


Fall 10-2009

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## Recommended Citation

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Jubal Early's Trains: The Battle of Lynchburg in Historical Memory

John G. Marks

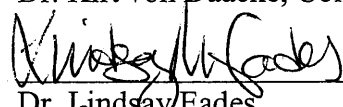
Senior Honors Project

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the graduation requirements of the Westover Honors Program

Westover Honors Program

October 2009

  
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On June 18, 1901, Charles Minor Blackford, brother of Battle of Lynchburg veteran Eugene Blackford, made a speech commemorating the thirty-five year anniversary of the Lynchburg Campaign. In the Battle of Lynchburg, as a part of the wider Shenandoah Valley campaign of 1864, General Jubal Early and the Confederate force defended the city from General David Hunter and the Union in a two-day engagement, marked mostly by skirmishing. Blackford stated in this speech that, “During the night of the 17<sup>th</sup>, a yard engine, with box cars attached, was run up and down the Southside Railroad, making as much noise as possible, and thus induced Hunter to believe and to report that Early was being rapidly reinforced.”<sup>1</sup> While this story of the cunning of Confederate leadership is compelling, it is not referenced at any time before this speech, more than thirty years after the end of the war; additionally, all subsequent published accounts of the battle accept and reproduce Blackford’s story. Furthermore, no first hand accounts, even those of Confederate general and future Lost Cause proponent Jubal Early, make any reference to this ruse.<sup>2</sup> After the Civil War, the history of the Battle of Lynchburg evolved into a myth exemplifying Confederate leadership and the sacrifices of Confederate soldiers through the embellishment, and sometimes fabrication, of the facts of the story in post-war recollections of the battle. The question, then, is why did Southern memories of the Civil War undergo such significant transformations in the years after the war?

Gaines M. Foster uses the theory of the Lost Cause to help explain how the memory of the Civil War evolved for the people of the South. In his discussion of post-war recollections, such as the above account created by Blackford, Foster states that:

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<sup>1</sup> Charles Minor Blackford, *Campaign and Battle of Lynchburg* (Lynchburg: JP Bell Press, 1901), 22.

<sup>2</sup> “Lost Cause” refers generally to the theory that attributes Confederate defeat only to the fact that the Union had far more and better supplied soldiers, and not to any advantage in the quality of their soldiers or officers; the theory asserts that, had Confederate officers been afforded the same numerical advantages, the Confederacy would have won the war.

Although this Confederate celebration had its roots in the persisting anxieties resulting from defeat, increasing fears generated by the social changes of the late nineteenth century provided the immediate impetus for the revived interest in the Lost Cause. In the public commendation of the Confederate cause and its soldiers, veterans and other southerners found relief from the lingering fear that defeat had somehow dishonored them. At the same time, the rituals and rhetoric of celebration offered a memory of personal sacrifice and a model of social order that met the needs of a society experiencing rapid change and disorder.<sup>3</sup>

The contemporary accounts of the Battle of Lynchburg fit this paradigm neatly. These recollections only refer to the primary accounts when they fit in with the narrative of personal sacrifice and exceptional courage in the face of insurmountable odds. The acquired importance and perceived accuracy of a story supported only by scant, circumstantial evidence at best, like the story of “Jubal Early’s trains,” and the development of new emphases in the story of the Battle of Lynchburg fits Foster’s model. Foster explains that these transformed memories, “helped explain to late nineteenth-century southerners how and why they lost the war that marked the end of the Old South. It helped them cope with the cultural implications of defeat. It served to ease their adjustment to the New South and to provide social unity during the crucial period of transition.”<sup>4</sup> The development of the myth of the Battle of Lynchburg epitomizes the type of transformation of historical memory described by Foster.

David W. Blight also offers explanation for the development of Civil War myths and the transformation of American historical memory.<sup>5</sup> Because of the breadth of Blight’s work – it addresses the memory of the Civil War in the entire nation, as opposed to Foster’s work which looks exclusively at the southern perspective – the Lost Cause theory which plays such a central

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<sup>3</sup> Gaines M. Foster, *Ghosts of the Confederacy: Defeat, the Lost Cause, and the Emergence of the New South, 1865 to 1913* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), 7.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

<sup>5</sup> David W. Blight, *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001).

role in Foster's work serves a more ancillary function in that of Blight. Blight does, however, discuss the role the Lost Cause played in the development of American Civil War memory. Blight states, "The Lost Cause took root in a southern culture awash in an admixture of physical destruction, the psychological trauma of defeat...and with time, an abiding sentimentalism...It took hold in specific arguments, organizations, and rituals, and for many Southerners, it became a natural extension of evangelical piety, a civil religion that helped them link their sense of loss to a Christian conception of history."<sup>6</sup> This reinforces the idea presented by Foster that the primary consequences of defeat first spawned the development of Civil War myth and memory in the South. As such, it lends further credence to the presumption that the myth of the Battle of Lynchburg developed as a result of the complex consequences of defeat. The development of the myth of the Battle of Lynchburg seems to be a product of this "abiding sentimentalism," as it exemplified and dramatized the Confederate effort and sacrifices.

After 1865, American remembrances of the Civil War underwent significant changes, at first as a result of the trauma caused by the war's unprecedented suffering, and later as a reaction to the social changes of the New South. Southerners actively transformed their memories of the Civil War in an effort to "[ease] the region's passage through a particularly difficult period of social change."<sup>7</sup> As a part of this phenomenon, the people of central Virginia emphasized, embellished, and engineered certain memories of the Battle of Lynchburg to reflect the honor and skill of Confederate leadership and the sacrifices of Confederate soldiers, rather than address the losses of their recent past and their impact on the challenges of their future.

The Battle of Lynchburg occurred as a part of the larger Shenandoah Valley Campaign of 1864. This campaign played an integral role in the final outcome of the Civil War, and brought

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<sup>6</sup> Blight, 258.

