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Working for the benefit and advancement of women: Three women's organizations that commemorated the American Civil War, 1880-1920

Annette F. Guild
James Madison University

Working for the Benefit and Advancement of Women:

Three Women's Organizations that Commemorated the American Civil War, 1880-1920

Annette F. Guild

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FACULTY COMMITTEE:

Committee Chair: Dr. Margaret Mulrooney

Committee Members/ Readers:

Dr. Philip Herrington

Dr. Kristen McCleary

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Abstract

In the past forty years, scholars and members of the public alike have obsessed over the complex legacy of the American Civil War (1861-1865). As debates over Confederate monuments and the United States' racial past have frequently emerged in politics, many Americans have disagreed as to how the Civil War should be remembered. In examining the evolution of Civil War memory in American society, numerous scholars have noted the important role that women's organizations played in influencing the Civil War's collective memory in the fifty years following the conflict. However, while scholars have noted the significance of these organizations for Civil War memory, they have been less likely to explore the significance that these organizations had for women.

This thesis fills a gap in contemporary scholarship by examining three women's organizations that commemorated the Civil War in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Rather than just exploring the impacts that these organizations had on Civil War memory, this thesis examines the Woman's Relief Corps (WRC), the National Association of Army Nurses of the Civil War (NAAN), and the United Daughters of the Confederacy (UDC) as influential organizations that worked for the benefit of white women and contributed to their advancement by ultimately expanding their opportunities and influence. From lobbying the federal government for pensions for former Union army nurses to supporting the higher education of southern women through scholarships and college funding, the WRC, the NAAN, and the UDC worked for the direct benefit and advancement of white women in a time when many women were still bound by traditional gender roles.

Introduction

As American novelist and memory scholar Viet Thanh Nguyen once remarked, "All wars are fought twice. The first time on the battlefield, the second time in memory."[1] Although Nguyen was primarily reflecting on his family's experiences during the Vietnam War when he penned this statement, his words can nevertheless be used to understand the American Civil War (1861-1865) and its complex legacy in the United States.[2] Today, the Civil War is a prominent yet still very divisive event in America's historical memory. While most Americans remember the Civil War as a significant event in the history of the United States, there are still disagreements as to how the Civil War should be remembered. For example, was the Civil War a war between the righteous Union and the treasonous, slave-owning Confederacy? Or was it a war in which both sides fought with honor, courage, and sacrifice for causes that were equally just?[3] Affirmative answers to both of these questions can be found any time a Confederate monument goes up for public debate or Americans find themselves examining the United States' racial past, but they are also questions that Americans have been trying to answer for more than a century now.[4]

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[1] Viet Thanh Nguyen, "Just Memory: War and the Ethics of Remembrance," *American Literary History* 25, no. 1 (2013): 144.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Caroline Janney, *Remembering the Civil War: Reunion and the Limits of Reconciliation* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2013), 1-11; Ta-Nehisi Coates, "Why Do So Few Blacks Study the Civil War?" *The Atlantic,* December 11, 2011.

[4] David Blight, *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001), 1-5; Dwight T. Pitcaithley, "'A Cosmic Threat': The National Park Service Addresses the Causes of the American Civil War," in *Slavery and Public History: The Tough Stuff of American Memory,* eds. James Oliver Horton and Lois E. Horton (New York: The New Press, 2006), 169-172.

Most significantly for this thesis, how Americans should remember the Civil War is a question that organized groups of women attempted to answer in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. As numerous scholars have come to note in the past forty years, powerful veterans' organizations like the Grand Army of the Republic (GAR) and the United Confederate Veterans (UCV) played a vital role in shaping public memory of the Civil War in the fifty years following the conflict as they erected monuments, founded and celebrated commemorative holidays like Memorial Day, and undertook a variety of activities that ultimately promoted their interpretations of the Civil War.[5] However, as numerous scholars have also come to note, women's organizations attempted to shape public memory of the Civil War during this time, too; although memory was not always the foremost focus of these organizations, both northern and southern women tried to influence how other Americans interpreted the events of the Civil War as they erected monuments, published literature, influenced public education, and lobbied legislatures for money and policies that benefited the causes of their organizations.[6] In doing this, women not only made it difficult for Americans to forget

[5] Blight, *Race and Reunion*, 156-158; 74-75; 253-278; Janney, *Remembering the Civil War*, 3-11; 77-125; 235-239. As will be discussed later in this thesis, the GAR and the UCV were fraternal organizations established for veterans. Whereas the GAR was established for Union veterans, the UCV was established for Confederate veterans. Historians have disagreed over how these organizations interacted with each other. While Blight argues in *Race and Reunion* that the GAR and the UCV were amicable to each other and helped promote reconciliation between the North and the South, Janney argues in *Remembering the Civil War* that members of the GAR and UCV held on to their sectional loyalties and contempt for each other well into the twentieth century. For more information about the GAR and UCV, read Blight and Janney.

[6] Janney, *Remembering the Civil War*, 246-249; Karen Cox, *Dixie's Daughters: The United Daughters of the Confederacy and the Preservation of Confederate Culture* (Gainesville, FL: The University Press of Florida, 2003), 1-4; Francesca Morgan, *Women and Patriotism in Jim Crow America* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2005), 30-37; 39-41.

the Civil War, but, especially in the case of southern women, they also played a significant role in creating the divisive legacy that the Civil War still has today.[7]

This thesis seeks to examine three particular women's organizations that sought to commemorate the Civil War and shape the larger understandings of that conflict in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. On the surface, the Woman's Relief Corps (WRC), the National Association of Army Nurses of the Civil War (NAAN), and the United Daughters of the Confederacy (UDC) all appear as incredibly different organizations. The WRC and the NAAN were the most similar as they both sought to celebrate the victory of the Union Army and became recognized auxiliaries of the GAR, although the NAAN was originally founded in 1881 for the interests of former army nurses while the WRC was founded in 1883 for the direct support of Union veterans.[8] The UDC, on the other hand, was founded in 1894 to vindicate the Confederacy and rescue the historical legacy of the South.[9] In addition to interests, these organizations ultimately differed in size and in some of the activities they chose to undertake.

Yet, as this thesis illuminates, the WRC, the NAAN, and the UDC also had much in common. Most significantly, rather than just examining how these organizations attempted to commemorate the Civil War and shape its public memory, this thesis aims

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[7] Janney, *Remembering the Civil War,* 7; Pitcaithley, "'A Cosmic Threat': The National Park Service Addresses the Causes of the American Civil War," 170; Thavolia Glymph, "Liberty Dearly Bought: The Making of Civil War Memory in Afro-American Communities in the South," in *Time Longer than a Rope: A Century of African American Activism, 1850-1950,* eds. Charles M. Payne and Adam Green (New York: New York University Press, 2003), 128-129.

[8] Woman's Relief Corps, *Proceedings of the Second National Convention of the Woman's Relief Corps* (Boston: E.B. Stillings & Co., 1884), 11-12; Kate M. Scott, *In Honor of the National Association of Civil War Army Nurses* (Atlantic City, NJ: Citizens Executive Committee, 1910), 1.

[9] United Daughters of the Confederacy, *Minutes of the Fifth Annual Meeting of the United Daughters of the Confederacy* (Nashville, TN: Press of Foster & Webb, 1899), 39; Cox, *Dixie's Daughters,* 1-4.

to examine all three of these organizations for what they really were: influential organizations that were created by women, for women. As member Lucie S. Lewis commented about the WRC specifically in 1903:

> [even] if the WRC had never spent a penny in relief to the [Union] soldier, or his widow or orphan, if it had never done one of the thousand things it has done to honor the dead and living heroes… it should still be credited as the power which has uplifted a vast army of women, by broadening their lives, and widening their influence-- by teaching them to think, and express that thought. Abraham Lincoln said, "The Lord must have loved the common people, for He made so many of them," and it is the women of this class who have been helped and uplifted by the WRC.[10]

Especially as most scholars have examined the WRC and the UDC solely for their effects on Civil War memory, this thesis examines the WRC, the NAAN, and the UDC as women's organizations and focuses on some of the ways in which they helped women and expanded in their opportunities in a time when many women were still bound by traditional gender roles. From lobbying the federal government for pensions for former Union army nurses to providing college funding and higher education for southern women, the WRC, the NAAN, and the UDC worked for the direct benefit of women and contributed to their advancement in ways that scholars have yet to fully explore.

Before trying to contribute new understandings of the WRC, the NAAN, and the UDC, however, it is important to first consider how these organizations have been interpreted in existing scholarship. Given their common missions to commemorate the Civil War, it is unsurprising that these organizations have been primarily examined by scholars interested in Civil War memory. The only exception to this is the NAAN, but this organization remained heavily unexamined overall. In fact, the only piece of

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[10] Woman's Relief Corps, *Journal of the Twenty-First National Convention of the Woman's Relief Corps* (Boston: Griffith-Stillings Press, 1903), 197.

scholarship that seems to consider the NAAN is Jane Schultz's *Women at the Front: Hospital Workers in Civil War America,* which briefly notes some of the NAAN's attempts to secure government pensions for former army nurses and its efforts to keep female veterans of the Civil War "publicly visible."[11] As membership for this organization was restricted to women who had served as nurses for the Union Army, the NAAN only ever achieved a peak membership of approximately 500 women, a miniscule number compared to the WRC's and the UDC's peak memberships of over 100,000 women.[12] The NAAN had neither the membership nor the funds to construct the elegant monuments or undertake the extensive educational efforts that have drawn many scholars of Civil War memory to the WRC and the UDC, so it is not surprising that this organization largely remains unexamined in this field.[13] Nevertheless, as this organization helped the GAR celebrate the victory of the Union Army and was frequently reported on in newspapers across the United States until its dissolution in 1931, there is more that

[11] Jane Schultz, *Women at the Front: Hospital Workers in Civil War America* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 189-190; 219-220. The overall purpose of *Women at the Front* is to examine hospital work during the Civil War "across regions, races, and classes," but some of the last chapters examine women after the Civil War and how they attempted to obtain recognition of their services.

[12] National Association of Army Nurses of the Civil War, *Constitution, By-Laws and Rules of Order* (Brookville, PA: The Republican Print, 1909), 6; "Courage Was Needed: Women Who Worked in the Fire of Battle," *The Buffalo Express*, August 23, 1897; Woman's Relief Corps, *Journal of the Tenth National Convention of the Woman's Relief Corps* (Boston: E.B. Stillings & Co., 1892), 65; Janney, *Remembering the Civil War*, 302.

[13] Woman's Relief Corps, *Journal of the Forty-Second Convention* (Washington, D.C.: The National Tribune Company, 1924), 110; Woman's Relief Corps, *Journal of the Thirtieth National Convention of the Woman's Relief Corps* (Boston: Griffith-Stillings Press, 1912), 374. The WRC donated a significant amount of money to the NAAN, suggesting that that the NAAN did not have a lot of its own money to expend.

could (and should) be said about the NAAN, especially in regard to its mission "to keep green the memories of those days of civil strife."[14]

Out of the remaining two organizations that this thesis has chosen to focus on, the UDC has undoubtedly received the most scholarly attention, primarily due to the fact that it surpassed even the UCV to become the foremost promoter of the Lost Cause.[15] Although strongly argued by some to be a "civil religion," an enduring "tradition," or even a complex "mythology," the Lost Cause can be simply defined as the conservative movement in the postbellum South to glorify the Confederacy and honor the Confederate "heroes" that died during the Civil War.[16] White southerners intentionally created the Lost Cause to cope with their embarrassment of losing the war as well as the political, economic, and social uncertainty that came with the end of the conflict. As the United States moved into the era of Reconstruction, followers of the Lost Cause constructed a memory of the Civil War to further justify this movement. More specifically, many followers of the Lost Cause came to argue that the Civil War was fought over states' rights rather than slavery, that slavery was a benevolent institution in which enslaved individuals were content with their bondage, and that the Confederate Army was a mighty army that was only defeated by the Union's superior resources.[17] The Lost Cause

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[14] Scott, *In Honor of the National Association of Civil War Army Nurses,* 1.

[15] Cox, *Dixie's Daughters,* 45-47.

[16] Charles Wilson, *Baptized in Blood: The Religion of the Lost Cause, 1865-1920* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1980), 1; Gaines Foster, *Ghosts of the Confederacy: Defeat, the Lost Cause, and the Emergence of the New South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), 7; Cox, *Dixie's Daughters,* 4; Adam Domby, *The False Cause: Fraud, Fabrication, and White Supremacy in Confederate Memory* (Charlottesville: The University of Virginia Press, 2018), 16-18.

[17] Reiko Hillyer, "Relics of Reconciliation: The Confederate Museum and Civil War Memory in the New South," *The Public Historian* 33 no 4, (November 2011): 37; Domby, *The False Cause*, 4.

effectively turned the South's military defeat into a cultural victory and had significant consequences for the United States, particularly for African Americans.[18] As historian Ty Seidule has noted, "The Lost Cause created a flawed memory of the Civil War, a lie that formed the ideological foundation for white supremacy and Jim Crow laws, which used violent terror and de jure segregation to enforce racial control."[19] As several of the Lost Cause's central arguments can still be found in American culture and politics, the Lost Cause remains a hot topic among scholars.

In trying to understand the Lost Cause and its consequences, several scholars have provided critical interpretations of the UDC. In writing about Civil War memory among African Americans during the nineteenth century, for example, Thavolia Glymph noted the impact of the UDC and the Lost Cause in her essay, "'Liberty Dearly Bought': The Making of Civil War Memory in Afro-American Communities in the South." According to Glymph, black southerners were eager to remember and celebrate the Civil War for its most important outcome: the abolition of slavery and the enfranchisement of African Americans.[20] Black southerners even used their memories of emancipation as a "political tool" in the years immediately following the war to further challenge injustice and inequality.[21] The UDC ultimately helped to suppress these attempts made by African Americans to gain economic and political autonomy in the South. By specifically writing

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[18] Caroline Janney, *Burying the Dead but Not the Past: Ladies' Memorial Associations and the Lost Cause* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2008), 22.

[19] Ty Seidule, *Robert E. Lee And Me: A Southerner's Reckoning with the Myth of the Lost Cause* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2021), 31.

[20] Glymph, "Liberty Dearly Bought," 112-113.

[21] Ibid., 114.

"histories" that featured depictions of faithful slaves and heroic Confederate soldiers, Glymph notes that the UDC contributed greatly to the racist memory of the Lost Cause, which helped southern white men regain and maintain political power at the turn of the twentieth century.[22]

Nevertheless, as valuable as Glymph's interpretation of the UDC is, Karen Cox has still provided the fullest interpretations of the UDC in her books *Dixie's Daughters: The United Daughters of the Confederacy and the Preservation of Confederate Culture* and *No Common Ground: Confederate Monuments and the Ongoing Fight for Racial Justice*. In both works, Cox demonstrates that the UDC did not inadvertently contribute to the Lost Cause or the re-subjugation of African Americans under Jim Crow. Instead, by writing pro-Confederate histories, working with schools to teach the central tenets of the Lost Cause to southern children, creating nursing homes for Confederate veterans, and erecting hundreds of Confederate monuments, the women of the UDC actively tried to vindicate their Confederate ancestors and promote white supremacy in the New South.[23] Cox makes sure to note that African Americans did not idly stand by and tolerate the UDC's racist rhetoric and efforts as they formed their own movements to oppose the UDC, but the UDC and its activities still left a profound mark on the South.[24]

As for the WRC, scholars like Caroline Janney have provided interpretations of the organization while examining other aspects of Civil War memory. In 2001, historian

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[22] Glymph, "Liberty Dearly Bought," 128-129.

[23] Cox, *Dixie's Daughters,*1-3; Karen Cox, *No Common Ground: Confederate Monuments and the Ongoing Fight For Racial Justice* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2021), 2; 51-54

[24] Cox, *No Common Ground,* 3-4.

David Blight published a book titled *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory,* which examined how the United States healed from the Civil War in the fifty years following the conflict. The book achieved its landmark status by arguing that most Americans were willing to forget the South's treason and accept the region's re-subjugation of African Americans in exchange for a country that was no longer threatened by sectional divisions.[25] In *Remembering the Civil War: Reunion and the Limits of Reconciliation,* however, Caroline Janney rejects Blight's earlier arguments and proves that post-Civil War reconciliation between the North and the South was far more elusive, something that she does by introducing the gendered organizations of the WRC and the UDC.[26] Most significantly, Janney notes some of the WRC's efforts to support African Americans, provide relief for Union veterans, and promote patriotism in public schools.[27] Like veterans in the GAR, women in the WRC consistently condemned the South's secession that had led to the Civil War and labeled southerners (and the women of the UDC in particular) as being traitorous, disloyal, and corrupting.[28] Consequently, the WRC not only resisted the Lost Cause and directly countered some of the efforts of the UDC, but it also promoted a memory of the Civil War that focused on the North's twin victories: the restoration of the Union and the end of slavery. As the WRC continued to celebrate the victory of the Union Army well into the twentieth century, it opposed

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[25] Blight, *Race and Reunion,* 3-5

[26] Janney, *Remembering the Civil War*, 1-6.

[27] Ibid., 252-253; 123-124; 247-248.

[28] Ibid., 234. Janney actually argues that women in the WRC were more likely than the veterans of the GAR to criticize southerners. While Union and Confederate veterans could sometimes bond over their shared sufferings during the war, Janney notes that women in organizations like the WRC and the UDC had "little reason to commiserate with their counterparts across the Mason-Dixon line."

some of the South's attempts to erase disunion and emancipation from the meaning of the Civil War.[29]

From these highlighted works, a few crucial elements of the WRC, the NAAN, and the UDC can be discerned. First and foremost, although these organizations shared a mission to commemorate the Civil War, it is clear that these organizations did not share the same memory or interpretation of the Civil War; rather, these organizations promoted different collective memories of the conflict.[30] The UDC clearly promoted the Lost Cause and its corresponding memory of the Civil War that glorified the Confederacy. Both the WRC and the NAAN, contrastingly, promoted what historians have termed the "Unionist memory" as they sought to remember the Civil War as the conflict that saved the Union from southern secession, although the WRC also promoted the "emancipationist memory" at times as it recognized the Civil War for resulting in the abolition of slavery.[31]

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[29] Janney, *Remembering the Civil War,* 125-126; 292-293.

[30] Collective memory is a phenomenon that has fascinated historians for over 50 years now. First identified by French sociologist Maurice Halbwachs in 1925, collective memory can simply be defined as a group's recollection of its past. Memory, of course, occurs on an individual level first. Every day, we, as individuals, mentally recall past events and attempt to assign some type of significance or meaning to those events. However, this same process can also occur at a collective level. The most significant characteristic of collective memory is that it is socially constructed. Over time, groups of people decide between what they want to remember and what they want to forget about the past. What groups choose to remember and forget about the past is often dictated by their goals and interests in the present. Consequently, collective memory can be quite contentious and political. Not only can individuals within a group disagree about how to remember a past event, but different groups can fundamentally disagree over how to remember and interpret a shared experience. Maurice Halbwachs, *The Collective Memory,* trans. Francis J. Ditter and Vida Yazdi Ditter (New York: Harper and Row, 1990), 22-23; 33-35; 78-83; Pierre Nora, "Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémorie," *Representations,* no. 26 (1989): 7-9; Niambi Carter, "(Re)Remembering Race: Collective Memory and Racial Hierarchy in the Present," in *American While Black: African Americans, Immigration, and the Limits of Citizenship* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2019), 110-116.

[31] Since David Blight's publication of *Race and Reunion,* historians have come to generally agree that four major collective memories or interpretations of the Civil War emerged during the politically contentious years of Reconstruction: the Unionist memory, the emancipationist memory, the white supremacist memory, and the reconciliationist memory. The Unionist memory was held primarily by white northerners and emphasized the Civil War as a contest to save the United States. In this memory, Union soldiers fought bravely and patriotically for the preservation of the Union and American democracy. The

Secondly, it is evident that in promoting these memories and trying to indoctrinate other Americans into embracing these memories, these organizations were neither insignificant nor inconsequential. This can especially be seen in the case of the UDC, whose promotion and transmission of the Lost Cause reinforced white supremacy and greatly impacted the entire political culture of the post-Civil War South.[32]

This thesis attempts to keep the larger social, cultural, and political impacts of these organizations in mind, but, as already indicated, the primary aim of this thesis is not to contribute new understandings of Civil War memory. Instead, the aim of this thesis is to examine the WRC, the NAAN, and the UDC as organizations that worked for the benefit of women and contributed to the advancement of women by expanding their opportunities and influence.[33] This thesis also aims to consider how these organizations allowed women to further challenge notions of gender in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

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emancipationist memory was primarily held by African Americans and maintained that the most important purpose and outcome of the Civil War was the abolition of slavery. As seen in Thavolia Glymph's article, African Americans often used this memory to advocate for further equality in the postwar years. The white supremacist memory included the Lost Cause and allowed southerners to remember the Confederacy in positive terms. It denied that the Civil War was fought over the issue of slavery and was ultimately used to marginalize African Americans once again. Finally, the reconciliationist memory was a romanticized memory that focused on the bravery of both Union and Confederate soldiers and sought to forget the contentious issues that had led to the war. Historians have disagreed as to which memory prevailed and found the most support in American society, but most agree that the white supremacist memory and the Lost Cause had a profound impact on the development of the United States. Blight, *Race and Reunion*, 3-5; Robert J. Cook, *Civil War Memories: Contesting the Past in the United States Since 1865* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2017), 1-8.

[32] Cox*, Dixie's Daughters*, 161-162.

[33] It is important to note that the missions of these organizations to commemorate the Civil War and work for the benefit of women were not separate; this can be seen with the WRC in the first and second chapters of this thesis. The WRC was formed around the idea that women had made significant contributions to the success of the Union during the Civil War. During its first decade of existence, it fought significantly for pensions for army nurses. Later, members of the WRC used the memory of women's work during the Civil War to advocate for equal suffrage.

The WRC, the NAAN, and the UDC were all organizations that matured and flourished in a time when many other women were attempting to challenge notions of gender. For most of the nineteenth century, Americans had held on tightly to the separate spheres ideology and the cult of true womanhood. Especially in the highly conservative South, women were expected to stay in the home to take care of children and complete household duties, while men were the ones who could earn wages, obtain a higher education, and, if not limited by race, engage in politics.[34] Of course, traditional gender roles have survived well beyond the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, but the idea that women and men should inhabit completely separate spheres underwent significant contestation during this time. One of the most direct and recognizable sources of contestation during this era was the women's suffrage movement, which re-emerged from its hiatus during the Civil War in the late 1860s and found strong leadership from white women like Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony, Anna Howard Shaw, and Carrie Chapman Catt.[35] Thousands of women from a variety of racial, social, and

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[34] Joan Marie Johnson, *The Woman Suffrage Movement in the United States* (New York: Routledge, 2022), 13-14; Marjorie Spruill Wheeler, *New Women of the New South: The Leaders of the Woman Suffrage Movement in the Southern States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 5-9. Of course, the separate spheres ideology was not a reality for most women. Even in the Early Republic, women worked as artisans, teachers, midwives, and shopkeepers. Lower and middle-class women worked in factories, particularly in textile production. Enslaved women worked alongside enslaved men in the South, both in the fields and in households. Nevertheless, the separate spheres ideology was still very strong in American society. As scholars like Patricia Collins have emphasized, even middle and upper-class African American women were bound by traditional gender roles in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Johnson, *The Woman Suffrage Movement in the United States,* 13-14; Patricia Hill Collins, *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment* (New York: Routledge, 2000), 208.

