

THE MEMORY AND MEMORIALIZATION OF JAMES BIRDSEYE MCPHERSON

by

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B.A., California State University, Sacramento, 2009

M.A., Kansas State University, 2012

AN ABSTRACT OF A DISSERTATION

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Abstract

General James Birdseye McPherson, the highest ranking Union officer killed during the Civil War, slowly over time became a largely forgotten figure in the collective memory of most Americans. A brief examination of the general's personal life and military career reveals that his life's narrative presented a captivating story, one which successfully captured the attention of his contemporaries. In the fifty years following his death, several groups of interested individuals sought to honor the general's memory through the construction of memorials. This dissertation approaches the history of McPherson through a memory study focusing particularly on the general's memorialization and the four main locations where the general had monuments built in his honor. In Washington, D.C., Clyde, Ohio, Atlanta, Georgia, and McPherson, Kansas, the attempts to preserve McPherson's memory both succeeded in certain ways but also fell short of accomplishing their primary goal. In the process of memorialization the general was both remembered and forgotten. The funding, unveiling, and preserving of the various monuments illuminates the politics of commemoration as well as the motives behind those seeking to honor McPherson. With the passing of time, McPherson's memory slowly began to evolve in each location and generally changed to reflect the times and circumstances of the citizens. In each case, the McPherson memorials signified something different to the community, including a permanent reflection of local identity, a symbol of sectional reconciliation, or a means of promoting civic pride and local boosterism. Ultimately, although the memorialization of McPherson served as the best attempt to honor the generals' memory, the narrow scope and reach of memorials could not successfully preserve McPherson's memory beyond a very limited range and within small communities of interested parties.

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Abstract

General James Birdseye McPherson, the highest ranking Union officer killed during the Civil War, slowly over time became a largely forgotten figure in the collective memory of most Americans. A brief examination of the general's personal life and military career reveals that his life's narrative presented a captivating story, one which successfully captured the attention of his contemporaries. In the fifty years following his death, several groups of interested individuals sought to honor the general's memory through the construction of memorials. This dissertation approaches the history of McPherson through a memory study focusing particularly on the general's memorialization and the four main locations where the general had monuments built in his honor. In Washington, D.C., Clyde, Ohio, Atlanta, Georgia, and McPherson, Kansas, the attempts to preserve McPherson's memory both succeeded in certain ways but also fell short of accomplishing their primary goal. In the process of memorialization the general was both remembered and forgotten. The funding, unveiling, and preserving of the various monuments illuminates the politics of commemoration as well as the motives behind those seeking to honor McPherson. With the passing of time, McPherson's memory slowly began to evolve in each location and generally changed to reflect the times and circumstances of the citizens. In each case, the McPherson memorials signified something different to the community, including a permanent reflection of local identity, a symbol of sectional reconciliation, or a means of promoting civic pride and local boosterism. Ultimately, although the memorialization of McPherson served as the best attempt to honor the generals' memory, the narrow scope and reach of memorials could not successfully preserve McPherson's memory beyond a very limited range and within small communities of interested parties.

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instrumental in the development and direction of the chapter which eventually became a published article in *Kansas History: A Journal of the Central Plains*. Dr. Hamscher first considered the idea to examine boosterism, which became a major theme of the chapter. Particular appreciation is also due to Virgil Dean and the *Kansas History* journal for first publishing a portion of this subject on McPherson's memorialization. I am also appreciative of my colleagues and fellow graduate students at Kansas State University, who have provided the friendships and social environment necessary to make it through graduate school. Finally, a special thank you is owed to my family, who has provided endless love and support over the years. My grandparents, William and Theresa Boldt, and Frederic and Peggy deGanna, have been a constant source of loving support and encouragement throughout my graduate schooling. My brother Evan Dudley and his wife Reina have also provided love and encouragement as well as an appreciated source of enjoyable intellectual competition. Lastly, my parents, Gary and Janet Dudley, have given invaluable assistance and continuous support throughout my graduate studies. Whether through supportive conversation, helpful proofreading, or simply their continued encouragement, they have been instrumental in the advancement of my graduate career and the completion of this ultimate goal.

Dedication

Fittingly, this dissertation is dedicated to the memory of James Birdseye McPherson.

Abbreviations

Sources:

- FDP, AHC* *Francis DeGress Papers*, Atlanta History Center, Atlanta, Georgia
- GLI* The Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History, New York, New York.
- JLP, LC* John Alexander Logan Family Papers, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.
- JMC, RH* *James Birdseye McPherson Collection*, Rutherford B. Hayes Presidential Center, Fremont, Ohio.
- JMP, LC* *James Birdseye McPherson Papers, 1848-1868*, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.
- JMP, TL* *James Birdseye McPherson Papers*, Toledo-Lucas County Public Library, Toledo, Ohio.
- KSHSL* Kansas State Historical Society Library, Topeka, Kansas.
- MHS* *Missouri Historical Society*, Manuscript Department, Jefferson Memorial Building, St. Louis, Missouri.
- O.R.* *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*. 128 vols. Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1880-1910.
- PUSG* *The Papers of Ulysses S. Grant*, edited by John Y. Simon. 31 vols. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1967.
- RPSAT* *Report of the Proceedings of the Society of the Army of the Tennessee*
- WFC, RH* *Wilfred S. Forester Collection*, Rutherford B. Hayes Presidential Center, Fremont, Ohio.
- WKP, AHC* *Wilbur G. Kurtz, Sr. Papers*, Atlanta History Center, Atlanta Georgia.

Organizations or Groups:

- B-ATL* The Battle of Atlanta Commemorization Organization
- GAR* Grand Army of the Republic
- UDC* United Daughters of the Confederacy

Introduction

Union General James Birdseye McPherson's "name and accomplishments during the Civil War appeared on the pages of every newspaper and were known to every American. . . . Through the irony of fate, few historians of today make mention of his name, and Americans as a whole have never heard it."¹ So wrote amateur historian Elizabeth J. Whaley in 1955 in her aptly titled biography of McPherson, *Forgotten Hero*. Born and raised in Clyde, Ohio, the hometown of General McPherson, Whaley quickly became enamored by the local Civil War hero, which prompted the writing of the only published biography of the general. In the sixty years since Whaley's book, little has changed with regard to McPherson's memory among Americans. Although Ulysses S. Grant, William Tecumseh Sherman, and Phillip Sheridan—all comparable contemporaries of McPherson—have had countless biographies written about them in the 150 years since the Civil War, scholarship has largely ignored McPherson.²

Considering McPherson's role during the Civil War, his heroic death, and his popularity among his contemporaries, the historiography on the general is surprisingly sparse. Although Whaley's biography offers the best published work on the general and his life, it ultimately is the product of an amateur historian, and does not compare favorably to a modern scholarly work. However, Whaley's book still provides the best starting point for McPherson scholarship. In

¹ Elizabeth J. Whaley, *Forgotten Hero: General James B. McPherson, The Biography of a Civil War General* (New York: Exposition Press, 1955), preface.

² See William S. McFeely, *Grant: A Biography* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1981), Joan Waugh, *U. S. Grant: American Hero, American Myth* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: The University of North Carolina Press, 2009), H. W. Brands, *The Man Who Saved the Union: Ulysses Grant in War and Peace* (New York: Anchor Books, 2012), Lee B. Kennett, *Sherman: A Soldier's Life* (New York: HarperCollins, 2002), Robert L. O'Connell, *Fierce Patriot: The Tangled Lives of William Tecumseh Sherman* (New York: Random House, 2015), James Lee McDonough, *William Tecumseh Sherman: In the Service of My Country: A Life* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2016), Roy Morris Jr., *Sheridan: The Life and Wars of General Phil Sheridan* (New York: Crown, 1992), Paul Andrew Hutton, *Phil Sheridan and His Army* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1985), Joseph Wheelan, *Terrible Swift Sword: The Life of General Philip H. Sheridan* (Cambridge, MA: Da Capo Press, 2013), as just a small sample of the dozens of biographies on the three men.

addition to Whaley, multiple graduate students wrote about McPherson's military career. Judith Caroline Pool, at Ohio State University in 1965, wrote her master's thesis on McPherson's generalship during the Civil War.³ McPherson also captured the attention of Tamara Moser Melia, a graduate student at the University of Southern Illinois in the late 1970s and 1980s. Melia wrote both her master's thesis and Ph.D. dissertation on McPherson. Her thesis focused on McPherson's early career in the Army, while her dissertation provided an excellent examination of McPherson's military service during the Civil War, and particularly noted the influences of the "Old Army" culture on McPherson's character and generalship.⁴ Melia later published a chapter in Steven E. Woodworth's collection of essays, *Grant's Lieutenants: From Cairo to Vicksburg*, examining the relationship between Grant and McPherson.⁵ McPherson did not fail to capture the interest of other authors, but owing to various circumstances, biographies failed to materialize. Wilfred S. Forester spent years collecting material and preparing a biography on McPherson, but unfortunately died before his work could be completed.⁶ Thomas Waldsmith, another amateur historian, wrote a biography on McPherson's life, but soon following its publication it was withdrawn from circulation for copyright infringement.⁷

Another popular media, historical fiction, largely ignores McPherson. The best example of the lack of attention devoted to McPherson in historical fiction can be found in *New York Times* bestselling author Jeff Shaara's works. Shaara, one of the most popular and widely read authors of historical fiction, recently published a trilogy on the Civil War in the West—the

³ Judith Caroline Pool, "James B. McPherson: Civil War General" (master's thesis, Ohio State University, 1965).

⁴ Tamara Moser Melia, "The Gallant Knight: The Life and Early Career of James Birdseye McPherson" (master's thesis, University of Southern Illinois, 1979); and idem., "James B. McPherson and the Ideals of the Old Army" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Southern Illinois, 1987).

⁵ Tamara Smith, "A Matter of Trust: Grant and James B. McPherson," in Steven E. Woodward, *Grant's Lieutenants: From Cairo to Vicksburg* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2001).

⁶ Much of Forester's work is included in the *Wilfred S. Forester Collection*, Rutherford B. Hayes Presidential Center, Fremont, Ohio, and offers scholars valuable material on McPherson.

⁷ Thomas Waldsmith, *General James B. McPherson: The Star-crossed Knight of the Union* (Tiffin, OH: Booksurge Llc, 2007).

theater where McPherson fought and distinguished himself. *A Blaze of Glory*, Shaara's novel depicting the Battle of Shiloh, almost entirely ignored McPherson. However, Albert Sidney Johnston—who could accurately be described as McPherson's Confederate counterpart, as he was the only other Army commander killed during the Civil War—was the primary focal point of the novel, and his narrative far outpaced that of any other character.⁸ *A Chain of Thunder*, Shaara's novel on the Vicksburg Campaign, devoted slightly more attention to McPherson, but remained minimal in comparison to characters such as Sherman.⁹ It is worth noting that McPherson and Sherman, as corps commanders, held roughly the same rank throughout the Vicksburg Campaign, and Grant continuously praised his two subordinates equally. Lastly, *A Smoke At Dawn*, the final novel in Shaara's trilogy on the Western Theater, picks up just after the Battle of Atlanta and McPherson's death, focusing instead on Sherman's March to the Sea.¹⁰ Although perhaps too much emphasis should not be placed on Shaara's lack of coverage of McPherson, the relative absence does reveal a noteworthy point. Unlike professional academics or more scholarly historians, Shaara's chief concern lies in the sales of his books. He certainly takes into account what subjects, stories, and characters he believes his readers—who are largely Civil War and history buffs—will most consume. Therefore, the fact that McPherson appears as only a minor character in the trilogy reveals that at least one author, Shaara, did not believe McPherson's story would be as well received or sell as many books as somebody else's, whether it be Johnston's death at Shiloh or Sherman's March to the Sea. In the end, the result remains the same: a continued underrepresentation of McPherson in historical writing.

⁸ Jeff Shaara, *A Blaze of Glory: A Novel of the Battle of Shiloh* (New York: Ballantine Books, 2012).

⁹ Jeff Shaara, *A Chain of Thunder: A Novel of the Siege of Vicksburg* (New York: Ballantine Books, 2013).

¹⁰ Jeff Shaara, *The Smoke at Dawn: A Novel of the Civil War* (New York: Ballantine Books, 2014).

The relative lack of scholarship raises the question of why have there been no major scholarly biographies on McPherson. The answer appears somewhat elusive. One explanation includes the claim that McPherson did not keep the best records or save the various letters and correspondences over the years. Many of the letters sent to Emily Hoffman, McPherson's fiancée—letters that would have provided extremely valuable insight into McPherson's most intimate thoughts and opinions during the Civil War—were burned by Hoffman's pro-Confederate family. McPherson's papers are not very extensive as a result.¹¹ However, the lack of substantial papers offers an insufficient answer. There remain plenty available primary sources for a biography, including the McPherson papers that do exist, *The Papers of Ulysses S. Grant*, which contains many of McPherson's correspondences, and *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies* (the O.R.), to name a few. An additional explanation includes the fact that McPherson died during the war, and as a result left no memoirs and did not actively fight to preserve his memory and reputation as other Civil War commanders did following the conflict. However, his death during the war also offers an insufficient explanation. Many Civil War generals died during the war and still received the attention of historians with numerous biographies, including Stonewall Jackson, Albert Sidney Johnston, J. E. B. Stuart, and Patrick R. Cleburne. One final possible explanation includes the fact that McPherson was a Union general. Jackson, Johnston, Stuart, and Cleburne all fought and served for the Confederacy, and due largely to the myth of the Lost Cause—an explanation for Confederate defeat that downplayed the role of slavery in the Civil War—became Southern heroes and martyrs. Americans have always been enamored by the counterfactual "what ifs" of

¹¹ McPherson's papers are spread out over three main locations, including the *James Birdseye McPherson Collection*, Rutherford B. Hayes Presidential Center, Fremont, Ohio, the *James Birdseye McPherson Papers, 1848-1868*, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C., and the *James Birdseye McPherson Papers*, Toledo-Lucas County Public Library, Toledo, Ohio. None of the collections are extremely extensive.

history, particularly the what if Jackson or Johnston had lived? Might the Confederacy have won the war? The similarly attractive "what if" for McPherson did not exist. He fought for the Union, and the Union won the war. That fact might have contributed to the lack of scholarship McPherson has received. However, even this explanation falls short of providing a sufficient reason for McPherson's lack of scholarship. In fact, the North obsessed over the Civil War in the conflict's aftermath nearly as much as the South, and scholarship proliferated on various Northern heroes of the war. The abundant scholarship on Grant, Sherman, and Sheridan serve as evidence of this Northern fascination. Therefore, the absence of an adequate answer for McPherson's lack of scholarship demands further inquiry into the evolving memory of McPherson after the war.

The aim of this dissertation is to examine the various attempts made in the war's aftermath to preserve McPherson's memory. Though the efforts to pay tribute to McPherson took multiple forms, the most valuable form included the construction and erection of memorials in honor of the general.¹² The most significant of these memorials included those erected in Washington, D.C., Clyde, Ohio, Atlanta, Georgia, and McPherson, Kansas. Each of these monuments provided a unique example of how McPherson's memory survived in a limited manner in select locations, as well as the various challenges facing the attempts at remembering

¹² Although some scholars have attempted to draw a distinction between the two, throughout this work the terms "memorial" and "monument" will be used interchangeably. Erika Doss best illuminated the debate over terminology, explaining, "Distinctions between monuments and memorials are tenuous: if monuments have traditionally functioned to commemorate great men and moments, memorials . . . have similarly served to remember and honor the subjects they address. Both monuments and memorials are memory aids: materialist modes of privileging particular histories and values. Some scholars argue for their difference: Marita Sturken explains that 'monuments are a means to honor the past, whereas memorials focus specifically on paying tribute to the dead.' Wilbur Zelinsky finds that monuments 'verge close to sacredness, not unlike the temples, shrines, and historic landmarks with which they are often associated,' whereas memorials are more multivalent entities like 'parks, gardens, forests, bridges, auditoria, stadia, highways, benches, government buildings, and institutions of every description.' In the United States today, the terms 'monument' and 'memorial' are used interchangeably." And so they will be used interchangeably throughout this study. Erika Doss, *Memorial Mania: Public Feeling in America* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2010), 38.

McPherson. Through the examination of these monuments, the motivations behind those seeking to preserve McPherson's memory become clear, as well as the main reasons why the efforts succeeded or failed.

The special case of McPherson provides historians with a fascinating study in memory, especially in regard to the process of forgetting. Despite his impressive service record, a heroic death, and widespread adoration during the Civil War from both Northerners and Southerners, Whaley correctly concluded that McPherson became a forgotten individual by the mid-twentieth century. The collective memory of McPherson faded so much over the past century that few individuals beyond professional historians or Civil War enthusiasts know of McPherson's contribution and role during the Civil War.¹³ However, as the national collective memory of McPherson faded, the four towns who erected monuments to McPherson attempted to preserve the general's memory. In certain instances they succeed. In other instances they failed. Approaching the history of McPherson's memorialization as a memory study offers scholars valuable insight.

In recent years, the study of history and memory has become a growing field among professional historians. Memory studies have broadened historians' perspectives, allowing them to examine the way an event or an individual has been remembered. Although individuals possess personal and distinctive memories, many memory theorists agree that there also exist commonly shared memories, referred to as collective or social memory.¹⁴ Memory scholars

¹³ Here I use the term "collective memory" referring to the memory of the nation as a whole.

¹⁴ Specifically note two works by Maurice Halbwachs, *Les Cadres sociaux de la mémoire* (Paris: Librairie Félix Alcan, 1925), and *The Collective Memory*, trans. Francis J. Ditter Jr. and Vida Yazdi Ditter (New York: Harper & Row, 1980; originally published as *La Mémoire collective*, Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1950). For more recent studies on collective memory, see Paul Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative*, trans. Kathleen McLaughlin and David Pellauer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984; originally published as *Temps et récit*, Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1983); Paul Connerton, *How Societies Remember* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989); David Middleton and Derek Edwards, eds., *Collective Remembering* (London: Sage Publications, 1990); and David Gross,

believe that groups develop collective memories in part to reflect the times and values during which those collective memories are being formed. Maurice Halbwachs, the chief developer of the concept of collective memory, wrote, "Collective memory . . . is a current of continuous thought whose continuity is not at all artificial, for it retains from the past only what still lives or is capable of living in the consciousness of groups keeping the memory alive."¹⁵ The construction of the McPherson memorials demonstrated how certain groups within society collectively remember individuals and form a shared memory. Examination of the memorials further illuminates the fact that communities indeed shape their collective memories to reflect their own values and the societal issues at the time. Another memory scholar, Paul Connerton, made a link between collective memory and commemoration ceremonies. For Connerton, commemorations embrace a collective memory through ritual performances. Dedication speeches, marching bands, and the singing of patriotic songs—all of which were present at the multiple McPherson monument unveiling ceremonies—constitute what Connerton called "a cult enacted."¹⁶ A study of the McPherson memorials, particularly examining the various commemoration ceremonies, helps to elucidate the memory theories of both Halbwachs and Connerton.

Halbwachs drew much of his inspiration and theories regarding collective memory from his mentor Émile Durkheim. Often labeled the first sociologist, Durkheim developed specific ideas regarding the makeup of society. He explored the question of what holds a society together, and determined that certain beliefs, values, and customs combine to form a "collective

Lost Time: On Remembering and Forgetting in Late Modern Culture (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 2000). For an introduction to the development of the concept of collective memory, see Jeffrey Olick, Vered Vinitzky-Seroussi, and Daniel Levy, eds., *The Collective Memory Reader* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

¹⁵ Maurice Halbwachs, "From *The Collective Memory*," in Olick, Vinitzky-Seroussi, and Levy eds., *The Collective Memory Reader*, 142-143.

¹⁶ Paul Connerton, "From *How Societies Remember*," in *ibid.*, 338.

consciousness" of the numerous members within society. Durkheim claimed that a society's collective consciousness not only provides people with a common connection and but is also crucial in holding society together.¹⁷ While studying religion, Durkheim determined that two elements make up a society's beliefs or values: the profane and the sacred. The dichotomy within society between the sacred—symbols or rituals that members revere and consider holy, and the profane—menial everyday tasks or mundane individual concerns, are what combines to make up a society's collective consciousness. Part of the problem for McPherson's place within the national memory of Americans, as will be seen through this work, was that he never truly entered into the realm of the sacred, and instead remained a part of the profane.

An additional factor to consider when examining the memorialization of McPherson includes the important role of communal identity. Benedict Anderson addressed this issue most directly in his work *Imagined Communities*. Anderson's most relevant point, as it relates to the topic of McPherson, is his claim that the idea of a nation or a community is simply an imagined social construction. He wrote, "It is imagined because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion."¹⁸ Anderson's theory that the national community is a social construction can be applied to smaller communities as well. Each one of the towns or cities that dedicated a memorial to McPherson had a strong sense of community. In fact, especially in the case of Clyde, Ohio and McPherson, Kansas, the memory of General McPherson significantly contributed to those communities' identities. Memorials to honor McPherson were usually designed to strengthen the bonds of those identities. The memory of

¹⁷ For a more thorough examination of Durkheim's theories on society and collective consciousness see Émile Durkheim, *Sociology and Philosophy*, trans. David F. Pocock (1954; repr., New York: The Free Press, 1974).

¹⁸ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1991), 6.

McPherson also contributed to the idea of a national community. Many Americans considered McPherson a hero in a war to preserve the Union and maintain the nation. The early attempts to honor his memory through the construction of monuments specifically emphasized that fact. Therefore, examining McPherson's memorialization through the context of Anderson's theories of community and nationalism provide valuable benefits.

The construction of memorials or monuments that possess added meaning beyond the individual to whom they were dedicated was certainly not unique to the McPherson memorials. In fact, linking memorials of past heroes to contemporary ideas and issues commonly appeared in commemorations during the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries. Several historians have examined the connection between commemoration and memory with contemporary issues in the construction of memorials and monuments. Not unlike scholars of collective memory, these historians explain that through memorialization and commemoration, societies often draw upon past events to give special meaning to the present.¹⁹ Historian David Blight demonstrated that Civil War commemoration ceremonies were often used for reasons other than simply honoring past heroes. Ulterior motives often included marginalizing African Americans while promoting a Southern agenda. One striking example provided by Blight was the dedication ceremony for the Robert E. Lee equestrian statue in Richmond, Virginia in 1890. Instead of focusing the commemoration on Lee, the event turned into a spectacle that promoted the Lost Cause. Tens of thousands of ex-Confederate soldiers attended the unveiling, waving Confederate flags and embracing their identity as a people still unwilling to submit to Northern rule. Speakers trumpeted the “just” causes of the war, which according to them, included

¹⁹ John Bodnar, *Remaking America: Public Memory, Commemoration, and Patriotism in the Twentieth Century* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1992); John R. Gillis, ed., *Commemorations: The Politics of National Identity* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1994). For issues directly related to Civil War commemorations, see David W. Blight, *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press, 2001).

fighting for “liberty” and “freedom,” as well as “love of state” and “love of home.” Slavery was conveniently forgotten as a major cause of the war, primarily as a way for Southerners to control African Americans’ role in society in the post-war environment.²⁰ Advancing the Lost Cause was extremely important to Southerners' identity in the post-Civil War era. Blight's example well illustrated the way that commemorations had special meaning to the groups who erected memorials. Similar to the Lee statue, the McPherson memorials also possessed added meaning for those living during the time of their dedication—much more than simply honoring the general's memory.

In addition to Blight, other scholars who examined the larger meaning of monuments in American society heavily influenced this work. Kirk Savage, author of *Monument Wars: Washington, D.C., the National Mall, and the Transformation of the Memorial Landscape* and *Standing Soldiers, Kneeling Slaves: Race, War, and Monument in Nineteenth-Century America* provided particularly constructive studies for understanding the import of memorials in the post-Civil War United States.²¹ In *Monument Wars*, Savage described the meaning of monuments to Americans, writing, "the public monument speaks to a deep need for attachment that can be met only in a real place, where the imagined community actually materializes and the existence of the nation is confirmed in a simple but powerful way. The experience is not exactly in the realm of imagination or reason, but grounded in the felt connection of individual to collective body."²² Savage's observation on the role of monuments in connecting communities into a collective body certainly occurred in all four of the locations discussed in this study. Especially in the cases of Clyde, Ohio, and McPherson, Kansas, the monument acted as a means of providing the

²⁰ Blight, *Race and Reunion*, 264-272.

²¹ Kirk Savage, *Monument Wars: Washington, D.C., the National Mall, and the Transformation of the Memorial Landscape* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2009), *Standing Soldiers, Kneeling Slaves: Race, War, and Monument in Nineteenth-Century America* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1997).

²² Savage, *Monument Wars*, 4.

community with a sense of local identity. Savage also excellently explained the ever evolving meaning of memorials, writing,

national monuments acquire authority by affixing certain words and images to particular places meant to be distinctive and permanent. Thus, monuments stand apart from everyday experience and seem to promise something eternal, akin to the sacred. Yet no matter how compelling they are, they can never fulfill that promise. People and history get in the way, and they force the commemorative landscape to change and adapt. For that we should be grateful: change keeps monuments alive.²³

Although the monument represents a permanent affixture in society—often literally a granite or bronze structure meant to stand indefinitely for all time—the import and significance of the monument frequently changes. Often, society tends to ascribe new meaning to certain monuments, given the current circumstances and events faced by the community or group at the time. Therefore, the evolving significance of a monument generally reflects the current values and goals of a community at any given time. Savage astutely noted that "The history of commemoration is therefore a history of change and transformation. . . . The ground perpetually shifts as changes in the landscape and in the world around it open up new possibilities of engagement. . . . Once public monuments are built they leave the orbit of their planners and designers and acquire a life and a direction of their own."²⁴ Such was the case with all four of McPherson's monuments. Over time, the monuments' significance and meaning to their respective community continuously shifted and evolved.

Another scholar who specialized in the study of monuments or memorials is Erika Doss, author of *Memorial Mania: Public Feeling in America*. Doss' work examined the modern obsession that Americans have had with memorialization, and particularly noted the role that the memorial has served in recent American society. Doss concluded that "At the most basic level,

²³ Ibid., 6-7.

²⁴ Ibid., 11.

memorials are designed to recognize and preserve memories. They are typically understood as acts and gifts that honor particular people and historical events." Her description may seem fairly obvious. Of course memorials are intended to honor the people for which they are built. However, Doss noted, "Gift giving, of course, is rarely altruistic; memorials, like most things in capitalist and commercial economies, are informed by systems of production and reception, by expectations of exchange and reciprocity."²⁵ In other words, the people who erect memorials often have ulterior motives, or at the very least additional motivations beyond simply the honoring of an individual's memory. Such motivations are clearly present in certain groups responsible for the erection of the various McPherson memorials discussed in the following study.

Ultimately, the primary argument of this dissertation will assert a number of different points. First, that the events surrounding the life and death of James B. McPherson are positively a remarkable story, one whose lack of modern historical scholarship appears enigmatic and puzzling. Chapter 1 provides the biographical foundation necessary for understanding McPherson's significance during the Civil War, as well as his place as an important figure in American history more generally. The examination of McPherson's early life and service during the Civil War also illuminates the various groups who would come to serve as the chief advocates of his later memorialization. His friends and neighbors from Clyde, Ohio, his former classmates at West Point, his friends from his time in California and Alcatraz, and most importantly his brothers-in-arms from the Army of the Tennessee, all would actively pursue McPherson's memorialization after his death. Understanding McPherson's life and service

²⁵ Doss, 7.

during the Civil War is most certainly necessary for comprehending the memorialization that followed his death.

Second, the dissertation will argue that despite the lack of scholarship and the American public's apparent "forgetting" of McPherson, that was not always the case. As evidenced by the numerous monuments erected in his honor, widespread efforts were indeed made in the fifty years following McPherson's death to keep and preserve his memory. Finally, through the examination of the various memorial efforts and unveiling ceremonies, it will become clear what exactly the people behind the numerous monument associations were hoping to accomplish in their efforts to preserve McPherson's memory, how they succeeded, and in some cases fell short. The degree to which McPherson is "remembered" or "forgotten" of course varies widely from location to location, and this work will explore these variations and attempt to answer why in each case McPherson's memory either persevered or faded from the public's collective conscience.

Chapter 2 explores the first attempt to memorialize McPherson with a monument. The chapter examines the various groups who had a vested interest in honoring the general, and how those motivations could at times clash with each other. It traces the Society of the Army of the Tennessee's continuous efforts to build a monument and the obstacles it faced along the way. Following the change of location to Washington, D.C., the chapter closely examines the commemoration speeches during the unveiling ceremony in 1876. The speeches given at the various monument unveiling ceremonies provide key insights into the motivations of the groups committed to the preservation of McPherson's memory, as well as what they believed to be most significant and worthy of remembering with a memorial. Therefore, all unveiling ceremonies, as well as their numerous speeches, receive extensive attention throughout the work. Finally the

chapter explores the lasting meaning of the McPherson memorial in Washington, D.C., and particularly the challenge faced by the surrounding memorial landscape of the nation's capital. Unlike the other three McPherson memorials that generally are unique and prominent in their respective towns, the Washington memorial stands as one among many similar bronze equestrian statues in the city. The loss of distinctiveness led to an obscuring of McPherson's memory and a decrease in significance in the nation's capital over the course of the twentieth century.

Chapter 3 examines the second monument built to McPherson in his hometown of Clyde, Ohio. The chapter traces the history of the monument's construction, as well as the growing animosity between the citizens of Clyde and the Society of the Army of the Tennessee following the previous change of location of the first monument. Unlike any of the other memorials, the McPherson monument in Clyde held a special significance for its residents. The chapter argues that Clyde's local identity was significantly shaped by laying claim as the "hometown of General James Birdseye McPherson." Therefore, McPherson's monument, serving as a tribute to the hometown hero, became a significant symbol of identity for the collective consciousness of the community. As a result of McPherson's importance to local identity, the residents of Clyde have preserved the general's memory more than any location of his other monuments. If there exists any single location in the country where it can be reasonably claimed that the memory of McPherson lives on, it is in Clyde, Ohio.

Chapter 4 investigates the erection of the monument to honor McPherson at the site of his death in Atlanta, Georgia. As the only McPherson memorial in the South, the history of the Atlanta memorial varies significantly from the others. The location in the Deep South, where the memory of the Civil War remained intense and controversial, presented challenges to those hoping to preserve McPherson's memory. The Atlanta monument required constant maintenance

and upkeep, as it suffered from the vandalism of both relic seeking tourists and bitter unreconstructed Southerners. However, the McPherson monument also served another noteworthy role, one unique from the other memorials. It functioned as the site and as a symbol of sectional reconciliation. The chapter argues that McPherson's role during the Civil War, and especially his positive image and widespread respect held among Southerners, made the site of his monument the perfect location for sectional reconciliation to occur. However, as a result of urbanization and the city of Atlanta's rapid development and expansion, the McPherson monument lost much of its significance and grandeur as the city quickly surrounded it with residential housing. Just as importantly, the Atlanta battlefield similarly suffered from urbanization, and despite local efforts, the city of Atlanta never created a national battlefield. As a result, the McPherson monument suffered from obscurity. Over the years, McPherson's Atlanta monument retained significance for many local Atlantans, but also suffered from the universal fading of his memory. Recent restoration efforts demonstrate both the sections of Atlantans who remember McPherson, and those who have forgotten the general.

Chapter 5 explores the final monument built to honor the general in his namesake town of McPherson, Kansas. The only town or city in the United States named after the general, McPherson, Kansas—similar to Clyde, Ohio—owed a special part of their local identity to McPherson. However, unlike the other memorials, the unveiling of the equestrian statue in McPherson, Kansas in 1917, occurred after most of McPherson's friends and other contemporaries had died. Therefore, it was largely a new generation intent on honoring the hero for whom their town was named after. More so than any other memorial, the meaning of the equestrian statue in Kansas quickly evolved from simply honoring an individual, to instead serving additional motives. The unveiling of the McPherson memorial in Kansas confirms the

notion that monument and memorial commemorations often transformed into celebrations of patriotism to reflect the current state of affairs. The erecting of the McPherson memorial coincided with the United States' mobilization for World War I, and the fact that the unveiling ceremony occurred on Independence Day enhanced the event as a celebration of patriotic fervor. The chapter also argues that an additional motive for the residents of McPherson included civic pride and local boosterism. Eventually the monument in Kansas came to represent a universal memorial to all veterans, not just James B. McPherson. Taken together, the patriotism surrounding America's World War I mobilization, the town's use of the memorial for local boosterism, and the later connecting of the monument to the honoring of all veterans, all combined to detract from the original purpose of honoring the memory of McPherson.

Ultimately, the causes for the diminishing of the national collective memory of McPherson throughout the twentieth century resulted from a number of factors. For one, the limited scope and nature of memorials restricted the number of Americans who were affected by McPherson's monuments. The four memorials undoubtedly had a significant influence and meaning for their respective communities and perhaps even visitors or tourists, but failed to truly reach a more broad section of Americans in order to secure McPherson's place in the American consciousness. Secondly, the lack of scholarship on McPherson and the absence of his memorialization through the written word represented a major reason for the fading of his place within the national collective memory. Without scholarly biographies written on McPherson, he subsequently failed to be included in other forms of public education such as textbooks, or other popular media like Hollywood movies or historical fiction. Finally, part of the explanation for this absence is the fact that McPherson's death and subsequent memorialization failed to connect itself to a greater ideological meaning for Americans. The chief preservers of his memory

constantly praised his personal character, service to country, and heroic death, but the inability to connect McPherson with a higher American ideal or cause eventually limited his place within the American public's memory.

Finally, the study of McPherson's memorialization provides a greater significance by offering historians valuable insights into multiple historical themes and topics. Beyond the obvious examination of Civil War memorials and their meaning in American society, the study also explores historical themes involving the Reconstruction Era, the period of sectional reunion and reconciliation, and the lasting memory of the Civil War in various regions of the country. The study also sheds light on the role of post-war veterans' organizations such as the Society of the Army of the Tennessee and the Grand Army of the Republic, and what memories these groups hoped to preserve as the most important issues from the fighting. Additionally, the story of McPherson's memorialization involves many familiar faces, including Ulysses S. Grant, William T. Sherman, James Garfield, and Rutherford B. Hayes. Understanding the importance that McPherson and his memorialization had to these individuals only adds depth to the ongoing scholarship on their lives and their historical significance. Most importantly, however, the study of McPherson's memorialization offers historians valuable lessons on the role of memorials within American society, the formation of local collective identity, and the process of remembering and forgetting.

Chapter 1 - The Life and Death of James B. McPherson

Early Years: Clyde, Ohio, West Point, and First Assignments

In 1824 James Birdseye McPherson's parents, William McPherson and Cynthia Russell McPherson, made the decision to move from their small hometown of Hopewell, New York to a new promising destination of Sandusky County, Ohio, with hopes for a brighter future. They settled in a small township named Hamer's Corners, which later became known as Clyde, Ohio. His father, a blacksmith, built a small workshop near his house, where he labored to earn additional money, beyond that which he gained from cultivating and working his plot of land. Cynthia gave birth to James on November 28, 1828. James was their first born, but the couple eventually had three more children, Emeline (b.1830), Russell (b.1832), and William (b.1835). The pressure from too much labor, combined with the distress of poor investments—which culminated in great loss for the family during the Panic of 1837—led to a decline in James' father's physical and mental health. The unexpected family tragedy left James, at only thirteen years old, in a position where he was forced to help provide for the rest of his family. William McPherson never recovered, and following an extended period of invalidism, passed away in 1847.²⁶

Even at this young age, Jimmie—as he was known by to his close friends and neighbors—already had a reputation for being trustworthy and hardworking. His positive reputation earned him a clerkship to a storekeeper, Robert Smith, in the nearby town of Green Springs, where he worked for the next six years.²⁷ His mother always had big dreams for her eldest son ever since he was an infant. Soon after his birth, local Seneca Indians visited the McPherson

²⁶ *Clyde Enterprise*, May 10, 1883, 3; Whitelaw Reid, *Ohio In The War: Her Statesmen Generals and Soldiers*, vol. 1 (Cincinnati: Moore, Wiltach, & Baldwin, 1868), 1: 561.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

family, and upon seeing the baby predicted that he would be a great man one day.²⁸ Though he certainly would live up to the Indian prophecy, his days of prominent renown lay in the future, and for the next several years the McPherson family struggled through impoverishment and hardship, with James playing a vital role in keeping the family afloat. In a sad narration of McPherson leaving home at such a young age, one witness described the scene:

The whole family were in tears when he bade them good-by; and taking up his little bundle, commenced his journey of five miles afoot and alone. After walking boldly forward for some distance he looked back and saw them all at the door watching him and weeping. To shut out the painful sight he clutched his bundle tighter, and ran as fast as his young feet could carry him until he reached the woods, where he sat down and wept abundantly. Then he took up his bundle again and came on to Green Spring.²⁹

Despite his clerkship being only five miles away from his mother and siblings in Clyde, the separation from his family at such a young age would have been trying on any child.

From an early age McPherson displayed a strong inclination toward education. His mother recalled that "his soul thirsted for knowledge," but unfortunately, "we were too poor to give him [a proper education]."³⁰ Despite the family situation and his inability to completely devote himself entirely to his studies, McPherson did periodically attend Norwalk Institute, a local secondary school, from 1848-1849.³¹ During this time he also became president of the Green Springs Lyceum, and delivered a speech to the members of that society on the importance of education.³² He never demonstrated a strong affinity for politics during these younger years, but once commented that if he had been more politically inclined he likely would have been a

²⁸ *News-Messenger, Fremont, Ohio*, June 30, 1975.

²⁹ Reid, 562. Similarly described from James' perspective in Elizabeth Whaley, *Forgotten Hero: General James B. McPherson, The Biography of a Civil War General* (New York: Exposition Press, 1955), 38.

³⁰ Cynthia McPherson to William E. Strong, October 22, 1864. The Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History (Hereafter abbreviated GLI).

³¹ *Catalogue of the Officers and Students of Norwalk Institute 1848-49 with the Course of Studies* (Milan: Clark, Waggoner, Job Printer: 1849), *James Birdseye McPherson Family Papers*, Toledo-Lucas County Public Library (hereafter cited as *JMP*, TL).

³² "J.B. McPherson to Members of the Green Spring Lyceum," January 22, 1848. *James Birdseye McPherson Papers, 1848-1868*, Library of Congress (hereafter cited as *JMP*, LC).

Know-Nothing.³³ McPherson's drive and personal ambition was reflected in his pursuit of a West Point appointment. With the endorsement of his Congressional representative Rodolphus Dickinson, McPherson defied the odds, overcoming his relative lack of education and less than impressive family background, and received an appointment to the United States Military Academy in his final year of eligibility.³⁴

His experiences at West Point, combined with the friendships he formed, played a significant part in McPherson's early life. At first James appeared somewhat homesick, and wrote home to his brother that he didn't care for the drills cadets went through at camp. But very quickly his opinions changed and he reported how much he enjoyed being in barracks.³⁵ Despite the fact that James was not as well educated coming into the academy as most of his fellow classmates, he excelled academically in his first year, ranking first in his class in the subject of Mathematics, second in English Studies, with zero demerits for the year. He ranked second overall in his class through the first year—it would be the last time he was not at the head of his class.³⁶ McPherson's academic success was even more impressive when considering his fellow classmates. The Class of 1853 consisted of numerous individuals who would rise to prominent fame during the Civil War for both the Union and Confederacy, including: John Bell Hood, John M. Schofield, and Philip H. Sheridan among others. During his time at the Military Academy, McPherson forged some of his strongest bonds and personal friendships. He roomed

³³ *News-Messenger, Fremont, Ohio*, June 30, 1975. The Know-Nothing Party, also known as the American Party, was a political party in the late-1840s and early-1850s, with strong nativist views that tended to focus on anti-immigrant and anti-Catholic positions.

³⁴ *Clyde Enterprise*, May 10, 1883, 3.

³⁵ James B. McPherson to Russell B. McPherson, July 12, 1849, *JMP*, LC; James B. McPherson to Russell B. McPherson, October 20, 1849, *JMP*, LC.

³⁶ *Official Register of the Officers and Cadets of the U.S. Military Academy, West Point, New-York*, (1851), 15, *JMP*, TL.

with Schofield for a year and a half, during which time the two became very close.³⁷ A little over ten years later the two would be commanding, respectively, the Army of the Tennessee and the Army of the Cumberland through Georgia during the 1864 Atlanta Campaign. McPherson also forged strong personal ties to his future adversaries, in particular, George Washington Custis Lee (the eldest son of Robert E. Lee), Edward Porter Alexander (the engineer who would gain renown in the Army of Northern Virginia), and his fellow classmate John Bell Hood (who would fatefully command the Army of Tennessee during the battle that took McPherson's life).³⁸

All of his classmates agreed on the striking nature of McPherson's work ethic and personal character while at West Point. Oliver O. Howard reflected on McPherson's time at West Point, saying "He was very fond of discussion, very fond of reading and enjoyed the society and the exercises of the society very much."³⁹ Schofield wrote that "McPherson, among other high qualities, was one of the most generous men I ever knew. He was remarkably skilful in topographical drawing, etching, lettering, and all other uses of the pen." However, even more impressive to Schofield was that "Although at the head of the class and a most conscientious student whose time was very valuable to himself, he would spend a very large part of that precious time in 'lettering' problems for classmates who needed such help." He noted that "For this reason and others he was, by common consent of all the classes, the most popular man in the corps."⁴⁰ Hood echoed Schofield's sentiment, recalling, "Although in the same class, I was several years his junior, and, unlike him, was more wedded to boyish sports than to books." He further reminisced, "Often, when we were cadets, have I left barracks at night to participate in

³⁷ John M. Schofield, *Forty-Six Years in the Army* (New York: The Century Co., 1897), 125.

³⁸ *Clyde Enterprise*, June 6, 1889; John Bell Hood, *Advance and Retreat: Personal Experiences in the United States and Confederate States Armies* (New Orleans: Hood Orphan Memorial Fund, 1880), 136.

³⁹ *Report of the Proceedings of the Society of the Army of the Tennessee at the Thirty-Fourth Meeting, Held at Washington, D.C., October 15-16, 1903.* (Cincinnati: Press of F. W. Freeman, 1906), 243.

⁴⁰ Schofield, 137.

some merry-making, and early the following morning have had recourse to him to help me over the difficult portions of my studies for the day."⁴¹ In addition to winning over his fellow classmates, McPherson also quickly impressed his instructors as well. Denis Hart Mahan, one of the more important and influential professors at the Academy during McPherson's time there, later wrote that McPherson was "among the ablest men sent forth from the institution; . . . his brilliant after-career in the field surprised no one who had known him intimately."⁴²

There was perhaps no other period more important in shaping the character of James McPherson than during his formative years at West Point. It did not take long for him to fully embrace the ideals of "the Old Army."⁴³ Tamara Mosier Melia makes this argument in her dissertation on McPherson. She defines the ideals of the Old Army as encompassing "patriotism, honor, devotion to duty, and manliness, the gentlemanly qualities of a good officer that rarely denoted military ability."⁴⁴ Melia indeed correctly identified the ideals that were most dear to McPherson in his early career. Something as simple as a visit from General Winfield Scott to West Point left a lasting impression on McPherson. He was particularly very impressed by the generals' appearance and mannerisms. He wrote home to his brother commenting, "I never saw a person who possessed such a commanding look and had so much stateliness and majesty in his appearance as he has, and although he is upwards of sixty seven years old his step is firm and elastic."⁴⁵ McPherson strove to replicate the general's appearance in his own. Not all McPherson's fellow cadets fully embraced his high standard ideals. In one incident, Denis Hart

⁴¹ Hood, 182.

⁴² Denis Hart Mahan quoted in Tamara Smith, "A Matter of Trust: Grant and James B. McPherson," in Steven E. Woodward, *Grant's Lieutenants: From Cairo to Vicksburg* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2001), 153-154.

⁴³ The term "Old Army" is sometimes used to refer to the Antebellum U.S. Army. Edward M. Coffman defines the term more generally to describe "the army that existed before the last war." See Edward M. Coffman, *The Old Army: A Portrait of the American Army in Peacetime, 1784-1898* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986).

⁴⁴ Tamara Moser Melia, "James B. McPherson and the Ideals of the Old Army" (PhD diss., University of Southern Illinois, 1987), 4.

⁴⁵ James B. McPherson to Russell B. McPherson, May 14, 1850, *JMP*, LC.

Mahan wrote to McPherson regarding the poor behavior of his fellow cadets, particularly their use of foul language. He called on McPherson to put an end to it.⁴⁶ The incident reflected not only the level of influence that Mahan must have placed in McPherson among his classmates, but also the high character of McPherson, and Mahan's confidence that he was the individual to accomplish the reigning in of his more unruly classmates.

McPherson provided an excellent insight into his character and what he valued most when discussing medieval tournaments, knights, and the nature of chivalry.⁴⁷ He wrote on this topic quite romantically, claiming, "The tournaments of [the] middle ages are emblematical of that peculiar spirit of chivalry which seems to have pervaded all ranks and the magnificence with which they are conducted cannot be surpassed by any scenic exhilaration of modern times."⁴⁸ To McPherson, the ideal of the medieval knight represented the epitome of how a gentleman-soldier should try to conduct himself. He wrote, "To be a knight did not simply require that you should be skilled in the use of arms and never turn his back upon an enemy, but his character must be without suspicion and without reproach."⁴⁹ Understanding McPherson's outlook on questions of honor and chivalry, or the conduct of a gentleman-soldier, not only provides a unique insight into the fundamental nature of his values, but also helps explain his conduct during his final moments.

McPherson continued to thrive in his new military culture and graduated first in his class in 1853. After graduation, he was appointed second lieutenant of engineers and assigned as an assistant instructor of practical engineering at West Point, "a compliment never before . . .

⁴⁶ Denis Hart Mahan to James B. McPherson, July 28, 1852. *JMP*, LC.

⁴⁷ McPherson wrote on this topic in two separate cases, one appears to be simply his musings on the topic which he recorded on paper, and the other is a speech he delivered to an unknown society. Both in Undated Folder, *JMP*, LC.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.* Although undated, the best guess is that this was written by McPherson while an instructor at West Point, shortly after graduating.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

awarded to so young an officer."⁵⁰ He worked in this position for a year, until September, 1854, when he received his first true engineering assignment. His assignment involved improving the fortifications of New York Harbor and the surrounding area, including the Hudson River.

McPherson very much enjoyed this station and described it as "almost like being on a 'leave of absence' to be stationed in New York."⁵¹ While in New York, McPherson boarded with William Tecumseh Sherman—two men whose careers would be so connected in later years—and they immediately became good friends.⁵² In early 1857 the Army sent McPherson to Fort Delaware and placed him temporarily in charge of operations in that location. McPherson described Fort Delaware as "a new work, not yet completed, situated on an island, called the 'Pea Patch,' containing about 90 acres, in the middle of the Delaware River, 45 miles below Philadelphia."⁵³

McPherson received his most noteworthy antebellum engineering assignment in late 1857, when the Army assigned him to construct the fortifications of Alcatraz Island in San Francisco Bay. He departed the East Coast on a steamship, crossed the Isthmus of Panama, and arrived in San Francisco in December, 1857. Despite Alcatraz' modern association with the famous Federal penitentiary, "The Rock" played a key role in the defenses of San Francisco Harbor for decades prior to the transition to a prison. The U.S. Army realized the excellent fields of fire provided by the island's location, and planned the construction of a fort that among other purposes would prevent the passage of hostile ships into the harbor.⁵⁴ Upon McPherson's arrival at Alcatraz, the Army had already begun erecting defensive batteries on the island, and the task

⁵⁰ De B. Randolph Keim, "The Life and Character of Major-General James B. McPherson," *The United States Service Magazine* 2 (October 1864), 369.

⁵¹ James B. McPherson to Cynthia McPherson, November 14, 1854, *JMP*, TL; James B. McPherson to Cynthia McPherson, January 16, 1857, *JMP*, TL.

⁵² William T. Sherman, *Memoirs of William T. Sherman* 2 vols. (1875; repr., New York: The Library of America, 1990), 153. Citations refer to the Library of America edition, which is a reprint of the 1886 edition.

⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ Erwin N. Thompson, *The Rock: A History of Alcatraz Island, 1847-1972, Historic Resource Study, Golden Gate National Recreation Area, California* (Denver: Denver Service Center, Historic Preservation Division, National Park Service, United States Department of the Interior, 1972), 1; *Ibid.*, 14.

of completing those batteries as well as improving "the Citadel"—the defensive barrack on the island—fell to McPherson.⁵⁵ McPherson's time on Alcatraz was vital to the fort's construction, and he was one of the most important engineers who contributed to the island's defenses. The Army rewarded McPherson for his efforts with a promotion to First Lieutenant on March 25, 1859. His role in San Francisco was so significant, that following his death, a proposal was introduced to rename Alcatraz to Fort McPherson; however the idea never came to fruition.⁵⁶

Upon his arrival on the West Coast, McPherson had a difficult time adjusting to the new people and culture. He did not socialize easily with the diverse mix of ethnic peoples. He commented to a friend on his new environment, writing, "I often congratulate myself when I am in Town, that I have a place [(Alcatraz Island)] to flee to, where the air is pure and where I can avoid meeting people whom I do not care to know—for the more of them you know the worse you are off."⁵⁷ The culture shock may have been intense for McPherson at first, but he very quickly adjusted to his new surroundings. After settling in, his mood toward San Franciscan society changed, as he wrote to his mother, "I must tell you that I have been quite gay for the last month, and have attended a good many Balls and parties. San Francisco, like most Cities, at this season of the year is very lively."⁵⁸ In fact, it was through this San Franciscan social scene where McPherson met his future fiancée, Emily Hoffman, thus beginning one of the most intriguing, and at the same time tragic, facets of McPherson's life story.

McPherson was 31 years old when he met Emily, and up to this point in his life no female had yet succeeded in capturing his affection. That all changed in the spring of 1859, when while attending a party he met a belle from Baltimore who was in San Francisco visiting

⁵⁵ Ibid., 71-78.

⁵⁶ Strobridge, 50.

⁵⁷ James B. McPherson to Enoch Moore Stotsenberg, February 4, 1858, in William F. Strobridge, ed., "California Letters of Major General James McPherson, 1858-1860," *Ohio History* 81, no. 1 (Winter 1972): 38-50.

⁵⁸ James B. McPherson to Cynthia McPherson, January 19, 1860, *JMP*, TL.

her sister. Miss Hoffman came from a wealthy family, and in one night she won over the young lieutenant. McPherson asked her at the end of the evening if he could court her, and over the coming months called on her frequently. In a letter home to his mother, McPherson wrote, "You will love her as I do when you know her. She is intelligent, refined, generous hearted and a Christian. This will suit you as it does me, for those qualities lie at the foundation of every pure and elevated character."⁵⁹ Unfortunately for the young couple, tumultuous national events soon threatened to cut short their newly blossoming love story.

With the looming election of 1860, McPherson began paying attention to politics to a degree that he never had before. McPherson had previously described his own political outlook, writing,

I do not take much interest in politics, and doubtless will not, as long as I remain in the Army. Though if I were out of the Army, I should, of course exercise my right as a citizen, at the polls, and vote for whoever I thought would best administer the Government in accordance with the spirit and letter of The Constitution. I have no toleration for those who place a light value on that sacred instrument, the palladium of our Civil and religious liberty.⁶⁰

He placed respect for the Constitution above any other political issue prior to 1860. He had even expressed doubt of the new Republican Party in 1856, writing that "they seemed to overlook the fact which was developed in the beginning of our history, that the constitution was a compromise, and to proceed as though the Government was formed for them & their interests exclusively, without any reference to the vast body of people South of the Ohio."⁶¹ The problem, of course, for McPherson—and many other Northerners—was that the Constitution of the United States established and protected slavery, and many people believed the Republican Party was

⁵⁹ Whaley, 95; James B. McPherson to Cynthia McPherson, quoted in Whaley, 97.

⁶⁰ James B. McPherson to William McPherson, July 16, 1860, *JMP*, TL.

⁶¹ James B. McPherson to Russell B. McPherson, March 14, 1861, *JMP*, TL.

part of the root problem leading to sectional hostility by challenging the sacredness of the Constitution.⁶² On this issue, McPherson certainly expressed his doubts.

However, once the country elected Lincoln and South Carolina led the way in seceding from the Union shortly thereafter, McPherson's slight apprehension to certain Republican rhetoric could not outweigh his condemnation of the very concept of secession. As the election year of 1860 progressed, McPherson became more opposed to what he viewed as Southern aggression. McPherson wrote to a friend, declaring, "It does seem to me that in the 'Cotton States' & especially in South Carolina reason has been dethroned and her place has been usurped by the Demon of fanaticism." He condemned Southern fire-eaters, claiming that "Instead of waiting to let the calm, conservative & patriotic voice of the Nation be heard, their whole aim seems to have been to precipitate a crisis, to provoke a collision with the General Government & thus force states naturally conservative to join them."⁶³ As events continued to unfold, McPherson became even more infuriated against what he viewed as the South's treasonous actions. On January 9, 1861 South Carolinians fired on the *Star of the West*, which was attempting to resupply Fort Sumter in Charleston harbor. McPherson responded with outrage, stating, "I never had my blood boil, and felt so indignant as when I first read the account of the firing into the 'Star of the West.'" He claimed that "Had I been there, and had it been in my power, I should have given the Charlestonians a taste of what 'Fort Sumter' can do . . ."⁶⁴ McPherson's statement is an interesting one to consider, for it really was only fate or coincidence that he was not at Fort Sumter. He was, after all, the commanding officer in charge of a very similar fort protecting a harbor in San Francisco. In fact, one could make the argument that

⁶² David M. Potter, *The Impending Crisis: America Before the Civil War, 1848-1861* (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 1976); James M. McPherson, *The Battle Cry of Freedom: The Civil War Era* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1988).

⁶³ James B. McPherson to Enoch Moore Stotsenberg, December 18, 1860, in Strobridge, 49.

⁶⁴ James B. McPherson to Russell McPherson, March 14, 1861, *JMP*, TL.

McPherson was Major Robert Anderson's Western counterpart. And yet, McPherson was not at Fort Sumter, he instead was 3,000 miles away, far from the heart of the action. Very quickly, the vast distance started to make McPherson stir-crazy, and led to a burning desire to get back East.

Owing to the vast distance between the East and West coasts, and the fact that the transcontinental telegraph was not yet in service, news of Fort Sumter had to travel overland and did not reach San Francisco until April 24, 1861.⁶⁵ Some United States Army officers from the South who served under McPherson chose to resign their commissions and return to their home states. McPherson's old West Point friend E. Porter Alexander was one of these individuals. Alexander described the scene that unfolded upon submitting his resignation and requesting a leave of absence. McPherson stated to him,

If you must go, I will give the leave of absence, and do all in my power to facilitate your going. But don't go. . . . This war is not going to be the ninety days affair that papers and politicians are predicting. Both sides are in deadly earnest, and it is going to be fought out to the bitter end. . . . God only knows what may happen to you individually, but for your cause there can be but one result. *It must be lost.* Your whole population is only about eight millions, while the North has twenty millions. Of your eight millions, three millions are slaves who may become an element of danger. You have no army, no navy, no treasury, and practically none of the manufactures and machine shops necessary for the support of armies, and for war on a large scale. You are but scattered agricultural communities, and you will be cut off from the rest of the world by blockade. Your cause must end in defeat and the individual risks to you must be great.⁶⁶

McPherson's prophetic statement seems to closely fit the Southern post-war "Lost Cause" narrative explaining why the South lost the war, so it should certainly be taken with a grain of salt. However, if even a portion of Alexander's version of McPherson's interpretation of the

⁶⁵ Strobridge, 50.

⁶⁶ Edward Porter Alexander, *Military Memoirs of a Confederate: A Critical Narrative* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1907), 5-6.

coming war was accurate, then indeed, he understood the looming conflict better than most in 1861.

Alexander was not the only officer anxious to head back East. McPherson desperately wanted to be a part of the coming fight, and wrote his superiors back in Washington hoping to obtain an assignment in the East. He wrote to Captain Horatio G. Wright, "I wish you, and also the Department [of Engineers], to understand that I am ready and anxious to go wherever I can be of the *most service* in upholding the honor and power of the General Government and protecting the *Flag* of our common country."⁶⁷ Notwithstanding his enthusiasm, and certainly much to his disappointment, McPherson's chief superior, General Joseph G. Totten, responded by telling him to stay put until further notice.⁶⁸ However, McPherson did not have to wait long, as President Abraham Lincoln had already made the order assigning McPherson the rank of captain and assigning him to the Nineteenth Regiment of Infantry. Special Order #134 came shortly after, ordering McPherson to join his regiment in the East. Around the same time, McPherson was additionally promoted to a captain in the Corps of Engineers.⁶⁹

With his wish seemingly coming true, McPherson bid farewell to Emily, with whom by this time he had completely fallen in love. However, the secession crisis unexpectedly complicated the two's relationship. Emily's family, from Baltimore, were ardent secessionists whose animosity for the North grew stronger with the start of the Civil War. Her mother wrote to Emily in 1861 forbidding her to marry a Northerner, and to come home to Baltimore at once. Whaley writes, "This was a source of grief to Emily, who, though very much in love with James, did not wish to displease her people. . . . James thought Emily should decide what to do. He

⁶⁷ James B. McPherson to Horatio G. Wright, May 11, 1861, in *RPSAT*, 1877, 159.

⁶⁸ Joseph G. Totten to James B. McPherson, June 25, 1861, *JMP*, LC.

⁶⁹ *RPSAT*, 1877, 160; "Special Order #134," July 29, 1861, *JMP*, LC; "Commission to Captain in the Corps of Engineers," August 20, 1861, *JMP*, LC.

would not urge her to go against her people. So it was decided to let things go on as they were for a while."⁷⁰ The two refused to break off their relationship, and yet, Emily did not want to defy her family's wish by marrying McPherson prior to his departure for the East. However, the two pledged their love for each other and secretly became engaged prior to his leaving California. They then had a very emotional farewell on August 1, 1861. On board a steamship in route back to the East, McPherson wrote an emotional letter to his love. "You cannot imagine how much I miss you, though each hour is but adding to the distance which separates us," wrote McPherson. He said that he held her picture and as he looked upon it he felt that she was with him, and that "providence will watch over us both, and enable me, ere many months, to retrace my steps towards you, when we shall meet never more to be separated." McPherson wrote that he could not imagine a year and a half ago that he would leave California with such regret. "As I stood on the deck of the steamer last Thursday morning, looking towards the house which contained the dearest treasure on earth for me," wrote McPherson, "I felt that I would give all that I possessed and hoped to possess if I could but fly to you." He continued,

But I thank Heaven every day and hour of my life, dearest Emily, that there are invisible cords stronger and more enduring than any ever made by hands which bind me to you; cords which will withstand the fury of the tempest, the rude shock of battle, and the allurements of an active, exciting life, and cause me to return to you with a heart overflowing with love and devotion. God knows, my dearest Emily, if it will be in my power to do so. This is what sustains me while I am writing and enables me to picture a future with you radiant with happiness.⁷¹

The tragic reality was that McPherson's departure from San Francisco was the last time the couple would ever see each other.

⁷⁰ Whaley, 106-107. Very few sources are available on Emily Hoffman, however, Whaley offers a valuable perspective on events relating to James and Emily's relationship, as she conducted interviews with Harriet Hoffman Lord, Emily's cousin.

⁷¹ James B. McPherson to Emily Hoffman, August 4, 1861, *JMP*, LC; Whaley, 107-108.

McPherson and the Civil War

McPherson arrived in New York in mid-August, 1861, but was soon ordered to Washington, D.C. His role in the coming conflict still seemed uncertain. The Department of Engineers assigned him to Boston with the task of raising a regiment of infantry for the regular Army. At first the assignment thrilled McPherson, who had just prior commented to a friend, "if I can only get orders to raise . . . a company . . . I shall be satisfied even if I am killed in the first battle!"⁷² McPherson found his new job extremely tedious and slow, owing primarily to the better benefits offered to state volunteers.⁷³ He desired more than anything a field assignment, preferably with the Army of the Potomac. McPherson wrote directly to General George B. McClellan, asking to be assigned to his staff and made his chief engineer. He lamented that "When I came on from California I was anxious to go into active service, and I felt somewhat disappointed on being ordered [to] here. . . . Can you not General have it arranged so that I can join the 'Army of the Potomac', by so doing you will confer a great favor." He added a postscript pleading, "If I cannot join the Army of the Potomac (which I greatly prefer) get me into active service somewhere."⁷⁴ McClellan passed the letter on to the Department of Engineers with his endorsement; however, the department eventually rejected the request.⁷⁵ At this point, McPherson began a descent into despair. He wrote to a friend,

If I truly thought I could get away from here in time to do something in the field I would be content. But as it is I am exceedingly disgusted I came on from California. I left Washington to come here with a hope that I would soon be back with the Army of the Potomac and have an opportunity to serve my country and win some promotion, but I fear the Brigadiers will all be made before I have a

⁷² James Harrison Wilson, *Under the Old Flag: Recollections of Military Operations in the War for the Union, the Spanish War the Boxer Rebellion, Etc.* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1912), 1: 51.

