

GEORGE S. PATTON JR. AND THE LOST CAUSE LEGACY

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Historians have done their duty in commemorating an individual who was, as Sidney Hook's *Hero in History* would describe, an "event making-man." A myriad of works focused on understanding the martial effort behind George S. Patton Jr. from his ancestral lineage rooted in military tradition to his triumph during the Second World War. What is yet to be understood about Patton, however, is the role that the Civil War played in his transformation into one of America's iconic generals. For Patton, the Lost Cause legacy, one that idealized the image of the Confederate soldier in terms of personal honor, courage, and duty, became the seed for his preoccupation for glory.

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

In a diary entry entitled, “My Father as I Knew Him and of Him from Memory and Legend,” George S. Patton Jr., a recent graduate of the United States Military Academy at West Point, wrote:

[the acts] performed by men of my blood remains; and it is these facts which have inspired me. It is my own sincere hope that any of my blood who read these lines will be similarly inspired and ever be true to the heroic traditions of their race. Should my own end be fitting, as I pray it may be, it will be to such traditions that I owe what ever valor I may have shown. Should I falter I will have disgraced my blood.<sup>1</sup>

The portrait emerging from these words do not merely depict an adolescent aspiring for military glory, but one who took seriously his duty to live up to his Confederate heritage. In this succinct diary entry, young Patton linked himself with the Lost Cause legacy of his Confederate forbearers.

Historians have done their duty in commemorating an individual who was, as Sidney Hook’s *Hero in History* would describe, an “event making-man.”<sup>2</sup> A myriad of works focused on understanding the martial effort behind George S. Patton Jr. from his ancestral lineage rooted in military tradition to his triumph during the Second World War. What is yet to be understood about Patton, however, is the role that the Civil War played in his transformation into one of America’s iconic generals. For Patton, the Lost Cause legacy, one that idealized the image of the Confederate soldier in terms of personal honor, courage, and duty, became the seed for his preoccupation for glory. It was not uncommon that soldiers of Patton’s generation chose the army because of their hereditary attraction to a military career. Take for example, World War II

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<sup>1</sup> Martin Blumenson, George S. Patton, and Samuel H. Bryant, *The Patton Papers* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co, 1972), 27.

<sup>2</sup> Sidney Hook, *The Hero In History* (New York: Cosimo, Inc, 2008), 154.

Lt. Gen. Simon Bolivar Buckner Jr. and Col. Thomas Jonathan Jackson Christian Jr. The former was a son of Confederate Lt. Gen. Simon Bolivar Buckner and the latter a great-grandson of Confederate Lt. Gen. Thomas Jonathan “Stonewall” Jackson.<sup>3</sup> On the Union side, General of the Army Douglas MacArthur was the son of Col. Arthur MacArthur Jr., who won the Medal of Honor in the Civil War.<sup>4</sup> The key difference between Patton and other notable WWII commanders was that he continuously looked to the Lost Cause legacy, a distorted image of the past, for motivation to supersede his contemporaries. Patton never escaped the Lost Cause image he imposed on himself.

The Lost Cause, as defined by historian Gaines Foster, was a literary and social movement that reigned in the South from 1865-1913. The leaders were primarily prewar southern elites and former leaders of the Confederacy who “defended their actions in 1861-65 and insisted that the North acknowledge the honor and heroism of their cause.”<sup>5</sup> Their efforts materialized in literature works, memorial activities and the construction of monuments that emphasized “superiority of Confederate ability and culture.”<sup>6</sup> Ultimately, this reconstructed collective memory that depicted the Confederate soldier as a moral exemplar of honor, heroism, and character not only helped postwar Southerners cope with the “cultural implications of defeat” and “triumph over reality,” but also influenced Patton.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Arndt M. Stickles, *Simon Bolivar Buckner: Borderland Knight* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1940), 257; Sean Heuvel, “Stonewall Jackson’s Great-Grandson: WWII Hero,” *Tidewater Historian* (January 23, 2011), accessed April 19, 2014, <http://tidewaterhistorian.blogspot.com/2011/01/stonewall-jacksons-great-grandson-wwii.html>.

<sup>4</sup> Douglass MacArthur, *Reminiscences* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1964), 9.

<sup>5</sup> Gaines M. Foster, *Ghosts of the Confederacy: Defeat, the Lost Cause, and the Emergence of the New South 1865-1913* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 5.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 57

<sup>7</sup> Keith D. Dickson, *Sustaining Southern Identity: Douglass Southall Freeman and Memory in the Modern South* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2011), 10; Gaines M. Foster, *Ghosts of the Confederacy*, 8; David W Blight, *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory* (New York: Harvard University Press, 2001), 4.

George S. Patton Jr. was born into a family with deep Confederate martial roots, and he came of age “in the shadow of giants-heroes and Redeemers.”<sup>8</sup> During his lifetime he modeled his creed according to the warrior image of his Confederate grandfather; an image that was propelled by a postwar Southern society that embraced the ideals of the Confederate generation. Throughout his life, he continually drew on the Confederate tradition by evoking places, people, and events to give impetus to his own martial ambition. He surrounded himself with Confederate relics, participated in Confederate memorial events, and used historical references to transmit the distinct memory of the Civil War. Ultimately, the philosophical and cultural source of Patton’s appetite for military glory was rooted in his obsession with his Civil War ancestry, which furthered his martial ambition, stubbornness, tenacity, and became the seedbed for his generalship. This legacy did not end with his death in 1945. Even after his death, his family continued to link him with the Confederate past. The investigation that follows is an anomaly from more familiar Patton work. It accentuates how Patton embraced the Lost Cause tradition to earn his place amongst the pantheon of American military heroes.

There exists a number of biographical literature on George S. Patton Jr. Martin Blumenson’s *Patton, the Man Behind the Legend, 1885-1945*, is perhaps the most thorough work on Patton. Blumenson’s personal relationship with Patton and his service as the official historical officer for the Third Army lend credibility to his work. Other biographies briefly highlight Patton’s Confederate ancestry as a harbinger to his military glory. However, they fail to address how the Lost Cause tradition influenced Patton throughout his life. Such an approach is typical of Ladislav Farago’s *Ordeal and Triumph* that paints a fairly standard and prosaic portrait. Former British general Hubert Essame’s analytical study of Patton’s command style explores

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<sup>8</sup> David R. Goldfield, *Still Fighting the Civil War: the American South and Southern History* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2002), 194.

more the degree to which Patton's auspicious pedigree molded his grasp of war at the operational level. The author compares Patton to Robert E. Lee and Thomas Jonathan "Stonewall" Jackson, but the work makes little use of Patton's own writings to buttress these comparisons. Finally, Carlo D'Este's *Patton: A Genius for War*, departs from other existing Patton biographies in that he acknowledges the paucity of scholarly work devoted to Patton's Confederate ancestry. He devotes two chapters to tracing his martial roots from 1750-1885, but stops at Patton's birth.<sup>9</sup> In D'Este's attempt to separate the man from the myth he also observed that Patton masked his insecurities and his problems with dyslexia by fostering a public persona of a confident and daring individual.<sup>10</sup> As a result, *A Genius for War*, reopened the door for scholars to revisit the Patton mystique.

There are a few exceptions that more deeply explore Patton's affinity for the Confederacy. Robert H. Patton's *The Pattons: A Personal History of an American Family*, for example, paints a portrait of his grandfather with a tint of Southern grey. According to him, the family's "curious tenor of their son's ambition had precedent in the family past. Straight-faced talk about destiny, spiritualism, violence, and glory didn't sound odd in the least."<sup>11</sup> Ashley Halsey's succinct article on Patton's martial lineage, entitled "Ancestral Gray Cloud Over Patton," also provides an in depth look into the Patton family's deep Southern martial roots.<sup>12</sup> In the prologue of *The Patton Papers*, Martin Blumenson likewise links Patton with the Confederate past by portraying him as an individual who "tried to live by the code of the

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<sup>9</sup> Martin Blumenson, *Patton, The Man Behind The Legend, 1885-1945* (New York: William Morrow and Company, 1985); Ladislav Farago Ladislav, *Patton: Ordeal and Triumph* (New York: Ivan Obolensky, 1964); Hubert Essame, *Patton: A Study In Command* (New York: Scribner, 1974); Carlo D'Este, *Patton: A Genius for War* (New York: Harper Perennial, 1996).

<sup>10</sup> D'Este, *Genius for War*, 467.

<sup>11</sup> Robert H. Patton, *The Pattons: A Personal History of an American Family* (New York: Crown Publishers, 1994), vii.

<sup>12</sup> Ashley Halsey, "Ancestral Gray Cloud Over Patton," *American History Illustrated* 14 (1984).



gentleman, the creed of the knight.”<sup>13</sup> In his other work, *The Man Behind the Legend*, he noted how Patton idolized his family, the “exalted coterie of military men” from Virginia who “represented the aristocratic notion, feudal in origin,” that ideas of *noblesse oblige* alone qualified one for leadership.<sup>14</sup>

These works represent a judicious mixture of the old and new literature on Patton. However, regardless of their quantitative and qualitative weightiness, they seldom explore the extreme degree to which the legacy of the Confederacy, through the Lost Cause tradition, molded Patton. An exploration of such legacy is the first step toward a composite and responsible synthesis of the general.

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<sup>13</sup> Blumenson & Patton, *Patton Papers*, 6.

<sup>14</sup> Martin Blumenson, *Patton, The Man Behind The Legend*, 17.

## CHAPTER 2

### ANCESTRY: A MARTIAL LINEAGE

The namesake of his grandfather and father, George S. Patton Jr's., direct link to the Confederacy came from his martial lineage, which had its roots in the Revolutionary era. While the Pattons claimed direct descent from John Washington, a collateral descendant of George Washington, they were most proud of their ancestors who bore the family name.<sup>1</sup>

The family patriarch, Robert Patton, was a Scottish immigrant who fled Scotland after opposing the Crown during the country's eighteenth-century struggle for independence. He settled in Fredericksburg, Virginia, in 1771, as a merchant and married Anne Gordon Mercer. Anne's family had its own colorful military background. She was the daughter of Hugh Mercer, a soldier wounded during the French and Indian War who became a brigadier general in the Continental Army during the American Revolution and accompanied Gen. George Washington during the crossing of the Delaware.<sup>2</sup> During the Battle of Princeton in 1777, Mercer, "whose unit responded effectively to halt the British advance, [and] actually determined the outcome of the battle," was mortally wounded in command of his troops.<sup>3</sup> As a boy, Patton wrote a poem in which he proudly concluded how his great-great- grandfather had laid the cornerstone for the future family-military legacy: "Then, Mercer, bear ye bravely, do no shame. Nor blot the scutcheon [a shield or emblem bearing a coat of arms] of our ancient name."<sup>4</sup>

A son of Robert, John Mercer Patton, born on August 10, 1797, further established the families' influence in Virginia. After studying a year at Princeton, he entered medical school at

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<sup>1</sup>Ashley Halsey, "Ancestral Gray Cloud Over Patton," *American History Illustrated* 14 (1984): 41.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 42-48.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 43.

<sup>4</sup> Earle Rice Jr. and Caspar W. Weinberger, *George S. Patton* (New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 2004) 23.

the University of Pennsylvania, from which he graduated in 1818. He later returned to Fredericksburg, Virginia, to study law. In 1830 he was elected to the Twenty-First United States Congress and served until 1838. Three years later, on March 18, 1841, he was elected as the interim governor of Virginia when Thomas Walker Gilmer resigned thirteen days before the expiration of his term. In 1846, Patton was appointed along with Conway Robinson to revise and digest the civil code of Virginia that remained the state's legal code until 1873. He died in Richmond in October 1858.<sup>5</sup> From their mother's side, John Mercer Patton's sons also had a rich military tradition. John Mercer Patton married Peggy French Williams. Her parents were Isaac Hite Williams and Lucy Coleman Slaughter, descendants of Maj. John Williams and Capt. Phillip Slaughter, both officers of the American Revolution who fought at the Battles of Brandywine and Germantown.<sup>6</sup>

George Patton was not the only Patton deeply influenced by the family's military heritage. John Mercer and Peggy French Williams had seven sons who fought for the Confederacy. They included: Col. John Mercer, Col. Isaac William, Col. Waller Tazewell, Lt. James French, Lt. Hugh Mercer, cadet 4th srgt. William MacFarland, and Col. George Smith. Although their father was independent politically and even expressed support for the Know-Nothings, who were definitely pro-Union, perhaps it was their education that moved them to embrace the Democratic-led push for secession. Four sons were graduates of Virginia Military Institute (VMI), three of whom studied under the tutelage of "Stonewall" Jackson along with several of their cousins. Three rose to full colonelcies in Confederate service, and two were

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<sup>5</sup> John M. Patton, "Biography/Genealogy," John Mercer Patton Papers, Virginia Military Institute Archives, Lexington, VA.

<sup>6</sup> Waller Tazewell Patton, "Biography/Genealogy," Waller T. Patton Papers, Virginia Military Institute Archives.

killed in battle as Confederates.<sup>7</sup> They were not alone. In all, no fewer than sixteen members of the Patton family fought for the Confederacy. Most served as commissioned officers and commanded the 7th, 21st, 22nd, 25th, 56th, and 62nd Virginia Infantry regiments; the 1st Georgia Volunteers and the 51st Georgia Infantry; the 21st and 22nd Louisiana Infantry; and the 2nd Missouri Infantry.<sup>8</sup>

The eldest son, John Mercer Patton Jr., began the Patton family tradition at VMI as its first graduate. After the outbreak of the war in 1861 he served as lieutenant colonel and then colonel of the 21st Virginia Infantry, a regiment that mustered into service in Fredericksburg, Virginia. After participating in Gen. Robert E. Lee's Cheat Mountain and Jackson's Valley Campaigns, the unit was assigned to J. R. Jones's and William Terry's Brigade, in the Army of Northern Virginia. Mercer Patton's wartime service included commanding a brigade until the conclusion of the Shenandoah Valley Campaign of 1862. He also served as a member of Maj. Gen. Phillip St. George Cook's staff.<sup>9</sup> Crippled by a severe wound suffered at the Battle of Second Manassas, he resigned his commission on August 15, 1862, and returned to civilian life. After the war he became a member of the VMI Board of Visitors.<sup>10</sup> When Patton was a cadet at VMI, he was acutely aware of his great uncle's wartime endeavors. He boasted that Mercer had "commanded a regiment throughout the entire war" and "though his clothes were hit six times and his horse was killed under him he was never hit."<sup>11</sup> Young Patton's comments portray

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<sup>7</sup> William M. Patton, "Biography/Genealogy," William M. Patton Papers, Virginia Military Institute Archives.

<sup>8</sup> Halsey, "Ancestral Gray Cloud," 41.

<sup>9</sup> Hugh Mercer Patton, "Biography/Genealogy," 1971, Hugh M. Patton Papers, Virginia Military Institute Archives.

<sup>10</sup> Halsey, "Ancestral Gray Cloud," 42.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

lucidly the influence of the Lost Cause tradition, in which families inflated the wartime records of their ancestors.

John Mercer Patton Jr.'s son and namesake, John Mercer Patton III, and his grandson, John Mercer Patton IV, continued the family military tradition. Mercer IV, who graduated from VMI in 1880, served as a lieutenant in the Corps of Cadets and was the recipient of the Jackson–Hope Medal, the highest academic award presented at VMI to the most academically distinguished cadets in each graduating class. Following his graduation he spent two years as a captain and assistant professor of Mathematics, Latin, French and Tactics at the Institute before continuing his formal education in Europe, where he studied in France, Germany, Spain and Italy. After his European sojourn, he returned to Lexington and served as an instructor of modern languages. He died in his VMI quarters in 1924.<sup>12</sup> His grandson, John Mercer Patton IV, a VMI cadet from 1910-1914, served as a sergeant in the Corps of Cadets and enlisted as a 2nd lieutenant in the Marine Corps during World War I. He was killed in an airplane accident in 1922, but he had a son who graduated from VMI in 1942 and taught at the Institute after his service in WWII.<sup>13</sup>

Another son of the first John Mercer Patton, Isaac William Patton, also rendered his services to the Confederacy. He assumed command of the 21st and 22nd Louisiana Infantry regiments after moving to New Orleans in 1861. Formed in January 1862, and mustered into Confederate service the following month, the 21st was captured during the Siege of Vicksburg and dissolved.<sup>14</sup> In the aftermath of Vicksburg, it was consolidated with men from other

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<sup>12</sup> John Mercer Patton, “Biography/Genealogy”, John M. Patton Papers, Virginia Military Institute Archives.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> “Confederate Louisiana Troops,” National Park Service, accessed May 28, 2013, [http://www.nps.gov/civilwar/search-regiments-detail.htm?regiment\\_id=CLA0021RI02](http://www.nps.gov/civilwar/search-regiments-detail.htm?regiment_id=CLA0021RI02).

Louisiana units. The regiment served as artillerymen at Mobile, Alabama, assigned to Hiram Harrison Higgins and Alpheus Baker's Brigade, District of the Gulf. Isaac also fought at Forts Gaines and Morgan, Spanish Fort, and Fort Blakely. He surrendered on May 4, 1865. His son, William Tazewell Patton, attended VMI and graduated in 1877.<sup>15</sup>

Continuing the VMI-Patton family tradition was a third brother, Waller Tazewell Patton, Class of 1855. Tazewell spent his first postgraduate year as an assistant professor of Latin at the Institute with the rank of lieutenant.<sup>16</sup> On the eve of the Civil War he was involved in a number of significant events that ultimately culminated in Virginia's secession. In 1859 he served as captain of a militia company, the Culpepper Minute Men, who helped suppress John Brown's raid on Harper's Ferry. Tazewell also served as a member of the Richmond Convention that voted for secession. In May 1861 he was elected colonel of the 7th Virginia Infantry and commanded this unit at the First Battle of Bull Run. Tazewell and his regiment fought in every early engagement of the Army of Northern Virginia, and he was wounded at the Battle of Second Bull Run.<sup>17</sup> He also served under the command of many notable Confederates throughout the war, such as Generals Jubal E. Early, Richard S. Ewell, Ambrose Powell Hill, James Kemper, and William R. Terry.<sup>18</sup> Following Second Bull Run, his brigade was incorporated into Maj. Gen. George E. Pickett's division. At the Battle of Gettysburg, Tazewell was mortally wounded storming Cemetery Ridge on July 3, 1863, and sent to the College Hospital.<sup>19</sup> Before succumbing to his wounds, he scribbled his last words on a slate: "My trust is in the merits of

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<sup>15</sup> William T. Patton, "Biography/Genealogy," William T. Patton Papers, Virginia Military Institute Archives.

