

The Legacy of the Civil War



An Online Professional Development Seminar

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NATIONAL
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American Oracle: The Civil War in the Civil Rights Era
(August, 2011)

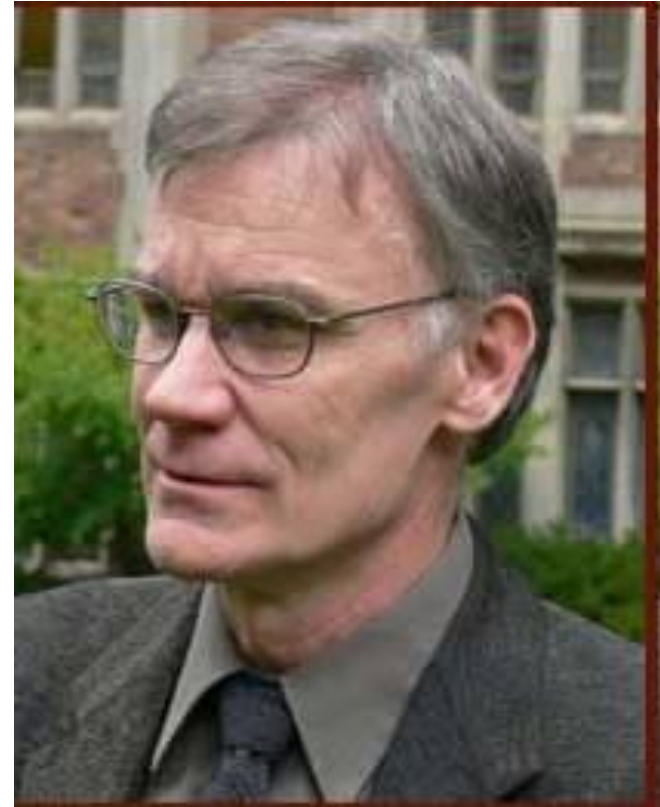
*A Slave No More: Two Men Who Escaped to Freedom, Including their
Narratives of Emancipation*
(2007)

Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory
(2001)

- the Bancroft Prize
- the Abraham Lincoln Prize
- the Frederick Douglass Prize, as well as
- Organization of American Historians, four awards

Beyond the Battlefield: Race, Memory, and the American Civil War
(2002)

Frederick Douglass's Civil War: Keeping Faith in Jubilee
(1989)



On Robert Penn Warren's *The Legacy of the Civil War*:

Do you agree with Warren that the Civil War "is the great single event of our history... may, in fact, be said to be American history?"

What does Warren mean by "felt" history?

Do you agree with Warren that "slavery looms up mountainously and cannot be talked away?"

"The Civil War draws us as an oracle, darkly unriddled and portentous, of personal as well as national fate."

What might he mean?

Do you agree?

Is the Civil War our national "oracle," and if so how?

Where or what is it?

“Three overall visions of Civil War memory collided and combined over time: one, the **reconciliationist vision**, which took root in the process of dealing with the dead . . . two, the **white supremacist vision**, which took many forms early, including terror and violence, locked arms with reconciliationists of many kinds, and by the turn of the century delivered the country a segregated memory of the Civil War on Southern terms; and three, the **emancipationist vision**, embodied in African American’s complex remembrance of their own freedom, in the politics of radical Reconstruction, and in conceptions of the war as the reinvention of the republic and the liberation of black to citizenship and Constitutional equality.”

--*Race and Reunion*

- Are these three categories for Civil War memory adequate?
- Why or how has Civil War memory been an ongoing struggle between “healing” and “justice”?
- How did Civil War memory change or challenge the country at the time of the war’s centennial (1950s-60s)?
- Is the Civil War at its 150th anniversary still the most vexing element in our national historical memory?
- How do nations or people remember?

What is the fullest meaning of the dispute over the nature and purpose of African American memory of slavery and the Civil War between Douglass and Crummell?

Alexander Crummell, “The Need of New Ideas and New Aims for a New Era,”
May 30, 1885

- Blacks needed to turn away from dwelling “morbidly and absorbingly on a servile past” and embrace the urgent “needs of the present.”
- Black were paralyzed by “fantastical anxieties on the subject of slavery”
- Black leaders “seemed to settle down in the dismal swamps of dark and distressful memory”
- Ordinary black folks fashioned life “too much after the conduct of the children of Israel”
- Blacks should avoid “not the memory of slavery, but the constant recollection of it.”