⁷³ Joseph G. Totten to James B. McPherson, August 22, 1861, *JMP*, LC; James B. McPherson to George B. McClellan, October 15, 1861, *JMP*, LC.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.* McPherson underlined "active service" in both instances.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.* McClellan's endorsement as well as the Department of Engineers' reply both recorded on the front of McPherson's original letter.

chance to see whether I have mistaken my calling—and perhaps the world will never know whether I have any military talent or not.⁷⁶

The letter revealed a great deal of both McPherson's sentiment at the time, and his desire for what he hoped to obtain from the war. For one, he truly missed Emily in California, and would not have left her if he knew he would not receive an assignment in the field. Additionally, the letter revealed that despite his constant outward humility, McPherson desperately desired the prestige and glory that potentially could come from serving in the field. He unquestionably was a very ambitious individual, and not only wanted to prove to himself whether he possessed the talents of a great military leader, but to show the world his skills as well.

Although his hopes of joining the Army of the Potomac seemed dashed, soon a new opportunity arose for McPherson. In late 1861, Henry W. Halleck, a friend of McPherson's from New York and California—McPherson had in fact introduced Halleck to his future wife—offered him a position on his staff as first assistant to the Chief Engineer. McPherson's enthusiasm impressed Halleck, and remembering McPherson's past kindness to him and his wife, he wrote McPherson, "I hope you will come as soon as possible, as I want your services very much."⁷⁷ McPherson eagerly accepted the position and headed west to St. Louis. Halleck commanded the Department of Missouri, making him effectively the most important Union general in what would become known as the Western Theater. Thus, a position on Halleck's staff offered McPherson definite potential for advancement. Upon arrival in St. Louis, McPherson accomplished whatever odd jobs Halleck desired of him, including field reconnaissance and topographical surveys, as well as constructing defenses along the line of the Pacific Railroad and organizing troops as they arrived in the department. Halleck even chose

⁷⁶ James B. McPherson to "Mr. Skiddy," October 13, 1861, *JMP*, LC.

⁷⁷ Whaley, 111; Henry W. Halleck to James B. McPherson, November 14, 1861, *Missouri Historical Society*, Manuscript Department, Jefferson Memorial Building, St. Louis, Missouri (hereafter abbreviated *MHS*); Mosier, 37.

McPherson to inspect a prison in Alton, Illinois, with the purpose of deeming if the location was suitable for prisoners of war.⁷⁸ Impressed by his work, Halleck promoted McPherson to the rank of lieutenant-colonel.

What proved to be the most fateful assignment of the war—in terms of what it would mean for McPherson's advancement—came in January, 1862, when Halleck assigned McPherson to the staff of Ulysses S. Grant.⁷⁹ Grant had been one of the only officers in the Western Theater who actually had combat command experience, having fought the Battle of Belmont on November 7, 1861, resulting in a somewhat indecisive clash with the Confederates. Grant had plans to move against Forts Henry and Donelson on the Tennessee and Cumberland Rivers, respectively. Rumors of insobriety surrounded Grant, dating all the way back to his days stationed in California in the early 1850s.⁸⁰ In fact, McPherson was apparently under confidential orders from Halleck to observe Grant's behavior and in particular to monitor his drinking habits.⁸¹

Upon his arrival at Grant's headquarters, McPherson initiated his secret investigation, interviewing Grant's surgeon, Dr. John H. Brinton. McPherson told Brinton, "I have been ordered here, and instructed to obtain special information. All sorts of reports are prevalent . . . as to General Grant's habits. It is said that he is drinking terribly, and in every way is inefficient. I am fond of him, and want to do him justice."⁸² In later years, Brinton reminisced on the meeting, recalling, "I knew [the rumors] were false, and assured him that to my knowledge there

⁷⁸ James B. McPherson to Cynthia McPherson, December 8, 1861, *JMP*, TL; Reid, 568; Henry W. Halleck to James B. McPherson, December 30, 1861, *MHS*.

⁷⁹ Henry Halleck to Ulysses S. Grant, January 30, 1862, National Archives, Record Group 393.

⁸⁰ H. W. Brands, *The Man Who Saved the Union: Ulysses Grant in War and Peace* (New York: Anchor Books, 2012), 73, and William S. McFeely, *Grant: A Biography* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1981), 96-97.

⁸¹ Catton, *Grant Moves South*, 149.

⁸² McPherson quoted in John H. Brinton, *Personal Memoirs of John H. Brinton* (New York: The Neale Publishing Company, 1914), 131.

was no liquor on the staff that the contents of my pocket flask was the whole supply and that I had been cautioned by Gen. Grant as to its disposal, being positively forbidden to give any to any of the staff, except in medical urgency.”⁸³ McPherson later reported to Halleck that Grant was sober and that the rumors were false.⁸⁴ As McPherson mentioned, he was quite fond of Grant and very quickly the two officers' began developing a strong personal connection. Not only did their personalities mesh, but as he soon discovered, McPherson possessed many of the qualities that Grant preferred in a subordinate.⁸⁵

The first military action in which McPherson participated was the campaign for Forts Henry and Donelson. During the fighting in front of Fort Donelson, McPherson soon proved to be one of the more capable officers on Grant's staff. McPherson made several suggestions to his superior, advice to which Grant followed, demonstrating his faith in his new staff member. At one point during the fighting, an aid from General Charles F. Smith came to Grant's headquarters flustered, requesting more artillery sent to Smith's division. Grant was away at the moment, and McPherson took the initiative and ordered a battery of artillery to report immediately to Smith. He then joined Smith in person. In the after battle report, McPherson recalled that he then sent "word to Gen'l Grant that I had done so for I thought I could be of more service there than anywhere else at that particular crisis. Having carried the enemy's works on his extreme right & effected a lodgement[sic] in his [e]ntrenchments we had thus secured the key to his position."⁸⁶ Smith's division, with the decisive assistance of McPherson, played a major role in gaining partial control of the enemy's entrenchments and forcing the fort's eventual surrender.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Eric Dudley, "From Capitol Hill and West Point: An Examination of Ulysses S. Grant's Subordinate Generals" (masters thesis, Kansas State University, 2012), 86-87.

⁸⁶ McPherson's Official Report to George W. Cullum, February 25, 1862, *JMP*, TL.

McPherson's work during the campaign impressed Grant, and he soon wrote Halleck requesting McPherson's services in any future movement as a "personal favor."⁸⁷

Halleck approved Grant's request of retaining McPherson's services during the coming months, and therefore McPherson accompanied Grant during the Battle of Shiloh. Being his chief engineer, upon reaching Pittsburg Landing, Grant turned to McPherson to handle the army's defenses. Grant planned on consolidating his forces at Pittsburg Landing before marching with an overwhelming force on Corinth, a vital rail station controlled by the Confederate army. One of the common interpretations of the Battle of Shiloh makes the claim that Grant was surprised by the Confederate attack and had not taken any defensive precautions.⁸⁸ While there is certainly reason to criticize Grant on this point, as expressed by his own postwar account, Grant actually did consider the Army's defenses. Grant wrote,

McPherson, my only engineer, was directed to lay out a line to [e]ntrench. He did so, but reported that it would have to be made in rear of the line of encampment as it then ran. . . . The fact is, I regarded the campaign we were engaged as an offensive one and had no idea that the enemy would leave strong [e]ntrenchments to take the initiative when he knew he would be attacked where he was if he remained. This view, however, did not prevent every precaution being taken and every effort made to keep advised of all movements of the enemy.⁸⁹

McPherson was Grant's engineer, and thus responsible for the army's defenses, so when looking for someone to assign blame for the resulting Confederate attack and the Union army's poor defensive positions McPherson would appear to be a logical target. However, condemning McPherson for the Union army's failure to entrench is unfair. After all, as evidenced by Grant's postwar account, McPherson did in fact inform his commander of the best line of entrenchment

⁸⁷ Ulysses S. Grant to Henry W. Halleck, February 16, 1862, John Y. Simon, ed., *The Papers of Ulysses S. Grant* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1967), 3: 222. (Hereafter abbreviated *PUSG*)

⁸⁸ See James M. McPherson, *Ordeal by Fire: The Civil War and Reconstruction* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2000) for traditional telling of the Battle of Shiloh.

⁸⁹ Ulysses S. Grant, *Personal Memoirs of Ulysses S. Grant* (1885-1886; repr., New York: Cosimo Classics, 2007), 128-129. Citations refer to the Cosimo Classics edition.

for the army's position at Pittsburg landing. Therefore, blame for the army's failure to entrench should not be placed solely on McPherson.

During the first day of battle, McPherson performed a variety of tasks for Grant, working off his verbal instructions. He directed troop movements and placed divisions on the field of battle where they were needed. At one point during the fighting, while inspecting the front lines, McPherson had his horse shot out from under him, offering a forewarning of the dangers that the battlefield presented to officers on horseback.⁹⁰ The incident was not the standard experience of an officer losing a mount. Riding with Grant, the two came under artillery fire. They both spurred their mounts and dashed for safety. Grant took shell fragments to his sword scabbard, adding pain to his already injured leg. As they reached safety, Grant noticed that McPherson's horse was panting hard and appeared ready to collapse. Upon further inspection, a cannonball had completely passed through the back of the animal. The fact that the horse survived to carry McPherson to safety appears somewhat miraculous.⁹¹ In fact, it was on the first day of fighting that Albert Sidney Johnston, the Confederate commander and highest ranking Confederate killed during the war, met his end. McPherson's most noteworthy experience on April 6, was his desperate attempt to seek out Lew Wallace's lost division and hurry it to the battlefield. Upon reaching Wallace on the road from Crump's Landing to Pittsburg Landing, McPherson told him for "God's sake to move forward rapidly."⁹² McPherson, one of several of Grant's staff sent to hurry Wallace along, could not seem to convince the division commander of the need for haste. Tempers flared and when Captain John A. Rawlins, Grant's chief of staff, actually considered arresting Wallace for insubordination, McPherson had to step in and persuaded Rawlins against

⁹⁰ Ibid., 137.

⁹¹ Larry J. Daniel, *Shiloh: The Battle That Changed the Civil War* (New York: Touchstone, 1997), 176.

⁹² *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*. 128 vols (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1880-1910) (hereafter abbreviated *O.R.*), 10: I, 182.

the idea.⁹³ That night after suffering severely at the hands of the Confederate assaults, McPherson reported to Grant on the condition of the army. Grant asked, "Well, Mac, how is it?" To which, McPherson informed the commander that his army was exhausted and severely depleted. McPherson then asked, "Well, General Grant, under this condition of affairs, what do you propose to do, sir? Shall I make preparations for retreat?" Grant acted surprised at McPherson's suggestion, and responded, "Retreat? No! I propose to attack at daylight, and whip them."⁹⁴

The next day, April 7, McPherson stayed by Grant's side, witnessing firsthand his commander's leadership on the battlefield. Tamara Moser Melia astutely observed, "Grant's refusal to retreat after the terrible losses of the first day impressed McPherson, who grew closer to both him and Sherman amid the carnage. After Shiloh, McPherson adopted Grant as his mentor, seeking Sherman's friendship but Grant's approval."⁹⁵ However, McPherson was not the only one impressed. In a post-battle letter to Captain Nathaniel H. McLean, Grant praised the actions of the members of his staff:

Lt. Col McPherson attached to my staff as Chief Engineer deserves more than a passing notice for his activity and courage. All the grounds beyond our Camps for miles have been [reconnoitered] by him, and plats carefully prepared under his supervision, give accurate information of the nature of approaches to our lines. During the two days battle he was constantly in the saddle leading troops as they arrived to points where their service were required. During the engagement he had one horse shot under him.⁹⁶

McPherson and Grant solidified their relationship during the heat of battle at Shiloh, and over the course of the next two years it only grew stronger.

⁹³ Lewis Wallace, *An Autobiography* (New York: Harper, 1906), 470.

⁹⁴ Meeting described in Steven E. Woodworth, *Nothing but Victory: The Army of the Tennessee, 1861-1865* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2005), 192.

⁹⁵ Tamara A. Smith, "A Matter of Trust: Grant and James B. McPherson," in Steven E. Woodward, *Grant's Lieutenants: From Cairo to Vicksburg* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2001), 152.

⁹⁶ Ulysses S. Grant to Nathaniel H. McLean, April 9, 1862, *PUSG*, 5: 34-35.

For his performance at Fort Henry and Fort Donelson and now at Shiloh, McPherson received a promotion to the full rank of colonel and assigned aide-de-camp on Halleck's staff.⁹⁷ Despite his victory at Shiloh, Grant found himself once again in hot water with Halleck, and temporarily lost command of the army in the field. Halleck joined the army at Pittsburgh Landing in person and took command of the campaign against Corinth. The fact that the Confederates surprised Grant on April 6, 1862 led to renewed talk of Grant's drinking habits, including rumors that he was drunk in his tent during the Battle of Shiloh. In fact, following the battle, his friend James H. Wilson wrote a letter to McPherson questioning Grant's sobriety. He reflected the uncertainty of many people, writing,

I am more than delighted that Genl. Halleck has at last taken the field, he could not have safely delayed another day. The country could not have afforded to trust the practical guidance of our armies any longer to Grant and Buell. They came too near blundering, between them. I strongly suspect some of your generals of inebriety. But I shall not comment more upon matters concerning which I am not fully informed. I will wait for you to give me an insight to the matters at which I have hinted.⁹⁸

McPherson undoubtedly dismissed these rumors and defended the reputation of his new mentor's actions in the field. However, given his close personal relationship to both Grant and Halleck, McPherson had hitched his star to more than one wagon.

Now in command, Halleck slowly moved his army toward Corinth, advancing forward not so much at a rapid march, but instead as an unstoppable siege inching closer to Corinth one mile at a time.⁹⁹ During the movements that eventually resulted in the capture of Corinth, McPherson, as a member of Halleck's staff, played a vital role. Sherman described his role, writing, "He was one of the most useful staff officers in the whole army—riding night and day,

⁹⁷ Official Commission, May 7, 1862, *JMP*, LC.

⁹⁸ James H. Wilson to James B. McPherson, April 30, 1862, *JMP*, LC.

⁹⁹ For one of the better examinations of the Siege of Corinth see Timothy B. Smith, *Corinth 1862: Siege, Battle, Occupation* (Lawrence, KS: The University Press of Kansas, 2012).

sometimes with a single orderly, and sometimes alone. I think he knew more of the lay of the ground and of the roads of the country around Corinth than any officer of the army."¹⁰⁰ The Siege of Corinth did not end in a decisive victory for the Union, as the Confederate army easily escaped the city, but on May 30, 1862 Halleck did succeed in taking the vital rail junction. During their retreat from the city, the Confederates destroyed many of the railroad buildings, tracks, and other vital resources in order to deprive the enemy.

Following the capture of Corinth, Halleck sought a new task for his talented subordinate. Halleck determined that McPherson's skills as an engineer could serve the Union well following the destruction left by the retreating Confederates. On June 4, 1862, in Special Field Order #86 Halleck assigned McPherson to the command of an Engineer Brigade, coming with a promotion to the rank of brigadier-general of volunteers.¹⁰¹ McPherson's new camaraderie with Grant was evidenced by Julia, Grant's wife, sewing the general's first stars onto his uniform.¹⁰² He received the official title of General Superintendent of Military Rail Roads. Halleck directed that McPherson's primary task be the "repair and reestablishment of the Rail Roads."¹⁰³ McPherson described his new position to his brother, writing, "you can imagine me a sort of Military Supt. repairing and rebuilding bridges, repairing locomotives and cars, and putting the roads in running order with very limited means in the way of tools, shops, etc to do the work with, though I have plenty of men." He continued, "But I am already getting things in shape, have had six

¹⁰⁰ William T. Sherman, "The Late Major-General J. B. McPherson." *Hours at Home: A Popular Magazine of Religious and Useful Literature* 2, no. 6 (April 1866), 485-486.

¹⁰¹ Due to the large numbers of volunteers making up the Union forces during the Civil War, the Union high command filled its officer corps with commanders who received a commission and rank with the title suffix "of volunteers." This was a separate rank from McPherson's rank within the Regular Army of the United States. Therefore, McPherson, as well as many Union officers during the Civil War, held concurrent ranks within the U.S. Army as well as within the volunteer forces they commanded in the field. Additionally, officers could receive brevet ranks, which were honorary ranks usually resulting from battlefield promotions that were above their permanent commissions. Therefore an officer like McPherson could potentially have multiple ranks at once (brigadier-general of volunteers and colonel in the Regular Army in 1862).

¹⁰² Julia Dent Grant, *The Personal Memoirs of Julia Dent Grant* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1975), 105.

¹⁰³ Special Field Order #86, June 4, 1862, *JMP, LC; PUSG*, 5: 298.

locomotives repaired and running and several platform cars . . ." ¹⁰⁴ The assignment was ideal for an engineer of McPherson's caliber, and not surprisingly, he proved quite effective in his new position. "All around town are the foot-prints of Gen. McPherson," reported the *Corinth War Eagle*. "New Railroad buildings are going up as if by magic." ¹⁰⁵ McPherson reorganized Confederate railroads, and in the process reopened over 350 miles of track, and fully staffed the new line with efficient personnel. ¹⁰⁶

Once McPherson completed his task, there appeared to no longer be a need for his newly created brigade. "When I first commenced," McPherson commented on his situation, "I had three Engineer Regiments placed under my Command and drove matters right along, now I do not require near as many, and some of them have gone back to their original positions." ¹⁰⁷ As efficiently as McPherson performed his task as the Superintendent of Military Rail Roads, he desperately desired a combat assignment. Following Halleck's promotion and reassignment to Washington, McPherson petitioned Grant seeking just such a position. McPherson's wish came true during the Confederate attack against General William S. Rosecrans in early October, 1862, in what became known as the Second Battle of Corinth.

In his October 30 after battle report, Grant described McPherson's role during the fighting. He wrote,

On the 3rd, I ordered [General] Hurlbut who had been previously ordered to be in readiness to move at any moment, to march upon the enemy's rear by way of Pocahontas; also, sent two Regiments from here under Colonel Stevenson, of the 7th Mo., to join Colonel Lawler at the Bridge, six miles south of Bethel, and put the whole under General McPherson, with directions to reach Corinth at the earliest possible moment. . . . As before stated, four of these were sent under

¹⁰⁴ James B. McPherson to "Dear Brother" [Most likely Russell], June 10, 1862, *JMP*, TL.

¹⁰⁵ *Corinth War Eagle*, August 7, 1862. Quoted in Timothy B. Smith, *Corinth 1862*, 113.

¹⁰⁶ Smith, "A Matter of Trust," 155.

¹⁰⁷ James B. McPherson to William McPherson, August 15, 1862, *JMP*, TL.

General McPherson to the former place[(Corinth)] and formed the advance in the pursuit.¹⁰⁸

McPherson hotly engaged the Confederate force, successfully driving it from the field. Shortly after the engagement, Grant attempted to keep McPherson in a combat command. On October 5, 1862, he wrote Halleck, “I would state in this connection that Gen. McPherson is exceedingly anxious to take an active command and I think it a great misfortune to have such a man without an important military command. I would feel more strengthened to-day if I could place McPherson in command of a Division than I would to receive a whole Brigade of the new levies.”¹⁰⁹ McPherson had only commanded troops in one brief engagement, and yet Grant strongly felt he was capable of an even higher command. Two days later, Grant wrote Halleck, “If possible have McPherson made Major [General]. He should be made at once to take rank above others who may be promoted for the late battles.”¹¹⁰ Halleck along with Secretary of War Stanton quickly approved McPherson’s appointment. Evidently, McPherson’s relationship with Grant and Halleck helped in his rapid advancement. However, in a sign of humility, when informed of his new promotion, McPherson replied, “I don’t know what for.”¹¹¹ On October 20, he wrote his mother, “Little did I think . . . that I should ever be a Major General in the Army of the United States, but so it is. My appointment was a perfect surprise, as I did not think I had earned it.”¹¹² Grant, however, placed supreme confidence in McPherson’s qualifications. And Grant was not the only Union general with a high estimation of McPherson's abilities. On October 7, 1862, Rosecrans wrote Grant, “[A] civilian must take the place of McPherson. He is needed in the field. He adds twenty [percent] to my troops he commands.” Grant replied,

¹⁰⁸ Ulysses S. Grant to John C. Kelton, October 30, 1862, *PUSG*, 6: 223-224.

¹⁰⁹ Ulysses S. Grant to Henry W. Halleck, October 5, 1862, *PUSG*, 6: 121.

¹¹⁰ Ulysses S. Grant to Henry W. Halleck, October 7, 1862, *PUSG*, 6: 130.

¹¹¹ McPherson quoted in Smith, "A Matter of Trust," 155.

¹¹² James McPherson to Cynthia McPherson, October 20, 1862, Whaley, 122.

“[General] Halleck has been written and telegraphed to several days since on the subject of McPherson. I want you to give him a [Division].”¹¹³ Whether through the close personal ties forged by McPherson or actual merit, he was soon provided the opportunity to further demonstrate his ability as a field commander, which he had so desperately desired.

Upon news of McPherson's promotion, and reflecting the clear admiration of the men under his command, the employees of the military railroads of the Department of the Tennessee offered their congratulations by presenting McPherson with a horse, bridle, and sword.¹¹⁴ Following McPherson's appointment, Grant telegraphed Rosecrans, “Order McPherson to report to me on his arrival at Corinth. I want to give him an important command at Bolivar.”¹¹⁵ The "important command" to which Grant referred presented entirely new challenges to the young commander. At Bolivar, McPherson experienced his first independent combat command. He did not disappoint the confidence placed in him by Grant. Wanting to advance into Mississippi and apply pressure on the enemy, with the objective eventually being the capture of Vicksburg, Grant gave McPherson command of the left wing of his army and ordered him to advance from Bolivar to La Grange, Tennessee, and after taking that town, on to Lamar, Mississippi.¹¹⁶ De B. Randolph Keim, a newspaper correspondent for the *New York Herald*, was attached to McPherson's new command and recalled McPherson's actions. "The enemy outnumbering us might have gained the advantage, had it not been for the excellent position the General had taken," wrote Keim. "While the infantry and artillery were occupying the attention of the enemy, the General sent his cavalry to the left, with instructions to avoid the flank of the enemy, and attack him in the rear. The movement was eminently successful." Keim continued, "No sooner

¹¹³ William S. Rosecrans to Ulysses S. Grant, October 7, 1862, *PUSG*, 6: 132; *Ibid.*, 131.

¹¹⁴ Keim, 368.

¹¹⁵ Ulysses S. Grant to William S. Rosecrans, October 11, 1862, *PUSG*, 6: 148.

¹¹⁶ Grant, *Personal Memoirs*, 165.

were they in this position, than a portion of our line advanced against their flank, crumbling their entire line. This was the end of the fight." In these actions, McPherson performed brilliantly, demonstrating a degree of tactical excellence. Considering the fighting was McPherson's first true field command, Keim expressed a degree of surprise in his appraisal of McPherson's conduct. He wrote,

This was the General's maiden fight. Hitherto he had acted under the direct supervision of his superior in rank. In this instance he was ordered to accomplish a certain purpose, and left to his own judgment in doing it. The result was more than was expected. The sagacity and foresight displayed, his quickness in grasping the mistakes of his adversary, the impetuosity of his attacks, his care of the lives of his men, and his unrelenting pressure of the enemy's lines when broken, marked him in the minds of all who witnessed him at Lamar as an officer destined for high command.¹¹⁷

McPherson's leadership so impressed Grant that he promptly made him the army's second in command. Grant then assigned McPherson to take the lead in the Army of the Tennessee's advance into Mississippi. However, when the Confederates attacked and destroyed Grant's supply depot at Holly Springs, the reversal forced Grant to retreat. He gave McPherson the important assignment of covering the rear of the army's retreat.¹¹⁸

During the retreat back to Tennessee, McPherson demonstrated many of the characteristics that would eventually lead the troops under his command to universally proclaim their love and devotion to their commander. The loss of the supply depot at Holly Springs delivered a major blow to the Army of the Tennessee, and now they were forced to retreat, marching through flooded country, exhausted, and on quarter-rations. However, shockingly, the morale of the men under McPherson's command did not sink as low as one would expect—due largely to the attitude and actions of their commander. Whitelaw Reid described the retreat,

¹¹⁷ Keim, 371.

¹¹⁸ Smith, "A Matter of Trust," 156; Reid, 272.

claiming that the troops endured the fatigues of the march "when they saw [McPherson] asking no sacrifice of them which he did not make himself. Day and night he kept the saddle. Whenever a difficulty or danger was encountered he lingered—never leaving till the last man or the last wagon was safely over." His actions did not go unnoticed by his men. Reid concluded that "through all the privations and dangers he continued so affable, so cheerful, with such kind words and pleasant looks for all, that on that march he fairly mastered the hearts of his command. Thenceforward [the troops] *morale* was perfect, for [they] believed in [their] General."¹¹⁹

With Grant's plan to march overland to Vicksburg thwarted, he altered his strategy to take his army via the Mississippi River in hopes of utilizing the Union's naval superiority. In October 1862, the Army of the Tennessee was officially organized into four corps with McPherson in command of the XVII Corps.¹²⁰ However, in the early stages of the Vicksburg campaign, Grant received word that McPherson's promotion to major general of volunteers was suffering setbacks in the confirmation process. He quickly started campaigning on McPherson's behalf. On November 15, 1862, Grant wrote to his cousin Silas A. Hudson, "I am glad that you Senators [presumably Iowa Senators James Harlan and James W. Grimes] are better disposed towards the confirmation of McPherson. He belongs to a class of men that we have [too] few of. We cannot afford to [lose] them. Such men as McPherson . . . are worth more each than a Brigade of troops under such commanders as some that have been promoted."¹²¹ When over a month later the confirmation had still not passed the Senate, Grant wrote to Halleck, "Urge the confirmation of

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

¹²⁰ General Order No. 210, War Department, December 18, 1862, *PUSG*, 7: 63.

¹²¹ Ulysses S. Grant to Silas A. Hudson, November 15, 1862, *PUSG*, 6: 320.

McPherson—he commands a wing of this army & it is of vast importance to the service that he should retain it.”¹²² The next day he wrote Halleck again:

I learn that there will probably be an effort made to defeat the confirmation of all the recent promotions. There are many of them I have no interest in, but in the case of McPherson I am deeply interested. He is now second in command with the Army in the Field and should his name be brought up, and rejected I would feel the loss more than taking a Division from me. He is worth more than a Division of men in his present position.¹²³

Grant likely realized that Halleck was a personal friend of McPherson, invested in his protégé's success, and likely would intervene on his behalf. Congress finally confirmed the promotion on March 10, 1863. That day Grant wrote to Elihu Washburne, “McPherson is one of my best men and is fully to be trusted. Sherman stands in the same [category]. In these two men I have a host. They are worth more than a full Brigade each.”¹²⁴ McPherson, along with Sherman, had quickly become Grant's most trusted subordinates, and Grant stood behind them both for the remainder of the war.

On January 16, 1863, Grant wrote to McPherson, ordering him to “come into Memphis and take immediately charge of troops designated to form part of the river expedition [against Vicksburg].”¹²⁵ McPherson responded, “I am just in receipt of orders assigning me to the command of a portion of the forces to operate against Vicksburg. I cannot express to you the gratification it gives me, and I shall most assuredly do my utmost to merit your confidence.”¹²⁶ However, the campaign that unfolded during the winter months turned into a nightmare, especially for an engineer. Grant planned for his troops to bypass the Vicksburg defenses by constructing a series of waterworks and canals, thus effectively rendering the strategic

¹²² Ulysses S. Grant to Henry W. Halleck, December 13, 1862, *Ibid.*, 7: 32.

¹²³ Ulysses S. Grant to Henry W. Halleck, December 14, 1862, *Ibid.*, 7: 31.

¹²⁴ Promotion of James B. McPherson to Major General of Volunteers, GLI; Ulysses S. Grant to Elihu B. Washburne, March 11, 1863, *PSUG*, 7: 409.

¹²⁵ Ulysses S. Grant to James B. McPherson, January 16, 1863, *PSUG*, 7: 227.

¹²⁶ James B. McPherson to Ulysses S. Grant, *Ibid.*

importance of Vicksburg moot. To his most gifted engineer, Grant assigned the most promising of these canal projects. The assignment involved digging a canal from Lake Providence to the Mississippi River, cutting through a swamp-filled region. Grant hoped that "by a little digging . . . will connect the Mississippi and the Lake, and in all probability will wash a channel in a short time."¹²⁷ McPherson set his mind to the task at hand, digging canals, clearing hazards, and cutting levees on the Mississippi River, attempting to reroute the water. Despite McPherson's progress, and confidence in ultimate success, the canal could only accommodate shallow-draft boats, and Grant soon decided to abandon the Lake Providence canal project.¹²⁸ Grant invested more time in an additional canal project through the Yazoo Pass, but it also failed in its goal. Historians can legitimately question how much importance Grant placed on the canal projects. He wrote in his memoirs, "I let the work go on, believing employment was better than idleness for the men. Then, too, it served as a cover for other efforts which gave a better prospect of success. This work was abandoned after the canal proved a failure."¹²⁹ Once spring arrived in 1863, Grant prepared to launch his most daring campaign yet against Vicksburg.

Grant's audacious new campaign involved first marching the Army of the Tennessee south of Vicksburg, then having Admiral Porter and the navy run the gauntlet south of the Vicksburg guns, further transporting the army across the Mississippi River, and finally breaking free of his supply lines in order to assault Vicksburg from the land side. It was a very risky plan, and one in which McPherson played a vital role. The Army of the Tennessee included three corps: the XIII Corps under the command of John A. McClernand, the XV Corps under Sherman, and McPherson's XVII Corps. The first three parts of Grant's plan worked to

¹²⁷ Ulysses S. Grant to James B. McPherson, February 5, 1863, *Ibid.*

¹²⁸ Michael B. Ballard, *Vicksburg: The Campaign that Opened the Mississippi* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 174.

¹²⁹ Grant, *Personal Memoirs*, 176.

perfection, and his troops were soon operating on the Vicksburg side of the river. By May 1, 1863, all of Grant's command had crossed the river and were operating in Mississippi. Grant selected Port Gibson as McPherson's first objective. Grant described the strategic importance of Port Gibson as "the starting point of roads to Grand Gulf, Vicksburg and Jackson."¹³⁰ After taking Port Gibson, McPherson secured a strategically important bridge at Hankinson's Ferry, allowing the army to easily cross the Big Black River.¹³¹

McPherson advanced on Raymond, Mississippi, and unaided by any other corps, clashed with a Confederate force on May 12, 1863. *New York Herald* correspondent De B. Randolph Keim, enthusiastically described McPherson as "inflict[ing] upon [the enemy] one of the most disastrous defeats of the campaign."¹³² Keim certainly overestimated the significance of McPherson's victory at Raymond, as Grant later estimated the enemy losses at only 75 killed, and 186 taken prisoner.¹³³ Following the Battle of Raymond, a staff member handed McPherson a pre-drafted message to send to Grant that read, "Have met the enemy in superior force, but have defeated him disastrously, and am now in full pursuit." McPherson, not believing the battle had been so one-sided, tore up the letter and drafted a new one that read, "We met the enemy about three today; have had a hard fight but up to this time have the advantage."¹³⁴ The incident says much about McPherson. He did not want to provide Grant with any kind of false claims which could have a negative impact on the future of the campaign. McPherson was not the type of commander who sought personal glory through misleading proclamations or grandiose statements. Such a quality was certainly a characteristic that Grant appreciated in his subordinate. Even though the battle did not necessarily live up to the claims of some of

¹³⁰ Ibid., 190.

¹³¹ Ballard, 246-247.

¹³² Keim, 373.

¹³³ Ulysses S. Grant to Henry W. Halleck, May 14, 1863, *PUSG*, 8: 213.

¹³⁴ Quoted in Whaley, 129.

McPherson's staff, the Battle of Raymond did improve the morale of the army and gave them momentum moving forward.

Following the successful Battle of Raymond, McPherson proceeded to Clinton and then onto Jackson, the capital of Mississippi, before turning back toward Vicksburg and meeting the Confederate army at Champion Hill, the truly decisive clash of the campaign. Grant recalled the Battle of Champion Hill, writing, “[W]here Pemberton had chosen his position to receive us, whether taken by accident or design, was well selected. It is one of the highest points in that section, and commanded all the ground in range.”¹³⁵ However strong the Confederate positions might have been, Grant still decided to attack the enemy where he stood. McPherson’s corps constituted Grant’s right wing and attempted to flank Pemberton’s strong positions. During the battle, McPherson commanded his own corps, which was assisted by Hovey’s division from McClernand’s command. The engagement that followed was hotly contested between McPherson and the Confederate defenses. Grant desperately attempted to have the rest of McClernand’s men attack the enemy, and despite McClernand’s failures to capitalize on the opportunity to deliver a decisive blow to Pemberton, McPherson’s men succeeded in winning a victory for Grant’s army. Sherman described the significance of the battle, claiming it was “the battle which won to us [Vicksburg] . . . for by it we penned up Pemberton in the walls of [Vicksburg], subject to starvation, while Johnston was thrown off to the right rear.”¹³⁶ McPherson had won the Battle of Champion Hill, which proved to be the most strategically

¹³⁵ Grant, *Personal Memoirs*, 202.

¹³⁶ Sherman, “The Late Major-General J. B. McPherson,” 486.

important battle in the Vicksburg campaign, making it thus one of the most important outcomes in the entire Civil War.¹³⁷

Following the Battle of Champion Hill, the Army of the Tennessee moved in around Vicksburg. Before conceding to a prolonged siege, Grant attempted twice to take the city by direct assault, on May 19 and 22. Neither attack succeeded, but during the second attack on May 22, McClernand exaggerated his gains on the enemy's position. Shortly after the attack began, McClernand signaled to Grant, "I am hotly engaged. The enemy are pressing me on the right and left. If McPherson would attack it would make a diversion."¹³⁸ Unlike McPherson, McClernand had a reputation for exaggerated claims, and Grant did not want to acquiesce to his request. Grant responded, "If your advance is weak strengthen it by drawing from your reserves or other parts of the lines"¹³⁹ Unfazed by Grant's denial, McClernand replied, "We have gained the enemy's entrenchments at several points. . . . Would it not be best to concentrate the whole or part of [McPherson's] Command on this point?" He then reported, "We have part possession of two Forts, and the stars and stripes are floating over them. A vigorous push ought to be made all along the line."¹⁴⁰ Grant later wrote, "I occupied a position from which I believed I could see as well as he what took place in his front, and I did not see the success he reported. But his request for reinforcements being repeated I could not ignore it."¹⁴¹ In reality, McClernand did not gain possession of two forts, but merely the outer lines. Therefore, when Grant ordered McPherson to attack in support of McClernand it did not result in taking the enemy defenses, but only resulted in increased casualties. In his postwar report to Halleck, Grant explained,

¹³⁷ See Timothy B. Smith, *Champion Hill: Decisive Battle for Vicksburg* (New York: Savas Beatie, 2006) for a detailed examination of the battle. Smith makes the claim that it was the "decisive battle of the Vicksburg campaign—and perhaps the Civil War," xviii.

¹³⁸ John A. McClernand to Ulysses S. Grant, May 22, 1863, *PSUG*, 8: 253.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁴¹ Grant, *Personal Memoirs*, 210.

The assault was made simultaneously by the three Army Corps at 10 o'clock a.m. The loss on our side was not very heavy at first but receiving repeated dispatches from Gen. McClernand saying that he was hard pressed on his Right & Left and calling for reinforcements, I gave him all of McPherson's Corps but four Brigades and caused Sherman to press the enemy on our right which caused us to double our losses for the day. The whole loss for the day will probably reach 1500 killed & wounded. Gen. [McClernand's] dispatches misled me as to the real state of facts and caused much of this loss. He is entirely unfit for the position of Corps Commander both on the march and on the battle field. Looking after his Corps give me much labor, and infinitely more uneasiness, than all the remainder of my Dept.¹⁴²

Grant, Sherman, and McPherson had an undying bond, but that relationship did not extend to all of the Army of the Tennessee's corps commanders. Following the failures on May 22, the army settled in for the siege of Vicksburg.

McPherson's relationship with McClernand became strained following his failure to support the XVII Corps at the Battle of Champion Hill, but it came to a breaking point following the May 22 assaults on Vicksburg. McPherson had no use for political generals, and like his superior, much preferred West Pointers as field commanders.¹⁴³ To make matters worse, McClernand issued a congratulatory order on June 13. The order aimed specifically at directing blame to the other commanders of the Army of the Tennessee. McClernand wrote,

The Thirteenth Army Corps, acknowledging the good intentions of all, would scorn indulgence in weak regrets and idle recriminations. If, while the enemy was massing to crush it, assistance was asked for by a diversion at other points, or by re-enforcement, it only asked what in one case Major-General Grant had specifically and peremptorily ordered, namely, simultaneous and persistent attack all along our lines . . . and . . . by massing a strong force in time upon a weakened point, would have probably ensured success.¹⁴⁴

McClernand leveled all the blame for the failure at Sherman, McPherson, and Grant.

¹⁴² Ulysses S. Grant to Henry W. Halleck, May 24, 1863, *PSUG*, 8: 260-261.

¹⁴³ See Eric Dudley, "From Capitol Hill and West Point: An Examination of Ulysses S. Grant's Subordinate Generals" (masters thesis, Kansas State University, 2012) for a detailed analysis of Grant's preferences in generals.

¹⁴⁴ *OR*, 24: I, 159-163; Richard L. Kiper, *Major General John Alexander McClernand: Politician in Uniform* (Kent: The Kent State University Press, 1999), 268-269.

In response to McClernand's allegations, and in defense of his own corps' conduct during the fighting, McPherson penned a long letter to Grant. He wrote,

After a careful perusal of the Order, I cannot help arriving at the conclusion, that it was written more to influence Public Sentiment at the North, and impress the Public mind with the magnificent strategy, Superior Tactics, and brilliant deeds of [McClernand], than to congratulate his troops, upon their well merited successes. There is a vaingloriousness about the Order, an ingenious attempt to write himself down, the hero, the master mind, giving life and direction to Military operations in this Quarter, inconsistent with the high toned principles of the Soldier. . . . Though 'born a Warrior,' as he himself stated, he has evidently forgotten one of the most essential qualities, viz: that elevated, refined sense of honor, which, while guarding his own rights with jealous care, at all times, renders justice to others.

McPherson then turned directly to the events of May 22:

It little becomes Major General McClernand to complain of want of cooperation on the part of other Corps, in the assault on the enemy's works on [May 22] when 1218 men of my command were placed 'hors de combat' in their resolute and daring attempt to carry the positions assigned to them, and fully one third of these men . . . fell in front of *his own lines*, where they were left, after being sent two miles to *support him*, to sustain the whole brunt of the battle, from 5 P.M. until after dark, *his own men being recalled*. If Gen'l McClernand's assaulting columns, were not immediately supported, when they moved against the enemy's [entrenchments], and few of the men succeeded in getting in, it most assuredly was his *own fault*, and *not* the fault of *any other* Corps commander.

McClernand's attempt to shift blame for the failures of May 22 was what seemed to upset

McPherson the most. He concluded his letter, "The assault failed, not in my opinion from any

want of cooperation or bravery on the part of our troops, but from the strength of the works, the

difficulty of getting close up to them under cover, and the determined character of the

assailed."¹⁴⁵ McPherson knew he did not need to convince Grant of McClernand's shortcomings

as a commander. However, the letter merely provided McPherson with the opportunity to

release his pent up anger, and ensure the reputation of his command was well recorded and

¹⁴⁵ James B. McPherson to Ulysses S. Grant, June 18, 1963, *PUSG*, 8: 431.

documented. Following the incident, Grant removed McClernand from command. McPherson's time with the Army of the Tennessee, however, was far from over.

With the Confederate forces penned up in Vicksburg, and the Army of the Tennessee content on besieging the enemy within their stronghold, once again McPherson's skills as an engineer served to complete an important operation. McPherson deployed his artillery batteries to inflict maximum damage on the enemy. However, the most significant event came when McPherson, together with his chief engineer Captain Andrew Hickenlooper, began work on an operation to detonate a mine under a key Confederate position. On June 22, 1863, McPherson ordered the detonation of 2,200 pounds of gun powder under Fort Hill. Grant and Sherman joined McPherson to witness the explosion. Whitelaw Reid described the scene: "the Rebel fort confronting them rose like a huge leviathan. As it entered the air it began to break into fragments; finally, at the height of about a hundred feet, it seemed to dissolve, and only the great cloud of sulphureous smoke could be seen."¹⁴⁶ The Confederate defenders "were thrown into the air, some of them coming down on our side, still alive," recalled Grant. "As soon as the explosion took place the crater was seized by two regiments of our troops. . . . The enemy made a desperate effort to expel them, but failed, and soon retired behind the new line."¹⁴⁷ The gains made by the detonation were only partially successful, so McPherson began operations on a second mine, which he detonate on July 1. McPherson's engineering operations resulted in the destruction of one of the key forts in the enemy's defensive line. Confederate General John C. Pemberton, nearly starved and giving up hope that assistance would come, became convinced

¹⁴⁶ Reid, 575-576.

¹⁴⁷ Grant, *Personal Memoirs*, 219.

that the damage done by the explosions was beyond repair, and sought an armistice to consider terms of surrender.¹⁴⁸

After six weeks of siege, Vicksburg surrendered on July 4, 1863. In the days during the siege, Grant, Sherman, and McPherson further strengthened their bonds of friendship. "During the time we lay before [Vicksburg], the most intimate relations existed between General Grant, McPherson, and myself," recalled Sherman, "and we were daily in interchange of the most kindly as well as of professional opinions." He remembered fondly of McPherson, "To his peculiar spirit of harmony as much as to any other one cause, I attribute a great part of the success which attended that army."¹⁴⁹ With the primary objective accomplished, General Grant selected McPherson to act as his second at the official surrender.¹⁵⁰ Grant, Sherman, and McPherson stood to gain the most from their recent successes in the Western Theater. Grant ensured that his two most trusted subordinates would receive their proper accolades. On July 22, Grant wrote to Abraham Lincoln,

I would most respectfully but urgently recommend the promotion of Maj. Gen. Wm. T. Sherman, now commanding the 15th Army Corps, and Maj. Gen. J. B. McPherson, commanding the 17th Army Corps to the positions of Brig. Gen. in the regular Army. The first reason for this is their great fitness for any command that it may ever become necessary to [entrust] to them. Second, their great purity of character and disinterestedness in everything except the faithful performance of their duty and the success of every one engaged in the great battle for the preservation of the Union. Third[,] they have honorably won this distinction upon many well fought battle fields.

Grant outlined Sherman and McPherson's services thus far in the war. He highlighted McPherson's performance at the Second Battle of Corinth, the advance through Mississippi, the Battle of Raymond, the Battle of Champion Hill, and the Siege of Vicksburg. Grant concluded,

¹⁴⁸ Reid, 576.

¹⁴⁹ Sherman, "The Late Major-General J. B. McPherson," 486-487.

¹⁵⁰ *Tiffin Tribune*, August 4, 1864.

“He is one of our ablest Engineers and most skillful Generals. The promotion of such men as Sherman and McPherson always add strength to our Arms.”¹⁵¹ Grant's star was on the rise—before long he would be commanding all the armies of the United States—and he made certain that Sherman and McPherson received the proper recognition for their long and loyal service to the Union cause.

Another noteworthy exchange took place on July 22, 1863. Grant's letter to Lincoln was prompted by a letter he had received from Halleck eleven days earlier. The letter read, “Meade has been appointed a Brigadier [General] in the regular Army at the same time that you were made a Major [General]. There is still one vacant Brig Generalcy . . . I am of the opinion that Sherman & McPherson have rendered the best service & should come in first. If you think so, write an official letter to that effect, urging their appointment to the first vacancies.” In a surprisingly friendly manner—seeing that Grant and Halleck had repeatedly clashed while serving together in the West—Halleck concluded the letter, “Give my kindest regards to my old friends among your officers. I sincerely wish I was with you again in the west. I am utterly sick of this political Hell.”¹⁵² Grant wrote McPherson on July 22, “I send you a private letter just received from 'Old Brains'[(Halleck)] which I send for your perusal. Return it by bearer. There is a portion of the letter which probably should not be repeated. The whole letter is *private & confidential* but I know there is no objection to you and Sherman seeing it. So far as you and Sherman are concerned I will do my part this very day.”¹⁵³ Grant's decision to share the letter with McPherson confirms the strong friendship between the two men. McPherson responded to Grant,

¹⁵¹ Ulysses S. Grant to Abraham Lincoln, July 22, 1863, *Ibid.*, 9: 96-99.

¹⁵² Henry W. Halleck to Ulysses S. Grant, July 11, 1863, *Ibid.*, 99.

¹⁵³ Ulysses S. Grant to James B. McPherson, July 22, 1863, *Ibid.*, 101.

I appreciate most highly the favor you have shown me in sending 'Old Brains,' letter for perusal—It is another of the repeated acts of kindness which you have always shown me, and it will ever be my duty as well as pleasure to try to merit your confidence I certainly had no idea before, that my name was thought of in connection with a Brig-ship in the Regular Army, though of course it is very gratifying to know that it is so, Sherman richly deserves the position and I earnestly hope he will get it.¹⁵⁴

On August 4, Halleck informed Grant of Sherman and McPherson's appointments as brigadier generals in the regular army. They were officially nominated January 7, and confirmed on March 1, 1864.¹⁵⁵ McPherson's performance on the battlefield, as well as his gaining Halleck and Grant's confidence, had paid off.¹⁵⁶

After the surrender of Vicksburg, Grant placed McPherson in command of the city and surrounding districts. McPherson adopted a humane style of governance that sought reconciliation with the city's inhabitants. It was, in fact, McPherson who suggested the plan of paroling the Confederate prisoners following the surrender of Vicksburg.¹⁵⁷ One particular incident reflected the approach McPherson took in handling a partially hostile civilian population. One of the terms of surrender agreed on by Grant was that the Union army would share its rations with the civilians in the city. In one instance, a citizen, Virginia Rockwell applied to McPherson for rations. In a note ordering her provisions, he described her as a "destitute citizen." Rockwell took great offense to this wording, and derisively commented that it should read "robbed citizen." Amused by her candor, McPherson rewrote the order, and proscribed her double the rations.¹⁵⁸ Through actions such as this, McPherson successfully

¹⁵⁴ James B. McPherson to Ulysses S. Grant, July 22, 1863, *Ibid.*, 101-102.

¹⁵⁵ *PUSG*, 9: 102.

¹⁵⁶ Dudley, "From Capitol Hill to West Point," 78-79.

¹⁵⁷ Charles A. Dana, *Recollections of the Civil War: With the Leaders at Washington and in the Field in the Sixties* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1913), 97.

¹⁵⁸ Gordon A. Cotton and Jeff T. Giambrone, *Vicksburg and the War* (Gretna, LA: Pelican Publishing Company, 2004), 111.

earned the respect of the citizens with his "gentlemanly deportment."¹⁵⁹ Nevertheless, despite Rockwell's pride, there were many destitute citizens in the city. The fighting had taken its toll on Vicksburg's civilians, reducing them to eating rats toward the end of the siege.¹⁶⁰ Over two months after the surrender, a report on the number of "destitute" citizens in Warren County Mississippi, placed the number at 3,387.¹⁶¹

McPherson's congeniality toward the civilians of Vicksburg earned him certain enemies who viewed his approach as too lenient. Some Northern newspapers and radical Republicans leveled accusations against McPherson. Sherman described the situation, writing, "his social nature brought him into contact with some families who were not prudent in restraining their expressions of attachment to the rebel cause." McPherson simply "laughed at these as the idle, foolish nonsense of women; while others catching at straws, imputed to him too much leniency toward rebel women and rebel people."¹⁶² McPherson's engagement to Emily Hoffman—whose family were known Confederate sympathizers—certainly did not help his cause. When informed of the charges of being a Southern sympathizer, McPherson was appalled. He wrote,

. . . rumors and reports have been sent North, giving an account of my reputed secession tendencies, I am well aware; but I am not going to be swerved from what I conceive to be my duty by all the reports that envy, malice, and slander can suggest. What I have done in all cases has been done conscientiously and with an earnest desire to crush out the rebellion, promote the best interests of our country, and obey the orders of my superiors. . . . [R]eports have been sent to the Secretary of War that I was "neglecting my official duties, spending my time with ladies of secession tendencies," etc. These reports I pronounce emphatically and unqualifiedly false. . . . [B]oth General Grant and General Sherman know full well that I would rather be in the field at the head of a division than where I am. I have treated the people of this county politely and civilly, and shall continue to do so, at the risk of being denounced as "secesh," so long as they manifest proper

¹⁵⁹ Cotton and Giambrone, 108.

¹⁶⁰ Ballard, 382-383. Also see Peter F. Walker, *Vicksburg: A People at War, 1860-1865* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1960) for a study on the effects of the siege on the citizens of Vicksburg.

¹⁶¹ "Report of a Number of Destitute Families and Sick Citizens of Warren County, Mississippi," Captain A. W. Robinson to James B. McPherson, October, 1863, *JMP*, LC.

¹⁶² Sherman, "The Late Major-General J. B. McPherson," 491.

respect for the Federal authority. . . . When the time comes (which I hope and believe never will) that, to be a soldier, a man has got to forget and overlook the claims of humanity, I do not want to be a soldier.¹⁶³

McPherson had always been an ardent supporter of the Union cause, and the charges leveled against him were unfounded. His social nature and ability to charm those around him was what ultimately landed him in hot water.

Perhaps in response to these allegations, McPherson increased his public condemnation of anti-Union civilians living in Vicksburg. In one incident, McPherson exiled the family of Nineon E. Kline for "acting in bad faith" toward the government. McPherson allowed the family to collect whatever personal property they could carry, and the Union army confiscated the rest.¹⁶⁴ In a second episode, McPherson cracked down on four women who disrespected Abraham Lincoln. During a prayer at a local Episcopal church, the minister prayed that the Lord would "behold and bless thy servant, the President of the United States." Kate Barnett, Ellen Barnett, Laura Latham, and Ellen Martin, took offense to the prayer and stormed out of the church. For these actions, McPherson ordered them banished within 48 hours to Confederate territory or face imprisonment.¹⁶⁵ One could fairly judge McPherson's actions as rather harsh, yet, given the level of scrutiny he faced for his conduct as Vicksburg's commander, his orders make more sense. Actions often speak louder than words, and his defenders could point to these orders as evidence of his loyalty.

Owing to these allegations, confirmation of McPherson's nomination for promotion appeared in doubt. Grant received a message from Halleck on December 22, 1863, which warned that "an effort will be made to defeat, in the Senate, the nomination of McPherson, on the

¹⁶³ James B. McPherson to George W. Cullum, December 23, 1863, Sherman, "The Late Major-General J. B. McPherson, 491-492.

¹⁶⁴ Cotton and Giambrone, 115.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid., 116-117; Sherman, "The Late Major-General J. B. McPherson," 493.

ground that he is semi secesh, [(has Southern sympathies)]. . . . You know how absurd this is. The true course of the opposition is the jealousy of other officers who want the place, but who have not rendered half as good services.” He continued, “I [don’t] think [McPherson] has a single friend or acquaintance in the Senate. I therefore suggest that you write to some of your friends on the subject.”¹⁶⁶ Grant came to McPherson’s defense and wrote to the Chairman of the Committee on Military Affairs. He stated that McPherson and Sherman

are both men of the purest integrity and greatest capacity as soldiers. . . . Either of them is qualified to be trusted alone with our largest Armies. This is a quality not possessed by many even of our best soldiers. They are both, particularly McPherson, young enough to do the country service in future wars if we should be so unfortunate as to be involved in any within the next ten or twenty years. . . . They may be relied on for an honest and faithful performance of their duties regardless of what may be their private views of the policy pursued. Neither will they ever discourage, by word or deed, others from a faithful performance of their duties. In a word they are not men to discuss policy whilst their country requires their services. Neither of these officers are aware that a word is being said in their favor and I know them well enough to assert that they would not ask intervention of any one even if they knew, without it, they would be defeated in their confirmation.¹⁶⁷

Grant’s endorsement helped assuage enough Congressmen to pass the confirmation of McPherson’s promotion.

Following the successful confirmation, Halleck wrote McPherson a letter of congratulations. He wrote, "It gives me great pleasure to send you your Commission as Brig. Genl. in the Regular army. It has been well-earned and is well merited. You have my congratulations and my best wishes that your future career may be as brilliant as the past."¹⁶⁸ McPherson had the obvious support from his friends in the Union high command—Halleck, Grant, and Sherman chief among these. Furthermore, the rank and file of McPherson's troops

¹⁶⁶ Henry W. Halleck to James B. McPherson, December 22, 1863, *PUSG*, 10: 36.

¹⁶⁷ Ulysses S. Grant to Henry Wilson, January 18, 1864, *PSUG*, 10: 35-36.

¹⁶⁸ Henry W. Halleck to James B. McPherson, March 14, 1864, *JMP*, TL.

continued to demonstrate their appreciation for their commander. However, in addition to the latter two groups, another group under McPherson's command—his officer corps—made up a third contingent who truly admired and cherished their commander. While occupying Vicksburg, McPherson's officers awarded him a medal of honor for the gallant manner in which he had led them during the Vicksburg campaign.¹⁶⁹ Although simply a symbolic gesture on their part, the action illustrated the degree of reverence these officers had for their commander, and their desire to express that admiration.

In the early months of 1864, Grant faced a dilemma regarding the best employment of a general of McPherson's talents. Due to his position as the commander of Vicksburg—and much to his disappointment—McPherson had missed the Union's victory at the Battle of Chattanooga. Shortly after Vicksburg had capitulated, Grant had contemplated a move against Mobile, Alabama. He wrote Halleck on July 24, "It seems to me that Mobile is the point deserving the most immediate attention. . . . Either Sherman or McPherson would be good men to entrust such an expedition to. Between the two I would have no choice and the army does not afford an officer superior to either in my estimation."¹⁷⁰ However, the Mobile expedition did not come to fruition, and McPherson remained in Vicksburg. On January 20, Sherman wrote to Grant on the issue of McPherson's use. "I do think McPherson is too young and active to be kept at a Post like Vicksburg," wrote Sherman, "and I will be perfectly willing to approve of a change that would take him to a more active field."¹⁷¹ Grant agreed with Sherman but could find no suitable command for his young subordinate until he was promoted to lieutenant general and headed for the Eastern Theater. General Orders No. 98, issued 12 March 1864, announced Grant's

¹⁶⁹ Keim, 375.

¹⁷⁰ Ulysses S. Grant to Henry W. Halleck, July 24, 1863, *PUSG*, 9: 109.

¹⁷¹ William T. Sherman to Ulysses S. Grant, January 20, 1864, *Ibid.*, 10: 21.

assignment to command the armies of the United States, placed Sherman in command of Grant's former position in the West, the Military Division of the Mississippi, and placed McPherson in Sherman's former command of the Department and Army of the Tennessee.¹⁷² Grant could now confidently head east to fight Robert E. Lee knowing he left the Western Theater of operations in the hands of his two most trusted subordinates.¹⁷³

Before departing for Washington, Grant informed Sherman and McPherson of the high opinion he held of the two men. Grant wrote to Sherman,

The bill reviving the grade of [Lieutenant General] in the Army has become law and my name has been sent to the Senate for the place. I now receive orders to report to Washington. . . . Whilst I have been eminently successful in this War, in at least gaining the confidence of the public, no one feels more than me how much of this success is due to the energy, skill, and harmonious [putting] forth of that energy and skill, of those who it has been my good fortune to have occupying a subordinate position under me. There are many officers whom these remarks are applicable to a greater or less degree, proportionate to their ability as soldiers, but what I want is to express my thanks to you and McPherson as *the men* to whom, above all others, I feel indebted for whatever I have had of success. How far your advice and suggestions have been of assistance you know. How far your execution of whatever has been given you to do entitles you to the reward I am receiving you cannot know as well as me. I feel all the gratitude this letter would express, giving it the most flattering construction. The word *you* I use in the plural intending it for [McPherson] also. I should write to him, and will some day, but starting in the morning I do not know that I will find time just now.¹⁷⁴

Once again, Grant grouped Sherman and McPherson, not only as his two most trusted subordinates, but also two very close friends. Sherman responded, "I have your more than kind and characteristic letter . . . I will send a copy to General McPherson at once. You do yourself injustice and us too much honor in assigning to us so large a share of the merits which have led to your high advancement."¹⁷⁵ Grant soon departed for Washington, where in the following

¹⁷² "General Orders No. 98," March 12, 1864, *Ibid.*, 195-196.

¹⁷³ Dudley, "From Capitol Hill to West Point," 80-81.

¹⁷⁴ Ulysses S. Grant to William T. Sherman, March 4, 1864, *PUSG*, 10: 186-187.

¹⁷⁵ William T. Sherman to Ulysses S. Grant, March 10, 1864, *Ibid.*

months he would clash with Robert E. Lee during the bloody Overland Campaign. McPherson, now under the command of Sherman, soon began the final campaign of his life.¹⁷⁶

Prior to the start of the Atlanta Campaign, McPherson received a furlough to travel to Baltimore and finally seal the nuptials with his fiancée Emily Hoffman. The couple had not seen each other since his departure from San Francisco, and McPherson expectedly appeared very enthusiastic to finally marry his love. However, while in route to Baltimore, McPherson received orders from Sherman to report to him at Nashville for the preparation of the coming campaign.¹⁷⁷ Devastated, McPherson wrote to Emily delivering the sad news that their wedding would have to be postponed again. He also asked Sherman to write her as well. On June 9, 1864, Sherman wrote,

It has come to my knowledge that you are affianced to [a] close friend and associate of mine Maj Genl McPherson, and I fear that weighing mighty matters of State but lightly in the Realm of Love, you feel that he gives too much of his time to his Country and too little to you. His rise in his profession has been rapid steady and well earned. Not a link unbroken. Not a thing omitted. Each step in his progress however has imposed on him fresh duties that as a man and a soldier and still more as a Patriot he could not avoid. I did hope . . . that he . . . could steal a month to obey the promptings of his heart, to hasten to Baltimore and I so instructed but by the changes incident to General Grants elevation McPherson succeeded to the Command of a separate Army and Department, and could not leave. . . . I know McPherson well, as a young man, handsome & noble soldier, activated by motives as pure as those of Washington, and I know that in making my testimony to his high & noble character I will not offend the Girl he loves. Be patient and I know that when the happy day comes for him to stand by your side as one Being identical in heart & human existence you will regard him with a high respect & honor that will convert simple love into something sublime & beautiful.¹⁷⁸

¹⁷⁶ Dudley, "From Capitol Hill to West Point," 81-82.

¹⁷⁷ William T. Sherman to "Commanding Officer, Cairo," March 23, 1864, *O.R.*, 32: III., 124.

¹⁷⁸ William T. Sherman to Emily Hoffman, June 9, 1864, William T. Sherman, Brooks D. Simpson, ed. *Sherman's Civil War: Selected Correspondence of William T. Sherman, 1860-1865* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1999), 642; Walter Lord, "General Sherman And The Baltimore Belle." *American Heritage* 9, no. 3 (April 1958): 102-104.

Throughout the coming campaign, McPherson lamented to his closest friends the postponement of his wedding and wondered when the next opportunity might arise.¹⁷⁹ Unfortunately, it never came.

Ever demonstrating humility following his rapid advancement, privately McPherson expressed reservations on his new command. "I have a much greater responsibility than I desire, one which will tax my energies to the fullest extent," McPherson wrote to his mother. "I sometimes wish that I could lay aside this responsibility for a short time & feel free from care and anxiety but I see no chance for it until the war ends."¹⁸⁰ Despite his apparent weariness, McPherson's determination and devotion to the justness of the Union cause never wavered. He also declared his willingness to make the ultimate sacrifice if necessary. McPherson wrote his mother the previous spring, saying "that if need be he would willingly give his life for his [periled] country."¹⁸¹

Sherman's strategy in the campaign targeted the destruction of General Joseph Johnston's Army of Tennessee, and the eventual capture of the strategically important city of Atlanta. Much like Corinth, Chattanooga, and many other sites of deadly Civil War battles, Atlanta guarded a major rail hub for the Confederacy and acted as a center for the transportation of troops and supplies for the South during the war. Atlanta also served as a valuable depot for munitions and a manufacturing center for many of the South's war materials.¹⁸² Sherman's command consisted of three separate armies: the Army of the Ohio, commanded by George H. Thomas; the Army of the Cumberland, commanded by McPherson's West Point friend and roommate John M. Schofield; and the Army of the Tennessee, commanded by McPherson. The

¹⁷⁹ Schofield, 137.

¹⁸⁰ James B. McPherson to Cynthia McPherson, April 4, 1864, *JMP*, TL.

¹⁸¹ Cynthia McPherson to William E. Strong, October 22, 1864, GLI.

¹⁸² Gary Ecelbarger, *The Day Dixie Died: The Battle of Atlanta* (New York: Thomas Dunne Books, St. Martin's Press, 2010), 9.

Army of the Tennessee had a prestigious reputation by this point in the war as one of the only armies in existence that had a claim of never losing a battle.¹⁸³ The Army of the Tennessee was quite familiar to McPherson, as it consisted of Sherman's old XV Corps, now commanded by John A. Logan, the XVI Corps commanded by Grenville Dodge, and McPherson's old XVII Corps, now commanded by Francis P. Blair.

