

American Civil War (1861-1865)

By Craig Symonds

Overview

In his classic “History of the Peloponnesian War,” Thucydides wrote that the cause of the 20-year conflict between Athens and Sparta was “the growth of Athenian power and the fear this caused in Sparta.”

In much the same way, it can fairly be said that the cause of the Civil War was the growth of the North’s power — both economic and political — and the fear this bred in the Southern states. In particular, the Southern states feared that the Northern states would place a limit on the expansion of slavery. Though a number of issues divided North from South in the decades before the war, the issue that proved both paramount and insoluble was slavery — in particular, the issue of allowing slavery to expand into territories in the West.

Southerners were convinced that without new Western lands to employ the growing population of slaves, the market value of the slaves would decline while the cost of sustaining them remained, thereby threatening the viability of the institution itself. Having invested so much, psychologically as well as financially, in the “peculiar institution,” the Southern planter class that dominated Southern governance decided that if the growth of slavery were halted, it must leave the Union.

Lincoln Elected

When Abraham Lincoln won election in 1860 on a platform pledged to halt the expansion of slavery (though not slavery itself), South Carolina was the first to react by seceding from the Union on Dec. 20, 1860. Six other states soon followed, and by the time Mr. Lincoln took the oath of office as president on March 4, 1861, those seven states had formed themselves into a Confederacy and named Jefferson Davis president.

The four-year war that ensued constituted a political, social and even cultural watershed that virtually remade the nation, strengthening the national government at the expense of the states and encouraging the creation of national markets and transportation systems. Despite the loss of life (estimated at 620,000 dead, as many as in all of America’s other wars combined) and the physical destruction that took place during the war (especially in the Southern states), the Civil War not only ended slavery (though not racial injustice), but it also spawned the conditions that made America a world power.

The Civil War was also the nation’s first “modern” war in that it witnessed the emergence of a variety of new military technologies. The most prominent (and the most deadly) of these was the widespread use of the rifled musket and Minie ball, which increased the range of shoulder arms to nearly 800 yards from about 80 yards. This technology made frontal assaults remarkably dangerous and contributed to the high number of casualties. In addition, the Civil War saw the first general use of the telegraph and the railroad, the ironclad warship and the submarine, and even hot air balloons for observation. In the last year of the war in particular, field armies

took to relying on sophisticated entrenchments that foreshadowed the trench warfare of World War I.

When he took office, President Lincoln inherited a *fait accompli*; seven Southern states had seceded and formed a government. President Lincoln did not believe that secession was constitutionally legitimate; his view was that in a democracy a minority had an obligation to accept the decision of a majority, or else elections had no real meaning. In that respect, the war was a test of the viability of majority rule — indeed, of democracy itself, as President Lincoln made clear in his famous address at Gettysburg. He therefore insisted that the Union remained whole whatever the Southern states might say, which justified his decision to send a relief expedition to Fort Sumter in South Carolina where Maj. Robert Anderson commanded a small North garrison on an island in the middle of Charleston Harbor surrounded now by hostile forces.

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President Lincoln notified Gov. Francis W. Pickens of South Carolina that this expedition was on its way, and Pickens passed the information on to President Davis. Determined that the South should begin its experiment in self-government with a decisive statement, President Davis ordered Brig. Gen. P. G. T. Beauregard to demand Major Anderson's surrender, and if the major refused, the general was to reduce Fort Sumter with gunfire. At a few minutes past 4 a.m. on April 12, 1861, the Beauregard forces opened fire.

Fort Sumter

On April 15, the day after Major Anderson surrendered Fort Sumter, President Lincoln issued a public call for volunteers to “suppress” the insurrection. The self-proclaimed Confederacy interpreted this as a declaration of war. More important, four of the eight so-called Border States — slave states that had not seceded — decided to cast their lot with the South. North Carolina, Tennessee, Arkansas and Virginia all seceded and joined the Confederacy.

Recognizing the importance of Virginia to its future success, the Confederate government moved its capital from Montgomery, Ala., to Richmond, Va. (Four other slave states — Missouri, Kentucky, Maryland and Delaware — remained in the Union.)

Only 100 miles separated Richmond from Washington, and many of the great battles of the war were fought between the Union Army of the Potomac and the Confederate Army of Northern Virginia in that constricted space. Though from the beginning, public attention focused on the military campaigns in Virginia, the military campaigns in the West — broadly defined as the area between the Appalachian Mountains and the Mississippi River — were also important, perhaps even decisive, to the war's outcome.

Finding himself a war president, Lincoln turned to the senior general in the United States Army for military advice. Winfield Scott was a Virginian by birth, but he had been an Army general since 1814, longer than most Americans had been alive, and his loyalty to the Union was never in doubt. He hoped to demonstrate to the Southern states that they were dependent on the Union as a whole for their future success and survival, and to do that he envisioned a three-part plan was subsequently (and derisively) called the Anaconda Plan.

General Scott suggested that the North should focus on three objectives: first, maintain a large field army in that 100-mile corridor between the opposing capitals to tie down enemy forces; second, blockade the Southern coastline with the United States Navy; and third, send expeditions up and down the axis of the Mississippi River to cut off the trans-Mississippi West (Texas, Arkansas and Louisiana) from the rest of the Confederacy.

While General Scott's hopes for a relatively bloodless war were quickly dashed, his grand strategy nonetheless became a kind of blueprint for the North's conduct of the war.

Battle of Bull Run

Public opinion, however, was not inclined to wait for the South to appreciate the error of its ways. Patience has never been an American characteristic. Moreover, President Lincoln's call for volunteers had been based on the 1792 Militia Act that authorized the president to call up the state's militia for only 90 days, and in July 1861 those 90 days were quickly expiring. He therefore urged Maj. Gen. Irvin McDowell, the commander of the militia forces gathering near Washington, to undertake an offensive even though that general claimed, rightly enough, that his troops were green.

President Lincoln replied: "You are green, it is true. But they are green also."

Thus prodded, General McDowell began a forward movement toward the railroad junction at Manassas. The First Battle of Bull Run, which the Confederates called the First Battle of Manassas, took place on July 21, 1861. (Confederates generally named battles after the nearest community, while the North named them after a nearby geographical feature, like a river.) General McDowell sent most of his soldiers on a roundabout march to get around the flank of the Confederate forces commanded by Gen. Joseph E. Johnston and General Beauregard.

