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Death and the Civil War

The Dred Scott Decision's Effect
on Slavery within the Union and
the Rise of the New Republican Party

Prattville's Role in
the Heart of the Confederacy

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LETTER FROM THE EDITORS

Dear readers,

We are pleased to present the sixth issue of the *AUM Historical Review*! Each year, we receive submissions from the talented writers here at AUM and compile them into a collection of some of our school's finest history essays and papers. In this issue we have papers on topics ranging from Prattville's role in the Civil War to the conflict in Iraq, and we believe each of them will be both entertaining and enlightening.

The *Historical Review* is based on student content, so we want to extend a sincere thanks to each of the authors who submitted their work for consideration. We also urge AUM students of any classification to respond to our Call for Papers and submit their work to the *Review* for next year's publication.

We of course want to thank Dr. Michael Burger, Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, for his continued support and funding. We are also very grateful to Dr. Tim Henderson and Karen Keller from the Department of History for their support. Additionally, we owe a big thanks to AUM photographer Frank Williams for his aid with photographs, as well as Professor Breuna Baine for her help with our student designers.

We also want to acknowledge our friends at local businesses who have supported us through advertisements in this edition: Jeffrey Vinzant from the Warhawk Shop, as well as the Hank Williams Museum, the Capri Theatre, Mr. K Carwash, and the Lattice Inn. Thank you for your support!

As with previous editions, a tremendous amount of time and energy went into this year's issue of the *Review*. We would like to give a big thanks to our associate editors Emily Witcher, Levi Wooke, and Christian Wismulek, and to our graphic designers Nalin Crocker and Amy LaPointe, for their hard work. Also, we would be remiss to go without thanking our faculty advisor, Dr. Steven Gish, for all of his work and guidance.

Lastly, thank you to our readers: the history majors, history professors, and history enthusiasts among you alike. Please enjoy the sixth issue of the *Historical Review*!

Tori Soltau and Roland McDonald, Editors



Confederate dead along Sunken Road, following the Battle of Chancellorsville (1863).

(Andrew J. Russell)

DEATH AND THE CIVIL WAR

by Will Segrest

Will Segrest graduated from AUM with a BA in history in 2016 and is a past editor of the Historical Review. His historical interest is the American West. His paper won the Dodd Southern History Prize in 2016.

Civil War cemeteries all across the nation contain numerous unmarked graves. These anonymous soldiers fought and died for their cause, be it as a Yankee or a Rebel, but would never be properly recognized for their services. Some headstones are peculiar in that they contain both the Confederate and Union insignia. Not only will their bodies never be properly identified, but the actual side that they were fighting for will never be known. The Civil War claimed the lives of approximately 750,000 soldiers and civilians, a good number of which have become lost in history. Corpses during the Civil War were not properly taken care of, leading to their identities being lost forever. These men were willing to forfeit a "good death" for their cause, yet they were not treated with due respect once they did die. The idea of a "good death" was important to the Civil War generation, but the conflict deprived many of this honor. The battlefield dead missed out on something regarded as sacred. This was a major injustice to men who lived in a society that hailed the "good death" as the most honorable way to die; they put their cause above their personal beliefs, yet were forgotten as soon as they were buried in the ground.

A few notable historians have done much in the way of discussing the relationship between death and the Civil War era. Drew Gilpin Faust's *This Republic of Suffering* covers all the different aspects of this topic quite thoroughly.

She discusses the way in which people prepared to die, how people coped with having to kill others, how the dead were buried, how they were identified and how those that could not be identified were handled, and how the living had an obligation to care for the dead.¹ Mark S. Schantz has also researched death during the Civil War. Schantz's book *Awaiting the Heavenly Country* looks at how death was viewed in the United States during the Civil War. He delves into the ways in which Americans were obsessed with death at the time. He discusses how American people were open about discussing matters of death and dying, and how they viewed death as a part of life.² In Jennifer Watts' book, *A Strange and Fearful Interest*, she looks at the intricacies of dying and mourning. It also features a large collection of photos that depict macabre images of the deceased. Her book is good for finding photographic primary sources on all issues of death during the Civil War.³ More recently, Meg Groeling has expanded on the subject of death and its effect on American society in her book *The Aftermath of Battle*. She looks at how the dead were handled when they were being buried and the business of death services such as embalming and burials. All of these historians have paved the way for more research to be done on this intriguing subject.⁴

One of the central themes of the Civil War generation is that most everyone wanted to die a "good

death.⁵ The concept of the “good death” was a defining characteristic of the Civil War and of the faith that many Christian Americans expressed in their religious life. The “good death” involved a dying person lying up in their bed, surrounded by a loving family, and having a willingness to accept fate. Being fearful of death was seen as weakness, and a sign that one did not completely trust the Creator.⁶ Witnessing a “good death” was also considered to be a learning experience for those who attended. People were expected to be at ease spiritually with the idea of their impending death. After a “good death,” relatives would take care of the body, and pay it respect. The corpse would be buried on familial property with all of the other departed descendants of the family.⁷ The “good death” was a typical part of life during the mid-1800s. It was the kind of death everyone wanted to have, and it became normal for the affluent parts of society to put high value on dying a “good death.” A “good death” was seen as the end to a good, happy life.⁸

During the war, soldiers tried to make the best of their situation by surrogating a “good death.” Many soldiers would carry pictures of their loved ones around with them, so that when they were dying they would be able to surround themselves with familial pictures.⁹ This was comforting to soldiers because it was like bringing a piece of home to the battlefield. Pictures were a reminder of what life was like before the war, and what life could be like after the war ended. Family photographs raised soldiers’ spirits and reminded them of what they were fighting for. This was important for dying soldiers because the idea of the “good death” was so ingrained in their minds that they thought that it was the only honorable way to die. On the battlefield pictures were as close as one could get to being surrounded by family. While many did not die a true “good death,” soldiers were comforted with the knowledge that they

would see their families again in the afterlife, which the Civil War generation took seriously. To them, Heaven was “a material place, a land, a country in which individual bodies and souls would be perfected and the relations of family and friendship restored.”¹⁰ It was comforting to soldiers to be able to spend their last moments of life with their family members in some capacity. Having pictures of their loved ones surrounding their dying bodies would have been the next best thing to actually dying a “good death.”

The deadliest of these was dysentery, which killed almost 100,000 soldiers. Typhoid fever caused by bacteria that lice carried from contaminated food and water killed nearly 60,000.

Many unfortunate soldiers had time to prepare for death during periods of mortal sickness. More men died of diseases than from fighting on the battlefield. In fact, two thirds of soldier fatalities came from campground illness—more than from combat wounds.¹¹ Civil War units rarely stressed hygiene: showers were irregular and tooth decay was common. Clothes were cleaned in the same pots that soldiers cooked in, which led these utensils to get infested with lice. The camps were full of filth because of the large numbers of men living in close proximities with no means of removing refuse from the camps. The garbage in the camps attracted mosquitoes and flies that would bite the soldiers and contaminate the campgrounds with diseases. The soldiers also tended to erect latrines close to

fresh water, which inevitably contaminated their drinking supply. The camps were overcrowded, so diseases spread rapidly. Another contributing factor to the spread of disease was the harsh conditions of army life. The extreme weather conditions they lived in made the men sick because exposure to these elements lowered their immune systems' strength. The men also had very poor diets. Fruits and vegetables were rare in the camps, and meats were usually spoiled because they were not properly preserved.¹² The camps also had few doctors to treat the sick, and practically no one knew anything about germ theory.¹³ When soldiers got sick with any of these diseases, they knew that it could be the end and were therefore able to prepare for their possible death.

The most common diseases that soldiers caught during the Civil War were dysentery, Typhoid fever, ague, Yellow Fever, malaria, scurvy, pneumonia, tuberculosis, and smallpox.¹⁴ Many of these diseases were contagious, and they typically proved fatal. The presence of most of these diseases could be attributed to the soldiers' unhealthy surroundings. The deadliest of these was dysentery, which killed almost 100,000 soldiers.¹⁵ Typhoid fever caused by bacteria that lice carried from contaminated food and water killed nearly 60,000.¹⁶ Mosquitoes were especially dangerous because they carried other diseases such as Yellow Fever and malaria, both of which killed many soldiers, especially those in warm, marshy areas.¹⁷ Scurvy could be attributed to the poor diets of the soldiers, while pneumonia could be attributed to the harsh weather conditions.¹⁸ While it was not the deadliest disease during the Civil War, consumption brought on by tuberculosis was the deadliest disease of the nineteenth century; it was responsible for one fifth of all deaths in America. These diseases were so deadly because soldiers lived in close quarters, which allowed the sickness to spread rapidly. The

wounded were more susceptible to contracting diseases, and helped the spread of the numerous diseases.¹⁹

Prior to the fall of 1862, there were no plans in place to take care of the wounded that had to be removed from the battlefield. Help for the wounded was sloppy at best. Jonathan Letterman, a Union surgeon, saw the ways in which these men were being taken care of, and he did not like it. He created the Letterman Plan, which was a medical treatment system for the wounded. Prior to the Letterman Plan, hospitals would operate on a first come first serve basis. Letterman wanted to implement a system of priority—those who needed medical attention the most would receive it first. Before his plan, very few injured men were able to make it to the hospital because there was no elaborate transportation system. Letterman created the Ambulance Corps as a way to get more injured or sickly patients to the hospital so that they might have a chance to survive their affliction. The Ambulance Corps were a group of qualified men who wore green bands to separate them from the regular soldiers. These men were tasked with going out on the battlefield to take injured soldiers to the hospital. Letterman also created Surgical Field Hospitals, which consisted of trained and qualified surgeons performing their surgical duties out of the back of a wagon stationed close to the battlefield. This close proximity to the battlefield was to ensure that fewer men would die on their way to the hospital.²⁰

After the Letterman Plan was put into action, battlefield medical personnel operated on a triage system, which was a European system that Letterman highly regarded. In this system, the first patients to be treated were those with serious injuries that were survivable if they were taken care of properly and in a timely fashion. The second group of patients to be treated was those who had less

serious injuries that could be easily fixed. The third and final group to be treated was the patients who had injuries that were most likely fatal. This system prioritized those who still had a chance to live over those who were very likely to die even with medical attention. This was vastly different from the previous first come first serve system that was in place prior to the Letterman Plan. By taking care of those that did not have fatal wounds first, they were able to save many lives by not making those patients with serious injuries have to wait for medical attention. Another revolutionary change brought on by the Letterman Plan was the addition of the "dressers," who assisted the surgeons by prepping patients for treatment. The preparations that the "dressers" made greatly increased the odds of patients surviving their treatments by lessening the risk of bacteria entering the open wounds.²¹

Letterman's innovations notwithstanding, medical care during the Civil War was primitive. Most physicians had limited knowledge of diseases and illnesses, and how they were spread. Doctors were actively spreading disease without knowing that they were doing so; they thought that pus was a sign of an infection healing, so they would take pus from one soldier's wound and transfer it to other soldiers' wounds that were not full of pus. Doctors also tried to purge disease by giving their patients laxatives; it was thought that certain afflictions were a result of toxins that could be purged from the body. Doctors gave soldiers suffering from diarrhea and dysentery laxatives to help them pass their affliction, not knowing that this caused more harm than good. Another problem with medical care was that doctors would not wash their hands, or take the proper steps to avoid infections from spreading. Bacteria would get into open wounds during surgeries and would be very harmful for the patients. Amputations were common because wounds were not properly cared for; limbs would

have to be cut off in an effort to save patients from infection. Overcrowding helped the diseases spread throughout the hospitals; airborne illnesses such as smallpox and measles were easily spread throughout the hospitals. This was devastating to the soldiers because their bodies were weak, and their immune systems were vulnerable.²² In addition to limited medical knowledge, there were very few medical doctors that were operational, and there simply were not enough doctors to care for the sick and wounded.²³ Many soldiers had a lack of faith in their doctors because there was so much disease and because so many soldiers had to have limbs amputated. This concerned the soldiers, and rightfully so.²⁴

Early on in the war, buildings such as schools or barns were used as makeshift hospitals for the troops. These buildings were not large enough for the growing number of patients, and there was no provision for separating the deathly sick from the wounded. It was easier for diseases to spread throughout these hospitals because different illnesses could not be isolated and contained. However, as the war went on, surgeons realized this fact and started using tents as hospitals. Tents made for better hospitals because they could be used to more easily contain diseases. They were also better ventilated and let in more light than barns or schools. Patients fared much better in tents than they did in buildings because they were not subjected to other ill troops, and they were not stuck in a stuffy room infested with germs. They could breathe much more easily in tents.²⁵

Many of the soldiers that had to be hospitalized eventually had to have a limb amputated because that was the way in which many of the surgeons dealt with the spread of infections. As such, prosthetic limbs became a major commodity. Post battle amputations were commonplace;



Dead soldiers at the Battle of Gettysburg (1863).

(Timothy O'Sullivan)

surgeons would take bone saws to soldiers' limbs. Because this had to be done in tents, it was done in the middle of Civil War camps; soldiers were used to hearing their comrades shriek in pain as their limbs were being sawed off. It was a sobering reality for many of the soldiers. However, many of those who had limbs amputated survived, although they were horribly disfigured. Some of the limbs that were amputated were sent off to medical schools in an effort to help medical students study the infections. But most limbs were unusable and were burned. They were replaced by prosthetics, which became much more refined as the war went on, and the demand for proper prosthetics increased.²⁶

One of the most important medical figures during the Civil War was Clara Barton. She was a pioneer in the field of nursing, and she worked on the battlefields to help soldiers with their diseases. On top of helping sickly soldiers, she kept notebooks with her, and entered

in information about the soldiers that she was taking care of. In the event that her patients died, she would send out letters to the families using the information that she received from her patients as they were dying. She became well-known for these letters, and she began receiving letters from other families, looking for their lost soldiers. She was sympathetic to their plight, and in 1865, she founded an initiative known as the Office of Correspondence with the Friends of the Missing Men of the United States Army. With this Correspondence, she went to the comrades of missing soldiers, and asked them if they had any information on the whereabouts of the missing. This office garnered Barton recognition from both Presidents Lincoln and Johnson. They both saw the good in what Barton was trying to do, and they did everything they could in their power to help her out. By 1868, Barton secured the whereabouts of roughly 22,000 missing men, and passed this information along to the men's families. While Barton's office closed in 1868, its

role in finding missing soldiers and identifying some of the unknown is praiseworthy.²⁷

All of this death inspired an artistic response. Many talented people wrote poetry and songs as a way of remembering their deceased loved ones. One of the most well-known Civil War inspired songs is "The Vacant Chair," written by Henry Washburn and composed by George F. Root. This song is about a family's sorrowful remembrance of their fallen soldier as they gather to eat dinner. They leave a chair vacant for the deceased, and reminisce about the times that they spent with him. This was a common sentiment of the time; families would find their own ways of honoring soldiers who had passed on.²⁸ Another fascinating instance of using art to deal with death is the poem "One of Us Two" by Ella Wheeler Wilcox. While this poem was written sometime after the war, it alludes to the struggles of the Civil War era family; one excerpt from the poem says "sad eyes watch for feet that never come." Families would patiently wait for the safe return of their soldiers that would never come home.²⁹ Walt Whitman also wrote a few works about the tragedies of the Civil War, particularly a collection of works he called Specimen Days on the horrors of the war. In this selection, Whitman discussed what he believed happened to the deceased after they were in the ground, and how the bodies were not treated like they should have been. Whitman witnessed these horrors first-hand as he worked as a volunteer nurse throughout the war; he used his own personal experiences with death to write his Specimen Days.³⁰

Civil War era families also had strict rules that they followed on mourning the dead. Because of the large number of dying soldiers, America became a nation of mourners. Almost everyone had lost someone in the war, and therefore, they had someone to grieve. Families had

a formal period of mourning their loved ones that had passed on. This period of time was different for all of the various family members, depending on their relation to the deceased. Traditionally, parents would mourn their children for a year, and children would mourn their parents for the same amount of time. Siblings would mourn each other for half a year. Widows would mourn their deceased husbands the longest: the mourning process for a widow would go on for two and a half years, though their mourning attire would become a lot less strict as time went on. Alternatively, widowers would only mourn their wives for three months. One of the ways in which families symbolized that they were in this formal period was the attire in which they dressed themselves.³¹

Because so many soldiers' identities were unknown when they died, their families were never notified. Other families knew that their soldiers had died, but were unable to find their bodies because they were thrown in unmarked graves.

