CONTROVERSY AND CRUSADE: DANIEL HARVEY HILL AND THE SHAPING OF REPUTATION AND HISTORICAL MEMORY

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ABSTRACT

BRIT KIMBERLY ERSLEV: Controversy and Crusade: Daniel Harvey Hill and the Shaping of Reputation and Historical Memory (Under the direction of Joseph T. Glatthaar)

Between 1863 and 1889, Confederate Major General Daniel Harvey Hill defended himself against real and perceived attacks on his reputation in connection with the Lost Dispatch and the Battle of Chickamauga, two controversial events of the Civil War. As a crusader of sorts, Hill actively shaped the historical memory of the Civil War in part by aggressively pursuing personal vindication through correspondence with politicians and colleagues and through printed statements in his own and other publications. Hill connected criticism of his military reputation with that of his personal reputation, and vice versa. For Hill, these two sides of his reputation were intimately linked by the desire to uphold the family name, not only for his children, but in relation to his war record and the units he commanded. He was keenly aware of his potential role in the memory-making of the war because he was one of its architects. Therefore, he consciously made the struggle to clear his reputation part of his crusade to sculpt southern and national memory of the Civil War.
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PROLOGUE: THE CRUSADER AT WORK

In early 1868, former Confederate Major General Daniel Harvey Hill wrote an emotional article for his self-published monthly magazine, *The Land We Love*. A friend had recently brought to his attention an excerpt from Virginia newspaper editor Edward A. Pollard’s *The Lost Cause: A New Southern History of the War of the Confederates*. Pollard became famous throughout the former Confederate states for this book and other works on the late war. He described an incident in September 1862 in which a copy of an order from General Robert E. Lee was delivered to Hill, then a division commander in Lee’s Army of Northern Virginia. When Hill received the order, Pollard claimed, “this vain and petulant officer, in a moment of passion, had thrown the paper on the ground. It was picked up by a Federal soldier, and [Union General George] McClellan thus strangely became possessed of the exact detail of his adversary’s plan of operations.”

Hill’s article passionately rebutted Pollard’s accusation. After arguing that Civil War histories should be written by his generation’s descendants, Hill denied ever receiving the order from Lee’s headquarters. He said he had first heard of his name being connected by some “pen-and-ink warriors” to the “Lost Dispatch” in June 1863. “As part of Mr. E. A. Pollard’s history was written during the war,” Hill observed, “it may be that while I was

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risking my life for the defence of Richmond he, secure in his office, was penning this most unjust and unprovoked slander.”  

He continued, “It does seem a little vain for a man, who never saw a single battle-field to attempt to describe so many hundreds of battles, and tell what were the errors in the conduct of them all . . . In fact, I think that it would be great presumption in Mr. E. A. Pollard to criticise the military career of one of Lee’s corporals or drummer boys.”  

Near the end of his article, Hill declared, “I am not willing that my reputation should be blackened and my name made odious among my countrymen, through the malice and unfairness of one, who encountered no dangers, endured no hardships and suffered no privations for that “Lost Cause,” of which he so presumptuously claims to be the historian.”  

Hill’s attempts to refute Pollard’s charges reflected his sensitivity to how his personal honor and reputation were being represented in the present and how they would appear in the future historical record of the Civil War. Likewise, he wanted to discredit Pollard as a biased historian who, if he could not get the facts straight about Hill and his troops, could not be expected to fairly represent the larger narrative of the southern war cause. By virtue of his service in the Confederate armies, Hill felt imminently more qualified to comment on and shape the narrative of the war than Pollard. Although many southerners recognized Pollard’s weaknesses as a historian, by 1868 he had, through his numerous publications, already contributed to the construction of the region’s collective memory of the war. During these same turbulent post-war years and up until his death in September 1889, Hill became one of

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3 D.H. Hill, “The Lost Dispatch,” *The Land We Love* 4, No. 4 (Feb., 1868): 275. As with Civil War battles, there are two different names for this incident: southerners called it “The Lost Dispatch” while northerners called it “The Lost Order.” Historians use both interchangeably.

4 Ibid., 278-79.

5 Ibid., 284.
a handful of Confederate veterans who self-consciously took over from Pollard the shaping of what they felt was a more accurate collective, and in particular historical memory, that would vindicate their efforts in the late war. Even with his eye on the big picture, however, Hill took the fight for southern memory personally. The second part of Hill’s Civil War was a war of words over his reputation.
Explanations of collective and historical memory retain a certain fuzziness even after thirty years of renewed interest in the study of memory. Scholars continue to refine Maurice Halbwachs’ definition of collective memory, which, as Jeffrey Olick explains, was dichotomous: he allowed for “socially framed individual memories and collective commemorative representations and mnemonic traces.”6 In other words, individual memories reconstructed according to social stimuli exist alongside an overarching collective memory, or more accurately, the memory of several mnemonic communities.7 Halbwachs, however, did not fully explore the connections between the collective and the individual.

I think of collective memory in similarly broad terms to Halbwachs, but agree with Olick that the trauma of an event such as the Civil War both highlights and links individual and collective responses, and brings them into dialogue with each other (as well as making individual traumas part of the national narrative).8 The way ex-Confederates framed the memory of the war had implications for how they presented its history. John Nerone has commented that history is characterized by multiplicity, yielding “many truths but no Truth,”

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8 Olick, “Collective Memory,” 344-46.
resulting in a clash with social (collective) memory, which is itself contested. In late
nineteenth-century America, before the professionalization of history, southern veterans
retained public authority over the historical memory of the Civil War. Essentially, unlike
scholars today, they thought of history and memory as the same thing; the veterans sought to
vindicate “the truth of Confederate history” as they saw it. Ex-Confederates crafted
historical memory, through the use of history and historical records, as a way to reconcile the
experiences of individuals and groups through a broad narrative that achieved an accepted
degree of credibility for the greater collective audience. In this sense, Hill and others
constructed particular historical memories—through dialogue and debate in print and
speech—within a larger framework of collective memory about the Civil War. These
historical memories were not only highly contested within the veteran group, they were in
turn questioned and condoned by their audience. Personal grievances did not remain private
for long, and together with controversial events provided fodder for public judgment and a
dizzying array of perceptions about guilt and innocence. Combined with the fact of
Confederate defeat, perceptions of even minor issues assumed larger importance in the quest
to explain why the war followed its particular course.

The Lost Dispatch, a real incident that involved the compromise of one of Lee’s
important military orders, was only one of many topics discussed publicly and privately by
Confederate veterans in the decades after Appomattox as they sought to vindicate and
rationalize military defeat. According to proponents of the Lost Cause, the Confederacy

11 On historical memory, see W. Fitzhugh Brundage, “Introduction: No Deed But Memory,” in Where These
Memories Grow: History, Memory, and Southern Identity, ed. W. Fitzhugh Brundage (Chapel Hill: The
might have lost the Civil War due to the overwhelming materiel and manpower resources of the Northern states, but its fight for constitutional freedom and property rights (embodied in the institution of slavery) was just and honorable. Confederate veterans took great pride in their courage and skill on the battlefield, finding their heroes in their generals, especially Robert E. Lee, who after his death in 1870 was elevated to white male sainthood. This collective memory of the Lost Cause, described by Charles Wilson as a civil religion, was sculpted by southerners to fit their particular political, social, or cultural needs in postbellum America. The Lost Cause also provided a thin veil for the underlying anxieties of male Southerners concerned about a loss of honor and manhood in the private and public spheres as a result of military defeat.  

D.H. Hill, a South Carolina native and graduate of the United States Military Academy (Class of 1842), became one of the most vocal architects of the Lost Cause. He spent ten years as the Charlotte, North Carolina-based editor of the monthly *The Land We Love*, followed by *The Southern Home*, a weekly newspaper he published until the end of formal Reconstruction in 1877. He was the first North Carolina vice president of the Southern Historical Society, founded in 1869, and contributed articles to the pages of its journal (the *Southern Historical Society Papers*) that began circulation in 1876. Until two years before his death in 1889 he was asked to deliver speeches to gatherings of Confederate veterans.

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veterans, extolling the virtues of soldiers and southerners. A former mathematics teacher, Hill returned to education in 1877 as the president of the institution that would become the University of Arkansas, and afterwards served in the same capacity at Georgia Military College. All the while, he maintained a busy correspondence with past colleagues, friends, admirers, and family. As an erudite scholar and participant in many of the major engagements of the Civil War, no one was better suited to write about the conflict and his part in it.

Unfortunately, Hill was plagued by two incidents during the war that called into question his military competence. One could say that September was an unlucky month for Hill. The Lost Dispatch episode of September 1862 was followed by his abrupt firing from corps command after the Battle of Chickamauga (Georgia) in September 1863. At Chickamauga, General Braxton Bragg, his commanding officer, associated Hill with a clique of generals who desired Bragg’s removal. Although Hill spent the rest of the war years searching for a reason why Confederate President Jefferson Davis relieved him from command, it is primarily with the Lost Dispatch that Hill continues to be connected in historical scholarship. After a successful start as the recruiter of North Carolina’s first Confederate infantry regiment, the winner of the first land-based engagement of the war, and as a division commander under Lee, Hill saw his military career go downhill as a result of his association with the two above incidences.

Hill spent the remainder of his life defending himself against attacks, real or perceived, on his reputation as connected with these two controversial events of the war. As a crusader of sorts, he actively shaped the historical memory of the Civil War in part by aggressively pursuing personal vindication through correspondence with politicians and
colleagues and through printed statements in his own and other publications. Hill connected criticism of his military reputation with that of his character reputation, and vice versa. By military reputation, I mean tactical competence on the battlefield, attention to protocol, and other soldiers’ trust in the leader. By character reputation, I mean a concern over honor, in particular integrity, truthfulness, and a strong sense of right and wrong. For Hill, these two sides of his reputation were intimately linked by the desire to uphold the family name, not only for his children, but in relation to his war record and the units he commanded. Concern for his name, and by extension the competency of his troops, along with a precise military mindset, caused Hill to hone in on and clarify the details of allegations made against him.13 He was keenly aware of his potential role in the memory-making of the war because he was one of its architects. Therefore, he consciously made the struggle to clear his reputation part of his crusade to sculpt southern and national memory of the Civil War. Ironically, he was simultaneously a proponent and target of the Lost Cause, and lamented the continued publicity over his alleged wrongdoings as much as he used it to clear his name. Ultimately, the public and peers responded favorably to his efforts, but Hill never quite let go of his fear of having a sullied reputation. The events of Chickamauga receded in importance, especially as history tended to single out the leadership limitations of Braxton Bragg, but Hill was truly bothered to his death by his continued association with the Lost Dispatch, a document that bore his name for posterity.