[35] It is important to note that while Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony, Anna Howard Shaw, and Carrie Chapman Catt were certainly significant suffragists in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, there have been efforts by historians in recent years to uncover more voices in this movement. In *Recasting the Vote: How Women of Color Transformed the Suffrage Movement,* for example, Cathleen Cahill reveals how many prominent African American, Asian American, and Native American women were a part of the suffrage movement and shaped its discourse. The second chapter of this thesis aims to contribute to suffrage literature by adding more names to the movement. Cathleen Cahill, *Recasting*

economic backgrounds also sought to confront the problems of rapid industrialization and urbanization in the post-Civil War United States. As members of the General Federation of Women's Clubs, the Woman's Christian Temperance Union, the National Association of Colored Women, and many other prominent women's organizations during the Progressive Era, women worked to eliminate child labor, improve public education, implement prohibition, and make a number of other improvements to American society.[36] Under the idea of "municipal housekeeping," these women often capitalized on their roles as mothers and argued that women should have a larger voice in politics and society as political and social issues can have profound impacts on the home.[37] In short, many women in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, regardless of race and class, sought to redefine their accepted roles in American society, and they found ways to become more involved in the public sphere.

A few scholars have attempted to place the UDC within these contexts and note the organization's significance for women, although it has never been the primary purpose of their studies. In both *Dixie's Daughters* and *No Common Ground,* Karen Cox describes the women of the UDC as "savvy politicians" and demonstrates how they consistently lobbied legislatures and influenced southern politics, all in a time when

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the Vote: How Women of Color Transformed the Suffrage Movement (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2020), 20-25.

[36] Mary Martha Thomas, *The New Woman in Alabama: Social Reforms and Suffrage, 1890-1920* (Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 1992), 2-7; Johnson, *The Woman Suffrage Movement in the United States*, 47-55; Stephanie J. Shaw, "Black Club Women and the Creation of the National Association of Colored Women," *Journal of Women's History* 3, no. 2 (1991): 10-11; 19-20.

[37] Joan Marie Johnson, *Southern Ladies, New Women: Race, Region, and Clubwomen in South Carolina, 1890-1930* (Gainesville: The University Press of Florida, 2004), 7.

women had yet to receive the legal right to vote.[38] Likewise, in her book *Southern Ladies, New Women: Race, Region, and Clubwomen in South Carolina, 1890-1930,* Joan Marie Johnson examines the South Carolina division of the UDC and notes that, along with the South Carolina Federation of Women's Clubs and the South Carolina Federation of Colored Women's Clubs, the UDC greatly expanded opportunities for women in the state during the early twentieth century. In erecting monuments, writing pro-Confederate histories, influencing public education, and undertaking other Lost Cause activities, women in the UDC forged public roles for themselves, despite the South's hostile responses to women's suffrage and the strong attempts of southern white men to maintain traditional gender roles.[39]

In the case of the WRC, on the other hand, some scholars have actually tried to diminish the organization's overall significance for women. In *Daughters of the Union: Northern Women Fight the Civil War,* for example, Nina Silber briefly examined the WRC while studying the Civil War's consequences for northern women and even noted the organization's important decision to join the National Council of Women of the United States, a prominent coalition for women's groups that were interested in furthering women's work in the public sphere.[40] Yet, Silber ultimately concluded that the WRC's status as an official auxiliary for the GAR meant that "for the most part, the WRC spent its money, and its time, paying tribute to men."[41] Francesca Morgan makes a

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[38] Cox, *Dixie's Daughters*, 23-24; 26-27; Cox, *No Common Ground*, 1-9.

[39] Johnson, *Southern Ladies, New Women,* 4-5; 131-133.

[40] Nina Silber, *Daughters of the Union: Northern Women Fight the Civil War* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005), 268-274.

[41] Ibid., 274.

similar interpretation in her book *Women and Patriotism in Jim Crow America.* In examining nationalism and political activism among several women's groups in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Morgan argues that recognizing women's work during the Civil War was never as important as honoring Union veterans for the WRC, and the goals of the WRC were inherently limited by its relationship to the GAR.[42] In the WRC, "women [only] mattered to history and to the present for their relations to children and patriotic men."[43] While the organization did encourage women's political activism to an extent, the WRC largely denied "political authority or power to women."[44]

In examining some of the ways in which the WRC, the NAAN, and the UDC worked for the benefit of women and contributed to their advancement, this thesis seeks to make a number of historiographical interventions and contributions. As chapter one will explore, the origins of the WRC and the NAAN were closely tied to the GAR, and, particularly in the case of the WRC, these organizations did spend a lot of time "paying tribute to men."[45] Yet, working in the interests of women was always a core objective for these organizations as well, as evidenced by the fact that the WRC and the NAAN spent their early years trying to secure pensions for former army nurses from the federal government. In the process, women in these organizations heavily engaged in politics and frequently argued that the work undertaken by women during the Civil War was equally as important as men's work. When the WRC and the NAAN were finally successful in

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[42] Morgan, *Women and Patriotism*, 37-42.

[43] Ibid., 41.

[44] Ibid., 41.

[45] Silber, *Daughters of the Union,* 274.

getting the Army Nurses Pension Act passed in 1892, it was the first time that women in the United States received pensions from the federal government for anything other than being a soldier's dependent.

Chapter two builds on the information presented in chapter one by examining how women in the WRC and the NAAN became involved in the larger movement for women's suffrage. Perhaps emboldened by its success with the Army Nurses Pension Act, the WRC accepted its invitation to join the National Council of Women in 1893. Following this decision, many women began directly voicing support for women's suffrage within the contexts of the organization, and the WRC truly became a progressive organization as it voiced support for eliminating child labor and sought to make a number of reforms and improvements to American society. In 1916, the organization voted to officially endorse women's suffrage. In both the WRC and the NAAN, women used their work and membership within these organizations to advocate for equal political rights and citizenship.

Chapter three takes a slightly different path by solely examining the UDC. This chapter builds on existing scholarship by showing how the UDC did not just indirectly expand women's opportunities and influence in the South. While the UDC certainly gave women the chance to participate in the public sphere and engage in politics, the organization also directly contributed to the advancement of women in the early twentieth century by supporting the higher education of poor white women in the South through scholarships and college funding. Although supporting the education of these women served practical purposes and fit with the organization's mission to promote the Lost Cause, the UDC still challenged the South's strict adherence to traditional gender roles

and gave women the chance to have careers outside of the home, something that has gone underexplored with this organization.

To thoroughly examine the WRC, the NAAN, and the UDC in these chapters, this thesis utilizes a variety of primary sources. First and foremost, this thesis heavily relies on major publications from the organizations themselves. In the case of the WRC and the UDC, they published the minutes of their national conventions almost every year, and most of these publications have been digitized by major universities and libraries. Not only do they document the words and opinions of prominent members within these organizations, but they also capture the overall activities and concerns of the WRC and the UDC. Published minutes and journals from state conventions will be occasionally referenced, but this thesis aims to examine the WRC and the UDC as national organizations. No published journals or minutes exist for the NAAN, but the organization did publish one book, *In Honor of the National Association of Civil War Nurses,* in 1910 to document its history as well as to honor its members. Additionally, I have accessed the questionnaires that were used to create this book, which contain additional information about the NAAN's members and can be found in the archives of the Rocktown History museum in Dayton, Virginia. Other primary sources for this thesis include articles from various newspapers, published books from individual members of these organizations, and publications from related organizations like the GAR and the UCV.

A few more elements of this thesis should be noted. First of all, this thesis is not intended to be a complete organizational history of the WRC, the NAAN, or the UDC. While this thesis will give an overview of the origins and major activities of these organizations, these organizations had a lot of members and were ultimately very

complex in terms of structure, ideology, and activities. Secondly, examining the WRC, the NAAN, and the UDC primarily means studying middle-to-upper-class white women. In the case of the WRC, there were multiple local chapters and state divisions that black women like Julia Mason Layton and Susie King Taylor led. Layton actually became an assistant national inspector for the WRC, and she traveled throughout the South to visit black chapters of the organization.[46] With that being said, while the WRC could be considered a bi-racial organization, white women still made up the majority of the WRC's membership. White women almost always held the top officer positions and were frequently the prominent members that attended national conventions.[47] In the case of the NAAN, there are no rules in regard to race in the organization's constitution and by-laws, but all the women that are featured in *In Honor the National Association of Civil War Army Nurses* appear to be white, suggesting that there may have been some barriers for African American women to join this organization.[48] As being an active member of these organizations also would have required a lot of free time and the ability to travel, women

[46] Janney, *Remembering the Civil War*, 252-253; Morgan, *Women and Patriotism,* 38.

[47] While the WRC could be considered a bi-racial organization, it did allow divisions in southern states to be segregated in order to encourage more patriotic southern white women to join. John C. Kennedy also notes that white women in the WRC could be very paternalistic to African American members, and the organization did nothing to oppose Jim Crow. In short, the WRC had both black and white members, but it still had racist attitudes. John C. Kennedy, "A Perfect Union: The Woman's Relief Corps and Women's Organizational Activism, 1861-1930" (PhD diss., Purdue University, 2017), 74.

[48] National Association of Army Nurses of the Civil War, *Constitution*, 3-13. There is no direct evidence to indicate that the NAAN prevented African American women from joining, but the group was founded by Dorothea Dix, the Superintendent of Army Nurses for the Union Army. Under her policies, only middle-to-upper class white women were commissioned as nurses by the federal government. As many of the NAAN's members mention that they had been commissioned by Dix during the war, the organization may have decided to follow Dix's racial attitudes and refuse membership to the African American women who had still found ways to serve as nurses for the Union during the war. Schultz, *Women at the Front*, 21.

likely had to be at least middle class to take part in these organizations.[49] Therefore, while this thesis aims to study the WRC, the NAAN, and the UDC as organizations that benefited women and contributed to their advancement in the contexts of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, it is critical to note that these organizations did not always work for the benefit and advancement of *all* women. However, these organizations were still influential in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and it is important to further explore their implications for gender during this time.

[49] Thomas, *The New Woman in Alabama,* 3.

Chapter 1-- Equal Work and Equal Citizenship: The WRC, the NAAN, and the Pursuit of Federal Pensions for Former Army Nurses

I. Introduction

It was August of 1864 when a Confederate spy snuck a bomb aboard a Union ship docked in City Point, Virginia, and detonated over 75,000 rounds of ammunition, killing an estimated 43 men and sending a canister shot into the leg of Elmina Spencer as she sat by the harbor on horseback.[1] Unlike the men that had been harmed by the explosion, Spencer had not come to City Point as a soldier for the Union Army; instead, she later described herself on that day as simply fulfilling her duties as a regimental nurse for the 147th New York Infantry, which involved making rounds to check on wounded soldiers in hospitals set up near the port.[2] Despite being able to ride to safety and presumably obtain medical attention in the closest hospital, the canister shot had significantly damaged her sciatic nerve and left her unable to walk again without crutches, with doctors having to completely amputate her leg later on in life.[3] This permanent and painful injury, however, did not deter Spencer from continuing to serve as an army nurse. For the rest of the war, Spencer continued to feed, bathe, and bandage wounded soldiers in field hospitals as the Union Army attempted to capture Richmond.[4] Decades later, the

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[1] Elmina Spencer, "Mrs. R.H. Spencer's Report of the New York State Agency At City Point, VA" in *Documents of the State of New York, Eighty-Eighth Session-- 1865* (Albany, NY: C. Wendall, Legislative Printer, 1865), 71-72; "Bust of Mrs. Elmina Spencer Destroyed in Capitol Fire," *The Syracuse Herald*, April 2, 1911.

[2] Elmina Spencer, "Mrs. R.H. Spencer's Report," 66-72.

[3] Kate M. Scott, *In Honor of the National Association of Civil War Army Nurses* (Atlantic City, NJ: Citizens Executive Committee, 1910), 60; "Mrs. Spencer is Dying: The Old Army Nurse Cannot Recover, It Is Said," *Oswego Palladium,* November 14, 1912.

[4] Scott, *In Honor of the National Association of Civil War Army Nurses*, 60; L. P. Brockett and Mary C. Vaughn, *Woman's Work During the Civil War: A Record of Heroism, Patriotism, and Patience* (Boston: Zeigler, McCurdy & Co., 1867), 413-415.

Woman's Relief Corps (WRC) decided to honor the patriotism and bravery demonstrated by Spencer as one of the organization's beloved members. In addition to appointing a few women to directly care for Spencer as she aged, New York members of the WRC helped Spencer secure a monthly pension from the federal government in 1885 by a special act of Congress, making Spencer among some of the first women in the United States to receive governmental recognition for her service during the Civil War.[5] Until she passed away in 1912, Spencer remained a devoted and grateful member of the WRC, although she had also joined and received recognition for her service from the National Association of Army Nurses of the Civil War (NAAN) when the organization published a book honoring the service of its members.[6]

This chapter seeks to examine the WRC and the NAAN as organizations that worked in the interests of women, like Elmina Spencer. As this chapter will further explore, the WRC and the NAAN had strong ties to the Grand Army of the Republic (GAR), the fraternal organization founded for the interests of Union veterans soon after the end of the Civil War. For this reason, the WRC and the NAAN did spend a significant amount of time supporting veterans and, in the words of Nina Silber, "paying tribute to

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[5] "Tribute to Elmina Spencer Composed by Harry L. Stone," *Oswego Palladium-Times,* February 27, 1965; *Statutes of the United States of America Passed at the Second Session of the Forty-Eighth Congress, 1884-1885* (Washington: The Government Printing Office, 1885), 128; Jane Schultz, *Women at the Front: Hospital Workers in Civil War America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 184. The first army nurse to draw a pension began to do so in 1866 after suffering a spinal injury toward the end of the war. Other nurses were able to draw pensions via special acts of Congress in the 1870s and 1880s, but army nurses were not able to collectively draw pensions until the NAAN and WRC began advocating for federal legislation in the mid-1880s. Additionally, it is worth noting that the GAR also endorsed Spencer's pension application, and Spencer actually became a fully-fledged member of the New York State Division of the GAR.

[6] "Tribute to Elmina Spencer"; Scott, *In Honor of the National Association of Civil War Army Nurses*, 60.

men."[7] In the case of the WRC, this has led some scholars to minimize the significance of the WRC as a women's organization in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. This chapter, however, argues that the WRC and the NAAN were still influential organizations that were created by women and, from the moment they were founded, were interested in working for the benefit of women. This can particularly be seen in the WRC's and the NAAN's early efforts to secure federal pensions for former army nurses.

II. Assisting the GAR: The Origins and Early Work of the WRC and the NAAN

In order to understand the WRC and the NAAN as organizations, it is important to examine the organization they formed in relation to and worked closely with: the GAR. The GAR, as already indicated, formed soon after the end of the Civil War for the support of Union veterans and their reintegration into society. As historian Caroline Janney has specifically noted, Union veterans had a difficult time adjusting to normal life when the Civil War ended in 1865.[8] Whereas a large percentage of the white male population in the South had served as soldiers for the Confederacy, the North had a much larger population during the war, and, therefore, a smaller percentage of men ended up serving as soldiers for the Union.[9] This smaller percentage not only allowed Union soldiers to form more intimate and fraternal bonds during the war, but this also made Union veterans not as universally revered in northern society as Confederate veterans were in southern society, with many northern civilians stereotyping Union veterans as

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[7] Nina Silber, *Daughters of the Union: Northern Women Fight the Civil War* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005), 274.

[8] Caroline Janney, *Remembering the Civil War: Reunion and the Limits of Reconciliation* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2013), 103-108.

[9] Ibid, 103-108.

"alcoholic dependents" and "grasping pensioners."[10] Desperate to recover some of those fraternal bonds, feel less marginalized in their communities, and find meaning in a rapidly changing post-war society, groups of Union veterans came together almost immediately after the war to form organizations dedicated to fraternity and relief. The largest and most prominent group, the GAR, evolved from a small band of white veterans in Decatur, Illinois, in 1866.[11] Following the GAR's founding in Illinois, interest in the organization spread rapidly throughout the North, and it claimed more than 240,000 members by 1869.[12] The GAR became one of the most well-known and recognizable men's groups in the United States in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.[13]

Guiding the GAR and its activities were the core values of "fraternity, charity, and loyalty."[14] Although local club rooms, national meetings in large cities, organized story-telling sessions around campfires, and other exclusive resources and activities gave the GAR a social aspect that attracted many veterans, the organization had much higher purposes.[15] A large part of the GAR's work, for example, was aimed at aiding less fortunate comrades. From helping unemployed comrades find manageable work to pushing for state-sponsored nursing homes for veterans and higher pensions from the

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[10] Janney, *Remembering the Civil War*, 104.

[11] Ibid., 104-110.

[12] Grand Army of the Republic, *Proceedings of the National Encampment of the Grand Army of the Republic: Held at Cincinnati, Ohio, May 12 and 13, 1869* (Washington, D.C.: Gibson Brothers, 1869), 10.

[13] Stuart McConnell, *Glorious Contentment: The Grand Army of the Republic, 1865 to 1900* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1992), xiii-xiv.

[14] Grand Army of the Republic, *Proceedings of the National Encampment of the Grand Army of the Republic: Held at Cincinnati, Ohio, May 12 and 13, 1869*, 30.

[15] Janney, *Remembering the Civil War*, 109-110.

federal government, the GAR focused many of its efforts on helping the thousands of veterans that the war had left permanently wounded or disabled.[16] But the GAR's most important purpose was to ensure that the American nation recognized their less fortunate comrades for their sacrifices by making sure that the nation remembered the entire purpose of the Civil War. By recalling the events of the war at almost every national meeting, erecting hundreds of monuments in honor of the Union army, and planting wreaths and American flags on the graves of fallen soldiers for Memorial Day, the GAR wanted to make sure that the nation and its future generations collectively remembered that, contrary to Confederate veterans, Union veterans had aided in the quest to abolish slavery and saved the United States from the threat of disunion.[17] In doing so, the GAR was not just an organization for fraternity and relief, but it was one of the foremost determiners, keepers, and translators of the Civil War's collective memory.[18]

The WRC and the NAAN would eventually become auxiliaries of the GAR and aid in its mission for relief and memory, but it took a while for the GAR to accept the help and presence of women. Since the GAR's founding in 1866, women had expressed

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[16] Grand Army of the Republic, *Proceedings of the Fifth Annual Meeting of the National Encampment of the Grand Army of the Republic* (New York: Headquarters Grand Army of the Republic, 1871), 24; Grand Army of the Republic, *Proceedings of the Sixth Annual Meeting of the National Encampment of the Grand Army of the Republic* (New York: Headquarters Grand Army of the Republic, 1872), 90-91.

[17] Grand Army of the Republic, *Journal of the Sixteenth Annual Session of the National Encampment of the Grand Army of the Republic* (Lawrence, MA: George S. Merill, 1882), 710; 945. Although some scholars have contested the origins of Memorial Day, many still credit GAR Commander-in-Chief John A. Logan for creating the holiday. In May of 1868, Logan issued General Order No. 11, which declared May 30th as the official day to remember the Union dead and honor living veterans. The order called for Americans to decorate the graves of Union dead with flowers and American flags. John C. Kennedy, "A Perfect Union: The Woman's Relief Corps and Women's Organizational Activism, 1861-1930" (PhD diss., Purdue University, 2017), 151.

[18] Janney, *Remembering the Civil War*, 112-115.

interest in joining the organization in some capacity.[19] Interested women were often the wives, daughters, sisters, or widows of men that had fought for the Union, and the love, empathy, and appreciation that these women had for veterans undoubtedly informed their desire to join the GAR.[20] However, as Kate B. Sherwood identified in a column in the *National Tribune,* some women also wanted the recognition of wartime loyalty that came with joining the GAR.[21] Throughout the four years of the Civil War, thousands of northern women stepped outside of the home to work in aid societies, take up jobs in factories and government, and help care for wounded soldiers. More than 20,000 women alone worked in Union hospitals as nurses, matrons, cooks, and laundresses and directly contributed to the success of the Union Army.[22] As the story of Elmina Spencer from earlier in this chapter indicates, the decision to support and work for the benefit of the Union could even be dangerous for women.[23] As many women in the late nineteenth century vividly recalled, men had not been the only ones to live through and suffer the consequences of the Civil War. Subsequently, when the GAR voted twice against allowing women to join the organization or form an official auxiliary on the national level (once in 1870 and once again in 1875) on the grounds that it might disrupt the

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[19] Janney, *Remembering the Civil War,* 123-125; Cecilia Elizabeth O'Leary, *To Die For: The Paradox of American Patriotism* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999), 75.

[20] O'Leary, *To Die For,* 75.

[21] Kate B. Sherwood, "The Grand Army's Allies," *National Tribune,* March 22, 1883.

[22] Silber*, Daughters of the Union*, 163-164; 174-178; Schultz, *Women at the Front*, 1-8; 21-25.

[23] Not every nurse had the chance of being wounded as a direct result of the war, but nurses did come into contact with contagious diseases, such as typhoid and measles, often while working in hospitals and some did die as a result. Schultz, *Women at the Front*, 86.

organization's work as a fraternal order for veterans, this upset many women.[24] As one particular woman fumed in a letter to the *National Tribune,* "Our husbands tell us that [the GAR] is a secret Order, and a woman has no more business in it than she had in the army twenty years ago. They seem to forget how we went around begging and sending help to the hospitals. They received our help with thanks, and now they don't want us."[25]

In spite of this frustration with the GAR as an organization, women sought to demonstrate their appreciation for veterans and continued loyalty to the nation by forming their own organizations at the state and local levels. As E. Florence Barker, the first elected president of the WRC, recalled at the organization's first national meeting: "It was during this time that all over the land 'Ladies' Leagues,' 'Loyal Ladies,' 'Relief Corps,' and other auxiliaries were established, all working in the interests of soldiers."[26] Among the largest of these independent organizations was the state-wide one established in Massachusetts in 1879, which its members named the Woman's Relief Corps of Massachusetts. Over the next three years, women in New Hampshire and Connecticut came to establish similar auxiliaries with the same name.[27] By the time a number of state and local auxiliaries gathered to establish a national version, many people, including

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[24] Grand Army of the Republic, *Proceedings of the National Encampment of the Grand Army of the Republic: Held at Washington, D.C., May 11 and 12, 1870* (Washington, D.C.: Headquarters Grand Army of the Republic, 1870), 13-14; Grand Army of the Republic, *Proceedings of the Ninth Annual Meeting of the National Encampment of the Grand Army of the Republic* (Boston: Headquarters Grand Army of the Republic, 1875), 49-50.

