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Emily Moore April 5, 2016

“Strange Histories”: A Cultural History of the Legend of Lost Confederate Gold in Washington, Georgia

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Abstract
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The legend of lost Confederate gold in Washington, Georgia has persisted since it was stolen on the night of May 24th, 1865. The story lives on in personal diaries, town tourism materials, treasure tale folklore, treasure hunting manuals, conspiracy theories, and family memory. This thesis seeks to examine how and why the robbery is understood as a meaningful event. In the aforementioned sources, the gold robbery has been construed as a reminder of bitter defeat, a charming feature of a small Southern town, a captivating treasure tale, an artifact waiting to be found, proof of the Confederacy's imminent return, and a source of pride for a prominent black family. Collective memory of the gold and its disappearance is ultimately intertwined with memory of the Civil War, and the nostalgia, emotion, and identity involved in creating remembrance. The gold – both the idea of it and its physical existence – represents a diverse array of ideas of what it means to not only preserve, but also perpetuate the history of the Civil War.

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I dedicate this thesis to the memory of Dr. Madelyn Joanne Chennault.

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"All the money and plate that lives through these troublous times
will have strange histories attached to it"

- Eliza Frances Andrews, *The War-Time Journal Of A Georgia Girl*

Notes to the Reader

1. The robbery of what is referred to as the lost Confederate gold occurred in the town of Washington, Georgia, in Wilkes County. In this paper, "Washington" always refers to the town, not the state or district.

2. As explained in Chapter 1, the gold stolen on the night of May 24th was technically not Confederate gold. It belonged to six different Virginia banks, whose cash assets had been seized by the Confederate government. Complex legal status aside, the gold that was stolen is remembered as Confederate gold; thus, this paper refers to it as such.

3. The spelling of Chennault throughout history is inconsistent. Primary source records are particularly inconsistent, occasionally spelling it with one "n" as "Chennault." For simplicity, I have used Chennault throughout the paper.

4. I have followed Chicago Manual of Style practice in using "black" not "Black" when referring to the racial group.

5. Any archaic words and jargon have been footnoted accordingly.

INTRODUCTION

At the end of the Civil War, Confederate President Jefferson Davis, facing certain collapse of the Confederate capital Richmond, clung to the hope of continuing the war from elsewhere in the South. On April 2nd, 1865, as Richmond fell, he evacuated his family, cabinet officials, and most importantly, the gold and silver specie comprising the Confederate treasury along with the assets of six Virginia banks. The funds and people traveling with them moved south first by rail, and later by wagon, with the threat of Federal troops close behind, arriving in Washington, Georgia on May 4th, 1865. Near midnight on May 24th, 1865, in the town of Washington, in Wilkes County, Georgia, twenty men on horseback robbed the wagon train and escaped with a total of $179,000, which has never been recovered. The events of that evening and the preceding and following days have been embellished extensively in the intervening one hundred and fifty years. Stories about the gold's whereabouts – ranging from plausible to paranoid –have been told and retold since its disappearance.

Despite the allure of speculation about the gold's fate, this thesis will not attempt to provide a possible explanation for its location, nor will it attempt to actually find the gold itself. This thesis is instead a cultural history. It is positioned among existing literature on Southern culture and collective nostalgia as exemplified by David Blight's *Race and Reunion*, Charles Wilson's *Baptized in Blood*, W. Fitzhugh Brundage's *The Southern Past*, and, serving as the spark of my inspiration, Tony Horwitz's *Confederates in the Attic*.[1] These works contemplate the

[1] Tony Horwitz, *Confederates in the Attic : Dispatches from the Unfinished Civil War*, 1st edition.. (New York: Pantheon Books, 1998); W. Fitzhugh Brundage, *The Southern Past : A Clash of Race and Memory* (Cambridge, Mass: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2005); David W. Blight, *Race and Reunion : The Civil War in American Memory* (Cambridge, Mass: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2001); Charles Reagan Wilson, *Baptized in Blood: The Religion of the Lost Cause 1865-1920* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1980).

emotionally fraught memory of the Civil War and, particularly in Horwitz's work, its last vestiges as they exist in the modern South.

Though the facts of the robbery and the specific variations of each version of the gold legend are important, they serve as background to the analysis of the motivations behind retelling the legend in different contexts. By examining the diary of Eliza Andrews, a young woman at the time of the robbery, and other written accounts from her contemporaries, it became clear that the gold story was used by Confederate sympathizers as a way to express their frustrations and bitterness in being defeated by the Union. The town of Washington, and the treasure chest on display in its historic library, perpetuates the Lost Cause and deliberately projects a wistfully genteel remembrance of the town's history during the war. The gold's physical existence (and heretofore-unexplained disappearance), when retold as part of the American treasure folktale tradition, serves as inspiration to treasure hunters – metal detector hobbyists who hope to discover a gold coin or two while 'hunting' the woods around Washington. A conspiracy theory, developed by an Arkansas man, suggests the gold is being protected the Knights of the Golden Circle, a secret society active during the war, in order to fund a second coming of the Confederacy. Finally, a persistent family legend, which tells of ancestor enslaved on the Chennault plantation who kept some of the gold for himself, speaks to the role of generational storytelling in constructing pride in family identity.

A clear pattern emerges in analyzing these various versions of the story: the way in which the gold story is told depends on the purpose behind the retelling. The gold's existence has meant entirely different things to the different people who have written about it in different textual spaces. The only continuity is that the gold itself reflects a diverse array of ideas of what it means to preserve and perpetuate the history of the Civil War.

The significance and lasting importance of the gold legend examined by this thesis can be interpreted on different levels. The first is that the gold serves as simply an interesting story – an oddity that illuminates the corners of the weird and wonderful world we inhabit. The gold can exist in the cultural space carved out by *Ripley's Believe it or Not, Unsolved Mysteries, The X-Files*, and other strange idiosyncrasies.

The second is that the gold is a meaning-laden symbol used to represent the Southern past, similar to the Confederate flag, the relief on Stone Mountain, and the names of buildings and statues on college campuses and other public places. As those other symbols have been embroiled in controversy in recent years, the gold is another reminder of the necessity of caution and sensitivity in preserving, displaying, and understanding these symbols.

Finally, the legend is consumed and perpetuated because the Civil War and memory of it is so large, complex, and monolithic that it defies a single comprehension. The gold legend is therefore necessary in chipping away at being able to break down the Civil War and come closer to understanding it.

CHAPTER 1

From Richmond to Washington and Beyond: The Gold's Journey South

Though the idea of lost Confederate gold is often the subject of fantastical claims, cabalistic conspiracy theories, and speculative legends regarding its current location, Confederate gold indeed existed and subsequently disappeared in the town of Washington, Georgia. Despite the legend and myth making that later sprang up around the gold, its existence and subsequent robbery is proven by examining memoirs, diaries, and Confederate Army records. It is therefore possible to sort original fact from later fiction and piece together what truly happened the night of May 24th, 1865, as well as the gold's travel prior to that night and its fate immediately after.

By late March of 1865, Richmond, the Confederate capital, was on the brink of collapse. Inflation "ravaged the city" and posed a very real threat of starvation to its residents.[2] One wounded soldier reported that though his fellow hospital occupants eagerly ate rats, he could not bring himself to do the same, having seen them 'running over the bodies of dead soldiers.'[3] General Robert E. Lee had visited Confederate President Jefferson Davis in January to insist to him that the Confederate army should be disbanded unless food supplies increased, but Davis refused. In early March, Lee had again traveled to Richmond to beg, unsuccessfully, for more supplies for his army, and returned now in late March to discuss his belief that the war was over, and to begin peace talks immediately. Surprisingly, Lee "found Davis willing to give up Richmond at once, weeks before the general felt the retreat might be necessary."[4] By the time of Lee's visit, Davis had already sent his children and wife south to Charlotte, North Carolina in anticipation of evacuating Richmond.

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[2] Burke Davis, *The Long Surrender*, 1st edition.. (New York: Random House, 1985), 5.
[3] Ibid., 6.
[4] Ibid., 13.

Although willing to surrender Richmond, Davis proved stubborn in his resolve to continue fighting the war. He clung "tenaciously to a dream that the Confederacy might endure."[5] Davis refused to even consider the possibility of reunion between North and South, instead proclaiming that now, "it must go on till the last man of this generation falls in his tracks, and his children seize his musket and fight our battle."[6] His cabinet officials still left in Richmond knew Davis would never flee the country. They knew Davis would instead try to continue the war with the remaining Confederate troops west of the Mississippi in perhaps western Virginia, the Deep South or the Southwest.[7]

The arrival of Union troops on March 28th under the command of General Ulysses S. Grant marked the beginning of the end of Richmond's Confederate defenses, as the Federal troops inflicted heavy casualties on the steadily declining Confederate forces remaining. During church services on the morning of Sunday, April 2nd, 1865, Davis received a telegram Lee had intended for John C. Breckenridge, Confederate Secretary of War. It read:

> "I see no prospect of doing more than holding my position here till night. I am not certain that I can do that…I advise that all preparations be made for leaving Richmond to-night"[8]

At noon, Davis gathered most of his cabinet ministers and simply read the telegram aloud to them. He then ordered their own evacuation as well as the immediate evacuation of the treasury and the funds of six Virginia banks alongside it. Of primary concern to Davis was removing the funds safely from Richmond, and keeping them ahead of Federal troops. Davis, on his own flight south, would not meet up with the combined funds until nearly a month later, on May 3rd, 1865,

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[5] Ibid., 14.
[6] William C. Davis, *An Honorable Defeat : The Last Days of the Confederate Government*, 1st edition.. (New York: Harcourt, 2001), 50.
[7] Ibid., 51.
[8] Davis, *The Long Surrender*, 21.

and the treasury would be disbursed without his approval or knowledge. A guard commanded by Captain William H. Parker was formed from a company of teenaged midshipmen (some as young as twelve) from the Confederate Naval Academy, and preparations began for departure by rail at 8 pm that night.[9]

At the rail depot, the midshipmen loaded eight wagonloads of money – Mexican silver dollars, American golden double eagles, as well as ingots, nuggets, and silver bricks – into wooden chests, bags, and barrels aboard one railroad car.[10] Though informally referred to as "the gold", and in subsequent storytelling colloquially referred to as "Confederate" gold, it is important to precisely describe what actually comprised the fortune that left Richmond. The first portion was the actual Confederate treasury, made up of "silver and gold coin, silver and gold bullion, 600-700 million dollars worth of Confederate treasury [paper] notes, 16,000 -18,000 pounds sterling in Liverpool, England acceptances[11], a chest of silver jewelry, and the floor sweepings of the Dahlonega, Georgia mint."[12] The second was the Virginia bank assets, a collection of funds totaling $450,000 from six banks: Bank of Virginia, Bank of Richmond, Bank of the Commonwealth, Exchange Bank, Farmers' Bank, and Traders' Bank. The Confederate government seized these assets prior to evacuating the city, and though they were kept physically separate from the treasury, the bank assets did travel alongside the treasury on their fifty-two day journey throughout the Southeast. The frantic nature of their sudden departure

[9] Ibid., 25.
[10] Ibid., 12.
[11] Acceptances are essentially promissory notes backed by the English government, which tentatively, partially, supported the Confederacy.
[12] Mark Waters, "The Missing Confederate Gold: Raid at Chennault, Georgia, May 24, 1865," *The Surratt Courier*, December 2009.

prevented a true count of the treasury: however, the figure was "casually estimated at about half a million dollars."[13]

After departing Richmond, the train made its first stop in Danville, Virginia, where the treasury was finally counted at $327,022.90.[14] This, combined with the $450,000 in bank assets, made for a total of about $778,000. From Danville, the train continued to Greensboro, North Carolina, where the first portion of the treasury was removed and paid out to soldiers and some members of his cabinet. A detailed chronology of the treasury's disbursement throughout the month can be found in Appendix 1. The Virginia bank assets would remain untouched until May 5th. $39,000 from the treasury was paid out to Major General Joseph Johnston and his soldiers at the rate of $1.15 each. An additional $35,000 was divided between John Reagan, the Postmaster of the Confederacy; Judah Benjamin, a previous Secretary of War; and John Breckinridge, the current Secretary of War. Reagan's portion was confiscated when he was captured by Federal troops in Irwinville, Georgia, Benjamin spent his escaping to England via the Bahamas. It remains unclear what Breckinridge did with his portion. Some of this $35,000 also was intended to be moved to Florida to keep Jefferson Davis' wife Varina and their children safe, yet it never made it, and it fate, too, is uncertain. Throughout all of this, the Virginia bank assets remained untouched. The train arrived in Charlotte, North Carolina, where Captain Parker, the commander of the midshipmen guarding the treasure, deposited the remaining treasury and still-untouched bank assets into the mint located there. Just three days later, Parker removed it without orders and decided to continue moving it south, with Macon, Georgia as the possible final destination.

Usable rail lines ended in Chester, South Carolina, where the treasury and bank assets were transferred to wooden horse-drawn wagons. After passing through Newberry and

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[13] Davis, *The Long Surrender*, 25.
[14] All dollar amounts are in contemporary values; they are not converted to 2016 values.

Abbeville, and crossing the Savannah River into Georgia by pontoon bridge, the party arrived in the town of Washington, Georgia on April 17th. Parker placed the treasury and bank assets at a local house. Upon receiving news of federal troops in Macon, Parker decided to move to Augusta and loaded the treasury and bank assets onto a train at the Washington rail depot. Upon arriving in Augusta on April 18th, Parker could not convince either Confederate General Birkett Fry or Commodore William Hunter to take command of the treasury and bank assets. Neither wanted to accept responsibility for such vulnerable cargo. Realizing this, Parker decided that the best course of action would be to turn them over instead to President Davis, whom he hoped would be in Abbeville, South Carolina.

On the way to Abbeville, Parker passed through Washington once again in order to separate the bank assets from the treasure, and deposited them both in the Bank of Georgia branch on the town square. Parker met Davis and his party in Abbeville when they arrived May 2nd. At this time, the treasury was released from Parker's command, the Corps of Midshipmen guarding it was disbanded, and it was turned over to John H. Reagan, the Acting Secretary of the Treasury.

By this time, Breckinridge's four thousand cavalry troops, who had joined the treasury a few days prior, were becoming angry. For months, they had been deprived of rations, supplies, and, most importantly, their pay. The troops nearly broke out in mutiny, fearing that the treasury would be seized any day by federal troops and that they would not get paid. To placate them, Breckinridge agreed to pay out, $108,322.90 total from the treasury, at approximately $26 per soldier. The next day, May 3rd, Captain Micajah Clark assumed the role of Acting Treasurer and dispensed the remaining treasury, totaling approximately $144,700. $56,116 went to cabinet

members, officers, soldiers and others comprising the Confederate government.[15] The remaining $86,000 in gold in bullion was paid to Lieutenant Commander James A. Semple, who had been instructed to transport it to either Charleston or Savannah. From there, it was to be shipped to Nassau, Bahamas or Liverpool, England, but it likely never made it. Semple seems to have stashed the gold with several friends in Savannah, and accessed it whenever he needed money. One friend, William Howell, absconded to Montreal with the gold in order to start a business and a new life. A more detailed account can be found in Millett and White's *The Rebel and the Rose*.

Thus, the last of the Confederate treasury was completely dispensed and gone for good, and was not part of the gold that would later be robbed on May 24th. From this point on, the only money handled by the last of the Confederate government were the Virginia bank assets, which had been stored safely in the Bank of Georgia since being deposited there on April 23rd. However, as the Confederate leadership had feared, federal troops – Captain Lot Abraham and the 4th Iowa Cavalry unit – arrived and garrisoned the city on May 4th, and the next day, Abraham confiscated the $450,000 in bank assets on behalf of the federal government and held them in Washington. A few weeks later, Federal Provost Marshall General Marsena Rudolph Patrick permitted bank assets to be returned to Richmond under cavalry guard. On May 24th, five wagons with two sergeants, five privates, five teamsters of the 4th Iowa Cavalry, and four Richmond bank representatives loaded the funds onto wagons and left town, with Abbeville, South Carolina as its intermediate destination on the way to Richmond.[16]

News of the wagon train likely traveled fast amongst the thousands of dirty, exhausted, and desperate returning ex-Confederate soldiers in Washington. The relative security provided by the various Confederate officials who had dealt with the treasury was now gone, and the

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[15] Davis, *The Long Surrender*, 129.
[16] Waters, "The Missing Confederate Gold: Raid at Chennault, Georgia, May 24, 1865."

safety of the wagon train was non-existent due to the environment in Washington. Because the town was a railroad hub for returning Confederate soldiers, by late May, its streets were "swarming with people", with "the shattered remains of Lee's army" arriving in an "endless stream…of trains going and coming at all hours."[17] The swarms of soldiers created a tense feeling in the town that was only compounded by the threat of more federal troops.

On the evening of May 24th, the wagon train and guard camped at the Chennault plantation, located approximately sixteen miles from the center of town. They camped near the house of The Reverend Abraham Dionysus Chennault, a highly regarded Methodist preacher in the community. His niece Mary Ann Chennault Shumate later recounted that her father, John N. Chennault, permitted the wagons to park in his enclosed horse lot that night. Close to midnight, twenty or so men on horseback surprised the sleeping camp and robbed the wagons. The men broke open the wooden kegs and filled whatever they could – saddle bags, pockets, pant legs – and rode off into the night. About $40,000 in gold and silver coin lay spilled on the ground due to the haste of the departing thieves, and a count by bank officials revealed that $251,029.90 had been stolen. Over the next few days, former Brigadier General Edward Porter Alexander recovered $70,000 from people who lived nearby who had helped themselves to the coins scattered around the site of the robbery. $10,000 of that was recovered from former slaves. Alexander was able to return to town with approximately $111,000 (including the $40,000 found on the ground immediately after the robbery). The remaining $159,929.10 went on to Abbeville by wagon and then rail to Richmond. The robbers successfully escaped with $179,000, which remains unaccounted for.[18]

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[17] Eliza Frances Andrews, *The War-Time Journal of a Georgia Girl, 1864-1865* (Macon Ga: Ardivan Press, 1960), 183.
[18] Davis, *The Long Surrender*, 185.

Though the Confederate government was disbanded, and the treasury exhausted, the missing gold's life had just begun. From this point in time onwards, its legacy would be remembered and retold by a variety of communities in order to reflect their understanding and interpretation of the robbery, the Confederacy, and the Civil War.

CHAPTER 2

A Legend is Born: Initial Interpretations of the Robbery

A modern reader would assume that the Washington gold robbery would have been a well-publicized event, reported on by at least local and regional papers, if not national news sources. Instead, it seems, the robbery appeared in no newspapers after it occurred. I was unable to locate any newspapers from the summer of 1865 that so much as referenced in passing the gold or its disappearance. It cannot definitively be concluded that the robbery never made the news without having the full historical record, since many newspapers have been lost to history. A possible explanation for silence about the robbery is that it was simply lost among the chaos of post war Washington. If this is true, this would suggest that the robbery and the gold involved only became important when those who had a personal connection to it began discussing their experiences. When these people projected their personal feelings onto the robbery, it shifted from an obscure happening to part of collective memory. Much more than gold, according to these accounts, was robbed from Southerners that night.