13 Bertram Wyatt-Brown refers to the defense of family and community as “romanticized self-respect in both language and action”: The Shaping of Southern Culture, 194-195 & 202.
CHAPTER 2

REPUTATION STUDIES: A USEFUL FRAMEWORK

The establishment and evolution of a person’s reputation coincide with how that individual is remembered, on their own and in conjunction with the event(s) that “made” them. Several sociologists have studied the making of reputation as a social construction. The subfield of reputation studies helps address the collective influence on the individual. Two related models, in particular, are applicable to a study of Hill. Gladys and Kurt Lang, in their book about British and American etchers of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, identified two dynamics of reputation: recognition and renown. Recognition, they argue, is driven by how “insiders,” essentially peers and discerning individuals within the artist’s community, hold the person in esteem. Renown, on the other hand, is a measure of how well known the artist is outside their sphere. By itself, renown may not be enough to guarantee the survival of achievement after the artist dies. The Langs listed four factors essential for keeping a particular reputation before the public: the artist’s own efforts to “protect or project” their reputation; the efforts of interested parties in furthering the posthumous artistic reputation; the artist’s association to tangible networks that would allow entry into the “cultural archives” (i.e. school, museum, or organization) of their field; and the person’s symbolic linkages with the political and cultural identities of the public at large.14

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The Langs’ theory applies well to Confederate military veterans, men who built and dismantled the reputations of their peers and used the Southern Historical Society, United Confederate Veterans, and other organizations to publicize their version of Civil War memory and the particular memory of living and deceased officers. Hill consistently applied the first factor—that of protecting and projecting his reputation—when seeking assurances from Jefferson Davis, soliciting help from political allies, and writing multi-page rebuttals in magazines. By virtue of his participation in the Southern Historical Society and as a publisher and editor who celebrated both the general and common soldier while bemoaning the policies of Radical Reconstruction, Hill solidified his access to the southern cultural archives. As the spirit of reconciliation overtook the country in the 1880s, he could also identify not only with the former Confederacy but with the American public through his *Century* battle narratives that celebrated valor on both sides of Chickamauga Creek and South Mountain.

Generally speaking, most people’s reputations fall within a gray area between the extremes of “good” or “evil.” Gary Alan Fine, in his studies of the “difficult” reputations of Benedict Arnold and Warren Harding, found that those people considered failures or incompetents suffer from the lack of a supportive perspective. In Fine’s example of Harding, there was no one willing to champion the positive accomplishments of his administration, so instead he went down in history as the worst president, vaguely identified today with the Teapot Dome Scandal. People such as Harding required what Fine called a “reputational entrepreneur,” an advocate who through “self-interest, narrative clarity, and social position affect which reputations ‘stick’.”

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that interested parties must further the person’s posthumous reputation, and also of their first point that the person in question is their own reputational entrepreneur. Hill’s posthumous reputation is the object of future study, but while he was alive he also had reputational entrepreneurs that assisted him by mentioning him in newspaper articles and speeches, or more blatantly through lobbying in Richmond during the war. Hill and his entrepreneurs were extremely successful in defending the character side of his reputation, as evidenced in glowing postmortem tributes. Even his military competence appeared vindicated, as there was little further mention of controversy by 1889.

Hill initially responded to allegations about the Lost Dispatch and Chickamauga during the last two years of the war. Years before Edward Pollard’s attack, Hill made sure that the copy of Lee’s order that he had in fact received was sent home for safekeeping among his papers. He spent the remainder of the war trying to extract an official reason for his dismissal after Chickamauga, an effort in which he enlisted the help of his eldest brother and his uncle-in-law, North Carolina (Confederate) Senator William A. Graham. In particular, Hill pressed for a statement of confidence in his service from Jefferson Davis, even if he no longer commanded in the field, for he considered this essential for vindicating his reputation. In spite of Graham’s pressure through the North Carolina contingent in Congress, the Confederate president, to Hill’s chagrin, never provided the statement.

After the war, Hill actively denied his role in the loss of the dispatch and in a public effort at sculpting historical memory, claimed the lost order was beneficial to the Confederacy. In *The Land We Love*, “the acknowledged organ of the late Confederate

1163. See also his compilation of reputation studies (including this article), *Difficult Reputations: Collective Memories of the Evil, Inept, and Controversial* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2001).
Army,” he strongly rebutted Pollard’s historical stance on two occasions.\(^\text{16}\) Hill also slipped in, without comment, his and two of his subordinates’ battle reports of Chickamauga. Former colleagues and veterans wrote him to support his stance and vilify Pollard’s history, although Robert E. Lee privately disagreed with Hill’s interpretation of the meaningfulness of the Lost Dispatch. Hill’s responses to Pollard illustrate Thomas Connelly’s and Barbara Bellow’s explanation of the 1860s as the beginning of the “Inner Lost Cause” period of writing. During the immediate post-war years, ex-Confederate authors assumed a defensive tone over controversies and looked for others to blame while resigning themselves to vindication in future histories.\(^\text{17}\) The Inner Lost Cause retained a sectional flavor not only because of subject matter but because of the relative lack of circulation of southern postwar publications in other parts of the United States.

By the 1880s, national magazines increasingly published articles by Union and Confederate veterans and the *Southern Historical Society Papers (SHSP)* became firmly established. Prompted by the publication of a Confederate veteran reunion address about Chickamauga, the *SHSP* reprinted several official reports of the battle. For some reason, Hill’s report was not among them, but this fact garnered no official reply from the general. He did respond, however, to another ex-Confederate general who brought up the Lost Dispatch in a subsequent issue of the *SHSP*, accepting a Frenchman’s account of Hill leaving the order on a table in a Frederick, Maryland house. Still fiercely protective of his reputation, Hill denied this account in a follow-up article, and continued to lobby for the productiveness of the lost order. During the same decade, Hill contributed battle narratives

\(^\text{16}\) This was the endorsement of a number of ex-Confederate generals which they sent to the *New Orleans Times*; Hill preprinted it in his magazine three months later. J.B. Hood, et. al., “New Orleans, December 10, 1868,” *The Land We Love* 6, No. 5 (Mar. 1869): inside back cover.

\(^\text{17}\) Connelly and Bellows, *God and General Longstreet*, 5-7 & 57.
to the New York-based *Century* magazine and corresponded with General James Longstreet about swapping notes for their entries, lamenting that they were both being made scapegoats for Confederate blunders. The “Inner Lost Cause” was still in play at this time, but a “National Lost Cause”—a homogenous, white American memory of the Civil War—started to eclipse the former through venues such as *Century*’s “Battles and Leaders of the Civil War” essay series.¹⁸ In other words, a wider public than during the 1860s saw Hill’s rebuttal in the *SHSP* as well as his *Century* articles on the Battle of South Mountain (which was connected with the Lost Dispatch) and the Battle of Chickamauga. Hill was critical of Braxton Bragg’s leadership in the Chickamauga piece, but did not mention the after-battle command controversy. By contrast, the South Mountain article reiterated the advantages of the Lost Dispatch. Hill let the Chickamauga matter go late in life, likely due to a conciliatory correspondence with Davis, but was unable to do the same for the Lost Dispatch. The continued mystery of who lost the order and the presence of Hill’s name on the paper meant he was perpetually associated with the incident, causing him (and his family) anxiety about how his reputation would be judged in the future.

¹⁸ Ibid., 44 & 46.
CHAPTER 3
TROUBLE ON THE HORIZON: THE LOST DISPATCH

As to the controversies themselves: First, how did the Lost Dispatch become Lost, and what were the immediate military implications?\(^{19}\) Shortly after Robert E. Lee and his Army of Northern Virginia defeated Union General John Pope at the Battle of Second Manassas in late August 1862, Lee moved across the Potomac River into Maryland. During the course of the campaign, Lee decided that he would need to secure objectives (specifically towns such as Harpers Ferry) along his supply line back through the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia. On September 9\(^{th}\), his headquarters issued Special Orders Number 191 (S.O. 191) detailing the missions of each division in the army. Hill had recently rejoined the Army of Northern Virginia with his division of roughly five thousand men, falling under the command of his brother-in-law, General Thomas J. “Stonewall” Jackson, for the movement into Maryland. Under S.O. 191, Hill’s division formed the rear guard of the army as it moved west from Frederick to Hagerstown.\(^{20}\) Meanwhile, General George McClellan, in charge of the Union Army of the Potomac, cautiously pursued Lee toward the mountains. The risk in


Lee’s order lay in the division of his army into five major parts that would be separated by several square miles of water and mountainous obstacles. If McClellan moved fast enough, he could engage these isolated units and defeat Lee’s army piece by piece.

Lee’s assistant adjutant general, Colonel Robert Chilton, prepared S.O. 191 and directed its distribution. Copies were addressed to each major subordinate commander, including Hill. The order detached Hill’s troops from Jackson’s command, but Jackson, noting that the chain of command stayed intact until execution of the order, personally copied his dispatch from army headquarters and forwarded it to Hill. Hill received the order in his brother-in-law’s handwriting; this was the copy that he and his family would later take pains to preserve. On September 13th, after the Confederates moved out of Frederick, McClellan’s army reached the city and encamped in many of the same spots that Lee’s troops had occupied days before. It was on this day that Union Corporal Barton Mitchell and First Sergeant John Bloss discovered an unmarked envelope on the ground. Inside was a piece of paper wrapped around three cigars. The top of the paper included the name of Lee’s headquarters and was labeled “Special Orders No 191,” and at the bottom was addressed to “Maj Gen D.H. Hill Comdg Division.”

The soldiers forwarded this important piece of intelligence through their chain of command to McClellan’s headquarters, where an officer with some acquaintance with Chilton recognized the adjutant general’s signature on the paper. Convinced he had a genuine document on his hands, McClellan exultantly transmitted the news to Washington.

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21 Stephen W. Sears, “The Twisted Tale of the Lost Order”, *North and South* 5, Issue 7 (2002): 54. Sears’ article is one of the most recent accounts about the finding of the Lost Order. Despite later Confederate claims and accusations against Hill dropping the order or leaving it on a table, the story of how Barton and Bloss found the paper in a field is the currently accepted one. Northern controversy on the subject deals with Bloss’ efforts to eclipse Barton (who died a few years after the war) as the one who found the document, how McClellan responded (or not depending on point of view) to the intelligence, and what happened to the cigars.
As it turned out, he did little to press his advantage; among other issues, S.O. 191 led him to believe that he faced both Longstreet’s and Hill’s units at South Mountain, which lay between Frederick and Hagerstown. In reality, only Hill with his five thousand men occupied the main pass through the mountain, and, largely unassisted for most of the day, he held off Federal troops on the 14th. Nonetheless, Union actions made Lee consolidate his troops more quickly and withdraw to Sharpsburg, Maryland, where McClellan met him on September 17th for the Battle of Antietam.