[25] "Woman's Auxiliaries: Suggestions for the Organization of a National Order," *National Tribune,* May 10, 1883.

[26] Woman's Relief Corps, *Proceedings of the Second National Convention of the Woman's Relief Corps* (Boston: E.B. Stillings & Co., 1884), 11.

[27] Ibid.

national officers of the GAR, had come to notice the activities and overall productivity of women in these independent organizations.[28]

Finally, in July of 1883, twenty-six state and local relief societies seeking to "extend and perfect their work" met during the GAR's national meeting in Denver, Colorado, and established the national Woman's Relief Corps, named after the organizations formed in Massachusetts, New Hampshire, and Connecticut.[29] Upon the GAR's vote to formally recognize the WRC as an official auxiliary, the WRC adopted a three-word motto to guide its activities: "work, faith, and love."[30] Unsurprisingly, as the GAR's auxiliary, much of the WRC's work, faith, and love went toward supporting veterans and helping the men's organization carry out its core values. Like the GAR, the WRC mostly provided relief during its early years. WRC members provided relief by helping to establish homes for wounded veterans, supporting veterans in applying for federal pensions, and eventually providing pensions for widows and orphans that were unable to secure sufficient money from the federal government.[31] Also similar to the GAR, the WRC attempted to commemorate fallen soldiers and honor veterans for their part in saving the Union and abolishing slavery. State divisions of the WRC were more active than the national organization in constructing monuments dedicated to Union

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[28] Woman's Relief Corps, *Proceedings of the Second National Convention*, 11. More specifically, GAR Commander-in-Chief Paul Vandervoort visited some of the women in Massachusetts and was impressed with some of the state Corps work. Vandervoort helped call state and local auxiliaries together to establish a national order.

[29] "Good Words from the East and the West: Notes and Inquiries," *The National Tribune,* July 19, 1883; Woman's Relief Corps, *Proceedings of the Second National*, 11-12.

[30] Ibid., 10.

[31] Woman's Relief Corps, *Proceedings of the Third National Convention of the Woman's Relief Corps* (Toledo, Ohio: Montgomery & Vrooman Printers, 1885), 152; Woman's Relief Corps, *Journal of the Sixth Annual Convention of the Woman's Relief Corps* (Boston: E.B. Stillings & Co., 1888), 57-59.

soldiers, but, upon the WRC's 1896 acquisition of the Andersonville Prison Site in Andersonville, Georgia, the organization worked extensively with veterans to establish monuments and memorials on that landscape.[32] Additionally, the WRC almost instantly became instrumental in helping the larger nation celebrate Memorial Day by making wreaths, supplying bouquets of flowers and American flags, and helping to decorate the graves of veterans.[33] Although patriotic education would later become the most prominent component of the organization's work, WRC members continued to undertake activities related to relief and Civil War commemoration well into the 1920s.[34]

In the same year that the WRC was formed and finally received recognition from the GAR, the GAR decided to extend its recognition to the NAAN as an auxiliary as well. Although army nurses had often joined the state and local relief societies that formed while the GAR refused to include women, many nurses felt bonded by their "distinct war-time work" of caring for wounded soldiers and witnessing the atrocities of battle.[35] Similar to the veterans that formed the GAR, some nurses wanted an exclusive organization where they could find a sense of sisterhood, recognize each other's importance, and work through their traumatic memories of the war.[36] After inviting a

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[32] Woman's Relief Corps, *Journal of the Fourteenth National Convention of the Woman's Relief Corps* (Boston: E.B. Stillings & Co., 1896), 203-205. While the WRC primarily erected monuments and memorials to Union soldiers and leaders in general, it did make special efforts to erect monuments to honor the bravery of black soldiers and sailors. Both the WRC and the GAR lobbied Congress to create a memorial to black soldiers who fought in all of America's wars. Kennedy, "A Perfect Union," 114.

[33] Woman's Relief Corps, *Proceedings of the Third National Convention*, 99-110.

[34] Kennedy, "A Perfect Union," 167-192.

[35] Mary S. Logan, *The Part Taken by Women in American History* (Wilmington, DE: Perry-Nalle Publishing Company, 1912), 357-359

[36] Ibid., 357-359.

hundred or so surviving nurses to Washington, D.C., Dorothea Dix, who had served as the Superintendent of Army Nurses for the Union Army, founded the Ex-Army Nurses' Association on June 18th, 1881.[37] Following a few name changes over the years, the organization would eventually become known as the National Association of Army Nurses of the Civil War.[38] Unlike the WRC, the NAAN did not allow just any woman who had been loyal to the Union to join its organization. Instead, the NAAN required women to prove that they had served as either an enlisted or volunteer nurse for the Union Army for more than three months.[39] Two years later, in 1883, the GAR voted to recognize the NAAN "as an auxiliary in heart and purpose."[40] It was at this point that the NAAN began working to support GAR veterans as well as its female members by showing up to support veterans at the GAR's national meetings every year, supporting their efforts to secure pensions, and "perpetuat[ing] the grand principles for which the boys in blue fought and died."[41] Until the organization disbanded in 1931, it continued to express its love, recognition, and support for Union veterans.[42]

III. Haunting the Capitol: Recognizing Women's War Work and Lobbying for the Army Nurses Pension Act

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[37] Scott, *In Honor of the National Association of Civil War Army Nurses*, 1.

[38] Ibid., 1-2.

[39] National Association of Army Nurses of the Civil War, *Constitution, By-Laws and Rules of the Order* (Brookeville PA: The Republican Print, 1909), 6.

[40] Grand Army of the Republic, *Journal of the Seventeenth Annual National Encampment of the Grand Army of the Republic* (Omaha, NB: Republican Book and Job Printing House, 1883), 129.

[41] Scott, *In Honor of the National Association of Civil War Army Nurses,* 1.

[42] "Mayor Appeals for Fund to Aid G.A.R. Meeting," *The Cincinnati Commercial Tribune,* July 16, 1930.

But as much as the WRC and the NAAN may have supported the GAR and worked for veterans, there was always a desire within these organizations to work for the benefit of women as well. The WRC resembled the GAR in that it ultimately promoted a collective memory of the Civil War that promoted the twin victories of the North: the preservation of the Union and the end of slavery. Unlike the GAR, members of the WRC consistently recognized women as playing a major role in these victories. During the WRC's first presidential address in 1884, for example, E. Florence Barker justified the WRC's creation by recalling that "while our fathers, husbands, sons, brothers and lovers went forth at our country's call to battle for her in her hour of dire distress, the mothers, wives, sisters, daughters, and loyal women went forth to organize 'Christian Commissions,' 'Sanitary Commissions,' and other relief societies, to render such assistance as well as to merit the title of auxiliary."[43] As Barker continued to reflect in her speech:

> In every city, town, and hamlet, [women] were found ministering their loving care to the soldiers in our hospitals, forwarding stores, that in a great measure rendered the work of relief to the wounded more successful, writing letters containing words of encouragement to the soldier, who, passing through hours of anxiety, trial, suffering, and discouragement, hailed these messages as one who has exhausted his own strength and looked in this hour to have his hands upheld. How powerful the influence! Who can measure the power of the women's pen in our late war? It must, indeed, be counted with that of the sword: they can only be valued together.[44]

At this same meeting, the WRC also voted to lobby the GAR and Congress to recognize the contributions of Anna Ella Carroll. Carroll, a political writer who had advised the Lincoln Administration during the war, not only provided some of the legal foundations

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[43] Woman's Relief Corps, *Proceedings of the Second National Convention*, 10.

[44] Ibid., 10.

for the Emancipation Proclamation, but she also contributed the idea of invading the South via the Tennessee River, a military tactic that ultimately led the Union to victory.[45] According to the WRC in 1884, Carroll "rendered some of the most important service of the war," but Congress had forgotten about her work and were now being "neglectful to her just claims" for a pension.[46] As the organization continued in its resolution, "we contemplate with deep sorrow the great injustice which [Carroll] has suffered, in that Congress has for many years failed to recognize her claims and renumerate this truest woman patriot, so that now she may also be said to have learned in her advanced years… the bitter lesson that 'republics are ungrateful.'"[47] At the WRC's following convention in 1885, the organization established a relief fund along with the National Pension and Relief Committee to provide yearly pensions for Carroll and other "ill or needy army workers" that they saw as playing a significant role in saving the United States.[48] The intent, of course, was to provide pensions for former army nurses.[49]

As one could guess, this is where the interests of the WRC and the NAAN really began to intersect. While Barker and other officers of the WRC emphasized women's service and contributions during the Civil War as a whole, the organization also called special attention to the work of army nurses. As one of the WRC's early resolutions

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[45] Mary Elizabeth Massey, *Women in the Civil War* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1994), 168.

[46] Woman's Relief Corps, *Proceedings of the Second National Convention*, 23; 45.

[47] Ibid., 45.

[48] Ibid.; Woman's Relief Corps, *Proceedings of the Third National Convention,* 94. The amount of money that Carroll and other army workers in need changed every year as it was based on how much the WRC was able to fundraise. In 1885, Carroll received around $600 as a yearly pension.

[49] Woman's Relief Corps, *Proceedings of the Second National Convention*, 45.

specifically stated, "we heartily adore… those noble and self-sacrificing women who devoted their lives to the care of the sick and wounded Union soldiers, who braved the dangers of the battle-field and more insidious forms of death in hospitals…"[50] In the eyes of WRC Secretary Nellie G. Backus, each and every nurse was a "faithful woman who, forgetting self, had enlisted under the flag, taken her life in her hands and gone forth to do what in her power lay to save those who were stricken by disease or held by wounds."[51] The army nurse may not have "shouldered a gun," but they "gave many a soldier back to the army, who, without her care, would have filled a soldier's grave."[52] Even Barker made sure to emphasize in the organization's first presidential address that ministering care to soldiers in hospitals had been a particularly trying and noteworthy feat for women, going as far as to assert that "a brave woman's duty in the hospital… would compare in deeds of valor with that of a soldier."[53] The WRC consistently remembered and recognized the work of army nurses as "brave," "noble," and "patriotic," even making their service comparable to men's.[54]

Although very few sources pertaining to the NAAN's early years exist, it is evident through some of the NAAN's later sources that its members shared the WRC's conviction that the work of army nurses during the Civil War was just as important and

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[50] Woman's Relief Corps, *Proceedings of the Third National Convention*, 173.

[51] Woman's Relief Corps, *Journal of the Fifth National Convention of the Woman's Relief Corps* (San Francisco: George Spaulding & Printers, 1887), 207.

[52] Ibid., 207.

[53] Woman's Relief Corps, *Proceedings of the Second National Convention*, 13.

[54] Woman's Relief Corps, *Journal of the Fifth National Convention*, 207; Woman's Relief Corps, *Proceedings of the Second National Convention*, 13; 131. Woman's Relief Corps, *Journal of the Seventh Annual Convention of the Woman's Relief Corps* (Boston: E.B. Stillings & Co., 1889), 127-128.

worthy of recognition as men's. Like the WRC, the NAAN celebrated and praised Union veterans for their part in preserving the United States, but it was very adamant that army nurses had played a significant role in the Union Army's success too. Responding to the figurative question of "Why are those Army nurses feted and cared for so tenderly at the National Encampments of the GAR?", Kate M. Scott stated in the introduction of *In Honor of the National Association of Civil War Army Nurses* that:

> [The veterans of the GAR] will tell you that in the grey-haired, bent forms of these veteran nurses, many of them recognize the gentle face upon which their eyes rested when they first opened after the work of a surgeon's knife was done; or the cool hands that smoothed the fevered brow or held the cooling drink to the parched lips. These are the women who, in their early womanhood, filled with the same patriotism that sent to the defense of the flag their husbands, fathers, brothers, and lovers, went to the front to care for the sick and wounded.[55]

Throughout the introduction of this book, Scott emphasizes that the women who had served as army nurses were "brave" and endured the same "dangers and discomforts of camp and field" as men, even making the choice to refer to nurses as "woman veterans."[56] In fact, Scott implies that being a nurse required an extra degree of bravery in light of 1860s gender norms. As Scott went further on to explain, "It can scarcely be realized in this age, when the glorious Red Cross, with its perfect system of trained nurses, has made the vocation of a nurse an honorable one… what nerve and patriotic devotion it took for the young women of the sixties to brave public opinion and enlist for hospital and field service."[57] It was army nurses, according to the pamphlet for the

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[55] Scott, *In Honor of the National Association of Civil War Army Nurses,* 1.

[56] Ibid., 1-2.

[57] Ibid., 1. Although most Americans were eventually able to justify nursing as an extension of women's traditional roles as caregivers, many initially opposed women's work in Union hospitals. Opponents feared that women would not be able to handle the bloodshed of the war or that their innocence would be marred with frequent exposure to naked male bodies. Furthermore, as Jane E. Schultz has pointed out, many feared that "women would be subject to the whims of sexually aggressive soldiers" or that the

NAAN's meeting in 1900, that worked through some of the most "toil and privation of the war," and, by kneeling close to the beds of wounded soldiers and offering words of comfort, they provided a service that "only a woman could."[58]

Despite the fact that the NAAN was the organization founded solely for army nurses and had the highest collective stake in obtaining pensions for these women, the initiative to lobby the federal government for a pension bill on behalf of former army nurses actually came from the WRC, although it did arise in somewhat of a lackluster manner. Following the WRC's establishment of a relief fund in 1885 for army workers, the WRC's National Pension and Relief Committee revealed the following year that the Committee had received hundreds of letters from former army nurses requesting to receive money from the organization's relief fund.[59] Additionally, back during the WRC's first national meeting in 1884, then Senior Vice-President Kate B. Sherwood raised the idea to the WRC to introduce a bill to Congress that would grant an honorable pension to every nurse "who gave her best services."[60] Viewing Sherwood's comment as a promise from the WRC to pursue this policy, army nurses also wrote letters inquiring about the bill's status. The Pension Committee had to admit in its 1886 yearly report that after giving over $200 to Anna Ella Carroll and three other women that the WRC had

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"air of moral laxity in hospitals would encourage romantic attachments and jeopardize reputations." Public disapproval was strong enough in the beginning of the war that it deterred some women from enlisting as nurses. Schultz, *Women at the Front*, 49.

[58] Souvenir Program for the National Association of Army Nurses of the Civil War, Sept. 4-9, 1899, Mary Ann Bickerdyke Papers, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

[59] Woman's Relief Corps, *Proceedings of the Third National Convention*, 134; Woman's Relief Corps, *Proceedings of the Fourth National Convention of the Woman's Relief Corps* (Boston: E.B. Stillings & Co., 1886), 116-120.

[60] Woman's Relief Corps, *Proceedings of the Second National Convention*, 24.

approved, the relief fund only contained $86.[61] This was not nearly enough for the WRC to provide a substantial pension for every army nurse. In spite of this initial fumble, the WRC restated its commitment to recognizing and helping army nurses and began working toward a comprehensive bill that would provide most women who had served as nurses with a suitable pension.

Spearheading the efforts to draft such a bill and present it to Congress was the woman who introduced the idea: Kate B. Sherwood. Although Sherwood never identified herself as a former army nurse on the basis that she had never enlisted with the United States Sanitary Commission, she did travel with her husband's regiment during the war and occasionally provided care to sick and wounded soldiers.[62] Both during and after the Civil War, Sherwood also became close friends with a number of army nurses, including the well-known Clara Barton and Annie Wittenmyer.[63] Either way, Sherwood was familiar with the invaluable work that army nurses provided, the trials they faced in the field, and the patriotism they demonstrated during the war. Furthermore, she had the support of her husband, Isaac Sherwood, a prominent member of the GAR who had served for one term in the United States House of Representatives and had a lot of

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[61] Woman's Relief Corps, *Proceedings of the Fourth National Convention*, 116-120.

[62] Kennedy, "A Perfect Union," 37. The United States Sanitary Commission was a private relief agency that was chartered by the federal government to supply, provide battlefield relief, and coordinate medical assistance to the Union Army. Judith Ann Giesberg, *Civil War Sisterhood: The U.S. Sanitary Commission and Women's Politics in Transition* (Boston: Northwestern University Press, 2000), xii.

[63] Woman's Relief Corps, *Journal of the Fifth National Convention*, 51; Woman's Relief Corps, *Proceedings of the Third National Convention*, 4. Clara Barton is among the most well-known Civil War nurses, having established the Red Cross of America and written books about her experience as a nurse on the battlefield. Wittenmyer was well-known in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries as she had also authored a book about her experiences, but she was also notably the first national president of the Woman Christian Temperance Union. Schultz, *Women at the Front*, 159; 197.

political connections.[64] Between her deep admiration for army nurses, her connections, and her reputation as a writer, Sherwood likely seemed to be the perfect woman for the job.

By the WRC's next national convention in 1887, Sherwood, along with E. Florence Barker, Clara Barton, Mary Simmerson Cunningham Logan, and Lydia A. Scott, had drafted the first version of the Army Nurses Pension Act (ANPA) and had even received an endorsement of the GAR's National Pension Committee.[65] Given the GAR's prominence and strong political connections, this endorsement meant a lot, but it came with a caveat: the WRC could not introduce the ANPA to Congress until the GAR presented its own pension bill for the widows of Union veterans. Although neither Sherwood nor the rest of the WRC had the desire to wait, the Pension Committee decided not to intrude upon the work of the GAR and waited until Congress voted upon the GAR's pension bill.[66] Finally, in January of 1888, Sherwood, Barker, Logan, Barton, and Scott submitted the bill to the Senate Committee on Pensions. Under this bill, any woman "regularly enrolled in the United States service, as an Army nurse or sanitary agent during the late war of the rebellion, and who rendered [at least] six months' service" would be entitled to a pension of $12 per month.[67]

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[64] "Mrs. Kate Sherwood, Writer and Patriotic Leader, Dead," *Washington Times*, February 15, 1914.

[65] Woman's Relief Corps, *Journal of the Fifth National Convention,* 206-208.

[66] Ibid., 206-208.

[67] A Bill for the Relief of Women Enrolled as Army Nurses, S.R. 6119, 50th Cong., 1st sess., introduced January 30, 1888. https://catalog.archives.gov/id/146619342.

When the Senate Committee on Pensions finally considered the bill in March of 1888, it became clear just how complicated efforts to pass a piece of legislation for army nurses would be. Some of the opposition came from members of the Senate Committee on Pensions. For example, Republican Senator George F. Edmunds of Vermont stated that while he was a "friend of women's rights," he felt the bill asked Congress to place women "on the same footing of soldiers who had been disabled in the service."[68] According to Edmunds, not every disabled Union veteran had been able to secure a pension yet, and it would be irresponsible of him to "make such an invidious distinction."[69] Democratic Senator James Beck of Kentucky also had an objection to the bill, albeit a more practical one. Pointing out that the bill contained no estimate of how many nurses might apply for a pension, Beck argued that the WRC should be required to obtain a list of all the women that had served as nurses from the War Department. Until then, the Committee would have no idea "what the bill would be taking out of the Treasury," and Beck would be unable to vote in favor of the bill.[70]

The most significant challenge to the WRC's pension bill came from an unexpected source: the NAAN. The WRC and the NAAN had a notable overlap in membership, so it is unsurprising that the NAAN had learned about the WRC's submission of a bill to federally pension army nurses. The chief criticism that the NAAN had with the WRC's bill, however, was that the WRC was lobbying for a pension that was only $12 per month. As NAAN Chairman Harriet A.B. Corts argued in her letter to

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[68] "Pensions for Nurses: Senator Beck's Objections to the Bill in Favor of Enrolled Women," *Boston Daily Globe,* March 22, 1888.

[69] Ibid.

[70] Ibid.

the Senate, this amount seemed too low. Like other members of the NAAN, Corts argued that army nurses, whether they had served in hospitals on the battlefield or in large city hospitals, had worked just as hard and contributed just as much to saving the nation as soldiers. Testifying to the carnage that nurses witnessed on the battlefield, the terrible conditions that they had to bear in hospitals and army camps, and the great skill that went into nursing the nation's husbands, fathers, sons, and brothers back to health, Corts maintained that "nurses should be pensioned on equal rating with the soldiers themselves."[71] As national law allowed Union veterans to receive a pension anywhere from $8 to $72 per month, $12 per month seemed on the lower end of this range, especially for nurses that had been middle-aged and unpaid during the war and were now struggling to make ends meet in their old age.[72] Wanting equal pay for equal work, the NAAN, consequently, submitted its own version of the ANPA to Congress in March of 1888. For the most part, the NAAN's bill contained the same terms and, like the WRC's bill, it did not contain an estimated number of nurses that would be pensioned. Rather than asking for $12 per month though, the NAAN's bill asked for a pension that was $25 per month for qualifying army nurses, arguing that this was still on the lower end of what a veteran received.[73]

Unsurprisingly, the Senate tabled both the WRC's and the NAAN's initial bills, forcing both organizations to regroup and reconsider their tactics. Following the failure of

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[71] Harriet A. B. Corts to Committee on Pensions, United States Senate, February 29, 1888, File No. 1407: J.B. Beck, Records of the Adjunct General's Office, 1762-1984, National Archives, Washington, D.C. https://catalog.archives.gov/id/146619342.

[72] Ibid.

[73] A Bill for the Relief of Women Enrolled as Army Nurses, S. 373, 50th Cong., 1st sess., introduced March 13, 1888. https://catalog.archives.gov/id/146619342.

the WRC's initial bill, members of the organization's National Relief and Pension Committee traveled to Washington, D.C., to discuss the bill with both the Senate's and the House of Representatives' pension committees. Following these meetings, Sherwood, Barker, Barton, and Logan decided to compile a comprehensive list of the army nurses that had served during the Civil War. This would be a difficult task since the War Department had failed to keep adequate records during the war, but it might eventually allow the WRC to provide an accurate estimate of how many might apply under the proposed pension act.[74] As for the NAAN, it actually convinced the WRC to resubmit its bill with the substitution of providing nurses with $25 per month.[75] Somehow, this compromised bill managed to pass through the Senate in January of 1889 with some unspecified amendments.[76] This could have been because, at this point, the WRC was able to estimate that at least 300 nurses wanted to apply under the pension bill, but the WRC disclaimed that this was an approximation at best and more would likely apply.[77] The House of Representatives refused to consider the compromised piece of legislation, and the bill was ultimately sent back to the committee system.[78]

The WRC and the NAAN were certainly frustrated with these setbacks, but neither organization gave up on securing pensions for army nurses. In fact, from 1889 to

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[74] Woman's Relief Corps, *Journal of the Sixth Annual Convention*, 117-119.

