2003

The body politic: burial and post-war reconciliation in Baton Rouge

Leah Wood Jewett
Louisiana State University and Agricultural and Mechanical College

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.lsu.edu/gradschool_theses

Part of the Social and Behavioral Sciences Commons

Recommended Citation
https://digitalcommons.lsu.edu/gradschool_theses/3679

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Graduate School at LSU Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in LSU Master's Theses by an authorized graduate school editor of LSU Digital Commons. For more information, please contact gradetd@lsu.edu.
THE BODY POLITIC:
BURIAL AND POST-WAR RECONCILIATION IN BATON ROUGE

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
Louisiana State University and
Agricultural and Mechanical College
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts

in

The Department Geography and Anthropology

by
Leah Wood Jewett
B.A., Louisiana State University, 1993
December 2003
Dedicated to the memory of my grandmothers,  
Mary Pulliam Gregory and Lucia Leonita Jack Wood,  
who shared a love of books.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I have been blessed by being surrounded by family, friends, co-workers and acquaintances who have cheered me along the way. I would first like to thank my husband, Mark Jewett, for his support throughout my graduate school career, which began only one month after we were married, and my family (Woods, Hardicks, Jewetts, Soignets, and Sharkeys) and friends who offered needed encouragement and are too numerous to list individually. Thanks to the members of my thesis committee, Heather McKillop, Mary Manhein, and Miles E. Richardson, for their inspiring teaching and nurturing attitudes toward students; to Faye Phillips, Elaine Smyth, and David Madden for making it possible for me to go to school while working full-time; to the U.S. Civil War Center staff past and present; to Sylvia Frank Rodrigue for her editorial suggestions; to fellow graduate student Pat Colquette; and to the ladies of the Phi Lambda Pi organization who generously awarded two scholarships to me and inspired me with the stories of their experiences as married women working toward their degrees at LSU many years ago. I received enthusiastic help with my research from the staff of LSU Libraries Special Collections; Ocie Williams and Adreina White of Port Hudson National Cemetery; the staff of Bluebonnet Regional Library (Genealogy Room); East Baton Rouge Parish Registrar of Voters Elaine Lamb and staff; Sara Amy Leach and Vicky Holly of the National Cemetery Administration; Nathaneal Heller of the Louisiana State Museum; Loraine Bowker of L. M. Berry and Company; Ken Gallagher of Environmental Data Resources; Trevor K. Plante and M. A. Gedra of the National Archives; Roy Pitchford; and Billy Spedale.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

DEDICATION.................................................................................................................. ii

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.................................................................................................. iii

ABSTRACT........................................................................................................................ v

CHAPTER

1 INTRODUCTION.............................................................................................................1
   Baton Rouge Cemeteries.........................................................................................2

2 LITERATURE REVIEW.................................................................................................6
   Civil War Memory.................................................................................................6
   Cemetery Studies..................................................................................................12
   Methodology........................................................................................................21

3 NATIONAL CEMETERY SYSTEM...........................................................................23
   Baton Rouge........................................................................................................31

4 BATON ROUGE IN 1886 AND 1898.........................................................................38
   1880s......................................................................................................................38
   1886.......................................................................................................................39
   Spanish-American War: New Opportunity in 1898?...........................................48
   World War I and a Confederate Burial..................................................................52

5 TWO CONFEDERATE VETERANS............................................................................54
   J. W. Nicholson......................................................................................................54
   R. L. Pruyn.............................................................................................................59
   What Pruyn and Nicholson Have in Common......................................................66
   Differences Between Pruyn and Nicholson.........................................................66
   Local and Global Context in 1917.......................................................................68

6 CONCLUSION...............................................................................................................71

BIBLIOGRAPHY..............................................................................................................79

VITA.................................................................................................................................87
ABSTRACT

Historians typically agree that reconciliation between the white North and South took place between the period of 1898 (Spanish-American War) and 1913 (before World War I). To test this hypothesis and identify when reconciliation took place in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, I will use the burial of R. L. Pruyn in the Baton Rouge National Cemetery. Pruyn served as a U.S. soldier during the Mexican War and a Confederate soldier during the Civil War.

Anthropologists have studied rituals, beliefs, and practices associated with death since early in the discipline. Archaeologists, in particular, have focused on this aspect of culture, in large part because in many cases remnants of burial ritual are all that remain of a culture in the archaeological record.

Scholars from a variety of disciplines, including anthropology, have, in recent years, taken on the study of public memory and its implications for national identity. The study of burial practice and identity are inextricably intertwined: the death of a member of a community is often a time of re-assertion of shared ideas and identities, an opportunity to pass important cultural information to younger, and future generations.

Confederate post-war memorial activities in Baton Rouge speak to the attitudes of white men and women regarding reconciliation and national identity. Newspapers, personal papers and the papers of local organizations, including the United Confederate Veterans, St. James Lodge No. 47 (freemasons), and the Historical Society of East and West Baton Rouge, will be used to help pinpoint those attitudes. Opportunities for reconciliation have been identified as 1886 with the burial of local Revolutionary War hero Philemon Thomas in the Baton Rouge National Cemetery; 1898 and the Spanish-American War (local men joined the U. S. war effort); and 1917 with the deaths and burials of Confederate veterans J. W. Nicholson (in Magnolia
Cemetery, adjacent to the Baton Rouge National Cemetery) and R. L. Pruyn, and U.S. involvement in World War I. Ultimately, Pruyn’s 1917 burial in the Baton Rouge National Cemetery denotes a change in perception by local white citizens regarding national identity and establishes the date of post-war reconciliation in Baton Rouge.
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Wars are fought over the intangibles of politics, ideology, religion, and national identity. Rhetoric fuels emotion; incorporeal concepts become manifest in men. In the end--no matter the cause, the participants, or the technology at hand--war never fails to produce dead bodies.

The meaning of war does not die with the violent end of human life. Instead, it is made immortal through the blood sacrifice of soldiers on the sides of both victory and defeat. The survivors of conflict ensure this through commemoration (Foster 1987). Examination of commemorative activities and artifacts related to treatment of the war dead can be used to reconstruct the social and political ideas for which soldiers died and to which contemporary and subsequent generations have attached meaning.

In her book, *The Political Lives of Dead Bodies*, anthropologist Katherine Verdery illustrates how living political meaning is attached to the dead. Bodies on parade--and, by extension, statues of the dead--mark cultural boundaries and further current agendas. They are, in a way, more potent, more effectively symbolic, in death than in life (Verdery 1999:1-5). An example of this from our own time is the destruction of the statue of Iraqi president Saddam Hussein by Iraqi citizens and American soldiers on April 9, 2003, marking American entry into Baghdad and the official overthrow of the tyrannical regime. Citizens dragged the statue through the street, spitting on it and beating it with their shoes, symbolizing the death of Saddam’s rule through the “death” of the body-figure of Saddam Hussein (CNN.com 2003).

While traditional historical research can reveal information regarding the facts of battle, political motivations, and personalities, the discipline of anthropology provides more appropriate tools for the study of the ideological symbols associated with treatment and commemoration of the dead. Culture, the subject of anthropological research, embodies, among other things,
symbols shared intergenerationally (tradition preserved as group memory) via burial ritual that reinforce identity.

Anthropologists have studied cemeteries and their representations of various aspects of culture since early in the development of the discipline. While initial investigations focused on religion and social stratification, researchers today, and archaeologists in particular, use burial remains to understand everything from diet and daily life to ideology.

**Baton Rouge Cemeteries**

Magnolia Cemetery, established in the 1850s in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, was the site of fighting during the Civil War (U.S. Secretary of War 1985a:52). This local cemetery houses the graves of many of the city’s elite. Confederate soldiers removed Union dead from Magnolia Cemetery, reburied them outside the fence, and buried Confederate dead in a mass grave within the limits of the cemetery (Handley 1946; Hahn 1992:12). After the war, the area containing the graves of Union soldiers was designated as a national cemetery (U.S. Department of Veterans’ Affairs – Louisiana Office 2000). This area was a symbol of enduring federal presence in Baton Rouge after the Civil War. The juxtaposition of the Magnolia and National Cemeteries against one another, each representing an ideology diametrically opposed to the other, calls out for explanation (see Table 1:1).

Because of their central, shared, location along a major thoroughfare, Magnolia Cemetery and the Baton Rouge National Cemetery are appropriate testing grounds for identifying the time and manner in which reconciliation between North and South took place and was marked on the landscape in Louisiana’s capital city after the Civil War. Initially, I sought to determine this by counting burials of Confederate veterans, their family members, or others sympathetic to the Confederate cause, in the Baton Rouge National Cemetery as an expression of reconciliation and
national identity. This necessarily is an enumeration of white men, because black veterans buried in the National Cemetery are exclusively federal during this time period. While the perspectives of black citizens, male and female, in post-war Baton Rouge are important, they are beyond the scope of this study.

Table 1:1 Contrasting Characteristics of Magnolia Cemetery and Baton Rouge National Cemetery

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Magnolia Cemetery</th>
<th>Baton Rouge National Cemetery</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>APPEARANCE</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marker type</td>
<td>varied shapes and iconography</td>
<td>granite arches</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arrangement</td>
<td>clustered family plots</td>
<td>symmetrical rows; no clusters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orientation</td>
<td>some face east</td>
<td>most face east</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boundary</td>
<td>iron fence</td>
<td>brick and stucco wall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IDEOLOGY</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scope</td>
<td>local</td>
<td>national</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political affinity</td>
<td>Confederate</td>
<td>Union</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emphasis</td>
<td>on individual</td>
<td>on nation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eligible burials</td>
<td>civilians and soldiers</td>
<td>soldiers (and immediate family members)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Several events took place in the 19th and 20th centuries in Baton Rouge that offer possible opportunities for expression of reconciliation:

(1) In 1886, the remains of Revolutionary War and War of 1812 hero General Philemon Thomas were removed, by order of the U.S. Quartermaster General,
from the dilapidated Post Cemetery (associated with the U.S. Garrison on the Mississippi River near downtown Baton Rouge – home of the present-day Arsenal Museum) to the National Cemetery. While the reburial took place under the auspices of a federal institution, this local hero’s placement in the National Cemetery may have been a strong symbol for local citizens;

(2) In 1898, the United States became involved in the Spanish-American War, affording the opportunity for burial in the National Cemetery;

(3) The United States joined World War I in 1917; as with the Spanish American War, this was yet another opportunity for an increased number of burials in the National Cemetery;

(4) The most promising possibility for establishing a date of reconciliation in Baton Rouge via burial in the National Cemetery occurs in 1917 when two prominent Confederate veterans involved in post-war politics, J. W. Nicholson and R. L. Pruyn, died and were buried. Nicholson was buried in Magnolia Cemetery, while Pruyn was buried in the National Cemetery. His headstone highlights only his Mexican War service as a musician (see Figure 5:7).

With the discovery of Pruyn’s burial, it became apparent to me that the number of people buried in Baton Rouge National Cemetery is not nearly as significant to this study as who is buried there.

Historians generally agree that reconciliation between North and South (that is, among white males) and subsequent development of the New South occurred between the Spanish-American War and 1913, just before the start of World War I (Foster 1987). The implication is that by this point, white Southerners once again had embraced a national, i.e. American, identity.
Southern symbolism of the Lost Cause is prolific and enduring; post-war monuments to the Confederacy still exist in many Southern towns. How then was the landscape manipulated or marked symbolically to represent national reconciliation? I seek the answer in a cemetery.

Public response to and participation in events in 1886, 1898, and 1917 as recorded in newspapers and private papers will be used to determine at what point a reclamation of American identity took place in Baton Rouge following the Civil War. I will test historians’ conclusions anthropologically using the body and burial of Confederate veteran R. L. Pruyn as evidence.

From a variety of sources, I will reconstruct the development of public memory as it pertains to the Civil War, with a specific emphasis on the Confederacy. In addition, I will discuss anthropological study of public memory and identity. This will serve as the foundation for describing the creation and expansion of the National Cemetery System, of which the Baton Rouge National Cemetery is a part. Focus will then turn specifically to the burials of R. L. Pruyn and J. W. Nicholson in this broader context.
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Civil War Memory

Civil War memory lies at the core of American national identity. Struggles over the interpretation of the war’s meaning and its legacy erupt frequently in the midst of modern political debates that center on race. Americans continue to negotiate and manipulate the symbols of the Civil War that are manifest in flags, films, and faux-fighting re-enactors. The war dead live in the imaginations of millions of Americans, represented by marked mounds and marble monuments in cemeteries, town squares, and central boulevards around the country. In his book *Memory in Black and White: Race, Commemoration, and the Post-Bellum Landscape*, anthropologist Paul Shackel describes the potency of Civil War memory:

Collective memory is the popular notion of the past, and it tends to bolster the image of those being commemorated. Memory often presents an uncomplicated way of seeing the past through deeds and acts that are often simple, thus allowing many to remember what they want to. Histories, symbols, and commemoration ceremonies surrounding the Civil War are often filled with metaphors such as “the war of brother against brother.” This “family conflict” allows for a sweeter reconciliation between the North and the South, creating a stronger bond and a more unified nation…The memory of the Civil War that developed in the late 19th century and survived into much of the 20th century…allowed for both sides to claim that they fought for a cause and that they were noble. [Shackel 2003:xvi]

Six hundred thousand Union and Confederate soldiers died during the Civil War. As varied as the individual reasons for fighting were, the result was singular: a challenge to the legitimacy of the American nation. The constitution withstood the bloody test, and millions of enslaved black men and women were free.