Whether or not Lee or any of the Confederate generals found out about the loss of the order during the Maryland Campaign is still a matter of debate, but someone leaked McClellan’s find to Northern newspapers by September 15th, two days after its discovery. The following March, McClellan testified before the (U.S.) Congressional Joint Committee on the Conduct of the War that the discovered dispatch was addressed to D.H. Hill, and information about the hearing eventually reached the Confederate press. The Savannah Republican conjectured on June 4, 1863, that Hill must have dropped the dispatch in his tent before moving out to South Mountain. McClellan’s movements now made sense, and Lee lost the opportunity to consolidate and ready his forces for battle. “We can never know what would have been the result if that order had not fallen into the hands of the enemy,” correspondent “P.W.A.” wrote, “and yet it is not impossible, had it not reached the Federal general, that we should this day be in Maryland.”

Getting wind of the media coverage, Hill

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22 Articles on the finding of the order appeared in the New York Herald (Sept 15th), Washington Star (Sept 15th), Baltimore Sun (Sept 16th), and Baltimore American (Sept 17th): Scott M. Sherlock, “The Lost Order and the Press,” Civil War Regiments 6, No. 2 (1998): 174-76. Concerning when Lee found out his order was compromised, Douglas S. Freeman and James Murfin believe he already knew the night of September 13th, while Stephen Sears thinks Lee’s postwar memory was clouded by the publicity the loss received in 1863, and that he did not know until he read about McClellan’s testimony.

23 “Army Correspondence,” Savannah Republican, June 4, 1863.
immediately sensed that his military reputation might suffer injury over the incident. As a precaution, he sent his field papers, including the order in Jackson’s hand, to his wife Isabella for safekeeping. “Fearing that there might be a stain upon my memory, if I fell in the approaching battle [Chickamauga] without some explanation of the mystery,” Hill stated in 1868, “I wrote home that the copy of Lee’s order, which governed me in all I did while in Maryland, could be found among my papers. . .”

24 Hill, “The Lost Dispatch,” 275. Jackson of course was dead by the summer of 1863 and could not back up his brother-in-law’s statements.
CHAPTER 4
A BARREN VICTORY: CHICKAMAUGA

Little did Hill know that the upcoming campaign would prove more immediately problematic to his reputation. Jefferson Davis appointed Hill lieutenant general (pending approval by the Senate) in July 1863 and sent him from Virginia to corps command in the western theater. When Hill joined Braxton Bragg’s Army of Tennessee, the army was struggling through a hot summer in the Chattanooga area after Union Major General William Rosecrans forced it out of Tullahoma, Tennessee the month before. Fighting a high desertion rate, the army was also in the midst of a command upheaval, with several of Bragg’s subordinates openly expressing no confidence in his abilities.²⁵ Hill had known Bragg since the Mexican War, but soon found himself agreeing with other officers that the commanding general was prone to indecision and had a habit of blaming subordinates for all battlefield failures. Nevertheless, a combination of favorable terrain and Rosecrans’ miscalculations provided Bragg with a chance to defeat the Yankees in the Georgia valleys south of Chattanooga, particularly along the course of Chickamauga Creek.

For the first three weeks of September, the two armies jockeyed for control of the valleys and the supply route to Atlanta. At McLemore’s Cove between September 9th and

²⁵ Peter Cozzens, This Terrible Sound: The Battle of Chickamauga (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1992), 4, 18-20, 27; Judith Lee Hallock, Braxton Bragg and Confederate Defeat, Vol. II (Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 1991), 7-9, 13-26, 30-32; Thomas L. Connelly, Autumn of Glory: The Army of Tennessee, 1862-1865 (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1971), 69-73, 121-134. These books provide some of the best summaries of the Chickamauga campaign and leadership issues in the Army of Tennessee, from which I construct the following narrative.
10th, Hill made the decision not to attack an isolated Federal unit in the Chickamauga valley. Bragg accepted his reasons at the time and followed up with a plan for his other corps commander, Leonidas Polk, to attack Union troops further downstream. This movement did not go off as planned either, and by the 19th the armies had shifted north again and faced each other across the Chickamauga. Bragg had lost his opportunity to surprise Rosecrans, but he also gained reinforcements in the form of General James Longstreet’s corps, newly arrived from Virginia. He reorganized his army the night of the 19th, placing Polk in command on the right (north) and Longstreet on the left (south) of the Confederate battle line. Hill, as the junior lieutenant general on the field, was subordinate to Polk, but his troops occupied the northernmost portion of the line and were responsible for starting the attack the following morning. Due to several poor decisions by Bragg, Polk, Hill, and their staff officers and couriers, as well as darkness, fog, and the confusion of the battlefield, Hill never received word that he was to engage the enemy at sunrise.

The next morning, Bragg, puzzled as to the silence after sunrise, rode to Hill’s lines to discover the troops eating breakfast and Polk nowhere in sight. Irate, he ordered Hill to attack, which he did about an hour later, around 9:30 to 10:00 AM. Hill’s first division made progress in flanking the Union lines but was beaten back, while his other division had an even harder time with a full frontal assault through the woods. The rest of the Confederates down the line engaged the Yankees, and Bragg’s big break came when enemy error allowed Longstreet’s troops to force a gap in the Union lines and send Rosecrans and his soldiers fleeing toward Chattanooga. By nightfall, the Army of Tennessee held the field and was primed to follow the Union army toward the city. Considering the disorganized state of the army and staying true to temperament, Bragg decided not to pursue Rosecrans.
On September 29, Bragg, dissatisfied with Polk’s explanation of the late attack on the 20th, suspended him for disobeying a direct order, and found another scapegoat for the McLemore’s Cove debacle. Polk retreated to Atlanta where he wrote angry letters to Jefferson Davis, while Longstreet penned letters of his own to Lee and Secretary of War Seddon and met with Hill and other generals to decide what to do about Bragg. They concocted a petition to Davis requesting the relief of Bragg from command for health purposes, but in truth it was a vote of no confidence for his overall leadership ability. Longstreet, Hill, Hill’s subordinate Patrick Cleburne, and several brigade commanders signed the petition, but they never sent it to Richmond, as Davis decided to visit the army that week. He called a meeting with the generals and asked them to voice their opinions while Bragg incredibly sat in a corner of the room listening to the entire conversation. At the end of it all, Davis decided to keep Bragg in command and sent Polk to another theater of operations.

While Davis was still in Georgia, Bragg wrote him to formally relieve Hill of corps command. Through rumors and hearsay, Bragg may have believed Hill wrote the petition or that it was mostly his idea, so this made Hill the perfect substitute for blame with Polk leaving the army. “Possessing some high qualifications as a commander,” Bragg told

26 OR, 30 (2): 54-56 & 310.
27 Hal Bridges, Lee’s Maverick General: Daniel Harvey Hill (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1991), 227-37; Cozzens, This Terrible Sound, 529-32; Connelly, Autumn of Glory, 235-42.
28 OR, 30 (2): 68 & 70; Bridges, Lee’s Maverick General, 238-39; Cozzens, This Terrible Sound, 532-33; Connelly, Autumn of Glory, 245-46. Davis had already decided to keep Bragg in command before the meeting, so it is unclear why he held it. Few written accounts of the meeting remain other than Longstreet’s.
29 Bridges, Lee’s Maverick General, 234-37; Cozzens, This Terrible Sound, 531-32; Connelly, Autumn of Glory, 238-40. Connelly supports the widely accepted view that General Simon Buckner drew up the petition because of the prominent placement of his signature. Hill always denied writing it, but because he ended up with the petition at his headquarters (and in fact kept it after the war), drew Bragg’s suspicion.
Davis, “he still fails to such an extent in others more essential that he weakens the morale and military tone of his command. A want of prompt conformity to orders of great importance is the immediate cause of this application.”\textsuperscript{30} Davis concurred with this rather vague letter, and Bragg’s adjutant notified Hill on October 15 that he was thereby relieved and should report with his staff to the Adjutant General in Richmond for further instructions.\textsuperscript{31}

Hill was stunned, as were many of his peers and soldiers. Taking his adjutant, Lieutenant Colonel Archer Anderson, with him, Hill went to Bragg’s headquarters to find out why he was being dismissed. Anderson documented the conversation between the two generals immediately after the meeting.\textsuperscript{32} Bragg offered varying explanations every time Hill asked a question. First he explained how he had asked Davis to remove Hill for “the harmony and efficiency of the service,” and that he had no formal charge to file against his subordinate.\textsuperscript{33} When Hill asked him what he meant by harmony and efficiency, Bragg replied that he did not hold Hill to any military offense (like dereliction of duty), but there had been orders that “had not been executed as they should have been,” such as at McLemore’s Cove, although he did not hold this against Hill at the time.\textsuperscript{34} Rather, he felt he did not have the “cordial cooperation” of Hill, due to previous reports he had received, and that he could not command the army without the support of his subordinates.\textsuperscript{35} If Bragg was


\textsuperscript{31} OR, 30 (2): 149.

\textsuperscript{32} Statement of Archer Anderson, 16 October 1863, Daniel Harvey Hill Papers, North Carolina State Archives (hereafter cited as Hill Papers, NCSA).

\textsuperscript{33} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{34} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{35} Ibid.
referring to the petition, Hill answered, “he had put his name to that paper with great reluctance and as a matter of simple duty.”\textsuperscript{36} Furthermore, he had never expressed want of confidence in Bragg until the morning of the 20\textsuperscript{th}, when the commanding general did not personally appear on the field to reconnoiter the front and flanks, place cavalry or adjust the lines. As for McLemore’s Cove, “nothing short of Almighty Power could have accomplished what was required” on September 10.\textsuperscript{37} Hill charged that Bragg’s vague statement about want of harmony and efficiency so soon after the battle would severely damage his reputation, and asked for specific charges “in some plain, palpable shape” so that he could defend himself.\textsuperscript{38} Bragg repeated that he would file no charges, and that he did not hold Hill responsible for anything that occurred up the night of the 20\textsuperscript{th}. When Hill asked for this statement in writing, Bragg told him to apply through proper channels. Anderson added that Hill also asked Bragg why he was singling him out from the other commanders, but that he received no reply.\textsuperscript{39}

Before he left Chattanooga, Hill collected statements from his staff members and subordinate commanders concerning the battlefield issues of September 19\textsuperscript{th} and 20\textsuperscript{th}.\textsuperscript{40} Several of his peers also wrote letters of farewell and encouragement. His old friend Alexander Stewart wrote with three other generals to express confidence in his corps leadership. “I regard him as an active, intelligent, brave and competent officer, possessing

\textsuperscript{36} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{37} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{38} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{39} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{40} Statement of Thaddeus Coleman; statement of Archer Anderson, Thaddeus Coleman, and George West; and statement of CPT H.C. Semple, 13 October 1863; and statement of John C. Breckinridge, 16 October 1863, Hill Papers, NCSA. The staff officer statements dated October 13, before his formal relief, suggest Hill was concerned about the fallout of Polk’s suspension and had heard rumors he might be next.
the confidence of this division, and I believe of the corps,” Stewart stated.⁴¹ John C. Breckinridge, one of Hill’s division commanders, added in his own note, “I have had more than one occasion to express my admiration of your fidelity to duty, your soldierly qualities and your extraordinary courage on the field. It may gratify you to know the feelings of one of your subordinates, and to be assured that in his opinion they are shared by his Division.”⁴²

Turning the corps over to Breckinridge, Hill departed for Richmond, focused on clearing his name. His main concern throughout was how odd his dismissal looked so soon after Chickamauga, as if he had blundered greatly on the battlefield. Only eleven days after his firing, the Charleston Courier published an article linking the inability of Bragg to pursue Rosecrans’ army to the delay caused by Hill feeding his troops. Similar articles in the Richmond Dispatch and the Raleigh Register addressed the same theme. By harping on the timing of ration distribution, the authors also questioned Hill’s ability to properly care for his men.⁴³ Fully aware of at least the Charleston article and camp rumors, Hill deeply felt that both sides of his reputation, concerning his military competence and honor, were on the line and by extension his devotion to the South.