Mourners were expected to dress in black attire throughout their mourning process, though this protocol became less rigid during the later months of the mourning

phase. Women were expected to wear black dresses, black veils, and black jewelry, while men were expected to wear black suits, black hats, and armbands, rosettes, or badges as tokens of remembrance for the deceased. As time went on, women would be allowed to wear purple, lavender, and gray dresses as well. By dressing in dark clothes, Civil War era families were paying their respects to those who had passed on. Also, by wearing these clothes for a certain period of time, mourners gained a sense of relief that they would be able to make it through the pain that they felt from their loss. A specific time frame enabled mourners to know when they could resume a normal life; it helped families accept their loss and move on. However, there were some problems with the mourning process during the Civil War. In the Confederacy, clothing was scarce. Because there were so many people in the process of mourning, dark clothes became a highly sought after commodity, and there just was not enough clothing to go around. Also money was tight in the South, and not everyone could afford mourning clothes. People were doing whatever they could in order to find and afford mourning clothes so that they could fit into the greater society that seemed to be mourning as a whole. As Drew Gilpin Faust puts it, "the southern death toll produced a uniformed sorority of grief," and as such, people wanted to do whatever they could to ensure that they fit into that community.³²

Walt Whitman also attempted to help families cope with death by publishing a list of all known burial places for Civil War soldiers. He thought that someone should have some sort of written record of this information, and he set out to make this manifest possible. He thought that by having a list of all known burial places, it would be easier to identify the vast number of unknown deceased soldiers. He wrote a circular that he called "Important Information Wanted." This circular was addressed to

"Surgeons, Chaplains, Agents of Sanitary and Christian Commissions, Quartermasters, Officers or Soldiers." This circular was printed in hundreds of newspapers and elicited numerous responses. Many of the responses were those telling Whitman the locations of their buried comrades. Not surprisingly, many other responses were from people begging Whitman to find their lost soldiers. Whitman acted quickly when compiling all of the information he was receiving. He wanted to get this information published as quickly as possible because he wanted to get information out to the families. He also wanted to get this information out in order to get soldiers out to the grave sites to attempt to identify the bodies before they were tampered with by grave-robbers. With all of this information, Whitman made recommendations for certain concentrated areas to become national cemeteries for the fallen soldiers. While this compiled list of burial sites did a lot of good in accounting for the number of dead, it also highlighted the somber fact that not all of the dead would be identified.³³

One interesting way the nation as a whole dealt with the massive amount of death was by turning it into a form of art through photography. Photography was barely thirty years old when the Civil War began, and photographers put their skills to good use throughout the war. Many photographers were able to capture the saturnine essence of the war through their photographs. Pictures of deceased soldiers lying about on the battlefields became a normal sight for Americans. These macabre photographs were printed in newspapers and magazines and served as a sobering reminder of the atrocities of the war. Death was inescapable, even for those not immediately involved in the war. After the Civil War, photography helped the nation heal in a sense; soldiers were commemorated in a way that they never had been previously. The photographs helped Americans make sense of the carnage of the Civil

War.³⁴ Civil War families would also have their soldiers photographed in their uniforms before they went off to war as a way of commemorating their services before they ever left home. These pictures were comforting to families; they had something of their soldiers to hold onto after they were gone.³⁵

Interestingly, photographs of dead soldiers became highly popular with the American public. People had a fascination with death, and they were quick to go out to the art galleries that housed photos of deceased soldiers. Mathew Brady was one of the photographers to capitalize on the curiosity of the general public. His photographs shocked and awed audiences, and he became known as the father of photojournalism as a result. He charged high prices for entry into his New York gallery, in which every wall was filled with photos of the deceased. His gallery was packed for weeks; everyone was hoping to get a glimpse of what death looked like. Many possibly had never seen a dead body before, and certainly very few had seen what one looked like after the person died a violent death. These macabre photos attracted many, but disgusted many more. There are reports that some people could not handle the sights that they were subjected to in Brady's gallery and fainted out of shock. Others went to his gallery in an effort to try and see if they could find any of their soldiers amongst the dead in the photographs.³⁶

Letters were another way in which families coped with the hardships of the time. Death was constantly on everyone's minds, and soldiers would write back and forth to their families checking to make sure that everyone and everything was okay. Matters of death and health dominated the letters. John Cotton and his wife Mariah wrote to each other throughout the war, and each letter discussed life, death, and the war; each letter also ended with three

words: "yours till death." They did so because they did not know whether that would be the last letter that they would ever read.³⁷ Helen Kirtland from Connecticut wrote to her sister, Mary Ann Hall from Alabama, throughout the war. This was an interesting case because one sister was living in the Union while the other was living in the Confederacy; the postal service developed what was known as the "Flag of Truce" system in an effort to send mail between the two entities, although a good portion of mail was inevitably lost. In April 1865, Hall's son, Herbert, was killed in battle. Upon hearing the news, Kirtland sent a letter to her sister expressing her condolences. She also talked about how Hall's pastor, Dr. Cushman, was kind to her for writing her such comforting words about her son's death, and that Hall needed to send Dr. Cushman a letter to thank him for caring about her son's death. Men of faith were held in high esteem because of their reputed skills to comfort civilians in such times of grief.³⁸

Not surprisingly, families often turned to God in this time of trial. They needed guidance on how to handle the deaths of their soldier-sons because they did not get that last chance to cope with it through the means of a "good death." Families were comforted by the idea of salvation, and that even death was not truly the end: they would be able to see the fallen again in the afterlife, as long as they were saved. Reverend Horace Bushnell is quoted as saying "There must be reverses and losses, and times of deep concern. There must be tears in the houses, as well as blood in the fields; the fathers and mothers, the wives and the dear children coming into the woe, to fight in hard bewailings."³⁹ While the Civil War was hard on families, northern clergymen were quick to ensure the families of the dead that wartime death was not in vain; God had a plan, and it was to restore the Union. Southern clergymen assured that the loss of lives was to achieve

independence. Blood had to be shed in order for the plan to work. The soldiers would pay the ultimate sacrifice, but they would also get the ultimate reward through eternal afterlife in Heaven. Unsurprisingly, many soldiers were quick to believe in this theology as well. Thomas Hampton, a soldier from Virginia, was devoted to his beliefs. Right before he died in May 1865, he sent a letter to his wife Jestin explaining to her that she should not grieve for him because he would be much better off in the afterlife than he ever was in this life.⁴⁰

It is shocking how so many of the “unknown” men could possibly not even have their cause recognized. These men fought and died for their cause, whatever that might have been, and will never be given proper recognition for it. They will forever remain “unknown.”

Tragically, many families were left to wonder whether their loved ones had passed on. Because so many soldiers' identities were unknown when they died, their families were never notified. Other families knew that their soldiers had died, but were unable to find their bodies because they were thrown in unmarked graves. The family of Reuben Vaughn Kidd wanted to bring his body

back to their Alabama homestead, but they were unable to because his body had been placed in an unmarked grave somewhere on the battlefield of Chickamauga.⁴¹ Many families travelled to the sites of their buried soldiers, but were never able to recover the bodies because they were buried in mass graves. Even if they were able to find the grave in which their loved ones were buried, there was no guarantee that they would find their loved one. There were so many bodies within the graves that people would have had to wade through all of the death to find their soldiers. Plus, after decomposition, it might have been hard to distinguish any one body from the others. Nevertheless, relatives still celebrated their soldiers' lives and held them in high regards as “political martyrs who died in the service of a higher cause.”⁴²

Because there were so many men dying on the battlefields, each corpse could not be taken care of properly. Many bodies had to be buried in mass graves because it would have taken too much effort to dig a plot for each individual. Consequently, they were mishandled; limbs were bent and broken in an effort to get all the bodies to fit into the graves.⁴³ Bodies were moved by all kinds of weapons and tools, such as bayonets, pitchforks, shovels, and rakes. During larger battles like Gettysburg, it sometimes took upward of two weeks to bury the dead. The bodies would be left to rot in the sun, leaving the surrounding area with the stench of death. The bodies left in the rain and the sun would become blackened and bloated, and become homes to all kinds of decomposers.⁴⁴ These corpses were not given the respect they deserved, considering the price they paid for their service. Mass graves were known to have contained hundreds of soldiers that were lined up and shoved in any way their bodies would fit.⁴⁵ There was no ceremony for all of the men placed in these mass graves. Their bodies were dumped, and they were quickly forgotten about. Soldiers

wanted to move on from the dead and keep on focusing on their own survival.

Dog tags were not a standard of the military during the Civil War. Soldiers carried little to no means of identification on their person; this made it difficult to identify the dead. Some soldiers were able to pin pieces of paper with their names and home addresses on their uniforms, and others would brand their knapsacks and belt buckles with their identification in the unfortunate event of their deaths.⁴⁶ John Kennedy, a New York inventor, came up with an idea he called "name discs" that would serve the same function that dog tags do today. He presented his idea to the Secretary of War, Edwin Stanton, but Stanton rejected this idea with no reasoning. After his idea was rejected, manufacturers began to make pins for soldiers, and advertised them in newspapers. However, because most soldiers did not have access to newspapers while they were in battle, they did not know about these pins and thus never wore them.⁴⁷ At least forty percent of all soldiers that died during the Civil War were "unknown."⁴⁸ It is a somber truth about the Civil War that so many soldiers had to be buried in nearby fields rather than familial plots. Many were buried in mass graves with their fallen brethren, and their bodies were never to be identified. Walking through a Civil War cemetery, one notices the sheer number of headstones with the engraved word "unknown." Many of the headstones that read "unknown" also have the insignias of both the Confederate Army and the Union Army. This is interesting to note because there is such a vast number of uncategorized deceased soldiers. Perhaps they were burned to death, or others took their uniforms as extra clothing. Perhaps even a grave-robbler took their uniform as a token from the war. It is shocking how so many of the "unknown" men could possibly not even have their cause recognized. These men fought and died for their cause, whatever that might have

been, and will never be given proper recognition for it. They will forever remain "unknown."

Everyone wanted to die a "good death," but so few were granted this opportunity during the Civil War.

Despite the proliferation of unmarked graves, many bodies were still identified. Soldiers would help identify their fallen comrades and would be tasked with sending word back to the families. Soldiers who died surrounded by pictures of their loved ones offered one of the best means of identification.⁴⁹ Newspapers would print lists of local casualties after major battles, though these lists were obviously incomplete, and sometimes even inaccurate. Some newspapers would acknowledge the fact that they did not have all of the information, so as to not lead the civilians on, while others did not. Some soldiers were reported to have been wounded, when they were actually killed in action, while others were reported to have been killed and later came back home, unharmed. Stories of soldiers returning home after being declared dead gave many people a sense of hope. They did not want to acknowledge that their loved one could truly be dead, and so retained the belief that he was still alive until they received definitive proof. Civilians would gather together to receive the news as to whether any of their family members had perished in battle.⁵⁰ Because there were many accounting errors made by the military, many volunteer workers came in to help with identification. Groups such as the Christian Commission and the Sanitary Commission, a northern group, stepped in to help identify as many soldiers as they

possibly could so that families would not be left to wonder about their loved ones.⁵¹

Depending on the circumstances, some families were contacted about the deaths of their soldiers. Some soldiers were able to write letters to their families before they passed on because they were dying of disease or illness, while others had their friends or superiors agree to write letters to their loved ones in the unfortunate event of their deaths. Tent mates would make pacts to take care of each other postmortem because their relationships were personal; these men were close, and they did not want their comrades to die in battle and be forgotten soon afterward.⁵² Some wealthier families could afford to send home the bodies of their loved ones. The family of one wealthy politician and soldier, Stephen Fowler Hale, paid to have his body transported back to Eutaw, AL after he died in battle outside Richmond in 1862.⁵³ Because it was so expensive to transport bodies across the country, few families were able to afford this luxury of burying their soldiers on their property.

When a family was able to pay to send their soldier's corpse home, the body had to be embalmed. Prior to the Civil War, bodies were rarely embalmed. Families would bury bodies as quickly as possible so as to not have to smell the stench from a rotting corpse. Because most people died at home, this was not a problem. Bodies would be placed in wooden coffins, and they would be buried usually within forty-eight hours of death. However, because many men died away from home and transporting bodies took a large amount of time, embalming had to become a standard practice in order to keep the bodies fresh. With the Civil War came a new kind of embalming fluid that lasted longer than ones that had been previously tried. Dr. Thomas Holmes created an arsenic based fluid that was

injected into the body's arteries. Because there were many men dying in the war, Holmes decided to try to turn a large profit for his embalming method. He gained the right to become the sole embalmer for all Union soldiers from the U.S. government, and he made embalming the regular practice that it is today.⁵⁴

Embalming tents were a common feature of Civil War camps, although very few soldiers were actually embalmed. Only six percent of all soldiers that died during the war had their bodies embalmed. One of the reasons so few men were embalmed is that they had to pay the embalming specialists a fee before they died to ensure that their bodies would be taken care of. Enlisted soldiers had to pay seven dollars while officers had to pay thirteen. This was a hefty price during the Civil War, and many men simply could not afford it. There were much fewer Confederate soldiers being embalmed than Union soldiers because fewer Confederates could afford this fee. This fee was solely for the embalming process; it would cost even more money for them to have their bodies transported back home. Even after paying the fee, there was no guarantee that they would actually be embalmed. Many embalmers were accused of charging unfair prices, and taking money from soldiers without actually giving them their services after they passed. Because there were a large number of complaints against the Union embalmers, General Ulysses S. Grant had to issue a General Order that required all embalmers to be licensed and registered with the military in order to cut down on the extortion within the industry.⁵⁵

Some good did come from the unorganized debacle of taking care of the dead during the Civil War. The business of death changed entirely; national cemeteries emerged around the nation as a way of honoring the lives that were lost during the conflict. Perhaps the most

well-known of all of the national cemeteries is Arlington National Cemetery. Arlington was created in 1864 after vast amounts of men were being killed. The U.S. government set up camp in Virginia on land owned by General Robert E. Lee. Because there were so many men dying, members of the War Department set aside 200 of the 1,100 acres on Lee's land as a cemetery to honor those who gave their lives for their country. Thousands of people were buried in Arlington by the end of the war, and their bodies were given proper respect. Because so many people were buried here by the end of the war, the War Department took ownership of this land from Lee, though it gave the Lee family some compensation. To this day, Arlington National Cemetery is still operational, and it pays respect to men and women who gave their services in all wars since the Civil War. According to the brochure, "laying our Nation's veterans and their eligible family members to rest with dignity and honor, while treating their loved ones with respect and compassion is the cornerstone of Arlington National Cemetery's mission."⁵⁶

There are numerous other ways in which the business of death changed after the Civil War. National monuments were also created all across the nation to honor those that gave their lives to their causes. Monuments helped the United States to develop a "culture of memory." They gave the United States an identity; monuments gave the American people an opportunity to learn about the sordid past of the nation and to grow to become a better society.⁵⁷ The burial of the dead became a legitimate issue that the government tried to fix. Provisions were made to enable the identification of the dead through the usage of dog tags. Next of kin were required to be notified after their family members died in battle, and families were given relief in times of crisis. Hospitals became better equipped to take care of the large numbers of wounded, as

a preemptive measure to keep them from dying.⁵⁸ Bodies were also handled with respect. The business of embalming and relocating bodies boomed during the Civil War, and became more commonplace within American society as a result.

Finally, one of the most important ways in which the Civil War impacted death in American society is how Americans viewed it. Prior to the Civil War, the "good death" was the pinnacle of all of the different ways to die. The idea of the "good death" was so ingrained in American society that many soldiers were upset that they might miss out on their chance to die a "good death" by going off to war. Because so many people were not able to die this kind of death because of the war, Americans had to change their views on death. After all, it would have been hard to argue that dying a noble death on the battlefield for one's country was not the same as dying a "good death." Americans became more open to the idea of dying in ways other than dying a "good death," and they realized that one was not inherently better for the soul than any others. While the traditional death was still seen as the best way to die, Americans became more open and accepting to those who were not fortunate enough to die a "good death."

