

At Home and in the Field

The Newsletter of The Society for Women and the Civil War

athomeandinthefield@gmail.com

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Our mission statement: To increase awareness and understanding of women's roles related to the Civil War through education



Detail from "News from the War"
Winslow Homer. From Harper's Weekly, June 14, 1862

Remember to Register for the 2019 Society for Women and the Civil War Conference

Plans for the 2019 **Society for Women and the Civil War Conference** are done and a wonderful agenda of events are planned. The Conference focus this year is *Women of the Peninsula*. It will be held in beautiful, historic Williamsburg, VA July 26 - 28, 2019. For conference details and registration, please visit:

<http://www.swcw.org/2019-conference-details.html>

We look forward to a wonderful time. See you there!!!

Mothers and Remembrance

Meg Galante- DeAngelis

A MOTHER'S SACRIFICE



The Gold Star Mother Monument, City Hall, Waterbury CT

In the lead up to and afterwards of the commemoration of the Armistice of World War I (November 11, 1918 at 11:00 AM), my daughters and I have been gathering the genealogical information on our ancestors who fought in World War I. The study of our family genealogy has been a strange and enlightening experience for me and has done for me what it has done for others - it has redefined my understanding of myself and my family's American journey.

As a younger person I had always thought of myself as a member of a family that places me two generations from my most recent immigrant ancestors. That remains true in one line but like so many others I found our path of immigration was complex and in fact there have been members of my family who served in every American conflict back to the French and Indian War.

In an interesting twist of fate most of those who served were themselves immigrants or the sons of immigrants, including my father who served with distinction in World War II.

Our work to document our family members who served in World War I have so far revealed members in each of our claimed nationalities, French Canadians - both from Canada and in the United States, Italians - both in Italy and the United States, and Irish in the United States. We have found two women who served as nurses, one who died of tuberculosis contracted in the hospital in France where she served both military personnel and civilians. We found two who were killed, both in the final push of the war. One lies in a named grave in the Meuse-Argonne America Cemetery and the other lies amongst the unknown.

As I continue my research on the lives of mothers after the loss of their sons in the American Civil War, I cannot be but touched by the hand of mothers who reach through the timeline of American history in sisterhood with each other and with sorrow for what might have been. As a soon to be full-time Mainer, I have been focusing my work on the mothers of men who served from Maine and who were killed and wounded at Gettysburg.

In many of the pension claims of these mothers, there is the quiet dignity of women who ask only for their due. Most are forthright about their loss, withstanding the questioning from pension examiners that sometimes seems callous at best. But it is in the letters that they include in the pension applications where my mind wanders to the renewed loss that must have come as a mother who suffers a loss that cannot be dimmed by time is asked to submit a letter from the son proving that he had supported her while he was in the service. She knows that once submitted she would never hold again that missive that touched the hand of her beloved son. She would never again be able to reread the words he wrote to her. These letters are often newsy and have the flavor of the liveliness of the one lost. They could have served in years ahead as a reminder of that boy as she had known him, before he was taken by the war. Instead they sit in envelopes, some unopened for over a century, to be found by someone who is hopefully able to see their worth beyond the proof of support they offer.

Another letter to a mother is the letter of notification. In her seminal work on death and mourning in the Civil War, *The Republic of Suffering: Death and the American Civil War*, Drew Gilpin Faust

reveals to the poignancy of the two types of notification letters, those written by the cherished son near the moment of his death and the often clumsily written letter from a comrade or superior notifying of the death of the son.

In the Florentine Films Documentary, *Death in the Civil War*, which is based on Gilpin Faust's book, the first scene is on the evening of May 10th, 1864 at a death scene of 26-year-old James Robert Montgomery, a private of the Confederate Signal Corps in Virginia. Robert, dripping blood from a devastating shoulder would onto the paper as he wrote, says in his letter to his father:

This is my last letter to you. I have struck by a piece of shell and my right shoulder is horribly mangled and I know death is inevitable. I am very weak but I write to you because I know you would be delighted to read a work from your dying son. I know death is near -that I will die far from home and friends of my early youth. But I have friends here too that are kind to me. My friend Fairfax will write you at my request and give you the particulars of my death. My grave will be marked so that you may visit it if you desire to do so. It is optionary with you whether you let my remains rest here or in Mississippi. I would like to rest in the graveyard with my dear mother and brothers but it is a matter of minor importance. Give my love to all my friends. My strength fails me. My horse and my equipments will be left for you. Again a long farewell to you. May we meet in heaven. Your dying son, J M Montgomery Fairfax did write and assured Mr. Montgomery of the good death of his son.

I was moved when I found a similar set of letters written by a Georgetown, Maine soldier, Private Samuel Beal Shea of

Company K 19th Maine after his mortal wounding at Gettysburg. My thoughts turned to his mother, Betsey Beal Shea as I read.

Gettysburg, July 4th, 1863

Dear Father, Mother, Brother and Sisters,

I will write a few lines to you This being the last time I ever shall write. I was wounded with a minie ball the second day of July in the left Brest but I die like hero that I have done my duty Most all of Co is killed or wounded it was a hard fought Battle but our men are victorious their has been no fighting to day tell the folks that I die a glorious Death

I must close Good bye now and forever

Weep not for me

S B Shea

On the back side of this letter is the following letter from a comrade, Jesse Mitchell who was a carpenter by trade back in Bath, Maine. It is clumsy and heartfelt and shows how Jesse worries that all should know that he has done his best for their sons:

Gettysburg July 10/63

Mr Shea This letter you Son rote to you it was the last he ever had the privilege to tell you he fell Your son don his whole duty to his God and his country and he diede with his Sences and he did not appear to sufer much He was struck in the left Brest and I think it past through his Lunge He had as good care taken of him as could be expected placd whare we are I have done all I could for hime amd all the rest of our

Com but he like some others of our Com, could mot Live with the Best of care he diede the 9ths of this month at ½ 9 in the evening and was buried this morning He did not say anything about home Poor felloe he has Fought his last Battle died like all true Soldiers. I was wounded the same day but slight. I am now attending on the rest of our company, it is a horrid sight to see some of them, we buried poor James Heal this morning with your Son, he likewise died at four yesterday eve he I think did not sense anything he was left on the field for dead, and on the fourth day after the fight I reconised him and tried to bring him too but failed he never tasted anything for eight days I tried to get something down but could not and he died the eight day after the fight our Loss is heavy and we all done our duty nobely and our core Saved the Battle So dear Sir I say with your Son if we soe all fall we die Like heroes to save our Beloved country and thank God we have come victorious with a great victory

With respect to you I write this to let you know he died and we buried him well

Jesse Mitchell Co K 19th Maine Vol

Jesse's worry about being the bearer of this terrible news echoes throughout all American conflicts through to World War I, when a mother with an impressive Civil War pedigree is yet another mother who learns of the death of her beloved son in a clumsy, insensitive turn of events. But this time, this mother decides to do something about it.

