

TRAVELLER

Award Winning Publication of the General Robert E. Lee
Camp, #1640

Sons of Confederate Veterans, Germantown, TN

Duty, Honor, Integrity, Chivalry

DEO VINDICE!

May 2018



CAMP MEETING

May 14, 2018

Speaker: Starke Miller

Topic: "Ole Miss Confederate Political Situation"

7:00 p.m. at the at the Germantown Regional History and Genealogy Center

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merely because they reported depression. When Vermont was considering legislation providing for civil unions for same-sex couples, not even the sweatiest, most paranoid snake-handler imagined that florists would be financially ruined by the government for refusing to serve customers whose nuptials violated their religious scruples. Yet here we are.

And now, a few weeks after conservatives were laughed at for predicting that the desire to take down Confederate memorials would eventually turn into the desire to take down memorials to the Founding Fathers, it has happened again. The leaders of Christ Church, an Episcopal congregation in Alexandria, Va., have decided to remove two plaques honoring previous Robert E. Lee and George Washington, who both once worshiped there.

It's important not to exaggerate this story. This is just one incident in a very notable place. Though it is not yet a wave, I predict that it is a sign of what is to come. Many progressive voices would surely object that while some radicals want to tear down the Founders, liberals have of late eloquently articulated a case for taking down Confederate statues that does not logically end in tearing down memorials to Jefferson and Washington. The argument goes like this: We're not interested in getting rid of statues of racists just because they are racist. Jefferson Davis, Nathan Bedford Forrest, and General Robert E. Lee are memorialized *only* because of their efforts on behalf of the Confederate cause. The Confederate cause was defined exclusively by the preservation and expansion of chattel slavery. It was a treasonous cause, and the memorials were erected to reinforce the renewed power and rhetoric of white supremacy in the South after it was defeated.

Jamelle Bouie of *Slate* has given this view elegant expression. "Yes, Jefferson was a slaveholder, Washington was a slaveholder," he said in a recent podcast. "But the reason we memorialize them is not because of their slaveholding. We memorialize them because one wrote the Declaration of Independence, and one led the Continental Armies and basically formed the

The Next Lost Cause

By Michael Brendan Dougherty

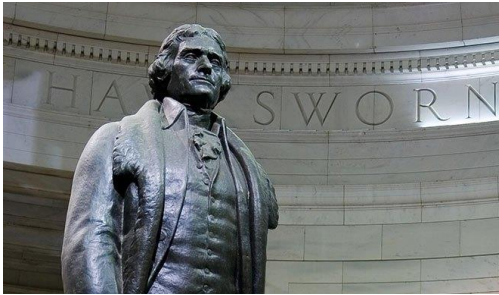


Why the slope from toppling Confederate monuments to shunning the Founders is so slippery

For conservatives who pay attention, the slippery slope isn't a logical fallacy, but a way of life. In our gloomy predictions, we regularly understate how far society will begin kicking us down the slope once we start sliding. It would've been unthinkable for even the most pessimistic anti-divorce activist of half a century ago to predict that the majority of American children would be born illegitimately within a few decades. Anti-euthanasia activists never dared suggest that the Dutch would be so depraved as to begin drugging children into their graves

model for the presidency.” He added, for emphasis, that, “these [Confederate] statues were explicitly raised as symbols of Jim Crow and of white supremacy. So Trump’s comparison [of Confederate memorials to monuments to Washington and Jefferson] there is dumb. It doesn’t really even make any sense. And the notion that there’s some slippery slope is dumb.”

All the distinctions Bouie and others raise are sound, but they are unlikely to stop the slide down the slippery slope, which starts when the principle established in one political controversy has nothing to impede its progressive application to other cases — or when the motivations for a desired political change outlive the change itself and find new avenues of expression.



I don’t think it is controversial to speculate that those wanting to tear down Confederate memorials do so because they oppose white supremacy. And the motivation that anti-racism provides them will outlive the public symbols honoring the Confederacy, energizing the next cause. The potential honorific gains for anti-racists will also remain after the brazen Rebs are gone. The desire to see white supremacy toppled in the present will motivate anti-racists to expose its influence throughout American history. And the fact that the Founders gave America its long-lived institutions — its Constitution, its presidency, its courts — will no longer be seen as a reason to retain their monuments, but as the primary reason for tearing them down.

