely captured from two different angles.19 Also, as William Frassanito demonstrates, in the case of A Sharpshooter’s Last Sleep and The Home of a Rebel Sharpshooter, a single body of a Confederate soldier was moved and posed in different positions for both images. However Gardner would later present them as being of two different young men, one a Confederate and the other a Union soldier.

These instances at Gettysburg are not necessarily due to a desire to deceive viewers, but are more related to the fact that there were few bodies remaining on the battlefield on the days the images were taken. Gardner and his team were working alongside Union burial crews as they quickly interred the dead. Furthermore the extreme heat experienced during the battle and the rain that followed afterwards had caused the dead to decompose rapidly. Gardner and his men

18 Ibid, 29.
were working against both time and circumstance. For this reason they worked quickly with the available subject matter in order to capture some idea of the visions witnessed in battle.\textsuperscript{20} In the case of the young sharpshooter Gardner found a body nearly unspoiled by the elements. With it he had the opportunity to focus on the individual features and lifeless state of the young man in order to capture an image that would seem more intimate and emotional to a Northern audience. In short, he communicated his notion of the war through what little carnage he had on hand.

The evocative elements of the bodies of the dead and their placement within these four images would only be emphasized by Gardner’s later use of them. After the work at Gettysburg was complete he returned to Washington with the negatives where they were then reproduced and sold as stereographs. This, however, would not be the only form they would take. Following the war, in 1865, they would eventually be featured in Gardner’s self-published and high-end album titled \textit{Gardner’s Photographic Sketch Book of the Civil War}. This was a sumptuous two volume, leather-bound work that included 100 hand-tipped photographs of the highest quality. The volumes covered major sites of the war from Antietam to Gettysburg and each image was proceeded by verbose and strongly Northern biased descriptions written by Gardner himself.

In its entirety the \textit{Sketch Book} has often been discussed as a text dedicated to a northern Unionist perspective in which the North was always predestined for victory. According to Trachtenberg and Timothy Sweet, Gardner hoped to elevate the northern cause of preserving the Union through the use of photographs which were framed with text shaped by a strong Northern bias. Sweet, whose opinion surrounding the album is by no means unique, states that the way in which Gardner sought to insinuate Northern superiority is evident in the text that precedes each image within the \textit{Sketch Book}. An example of this kind of interaction between text and image is

\textsuperscript{20} Ibid.
seen in the words Gardner includes alongside *Harvest of Death*. His description of those he labeled as Confederates reads:

Killed in the frantic efforts to break the steady lines of an army of patriots, whose heroism only excelled theirs in motive, they paid with life the price of their treason, and when the wicked strife was finished, found nameless graves, far from home and kindred.

Though described as worthy opponents to their Northern counterparts, Gardner repeatedly emphasized that the Confederates lost to the Union army, not because of their lack of effort, but because, in his eyes, the Union motive of preserving the country was far superior to any Confederate motive. The reward for what Gardner described as treason on the part of the Confederates is the anonymity of an unmarked grave.

Though scholars ascertain Gardner’s strong Union bias from the combination of these words and the images included with them, it is also possible that Gardner was working to create a vision of the war that he knew his intended northern audience for the *Sketch Book* would accept and appreciate. Based on the expensive nature of the large two-volume publication, as well as the fact that the work was available only through subscription, it is clear that Gardner sought out a specific upper class audience, and not the masses. A large amount of the images Gardner eventually used in the *Sketch Book* had already been widely available to the general public in the North through the stereograph. The audience he was after with this work, on the other hand, were those wealthy and prominent members in society who could afford such an expensive item. As Davis points out, Gardner’s album was sold by obtaining a commitment for purchase from wealthy patrons prior to the publication of the work. Also the limited run of 200 printed copies

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23 Davis, 168.
of the *Sketch Book* reveals that it was a unique and high-end art object meant to be a specialized product for those who could both afford and appreciate it.\(^{24}\)

If Gardner’s targeted audience was to be those in official political positions and influential members of northern society, it is reasonable to see that the words included with the images could have been written to cater specifically to the Unionist ideals held by those in authority and power. It is interesting to note that thirty years later the photographs and histories they were included in would be marketed to a similar audience. Just as Gardner did, those who would later use his images in their photographic histories would continue to cater to wealthy and prominent individuals in society. Although the audience remained the same, the way in which the war’s history would be told between the mid1890s to early 1900s would shift from the Unionist perspective of Gardner’s time to one that fit the growing concern for national unity and a cohesive historical memory.

Ultimately it was those in powerful positions who shaped Civil War memory as it was to them that publishers were skewing the narratives within their historical texts. The implication, therefore, is that money, power, and personal interest, and not necessarily details and documents alone, establish history. At the same time within the context of a specifically formulated narrative of the war, Gardner’s images would be used and understood as documents and evidence to the war’s history. Through this they would be used to give concreteness to a memory of the war with a very specific end in mind.

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\(^{24}\) Katz, 89.
Though only previously touched on by scholars, the afterlife of Gardner’s Gettysburg photographs was extensive and influential in the formation of Civil War memory. During the war, photographs and stereographic battlefield images brought the warfront to Northern parlors and galleries as objects of entertainment and news. Five years after the war’s end, however, the urgency and desire for the images dropped off. The attention of the American public had moved to the west with the railroads, and on to the Indian wars on the Plains and beyond. Simply put, following 1866, images from the war no longer filled a present need or concern for the information they held, and so they slowly faded out of production. Reflecting this shift in interest, by 1869, Gardner had abandoned producing any later editions of the Sketch Book or reproductions of any of his Civil War photographs. In an effort to salvage their years of work, Gardner and his former employer, Brady, tried to persuade Congress to purchase all of their war negatives. Both photographers hoped to convince them of the historical importance of the negatives. Perhaps because of the proximity of the war and the sheer amount of photographs created during it, Congress did not see the urgency in purchasing either of the large collections and declined both men’s appeals. Despite this disappointing outcome, in that same year Gardner’s career also moved west. He was hired as chief photographer of the Union Pacific Railroad in late 1869, and later covered ongoing delegations in the west between the U.S. Government and American Indian tribes. With this shift in the nation’s attention Gardner’s Civil War images would not hold public interest again until a decade later.

In 1879, John C. Taylor, a Civil War veteran, was searching through the attic of an old New York building for any leftover Civil War photographs when he found something extraordinary. The building formerly belonged to the E. & H. T. Anthony Company, the largest distributor of photographic supplies in America throughout the second half of the nineteenth century. During the war, many of the photographs taken of the battlefront by Gardner and others were made available for public use as stereographs and albumen prints by the Anthony Company. It was during his search of the company’s attic that Taylor discovered some 7,000 negatives taken during the war. Included in this collection were nearly 2,000 negatives from Gardner’s own studio. Among these were the Gettysburg photographs. Though it is not known how Gardner’s negatives ended up in the attic of the Anthony Company, one scenario seems likely. Considering Gardner’s failure to sell his negatives to Congress, it is possible that he moved on to another interested party. It seems likely that the company ultimately came into possession of Gardner’s negatives either through purchase or perhaps in order to settle a debt.