<sup>7</sup> Foster, 6.

with it heavy casualties on both sides. From May 26, 1864, through the end of June of that year, Union and Confederate forces engaged in battles and, more frequently, skirmishes throughout the Shenandoah Valley between Cedar Creek, Virginia and Meadow Bluff, West Virginia.<sup>8</sup> Gary W. Gallagher describes how the 1864 campaign, “exceeded in scale and importance Stonewall Jackson’s more famous 1862 operations in the Shenandoah.”<sup>9</sup> Gallagher also notes how, during this campaign, “The military and political stakes were immense. War on civilians first debuted on a theater wide-scale, and tactical operations ran the gamut from guerilla activity to the grand encounter at Cedar Creek.”<sup>10</sup> The events of the Valley Campaign profoundly impacted the lives of both the military personnel and civilians unfortunate enough to experience it first hand.

Despite the existence of a number of detailed accounts of the events of the Battle of Lynchburg, none reference the “train ruse” which would later become the focal point of stories of the battle. Of all of the records from Confederate soldiers and officers at the Battle of Lynchburg, not one addressed attempts to deceive the Union forces. Union army accounts are similarly silent on the subject. Likewise, no civilian accounts of the battle – whether in private correspondence or newspaper articles – discuss hearing or participating in an attempt to trick the Union troops into thinking that the city already had received reinforcements from Richmond. The lack of any first-hand accounts directly addressing an empty train being run over a bridge to deceive the enemy highlights the development of the historical memories of Southerners after the war; they actively transformed their memories to re-establish the honor, ability, and social

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<sup>8</sup> United States War Department, *War of the Rebellion* (Gettysburg: National Historical Society, 1971-72), Series 1, Volume 37, part I, 93.

<sup>9</sup> Gary W Gallagher, *Struggle for the Shenandoah* (Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 1991), ix.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid*, 19.

dominance experienced by whites in the old South, or embraced histories that portrayed Confederates in a way that supported these ends.

Jubal Early noted on June 19, 1864, before the conflict at Lynchburg had even ended, that, “Last evening the enemy assaulted my lines in front of Lynchburg and was repulsed by the part of my command which was up. On the arrival of the rest of my command I made arrangements to attack this morning at light but it was discovered the enemy were retreating, and I am now pursuing.”<sup>11</sup> Early, the man who receives credit for designing the plan to deceive General Hunter and the Union troops, did not mention anything about running the train from the Southside railroad to achieve these ends. He stated that some of his command did indeed arrive that evening, but mentioned nothing of the ruse for which he would later receive credit. Even in his post-war memoirs Early does not mention running empty boxcars along the Southside railroad bridge. He noted that, because the remainder of his troops did not arrive from Charlottesville until late during the night of June 18, “arrangements were made for attacking Hunter at daylight on the 19, but some time after midnight it was discovered that he was moving, though it was not known whether he was retreating or moving so as to attack Lynchburg on the south where it was vulnerable, or to attempt to joint Grant on the south side of the James River.”<sup>12</sup> The contrast between Early’s contemporary account of a relatively uneventful interaction and the post-war memories of his valiant salvation of the city again point to the transformation of the historical memory of the people of central Virginia and to formation of the

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<sup>11</sup> Report of Gen Jubal A. Early, June 19, 1864, *War of the Rebellion*, Series 1, Volume 37, Part I, 160.

<sup>12</sup> Jubal Anderson Early, *Autobiographical Sketch and Narrative of the War Between the States (electronic edition)* Academic Affairs Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 1999.

myth of the Battle of Lynchburg as a way to bolster their sense of honor of after a defeat which destroyed the institution of slavery, and with it the basis for social order in the old South.

From the Union perspective, Secretary of War Edwin M. Stanton described in his report of the Battle of Lynchburg on June 21, 1864, just three days after the battle, that “General Hunter attacked Lynchburg on Saturday last and was repulsed...the attack was nothing more than a reconnaissance.”<sup>13</sup> Similarly, Franklin E. Town, Captain of the Union Signal Corps, noted, “We marched towards Lynchburg, crossing the Blue Ridge at the Peaks of Otter. We skirmished continually with the enemy after passing Staunton, and on the 17<sup>th</sup> of June pushed him into his works at Lynchburg...on the 18<sup>th</sup> we fought to gain possession of their works and the city but failed to do so.”<sup>14</sup> Town makes no reference to hearing trains running through the night, and attributes the Union retreat simply to an inability to take the city effectively and efficiently; he offers no indication that the fear of confederate reinforcement provided the impetus for retreat. Similarly, the report of Brigadier General George Cook, commander of the US Army’s Second Infantry Division, offers no indication that the Union had been forced to retreat from fear of reinforcements. Discussing his actions immediately after arriving with his force outside of Lynchburg, he stated, “When I arrived at these cross-roads General Averell had already passed and was engaging the enemy at the church on the hill beyond. Upon my arrival at the church the enemy began to show themselves in considerable force and were pressing back our skirmish line...part of this brigade had already turned the enemy’s works, but by this time it had become so dark and not knowing the ground the pursuit was discontinued.”<sup>15</sup> While Cook did mention Confederate reinforcement, it is in reference to the force they actually confronted, not one they

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<sup>13</sup> Stanton, Edwin M., *War of the Rebellion*, Series 1, Volume 40, Part II, 27.

<sup>14</sup> Town, Franklin E., *War of the Rebellion*, Series 1, Volume 37, Part I, 108.

<sup>15</sup> Report of Brig Gen George Cook, *War of the Rebellion*, Series 1, Volume 37, part I, 121.



feared had arrived during the night. Cook continued, “Next morning I was sent to the right with my division to make a reconnaissance for the purpose of turning the enemy’s left. Found it impracticable after marching some three or four miles, and just returned with my division and got it in position to support General Sullivan’s division when the enemy made an attack on our lines. On the retreat this evening my division brought up the rear.”<sup>16</sup> Again, although Cook noted that the Confederate force in Lynchburg had forced the Union troops to retreat, he made no reference to hearing trains coming in through the night. None of these military accounts, Confederate and Union alike, referred to Jubal Early’s Trains.