[75] Ibid., 117.

[76] "Relief Corps News: Gleanings from the National Headquarters-- Notes from the Departments," *National Tribune,* February 14, 1889.

[77] Woman's Relief Corps, *Journal of the Sixth Annual Convention*, 117.

[78] "Appropriations Considered: The Army Nurse Pension Bill Amended and Passed," *Montezuma Reporter,* February 1, 1889.

1891, the WRC only increased its efforts to lobby Congress for army nurse pensions. Unable to get its initial bill passed in 1889, the WRC decided to adopt the method of some of its state divisions by helping individual women secure pensions through special acts of Congress.[79] Congress typically only approved special act pensions for women who had provided truly noteworthy service during the war (like Elmina Spencer), but this would at least provide pensions for some women in the meantime while the WRC worked to secure pensions on a more comprehensive level.[80] Additionally, the National Relief and Pension Committee began distributing ready-to-mail "forms of appeal" to WRC members, noting that "Members of Congress in every State may be personally reached by their own constituents, and urged to vote and work for measures of relief for our army nurses."[81] A few years later, Sherwood and Secretary Sarah E. Fuller wrote a personal letter to every member of the House of Representatives, asking for their support in passing the ANPA.[82] Meanwhile, Barton, Logan, and other WRC members had spent so much time imploring politicians for aid in the halls of Congress that, by 1892, Secretary Harriet L. Reed jokingly stated that they "haunted the Capitol."[83]

Finally, the WRC had a stroke of luck in February of 1892. While visiting Washington, D.C., to check on the status of the pension bill that the WRC had

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[79] "Our Correspondents: Replies to Questions on a Variety of Interesting Subjects," *National Tribune,* October 11, 1888.

[80] Schultz, *Women at the Front*, 184.

[81] Woman's Relief Corps, *Journal of the Sixth Annual Convention*, 118.

[82] Woman's Relief Corps, *Journal of the Seventh Annual Convention*,125.

[83] Woman's Relief Corps, *Journal of the Tenth Annual Convention of the Woman's Relief Corps* (Boston: E.B. Stillings & Co., 1892), 184.

resubmitted, Reed reached out to Ellen S. Tolman, the secretary for the NAAN. A meeting occurred between Reed, Tolman, and NAAN President Harriet P. Dame where they agreed once again to compromise and "work together for the best bill that could be obtained."[84] What resulted was a new version of the ANPA that asked for $12 pensions for every army nurse that had served for more than six months and had been commissioned by the War Department, terms that both the WRC and the NAAN agreed on.[85] It would be unsurprising if Tolman and Dame protested the pension amount at first, but, reflecting upon the failure of the WRC's and the NAAN's previous bills, they likely realized that Congress was not ready to approve of a higher pension for army nurses and $12 per month was better than nothing. The organizations passed their bill onto the House Committee of Invalid Pensions. Republican Congressman Walter Butler of Iowa presented the bill to the House of Representatives in June of 1892.[86]

Now known at this point as the "Butler Bill," this version of the ANPA passed through the House of Representatives with relative ease and went before the Senate soon after.[87] A few members of the Senate still had a few qualms about the bill. Specifically, they felt that it seemed to leave out volunteer nurses or nurses that were commissioned by specific hospitals rather than the War Department.[88] Nevertheless, the WRC and the

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[84] Woman's Relief Corps, *Journal of the Tenth Annual Convention*, 184.

[85] "Relief Corps News: Gleanings From National Headquarters—Notes from Departments," *National Tribune,* July 14, 1892.

[86] Ibid.

[87] Woman's Relief Corps, *Journal of the Tenth Annual Convention*, 184-185.

[88] "Relief Corps News: Gleanings from National Headquarters-- Notes from the Departments," *National Tribune,* January 24, 1892.

NAAN were determined to not let this bill fail. In addition to presenting the Senate with a petition that had over 160,000 signatures in support of the bill, the WRC urged its members and the public to "write their own members of Congress and ask them to vote for this bill."[89] As Reed recalled in her report during the WRC's 1892 national convention, "letters and telegrams from prominent men and women of the country again went pouring in."[90] At last, the Senate voted in favor of the ANPA on July 27th, 1892, and President Benjamin Harrison signed the ANPA into law on August 5th, 1892.[91]

IV. Conclusion

While it may not seem so significant at first glance, the Army Nurses Pension Act was a tremendous achievement for women in its time. Not only was it the first time that the federal government and the larger public recognized women's service during the Civil War, but it was also the first time that a group of women received a pension for anything other than being a soldier's dependent. By adopting this law, the government was, in some degree, acknowledging female independence, especially since nurses were entitled to their pension regardless of their marital status.[92] Additionally, although the pension for army nurses was on the lower side in terms of pensions amounts, and pensions for former

[89] "Relief Corps News: Gleanings from National Headquarters-- Notes from the Departments," *National Tribune,* January 24, 1892.

[90] Woman's Relief Corps, *Journal of the Tenth Annual Convention*, 185.

[91] Ibid.

[92] Schultz, *Women at the Front*, 187.

army nurses did not increase as they got older, the average pension for a Union veteran in 1891 was $11 per month, making pensions for army nurses slightly above average.[93]

But the ANPA and its significance only came about due to the time, political activism, and persistence of women in the WRC and the NAAN. In the case of the WRC, scholars have debated the significance that the organization had for women as it spent a lot of time and resources supporting the GAR.[94] In this chapter, it has been acknowledged that the WRC did spend a considerable amount of time and money supporting the GAR as its official auxiliary, but, even from their early years, both the WRC and the NAAN were also interested in working for the benefit of women. Even when the WRC and the NAAN encountered significant political obstacles, women in these organizations remained committed to recognizing the work and contributions of women. The WRC and the NAAN were organizations that were created by women for women, and they used their time and resources to advocate for women's wartime service to be recognized by the federal government.

Pensions for former army nurses meant a lot to the women of the WRC and the NAAN. It is unsurprising that the ANPA meant a lot to the NAAN since the organization was composed entirely of army nurses who likely either wanted a pension for themselves or their fellow nurses. As the NAAN's efforts to narrate the stories of its members in *In Honor of the National Association of Civil War Army Nurses* also indicate, the NAAN wanted the government and general public to remember their wartime service as being

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[93] Edward Waite, "Veteran's Pensions: The Law and Its Administration From the Revolutionary War to the Civil War," *Harper's New Monthly Magazine,* January, 1893.

[94] Silber, *Daughters of the Union*, 274.

valuable. In the case of the WRC, on the other hand, many women had taken part in the northern war effort in some way, but not every woman had served as an army nurse. Yet, the WRC consistently singled out the contributions of army nurses, chose to describe their service as being equal to that of a soldier, and spent nearly a decade trying to get a version of the ANPA to pass through Congress. This could be because the WRC was still trying to justify its right to exist and act as an official auxiliary for the GAR during its early years.[95] Thousands of army nurses provided some of the most important service of the war by saving the lives of Union men, and the stories of nurses like Elmina Spencer proved that women had made significant sacrifices in order to help the Union. Because women had played a significant role in the war and ultimately helped save the United States from disunion, it was only right for women to have an organization in the 1880s that still helped soldiers and took part in Civil War commemoration.[96] With that being said, it is also likely that women in both the WRC and the NAAN wanted to advocate for a federal pension bill for former army nurses for another reason: it would acknowledge women as loyal citizens of the American nation. In lobbying the federal government for army nurse pensions, the WRC and the NAAN demonstrated how women, specifically those who had been nurses, had been just as patriotic as men, something that the

[95] Barker particularly tried to justify the WRC's existence in her first presidential speech. In this newspaper article reporting on a reception for Kate B. Sherwood, the writer notes that the women present continued to struggle against "prejudice and discouragement in various forms." Woman's Relief Corps, *Proceedings of the Second National Convention*, 10; "Relief Corps News: Reception to Pres. Kate B. Sherwood," *National Tribune,* August 14, 1884.

[96] This argument is also supported by a statement made by GAR Commander-in-Chief Paul Vandervoort, who commented at the WRC's first national meeting that the need for American patriotism in the world of the 1880s "demand as much as they did the womanly sacrifices made in the days of lint picking and hospital nursing, nearly a quarter of a century ago…" Woman's Relief Corps, *Proceedings of the Second National Convention*, 8.

government ultimately agreed with by passing the ANPA.[97] If women were loyal citizens of the nation during the Civil War, they could continue to be so in the late nineteenth century and perhaps deserved an equal voice in the nation's government. As the next chapter will explore, women in both the WRC and the NAAN sought to expand on their statuses as loyal women and their positions within these organizations by advocating for equal political rights and becoming part of the larger social movement for women's suffrage.

[97] Schultz, *Women at the Front,* 187. Schultz also reached a similar conclusion while examining the topic of Civil War pensions, noting that the passage of the ANPA inherently included "government acknowledgment of citizenship" for army nurses.

Chapter 2-- "One Step Nearer to the Polls:" Women's Suffrage in the WRC and the NAAN

I. Introduction

Following the passage of the Army Nurses Pension Act (ANPA) in 1892, the Woman's Relief Corps (WRC) and the National Association of Army Nurses of the Civil War (NAAN) continued their efforts to support army nurses. Two years after the implementation of the ANPA, the WRC reported that the organization had been successful in helping more than 270 "heroic women" procure pensions from the federal government.[1] For another 145 nurses, the organization provided temporary pensions until their applications could be approved by Congress, and it was working on endorsing another 154 pension applications.[2] As for the NAAN, in addition to endorsing pension applications and helping women secure proof of their service, the organization continued to advocate for higher and more comprehensive pensions. For the first few years, this effort was spearheaded by Annie Wittenmyer, a prominent member of both the WRC and the NAAN. Until her death in 1900, Wittenmyer worked with the NAAN to amend the terms of the ANPA to cover regimental nurses, a significant group left uncovered by the ANPA since they were often unable to prove that they had served for more than six months.[3] Between 1907 and 1918, the NAAN tried a few more times to improve the ANPA and increase pensions for nurses to over $20 per month, but, like Wittenmyer's

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[1] Woman's Relief Corps, *Journal of the Twelfth Annual Convention of the Woman's Relief Corps* (Boston: E.B. Stillings &Co., 1894), 172; 166-167.

[2] Ibid., 166-167.

[3] Jane Schultz, *Women at the Front: Hospital Workers in Civil War America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 196-197; "Surviving Civil War Nurses Are Here for Probably Their Last Encampment," *The Evening Star,* September 29, 1915.

attempts to amend the ANPA for regimental nurses, these efforts ultimately failed.[4] This did not stop members of the NAAN from celebrating their own service, though, as they still hosted annual conventions, attended large commemorations of battle anniversaries, and, as previously mentioned, published a book detailing the NAAN's history and membership in 1910.[5] Additionally, by the end of the 1920s, the WRC and the NAAN had ultimately helped more than 2,000 women apply for a nurse's pension from the government and were still supporting women who could not secure federal assistance.[6]

The WRC's and the NAAN's commitment to seeking recognition for the "women veterans" of the Civil War never faded, but prominent members of the organizations also began to advocate for the benefit of all women.[7] For members of the WRC, this shift particularly occurred after the organization accepted an invitation in 1893 to join the National Council of Women of the United States, an umbrella organization founded by May Wright Sewall for the advancement of women and the "uplift of humanity."[8] Although the WRC would not officially voice support for women's suffrage until 1916, it was after the WRC's inclusion in the National Council of Women and its turn toward patriotic instruction that a number of its members began to engage with the topic of

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[4] "Army Nurses: National Convention in Saratoga," *National Tribune,* September 26, 1907; Kate M. Scott, *In Honor of the National Association of Civil War Army Nurses* (Atlantic City, NJ: Citizens Executive Committee, 1910), 1-2; "Nurses of the Civil War Are Rewarded," *Hamilton Evening Journal,* November 30, 1926. Congress eventually increased pensions for army nurses to $50 per month in 1926, but there were only 45 nurses left on the government's pension rosters.

[5] Scott, *In Honor of the National Association of Civil War Army Nurses*, 1-2.

[6] Woman's Relief Corps, *Journal of the Thirty-Eighth National Convention of the Woman's Relief Corps* (Washington, D.C.: The National Tribune Company, 1920), 337.

[7] Scott, *In Honor of the National Association of Civil War Army Nurses*, 2.

[8] National Council of Women, *Transactions of the National Council of Women of the United States,* ed. Rachel Foster Avery (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Co., 1891), 9-10.

women's rights. This chapter argues that by the time women's suffrage became legal in the United States in 1920 with the ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment, women in the WRC and the NAAN had spent years attempting to improve women's political positions in American society, something they often did by capitalizing on their work and membership within these organizations.

II. Equal Rights to All People: Women's Suffrage and the Evolution of the WRC into a Progressive Organization

When the WRC and the NAAN emerged in the 1880s, women's suffrage was still a divided movement, but it was one that was increasing in popularity. Following the emergence of the women's rights movement at the Seneca Falls Convention in 1848, the cause of women's suffrage found some support in the 1850s before the volatile years of the Civil War led most women's rights activists to suspend their activities.[9] When the guns quieted down in 1865, many women were eager to promote the cause of women's suffrage once again. This eagerness, however, quickly turned into frustration when Congress refused to include women in the terms of the Fifteenth Amendment, causing suffragists to divide on the issue of race.[10] Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony, two of the most prominent suffragists of the nineteenth century, formed the

[9] Joan Marie Johnson, *The Woman Suffrage Movement in the United States* (New York: Routledge, 2022), 26-30; 34-35. It is important to note that some historians have contested the Seneca Falls Convention as the origin point for the women's rights movement in United States. This has particularly been the argument of Lisa Tetrault in her book *The Myth of Seneca Falls: Memory and the Women's Suffrage Movement.* Tetrault points out how women expressed desire for political equality well before the Seneca Falls Convention. Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony, and other white suffragists created the myth of Seneca Falls to provide a sense of cohesion for the suffrage movement. Lisa Tetrault, *The Myth of Seneca Falls: Memory and the Women's Suffrage Movement* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2014), 1-12.

[10] Johnson, *The Woman Suffrage Movement in the United States,* 39-43.

National Woman Suffrage Association (NWSA), which passed a resolution against the Fifteenth Amendment and criticized it for only enfranchising African American men. Other suffragists, including Lucy Stone and Julia Ward Howe, formed the American Woman Suffrage Association (AWSA), which supported the Fifteenth Amendment and emphasized the importance of universal suffrage.[11] These organizations eventually unified into the National American Woman Suffrage Association (NAWSA) in 1890, but the NWSA and AWSA largely divided the women's suffrage movement during the 1870s and 1880s in terms of membership and strategy.[12] Even so, women continued to push for equal suffrage, and the movement experienced significant growth in the United States. By 1893, three western states, Wyoming, Utah, and Washington, had even given women the right to vote.[13]

Within these contexts, members of the Grand Army of the Republic (GAR) were concerned that an organization like the WRC could further encourage women's suffrage and challenge traditional gender roles. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the GAR initially resisted the idea of recognizing a female auxiliary. A large part of this resistance stemmed from the fact that the GAR was a fraternal organization intended for former soldiers, and many members thought that allowing women to join the organization in some degree would undermine the organization's purpose to support veterans. However, as historian Stuart McConnell identified in his study of the organization, the GAR was

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[11] Cathleen Cahill, *Recasting the Vote: How Women of Color Transformed the Suffrage Movement* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2020), 20-21; Johnson, *The Woman Suffrage Movement in the United States*, 39-43.

[12] Johnson, *The Woman Suffrage Movement in the United States*, 36-46.

[13] Ibid., 60.

also largely conservative. According to McConnell, the GAR was not reactionary in its politics, but the organization did possess a nostalgic view of American society and a common desire to "freeze the social relations of 1865."[14] This meant, for example, that while the GAR might have been anti-segregationist and supportive of the rights guaranteed to African Americans by the Thirteenth, Fourteenth, and Fifteenth Amendments, it did not push for racial equality beyond this. Likewise, the GAR recognized the important roles that women played during the Civil War, but many of its members still thought that the primary place for a woman was in the home.[15] By allowing the creation of an auxiliary, some members not only feared that such an organization would encourage more women to step outside of the domestic sphere but also that it could advance the cause of women's suffrage.[16] After all, women in such an organization would have to physically leave the home in order to attend meetings and engage in the organization's activities. They would likely be able to vote for officers, discuss important social matters, and maybe even influence politics, all of which could encourage female independence.[17] As one woman wrote in her letter to Kate B. Sherwood in May of 1883, "I think it [the creation of a women's auxiliary] a good thing, but the men of the Post at this place seem to be opposed to it, and held what they called a meeting of protest, and

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[14] Stuart McConnell, *Glorious Contentment: The Grand Army of the Republic, 1865 to 1900* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1992), 219.

[15] Ibid., 219-220.

[16] Ibid., 219-220.

[17] Mary Martha Thomas, *The New Woman in Alabama: Social Reforms and Suffrage, 1890-1920* (Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 1992), 20-22; This statement is based on conclusions that Thomas and similar scholars have reached about other women's organizations during the Progressive Era.

say that they will never allow a woman to stand beside them in the GAR. They say it is giving us one step nearer to the polls, and that takes pleasure away from them."[18]

Despite these concerns, the GAR voted to recognize the WRC upon its creation in 1883, and, for the most part, the GAR's initial fears appeared unwarranted as the WRC's members seemed content to simply grow the organization and assist the GAR during its first decade. Between 1884 and 1892, the WRC went from being able to spend approximately $2,000 per year on its relief work to over $153,000 per year. Its membership increased from a few thousand members to almost 140,000 members in thirty different states.[19] Also during this time, the organization's work largely aligned with the GAR's activities and priorities. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the WRC spent a lot of its time supporting and celebrating Union veterans, something that it did by helping former soldiers secure pensions for themselves and their dependents, funding nursing homes for veterans, erecting monuments in honor of the Union Army, and sponsoring celebrations of Memorial Day. This was especially true during the organization's first decade. As Commander-in-Chief Wheelock G. Veazey reflected at the GAR's national encampment in 1892:

> [The WRC], both in character and in magnitude, is too familiar to require explanation. They bring supplies to the relief fund, and aid most effectually in bringing recruits into the Post; they greatly assist the Posts in their entertainments; they sustain them nobly in observance of Memorial Day; they are invaluable

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[18] "Woman's Auxiliaries: Suggestions for the Organization of a National Order," *National Tribune,* May 10, 1883.

[19] Woman's Relief Corps, *Proceedings of the Second National Convention of the Woman's Relief Corps* (Boston: E.B. Stillings & Co., 1884), 27; Woman's Relief Corps, *Journal of the Tenth National Convention of the Woman's Relief Corps, Auxiliary to the Grand Army of the Republic* (Boston: E.B. Stillings & Co., 1892), 65. Adjusting for contemporary inflation, the Woman's Relief would have gone from spending approximately $60,000 to over $5,000,000 per year in a decade.

> when sickness and death invade the household of the comrade. They are indeed our auxiliary and are entitled to our gratitude.[20]

In short, during the WRC's first ten years of existence, its members did not challenge the ideological directives of the GAR too much. While the WRC, along with the NAAN, did lead the political efforts to secure federal pensions for former army nurses, this was something that the GAR could find within its purposes to support, especially as these pensions would still honor individuals that had served the Union Army.[21] When the WRC did begin to come into contact with other women's organizations and take steps toward supporting more progressive causes, it is likely that the benefits of having the WRC as an auxiliary outweighed some of the GAR's anxieties surrounding drastic social and political change for women, which is why the GAR never opposed some of the WRC's affiliations as well as the auxiliary's eventual endorsement of women's suffrage.[22]

One year following its success in securing pensions for former army nurses, the WRC joined the National Council of Women of the United States (NCW), an umbrella organization founded in 1888 by May Wright Sewall.[23] Sewall, a well-known educator, lecturer, and suffragist in the post-Civil War United States, had been one of the

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[20] Woman's Relief Corps, *Journal of the Tenth National Convention*, 48.

[21] Woman's Relief Corps, *Journal of the Fifth National Convention of the Woman's Relief Corps, Auxiliary to the Grand Army of the Republic* (San Francisco: George Spaulding & Co., 1887), 206; The GAR seemed unsure if Congress would be willing to pass more than one pension bill, so they requested that the WRC wait to present its bill for army nurse pensions until some of the GAR's bills were passed by Congress. However, pensions for army nurses were something that the GAR supported for the most part.

[22] Caroline Janney, *Remembering the Civil War: Reunion and the Limits of Reconciliation* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2013), 123-124; The WRC used a significant portion of its money to support the GAR, and, as Caroline Janney noted, Union veterans began realizing soon after the WRC's first decade that it was going to outlast the GAR. Whereas the GAR only allowed veterans to join, the WRC permitted any woman loyal to the Union cause to become a member, allowing the WRC to outlast the GAR when veterans began passing away in large numbers in the twentieth century.

[23] National Council of Women, *Transactions of the National Council of Women*, 9-10.

organizers for the first meeting of the International Council of Women, an organization founded by Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony in celebration of the 40th anniversary of the Seneca Falls Convention.[24] Upon attending this first meeting of the International Council of Women in 1888, Sewall was inspired by the organization's mission to create connections between women's groups from around the world but thought that there should be a similar organization that attempted to connect women's groups in just the United States.[25] From this thought came Sewall's proposition for the NCW. Like the international version, this organization sought to bring a variety of women's groups together in order to advocate for equal rights for women and advance women's work in education, philanthropy, and social reform.[26] Among the NCW's first officers were Sewall, Frances Willard, Susan B. Anthony, and Mary F. Eastman, all of whom were prominent suffragists. Some of its most prominent member organizations included the Woman's Christian Temperance Union and the National Association of Colored Women.[27] Following Susan B. Anthony and Lucy Stone's efforts to unite the NWSA and the AWSA in 1890, the NAWSA became a prominent member of the NCW as well and grew to be the largest women's suffrage organization in the United States.[28]

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[24] International Council of Women, *Report of the International Council of Women, Assembled by the National Woman Suffrage Association* (Washington, D.C.: Rufus H. Darby Printer, 1888), 2-11.

[25] Ibid., 10-11; 448-449.

[26] National Council of Women, *Transactions of the National Council of Women*, 9-10.

[27] Ibid., 9-10; 352-354.

[28] National Council of Women, *Transactions of the National Council of Women*, 352-354; Johnson, *The Woman Suffrage Movement in the United States*, 4.