Hundreds of thousands of survivors mourned the loss of limb and life. Children from both North and South grew up among the ghosts of the dead and the haunted presence of crippled veterans. Politicians, including Woodrow Wilson and Theodore Roosevelt, were
indelibly marked by the war as children, a fact that influenced their outlook on the nation’s future (Marten 1998:233-235).

Resentment ran high on both sides after the Confederate surrender at Appomattox in 1865, and politicians North and South used this to their advantage, “waving the bloody shirt,” figuratively and literally during post-war campaigns (Tindall and Shi 1992:729). The victorious Union debated the fate of the former Confederacy and its citizens. Some pushed for reconciliation and economic healing (Blight 2001:104). Others demanded harsh punishment for what they perceived as a traitorous South (Blight 2001:55-57). Lincoln and Vice President, Andrew Johnson, were generally lenient in their plans for Reconstruction. Lincoln sought to reunite the nation quickly, offering broad forgiveness to those who agreed to take an oath of allegiance to the United States (Cashman 1988:154-156). His murder stifled the plan. Johnson, a Democrat from Tennessee, required wealthy Confederate veterans to appeal to him personally for pardons (Cashman 1988:156). In addition, he required that Southern states ratify the 13th Amendment (ending slavery) as a condition for re-admittance to the Union (Tindall and Shi 1992:702). Former Confederates were elected to Congressional office in 1865, but Radical Republicans refused to seat them. Among the elected was former Confederate Vice-President Alexander Stephens (Tindall and Shi 1992:703). Enactment of harsh black codes in the South intended to disenfranchise prompted Congress to pass the Civil Rights Act of 1866, which explicitly protected black citizenship (Tindall and Shi 1992:706). Shortly afterward, Congress passed the 14th Amendment, ratified in 1868, which ensured citizenship of native-born Americans and specifically excluded from office those who had “engaged in insurrection or rebellion against” the United States (Tindall and Shi 1992:A24-A25). With the Military

In the disputed presidential election of 1877, Southern Democrats supported Republican Rutherford B. Hayes in a negotiated exchange for an end to Reconstruction (Tindall and Shi 1992:730-731). Former Confederates held power once again and, calling themselves Redeemers, moved to cleanse the South of what they perceived as the stain of war and “Yankee” occupation. The first order of business was removal of black men from the political process. White supremacy and antebellum values prevailed (Tindall and Shi 1992:731). Associations established explicitly to preserve the memory of the Confederacy embraced the “Lost Cause” doctrine of Confederate sovereignty in the 1880s and 1890s (Foster 1987:104).

From the rubble and ruin of the Civil War, survivors sought meaning in death and worked to rebuild the nation (Blight 2001:6). Even before the surrender at Appomattox, “rituals of burial and remembrance” were performed graveside by women across the South (Blight 2001:65). These rites, along with the erection of monuments, increased in frequency throughout Reconstruction (Blight 2001:77). “Mourning,” notes Shackel, “became a significant social, cultural, and spiritual duty in the old Confederacy, and women acquired the role of grieving and memorializing” (Shackel 2003:24). Memorialization in this form, according to historian Gaines Foster, “eased the pain of defeat and restored southern pride” (Foster 1987:103).

Celebrations of the Confederacy helped Southerners cope with defeat as well as the imposition of the new industrial order as nostalgia replaced bereavement (Foster 1987; Shackel 2003). Shackel notes that:

Some of the first actions performed by newly formed Confederate organizations after the war were not necessarily about memory but rather about defiance. Confederate veteran organizations dedicated themselves to the idea of revitalizing the Confederacy…In 1869, southern generals who wanted to preserve the
Confederate tradition founded the Southern Historical Society in New Orleans. The organization provided an interpretation of the Civil War that favored the Confederacy and the ideals of the Old South.” [Shackel 2003:22]

Memorialization activities proliferated in the 1880s in conjunction with an increase in the publication of veterans’ memoirs (Blight 2001:95). The United Confederate Veterans, originally formed in 1889, ultimately split over the issue of reconciliation with the North (Foster 1987:164). The group initially sought to include all Confederate veterans, but over time, as activities became more social than political, membership changed to represent predominately the upper middle class (Foster 1987:171). Monuments increasingly appeared in areas unassociated with graves, such as courthouse squares and downtown boulevards, illustrating the focus on celebration (Shackel 2003:37) (see Figure 2:1).

The Lost Cause reached its peak during the Spanish-American War (Rabinowitz 1992:178). This conflict was the South’s opportunity to vindicate itself – and it did (Foster 1987:163; Shackel 2003:37). “National reconciliation had gotten under way with the South’s strong support for the Spanish-American War in 1898 and with the earlier participation of southerners in Grover Cleveland’s two administrations” (Rabinowitz 1992:127).

The Blue and Gray Reunion on July 4, 1913, at Gettysburg was a large-scale attempt at national healing, funded in large part by both state and federal treasuries. President Woodrow Wilson delivered the featured speech. He reflected upon the event as a celebration of the real close to war and ill will between North and South (Blight 2001:7-8). “Glorious remembrance,” says historian David Blight, “was all but overwhelmed by an even more glorious forgetting.” Black veterans were not welcome to join white veterans at the fireside of reunion, and the specter of slavery was hastily herded into the shadows (Blight 2001:9; Shackel 2003:32-36).
Over time, Foster notes, increased commercialization associated with the Lost Cause illustrates a major change in the meaning of Confederate symbols (Foster 1987:167-169). By 1913, he asserts, the power of Confederate tradition had dwindled in importance (Foster 1987:179). Historian Howard N. Rabinowitz affirms the change in strength of the movement:
Yet by at least the late teens, interest in the Lost Cause had declined to the point where it had become a hollow shell of its initial self. The Civil War generation was largely gone, New South boosterism had triumphed, and two new wars had brought an outpouring of American patriotism. It was fitting that the 1917 Confederate Veterans’ reunion occurred in Washington, DC, the first time a reunion was held outside the boundaries of the Confederacy. [Rabinowitz 1992:180-181]

Ideological causes of the war were forced into the periphery of discussion and reflection; focus turned almost exclusively to individual heroism of white men on both sides (Blight 2001:53). “A moral equivalent of war came increasingly to exalt the soldier and his sacrifice, disembodied from the causes and consequences of the war,” explicitly to the exclusion of black veterans (Blight 2001:95). Supreme Court Justice and Civil War veteran Oliver Wendell Holmes argued that if a soldier fought for what he believed in, he was a hero—regardless of the moral rightness or wrongness of his convictions (Blight 2001:96). This notion, which was adopted eagerly by those on either side of the Mason-Dixon Line, helped further mold meaning out of the chaos of the war. “The bitter experiences of Reconstruction, and the impossibility of a postwar consensus on the war’s causes, all but guaranteed the irresolution [between black and white citizens] deep at the heart of Civil War memory” (Blight 2001:107).

Historians generally agree that reconciliation between white Northerners and Southerners had taken place by 1913 (Foster 1987), though some extend that date to 1920, one year after the close of World War I (Rabinowitz 1992:1). The South had endured Reconstruction, shed its blood in the Spanish-American War, and was represented in the White House by Southern–born President Woodrow Wilson.

The South’s support for World War I in the form of fighting men and training sites furthered the cause of reconciliation (Rabinowitz 1992:130). From the long-smoldering ashes of the Civil War emerged a “New South” determined to embrace and contribute to the development
of a modern nation, though still shackled by a legacy of racism, lack of industry and agricultural innovation, and pervasive poverty (Rabinowitz 1992:4-10).

The South’s transformation is recorded symbolically in the graves of Confederate soldiers and veterans. Burial of these “honored dead” and the rituals of memorialization that consecrated them can illuminate our understanding of changing ideas of national identity and reconciliation after the Civil War.

Cemeteries embody the ideals of both the living and the dead. In some cases a collection of graves is all that remains of a particular culture, serving as a narrative that can reveal much about a people. Cemetery studies has been the realm of a variety of disciplines, including anthropology; geography (Kniffen 1967, Francaviglia 1971); history (Vovelle 1980); architecture (Mayo 1988); and art (Greiner 1999). Archaeologists in particular have studied a variety of aspects of burial.

In the 1960s, archaeologists James Deetz and Edwin Dethlefsen examined changes in headstone iconography in colonial New England to reveal changes in ideology (Deetz and Dethlefsen 1966). Grave goods, the physical remains of burial ritual, have been used to extrapolate differences in social status. Studies of Mesopotamian graves reveal differential placement of imported materials (gold, lapis lazuli, and ivory) in graves, leading archaeologists to interpret those with such items as the elite (Whitehouse and Wilkins 1988:53). Body orientation has been used to determine religious affiliation or ideology. An east-west burial orientation with the head facing west has been identified in some contexts as Christian, and in others as evidence of African influence (Dockall and Powell 1996:21).
Across the globe and throughout time, treatment of the dead has been and is as diverse as language, art, and religion. Likewise, there are a variety of approaches through which scholars have studied treatment of the dead. Anthropologists contend that the method of disposal of dead bodies, along with related ceremony and grave goods, can be used to determine a culture’s belief system and practices regarding religion, political organization, and social status (Saxe 1970; Binford 1971; McGuire 1988; Alekshin 1983). All four sub-fields of anthropology have contributed to the field of cemetery studies.

Cultural anthropologists study and record information regarding activities surrounding death and burial and the beliefs behind them (Huntington and Metcalf 1979). Physical anthropologists analyze human remains in search of demographic and pathological data (Khudabux 1999; Buikstra and Cook 1980); behaviors and patterns, such as cannibalism (Defleur and White 1999) and warfare (Blakely and Mathews 1990), occasionally leave their marks on bones. Linguists examine language associated with the dead, such as the existence of taboos against uttering the name of the dead (Frazer 1998:206-212). Archaeologists seek spatial patterns (Powell 1996:151), differential orientation of bodies, signs of burial containers (coffins) (Dockall 1996:49), and other cultural practices that may leave traces in the soil, such as placement of coins and shoes in African American graves (Dockall and Powell 1996:21). Historical documentation is an invaluable aid to archaeologists as they strive to interpret culture through the imperfect remains of burial ritual.

Burials reveal more about survivors than they do about the dead (Parker-Pearson 1999:5). Archaeologists examine the remains of burials in order to get to the living – to determine meaning associated with body alignment, grave goods, and spatial patterns within the cemetery and the cemetery’s placement in a settlement-at-large (Parker-Pearson 1999; Francis et al. 2002).
The purposeful, intentional placement of the dead in the landscape has been interpreted as alternately an act that reinforces social connections, a manifestation of fissures within or between groups, and as a time when status of the living and the dead are “negotiated and reevaluated” (Parker-Pearson 1999:23-32).

Since the earliest explorations into culture and human evolution, anthropologists have focused on the remains of death-ritual, i.e., grave goods, in large part because of their survival in the archaeological record (Huntington and Metcalf 1979:5). The treatment of the dead was interpreted initially by anthropologists, including Sir James Frazer and Edward Tylor, as indicative of ideological and religious beliefs. Religion, it was surmised, was the result of human attempts to explain the natural world, to make sense of the realization that humans do not have complete control over nature or our lives (Huntington and Metcalf 1979:6; Frazer 1998:46).

With sociologist Emile Durkheim came a focus on solidarity in society. Death-ritual was seen as a reconciliation of the deceased with the community at large; rituals were performed to maintain group cohesion in the face of threats to stability upon a member’s death (Huntington and Metcalf 1979:7).

Group memory is inextricably linked to group identity (Thelen 1989:1117), (Francis et. al. 100). Historian David Thelen notes that memory is rebuilt and reshaped based on “politics, and social dynamics” (Thelen 1989:1119). Memory is malleable and can be manipulated to meet a culture’s needs (Thelen 1989; Cattell and Climo 2002; Shackel 2003).

Memory is the Foundation of self and society…Without memory, the world would cease to exist in any meaningful way…Without memory, groups could not distinguish themselves one from another, whether family, friends, governments, institutions, ethnic groups, or any other collectivity, nor would they know whether or how to negotiate, fight, or cooperate with each other. From the simplest everyday task to the most complicated, we all rely on memories to give meaning to our lives: to tell us who we are, what we need to do, how to do it, where we belong, and how to live with other people. But memory, whether individual or
collective, is constructed and reconstructed by the dialectics of remembering and forgetting shaped by semantic and interpretive frames and subject to a panoply of distortions. [Cattell and Climo 2002:1]

Groups negotiate interpretations and agree on what should be remembered, solidifying their identity (Thelen 1989:1122; Cattell and Climo 2002:4). Political power pervades these negotiations (Thelen 1989:1124; Cattell and Climo 2002:2; Shackel 2003:11-13). “The struggle for possession and interpretation of memory is rooted in the conflict and interplay among social, political, and cultural interests and values in the present. The actors appeal for popular support by claiming the sanction of the past” (Thelen 1989:1127). The idea of a shared past validates cultural institutions and, on a larger scale, nations (Cattell and Climo 2002:35; Shackel 2003:11). Once the past is collectively created, it is transferred through generations via “myth, legends, songs, proverbs, genealogies, rituals, and other forms of knowledge” (Cattell and Climo 2002:12). The degree to which this memory reflects reality is of little consequence; what is important is that it is accepted, and has meaning for the group (Cattell and Climo 2002:27).