Civilian accounts likewise included no references to the story of the train ruse, though some reported detailed descriptions of other events of the battle. In a letter written by Liberty resident Frederick Anspach to his brother Robert on June 23, 1864, he discussed the events of the battle which had occurred only a few days earlier. He described in vivid detail how, two days before the Battle of Lynchburg, Hunter and his army came through the city, an “in 10 minutes after they arrived, the Depot, Hay house and Turpin’s House were in a flame. The Steam Mill was burnt, also the Reese Hospital, RR track torn up, little and big Otter bridges burnt, etc, etc...They took flour from us, all our onions. We had but little, consequently, lost but little. That little however we feel sensibly.” He continued, “Some were treated worse than we were. They didn’t ransack or pillage our house at all, except the basement...The two negro women who that lived with us (Emily and Mary) and Joe (Mary’s Husband) left with the Yankees.”<sup>17</sup> Anspach described these events in vivid detail, but when he described the battle, he noted only that “The enemy marched on Lynchburg, where they met our forces, a fight ensued, and the

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Letter from Frederick Anspach to Robert Anspach. 23 June 1864, Liberty, VA. Papers of the Anspach Family, Special Collections Library, University of Virginia, Charlottesville, VA.

enemy commenced to beat a retreat, in haste, if not confusion.”<sup>18</sup> While Anspach clearly would have spent more time explaining to his brother the events directly pertinent to their family and home, he demonstrated in his description of the events in Liberty the rapidity with which news traveled in the area. He referenced the major actors in the conflict, and even cited early but nonetheless accurate casualty numbers. His account does not, however, fit in anyway with the conflict described in recollections of the battle at the turn of the century by Charles Blackford and various others.

Similarly, the Lynchburg newspaper, *The Daily Virginian*, did not make reference to a train being run throughout the night. In its first issue after the battle, on June 21, 1864, the paper shared specifics about the conflict: “On Friday morning it was ascertained that the enemy had approached within a few miles of the city, and in the afternoon the booming of artillery was heard on the Lynchburg and Salem Turnpike road, near the old Quaker Church, about three miles distant...After the fight at the Quaker Church, on Friday Afternoon, further hostilities were suspended until Saturday morning.” It continued, “The battle ended on Saturday afternoon, and the enemy retreated in great haste on Saturday night. Had they remained until the next day, we are satisfied from the dispositions that had been made by Gen Early, that they would have been captured.” Interestingly, the paper also noted that “Stationed at all the passes by which ingress to the city was afforded, it was not doubted that the militia, the reserves, the convalescent soldiers, and the volunteers would be able to keep the enemy at bay until reinforcements could arrive.”<sup>19</sup> Again, as with the other civilian and military accounts, the Lynchburg newspaper described the battle in great detail, but did not mention any Confederate efforts to deceive the Union troops because of a discrepancy in the size of their forces. This account likewise dovetails neatly with

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> *Lynchburg Virginian*, 21 June 1864, p 1.

other first hand accounts of the war, but is in conflict with the Blackford account in its omission of the story of the train ruse.

Blackford's own wife, Susan Blackford, in her letter to him just three days after the battle, also failed to mention the story of the train ruse, though she did include details consistent with other first-hand accounts. She wrote, "It is amusing to me, reading your letters from the 17<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> to see how little idea you had of the stirring times through which we were passing in Lynchburg...[General Early] arrived with some troops on the evening of Friday the 17<sup>th</sup>, but could do little more than get what he had into positions." She continued, pointing out how there "was no general engagement, but was a constant cannonade and heavy skirmishing went on all day...it was fascinating beyond all description."<sup>20</sup> Susan Blackford demonstrated detailed knowledge of the battle, but did not mention the train ruse, nor a great disparity in troop levels. Further, if it is assumed, as Peter W. Houck suggests in his introduction to the updated, published, 1984 version of Blackford's *Campaign and Battle*, that "[Blackford's] brother Eugene fought in the battle, so the two brothers must have discussed the event in detail" then surely his communications with his wife about the battle also contributed to his knowledge of its events, but she did not mention the story of the train ruse.<sup>21</sup>

The contemporary accounts of the battle consistently establish other facts with which later accounts conflict, in addition to the story of the train ruse. First, they establish that the number of troops on either side was at least relatively even, though the Union did outnumber the

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<sup>20</sup> Letter, Susan Blackford to Charles Blackford, 21 June 1864, Lynchburg, VA. Reprinted in the 1994 edition of *Campaign and Battle of Lynchburg, Virginia*, by Charles Minor Blackford (Lynchburg: Warwick House Publishing, 1994).

<sup>21</sup> Houck's assertion that the familial relationship between Eugene and Charles Blackford directly implies that they would have communicated about the events of the battle is an extremely weak assertion, one based purely on speculation. I have found no specific evidence of correspondence between the two brothers directly related to the battle; thus, it is impossible to assess with any certainty the impact and content of correspondence between the brothers.

Confederacy. While it is difficult to discern exact numbers, Gary W. Gallagher estimates the disparity in troops at “a few thousand men,” a small difference relative to Civil War standards, and one which would not have offered the Union a significant strategic advantage. Second, they establish that Hunter’s force slowly approached the city of Lynchburg, tearing up railroads and communication lines, and generally wreaking havoc on the communities in their path. Third, that the military action of the Confederate forces repulsed the Union attempt to take the city. These elements declined in their presence and importance in more modern recollections of the battle, as people of Lynchburg began to emphasize Confederate heroics and sacrifices through the embellishment and fabrication of the facts of the story.

The myth of the Battle of Lynchburg began to develop around the turn of the twentieth century. Beginning in force with the publication of the Blackford speech, accounts of the Battle of Lynchburg began to center around the story of Jubal Early’s train ruse, the incompetence and cowardice of Federal officers, and the sacrifices and valiance of Confederate officers and soldiers in an ultimately doomed effort. No longer focusing on the correspondences about and primary accounts of the battle, these recollections of the war, which began to appear around the turn of the century, constituted the key sources in almost all subsequent historical analyses of the battle.