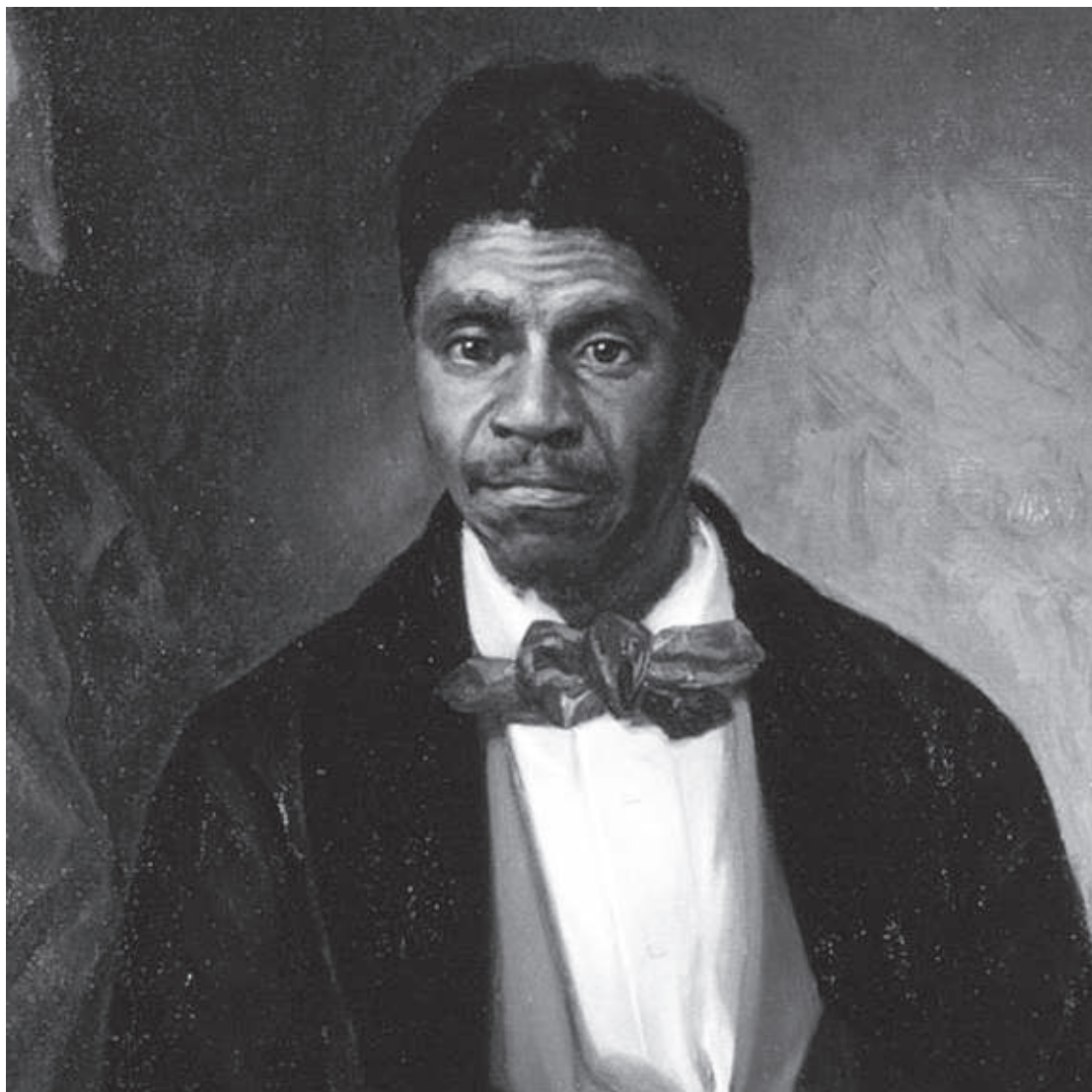
The Civil War cost roughly 750,000 soldiers and civilians their lives. American society at the time was engulfed in death, and citizens became obsessed with it. People were constantly discussing matters of death and dying. People wanted to honor the dead, but in a country shrouded in so much death, this became difficult. Everyone wanted to die a "good death," but so few were granted this opportunity during the Civil War. Union and Confederate soldiers fought and died for their causes, yet many of them lost their identities in the process. Their bodies are located in mass graves all across the country, and headstones reading

"Unknown" were erected in their honor. Their bodies were not properly taken care of and they were not given the respect that they deserved, especially when considering the price they paid for what they believed.

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This portrait of Dred Scott was commissioned by “a group of Negro citizens” and was presented to the Missouri Historical Society in 1882.

(Louis Schultze)

THE DRED SCOTT DECISION'S EFFECT ON SLAVERY WITHIN THE UNION AND THE RISE OF THE NEW REPUBLICAN PARTY

by LaKendrick Richardson

In 1846, Dred Scott, a slave living in Missouri, filed a lawsuit against Irene Emerson, the wife of his deceased master, requesting freedom for himself and his family. After eleven years of fighting, the Supreme Court denied Scott's request. *Dred Scott v. Sandford* was the most important case to come before the Supreme Court between 1820 and 1954. The *Dred Scott* decision affected the nation's position on slavery and slave rights within the Union, divided the United States regionally, and led to the rise of Abraham Lincoln as the head of the Republican Party. What started as a slave's fight for freedom became an event that foreshadowed the dissolution of the Union.

Dred Scott was born a slave around 1799 in Virginia. For three years, Scott lived with Dr. John Emerson at Fort Armstrong in Illinois, a free state. This became the basis of Scott's claim for freedom. In 1836, the army evacuated Fort Armstrong, which forced Dr. Emerson to relocate to Fort Snelling in the Wisconsin Territory, where slavery was prohibited. Despite this, Dr. Emerson was able to keep Scott as a slave because the laws were not enforced. During the two years he spent at Fort Snelling, Scott met and married Harriett Robinson, a slave owned by Major

Lawrence Taliaferro, a justice of the peace. In October 1837, Emerson was transferred to St. Louis and left Scott and Harriet in the Wisconsin territory to be rented out to others, which was a direct violation of the Missouri Compromise.¹

Over the next eight years, Scott did not sue for his freedom, possibly because he did not know how strong a claim he had. In 1843, Emerson died and after a few years of being loaned out as a slave, Scott returned to St. Louis, where he tried to purchase his freedom and was denied. After this, Scott discovered he had a claim for freedom, and then enlisted the help of lawyers. Scott lost his initial case in June 1847 because no one could prove that Irene Emerson owned him. A new trial began in January 1850. Because Scott lived in a free territory, the jury sided with him and awarded him freedom. However, John F.A. Sanford, Irene Emerson's brother, appealed the decision. Sanford acted on his sister's behalf in court after she married and moved to Massachusetts. In 1852, Dred Scott's freedom was repealed when Missouri Supreme Court Chief Justice William Scott overturned nearly three decades of Missouri precedents. Scott continued his fight in federal district court, and the case made its way to the Supreme Court in 1856.²

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A major argument in the Supreme Court case concerned the citizenship of slaves. Without citizenship, slaves did not have any rights, which rendered Dred Scott's argument for freedom meritless. The Supreme Court phase of Dred Scott's case is by far the most important because it took place during a volatile period in United States history. The tension over slavery and its expansion into the Western territories was reaching a boiling point, and Kansas was being bled dry by warring factions and a split government. What had begun in 1846 as an attempt to get Scott and his family their freedom became a potentially monumental decision that carried political, social, and legal significance. Even though Dred Scott lost his Supreme Court case by a vote of 7-2 on March 6, 1857, his family was manumitted by his former owner's son, Henry Blow, less than three months later. The worst part of the *Dred Scott* decision was the outcome which affected the spread of slavery and Chief Justice Roger Taney's protection of Southern interests.³

Chief Justice Taney could have adopted a precedent, specifically *Strader v. Graham*, which could have allowed him to leave the decision up to Missouri, but Taney opted for a harsher proslavery approach. He decided to use *Dred Scott v. Sandford* as a way to get slavery into the Western Territories by negating the Missouri Compromise. Chief Justice Taney went on to argue that black slaves were a special form of property and they did not have the right to sue at the federal level. He stated that they had no rights under the constitution, and they were "beings of an inferior order" who were "altogether unfit to associate with the white race, either in social and political relations." He also argued that the Declaration of Independence seemed to embrace the human family, but it could clearly be disputed that people of the African race were not protected since they did not have a hand in crafting the Declaration.⁴

John McLean, a Democrat turned Republican, was the only justice on Taney's court who opposed slavery. McLean cited *Marie Louise v. Marot* as the basis for his dissenting opinion. *Marie Louise v. Marot* said that slavery was a state issue and that once a slave was moved into a free territory he or she was free and should not be placed back into slavery again. Chief Justice Taney concluded by saying that Scott was not a citizen of Missouri and therefore the Circuit Court had no jurisdiction in the case. Therefore, the judgment in favor of Dred Scott had to be reversed.⁵ Justice Benjamin R. Curtis joined McLean in his dissent, arguing that birth was tied to citizenship, and allowing slavery into the territories also meant allowing laws of a slave society into the territories.⁶

The *Dred Scott* decision was received differently in the Northern and Southern States. In the South, there was a unanimous cry of approval. *The Richmond Enquirer* praised the decision and saw it as an end to the debate on slavery. It proclaimed, "The nation has achieved a triumph, sectionalism has been rebuked, and abolitionism has been staggered and stunned!"⁷ *The Charleston Mercury* expressed shock at the Supreme Court's open support of Southern interests. It celebrated the South's victory, but warned that this victory could have political implications. "The Black Republican party will go into the [election] of 1860, strengthened rather than discredited and weakened by the adverse judgment of the Supreme Court." This line foreshadows the Republicans' use of *Dred Scott* to solidify their position in the North.⁸

In the North, the *Dred Scott* decision drew a split opinion. Many Northern Democrats supported it out of racism, party politics, and business ties. They saw it as a way to maintain the peace within the party and maintain political power in the Union.⁹ *The New York Times* appeared to be

horrified, believing the Supreme Court had “nationalized” slavery. The article argued that the decision would strengthen Northern resolve against slavery.¹⁰ The *Salem Register* and *Zion’s Herald* and *Wesleyan Journal* reflected the Northerners’ growing frustration with the South and the institution of slavery. Northerners had been content with slavery as long as it was confined within its current borders.¹¹ The *Independent*, a Protestant paper, attacked the decision not because of its political implications, but due to the “moral wickedness” displayed by Chief Justice Taney, a Roman Catholic. It blamed the Catholics, who were mostly Democrats, for protecting the wicked institution of slavery.¹²

“The nation has achieved a triumph, sectionalism has been rebuked, and abolitionism has been staggered and stunned!”

The Republican Party gained control of the House of Representatives in 1858 and the Senate in 1860. The Republican Party gathered public support in the North as the Southern Democrats held on to the issue of slavery and slowly lost their power in the Union. The Northerners did not like slavery being thrust upon them and looked toward the Republican Party and newly elected president, Abraham Lincoln, to get their voices heard. On November 6, 1860, Abraham Lincoln was elected president and in the four months it took him to assume office, the Union fractured and plunged into chaos, beginning with the secession of South Carolina on December 20, 1860.¹³

The political effect of *Dred Scott* in the Southern United States was universally supportive, unlike in the North. Northern public opinion was fractured, and some took advantage of this to push their own agendas. Future president Abraham Lincoln used the *Dred Scott* decision in his pursuit of a Senate seat. Lincoln’s eloquent speaking allowed him to emerge as a candidate for the Republicans, the nation’s first serious antislavery party. On June 16, 1858, upon accepting the Republican nomination for a senate seat, Lincoln delivered his “House Divided” speech in Springfield, Illinois. He claimed that the incumbent Stephen Douglas was part of a conspiracy to nationalize slavery and challenged him to debate the place of slavery in the nation and the legality of the *Dred Scott* decision. Lincoln thought that Taney’s ruling on black citizenship was illegal. Even though Lincoln lost the race for the Senate seat, he gained a national political reputation.¹⁴

The *Dred Scott* decision is one of the most important cases in United States history. What started off as a slave seeking freedom for himself and his family, transformed into a national case that argued the place of slavery in the Union, slaves’ rights, and the expansion of slavery into new territories. The *Dred Scott* decision was a critical moment in American history. There were two options, the Southern States could move away from a slave-based economy or fight for their right to own humans as property. Nearly four years later, with tensions high, the South chose the latter and tore the Union apart. What started as a fight over the spread of slavery turned into a war to preserve and strengthen the Union.

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What remains of Daniel Pratt's factory today.

(Spyder_Monkey)

PRATTVILLE'S ROLE IN THE HEART OF THE CONFEDERACY

by Anthony Cognasi

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Several Alabama towns have rightly earned their place in the history books of the Civil War. Montgomery has the pride of being the first capital of the Confederacy. Mobile was a key port and the scene of a giant naval battle on the bay, one immortalized by David Farragut's famous phrase, "Damn the Torpedoes." While these cities were important to the overall Confederate war effort, hundreds of smaller towns across Alabama sent their young men to fight and provided goods to support the armies at the front. One of these towns was Prattville. Prattville not only sent men and homemade goods to the front, but it was also one of the largest manufacturing hubs in Alabama, being the home to the Prattville Manufacturing Company, which produced cotton gins and processed cotton into cloth. Prattville's namesake, Daniel Pratt, invested heavily in the Confederate war effort. Inspired by Pratt, the town's residents worked tirelessly to support the cause. As a result, Prattville gave a disproportionate amount of aid to the Confederate cause. By looking at the history of Prattville, it becomes clear that Prattvillians were guided by the liberal patriotism of Daniel Pratt to give not only their fair share, but well above that given by other Alabama towns of the same size.

The origins of Prattville begin with the birth of Daniel Pratt himself. Born July 20, 1799, Pratt came of age in a large, modest family of New Hampshire Puritans who took their creed seriously. His parents, Edward and Asenath Pratt, "required their children to attend church and prayer meetings and to avoid all vain and trifling conversation" on the Sabbath. They were also forbidden to read novels.¹ Pratt had limited access to education due to his family's limited means. At the age of sixteen, Pratt was apprenticed to a carpenter named Putnam. At the age of twenty, Pratt was released from his apprenticeship due to his employer's bankruptcy. In order to find better employment, Pratt set sail for Savannah, Georgia in 1819.

Upon arriving in Georgia, Daniel Pratt found himself without employment or money. He obtained a loan from the captain of the vessel that had transported him. Quickly, Pratt was able to find work as a carpenter designing and building homes. At the end of a year, he traveled back to New Hampshire where he repaid the kindly captain and settled Putnam's debts. Having taken care of affairs in New England, Pratt returned to Georgia in 1821 and settled in Milledgeville. For ten years, he continued working as a carpenter and architect. In 1831, Pratt moved to Clinton,

Georgia and began working at the cotton gin factory belonging to Samuel Griswold. In the short span of a year, Griswold made Pratt a full partner. During this time, Pratt met and married Esther Ticknor, a New England native who was vacationing in the South. The business partners decided to expand into Alabama, but owing to the dangers of the trip and his old age, Griswold decided that Pratt should head the operation. In 1833 Pratt loaded the material for fifty gins on wagons and set out for Alabama with his wife and two slaves.²

sensing an opportunity to capitalize on Pratt's success, increased the rent. Resentful of such duplicity, Pratt bought two thousand acres of land that was three miles further north on the Autauga Creek for \$21,000 from Joseph May.⁴ Although the area was largely a swamp, the land had a good source of water from the Autauga Creek, as well as a good supply of timber. Moreover, it contained a saw mill, a flour mill, and a house.⁵ From these humble beginnings, Pratt began to create his manufacturing empire and the small village that would bear his name.

“... his object was to build up a village for the dignifying of labor in the South,” and “to train workmen who could...add to the respectability and wealth of his adopted State.”