So for this episode, I have veered a bit from the Civil War woman to the descendent of some strong and decisive Civil War women and men who changed the way that the

mothers of our fallen heroes would come together in support of each other in their time of greatest loss. She is Grace Darling Whitaker Seibold, founder of American Gold Star Mothers.

Grace Darling Whitaker Seibold : Civil War Daughter and Gold Star Mother



Grace Darling Whitaker Seibold was born into an Ashford, Connecticut family of substance. Great-granddaughter of men who served in the Revolutionary War, Grace's grandparents George Halsey and Mary Colgrove Whitaker were farmers and prominent citizens in the burgeoning farming community of Ashford, a growing carriage stop on the Hartford Providence turnpike. George and Mary had 16 children and were abolitionists. They gave four sons to serve in the Civil War, Edward, Daniel, William and George. Daniel, 1 Connecticut Cavalry, was killed in action at Aldie, Virginia in the pre-July movements that led to the Battle of Gettysburg. Four daughters - Emma, Sarah, Adeline and Annah - went south to serve as teachers to freed black men, women and children.

Grace's father Edward Washburn Whitaker started his service in the 1st Connecticut Cavalry and ended as a Brigadier General on the staff of George Armstrong Custer.

He won a Congressional Medal of Honor at Ream's Station and is said by many to have carried the flag of truce through the Confederate lines at Appomattox to notify the troops of the surrender. He and Grace's mother, Theodosia Davis had three daughters, Clara Barton Whitaker b 1866, Theodosia born 1868 and Grace Darling born 1870. After the war, Edward was appointed Superintendent of the U.S. Capitol Building, and later (1869) Postmaster of Hartford, Connecticut, a position he was appointed to by President Ulysses S. Grant. He was an insurance agent and a patent attorney in his later years, living in Washington, D.C. He was disabled most of his life by a heart condition brought on by Malaria he contracted shortly after the battle of Gettysburg. Edward died on July 30, 1922 and was buried in section 3 of Arlington National Cemetery.

Grace's story as told by the *American Gold Star Mothers* website

(<https://www.goldstarmoms.com/our-history.html>)

When the United States entered World War I in 1917, George Vaughn Seibold, 23, volunteered, requesting assignment in aviation. He was sent to Canada where he learned to fly British planes, since the United States had neither an air force nor planes. Deployed to England, he was assigned to the British Royal Flying Corps, 148th Aero Squadron. With his squadron, he left for combat duty in France. He corresponded with his family regularly. His mother, Grace Darling Seibold, began to do community service by visiting returning servicemen in the hospitals.

The mail from George stopped. Since all aviators were under British control and authority, the United States could not help

the Seibold family with any information about their son.

Grace continued to visit hospitalized veterans in the Washington area, clinging to the hope that her son might have been injured and returned to the United States without any identification. While working through her sorrow, she helped ease the pain of the many servicemen who returned so war-damaged that they were incapable of ever reaching normalcy.

But on October 11, 1918, George's wife in Chicago received a box marked "Effects of deceased Officer 1st Lt. George Vaughn Seibold". The Seibold's also received a confirmation of George's death on November 4th through a family member in Paris.

On Sunday, December 15, 1918, nine days before Christmas Eve, the following obituary appeared in the Washington Star newspaper:

***Lieut. G. V. Seibold Killed in Action
Battling Aviator, Recently Cited for
Bravery in France, is War Victim.***

Lieut. George Vaughn Seibold, battling aviator, cited for bravery in action some time ago, lost his life in a fight in the air August 26, last. His father, George G. Seibold... has been officially notified of his son's death by the War Department.

Lieut. Seibold was a member of the 148th U. S. Aero Squadron. He was first reported missing in action, though a number of circumstances led to the fear that he had been killed. Hope was sustained until now, however, by the failure to receive definite word.

George's body was never identified. Grace, realizing that self-contained grief is

self-destructive, devoted her time and efforts to not only working in the hospital but extending the hand of friendship to other mothers whose sons had lost their lives in military service.

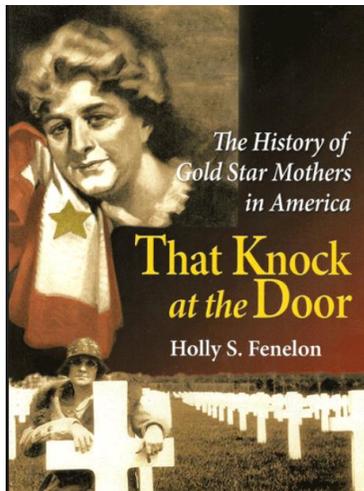
She organized a group consisting solely of these special mothers, with the purpose of not only comforting each other, but giving loving care to hospitalized veterans confined in government hospitals far from home.

The organization was named after the Gold Star that families hung in their windows in honor of the deceased veteran. After years of planning, June 4, 1928, twenty-five mothers met in Washington, DC to establish the national organization, American Gold Star Mothers, Inc. The success of our organization continues because of the bond of mutual love, sympathy, and support of the many loyal, capable, and patriotic mothers who while sharing their grief and their pride, have channeled their time, efforts and gifts to lessening the pain of others.

We stand tall and proud by honoring our children, assisting our veterans, supporting our nation, and healing with each other. On May 28, 1918, President Wilson approved a suggestion made by the Women's Committee of the Council of National Defenses that, instead of wearing conventional mourning for relatives who have died in the service of their country, American women should wear a black band on the left arm with a gilt star on the band for each member of the family who has given his life for the nation. After years of planning, June 4, 1928, twenty-five mothers met in Washington, DC to establish the national organization, American Gold Star Mothers, Inc.

A Few Great Resources about the Gold Star Mothers and the Gold Star Mother Pilgrimages to France 1930 - 1933

Some great resources for anyone who wants to read a bit more:



That Knock at the Door: The History of Gold Star Mothers in America - June 5, 2012 by Holly S. Fenelon

Review from Amazon

A blue star for each family member serving in America's military . . . a gold star if that life was lost in defense of the nation's freedom. IN WORLD WAR I, the American tradition of the service flag began. Families displayed a simple fabric banner with a blue star for each family member serving in the U.S. Armed Forces. If a family member died in the nation's service, a gold star covered that individual's blue star on the family service flag. Not a symbol of mourning, the gold star represented the family's pride and the honor and glory accorded to that individual for making the supreme sacrifice in defense of the America's freedom. Soon, the term "gold

star mother" came to be used to identify and honor women who had lost a son or daughter in wartime military service. Following the war, as the nation focused its attention on those veterans who had returned whole in mind and body, gold star mothers served as a constant reminder of the true cost of war. In 1928, a group of these women formed American Gold Star Mothers, Inc., an organization created to honor those who had died by being of service to veterans and their families in need, supporting gold star families, and caring for veterans who had returned with physical, emotional and psychological wounds. From that humble beginning, American Gold Star Mothers, Inc. has become an icon of national service, opening its membership time and again to gold star mothers of later wars and conflicts, including Iraq and Afghanistan. Their amazing legacy of service is an important yet largely unknown chapter in American history. This book presents the story of gold star mothers in America and the first comprehensive history of American Gold Star Mothers, Inc., drawn from nearly a century of archival materials. The fascinating story of the strong women who honored their fallen sons and daughters by dedicating themselves to the service of veterans and peace is both compelling and inspiring.