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⁴¹ A.P. Stewart, J.C. Brown, B.R. Johnson and W.B. Bate to Hill, 15 October 1863, Hill Papers, NCSA.

⁴² John C. Breckinridge to D.H. Hill, 15 October 1863 (certified as true copy by M.A. Small on 12 March 1868), Hill Papers, NCSA.

⁴³ OR, 30 (2): 152; Richmond Dispatch, 20 October 1863; Raleigh Register, 20 October 1863. The OR entry reflects the Charleston Courier article, dated October 26 (1863), that Hill enclosed in correspondence to the Confederate War Department.
CHAPTER 5
COMMENCE FIRING: THE WAR OF WORDS BEGINS

Hill applied to Samuel Cooper, the Confederate adjutant general, for a formal military court of inquiry. While awaiting an answer, he had a contentious meeting with Davis in November, and came away with the impression that his request for a court would be denied. A couple of days later, Hill penned a letter to Davis that started out apologetic in tone but turned into a passionate defense of his character. He said he had been singled out for punishment when other generals had expressed the same want of confidence in Bragg. “Justice should be even-handed,” he bluntly wrote. Then, Leonidas Polk received a “complimentary letter” from Davis upon reinstatement to command, and was cleared of any negligence on the morning of September 20, making it seem like only Hill was to blame in the eyes of the president. A court was necessary to establish the facts. “There have been many disgraceful surprises, defeats, surrenders & other disasters and the responsible officers not held to account,” Hill said, and summed up, “at Chickamauga, there was a glorious victory & all accord that I contributed my share in winning it and yet I am virtually condemned for my connection with that great battle. Can this be just?”

44 D.H. Hill to Samuel Cooper, 13 November 1863, Hill Papers, NCSA; Bridges, Lee’s Maverick General, 250-51.
45 D.H. Hill to Jefferson Davis, 16 November 1863, Hill Papers, NCSA.
46 Ibid.
47 Ibid.
Davis probably did not appreciate Hill’s tone and wanted to ignore the general altogether, but in his response he assured him that he had taken no offense and considered “the whole matter . . . restored to its official character.” He and Bragg seemed determined to put the matter behind them; one historian suggested that they purposely “cleaned house” in the Army of Tennessee that fall, moving regiments around to break up the Kentucky and Tennessee opposition. The War Department turned down Hill’s application for a court of inquiry, and he went back to Charlotte to wait for notification of a suitable position for his rank. Two months later, a friend and fellow officer from the Army of Northern Virginia, Lafayette McLaws, wrote that he had met with Bragg the day after Hill’s dismissal and asked him for reasons. McLaws reported that Bragg said he had “the kindest feelings” for Hill but that the two could not be in the same army. “You were, as you always are, open and outspoken, made no secret of your opposition to him, and you were looked on as the head and front of the coalition against Genl B,” McLaws reminded him. His words probably soothed Hill little, since the press already labeled him as the general who had stopped the battle to let his soldiers eat. McLaws, however, was right. Hill had spoken out publicly against a superior officer when commiserating with his fellow generals after the battle, and Bragg could not let this go unheeded. Davis and Bragg, however, unfairly singled out Hill and made an example of him, compared to other generals who had been just as outspoken as he, and were allowed to leave Chickamauga with reputations intact.

48 OR, 52, (2): 562.

49 Connelly, Autumn of Glory, 250-53. Officers from Tennessee and Kentucky resented Bragg’s withdrawal from the two states (and subsequent Union occupation) over the course of 1863.

50 Samuel Cooper to D.H. Hill, 16 November and 20 November 1863, NCSA.

51 Lafayette McLaws to D.H. Hill, 23 January 1864, Hill Papers, NCSA.

52 Ibid.
Hill did not give up without a fight, acting as his own reputational entrepreneur and enlisting others to help him. During his downtime, he exploited kinship networks to try to get a statement of confidence in his military abilities from Davis. He convinced his oldest brother and father figure William to meet with Adjutant General Cooper and Davis to secure a guarantee of endorsement for follow-on commands. He also applied to North Carolina Senator William Graham, his wife Isabella’s uncle, who went one step farther and lobbied for Hill’s reinstatement as lieutenant general. At this point, all Hill was looking for was a clear record, not promotion, and some duty other than “Inspector General of Trenches” in Petersburg, Virginia.

Hill corresponded with Graham throughout the spring of 1864 about the various reasons the administration had given him for not being able to remain a lieutenant general. He had been told there was no vacancy, corps command or otherwise, for him at that rank, yet other officers had been promoted to that grade and given assignments. Hill had nothing against these other generals; he had simply not been given a sufficient reason for being passed over. Referring back to his November interview with Davis, Hill conjectured, “the whole brunt of my offense is that . . . I made him angry by telling him that he had discriminated between me & Genl Polk . . . For this, the President resolved to punish me, wound my feelings, and degrade me in public estimation.” A week later, he thanked Graham for his efforts on his behalf. Graham had evidently tried to place Hill back in Lee’s army, but Hill felt better men than he deserved that honor. “All I wish is the vindication of

53 William Hill to Samuel Cooper, 25 March 1864, Hill Papers, NCSA; Bridges, Lee’s Maverick General, 255-60 & 264-66.

my past history,” he wrote, adding, “I can neither live nor die satisfied with a stain upon my character. I would be content with a statement from Mr Davis that he had no fault to find with me as a soldier & had refused to nominate me to the Senate out of personal pique.”

Hill knew that Davis, as a former military man, understood the concept of honor and the desire to appear courageous, competent, and forthright in front of soldiers. However, he was naïve to think that Davis, given his aloof character and political troubles, would publicly or even privately admit that he was wrong in any way. Both men, in fact, were too proud to budge on the decisions that had brought them to this impasse. Hill, for example, maintained that the War Department offered him a job in Charleston but had not ordered him to go; he accepted the post on the condition that Davis or Secretary of War James Seddon gave his brother or uncle the letter of confidence. In Richmond, his action was interpreted as disinterest in any new command, because he had not formally reported to Charleston, which made it hard for Graham to make any headway on Hill’s behalf. Hill then appealed to Bragg, now working side by side with Davis in Richmond, for justice. Nevertheless, in closing his missive, Hill asserted, “I must candidly tell you that I do not regret my course whilst connected with the Army of Tennessee. I acted solely from a sense of duty and, with a full knowledge of all the suffering attendant upon the act, would renew it again.”

In the meantime, the family did not forget the matter of the Lost Dispatch. Isabella Hill was concerned about the implications of the incident in the aftermath of the Chickamauga affair. In a January 1864 letter to Graham, she relayed information “in regard

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55 D.H. Hill to William Graham, 4 June 1864, Graham Papers, SHC.

56 Samuel Cooper to D.H. Hill, 16 February 1864, and James Seddon to Senator W.A. Graham, 6 June 1864, Hill Papers, NCSA; D.H. Hill to William Graham, 13 June 1864, Graham Papers, SHC.

57 OR, 52 (2): 677.
to this order, said to be lost by him [Hill].’” She reported that the order, “in our dear Brother Jackson’s own handwriting,” was filed in Hill’s “most important papers” in their home. Mrs. Hill sent a copy of this order to Graham along with a testimonial by a friend, saying “They will show the absurdity of the whole affair & ought in justice to my Husband be published in the Richmond papers.” With her name at stake as well, Isabella actively took steps to help vindicate her husband.

By January 1865, nothing much had changed for Hill, who was back in the field (but not in command) in Georgia. The War Department never sent the letter of confidence it had guaranteed to his brother. He hoped that the Confederate Congress would address his case, but held Davis responsible for his public humiliation. Writing again to Graham, Hill showed how clearly both the Lost Dispatch and Chickamauga weighed on his mind:

Mr. Davis has done all that the Executive could to blacken my character & reputation. I may fall any day in this bloody strife and my name go down to my children with the Executive’s stain upon it. Is there no remedy? Congress can ask for my restoration to rank or can demand the reasons of my degradation. This would cancel in public estimation the wrong done through private spite. The myth about the Lost Dispatch is but a specimen of the temper exhibited towards me.  

Soon Hill’s battle for his reputation was forgotten amidst the disintegration of the Confederacy.

Throughout the previous year and a half, Hill received support from friends and family for his plight, but did not obtain the acknowledgement he really wanted—an apology and vote of confidence from Jefferson Davis. Frustrated by this failure and recurring health problems, Hill felt rather useless the last few months of the war. His standing in the future cultural archives of southern history was in jeopardy, and he agonized over public opinion.

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58 Isabella Hill to William Graham, 5 January (1864), Hill Papers, NCSA.

59 D.H. Hill to William Graham, 30 January 1865, Graham Papers, SHC.
Time would soften his opinion of the Confederate president, who became a southern martyr for his stoicism during his postwar imprisonment at Fort Monroe, Virginia. Hill would soon have other people to spar with over his reputation.
CHAPTER 6
CALLING FOR REINFORCEMENTS

Nothing further appears to have agitated Hill about his wartime reputation until Edward Pollard’s book appeared in 1866, and as previously noted, Hill was not aware of the accusations against him until 1868. Curiously, however, he published his official battle report of Chickamauga, along with those of John C. Breckinridge and Patrick Cleburne (his division commanders), in three of the first six issues of *The Land We Love (LWL)*.60 Certainly Hill was trying to establish a readership base by showing what kinds of articles his magazine would include, and to be sure, few outside authors submitted material to the fledgling enterprise the first year of its existence. However, he never reprinted his other battle reports, such as the one about South Mountain. The *Official Records* show that Hill’s Chickamauga report did not get turned in to the Richmond authorities until August 1864, when it was found in Leonidas Polk’s papers.61 In December 1864, Hill made reference in a letter to William Graham about his report being suppressed, insinuating that Davis had something to do with it.62 If Hill perceived mischief on the part of the president, he appears to have made sure his report went public by including it in his magazine soon after the war.