The Atlanta Campaign did not start particularly well for McPherson. Johnston opted to conduct a defensive campaign, trying to harass the Union army where he could, but to avoid fighting a pitched battle unless under very favorable conditions. The earliest actions of the campaign involved Sherman trying to maneuver Johnston into an unfavorable position and force a battle. At one point early in the campaign, McPherson discovered an isolated body of Confederate troops occupying the town of Resaca, Georgia. Sherman's orders to McPherson called for him to "strike [Johnston] if possible," but if he found Resaca heavily defended, "to draw back four or five miles, to Snake Creek Gap, make it secure, and wait for orders."¹⁸⁴ McPherson approached the town cautiously, and found it defended by a small Confederate force. John Logan reportedly told McPherson that he could take the town with his XV Corps alone. An officer who overheard McPherson and Logan arguing later wrote, "From pleading, [Logan] advanced to protestations, and then to curses 'both loud and deep,' and these became almost bitter denunciations of McPherson."¹⁸⁵ Although certainly not as strong as his friendship with Grant or Sherman, Logan and McPherson did have a solid relationship, and despite this particular outburst—which contained perhaps even a degree of insubordination on Logan's

¹⁸³ Many veterans after the war proudly made the claim that the Army of the Tennessee had never lost a battle. *RPSAT*, 1876, 456. Perhaps the best example of this fact is Steven Woodworth's title of his definitive work on the Army of the Tennessee: *Nothing But Victory*.

¹⁸⁴ William T. Sherman to James B. McPherson, May 11, 1864, Sherman, *Memoirs of General W. T. Sherman*, 499-500; Sherman, "The Late Major-General J. B. McPherson," 488.

¹⁸⁵ Originally printed in the *New York Tribune* and republished in "Logan at Resaca," *The National Tribune*, June 19, 1884, Ecelbarger, *Black Jack*, 169.

part—the incident did not destroy the two men's rapport. McPherson forgave Logan in large part because he was correct. McPherson likely could have taken Resaca, and by doing so delivered a blow to Johnston's army. Sherman believed that McPherson "could have walked into Resaca . . . or he could have placed his whole force astride the railroad above Resaca. . . . Had he done so, I am certain that Johnston would . . . have retreated . . . and we should have captured half his army . . ." ¹⁸⁶ The next time he saw McPherson, Sherman told him, "Well Mac, you have missed the great opportunity of your life." ¹⁸⁷ McPherson's caution allowed Johnston to retreat before Sherman's army could deliver a decisive blow. Sherman later described McPherson's actions at Resaca as acting timidly. Sherman believed that "such an opportunity does not occur twice in a single life, but at the critical moment McPherson seems to have been a little cautious." ¹⁸⁸ As a result of McPherson's poor decision, the Battle of Resaca turned out to be less than decisive.

Even in failure, McPherson had his defenders. Chief among them were John Schofield, who instead placed the blame for Resaca on Sherman. Schofield described Resaca, writing, "Here I have always thought General Sherman committed the mistake, so common in war . . . of assigning to too small a force the main attack upon the vital point of an enemy's position. . . . I think [Sherman] is in error in saying that 'at the critical moment McPherson seems to have been a little timid.' I believe the error was Sherman's, not McPherson's; that McPherson was correct in his judgment, which certainly was mine (after passing over the same ground and fighting the battle of Resaca), that his force was entirely too small for the work assigned it." ¹⁸⁹ Not only did Schofield believe that McPherson did not have enough troops, but he also blamed the nature of Sherman's order to McPherson. "McPherson was a subordinate in spirit as well as in fact, and

¹⁸⁶ Sherman, *Memoirs of General W. T. Sherman*, 500.

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 1004.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 500. In the first edition (1875) of his memoirs, Sherman wrote "McPherson seems to have been a little timid." In his second edition (1886), Sherman changed the wording to the less harsh term "cautious." *Ibid.*, 1123.

¹⁸⁹ Schofield, 124-125.

cannot fairly be charged with timidity for not attempting what he was not ordered to do," wrote Schofield, "and what, in fact, was no part of the plans of his superior so far as they were indicated in his orders."¹⁹⁰ Schofield even raised the question of whether McPherson could have been successful in an attack against the fortified positions, writing, "If McPherson had assaulted Resaca, it is possible, but only possible, that he might have succeeded."¹⁹¹ In the end, the failure might not have been McPherson's alone. However, ultimately, if Resaca—a missed opportunity to cripple the enemy's army—represented McPherson's biggest failure of the Civil War, it speaks more to his decorated record and penchant for success.

McPherson's failure at Resaca also illuminated one of the chief differences between Grant and Sherman. McPherson may have been a cautious general, but he was especially cautious when orders permitted little flexibility. Grant's orders allowed interpretation and room to maneuver for his subordinates. He always made sure that his generals understood his objectives, but he allowed the actual application to rest with his subordinates, particularly Sherman and McPherson. Under such a system McPherson thrived and was anything but cautious. However, Sherman was much more meticulous with his orders. He tried to predict all possible contingencies and provide instructions for how to handle each and every situation. For example, for McPherson's advance toward Resaca Sherman instructed him "to draw back four or five miles, to Snake Creek Gap, make it secure, and wait for orders" if he found the town strongly occupied.¹⁹² Indeed, Sherman even admitted in his *Memoirs* that McPherson's actions were "perfectly justified by his orders."¹⁹³ Therefore, it appears that Sherman's command style, and his excessively detailed orders, were additional reasons for McPherson's hesitancy. After

¹⁹⁰ Ibid., 127.

¹⁹¹ Ibid.

¹⁹² Quoted in Smith, 161.

¹⁹³ Sherman, II: 34.

all, McPherson had proved that he was perfectly capable of aggressive action under Grant during the previous campaign.

Although briefly discussed previously, it seems fitting at this point to analyze in a little more detail McPherson's characteristics as a commander. For one thing, McPherson was not prone to give grandiose speeches to inspire his troops. He, in fact, was reportedly not a great orator. Special correspondent for the *New York Herald* De B. Randolph Keim described McPherson, writing, "In conversation, the General was at perfect ease. His words were well chosen, and uttered in a voice clear, distinct, and harmonious. He was never frivolous, always imparting something new and instructive on the most trivial subjects."¹⁹⁴ Instead of speeches, McPherson alternatively inspired his troops with his actions. "His was the most completely balanced mind and character with which I have ever been intimately acquainted, although he did not possess in a very high degree the power of invention or originality of thought," John Schofield described. "His personal courage seemed to amount to unconsciousness of danger, while his care of his troops cannot, I believe, be justly characterized otherwise than as wise prudence."¹⁹⁵ Schofield's observation represents perhaps the most common fault attributed to McPherson's command style: his cautiousness. Oliver O. Howard provided an interesting interpretation of why McPherson might have been at times overly cautious. He believed that caution was simply McPherson's natural instincts as an engineer. Howard reminisced, "They used to say McClellan could see so many difficulties that he wasn't willing to ride over a bridge that he had constructed himself until somebody else had been over it several times. It was so with all the engineers of the army and I was glad of it."¹⁹⁶ However, there existed many worse

¹⁹⁴ Keim, 379-380.

¹⁹⁵ Schofield, 125-126.

¹⁹⁶ *RPSAT*, 1903, 244.

flaws in Civil War generals than being cautious, and at times prudence and discretion could be positive attributes.

If overly cautious as a commander, McPherson could be reckless when it came to his own personal safety. Keim remembered, "If there was in McPherson any fault more strongly predominant than usually attends the fallibility of men, it was too much bravery, or what might be more properly termed recklessness. He was never conscious of the presence of danger." Exposure to danger manifested itself first at Shiloh where McPherson had his mount shot out from under him. As he rose in rank, McPherson continued to risk danger in hopes of inspiring the men under his command. "In the heat of the fight he was always with that portion of his lines which were subject to the greatest pressure, and never left his post until assured of victory. He had been the target of solitary sharpshooters, of battalions and batteries . . ." ¹⁹⁷ Risking the same dangers that he asked of his troops was one of several reasons McPherson was so beloved by his men. During the Civil War grumbling among soldiers was common, often times directing anger or irritation at their superiors—generals being a common target of complaint. Yet, Keim, a newspaper correspondent who would have been an easy person at which to direct such grumblings, reported that "I have never heard him denounced by a single man of his command." ¹⁹⁸

During the next two months, McPherson hoped to make up for his disappointment at Resaca. Throughout Sherman and Johnston's campaign of maneuver, McPherson performed brilliantly. Sherman continuously employed McPherson's Army of the Tennessee as the primary flanking force against Johnston on his retreat to Atlanta. Throughout these moves McPherson's

¹⁹⁷ Keim, 380-381.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid.

Army of the Tennessee acted as Sherman's "whiplash."¹⁹⁹ While Sherman certainly deserved most of the credit for reaching Atlanta with relatively little bloodshed, much recognition must also belong to McPherson for his superb handling of the Army of the Tennessee. Tamara Smith described the Atlanta campaign: "As Sherman steadily pressed Johnston back toward Atlanta, he left the safety of his most endangered flanks entirely in McPherson's hands, seemingly oblivious of the need for adequate cavalry protection, while McPherson showed a more restrained exercise of the caution that Sherman lacked."²⁰⁰ The combination of McPherson and Sherman proved extremely effective against Johnston's own extreme cautiousness, and by June, Johnston had retreated all the way to Atlanta.

The situation drastically changed, however, when the aggressive John Bell Hood—McPherson's former West Point classmate—replaced Johnston in command of the Confederate army. McPherson believed he knew Hood's nature, and predicted his intentions to his staff, commenting, "we must now look out for different tactics; that Hood, though he might lack in judgment, would certainly fight his army at every opportunity that offered and with desperation, and that we must take unusual precautions to guard against surprise."²⁰¹ He also warned Sherman of a possible flank attack against the left of Sherman's army, which had been weakened. Sherman later wrote, "McPherson had also been of the same class at West Point with Hood . . . we agreed that we ought to be unusually cautious and prepared at all times . . . because Hood, though not deemed much of a scholar, or of great mental capacity, was undoubtedly a brave, determined, and rash man."²⁰² On July 20, Hood proved McPherson's prediction correct by attacking Thomas' Army of the Cumberland, in what became known as the Battle of

¹⁹⁹ Woodworth, 528, 579.

²⁰⁰ Smith, 163.

²⁰¹ *RPSAT*, 1877, 238-239.

²⁰² Sherman, *Memoirs of General W. T. Sherman*, 548-549.

Peachtree Creek. Though the fighting did not involve McPherson's Army of the Tennessee, its commander remained alert and expected further attacks. Two days later, on the morning of July 22, McPherson reportedly told his staff repeatedly that they were likely to have that day the severest battle of the campaign. Trusting his instincts, McPherson ordered Grenville M. Dodge's corps to where he believed the Confederate attack would take place.²⁰³ Years later Francis P. Blair claimed that "the Lord placed Dodge in the right place that day."²⁰⁴ In reality, it was McPherson. The redeployment of Dodge's division could not have been to a more perfect position to check the Confederate attack. The decision ultimately saved Sherman's army from possible defeat.

The various stories surrounding McPherson's death were somewhat disputed. Initially, many Northern newspapers reported that he was shot by a Confederate sniper. The *New York Times* reported that "a rebel sharpshooter shot him from an ambush." Some Northern papers even went as far as to label McPherson's death as "murder."²⁰⁵ Conversely, several reports claimed that McPherson, far in advance of his troops, rashly and unnecessarily exposed himself and threw away his life.²⁰⁶ In reality, the general's death did not occur at the hands of a concealed Confederate sharpshooter, nor was it the result of careless and unnecessary bravado.

²⁰³ *RPSAT*, 1877, 239-240.

²⁰⁴ *RPSAT*, 1888, 339.

²⁰⁵ *New York Times*, July 26, 1864, 1; Richard Beard, the Confederate officer who commanded the troops who killed McPherson, took great offense to the claim that "it had been charged by the Northern press that General McPherson had been murdered," *RPSAT*, 1877, 250.

²⁰⁶ William E. Strong, a member of McPherson's staff, was particularly interested in McPherson's death and prepared a paper on the incidents surrounding the death and presented his paper to the Society of the Army of the Tennessee at the 1877 reunion. His primary reason for compiling the report was because he knew "all the circumstances connected with his death, and believing also that great injustice has been done in this regard [reports that he had foolishly thrown his life away], to one of the ablest, most gallant and best loved comrades, I deem it my duty to write out the facts while they are still fresh in my memory." William E. Strong, "The Death of Major General James B. McPherson," *RPSAT*, 1877, 236-256. Given the numerous, and often contradictory versions of events, Strong's report constitutes one of the best informed and the most reliable first-hand accounts of McPherson's death. There were several individuals, both Union and Confederate, who witnessed the death of McPherson, and yet they differ on the details of the incident. The best explanation for this is simply the confusing nature of warfare and the fog of battle which often leads to differing memories of the same event.

Just prior to the fighting, McPherson and several members of his staff were meeting with Sherman at his headquarters at the Howard House. Upon hearing the sounds of nearby fighting, McPherson departed Sherman's company with concern over a gap in his line between the left side of the XVII Corps and the right side of the XVI Corps. He rode to reconnoiter this gap and determine the best position to place his men in order to close the line. During this ride, McPherson ordered away one staff member after another with various orders, until he was left with only one orderly, a Private Andrew J. Thompson. Attempting to locate the left wing of the XVII Corps, he encountered three officers, Colonel R. K. Scott, Captain Howard, and Lieutenant William H. Sherfy, heading to what they believed to be the rear of the XVII Corps. McPherson joined them, and rode about 100 yards before coming upon a line of rebel skirmishers. They were ordered to "Halt! Halt!"²⁰⁷ One needs only to recall McPherson's views on the medieval knight and the ideals of chivalry while at West Point, to not be surprised at the general's refusal to surrender. He tipped his hat to the Confederates, bowed, wheeled his horse to the right, and attempted to escape toward a clump of pine trees. The Confederates fired a volley as he made his escape, striking McPherson in his side, near his heart. Thompson, also hit by the volley, crawled over to McPherson and asked, "General, are you hurt?" Trembling, with his hand pressed against his chest, and blood gushing between his fingers, McPherson supposedly responded, "Oh, orderly, I am."²⁰⁸ The Confederates immediately seized Thompson and took

²⁰⁷ Various accounts disagree with what was shouted, with one claiming "Halt you damned sons of bitches!" being yelled, or nothing being shouted at all, but multiple reports claim that simply "Halt!" was ordered; Andrew Jackson Thompson to William T. Sherman, July 22, 1878, *RPSAT*, 1877, 167; "The Death of Major General James B. McPherson," *Ibid.*, 246-247; "Incidents of Gen M'Pherson's Death," *The Confederate Veteran* 11, no. 1 (January 1903): 118-19.

²⁰⁸ Thompson's version of the event, Andrew Jackson Thompson to William T. Sherman, July 22, 1878, *RPSAT*, 1877, 167, "The Death of Major General James B. McPherson," *Ibid.*, 246. However Thompson also claimed to have hit his head while trying to retreat and being unconscious for roughly three minutes. Confederate Captain Richard Beard claims that he immediately approached the body after he fell, and "There was not a quiver of his body to be seen, not a sign of life perceptible," "Incidents of Gen M'Pherson's Death," 119. Sherman's doctor, Dr. Hewitt, also reported, upon inspecting McPherson's body and wound, that he likely was killed instantly. Sherman,

him prisoner. Captain Richard Beard, the Confederate officer commanding the skirmishers, approached the scene and asked Colonel R. K. Scott, who had also been unhorsed and would be taken captive, who the officer was who had been killed. Scott responded, "Sir, it is General McPherson. You have killed the best man in our army."²⁰⁹

Initial Reaction to McPherson's Death

Confederate troops quickly rifled through the general's possessions, and took some of his personal effects including his hat, his sword belt, some papers he had on his person, his watch, and a pair of borrowed field glasses.²¹⁰ However, very quickly the rebels found themselves under heavy fire from Union troops and were forced from the field, leaving McPherson's body where it lay. Before long, Private George Reynolds, of Company "D" Fifteenth Iowa Volunteers, Fourth Division, of McPherson's old XVII Corps, wounded during some nearby fighting, and withdrawing to the rear to find a field hospital, came upon McPherson. He remained with the general until his final breath. Private Joseph Sharland, of the Sixty-fourth Illinois Infantry, soon joined Reynolds and the two men decided to try to find an ambulance to secure the general's body. They soon encountered William E. Strong of McPherson's staff and accomplished their task.²¹¹ One of McPherson's final orders was sent to John A. Logan, ordering him to redeploy a portion of his command to fill the gap between the XVI and XVII Corps. As

Memoirs of General W. T. Sherman, 551. Yet others claim differently: Lieutenant William H. Sherfy claimed he lived for 20 minutes, and Private George Reynolds claimed McPherson was still living when he discovered his body several minutes later, though he was unable to speak. "The Death of Major General James B. McPherson," *RPSAT*, 1877, 252. Reynolds likely offers the truest account of how long McPherson lived, as he claims he was in and out of consciousness for several minutes, which could have been mistake for death by others. He later was awarded a "Medal of Honor" for his actions, and his only possible reason for lying would be to embellish his own story.

²⁰⁹ Richard Beard to "the Editor of the *Nashville (Tenn.) Union and American*, in "The Death of Major General James B. McPherson," *RPSAT*, 1877, 251.

²¹⁰ Strong, "The Death of Major General James B. McPherson," *RPSAT*, 1877, 245.

²¹¹ *Ibid.*; "A Correction Regarding the Rescue of General McPherson's Body—Justice to a Private Soldier," *The Soldiers Casket* 1, no. 3 (March 1865): 131-133.

the news of McPherson's death spread through the Army of the Tennessee, the soldiers vowed to avenge the death of their beloved commander. General Logan, now in charge of the entire Army of the Tennessee, rode from one end of the line to the other, rallying the troops with the cry of "McPherson and revenge!"²¹² Logan later described the feeling among the Army of the Tennessee:

It seemed as though a burning, fiery dart had pierced every breast, tearing asunder the floodgates of grief, but at the same time heaving to their very depths the fountains of revenge. The clenched hands seemed to sink into the weapons they held, and from the eyes gleamed forth flashes terrible as lightning. The cry, "McPherson! McPherson!" rose above the din of battle, and as it ran along the lines swelled in power, until the roll of musketry and booming of cannon seemed drowned by its echoes. McPherson again seemed to lead his troops, and where he leads victory is sure; each officer and soldier, from the succeeding commander to the lowest private, beheld, as it were, the form of their bleeding chieftain leading them on to battle. "McPherson," and "onward to victory" were the only thoughts; bitter, terrible revenge their only aim. There was no such thought that day of stopping short of victory or death. The firm, spontaneous resolve was to win the day or perish with their slain leader on the bloody field.²¹³

Union troops soon surrounded and took prisoner most of the unit responsible for killing the general, and recovered most of his personal effects, including important dispatches from Sherman.²¹⁴ Ultimately fighting for the memory of McPherson, the Army of the Tennessee won the Battle of Atlanta, one of the most significant Union victories of the Civil War.²¹⁵

Strong took McPherson's body to Sherman's headquarters at the Howard House. The loss hit Sherman hard, bringing tears to the rugged general's eyes. Schofield later recalled that

²¹² Mary Logan, *Reminiscences of a Soldier's Wife: An Autobiography* (1913; repr., Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1997), 158.

²¹³ *RPSAT*, 1876, 494.

²¹⁴ McPherson's hat was the only item not recovered by the Union troops. Capt. W. A. Brown, C.S.A., among the rebel troops captured, managed to avoid detection and wore the general's hat for his entire time as a prisoner of war, and returned to his home in Grenada, Mississippi with it in his possession. "Incidents of Gen M'Pherson's Death," 118-119.

²¹⁵ Many historians point to the Battle of Atlanta as a decisive battle of the Union. Ecelbarger, *The Day Dixie Died: The Battle of Atlanta* is but one example. The Union victory not only ensured the capture of Atlanta, but crippled Hood's Army of the Tennessee, enabling Sherman's infamous "March to the Sea." Perhaps most importantly, the victory significantly helped Abraham Lincoln's re-election in 1864, ensuring the Union would continue the war through to final victory.

Sherman remarked to the effect "that the whole of the Confederacy could not atone for the sacrifice of one such life."²¹⁶ Sherman wrote to Lorenzo Thomas the next day reporting McPherson's death, declaring, "McPherson fell in Battle booted and spurred as the Gallant Knight and Gentleman should wish." Sherman said that the true loss was the country's and the Army's, who would "cherish his memory as that of one who though comparatively young, had risen by his merit and ability to the Command of one of the best Armies which the Nation had called into existence to vindicate its honor and integrity." Sherman also pointed out McPherson's universal admiration in both the North and South, writing, "His public enemies, even the men who directed the fatal shot, [never] spoke or wrote of him without expressions of marked respect, those whom he commanded loved him to idolatry." Sherman did not believe McPherson's loss merely affected the current war, but also the country's future. He concluded that "the Country generally will realize that we have lost not only an able Military Leader, but a man who had he survived was qualified to heal the National Strife."²¹⁷ Furthermore, with the end of the war not yet in sight, Sherman believed that McPherson would have eventually risen to the highest level of command in the Army. "The army and the country have sustained a great loss by the death of McPherson. I had expected him to finish the war. Grant and I are likely to be killed or set aside after failure to meet popular expectation, and McPherson would have come into chief command at the right time to end the war. He had no enemies."²¹⁸

Sherman's claim that "he had no enemies" was indeed true, judging by the Confederate response to McPherson's death. The citizens of Vicksburg, remembering McPherson's kindness to them during his time as commander of the city, also expressed grief at the news of his death,

²¹⁶ Schofield, 146.

²¹⁷ William T. Sherman to Lorenzo Thomas, July 23, 1864, GLI; Also in *RPSAT*, 1877, 253-254.

²¹⁸ Sherman, *Memoirs of W. T. Sherman*, 1010.

and would remember him kindly for many years to come.²¹⁹ General Hood, reflecting on his lifetime friendship with McPherson, wrote,

Neither the lapse of years, nor the difference of sentiment which led us to range ourselves on opposite sides in the late war, had lessened my friendship; indeed the attachment, formed in early youth, was strengthened by my admiration and gratitude for his conduct toward our people in the vicinity of Vicksburg. His considerate and kind treatment of them stood in bright contrast to the course pursued by many Federal officers; and his acts were ever characterized by those gentlemanly qualities which distinguished him as a boy. No soldier fell in the enemy's ranks, whose loss caused me equal regret.²²⁰

Hood's personal friendship with McPherson did not make him an exception in the South, as many people, even those who had never met McPherson, similarly felt the loss. One Confederate soldier recalled that "When I heard that Gen. McPherson was killed I felt the same choking sensation I felt when a comrade fell at my side."²²¹ With some Southerners, McPherson's ability as a general had become almost mythical and even exceeded reality. W. C. P. Breckinridge claimed, "In our ranks he was accounted the equal, perhaps the superior, of Sherman."²²² The *Richmond Examiner* credited McPherson with the planning of the fall of Vicksburg, and basically all of Grant's success in the West. It claimed "that it was *his* genius that had so successfully planned the reduction of Vicksburg. It was McPherson who had made Grant famous, and was about to do the same for Sherman."²²³ Exaggerated Confederate claims were a clever way to lift up the record of McPherson, who many Southerners respected and admired, while also detracting from Sherman and Grant, who most Southerners despised and vilified. Though surely depriving Grant and Sherman of their much deserved credit as competent and

²¹⁹ Originally published in the *Vicksburg Herald*, reprinted in *The Clyde Enterprise*, April 6, 1899.

²²⁰ Hood, 182.

²²¹ *Clyde Enterprise*, April 6, 1899.

²²² *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, May 30, 1960.

²²³ *Richmond Examiner*, quoted in the *Sandusky Register*, Nov. 10, 1864.

successful commanders, the claims do correctly acknowledge the key role that McPherson filled for both men as a trustworthy and capable subordinate.

One of the interesting memory issues that occurred in the immediate aftermath of McPherson's death, involved the disputed claims over who actually killed the general. Throughout U. S. history, Americans seem to have had a strange obsession over claiming responsibility, as well as assigning accountability, to the death of famous or high ranking individuals.²²⁴ The same was certainly true in the case of McPherson's death. Captain Richard Beard, claimed that Corporal Robert F. Coleman fired the fatal shot. Major Chas. W. Gibson, of Nathan Bedford Forrest's Cavalry, told Benson J. Lossing that McPherson was killed by a Major McPherson, of the Fifth Cavalry Regiment, of Hood's Army. Well into the twentieth century, Southerners made claims that their relative was the one who actually shot McPherson.²²⁵ In reality, it is highly unlikely that anyone could be sure who fired the deadly shot—as many of the sources refer to a volley being fired at McPherson—and instead the obsession speaks much more to Americans' need to assign blame, as well as the tendency for soldiers to boastfully exaggerate their own experiences during war.

The heart-breaking task fell to Sherman to inform Emily Hoffman of her fiancée's death. Sherman had indirectly been responsible for preventing the couple's wedding the previous spring, and the letter of condolence must have been extremely difficult to compose. The day after his death, Captain J. C. Van Dusen sent a telegram to Emily Hoffman's mother informing

²²⁴ This is a common theme that recurs in many instances, but one pointed example was the death of the Shawnee chief Tecumseh. In the aftermath of his death, many people tried claiming responsibility for being the one to shoot Tecumseh, and Americans became obsessed with determining the exact person who fired the fatal shot. John Sugden, *Tecumseh's Last Stand* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1985) devotes an entire chapter weighing the various claims of who shot Tecumseh.

²²⁵ "Incidents of Gen M'Pherson's Death," 118-19; *RPSAT*, 1876, 456; William P. Fowler to [Ruth] Blair, November 18, 1954, *Wilbur G. Kurtz, Sr. Papers*, Atlanta History Center (hereafter abbreviated *WKP*, *AHC*). Fowler's letter is a great example of exaggerated claims about who killed McPherson. Fowler says his great uncle used to brag about being the sharpshooter who killed McPherson. His story does not match up to the historical events at all.

her of the tragic news. Conflicting stories tell the horrible scene of Emily receiving news of her fiancée's death. One narrative told that Emily's mother coldly said, "finally some good news," after reading the telegram, and then handed it to Emily.²²⁶ The more likely story claimed that Mrs. Hoffman couldn't read the telegram due to the poor lighting of the room, and believing it to be a positive report on her son's (a Confederate soldier) wellbeing, asked Emily to help read it to her. Upon seeing the true news of the telegram Emily fainted.²²⁷ On August 5, 1864, Sherman wrote a condolence letter to Emily, declaring,

I yield to none on Earth but yourself the right to excel me in lamentations for our Dead Hero. Better the Bride of McPherson dead, than the wife of the richest Merchant of Baltimore. . . . Nothing that I can record will elevate him in your minds memory, but I could tell you many things that would form a bright halo about his image. We were more closely associated than any men in this life. . . . I see him now, So handsome, so smiling, on his fine black horse, booted & spurred, with his easy seat, the impersonation of the Gallant Knight. . . . The lives of a thousand men . . . could not atone for that of McPherson. . . . Though the cannon booms now, and the angry rattle of musketry tells me that I also will likely pay the same penalty yet while Life lasts I will delight in the Memory of that bright particular star which has gone before to prepare the way for us more hardened sinners who must struggle on to the End.²²⁸

Sherman's words had little effect in consoling Emily. She confined herself to her room for the next year. When the Washington, D.C. memorial was eventually erected to McPherson, Emily visited the site regularly. However, the sorrowful grief stayed with her for the remainder of her life. She never married and died at the age of 57.

His death sent shockwaves throughout the North and especially through the Union Army high command and those who had personal relationships with McPherson. Oliver O. Howard

²²⁶ Lord, "General Sherman And The Baltimore Belle," 102-104.

²²⁷ Whaley, 167. Whaley conducted interviews with Emily's niece who had personal knowledge of the event. It is possible the words "finally some good news" were spoken, but if so, it likely was in reference to the fact that Mrs. Hoffman believed the news was about her son. If spoken it is doubtful the comment was intended to be malicious; *RPSAT*, 1888, 501 also confirms Whaley's version.

²²⁸ William T. Sherman to Emily Hoffman, August 5, 1864, Lord, "General Sherman And The Baltimore Belle," 102-104.

wrote, "No distinguished officer of this war, who has given a noble life to his country, and left with his countrymen a record of honor and affection, seems to have impressed the citizen and soldier like him, and his death occasioned a profound sense of loss, a feeling that his place can never be completely filled."²²⁹ Another Union general felt the loss equally as hard. According to an eyewitness, when Grant received the dispatch, "[H]is mouth twitched and his eyes closed as if he were shutting out the baleful words. Then the tears came and one followed the other down his bronzed cheeks as he sat there without a word of comment."²³⁰ Finally he remarked, "The country has lost one of its best soldiers, and I have lost my best friend," and retired to his tent where he wept.²³¹

When news of Grant's emotion reached Lydia Slocum, McPherson's grandmother, she penned a letter to Grant, writing,

I hope you will pardon me for troubling you with the perusal of these few lines from the trembling hand of the aged grandma of our beloved General James B. McPherson, who fell in battle. When it was announced at his funeral, from the public print, that when General Grant heard of his death, he went into his tent and wept like a child, my heart went out in thanks to you for the interest you manifested in him while he was with you. . . . when we heard the Commander-in-Chief could weep with us, too, we felt, sir, that you have been as a father to him, and this whole nation is mourning his early death. . . . I pray that the God of battles may be with you, and go forth with your armies till the rebellion shall cease, the Union be restored, and the old flag wave over our entire land.²³²

Grant responded with what must have been an emotionally challenging reply:

I am glad to know the relatives of the lamented Major General McPherson are aware of the more than friendship existing between him and myself. A nation grieves at the loss of one so dear to our nation's cause. It is a selfish grief,

²²⁹ "Reports of Maj. Gen. Oliver O. Howard, U.S. Army, commanding Army of the Tennessee," September 17, 1864, *O.R.* 38: III, 39.

²³⁰ Samuel H. Beckwith, "With Grant in the Wilderness, By His Shadow: Who Was So Constantly in Attendance Upon the Union General as to Earn that Nickname," *New York Times*, May 31, 1914, SM5; Also quoted in Brooks D. Simpson, *Ulysses S. Grant: Triumph over Adversity, 1822-1865* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2000), 360.

²³¹ Keim, 381.

²³² Lydia Slocum to Ulysses S. Grant, August 3, 1864, *PUSG*, 11: 397-398; *Washington Chronicle*, August 29, 1864.

because the nation had more to expect from him than from almost any one living. I join in this selfish grief, and add the grief of personal love for the departed. He formed for some time one of my military family. I knew him well. To know him was but to love him. It may be some consolation to you, his aged grandmother, to know that every officer and every soldier who served under your grandson felt the highest reverence for his patriotism, his zeal, his great, almost unequaled ability, his amiability, and all the manly virtues that can adorn a commander. Your bereavement is great, but cannot exceed mine.²³³

Grant's relationship with McPherson constituted far more than just that of a subordinate and a superior. It was truly as if Grant had lost a family member.²³⁴

For his actual family, their sentiment upon receiving the news of "Jimmie's" death was represented by his grandmother's letter to Grant. The family, of course, suffered devastation at the news, but always remained firm believers in the Union cause. Cynthia McPherson, his mother, wrote shortly after his death, ". . . when the waves of rebellion rose like giant billows threatening to deluge all our land, I felt that he was mine no longer. I must give him to his country forever." She contented herself that her son died for the greater good, stating, "And yet I did hope and pray that he might live. But thanks to God if he must die, he died at the front of duty—He never did dishonor our Glorious Standard— [H]e never raised a rebellious hand against the Government that had cherished him."²³⁵ The words of his mother and grandmother certainly reflected McPherson's own eternal loyalty to the Union and its cause. He continuously claimed a willingness to give his life if necessary, and in the end, the sacrifice was made.

²³³ Ulysses S. Grant to Lydia Slocum, August 10, 1864, Ibid.

²³⁴ Dudley, "From Capitol Hill to West Point," 85-86.

²³⁵ Cynthia McPherson to William E. Strong, October 22, 1864, GLI.

Chapter 2 - Erecting a Monument

Three primary groups had a vested interest in preserving McPherson's memory. The first included McPherson's close friends, whether in California or at West Point, individuals who knew McPherson personally, had a relationship with him prior to the war, and after his death hoped to safeguard the memory of an esteemed and now famous friend. The second group included McPherson's neighbors and citizens from his hometown and surrounding areas in northern Ohio. For this group, memorializing McPherson did not just represent the honoring of a friend—certainly there were childhood friends, numerous acquaintances, and even family members, though many residents of the region may have had little or no interaction with McPherson before his departure for West Point and not known him personally—but his memorialization was also about remembering a distinguished individual who brought pride to their town and region as a result of his success and fame. The third group who wanted to preserve McPherson's memory included his veterans: men who served under his command during the Civil War. These individuals wanted to pay tribute to the beloved commander who led them in battle and paid the ultimate sacrifice, and ensure that they preserved his memory for future generations. As the events surrounding McPherson's post-war memorialization unfolded, all three groups would work together, and sometimes against each other, to accomplish their goals. At times these groups' goals coincided with each other, and it resulted in cooperation. At other times they diverged, and led to conflict.

In the immediate aftermath of McPherson's death, even prior to the end of the Civil War, preserving McPherson's memory became a chief goal for many people. After recovering his body, Sherman ordered that it be returned to his hometown of Clyde, Ohio, accompanied by

certain members of his staff. It arrived at his mother's house on July 28, 1864.²³⁶ Surprisingly, McPherson's body was not embalmed, apparently because his fatal wound had severed the main arteries of the heart and made embalmment impracticable.²³⁷ Three guns fired to signal the arrival of McPherson's body, and all places of business in Clyde closed for the day. A large crowd formed to greet the procession. A thirty-five minute gun salute was "fired in token of the age of the deceased."²³⁸ His family wasted no time and held his funeral the next day. The turnout from the surrounding countryside was immense, resulting in a crowd like nothing before seen in Clyde.²³⁹

Reverend T. F. Hildreth, a distinguished Methodist preacher, delivered the sermon.

Hildreth proclaimed,

. . . It is most fitting, as we stand around the mangled corpse and open grave of the honored dead to-day, that we shall pause to speak of the merits of the cause for which he died. As I should vindicate the Christian religion over the grave of a Christian martyr, so should I plead the cause of the country over this soldier's grave. We are called on to bury a brave man, who died, not at home, amid the embraces and kind care of friends, but amid the stern realities of war—whose . . . heart poured out its patriotic current to sanctify the soil our fathers left us.

It is not surprising that McPherson eventually became depicted as a martyr. The practice of ascribing the title of "martyr" to the leaders who gave their lives during the Civil War became extremely common in the war's aftermath. Abraham Lincoln and Stonewall Jackson are but the

²³⁶ Sherman, *Memoirs of W. T. Sherman*, 551-552; *Fremont Journal*, July 29, 1864, 1.

²³⁷ *Tiffin Tribune*, August 4, 1864, 1. The practice of embalmment was fairly new during the Civil War, and completely altered the process of mourning the fallen. For a fascinating discussion on this and other aspects of death in the Civil War see Drew Gilpin Faust, *This Republic of Suffering: Death and the American Civil War* (New York: Random House, 2008). Likely owing to not being embalmed, McPherson's body was enclosed in a metallic case within a wooden coffin.

²³⁸ *Ibid.*

²³⁹ *Ibid.*

two best examples of this common practice.²⁴⁰ The idea that McPherson gave his life for a greater good—the Union cause, comprised the basis of Hildreth's eulogy. He declared,

We all earnestly pray for peace. For this our armies are fighting before Atlanta and Richmond to-day. But if it is only on conditions which the assassin dictates to his victim, give up all thoughts of peace. Better let the war go on. Better that a thousand McPherson's should fall—that all should be sacrificed on the altar of patriotism. I pray for peace, but for no such peace as this.²⁴¹

With the war still raging, people understandably used McPherson's death as a rallying cry to finish the task at hand and fulfill the cause for which he gave his life.

Almost immediately following McPherson's death, local citizens in Ohio took steps to ensure the preservation of his memory. Shortly after the funeral, the people of Fremont, Ohio, a larger town nearby Clyde, formed a committee and passed a series of resolutions for the purpose of calling "upon our fellow citizens by every consideration that should influence a community [(Clyde)] so highly favored, to aid us in cherishing the memory and protecting the resting place of this brave defender of our rights." The committee made three resolutions: First, in "the judgment of the Committee, that in the premature death of Major General James B. McPherson, our state and Nation have sustained a grievous loss, the mother and aged grand-mother a kind and dutiful son, the brothers and sister and other near and dear relatives an affectionate friend, and we an illustrious prototype;" second, "That we will cherish the memory and many virtues of the deceased, and protect his sacred dust, as becomes a community charged with such solemn duties and responsibilities;" and third, "That in perfecting the necessary plans in this direction we will aid the 'Clyde Evergreen Cemetery Association' in procuring (if practicable) suitable lands surrounding the grave of our fallen friend, and appropriately embellishing them, to make a public

²⁴⁰ See Barry Schwartz, *Abraham Lincoln and the Forge of National Memory* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2000) and Wallace Hettle, *Inventing Stonewall Jackson: A Civil War Hero in History and Memory* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 2011) as two memory studies that examine the phenomenon of depicting the two respective individuals of Lincoln and Jackson as martyrs.

²⁴¹ *Fremont Journal*, August 5, 1864, 2.

Cemetery creditable alike to our village and vicinity, and worthy the resting place of him whom we seek to honor."²⁴² The citizens of Fremont realized the significance of Clyde's new position as the "home of General James B. McPherson," and the importance of making sure his final resting place lived up to the prestige that it now held. In the effort to preserve McPherson's memory, the citizens of northern Ohio took the first step.

Society of the Army of the Tennessee Leads the Way

The veterans who had served under McPherson's command took the next step, and indeed the lead, in the effort to memorialize their fallen general. Immediately following McPherson's death, members of the Army of the Tennessee started contemplating the construction of a memorial in his honor. William T. Clark, assistant adjutant general to the Army of the Tennessee, first suggested the erection of a monument and spread the idea to members of McPherson's "military family." However, considering that the war had not yet ended, these men determined to postpone the task until a later date. Less than one year later, the Civil War had ended, and the famed Army of the Tennessee prepared for its disbandment. On July 7, 1865, from his headquarters in Louisville, Kentucky, General John A. Logan issued the following order:

Headquarters Army of Tennessee,
Louisville, KY., July 7, 1865.

Many officers and soldiers of the Army of the Tennessee, having expressed a desire to pay some fitting tribute to the memory of their late gallant commander, the noble McPherson, who fell in the front of battle, booted and spurred, on the bloody day of the 22nd of July, I submit to the several corps and other commanding officers for their consideration, the following plan of action:

I would suggest that each regimental commander have lists prepared for subscription, and that those soldiers of the army, who may desire to subscribe,

²⁴² Ibid.

register their names thereon; as soon as the lists have been completed, that they, with the funds raised, be forwarded to the brigade commander, and by him transmitted for the purchase and erection of a suitable monument at the grave of that gallant soldier.

As soon as the monument has been erected, these lists should be deposited at the grave.

I would further suggest as members of the Executive Committee, Major-General William B. Hazen, Brevet-General M. D. Leggett, and Brevet Brigadier-General A. Hickenlooper, citizens of McPherson's native state, and in every way fitted to discharge the duty of their position.

Corps commanders will please take such steps in the matter as will insure the result desired.

John A. Logan,
Major General.²⁴³

Hazen, Leggett, and Hickenlooper formed the committee as proposed, and the "Committee on McPherson Monument" became official. It soon set out to accomplish the task at hand, in the manner proposed by Logan: attaining subscriptions from the soldiers in the Army. Very quickly, news of Logan's proposal spread throughout not only McPherson's home state of Ohio, but throughout the country.²⁴⁴

The reasons for building the monument may have varied slightly, but all motivations centered on the idea of keeping and preserving McPherson's memory. At a later reunion of the Army of the Tennessee, Logan spoke of the importance of remembering McPherson, saying "Who of us can recall [the Battle of Atlanta] without heaving a deep-drawn sigh of grief!—without a pang of regret for the loss of the fallen brave, and especially the accomplished, the brave, the noble McPherson, the pride and gem of the Army of the Tennessee?" Logan described McPherson as "So young, yet having achieved a fame that will live so long as history shall last—a fame unspotted by a single ignoble deed; a name untarnished by a single unworthy act; without reproach, beloved and esteemed by all." To Logan and others, it seemed obvious

²⁴³ *RPSAT*, 1882, 247-248; *History of Sandusky County Ohio with Portraits and Biographies* (Cleveland, OH: H. Z. Williams and Bro, 1882), 366.

²⁴⁴ *Daily Cleveland Herald*, July 17, 1865, 1; *Milwaukee Daily Sentinel*, August 26, 1865, 1.

that McPherson would be remembered in the history books, however, he also believed that they themselves, as his comrades in arms, had a part to play in ensuring the preservation of McPherson's memory, whose death also acted as a symbol for the sacrifice made by all soldiers during the war. Logan concluded, "My fellow soldiers, let this tongue become palsied and speechless when it refuses to honor the noble, heroic dead; let memory sink into oblivion when it shall cease to retain their glorious deeds. Fresh and sacred shall they ever be to us. Oh! Atlanta, though the stronghold of our nation's foes, yet thy name is immortal, for here precious blood was shed; here is an altar where noble sacrifice was offered up."²⁴⁵ Logan's speech clearly recognized not just McPherson's death at Atlanta, but all the soldiers who died there. Memorialization has its limits, but by honoring one individual, the commander of the army who fell in battle, Logan believed it could act as a symbolic representation of honoring all who fell fighting for the Union.

Meanwhile, even as the veterans of the Army of the Tennessee—soon organized into the Society of the Army of the Tennessee—did their part in leading the efforts for McPherson's memorial, the citizens of Clyde took on a major role as well.²⁴⁶ Logan's proposal called for a monument to be placed over the general's grave in Clyde, so it seemed only fitting for the citizens of that town, who took much pride in their fallen hero, to contribute to the effort. On August 3, 1866, the general's former friends and neighbors formed the McPherson Monument Society of Clyde. General Ralph P. Buckland, from Fremont, became the organization's president, and Captain John M. Lemmon, from Clyde, became the society's secretary. At the

²⁴⁵ *Fremont Journal*, October 24, 1873, 2.

²⁴⁶ For simplicity and consistency purposes the Society for the Army of the Tennessee will be shortened and referred to simply as the Society throughout the remainder of the chapter.

time of the Monument Society's formation, they estimated the cost of the monument at \$11,000, and the people of Clyde pledged to donate \$3,000 of that cost.²⁴⁷

Although it appeared as though McPherson's gravesite at Clyde represented the obvious spot for the monument, soon a new group raised questions regarding the memorial's final location. William P. Craighill, a close friend of McPherson's from West Point, shortly after his death, began raising money for a similar purpose of constructing a monument at West Point.²⁴⁸ On November 30, 1865, Craighill wrote to William B. Hazen, a member of the Society's Committee on McPherson Monument, informing him that "As the remaining member of McPherson's class in the Corps of Engineers, I have been requested to receive, (and have done so), certain subscriptions to a monument which it is proposed to erect to his memory at West Point, N.Y." He suggested that if the Society decided "to erect their monument at the same place, our subscriptions will be thrown with theirs. If they build elsewhere, we propose to erect a separate monument at West Point."²⁴⁹ The primary contributors to Craighill's subscriptions included his former classmates, the members of the Corps of Engineers, and his "special friends (in and out of the Army) in New York and San Francisco."²⁵⁰ Craighill's letter may not have represented an outright ultimatum to the Society, but it did complicate the original plan, and the existence of these new subscriptions caused the committee to at least reconsider their options moving forward.

The members of the Committee on McPherson Monument had a very strong negative response to Craighill's suggestion. Hazen responded that "Subscriptions already made were with a view to building this monument at his home in Ohio, and in my opinion that is the appropriate

²⁴⁷ *History of Sandusky County*, 366-367.

²⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 366; *Fremont Journal*, November 23, 1866, 3.

²⁴⁹ William P. Craighill to William B. Hazen, November 30, 1865, *RPSAT*, 1866, 65-66; *Ibid.*, *Francis DeGress Papers*, Atlanta History Center (Hereafter abbreviated *FDP*, AHC).

²⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

place for it. The building of two monuments would seem to me to involve a sort of absurdity that I prefer being no party to." From Hazen's perspective, it not only made sense to locate the monument over McPherson's grave, but he actually viewed the building of any memorials at the National Military Academy as a danger. He explained, "I will pledge myself to be governed by the weight of reason. I may be wrong, but am nevertheless opposed to grouping the monuments of our soldiers at West Point, and believe it not only opposed to republicanism, but detrimental to the Academy, by exclusively absorbing even the memories of its glories." Hazen believed that the best way to proceed in constructing memorials was by dispersing them throughout the country. "I would have McPherson's monument in Ohio, [John F.] Reynold's in Pennsylvania, [John] Sedwick's in Connecticut, where their remains are, and where all these great States would be constantly reminded of, and recognize, through the works of these men, the merits of their own National Academy," wrote Hazen. "By placing them all at West Point, the only apparently true grounds for opposition to the Academy ever raised, 'exclusiveness,' would be established, and thus remove it to a greater distance from the people." Hazen's fear of concentrating the nation's memorials at West Point was that it would "incite envy, and thus alienate the friendship of the people, without which the Academy cannot exist. These monuments have a meaning far beyond the gratification of those who wish to do homage to the men they commemorate."²⁵¹ Hazen's letter represented perhaps the best insight into the additional motivations that went into the construction of the McPherson monument. Hazen hoped that memorials could inspire the people who saw them; that they would take pride in their local heroes; and they would encourage faith and conviction in the values and institutions of the United States. And from Hazen's perspective, taking the McPherson monument away from "the people," and removing it to the

²⁵¹ William B. Hazen to William P. Craighill, December 11, 1865, *RPSAT*, 1866, 66; *FDP*, AHC.

exclusivity of the Military Academy would completely negate the secondary purpose of the memorial.

Andrew Hickenlooper echoed Hazen's sentiments regarding the relocation of the memorial. After hearing of Craighill's proposal, he wrote to Hazen, "I am most decidedly opposed to any change in the proposed location of the monument." He reasoned that the change should not occur since the subscriptions had been "almost entirely from the rank and file of the army which McPherson commanded—probably two-thirds from his own Corps—with the distinct understanding (so published) that the monument would be erected over his remains at Clyde." However, contrary to Hazen's opinion that the move represented a threat to republicanism, Hickenlooper focused much more on the memory of the man who the monument intended to honor. He asserted that "The feeling which prompted this action upon the part of his officers and men was not such as *usually* actuates men to subscribe to such an object; it was not so much for the purpose of perpetuating his military success and renown, but as a testimonial of their love and affection for the *man*." Hickenlooper further believed that the feelings of McPherson's family on the memorial's location should be taken into account as well, and that "they are decidedly opposed to the removal of his remains to the Point, if a monument can be erected at Clyde. It appears very absurd to erect a monument at West Point, and leave the place where he was born and raised, and where his remains now lie, unmarked and uncared for."²⁵² Although Hazen may have correctly identified some secondary importance of the memorial, Hickenlooper rightly identified the primary purpose that still remained honoring the memory of the man. At the Society's first annual reunion held at Cincinnati in 1866, McPherson's veterans

²⁵² Andrew Hickenlooper to William B. Hazen, December 30, 1865, *RPSAT*, 1866, 67; *FDP*, AHC.

passed a resolution pledging themselves to erect the monument to McPherson's memory over his remains at Clyde, Ohio.²⁵³

Before long it became clear the raising of the necessary funds for the memorial proved more challenging than originally expected. By the time of the first reunion, the committee had raised just under \$4,000. Following Logan's original order, Hickenlooper urged officers in the Army of the Tennessee to assist in the subscription effort. He sent letters to many of these individuals, imploring them to take on the task. A typical letter to Colonel L. M. Dayton read, we "request your assistance in adding to the efforts of the Army, that of the citizens and returned soldiers of your community; and, to that end would respectfully request and urge that you make a personal effort to procure subscriptions."²⁵⁴ Despite his efforts, Hickenlooper did not receive the response for which he hoped. General Leggett, one of the three members on the committee, had an interesting theory on why they were encountering more trouble than expected in raising the funds. Leggett said that he "found that when the war ended each family had its own hero, in the person of some returned soldier, and it was hard to arouse interest in the claims of the great hero who died in the front of Atlanta."²⁵⁵ Even for someone as clearly beloved as McPherson, who people repeatedly described as having no enemies in the North or the South, raising the funds for a memorial proved no easy task, as the committee quickly found out.

At the Society's second reunion, in 1867, Hickenlooper urged the veterans to fulfill the mission they pledged themselves to complete. He announced that he had circulars and subscription blanks prepared and distributed to 149 members of the Society, "those most likely to take an interest in procuring subscriptions." From these 149 members, Hickenlooper received

²⁵³ *RPSAT*, 1866, 67-68. In the same resolution, the Society pledged to "act harmoniously with any other society or association acting for the same purpose."

²⁵⁴ Andrew Hickenlooper to L. M. Dayton, January 4, 1867, *FDP*, AHC.

²⁵⁵ Leggett in *Fremont Journal*, November 23, 1866, 3.

zero response. He followed up on his original plea, and wrote the 149 members again, receiving by the time of the meeting only nine responses. Frustrated, Hickenlooper took to the streets of Cincinnati, and in less than one week, raised \$710. He told the members of the Society that he was confident that equal or more pledges could be obtained in Chicago, St. Louis, and other western cities, "if the officers interested would but make the effort. The officers do not appear to realize that but a slight effort upon the part of each is necessary to secure the erection of a monument which will be creditable alike to the Army, the Society, and to McPherson's memory." By the time of this meeting, the Society had raised a little over \$7,000. Following Hickenlooper's appeal, a range of ideas were then proposed on the best means to collect the needed subscriptions, and numerous members of the Society pledged themselves to specific amounts of donations. The Society also passed a resolution stating that the total amount should be collected and paid to the committee by February 1, 1868, and the committee would then contract out the job.²⁵⁶

Despite their determined resolve, the Society's renewed efforts had little positive effect. At the third annual meeting in 1868, held at Chicago, the committee estimated their total subscriptions at \$9,165.14.²⁵⁷ Hickenlooper once again scolded the Society on their ineffectiveness. He lectured them, saying "various sums were pledged, and subscription blanks were given to twenty-two persons [at the last reunion] making such pledges, but only *three* of them have reported collections." Next, Hickenlooper challenged the veterans in a way he knew would strike at their pride. He said, "As the Army of the Tennessee has never yet failed in anything it has undertaken, let us not do so in this, but put forth renewed efforts, and the result

²⁵⁶ Hickenlooper, "Report of Committee on McPherson Monument," *RPSAT*, 1867, 120-122.

²⁵⁷ Hickenlooper, "Report of Committee on McPherson Monument," *RPSAT*, 1868, 154. This sum also included \$2,000 from the McPherson Monument Association of Clyde, Ohio, as well as a \$1,000 donation made by Francis Skiddy, a close friend of McPherson from New York.

will add one more to the many achievements which we are proud to look back upon."²⁵⁸ For the Army of the Tennessee, who proudly claimed to be the only army to never lose a battle, defeat in this new arena seemed unacceptable. Subsequently, Logan spoke on the importance of the monument, and the Society passed a resolution to seek more subscriptions in New York.²⁵⁹ At that moment, General Sherman entered the room, and realizing the topic of discussion, desired to speak. He proceeded to inform the members of the Society that Louis McLean from San Francisco, who was Emily Hoffman's sister's husband and had introduced McPherson to his fiancée, had raised \$4,350 for the purpose of a monument. Sherman reported that McLean told him that Emily wished the monument to be located at West Point, but that if she could be convinced of the location of Clyde, that he would transfer the money to the Society for that purpose. Sherman then wrote Emily and convinced her of the merits of his gravesite as the proper location, and she and McLean consented to giving the money to the Society. Upon the delivery of Sherman's news, the room erupted with cheers.²⁶⁰

While Sherman's news brought much joy to the members of the Society, he had more to contribute to the ongoing discussion. He suggested that the memorial needed to be constructed as soon as possible. "I need not tell you of McPherson's claims upon us, or how much I honored him and appreciated his nobleness as a gentleman, a soldier, and your commander," Sherman spoke, "but I do think if a modest memorial is erected over his grave now, with the money we have, it will do him more honor than if we defer until years hence and erect one more costly."²⁶¹ Part of the problem the Society had been facing was that not long after the decision had been made to build a monument, the committee discovered that the cost of a memorial in which they

²⁵⁸ Ibid., 154-155.

²⁵⁹ Ibid.

²⁶⁰ Ibid., 155-156.

²⁶¹ Ibid.

deemed fitting for McPherson's honor, far outpaced the original estimate of \$11,000. Sherman now suggested that the scale of the memorial should not stop the Society from simply building a more modest statue with the available funds. He proposed that the monument should be completed within one year. On his suggestion he received resistance. Hickenlooper spoke in opposition of Sherman's proposal and said that it was unwise to place any fixed date on the completion of the memorial. He defended his position, stating, "As the monument is to be erected not alone for the present, but for future generations, the committee do not deem it advisable to be too hasty in concluding a long and laborious task." He advised that the committee should wait until it had the desired sum of \$15,000. Another issue that Hickenlooper understood was that the pledges and subscriptions were merely promised donations and the Society at that moment had relatively little actual money on hand. Hickenlooper knew that the collection of the subscriptions would present a long and challenging process. Consequently, Hickenlooper's argument won the day and the Society passed a resolution accepting his proposal to wait.²⁶²

Hickenlooper's concerns that the committee might have difficulty securing the subscriptions soon proved well founded. The two subscriptions that proved the most difficult also coincided with the two largest pledged donations: McLean's and Clyde's. At the annual meeting in 1869, held at Louisville, Kentucky, Hickenlooper reported to the Society that the collected money in the hands of the committee totaled \$8,196.06.²⁶³ He then informed those present of the ongoing struggle he was experiencing with McLean. In the year since the previous meeting, Hickenlooper and McLean exchanged a number of letters arguing over the timetable for the delivery of the pledged money. There clearly existed a degree of mistrust between the two

²⁶² Ibid., 158-159.

²⁶³ Hickenlooper, "Report of Committee on McPherson Monument," *RPSAT*, 1869, 333-334.

parties, and McLean refused to send the money until he first received a photographed copy of the design of the monument, and further demanded that payment not be sent until receipts of expenditures by the hired artist could be provided. Infuriated by McLean's obstinacy, Hickenlooper tried to employ Sherman as a go-between, but to no avail.²⁶⁴ To add to his frustrations, Hickenlooper also had trouble receiving the full pledged payment from the McPherson Monument Association at Clyde. Hickenlooper reported,

We have written repeatedly, but have been unable to ascertain the exact amount of cash in the hands of the McPherson Monument Association at Clyde. While we have no doubt that their pledge to raise \$3,000 will be carried out in good faith and with a reasonable degree of promptness, your committee are of the opinion that, as they have individually become responsible for the faithful execution of this contract, all subscriptions should be at once transferred to their custody.²⁶⁵

Hickenlooper's report signified the first evidence of trouble between the Society and the McPherson Monument Association at Clyde, who up to this point had been the best of allies. The rift would only continue to grow in the coming years.

With the bulk of the funds raised and subscriptions collected, the Society began the task of finding an artist to construct the monument. The committee published advertisements in multiple newspapers in Cincinnati, New York, Hartford, and Chicago on May 1, 1869 calling for the submission of design models. To entice artists to submit drawings, the Society offered \$300 for the best design and \$200 for the second best model. The advertisements stated that the cost of the monument was not to exceed \$14,000. In total, the Society received fifty-three designs and models from throughout the United States and Europe. The committee eventually decided to

²⁶⁴ Andrew Hickenlooper to Louis McLean, July 10, 1869; McLean to Hickenlooper, July 15, 1869; Hickenlooper to McLean July 29, 1869; McLean to William T. Sherman, August 11, 1869, *RPSAT*, 1869, 334-335.

²⁶⁵ *RPSAT*, 1869, 336.

award the best design, and therefore grant the commission, to Thomas D. Jones, a local artist from Cincinnati, Ohio.²⁶⁶

On October 13, 1869, Jones and the committee members for the Society entered into a contract for the construction of a bronze equestrian statue. Hickenlooper, Hazen, and Leggett agreed to pay Jones no more than \$14,000, but agreed that Jones could solicit a further sum of \$6,000. From whom the artist would solicit this additional \$6,000 is unclear, because the contract makes apparent that the Society would not be liable for anything more than the \$14,000, which would be paid on completion of the monument. The contract further indicated the fact that the Society had real concerns over the time it would take to complete the statue. They required Jones to agree to finish the project in eighteen months from the signing of the contract, and that he would be liable \$10 for each day's delay beyond the appointed date of completion for the memorial.²⁶⁷

In his address to the Society, Hickenlooper explained the complexity of the contract entered into with Jones. "It will be seen, by reference to the contract, that your committee have not obligated themselves to pay any sum in excess of \$14,000," stated Hickenlooper, "yet, in order that we might obtain an equestrian statue, which in the opinion of your committee, is much more appropriate than any other that was or could be submitted, we have promised Mr. Jones our aid and assistance in raising the balance of the \$20,000 which he is to receive for the faithful and satisfactory execution of his contract." However, Hickenlooper expressed certain concerns regarding the fiscal responsibility of the artist. He declared, "while we have every confidence in Mr. Jones' ability as an artist, we are afraid he has overestimated his ability as a financier, and therefore, in order that there may be no delay in the prompt and satisfactory execution of the

²⁶⁶ *RPSAT*, 1869, 336.

²⁶⁷ Entire contract in *RPSAT*, 1869, 337-338.

contract, we would respectfully urge upon the members of the Society the necessity of procuring additional and more liberal subscriptions."²⁶⁸ It appears from Hickenlooper's statement, that there were multiple inherent problems with the contract entered into between the Society and the artist. First, the completion of an equestrian statue on the scale desired by the committee would be closer to \$20,000 than the \$14,000 pledged, and it was only in a faithful promise that the Society would assist in raising the additional \$6,000. Second, and perhaps more importantly, Jones, as indicated by Hickenlooper, did not manage money very efficiently, and had now been tasked with the completion of an equestrian statue before receiving the full payment.

The Society found a solution to the second problem by employing Cornelius Bealer as a middleman, to front the necessary money to Jones, and receive payment from the Society upon completion. Bealer, the artist's father-in-law, fully backed Jones' ability, and even assumed the liability in the event that the artist did not finish on time.²⁶⁹ With the necessary funds secured, Jones began his project the day after the signing of the contract. Jones started by traveling to Clyde, choosing the site for the statue, and laying the foundation for the memorial. The artist completed the foundation by December 10, 1869. According to a later report from Hickenlooper, Jones personally paid \$950 for the Clyde foundation, along with a contribution of \$475 from the McPherson Monument Association of Clyde.²⁷⁰ The project appeared to be progressing well.

At the 1869 reunion, Hickenlooper further recommended that the Society should pass a resolution requesting Congress to donate a number of cannon to the memorial project, from the artillery pieces captured by the troops under McPherson's command. The bronze equestrian

²⁶⁸ Ibid., 340-341.

²⁶⁹ *RPSAT*, 1871, 452.

²⁷⁰ Ibid., 453.

statue could then be cast from the melted down cannon. The Society adopted the resolution.²⁷¹

The following year, the committee successfully accomplished their task. Congress passed a joint resolution (Public Resolution-No. 39), approved May 11, 1870, and then passed along to the War Department with General Orders No. 65, stating:

Be it resolved by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled. That the Secretary of War be, and he is hereby, authorized and directed to deliver to the McPherson Monument Association such number of condemned bronze guns as may be required by said association, to be used in the erection[sic] or ornamentation of a monument to the late Major General James B. McPherson.²⁷²

With the foundation laid at Clyde, and the necessary cannon secured from Congress, it appeared as if the project was progressing smoothly, and the eighteen-month estimate seemed perhaps attainable.

Progress, however, came to a screeching halt on May 14, 1870, following the death of Cornelius Bealer, the financier and middleman between Jones and the Society. Following his death, J. C. Fiedeldey, a lawyer, became the administrator of Bealer's estate, and he refused to recognize the contract made with Jones and the Society, and discontinued the payments for the monument. The Society and Jones brought suit against Fiedeldey in the Court of Common Pleas, to compel the enforcement of the contract between Jones and Bealer. On February 16, 1871, presiding Judge Cox handed down a ruling in Jones' favor. He ruled that "the estate was liable for the contract with the committee," and that "the administrator being liable . . . the case required the defendant to perform the contract and advance the money."²⁷³ However, Fiedeldey

²⁷¹ *RPSAT*, 1869, 341-342.

²⁷² Edward D. Townsend, "General Orders No. 65," May 19, 1870, *The Fort McPherson Story*, (Fort McPherson, GA: Staff History Officer Office, Adjutant General, Headquarters Third United States Army, 1964), Appendix F, 163.