One of the best primary sources concerning the gold robbery is the diary of Elizabeth Frances "Fanny" Andrews, first created in 1865 but published in 1908. Her diary is itself a fascinating document, with editor Spencer Bidwell King, Jr. writing in his introduction that he once heard Richard B. Harwell, an expert on Southern books, call the diary "one of the most significant diaries of the Civil War period to come out of Georgia…ranked alongside Mary Boykin Chesnut's."[19] King further explains that "both diaries reflect vividly the trials and hardships of war at the home front and the attitudes, prejudices, and opinions of two highly

[19] Andrews, *The War-Time Journal of a Georgia Girl, 1864-1865*, xi.

cultured and entertaining women."[20] Andrews' diary provides a unique perspective on the robbery and its aftermath. Andrews was born on August 10th, 1840 into an upper class family in Washington. The Andrews were part of a wealthy community – most of their friends owned enormous plantations with many slaves. Though her father was a lawyer who did not own slaves nor support the Confederacy, Andrews was a Rebel at heart. Her romantic appreciation of Georgia's independence and her admiration and pride in the spirit and dignity of the South are effusively expressed in nearly every entry. Her disgust for Yankees is equally fervent, propelled by the suffering of the discharged soldiers she saw pass through Washington on their way home from the war. Andrews' perspective on the robbery is primarily informed by her broken heart and bewilderment at the changes and chaos she observed in Washington. Later, her anger, bitterness, and outright hatred of the federal troops who descended on the town in search of the missing gold would lead her to describe the incident much differently than she had originally recorded when the robbery first occurred.

The robbery of the Richmond bank funds occurred near midnight on May 24th. On May 25th, just one day afterwards, Andrews writes about her family friend General Elzey, who "…has been led to change his plan of going to Charlotte in a wagon, by news of the robbery of the Richmond banks. Five hundred thousand dollars in specie had been secretly packed and shipped from this place [Washington] back to Richmond, in wagons, but the train was waylaid by robbers and plundered between here and Abbeville, somewhere near the Savannah River."[21]

In her earlier entries, Andrews mostly worries about the ex-Confederate soldiers' lice infestations and sickly appearances, as well as her own family's discomfort due to inflation and the scarcity of good food available in town. Andrews has ignored the war and politics

[20] Ibid., xiv.
[21] Ibid., 268.

surrounding it until this point. Now, however, she is interested enough in the robbery to write a good deal about it in her diary. Indeed, it takes up her entire entry for the day and the day after. Her distinction between the treasury and the bank assets, and her speculation that "it is thought [the robbers] mistook it for the remains of the Confederate treasury" demonstrate that originally, locals like Andrews knew the correct details of the event.[22]

The next day, May 26th, she describes a Confederate officer, General Porter Alexander C.S.A., and his mission to arrest the robbers and recover the stolen gold. Alexander rode out with a small posse in order to "arrest such of the guilty ones as could be found" and though he found some robbers who were being sheltered by the nearby people, he was unable to arrest them successfully.[23] Andrews' tone here is quite sympathetic towards Alexander, who was also a Washington native and well-liked by its residents.[24] In her description of his failed attempt to arrest the robbers, Andrews' tone shifts to hopelessness and sadness. She describes the town as being "filled with lawless bands that call themselves Rebels or Yankees, as happens to suit their convenience."[25] To Andrews, the robbery and subsequent bungled arrest serves as proof that she and the rest of the South "are utterly and thoroughly wretched!" and that "the whole country is in disorder."[26] Andrews clearly feels that it is not Alexander's fault that the local people harbored and protected the robbers, thus interfering with his efforts to punish them. Andrews sides with Alexander and appreciates his efforts to confiscate the money and question and detain the robbers.

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[22] Ibid.
[23] Ibid., 269.
[24] Frances Harding Casstevens, *Edward A. Wild and the African Brigade in the Civil War* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2003), 219.
[25] Andrews, *The War-Time Journal of a Georgia Girl, 1864-1865*, 269.
[26] Ibid., 270.

Later in her May 26th entry, Andrews demonstrates her understanding of how the robbery will be remembered by people in the future: not only as proof of a nation's defeat, but also as a bizarre occurrence. She concludes that in town, where "so many strange things are happening every day, nothing seems incredible," and, looking forward, writes "all the money and plate that lives through these troublous times will have strange histories attached to it."[27] Because the original manuscript of her diary has not survived, it is unclear whether or not Andrews' observation was unusually prophetic or added in before publication in 1908. In any case, her statement certainly held true throughout the intervening one hundred and fifty years.

In mid-July of 1865, Union officer Brigadier General Edward A. Wild, U.S.A. was sent to Wilkes County by the Freedmen's Bureau to investigate claims that former slave owners were still holding newly freed people as slaves.[28] While there, Wild was approached by an ex-slave, Angelina, from the Chennault plantation. She claimed that not only had the white Chennault family aided the gold robbers, but they were also concealing some on the plantation. Wild and his men chose to pursue the claim – or as Andrews describes it, "turned [their] attention to more lucrative business" – and interrogated the Chennaults.[29] They killed the family dog, imprisoned the family in the county courthouse, and stole what little jewelry and silver they could find. No gold was found, despite the torture inflicted upon the family.

Andrews hates Wild simply because he is a Yankee, describing him as a "most atrocious villain" and "a bloodhound."[30] Even Wild's Union Army superiors were appalled at his cruelty, later removing him of his rank. However, Andrews has slightly different reasons for hating him

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[27]'Plate' is an archaic term referring to gold or silver currency.
Ibid., 269.
[28] Casstevens, *Edward A. Wild and the African Brigade in the Civil War*, 226.
[29] Andrews, *The War-Time Journal of a Georgia Girl, 1864-1865*, 353.
[30] Ibid., 358.

besides his being a Yankee and his cruelty. She hates Wild because he dared torture the Chennault family and treat "a sterling old Wilkes county planter…worse than we would do a runaway negro."[31] Even more shocking is Wild's reasoning for singling out the Chennaults: "the lying accusation of a negro."[32] In torturing the Chennaults specifically, and on the orders of a "negro" no less, Wild transgressed Southern social code by daring to pursue a wealthy respectable planter family.[33] Andrews bitterly decries how "Yankees pretend to be a civilized people! And these precious missionaries of the gospel of abolitionism have come out…to enlighten us benighted Southerners on our duty to the negroes" and, still worse, how these "Yankees" have the nerve to treat a white person like a "negro."[34] Wild's reign of terror he inflicted upon the town demonstrates to Andrews and other wealthy Washingtonians that the "robbery business furnishes a good exposition of Yankee character" and "each one that meddles with [the gold] goes off with some of it sticking to his fingers…let a Yankee alone for scenting out plunder."[35]

There exists a clear contrast in Andrews' opinion and retelling of the robbery before both General Alexander, C.S.A.'s recovery efforts and after those of General Wild, U.S.A. Of course, Wild's approach was more violent than Alexander's, and founded on less evidence. However, the change in her language hints at something more. Andrews' conception of the robbery has fundamentally shifted due to the Wild-Chennault incident. Previously, the gold robbery signified to Andrews that the war was really over, and her beloved Confederacy truly defeated. After Wild's shocking behavior, however, the gold robbery came to represent Yankee greed, disrespect

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[31] Ibid., 353.
[32] Ibid.
[33] 'Planter' refers specifically to a wealthy plantation owner who has twenty or more slaves.
[34] Andrews, *The War-Time Journal of a Georgia Girl, 1864-1865*, 354.
[35] Ibid., 358.

for Southern racial hierarchy, and above all, embodied the bitterness Andrews shared with most Southerners long after the end of the war.

The Wild-Chennault incident spurred Andrews' father to suggest that she "might make some money by writing an account of this robbery business for some sensational Northern newspaper."[36] Instead of drafting a factual account that she intended to publish under her own name, Andrews wrote a "sensational article" in order to "let the Yankees know how mean they are."[37] By publishing a dramatized account from the perspective of " a Yankee [her]self", she could "hit the wretches a few good hard raps over the head that they would not take from a Southerner."[38] Andrews feels the only way she can give voice to her criticism and loathing is through a satirical article. The existence and subsequent publication of the article, entitled "A Romance of Robbery" and published in the New York World on August 21st, 1865, demonstrates how the gold robbery was manipulated to prove the opinion and personal feeling of whomever was writing about it. Andrews, because of her Rebel sympathies and her emotional and physical proximity to the gold, used the story of the robbery as a way to demonstrate Northern malice and wretchedness. By publishing this article, and later, her diary, Andrews joined a tradition of Southern female writers, whose authorship of "sentimental fiction" allowed them to "remember the Civil War as a time of suffering rather than heroism, of joint sacrifice rather than manly valor"[39]

In 1903, Andrews asked Mary Ann Shumate (née Chennault) to give her account of "the outrages perpetrated upon the Chennault family of Lincoln County by Gen. Wilde [sic] of

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[36] Ibid., 353.
[37] Ibid.
[38] Ibid.
[39] Alice Fahs and Joan Waugh, *The Memory of the Civil War in American Culture*, Civil War America (Series) (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 261.

Massachusetts, in July 1865."[40] Along with her mother, aunt, father, uncle, and brother, Mary Ann Shumate was tortured, interrogated, and imprisoned by the aforementioned General Wild. Andrews made an effort to capture what Shumate said as accurately as possible, and had Shumate and her sister Sallie Ramsey (née Chennault) revise the written copy to verify its correctness, which they affirmed with their signatures. Andrews herself was in the process of editing her own diary for publication, and finished it in 1908, and this process likely motivated her to seek out and capture others' stories, particularly those of her peers, such as Shumate.

Shumate's account primarily discusses Wild's torture and interrogation of her family, beginning with Wild's "oceans of soldiers" who shot and killed Jeff Davis – the family dog – "punching him through with their bayonets…laughing and hoorahing when they shot him because they had killed Jeff Davis."[41] After this disturbing story, Shumate describes how her father John, uncle "Nish" (Dionysus), and brother Frank were taken into the woods, and hung up by their thumbs with their arms tied behind their backs until they "begged the Yankees to shoot them dead rather than suffer so."[42] All three men's hands swelled up and turned black and it was "a long time before they could use them."[43] Next, the soldiers locked Shumate, her mother, and her aunt Deasy (Ardesia, Dionysus' wife) in a room in the house and forced them to strip off their clothes in order to have Angelina, the female slave mentioned by Andrews, search them. The women cried at the indignity, yet Wild's men were unmoved. Although no gold was found on the property, all six of the family were taken prisoner in the county courthouse, where they were held for several days until a Mr. Sam Barnett and Andrews' father convinced officials in

[40] Mary Ann Shumate, "The Torturing Of The Chenault Family," ed. Eliza Frances Andrews, *The Georgia Historical Quarterly*, April 15, 1903.
[41] Ibid.
[42] Ibid.
[43] Ibid.

Augusta to have them released. The incident is described as quite traumatic for Shumate and the rest of the Chennault family, and turned them very bitterly against Yankees, since, "after all, we were robbed by the Yankee government instead of our robbing anybody."[44] What they are robbed of is clear: not only their personal dignity by being searched and tortured, but their dignity and honor as a fallen nation and society.

In addition to the gruesome details of the Wild incident, Shumate offers her take on the identity of the robbers. Shumate believed the robbers were ex-Confederates who "didn't know the money belonged to the banks" and instead believed it to be the property of the Confederacy." Believing Yankees would "take it anyhow, they thought that they, being Confederates, had a better right to it than the people that had come down here to rob us of our property."[45] Strangely, no condemnation is cast on the robbers themselves even though people seemed to have known who they were. Instead, the robbers are absolved of all guilt because they are presumed to be Confederate veterans, suffering after a long war that had ended in a bitter defeat. The robbers are therefore justified in taking what they thought was their money. The fact that Shumate readily accepts the robbers' suspected rationale for the theft proves that it was the subsequent torture of her family that made the robbery noteworthy and perhaps remembered at all. The theft was, to contemporary townspeople, justified and even expected given the destitute state veterans were in by May of 1865.

Published in 1903 and 1908 respectively, Shumate's and Andrews' accounts are what enabled the conversion of the robbery from one of many examples of post-war chaos into a meaningful event. Because of Shumate's and Andrews' bitterness, undoubtedly filtered through and amplified by the painful humiliation of Reconstruction, the robbery acquired significance.

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[44] Ibid.
[45] Ibid.

Shumate's and Andrews' anger and sadness shaped collective memory of the robbery and the gold involved, which came to symbolize the lingering resentment harbored by Southerners after the war.

Besides implanting the robbery firmly in public discourse, Shumate's account also changed how the facts of the event are retold, specifically, the location of the robbery. Most versions of the robbery story – either in tourism materials, or treasure legends, or oral histories – place the robbery at the Chennault plantation. However, the only source this presumption is based on is Shumate's account. Even Andrews' diary makes no mention of the location in her May 24th and May 25th entries – only after Wild tortures the Chennault family does she even mention their name. The Chennault plantation as the location of the robbery is further called into question by the recent discovery of an account written by Mary F. House, who lived with her father and widowed sister, Susan Moss, at Moss's house near the Chennault plantation. In her account, the wagon train parked, and was subsequently robbed, at *her* house on the night of May 24th.[46] This idea is supported by the testimony of a few bank officials who were present with the treasure, who remembered a small, one story wooden house – matching the description of the Moss house, and not of the grand Chennault plantation mansion.[47] In addition, it is very likely that Shumate's account of the wagons' presence at her house is influenced by the suffering she endured, and undoubtedly impacted by the almost forty years between the event and the 1903 transcribing of her account.

If there is evidence to support the Moss house as the site of the robbery, then why is the Chennault house traditionally cited as the location of the robbery? The reason is simple: Wild's

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[46] Mary F. House, "Some Incidents of the Civil War as Related by an Eye Witness," 1925.
[47] The site of the Moss house (which burned sometime in the 1970s) is home to a llama farm as of July 2015.

torture of the Chennault family, and the lasting outrage generated by Shumate's account of it, cemented the connection between the robbery, the mistreatment of the Chennault family, and the Chennault plantation. Collective memory of the robbery is affected by the emotional trauma associated with it.

B.A. Botkin, prominent American folklorist, notes despite "occasional self-consciousness and unreliability…the best of the officers' writings, are…full of nuggets of talk and incident."[48] The officer, and more generally, the veteran memoir genre, sprang to life after the end of the war, prompted by the collective understanding by veterans that "as time passed and their numbers dwindled, the memories of their respective causes faced the danger of disappearing."[49] Robert E. Lee's death in 1870 spurred on the "heightened sense of urgency" not only surrounding the organization of veterans group, but also, the "commitment to the preservation of Confederate memories."[50] Confederate veterans were active in the generation and preservation of memories about their shared wartime experiences, recollecting not a "whitewashed memory of the war," but instead, "issues and instances – often painful, but vitally important to those who had lived through them and now sought to contribute their experiences to the national identity."[51] Most veterans' written works were not bland retellings of these painful events. Instead, their writings on these topics "functioned in…more public ways," with personal memoirs hardly serving as "benign treatises on the war's central issues…the authors of these works tended to provide specific points of view – often envisioned for friendly audiences."[52] Sharing stories and

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[48] Benjamin Albert Botkin, *A Civil War Treasury of Tales, Legends, and Folklore* (New York: Random House, 1960), xix.
[49] M. Keith Harris, *Across the Bloody Chasm : The Culture of Commemoration among Civil War Veterans*, Conflicting Worlds (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2014), 7.
[50] Ibid., 19.
[51] Ibid., 7.
[52] Ibid., 18.

even tall tales of what had happened to them was a way for veterans to process the hardship and atrocities they had experienced, as evidenced by the robust genre of prisoner-of-war accounts, whose authors "saw to it that commemorative efforts were heavily weighted with negative imagery."[53] Veterans' memoirs that dealt with disaster, pain, and defeat were welcomed, as the suffering they portrayed served to justify the legitimacy of the Confederate cause, and therefore, the moral correctness of those who fought for it.

The instinct to preserve the honorable reputation of the Confederacy can be seen quite clearly in the accounts of Captain Micajah Clark (published 1881), General Edward Porter Alexander (published 1883), and Captain William Harwar Parker (published 1893). Though these Confederate officers did not suffer as badly as infantry or cavalry soldiers did, their memoirs still convey regret and sadness over both the robbery and related events at the end of the war, and how discussion of those events has affected the memory and reputation of the Confederacy.

Though he was not present during the robbery itself, Captain Micajah Clark, C.S.N.'s role in the Confederate gold saga was that he briefly served as the Acting Treasurer of the Confederacy for the few weeks of April he was in contact with the treasury. He was in charge of the disbursement of the last $144,700 of the treasury to various cabinet members, officials, and soldiers. Clark wrote a letter to the editor of the Clarksville, Tennessee *Courier-Journal,* which was published in 1881, in order to "compile…a full statement of the disposition made of the Confederate specie at the close of the war."[54] While Clark's article goes on to methodically and carefully do just that, his true purpose, according to the editor, is to "forever set at rest the

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[53] Ibid., 17.
[54] Micajah Clark, "The Last Days of the Confederate Treasury and What Became of Its Specie," *Southern Historical Society Papers* 9, no. 10 (October 1881): 542–56.

miserable slanders against President Davis, which have been so often refuted only to be revived by the malignity of his enemies."[55]

Though Clark's account never explicitly mentions the robbery of the bank assets, nor does he mention the Chennault incident, the idea that the article exists to put unflattering rumors about Jefferson Davis to rest shows that Davis' detractors used the gold robbery as shameful rumor-fodder. The robbery and careless, frantic mishandling of the funds leading up to it undoubtedly enhanced and even caused this association to occur in the public mind. The uncertainty regarding the stolen gold's whereabouts only emphasized the bumbling and incompetent appearance of the Confederate government and its war effort in its final days.

As stated previously, Clark makes no mention of the robbery itself in his article. However, there are three areas of interest in his article. The first is his pointed clarification of the separation of the bank funds and the Confederate treasury. Clark, slightly defensively, writes that the bank funds were never mixed in with the Treasury money, and that the bank officers were entirely "devoted to their duties" and "never left [the gold]."[56] It is clear Clark hopes to dispel any idea that the bank officials were less than devoted due to the fact that the gold was robbed under their supposedly close watch. The bank officials present during the robbery, though Southerners, were not affiliated with the Confederate government. Though he could have easily condemned them as incompetent, Clark is careful to shift any blame away from them, in order to categorize the robbery as a dramatic heist rather than a careless mistake.

The second point of interest in the article is Clark's debunking of the popular idea that the Treasury contained an enormous, untapped stash of wealth. If it had, he writes in an exasperated

[55] Ibid.
[56] Ibid.

tone, "certainly the brave men of our armies would never have suffered so severely."[57] Again, Clark is here attempting to dispel hurtful rumors, this time of the Confederate government's supposed greed and callousness towards its starving, shoeless soldiers. He concludes this discussion by stating that the "history of the Virginia banks' specie would make a chapter of itself" and he will therefore "drop further mention of it."[58] Though willing to defend the bank officials responsible for the robbery, Clark seeks to distance himself, and thus, Confederate command, from the embarrassing and expensive mistake. As it is, the soldiers who had received Treasury payouts (which he meticulously accounts), "jingl[ed] their silver dollars on every road [and] told the tale" of their new small fortunes.[59] Thanks to these loose-lipped soldiers, Clark "found on [his] return the wildest rumors through the country as to the amount it had contained…five million dollars was the smallest amount mentioned."[60] In his conclusion, Clark returns to his original mission of protecting Davis' and the Confederacy's reputations, calling on the reader to "preserve that untarnished, and defend it from slanderous insinuations."[61] Simply put, Clark's article is damage control, and the fact that he thought it was necessary to write it shows that even by 1881, sixteen years after its occurrence, the gold and its robbery were used to construct anti-Confederate sentiment.