Frederick Douglass:

- The history of African Americans “can be traced like that of a wounded man through a crowd by the blood.”
- “We are here to remember the causes, incidents, and results of the late rebellion.”
--Memorial Day Address, 1883

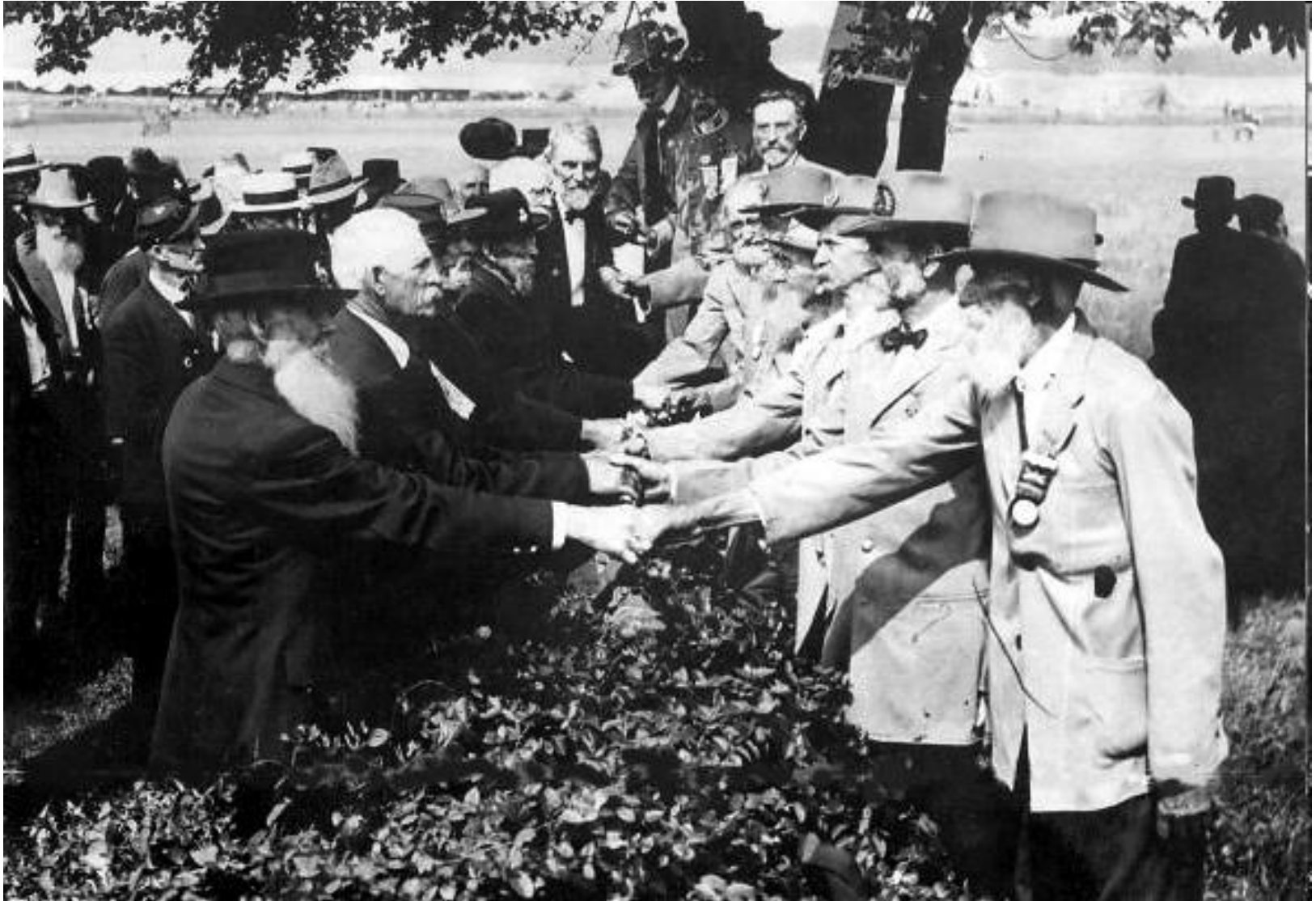
Reenactment of Pickett's Charge on July 2, 1913, photo