²⁷³ "Common Pleas District Court. Before Judge Cox. The Contract to Provide Funds to Build the M'Pherson Monument to be Enforced," *RPSAT*, 1871, 454-455.

immediately appealed the ruling to a district court. His actions indicated that he had no intention of paying for the memorial, and would delay any court ruling for as long as possible.

Given the unforeseen events, Jones wrote a letter to the committee, saying that "owing to circumstances wholly beyond my control, after having spent much time, and nearly one thousand dollars upon the work, I am and shall be unable to fulfill the contract by the *time specified*." He regretfully explained that when he took the contract he felt confident that he could obtain the money necessary for its completion, but with the death of Bealer, he found himself "utterly unable to furnish the large amount needed for the further prosecution of the work." He concluded his letter with an apology and a tribute to McPherson, writing,

I can only hope that the committee, and all the friends of the great and heroic dead whose virtues this monument is to commemorate, will do me the justice to believe that only "my poverty, not my will consents," and while they may find an abler artist to take up my unfinished work, they can not find one who can or will labor in it with a more earnest purpose, or a deeper love and enthusiasm for the memory of him, to whose patriotism, bravery, talents as a soldier, and gentle and winning graces of heart and voice, and smile and manner, the monument is to be erected by that glorious Army of the Tennessee, of which he was one of its favorite and trusted leaders.²⁷⁴

With Jones' withdrawal from the project, the Society's efforts to erect McPherson's memorial continued to suffer unforeseen setbacks and delays, and they appeared yet again frustrated in their efforts.

Following Jones' removal, the Society brought suit against the estate of Cornelius Bealer for the recovery of damages resulting from the abandonment of the contract.²⁷⁵ Notably, the disputes between the Society, the artist, and Bealer's estate were followed closely by many people, not just in Ohio, but throughout the country, with the news being reported as far as

²⁷⁴ Thomas D. Jones to the Military Committee of the Army of the Tennessee, April 5, 1871, *RPSAT*, 1871, 456.

²⁷⁵ *RPSAT*, 1872, 27.

Bangor, Maine.²⁷⁶ However, the committee's real task now turned to finding a replacement artist. The Society did not waste time, and soon entered into a contract with Louis T. Rebisso, also of Cincinnati, on December 27, 1871. Rebisso was born in Italy in 1837, and later immigrated to the United States, finally settling in Cincinnati. He would become best known for sculpting the monument to General Grant in Chicago, the monument for President Benjamin Harrison in Cincinnati, and the McPherson equestrian statue for which the Society now commissioned him.²⁷⁷ However, at the time of his hire, Rebisso was relatively unknown, and the Society took quite a risk hiring such an inexperienced artist. Learning from their previous mistakes, the contract called for monthly payments to be made to Rebisso toward the completion of a model of the equestrian statue, and upon that completion the Society would pay him \$3,000. The new arrangement would provide the artist with enough up-front capital to successfully accomplish his task. Time remained a priority for the Society, and they called for Rebisso to take no other projects, and to "devote his whole time and attention to the construction of the said models, and will fully complete the same within the space of two years from the execution of this contract."²⁷⁸ Despite the Society's recent frustrations, they seemed to have found a competent replacement, and entered into a contract that set him up for success.

At the Society's 1872 reunion, held at Milwaukee, Hickenlooper reported to the Society the new contract with Rebisso. In addition, despite reporting a total of \$15,517.08, both collected and subscribed, Hickenlooper stressed that further efforts were required. He claimed, "It is scarcely possible that we will be able to fully complete this monument with the sum of money now at our disposal." The renewed push for more subscriptions most likely resulted from

²⁷⁶ *Bangor Daily Whig and Courier*, December 30, 1871, 1.

²⁷⁷ James Mackay, *The Dictionary of Sculptors in Bronze* (Woodbridge: Antique Collectors Club, 1977), 313.

²⁷⁸ "Contract," *RPSAT*, 1872, 27-28.

the fact that the new target total for the monument had increased to \$20,000. "In order that there may be no further delay in consequence of pecuniary embarrassments," said Hickenlooper, "we would respectfully, but earnestly, urge that renewed efforts be made by our members to obtain a sufficient sum to carry this work through to an early and successful completion."²⁷⁹ At the time of Hickenlooper's report (July 3, 1872), Rebisso had been working for roughly 6 months, in a newly built studio, toward the completion of the model. Hickenlooper reported that upon the committee's inspection, the artist's progress had been deemed satisfactory.²⁸⁰

At the following year's reunion, Hickenlooper only reported on two issues. The first was his announcement that the suit against Jones and Bealer's Estate had been settled. The court found in favor of the plaintiffs (the committee) and ordered that a settlement of \$1,725 be paid to the Society.²⁸¹ The second issue that Hickenlooper reported was the committee's reevaluation of the expected time needed for Rebisso to complete his task. He announced, "your committee are now satisfied that sufficient time was not allowed within which to execute so important and difficult a task. Mr. Rebisso has devoted himself to the work with unceasing energy." He then presented photographs that had been sent to the committee showing the progress on the model, and declared that the committee hoped by the next meeting to be able to report the completion of the model and the contracting of the casting.²⁸²

Rebisso continued to labor vigorously until the model's completion in early 1874. In fact, he completed the main model, and had several moulds and plaster casts made as well. He placed one of these casts on public display in the Art Gallery of the Cincinnati Exposition. The exhibit

²⁷⁹ *RPSAT*, 1872, 29.

²⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

²⁸¹ "Decree. W. B. Hazen, M. D. Leggett, and A. Hickenlooper. Plaintiffs. vs. T. D. Jones and John C. Fiedeldej, Adm'r Est. Cornelius Bealer, dec'd. Defendants," *Hamilton Common Pleas*, 38401, Money. "Minutes Common Pleas," July 3, 1873, 204; *RPSAT*, 1873, 117.

²⁸² Hickenlooper, "Report of Committee on McPherson Monument," *RPSAT*, 1873, 118.

soon became quite the attraction, with Hickenlooper estimating that half a million people had viewed the model in just a few short months.²⁸³ One Cincinnati newspaper described the exhibit, writing, "Over two years of patient work and study are to-day embodied in the model on exhibition, which in genius of conception and truthfulness of execution stands second to no other similar work of art in this country."²⁸⁴ The Society sent out cards of invitation to several hundred of the leading citizens and artists of Cincinnati and the surrounding vicinity to examine the work.²⁸⁵ Describing the model, the *Cincinnati Esquirer* wrote,

. . . this is Rebisso's greatest triumph, no detail has been allowed in its perfection to interfere with the unity of the whole. Colossal in measurement, it is more than colossal in effect, and we predict that it will attract favorable criticism from the whole art world. Certainly so, if the promise of the clay is kept in the everlasting bronze.²⁸⁶

Citizens from throughout McPherson's home state proudly flocked to Cincinnati to view the excellent work that finally seemed nearing completion.

Sudden Change of Location

Nearly ten years had passed since Logan first issued his order suggesting a monument be built to honor the memory of McPherson. The Society for the Army of the Tennessee led the way in the efforts to raise money and ensure the successful completion of the project. Despite efforts to move the memorial to a different site, namely West Point, the Society emerged as a chief ally of the city of Clyde, and strongly defended the location of McPherson's hometown and final resting place as the best site for the monument. Although there may have been hints of concern along the way, it never appeared in doubt over the course of the ten years that the

²⁸³ Hickenlooper, "Report of Committee on McPherson Monument," *RPSAT*, 1874, 222.

²⁸⁴ Quoted in *Ibid.*

²⁸⁵ *RPSAT*, 1876, 474

²⁸⁶ *Cincinnati Esquirer* reprinted in the *Atlanta Constitution*, January 30, 1876, 2.

monument would eventually end up in Clyde. Nevertheless, suddenly, and with little warning, the committee made the decision to move the monument's location from Clyde to the nation's capital, Washington, D.C.

Hickenlooper stated that the cause for the change of location stemmed from Clyde's failure to raise the money they had pledged for the monument. Hickenlooper had previously expressed doubts in the McPherson Monument Association of Clyde, because he had not received the full promised subscription.²⁸⁷ At the 1875 reunion, held at Des Moines, Iowa, Hickenlooper submitted his annual report on the monument. He noted, "It will be observed that the sum of \$1,500 pledged by the Clyde Association has been dropped from our report, for the reason that after making every effort in our power, we have utterly failed in having this sum paid over, or placed in any available shape."²⁸⁸ Although Hickenlooper highlighted the failure to pay the pledged \$1,500 to the Society, in fact, there was a larger reason for the change. Much like the Society had underestimated the original cost of the equestrian statue, they also overlooked the necessity, and the cost, of a corresponding pedestal for the memorial. Hickenlooper continued, "While this failure still leaves us enough to complete the statue as originally contemplated, it seemed to render hopeless the task of raising the additional sum necessary for the base, which, to be in keeping with the character of the statue, should be granite, costing between \$15,000 and \$20,000."²⁸⁹ The prospect of raising a sum of money approximately the equivalent to the entire sum that it took the Society ten years to raise had to have a demoralizing effect on the committee.

²⁸⁷ *RPSAT*, 1869, 336.

²⁸⁸ Hickenlooper, "Report of Committee on McPherson Monument," *RPSAT*, 1875, 320.

²⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

The only solution that seemed a legitimate option—other than abandoning the project after so much had been invested—was to move the location of the monument to Washington, and get the money for the pedestal from Congress. On January 10, 1875, Hickenlooper wrote to William W. Belknap, the Secretary of War, hoping to enlist him for this purpose. After explaining the history of the Committee on McPherson Monument, Hickenlooper explained,

As you are aware, our original design was to place this statue at Clyde, Ohio, the place of McPherson's birth, and where he is buried; but since then, as Washington City has been much changed, and is now no doubt destined to be the representative city of the country, it appears to be the most appropriate place at which to erect such a statue. I therefore desire to make application through you to ascertain the practicability of having Congress or other proper authority set aside a square and erect therein a suitable base, with a view to having this statue erected thereon. If such a place and base be furnished, we will agree to place thereon the statue complete in every respect.²⁹⁰

From his letter, it certainly appeared that Hickenlooper was the first party to broach the subject of a potential location change. When explaining to the Society, his story slightly changed. Hickenlooper said, "At this juncture [Belknap] expressed the opinion that upon a proper presentation of the facts, Congress might be induced to set aside a public square and erect a suitable base, providing we would place the statue thereon."²⁹¹ Although only a slight alteration of the facts, it seems that Hickenlooper conceivably hoped to shift the blame for the relocation away from himself. Belknap, along with Major George H. Elliot, of the Corps of Engineers, and General Orville E. Babcock, the Superintendent of Public Building, led the petitioning of Congress for an appropriation of \$25,000 for the purpose of erecting the base for the monument.²⁹² Belknap wrote to Representative James Garfield, explained Hickenlooper's proposal, and then said, "It is needless for me to say anything as to the military character of

²⁹⁰ Andrew Hickenlooper to William W. Belknap, January 10, 1875. *Sundry Civil Appropriation Bill*, Bill Number: 43 H.R. 4729. 18 Stat. 371. 43rd Congress, 2nd Session. House of Representatives, Report No. 149, 46.

²⁹¹ Hickenlooper, "Report of Committee on McPherson Monument," *RPSAT*, 1875, 320-321.

²⁹² *Ibid.*, 320-321.

General McPherson. He certainly was one of the most brilliant, capable, and able officers of the Army." He concluded, "I earnestly commend this matter to your attention and to the attention of the Committee on Appropriations, and trust that the necessary appropriation for the base will be made."²⁹³ However, the appropriation would only be passed with the understanding that the statue would be relocated to Washington.

On March 3, 1875, Congress approved the bill for the appropriation of \$25,000 "For the Construction of a pedestal for an equestrian statue to be furnished by the association hereinafter named, of Major General James B. McPherson, who was killed at the battle of Atlanta." The bill stated that the money would be granted, provided

that the design of said pedestal shall be approved by the Secretary of War, the Officer in charge of Public buildings and grounds, and the Corresponding Secretary of the Society of the Army of the Tennessee, or a majority of them: And provided also, that it shall be erected in Scott Square in the City of Washington, on or near its center . . . and said square shall hereafter be known as McPherson Square.²⁹⁴

Belknap and the War Department took charge in contracting the job of constructing the pedestal. After receiving numerous bids, the War Department accepted a proposal from the Westham Granite Company of Virginia.²⁹⁵ With the bill passed and the pedestal commissioned, the change of location to Washington, D.C. had officially taken effect.

Understandably, the citizens of Clyde and northern Ohio were outraged by the change, and viewed the decision to move the monument as a gross betrayal by the Society. An incident that followed did little to alleviate these feelings of resentment. Following the sudden change,

²⁹³ William W. Belknap to James A. Garfield, January 19, 1875. *Sundry Civil Appropriation Bill*, Bill Number: 43 H.R. 4729, 18 Stat. 371. 43rd Congress, 2nd Session. House of Representatives, Report No. 149, 47.

²⁹⁴ "Act of Congress for McPherson Pedestal," War Department No. 4268, National Archives, RG 42: Records of the Office of Public Buildings and Public Parks of the National Capital, Records Relating to the Construction of the Pedestal of the Statue 1875-1876, Box 1, HM2006, A1, Entry 203.

²⁹⁵ National Archives, RG 42 Records of the Office of Public Buildings and Public Parks of the National Capital, Proposal for the Construction of the Pedestal of the Statue 1875, 1876, Box 1, HM2006, A1, Entry 202.

Ulysses S. Grant appealed to Cynthia McPherson that the proper location of her son's remains should be at Washington, under the memorial. The McPherson family had long been opposed to a relocation of the monument or the general's remains, but given this personal appeal by the President of the United States—and perhaps more importantly, one of McPherson's closest friends and mentor—his mother reluctantly agreed to his wishes and placed the body of her son at Grant's disposal for final burial.²⁹⁶ Grant then gave instructions for the body's removal to Washington.

On a Friday evening in June, 1876, two men from Washington, one of whom was an undertaker, arrived in Clyde and proceeded to commence exhuming the general's remains and tearing up the stonework of the foundation that had been laid by Jones in 1869. News of these men's deed quickly spread, and concerned citizens of Clyde quickly rose to action to prevent the Washington men from continuing their work. U. B. Lemmon and Henry Nichols, two cemetery trustees, were the first to confront the men. They had entered the cemetery without permission, and Lemmon and Nichols told the men they had no right to disturb the gravesite, or to destroy the foundation that the McPherson Monument Association of Clyde had paid \$1,500 to put in place. The Washington men presented the trustees orders (possibly with Grant's endorsement) showing that they had been sent for the general's remains, and that they were unaware of any McPherson Monument Association. The concerned citizens of Clyde detained the men from Washington and took them before the town mayor, Zelotes Perrin.²⁹⁷

²⁹⁶ The McPherson family had also shown reluctance when the proposal to locate the monument at West Point had been raised; "General McPherson's Remains," *Sandusky Daily Register*, June 20, 1876, 1; *New York Times*, June 9, 1876; *PUSG*, 27: 337.

²⁹⁷ Story told in *Clyde Sentinel*, June 17, 1876, reprinted in the *Clyde Enterprise*, March 22, 1978, 1; Whaley, 179-180; *Sandusky Daily Register*, June 30, 1876, 1.

The city of Clyde had always been extremely proud of not only being the birthplace of one of the country's greatest heroes, but also claiming the site of his final resting place, and the residents certainly had no intentions of passively submitting to the removal of McPherson's remains. In their interview before the town's mayor, the Washington men made their case. One of them declared, "General McPherson owed it to his country to be buried in Washington." Unconvinced, Mayor Perrin responded, "Sir, General McPherson paid that debt. He gave his life for his country!"²⁹⁸ The Washington men were placed under arrest and the McPherson Monument Association of Clyde filed an injunction restraining them from removing the remains. Prepared to defend the general's remains, the city of Clyde further decided to bring suit against the Washington men for \$300 worth of damages to the foundation. Eventually someone had the idea that perhaps the best way to secure the remains in Clyde would be through the support of the Society of the Army of the Tennessee. Despite the apparent recent duplicity, the Society had always been closely allied with the city of Clyde and the Monument Association, and there were several sympathetic individuals who would perhaps be willing to take up their case. Therefore, Captain Charles Dirlam was dispatched to Cincinnati to meet with officers of the Army of the Tennessee to impress upon them the city of Clyde's rationale for keeping the remains. The sources are unclear exactly which officers Dirlam specifically met with, but they certainly must have been influential, because he successfully received assurances that McPherson's remains would indeed remain in Clyde.²⁹⁹ Even more to the town's satisfaction, the officers pledged to Dirlam that despite the recent change of location of the monument to Washington, Clyde still had its supporters in the Society, and that steps would soon be taken to erect another memorial to be

²⁹⁸ *Clyde Sentinel*, June 17, 1876, 1.

²⁹⁹ Although no officer is specifically mentioned, Hickenlooper is a possible candidate. He not only would have been immensely involved in the monument discussions, but it would have potentially been someone who could influence Grant. Hickenlooper had close ties to several people in Grant's administration, including Secretary of War Belknap.

placed over his gravesite in Clyde.³⁰⁰ Following the news of Grant's agents' arrest in Clyde, an additional officer was sent to procure their release. Ultimately, the involved parties resolved the situation peacefully.³⁰¹

The Unveiling

With the model finished, the location determined, and the pedestal commissioned, the monument entered into its final stages of completion. Rebisso sent the finished model to Edward Marchi and his assistant for dissection and duplication in plaster. After three months of work, the Society delivered the sections—courtesy of the Adams Express Co., who shipped the model free of charge—to Robert Woods & Co., in Philadelphia, who had been contracted to finalize the bronze casting of the statue. The final bronzing process took approximately six months before the finished product was finally ready for delivery in Washington.³⁰² The Westham Granite Company of Virginia completed the pedestal some months prior to the arrival of the monument, and placed it in its final location in McPherson Square. Newly named after McPherson, the Washington hub had previously been named after General Winfield Scott. At the time of the unveiling, the square was located in a fairly upscale part of Washington City. One newspaper described the location as "about a stone's throw from the Arlington Hotel, and is surrounded by magnificent residences, among which are those of Secretary Fish, Fernando Wood, and ex-Speaker Blaine."³⁰³ Once Robert Woods & Co. completed the bronzing, they shipped the equestrian statue for its placement on the pedestal. With the unveiling ceremony some days

³⁰⁰ *Clyde Sentinel*, June 17, 1876, 1.

³⁰¹ *Sandusky Daily Register*, June 30, 1876, 1

³⁰² *RPSAT*, 1876, 474-475.

³⁰³ *Daily Inter Ocean*, October 19, 1876, 1.

away, a canvas was placed over the head and upper body of the statue, with the lower portion of the body and nearly all of the horse exposed to the public.³⁰⁴

The Society of the Army of the Tennessee planned the unveiling ceremony of the McPherson monument in Washington, D.C. to correspond with their annual reunion held in the same city. John A. Logan, having been the one who originally called for the memorial, one of McPherson's closest subordinates, and a sitting U.S. Senator from Illinois, became personally involved in creating the programme for the unveiling ceremony.³⁰⁵ Logan also agreed to give one of the main addresses at the unveiling. The Society prepared 750 finely engraved invitations sent to prominent persons intended to represent the special guests of the Society while in Washington. A close associate of Logan's reassured him that "Every effort will be made to give you an audience that you will feel proud of."³⁰⁶ In the era immediately following the Civil War, memorial unveilings became a common occurrence, and one of the ways of measuring the success of these events was by the size of the crowd in attendance. Yet the Society also hoped the affair could provide an environment of reunion and fraternity among veterans. Therefore, the Society also invited members of the Grand Army of the Republic to attend, to which they accepted.³⁰⁷ Once the committee finalized the programme they had it printed and the ceremony advertised in multiple local newspapers.³⁰⁸

The day of the ceremony, October 17, 1876, began with the Society holding their tenth annual meeting at Lincoln Hall. About 125 members attended the reunion, along with many additional spectators, as the Society opened the meeting to the public. During the meeting,

³⁰⁴ *Forney's Sunday Chronicler*, October 15, 1876, 1.

³⁰⁵ O. M. Poe to John A. Logan, August 26, 1876, *John A. Logan Family Papers*, Library of Congress (hereafter abbreviated *JLP*, LC).

³⁰⁶ Dr. M. Woodworth to John A. Logan, September 22, 1876, *JLP*, LC.

³⁰⁷ *Washington Chronicle*, October 17, 1876, 1.

³⁰⁸ *Ibid.*; *Forney's Sunday Chronicler*, October 15, 1876, 1.

President Grant's private secretary read a note, saying that it would give the President "great pleasure to meet again and take by the hand such of his associates of the Army of the Tennessee." As the reunion was scheduled as a multi-day event, Grant informed the veterans that they could call upon him at 9 P.M. the following night.³⁰⁹ The Society then adjourned their meeting at 1 P.M., and proceeded to march to the site of McPherson Square for the dedication of the monument and the unveiling ceremony. One newspaper described the scene, writing,

a column was formed under the command of Major General David Hunter, Chief Marshal, consisting of mounted police, the Fort McHenry Band, several companies of military, the Marine Corps and band, the orator of the day, General Logan, and the chairman of the respective committees of arrangements, prominent civil officers, the Society of the Army of the Tennessee, officers of the army, of the navy, and invited guests, the Veteran Club of Generals of the Republic, and officers, soldiers, and sailors who served during the late war. It was nearly 2 o'clock before the procession reached the Executive Mansion, where it was reviewed by President Grant.³¹⁰

Marching toward the dedication of a memorial honoring the memory of their beloved commander—under review from their very first commander, and perhaps the greatest Northern general of the war—undoubtedly must have filled all the veterans with a sense of pride and a feeling of overdue gratification.

The weather conditions, the turnout of local residents, and the outward expression of patriotism combined to offer a perfect environment for the ceremony, and promised to make the day an auspicious one. On the weather, the *Washington Chronicle* reported "the sky was cloudless, and the wind, which prevailed for a day or two past, was hushed, rendering out-door life pleasant."³¹¹ Anytime an unveiling ceremony is scheduled weeks in advance, weather, always unpredictable, could potentially act to spoil the planned events. Therefore, clear skies

³⁰⁹ *Daily Inter Ocean*, October 19, 1876, 1.

³¹⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹¹ *Washington Chronicle*, October 19, 1876, 1.

proved fortuitous and a good sign for the looming ceremony. The city virtually transformed on the day of the unveiling, embodying a full display of patriotism. "The city, at an early hour yesterday, presented a gala appearance," wrote the *Chronicle*. "All the public buildings flung to the breeze the Stars and Stripes, and many private edifices were decorated with the national colors, and in some instances with the corps badges of the Federal army, prominent among which could be seen that of the Army of the Tennessee."³¹² Such made up the scene that greeted the procession as it marched toward McPherson Square. The *Daily Inter Ocean* reported that "On the route a number of residences and places of business were decorated with flags, and every point whence a view of the procession could be obtained was occupied by spectators." Upon arriving at McPherson Square, "the crowd was so dense that it completely cut off part of the procession that was on foot, and it was with great difficulty that the members of the society could make their way to The Grand Stand. The statue was covered with a large American flag."³¹³ Estimates placed the crowd at 20,000 people who turned out for the dedication of the monument.³¹⁴ Although hearing Sherman, Logan, and other prominent figures deliver public addresses undoubtedly offered an appeal to the large crowd, more importantly, the huge multitude speaks to the reverence Americans still held for McPherson and his memory, twelve years after his death.

Following an opening prayer from Reverend McCarty, and a playing of "Religious Andante" by the Marine Band, Sherman introduced Hickenlooper to provide remarks on behalf of the McPherson Monument Committee. Hickenlooper opened his speech, exclaiming, "surrounded . . . by the familiar faces of old army comrades, and cheered by the presence of so

³¹² Ibid.

³¹³ *Daily Inter Ocean*, October 19, 1876, 1.

³¹⁴ Ibid.

many fellow-members of [McPherson's] immediate military family, it is indeed a pleasure for me to submit . . . a brief account of our stewardship, and transfer to your care the result of our labors."³¹⁵ Hickenlooper then continued by providing a brief history of the monument. He offered specific thanks to contributors, including comrades of the Army of the Tennessee, and singled out Francis Skiddy and Louis McLean, the two largest single donors. Hickenlooper offered high praise for Rebisso, who attended the ceremony. He admitted that the committee initially had legitimate fear for entrusting "so important a work to an untried and then almost unknown artist." Despite their concerns, the artist persevered through "years of patient thought, work and anxiety, till his genius assured success." He thanked Rebisso "for his unparalleled devotion to the work entrusted to his care."³¹⁶ Given the turmoil the committee faced with Jones, and the sudden delay caused by Bealer's death, Rebisso's work, though taking longer than originally hoped, was truly appreciated by the members of the Society. Hickenlooper closed his speech by thanking the members of Congress, "who by their wise and liberal legislation have made it possible for us to locate within the nation's capital this statue of a nation's hero; for the aid and encouragement of that lady, of whom it may well be said:

Tho' Heaven alone records the tear,
And fame may never know the story,
Her heart has shed a drop as dear
As e'er bedewed the field of glory.³¹⁷

Hickenlooper lastly thanked General Logan and transferred to the people's care, "a statue significant of the unparalleled heroism, chivalric daring, unselfish patriotism and gentle demeanor of our loved, lamented commander, Major-General James B. McPherson." The flag

³¹⁵ The entirety of Hickenlooper's speech reprinted in *Washington Chronicle*, October 19, 1876, 1 and *RPSAT*, 1876, 480-481.

³¹⁶ *Ibid.*

³¹⁷ The quoted excerpt was from Thomas Buchanan Read's poem, "The Brave at Home." It specifically honors the sacrifice made by the patriotic women of the country who gave their sons, brothers, husbands, and sweethearts for the Union cause.

covering the statue was then removed and the statue unveiled, to which the crowd enthusiastically cheered, the Marine Band played more music, and the District artillery fired a salute.³¹⁸

Hickenlooper's speech was relatively short compared to Senator Logan's keynote address. Logan proceeded to the stage following Sherman's introduction. Logan opened his oration by first explaining the deep feeling of respect and love for McPherson within the Army that prompted him to issue his original order asking for a memorial. He said, "it was in accordance with a deep feeling that existed in the army that some mark of great respect was due from that gallant Army to their beloved but dead commander, Major-General James B. McPherson."³¹⁹ He thanked all those within the Army whose contributions made the memorial possible. "In receiving for the Army of the Tennessee, from your hands, this mark of our great respect for our commander that is gone," continued Logan, "I, on behalf of that grand old Army of the Tennessee, now commit it to the care and custody of the nation, for whose preservation our beloved commander gave his life."³²⁰ Unlike certain future unveiling ceremonies, the 1876 dedication kept the topic of the speeches solely on McPherson himself, whose memory the memorial intended to honor. Logan continued,

Regrets that a bright star of the first magnitude has been blotted from the firmament of the military and social world, as it was rapidly ascending toward and nearing the zenith; sorrow that a beloved comrade-in-arms, to whom we were linked by the strongest ties of friendship, formed amid the trying scenes of war, has been taken from our midst; deep regret that he was not permitted to see and enjoy the day of triumph so near at hand, to gain which he had done so much. Yet amid these emotions of sorrow and regret, which are kindled afresh to-day, there is mingled a strong feeling of pleasure, because we have before us the evidence that our beloved comrade and commander is not forgotten, and that his services, his bravery and his worth are recognized and fully appreciated by that country for

³¹⁸ *Washington Chronicle*, October 19, 1876, 1 and *RPSAT*, 1876, 481.

³¹⁹ Logan's entire speech reprinted in *RPSAT*, 1876, 481-502, 481.

³²⁰ *Ibid.*, 482.

which these services were performed, and for which he gave his life. To-day we have assembled to do honor to his name . . .³²¹

Newspapers reported the crowd continuously interrupting Logan with cheering and applause.³²²

The crowd's response provided further evidence that McPherson truly had been a beloved individual among those who experienced and remembered the Civil War and the sacrifice he had made. For an individual who largely became a forgotten figure 150 years later, the turnout of 20,000 people to honor his memory and listen to a speech praising his life and accomplishments, spoke to his fame and renown with his own generation.

Logan continued his oration by giving a detailed history on McPherson's life and career in the Army up until the moment of his death at Atlanta. Logan's choice of life events to highlight, interestingly reflected the features of McPherson's character which he believed to be admirable qualities and worthy of emulation. For example, he noted how in his youth, McPherson became the primary support for his widowed mother and aged grandmother. Logan exclaimed,

Whatever may be the fame of McPherson as a General and a warrior; however enthusiastic may be the regard of his comrades-in-arms; whatever monument a grateful people may erect as an evidence of their appreciation and remembrance of his merits, they can never equal the devotion to his memory and the sacred shrine that dwells in the hearts of the quiet household at Clyde, Ohio; a shrine surrounded with a halo of memories so sweet and love so holy and true that it should be approached only with unsandled feet and uncovered head; there his memory lives as fresh and green as when a prattling boy he played around the old hearthstone. This love for his widowed mother and tender care of his aged grandmother will ever form the brightest gem that decks the wreath of honor which surrounds his name, and when the statue now before us has crumbled beneath the ruthless storms of time will live in story as an undying monument to his memory, and as an example worthy to be imitated by American youth.³²³

³²¹ Ibid.

³²² *Daily Inter Ocean*, 10-19-1876, 1.

³²³ *RPSAT*, 1876, 483-484.

Logan's acknowledgment, not only of McPherson's youth, but of his hometown of Clyde, further emphasized the recent change, which by happenstance placed the memorial in the nation's capital, leaving the "sacred shrine" of his hometown without the monument that had originally been planned for them.

Much of Logan's recounting of McPherson's life was redundant. However, certain details of Logan's history of McPherson offer worthy points of analysis. For example, Logan highlighted the fact that McPherson had been loved by not only Northerners, but Southerners as well. He spoke specifically of the respect, almost fear, the Confederates had for McPherson as a commander. Logan referred to McPherson as one of the Army's "foremost strategists and tacticians, a fact which the rebels were not long in perceiving, and which, as shown by rebel newspapers that fell into our hands, caused them to dread any movement they supposed him to be the author of."³²⁴ The fact that Southerners feared and respected McPherson during the war, and loved and appreciated him following his death, placed McPherson in an almost unique position, in terms of his memorialization and postwar remembrance. Grant and Sherman, the two generals most comparable to McPherson's rank and success, experienced very different postwar memories among Southerners. Ex-Confederates largely depicted Sherman as a villain or a terrorist for his infamous March to the Sea, and the destruction spread throughout Georgia and the Carolinas. With the rise of the Lost Cause as the Southern narrative of why the Confederacy lost, Grant's skills as a general also suffered in the memory of many Southerners, with his most common depiction being that of a drunk and a butcher. McPherson alone offered Southerners a

³²⁴ Ibid., 489.

Northern general who they could respect and one they did not have to villainize. In future years, as will be seen, McPherson served a vital role for sectional reconciliation.³²⁵

Following his account of McPherson's life and service during the war, Logan returned to the reason why they had gathered for the occasion: honoring McPherson's memory. "It is not too much for me to say that his memory . . . is the silver cord which binds together, more than any other influence, this Society of the Army of the Tennessee," explained Logan, "knitting its members in closer and closer unity as one by one drops from the ranks and is transferred to the army on the other shore . . ."³²⁶ Postwar veterans organizations proliferated following the Civil War, and although certainly not the only factor bringing together the Army of the Tennessee, Logan correctly identified an important role that McPherson did serve in connecting the veterans from that particular army through a common attachment to their former commander. Logan continued at length about the meaning of the memorial, and more importantly the meaning of McPherson's memory. He stated,

The devotion of his friends and comrades, their tender regard for his memory and high esteem of his character as an officer, comrade and patriot, has resulted in the erection of a monument to his memory . . . As his entire life-work was national, his great heart national to the [innermost] core, his loss national and his memory national, it is [appropriate] that his statue should be placed here in the nation's capital, among the bronze and marble forms of those heroes and statesmen who have made our nation illustrious. It is proper that his noble form should appear among those who have done so much to work out the great problem of a permanent republic with the power in the people . . . Feeling that patriotic devotion on the battle-field alone could save the Union, he gave his soul, his life to the work. It is therefore eminently proper that this monument to his memory should be erected here in our national shrine.³²⁷

³²⁵ Many works focus on Sherman's memory. For a recent examination of Southern memory of Sherman and particularly his "March to the Sea" see Anne Sarah Rubin, *Through the Heart of Dixie: Sherman's March and American Memory* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 2014). For the best analysis of modern Grant scholarship and the evolution of his historiography see Ethan S. Rafuse, "Still a Mystery? General Grant and the Historians, 1981-2006," *Journal of Military History* 71, no. 3 (July 2007): 849-874.

³²⁶ *RPSAT*, 1876, 496-497.

³²⁷ *Ibid*, 497.

In mentioning the national memory of McPherson, Logan raised an interesting point. At the time of the unveiling, the national collective memory of McPherson was at its strongest. Very few Americans would not have been able to give some detail on his life, and most were keenly aware of his role in the Civil War. Only as the decades passed, and new generations replaced old generations, did his memory start to fade. Therefore, Logan's claim that his "memory is national," does not hold up to the modern reality. In fact, today, the opposite is true, and McPherson's memory, indeed, is extremely local in nature. Specific communities remember him to varying degrees, but beyond those localities, few Americans truly remember McPherson and he has become largely a forgotten individual in the national collective memory.

Logan next attempted to clarify, in his opinion, exactly what made McPherson so beloved with the men under his command. "A quiet dignity pervaded all his actions and movements, which . . . inspired confidence and awakened a love which with his soldiers amounted almost to idolatry," explained Logan. He singled out one particular quality of McPherson's that bonded him to his men—his ability to connect with volunteer soldiers. Logan explained,

The severest rebuke he was ever known to give was administered to a young officer just from West Point, whom he overheard abusing a subordinate because he was a volunteer . . . McPherson was cast in a mold too grand and expansive to confine his fellowship and sympathy within the narrow limits of the trained military circle [(West Pointers)]. The cadet and the volunteer, loyal to their country and faithful in their duties, were alike objects of his love and sympathy. He never felt called upon to attribute their soldierly conduct to anything but love of country. To his high appreciation of Western volunteers can be attributed much of McPherson's success as a commander of these forces. They felt that they were properly appreciated by him, that they would always receive at his hand their appropriate share of commendation for any successes achieved. And what was still dearer to the Western volunteer they felt that, although a commander, he looked upon himself more as a comrade than a superior.³²⁸

³²⁸ Ibid., 498.

What might appear obvious to an outside observer—the importance for a commander to connect with volunteer soldiers in addition to professional West Pointers—was anything but the reality during the Civil War. Many West Pointers struggled to bond with volunteer soldiers and officers, with many professional officers viewing volunteers as beneath them in terms of skill and education.³²⁹ Therefore, McPherson's ability to overcome this common occurrence, set him apart from many officers of the "Old Army," and Logan is certainly correct in identifying this as an essential aspect that bonded McPherson to the men of the Army of the Tennessee.

Logan subsequently described McPherson's strengths and weaknesses as a commander, reflecting many of the same opinions held by others previously discussed. Logan highlighted McPherson's personal bravery as a distinguishing feature. He wrote, "No sooner was the first note heard than he was off to the threatened point, riding along the line of skirmishers, amid the huzzas of his men, utterly regardless of his own safety." Always idolizing the ideals of the medieval knight, McPherson succeeded in embodying those characteristics according to Logan. "Not even Henry of Navarre, the most gallant knight of his day, or the noted Chevalier Bayard, surpassed McPherson in their utter unconsciousness of fear," he said. "When he entered into the contest with rebellion he gave his life to his country, and ever afterwards regarded it no longer his own but his country's, and to be used only for the salvation of the Union." If bravery had been a positive feature of his generalship, as many others noted as well, his daring at times could also be his chief fault as a commander. Logan explained, "Although never guilty of foolish daring or feats of useless and uncalled for bravery, yet here seemed to lay his only fault as a commander, that he did not sufficiently regard his own life." Logan believed McPherson's "daring bravery too often expos[ed] him, where by care it might have been avoided. He

³²⁹ See Wayne Wei-Siang Hsieh, *West Pointers and the Civil War: The Old Army in War and Peace* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 2008).

appeared to forget that it was as much a duty to preserve his life for his country as to risk it for it."³³⁰ Logan provided an accurate and unbiased accounting of McPherson's attributes as a commander, and for the 20,000 people in attendance, who perhaps did not know all the details of his military career or his personality, Logan's provided valuable insights into McPherson's character and generalship.

Finally, Logan returned to the equestrian statue itself and commended Rebisso on the accuracy of his work. "The artist . . . has evidently caught the inspiration of McPherson's presence in action . . . Booted and spurred, ready for action, impatient and anxious to plunge into battle, as a brave and gallant knight he stands before us," he said. "Artist, your work is well and skillfully done; every line and curve, every part and feature is true to the original . . . I find nothing wanting which art can supply." However, as excellent as Rebisso's final product appeared, Logan said that it tried in vain to fill the void left by McPherson. He commented,

neither bronze or marble can ever send forth from the cold and rigid eye the keen and vivid flashes of an inward immortal spirit. No pulsating heart beats within or heaves the throbbing breast. Beautiful as is your work, faultless in conception and perfect in execution, yet the great heart, the generous soul of McPherson is wanting. We see the form, but we miss the fire of that large and penetrating eye, and the vivid glow of that powerful intellect. It is the form, but not *the man*.³³¹

Logan highlighted an essential fact. Memorialization can only accomplish so much in preserving the memory of an individual. As accurate as the features in a statue might be, it cannot make up for the qualities and personality of the actual person. Therefore, as the generation who personally knew McPherson passed, a significant portion of his memory inevitably passed with them. Logan continued on this same topic, saying,

No more shall we hear his welcome voice; no more will he lead us onward to victory. He is gone, yes comrades of the Army of the Tennessee, your beloved

³³⁰ *RPSAT*, 1876, 499.

³³¹ *Ibid.*, 499-500.

chief, your idolized commander is forever gone, a victim to treason and rebellion, a martyr to the cause of union and freedom. Gone, stricken down by the hand of traitors, in the prime of manhood; a sacrifice offered upon the altar of national unity. But yet he lives in the hearts of his comrades, and in the hearts of a thankful people; and so long as a single member of the glorious old Army of the Tennessee remains, will the image of McPherson be imprinted there in living colors. And when they have all been gathered home, then will their children and their children's children, repeat to each other the story of his gallant deeds and his death, and visit this spot to view his form.³³²

Word of mouth storytelling from one generation to the next also severely restricted the ability to preserve McPherson's memory. Although perhaps effective in a limited manner within certain families or households, the Army of the Tennessee and their descendents represented such a small portion of the national population that these individuals could not possibly hope to maintain McPherson's memory within the larger national collective memory through such limited means. Not to say that personal storytelling was inconsequential, or that it did not serve a valuable part in maintaining McPherson's memory. On the contrary, invested individuals passing on to their descendents personal memories, play an extremely important role in the initial preservation of a memory, but by its very nature it is narrow in scale and effect.

Logan truly believed that McPherson would become a figure for future generations to emulate. He declared, "Young men of America, whose hearts burn with a desire to win honorable distinction in the cause of your country, whether in the tented field or the councils of the nation, I would commend to your careful study, the character of him whose statue we here unfold." Undoubtedly, McPherson's values, his character, his service, and ultimately his sacrifice, combined to represent a person worthy of emulation, and Logan recognized that fact. He continued, "the study of noble characters will guide you into the road to real fame and true

³³² Ibid., 500.

greatness; and in McPherson you have a model well worth copying."³³³ As Logan's speech made clear, McPherson possessed numerous qualities that people deemed worthy of memorialization. His service and death in the Civil War represented only one reason for the preservation of his memory. According to Logan, his character embodied an equally important aspect, worthy of being preserved.

In closing, Logan returned to the increasingly common theme of McPherson "the martyr."

. . . I here to-day, in the presence of the form of one of our chief martyrs, thank you with my whole heart—but eternity alone can reveal to you the price of that liberty and peace you now enjoy. The fields of gory dead and ghastly forms, the shrieks of dying comrades and friends, the hiss of leaden hail, and unearthly shrieks of bursting shell—may fade from the mind of those who heard them only from the lips of others—but from the mind of the soldier they can never fade. Will the soldier of the Army of the Tennessee ever forget the terrible scenes of the bloody field of Atlanta? Never, no never. . . . As the years roll back into the great sea of eternity, and our nation floats down the stream of time swelling its pages of history, stronger and stronger will grow the contrast between treason and loyalty, and the great war of the rebellion will be looked upon as the pivot of our history. Then will its heroes be seen in bolder lines than ever before, and then chief among the martyrs will be the names of *Lincoln* and *McPherson*.³³⁴

In reality, the duel paths of memory for McPherson and Lincoln offer a sharp contrast. As McPherson's memory slowly faded over time, Lincoln's only increased in nearly mythical fashion, with the national collective memory turning him into the chief martyr for the United States. To those people in attendance at the unveiling ceremony, that Lincoln would eventually reach such mythical proportions, may have come as no surprise. However, they likely would have been shocked to know that contrarily, McPherson—the other great Union martyr—would eventually become a forgotten figure in America.

³³³ Ibid., 501.

³³⁴ Ibid., 501-502.

One of the takeaway points from Logan's speech was that McPherson was a multifaceted individual, and that the memorial honored all of those different features of his life, not just one particular aspect. He closed his oration with,

Therefore, as we place here to-day the marble form of the commander of the Army of the Tennessee, let us fix in the hearts of our youth the great principles by which he was governed, and for which he gave his life. McPherson the affectionate son, McPherson the model cadet, McPherson the faithful officer, McPherson the fearless soldier, McPherson the devoted friend and magnanimous conqueror, McPherson the pride of the Army of the Tennessee. "Rest, soldier rest, thy warfare's o'er."³³⁵

Logan's closing line also reflected the fact that multiple groups competed following McPherson's death to control his memorialization. His family, his West Point classmates, his fellow officers all constituted separate groups who shared in their hopes of preserving McPherson's memory, but at times differed on the best means of carrying out his memorialization. As the events involving the first monument revealed, despite holding similarly shared goals, difference of opinion could lead to hostility between the various groups.

Following Logan's conclusion, the Marine Band played the "Centennial Exposition March," which concluded the unveiling ceremony. However, for the Society of the Army of the Tennessee, their reunion had only just begun. The Society reconvened that evening for another meeting. President Grant attended this affair, and despite calls for him to speak, made only a few remarks, then simply sat in attendance for the other orators.³³⁶ The Society asked George Reynolds, the private who cared for McPherson during his final minutes, to speak, and he relayed his version of July 22, 1864. However, the main annual address belonged to General John Milton Thayer, who spoke on the topic of national reconciliation. Thayer said he "trusted the time would never come when the issues of the war would be forgotten," but the veterans of

³³⁵ Ibid., 502.

³³⁶ *Daily Inter Ocean*, October 19, 1876, 1.

the Civil War "earnestly long for fraternity and reconciliation." Thayer hoped that "the places made waste by the desolation of the struggle will be made to abound with plenty, the wounds left by the conflict will be healed by the benign influence of peace, and the sunshine of prosperity will rest upon all our borders."³³⁷ Thayer's speech represented the national mood in 1876. The Presidential election that year resulted in the Compromise of 1877, often considered the official end of Reconstruction. In coming years, McPherson's memorialization would come to play a vital role in the country's sectional reconciliation.

McPherson's Lasting Memory in Washington D.C.

Compared to the other three towns or cities where memorials would eventually be unveiled for McPherson, the lasting memory of McPherson in Washington, D. C. offers a unique example. The nation's capital had little real connection to McPherson other than the fact that he died for the Union cause in service to his country. It was not his hometown. It was not the site of his death. It was not named in his honor. Instead, Washington, D.C. was not only the nation's capital; it was the center of national memorialization. The government erected memorials within the city to a degree not seen anywhere else in the country.³³⁸ At the time of its unveiling, McPherson's statue had the honor of being only the fourth equestrian statue erected in Washington. The other three included Andrew Jackson (1853), George Washington (1860), and

³³⁷ Ibid.

³³⁸ The city that could claim the closest parity to Washington D.C. was Richmond, Virginia. Following the Civil War, as the national capital unveiled memorials at a fever pitch, most to honor Union generals and Northern heroes, Richmond attempted to match the pace with monuments to Confederate generals and Southern heroes. In a very real sense this became an increasingly competitive struggle over the post-war memory of the conflict. McPherson's memorial represented simply one of many memorials within this larger competition.

Winfield Scott (1875), making McPherson's the only equestrian to a Civil War general.³³⁹

However, very quickly the memorial landscape of Washington, D.C. radically changed. Kirk



Figure 1: McPherson Equestrian Statue, Washington, D.C. (Photograph by the author, 2014)

³³⁹ Savage, *Monument Wars*, 64, 78-80, 89. Of course Winfield Scott could technically be considered a Civil War general as well, but his equestrian statue was primarily meant to memorialize his role in the Mexican-American War.

Savage wrote that "In the second half of the nineteenth century, statue monuments proliferated throughout the capital, creating a dispersed memorial landscape of great men on pedestals."³⁴⁰ Today, Washington, D.C. possesses the most equestrian statues of any city on the continent, due largely to the dozens erected in the last three decades of the nineteenth century.³⁴¹ These numerous other monuments threatened to overshadow the importance of the McPherson memorial unveiled in 1876, because it lost its uniqueness. A visitor to the nation's capital around the turn of the century would not be struck by the magnificent distinctiveness of McPherson's memorial, for in a five mile stretch they literally could see two dozen other equestrian statues of equal or greater grandeur. McPherson's monument simply became one of many similar monuments in the city.

Another vital factor in understanding the declining significance of the McPherson memorial over the years includes an examination of the transformation of the memorial landscape in D.C. in the last 150 years. As the monument craze continued throughout the latter half of the nineteenth century, the memorials unveiled in the city had no real central location, but instead were spread throughout the city. The apparently disorganized manner by which these memorials were erected has led scholars to describe the memorial landscape in the nineteenth century as an "incomprehensible forest," or that the city by 1900 had "slipped into incoherence and disorder."³⁴² However, in the twentieth century, a semblance of order came to Washington's memorial landscape, as designers sought to concentrate around a "monumental core," focused

³⁴⁰ Kirk Savage, *Monument Wars*, 63.

³⁴¹ James M. Goode, *Outdoor Sculpture of Washington, D.C.: A Comprehensive Historical Guide* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1974), 25.

³⁴² Daniel Urban Kiley, "A Critical Look at the McMillan Plan," in *The Mall in Washington, 1791-1991*, ed. Richard W. Longstreth (Washington, D.C.: National Gallery of Art, 2002), 299; John William Repts, *Monumental Washington: The Planning and Development of the Capital Center* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1967), 66; Wilcomb W Washburn, "Planning Washington," in *The Federal City: Plans and Realities*, ed. Frederick Albert Gutheim (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1976), 86; Cited in Savage, *Monument Wars*, 12, 318n.

along what today is referred to as the National Mall.³⁴³ By unfortunate fate and happenstance, McPherson's memorial fell outside of this monumental core, and thus inevitably suffered from a lack of positional prominence.

Perhaps even more importantly, there occurred a dramatic shift in the meaning of the memorials in Washington. Savage explained this shift, arguing that monuments were transformed from "objects of reverence and emulation—the archetypal hero on a pedestal—[to] spaces of reflection and psychological engagement."³⁴⁴ In the twentieth century, artists no longer intended to simply honor an individual hero, but instead attempted to impose greater meaning to a historical event. The Vietnam Memorial stands as a perfect example of this shift in meaning. Savage claimed that the primary change that occurred involved a shift from a nineteenth-century concept of "public grounds" to a twentieth-century concept of "public space."³⁴⁵ As the twentieth-century transformation occurred, artists and the designers of Washington's monumental core came to view the equestrian statues of the nineteenth century with disdain. "The designers of the capital's monumental core would have been happy to see most of the city's public statues sent to a scrap heap," wrote Savage. "The reformers saw the city's statues as mere ornaments scattered haphazardly across the ground of the city, without spatial coordination or impact and therefore without any lasting significance."³⁴⁶ McPherson's statue, of course, was included in this group. The *American Architect and Building News* deplored the spread of the equestrian statue, claiming that "if they did not appeal to the intellect in some way, they soon lost the attention of passersby and became merely 'an obstruction to traffic.'"³⁴⁷ Artists led the charge

³⁴³ Savage, *Monument Wars*, 36. The emergence of the monumental core and the evolution of Washington's memorial landscape are main themes throughout Savage's work.

³⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 12.

³⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 13-14.

³⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 15.

³⁴⁷ *American Architect and Building News*, July 28, 1888, 657, quoted in Savage, 195.

against the equestrian statue trend. Many critics complained that the portrait statues became dull and repetitive. "One hero melted into another," explained Savage, "especially in soldier monuments, which were so commonplace that they could even be ordered from stock catalogues."³⁴⁸ As a result of the proliferation of portrait monuments, combined with the shift in meaning of Washington's memorial landscape, McPherson's equestrian statue lost not only its uniqueness, but also the emotional impact originally intended by Rebisso.

Given the evolving nature of Washington's memorial landscape, it is not surprising that McPherson's memorial received little attention or public upkeep in the decades after its unveiling. In 1925, the Office of Public Buildings and Public Parks—the organization that managed the maintenance of McPherson Square—was transferred from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers directly to the control of the president.³⁴⁹ The only major renovation of the square occurred from 1930-1931. Reflecting the new importance placed on the concept of "public space" described by Savage, the renovations mainly changed the way space was organized around the monument, adding a circular system to provide more openness and scenic walks through the square. The new design built two narrow curved walks through the park, dividing the square into two triangular corners with an oval center. The boundaries of the park were lined with large deciduous trees to emphasize the spatial pattern.³⁵⁰ In 1933, the Office of Public Buildings and Public Parks transferred ownership of McPherson Square to the National Park Service, who from that point forward oversaw maintenance of the monument.³⁵¹

Despite being under the new ownership of the NPS, little maintenance on the monument itself took place for many years. A hundred years after its dedication, the bronze had turned a

³⁴⁸ Savage, 195.

³⁴⁹ "Cultural Landscapes Inventory: McPherson Square, National Capital Parks-Central," National Park Service, 2004, 13. (available on nps.gov)

³⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 5.

³⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 13.

dirty green, and presented somewhat of an eyesore. Representative of the lack of importance placed on McPherson's memory in Washington, the local authorities did nothing to improve the statue's appearance. Only when residents of Clyde, Ohio intervened, did a restoration of the memorial take place. Upon hearing of the dilapidated state of the memorial, Clyde's City Manager, Nelson Summit, wrote to his Congressional representative, Rep. Delbert Latta, R-Bowling Green, requesting that the government do something to improve the condition of the statue. As a result of his efforts, the NPS handled the restoration process, restoring and cleaning the statue.³⁵²

As the decades passed, McPherson's memorial remained a mainstay in McPherson Square, which eventually became a busy transportation hub for the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (Metro). McPherson Square Station serves as a junction for the Orange, Blue, and Silver lines of the Washington Metro. The Square also serves as bus stops for numerous public transportation services. Therefore, given its role as a transportation hub, tens of thousands of local Washington residents and workers pass through the square daily. Such traffic gives the McPherson memorial in D.C. an audience unparalleled by any of the other McPherson memorials built in later years. That fact should not be easily dismissed. Although the majority of the foot traffic through McPherson Square neither gives much notice to the monument, nor could tell much about the individual it honors beyond possibly the fact that he was a Civil War general, the public exposure to McPherson remains significant. The monument partially accomplishes its original task—even if only minimally—by reminding passersby that, if nothing else, McPherson was an important individual worthy of memorialization.

³⁵² *News-Messenger*, (Fremont, Ohio), June 9, 1988.

The most recent case of McPherson's Washington memorial occupying a position in the national spotlight came during the 2011-2012 Occupy Wall Street movement. The Washington, D.C. branch of the movement, known as Occupy D.C., set up camp in McPherson Square where they remained in protest for several months. During the protest—in actions that likely would have had the officers of the Society of the Army of the Tennessee rolling over in their graves—protestors disrespectfully climbed on the monument, and adorned it with various decorations. Members of the group Anonymous, who were participating in the protest, climbed atop the statue and placed a Guy Fawkes mask over the face of McPherson.³⁵³ Eventually, protestors covered the statue with a giant tarp that was subsequently named the "Tent of Dreams."³⁵⁴ The occupation violated a National Park Service regulation that prohibited camping in the square. Concerned over health issues and the violation of the NPS ordinance, D.C. Mayor Vincent Gray called on the NPS to relocate the protestors in order to restore and clean McPherson Square.³⁵⁵ The primary health concern that worried Mayor Gray was a major infestation of rats. One reporter described the scene, writing, "[rats] were everywhere, darting between tents, rustling in the trash. The occupiers had closed the kitchen and prepared food offsite, but the rats remained nearly impossible to control."³⁵⁶ However, the infestation did not seem to faze the protestors. Many of the demonstrators were homeless and didn't have better options. In fact, McPherson Square, even before the Occupy D.C. protests, was a hub not only for the Metro, but for

³⁵³ Quinn Norton, "Occupy D.C. Evicted From a Winter of Communal Discontent," *Wired*, February 10, 2012. Accessed July 12, 2016. <https://www.wired.com/2012/02/occupy-dc-eviction/>.

³⁵⁴ Annie Gowen, "Occupy D.C. protesters sleep under 'Tent of Dreams,' defy no-camping rules," *Washington Post*, January 31, 2012. Accessed July 12, 2016. https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/occupy-dc-protesters-sleep-under-tent-of-dreams-defy-no-camping-rules/2012/01/31/gIQAxARDgQ_story.html.

³⁵⁵ *Ibid.*; Elizabeth Harrington, "Police Take No Action to Enforce No-Camping Rule at Occupy D.C. Location," *CNSNews*, January 31, 2012. Accessed July 12, 2016. <http://cnsnews.com/news/article/police-take-no-action-enforce-no-camping-rule-occupy-dc-location>.

³⁵⁶ Norton.

homeless people as well.³⁵⁷ Despite the massive health concerns, initially the NPS hesitated on the issue of eviction. In fact, during congressional hearings, National Park Service Director Jonathan Jarvis defended the protester's First Amendment rights.³⁵⁸

Eventually the police moved in to break up the camp. On February 4, 2012, the U.S. Park Police, mounted and clad in riot gear, entered McPherson Square with the intent of enforcing the ban against camping. During the crackdown, one protestor threw a brick, striking an officer in the face. In the end, 11 protestors were arrested in the incident.³⁵⁹ The police cordoned off the park and cleared out the demonstrators one quadrant at a time. Many of the tents were carried away in a garbage truck. Police Sgt. David Schlosser made it clear that their actions did not constitute an eviction of the protestors, only an enforcement of the NPS regulations. The "Tent of Dreams," covering the McPherson statue, also violated NPS regulations. However, the "Occupiers" took the police actions as a hostile move, and responded with antagonism of their own. Several protestors rallied around the base of the statue, refusing to leave. Demonstrators left bags of human waste as booby traps for the police.³⁶⁰ These actions not only desecrated the grounds around the statue, but grossly disrespected the memorial that had been so deferentially and sacredly dedicated in 1876.

Ultimately, the Washington, D.C. memorial served an essential function in the memorialization of McPherson. It was the first monument erected to honor his memory, and the product of eleven years of effort and struggle from the Society of the Army of the Tennessee and many others. The very fact that Hickenlooper's Committee on McPherson Monument underwent

³⁵⁷ Maurice King, "Washington: The District of Haves and Have Nots," *Street Sense*, December 13, 2003. Accessed July 12, 2016. <http://streetsense.org/article/washington-the-district-of-haves-and-have-nots/#.V4TGHo-cHIU>.

³⁵⁸ Norton.

³⁵⁹ "11 arrested at Occupy D.C. site," *USA Today*, February 5, 2012. Accessed July 12, 2016. <http://usatoday30.usatoday.com/news/washington/story/2012-02-05/occupy-dc/52973316/1>.

³⁶⁰ Alyssa Newcomb, "Occupy DC: Police Raid Camp, Kicking Protesters Out 'Violently,'" *World News*, February 4, 2012. Accessed July 7, 2016. <http://abcnews.go.com/blogs/headlines/2012/02/occupy-dc-police-raid-camp/>.

so many setbacks and experienced such adversity throughout the process, and yet continued to persevere through to ultimate success, spoke to the high importance that so many individuals placed on McPherson's memorialization and the preservation of his memory. It would have been extremely easy to give up on the project following any one of the many obstacles faced along the way by the committee. Nevertheless, they persevered in their task year after year until finally they succeeded in their ultimate goal. In addition, the location of the monument adds to its importance. Although not the site originally planned for the memorial, the location in Washington, D.C. gives added significance to the monument. As the very first equestrian statue of a Civil War general dedicated in the nation's capital, McPherson received a very high honor. At the time of its unveiling, few could have predicted the monument explosion that would eventually occur in the latter half of the nineteenth century, therefore the prestige of being the first—and for a short time, the only—Civil War equestrian statue in the city indicated the widespread national prominence that McPherson's memory received in the period immediately following his death. Also, due to its location, the number of people who see and interact with the monument is far greater than any of the other McPherson memorials. Even though the national collective memory of McPherson has diminished greatly over the past 150 years, the mere presence of his memorial in the nation's capital, and the exposure to thousands of residents and tourists has an effect that cannot be ignored.

Chapter 3 - The Hometown of General James Birdseye McPherson

The small Ohio town of Clyde—known as Hamer's Corners at the time of McPherson's birth—was nothing more than a tiny township at the start of the Civil War. Very patriotic from the start, nearly half the town's male population answered Lincoln's call for volunteers in 1861. The citizens of Clyde formed the first official town government following the end of the war on March 8, 1866, with John M. Lemmon, a local attorney, becoming the town's first mayor.³⁶¹ Over the years, Clyde's population steadily rose, particularly in the twentieth century with the introduction of the Whirlpool Corporation plant, which brought a large amount of jobs to the town.³⁶² However, even this boost in industry did not lead to a huge population explosion. As of the 2010 census, Clyde had a population of only 6,325.³⁶³ The town served as the inspiration for the setting in *Winesburg, Ohio*, a collection of short stories by Sherwood Anderson.³⁶⁴ However, the town's most noteworthy claim—and also the biggest component of the town's local identity—is that it was the hometown of Major-General James Birdseye McPherson.

Aftermath of McPherson's Death

Although the rest of the country respected and cherished McPherson at the time of his death, the town of Clyde surpassed all in their degree of love and devotion to their most famous son. One local assessment of McPherson's skill as a general described the significance of his death, writing, the "country has sustained the most severe loss that it has in the death of any officer since the commencement of the rebellion. As a military engineer he had no equal, and as

³⁶¹ W. W. Kastrup, "The Early History of Clyde," *Ohio Memory*, Thaddeus B. Hurd Digital Archive, Clyde Public Library.

³⁶² *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, May 30, 1960, 1.

³⁶³ "American Fact Finder," *United States Census Bureau*, 2010 United States Census.

³⁶⁴ Sherwood Anderson, *Winesburg, Ohio* (New York: B. W. Huebsch, 1919).

a skillful and successful General no superior, unless it should be Gen. Grant."³⁶⁵ An outsider, attending McPherson's funeral observed that while his mother and grandmother wept, the "citizens of the village and county had vied with them in love for him, and gloried in him as *their* son and brother."³⁶⁶ The citizens of Clyde felt as though they had a claim to McPherson's reputation and legacy, and following his death they wanted to ensure the proper reverence toward his memory.

The first step taken, as previously discussed, involved the creation of the Clyde McPherson Monument Society (later McPherson Monument Association at Clyde), with General Ralph P. Buckland as the association's president, and John M. Lemmon as Secretary.³⁶⁷ The strong desire to honor McPherson's legacy and gravesite extended beyond Clyde to the rest of Sandusky County and northern Ohio. Fremont's resolution to "cherish the memory and many virtues of the deceased, and protect his sacred dust" offered the best example of the local attitude in the surrounding vicinity.³⁶⁸ The local populace recognized that Clyde had a great honor as the hometown and final resting place of one of the country's greatest heroes, and with that honor came responsibility. Quickly, the desire to safeguard McPherson's memory consolidated in the Society of the Army of the Tennessee's efforts to erect a memorial over his gravesite.

Several factors contributed to the eventual turmoil with the Society in 1875, but it centered on the issue of raising the necessary subscriptions. Although the \$3,000 pledged by Clyde's Monument Association represented only a minor percentage of the funds collected by the Society, the small Ohio town experienced setbacks in their efforts to collect the subscriptions just

³⁶⁵ *Fremont Journal*, July 29, 1864, 1.

³⁶⁶ *Tiffin Tribune*, August 4, 1864, 1.

³⁶⁷ For simplicity and consistency purposes the Clyde McPherson Monument Society, which later became the McPherson Monument Association at Clyde, will simply be referred to as the Monument Association throughout the remainder of the chapter.