Legitimization of memory involves the incorporation of place. According to anthropologist Christopher Tilley, topographical, geographical, and environmental factors contribute to the physical distinctiveness of space, but people use memory to attribute meaning to a landscape (Tilley 1999:178). Any given space can, theoretically, be an infinite number of places to an equally immeasurable number of individuals and/or groups. Only when a culture establishes, maintains, and transfers a shared concept of past and place does the landscape become a significant element of history and identity (Tilley 1999:178). Cattell and Climo expand on the connection between space and identity:

The sites of memory are important to truth claims, identities, and many other aspects of human life. They are important for social and cultural continuity within ethnic, religious, national, and other groups, and across generations, occupational categories, and other identities. At the same time, the sites of memory can, and
often do, become the focus of contestation, as in current debates over different histories of the American South – black, white, Hispanic – and symbols such as the Confederate flag and the Alamo. [Cattell and Climo 2002:18]

People become emotionally attached to places, and places have the power to evoke forgotten memories and even forgotten selves. [Cattell and Climo 2002:21]

Anthropologist Arthur Saxe interpreted space set aside intentionally for burial (cemeteries) as an attempt to maintain a direct connection to ancestors, therefore legitimizing power over limited resources:

Hypothesis #8: To the Degree that Corporate Group Rights to Use and/or Control Crucial but Restricted Resources are Attained and/or Legitimized by Means of Lineal Descent from the Dead (i.e., Lineal Ties to Ancestors), Such Groups Will Maintain Formal Disposal Areas for the Exclusive Disposal of Their Dead, and Conversely. [Saxe 1970:119]

Lynne Goldstein adds to Saxe’s hypothesis, noting that this control is “most likely to be attained and/or legitimized by means of an actual lineage or in the form of a strong, established tradition of the critical resources passing from parent to offspring” (Goldstein 1981:61).

According to anthropologist Paul Shackel, public memory is based on history, but “is more a reflection of present political and social relations than a true reconstruction of the past” (Shackel 2003:11). Cultural geographer Kenneth Foote considers landscape a “communicational resource, a system of signs and symbols, capable of extending the temporal and spatial range of communication,” or “earth writing” through which this past is presented to subsequent generations (Foote 1997:33). Historian Alon Confino notes that expenditure of energy through social action,” an example of which could be alteration of a landscape through the creation of a monument-filled cemetery, is a measure of the “effectiveness of memory in the life of a social group” (Confino 1997:157).

Manipulation or marking of a landscape reinforces the importance of place in a culture and is a method by which certain ideas are conveyed. Meaning of a place is preserved through
the establishment of boundaries between the place and its surroundings, maintenance of the area over time, designation of the landscape as public space, continual expansion of land and monuments, and visitation and performance of rituals ceremonies (Foote 1997:9). Studying spatial patterns between cemeteries and among burials within single cemeteries can reveal group organization as well as differentiation within the group, such as kinship systems and status/class levels (Goldstein 1981:57).

Anthropologist Mike Parker-Pearson asserts that a place of burial is not chosen for purely functional reasons, but is significant in that it reflects “perceived social geographies” (Parker-Pearson 1999:141). Manipulation of the landscape through burial of the dead, he says, is an overt, lasting, observable expression of human relationships (Parker-Pearson 1999:141):

Death is engraved on the landscape. It is re-experienced by the living whenever we see (or even think about) the event and its location. Death is never over. Business is always unfinished, because the meaning of the death and of its memory, whether enhanced or not by a monument, will forever be reworked, even by societies distant in space or time from the actual corpse. [Parker-Pearson 1999:193-194]

Burials and associated markers and monuments are intended to maintain the current power structure “forming a fixed point in time and space for future generations” (Parker-Pearson 1999:196). “At life crises, particularly at times of death, issues of identity and community take center stage and may be renegotiated and reconstituted through cemetery memorial rituals” (Francis et al 2002:95).

Rituals and artifacts associated with place teach social expectations and moral obligations (Tilley 1999:178; Francis et al. 2002:98), or convey warnings (Foote 1997:8). For example, commemorative activities and artifacts associated with war can be used to reconstruct social and political concepts for which soldiers fought and died, and to which contemporary and subsequent generations have attached meaning that is then passed onto new generations (Foster 1987).
“Historic and present-day cemeteries, as liminal places, bridge notions of self and other, time and space, individuals and community, and past and present homeland. Such landscapes encode, reproduce, and initiate constructions of memory at individual, familial, and collective levels” (Francis et al. 2002:95).

In recent years, archaeologists have moved away from simply establishing status relationships and organizational structure based on treatment of the dead. Focus has turned toward interpretation of ritual and symbol that serve the living but are manifested in burial of the dead (Cannon 2002:191).

Examination of a wide range of case studies shows that the scale and form of mortuary expressions are a function of the social and political scale for which memories are relevant and the circumstances in which their representation remains meaningful and effective. The growth and transformation of these expressions over time can therefore be read as a historical narrative of individual choices made in response to spatial representations of the immediate past and perceptions of current and anticipated social and political circumstances. [Cannon 2002:191]

Anthropologist Aubrey Cannon refers to spatial patterns of burial as readable text that outline group identity and “social memory” (Cannon 2002:192). “Over the long term visible to archaeology, an unconsciously created spatial narrative also emerges as the cumulative sum of reactions to past expressions and changing social and political circumstances” (Cannon 2002:192). Through burial, continuation of past relationships--and rights to power--is ensured (Cannon 2002:192). Ongoing “public ritual performance” in the place of the dead solidifies social memory (Cannon 2002:193). The repetition of ritual instills place with meaning (Goldstein 2002:204).

The mortuary landscape becomes the spatial representation of political power, which is more potently expressed in its construction than in social memories of death. Commemoration is merely ritual punctuation for political systems whose power transcends any power of the dead themselves. [Cannon 2002:195].
In *Political Lives of Dead Bodies*, anthropologist Katherine Verdery examines symbolic meaning attached to the actual corpse. She outlines several points of study: “political symbolism,” the concept of “proper burial,” the relationships between individual bodies and larger political contexts, and the manipulation of “memory” (Verdery 1999:3). Bodies, says Verdery, are “symbolic vehicles” laden with political and cultural meaning (Verdery 1999:27).

Bones and corpses, coffins and cremation urns, are material objects….As such, a body’s materiality can be critical to its symbolic efficacy: unlike notions such as “patriotism” or “civil society,” for instance, a corpse can be moved around, displayed, and strategically located in specific places. Bodies have the advantage of concreteness that nonetheless transcends time, making past immediately present. Their “thereness” undergirded the founding and continuity of a monastery’s property right to donated lands. That is, their corporeality makes them important means of localizing a claim. [Verdery 1999:27].

The body alone has no meaning – cultural perceptions of the living give it meaning (Verdery 1999:28):

A body’s symbolic effectiveness does not depend on its standing for one particular thing, however, for among the most important properties of bodies, especially dead ones, is their ambiguity, multivocality, or polysemy. Remains are concrete, yet protean; they do not have a single meaning but are open to many different readings. Because corpses suggest that lived lives of complex human beings, they can be evaluated from many angles and assigned perhaps contradictory virtues, vices, and intentions. [Verdery 1999:29]

A group’s perception of a dead body – or a collection of dead bodies – as representative of their identity can be so powerful as to be used in “marking territories as ‘ours’ and setting firm international borders to distinguish ‘ours’ from ‘theirs,’” (Verdery 1999:40). National identity, together with legitimization of the state, can be reinforced through repetitive, “public ritual performance” as well the establishment of war memorials to the unknown soldier (Cannon 2002:193).

Archaeological and historical research reveals that many cultures perceive a difference between individuals who have died of natural causes and those who have died violently, which is
manifested in burial. In our own culture war dead command a special mode of memorialization. In recent years research has been conducted on memorialization of war dead, those both connected directly with burial sites and those that stand alone in public places (Foster 1987; Mayo 1988).

Monuments stabilize and make permanent the “identity of the community” (Cannon 2002:194). However, notes Cannon, large-scale monuments may actually be a reflection of political crisis: “Extraordinary efforts to preserve the spatial representation of social memory may actually be more indicative of the failure of social and political structures than of their transcendent emergence” (Cannon 2002:196).

In War Memorials as Political Landscape, architect James M. Mayo discusses the history of war memorials from classical times to the present. He points out that two of the most famous legacies of Greek civilization, the Parthenon and the sculpture “Winged Victory,” are war memorials (Mayo 1988:2). Mayo goes on to enumerate war memorials of a variety of peoples through time (Mayo 1988:3); he illustrates that we interpret past cultures through their monuments to war.

Consider that one of the most famous speeches, delivered by one of our most famous presidents, was written for the dedication of one of the first national cemeteries, a literary monument to war dead:

Four score and seven years ago our fathers brought forth on this continent, a new nation, conceived in Liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal.

Now we are engaged in a great civil war, testing whether that nation or any nation so conceived and so dedicated, can long endure. We are met on a great battle-field of that war. We have come to dedicate a portion of that field as a final resting place for those who here gave their lives that that nation might live. It is altogether fitting and proper that we should do this.
But, in a larger sense, we cannot dedicate -- we cannot consecrate -- we cannot hallow- this ground. The brave men, living and dead, who struggled here, have consecrated it, far above our poor power to add or detract. The world will little note, nor long remember what we say here, but it can never forget what they did here. It is for us the living rather, to be dedicated here to the unfinished work which they who fought here have thus far so nobly advanced. It is rather for us to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us – that from these honored dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they gave the last full measure of devotion – that we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain – that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom – and that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth. [Wills 1992:263]

Abraham Lincoln’s Gettysburg Address, originally delivered on November 19, 1863, and intended as a very small part of the large-scale dedication ceremonies of the Soldiers’ Cemetery at Gettysburg, is a powerful symbol of American history and culture. Lincoln asserts in the speech that these dead, and the dedication of this space, is no less than a matter of national identity. Lincoln explicitly defines the Civil War and the death of those at Gettysburg as the struggle to keep alive the democracy established in 1776. All Americans know that on some level the Gettysburg Address defines America, even if they have forgotten that its initial presentation was at the dedication of a national cemetery, a consecration of war dead.

Methodology

I have thrown a wide net in my search for information on national cemeteries, local attitudes, and information regarding the burials of R. L. Pruyn and J. W. Nicholson. Resources include microfilm of Baton Rouge newspapers from the 19th and 20th centuries; personal manuscript and photograph collections, as well as institutional papers (representing United Confederate Veterans, St. James Lodge No. 47 freemasons, and the Historical Society of East and West Baton Rouge) in Louisiana and Lower Mississippi Valley Collections in LSU Libraries Special Collections; collections in the University Archives; internet sources, including pages administered by the National Cemetery Administration in the Department of Veterans’ Affairs;
numerous secondary sources on the Lost Cause, national cemeteries, public memory, and the Civil War; the Official Records of the War of the Rebellion published originally by the U.S. Secretary of War in 1885; dissertations regarding the history of Baton Rouge and Louisiana; journal articles by anthropologists studying burial practices; materials from the files of the Port Hudson National Cemetery; as well as archaeological reports from sites featuring historic cemeteries.

Tracing the symbolism of burial and national identity, I will address the history of the national cemetery system in Chapter Three, followed in Chapter Four by a discussion of the years 1886 and 1898 as possible dates of reconciliation in Baton Rouge. Chapter Five will cover the advent of World War I and military and political careers of Confederate veterans R. L. Pruyn and J. W. Nicholson, along with their deaths and burials in 1917. I will summarize my analysis and provide conclusions in Chapter Six.
CHAPTER 3: NATIONAL CEMETERY SYSTEM

A brief walk through Arlington, the quintessential national cemetery, reveals the cemetery as symbolic narrative. Identical marble headstones sweep symmetrically along massive swaths of cleared land, a testimony to the military order “which follows even the disintegration of the individual soldier by death,” (Hughes and Ware 1998:66) (see Figure 3:1). Memorials cover the cemetery, constructed of a variety of materials from marble to living trees (Knack and Falconer 1994:9).

![Figure 3:1 Arlington National Cemetery, 2000. Photograph by author.](image)

The official brochure of the National Cemetery System states its mission:

As a nation, we collectively remember these men and women. Famous or obscure, recruit or five-star general, these veterans gave of themselves to protect the ideals...
of liberty. They earned the appreciation and respect not only of their friends and families, but of America. [U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs N.d.]

A prominent sign at the cemetery’s entrance admonishes visitors to behave accordingly in this high place (see Figure 3:2).

![Figure 3:2 Entrance to Arlington National Cemetery, 2000. Photograph by author.](image)

Method of commemoration of war dead has changed over the course of American history. Though now considered a collection of national shrines, central to our identity as Americans, the National Cemetery System, of which Arlington is a part, did not come about until the 1860s. The precise location of the Arlington National Cemetery was first chosen by the officers of the federal government to spite its previous owner, perceived traitor, Confederate General Robert E. Lee (Bigger 1987:28).
An enduring symbol of nation, national cemeteries as a system were established in America nearly 100 years after the Revolutionary War, in the midst of a still greater conflict: the Civil War. Previously buried on and near battlefields as time allowed, Union dead were now interred in the boundaries of these newly designated spaces in Southern places; Confederate dead were gathered by family members and cemetery associations, sometimes many years after death, and were, for the most part, buried in separate sections within existing private cemeteries (Foster 1987:39).