General McDowell's turning movement stalled on Henry House Hill where Col. Thomas J. Jackson stood "like a stone wall," and newly arrived Confederate reinforcements sent the North into a disorganized retreat, allowing the South to claim the first laurels. This first major engagement between enthusiastic volunteers who were imperfectly trained proved that the war would not be won or lost in a single battle.

Blockade of Southern Coast

Meanwhile, the Union Navy was building the force that would be necessary to execute President Lincoln's declared blockade of the Southern coast. The Navy underwent an expansion to more than 600 warships from about only 90, and the blockade, porous at first, grew increasingly effective. Though about 75 percent of the blockade runners who tried to get through the blockade did so successfully, far fewer of them tried once the blockade was in place, so that the total amount of trade in and out of the Southern states declined precipitously to as little as 15 percent of its prewar levels. The blockade had relatively little impact on the major battles ashore, for the South did manage to import sufficient arms and power to keep its soldiers supplied, but it had a long-term corrosive effect on the overall Confederate economy and contributed to both shortages and inflation.

To sustain the blockade, the North needed coaling and support stations along the South Atlantic coast. In November 1861, Flag Officer Samuel F. Du Pont's fleet of steam-powered warships successfully seized Port Royal, S.C., thus demonstrating how modern steam-powered warships could overcome hastily erected shore defenses as well as giving the Union its first taste of victory. In consequence, the Confederacy decided to abandon any serious effort to defend its coast except at half a dozen ports: Galveston, Tex.; New Orleans; Mobile, Ala.; Savannah, Ga.; Charleston, S.C.; and Wilmington, N.C.

Unable to break the blockade by force, the Confederacy countered with a handful of mostly English-built commerce raiders, including the C.S.S. Alabama commanded by Rear Adm. Raphael Semmes. Collectively, these raiders captured or destroyed 284 Northern merchant ships during the war, which sent maritime insurance rates soaring and led many Northern merchants to re-flag their vessels to avoid being targeted.

Though the United States Navy eventually caught up with most of these raiders — including a sea duel off the coast of France in which the U.S.S. Kearsarge sank the Alabama — the rebel raiders were a constant aggravation to the Union.

Western Battles

The Navy also played a role in more western battles: on the Tennessee, Cumberland and Mississippi Rivers. On Feb. 6, 1862, a four-ship squadron of ironclad gunboats commanded by Flag Officer Andrew H. Foote, attacked and overwhelmed Confederate Fort Henry on the Tennessee River. Ten days later, Brig. Gen. Ulysses S. Grant captured Fort Donelson on the Cumberland River. These relatively small actions had large strategic consequences as they gave Union forces control of both the Tennessee and Cumberland Rivers, which provided avenues of approach that the Union used to penetrate deep into the Confederate heartland, and which also cut the Confederate's east-west rail communications.

Confederate forces in Tennessee fell back all the way into northern Mississippi. In April, a combined Army-Navy team secured the fall of the Confederate bastion of Island No. 10 in the Mississippi River, and that same month, Flag Officer David G. Farragut ran past the forts guarding the approach to New Orleans and captured that city, the largest in the Confederacy.

One of the reasons Farragut found so little opposition at New Orleans was that the Confederates were consolidating their forces in the West for a counterstrike at the Grant forces. After seizing the river forts on the Tennessee and Cumberland Rivers, General Grant had moved upstream (southward) on the Tennessee River to Pittsburg Landing near a small country church called Shiloh. There, on April 6, 1862, Confederate forces under Gen. Albert Sidney Johnston caught him by surprise, and in a furious dawn assault nearly drove his army into the river. The next morning Grant counterattacked and won back all the ground he had lost. Shiloh was the first battle that foreshadowed just how bloody the Civil War was likely to be as nearly 24,000 men fell killed, wounded and captured in the two days of fighting, seven times the losses at Bull Run-Manassas.

Battling For Richmond

After the shock and disappointment of Bull Run-Manassas, Union forces in the East reorganized. General McDowell was supplanted by a confident young general named George B. McClellan, who commanded not only the Army of the Potomac, but also all Union armies, supplanting General Scott in that role in November. After spending the winter drilling and training his forces, General McClellan sought to capture the Confederate capital at Richmond in the spring of 1862 by means of a large amphibious movement to Fort Monroe at the tip of the peninsula formed by the York and James Rivers, hence its designation as the Peninsular Campaign.

His plan was nearly undone by a single warship. The C.S.S. Virginia, built atop the partly burned hull of the U.S.S. Merrimack — which had been abandoned when the North evacuated Norfolk — was the South's first and most famous ironclad. It sortied into Hampton Roads near Fort Monroe on March 8, 1862, and sank two wooden Union warships. That night the Union's own ironclad, U.S.S. Monitor, arrived in Hampton Roads, and the next day (March 9) it fought the Merrimack-Virginia to a standstill, allowing the Union landings at Fort Monroe to continue.

General McClellan was a cautious commander who was reluctant to press ahead until he had all the elements of his vast army in position. He was annoyed that President Lincoln decided to keep Maj. Gen. Irvin

McDowell's corps in Washington after the president learned just how weak General McClellan's move to the Virginia Peninsula left the defenses of the national capital. It was the first important dispute between the president and his field general, but not the last.

Though the Confederate forces opposing General McClellan on the Peninsula were at first very weak, the general's continuing delay gave them a chance to gather reinforcements so that by late May, the Confederate Army under Gen. Joseph E. Johnston outside Richmond was nearly as strong as his own. General Johnston attacked a segment of the McClellan army at the Battle of Seven Pines on May 31, 1862, but though the Confederates pushed the North's forces back a mile or so, the attack failed to achieve the decisive success the South needed to reverse the momentum.

One important result, however, was that General Johnston himself was badly wounded, and to replace him, Jefferson Davis chose Gen. Robert E. Lee.