<sup>16</sup> Waller Tazewell Patton, "Biographical Sketch."

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> "Virginia Confederate Troops." National Park Services, accessed May 18, 2013, [http://www.nps.gov/civilwar/search-regiments-detail.htm?regiment\\_id=CVA0007RI](http://www.nps.gov/civilwar/search-regiments-detail.htm?regiment_id=CVA0007RI).

<sup>19</sup> Carlo D'Este, *Patton: A Genius for War* (New York: Harper Perennial, 1996), 12-14; Stanley P. Hirshson, *General Patton: A Soldier's Life* (New York: HarperCollins, 2002), 10.

Jesus Christ; my all is entrusted to Him.”<sup>20</sup> He died on July 21, 1863, at the age of twenty-nine. His body was taken to Baltimore, where it remained in a vault until after the war. It was later transferred to Winchester, where it was interred alongside the grave of his brother George Smith Patton.

Two younger brothers, James French and Hugh Mercer Patton, served as Confederate lieutenants. The former was wounded at Second Bull Run and the latter at Cold Harbor.<sup>21</sup> The youngest son of John Mercer Patton to bear arms for the Confederacy was William MacFarland Patton. He was one of the VMI cadets who gained immortality at the Battle of New Market. During the battle he served as cadet 4th sergeant in Company B and fought alongside his brother George Smith, who commanded the 22nd Virginia Infantry. Two other Patton relatives also joined McFarland in the Cadet Corps at New Market. A cousin, John Ross Patton, Class of 1867, served as a private in the same company.<sup>22</sup> Another relative, William Lane Slaughter, Class of 1867, served as a private in Company C.<sup>23</sup> Other notable cadets who fought alongside the Patton kin included George Taylor Lee, Class of 1867, a private in Company B. Lee’s grandfather was Henry “Light Horse Harry Lee,” making him a nephew of Robert E. Lee.<sup>24</sup> Thomas Garland Jefferson, great-great nephew of Thomas Jefferson, was another famous cadet. He served as a 4<sup>th</sup> class private, Company B, and was mortally wounded. He died three days later in New Market at the age of seventeen and was posthumously granted the title of “honorary graduate” in 1867. He

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<sup>20</sup> Jennings Cropper Wise, *The Military History of the Virginia Military Institute from 1839-1865* (Lynchburg: J.P. Bell Company, 1915), 247.

<sup>21</sup> Halsey, “Ancestral Gray Cloud,” 45.

<sup>22</sup> “John Ross Patton,” Virginia Military Institute, accessed May 22, 2013, <http://www9.vmi.edu/archiverosters/show.asp?page=details&ID=2973&rform=search>.

<sup>23</sup> “William Lane Slaughter,” Virginia Military Institute, accessed May 22, 2013, <http://www9.vmi.edu/archiverosters/show.asp?page=details&ID=3011&rform=search>.

<sup>24</sup> “George Taylor Lee,” Virginia Military Institute, accessed May 22, 2013, <http://www9.vmi.edu/archiverosters/show.asp?page=details&ID=2933&rform=search>.

is buried beneath the New Market Monument at VMI.<sup>25</sup> Jacob Peck Imboden, an honorary graduate in 1867, was one of five brothers in the Confederate Army and also fought alongside his brothers Francis M. Imboden, Class of 1864, and Brig. Gen. John D. Imboden at New Market.<sup>26</sup> Charles Carter Randolph, Class of 1870, was another distinguished cadet at New Market. Carter's paternal grandmother was Elizabeth Carter Lee, sister of Anne Carter, mother of Robert E. Lee.<sup>27</sup> Prior to his matriculation at VMI, he had enlisted as a private in Company F of the 6th Virginia Cavalry. He was discharged on December 31, 1862, whereupon Jackson arranged for him to attend VMI.<sup>28</sup>

Following New Market, MacFarland was promoted to 2nd lieutenant among the Cadet Officers for the 1864-1865 school year. In September 1868 he was recalled to the Institute to serve as an Assistant Professor of Latin, with the rank of lieutenant. The following year he was assigned to the Department of Tactics and promoted to captain. He remained a professor at VMI from 1873 to 1882.<sup>29</sup> He later returned to the Institute in 1888 as a professor of Civil Engineering and Applied Mechanics. In 1896 MacFarland became the Dean of the Engineering School at the Virginia Polytechnic Institute, where he served until his death in 1905.<sup>30</sup> His

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<sup>25</sup> "Thomas Garland Jefferson," Virginia Military Institute, accessed May 22, 2013, <http://www9.vmi.edu/archiverosters/show.asp?page=details&ID=2916&rform=search>.

<sup>26</sup> William Couper and Keith E. Gibson, ed., *The Corps Forward: Biographical Sketches of the VMI Cadets Who Fought in the Battle of New Market* (Prezzo: Mariner Companies, 2005), 101; "Jacob Peck Imboden," Virginia Military Institute, accessed May 22, 2013, <http://www9.vmi.edu/archiverosters/show.asp?page=details&ID=1894&rform=search>.

<sup>27</sup> Lyon G. Tyler ed., *Encyclopedia of Virginia Biography* (New York: Lewis Historical Publishing Company, 1915), 621.

<sup>28</sup> "Charles Carter Randolph," Virginia Military Institute, accessed May 22, 2013, <http://www9.vmi.edu/archiverosters/show.asp?page=details&ID=883&rform=list&num=11546>.

<sup>29</sup> Diane B. Jacobs and Judith Moreland Arnold, *A Virginia Military Institute Album, 1839-1910: A Collection of Photographs and Manuscripts from the VMI Archives, Lexington, Virginia* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1982), 77.

<sup>30</sup> William MacFarland Patton, "Biography/Genealogy," William M. Patton Papers, Virginia Military Institute Archives.



grandson, Capt. Mercer Davis, a West Point graduate, performed heroic service as a U.S. Army Air Corps pilot in World War II.<sup>31</sup>

Many other Patton kin also attended VMI and took up arms for the Confederacy. The most notable was Col. George Hugh Smith, Class of 1853, first cousin and classmate of George S. Patton Jr.'s grandfather and later the step-grandfather of the younger Patton. During the war he commanded the 25th Virginia and 64th Virginia Infantry regiments. The 25th organized during the early summer of 1861 and included the four companies of the 9th Battalion of Virginia Infantry. Its members came from Upshur, Augusta, Highland, Bath, Pendleton, and Rockbridge counties. During the war Smith was wounded several times and fought under the command of his former instructor Stonewall Jackson at the Battle of McDowell. He also participated in such notable battles such as Chancellorsville, Cold Harbor, and New Market.<sup>32</sup> After the war, he married George Smith Patton Sr.'s widow, Susan Thornton Glassell Patton, and moved the family to California. In the Golden State, he became a commissioner of the California Supreme Court and a justice of the district court of appeals. He was also the author of a plethora of essays on the theory of the state and jurisprudence. He died on February 6, 1915.<sup>33</sup> His grandson, Hancock Banning Jr., Class of 1914, served as a lieutenant in the U.S. Navy during World War II.<sup>34</sup> In a private letter to his father on Feb. 11, 1915, Lt. George S. Patton Jr. undervalued his late step-grandfather. According to him, Smith "did not have the military mind in its highest development, because he was swayed by ideas of right or wrong rather than those

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> George Hugh Smith, "Biography/Genealogy," George H. Smith Papers, Virginia Military Institute Archives.

<sup>33</sup> William C. Davis, *The Battle of New Market* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1983), 171.

<sup>34</sup> Hancock Banning Jr., "Biography/Genealogy," Hancock Banning Papers, Virginia Military Institute Archives.

of policy. Still he was probably more noble for his fault. Also the education of law hampered him.”<sup>35</sup> Thus for Patton, raised within the Lost Cause mythology, Smith never lived up to his biological grandfather, who died gloriously during the war.

George Hugh Smith’s brother, Isaac William Smith, was another Patton relative with Confederate service. After a year and a half at VMI, he departed the Institute to serve in the Mexican American War. Upon his return he served as an assistant professor and later became colonel of engineers in the Confederate Army. He was later transferred to Richmond, where he served in the War Department at the helm of the Pontoon Service. While in Maryland he heard of his cousin Tazewell’s mortal wounding at Gettysburg and traveled to his aid. He was present during his final moments. In 1874, Isaac Smith was granted honorary graduate status at VMI.<sup>36</sup>

Another Patton cousin and VMI graduate in Confederate arms was Lewis Burwell Williams Jr., Class of 1855. Lewis, classmate of Tazewell, stood fourth in a graduating class of sixteen. He served as both assistant professor of mathematics and instructor of tactics with the rank of captain for two years at the Institute. At the outbreak of the war he served as a lieutenant colonel under the command of Tazewell in the 7th Virginia. He was later promoted to colonel and assumed command of the 1st Virginia Infantry. At the Battle of Williamsburg in 1862 he was wounded and taken prisoner.<sup>37</sup> He was later killed outright in command of his brigade on July 3, 1863, while charging up Cemetery Ridge alongside Tazewell.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Steve French, “Smith Hailed as a ‘Perfect Soldier,’ VMI Graduate in Many Battles, Wounded Twice, Lived till 1915,” *The Washington Times Military History*, July 16, 2009 (clipping found in the Virginia Military Institute Archives).

<sup>36</sup> Isaac Williams Smith, “Biography/Genealogy,” Isaac W. Smith Papers, Virginia Military Institute Archives.

<sup>37</sup> Lewis Burnwell Williams, “Biography/Genealogy,” Lewis B. Williams Papers, Virginia Military Institute Archives.

<sup>38</sup> Ray F. Silbey, *The Confederate Order of Battle* (Shippensburg, PA: White Mane Publishing Company, 1996), 48.

Other Patton relatives with distinguished Confederate service were the Slaughter cousins. Like the Pattons, their military ancestry dated back to the Revolutionary era. They were grandsons of Capt. Philip Slaughter of the 11th Continental Regiment. On their maternal side, some were descendants of Gen. William Madison, brother of the former president.<sup>39</sup> The eldest cousin was Brig. Gen. James Edwin Slaughter Class of 1848. He enrolled at the Institute on August 6, 1845, and resigned his cadetship a year later to serve in the war against Mexico. In 1861 he was appointed as a 1st lieutenant in the Confederate artillery and also served on Gen. Pierre Gustave Toutant Beauregard's staff in Alabama and Florida. In March 1862, he was appointed brigadier general and served as a member of Gen. Braxton Bragg's staff in Mississippi. During the latter half of the war he was transferred to Texas as Maj. Gen. John B. Magruder's Chief of Artillery. Slaughter led troops during the last engagement of the war at Palmito Ranch, near Brownsville, Texas, on May 12, 1865. After the war he fled to Mexico.<sup>40</sup>

Philip Peyton Slaughter, Class of 1851, another Patton cousin, matriculated at VMI on Sept. 1, 1853, and graduated on July 4, 1857. He stood 8th in a class of twenty-three and held the rank of cadet first captain. During the first year of his postgraduate career he joined the VMI staff as a lieutenant and served as an instructor of Latin and Tactics. His Civil War military record included volunteer service with the Montpelier Guards in April 1861, which later mustered as Company A of the 13th Va. Infantry. On September 17, 1861, he was appointed lieutenant colonel of the 56th Va. Infantry and was severely wounded in the thigh at the Battle of Gaines Mill. Slaughter also fought under the command of Col. William D. Stuart, Class of 1850, during Pickett's Charge. When Stuart fell mortally wounded, Slaughter briefly assumed

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<sup>39</sup> Phillip Alexander Bruce and William G. Stanard, ed "Mercer Slaughter," *The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 6 (1989): 23.

<sup>40</sup> "VMI's Civil War Generals: James E. Slaughter," Virginia Military Institute, accessed May 24, 2013, <http://www.vmi.edu/archives.aspx?id=5653>.

command before the attack was repulsed.<sup>41</sup> He later served on detached service with the commission for the exchange of prisoners of war and was promoted to colonel in August 1863. Two months later he applied for retirement but was instead assigned for light duty with the Virginia Reserve Forces.<sup>42</sup>

The Slaughter family contributed several other men who served the Confederate cause in lesser roles. Mercer Slaughter graduated from VMI and rose to the rank of lieutenant in C. W. Fry's Virginia Light Battery, Braxton's Battalion. He was enrolled at the Institute only for three weeks before he enlisted at Richmond on March 20, 1862. During the action at Spotsylvania on May 12, 1864, he fell wounded when his horse was killed under him, but continued his service as acting Assistant Quartermaster until the end of the war.<sup>43</sup> Others included Edward Mercer Slaughter, Class of 1865, and James Shepard Slaughter, Class of 1864. The former enrolled at VMI for only three months before enlisting on April 1, 1864, as a private in Company B, 6th Virginia Cavalry. An unofficial source claims he was killed in action in the Shenandoah Valley on November 12, 1864. James Shepard Slaughter also served a brief stint at VMI. After three weeks at the Institute he enlisted on July 15, 1861, at Winchester as a private in Company A, 13th Virginia Infantry. On December 1, 1863 he transferred to Company C, 1st Confederate Engineers, and was promoted to sergeant just twenty days later. He was paroled in 1865 at Appomattox.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Wise, *The Military History of the Virginia Military Institute*, 244.

<sup>42</sup> "Phillip Peyton Slaughter," Virginia Military Institute, accessed May 24, 2013, <http://www9.vmi.edu/archiverosters/show.asp?page=details&ID=651&rform=search>.

<sup>43</sup> "Mercer Slaughter," Virginia Military Institute, accessed May 24, 2013, <http://www9.vmi.edu/archiverosters/show.asp?page=details&ID=2340&rform=search>.

<sup>44</sup> "Edward Mercer Slaughter," Virginia Military Institute, accessed May 24, 2013, <http://www9.vmi.edu/archiverosters/show.asp?page=details&ID=2548&rform=search>.

The Patton extended family in arms continued with Col. William M. Slaughter, who served as the commander of the 51st Georgia Infantry Regiment. He was elected as captain of a company in February 1862 and then colonel of the regiment before he was assigned to Gen. Thomas F. Drayton's brigade in the Army of Northern Virginia. He fought at Second Manassas and was later killed at the Battle of Chancellorsville.<sup>45</sup> Brig. Gen. Hugh Weedon Mercer, namesake of his Revolutionary war grandfather, was also a Patton relative. He graduated from West Point in 1828 and served as a 2nd Lt. in the United States Artillery. At the outbreak of the war he resigned his commission with the Regular Army and served as a colonel in the 1st Georgia Infantry. The regiment served in Savannah and at Charleston until May 1864. It was later assigned for the defense of the Savannah area late in the war.<sup>46</sup> The last of the Patton military men included Col. Thomas Patton, commander of the 2nd Missouri Infantry; Lt. Col. John Patton, commander of a Missouri militia; and Lt. Col Archibald K. Patton commander of the 1st and 15th Arkansas Infantries.<sup>47</sup> Ultimately, a total of sixteen members of the Patton extended family fought for the Confederacy.

The most important Patton in Confederate arms for George S. Patton Jr. was his grandfather, George Smith Patton, who provided the boy with an immediate bloodline link to the Confederacy. George Smith Patton was born June 26, 1833 in Fredericksburg, Virginia. He followed his brothers' footsteps and graduated from VMI in 1852, ranking second in his class. In his last year of cadetship he served as an assistant professor of languages.<sup>48</sup> Upon graduation he

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<sup>45</sup> "Confederate Georgia Troops," National Park Service, accessed May 28, 2013, [http://www.nps.gov/civilwar/search-regiments-detail.htm?regiment\\_id=CGA0001RI01](http://www.nps.gov/civilwar/search-regiments-detail.htm?regiment_id=CGA0001RI01).

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> "Confederate Arkansas Troops," National Park Service, accessed May 28, 2013, [http://www.nps.gov/civilwar/search-regiments-detail.htm?regiment\\_id=CAR0015RI03](http://www.nps.gov/civilwar/search-regiments-detail.htm?regiment_id=CAR0015RI03).

<sup>48</sup> George Smith Patton, "Biography/Genealogy," George S. Patton Papers, Virginia Military Institute Archives.

helped establish a private school in Richmond and also set up a law practice in Charleston, West Virginia. During his time in Charleston he recruited the Kanawha Rifles or 1st Kanawha Regiment, a volunteer militia unit whose members were composed of men from Jackson, Craig, Nicholas, Alleghany, Wyoming, and Boone counties. His contemporaries described him as a “pleasant-spoken gent’ man” with a “silky, portrait beard and “looked mighty Frenchy.”<sup>49</sup>

On April 25, 1861, Patton's regiment mustered into Confederate service as Company H of the 22nd Virginia Infantry, whereupon Patton became a lieutenant colonel on July 7, 1861.<sup>50</sup> He first saw action at Scarey Creek, near present day Putnam County, West Virginia on July 17, 1861, when he was wounded and captured. While on parole, he rejected an offer to join the VMI faculty and returned to military service. At Giles Court House (Pearisburg), West Virginia, he suffered yet another wound. Despite his injury, he returned to service and was promoted to colonel of his regiment on January 3, 1863. The field officers under his command included his cousin, Isaac N. Smith. In August 1863 at the Battle of White Sulphur Springs Patton served as a commanding officer, and he later fought at Cold Harbor and participated in Gen. Early's attempted raid on Washington.<sup>51</sup>

After participating at the Battle of New Market alongside his younger brother MacFarland and cousin George H. Smith, Patton's grandfather last saw action during the Shenandoah Valley operations against Gen. Philip Sheridan's army. At the Battle of Winchester on September 19, 1864 Patton was severely wounded after receiving orders from Maj. Gen. John C. Breckinridge to assist the Confederate cavalry on the Valley Pike. Union forces under Col. Thomas Devin captured two of his regiments, taking over 300 men and every battle flag from

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<sup>49</sup> Garnett L. Eskew, “Some Patton Reminiscences,” *The New York Times*, August 31, 1944.

<sup>50</sup> Davis, *The Battle of New Market*, 123.

<sup>51</sup> Bruce L. Bager, “The First Patton,” *National Guard Association of the United States* 38 (1984): 5.

Patton's brigade. After the battle he was taken to the home of a family member in Winchester, where he died several days later on September 25, 1864. He had been promoted to brigadier general in September 1864, but he died before he received his commission. His body was interred in Stonewall Cemetery, a part of Mt. Hebron Cemetery at Winchester, Virginia. In 1920, his grandson and namesake, then a colonel, accompanied by his father and wife Beatrice, paid tribute to family graves in Richmond and Fredericksburg. They also went on a battlefield pilgrimage and toured the spot where his grandfather had been mortally wounded. This spot became frozen in time for the aspiring soldier. After he laid floral tributes on his grandfather and uncles' graves he posed for a picture next to the tombstone of the two Confederate brothers.