Brigadier General Edward Porter Alexander, C.S.A., had returned home to Washington from the war on May 6th. A few days after the robbery, Alexander went to the area surrounding the Chennault plantation in order to arrest and recover whomever and whatever he could. Alexander's account of his involvement with the gold was published in the October 17th, 1883

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[57] Ibid.
[58] Ibid.
[59] Ibid.
[60] Ibid.
[61] Ibid.

edition of the *Atlanta Constitution*, and was evidently inspired by a similar one written by a Captain McLendon. Though I could not locate McLendon's original article, based on Alexander's article referring to it, it seems that in it, McLendon recounted his own version of the robbery. Later, a reporter with McLendon's apparently recent article in mind asked Alexander for his own version of the events.

Alexander agreed to tell his story, despite the fact that "the matter is so well known."[62] Here, he implies that by 1883, eighteen years later, the robbery was still prominent in public memory – enough so that "it is hardly necessary for [Alexander] to do more than state the leading points."[63] The first of these leading points is one of clarification – the money that was robbed, Alexander reminds the reader, "was not Confederate money and never did belong to the Confederate treasure."[64] Not only was the money not Confederate in origin, but it was also never "under the control of the Confederate government, any of its military officers…[or] any Confederate officers in Washington."[65] Alexander is expressing the same emphatic distancing that Clark employed earlier in his own denial of official Confederate involvement in the affair. Distancing the Confederacy from legal ownership of the gold also distances it from metaphorical ownership of its fate.

Alexander then describes his personal role in the aftermath of the robbery, consisting of his attempt to arrest those involved in it. Though he was able to find and arrest "five or six of the raiders," when he orders them to ride with him back to town, they all armed themselves with

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[62] Edward Porter Alexander, "Confederate Treasure: General Alexander Replies to Captain McLendon," *The Atlanta Constitution*, October 17, 1883.
[63] Ibid.
[64] Ibid.
[65] Ibid.

guns, making it clear to Alexander that he "could not carry them off without a fight."[66] Judge Reese, who had accompanied Alexander's party intending to enforce the law, revealed that he also had no legal authority to take robbers prisoner with force, nor did Alexander or any other officers – after all, this was forty-six days after Lee's formal surrender. To Alexander, the robbery and subsequent failed arrests he attempted to make proved that the Confederacy's legitimacy, and his authority derived from it, were both gone for good.

Alexander was able to defuse the situation without any shooting because the prisoners promised to return the money, which Alexander convinced them to do by informing them of its true origins – the Richmond banks. Consistent with Shumate's account, Alexander writes that the thieves originally robbed the train "under the impression that the money was Confederate treasure" but once informed it was privately-owned money, belonging to Southerners in Virginia, they were "willing to surrender it."[67] It seems at this point, these thieves, perhaps ex-Confederate soldiers themselves, were more loyal to their fellow citizens than the government that had failed to provide them with food, clothing, and pay during their military service.

To conclude the article, Alexander acknowledges the existence of popular speculation regarding the fate of the gold. He finishes his account with the recovered money replaced in the bank on the town square, explaining that "there all my connection with it ceased, and I never received personally one dollar of it," with a hint of exasperation at the idea that he was thought to have been on the take. "Of course," writes Alexander, "the matter was very much talked of all over the country…Popular report has it that the money is still in…Washington and the Richmond banks have never been able to recover it."[68] Alexander knew that there were many incorrect

[66] Ibid.
[67] Ibid.
[68] Ibid.

versions of the story in circulation and presented this article as his personal attempt to set the record straight – both with regards to the Confederacy's lack of involvement and therefore the preservation of its dignity.

Captain William Harwar Parker, C.S.N. was the first person in charge of guarding the gold as it moved out of Richmond and until its arrival in Abbeville, at which point he relinquished command of the treasury to the current Acting Secretary of the Treasury, John H. Reagan. In 1893, Parker wrote a letter to the editor of the *Richmond Dispatch* to clear up the "many incorrect statements [which] have appeared in the public prints…concerning the preservation and disposition of the Confederate treasure."[69] Parker was inspired to do so because he believed "a true…account of *where it was* from April 2, 1865 to May 2, 1865 may prove interesting to the public."[70] Parker's account does not include the night of the robbery (May 24th), although he does tell a few stories tangentially related to the robbery.

Parker is the first writer to note the entertainment value of the robbery and the stories related to it, and recounts these stories with wit and humor. First, despite his evident trust in the Confederacy, Parker states that, in his opinion "a good deal of the money was never accounted for."[71] Due to the fact that this account deals with the pre-robbery timeframe, this is not a reference to the disappearance of gold then, but rather a reference to specie that was miscounted or perhaps more dishonestly, wandered off with officers who were supposed to protect it. What remains, according to Parker, is "what sailors call a 'Flemish' account of it."[72] It is uncertain if Parker believed this in 1865, if he became convinced of it in the almost thirty years since, or, if

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[69] William Harwar Parker, "The Gold and Silver in the Confederate States Treasury," *The Virginia Dispatch*, July 16, 1893.
[70] Ibid.
[71] Ibid.
[72] From archaic British slang, referring to an amount less than expected.

he is simply slyly acknowledging the idea that the treasury trickled out into the wrong hands. It is unclear to what degree citizens knew about the Confederate officials who had received large cash payments from the treasury, but it is likely that rumors about these payments were circulated.

Having ended his discussion and opinion of the Confederate treasury's disbursement, Parker relates the story of what he terms "The Mysterious Box," which he did not experience or hear of firsthand but rather read it in the papers "several years ago."[73] Shumate's diary describes the same event in much clearer detail: in early May of 1865, General Breckinridge and his men camped at the house of Mrs. J. D. Moss, and left with her a box of jewelry that had been donated by Southern ladies for the Confederate cause. Shumate said she herself had never seen "such a splendid collection of silver and jewels as was in that box." [74] Moss kept the box for several weeks "until the Yankees heard of it and came and got it."[75]

Parker's version of the story is less detailed, and differs from Moss' version. According to Parker, the man who left the box of jewelry with Moss was "Mr. [Jefferson] Davis and his Cabinet beyond a doubt" – not the less-powerful Breckenridge.[76] In Parker's version, instead of Yankees returning to retrieve the box, the fetcher is instead "a strange man" who claimed to have been sent to retrieve it. "Whether he was really sent back for it or was a despicable thief, will probably never be known," writes Parker.[77] Parker's writing here has an air of adopted, self-conscious mystery. I assume Shumate's account is correct, which is likely since she lived very close to the Moss house, and, describes in her diary that the Yankees took the box and made her add her own cheap jewelry and the family silver in with it when they arrived at her house. It

[73] Parker, "The Gold and Silver in the Confederate States Treasury."
[74] Shumate, "The Torturing Of The Chenault Family."
[75] Ibid.
[76] Parker, "The Gold and Silver in the Confederate States Treasury."
[77] Ibid.

seems, then, that Parker's version is purposely embellished for pure entertainment value. Being able to claim that no one knows what became of the mysterious box or the mysterious man who took it is too tempting of a story leave out of his account. In his last anecdote of his account, Parker tells the extremely implausible story of one of his friends, a Colonel Wood, who escaped to Cuba after escaping Federal custody. Wood stole a rowboat, rowed down the Florida coast, commandeered a gunboat in the possession of Confederate deserters, and finally arrived safely in Cuba. This story is undoubtedly false, or at the very least, generously embellished. Parker's inclusion of these three deviations from the narrative of the treasury's disbursement demonstrates that he associates the treasury and the robbery with these other tall tales and mysterious speculations he has overheard or created. Parker's account, and the fact that it includes what he thought contemporary readers would want to hear demonstrates that popular speculation about the gold had already become widespread in the thirty years since the robbery. Parker's account, then, exists at the very beginning of the next generation of Confederate gold treasure legends.

Otis Ashmore (1853-1934) is an instrumental figure in the preservation and discussion of Georgia's history. The Superintendent of the Chatham County school system, Ashmore also was interested in the genealogy and history of Lincoln County, his hometown. Ashmore published his article, "The Story of the Virginia Banks Funds: A Dramatic Episode of the War Between the States," in the December 1918 issue of *The Georgia Historical Quarterly*. The content of his article is not unique: by this point, several texts have covered the same set of events. Instead, Ashmore's article is important because it is the first text to analyze the robbery and those involved from a historical perspective. His analysis is historiographic in nature, as he assembles the Shumate transcription, some of Alexander's account, and treasury records from 1865 in order to reconstruct the events of May 1865 and "one of the most dramatic episodes" of the Civil

War.[78] Supposedly Ashmore's half-brother, upon hearing of the gold's presence in town, set off to rob it, and was killed in the melee the night of the robbery. Despite this personal connection to the robbery, Ashmore's perspective is removed, and he is purposely distant for the sake of historical analysis.

By the time Ashmore wrote his article in 1918, the robbery as a concept had been transformed in public discussion and collective memory. By that time, the robbery was a well-remembered event worthy of historical analysis, in contrast with the virtual silence around it in 1865. The experiences and writings of Andrews, Shumate, Clark, Alexander, and Parker imbued the robbery, and the gold involved, with meaning and significance – a pattern that would come to be repeated in the next hundred years by a variety of communities who interacted with it.

[78] Otis Ashmore, "The Story of the Virginia Banks Funds: A Dramatic Episode of the War Between the States," *The Georgia Historical Quarterly* 2, no. 4 (n.d.): 171–97.

CHAPTER 3

"A Casket Full of Precious Memoirs": The Town of Washington's Conception of its History

In the town of Washington exists a small yet stately historic library – the Mary Willis Library. Built in 1888 as the very first free library in Georgia, it is home to a unique artifact.[79] Under a three-part panel of stained glass Tiffany windows sits an enormous, magnificent iron and leather chest which supposedly belonged to Confederate President Jefferson Davis and held the remainder of the Confederate treasury's gold.

The treasure chest. Personal photo. July 2015

Davis brought the chest to Washington when he visited in May 1865 and left it there when he continued his flight south to Irwinville, Georgia, where he was captured by Federal troops just a week later. Though the chest languished in the basement of the old bank building on the town

[79] Kathleen Walls, "Washington, Georgia: A Confederate Treasure," *Visit Georgia Online*, n.d.

square for nearly fifty years before being moved its current location in the library, the chest was never forgotten about. Instead, its existence and prominent display in Washington demonstrates the permanence of the Lost Cause in the town's collective memory and identity, the town's conception of the war, and the centrality of the gold story to the town's history of its role in the war.

Jefferson Davis arrived in Washington on May 3rd on his way south towards Florida and was greeted as a hero. A crowd of townspeople gathered to see him, crying and waving in the town square. Davis represented "their lost hopes whose presence even then was so reassuring to them" despite the fact the Confederacy was at its bitter end.[80] The town's warm reception was partially due to his wife's recent visit, the existence of army supply depots there, and, perhaps most importantly, the presence of his cabinet officials who had preceded him, making Washington a "temporary sanctuary" as they disbanded the government.[81] Eliza Andrews, the young woman who recorded the gold robbery and its aftermath in her diary, described how her father, a staunch Unionist, "could not help admiring the man," so moved as he was by his dignity and poise in the face of defeat.[82] She further described the "wildest excitement" gripping the town due to Davis' presence, and that everyone greeted him "with every mark of respect due the president of a brave people."[83] This love and adulation showered upon Davis planted the seed for how he would be remembered by a town still emotionally invested in and loyal to the Confederacy long after his capture and arrest.

The next day, May 4th, Davis held the final cabinet meeting of the Confederacy in the old bank building on the town square. His last official act as president was appointing Captain

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[80] Davis, *The Long Surrender*, 126.
[81] Ibid.
[82] Andrews, *The War-Time Journal of a Georgia Girl, 1864-1865*, 204.
[83] Ibid., 201.

Micajah Clark as Acting Treasurer of the Confederacy, who was responsible for not only Davis' personal baggage from this point on, but also the remainder of the treasury, contained in three identical iron and leather chests holding an equal amount of gold specie, which he paid out to Confederate troops on May 3rd.[84] One of these chests, supposedly, is the chest that today exists in the Mary Willis Library. This last meeting, and subsequent disbanding, of the last of the Confederate government is an important event in both Washington and Confederate history. In the early 1900s, the old bank building was described as the "death chamber of the Confederacy" as part of unsuccessful efforts to preserve it.[85] Washington as the final resting place of the Confederacy was and is a motif that has been expounded upon in the one hundred and fifty years since the town originally earned that reputation.

Davis departed Washington on May 5th with a small cavalry escort, his wife, and children. After reaching Irwinville on May 10th, Federal troops caught up with him, captured him, and arrested him. The moment of his capture and arrest quickly became subject to ridicule due to the exaggerated claim that Davis was disguised as a woman, and wearing a dress and shawl, in order to hide him from the pursuing troops. In the days after his arrest, the northern press was eager to "proclaim: Jeff Davis Captured in Hoop Skirts"… "Jeff in Petticoats," and cartoonists were to stir laughter for months to come at the expense of Davis."[86] Though there is a small grain of truth to these claims – Davis, in the confusion of the early morning, accidentally picked up his wife's cape when leaving their tent, and later, she threw her own shawl around him

[84] Davis, *The Long Surrender*, 127.
Clark, "The Last Days of the Confederate Treasury and What Became of Its Specie."
[85] Lauren Foreman, "Fight to Preserve Confederacy's Death Chamber from Hands of Iconoclasts," *The Sunny South*, June 6, 1903.
[86] Davis, *The Long Surrender*, 145.

in a protective gesture – the effect of these accounts was to compound the public loss of manhood, humiliation, and disgrace that Davis suffered upon capture.[87]

Though Davis had at times been a controversial figure during the war, with some Southerners blaming losses on his leadership, he was ultimately redeemed in Southern public opinion by his suffering.[88] Davis became a Christian martyr in the theology of the Lost Cause, the "culture religion" that gripped the South in the wake of its humiliating, devastating defeat.[89] Though the Confederacy had died, its spirit as personified by the Lost Cause's mythology, symbology, and ritual, "survived as a sacred presence, a holy ghost haunting the spirits and actions of post-Civil War Southerners."[90] If Robert E. Lee was the national hero of the cause, and Stonewall Jackson was a "stern Old Testament prophet-warrior", Davis was the "symbol of the South's holiness" as a figure whose suffering, like Christ's, redeemed the Southern people.[91] In an address to a 1910 reunion meeting of the United Confederate Veterans, Father E. C. DeLa Moriniere remarked that Davis "was a thousand times greater in the fetters and confinement of Fortress Monroe than in the Capitol of Richmond."[92] Davis' suffering was interpreted as not only wonderfully holy, but also his greatest act of servitude and leadership to the Southern people.

No group championed the Lost Cause – and Davis' beatification – as fervently as the United Daughters of the Confederacy. Founded in 1894, the group was an extension of ladies' auxiliary associations and social clubs, and dedicated itself to "honor the memory of those who served and those who fell in the service of the Confederate States…to protect, preserve and mark

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[87] Ibid., 143.
[88] Wilson, *Baptized in Blood: The Religion of the Lost Cause 1865-1920*, 50.
[89] David S. Williams, "Lost Cause Religion," *The New Georgia Encyclopedia*, May 15, 2005.
[90] Wilson, *Baptized in Blood: The Religion of the Lost Cause 1865-1920*, 1.
[91] Ibid., 51.
[92] Ibid.

the places made historic by Confederate valor…[and] to collect and preserve the material for a truthful history of the War Between the States."[93] The UDC did not simply honor Confederate dead. Instead, the UDC "raised the stakes of the Lost Cause by making it a movement about vindication" and sought to convert the memory of military defeat into a socio-cultural victory, "where states' rights and white supremacy remained intact."[94]

An obelisk erected by the UDC in Washington's town square. Personal photo. July 2015.

These efforts are clear in an article written by Mrs. Theo Green, a UDC member who lived in Washington, circa 1900. At this time, the chest had been kept in the basement of the old bank building since it had been left there in 1865. Now for sale (by whom, it is unclear), and keenly eyed by Northern relic hunters, the UDC undertook as its mission to preserve it. Though difficult to find records of Green specifically, her husband's employment records indicate she was likely a Washington resident, and therefore a member of 'The Last Cabinet' Chapter, No.

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[93] "History of the UDC | United Daughters of the Confederacy," accessed February 29, 2016, http://www.hqudc.org/history-of-the-united-daughters-of-the-confederacy/.
[94] Karen Lynne Cox, *Dixie's Daughters : The United Daughters of the Confederacy and the Preservation of Confederate Culture*, New Perspectives on the History of the South (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2003), 1.

295 of the UDC.[95] Her article advocated for donations to fund the preservation of the Confederate treasure chest, which she described as a "priceless treasure – a casket full of precious memoirs [sic]."[96] The chest, Green believed, kept alive the memory and final wishes of Davis, because it was he who left it in Washington, thus, "here it must remain."[97] The chapter had "undertaken to purchase this valuable souvenir", because owning the chest would advance their mission of "keeping alive in song and story, a love for our Southland" and would aid them in their fight "against poverty and despair…for white supremacy…for recognition in the halls of congress…for the truth of liberty."[98] Green pleaded on behalf of those she saw as true beneficiaries of the UDC's preservation efforts: children, who must be taught that their ancestors were not cowards, nor traitors fighting for an unjust cause, "but brave and honorable knights…not whipped in battle but overcome at last by great numbers and power."[99] The chest, she wrote, would be placed on display in the Mary Willis Library, with a list attached to it available where benefactors could write their names – accompanied, of course, by a "generous" donation.[100]

Though it remains unclear precisely how the treasure chest came to be permanently displayed in the Mary Willis Library, it remained there untouched until 1948, when the *Atlanta Journal Magazine* caught wind of its existence. Unopened due to the enormous locks and bolts securing it, the trunk would be opened at last when the *Magazine* brought with its reporters an

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[95] John Moody, ed., *Moody's Manual of Railroads and Corporation Securities* (New York: The Moody Corporation, 1906), 487.
Tommie Phillips LaCavera, *The History of the Georgia Division, of the United Daughters of the Confederacy, 1895-1995*, Centennial edition.., vol. 1 (Atlanta, Ga: The Division, 1995), 305.
[96] Theo M. Green, "Jefferson Davis' Camp Chest," *United Daughters of the Confederacy*, c 1900.
[97] Ibid.
[98] Ibid.
[99] Ibid.
[100] Ibid.

expert locksmith from Atlanta.[101] Over the years, the chest had sat on display, inspiring questions as to its purpose and contents. In an article written by Marion Boyd, correspondent for the *Augusta Chronicle* and sister of Mary Willis librarian Kathleen Colley, the library was imbued with "the enchantment of this gigantic, scarred, old money vault…a magic thing."[102] The chest's imposing presence supposedly sparked questions in the imaginative minds of the children who came to the library to poke at the chest with fishing wire and sticks: "What did it hold? Confederate gold? Priceless old manuscripts dealing with that tragic era? Jewels donated by the belles of that old regime to the Cause?"[103] The fact that children were in awe of the chest would have pleased Mrs. Theo Green, as the UDC focused on children as the next generation to continue Confederate values, which hinged on their frequent exposure to historical artifacts in order to "immerse them in the spirit of the Lost Cause."[104] Though these questions had heretofore remained unanswered, "the treasure chest did wonders for the library's circulation."[105] Colley had, many years ago, been offered the chance to have a locksmith open the chest for the price of $12.50. After considering it, she decided the money would be better spent on a copy of Audubon's *Birds of America*, content to allow the chest to remain as an enigmatic symbol of the Confederacy.