Bodies of War: World War I and the Politics of Commemoration in America, 1919-1933 by Lisa M. Budreau
NYU Press; Reprint edition (November 1, 2011)

Review from Amazon

The United States lost thousands of troops during World War I, and the government gave next-of-kin a choice about what to do with their fallen loved ones: ship them

home for burial or leave them permanently in Europe, in makeshift graves that would be eventually transformed into cemeteries in France, Belgium, and England. World War I marked the first war in which the United States government and military took full responsibility for the identification, burial, and memorialization of those killed in battle, and as a result, the process of burying and remembering the dead became intensely political. The government and military attempted to create a patriotic consensus on the historical memory of World War I in which war dead were not only honored but used as a symbol to legitimize America's participation in a war not fully supported by all citizens.

The saga of American soldiers killed in World War I and the efforts of the living to honor them is a neglected component of United States military history, and in this fascinating yet often macabre account, Lisa M. Budreau unpacks the politics and processes of the competing interest groups involved in the three core components of commemoration: repatriation, remembrance, and return. She also describes how relatives of the fallen made pilgrimages to French battlefields, attended largely by American Legionnaires and the Gold Star Mothers, a group formed by mothers of sons killed in World War I, which exists to this day. Throughout, and with sensitivity to issues of race and gender, *Bodies of War* emphasizes the inherent tensions in the politics of memorialization and explores how those interests often conflicted with the needs of veterans and relatives.



The Gold Star Mother Pilgrimages of the 1930s: Overseas Grave Visitations by Mothers and Widows of Fallen U.S. World War I Soldiers

by John W. Graham, McFarland & Company (May 5, 2005)

Review from Amazon

During the first World War, a flag with a gold star identified families who had lost soldiers. Grieving women were "Gold Star" mothers and widows. Between 1930 and 1933, the United States government took 6,654 Gold Star pilgrims to visit their sons' and husbands' graves in American cemeteries in Belgium, England, and France. Veteran Army officers acted as tour guides, helping women come to terms with their losses as they sought solace and closure. The government meticulously planned and paid for everything from transportation and lodging to menus, tips, sightseeing, and interpreters. Flowered wreaths, flags, and camp chairs were provided at the cemeteries, and official photographers captured each woman standing at her loved one's grave. This work covers the Gold Star pilgrimages from their launch to the present day, beginning with an introduction to the war and wartime burial. Subsequent topics include the legislative struggle and evolution of the

pilgrimage bill; personal pilgrimages, including that of the parents of poet Joyce Kilmer; the role of the Quartermaster Corps; the segregation controversy; a close examination of the first group to travel, Party A of May 1930; and the results of the pilgrimage experience as described by participants, observers, organizers, and scholars, researched through diaries, letters, scrapbooks, interviews, and newspaper accounts.



Gold Star Mother Pilgrimage June/1930

Gold Star Mothers: Pilgrimage of Remembrance, DVD 2006

Review from Amazon

For 6,000 women whose sons or husbands were lost in World War I and buried in foreign graves, a pilgrimage to see their loved one's final resting place brought a measure of comfort. In the 1930s, when mothers had heroic stature in the eyes of the nation, the government took thousands of them on trips across the ocean to visit cemeteries in Europe. This one-hour documentary, produced by WILL-TV, tells the story of the emotional Gold Star journeys that, for many women, involved their first travel outside their own communities. The program also describes how mothers wielded political power to get

Congress to approve the Gold Star pilgrimages, and how the segregation of African American women on the trips contributed to the decision of many black voters to leave the Republican Party. The documentary also follows some of today's Gold Star Mothers, who lost sons in Vietnam, as they make modern-day pilgrimages to see where their loved ones died.



MOURNING AND THE MAKING OF A NATION: The Gold Star Mothers Pilgrimages, 1930-1933

This is a great paper on the pilgrimages.

https://www.vanderbilt.edu/rpw_center/pdfs/BUDREAU.PDF

'I Hope...To See You Once More And Then I Would Die Contented': An Irish Mother Writes to Her Son

by irishacw September 22, 2014

<https://irishamericancivilwar.com/2014/09/22/i-hope-to-see-you-once-more-and-then-i-would-die-contented-an-irish-mother-writes-to-her-son/>

Bridget Burns married her husband William in Ireland on 18th August 1840. When her husband died eight years later, he left Bridget a widow and their only child, Henry, fatherless at the age of six. By the time 1861 came along, Bridget and her

son were living 125 Greenwich Avenue, New York. On 19th August that year 19-year-old Henry enlisted, becoming a Private in Company D of the 59th New York Infantry. With that act, Bridget became one of tens of thousands of Irish mothers who spent each day on edge, waiting for news from the front. Over the course of the war Henry regularly corresponded with his mother; he sent his letters to neighbor Catharine Farrell who read them out to the illiterate Irishwoman.

Henry, always keen to hear from home, felt his mother didn't write to him enough and chastised her for it- at one point in 1863 telling her that 'there is no excuse for you not writing.' Still he was grateful when letters did arrive, and especially for the occasional boxes he received, especially if they contained alcohol! As the years passed and the war dragged on, Henry's term of enlistment began to draw to a close. In December 1863 he decided to take advantage of the financial bounty offered to those who re-enlisted as Veteran Volunteers- and earn himself a furlough home into the bargain. When he got home to New York, he noticed a lot of his friends were marrying their sweethearts. On his return to the army, he wondered if he should have done the same with his girl Ann; he wrote to his mother asking her to tell Ann to 'have good patance I will be around there one of the days.' He had a photo of himself taken that April, and cheekily asked his mother to check with Ann see if she 'received that beautiful likeness of mine.'

It seems probable that as well as reading Bridget the letters from her son, Catharine Farrell also wrote the responses for her friend. On 22nd June 1864 the two women sat down to write this letter to Henry, who

was now engaged with the Army of the Potomac in the Overland Campaign:

New York June 22 1864

My Dear Son,

I sit down to answer your kind and welcome [letter] which I received on the 11th and I am sorry to hear that your cough is so bad but I hope it is better before this and I hope that this will find you in good health as this leaves me and all friends in at present thanks be to God for his mercy to us Dear Henry I wish to let you know that I sent you that candy in A small box and A small bottle of hot drops for your bowels [bowels] I hope you have it before this for I made no delay in sending it I sent it the day I got yours and the[y] charged me one dollar and 10 cents for postage but no matter what costs it is When you write again I hope that you will let me know if it does you any good and if it does I will send you plenty more

My Dear son I am sorry to hear that you have such bad times as you have I wish I was near enough to you to give you your hot rum and oysters but I hope with the help of God that this war will be soon over and that will be speard [spared] to me to see you once more and then I would die contented. Mrs. Finnen feels very bad she had not A letter from John in five weeks since he moved from Harpers Ferry when we last he[a]rd from James he was in the same place [place] at Sandy Hook Mr and Mrs Farrell and the Children are all well and send there loved in the kindest maner to you and Kate wants you home to give her her gin Mrs Finnen Anne and Hugh sends there best respects to you and likewise others that I have not time to mention wishes to be remembered to you