Patton's father also had a deep connection with the Confederacy. Formerly George William Patton, he was the only child of George Smith Patton. After the death of his father and his mother's remarriage to his father's cousin, George Hugh Smith, George changed his middle name to Smith. As a child growing up in Richmond during the war, young George was deeply affected by the Confederate defeat. In addition to the traumatic death of his father, he also witnessed the fall of the besieged capital in 1865. After the war, VMI offered him a scholarship for being the son of a deceased Confederate soldier. Thus, typical of the Patton men, he continued the family legacy at VMI. In Lexington he furthered the family name by his academic achievements. In his senior year, he was promoted to first captain of "A" Company, a position that made him the first-ranking cadet officer both in his class and within the entire Cadet Corps.<sup>52</sup> He also graduated first in his class in 1877 and delivered a colorful valedictorian speech in which he vindicated his father and the Confederacy. He postulated how the Institute was "still

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<sup>52</sup> Julia Smith Martin to Col. Irving E. Pugh, 14 June 1968, George S. Patton Jr. Papers, Virginia Military Institute Archives.

scarred and blackened” from the torches of Union invaders, “continually reminding the sons of the South that their fathers once dared to strike for liberty.”<sup>53</sup>

George would later bequeath these same sentiments to his son. After graduation he remained at the Institute and served as an assistant professor of French and Tactics. “Papa,” as the younger Patton was fond of calling him, devoted his whole life to sustaining the memory of his own father and his service in the Confederacy. For young Patton, his father was a living connection with the old world. In an entry, he haughtily spoke of him as an individual who had “commanded the battalion at the Philadelphia Centennial in 1876 as a cadet, “This was the first time Southern troops had appeared in the North since the war and a great fuss was made over them.”<sup>54</sup>

After the war, the Patton family lost most of its fortune and moved to California, a popular destination for ex-Confederates. As the Confederate generation passed on as well as the generation of its sons, what remained for Patton and his contemporaries was to perpetuate their legacy and if possible surpass their patriotism, honor, civic duty, and virtue. The Patton family produced a total of twenty-two soldiers who fought for the Confederacy. Twelve attended VMI, establishing a longstanding family tradition. Young Patton never forgot his family of warriors, especially those connected to the Lost Cause.

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<sup>53</sup> Robert H. Patton, *A Personal History of an American Family*, 72.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 26.



## CHAPTER 3

### THE POWER BEHIND A NAME: CHILDHOOD AND CADET LIFE

George S. Patton Jr.'s interest in his biological grandfather's lineage and military feats was deeply seeded during his childhood. From birth he was nurtured in the company of Confederate heroes, heard their wartime tales, and was surrounded by Confederate relics. This environment influenced the boy at an early age to not only decide on a military career, but to preserve the legacy of his ancestors.

George S. Patton Jr. was born on November 11, 1885 in San Gabriel, California. Though given the name Junior, Patton was actually the third George Smith Patton. His first encounter with a living monument of the Confederacy was with his step-grandfather. George H. Smith had been his grandfather's cousin, classmate at Virginia Military Institute (VMI), and comrade in arms at New Market. Smith described George Patton as "a man of great gifts as a soldier and otherwise, and of a most noble and loveable character . . . and . . . excited the admiration of everyone with whom he came in contact."<sup>1</sup> As a small boy, the younger Patton heard many stories about their wartime experiences and by the age of five he informed his parents that he intended to become a "great general."<sup>2</sup> In addition to his step-grandfather, other notable Confederates also frequented the Smith family's two-thousand-acre estate in Southern California. According to his family lore, John S. Mosby, the well-known Confederate partisan ranger, was a frequent guest. During his visits he would re-enact Civil War battles with young Patton, allowing the boy to play the part of Robert E. Lee.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> William C. Davis, *The Battle of New Market* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1983), 127.

<sup>2</sup> Harry Yeide, *Fighting Patton: George S. Patton Jr. Through the Eyes of His Enemies* (London: Zenith Press, 2011), 3.

<sup>3</sup> William S. Connery, *Mosby's Raids in Civil War Northern Virginia* (Charleston: The History Press, 2013) 127.

Apart from his playful antics, Patton also translated the Confederate experience into faith. According to relatives, he recited his daily prayers next to “two small etched portraits he assumed were God and Jesus” in which he “beseechingly fixed his upturned eyes on these faces,” who, not surprisingly, turned out to be Lee and Stonewall Jackson.<sup>4</sup> As David Goldfield has observed in his study of Southern history, because of the Lost Cause’s religious overtones, “the links between God and the Confederacy, God and the South became so powerful that young children occasionally confused the two.”<sup>5</sup>

The most pervasive influence in the Patton family was remembrance of the Confederacy. Their need to preserve wartime relics helped foster the role that the Confederate legacy played in Patton’s life. At the helm of this movement were the Patton women, who laid the cornerstone long before Patton’s birth. His paternal grandmother, Susan Thornton Glassell Patton, who could trace her ancestry back to Edward I of England, continued to practice the planter class ideologies in California. She avidly instructed Patton’s father after the war that, “the best that any Patton could aspire to was embodied in their ancestry, . . . its excellence could not be surpassed.”<sup>6</sup> In addition to her Victorian values, she preserved a motley collection of family military mementoes that she bequeathed to her grandson: a fragment of the shell removed from her husband’s blood-soaked shirt, his letters, infantry tactics manual, saber, saddle, and the same prayer book that he carried throughout his Civil War campaigns. Moreover, she also gave the boy Waller Tazewell Patton’s deathbed letter from Gettysburg.<sup>7</sup>

Among the most treasured family relics bequeathed to young Patton were his biological

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<sup>4</sup> Robert H. Patton, *The Pattons: A Personal History of an American Family* (New York: Crown Publishers, 1994), 90.

<sup>5</sup> David R. Goldfield, *Still Fighting the Civil War: the American South and Southern History* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2002), 55.

<sup>6</sup> Robert H. Patton, *A Personal History of an American Family*, 24, 65.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 61.

grandfather's wartime saddle and saber. These artifacts became the child's most treasured possessions, which is evident in his first diary entry in which he penned, "the saddle I then rode was the McClellan saddle...on which my grandfather had been killed, in the pommel was a stain which I thought was his blood."<sup>8</sup> Even though his grandfather had been wounded on foot by an artillery shell and later succumbed to his wound, for Patton it was more heroic that he had done so in battle. He had understood at an early age that a hero in the making could only result from an honorable death upon the battlefield. The celebrated personal bravery and martial skills of the Confederate soldier by the Lost Cause challenged Patton and his contemporaries to "question whether they had lived up to expectations, to question whether they had behaved honorably."<sup>9</sup> This is evident in his entries in which he succinctly noted to himself, "If you do not die a soldier...I pray God to dam [*sic*] you George Patton."<sup>10</sup>

Like so many Southerners of his generation, who were raised within the culture of the Lost Cause, young Patton internalized an idealized image of his grandfather and other Confederate ancestors. Largely through the efforts of his grandmother, these war trophies emotionally connected Patton with his ancestors. As Goldfield has noted, the "Victorian belief that women were the natural preservers of tradition" became the cornerstone for the preservation of the Confederate tradition.<sup>11</sup> For Southern women, "it came as a natural calling to chronicle the heroic deeds of a dead civilization so that it and they might live again."<sup>12</sup> Patton's upbringing amidst tales and relics of legendary Confederate heroes, provided to him by his grandmother,

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<sup>8</sup> Martin Blumenson, George S. Patton, and Samuel H. Bryant, *The Patton Papers* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1972), 32.

<sup>9</sup> Gaines M. Foster, *Ghosts of the Confederacy: Defeat, the Lost Cause, and the Emergence of the New South 1865-1913* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 25.

<sup>10</sup> Robert H. Patton, *A Personal History of an American Family*, 105.

<sup>11</sup> Goldfield, *Still Fighting the Civil War*, 250.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 97.

undoubtedly nurtured and shaped his sense of mission and faith.

Other vestiges of the Old South remained at the Patton California household. Although the Pattons moved west after the Civil War, they still retained the social and patriarchal spirit of old Virginia landowners. Indeed this process began with Patton's paternal great grandmother, Peggy French Williams, who advised her sons before they ventured off to war that "as officers and gentleman, they must have body servants to accompany them through their campaigns against the Yankee invaders."<sup>13</sup> Thus, the plantation matriarch bequeathed to the Patton men the importance of class hegemony. This was especially true with Patton's father, who apparently inherited and practiced the paternalistic qualities of the old planter class. In a diary entry young Patton recalled that his father supported the "nigro body servant" who had accompanied his grandfather throughout the war until his death.<sup>14</sup> "Papa" also continuously instructed the boy on the qualities of *noblesse oblige* during his formative years. On one occasion he assertively told his son that "the laws of Nature and of God" advocated for the subjugation of the Negro race.<sup>15</sup> Moreover, he also educated his son that the "Southern white race, [was] the most homogenous British stock in the world."<sup>16</sup> Largely through the influence of his father, Patton was exposed to the racial elements of Southern identity prevalent during the postwar years.

The duty to uphold the tradition of his Civil War ancestors continued throughout Patton's adolescent years, during which he sought to live up to his namesake. In his diary he confided, "I only hope I may be worthy of it."<sup>17</sup> And in a reminiscent entry, written twenty-four years after his matriculation into VMI, Patton recalled, "Just before I went away to the V.M.I I was walking

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<sup>13</sup> Robert H. Patton, *A Personal History of an American Family*, 25.

<sup>14</sup> Ashley Halsey, "Ancestral Gray Cloud Over Patton," *American History Illustrated* 14 (1984): 48.

<sup>15</sup> Robert H. Patton, *A Personal History of an American Family*, 125.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>17</sup> Carlo D'Este, *Patton: A Genius for War* (New York: Harper Perennial, 1996), 20.

with Uncle Glassell Patton and told him that I feared that I might be cowardly. He told me that no Patton could be a coward. He was a most recklessly brave man. I told this to Papa and he said that while ages of gentility might make a man of my breeding reluctant to engage in a fist fight, the same breeding made him perfectly willing to face death from weapons with a smile. I think that this is true.”<sup>18</sup> In spite of his angst, his relatives who shared a similar appreciation for their Confederate tradition reinforced and encouraged the aspiring boy.

As Patton grew into young manhood, his affinity for the Confederate legacy became more pronounced. The years 1903 and 1904 were momentous ones for the aspiring boy. He rejected an offer to attend Princeton University and instead remained true to the family tradition by matriculating into VMI on September 1, 1903. As a third generation cadet, Patton felt at home at the Institute. As soon as he arrived he assimilated well with the Institute’s Confederate legacy. Patton later recalled how tailors Charles Adams, or “Old Man,” as the cadets called him, and "Mr. Wingfield" altered his cadet uniform “so that my first uniform was made to the measure of my father and grandfather.”<sup>19</sup>

At the Institute, Patton was again surrounded by Confederate heroes and traditions. In the early twentieth century Lexington served as a Confederate mausoleum. Today the town is still composed of a multitude of Confederate shrines that preserve the memory of the Civil War. The environment of the Southern military school on Patton enhanced his ancestral connection with the Institute. In fact, from its conception, VMI had created a fertile ground for the Confederate legacy. Prior to its conversion into a military academy, the school grounds had housed a military arsenal that preserved the interests of local autonomy. In “J.T.L. Preston and the Origins of the Virginia Military Institute," Bradford Wineman argues that contrary to the belief that the school

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<sup>18</sup> Blumenson & Patton, *The Patton Papers*, 58.

<sup>19</sup> Halsey, “Ancestral Gray Cloud,” 47.

was intended to prepare Virginia for a looming Civil War, its military emphasis was actually intended to further “a Southern culture that defined militarism as the attraction to values such as honor, patriotism, and courage” in young cadets.<sup>20</sup> In effect, both the arsenal and the later academy were “products and agents” for the Commonwealth, and each cadet who went through the academy was literally and figuratively drilled “to be attached to his native state, proud of her fame, and ready in every time of deepest peril to vindicate her honor or defend her rights.”<sup>21</sup>

VMI accomplished its goal during the Civil War. By the eve of the war the Institute had produced over 848 alumni who embodied the militarism that it sought to produce. Within a week of Virginia’s secession, cadets entered Confederate service, traveled to Camp Lee in Richmond, and assisted in training recruits before the First Battle of Bull Run. The Confederacy regarded the Institute as its “National School of Arms” and relied heavily on the Institute to supply trained officers.<sup>22</sup> Forty-five percent of the officers in the Confederate Army were VMI alumni.<sup>23</sup> Throughout the war, 614 young men between the ages of fifteen and twenty-one served as drillmasters and trained over fifty thousand Confederate soldiers. Although the VMI cadets were exempt from conscription, upperclassmen often abandoned their studies to enlist.<sup>24</sup>

In all, approximately 1,800 VMI graduates served (including nineteen in the United States Army), with about 250 of them killed in action. They included twenty general officers, three major generals, eighteen brigadier generals, ninety-two colonels, sixty-four lieutenant-colonels, 107 majors, 804 captains, and 221 lieutenants. It has been estimated that at one point in

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<sup>20</sup> Bradford Wineman, “J.T.L. Preston and the Origins of the Virginia Military Institute,” *The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 114 (2006): 229.

<sup>21</sup> Jon D. Bohland, “A Lost Cause Found: Vestiges of Old South Memory in the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia” (Ph.D. diss., Virginia Institute and State University, 2006), 155.

<sup>22</sup> Jennings Cropper Wise, *The Military History of the Virginia Military Institute from 1839-1865* (Lynchburg, VA: J.P. Bell Company, 1915), 185.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 486.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 139.

the war nearly two-thirds of the Army of Northern Virginia was officered by graduates from the Institute.<sup>25</sup> Of the fifty-six regiments of Virginia infantry and heavy artillery mustered into Confederate service, twenty were commanded by graduates of the Institute, and two of the eight cavalry regiments were also led by former cadets.<sup>26</sup> The Institute's historical wartime service and "connections with Confederate glory . . . caused VMI to turn inward and dwell on its Confederate past."<sup>27</sup> Such a history attracted, and affected, future cadets such as Patton.

VMI graduates also participated in famous battles that are not only memorialized in the annals of United States military history but which also influenced many aspiring soldiers such as young Patton. Many served under Jackson during his famous flank attack at Chancellorsville, where his former pupils commanded all of his cavalry regiments, two infantry divisions, and two battalions of artillery.<sup>28</sup> During Pickett's Charge, thirteen of the fifteen field commanders in the Confederate Virginia division had either taught at or attended the Institute, including several Patton relatives.<sup>29</sup> In the fifteen regiments of Pickett's Division, there were twenty-seven field officers who were VMI graduates, and many captains and lieutenants from the Institute commanded battalions and companies.<sup>30</sup> In addition to the Virginia regiments on July 3, the Institute's graduates were also at the helm of regiments in six other brigades of the Army of Northern Virginia.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> "Digital Database: The Bomb," Virginia Military Institute, published annually, accessed February 1, 2014, also available at <https://archive.org/stream/bomb1895virg#page/n23/mode/2up>, 16.

<sup>26</sup> Wise, *The Military History of the Virginia Military Institute*, 150.

<sup>27</sup> Rod Andrew Jr., "Soldiers, Christians, and Patriots: The Lost Cause and Southern Military Schools, 1865-1915," *The Journal of Southern History* 64 (November 1998): 683.

<sup>28</sup> Wise, *The Military History of the Virginia Military Institute*, 221-222.

<sup>29</sup> Jennifer R. Green, "Virginia Military Institute During the Civil War," *Encyclopedia Virginia*, Virginia Foundation for the Humanities (April 11, 2011), accessed February 3, 2014, [http://www.encyclopediavirginia.org/Virginia\\_Military\\_Institute\\_During\\_the\\_Civil\\_War](http://www.encyclopediavirginia.org/Virginia_Military_Institute_During_the_Civil_War).

<sup>30</sup> Wise, *The Military History of the Virginia Military Institute*, 245-246.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 246.

When Patton attended the school he was continuously exposed to the Institute's rich Civil War history and its Confederate heroes. At the founding of VMI, historian Bradford Wineman observed that John Thomas Lewis Preston, the founder of the Institute, was regarded as "the physical and intellectual embodiment of what was viewed as a "typical [learned] Virginian," and that Preston served as a model for the graduates the school would attempt to produce."<sup>32</sup> At the time of Patton's studies at VMI, Jackson had replaced Preston as the most venerated model of fortitude, industry, temperance, honor, and valor.

Well known for his impressive victories and martial genius during the Civil War, Jackson and VMI became inseparable. Indeed, the Institute professes that "At VMI one cannot escape the memory of Stonewall Jackson nor forget those things for which he stood."<sup>33</sup> Following his death, his remains were immediately transferred to Lexington and interred on May 15, 1863. After the war his body was reburied at the Stonewall Jackson Memorial Cemetery located on South Main Street, less than a mile from campus. The physical presence of Jackson's body in town not only further cemented the link between the Institute and its wartime past, but also deeply influenced Patton and his classmates. Henry Gilliam Link Jr., a sophomore at the time of Patton's tenure at the Institute, wrote a poem titled "Stonewall's Grave," which was published in the yearbook. The first stanza depicts lucidly how the proximity of the old general's remains impacted the daily life of Patton and his fellow cadets:

Where the light phantoms glide,  
In the dim evening tide,  
Sleeps the hero in peaceful rest;  
Tho' no grand tomb's o'er him,

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<sup>32</sup> Wineman, "Preston and the Origins of the Virginia Military Institute," 232.

<sup>33</sup> "Stonewall Jackson and VMI," Virginia Military Institute, accessed February 8, 2014, <http://www.vmi.edu/content.aspx?id=13243>.



Yet Southrons deplore him,  
And he smiles from the Land of the Blest.<sup>34</sup>

In addition to Stonewall's grave, young Patton was also exposed to other Jackson relics present at the Institute. Following the general's death, his horse was sent to VMI. After twenty-three years of grazing on the school grounds, Little Sorrell died and his mounted hide was put on display in the VMI Museum. In 1997, his bones were cremated and interred on campus. The Jackson Statue located on the west side of the cadet barracks overlooking the parade ground was another tangible monument for cadet Patton. Flanking the statue were the four six-pounder guns of the old cadet battery used by Jackson in teaching artillery at VMI. Moreover, inscribed on the base of the statue is Jackson's poetic address he delivered at the Battle of Chancellorsville- "the Institute will be heard from today." If these words were not inspirational enough for Patton and his fellow cadets, those inscribed over the Jackson Arch entrance, the principle entrance of the cadet barracks, must have been. Taken from the late general's notebook, the phrase, "You may be whatever you resolve to be," reinforced Patton and his classmates' martial ambitions. Other Jackson memorabilia at the time of Patton's cadetship included the uniform he had worn as a member of the VMI faculty, his wartime forage cap, field desk, camp stool, and the bullet-pierced raincoat he wore the night that he was mortally wounded. In spite of these tangible reminders of past glories, Patton sought an even more personal link to the legendary Confederate field commander. Typical was his behavior on Christmas Day 1903, which he observed "eating figs on Stonewall Jackson's grave."<sup>35</sup>

If Jackson's relics and monuments did not suffice to feed Patton's nostalgia for the Confederate past, the remains of another southern hero located in town did. Half a mile from the

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<sup>34</sup> "Digital Database: The Bomb," Virginia Military Institute, published annually, accessed February 3, 2014, also available at <https://archive.org/details/bomb1904virg>, 67.