Whatever the reason for their location, Taylor’s rediscovery of the negatives marks the beginning of the important relationship that Gardner’s four Gettysburg photographs would have with the formation of a unified memory of the war. Evidently Taylor went to the building with the intent of locating Civil War photographs and negatives. He later recalled that he “believed that the heroes of the conflict should be allowed to look upon the scenes in which they participated.” The war was part of the veterans’ memories, and the photographs, as captured memories, in Taylor’s mind, belonged to them and should be returned.

27 Katz, 19, 73.
28 Edward Bailey Eaton & Francis Trevelyan Miller, Original Photographs Taken on the Battlefields, During the Civil War of the United States (Hartford, 1907), 9. and Zeller, 191-193.
29 Ibid, 9.
In the years that followed 1865 many veterans sought to bury away the war in the back of their minds. When the war ended many veterans were at a loss for how to mentally approach the ordeal that they had endured. This is most potently illustrated in Winslow Homer’s painting *The Veteran in a New Field* (Fig. 7) (1865). A large amount of Civil War battles were fought in farm fields or orchards. In this way, the inclusion of the golden wheat field before the toiling veteran infuses Homer’s work with an underlying meaning. When the veteran in the painting looks at the field before him he does not see a bounteous harvest of wheat, but possibly sees the blood and hears the screams and moans of a different harvest—one more akin to that which is depicted in the Gardner team’s photographs from Gettysburg like *Harvest of Death*. The veteran will probably never be able to put this more grisly vision fully out of his mind. In many ways this painting captures the reality of what returning home meant for many veterans. Gerald F. Linderman argues that soldiers, like the loved ones and acquaintances they left behind, went into the war with the belief that it would be a glorious and adventure-filled proving ground for courage and patriotism. In reality, the experience of the war was a constant cycle of boredom, horror, and disease, which, for several soldiers, led to feelings of discouragement, cowardice and, in many cases, absolute disillusionment. Upon their return home it was difficult to reconcile the reality of the war with friends and family expecting tales of patriotic adventure. It is this difficult homecoming, to a world far separate from bullets and battle that Homer captures. In the next several decades however, the distance in years from the war helped those involved in

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32 Linderman, 1-2, 266-268.
33 Ibid.
it approach its memory once more in a way perhaps less tainted by the pain of more dismal experiences.

In spite of trauma and physical wounds by the 1880s, a strong desire to preserve and reflect upon the war’s memory began to grow in the North and South, especially among those who had directly endured the ordeal. The growing distance from the war allowed the memory of those trauma tainted years to be softened by feelings of tender nostalgia as time moved forward into a period and culture far different from the one the war had occupied. Throughout the 1880s, middle-aged veterans and their families began to feel more comfortable looking back on, embracing, and even sharing their past experiences in the war.\textsuperscript{34} As veterans became more accustomed to revisiting their pasts so did the public. During the 1880s, veteran speeches and lectures on the war became popular events. Veterans also soon found a number of other ways to stay engaged with their military participation. Many of them joined veterans organizations like the Grand Army of the Republic in the North or the United Confederate Veterans in the South. With the rising interest in the war’s memory, these veteran groups even began organizing reunions and battlefield reenactments as a kind of nostalgia-laden spectacle for them and the public to enjoy.\textsuperscript{35}

If speeches and reenactments were not enough to engage the larger American public, presentations like artist Paul D. Philippoteaux’s 1883 \textit{The Battle of Gettysburg}, a 400-foot long cyclorama displayed in Chicago, also shaped the narrative of the war. While such displays helped to establish Gettysburg’s rise to legendary status in the minds of the American public, Philippoteaux’s work also shows a desire to connect more fully with the war’s reality. The


\textsuperscript{35} Ibid.
cyclorama put the viewer in the middle of the scene of Pickett's last charge, the legendary but failed Confederate assault on Union lines on the final day at Gettysburg on July 3, 1863. The feeling of being surrounded by the historical military maneuver was accentuated by the inclusion of lights, sound, and three dimensional objects like trees and other scenery placed in the foreground. The display was evidently so effective in provoking the illusion of the battle that it was reported to have brought many veterans who visited it to tears. 36

In the wake of strong public interest came a surge of veterans and their families working to locate old personal effects and writings from the war.37 In both the North and the South, families searched their homes for items and mementos that came from the war, and created “relic rooms.” These were spaces filled with objects of nostalgia like old battle flags, uniforms, and weaponry that all paid homage to the battles of the past.38 Taylor occupies such a room in his photograph from the 1890s (Fig. 8). His room is filled with an array of rifles, sabers, shackles, uniforms, picture prints, portrait busts and tomes all relating to the war. These objects further connected Taylor to the same past he sought out in the negatives and images pulled from the Anthony warehouse. Relic rooms like this one illustrate the depth of interest in and personal connection to the war that many Americans were beginning to feel at the end of the nineteenth century.

Due to presentations like those of Philippoteaux’s and reenactments put on by veterans organizations, interest in the war expanded into engagement with its memory. This manifested itself in works like the short stories by San Francisco journalist and veteran Ambrose Bierce. His

38 Marten, 141-143.
semi-autobiographical and gruesome tales of life and death on the battlefield were devoured by
the public between the 1880s and 1890s. Author Stephen Crane looked to the writings of
Bierce, the personal accounts of veterans, and the works of soldier and American realist author,
John W. De Forest, for his popular 1895 novel, *The Red Badge of Courage*.\(^{40}\) It was not just
writings and personal accounts he depended on. Crane saw the photographs from the war as
equal to the accounts he read. By combining his interactions with both he sought to create a
realistic experience of the war for his readers.\(^{41}\) It was this understanding of photographs like
Gardner’s as documents of the past that would lead to their vital role in shaping national memory
of the war.

With the renewed public interest in the war in 1890 Taylor began to reprint and sell new
stereographic images made from the original 7,000 negatives he had gathered from the Anthony
building. Bundled among this reproduced collection were the four Gettysburg images. For the
first time in thirty years they were once again brought before the eyes of the public. The market
was prime for the release of this reprinted series, which Taylor fittingly titled *War Memories*.\(^{42}\)
Just as veterans were returning to their past experiences in the war, the opportunity to once more
look at photographs taken during the same period brought the war to those too young to
remember it, or born after its conclusion. In this way Taylor became one of the first individuals
to use a group of Civil War photographs to create and shape a national memory of the war for a
rising generation of Americans.