W. Asbury Christian already included many of the elements of this myth in his 1900 work *Lynchburg and its People*, a classic example of turn of the century local history and genealogy that candidly captures the Lynchburg zeitgeist. While it predates Blackford’s speech and subsequent publication, Christian demonstrates that a number of the elements of the myth of the Battle of Lynchburg had already been established by 1900. For instance, while it did not mention the train ruse that Blackford would introduce the following year, it characterized the

Union leadership and their decision to retreat as unequivocally cowardly. Christian stated, “Terrible volleys were poured into them, when they broke and fled, seeking a hole for themselves. Saturday evening the battle ended, and at night, like the Arab, General Hunter quietly folded his tent and stole away.”<sup>22</sup> This description of the Union retreat characterized them as cowards (an element of the myth which gained particular prominence), especially when juxtaposed with the reverence paid to the Confederate leadership, particularly Jubal Early. Christian characterized Early almost as a new Moses, who saved the people of Lynchburg: “A thrill of joy went like an electric shock through the whole place as the train came over the bridge into the city...When the soldiers disembarked, cheer after cheer rent the air. Early had come, and Lynchburg was safe once more.”<sup>23</sup> Early described this event far differently, stating “I accompanied Ramseur’s division, going on the front train, but the road and rolling stock were in such bad condition that I did not reach Lynchburg until about one o’clock in the afternoon, and the other trains were much later.”<sup>24</sup> After this, he continued only to describe the state of Confederate forces at the time of his arrival, and his analysis of the military situation. He made no mention of the crowds Christian stated had awaited his arrival, nor anything about men hanging off the outside of the train. While it is certainly possible that the people of Lynchburg celebrated the arrival of Early and reinforcements, and that the train carrying Jubal Early very well may have been crowded with soldiers, the available primary accounts of the battle offer nothing close to the level of detail provided by Christian. The characterization of the Union troops and officers as cruel and cowardly, the description of the nature of the fighting as well as the attitudes of Confederate troops and Lynchburg civilians, and the almost religious reverence

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<sup>22</sup> W Asbury Christian, *Lynchburg and its People* (Lynchburg: JP Bell Company, Inc, 1900), 221.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid*, 221.

<sup>24</sup> *Memoirs of Jubal Early*, 373.

paid to Jubal Early in Christian's account, published thirty-five years after the Civil War, highlight the extent to which the development of the myth of the Battle of Lynchburg informed his description.

Christian's account as well demonstrated other elements which point to the development of the myth. In his description of the aftermath of the battle, he noted how, "In Lynchburg there was quite a difference between this Sunday and the one preceding. Now there was a joy of deliverance; before there was the gloom of impending ruin...About one hundred dead Yankees were strewn over the field, many of whom were nude and terribly torn by shells; others were shot through the head and heart, showing the accurate aim of our men."<sup>25</sup> Again, Christian's reference to a "joy of deliverance" highlights Early as something of a religious savior for the people and city of Lynchburg. His description of nude bodies and soldiers shot "through the head and heart" also represent details absent from contemporary accounts. This as well represents development of the myth of the Battle of Lynchburg, as the story transforms from a relatively anti-climactic series of skirmishes to one in which the city is saved by one man's seemingly divine intervention. Further, while Christian's approximation of Union dead is fairly accurate, he included details not found in the primary accounts: the attitudes of Lynchburg citizens, the incredible skill and valiance of Confederate troops and officers, and the cowardly and evil nature of the Union. These details represent embellishments of the realities of the battle and developments of the myth, designed to glorify the memory of the Confederates and the Old South.

The year after the publication of Christian's local history, Charles Blackford delivered his speech about the campaign and battle, including all of the aforementioned elements that

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<sup>25</sup> Christian, 221.

constitute the myth of the Battle of Lynchburg. Blackford vividly described how “The residue of Early’s command did not reach Lynchburg until late on the afternoon of the 18<sup>th</sup>, when it was hurried through the city at a double quick, much to the relief of the citizens, who cheered them on their pathway.”<sup>26</sup> Here, Blackford introduced the idea that Early and his troops arrived in Lynchburg to save the city at the last possible moment, an idea which became an important element of the myth, and would be incorporated into all future accounts of the battle. Blackford also stated, as previously mentioned, how “During the night of the 17<sup>th</sup> a yard engine, with box cars attached, was run up and down the Southside Railroad, making as much noise as possible, and thus induced Hunter to believe and to report that Early was being rapidly reinforced.”<sup>27</sup> This marked the first time a description of the train ruse appeared publicly. While it is impossible to determine whether Blackford invented the story or simply became the first to declare and record a story that had developed locally during the years between the end of the war and the time of the speech, Blackford’s account of Jubal Early’s trains marks its first appearance in any available record. Also fitting with the myth, Blackford noted how the confederate forces numbered “little over one-half as large as that under Hunter.”<sup>28</sup> Blackford’s seeming invention of the train ruse story is the most prominent element of the myth of the Battle of Lynchburg, as it demonstrates the genius and cunning of Confederate leadership against a far more numerous opponent; in addition to these things however, Blackford’s account also establishes the idea that Jubal Early arrived to Lynchburg just in time to stave off a Union invasion of the city, and that the Confederate forces were vastly outnumbered. He praises the efforts of General Early, while disparaging those of General Hunter. These “facts” would all develop into key elements of the

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<sup>26</sup> Blackford, 23.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

memory of the Battle of Lynchburg for many of the people of central Virginia. Further, the Blackford account became the most authoritative source on the history of the Battle, despite the fact that he was not there when it occurred. In the vast majority of historical recollections of the battle after 1901, Blackford's account generally represents one of the most frequently referenced sources.<sup>29</sup>

Similarly, in 1904, John Terrell, who served as a surgeon in one of the Lynchburg war hospitals during the battle, described his experiences. He described Hunter's force as "estimated at 30 or 40,000 troops," well higher than the actual number, further perpetuating the idea that Jubal Early and his men were vastly outmanned, yet somehow managed to overcome the enemy. Additionally, after describing some of the events of the battle, he noted how:

If Gen Early with his army, had reached Lynchburg a few hours sooner...Hunter's army would not, we thought, have escaped, although his troops were fresh and well equipped and nearer twice the numbers in Gen Early's army, whose veterans had been actively engaged in the field from May 4<sup>th</sup> in the Wilderness fight to Cold Harbor in June with their ranks depleted by casualties of battles and seemingly worn out. Yet on the firing line, June 18<sup>th</sup>, they seemed bright, dashing, self confident and eager to meet the foe.<sup>30</sup>

Here, Terrell surmised that had it not been for their depleted ranks and exhaustion, Confederate soldiers would have somehow captured or more convincingly defeated Hunter's army. This