The WRC was one of the first organizations to receive an invitation to join the NCW due to its respectability and status as the "largest beneficent and patriotic organization of women in the world," but it took a few years of debate before the WRC finally accepted.[29] While some women in the organization wholeheartedly endorsed the WRC's entrance into the NCW from the beginning and even argued that it would help "noble women" like army nurses secure a "[fuller] recognition of their rights," others still held a more conservative view of the WRC and its purpose.[30] This was particularly the view of Annie Wittenmyer, the dual WRC and NAAN member mentioned earlier in this chapter. Wittenmyer argued that the WRC's national convention in 1890 that the NCW not only required exorbitant fees from its member organizations, but that the NCW's mission might distract the WRC from its own mission of serving Civil War veterans, both male and female, and commemorating the victories of the Union Army. In Wittenmyer's view, the WRC was the GAR's auxiliary only, not truly an independent entity, and it is likely that her personal objections to women's suffrage also informed her opposition to the NCW.[31] Nonetheless, despite the fact that Wittenmyer seemed to deliver the minority opinion of the national meeting in 1890, the WRC's officers at the time decided to follow Wittenmyer's advice and decline the NCW's invitation until it at least agreed to lower the

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[29] Mary S. Logan, *The Part Taken by Women in American History* (Wilmington, DE: Perry-Nalle Publishing Company, 1912), 343; Woman's Relief Corps, *Journal of the Sixth National Convention of the Woman's Relief Corps* (Boston: E.B. Stillings & Co., 1888), 35-36.

[30] Woman's Relief Corps, *Journal of the Eighth Convention of the Woman's Relief Corps* (Boston: E.B. Stillings & Co., 1890), 254.

[31] Ibid., 258-260. Annie Wittenmyer was the first president of the WCTU, but she split from the organization over her refusal to support women's suffrage. Catherine Gilbert Murdock, *Domesticating Drink: Women, Men, and Alcohol in America, 1870-1940* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1998), 20-21.

costs for its member organizations.[32] After a few more years of communication between the NCW and the WRC, the NCW agreed in 1893 to allow the WRC to join for only $100 every three years, allowing President Margaret Ray Wickens to better justify the cost at that year's national meeting. Upon Wickens' open endorsement of the NCW, Wittenmyer continued to oppose the WRC's entrance into the NCW. Another woman, Mary R. Morgan, went so far as to ask Wickens if she had secured permission from the GAR to advocate for the WRC's affiliation with such a progressive organization that directly advocated for women's rights.[33] At this question, Wickens hotly replied, for the first time in the organization's history, that the WRC was an "independent body" and argued that it was capable of forming its own affiliations.[34] Finally, after Wickens and a few other women reassured the rest of the WRC's members that joining the NCW would only enhance the WRC's ability to work for veterans by giving the organization more name recognition, the officers called for a vote, and the WRC members present voted in favor of becoming affiliated with the NCW.[35] Following this vote, the WRC elected representatives every few years to send to the NCW's triennial meetings, where they promoted to the WRC's work to other women's organizations, and eventually supported some of the NCW's efforts towards women's rights.[36]

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[32] Woman's Relief Corps, *Journal of the Eighth Convention*, 260.

[33] Woman's Relief Corps, *Journal of the Eleventh National Convention of the Woman's Relief Corps* (Boston: E.B. Stillings & Co., 1893), 195-198.

[34] Ibid., 198.

[35] Ibid., 209.

[36] National Council of Women, *National Council of Women of the United States: Report of its Tenth Annual Executive and its Third Triennial Sessions,* ed. May Wright Sewall (Indianapolis: The Hollenback Press, 1899), 181-183.

While it is fair to say that the WRC joined the NCW for more practical reasons rather than ideological ones at first, this action still encouraged some of the WRC's members to begin addressing women's rights, something that happened to coincide with the WRC's turn to promoting patriotism and citizenship. As Caroline Janney and John C. Kennedy have both highlighted in their respective works, perpetuating feelings of patriotism was one of the founding principles of the WRC, but it was not something the WRC heavily focused on until the early-to-mid 1890s, when pensions and nursing homes for former soldiers started to take the place of women directly tending to invalid veterans.[37] Not wanting to lose purpose or be upstaged by the commitment of southern women in organizations like the United Daughters of the Confederacy (UDC), the WRC pivoted to instilling other Americans with love for their country and respect for its political institutions by placing American flags in classrooms, encouraging the pledge of allegiance in schools and at social events, promoting wider observances of Memorial Day, and launching textbook campaigns to ensure that they contained enough patriotic content.[38] At the end of the day, one of the primary purposes of the WRC was to celebrate and preserve the memory of the Union, which, in the minds of its members, had successfully fought the Civil War to save the United States and purge the country of human bondage. By fostering patriotic sentiment and encouraging other Americans (particularly younger Americans) to value their citizenship, the women of the WRC were not only urging Americans to remember the sacrifices that the Union Army made to save the United States, but they also saw themselves as protecting the country from the

[37] Janney, *Remembering the Civil War,* 247-249; Kennedy, "A Perfect Union," 167-168.

[38] Janney, *Remembering the Civil War,* 247-249; Kennedy, "A Perfect Union," 167-168.

possibility of future disunion.[39] A variant of Republican motherhood, this was the work that the WRC promoted to other women's organizations the most. It even led a committee on women's patriotic instruction as part of the NCW.[40] As part of this new mission to promote patriotism, the WRC necessarily committed itself to ensuring "equal rights to all people, irrespective of color, religion or previous conditions" from the 1890s onward.[41] Consequently, when the WRC's members did begin to openly advocate for women's rights, they often used patriotic language and drew upon the WRC's new mission of ensuring equal rights.

One of the first women in the WRC to try to combine a personal desire for women's rights with the WRC's mission of patriotic education is already a familiar character at this point: Kate B. Sherwood. Although Sherwood would be more vocal about her support for women's suffrage in later years, she began approaching the need for women to have political rights soon after becoming one of the WRC's first delegates for the NCW.[42] In 1895, while delivering a speech on behalf of the WRC at one of the NCW's triennial meetings, Sherwood spent a good portion of her time discussing the

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[39] Janney, *Remembering the Civil War*, 245-246.

[40] National Council of Women, *Report*, 181-183. Women, in the eyes of the WRC, had a special duty to promote patriotism and encourage respect for American political institutions. In this way, they significantly perpetuated the tradition of "Republican motherhood," or the post-American Revolution idea that women had a unique responsibility to educate children and future generations to value republicanism and be good citizens. This ideology reinforced women's primary societal roles as wives and mothers, but it also allowed women to further their educations and indirectly contribute to American politics and society. Lisa Kerber, "The Republican Mother: Women and the Enlightenment-- An American Perspective," *American Quarterly* 28, no. 2 (1976): 187-205.

[41] Woman's Relief Corps, *Journal of the Sixteenth National Convention of the Woman's Relief Corps* (Boston: E.B. Stillings & Co., 1899), 288.

[42] Woman's Relief Corps, *Journal of the Thirteenth Annual Convention of the Woman's Relief Corps* (Boston: E.B. Stillings & Co., 1895), 156-160.

need for patriotism in America's rapidly changing society at the end of the nineteenth century, but she also dissected why women, especially those in the NCW, should have a special interest in endorsing citizenship and instilling others with love for their country. According to Sherwood, not only were the women of the NCW some of the country's ultimate patriots as they spent a lot of time and money, with no "emoluments or reward," attempting to better their country, but being a patriotic American also meant believing in equality and inalienable rights.[43] As Sherwood went on to emphasize, the Constitution may have included "the subjection of a sex and the enslavement of a race," but the "highest form of patriotism is to remove inequalities, to maintain individual rights."[44] Furthermore, Sherwood drew connections between American patriotism and women's rightful inclusion in politics by emphasizing the contributions and opinions of First Lady Abigail Adams, a well-known supporter of women's political rights in the early American republic. As Sherwood stated about this "woman patriot":

> The first declaration of independence came from the pen of a woman, long before the [Mecklenburg] Manifesto, long before the Liberty Bell at Philadelphia proclaimed independence in the name of the Continental Congress. "Let us separate," wrote Abigail Adams to her husband [John Adams] in the Continental Congress when King George proclaimed all the Revolutionary forces rebels when they would not lay down their arms; Abigail Adams, who had the immortal honor to be the wife of one President and mother of another… It was of his mother that John Quincy Adams thought when he stood up in Congress to maintain the rights of women to join in political matters when he uttered those memorable words: "I say that correct principle is that women are not only justified, but exhibit the most exalted virtues when they depart from the domestic circle and enter upon the concerns of their country, of humanity and God."[45]

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[43] "The Relief Corps: Gleanings from National Headquarters—Notes from Departments," *National Tribune,* February 28, 1895.

[44] Ibid.

[45] Ibid.

As Sherwood's interest in patriotism and women's rights led her to remember, women had been patriots and valuable citizens since the American Revolution. Because women made valuable contributions to society in the past, they could make valuable contributions in the present, especially if they had political rights.[46]

At this same meeting of the NCW in 1895, another prominent WRC member, Ellen S. Mussey, delivered a similar speech invoking similar collective memories of white women's patriotism. Like Sherwood, Mussey was known for being a prolific writer and political activist, but she was also one of the first accredited female lawyers in the United States who went on to found the Washington College of Law for Women in 1899.[47] While standing in front of the NCW a few years earlier in 1895, Mussey echoed Sherwood's speech by emphasizing the importance of patriotism and also identifying Abigail Adams as a founder of the United States. However, Mussey drew on something else that made her speech really stand out at the NCW's meeting: the memory of women's work during the Civil War. As Mussey noted about halfway through her speech:

> In the late war, woman and her influence was felt at every turn, and always for good. In those days man learned that there were in woman powers and possibilities he dreamed not before. And there were women who followed the flag to the hospitals, to the field, to the very battle ground, giving up youth, strength,

[46] It is important to note that Sherwood is utilizing collective memory here in her speech. Women in the suffrage movement consistently emphasized Abigail Adams as an important but forgotten founder of the United States for her early plea to John Adams "to remember the ladies." Like all other collective memories, this one was intended by suffragists to justify and give further credence to their political desires in the present. For another example of suffragists referencing Abigail Adams in memory, see: Carrie Chapman Catt and Nettie Rogers Schuler, *Woman Suffrage and Politics: The Inner Story of the Suffrage Movement* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1923), 9.

[47] Logan, *The Part Taken by Women in American History*, 749.

> and life itself… Abraham Lincoln said "that without the help of women the rebellion could have never been put down nor the country saved."[48]

According to Mussey, men had failed to reward women for their efforts and sacrifices by leaving their rights out of the Fifteenth Amendment, but women could still become valuable "citizens if not voters" by celebrating their patriotism and demonstrating it in the present.[49] Because so women in the WRC had given their assistance to the war effort in the 1860s, this speech likely resonated a lot with the WRC's members, and Mussey, like Sherwood, was reportedly well-received at the NCW's meeting.[50]

As the years passed, and the WRC maintained its affiliation with the NCW, other prominent members of the WRC continued to further the organization's associations with the movement for women's suffrage. In 1899, for example, National President Florence Jamison Miller made the point to acknowledge Frances Willard, Susan B. Anthony, Anna Howard Shaw, and May Wright Sewall as all "patriotic" and "proud" women that "bear the badge of the Woman's Relief Corps."[51] In fact, when Susan B. Anthony passed away in 1906, the WRC not only acknowledged Anthony as a valuable member once again and voted to help fund a permanent memorial in her honor in Washington, D.C., but the organization also sponsored an obituary for the suffragist in the *National Tribune,* the official organ of the GAR and the WRC.[52] In addition to calling her the "Abraham

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[48] "Women and the Flag: Patriotism Made the Subject of Today's Addresses," *The Evening Star,* February 22, 1895.

[49] Ibid.

[50] Ibid.

[51] Woman's Relief Corps, *Journal of the Sixteenth National Convention,* 342.

[52] Woman's Relief Corps, *Journal of the Twenty-Fourth National Convention of the Woman's Relief Corps, Auxiliary to the Grand Army of the Republic* (Boston: E.B. Stillings & Co., 1899), 333-335.

Lincoln of her sex," Isabel Worrell Ball, writing on behalf of the WRC, applauded Anthony for her furtherance of women's work and her refusal to give up the cause of women's suffrage, even when "thousands of women and hundreds of thousands of men did not agree with her."[53] As Ball stressed: "[Anthony was] a beacon of light for every woman. A woman's right to herself, her right to property, her right to her children, her position as a factor in the world's work today, is due to the fight made under the leadership of Susan B. Anthony."[54]

Additionally, while some of the WRC's delegates expanded upon their roles in the NCW by becoming officers of the NCW or joining some of the NCW's other committees (like the Suffrage and Rights of Citizenship Committee), the WRC, as a whole, voted to take up other progressive causes that women were involved with in the early twentieth century. Like the General Federation of Women's Clubs, the Woman's Christian Temperance Union, and many other women's organizations in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the WRC sought to combat some of the negative effects of increased industrialization and urbanization in the United States.[55] Many members of the WRC specifically spoke out against child labor, arguing that children should be getting an education in school for the benefit of the country and its political institutions, not working in factories or shops. As John C. Kennedy has noted, women worked within the WRC to overturn state laws that permitted child labor, and the

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[53] "Miss Anthony Gone: Death Takes Away the World's Greatest Woman—The Good She Did Lives After Her—Benefactor of Her Sex," *National Tribune,* March 22, 1906.

[54] Ibid.

[55] Thomas, *The New Woman in Alabama*, 4-7.

organization established committees related to child welfare.[56] The WRC also came to support policies that sought to protect women; particularly in 1921, the WRC voted to officially endorse the Sheppard-Towner Act, which provided funding to states for prenatal health and aimed to decrease maternal and infant mortality.[57] Like many women during the Progressive Era, women in the WRC sought to reform and improve American society.[58]

By the thirty-fourth national convention in 1916, the WRC had cemented its status as a progressive women's organization by deciding to officially endorse women's suffrage. Of course, this was not a unanimous decision within the organization, and quite a few women, including Mary R. Morgan, voiced opposition to the resolution on the grounds that "lots of men in the Grand Army of the Republic are opposed to it" and endorsing suffrage could potentially create divisions within the organization.[59] In the face of this opposition, supporters of the resolution voiced a few distinct arguments. As expected, some of these arguments echoed the early rhetoric of Sherwood and Mussey. President Carrie Alexander-Bahrenberg, for example, not only argued that women's rights should be part of the WRC's mission of ensuring equal rights for all, but she also pointed out the irony of having women promote patriotism and teach citizenship when they were not even equal citizens themselves. As Bahrenberg specifically asked, "Should

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[56] Kennedy, "A Perfect Union," 130-131.

[57] Woman's Relief Corps, *A Journal of the Thirty-Ninth National Convention of the Woman's Relief Corps, Auxiliary to the Grand Army of the Republic* (Boston: E.B. Stillings & Co, 19 21), 422.

[58] Lewis L. Gould and Courtney Q. Shah, *America in the Progressive Era, 1890-1917* (New York: Routledge, 2021), 30.

[59] Woman's Relief Corps, *Journal of the Thirty-Fourth National Convention of the Woman's Relief Corps, Auxiliary to the Grand Army of the Republic,* quoted in John C. Kennedy, "A Perfect Union," 171.

we not ourselves be citizens with the full power of the franchise in order to make better teachers of ourselves?"[60] Florence Jamison Miller also spoke in favor of the WRC endorsing suffrage by drawing on her experience with the NCW as one of the WRC's longest-serving delegates. Having spent years appearing in front of state legislatures and lobbying for Congressional bills on behalf of the NCW, Miller pointed out the importance of being able to apply political pressure. If women had formal political rights, the potential influence of the WRC and its ability to act on its interests could increase as women could threaten legislators with their votes.[61] Ultimately, these arguments and appeals seemed to work as a majority of women voted for the WRC to officially voice support for women's suffrage.[62] Following this vote, the WRC restated its support for women's political rights at proceeding national conventions and continued to work closely with the NCW.[63] Finally, following women's persistence in lobbying for suffrage and their valuable contributions to the war effort during World War I, women won the right to vote on the national level in August of 1920, which the WRC happily celebrated.[64] Weeks after Tennessee became the final state to ratify the Nineteenth Amendment, Carrie Alexander-Bahrenberg proudly observed on behalf of the WRC that "we are glad that the pledge to our Flag, 'with liberty and justice for all,' is now a living entity, because of the ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment to the Constitution of the

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[60] Woman's Relief Corps, *Journal of the Thirty-Fourth National Convention of the Woman's Relief Corps* (Boston: E.B. Stillings & Co, 1916), 102.

[61] Ibid., 333.

[62] Ibid., 332.

[63] Woman's Relief Corps, *Journal of the Thirty-Fifth National Convention of the Woman's Relief Corps* (Washington, D.C.: The National Tribune Company, 1917), 467; 117-119.

[64] Johnson, *The Woman Suffrage Movement in the United States*, 151-155.

United States…"[65] As an organization, the WRC encouraged its members to act on their new statuses as full citizens of the American nation.[66]

III. Working for a Great Act of Justice: Members of the NAAN and the Pursuit of Suffrage

Unlike the WRC, there is no record of the NAAN endorsing or becoming directly involved with the movement for women's rights as an organization. This could be because the association was exponentially smaller than other women's organizations and did not document its activities as much. Whereas the WRC achieved a peak membership of 200,000 women in the 1920s, the most members that the NAAN ever had was about 500 women, and it likely did not feel the need to take money from its limited treasury to publish the proceedings of its annual meetings.[67] The NAAN also appears as more of a social group in the records that do exist; although the NAAN certainly acted in the interests of its members by lobbying for pensions and even securing the right for Union army nurses to be buried in national cemeteries, most newspapers portrayed the organization's yearly meetings as events where women could gather to socialize, maintain a sense of sisterhood, and, most importantly, remember the past.[68] As Addie L. Ballou wrote on behalf of the organization in 1892:

> We, the assembled Army Nurses of the late war for the preservation of the Union, agree to band ourselves together for mutual good will and protection, and to perpetuate fraternity and the memory of our hospital services during the country's

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[65] Woman's Relief Corps, *Journal of the Thirty-Eighth National Convention*, 254.

[66] Ibid., 259.

[67] Woman's Relief Corps, *Journal of the Forty-First National Convention of the Woman's Relief Corps* (Washington, D.C.: The National Tribune Company, 1923), 67; "Courage Was Needed: Women Who Worked in the Fire of Battle," *The Buffalo Express,* August 23, 1897.

[68] Scott, *In Honor of the National Association of Civil War Army Nurses*, 1-2

> peril; and also to keep perpetuated among us the spirit of loyalty to country… and to other wise further our mutual interests as sisters in a grand and loyal cause.[69]

Especially as former nurses began to pass away in large numbers in the early twentieth century, the NAAN's members became increasingly committed to leaving behind a memory of their service by recording their experiences during the Civil War and emphasizing the sacrifices they made to the larger American nation.[70] In the eyes of most of the NAAN's members, spending time with their female comrades and making others remember the service of army nurses likely seemed more important than urging the entire NAAN to become further involved in the divisive world of politics.

Yet some prominent members of the NAAN did advocate for women's suffrage and political rights by capitalizing on their work and membership within this organization. Of course, advocating for suffrage occurred on a more individual level in the NAAN than the WRC, and, at times, it appeared to be less direct. Consider, for example, Addie Ballou, whose heavy involvement in the NAAN was just one part of her very busy post-war life. Having left her children to enlist in the 32nd Wisconsin Infantry as a regimental nurse during the Civil War, Ballou later insisted "that a woman had as

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[69] "Association of Army Nurses," *The National Tribune,* September 8, 1904.

[70] Their determination to leave behind a memory of their service can be seen in the NAAN's efforts to publish the book *In Honor of the National Association of Army Nurses of the Civil War.* In addition to summarizing the NAAN's history, the book functioned as a record of the services provided by its members during the Civil War. The book's introduction and included poems from Rose Terry Cook and Clara Barton paint Civil War nurses as being brave and worthy of recognition. The book was originally published to be passed around at the national conventions of the GAR, but copies of it were donated in libraries across the United States for other Americans to read. Scott, *In Honor of the National Association of Civil War Army Nurses*, 1-4; *Report of the State Librarian of the State of Michigan* (Lansing, MI: Wynkoop Hallenback Crawford Company, 1908), 11; Georgetown University, *General Catalogue at the University-- 1910-'11* (Washington, D.C.: The University Press, 2010), 38.

much right to go to war, as a man had to shoulder a musket."[71] Following a dip in the NAAN's membership and its inability to maintain a president, Ballou started an effort in 1892 to turn the NAAN into a truly national organization by recruiting more nurses, writing new rules and regulations, and eventually designing the NAAN's official emblem.[72] For these efforts, the NAAN's members elected Ballou as president of the organization twice, once in 1892 and once again in 1903.[73] Almost immediately after her reformation of the NAAN in 1892, Ballou appears to have used some of the organizational skills she acquired with the NAAN to found and lead independent organizations for the pursuit of women's rights, such as the San Francisco Council of Women in 1893 and the Woman's State Central Republican Club of California in 1895.[74] After being invited to a Republican Party convention in 1902, Ballou insisted that "within the present century the recognition of women and her rights is bound to come."[75] As Ballou continued to advocate for more rights and opportunities for women, she also began to emphasize her status as a former army nurse and added her presidency of the NAAN to her list of distinctions.[76]

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[71] "She Breathes Fire: Mrs. Addie L. Ballou Warms Up the Thirty-Second Wisconsin Veterans," *The Saint Paul Globe,* September 4, 1896.

[72] Scott, *In Honor of the National Association of Civil War Army Nurses*, 1; "Encampment in Full Swing," *Norwalk Daily Reflector*, August 16, 1904.

[73] Scott, *In Honor of the National Association of Civil War Army Nurses,* 1.

[74] "Women Organize: The New Club Adapts a Name," *San Francisco Morning Call,* June 11, 1893; "Woman's Voice is Heard," *The San Francisco Call,* April 16, 1902.

[75] "Woman's Voice is Heard."

[76] Addie Ballou, *Driftwood* (San Francisco: The Hicks-Judd Company, 1899), 30; Addie L. Ballou, questionnaire, 1910, Collection of Association of Army Nurses of the Civil War Questionnaires, HRHS-073, Rocktown History Museum, Dayton, Virginia. This set of 108 questionnaires was taken to

Another president of the NAAN that seemed to capitalize on her activities and membership within this organization was Fanny Titus Hazen, although the connections between her work in the NAAN and her advocacy for suffrage are more explicit. When the Civil War broke out in the spring of 1861, Hazen, in a similar manner to Ballou, recalled thinking: "When the whole country was alive with patriotism, it seemed the greatest misfortune of my life that I was born a girl."[77] Unable to go fight in the war with her younger brothers, Hazen decided to enlist as an army nurse, something that was difficult for her to achieve as she was only 20 years old, and the United States government made it a rule to only accept older women as nurses to reduce the likelihood of inappropriate nurse-soldier relationships.[78] Hazen won the favor of Dorothea Dix, the Superintendent of Army Nurses for the Union Army, and she served as an army nurse for the entirety of the Civil War.[79] When Dix founded the organization in 1881 that would become the NAAN, Hazen was among its members, and it furthered her interest in "anything concerning the welfare and betterment of women."[80] Eventually, Hazen became president of the association for two terms starting in 1896. During this time, she worked under the NAAN's mission of documenting and commemorating the service of its members by collaborating with Mary Gardner Holland to publish a book that featured

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support the publication of Kate M. Scott's *In Honor of the National Association of Civil War Army Nurses*. Hereafter cited as Army Nurses Questionnaires.