Initially, Daniel Pratt settled in Elmore's Mill in present-day Elmore County. The gins that Pratt brought with him quickly sold. After a year, Pratt leased some land from John McNeill. The land was located at Montgomery's Hill in Autauga County which was three miles from Prattville's current site. Here, Pratt built a two-story gin shop that was powered by the water from Autauga Creek and housed the machinery, workers, and Pratt's family. Pratt leased this land for five years, during which time, Pratt produced on average two hundred gins annually.³ At the end of five years, Pratt tried to renew his lease with McNeill. However, McNeill,

There is much speculation on why Pratt decided to found his namesake town. By 1838, Pratt was a wealthy man and could have chosen to retire back to New England if he was so inclined. One popular theory among Pratt's contemporaries was his concern about Alabama's lack of industry. Shadrick Mims, the manager of Pratt's cotton gin factory and a family friend, believed “that his object was to build up a village for the dignifying of labor in the South,” and “to train workmen who could...add to the respectability and wealth of his adopted State.”⁶ Pratt was an advocate of southern industry before, during, and after the Civil War and expressed his own views in numerous letters to Alabama newspapers urging wealthy Alabamians to invest in manufacturing. For example, on February 23, 1860, *The Autauga Citizen* printed a letter in which Pratt called on Alabama's legislature to “encourage internal improvements...by diminishing or removing the tax on capital invested in business, and on goods manufactured here.”⁷ Similarly, Pratt's contemporaries believed that he founded the town out of a sense of Christian duty. This is a recurring theme in many of Pratt's letters. For instance, in an 1847 letter to his sister, Pratt writes, “I think I shall accomplish what I have been striving for. That is build up a respectable village that will compare with your Northern in [sic] of good morals and good society.”⁸ This would be

supported by Pratt's patronage of schools, churches, the poor, and the arts. Indeed, Pratt was the model of the New England Puritan who effortlessly mixed business and Christian living.

However, modern historians debate Pratt's seemingly benevolent intentions. Wayne Flynt believes that Pratt "feared the corrupting influence of cities and the rise of class consciousness."⁹ This historian believes that Pratt was concerned about the large number of idle, poor whites who roamed the countryside and generally created trouble. The solution was to build a factory that would give employment to these families. Having given them roots, Pratt would attempt to civilize them by requiring church attendance and providing schools for their children. This is consistent with the Puritan values that Pratt's contemporaries attached to him, but Flynt also notes that Pratt began to use slave labor in the 1850s which showed that profit was Pratt's central concern.¹⁰ In contrast to Flynt, historian Curtis J. Evans more or less accepts that Pratt was simply a benevolent industrialist. Evans writes, "for Pratt...Prattville was to be a reflection of the value system inculcated in his New England boyhood, a place of hard work and religious devotion."¹¹ It is difficult to say which thesis is correct as both theories contain some of the truth. Pratt was concerned about the idle whites that plagued Alabama, and wanted to do something to improve their situation, but profit was never far from the center of his mind.

Whatever Daniel Pratt's motives, his business ventures soon began to flourish. Using the sawmill and fresh timber supply, Pratt built a cotton gin factory. Pratt's workforce was a mixture of native whites, slaves, and northern mechanics.¹² The factory was a success. The following year Pratt expanded the cotton gin factory, and

opened a warehouse in New Orleans to help meet the increasing number of orders. In 1841, Pratt constructed a flour and grist mill which soon began to turn a profit. In 1846, Pratt opened a textile mill for the purpose of the ginning and spinning cotton into thread. Initially, the mill consisted of a hundred spindles, but Pratt soon expanded. Shadrick Mims, one of the managers, estimated the stock's value at \$110,000. Another building was erected which housed one hundred looms.¹³ Pratt also built an iron foundry; sash, door, and blind factory; blacksmith shop; carriage shop; and machine shop in the years leading up to the civil war.¹⁴ Since Prattville lacked access to the railroad, all the raw materials and finished goods were carried by cart to and from Montgomery. His entire life, Pratt pushed endlessly for a railroad to be built through Prattville, but it was never to be. On the eve of the Civil War, Prattville had become the industrial hub of central Alabama, and one of the largest manufacturing towns in the state.

As Pratt's businesses grew, so did the town, which was largely planned and financed by Daniel Pratt. Prattville's layout is different from most southern towns. The basic layout of a southern town of the time was centered on a common area or courthouse and formed a square. Prattville, however, was designed to look like the New England towns of Pratt's childhood, which meant that the town was centered on a main street and was adjacent to a river.¹⁵ Pratt began to construct and lease out buildings to merchants.¹⁶ Despite his Puritan upbringing, Pratt financed several churches in Prattville of various creeds. In 1841, construction was begun on a Baptist church followed two years later by a Methodist church. Pratt would never worship exclusively at one, but would alternate between all of "his" churches. Regardless of the competing church creeds, Pratt enforced a strict zero tolerance policy on alcohol. Pratt's ban on alcohol probably came out of his puritanical upbringing

and a desire to keep his workers sober on the job. All buildings Pratt sold or leased came with a clause that stated, "If liquor were sold on the property, the property would revert to the original title owner." Pratt also spent \$14,000 on a plank road so that his drivers would bypass any saloons on their deliveries. As a result, the people of Prattville become known as "The Temperance People."¹⁷

In the years leading up to the Civil War, Prattville's population swelled as Pratt's businesses expanded. By 1850, Prattville had a population of 448. By 1860, the population had nearly doubled to 871.¹⁸ The town was a mix of southern whites, enslaved blacks, and northern immigrants. It boasted a school, daycare, a variety of stores, and Pratt's numerous factories, of course. Pratt's enterprises employed most of the residents: 80 hands at the cotton gin factory; 160 hands at the textile mill; 4 hands at the saw mill; 2 to 4 hands at the flour mill; 8 to 10 hands at the foundry, blacksmith, and machine shops; and 20 carpenters.¹⁹ In comparison with its agrarian counterparts in the state, Prattville was a mecca of industry. By 1860, the gin factory was producing fifteen hundred gins annually.²⁰ The revenue for 1857 from all of Pratt's businesses amounted to \$519,169.²¹ By the late 1850s, Daniel Pratt had become a very wealthy and well-respected citizen in his adopted state. Prattville, through the efforts of its founder, had transformed from a swamp with a few buildings to a prosperous manufacturing village. However, events were taking shape around the nation that would soon test the industrialist and his small town. Alabama would soon take drastic steps in order to protect itself from perceived northern tyranny, and Prattville would be swept up in the sectional conflict that culminated in the Civil War.

In the late 1850s, Prattville, as well as much of the South, was gripped with anti-abolitionist and anti-northern

fervor. This wave of xenophobia was intensified after John Brown's 1859 raid on the federal arsenal at Harper's Ferry, Virginia. Brown was a radical abolitionist who had taken part in "Bloody Kansas," the small civil war that occurred in Kansas during the 1850s. Brown and his small band of militants hoped to secure arms from the arsenal and distribute them among the slave population, thereby sparking a servile insurrection. His plan ultimately failed, but the raid caused a wave of panic throughout the South. On November 24, 1859, *The Autauga Citizen*, which was the only paper in Autauga County at that time and headquartered in Prattville, ran an article that called for the raising of a volunteer regiment to defend against attacks like the one "recently made upon the unsuspecting citizens at Harper's Ferry."²² This was the first step towards persecuting abolitionism.

Soon, a witch-hunt ensued for the purpose of rooting out supposed abolitionist spies. On December 1, *The Autauga Citizen* reported that a strange man from the North had been seen wandering the county, claiming to be a bookseller. Accused of being an abolitionist agent spreading seditious material, he was "requested to leave 'immediately, if not sooner.'" The article ended by asking Prattvillians "to arrest all suspicious individuals."²³ On December 10, a meeting was held to decide whether or not Luther Cleveland, a mill wright employed by Pratt, was an abolitionist. The meeting found Cleveland guilty, and compelled him to leave Prattville.²⁴ Finally, in early December Prattville established a "Vigilance Committee" for the purpose of monitoring and expelling anyone suspected of being an abolitionist.²⁵ The long term effects of this purge were that the factory and mill lost many skilled mechanics that were never replaced. This would hurt the output of materials that Prattville would later contribute to the Confederate cause and its recovery after the war. Lastly,



Daniel Pratt around the time of the Civil War.

(Alabama Department of Archives and History, Montgomery, Alabama)

it is unknown what part Pratt played in this or why he did not try to stop the persecution of his fellow Yankees. Maybe Pratt had supported these happenings or perhaps Pratt acceded to them in order to protect his business interests in the region. Pratt also owned slaves and supported the institution. Once again, it is impossible to accurately guess Pratt's motives for his actions.

The 1860 presidential election proved to be turning point for the nation. It was a four-way race between the Republican Abraham Lincoln, the Northern Democrat Stephen Douglas, the Southern Democrat John Breckenridge, and the Constitutional Unionist John Bell. The citizens of Prattville agreed with Alabama senator Benjamin Fitzpatrick's sentiments. In a letter to the *Citizen*, Fitzpatrick declared that "the rights of the South should...be maintained in the Union" but could be "dissolved...upon some great practical question."²⁶ That question, of course,

was slavery. Pratt, and many other prominent Autaugans, felt that the election of Breckenridge would be the surest way of protecting that right while maintaining the integrity of the United States. Breckenridge would go on to win Autauga County receiving 189 votes out of the 290 votes cast in Prattville.²⁷ However, the four-way split allowed Abraham Lincoln to win the election. Lincoln was opposed the spread of slavery, which caused Alabamians to see him as a threat to their peculiar institution. With the election of Lincoln, Alabama had reached a crisis point. The question of the day was whether Alabama should secede from the Union. How would the Yankee Pratt and his New England-style village respond to this question?

On November 24, a public meeting was held in Prattville to elect delegates for the state's secession convention. Although Pratt was against secession, the general mood in the town was for it. The meeting quickly

developed into two camps. One consisted of cooperationists led by Bolling Hall, a local lawyer, who wished to leave the Union in bloc with other southern states. The other camp called for immediate secession and backed Dr. George Rives, a local physician. The meeting of six hundred soon became riotous and broke up.²⁸ In the end, the immediate secessionists elected George Rives to the convention.²⁹ On January 11, 1860, a majority of the elected representatives of Alabama, including Rives, gathered in Montgomery and voted for secession.³⁰ Although Rives was elected to the secession convention, the cooperationists had some news to rejoice over. Daniel Pratt, a cooperationist who opposed secession, was elected to serve in the state legislature in an overwhelming victory.³¹ During his two years in the state legislature, Pratt served on the Manufactures Committee and pushed hard for Alabama to increase its manufacturing capabilities. Although opposed to secession, the New England native and his small New England village now found themselves committed to the Confederate cause.

Prattville's first contribution to the war was the raising of a company of cavalry. Samuel Oliver began recruiting in April 1861. Prattville exhibited a great zeal for the coming conflict, and it took only a few days to find and equip recruits. Daniel Pratt spent \$17,000 of his own money to furnish horses and arms to those too poor to do it themselves.³² In addition to this monetary gift, Pratt also donated cloth that was sewn into uniforms "made of black broadcloth, trimmed with gold braid. No other company in the State had a uniform so handsome."³³ On April 27, the company, calling themselves the Prattville Dragoons, paraded through the town to the Prattville Academy where they were presented with a Confederate flag by Miss Abbie Holt, a prominent local woman.³⁴ On the same day, they departed for Pensacola, Florida to join the army forming under General Braxton Bragg. The Dragoons numbered a

hundred men, plus two cooks, and were commanded by Jessie Cox. A story by *The Pensacola Observer* and reprinted in *The Autauga Citizen* notes that the Dragoons "have been doing good service for over two months," and that "their gentlemanly appearance and martial bearing have caused them to be objects of great attraction."³⁵ Wilbur Mims, the son of Shadrick Mims and a sergeant in the Dragoons, wrote that in Pensacola the Dragoons got their first taste of life in the army and realized "that patriotism and privation are inseparable companions."³⁶ While the Dragoons drilled in the art of war and became accustomed to camp life, events were taking place in Tennessee that would soon draw the Dragoons into their first conflict.

In early 1862, Union forces under generals Ulysses Grant and Henry Halleck achieved great success in Tennessee. After capturing Forts Henry and Donnellson, Union forces took Nashville. Confederate forces under Albert Sydney Johnston withdrew to Corinth, Mississippi to reorganize and plan for a counteroffensive. In February, the Dragoons received orders to join Johnston's army at Corinth. The hard journey and drastic change of weather caused many Dragoons to become ill and "when the roll was called many could not answer to their names."³⁷ The remaining Dragoons soon got their first taste of combat. A scouting party under Captain Cox was surprised by a force of a hundred Union cavalry. The Yankees were armed with Spencer rifles while the Dragoons, having not been formally issued their weapons, had only sabers and Colt pistols. The Dragoons, after a brief, lopsided fight, retreated with one casualty.³⁸ This first engagement was an inglorious one but the Dragoons would shortly be given a chance to redeem themselves at what came to be known as the Battle of Shiloh.

Following the Dragoons' skirmish, Johnston began his counter-offensive. Union forces under Grant were camped at Pittsburg Landing, Tennessee, twenty miles north of Corinth. Grant was overconfident due to the lack of Confederate resistance to his southward march, and he uncharacteristically let his guard down. As a result, the Confederate army achieved complete surprise on April 6. Union forces were routed on the first day and were only saved by Grant's quick decision making and force of personality. By the end of the day, Union defenses stabilized. Unfortunately for the Confederates, Johnston had been shot and killed, and the Union Army was reinforced by General Buell's forces the following day. With their commander dead and Union forces strengthening, the Confederates were compelled to retreat back to Corinth. The Dragoons served as couriers in the battle. As Mims recalls, "The duties of the company carried them to every part of the battlefield and many acts of gallantry were accorded by the proper authorities."³⁹ Following their defeat, the Confederate army retreated back to Corinth then to Tupelo, Mississippi. At Tupelo, the Dragoons were reorganized as company H and incorporated into the Third Alabama Cavalry Regiment. During this period, many of the Dragoons either died or were discharged due to bad health. In addition to these losses, several officers, including Captain Cox, resigned from the Dragoons to accept commissions as infantry officers.⁴⁰ Thus, the Dragoons were greatly diminished.

The next major campaign for the Dragoons occurred during the Kentucky campaign that culminated in the Battle of Perryville on October 8, 1862. The campaign was undertaken by General Bragg, who had taken command of the Army of Mississippi after Shiloh, in order to assist General Edmund Kirby Smith in taking Kentucky from Union control. Although a slave state, Kentucky had tactfully decided not to join the Confederacy. Smith and

Bragg hoped that by invading Kentucky, it would join the Confederate cause or in any case divert Union attention from Tennessee. Union forces, under General Buell, intercepted the combined Confederate forces at Perryville, Kentucky. The battle was a tactical victory for the Confederates, but Bragg and Smith would be forced to abandon Kentucky forever. Of the campaign, Mims records, "The Prattville Dragoons were actively engaged in many capacities meeting with no casualties...though our duties were arduous."⁴¹ However, Mims inexplicably downplayed the extent of the Dragoons' involvement and courageousness in the campaign. The commanding officer of the cavalry, General Joseph Wheeler, offered a glowing testimony of the First and Third Alabama Cavalry in his after action report:

In closing this report I cannot speak in too great of praise of the gallantry of the officers and men of the First and Third Alabama, who were always ready to meet the enemy at any moment, performed all duties assigned to them, and endured all hardships and privations without a murmur or complaint. The confidence I naturally placed in such noble officers and men caused me to call on them perhaps too frequently for posts of danger and hardship, yet never did they intimate that their details were more frequent than other commands, but with the greatest cheerfulness right bravely performed them their double task thus imposed simply because their commander placed in them unshaken and implicit trust and confidence. To the brave officers and men of these regiments...I tender my warmest thanks.⁴²

Although this passage does not refer directly to the Dragoons, only to the regiment that the Dragoons belonged to, it still stands that many of the praises that Wheeler gives to the regiment rightly belong to the Dragoons as well. This

testimony to the fighting prowess and dedication to duty of the Third Alabama applies to all the units that served in it, including the Dragoons.