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<sup>29</sup> Blackford's account is cited as source for information about Battle of Lynchburg in: George Morris and Susan Foutz, *Lynchburg in the Civil War: the City, the People, the Battle*, (Lynchburg: H.E. Howard, Inc., 1984), 46; Phillip Lightfoot Scruggs, *The History of Lynchburg, Virginia, 1786-1946*, (Lynchburg: J.P. Bell Press) 103-110; James M. Elson, *Lynchburg, Virginia: the First Two Hundred Years, 1786-1986*, (Lynchburg: Warwick House Publishers, 2004), 171-172; Dorothy Potter and Clifton Potter, *Lynchburg: 1757-2007*, (Charleston, SC: Arcadia Publishing, 2007), 54; Darrell Laurant, *Remembering Lynchburg and Central Virginia: Articles from the News & Advance*, (Charleston, SC: History Press, 2005), 26-27; Dorothy Potter and Clifton Potter, *Lynchburg: The Most Interesting Spot*, (Lynchburg: Beric Press, 1985), 74-75.

<sup>30</sup> JJ Terrell, Transcription of speech made to Gardland-Rodes Sons of Confederate Veterans Camp, (Not Published: 'Battle of Lynchburg File,' Jones Memorial Library, Lynchburg, Virginia, ca. 1904)



implies that the entire outcome of the war may have been different if it had not been for being so far outnumbered, and so tired from fighting this larger force in the preceding months. This all fits in with the myth: an exhausted fighting force valiantly defending their city against forty-thousand Union troops. It is unclear why, primarily in his assessment of troop numbers, Terrell's account of the Battle differed from other eye-witness accounts recorded closer to the time of the battle. It could perhaps be attributed to a growing sense of sentimentalism as time passed, or possibly influence from the popularity of Blackford's account, but regardless of the reason, the facts of Terrell's account, recorded thirty years after the Battle, do not fit with the contemporary accounts.

The development of the myth of the Battle of Lynchburg continued through the early twentieth-century, as demonstrated in the remarks of Captain Tipton D. Jennings, Chairman of the Gardland-Rodes Camp of Confederate Veterans, in 1912. The influence of the myth in Jennings's remarks is highlighted in his focus on the sacrifices of the Confederate soldiers and officers, an element which played a more ancillary role in previous secondary recollections of the battle. He states, "And it shall come to pass, when your children say unto you, 'What mean ye by this service?' A true index to greatness is gratitude...A people forgetful of sacrifices of others, endured to deliver them from impending horrors are unworthy of the world's respect."<sup>31</sup> Though definitely present in the aforementioned secondary recollections of the battle, the concept of a shared debt of gratitude to those who fought and died played an integral role in these remarks. This development demonstrates how the memory of the battle had shifted away from military strategy and specifics, and developed rather into a story of fantastic Confederate

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<sup>31</sup> Tipton D. Jennings, "Battle of Lynchburg" (transcription from *Lynchburg Advance*, Jones Memorial Library, Lynchburg, Virginia, 1912).

effort and sacrifice. This re-emphasis on new elements of the story of the Battle of Lynchburg highlights the development of the myths surrounding it.

Furthermore, Jennings deferred to Charles Blackford's account of the Battle of Lynchburg, stating, "No attempt has been made to narrate but the sidelights so to speak, of the deliverance of Lynchburg on the 18<sup>th</sup> of June, 1864, however interesting a full and complete history of that important campaign would prove. Right here let us refer the reader to 'Blackford's' pamphlet on this 'Campaign and Battle.'"<sup>32</sup> This deference to Blackford's account as the most complete synthesis of the events of the Battle of Lynchburg represents the first instance of what would later develop into a pattern of citation of his account as historical fact. This mention of Blackford's account carries with it two strong implications: that just over a decade after the delivery and publication of Charles Blackford's remarks on the campaign and battle of Lynchburg, the story had acquired such widespread recognition that it could be referred to simply as "Blackford's Pamphlet," and that the details contained within said pamphlet had at the very least been introduced to many of the people of central Virginia. These secondary recollections all utilized first hand accounts to the extent that they meshed with their narrative, but often made assertions outside the purview of the primary documentation. Nevertheless, these post-war recollections developed into the "true" history of the Battle of Lynchburg.

Don P. Halsey perpetuated the myth of the Battle of Lynchburg in his description of the conflict in *Historic and Heroic Lynchburg*. The book represents a compilation of transcriptions from, "speeches I have been privileged to make on various occasions when we have assembled ourselves together to commemorate some of the people and deeds which have rendered

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<sup>32</sup> Jennings, "Battle of Lynchburg."

Lynchburg historic and heroic.”<sup>33</sup> While his description of the battle, delivered in a memorial speech in April of 1924, focuses primarily on those involved in the conflict originally from Lynchburg, his characterization of Hunter and his praise of the Confederate effort clearly highlight the influence of the myth. Halsey described Hunter, pointing out how “The mildest terms that can be applied to him are renegade and coward,” and that “Hunter’s deeds were those of a malignant and cowardly fanatic who was better qualified to make war upon helpless women and children than upon armed soldiers.”<sup>34</sup> This characterization of Hunter falls clearly outside of the purview of the primary documentation, and clearly represents an opinion, yet he nonetheless presented it as fact. His description of the Confederate effort reflects how the myth developed to exemplify the heroics of the Confederates while thoroughly denigrating the actions of the Union forces. He described how the Confederate force had been “reduced to a ragged fragment of its former invincible legions, but [were] still animated by its dauntless and deathless spirit of valor,” and how on the day of the battle, “when [the city’s] existence was threatened by a cruel foe...it was saved by the blood of heroes.”<sup>35</sup> The focus on the “dauntless spirit” of the Confederate soldiers and the cowardly character of the Union leadership highlights the influence of the myth and the transformation of the story of the Battle of Lynchburg in historical memory.