A detailed account of the method by which Union graves were made and marked can be found in the 1864 annual report of Capt. James M. Moore, assistant quartermaster, in 1864:

It was deemed advisable…for the Government to manufacture all the coffins required for interments in the National Cemeteries, as well as those needed for shipment to distant points. The coffins now issued cost less than one-half the price paid by contract, and are far superior. The hearses used for transportation to the graves are covered ambulances, painted black….

The tablets or headboards are principally of white pine, with the exception of some 4,000 black walnut purchased more than a year ago. They are painted in white and lettered in black, with the name, company, regiment, and date of death. I would here remark that unless the tablets are painted before lettering the wood will absorb the oil in the paint and the rain soon wash off the lead in lettering.

By much pains and labor I have succeeded in preparing a mortuary record for future reference, giving a succinct history of the deceased, every page of which has been compared with the records of hospitals, and up to the present date believed to be the most reliable register of the dead extant…

Great care and attention have also been paid to the Harmony burial ground, where all soldiers dying of infectious diseases, and contrabands, are interred.

The improvements of the National Cemeteries have been a source of great gratification to all who visit them, and entirely dissipated the prevailing opinion of those living remote from Washington that soldiers were irreverently or carelessly buried. [U.S. Secretary of War 1985b:903]

As is evident in Moore’s statement, burials of whites and blacks were very carefully distinguished and segregated. Racial perceptions of the federal government were such that the
only white soldiers that black refugees were fit to be buried alongside were diseased (U.S. Secretary of War 1985b:903).

The first American cemetery devoted to the burial of soldiers of the U.S. Army was created in Mexico City in 1850 for American casualties of the Mexican War. Congress approved funding for a cemetery “for such officers and soldiers of the U.S. Army… as fell in battle or died in and around the said City,” (Steere 1948:150). The war dead, initially buried near battlefields, were reinterred in the cemetery; the years since death had taken their toll, obliterating any chance to identify the remains individually (Steere 1948:150).

The problem of identification of war dead during the Mexican War led the United States War Department to create a Graves Registration program during the first year of the Civil War (Steere 1948:150). In General Orders No. 75 issued by the War Department, the Quartermaster General was given the responsibility of providing the means to record and mark the graves (with wooden headboards) of the war dead. Hospital personnel and commanding officers were expected to carry out the details of registration (Steere 1948:151).

Many of the duties outlined regarding keeping records of buried soldiers were adapted from an existing system used at frontier posts (Steere 1948:151). The sheer volume of dead made this task almost impossible, along with the fact that no land or manpower had been provided to execute the duties outlined in General Order No. 75 (Steere 1948:151). Concern voiced by the public and soldiers alike--as from members of the Army of the Potomac who made a grisly discovery in 1864 of the exposed remains of Union dead who had been killed on the battlefield at Chancellorsville one year earlier--prompted federal action to improve the system for burial and registration of the dead (Steere 1948:154). The intensity of public concern for proper, respectful burial of the war dead resulted in Congressional legislation in July 1862 that authorized the
president to purchase property for this purpose (Steere 1948:151). In the following months, the
War Department created fourteen national cemeteries, many of which were existing burial
grounds associated with areas of troop concentration, battle sites, hospitals, and prisons (Steere

The Quartermaster General’s responsibilities did not end with the war; countless
battlefield burials had to be located, and in many cases, remains were re-interred in designated
cemeteries (Steere 1948:157). By June 1866, forty-one national cemeteries had been created
(Steere 1948:160). In 1867, Congress passed legislation ensuring the permanence of the national
cemetery system, requiring the Secretary of War to provide fences around cemeteries, hire
superintendents to reside on cemetery grounds, and to purchase additional property for new
cemeteries. Relocation of Union war dead continued until 1870, at which time there were 73
national cemeteries (Steere 1948:161).

Congress passed legislation in 1873 designating the size, shape and material of grave
markers for all national cemeteries. The exposed portion was to be twelve inches high, four
inches thick, and ten inches wide, the markers would have rounded tops and a “face ornamented
with a recessed shield and raised lettering” and composition was designated as white granite or
marble. By 1881, all graves were marked in this manner (U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
2000). By the last decade of the 19th century, landscaping of national cemeteries was complete,
each cemetery reflecting the native flora of the region, a subtle detail intended to enforce the idea
that the national cemeteries “belonged.” National cemeteries officially accepted Civil War
veterans for burial free of charge by 1873 (U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs 2000), Spanish-
American War veterans in 1899, and American veterans of all wars after World War I (U.S.
Department of Veterans Affairs N.d.). However, evidence indicates, as illustrated in Chapters
Four and Five with the burials of James Fornance in April 1899 and R. L. Pruyn in July 1917, the practice of burying all American veterans may have preceded the official acts that allowed it.

Method of memorialization evolved with the development of national cemeteries. In June 1865 Quartermaster General Meigs, responsible for the standardization of many of the elements of the National Cemetery System, chose a poem for printing in the published “roll of honor” listing Union dead, and later for placement within all national cemeteries (Hughes and Ware 1998:64). It is possible that Meigs was responding to an established grass-roots practice of placing the poem on wooden tablets beside Union graves (Hughes and Ware 1998:65).

O’Hara’s poem, originally written in 1850 to memorialize Kentuckians who had died fighting in the Mexican War, was excerpted as follows for use in national cemeteries:

The muffled drum's sad roll has beat
    The soldier's last tattoo;
No more on Life's parade shall meet
    That brave and fallen few.

On Fame's eternal camping-ground
    Their silent tents are spread,
And Glory guards, with solemn round,
    The bivouac of the dead.

No rumor of the foe's advance
    Now swells upon the wind;
No troubled thought at midnight haunts
    Of loved ones left behind;

No vision of the morrow's strife
    The warrior's dream alarms;
No braying horn nor screaming fife
    At dawn shall call to arms.

The neighing steed, the flashing blade,
    The bugle’s stirring blast,
The charge, the dreadful cannonade,
    The din and shout are past.
Your own proud land's heroic soil
    Shall be your fitter grave:
She claims from war his richest spoil—
    The ashes of her brave.

Rest on, embalmed and sainted dead!
    Dear as the blood ye gave;
No impious footstep here shall tread
    The herbage of your grave.

[Hughes and Ware 1998:66-67]

In 1882 excerpts of the poem were imprinted on cast iron tablets and placed in national cemeteries around the country; the tablets were standardized at a size of one and a half feet by three feet, “with socket fitted on the back by which they can be secured to wooden posts. They are desired to replace the present wooden tablets at the cemeteries which are rapidly decaying” (Hughes and Ware 1998:65). According to one source, a wooden board with an excerpt of the poem painted on it was found nailed to a tree on the battlefield at Chancellorsville in 1863. It is unclear as to how long the wooden tablets with the poem were present in any cemeteries or battlefields, nor who placed them there. However, with the official manufacture of plaques in the 1880s featuring the poem, “the elegy was established with the memorial status it has now occupied for well over a century” (Hughes and Ware 1998:65).

Over the next thirty years, numerous requests were made for copies of the tablets for placement beside Union graves in private cemeteries; all were denied by the government based on the interpretation that the plaques were created only for national cemeteries in 1882 (Hughes and Ware 1998:68).

Theodore O’Hara wrote *The Bivouac of the Dead* in 1858 in memory of his comrades who fell in the Mexican War (National Cemetery Administration 2003). Published various times in numerous forms, this poem, written by a poet who after death would be known as “Uncle
Sam’s Official Poet” (Hughes and Ware 1998:ix), was accepted, popularized, and reused because O’Hara had tapped into existing cultural expectations regarding the patriot and the appropriate care of his body and memory after death in battle. The significance of the poem and the sentiment that it expressed did not wane after its initial publication; in the 1860s it made its way onto Civil War battlefields in the midst of war in the form of wooden tablets (Hughes and Ware 1998:65). Over time, the words were adopted officially, and were displayed in prominent areas in national cemeteries around the county (Hughes and Ware 1998:65).

It is in the national cemeteries that marble stones of immortality have replaced transient human flesh, symbolic of soldiers’ sacrifice for the nation. Individual fallibility has succumbed to heroic purpose. These are the lessons of the landscape. The presence of O’Hara’s Bivouac helped to shape and reinforce the developing concept of national cemeteries as shrines.

The ideas conveyed in The Bivouac of the Dead originated as part of the public consciousness. The words of the poem have appeared on monuments associated with Kentucky soldiers who died in the Mexican War, on the tombstone of the author (Hughes and Ware 1998:148), in published books featuring American and Southern poets, on wooden boards in battlefields, on metal plaques in cemeteries, and even on the Internet (personal observation, 2000). Presence of The Bivouac of the Dead in these various public landscapes, both real and virtual, over 150 years after its creation attests to its significance and relevance within our culture as a tool for the transmission of collective memory.

These words in this place convey cultural concepts of memory and identity to Americans, not through official federal sanction alone, but because they stem from a shared consciousness that transcended even the large scale bloodshed and regional schism of the Civil War and Reconstruction. Such is the case with national cemeteries. The purpose of the cemetery
landscape is not merely to dispose but to instruct (Foote 1997). Symmetrical rows of identical headstones convey concepts of order and equality, representing the loss of one life for the greater, enduring nation. This is the gift we have been given, and the act which we, as citizens, are expected to repeat when called. We are reminded that death is the cost we pay for Liberty.

The National Cemetery System, arising out of war in response to citizens' calls for "proper" soldier burials, now serves as the keeper of our tradition and national identity. It is within this context that the Baton Rouge National Cemetery can be best understood.

**Baton Rouge**

The U.S. Garrison in Baton Rouge (referred to today as the Old Arsenal) maintained a cemetery for soldiers and their families, though area citizens were allowed burial there as well (Manhein and Whitmer 1991:108). This cemetery was filled to capacity by the 1850s; the city established Magnolia Cemetery in 1854 for private citizens, creating a small section to serve as a Potter’s Field (Hahn 1992:17) (see Figure 3:3). The landscape of Magnolia Cemetery is marked with oak trees and local flora. Grave types and markers are diverse, exhibiting a range of materials, colors, shapes, sizes, epitaphs, and iconography. Graves are grouped in family plots. Though generally each marker within a plot is oriented in the same direction, they are not spaced or arranged symmetrically. The number of graves per plot varies (personal observation 1999).

The Battle of Baton Rouge occurred in August 1862, as Confederate forces attempted to retake the city after federal occupation earlier that year; soldiers fought amongst the headstones of Magnolia Cemetery (see Figures 3:4 and 3:5). Correspondence between commanding officers, Union Major General John C. Breckenridge and Confederate Colonel Thomas W. Cahill, reveals that Confederate troops buried Union war dead while the Confederates still occupied parts of
Figure 3:3 Magnolia Cemetery, Lytle family plot, ca. 1890. Andrew D. Lytle Photograph Collection, Mss. 2600, Louisiana and Lower Mississippi Valley Collection, LSU Libraries, Baton Rouge, LA.

Figure 3:4 Battle of Baton Rouge, Harper’s Weekly, September 6, 1862 p. 564. Note tombstones in Magnolia Cemetery in top left quadrant.
Figure 3:5 Portion of “Topographical Plan of the City and Battle-field of Baton Rouge, Louisiana,” from the Atlas to Accompany the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies, Government Printing Office, Washington D.C., 1895 [reprinted 1983] Note the location of Magnolia Cemetery in area near green square, marked “Cemetery.” “Public Cemetery Grounds” refers to the potter’s field affiliated with Magnolia Cemetery.
Baton Rouge (U.S. Secretary of War 1985a:55). Confederate dead were placed in a mass grave in the center of the family plots (Hahn 1992:12). Union dead were buried in a wooded area several feet to the south of Magnolia Cemetery. Union soldiers who had died at a local field hospital, along with war dead from Plaquemine and Camden, Arkansas, were re-interred there (Handley 1946).

Baton Rouge National Cemetery was established in 1867 on the site of burial of Union war dead following the battle (Handley 1946) (see Figures 3:6 through 3:9). During the war, the cemetery, adjacent to the civilian Magnolia Cemetery, was on the outskirts of town. However the street between the two cemeteries, Florida Street, would later become a major thoroughfare, one of the most well-traveled routes from Baton Rouge to New Orleans.

Located in a primarily residential area, the cemetery is bordered on the north by Florida Street and on the west side by 19th Street (Dufrocq Street). Its dimensions are 1010 feet by 320 feet; there are 51 sections, each measuring 60 feet by 60 feet (Handley 1946). In 1878 the original wooden picket fence was replaced with a brick and stucco wall, started by contractors from Massachusetts; local artisans completed the new fence after the original contractor died during a yellow fever epidemic in Baton Rouge (Handley 1946). In the 1880s, (and again in the 1930s during construction of the Huey Long’s new state capitol), bodies previously buried in the Post Cemetery associated with the U.S. Garrison (some dating to the 1780s) were reinterred in Baton Rouge National Cemetery (Handley 1946).