The chest itself proved extraordinarily difficult to open, with the ornate lock on the front actually discovered to be a decoy. The locksmith is described as having dumped an entire bottle of oil inside the real lock to soften the rust, which still snapped his screwdrivers and easily bent his tools, eventually forcing him to use a crowbar to pry open the "'tamper-proof, burglar-proof,

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[101] Andrews Sparks, "Opening The Confederate Treasure Chest," *The Atlanta Journal Magazine*, May 9, 1948.
[102] Mrs. Kenneth Boyd, "Jeff Davis' Gold," *Augusta Chronicle*, n.d.
[103] Ibid.
[104] Cox, *Dixie's Daughters*, 65.
[105] Sparks, "Opening The Confederate Treasure Chest."

iron safe.'"[106] When finally opened, there was "not a doggone thing!" remaining inside the chest.[107] The only thing giving any hint to the chest's past life was an etched iron plate with "300,000" engraved on it, which supposedly proves its use to hold three hundred thousand dollars worth of the Confederate treasury's gold.

It is a particularly fitting image –the treasure chest holding tightly to its secrets as the South held tightly to the Lost Cause, with its nearly unbreakable lock mirroring the South's desperate cling to antebellum values. The chest's unique position as an artifact connected with Davis associates it, and the vanished gold inside, with his martyrdom on behalf of the demise of the Confederacy. Both the chest and the gold retain a special, close relationship with the martyrdom and suffering narrative exemplified not only by Davis, but also the post-war South. The chest, and the gold that was once inside, serve a greater purpose than the spark for Lost Cause nostalgia – they are physical embodiments of the hurt, destruction, and loss that went into formulating the Lost Cause religion's grandly emotional spirituality and distinctively tight hold it has on its believers.

The chest is far from Washington's only monument, overt or implied, to the Lost Cause. The entire town is a living piece of history, a mood only heightened by the immaculately preserved antebellum homes there, numbering over one hundred. The lack of chain stores in town, the Confederate soldier monument in the town square (erected by the UDC in 1909), the elaborate county courthouse, and the *Gone With the Wind* mural splashed across an old brick building results in a deliberately cultivated historic feeling. The town and county it resides in is replete with metal historical markers, with one for every two hundred and eighty four people,

[106] Ibid.
[107] Ibid.

compared with DeKalb County, for example, where there is one historical marker for every seven thousand, six hundred and eighty three people.[108]

Towns and cities closely associated with significant Civil War events embraced the connection in the culture of memory-making immediately after the war. Richmond, the old Confederate capital, for example, quickly became "the eternal city of Southern dreams…[which] preserved the memory of its past and catered to the activities of the Lost Cause" by constructing monuments, graveyards, and museums.[109] If Richmond is the eternal city of the Confederacy, then Washington is perhaps the eternal small town, having eagerly embraced its reputation as home to prominent Confederate officials as well as its image of the Confederacy's final resting place. Washington bills itself to tourists as a destination that embodies the Old South: "When you visit Washington-Wilkes County, you may not unearth any Confederate Gold but you will certainly come away with a treasure trove of great memories!" reads one site.[110] The Chamber of Commerce describes Washington as the epitome of a Southern small town: "…complete with charm, beauty and of course hospitality which is usually exhibited in the form of a tall glass of iced sweet tea on the veranda!"[111]

Aside from its use of evocative Southern motifs such as glasses of sweet tea on verandas, the town touts one of its most famous natives as credit for its influential role in Southern history: Robert Toombs, Davis' first Secretary of State.[112] Toombs was a fire-eating secessionist despite his early career as a Union preservationist who spent the years immediately after the Civil War

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[108] U.S. Census Bureau, "Population Estimates, July 1, 2015, (V2015)," accessed February 28, 2016, http://www.census.gov/quickfacts/.
[109] Wilson, *Baptized in Blood: The Religion of the Lost Cause 1865-1920*, 18.
[110] Walls, "Washington, Georgia: A Confederate Treasure."
[111] "Welcome to Washington-Wilkes," *Http://www.washingtonwilkes.org/*, n.d.
[112] NGE Staff, "Robert Toombs (1810-1885)," *New Georgia Encyclopedia*, accessed February 29, 2016, http://www.georgiaencyclopedia.org/articles/history-archaeology/robert-toombs-1810-1885.

consumed with bitter hatred for the Union. Upon Lee's surrender at Appomattox, Toombs "announced that he had no intention of submitting to arrest should it come."[113] He stubbornly remained in his home less than half a mile from the town square. When Federal troops came to arrest him one day in 1865, he simply slipped out the back door, fleeing first to Cuba, then France, before returning to the United States in 1867. Upon his return, he refused to request a pardon from Congress and never recovered his American citizenship.[114] His home is now a Georgia state park, available for touring Tuesdays through Saturdays.[115]

Despite their pride in the town's unique history, Washington's residents are wary of outsiders' co-opting the gold story. This is exemplified by the reaction to the October 2015 Discovery Channel series *Rebel Gold*. The show, comprising four episodes aired weekly from October 5th to October 26th, is a scripted, semi-historical reality program similar to offerings such as *Pawn Stars*, *American Pickers*, and *Deadliest Catch* on the History Channel. *Rebel Gold* follows an "all-star team" of eight or so "treasure hunters, history experts, and engineering specialists…who share one common obsession: making history by finding the vanished treasure of REBEL GOLD [sic]" according to the show's press release.[116] In reality, the team is made up of camouflage-wearing, Stonewall Jackson tattoo-having metal detector swingers, who eagerly dig up sites from Richmond to Washington with little to no scholarly evidence suggesting the gold would be located there. The team members' infighting and rash decision-making (one episode features a pair of men who decide to begin digging just an hour before sunset) are what provide the drama and excitement of the show – not any meaningful discoveries, gold or

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[113] Davis, *An Honorable Defeat*, 314.
[114] NGE Staff, "Robert Toombs (1810-1885)."
[115] "Robert Toombs House Historic Site | Georgia State Parks," accessed February 29, 2016, http://gastateparks.org/RobertToombsHouse.
[116] "REBEL GOLD : Programs : Discovery Channel : Discovery Press Web," accessed March 19, 2016, https://press.discovery.com/us/dsc/programs/rebel-gold/.

otherwise. The episode set in Washington features a schism among the team – Larry and his team bring a backhoe to a seemingly randomly chosen antebellum home, and Brant's team hikes deep into the woods, where they are nearly bitten by snakes. Amongst the carefully edited chaos is an appearance by Dr. Mark Waters, a Washington native who has published scholarly articles on the gold robbery. His advice and expertise are cheerfully ignored by the hunters, who continue their haphazard digging and squabbling after meeting with him. I interviewed Waters in Washington in July 2015, shortly after the taping of the episode. In the interview, Waters expressed frustration that his scholarly input was largely dismissed, and regretted what he interpreted as an unfavorable portrayal of the town. Waters is worried "that the nation is going to watch [the episode] and think that everyone in Washington" is as reckless and ultimately unconcerned with historical accuracy as the men on the show.[117]

Waters is not the only Washington resident irritated by the episode. The town newspaper, the *News-Reporter*, published a subtly critical article entitled "Discovery Channel's 'Rebel Gold' Series Will Finally Find Our Long-Lost Gold…or Not" a few weeks before the first episode aired. The article wryly juxtaposes quotes from the enthusiastic press release from the Discovery Channel – "whose big hit now is 'Naked and Afraid XL'" – with the paper's own skeptical tone, and sarcastically describes the show's intention to "find the lost Confederate gold for us."[118] Washington is not wrong to be anxious over its public image, and how its history informs that image, given what history education professor Jeremy Stoddard has termed the "History Channel Effect." Though *Rebel Gold* technically belongs to the Discovery Channel, its inaccuracies and manufactured drama are very similar to shows like it that are aired on the History Channel. The

[117] Mark Waters, July 23, 2015.
[118] "Discovery Channel's 'Rebel Gold' Series Will Finally Find Our Long-Lost Gold...or Not," *News-Reporter*, accessed March 19, 2016, http://www.news-reporter.com/news/2015-09-17/Front_Page/Discovery_Channels_Rebel_Gold_series_will_finally_.html.

"History Channel Effect" refers to the fact that viewers of these shows are unable to distinguish the "value-laden ideological perspectives" or recognize the lack of historical accuracy of the content and instead accept it as neutral fact.[119] The Discovery Channel's attempts to create a show that appeals to its "middle-aged male audience" by "emphasizing warfare and patriotism" influences its viewers' opinion of not only the events of the gold robbery but also collective memory of the Civil War, as interpreted through the lens of the lost Confederate gold.

Collective memory of the Civil War, as constructed from "visual art, sermons, popular songs, cemeteries, genealogies, relic collections, reenactments, private letters, legislation, folklore, advertising, movies, tourist souvenirs, and even the physical landscape," is what informs most Americans' interpretation of the war's events and aftermath.[120] An example of this phenomenon is the film *Gone With The Wind*: more people have seen it "than have read the works of all professional Civil War historians combined."[121] Interaction with folk artifacts, media, and fiction are more significant to collective memory building than academic sources whose biases and opinions are more easily discernable. Up until *Rebel Gold*, Washington has, like other Southern memory-making institutions, been able to project a genteel, charming image of the gold and its history. *Rebel Gold* challenges that image, instead broadcasting one that is dirty, reckless, uneducated and destructive, not only physically to the town's backyards and old homes, but also its constructed narrative of the gold. The distinction "between what happened and that which is said to have happened" is easily blurred in both this particular example and

[119] Jeremy D. Stoddard, "Backtalk: The History Channel Effect," *The Phi Delta Kappan* 91, no. 4 (2009): 80.
[120] Fahs and Waugh, *The Memory of the Civil War in American Culture*, 259.
[121] Ibid., 258.

others of collective memory in Washington, creating a struggle for which shared remembrances are incorporated into the town's identity.[122]

[122] Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past : Power and the Production of History* (Boston, Mass: Beacon Press, 1995), 3.
W. Fitzhugh Brundage, *Where These Memories Grow : History, Memory, and Southern Identity* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 5.

CHAPTER 4

"A Kind of Special Treasure In Itself": The Treasure Folktale and the Treasure Hunting Community

Folklore, specifically the folktale, has served as an integral part of American culture since the development of a unique American character. According to folklore scholar Jan Harold Brunvand, folklore "comprises the unrecorded traditions of a people" – the local stories, customs, and songs which define a region's character and shared beliefs.[123] Characters such as Johnny Appleseed, creatures like Bigfoot, and more generic tales of hunters, Indians, and frontiersmen have all played a part in shaping the American character and revealing American fears, values, and ideals throughout history. These tales tend to exhibit five distinct qualities: they are told orally, comprise tradition, survive in multiple different versions, exist anonymously, and become formularized.[124] Of particular importance is the last feature. Folktales, in order to survive multiple generations, take a specific narrative arc, depending on the content of the tale itself.

The Civil War was fertile ground for the generation and perpetuation of folktales. "From camp, bivouac, battlefield, and hospital," writes American folklorist B.A. Botkin in his compendium of Civil War folktales, "stories passed into the letters of soldiers, doctors, nurses, chaplains, and the reports of war correspondents, becoming living lore and legend for the folks back home. Told and retold, campfire tales ultimately became folk history."[125] The human side of the Civil War, with its myths and legends, reflects the "American imagination at work" in

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[123] Jan Harold Brunvand, *The Study of American Folklore : An Introduction*., [1st edition].. (New York: WWNorton, 1968), 1.
[124] Ibid., 5.
[125] Botkin, *A Civil War Treasury of Tales, Legends, and Folklore*, xviii.

preserving and remembering the history of the war.[126] These stories include strange happenings or odd coincidences involving soldiers. Perhaps the most well known, and most obviously fantastical, is the supposed virgin birth that occurred due to the chance meeting of a bullet, which had passed through a soldier's scrotum, with the uterus of a young woman watching the battle from afar – revealing, perhaps, ideals of Confederate virility and female Southern purity.[127]

Treasure tales are an especially popular genre of American folktales. After all, "most people," observes folklorist Gerard Hurley, "like the idea of something for nothing, and enjoy talking about fellow men who receive, or almost receive, a very great deal in exchange for a modicum of ingenuity and effort."[128] The treasure tale is of particular importance in the United States especially, as it captures the independence and supposedly infinite possibilities available to all Americans, with treasure revealing itself to those who seek it. American treasure tales have existed since Spanish exploration and settlement in the Americas in the 1500s. Spanish gold, lost gold and silver mines in the West, Indian treasure, secret societies' caches, and pirate loot have all captured the American imagination throughout folklore history.[129]

Of all folktale subtypes, treasure tales are by far the most "formularized."[130] The plots of treasure tales have a two-part structure. First is a description of the treasure, which usually includes a vague hint regarding its pirate, Indian, Spanish, or supernatural origins (these are among the most popular treasure 'owners'). Next, treasure seekers undertake a search for the treasure, based on instructions relayed to them by a mysterious figure (usually a witch, a talking

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[126] Ibid., xx.
[127] James O. Breeden, "'The Case of the Miraculous Bullet' Revisited," *Military Affairs* 45, no. 1 (1981): 23–26, doi:10.2307/1987353.
[128] Gerard T. Hurley, "Buried Treasure Tales in America," *Western Folklore* 10, no. 3 (July 1951): 197.
[129] Benjamin Albert Botkin, *The American People in Their Stories, Legends, Tall Tales, Traditions, Ballads and Songs* (London: Pilot Press ltd, 1946).
[130] Brunvand, *The Study of American Folklore*, 5.

animal, or a ghost) or directions (often on a map, diary, or letter that is only a fragmented piece, or, oral instructions) that are tantalizingly incomplete. Directions received by the treasure seekers are categorized by fundamental contradiction. The location of the treasure is invariably described with an air of specificity – buried under the southwest corner of a large oak tree in a cemetery, for example – but with language that is much too general to truly find the treasure. This is one explanation for the fact that American treasure tales, the Washington Confederate gold included, "usually end with the treasure *not* being found."[131] The treasure's as-yet-undiscoveredness ensures it remains a legend and the tale "can be successful even though the search [described in the tale] it is not."[132] Indeed, it can be argued that the success of the treasure tale – that is, its longevity throughout generations – is *because* the search in it is unsuccessful. The narrator or author of the tale must successfully convince the reader that discovery of the treasure is available to anyone, reader included.[133] For this reason, treasure tales "can never be disproven. It can always be said that one simply hasn't looked in the right place."[134]

The marriage of the two genres – the treasure tale and the Civil War legend – occurs in the retelling of the Washington Confederate gold story. Though the robbery was a factual event that indeed occurred, the way it has been discussed in the years since takes the familiar narrative arc of the treasure tale. Below are two examples, taken from a book and article, respectively, which compile the history of the Washington area.

From Clinton Perryman's 1933 "History of Lincoln County, Georgia":

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[131] Hurley, "Buried Treasure Tales in America," 197.
[132] Ibid., 204.
[133] James Miller, "TREASURE!," *Studies in Popular Culture* 8, no. 1 (1985): 46–52.
[134] Ibid., 48.

> "it is a tradition that the wagon bodies were ankle deep with the precious metal…It is said that their horses were so heavily laden, as they went away, they staggered under the weight and that much of the silver had to be thrown aside. A few of the men deposited the treasure in creeks and some others buried it to await a favorable opportunity to carry it away…For years after the raid, reports were frequent that some of the treasure had been found. Creeks were dredged, rocks overturned, hollow stumps were dug into, and all places where there was a possibility of concealment were carefully examined. Some small amounts may have been found, but the great bulk of the treasure, if not all of it, concealed on the night of the raid was removed as quickly as the raiders could make arrangements to take it away. Even at this late day [1933] there are occasional reports of finding some of this gold, but they do not create any excitement."[135]

From Ray Chandler's 1998 article "Lost Wilkes County Treasure":

> "The horse-lot was pandemonium. Figures on horseback – spectral shadows in the pale moonlight – waved and fired their revolvers, horrifying their victims. Horses whinnied, shied, reared, and bolted. Figures on foot teemed around the wagons, dark figures hacking and slashing at the tarpaulins and the containers therein.
> Forty? Fifty? Sixty? Maybe more? They skittered over the wagons, over each other, cursing and shouting, grabbing at the booty like lions on a fresh kill. They splintered open boxes and kegs…"[136]

Besides fitting into the specified arc of concealment – attempt at discovery – ultimate failure, versions of the Washington Confederate gold story all draw from the same series of motifs. The gold is always Confederate gold, not Richmond bank funds. Yet, when correctly identified, the author of the tale makes sure to explain the robbers' mistaken belief that the gold was from the treasury and thus rightly theirs for the hiding or taking. Jefferson Davis is sometimes placed as with the gold, not in Abbeville, as he actually was during its robbery. The Chennault plantation is usually the site of the robbery, with great attention paid by the narrator to the grandeur of the plantation house, and the hospitality of the kind patriarch of the house. Some accounts implicate

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[135] Clinton J. Perryman, *History of Lincoln County, Georgia*, 1st edition.. (Tignall, Ga: Boyd PubCo, 1985), 63.
[136] Ray Chandler, "Lost Wilkes County Treasure: Mystery of the Gold at Chenault Crossing," *The North Georgia Journal* 15, no. 4 (Winter 1998): 39.

the Chennaults as the ones responsible for hiding the gold, indicating belief that the gold is still buried on their property. When mentioned, the last of the treasury is distributed under an elm tree – always an elm tree – prior to the robbery, and, the Great Seal of the Confederacy is dumped into the Savannah River. The robbery itself always occurs at midnight, with the robbers shouting and causing a commotion. The gold is scattered ankle- or knee-deep, glittering in the moonlight, since there is always a full moon shining to light the scene. The gold is either buried in the woods, at the confluence of two rivers, or in a graveyard, with the intent of recovering it later never realized.

After the vivid description of the robbery itself, a shift in the narration occurs to the present day, following a vague mention of time passing. Gold coins are known to wash up after heavy rains, or found but kept quiet. The farm is supposedly known as the golden farm (though never actually referred to as such by Washington locals), with the road traveling by it nicknamed Graball – for the phrase "grab all you can" shouted by the robbers.

Written accounts of the Washington Confederate gold appear in two literary spaces. The first are anecdotal feature columns in newspapers, both local and national. The second are materials written specifically for treasure hunters – readers who, as a hobby, hunt for all kinds of treasure. In these two areas, the robbery is retold in a predictable way. The facts are loosely interpreted, and descriptions that are either unverifiable, clearly exaggerated, or both, are included to amplify the dramatic entertainment value of the account. Included in each versions are motifs shared by multiple accounts, similar to those described above.

Treasure tales enjoy popularity in a newspaper feature known as the local color story. Though these works may appear historical or neutrally researched in nature, the actual writing is quite fictionalized and displays most of the previously-discussed attributes of the folkloric

treasure tale. From the years 1967 to 2003, the Confederate gold was the subject of five articles in four different newspapers around Georgia. The *News Reporter of Washington-Wilkes*, the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, the *Augusta Chronicle*, and the *Brunswick News* all published local color articles about the gold, each with its own unique take, tone, opinion, and motive behind publishing on the story. The Confederate gold story serves as grist for many a local columnist's mill, with one even writing two articles in four years apart that are nearly identical in both tone and substance.