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\(^{39}\) Roy Morris Jr. “So Many Needless Dead: The Civil War Witness of Ambrose Bierce,” in *Memory and Myth: The
Civil War in Fiction and Film from Uncle Tom's Cabin to Cold Mountain*. ed. David B. Sachsman, S. Kittrell
Rushing, Roy Morris (West Lafayette, IN: Purdue University Press, 2007), 115-126.

\(^{40}\) Ibid.

\(^{41}\) Trachtenberg, 78.

\(^{42}\) Zeller, 193.
Molding the Civil War Memory

Part of the immediate aftermath of the Civil War was the strong divide that continued socially and politically between the North and the South. The interest in returning to the war’s past that had been sparked by veterans shed more light on just how divided the country remained in the decades since the war’s end. These tensions were played out in many arenas, including that of social memory.

In *Race and Reunion* David Blight argues that directly following the war, northern abolitionist groups and their leaders hoped for and worked towards a memory of the war that portrayed it as a struggle to liberate and preserve the freedoms of every African American. For them, slavery and the Union victory over the states that had protected its practice, should have been the main focus of a national memory of the war.43 At the same time, another vision was being established around southern perspectives which were embellished with white supremacist thought. From what has been termed the “Lost Cause” narrative, the defeat that the South experienced was formed into a point in time that defined the bravery, chivalry, and fortitude of its people in spite of a war that could not be won.44 In this light the war was seen as a source of noble action taken by the Confederate South as they strove to preserve their rights and way of life. Furthermore, within this narrative the entire conflict became a war of defense in which the South was always bound to lose while pitted against the endlessly better supplied forces of the Union military.45 Emphasis also eventually shifted away from slavery, the topic that had been such a strong part of the abolitionist vision of the war, and on to the noble actions taken by the

43 Blight, 256-258.
44 Ibid.
Confederates as they strove to preserve the region’s rights against the tyranny of the United States government.46

While interest in the Civil War revived on a public and private level in the 1890s, a desire to build a unified memory of the nation’s past also grew. Yet, neither of the disparate narratives of the “Lost Cause” or the predominantly northern abolitionists found common ground in the formation of such a memory. For thirty years, America had officially been a reunited country, but what was lacking was a way to emotionally and intellectually reconcile and symbolically unite it. These two leading narratives kept any feeling of reunification within the country at bay. It was from this struggle over the war’s memory that what has been called a “reconciliationist perspective” arose. Eventually, this perspective was perpetuated in the publications that included and framed Gardner’s Gettysburg photographs.47

From this desire for reconciliation came a new narrative of the war that was more about remembering what had happened between the North and the South than questioning why it had happened. Through it the weight of slavery was diminished in the overall history of the Civil War, and the ordeal became an act of devotion that made the causes of each side equal through their bravery and fervor for their separate ideals.48 In reality, this new perspective matched that of the “Lost Cause” well. The Southern rendition of the war’s narrative was able to quietly take shelter underneath the ideals of reconciliation as it shifted its focus towards the bravery and actions of individual southern men and women. On the other hand, perspectives focused on slavery slowly diminished within national concern against the growing presence of reconciliation.49

46 Blight, 259.
47 Ibid.
48 Ibid.
49 Ibid.
The strongest manifestation of the growth of a memory of the war that reconciled the actions of the North and the South towards one another was the battlefield on which Gardner and his men had captured their four most important photographs. At the end of the war in 1865, the battle of Gettysburg was not seen as the epic turning point that it would become. However, through a carefully organized and detailed rendering of the past the Gettysburg battlefield became both that epic turning point as well as a physical touchstone for reconciliationist memory. The battlefield gave weight and reality to the narrative of reconciliation in much the same way that photographs and stereographs had done for veterans and other individuals interested in connecting with the past.⁵⁰

In many ways Gettysburg was the perfect place to build a reconciled memory, one where turn-of-the-century audiences, from both sides, could work to develop a cohesive vision of themselves and the United States as a whole. The battle had taken place on northern ground as opposed to the southern fields where a majority of the battles were fought. In this light the North, which generally took the offensive position in southern history, could be portrayed as a worthy defender of its land. Comparatively, the South could also be complimented as the main focus of the narrative was shifted away from the issue of slavery and onto the South’s bravery in the face of a tragic defeat—illustrated most famously in the final charge led by General Pickett.⁵¹ By making a battle such as Gettysburg the focal point in the history of the war, the raging politics and myriad of potent negative emotions from both sides could be diminished. The history could be based more on the passions of men rather than on competing perspectives of the war’s history.

⁵¹ Blight, 6-14.
The reconciliationist narrative which was soon engrained within the memory of Gettysburg began with John Badger Bachelder, an artist who, from 1863 to his death in 1894, became the battlefield’s foremost historian. Throughout the war, Bachelder searched for the particular Civil War battle that he felt could measure up to the great and mythic battles of the past. In gathering critical information for his paintings, however, he soon began to formulate the history of the battle of Gettysburg. With the hopes of creating a historically clear narrative of the battle, he sorted through information and began to pick and choose those points on the battlefield he felt to be most essential. He solidified the notoriety of these key points by physically marking them on the old battlefront. In the case of Pickett’s Charge, he labeled the section of the battlefield at which Pickett’s men had pushed the farthest through Union lines, dubbing it “The High Watermark of the Confederacy.”

Bachelder’s desire to locate the pinnacle of the four years’ fight in Gettysburg caused many of the larger circumstances behind the war’s conception, such as the political and moral issues of slavery and its expansion, to be diminished. Also of interest to a national audience was the battlefield’s connection to Lincoln. Since his assassination in 1865 his reputation had grown to a legendary status. From the end of the nineteenth century, and especially beginning in the early 1900s, Lincoln’s “Gettysburg Address” became, with the battlefield, one of the pivotal points in the war’s history and memory. Lincoln’s words fit nicely into a reconciled mode of thinking with their references to “those who gave their lives that the nation might live.” In the years following the war, Lincoln’s speech had been used by those on all sides of social and political thought. His words appeared on monuments to Civil War soldiers around the country,

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52 Desjardin, 83-107.
53 Ibid.
and portions of his speech were even used in newspapers dealing with everything from reports surrounding emigration to suffrage. Soon they would be used alongside Gardner’s own Gettysburg images within published photographic histories. The status of Lincoln and his visit to the battlefield to deliver the speech only added more clout to the already exaggerated importance of the battlefield.

The nationally felt importance of the events that took place at Gettysburg only grew and by the turn of the century Bachelder’s handpicked and detailed history of the battlefield became a key point in the formation of the war’s memory. The status of the battlefield soon began to draw individuals from all over the country to the small Pennsylvania town. Reunions and reenactments began to take place and soon statues and memorials to several regiments and to “important” instances of the battle began to dot the sprawling countryside. Tourist operations took the form of more commercial endeavors. Battlefield tours and Round Top Park, a trolley stop on the battlefield that included a food stand and photographic studio allowed visitors to enliven and commemorate their visit to the battlefield.