Baton Rouge National Cemetery features symmetrical rows of raised arched white stone markers. Crosses and federal shields are recurring motifs. Burials include veterans from the Civil War to the Korean War, and though officially closed in 1960, burials continue for those with
Figure 3:6 Entrance, Baton Rouge National Cemetery, ca. 1890. Andrew D. Lytle Photograph Collection, Mss. 2600, Louisiana and Lower Mississippi Valley Collections, LSU Libraries, Baton Rouge, LA.

Figure 3:7 Baton Rouge National Cemetery postcard, ca. 1906. Leroy S. Boyd Family Papers, Mss. 99, Louisiana and Lower Mississippi Valley Collection, LSU Libraries, Baton Rouge, LA.
Figure 3:8 Baton Rouge National Cemetery, ca. 1890. Andrew D. Lytle Photograph Collection, Mss. 2600, Louisiana and Lower Mississippi Valley Collections, LSU Libraries, Baton Rouge, LA.

Figure 3:9 Map of Baton Rouge National Cemetery. Copyright 1916. This image is not to scale. Reprinted with permission. The Sanborn Company, Sanborn Library LLC. All Rights Reserved. Further reproductions prohibited without written permission from Sanborn Library LLC.
prior arrangements. Wives and children of soldiers are buried here as well. Markers feature very basic biographical information, in some cases restricted to an abbreviated name and rank. Most markers face east. The cemetery is completely surrounded by a brick and stucco wall, and a single central driveway runs its length. Although most headstones are the same size and basic shape, several individual monuments stand out, including that of General Troy Middleton, former president of Louisiana State University. These two very different cemeteries offer unique Reconstruction and reconciliation in the capital city. Burials and memorial activities in both Magnolia Cemetery and the Baton Rouge National Cemetery speak to the attitudes of former Confederates in a time of great change.
CHAPTER 4: BATON ROUGE IN 1886 AND 1898

As described in the Introduction, the years 1886 and 1898 are promising dates for pinpointing reconciliation and reclamation of a national American identity in Baton Rouge. Specific occurrences and events during each of these years will be examined in the larger context of the community.

1880s

Reconstruction had ended; Baton Rouge was adjusting to new political, economic, and race relation realities. The population of Baton Rouge in the 1880s was close to 8,000, the majority of whom were black citizens. White Baton Rougeans would not be in the majority for another 40 years (Carleton 1981:111). Most of the city streets were not paved, as was the case with the access roads to the National Cemetery (House Congressional Committee on Military Affairs 1885). A flood in 1882 instigated massive levee construction projects (Fortier 1903:211). The town’s first railroad was completed in 1883, connecting Baton Rouge to New Orleans and beyond (Carleton 1981:128).

In his book River Capital, historian Mark Carleton summarizes the political and racial climate in Baton Rouge after Reconstruction’s end and through the 1920s:

The last two decades of the 19th century would prove to be the most unbecoming in the entirety of Baton Rouge’s existence as an incorporated municipality. For this period and two decades of the 20th century, Baton Rouge would be a truly enjoyable place to live only if one were white, possessed a degree of prominence or wealth, and professed loyalty to the Democratic Party…

The men who assumed the reins of Louisiana’s government after disposition of the “carpetbaggers” and “scalawags” were Democrats who, for the most part, were middle-aged and middle-class, had served in the Confederate Army, loathed the Republican party for its part in Reconstruction, and worked to eliminate its influence in state and local affairs entirely. [Carleton 1981:117-119]

Baton Rouge was the state capital once again. Black legislators who were
accustomed to patronizing businesses in New Orleans were met with contempt, and were refused service in the segregated capital city (Carleton 1981:120). In the midst of Democratic control of the federal government, Louisiana Republicans found it necessary to support Democratic candidates in order to survive politically (Uzee 1950:78).

1886

Jefferson Davis toured the South this year, making appearances and giving speeches for the first time since the war’s end (Foster 1987:95). Confederate Governor Henry Watkins Allen’s remains were moved from New Orleans and interred on the State Capitol grounds “in sight of the battlefield once moistened with his blood,” and topped with an imposing monument (McEnery 1886:34). Louisiana State University took formal possession of the former U.S. Garrison in 1886 (Fleming 1936:430). The cornerstone of the Confederate monument was laid downtown this year. And the remains of a local hero of both the Revolutionary War and the West Florida Revolt, General Philemon Thomas, were moved from the Post Cemetery to the Baton Rouge National Cemetery.

Baton Rouge newspapers in 1886 feature a myriad of articles detailing Civil War battles and the recollections of aging combatants, lamenting the death of veterans, and celebrating the renewed “brotherhood” of North and South. But the newspapers are peppered with articles and editorials that belie the friendly feelings between the sections, revealing remnants of resentment on the part of former Confederates. The local newspaper Weekly Truth, founded by Confederate veteran John McGrath, features frequent advertisements for Dr. Tichenor’s antiseptic (see Figure 4:1), the label boldly illustrated with an image of a Confederate soldier rescuing his comrade and
Figure 4.1 Advertisement for Dr. Tichenor’s Antiseptic featuring Confederate soldiers and battle flag, 1886. From Weekly Truth newspaper.
the “stainless banner.” Another example is an anecdote printed in the August 13 edition that reveals sectional bias in the details of a pre-war meeting of two future presidents:

Lincoln’s Oath of Allegiance

General Winnfield Scott, when a young man, was stationed at Fort Snelling – at that day perhaps the remotest military outpost in the country. When the Black Hawk war was begun some Illinois militia companies proffered their services. Two lieutenants were sent by Scott to Dixon, Ill [sic], to muster the new soldiers. One of the lieutenants was a very fascinating young man, of easy manners and affable disposition...On the morning when the muster was to take place, a tall, gawky, slab-sided, homely young man, dressed in a suit of blue jeans, presented himself to the lieutenants as the captain of the recruits and was duly sworn in. The homely young man was Abraham Lincoln. The bashful lieutenant was he who afterward fired the first gun from Fort Sumter, Major Anderson. The other lieutenant, who administered the oath, was in after years the President of the Confederate States, Jefferson Davis. [Weekly Truth 1886 August 13:6]

In early February, the Washington Fire Company of Baton Rouge invited the Confederate Memorial Association to hold its commemorative activities in conjunction with the company during its annual February 22 parade in honor of its namesake, George Washington, on the anniversary of his birthday (Weekly Truth 1886 February 12:5) (see Figure 4:2). This parade was one of several major annual events held before the war (Allen 1936:53). Each paper devoted multiple pages to the descriptions of the laying of the cornerstone of the Confederate monument on February 22, the most coverage any single event received in each that year (see Figure 2:1 for photograph of completed monument, 1890).

Ceremony participants include Governor McEnery, Cornerstone Committee Chairman, who rode in the parade on horseback; Andrew Lytle, a well-known local photographer who documented Baton Rouge during the war; a wide variety of military organizations, such as the Delta Rifles of West Baton Rouge, whose uniforms were “similar to the uniform worn by the ‘old Delta Rifles’ when they left to enter the late war” (Capitolian-Advocate 1886 February 23:1); fire and “hook and ladder” companies; cadets from Louisiana State University “in their
neat gray uniforms” (Capitolian-Advocate 1886 February 23:1); and the masons of St. James Lodge No. 47 in Baton Rouge. Artillery companies fired off multiple gun salutes throughout the day (Weekly Truth 1886 February 26:2).

The Truth mentions that members of the Joseph Mower Post of the Grand Army of the Republic (a national organization of Union veterans commonly referred to as the GAR) in New Orleans were invited to the festivities, but no one from the group was able to attend. A letter from the Adjutant, E. V. Hitch, was read during the ceremony:

> Circumstances beyond our control will prevent the personal attendance of our comrades, but we desire to express our heartfelt sympathy in the noble work of keeping forever fresh in grateful memory the sacrifices and heroic deeds of those of our country-men who sealed with their life’s blood their devotion to their truest convictions of honor and right. The rancor and bitterness born of civil strife belong to the past; the glorious record of brave deeds by brave is an ever-present heritage, and the work of perpetuating in enduring granite to coming generations the example of those who found it the loftiest patriotism can find no better expression than the labors about to be inaugurated in laying the cornerstone of the “Confederate Memorial monument” in all of which labors to their happy conclusion we wish you God-speed. [Weekly Truth 1886 February 26:5]

Members of the Baton Rouge chapter of the GAR, named the Harney Post, “were also present but owing to some unaccountable mistake were not assigned a place in the procession, a circumstance most deeply regretted by the members of the Monumental Association” (Weekly Truth 1886 February 26:5). Only the Truth mentions this grand faux pas, and only in the last paragraph of the multi-page article on the activities of the 22nd. GAR chapters in the South were surely keenly aware of the need for cooperation with former Confederates, especially in the midst of Democratic power. It would be interesting to learn members’ reactions, and whether or not the Monument Association made any public apology other than the admission of a mistake printed in the Truth.
The next Confederate-oriented activity on the calendar was Memorial Day, designated by the Baton Rouge Confederate Memorial Association as April 26. While Memorial Day was celebrated throughout the former Confederacy, the date varied by city (Foster 1987:42). The *Truth* reports that the day was “appropriately observed by the citizens of Baton Rouge” (Weekly Truth April 30:5) with the placement of wreaths and flowers at the grave of Governor Henry Watkins Allen on the capitol grounds; creation and decoration by members of the Pansy Circle (young women who were members of the Confederate Memorial Association) and Captain Eichwurzel, superintendent of the National Cemetery, of a grandstand in Magnolia Cemetery.
which the reporter refers to only as “the cemetery”); and placement on the grandstand of a wreath of flowers joined with a blue ribbon “symbolizing the bond of fraternal friendship uniting all.” And in a continued show of united brotherhood:

When the ceremonies at the Confederate graves had ended most of those present repaired to the National Cemetery, where Col. J. W. Nicholson in a few choice words, presented Captain Eichwurzel with a bouquets of flowers on behalf of the Confederate Memorial Association. After promenading through the well kept walks and registering their names at the office, the assembled crowd departed for home. [Weekly Truth 1886 April 30:5].

May ushered in “decoration day,” officially declared Memorial Day by the Grand Army of the Republic (Beath 1889:246). The local newspapers maintain a distinction, calling the Confederate day of remembrance “Memorial Day” and the other as “Federal Decoration Day.”

On May 27, four days before the federal celebration, the Pansy Circle presented another fundraising event for the Confederate Monument Fund (Weekly Truth 1886 May 28:1).

The Capitolian-Advocate gives a description of ceremonies at the National Cemetery for “Federal Decoration Day” which took place on May 31, under the direction of Post Commander Patrick Fallon of the Harney Post of the GAR. Fallon read the orders of the post regarding the purpose and method of commemoration:

In view of establishing a feeling of fraternity between the brave soldiers who wore the blue and the grey, and are now united as loyal citizens of one country and one flag, let us unite in this sacred duty, and extend to each other the hand of fraternity as brave soldiers of one undivided union...

In the distribution of the flowers on the graves of the brave dead, it is earnestly requested that the ladies and children take part in the work of love and patriotism.

Immediately after the closing ceremonies at the National Cemetery, this post will proceed to Magnolia Cemetery and as a tribute of respect for the Confederate dead, will decorate the grave of the late Major A. S. Herron, CSA. [Capitolian-Advocate 1886 June 1:3]
A thunderstorm broke up the music and prayers earlier than planned, but later the Confederate Memorial Association, represented by Col. J. W. Nicholson, Confederate veteran and LSU faculty member, presented a floral wreath and cross to Captain Eichwurzel in memory of the federal dead. According to newspaper accounts, “Governor McEnery and a large number of prominent citizens were present, including many members of the General Assembly” (Capitolian-Advocate 1886 June 1:3).

The Summer Moonlight Festival on July 2, sponsored by the Young Men’s Literary and Social Club, was held on the grounds of the former U.S. Garrison, no longer occupied by federal soldiers (Fleming 1936:430). The evening’s events were similar to those presented by the Pansy Circle on January 21 and 22. Likewise, proceeds from the admission were donated to the Confederate Monument Fund (Weekly Truth 1886 July 2:5). While pre-war parades were focused on January 8, February 22, and July 4 (Allen 1936:53), there is no mention of anything remotely related to Independence Day on or around July 4 in either newspaper in 1886.

Then on August 17, 1886, “buried” amongst ads for Tulane University; Alex. S. Gilber, Undertaker and Furniture; Smith’s Bile Beans for sour stomach, neuralgia, fever and chills; and the Louisiana State Lottery $150,000 capital prize, is an article on the reburial of Baton Rouge hero Philemon Thomas in the National Cemetery (see Figure 4:3). The story begins on the bottom of the first column of page three:

We are pleased to note that upon the application of Mr. Charles Eichwurzel, superintendent of the National Cemetery, approved and recommended by Mayor Vay and other prominent citizens, authority was fronted by the government to Mr. Eichwurzel to remove the marble tomb and remains of the late Gen. Philemon Thomas to the National Cemetery.

Immediately after receiving the order Mr. Eichwurzel had them carried out and placed the tomb in a suitable spot where it can be readily seen by visitors to the cemetery. This action is commendable in all of the gentlemen who took an interest in it, as the long public services of Gen. Thomas merited some better care
of his remains than they had received during many years while they lay exposed in the old American Graveyard. As a soldier of the first revolution, and of other wars against this country’s foes it was right that the United States Government should take care of his remains, and the action of Mr. Eichwurzel is indeed worthy of more than mere complimentary mention.