In 1967, Janet A. Standard, author of multiple local color columns for the *Washington-Wilkes News Reporter*, a weekly paper serving the area, published an article entitled "Grab-All Gold Still Up For Grabs." Her article portrays the robbery as the responsibility of Confederate soldiers of Wilkes county, who buried it as a way to keep it out of the hands of quickly approaching Union soldiers. When discussing the fate of the gold, she expresses hope that it was used to buy "mules and plows, fertilizer and wagons for the Confederate families who had lost all," tailoring the story and adjusting the facts in order to personalize the story to the citizens of Washington. The final paragraph contains an indirect reference to the Chennaults, describing how "even though they were strung up by the thumbs and left hanging for hours, they would not tell" the Union soldiers where the gold was buried. The Chennaults, noble Southerners, preserved the dignity of themselves and of the town, saving it from greedy Union troops. The last few lines of the article read "their secret is still safe. Grab-All's whispering trees tell nothing…Where do you think this gold lies now?" thus involving the reader, presumably a Washington resident or someone with personal connections to the area, in the story.[137] Other articles written by Standard also address the reader in the second person, making the paper's

[137] Janet Harvill Standard, "Grab-All Gold Still Up for Grabs," *The News-Reporter of Washington-Wilkes and Surrounding Communities*, 1967.

content personally relevant to them. This appeal at the end also exemplifies a common feature of treasure tales, wherein the reader is convinced the treasure could someday, somehow, be theirs.

The same personalization can be seen in a similar *Brunswick News* article. Both papers are the only two to speculate on the use of the gold and its fate outside of the traditional ideas of being lost forever. The two articles also emphasize its use to benefit white Confederate families. The *Brunswick News*, published weekly out of Brunswick, Georgia, a town on the Atlantic coast south of Savannah, over two hundred miles from Washington. The paper was founded in 1902 and proudly claims that it is still family owned, billing itself as "The Golden Isles' Voice Since 1902."[138] Brunswick is a town that easily lends itself to romantic Southern character, with dripping Spanish moss, ghost tours, and upscale beach bed and breakfasts.

Amy Horton, the author of the article "The Lore of Rebel Gold," lacks an official bio on the *Brunswick News* website. However, her articles available in the paper's online archives mostly concern local politics, local news, and occasional feature stories. For example, in April of 2005, Horton published an article entitled "Southerners Strive to Keep History Alive" concerning Confederate Memorial Day, which is celebrated in Georgia on the last Monday in April. Horton's position quite clear in the very first line, in which she writes "The War of Northern Aggression is long over and it's unlikely the Confederacy will ever rise again, not even on a flagpole. The state of Georgia, though, still has its one little rebellion."[139] She goes on to lament "society's growing aversion to politically incorrect history" as a force contributing to the growing obscurity of the holiday, and thus, remembrance of the war itself.[140]

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[138] The Brunswick News, "About Us," *The News*, n.d., http://www.thebrunswicknews.com/site/about.html.
[139] Amy Horton, "Southerners Strive to Keep History Alive," *The Brunswick News*, April 22, 2005.
[140] Ibid.

Horton and the *Brunswick News* are clearly steeped in nostalgia and are unconcerned with political neutrality. This likely mirrors the opinions of their readers. Like the *Washington-Wilkes News Reporter*, the *Brunswick News* is a local paper and must court its readers accordingly, and reflect what they are interested in and want to read and purchase.

In her article about the Confederate gold, Horton first gives a brief summary of the gold's travel from Richmond, incorrectly implying that it was traveling with Jefferson Davis during the entire journey from Richmond to Irwinville, the site of his capture on May 9, 1865, and could have disappeared anywhere along that route in the nearly two months it was traveling. The only hint at the current location of the gold is her inclusion of the popular version of the story, in which the "city of Washington proudly perpetuates the tale that heavy rains in the past have left deposits of gold coins along the dirt roads surrounding the Chennault Plantation outside of town."[141]

Horton then details an even more obscure offshoot of the legend: the Theresa Mumford Memorial Scholarship Fund, a scholarship fund disbursed by the Presbyterian Church since 1946 and supposedly funded by a portion of the missing Confederate gold. Sylvester Mumford owned a plantation in Waynesville before the war and was present at the Confederacy's final cabinet meeting in Washington, where Davis himself divided the gold among the men present and allegedly instructed each to use the money "as he felt it should be used."[142] Though Davis did hold a final cabinet meeting, and money was disbursed to his highest officials, it is doubtful that any would have been given to Mumford. Mumford used some to rebuild his wealth postwar as well as to "support children orphaned by the Civil War."[143] Upon his death, he left some of it to

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[141] Amy Horton, "The Lore of Rebel Gold," *The Brunswick News*, October 28, 2003.
[142] Ibid.
[143] Ibid.

his daughter Mrs. Goertner "Gertrude" Mumford Parkhurst, who in turn left it in trust to the Presbyterian Church when she died in 1946, instructing that it be used for "the maintenance and education of white orphan girls" in Brantley County.[144] Rural white girls were praised in United Daughters of the Confederacy dogma as foremothers of a white race that would continue the "…political, social, and cultural traditions of the former Confederacy."[145]

In this article, as in the *Washington-Wilkes* article, the money was used to aid, the true victims of the war in the eyes of those lamenting the gold's loss: white Southerners. Comparisons can be made between the Jim Crow-era environments of 1946 when the Brunswick scholarship fund was created, and the 1967 *Washington-Wilkes* article, during which time the rise of civil rights highlighted the nostalgia for white Southern culture that was fragile to the changing social dynamics of the time. The articles' subtly pro-white rhetoric echoes the language used to perpetuate the Lost Cause and the belief in white supremacy underpinning it.[146]

The online version of Horton's article contains two addendua: an email received soon after it was published in 2003, and another email received in 2005. Both emails are from people who know of attempts to search for the physical location of the gold, with the 2003 email from a man whose father dug around an old home in Waynesville, near the original plantation, and found gold bars. Gold bars were never part of the Confederate treasury, or the Richmond bank funds, yet, this detail is overlooked in favor of publication of the email alongside the original article. The article's inclusion of the two emails demonstrates the idea that history and legend trickles down to the personal, individual level. The two people claiming involvement with the gold lack a personal connection to the history or the gold itself: one email is from the current

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[144] Ibid.
[145] Cox, *Dixie's Daughters*, 2.
[146] Ibid., 162.
Wilson, *Baptized in Blood: The Religion of the Lost Cause 1865-1920*.

inhabitant of the Chennault home, and the other is the son of a man whose friend discovered the supposed gold bars. Neither of these people have themselves searched for the gold. This incident shows the tradition of small Southern towns touting their involvement in the war, however obscure the involvement may have been. The article and the emails accompanying it demonstrate that involvement in a strange legend, however tangential, becomes brag worthy. The two articles also show how widely the treasure legend was adopted and owned, helping the readers link the local story to the larger narrative of lost Confederate gold.

In July 1991, Colin Campbell, a frequent columnist in the Sunday Atlanta Journal-Constitution, published a three part series about the gold. Campbell often wrote anecdotal features for the Sunday edition, and occasionally his stories were included in weekday editions. Most of his columns pertain in some way to Southern or Georgia-specific quirks or traditions in rural areas, such as the backstories behind physical features or traditions in the small towns he visits. One article in 1992 recounts the history and etymology behind unusual place names he saw while driving back from the Sea Islands on Georgia's Atlantic coast, and includes vivid descriptions of the people he met along the way. Campbell usually writes in first person, employing gentle humor in his observations of Southern life.

On Sunday, July 14, 1991, Campbell published part two of a three part series about the Washington Confederate gold. He writes that he was greeted by an overwhelming number of phone calls when he arrived at work on the following Monday, remarking "Print the words 'lost gold' and every dreamer, hustler, pedant, and crackpot for miles around starts breathing fast."[147] Campbell retains journalistic distance and his distinctive humor and voice in describing the

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[147] Colin Campbell, "In Search of Lost Confederate Gold, Chapter 2," *The Atlanta Journal and Constitution*, July 14, 1991, http://www.lexisnexis.com.proxy.library.emory.edu/lnacui2api/api/version1/getDocCui?lni=3SJC-BTN0-000W-K3C1&csi=8379&hl=t&hv=t&hnsd=f&hns=t&hgn=t&oc=00240&perma=true.

breathless calls he receives from these eccentric readers. Despite his distance, he cannot help but be pulled in by the legend's trance. Instead of remaining entirely skeptical of the people interested in the gold, he is inspired to begin his own search to track down at least a few more of the legends and perhaps some facts along the way. While describing the treasure genre and its appeal, Campbell becomes attracted to the story's content. Campbell's inclusion of the gold in his 'features of Southern life' oeuvre demonstrates that the ongoing popularity of the legend is in part because it is a captivating treasure tale. His other columns about place names, for example, do not provoke the same frantic reaction in his readers that this gold series does.

The gold is next mentioned twice, in two nearly identical articles published in 1997 and 2001 by Robert Pavey in the *Augusta Chronicle*, a regional newspaper serving the Augusta metro area. Augusta is approximately fifty miles east of Washington, and is the largest city nearby, besides Athens. Pavey is the bureau chief of the newspaper's Columbia County office, which borders Lincoln County, the county adjacent to Wilkes. Pavey, according to his online biography, writes a weekly outdoors column for the paper.[148]

His two articles "Confederate Gold Still Missing" and "Mystery of Lost Treasure Lives On" are nearly identical: both quote the same author, South Carolina resident Ralph Hobbs; mention a trunk legendarily owned by Jefferson Davis that has survived to the present day; use the phrase "ankle-deep" to describe the piles of gold littering the ground during the robbery; and, finally, both mention Alexander Stephens' dog Rio, who died the night of the robbery and whose ornately decorated grave is a popular potential site for the gold's current location. Pavey's 2001 article includes a map of Georgia with superimposed text over key locations in the gold's journey. This graphic exemplifies the previously mentioned common feature of treasure tales, in

[148] The Augusta Chronicle, "Robert Pavey," *The Augusta Chronicle*, n.d., http://chronicle.augusta.com/users/rob-pavey.

which clues to the gold's location possess the semblance of being specific or helpful in its eventual recovery, but lack the detail to actually result in its discovery. Fitting well into the treasure genre, Pavey's articles end with the standard conclusion of the gold remaining unrecovered by the many people who "still come around with metal detectors" yet "never find anything…or if they do, they never tell."[149]

There is another community besides newspaper subscribers who perpetuate the gold legend. The idea of lost Confederate gold is particularly popular with treasure hunters – hobbyists who own metal detectors and take them to parks, beaches, playgrounds, wooded areas, and in some specialized groups, historic sites to look for broadly defined treasure. Most metal detector owners simply look for coins, jewelry, and other lost trinkets, and these people are referred to as coinshooters. However, there are subcultures, such as those who hunt for Civil War relics, or others, known as cache hunters, who are dedicated to finding larger caches of historical or otherwise important or famous treasure. Relic hunters, and cache hunters in particular, spend most of their time not out in the field sweeping their detectors but instead in the library researching. There are approximately two hundred clubs in the United States dedicated to treasure hunting and among them, different specialties exist, such as the Arizona Association of Gold Prospectors, Inc., or, the New Jersey Antique Bottle Club.[150]

Treasure hunters mostly rely on traditional means of communication and research, favoring print magazines, physical maps and hardbound atlases. A favorite publication is the magazine *Lost Treasure*, which advertises itself as the "treasure hunter's guide to adventure and fortune," containing "vibrant tales of a historical nature and educational tips on the latest

[149] Robert Pavey, "Mystery of Lost Treasure Lives On," n.d.
[150] Metal Detecting in the USA, "Metal Detecting Clubs," *MetalDetectingInTheUSA.com*, n.d.

methods and equipment to find lost treasure of all types."[151] The magazine contains letters from readers, articles reviewing equipment, and advertisements for metal detectors and their accessories, home security systems, relic display cases, and even dowsing rods.[152] The magazine's most popular feature is the section containing state-specific treasure tales, with usually three or four states covered per issue, and, the feature stories about particular caches and hoards that remain unrecovered.

The Washington Confederate gold was included in the October 1999 issue, in an article entitled "A Rainbow Beginning" by Ray Chandler, who has authored two books pertaining to the robbery. His article marries two genres: the self-aware, purposely mysterious local color newspaper column and the treasure hunting guide. Chandler introduces the topic by writing "Whenever anyone around the community of Chennault, Georgia, seems to come into unexplained money, the other locals chuckle and exchange knowing winks."[153] He continues with the yarn-spinning by explaining the various versions of the legends that have "sprouted thicker than the pulp pines" in the area around the old Chennault plantation house, describing that though many years have passed since its disappearance, the "currency" of the story has only "accrued interest" with the tale attracting both "determined treasure hunters and the just idly curious."[154]

Though Chandler's and other *Lost Treasure* articles may share the tone and style with the legend retelling of local newspaper features, the Washington gold's appearance in *Lost Treasure*

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[151] Lost Treasure Magazine, "A Message From the Publisher," *Lost Treasure Magazine Online*, n.d., losttreasure.com.
André Hinds, "A History of Lost Treasure," n.d.
[152] Simmons Scientific Products, "Directional Locating Rods," *Lost Treasure*, February 2015. Dowsing rods, commonly made from copper or wood, are used to divine the source of underground metal, water, gemstones, graves, or treasure.
[153] Ray Chandler, "A Rainbow Beginning," *Lost Treasure*, October 1999.
[154] Ibid.

shows the relationship perceived by the treasure hunting community between the self-consciously embellished, legendary tale and actionable instructions to find physical treasure. For treasure hunters, Confederate gold and the promise of finding it becomes part of their hobby as a possibility of what could be discovered, as evidenced by these fantastical legendary hoards being written about right next to dull ads for the newest model of waterproof metal detector.

A strange paradox exists in *Lost Treasure* magazine in the difference between the content of the articles and the interests of the readership it is marketed to. The featured articles' content is almost entirely centered on lost historical treasure, yet, the magazine is clearly marketed to the casual coin shooter hobbyist who takes their detector to the beach. For this audience, then, treasure tales like the Confederate gold are inspirational and even motivational. Treasure stories provide excitement to a hobby that is fairly mundane and has pedestrian results such as coins, cheap jewelry, and other lost trinkets. Perhaps metal detector owners know that they will likely not find anything truly historically special, yet, it is exciting to dream about finding treasure more rare than a missing earring or necklace.

This idea is proven by observations that occurred at the June 30, 2015 monthly meeting of the Stone Mountain Treasure Hunter's Club, held at the Gwinnett County Fire Station No. 5 in Duluth, approximately twenty miles northeast of Emory's campus. The club was founded in 1982 to fulfill the need for "an organization of metal detecting enthusiasts to promote…that metal detecting is a rewarding and beneficial hobby…[and so that] the world may be convinced of the sincerity of our purpose."[155] The club's members are split into three categories: coin shooters, beach and water hunters, and Civil War relic hunters, one of whom presented his collection of soldier-carved minié balls he had dug at various Civil War sites in Virginia.

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[155] The Stone Mountain Treasure Hunters, "Club Information," *StoneMountainDiggers.org*, n.d.

According to an interview conducted with John Dyer, a club member, treasure hunters have great respect for relic and cache hunters, and view them as just another faction of hobbyists, not as strange or foolish.[156] In fact, cache hunters are particularly admired for their dedication, as they spend more time researching than other types, in hopes of discovering one big elusive find, compared to the constant payoff of coin shooters and other small-objects hunters. Doug Rouner, another club member, remarked that "[Civil War] relics are a non-renewable resource" as opposed to caches, which, if not found, can continue to be searched for indefinitely – similar to the treasure featured in treasure folktales. [157]

Searching for Confederate gold in Washington is not entirely limited to meticulous cache hunters, however; the gold's possibility of existence is motivation for even the casual hunter. Member Mel "Bud" Parker hunted the town with a friend, Tom Burrows, a few summers prior to the June 2015 club meeting. The two of them went to Washington's downtown and some of the antebellum homes and found a few old lead toys. According to Parker, while they were there together, Burrows also discovered a twenty dollar gold piece in front of an office building, Parker described Burrows as a thorough researcher "into Confederate history" who invited him along, hoping that Washington would have interesting Civil War relics. Neither Parker nor Burrows expected or hoped to find any gold that day. It is unclear, though unlikely, if Burrows' coin is part of *the* gold. However, Parker's tone of hushed wonder conveyed that the coin's true origins were of little significance compared to the excitement its discovery created.[158]

Dyer added that he, too, "meandered around" the town in the early 2000s. Though he did not travel there specifically for the gold, he "knew in the back of [his] mind" about it. While

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[156] John Dyer, n.d.
[157] Doug Rouner, June 30, 2015.
[158] Mel Parker, June 30, 2015.

asking permission at the antebellum homes he was hunting (a central tenet of treasure hunters nationwide), one couple denied his request – which is not unusual, given that treasure hunters have negative reputations as disruptive and damaging to gardens, lawns, and other environments. These aggressive types who trespass and damage property are mocked as "nighthawks" by hunters who are courteous. What Dyer remembers as happening next was quite unusual. He describes that the owners, an elderly couple, invited him inside and talked with him about the gold. Later, he "got the feeling" they turned down his request to hunt on their property because they were trying to protect it and hide it from him. When asked what else he found on that trip, Dyer was unable to remember specific items – the elderly couple and their mysterious behavior is what stood out to him the most.[159]

To treasure hunters, history is accessible and can quite literally be found. Yet, to them, the legend is just as valuable as the gold they will likely never find. The tale of lost Confederate gold remains enjoyable, pleasurable, debatable, and even actionable in the absence of real probability that it will be recovered. W.C. Jameson, a self-styled adventurer and professional treasure hunter, writes: "Not every expedition ends with some amazing discovery…even though the goal of locating some lost mine or buried loot may not have been achieved, each expedition was filled with adventure and excitement, which is a kind of special treasure in itself."[160] Similarly, for readers of Confederate gold legends, the gold's physical existence takes a backseat to the story surrounding it. The legend is just as good as, and becomes representative of, the history behind it.

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[159] Dyer, interview.
[160] W. C. Jameson, *Lost Treasures of American History*, 1st Taylor Trade Publishing edition.. (Lanham: Taylor Trade Pub, 2006).

CHAPTER 5

The South Will Rise Again: A Conspiracy Theory Concerning the Gold's Whereabouts

The history and memory of the Civil War is intertwined with conspiracy theories about the events leading to the war's beginning, the end of the war, and modern study and interest in the war. Conspiracy theory has also come to intersect even with the Washington, Georgia gold robbery and the fate of the gold with which the robbers successfully escaped. One theory is the product of treasure hunter and conspiracy theorist named Bob Brewer. His theory is that the Knights of the Golden Circle (KGC), a secret society that worked for secession prior to the Civil War, were tasked with transporting, concealing, and guarding the Confederate gold to ensure the survival of the Confederacy after the war was over. According to Brewer, there are thousands of as-yet-undiscovered caches scattered around the country, just waiting to be found using a system of symbols and maps he has discovered and subsequently deciphered.[161] Though Brewer is just one man, he and his theories are the best representation of the modern Civil War conspiracy culture and the subset of theorists who believe that the South will rise again.

Belief in vast, sinister conspiracy theories is a uniquely American pastime, borne of the "religious apocalypticism, political populism, and rapid technological advancement" endemic to American intellectual and popular culture.[162] Paranoia and conspiracy theory have roots in Christian views of imminent end times and hidden Satanic influences, cultural emphasis on self reliance and individual reason, and the paranoia produced by suddenly ubiquitous technology in

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[161] Warren Getler and Bob Brewer, *Rebel Gold: One Man's Quest to Crack the Code Behind the Secret Treasure of the Confederacy*, Complete Numbers Starting with 1, 1st Ed edition (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2005).