Another important aspect of Halsey’s account of the battle is the respect he paid to Blackford’s “Campaign and Battle.” He utilizes Blackford’s account for a number of descriptions of individuals from Lynchburg that participated in the battle, the reason for Hunter’s delay in reaching Lynchburg, as well as the proper memorialization of those responsible for the

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<sup>33</sup> Don P. Halsey, *Historic and Heroic Lynchburg*, (Lynchburg, 1935: J.P. Bell Press), v.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 16.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 15.

city's salvation.<sup>36</sup> This reliance on Blackford's account, as opposed to the primary documentation, demonstrates the importance of secondary recollections of the battle in establishing its history, and also highlights the perpetuation of the myth of the Battle of Lynchburg in the historical memory of many of the people of central Virginia.

These accounts establish their own story of the battle, often despite contradictory primary evidence. During the years after the end of the Civil War, the story of the Battle of Lynchburg transformed into a myth illustrating the strength of Confederate leadership and the bold sacrifices of Confederate soldiers through the exaggeration, and sometimes the invention, of certain facts of the story in published recollections of the battle. What's important in this discussion, however, is not that this disparity exists between the primary and secondary accounts, but rather the reason behind it.

The people of Lynchburg and central Virginia likely re-emphasized certain aspects, and embellished or engineered others, at first to re-establish their sense of honor after a defeat not only to their military but to southern culture, and later to establish a sense of community in a rapidly changing social atmosphere. Foster notes the importance of Confederate veteran organizations in the development and dissemination of transformations in the memory of the Civil War. He states that in the assessment of historical memory of the Civil War, one must understand, "who controlled these postwar Confederate organizations (and thereby served as keepers of the past), how southerners responded to these groups, what these groups had to say about the war, and what their rituals meant."<sup>37</sup> In the case of the Battle of Lynchburg, the Garland-Rodes Camp of Confederate Veterans functioned as the most important organization in the development

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<sup>36</sup> Halsey, 21-28.

<sup>37</sup> Foster, 5.

of the myth of the Battle of Lynchburg, as Blackford's remarks were first made in a speech to the organization, and Tipton Jennings served as the chairman of the organization during the time when his remarks were published. The leaders of the organization, as Foster asserts, functioned as keepers of the past. The people of central Virginia demonstrated a penchant for this type of war recollection, resulting in the publication and distribution of Blackford's remarks shortly after the initial speech – so much so that a decade later, Jennings could simply refer to it as “Blackford's pamphlet.” The fact that the historical recollections made by members of this group gained such widespread popularity – yet simultaneously conflicted with primary accounts, or at the very least contained undocumented information – highlights how the myth of the Battle of Lynchburg developed as a way to comfort and affirm a society so drastically shaken. Rather than deal with the embarrassment of defeat and the challenges of reconstruction, the people of Lynchburg could focus, with a growing sense of sentimentality, on certain aspects of the battle itself to honor the extraordinary abilities and immense sacrifices of their people.

David W. Blight as well speaks to the factors behind the development of Civil War myth and memory:

American culture romance triumphed over reality, sentimental remembrance won over ideological memory. For Americans broadly, the Civil War has been a defining event upon which we have often imposed unity and continuity; as a culture, we have often preferred its music and pathos to its enduring challenges, the theme of reconciled conflict to resurgent, unresolved legacies. The greatest enthusiasts for Civil War history and memory often displace complicated consequences by endlessly focusing on the contest itself... Deeply embedded in an American mythology of mission, and serving as a mother lode of nostalgia for antimodernists and military history buffs, the Civil War remains very difficult to shuck from its shell of sentimentalism.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Blight, 5.

Again, the myth of the Battle of Lynchburg that developed between the end of the war and the early twentieth century fits well with Blight's paradigm. Blight establishes the idea that Americans living in the wake of the Civil War could more easily unite around the ideas of shared sacrifice and honor than they could through the reconciliation of the racial issues that were at the heart of the war to begin with. Blight states, "sometimes reconciliations have terrible costs, both intentional and unseen. The sectional reunion after so horrible a civil war was a political triumph by the late nineteenth century, but it could not have been achieved without the resubjugation of many of those people whom the war had freed from centuries of bondage."<sup>39</sup> It seems very plausible then that the myth of the Battle of Lynchburg developed as a way to re-establish the social unity of the Old South and re-affirm the honor of the Confederate war effort.

Additionally, the Civil War, particularly in its latter stages, had an impact on civilians that was both broader and more severe than in previous wars in North America. A number of works pay particular attention to the psychological effects of experiencing violence and death on such a wide scale. These psychological effects, in turn, may have influenced the development and transformation of the myth and memory of the Battle of Lynchburg. Drew Gilpin Faust discusses the many ways Americans dealt with death during and after the Civil War. She points out how nineteenth-century Americans had to develop ways to deal with this level of death, and Faust asserts, "Americans had to identify – find, invent, create – the means and mechanisms to manage more than a half a million dead: their deaths, their bodies, their loss."<sup>40</sup> In this instance, the people of central Virginia used the myth of the Battle of Lynchburg, initially, as a mechanism to manage this loss. In Alan Nolan's essay "Civil War History and the Myth of the Lost Cause,"

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<sup>39</sup> Blight, 3.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid, xviii.

he describes how there exists, “an idealization of the Confederate soldier in the Lost Cause myth” to help assuage this feeling of loss and defeat.<sup>41</sup> Secondary recollections of the battle tend to emphasize this idea of shared sacrifice, partially assuaging the burden of death, as Captain Jennings did in his opening remarks. Halsey’s account of the battle also begins by honoring the “invincible legions” with their “dauntless and deathless spirit of valor.”<sup>42</sup> This focus on the shared sacrifice of those who fought and died defending Lynchburg, and the imploration to appropriately honor them, suggests that the myth of the Battle of Lynchburg may have developed as a way of dealing with the death tolls of the Civil War.

The events of the Battle of Lynchburg and how people dealt with their aftermath significantly impacted the development of the myth and the historical memory of the people of central Virginia. The impact of the battle on individuals and communities affected how they would remember the conflict years later, and how that history would be passed on to the next generation. Thomas Desjardin explores how the story of a battle can shape historical memory. Although he focuses on a much larger battle, Gettysburg, in order to make assertions about how the Civil War developed in historical memory in all of the United States, this connection reinforces the idea that the story of the Battle of Lynchburg could have transformed the historical memory of the people of Central Virginia. In discussing how similar disparities exist between the primary and secondary accounts of the Battle of Gettysburg, Desjardin notes that “Their divergence from fact demonstrates more about how human nature affects memory than any intentional deception on their part.” He continues, noting that “In trying to slant the meaning of Gettysburg in the direction of their cultural views, a number of leading veterans (particularly

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<sup>41</sup> Alan Nolan, “Civil War History and the Myth of the Lost Cause: National Consequences of Civil War Battle” In *Battle: the Nature and Consequences of Civil War Combat*, ed Gramm, Kent (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2008), 117.