Seven Days Battles

General Lee called upon reinforcements from the Stonewall Jackson forces in the Shenandoah Valley. Jackson, now a general, had been running Union forces ragged, keeping a force three times the size of his own pinned down there. General Jackson moved his men by rail to join General Lee outside Richmond for a counterattack against General McClellan. In what became known as the Seven Days Battles (June 25 to July 1, 1862), the Lee forces struck again and again at the McClellan army. None of the Lee-led attacks can fairly be labeled a victory, but they affected General McClellan's attitude and behavior.

Believing that he was badly outnumbered (he wasn't), General McClellan withdrew his army to an enclave around Harrison's Landing on the banks of the James River, where it could be protected by the heavy guns of the Navy warships.

The battles were costly: the Lee army had more than 20,000 casualties; the McClellan army had about 15,000 casualties.

But General McClellan's will was shattered. He called for reinforcements, and then more reinforcements, until President Lincoln told him he had better bring the army back to Washington.

Second Battle of Bull Run

Meanwhile, the Union had managed to field another army near Washington (the Army of Virginia) under Maj. Gen. John Pope, who had been credited with the victory at Island No. 10 in the West. Once it was clear that General McClellan was withdrawing from the peninsula, General Lee first sent General Jackson, and then Gen. James Longstreet, to face this new threat. In the Second Battle of Bull Run-Manassas (Aug. 30, 1862), the Jackson and Longstreet forces won a clear victory over the Pope troops and gained the initiative in the campaign. To maintain the momentum, General Lee decided to take his now-unified army across the Potomac into Maryland where he hoped to attract new recruits and relieve his beloved Virginia of the burden of sustaining the armies.

In a twist of fate, a soldier from the North found a copy of General Lee's orders (Order No. 191) in a field near Frederick, Md., and as a result, General McClellan learned not only where Lee was, but also where he was going. Infused with (for him) unusual alacrity, General McClellan started off in pursuit, fighting his way past delaying battles in the gaps of South Mountain until he arrived on the banks of Antietam Creek in western Maryland overlooking the Lee army, which was occupying the small town of Sharpsburg. General

Lee knew that General McClellan was coming, but he remained in place to reunify his scattered forces and secure the surrender of the North's arsenal at Harpers Ferry.

Learning that Harpers Ferry had fallen, and that his army would soon be united, General Lee decided to remain in Sharpsburg and accept the McClellan forces' attack. It was a bold and risky decision, but even though he would be badly outnumbered, General Lee was confident in the fighting prowess of his soldiers.

Antietam

The day of the Battle of Antietam (or Sharpsburg) on Sept. 17, 1862, was the single bloodiest day of the Civil War, and remains the single bloodiest day in American military history. More than 22,000 men fell that day, 3,654 of them killed outright.

General McClellan had overwhelming numerical superiority, but he threw that advantage away by sending his divisions into the fight one at a time, and late in the day when he might have applied the coup de grâce by sending in Maj. Gen. Fitz John Porter's V Corps, he kept it as a reserve in case of a disaster. Most scholars believe that the commitment of the Porter Corps would have brought about a decisive victory and possibly shortened the war. Instead, General Lee was able to hang on until nightfall, and after a quiet day on Sept. 18, he "escaped" across the Potomac back into Virginia.

Emancipation Proclamation (Preliminary)

One important consequence of this battle, however, was that it provided President Lincoln with the impetus to issue the Preliminary Emancipation Proclamation. He had planned to issue it sooner, but had been convinced by Secretary of State William H. Seward that he should wait until a Union victory so that it would not appear to be an act of desperation. Calling it a war measure, President Lincoln declared on Sept. 22 that any areas that remained in rebellion as of Jan. 1, 1863, would forfeit the right to hold slaves — slaves in those areas, he declared, would become free. Of course, President Lincoln would not be able to enforce his declaration unless the North won the war, but if the North did win, slavery would now almost certainly expire. One important element of the January Proclamation was that it authorized the enlistment of black soldiers.

This has led to some discussion among historians about President Lincoln's central motive: Did he fight the war to free the slaves, or free the slaves to fight the war? There is no reason the answer cannot be that he did both, but it is clear that by late 1862, the momentum of war had provided President Lincoln with an opportunity to strike at slavery more boldly than he had imagined would be possible when he took office.

General McClellan Dismissed

Meanwhile, President Lincoln was running out of patience with General McClellan. After Antietam, "the Little Napoleon" relapsed into his habit of moving slowly and calling for reinforcements. In October 1862, the president dismissed him and replaced him with Maj. Gen. Ambrose E. Burnside. That officer, knowing that the president expected results, led the North's army to the Rappahannock River near Fredericksburg hoping to get around the Lee forces' right flank. He might have done so had the pontoon bridging equipment he had requested arrived in time. But it did not, and that gave General Lee the time he needed to get his men into position. The ensuing Battle of Fredericksburg (Dec. 13, 1862) was a disaster for the North, as wave after wave of blue-clad soldiers stormed up Marye's Heights behind Fredericksburg trying to break through the Confederate line. By the end of the day, some 12,000 soldiers from the North were dead or wounded on that hillside, while Confederate losses totaled "only" about 5,000.

The year 1862 ended on a sanguinary note in the West, too. In the fall, Confederate Gen. Braxton Bragg (who had replaced General Beauregard) used the South's rail system to transfer his army from Mississippi to Tennessee, then started north into Kentucky. His "invasion" was turned back at the Battle of Perryville (Oct. 8, 1862), and General Bragg withdrew to middle Tennessee. He was assailed there by a new North commander, William S. Rosecrans, in the Battle of Stones River (Murfreesboro) on the last day of 1862.

General Bragg anticipated the Rosecrans forces' attack by countering with one of his own, and the South nearly won a victory. But the North line stabilized, and after trying a second time to break through on Jan. 2, 1863, General Bragg decided to retreat.

Gettysburg and Vicksburg

In the spring of 1863, President Lincoln appointed another new commander for the Army of the Potomac: Maj. Gen. Joseph Hooker was sure that he would succeed where his predecessors had failed. Over the winter, General Hooker reorganized his army, improved morale and prepared a campaign for the spring. In April, he pinned the Lee forces down behind Fredericksburg while he sent the bulk of his army on a lengthy flanking march upriver.