All of these efforts further connected visitors with a memory of a past that was increasingly not their own. By the beginning of the twentieth century, over 100 residents of the town were making their living by either giving tours or taking part in the myriad of other endeavors created for the thousands of tourists that poured into the town each year. As focus on Gettysburg grew so did the iconic nature of Gardner’s photographs. In this role they would soon

55 Dupré, 32-47.
57 Peatman, 90.
move beyond Taylor’s motives and become part of a foundation that would further shape
American memory of that past.\textsuperscript{58}

\textsuperscript{58} Nivison, 301.
Civil War Memory and the Photographic Histories of Williams and Lossing

By the mid1890s Gardner’s Gettysburg images moved beyond Taylor’s use for them and began to illustrate newly written histories of the war. In their new settings they were soon framed not only as realistic renderings of the war, but as signifiers of a reconciliationist perspective. The presence of photographs within these published histories was made possible by the evolution of the photographic process. By 1880 the halftone image—a printing process that allowed photographs to be cheaply reproduced amongst text in newspapers, magazines, and eventually books was perfected in both England and the United States. Prior to this, if photographs were included on the same page as written text they had to be placed in by hand as in Gardner’s Sketch Book. With this technological breakthrough, the rediscovered Gettysburg images were presented to the public in new ways that further shaped Civil War memory.

In 1894 Taylor lent his collection of negatives to George F. Williams who used them to publish the Civil War history titled The Memorial War Book. The book was a large-bound tome that combined a brief history of the war and its individual battles with sketches, prints, and halftone photographs by Gardner, Brady and several others. In Gardner’s introduction to his 1865 Photographic Sketch Book of the Civil War, he wrote that he desired that his photographs would “possess an enduring interest…” Through Williams it seems that Gardner’s hopes came to fruition. Like Taylor, Williams was a veteran of the war and hoped that his Memorial War Book would “vividly renew the memories of our war days.”

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60 Zeller, 194.
61 Gardner, 1.
series, Williams’s publication highlighted the photograph’s ability to work as a bridge between the viewer and moments within the war. Williams’s belief that the war could be brought to the viewer through the photograph is evident in his introduction to the book which stated:

These pictures are the original photographs taken during the war of the Rebellion. It is more than a quarter of a century since the sun painted these real scenes of that great war… Just how things looked ‘at the front,’ during the great war, is with the most of us, now after the lapse of nearly thirty years, only a fading memory, cherished, it is true, and often called up from among the dim pictures of the past, but after all, only the vision of a dream. Artists have painted and sketched, and engraved, with more or less fidelity to the fact and detail, those ‘scenes of trial and danger’ but all their pictures are in a greater or less degree, imaginary conceptions of the artists.63

Here Williams makes the point that, with absolute reliability, these photographs showed what it was like to be “at the front.” He applied the early concept that photographs are given a physical presence because the unbiased and objective sun that shined on the day that they were taken lit the scene itself. Williams also states that the photographers of the war captured “with their cameras the reflection, as in a mirror, of very many of those thrilling and interesting scenes.” A “reflection” of the war, or a reality that could be placed before the viewer, was what the public desired and demanded from a war so highly documented.

Like Taylor before him, Williams sought to give the war’s reality to those who were separated from it. In this regard, at least, he pursued the same audience Taylor had with his stereographs—the increasingly older veterans and war enthusiasts longing to connect or reconnect with the reality of the war. According to Williams, his work was meant to place, “[t]he reader on the very ground where the historic scenes of the war occurred…” and carry them “back to a period of thirty years ago.”64
In his book Williams pulled together a collection of photographs and illustrations that he believed gave the full breadth of the war. Gardner’s Gettysburg images were included in this vision, scattered between photographs of generals, crowded encampments, and action-filled illustrations complete with galloping cavalry and the billowing smoke of gunpowder. Through these photographs and illustrations framed by Williams’s reconciliationist-skewed words, the book comes alive with the action of war. This may be seen in the text that surrounds Gardner’s Field Where General Reynolds Fell. Williams writes that “The sound of song and praise to the Creator had given place to the roar of battle, the yells and cheers of advancing battalions, the agonized cries of shattered and wounded men, the deafening detonations of artillery, and the angry crash of musketry.”  

Surrounded by this text, Gardner’s image of swollen bodies is infused with the sounds of battle, agony, and the death that follows.

Williams also used Gardner’s Gettysburg photographs to illustrate the most solemn aspects of war (Fig. 9). The four images appear grouped together in the middle of the book, amongst a harrowing written description:

In the wheat field, among ripening peaches in the orchard, in the Devil’s Glen, under the trees in the clumps and belts of woodland, in the shallow waters of Plum Run and Rock creeks, along the steep face of the Round Top, behind and in front of stone walls, besides dismantled cannon, everywhere along the front of the Federal positions, lay many thousand corpses.

These words infuse the photographs with a sense of shock and sorrow through the juxtaposition of a picturesque landscape littered with the carnage of war. The grouping is given even more visual impact through the presence and actual arrangement of the photographs. Like the bloated bodies in the photographs, the reproductions of them overlay one another and spill into each other’s frames. For the reader this grouping created the grotesque visual sensation of bodies piled

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65 Ibid, 195.
66 Ibid, 419.
high. Through this arrangement Williams illustrated the overwhelming capacity at which lives are ended in battle. Those who read Williams’s text in 1894 were not only allowed to visually experience the war’s veracity, but were also shown how to formulate the meaning behind it—a meaning that was already greatly shaped by the influence of reconciliation.

As with the Gettysburg images, anywhere photographs of the dead appear in Williams’s work, such as those taken by Gardner at Antietam or by Thomas C. Roche at Fort Mahone in Petersburg, Virginia, they are grouped together (Fig. 10-11). In image after image, photographs of deceased soldiers are either laid over the top of one another or clustered together at strange angles that make them seem to become one united work. In the case of the Gettysburg images, Williams strays away from Gardner’s original outline, which kept a strict distinction between the armies of the North and South. Williams piles them together in such a way that these men almost become one. Though each image is labeled so that the viewer may see with accuracy which army the dead are from, in their grouped form the northern dead are perceived no differently from the southern dead. Every body that lays on the ground was, as Williams would have it, a person who fought for what he believed. In the words that surround the photographs Williams writes, “These soldiers in the blue and the gray were lying peacefully together, mere clods of clay, many to sleep forever in unknown graves.”67 Instead of the treasonous Confederates of Gardner’s Sketch Book only occupying the unmarked graves, in Williams’s book it is indicated that the dead of both armies share the tragic anonymity of a mass co-burial. They are reconciled in their just but separate causes and in their shared deaths. Williams unites both armies by gathering them into a single group of passionate patriots.