<sup>42</sup> Halsey, 15.

vanquished postwar Confederates) contrived, invented, and flat out lied, knowing that they were building a record on which future generations would judge the past.”<sup>43</sup> The development of the story of the Battle of Lynchburg seems to fit this model exactly: addresses to Confederate veterans organizations and later publications shaped the story of the Battle of Lynchburg, and after their introduction served as the factual basis for the majority of subsequent historical investigations of the battle.

Desjardin also places focus on veterans’ organizations, stating, “veteran groups collaborated to establish a mythology for future generations to absorb.”<sup>44</sup> This again reinforces the idea that the speeches of the members of the Garland-Rodes Camp of Confederate Veterans functioned as an extremely important mechanism through which this myth could be established and disseminated. Most poignantly, Desjardin describes how “Given the flawed memories of thousands of veterans and their complex web of communicating ideas and forming various versions of the battle story, mistaken tales, myths, and legends were virtually inevitable.”<sup>45</sup> These assertions support the idea that the myth and memory of the Battle of Lynchburg developed to serve specific functions in the lives of the people of central Virginia.

In his more general discussion of historical memory in the American South, W. Fitzhugh Brundage describes how “the remembered past and debates about it have a deep significance for both public life and regional identity in the American South.”<sup>46</sup> This seems particularly true in the case of Lynchburg and the memory of its Civil War battle. Brundage continues, noting, “Historical memory, consequently, transmits selective knowledge about the past. By discerning

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<sup>43</sup> Thomas Desjardin, *These Honored Dead* (Cambridge: Da Capo Press, 2003), 41-42.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 58.

<sup>46</sup> W. Fitzhugh Brundage, *Where These Memories Grow* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 2.



patterns in the past and attaching significance to events, groups create interpretative frameworks that make ‘the flux of experience comprehensive.’”<sup>47</sup> In order to help regain a sense of identity after a crushing defeat and to help re-establish their old sense of community in a time of rapid social change, key speakers and writers in Lynchburg embellished certain elements of the Battle of Lynchburg, and flatly engineered others in order to establish their interpretation.

The contemporary accounts of the Battle of Lynchburg differ greatly with the secondary recollections that began to appear in the early twentieth century. While the story of Jubal Early’s trains represents the most detailed and colorful example of this, the disparities in the details – the troop numbers, the necessity of reinforcement at the time of Early’s arrival and the subsequent response, in addition to the character of the men on both sides – supply an equally important element of the story. Further, whether or not the story of Jubal Early’s trains is true seems irrelevant. If it is not true, then the fact that Charles Blackford either invented or became the first to publicly discuss this story in 1901 deeply reflects the need of the people of the early twentieth century in central Virginia to re-establish their honor and dominance in the aftermath of heavy personal and cultural losses. That the story developed from factual, primary accounts noting a seemingly balanced encounter marked by heavy skirmishing, and an uneventful Union retreat into one where heroic Confederate officers and soldiers arrived just in time to save the city with cunning, strategy, and valiant sacrifice from the cowardly, cruel, and far more numerous Union Army demonstrates the social and cultural needs of the people of central Virginia in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. After a long war in which countless soldiers and civilians died alongside the institution that formed the center of southern social structure,

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid, 5.

Southerners needed something to assist them in overcoming this trauma of defeat: for many, the myth and memory of the civil war served this purpose.

## Bibliography

### *Manuscripts and Pamphlets*

**Blackford, Charles Minor. *Campaign and battle of Lynchburg, Va.* Lynchburg: JP Bell, 1901**

This source is the first place where the story of the confederates tricking the union troops into believing they had been reinforced appeared, though 37 years after the battle. This makes the source extremely important in the analysis of how the people of central Virginia remember the Battle of Lynchburg.

**Early, Jubal Anderson. *Lieutenant General Jubal Anderson Early CSA Autobiographical Sketch and Narrative of the War Between the States: Electronic Edition.* Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina .**

This will be the main source of information in regards to the events of the Battle of Lynchburg. As the man credited with running the "train ruse" it is indicative that he does not mention it anywhere within his memoir.

**Frederick Anspach to Robert Anspach, 23 June 1864, Anspach Family Papers, University of Virginia Special Collections Library, Charlottesville, VA.**

This source represents one of the few detailed civilian accounts of the events of the Battle of Lynchburg. It makes no reference to the train ruse, although it does mention extremely specific information about the battle. It is also interesting because it notes that the misinformation about the battle began immediately in the newspapers.

**Jennings, Tipton D. "The Battle of Lynchburg" *The Lynchburg Advance*, 17 June 1912. Transcription accessed at Jones Memorial Library, Lynchburg, VA, Pamphlet 1842.**

This editorial of sorts by Tipton Jennings, a former commander of the Garland-Rodes Camp Sons of Confederate Veterans, describes the events of the battle of Lynchburg in 1912. It is interesting that he also makes no mention of the train ruse, but his musings on the meaning of battle and the war do well to inform my discussion of the Battle of Lynchburg in historical memory.

**Terrell, John J. Speech to Garland Rodes Camp Sons of Confederate Veterans, 1904. Transcription from Jones Memorial Library, Lynchburg, VA.**

This source is a speech made to the Sons of Confederate Veterans in 1904, which recounts Terrell's movements during the battle of Lynchburg, noting that he spent a great deal of time with General Early during the battle. It makes no mention of the "train ruse". It is interesting that the story had been established 3 years earlier, but it is completely left out of this account.