³⁶⁸ *Fremont Journal*, August 5, 1864, 2; See Chapter 2: Erecting a Monument, 81.

as the Society did in the early years following the war. At the first annual reunion of the Society, many individuals expressed renewed optimism in the fundraising effort. T. Buchanan Read spoke to the Society, announcing, "I have the honor to count Gen. McPherson among my warmest personal friends. I had also the sorrowful privilege of shedding tears over his slain body, as did many of you." Read declared his willingness to put action behind his emotion, stating, "Let me but say those tears sinking into the earth shall rise again in dollars to build him a monument. I am willing to travel and give readings and entertainments throughout the country, and I will engage to raise half the amount you need."³⁶⁹ Many people spoke up in their willingness to dedicate themselves to the subscription effort, but the Society also placed the impetus on Clyde and northern Ohio to significantly contribute to the monument.

General Buckland spoke at the reunion, and stated that he believed a considerable amount could be raised in northern Ohio. He emphasized that the people had a great interest in having the monument at Clyde.³⁷⁰ To close the reunion, the Society passed a resolution affirming Clyde as the location for the monument, and declared that they would "act harmoniously with any other society organized for the same purpose."³⁷¹ Clyde's Monument Association took the initiative by appointing Bradley Tuttle, Esq., as "canvassing agent" for Clyde and the surrounding vicinity, and Reverend J. S. Broadwell as "general canvassing agent." Broadwell personally visited Fremont semi-daily over a two or three week period, soliciting subscriptions. He additionally visited the other towns in the county, and sent agents throughout the other parts of Ohio. Local advertisements announced that subscriptions could be paid to either Tuttle or Broadwell or

³⁶⁹ *Fremont Journal*, November 23, 1866, 1.

³⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

³⁷¹ *Ibid.*; *RPSAT*, 1866, 67-68.

agents appointed by them.³⁷² Clyde's Monument Association unquestionably did not sit idle and instead actively sought to fulfill their pledged \$3,000.

With the hiring of Jones to build the monument, and the laying of the foundation over the future site of the memorial, the location of Clyde seemed solidified. Clyde was also firmly invested by this point, through the contribution of funds for the laying of the foundation.³⁷³ News of the laying of the foundation was reported as far away as Arkansas, once again indicating the national interest generated by McPherson's memorialization.³⁷⁴ In addition to the foundation, Clyde expended between \$2,000 and \$3,000 on improvements to the cemetery grounds. The money went to purchasing additional lots, and removing the buildings from those lots in order to increase the size of the grounds for such a grand monument.³⁷⁵ Clyde made significant progress toward the preparation of the cemetery for the arrival of the monument upon its completion.

During the seventh meeting of the Society at Toledo, Ohio, General Sherman visited Clyde with General Buckland and inspected the site of the future monument. They also met with McPherson's mother. Sherman later gave a speech in Fremont, saying, "To-day General Buckland and I have been over to General McPherson's grave, and visited his aged mother. Some day I hope we shall repeat the visit, and assemble to unveil a monument there. . . . General Grant has signified his intention to be present on that occasion." He expressed a high opinion of the town of Fremont, stating, "I have been in every part of the world, and nowhere have I seen as attractive homes . . . as I see about me here. I hope Fremont may grow to be a large prosperous

³⁷² *Fremont Journal*, November 23, 1866, 1; *Fremont Journal*, December 14, 1866, 3.

³⁷³ *Sandusky Daily Register* June 20, 1876, 1 refers to \$1,500 contributed by Clyde for the foundation. The Society of the Army of the Tennessee reported that Clyde contributed only \$475 and Jones contributed \$950, for a total of \$1,425. *RPSAT*, 1871, 473.

³⁷⁴ *Daily Republican*, (Little Rock, AR), November 12, 1869, 1.

³⁷⁵ *Fremont Journal*, December 28, 1878; *Clyde Enterprise* April 11, 1878, 3.

city, equaling your greatest expectations, and that I may be back here again in about three years to witness the completion of the McPherson Monument."³⁷⁶ Relations between the Society and Clyde's Monument Association were at their apex, but they soon quickly deteriorated.

The citizens of Clyde were devastated by the news of the Society's decision to move the memorial to Washington, D.C. Although the high cost of the pedestal represented the main reason for the monument's relocation, Hickenlooper continuously attributed the decision to the failure of Clyde's Monument Association to provide its pledged \$3,000 to the Society. However, Clyde's residents had a different interpretation of the events. The Monument Association had already paid the Society \$1,500, in addition to expending a large sum on cemetery improvements. The payments only stopped, according to citizens of Clyde, because it soon became clear to them that a change of location was planned. Apparently, news of the change to Washington had reached McPherson's brother, Russell B. McPherson, and he in turn leaked that information to the public. Understandably, Clyde's residents halted their payments for a memorial that was no longer planned for their hometown.³⁷⁷

Considering the Congressional appropriation of \$25,000 for the monument's pedestal, Clyde's unpaid sum of \$1,500 seems a trivial issue in comparison. So why did Hickenlooper continuously insist that the failure of Clyde's Monument Association to raise the necessary funds was the primary reason for the change of location? The answer most likely lies in Hickenlooper's mounting frustration at the general inability to raise the necessary funds for the memorial. The 1876 unveiling was much later than Logan, Sherman, or any of the leading officers in the Society had planned for McPherson's memorial. Hickenlooper's irritation at the slow progress of raising subscriptions was reflected in his annual addresses to the Society year

³⁷⁶ *Fremont Journal*, October 24, 1873, 3.

³⁷⁷ *Clyde Enterprise*, April 11, 1878, 2.

after year.³⁷⁸ In multiple instances, Hickenlooper referenced the appeal that McPherson's memorial should have had on northern Ohio, and his disappointment that the region's residents were unable to provide more in the way of subscriptions.

Hickenlooper later wrote on what he considered the gross disparity between Clyde's raised funds and the Society's subscriptions. He wrote,

While the devoted love and affection of his old army comrades [(the Society of the Army of the Tennessee)] induced contributions of from \$1 to \$500, out of their scanty earnings, and while one man a resident of New York—only a passing friend—gave \$1,000, and another only a prospective relative contributed over \$4,000, these companions of his youth [(the citizens of Clyde)], reared almost at his hearthstone, any one of whom . . . was worth more than the total amount, agreed under the auspices of a society, formed for the express object, on behalf of the citizens of all Northern Ohio, subscribed but \$3,000 toward a work to cost between 40 and \$50,000, and never paid in but \$1,500 or one half this sum.³⁷⁹

His words offer the best answer to the previous question. Hickenlooper did not believe that Clyde and Northern Ohio had contributed their fair share to the monument effort. He therefore placed the blame for the change of location not on the Society, but on the residents of northern Ohio, who, if they simply could have raised more money, could have kept the memorial.

Hickenlooper also challenged Clyde's version of the halting of payments, claiming that payments stopped "not because of any fear of change in location . . . for not one cent was ever paid in until five years after the subscription was made and three years after the committee had made a contract for the erection of the monument at Clyde."³⁸⁰ Despite the fact that no demand was made of the Clyde Monument Association for additional funds (beyond the pledged \$3,000), nor notification of the additional cost for a pedestal, nor any indication that a change of location

³⁷⁸ See chapter 2.

³⁷⁹ Hickenlooper to the editor of the *Fremont Journal*, reprinted in *Clyde Enterprise*, April 11, 1878, 2.

³⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

would occur, Hickenlooper nevertheless justified the change of location to Washington, as a result of insufficient funds raised by the local citizens of northern Ohio.

Following the threat to remove the general's body from its gravesite, Clyde's disappointment turned to anger, feelings of betrayal, and, eventually, attempts at retribution. Clyde's Monument Association recalled their subscriptions (\$1,500) from the Society, which Hickenlooper returned to them.³⁸¹ They did not intend to consent quietly to the change in location, and attempted to defeat the appropriations bill to fund the monument's pedestal. Clyde's decision to fight the bill shocked Hickenlooper, because he could not fathom why Clyde would attempt to defeat the bill that offered the only real hope for providing the sum necessary to construct a monument erected "to the memory of the man they so loved and respected."³⁸² Clyde also threatened to file an injunction against the Society in hopes of preventing the erection of the memorial in D.C.³⁸³ To Hickenlooper, it appeared as if Clyde took the stance that if they couldn't have the monument they didn't want anyone to have it. In reality, they likely still held out hope that they could be the final location for the monument, and if the bill was defeated, perhaps additional funds could still be raised to place the monument at Clyde. Ultimately, their efforts came to no avail, and the relocation of the monument to Washington became a reality.

During the unveiling of the monument at the Society's 1876 reunion in Washington, D.C., General Buckland spoke in defense of Clyde and against what he saw as an injustice done to them. He claimed that Clyde "had no objection to statues being erected at other places, but, fearing something was wrong, had, some years since, refused to contribute more [money] to be

³⁸¹ *RPSAT*, 1877, 41.

³⁸² *Clyde Enterprise*, April 11, 1878, 2.

³⁸³ *Clyde Enterprise*, March 22, 1978.

used by the committee of this Society."³⁸⁴ Buckland defended Clyde's explanation that the subscription payments had been suspended because of the rumored change of location. However, Buckland went even further in denouncing the decision made by the Society as dishonorable. He described the change of location as an "unfair dealing to the people at Clyde, and without honor to this Society."³⁸⁵ Buckland also denounced the attempt to move McPherson's remains to Washington, declaring, "The remains of McPherson are now at Clyde, and will remain there—the people of Clyde had a right to claim this statue."³⁸⁶ Even though by the time of the reunion in 1876 there was no chance of changing the location back to Clyde, Buckland wanted the record to show that a wrong had been done to the residents of Clyde.

Following Buckland's comments, Hickenlooper responded in defense of the Society, repeating his justification from the previous year's meeting. "Being unable to get from the Clyde association what it had pledged to this committee, the original plan had to be abandoned, for want of means to carry it out," stated Hickenlooper. "The money needed for a proper base for the statue was provided by the Government, as heretofore explained, and these causes compelled the change."³⁸⁷ However, Hickenlooper did not want to completely abandon Clyde, and hoped that the fissure could be repaired and the relationship healed. Hickenlooper informed Buckland that the Society's committee not only intended to return all the money that had been given, but also that the Society would go further by aiding the Clyde Monument Association in any future attempt to erect a different monument on the foundation that had been built there.³⁸⁸ As strained as the relationship had become, Hickenlooper's offer represented an olive branch that could perhaps start to mend the division.

³⁸⁴ *RPSAT*, 1876, 475.

³⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

Despite Hickenlooper's offer, hostilities still existed between Clyde's residents and the Society. A group of residents from Clyde visited Washington, D.C. during the Centennial and viewed the completed monument and also encountered the Society's committee. Since the monument had not yet been unveiled, a blanket still covered the upper portion of the equestrian statue. The group who made the trip reported their impression of the work to a local Clyde paper, stating, "We visited McPherson monument of course, but were disgusted to find we could only see the horse, the whole upper portion of the figure being wrapped in a miserable blanket." They also visited one of the models of the cast that was being displayed in the National Museum. On the model, they reported that they were much pleased.³⁸⁹ Clyde's citizens expressed their anger and frustration when they encountered Hickenlooper and the rest of the Society's committee. Hickenlooper claimed that the group of Clyde residents made "unkind and uncalled for comments" to the committee.³⁹⁰ Two groups—the Society and the residents of Clyde—who had for so long endeavored in the common goal of preserving the memory of McPherson, now appeared as bitter enemies.

Clyde Gets Its Monument

Even with the change of location to Washington, D.C., Clyde's citizens did not abandon hope that a monument could still be erected above McPherson's grave on the foundation built by Jones several years earlier. In fact, on July 11, 1876 Clyde's City Council passed a resolution to remove the trees and remains surrounding McPherson's grave and foundation, an area of the cemetery that was referred to as "Monumental Square."³⁹¹ Bodies in the graves surrounding

³⁸⁹ *Clyde Sentinel*, October 16, 1876, 8.

³⁹⁰ *Clyde Enterprise*, April 11, 1878, 2.

³⁹¹ Clyde City Council Minutes, July 11, 1876, Clyde Public Library, Clyde Ohio.

McPherson were reinterred elsewhere in the cemetery. The action cleared the space around McPherson's gravesite for what they hoped would be a future memorial. Even the name "Monumental Square"—despite the fact that no monument yet existed—reflected Clyde's confidence that a monument would one day be erected. However, the easiest and quickest means of building a memorial remained through the Society. Old wounds would need to be healed.

Despite having a common interest in preserving McPherson's memory, the relationship between the Society and Clyde remained strained. In a somewhat aggressive letter to the editor of the *Fremont Journal* in 1878, subsequently published for the surrounding area's residents, Hickenlooper once again made an overture to assist in the building of a new monument. First, however, he identified what he believed to be the faults in the previous actions of the Clyde Monument Association. He once again mentioned the failure to fully pay the pledged \$3,000 as well as the insufficient subscriptions to cover the cost of a pedestal. He continued, "To this failure was added the distrust, apathy and lack of encouragement and appreciation of our efforts extending over a period of ten years, for any one of which years, labor and responsibility, I would not have [except] their entire subscription as sufficient pecuniary compensation." Hickenlooper did not appear willing to let bygones be bygones, and openly expressed his viewpoint on the previous disputes. "These failures to perform their part of the agreement," wrote Hickenlooper, "necessitating a failure upon our part, unquestionably relieved us from any pecuniary or moral obligation." However, despite his scathing condemnation, Hickenlooper turned to the main point of his letter. "But I said then and say now, that notwithstanding all that I have recited, the committee, whose love and reverence for McPherson's memory is not circumscribed by any local considerations, stand ready and willing to unite heart and soul with the people of Clyde and vicinity in erecting a fitting monument over McPherson's remains at

Clyde."³⁹² Hickenlooper clearly was not fond of Clyde's Monument Association leadership. There was no love lost between the two groups. Nevertheless, as he stated in his letter, the committee's "love and reverence for McPherson's memory" trumped any feelings of hostility or resentment between Hickenlooper and Clyde, and demonstrated a willingness on the part of the Society to overcome their differences if it meant adding to McPherson's memorialization.

Hickenlooper also outlined the details of his proposed plan for building a memorial in his letter. He stated that the Society "will contribute all the time and trouble necessary to assure success." Clyde should "give the \$1,500 to start on and in addition contribute two dollars to every one they may secure and pay in this purpose during the present year. I am in earnest in making the proposal, which if promptly acted upon will result in securing, at no distant day, a monument of which we may all be proud." Hickenlooper understood the current state of the relationship between the Society and Clyde, and had they rejected his proposal, he added a final statement to shame them into agreeing. He wrote, "If this proposition is not accepted, or aid contributed, then it should be left, without fault-finding or bickering, to the Army of the Tennessee to erect, as soon as practicable, such a monument as they can, over the now unmarked grave of their dead Commander."³⁹³ Although the recent events might have caused the Clyde Monument Association to have feelings of disdain toward Hickenlooper, the Society's proposal still offered the best hope of realizing their vision of a monument. They therefore responded in the affirmative. The *Clyde Enterprise* published their response: "Of one thing . . . Gen. Hickenlooper and the Army Association which he represents may feel assured. That is, that the people of Clyde will be glad to meet and join them, with one heart and one accord, in any feasible plan which shall secure the erection of a suitable monument over the remains of the

³⁹² *Clyde Enterprise*, April 11, 1878, 2.

³⁹³ *Ibid.*

great soldier in the perpetuation of whose gallant deeds and loved memory we all feel so deep an interest."³⁹⁴ Once more two disparate and estranged groups were brought together in the common goal of preserving McPherson's memory.

In the years following the unveiling of the memorial in Washington, D.C. local residents of northern Ohio rededicated themselves to the effort of building a memorial. One local newspaper explained the situation as it currently existed in Clyde. The article described McPherson as "a hero whose body lies here in our cemetery with only the base of a monument erected over his remains. Surely something should be done. . . . Strangers come and ask why it is thus, and where is the McPherson monument[,] and stand and look at the foundation up there on the elevation, so near his old home, with surprise."³⁹⁵ The absence of a proper memorial, in fact, acted as an embarrassment to the town of Clyde. The need to answer questions of visitors and travelers as to why there was no memorial somewhat tarnished the towns reputation—particularly their claim as the hometown of General James B. McPherson. If they took such pride in their hometown hero, why was there no monument over his gravesite? Soon the questions were silenced.

At the 1877 reunion of the Society held at St. Paul, Minnesota, the Committee on McPherson Monument presented their final report on the Washington memorial. Hickenlooper addressed some monetary disputes that had arisen between Rebisso and the Society. First, Rebisso had agreed in his original contract to complete the statue within two years of December 27, 1871, or else be liable for the sum of \$5 per day after that date.³⁹⁶ In fact, Rebisso did not complete the equestrian statue until April 19, 1876, 844 days after the agreed upon date of

³⁹⁴ *Clyde Enterprise*, April 11, 1878, 3.

³⁹⁵ *Fremont Journal*, December 28, 1877, 4.

³⁹⁶ *RPSAT*, 1871, 27.

completion. According to the contract, the delay potentially made Rebisso liable for the sum of \$4,220, but the Society, somewhat surprisingly, did not hold him accountable for this sizable sum.³⁹⁷ In fact, the Society acted very generously with regard to Rebisso's payment.

Hickenlooper reported that due to the Congressional appropriation for the pedestal "the Army of the Tennessee saved a great outlay and was thereby enabled to pay said Rebisso the compensation he has already received, being considerably more than double the total amount which it was expected by the parties he would receive."³⁹⁸ While the Society seemed perfectly willing to overlook Rebisso's liability for tardiness, the artist pressed a separate clause in the contract that stated the Society would pay Rebisso any additional funds held in their possession at the time of the completion of the monument. In 1877, those additional funds totaled \$1,158.09. Once again, the Society acted generously in this regard, paying Rebisso the full amount. Hickenlooper's justified the payment, explaining, "Whereas, the parties, while so differing in opinion, feel disposed to settle amicably, the said Rebisso having already received much greater compensation than he expected to, and the committee having received an equestrian statue of much greater artistic merit than they expected."³⁹⁹ Ultimately, the reason for the Society's generosity resulted from the fact that they were extremely pleased with Rebisso's finished product. Hickenlooper closed his report by concluding the business on the Washington, D.C. monument and opening the possibility for another monument in Clyde. He stated, "This makes complete . . . all outstanding obligations on account of the equestrian statue, and leaves in our hands material sufficient to enable us to return the subscriptions made by the citizens of Clyde, or to join with them in erecting over the grave of McPherson a monument which should

³⁹⁷ *RPSAT*, 1877, 41.

³⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 42

³⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

be second only to that recently unveiled in the city of Washington."⁴⁰⁰ For this future project, the Society concluded that Rebisso was an obvious choice to serve as the artist.

Despite the Clyde residents' positive response to Hickenlooper's proposal, it appeared that the Monument Association had difficulty reaching out to their new antagonist. Hickenlooper later claimed that following his proposal to Clyde, he received "no response . . . to this liberal proposition."⁴⁰¹ The Society therefore followed through on their threat and entered into a contract with Rebisso, without the help of the Clyde Monument Association. The specifications for the new memorial called for a bronze "statue of *Major General James B. McPherson*, on a broken cannon, his left hand holding a field glass, and his right pointing out directions."⁴⁰² The contract between Rebisso and the Society, signed March 22, 1880, agreed to the relatively inexpensive commission of \$6,000 for the completion of the monument.⁴⁰³ The monument in Washington, in total, had cost approximately \$45,000.⁴⁰⁴ Rebisso's second monument to McPherson, even taking into account Jones' previously laid foundation and Clyde's cemetery improvements, cost less than \$10,000. The Society's previous generosity toward Rebisso and their established relationship with the artist undoubtedly helped in securing a seemingly favorable contract.

Part of Clyde's failure to enter into an agreement with the Society resulted from their inability to raise additional funds. One possible explanation for this failure was the inability to rebuild trust with the Society after they had changed the location of the first monument. Many residents may have felt that the Society had betrayed them before and might do so again.

⁴⁰⁰ Ibid.

⁴⁰¹ Andrew Hickenlooper, "Report Committee on McPherson Monument," *RPSAT*, 1882, 249.

⁴⁰² "Specification," Ibid., 250.

⁴⁰³ "Contract," Ibid., 252.

⁴⁰⁴ "Report Committee on McPherson Monument," Ibid., 253. A sizeable portion of this total comes from the \$25,000 for the monument's granite base. The payments made to Rebisso as well as to Robert Wood & Co. for the bronze casting made up the remainder of the \$45,000.

However, even more important than the possible mistrust toward the Society, was the Monument Association's inability to regenerate motivated subscribers for the monument. Even after the monument was unveiled in 1881, the Association still had trouble collecting its original subscriptions. The *Clyde Enterprise and Sentinel Weekly* published notice two weeks after the unveiling that "In this connection notice is given to subscribers to the old monument fund, that their subscriptions, if not paid soon, will be put in process of legal collection." The article explained that "This money is needed very badly, as is also that due and unpaid on the unveiling subscriptions, which will likewise be collected by law if not paid."⁴⁰⁵ Although Clyde had not entered into the Society's contract with Rebisso, many expenses still took their toll. The unveiling ceremony itself provided Clyde with a serious financial challenge. Furthermore, Congress appropriated one thousand muskets and four brass cannon to be placed around the McPherson statue, and the construction of a fence from the muskets and mounting the cannon also presented a financial burden on the small town's government.⁴⁰⁶

Just as the first contract between the Society and Rebisso set a time limit on the completion of the monument, the new contract also called for Rebisso to complete his work within 18 months of March 22, 1880 or face \$10 per day for liquidated damages.⁴⁰⁷ However, unlike the first monument, Rebisso successfully completed the second statue within the allotted time. The completed statue, cast in bronze, was shipped to Clyde, placed on the foundation, and prepared for the unveiling ceremony, scheduled for July 22, 1881, the seventeenth anniversary of the day McPherson fell in battle in front of Atlanta.

⁴⁰⁵ *Clyde Enterprise and Sentinel Weekly*, July 28, 1881.

⁴⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰⁷ "Contract," *RPSAT*, 1882, 251.

Following the completion of the statue, Mr. Callahan, the contractor whom Clyde hired to furnish and set the pedestal, took possession of the statue and placed it in position over McPherson's grave. Local residents streamed into the cemetery throughout the day to watch Callahan's work.⁴⁰⁸ The *Clyde Enterprise* reported, "This monument to Clyde's hero . . . is indeed a magnificent work. As a likeness of the original in features, the statue is said by those who knew the General in life to be perfect, while the attitude and expression are as good as could be; in fact both are grandly inspiring."⁴⁰⁹ After the statue had been situated on its pedestal, Cynthia McPherson, the general's aged mother, took a carriage from her home to view the memorial. Upon looking on the statue, tears filled her eyes and "rain[ed] down her face." Eventually she turned to General Buckland, who had accompanied her to the cemetery, and said, "Ah, little did I think, when I tied all of Jimmy's clothing in a pocket handkerchief and started him to Green Spring to work for Mr. Smith forty years ago, that I should live to see such great honor as this done to his memory."⁴¹⁰ McPherson's mother had reason to be proud, as did the people of Clyde who now had a very impressive monument for their beloved hometown hero. Following Callahan's work and Cynthia McPherson's visit, a "substantial enclosure of lumber" was built around the statue, in order to block it from view until the final unveiling ceremony.⁴¹¹

Clyde exuded a clear sense of pride for the upcoming unveiling ceremony. A month prior to the event the *Clyde Enterprise* wrote, "Without doubt the ceremonies of unveiling the Clyde statue of Gen. McPherson, July 22d, are going to draw an immense crowd of people."⁴¹² Clyde prepared to play host to numerous distinguished guests, possibly including invitees William T. Sherman, former President Rutherford B. Hayes, former President Ulysses S. Grant,

⁴⁰⁸ *Clyde Enterprise*, June 23, 1881, 3.

⁴⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴¹⁰ Cynthia McPherson quoted in *Clyde Enterprise*, June 23, 1881, 3.

⁴¹¹ *Clyde Enterprise*, June 23, 1881, 3.

⁴¹² *Ibid.*

and sitting President James Garfield. In addition to the dignitaries, numerous military organizations planned to take part in the ceremonies as well. The Sixteenth Regiment of the Ohio National Guard, six hundred men in total, planned to encamp near Clyde for one week and take part in the festivities. Captain Smithknight's Cleveland Battery, described as "perhaps the finest artillery company in the United States," as well as the infantry company of Cleveland Grays also intended to take part in the proceedings. Additionally, numerous posts of the Grand Army of the Republic planned to attend. Yet, what gave the locals of Clyde the most pride, were not the distinguished guests or military organizations who would take part in the ceremony, but "the plain people without titles, who want to help do honor to the memory of our slain General, [who] are coming in great numbers."⁴¹³ In the upcoming unveiling ceremony in Clyde, not only McPherson's military family would pay tribute to his memory, but also his childhood friends and neighbors who felt an equally deserving claim to his legacy.

Clyde's residents also demonstrated a clear sense of the importance of the unveiling ceremony for the town's image. "No such event is likely to occur again in our local history," wrote the *Clyde Enterprise*, "and Clyde cannot afford to send this multitude away thinking that they have been shabbily provided for or treated in any way."⁴¹⁴ The unveiling ceremony likely would be the largest gathering of people in Clyde's history, and the citizens did not want to put forth a negative image to the rest of the state, and in fact, the country. Numerous advertisements had been issued throughout the Mid-West, inviting people to come to Clyde.⁴¹⁵ Local leaders therefore issued a call to service to the residents to make the unveiling ceremony as perfect as possible. The *Enterprise* instructed locals that "To ensure a grand completeness of success to the

⁴¹³ Ibid.

⁴¹⁴ Ibid.

⁴¹⁵ *Daily Inter Ocean*, July 4, 1881, 4.

affair now rests with our people. Much work and money are required, to which every one certainly should contribute as liberally as possible." But even more so than money, the paper declared, "There is work ahead, work for which all hands must unite, shoulder be put to shoulder, and a long, strong pull made and kept up until everything needed by way of preparation shall be accomplished."⁴¹⁶ The unveiling ceremony served to put the town of Clyde on full display for the rest of the country. The honor previously placed in claiming the title of the hometown of General James B. McPherson, now turned simply into a sense of civic pride, a feeling that Clyde needed to make its best outward presentation during the upcoming unveiling ceremony.

The Unveiling Ceremony

John M. Lemmon and Charles H. McCleary served as the primary organizers for the unveiling ceremony in Clyde. They arranged the program, invited special guests, and prepared the small Ohio town for its big day. The two men spent weeks prior to the ceremony in preparation, often working into the night answering correspondence and arranging the events for July 22.⁴¹⁷ Although Lemmon and McCleary invited many noteworthy individuals, and Rutherford B. Hayes and William Sherman were present, other significant invitees were unable to attend. Ulysses S. Grant initially expressed hope that he could attend the event. He wrote, "if I can leave New-York . . . I shall certainly be there. My respect for Gen. McPherson was so great that I want to do everything I can to express my appreciation of the man and of his services while living."⁴¹⁸ Despite his declared interest, business and other personal circumstances

⁴¹⁶ *Clyde Enterprise*, June 23, 1881, 3.

⁴¹⁷ *Clyde Enterprise and Sentinel Weekly*, July 28, 1881.

⁴¹⁸ Ulysses S. Grant to George S. Canfield, June 30, 1881, *PUSG*, 30: 245-246. Letter also published in *New York Times*, July 12, 1881.

prevented Grant's attendance. He later wrote his regrets, declaring "I regret not being able to meet the Ohio Veterans on the coming occasion, and still more my inability to testify to the high regard I feel for the memory of McPherson who was for so long a time a member of my household."⁴¹⁹ Grant's inability to be present was a major blow for the ceremony, but the hoped for attendance of other notable dignitaries offered to counterbalance his absence. On June 28, 1881, less than a month prior to the unveiling, President James Garfield wrote, "I have received yours of the 18th . . . inviting me to attend the ceremony of the unveiling of the McPherson statue at Clyde, Ohio. . . . I hope to be present, and shall certainly do so unless something occurs that I do not know how to prevent it."⁴²⁰ Only four days after writing the letter, Charles Guiteau fatally shot President Garfield. The incident shocked the nation and created a somber mood that would also be felt at the upcoming unveiling ceremony at Clyde. Although Garfield clung to life for another 80 days, his attendance in Clyde obviously proved impossible.⁴²¹

Despite the absence of Grant and Garfield, the crowd that eventually arrived in Clyde for the unveiling ceremony equaled the town's optimistic expectations. Estimates placed the total number of people in attendance at between 15,000 and 20,000.⁴²² At dawn on July 22, 1881, a Hopkins Battery fired a salvo awakening the sleeping attendees. Many residents of Clyde had opened up their homes to strangers who were in attendance for the ceremony. However, many locals did not have anyone take them up on their hospitality. It had rained heavily over the preceding days and the weather potentially prevented even more people from attending the

⁴¹⁹ Ulysses S. Grant to Rutherford B. Hayes, July 19, 1881, *PUSG*, 30: 246.

⁴²⁰ James A. Garfield to Ralph P. Buckland, June 28, 1881, *RPSAT*, 1882, 255.

⁴²¹ For the most complete examination of the assassination of James A. Garfield and the events surrounding the incident, see Candice Millard, *Destiny of the Republic: A Tale of Madness, Medicine and the Murder of a President* (New York: Doubleday Books, 2011).

⁴²² *History of Sandusky County Ohio with Portraits and Biographies* (Cleveland, OH: H. Z. Williams and Bro, 1882), 367; *Clyde Enterprise*, March 22, 1978.

event.⁴²³ The recent rains left the dawn sky overcast with heavy clouds, but as the sun rose later that morning, the clouds slowly dispersed and the day turned out to be exceptionally lovely.⁴²⁴ The ceremony was slow to get started. The committee originally planned for a procession to move from the town to the cemetery at 1 P.M., but delays postponed the commencement until 2 P.M. General Buckland commanded the procession that stretched nearly a mile in length. The procession consisted of the First Division (the Cleveland Grays, 60 men, with band and drum corps, with General Sherman, ex-President Hayes, and the Orators and invited guests in carriages), the Second Division (the Columbus Barracks Band, fifteen or sixteen posts of the Grand Army of the Republic), the Third Division (the Hopkins' Battery of the Sixteenth Regiment of the Ohio National Guard, and the Tiffin Zouave), and the Fourth Division (the Cuyahoga Soldiers' and Sailors' Union, various other veteran organizations, and the remainder of the citizens on foot). Onlookers later described the procession as "an imposing spectacle worthy the occasion, and a fitting honor to the memory of the dead hero." As the column advanced masses of people joined the march, becoming a "compact mass of humanity, impossible to enumerate."⁴²⁵ Several thousand people already awaited the procession at the cemetery, prepared for the ceremony.

At the foot of the hill Clyde's residents constructed a platform decorated with the national colors and intended to seat the orators and special guests. Upon arrival the choir, numerous officers from the veteran organizations, and representatives from the press all gathered on the tiny structure. Before long, the platform held nearly a thousand people, causing them not only physical discomfort, but mental stress over fear of a possible collapse of the structure. The fear

⁴²³ *Clyde Enterprise and Sentinel Weekly*, July 28, 1881.

⁴²⁴ *RPSAT*, 1882, 253.

⁴²⁵ *Ibid.*, 253-254.

only intensified as seats and support beams began to break. In addition to the orators, some of the special guests included Charles Foster, the sitting governor of Ohio, and congressmen Amos Townsend and Warren P. Nobel.⁴²⁶ Cynthia McPherson also attended the ceremony as a special guest. It took much persuasion to convince the general's mother to attend the event. For many years, Cynthia had lived as a recluse, and although she later claimed to enjoy the unveiling very much, she also described having a feeling of self-depreciation at the honors that were paid to her personally.⁴²⁷

At approximately 2:20 P.M., ex-President Hayes opened the ceremony with a short address. "Seventeen years ago today, Friday, July 22d, 1864, James Birdseye McPherson was killed in battle near Atlanta, Georgia," began Hayes. "In grateful recognition of his services and character, his surviving comrades of the Army of the Tennessee, and his friends and neighbors residing at and near his birthplace, Clyde, Sandusky county, Ohio, have erected a portrait statue of heroic size in bronze." Hayes stated that the statue fittingly marked the final resting place of McPherson, standing within a few rods of his birthplace, and amid the scenes of his childhood. Hayes concluded,

The facts of his career and character will be fully spread before you by the distinguished speakers to whom that duty has been assigned. His rank, his important command, his brilliant services, the cause for which he died, his talents, his culture, his grace and beauty and soldierly accomplishments, his noble and lovable nature, so affectionate, so gentle, and at the same time so brave and manly, and his heroic death in one of the great battles of a decisive campaign while he was yet in the bloom and promise of early manhood, taken altogether, have given to McPherson a place in the hearts of mankind more tender and interesting than that which belongs to any other of the thousands of honored heroes whose death in battle his countrymen have been called to mourn. His name will be forever found on the shining roll of the world's best loved heroes. Neither Bayard, nor Sidney, nor Nelson, nor Wolfe, nor any other Knight or hero

⁴²⁶ Ibid.

⁴²⁷ *Clyde Enterprise*, May 10, 1883, 3.

of the Old World in any age had better titles to love and grateful remembrance than belong to him whose grave, here at his birthplace, we are about to mark.⁴²⁸

Just as it had to the orators who spoke at the Washington, D.C. unveiling, it seemed somewhat obvious to President Hayes that McPherson's memory would long be preserved in the hearts and minds of Americans as one of the country's greatest heroes.

Following his short address, Hayes introduced a Chaplain from the Ohio National Guard who delivered a short prayer, and then Hayes returned to the stage and turned his attention to an issue that surely was on the minds of all those in attendance. Hayes announced that he had in his possession a telegraph from President Garfield, to which the crowd cheered enthusiastically. The telegraph had actually been written on behalf of Garfield, and read, "The President sends his comrades and friends assembled his cordial greeting."⁴²⁹ The crowd then erupted with deafening cheers demonstrating their love and sympathy for their President. At the time of the ceremony, Garfield's health and the ultimate outcome of the assassination attempt remained unclear, and therefore the mood in Clyde was one of hope and encouragement. Hayes captured that mood by suggesting that a dispatch of congratulations and sympathy be sent to the President, which the crowd quickly affirmed. Hayes then read a letter that he had already prepared. It read:

To President Garfield:

The comrades and friends of General McPherson, assembled at his grave on this anniversary of his death to assist in the grateful duty of unveiling a statue erected to commemorate his character and services, rejoice to know that the President is steadily and rapidly regaining his health and strength. This large assemblage, composed of citizens representing every shade of political sentiment, is, with entire unanimity, in deepest sympathy with President Garfield, and wife, and mother and children, and heartily congratulate him and them on the cheering prospect of his complete recovery. They rejoice that in this crisis it has been shown that the Union which McPherson died to preserve is fully and firmly re-established, and that in the presence of a common affliction or a great National

⁴²⁸ *Clyde Enterprise*, March 22, 1978; *RPSAT*, 1882, 255.

⁴²⁹ D.G. Swain to Rutherford B. Hayes, July 22, 1881, *RPSAT*, 1882, 255.

peril, the people of our whole country are indeed one people. The prayer of all who are here assembled is, "God grant to our President restored health and a long, honored and useful life."

R. B. Hayes,
*President of the day.*⁴³⁰

Although Garfield continued fighting for 59 more days, the letter of congratulations from Hayes proved premature, for on September 19, 1881, Garfield finally succumbed to his wound and the infection caused by poor medical treatment from his physicians.⁴³¹

Following Hayes' reading of the congratulatory letter, General Sherman and Rebisso proceeded to the statue and pulled the cords unveiling the monument. Hayes then introduced the second orator of the day, General Manning F. Force. "In this place, in this presence, in sight of the home of his childhood, where he was born on the 14th of November, 1828, speaking to the playmates of his youth and the comrades of his career, there is little need of saying who James B. McPherson was," began Force. "They are present who remember the sunny-faced boy, cheerful, generous, affectionate, studious, diligent in every duty." Force then gave a short description of McPherson's military career and events surrounding his death. He then turned to the purpose of the ceremony. Force declared, "He needs no monument. His fame is more enduring than bronze. The monument is needed for us." He then quoted Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, saying, "The lives of great men all remind us we can make our lives sublime." What did Force mean that "the monument is needed for us?" He explained:

Let, then, the monument rise. Let it stand a perpetual monitor. Soldiers gazing on the lineaments of their loved leader will throb anew with patriotism. Citizens of Clyde will freshly remember how the child of poverty expanded to the man of fame. Succeeding generations will be reminded that true heroism is simply doing every day the duty that lies before us. And the busy tide of humanity whirling by

⁴³⁰ *Clyde Enterprise*, March 22, 1978; *RPSAT*, 1882, 256.

⁴³¹ Millard.

on these iron rails will be admonished that a noble life is greater than heaped up riches.⁴³²

Force, like others, did not expect that McPherson's memory would fade from Americans' collective memory as quickly as it did. Therefore, he most likely would have also believed the monument was needed even more so as a reminder of McPherson's life. Force's speech also provided insight into the target audience who people believed the monument would affect. Soldiers or veterans from Ohio were one group. Citizens of Clyde represented perhaps the most obvious group of onlookers upon the memorial. However, the final category, described by Force as "the busy tide of humanity whirling by," represents perhaps the most intriguing group of observers. Although in 1881, the "iron rails" appeared to be the future of long distance travel in the United States, before long the automobile and roads replaced the role of the railroad. To Force's point, though, Highway 20 passed through Clyde within view of McPherson's monument, so large groups of people over the years did in fact pass by the memorial. Beyond locals—who may or may not be familiar with who McPherson was—for others, the sight of the statue could possibly raise an interest, or potentially cause travelers to stop in Clyde and inquire after the identity and importance of McPherson. Therefore, despite Force's belief that a monument for McPherson was not needed, and that "his fame is more enduring than bronze," in fact, that is exactly the purpose the monument eventually would come to serve, reminding passersby of McPherson's life, service, and sacrifice.

Following Force's speech, Hayes introduced the next orator, General William E. Strong, a member of McPherson's staff. In contrast to Force's (and most of the other orators in both Clyde and Washington) confidence that McPherson's memory would remain strong, Strong accurately projected the potential for future generation's unawareness and curiosity as to McPherson's

⁴³² *RPSAT*, 1882, 256-259.

identity. He said, "Millions of men will stand here, after us, and will ask, 'Who was this man? What did he do? Why did his contemporaries single him out to do honor to his memory?'" Many of the other speakers seemed to take it for granted that, of course, McPherson will be remembered by future generations. Strong, more accurately than all the others, appeared to understand the nature of memory, and the forgetfulness of future generations. Despite McPherson being viewed as one of the greatest heroes in America at the end of the Civil War, future generations of Americans would indeed ask those very same questions that he posed in his speech. Strong answered that "the reply will be that he was the highest type of the American, and the highest type of the American soldier. He was a man of transcendent military ability . . . But above all he was a manly and a pure man. He was tender, and trusty and true. I speak of him in loving memory."⁴³³ Strong chose not to give a detailed history of McPherson's life, as others had previously done so sufficiently. Instead, he spoke on various topics, one being McPherson's love for the Army of the Tennessee. Strong asserted that "It is General McPherson's greatest praise that he was the highest type o[f] representative of his Nation and of our army . . . the Army of the Tennessee, which he commanded at the date of his death . . . and which he loved to idolatry." Strong continued, "In this magnificent command . . . James B. McPherson was second to none in genius, patriotism, manhood, and worth."⁴³⁴ Strong concluded his speech saying,

Around the throne of the Eternal God must hover the spirits of such as he, who lived and died without ever having a selfish thought. Here, where he was born and where his boyhood's days were passed lies all that is left of the steadfast friend, the gallant soldier, the great commander. Rest thee friend, soldier, patriot! We dedicate this monument to the manhood of America, to the manhood of the

⁴³³ Ibid., 259.

⁴³⁴ Ibid., 261-262.

world. We dedicate it to all that is high, noble and glorious in the world. We dedicate it to all the heroes and all the martyrs of all the climes and all the ages.⁴³⁵

Strong's dedication of the monument to not just McPherson, but all soldiers and heroes of the world was an interesting and somewhat surprising choice, given that it somewhat diminished the focus on McPherson himself. A similar shift in focus later dominated the other McPherson memorials as well.

Following the conclusion of Strong's speech, Hayes retook the stage, thanked Cynthia McPherson for being present, and told the story of the Seneca Indians who visited McPherson when he was just a child, who declared that "He will be a great man."⁴³⁶ Hayes then introduced General Sherman, the keynote speaker of the ceremony, proclaiming, "There is now on this platform a man who is known to every American and who needs no introduction to Americans, and I now present him."⁴³⁷ Sherman opened his speech, stating,

I have heard others describe his personal traits and eulogize his many virtues, conspicuously so . . . at the time when the Society of the Army of the Tennessee dedicated his equestrian statue in the city of Washington. It so happens that my residence is close by that statue. Every time I look from my front window I see it . . . and my mind rapidly runs back eighteen years and I see McPherson plainly on his black charger, bright, cheery strong and hopeful; one of the best types of knightly grace united to mental strength and genial humor of all my acquaintances. . . . I wish his family and friends to believe that as long as life is spared, I stand ready to do a man's full part to add a least mite to his already established fame, and to derive from his noble life and career all the lessons which may inspire the coming generations of American youth to emulate his example.⁴³⁸

Sherman followed the example of previous orators by claiming that perhaps one of McPherson's greatest legacies—or one of the chief reasons to preserve his memory—was the example he provided for young Americans. Many of the men who knew McPherson claimed he possessed

⁴³⁵ Ibid., 263.

⁴³⁶ Ibid.

⁴³⁷ Ibid.

⁴³⁸ Ibid., 264.

qualities—bravery, kindness, duty to country, chivalry, and a willingness to make the ultimate sacrifice—worthy of emulation. Sherman echoed those sentiments.

Sherman speech stretched on far longer than the previous speakers. *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper* described Sherman's mood, writing that he "was in his happiest vein, paying the highest tribute to the character and military achievements of General McPherson, in words of rugged eloquence, and entertaining his audience with reminiscences of the Mexican War."⁴³⁹ Sherman told of his first encounter with McPherson in New York in 1857. He briefly described his meteoric rise from a Lieutenant of Engineers to the commander of an army. Then, speaking of McPherson's lasting memory, Sherman stated,

All that was mortal of him lies buried here, within a few feet of where we stand, but the spirit, the genius, of the man survives, and millions will award him a full share of the fruits of a victory for which he gave his young life so nobly and so heroically. . . . A nation has adopted him as one of her heroes, and long after we are gone, and it may be, forgotten, young men will gather about his equestrian statue in Washington, and this one at Clyde, Ohio, and say to themselves, 'Behold the type of man who rescued us from anarchy; who died that freedom might become universal; that America might attain her true place in the gallery of nations, and whose virtues, heroism and self sacrifice we must imitate.'⁴⁴⁰

Sherman appeared much less prophetic regarding McPherson's lasting memory than did General Strong. He believed that even if he was one day forgotten, Americans would still remember the role McPherson served during the war. In reality, the vast majority of Americans who visit Washington, D.C. and gaze upon McPherson and Sherman's equestrian statues are more likely to be familiar with the latter general.

Sherman continued his oration by attempting to explain to the crowd the intimate bonds forged through war and on the battlefield. "The artist may model his form, the painter may

⁴³⁹ *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper*, August 13, 1881, 395. *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper*, a popular periodical, provided good national press for the event and the town of Clyde. The article also included a full illustration of the ceremony.

⁴⁴⁰ *RPSAT*, 1882, 266.

reproduce his likeness, and the historian narrate his deeds," said Sherman, "but none save his comrades in battle can feel the full force of his living, genius and character."⁴⁴¹ Given his audience—McPherson's neighbors, friends, and family—Sherman risked possible offense by boldly claiming that it was in fact McPherson's military family who knew him best.

Nonetheless, Sherman's words rang true, and many in the audience, particularly the veterans, undoubtedly understood that combat forges unique bonds and creates relationships that are distinct and separate from civilian life.⁴⁴² Nearing the end of his speech, Sherman then read the letter that he had sent to General Lorenzo Thomas following the death of McPherson outside Atlanta, believing those words captured his affections and opinion of McPherson better than he could presently express.

At the close of his speech, similar to Hayes, Sherman addressed the absence of President Garfield. "We miss from our circle one who intended to be here," said Sherman, "but who now lies on a bed of pain and anguish, where for twenty days he has been almost within the portals of death."⁴⁴³ Sherman explained to the crowd that he had begged the privilege of standing by the President's bedside, to obtain the shortest possible message for the ceremony and his comrades of the Army of the Tennessee. Unfortunately, it had been the unanimous opinion of his physicians that no one should see the President for some time.⁴⁴⁴ Informed of Sherman's request, however, Garfield replied, "God bless them all, ask General Sherman to say that in my every day of pain I have thought of them and the hope I had to have been with them. In my sufferings I feel that the

⁴⁴¹ Ibid., 266-267.

⁴⁴² Much scholarship has addressed the role of war in forging strong relationships between soldiers, including most notably Steven E. Ambrose, *Band of Brothers: E Company, 506th Regiment, 101st Airborne from Normandy to Hitler's Eagle's Nest* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1992). In fact, the very term "band of brothers" has become somewhat synonymous with the phenomenon described above.

⁴⁴³ *RPSAT*, 1882, 268.

⁴⁴⁴ *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper*, August 13, 1881, 395.

dear old State is behind me."⁴⁴⁵ The very fact that Garfield, on his deathbed, had thoughts about the unveiling ceremony and regretted his inability to attend revealed the importance of McPherson and his memory in 1881. Sherman closed his oration with,

I will not mar the effect of this tribute of affection by a single word, and I am sure that from this shrine, made sacred by the ashes of McPherson, will arise this day a prayer that the majestic form of General Garfield, full of health, energy and life, may stand where we do now, and that this clarion voice will often again be heard to cheer on in the battle of life the hosts of young heroes who have drunk inspiration at this pure fountain of patriotism.⁴⁴⁶

The assassination attempt on President Garfield certainly dampened the mood of the unveiling ceremony, and partially overshadowed the attention on McPherson; however, the focus unquestionably remained primarily on the man for whom the memorial intended to honor.

Although Sherman delivered the main oration, his speech did not close the ceremony. Hayes next introduced Governor Foster, who spoke briefly on McPherson's youth and character. Following Foster's brief speech, Hayes' gave recognition to the men most responsible for the monument, Generals Hickenlooper, Hazen, and Leggett. Hickenlooper did not attend the ceremony, but Hayes read a letter of regret from Hickenlooper for his absence.⁴⁴⁷ It appears as if Hickenlooper had a legitimate excuse for missing the unveiling, though given the hostile relationship between him and the residents of Clyde, it is possible that it was a scene he simply wanted to avoid. Hayes introduced several more speakers, including Generals Hazen, Leggett, Belknap, J. Warren Keiffer, and finally, William H. Gibson. All spoke eloquently and favorably of McPherson. Gibson concluded the long day of orations, stating,

He was born in Ohio—born in Clyde, and to-day I appeal to you to guard well his memory. . . . As the ages and the centuries shall pass, let our children and our children's children come trooping in, in the shadow of that statue; let them draw

⁴⁴⁵ Almon F. Rockwell to William T. Sherman, July 16, 1881, *RPSAT*, 1881, 268; *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper*, August 13, 1881, 395.

⁴⁴⁶ *RPSAT*, 1882, 268; *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper*, August 13, 1881, 395.

⁴⁴⁷ Andrew Hickenlooper to William E. Strong, undated, *RPSAT*, 1882, 269.

fresh inspiration for life's approaching battle. Let us to-day not only dedicate that monument, but let us dedicate ourselves to teach the boys and the young men, the grand possibilities that lie before them. I hope that in the future no immorality of fame shall be won on the battlefield. Rather let that fame be won on the battlefield of peace. But should the time come when soldiers must again fight and die, let the name of McPherson be a watchword and inspiration, and armies shall fall in, and men like him to realize that

"The fittest place for man to die
Is where he dies for man."⁴⁴⁸

The last speech finished shortly after 5 P.M., at which time Reverend J. S. Broadwell delivered a benediction and the ceremony concluded.

While the numerous orators honored the memory of McPherson on stage, an equally dramatic and fascinating story was unfolding behind the scenes within the crowd. The attendance of such a large number of people in Clyde also drew a large number of pickpockets who were looking to take advantage of the crowd. "Perhaps never was a great gathering of people worse beset with thieves, pick-pockets and criminals of that class generally, than was the multitude that gathered here last Friday," reported the *Clyde Enterprise and Sentinel*. "Attracted by the extensive advertising of the affair, and the prospective chances of plundering honest people whose presence was assured, these harpies bore down upon us from all quarters of the land, far and near."⁴⁴⁹ The paper estimated that as many as 500 criminals attended the unveiling ceremony and beset the oblivious crowd. The pickpockets were not simply random and unacquainted thieves, but highly organized and prepared not only to pull off the thievery, but also to resist arrest should authorities apprehend them. The *Enterprise and Sentinel* article explained that the thieves likely "imbibed the notion that Clyde being but a country village, would have a small and inefficient police force, which could be cowed and overridden at will."

⁴⁴⁸ RPSAT, 1882, 276.

⁴⁴⁹ *Clyde Enterprise and Sentinel Weekly*, July 28, 1881. The story of the pickpockets is also reprinted in *The Clyde Enterprise*, March 22, 1978. The 1881 unveiling ceremony was not the first time Clyde experienced pickpockets during a McPherson event. During McPherson's funeral in 1864 people reported pickpockets as well, though not nearly to the extent of what occurred in 1881. "Remember Funeral of Gen. McPherson" Clyde Public Library.

The article then proudly claimed, "In this they were mistaken." Marshal Nuneviller, of Clyde, was an experienced police officer from Boston, and expecting potential issues, reinforced his ranks with a number of special police from the surrounding area.⁴⁵⁰

Even with the reinforcements, the law enforcement officers faced a tall task in dealing with the pickpockets. The tactics employed by the thieves presented a challenge. The pickpockets targeted crowds of ten to twenty-five people, and when stealth proved impossible, some resorted to forcibly rifling through pockets. By the time the victim realized what had been done, the pocketbook or pocket watch had already been passed to one of the thief's accomplices, making it nearly impossible to track the stolen items.⁴⁵¹ When a policeman noticed a crime taking place and stepped in to make an arrest, he often found himself struck from behind to the head or neck by a billy club loaded with lead or iron. By these tactics numerous officers received serious injuries, including cuts to the head and neck, and black eyes. In one case, after being struck in the back of the head by a club, an officer shot his attacker through the hand in self defense, only to later realize that the man who he had shot was actually a policeman. Realizing the odds were against them, Marshal Nuneviler made an increase in the number of police, and slowly began capturing the criminals. Nuneviler then gathered the thieves in the local calaboose, or jailhouse.⁴⁵²

The presence of the thieves and the scenes that unfolded during and after the ceremony created an atmosphere of chaos and at times pandemonium. One Clyde citizen, Mr. E. C. Palmer, walked along Maple Street during the evening after the ceremony, when suddenly several police officers chasing an escaped pickpocket came running up behind him, calling for

⁴⁵⁰ *Clyde Enterprise and Sentinel Weekly*, July 28, 1881.

⁴⁵¹ The thieves' tactics are described in detail in *Clyde Enterprise and Sentinel Weekly*, July 28, 1881.

⁴⁵² *Ibid.*

Palmer to halt. Palmer believed the police were thieves meaning to rob him, and began to run. The officers became convinced they were after their target and fired two shots at Palmer. Luckily the shots missed their target and the two parties explained themselves before any harm had been done.⁴⁵³ In another incident, Chas. F. Pohlman, Jr., a Deputy Sheriff of Sandusky County, during his train ride home that evening found the train completely overrun by pickpockets. Pohlman arrested one man rifling through the pocket of an older gentleman. After detaining him, a gang of the pickpocket's associates attacked Pohlman, beat him, and even tried to throw him out of the rail-car window, which he barely avoided. During the fracas the thieves managed to take Pohlman's revolver and had complete control of the train, doing as they pleased. In the end, Pohlman narrowly escaped with his life.⁴⁵⁴

Although many thieves had been captured and taken to the local jail in Clyde, the drama had only just begun, as the criminals prepared for such a contingency and did not intend to abandon their associates to capture. Well aware of the local presence of the captured pickpockets' accomplices, Marshal Nuneviler requested a military guard to watch over the prisoners, which Captain Lemmon's Company I of the Sixteenth Regiment provided. The military guard remained on duty over night. However, the following evening provided the most drama. Marshal Nuneviler traveled to Sandusky to pick up two men who had been arrested on the train to Sandusky the previous evening. On their return journey to Clyde they were followed by a great crowd of men and boys. The military guard from the previous night had been dismissed, and during the night, one of the men passed an iron bar into the jailhouse, which the prisoners then used to loosen a plank in the water closet and make their escape. At least ten captured pickpockets, assisted by their outside comrades, simply mingled into the crowd

⁴⁵³ Story described in *Clyde Enterprise and Sentinel Weekly*, July 28, 1881.

⁴⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

surrounding the jailhouse and then fled to safety. The following day a manhunt ensued, during which Marshal Nuneviler recaptured three of the escaped prisoners.⁴⁵⁵

The entire incident of the pickpockets threatened to tarnish what was hoped to be the biggest day in Clyde's history. The *Clyde Enterprise and Sentinel* reported, "No man can tell how many pockets were picked, or forcibly rifled, in Clyde on the 22d. New victims are being heard from every hour. . . . The officers are of the opinion that the watches taken could be more easily estimated by bushel measurement than by numbers."⁴⁵⁶ In fact, pocket-picking represented only one of the many crimes committed during the unveiling ceremony. Thieves also burglarized many houses in and around Clyde, and a valuable mare belonging to Erastus Gould was stolen. The whole affair undoubtedly embarrassed Clyde and did not reflect well on the town's image. In fact, Clyde received some outside criticisms, particularly regarding the escape of the prisoners. To this charge, Clyde's residents defended themselves. The *Clyde Enterprise and Sentinel* wrote,

It certainly seems very unfair to charge, as has been done, the escape of several arrested pickpockets from the calaboose last Saturday night to the officers, instead of to the insecurity of the prison itself which was the real fact in the case. . . . Three of those who escaped were followed Sunday by Marshal Nuneviler and officer Harnden, who brought them back from Norwalk and placed them safely behind bars again, after the weak spot in the building had been strengthened. This too when both officers had been without rest or sleep almost continuously for three days or nights preceding. When strangers give praise to our officers for excellent conduct amid the army of desperadoes that swept down upon them—as was done in the reports of a number of the daily papers—it certainly does not become our own citizens to refuse credit to them for what they did, or to intimate carelessness in taking care of prisoners whose arrest had cost some of the hard knocks and bloody heads.⁴⁵⁷

⁴⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁵⁷ Ibid.

Following the unveiling ceremony and the incidents that followed, a state of total exhaustion set in among the people in Clyde. Many people actually had become sick and prostrated as a result of overwork.⁴⁵⁸

Overall, the unveiling ceremony accomplished for Clyde and the Society its primary objective. Even though the conditions were not perfect—particularly the heavy rains in the previous days that kept the attendance from being even larger—the occasion still produced the largest turnout for any event in Clyde's history. Despite the focus slightly diverting away from McPherson—mainly as a result of Garfield's assassination attempt—the speeches still remained concentrated on McPherson's memory and paying tribute to the man memorialized in bronze. Although certain disruptions threatened to tarnish the occasion—primarily the pickpockets and the chaos that accompanied their confrontations with the authorities—the disorder nevertheless could not overshadow the turnout of numerous prominent individuals and the tribute paid to Clyde's hometown hero. Since at least 1864, the town of Clyde had developed an identity of being "the hometown of General James B. McPherson." The residents' fight to maintain possession of his remains, the erection of an impressive bronze monument, and now a well advertised and well attended unveiling ceremony solidified Clyde's local identity. It was the hometown of General James B. McPherson.

McPherson's Memory in Clyde Through the Years

Given the role that McPherson's memory played in Clyde's local identity, the Ohio town—more than any of the other sites of his memorials—strongly preserved the general's memory through the years following the unveiling of his monument. The reasons for this appear

⁴⁵⁸ Ibid.

somewhat obvious. The residents of Clyde had strong motivation and incentive to ensure the lasting remembrance of their local hero. Not only did it add to the town's prestige, but it also offered the potential to boost local business from potential tourists who might be interested in visiting the hometown of a national hero. As a result, Clyde's residents took numerous steps following the unveiling in 1881 to ensure the lasting preservation of their hometown hero's memory.

Less than a year following the unveiling of McPherson's monument, the citizens of Clyde returned to McPherson Cemetery to celebrate Decoration Day. John Logan created the holiday known as Decoration Day, which later Americans would come to call Memorial Day, in an effort to honor the sacrifice of fallen soldiers.⁴⁵⁹ A Post of the Grand Army of the Republic conducted the ceremonies held at McPherson Cemetery on May 30, 1882. The Ohio National Guard unit from Clyde, renamed the McPherson Guards, also participated in the event.⁴⁶⁰ The veterans honored the graves of fallen soldiers, several orators delivered speeches, and then a Mr. West read a letter from a GAR post from Hackensack, New Jersey. The post was named the McPherson Post, after James B. McPherson, and they addressed the letter to Cynthia McPherson, the general's mother. It read, "I have been instructed by James B. McPherson Post No. 52, Department of New Jersey, to have an emblem or something of the sort made and sent to you, so that you may have it in time to put it on the grave of your much-loved son." The GAR post enclosed a floral pillow with the letter. Referencing the ornamentation, the letter continued, "I trust it has arrived in good order and in time for Decoration Day. Jas. B. McPherson Post has the highest esteem for you, the mother of our departed comrade."⁴⁶¹ The incident provided even

⁴⁵⁹ See Blight, 64-65 for a description of Decoration Day's meaning to Civil War veterans, and American society at large.

⁴⁶⁰ *Clyde Enterprise*, May 31, 1882; "The McPherson Guard," 1887 Clyde Directory, Clyde Public Library.

⁴⁶¹ George W. Hunter to Cynthia McPherson, May 27, 1882, *Clyde Enterprise*, May 31, 1882.

further evidence that Americans throughout the country knew of McPherson and were interested in honoring his memory in the years immediately following the Civil War.

The decoration placed over the general's grave became the most popular aspect of the day's proceedings, as "this offering . . . was probably visited by every person in the cemetery during the afternoon." The *Clyde Enterprise* described the floral display, writing,

It was composed of a mass of white petunias, red and purple immortelles, tastefully varied by Marshal Neil cream-colored roses and snow-white callas, the whole bordered with an entwining trail of smilax. The number of the New Jersey Post (No. 52) was wrought in red immortelles near the top of the pillow, a sword of purple immortelles lay diagonally across. . . . It was indeed beautiful, expressive tribute to the memory and virtues of the soldier of national renown whose remains lie in our village cemetery.⁴⁶²

The offering pleased the citizens of Clyde, and in particular, Cynthia McPherson. She penned the following day a letter of thanks to the editor of the *Enterprise*. She wrote,

Please allow me space in your paper to offer my thanks to the Post of the Grand Army of the Republic at Hackensack, N.J., for the beautiful and costly pillow of flowers its members sent to place on the grave of my dear son on Decoration Day. I am indeed very thankful to them. To have such a tribute to the memory and character of my dead boy sent from so great a distance does my heart good. It helps me to feel, in the lonesome bereavement of old age, that many other people besides his mother did indeed love him, and do yet cherish his name and memory. I thank them again for calling their Post after James, and for so kindly remembering me.⁴⁶³

Cynthia McPherson truly took comfort and joy in knowing that others throughout the country recognized and honored her son. Soon, however, McPherson's memory outside of Clyde began to slowly fade.

In the early 1880s, most of the generation who experienced the Civil War remained living, and their memories still encompassed the many heroes who had fallen during the conflict, McPherson being chief among them. Over time, however, the Civil War generation began

⁴⁶² *Clyde Enterprise*, May 31, 1882.

⁴⁶³ Cynthia McPherson to "Editor Enterprise," May 31, 1882, *Clyde Enterprise*, May 31, 1882.

giving way to a new generation whose memories of the conflict were more distant and vague. On the Sunday morning of May 6, 1883, Cynthia McPherson, at the age of seventy-seven, passed away. The local newspaper paid a worthy tribute to "this 'mother in Israel' with whose name a Nation has become familiar."⁴⁶⁴ Both of McPherson's brothers, William and Russell, had died prior to their mother's passing, leaving Emeline as the only surviving member of the immediate McPherson family. The passing of the McPherson family was representative of the inevitable nature of life that affected families all across the country. As more people from the Civil War generation passed away, the number of individuals who had real memories of McPherson—whether through personal encounter or simply reading second-hand accounts—continued to shrink. As the rest of the country's memory of Clyde's heroic son began to fade, the task fell to the town's residents to take the mantle of responsibility in preserving McPherson's memory.

In 1915, the residents of Clyde formed a new Memorial Committee with the purpose of getting the Federal government to pay for a new monument in Clyde, located at McPherson's childhood home. The effort represented the first attempt to recognize and preserve what the people of Clyde believed to be a historically important location. The committee selected N. B. Mason as its secretary and tasked him with taking active charge of the work.⁴⁶⁵ The committee printed a brochure in which they made their case for why McPherson's boyhood home deserved a memorial. "The National Government has spent many millions of dollars for monuments and memorials to her soldiers and citizens who have rendered distinguished service or made great sacrifices to and for the Nation," read the brochure, "but we believe it has never been called upon to contribute one dollar, either to the State of Ohio or the people of his home town, for any

⁴⁶⁴ *Clyde Enterprise*, May 10, 1883, 3.