As I hope you will excuse this letter it was wrote in A hurry and I hope you will Answere it the first opperthunity you get so I have nomore to say at present I remain your affectionate Mother until death

Bridget Burns
125 Greenwich Avenue

Dear Henry write as soon as you can for I will be very uneasy until I hear from you again

Johnny MGinn is in Co. B 59 and I want you to find him for I know he will be glad to see you

The very day that Bridget Burns dictated this letter to her son in New York, his regiment was going into action at Petersburg, Virginia. A few weeks afterwards Bridget and Catharine Farrell would once again sit down together, looking at the very letter they had sent that 22nd June. On a blank section of paper at the back of the returned letter the following was written:

HdQrs 59th N.Y. Vet Vols

Near Petersburg
July 15 1864

Mrs. Burns,

Henry Burns of Co D was mortally wounded on June 22, 1864 and died of his wound at Campbell U.S.A. Hosptl Washgtn D.C. on July 6, 1864.

I am Madam,

Very Respectfully
Horace P. Rugg
Lt. Col. 59th N.Y.V. Vols

A Minié ball had struck the upper third of his left femur on 22nd June. He arrived in the hospital in Washington on 3rd July, but it was too late- his fate was sealed. Henry would never read the letter his mother had sent him. Bridget Burns became just another of thousands of Irish mothers- those whose wish to see their child one more time would go unfulfilled as a consequence of the American Civil War.

*None of my work on pensions would be possible without the exceptional effort currently taking place in the National Archives to digitize this material and make it available online via Fold3. A team from NARA supported by volunteers are consistently adding to this treasure trove of historical information. To learn more about their work you can watch a video by clicking here.

References

Henry Burns Widow's Pension File (available to anyone who has a Fold3 subscription or who accesses the information at the National Archives)

New York Adjutant-General Roster of the 59th New York Volunteer Infantry

AHAITF Highlights

John Bank's Civil War Blog
www.john-banks.blogspot.com

John Banks is author of two published books on the Civil War: Connecticut Yankees at Antietam and Hidden History of Connecticut Union Soldiers, which feature profiles of soldiers and others. His work has been featured in such notable publications as The New York Times, Civil War Times, Civil War Monitor, Civil War

News, America's Civil War and Military Images. Banks, who attended Mount Lebanon (Pa.) High School, graduated from West Virginia University (B.A. in journalism). A longtime journalist (The Dallas Morning News and ESPN), he is secretary-treasurer of The Center for Civil War Photography, a member of the Civil War Trust and a board member of the Save Historic Antietam Foundation.

His blog is worth following – it is well researched and well written. As an example of one of the blog posts, I offer a recent post that focuses on the correspondence of a mother and her son.

John Bank's Civil War Blog SUNDAY, MARCH 11, 2018

Only 14, Lucien Welles Hubbard posed for a carte de visite before he left Connecticut for war.



(Photos/letters courtesy Emilie Bosworth-Clemens)

Wearing a stern expression and a slightly oversized greatcoat, 14-year-old Lucien Welles Hubbard posed in a studio in Hartford, Conn.,

in front of a photographer's army camp backdrop of Sibley tents and cannon balls. After his keepsake image was taken, probably shortly after his enlistment in July 1862, the drummer in the 14th Connecticut began a momentous, 21-month journey.

Whether parents Calista and Timothy Hubbard gave consent for their eldest son to join the Union army is unknown. (Timothy was a 52-year-old ship carpenter who sometimes plied his trade in New York.) In addition to Lucien, the Hubbards had five other children, ranging in age from 4 to 24. What is certain is the great anxiety 45-year-old Calista felt because of her son's absence from home in Bridgeport, Conn.

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On the very day Lucien witnessed the bloodiest single-day battle of the war, at Antietam on Sept. 17, 1862, Hubbard wrote a heart-rending note to her son:

"We heard of battles and we think perhaps your regiment may be engaged in some of them and it casts a sadness over my feelings, and my

heart is filled with anxiety until I shall hear that you are safe. I know that you must have had a pretty hard time since you left, but all that I can do for you is to pray for you that God would strengthen you and help you and give you courage to endure all that He in his providence shall call you to pass through.



Calista Hubbard, Lucien's mother.

"You may think because you do not hear from me after that I have forgotten you. No, Lucien your Mother has not. I think of you in your long weary marches, in your tents, or your lodgings on the ground ... and I pray God that this dreadful war may soon be over, but He alone knows when it will be. ...

"All the men most want to know if I have heard from you. They think you have good pluck to go to war so young as you are. Do be careful of your health as I fear you will ruin your constitution for life. Take good care of yourself. Write as often as you can and try to improve in writing and composition, for your school days are gone. Good night my dear boy. May Heaven protect you." As a drummer, Hubbard did not participate in much, if any, fighting. Unsurprisingly, his mother preferred that he

avoid armed conflict at all costs. "Now Lucien," Calista wrote on Jan. 19, 1863, "if you love your mother for my sake do not expose your life unnecessarily, for we are commanded to use all means to preserve our lives and the lives of others."

But Hubbard was far from a bystander during the war -- he dressed wounds at Antietam, carried off war booty during the Union army's sacking of Fredericksburg in December 1862 and had the shell of his drum broken by an artillery fragment at Chancellorsville in May 1863. At Gettysburg two months later, he acquired souvenirs from Rebels, sending the prizes of war home to his mother. In April 1864, the private's war ended far behind enemy lines, 400 miles from home.

Excerpts from a remarkable cache of correspondence between Lucien and Calista Hubbard provide a small window into the youngster's war -- and into a mother's love for her boy:



Patriotic envelope for letter dated Sept. 5, 1862, from Lucien Hubbard to his mother in Bridgeport, Conn.

Only weeks after the 14th Connecticut left Hartford, it fought in its first battle outside the village of Sharpsburg, Md. The regiment swept across William Roulette's farm and engaged Confederates in Bloody Lane, suffering 20 killed and 98 wounded. Among the regiment's

dead were well-regarded captains Jarvis Blinn and Samuel Willard.

The battle field, Sept. 18, 1862

Dear mother

I have found a few minutes to spend and I thought I would write as you might think I was killed in battle Wednesday Sept. 17. I was in the battle bringing off the wounded, the balls flying thick and fast. The nearest I had one hit me was one through my hat. Our regiment was cut up terribly. We did not muster but 300 men this morning and before we numbered 1,000. I have been to work all day long and been up all night helping the wounded and dressing the wounds. Our regt. Lost 2 capt that were thought of a great deal of. Their names were [Jarvis] Blinn and [Samuel] Willard. It was one of the biggest & hardest battles ever fought. Gen. Morris (our old col.) says it has been the hardest battle every fought.