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60 Cleburne’s report appears first, in August 1866, followed by Breckinridge’s report in September and Hill’s in October. The first issue of *LWL* was published in May 1866. For an explanation of the organization, content, and purpose behind *LWL*, see Ray M. Atchison, “The Land We Love: A Southern Post-Bellum Magazine of Agriculture, Literature, and Military History,” *The North Carolina Historical Review* 37, No. 4 (October 1960): 506-15.

61 OR, 30 (2): 147. Following the chain of command, Hill would have turned in his report to Polk after Chickamauga (and before both were relieved of command). Polk died in early 1864 at Pine Mountain, Georgia.

62 D.H. Hill to William Graham, 7 December 1864, Graham Papers, SHC.
In it he gave his timeline and version of events on September 20th, paying homage to the efforts of Breckinridge and Cleburne and discreetly criticizing Polk for not committing reserve forces. Both his subordinates’ reports backed up Hill; nobody could question Cleburne, who was killed in 1864, and Breckinridge continued to support his former commander by endorsing *LWL*. Not coincidentally, Davis was still in Federal prison at this time, and would have been hard pressed to respond. With no introduction or additional comment, Hill the editor cleverly placed the Chickamauga reports out for his readership to receive and allowed them to draw their own conclusions about his professional conduct during the campaign.

During the next year and a half, Hill left Chickamauga behind and diversified his magazine’s topics, saving most of his criticism for current political policies. Compared to many of his articles, which focused on literature and suggestions for regional agricultural and industrial improvements, his February 1868 entry on the Lost Dispatch was full of anger and sarcasm. Hill no doubt also had in mind that Pollard blamed him for the lost opportunity at McLemore’s Cove and for not starting the battle on time along Chickamauga Creek.63 He depicted himself as being forced to respond to Pollard, since the journalist spoke of “matters of general and not merely of personal interest.”64 Hill argued that it was right that he should have received S.O. 191 through Stonewall Jackson because he fell under his command, and suggested that the copy from Robert E. Lee might have been lost at army headquarters, dropped by the courier, or purposely lost through treachery.65 Hill also contended that the loss of the dispatch was actually a good thing for the Army of Northern Virginia. Giving

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64 Hill, “The Lost Dispatch,” 273.

65 Ibid., 274-75.
George McClellan the benefit of the doubt for possessing common sense, Hill argued that the order merely communicated the fact that Lee had divided his army—a fact that Union cavalry could have provided to its commander—and that it did not reveal information such as the composition and strength of the forces. McClellan was led to believe by the letter of the order, four days old at the time he read it, that James Longstreet, Hill, and perhaps even Jackson opposed the Federal army at South Mountain, and assumed he faced a larger amount of troops than Hill’s band of five thousand. If not for the order, Hill asserted, McClellan “could have crushed my little squad in ten minutes” on September 14th, 1862.66 The order led the Federal commander to commit an error in judgment that “saved Lee from destruction” by permitting him to consolidate at Sharpsburg, and for better or worse, allowed the war to continue for two more years.67

In his article, Hill mentioned receiving letters from fellow veterans who criticized Pollard’s take on Confederate history. Additional supportive letters arrived after he published his article in February 1868, which should have given Hill confidence that his military peers approved of his action. One friend noted that he “read with pleasure your article on the “Lost Dispatch” & other vagaries of Pollard the would be historian.”68 Agreeing with Hill that Pollard seemed to hold some sort of grudge against the general, another friend added, “But for the pictures in his [Pollard’s] book, I should be strongly tempted to consign it to the ignominious use to which has been devoted a large amount of the

66 Ibid., 277.
67 Ibid., 278. In his first after action report, written 15 October 1862, McClellan indicated that he moved his main body up the National Road to Turner’s Gap, where Hill’s and presumably Longstreet’s troops were located, mainly because it was the widest point to get his army across South Mountain (OR, 19 (1): 27).
68 J.T. Holtzclaw to D.H. Hill, 10 February 1868, Hill Papers, NCSA.
otherwise worthless trash of my library.” 69 Later that year, former Virginia governor and Confederate General Henry A. Wise wrote Hill in response to a letter inquiring if Wise had endorsed *The Lost Cause*. “He [Pollard] requested my approval and I expressly refused to sanction his utterly false & erroneous pretended history,” Wise answered. He disapproved of all of Pollard’s books, and mentioned that General P.G.T. Beauregard, Hill’s commanding officer for most of 1864, felt the same. Pollard, Wise concluded, was “an utterly abandoned & shameless man & author, and writes for malice & for money.” 70

Even southern newspapers picked up on the controversy. The *Daily Journal* of Wilmington, North Carolina advertised the February edition of *LWL*, drawing “special attention” to the Lost Dispatch article. 71 The *Galveston (Texas) Daily News* summarized Hill’s article, noting that the general “denies a charge which has been often published against him all over the country, greatly to the damage of his reputation as a military officer.” The paper concluded by telling its readers that they published the notice “in justice to a good man and an able officer,” and referred them to the original piece in *LWL*. 72

Letters from colleagues and newspaper endorsements did not necessarily convince Hill that his name was cleared, for he wrote to a number of people between 1867 and 1869 trying to get information about how S.O. 191 was distributed and if his name was indeed on the order. He contacted Robert Chilton and Charles Marshall, another staff officer of Lee’s, and asked them about courier procedures at army headquarters. Chilton claimed “a very defective memory” and said he could not remember the particulars of how headquarters

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69 G. Wilson McPhail to D.H. Hill, 17 February 1868, Hill Papers, NCSA.

70 Henry A. Wise to D.H. Hill, 3 October 1868, Hill Papers, NCSA.


72 *Galveston Daily News*, 5 March 1868.
handled the dispatch. He stated that the standing orders for couriers delivering important documents were “to bring back the envelope, receipted, or some written evidence of delivery.” Chilton continued, “This order was so important, that violation of this rule would have been noticed, & I think I should certainly recollect if delivery had been omitted in any case.”

Seven months later, Chilton again begged forgetfulness, regretting he could not aid Hill more in his rebuttal against Pollard. Marshall recalled the talk at Lee’s headquarters when McClellan’s congressional testimony was publicized, and stated that he, Chilton, and others finally realized in 1863 that the copy of S.O. 191 addressed to Hill had been compromised. Corroborating Chilton’s description of courier duties and document tracking, Marshall said he did not know how the order was lost, but assured Hill, “Your simple statement that you never saw it, puts an end to all conjecture as to the way you lost it.” He suggested that Hill ignore Pollard and publish his own history of what happened in the Maryland Campaign.

Hill also approached Union veterans, including McClellan himself. In 1868, former Federal commander S.W. Crawford wrote Hill that his and another officer’s impression at the time was that they were occupying A.P. Hill’s former encampment in Frederick. They seemed to assume that by virtue of location, the Lost Dispatch was addressed to A.P. Hill, not D.H. Hill. McClellan, however, stated, “My remembrance has always been that the order was addressed to you,” although, in contrast to his earlier testimony, he admitted it was

73 Robert H. Chilton to D.H. Hill, 22 June 1867, Hill Papers, NCSA.
75 Charles Marshall to D.H. Hill, 11 November 1867, Hill Papers, LOV.
76 R.B. Marcy to S.W. Crawford, 17 August 1868, and S.W. Crawford to D.H. Hill, 22 August 1868, Hill Papers, LOV.
not impossible that he had made a mistake in his report. He promised to look through his papers to see if he could find the Lost Dispatch and verify to whom it was addressed.\(^77\)

Hill’s article struck a much different chord with the president of Washington University in Lexington, Virginia, than with other veterans. Robert E. Lee read the February 1868 issue of *LWL* and quickly responded in a private letter to Hill concerning his assertion about the benefits of the Lost Dispatch. He did not know what Pollard said about the matter, but “at the time the order fell into Genl McClellans hands, I considered it a great calamity & subsequent reflection has not caused me to change my opinion.”\(^78\) Lee pointed out that it was proper that Hill should have received one copy of S.O. 191 from his headquarters as well as one from Jackson’s, as the order changed the command structure by moving Hill from one authority to the other. Far from mystifying and deceiving McClellan, the dispatch caused him to issue orders to his subordinates to press toward the South Mountain gaps with the intent of cutting off Confederate forces sitting on the heights above the Potomac River and Harpers Ferry. Lee did not know how the order was lost, and did not know it was the copy addressed to Hill until he read McClellan’s report, but he emphasized again at the end of his letter that the incident was not a benefit “but on the contrary, ‘an injury’ to the Confederate arms.”\(^79\)

Known to have referred to Hill as a “croaker” during the Civil War, Lee probably did not appreciate the liberties Hill took with an incident that compromised his plan to bring the

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\(^77\) George McClellan to D.H. Hill, 1 February 1869, Hill Papers, LOV. McClellan wrote a follow-up letter to Hill but I have not been able to locate it. It likely confirmed that Hill’s name was on the order. The Lost Dispatch itself (with D.H. Hill’s name) resides in George McClellan’s papers in the Library of Congress.


\(^79\) Ibid.
hard hand of war to Yankee citizens.\textsuperscript{80} Lee also communicated his displeasure with Hill’s assertion to Colonel William Allan and personal secretary E. C. Gordon, both of whom made notes about their conversations with the general; Allen revealed his concurrence with Lee in his posthumously published book on the Army of Northern Virginia in 1892.\textsuperscript{81} Although Lee was not yet the preeminent icon of the Lost Cause and the contents of the letter remained private, Hill took the criticism seriously. Despite other supportive letters, he persisted in shoring up his reputation for posterity. The following month, Hill went so far as to get his brother-in-law, Joseph Morrison, a former Jackson aide, to swear an affidavit before a judge and make a notation on his copy of S.O. 191 that the dispatch was in Jackson’s handwriting.\textsuperscript{82}

As if Lee’s criticism was not enough, Pollard fired back at Hill in the New York News, accusing the general of not providing him with personal information for his publication of Confederate biographies, and evidently also made fun of Hill’s literary pursuits. In the July 1868 issue of LWL, Hill answered, saying that he had no intention of giving someone he professionally disapproved of information for another so-called history. In fact, Hill alleged, Pollard was stealing his own character sketches of Confederate generals out of LWL! “It is adding theft of property to attempted theft of character,” Hill

\textsuperscript{80} The croaking comment comes from the notes of William Allan, “Memda (Memorandum) of a conversation with Gen. R. E. Lee, held Feb. 15 1868,” William Allan Papers, Southern Historical Collection, Manuscripts Department, Wilson Library, The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (hereafter cited as Allan Papers, SHC).