<sup>35</sup> Robert H. Patton, *A Personal History of an American Family*, 120.

school grounds lay the remains of Robert E. Lee, buried in a vault beneath the Chapel of Washington College, where he had served as president, in October 1870. Immediately after his death the school was renamed as Washington and Lee College.<sup>36</sup> By the time that Patton was a cadet at VMI, the skeleton of Lee's favorite horse, Traveller, had been mounted and was displayed on the campus where Lee had worked and was buried. Both Jackson's and Lee's remains, as well as those of their favorite horses, were tangible relics for young Patton.<sup>37</sup> Apart from access to monuments and wartime relics, Patton had other ties to the Confederate legacy in Lexington. Patton's great uncle Tazewell's pre-Civil War unit, the Culpepper Minute Men, still operated in Lexington. At the turn of the twentieth century they were mustered into the 70th Regiment of Infantry along with other famous wartime companies. These included the Richmond Light Infantry Blues; Page Rifleman from Luray; and the Petersburg Greys. Moreover, it was commanded by Edwin Luzenberg Slaughter, Class of 1888, a distant Patton relative. In the ranks was yet another relative, Richard L. Patton, who served as the company's musician. The entire regiment was under the command of Col. George Wayne Anderson and Lt. Col. William J. Perry.<sup>38</sup>

Inside the classroom, Patton was reminded of the Confederate past on a daily basis. Most of his classmates and professors had their own links to the Civil War. In Patton's cadet company, the same company that his father had commanded as a cadet, nearly all the commanding officers were grandsons of Confederate veterans. For example, 2nd Sgt. Carson T. Taliaferro's father, William Booth Taliaferro, had served under Jackson as a general. Patton's roommates during his

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<sup>36</sup> Richard B. McCaslin, *Lee in the Shadow of Washington* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2001), 224.

<sup>37</sup> "General Lee's Horses," Stratford Hall, accessed February 10, 2014, <http://www.stratfordhall.org/meet-the-lee-family/general-robert-e-lee-1807-1870/general-lees-horses/>.

<sup>38</sup> State of Virginia, *Annual Reports of Officers, Boards and Institutions of the Commonwealth of Virginia* (Richmond: Superintendent of State Printing, 1903), 77, 165.

single year at VMI were also connected to the Confederate past. Dudley Harvey-Elder of Los Angeles, California, Harding Polk of Fort Worth, Texas, and Lucius J. Polk III of Galveston, Texas, were all descendants of Confederate veterans. Harding and Lucius were cousins.<sup>39</sup> Lucius J. Polk I had been a distant relative of President James Knox Polk and married Andrew Jackson's niece; Lucius J. Polk II was a member of the Tennessee militia during the war.

Throughout his tenure at VMI, Patton tried to live up to the image he had of his biological grandfather. A classmate who roomed next door to him on the fourth floor of the cadet barracks described him as “quiet, straight as a string, courteous, well-mannered, more serious minded than lightsome in conversation.”<sup>40</sup> Despite his attempt to embody the qualities of a Southern gentleman, he also proved to be a jokester. During his one-year term at VMI, he continuously joked with his fellow cadets that the halls of Institute were infested with the ghosts of his omnipresent forefather and often recounted stories of how they regularly interacted him.<sup>41</sup> For Patton and his contemporaries, the “South of the twentieth century remained a land haunted by the ghosts of the Confederacy.”<sup>42</sup>

Aside from the guiding spirits of the Lost Cause, Patton sought even more tangible links to his ancestors. For Patton and his fellow cadets, the VMI faculty, especially those who were Confederate veterans, “were living symbols . . . and heroes to their students.”<sup>43</sup> Rod Andrew, in his “Soldiers, Christians, and Patriots: The Lost Cause and Southern Military Schools, 1865-1915,” expands on the crucial role that Southern military schools and their veteran staffs played

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<sup>39</sup> Julia Smith Martin to Col. Irving E. Pugh, 14 June 1968, George S. Patton Papers, Virginia Military Institute Archives, Lexington, VA.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> Blumenson & Patton, *The Patton Papers*, 120.

<sup>42</sup> Gaines M. Foster, *Ghosts of the Confederacy*, 198.

<sup>43</sup> Andrew, “Soldiers, Christians, and Patriots,” 703.

after the war. He argues that Southern military schooling transformed young men into model citizens by imbuing them with “martial virtues (courage, patriotism, selflessness, loyalty) and moral rectitude.”<sup>44</sup> The Institute’s martial philosophy was intended to instill “respect for lawful authority, self-restraint, patriotism, and moral uprightness” in cadets, manly virtues deemed vital for the restoration of social order in the New South.<sup>45</sup> Such doctrine often focused on the Lost Cause, which was furthered by the use of grey uniforms that were reminiscent of the Confederate soldiers.

The 1903 VMI faculty consisted of three prominent Confederate veterans as well as a great number of sons of former Confederates. Perhaps the most distinguished Confederate hero at the time of Patton’s studies was the superintendent himself, Scott Shipp. “Old Shipp,” as the cadets called him, was a former pupil of Jackson and had graduated on July 4, 1859 standing fourth in a class of twenty-nine. Upon the outbreak of the Civil War, he was commissioned as a lieutenant and later a captain in the provisional Army of Virginia. After several months of serving as a drill instructor, he was appointed as an assistant adjutant-general at Camp Lee in the spring of 1861 and later appointed major of the 21st Virginia Infantry. Shipp’s commanding officer was Patton’s great uncle John Mercer Patton. After a brief stint with the 21st he returned to the Institute on January 20, 1862, and served as professor of military history and strategy; instructor of infantry, artillery, cavalry tactics; and Commandant of Cadets from 1862-64. At the Battle of New Market he commanded the Corps of Cadets and was slightly wounded in action (took a small piece of shell in the face). After Union Maj. Gen. David Hunter burned the Institute in 1864, Shipp accompanied the cadets in the trenches at Richmond until the Corps disbanded in 1865. After the war he continued to serve as Commandant until 1890. Brig. Gen. Shipp then

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<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 679.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 680.

became the first VMI alumnus to serve as its Superintendent from 1890-1907.<sup>46</sup> Another living Confederate veteran on the faculty was William Thomas Poague, who served as Treasurer and Military Storekeeper for the Institute for thirty-one years. After the outbreak of the war, Poague had served as a 2<sup>nd</sup> lieutenant in the Rockbridge Virginia Artillery. By the second year of the war, Poague had participated with Stonewall Jackson in nearly every major engagement in the eastern theatre. After Jackson's death, he remained with the Rockbridge Artillery and fought at the Battle of Gettysburg, Battle of Mine Run, Battle of Bristoe Station, the Overland Campaign, Siege of Petersburg, and the Appomattox Campaign. Before assuming his position at VMI, he wrote his memoirs of the war as a personal history for his family. They were published after his death as *Gunner with Stonewall: Reminiscences of William Thomas Poague (1903)*. His papers are stored at the VMI museum. He died on September 8, 1914, long after Patton left, and is buried in Stonewall Jackson Cemetery in Lexington.<sup>47</sup>

Col. John Mercer Brooke, who served as emeritus professor of physics and astronomy, was another veteran during Patton's VMI year. Brooke resigned from the United States Navy in 1861 and joined the Confederate Navy. In 1863 he was appointed Chief of the Confederate Navy's Bureau of Ordnance and Hydrography, serving in that post until the end of the war. He also erected the Confederate States Naval Academy. Brooke was married to the sister of the famed brigade commander Richard B. Garnett, who perished at Gettysburg. Finally, Col. Thomas Middleton Semmes, Class of 1860, was another link to the Confederate past for Patton and his classmates. After graduation he served as professor of French and Tactics at VMI 1860-

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<sup>46</sup> "Scott Shipp," Virginia Military Institute, accessed January 29, 2014, <http://www9.vmi.edu/archiverosters/show.asp?page=details&ID=971&rform=search>.

<sup>47</sup> Winfred Edward Kidd, "Military History of the Institute, Alumni Letter and Alumni Interest," *The Cadet*, October 17, 1914, accessed February 1, 2014, [http://www2.vmi.edu/thecadet/pdfs-hi/1914/The-Cadet\\_1914-10-17.pdf](http://www2.vmi.edu/thecadet/pdfs-hi/1914/The-Cadet_1914-10-17.pdf).

61. In April 1861 he was summoned to Richmond with the Corps and later commissioned as adjutant for the 3rd Arkansas Infantry. The rest of his wartime career included serving as 1st lieutenant of Company K, 3rd Arkansas Infantry, and ordnance officer for Brig. Gen. H. R. Jackson's staff. In December 1861 he was ordered to report to the government of Virginia and sent back to the VMI, where he remained a professor until his death with one important interruption: he fought at New Market on the staff of Col. Scott Ship.<sup>48</sup>

A handful of the younger faculty who were the sons of former Confederates also bequeathed to the cadets their own link to the Confederate past. Among these heroes was Patton's own relative, John Mercer Patton Jr., Class of 1888. Mercer was the son of John Mercer, eldest of the Confederate Patton brothers. In 1903, Mercer Jr. taught his second cousin Latin and French. He also served as an assistant professor of tactics. Another son of a former Confederate was Col. Edward West Nichols, Class of 1878, a professor of mathematics and civil engineering. In 1908 he was appointed as superintendent. Other faculty with a Confederate heritage included Commandant of Cadets Maj. Lewis Harvie Strother, who had been a classmate of Patton's father in 1877; Col. Nathaniel Beverly Tucker, Class of 1888 and a professor of geology, mineralogy, and chemistry; Col. Hunter Pendleton, a professor of general and applied chemistry, Francis Mallory, Class of 1878, a professor of physics and electrical engineering; Thomas Archer Jones, Class of 1889, a professor of engineering; James W. Gillock, military storekeeper; and Col. Henry C. Ford, professor of history, Latin, and English. Ford graduated fourth in his VMI class of 23 and later served as commandant from 1901-03. Another son of a Confederate war hero was John W. Gilmore, Class of 1872, who served as commissary and quartermaster. His father, Thomas Russell Gilmore, Class of 63, joined Company K of the 11th Virginia Infantry on May

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<sup>48</sup> "Thomas Middleton Semmes," Virginia Military Institute, accessed February 2, 2014, <http://www9.vmi.edu/archiverosters/show.asp?page=details&ID=784&rform=search>.

25, 1861, after a year and two months at VMI. He fought in Pickett's Division at Gettysburg beside the 7<sup>th</sup> Virginia Infantry, commanded by none other than Tazewell Patton.<sup>49</sup>

The remainder of the VMI faculty included even more recent graduates who were descendants of Confederate veterans. These included Maj. Charles Wilder Watts, adjunct professor of mathematics; Maj. H. P. Howard, instructor of Spanish; Capt. Horatio Eugene Hyatt, assistant professor of chemistry; Capt. Hugh Stockdell, assistant professor of Latin and English; Capt. John Lottler Cabell, assistant professor of German, English and tactics; Capt. Taylor Scott Carter, assistant professor of drawing and tactics; Capt. Paul Andrew Tillery, assistant professor of physics and astronomy; Capt. Thomas Augustus Dewey, assistant professor of engineering, mineralogy, and tactics; Capt. Jefferson Bennett Sinclair, assistant professor of mathematics; Capt. John Paul, assistant professor of English and tactics; and Capt. David Meade Bernard, assistant professor of mathematics. Bernard's father, David Meade Bernard Jr., Class of 1864, served as a private in Company E, 12th Virginia Infantry. In 1865 he transferred to Company E, 10th Virginia Cavalry, and was promoted to sergeant. He was severely wounded in action in the thigh on April 1, 1865, at Five Forks.<sup>50</sup>

VMI's Confederate heritage was not exclusive to the academic staff. A few members of the Board of Visitors also provided cadet Patton with a direct link to the Confederate past. Board member Col. Francis Lee Smith fought with the Corps of Cadets at New Market. He served in company A as a private and was wounded during the battle. Another fellow New Market cadet on the board was John Nottingham Upshur, Class of 1867. He served as a fourth class private in

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<sup>49</sup> "Thomas Russell Gilmore," Virginia Military Institute, accessed February 1, 2014, <http://www9.vmi.edu/archiverosters/show.asp?page=details&ID=1300&rform=search>.

<sup>50</sup> "Digital Database: The Bomb," Virginia Military Institute, published annually, accessed February 3, 2014, also available at <https://archive.org/details/bomb1904virg>, 14.

company C and was also severely wounded.<sup>51</sup> Another board member, Lloyd Thomas Smith, served as a courier for Stonewall Jackson and was riding at his side when the general was shot by friendly fire.<sup>52</sup> Smith, Upshur, and Lloyd Smith all participated in battles that were familiar to young Patton. Finally, board member James Lowery White, Class of 1866, served as a medical officer and surgeon for Company K, 37th Virginia Infantry.<sup>53</sup>

In addition to the Confederate veteran staff and their descendants at the Institute, the memorialization of the New Market Cadets further fostered young Patton's affinity toward his family's Confederate past. The Battle of New Market, in which the VMI cadets helped dislodge Captain Alfred Von Kleiser's 80th New York Battery, best highlights the military heritage of the Institute. For Patton, however, May 15, 1864, was the day of his family's greatest performance during the war. During the battle, Patton's grandfather commanded the 22nd Virginia Infantry, which held the Confederate right flank, his younger brother, cadet William, served in the center, and their cousin Smith fought on the left.<sup>54</sup> As one historian noted wittily, "In retrospect, it emerges as a Patton military picnic."<sup>55</sup>

Due to the Patton family's extensive involvement at New Market, a look into the battle itself merits attention. Prior to New Market, the Corps of Cadets had several times been called into the field to repel Union raiders. In May 1864 the cadets were summoned once again after nearly several months of inactivity. In the spring of 1864, George Smith Patton and his brigade

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<sup>51</sup> "John Nottingham Upshur," Virginia Military Institute, accessed February 2, 2014, <http://www9.vmi.edu/archiverosters/show.asp?page=details&ID=3049&rform=search>.

<sup>52</sup> "Lloyd Thomas Smith," Virginia Military Institute, accessed February 2, 2014, <http://www9.vmi.edu/archiverosters/show.asp?page=details&ID=12071&rform=search>.

<sup>53</sup> "James Lowery White," Virginia Military Institute, accessed February 2, 2014, <http://www9.vmi.edu/archiverosters/show.asp?page=details&ID=559&rform=search>.

<sup>54</sup> George H. Smith, "An Account on the Battle of New Market, May 15, 1864," *The Confederate Veteran* 16 (1908): 569; Silbey, *Confederate Order of Battle*, 82.

<sup>55</sup> D'Este, *Genius for War*, 16.



also saw minimal action. On March 18, 1864, two months before the battle, he wrote his wife regarding the monotonous routine of army life— “at night we can do nothing . . . but sit around the fire, fight our battles over again and conjecture what we will do in the coming campaign.”<sup>56</sup> To George Patton’s delight the situation changed when Union Maj. Gen. Franz Sigel with 8,000 infantry, three batteries, and 1,500 cavalry moved toward the Shenandoah Valley in early May.<sup>57</sup> The first line of the Confederate forces to arrive on the scene included the 62nd Virginia Infantry, commanded by Patton’s step grandfather, George H. Smith. The second line included the 22nd Virginia Infantry commanded by Patton’s grandfather. Behind the third and last line, McFarland Patton and his fellow cadets were held in reserve under the command of Lt. Col. Scott Shipp.<sup>58</sup> At two o’clock the cadets were deployed during the second phase of the battle. Patton’s 22nd Virginia and Smith’s 62nd Virginia had pressed hard and gained access to the village, but had stalled between the Bushong House and the pike.<sup>59</sup> Armed with Austrian rifles, the cadets became part of the first line of battle. When they reached the Bushong House, the companies divided. Companies A and B, in which MacFarland Patton served, passed to the right, while Companies C and D went to the left. After the line reformed on the other side, Shipp fell wounded and Capt. Henry Alexander Wise assumed command.<sup>60</sup> It was at this moment that Patton’s grandfather and his brother McFarland fought side by side. The combined Confederate forces finally drove the enemy from their last position on Rude’s Hill. The battle ended with the

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<sup>56</sup> William C. Davis, *The Battle of New Market*, 17.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 20.

<sup>58</sup> Wise, *The Military History of the Virginia Military Institute*, 245.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, 312.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, 313.

Union Army retreat back across the Shenandoah River to Mount Jackson.<sup>61</sup> Approximately 279 cadets were engaged, including the artillery detachment. The casualties included five killed, four mortally wounded, and forty-eight wounded.<sup>62</sup>

The memorialization of the New Market cadets deeply affected Patton. Such memorialization came into fruition by the efforts of VMI alumni. In a letter concerning a forthcoming military history of the Institute, John Garland James, Class of 1866, who served as a cadet corporal at New Market, urged Col. Jennings Cropper Wise, Class of 1902, to provide a “historically accurate record” of “the glorious past of the Institute and the devotion of its sons to the cause of the South” which is “sealed upon every field on which the Confederate soldier fought, and bled, and died.” Moreover, he advised that such effort should not be restricted “to V. M. I. men alone, not to Virginians alone, but to the people of the whole South,” in order that her “sons grow up with the knowledge of the glorious and patriotic record of these successive works of young manhood that issued forth from the portals of the old V. M. I . . . and lead them on to a noble manhood.” He added a final remark: “If I were rich I would place a copy in every public library, North as well as South.” The Institute alumni not only wrote their history but also created a literary mausoleum for the New Market cadets.<sup>63</sup>

The commemoration of VMI and its Confederate legacy circulated far beyond the confines of the Institute. Many non-alumni also supported the initiative. The *Confederate Veteran*, which had pledged to “faithfully” record the “courage and heroism that lives in the

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<sup>61</sup> Edward R. Turner, *The New Market Campaign: May, 1864* (Richmond: Whittet and Shepperson, 1912), 159.