The Dragoons' last major action was the Atlanta Campaign in the summer of 1864. The Confederate cavalry was again commanded by General Joseph Wheeler and was tasked with screening Joe Johnston's Confederate forces as they retreated back to Atlanta. The Union commander, William Sherman, was relentless in driving the Confederates back. Numerous cavalry raids and counter raids occurred as a result. Mims describes the siege as a "tedious experience" and relished when "the opportunity came to mount and resume active service."⁴³ That opportunity came with the Union cavalry raids that occurred in August. The Dragoons "entered into this race like schoolboys in a game of baseball."⁴⁴ Wheeler successfully countered the Union cavalry and began his own strike into Union held territory. During this attack, the Third Alabama destroyed two trains full of Union supplies around the town of Calhoun, Georgia.⁴⁵ The raid proved to be a mistake as it left Johnston's replacement, John Bell Hood, without information about Sherman's movements. As a result, Hood was outmaneuvered, defeated, and forced to abandon Atlanta. For the rest of the war, the Dragoons skirmished ineffectively with Sherman's forces as he marched through Georgia and the Carolinas. On April 18, Johnston formally surrendered the Army of Tennessee to Sherman. The Dragoons were placed in an internment camp until they received their pardons. They bade farewell to their "brave, tender, loving, darling Joe Wheeler" and began the six-hundred-mile trip back to Prattville and home.⁴⁶

In addition to the Dragoons, Prattville contributed troops to other companies that were raised in Autauga

County. One of these, the Autauga Rifles, was organized in April-May 1861 and served in General Robert E. Lee's Army of Northern Virginia. The Rifles numbered around a hundred men, and the Company participated in every major battle from Seven Pines to the surrender of Lee at Appomattox.⁴⁷ A third company to be raised in Autauga was the Old Autauga Guard which also formed in April-May 1861.⁴⁸ Prattville also raised two reserve regiments which never saw combat. The Prattville Cadets was formed by the boys at the Prattville Male and Female Academy in September 1861. *The Autauga Citizen* rationalized arming young boys with the proclamation, "The existing conditions of the country demands, WITH EMPHASIS, that boys be taught military tactics both by theory and practice."⁴⁹ The second was the Prattville Grays, who paraded with the Dragoons on April 27, 1861.⁵⁰ The fact that the Grays were never called into service, even late in the war when the Confederacy was desperately short of manpower, suggests that the company was made up of either men much too old to fight in war or men who worked in Pratt's factories and could not be spared to go and fight. On March 20, 1862, *The Autauga Citizen* reported that 1,473 men from Autauga had enlisted in the Confederate army with 141 coming from Prattville.⁵¹

In addition to providing soldiers, Prattville was also the home to two aid societies that provided material support to soldiers and their families. The Prattville Ladies Aid Society was formed with Esther Pratt, Daniel Pratt's wife, naturally serving as its president. Historian Malcom McMillan notes that the Prattville Ladies Aid Society was "among the more active of the small town societies."⁵² The Society would go on to produce a tremendous amount of clothes and other goods for the beleaguered Confederate army. One of the first tasks of the society was to produce uniforms for the Prattville Grays and the Dragoons along

with a Confederate flag to take into battle. By October 3, 1861, the Prattville Ladies Aid Society had produced 1008 sand bags, 368 pairs of pants, 122 shirts, 110 Zouave caps, 108 havelocks, 19 haversacks, 9 tents, 98 coats, and 78 pairs of socks.⁵³ The life of Abbie Holt Smith is an example of the dedication to the cause that the Society exhibited. Smith recorded her wartime experiences in a diary. She spent the majority of her days sewing clothes for soldiers. For three consecutive days in February 1862, Smith sewed clothes which left her feeling exhausted.⁵⁴ However, the ladies of the society were rewarded with letters from soldiers thanking them for their contributions. One soldier wrote "by the help of the good Ladies of the South we have been clothed very well," while another soldier expressed his thanks by writing, "I hope I may wear more of your make of shirts."⁵⁵ The majority of ladies aid societies in the South disappeared after 1862 due to low morale or lack of supplies or money, but the one in Prattville lasted through 1863.⁵⁶

The patriotism of the citizens of Prattville manifested itself in their liberal giving of aid to their nation.

The women of Prattville were not the only ones contributing to the war effort as the men folk also gave money or supplies individually and collectively. In February 1862, the Prattville Soldiers Aid Society "was formed to solicit subscriptions to support the families of confederate soldiers," and quickly collected \$10,000 in donations.⁵⁷ In December of that year, Thomas P. Frith donated two hundred bushels of corn to destitute families of Confederate soldiers. Frith lamented, "I wish it were in my power to supply

them with more" but a drought the previous summer had lowered his crop yield.⁵⁸ In April-May 1863, a committee was formed to travel the county and buy any excess food or supplies from the locals. Those that refused to sell were reported to government authorities.⁵⁹ Above all, Daniel Pratt gave large amounts of money to the war effort. In addition to outfitting the Dragoons, Pratt also gave \$500 to help support the families of Autauga soldiers at the front.⁶⁰ Pratt also purchased thousands of dollars of Confederate war bonds in order to help buoy the crumbling Confederate economy. Taken all together, the contributions that the people of Prattville made as private citizens is impressive. The patriotism of the citizens of Prattville manifested itself in their liberal giving of aid to their nation. It was only the hardship and scarcity of resources that appeared later in the war that put a stop to the outpouring of aid from Prattville.

The war proved to be a curse for Daniel Pratt's gin business. The years leading up to the war were a time of economic trouble and uncertainty for Pratt. In a letter written in 1856 to Elisha Griswold, Pratt comments, "our business was poor last year and is not very good so far this year...My impression is that the gin business is overdone."⁶¹ While Pratt's gin business suffered in the years leading up to the war, it would collapse with secession. Secession and the threat of war caused a panic among planters which resulted in fewer orders for gins and more defaulting on debts. Shadrick Mims, the manager of Pratt's gin factory, wrote in a letter to one of his agents in the field, "The war excitement is very high with us. Business has almost come to a standstill."⁶² To compound the issue, many of Pratt's agents and workers quit and joined the Confederate army. Mims wrote several frantic letters to agents imploring them to continue in their work. For example, Mims begged an agent to stay by writing in a letter, "business is obliged to go on to sustain us in this emergency and somebody has

to stay home and attend to it.”⁶³ Lastly, Lincoln imposed a blockade on southern ports in April 1861 which made it nearly impossible for Pratt to secure the raw materials he needed. Mims explained in a letter that gin production slowed due to the lack of iron and, “we cannot get them anywhere else except at New York and the state of affairs between our two sections is such now that we cannot get them.”⁶⁴ Economic panic, lack of manpower, and scarcity of materials led Pratt and Mims to decide to close down the gin factory for the duration of the war, although it would still act in a limited capacity producing the machinery needed for Pratt’s other businesses.

While Pratt’s gin business suffered as a result of the war, the creation of the Confederate army created a huge demand for cloth. This huge demand meant that Pratt’s textile mill and wool factory remained extremely busy throughout the war. Shadrick Mims would later recall that “during the war the profits were fabulous.”⁶⁵ Historian Curtis Evans theorizes that “it is likely that Pratt did make larger profits in 1861 and 1862,” but profits decreased later in the war due to stricter government control and the deterioration of Pratt’s machinery.⁶⁶ However, the profits were large enough for Pratt to expand his business to include a large bobbin factory. Pratt began in January 1863 by purchasing the necessary equipment for \$10,860.22. The factory was completed by 1864 and Pratt produced 93,000 bobbins, spools, cones, and quills by the end of the war.⁶⁷ The cloth would then be transported to other factories where it would be used to create uniforms for the Confederate soldiers. Pratt was able to produce not only enough cloth and wool to meet his government contracts, but was also able to set aside some product in order to barter or sell to the civilian population.⁶⁸ Prattville’s industry is what truly sets it apart from other southern towns in terms of its contributions to the war effort. Selma was another industrial town, but it

was more or less created by the Confederate government to provide materials. Prattville was a natural town that gave willingly to the Confederate cause. While Selma played an important role in providing arms to the army, Prattville played a less glamorous but equally as vital role in providing cloth which was made into uniforms and other basic supplies that soldiers need to survive on long, arduous campaigns. Northern Alabama was home to small towns that mined and refined iron ore for the war effort, but Prattville contributed finished products which required greater skill and more elaborate machinery. Comparatively, Prattville was of equal, if not greater, importance to these other industrial centers.

However, it would be going too far to assume that Daniel Pratt was supporting the Confederate purely out of a sense of patriotism. The view that Pratt was a great southern patriot was held by many of Pratt’s contemporaries. Shadrick Mims lauded Pratt saying that “his patriotism was of the purest kind,” and, “he probably gave more of his means to help the Confederacy than any other man in Alabama.”⁶⁹ S.F.H. Tarrant, a contemporary of Pratt who later wrote a biography of him, mused “what a vast debt the state of Alabama owes to Daniel Pratt.”⁷⁰ Pratt’s nephew, Merrill E. Pratt, joked that “if Uncle Pratt was 10 years younger I believe he would” enlist in the Confederate army.⁷¹ Merrill would go on to claim to friend in a letter, “we do not expect nor do wish to make any money so as long as the war continues.”⁷² This view is consistent with the views that Pratt expressed before the war on slavery and southern rights. However, first and foremost Pratt was a pragmatic business man. Historian Curtis Evans examined the business dealings that Pratt conducted with the Alabama and Confederate governments as well as Pratt’s numerous claims of mistreatment by these governments to conclude, “Pratt surely hoped to mix patriotism with profit. He wanted

the Confederacy and his business to flourish." For example, the first Conscription Act passed by the Confederate government in April 1862 made no exemptions for industrial workers. As a result, Pratt's labor force plunged. Eventually, Pratt was able to secure exemptions for his workers. In addition to his labor worries, Pratt was forced to accept increasingly worthless war bonds in exchange for his manufactured cloth as the war dragged on.⁷³ Just like Pratt's motives for founding Prattville, Pratt's motives for supporting the Confederacy were twofold: to improve the South at a profit.

While Selma played an important role in providing arms to the army, Prattville played a less glamorous but equally as vital role in providing cloth which was made into uniforms and other basic supplies that soldiers need to survive on long, arduous campaigns.

Lee's surrender at Appomattox and the capitulation of the Confederacy caused economic ruin in the south. Daniel Pratt had invested heavily in Confederate war bonds. In addition, the Confederate government began to pay manufacturers, including Pratt, in war bonds

as the war dragged on and the southern economy began to deteriorate. With the collapse of the Confederacy, Pratt's bonds, which amounted to \$260,000, were now worthless.⁷⁴ Mims wrote, "the gin shop exceeded a half a million dollars in outstanding claims."⁷⁵ The constant pace of war production coupled with a lack of repairs meant that most of Pratt's machines had deteriorated almost past the point of usability. In addition to Pratt's financial woes, the town of Prattville now faced an economic crisis of its own. During the war, the citizens of Prattville were encouraged to exchange their Federal dollars for Confederate currency, which was now worthless. In short, Pratt and Prattville had reached a critical point in their paths. Fortunately, Prattville had been spared destruction by Wilson's raiders, a powerful Union cavalry force that destroyed much of central Alabama's industry. And Pratt still had plenty of personal drive. With the close of the war, the town began to regain the lost ground.

Daniel Pratt stabilized his business through three main activities. First, he began to settle all of the debts that he accumulated during the war. Pratt maintained a large network of business ventures in the north and south and by calling in all of his debts that he held from this vast network, Pratt was able to pay off any of his own lingering debts. With his debts paid off, Pratt refitted his factories with new machinery. As mentioned before, the constant pace of war production and the scarcity of materials needed to repair the machines had left them near ruin. In the summer of 1866, Pratt began purchasing new machines and refitting his factories.⁷⁶ Writing in 1877, Shadrick Mims noted, "since the war the entire mill has been filled with new machinery of the latest and most improved patterns" and "a good deal of expense has gone to in wheels and fixtures."⁷⁷ With the new machinery, the factories and mills at Prattville produced more than ever before. Lastly,

Whatever the future of the mill and factory, the industry and patriotism of the townspeople that worked in them has cemented Prattville as a vital part of the history of the short lived Confederate States of America.

Curtis Evans contends that "Pratt responded to hard times by holding wages down."⁷⁸ On May 10, 1866, *The Autauga Citizen* ran a letter by Daniel Pratt that denounced the ten-hour, five-day work week and worker wage increases.⁷⁹ Once again, Pratt the pragmatic businessman emerged.

In addition to suppressing wages, Pratt also employed a large number of recently freed slaves, who would typically work for less than their white counterparts. As Curtis Evans points out, "reflecting this low wage increase, a majority of the gin factory employees in the 1870s were African Americans."⁸⁰ Historian Harold Wilson concurs, "Daniel Pratt, like many manufacturers, kept skilled former slaves at work in his shops."⁸¹ The fact that Pratt kept so many former slaves as employees highlights two concerns of his. The first was his need to pay his employees as little as possible in order to ensure that his business did not go bankrupt. The second was his need for skilled labor. Many of Pratt's northern mechanics left for the north before the war began because of conflicting loyalties and persecution. These former slaves were assistants to those mechanics and had gained an understanding of how to work the machines employed in the factory and mill. By using former slaves, Pratt was able to address both concerns.

Thanks to Daniel Pratt's business decisions, or maybe despite them, Prattville was able to recover at a much faster pace than other Alabama towns in the years

after the Civil War. Evans writes, "within a few years, both [Prattville's] gin and textile factories had recovered much of the ground lost during the war, and Prattvillians were again successfully engaging in profitable economic activities."⁸² While wages and standards of living were lower than they had been on the eve of the war, Prattvillians were still able to find steady work in Pratt's factories which allowed them to subsist or supplement their meager incomes. Some money is better than no money at all. In addition to Pratt's recovery, other businesses in the town rebounded as well. In January 1866, the Prattville Sash, Door, and Blind Factory reopened under the management of F.E. Smith, a former employee of Pratt.⁸³ The Indian Hills textile factory and a carriage, buggy, and wagon shop also opened in Prattville shortly after the war.⁸⁴ From 1860 to 1870, Prattville had increased its number of factory and shop hands from 241 to 332 in 1870 and could also claim fifty-six merchants and professionals.⁸⁵ By 1870, Prattville's population had increased to 1,240.⁸⁶ Other signs that Prattville had recovered economically were the founding of the all-male academy, the founding of an orphanage, and the ordering of \$800 worth of bibles by the Prattville Bible Society.⁸⁷ The recovery of Pratt's businesses, the introduction of new businesses, and the philanthropic efforts of its citizens shows that Prattville had well recovered from the economic turmoil caused by the war. Prattville's relative prosperity was probably the main factor in the decision to move the county seat of Autauga from Kingston to Prattville in 1868.

The mid-1870s witnessed two events that greatly affected Prattvillians and Alabamians in general. The first was the end of Reconstruction in Alabama, which was achieved by the Democrat party's takeover of Alabama's legislative and executive branches in 1874. The other was the death of Daniel Pratt a year earlier on May 13. The industrialist had long suffered from neuralgia. Shadrick Mims wrote, "his friends thought that he gave himself unnecessary worry about his business," thereby "exhausting his physical powers."⁸⁸ The years after the Civil War certainly taxed Pratt. The strain of repairing his businesses in Prattville along with his new iron smelting adventure in the present-day Birmingham area would have been hard for a much younger man. When Pratt died, Prattville went into mourning. All businesses closed and factory production stopped for at least two days. On May 15, 1873, *The Autauga Citizen* read, "universal sorrow...hangs over our town like some dire pall of evil."⁸⁹ Pratt's gin and textile factories would pass on to his nephew Merrill Pratt, while his iron furnaces would pass to his son-in-law Henry DeBardeleben.