\textsuperscript{82} Affidavit of Capt J.G. Morrison before the Mecklenburg County Court, North Carolina, 17 March 1868, and “Copy by Genl Jackson his handwriting” of S.O. 191, Hill Papers, NCSA.
complained. He returned to the matter of September 1862. “I deny that I threw down Lee’s dispatch and demand the proof of an eye-witness,” Hill emphatically wrote. Reiterating his previous defense from February, he mentioned that Pollard’s latest slander was “of misconduct, at Chickamauga. He knows that this is untrue.” Obviously tired of dealing with the journalist, Hill stated that he would no longer pay attention to him, for “I feel sure that he is harmless, however malignant,” and trusted that Americans would not believe a man who “crept into a bomb-proof when the bullets began to fly.”

Despite his written declaration that Pollard was harmless, Hill was clearly still concerned about shaking any kind of doubt associated with his military reputation, even five years after his firing at Chickamauga. Perhaps he felt this reputation was all he could count on in the Reconstruction-era South—respect and recognition for one’s support of the late Confederacy were just as or more important than financial stability, even with a wife and six children to support. Pollard actually gave Hill the perfect excuse to reassert his outstanding combat record to a sympathetic audience. Hill seized the opportunity to deflect criticism from himself through an assertion about the outcome of the Maryland Campaign that, compared to Pollard’s history, was more believable because it was spoken by someone who was there. White southerners were too concerned with the problems of rebuilding their society to tolerate Pollard’s penchant for muckraking, and they increasingly started to appreciate the efforts of Jefferson Davis (recently released from prison) and military leaders to save the Confederacy. That most of the responses to Hill’s article were sympathetic


84 Ibid., 284.

85 Ibid., 285.

86 Ibid.
indicated that his tactics, whether out of mere indignation or ulterior motives, were successful at least among former Confederate officers. From the lows of the Chickamauga fallout four years earlier, Hill rebounded to facilitate his entry into the southern cultural archives. He continued to receive compliments about and endorsements for LWL until he turned it over to a Baltimore publishing firm in 1869. At this stage, Hill not only actively salvaged his reputation; he was his own best reputational entrepreneur.

87 The Land We Love had up to twelve thousand subscribers, which was a large number compared to other magazines during a period when most southerners could not afford to buy them. Hill’s own correspondence indicates that it had many Northern readers: Atchison, “The Land We Love,” 508; Blight, Race and Reunion, 150-51; Foster, Ghosts of the Confederacy, 50.
CHAPTER 7
DISSENTION IN THE RANKS

The turbulent political and economic events of the 1870s gave Hill plenty to write
about in his new publishing venture, *The Southern Home*, diverting his attention from a strict
focus on wartime events. As Rutherford B. Hayes’ election to the presidency (through the
Compromise of 1877) ushered in the end of Reconstruction and a spirit of national
reconciliation, more Americans became interested in reading about Civil War battles and
celebrating the veterans of the conflict. During this decade, as David Blight elegantly stated,
“Soldiers’ memory may have been more in a stage of incubation than hibernation—stored
and unsettled, more festering than sleeping, and growing into a cultural force.”

Not coincidentally, the *Southern Historical Society Papers (SHSP)* debuted in 1876, “at a time
when conservative white southerners were striving to reassert themselves both politically and
socially, and power relations in the South were in disarray.” As the first issue of the *SHSP*
attested to, former Confederates were ready and willing to impose their views on an
increasingly sympathetic white audience. As memory and reputational entrepreneurs in their
own right, the editors took on the responsibility of publishing articles “with the firm

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conviction that those who are interested in vindicating the truth of Confederate History will sustain the enterprise and make it a complete success.”

During the 1880s, the SHSP increasingly focused on contemporary commemorations and “the relation of Confederate historical memory to current events,” but the journal also continued to publish articles about wartime occurrences. It became the platform for renewed public discussion of the Lost Dispatch and Chickamauga through battle reports and reunion speeches. The SHSP republished Breckinridge’s report of Chickamauga in April 1879, followed four years later by those of Bragg, Longstreet, and Simon Buckner. In 1884 and 1885, the journal published nine more official reports, but Hill’s was not among them. There could be many reasons for this, but Hill appears not to have cared, for none of the reports criticized him. He was also preparing his own piece on the campaign for the Century, and his former adjutant had already publicly complemented his commander.

The SHSP reprinted the keynote speech from each annual reunion of the Virginia Division of the Army of Northern Virginia (ANV) Association. In 1881, Archer Anderson, who had transcribed Hill’s ill-fated interview with Braxton Bragg, delivered the annual address on the “Campaign and Battle of Chickamauga.” Speaking extemporaneously, Anderson invoked the language of chivalry to describe how Longstreet and the “romantic presence” of his ANV troops rescued the Army of Tennessee. He brought attention to how Hill had also come from the ANV, describing him as “a stern and dauntless soldier . . . whose vigor, coolness and unconquerable pertinacity in fight had already stamped him as a leader of


91 Starnes, “Forever Faithful,” 189.

92 The names listed in the proceedings of the reunions can be compared to the membership of the SHS and show many overlapping names, of which the most obvious is the first SHSP editor, Rev. J. William Jones.
heroic temper.” In speaking of operations at McLemore’s Cove, Anderson laid the blame fully on Bragg, saying he “frittered away a brilliant opportunity;” he mentioned no other names in acknowledging the operation could have succeeded. Of the communications issues of the morning of September 20, 1863, he was also vague, summing up the late start as the product of “annoying miscarriages” that at least allowed the soldiers to get some food in their empty stomachs. After complementing the élan of the troops at Chickamauga, Anderson foreshadowed the troubles ahead, but spoke in a general tone about the Confederacy, with no reference to the command fallout or additional comments about Bragg’s leadership.

The audience received Anderson’s speech favorably, and it was not until a year and a half later that one of Bragg’s former cavalry commanders sent a response to the SHSP taking issue with the characterization of the commanding general. Former Confederate Major General Will Martin provided more detail than Anderson about McLemore’s Cove, i.e. that Bragg had relieved a subordinate for not attacking and implied that Hill could have helped the situation. Aside from this article and another one generally critical of all the senior commanders at Chickamauga, no one cast any sort of blame on Hill for the outcome of the campaign. If Hill was concerned, it benefited him to keep quiet and let Bragg (deceased since 1876) take the heat.


94 Ibid., 397.

95 Ibid., 410.


Things changed in 1884, when the *SHSP* published former Confederate General Bradley T. Johnson’s “Address on the First Maryland Campaign,” the keynote address of that year’s ANV Association Reunion. Johnson provided a narrative of both the Union and Confederate actions in the fall of 1862. When he came to the Lost Dispatch, Johnson wrote:

General McClellan says this order fell into his hands. The Count of Paris states that it was picked up from the corner of a table in the house, which had served as headquarters to the Confederate General, D.H. Hill. A story current in Frederick is, that General Hill sat for sometime at the corner of Market and Patrick streets inspecting the march of his column as it moved by, and was observed to drop a paper from his pocket, which was picked up as soon as he left, and delivered to McClellan on his arrival on the 13th. It was a copy of Special Order No. 191, which had been sent by Jackson to D.H. Hill, and was as follows:” (transcript of S.O. 191)  

Johnson referred to a history of the war written in 1876 by the Comte de Paris, who along with many Europeans had traveled to the United States to observe the opposing armies between 1861 and 1865. Not surprisingly, Hill could not remain quiet about an incident he thought he had long put to rest. A few months later, the *SHSP* published “The Lost Dispatch—Letter from General D. H. Hill,” which was dated January 22, 1885 and addressed to the Reverend J. William Jones, the secretary of the Society. After first observing that Johnson presented two different theories of the loss of the order in the same paragraph, Hill reminded readers of his exposé of Pollard seventeen years previously. His adjutant general, James W. Ratchford, had certified that Hill’s headquarters never received S.O. 191 from Robert E. Lee. Furthermore, Hill had occupied a tent, not a house, near Frederick. Hill then disputed Johnson’s claim that the Confederates could have captured Washington and Baltimore and brought about circumstances leading to peace and independence. Lee never mentioned this aim at all in his

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reports, Hill argued—only that of holding on with the depleted Army of Northern Virginia until it got too cold for the Federals to move into Virginia. 99

“I have thought that McClellan lost rather than gained by the capture of order No. 191,” Hill continued, bringing up the claim that had so disturbed Lee in 1868. 100 McClellan and his commanders were quite simply misled by the number of rebel troops that were supposed to be at South Mountain. “To assert that the Federals were not under some delusion as to our numbers is to charge them with an imbecility unexampled in modern warfare,” Hill declared, concluding, “This delusion could only have been caused by the captured order.” 101 The rest of his letter compared the Maryland Campaign with Gettysburg, arguing that Lee had more troops the second time around and no lost dispatch to contend with, yet the results were much worse. Very complimentary of Lee’s generalship and the soldiers under his command, Hill took a swipe at Johnson by stating that Lee “did not look round to find a scape-goat. . . Let all who admire his greatness imitate his noble example.” 102

Once again, public questioning about his military reputation had put Hill on the defensive. He was also perturbed at the popularity and influence of Virginia veterans in particular. Ten years earlier, he had commented to William Graham, “I think that some effort should be made to get a correct Confederate history of our State written. North Carolina did the fighting & Virginia has written the history & from that history, it is difficult

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100 Ibid., 421.
101 Ibid., 422.
102 Ibid., 423.
to discover that our State took any part in the Confederate struggle." State bias aside, Hill was correct in his assessment of the Virginia influence. His friend Jubal Early carefully cultivated the image of Lee and Jackson as preeminent war commanders through his own publications, speeches, and early involvement in the Southern Historical Society. He focused discussion of the war on the eastern theater of operations, calling the defense of Richmond the key to the Confederacy; it was no coincidence that the *SHSP* were published in that city. Early and his fellow Virginians particularly criticized James Longstreet, the Georgian who had served in both theaters of war but had the audacity to join the Republican Party. Refusing to ascribe fault to Robert E. Lee, they cast about for someone to blame for Confederate failure during the third day at Gettysburg, and found him in Longstreet, who had not only allegedly disobeyed Lee’s orders, but had spoken out against his former commander. Throughout the 1880s, the pages of the *SHSP* were full of articles and reports about Gettysburg; to former Confederates, this was by far a more important debacle than either the Lost Dispatch or Chickamauga. Debate over Gettysburg ensured that Longstreet, unlike Hill, was eventually pushed out of the southern cultural archives by former colleagues who feared he would taint Lee’s ascendance as the saint of Confederate warriors.

Nevertheless, Hill found in Longstreet a sympathetic ear concerning the Virginia bias. He started corresponding with Longstreet in 1884 about the facts of Chickamauga and the

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103 D.H. Hill to William Graham, 28 April 1875, Graham Papers, SHC.