⁴⁶⁵ "Brochure of the Committees," *JMP*, TL, Box 1, Folder 3.

monument memorial, or even a tablet, to the memory of General McPherson."⁴⁶⁶ Technically, the brochure's statement was true. The Federal government had not contributed specific money to the state of Ohio or the town of Clyde for a memorial for McPherson. However, the claim overlooks the \$25,000 Congressional appropriation for the pedestal in Washington, D.C., its contribution of captured cannons, and Congress' bequeathing and renaming of McPherson Square in his honor. In fact, the Federal government had contributed generously to memorialize McPherson, just not in the state of Ohio.

Nevertheless, the Committee actively pursued its goal of obtaining a new memorial. The brochure argued,

. . . in consideration of the great service rendered to this Nation by General McPherson, and the great sacrifices—not only of his life-work, but his life his heart's blood—the soldiers, and citizens of Clyde and vicinity feel that they are justified in asking of the National Congress an appropriation that will enable them to erect to the memory of our illustrious and honored dead a memorial befitting the man and the services he rendered our country.⁴⁶⁷

The new request did not diminish the satisfaction and pride Clyde's citizens took in their bronze monument over McPherson's grave, but simply signified a desire to further memorialize their hometown hero by whatever means available. They additionally enlisted the support of their Congressman, Arthur W. Overmyer, who promised to render "all the assistance he can in Congress."⁴⁶⁸ In addition to the brochure, the committee also made postcards with a very similar message. One postcard read,

The general government has never been called upon by the people of Clyde or the state of Ohio for a single dollar for monument, memorial or tablet in Ohio. The monument over his grave was secured by donations from the army of the Tennessee and Clyde and Sandusky county. The people of Clyde and the state of Ohio will ask the next congress for an appropriation to erect at his old home a

⁴⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁶⁸ Ibid.

memorial in recognition of his distinguished services. We ask your approval and support.⁴⁶⁹

Despite their considerable effort and thorough advertisements, the committee did not succeed in getting an appropriation from Congress. That did not, however, end their pursuit to preserve McPherson's boyhood home as a historically significant site.

The log cabin where McPherson had been born in 1828 burned to the ground only two years later in 1830.⁴⁷⁰ However, some Clyde residents believed that the site of McPherson's birth deserved recognition, even if no cabin still existed. In 1960, Thaddeus Hurd and the Sandusky County Historical Society erected a historic marker identifying the site of the log cabin. The location of McPherson's birthplace lies by a curve in Highway 101 in Clyde, just north of the cemetery. Its marker reads, "McPherson Birthplace: Here stood the log cabin where General James B. McPherson was born Nov. 14, 1828." Nothing special surrounds the marker but a few local residences and open Ohioan fields, a proper reflection of McPherson's humble beginnings. On July 22, 1960, the community of Clyde celebrated the dedication of the marker, while also observing the 95th anniversary of McPherson's death.⁴⁷¹ The actions taken by Hurd and the Sandusky County Historical Society represented yet another step in the ongoing process of McPherson's memorialization in Clyde.

Meanwhile, the house in which McPherson grew up continued to be of chief concern to the Clyde community. By 1960, the home had only its fourth owner. However, one of the families who owned the home, the Zielley family, sold it back and forth like a "ping pong ball" during one stretch of time. When the owner needed money he would sell the home to his father, and then when financial times improved the father would sell it back to the son. As a result, the

⁴⁶⁹ "Mint Postcard," "I am a booster for the McPherson Memorial," *JMP*, TL, Box 1, Folder 3.

⁴⁷⁰ Thad Hurd, "McPherson activities slated for this Sunday," *Clyde Enterprise*, June 17, 1985, 1A.

⁴⁷¹ George J. Barmann, "Statue of War Hero Dominates Ohio Town," *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, May 30, 1960.

records show a series of sales from Zielley to Zielley, even though the home never truly left the family.⁴⁷² By the mid-twentieth century the house belonged to the Wagoner family, who reportedly greatly respected the historical significance of the home.⁴⁷³

The residents of Clyde successfully convinced the National Register of Historical Monuments to place the McPherson House on its list in 1974.⁴⁷⁴ Although still privately owned, the move at least brought some national recognition to Clyde's historic site. The Clyde Heritage League erected a new bronze plaque in front of the house at the cost of \$210. The Daughters of Union Veterans, Mattie McPherson Tent No. 46 of Clyde, unveiled the plaque in 1985.⁴⁷⁵ The plaque reads, "McPherson House Built 1833 Has Been Placed on the National Register of Historical Places By the United States Department of the Interior."⁴⁷⁶ Most local residents throughout the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century most likely would have been aware of the historic significance of the house, but its placement on the National Register of Historic Monuments and the erection of the plaque gave the site a little more identification for outsiders and interested visitors.

The significant change for the McPherson House occurred in 1995 when the owners of the residence, Harry and Wanda Meyer, presented the home as a gift to the Clyde Heritage League.⁴⁷⁷ Following the Meyer's gift, the home was no longer a private domicile, but could be transformed into a public history museum. The Clyde Heritage League transformed the home into a fitting tribute to McPherson, with numerous exhibits and historical artifacts on display.

⁴⁷² Ibid.

⁴⁷³ Ibid.

⁴⁷⁴ Liz Bobbitt, "McPherson: bright star that burned briefly," *News-Messenger, Fremont, Ohio*, June 30, 1975; *Clyde Enterprise*, June 17, 1985.

⁴⁷⁵ *Clyde Enterprise*, June 17, 1985.

⁴⁷⁶ Observed by the author.

⁴⁷⁷ Wanda Meyer's maiden name was Wagoner, thus Harry and Wanda Meyer were the last owners from the Wagoner family. A plaque erected in front of the McPherson House reads, "In Grateful Acknowledgement to Harry & Wanda (Wagoner) Meyer For the Gift of this House to Clyde Heritage League, Inc. December 1995."

The League—which also maintains and runs the Clyde Historical Museum located on Buckeye Street—preserves and manages the McPherson House, transferring certain artifacts between the House and the Museum. For example, the League prominently displays McPherson's sword, which was returned to Cynthia McPherson following her son's death and later donated to the museum by the Russell family in 1982.⁴⁷⁸ Another interesting item on display in the McPherson House includes the plaster of Paris mold of Clyde's monument, created by Rebisso at his Cincinnati Art Foundry.⁴⁷⁹ The display simply enhances the significance of the monument's role in McPherson's memorialization.

Other than the McPherson memorial at his gravesite, the McPherson House offers the general public the best opportunity to learn about Clyde's "forgotten hero." Although the House is not open to the public on a regular hourly schedule, the Clyde Heritage League does offer tours by appointment.⁴⁸⁰ The House, located on the corner of the busy Highway 20 and Maple Street, is well advertised to the passing public. In 2003, the Scotts Company of the Ohio Bicentennial Commission erected a historical marker in front of the McPherson House. It reads,

General James Birdseye McPherson

James Birdseye McPherson was born in Hamer's Corners (now Clyde) on November 14, 1828. He left this house at age 13 to work in nearby Green Springs. He attended Norwalk Academy and West Point, where he graduated first in the class of 1853. Early in the Civil War, he was appointed by General Ulysses S. Grant to command the Army of the Tennessee. He received the rank of Major General with the United States Volunteers in October 1862 and was promoted to Brigadier General in the Regular Army in August 1863. He was killed in action during the battle of Atlanta, Georgia on July 22, 1864. General McPherson was the youngest and highest ranking Union Officer killed in the Civil War. He is buried in the local McPherson Cemetery. This McPherson home is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

⁴⁷⁸ McPherson was not wearing his sword when he was killed, so it was in the possession of the Union Army. Cynthia passed the sword on to W. Spencer Russell, James' cousin, whose family eventually donated it to the museum. Information on display in the McPherson House, visited by the author in 2014.

⁴⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁸⁰ Information printed on a flyer for the McPherson House available at numerous Clyde locations, including local hotels, the Clyde Historical Museum, and the Clyde Public Library.

Ohio Bicentennial Commission
The Scotts Company--Founded
by a Civil War Veteran
The Ohio Historical Society
2003⁴⁸¹

In addition, two separate, but identical, signs in front of the McPherson House read,

The McPherson House
c. 1833
Boyhood Home of
Major General
James B. McPherson
b. 14 Nov. 1828 - d. 22 July 1864
Highest Ranking Union Officer
Killed in the Civil War⁴⁸²

In the twenty-first century, the advertisement and publicizing of the McPherson House are important for an outside public who may be completely unaware of McPherson's history. The Clyde Heritage League also prints and distributes a pamphlet advertising the McPherson house at various locations in Clyde. The handout gives a brief history of McPherson as well as a history of Clyde's monument. For the 150th anniversary of the Civil War, and perhaps anticipating the heightened interest that would accompany the anniversary, a special McPherson House Advertisement was printed and distributed. Although the public can buy various items at the House, including Whaley's *Forgotten Hero*, postcards of the general, and various other McPherson mementos, the League does not charge an entry fee for the home, and does not appear overly interested in making a profit from the historic site. Instead, the League seems far more interested in conveying the fascinating, and for Clyde, locally significant history of McPherson to the public, and in the process, accomplishes a small part in preserving the general's memory.

⁴⁸¹ Ohio Historical Marker 9-72.

⁴⁸² Observed by author in 2014.

In addition to the McPherson House, the community of Clyde took further steps to honor McPherson following the unveiling of his monument. The Daughters of Union Veterans of Clyde funded and erected a bronze tablet on the pedestal of McPherson's statue in 1922.⁴⁸³ Civil War monuments and bronze statues of the size and scale of McPherson's typically included a plaque or tablet of some kind, so the absence of any marker led to the organization's decision to add one to the memorial. The residents dedicated the new plaque on May 30, 1922. McPherson's 90 year old cousin, Phoebe Russell Mugg removed the flag that covered the tablet, thus officially unveiling it. Judge S. S. Richards made a short address and presented the tablet to the people of Clyde.⁴⁸⁴ Cast in bronze, the tablet measured 19.5 by 26.5 inches and had a bronze eagle holding a flag in its claws at the top of the tablet. The inscription reads,

DEDICATED TO THE MEMORY OF
JAMES BIRDSEYE MCPHERSON
BORN AT CLYDE, OHIO, NOV. 14, 1828;
GRADUATED FROM WEST POINT, 1853;
APPOINTED BREVET SECOND LIEUTENANT OF
ENGINEERS 1853;
APPOINTED CAPTAIN AUG. 6, 1861;
SERVED IN THE FIELD AT THE OPENING OF THE CIVIL WAR
PROMOTED TO MAJOR GENERAL OCT. 8, 1862.
HE TOOK AN IMPORTANT PART IN THE SIEGE AND
CAPTURE OF VICKSBURG, JULY 4, 1863 AND WAS
APPOINTED BRIGADIER GENERAL OF U.S. ARMY AUG. 1, 1863;
MADE COMMANDER OF THE ARMY OF TENNESSEE MARCH 12, 1864.
HE WAS ACTIVE IN THE GEORGIA CAMPAIGN,
COMMANDED IN THE ENGAGEMENT AROUND ATLANTA
AND WAS KILLED WHILE MAKING A
RECONNOISSANCE ON JULY 22, 1864.
GENERAL MCPHERSON WAS THE HIGHEST RANKING
OFFICER KILLED IN ACTION DURING THE CIVIL WAR.

THIS TABLET ERECTED BY
"MATTIE MCPHERSON TENT NO. 46

⁴⁸³ Thad Hurd, "McPherson activities slated for this Sunday," *Clyde Enterprise*, June 17, 1985, 1A.

⁴⁸⁴ Handout available at the McPherson House. "The History of the Major General James Birdseye McPherson Clyde, Ohio Monument." Author collected pamphlet during visit to Clyde in 2014.

DAUGHTERS OF VETERANS"
DEDICATED MAY 30, 1922

Two points are worth making about the choice of words inscribed on the bronze tablet. First, the Daughters of Veterans dedicated the tablet neither to the Society of the Army of the Tennessee, nor to Civil War veterans in general, but instead, specifically to the memory of James Birdseye McPherson. The intent of their tablet, and now the memorial had been made clear: that it honored the memory of McPherson. The second point includes the inscription's claim that McPherson was made commander of the "Army of Tennessee." In fact, the tablet is factually incorrect. McPherson's promotion placed him in command of the Army of *the* Tennessee. The Army of Tennessee actually fought against McPherson and contained the Confederate force that killed him at Atlanta. The simple omission of a "the," although seemingly small, completely changed the accuracy of the statement, and made the line factually incorrect. Most veterans, or Americans in general for that matter, would have known the difference between the Army of *the* Tennessee and the Army of Tennessee during and shortly after the war. By 1922, however, signs began to point to the slow decay of the memory of the conflict, as reflected by the minor error in the plaque.

Another act of memorialization undertaken by the city of Clyde included the dedication of Highway 20 as the "General McPherson Highway." As early as 1919, the McPherson Memorial Committee—the same committee who attempted to get the Federal government to fund a memorial at McPherson's boyhood home—petitioned various GAR posts for support in an effort to rename the highway. In a letter seeking support, Secretary of the Committee N. B. Mason wrote,

Your Post is most respectfully requested to assist by petition a movement of great concern to every member of the Grand Army of the Republic. That we may honor the memory and further immortalize the name of the highest ranking officer

killed in the great Civil War we seek to establish the name "McPherson Highway" as the legal and permanent name of the roadway which passes through the former McPherson property in Clyde, Ohio, and on which borders beautiful McPherson Cemetery. . . . The prompt action of every Post will insure the full success of this worthy project and will result in giving it the publicity it deserves. . . . The present request entails no expense and requires only the Grand Army endorsement.⁴⁸⁵

Similar to the Committee's attempt to acquire a memorial at the McPherson House, the effort to rename the highway faltered and would have to wait several more years. Eventually, however, the town's efforts succeeded and the dedication of the "General McPherson Highway" took place on August 9-10, 1941 during the Reunion of Ohio Civil War Veterans.

An interesting incident involving the McPherson Memorial Highway perfectly depicted the fading memory of McPherson during the twentieth century. In 1960, residents of Willoughby in Lake County, Ohio noticed the signs marking Highway 20 "General McPherson Highway," and inquired into the general's identity. A local newspaper, the *News-Herald*, published an article titled "Lake County's Rt. 20 Is Tribute To 34-Year-Old Civil War General." The author of the article wrote, "The sign goes unnoticed by thousands of motorists daily, but the folks at City Hall are well aware that their municipality honors this man. Questions they can't answer, though, include: Who was Gen. McPherson? Why and when was Euclid avenue designated to honor him? Who put the sign there in the first place?"⁴⁸⁶ Upon further inquiry, the author still couldn't find answers to his questions. He asked the local Police Chief, James Coleman, who responded, "I don't know who Gen. McPherson was . . . but we've got a road named after him." The Mayor of Willoughby, Gar. J. Pierce, investigated the sign and reported, "The oldest man in my office—and he's pretty old—said that page of history has been torn out of

⁴⁸⁵ N. B. Mason to Unidentified GAR Post, February 21, 1919, Clyde Public Library.

⁴⁸⁶ "Lake County's Rt. 20 Is Tribute To 34-Year-Old Civil War General," *News-Herald*, July 28, 1960, reprinted in "'Forgotten Hero' Arouses Curiosity, General McPherson Highway Sign Puzzles Lake County Community And Newspaper," *Clyde Enterprise*, October 18, 1960, C3, 9.

his memory." Pierce continued, saying, "Many highways have designations on them. . . . Most of them are Civil War veterans, I think. This is just another one of those."⁴⁸⁷ The confusion of the citizens of Willoughby and their unawareness of McPherson's historic significance reflected the fact that outside of the town of Clyde, Americans' memory of McPherson had significantly diminished during the twentieth century. Even a community in northern Ohio, that had McPherson Memorial Highway pass through their town, did not know the identity of the general.

Just as illuminating as Willoughby's unawareness of McPherson was the residents of Clyde's response to the article. Joe Chidley, a Clyde citizen, found the *News-Herald* article and brought it to the attention of the *Clyde Enterprise*. In response, the *Enterprise* published an answer to the *News-Herald's* inquiry, writing, "We should like to point out to the Lake County newspaper folks that U. S. Route 20 through Ohio was officially designated as the 'General McPherson Highway' by the State Legislature some years ago, and the highway has been marked with the signs in question all the way through this State for some years."⁴⁸⁸ The tone of the *Enterprise* article seemed to reflect a certain offense taken by the Clyde residents at the lack of knowledge on the part of Willoughby. The article provided a short history of McPherson in Clyde, including the unveiling of the monument and the renaming of the highway. Then, the author, in a somewhat passive-aggressive manner, wrote "may we suggest that if the Willoughby folks really want to learn all about General McPherson, one of the most famous of Union Generals, they should go to their bookstore right away and get a copy of Mrs. Elizabeth Whaley's author[itative] book, 'Forgotten Hero: General James B. McPherson.'"⁴⁸⁹ The *Enterprise* very possibly had a real desire to educate the citizens of Willoughby, but there also clearly existed a

⁴⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸⁸ "'Forgotten Hero' Arouses Curiosity, General McPherson Highway Sign Puzzles Lake County Community And Newspaper," *Clyde Enterprise*, October 18, 1960, C3, 9.

⁴⁸⁹ Ibid.

sense of frustration. The article ended with, "Anyway, they'd better be careful what they say about McPherson, for, as Joe Chidley remarked the story in Lake County paper, 'articles like that could start another Civil War!'"⁴⁹⁰ Although the author most likely included the line for humor, it also revealed a degree of annoyance over Willoughby's ignorance regarding Clyde's hometown hero.

In 1994, perhaps in an effort to alleviate the lack of knowledge regarding the McPherson Memorial Highway, the residents of Clyde spearheaded the erection of four new signs along the roadway. On October 14, 1994, the Ohio Department of Transportation along with State Senator Karen Gillmor, and Ralph Roger—the head of the Clyde Museum and the man most responsible for the rededication of the highway—officially unveiled one of four new signs at a roadside park east of Woodville, Ohio on US 20. The Ohio Department of Transportation erected the four new signs at the Indiana and Ohio state lines as well as two roadside rest areas. The intention of the new markers, as a *Clyde Enterprise* article stated, hopefully would lead to "Clyde's 'forgotten hero' of the Civil War . . . finally [receiving] his due."⁴⁹¹ Senator Gillmor delivered a short dedication speech during the ceremony, and The Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War had the honor of placing the Historical Markers in place.⁴⁹² Although minor, the four new signs along McPherson Memorial Highway continued to raise awareness for Clyde's "Forgotten Hero."

In a further act of memorialization, the Clyde Community Council along with the Ohio Historical Society erected a historic marker in McPherson Cemetery in 1976. The marker reads,

McPherson Cemetery
since 1824
Named for Major General James B. McPherson,
buried here July 29, 1864. Here also are graves of

⁴⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁴⁹¹ "McPherson Highway dedication Friday," *Clyde Enterprise*, October 12, 1994.

⁴⁹² Program, Clyde Public Library.

George Burton Meek, U.S.N, first American service-
man killed in the War with Spain; Congressional
Medal of Honor recipients Charles H. McCleary,
Civil War, and Rodger W. Young, World War II; Emma
Anderson, mother of author Sherwood Anderson.
Clyde Community Council
and
The Ohio Historical Society⁴⁹³

The marker identified not only who the citizens of Clyde considered their greatest local heroes, but also the individuals who forged Clyde's local identity. By far two of Clyde's most proudly claimed historical facts include the setting of Sherwood Anderson's *Winesburg, Ohio* and the hometown of General James B. McPherson. Not surprisingly, both individuals were included in the historical marker. The Clyde Community Council erected the marker at the entrance of the cemetery under a decorative metal archway, erected in 1948, with the word "McPherson" across the top.⁴⁹⁴ Both the archway and the marker offer assistance to any out of town tourist who may be curious who the statue on the hill—visible from the entrance—memorializes.

Perhaps the greatest evidence of McPherson's continued importance to Clyde's identity, and the community's ongoing effort to preserve the general's memory, involved the local effort to restore the McPherson statue in 1985. After 104 years in the McPherson Cemetery, Rebisso's work had sustained substantial wear and dilapidation. The bronze had become coated with a grayish-green corrosion and the surface of the work became pitted.⁴⁹⁵ Clyde's City Council, under the direction of Nelson Summit, city manager, and Mayor Pat Wadsworth, agreed that the conditions of the memorial demanded action. The group hired Eleftherios Karkadoulis, an artist from Cincinnati, to remove the monument from its pedestal, clean the inside and outside of the statue, to repair the cracks, and to rebronze the work. In addition to the memorial itself, the city

⁴⁹³ Ohio Historical Marker, 3-72.

⁴⁹⁴ The archway, built in 1848, was erected "in memory of Jesse R. Beard, by Dora Beard." Observed by author in 2014.

⁴⁹⁵ *Clyde Enterprise*, June 17, 1985.

paid to remove and clean the cannons surrounding the monument and to install new granite bases under each. The entire refurbishment process lasted a two month period. The cost to Clyde's local government totaled \$10,500.⁴⁹⁶ The willingness of the city council to expend such a large amount of money indicated the continued significance McPherson's memory served in Clyde's local identity. The landmark's weathered state demanded repairs so that the community could once again take pride in their local hero's monument.

Clyde's City Council took no shortcuts in the memorial's restoration. The hiring of Karkadoulis, a well-established metal art restoration expert, attested to their willingness to spare no expense. Karkadoulis, a Greek national who immigrated to the United States in 1969, had a solid reputation by 1985. His most noteworthy commission included the restoration of the Tyler Davidson Fountain, one of the most iconic local landmarks in Cincinnati.⁴⁹⁷ Impressed by Karkadoulis' work, Clyde's leadership decided he was the man for the job. However, the artist operated a busy Cincinnati art foundry, and the McPherson statue represented only a small job in comparison to his previous commissions to restore monuments at Gettysburg as well as the capital buildings in North and South Carolina and Tennessee.⁴⁹⁸ In the 100 years since Clyde unveiled the McPherson statue, restoration and preservation techniques had drastically evolved. Karkadoulis first cleaned the statue with high impact glass beads, removing the dirt and grime that had accumulated over the years. The cleaning technique is similar to sand-blasting. Next, he filled in the pits and holes with bronze to match the statue's original metal. Finally, Karkadoulis applied a clear patina finish to highlight the details and color of the statue, and

⁴⁹⁶ *Toledo Blade*, May 17, 1985; *Clyde Enterprise*, June 17, 1985. The cost included \$5,900 for the statue, and \$1,150 for each of the four bronze cannons.

⁴⁹⁷ James Russell, "Restoring statues is an art," *Clyde Enterprise*, June 17, 1985, 1A.

⁴⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 11A.

lastly applied a protective coating to defend against future weathering of the monument.⁴⁹⁹ The artist commended Clyde on both the mastery of the work, and for their foresight in restoring it. "This is a beautiful piece," said Karkadoulis, "It shows you have depth. This is something worth preserving. Once you lose it; it's gone forever."⁵⁰⁰ The artist accomplished the restoration on time and the City Council set the rededication ceremony for July 21, 1985.



Figure 2: McPherson Monument, Clyde, Ohio (Photograph by the author, 2013)

Similar to the unveiling ceremony that occurred 104 years earlier, Clyde focused the rededication of the statue on honoring McPherson's memory. The program for the day began with an open house at the McPherson House, followed by an unveiling of the bronze plaque on the home. The ceremonies then moved to the cemetery for the rededication of the statue. Following the rededication, the memoriam moved to Heritage Hall where various McPherson

⁴⁹⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰⁰ Karkadoulis quoted in James Russell, "Restoring statues is an art," *Clyde Enterprise*, June 17, 1985, 11A.

items from the Clyde Museum were on display.⁵⁰¹ Margaret Nicely, a distant relative of McPherson, delivered a short talk on the McPherson family in Clyde. All of the events were free and open to the public. Clyde's historical society, The Heritage League, sold a reprinted edition of Whaley's *Forgotten Hero* for \$3.50, as well as blue and gold souvenir ribbons for \$1.⁵⁰² Any of the residents who attended the ceremony had the opportunity to purchase a small souvenir to commemorate the event, or to read Whaley's short biography on their hometown hero. Clyde's restoration of the monument and the accompanying rededication ceremony revealed the town's continued esteem for McPherson, over 120 years after his death.

Following the restoration of Clyde's McPherson monument, Clyde's City Council turned their attention to restoring McPherson's other most prominent memorial in Washington, D.C.. Clyde's legal consultant, Gregg Ottinger, whose office was located in Washington, D.C., reported to Clyde's government that the equestrian statue in McPherson Square had turned an old shade of green, and was not in the best condition. Upon receiving this news, City Manager Nelson Summit wrote a letter to Rep. Delbert Latta, requesting that the federal government do something to restore the monument. Summit's work paid off, and the National Park Service organized the restoration of McPherson's memorial.⁵⁰³ Summit's actions proved that the concern of the residents of Clyde for preserving McPherson's memory extended beyond their small Ohioan town.

Another example of how McPherson became a fascination for some of Clyde's local residents includes Randy Dick's collection of McPherson memorabilia. In 1994 the *Family Times* interviewed Dick and wrote a story about his growing collection that he had accumulated

⁵⁰¹ The program's schedule printed in Steve Goble, "McPherson's statue to resume its Clyde stand," *News-Messenger, Fremont, Ohio*, July 20, 1985 and *Clyde Enterprise*, June 17, 1985.

⁵⁰² *Clyde Enterprise*, June 17, 1985.

⁵⁰³ *News-Messenger, Fremont, Ohio*, June 9, 1988.

over the years. John C. Moor, the article's author, wrote, "Always a Civil War buff, Randy's fascination with McPherson began when he bought something with a picture of the general on it. From that day on he was hooked."⁵⁰⁴ Since then, his collection has grown to include numerous McPherson pieces, including original photographs, original letters, and even ribbons from the 1881 dedication of the McPherson monument in Clyde. When interviewed for the article, Dick revealed the source of his attraction to McPherson. "A lot of people don't know who he is," he stated. However, despite the fading memory of McPherson, Dick believed he still can provide an example to the current generation. "The world's forgotten the difference between right and wrong," stated Dick. "I'm a firm believer in principles and values. McPherson was the type of man I would've admired. He came from a time that when you gave a man your word that was enough. I want to bring up my child that way."⁵⁰⁵ In 1994, at the time of the *Family Times*' article, Dick's collection was 15 years in the making, and by 2014 his collection continued to grow.⁵⁰⁶ Dick deservedly holds the title of the country's leading McPherson memorabilia collector. His collection and his fascination in the general provide further proof that McPherson's memory remains strong in Clyde, Ohio among certain residents well into the twenty-first century.

Further evidence of recent remembrance of McPherson in Clyde and the surrounding Ohio area includes the "McPherson Days," an annual event put on by the city of Clyde. McPherson Days—later simply referred to as Civil War Days—represents Sandusky County's largest Civil War reenactment and general tribute to the Civil War veterans of the county. Scott Thomas, the reenactor who portrays McPherson, plays a particularly important role in the event.

⁵⁰⁴ John C. Moor, "Randy Dick Brings McPherson 'To Life,'" *Family Times*, February 1994, 9.

⁵⁰⁵ Dick quoted in *Family Times*, February 1994, 9.

⁵⁰⁶ During this author's visit to Clyde in 2014 he met with Dick, viewed his collection, and discussed McPherson.

He takes his role as McPherson very seriously, and as a result, is well educated on McPherson's life. He also enjoys taking every opportunity to educate others on McPherson's history.⁵⁰⁷ Brenda Stultz, the curator of Clyde Museum and General McPherson House from 2007 to 2016, also actively participated in the Civil War Days and tried to bring attention to McPherson. In one interview Stultz stated, "Bottom line is, we would like people to remember he was an able leader. He was respected as an able leader by both the North and the South."⁵⁰⁸ During the 150th anniversary of the Civil War, and particularly in 2014—the 150th anniversary of McPherson's death, Clyde made several efforts to highlight McPherson's importance. Clyde Public Library had special displays of various McPherson related history, with particular interest paid to McPherson's memorialization and the various monuments built in his honor. The Clyde Public Library and the Heritage League brought in renowned Civil War historian Steven Woodworth to give a lecture on General McPherson and his role with the Army of the Tennessee. The lecture drew large attendance and was even recorded and archived by C-SPAN.⁵⁰⁹ The continued local interest in McPherson proves that at least one community still remembers Clyde's "Forgotten Hero."

Following the change of location of the first memorial to Washington, D.C., the residents of Clyde had reason to despair. However, perseverance combined with the desire of the Society to continue McPherson's memorialization eventually led to Clyde acquiring a monument of its

⁵⁰⁷ Vicki Johnson, "Being Birdseye: Clyde's native son made his mark during the Civil War," *Advertiser-Tribune* (Tiffin, Ohio), July 20, 2014, C1.

⁵⁰⁸ Stultz quoted in *Advertiser-Tribune* (Tiffin, Ohio), July 20, 2014, C1. According to the *Clyde Enterprise*, Stultz stepped down as curator on April 7, 2016, Scott Mahoney, "Brenda Stultz retires as curator of Clyde Museum," *Clyde Enterprise*, April 1, 2016.

⁵⁰⁹ The author also attended this lecture, met personally with Steven Woodworth after the event and discussed the memory of the general. Video of lecture can be found at "General James B. McPherson and the Army of the Tennessee," *C-SPAN*, July 26, 2014. Accessed August 18, 2016. <https://www.c-span.org/video/?320621-1/discussion-james-b-mcpherson-army-tennessee>.

own. Certain distractions—chiefly the assassination attempt on President Garfield and the numerous pickpockets that disturbed the ceremony—slightly diminished the spotlight on McPherson during the unveiling, however, the primary focus remained on honoring the general and paying tribute to his memory. The successful erection of a bronze statue over McPherson's grave provided Clyde with legitimacy and validated their claim of being the home of Major General James B. McPherson, a crucial part of the town's identity.

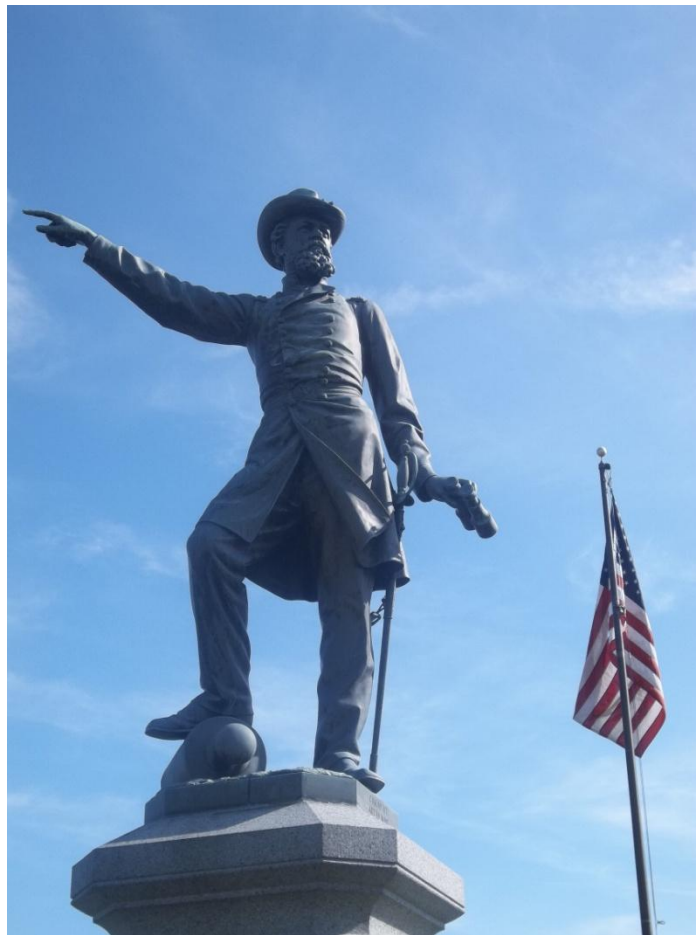


Figure 3: Close-up of McPherson Monument, Clyde, Ohio (Photograph by the author, 2013)

Following the unveiling of the memorial in 1881, the community continued to build on their memorialization efforts. The best example of these efforts resulted in the acquisition of McPherson's boyhood home, and its transformation by the Heritage League into a museum to the

general. Any visitor passing through Clyde can visit the McPherson House and learn about the Civil War hero. The other major accomplishment of the residents of Clyde was their successful renaming of Highway 20 as General McPherson Highway. Signs erected throughout the state of Ohio pay tribute and honor McPherson's memory. Further local remembrance of McPherson appears elsewhere. Whether it be the city's restoration of the monument in 1985, Randy Dick's large collection of McPherson memorabilia, or Scott Thomas' reenactment of McPherson during Civil War Days, the memory of the general lives on in Clyde, Ohio.

Compared to the other sites of McPherson's memorials, Clyde offers a unique example of the lasting preservation of the general's memory. Particularly as a result of the fact that McPherson played such an important role in Clyde's local identity, the memory of the general never faded as much in northern Ohio as it would throughout the rest of the country. Ever since McPherson gained fame during the Civil War, and especially following his death, Clyde proudly claimed to be the home of General James B. McPherson. Therefore, the town had a motivation not only to preserve the general's memory, but also to promote his memory beyond the limits of Clyde. The more well known McPherson became, the better for Clyde. The incentive did not necessarily stem from increased revenue from tourists—though that could certainly represent a small factor as well, but instead the added prestige and reputation the town could have from being the home of one of the Civil War's greatest heroes. That honored status offered incentive enough for many locals. As a result, while the general's memory may fade elsewhere, it remains strong in the hometown of James B. McPherson.

Chapter 4 - McPherson's Memory in Atlanta, Georgia

Unlike McPherson's memorials in Washington, D.C., Clyde, Ohio, or even later in McPherson, Kansas, the monument erected to McPherson in Atlanta, Georgia had unique and special circumstances surrounding its significance due purely to its location. Instead of in the center of the capital of the nation that McPherson fought to preserve, the hometown of the man local residents idolized, or a town named after the general, Atlanta was deep inside the former Confederacy, the nation McPherson had fought and died to defeat. Due to the combustible politics of Reconstruction immediately following the war, tensions throughout the South were high. Many Southerners held special hostility for Northerners, famously labeling Northerners who traveled to the South after the conflict "carpetbaggers." Therefore, the prospect of erecting a monument to a Yankee general—at the site of perhaps Sherman's most infamous deed no less—little over a decade after the conflict ended, involved exceptional circumstances and carried the potential for local resistance. The unique location further ensured a fascinating evolution of McPherson's memory in Atlanta over the years.

Given the circumstances surrounding McPherson's death, he immediately became associated with the Battle of Atlanta, as well as the city. The Society of the Army of the Tennessee inscribed the Washington, D.C. equestrian statue's pedestal with,

Maj Gen James B. McPherson
Atlanta
July 22, 1864

Of all the potential inscriptions and all the many accolades of McPherson's military career, the Society chose the site of his death as the most noteworthy fact worthy of memorialization. Over the years, writers and speakers ascribed to McPherson the titles of the "hero of Atlanta," and,

even more powerfully, the "martyr of Atlanta."⁵¹⁰ McPherson's association with the city of Atlanta resulted in an increase in the city's residents' interest in McPherson as well as attempts at preserving his memory. Interest began simply by following the news related to McPherson's previous memorialization. The *Atlanta Constitution* reported the completion of Rebisso's equestrian statue, described its display in his Cincinnati studio, and informed interested readers about the statue's details.⁵¹¹

Erection of a Monument

Despite the local interest, it was not Atlantans who spearheaded the efforts to erect a memorial for McPherson, but instead Federal Army officers. Following the end of the Civil War, during Reconstruction (sometimes referred to as "military" Reconstruction), the United States Army occupied much of the South, including stationing troops in the city of Atlanta. The Army established a ten-company post in Atlanta that it designated McPherson Barracks, in honor of the fallen general's memory.⁵¹² Major John R. McGinness, an officer stationed in Atlanta following the war, led an effort to locate and purchase the exact spot of McPherson's death for the erection of a monument. In the immediate aftermath of McPherson's death, Hickenlooper visited the location, carved the name "McPherson" into a nearby tree, and nailed a sign on the tree to mark the site. Orlando Metcalfe Poe, a U.S. Army Engineer with Sherman, surveyed the ground, and together with photographer George Barnard, took photographs of the location.⁵¹³ Hearing talk of a possible memorial, Poe drew a detailed map to assist McGinness in locating the

⁵¹⁰ *Clyde Enterprise*, May 10, 1883, 3; *Clyde Enterprise*, March 22, 1978.

⁵¹¹ *Atlanta Constitution*, January 30, 1876, 2.

⁵¹² Cameron Dewberry Sexton, *The Building of a Worthy Post: A History of Fort McPherson* (Mobile, AL: U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Mobile District, 2013), 3.

⁵¹³ George N. Barnard, "Where General McPherson Was Killed," Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division, Washington, D.C.

site. William T. Sherman—always one of the biggest advocates of his late friend's memorialization—recommended to the Secretary of War that a cannon be donated to mark the spot where McPherson fell in battle. Sherman also suggested that a gun-barrel fence cordon off and surround the memorial. Acknowledging Sherman's proposal, the War Department passed along the request to local Army officers stationed in Atlanta with the hope of securing the plot of land where McPherson was killed in preparation for the monument.⁵¹⁴ On June 8, 1877, McGinness wrote Sherman informing him that the site had been located and the deed to the property secured. Over twelve years after the end of the conflict, the location still showed evidence of the battle with many of the surrounding trees filled with bullet holes.⁵¹⁵

James Brown, known locally in East Atlanta as "Spanish Jim," owned Land Lot 177 where the proposed monument was to be located.⁵¹⁶ Brown assisted McGinness in finding the location of McPherson's death, and generously donated a 30 by 30 foot piece of land for the purpose of erecting the monument. In order to procure a legal deed of sale, McGinness purchased the land for \$1. In the deed, McGinness agreed to "erect on the spot marked . . . a cast iron gun surmounted by a shell and protected by a neat substantial iron fence—which shall serve simply to mark sacred the spot where McPherson fell."⁵¹⁷ The contract further ceded a right of way with a width of sixteen feet leading to the monument. The right of way would later be named McPherson Avenue. Along with Brown's initial generosity in donating the land for only \$1, he also took care to protect any future plans he might have for the land. The deed of sale specified that the use of the land for any purpose other than the monument would void the purchase. It also stipulated that if "at some future day, the United States Government, a

⁵¹⁴ John R. McGinness to William T. Sherman, June 8, 1877, *RPSAT*, 1878, 169.

⁵¹⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵¹⁶ Henry Bryant and Wayne Carey, *The Battle of Atlanta Monuments: Assessment and Restoration Plans for the McPherson and Walker Monuments* (Atlanta: Bryant Art Direction, 2012), 10.

⁵¹⁷ "Deed," *RPSAT*, 1878, 172.

memorial association, or other parties, shall desire the privilege of replacing said gun by a more elaborate and expensive memorial testimonial or monument, such privilege shall only be accorded them on the payment to said James Brown . . . of an additional compensation in the sum of five hundred dollars."⁵¹⁸ Notwithstanding Brown's forward thinking, no "more elaborate" memorial ever replaced the original.⁵¹⁹

Following the successful acquisition of the land, McGinness wrote to Sherman informing the general of his progress. "The spot is already secured by deed," wrote McGinness. "The gun will be a 24 pounder, and will be surmounted by a shell, and will be up and fenced in by the middle of July[, 1877]."⁵²⁰ A group of Army officers stationed in Atlanta, McGinness among them, took a special interest in McPherson's monument, and were willing to donate time and money to the effort. Specifically, the officers paid for the construction of the fence surrounding the monument. Some suggested clearing the land around the monument of trees and planting flowers and shrubs, but McGinness suggested that it remained untouched. He wrote, "It is deemed best to have the ground just as near as it was then as nature has permitted it to remain. . . . Unless a better suggestion is made, I am in favor of leaving it as it is."⁵²¹ McGinness won the debate and the area was left untouched. A future visitor described the site of the memorial as, "Mingled with the undergrowth of oak and maple, many waving pine trees throw their shade over the open space within which the memorial stands."⁵²²

⁵¹⁸ Ibid.

⁵¹⁹ The Society passed a resolution at their 11th annual reunion in 1877 that eventually the Society should construct "something on the spot where their commander perished, on which suitable inscriptions can be made," perhaps indicating a similar bronze statue to the memorials unveiled in Washington, D.C. and Clyde, but nothing ever came of this resolution. *RPSAT*, 1877, 42-43.

⁵²⁰ John R. McGinness to William T. Sherman, June 8, 1877, *RPSAT*, 1878, 169.

⁵²¹ Ibid.

⁵²² *RPSAT*, 1878, 176.

Following Sherman's recommendation, the War Department appropriated a twenty-four pound iron cannon and gun barrels for the enclosing fence. General Franklin D. Callender of the Ordnance Department completed the necessary mechanical and foundry work for the monument, and upon completion, a cannon ball was placed on the top of the upright cannon, sealing the memorial. Callender and McGinness selected a block of Stone Mountain granite for the base of the cannon, and the Army inscribed the single word of "McPherson" into the granite base. William Rosser, a Confederate veteran, assisted in placing the granite foundation in preparation for the cannon.⁵²³ Rosser's contribution revealed that certainly not all ex-Confederates held a grudge against their former enemies, and in fact many Southerners continued to respect McPherson as they had during the war. Whether that respect would be universal for all local Atlantans was yet to be seen.

One significant factor that initially prevented McPherson's Atlanta monument from creating too much of a local controversy was its remote location. At the time of McPherson's death in 1864 as well as at the time of the monument's erection, the location of the site where McPherson fell in battle had not yet been overtaken by the growing city of Atlanta. The site still remained on the outskirts of the city and was more wilderness than urban sprawl. The resulting isolation initially prevented common Atlanta Southerners from regularly encountering the Union hero's memorial. The only locals who saw the memorial were those who chose to visit it. No elaborate unveiling ceremony took place following the completion of the monument. Instead, a simple newspaper article announced the erection of the memorial to the public. The *Daily Constitution* described the monument and provided its readers directions to its location. The article stated that "It will no doubt be interesting to our readers to know the location of this

⁵²³ Ibid., 175-176.

illustrious spot. . . . It will be found a very pleasant and interesting drive both for our citizens and strangers visiting here."⁵²⁴ The tone of the article suggested that by 1877 the sectional wounds of the Civil War and Reconstruction had already begun to heal, and that the new McPherson monument did not represent a reminder of defeat. It seemed simply to be a tribute to the memory of an American hero, of whom even Southerners could be proud.

Initial local reactions to the new McPherson monument in Atlanta revealed Southerners' acceptance of a Northern hero's memorial in the South. In one description of the monument an author proclaimed, "I am sure that no true Confederate soldier will ever visit the spot without a feeling of respect for the brave and chivalrous 'fallen hero' whose bright military career ended so suddenly within the seclusion and quiet of those woods."⁵²⁵ Undoubtedly, McPherson received admiration and even reverence from Southerners during the war, and with the unveiling of his new memorial in Atlanta, that respect continued. "Like the late General Albert Sidney Johns[t]on, he was a 'knightly soldier, without fear and without reproach,'" the same author wrote of McPherson. "Now that Peace has spread her gentle wings over all the land, and the true soldiers and patriotic people of both sections meet again in cordial and hearty fellowship, it is safe to predict that the 'McPherson Memorial' will be visited by thousands of persons whose object will be a higher and purer one than mere idle curiosity."⁵²⁶ During the war McPherson had been one of the few Federal commanders who Southerners recognized as honorable and chivalrous, and with the erection of the new monument came the possibility that McPherson's memory could now serve to counter sectional division.

⁵²⁴ *Daily Constitution*, September 20, 1877, 3.

⁵²⁵ *United States Army and Navy Journal, and Gazette of the Regular and Volunteer Forces*, October 6, 1877, 139, quoted in *RPSAT*, 1878, 176-177.

⁵²⁶ *Ibid.*

McPherson as a Symbol of Reconciliation

In 1894, city officials in Atlanta proposed the construction of a monument to commemorate the 30th anniversary of the Battle of Atlanta, at the cost of \$300,000. The Confederate Veterans' Association of Fulton County proposed a resolution that called for that organization to join with the GAR and to take into "consideration the erection of a monument in memory of the fallen heroes of the battle of Atlanta, to be participated in by the men of both armies and to be by them jointly erected."⁵²⁷ The members of the Confederate Veterans' Association debated the proposal at a meeting in 1894. Referred to by some veterans as the "Monument of Peace," the memorial intended to honor both Union and Confederate soldiers, and represent reconciliation as well as demonstrate Confederate veterans' love for the Union. One outspoken advocate for the memorial, A. T. Walker, a former aide to General Longstreet, said, "now was the time for the south to come forward and ask the north to join with it in building a monument on which should stand the figures of General Walker, who died for the south, and General McPherson, who fell on the same day fighting for the other side."⁵²⁸ However, other ex-Confederates did not possess the same enthusiasm as Walker. Dr. Amos Fox expressed his opinion that there was no need to make a demonstration of reconciliation. Ultimately, the anti-monument sentiment carried the day and the resolution was tabled. Clement Evans closed the meeting, declaring, "No monument is necessary to show our devotion to the union, yet our love for the confederate dead is unshaken and will remain in the heart of the living until he reaches the last and steps into his grave like a confederate soldier. If we cannot be accepted today we cannot tomorrow."⁵²⁹ In 1894, as evidenced by the failure to pass the memorial resolution,

⁵²⁷ *Atlanta Constitution*, August 21, 1894, 5.

⁵²⁸ Walker quoted in *Atlanta Constitution*, August 21, 1894, 5.

⁵²⁹ Evans quoted in *Atlanta Constitution*, August 21, 1894, 5.

certain Confederate veterans still hesitated to embrace total reconciliation. In only a few short years this hard-line stance began to soften.

Some historians argue that the Spanish-American War in 1898 facilitated sectional reconciliation. Historian David Blight argued that the war helped solidify national reconciliation and "served the ends of reunion by uniting North and South against a common external foe." He claimed that "two decades of soldiers' reconciliation had inevitably prepared the ground, . . . but without the war with Spain, and the South's embrace of the cause, such reconciliation would not have matured so readily."⁵³⁰ For Atlantans, McPherson provided a useful catalyst to bring about reconciliation. During the American mobilization for the Spanish-American War, the *Atlanta Constitution* published an article very favorable of McPherson, depicting him as a soldier loved by both Northerners and Southerners. The article described McPherson as "probably the only officer on the union side for whom the southern people entertained a high regard and a feeling of respect and admiration." The article continued, saying, "When the intelligence of his death was made known to the country the south, or at least many of its people, joined with the north for the first time since the initiation of the struggle in expressions of sorrow and regret at the death of a federal general."⁵³¹ With the country uniting for a war against a foreign power, McPherson offered Atlantans, and Southerners more generally, a unique national hero who could be used as a symbol for reunion between North and South. The *Atlanta Constitution* imagined McPherson as the perfect icon of reconciliation, writing, "The national barracks on the outskirts of Atlanta, where now another army is being recruited for a war, not of brother against brother, but against a foreign foe, and in the name of humanity and civilization, was called McPherson in honor of the

⁵³⁰ David W. Blight, *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2001), 291, 351-352. For another historian who examines the Spanish-American War and reconciliation see Paul H. Buck, *Road to Reunion: 1865-1900* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1937).

⁵³¹ *Atlanta Constitution*, July 20, 1898, 8.

brave and chivalrous man who fell not far off to the right."⁵³² During wartime, it is not uncommon for Americans to look to their past heroes for inspiration and motivation. For Atlantans, McPherson represented a unique type of hero: one who had local significance to Atlanta, one who had fought for the Union but still had the respect of most Southerners, and one who had paid the ultimate sacrifice in service of his country, just as young men again were being asked to do in 1898.

The Spanish-American War certainly aided sectional reconciliation as evidenced by a Civil War veterans' reunion held in Atlanta in 1900. Prior to the reunion, the *Atlanta Constitution* published a detailed account on the lives and deaths of McPherson and Confederate General William H. T. Walker who also died at the Battle of Atlanta. The article included an extensive description of the battle from Sherman's *Memoirs* detailing McPherson's death. It further detailed the memorial marking the spot of McPherson's death, describing the monument as "stand[ing] in the thick of a native forest. The great pine trees around it, at distance of ten to twenty-five feet from the ground, show marks of shell and shot. They were saplings in 1864 and the marks were much nearer the ground."⁵³³ The description served as a reminder to locals of McPherson's monument, but also possibly helped in making the memorial a key site for the upcoming veterans' reunion. The article also connected McPherson and Walker as two heroes from the Battle of Atlanta.

The McPherson memorial served as the chief site of reconciliation for the Civil War veterans' reunion in 1900. Rank and file veterans attended the Atlanta reunion, but the guests also included prominent individuals such as Union General Oliver O. Howard and Confederate General John C. Breckinridge. The Atlanta reunion was unique in the history of veteran's

⁵³² Ibid.

⁵³³ *Atlanta Constitution*, January 12, 1890, 6.

reunions. *Collier's Weekly* reported that "Reunions of the Grand Army of the Republic and of the United Confederate Veterans are annual events, but never before have the soldiers of the North and South met in social conclave in such numbers, mustered together, as it were in the cause of history."⁵³⁴ The *Atlanta Constitution* reported that the climax of the reunion occurred when the veterans gathered around the McPherson monument "to pledge their fealty and undying loyalty to their common country, and to wipe out on one of their most famous battlefields, dyed by the blood of two famous generals, the animosities and rancors of the past."⁵³⁵ The upright cannon memorial—a rather obscure monument meant to honor the memory of McPherson, located in the wilderness of Atlanta's outskirts—now acted as the chief location of one of the earliest moments of sectional reconciliation.

Scholars have debated the conditions of national reconciliation following the Civil War. Historian David Blight argued that Civil War memory, in the fifty years following the end of the conflict, became settled on one common interpretation. Whites in both the North and South "reconciled their war wounds through shared ideas about white supremacy."⁵³⁶ He argued that the dominant memory of the war, which fostered sectional reunion and reconciliation, was largely defined by the white South and came at the expense and marginalization of African Americans. Not all historians fully accept Blight's interpretation however. Caroline Janney, in contrast to Blight, argues that neither Union nor Confederate veterans were willing to abandon their dominant memory of the root causes of the Civil War. She claims that "Well into the

⁵³⁴ C. R. S. Horton, "The Reunion of the Blue and the Gray." *Collier's Weekly* 25, no. 19 (August 11, 1900): 18-19.

⁵³⁵ *Atlanta Constitution*, July 20, 1900, 5.

⁵³⁶ Caroline E. Janney, *Remembering the Civil War: Reunion and the Limits of Reconciliation* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 2013), 315n. Also see Blight, *Race and Reunion*, 65. Other historians who influenced or reflect Blight's well accepted reunion and reconciliation thesis include Paul Buck, *Road to Reunion, 1865-1900* (New York: Little, Brown and Company, 1937), Nina Silber, *The Romance of Reunion* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 1997) and Timothy B. Smith, *The Golden Age of Battlefield Preservation* (Knoxville, TN: The University of Tennessee Press, 2008).

twentieth century, neither side was willing to forget what it had fought to preserve, even in the name of sectional reconciliation."⁵³⁷ In a peculiar way, the events that unfolded in Atlanta in 1900, served to support both authors' claims.

The meeting at the McPherson memorial on July 20, 1900 began smoothly. "At two o'clock a luncheon was served in the shadow of McPherson's monument," described *Collier's Weekly*, "and soldiers who once, in the execution of their respective duties, sought each other's lives, sat down to break bread together."⁵³⁸ Following lunch, several veterans made patriotic speeches fully embodying the spirit of national reunion. General Oliver O. Howard delivered the first speech. He mentioned the Spanish-American War, spoke of his days with McPherson at West Point, and said that nothing brought him more delight than seeing the perfect fraternity between North and South. Other similar speeches followed Howard. The *Atlanta Constitution* reported the emotional reaction from the veterans, writing, "Surely they may be pardoned their tears and other evidence of strong emotion they displayed when the spot and its associations are taken into account. The crisp, vigorous words of the speakers shot home with telling effect."⁵³⁹ The reunion appeared to be fostering harmony between the ex-Union and Confederate soldiers, but soon talk over the causes of the war altered the atmosphere among the veterans.

General Alex P. Stewart, a former Confederate, started the debate by defending his service to the Confederacy. "I am proud of my record as a confederate veteran, just as you men who fought for the union are proud of your records. We are proud of our records because we did our duty as we saw it, and fought for what we believed to be right," declared Stewart. "I have nothing to apologize for. I have done nothing that I am ashamed of, and this is the sentiment of

⁵³⁷ Janney, 4.

⁵³⁸ Horton, "The Reunion of the Blue and the Gray." *Collier's Weekly*, 18.

⁵³⁹ *Atlanta Constitution*, July 20, 1900, 5.

the men who fought with me for the confederacy."⁵⁴⁰ The mood continued to deteriorate following a speech from General Albert D. Shaw, the commander-in-chief of the GAR. Shaw turned from a tone of reunion to one of chastisement toward the ex-Confederate veterans. He said,

There can now be but one ideal of American citizenship, one Stars and Stripes, one bulwark of future national glory, and one line of patriotic teachings for all and by all. In this view the keeping alive of sectional teachings as the justice and rights of the cause of the South in the hearts of children is all out of order, unwise, unjust, and utterly opposed to the bond by which the great chieftain Lee solemnly bound the cause of the South in his final surrender. I deeply deplore all agencies of this sort, because in honor and in chivalric American manhood and womanhood nothing of this nature should be taught or tolerated for an instant. The facts are that one of two things is true. (1) All the issues of the South were surrendered to the Union, or (2) the war for the preservation of the nation and the freedom of the slave, and the end of the causes of contention, was a failure. The whole world acknowledges that the final victory of the matchless Grant was complete, and that the South lost and the Union won.⁵⁴¹

Shaw's speech dramatically increased the tensions of the reunion and threatened to destroy any goodwill that had previously existed between the former enemies.

In reply to Shaw's challenge, Confederate General John B. Gordon immediately responded. He said,

I know that my friend, General Shaw, is devoted and true. . . . But when he tells me and my Southern comrades teaching our children that the cause which we fought and our comrades died is all wrong I must earnestly protest. In name of the future manhood of the South I protest. What are we to teach them? If we cannot teach them that their fathers were right, it follows that those Southern children must be taught that they were wrong. Are we ready for that? For one I am not ready! I never will be ready to have children taught that I was wrong or that cause of my people was unjust and unholy. . . . Let us settle this question now and forever. Let us settle it upon a basis consistent with the self-respect and manhood of both sides. Let us settle it upon a basis consistent with the welfare of the great republic. There is a basis on which we can all stand. It is that monumental truth which history will yet record and heaven reveal at last; namely,

⁵⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁵⁴¹ Horton, "The Reunion of the Blue and the Gray." *Collier's Weekly*, 18.

that both sides were right because both were fighting for the constitution of the fathers as they had been taught to interpret it and both were right.⁵⁴²

Gordon's response demonstrated that Southerners were not willing to give up their version of the war, commonly referred to by historians as the Lost Cause theory. The comments by Gordon and Shaw also support Janey's thesis that claimed both Union and Confederate veterans defended their versions of the causes of the war.

Just when the reunion appeared on the brink of collapse, General Shaw smoothed the friction building within the crowd of veterans. He stepped back from his previously strong words criticizing ex-Confederates. He said that his words had been misunderstood, and that "If I had been in the Confederate service and a man had come to my house and told me to teach my children the cause I fought for was wrong, I would have turned him out of doors."⁵⁴³ His words saved the day, and the reunion continued with a harmonic mood. The retraction of Shaw's challenge to the ex-Confederates supports Blight's claim that many Northerners, veterans included, eventually looked the other way—even if reluctantly—when Southerners preached their Lost Cause narrative. In fact, the next day at a large barbeque for the veterans, Colonel I. C. Wade, a Union veteran, suggested that General Gordon and General Howard together edit a history of the war. "They will be free from all prejudice, and a citation of truthful events can only be the right history to teach our boys in the schools," said Wade. "There should be but one history for the youth of our country, which would be acceptable to every one, and which will, eventually, further cement the two sections that they have heretofore been, but which we hope now is forever solidified."⁵⁴⁴ The problem with Wade's suggestion was that the only narrative of the war that "would be acceptable to every one," was the narrative that defended secession and

⁵⁴² Ibid., 19.

⁵⁴³ Ibid.

⁵⁴⁴ *Atlanta Constitution*, July 22, 1900, 6.

promoted the Lost Cause. Although certain Union veterans continued to uphold their version of the war, and maintain the Union and emancipation narrative, by the 1900 reunion, they were already beginning to relent to a Southern version of the event.

For the county as a whole, the story of reunion and reconciliation trumped any need for the defense of emancipation or a condemnation of secession, as reflected by the national coverage of the Atlanta reunion. Renowned newspapers throughout the country reported on the events in Atlanta, giving the coverage prominent positions with large headlines.⁵⁴⁵ The national coverage glorified the meetings as confirmation of sectional reconciliation. One report described the reunion as "an inspiring occasion, illustrating the generous nature of the American people, once divided into hostile sections, but once more united in the bonds of fraternal sympathy." The concept of bringing veterans together for reunion on former battlefields started with Atlanta, and "united many survivors of a stormy but glorious period in the bonds of friendship, with all of whom the occasion must remain a pleasant memory."⁵⁴⁶ President McKinley sent a congratulatory message to the veterans at Atlanta, in which he said, "Such reunions are gratifying evidences of good feeling and comradeship, and give assurance of the permanence of our government, resting upon the patriotism of a reunited people."⁵⁴⁷ In the coming years, the scenes in Atlanta would be replicated at other battlefields, perhaps most famously at the fifty year anniversary and reunion at Gettysburg. However, importantly, it was not Gettysburg, nor Antietam, nor any of the other famous battlefields fought over during the Civil War, where one of the first major joint reunions took place. It was instead held at the McPherson memorial at

⁵⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁴⁶ Horton, "The Reunion of the Blue and the Gray." *Collier's Weekly*, 19.

⁵⁴⁷ *Atlanta Constitution*, July 20, 1900, 5.

Atlanta. Given McPherson's stature as a non-controversial Union general, who both Northerners and Southerners respected and admired, the site of his memorial offered the perfect venue.

Confederate General William H. T. Walker, whose memory soon became closely connected with McPherson's memory for Atlantans, received his own monument shortly following the 1900 reunion. Citizens of Atlanta formed the William H. T. Walker Monument Association on May 30, 1902, electing Julius L. Brown as the body's president. The organization planned the unveiling for July 22, 1902; the anniversary of the day both McPherson and Walker fell in the Battle of Atlanta. Reflecting the significance many people placed on memorial unveilings during this time period, the Association intended to invite such distinguished guests as General Nelson A. Miles and President Theodore Roosevelt.⁵⁴⁸ The Association intended Walker's monument to be comparable to the McPherson memorial, an upright cannon. They intended the ceremony itself to serve as an act of reconciliation. In advertisement of the unveiling ceremony, the *Atlanta Constitution* claimed that it would "be in the nature of a love feast and a reunion of the blue and gray," and attendees "will witness a scene of peace, exemplified by the hearty handshake and words of friendship."⁵⁴⁹ In fact, despite being a monument to a Confederate general, the Association invited Union General Oliver O. Howard to deliver the dedication speech.

The true significance of the Walker monument was its association with the McPherson monument to jointly serve as a symbol of reconciliation. For the unveiling ceremony, the veterans in attendance planned to pay special honor in remembrance of General McPherson by placing a wreath of flowers and an emblem of restored peace and harmony on the general's

⁵⁴⁸ *Atlanta Constitution*, May 31, 1902, 7.

⁵⁴⁹ *Atlanta Constitution*, July 15, 1902, 7.

memorial.⁵⁵⁰ During the unveiling ceremony, the William H. T. Walker Monument Association's president, Julius Brown addressed the theme of reunion. "Federal generals are with us to-day. One [(Oliver O Howard)] who commanded an army in this same battle has come from his Vermont home, more than 1,500 miles away, to pay tribute to the memory of this man, against whom his sword was drawn," stated Brown. "What stronger evidence could be given that all sectional strife is ended, and that we are now united as one people, no matter what demagogues may say?"⁵⁵¹ He continued on the topic of national reunion and Southerners' loyalty to the United States, saying,

. . . believing from the knowledge we now have that the Great Ruler of the Universe, who does all things well, ended this conflict for the best, and knowing that from out of that mighty contest there has been developed the grandest and best government this world has ever known, here pledge to it our loyalty and our devotion equally with those who wore the blue. We thank our government for its liberality, and we thank the officers and the soldiers who wore the blue for their generous kindness and friendship in being with us to-day. We greet you as friends, as brethren, and as countrymen, each having our reunited country's interest equally at heart.⁵⁵²

Brown then turned to the topic of McPherson and how the honoring of both he and Walker represented the country's reunion. He said,

Many years ago the Army of the Tennessee erected a monument which stands within modern pistol range of this spot to the memory of that superb soldier, Major General McPherson, who fell at about the same time and upon the same field where our hero met his death. Would that a joint monument had been erected to them instead of two separate ones, this showing to the world that we are indeed one people, and that, although we may have our family quarrels, the nations of the earth had best beware how they seek to presume upon our former differences.⁵⁵³

⁵⁵⁰ Ibid. Complete program printed in *Atlanta Constitution*, July 20, 1902, 7.