I do not offer this argument as an indictment of anyone’s motivations. I’m not accusing anyone of hiding the ball, or of deliberately misleading others, or even themselves. I’m not even arguing against the removal of Confederate statues. I am merely offering a prediction based on the current placement of pieces on the chess board, the temperament of the players, and the known history of their previous games. But I do think America will lose something important when the Founders are judged too problematic to honor, even if by that point most Americans will judge the losses minor and the gains to be had irresistible.

Political battle creates archetypal heroes and villains. And once the villainy of the latter is established, why

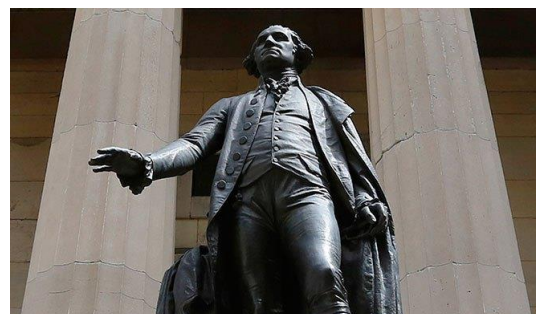
shouldn’t they lose even more ground? Liberals should be easy to persuade on this point, because the more extreme among them — those doing the persuading — will be using arguments against the Founders that have the exact same shape as the arguments against the Confederates.

Right now, most liberals cannot quite envision the toppling of the Jefferson Memorial on account of Jefferson’s white-supremacist views. It seems so unthinkable that they genuinely don’t allow themselves to contemplate it, much less desire it. And so they are quite reassuring when they say they aren’t leading us down the slope. But they are, even if they don’t know it.

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Twenty years ago, the strength of the Religious Right was such that few then fighting what they saw as patriarchal attitudes and homophobia could imagine Catholic hospitals would one day be sued to provide abortions, and Evangelical colleges sued into providing dorms for same-sex couples. But once feminism and sexual liberation made certain gains, the next battle against the same enemy became obvious. Suddenly, the only people who saw utility in religious liberty were these Catholics and Evangelicals, who now seemed to their opponents as nothing other than misogynists and homophobes. And thus religious liberty, a liberal value and achievement, died and became doomed to a second ghostly life as a conservative preoccupation, one that makes both the conservative and the preoccupation seem more suspicious by association.

Precisely because conservatives — the paradigmatic enemy who once argued on behalf of Lee — will be the group trying to save the memory of Thomas Jefferson by calling people to Martin Luther King Jr.’s understanding of our founding documents as a “promissory note,” liberals will be more and more tempted by an alternative, more radical understanding of those documents. And they will have another very important motivation beyond ideological tribalism: They will be seeking what they view as justice in the present.



I have the blessing and curse of being a dual national. I think it can be easier to see how present concerns motivate our understanding of the national past when you look at my other country, Ireland. I watched with interest as the Irish celebrated the centennial of the Easter Rising in 2016. The legacy of the 1916 rebels has been subject to heated debate ever since they fired the first shot at the gates of Dublin Castle. Starting in the 1970s, there was much discussion among historians and the Irish lettered class over how the ideological baggage of the Easter Rising contributed to the peculiar bloodiness of the Troubles in Northern Ireland. The rebels of 1916 embraced their certain defeat and death, making martyrdom a proof of manhood and a means of keeping alive an Irish tradition of anti-British resistance, even when their present campaign was futile and therefore failed one of the tests of a just war: that it have a reasonable chance of success. Did not the Easter rebels leave a residue in Irish nationalism that bid the Provisional IRA to continue its mayhem even in a hopeless cause, even if it destroyed any chance of social peace in Ulster? The present concerns overwhelmed almost all other understandings of the act that had previously been credited with achieving Ireland's first political independence since at least the rise of the Tudors.

But now, almost 20 years after the Good Friday Agreement, the legacy of the Rising is reinterpreted in an Ireland where the lettered class is defined by its current ambition to shake off the last vestiges of what it demeans as "Holy Catholic Ireland," the country whose education system and socially conservative laws speak to the preeminence of the Church. Two years ago, that meant legalizing same-sex marriage. Next year, there will be a push to legalize abortion. And so, there was the odd spectacle of the *Irish Times* religion reporter, Patsy McGarry, ringing in the 2016 with an editorial suggesting that Rising leaders Patrick Pearse and James Connolly were poisonous Catholic sectarians. McGarry suggested they could only have had one motivation for receiving Holy Communion before their execution by the British: to commit to history a deed of political propaganda on behalf of Catholic supremacy. That they might have believed it good for their souls and necessary for salvation never enters McGarry's mind. And McGarry is so committed to an anti-Catholic revisionism he mangles the details of history, seeming unaware that the Apostle's Creed was



common to all Ireland's Christian denominations. Again, the present ambition to continue humbling the Church overwhelms alternative understandings of the Irish past.