Once his forces were in place, General Hooker would have General Lee in a difficult position with enemy forces across the river to his front and in the wilderness area on his flank and rear. General Hooker expected General Lee to retreat, and most generals under similar circumstances would have done so. But General Lee saw an opportunity and he divided his own forces — twice — to send General Jackson on a flanking march of his own to roll up the North's right. The Jackson attack was devastating, but in the process of pushing that attack past nightfall, General Jackson was shot and mortally wounded by his own men in the confusion of the fighting.

The Confederate victory in the Battle of Chancellorsville (May 2-3, 1863), again gave General Lee the initiative, and again he chose to invade the North. General Hooker quarreled with President Lincoln about how to respond to this push, and he was replaced by Maj. Gen. George Gordon Meade, who took the Army north through Maryland and into Pennsylvania. The two armies met in the Battle of Gettysburg, where they fought a three-day battle (July 1-3, 1863) and the total casualties on both sides probably exceeded 50,000 men.

On the third day, General Lee hurled some 12,500 men at the center of the Union position in an attack that has gone down in history as "Pickett's Charge," though Maj. Gen. George E. Pickett's Division formed only about a third of the assaulting force. After failing to achieve a breakthrough, General Lee withdrew back over the mountains and south to Virginia.

Near this moment, General Grant teamed with Rear Adm. David Dixon Porter to outflank the Confederate defenses at Vicksburg, Ms., the principal Confederate bastion on the Mississippi River. After running past the rebel batteries on April 16, the Porter gunboats ferried the Grant soldiers across the river south of Vicksburg so that Grant could approach the city from the east. After a brief and unsuccessful stand at Champion Hill (May 16, 1863) the Confederate Army under Lt. Gen. John C. Pemberton fell back into prepared defenses around the city.

The rebel theater commander, Gen. Joseph E. Johnston, urged General Pemberton to bring his army out of the city lest it be trapped there, join with his own small army and confront the Grant forces in the open. But General Pemberton knew that President Davis expected him to hold the city at all costs, and he decided to

stay in the city. General Johnston believed he did not have a strong enough force to break the Grant siege. The Pemberton-led men endured 47 days with dwindling supplies until finally, on July 4 (the same day that General Lee began his retreat to Virginia), General Pemberton surrendered both the city and his 30,000-man army.

The victories by the North at Gettysburg and Vicksburg did not end the war, but they marked a new phase in the war, one in which the North's forces seized and held the initiative. In hindsight, the summer of 1863 seemed to Southerners to have been the South's high-water mark.

Total War

The disappointment of Gettysburg, and the disaster at Vicksburg, encouraged General Lee to allow General Longstreet to take two divisions from Virginia to reinforce the Western theater. General Longstreet's men played a role in the Confederate victory at Chickamauga (Sept. 19-20, 1863) in northern Georgia, but the Confederates were unable to reap the strategic benefits of their tactical victory mainly because of quarreling between two of their generals, Longstreet and Bragg. Together they conducted a halfhearted siege of the North's forces in Chattanooga before General Longstreet, with President Davis's approval, went off to conduct a siege of his own at Knoxville.

Meanwhile, General Grant's capture of Vicksburg marked for him even greater responsibilities, and in the fall of 1863 he took command of the besieged North army in Chattanooga. To break the siege and drive General Bragg's army away from the city, the Grant forces first opened a supply line, then sent General Hooker (now in command of a Corps) against Lookout Mountain on Nov. 24, 1863. The capture of Lookout Mountain effectively lifted the siege, but General Bragg remained stubbornly in place on Missionary Ridge.

General Grant sent his favorite subordinate, Maj. Gen. William T. Sherman, against one end of the Confederate line on that ridge. When that attack stalled (thanks to the defensive prowess of Confederate Maj. Gen. Patrick R. Cleburne), General Grant directed the Army of the Cumberland, led by Maj. Gen. George H. Thomas, to make a demonstration against the center of the Bragg line to relieve the pressure on the Sherman forces. General Thomas's men exceeded their orders and charged up Missionary Ridge on their own, putting the rebel army to flight (Nov. 25, 1863). After this, General Bragg's dispirited army retreated southward into Georgia, and soon thereafter, General Grant came to Washington to take command of all Union armies.

Grant's Plan

In the spring of 1864, General Grant developed an overall plan that embraced a concept President Lincoln had been urging for years: the application of force at several places at the same time. By now, there were only two substantial field armies left in the Confederacy: General Lee's bloodied but still dangerous Army of Northern Virginia, and the Army of Tennessee, now commanded by Gen. Joseph E. Johnston after General Bragg's sub-par performance at Chattanooga.

To defeat these forces, General Grant joined General Meade's Army of the Potomac in Virginia and went after the Lee forces, while General Sherman, in command of three armies in Georgia, went after the Johnston troops. By coordinating their attacks, they would prevent the Confederates from sending reinforcements from one army to the other. At the same time, Maj. Gen. Benjamin Butler with the Army of the James would assault Richmond from the east (as the McClellan forces had done in 1862), Maj. Gen. Franz Sigel would march southward up the Shenandoah Valley, and Gen. Nathaniel P. Banks would attack Mobile on the Confederate Gulf Coast.

The Butler, Sigel and Banks movements all proved disappointing. General Butler got himself trapped in a bend of the James River south of Richmond; General Sigel was defeated by a scratch force at New Market (May 15, 1864), and General Banks got sidetracked into a lengthy and ultimately fruitless campaign up the Red River in Louisiana.

Consequently, the 1864 campaign depended entirely on the thrusts by General Grant in Virginia and General Sherman in Georgia. In the end, they were enough.

Virginia and Georgia

The two campaigns were very different in character. The fighting in Virginia, during what is known as the Overland Campaign, was a slugfest as each side hammered at the other in a series of battles from the Wilderness (May 4-7, 1864) and Spotsylvania (May 8-20, 1864) to Cold Harbor (June 3, 1864). During this 40-day period, the opposing forces suffered appalling casualties that totaled nearly 100,000 men: 60,000 from the North and 40,000 Confederates.

In Georgia, by contrast, both generals maneuvered cautiously, often avoiding battle. Only once did General Sherman start an all-out offensive against General Johnston — at Kennesaw Mountain (June 27, 1864) — with such poor results that he never did it again. The Johnston forces never attacked the Sherman troops at all. As a result, while the casualties in Virginia were staggering, those in Georgia were relatively modest (at least modest by the new standard of Civil War battles).