[Capitolian-Advocate 1886 August 17:3]

Figure 4:3 Grave marker of Philemon Thomas, 2003. Photograph by author.

Thomas was buried in the National Cemetery by order of the U.S. Quartermaster General (Casey 1975), along with the remains of a number of other individuals originally buried at the
deteriorating Post Cemetery. Thomas’s remains were apparently the last moved. There are no other references to this event in either newspaper, and no notice at all in the Weekly Truth.

Former Confederate soldiers and sympathizers in Baton Rouge in 1886 maintained a delicate balance between reconciliation with the North and preservation of the memory of the Confederacy. Overt statements and actions of “brotherhood” are recorded in local newspapers, but beneath the surface an attachment to the Confederacy and sectional superiority remained.

Washington’s birthday was a popular date for dedications of Confederate monuments throughout the South, including New Orleans in 1884 (Foster 1987:91). Washington’s image was used by both the Union and the Confederacy during the Civil War as a means of justifying each side’s cause and doctrine. For example, Confederate currency featured images of Washington and other Founding Father figures (Holzer 2000). Both North and South claimed legitimate heirship to the democracy represented by Washington; some sympathetic to the Confederate cause referred to the war as the Second American Revolution. By including the cornerstone activities within the annual Fireman’s Parade on February 22, the Confederate Monument Association claimed Washington’s blessing on the event, and by logical extension, the Confederacy itself. From the details described in both local newspapers, most, if not all, events held in the National Cemetery also include visitation to Magnolia Cemetery. The reverse is not always true. Instances of local former Confederates reaching out to Captain Eichwurzel and GAR chapters by including them in Confederate commemorations, presenting floral arrangements to them on behalf of the Confederate Memorial Association, and actively recording their visits to the National Cemetery are well documented in both local newspapers.

Baton Rouge was, like the rest of the South, moving toward a time of increased activity immortalizing and justifying the Confederate Cause in the 1880s and 1890s. During the years of
1886 to 1899, citizens erected more monuments to the Confederacy than in the previous two decades (Foster 1987:129). Monuments began to appear more frequently in public spaces, less often in cemeteries, serving as daily reminders in busy areas within communities (Foster 1987:129; Shackel 2003:37). Memorial activities, including parades and commemorations, have been interpreted as events which emphasize the solidarity of the community by praising the sacrifices of common men to the larger Southern Cause (Foster 1987:195). The 1890s marked the creation of both the United Confederate Veterans and the United Daughters of the Confederacy, groups which would become increasingly active in their work to assist veterans in need, and to preserve the memory of the dead and their Cause. While those activities were overtly focused on national reconciliation, the dates, locations, and symbolism of these commemorations reveals a lingering loyalty to the Confederacy.

Although the Confederate supporters in Baton Rouge included GAR groups in their activities and printed poetry and newspaper articles that basked in the glow of brotherhood, it is clear that Baton Rouge had not by this time adopted the National Cemetery as its own. The cemetery was a reminder of the continued presence of the former enemy, and cooperative efforts were most likely exercised at least in part for political expediency rather than out of purely fraternal feeling.

**Spanish-American War: New Opportunity in 1898?**

The next opportunity for expression of national identity through burial in the Baton Rouge National Cemetery was the Spanish-American War in 1898. Scholars of the New South note Confederate veterans' eagerness to support and fight for the American flag in 1898 amidst a renewed sense of national reconciliation (Foster 1987:145). The burial of Confederate General Joseph Wheeler (who proved himself a hero in the Spanish-American War) in Arlington
National Cemetery in 1906 is a testament to mutual acceptance between North and South as a result of the latter war (Kane 1999).

During President William McKinley’s administration, the United States ultimately joined rebel forces in Cuba in their bid for independence from Spain. Americans had invested millions of dollars in sugar and mining interests in Cuba. Meanwhile, newspapers competing for subscribers, specifically the *New York Herald* and the *New York World*, saw opportunity in the Cuban crisis. Atrocities on the part of Spain, including the holding of Cuban civilians in camps, were reported and in some cases exaggerated, which helped send readers into a frenzy of support for Cuba (Tindall and Shi 1992:906-908).

McKinley initially sought to serve as an arbiter and end the fighting through diplomacy. Then in February, 1898, the battleship *Maine*, sent by the United States to Cuba on a “courtesy” mission, exploded. No hard evidence materialized, but Americans were quick to blame the Spanish. The United States entered the war on the side of Cuba in April, 1898 (Tindall and Shi 1992:909-911).

In spite of initial statements pledging that the United States was not interested in acquiring new territory, at the close of war in August 1898, McKinley negotiated to take possession of Puerto Rico and Guam. By 1901, after two years fighting insurrectionists in the Philippines after the Spanish-American War, the United States annexed Hawaii and occupied the Philippines. The United States had become, in the eyes of the world, a major power (Tindall and Shi 1992:911-918).

Baton Rouge continued to grow during this period. Mayor Robert A. Hart focused his administration on improving education, roadways, and sewage disposal. (Carleton 1981:132). By
1896, the Coca Cola bottling company had opened a facility in the capital city (Carleton 1981:136).

Amid headlines of impending war early in 1898, the Daily Advocate is filled with favorable reports on the constitutional convention and passage of new suffrage requirements (literacy, property, and poll tax) that ultimately disenfranchised blacks and poor whites; proclamations from Governor Murphy J. Foster enlisting the help of Baton Rouge citizens in the arrest of “known” murderers (mostly young black men who had not had the benefit of trial); and yellow fever quarantine notices (Daily Advocate 1898).

On February 17, the newspaper reports the explosion of the Maine and assures readers that their “Louisiana Boys” stationed on the battleship, David French Boyd, Jr. (son of David French Boyd of Confederate and LSU fame) and Mat T. Culverius, Jr., are safe (Daily Advocate 1898 February 17:2). In spite of the coming crisis in Cuba, the annual Washington Fire Parade was held as usual on February 22, and much of the city turned out for it (Daily Advocate 1898 February 23:1).

Once war was declared on Spain, the young men of the Pelican Rifles (1st Louisiana Regiment) were given a proud farewell in Baton Rouge. Confederate veteran John McGrath was a speechmaker at the sendoff. The newspaper notice indicated that the pre-war debate over the need for war had given way to public support:

Whatever may have been the differences of opinion in response to the necessity for the causes leading to war, now that war is upon us there is but one course for patriots to pursue and that is to support our country’s cause until peace is restored. [Daily Advocate 1898 May 3:4]

Reference was made to the Confederacy, establishing a symbolic unbroken chain of patriotic service to the country on the part of Baton Rougeans (in spite of the fact that from 1861-1865, fighting for their country meant being the enemy of the United States):
The Pelican Rifles have engaged in war before, and the company was a terror to their foes.

[When] The military band in the State House yard struck up “Dixie” there was such a yell of enthusiastic delight that has never before been heard in Baton Rouge.

Louisiana loves her children, for as soon as Uncle Sam asked for their services they came to the front.

Many join the ranks of the army with the ambition of personal distinction, but this young man (Quartermaster Sergeant N. Wax) did not crave for the distinction of a high rank, so much as to uphold the loyalty and honor of this city and State. He is the son of a Confederate veteran who left a limb on the battlefield, the Hon. John J. Wax, ex-mayor of this city. [Daily Advocate 1898 May 3:4]

Confederate veterans in particular must have sensed the bitter irony of federal support for Cuba’s autonomy, considering the United States government’s willingness to shed blood to crush the Confederacy’s bid for independence a generation earlier.

John McGrath went on to serve as the grand marshal of July 4th festivities to celebrate Admiral Dewey’s victory against the Spanish in Manila Bay. There is no mention of local Confederate Memorial Day activities, and only a reference to federal Decoration Day programs held nationally (Weekly Advocate 1898 July 2:5).

In spite of a palpable patriotism in the city, it does not appear that the citizens had yet fully embraced an American identity by way of adoption of the National Cemetery. During the years 1898 and 1899, there were only 10 burials in the Baton Rouge National Cemetery (Interment.net 2001). Nine of those buried were black Civil War veterans who fought for the Union. Most had served in Louisiana, including New Orleans and Port Hudson (National Park Service 2003). The tenth burial was that of James Fornance (see Figures 4:4-5), a white officer of the United States who was stationed in Baton Rouge during Reconstruction, married a local woman, and eventually died during action in the Spanish-American War (USGENWEB 2003).
By contrast, there is one Spanish-American War veteran who died in 1899 and is buried in Magnolia Cemetery. Native Baton Rougean Lieutenant John B. Lobdell returned from service in Cuba; several months later he became ill and died on January 28, 1899 (Daily Advocate 1899 January 28:1).

**World War I and a Confederate Burial**

In 1917, Confederate veteran and former Baton Rouge mayor R. L. Pruyn is buried in the Baton Rouge National Cemetery; fellow Confederate, Col. J. W. Nicholson, was buried in Magnolia Cemetery in the same year. Pruyn’s Mexican War service is listed on his headstone; neither symbol nor word of his Confederate service marks the granite. The timing and locations of these particular burials in conjunction with America’s involvement in World War I present a good possibility for expression of reconciliation.


Figure 4:4 Grave marker of James Fornance, 2003. His wife was buried first in a plot adjoining his, and has a similar marker, which may explain why he does not have a standard granite arch. Photograph by author.

Figure 4:5 Close-up of Fornance marker, 2003. Photograph by Mark Jewett.
CHAPTER 5: TWO CONFEDERATE VETERANS

In 1917, the United States entered World War I, and two prominent Baton Rouge citizens – both Confederate veterans – died and were buried in the city. Their deaths and burials illuminate the changing world view of Baton Rougeans regarding their national identity.

J. W. Nicholson

James W. Nicholson was born in Alabama in 1844; he later moved to Claiborne Parish, Louisiana, with his family. At the start of the Civil War, Nicholson was sixteen years old. He joined Company B of the 12th Louisiana Infantry, and was ultimately elected its sergeant. He served until the war’s end in 1865 (State Times 1917 March 22:1). Nicholson completed his college degree after the war and was twice named president of Louisiana State University (Fleming 1936:407). He also chaired the Department of Mathematics (State Times 1917 March 22:1).

An active member of the Baton Rouge community and First United Methodist Church (Sanders 1918:6), Nicholson took part in Confederate Memorial activities around the city throughout the late 19th and early 20th centuries. In addition to numerous publications in the field of mathematics, in 1915 he wrote *Stories of Dixie*, a collection of his war-time memories written for children (Nicholson 1915).

Nicholson remained on the LSU faculty until his death on March 22, 1917. (State Times 1917 March 22:1). He was buried in Magnolia Cemetery in Baton Rouge. The grave is marked with a substantial headstone in the shape of an obelisk as well as a small plaque (see Figures 5:2-4).

The obituary printed in the *State Times* calls Nicholson “Baton Rouge’s most beloved citizen” (State Times 1917 March 22:1). The esteem in which the community held him is evident
in the announcements of his death and reflections on his life that appeared on the front page of the local newspaper, the State Times, and the number and type of people who participated in the burial ceremony.

Figure 5:1 J. W. Nicholson. LSU Photograph Collection, RG# A5000, Louisiana State University Archives, LSU Libraries, Baton Rouge, LA.
Nicholson’s body lay in state in LSU’s Garig Hall, under the care of an honor guard of LSU cadets. An elaborate procession from Garig Hall to Magnolia Cemetery, included the LSU Band, LSU cadets, a group of clergy, LSU faculty, Confederate veterans, members of the fraternal order Knights of Pythias (of which Nicholson was a member), boy scouts, students, and personal friends. The funeral is described in the newspaper as “military in its character.” As if to justify this distinction and Nicholson’s status as Confederate hero, the obituary elaborates on his Civil War service as a young man:

It was doubtless because of this extreme youth and his continued occupation with study even during the midst of war that he achieved no marked distinction among the brave fellows by whom he was surrounded, most of whom were by many years his seniors. He was however elected first sergeant of his company in the spring of 1862 and in that capacity participated in many of the great battles of the war. [State Times 1917 March 22:2]

The paper elaborates on Nicholson’s popularity:

Telegrams of condolence have been received not only from over Louisiana but from many parts of the nation.

Few persons in the south ever acquired a more enviable reputation in their profession than Col. James W. Nicholson. His great reputation was principally due to his mathematical attainments which have become, recognized throughout the world, and the general ability and fidelity with which he discharged the various duties and trusts which have been committed to him. [State Times 1917 March 22:1]

But whether as a professor, president, or colonel, honor seems to have sat lightly upon him for he continued to be the same genial companion, wise counselor, and sympathetic friend. His magnetic nature always drew hearts to him, and there were none among either pupils or associates who did not esteem him as a friend. His habitual good humor and kindness gradually earned for him the appellation of “Col. Nic” which title he was affectionately referred to by every one until his death. [State Times 1917 March 22:1]

The rank of colonel was conferred upon him in 1883 by the governor, a title which in this military age seems fit to be more generally recognized than those which testify to civic honors of greater worth, consequently, he came to be known as Colonel Nicholson. [State Times 1917 March 22:2]

Honorary pallbearers included Governor Ruffin G. Pleasant, Thomas D. Boyd (LSU President),
Figure 5:2 Nicholson’s grave monument, 2003. Photograph by author.