Prattville would continue to grow without its founder. Merrill Pratt continued to operate the factory until he sold it in 1899. From then on, it was known as the Continental Eagle Gin Company. The factory continued to operate in some capacity until 2009 when Continental Eagle moved all production overseas. The mill and factory complex now stands like a ruined castle above downtown Prattville. Vines crawl up its ancient walls and creep in its broken windows and crumbling chimneys. Its fate is uncertain since the Historic Prattville Redevelopment Authority bought the factory in 2012 with plans of converting it into a residential complex.⁹⁰ Whatever the future of the mill and factory, the industry and patriotism of the townspeople that worked in them has cemented Prattville as a vital part of the history of the short lived Confederate States of America.

NOTES

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Dr. Qiang Zhai.

(Frank Williams)

A CONVERSATION WITH DR. QIANG ZHAI

by Tori Soltau

Tori Soltau is a junior majoring in history with a minor in art history. She has attended AUM since fall 2015, and is a Writing Across the Curriculum Intern. She plans to go on to graduate school and to enter either the field of history education, public history, or law. This is her first year serving on the editorial board.

Dr. Qiang Zhai has been a professor of history at AUM since 1991. He attended Nanjing University from 1978 to 1984, where he graduated with a B.A. and an M.A. in history. He went on to earn a Ph.D. from Ohio University in 1991. He has published several books, including *China and the Vietnam Wars, 1950-1975* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000) and *The Dragon, the Lion, and the Eagle: Chinese-British-American Relations, 1949-1958* (Kent State University Press, 1994). Dr. Zhai was also recognized as one of AUM's Distinguished Research Professors in 1997. He recently sat down with history major Tori Soltau to discuss his upbringing in China as well as his experience in and perspective on the study of history.

To begin with, could you tell me a little bit about your childhood, your experience growing up, and your early education?

I was born in China, in the city of Nanjing. Nanjing used to be the capital of China before the communist takeover in 1949. It's a city with a lot of history. In the past, six imperial dynasties used that city as the capital. So there are many historical monuments, imperial palaces, tombs, and so on. It's a city rich in history, both in ancient history and in contemporary history. I was born in that city in 1958

and grew up through the radical years of Mao Zedong, who created Communist China in 1949. I basically grew up in his shadow. 1958 was the year that Mao launched the "Great Leap Forward." "Getting strong" was the catchword at the time. So my parents gave me my first name by borrowing that catchword: "Strong." My first name, Qiang, in Chinese means "strong." It was kind of fashionable at the time, politically correct. That's communist jargon – we are to build the country up to be strong. But we know now that the Great Leap Forward was actually a disaster, and Mao's utopian dream later came crashing to the ground, resulting in a big famine in China. It was mismanagement of the economy, and wishful thinking about what man can do so long as he had a will. But Mao didn't follow scientific rules, so to speak.

Therefore, I grew up in a kind of politically charged atmosphere with a strong communist influence. My education was also shaped in a very narrow context. Mostly, I received communist education, from primary school to middle school and high school. In other words, I was taught that communism had saved China from imperialism and that communism would bring the Chinese people into a better world. At first, I grew up believing that Mao was 100% correct. He's our leader. He's our liberator. And he's

taking us to a good place. So that's my childhood, my pre-college experience – I grew up in a very twisted, skewed setting.

Did your upbringing and experience growing up in Communist China affect your decision to come to the United States?

Yes. Mao died in 1976, and his successor as the next Chinese leader was Deng Xiaoping, who was also a communist. But he was more pragmatic – more flexible – knowing that Mao's approach was leading nowhere – a dead end street. He knew we had to learn the capitalist way of doing economics. Mao's way of socialist central planning – the communist way of doing economics – was a disaster, not improving people's lives, so to speak. Deng Xiaoping wanted to learn from the West. He was not abandoning communism; he believed that he could save communism actually. He still stuck to communist one party rule, but he believed that in economics you could use the Western method of free market and capitalist management.

Once he took over in the late 1970s, he began to open up China to the West, including allowing students to study abroad, particularly to study in the West. He wanted them to learn in the West and bring back Western methods and knowledge to improve the Chinese economy. As a result, I became a beneficiary of his open door policy. Under Mao there was no opportunity, no opening, and no likelihood for students to go to the West. You could go to the Communist Bloc countries – the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe – in the 1950s but not to the West. Deng opened the door. I completed my undergraduate degree at the University of Nanjing from 1978 to 1982. At that time we began to have foreign teachers in China. I learned English from an

Australian teacher, for instance, and I became exposed to the outside world.

I wanted to learn more about the world, and I wanted to study in the U.S. for a number of reasons. First, the U.S. was the most advanced industrial nation and military power in the world. I was really curious; how did that happen? The U.S. had a very short history, I mean in comparison with China, India, and other, older civilizations which had thousands of years of history. The U.S. was just several hundred years old. So, what made the U.S. so successful in such a short period of time? This remained a mystery to me, so I wanted to learn. Also, U.S. universities gave fellowships, teaching assistant positions, and things like that to assist students – including foreign students – to work on advanced degrees. So both intellectually and practically, the U.S. was very attractive. After I finished my bachelor's degree and master's degree in China, I came to the U.S. for a Ph.D. degree. In 1985 I came to Ohio University. Under the guidance of Professor John Lewis Gaddis, I completed a dissertation on U.S.-Chinese relations during the Cold War. I wanted to investigate how the U.S. and China interacted in the 1950s and 1960s, in the Cold War years.

What advice would you give to students who wish to study abroad in China? Are there certain customs they should be aware of, things like that?

Yes, certainly. First, if you read the Chinese official media, government publications, you might encounter criticism of U.S. foreign policy. Like they always say, "the U.S. tends to teach people a lesson, telling people 'do this, do that, U.S. is always right.' The U.S. likes to poke its nose into other people's business, rearranging other people's

furniture, changing other people's leaders." The U.S. certainly criticized China's human rights record all the time, and wanted the Chinese government to be more sensitive to people's demands and sentiments, not always imposing party will on people's activities. So the Chinese government is very resentful of U.S. criticism of their human rights record.

On the official level, you will see tensions and disputes. But, if you engage ordinary Chinese students on campus, you will find them very helpful and friendly – eager to talk with Americans, eager to learn. In China, you find people eager to practice English with you. There is widespread interest in learning English and coming to America to study. In fact, from my experience there's certainly a huge gap between the level of interest in America among the Chinese, and the level of interest Americans have in China.

I'm pretty sure most people in China know that the American president [in 2016] [was] Obama. If you just ask people randomly on the street, "Who is the American president?" Most likely you will get the correct answer. But if you ask the average American on the street here, "Who is the Chinese leader nowadays?" I'm pretty sure nine out of ten people would have no clue. I certainly encourage more Americans to go to China to study, to learn Chinese culture, and to study the Chinese language. And we are lucky to have a Confucius Institute on campus here, where they offer Chinese lessons. I hope more American students can take advantage of that opportunity, to learn some Chinese vocabulary, expressions, speaking ability, then go to China to communicate, to experience China firsthand.

You say that Chinese students are a little more aware of American culture, a little more eager to practice

and learn English, and generally would know more about the American government than American students would know about the Chinese government and Chinese customs.

Are there other differences?

From my own experience, as well as my observation of American and Chinese students, there are certainly many other differences. For instance, in China, students are always taught to be respectful of authority. So in the classroom, students are just asked to learn from teachers, get knowledge, and be informed. They are not encouraged to challenge the teacher, to disagree, or to argue. Chinese students are very good at taking notes and memorizing. They are very good in math, they develop a good English vocabulary, and they spend a lot of time in the library. They are good at learning. But they are not really prepared in terms of communicating orally, arguing, and debating. They are not encouraged to articulate their thoughts and to disagree with people. They tend to be timid and shy. They are good at completing individual work, but they don't do well in a team setting. They are good in reading, as I said – they are kind of bookish. They are not very active in extracurricular activities. They don't spend a lot of time in athletic things. So American students are more well-rounded. Their math may not be that good, but they certainly have more skills in terms of oral communication, articulation, debating, critical thinking, doing experiments, and fixing things up.

Also, you need to understand that in Communist China since the 1960s, they have had this one child policy. China has a huge population, and they believe population can hold you back in terms of economic development and improving the living standard. So, they limit the size of the

family. Now today's college students in China are mostly from this kind of family background – one child, who is spoiled by their parents. They don't have siblings, and they are very self-centered, with no habit of sharing, teamwork, and with very limited social skills. They tend to be selfish and self-centered, and that's an important thing to keep in mind.

Related to that question, is there a difference between the Chinese and American approach to the subject of history? Do the differences between these two cultures affect the way history is studied and taught?

Under the communist education system, which is still in effect in China today, they basically emphasize one approach to history, which is economic determinism. Everything is explained in terms of economic manipulation and class struggle. For instance, when I grew up, I was taught that the history of American foreign policy is the history of monopoly capitalism manipulating the U.S. government. The U.S. was dominated by the capitalist class, who basically controlled the government. Working class people, poor people, had no say in the U.S. There is class struggle; class contradictions are the dominant, driving force in U.S. history.

We don't consider other factors in shaping U.S. history, like religion. We don't believe religion is a real factor because Karl Marx once said, "religion is spiritual opium." In the communist system, they crack down on religion. They tend to believe that religion plays no role in history. But we know that's not true; whether in a Christian country or in an Islamic country, religion is a big deal. Many people follow religious beliefs, and religion can influence American

attitudes and approaches towards foreign affairs. In China, religious input into foreign policy was downplayed. In China, when you are doing history, basically you are just following one track, mono-causal, rather than being open-minded and pluralistic in terms of approach. There is a big difference in terms of the approach to history research – in China it is more restricted.

And, especially in doing research on contemporary Chinese history, they still have a lot of forbidden topics. In other words, topics that would embarrass the Communist Party, that they will not allow people to research; there are no open archives. Take the Cultural Revolution and anti-rightist movements as examples. These were all political campaigns launched by Mao, designed to discipline intellectuals – they wanted intellectuals to follow the party's lead. They don't want them to have different thinking – independent thinking. College professors, journalists, and other intellectuals – the party wanted them to study communist theory and re-educate themselves, abandon different theories, and just follow one party doctrine. Those political campaigns and indoctrination programs nowadays are not really open for research. We don't have open archives for you to read because government officials know this is embarrassing for them. Another example would be Chinese relationships with bad communist governments – like the Khmer Rouge and Pol Pot in Cambodia, who killed a lot of innocent people – the current government in China doesn't want people to research that history, because that will embarrass them. At the time, China subsidized and supported the Khmer Rouge. So there are a lot of forbidden topics – prohibited areas that the government doesn't want you to touch. So in China, doing history is still very tricky business.

So as a professor of history, what is some advice that you'd give to students of history now?

My advice to students is just to be open-minded, and just to follow your research. Do not start from a preexisting idea but let evidence shape your conclusion. Sometimes people tend to start from the consequence, and go back to find causes, that is, going backward in history. For instance, in the study of contemporary Chinese history, we know that in 1949, the communists took over China and defeated their opponents, Chiang Kai-shek's Nationalist government, ending the civil war. So people tend to start from the outcome: the 1949 communist victory, and then they go back to see why Chiang Kai-shek's Nationalist government failed. They start from the end point, then go back to see what led to that end point. If you do that, you tend to find that you only look for shortcomings of Chiang Kai-shek, and actually he has a lot of achievements in addition to failure. In other words, if you are only interested in seeking the reasons for his failure, you tend to overlook things that may not be relevant to your conclusion. If you start from the result, and go back to research history, that can lead you to develop a kind of one-sided, simplistic view of Chiang Kai-shek.

My point is that we need to be open-minded and not let the outcome determine our judgment of what happened previously. We should give Chiang Kai-shek credit for doing something positive, rather than just focusing on his failure. He achieved some positive things, such as in the areas of medicine and urban planning, which later the communists built on to go forward. I believe there's a word for this approach: teleological.

What is an event or figure in history that you wish more people knew more about, or that you particularly enjoy teaching?

The event I emphasize, especially in my class on modern China that I teach every year, is the hidden atrocity the Japanese committed in World War II. We know a lot about the German treatment of the Jews in the Holocaust. But for a long time in the West there was little discussion of Japanese war crimes against innocent civilians in Asia. For instance, during World War II, during the Japanese occupation of China, they killed a lot of innocent people in the city of Nanjing, which was the Chinese capital at the time. Japan wanted to use this to send a message to the Chinese: "Do not resist, submit to Japanese domination." So when they captured Nanjing in 1937, they conducted a systematic large-scale massacre of innocent residents in Nanjing. Around 200,000 innocent civilians were killed. Some scholars call this the Rape of Nanking. Nanking was the old spelling; nowadays it's called Nanjing.

For many years, the Japanese government refused to acknowledge their wrongdoing, always denying that this large-scale massacre happened. And they tend to whitewash and downplay their criminal acts, calling the atrocity an "incident" and saying that the people who died there just happened to be in the wrong spot, caught in the crossfire. In other words, the Japanese government claims that their soldiers did not intentionally kill innocent people; they died as a kind of collateral damage. But we now have new evidence, especially from the third party, the Westerners who happened to be in the city, like businessmen and missionaries. Their dairies, their letters, and their writings at the time that have survived today indicate that Japanese soldiers purposely and intentionally massacred innocent

civilians. Japan's denial is really an injustice to history. This is an event that should be remembered, because the Germans have won respect in the world for their honesty – for their readiness to acknowledge their behavior in World War II so they can move on. But Japan's refusal to admit and acknowledge their conduct in World War II has only made Japan's neighbors today distrust them. That is certainly not good for peace and cooperation in East Asia; if you cannot properly deal with what happened in the past, how can you move forward in a positive manner? It's a big deal, so I really want to make more people aware of what really happened in Asia in World War II, especially those so called "hidden chapters," forgotten episodes that have escaped our notice.

As a history professor for many years, what would you say is your proudest achievement?

Professionally, I would say my scholarship, especially in Cold War history and in the study of the Vietnam War. For a long time, in the study of the Cold War, scholars focused on the role of the superpowers – the Soviet Union and the United States – how they dominated, how they intervened in the third world, and how they tried to impose their will on smaller countries. But I believe that focus tends to downplay the agency, the initiatives, and the role of other countries. In other words, a lot of writing on Cold War history was Western-centric, or you could say America-centric or Soviet-centric.

So in my research, especially drawing on documents from China, Vietnam, and Cambodia, I try to present the view from Asia to show that these countries were not just passive and insignificant players. They were not just people who were manipulated by the superpowers. They sometimes can set the agenda, and they sometimes

can influence the superpowers. As some people say, "the tail wags the dog." In other words, the small power sometimes can manipulate the big power, not always the other way around. In recent scholarship on the Cold War, there is a trend toward de-centering the Cold War. In addition, there has also been interest in doing global history – transnational history – emphasizing interactions and connections between countries, not just focusing on one specific nation state, not just from one superpower, but giving equal emphasis and equal attention to different players.

For example, my book on China and the Vietnam War has been well received in the field, because I have done research in the Chinese archives and in Vietnamese sources so that I can provide a unique perspective to the study of the Vietnam War. Because most American writings were based on American sources and were America-centric, I believe I've done some useful, important work in filling in the gaps in the literature. So that's a proud achievement as far as I'm concerned.

Lastly, is there anything else you'd like the readers of this interview to know?

As far as my current research interest is concerned, I'm paying attention to transnational history. There is growing interest in transnational history among scholars. In the past we tended to do history based on nation states – American policy towards this country or that country during the Cold War. But many scholars believe that developments across national boundaries – like the flow of ideas, people, and goods – are an important phenomenon. So one of my recent research interests is the transnational history of the anti-communist coalition in Asia. During the Cold War, leaders like Chiang Kai-shek in Taiwan, Syngman Rhee

in South Korea, and leaders in South Vietnam and the Philippines, often worked together and communicated with each other and tried to influence the policy in Washington to develop their own strategy in countering communists. A study of their cooperation and connection is a study of ideas and activities across national borders.

What I am doing is not just Chinese history or Korean history – it's history across borders. So I'm conducting research into Chiang Kai-shek's papers and diaries, now available in Stanford University's Hoover Institution Library. I'm also reading Syngman Rhee's diary and papers, available in South Korea and also available in the United States in the Wilson Center Cold War International History Project. You can call it the transnational study of the rise of the political right in Asia. It's beyond national history; it's the comparative study of transnational movement.