But the outcome of the two campaigns was much the same: General Lee was forced back inside the Richmond defenses; General Johnston was backed up to the outskirts of Atlanta. President Davis thought that General Johnston could have done more, and on July 17, 1864, the Confederate president dismissed his commander, replacing him with Lt. Gen. John Bell Hood.

Determined to restore the kind of mobility and maneuver that had characterized the war back in 1862, General Hood began a series of attacks against General Sherman's superior forces at Peachtree Creek (July 20, 1864) and at Atlanta (July 22) in the hope of dealing the Sherman forces such a blow that they would be compelled to fall back northward. The Hood attacks won some short-term tactical advantages, but they also weakened his own army so that by September it was barely half the size of the army he had inherited. And once General Sherman had cut the Hood railroad lines in and out of Atlanta, General Hood had to evacuate the city anyway on Sept. 1.

That is when General Hood conjured up a truly desperate scheme: He planned to ignore General Sherman in Atlanta and "invade" Tennessee. After following him briefly, General Sherman let him go, sending General Thomas and Lt. Gen. John M. Schofield to take care of the Hood forces while General Sherman got ready for a march across Georgia from Atlanta to Savannah. The Hood army was roughly handled in the Battle of Franklin (Nov. 30, 1864) where he unleashed a foolish frontal assault that gained nothing but more casualties, and it was routed and almost completely destroyed by the Thomas Army of the Cumberland in the Battle of Nashville (Dec. 15, 1864).

Meanwhile, General Sherman moved across Georgia at will during his March to the Sea (Nov. 15 to Dec. 20, 1864), living partly off the land, and demonstrating the government's absolute ability to dominate the countryside.

Surrender at Appomattox

General Sherman arrived in Savannah the week before Christmas, presenting President Lincoln with the city as “a Christmas present.” He then turned north and marched across South Carolina with the same dominant and devastating mastery as he had in Georgia. At Columbia, the capital of South Carolina, much of the city went up in flames, and scholars still argue about whether the destruction was deliberate or accidental. For his part, General Sherman was unapologetic, arguing that any and all destruction that resulted from the war belonged at the doorstep of those who had started it. Joseph Johnston, restored to command in this crisis of the Confederacy, fought one more battle against Sherman at Bentonville, N.C., on March 25, but he could do no more than slow down General Sherman’s inexorable advance.

While the Sherman forces moved north through the Carolinas, General Grant was stretching and testing the Lee entrenchments around Richmond and Petersburg. On April 1, 1865, the Grant men achieved a breakthrough at Five Forks, and General Lee knew he had to evacuate the city. His hope, a faint one, was somehow to link up with the Johnston small army in North Carolina and make one more stand. But he was cut off near Appomattox Court House and compelled to surrender on April 9. For his part, General Johnston surrendered to General Sherman near Durham Station, N.C., on April 26, and the war came to an end.

Confederate forces in Texas surrendered in May, and the last surrender came when Capt. James I. Waddell turned the Confederate raider C.S.S. Shenandoah over to the British on Nov. 6, 1865. Meanwhile, in an event that shocked both sides, John Wilkes Booth shot and killed President Lincoln in Ford’s Theater in Washington on April 14, an event that had profound consequences for the postwar years.

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1. Jul. 13, 2015

Op-Ed article by author Peter Manseau recalls how wax statue mocking Confederate leader Jefferson Davis was destroyed along with other property when P T Barnum's American Museum caught fire in 1865; argues that few living at that time could imagine that Davis, an object of ridicule in the North, would one day be honored by statues and memorials in one dozen states; holds Davis' awkward position in American history has become even more fraught as nation debates bans on Confederate flags.

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2. Jul. 11, 2015

Thousands of people gather at South Carolina State House to watch official removal of Confederate battle flag; cheers hail end of era marked by racially charged debate over symbol of Old South. MORE

3. Jul. 8, 2015

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4. Jul. 7, 2015

Museum of the Confederacy in Richmond, Va, along with another Civil War museums in city, cannot escape controversy engendered by display of Confederate-era flags; city is former capital of Confederacy; museum's chief historian John M Coski says officials are making conscious effort to modernize from a 'shrine' to the Old South into a Smithsonian-like facility that can deepen understanding of the war's history and legacy. MORE

5. Jul. 7, 2015

Editorial welcomes overwhelming vote in South Carolina Senate to remove Confederate battle flag from state Capitol's grounds; suggests it is sign that Civil War and Reconstruction have been put squarely in past and crucial task of reconciliation can be completed. MORE

6. Jun. 28, 2015

Charleston, SC, massacre and ensuing push to take down Confederate flag have cast into relief tensions between Old South and new; region has gone through startling economic and social shifts, but old truths such as power of church, persistent poverty and racial divides remain; willingness of conservative southern politicians to join push to remove flag is nonetheless a remarkable milestone of change. MORE

7. Jun. 28, 2015

Two protesters in are arrested and charged with defacing a monument after they attempted to remove Confederate battle flag from South Carolina State House in Columbia. MORE

8. Jun. 27, 2015

The Upshot; cities throughout the South have streets, schools and parks named after Confederate generals like J E B Stuart, Jubal Early and Stonewall Jackson; review of Census Bureau data set of all roads in United States finds that most common names honored are Presidents Washington, Lincoln and Jackson. MORE

9. Jun. 26, 2015

Congressional Memo; national push to remove Confederate symbols in wake of Charleston, SC, massacre is gaining momentum, and few areas boast as many such symbols as Washington, DC; statues and imagery depicting Confederate heroes are relatively common in Capitol building, and several lawmakers have already called for their removal. MORE

10. Jun. 24, 2015

Chorus of calls to remove Confederate battle flag from public parks and buildings, stores and license plates is growing nationwide as South Carolina Legislature votes to debate removing flag from its State House grounds; emotional movement comes in wake of hate-fueled murder of nine parishioners in black church in Charleston. [MORE](#)