[77] Mary Gardner Holland, *Our Army Nurses: Interesting Sketches and Photographs of Over 100 Nurses Who Served in Hospitals and On Battle Fields During Our Late Civil War, 1861-1865* (Boston: Press of Lounsbery, Nichols & Worth, 1892), 467-468.

[78] Schultz, *Women at the Front*, 15-16.

[79] Holland, *Our Army Nurses*, 467-468; Fanny T. Hazen questionnaire, 1910, Army Nurses Questionnaires.

[80] "Famous War Nurse to Celebrate 70th Birthday," *Boston Sunday Post,* May 8, 1910.

the stories of many women in the NAAN.[81] At the end of the book, Holland and Hazen chose to include an essay written by Ida A. Harper, a prominent suffragist and close friend of Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton. In this essay, Harper made it a point to ask: "Can any man read this record [of women in the Civil War] and continue to say, 'no woman shall have a voice in this Government because she cannot go to war and fight?' Do the services of men outweigh the services that women have given to this nation?"[82] Like Ballou, Hazen later became a prominent member of other women's organizations like the Cambridge Equal Suffrage League in Massachusetts, but she remained active in the NAAN and proudly cited her leadership of the association.[83]

No woman, however, capitalized upon her membership in the NAAN more than Mary O. Stevens. Although Stevens only served as an army nurse for five months in Washington, D.C., during the Civil War, she had the distinction of being the youngest to serve under Superintendent Dorothea Dix at just 19 years old.[84] Following the end of the conflict in 1865, Stevens moved back to Massachusetts and, like Ballou and Hazen, became involved in the broader women's movement by advocating for suffrage, even founding the Peabody Equal Suffrage League in 1889.[85] While it is unclear exactly when Stevens joined the NAAN, Stevens began to become particularly involved with the

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[81] The book only lists Mary Gardner Holland as an author, but the book is copyrighted in Hazen's name and a newspaper article notes her as having a role in the book's publication. Holland, *Our Army Nurses,* 2; "Famous War Nurse to Celebrate 70th Birthday."

[82] Holland, *Our Army Nurses*, 584.

[83] Fanny T. Hazen questionnaire, 1910, Army Nurses Questionnaires; "Famous War Nurse to Celebrate 70th Birthday."

[84] Mary O. Stevens to Kate M. Scott, April 9, 1910, Army Nurses Questionnaires.

[85] "Peabody," *The Boston Sunday,* February 28, 1915.

association around the 50th anniversary of the Civil War.[86] In 1916, the NAAN's remaining members elected her as the organization's secretary and press correspondent. In the following year, Stevens sent a brief letter to North Carolina Congressman Edwin Webb advocating for suffrage. As she specifically wrote:

> It seems to me right to ask you to help the cause of Woman Suffrage just now at this session of Congress by an immediate and favorable report on the Federal Suffrage Amendment Bill. My father trained me in my childhood days to expect this right. I have given my help to the agitation and work for its coming a good many years. It seems as if the time was to come for this great act of justice and that this Congress doing most needed things for the whole world ought not to overlook the appeal of the women of our land.[87]

This appeal for suffrage was most likely one of thousands that the House of Representatives received that year, but what makes the letter unique was Stevens' choice to write it on the NAAN's stationery, something that was probably provided to her as part of her role as the organization's secretary and press correspondent. While there is no evidence to conclude that Stevens wrote this letter on behalf of the entire organization, the NAAN's bold logo, the listed names of the association's officers, and the printed version of the emblem that Ballou designed for the organization give the letter a sense of authority.[88] Additionally, by choosing to write this on the NAAN's stationery, Stevens likely drew upon the recognition of the NAAN as an organization full of honorable and self-sacrificing women that had saved the United States with their work, which would

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[86] Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, *Fiftieth Anniversary of the Battle of Gettysburg, Report of the Pennsylvania Commission* (Harrisburg, PA: Stanley Ray, State Printer, 1915), 102.

[87] Mary O. Stevens to Edwin Webb, United States House of Representatives, May 1, 1917, Petitions and Memorials, 1813-1968, National Archives, Washington, D.C., https://catalog.archives.gov/id/119222092.

[88] Ibid.

have reinforced the letter's argument and the credibility of its author.[89] Either way, in sending this particular letter, Stevens was ultimately advocating for women's political rights by using her position in the NAAN.

IV. Conclusion

To be clear, not all women in the WRC and the NAAN were intent on improving their political positions in American society by advocating for women's suffrage within the contexts of these organizations. As already explored, the WRC may have featured progressive women such as Kate B. Sherwood, Ellen S. Women, Carrie Alexander-Bahrenberg, and Florence Jamison Miller, but it also featured women like Annie Wittenmyer and Mary R. Morgan, who had much more conservative views regarding the purpose of the WRC and the rightful position of women in American society. Likewise, the NAAN may have featured other women in addition to Addie L. Ballou, Fanny Titus Hazen, and Mary O. Stevens that supported women's suffrage, but there were also plenty of members in the NAAN that have no records of supporting this cause. In fact, Dorothea Dix, the NAAN's founder, continued to criticize the pursuit of women's rights even as she lobbied legislatures for better hospital conditions for the mentally ill and despite having witnessed the full extent of women's work during the Civil War as the Superintendent of Army Nurses for the Union Army. Dix's personal opposition could be

[89] Despite being small in size, the NAAN featured many prominent and honorable women, including Dorothea Dix, Clara Barton, and Mary Livermore. Additionally, the organization was still relatively well-known as a result of its connection to the GAR. Newspapers across the United States reported the NAAN's meetings, although some of these reports were more detailed than others.

another reason as to why the NAAN never formally affiliated itself with the women's suffrage movement.[90]

Nevertheless, it is evident that at least some women attempted to capitalize on these organizations to advocate for concrete forms of political power. Although the WRC and the NAAN provided avenues for women to influence politics and even get legislation passed in their interests, some women saw the potential of using their work and membership within these organizations to achieve something bigger. This was especially the case for a number of women in the WRC, whose affiliation with the NCW and use of patriotic language to advocate for equal rights further proves that this organization was a significant organization for women. The WRC did not solely serve the desires of the GAR, and it actually endorsed giving political power to women. In the end, most people may not know their names as well as Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony, but some of the most prominent members of the WRC and the NAAN were part of a very large and influential movement for women's rights in the United States. The WRC and the NAAN were thus organizations that worked for the benefit and advancement of women, and their efforts were ultimately part of the progress that women have been able to make in the past 100 years.

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[90] The Man-Suffrage Association, *The Case Against Woman Suffrage: A Manual for Speakers, Debaters, Writers, Lecturers, and Anyone Who Wants the Facts and Figures* (New York: Self-published, 1903), 16; There is some evidence to suggest that the NAAN might have indirectly affiliated itself with the women's movement, particularly when it chose to host its annual meetings during the national conventions for the NAWSA instead of the GAR. "Army Nurses Meet: Annual Gathering Held at 4 Park St. This Noon," *Boston Daily Globe,* June 12, 1902.

Chapter 3-- Giving Power to Confederate Lineage: The United Daughters of the Confederacy and the Promotion of Higher Education for Southern Women

I. Introduction

According to the *Savannah Morning News,* November 1st of 1902 could only be described as a day of "glorious educational revival" for the people of Athens, Georgia.[1] On this day, nearly 100 state legislators traveled to Athens to help the Georgia division of the United Daughters of the Confederacy (UDC) celebrate the new dormitory that was being constructed at the State Normal School.[2] Initially chartered by the Georgia legislature in 1891 to increase the state's supply of trained teachers, the State Normal School in Athens was a thriving coeducational college, but, by 1902, it was one that was also struggling to provide adequate housing for its female students.[3] Among those who noticed this issue were Georgia residents and UDC members Hallie Alexander Rounsaville and Mildred Lewis Rutherford. Both recommended at UDC meetings in 1898 and 1899 that the Georgia division fund a new dormitory as a living memorial to the Confederacy.[4] Over four years later, state legislators and UDC members gathered on the grounds of the State Normal School to lay the cornerstone of this new dormitory. The dormitory was to be named in honor of Winnie Davis, the youngest daughter of ex-Confederate President Jefferson Davis, and it was to provide free housing for

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[1] "Winnie Davis Memorial Hall: Day of Unusual Interest in Classic Old Athens," *Savannah Morning News,* November 2, 1902.

[2] Ibid.

[3] "To Lay the Corner Stone of Winnie Davis Monument," *Atlanta Constitution,* October 26, 1902.

[4] United Daughters of the Confederacy, *Minutes of the Tenth Annual Meeting of the United Daughters of the Confederacy* (Nashville, TN: Press of Foster & Webb, 1904), 142; "To Lay the Corner Stone of Winnie Davis Monument."

approximately sixty women per academic year, with preference given to the descendants of Confederate veterans.[5] Although the eventual opening of the Winnie Davis Memorial Hall in 1903 did not solve all of the State Normal School's housing issues, it did provide housing for some women, and it inspired other individuals to donate money for the construction of new dormitories.[6] As for the Georgia division of the UDC, its members described their funding of the dormitory as some of the "greatest work the division has ever accomplished."[7] As Mildred Lewis Rutherford specifically stated, "the Winnie Davis Memorial Dormitory… is a better testimonial of love and devotion of our heroes than cold marble shafts."[8] Even after the UDC handed the ownership of the dormitory over to the state of Georgia, the organization continued to pay for the building's repairs and to aid women in securing housing at the State Normal School.[9] Today, the dormitory still stands and serves as an administration building for Augusta University and the University of Georgia. It also retains its name as Winnie Davis Hall.[10]

Today, the UDC is one of the most recognized women's groups in American history. Their legacy is physically visible as hundreds of Confederate monuments still populate the landscape of the South and habitually spark debates in American politics. By

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[5] "To Lay the Corner Stone of Winnie Davis Monument."

[6] Ibid.

[7] United Daughters of the Confederacy, *Minutes of the Tenth Annual Meeting*, 142.

[8] United Daughters of the Confederacy, *Minutes of the Ninth Annual Meeting of the United Daughters of the Confederacy* (Nashville, TN: Press of Foster & Webb, 1903), 110.

[9] Georgia Division of the United Daughters of the Confederacy, *Twenty-Sixth Annual Minutes of the Georgia Division United Daughters of the Confederacy* (n.p.: Self-published., 1920), 87-88.

[10] "Location/Contact," About, AU/UGA Medical Partnership, accessed February 15, 2023, https://medicalpartnership.usg.edu/about/location-contact/.

examining these monuments and the context behind their constructions, historians like Karen Cox have been able to argue that the main purpose of the UDC was to vindicate the Confederacy and promote the Lost Cause in the post-Civil War South, something that the organization did by primarily erecting Confederate monuments and influencing southern education.[11] This chapter seeks to build on previous scholarship by further exploring some of the ways in which the UDC worked for the benefit of women and contributed to their advancement by expanding their opportunities. This chapter particularly focuses on the UDC's efforts to support higher education for white southern women through scholarships and college funding.

II. Lost Cause Ladies: The Origins and Enduring Work of the UDC

The WRC and the NAAN had been in existence for over a decade by the time the UDC emerged as an independent women's organization and began its mission to vindicate the Confederacy. On September 10th, 1894, a group of white southern women met in Nashville, Tennessee, to discuss the possibility of forming a national women's organization dedicated to preserving the values and memory of the Old South. The meeting had been arranged and attended by two women in particular: Caroline Meriwether Goodlett of Nashville and Anna Davenport Raines of Savannah, Georgia.[12] Initially connected by the fact that they were both leaders of local organizations named "Daughters of the Confederacy," Goodlett and Raines had spent months corresponding with each other about the need for white women to rescue the historical legacy of the

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[11] Karen Cox, *Dixie's Daughters: The United Daughters of the Confederacy and the Preservation of Confederate Culture* (Gainesville, FL: The University Press of Florida, 2003), 1-3.

[12] United Daughters of the Confederacy, *Minutes of the Fifth Annual Meeting of the United Daughters of the Confederacy* (Nashville, TN: Press of Foster & Webb, 1899), 39.

Confederacy.[13] Eventually, both women came to agree that there should be an umbrella organization to connect all of the local women's societies that had emerged in the South to celebrate the Confederacy. Goodlett published a notice in southern newspapers for all women interested in "perpetuating the memories of the heroes of the war" to meet at the Frank Cheatham Bivouac in Nashville.[14] Only about 30 women showed up to attend this meeting, but the women present agreed that a large organization seemed beneficial and subsequently established the National Association of the Daughters of the Confederacy.[15] In the following year, this group shortened its name to the "United Daughters of the Confederacy.[16]

The UDC immediately became an exclusive yet dedicated organization. As outlined in the organization's constitution, women could only become members of the UDC in three ways. Most women became members of the UDC by proving that they were the wife, mother, sister, daughter, or granddaughter of a man who served in the Confederate military or government.[17] Other women, however, could join by proving that they had provided "personal service and loyal aid to the Southern cause during the war" or were the descendant of a woman who provided such service.[18] In all three cases, women had to demonstrate a personal connection to the Confederacy and perhaps even

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[13] Cox, *Dixie's Daughters*, 18-19.

[14] United Daughters of the Confederacy, *Minutes of the Fifth Annual Meeting,* 39.

[15] Karen Cox, *No Common Ground: Confederate Monuments and the Ongoing Fight For Racial Justice* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2021)*,* 2

[16] Cox, *Dixie's Daughters*, 19.

[17] United Daughters of the Confederacy, *Constitution of the United Daughters of the Confederacy* (Atlanta, GA: Self-published, 1895), 2.

[18] Ibid.

an emotional stake in protecting its legacy, thereby ensuring that they would not divert the organization from its objectives. Over the next few decades, the women of the UDC would aggressively defend the legacy of the Confederacy by becoming the foremost promoters and transmitters of the Lost Cause in the New South.

As already addressed in the introduction of this thesis, some scholars have chosen to refer to the Lost Cause as a "civil religion," a "tradition," or even a "mythology," but it can primarily be defined as the conservative movement in the postbellum South to glorify the Confederacy and honor the Confederate "heroes" that died during the Civil War.[19] Most significantly, supporters of the Lost Cause still commonly maintain that the Civil War was about states' rights rather than slavery, that slavery was a benevolent and fair institution in the Old South, and the Confederacy was only defeated due to the Union's superior resources.[20] White southerners not only fabricated this narrative to cope with their humiliating loss of the Civil War and remember the Confederacy in a positive light, but their intentional creation of the Lost Cause also justified their desire to maintain white supremacy and establish extremely oppressive laws for African Americans in the New South.[21] By supporting the Lost Cause and undertaking activities that celebrated the

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[19] Charles Wilson, *Baptized in Blood: The Religion of the Lost Cause, 1865-1920* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1980), 1; Gaines Foster, *Ghosts of the Confederacy: Defeat, the Lost Cause, and the Emergence of the New South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), 7; Cox, *Dixie's Daughters,* 4.

[20] Adam Domby, *The False Cause: Fraud, Fabrication, and White Supremacy in Confederate Memory* (Charlottesville: The University of Virginia Press, 2018), 16-17. Historically speaking, the Union Army did have more resources than the Confederacy. Most significantly, the North had a larger male population to draw soldiers from, but it also had more railroads to transport supplies and troops and more factories that could produce weapons. James McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom: The Civil War Era* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 95.

[21] Domby, *The False Cause*, 15-17.

Confederacy, white southerners transformed the South's military defeat into a cultural victory and reconstructed the class and racial hierarchies that favored themselves.[22]

Although the UDC became the foremost leader of Lost Cause celebration, the UDC did not invent the Lost Cause, nor was it the first women's organization to promote it. While some historians point to Edward Pollard's 1866 book for the formal origins of the Lost Cause, Caroline Janney contends that local Ladies' Memorial Associations (LMAs) actually laid the groundwork for the Lost Cause in 1865.[23] According to Janney, white women in LMAs were the first southerners to organize cemeteries for fallen soldiers, erect monuments within these cemeteries, and host southern celebrations of Memorial Day, all of which honored Confederate dead and helped the South maintain pro-Confederate sentiment.[24] LMAs never quite faded away, but, starting in 1890s, organizations called "Daughters of the Confederacy" emerged throughout the South and continued to undertake similar activities. These were the organizations that the UDC primarily sought to connect as a national organization.[25] There were a few men's organizations that emerged and took part in Lost Cause celebration as well, namely the United Confederate Veterans (UCV). Organized in 1889 for "social, literary, historical, and benevolent" purposes, the UCV funded Confederate monuments, provided supplies for southern celebrations of Memorial Day, and sponsored efforts to publish "true"

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[22] Cox, *Dixie's Daughters,* 1.

[23] Cox, *No Common Ground,* 15-19.

[24] Caroline Janney, *Burying the Dead but Not the Past: Ladies' Memorial Associations and the Lost Cause* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2008), 1-14.

[25] Cox, *Dixie's Daughters*, 15-16; United Daughters of the Confederacy, *Minutes of the Fifth Annual Meeting*, 39.

histories of the South and Confederate struggle.[26] Consequently, when the UDC emerged at the end of the nineteenth century, most of its goals and activities were not exactly unique. Instead, what distinguished the UDC was its gendered approach.

As Karen Cox identified in *Dixie's Daughters,* it was ultimately the UDC's commitment to the ideal of Confederate motherhood that made the UDC the most effective and, therefore, the most significant organization for Lost Cause celebration.[27] A variation of the post-American Revolution ideal of "republican motherhood" that described women as having a unique responsibility to educate children and future generations to value republicanism and be good citizens, the UDC's Confederate motherhood maintained that southern women had a unique responsibility to educate children and future generations in the values of the Old South and the Confederacy. As with republican motherhood, Confederate motherhood reinforced the separate spheres ideology as it emphasized women's domestic roles as wives and mothers, but it also expanded upon these roles by recognizing women as educators and moral guardians.[28] Under the idea of Confederate motherhood, women in the UDC saw themselves as having a special duty of preserving the Lost Cause and instilling Confederate patriotism in southern white children. As a result, while members of other organizations may have felt a responsibility to perpetuate the Lost Cause and teach children to honor the Confederacy, the UDC's adherence to Confederate motherhood, as well as its overt fear that northern influences would tarnish the legacy of the Confederacy for future

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[26] United Confederate Veterans, *Minutes of the Third Annual Meeting and Reunion of the United Confederate Veterans* (New Orleans, LA: Hopkins' Printing Office, 1892), 45-46; 49; 23.

[27] Cox, *Dixie's Daughters*, 123.

[28] Ibid., 122-123.

generations, led its members to take an aggressive role in ensuring the survival of the Lost Cause and shaping the minds of southern white children.[29] The UDC sought to perpetuate the Lost Cause and ensure its transmission to future generations in two major ways: by erecting Confederate monuments and by influencing southern education.

Although compelled by its constitution to undertake a variety of "memorial, benevolent, historical, educational, and social objectives," the UDC always maintained a heavy emphasis on memorialization.[30] On one hand, the UDC's extensive efforts to erect monuments were a continuation of the tradition started by LMAs. As already mentioned, LMAs laid some of the foundations for the Lost Cause by being the first organizations to honor fallen Confederate soldiers by erecting monuments, most of which were located in the cemeteries they founded.[31] The UDC continued to erect monuments that memorialized Confederate dead, but they also built monuments with the idea that they would aid in the transmission of Confederate ideals to future generations. Rather than just erecting monuments in secluded cemeteries, UDC monuments would often take the form of a marble or granite statue in a highly visible public space, such as a park or town square.[32] The UDC's monuments also heavily featured Lost Cause language. In 1907, for example, over 80,000 people gathered to witness the unveiling of the UDC's large monument to Jefferson Davis in Richmond, Virginia. The project had taken several years for the UDC to complete, but the organization ended up raising over $50,000 for the

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[29] Cox, *Dixie's Daughters,* 122-123.

[30] United Daughters of the Confederacy, *Minutes of the Fourth Annual Meeting of the United Daughters of the Confederacy* (Nashville, TN: Press of Foster & Webb, 1898), 51.

[31] Janney, *Burying the Dead But Not the Past*, 120; 164.

[32] Cox, *Dixie's Daughters*, 55-57.

monument's construction.[33] On the base of Davis' statue, the UDC inscribed that Davis had been both an "exponent of Constitutional principles" and a "defender of the rights of states" as the Confederacy's president during the Civil War.[34] Davis had been an honorable man, a memory that the UDC sought to "transmit unshorn to our children" by building the monument.[35] Overall, the UDC, both as a national organization and as a collection of state divisions, was responsible for the construction of at least 400 Confederate monuments in the United States by the end of the 20th century. A significant number of these monuments still stand today.[36] The women of the UDC saw memorialization as one of the most important components of their work, and they truly made the construction of Confederate monuments an integral part of Lost Cause celebration.

Next to memorialization, the objective that the UDC focused on the most was education. Prior to organizing the UDC's first meeting in Nashville, Goodlett and Raines bonded over the need to protect southern children from "falsehoods" present in northern-

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[33] Foster, *Ghosts of the Confederacy*, 158-159.

[34] "Richmond's Black Residents Have Lived With Shrines to the Confederacy For Too Long," *The Washington Post,* July 9, 2018, https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/richmonds-black-residents-have-lived-with-shrines-to-the-confederacy-for-too-long/2018/07/09/19306316-8082-11e8-bb6b-c1cb691f1402_story.html/.

[35] Alice M. Tyler, *Souvenir Book of the Jefferson Davis Memorial Association and the Unveiling of the Monument* (Richmond, VA: Whittet & Shepperson, 1907), 14.

[36] "A Closer Look: Southern Heritage Groups Actively Promote 'Lost Cause' Mythology," Southern Poverty Law Center, accessed February 1, 2022, https://www.splcenter.org/20190201/whose-heritage-public-symbols-confederacy#methodology. It is interesting to note that not all of the UDC's monuments were constructed in the South. For example, one UDC monument can still be found in Woodlawn National Cemetery in Elmira, New York. Erected in 1937, the monument commemorates the 3,000 Confederate soldiers who died in Elmira's prisoner-of-war camp. "Confederate Statue Dedicated in Elmira," *Syracuse Herald,* November 18, 1937.

published history books.[37] As ardent supporters of the Lost Cause, Goodlett, Raines, and many other women in the UDC strongly believed that slavery was not a central factor in the Civil War and that the South had seceded for a more honorable purpose. Unsurprisingly, these beliefs were not supported by the historical accounts published by non-southern writers in the decades following the war. Drawing on their gendered roles as educators and shared duty to ensure the survival of the Lost Cause, the women of the UDC formed the organization's first historical committee in 1897 to monitor and rewrite history books for "truthfulness."[38] Making sure that books were free of "misrepresentations" and "gross omissions" that were "unjust to the South and her institutions," the UDC spent the next several decades compiling lists of acceptable history books and working with state legislatures and school boards to ensure that these were the books used in public schools.[39] Only history books that were compatible with the Lost Cause were approved by the UDC's committees, with many of these books containing positive depictions of slavery and arguments for the South's right to secede.[40] To further shape the minds of southern white children and ensure that they learned about the Confederacy in a positive light, the UDC also placed Confederate flags in classrooms, worked with teachers to plan history lessons, and recruited students to join the Children of the Confederacy, an auxiliary formed by the UDC to train children in Confederate

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[37] Cox, *Dixie's Daughters*, 18.