The Gee's Bend Ferry, 1939.

(Maria Post Wolcott)

FORGOTTEN FREEDOM FIGHTERS

Gee's Bend, Alabama and the Voting Rights Movement of 1965

by Jeremy Jeffcoat

Introduction

In 2011, Atlanta-based painter, photographer, and playwright Calvin Alexander Ramsey published a children's book entitled *Belle, the Last Mule at Gee's Bend*. In the author's note, Ramsey recounts a story told to him by leading 1960s civil rights activist Reverend James E. Orange. Following Dr. Martin Luther King's assassination in 1968, Reverend Orange was assigned the task of finding two mules to pull the farm wagon that would carry Dr. King's casket through the streets of Atlanta.¹ Orange recalled Dr. King's fondness for the people of Gee's Bend, Alabama, and that the slain civil rights leader "had spoken at Gee's Bend on several occasions and...Dr. King had long admired the 'Benders,' who lived simply and had faced hard times."² Orange felt that the mules from this small, isolated community symbolized a history of overcoming adversity and would thus provide a moving representation of the struggle for civil rights in the South, and for the movement to which Dr. King had devoted, and given, his life. The symbolism is often lost as the Gee's Bend story remains largely untold. Even Orange's attempt at recognizing the courage and stubbornness of the Benders appears in an obscure footnote to one of the Civil Rights Movement's most traumatic moments.

The tiny, black-belt peninsula of Boykin, Alabama is located in southwest Alabama forty miles from Selma and only seven miles from the Wilcox County Seat of Camden across the river. Boykin is better known to its residents and the surrounding communities as Gee's Bend, and is home to a community of slave descendants who have been internationally recognized for folk art in the form of handmade quilts. The largely untold story of Gee's Bend's role in the civil rights movement in rural southwest Alabama is a story of struggle to overcome isolation, segregation, abuse, neglect, and extreme poverty. In many ways, Gee's Bend was a forerunner to the more well-known voting rights protests in Selma and Montgomery, and the stubborn courage of the residents earned a special place in the hearts of civil rights leaders, including Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. The unique nature of Gee's Bend lies in its isolation from the white population, and even their black neighbors in Wilcox County and the surrounding areas.

In a 1937 story for the *Christian Century*, Reverend Renwick Kennedy wrote:

Gee's Bend represents not merely a geographic configuration drawn by the yellow pencil of the

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river. Gee's Bend represents another civilization. Gee's Bend is an Alabama Africa. There is no more concentrated and racially exclusive Negro population in any rural community in the South than in Gee's Bend.³

This isolation produced a culturally and economically independent spirit. Recognition of the contributions and importance of Gee's Bend and its residents in helping to lead the voting rights effort in southwest Alabama is critical to a more thorough understanding of the Civil Rights Movement in the rural South.

Origins: The Founding of Gee's Bend

In 1816, Virginia native Joseph Gee and eighteen slaves settled a cotton plantation in a fertile, horseshoe-shaped bend of the Alabama River in southwest Alabama in what would become, three years later, Wilcox County. Upon his death, the estate and forty-seven slaves passed to two of his nephews, Charles and Sterling Gee.⁴ As with other slave communities, written history is scarce, but "residents have been told, by means of oral tradition, that they are descended from slaves smuggled illegally from Africa to Mobile long after the international slave trade was prohibited in this country in 1808."⁵ A relative of the Gee family, Mark H. Pettway, obtained the plantation to satisfy a debt in 1845 and moved his operations, and over one hundred slaves, from North Carolina to Gee's Bend. The 1860 Wilcox County Census records Mark H. Pettway with a slave population of 160, and Pettway remains the dominant surname on Gee's Bend.⁶ Following emancipation, the freedmen largely remained on the bend as tenant farmers and sharecroppers under the Pettway family until 1895, when the land was sold to prominent Tuscaloosa attorney

Adrian Van de Graaff. Van de Graaff was largely absent from day-to-day operations, leaving the Benders to fend for themselves.⁷

White Wilcox Country residents avoided the all-black Gee's Bend community; rumors persisted that Benders spoke their own language and that voodoo was practiced regularly. The Benders, likewise, avoided Camden and its white population whenever possible.

By the early twentieth century, only a ferry connected Gee's Bend to the County Seat of Camden. By land, the journey was over forty miles by mule-wagon or by foot, compared with a less than five mile journey with ferry service over the river. White Wilcox Country residents avoided the all-black Gee's Bend community; rumors persisted that Benders spoke their own language and that voodoo was practiced regularly.⁸ The Benders, likewise, avoided Camden and its white population whenever possible. The result of this isolation was a community of people with an independent mindset and their own traditions and way of life that combined tribal African

and plantation slave traditions. Benders celebrated their cultural uniqueness and because of this, they were often considered arrogant by other African Americans. Some Wilcox County blacks scornfully referred to them as “the Africans.”⁹

Independence: Gee’s Bend and the Great Depression

In the early 1930s, years of fighting the boll weevil in the fields and the plummeting cotton market of the Great Depression had rendered Gee’s Bend almost completely destitute. For years, Gee’s Bend farmers had utilized credit extended by a sympathetic white merchant in Camden for their supplies and seed. Upon his death in 1932, his widow and sons demanded immediate and full payment on all accounts. With cotton prices at near five cents per pound, the Benders were unable to pay, and “with no hesitation, the furnishing merchant’s heirs came into Gee’s Bend in horse-drawn wagons and seized everything that was of any value.”¹⁰ For the farmers and families of Gee’s Bend, any ability to sustain their community was lost, including tools, grain, livestock, furniture, and clothing.

Having been made aware of the deplorable conditions in Gee’s Bend, and fearing that the entire community would starve, help was dispatched in the form of Red Cross rations. The Van de Graaff family also agreed to waive rent payments. The Van de Graaff’s sold the land to the Farm Security Administration in 1937, which parceled Gee’s Bend into small farms and houses and offered them to the residents at reduced prices with low interest loans over the next ten to fifteen years.¹¹ The government sent workers to Gee’s Bend to assist in developing new methods of livestock and crop production and help to establish some level of self-sufficiency for the community. The Farm Security Administration project and its investment in Gee’s

Bend had staved off starvation for the Benders, and had done something profoundly more impactful. The Benders, unlike their black neighbors in Camden and surrounding communities, were now landowners. Farmers on the Bend eked out a meager existence, but their independence both culturally and agriculturally became legend in rural Southwest Alabama.

In 1949, the community was renamed Boykin, in honor of a longtime Alabama Congressman and segregation supporter. Even today, residents still refuse to refer to their community as anything other than Gee’s Bend.¹² As the 1950s and 1960s arrived, poverty still dominated life in the Bend, but many residents had established farms and businesses, and some had fought in World War II and Korea. Elected county committees regulated farming and commerce in Wilcox County, and all of the committee members were white. In 1961, blacks represented seventy percent of the adult population of Wilcox County, and none was registered to vote.¹³ Without any ability to elect their own representatives, the farmers of Gee’s Bend had little control over the regulation of farming and commerce in their community. As a group, farmers on the Bend had developed their own independent spirit and grew weary of white efforts to exclude them from the process of governance in Wilcox County. It was during this time that voting rights became part of the Gee’s Bend consciousness.

Obstacles to Freedom: “They Forgot They Were Black”

In early 1961, Korean War veteran and independent insurance salesman Lonnie Brown, Pastor of Gee’s Bend’s Pleasant Grove Baptist Church, hosted a meeting of concerned black citizens and farmers from in and around Gee’s Bend. One of those at the meeting was

Monroe Pettway, a veteran of World War II. Emblematic of the Benders, Monroe Pettway was “an independent Gee’s Bend landowner, a veteran of the war to make the world safe for democracy, and a proud black Wilcox County resident with a burning desire to vote.”¹⁴ Together, they led the formation of Wilcox County’s first civil rights organization, the Wilcox County Civic and Progressive League (WCCPL). The WCCPL decided to take steps to bring attention to the plight of African Americans in Wilcox County and petition for their right to vote. This group formulated a strategy for protests and awareness-building across multiple meetings throughout 1961 and into 1962.

Across the river in Camden, black residents faced immense challenges to their civil rights from state and county regulations, law enforcement, and the threat of violence. In J.R. Moehringer’s 1999 Pulitzer Prize winning *Los Angeles Times* feature “Crossing Over”, he writes:

Camden was the kind of town where the newspaper got its start in the early 1800s, printing ads for slave-catchers. It was the kind of town where the manager of the Wilcox Hotel would tell a government worker in 1941, ‘A nigras is a nigras. And if you go and try to fix ‘em up, make somethin’ out of ‘em, put ‘em to livin’ like white folks and try to treat ‘em decent, you don’t do anything but make a mean nigger out of ‘em that somebody eventually will have to kill.’¹⁵

Black residents of Camden clearly understood that such threats were not to be taken lightly. Since Reconstruction, they had born witness to the intimidation and violence of the local Ku Klux Klan. Killings of black residents had been public spectacles which “helped to create an atmosphere of terror that was designed to crush black hopes for change.”¹⁶

The inhabitants of Gee’s Bend had never heard someone outside their own community preach a message as radical as one that claimed equality in the humanity of whites and blacks; that they were as deserving of their civic and human rights as any white man.

Perhaps no figure represented white oppression to the black residents of Wilcox County more than Sheriff P.C. “Lummie” Jenkins. Jenkins was a legendary figure in Alabama’s Black Belt region for his skill in maintaining order among the local African American population. Jenkins was the Sheriff of Wilcox County from 1939 to 1971, at one time “known as the sheriff with the longest tenure in the United States,”¹⁷ and sported a well-earned reputation among blacks as a cruel antagonist more likely to beat protestors than arrest them. Among African Americans, Jenkins “was infamous for ignoring legal process and encouraging extreme physical violence.”¹⁸ In Wilcox County, Jenkins’ law was the only one that mattered, and he was revered by whites as a “master psychologist. The sheriff who didn’t wear a gun. He merely sent word for suspects to come to his office. They came. After all, the whole backwater world over which he lorded knew that the sheriff had powers that exceeded those of the ordinary lawman.”¹⁹

The biggest obstacle for the Benders and WCCPL in their pursuit of voting rights would occur in 1962, when ferry service from Gee's Bend to Camden abruptly stopped. The Gee's Bend Ferry was moved upriver, ostensibly to help employees at the local paper mill get to work. According to Hollis Curl, the longtime editor and publisher of the *Wilcox Progressive Era* newspaper, Camden officials were aware of the plans of the WCCPL, and hindering the Benders' ability to travel to Camden was the true motivation of the move.²⁰ After the ferry's closing, Sheriff Jenkins was infamously quoted: "We didn't take away the ferry because they were black; we closed it because they forgot they were black."²¹

Pressing Forward: The Voting Rights Movement begins in the Bend

Reverend Lonnie Brown, Monroe Pettway, and the WCCPL pressed on with their plans, with or without the ferry. On a Thursday morning in early April 1963, twelve men in pickup trucks left Monroe Pettway's home in Gee's Bend, heading for the Wilcox County Courthouse in downtown Camden. Without the ferry, the drive took more than an hour over unpaved, uneven, dusty, red-dirt roads that wound back through Alberta in the opposite direction, then over the river and down towards Camden. The Benders were accompanied by a young civil rights worker named Bernard Lafayette, visiting from his base of Selma to observe the activity. Lafayette had informed the civil rights leaders of the planned protest, so the men were met at the courthouse by journalists, FBI agents, and Justice Department representatives. Finding the office closed, they waited for nearly two hours before a staffer opened the office after lunch. After a tense moment of silence at the registrar's office, and with both white and black citizens looking on, the twelve men filled out their applications one at a time amid almost total silence. The men returned to

the Bend to cheers and congratulations from their fellow residents at a planned community event. They had faced Camden, the removal of the ferry, and the threats of Sheriff Lummie. They stood up for their rights as citizens and lived to tell about it. Unexpectedly, "most of the men who had gone to the courthouse that day were eventually notified that they had passed the test."²² Wilcox County authorities placed additional qualifications for voter registration, including requiring an already registered voter to vouch for the applicant's character.²³ Since no blacks were registered, and whites were unwilling to help, this requirement proved a major hurdle for registration in Wilcox County. Nevertheless, the Benders and the WCCPL had taken their stand.

Awareness: The Movement Takes Notice

Following this event, Wilcox County became something of a microcosmic epicenter of the civil rights struggle in the poor, rural South. In late 1963, Dr. Martin Luther King launched the Black Belt voter registration campaign with a headquarters in nearby Selma, and had taken a keen interest in rural Southwest Alabama. Former *Atlanta Constitution* and *L.A. Times* reporter Jack Nelson was assigned to follow King in the mid 1960s and in his memoir, *Scoop: The Evolution of a Southern Reporter*, he recounts that King had become aware of the reputation of the Benders and decided to see it for himself:

'Mr. Nelson, you goin' with us to Gee's Bend tomorrow?' he asked me one day in Selma, apparently concerned that some of the national press that had been covering him in Selma might not be interested in following him to such a small community...Once we arrived at Gee's Bend I understood why he would stage a rally there. It provided a dramatic scene made

to order for the kind of news coverage—especially by television and large newspapers—that King courted.²⁴

During King's visit to Gee's Bend in 1963, he was hosted by one of the Bend's independent, landowning farmers, Willie Quill Pettway, and Dr. King "encouraged other farmers, led by Rev. Lonnie Brown and World War II veteran Monroe Pettway, in their fight for the right to vote."²⁵ King's message to the Benders at Lonnie Brown's Pleasant Grove Baptist Church was as simple as it was profound: you are somebody. The inhabitants of Gee's Bend had never heard someone outside their own community preach a message as radical as one that claimed equality in the humanity of whites and blacks; that they were as deserving of their civic and human rights as any white man. Nelson wrote that tears flowed from King's face as he spoke to "an audience of some three hundred black faces, most if not all of them direct descendants of slaves."²⁶ Over the next several years, King would pay several visits to Gee's Bend, some recorded, others either secret or legendary.

Ticking Time Bomb: The Voting Rights Struggle in 1964-1965

California native Maria Gitin spent ten weeks in the summer of 1965 as a civil rights volunteer in Wilcox County. In her book, *This Bright Light of Ours: Stories from the Voting Rights Fight*, she describes the racial atmosphere of Wilcox County as "like a ticking time bomb that could blow up at any moment."²⁷ Benders, and other African American residents of Wilcox County, with the help and encouragement of civil rights workers, continued to press for their voting rights as protests gained momentum and visibility in 1964 and 1965. During this time Dr. King made visits to Pleasant Grove Baptist Church in Gee's Bend, the all-black Camden Academy, and the Antioch Baptist Church in Camden which had become a hub of the Voting Rights movement in Wilcox County.

In February 1965, surrounded by supporters, civil rights workers, and a strong contingent of Benders, Dr. King addressed a crowd of around two hundred people gathered at Camden Academy and then joined a smaller group gathered at Antioch Baptist Church to march to the courthouse in downtown Camden. Waiting for Dr. King and the group at the courthouse entrance that day was Sheriff Lummie Jenkins.²⁸

As the two men came face to face, with hardly a sound on the crowded street behind them, King politely informed the sheriff that the people had come to the courthouse to register to vote. Sheriff Jenkins responded by informing Dr. King that it would be impossible for them to legally register unless they could find a registered Wilcox County voter to vouch for them. King responded that he was aware of the qualification, and asked the sheriff if he would personally vouch for the character of any of the people in attendance, since he was sure that he knew many of them quite well. For a tense and exceedingly long moment, Lummie Jenkins uncomfortably stared at King, before responding that he would not be able to vouch for them, stumbling through some sort of explanation that his political office prevented it. Gitin wrote that some in attendance believe Jenkins was slightly intimidated by the confrontation, and that Dr. King only "got out of Camden alive because there were state troopers assigned to his security that day."²⁹

Days after Dr. King's march on Camden, the Voting Rights Movement in Southwest Alabama took a violent turn. Jimmie Lee Jackson, a young, unarmed civil rights activist in nearby Marion, Alabama was beaten and shot by state troopers during a voting rights protest. Jackson died in a Selma hospital on February 26. On March 2, the same day that Jackson was buried, another march occurred in Camden led by John Lewis, Chairman of the



A young girl at Gee's Bend during the Great Depression.