If white supremacy will be named as the perennial problem of American life going forward, the Founders must eventually fall.

The current climate of anti-Catholicism in Ireland is generational and likely to exhaust itself in the cause for legal abortion and the secularization of the best nominally Catholic schools in Dublin. The climate is amenable to change; religions often find ways to revive themselves, and the spiritual vacuum in Ireland is real, waiting to be filled.

In America, the picture is quite different. Generations of mass immigration all but guarantee that the future of our politics will almost certainly be more and more focused on achieving the equitable distribution of economic, institutional, and honorific resources in an ever-more-racially-diverse society, thereby ensuring social peace.

Because I believe that human nature cannot be perfected, and that human ambition is very difficult to restrain, I doubt any government or society is capable of creating a distribution of resources that is fair and disinterested and perceived by everyone as such. Yet it is precisely this need to

create harmony in an increasingly diverse society that prompted Christ Church to ditch George Washington. They explained in their statement that the plaques "create a distraction in our worship space and may create an obstacle to our identity as a welcoming church and an impediment to our growth and to full community with our neighbors."

And so, if white supremacy will be named as the perennial problem of American life going forward, the Founders must eventually fall.

I realized that this would be inevitable once I read Adam Serwer's intelligent dissection of the myth of General Robert E. Lee. Serwer takes on what he calls "a 150-year-old propaganda campaign designed to erase slavery as the cause of the war and whitewash the Confederate cause as a noble one." He acknowledges that while some white supremacists honor Lee for his racism, many others wish to honor what they imagine to be his virtues, and says he is trying to alert the latter folks to the ugly truth. He

corrects those who believe Lee was a military genius by calling out the fatal “decision to fight a conventional war against the more densely populated and industrialized North.” He cautions those who say that Lee became a man of peace, noting that after the war, “To the extent that Lee believed in reconciliation, it was between white people, and only on the precondition that black people would be denied political power.” He concludes:

To describe [Lee] as an American hero requires ignoring the immense suffering for which he was personally responsible, both on and off the battlefield. It requires ignoring his participation in the industry of human bondage, his betrayal of his country in defense of that institution, the battlefields scattered with the lifeless bodies of men who followed his orders and those they killed, his hostility toward the rights of the freedmen and his indifference to his own students waging a campaign of terror against the newly emancipated. It requires reducing the sum of human virtue to a sense of decorum and the ability to convey gravitas in a gray uniform.

Liberal writers today say that we honor Jefferson and Washington for the noble parts of their legacy, just as Lost Cause devotees once said they honor the honorable facets of Lee’s life. But in fact, it is probably easier to criticize the Founders as white supremacists than it is to fault Lee’s military acumen, his physical bravery, or several other of the virtues routinely ascribed to him. Lee and the Confederates offered more praise of slavery and fewer ambivalent notes about it. But the bill of indictment I expect to be aimed at the Founders harmonizes with the one Serwer aims at Lee. In fact, it is so harmonious that I believe we can almost hum it as a counter-melody already.

Previously, civil-rights activists such as King reconciled white America’s devotion to the nation’s founding and their own ambition to living as equals under the law by casting the Declaration and other artifacts of the Founding as a “promissory note” whose liberties need to be justly extended to all human beings in America. And many today say that we can honor the Founders because, unlike the the Confederates, the principles they enshrined in our Founding documents could be used against the injustice of slavery and white supremacy.

It is my contention that this way of honoring the Founders will soon begin to seem dishonest to liberals. It will be seen as a concession to a recalcitrant prejudice and a political reality that is rapidly disappearing, the same way civil unions for same-sex couples are now seen.

It is easy to imagine a writer who grew up reading Ta-Nehisi Coates on “the First White President” looking back at Bouie’s assertion that we have statues to Jefferson on account of his authorship of the Declaration of

Independence with a jaundiced eye. That future man of letters will observe that the Declaration’s invocations of liberty and its pretensions of universalism were merely Whig propaganda against a King. He will assert that Jefferson did not actually believe that all men were so endowed by their creator. He will hasten to add that as America achieved the political sovereignty, Jefferson became more convinced of white supremacy, more secure in the view that white liberty could be guaranteed only through black bondage. Many reading this argument will conclude that by raising statues to Jefferson we are crediting him *only for his hypocrisy*, a privilege only white racists and slavers get in America. They will conclude, in other words, that America has spent centuries sanctifying its foundational hypocrisy. Land of the Free, home of the enslaved.