67 Ibid, 419.
Through his arrangement of the Gettysburg photographs, Williams also seems to have desired to add a personal tone to these clustered images of the dead. On one page of the book the photographs *A Sharpshooter’s Last Sleep* and *The Home of a Rebel Sharpshooter* are clustered with other images of the dead collected by the Gardner team at Gettysburg (Fig. 12). Together they are laid out in a design that does not speak of mass production. Their presence within an intimate family-album-like space is alluded to through the photographs’ angled arrangement, layering, handwritten captions, stenciled motifs, and appearance of curled aging corners. Verna Posever Curtis explains, “When you hold a photo album, you sense that you are in possession of something unique, intimate, and meant to be saved for a long time.” She goes on to say that “From their earliest days, albums have been made for the purpose of preserving impressions and launching memories.”68 It is this intimacy with memory that Williams hoped to tap into. After all the war had been a family matter. It had been labeled a war of brother against brother or an act of fratricide. What Williams arranged was a kind of national family album alluded to through the intimacy of the layout. By bringing the war to a more personal level he could further emphasize the human qualities and tragically heroic nature of the war through which a reconciliationist perspective thrived, and in this way shape the memory of the war.

Williams also relied on small details within his arrangement to gently allude to the intimacy between a family and the creation and interaction with their photographic albums. In *Photography and the American Scene*, Robert Taft shared an anecdote of a late nineteenth-century mother looking at the photograph of her deceased child. He stated, “How many a tear-stained mother has leafed through an album until she reached a well-worn page and there gazed

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on the one whose presence was still insured by the blessed bit of cardboard!69 Images of great personal connection would certainly have become worn with time and even would have begun to break down. In Williams’s arrangement of Gardner’s Antietam images for example, he again applies to a connection to the war on a personal level, not only through an arrangement that denotes the outline of a family photo album, but also through the subtle curling at the edge of the middle photograph, which denotes human interaction with the image (Fig. 13). Though a halftone print on a mass produced page, the image stirs the sentiment of personal connection and the ephemeral nature of the photographs. Through these careful details, the soldiers become, in a sense, individualized once more. The photographs personalize a moment in the war for the viewer, allowing them to become part of the national family that endured the war. The arrangement alludes to the quickly growing notion at the time that the war could be felt at a personal level by all Americans. Its history was their history, whether they had been there or not. Williams’s layout helps to create that sense by arranging and staging these images in an intimate outline. The ability to personalize the war, as well as the images within the book, only added more emotional weight to the rising reconciliationist perspective Williams carefully wove into his narrative.

Although a northern creation published in New York, the reconciliationist contents of Williams’s work indicate that it was meant to appeal to a wider audience. Like Gardner before him, Williams was aware of the interests of his audience and applied to them in a similar fashion. In the case of Williams’s publication, his audience were those who desired to see the war as a moment that more fully united the nation rather than tearing it apart. They were those members of society, just as in Gardner’s age, who could afford Williams’s finely hard bound and carefully

embossed book. These individuals, involved in the business or politics of the nation, were interested in a country that could move forward boldly and with strength. They wanted to see a version of history that made America a stable country that could go unquestioned as it took its place on the world stage. As with Gardner, the personal interests of those with the means to buy Williams’s work shaped the contents of it. For this reason he shifted the focus onto the “heroic deeds” of the men on both sides, not the “technicalities” that got them there—a more pleasing outcome to his major audience.70

It was Williams’s brand of reconciliationist thought that influenced similar publications that followed. In 1895, just one year after *The Memorial War Book* was sold, the War Memorial Association, based in New York, published Benson J. Lossing’s *A History of the Civil War*. Lossing, a northerner and well known historian of the period, approached the written portion of his book quite differently from Williams. Hoping for the text to be approached as a dynamic history, Lossing’s writing is less dramatic and written in a more empirical tone. Because of this, the publication was able to be presented as a rendering of the war based in absolute fact and perhaps catered to an audience interested in a more academic understanding of the war’s history. At the same time there is the sense that the history is woven around a reconciliationist perspective.

Lossing opens the work with a verbose description of how the South, though utterly destroyed in the war, is steadily rebuilding. In reality, even some thirty years after reconstruction, the South was still anything but recovered. Yet, for the sake of a historical narrative based on a country that should be seen as thriving and reunited, emphasis is placed on a South that is

70 Williams, ii.
“living, breathing, growing every hour.”71 Despite the reality of an economically weak South rife with political upheaval and social violence, Lossing’s text already envisions a thriving United States with an equally united national identity. This narrative laid out by Lossing went well with the perspective of reconciliation as history’s focus was continually pushed away from harsher realities onto points that could be construed as positive and even needed circumstances for the country’s improvement.

Lossing’s book, just as Williams’s, consists of historical text paired with photographs and illustrations. Other similarities are seen in the many pages of Lossing’s work that are identical in layout to those Williams’s work. Although it is not known why or under what circumstances this occurred, many times throughout the text there are examples of Lossing directly copying certain arrangements from The Memorial War Book (Fig. 14). In the example from Figure 12 the same clustered groupings of images of Gardner’s dead “sharpshooter” from Williams’s book are used by Lossing. The adoption of this layout by Lossing may show the success Williams had in personalizing the images of the dead, and even adding emotion to the straightforward framework of historical writing. The presence of such emotion allowed a reconciliationist perspective to take an even deeper hold in the minds of the audiences of these works.

A History of The Civil War indicates the deeper influence of reconciliationist thought through Lossing’s own original captions which he included with the photographs of the dead. Alongside these depictions of what he calls “The Horrors of War,” are captions that quote Lincoln’s Gettysburg address. A Sharpshooter’s Last Sleep, though not given its original title, is pictured with the caption “that we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain…” (Fig. 15). This quote from the Gettysburg Address functions here just as the battlefield

did by the end of the century. It became, not a speech to usher in the end of the war, but one that called soldiers of the North and South to reconcile and become brothers in arms. Through word and image, the men of both sides of the war are depicted as having all died “that the nation might live.” Their sacrifice is rendered as a sacrifice for the country as a whole, as martyrs to build a stronger and more united nation. In Lossing’s work, the war, like the battlefield of Gettysburg, becomes a proving ground that did not destroy the country, but made it a nation. Lossing’s work, like Williams’s, can be seen as having been directly influenced by an underlying reconciliationist thought process.