(Arthur Rothstein)

Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee. The march ended when the protesters were met by Sheriff Lummie Jenkins and Camden Mayor Reg Albritton, who ordered the group to disperse. The next day, the protesters again marched on Camden, only to be met by Mayor Albritton and a detachment of heavily armed law enforcement on the outskirts of Camden. Later that day, another march ensued, and it also encountered armed policemen.³⁰ This time, however, the marchers did not leave, rather "they knelt down and prayed by the side of the road,"³¹ and sang spirituals. The determination on the part of the marchers alarmed local authorities, and provided an indication of how confrontational the voting rights struggle in Wilcox County was becoming. Only four days later, a large group of marchers was attacked on the Edmund Pettus Bridge in Selma, and television images from the attack "that came to be known as Bloody Sunday were beamed around the country and around the world."³²

The Aftermath of Bloody Sunday: Change Begins in Rural Southwest Alabama

In the aftermath of Bloody Sunday, white students from around the nation took part in the Freedom Summer of 1965, part of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference's Summer Community Organization and Political Education (SCOPE) project. These students volunteered in voter registration campaigns throughout the South, including Wilcox County. The demand for the Voting Rights Act of 1965 in the wake of the nationally-televised violence in Selma led to its eventual signing into law in August. Demonstrations throughout the South, including Wilcox County, continued with regularity. Blacks who registered to vote or assisted in the movement lost their jobs; whites who supported the movement lost their businesses. Threats, intimidation, and violence failed to deter the increasingly defiant protesters. The early leaders of the revolutionary Wilcox County Civic and Progressive League (WCCPL), Monroe Pettway and Reverend Lonnie

Brown, continued to lead marches and protests in Wilcox County, including one that passed directly by the home of Sheriff Lummie Jenkins:

In one of those demonstrations Monroe Pettway remembers that the route of the march passed right by Sheriff Lummie Jenkins' home, the sheriff was not at home that day, but his wife was. As the marchers drew even with the Jenkins home, the sheriff's wife ran out onto the porch, screaming at the demonstrators at the top of her lungs. The anger in her voice gave her words a strident quality as she yelled at the demonstrators, 'Y'all better go on home, Mr. Lummie's gonna kick y'all's ass.' Pettway clearly recalls the look of frustration on Mrs. Jenkins's face when the demonstrators ignored her warning, and actually laughed in her face as they kept marching straight to the courthouse.³³

In the summer of 1965, over five hundred black Wilcox County residents were registered to vote. The black population, a solid majority, still had not produced a single elected county official since Reconstruction. That all changed in 1977, when "Prince Arnold, a young teacher and a graduate of Alabama State University,"³⁴ moved home to Wilcox County and decided to run for Sheriff, the post held for thirty-two years by the infamous Lummie Jenkins. The twenty-six year old Arnold won the election, becoming the youngest sheriff in Alabama history.

Indications of Change: The Ferry Returns

In 1972 Hollis Curl, the publisher of the *Wilcox Progressive Era* newspaper wrote: "There's a code of behavior between whites and niggers. We don't know how to keep the code but we do know when we violate it."³⁵ By his own admission, Curl strongly favored segregation during the Civil Rights Movement, stating "I was as racist as anyone else...I wanted to preserve our way of life."³⁶ In the

early 1990s, Curl claimed to have had a change of heart on race relations and began publishing editorials advocating the return of the Gee's Bend ferry. A decade later, Curl served as chairman of the newly created Gee's Bend Ferry Commission. Curl's passion for the return of the Gee's Bend Ferry surprised many Wilcox County residents of both races, while others saw his motives as self-serving. Curl, as a major landowner in the area, stood to profit from property values along the Alabama River that were sure to rise with more convenient transportation. Curl was also very active politically, and in a county with a seventy percent black population, one would find it difficult to be elected without support from Gee's Bend and the black voters of Wilcox County. In February 2000, Wilcox County Sheriff Prince Arnold, the first black elected official in Wilcox County, said of Curl "I think he wants to be a senator eventually. And he knows the black population is the one that's going to make him whatever he becomes in this area."³⁷

Willie Quill Pettway, one of the Bend's notoriously independent farmers and early participant in the Wilcox County Civic and Progressive League, had defied Wilcox County officials in the Voting Rights Movement more than forty years earlier. It was Pettway and his family that hosted Dr. Martin Luther King in their home on the Bend during his historic visit in 1963. Pettway viewed the potential return of the ferry as a symbolic triumph for the Benders who had risked so much to bring voting rights to Wilcox County, telling *USA Today*, "I told them I wanted to be the first one to ride it when it comes back."³⁸ In the fall of 2006, the Gee's Bend Ferry once again began crossing the Alabama River. The now 78-year-old Willie Quill Pettway was, indeed, one of the first passengers on the first crossing of the reinstated ferry. When asked if he wanted the ferry service to return to his community, Pettway responded, "Yeah, I want it to come back. That's what you call winning."³⁹

Sadly, the role of Gee's Bend and its residents in the Voting Rights Movement in rural Southwest Alabama remains largely unknown.

Conclusion: Gee's Bend Today

Wilcox County is still one of the poorest counties in Alabama and in the nation. Gee's Bend residents, in particular, still struggle with poverty and neglect. Median family income in Gee's Bend is less than \$15,000 annually, "67 percent below the state average."⁴⁰ The inhabitants of the Bend remain as independent, strong, and determined as ever. They have established a quilting cooperative and folk art museum on the Bend that draw occasional curious tourists from as far away as New York and California. Some of the quilts produced by the Quilting Bee sell for thousands of dollars. The Gee's Bend quilts have been featured in books, plays, television shows, documentaries, metropolitan art galleries, and the Smithsonian Institution. This unique brand of folk art has captured the imagination of art enthusiasts and celebrities. Despite the popularity of the quilts, there is not enough revenue generated to raise the Bend's standard of living by any appreciable amount. Sadly, the role of Gee's Bend and its residents in the Voting Rights Movement in rural Southwest Alabama remains largely unknown. The colorful history and independent spirit of the Benders in challenging the oppression and racism of Wilcox County in the 1960s receives little attention in comparison to the later, better known, and

televised events in Selma and Montgomery.

In 1963, when twelve brave men from Gee's Bend defied the loss of their ferry, the denial of their civil rights, and a legendary segregationist sheriff to drive to Camden and register to vote, their actions left an indelible impression on young civil rights worker Bernard Lafayette. He saw a community of isolated, neglected, and largely ignored farmers that "seemed to have an obvious independent streak and an unstudied orneriness."⁴¹ That orneriness inspired Dr. Martin Luther King Jr and other Civil Rights leaders who encountered them. In Calvin Alexander Ramsey's children's book *Belle, The Last Mule at Gee's Bend*, the character Miz Pettway explains to a curious young boy named Alex why Gee's Bend mules were requested to pull Dr. King's funeral wagon in 1968: "They wanted to use our mules, not fancy draft horses. Mules take their time, work hard, and they never back down. Mules aren't pretty, but they are somebody."⁴²

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A Royal Air Force Airman standing beside a Turkish artillery piece in Iraq, 1920s. The country was a British protectorate from its creation in 1920 until becoming the independent Kingdom of Iraq in 1932.

(Edwin Newman Collection/San Diego Air & Space Museum)

HISTORICAL CAUSES OF IRAQ'S NEWEST WAR

by Christian Wismulek

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Though the land between the Tigris and the Euphrates has been populated since ancient times, the country of Iraq is relatively new. Still, Iraq has found itself in the midst of war for most of its existence. Today, the government forces of Iraq and a coalition of its supporters fight against the Islamic State terror organization, also known as the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS). This war began shortly after the withdrawal of United States combat forces from Iraq, and it remains motivated by the history of the last century. While the Islamic State is being pushed out of central Iraq, recent events in the Iraqi government and in the surrounding countries are determining the future of the nation and whether it will be strong enough to survive these times.

At the end of 2015, Iraqi government soldiers started retaking the city of Ramadi in Anbar Province. They finally forced ISIS out of Ramadi in January and have been trying to reestablish peace and stability in the city ever since.¹ This has been hard since a small number of ISIS fighters and other militant groups try to dismantle the government efforts whenever possible.² The Iraqi government and the United States faced the same issue in the Iraq War that began after the 2003 American invasion. A constant insurgency is difficult to fight when the enemy's goal is to simply create chaos and when the enemy itself is always changing. Governments struggle to appear in

control, especially ones that are friendly to a Western invader. This has been the nature of war in Iraq since at least 2003. Consequently, the Iraqi government has had a difficult time staying relevant and fair to its diverse populace when so many other groups have their specific interests at heart.

The country is mainly divided between three religious and ethnic groups—Sunni Arabs, Shia Arabs, and Kurds.³ Saddam Hussein, the President of Iraq from 1979 until 2003, kept the nation together through brutal totalitarian leadership that favored his own Sunni people, but even his government had difficulties putting down Shiite and Kurdish revolts.⁴ Just like the insurgent groups that persist even today, the Shia and Kurds never really changed their minds about their religious beliefs or accepted their place on the fringes of Iraqi governance. No matter how often they were beaten, the Kurds could not cease to be Kurdish. The same can be said for extremist groups. The religious idealism that fuels groups like ISIS and Al-Qaeda does not go away when their members are slain.

Iraq has had six governments since it was created in 1920. In every case but one, the transfer of control from Britain to the independent Kingdom of Iraq, these new governments have been brought on by a military coup. Just

as the Kingdom of Iraq faced military uprisings, the current Republic of Iraq faces militant threats and sectarian protests. In April 2016, Shia protesters held demonstrations outside the Green Zone in Baghdad, the highly secure center for the Iraqi government where normal citizens are denied access.⁵ They were followers of the Shia cleric Moqtada Sadr, who has called for Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi to push through anti-sectarian reforms. These reforms would, in part, replace cabinet members appointed based on ethnic and religious partisanship with technocrats who are experts in their fields.⁵

The protesters were temporarily appeased when al-Abadi was able to get several new cabinet members approved on the parliament floor on April 26, 2016.⁶ On May 1, the protesters stormed the Green Zone, knocking over blast shields and barricades and overrunning the parliament building. Members of parliament evacuated the area and the protesters left the next day.⁷ This incident is important for two reasons: it shows that Iraq is still having trouble uniting as one people, but also that there is enough respect for the government authority, or enough of a desire to see the government prosper, that the population can choose to protest for change rather than incite revolution. This is especially significant since Moqtada Sadr formerly led his militant group, the Mehdi Army, against U.S. forces for several years after the invasion.⁸ A former Shia militant showing support for a merit-based system shows that Iraq may be able to move forward.

Shia Muslims have complained about a lack of representation over the last few decades. Although they are the largest ethno-religious group in Iraq, Shias had been alienated by a minority ruling class of Sunnis under Saddam Hussein. After the fall of Saddam's Ba'athist government, Shiites saw an opportunity to gain more influence. Sporadic

fighting broke out between Shia and Sunni groups, tearing apart neighborhoods. The United States had depended on the more secular Shia population to help them defuse extremist sentiments and secure a peaceful, modern Iraq.⁹ A 2007 National Public Radio report on the Sunni-Shia divide quoted the work of Middle East historian Augustus Norton, saying "Those rosy predictions did not take into account the frequently violent and tragic history of Iraq, especially the aspirations of Iraq's often brutalized Shiite majority..."⁹ The Shia already felt deeply separated from the Sunni and took the chance to act on their own against U.S. wishes. The United States was not prepared for Iranian involvement either.

Iran is run by a mostly theocratic government and lies to the east of Iraq. Ottoman territorial expansion and the subsequent Ottoman-Persian Wars lasted from the sixteenth century until World War I. Over time, the borders of the two empires had shifted enough to permit a large population of Shia Muslims to live within the provinces of Ottoman Iraq. Ever since the rise of the Iranian Shiite government, the neighboring country has had plenty of influence on Shiite Iraq. In the Iran-Iraq War (1980-1988), the predominately Shia Iranians went up against Saddam and his minority Sunni government forces, displaying an early Iranian abhorrence to Saddam's regime. Many Iraqi Shia clerics allied with Iran for this very reason, and they used the support to revolt against Saddam in 1991 and again in 2003. Government-supported militias entered Iraq after 2003, and Iran continued to supply and fund Iraqi Shiite militias.¹⁰ This activity has seen a greater resurgence since the Islamic State's rapid expansion in 2014, and the same can be said for Sunni militias that are backed by Sunni Saudi Arabia and other nations.⁹

Recently, sectarian violence itself has been pushed to the sidelines in the combined effort against ISIS. It is possible that the fight against ISIS is all that holds the country together. Because of this war, many Shia and Sunni Muslims have set aside their differences to defeat the globally despised terrorist group. Even Kurds have seen some cooperation with other Iraqi forces. The Kurds who live in northern Iraq have their own government, their own president, and their own military—the Peshmerga.¹¹ They were promised autonomy in 1970, but they were not formally granted their own region of the country until 2005 under the new Iraqi Constitution.¹¹ During the Iran-Iraq War, the Iraqi military also engaged in the Kurdish genocide, decimating the Kurdish population. The Peshmerga drove out Saddam's forces in 1991 after the Gulf War, further separating themselves from the rest of Iraq.¹¹ This primed the Kurdish government to establish itself later after the United States toppled Saddam.

It is possible that the fight against ISIS is all that holds the country together.

In the current war against the Islamic State, the Kurds have been local heroes to the Western coalition. In ISIS's 2014 campaign, the Kurds defended their territories ferociously while Iraqi units with superior numbers and equipment retreated.¹² For this reason and for their often progressive policies such as allowing women to fight alongside men against the Islamic State,¹³ Western audiences began to revere the Kurds and demand supplies and funding for the Peshmerga. They are more separated from the Sunni-Shia infighting that can be seen in the

Iraqi Security Forces, and have shown more resolve to hold common Kurdish territory as opposed to the shared territory of other Iraqis. Kurdish offensives have pushed ISIS all the way back to the large northern city of Mosul. For many, they seem to be the best hope for defeating ISIS, but they are not alone in the fight.

The United States is leading coalition forces in support of the Iraqis. American troops redeployed to Al Assad Air Base in Anbar province in 2014.¹⁴ The original small detachment of Marines, Special Forces soldiers, and aviation units sent to Iraq early in what the U.S. calls Operation Inherent Resolve have since been replaced by over four thousand troops.¹⁵ The mission has claimed the lives of eleven American servicemen and women so far, with only three dying from enemy fire.¹⁶ With most of these forces being sent to Anbar province, it is easy to see why the victory in Ramadi was a turning point for the Iraqi Security Forces.

Ever since, the United States has increased the number of troops in Iraq and has pushed those units meant to provide support and training closer to the Islamic State's front in the north. According to a report in the *New York Times* about the Iraqi offensive, Ramadi is the "most populous city in western Iraq."¹ Whoever holds the city has operational freedom throughout the province, meaning that they can more effectively deploy fighters to nearby areas and command their resources. It also means that the Islamic State cannot efficiently recruit from the large population. Since this victory, the Iraqis have nearly surrounded the bulk of ISIS forces holed up inside the cities of Mosul and Fallujah. As Americans take on a more direct combat role with more people and firepower, ISIS as a conventional force may soon be defeated.

So what are the issues facing Iraq now? Iraq is still trying to find its identity as a people, but with reforms being passed and militant leaders taking a more peaceful approach to government coercion, Iraq may be able to set aside some of its religious prejudices while deciding what will be best for all Iraqis. For the time being, ISIS remains the dominant physical threat to Iraqi life. The people of Iraq have had plenty of war and they are now forced to work together to overcome another. If the rest of Iraq can cooperate with the Kurds, then there can be enough unity to drive ISIS out and secure the borders of Iraq. It is not an easy road, and it will not fix the sectarian issues in the country, but it will mean that Iraq can stand united and try to work through its growing pains. Maybe it will not shirk off religion as it continues to modernize, but it will finally have a chance to peacefully change itself from within.

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