<sup>62</sup> Wise, *The Military History of the Virginia Military Institute*, 315, 335.

<sup>63</sup> Winfred E. Kidd, “Military History of the Institute, Alumni Letter and Alumni Interest.” *The Cadet*, October 17, 1914, accessed February 1, 2014, [http://www2.vmi.edu/theacadet/pdfs-hi/1914/The\\_Cadet\\_1914-10-17.pdf](http://www2.vmi.edu/theacadet/pdfs-hi/1914/The_Cadet_1914-10-17.pdf).

history of our great war,” became the principal print medium for the New Market cadets.<sup>64</sup>

Poems that compared them to “the Gallant three hundred at Thermopylae” and the “charge of the immortal six hundred at Balaklava” were widely read by Patton and his classmates.<sup>65</sup>

Northerners also contributed to the mythologizing frenzy. A Union officer present during the battle, Capt. Franklin E. Town, declared: “I do not believe that the history of wars contains a record of a deed more chivalrous, more heroic, more daring, or more honorable than the charge of these boys to a victory of which seasoned veterans might well boast.”<sup>66</sup> Patton and his fellow cadets were bequeathed this history that glorified and idealized their wartime comrades.

In a diary entry cadet Patton recorded still vivid memories of his participation in a Battle of New Market ceremony. The boy marveled at the sight of the romantic pageantry and remarked, “it was a happy fate to witness this touching ceremony” because “this band of college boys” achieved “an exploit never equaled in all history.” He described the event as if it was living history. The manner in which the upperclassmen “came in columns of fours, the brass plates on shako and cross belts gleaming in the sun, their black shoes below their white trousers rising and falling in perfect unison” reminded him of the cadets marching into battle in 1864. Amid the martial music and displays, he also took time to condemn the Union forces who, “while claiming to defend freedom [were] vainly trying to enslave the mother of her creators.” Finally he closed with the bold claim that VMI men were “the finest body of cadets in America.”<sup>67</sup>

One of Patton’s classmates expressed similar sentiments. In a poem titled, “New

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<sup>64</sup> Edward Raymond Turner, “The Battle of New Market,” *The Confederate Veteran* 20 (1912): 75.

<sup>65</sup> Giles B. Cooke, “The V.M.I Cadets at New Market, Virginia,” *The Confederate Veteran* 16 (1908): 15.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>67</sup> George S. Patton Jr., “Patton Family 1907,” George S. Patton Jr. Papers, Virginia Military Institute Archives.

Market,” he summed up the lasting impression that the wartime cadets had on himself and his fellow classmates-

And when they learned  
Of some repulse to Southern arms,  
‘T was then, indeed, that each heart yearned  
to fight, yes die- to save from harm.

They buried the boys at V.M.I.  
And here their graves may still be seen,  
And here, beneath Virginia’s sky,  
Their country’s tears will keep them green.<sup>68</sup>

In addition to these Lost Cause pageantries, Patton was also surrounded by other events that further memorialized the heroic feats of his ancestors and fallen comrades. In 1903 he witnessed the unveiling of the New Market Monument, “Virginia Mourning Her Dead,” which was placed in front of Old Jackson Memorial Hall. At the commencement ceremony, the VMI Alumni Association presented the Civil War-era survivors of the Corps with bronze medals. New Market cadet Moses Jacob Ezekiel, who had survived the engagement, sculpted the monument. According to professor Robert Atheistan Marr, a classmate of Patton’s father, the Virginia monument, “majestic in her woe, speaks through her pathos of those who, living or dead, are immortal, who to-day and for always are her crown and her great glory.”<sup>69</sup>

During the postwar era, Ezekiel had become a renowned sculptor of numerous Confederate-related projects. These include the Confederate Monument located at the site of the prisoner of war camp at Johnson's Island, Ohio; a statue of "Stonewall" Jackson at Charleston, West Virginia (with a replica at VMI); a bas relief portrait of Robert E. Lee at the Virginia State Library, Richmond; and a gateway to the Confederate Cemetery at Hickman, Kentucky.

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<sup>68</sup> “Digital Database: The Bomb,” Virginia Military Institute, published annually, accessed February 3, 2014, also available at <https://archive.org/details/bomb1904virg>, 117-122.

<sup>69</sup> “Digital Database: The Bomb,” Virginia Military Institute, published annually, accessed February 4, 2014, also available at <https://archive.org/stream/bomb1903virg#page/8/mode/2up/search/Mar,9>.

Impressed with his work for them, the VMI class of 1903 dedicated the nineteenth volume of their yearbook to him. As a VMI cadet, present for the unveiling of Ezekiel's New Market monument, Patton was nurtured in the midst of this perpetual adoration of the Institute's Confederate past.

Patton's interest in the Confederacy also served as a doorway for him into the Kappa Alpha Order Fraternity at VMI. The fraternity was founded at Washington and Lee University and modeled its creed on Lee's genteel character.<sup>70</sup> On the organization's website the phrase, "the definition of a gentleman," appears on a Lee letterhead and their pledge, "We are gentleman of honor," is flanked by the image of a young man dressed as a knight.<sup>71</sup> Even today, the Kappa Alpha chapter at VMI continues to hold an annual ritual called 'Convivium' in celebration of Lee's birthday that is reminiscent of an 'Old South Ball' because members dress in period attire.<sup>72</sup>

Ultimately, VMI provided a chivalric cult rooted in Confederate ritualism for young Patton. His ancestral connection with the Institute notwithstanding, the schooling and nurturing Patton received at VMI allowed him to drape himself in the Confederate mantle of his Virginian ancestors. His experiences in Lexington served to shape his identity as a Southerner and groomed him in the Confederate traditions. In a letter to his wife Beatrice written a few years after his time at the Institute, he lamented: "I never felt lonely there [Lexington]. Some way it seemed so full of people...most of them dead ones yet I liked it. For in spite of their many faults the cadets there are more gentleman than any place I have been or seen. And most of them [were] third generation [at the school] some fourth. In my time there you could find the name of

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<sup>70</sup> Blumenson & Patton, *The Patton Papers*, 62.

<sup>71</sup> "The History of the Order," KA-Order, accessed March 13, 2012, <http://www.ka-order.org/ka/history>.

<sup>72</sup> Bohland, "A Lost Cause Found," 153.

almost two thirds [of the] corps either on the monument or on the pictures in the library.”<sup>73</sup> As a third generation cadet, Patton’s family fell into this group. Portraits of his grandfather and great uncle Tazewell in their Confederate colonel's uniforms were displayed in the library during his cadetship. Today both are displayed side by side in the VMI Archives section of Preston Library. But despite how much he loved VMI and its focus on the Lost Cause while he was a cadet there, Patton left the Institute for an even loftier institution of higher education.

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<sup>73</sup> Blumenson & Patton, *The Patton Papers*, 190.

## CHAPTER 4

### GHOSTS FROM THE PAST: COMING OF AGE IN THE ARMY

Patton's time at the Virginia Military Institute (VMI) only heightened his martial ambition to exceed the heroic acts of his Confederate forefathers. In Lexington he always dreamed of the day when he would take his place among the heroes of the ages. If Patton had remained at VMI, he would have led his class as first corporal; however, his ambition went beyond the cadet rank. The lure of military glory led him to procure an appointment to the United State Military Academy at West Point. A West Point education offered an opportunity to surpass the military feats of his Confederate ancestors. As a young man of distinguished lineage, Patton had great connections that ultimately helped him secure an appointment. Not surprisingly such connections emphasized the boy's martial bloodline as a premise for acceptance. And also not surprisingly, his martial heritage remained foremost in his thoughts as he pursued a military career through two world wars.

At the forefront to secure his appointment was his father, who launched an aggressive lobbying campaign for his son. George S. Patton II corresponded frequently with California Senator Thomas Robert Bard, who was the congressional representative in Patton's district. As early as 1902, a year before Patton enrolled into VMI, "Papa" wrote to members of Bard's inner circle in an attempt to influence the senator. To Judge Henry T. Lee, a close friend of Bard's, Patton's father urged him to put in a word for his son. Lee did his duty. In a brief letter to Bard, he stressed Patton's ancestry to further his cause: "If blood counts for anything, he certainty comes of fighting stock."<sup>1</sup> Patton's father also used the same technique. Writing to Bard in February 1903, Papa emphasized that his son was:

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<sup>1</sup> Martin Blumenson, George S. Patton, and Samuel H. Bryant, *The Patton Papers* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1972), 49.

a direct lineal descendant of that John Washington who came to Virginia in 1657, and who was the grandfather of George Washington. He is also a direct descendant of General Hugh Mercer a friend and comrade of Geo. Washington in Braddock's expedition & who as a General in the Colonial Army led the advance and was killed at Princeton. In more recent times my son's immediate grandfather (my father) fell while in command of the Confederate division that sustained the historic charge of Sheridan at Winchester in 1864.<sup>2</sup>

His father not only established the boy's patriotic lineage as far back as the founding of the Republic, but his use of the phrase "historic charge" tacitly suggests that his own father's role was crucial in the quest for Southern independence. Bard's succinct reply to "Papa" affirmed that he recognized that young Patton "possesse[d] a strain of blood which ought to result in a successful army career" and that "the important factor of heredity [will not be neglected] when making my choice."<sup>3</sup> Patton's step-grandfather, George H. Smith, also offered his assistance. In a letter to Bard, he also used Patton's Confederate ancestry to persuade the Senator. According to him, the boy carried the same fighting blood of his gallant grandfather. Finally, in a last push for Patton's nomination, Col. Marr, a VMI professor and classmate of his father, wrote to the senator that Patton was "moral upright in character," by virtue of his "good breeding."<sup>4</sup>

Such lobbying by Patton's father and his allies appropriately illustrate how one's Confederate ancestry could secure career advancements. Patton himself learned to use his Confederate heritage for lobbying as well. In a 1932 letter to VMI Superintendent John Archer Lejeune, Patton used his own family connection to the Institute to secure the appointment of Maj. John S. Wood as the new Commandant of Cadets:

As you know I am the third generation who went to V.M.I. so her interests are mine. In my opinion you could not get a better man than Major J.S. Wood. He is a natural leader,

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 51.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 52-53.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 74.



military looking, and very well read and educated above all he is an honest southern gentleman.”<sup>5</sup>

The use of Patton’s Confederate ancestry proved successful. Young Patton enrolled at West Point on June 16, 1904. Despite his move north, his affinity to the Confederate past never waned. Throughout his cadetship he was still exposed to remnants of the Confederacy. West Point’s Civil War legacy was not exclusive to graduates who had fought for the Union Army. West Point alumni had served as major military commanders for both Union and Confederate Armies. Moreover, eight superintendents from 1864 to the early nineteenth century served as general officers during the Civil War.<sup>6</sup> Consequently, Patton and his classmates “walked in the shadows of living legends- West Pointers turned war heroes- whose presence must have influenced cadet perceptions of professional development.”<sup>7</sup> West Point’s curriculum also heightened Patton’s Civil War interest. According to historian Lance Bestros, the achievements of Academy graduates during the Civil War influenced leaders to resist changes to the curriculum during the postwar years. Consequently, Patton attended West Point during a period in which it still “clung to outmoded assumptions about education, military training, leadership, and other developmental activities” that characterized the romantic notion of nineteenth century warfare.<sup>8</sup> Both the Academy’s notable graduates and its curriculum fostered the Lost Cause image Patton imposed on himself.

Despite West Point’s own Civil War legacy, it proved difficult for him to escape VMI and its Confederate heritage. In two letters to his father after a year in New York, the young

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<sup>5</sup> George S. Patton Jr. to John Archer JeJune, 4 January 1932, George S. Patton Jr. Papers, Virginia Military Institute Archives.

<sup>6</sup> Lance Bestros, *Carved from Granite: West Point Since 1902* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2012), 40.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 24.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

cadet worried that “most of the men here are nice fellows but very few are born gentleman in fact the only ones of that type are Southerners. I have not yet settled on my roommates but I believe I will live with Ayers and Marshal. Both are gentleman both V.M.I. men and both are studious.”<sup>9</sup> The young plebe also added, “The West Point cadets are better Marksmen, but the V.M.I. cadets are far more gentlemanly.”<sup>10</sup> This sense of Southern superiority did not end after his initial year at the Academy. After hearing a fellow cadet’s speech on Independence Day, Patton relayed to his father that, “I belong to a different class . . . a class perhaps almost extinct or one which may have never existed, yet as far removed from these lazy, patriotic, or peace[-loving] soldiers as heaven is from hell.”<sup>11</sup> In other words, in Patton’s own typical vernacular, West Pointers were “just very respectful middle class fellows” compared to himself and his former Southern classmates from Lexington.<sup>12</sup>

Other instances throughout his cadetship illustrate how Patton continued to carry the torch of the Confederate legacy. References to the Confederate past surfaced again and again in his speech and writings. In a memoir of his boyhood he recalled the stories of his father who spoke often about the Confederacy. Written during his time at West Point, he recounted, “One night Papa began talking about Robert E. Lee,” and “I got all excited.”<sup>13</sup> In addition to a diary, Patton also kept a little notebook filled with military maxims and personal notes. However, merely writing about the Confederate past did not suffice. The boy needed the material links he had experienced in Lexington and soon found such outlet in touring battlefields. In the second

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<sup>9</sup> Blumenson & Patton, *The Patton Papers*, 92.

<sup>10</sup> Keith E. Gibson, *The Virginia Military Institute, Campus History* (Mount Pleasant: Arcadia Publishing, 2010), 39.

<sup>11</sup> Martin Blumenson, *Patton, The Man Behind The Legend, 1885-1945* (New York: William Morrow and Company, 1985), 49.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Ashley Halsey, “Ancestral Gray Cloud Over Patton,” *American History Illustrated* (1984): 47.

year of his cadetship he went to the Gettysburg battlefield and traced the heroic exploits of his Confederate ancestors at Cemetery Ridge. As historian Thomas A. Desjardin notes, Pickett's Charge represents "a point at which Southern culture and military strength, as well as everything for which it stood, peaked and then ebbed in what is referred to as the High Water Mark."<sup>14</sup> Historian Carol Reardon also observed, "the gallantry and sacrifice of the Confederate infantry on July 3<sup>rd</sup> gave Southerners some much needed heroes to help ease the pangs of the defeat and, in some ways to validate and represent all that was right about the Lost Cause."<sup>15</sup> For Patton, the charge blazed forth like a beacon of Confederate heroism. His great uncle Waller Tazewell Patton and his cousins Lewis Williams and Philip Slaughter had perished storming Cemetery Ridge.

After his visit to Gettysburg, Patton wrote to his future wife Beatrice and commented on one of the most famous infantry attacks of the Civil War. He lamented that the Pennsylvania landscape was the "scene of death of the Confederacy." He also noted poignantly as he looked toward the Union position on Cemetery Ridge:

I walked down alone to the scene of the last and fiercest struggle on Cemetery hill. To get in a proper frame of mind I wandered through the cemetery and let the spirits of the dead thousands laid there in ordered rows sink deep into me. Then just as the sun sank behind South Mountains I walked down to the scene of Pickett's great charge and seated on a rock just where Olmstead and two of my great uncles died I watched the wonder of the day go out. The sunset painted a dull red the fields over which the terrible advance was made and I could almost see them coming growing fewer and fewer while around and beyond me stood calmly the very cannon that had so punished them...it was very wonderful and no one came to bother me. I drank it in until I was quite happy. A strange pleasure yet a very real one. ...it was a wonderful yet a foolish battle.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Thomas A. Desjardin, *These Honored Dead: How The Story of Gettysburg Helped Shaped American Memory* (Cambridge: Da Capo Press, 2003), 94.

<sup>15</sup> Carol Reardon, *Pickett's Charge in History and Memory* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2009), 3.

<sup>16</sup> Blumenson & Patton, *The Patton Papers*, 172-173.

In this vividly romantic word picture, Patton artfully portrayed how the legacy of the Confederacy continued to remain influential in his life.

The rest of Patton's cadetship at West Point revealed his persistent martial ambition to supersede his Confederate grandfather. Despite the fact that he struggled academically during his plebe year, he bounced back and transformed into a student *par excellence*. Throughout his cadetship he held the ranks of Cadet Corporal, Cadet Sergeant Major, and position of Cadet Adjutant, the highest cadet rank. In his last year he ranked 37th in Civil and Military Engineering; 80th in Law; 62nd in Ordinance and Science of Gunnery; 5th in Drill Regulations; 10th in Practical Military Engineering; 16th in Conduct; and 42nd in demerits for the year. Eventually he graduated forty-six out of a class of one hundred and three. Immediately following graduation, he was commissioned a 2nd lieutenant in the cavalry on June 11, 1909, and assigned to the 15th United States Cavalry at Fort Sheridan.<sup>17</sup> Although Patton finished his education at West Point, he remained an admirer of the Confederacy. He had grown into young manhood at West Point, learning the art of warfare, but he dreamed of serving his state and nation as his grandfather's Confederate generation before him had done.

As an army officer, Patton remained fascinated with his Confederate heritage. Despite his rigorous studies at the French Cavalry School, he made time to travel home to participate in Confederate memorial ceremonies. While enroute to the fiftieth anniversary of the Battle of Gettysburg, he wrote to his wife Beatrice: "To day we past a field and saw a monument on it. We found that it to commemorate a regiment destroyed by Gen. Early in his raid on Washington. My grandfather commanded the advance guard on that raid, it was a pretty place to fight."<sup>18</sup> Once he

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<sup>17</sup> "Official Roster of the Officers and Cadets of the United States Military Academy," United States Military Academy, accessed February 15, 2014, <http://digitallibrary.usma.edu/libmedia/archives/oroc/v1909.pdf>, 13.

<sup>18</sup> Blummenson & Patton, *The Patton Papers*, 225.

arrived at the festivities, he specifically noted his volunteer work during the ceremony and proudly proclaimed, “I distributed some 7900 blankets to Vets.” He also noted with admiration and affection that the old grey veterans were “of the people who 'God loves.’” Eight days later he wrote to Beatrice again, and he boastfully evoked the memory of his grandfather who had “commanded the advance guard in [Maj. Gen. Jubal] Early’s Raid on Washington and his command was the only Southern force which ever camped with in the city limits of Washington D.C.”<sup>19</sup> Patton’s active role in veterans’ reunions, battlefield tours, and other Confederate memorial activities fed his admiration for the Confederate legacy.