⁵⁵¹ "Honor to Gen. W. H. T. Walker: Monument Erected Where He was Killed, Near Atlanta," *Confederate Veteran*, 10 (1902): 402.

⁵⁵² Ibid., 403.

⁵⁵³ Ibid.

Despite the absence a joint monument to the two fallen generals, as Brown suggested, the two nearly identical upright cannons signified a degree of equality in the memorialization of both Union and Confederate heroes in Atlanta.

Following Brown's speech, General Walker's former chief of staff, Joseph B. Cumming, delivered an address that similarly highlighted the mood of reconciliation present at the unveiling. He asked, "What are the salient features of this remarkable occasion? The men who then stood apart in hostile ranks united here in a contest as to which will do the greatest honor to his foeman of that dreadful day—the gray vying with the blue in laying flowers on the monument of the brave Federal McPherson."⁵⁵⁴ What truly struck Cumming was the fact that former enemies, after four years of bitter fighting, could reunite and pay honor to their former foes. He identified American Exceptionalism as the main reason such a unique phenomenon could occur. He said, "The like of this, so far as I know, has never occurred in history, and, as I verily believe, could not happen elsewhere than in this wonderful country, which the greatest war in history, could not rend in twain."⁵⁵⁵ The seeds of reconciliation that began at the 1900 veterans' reunion became more solidified with the unveiling of the Walker monument two years later. Future visitors to the Atlanta battlefield would see Atlantans' memorialization of not just a Southern general, but a Union general as well, as evidence of national healing. The real problem, however, was the question of whether or not the Atlanta battlefield could be preserved.

Urbanization Overtakes the Memorial

Following the erection of the McPherson monument in 1877, urbanization in Atlanta quickly engulfed the memorial. A special correspondent of the *Philadelphia Times* described his

⁵⁵⁴ Ibid., 404.

⁵⁵⁵ Ibid.

tour of the Atlanta battlefield in 1882, and specifically noted the growing city. He wrote, "as seen now, from the midst of its rumble, its rattle and its shrill noises, [Atlanta] is so quick with the life of trade as to threaten to drive dry history back into the books." The lively prosperity of the city famously burned and destroyed during the Civil War struck the Northern newspaperman. Yet hoping to experience Atlanta as it had been during the war, the correspondent expressed his disappointment at the overwhelming noise of the city. He wrote that to escape "this young giant among cities, itself born of battles, one must get into the suburban fields to catch again the echo of strife so long since succeeded by factory whistles piping peace." He sadly exclaimed that "Atlanta's growth has been so wonderful that the war-jacket of mail knit by Johnston about the place no longer fits."⁵⁵⁶ Atlanta's growth offered a nice post-war narrative of recovery and rebirth, but it also threatened the preservation of a historically important site.

During his 1882 tour of the Atlanta battlefield, the newspaper correspondent made a point of visiting the McPherson memorial, as it marked one of the most important parts of the battle. He described his experience, providing an excellent portrayal of how the monument appeared prior to Atlanta's growth. He followed the sign labeled "McPherson Avenue," noting it was clear the road "never had been used for any other purpose than to reach the place of McPherson's death." In contrast to the bustling of the city, the sight of the monument reflected more the wilderness he had expected. "Picket fences bordered both sides of the road and bushes swept mud from our spokes as we labored along. Though our ears caught the hum of a lively city's noises it seemed as if we had dropped into a genuine bit of wilderness," described the correspondent. "Trees were set thickly among remnants of rifle pits, and at the further end of the lane rag weed choked briars and briars fought rag weed in a wild tangle over the surface of a

⁵⁵⁶ *Atlanta Constitution*, October 15, 1882.

desolate field." Only five years after its erection the monument still appeared as it had in 1877. He wrote, "As made by comrades who loved McPherson[,] the enclosing picket had 31 muskets on every side, or one hundred and twenty four on the four sides, together with nine barrels grouped at each corner in fanciful posts."⁵⁵⁷ Although it had remained untouched up to that point in 1882, Atlanta's growth soon threatened to envelope the McPherson memorial as well.

By the early 1890s, the city's expansion had reached the McPherson monument. In 1891, 39 lots had been developed and were being sold on McPherson Avenue. They ranged from \$500 to \$800 each.⁵⁵⁸ Before long, Victorian homes and Craftsman bungalows surrounded the monument.⁵⁵⁹ With residents now living around the monument, traffic the memorial received drastically increased. No longer would the monument's visitors be restricted simply to those who wanted to see the historic site. With the increase in traffic there also occurred an increase in vandalism.

Even prior to the development of the land on McPherson Avenue, the monument had suffered a degree of defacement and vandalism, mainly from relic hunters, but from other ordinary visitors as well. The *Philadelphia Times* correspondent described the vandalism he witnessed, noting that the cannon barrel bore "the penciled names of many comrades and of men from every part of the world." In fact, he even inscribed his own name on the cannon. While he had justified writing on the monument, other forms of vandalism he found unforgiving. He wrote, "what Time has done in the way of destruction is as nothing compared with the vandalism wrought by small rascals whom Time will make answer." The bayonets had been taken or were missing from most of the musket barrels, and thirty-two of the muskets had been ripped from

⁵⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁵⁸ *Atlanta Constitution*, April 26, 1891, 6.

⁵⁵⁹ Henry Bryant and Katina VanCronkhite, *East Atlanta* (Charleston, S.C.: Arcadia Publishing, 2014), 25. A 1890 plat of the McPherson Park subdivision shows lots and a grid pattern of streets surrounding the monument. Ibid, 29.

their place in the fence. As a result, he explained, "the unsightly gaps in the picket, the scratched cannon and the [missing bayonets] make the monument rather one in memory of the spirit that possesses the relic hunter than in honor of brave McPherson." Even the surrounding wilderness did not escape the vandalism of its visitors. "Scattered around the monument are clumps of undergrowth, saplings from which canes have been cut and stumps out of which bullets have been taken." The large pine tree nearby the monument, alleged to be the spot where McPherson spent his final moments, also bore scars from relic seekers. The author explained, "Old wounds and new wounds give the tree the look of a veteran for its bark has been chipped time and again by persons who seek to get the very bullet that took McPherson's breath."⁵⁶⁰ As new urban development expanded around the monument, the likelihood for further vandalism only increased.

The Society of the Army of the Tennessee discussed the problem of vandalism at their 1905 reunion. Colonel Cornelius Cadle proposed a motion to fix up the monument from the recent defacement. He described the state of the memorial at the time, stating, "Vandals carried away the guns and we replaced them with an iron fence. Of late years some one has broken off the name of McPherson, which was chiseled in the base, thrown the cannon ball from the top and destroyed the entire fence."⁵⁶¹ The destruction described by Cadle exceeded the typical inscription of a name on the cannon, or the taking of a souvenir from the surrounding trees, but instead indicated a certain degree of malice in the vandalism. The obliteration of the name "McPherson" and the removal of the cannon ball implied malevolence or spite. Although it is impossible to know for sure exactly who the vandals were, reasonable speculation would be that they were unreconstructed Southerners who disliked having a monument to a Union hero in the

⁵⁶⁰ *Atlanta Constitution*, October 15, 1882.

⁵⁶¹ *RPSAT*, 1905, 190-191.

South. Despite the recent outward signs of goodwill and reconciliation surrounding the 1900 reunion and the unveiling of the Walker monument, there undeniably remained certain bitter Southerners who maintained their disdain for Yankees.

Colonel Cadle's proposal called for paving the ground around the cannon with granite, replacing the iron fence, restoring the cannon ball on the top of the monument with cement fixing it in place, and providing a new base for the memorial. He estimated that the entire project would cost approximately \$500.⁵⁶² Not all members of the Society readily agreed to Cadle's motion. Major Robert Wilson McClaughry spoke in opposition, stating that "I visited that place recently. It is all true as Colonel Cadle states, but I would suggest that any iron fence placed about that monument will be broken to pieces." McClaughry did not see the point of replacing what had already been destroyed when the likelihood of recurring vandalism remained a strong possibility. He instead desired something more permanent, suggesting an enclosing wall of Georgia granite that could not be defaced as easily as a fence.⁵⁶³ Interestingly, McClaughry placed the blame for the vandalism on the location—and perhaps even the demographics—of the neighborhood surrounding the monument. He said, "It is located in a neighborhood where they are apt to break an iron fence to pieces."⁵⁶⁴ McClaughry highlighted a significant factor in the vandalism—the surrounding residents. But who is the "they" to whom McClaughry referred? Poor people? African Americans? In fact, it was likely neither. Henry Bryant and Katina VanCronkhite, historians of East Atlanta, described the exact type of people who lived in the area at the time of the vandalism in question. They wrote that the area around the monument "became the home of merchants and tradesman from Atlanta, as well as farmers, dairymen,

⁵⁶² Ibid.

⁵⁶³ Ibid.

⁵⁶⁴ Ibid, 191.

blacksmiths, and railroad workers."⁵⁶⁵ The description suggests a combination of working and middle-class residents, and not the poorest elements of the city. Since the time period being discussed preceded racial integration, the community also would have been entirely white. A local advertisement for East Atlanta during this period called the area the "most delightful places of residence to be found with a bright mercantile and professional future."⁵⁶⁶ If income or race were not what McClaughry referred to, then it is likely that he believed Atlantans themselves, as Southerners, did not respect the Federal memorial.

Major Leo Rassieur offered the greatest opposition to Cadle's proposal. He said, "I am disposed to believe that this expenditure will be a waste of money." He did not equivocate on his view of Southerners, and believed that their negative attitude toward the Union was the primary problem. He stated, "There is only one thing that can [a]ffect a change of heart, and that is for the people of Atlanta, who are, in a measure, responsible for what has occurred, to put their hands in their pockets and replace that monument." He continued, "Until they manifest a disposition to preserve that monument our action in putting it in shape will be for naught because it is going to be destroyed, as it has been in the past, in my judgment."⁵⁶⁷ Rassieur proposed an amendment to the resolution that it only be adopted if,

the authorities in charge of these premises, whether city or county, give an assurance that the monument shall not be disturbed in the future. Let us throw the burden upon the people there. If it is made known that they have given that assurance I believe the monument will be safer than without something of that sort. To repair it without any such assurance is simply to expose our money to be wasted again.⁵⁶⁸

Rassieur evidently did not accept the narrative of sectional reconciliation, and did not wish to spend any more money on the memorial without assurances from the local citizens themselves

⁵⁶⁵ Bryant and VanCronkhite, *East Atlanta*, 25.

⁵⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁶⁷ *RPSAT*, 1905, 191-192.

⁵⁶⁸ Ibid., 193.

that proper maintenance and care would be shown the monument. Others argued that such a proposal and guarantee would prove impossible. Ultimately, the Society voted down Rassieur's proposed amendment and adopted the main resolution proposed by Cadle.⁵⁶⁹

Not all Southerners demonstrated a disinterest in preserving McPherson's memorial and the Atlanta battlefield more generally. Local residents realized that making the Atlanta battlefield a national park offered the only hope of preventing the complete loss of the most important sites from the battle. The best attempt at making Atlanta's battlefield a national park occurred in 1899. Colonel William A. Hemphill, in cooperation with the local Atlanta Business League, spearheaded the efforts. Hopes still hinged on the state government ceding land and for the national government to agree to the establishment of a national park. In hopes of convincing people, Hemphill claimed,

It is not to be a mere park, but it is to be a grand system of bringing together the battlefields of Atlanta. The central park . . . is to be the concentrating point of a system of national roads which will lead to the battlefields of Ezra church and all other notable points made famous during the investment of Atlanta by the federal troops. Each notable spot is to be marked by an appropriate monument, and the purpose is to invite communities, north and south, whose troops distinguished themselves, to place upon record the spot, as is done in Gettysburg and Chickamauga. When it is recollected that McPherson fell on the outskirts of Atlanta . . . it will be seen that there is a great spirit in the north to which we can appeal.⁵⁷⁰

Hemphill believed that the issue of a national battlefield appealed to both Northerners and Southerners, primarily due to McPherson's death at Atlanta, and the memorial that already existed. He embodied the theme of sectional reunion by stating that the Battle of Atlanta included "heroes of Louisiana and of Minnesota, of Mississippi and of Indiana, of Georgia and of Wisconsin. Divided then, their valor is today our common heritage, and it is fitting that the sites

⁵⁶⁹ Ibid., 192-193.

⁵⁷⁰ *Atlanta Constitution*, December 4, 1899, 5.

of their great achievements should be equally marked for eternity."⁵⁷¹ However, the only way these sites could act as sites of reunion and a reminder of national greatness would be if Hemphill could succeed in preserving the battlefields around Atlanta before the expanding city enveloped them. Ultimately, Hemphill and others' efforts in 1899 failed to achieve their goal of making Atlanta's battlefield a national park.

Atlantans renewed their idea for preserving the battlefield just a few short years later during President Roosevelt's visit to Atlanta in 1905. Just prior to the president's visit, Piromis H. Bell, a resident of Decatur, a suburb of Atlanta, wrote a letter to Colonel Lovick P. Thomas explaining the importance of a park. He stated, "as the battle of Atlanta was . . . the beginning of the end of the war, that it would tend to obscure the truth of history unless, whenever a military park should be established in or near Atlanta, the site of the battle of Atlanta should become a part of those improvements."⁵⁷² Bell feared that a failure to properly preserve the important sites from the battle threatened to obscure the very history of the Civil War. With the upcoming visit from President Roosevelt, a known advocate for both environmental and historic preservation, Bell hoped the president's support could possibly be enlisted. "In view of the fact that the president of the United States is to visit Atlanta in October next," wrote Bell, "it may be that he will not have time to see McPherson monument, etc., and his attention may not be directed to the battle field of the battle of Atlanta." Bell admitted he did not know the president personally, only by his reputation, but surmised that "the battle of Atlanta site might be of interest to him. And this, I know, that if any park is ever established . . . to commemorate the fighting . . . it will be an unfortunate mission if . . . the battle of Atlanta should be overlooked and left out."⁵⁷³ Despite the

⁵⁷¹ Ibid.

⁵⁷² Piromis H. Bell to Lovick P. Thomas, June 6, 1905, in *Atlanta Constitution*, June 27, 1905, 7.

⁵⁷³ Ibid.

enthusiasm displayed by many locals, the preservation of the Atlanta battlefield ultimately failed to gain sufficient momentum yet again. In any case, by the early-twentieth century, the city's growth had already taken over most of the significant battle sites. Attention now turned to preserving the two memorials already built in Atlanta.

In 1914, Congressman William Schley Howard, the U.S. representative from Georgia, attempted to secure a national appropriation for a park and roadway between the Walker and McPherson monuments. If a national park could not preserve the original battlefield that had already been overtaken by urbanization, Howard hoped that the government could at least preserve and beautify the two memorials. Many local Atlanta organizations, such as the East Atlanta Improvement club, the Julia Jackson chapter of the Children of the Confederacy, and the Atlanta chapter of the United Daughters of the Confederacy, united in their support for the measure.⁵⁷⁴ Despite their continuous efforts, the congressman's proposal failed, and a roadway connecting the two memorials never materialized.

Following the Society's decision to restore the monument, they passed on the custodial duties to the local GAR Post of Atlanta.⁵⁷⁵ The GAR continued the maintenance of the memorial as it suffered more vandalism and expended over \$900 on improvements.⁵⁷⁶ However, despite the GAR's efforts, the condition of the monument caused some locals a degree of embarrassment. An Atlanta newspaper man visited Clyde, Ohio in 1913, and reported his favorable impression to his readers. The Ohio monument impressed the author, and he expressed regret over the poor state of the Atlanta memorial, referring to it as a "crude and pathetic"

⁵⁷⁴ *Atlanta Constitution*, March 25, 1914, 7.

⁵⁷⁵ *RPSAT*, 1905, 191.

⁵⁷⁶ *Atlanta Constitution*, April 12, 1914, 5.

sight.⁵⁷⁷ He conveyed hope that Atlantans would take action to make the Atlanta monument as presentable as possible for an upcoming veterans' reunion. He implored his readers:

During the coming national encampment of the grand army of the republic, at Chattanooga, this month, there will be many ex-federals, who served in the Atlanta campaign, who will visit our city for the first time since they occupied it in the fall of 1864. Some of them served under McPherson, some of them will be from his home town and county and they will eagerly inquire for the marker monument that shows where he fell. Let us hope they will find it well-conditioned, clean, and evincing that even in the enemy's country the memory of a brave gentleman and American soldier is generally respected.⁵⁷⁸

The author's sentiment exhibited the same feeling of approval that greeted the original erecting of the memorial in 1876. Locals could support the monument because it honored someone they felt worthy of their respect. However, there now entered a new element into the desire to restore and maintain the McPherson memorial: civic pride.

In 1914, local Atlanta residents made new attempts to maintain and care for both the McPherson and Walker monuments. The largest motivating factor for the renewed restoration effort came from an upcoming visit to Atlanta of "The Shriners," a sub-branch of the Free Masons. The organization intended to hold a convention in Atlanta in May, 1914, and locals wanted the memorials to look presentable for the visitors. The Old Guard, an elder veteran organization of volunteer militia and Atlanta firemen, organized the restoration and appointed a committee to oversee the efforts. H. M. Ashe, a member of the committee, commented on the horrible state of the monuments, stating, "To say that I was amazed at the neglected condition of these monuments . . . is putting it mildly. Nobody who has not seen them can realize the condition into which they have fallen. They are literally overgrown with weeds and bushes and

⁵⁷⁷ *Atlanta Constitution*, September 8, 1913, 4.

⁵⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

the stone of which the monuments are constructed has been badly chipped by vandals."⁵⁷⁹

Despite the restoration efforts of the Society and the GAR, the conditions of the monuments in 1914 appalled Ashe. He despaired that "There is not even a railing around the McPherson monument and the spot where it is located is as desolate and neglected a looking place as there is in the county."⁵⁸⁰ The Old Guard committee considered it their "patriotic duty" to clean up the monuments.⁵⁸¹

Ashe and the committee hoped to raise \$300 to make the memorials presentable by the time of the Shriners' convention. The improvements included painting the metal work around the monuments, putting in new railings, resodding the areas surrounding the monuments, and putting in gravel around the base of each monument.⁵⁸² Ashe requested help from Atlantans, claiming, "we should be able to get as small amount as this from the citizens of Atlanta for the purpose of improving the surroundings of these two sites which should be places of interest to visitors to the city, instead of eyesores, as they are now." Indeed, Ashe appealed to locals' sense of civic pride to gain support for the improvements. He lectured that "the city would be disgraced if the visitors from the north should see [the monuments] as they are now."⁵⁸³ Another newspaperman published a similar admonishment in an editorial in the *Atlanta Constitution*, imploring citizens, "It will be a sorry commentary upon civic spirit and common patriotism in Atlanta if our visitors find all or any one of these monuments grimy, unkempt, breathing signs of neglect. Atlanta is not a city that forgets. Atlanta appreciates the services and the heroism of the men who have gone before."⁵⁸⁴ The guilt, as well as the appeal to civic pride, had the desired

⁵⁷⁹ Ashe quoted in *Atlanta Constitution*, April 3, 1914, 8.

⁵⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁵⁸¹ *Atlanta Constitution*, April 11, 1914, 7.

⁵⁸² Ibid.

⁵⁸³ Ashe quoted in *Atlanta Constitution*, April 3, 1914, 8.

⁵⁸⁴ *Atlanta Constitution*, April 22, 1914, 4.

effect as many Atlantans contributed to the cause. The United Daughters of the Confederacy and the GAR cooperated with the Old Guard to complete the work.⁵⁸⁵ One local, a Miss Katherine Koch of East Atlanta, took up the call and aided the committee by soliciting subscriptions.⁵⁸⁶ By connecting the McPherson memorial to Atlantans' sense of civic pride, the Old Guard renewed the significance of the monument for many locals.

Lasting Memory of McPherson in Atlanta

Throughout the mid-twentieth century, McPherson's memory remained strong with many Atlanta citizens. He captured the imagination of Wilbur G. Kurtz Sr. in the early 1930s. Kurtz, a local Atlanta historian, most famous for serving as a historical advisor for the movie *Gone with the Wind*, showed a particular interest in McPherson's death during the Battle of Atlanta. He wrote a short manuscript, titled "McPherson's Last Ride," describing in detail the final moments of McPherson's life, and attempting to accurately recreate the route taken by McPherson from Sherman's headquarters to the spot where he was killed.⁵⁸⁷ The topic was mostly a fascination or hobby for Kurtz, and he never published the manuscript or developed it into a larger project. Nevertheless, the very fact that he wrote the manuscript in the first place indicated that McPherson's story still fascinated locals in Atlanta nearly seventy years after his death.

In a further act of remembrance, the Georgia Historical Commission added a historical marker to the McPherson monument in 1956. One side of the marker reads,

Historic Ground--1864

In area bounded by Memorial Dr., Clifton, Glenwood & Moreland, was where the major part of the Battle of Atlanta was fought, July 22d. In terms of present

⁵⁸⁵ *Atlanta Constitution*, April 11, 1914, 7.

⁵⁸⁶ *Atlanta Constitution*, April 26, 1914, 12.

⁵⁸⁷ Wilbur G. Kurtz Sr., "McPherson's Last Ride," *WKP*, AHC.

landmarks, the battle began at Memorial Dr. & Clifton where Hardee's right wing was repulsed in an unexpected clash with Sweeny's 16th A.C. div. This was followed by an assault of Hardee's left wing which crushed the left of the 17th A.C. at Flat Shoals Road & Glenwood & dislodged the right of the 16th A.C., forcing them north to a second line at & east of Leggett's Hill eight hours of battle in which two major generals, Walker and McPherson, were killed.⁵⁸⁸

The marker provides a very straightforward description of the sequence of battle, with reference to modern-day streets for contemporary perspective. The reverse side of the marker speaks more directly about McPherson and his death. It reads,

Death of McPherson

The monument in the enclosure was erected by U.S. Army Engineers to mark the site where Maj. Gen. James B. McPherson was killed during the Battle of Atlanta, July 22, 1864. McPherson rode S. from the Ga. R.R. when he heard firing in Sugar Cr. valley, where the rear attack by Walker's & Bate's divs. fell upon Dodge's 16th A.C. After pausing to observe this part of the battle, he galloped toward the left of the 17th A.C. (Flat Shoals & Glenwood), on a road through the pines. At this point he was assailed by skirmishers of Cleburne's div. refusing to surrender he was shot while attempting to escape.⁵⁸⁹

By 1956, most Civil War veterans, as well as many of their children were dead. The national collective memory of McPherson certainly was beginning to fade, and the erection of a historical marker to provide the details of who the monument was meant to honor offered an important context to observers, both locals and visitors.

At the same time that the Georgia Historical Commission erected the historical marker at the McPherson monument in 1956, they also added a marker on Memorial Drive near East Side Avenue, marking "McPherson's Last Ride." The marker reads,

McPherson's Last Ride

July 22, 1864. When Gen. McPherson heard the firing to the S. E. while at luncheon (Whitefoord Ave. at R. R.), he mounted his horse & sending away most of his staff on various missions, galloped south to this hill. Here, he observed Dodge's 16th A. C. troops in desperate combat with Bate's & Walker's divs. in Sugar Cr. valley. Anxious about the left of the 17th A. C. (at Glenwood & Flat

⁵⁸⁸ Georgia Historical Commission. 1956, Marker #044-68.

⁵⁸⁹ Georgia Historical Commission. 1956, Marker #044-45.

Shoals), he proceeded on a road through the pines in that direction, accompanied by an orderly, & Signal Officer, Wm. Sherfy, who reluctantly followed after vainly warning the general that Confederate troops had seized the road.⁵⁹⁰

Neither the marker on Memorial Drive, nor the marker at McPherson's monument were unique, but instead were part of a larger effort made by the Georgia Historical Commission to mark the various sites for the Battle of Atlanta that had already been overtaken by urbanization and the expanding city. Even so, the marker represented yet another attempt by interested residents to memorialize McPherson in Atlanta.

In 1964, for the 100th anniversary of the Battle of Atlanta, residents made a special effort to honor the city's historic past. The city of Decatur, a suburb of Atlanta and county seat of DeKalb County, held celebrations in conjunction with the Clement Evans Camp No. 1238 of the Sons of Confederate veterans, the Agnes Lee Chapter of the United Daughters of the Confederacy, and the DeKalb Historical Society.⁵⁹¹ Atlanta's famous Cyclorama, a cylindrical panorama painting of the Battle of Atlanta, was opened free to all visitors on July 22, 1964.⁵⁹² The painting, originally called "Logan's Great Battle," had been commissioned mainly for political reasons during John Logan's failed vice-presidential run in 1884, but had long since become a popular attraction in Atlanta for its vivid depiction of the battle.⁵⁹³ At nearby Stone Mountain—the iconic large stone carving of Robert E. Lee, Jefferson Davis, and Stonewall Jackson in the side of a mountain face—reenactors put on a mock battle for the public.⁵⁹⁴ From the mid-twentieth century onward, major anniversaries, such as that celebrated in 1964, offered the best opportunity to convey the history of the Civil War, and McPherson's role in the Battle of Atlanta in particular, to the public at large.

⁵⁹⁰ Georgia Historical Commission. 1956, Marker #044-44.

⁵⁹¹ *Atlanta Times*, July 21, 1964, 10-A.

⁵⁹² *Atlanta Times*, July 21, 1964, 11-B.

⁵⁹³ *Atlanta Constitution*, May 9, 1982, 2GB.

⁵⁹⁴ *Atlanta Times*, July 22, 1964, page 1B.

For the 125th anniversary of the Battle of Atlanta, in 1989, interested residents conducted guided van tours of the Atlanta battlefield. The East Atlanta Community Festival sponsored the tours, and they consisted of a five-mile drive that visited all the major sites of the battlefield. The association advertised their tours in the *Atlanta Constitution*, informing readers that "Visitors . . . will stop at the intersection of Monument and McPherson avenue where Union Gen. James McPherson was killed."⁵⁹⁵ Given the state of the Atlanta battlefield and the lack of preservation, the McPherson and Walker monuments constituted two of the main sites along the tour. Henry Bryant, the association's vice president and one of the chief tour guides, said that visitors would be shown the sites where McPherson and Walker died during the "bloodiest and the hardest-fought battle of the entire Atlanta campaign."⁵⁹⁶ Nearly 115 years after its erection, the McPherson monument continued to receive visitors, even if in smaller numbers, and the guided tours helped provide uninformed visitors of some of the historical information surrounding the life and death of McPherson. Bryant and the other tour guides represented the long tradition of Southerners who supported the memorialization of McPherson in Atlanta, and respected him as a figure worthy of admiration. Not all Atlantans, however, held the same opinion of the Yankee hero.

Fort McPherson and Local Animosity

One of the controversial issues that caused some Southerners a degree of dismay was the naming of the local Army barracks in Atlanta, Fort McPherson. Following the Civil War, the U.S. Army had wanted to name a post to honor McPherson's memory. Some of McPherson's old friends from Alcatraz attempted to rename the San Francisco fort after McPherson, though they did not succeed. For a short period the Army named an outpost in Maxwell, Nebraska Fort

⁵⁹⁵ *Atlanta Constitution*, May 4, 1989, D12.

⁵⁹⁶ Bryant quoted in *Atlanta Constitution*, May 4, 1989, D12.

McPherson. Built in 1863, and originally named Fort Cottonwood, the Army officially changed the name to Fort McPherson in 1866. It served as a base for five cavalry companies whose responsibilities included protecting travelers as well as the Union Pacific Railroad from hostile Indians. The U.S. Army eventually abandoned the post in 1880.⁵⁹⁷ The name McPherson had always been connected with Atlanta since the general's death in 1864. The ten-company post in Atlanta, established on December 30, 1867, officially received the name McPherson Barracks. The post served an important role for the Army during Reconstruction, and housed the officers responsible for the McPherson monument, but the Army discontinued the barracks as an active military post on December 8, 1881. The Army desired a more permanent post in Atlanta, and began construction on what became known as Fort McPherson in the summer of 1885.⁵⁹⁸ General John A. Schofield, the Chief of Staff of the U.S. Army and McPherson's close friend and classmate, suggested the name of Fort McPherson. The Army, with War Department General Order 44, officially designated the post Fort McPherson on May 4, 1889.⁵⁹⁹

Certain unreconstructed Southerners likely detested the naming of an Atlanta area fort after a Union general, but it was not until the mid-twentieth century that the issue became a point of intense discussion for local residents. A 1955 *Atlanta Constitution* article, titled "Of All Things! Ft. Mac Got Name From Union Man," expressed offense that a Southern fort would be named after a Yankee. The article only briefly mentioned McPherson before proudly naming all the streets and namesakes in Atlanta named after Confederate "heroes."⁶⁰⁰ It appears the author of the article was unaware of McPherson's role as a symbol of reconciliation, as well as

⁵⁹⁷ Jeff Barnes, *Forts of the Northern Plains: Guide to Historic Military Posts of the Plains Indian Wars* (Mechanicsburg, PA: Stackpole Books, 2008), 68.

⁵⁹⁸ *The Fort McPherson Story, 1885-1963*, (Fort McPherson, GA: Staff History Officer Office, Adjutant General, Headquarters Third United States Army, 1964), 141.

⁵⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 19, 141, Appendix G, 164.

⁶⁰⁰ *Atlanta Constitution*, April 14, 1955, 8.

contemporary Southerners' generally positive opinion of him. The sole fact that McPherson did not fight for the Confederacy, and yet had the Atlanta fort named for him, seemingly appalled the author.

Dick Williams took over the mantle of protest against the naming of Fort McPherson in the 1980s, and in a 1981 opinion piece, Williams suggested renaming the fort. For Williams, McPherson's association and close friendship with General Sherman—the ultimate villain in the eyes of many Southerners—was enough to condemn him. "Fort Mac is a burr in the saddle blanket of Atlanta, named as it is after Gen. James Birdseye McPherson, the right-hand man of Gen. William Tecumseh Sherman," wrote Williams. "It is a symbol of Northern occupation and playing with matches. McPherson's name lives on, despite his paramount role in the destruction of Atlanta."⁶⁰¹

Williams' logic appears faulty at best. First, McPherson died weeks before the burning of Atlanta. Sherman's desire for revenge over McPherson's death is the "paramount role" to which he refers. Placing blame for the burning of Atlanta on McPherson constituted a serious stretching of the historical record, yet Williams proposed renaming the post Fort Johnston, after Confederate General Joseph Johnston. He urged his readers to help in the crusade to "Ship [McPherson] Back North."⁶⁰² Despite his mischaracterization of McPherson, Williams' suggestion was not particularly unusual. As strange as it may seem for the United States Army to name bases after leading generals of the Confederacy—a country whose very existence desired the destruction of the United States—several U.S. Army posts had been named after just such individuals, including: Fort Lee (Robert E. Lee), Fort Hood (John Bell Hood), Fort Benning (Henry L. Benning), Fort Gordon (John B. Gordon), Fort Bragg (Braxton Bragg), Fort Polk

⁶⁰¹ *Atlanta Constitution*, August 1, 1981, 2B.

⁶⁰² *Ibid.*

(Leonidas Polk), Fort Pickett (George Pickett), Fort A. P. Hill (A. P. Hill), Fort Rucker (Edmund Rucker), and Camp Beauregard (P. G. T. Beauregard). Even Fort McPherson, named after a Union general, had all of its streets within the fort named after Confederate commanders, including: Gordon Plaza (John B. Gordon), Hardee Avenue (William J. Hardee), Colquitt Street (Alfred H. Colquitt), Wheeler Street (Joseph Wheeler), and Cobb Street (Howell Cobb).⁶⁰³ The Southern glorification of the Civil War and particularly Southern heroes, embodied by the Lost Cause interpretation of the events, had clearly affected the Army's decision in naming many of its bases. Although many forts had also been named after Union generals, in the Deep South, Fort McPherson represented more of an exception.

Williams renewed his crusade in another opinion piece in 1985, holding nothing back in his attempt to depict the naming of Fort McPherson as a black mark on the Atlanta community. Once more, Williams found McPherson's relationship with Sherman his most condemning quality. "Fort Mac is named after the right-hand man to Gen. William Tecumseh Sherman, one of the leading discriminators of his day. Naming an Atlanta Institution after James Birdseye McPherson of Ohio is as offensive as naming an Atlanta fire station after Sherman," declared Williams. "Sherman was not the sort we now would admire with monuments . . . and McPherson was his ally."⁶⁰⁴ Despite his rallying cries, it does not appear that Williams successfully gathered public support for his movement. Yet, even if Williams did not gather sufficient local support, his actions and public statements signify that at least a portion of the Atlanta community—however small—shared his sentiment. If nothing else, he intended his article to sway readers to his opinion, and it undoubtedly persuaded some of McPherson's

⁶⁰³ *The Fort McPherson Story*, Appendix M, 171.

⁶⁰⁴ *Atlanta Constitution*, January 6, 1985, D2.

villainy. Indeed, Williams employed a solid tactic, because few individuals received more hatred from Southerners than Sherman.⁶⁰⁵

Despite receiving the disdain from various local residents, the Atlanta Army post continued under the name of Fort McPherson. In 1999, the Army offered tours of Fort McPherson for the general public. On these tours, at least a little recognition was given to the history of the fort and the man it had been named after.⁶⁰⁶ Ultimately, the Army officially closed Fort McPherson on September 15, 2011. Following the closure, the Fort McPherson Implementing Local Redevelopment Authority made an effort to preserve some of the historic sites on the base. The homes on Staff Row, as well as other historical structures on the National Register of Historic Places, were protected from destruction through agreements following the sale of the property.⁶⁰⁷ In 2015, film mogul Tyler Perry purchased Fort McPherson with the intention of turning it into a film studio.⁶⁰⁸

Recent Examples of Atlantans' Attempt to Preserve McPherson's Memory

In the twenty-first century, several individuals in Atlanta continued to advocate for the preservation of McPherson's memory, and many lamented the loss of the Atlanta battlefield to urbanization. John W. Brinsfield, expressing grief on the topic in the *Atlanta Constitution*, wrote, "Unlike Gettysburg, Richmond, Murfreesboro, Vicksburg and other cities where Civil War battles were fought, Atlanta has had little interest in preserving its Civil War real estate . . .

⁶⁰⁵ For more evidence of lingering modern hatred for Sherman among Southerners see *Atlanta Constitution*, July 18, 2004, F6.

⁶⁰⁶ *Atlanta Constitution*, November 6, 1999, B4.

⁶⁰⁷ *Atlanta Constitution*, March 27, 2012, B4.

⁶⁰⁸ J. Scott Trubey, "Tyler Perry's plans for Army base could include museum, amphitheatre," *Military Times*, July 28, 2015. Accessed September 9, 2016. <http://www.militarytimes.com/story/entertainment/2015/07/28/tyler-perrys-plans-for-army-base-could-include-museum-amphitheater/30805653/>.

Progress with us has always trumped preservation."⁶⁰⁹ Brinsfield, like many Civil War enthusiasts, or people simply concerned with historical preservation, bemoaned the development in Atlanta. He wrote,

Along Moreland Avenue, construction crews have recently dug up and then leveled an area where thousands of men clashed and died in the Battle of Atlanta on July 22, 1864. And it wasn't even the first time the field has been dug up and leveled for commercial development. Now it will be the site of a Target store, a Kroger, Best Buy, Bed Bath & Beyond, Barnes & Noble and more. The workers clearing the new Edgewood Retail District did not know they were on a battlefield. There is no reason they should have known, for there are no signs along that part of Moreland, from Hardee Street to DeKalb Avenue, to tell them otherwise. It is sad to see the last fragile vestiges of our battlefields disappear.⁶¹⁰

In the same article, the author included a special section on the death of McPherson. Even if the city's development had overtaken the battlefield, Brinsfield took the opportunity to educate his readers on the life and death of McPherson in the battle.

In recent years, Lenora Scott, a local resident who lives only two houses down from McPherson's monument, has taken up the maintenance of the memorial. When asked about her upkeep on the monument, Scott recalled, "The city used to keep the monument up, but they cut it out a while ago. . . . It was starting to look bad, with weeds growing up all over. At first, I was afraid to do anything; I thought I might get in trouble. But I gradually started doing a bit here, then a bit there."⁶¹¹ Initially, Scott did not know who the canon memorialized, or any history of McPherson. As had happened throughout most of the rest of the country, the memory of the general had faded for Scott. Scott wanted to maintain the monument simply as a point of pride for what she knew to be an important historical marker in her neighborhood. Her upkeep included hauling water from her home to water the various plants and flowers planted around the

⁶⁰⁹ John W. Brinsfield, "Losing the Battle of Atlanta: First the fight, then the battlefield, Atlanta is about to bury one of its most sacred spaces under a retail development." *Atlanta Constitution*, July 18, 2004, F1.

⁶¹⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹¹ Scott quoted in H. M. Cauley, "Working outdoors becomes her therapy: East Atlantan maintains grounds at monument to Union general," *Atlanta Constitution*, July 4, 2012, B5.

monument. She also transplanted roses from her own garden to place around the monument. She also added an American flag to the railing.⁶¹² As she worked around the monument, her interest in McPherson increased. She found some books with information on the general and learned about his life and role in the Civil War.⁶¹³ Scott's role in maintaining the monument and



Figure 4: Current Image of the McPherson Monument, at the Intersection of McPherson Avenue and Monument Avenue, Atlanta, Georgia (Photograph by the author, 2015)

her increased interest in McPherson provide an insight into the current memory of McPherson in Atlanta, as well as the role the monument plays in educating people. Many passersby and even residents living in close proximity to the monument might not fully be aware of General McPherson's history. However, those who take the time to read the historic marker or look at the

⁶¹² Ibid.

⁶¹³ Ibid.

memorial may just develop an interest in an important historical individual with ties to local Atlanta history.

By far the most significant recent effort to maintain McPherson's memory in Atlanta was Henry Bryant's attempt to restore the monument. In preparation for the 150th anniversary of the Battle of Atlanta, Bryant formed The Battle of Atlanta Commemorization Organization with the intention of restoring the Walker and McPherson memorials.⁶¹⁴ Between 2011 and 2012 Bryant, the chairman of the B-ATL, conducted multiple assessments of the McPherson and Walker monuments and solicited quotes for restoring the monuments. One assessment of the McPherson monument completed by Stability Engineering in 2011 described its condition, writing, "There is a lot of rust and corrosion at the base of the barrel where it rests against the stone pedestal. This area easily traps moisture which is accelerating the corrosion. . . . The top of the cannon is not capped and allows water/debris to collect in the barrel."⁶¹⁵ A separate metallurgical report, conducted by Metals & Materials Engineers, recommended the use of "chemical and/or mechanical cleaning methods" to "remove corrosion by-products without damaging the original metal."⁶¹⁶ However, in addition to the basic restorations needed on the monument, the B-ATL had extensive plans to redesign the areas surrounding the monuments. The new landscaping for the McPherson monument included an open space area around the memorial with concrete benches, surrounded by evergreen hedges, perennial flowers, and additional flower beds.⁶¹⁷ The proposed project, including the restoration and landscaping, required a sizable sum of money.

⁶¹⁴ Hereafter abbreviated B-ATL.

⁶¹⁵ Allen Morris to Randy Pimsler, December 1, 2011, in Bryant and Carey, *The Battle of Atlanta Monuments: Assessment and Restoration Plans for the McPherson and Walker Monuments*, Appendix E, Structural Engineering Report.

⁶¹⁶ Scott Lowrie to Randy Pimsler, November 21, 2011, in Bryant and Carey, *The Battle of Atlanta Monuments: Assessment and Restoration Plans for the McPherson and Walker Monuments*, Appendix F, Metallurgical Report.

⁶¹⁷ Bryant and Carey, *The Battle of Atlanta Monuments: Assessment and Restoration Plans for the McPherson and Walker Monuments*, Preliminary Design Summary; McPherson Monument Concept.

Initial quotes for the work on both the McPherson and Walker monuments were \$51,698 and \$84,225 respectively. Eventually the total estimated costs for the restoration and beautification reached \$192,000.⁶¹⁸



Figure 5: Different Angle of McPherson Memorial, Atlanta Georgia. Note the Inscription of "McPherson" on Granite Base, Previously Defaced by Vandals, and Restored by the Society of the Army of the Tennessee (Photograph by the author, 2015)

The B-ATL employed multiple approaches to raise the necessary money. The organization, along with Pimsler Hoss Architects, scheduled meetings with multiple community groups, including the East Atlanta Community Association, the Kirkwood Neighbor Organization, the Parkview Civic Club, Neighborhood Planning Unit-W, Neighborhood

⁶¹⁸ Randy E. Pimsler to Henry Bryant, May 24, 2012, Bryant and Carey, *The Battle of Atlanta Monuments: Assessment and Restoration Plans for the McPherson and Walker Monuments*, Preliminary Scope of Work and Cost Estimate. Henry Bryant in discussion with the author, May, 2015.

Planning Unit-O, and the Atlanta Urban Design Commission. All of the organizations voted unanimously to support the restoration plan.⁶¹⁹ The B-ATL also applied for a grant from the state of Georgia's Department of Natural Resource, which ultimately agreed to match 60 percent of the costs for the assessment of the restoration, estimated at \$25,000.⁶²⁰ The organization hoped to obtain the bulk of the money in large donations from various interested associations. The Georgia Battlefield Association, for example, donated \$2,000. The B-ATL also received money from residents of Clyde, Ohio who had an obvious vested interest in the restoration of the McPherson monument. The Sons of Confederate Veterans also contributed to the project, considering that the Walker monument was included in the plan as well.⁶²¹ Unfortunately, the organization failed to reach its fundraising goal by the time of the 150th anniversary of the Battle of Atlanta in 1864. Therefore, the monument restoration did not occur by the time of the anniversary and the accompanying increase in visitors and tourists.

Despite the delay in the fundraising, multiple Atlanta organizations attempted to honor McPherson's memory as well as the history of the Battle of Atlanta for its 150th anniversary. Similar to the 125th anniversary in 1989, Bryant and the East Atlanta Community Association gave van tours to interested visitors. Bryant described the tours he offered, saying visitors

find [McPherson] a very interesting character, and so he is one of the main people we talk about on the tour, because he died here. . . . Sherman is the one that everybody knows, and they don't know him very well. So they get here and they learn about General McPherson. We talk about his potential future in politics. What I like to do on my tour is try to apply it to the present time. During the present time that we've been giving the tour, we've had Schwarzkopf, Powell. We've had these powerful generals who've become national heroes, so its very easy for a person today to see a general, and say 'yeah he could be.' General McPherson was young and handsome and dynamic type figure, very charismatic really, in the vein of John Kennedy, say, who was a military hero. . . . They start

⁶¹⁹ Bryant and Carey, *The Battle of Atlanta Monuments: Assessment and Restoration Plans for the McPherson and Walker Monuments*, Battlefield Community Meetings.

⁶²⁰ Bryant, discussion.

⁶²¹ Ibid.

to see that McPherson might have had a future in politics if he had lived, and what that might have meant for the country if he had lived.⁶²²

Bryant certainly helped maintain McPherson's memory for those interested in learning about the general or the battle. The East Atlanta Community Association also helped promote the McPherson name in the Atlanta community around the time of the 150th anniversary by selling shirts and mugs with McPherson and Walker on them, with the labels "Hipster General," in an attempt to interest the younger generation in local Atlanta history.⁶²³ The efforts of Bryant and the East Atlanta Community Association continue to maintain McPherson's memory in Atlanta in the twenty-first century.

Despite the recent efforts of certain locals, the battle to preserve McPherson's memory in Atlanta remains an uphill fight. That fact is certainly evident in Bryant's and the B-ATL's restoration efforts, which remain challenging. When asked about the different sections of Southern Atlantans who remain resistant to restoring the monument and preserving McPherson's memory, Bryant identified two groups. African-Americans living in and around Atlanta represent the first group. When asked about his reception from the African-American community, Bryant said, "the Civil War is not their war. . . . It's about them, but it's not their war. When I . . . [try] to raise money to fund the restoration of the monument from African Americans I get, 'Why do you want to do that? Why do you want to even perpetuate anything about the Civil War or that period of time?'" Many African-Americans equate the Civil War with a dark period in American history intrinsically linked to slavery. The African-American hesitation to support the restoration of a Civil War monument likely results from the extreme exasperation of living in a region littered with memorials to Southern heroes and Confederate

⁶²² Ibid.

⁶²³ East Atlanta Community Association Meeting Minutes, February 10, 2015.

veterans, the same men who fought to perpetuate slavery. "So it's sort of a twisted idea," said Bryant. "It's painful for [African-Americans] to think about, that their ancestors might have had a painful part of that history."⁶²⁴ The second group who resists the restoration efforts is unreconstructed Southerners. Bryant explained, "You have unreconstructed Confederates who are from outside the perimeter, largely, not very local, but Georgia, and they might view it as, 'That's just another dead Yankee.' Still . . . you still have some of that in the state of Georgia."⁶²⁵ These unreconstructed Southerners do not know or care that McPherson was generally loved and respected in both the North and the South at the time of his death, nor the fact that he served as such a prominent symbol of reconciliation at the beginning of the twentieth century. For them, McPherson simply is another dead Yankee.

Despite the slow progression and the various challenges, Bryant and the B-ATL remain confident in their efforts to restore the Walker and McPherson monuments. Notwithstanding the opposition, Bryant has found numerous supporters of the restoration efforts. "Atlanta has a lot of Northerners living here . . . and a lot of young people too, so I think there is a large section of people who view [the monument] as history, and part of the local history, the state's history, and the national history," said Bryant. The fundraising effort continues to make progress. By the summer of 2015, the B-ATL had raised approximately \$100,000 of the needed \$190,000. The organization intended to raise the majority of the money through large donations from various groups or societies, and then finish off the fundraising through local efforts among Atlanta residents.⁶²⁶ Even with the delay of the McPherson monument's restoration, it still receives

⁶²⁴ Bryant, discussion.

⁶²⁵ Ibid.

⁶²⁶ Ibid.

numerous visitors.⁶²⁷ "We do get lots of visitors," said Bryant. "Any type of veteran's type day—Memorial Day, Veteran's Day—you're more likely to get somebody visiting on those days. They might [visit] for their reverence for soldiers, and the price that they paid for our country. He's a hero, and they come for that reason."⁶²⁸

The memorial to McPherson in Atlanta had certain similarities, but mostly differences from the two erected in Washington, D.C. and Clyde, Ohio. One obvious similarity included the fact that it was established to preserve the memory and pay homage to McPherson. Another similarity is that the forces behind the construction of the monument were Civil War veterans and members of the U.S. Army. Just as the Society of the Army of the Tennessee played a crucial role in erecting both the Clyde and Washington memorials, McPherson's former brothers-in-arms felt that Atlanta needed a monument to mark the site of their former commander's death. Without the close proximity of a U.S. Army base in Atlanta and the presence of Union veterans in the 1870s, it is difficult to imagine the erection of a monument to a Yankee commander in the Deep South during Reconstruction. Indeed, the chief difference between the Atlanta monument and the others is the monument's location—the South. Atlanta is drastically different from Washington, D.C., the capital of the nation McPherson died to preserve, or Clyde, Ohio, the hometown of the general, in that it was, in fact, enemy territory. That distinction—the monument's location in the South—heavily influenced the memorial's history and meaning in Atlanta for the next 140 years.

⁶²⁷ Most visitors coming to Atlanta specifically to see McPherson's monument likely are either already familiar with the general's history, or self educated on his role in the Civil War. Very little public exposure of the McPherson's Atlanta monument exists. One exception is Barry L. Brown and Gordon R. Elwell's, *Crossroads of Conflict: A Guide to the Civil War Sites in Georgia* (Athens, GA: The University of Georgia Press, 2010), which describes the memorial and provides its location for its readers. *Ibid.*, 89.

⁶²⁸ *Ibid.*

The most significant feature of McPherson's Atlanta monument was its role in sectional reunion and its service as a symbol of reconciliation. Of all the Civil War locations and famous battlefields, the site selected for one of the earliest and most important joint reunions between Union and Confederate veterans took place in 1900 at the McPherson monument in Atlanta. Members of the Grand Army of the Republic and the United Confederate Veterans embraced in front of the memorial and pledged their devotion to the flag and the nation. McPherson's role during the Civil War, and particularly the respect he had earned from most Southerners, made him the perfect symbol for reunion. Although reconciliation did not occur seamlessly and certain issues between Northern and Southern veterans still remained, the location for the reunion proved an excellent choice. Following the erection of General Walker's matching memorial in 1902, the two men became intrinsically linked as the fallen heroes of Atlanta, and together offered further evidence of national reunion. Atlantans had demonstrated that they could honor the memory of both a Union and Confederate general with equal respect.

The other distinctive feature of McPherson's Atlanta monument is the rapid urbanization that quickly overtook the memorial. Washington, D.C.'s memorial had an entire city square surrounding McPherson's equestrian statue at its center. Clyde's McPherson Cemetery provided an open space around the monument, with the bronze statue as the most prominent feature in the surrounding area. Conversely, Atlanta's monument, although occupying a remote location in the wilderness on the outskirts of the city at the time of its unveiling, was soon surrounded by residential housing. Because of Atlanta's urbanization, the monument was soon located at the junction of two residential streets, another characteristic that sets it apart from the other memorials. This obscure residential location undeniably diminished the grandeur and prominence of the monument, and the loss of the Atlanta battlefield due to the city's expansion

severely diminished the potential memorialization of McPherson on a preserved battlefield or national park. Despite certain Atlantans' efforts, the Atlanta battlefield never developed into the type of tourist attraction seen at other significant Civil War battlefield sites. Ultimately, urbanization affected McPherson's memorialization in Atlanta in a negative manner.

A final feature that continuously characterized McPherson's Atlanta monument throughout its 140 year history was the constant maintenance and restoration efforts. Following its erection in 1876, the Society first determined that the memorial needed restoration and serious maintenance in 1905. Vandalism from both relic hunters and bitter Southerners intent on defacing the memorial left the monument in a dilapidated state around the turn of the century. However, several groups proved willing to maintain the monument, with the Society passing a resolution for its restoration and the local GAR handling the memorial's upkeep. Shortly thereafter, in 1914, the Old Guard of Atlanta made an effort to restore the memorial in preparation for the upcoming Shriners' convention in Atlanta that year. This effort signaled that the McPherson monument had entered into a new stage of importance as a point of civic pride for Atlantans. Henry Bryant and the B-ATL organization carry on the long tradition of local restoration efforts. Their attempt to restore the memorial, as well as the protracted progress in gaining local support, demonstrate both the determination of some citizens to maintain McPherson's memory, as well as a general lack of concern held by many local residents. One fact the restoration efforts make clear is that in Atlanta, McPherson is both remembered and forgotten.

Chapter 5 - McPherson, Kansas: A Unique Case Study

“I cannot refrain from saying all Hail to patriotic Kansas which in these days of lethargic patriotism has completed this enduring memorial to brave Major General James Birdseye McPherson. . . . Long live McPherson in the hearts of his countrymen! And long live Kansas for her patriotic devotion to the American Flag and it’s brave defenders!”⁶²⁹ So wrote Mrs. John A. Logan, the wife of the distinguished Civil War general and politician, who delivered this message to the residents of McPherson, Kansas, following their unveiling of an equestrian statue memorial to McPherson on July 4, 1917. The fourth and final of the major McPherson monuments, the events that surrounded its unveiling, and finally its greater significance to the town's residents through the years, all possessed certain similarities to the previous McPherson memorials, but also presents a unique case study on McPherson's memorialization.⁶³⁰

Much like the other memorials, the Kansas monument, at first, primarily intended to honor the memory of the town's namesake. However, the town's residents also had further motivations for erecting a monument, mainly local boosterism and an attempt to increase the appeal of McPherson, Kansas to possible new residents or businesses. Additionally, the memorial represented an important symbol of civic pride for the town's residents, as reflected in the unveiling ceremony. Furthermore, given the timing of the unveiling in 1917, during the height of American mobilization for World War I, the ceremony turned into a celebration of patriotism and national pride, somewhat overshadowing the focus on McPherson's memory. Finally, over the years, the town's memorial took on new layers of significance, evolving from simply honoring McPherson, to representing a tribute to all Civil War veterans, and finally

⁶²⁹ *McPherson Weekly Republican*, July 20, 1917, 10.

⁶³⁰ This chapter first appeared as an article in *Kansas History: A Journal of the Central Plains*. Eric Dudley, "Remembering and Forgetting: The Memorialization of General James Birdseye McPherson in McPherson, Kansas," *Kansas History: A Journal of the Central Plains* 36, no. 4 (Winter 2013-2014): 250-268.

honoring all U.S. veterans and servicemen. One explanation for these multiple motives was the generation that unveiled the Kansas memorial. Unlike the previous three monuments, which had been paid for, constructed, and unveiled by McPherson's contemporaries, a new generation, many of whom were born after the Civil War, oversaw the erection of the Kansas monument. Therefore, although the residents were not completely disinterested in the general himself and preserving his memory, added incentives certainly played a significant role in the monument's history.

Examination of the McPherson memorial complements the study of Kansas history and Kansas memory. Several recently published studies explore the nature of the collective memory of Kansans.⁶³¹ Many of the scholars who examine Kansas memory also draw on Benedict Anderson's concept of "imagined communities."⁶³² Writing on the subject of history and memory as it relates to Kansas, Virgil Dean, editor of *Kansas History: A Journal of the Central Plains*, noted that "Remembrance leads us toward an identity as Kansans, or to what has been called 'imagined communities.' It leads us away from a preoccupation with the 'image' of Kansas, as determined elsewhere, and toward a healthy consideration of the identity of Kansas, as we ourselves imagine it."⁶³³ Similar to previous studies, examining the Kansas McPherson equestrian memorial reveals much about Kansans' "imagined" identity, as well as the values many Kansas residents held in the early-twentieth century.

⁶³¹ While many historians have long pondered the relevance of Kansas memory, several authors have recently examined the topic in a special issue of *Kansas History: A Journal of the Central Plains* published to commemorate the 150th anniversary of Kansas' statehood. Of particular note see Thomas D. Isner, "The Enterprise of Kansas History," *Kansas History: A Journal of the Central Plains* 34, no. 1 (Spring 2011): 12-27 and Bruce R. Kahler, "John A. Martin: Soldier State Visionary," *Kansas History: A Journal of the Central Plains* 34, no. 1 (Spring 2011): 50-59.

⁶³² Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (New York: Verso, 1983).

⁶³³ Virgil Dean, "Kansas at 150," *Kansas History: A Journal of the Central Plains* 34, no. 1 (Spring 2011), 7.

Much of the recent scholarly interest in Kansas memory has focused on memorialization. Steven Trout and Randall M. Thies both addressed the issue of memorial building, concentrating in particular on World War I memorials.⁶³⁴ Trout surveyed the construction of World War I monuments throughout the state of Kansas during the 1920s and 1930s. Central to Trout's analysis was the fact that over time many of the memorials either lost their significance to the local community, or were assigned new meaning. Thies explored only one particular memorial—the Kinsley Civil War Monument in Kinsley, Kansas. However, much like the memorials examined by Trout, Thies identified a diminished significance and a lack of understanding of the Kinsley monument by local residents that gradually occurred over time. A similar shift also existed in the significance and meaning of the McPherson memorial to its town's residents.

In addition to the topic of memorialization and Kansas history, the McPherson memorial also offers a useful analysis of civic pride. Although the desire to honor McPherson played a major role in the town's decision to erect a memorial, there unquestionably were additional factors that contributed to the community's determination to erect a monument—key among these was a desire to promote the town and boost local business.

In the early-twentieth century, McPherson, Kansas experienced significant growth. Between 1910 and 1920, the town grew from 3,546 residents to 4,595, an increase of 29.6 percent.⁶³⁵ One local newspaper article in 1914 proudly noted that McPherson was a town on the

⁶³⁴ Randall M. Thies, "Civil War Valor in Concrete: David A. Lester and the Kinsley Civil War Monument," *Kansas History: A Journal of the Central Plains* 22, no. 3 (Autumn 1999): 164-181 and Steven Trout, "Forgotten Reminders: Kansas World War I Memorials," *Kansas History: A Journal of the Central Plains* 29, no. 3 (Autumn 2006): 200-215.

⁶³⁵ University of Kansas Institute for Policy and Social Research, "Kansas Statistical Abstract Enhanced Online Edition," Section 15: Population, "Population of Cities in Kansas, 1900-2010," accessed April 8, 2013, <http://www.ipr.ku.edu/ksdata/ksah/population/2pop33.pdf>. This study draws its data from U.S. Census Bureau, Decennial Census.

rise.⁶³⁶ Accompanying the growth of McPherson was a desire to promote civic pride and attract new businesses through boosterism. Constructing an equestrian statue to honor General McPherson was one way residents hoped to accomplish this goal.⁶³⁷ Over time, as the meaning of the memorial gradually acquired its new layers of significance, what began as an attempt by locals to exhibit civil pride and boost business eventually transformed the memorial to become a symbol of patriotism for the town's residents during America's mobilization for World War I. Additionally, the memorial gained further meaning when the town's residents elected not only to honor General McPherson alone, but also chose to memorialize all Civil War veterans with the monument. This wider focus was later enlarged to include a testament to the sacrifice of all U.S. servicemen, and this has continued to the present day.

The Town of McPherson, Kansas and the Building of a Monument

Founded in 1872, McPherson, Kansas, is the only town in the United States named after General McPherson. Early settlers included many Civil War veterans, some of whom were men from Ohio who had served under General McPherson. The town also became the county seat of McPherson County, and for its residents, much like those of Clyde, Ohio, the town's namesake remained central to their identity. The community's decision to erect a statue to honor the general demonstrated McPherson's special significance to the town. The construction of the monument occurred near the end of a period known as the "Great Monument Era" in Kansas.⁶³⁸ The term refers to the period between roughly 1885 and 1918 that witnessed an explosion of

⁶³⁶ *McPherson Weekly Republican*, May 22, 1914, 9.

⁶³⁷ For examples of the construction of cemeteries also being driven by local commercial interests, see Cathy Ambler, "A Place Not Entirely of Sadness and Gloom: Oak Hill Cemetery and the Rural Cemetery Movement"; Nancy Volkman, "Landscape Architecture on the Prairie: The Work of H. W. S. Cleveland"; and Albert N. Hamscher, "'Scant Excuse for the Headstone': The Memorial-Park Cemetery in Kansas"; all in Albert N. Hamscher, ed., *Kansas Cemeteries in History* (Manhattan, KS: Kansas Publishing Inc., 2005).

⁶³⁸ Theis, "Civil War Valor in Concrete," 169.

monument building across the state. Kansas' monument boom reflected the larger increase in memorial construction occurring throughout the country during that time.⁶³⁹ In McPherson, the town's citizens had long desired to honor the general with a memorial. The "Official Souvenir," a program of fifty-six printed pages prepared for the attendees of the unveiling ceremony in 1917, claimed that "for years this dream was only a dream, but about four years ago the patriotic societies of [McPherson County] got together and organized the [General James] B. McPherson Monument Association for the purpose of erecting a suitable memorial to the general for whom the county was named."⁶⁴⁰ The Association, led by President John M. Van Nordstrand, became the chief organizing force behind the monument project.⁶⁴¹

The town's recent population growth combined with the residents' desire to promote their town and attract new business also strongly influenced the community's decision to erect a memorial to McPherson. In early 1913, just prior to the town's decision to fund a memorial project, the *McPherson Weekly Republican* printed ten suggestions for the town for the coming year. The first called for "The hearty co-operation of all the people, the organizations and the community for those things which make for a bigger and better town." An additional proposal recommended that the local Board of Trade reach out and increase McPherson's markets, "which should be enlarged so as to give McPherson its just share." Yet another suggestion urged the town to beautify its parks. The recommendation that most clearly exemplified the goals of the

⁶³⁹ See Doss, *Memorial Mania*, and Savage, *Monument Wars*.

⁶⁴⁰ "Official Souvenir McPherson County July 4th State Wide Patriotic Event, Unveiling Gen. James B. McPherson Monument First Bronze Equestrian in Kansas," hereafter "Official Souvenir," section "How We Got The Monument," located in "General James Birdseye McPherson: Biographical Information and Miscellaneous Information on the General James B. McPherson Monument in McPherson, Kansas," Kansas State Historical Society Library, Topeka, Kansas (hereafter "General James Birdseye McPherson," KSHSL). The "Official Souvenir" included a significant amount of information on the commissioning and construction of the monument, as well as a historical record of General McPherson himself and the planned unveiling ceremony. In addition to the printed copy at the KSHSL, a version is available online: "Official Souvenir McPherson County, July 4, 1917," last modified 1999, accessed March 10, 2013, <http://skyways.lib.ks.us/genweb/archives/mcpherson/1917/>.

⁶⁴¹ Raymond L. Flory, ed., *McPherson At Fifty: A Kansas Community in the 1920's* (McPherson, KS: McPherson College, 1970), 98.

town in 1913 was to “Encourage the Chautauqua [(an adult education movement)], the Fair, the band and [to] boost for attractions that will bring people from over the country and help all to become acquainted and get out of business ruts.”⁶⁴² A memorial to the Civil War hero for whom the town was named offered just such an “attraction” to “bring people from all over the country” to the small town of McPherson, Kansas.