We sometimes lift ourselves out of historical time, above the details, and render the war safe in a kind of national Passover offering as we view a photograph of the Blue and the Gray veterans shaking hands over the stone walls at Gettysburg. Deeply embedded in an American mythology of mission, and serving as a mother lode of nostalgia for anti-modernists and military buffs, the Civil War remains very difficult to shuck from its shell of sentimentalism. Over time, Americans have needed deflections from the deeper meanings of the Civil War. It haunts us still; we feel it, to borrow from Warren, but often do not face it.

--Race and Reunion

Reenactment of Pickett's Charge on July 2, 1913, photo



Robert E. Lee Equestrian - Monument Avenue, Richmond



Lee: “a man of moral strength and moral beauty.”

The monument: “[not] a record of civil strife, but . . . a perpetual protest against whatever is low and sordid in our public and private objects.”

--Archer Anderson, orator of the day at the unveiling in 1890

“[The] Lee cult is much in vogue, even at the North, in these days. . . . [It has become fashionable to surround Lee with] a sort of halo of moral grandeur, military genius, and knightly grace, as a man of finer and better mold than his famous antagonists.”

--Minneapolis *Tribune*

Robert E. Lee Equestrian - Monument Avenue, Richmond

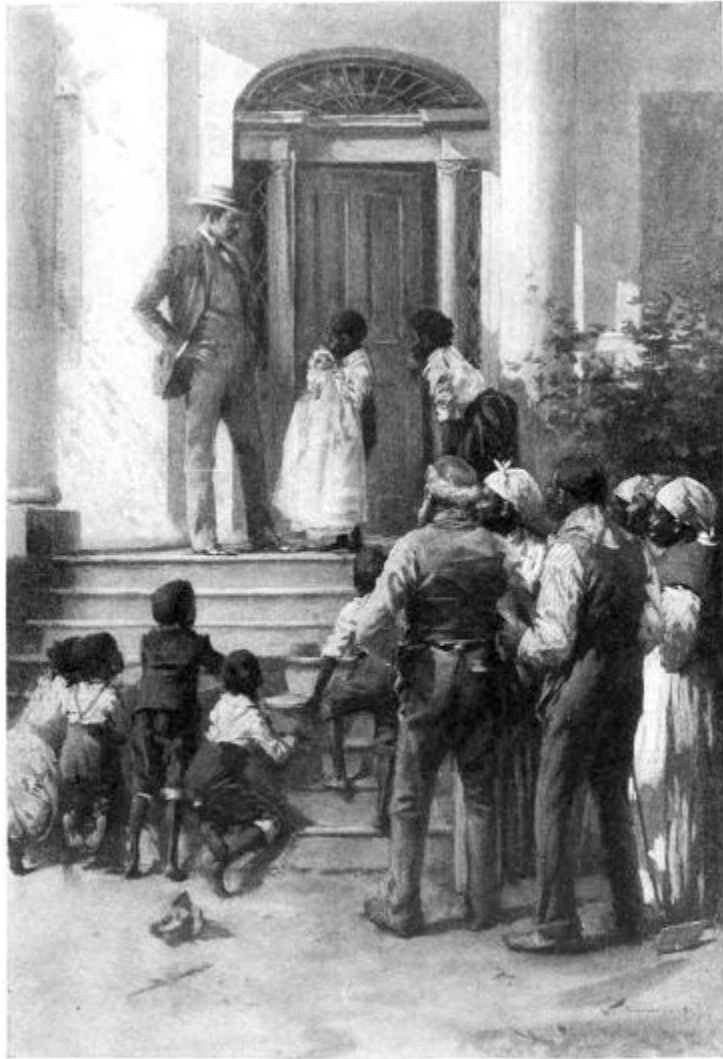


How or why could the leader of such a resistance movement in a massive civil war who ends in utter defeat be commemorated in such a way?