T. H. Harris (Superintendent of LSU), Confederate veteran John McGrath, and others described as “high in the life of the state and friends of the colonel.”

At Magnolia cemetery, the last rites were said by the Confederate veterans, after which the military salute was fired over the grave, followed by taps on the bugle.

All of the city schools, the two Catholic academies, the Louisiana state school for the deaf, the blind institute, and the Louisiana state university were closed for the funeral. Classes that the university have been suspended for the past two days. Leading business houses were closed during the morning hours.

[State Times 1917 March 23:2]

The description of the funeral ends with a reminder to readers that Nicholson was a good Confederate. “Colonel Nicholson said he worked out a problem in mathematics once when he was hiding behind a tree and the Yankees were shooting at him” (State Times 1917 March 23:2). Nicholson is still revered today for his Confederate service. A chapter of the Sons of Confederate Veterans in Ruston, Louisiana, is named after him (Sons of Confederate Veterans 2003).
Robert Legget Pruyn, was born in New York in 1832. Under the instruction of his parents, he joined the 7th U.S. Infantry, Company F at the age of 12; several years later his unit became part of the Mexican War effort (Mexican War Pension Applications N.d.). He served as a fifer. (Historical Society of East and West Baton Rouge Papers 1917; Confederate Pension Applications N.d.).

After the Mexican War, Pruyn returned to New York and became a carpenter. Planning to move to California, he stopped in Baton Rouge along the way. Pruyn decided instead to make the city his permanent home. He became a contractor and at the time of his death in 1917 was credited with constructing several landmark buildings in the downtown area. He married his employer’s daughter, Martha Brown, and remarried in 1881 after her death. (Historical Society of East and West Baton Rouge Proceedings 1917).

In 1861, Pruyn enlisted in the Delta Rifles, organized across the river in Port Allen, Louisiana, and ultimately earned the rank of Major. Pruyn earned his war-hero status at Port Hudson in 1863. He slipped out of the Confederate defenses in the night, and swam the river using canteens as floats to deliver correspondence to Confederate General Joseph E. Johnston requesting support. Pruyn not only successfully delivered the messages, but he returned to Port Hudson, and evading Union capture, made it back into the Confederate defenses and delivered Johnston’s response (Historical Society of East and West Baton Rouge Papers 1917).

At war’s end Pruyn returned to his work as a carpenter/contractor, and he remained active in Confederate memorial programs and local politics. He joined the local freemasons lodge in 1872 (St. James Lodge No. 47 Papers N.d.). In 1888, as a result of the January, 1887, pension act, Pruyn applied for and received a federal pension for his Mexican War service. He continued
to receive this pension, at increasing rates, until his death (Mexican War Pension Application papers). In 1902 Pruyn, a seventy-year-old Democrat, ran for mayor of Baton Rouge. *The Daily Advocate* endorsed his candidacy, reminding citizens of his brave service to the Southern Cause:

Major R. L. Pruyn, an honored citizen whose life has been spent here and who has proven true to every trust and loyal to all that represents Southern chivalry and honor, becomes a candidate for mayor….

No man in Louisiana is more entitled to the veneration, confidence, love and esteem of this people than this noble old Roman. He is the personification of rock-ribbed truth. He is a man who dignifies labor and eats his bread in the sweat of this brow. He is brave, generous, noble, open hearted, plain as an old shoe, fearless as a lion and withal, kind gentle, lovable. We hail him as our next mayor. [Daily Advocate 1902 February 18:2]

The paper includes a notice issued by Pruyn on February 18, 1902, outlining his platform:

I feel that I need make no profession or appeal to the people of this city. I have lived among you for fifty years, and my life and character are well known to all of you…I stand simply and solely for good city government…I am no politician, but a plain man of the people, and my administration, if elected, will be an honest, plain, business administration, consecrated solely to the highest good…The public shall be in my full confidence, and its financial business and all other affairs shall be an open book. [Daily Advocate 1902 February 20:2]

One of his proposals was to change the city charter so that property ownership was no longer a prerequisite for holding office:

Under its remarkable provisions, the ignorant negro owning real estate may administer the affairs of the city government, while the active, educated progressive young white man who happens not to own real estate is barred and prohibited. [Daily Advocate 1902 February 20:2]

He repeatedly pledged not to use the office to take revenge upon or privilege people he knew personally, apparently in response to problems he perceived within the acting administration.

Pruyn was elected and sworn in as mayor of Baton Rouge in April, 1902 (Weekly Advocate 1902 April 19:5). Several of his councilmen were fellow members of the Baton Rouge
chapter of the United Confederate Veterans to which Pruyn belonged (United Confederate Veterans Papers N.d.).

In November, 1909, a delegation led by Massachusetts Governor Ebenezer Draper came to the capital city to dedicate a monument at the Baton Rouge National Cemetery to those men from their state who fought and died in the Department of the Gulf during the Civil War. R. L. Pruyn and John McGrath were present at the ceremonies; their picture was taken with Governor Draper (see Figure 5:5). New Orleans photographer John Teunisson documented the event as

Figure 5:5 Dedication of the Massachusetts Monument, Baton Rouge National Cemetery, 1909. Standing: St. Clair Favrot; Ebenezer Draper, Governor of Massachusetts; Captain King, Superintendent of Baton Rouge National Cemetery. Seated: Major R. L. Pruyn; Major John McGrath. John McGrath Family Papers, Mss. 3281, Louisiana and Lower Mississippi Valley Collection, LSU Libraries, Baton Rouge, LA
well (see Figure 5:6). The welcome received by the delegation seems to indicate sectional reconciliation on some level, including the participation in the dedication by both Union and Confederate veterans, including Pruyn and McGrath, and local and state officials, such as Louisiana Governor J. Y. Sanders (Daily State Times 1909 November 15:1).

In 1911, Pruyn applied for a pension from the State of Louisiana for his Confederate service. Among the questions on the form is the following: “Did you take the oath of allegiance to the United States Government at any time during the war?” Pruyn answers this with a “NO,” written larger and more deliberately than other “no” answers on the form (Confederate Pension Applications N.d.), apparently wanting to make his allegiance to the Cause very clear.

R. L. Pruyn died on July 30, 1917 (see Figure 5:7). His obituary, like Nicholson’s, paints the portrait of a local hero:

Veteran of Many Wars Meets Death: Major R. L. Pruyn Dies at the Ripe Age of 86 Years: Last Mason and Mexican Veteran.

Had a Life Full of Peril, But Courageously Met Every Danger.

The death of Major R. L. Pruyn aged veteran of the Mexican and civil wars at the age of 86 occurred at the home of his son, Marshall Pruyn on America street about noon Monday, Major Pruyn is said to have been the oldest Mason in the state and the last Mexican War veteran in Louisiana….

During the reconstruction era Major Pruyn took an active part as a white leaguer and continued actively in politics until quite recently, never seeking office personally, although he was elected mayor at one time but resigned after about one year’s service.

Major Pruyn was a gallant soldier, an excellent citizen, a devoted husband, an indulgent parent and leaves behind numerous progeny of highest respectability, and many veterans and comrades who loved and honored him for his military heroism and civic virtues. [State Times 1917 July 30:8]

Major Pruyn was for years a conspicuous figure in the civic development of Baton Rouge. He played an important part during his long career in the events of the times, and his passing removes from our midst a notable figure [State Times 1917 July 31:2]
Comrades Conduct Last Rites of Dead Veteran

Masons and Old Confederates Bid Farewell to Comrade

The funeral services of Maj. R. L. Pruyn, aged veteran of the Mexican and civil wars, whose death occurred Monday noon, were held at the home of Marshall Pruyn, son of the deceased, on America Street, Tuesday morning at 10 o’clock.

The religious ceremony was conducted by Rev. S. P. DuBois, of the Second Presbyterian Church.

Figure 5:6 Dedication of Massachusetts Monument, 1909. Includes Massachusetts delegation and local Baton Rougeans, such as members of the United Daughters of the Confederacy. John Teunisson Photograph Collection, Louisiana State Museum.
The Masons then took charge of the services with J. J. Mundinger, W. M., leading. After their impressive ceremony the hoary veterans of the civil war days came forward to pay their last respects of loyalty and affection to their comrade. John Seaman and Capt. John McGrath each gave a few words of commendation and farewell.

In the passing of this aged man Louisiana loses one of her few Mexican war veterans, as well as one of the small band of civil war survivors.

[State Times 1917 July 31:6]

Although the funeral service description in the newspaper does not mention burial at the National Cemetery, the membership book of the St. James Lodge No. 47 of the Masons does:
The Lodge proceeded to the late residence of Brother Pruyn and marched in funeral procession to the National Cemetery and there consigned his body to the earth by the beautiful ritual of our beloved order. He was our Senior Member and left as a token of his devotion to the order, the Holy Bible which rests upon our Altar. “Peace to his Ashes.” [St. James Lodge No. 47 Papers N.d.]

In spite of the fact that Pruyn’s heroics in the Civil War are detailed in the obituary and articles in the newspaper in the days following his death, the word “Confederate” appears only once, and that is in reference to the veterans that attended the funeral service. Pruyn is labeled instead as a “civil war survivor” (State Times 1917 July 31:6). Pruyn, according to the obituary, answered Louisiana’s call to arms, while Nicholson’s obituary explicitly states that he “enlisted in the Confederate Army” (State Times 1917 March 22:2).

So why would J. W. Nicholson and R. L. Pruyn, both well-respected Confederate veterans, be buried in two diametrically opposed places?

In search of information regarding who applied for Pruyn’s burial in the National Cemetery, I contacted the National Cemetery Administration, the National Archives (Reference, Old Military Records, and Modern Military Records Branches), Port Hudson National Cemetery, and a great-great nephew of Pruyn’s, Roy Pitchford, staff reporter for the Alexandria Daily Town Talk newspaper. The only extant documentation of the burial is a 1950 copy of the record of internment, provided by Port Hudson National Cemetery. The record indicates only that the headstone was requested and the date of Pruyn’s death – several fields, including the requestor field, are blank. Because he was living with his son at the time of his death, and his children (according to his Confederate pension application) were taking care of him financially in his last years, it is reasonable to assume that the children made the decision regarding his burial there, no doubt counseled by close friends of the deceased. But why the National Cemetery? Burial there makes a bold statement, especially for a Confederate veteran. In order to make sense of this
mystery, it is important to note (1) what Nicholson and Pruyn had in common with each other; (2) the differences between them; and (3) the larger context of America’s involvement in global warfare in 1917.

What Pruyn and Nicholson Have in Common

Pruyn and Nicholson were both Confederate veterans. Each belonged to the Baton Rouge chapter of the United Confederate Veterans, and in fact served together as officers in 1913 - Pruyn was elected Commander, while Nicholson was re-elected as Chaplain (United Confederate Veterans Papers 1913). Both maintained a friendship with fellow Confederate veteran John McGrath. As President of the Confederate Monument Association, McGrath most likely had contact with Nicholson, who was, throughout the year of the cornerstone ceremony (1886), listed in the local newspapers as a speaker at Confederate-related events. Pruyn’s masonic lodge, St. James Lodge No.47, marched in the parade associated with the cornerstone ceremony. Pruyn served under McGrath in the Civil War, and listed him as a character witness on his application for State Pension from the Louisiana for his Confederate service. McGrath was conspicuously present and active at the funerals of both Nicholson and Pruyn.

Both men were Protestants: Nicholson attended the First United Methodist Church; the minister of Second Presbyterian Church led Pruyn’s funeral. Pruyn and Nicholson were both widowers with children. Each was highly regarded in the community, as is evidenced by statements in the local newspapers upon their deaths.

Differences Between Pruyn and Nicholson

On the other hand, Nicholson and Pruyn differed in a number of ways (see Table 5:1). Pruyn, thirteen years Nicholson’s senior, was considered a hero for his role in the Civil War,
Table 5.1 Commonalities and contrasts between Nicholson and Pruyn

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>J. W. Nicholson</th>
<th>R. L. Pruyn</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Confederate Veteran</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Confederate Veterans member</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confederate hero</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mexican War Veteran</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protestant</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respected by community</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financially independent</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Applied for Confederate pension</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Profession</td>
<td>Scholar, university administrator</td>
<td>Carpenter, contractor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Placement of death notice in newspaper</td>
<td>Page 1</td>
<td>Page 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friend(s) in common</td>
<td>John McGrath</td>
<td>John McGrath</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age at death</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burial</td>
<td>Magnolia Cemetery</td>
<td>National Cemetery</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Headstone</td>
<td>Elaborate</td>
<td>Simple, government issue</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
while Nicholson, only sixteen when he enlisted, was excused by the local newspaper for lack of distinction due to his age. Of the two men, only Pruyn served political office, albeit he was mayor for less than one year.

Nicholson was a scholar and an active member of the Louisiana State University faculty; Pruyn was a carpenter by trade. Pruyn notes in his Confederate pension application that his children provide for his economic well-being, and at the time of his death, he lived with his son Marshall. Pruyn’s interment record confirms that he received a pension for his Mexican War service as well. According to archaeologist Thurston Hahn III, the city of Baton Rouge donated plots to the United Confederate Veterans Association before 1915 (Hahn 1992:31). Pruyn was a long-standing member, and would have had access to these plots, as would Nicholson.