In the years that followed, other books with agendas similar to those by Williams and Lossing would be created. Whether their motives were to give a detailed history of the war or spin it into a narrative of patriotic adventure, the reconciliationist perspective would be continually present as it became more fully entwined with a national memory of the war. Memory is never stagnant however, and as the United States moved into a new century the growing perception of the war built a foundation on which feelings of national unity could stand as the country launched itself onto the world stage and into a new era.
Miller and Civil War Memory in the Twentieth Century

In the final years of the nineteenth century the sense of tension in a growing and changing society further fostered a reconciled memory of the Civil War that strove to resolve bitter feelings from the past. The narrative and memory of the war would take on a greater role by the beginning of the twentieth century as a foundation for American unity that could function as a part of a society that was increasingly concerned with working to solve new social struggles. While Progressive Era politics worked to formulate policies that created a more socially stable nation, the United States began to assert itself on the world stage. This began with the Spanish American War in 1898, and would expand to eventual involvement in World War I. At this time reconciliationist thought was continually present in American culture, as seen in the continued creation of photographic histories of the Civil War.

In 1907 journalist Francis Trevelyan Miller, with the help of his employer Edward Bailey Eaton, published *Original Photographs Taken on the Battlefields During the Civil War of the United States*. It was to Eaton that John C. Taylor sold his entire collection of Civil War negatives. In time Eaton gave Miller access to his newly acquired collection. Under his employer’s supervision Miller arranged the images within the book and wrote the accompanying text. Unlike the previous books by Williams and Lossing, Miller was less intent on giving a detailed history of the war as he was more drawn to the artistic qualities of the photographs themselves. This may have been in part due to Eaton’s influence, as his interests mainly lay in the value of the photographs rather than in the full breadth of the war. Upon purchasing the negatives, Eaton abandoned Taylor’s original scheme of reprinting stereographs, which had slowly become less popular, and reproduced the images as small and large prints that were

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72 Eaton, 5-9.
individually sold to those who collected and shared a similar interest in photography. By the
beginning of the twentieth century many photography associations and camera clubs had
appeared in the United States started by those who were intrigued by the collection of historical
photographs. This growing interest is seen in the fact that in Miller’s book, the history of the war
plays a secondary role to the photographs.

In addition, though many of the photographs in the collection of negatives were created
by Gardner’s studio, much of the credit went to Mathew Brady who had become the icon of Civil
War photography. This was due to the fact that, prior to the war, Brady was already established
as one of the best and most well known American entrepreneurs of photography. In relation to
this, following the war, credit for many of the photographs taken at that time were assigned to
Brady rather than to his former employees like Gardner and Gibson. Because of this, Miller
highlights Brady throughout the text and credits him for many of the photographs while Gardner
is mentioned only in passing reference. In the work Miller states that, “Accompanying the
collection is found an occasional negative that seems to have been made by Alexander
Gardner…”73 Beyond this Gardner is neither discussed nor given credit for many photographs
that were his own work.

It is interesting to note that of any of the turn-of-the-century texts Miller’s comes closest
to Gardner’s original display of the Gettysburg images. The photographs are displayed in large
formats that minimize the written word. Though Gardner was limited in his arrangement of the
images by the photographic process at the time, his high-end work in the Sketch Book still held
the photographs as the main focus. Miller’s work functions in much the same way. Although the
text is included on the same page as the halftone reproductions, the words are often squeezed

73 Ibid, 15.
into awkward margins in order for the viewer to have access to larger and more detailed copies of the images (Fig. 16-17). Such an arrangement shows that despite the information they hold, the words are secondary to the photographs themselves. This is an important shift away from what Williams and Lossing did with their own publications. Photographs, not words, were becoming the true eyewitnesses of history.

Throughout the work Miller reiterates the unique nature and quality of these photographs, making his intended audience clear. Miller’s publication does relate to the photographic histories that came before it in that it hinges on the ideals of building a memory of the war around reconciliationist thought. This is witnessed in the language used within Miller’s work. He writes:

> The drama here revealed by the lens is one of intense realism. In it one can almost hear the beat of the drum and the call of the bugle. It throbs with all the passion known to humanity. It brings one face to face with the madness of battle, the thrill of victory, the broken heart of defeat. There is in it the loyalty of comradeship, the tenderness of brotherhood, the pathos of the soldier’s last hour; the willingness to sacrifice, the fidelity to principle, the love of country.74

With words such as “brotherhood” and the phrase “willingness to sacrifice,” and no mention of North or South, the focus of Miller’s message is clear: his goal is to reveal through drama, victory, and sacrifice, that what led both sides to this demise was the equally noble ideal of “love of country.” Miller also relies on the idea of the connection to a past that photographs hold—that they reveal the actuality of the war through their “intense realism.” Miller states that images like *Field Where General Reynolds Fell* or *The Home of a Rebel Sharpshooter* depict “the pathos of the soldier’s last hour.” Such a reference to death in the Civil War is possible here because the notion of a reconciled nation had, by this time, settled itself so deeply into a collective understanding of the war.

74Ibid, 15.
The persistence with which reconciliationist thought settled into the formation of Civil War memory was, by this time, so pervasive that it would have probably gone unnoticed by contemporary audiences. This is evident in Miller’s words throughout the book. In one section he writes:

Whatever may have been the differences that threw a million of America’s strongest manhood into bloody combat, each one offered his life for what he believed to be the right. The American People today are more strongly united than ever before—North, South, East, and West, all are working for the moral, the intellectual, the industrial and political upbuilding of Our Beloved Land.75

Here Miller does not link the outbreak of the war with slavery or contentious politics. Furthermore he diminishes the circumstances that led to the war, except for stating that it may have been over a strong love of state. In the end, the war and the toll of death that Gardner’s photographs illustrate was, as Miller represented it, simply the sacrifice necessary to unite the country. Through his combination of text and image, the United States is depicted as being better for the absolute carnage that was brought on by the war. Miller’s book shows just how well the national perception of the war had settled into an outline of reconciliation. Though in many regards the war remained a point of great division and tension, in a work like Miller’s it became a moment of uniting triumph for the American spirit rather than a moment of absolute tragedy.

Published four years later in 1911, Miller’s second work the Photographic History of the Civil War amplified his endeavor to illustrate the war as an event that made way for national unification. Again using Eaton’s negatives, as well as several other collections lent from military and government sources and other private donors, Miller created a work made up of ten individual books that sought to give a detailed outline of all the various facets of the war.76

75 Ibid.
76 Zeller, 194.
so many volumes it was possible for Miller to explore the war’s history in even greater depth. As with Williams and Lossing, book one briefly covers the history of the war, the other books individually delve into areas such as the lives of the soldiers themselves, naval history of the war, or even weaponry. The main goal of Miller’s vast work was to provide a well documented and in-depth history of the American Civil War as a whole. The work’s function as a record of the war was given further strength by the names listed on book one’s index page. Contributors to the series’s historical text include historians, professors, leading members of the military, and even President Taft. Miller is not simply relying on his own words in the series. He adds the words of those like history professor Henry W. Elson, or the accounts of Union Lieutenant-Colonel Eben Swift or Confederate Brigadier-General Marcus J. Wright on the war’s impact and history. This gives the sense that the series is an unbiased factual documentation of the war. Miller’s history, though a carefully formulated reconciliationist narrative, was seen not as a construction, but as an actuality.