Even his leisure time was marked by an attempt to embrace the cavalier spirit of the Civil War era. In 1912 he participated in the Olympics in Stockholm in the first modern pentathlon. The event consisted of pistol shooting from 25-meters fencing, a 300-meter free style swim, an 800-meter horse back ride, and a 4-kilometer cross country run, in which he placed fifth overall. His proclivity for the Confederate past was also evident by his obsession with anachronisms in modern warfare. On the eve of the First World War he designed the M-1913 Cavalry Sabre, also known as the “Patton Saber.” The sword, modeled after one used by the Confederate cavalry, was characterized by its lightness, mobility, and utility during cavalry charges. In addition to sword crafting, he also took courses in swordsmanship at the French Cavalry School, served as commandant of the Mounted Service School at Fort Riley, and taught a course in swordsmanship.

Despite Patton's many attempts to relive the Confederate past, he remained in the shadow of his biological grandfather. In peacetime, military inactivity clouded his future; however, World War I provided him with an opportunity to live up to his namesake. On the eve of one his

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 22.

greatest acts of heroism, he wrote, “Now I fall and rise on my own.”<sup>20</sup> For the first time in his life it appeared that he divorced himself from his Confederate ancestors, but his role in the Meuse-Argonne offensive in 1918 demonstrated otherwise. In an attempt to rally his men, Colonel Patton fell wounded while commanding the 304th Tank Battalion. Before he charged the German machine guns near Cheppy, he shouted with his characteristic flair for the dramatic- “it is time for another Patton to die.”<sup>21</sup> After the engagement he recounted his experience— “I Looked upon myself during the charge as if I were a small detached figure on the battlefield watched all the time from a cloud by my Confederate kinsmen and my Virginia grandfather.”<sup>22</sup> Moreover, he later told his wife, “I would have never gone forward when I got hit had I not thought of you and my ancestors.”<sup>23</sup> No matter how much Patton wanted to make a name for himself, he always returned to the example of his ancestors for inspiration. For his actions, Patton achieved military laurels. He was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross, the army’s second highest award for valor in combat and brevetted for gallantry. Yet, in spite of his honors, for Patton, apparently only death upon the field of battle would make him a worthy heir of his Confederate grandfather.

During the interwar years, the legacy of the Confederacy continued to influence Patton. In 1926 he wrote an essay titled, “The Secret of Victory,” in which he analyzed the success of Stonewall Jackson’s troops.<sup>24</sup> Apart from leisure writing and additional studies at the Command and General Staff and the Army War College, he frequently took his family on Civil War

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<sup>20</sup> “The Secret of Victory,” Free Republic, accessed March 31, 2014, <http://www.freerepublic.com/focus/f-news/1772709/posts>.

<sup>21</sup> Robert H. Patton, *A Personal History of an American Family* (New York: Crown Publishers, 1994), 105.

<sup>22</sup> Ashley Halsey, “Ancestral Gray Cloud Over Patton,” *American History Illustrated* 14 (1984): 42.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>24</sup> “The Secret of Victory,” Free Republic, accessed March 31, 2014, <http://www.freerepublic.com/focus/f-news/1772709/posts>.

battlefield tours that often culminated with a reenactment of the battles. Less than a decade after his death his wife Beatrice recounted their experiences:

He and our family acted out Bull Run, Chancellorsville and Gettysburg. I have represented everything in those battles from artillery horses at Sudsleigh's Ford to Lt. Cushing, Army of the Potomac, at the battle of Gettysburg. That was a battle long to be remembered. At the end of the third day, as the girls jumped over the stone wall into Harper's Woods, Ruth Ellen fell wounded, took a pencil and paper from her pocket and wrote her dying message. I heard a sort of groan behind me. As Lt. Cushing, firing my last shot from my last gun, I had been too busy to notice a sightseeing bus had drawn up and was watching the tragedy of Pickett's Charge.<sup>25</sup>

Yet his studies and reenactment of battles did not provide Patton with an adequate opportunity to put his officership to practice. The Bonus March episode on July 28, 1932 offered one. After Congress rejected the "bonus bill," which called for an immediate cash payment to First World War veterans, rioting broke outside the Capital dome. In response Army Chief of Staff Douglass MacArthur ordered Patton, executive officer of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Cavalry, to clear the "Bonus Army" marchers from Pennsylvania Avenue. At approximately 4:00 p.m., Patton personally led 217 men and 14 officers with drawn sabers on some of his former comrades whom he had commanded in 1918. Although the event left the American public with distaste, it offered Patton the opportunity to perform his soldiery duty. Moreover, the sight of Patton on horseback with saber in hand was reminiscent of the Civil War cavalryman.<sup>26</sup>

In spite of his successes on the battlefield and the action he saw during the Bonus March, the First World War had obviously failed to satisfy Patton's hunger for glory. As a young major in the peacetime army he declared, "the fixed determination to acquire the warrior soul and

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<sup>25</sup> "A Soldiers Reading," *Armor*, accessed February 26, 2014, [http://www.benning.army.mil/armor/eARMOR/content/issues/2013/JUL\\_SEP/Articles/Patton.pdf](http://www.benning.army.mil/armor/eARMOR/content/issues/2013/JUL_SEP/Articles/Patton.pdf).

<sup>26</sup> Alan Axelrod, *Patton: A Biography*, Foreword Wesley K. Clark (New York: Macmillan, 2009), 69.

having acquired it to conquer or perish with honor is the secret of victory.”<sup>27</sup> He impatiently waited for yet another opportunity to embrace the warrior soul and thereby surpass the gallantry of his Confederate ancestors. World War II offered one. On the eve of the United States’ entry into the war, he toured the Wilderness Battlefield in Spotsylvania, Virginia and confidently professed that he felt he had been there before.<sup>28</sup> During the war his references to the Confederacy persisted throughout his campaigns, in which he continually demonstrated and even used his knowledge of Civil War commanders. In many respects, his wartime experiences served to reaffirm and strengthen his connection with his Confederate past. Specifically, he remained fascinated with Robert E. Lee and other notable Confederate leaders. According to his son, George S. Patton IV, Patton always considered both Lee and Stonewall Jackson to be his favorite military heroes, and he read military history copiously. “I particularly remember in Hawaii,” General Patton recalled, “when he was there, as a lieutenant colonel. He had a little office in the back of the house and he used to stay there very late at night studying various military works, but mostly biography and autobiography. As a matter of fact, that was some advice he gave to me. He said study biography and autobiography.”<sup>29</sup>

Throughout his campaigns, Patton brought along his personal library, which consisted of biographies of famous Confederate generals. According to his wife, “there was never enough room for the books. We were indeed lucky that an Army officer’s professional library is transported free.”<sup>30</sup> Among the transported collectables included a Bible, prayer book, G.F.R.

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<sup>27</sup> “The Secret of Victory,” Free Republic, accessed March 31, 2014, <http://www.freerepublic.com/focus/f-news/1772709/posts>.

<sup>28</sup> Robert H. Patton, *A Personal History of an American Family*, 246.

<sup>29</sup> “Reflections of a Fighting Father,” The Patton Society Research Library, accessed January 27, 2014, <http://www.pattonhq.com/textfiles/reflect.html>.

<sup>30</sup> “A Soldiers Reading,” *Armor*, accessed February 26, 2014, [http://www.benning.army.mil/armor/eARMOR/content/issues/2013/JUL\\_SEP/Patton.html](http://www.benning.army.mil/armor/eARMOR/content/issues/2013/JUL_SEP/Patton.html).



Henderson's *Stonewall Jackson and the American Civil War* and both of Douglass Southall Freeman's colossal works, *R.E. Lee* and *Lee's Lieutenants: A Study in Command*. Patton's copy of *R.E. Lee* was marked with over 1,600 words of annotation and marginal notes. He also signed the inside front covers of the first two volumes. Most of his annotations on Lee were laudatory comments. For example, on Freeman's assessment of Lee's actions at the Battle of Cerro Gordo during the Mexican War, Patton scribbled: "This seems a very complicated operation. If it was as described then most have seen great leadership." When Freeman described Lee's inability to counter enemy movements during the early stages of the Civil War, Patton justified his hero's motives. Surely, he concluded, "the fog of war" was the factor.<sup>31</sup>

Throughout Patton's annotations of Freeman's works on Lee, he continually compared himself to the Confederate legend. In a bit of frustration he declared, "I am 49 and a Lt. Col/oh! God 15 years... hope yet... great hope... men live on deeds, not years." Of course, reading about Confederate wartime history also led him to evoke the memory of his grandfather. Of course, his annotation regarding his grandfather was lengthier. Next to Freeman's vindication of Lee and his decision to resign his Army commission after the secession of Virginia, Patton wrote, "My grandfather Patton was of these and was prepared to go South if Virginia failed to secede... Taswell Patton held Papa in his arms so he could see the ordnance of secession read from the steps of the Capital at Richmond."<sup>32</sup>

Ultimately, from Freeman's *Lee*, Patton was exposed to Lee's military acumen and applied it to his own military campaigns. Keith Dean Dickson has observed in "The Divided Mind of Douglass Southall Freeman and the Transmission of Southern Memory" that *Freeman's*

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<sup>31</sup> "R.E. Lee: A Biography," Bauman Rare Books, accessed February 26, 2014, <http://www.baumanrarebooks.com/rare-books/lee-robert-e-patton-george-s-/r-e-lee-a-biography/88178.aspx>.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*

works were so powerful that they “enabled Southerners to merge their identities with Lee and the Old South.”<sup>33</sup> This was the case with Patton, who remarked that, “the study of man is Man, and that the present is built upon the past.” He remained true to his word and modeled his generalship after Lee’s traditional martial spirit.<sup>34</sup>

Specifically, Patton adopted the fundamentals of strategy and planning from Lee. He identified with Lee’s audacity and adopted his aggressive tactics by which a smaller army could defeat a superior opponent through maneuver. His maxim, he declared in his work *War As I Knew It*, was reminiscent of Lee’s. War is simple, Patton declared, “utilize speed, maneuver, and surprise to “hold them [the enemy] by the nose and kick them in the pants.”<sup>35</sup> Such policy “is just as true as when I wrote it, some twenty years ago, and at the time is has been true since the beginning of war,” he proclaimed.<sup>36</sup> In September 1942, before American troops sailed for North Africa in the largest amphibious combat operation of the war, Maj. Gen. George S. Patton Jr. deliberately invoked the memory of Lee’s offensive doctrine as an inspiration for his troops—“We shall attack until we are exhausted and then we shall attack again.”<sup>37</sup>

Throughout the war Patton continually returned to the Confederate past to draw lessons. As commander of the Third Army, he looked to *Lee’s Lieutenants* and George Alfred Henry’s, *With Lee in Virginia* for guidance. Through Freeman’s work, Patton analyzed the Army of Northern Virginia’s success and applied it to his own campaigns. An avid student of Civil War cavalry, he also studied and transferred the doctrine of mobility into tank warfare. Immediately

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<sup>33</sup> Keith Dean Dickinson, “The Divided Mind of Douglass Southall Freeman and the Transmission of Southern Memory” (Ph.D. diss., University of Virginia, 1998), 126.

<sup>34</sup> “R.E. Lee: A Biography,” Bauman Rare Books.

<sup>35</sup> George S. Patton, Paul D. Harkins, and Beatrice Banning Ayer Patton, *War As I Knew It* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1947), 5.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 348.

<sup>37</sup> George S. Patton Jr., “General Patton Gave Slogan to his Troops,” George S. Patton Jr. Papers, Virginia Military Institute Archives.

after the First World War he had taken charge of the development of mechanized warfare and utilized Confederate cavalry tactics with the tank as commander of both the Seventh Army and the Third Army. Later, in battles he continuously referred to Lee in order to inspire gallantry among his troops. On at least one occasion he borrowed Lee's own vernacular to advise Lt. Gen. Manton S. Eddy, the leader of the XII Corps who had been dislodged from a hill northeast of Nancy in France, to resume the initiative. Patton recounted the experience in his action report: "I told him ....what Lee was supposed to have said at Chancellorsville, 'I was too weak to defend, so I attacked' and as a result, Eddy retook the hill at once." Similarly, during the Battle of the Bulge, Patton borrowed Lee's words to advise his commanders. Reminiscent of Lee's comments to his field commanders, Patton similarly instructed his own commanders to "attack rapidly, ruthlessly, viciously, without rest, however tired and hungry you may be, the enemy will be more tired, more hungry. Keep punching."<sup>38</sup> Patton's pre-D-Day remarks to units of the Third Army also accentuated the Confederate fighting spirit. He reminded his troops that because "Americans love to fight-traditionally" not only do "All real Americans love the sting and clash of battle," but it drives them to never "lose a war." Finally, he closed: "The very thought of losing is hateful to an American."<sup>39</sup> Ironically, his Confederate ancestors, from whom he had inherited such an aggressive fighting style, were on the losing side in 1865.

In addition to his inspirational speeches and references to Lee, Patton referred to the Confederacy while putting his pen to paper. During his lifetime he wrote a total of seventeen poems, most of them written during the war. On December 31, 1942, he received fifty dollars from the *Woman's Home Companion* for a poem titled "God of Battles" in which he referenced

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<sup>38</sup> George S. Patton, *War As I Knew It*, 89, 134.

<sup>39</sup> George S. Patton Jr., "And When Your Grandson Asks What You Did in the War," George S. Patton Jr. Papers, Virginia Military Institute Archives.

the Confederate past. A reader lauded Patton's literary skills and commented that "Every American should be proud of the praying, fighting, poetic General Patton."<sup>40</sup> In March 1945 *Cosmopolitan* magazine featured his poem "Fear" and rewarded him with \$250.<sup>41</sup> His interest in the Civil War also came up with those who visited his headquarters. In one occasion he noted a conversation he had with Undersecretary of War Robert P. Patterson in May 1954: "He is exceptionally well informed on history, particularly that of Civil War, so we had a very enjoyable talk together."<sup>42</sup>

Patton became well known as a general who took the legacy of the Confederacy into battle. Throughout the conflict, newsmen continuously linked Patton with his Confederate ancestry. In a May 1945 editorial column titled "Gen. Patton, Grandson of Kanawha Rifleman Captain, Comes of Long line of Fighting Men," William H. Maginnis from *The Charleston Gazette* concluded that Patton's "fighting stock" was derived from "the fighting courage of a fighting family."<sup>43</sup> Ordinary citizens also found a personal link between Patton's Confederate heritage and their own. Garnett L. Eskew wrote a letter to *The Times* in which he recounted that as a boy an "old family Negro" used to tell him stories about Patton's grandfather. Moreover, he boastfully remarked how his own Confederate ancestors had fought with the original George S. Patton. Garnett L. Eskew wrote that Patton's "method of fighting was said to have been marked by a "Jeb" Stuart kind of dramatic dash." Patton, the writer continued, "comes naturally by his qualities as a fighting man" given his Confederate heritage. As if ancestral lineage alone

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<sup>40</sup> Blumenson & Patton, *The Patton Papers*, 367.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 654.

<sup>42</sup> Ashley Halsey, "Ancestral Gray Cloud Over Patton," *American History Illustrated* 14 (1984): 48.

<sup>43</sup> William H. Maginnis, "Gen. Patton, Grandson of Kanawha Rifleman Captain, Comes of Long line of Fighting Men," *The Charleston Gazette*, May 27, 1945 (clipping in Virginia Military Institute Archives).

qualified Patton for warfare, Eskew declared confidently— “we knew all along he had it in him.”<sup>44</sup>

Notable historians of the Civil War also entered the fray. During the Battle of the Bulge, Douglass Southall Freeman compared Patton with Robert E. Lee:

As surely as Lee commanded in the Wilderness of Spotsylvania, he rides in spirit today along the roads of the Ardennes. Hundreds of commanding officers are stronger today because of the lessons they have learned from him. Unreckonable thousands of Americans are enriched in life and are more proudly Americans because they can point to such a man. Unshaken by crises, unmoved by disaster, he was invincible in character.<sup>45</sup>

Editors beyond the South agreed as well. In 1944 *The New York Times* published a piece in which the editor compared Patton’s rapid march across France “with a swiftness that surpasses even the “foot cavalry” of old Stonewall.”<sup>46</sup>

In spite of his military achievements, Patton never felt he compared well with his Confederate grandfathers. His dream to die upon the field of battle, in a manner similar to his ancestors, ended in a tragic automobile accident instead. Patton died on December 21, 1945. Although he was buried in the Luxembourg American Cemetery and Memorial in Hamm, Luxembourg, his Confederate ancestry and his unwavering interest in the Lost Cause continued to be discussed back home as part of his own growing legend. Efforts by his contemporaries to lay the cornerstone for his legacy began by highlighting his martial lineage. Within a decade following the end of the war, George S. Patton Jr. had surpassed his ancestors and was elevated in the public memory to be an equal to the Confederate legend Thomas “Stonewall” Jackson.

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<sup>44</sup> Garnett L. Eskew, “Some Patton Reminiscences,” *The New York Times*, August 31, 1944.

<sup>45</sup> Dickinson, “Divided Mind of Douglass Southall Freeman,” 98.

<sup>46</sup> Eskew, “Some Patton Reminiscences.”

## CHAPTER 5

### AN ENDURING LEGACY: PATTON'S MEMORIALIZATION

George S. Patton Jr.'s link to the legacy of the Confederacy continued well after his death. As early as 1875, Southerners recognized and referenced the Patton family's Confederate legacy. For example, Charles D. Walker, late assistant professor of the Virginia Military Institute (VMI), cited the Confederate Patton brothers for battlefield bravery. He recounted how Waller Tazewell Patton "fell, at the head of his regiment, in that heroic and desperate charge which has made Pickett's Division immortal and won for it the crown of martyrdom."<sup>1</sup> According to Walker, the Pattons' heroism was derived from "Three streams of Revolutionary blood" that "was poured out on the same soil which had drunk in that of their ancestors."<sup>2</sup> The Institute, who began to collect family wartime memorabilia in 1892, also furthered the foundation for the Patton family Confederate legacy. The first donation received by the Institute was a detailed biographical sketch of John S. Patton Sr. and his seven sons who served in the Confederate Army. The manuscript was written and donated by the eldest son, John Mercer Patton, Class of 1846.

In the years following World War II, a great deal of attention was given to the Pattons' Confederate service. General Patton's military prowess during World War II kindled a renewed interest in his Confederate ancestry. Civilians ranging from park service employees to newspaper editors wrote to VMI requesting information on Patton's Confederate ancestors, and the Institute more than willingly granted their requests. Four months following the late general's death, Charles C. Berkely, a lawyer from Newport Virginia, wrote to Col. William Couper, VMI

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<sup>1</sup> Charles D. Walker, *Biographical sketches of the Graduates and Eleves of the Virginia Military Institute Who Fell During the War Between the States* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott & Company, 1875), 426.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 425.