11. Jun. 24, 2015

Confederate sympathizers are reacting in varied ways to wave of politicians calling for elimination of symbols like Confederate battle flag from state property after massacre of nine black people in church in Charleston, SC; some are expressing open defiance, others deny influence symbols had on alleged murderer Dylan Roof, while still others say pace of change is simply too fast. [MORE](#)

12. Jun. 24, 2015

South Carolina Gov Nikki R Haley says her decision to call for removal of Confederate battle flag from State House grounds in wake of massacre at church in Charleston is 'emotional' one; Haley, who had previously defended flag, has been thrust into national spotlight by massacre and resultant debate over flag. [MORE](#)

13. Jun. 24, 2015

Some of largest retailers in American have decided to stop selling merchandise featuring Confederate battle flag in wake of Charleston, SC, church massacre, including Walmart, Sears/Kmart, eBay and Amazon. [MORE](#)

14. Jun. 24, 2015

Hillary Rodham Clinton says during event at African-American church near Ferguson, Mo, that Confederate battle flag should not fly anywhere in country; reiterates previously stated assertion in wake of mass shooting at church in Charleston, SC, where flag flies at State House grounds in capital Columbia. [MORE](#)

15. Jun. 20, 2015

South Carolina is being forced to confront Confederate battle flag flying above grounds of State House in Columbia following racially-motivated massacre at Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church; NAACP has demanded removal of flag, calling it emblem of hate. [MORE](#)

16. Apr. 12, 2015

Op-Ed article by historian Gregory P Downs examines mythology that Civil War ended with battle of Appomattox; argues that by separating battlefield events from complexities of Reconstruction that followed, Civil War becomes meaningless feud ending in regional reconstruction; holds that truly understanding the problems of governance created by war is lesson that such mythologies dangerously bury from sight, dooming nation's leaders, and voters, to continually repeat history. [MORE](#)

17. Apr. 10, 2015

Myriad ceremonies, re-enactments and other events take place on April 9 to commemorate 150th anniversary of Battle of Appomattox Court House in Virginia, marking the end of American Civil War in 1865. [MORE](#)

18. Apr. 10, 2015

Holland Cotter reviews exhibition Personal Correspondents: Photography and Letter Writing in Civil War Brooklyn at Brooklyn Historical Society. [MORE](#)

19. Mar. 30, 2015

Beinecke Rare Book & Manuscript Library at Yale University will announce it has bought one of largest private collections of 19th-century American photography from Meserve-Kunhardt Foundation; collection, which includes over 73,000 items, primarily features vast trove of Abraham Lincoln and Civil War-themed photographs. [MORE](#)

20. Mar. 29, 2015

Op-Ed article by Prof Eric Foner underscores relevance of post-Civil War Reconstruction in relation to current era, noting 150th anniversary of surrender of Gen Robert E Lee in April 2015; argues that accurate understanding of Reconstruction will remain relevant for as long as citizenship, rights and democracy are matters of public debate. [MORE](#)

21. Mar. 23, 2015

Supreme Court will hear case Walker v Sons of Confederate Veterans, challenge to Texas decision to refuse to allow license plates that feature Confederate flag; case will consider limits of free expression and the meaning of the flag, which many associate with secession and slavery. [MORE](#)

22. Jan. 31, 2015

Civil War mural by artist James Walker will be stored at New York State Military Museum in Saratoga Springs after decades of being misidentified and bouncing from museum to museum. [MORE](#)

23. Nov. 28, 2014

Op-Ed article by Prof Ned Blackhawk recounts 1864 attack by Union armies on peaceful Cheyenne and Arapaho villagers at Sand Creek in Colorado, in which nearly 200 women, children and older men were murdered; holds Civil War obscures campaigns like Sand Creek Massacre and other acts of ethnic cleansing against American Indians; calls for National Day of Indigenous Remembrance and Survival to commemorate those murdered at Sand Creek. [MORE](#)

24. Nov. 25, 2014

Sam Roberts examines little-known history of infiltration of Confederate saboteurs into New York City on Nov 25, 1864, where they started 19 fires in hotels, a theater and at P P T Barnum's Museum; destruction was in response to Union Army's scorched earth campaign against Southern military installations and industrial sites; most of the fires fizzled and theater performance that included actor John Wilkes Booth went on. [MORE](#)

25. Nov. 15, 2014

Atlanta Journal; Atlanta erects historical marker annotating Civil War folklore surrounding Union Army Gen William T Sherman to reflect expanding body of forgiving scholarship about Sherman's rampage through Confederate South; marker is fruit of reassessment of Sherman and his tactics that has been decades in the making. [MORE](#)

26. Nov. 7, 2014

Pres Obama presents Medal of Honor to family of First Lt Alonzo H Cushing, Union soldier in Civil War who died at Battle of Gettysburg after standing up to fusillade of Confederate fire; hero receives nation's top military honor 151 years after his death. [MORE](#)

27. Aug. 28, 2014

First Lieutenant Alonzo H Cushing, who stood his ground against Pickett's Charge at the Battle of Gettysburg, will be awarded the Medal of Honor by Pres Obama; long delay in recognizing Cushing's contribution to what is arguably the most pivotal battle of the Civil War began with fact that at the time of his death, Medal of Honor was not awarded posthumously. [MORE](#)

28. May. 10, 2014

Civil War photograph taken in 1862 by Henry P Moore shows Union soldiers in a neat line, and in the background captures an early moment in baseball history. [MORE](#)

29. May. 6, 2014

Edward Rothstein reviews exhibit Homefront & Battlefield: Quilts and Context in the Civil War at New-York Historical Society. [MORE](#)

30. Mar. 20, 2014

Minnesota Historical Society tour St Paul After the Civil War examines life in the region after some 20,000 veterans returned home. [MORE](#)

31. Jan. 21, 2014

Exhibit Broken Bodies, Suffering Spirits, at the Mutter Museum in Philadelphia, documents physical trauma and injuries suffered by those involved in Civil War, as well as city of Philadelphia's role in treating wounded soldiers. [MORE](#)

32. Jan. 17, 2014

Olustee Journal; proposed Civil War monument to Union soldiers at Olustee Battlefield Historic State Park in Olustee, Fla, has enraged the area's Confederate descendants; many Sons of Confederate Veterans view state's decision as betrayal of legacy of small park, which holds three monuments commemorating Confederate soldiers; Union soldiers lost Feb 1864 battle. [MORE](#)