Seen from this vantage, the statues and the faces on federal coins and the convenient February holidays are part of a centuries-old campaign to whitewash the Revolutionary cause as a noble one. Why should we credit the Founders with their ideals of human liberty and their constitutional genius when the system of government they bequeathed was so uniquely resistant to the emancipation of slaves that the “American exceptionalism” of the 19th century could be said to reside in the fact that America was the only Western nation where abolition required a cataclysmic civil war?

Why raise statues to Washington for his leadership of the Continental armies when those armies were partly motivated to destroy the British as vengeance for emancipating America’s slaves? Scores of thousands of slaves ran to the British army seeking emancipation, including many owned by George Washington. This fact incensed the America Revolutionaries. Tom Paine decried the British as “that barbarous and hellish power which hath stirred up the Indians and Negroes to destroy us.”

This hypocrisy was not lost on all observers. Samuel Johnson’s assessment of the American cause can be repurposed by those who would tear down Jefferson and Washington: “We are told, that the subjection of Americans may tend to the diminution of our own liberties; an event, which none but very perspicacious politicians are able to foresee” Johnson wrote, “If slavery be thus fatally contagious, how is it that we hear the loudest yelps for liberty among the drivers of negroes?”

Forget the promissory note, they may say — only right-wingers talk about that any more. We ran away from Washington in the 1770s, and we’ve been running from him and what he created ever since. Everything that has been good for racial peace in this country has involved running away from the Founders.

I think it will seem natural that Americans, first on the far left, then at the more respectable liberal journals will come to the same conclusion about the Founders as Serwer does about Lee.

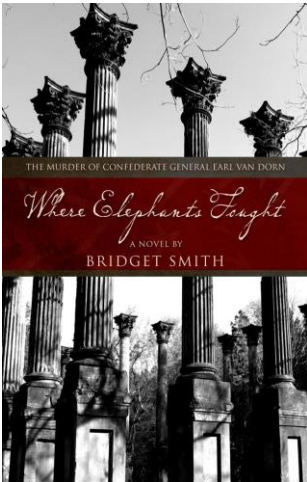
Perhaps I am wrong. Perhaps the great themes of American politics will change before that can happen. Perhaps China or some other power will emerge as an empire that threatens our subjugation, and the Founders' desire for sovereignty, independence, and republicanism will seem relevant and ennobling of American life again. Perhaps unforeseen changes to society and technology will so atomize us that racial divides in politics no longer exist on account of factional cohesion itself becoming impossible.

But I doubt it. The pieces on the board are where they are, and the logic of the game requires that some of them will fall, even if the players cannot yet anticipate it. All that is required is for the game to continue on its current course.

DID YOU KNOW?

by Beecher Smith

A REVIEW OF *WHERE ELEPHANTS FOUGHT* BY BRIDGET SMITH (Sudbury Press, 2015)



“When elephants fight it is the grass that suffers.”
African Kilkuyu proverb

One of the more intriguing tales from the War Between the States involves the murder of Confederate general Earl Van Dorn by Dr. George Peters on May 7, 1863. At first glance one wonders if there is enough material in the story to write a book about it. That is exactly what Bridget Smith has done.

After spending years researching this incident, rather than opt for nonfiction, she chose the format of an historical novel. This allowed her much greater freedom to present the major characters, their thoughts, words, and deeds much more lifelike and more vividly. At the center of the

conflict is General Earl Van Dorn, a dashing cavalry commander with a checkered reputation from his wartime engagements and a notorious reputation for womanizing. Trapped in a loveless marriage, Jessie McKissack Peters, the youthful second wife of Dr. Peters, carries on a scandalous affair with the General while her husband is away on business matters. Completing this triangle is Dr. George Peters, a Union sympathizer who comes across as a rather cold, self-centered businessman who cares more about his investments and material possessions than he does about his beautiful young and lonely wife.

Rounding out the story are the children of Dr. Peters and how their father's killing Gen. Van Dorn affected them with tragedies of their own.