Nicholson did not apply for a Confederate pension; in addition, his elaborate gravemarker in Magnolia Cemetery suggests that he was, if not well-off, more financially stable than Pruyn. But it should be noted that as a member of the Knights of Pythias fraternal organization, Nicholson’s family would have been entitled to $20 to help defray funeral costs if necessary (Skofield et al 1890:74). The burial plot in the Baton Rouge National Cemetery would have been free for Pruyn’s family. Economics, then, at least provide part of the answer.

Local and Global Context in 1917

Several newspaper articles on Confederate history appeared throughout the year. National women’s suffrage events were covered as well. The mayor gave a report on municipal improvements in the way of street paving, the eradication of typhoid, increased and improved food inspections, and the expansion of Standard Oil’s facilities in Baton Rouge--the company arrived in the city in 1909 (Carleton 1981:156).
The deaths of Nicholson and Pruyn in 1917 occurred at a very significant time. In January of 1917, members of the Historical Society of East and West Baton Rouge (formed in 1916 by elite white citizens in the area) celebrated the centennial of the incorporation of Baton Rouge, which included a skit commemorating Louisiana’s secession. J. W. Nicholson died on March 22 and was buried in Magnolia Cemetery; his Confederate service is honored with a military burial. The United States joined World War I in April.

The city was host to the national convention of the United Daughters of the Confederacy in May (State Times 1917 May 2:2). In June, the largest Confederate veterans’ reunion was held outside of the South in Washington, D.C. (State Times 1917 May 1:3; Rabinowitz 1992:180). On July 4, the State Times newspaper ran a patriotic graphic on the front page of the July 4 edition, featuring an image of the American flag, George Washington, and the headline: “Spirit of ’76 Alive in America Today!” Shortly over two weeks later, on July 20, the States Times prints names and addresses of young men from Baton Rouge who had been conscripted (State Times 1917 July 20:1-4). On July 30, R. L. Pruyn died and was buried in the Baton Rouge National Cemetery.

Pruyn was a man known to be a proud Confederate veteran; much of his popularity was based on his status as a hero in gray. He was active in the community and served as mayor for one year. Masons and Confederate veterans actively participated in his funeral ceremony. His burial in the Baton Rouge National Cemetery caused no public outcry or family quarrel. “Uncle Major,” according to Pruyn’s great-great nephew, Roy Pitchford, “was revered by his family, and stories were told long after his death” (email to author, June 18, 2002). Pruyn’s burial in the Baton Rouge National Cemetery was not an accident, or simply the result of economic
conditions, but instead it was an overt effort by family and friends (reflecting the community in general) to mark their patriotism through a renewed sense of American identity.
CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION

Magnolia Cemetery offers what is expected of a local cemetery bearing graves from the nineteenth century (see Figures 6:1-2). A quaint black iron fence marks the boundaries of the cemetery. Graves are grouped in family plots and feature a who’s who of Baton Rouge from the mid-1800s to the present. Grave markers vary in color, size, and form, ranging from Egyptian obelisks to angels.

Trees and shrubs erupt throughout, further focusing the eye on familial clusters of graves. The varied markers breathe out the cacophony of many voices—many individual voices. A sense of unity comes only from the fact that plots are grouped, and that all is herded safely in by the iron fence (personal observation 2000).

Figure 6:1 Entrance to Magnolia Cemetery, 2003. Photograph by author.
The Baton Rouge National Cemetery is a very different place (see Figure 6:3). Even on an overcast day, the white granite markers, synchronized in steady, symmetrical rows, pulsate with light. Large expanses of grass showcase the countless arches that call to mind soldiers standing at attention. Here there is the sense of a constant, unified hum. The cemetery is surrounded by a brick and stucco wall that emanates permanence. All elements of the landscape convey the idea of union and nation, minimizing the importance of the individual. It is difficult to come to this place and not be emotionally moved (personal observation 2003).

The headstone of R. L. Pruyn is simple and unassuming (see Figure 5:7). The recessed shield, abbreviated name, and dearth of information mask the individual that lies beneath, instead emphasizing the importance of this man and this grave as one of many. There is no mention of
Pruyn’s service to the enemy. Collectively, these aspects of the headstone normalize this burial within the broader cemetery. The message is that he is part of something larger than himself. There is nothing out of the ordinary about his headstone.

In these very different spaces that are quintessential examples of the power of place, lie the bodies of two men: both proudly served in the Confederate army, and both were highly respected by the community in post-war years. While they traveled in different social circles, their shared devotion to the Southern Cause at least occasionally guided their paths to cross. Their differential burial is not an accident, or merely a function of differential economic status; it is a function of the climate of reconciliation in Baton Rouge in 1917.

The Civil War and its aftermath affected the lives of thousands of people North and South, killing, maiming, and emotionally scarring them forever. The defeated South struggled to
recover in the years that followed. Some tried to forget, but many white Southerners, angered by what they saw as an unjust occupation of the South imposed by Reconstruction (not to mention resentment of black suffrage and political involvement), gratefully embraced the myth of the Lost Cause in the 1880s and 1890s, seeking moral justification and a higher purpose for the otherwise unfathomable slaughter and destruction.

Years passed and industry grew in the South. Leaders hoping to restore the South in the nation’s eyes pushed for sectional reconciliation and economic partnerships, touting the development of a “New South.” The Spanish-American War in 1898 offered Southerners a chance at redemption; Confederate veterans and their sons served the United States in the conflict. In spite of many political and social changes, black citizens were left out of the celebrations of union between North and South. In 1915, D. W. Griffith’s film Birth of a Nation toured the nation, painting the Ku Klux Klan as romantic and heroic figures during Reconstruction.

Confederate commemoration had become celebration (Foster 1987); mourning at the gravesides of the men in gray gave way to proud public displays. In March 1917, J. W. Nicholson of Baton Rouge was laid to rest, his Confederate service honored at his funeral and in the local newspapers. And then the United States declared war on Germany.

Another Confederate veteran, R. L. Pruyn died – he is described as a “Civil War” hero and is buried in the Baton Rouge National Cemetery. There is no public outcry regarding his burial; the newspaper records a fitting service for a man held in high esteem by the community. Fellow Confederate veterans participate in his funeral at the National Cemetery. And it is all so normal.
Pruyn’s burial, with its simple headstone, is indeed a loud public proclamation that Southerners are Americans. This place, the National Cemetery, is an appropriate place for this honorable soldier. The people of Baton Rouge declare their loyalty to the United States through this burial, and the United States agrees. No other act could say that so clearly. Future research using larger samples and taking into account burials before and after Pruyn’s 1917 could help reveal more about the significance and meaning behind his burial.

Cemeteries are not merely repositories of the dead – this is their superficial function. Cemeteries are instead history books for the living. Landscapes are manipulated to communicate layers of information to contemporary and future generations. The meaning of the symbols there is continually reshaped and renegotiated to serve the needs of the living generation. The lesson, then, is that cemeteries are never simply collections of corpses.

The National Cemetery System communicates its message on an institutional scale (see Figure 6:4). The stone sentinels within chant “nation,” “honor,” “duty,” “sacrifice,” “freedom.” Americans are taught at an early age that national cemeteries are sacred spaces. They are the physical expression of American democracy. It is within this context that R. L. Pruyn’s burial in the Baton Rouge National Cemetery can be understood.

Officially closed in 1960, burials continue in the Baton Rouge National Cemetery sporadically for those who have made prior arrangements. Memorial Day activities take place annually on the cemetery grounds, complete with military trimmings. Even so, many residents of Baton Rouge do not know that there is a National Cemetery in the heart of the city.

The current Baton Rouge phone directory, published by BellSouth, features a street map with cultural and historical sites of interest. While Magnolia Cemetery is indicated, the National Cemetery is not (see Figures 6:5-6). In response to my contact with BellSouth regarding the
Figure 6:4 View from Arlington National Cemetery, 2000. The Lincoln Memorial and the Washington Monument are visible in the background. Photograph by author.
Figure 6:5 City Map of Baton Rouge. Copyright 2003, BellSouth Advertising and Publishing Corporation. Reprinted with permission.

Figure 6:6 Close up of city map showing omission of National Cemetery.
omission, I have been assured that future editions of the directory will include Baton Rouge National Cemetery.

It is my hope that there will be two outcomes resulting from the writing of this thesis: (1) that local residents become aware of the existence and history of the Baton Rouge National Cemetery; and (2) that I have provided an example of how anthropology can be applied to an historic subject to both test and enhance interpretations made by historians.
BIBLIOGRAPHY

Unpublished Primary Sources

Andrew David Lytle Photograph Collection
N.d. Louisiana and Lower Mississippi Valley Collections, LSU Libraries, Baton Rouge, Louisiana

Baton Rouge Cemetery Files
N.d. Foundation for Historical Louisiana, Baton Rouge, Louisiana.

Confederate Pension Applications
N.d. Louisiana State Archives, Baton Rouge, Louisiana.

Handley, C. R.

Historical Society of East and West Baton Rouge Papers and Proceedings
N.d. Louisiana and Lower Mississippi Valley Collections, LSU Libraries, Baton Rouge, Louisiana

John McGrath Papers and Scrapbook
N.d. Louisiana and Lower Mississippi Valley Collections, LSU Libraries, Baton Rouge, Louisiana

John Teunisson Photograph Collection
N.d. Louisiana State Museum, New Orleans, Louisiana.

Mexican War Pension Applications
N.d. National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C.

St. James Lodge No. 47 Papers (Freemasons)
N.d. Louisiana and Lower Mississippi Valley Collections, LSU Libraries, Baton Rouge, Louisiana

United Confederate Veterans Association Records
N.d. Louisiana and Lower Mississippi Valley Collections, LSU Libraries, Baton Rouge, Louisiana

U.S. Quartermaster General
Newspapers

The Advocate 1917
Capitilian-Advocate 1886
Daily Advocate 1898, 1902
Daily State Times 1909
State Times 1917
Weekly Advocate 1898, 1899, 1902
Weekly Truth 1886

Published Sources

Aertker, Robert J.

Alekshin, V.A.

Allen, Frederick Stuart

Arlington National Cemetery

Beath, Robert B.

Bigger, Philip

Binford, Lewis R.

Blakely, Robert L. and David S. Mathews

Blight, David
Buikstra, Jane E. and Della C. Cook  

Cannon, Aubrey  

Carleton, Mark T.  

Cashman, Sean Dennis  

Cattell, Maria G. and Jacob J. Climo  

Chapman, Robert and Klavs Randsborg  

CNN.com  

Confino, Alon  

DeFleur, Alban and Tim White  

Dethlefsen, Edwin and James Deetz  
Dockall, Helen Danzeiser

Dockall, Helen Danzeiser and Leah Carson Powell

Fleming, Walter L.

Foote, Kenneth E.

Fortier, Alcee'

Foster, Gaines
1987 Ghosts of the Confederacy: Defeat, the Lost Cause, and the Emergence of the New South. New York: Oxford University Press.

Francaviglia, Richard V.

Francis, Doris, Leonie Kellaher, and Georgina Neophytou

Frazer, James George

Genoble, Richard C.
Goldstein, Lynne

Goldstein, Lynne

Greiner, William K.

Hahn, Thurston H.G., III

Holzer, Harold

House Congressional Committee on Military Affairs
1885 Report to Construct a Road to the National Cemetery at Baton Rouge. 48th Congress, 2nd Session, House Report 2317.

Hughes, Nathaniel Cheairs Jr. and Thomas Clayton Ware

Huntington, Richard and Peter Metcalf

Internment.net

Kane, Sharyn and Richard Keeton
Khudabux, Mohammed Rakieb

Knack, Emily and John Falconer

Kniffen, Fred

McEnery, Governor S. D.

McGuire, Randall H.

Manhein, Mary H. and Ann M. Whitmer
1991 Investigations of the State Capitol Grounds. Department of Geography and Anthropology, Louisiana State University, unpublished manuscript. Used with permission.

Marten, James

Mayo, James M.

National Cemetery Administration

National Park Service

Nicholson, James W.
Parker-Pearson, Mike
1999  The Archaeology of Death and Burial. College Station, TX: Texas A&M University Press.

Powell, Joseph F.

Rabinowitz, Howard N.

Sanders, Samuel Thomas
1918  An Appreciation of James W. Nicholson. LSU University Bulletin 10(8).

Saxe, Arthur A.

Shackel, Paul
2003  Race, Commemoration and the Post-Bellum Landscape. Walnut Creek, CA: Altamira Press.

Skofield, Harney, Dr. J. M. Watkins, and C. K. Browning

Sons of Confederate Veterans

Steere, Edward

Thelen, David

Tilley, Christopher

Tindall, George Brown and David E. Shi
USGENWEB

U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs – Louisiana Office

U.S. Secretary of War

U.S. Secretary of War

U.S. War Department

Uzee, Philip D.

Verdery, Katherine

Vovelle, Michel

Whitehouse, Ruth and John Wilkins

Wills, Garry
VITA

Leah Wood Jewett was born in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, in 1971. She received her Bachelor of Arts degree in anthropology with a concentration in archaeology and a minor in history from L.S.U. in May 1993, graduated summa cum laude, and was elected to membership in the Phi Beta Kappa honor society. Leah returned to L.S.U. on a part-time basis in January 1999 to pursue her Master of Arts degree in anthropology. She is currently the director of the United States Civil War Center at L.S.U., and serves on the Advisory Committee of the Abraham Lincoln Bicentennial Commission.