Throughout 1913, the McPherson community continued to demonstrate signs of civic pride and boosterism. Foreshadowing the memorial’s unveiling ceremony that occurred four years later, the town planned a large Fourth of July celebration, aimed not only at observing Independence Day, but also to advertise the attractiveness of McPherson to outsiders. One *McPherson Weekly Republican* article stated that the purpose of the day’s events was “letting the outside world know of the splendid possibilities there are in this county, of the bargains that can be had here as compared to the east.” The author believed that once outsiders could “be convinced that in Kansas they can become independent land owners, they can be easily induced to come and locate here.”⁶⁴³ McPherson's residents considered the July 4 celebration a major success, primarily because it drew approximately 20,000 people, the largest crowd the small town had ever hosted.⁶⁴⁴ Following this event, the town continued efforts to attract additional residents and new businesses. McPherson's Board of Trade planned to distribute a sixteen-page pamphlet specifically designed to “show what McPherson has to offer and by what a prosperous community it is surrounded.”⁶⁴⁵ Shortly after the decision to print and distribute this pamphlet, the town's residents decided to broaden the theme of civic pride by constructing a monument to the man for whom the town was named.

⁶⁴² *McPherson Weekly Republican*, January 3, 1913, 2.

⁶⁴³ *McPherson Weekly Republican*, June 20, 1913, 8.

⁶⁴⁴ *McPherson Weekly Republican*, July 11, 1913, 1.

⁶⁴⁵ *McPherson Weekly Republican*, November 21, 1913, 1.

Many McPherson residents viewed the year 1913 as a significant year for the town and its continued growth. In January 1914, an article in the *McPherson Weekly Republican* claimed that “There has been an added awakening of McPherson people in the pride of the town and a consciousness that McPherson has the 'stuff.’”⁶⁴⁶ In a continued effort to enhance the attractiveness of the town, the residents undertook a campaign to beautify the local parks, and it was during this project that the community developed a plan for a memorial for General McPherson in what, at the time, was known as Central Park.⁶⁴⁷ The idea appealed to those citizens who wanted to show off the town and attract additional residents and new business. The crowd that eventually attended the memorial's unveiling ceremony would double that of the July 4 celebration in 1913. In a clear demonstration of the connection between civic boosterism and the McPherson memorial, the same *Weekly Republican* issue that reported on the detailed plans for the monument also announced the distribution of 1,000 pamphlets intended to promote the town and attract future residents.⁶⁴⁸ Although the town remained committed to honoring General McPherson, the timing of the town's decision to build a monument also underscored the significance of civic pride and the desire to draw in people and business through boosterism.

Initially, the Monument Association anticipated a relatively small monument, but soon “the efforts of the association were received with such hearty encouragement that plans were being considered for such a statue as nowhere existed in the state—a life-sized equestrian bronze.”⁶⁴⁹ The Association began looking into commissioning a reputable sculptor to create the memorial, and they placed its estimated cost at approximately \$30,000. The estimates at first dismayed the Association, but the organization soon found John Paulding of Chicago, who

⁶⁴⁶ *McPherson Weekly Republican*, January 9, 1914, 1.

⁶⁴⁷ *McPherson Weekly Republican*, February 27, 1914, 1.

⁶⁴⁸ *McPherson Weekly Republican*, March 6, 1914, 1.

⁶⁴⁹ “Official Souvenir,” section “How We Got The Monument.”

agreed to build the statue for \$15,000.⁶⁵⁰ Even at the reduced cost, funding for the project presented a major challenge for the Association. In the first attempt to raise money for the monument the state legislature levied a county tax in order to cover a portion of the expense. However, even this tax only covered a fraction of the cost, and the town raised the remaining balance through encouraging volunteer subscriptions from local citizens.⁶⁵¹ For example, the Monument Association contacted local teachers in McPherson to help fund the memorial project. In a letter requesting support, I. C. Meyer, the McPherson county superintendent, stated that “You are no doubt fully aware of the great patriotic effort being made by the citizens of McPherson County to erect a monument to the memory of [General James] B. McPherson. . . . Every citizen of our county has and should have a very personal interest in this great undertaking.” By the time Meyer wrote his letter, the Association had already collected all but \$2,000, yet he stressed that every school and school child would “want a part in this great monument that will be a thing to go down to posterity.” Meyer closed the letter writing, “The teachers of McPherson County can do a great service toward making the erection of this monument a success. We owe it in a patriotic spirit. I hope you will make a worthy effort.”⁶⁵² Myers exhortations clearly demonstrate that citizens were already connecting the McPherson monument with ideals of patriotism and national duty.

Meyer's letter also illustrated the shift that was occurring in the Association's vision. The original motives, which included civic pride and boosterism, still existed, but now patriotism slowly started becoming the more significant factor for the town. Through both taxes and subscriptions, the local residents bore the entire burden of the cost for the memorial, largely

⁶⁵⁰ Ibid.; Flory, ed., *McPherson at Fifty*, 98.

⁶⁵¹ “Official Souvenir,” section “How We Got The Monument,” *Kansas City Star*, July, 13, 1917, 1.

⁶⁵² I. C. Meyer to Teachers of McPherson County, January 27, 1917, “General James Birdseye McPherson,” KSHSL.

because throughout the entire process, certain members of the Monument Association depicted support for the monument as an act of patriotism.

While the construction of the McPherson monument accomplished a number of tasks, such as promoting the town, citizens demonstrated particular concern in honoring General McPherson and educating locals about his life and service. Prior to the unveiling of the memorial, the *McPherson Weekly Republican* published a biographical article on McPherson's life.⁶⁵³ The article provided a detailed sketch of McPherson from his childhood to his death. The purpose of the article clearly intended to educate McPherson residents, who perhaps were unaware of the man for whom their town was named. The approaching dedication of the memorial provided a perfect opportunity to inform those interested individuals about McPherson's illustrious life and heroic death, and although the eventual unveiling ceremony served purposes, it never completely relinquished its focus on McPherson "the man."

The Association's decision to build a statue was well publicized, and the community planned for its unveiling ceremony on an epic scale. Not only did McPherson residents expect as many as 30,000 people from throughout the state of Kansas to attend, but they also invited several prominent speakers to mark the occasion, including General Frederick A. Funston, General Nelson A. Miles, and Mrs. John A. Logan.⁶⁵⁴ Even prior to the unveiling ceremony, it was obvious that the memorial had assumed a significance greater than simply honoring General McPherson or promoting the town. This was evident in Mrs. John A. Logan's reply to her invitation to speak at the unveiling of the monument. She stated, "All [too] few testimonials of the gratitude of the American nation to the soldiers of the 1861-65 [conflict] are built and my heart is delighted whenever I hear anything being done to perpetuate the memories of these

⁶⁵³ *McPherson Weekly Republican*, March 2, 1917, 12.

⁶⁵⁴ *McPherson Weekly Republican*, January 5, 1917, 1.

gallant men.”⁶⁵⁵ Logan’s words reflected the widespread opinion that the memorial had the greater purpose of not simply paying tribute to McPherson, but honoring the service and sacrifice of all Civil War veterans.

Echoing Mrs. Logan's sentiments, the Association voted to add a large tablet with the names of all the Civil War veterans from McPherson County to accompany the memorial. Several months prior to the unveiling, the *McPherson Weekly Republican* published a list of the names that would be inscribed on the tablet. It stated that the town “desires that the name of every Union veteran who is now or has been a citizen of McPherson county should be on this bronze tablet.”⁶⁵⁶ The “Official Souvenir” from the unveiling ceremony referred to the tablet as “The Tablet of Fame,” and it described the Association’s efforts not to overlook any local veteran, stating that “The committee decided to make an appeal for support from patriotic people who would not wish to have a single deserving veteran’s name omitted.” In addition, it noted that although the monument had been fully funded, the “Tablet of Fame” had not yet received the necessary funds. To cover this shortfall, the “Souvenir” noted that “Consequently, it was decided to sell 752 medals [one for each veteran listed on the tablet] at a dollar a piece—a dollar for a soldier’s name,” and it emphasized that “as the number is limited, it will be a distinction in years to come to own one of these medals of award for patriotic service in honoring the patriot who fought for us the battle of freedom.”⁶⁵⁷ The Tablet of Fame, as well as the campaign to raise money for its construction, further indicated the intent to associate the memorial with all McPherson county Civil War veterans, and it also further demonstrated the continued association of the fundraising with a sense of patriotism.

⁶⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁵⁶ *McPherson Weekly Republican*, February 23, 1917, 2.

⁶⁵⁷ “Official Souvenir,” section “The Tablet of Fame.”

Once completed, the McPherson memorial indeed lived up to many of the residents' expectations. The "Official Souvenir" provided a proud description of the finished equestrian statue. Sculptor John Paulding desired the statue to reflect the moment just before the general's death, as McPherson scouted his Army's front lines. "The sculptor's conception is that of the general advancing before his command, reconnoitering the line of battle, and the intensity of horse and rider fully portray the moment before the enemy bullet cut short his illustrious life," explained the "Official Souvenir." However, above all else, Paulding created the monument essentially as a portrait statue, and the "Souvenir" noted that "The likeness of General McPherson is excellently reproduced in bronze and is completely authentic even to clothes and accoutrement." Finally, in order to fulfill his vision for the memorial, Paulding designed the rider "looking south. . . . Directly behind him are the embattlements of his forces mounted by two huge cannon donated by the United States Government, and behind this fly the Stars and Stripes from a flag pole erected by the city. The entire picture splendidly carries out the idea of 'The Reconnaiss[s]ance.'"⁶⁵⁸ As described in the "Official Souvenir," the town's citizens appeared quite pleased with their finished product.

John Paulding, the sculptor of the McPherson statue, did not attend the unveiling ceremony for health reasons, but he still left his mark on the event. The Monument Association made sure to honor the sculptor with a lengthy biographical profile in the "Official Souvenir." The piece, previously published in the *Kansas City Star*, discussed not only Paulding's work on the McPherson memorial, but also his personal history. The article proudly noted that Paulding

⁶⁵⁸ Ibid., section "The Reconnaissance." The McPherson memorial's horse has all four of its hooves on the ground, contradicting the common belief that the horse's hooves indicate the fate of the rider. Popular belief contends that if the horse's hooves are off the ground it signifies that the rider was killed in combat. For further discussion of this myth, see "Statue of Limitations," last modified August 2, 2007, accessed February 24, 2013, <http://www.snopes.com/military/statue.asp>. The two cannons remained in the park until World War II, when the city donated them as scrap metal for the war effort. Information on the history of the cannons was acquired through personal communication with David Nigh, the President of the McPherson County Historical Society.

was an artist who was “rapidly mounting the ladder of fame in the art world.”⁶⁵⁹ At the time he completed the McPherson monument in 1917, Paulding belonged to the Chicago Society of Artists and the Western Society of Sculptors and had graduated from the Chicago Art Institute. The profile also suggested that it was fortuitous that like General McPherson, Paulding was from Ohio, only approximately 100 miles from McPherson’s birthplace. The article, along with its inclusion in the "Official Souvenir," clearly demonstrated that McPherson’s residents desired to honor the creator of their prized memorial.

The Monument Association's decision to commission Paulding to construct the McPherson memorial was a mutually beneficial arrangement for both the town and the artist. The agreement reduced the original estimated cost of \$30,000 by half, thus saving the town a significant amount of money. For Paulding, a relatively unknown artist, the McPherson equestrian statue offered an opportunity to enhance his reputation. In fact, Paulding later became renowned for sculpting World War I memorials. His most famous sculpture, “Over the Top” (also known as “American Doughboy”), was replicated at least fifty times across the United States, including three versions in Kansas at Onaga, Olathe, and Leavenworth.⁶⁶⁰ Despite the fact that Paulding’s fame eventually came from memorializing World War I soldiers, notably, his start can be traced directly to his commission to build the McPherson memorial.

Although unable to attend the unveiling ceremony, Paulding did send his regards to the citizens of McPherson and explained his personal views on the significance of the memorial. In

⁶⁵⁹ “Official Souvenir,” section “John Paulding. Sculptor.”

⁶⁶⁰ Earl D. Goldsmith, “Sculptor John Paulding’s Doughboys,” accessed March 10, 2013, <http://doughboysearcher.weebly.com/john-pauldings-doughboys.html>. Although E. M. Viquesney also received credit with creating the first “American Doughboy” memorial, experts still dispute which of these men deserve credit as the original sculptor. During their lifetimes, Paulding and Viquesney engaged in several copyright suits against one another and also conducted competitive marketing campaigns to prove that they originally designed the “American Doughboy.” Similar to his McPherson memorial, Paulding made his “Doughboys” with cast bronze, which he believed made them far superior to Viquesney’s pressed copper. “The Doughboy War: E. M. Viquesney vs. John Paulding,” accessed March 10, 2013, <http://doughboysearcher.weebly.com/john-pauldings-doughboys.html>.

a letter written to the President of the Monument Association, Van Nordstrand, Paulding wrote, “I tell you it gives me quite a heart ache not to be with you. . . . My sincerest hope is that the bronze General and his Horse shall grow in your pleasure and as the generations follow they shall come to know them as the emblem of courage and patriotism.” Paulding’s letter revealed that even the sculptor understood that his work represented more than simply honoring a Civil War general or enhancing the image of a Kansas town. Given the United States’ involvement in World War I at the time of the unveiling, Paulding also recognized the importance of collective service to the country, writing that “the attentive attitudes of the horse and rider shall often remind [future generations] of that necessary vigilance toward the interests of the whole community which it has been well said is the price of our liberty.”⁶⁶¹

Advertisement and the Unveiling Ceremony

Although the significance of the memorial was shaped by the nation's entry into the war in 1917, the ceremony still retained its original purpose of promoting civic pride and attempting to convince outsiders of the attractions of the town of McPherson. The “Official Souvenir” lauded not only the memorial, but also advertised the positive features of the town. The “Souvenir” described McPherson as “a beautiful and prosperous city. . . . It has an abundant supply of 99% pure water from deep wells and is situated in the midst of a territory [in] which there is no better farming land in the United States.”⁶⁶² The “Souvenir” also contained several pictures of homes, businesses, churches, and parks in McPherson meant to appeal to outside visitors on the attractiveness of the town.

⁶⁶¹ John Paulding to John M. Van Nordstrand, July 2, 1917, *McPherson Weekly Republican*, July 13, 1917, 1.

⁶⁶² “Official Souvenir,” section “The City of McPherson.”

The community promoted the unveiling throughout the state with the hope that thousands of potential residents would attend. Men from McPherson traveled to nearby Kansas towns, such as Salina, where the local paper reported that these men from McPherson claimed that “There will be something doing from daylight until 11 o'clock at night.” The article further stated that “Thousands of people from all over the state will start out on the morning of the Fourth with McPherson as the mecca.”⁶⁶³ Several other town newspapers throughout Kansas also reported on the McPherson memorial and the upcoming unveiling ceremony.⁶⁶⁴ The *Topeka Daily Capital* advertised the occasion, claiming “It will be not only a county-wide event, but a Kansas and almost a nation-wide event when an equestrian bronze statue, the first of its kind in Kansas, is unveiled here on July 4 to the memory of Maj. Gen. James Birdseye McPherson.”⁶⁶⁵ The article also included a large picture of the monument and promoted the expected scale of the planned ceremony. It stated that “Indications from every section of the state indicate that it will be one of the largest attended observances of July the Fourth ever held in the state. Special trains will be run from Topeka, Pratt, Great Bend, Florence, Salina, and El Dorado and the city may be [r]eached either over the Meridan or Santa Fe trails.”⁶⁶⁶ The widespread promotion of the unveiling ceremony revealed that McPherson residents worked hard to advertise their event to a broad audience in an effort to attract as many people as possible to the celebration.

Part of the attraction for attendees of the unveiling ceremony, beyond the demonstration of patriotism and the honoring of General McPherson, included the opportunity to see a prominent general, Nelson A. Miles, deliver the keynote dedication speech. Miles' military career included distinguished service during the Civil War, during which he impressively rose to

⁶⁶³ *Salina Daily Union*, June 30, 1917, 4.

⁶⁶⁴ A sampling of Kansas newspapers outside of McPherson that advertised or reported the unveiling included the *Salina Daily Union*, the *Topeka Daily Capital*, the *Wichita Daily Eagle*, and the *Kansas City Star*.

⁶⁶⁵ *Topeka Daily Capital*, June 24, 1917, 2B.

⁶⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

the rank of Major General at the age of only twenty-six. He increased his national prominence most notably as an Indian fighter following the Civil War, gaining renown during the Great Sioux War and the Apache Wars. Most recently, he had served as the Commanding General of the United States Army during the Spanish-American War.⁶⁶⁷ Most Americans would have been familiar with Miles' military service and would have been drawn by the opportunity to hear the famous general speak. In fact, many of the state-wide articles that promoted the unveiling ceremony focused more on General Miles than on General McPherson, an interesting insight into the slowly diminishing role of McPherson's significance to the ceremony. The *Salina Daily Union* reported that General Miles would be coming to McPherson to dedicate the memorial.⁶⁶⁸ A picture of General Miles—not General McPherson—accompanied the article, and the author further displayed a degree of uncertainty regarding McPherson's identity, describing him at one point as “Gen. James M. McPherson, the founder of the city.” Not only did McPherson die in 1864, long before the Kansas town's founding, but the author also inaccurately assigned the general the incorrect middle initial of M instead of B. Already by the early-twentieth century, signs indicating the decline of McPherson's importance in the nation's collective memory were evident. The *Topeka Daily Capital* eagerly reported General Miles' arrival on July 3, 1917, and although he slightly diminished the focus on General McPherson, the presence of General Miles greatly benefited the small Kansas town by boosting the numbers of attendees. The eventual crowd exceeded expectations, with various estimates placing the number of people in attendance between 30,000 and 45,000.⁶⁶⁹ The original hope that the unveiling ceremony would provide a

⁶⁶⁷ For biographies of Miles, see Robert Wooster, *Nelson A. Miles and the Twilight of the Frontier Army* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1993), and Peter R. DeMontravel, *A Hero to His Fighting Men: Nelson A. Miles, 1839-1925* (Kent, OH: The Kent State University Press, 1998).

⁶⁶⁸ *Salina Daily Union*, June 6, 1917, 4.

⁶⁶⁹ The estimates of the crowd varied. The *Kansas City Star*, July 13, 1917 refers to “fully thirty thousand persons.” The *Wichita Eagle*, July 5, 1917 placed the number at over 40,000. The *Democrat-Opinion*, July 6, 1917 quoted

platform for boosting the town certainly came to fruition. However, in the process, the concentration on General McPherson appeared to be slowly losing its position as the unveiling ceremony's central focal point.

An example of how such large numbers of Kansans managed to travel to McPherson was best demonstrated by the residents of Salina, Kansas. More than 1,000 Salina residents attended the commemoration, and they traveled to McPherson a number of different ways.⁶⁷⁰ Many Salina citizens simply drove their automobiles to McPherson. As a second option, the day prior to the event the *Salina Daily Union* announced that “A special train on the Union Pacific leaves Salina tomorrow morning at 7:10 [a.m.] and returns from McPherson at 11:30 [p.m.]. In addition the regular trains run.”⁶⁷¹ Salina residents in attendance expressed delight at McPherson's hospitality, and the *Salina Daily Union* reported that “there was the best of order and unbounded felicity prevailed throughout the entire day.” The article continued, “As an indication of McPherson's great hospitality many of the best homes of the city were opened to the visitors and placards bid welcome to the porches of these homes for the rest and comfort of all. Chairs were [set] out on the porches for visitors.”⁶⁷² This level of hospitality is reminiscent of the welcome extended by the residents of Clyde, Ohio, where residents did the same. Luckily for McPherson residents, however, the widespread pick-pocketing and crime that overshadowed the event in Ohio was absent in Kansas. As the Salina newspaper made evident, McPherson not only successfully attracted attendees from across the state, but also achieved its objective of promoting the attractiveness of the town.

“competent judges” who placed the number between 30,000 and 40,000. The *McPherson Weekly Republican*, July 6, 1917 quoted two judges who “think the estimate of forty to forty-five thousand is conservative.” In any case, the crowd would have been extremely impressive and by far the largest McPherson had ever hosted.

⁶⁷⁰ *Salina Daily Union*, July 5, 1917, 1.

⁶⁷¹ *Salina Daily Union*, July 3, 1917, 5.

⁶⁷² *Salina Daily Union*, July 5, 1917, 1.

The Monument Association planned the unveiling ceremony as a day long affair, and reflecting the mood of the country, the program specifically referred to the commemoration as a “Patriotic and Military Event.” The Monument Association declared that because the United States was at war, “it is appropriate that this unveiling should be a day of great patriotic effort and for that reason the event will p[a]rtake of deep patriotism and military splendor.”⁶⁷³ The day began with the sunrise firing of cannons from Topeka’s Battery A, followed by the ringing of every bell in the city forty-eight times to honor each state in the Union. In addition, every steam whistle in the city blew for three minutes. A military escort, a band, and a reception committee greeted the special guests as they arrived at the McPherson train station. There as a military review for General Miles, and following General Miles' oration and the official dedication of the memorial, there was more band music, more patriotic speeches, and a drill exercise by state troops. The night ended with a pageant.⁶⁷⁴

General Miles’ main dedication speech best represented the connection between the memorial’s unveiling and the themes of patriotic duty and service to the United States. The speech also reflected another shift that occurred by focusing less attention on General McPherson or even the Civil War veterans honored by the bronze tablet. Miles opened his speech by saying,

On this our National Birthday, a day sacred and glorious to all lovers of liberty in every quarter of the globe, we are gathered, not only to pay our tribute of honor to the heroes and patriots who have given the full measure of their valor and sacrifice to our beloved country, but we come to pledge anew our fidelity to the welfare and perpetuity of [our] system of Government and our priceless institutions. Standing here at the base of this imperishable monument that symbolizes all that is heroic and noble, we would again dedicate our lives to the cause of American patriotism, American progress and all that true Americanism implies.

⁶⁷³ “Official Souvenir,” section “The State-Wide Event.”

⁶⁷⁴ *McPherson Weekly Republican*, June 29, 1917, 1.

Miles's speech appeared much more as a rallying cry intended to motivate the audience to face the country's new challenges than a simple honoring of General McPherson's memory or a promotion the town. Miles did provide a brief summary of McPherson's life and military career, but he then returned to his call to service, asking the crowd,

What was the cause for which McPherson made the soldier[']s] sacrifice? It was the most sacred cause for which our father's [sic] battled for seven long years, and for the beneficent Government they established. . . . [Americans] should understand that they are not mere subjects of some despotic power, but that the duties and responsibilities of citizenship rests [sic] upon each and all. I would that all our people were required to fully appreciate the important duties and responsibilities of citizenship. . . . As our beloved country [develops] into a mighty Nation and takes it's place as the [dominant] power of the world, I trust that the intelligence, genius and profound patriotism of our people may correspond and equal the grandeur and glory of our country, and be commensurate with our great resources and responsibilities.⁶⁷⁵

Had the United States not been on a war footing, Miles' speech undoubtedly would have placed more emphasis on honoring the Civil War veterans whose names were engraved on the tablet as well as perhaps devoting more time discussing the town or McPherson himself. But because the country was concentrated on its impending war in Europe at the time, Miles' speech adopted that focus as well. The memorial thus gained an additional layer of significance by focusing not only on McPherson, or even Civil War veterans more generally, but on the collective service and sacrifice of all U.S. servicemen.

Another fascinating event occurred during the unveiling ceremony when a German Civil War veteran spoke to the crowd. The *Wichita Eagle* reported that following General Miles's speech and official unveiling of the equestrian statue, an elderly man walked onto the speaker's stand. A. W. Smith of Topeka introduced him as Dr. Heddinger, a ninety-six-year-old Civil War veteran. Smith explained that Germany had expelled Dr. Heddinger "for rebelling against the

⁶⁷⁵ Ibid., July 6, 1917, 2.

beginning of the present German despotism,” following which “he came to this country and fought in our Civil War.” Hedding then spoke, and his words visibly moved the crowd when, in a barely audible voice, he stated, “I fought against German despotism of that day. Were I fifty years younger I would enlist today.” The *Wichita Eagle* reported that following Hedding's statement, “General Miles stepped forward and grasped his hand. Then the crowd massed about the stand, cheered wildly.”⁶⁷⁶ The *Topeka Daily Capital*, which also described this moving scene, explained that “Hundreds of settlers of German birth or parentage from the southern part of McPherson county burst into applause with the rest of the crowd, testifying to the unanimity of Kansas patriotism.”⁶⁷⁷ The incident merits recognition for two reasons. First, a Civil War veteran was being recognized and honored for his service to the United States, part of what the monument had come to symbolize following the addition of the bronze “Tablet of Fame.” Second, and more importantly, it demonstrated that the unveiling ceremony unquestionably served to reinforce the United States’ fight against Germany during World War I. Once again, the attention had been shifted away from General McPherson and his memory. The same *McPherson Weekly Republican* article that provided a biographical sketch of McPherson's life provided the logic that led to this shift. In describing the ceremony's significance, the article stated, “When the monument was planned this tablet was not thought of but as the work progressed those in charge of it felt that it would be incomplete without recognizing the [valiant] soldiers who made it possible for generals to win laurels. McPherson county has always been a highly patriotic county.”⁶⁷⁸

⁶⁷⁶ *Wichita Eagle*, July 5, 1917, 10.

⁶⁷⁷ *Topeka Daily Capital*, July 5, 1917, 1.

⁶⁷⁸ *McPherson Weekly Republican*, March 2, 1917, 12.

In addition to the *McPherson Weekly Republican* article, the “Official Souvenir” also included a biographical sketch of McPherson’s life. This extremely romanticized portrayal of the general challenged any assertion that McPherson had foolishly exposed himself to the enemy, claiming “[McPherson] was a man who feared no danger and shirked no responsibility, but he was never fool-hardy nor rash.” Although many of McPherson's contemporaries would have agreed that the general did not foolishly throw his life away, many of McPherson's closest friends described his lack of caution and habitual exposure to danger as one of McPherson's few flaws as a general.⁶⁷⁹ Of his personal appearance, the piece described McPherson as “eminently preposs[ess]ing. He was six feet high, of remarkable physical development, graceful carriage and pleasing manners. He blended in the most happy manner ‘the grace and gentleness of the friend with the dignity, courage, faith and manliness of the soldier.’”⁶⁸⁰ In addition, the piece included segments of General William T. Sherman’s speech from the 1881 dedication of the McPherson memorial in Clyde. The inclusion of Sherman's speech demonstrated that the citizens of McPherson wished to emphasize those aspects of Sherman's speech the Kansans found particularly valuable or applicable to America's current situation. The "Official Souvenir" included Sherman's assertion that “[McPherson’s] natural place was as a leader of men, the highest sphere in military life,” which he quickly attained. “He performed deeds which are fully recorded,” Sherman continued, “and place his name honorably and worthily in the catalogue of the great generals of the world.” Sherman emphasized the importance of the Civil War to American history as well as the country's future, noting that “the years 1863 and 1864 were big with events which will influence the destiny of America for centuries to come.” The final segment of Sherman's remarks published in the "Souvenir" included his somber statement that

⁶⁷⁹ See Chapter 1, 66-67.

⁶⁸⁰ “Official Souvenir,” section “General J. B. McPherson, The Man and Soldier.”

“like a brilliant meteor, ‘Loved of the Gods,’ his young life went out before we had achieved the full measure of the work demanded of us by the times.”⁶⁸¹ Many people reading Sherman’s speech at the unveiling ceremony in McPherson, Kansas thirty-six years after its original delivery, also believed that Americans were now involved in a struggle that would “influence the destiny of America,” and that there was still “work demanded of” Americans.

Evolution of McPherson's Memory in Kansas Through the Years

As time passed and the memory of the unveiling ceremony faded, the town’s image of General McPherson remained closely linked with veterans’ collective sacrifice. In 1964, on the hundredth anniversary of General McPherson’s death, the *McPherson Sentinel* published an editorial entitled, “Lest We Forget Our War Heroes Too Soon.” The author began the article by noting that one hundred years ago McPherson had fallen on the battlefield. The primary focus of the editorial quickly changed, however, as the author stated that “When the men who survived a war came home, they were given the hero’s welcome they so richly deserved. But once a war was over, how often did you think of these men who had the courage to fight for their country?” The author’s attention thus shifted from honoring McPherson to encouraging his readers to recognize and honor the sacrifices made by all American servicemen. He continued:

It is good to think of these men once in awhile between wars. It is also good to think of the thousands of our best young men today in the armed forces. Men ready to fight to the limit when needed. Men such as these are the keepers of the peace between nations. The best things in life must be fought for one way or another. Once won, we again must be ready to fight to hold our possessions and privileges we prize so highly. Only our fighting men can protect us as we sit helpless in our happy homes. Without their courage our nation would have disappeared long ago.⁶⁸²

⁶⁸¹ Sherman quoted in “Official Souvenir,” section “Tribute By General Sherman.”

⁶⁸² *McPherson Sentinel*, July 22, 1964, 2.

At the time of the editorial, there were American servicemen fighting and dying in Vietnam and Laos, and although the nation did not necessarily consider itself at war in 1964, the conflict appeared to have been on the author's mind. Even if the author was not specifically referring to what would become the Vietnam War, the article was published during the height of the Cold War, and America's ongoing struggle against the Soviet Union in particular and communism in general, occupied many Americans' thoughts. As in 1917, the country in 1964 had a reason to



**Figure 6: McPherson Equestrian Statue in Memorial Park, McPherson, Kansas
(Photograph by the author, 2012)**

connect General McPherson to the idea of patriotic service. In this context, it becomes more apparent why other than the brief mention of General McPherson's death, the entire 1964 editorial concentrated on patriotic recognition of soldiers' service to their country. Although the

article demonstrated that McPherson's life and deeds were still remembered in Kansas, that memory remained blended with the universal themes of patriotism and recognition of veterans.



Figure 7: "Tablet of Fame" (Photograph by the author, 2012)

Another fitting example of the relationship between the McPherson memorial and other tributes to U.S. veterans can be seen in the transformation of the park where the statue was originally dedicated. In 1917, the park was named simply Central Park. Only one year earlier, a

different park in town received the name McPherson Park.⁶⁸³ Surprisingly, the park with McPherson's equestrian statue failed to receive the name for the individual for whom the memorial was built and the town was named. Although the name of the park may appear a



Figure 8: "Tablet of Fame" and McPherson Equestrian Statue in Memorial Park, McPherson, Kansas (Photograph by the author, 2012)

⁶⁸³ Flory, ed., *McPherson At Fifty*, 98.

trivial matter, it reveals a great deal about how the memorial was perceived by the town's residents. Had the memorial been solely about recognizing the life and memory of General McPherson, it would follow that the town would have named the park after the general. After all, Clyde's cemetery changed its name to McPherson Cemetery, and Washington, D.C. changed the name from Scott Square to McPherson Square. Following the unveiling of the McPherson equestrian statue, the park where the statue is located became a central site for additional memorialization. Shortly after the end of World War I a granite memorial honoring Company D of the 2nd Kansas Infantry Division was erected in the park. The stone was engraved with "1917-1919: In Grateful Tribute To The Supreme Sacrifice Of Our Comrades." Following the Vietnam War, the town erected another impressive memorial—a triangular prism-shaped monument called the "McPherson County Memorial." Each of the three sides of this memorial was devoted to different wars—one side to World War I, another to World War II, and the third to Korea and Vietnam. Each of the panels bore the names of McPherson county residents who died in these conflicts. On Veteran's Day in 1990, the town rededicated the park as Memorial Park. On July 4, 2001, the town designated the park's pathway the "Military Order of the Purple Heart Pathway," and on Veteran's Day in 2004 the town erected a memorial to "Prisoners of War" and those "Missing in Action."⁶⁸⁴ Although the McPherson memorial remains the park's most prominent monument, the additional memorials have served to reinforce the idea that the McPherson equestrian statue honored much more than a Civil War general and his memory. In the years since the statue's unveiling, the transformation of the park into a more general symbol of patriotic memorialization perfectly embodies the additional layers of meaning that the McPherson memorial has come to represent. What began as a demonstration of civic pride and

⁶⁸⁴ All additional memorials in the park were observed by the author in 2012.

an honoring of General McPherson was by the desire of McPherson, Kansas' residents transformed to create a more inclusive memorial honoring the collective sacrifice of all U.S. servicemen. Memorial Park, as it is called today, exemplifies the present meaning of the McPherson memorial to the local residents.

This is not to say that as the park's meaning changed, the residents of McPherson no longer honored the memory of the general. In fact, some residents have even attempted to revive the memory of the general and learn more about his history. Of particular note are the members of the McPherson County Historical Society, who, under the guidance of President Linn Peterson, have sought to learn more about McPherson. In 1989, the Society invited a local professor from McPherson College, Dr. Leland Lengel, to give a presentation on the life and military career of General McPherson. Working primarily from Elizabeth J. Whaley's biography, Dr. Lengel presented the members of the Society with a concise yet informative description of the general's military service.⁶⁸⁵ Dr. Lengel's presentation prompted the Society to organize a trip to visit Clyde, Ohio in 1992, wishing to visit the site of General McPherson's birthplace and his final resting place.⁶⁸⁶ In addition to the obvious historical connection between the two towns, Clyde, Ohio also appealed to the members of the Society because it is one of the other communities that has a McPherson memorial. The trip confirms that there exists a certain connection between the various towns with monuments to McPherson, and allowed McPherson residents to compare their own statue with that of another town.

⁶⁸⁵ Program 144, "General James Birdseye McPherson," McPherson County Historical Society Audio Recordings, McPherson Public Library. Linn Peterson, president of the McPherson County Historical Society, archived audio recordings of various Society meetings, which have since been converted to compact discs and made available to the public through the McPherson Public Library.

⁶⁸⁶ Program 175, "Clyde, Ohio Trip," McPherson County Historical Society Audio Recordings.

In the early twentieth century, as the national collective memory of McPherson began to fade, one location where a group of individuals endeavored to maintain the general's memory was the town of McPherson, Kansas. However, even in this town named for the general and containing an equestrian statue erected in his honor, McPherson “the man” was still largely forgotten. Undoubtedly, part of the explanation for the fading memory of McPherson is that few of the Kansas citizens who built the memorial had actually experienced the Civil War or were aware of the particulars of McPherson's death. Therefore, the construction of the equestrian statue originally intended to honor the memory of the town's namesake, was assigned additional objectives by the towns' residents to reflect their values at the time it was unveiled. The Monument Association's initial purpose for building the McPherson memorial was never restricted to simply honoring the general. The project was also intended to display civic pride and promote boosterism for a budding town, and the unveiling ceremony served as a platform to attract new residents and to advertise the opportunities that McPherson offered. With the Association's decision to include the "Tablet of Fame," the memorial quickly gained an additional layer of meaning by honoring all the county's Civil War veterans. The memorial evolved further due to America's entry into World War I. The timing of the unveiling ultimately led to the shift from honoring McPherson and Civil War veterans to promoting America's patriotic cause and encouraging military service. Eventually the memorial's meaning was expanded to honor the service of all U.S. veterans, as evidenced by the transformation of Memorial Park.

The case of the Kansas memorial, like the previous monuments constructed in McPherson's honor, illuminates larger issues related to history and memory. It demonstrates that a collective memory—in this case, that of a small Kansas town—is often created in order to give

meaning to those individuals preserving the memory. Although originally intended to honor the individual for whom the town was named, the expanding objectives of the residents resulted in the statue becoming a monument to the ideals of the nation and the service and sacrifice of its servicemen.

The account of McPherson, Kansas' memorial is as much a story of collective forgetting as it is a story of one group's attempt to remember through memorialization. Although the original aim of the monument intended to preserve the memory of the general, residents of the town altered that objective to reflect the time in which it was dedicated. In doing so, the town's residents unintentionally diminished the significance of the individual being honored, demonstrating once more that in the process of commemoration individuals are often overlooked or forgotten as those controlling the process of memorialization seek to connect them to larger themes. Indeed, in one sense the Kansas town genuinely attempted to remember General McPherson and honor his memory with a lasting monument. In part they accomplished this goal, but in the process they also diminished the significance of General McPherson by altering the meaning of his memorial.

Conclusion

Other McPherson Memorialization and Acts of Remembrance

The four memorials discussed in the preceding chapters represent by far the most significant of the attempts to honor the memory of James B. McPherson. However, other memorials and gestures of remembrance occurred in the years following the general's death. Therefore, a study on the memorialization of General McPherson would be incomplete without a brief accounting of these additional monuments and further acts of remembrance.

In Niles, Ohio, on December 24, 1878, the Grand Army of the Republic organized the McPherson post #16 of the Ohio Department of the GAR with 30 members. Eventually more veterans joined the post and it grew to a membership of 150. The post presented the idea of raising funds for a monument in the nearby township of Weathersfield, Ohio in March 1882. The township's citizens unanimously adopted the proposal, and a granite shaft monument surmounted by an eagle was erected by the GAR post and the citizens of Weathersfield. Much like the McPherson, Kansas memorial, the meaning of the monument extended beyond McPherson, as the inscription reads, "Erected to the memory of our fallen heroes in the war of 1862-1865. By McPherson Post #16, Department of Ohio GAR and the Citizens of Weatherfield Township, General McPherson Killed July 22, 1864." Dedicated on October 21, 1882, today the memorial is located within the grounds of the McKinley Memorial in Niles, Ohio.⁶⁸⁷

One of the more peculiar McPherson memorials includes a statue in Baughman Memorial Park, near Frazeyburg in rural Ohio. Baughman Memorial Park contains several large stone carvings completed by an amateur sculptor, Brice Baughman. Baughman did not receive

⁶⁸⁷ Information on the Niles memorial obtained from a display titled "The Monument to McPherson, Niles, Ohio," in the McPherson House, Clyde, Ohio.

compensation for his work, nor did he carve his statues in hopes of receiving fame or recognition; instead he simply enjoyed making memorials to individuals who he admired and respected. The park includes numerous statues of U.S. presidents and famous generals.⁶⁸⁸ Several local organizations, apparently interested in McPherson, attended the monument's dedication on September 19, 1914. A local contingent of the GAR from Frazeyburg, the Newark Daughters of the American Revolution, the Newark Old Guards, and the Old Guard Drum Corps of Columbus all attended the event.⁶⁸⁹ The event provided further evidence that in his home state of Ohio, McPherson's memory persisted slightly longer than elsewhere. Yet, even here, time soon caught up with the memorialization efforts. In the early-twentieth century, Baughman Park was a popular attraction where many locals came to have picnics or various social functions among the numerous memorials. However, over time the park's significance to the public greatly diminished. Weeds overtook the statues, the monuments themselves deteriorated, and the public generally forgot about the park, leaving it isolated and rarely visited. Located in remote rural Ohio, today the park receives hardly any visitors and the monuments stand secluded in relative isolation from the world. In a sense, the fate of the park approximates the national memory of McPherson—significant for a period of time, but eventually forgotten by the general public.

Several other forms of remembrance also honored McPherson. The Union Pacific Railroad named one of its locomotives "The General McPherson" shortly following his death in 1864.⁶⁹⁰ Despite the initial resistance to a monument at West Point, the U.S. Military Academy eventually paid tribute to the general. West Point's "Battle Monument" was not specifically

⁶⁸⁸ See Aaron J. Keirns, *Statues on the Hill: The Story of Baughman Memorial Park* (Howard, OH: Little River Publishing, 2007) for the most complete history of the peculiar park.

⁶⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 39-40.

⁶⁹⁰ *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, May 30, 1960.

dedicated nor intended solely to honor McPherson, but the memorial does have his name inscribed on its base, along with several other Civil War veterans. It specifically honors all ". . . Officers and soldiers of the Regular Army killed in the US Civil War." Additionally, Grant's tomb in New York includes a bust of McPherson, reflecting their close relationship, and the Lincoln Vicksburg Memorial in the Ohio Statehouse Rotunda also includes a small tribute to McPherson. The Treasury Department put McPherson's portrait on a \$2.00 treasury note, referred to as the "McPherson \$2.00 Bill." The note was only in circulation for two years, from 1890-1891, and is highly valuable today among rare currency collectors, who have assigned it a value of between \$600 and \$1,500.⁶⁹¹

Equally interesting as the sites where there have been attempts to keep McPherson's memory alive, are the locations where there is no memorialization. One of the more surprising locations where McPherson has not been memorialized is Vicksburg, Mississippi. Unlike the Atlanta battlefield, local and national efforts preserved much of the battlefield and siege lines where the famous fighting around Vicksburg occurred. The Vicksburg National Military Park was established in 1899 and transferred to the NPS in 1933. Throughout the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century, memorialization in the park increased exponentially. As at Gettysburg, the Vicksburg Military Park is filled with dozens of monuments to both Union and Confederate generals. Therefore the absence of a memorial at Vicksburg to McPherson—one of the most important Union commanders in that campaign—is somewhat shocking. In fact, every other Union corps commander who participated in the campaign is memorialized.⁶⁹² Even John A.

⁶⁹¹ "Prices for Two Dollar 1891 Treasury Notes," *Antique Money*, Accessed September 22, 2016. <http://www.antiquemoney.com/old-two-dollar-bill-value-price-guide/two-dollar-bank-notes-pictures-prices-history/prices-for-two-dollar-1891-treasury-notes/>.

⁶⁹² The other Union corps commander with memorials include William T. Sherman (commander of XV Corps), John A. McClernand (commander of XIII Corps), Edward O. C. Ord (who replaced McClernand), Brig. Gen. Cadwallader Washburn (commander of XVI Corps), John G. Parke, (commander of IX Corps), and Elias S. Dennis

McClermand, whose blunders and insubordination eventually led to his dismissal by Grant, has a prominent equestrian statue, as do all of McPherson's subordinate Division commanders.⁶⁹³

Andrew Hickenlooper, McPherson's chief engineer for the XVII Corps, has a prominent memorial on the battlefield. McPherson not only commanded a corps during fighting, but also served as the commander of Vicksburg following its surrender, and was applauded for his generosity throughout the South. At the time of the park's establishment in 1899, the residents of Vicksburg attempted to erect a memorial to McPherson, but ultimately failed in their efforts.⁶⁹⁴ In the subsequent years, nobody took up the cause of a McPherson monument, and because there is no memorial, visitors to the battlefield fail to fully recognize McPherson's important role in the campaign.

Another location where McPherson's historical influence goes largely unrecognized is Alcatraz Island in San Francisco Bay. Despite McPherson's role in the construction of the island's defenses, attempts to name the works "Fort McPherson" failed, and the NPS pays almost no acknowledgment to the general at the site today. Not surprisingly, most of the attention on Alcatraz is devoted to the federal prison for which the island became most famous in the twentieth century. Given that Alcatraz receives approximately 1.3 million tourists annually, the failure to devote even a small recognition to the general's role in the island's history, represents a significant lost opportunity to preserve a portion of McPherson's history and memory.⁶⁹⁵

(commanded a detachment from the District of Northeast Louisiana) have one, despite McClermand's shady record in the campaign.

⁶⁹³ McPherson's division commanders included John McArthur, Isaac F. Quinby, Marcellus M. Crooker, and John Logan. All have monuments at Vicksburg.

⁶⁹⁴ *Clyde Enterprise*, April 6, 1899.

⁶⁹⁵ Although the NPS does present a history of the island as a military fort, both in exhibits and a video history, no mention of McPherson or his role in the fort takes a prominent position. In addition, despite the many historic programs offered by the NPS on a number of topics, none have been devoted to McPherson's role in the island's history. Information obtained through personal observance by the author in August, 2016, and conversation with unnamed NPS Park Ranger.

Remembering and Forgetting

The study of history and memory, and particularly the topic of memorialization, presents historians with certain difficulties. That is especially true when examining the degree to which an individual has been "remembered" or "forgotten." The terms "remembering" and "forgetting" are, in fact, abstract ideas and cannot be definitively measured or concretely defined. Nevertheless, by analyzing unveiling ceremonies, the commemorations that occurred throughout the years in the various towns, and the numerous motivations of the towns' residents, a number of observations can be made regarding whether McPherson has been "remembered" or "forgotten," and in what specific ways. Additionally, attempting to examine and evaluate an individual such as McPherson through a memory study focused on the various memorials built in his honor offers historians several valuable lessons. Other areas of history—whether cultural, military, political, or economic—get illuminated through such a memory study. The examination of town residents' commonly shared values, what communities hoped to preserve through memorialization, as well as other possible motives involved with memorialization, all offer noteworthy insight into American society and culture.

Although the exact degree to which McPherson has been "remembered" or "forgotten" in the four towns proves impossible to provide a definitive measurement, still, through the examination of the history of the monuments and their lasting meaning to their communities, certain conclusions can be drawn. Each of the McPherson monuments shared common similarities, the chief collective connection including their goal of honoring McPherson's memory. However, each memorial also possessed specific differences from the others—sometimes as a result of their location, other times as a result of the communities' residents' motivations, or the monument's lasting meaning to the town. One conclusion, which can be

stated definitively, includes the fact that although McPherson's collective memory among Americans significantly diminished in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, the four locations where his memory remained strongest in the years following his death included Washington, D.C., Clyde, Ohio, Atlanta, Georgia, and McPherson, Kansas. However, even in these four locations—the sites of his most important memorialization—the degree to which McPherson was remembered or forgotten, varied greatly.

In Washington, D.C., the site of McPherson's first memorial, the monument's evolving significance faced many challenges. At the time of its unveiling by the Society of the Army of the Tennessee in 1876, the monument was at its pinnacle of importance. In fact, at the time, the memorial was the only bronze equestrian statue to a Civil War general in the nation's capital. That great honor reflected the meaning that McPherson's memory had to the Civil War generation who loved and respected the general as one of America's greatest heroes and martyrs. One needs only to look at the speeches given at the unveiling ceremony to see repeated references to the confidence the speakers had that McPherson's name and reputation would live on with great distinction and fame for generations to come. Yet, the orators at the unveiling ceremony could not have foreseen the future evolution of Washington, D.C.'s memorial landscape. The changes that occurred in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries in Washington, most contributed to the diminishing importance of the memorial in McPherson Square. An explosion of memorials, and particularly bronze equestrian statues, stole the McPherson monument's uniqueness, and made it simply one of many similar memorials within the city. Another factor that reduced the monument's significance included the development of the National Mall, which became the monumental core of the city, leaving McPherson Square on the outskirts in relative isolation from the center of memorialization. However, even with the

reduced significance, the Washington, D.C. statue still serves an important role in McPherson's memorialization. Located at a busy metro and transportation hub, the monument receives more visitors and passersby than any of the other locations. As a result, its influence in perpetuating the general's memory cannot be ignored. Yet, even a high degree of public exposure does not guarantee true collective remembrance or acknowledgement of the generals' once semi-sacred place in American history. The level of disrespect shown to the memorial during the Occupy D.C. movement attested to that fact.

In Clyde, Ohio, the hometown and final resting place of the general, McPherson's memorial, and his memory more generally, served as a vital part of the town's local identity. The residents prided themselves on the claim of living in the hometown of Major General James B. McPherson, the highest ranking Union officer killed in the Civil War.⁶⁹⁶ Following the devastating relocation of the first memorial to Washington, D.C., the community demonstrated its resolve by refusing to allow government agents to remove the general's remains. In order to receive the full recognition and legitimacy of being the home of McPherson, they argued, they need to maintain possession of his remains and erect a lasting monument over his gravesite as a tribute to his memory. In 1881, at the time of the monument's dedication, the residents of Clyde successfully established their local reputation and prominence by hosting a large unveiling ceremony. The national import of the ceremony was confirmed by the attendance of ex-President Rutherford B. Hayes, William T. Sherman, and had not unforeseen circumstances intervened, sitting President James Garfield would have attended as well. Indeed, the very fact that Garfield had the ceremony on his mind during the final days of his life demonstrated the importance many of the Civil War generation placed in McPherson's memorialization. The later

⁶⁹⁶ So says the sign that greets visitors as they enter the town's city limits.

adoption of the McPherson House as a historical museum, the dedication of Highway 20 as "General McPherson Highway," and the restoration of the memorial, all attested to the significance of McPherson to the community's sense of identity. Clyde's residents steadfastly endeavored to preserve the memory of the general, and of the four locations with monuments to McPherson, reverence for the general is strongest in the town of Clyde, Ohio.

In Atlanta, Georgia, McPherson's memory faced a unique obstacle due to its location in the Deep South and former Confederacy. Unlike the other three memorials that enjoyed elaborate and well attended unveiling ceremonies, locally stationed U.S. Army officers quietly built and unveiled the Atlanta memorial without much local publicity or fanfare. Early in its history, the monument faced the problem of vandalism, both from relic seekers and bitter unreconstructed Southerners. The later naming of Fort McPherson in Atlanta further connected the Union general's name to the city, and efforts to change the name well into the late-twentieth century demonstrated an element, however small, of Southern hostility toward McPherson that has existed in Atlanta since the Civil War. Eventually, however, the monument came to serve an important purpose for locals. More so than any of the other memorials, the Atlanta monument filled a vital role for local Atlantans as a symbol of sectional reconciliation. Serving as the site of a major joint veterans' reunion in 1900, the McPherson monument provided the perfect setting for former Confederate and Union soldiers to heal old sectional wounds and rededicate themselves to the nation for which McPherson gave his life. Following the erection of the William H. T. Walker memorial in 1902, the two upright cannon monuments became henceforth connected to each other as joint symbols of national reunion. The other unique phenomenon faced by the Atlanta monument, not experienced by the other three, was urbanization. Originally erected on the outskirts of the city in unsettled wilderness, the expansion of Atlanta soon

overtook the monument, surrounding it with residential housing. The similar loss of the Atlanta battlefield further obscured McPherson's memory by denying Atlanta a preserved national battlefield similar to the National Parks at Gettysburg or Vicksburg. The other theme that continued throughout the Atlanta monument's history involved the numerous restoration efforts. First, the Society and the GAR hoped to improve what they considered an eyesore and a tarnishing of McPherson's memory. Then, the city of Atlanta took the lead by connecting the memorial with civic pride and a desire to restore the city's historically significant sites. Finally, private citizens from the local community, such as Henry Bryant and the B-ATL, currently lead the way in the restoration efforts for a combination of reasons, including civic pride and a desire to preserve McPherson's memory. However, local resistance and slow progress in the fundraising reveals that not all Atlanta residents are overly concerned or eager to support the restoration of a Civil War monument. Overall, the current memory of McPherson in Atlanta has drastically decreased since the time of his death when nearly every Atlantan would have known the general's name.

In McPherson, Kansas, the location of the last major McPherson monument, a new generation took up the memorialization effort. Unlike the first three memorials, which were constructed by McPherson's contemporaries who either knew him personally or were alive during the Civil War and his rise to fame, town residents born after the Civil War constituted the primary group who funded and erected the Kansas monument. As a result, ulterior motives beyond simply honoring a Civil War general tended to dominate the construction, unveiling, and significance of the memorial. Similar to Clyde, Ohio, McPherson constituted an important part of the Kansas town's local identity, and this led to the idea of erecting an equestrian statue. The citizens of McPherson also hoped an elaborate unveiling ceremony would help to boost business

and increase the attractiveness of the town to potential residents. Beyond merely honoring McPherson's memory, the equestrian statue represented a symbol of civic pride for the town's residents. The community's decision to add a "Tablet of Fame" to the memorial, added an additional layer of significance by extending the memorialization beyond McPherson to all Civil War veterans. Additionally, the timing of the unveiling, occurring during the United States' mobilization for World War I, infused the ceremony with themes of patriotism and military service that further diminished the focus on McPherson. Finally, the later development of Memorial Park, with its numerous memorials, added a final layer of significance to the meaning of the McPherson monument, as it became a tribute to all U.S. servicemen. In McPherson, Kansas, the only town or city named after James B. McPherson, residents made a noteworthy effort to add to the memorialization of the general, however, additional motives and unforeseen circumstances acted to overshadow the focus on McPherson the man. The Kansas community still remembers McPherson, even if only in a limited manner.

One phenomenon that evolved following the erection of the four McPherson memorials was the strong connection that developed between the four locations as a result of their shared association with McPherson. This connection is evidenced in the Clyde residents' efforts to restore the monument in Washington, D.C. and their financial support for the restoration of the Atlanta memorial. Henry Bryant and the B-ATL correctly recognized that the community of Clyde would be a group who had a vested interest in McPherson's memorialization. When the residents of McPherson, Kansas desired to learn more about their town's namesake, they visited Clyde, Ohio strengthening the bond between the two communities.

Although this dissertation's primary focus has been on the four towns where McPherson's memory has remained strongest, other conclusions also emerge from the study of McPherson's

larger national collective memory. First, from the high levels of national reporting and attendance at the multiple unveiling ceremonies, it can be concluded that McPherson's national memory remained strong throughout the country in the immediate aftermath of the Civil War. In particular, McPherson's veterans—especially the Society of the Army of the Tennessee—never failed to remember McPherson, even in later years. McPherson remained the topic of toasts and remembrance at the Society's reunions well into the twentieth century.⁶⁹⁷ The Society led the initial memorialization movements, as well as the early maintenance efforts in the case of the Atlanta monument. However, the group of veterans remained small in comparison to the American population as a whole. While McPherson's men could pass down to their children stories of their brave and heroic commander, the collective memory of the general dimmed in the decades following the passing of the Civil War generation. In the twentieth century, the collective memory of the Civil War changed again in both focus and intensity, and in the process McPherson's role in the war faded further. While an American who lived during the war could list dozens of Civil War generals and provided a detailed description of the role of each during the conflict, later generations could identify fewer and fewer, and only the most famous remained part of the collective memory.

The ultimate question remains: Why has the memory of McPherson diminished so dramatically? Considering the high esteem McPherson's contemporaries held for the general, and the numerous memorialization efforts made in the 50 years following his death, the fading of his memory in the later-twentieth and twenty-first centuries is perplexing. The answer, beyond the reasons previously discussed, involves the limited scope of memorials. Memorials only influence their immediate surroundings. They are visual by nature, and if someone cannot see or

⁶⁹⁷ *RPSAT*, 1903, 241-244; "Society Reunion," *JMP*, LC.

visit a monument, then it doesn't affect them. Therefore, the four monuments in this study certainly have had an effect on the residents of the four locations where they stand, as well as visitors to the four sites, but that number remains extremely small in comparison to the American populace as a whole. The memorials have successfully maintained the general's memory among the four communities, though even those memorialization efforts remain only partially effective as seen throughout this study, and they cannot efficiently maintain McPherson's memory among the American collective conscience as a whole.

The written word represents a memorial of a different type, one which McPherson has lacked over the years. In 1800, Nathaniel Macon, a congressman from North Carolina, declared on the floor of Congress, "Since the invention of [printing], monuments are good for nothing." Speaking particularly against the movement to fund a monument for George Washington in the nation's capital, Macon expressed his belief that words, not permanent stone or bronze structures, were what preserved the memory of great men. Macon believed that America, a modern, democratic nation with a literate and enlightened citizenry, had no use for "pernicious acts of ostentation."⁶⁹⁸ Although Macon misjudged the character of the American people and their affinity for monuments, he correctly identified an important aspect of the preservation of memory: the written word. Kirk Savage wrote, "There is no doubt that the modern state has been built on the mass circulation of the written word. Public monuments, by contrast, offer an anachronistic experience: a face-to-face encounter in a specially valued place set aside for collective gathering."⁶⁹⁹ In the case of McPherson, though several memorialization efforts were

⁶⁹⁸ Macon quoted in Savage, *Monument Wars*, 1. From *Annals of Congress*, House of Representatives, 6th Cong., 2nd sess., December 5, 1800, 803.

⁶⁹⁹ Savage, *Monument Wars*, 4.

completed following his death, a similar memorialization of his life and deeds through the writing of history is largely missing.

The general absence of an abundance of historical writing on McPherson has seriously diminished his place in the collective memory of the American public. Whether through coincidence or simply a lack of interest, no modern scholarly biography has yet been written on McPherson.⁷⁰⁰ Any discussion of what really influences collective memory must concede that the written word serves a significant role. Historians' publications influence the audience of readers who consume their work, and the publication of biographies and other history also influences the accounts written in textbooks. As a result, they play a part in determining the history taught in schools. Historians' publications also affect more popular forms of history such as historical fiction, which in turn is consumed by a larger, more popular audience.

Unquestionably, one of the more important mechanisms that greatly affects the American collective conscious is mass media, and particularly Hollywood. Although a large number of Americans read history books, a much larger number watch movies. Popular Hollywood films, particularly historical films, significantly influence the collective memory of certain historical events or individuals. The absence of any depiction of McPherson in a major Hollywood blockbuster has also significantly contributed to the lack of his remembrance among the American populace.

An additional explanation for the diminishing of the memory of McPherson in American collective memory that emerges from the study of his memorialization is that the primary

⁷⁰⁰ "Coincidence," in this case, refers to the death of Wilfred S. Forester, the individual who prepared to write a biography on the general before his death prevented its completion. Whaley's *Forgotten Hero*, despite representing the best existing biography, doesn't qualify as a modern scholarly biography owing primarily to the brevity and scope of her work. Tamara Moser Melia's dissertation actually represents the most complete work on the general's life and military service; however, being simply a dissertation and never being published for mass consumption, its reach on the American public remained extremely limited.

preservers of his memory failed to connect him to a greater ideological cause. Throughout the numerous dedication ceremonies and various acts of remembrance, speakers promoted McPherson's character and the fact that he was an individual to be emulated by younger generations, but the reasons provided by those speakers did not carry an ideological value. His military service, devotion and love of country, and willingness to make the ultimate sacrifice stood out as the most striking characteristics that his contemporaries admired. In times of war, as seen in 1917 in Kansas, those values were very useful and could serve a distinct purpose, yet at other times they did not mean as much to average Americans. The primary cause that McPherson did serve, as seen in Atlanta, was the cause of reconciliation, but even in this case McPherson's function served a very limited role. Once sectional reconciliation and national healing occurred, the import of McPherson's symbolism as an icon of reunion slowly diminished.

Throughout American history, the generals who tend to get remembered within the American collective consciousness usually either came to represent a distinct ideology or very clearly served an important role in the final outcome of the war. Intentionally or not, many of the Confederate generals who were immortalized following the Civil War came to represent the ideology of white supremacy, black subordination, or the myth of the Lost Cause. Other figures such as Colonel Robert Gould Shaw, the commander of the famous African-American 54th Massachusetts, came to represent the opposite ideology, one of racial equality and civil rights. Americans could lift up the actions of those individuals because they represented a cause or an ideal that they currently embraced. Other key figures such as Ulysses S. Grant and William T. Sherman get remembered for their perceived importance in ending the conflict. They are the ones who saw the Union through to its final victory, and finally overcame Lee and the Confederacy. Despite the important role McPherson played under both of these men, he never

would receive full recognition as one of the final victors as they would. McPherson also suffered from the eventual obscurity of the Western Theater in American Civil War history compared to the East. As the American obsession with Lee grew following the war, the central focus of not only Civil War history, but also the national collective memory of the war tended to focus on the Eastern Theater and Lee's Army of Northern Virginia. As a result, the significance of the capture of Vicksburg and the Battle of Atlanta diminished as the importance of the Battle of Antietam and the Battle of Gettysburg grew. It could easily be argued that had McPherson died defending against Pickett's Charge on the third day of the Battle of Gettysburg, he would still be one of America's greatest and best remembered heroes of the Civil War. Therefore, the circumstances surrounding his death at the Battle of Atlanta, the reduced importance of the Western Theater more generally in the national memory, as well as the inability to connect McPherson with a larger ideological value or national cause, all further contributed to his being forgotten by Americans.

Beyond the valuable insights regarding the evolution of the generals' memory, this dissertation further provides greater historical significance by highlighting several important themes regarding the study of history and memory. McPherson's memorialization supports the argument made by several memory theorists that collective memory is often shaped to reflect the times and conditions during which it is formed. Especially in the case of Atlanta and McPherson, Kansas, the communities at times co-opted the meaning of the memorials for other purposes, whether to facilitate sectional reconciliation between North and South, or to promote military service during World War I. The study of McPherson's monument in Atlanta, specifically, reveals how a segment of Southerners during Reconstruction regarded a local monument that provided a constant reminder of their defeat. The manner in which the memorial

was later used as a symbol for sectional healing also offers historians a commentary on the mechanics of reconciliation and contributes to a better understanding of Civil War memory and national reunion. The study has also illuminated the way in which a community can form a sense of local identity centered on the memory of an individual. In the cases of Clyde, Ohio and McPherson, Kansas, the towns' residents based a large portion of their local identity on a claim to the legacy of a Civil War hero. For the residents of both towns, McPherson's memory became a large part of their "imagined community." Finally, this study has shed light on the topics of local boosterism and civic pride and how communities can at times use memorialization for other purposes, such as improving the image and attractiveness of their town, promoting new businesses, and enticing new residents. However, even beyond the greater historical significance and several themes that this dissertation has helped illuminate, a central hope remains that it might bring further attention to a fascinating yet tragic historical figure who, through the passage of time and the slow decay of collective memory, has regrettably become a forgotten hero.

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