I will give you the names of some of our killed in our company. Company A Eldregg [Nathaniel Eldridge] was wounded in the leg and Frank Curtis of Startford had his shoulder all blown off. Philo knows him. Oscar Beers was not in the action. He staid back at Ft. Allen because he was sick. I am in good health and stand it very well. We have not received any letters since we left Hartford. The mail could not reach us. We were marching all the time day and night. If I could get home I would not care about coming again, not because I am sick of it but I do not like the looks of some of the wounds I have to see. You can't imagine anything about it. See men wounded in the head, arms, hands, legs and all over their body.

One fellow had five balls in him and he did not stop fighting until a shell hit him and knocked his leg clean off. I don't want to have you worry about me because I am all right and will take

care of myself. I read a psalm every night and morning and read a verse in that book you gave me. Give my love to all the boys and girls. Tell them to remember old Lush. I have wrote to Charley Smith but have not received any answer. Give my love to my dear sisters and to [brother] Charlie. Tell him he must be a good boy and mind his mother.

On Dec. 13, 1862, the 14th Connecticut attacked an impregnable Confederate position at Marye's Heights. The result was disastrous: 11 killed, 87 wounded, and 22 missing.

Camp near Falmouth Dec. 18, 1862 (of Camp Abomination 25,000 miles from civilization)

Dear mother

We have been in a great battle. Our regiment went in the battle with 362 men and came out with 105. Our. Lt. Col, was wounded and our major. We had 1 Lieut. Killed and all the line officers except 4 are wounded. Our company lost two killed and considerable many wounded. George Carlock was killed. Fred Standish was wounded in the hand. We had a good time while we were in Fredericksburg, We rummaged the houses for sugar, butter, jellies, tea coffee and all the dishes you can think of. I made some slapjacks and I got some dried apples and made some apple dumplings and I found a piece of fresh pork and made a pork pie. We live high and slept in a cellar. I received your photograph and I never saw a better likeness in my life. I send you an old copper coin I found in Fredericksburg.

"I am afraid by your writing that you do not appreciate His goodness in sparing you through such scenes of carnage and blood," Calista wrote to Lucien two days before Christmas 1862.

Bridgeport, Dec. 23, 1862

My dear son

I received your letter last evening after waiting a whole week in the greatest possible anxiety. I had about concluded that you was either killed or taken prisoner. I hope if you are ever in another battle and escape unhurt you will try to let me know sooner if it is possible for you to write, for it is dreadful to be kept so long in suspense.



An undated, pre-war photo of Lucien W. Hubbard of Bridgeport, Conn. He was one of six children.

For my part I am full of gratitude to God for you again protecting you through so much peril and danger. I am afraid by your writing that you do not appreciate His goodness in sparing you through such scenes of carnage and blood. I wish that such scenes might have a tendency to lead you to repentance, so that if I should hear that you had fallen in battle I might have

the fullest assurance that you had gone to be forever with the Lord, but I hope you will be spared to come home again.

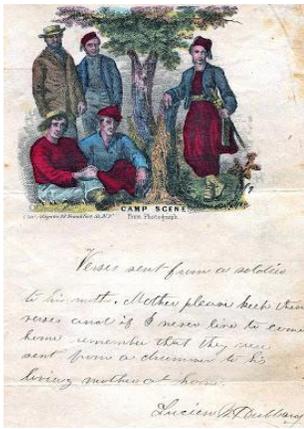
Do Lucien try to be a good boy so that if you should live to get home you may make a good and useful man. My heart yearns over you lest you should fall into sin and temptation. I am inclined to think that war is a bad place for any one to live as they ought. You little know how many sorrowful and sleepless hours I spend on your account, how many prayers are offered for your safety and your good. There has been a great excitement here on account of the battle. A great many are ready to give up and think that this war is never going to be ended, but for my part I am not willing to believe that our armies can be conquered by the South. God forbid that we too should be slave to them.

Camp near Falmouth, Jan. 13/62

Dear mother

... I am nearly well with the exception of my feet and I hope this letter will find you and the family the same. I have had the best kind of care taken of me since I have reentered the hospital. My toes have turned black and scabbed all over and they pain me night and day. If I get them a little warm they will sting and it seems as though I should go crazy. My left foot is a great deal the worse. The toes are stiff as a poker.

"Remember that you have a precious soul ..."
Calista Hubbard wrote her son on Jan. 19, 1863.



On beautiful stationery featuring a camp scene, Lucien wrote: "Verses sent from a soldier to his mother. Mother please keep these verses and if I never come home remember that they were sent from a drummer to his mother at home."

Bridgeport, Jan. 19th, 1863

My Dear Child

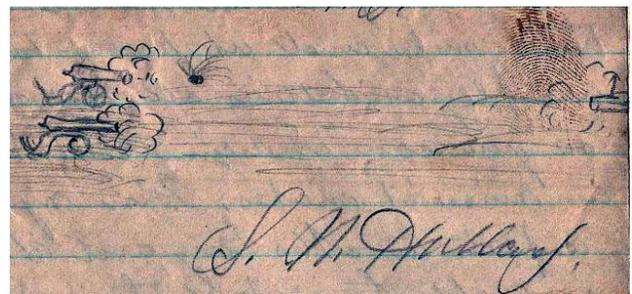
I just received your letter this morning and received your letter this evening [and] was glad to hear that you are better. I have worried myself almost to death about you. I was afraid you was worse and was not able to be sent on to Washington, and I have imagined a thousand things about you which have made me very anxious to hear from you, but thank God it is no worse. I am glad you have good care where you are ...

Josie has just got home from Stratford. She and Philo and Gus spent the Sabbath there. They got a letter from Oscar which informed them that you had been very sick and that he thought you would get a discharge. At least he thought you had ought to for you looked so thin, so I had about made up my mind to see you walk in some day or rather to hear that you had been sent to New Haven, but it seems I shall be disappointed as you are not going to be sent on. I should think it would be a long time before you will be able to march on your sore feet. O dear what will you do?

Aunt Sarah tells me that when she was over to

the Hospital that Fred Standish said that the drummer boys did not have to be much exposed in time of battle unless you are a mind to, but he says you and George Allen are always around.

Now Lucien if you love your mother for my sake do not expose your life unnecessarily, for we are commanded to use all means to preserve our lives and the lives of others. Remember that you have a precious soul which must spend an eternity in happiness or misery. You can't tell how much I feel on your account surrounded by thieves and every thing that is bad and evil examples of every kind. Don't you sometimes think you would like to be at home and have a quiet home life once more? I sometimes fear that I shall never see you again on earth. But if not I hope we may meet in Heaven.



In a letter about his experience at Gettysburg, Lucien Hubbard drew cannons. "The batteries from our side," he wrote July 3, 1863, "are mowing the rebels down with grape and canister and shell." At the upper right, a mystery fingerprint.

Depleted by hard fighting since it had left Hartford in the summer of 1862, the 14th Connecticut barely had 200 soldiers at Gettysburg, where it suffered 10 killed and 52 wounded. In defending the Bloody Angle during Pickett's Charge, the regiment captured the colors of the 1st and 14th Tennessee.