Unlike Miller’s prior work, photographs like Gardner’s are less highlighted than the history. Their job is to function as historical documents of “intense realism” within the publication. This is seen in the way that Gardner’s photographs are utilized and retitled. Just as Gardner’s titles shaped the way his photographs were received and understood in the 1860s, so did Millers titles for a generation in need of a reconciled past. *A Harvest of Death, Field Where General Reynolds Fell*, and *A Sharpshooter’s Last Sleep* are included with titles like *The First Day’s Toll, The Federal Dead At Gettysburg, July 1st, 1864*, and *In The Devil’s Den* (Fig. 18-20) respectively. The title *The First Day’s Toll* as opposed to *A Harvest of Death* adds to the photograph’s part as documentation by stating that the image is of a specific point in time in relation to the battle of Gettysburg. By retitling these and the other images in this way, they are
no longer separate depictions full of moral and poetic content, as Gardner’s Sketch Book originally presented them. Under Miller’s hand they become documents that strengthen the credibility of the historical writing surrounding them. Already seen as “simple, unimpeachable bits of visual fact…” by the American public, in underscoring the documentary nature of the photographs through their titles, Miller’s work as a whole is better able to support the reconciliationist perspective.77

Although presented as an unbiased history, the influence of reconciliation weaves its way through Miller’s books. As Allan Trachtenberg points out, “Miller overlooks the fact of secession, dispels the notion that it was a ‘War of the Rebellion,’ and passes over the destruction of half a million combatants.”78 Trachtenberg also contends that Miller’s work is a compilation that “pays ‘tribute’ to that ‘American Character’ which proved itself by surviving fratricidal battles and reestablishing national unity.”79 The tone to which Trachtenberg alludes appears as early as Miller’s dedication page which states that the publication is for “…the men in blue and gray whose valor and devotion have become the priceless heritage of a united nation.”80 Here is, as in Miller’s Original Photographs Taken on the Battlefields During the Civil War of the United States, the idea of the war uniting the nation. The key focus of Miller’s publication, therefore, is to underscore the perspective of reconciliation by outlining that what was needed to unite the nation was the blood of a worthy generation of men during the Civil War.

Miller’s ten volume set is only a small illustration of how deeply the reconciliationist perspective had moved into the United States’s collective memory. In the years to come more

77 Davis, 13.
78 Trachtenberg, 79.
79 Ibid.
popular culture in the form of literature, history books, and other forms of media including film, and especially social commemorations would be influenced by reconciliation. In 1913, for instance, nearly two years after the publication of Miller’s work and only four years prior to American involvement in World War I, Gettysburg hosted one of the largest reunions of its time. The Peace Jubilee, as it was called, reunited the veterans of both The Grand Army of the Republic and those of the United Confederate Veterans at a 50th anniversary commemoration of the now epic battle. This event, just as the photography books that proceeded it, shows just how reconciliationist memory had taken hold by 1913. In his remarks at the event, President Woodrow Wilson spoke in words filled with the tone of reconciliation:

> How wholesome and healing the peace has been! We have found one another again as brothers and comrades, in arms, enemies no longer, generous friends rather, our battles long past, the quarrel forgotten—except that we shall not forget the splendid valor, the manly devotion of the men then arrayed against one another, now grasping hands and smiling into each other’s eyes.81

Through these words four bloody years of carnage, death, and suffering became years of “splendid valor.” Fifty years earlier such an assessment of the war would have been scoffed at, but something had changed. The collective understanding of the war had shifted and had done so in a very active way. This was made possible because of popular culture that moved social understanding of the war away from its more unpleasant circumstances and on to those points that a nation could unite around.

Photographs like Gardner’s Gettysburg images played a vital role in shaping the way Americans would look at the war. Through them and the texts in which they were included, ideals of reconciliation and turning tragedy into triumph were realized as the photographs were

81 Blight, 11.
reformulated into a context in which they could be understood as documents and evidence for a more strongly united nation. In this way these photographs from 1863 became part of a continuing effort to transform the war from tragedy to triumph, a perception of the war that still prevails within American identity even today.\textsuperscript{82}

\textsuperscript{82} Burke, 188-192.
Conclusion

Through their publication in texts like those by Williams, Lossing, and Miller, Gardner’s Gettysburg photographs took part in a larger endeavor to reshape the tumultuous history of the American Civil War into a narrative that eventually expressed brotherhood, bravery, and a nation consecrated and united through blood rather than torn apart by dissidence. This was not done by the photographs themselves but through the social and political contexts in which they were rediscovered and ultimately reproduced. The attitude of reconciliation present at the end of the nineteenth century created an understanding of the war which allowed its photographs to shift from static images of the past to illustrations and documents that enlivened and spread a common memory of the war. Gardner’s photographs participated within this evolving discourse which ultimately allowed their influence to stretch from the 1860s to the turn of the century and beyond.

Gardner’s photographs have never stood completely silent. Every generation that inherits them understands and reshapes their meaning according to that given period’s own needs and present concerns. With their absence of inherent meaning and their malleability within a given context, the photographs have continually provoked new forms of understanding and remembering the war. The avenue of inquiry presented here is only the beginning of a much larger discussion. Since World War I and especially through the Civil Rights movement Gardner’s images and their part in the development of Civil War memory have continued to evolve. For each generation, the war takes on new meanings, ones that are handed-down by preserved material objects such as photographs. Through objects like Gardner’s photographs from Gettysburg the American Civil War has become a memory not of its own time but of the periods and people that have transformed and adopted its narrative as their own.
Figure 1. Timothy O’Sullivan. *A Harvest of Death*. 1863.
Figure 2. Timothy O’Sullivan. *Field Where General Reynolds Fell*. 1863.
Figure 3. Alexander Gardner. *A Sharpshooter’s Last Sleep*. 1863.
Figure 4. Alexander Gardner. *Home of a Rebel Sharpshooter*. 1863.
Figure 5. Rodger Fenton. *Shadow of the Valley of Death*. 1854.
Figure 6. Felice Beato. *Interior of the Secundra Bagh after the Slaughter of 2,000 Rebels by the 93rd Highlanders and 4th Punjab Regt.* 1858.
Figure 7. Winslow Homer, *The Veteran in a New Field*, 1865.
Figure 8. Unknown, *John C. Taylor in His Study*, c.1890s.
Figure 9. George F. Williams. *The Memorial War Book*. Page 419. 1894.
Hooker, who by the reckless exposure of his body, here earned the title of "Fighting Joe." The General was sometimes on foot; and he personally directed every movement. Just as Gordon and Crawford were rushing forward a bullet struck Hooker in the foot, the missile passing clean through, and he was carried off the field.