[162] Jonathan Kay, *Among the Truthers : A Journey through America's Growing Conspiracist Underground*, 1st edition.. (New York: Harper, 2011), 33.

the twentieth century in particular.[163] But what makes Brewer and others' belief in the KGC-Confederate gold connection or possession a true conspiracy theory? In his famous essay, "The Paranoid Style in American Politics" Richard Hofstadter explains that the hallmark of a conspiracy theory is not the belief in furtive, sinisterly coordinated actions, but instead, the scale and vastness of the given conspiracy as the primary motivating force behind a network of historical events.[164] This definition fits well with belief in the KGC theory. There were treasonous, even sinister forces operating in the events leading to the Civil War – secession, of course, was a coordinated betrayal even when it was separated from the supposed influence of the KGC. What makes the KGC theory a conspiracy is the enormous scale on which it supposedly operated, from treasure caches located in Georgia, Arkansas, and Arizona and other innumerable hoards buried across the country.

[163] Ibid., 34.
[164] Richard Hofstadter, *The Paranoid Style in American Politics : And Other Essays*., [1st edition].. (New York: Knopf, 1965).

One of Brewer's trees, showing carvings. *Rebel Gold*, photo no. 20

Beyond scale, another key feature of a conspiracy theory is the "attribution of deliberate agency to something that…might far more reasonably be explained as the less covert and less complicated action of another."[165] In short, Occam's razor – a philosophical principle which posits that, logically, the simplest explanation for something is the most likely to be correct – is applicable here. For example, the very first clues Brewer used to find buried gold coins were carvings made in tree trunks around his property in rural Arkansas. The markings are of human origin and are clearly deliberate and quite intricate, but it is entirely possible that instead of holding the significance he interprets, the carvings are the result of bored, knife-happy mountain men. However, the purpose of this chapter is not to analyze the veracity or the accuracy of Brewer's theory.[166] Regardless of if the KGC conspiracy is true, or has any theoretical merit or convincing evidence to prove it, belief in it is itself worthy of study and interpretation. Casual consumers of the Washington gold legend are unconcerned with its physical existence, and instead are interested in the story for folkloric entertainment value, political grudge-holding (such as in Eliza Andrews' diary from Chapter 2), or perpetuating the Lost Cause (such as the intentions of Mrs. Theo Green, the UDC member who wrote so passionately on behalf of the preservation of the purported Jefferson Davis treasure chest). On the other hand, treasure hunters, though inspired by the history and rarity of the gold, are solely concerned with its physical existence in order to enjoy the thrill of the metal detector-enabled chase but ultimately ignore the meaning. Unlike casual readers of the legend and treasure hunters, conspiracy theorists are

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[165] David Aaronovitch, *Voodoo Histories : The Role of the Conspiracy Theory in Shaping Modern History* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2009), 5.
[166] Jesse Walker, *The United States of Paranoia : A Conspiracy Theory*, First edition.. (New York: Harper, 2013), 18.

convinced not only of the gold's physical existence, but also the idea that the way in which it exists (buried and protected by an expansive network of secret symbols and stoic sentinels) provides purpose and intentionality for the story of its disappearance. The KGC's protection of the gold cements the association between the gold and the everlasting, perpetual spirit of the South, as if the gold were possessed by the immortal ghosts of the Confederacy.

The events of the Washington gold robbery themselves have a conspiratorial air to them, due to the fact that the gold vanished and remains unaccounted for. The midnight raid, the involvement of lost treasure, the mystical aura surrounding gold, the unknown identity of the robbers, and the tantalizingly sparse details of the event itself perpetuate the spooky, almost Fortean quality of the robbery story. Gold aside, the history of the Civil War is ripe for the minds of the conspiracy theory-inclined, from the events leading up to the war, the end of the war, and, contemporary historiography of the Civil War.

The Civil War is itself an example of applied subversion and coordinated treason as illustrated by secession, a setting ripe for the mushrooming of conspiracy theories.[167] Long before Southern states threatened and followed through with secession, conspiratorial language surrounded slavery, particularly the phrase "Slave Power" to refer to the Southern voting block. All political sides, it seems, could agree on the Slave Power thesis, and it was supported by contemporary politicians as varied as Charles Sumner, Salmon P. Chase, Josiah Quincy, Horace Greeley, and Henry Wilson.[168] "Hostility toward slave oligarchs" was agreed-upon common ground among the prominent political parties of the time, who shared hatred of the so-called

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[167] William Alan Blair, *With Malice Toward Some: Treason and Loyalty in the Civil War Era*, Littlefield History of the Civil War Era (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2014), 2.

[168] Leonard L. Richards, *The Slave Power: The Free North and Southern Domination, 1780-1860* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2000), 2.

"slaveocracy."[169] Some, particularly William H. Seward and the "eccentric" John Smith Dye, lumped those responsible for Slave Power in with Freemasons, whom they despised and feared about equally.[170] Seward's stump speeches about Slave Power contained elements similar to his Antimasonic rhetoric, in which he described an all-powerful Slave Power cabal responsible for running "not only all the slave states, but also the Federal government."[171] However luridly convincing Seward and other politicians may have sounded, the rhetoric surrounding conspiracies both imagined (Slave Power) and real (Harpers Ferry and Lincoln's assassination) were indicative of the American paranoid style and nothing more.

Though it technically occurred days after Lee's surrender, the Lincoln assassination has served as a generator for conspiracy theories since it occurred on April 15th, 1865, with the most famous being the belief that John Wilkes Booth survived long after he was officially shot when apprehended at the Garrett farm in rural northern Virginia ten days after Lincoln's death.[172]

The theory that the KGC is still protecting the gold is primarily the discovery – or creation – of a man named Bob Brewer. Born in 1940, Brewer is the last of a generation of Arkansas mountain men. Raised in the tiny town of Hatfield, Arkansas, located deep in the Ouachita Mountains approximately ten miles from the Oklahoma border, Brewer spent his childhood immersed in the woods with his brothers, grandfather, and uncle. The men in his family earned their livelihoods logging, prospecting, hunting and trapping, fishing, and growing their own vegetables, and on their frequent trips into the woods, Brewer's elders would make

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[169] Ibid., 3.
[170] John Smith Dye was steadfastly convinced of the complete control exerted by Slave Power, authoring *The Adders Den: Secrets of the Great Conspiracy to Overthrow Liberty in America* (1864) and *History of the Plots and Crimes of the Great Conspiracy to Overthrow Liberty in America* (1866).
[171] Richards, *The Slave Power*, 7.
[172] Thomas Turner, "Myth and the Lincoln Assassination: Did John Wilkes Booth Escape?," *Bridgewater Review* 1, no. 1 (May 1982): 5–7.

oblique, sporadic, and enticing references to a system of patterns embedded in the natural landscape. His uncle and grandfather pointed out bizarrely carved or marked trees, branches purposely grafted at unnatural angles, strangely shaped rocks, and other conspicuous natural features, one day remarking that there was more money buried among the mountains than any of the young boys could fathom. "Someday," pronounced his grandfather, "perhaps one of you will learn how to read these signs and know where that money is."[173] Brewer felt that underneath the natural closeness of three generations of men exploring the woods and enjoying nature together, there was something more. Brewer feels he was being groomed to follow in their footsteps in not only their knowledge of the woods but the secrets it – and they – were actively concealing.[174] Every remark, no matter how offhand, was a veiled reference to the vast conspiracy that lay, quite literally, below the surface.

After spending nineteen years in the Navy, Brewer moved back home to Hatfield in 1977. In what first began as a hobby, Brewer began meticulously recording the signs he found and transferring them to a topographical map of the area. These signs took the form of "countless letters and numbers with odd flourishes, to crosses and crescent moons, to bizarre stick figure depictions of animals: snakes, birds, turtles (including one laying eggs), horses, mules, and deer" carved on trees and rocks.[175] Over time, Brewer realized that they were markers on a geometric grid overlaying the area, "anchored in physical features of the Brushy Creek countryside."[176] An excerpt of David Hume's essay "The Natural History of Religion" is particularly relevant. Humans are inclined to find "human faces in the moon, armies in the clouds; and by a natural

[173] Getler and Brewer, *Rebel Gold*, 11.
[174] Ibid., 13.
[175] Ibid., 15.
[176] Ibid., 16.

propensity…ascribe malice and good will to everything that hurts or pleases us."[177] While relentless pattern-seeking (scientifically known as apophenia) is a shared human trait, it is exaggerated in conspiracy theorists, who not only see and believe in a simple pattern, but ascribe an intelligent meaning and purpose to the pattern.[178]

The lack of academic approval of this system and the lack of discussion of it in mainstream history writing does not faze Brewer, nor does this discourage most conspiracy theorists. The fact that no legitimate source has ever supported their ideas is not a problem. Instead, a conspiracist "imagines his own native intelligence and instinctive suspicion to be a sufficient arbiter of truth."[179] Brewer is his own expert on the subject of the KGC system, and his book *Rebel Gold*, published in 2003 with the help of Warren Getler, an investigative journalist, is his manifesto. Brewer and Getler appeared in 2004 on the nationally-syndicated late-night call in radio talk show *Coast to Coast AM*, hosted by George Noory, a respected source in the paranormal and conspiracy communities.[180] Brewer's theory has likewise received support in other conspiracy oriented online communities, to be discussed further below. The book, however, is the most comprehensive source on the KGC conspiracy theory, and interweaves Brewer's life, background, and search to grasp a deep understanding of the system he finds himself immersed in.

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[177] David Hume, *The Natural History of Religion* (Oxford Eng: Clarendon Press, 1976).
[178] Walker, *The United States of Paranoia*, 337.
[179] Aaronovitch, *Voodoo Histories*, 35.
[180] Staff, "Coast to Coast AM Is No Wack Job," *WIRED*, February 15, 2006, http://www.wired.com/2006/02/coast-to-coast-am-is-no-wack-job/.
Marc Fisher, "The Outer Limits: A Lone Voice in the Desert Lures 10 Million Listeners," *The Washington Post*, October 28, 2013, https://www.washingtonpost.com/lifestyle/the-outer-limits-a-lone-voice-in-the-desert-lures-10-million-listeners/2013/10/28/95615598-3ff6-11e3-9c8b-e8deeb3c755b_story.html.

Brewer does have physical evidence that successfully supports his system. After following the carved tree symbols, as well as what seemed to be purposely shallowly buried metal objects, he found his first few small treasure caches: buried fruit jars with gold coins. The first jar, with over four hundred dollars of gold coins in face value (which could be worth fifty to seventy times that amount today depending on numismatic value), sparked a fire in Brewer. He "intuitively…knew that this breakthrough was no mere coincidence. Geometry, geography, navigation, cryptanalysis, intuition and raw persistence had meshed to bring him to this tiny spot in a vast wilderness."[181]

Despite this initial success, at first, all that Brewer could reasonably conclude was that there was a small group of people who buried small amounts of gold in the Ouachita Mountains.[182] He had no clues to suggest the identity of these people – at one point believing it was perhaps Spanish explorer treasure – until a fellow treasure hunter caught wind of his activities in Arkansas and invited him to see if the system continued in other states. This new friend gave him a book about Jesse James and his purported involvement in a group that Brewer had never heard of before: the Knights of the Golden Circle. The book referenced carvings identical to those he had observed and recorded, and, with a "tingling sense of how big this treasure conspiracy was," Brewer became convinced that the Knights of the Golden Circle were responsible for the elaborate, multi-layer system he had observed not only in Arkansas, but also in other parts of the country. Jesse James, the notorious American outlaw, was supposedly a KGC member who stole and plundered in order to support the group's mission to "keep up the fight for the Confederate cause amid Reconstruction."[183] His KGC membership ostensibly

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[181] Getler and Brewer, *Rebel Gold*, 40.
[182] Ibid., 88.
[183] Ibid., 97.

accounts for why the fabulous wealth he accumulated is not well accounted for. Clearly, according to theorists like Brewer and revisionist James historians, the wealth was stashed away in "the coded depositories and weapons stockpiles of an underground post-Confederate terrorist network."[184]

The best way to describe the Knights of the Golden Circle is as a "militant, oath-bound secret society dedicated to promoting southern rights (including slavery) and extending American hegemony over the Golden Circle region."[185] The society was created in 1859 by George W.L. Bickley, a charismatic, charming phrenologist and all around quack who created a thriving cult of personality around his mysterious persona. He established the first KGC "castle," or chapter, in Cincinnati, and by the end of the year, there numbered nearly seven thousand men in the lowest degree, with an uncertain number in the second and third degrees, who were tasked with managing the most secretive workings of the society. The KGC can be understood as a pro-South, pro-slavery extension of the Manifest Destiny philosophy that governed the United States in the mid-nineteenth century.[186] The group's original goal was to extend the Confederacy to the Golden Circle – a geographic region encompassing parts of Mexico, some of Central America, and, of highest priority, Cuba.[187] This would theoretically be achieved through the process of filibustering – unprovoked invasions of these regions that not only served as fertile potential outposts of the Confederacy, but desperately needed the economic profitability slavery would

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[184] Ibid.
[185] David C. Keehn, *Knights of the Golden Circle : Secret Empire, Southern Secession, Civil War* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2013), 2.
[186] Ollinger Crenshaw, "The Knights of the Golden Circle: The Career of George Bickley," *The American Historical Review* 47, no. 1 (1941): 26, doi:10.2307/1838769.
[187] Robert E. May, *The Southern Dream of a Caribbean Empire, 1854-1861* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1973), 9.

bring.[188] This would also be continued at home by the seizures of domestic military installations. This strategy was most successful in Texas at an army fort in San Antonio in February 1861, in which KGC members seized the fort in one of many events that led to Texas' formal alliance with the Confederacy in March of the same year.[189] At about this time, the society added the secondary goals of inciting secession throughout the rest of the south and establishing slave republics throughout the country, most notably in California and Oregon – the "Dixie of the Northwest" – which the Lincoln administration responded to by quickly strengthening military posts in San Francisco. [190]

The degree to which the KGC is responsible for secession movements, and the group's during the war ultimately remain unclear. After all, the KGC was a *secret* society, with little surviving documentation. Although the extent of the KGC's influence is unknown, of particular importance to this discussion is that the KGC was perceived as being sinisterly omnipresent from the years 1859-1861.[191] The KGC gained a reputation as "long-haired, wild-eyed strangers" in their lobbying to convince Virginia to secede.[192] Though the group generated widespread fear and suspicion throughout the South, its desire to create a separate, powerful, slave society was ultimately adopted by the Southern state governments who had feared them. As the *San Antonio Unionist* editor James Newcomb wrote shortly after the war, "after secession was consummated [the KGC] were suppressed by the very persons who had used them; either fearing or loathing them as they would an assassin accomplice."[193] Despite being cast as a reckless, subversive, malicious influence, the essence of the KGC's cause became that of the states that did secede and

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[188] Ibid., 10.
[189] Keehn, *Knights of the Golden Circle*, 122.
[190] Ibid., 130.
[191] Ibid., 169.
[192] Ibid., 135.
[193] Ibid., 167.

form the Confederacy. The Confederacy's partial adoption of, or merge with, KGC values helps to explain present-day association between the KGC and the eternal Confederacy that will someday rise again.

When Bickley was arrested in 1863, the KGC went dormant for a short period, and a new secret society sprang up in its place. Called the Order of American Knights (OAK), their secret mission was "to undermine U.S. military authority, aid the southern Confederacy, promote insurrection, and create a separate northwestern confederacy in the states stretching from Ohio to Minnesota."[194] The Lincoln administration attempted to smear the OAK by associating it with the KGC, which had the effect of perpetuating the idea that the OAK had risen from the ashes of the KGC in order to continue its subversive actions. There was a degree of truth justifying the administration's campaign, as many former KGC members crossed over to the OAK, which changed its name to the Sons of Liberty (SOL) by 1864.

By the end of 1864, plans had been made to kidnap Lincoln, with two reported in March and July respectively.[195] Though never carried to fruition, the plans served as the foundation for the later assassination plot carried out by John Wilkes Booth and his co-conspirators in April 1865. A member of the KGC since it first gained popularity in 1859, Booth and his acting colleagues were entranced by the "chivalric code and military trappings" the secret society would offer them, and they enjoyed "running around with similar high-spirited young men from the very best Richmond families."[196] Booth was impressed by the KGC's offerings of a prestigious aura of ritualism, exclusivity, and power derived from participation in it and other similar elite militia units. Booth later consoled himself with membership in the KGC when he

[194] Ibid., 171.
[195] Ibid., 177.
[196] Ibid., 1.

could not become a Confederate military officer, realizing he could "nevertheless help the South through his wealth and affiliation with the Knights."[197]

In all, it is difficult to ascertain just how involved, or capable of involvement, the KGC, OAK, or SOL were in the formation of Booth's group of conspirators and in the eventual assassination they carried out; however, it is clear that those involved all possessed strong connections to those groups in one way or another. Given that the KGC had orchestrated the February 1861 assassination attempt on Lincoln and given the number of Knights (or former Knights) associated with the 1865 assassination, "it is possible that future revelations may show organized KGC involvement."[198] The KGC's ties to the Lincoln assassination more strongly links the group to not only the continuation of the Confederacy but also the secretive, sinister, deadly associations with it.

Once Brewer made the connection that the KGC was responsible for his Arkansas treasure, he broadened his search to the whole country, settling on the famous Lost Dutchman treasure in the Superstition Mountains east of Phoenix, Arizona as what had to be an enormous KGC treasure cache. The region is a scenic, mystical place that represents the perfect example of the romantic, mysterious old west, and the Lost Dutchman mine is one of the most famous lost treasure tales in America, with dozens of treasure seekers having died in pursuit of it. According to legend, Jacob Waltz (the German immigrant man who is the eponymous Dutchman) knew of a remote and very productive gold vein that he would disappear to during his lifetime in the late 1800s. Waltz supposedly cashed in small amounts of pure gold nuggets and gold-bearing quartz in mining towns around Arizona, and wild stories of the supposed riches live on despite geologists determining there are no large gold deposits possible in the geologic makeup of the

[197] Ibid., 145.
[198] Ibid., 184.

area. The Lost Dutchman mine was simply one of the many fixtures of the American treasure tale canon – or so it seemed until Brewer came to know about the story.

As implausible and illogical as it may seem for Brewer to choose the Lost Dutchman treasure, his selection is part of a common pattern for conspiracy theorists, who will link together multiple theories or sets of features that have no logical connection but are convenient to their narrative. Journalist Michael Kelly created the term 'fusion paranoia' to describe this process in which conspiracy theorists draw on many possible sources – other conspiracies, esotericism, symbology, radical politics, obscure legends – in order to cobble together a resulting mixture with no regard to the incompatibility of the many threads of the composite theory.[199] Getler writes that seeing "Jacob Waltz for what he was – a Southern partisan and KGC sentinel – and [seeing] the Lost Dutchman Mine legend for what it was – a fabricated cover story for an enormous KGC depository of cached gold…required special knowledge: the type Bob Brewer had acquired."[200] Instead of "special knowledge," it seems that the belief in the KGC-Lost Dutchman connection required a special willingness to see and connect patterns that simply are not there. Brewer's pursuit of unverified leads that are no more than treasure tales with coincidentally similar graffiti demonstrates the lengths to which he and other gold conspiracy theorists are willing to go to desperately cling to a higher order of connection between the points they see as interrelated.