Camp on the battlefield, July 3

Dear mother

I take my pencil in hand to write you a few

lines hoping to find you in good health as I am at present. We are having a terrible battle here. Our regiment is being all cut to pieces. This morning there were ordered (four companies) to charge a barn that was occupied by the rebels. They done it - not a man faltered and they succeeded in reaching the barn. Out of the four companies two lieuts were wounded and about 10 privates. Pretty soon the brig. rode by and said he wanted the 14th to charge a house that the rebel sharpshooters occupied. They charged the house and had just (indecipherable) when rebel batteries opened on them. Still they stood firm. Here was when they got cut so. Then was some killed and a great many wounded. Just think -- our regiment is now not as large as the Home Guards were when I was home.



Confederate money Private Lucien Hubbard acquired at Gettysburg.

I see Fred - he was in the fight but was not hurt the last I saw of him. The men fight nobly. Dr. Dudley of our regiment was wounded in the left arm. The second battery was engaged I believe. You must not feel worried about me. I will try and take care of myself. This is an awful fight. We have taken a great many prisoners. We are in Pennsylvania now at a place called Gettysburg. That is quite a large place and troops hold 1/2 of the town and the rebels the other. The troops will all fight tomorrow, it being 4th of July. The batteries from our side are mowing the rebels down with grape and canister and shell. They don't seem to have a great deal of artillery here. At least they don't reply a great deal. Their batteries seem to be all

planted in one place while ours are all scattered around at different places.

I don't think of much more this time. One thing I forgot to tell. Our line of battle extend about three miles and at present we are playing batteries all that distance and you can imagine what kind of noise it makes. Give my respects to Mrs. Gray and Mrs. Perry and all the rest of the neighbors. Give my love to Gus and Joe also Phil. Tell the children to be good and do all they can for you. Tell Father to write to me. Give my best respects to Father and my love to you and the rest. So good bye. Write soon.



A stamped envelope Lucien got from a Confederate prisoner at Gettysburg. He sent it home to his mother.

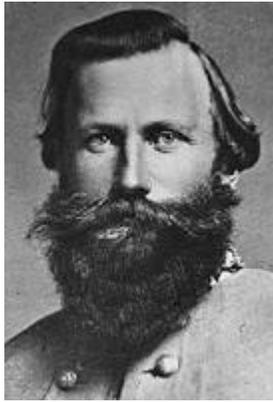


Envelope for letter Lucien sent to his mother from Belle Isle POW camp in Richmond.

On Oct. 14, 1863, Lucien was captured at the Battle of Bristoe Station (Va.). Before he was

sent to a POW camp at Belle Isle in Richmond, Hubbard said he briefly met J.E.B. Stuart. The Confederate cavalry commander "treated me very well indeed," Lucien told his mother.

Richmond Va., Oct. 24th 1863



J.E.B. Stuart

Dear mother,

I take my pencil in hand to let you know that I am alive yet. I am a prisoner and am at Richmond. I was taken on the 14th but have not had a chance to write before this. I am well and hope these few lines will find you the same. If you have sent them things on to my regiment you had better send back after them. Or else try to sell them. If you write to the regiment direct to Franklin M Bartlett Sargt Co. A 14th V.C. I was taken by some of Gen. Stuarts cavalry. I was before the Gen and he talked and treated me very well indeed.

We were taken to Warrenton Jail and stayed there a while and then to Culpepper and then here. As soon as I can find out how to direct my letters I will write and let you know. I don't know what place to have you direct to. What prison. You must not feel worried about me, for I will take as good care of myself as possible. You can write to the regiment if you are a mind to and tell them that I am a prisoner.

I guess we will not have to stay here a great

while before we are exchanged. At least I hope not. I would like to get paroled and then I could get a chance to come home and see you once more. But I shall have a chance. Give my love to Sarah and Charley and Josephine and to all the rest of my friends. Tell father not to worry about me for I am all right. Tell him I aint but 15 years old. I can manage to get out all right.



A cropped enlargement of an April 1865 photo of a graveyard for Union POWs at Belle Isle.

(Alexander Gardner | [Library of Congress collection.](#))

At Belle Isle, a small island in the James River, Union POWs lived in tents or without any shelter at all because there were no barracks or other buildings to house them. Sanitary conditions were equally primitive. "The water in the river at this time was about two feet deep," a POW at Belle Isle in the summer of 1864 wrote after the war. "This was the privy, as also the only place where we were allowed to get any water, to either drink or wash with...the river was full of filth from houses."

In the spring of 1864, Lucien Hubbard suffered from chronic diarrhea. Severely weakened, he died from the disease on April 16, 1864.

Calista Hubbard doggedly pursued the story of her son's death. On May 21, 1865, a soldier who was imprisoned with Lucien replied to her inquiry about him. "He often

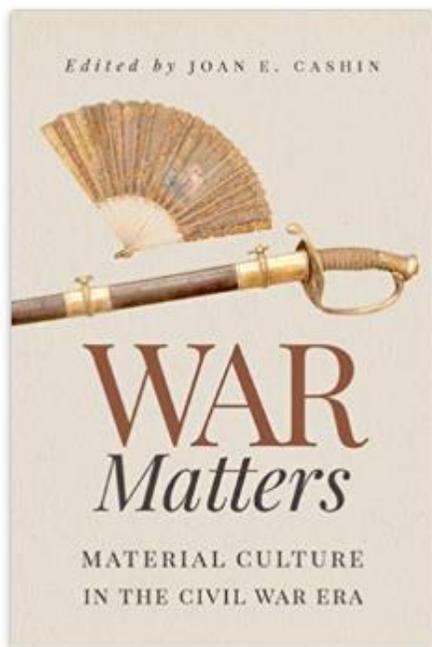
told me," wrote Patrick Carroll, "that he was afraid he would never see home."

The drummer boy's final resting place is believed to be Richmond (Va.) National Cemetery.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My thanks to Rich Condon, who provided the Hubbard correspondence and images for this post via Lucien's descendant, Emilie Bosworth-Clemens.

War Matters: Material Culture in the
Civil War Era.
Joan E. Cashin



Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2018. 280 pp. \$90.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-1-4696-4319-9; \$29.95 (paper), ISBN 978-1-4696-4320-5.

Reviewed by John Coski (American Civil War Museum) Published on H-CivWar

(March, 2019) Commissioned by G. David Schieffler (Crowder College)

As a historian who has worked for thirty years mining a rich museum collection of Civil War objects, documents, and photographs to create exhibits and write articles, I welcome a pioneering new book of essays on material culture in the Civil War era, especially one written and edited by some of the best historians in our field. *War Matters* is a useful introduction to a still largely unfamiliar subfield, and it certainly provides valuable insights and context for those who work with objects. On the whole, however, I find the collection underwhelming and its insights less original and profound than I had hoped. Too often the essays did not pass my "so what?" test. I concede that I may have expected too much and that the problem may lie less with the essays than with the reviewer.