[38] United Daughters of the Confederacy, *Minutes of the Fourth Annual Meeting*, 38.

[39] Mildred Lewis Rutherford, *A Measuring Rod to Test Text Books, and Reference Books in Schools, Colleges and Libraries* (Athens, GA: Self-published, 1920), 4-5.

[40] For an example of one of these textbooks, see: Mary C. Simms Oliphant, *The New Simms History of South Carolina* (Columbia, SC: The State Company, 1940), 233-253.

culture.[41] Fortunately, the UDC's direct influence on southern education has faded with time, but, as with the organization's work in memorialization, the UDC's educational work was largely successful in that it has ensured the survival of the Lost Cause into the 21st century.

III. Educating the Poor Girls of the South: The UDC's Work in Higher Education for Southern Women

In exploring the Daughters' efforts to erect monuments, influence southern education, and undertake other Lost Cause activities, scholars have acknowledged how the UDC expanded opportunities for women in the post-Civil War South. As outlined in the introduction of this thesis, dominating gender ideologies, like the separate spheres ideology and the cult of true womanhood, limited the activities of many women in the nineteenth century, but this was especially true for southern women. Before the Civil War, rigid race, class, and gender hierarchies had governed southern society and helped southern white men maintain their own political power as well as the institution of African American slavery.[42] Like their devotion to the Confederacy, the desire of southern white men to maintain rigid race, class, and gender hierarchies never disappeared. More than anywhere else in the United States, traditional gender roles endured in the post-Civil War South. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, elite white women were particularly bound by the cultural image of the southern lady, which provided a model for respectable white womanhood and urged southern women to

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[41] Cox, *Dixie's Daughters*, 121-122.

[42] Catherine Clinton, *The Plantation Mistress: Woman's World in the Old South* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1982), 6-7.

be soft, pious, and submissive. Like the separate spheres ideology, the idea of the southern lady also depicted the proper place for white women as being in the private sphere of the home.[43] As both Karen Cox and Joan Marie Johnson have identified, women in the UDC made conscious attempts to identify as southern ladies and to conform to this cultural image, but they also pushed the boundaries of what was considered socially acceptable for women by undertaking public-facing work. In their attempts to erect monuments, influence southern education, and undertake other Lost Cause activities, women in the UDC consistently lobbied legislatures, took part in political negotiations, and became gifted orators.[44] Southern society ultimately found these developments acceptable as they were part of the admirable attempts of women to preserve the honorable image of the Confederacy and perpetuate the Lost Cause, but the UDC still played a significant role in elevating women into the public sphere.[45] Although this thesis recognizes how the UDC benefited women by providing them with a political and cultural outlet, this chapter seeks to examine another way in which the UDC worked for the benefit of women and contributed to their advancement in the contexts of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries: by providing scholarships and college funding for the benefit of southern women.

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[43] Anne Firor Scott, *The Southern Lady: From Pedestal to Politics, 1830-1930* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1970), 107-111; x; Marjorie Spruill Wheeler, *New Women of the New South: The Leaders of the Woman Suffrage Movement in the Southern States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 6-8.

[44] Cox, *Dixie's Daughters*, 26-27; 43-44; Joan Marie Johnson, Joan Marie Johnson, *Southern Ladies, New Women: Race, Region, and Clubwomen in South Carolina, 1890-1930* (Gainesville: The University Press of Florida, 2004), 3; 27-29.

[45] Johnson, *Southern Ladies, New Women*, 145.

Only three years after the UDC's formation in Nashville, members of the UDC began advocating for the organization to directly support the higher education of southern women. During the UDC's national convention in 1897, Rebecca Latimer Felton of Georgia became the first Daughter to advocate for such an endeavor when she delivered a speech titled "The Importance of the Education of the Poor Girls of the South." In this speech, Felton argued that the UDC had an important responsibility to help "the poor, needy, and grateful white girls of the South."[46] After all, most of the fathers and grandfathers of these girls had bravely fought for the Confederacy, and one of the foundational purposes of the UDC was to honor Confederate soldiers and provide support for their families.[47] However, as Felton also pointed out, it was not just the children of the UDC's middle-to-upper-class white women that would make up the South's future generations; instead, statistically speaking, economically disadvantaged white women would "be the coming mothers of the white race by a large majority."[48] By providing these women with a higher education, the UDC could not only further honor veterans by giving their female descendants the chance to better their lives and economic prospects, but it could also instill a respect for the UDC in these women and turn them into Confederate mothers.[49]

Capitalizing on the overwhelmingly positive reception to Felton's speech, Mrs. Albert Ackers, on behalf of Mrs. William F. Holtzman, delivered a short speech on the

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[46] United Daughters of the Confederacy, *Minutes of the Fourth Annual Meeting*, 36.

[47] Ibid. 34-36.

[48] Ibid., 35.

[49] Ibid., 34-37.

topic of higher education for southern women at the same national convention in 1897. However, rather than generally suggesting that the UDC support women's education, Ackers and Holtzman made a specific proposition to the convention:

> Many of you are aware that it is the gallant wish of the Confederate soldiers and other loyal Southerners to erect a monument to the Southern woman in commemoration of the aid rendered by her to our beloved "Lost Cause." We suggest that this chivalric movement find expression in a monument more enduring than brass, and that it take the shape of a university for women, an institution wherein the daughters, granddaughters, and great-granddaughters of the brave Confederate veterans, and of the noble women who patiently and untiringly gave them their aid… may obtain that thorough mental training and higher education for which so many are now thirsting… Such an institution would, we feel assured, be the most acceptable and appropriate monument that could be erected in honor of the Southern woman-- a tribute that would not only honor her, but be of lasting and continuous benefit to her descendants.[50]

In the end, the UDC never established an entire university. But, by delivering these speeches, Felton, Ackers, and Holtzman had effectively laid the ideological foundations for the Daughters to support the higher education of southern women.

The first significant project related to the higher education of southern women within the UDC was the construction of the Winnie Davis Memorial Hall mentioned in the introduction of this chapter. The project memorialized Winnie Davis for her role in motivating the South both during and after the Civil War.[51] Born in June of 1864 to then-Confederate President Jefferson Davis and First Lady Varina Davis, Varina Anne "Winnie" Davis quickly became a symbol of hope as the Confederate war effort deteriorated. She later fostered the Lost Cause as an adult by writing in support of the

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[50] United Daughters of the Confederacy, *Minutes of the Fourth Annual Meeting*, 36-37.

[51] United Daughters of the Confederacy, *Minutes of the Tenth Annual Meeting,* 142.

Confederacy in the 1880s.[52] When Davis tragically died in 1898, the women of the UDC were frantic to commemorate the first "Daughter of the Confederacy."[53] Perhaps inspired by the speeches delivered by Felton and Ackers in the previous year, Hallie Alexander Rounsaville recommended during the Georgia division's meeting in 1898 that the division's monument to Davis take the form of a dormitory, with Mildred Lewis Rutherford recommending in the following year that this dormitory be located at the State Normal School in Athens.[54]

In considering the dormitory's construction, it is easy to see why the Georgia division considered the dormitory as some of its best work. In order to construct the dormitory in a timely manner, the Georgia division worked heavily to raise the $25,000 needed for an adequate dormitory.[55] The division was ultimately successful in raising most of the money on its own (approximately $15,000), with the Georgia legislature and an independent organization, the General Education Board, providing the rest.[56] In addition to giving it a distinctly southern name, the UDC ensured that the Winnie Davis Memorial Dormitory had a southern design with gray marble, a three-sided colonnade,

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[52] Heath Hardage Lee, *Winnie Davis: Daughter of the Lost Cause* (Lincoln, NE: Potomac Books, 2014), 1; 152-167.

[53] United Daughters of the Confederacy, *Minutes of the Fifth Annual Meeting,* 29.

[54] United Daughters of the Confederacy, *Minutes of the Tenth Annual Meeting*, 142.

[55] "To Lay the Corner Stone of Winnie Davis Monument," *Atlanta Constitution,* October 26, 1902. The original goal in order to build the dormitory was $15,000, but the UDC made improvements to the dormitory's design that upped the cost.

[56] *Acts and Resolutions of the General Assembly of the State of Georgia* (Atlanta: The Franklin Printing and Publishing Company, 1903), 13-14; "Gifts for Georgia: General Education Board's Liberal Offer," *Savannah Morning News,* April 27, 1902. Adjusting for contemporary inflation, the Georgia division would have raised over $500,000 today.

and a wrap-around balcony.[57] The inside of the dormitory could reportedly be mistaken as a museum, as battle flags, Davis family portraits, and other Confederate relics lined the dormitory's walls.[58] In short, the entire building, both inside and out, served as a living memorial to Winnie Davis and the rest of the Confederacy. There were a number of ways that women who were housed by the dormitory could be influenced or reinforced into holding an appreciation for the Confederacy, something that they would likely pass down to children once they graduated from the State Normal School and became teachers. The Winnie Davis Memorial Hall, subsequently, represented a perfect intersection of the UDC's benevolent, memorial, and educational objectives.

The Tennessee division also eventually funded an impressive dormitory for female students at the George Peabody College for Teachers (now the College of Education for Vanderbilt University), but the rest of the UDC preferred to established college scholarships.[59] Two years following the completion of the Winnie Davis Memorial Hall, the Georgia division proudly reported that its members were now "maintaining scholarships in many schools and colleges" across the state, with the division notably paying tuition and other expenses for at least five women at the State Normal School in Athens.[60] In 1907 and 1908, the South Carolina, North Carolina, and Mississippi divisions all reported that they, too, now owned multiple scholarships to send

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[57] "To Lay the Corner Stone of Winnie Davis Monument."

[58] E.S. Sell, "Winnie Davis Memorial Hall," *The Athens Daily Banner,* June 22, 1922.

[59] United Daughters of the Confederacy, *Minutes of the Nineteenth Annual Convention of the United Daughters of the Confederacy* (Jackson, TN: McCowat-Mercer, 1912), 389.

[60] United Daughters of the Confederacy, *Minutes of the Twelfth Annual Meeting of the United Daughters of the Confederacy* (Nashville, TN: Foster & Webb Printing Co., 1906), 138-139.

young women to normal and industrial colleges within their respective states.[61] At the same time, the UDC worked as a national organization to establish a scholarship at the Teacher's College of Columbia University in New York.[62] Although both male and female descendants of Confederate veterans could apply for the scholarship, its first recipient was a young woman, Armida Moses, from South Carolina, who was chosen as a result of a historical essay she submitted to the UDC.[63] It is unsurprising that scholarships became the UDC's popular way of supporting southern women in higher education as they were cheaper and more achievable for state divisions than constructing and furnishing an entire dormitory.[64] Furthermore, scholarships could be used to send women to southern schools where they would still be surrounded by Lost Cause culture, and receiving a scholarship from the UDC would undoubtedly instill an appreciation for the organization in these women.

Impressed by the "great deal of unclassified educational work" that had been reported at the national meetings in 1907 and 1908, Presidential-General Cornelia Branch Stone moved for the UDC to found a Committee on Education in 1909 that would further

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[61] United Daughters of the Confederacy, *Minutes of the Fourteenth Annual Convention of the United Daughters of the Confederacy* (Opelika, AL: Post Publishing Company, 1908), 291; United Daughters of the Confederacy, *Minutes of the Sixteenth Annual Convention of the United Daughters of the Confederacy* (Opelika, AL: The Post Publishing Company, 1909), 257; United Daughters of the Confederacy, *Minutes of the Fifteenth Annual Convention of the United Daughters of the Confederacy* (Opelika, AL: The Post Publishing Company, 1909), 315.

[62] United Daughters of the Confederacy, *Minutes of the Fourteenth Annual Convention*, 46.

[63] United Daughters of the Confederacy, *Minutes of the Fifteenth Annual Convention*, 282.

[64] Mary Poppenheim, *United Daughters of the Confederacy Committee on Education: 1913-1914 Report* (Raleigh, NC: Edwards & Broughton, 1914), 3. As can be seen in this source, tuition scholarships could cost as low as $60 per year, which was much cheaper and easier for state divisions and local chapters to fundraise for on a yearly basis compared to the $25,000 needed for a dormitory.

encourage the establishment of scholarships.[65] Selected to chair this new committee was Mary B. Poppenheim, an extremely dedicated Daughter who began attending national conventions as early as 1897.[66] Poppenheim was a perfect choice to lead the committee. In addition to being a devoted member of the UDC and almost every other women's organization that had a division in South Carolina, Poppenheim had an impressive education herself, having attended the highly prestigious Vassar College for women in Poughkeepsie, New York.[67] Using some of her academic connections, Poppenheim established several scholarships for the UDC as a national organization, with the committee controlling 16 scholarships by 1915.[68] Some of these scholarships were reserved for young men who could also not afford to go to college (i.e., the scholarships to the University of Pennsylvania and Washington and Lee University), but most were awarded to women and were worth between $100 and $1,000 per year.[69] Among the schools that the UDC provided national scholarships to were the Sophie Newcomb College in New Orleans, Louisiana, the Lucy Cobb Institute in Athens, Georgia, and, of course, Vassar College in New York.[70] In order to receive one of these scholarships,

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[65] United Daughters of the Confederacy, *Minutes of the Fifteenth Annual Convention*, 6.

[66] United Daughters of the Confederacy, *Minutes of the Sixteenth Annual Convention,* 39; United Daughters of the Confederacy, *Minutes of the Fourth Annual Meeting*, 37.

[67] Joan Marie Johnson, "Introduction" in *Southern Women at Vassar: The Poppenheim Family Letters, 1882-1916,* ed. Joan Marie Johnson (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 2002), 6; Joan Marie Johnson, *Southern Women at the Seven Sister Colleges: Feminist Values and Social Activism, 1875-1915* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2008), 2. Vassar College was one of the Seven Sister colleges in the North. These were the best women's schools in the country, being on par with Harvard and Amherst for men.

[68] Poppenheim, *Committee on Education: 1913-1914 Report*, 3.

[69] Ibid., 4-9; 3.

[70] Ibid., 3.

women (as well as men) not only had to pass the entrance exam to their desired school, but they also had to submit proof of their Confederate ancestry and testimonials of their "good moral character" and "need of assistance."[71] By 1915, helping southern women secure a higher education became a permanent and important part of the UDC's work.

A few women had reservations about this part of the UDC's work, particularly when some of the UDC's scholarships ended up at northern schools. Almost immediately following the establishment of the UDC's national scholarship for the Teacher's College of Columbia University, Adelia Dunovant of Texas launched a campaign to abolish the scholarship. According to Dunovant, Columbia University was not only a school where "negroes are on a perfect equality," but it was known for having professors who "officially advocate intermarriage of the races."[72] To send the young men and women of the South to such a school would be violating the very "racial purity" that Confederate soldiers died to protect.[73] Dunovant was successful in getting the scholarship abolished, although the Daughters effectively discarded her argument that UDC scholarships should only be for southern schools.[74] Mildred Lewis Rutherford also had some reservations regarding the establishment of UDC scholarships for northern schools, noting that "the largest [UDC] scholarship is in a Northern college where no Chair of Southern History exists. Indeed it behooves us to examine the teachers and their textbooks used in all

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[71] United Daughters of the Confederacy, *Minutes of the Twenty-Sixth Annual*, 196.

[72] Adelia Dunovant, "Columbia College Scholarships," *Confederate Veteran*, February 1910, 60.

[73] Ibid.

[74] United Daughters of the Confederacy, *Minutes of the Seventeenth Annual Convention of the United Daughters of the Confederacy* (Paducah, KY: Paducah Ptg. Co., 1910), 266.

colleges where our scholarships are placed."[75] Nevertheless, while these women ultimately opposed any education that had the potential to contradict the UDC's racial attitudes and Lost Cause beliefs, it is important to note that they still supported the UDC's overall mission of aiding southern women with scholarships.

By 1919, supporting the higher education of southern women had become a truly thriving endeavor within the UDC. At the national convention that year, the Committee on Education reported that the UDC was responsible for over 790 higher education scholarships in the United States, all of which were estimated to have a collective value of $72,486.65.[76] Most of these scholarships were maintained at the state division level. The Georgia division alone established 89 scholarships in one year, with the division reportedly owning more than $22,000 in scholarships in 1920.[77] It is difficult to discern what percentage of the UDC's total scholarships were available or exclusively established for women. In the case of the national organization, at least 11 of the 19 scholarships controlled by the Committee on Education in 1919 were awarded to women.[78] The Georgia division did not breakdown its scholarships by gender or by school, but the Daughters of this state repeatedly talked about their work with women-

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[75] Mildred Lewis Rutherford, "Are We as Daughters of the Confederacy True to the Objects Which We Organized?" in *Miss Rutherford's Scrapbook: Valuable Information about the South,* vol. 2 (Athens, GA: Self-published, 1924), 20.

[76] United Daughters of the Confederacy, *Minutes of the Twenty-Sixth Annual Convention* (Jackson, TN: McCowat-Mercer, 1919), 190. In 2023, the sum of the UDC's scholarships would have equaled $1,264,686.73.

[77] Georgia Division of the United Daughters of the Confederacy, *Twenty-Sixth Annual Minutes of the Georgia Division,* 83; Adjusting for contemporary inflation, the Georgia division would have controlled more than $300,000 in scholarships.

[78] United Daughters of the Confederacy, *Minutes of the Twenty-Sixth Annual Convention*, 179-182.

majority schools such as the State Normal School in Milledgeville, the South Georgia Normal School in Valdosta, and the Industrial School in Rabun Gap, in addition to their work with the State Normal School in Athens.[79] Alabama, the state division with the second highest amount of money devoted toward scholarships, also heavily promoted its scholarships to women's or women-majority colleges in the state, particularly the State Teachers College in Troy, Huntingdon College in Montgomery, and Judson College in Marion.[80] From New York to Texas, the UDC had scholarships for the "ambitious girls" of the South.[81]

IV. Conclusion

When publishing the Committee on Education's 1914-1915 report, Mary Poppenheim wrote that "when we realize how few native born southern girls are graduates in full of 'A' grade colleges for women… we will appreciate the power, we, as an organization, are giving to women of Confederate lineage."[82] On one hand, the UDC's attempts to support the higher education of southern women was a natural extension of the organization's work and interests. As explored with the construction of the Winnie Davis Memorial Hall, supporting the higher education of southern women often represented an intersection of the UDC's benevolent, memorial, and educational goals. Even in the case of scholarships, scholarships could be named to memorialize a

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[79] Georgia Division of the United Daughters of the Confederacy, *Twenty-Sixth Annual Minutes of the Georgia Division*, 36.

[80] Mattie McAdory Huey, *History of the Alabama Division of the United Daughters of the Confederacy* (Opelika, AL: The Post Publishing Company, 1937), 108-110.

[81] Ibid., 105.

[82] Poppenheim, *United Daughters of the Confederacy Committee on Education*, 4.

Confederate individual while also being benevolent and educational.[83] Furthermore, by ensuring that its scholarships and construction of dormitories primarily benefited women with Confederate heritage, the UDC was both honoring the service of Confederate soldiers and providing charity to their descendants, two specific goals of the UDC that its early members spelled out in its constitution.[84] Most significantly, however, in supporting the higher education of southern women, the UDC perpetuated its idea of Confederate motherhood. Whether providing free housing for women or directly funding their educations, the UDC saw themselves as further ensuring that these women had an appreciation for the Confederacy, which they could pass on to future generations. After all, it was no coincidence that most of the UDC's funding and scholarships were for normal and industrial schools, which were widely established in the South following the Civil War to solve the region's shortage of teachers.[85] Even if the women who received assistance from the UDC did not end up becoming a Daughter and taking an active role in inscribing the Lost Cause into the South's political, cultural, and social institutions, they could still have an admiration for the Confederacy and the Lost Cause, which could trickle down in their primary and secondary school classrooms.[86] In supporting the higher

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[83] Georgia Division of the United Daughters of the Confederacy, *Twenty-Sixth Annual Minutes*, 36.

[84] United Daughters of the Confederacy, *Constitution*, 2.

[85] David Gold & Catherine L. Hobbs, *Educating the New Southern Woman* (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 2014), 6.

[86] This is something that the Daughters even spelled out themselves. As Hallie Alexander Rounsaville stated about the Winnie Davis Memorial Hall at the organization's tenth national convention: "... thus securing to many Confederate girls the benefits of [the State Normal School], and to the State at large an eventual supply of thoroughly trained and equipped Southern teachers, adapted by nature, understanding of conditions, and patriotic interest, to best direct Southern children in the paths of knowledge and keep them "true to the traditions of their lineage." United Daughters of the Confederacy, *Minutes of the Tenth Annual Meeting*, 112.

education of southern women, the UDC saw itself as creating more Confederate mothers and further ensuring the survival of the Lost Cause.

With that being said, while the Daughters seemed to have plenty of reasons to support the higher education of southern women, the collective decision of the UDC to support the higher education of southern women was still significant. As late as 1920, only 7.6% of women in the United States had a higher education.[87] This percentage was even lower in the South, where, as already mentioned, antebellum hierarchies of race, class, and gender re-emerged following the end of Reconstruction and sought to confine most women to the home.[88] To a number of southern white men in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, any form of "higher education for women [was] unnecessary or downright dangerous" as it could lead them to neglect their domestic duties.[89] Although the physical and economic destruction of the Civil War and the lack of able-bodied men did pull a significant number of southern women into the workforce following the end of the conflict, women were still held "hostage" by the social mores of the Old South.[90]

By supporting the higher education of southern women, the UDC benefited women and further pushed the boundaries of what was considered socially acceptable for women in the South. On one hand, the South's state normal and industrial schools were

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[87] Johnson, *Southern Women at the Seven Sister Colleges*, 3.

[88] Ibid., 3; Wheeler, *New Women of the New South*, 9-10.

[89] Wheeler, *New Women of the New South*,10.