Seven Days battles around Richmond in 1862. In February 1885, shortly after he wrote the Reverend Jones, Hill addressed Longstreet about Bradley Johnson’s speech. “The Virginians in order to glorify Lee assume that he would have conquered a peace, but for my carelessness,” he complained bitterly. He was certain that he did not lose the order and that the loss was beneficial to Lee. After spending a great deal of the letter providing Longstreet with information for the article he was writing for the *Century* and promising more to come, Hill wrote, “I confine myself today to the lost order, because I do hope that you will set that matter right. The vanity of the Virginians has made them glorify their own prowess & to deify Lee. They made me the scape-goat for Maryland and you for Pennsylvania.” Hill continued in the same vein a few months later when he reported that Jones had attacked Longstreet’s record in what was another effort at “the deification of Lee by the Virginia people.”


107 Ibid.

CHAPTER 8
BYPASSING OBSTACLES ON THE WAY TO NATIONAL REUNION

Hill may not have gotten along with some Virginia members of the Society, but that did not keep him from contributing to the SHSP throughout the 1880s. In fact, he was the keynote speaker at the ANV Association the year after Johnson, speaking on “The Confederate Soldier in the Ranks.”109 In the meantime, the Century became a new outlet for himself, Longstreet, and other veterans to spread their views outside the Virginia-dominated publications to a national audience. Based out of New York City, the nationally-distributed magazine invited former generals to contribute to the “Century War Series” for the purpose of “interesting veterans in their own memories and of instructing the generation which has grown up since the War for the Union.”110 Under the editorship of Robert Johnson and Clarence Buel, the three year long series (November 1884-November 1887) published one article from a Union veteran and one from a Confederate veteran in each issue, and in 1887 the editors compiled all of the entries into a four volume set entitled Battles and Leaders of the Civil War. The series purposely avoided politics and promoted reconciliation through a focus on “shared battle experiences,” and the authors liberally used reports from the newly

109 The Confederate Soldier in the Ranks: An Address by Major-General D. H. Hill of North Carolina, before the Virginia Division of the Association of the Army of Northern Virginia (Richmond: Wm. Ellis Jones, Book and Job Printer, 1885); also reprinted in SHSP 13 (1885): 259-77.

110 “Preface,” in Battles and Leaders of the Civil War I, ed. Robert U. Johnson and Clarence C. Buel (New York: The Century Company, 1884-1887), ix (hereafter cited as Battles and Leaders with volume number). All citations are from Battles and Leaders, with editors’ notes, and not the original Century magazine articles.
compiled *Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies* to flesh out their narratives.111

Hill wrote several articles for the series, one of the first being “The Battle of South Mountain, or Boonsboro’,” published in May 1885. Hill may have been working on the article for several months, depending on when the editors solicited input from him, but in timing it was another rebuttal to Bradley Johnson. Hill alluded to the Lost Dispatch in the opening sentence of his second paragraph when he stated that “The battle of South Mountain was one of extraordinary illusions and delusions.”112 Following the format of other narratives, he detailed the actions of September 14th, 1862 on the Union and Confederate sides, with a tally of casualties at the end. In the middle of his article, however, he interposed a one page discussion of the Lost Dispatch to explain “the extraordinary caution of the Federals” that day.113 He reiterated how two decades previously he had proved that he did not lose the order, as well as the old assertion that McClellan believed Longstreet to be closer to South Mountain than he really was. The editors added notes at the bottom of the page about a letter Hill sent to them reaffirming the chain of command through Jackson and the affidavit of Hill’s adjutant general that Lee’s order was never received. Before moving back to the main narrative, Hill forcefully stated, “The losing of the dispatch was the saving of Lee’s army.”114

111 Ibid., ix-xi; Foster, *Ghosts of the Confederacy*, 69-70.
113 Ibid., 569.
114 Ibid., 570.
Besides sharing opinions with Longstreet, Hill wrote other people for information about the loss of the order much as he had done in the 1860s. One acquaintance, Thomas Moore, attempted to gather information for Hill from a family that lived near Frederick, but with no success. Instead, he lavished praise on Hill for the South Mountain article, which afforded him “genuine pleasure.” A month later, Longstreet informed Hill that he had submitted his article about the Maryland Campaign to the *Century*, saying that he thought his colleague would approve of his discussion of the dispatch.

Hill’s article appears not to have garnered a specific response in the *SHSP*, but Longstreet’s did when it was published a year later in 1886. Longstreet noted that the lost order had been the subject of “much severe comment by Virginians who have written of the war,” and backed Hill’s assertion that he was innocent of losing the document. He also condoned Hill’s opinion that the dispatch had fooled McClellan at South Mountain.

Colonel William Allan, one of Jackson’s staff officers and the same man to whom Lee had complained about Hill’s 1868 “Lost Dispatch” piece, critically reviewed Longstreet’s article for the *SHSP*. His main criticisms were over factual errors, but he also disapproved of the alleged benefits of the Lost Dispatch. “After defending General D. H. Hill from some imaginary assailant for the loss of the captured dispatch,” Allan wrote, “he [Longstreet] adopts, more or less, General Hill’s idiosyncrasy in regard to the value of that dispatch to McClellan and its effect upon the fortunes of the campaign.” Allan believed that Hill had

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115 Thomas Moore to D.H. Hill, 3 June 1885, Hill Papers, LOV.
116 James Longstreet to D.H. Hill, 28 July 1885, Hill Papers, NCSA.
118 Ibid., 665.
never received the order from Lee, but did not speculate on how it was lost, saying that there was no way of finding out what happened at that point. Perhaps speaking for the Society as well as himself, Allan added at the end, “We regret the tone in which General Longstreet speaks of Virginians.”\textsuperscript{120}

Longstreet could not escape criticism from Virginians even when the subject was other than Gettysburg. He also did not aid his cause by taking a self-important tone in his writings, something that would later cast doubt on his memoirs.\textsuperscript{121} Therefore, being associated with Longstreet did not help Hill’s military reputation, although it does not appear to have unduly damaged it either, for Hill could count on the other general to absorb most of the blows from angry Virginians. Regardless of Longstreet’s intervention, Hill felt the need to nip any controversy in the bud, even though Allan, as a representative of the Lee/Virginia camp of Confederate veterans, had already accepted Hill’s explanation that he did not lose the dispatch. Johnson may also have come around to this point of view or at least reconciled with Hill, since he invited him to give a speech to veterans in Baltimore in 1887.\textsuperscript{122} One possible explanation for Hill’s concern in 1884-1885 is that he was between jobs, having left Arkansas after a major disagreement with the college trustees over matters of discipline. Without attributing a feeling of paranoia to him, one can reasonably assume that D.H. Hill may have felt like he was under siege. First, he was not able to impose the kind of control he expected to wield as president of an institution of higher education; then, a general with an

\textsuperscript{120} Ibid., 106 & 118.  
\textsuperscript{121} See Connelly and Bellows, \textit{God and General Longstreet}, Chapter 1; also Longstreet’s memoir, \textit{From Manassas to Appomattox: Memoirs of the Civil War in America} (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1896).  
\textsuperscript{122} On this occasion, Hill gave a speech titled “The Old South,” reprinted in \textit{SHSP} 16 (1888): 423-43. Hill and Johnson corresponded a few times in 1887 to exchange details about Hill’s Baltimore trip. There is no hint of rancor in Hill’s side of the correspondence; see Bradley T. Johnson Papers, Rare Book, Manuscript, and Special Collections Library, Duke University
average war record brought up an old controversy that Hill thought he had settled years
before. He perceived his place in the southern cultural archives and as a spokesman for the
South to be in danger.

In addition to entries on South Mountain and the Seven Days Battles, Hill also wrote
a long article on Chickamauga for the Century. Told in the first person, it described Hill’s
impression of Bragg throughout the campaign and quoted extensively from official reports.
Like his adjutant a few years earlier, Hill blamed Bragg for the failure to attack Federal
troops in McLemore’s Cove. The main trouble with the commanding general, he claimed,
was “first, lack of knowledge of the situation; second, lack of personal supervision of the
execution of his orders.” Hill completely skipped over his actions during the two day
period. By contrast, he described in detail his attempts to link up with Bragg and Leonidas
Polk the night before the big battle, saying the first time he physically saw Polk’s order to
attack was in the SHSP nineteen years later. Aside from the feeding of the troops, Hill
continued, the army was not ready to attack in the morning because Bragg had not performed
his own reconnaissance to fix unit location issues, or to see the exact disposition of the Union
forces to the front. Hill spent most of the narrative complimenting all the soldiers involved
for their gallantry in battle. In conclusion, he remarked, “Whatever blunders each of us in
authority committed before the battles of the 19th and 20th, and during their progress, the
great blunder of all was that of not pursuing the enemy on the 21st.”

124 Ibid., 653.
125 Ibid., 662.
Hill did not mention anything about his quarrel with Bragg or Jefferson Davis, preferring to end his account with a tribute to the soldiers. If he had, he would have drawn renewed attention to the controversy over his reputation. Through a national medium outside the control of the Virginia clique, Hill forwarded his own version of Chickamauga, one that was factually accurate if not complete. Nevertheless, the narrative provoked an angry editorial claiming that Hill blamed Bragg for the course of the battle because he wanted his job. To this Hill replied, “I never once thought of a thing so absurd as becoming Gen Bragg’s successor. Nor did any one ever hear me say one word derogatory of Gen Bragg until after “the barren victory” of Chickamauga . . . All that I did was open & above board from an imperative sense of duty & with not the remotest idea of self-aggrandisement (sic).” 126

By defending himself through the SHSP and Century articles, Hill reasserted his innocence not only to Confederate veterans, but to a national audience. He established himself as a leading spokesman for the Lost Cause while simultaneously defending his own reputation. However, he very nearly damaged his military reputation in the long run. For people like William Allan, who championed the memory of Lee and the Army of Northern Virginia in the 1880s, the possibility that the Lost Dispatch did some good for the Confederates diminished the valor of the troops who had fought tooth and nail against the Federal army in Maryland. Many agreed that Hill and his troops had performed gallantly at South Mountain, buying time for Stonewall Jackson and the other divisions of the army to take Harpers Ferry and regroup at Sharpsburg. Ironically, though, Hill very nearly negated his unit’s accomplishment by stating that the soldiers could have been swept off the mountain by the Yankee hordes had McClellan not known about S.O. 191. In this sense, Hill did not

126 D.H. Hill to Editor of Picayune, 18 August 1887, Hill Papers, NCSA (emphasis mine).
realize how this part of his dispatch story ran counter to the mainstream memory of soldierly courage and sacrifice, a narrative he otherwise fully supported through his writings and speeches. A man intensely committed to his soldiers, Hill was able to believe that when he defended himself, he was defending them as well, in his role as a representative of the noble southern cause that defended hearth and home. He saw no conflict between what he advocated in terms of the tactical and operational advantages of the Lost Dispatch with the avoidable casualties of South Mountain. Hill fully subscribed to the linkage of masculine courage on the battlefield with honor, and most obviously, its reception in terms of reputation. 127 This aspect both justified his pride in his soldiers’ performance and blinded him to the implications of his argument.