The most compelling issue in this novel is why Peters would murder Van Dorn? Although the commonly held belief is because Van Dorn cuckolded Peters and it became an affair of honor, Bridget Smith probes much deeper than that to bring us her theory of what really drove Jessie's husband to kill her paramour.

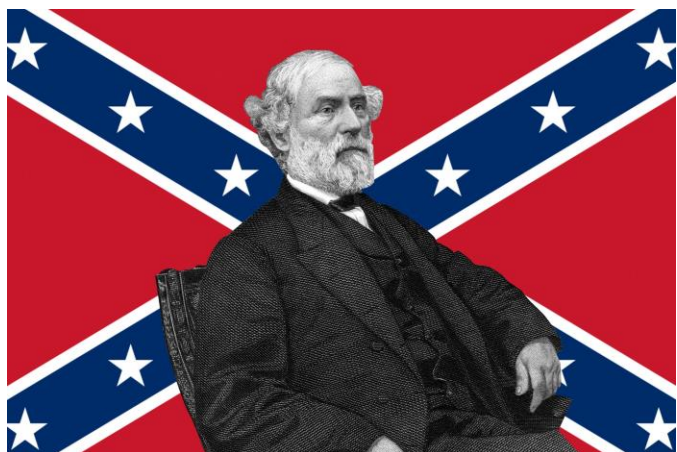
The author deserves high praise for making these characters come alive as real people with their own personal hopes, dreams, and sorrows. The worst sin a writer can commit is to bore her readers. Let the reader be advised that does not happen here.

Every page of this book contains delicious tidbits leading up to as well as the aftermath of the killing of Gen Van Dorn. Its readers will not be disappointed.

END



Bridget H. Smith was born and raised in Columbia, Tennessee, not far from the setting of her Civil War era novel *Where Elephants Fought*. From the first glimpse into the lives of Jessie Peters and General Earl Van Dorn, she was intrigued and soon found herself immersed in the world of research for over twenty years. She has a Masters in English and has taught in high school and college for the last twenty-five years. She lives in Raymond, Mississippi, with her husband Ray and her four children and is currently at work on her second novel, a more modern tale of sin and eccentricities set in her beloved South.



**The General Robert E. Lee Camp #1640
Sons of Confederate Veterans**

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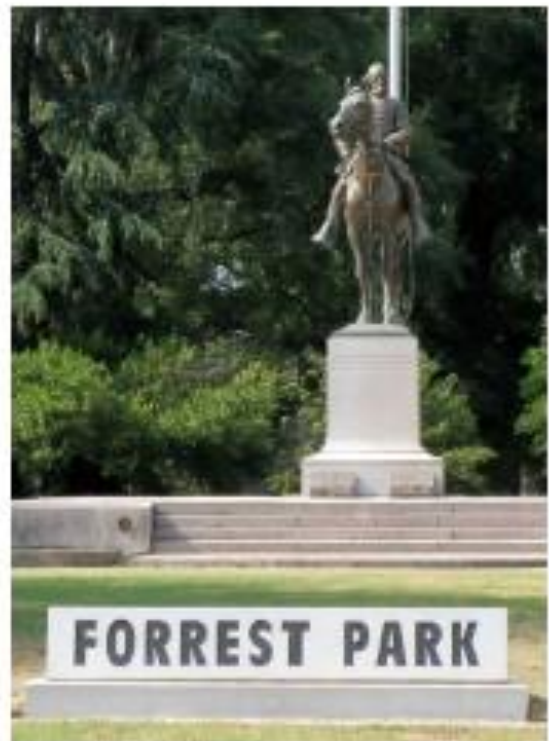
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SONS OF CONFEDERATE VETERANS

Help Save General Forrest



The Memphis City Council has passed a resolution to remove the Forrest Equestrian Statue from Forrest Park and to dig up the graves of General Forrest and his wife MaryAnn from beneath the statue.

The SCV and the Forrest family descendants must raise money to fight the city in this second attack on General Forrest. We need your help.

Help us to save the graves and monument of General Forrest

Can you, or your camp or Division donate \$100, \$500 or \$1000 to the defense ?

Please sign me up as a supporter. No membership fee.

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The General Robert E. Lee Camp #1640
Sons of Confederate Veterans
and

The Mary Custis Lee Chapter,
Order of the Confederate Rose
P.O. Box 171251
Memphis, Tennessee 38187

Steve M. McIntyre, Editor

Next Camp Meeting ** May 14, 2018
Germantown Regional History and Genealogy Center, 7779 Old Poplar Pike, Germantown, TN