[90] Gold & Hobbs, *Educating the New Southern Woman*, 6; Wheeler, *New Women of the New South*, 3. Marjorie Spruill Wheeler argues in the first chapter of *New Women of the New South* that women were held hostage by the social values of the Lost Cause. Because white southerners wanted to reconstruct the race, gender, and class hierarchies of the Old South in the New South, this prevented the women's suffrage movement from gaining a foothold in the region until the early 1900s.

not created to inspire social change for women. Ultimately resulting out of the efforts of southern states to combat poverty and illiteracy during the Progressive Era, state normal and industrial schools served a practical purpose as they trained women to be educators and sought to alleviate the South's shortage of teachers. As historian Amy Thompson McCandless has noted, these schools even reinforced traditional definitions of femininity in some ways by ensuring that female students received training to be southern ladies.[91] Yet, state normal and industrial schools still encouraged intellectual development in addition to providing practical training for women and allowed them to enter a wage-earning profession that took them beyond the physical walls of the home. The same can be said for the limited number of liberal arts colleges for women in the South that were established in the same period as well as the liberal arts colleges in the North that the UDC supported with scholarships.[92] For example, after receiving a scholarship from the UDC to attend the Agnes Scott College in Decatur, Georgia, and graduating from the college in 1921, Edyth Bland Clarke went on to become the chair of mathematics at St. Genevieve's school in Asheville, North Carolina. Due to the support of the UDC, Clarke went from demonstrating a need for assistance to pay the Agnes Scott College's $75 tuition to being a successful educator and mathematician, with Clarke even eventually obtaining a master's degree in math and science from Columbia University.[93] Likewise,

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[91] Amy Thompson McCandless, *The Past in the Present: Women's Higher Education in the Twentieth-Century American South* (Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 1999), 18-25; 60-63; 121-139.

[92] Wheeler, *New Women of the New South*, 9; 43; Johnson, *Southern Women at the Seven Sister Colleges,* 17.

[93] United Daughters of the Confederacy, *Minutes of the Twenty-Sixth Annual Convention*, 180; "Alumnae News: Items About '21," *The Agnostic,* November 8, 1921; *Essays for the Master's Degree* (New York: Columbia University, 1925), 6.

Ruth Walker thanked Mary Poppenheim and the rest of the UDC in 1916 for fully funding her four years of study at Vassar College. After graduating from Vassar in 1917, Walker went on to become a chemist and instructor at Northwestern University in Chicago.[94]

In the end, there were many ways in which the UDC gave power to the women of Confederate lineage. In becoming the foremost leader of Lost Cause celebration, the UDC provided an important political and cultural outlet for women. Although women in the UDC often cited their roles as wives and mothers in justifying their attempts to erect monuments, influence southern education, and undertake other Lost Cause activities, the UDC ultimately allowed women to further their influence and exercise a significant amount of power. Like the Woman's Christian Temperance Union, the General Federation of Women's Clubs, and other women's organizations that became active in the South during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the UDC brought thousands of middle and upper-class white women into the public sphere. At the same time, the UDC worked for the direct benefit of women and contributed to their advancement by supporting their higher education. Particularly for lower and middle-class white women, the UDC funded the construction of college dormitories and provided a significant amount of scholarships to liberal arts colleges and normal and industrial schools. In doing so, the UDC would have not only played a notable role in normalizing higher education for southern women, but it most importantly encouraged women to have

[94] United Daughters of the Confederacy, *Minutes of the Twenty-Third Annual Convention of the United Daughters of the Confederacy* (Raleigh, NC: Edwards & Broughton Company, 1917), 194; The Associate Alumnae of Vassar College, *Vassar Quarterly* (Poughkeepsie, NY: Self-published, 1922), 283.

a wage-earning career outside of the home and gave them a chance to achieve a degree of independence that would have been unimaginable for a woman in the antebellum South.

Conclusion

At the United Daughters of the Confederacy's national convention in 1919, Second Vice-President-General Mrs. Charles M. Roberts delivered a welcoming speech for the Daughters in attendance. While praising the United Daughters of the Confederacy and the dedication of its 65,000 "loyal and patriotic women," Roberts took a moment to emphasize the importance of women's work in the early twentieth century. As Roberts insisted to those at the convention: "In this era of our country's history, the woman's work looms large. Today is our day. May we realize it and fit ourselves for it."[1] Towards the end of her speech, Roberts also took the time to recite an uncredited poem:

> They talk about a woman's sphere, as tho it had a limit,
> There's not a place in earth or heaven,
> There's not a task to mankind given,
> There's not a blessing nor a woe,
> There's not a whispered yes or no,
> That has a feather's weight of worth, without a woman
> in it.[2]

According to Roberts, "the women of [the United States] have always had a large part in the onward march of our civilization." However, in the early twentieth century, a woman's sphere was now truly "without an orbit," and her altitude was "without a measure." In the South, the United Daughters of the Confederacy played a significant role in extending a woman's influence, and now it was up to women to ensure that the South remained as a place "of chivalry, of love, and of memory."[3]

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[1] United Daughters of the Confederacy, *Minutes of the Twenty-Sixth National Convention of the United Daughters of the Confederacy* (Jackson, TN: McCowat-Mercer, 1919), 22.

[2] Ibid.

[3] United Daughters of the Confederacy, *Minutes of the Twenty-Sixth National Convention*, 22.

As this thesis has explored, the Woman's Relief Corps (WRC), the National Association of Army Nurses of the Civil War (NAAN), and the United Daughters of the Confederacy (UDC) were all very different organizations in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Although the WRC and the NAAN overlapped in their celebration of the Union Army, the NAAN was primarily a social organization that served the interests of former army nurses while the WRC was founded for the direct support of Union veterans and the Grand Army of the Republic (GAR). The UDC, contrastingly, was founded to vindicate the Confederacy and rescue the historical legacy of the South. In terms of size and activities, the WRC and the UDC were the most similar as they both achieved large memberships, engaged in monument-building, and influenced primary and secondary education in the United States, although these organizations clearly had different motivations and interests.

Yet, the WRC, the NAAN, and the UDC also had much in common. First and foremost, all three organizations had the common goal of commemorating the Civil War and influencing how other Americans remembered the conflict. Of course, these organizations varied in which memories they wanted the public to adopt, with the UDC differing significantly from the WRC and the NAAN in its promotion of the Lost Cause. Nevertheless, as Viet Thanh Nguyen would likely note, all three of these organizations ultimately attempted to fight the Civil War a second time through the politics of memory.[4] The WRC, the NAAN, and the UDC were all organizations that attempted to influence the Civil War's collective memory, and, specifically in the case of the UDC,

[4] Viet Thanh Nguyen, "Just Memory: War and the Ethics of Remembrance," *American Literary History* 25, no. 1 (2013): 144.

they were at least partly responsible for the divisive legacy that the Civil War still has today.

Most importantly for this thesis, however, the WRC, the NAAN, and the UDC were all organizations that were created by women, for women. In the past forty years, historians have produced countless studies concerning Civil War memory.[5] As Michael Vorenberg remarked over twenty years ago, "Today, the history of memory has become not merely a cottage industry but a boom trade, and the history of Civil War memory is the cash cow of the business."[6] In writing about reconciliation and racial politics in connection to Civil War memory, several scholars have provided critical interpretations of the WRC and the UDC as well as their political and cultural impacts. Scholars have not paid nearly as much attention to the significance that these organizations had for women. As the speech from Mrs. Charles M. Roberts indicates, the UDC was an organization that extended female influence and elevated women into the public sphere. Letters and speeches from women like Lucie S. Lewis confirm that the WRC and the NAAN also extended female influence and elevated women into the public sphere.[7] While the WRC, the NAAN, and the UDC kept a strong focus on commemorating men's role in the Civil War, they clearly worked for the direct benefit of women, too.

Today, one can find many historical studies detailing the ways in which women and women's organizations challenged traditional gender roles in the United States

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[5] Matthew Grow, "The Shadow of the Civil War: A Historiography of Civil War Memory," *American Nineteenth Century History* 4, no. 2 (2003): 78-80.

[6] Michael Vorenberg, "Recovered Memory of the Civil War," *Reviews in American History* 29, no. 4 (2001): 550.

[7] Lucie S. Lewis was the WRC member quoted in the introduction of this thesis. Lewis praised the WRC for expanding women's influence and giving them something to work toward.

during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Especially given the recent 100th anniversary of the Nineteenth Amendment in 2020 and the subsequent spike in scholarship concerning the women's suffrage movement, a plethora of books and articles can be accessed that detail the lives and activities of Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony, and other prominent women that fought for equal political rights.[8] Furthermore, historians like Mary Martha Thomas, Joan Marie Johnson, and Rosalyn Terborg-Penn have emphasized organizations other than the National American Woman Suffrage Association (NAWSA) that extended female influence and challenged what was socially acceptable for women in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.[9] The Woman's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU), for example, has long been noted for its significance for women. Under the WCTU, not only did women advocate for prohibition, but they also worked to eliminate child labor, improve conditions in prisons, establish homes for abandoned women and children, and took part in other political and social reforms that were characteristic of the Progressive Era.[10] As many scholars have concluded, the WCTU played a significant role in eroding the separation between the

[8] Examples of the recent scholarship on the women's suffrage movement include: Ellen DuBois, *Suffrage: Women's Long Battle for the Vote* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2020), 8-9; Cathleen Cahill, *Recasting the Vote: How Women of Color Transformed the Suffrage Movement* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2020), 3-6; Susan Ware, *Why They Marched: Untold Stories of the Women Who Fought for the Right to Vote* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2019), 1-15.

[9] Mary Martha Thomas, *The New Woman in Alabama: Social Reforms and Suffrage, 1890-1920* (Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 1992), 1-9; Joan Marie Johnson, *The Woman Suffrage Movement in the United States* (New York: Routledge, 2022),48-59; Rosalyn Terborg-Penn, "The Nineteenth Amendment and Its Outcome for African American Women," *Journal of Women's History* 32, no. 1 (2020): 23-24.

[10] Thomas, *The New Woman in Alabama*, 4-5; 10-18.

private and public spheres for many women. The WCTU is also frequently noted for bringing many women to the cause of women's suffrage.[11]

The WRC, the NAAN, and the UDC were very prominent and influential organizations that emerged and matured in the same era as the WCTU, but historians have been less likely to note their significance for women. This is perhaps the most surprising for the WRC. As extensively explored in the second chapter of this thesis, the WRC not only inspired women to take up the cause of women's suffrage, but the organization even voted to endorse women's suffrage as a whole. Whereas the WCTU achieved a peak membership of 150,000 women in 1892, the WRC had nearly 200,000 women in its ranks when it voted to officially endorse women's suffrage in 1916.[12] Of course, the WCTU had already been officially endorsing suffrage for over thirty years by the time the WRC decided to do so, but the WRC had still been working closely with the WCTU, the NAWSA, and other prominent women's organizations for over twenty years as a part of the National Council of Women (NCW).[13] Out of all three of the organizations examined in this thesis, the WRC has been the most under-recognized by modern historians. Not only did it spend its early years fighting for a relatively progressive bill that pensioned women regardless of their marital status and put them on the same footing as men who fought for the Union, but, in viewing the efforts of the

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[11] Thomas, *The New Woman in Alabama,* 4; Johnson, *The Woman Suffrage Movement in the United States,* 48-52; Lewis L. Gould & Courtney Q. Shah, *America in the Progressive Era, 1890-1917* (New York: Routledge, 2021), 74.

[12] Johnson, *The Woman Suffrage Movement in the United States,* 50; Woman's Relief Corps, *Journal of the Thirty-Third National Convention of the Woman's Relief Corps* (Boston: Griffith-Stillings Press, 1915), 60.

[13] DuBois, *Suffrage*, 107.

WRC to get the Army Nurses' Pension Act passed by Congress, it is very easy to see how the WRC elevated women into the public sphere where they significantly shaped politics. Like the WCTU, the General Federation of Women's Clubs (GFWC), and many other women's organizations in the Progressive Era, the WRC expanded upon its initial interests to partake in larger social and political reforms.[14] Most significantly, the WRC brought many women to the cause of women's suffrage. The WRC did not just pay tribute to the veterans of the GAR, nor did it deny political authority for women.[15] The WRC should be acknowledged by both scholars of Civil War memory and women's suffrage as being a significant organization for women.

In the case of the NAAN, it is easy to see why it has been previously overlooked in historical scholarship. In addition to being exponentially smaller than the WRC and the UDC, the NAAN appears in most historical records as a social organization that sometimes mobilized to advocate for policies that benefited its members. The NAAN did attempt to influence how other Americans remembered the Civil War by celebrating the victory of the Union Army and emphasizing the role that nurses played in ensuring that victory, but the organization's commemorative activities were ultimately limited by its size and available resources. Even so, this thesis studies the NAAN because it was still a powerful and influential organization. Despite its small size, it was able to secure some impressive legislative victories for the benefit of its members, specifically the Army Nurses Pension Act as well as a policy that allowed army nurses to be buried in national

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[14] Gould & Shah, *America in the Progressive Era, 1890-1917,* 38; 74; Johnson, *The Woman Suffrage Movement in the United States*, 48-52.

[15] Nina Silber, *Daughters of the Union: Northern Women Fight the Civil War* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005), 274; Francesca Morgan, *Women and Patriotism in Jim Crow America* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2005), 41.

cemeteries.[16] As the both the GAR and the WRC honored the NAAN at their national conventions and allocated money to the organization, the NAAN was clearly a respected organization.[17] This conclusion is further supported by the widespread newspaper coverage of the organization and the decision of Congressman Edwin Webb to preserve Mary O. Stevens' letter that was written on the NAAN's stationery. The NAAN may not have been the largest or most influential organization that took part in Civil War commemoration during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, but, like the WRC and the UDC, it was an organization that brought women outside of the home. Although there is no evidence to suggest that the NAAN ever officially supported equal political rights for women like the WRC did, the organization still likely functioned as a "school of self-government" in that it brought white women into a political context where they could choose leaders, harmonize differences, learn important organizational skills, and voice their opinions on certain issues.[18] In the cases of Addie Ballou, Fanny Titus Hazen, and Mary O. Stevens, the NAAN seems to have played a significant role in their decisions and attempts to promote women's suffrage.

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[16] Kate M. Scott, *In Honor of the National Association of Civil War Army Nurses* (Atlantic City, NJ: Citizens Executive Committee, 1910), 1.

[17] Grand Army of the Republic, *Journal of the Fiftieth National Encampment of the Grand Army of the Republic* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1917), 211; Woman's Relief Corps, *Journal of the Thirty-Third National Convention,* 392.

[18] Arthur M. Schlesinger, "Biography of a Nation of Joiners," *The American Historical Review* 50, no. 1 (1944): 24; In "Biography of a Nation of Joiners," Schlesinger was one of the first historians to write about the significance of voluntary associations in the United States, noting that voluntary associations have served as "schools of self-government" in history as they have trained generations of Americans in the democratic way. Other scholars have since expanded upon Schlesinger's ideas. Adam Chamberlain, Alixandra B. Yanus, and Nicholas Pyeatt, "The Southern Question: American Voluntary Association Development, 1876-1920," *Political Science Quarterly* 135, no. 1 (2020): 103.

Unlike the WRC and the NAAN, some historians have acknowledged the significance of the UDC for women. In *Dixie's Daughters,* Karen Cox characterizes the women of the UDC as "savvy politicians" and narrates some of their attempts to lobby legislatures.[19] Cox even likens the UDC to the WCTU and GFWC by noting that the UDC was part of a "national trend by women to create new public roles for themselves through their own organizations."[20] Likewise, Joan Marie Johnson describes the ways in which the UDC expanded opportunities for white southern women in *Southern Ladies, New Women.* While the UDC did not bring women into a progressive context as much as other clubs in South Carolina did, Johnson makes sure to emphasize that the UDC was still a significant organization for white women as it empowered them to undertake public-facing work.[21] As both Cox and Johnson would likely conclude, southern society deemed the work of the UDC as socially acceptable because the Daughters ultimately worked to protect the legacy of the Confederacy, but the UDC still contributed to the advancement of southern white women by allowing them to pursue "a public agenda and still receive the accolades accorded to women for being [southern] ladies."[22]

Nevertheless, much more can be said about the UDC as a women's organization. Most significantly, the third chapter of this thesis focused on the UDC's support of higher education for lower and middle-class white women in the South. Despite being a

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[19] Karen Cox, *Dixie's Daughters: The United Daughters of the Confederacy and the Preservation of Confederate Culture* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2003), 23.

[20] Ibid., 26.

[21] Joan Marie Johnson, *Southern Ladies, New Women: Race, Region, and Clubwomen in South Carolina, 1890-1930* (Gainesville: The University Press of Florida, 2004), 27-32.

[22] Cox, *Dixie's Daughters*, 26-27.

prominent part of the UDC's work, and a part that many Daughters valued highly, the UDC's support of higher education for southern women has received very little attention from scholars. Karen Cox briefly explores the UDC's efforts to provide scholarships to southern women, but Cox simply concludes that supporting the higher education of women was just another way in which the UDC sought to instill other Americans with an appreciation for the Confederacy and the Lost Cause, thereby overlooking the opportunities that the UDC gave to women like Edyth Bland Clarke and Ruth Walker.[23] Despite the strength of traditional gender roles in the South and the attempts of southern white men to paint women's higher education as "downright dangerous," both Clarke and Walker (and most likely other women) were able to obtain a higher education and have wage-earning careers due to the support of the UDC.[24]

In the end, the WRC, the NAAN, and the UDC were very different organizations, but women from all three organizations could likely find agreement in at least one statement: women should have expanded roles and opportunities in American society during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In both the WRC and the NAAN, members of these organizations not only fought for definitions of equal work and equal citizenship for women, but they also used their positions in these organizations to advocate for equal political rights for women. In the case of the WRC, scholars like Nina Silber and Francesca Morgan have diminished the significance of the WRC as a women's organization by focusing on its status and activities as an auxiliary for the GAR.[25] While

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[23] Cox, *Dixie's Daughters*, 83-86.

[24] Marjorie Spruill Wheeler, *New Women of the New South: The Leaders of the Woman Suffrage Movement in the South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 10.

[25] Silber, *Daughters of the Union*, 268-274; Morgan, *Women and Patriotism*, 37-42.

the WRC did spend a significant amount of time and resources supporting Union veterans and aiding them in commemorating the Civil War, the WRC still worked for the direct benefit of women and, like Karen Cox and Joan Marie Johnson noted for the UDC, allowed them to pursue a public agenda.

The UDC never became as progressive as the WRC, but it still supported expanded roles and opportunities for women in American society. Unlike the WRC, the UDC never came to officially endorse suffrage. In fact, once the women's suffrage movement finally began to gain momentum in the South in the 1900s and 1910s, the Daughters largely refused to acknowledge the movement within the contexts of the organization, ironically maintaining that the UDC was a "non-political organization."[26] While some Daughters, such as Rebecca Latimer Felton, Belle Kearney, and Nellie Nugent Somerville, did become prominent suffragists in the South, other UDC members joined anti-suffrage leagues.[27] Mildred Lewis Rutherford, for instance, was a member of the Georgia Association Opposed to Women's Suffrage and voiced strong opposition for the Nineteenth Amendment, arguing that women's suffrage came from women "who [did

[26] "UCV and Suffrage," *Brownwood Bulletin,* May 20, 1919. The women's suffrage movement was very slow to emerge and gain prominence in the South. Whereas the suffrage movement emerged in the North during 1840s and 1850s and saw victories in the West starting in the 1870s, the movement did not take hold in the South until the 1900s and 1910s. Not only did men worry that it would undermine the South's strict adherence to traditional gender roles, but, by also inherently giving black women the right to vote, both white men and white women thought that women's suffrage could lead to the collapse of the South's racial hierarchy. The NAWSA tried to alleviate these fears through its "southern strategy," arguing that enfranchising women could further help the South disenfranchise African Americans since there were more white women than black women. In short, the southern suffrage movement was very distinct from the suffrage movements in the North and the West. Aileen Kraditor, *The Ideas of the Woman Suffrage Movement, 1890-1920* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1965), 138-151; Wheeler, *New Women of the New South,* xv; Cahill, *Recasting the Vote*, 163-174.

[27] Wheeler, *New Women of the New South*, 109.

not] believe in states' rights and who wish to see negro women using the ballot."[28] Nevertheless, despite her outright opposition to suffrage, Rutherford still supported expanded roles and opportunities for white women. Once insisting in a speech to the Dallas chapter of the UDC that "organizations for women by women were not needed before the [Civil War]… but are now badly needed to meet the present conditions," Rutherford encouraged women to join an organization that pursued a public agenda and ultimately increased their political, cultural, and social influence.[29] Furthermore, Rutherford had some reservations about the UDC's choice to establish scholarships for liberal arts colleges in the North, but she was still a major proponent of the UDC's mission to support higher education for southern women, even being instrumental to the Georgia division's efforts to build the Winnie Davis Memorial Dormitory that provided free housing for lower and middle-class white women who attended the State Normal School in Athens. As was the case for most women in the South during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the Daughters had to navigate a fine line between the conservative Old South and the potentially progressive New South.[30] While the UDC glorified the values of the Old South, it still often crossed the line into the New South and attempted to redefine what it meant to be a southern lady.

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[28] Mildred Lewis Rutherford quoted in Marjorie Spruill Wheeler, *New Women of the New South,* 25.

[29] Mildred Lewis Rutherford, "The Civilization of the Old South: What Made it: What Destroyed It: What Has Replaced It" (speech, Dallas, Texas, November 9, 1916), Mississippi State University Library Digital Collections, 43.

[30] David Gold & Catherine L. Hobbs, *Educating the New Southern Woman* (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 2014), 18-24.

To be clear, the WRC, the NAAN, and the UDC should not be considered radical organizations in terms of gender. While the UDC encouraged white southern women to expand upon or step outside of their domestic roles, it did not support full equality for women, as indicated by its refusal to acknowledge the women's suffrage movement. Out of all three of the organizations examined in this thesis, the WRC was clearly the most progressive, but it was still a not a radically feminist organization. Unlike Susan B. Anthony, Alice Paul, and more radical members of the women's suffrage movement, women in the WRC did not advocate for more women to abandon the domestic sphere altogether; instead, most women in the WRC still prided themselves on being wives and mothers while also emphasizing that women could contribute more to American society.[31] The WRC, the NAAN, and the UDC were organizations that, in many ways, challenged traditional gender roles for women, but they were still subject to some of the conservative ideas and values of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

The WRC, the NAAN, and the UDC have not been silenced in historical literature. Especially in the cases of the WRC and the UDC, historians have provided important interpretations of these organizations and how they have impacted American culture, society, and politics in the past 140 years. However, in their fascination with reconciliation, the Lost Cause, and other aspects of Civil War memory, historians have often overlooked the fact that the WRC and the UDC were organizations that were founded by women, for women. From securing pensions from the federal government for former army nurses to supporting the higher education of southern women, the WRC, the NAAN, and the UDC were organizations that worked for the direct benefit of women,

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[31] Johnson, *The Woman Suffrage Movement in the United States*, 38; 104-107.

and they contributed to the advancement of women in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

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