Hill’s counterfactual scenario was not unrealistic, except in perhaps overestimating McClellan’s ability to act forcefully against an enemy whose numbers he tended to inflate. The point was that Confederate veterans did not see any use in dragging up “might have beens” when the nation was basking in the reconciliationist glow of the 1880s. A northern friend even warned Hill about discussing controversial topics in the newspapers. Colonel T.T.S. Laidley, who periodically looked in on Hill’s physician son Randolph in New York City, wrote the general, “The mass of the Northern people do not expect you to regret your action in the war, but they do think that it is better not to be always discussing the issues which are past and forever settled.” 128 Perhaps Hill took his advice, for his Century article on Chickamauga was more ambivalent in tone. Even so, he got away with criticizing Bragg more than he might have in the pages of the SHSP, which Bragg had helped found along with

127 Wyatt-Brown, The Shaping of Southern Culture, 209.
128 Col. T.T.S. Laidley to D.H. Hill, 22 May 1885, Hill Papers, NCSA.
the society itself.\textsuperscript{129} Hill’s correspondence with Longstreet also dropped off, for he started to resent the other general taking more credit for battlefield successes, especially the Virginia campaigns of Summer 1862.\textsuperscript{130} Hill realized that Longstreet was no longer a viable reputational entrepreneur for him.

During the last three years of his life, school duties and failing health prevented Hill from contributing much more to the public discussion of the Civil War. North Carolina newspapers marked Hill’s passing on September 24, 1889 with obituaries that outlined the basic details of his military, educational, and publishing careers while lauding his Christian virtues and courage under fire. The \textit{Charlotte Chronicle} associated his last day alive with the storm brewing over the city that day, noting that Hill died just as the clouds parted and the sun came out. The paper spent more lines describing his Mexican War record than his Civil War record, but did say that he had single handedly held back McClellan at South Mountain and “was sent to help Bragg” at Chickamauga, engaging in “the stubbornest fighting of the war.”\textsuperscript{131} Endorsing the memorial in the \textit{Charlotte Chronicle}, the \textit{Raleigh News and Observer} expressed, in keeping with the times, its “personal appreciation of his sterling virtues, his robust patriotism, his high character and his splendid bravery.”\textsuperscript{132} At the beginning of a speech later printed in the \textit{SHSP}, Charles C. Jones, Jr. memorialized recently deceased Confederates and referred to Hill as “an uncompromising defender of the impulses and acts

\textsuperscript{129} Hallock, \textit{Braxton Bragg and Confederate Defeat}, 264.

\textsuperscript{130} D.H. Hill to Joseph Hill, 12 June 1886, Hill Papers, NCSA.

\textsuperscript{131} \textit{Charlotte Chronicle}, Wednesday, Sept. 25, 1889.

\textsuperscript{132} \textit{Raleigh News and Observer}, Thursday, Sept. 26, 1889.
of the South,” and also as “a brave soldier, capable educator and Christian gentleman.”

The obituaries, by not mentioning controversy, swept aside questions of Hill’s military competence to focus on his character and role in forwarding Lost Cause interpretations of the war.

CONCLUSION: MISSION ACCOMPLISHED?

So where does all of this leave Hill’s reputation? To review, he identified both the military and character sides of his reputation as being at stake. Hill understood his military competence and character to be linked—an insult against one was an insult against the other. Accusations against him regarding the Lost Dispatch and Chickamauga catapulted him into action to defend his good name and by extension the efforts of his soldiers. Hill first used his family to help him secure concessions from the Confederate government, in particular a statement of confidence from Jefferson Davis that would serve the purpose of affirming his skills as a warrior. He did not feel he could be an effective general in the eyes of his soldiers and the public if he did not have this statement. Hill and his allies might have succeeded in getting him a new command and even reinstating his lieutenant general rank if not for his and Jefferson Davis’ pride, and the impending Confederate loss. He ended the war unsure of his place in history, with a sense of personal defeat more acute than many white southerners because his perceived degradation occurred under the watchful eye of actual and armchair generals.

Nevertheless, Hill still had enough clout to establish a literary magazine, *The Land We Love*, in 1866, and it attracted subscribers across the newly reunited country. For the next three years, Hill was his own best reputational entrepreneur via his scathing editorials and clever insertions of dispassionate and commendable battle reports, published when his perceived nemesis, Davis, could say nothing against him. The magazine gradually acquired
legitimacy with former Confederates, giving Hill a strong foothold in the slowly blossoming Lost Cause movement. In conjunction with *The Land We Love*, outside reputational entrepreneurs supported Hill against a prominent memory-maker, Edward Pollard, during an era in which those with wartime experience carried authority over those trying to rile up an already agitated white public dealing with the perceived inequities of Reconstruction. By the end of the decade, Hill had satisfied the public as to his innocence in regard to the controversies, yet he privately retained doubts, perhaps aggravated by Robert E. Lee’s disapproval of his argument about the usefulness of the Lost Dispatch.

Starting in the 1870s and gathering force throughout the 1880s, Virginia veterans subsumed alternative narratives of the war under their construction of the Lost Cause and its focus on Lee and the gallant soldiers. In this environment, Hill’s insistence that the Lost Dispatch was a beneficial occurrence came close to damaging his overall reputation. Harkening back to the Langs’ theory of recognition and renown, this is an example of how someone’s symbolic linkage with a particular political or cultural identity influences what reputation appears before the public. In Hill’s case, his publicly known outrage against Reconstruction and his continued devotion to the Lost Cause, despite his “slipup” over the lost order’s helpfulness, sealed his sterling character reputation and made his controversial military opinion easier to tolerate. His decision to tone down his writings and disassociate himself from “pariahs” like Longstreet also helped deflect criticism away from his strongest assertions. Insiders (family, friends and peers) accorded Hill recognition and a degree of renown for his character and devotion to the South through his inclusion in veteran organizations, invitations to deliver speeches, and laudatory eulogies upon his death.
Hill occupied a particular niche within the discourse of the Lost Cause as both a proponent and target of collective and historical memory. Starting from its earliest manifestations, the Lost Cause had always worked to exclude certain individuals such as Pollard who deviated from the prevailing interest, and this tendency increased after Lee’s passing and deification by the Virginians. Consequently, studying the nuances of the Lost Cause myth and historical memory of the South reveals how someone like Hill could support the myth while himself being supported by and at certain times criticized by it. The study of individuals such as Hill provides new angles from which to evaluate the trajectory and staying power of Lost Cause ideology. It may in fact be useful to think of the Lost Cause, and southern historical memory, as changing and contested constructs in a similar fashion to race, gender, or class. As Edward Harcourt showed in his study of the executed Confederate scout Sam Davis, even the reputations of minor figures develop and change over time; in Davis’ case, the editor of Confederate Veteran became interested in his story and made him into a powerful symbol of the Lost Cause, one that still carries weight among white Tennesseans but simultaneously draws different responses from African-American Tennesseans.134

The case of D.H. Hill also illustrates the connections between individual and collective memory as centered on traumatic experiences. Hill was traumatized not so much by war and his individual experience in battle, but by the negative perceptions of his involvement and actions. He brought his belief in the importance of reputation, and by extension honor, from his pre-Civil War acculturation as a martial southern male. Hill adjusted in the postwar climate to attacks on his reputation by becoming actively involved in

crafting the historical memory of the war. He may never have fully understood how his relatively simple statement about the helpfulness of the Lost Dispatch to the Confederacy endangered the very reputation and Cause he strove to uphold. However, he was entirely cognizant of his position as a Southern man defending not only his personal honor but that of his chosen nation, the Confederacy. 135 This study hopes to add to the growing literature on southern historical memory by highlighting how veterans rearticulated and justified the importance of reputation and honor through the civil religion of the Lost Cause. Reputation and particularly honor, as Bertram Wyatt-Brown has acknowledged since his definitive study of the subject, have “a broken, not a steady history.” 136

After his death, Hill’s character remained unquestioned, but interested parties engaged in ambivalent discussion about his military reputation, specifically in regard to S.O. 191. The few public statements his immediate family made were short, yet slightly defensive, and privately they expressed relief that the proof of innocence rested in Hill’s papers, later deposited in the North Carolina State Archives. 137 No truly dedicated reputational entrepreneur stepped forth to argue for Hill. Historians’ narratives of the Maryland Campaign inevitably brought him up when they talked about McClellan’s spectacular intelligence coup in Frederick, Maryland. He was the good but difficult general, and association with the Lost Dispatch could fairly or unfairly reinforce the thorny aspect of

135 What further complicates this picture is that Hill was for a time a proponent of New South ideas. Immediately after the Civil War he wrote about what the former Confederacy needed to do to encourage more scientific education, industrial development and improve agricultural techniques (the last remained a focus throughout his life). He regressed back to a defense of the Old South as he became disenchanted with Reconstruction.

136 Wyatt-Brown, The Shaping of Southern Culture, 301.

137 See for example Eugenia Hill Arnold to Charles Dabney, 10 October 1931, Hill Papers, SHC, and the following footnote about Isabel Arnold.
Hill’s personality. On the other hand, historians have liberally quoted his *Century* article on Chickamauga for evidence of Bragg’s erratic behavior and an overall description of the battle, an irony Hill no doubt would enjoy. Hill will always be associated with controversy because his name is printed on an important piece of paper that just happens to be the subject of a one hundred forty-four year old mystery. Because of this, one may still come away with a kernel of doubt about Hill’s military reputation, which is reinforced as long as people discuss the Lost Dispatch.

In 1970, Isabel Arnold, aged ninety-two, wrote down several statements regarding information about her Carolinian ancestors, including grandfather D.H. Hill. Echoing other relatives, she remarked that she was “glad to say the lost dispatch is in safe keeping in Raleigh, N.C.” 138 Today, researchers access a photocopy of S.O. 191 in Hill’s papers while the State Archives preserves the original in its vault. Ironically, this document is probably preserved very carefully not so much for Hill’s sake but because it is in Stonewall Jackson’s handwriting and would be prized by unscrupulous collectors. In addition, no one has yet pointed out that the existence of this copy of the order does not prove that Hill never received the one from Lee’s headquarters. This was Hill’s contention until his dying day, and most people believed him. Through the power of his pen, Hill did a remarkably good job of defending his reputation, but he still left room for historians and non-academics to debate his importance in Civil War history and southern historical memory.

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138 Isabel Arnold notes, 6 January 1970, Isabel Arnold Collection, Russell-Arnold Archives, Presbyterian College. Ms. Arnold handwrote her observations, which were transcribed twice into a typewritten statement to the United Daughters of the Confederacy. I cite one of the typed statements above, which is in a complete sentence with correct spelling.
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