The essays range chronologically from the 1850s to the war's concluding events and cover a wide range of topics from the ordinary to the unexpected. Jason Phillips analyzes the conflicting definitions and symbolic uses of John Brown's famous pikes (and a significant, but less famous, bowie knife). Joan Cashin surveys the similarly conflicting sectional perspectives and uses of "relics" from the American Revolution. Lisa Brady and Timothy Silver make the case that the Antietam battlefield itself, and the landscape and the environment generally, represents a kind of material culture. Ronald J. Zboray and Mary Saracino Zboray explore the meanings that soldiers and their families bestowed upon books that stopped bullets and shell fragments. Earl Hess asks us to consider the cultural importance to soldiers of the weapons that fired those bullets and

shells. Robert D. Hicks probes in detail mid-nineteenth-century vaccination practices and the Confederacy's reaction to a wartime smallpox outbreak to show how human matter qualifies as a form of material culture. Sarah Jones Weicksel uses photographs and descriptions to analyze the material culture of refugee camps and the divergent understandings of it. Victoria Ott argues that the material culture of white non-elite Alabama households helps us understand the patterns of support for and dissent from the Confederate government. Peter Carmichael posits that Confederate and Federal soldiers collected and saved artifacts as enduring relics of defeat or symbols of triumph, not just for idle nostalgia. Lastly, Yael Sternhell suggests that Jefferson Davis's years-long effort to recover clothing and papers taken from him upon his May 1865 capture brought home to him in very personal terms the meaning of defeat.

Beyond the main points of their chapters, the essayists seek to demonstrate the value of applying material culture studies to Civil War history. Judging by the number of textual and endnote references to it, Michael DeGruccio's essay in the 2011 collection *Weirding the War* provides the kind of clarion call for material culture studies that Maris Vinovskis's 1989 *Journal of American History* article, "Have Social Historians Lost the Civil War?" did for social history. Accordingly, editor Cashin and the essayists assiduously lay a historiographical foundation for their work. The touchstones include the familiar classics by Clifford Geertz, Henry Glassie, and James Deetz and more recent cornerstones of the literature. Cashin's introduction and Brady and Silver's essay naturally cite the literature of environmental history. Earl Hess's essay

draws on an impressive body of international scholarship about the material culture of weapons.

Not surprisingly, editor and essayists trumpet the potential value of material culture studies. "The study of material culture can give us new perspectives on a number of ongoing historical debates," Cashin argues, such as "the nature of the common soldier's experience" and "long-running debates about the strength of popular allegiance to the Confederacy and the related question of persisting support for the Union within the South" (p. 5). In his essay, Jason Phillips states that broadening our study beyond manuscripts in archives shows us "how the power of possessions, particularly weapons, can goad people into action and make history" (p. 29). Peter Carmichael argues that Confederate trophies taken at the end of the war were not merely idle souvenirs, but objects that "could shape behavior, filter perceptions, and serve as conductors of action" (p. 218).

It is easy to get caught up in the excitement of the prospect for new insights into Civil War history, not to mention the new opportunities for articles, books, and dissertations. But, upon closer—and skeptical—inspection, how many truly new and important insights do these essays yield?

Does a study showing how proslavery forces and abolitionists perceived and exploited for propaganda purposes the weapons manufactured for John Brown's raid on Harper's Ferry reveal anything fundamentally new about the dynamics of antebellum politics? Would it not be reasonable to expect that Northerners and Southerners would similarly perceive and

portray the material culture of the founding fathers through sectional and ideological prisms (as other studies have shown they did for the image of George Washington, for example)?[1] Were we not aware already that freedmen and Northern humanitarian organizations held different perceptions of African American family and morality? Although environmental historians have given us new insights about the causal importance of microbes and specific soils and weather patterns on Civil War campaigns and battles, the importance of a battlefield's terrain has long been the stuff of Center for Military History staff ride studies (which, incidentally, do not appear in the endnotes for Brady and Silver's essay).[2] The contrast between Jefferson Davis's unyielding belief in the righteousness of his actions and the humiliation and emasculation he suffered at the end of the war, along with his postwar quest for vindication, is a staple of his biography, even without a study of his effort to recover the clothes and documents that could aid that vindication.

Admittedly, these thumbnail critiques are inherently oversimplified generalizations about nuanced essays, but I offer them to suggest that the essays' essential points seem more self-evident than profound. Material culture contributes new evidence to discussions we are already having rather than generating new discussions.

My inchoate sense of being underwhelmed derives from my own innate and increasingly firm belief that ideas shape our understanding of objects, not vice versa, and that the essays seem to support that perspective even when they argue for objects' causal role. In praising DeGruccio's Weiriding essay and other recent works, Peter Carmichael asserts that "the logical

outcome of their fine scholarship calls into question the primacy of ideas as the dominant source of motivation. Rather, things themselves have agency, and they possess an intrinsic power to shape behavior, as is evident in the ways that Union and Confederate soldiers responded to the outcome of Appomattox." In the subsequent paragraph, Carmichael notes how "both sides collected objects to validate their military service and the political cause for which they had fought" (p. 199). The beliefs, perceptions, and feelings that he enumerates—suffering, sacrifice, shame, and pride—were powerful motivating and shaping forces even without relics and trophies to embody them.

The other essays similarly rely on documentary sources and ideas to give them any real significance or context and make them worth studying. Weicksel's study of refugee camps relies explicitly on "textual accounts" because there is so little surviving material culture evidence (pp. 152-53). Victoria Ott deals less with specific examples of material culture than with material objects in the abstract as indices of wealth and of engagement or disengagement with the Confederate cause. "Through the home and the material objects within it," Ott concludes, "Alabama's common whites found agency in the Civil War experience by creating a supportive, maternal female identity and a protective, paternal male identity" (p. 192). Her essay dwells far more on those concepts than it draws from an admittedly small sample of evidence about common Alabamians' material culture. Earl Hess is careful to stay within his evidence and, in the course of exploring the multifaceted interrelationships between soldiers and their weapons, underscores how men

adapted to their weapons and how they adapted their weapons to their own cultural beliefs and experiences.

The Zborays “examine bullet-in-the-book episodes for the light they shed upon how and why books were refashioned into talismans against harm by soldiers, upon the loved ones who gave them books, and upon those who wrote about these incidents” (p. 76). Their essay reveals the indispensable importance of accompanying written histories to give meaning to those artifacts. The essay also begs an obvious comparison and contrast between books (especially religious books) as shields and other struck objects. As they note (also on p. 76), bullet-struck books typically have been the province of collectors and hobbyists, the types of people whom Michael DeGruccio chides academic historians for shunning. Indeed, the flagship popular magazine *Civil War Times* ran a short-lived regular feature entitled “Struck,” about bullet-struck objects, including books, but also canteens and other equipage. My museum’s collections also have pieces of trees and other objects that soldiers donated because they saved their lives. The most storied struck object is the bent gold coin (“my life preserver”) that Lt. George Dixon saved (and engraved) from the battle of Shiloh, salvaged recently from the wreckage of his coffin, the submarine *H. L. Hunley*. How do these objects and the testimonials accompanying them affect the Zborays’ analysis of bullet-struck (religious) books?