General Sumner had now arrived and assumed command of that part of the line. Seeing the perilous position of Crawford and Gordon, who were holding their ground against heavy odds, Sumner ordered in French, Sedgwick and Richardson about nine o'clock. McLaws and Walker now joined Jackson, so that the main battle surged around the Dunker Church. The Confederates held to their limestone lodges, and mowed down the Federals as they advanced. General Sedgwick received three wounds and had to retire. Crawford met the same fate. Hooker's corps had been shattered, and its ammunition was exhausted; Mansfield's corps had also suffered terribly, while Sumner saw his own men falling in every direction. He knew that Jackson must have suffered heavily, for the ground had as many dead Confederates stretched upon it as there were Federals, so he sent McClellan word that he could hold his position, but needed reinforcements for a forward movement.

Figure 10. George F. Williams. *The Memorial War Book*. Page 327. 1894.
The permanent line was a mile longer. The return of the Federal troops to their intrenchments was made during the day and night of October 28, over muddy roads and in a heavy storm of rain, leaving nearly all their wounded behind for lack of transportation.

This ended the manoeuvres of both the Army of the Potomac and the Army of the James for nearly two months, though the work of the siege was maintained with uncasing severity and duration. Week after week, during every hour of the day and night, the air was filled with shells from siege cannon and mortars, the roar of the opposing guns deafening the ear, while the rattle of musketry formed the monotonous war. Grant’s line was twenty-five miles long, but the forts, curtains, approaches, and parallels multiplied this line to over ninety miles of intrenchments.

Fort Hell and Fort Damnation, as the soldiers called them, on either side of the Jerusalem Plank Road, were the nearest to the City of Petersburg. From their casemates the movements of Confederate soldiers in the streets of the beleaguered city were distinctly visible. The guns of these two advanced forts were never silent, the garrisons being constantly changed, in order that the men might endure the fatigue. Even along the curtains that connected the principal forts there were cannon and huge, wide-mouthed mortars, while little barking coehores lay concealed in convenient pits. The pickets went in every evening with one hundred and fifty rounds of ball cartridges, and few men returned, on being relieved at the end of twenty-four hours, with more than a dozen cartridges in their pouches. So deadly was the fire that these Federal and Confederate

Figure 12. George F. Williams. *The Memorial War Book*. Page 426. 1894
Hooker, who by the reckless exposure of his body, here earned the title of “Fighting Joe.” The General was sometimes on foot, and he personally directed every movement. Just as Gordon and Crawford were rushing forward a bullet struck Hooker in the foot, the missile passing clean through, and he was carried off the field.

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Figure 14. George F. Williams. *The Memorial War Book*. Page 426. 1894. (Left)

&

“Was it hell?” The daring Sherman’s familiar words are witnessed with all its horrors.

War is hell, and this is war! If it were not for the service that this neg­ative should do for the great cause of the world’s Peace, this picture, which has been in a vault in Washington for an epoch, would never be exposed to public view. Its very gruesomeness is a plea to men to lay down arms.

In glaciation is an admonition to the coming generations. It is a silent prayer for universal brotherhood. The negative was taken after the third day’s battle at Gettysburg. The din of the batteries had died away. The clash of arms had ceased. The tangle of men was buried. The clumps of smoke had lifted and the waving sun engraved on the glass plate the mute witness of the tragedy that had made history.

It was the nation’s holiday—the Fourth of July in 1863. The battery was taken into the bivouac near the extreme left of the Union line. The horses had been dead about nineteen hours. It will be observed that their bodies are already much bleached by exposure to the sun. These men were killed on July 1, 1863, by one discharge of “canister” from a Confederate cannon which they were attempting to capture. The men were killed with small balls the size of marbles and when the cannon was fired the force of the discharge burst open the can, and the shrapnel of canister balls swept everything before it. When the photograph was taken a detail had already moved over the field, and gathered the guns and accumulations of the dead and wounded. Shells, cartridges, and canisters have been removed from these dead heroes as it was frequently necessary to apprehend them to render the needs of the soldiers.

In the center of the picture these men were identified as belonging to the second division of third army corps.

Figure 16. Francis Trevelyan Miller, *Original Photographs Taken on the Battlefields During the Civil War of the United States*, Page 15, 1907.
Figure 17. Francis Trevelyan Miller, *Original Photographs Taken on the Battlefields During the Civil War of the United States*, Page 10, 1907.
THE FIRST DAY'S TOLL

The lives laid down by the blue-clad soldiers in the first day's fighting made possible the ultimate victory at Gettysburg. The stubborn resistance of Buford's cavalry and of the First and Eleventh Corps checked the Confederate advance for an entire day. The delay was precious; it enabled Meade to concentrate his army upon the heights to the south of Gettysburg, a position which proved impregnable.

To a Pennsylvanian, General John F. Reynolds, falls the credit of the determined stand that was made that day. Commanding the advance of the army, he promptly went to Buford's support, bringing up his infantry and artillery to hold back the Confederates.

McPherson's Woods

At the edge of these woods General Reynolds was killed by a Confederate sharpshooter in the first vigorous contest of the day. The woods lay between the two roads upon which the Confederates were advancing from the west, and General Doubleday (in command of the First Corps) was ordered to take the position so that the column of the foe could be enfiladed by the infantry, while contesting with the artillery posted on both roads. The Iron Brigade under General Meredith was ordered to hold the ground at all hazards. As they changed, the troops shouted: "If we can't hold it, where will you find the men who ran?" On they swept, capturing General Archer and many of his Confederate brigade that had entered the woods from the other side. As Archer passed to the rear, Doubleday, who had been his classmate at West Point, greeted him with "Good morning! I'm glad to see you!"
Upon this wide, steep hill, about five hundred yards due west of Little Round Top and one hundred feet lower, was a chasm named by the country folk "the Devil's Den." When the position fell into the hands of the Confederates at the end of the second day's fighting, it became the stronghold of their sharpshooters, and well did it fulfill its name. It was a most dangerous post to occupy, since the Federal batteries on the Round Top were constantly shelling it in an effort to dislodge the hardy riflemen, many of whom met the fate of the one in the picture. Their deadly work continued; however, and many a gallant officer of the Federals was picked off during the fighting on the afternoon of the second day. General Vincent was one of the first victims; General Wood fell likewise; and as Lieutenant Hazlett bent over him to catch his last words, a bullet struck the head protruding that offered itself to the body of his chief.
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