In Arizona, Brewer became aware of a more sinister, threatening pattern: one of ubiquitous, armed, possibly violent surveillance. Previously, while exploring the woods near his home in Arkansas, Brewer claimed he was tailed by two military-looking men with assault rifles. Another incident involved the discovery of a beheaded doll with shotgun shells, deliberately

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[199] Walker, *The United States of Paranoia*, 276.
[200] Getler and Brewer, *Rebel Gold*, 176.

strung up on a barbed wire fence in an area he had been hunting. Twice in Arizona, a helicopter flew overhead while he and his colleagues were out in the mountains with their metal detectors, and, the next day, a man and a woman arrived by helicopter and asked him what he was doing. Though they were ostensibly asking him innocent questions, their presence to Brewer seemed threatening and therefore, their questions were clearly traps to determine how much he knew about the treasure and KGC system. The pattern of what appeared to be deliberate surveillance "seemed to suggest that certain KGC depositories – containing big, deeply buried master caches – were guarded."[201] In fact, Brewer became convinced that the guards are sentinels and are members of an organization that is tasked with guarding the KGC's treasure, or, KGC members themselves.

Belief in the existence of sentinels whose job it is to guard the treasure from Brewer and people like him demonstrate an important feature of Brewer's theory. These guards support Brewer's interpretation of the KGC as an honor-bound fraternity charged with protecting the gold from being looted by the wrong people – which Brewer is not. Instead, Brewer sees himself as having self-initiated into the ways of the KGC system by observation and study, and a worthy recipient of this arcane information, knowable only to the chosen few. The guards' suspicion but accommodation of Brewer (as demonstrated by the fact that he is still alive and has been permitted, it seems, to dig up smaller caches) fits well into his belief that he has been groomed since he was a boy to inherit the ability to decipher the structure and unlock the ancient, secret knowledge within it.[202] Viewing the KGC as a wise, benevolent, immortal group imparts the same meaning onto the gold it is defending. The gold, the symbol and embodiment of the

[201] Ibid., 217.
[202] Ibid., 256.

Confederacy it is destined to continue, is not only special, but good, and therefore worthy of this uniquely dedicated protection.

Another treasure tale Brewer incorporates into his KGC framework is the Confederate treasury. Brewer believes that Confederate President Jefferson Davis ordered large amounts of gold and silver to be hidden along the way of the treasury's journey from Richmond to Washington, and that the group tasked with hiding it is none other than the KGC. Brewer appears on a 2010 episode of Brad Meltzer's *Decoded* in order to discuss it further.[203] On the show, Meltzer, author of popular political and government-themed thrillers, takes his three assistants with him as they travel around the country investigating and telling the story of various aspects of lost, secret or conspiratorial American history. The show, and the book it spawned, affect a deliberate National Treasure feeling, with superimposed architectural diagram graphics and faux cryptological symbols in the intro of each episode. Chapters in the book include the mysterious Georgia Guidestones (best described as a domestic Stonehenge), the Kennedy assassination, and the popular conspiracy that there is no gold in Fort Knox.[204]

This episode begins with an interview with Mark Waters at the Museum of the Confederacy in Richmond. Waters, a Washington resident and local historian, methodically explains to Meltzer's team of three assistants what the gold and silver would have looked like and how much was traveling with the wagon train. Waters is careful to make the distinction between the Confederate treasury and the Virginia bank funds, and tells the story of the night of

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[203] Brad Meltzer, "Confederate Gold," *Brad Meltzer's Decoded* (The History Channel, December 30, 2010), http://www.history.com/shows/brad-meltzers-decoded/season-1/episode-5.
[204] Brad Meltzer and Keith Ferrell, *History Decoded: Solving the Ten Greatest Conspiracies of All Time* (New York, NY: Workman Publishing Company, Inc., 2013).

the robbery in Washington, chuckling that "no one has been able to 'decode', if you will" the fate of the missing gold.[205]

The pseudo-academic setting is completely abandoned for the next segment of the episode, taking place further south in Danville, Virginia's Green Hill Cemetery. Before any footage is shown, Meltzer speaks directly to the camera, cautioning the viewer that Brewer is "not just some nut with a metal detector in his hand – he's the *real deal*."[206] Meltzer's team is respectful of Brewer, and allows him to display his photographs of tree carvings and metal objects he has found buried. However, it is hard for him to avoid seeming scattered as he flips through his binder and scribbles on his multiple enormous maps with protractors and rulers, all the while pointing out barely visible carvings on seemingly random trees. The team shies away from outright dismissing him by retaining a degree of journalistic distance and neutrality, yet their traded glances and doubtful, joking remarks amongst themselves barely avoid an air of condescension.

The Danville cemetery is not, of course, the Washington plantation where the more famous, and more easily verifiable gold disappearance occurred. Danville is merely the focus of a popular legend that the treasure was buried in a graveyard somewhere along the route from Richmond to Washington. However, one of the team members does travel to Washington and interviews historian Robert Scott Davis, prolific genealogical researcher and author of the most comprehensive academic article on the Washington robbery.[207] They conduct most of their interview standing in front of the Chennault plantation, the purported site of the midnight

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[205] Meltzer, "Confederate Gold."
[206] Ibid.
[207] Robert Scott Davis, "The Georgia Odyssey of the Confederate Gold," *The Georgia Historical Quarterly* 86, no. 4 (2002): 569–86.

robbery, and though Brewer is never taken to Washington, Meltzer still connects the Washington gold to the treasury-KGC theory by including them in the same episode.

Brewer and Meltzer are not the only people who connect the KGC and the Washington gold robbery. The two topics are discussed in conjunction on AboveTopSecret.com, ConspiracyArchive.com, Reddit's subreddit devoted to conspiracy theories and TreasureNet.com, a treasure hunting forum (motto: Caveat Lector) that has an entire subforum dedicated to the KGC.[208] The KGC corner of TreasureNet is by far the most densely populated source of KGC-Confederate gold discussion, with three hundred and twenty four unique threads, some with only two replies, and others with upwards of four hundred. Their titles vary: "WAS JOHN WILKES BOOTH A PAID ASSASSIN????" from July 27, 2013, with four hundred and seventy eight replies; "THE MASONIC/KGC/OAK REPRESENTATION ON THE DOLLAR BILL AND U.S. COINS" from December 13, 2014; "CSA Treasure(s)/Treasury…?" from December 16, 2014. Though Brewer is undoubtedly the most thoroughly dedicated expert on the KGC's treasure and the system encoding it, other amateur conspiracy theorists engage in debates on the topic in a space that allows them to do so without judgment. The Internet's development allowed the proliferation of "elaborate conspiracy theories…cobbled together literally overnight through the efforts of hundreds of scattered dilettante conspiracists."[209]

The *Decoded* episode ends with Brewer's ultimately unsuccessful ground penetrating radar-assisted search of the cemetery. Nevertheless, Brewer remains optimistic, categorizing the

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[208] AboveTopSecret.com, "Thread: Knights of the Golden Circle," *Above Top Secret*, n.d., http://www.abovetopsecret.com/forum/thread14808/pg1.
Mark Owen, "What You Didn't Know About John Wilkes Booth & Jesse James," January 19, 2011, http://www.conspiracyarchive.com/Articles/Booth-Jesse-James.htm.
Reddit.com, "/r/Conspiracy," *Reddit*, n.d.
TreasureNet.com, "Forum: KGC," *Treasure Net*, n.d., http://www.treasurenet.com/forums/kgc/.
[209] Kay, *Among the Truthers*, 229.

search as a "dodge": a red herring purposely set up by the KGC to throw the undedicated off their scent. Brewer is not only optimistic, but satisfied – this false lead supports his theory as to where the closest treasure cache is buried, which, of course, he refuses to reveal to the team. Before Meltzer's team says goodbye, one asks Brewer if he wants to know where the treasure is in order to simply find it, or to guard it. Brewer replies that he wonders about that himself sometimes, everyone shares a laugh, and they all part ways.

Though Brewer explains his lack of disappointment as satisfaction that he correctly identified the graveyard as one large false lead, Getler in his book offers other explanations for his enjoyment, writing at one point that Brewer was unsure which internal force was predominant: "the psychological thrill and financial reward of recovering the gold, or the higher 'art' of breaking a bewildering code and revealing some kind of underlying system."[210] The process of hunting the gold and the mental fulfillment Brewer derived from working with his map system had become more important than the physical treasure – the gold – he dug up in the process.[211]

All in all, conspiracy theorists are defined by seeing purpose in a series of superficially unrelated events, which is what Brewer demonstrates with his hunting, Brewer ultimately comes to the conclusion by the end of the book that the gold transcended its intrinsic value, and served as the anchor of a system whose cause "must have been bigger than a revived Confederacy, something extending beyond politics and the nation-state into the realm of philosophy or, perhaps, religion and spirituality."[212] Eventually, Brewer felt that the specifics of the gold's value or origin is meaningless in the presence of a higher order of connection between

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[210] Getler and Brewer, *Rebel Gold*, 91.
[211] Ibid., 93.
[212] Ibid., 263.
Ibid., 213.

everything – rock carving and tree notch alike – across the entire United States. Inching closer to the higher power controlling the system is the ultimate goal of the pursuit of these earthly symbols. The gold, according to Brewer and conspiracists like him, is merely a stand-in for the continuation of the values and beliefs of an archaic, deceased, spiritual way of life, as embodied by Brewer's revered uncle, grandfather, and the similarly-worshipped Confederate veterans who were their forefathers. These sentinels who were tasked with guarding the gold "gained no wealth or fame from their vigil" yet, they "stood for a cause" and could be trusted wholly.[213] This rhetoric is strikingly similar to language used to discuss the Lost Cause, in which Confederate soldiers are painted as honorable men who did not die in vain, like the KGC sentinels whose religion Brewer and others so desperately seek to understand and whose emotional legacy warps the lasting memory of the war.

There exists a strange paradox between Brewer's theory and other, more popular conspiracies: where other conspiracies are convinced of anti-American or otherwise sabotaging forces lurking amongst the shadows of the government, belief in the KGC Confederate gold is the exact opposite – it is the celebration, almost, of treason, and perpetuates a kind of pride and awe of gold that is destined to continue the rebellious impulses of the Confederacy. Yet, at the same time, Brewer's impulse is entirely understandable. A conspiracy theory that persists in memory "says something true about the anxieties and experiences of the people who believe and repeat it, even if it says nothing true about the objects of the theory itself."[214] Though Brewer may not himself be one of the faithful, believers of the religion of the Lost Cause anticipate the second coming of the Confederacy as enabled by its truest disciples – and, of course, the gold that belongs to it.

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[213] Getler and Brewer, *Rebel Gold*, 264.
[214] Walker, *The United States of Paranoia*, 15.

CHAPTER 6

"I Just Know": A Family Legend

Madelyn Joanne Chennault was born July 15th, 1928 in Atlanta, Georgia, to Benjamin Q. and Othello Jones Chennault. Madelyn[215] pursued education and research throughout her life, eventually becoming the first black woman to receive a doctorate in Educational Psychology from Indiana University in 1966, completing a post-doctorate at the University of Georgia in 1970, and an internship in clinical psychology at the University of Mississippi in 1972. Later in life she conducted research on the health of rural black communities and taught at colleges and universities in Georgia.

Before she passed away on May 20th, 2014, we met to discuss a peculiar family story, passed down through four generations, that Chennault believes wholeheartedly to be true. According to Madelyn and other family members, her great grandfather Askew Chennault Sr. (1825–1884) was a mixed-race slave on the Chennault plantation in Washington, Georgia. Trained as a carpenter, Askew was the son of a slave woman referred to as 'Jenny' and, supposedly, a member of what Madelyn referred to as the 'white' Chennault family. Family tradition and some records suggest his identity was Abram Chennault (1806–1832), but there is little documentation to completely verify his identity.

According to Madelyn's family's legend, Askew lived on the Chennault plantation at the time of the robbery, and either found or somehow to possess some of the gold immediately after the robbery occurred. Instead of turning it in (either to the family, or the subsequent investigations), Askew kept it for himself. He later passed the money down to his four sons – Askew Jr., George, Daniel, and Jim – who used it to learn trades and start and maintain

[215] First names will be used to avoid confusion; no disrespect is intended.

businesses that were successful for subsequent generations. Madelyn's grandfather, Daniel, moved to Atlanta and bought a house there in 1924 or 1925 with cash. From what Madelyn remembers, the house, which is still standing, is located at the intersection of Joseph Lowery Boulevard and Magnolia Street, in Bankhead.

Madelyn believes very deeply in the truth of the gold legend, and in an interview that occurred at her home on February 22nd, 2013, she discussed her family heritage, stories about her life, and, of particular relevance to this paper, her family's legend regarding the gold. Below is a partial transcript of a recording made:

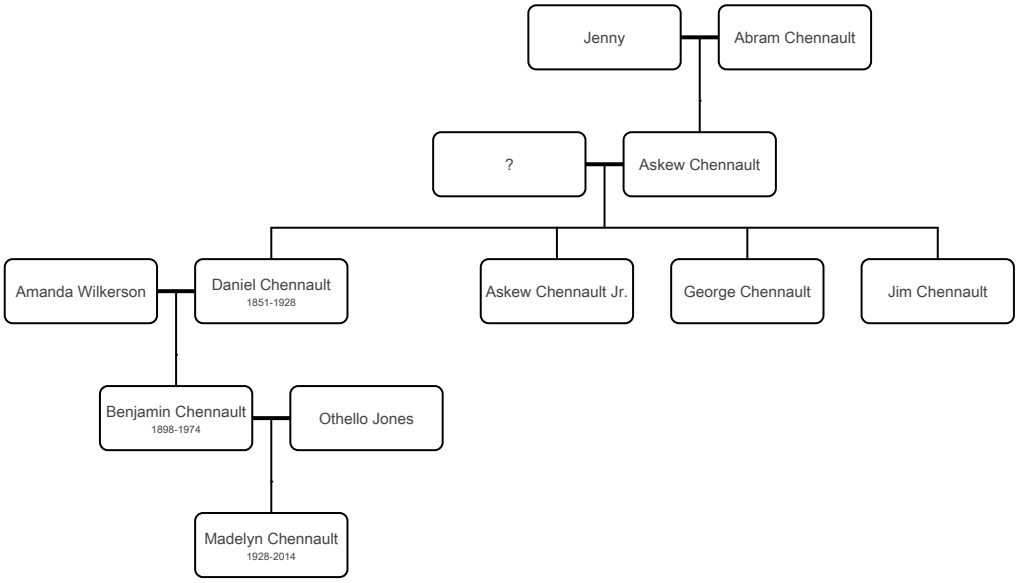
> EM: "When I read [an article about the Washington gold], it made it sound like it wasn't true…how come [the article]…treats the story like it's not true?"
> MC: Well, they don't know what happened to it.
> EM: They haven't talked to the black Chennault family?
> MC: No, nobody ever admitted taking it.
> EM: But it was Askew who did?
> MC: Yes…his children all worked hard, and they saved their money, they never admitted to finding this gold…if they had admitted to taking it, they would've had to give it back.

Later, regarding the fate of the gold and its use to purchase a house in Atlanta:

> MC: [The white Chennaults] just didn't know what happened to it. All anybody knows is that they [her grandfather, one of Askew's sons] moved from Tignall [to Atlanta] with their horses and buggy…and paid forty thousand dollars cash money, and they brought it in a brown paper sack…they took it to a white man and they bought the place.

During the entirety of this interview, which began in the early afternoon but lasted well into the evening, Madelyn's deep belief in the story was quite clear. To Madelyn, there is no question where Askew's wealth or the subsequent wealth of her family originated. She reiterated her belief in a later interview conducted in March 2014, a few months before she passed away, in which she stated that she could simply feel that the story was true. "I just know," she declared. "I just know."

Bennie (short for Bennelle in honor of Madelyn's grandfather) is Madelyn's firstborn daughter, and currently lives in Maryland. In a phone interview on June 4th, 2015, Bennie described her family, enabling the creation of the rough family tree shown below. Madelyn's father is one of thirteen children, and his siblings' names were not included on the tree.



Created using free online software, 2016.

Bennie then discussed the gold story and her opinion of it. Ultimately, Bennie is unconvinced of its truthfulness, as she feels, perhaps correctly so, that there is "no proof" and "no evidence" to support it. She emphasized "nothing has been proven anywhere with anyone…they, you know, just make connections and guesses, trying to put people and places together." Though she acknowledged "anything is possible," Bennie prefers to "go by history, by evidence, by proof." The gold was never brought up to her as a child, she said, and she never encountered the story until "people started to put it in family reunion stuff." Elaborate family

reunions are a large part of black family life, particularly in families with strong ties to the South. They are often "highly organized affairs" and can include "t-shirts, talent shows, award ceremonies, athletic events, storytelling, and occasionally workshops related to social issues."[216] The Chennault family reunions, whose hosts rotate among the descendants of the four brothers, are no different. The gold story involving Askew, according to Madelyn, was a prominent part of the programs and literature circulated at them.

At one such reunion event, Bennie and other relatives went to Washington to visit, and toured what she remembered as the Chennault plantation home itself. They toured the interior of the main house as well as some of the other buildings on the property. Bennie described the woodworking and carpentry that Askew had done in his job as the carpenter on the plantation as "really nice to see." Photographs from the home's acceptance to the National Register of Historic Places in 1976 show full wood paneling in the den as well as partial wood paneling on the staircase. It is unknown whether those pieces are original to the house's construction in 1859. However, the document references the floors as being "1918 pine," so it is possible that the wood may not have been Askew's work.[217] Bennie, and the rest of the Chennault family with her, were perhaps unconcerned with the identity of the carpenter who completed the woodwork – they were instead proud of the idea that the well-done handiwork could possibly have been completed by their ancestor.

Despite Bennie's earlier statement that she had never been informed of the gold growing up, she remembered later in the conversation that "someone mentioned it to me when I was in

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[216] Julie E. Miller-Cribbs, "African-American Family Reunions: Directions for Future Research and Practice," *Research Center for Group Dynamics*, Spring 2004, 164, http://www.rcgd.isr.umich.edu/prba/perspectives/springsummer2004/miller.pdf.
[217] Georgia Department of Natural Resources, "Entries in the National Register," September 1976.

high school, saying 'your family's got some gold!' but I thought they were crazy! That's absurd, I thought. I never mentioned it to anyone." Gold aside, Bennie is insistent that her family's wealth came from only their businesses. Daniel was a contractor and carpenter, perhaps having learned the trade from his father. According to Bennie, Daniel worked on the construction, specifically the brickwork, of the Briarcliff mansion, the home of Asa Candler, Jr., the eccentric son of the famous Coca Cola co-founder. Later, one of Daniel's daughters owned the Andrews Chennault Funeral Home, on the same street as the family home. Daniel's home, bought in 1924 or 1925, had a corner store, barber shop, and two rental units attached. The family lived on the top floor, and their combined enterprises "made quite a lot of money" and were "quite the money generator" according to Bennie. She repeatedly used the word "corporation" to describe the family's self-sufficiency and their dedication to their businesses, in a tone that reflected the obvious pride and respect with which she regarded her family. It is this pride and respect which likely influences her view of the gold story – as a dishonest transgression on the memory of their hard work, business smarts, and legitimately earned financial success.