Once again, I am in danger of misrepresenting the essays, which do not argue explicitly and consistently for the primacy of objects over the ideas that they convey. But, by trying to establish the value of the material approach, they suggest that the study of objects reveals things that we

would not know or consider otherwise. I am not sure that is true.

“Material objects lie at the crux of understanding individual and social relationships in every culture,” editor Cashin explains in her introduction, “and nineteenth-century Americans created, used, preserved, revered, exploited, discarded, mocked, and destroyed objects for a host of reasons. By so doing, they made manifest some of their most significant beliefs about themselves, their communities, and their country, in peacetime and war” (pp. 8-9). In her essay, Cashin concludes that the collection of relics from the Revolution “demonstrates yet again how much human beings have coveted relics, how much they have enjoyed them, and how insistently they have used them to express their political beliefs, as they perceive them anew in new contexts” (pp. 47-48).

That objects offer different ways of getting at ideas and themes of the American Civil War or any era of history is a reasonable and compelling case for the value of this collection. Educators will welcome a more sensory, three-dimensional approach to teaching their subject. Historians and curators who work with the objects will appreciate thoughtful essays that add context to their collections. Less compelling to me are arguments that objects actively shaped behavior and goaded people into action. If the problem lies with me, not the scholarship, then I hope that my critique will prompt these and other scholars to sharpen their presentation and arguments.

Notes

[1]. See, for example, Anne Sarah Rubin, *A Shattered Nation: The Rise and Fall of the*

Confederacy, 1861-1868 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005); and Richard B. McCaslin, *Lee in the Shadow of Washington* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2001).

[2]. See, for example, Timothy Silver and Judkin Browning, "Nature and Human Nature: Environmental Influences in the Union's Failed Peninsula Campaign, 1862," *The Journal of the Civil War Era* 8, no. 3 (2018):388-415; and Kathryn Shively Meier, *Nature's Civil War: Common Soldiers and the Environment in 186 Virginia* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2013).

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URL: <http://www.h-net.org/reviews/showrev.php?id=53541>

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Aberration of Mind: Suicide and Suffering in the Civil War-Era South
Diane Miller Sommerville

Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2018. 448 pp. \$105.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-1-4696-4356-4; \$34.95 (paper), ISBN 978-1-4696-4330-4.

Reviewed by Katie Thompson (West Virginia University) Published on H-CivWar (February, 2019) Commissioned by G. David Schieffler (Crowder College)

Scholars of the Civil War and post-Civil War South know of the suffering experienced by the southern people during

those periods: the stress of war, the loss of loved ones, the sting of defeat, the difficulties in recovering from the destruction of war. In *Aberration of Mind*, Diane Miller Sommerville seeks to understand the impact of the war on the South through suicide, the effect of that suffering turned inwards. As she says in her introduction, historians of the South often look at the violence endemic in that society, but usually in outward expressions. Suicide is an expression of violence, but inwards onto oneself, and an analysis of this form of violence can tell us about the political, social, and economic pressures experienced by southerners, social responses to personal suffering, the changes wrought by emancipation (for both black and white southerners), concepts of gender, and changes in medical care and the perception of mental illness. Sommerville breaks her analysis into three sections: first she looks at Confederate men and women during the war, then suicide and suffering for African Americans in slavery and after emancipation, and finally southern men and women dealing with the aftermath of the Civil War.

Sommerville jumps boldly into a methodological debate circling the field in recent years. Looking at a topic that many would label part of the "dark turn," she is also looking at the mental effects of the war, research that poses many methodological challenges and has been questioned by other scholars in the field who claim that attaching modern understandings of PTSD on the past is anachronistic. Sommerville acknowledges that the study of mental health in the nineteenth century is imperfect and that historians must be willing to rely on conjecture, but she argues that the benefits outweigh the challenges. A study of southern suicide, she argues, tells

us about the pressures on southerners during and after the war, how the society reacted to suicides, and how the war itself changed the South. While historians can never say with 100 percent certainty that Civil War soldiers experienced PTSD as it is currently understood, there is certainly enough evidence to show that soldiers and civilians experienced strains on their mental health, and studying that can tell us much about nineteenth-century America. Sommerville states that her research is grounded in modern theory, but that is not heavy within the body of her work; her analysis is grounded deeply in the primary source material. She is, however, willing to make that strong leap of conjecture to connect the actions of southern men and women to trauma caused by the Civil War.

One of the strengths of Sommerville's work is how comprehensive it is. She tried to look at suicide in the South through the broadest lens possible, looking at white and black, men and women, during and after the war. Instead of focusing on just one part of the southern population, she looks at as many factors as possible to analyze why people committed suicide and how that fit into the society of the South. She was also able to show change over time and examine how the war changed southern culture and society, through the lens of mental illness and suicide. Another strength of this work is that it is supported by thorough primary source research, utilizing diaries and letters, pension and military records, asylum and medical records, and periodicals to examine the experience of suicide in the South. This allowed her work to be rich in descriptions of suicides and the words and reactions of those who ideated or committed suicide and those in society who commented on it. It is a well-researched, thoughtful

monograph in which the historical actors take center stage.

The only criticism I have of this work, and really this is just a major challenge in this field of research, is a question of how representative these experiences are. Because of the lack of sources and how suicides/trauma/mental illness was reported in the nineteenth century, there is no good way for historians to quantify this experience. It is likely that we will never be able to give accurate statistics on how many soldiers experienced trauma or how many people committed suicide. Sommerville acknowledges this challenge within her discussion of methodology but does not talk about how representative these experiences might be. If suicide was a minority experience in the South, a discussion about why that research is still valuable to understanding nineteenth-century society would be helpful to support the methodology. In addition, Sommerville makes some claims about numbers or the rise of suicides without these statistics. In my opinion, this criticism is minor in comparison to the strengths of the work. However, it is a part of the methodology of this type of research that scholars must continue to discuss.

In conclusion, Sommerville gives a well-researched, powerful monograph that paves the way for other historians doing research in this field. She presents the experience of suicide from many angles and grounds that examination in the words and experiences of southerners themselves. The resulting analysis is a valuable contribution to our understanding of nineteenth-century American society, the impact of the Civil War on the South, and the understanding and treatment of mental illness in the Civil War era.

Citation: Katie Thompson. Review of Somerville, Diane Miller, *Aberration of Mind: Suicide and Suffering in the Civil War-Era South*. H-CivWar, H-Net Reviews. February, 2019. URL: <http://www.h-net.org/reviews/showrev.php?id=53460>

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We are seeking member involvement on one time or serial bases. We are interested in any member submissions including reviews of books, articles, museums and their current exhibits, events, websites, archives, libraries, collections and artifacts. If it is of interest to you, it is probably of interest of many of our other members.

Next edition of *At Home and in the Field* will continue our look at women, pensions and photographs of the period. I encourage our readers to contact me to send in interesting stories of their own connected to this and other connected topics.

If you are interested in becoming a one-time contributor, a serial contributor or are interested in becoming a columnist for *At Home and in the Field*, please contact our editor, Meg Galante-DeAngelis at athomeandinthefield@gmail.com