“Page, who grew up on a small plantation in Hanover County, Virginia, was only twelve years old when the war ended in 1865. As grand master of pathos, nostalgia, and Negro dialect stories, Page created a world of prewar and wartime Virginia inhabited by the thoroughly stock characters of Southern gentlemen (“Marse Chan”), gracious ladies (“Meh Lady” or the “Mistis”), and the stars, the numerous Negro mammies and the unwaveringly loyal bondsmen (“Sam,” “Unc’ Billy,” “Unc’ Edinburgh,” or “ole Stracted.”)
--Race and Reunion



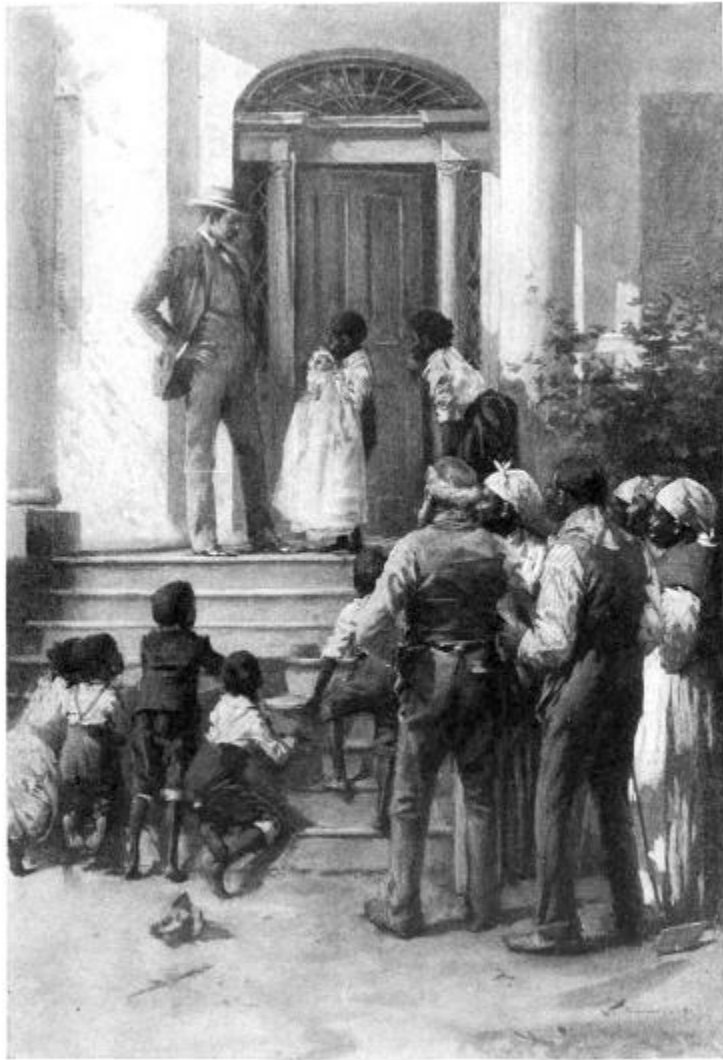
Thomas Nelson Page
1853-1922



“‘Now, Sam, from dis time you belong to yo’ young Marse Channin’.”

“Dem wuz good ole times, marster—
de bes’ Sam ever see! . . . Niggers
didn’ hed nothin’ ‘t all to do—jes hed
to ten to de feedin’ an’ cleanin’ de
hosses, and ‘ doin’ what de marster
tell ‘em to do; an’ when dey wuz sick,
dey had things sont ‘em out de house,
an’ de same doctor come to see ‘em
whar ten’ to de white folks when dey
wuz po’ly. Dyar warn’ no trouble nor
nothin’.”

Marse Chan: a Tale of Old Virginia,
by Thomas Nelson Page.
Illustrated by W. T. Smedley.
New York: C. Scribner's sons, 1897.



“‘Now, Sam, from dis time you belong to yo’ young Marse Channin’.”

“In this former Eden that Sam describes, swarms of Northern readers were introduced to a world they had all but destroyed in war.”

--*Race and Reunion*

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Augustus Saint-Gaudens,
Robert Gould Shaw and the Fifty-fourth Regiment Memorial

What story does this monument tell?

What meanings does it convey?



Augustus Saint-Gaudens,
Robert Gould Shaw and the Fifty-fourth Regiment Memorial



How would you contrast the Shaw Memorial with the Lee Monument?

Final slide

Thank You