**William G Watson Memoirs. *A Union Soldier in the Shenandoah Valley 1864* VMI Archives Manuscript #37.**

Additional first-hand, military perspective on the events of the Battle of Lynchburg and the Shenandoah Valley Campaign of 1864

**Wilson, Edward S. "The Lynchburg Campaign," *Sketches of War History, 1861-1865, Papers Prepared for the Ohio Commandery of the Military Order of the Loyal Legion of the United States*, WH Chamberlain, ed Vol IV Cincinnati: The Robert Clarke Company, 1896, pp 133-146**

I will use this source as a northern perspective of the Battle of Lynchburg More specifically, I will be using this source to prove there were valid reasons for the Union's retreat from Lynchburg, which extended far beyond the fear of reinforcements that had arrived during the night

### ***Books***

**Asbury, W Christian. *Lynchburg and Its People*. Lynchburg: J P Bell Company, Inc, 1900.**

This source will be used solely as an example of secondary recollections of the war Since it was printed 36 years after the Battle of Lynchburg took place, it provides a view of how the people of Lynchburg remembered it at the turn of the century

**Baker, Bruce E. *What Reconstruction Meant: Historical Memory in the American South*. Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2007.**

This source provides a general overview of one interpretation of Reconstruction, in regards to its effect on Southern historical memory This source will assist me in contextualizing my argument about the Battle of Lynchburg in historical memory, and why it developed the way it did

**Blight, David W. *Race and Reunion: The Civil War In American Memory*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001**

This source represents some of the most recent work on the Civil War in historical memory I hope to gain an idea of how the Civil War exists in southern memory in order to properly situate my findings from Lynchburg and Central Virginia within the historiography

**Brundage, W Fitzhugh. *Where These Memories Grow: History, Memory, and Southern Identity*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000.**

This source will also provide some broader historiography about the Civil War in America, within which I will be able to situate my argument about how the people of

Central Virginia remembered the Battle of Lynchburg Due to the availability of resources about the Battle of Lynchburg, a broader view of Civil War historical memory is necessary

**Desjardin, Thomas A. *These Honored Dead: How the Story of Gettysburg Shaped American Memory* Cambridge, MA: Da Capo Press, 2003.**

This source uses the story of the Battle of Gettysburg in order to discuss how the Civil War developed in American historical memory, not just that of the South Still, many of the arguments he raises about Gettysburg's effect on the nation hold true on a smaller scale, when investigating the Battle of Lynchburg's effect on the people of central Virginia

**Faust, Drew Gilpin. *This Republic of Suffering: Death and the American Civil War*. New York: Random House Inc, 2008.**

This source offers a glimpse of the toll taken by the Civil War It also discusses how people on both sides dealt with the extreme violence during the conflict I may use this information in an effort to explain discrepancies between first hand accounts and secondary recollections of the Civil War

**Foster, Gaines M. *Ghosts of the Confederacy: Defeat, the Lost Cause, and the Emergence of the New South, 1865-1913*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1987.**

This source speaks most directly to my research topic This work deals with historical memory of the Civil War throughout the South, while my research will focus solely on Central Virginia after the Battle of Lynchburg However, I hope to place my conclusions within the paradigm established here by Foster, and later by Blight

**Gallagher, Gary W. *Struggle for the Shenandoah: Essays on the 1864 Valley Campaign*. Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 1991.**

This source compiles a number of conflicting arguments about the events and importance of the 1864 Shenandoah Valley Campaign which included the battle of Lynchburg This source provides views of the conflict that are both thorough and brief, and will be valuable pieces of information as I continue my research

**Gallagher, Gary W and Alan T Nolan. *The Myth of the Lost Cause and Civil War History*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000**

This source addresses how the theory of the "Lost Cause" effected (and continues to effect) how the Civil War is remembered in American historical memory This is directly relevant to the argument I am making about how the people of Lynchburg remember the Civil War

**Nolan, Allan T. "Civil War History and the Myth of the Lost Cause: National Consequences of Civil War Battle." In *Battle: The Nature and Consequences of Civil War Combat*, edited by Kent Gramm, 111-119 Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2008**

This essay provides one interpretation for the development of historical myth about the Civil War and the reasoning behind the development of Lost Cause theory. Nolan argues that the effects of Battle forced survivors and civilians to focus on other details, or invent new details. This essay will inform my discussion of the story of "Jubal Early's trains"

**Humphreys, Milton W. *A History of the Lynchburg Campaign*. Charlottesville: The Michie Company, 1924.**

This source functions as an additional next-generation remembrance of the Civil War, though published slightly later than the other sources of this nature. This history is surprising in its avoidance of the typical historical fallacies of history, and southern history in particular, during this period. It is also notable because it does not mention the story of the train ruse, though the story had already developed by that point.

**Neff, John R. *Honoring the Civil War Dead: Commemoration and the Problem of Reconciliation*. Lawrence, Kansas: University of Kansas Press, 2005.**

This monograph is a contemporary investigation of the problem of reconciling the ideas of commemoration and reconciliation. This is a more ancillary source, but will still provide some more contemporary commentary on historical memory and the Civil War.

**Osterweis, Rollin G. *The Myth of the Lost Cause, 1865-1900*. Hamden, CT: Shoe String Press, Inc, 1973.**

Though this source is a bit outdated, it provides an excellent overview of the origins and development of the Lost Cause. I will use the Lost Cause Theory in order to help explain the discrepancies between primary and secondary accounts of the battle of Lynchburg and how it survived in historical memory.

**Sturm, Jesse Tyler. *From a "whirlpool of death...to victory": Civil War Remembrances of Jesse Tyler Sturm, 14<sup>th</sup> West Virginia Infantry*. Mary E. Johnson, ed. Charleston: West Virginia, 2000.**

Though a recently published source, this book provides detailed first-hand accounts of the Battle of Lynchburg and the Shenandoah Valley Campaign of 1864. This source will be used to provide the military perspective of the battle of Lynchburg.

**United States War Department. *The War of the Rebellion: a compilation of the official records of the Union and Confederate armies Prepared under the direction of the Secretary of War by Robert N. Scott*. Washington, Govt. Print. Off., 1880-1900. Gettysburg: National Historical Society, c1971-72.**

This source is a compilation of official records and correspondences from the Civil War  
There are a number of letters and telegrams between both Union and Confederate officers  
which describe in detail the events of the Lynchburg Campaign