Executive Officer, inquiring about Patton's ancestry for an editorial piece.<sup>3</sup> Others took more decisive action. Jay W. Jones from Charlottesville, Virginia, president of the Stonewall Memorial Incorporated, encouraged VMI to hunt for Patton-Confederate relics. In 1959 he encouraged Robert W. Jeffrey, the Public Directions Director for the Institute, to appeal to Beatrice Patton for her husband's wartime and family collectables. Beatrice, Jones maintained, "showed me the General's Military Library," which included books on the Confederacy, and she "agreed with me that General Patton's library should be kept intact, but had no idea what her son would do with it."<sup>4</sup> Jones then suggested that Jeffrey "approach" George S. Patton IV and ask him to bequeath this valuable library to VMI in memory of his father, grandfather, and great grandfather. Jones added that it would mean little to West Point and "Much to Virginia Military Institute."<sup>5</sup> Finally, he offered his assistance as a mediator between George and the Institute.

Southern newsmen after the war also did their best to commemorate Patton and his family's Confederate background. Typical was an editorial in the 1950s in which the author declared that Patton's grandfather was one of the "most inspiring, daring Soldiers of the Gray."<sup>6</sup> Given this information, the writer added that he, "being a Southerner, could well imagine of a Confederate soliloquizing thusly: Why should anyone wonder as to this Patton's fighting qualifications? Did he not follow his grandfather in the Valley Campaign."<sup>7</sup> Bruce L. Bager, writing in an article titled "The First Patton," arrived at a similar conclusion. According to him, the late general's grandfather was "one of the field grade officers Robert E. Lee could not afford

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<sup>3</sup> Charles C. Berkeley to Col. William Couper, 26 April 1945, George S. Patton Jr. Papers, Virginia Military Institute Archives, Lexington, VA.

<sup>4</sup> Jay W. Jones to Robert W. Jeffrey, 20 October 1959, George S. Patton Jr. Papers, Virginia Military Institute Archives.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> George Smith Patton, "Biography/Genealogy," George S. Patton Jr. Papers, Virginia Military Institute Archives.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

to lose.”<sup>8</sup> Ultimately, the public at large learned quickly that the process of preserving the memory of General Patton, hero of World War II, often included preserving his links to his Confederate military ancestry.

The principal leader of this movement was VMI, which worked hard to preserve the Patton-Confederate legacy. This process began on the day of Patton’s death. At the Institute the cadets honored Patton in a special ceremony in which flags were flown at half-staff. The dedication was followed by an address by Superintendent General Charles E. Kilbourne, who highlighted the late general’s martial ancestry at the Institute. This commemoration also marked the beginning of VMI’s enduring mission to chronicle Patton’s martial heritage. It began with the late General and soon applied to the history of the entire Patton family at the Institute. In fact, the Institute promoted his Confederate ancestry as an avenue to obtain Patton wartime mementoes. As early as 1946, Kilbourne launched the campaign when he appealed to Beatrice for her husband’s wartime pistols. Although they were donated to West Point, the Institute obtained other Patton trophies instead. They included his wartime helmet, a host of bayonets, insignia and battle flags that Patton accumulated during the war. A letter the superintendent wrote to Beatrice a few months later deserves to be quoted at some length:

It appears that the belt buckle used by general officers in World War II was designed by Colonel McCarthy, V.M.I., 1933, by direction of General Marshall, class of 1901. The Institute loaned Colonel McCarthy a cadet buckle which was used as a model.

Our librarian (also custodian of our museum of historic mementos) has suggested we should endeavor to secure one of the buckles worn by General Patton to place among mementos of other distinguished former cadets. While he went to West Point prior to graduation from V.M.I., the institute has always claimed him and all here followed his career with interests and pride. We wish something used by him for our museum and the buckle seems especially appropriate. We should, of course, be glad of any other articles you might wish to entrust to V.M.I. in his memory.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Bruce L. Bager, “The First Patton,” *National Guard Association of the United States* 38 (1984): 9.

<sup>9</sup> Charles E. Kilbourne to Beatrice Patton, 26 January 1946, George S Patton Jr. Papers, Virginia Military Institute Archives.



Beatrice's reply also hinted of her late husband's affinity for VMI, which had promoted the Lost Cause as zealously as he had: "George always loved VMI and would have liked the Institute to have so individual a keepsake as his helmet."<sup>10</sup>

Kilbourne's successor, Superintendent Richard Jaquelin Marshall, continued his predecessor's work to preserve the memory of Patton as a VMI man with strong ties to his Confederate ancestry. Marshall himself was a descendant of a Confederate veteran. His grandfather was Col. Richard Coke Marshall, who was wounded in Wade Hampton's fight with Union Cavalry Maj. Gen. Philip H. Sheridan at the Battle of Trevilian Station in June 1864. Marshall was also among the troops present at the Confederate surrender at Appomattox. Richard Marshall's superintendence entailed considerable measures to obtain more Patton memorabilia. In a letter written to Maj. Jack L. Balthis at Ft. Knox, he indicated that "a considerable amount of interests in General Patton is being taken by our Board of Visitors . . . one member of the Board brought me a clipping from a New Orleans paper that indicated that the Armored Force School at Ft. Knox has a very fine collection of Patton items in a museum located there. I want to get some information as to whether or not any of these are items that we might want in the VMI museum."<sup>11</sup> The Institute's memorialization of Patton and his Confederate background also came to fruition by the efforts of cadets. By the mid-twentieth century Patton had been elevated to the level of Stonewall Jackson at VMI. In *The Bomb*, the VMI yearbook, a cadet editor declared that everyone who went through the Institute was "destined to follow the tradition of Jackson, Patton, and Marshall." Moreover, it was not uncommon to find cadets compared to Patton. Phrases such as "Patton-like demeanor," "in the

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<sup>10</sup> Beatrice Patton to Julia Smith Martin, 24 May 1967, George S. Patton Jr. Papers, Virginia Military Institute Archives.

<sup>11</sup> Richard Coke Marshall to Major Jack L. Balthis, 20 January 1949, George S. Patton Jr. Papers, Virginia Military Institute, Lexington, VA.

same manner as General Patton,” “he’ll be a great tank commander like Patton,” “infected with the Patton syndrome,” and “producing little carbon-copy versions of General Patton,” were ubiquitous.<sup>12</sup>

In the meantime, efforts by Marshall to obtain Patton memorabilia continued throughout the year. In a letter written to VMI Board member Jay W. Johns, the superintendent attempted to purchase a portrait of the late general for \$1,500 from Boleslaw Jan Czedekowski, a Polish portrait painter who had escaped from Warsaw and was rescued by Patton’s Third Army in Salzburg. He advised Johns to “recall that the matter of obtaining this portrait was previously suggested to the Board and that you had some correspondence with Mrs. Patton in regard to it” and that he “make an appropriate recommendation to the Board at its next meeting” for its purchase.<sup>13</sup> At the bottom corner of the portrait was an inscription written by Patton himself:

The one honor which is mine and mine alone is that of having commanded such an incomparable group of Americans, the record of whose fortitude, audacity and valor will endure as long as history lasts. G.S. Patton Jr. Gen., 9 May 1945.<sup>14</sup>

VMI’s wish was granted. When Czedekowski’s portrait of Patton was unveiled at VMI on October 28, 1950, Beatrice tearfully expressed that it was “the finest likeness of him and one of the finest portraits of anyone that I have every seen.”<sup>15</sup> When she spoke at the unveiling of the

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<sup>12</sup> “Digital Database: The Bomb,” Virginia Military Institute, published annually, accessed March 31, 2014, also available at <https://archive.org/stream/bomb197virg#page/88/mode/2up>, 88; “Digital Database: The Bomb,” Virginia Military Institute, accessed March 31, 2014, published annually, also available at <https://archive.org/stream/bomb1972virg#page/192/mode/2up>, 192; “Digital Database: The Bomb,” Virginia Military Institute, published annually, accessed March 31, 2014, also available at <https://archive.org/stream/bomb1974virg#page/42/mode/2up>, 42; “Digital Database: The Bomb,” Virginia Military Institute, published annually, accessed March 31, 2014, also available at <https://archive.org/stream/bomb1977virg#page/84/mode/2up>, 85; “Digital Database: The Bomb,” Virginia Military Institute, published annually, accessed March 31, 2014, also available at <https://archive.org/stream/bomb1990virg#page/146/mode/2up>, 146.

<sup>13</sup> Richard Coke Marshall to Jay W. Johns, 24 February 1949, George S. Patton Jr. Papers, Virginia Military Institute Archives.

<sup>14</sup> George S. Patton Jr., “Patton Family 1907,” George S. Patton Jr. Papers, Virginia Military Institute Archives.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*

portrait, she did more than pay her late husband a public tribute. Not surprisingly, her speech accentuated Patton's Confederate ancestry. Speaking to the cadets, she began by describing the Confederate service of Patton's grandfather as well as her father-in-law's time at the Institute. According to her, her husband followed his ancestors' footsteps for "the same reason— to join with V.M.I. in its tradition and to add to its Glory and Honor." She continued, "now you are honoring him by hanging this portrait with these others who have gone before—a noble company of gentlemen of who I know you are proud as they are of you." She went on to reassure the young cadets that "whatever you become, these gentlemen who have proceeded you along the road, are here to help you." If the cadets were not inspired by her words of wisdom, a story of her late husband in action during battle surely did. She recounted Patton's hopeless charge at the Battle of the Argonne Forest in 1918. Mrs. Patton quoted her husband, saying:

I looked up at the sky, and there they were--Grandpa and Col. Smith and all the great uncles, leaning out of a cloud bank and looking at me. They had their old Confederate uniforms...I could see myself, too, as though I were one of them, looking down at the little toy soldier marching into the gunfire. This, I said to myself, is how a Patton dies.<sup>16</sup>

She then closed with some encouraging words for the aspiring cadets: "when your hearts grow faint, think of these portraits on the wall at V.M.I. and do as these gentlemen did: 'Act well your part; there all honor lies.'"<sup>17</sup> The Patton portrait was later hung in the VMI superintendent's office.

After having established Patton as a VMI man through his Confederate ancestry, the Institute became an expert on the legacy of its hero and even provided its assistance when it came to Patton relics. In May 1954, Milton F. Perry, the curator of history at West Point, wrote to the VMI museum director to inquire about two pistols that Patton had allegedly carried

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

throughout the war. Both the caliber .45 Colt revolver and a Smith and Wesson .357 Mungum revolver had been donated to West Point by Beatrice along with a belt with two holsters. The purpose of the letter was to verify their authenticity. VMI complied and shared its knowledge on these Patton treasures with its northern counterpart.<sup>18</sup> Ultimately, amid this Patton-memorabilia frenzy was the power of the Confederate legacy. Individuals used the memory of Patton's Confederate heritage to become experts on preserving his memory.

No other individual preserved the memory of Patton's Confederate ancestry more than his widow. Throughout the postwar years Beatrice served as keeper of her husband's memory. When Martin Blumenson argued in the prologue to the *Patton Papers* that "Patton was, as man and legend, to a large degree, the creation of his wife," he hit the nail on the head.<sup>19</sup> Before the curtain went down on Patton's story, Beatrice invested heavily in a number of historical projects and memorial activities concerning her late husband. Similar to the manner in which Mary Custis Lee and Lasalle Corbett Pickett nurtured their husbands' legacies, Beatrice worked arduously to do the same. Known notably for Pickett's Charge, one of the most famous infantry attacks of the Civil War, Maj. Gen. George E. Pickett's legacy as a famed soldier was furthered almost singlehandedly by his wife's efforts. As historian Gary Gallagher observed, Mrs. Pickett's *The Heart of a Soldier* mythologized her late husband by mirroring him with "the prevailing Lost Cause sentiment of the era."<sup>20</sup> Thus, Beatrice was not the first military widow to use the Lost Cause to memorialize her husband. Emulating the role of the traditional Southern woman, she instilled in her son George IV the all too familiar Patton mantra: "Our family's different . . . we

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<sup>18</sup> Milton F. Perry to Director of Museum, 17 May 1954, George S. Patton Jr. Papers, Virginia Military Institute Archives.

<sup>19</sup> Blumenson & Patton, *The Patton Papers*, 3.

<sup>20</sup> Gary Gallagher, *Lee and his Generals in War and Memory* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press 2004), 241.

have a lot to live up to.”<sup>21</sup> Although she was born in Haverhill, Massachusetts, to Frederick Ayer, a Northern industrialist, her late husband’s affinity to the Confederacy surely affected her. By celebrating her husband’s family Confederate history, she in effect embraced not just his memory, but his promotion of the Lost Cause.

As soon as Patton was laid to rest, Beatrice arranged for Douglass Southall Freeman to review her husband’s autobiography for publication. She claimed that she chose Freeman because Patton had always considered him “the greatest living military historian.”<sup>22</sup> According to her, “one of his regrets was that his favorite military biography of that period was a foreigner . . . Henderson’s *Stonewall Jackson*.”<sup>23</sup> However, “when Freeman’s *Lee* began to appear,” Beatrice continued, “He bought and read them one volume at a time and when I showed it to the author, crammed with my husband’s notes and comments, he smiled:” He REALLY read it, bless his heart.”<sup>24</sup>

Of course the fact that Freeman had emerged as both the principal biographer of Lee as well as the most prominent Confederate military historian by the mid twentieth century also aided in Beatrice’s decision. Freeman was the author of two definitive works on the Confederate leader, including the Pulitzer Prize-winning multi-volume work *R. E. Lee: A Biography* and *Lee’s Lieutenants: A Study in Command*. In addition, he also wrote a colossal seven-volume biography on the Revolutionary hero, *Washington*. In his work on both Washington and Lee, Freeman stressed their Virginian ancestry and martial genius. His literary skill did not end with

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<sup>21</sup> Robert H. Patton, *The Pattons: A Personal History of an American Family* (New York: Crown Publishers, 1994), 291.

<sup>22</sup> David E. Johnson, *Douglass Southall Freeman* (Gretna, LA: Pelican Publishing Company, 2002), 302.

<sup>23</sup> G.F.R. Henderson, *Stonewall Jackson and the American Civil War* (New York: Longmans, Green and Company, 1898).

<sup>24</sup> “A Soldiers Reading,” *Armor*, accessed February 26, 2014, [http://www.benning.army.mil/armor/eARMOR/content/issues/2013/JUL\\_SEP/Patton.html](http://www.benning.army.mil/armor/eARMOR/content/issues/2013/JUL_SEP/Patton.html).

these two American military giants. He also wrote extensively on the Confederacy. While working as editor of the *Richmond News Leader*, he published *A Calendar of Confederate Papers* (1908), *Lee's Dispatches to Jefferson Davis* (1915), *The South to Prosperity: An Introduction to the Writings of Confederate History* (1939), and numerous essays on Confederate history.

Like Lee, Washington, and Patton, Freeman was also a Virginian with close ties to the Confederacy. Born in 1886, he was the son of Walker Burford Freeman, who had served as a private in Lee's Army of Northern Virginia. His father left his studies at the University of Virginia in August 1861 and enlisted in Company E of the 34th Virginia Infantry under the command of Maj. Gen. Daniel Harvey Hill.<sup>25</sup> Walker Freeman was wounded in the thigh and knee at the Battle of Seven Pines and was later present at the Confederate surrender at Appomattox.<sup>26</sup> Like Patton, the legacy of the Confederacy in Virginia deeply affected Freeman as well. As a child he recalled the impact that the rebel yell had on him during a veterans' reunion rally. Throughout his life he was also involved extensively with Confederate memorial projects, worked with the *Southern Historical Society Papers*, and attended both the unveiling of the Robert E. Lee Monument in Richmond in May 1890 and the re-interment of Jefferson Davis' body in Hollywood Cemetery. Shortly after the publication of his book on Lee, he bombastically remarked that the "greatness of Virginia rested in a mixture of good breeding and the gentlemanly qualities of the noblesse oblige."<sup>27</sup> Immersed in this atmosphere, Freeman

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<sup>25</sup> Keith Dean Dickinson, "The Divided Mind of Douglass Southall Freeman and the Transmission of Southern Memory" (Ph.D. diss., University of Virginia, 1998), 11.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 13-19.

<sup>27</sup> Thomas L. Connelly & Barbara L. Bellows, *God and General Longstreet: The Lost Cause and the Southern Mind* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1982), 40.

“absorbed a southern collective memory” that commemorated Lee’s Army of Northern Virginia, and dedicated his life to sustaining it through his speeches, editorials, and historical works.<sup>28</sup>

Given Freeman’s extensive work on the Confederacy, it is not surprising that the Southern author admired Patton’s fighting style. When Patton replaced Maj. Gen. Lloyd Fredendall in command of the II Corps in March 1943, Freeman remarked that “Old Patton is tougher and better in every way.”<sup>29</sup> A year later he added, “few men in our army had studied more carefully the works of the masters of war...probably no man was better informed on American military history,” than Patton. Finally, he concluded that Patton’s personality was “singularly suited to the leadership of combat troops.”<sup>30</sup> Unfortunately, Freeman did not become the “great biographer” that Beatrice had hoped he would be of her late husband.<sup>31</sup> He did, however, agree to write the introduction of Patton’s work, *War As I Knew It*. In the brief introduction, his assessment of Patton’s generalship linked him to the great leaders of the Confederacy and compared his “larger qualities of leadership” to those of “Stonewall” Jackson.<sup>32</sup> Freeman’s writings on Washington, Lee, and the succinct piece on Patton validate Louis Rubin Jr.’s argument that Southern historians, “however talented, could not isolate an individual from time and place.”<sup>33</sup>

After securing Freeman as Patton’s editor, Beatrice continued to memorialize her husband by honoring his Confederate ancestry. During her lifetime she also continued to preserve the families’ war trophies. Having accomplished her duty, she passed away in a similar

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<sup>28</sup> Keith D. Dickson, *Sustaining Southern Identity: Douglass Southall Freeman and Memory in the Modern South* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2011), 11.

<sup>29</sup> Johnson, *Douglass Southall Freeman*, 302.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 303.

<sup>32</sup> George S. Patton, *War As I Knew It*, xviii.

<sup>33</sup> Connelly and Bellows, *God and General Longstreet*, 112.

fate as her husband. On September 30, 1953 at Hamilton, Massachusetts, she fell off her horse and suffered a ruptured aorta. The incident killed her instantly. After a brief Episcopal service, she was cremated and later her ashes were spread over her husband's grave.