It is impossible to pinpoint exactly where and when the event (Askew's discovery and keeping of the gold) became converted into a legend. Yet, there existed certain features of the social and economic environment. Daniel, Askew's son, experienced in 1920s Atlanta that lent themselves to not only the creation of a family legend and wealth origin story, but also the long lasting perpetuation of it. Bennie's fierce pride in her family's businesses reflects the importance of successful black businesses in the Reconstruction era and into the twentieth century. The Chennaults were part of a larger trend of the "cityward movement of rural Negroes,

which…became a great folk movement during and following the First World War."[218] Between the years 1870 to 1915, 77% of the wealthiest black Americans lived in towns and cities, a transition mirrored by the Chennaults' move to Atlanta in the 1920s.[219]

In his Ph.D. dissertation-turned-book about black families in the United States, E. Franklin Frazier includes a section entitled "The Brown Middle Class", which describes the economic and social structure of middle class black Americans from approximately 1900 to 1930. "The economic foundations of the Negro middle class" were family owned businesses, which were an important feature of not only the economic life of black Americans, but also their social position relative to other blacks. In 1890, there were just 1,900 black-owned businesses, but by 1930 there were over 70,000 across the country, and the most successful were of the type managed by the Chennaults: personal services including barber shops, corner stores, and funeral parlors.[220] Other professions included in this socio-economic stratum were craftsmen, such as tailors, dressmakers, carpenters, or bricklayers.[221] Black businesses, writes Frazier, quoting Abram L. Harris' book *The Negro as Capitalist*, were "'defensive enterprises,' the product of racial segregation."[222] The expansion of black property ownership not only coincided with, but was caused by the "rising tide of Jim Crow laws" leading black entrepreneurs and professionals to "exploit new markets among fellow blacks."[223] Some businesses did cater to clientele of all races – if Daniel Chennault worked on Asa Candler Jr.'s house, perhaps the family's other

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[218] Edward Franklin Frazier, *The Negro Family in the United States : E. Franklin Frazier.*, Revised and abridged edition Foreword by Nathan Glazer.. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968), 225.
[219] Loren Schweninger, *Black Property Owners in the South, 1790-1915*, Blacks in the New World (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1990), 216.
[220] Frazier, *The Negro Family in the United States*, 317.
[221] Edward Ball, *The Sweet Hell inside: A Family History*, 1st edition.. (New York: William Morrow, 2001), 35.
[222] Frazier, *The Negro Family in the United States*, 318.
[223] Schweninger, *Black Property Owners in the South, 1790-1915*, 219.

businesses did, too. In any case, "blacks with energy, foresight, and business acumen," including the Chennaults, were able to take advantage of the economic opportunities presented by the increasingly urbanized environment in Atlanta.[224] This upper class, according to Gatewood's *Aristocrats of Color*, "justified its claims to a privileged status" with wealth and education, among other grounds.[225] The formation of this social stratum "prompted both pride and resentment in the black community" – with resentment partially stemming from criticism of "transient, superficial considerations" including the chance acquisition of money to skin color and hair texture.[226]

Indeed, one of the reasons the Chennaults were able to be a part of this middle class is their racial heritage. Being mixed-race, and most importantly, having light skin, was fundamental to inclusion in the professional elite. The two – professional business ownership, and having mixed racial heritage – were inextricably intertwined. The middle class was "comprised largely of men and women of mixed ancestry" who affirmed light skin as an influence on, and marker of, family social status.[227] The roots of this fact were established under slavery, during which time "mulatto children fathered by white planters…were not uncommon."[228] Rather than make the mixed-race child work in the fields, a son would sometimes be apprenticed to a trade, in a "relatively brief period of instruction designed to prepare them as rough plantation carpenters,

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[224] Ibid., 220.
[225] Willard B Gatewood, Jr., *Aristocrats of Color : The Black Elite, 1880-1920* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 2000), 24.
[226] Ibid., 25.
[227] Frazier, *The Negro Family in the United States*, 319.
Schweninger, *Black Property Owners in the South, 1790-1915*, 321.
[228] Michael P. Johnson and James L. Roark, *Black Masters□: A Free Family of Color in the Old South*, 1st edition.. (New York: Norton, 1984), 5.

blacksmiths, or masons."[229] This is likely what happened to Askew, if the source of his white heritage really was one of the men in the white Chennault family.

Race was a complex issue not only among black Americans of varying classes, but also between blacks and whites. Reconstruction, the great American tragedy, gave way to a "slow-moving war between whites and blacks…the fragile truce between the races that had come out of the Northern victory vanished."[230] Blacks were treated terribly by most whites, with hatred that "roared with hysterical, angry, vengeful laughter."[231] Though Madelyn never explicitly refers to any outright racism or discrimination her family members experienced, she told of the following regarding her grandfather, Daniel, and his car:

> MC: With that money, [Daniel] bought a car and I don't know how he got it but he had a real nice car, and everyone here…he told them it was a white man's car…black people at that time had to be subservient to white people if they wanted to improve themselves…
> [later]
> MC: My grandfather was very smart and shrewd, and he knew how to ride the tide, you know, roll with the punches…he only had a third grade education but he was very very talented, very smart…but he kept his mouth shut, he always told me, 'you can learn more if you keep your mouth shut, don't tell your business to anybody, just keep quiet and pretend like you're stupid, dumb, and crazy!' [MC laughs] 'and if they say something to you that you don't like, pretend like you can't hear!'…those were the things he taught me as a little girl.

A nice car in the Jim Crow South was a common trigger of racially-motivated violence. It was a particularly salient symbol of black success that prompted white retaliation.[232] Blacks' ownership of any outward symbol of material success, but particularly expensive cars, "violated

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[229] Ibid., 11.
[230] Ball, *The Sweet Hell inside*, 34.
[231] W.E.B. DuBois, "Black Reconstruction," in *Reconstruction; an Anthology of Revisionist Writings* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1969), 467.
[232] Nate Shaw and Theodore Rosengarten, *All God's Dangers: The Life of Nate Shaw*, University of Chicago Press ed.. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000).

the common white supremacist image of humble and socially inferior black people."[233] Further, any "black economic achievement signaled to white people that African Americans, by refusing to accept their assigned place at the bottom of the social ladder, threatened the white-dominated hierarchy."[234] Madelyn's description of Daniel's attempts to stave off unwanted attention with the lie that it was a white friend's car, and his advice to her to keep her head down, mouth shut, and to "roll with the punches" reflects this conscious awareness of the car's symbolism and what it attracted from whites.

It was in this racially oppressive environment that the story of Askew's gold was passed down through four generations. With the previous discussion as context, it is possible to understand just why the story has survived, why it is meaningful, and what it does for those who believe in it. If the gold story did not have some layer of significance to it beyond being an amusing family treasure tale, it would not have survived as long and as vividly as it has.

The legend's significance is filtered through the experiences of the family that created it, owns it, and has passed it down. As a family, the Chennaults and their story fall under the archetype known as the family saga, a genre of literature that involves people retracing their shared past and finding meaning within it.[235] The Chennaults' attempts to "reconstruct the forgotten memories of their ancestors" were "exercises in race pride."[236] Family rituals, such as passing down and sharing this legend involving a common ancestor, "offer individuals, families

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[233] Charles L. Lumpkins, *American Pogrom: The East St. Louis Race Riot and Black Politics*, Ohio University Press Series on Law, Society, and Politics in the Midwest (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 2008), 100.
[234] Ibid.
[235] Alex Haley, *Roots*, 1st edition.. (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1976).
[236] Robert O. Stephens, "Reaching for America: The Black Family Saga in the South," in *The Family Saga in the South* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1995), 142.

and groups the capacity to face oppression."[237] The Jim Crow-era Chennaults likely embraced the legend and its portrayal of their slave ancestor, who managed to pull one over on the white Chennaults.

From a literary perspective, Toni Morrison's *Song of Solomon* contains similar elements to the Chennault story. The main character Milkman Dead "goes on a near-mythic quest into his family past…[which] reflects at the same time the historical and sociological phenomenon… [of] black families' leaving the rural South for new lives and new structures in cities of the North."[238] In *Song of Solomon*, Milkman searches for meaning behind his family's legends by exploring his family's Southern roots, in a journey which reflects the larger sociological trend of the Great Migration. The Chennaults did not themselves move North. However, like Milkman, they looked to the past to understand their present. This is analogous to the Chennaults, as the continuation of their story reflects the historical context surrounding their family from Askew's life on the Chennault plantation to Madelyn's life as a pioneering black woman in science.

It seems from examining the historical surroundings of the story that, at a time when their experiences and identities were marginalized, the Chennault family used the gold story as a source of pride for their family, as mentioned previously. The story became the nucleus around which they formed their conceptions of their family as unique, due to the fact that these types of stories are "means for family members to perform and transform their identities" as well as demonstrate "family values, beliefs, desires, and aspirations."[239] This is true for Madelyn, who feels her family is special – rightly so, given their economic success – and views herself as a

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[237] Miller-Cribbs, "African-American Family Reunions: Directions for Future Research and Practice," 162.
[238] Stephens, "Reaching for America: The Black Family Saga in the South," 162.
[239] Amy M. Smith, *Tracing Family Lines: The Impact of Genealogy Research on Family Communication* (Lanham, Md: Lexington Books, 2012), 18.

continuation of a family that has advanced successfully despite societal obstacles. This seemed to be a theme she experienced in her own life, first being railroaded into a job teaching elementary school that she hated, being mistreated by white students, and later persisting as the only woman in her graduate programs and eventually being granted over a million dollars to conduct research on the health of black rural communities. If families pick and choose which stories to pass down based on what represents their values, the gold story represents the Chennaults' success in a time and place when it was unlikely and nearly impossible to achieve.

The focus of this chapter is not to assess the veracity of this particular version of the legend, primarily because, similar to the rest of the paper, the meaning and motivation behind retelling the story is of greater importance than it being true or untrue. This focus away from verification is also due to the fact that confirming if Askew ever did find any gold is impossible. Save for the discovery of a gold coin in a dusty attic, or perhaps a diary from Askew describing how he found the gold and kept it, or some other holy grail document or artifact, there is no way to know if he found any gold, or what he may have done with it.

However, the temptation to at least try to find something documented that could give any suggestion about the legend's grounding in fact was too great to resist. I undertook trips to the Georgia Archives over two weeks in June 2015 in an attempt to find any records on Askew that could possibly supplement the narrative told by Madelyn and Bennie.

Documentation on Askew did exist, and most importantly, the 1870 census indeed lists his occupation as "carpenter."[240] I could not verify that he was actually owned by the Chennaults because the slave-owning family members died after Emancipation. Had they died pre-Emancipation, their estate records would have listed their property, which may have included

[240] For all Georgia Archives sources, see bibliography

slaves listed by name. Despite this particular deficiency, Askew very likely lived near the plantation due to certain notations in the tax digests.[241]

The most information found on Askew is in Wilkes County tax digest records. Tax digest records are useful in not only physically locating people, but also in creating an approximation of their life, based on the things they were taxed on. Pre-Emancipation, Askew could not be found, and the years 1867 to 1874 are lost. Of particular interest are Askew's records from 1876. He first appears in the records from 1874, with $530 of what is listed in the tax book as "all other property," meaning everything including horses, mules, and household items. In Askew's case, carpentry tools would have been included in this category and likely account for some of the value. He is also listed as possessing $150 in "amount of money and solvent debts of all kinds," meaning cash. The next year, 1875, Askew had again $530 of all other property, and had $200 in cash.

1876 was life-changing year for Askew. His net worth jumped to $1, 491 due to his purchase of 269 acres of land (worth $1, 076) in Wilkes County from a J.E. Bramlett. The nature of their relationship is uncertain, but cursory research of other Bramletts indicates that they are a white family. What is significant about this particular purchase is not that a mixed-race ex-slave had purchased land – prosperous black people existed and made comfortable livings before the war and into the Reconstruction era. Instead, what sets this purchase apart is its size. Normally, land would have been purchased, at least by someone of modest wealth like Askew, in increments of fifty acres or less. As money came in, a man of his economic status would have added more to his property in pieces. A large piece of land more than doubling one's worth

[241] Tax records were compiled by a person who went house-to-house collecting information. Therefore, it is able to see who lived near whom by these lists. A similar process is true for census records. The fact that Askew's name is listed among other white Chennaults suggests he lived near the plantation.

would have been an unusual purchase for anyone, including a mixed-race ex-slave. Throughout the next seven years, Askew slowly parceled out land to his son Askew Jr. and another Chennault by the name of Cooksey, forming the foundation for their financial stability that eventually enabled their move away from Washington and to Atlanta.

As surprising and unusual a purchase as the 269 acres was, it would be inaccurate and unethical to jump to the conclusion that Askew was able to purchase the land due to gold he had been holding on to since 1865. However, it is not entirely out of the realm of possibility. Confederate General Porter Alexander recovered $70,000 from local people who had scooped up the gold littering the ground after the robbery occurred.[242] $10,000 of this amount was recovered from ex-slaves.[243] Of all the theories and speculations about the gold's fate, this one – that Askew was one of the slaves who found and kept some gold, at least until Alexander came, but perhaps longer – is the one least likely to be entirely false. Eliza Andrews' diary's prediction of the "strange histories" generated by the gold robbery begets the possibility of an even stranger reality.

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[242] Alexander, "Confederate Treasure: General Alexander Replies to Captain McLendon."
[243] Michael Golay, *To Gettysburg and beyond: The Parallel Lives of Joshua Lawrence Chamberlain and Edward Porter Alexander*, 1st edition.. (New York: Crown Publishers, 1994), 273.

CONCLUSION

This thesis examined not only the varied retellings of the gold robbery story, but also the motivation behind those retellings and the impact of these stories on their creators and audiences. If the gold's robbery is an allegory for the Confederacy's defeat, then the gold's persistence in public culture represents the collective Southern refusal to forget the Civil War. Southern life "continues to be interrupted by both familiar and new controversies over Confederate symbols" – with the gold serving as a symbol and relic embodying the Confederacy's eternal spirit.[244]

Though not the focus of the project, throughout the past eighteen months of research, it has become clear that we – historians, treasure hunters, Washington locals, conspiracy theorists, or anyone interested in the gold – will never find it. The truth is out there; the gold is maybe long forgotten in a basement, possibly quietly dispersed over the past century and a half, or perhaps buried in some unknowable place. If it were possible to find the gold, it would have been found by now. The gold's fate, despite its permanent loss, remains open to speculation and interpretation. What happened in the hours and days after the robbery on May 24th, 1865 remains tantalizingly, hauntingly uncertain.

This lack of resolution regarding the gold's fate is a metaphor for the unresolved bitterness and anger that has and continues to pervade the South's memory of the Civil War. The war left a deep wound on the South; a wound that has never been permitted to heal. Every seemingly harmless, superficially charming cultural artifact like the gold legend picks at the surface of the wound, opening and reopening it and keeping the bitterly glorified memory of the Old South alive. A common thread among the different communities explored in this paper is the element of sweetly innocent nostalgia, enhanced by the motif of shiny Confederate gold. Blight

[244] Brundage, *The Southern Past*, 318.

writes in *Race and Reunion* the Civil War "remains very difficult to shuck from its shell of sentimentalism."[245]

Does this sentimentalism enhance or obscure our ability to understand the war? The gold, it seems, can be used as a deflection to avoid the issue at the very root of the war – slavery. Americans, writes Blight, have always needed these kinds of "deflections from the deeper meanings of the Civil War."[246] Race, he adds, was so fundamental to the "root of the war's causes and consequences" and so deep a source of division in America, that race "served as the antithesis of a culture of reconciliation."[247] Where in this gold deflection, then, does the black Chennaults' version of the story and its complex racial and socio-economic threads fit in? Their story was originally the center of this project, yet, their ancestors are silenced in nearly every account of the gold legend I read. The deliberate lack of inclusion of the black Chennaults, or black people at all, showcases a larger truth about the Civil War and contemporary memory of it. Slavery, race, and freedom were and are purposely forgotten in favor of grandiose ideals of the Confederacy rooted in what is ultimately willful, wistful ignorance.

[245] Blight, *Race and Reunion*, 4.
[246] Ibid., 5.
[247] Ibid., 4.

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APPENDIX 1
Confederate Treasury Distribution April 7 – May 4, 1865*

Article by Mark Waters

April 6, 1865 at Danville, Virginia -Treasury is counted for the first time; $327,022.90.
Treasury also contains 600-700 million dollars worth of Confederate Treasury Notes (burned at Washington, Georgia, May 4th) and 16-18,000 pounds sterling in Liverpool, England, acceptances (taken by federal troops at Irwinville, Georgia May 10th). Small miscellaneous expenses are not reported by Clark.

April 7, 1865 at Greensboro, North Carolina - Treasury contained $327,022.90.
$39,000 paid to Major General Joseph Johnston and his soldiers - $1.15 each.
$35,000 was removed and taken for future use by President Davis and Cabinet.

May 3, 1865 near Chennault, Georgia - Treasury contained $253,022.90.
$108,322.90 to Major General John Breckinridge paid cavalry troops of Duke's, Vaughn's, Dibrell's and Ferguson's Commands - $26.25 each. This payout included twenty members of the First Ohio Cavalry posing as Confederates.

May 4, 1865 at Washington, Georgia - Treasury contained $144,700.
$150 ($50 each) to S. Brittain, Jas. Miller, and J. B. MacMurdo of the First Auditor's Office for services to date.
$300 to Captain Given Campbell CSA for payment to Presidential Scouts at Abbeville.
$300 to Lieutenant Bradford for payment to the marines at Abbeville.
$520 to Captain Joseph M. Brown CSA (Acting Quartermaster) for services of the Quartermaster's Department
$806 to Quartermaster General Alexander Robert Lawton CSA (Military Academy Class of 1839 Brigadier General Edward Porter Alexander's brother-in-law) for payment of five commissioned officers and 26 men under Brigadier General L. York's Louisiana Brigade.
$1,000 to Major General John Breckinridge for transport to trans-Mississippi Department
$1,500 to John F. Wheliss (Captain Parker's paymaster) for payment of the midshipmen and other Naval scouts at Abbeville - about twenty days pay each.
$2,000 to General Braxton Bragg for transport to the trans-Mississippi Department
$3,500 to Acting Secretary of the Treasury, John H. Reagan, taken by federals at Irwinville.
$6,040 ($1510 each to Colonels William Preston Johnston, Francis Richard Lubbock, Charles E. Thorburn, and John Taylor Wood (1830-1904; USNA Class of 1853) taken by federals from Johnston and Thorburn at Irwinville.
$40,000 to Major and Chief Commissary Raphael Moses CSA to feed paroled soldier and stragglers who were passing through (transported to Augusta). Davis' last order.
$86,000 in gold and bullion to Lieutenant Commander James A. Semple CSN was the last payment made by Captain Micajah Clark CSA, Acting Treasurer. Semple was to have transported it to Charleston or Savannah to be shipped to Bermuda, Nassau, or Liverpool for deposit on account of the Confederate Government. However, Semple gave $27,000 to Edward M. Tidball and $25,000 to William F. Howell (Varina Davis' brother). Both were naval purchasing agents that had worked for Semple. The remaining $34,000 was kept by Semple.
$2,584 not accounted for or reported but would have been miscellaneous expenses used in route to Washington, Georgia. (*NOTE*: *Micajah Clark's accounting differs slightly from that*

published in Flight into Oblivion, by Alfred Jackson Hanna – he lists the figure at $6360.)

* *The Last Days of the Confederate Treasury and What Became of the Specie*, Captain Micajah H. Clark (CSA), *Southern Historical Society Papers* (1881), Vol. 9, No. 1, page 545, Broadfoot Publishing Company, Morningside Bookshop, Dayton, OH, 1990

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