33. Nov. 18, 2013

Editorial underscores the enduring power of Abraham Lincoln's Gettysburg Address on eve of the anniversary of the speech; contends the speech is the pinnacle of American civic utterance. [MORE](#)

34. Nov. 17, 2013

For all of its famous brevity, the Gettysburg Address is not so simple or compact as it seems. [MORE](#)

35. Nov. 11, 2013

The filmmaker Ken Burns is starting a web project to encourage Americans to recite the Gettysburg

Address. [MORE](#)

36. **Sep. 5, 2013**

Op-Ed article by Alex de Waal and Bridget Conley-Zilkic, members of World Peace Foundation, contends use of nerve gas in Syria is abhorrent but holds airstrikes will fail to protect civilians and will hinder peacemaking; cites warnings of 19th-century British diplomat Sir William Harcourt, who argued against Britain's intervention in American Civil War. [MORE](#)

37. **Aug. 15, 2013**

Since June, visitors at Governors Island National Monument have heard the roar of cannons during weekly firing demonstrations. [MORE](#)

38. **Jul. 28, 2013**

Look column presents photos of re-enactment of Battle of Gettysburg on its 150th anniversary in Gettysburg, Pa. [MORE](#)

39. **Jul. 22, 2013**

An almost-50-year-old memory of a short-lived show called “The Object Is” illustrates the place that objects have in history. [MORE](#)

40. **Jul. 14, 2013**

Op-Ed article by Jon Grinspan, doctoral candidate in history, describes way in which deadly riots in New York City in July 1863 were not just about Union Army's draft, but where also about race, class and politics. [MORE](#)

41. **Jul. 9, 2013**

Civil War re-enactors gather in Gettysburg over Fourth of July weekend to mark 150 years since Union troops won decisive battle that turned war in North's favor; strive to portray soldiers' lifestyles accurately, but some of them believe women and children should not participate in the re-creations because they were not part of the real thing. [MORE](#)

42. **Jul. 6, 2013**

Op-Ed article by Prof David T Z Mindich proposes that National Security Agency's data-mining program is not as unprecedented as some critics have maintained; cites extensive monitoring of telegraphs by federal government during Civil War; maintains first step toward regaining civil liberties is to end war on terror itself. [MORE](#)

43. **Jul. 4, 2013**

Vicksburg Journal; among modern-day residents of Vicksburg, Miss, site of bitter 47-day siege in 1863, it is hard to find many with strong feelings about the Civil War; folklore has it that for years, people of Vicksburg did not celebrate Fourth of July holiday because of bitterness over war. [MORE](#)

44. **Jul. 3, 2013**

Op-Ed article by author Robert Hicks explores importance of Civil War on occasion of three-day sesquicentennial of the Battle of Gettysburg; contends that events at Gettysburg bound United States into one nation. [MORE](#)

45. Jul. 2, 2013

David Brooks Op-Ed column memorializes 150th anniversary of Battle of Gettysburg, noting letters from Civil War soldiers recall profundities of loyalty and sacrifice; holds their sense of deep involvement with their country's destiny puts them in stark contrast to petty world of modern politics. [MORE](#)

46. Jun. 30, 2013

Emily Brennan travel article on 36-hour trip to Gettysburg, Pa for commemoration of 150th anniversary of Civil War's three-day Battle of Gettysburg. [MORE](#)

47. May. 26, 2013

Op-Ed article by author Jamie Malanowski calls for changing the names of military bases that are named after Confederate generals. [MORE](#)

48. Mar. 31, 2013

Ku Klux Klan rallies in Memphis to protest City Council's decision to rename three city parks that honored Confederate troops; no violence is reported and no arrests are made. [MORE](#)

49. Mar. 29, 2013

Memphis City Council's decision to rename three public parks named after Confederate leaders sparks controversy in the face of a state bill that would make such renamings more difficult; Council says names evoked racist past and were unwelcoming in city where most of population is black; Southern historical groups say change dishonors Civil War troops. [MORE](#)

50. Mar. 21, 2013

Drum Barracks Civil War Museum near Los Angeles, Calif, tells little-known, but fascinating story of California in the Civil War; museum was constructed as military outpost in 1863 by Union troops to control the Western ports and keep them out of Confederate hands. [MORE](#)

There are no additional abstracts to display.

ARTICLES ABOUT THE AMERICAN CIVIL WAR

'Our Man in Charleston,' by Christopher Dickey

By GREG GRANDIN

A diplomat stationed in South Carolina helped keep Britain out of America's Civil War.

July 19, 2015, Sunday

MORE ON THE AMERICAN CIVIL WAR AND: Dickey, Christopher , Books and Literature , Civil War (US) (1861-65)

What the Country Owes Harriet Tubman

By BRENT STAPLES

The abolitionist and Union Army spy is more than worthy of replacing Andrew Jackson on the \$20 bill.

July 17, 2015, Friday

MORE ON THE AMERICAN CIVIL WAR AND: Bernanke, Ben S , Jackson, Andrew , Lew, Jacob J , Seward, William Henry (1801-72) , Tubman, Harriet , Florida , Jacksonville (Fla) , Maryland , Southern States (US) , United States , Federal Reserve System , House of Representatives , Senate , Banking and Financial Institutions , Civil War (US) (1861-65) , Names, Geographical , Slavery (Historical) , United States Politics and Government , US Dollar (Currency)

Jefferson Davis on Fire

By PETER MANSEAU

He's always had a fraught place in the American imagination.

July 13, 2015, Monday

MORE ON THE AMERICAN CIVIL WAR AND: Davis, Jefferson F , Southern States (US) , Civil War (US) (1861-65) , Flags, Emblems and Insignia , Barnum, P T

Era Ends as South Carolina Lowers Confederate Flag

By RICHARD FAUSSET and ALAN BLINDER

A symbol of the Old South that once seemed untouchable was lowered at the State House just 23 days after a massacre at a Charleston Church.

July 11, 2015, Saturday

MORE ON THE AMERICAN CIVIL WAR AND: South Carolina , Flags, Emblems and Insignia , Civil War (US) (1861-65) , Blacks , Discrimination , Charleston, SC, Shooting (2015) , Haley, Nikki R , Columbia (SC)

The Moment the Confederate Flag Was Lowered in South Carolina

By KATIE ROGERS

After flying for more than 50 years, the divisive flag was removed from the grounds of the State House.