Attempts to commemorate Patton as a VMI man by way of his Confederate ancestry was not merely exclusive to the work of Beatrice and the Institute. Other Patton family members also joined the effort. Ruth Ellen "Nell" Patton continued the work of her mother as both family historian and preservationist. She collected and edited family papers and also handled with delicate care her great grandfather and father's wartime mementoes. At the age of thirteen she officially assumed the role of both genealogist and preservationist that she continued throughout her life. She often recalled that as a child her father continually referenced the Confederacy. On one occasion he gave her a small Confederate flag as a gift. Other instances involved story telling. Years later she informed a family friend that she was "the one who collected all the stories and clippings and snapshots and memorabilia . . . listening to our grandfather and the great aunts." Amid the "boxes and boxes of letters," she continued, "I have George Hugh Smith's tinder box, and the gold piece that saved George Patton #1's life, when the enemy bullet hit it and did not penetrate further." She also obtained and preserved the "shirttail of his shirt with the shrapnel hole in it, and his blood soaked wallet and handkerchief that were on him when he received his mortal wound at Cedar Creek." Family relics pertaining to great grandfather Patton were not the only mementoes she preserved. Ruth also kept in her possession the "original letter dictated by Waller Tazewell Patton when he was dying" at the Gettysburg Hospital in 1863, and she later gave it to the Museum of the Confederacy in Richmond, Virginia. Her duty to preserve the families' Confederate history led her to take extra measures. In one occasion she clashed with her brother regarding the donation of family relics. She opposed that they be sent to



the Patton Museum and Center of Leadership in Fort Knox, Kentucky because she believed that they “belonged at VMI” instead. According to her, such relics “mean a great deal to me as I was allowed to hold them when I was a child while the old ladies were telling the stories.”<sup>34</sup>

Unfortunately for VMI, both George S. Patton’s saber and saddle were donated to the Patton Museum.

Another way Ruth Ellen preserved the legacy of her families’ martial tradition was by way of marriage. In fact, all of the Patton women continued the family’s military tradition through marriage. Beatrice Smith “Bee” Patton, the eldest Patton daughter, married Gen. John Knight Waters, a West Point graduate who served in the cavalry upon graduation. In World War II he became a prisoner in Germany and was freed by his father-in-law during the Operation Force Baum raid in March 1945. After the war he became commandant of cadets at West Point. In 1940, Ruth Ellen married West Pointer James Willoughby Totten. Totten himself also came from a family of military men. His forefathers had ironically fought against the Patton Confederates. His great-grandfather James Totten, West Point Class of 1841, was a light battery commander for the Union in the Civil War. James’ brother, Joseph Gilbert Totten, West Point Class of 1805, was a veteran of the War of 1812, Mexican-American War, and served as Chief of the Corps of Engineers in 1861. Both of his grandfathers, Charles Totten (West Point Class of 1873 and Willoughby Walker (West Point Class of 1883 served as artillery officers for the United States Army.<sup>35</sup>

In the latter part of her life, Ruth Ellen made it her mission to donate family wartime relics to VMI. In 1985, she donated a myriad of the first George S. Patton’s relics as well as

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<sup>34</sup> Ruth Ellen Totten to Joseph D. Heikirk, 23 February 1983, George S. Patton Jr. Papers, Virginia Military Institute Archives.

<sup>35</sup> George S. Patton Jr., “Patton Family 1907,” George S. Patton Jr. Papers, Virginia Military Institute Archives.

Waller Tazewell Patton's death letter to the Institute. VMI's officer clerk, Joseph D. Heikirk, sent her a thank you letter in which he mentioned that "VMI will certainly be pleased to be the repository of such important items," just as he was "proud to have your father's VMI coat and other things you donated previously." Finally, he reaffirmed her family's military heritage at the Institute: "it's evident to me that a strain of great leadership has been exhibited by the male members of your family from General Hugh Mercer to the present."<sup>36</sup> Ultimately, Patton's daughter's central role as the family historian and preservationist preserved her father's link to the Confederacy. It was appropriate that she assumed the traditional role of the Southern woman, and she was well aware of her duty. According to her, "the Patton men were great because of the women they married."<sup>37</sup>

The men also contributed to Patton's memorization. Following his father's death in 1945, Patton's son had the original suffix legally removed and changed his name to that of his Confederate great-grandfather. After his retirement, George S. Patton IV began to cement the families' Confederate past. First, he provided Patton biographers with information on his families' rich ancestry. Specifically, he contributed to Brian Sobel's *The Fighting Pattons*. George also helped to preserve family relics. In 1986 he wrote VMI Superintendent General Sam S. Walker from his home in South Hamilton, Massachusetts to inform him of his donation of his father's cadet journal entry on the Battle of New Market Ceremony. After recalling that "both of my great grandfathers . . . commanded major forces in this fight," the retired general concluded that "VMI ought to have it" and enclosed the original entry with the letter.<sup>38</sup> Walker responded a

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<sup>36</sup> Joseph D. Heikirk to Ruth Ellen Totten, 19 March 1985, George S. Patton Jr. Papers, Virginia Military Institute Archives.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> Maj. Gen. George Smith Patton IV to Gen. Sam S. Walker, 16 January 1986, George S. Patton Jr. Papers, Virginia Military Institute Archives.

month later, thanking him for the donation and like his predecessors accentuated the family's Confederate heritage. He closed— “it is a valuable addition to our archives and especially touching because of the family ties and the heritage that the Battle of New Market represents for all VMI men.”<sup>39</sup>

George S. Patton IV also preserved the memory of his father by recounting stories. In fact, he proved to be as mystical as the elder Patton. In an interview with Jeffery St. John, the retired general shared a combat experience similar to his father’s vision of his Confederate grandfather in 1918. He recounted that during the Vietnam conflict he looked up at the sky and saw his father who told him, “Get your a\*\* across that road.’ That was the message I got. I took a deep breath and took off and as I crossed the main road the shelling stopped—or relaxed. I think my sense of duty and obligation to my men would have made me cross that road anyway, But his appearance in the clouds helped to spur me on.”<sup>40</sup> In the same interview he also shared that after he took charge of the Second Armored Division, the same division that his father had commanded, he could feel his presence all around him. Family stories and lore were not simply restricted to the immediate Patton family. Extended family members also venerated their Confederate ancestors. Hancock Banning, himself a VMI graduate and cousin of Patton, boasted to VMI office clerk Heikirk about the family’s Confederate genealogy during a luncheon in San Marino, California.

Apart from their role as raconteurs, the Patton’s continued to donate family relics to VMI well into the 1980s. Today the VMI museum houses the coatee Patton wore as a cadet, a map he used at the Battle of the Bulge, and a bronze bust of him. The George C. Marshall Research

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<sup>39</sup> Gen. Sam S. Walker to Maj. Gen. George Smith Patton IV, 6 February 1986, George S. Patton Jr. Papers, Virginia Military Institute Archives, Lexington, VA.

<sup>40</sup> “Reflections of a Fighting Father,” The Patton Society Research Library, accessed January 27, 2014, <http://www.pattonhq.com/textfiles/reflect.html>.

Foundation, also located on the VMI campus, houses a silver-colored helmet Patton wore throughout Sicily, France, and Germany.<sup>41</sup> In 1988, Hertha Czedekowski, wife of the Polish artist, donated two signed copies of Patton's poems, one titled "God of Battles." Both are housed in VMI's Preston Library along with her husband's portrait of the famous World War II general. On the other hand, the Institute did not keep these Patton relics to themselves. They shared their valuables with the world. In the 1970s they generously loaned the Renner Museum in Vienna the famous polished combat helmet worn by the late general along with other relics for the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration of the Second Republic of Austria.<sup>42</sup>

The link between Patton and the Confederacy translated onto the big screen as well. Despite the film's release during the anti-war sentiments in 1970, *Patton* won the favor of the American public. According to historian Nicholas Sarantakes, the film appealed to a broad American audience because it provided its viewers with a portrait of the nation's mythic self-image in the post-World War II era.<sup>43</sup> For VMI, the film offered the Institute an opportunity to renew its glorification of its Confederate past via the Patton family. Not surprisingly, at the helm of the production of the film was alumnus, Brig. Gen. Frank M. McCarthy. Like most VMI men, McCarthy descended from ancestors who fought for the grey. He was a grandson of Confederate soldier Frank J. McCarthy. In 1933 McCarthy graduated from VMI and became a 2nd lieutenant in the Field Artillery Reserve. He remained at the Institute for two more years as an instructor of English and Tactics. During the Second World War he served as a military secretary for Gen.

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<sup>41</sup> George S. Patton Jr., "Patton Family 1907," George S. Patton Jr. Papers, Virginia Military Institute Archives.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> Nicolas Sarantakes, *Making Patton: A Classic War Film's Epic Journey to the Silver Screen* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2012).

George C. Marshall.<sup>44</sup> After the war, McCarthy spent nearly two decades working on Patton's biographical film, which won seven Academy Awards. VMI used the film to revisit the Institute's rich tradition. On October 2, 1980, then VMI Superintendent Richard L. Irby wrote to McCarthy:

In the view of the fact that General Patton's father and grandfather were VMI graduates and later members of the faculty, and that the General himself was an alumnus, our cadets have a special interest in your film, PATTON.

Do you think you can arrange to address the Corps on the subject, and also to screen the film on the night of November 11? In anticipation, we have tentatively reserved the State Theatre in Lexington for eight o'clock that evening, and we hope you can persuade 20<sup>th</sup> Century-Fox let us have a print of the film for that occasion.<sup>45</sup>

McCarthy granted the Institute's wishes. During the private showing of the film to the Cadet Corps and friends at the State Theatre in Lexington, the producer spoke about Patton's Confederate ancestry at VMI, where "General Patton was one of our own."<sup>46</sup> A copy of the film was donated to the Institute and is housed at the George C. Marshall Research Foundation on campus.

After the movie was released, a plethora of letters by citizens inquiring about Patton's Confederate ancestry continued to flood the Institute's doorsteps. The movement for Patton's wartime belongings would not die. Almost a generation later, Julia Smith Martin, Assistant Public Information Officer at the Institute reported to Ashley Halsey in 1982, "Here at VMI we are frequently asked to provide information on the late General George S. Patton, VMI class of

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<sup>44</sup> "Biographical Sketch," Marshall Foundation, accessed January 27, 2014, [http://www.marshallfoundation.org/library/documents/McCarthy\\_Main.pdf](http://www.marshallfoundation.org/library/documents/McCarthy_Main.pdf).

<sup>45</sup> Richard L. Irby to Brigadier General Frank McCarthy, 2 October 1980, George S. Patton Jr. Papers, Virginia Military Institute Archives.

<sup>46</sup> Frank M. McCarthy, "Patton" (undated speech), George S. Patton Jr. Papers, Virginia Military Institute Archives.

1907 . . . and his Confederate ancestors who attended VMI.”<sup>47</sup> The nexus between Patton and the Confederacy at VMI still persists. In 1997, a VMI graduate wrote, “inspired by Stonewall Jackson and General Patton, my boyish dreams came to life the day I matriculated at VMI.”<sup>48</sup> A year later, the editors of the Institute’s yearbook declared, “the likes of General Thomas Jackson, General George C. Marshall, and General Patton have graced buildings of Virginia Military Institute. This creates a legacy for cadets to follow and be proud.”<sup>49</sup> Outside of Lexington, George S. Patton Jr. and the legacy of the Confederacy is still alive. In a recent article from the Army War College and Army Command and General Staff College, Col. Joseph C. Carter and Maj. Michael S. Finer compare Stonewall Jackson and Patton’s leadership qualities. According to the authors, “Patton possessed an inspirational leadership quality, which made him second to only Stonewall Jackson in terms of battlefield success.”<sup>50</sup>

Ultimately, Southern newsmen, VMI, family members, and individual efforts all contributed to keep ablaze the enduring legacy between Patton and the Confederacy well after his tragic death. In 1991, Patton’s grandson set out to unravel the mystery behind the allure of his family’s martial legacy. Robert Holbrook Patton, son of George S. Patton IV, became the family historian after his aunt Ruth Ellen passed away. The namesake of the family patriarch who had settled in Virginia in 1777, it was appropriate that he would assume this role. According to him, his aunt declared before her death that his efforts to chronicle the family’s history would “keep

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<sup>47</sup> Julia Smith Martin to Ashley Halsey, 21 January 1982, Waller Tazewell Patton Papers, Virginia Military Institute Archives.

<sup>48</sup> “The Bomb,” Virginia Military Institute, published annually, accessed March 31, 2014, also available at <https://archive.org/stream/bomb1997virg#page/76/mode/2up>, 76.

<sup>49</sup> “The Bomb,” Virginia Military Institute, published annually, accessed March 31, 2014, also available at <https://archive.org/stream/bomb1998virg#page/8/mode/2up>, 8.

<sup>50</sup> Col. Joseph C. Carter and Maj. Michael S. Finer, “Stonewall Jackson and George S. Patton: A Survey of Leadership,” U.S. Army (April 4, 2004), accessed March 31, 2014, [http://www.army.mil/professionalWriting/volumes/volume2/april\\_2004/4\\_04\\_1.html](http://www.army.mil/professionalWriting/volumes/volume2/april_2004/4_04_1.html).

alive voices that otherwise would have been lost.”<sup>51</sup> Unlike his grandfather who was surrounded by a plethora of family relics, the only memento bequeathed to Robert was the 1860 model Colt pistol carried by the first George Smith Patton during the Civil War. Grandfather Patton’s wartime weapon was the families’ most precious link to the Confederate past. Apart from this valuable family relic, Robert’s interest in the Patton family legacy was seeded at a young age when he witnessed his father cry during the film, *Patton*. He later described his experience: “it led me to consider for the first time in my life that my grandfather was somebody real.”<sup>52</sup> Thereafter he sought to unravel the mystery of this famed grandfather.

Robert, however, was an anomaly. Unlike the previous Patton men, he did not receive a military education nor did he enter into military service. His father, brothers, and cousins had continued the family-martial tradition. His father, George S. Patton IV, graduated from West Point in 1946 and served in Korea as a tank commander. During the Vietnam War he served three tours of duty, between 1961 and 1969. In 1970 he became a brigadier general, and he attained the rank of major general in 1973. Two years later he assumed command of the Second Armored Division, which had been his father's first divisional command. It was the first time in the history of the Army that a son took charge of a unit previously commanded by his father. Overall, his military decorations include the Distinguished Service Cross with Oak Leaf Cluster, two Silver Stars, the Distinguished Service Medal, and the Purple Heart.

To “bring the Patton story full circle,” Robert’s cousin, James Patton Totten, was born on May 15, 1947, the anniversary of the Battle of New Market.<sup>53</sup> Totten was one of the thirteen

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<sup>51</sup> Andi Rierden, “The Patton Family: An Intimate Portrait,” *New York Times*, June 12, 1994, accessed February 27, 2014, <http://www.nytimes.com/1994/06/12/nyregion/the-patton-family-an-intimate-portrait.html>.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>53</sup> William C. Davis, *The Battle of New Market* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1983), 173.

cadet captains who commanded Company A in the VMI Corps of Cadets, the same company that his great-grandfather had commanded. As a rising cadet he predicted that upon graduation he would “follow a line of Old Soldiers.”<sup>54</sup> If James’ birth brought the Patton story to full circle, Robert’s role caused a ripple in it. When he finally set out to investigate the Patton family legacy in his family memoir *The Pattons: A Personal History of an American Family*, he deliberately severed the family’s link to its revered Confederate legacy. For him, the Patton family was “a fiction created by a few ancestors to give their lives and legacies dramatic continuity.”<sup>55</sup> In fact, according to him, the principal arbiter of this fiction was his grandfather. Apparently he did not realize that in denying the fascination of his grandfather with the Lost Cause, he was only bringing more attention to it.

In his lifetime, George S. Patton Jr.’s preoccupation with his Confederate past became the nucleus for his appetite for glory. Raised within the patrician tradition of Virginia’s Confederate heritage, the many Patton military men were his idols. During his boyhood, his love of war and its potential glories stemmed largely from the stories he heard from his step-grandfather about his Revolutionary and Civil War ancestors, as well as his exposure to the family’s wartime relics. Influenced by his father, young Patton put into practice valuable lessons about martial virtues of manliness and personal honor that focused on the Confederacy. As a cadet at VMI he was further clothed with the Confederate mantle by classmates and a staff that contained many Confederate veterans and descendants who instilled courage, honor, and duty in their students. The Institute’s wartime relics, mementoes, and traditions that glorified the Confederate legacy also influenced young Patton. During his cadetship at both VMI and West Point, he made frequent references in

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<sup>54</sup> “The Bomb,” Virginia Military Institute, published annually, accessed March 31, 2014, also available at <https://archive.org/stream/bomb1969virg#page/150/mode/2up/search/Patton>, 150.

<sup>55</sup> Robert H. Patton, *A Personal History of an American Family*, 304.



his diary and letters to the Confederate past. Throughout his life he surrounded himself with family wartime relics and read copiously on Confederate heroes. In his formative years he chose the army because of his hereditary attraction to a military career. During his early years in the army his admiration for his ancestors affected his conduct in war. In his military campaigns he also continually evoked the Confederacy's martial spirit and instituted Lee and Jackson's military acumen in his own generalship. After his death his family perpetuated his obsession with the Confederacy by linking him to his ancestors.

In spite of Patton's dogged military ambition and colorful military career, he "never quite measured up to the romantic figure of the Patton grandfather who died gloriously in battle during the Civil War."<sup>56</sup> The portrait of the famous general who emerges from an obsession with the Confederate past is a contradictory image of the confident Patton previously painted. George S. Patton Jr. was a conflicted individual. He never came to terms with the fact that his Confederate ancestors were on the losing side of the war. His endeavor to surpass his grandfather in rank and glory was his attempt to ameliorate his disappointment. Ironically, he used their defeat to champion their legacy and feed his own ambition. A biographical sketch of Patton seen in such light explains *why* Patton embraced a military career. Scrupulous attention to the *why* provides a better understanding of Patton as an individual largely defined by the Lost Cause.

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<sup>56</sup> Blumenson & Patton, *The Patton Papers*, 12.

APPENDIX  
PHOTOGRAPHS



Portrait of Brigadier General Hugh Mercer (1726-1777) sketched by John Trumbull.



Portrait of George Smith Patton (1833-1864) hung at the Virginia Military Institute Archives, Lexington Virginia.



Portrait of Waller Tazewell Patton (1835-1863) hung at the Virginia Military Institute Archives, Lexington Virginia.



George S. Patton, Sr. with his son, George, Jr. at their home in San Gabriel, California.



George S. Patton Jr., poses with his “Rat” Class, 1907. Virginia Military Institute Archives, Lexington Virginia.



George S. Patton Jr., “Rat” year, 1903. Virginia Military Institute Archives, Lexington Virginia.



This photograph (from the Patton Museum) shows Col. George S. Patton Jr. (r) with his father, George S. Patton II, in 1919 at the combined graves of his grandfather, George S. Patton, and his brother Waller Tazewell Patton in Winchester, Virginia.

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