July 10, 2015, Friday

MORE ON THE AMERICAN CIVIL WAR AND: Flags, Emblems and Insignia , Charleston, SC, Shooting (2015) , Charleston (SC) , Civil War (US) (1861-65)

South Carolina's Confederate Flag Will Finally Come Down [Updated]

By FRANCIS X. CLINES

Unfortunately it took the massacre in Charleston to drive the flag from the State Capitol.

July 9, 2015, Thursday

MORE ON THE AMERICAN CIVIL WAR AND: Haley, Nikki R , Horne, Jenny Anderson , Hosey, Lonnie , Charleston (SC) , South Carolina , Ku Klux Klan , Charleston, SC, Shooting (2015) , Civil War (US) (1861-65) , Flags, Emblems and Insignia , Law and Legislation , State Legislatures , United States Politics and Government

The South's Heritage Is So Much More Than a Flag

By PATTERSON HOOD

An open letter from a musical chronicler of the Southern experience.

July 9, 2015, Thursday

MORE ON THE AMERICAN CIVIL WAR AND: Music , Southern States (US) , Charleston, SC, Shooting (2015) , Flags, Emblems and Insignia , Race and Ethnicity , Civil War (US) (1861-65) , Drive-By Truckers

(Music Group) , Lynyrd Skynyrd , Muscle Shoals Sound Studios , Alabama , Charleston (SC)

‘Complicated’ Support for Confederate Flag in White South

By RICHARD FAUSSET

In white, working-class Haralson County, the Confederate banner remains a revered symbol, not only of the Confederate dead, but of a unique regional identity.

July 8, 2015, Wednesday

MORE ON THE AMERICAN CIVIL WAR AND: Georgia , Flags, Emblems and Insignia , Southern States (US) , Civil War (US) (1861-65) , Blacks , Discrimination , Race and Ethnicity

South Carolina Opponents of Confederate Flag Win One Round, but a Fight Still Looms

By ALAN BLINDER

The State Senate gave final approval to a measure forcing the controversial symbol from the grounds of the State House; the debate now heads to the House of Representatives.

July 8, 2015, Wednesday

MORE ON THE AMERICAN CIVIL WAR AND: South Carolina , Flags, Emblems and Insignia , Civil War (US) (1861-65) , Blacks , Discrimination , Law and Legislation , Charleston, SC, Shooting (2015) , Sheheen, Vincent A , Peeler, Harvey S Jr

Germany Has Lessons for the South

By ANAND GIRIDHARADAS

As arguments over the Confederate flag have shown, Germany and the American South have different stories about defeated racist ideologies.

July 7, 2015, Tuesday

MORE ON THE AMERICAN CIVIL WAR AND: United States , Southern States (US) , South Carolina , Civil War (US) (1861-65) , World War II (1939-45) , Slavery (Historical) , Holocaust and the Nazi Era , Segregation and Desegregation

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Opinionator

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Essential Reading

A survey of notable books about the American Civil War.

- **Civil War Book List**

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Resources | Abraham Lincoln and the Civil War

Lessons, multimedia and other Times and Learning Network links.

Civil War Navigator

A list of resources from around the Web about the U.S. Civil War as selected by researchers and editors of The New York Times.

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- The American Civil War Home Page
- American Military History: The Civil War
- U.S. Army Center of Military History
- Civil War Soldier, Regiment, Battle Database
- National Park Service
- Making of America: Civil War Documents
- Cornell University Library
- Nineteenth Century Documents Project
- Furman University
- The Valley of the Shadow: Two Communities in the American Civil War
- University of Virginia Library
- Mathew Brady Civil War Photographs
- The National Archives / note: free with registration
- Civil War Book Review
- LSU Libraries Special Collections

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- Civil War Resources: Overview
- Selected Civil War Photographs Collection
- Selected Civil War Maps
- For Teachers and Young Audiences

Multimedia

Disunion: A Call for Your Questions

Submit your questions for a virtual Civil War panel discussion featuring Disunion's contributors and friends.

Disunion: The Civil War

America's most perilous period, revisited through essays, diaries and archival images.

Re-enacting the Battle of Appomattox Court House

American Civil War re-enactors gathered in Virginia to commemorate the 1865 Battle of Appomattox Court

House.

Obama Honors Civil War Soldier

President Obama awarded the nation's highest military honor to a Union soldier who was killed more than 150 years ago during the Battle of Gettysburg.

The 'Myriopticon' Game

A game captures the "Great Rebellion"

Gettysburg, Readdressed

Scenes from the 150th anniversary of the Battle of Gettysburg.

Seeing the New York Draft Riots

A group of uncredited artists employed by the weekly pictorial newspapers followed the bloody riots that erupted after a new military draft in July 1863.

A Quest for Authenticity in a Gettysburg Re-Enactment

Many re-enactors at 150th anniversary events for the Battle of Gettysburg strive to eschew modernity and portray the battle with historical accuracy.

Going to Gettysburg

It's a historic year in this historic town, but there's more to do here than learn about the battle.

The Battle of Gettysburg

At the end of the three-day battle that began on July 1, 1863, Confederate and Union armies endured the largest loss of lives in the Civil War.

More Multimedia »

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Stowaways and Crimes Aboard a Scofflaw Ship

2.



Chattanooga Gunman Mohammad Youssuf Abdulazeez: 'Life Is Short and Bitter'

3.



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Listening to Ta-Nehisi Coates While White

4.



Gunman Kills 4 Marines at Military Site in Chattanooga

5.



Inquiry Focusing on Chattanooga Gunman's Trip to Jordan in 2014

6.



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Liberals and Wages

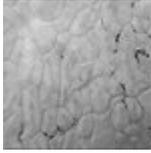
7.



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The Wedding Toast I'll Never Give

8.



New Horizons Sharpens Our View of Pluto's Icy Heart

9.



Cara Delevingne, Ready to Conquer Hollywood, Immerses Herself in 'Paper Towns'

10.



At Zappos, Pushing Shoes and a Vision

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