The Rage for Order: Reconstruction and Jim Crow in America

The Lost Cause Movement
Our Session Subjects:
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2. Presidential Reconstruction
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The Rise of the Lost Cause movement (LCM)
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The LCM changes concerns
“The capacity to live in the past by memory also emancipates the individual from the tyranny of the present. He can choose, if he wants, to reverse the present trend of history in favor of some previous trend. He can, if he wishes, seek asylum from present tumults in a past period of history, or use the memory of the past innocently to project a future of higher virtue.”

Reinhold Niebuhr
Five Popular Myths about the Civil War and Reconstruction

Myth No. 1
The Civil War was not fought over slavery.

Myth No. 2
The South lost simply because the North had more resources.

Myth No. 3
Robert E. Lee abhorred slavery.

Myth No. 4
Confederate monuments only recently became controversial.

Myth No. 5
Removing a Confederate monument is erasing history.
The rise of the Lost Cause movement (LCM)

- Physical destruction and economic misery
- Psychological trauma of defeat
- A Democratic party resisting reconstruction
- Racial violence
- Freed “disrespectful” slaves
- Abiding sentimentalism for the old South

Like all mythologies, the LCM changed with succeeding generations and shifting political circumstances
The early concerns of LCM

The South lost due to no fault of its own
- Infidelity/incompetency of the South’s leaders in light of Southern warrior ethos
- The savagery of the North and its overwhelming numbers and technology
- The South was a perfect civilization before the War
- The War was not a defense of slavery but freedom and independence
- Slaves lived a better life under slavery, civilized by the South
LCM began in the 1870s with ex-Confederate generals, such as Jubal Early, defending Lee’s actions at the battle of Gettysburg.

The LCM sentimentalized southern life before the war and attached itself to the antebellum rhetoric of the south as an Eden like civilization.

- The civilization was crushed not because of its own faults but because of the ruthless actions of a corrupt industrial power, the North
- The North was the serpent in the Garden destroying paradise
The LCM and Reconstruction

The LCM had a sense of righteousness born of successful resistance to Radical Reconstruction; the South refused to be made in the image of the North

Emerged in the 1890s as explanation of southern history and virtue

By the 1890s and until at least WW I, the Confederate memorial movement began spurred by Reunions

New memorial organizations came into being: United Daughters of the Confederacy; the United Confederate Veterans.

LCM had contradictory goals: reconciliation yet Southern partisanship.

Began to wane in the wake of the Spanish American War of 1898 and the patriotic upheavals of WW I
The LCM in the field

The LCM movement thru its organizations had three major activities:

- rewrite and control the history of the war and its aftermath through textbooks, pamphlets and articles

- use of white supremacy as both means and ends

- promote the place of women in the war effort with women representing the virgin purity of the south honored by southern manhood
The LCM movement was led by high-ranking officers and political leaders of the Confederacy.

- Jefferson Davis’ 1300-page memoir, *The Rise in for the Confederate Government*, was the prominent message bearer.

  - James McPherson argues that Davis conceived of the Confederacy through the “virgin birth theory of secession: the confederacy was not conceived by any world but by divine principal.”

- For the LCM, the South was merely protecting its “natural rights”
Omnipresent in LCM rhetoric was that slavery was not the cause of the conflict but was only an incident.

- Slaves were barbarians who are fortunate enough to come to a Christian country and become Christian civilized. According to Jefferson Davis,

  “Blacks had been put to servitude, trained in the general arts of peace, order and civilization; they increased from a few unprofitable savages to millions of efficient Christian laborers. Their patient toil blessed the land with unmeasured riches. Their strong local and personal attachment secured faithful service. Never was there a happier dependence of labor and capital on each other. The tempter came, like the serpent of Eden, and decoyed them with the magic word of "freedom. He put arms in their hands, and trained their humble but emotional natures to deeds of violence and bloodshed, and sent them out to devastate their benefactors."
Other post-Civil War writers laid out defenses of states’ rights and justified the war as in the tradition of the War of Independence.

In the meantime, Confederate veterans’ groups formed Confederate clubs with two goals: charity to members and families and to create a southern history.

The LCM members saw themselves vying with the northern historians for the truth of the Civil War.
LCM proponents also characterized Reconstruction as the second war against the south.

- The end of Reconstruction for them signaled the victory of the South over efforts to end its freedom to treat Blacks as it wanted and as Blacks deserved.
LCM proponents could participate in reconciliation with the North, seeing it a victory of white supremacy and they had a desire for renewed economic growth via Northern loans

- Such growth would justify southern civilization.

LCM could also accept the Civil War amendments but they could equally claimed that they were not traders.
Reconciliation for the South meant the restoration of states’ rights and local control ("redemption").

- The failure of Reconstruction was the triumph of southern principles fought for in the Civil War.

For most white southerners, the LCM evolved into a
- language of vindication and renewal
- an array of practices in public monuments around which they could solidify both Southern pride and as the Americans.

The nationalism that grew out of national reconciliation was appropriated by the South as a southern nationalism.
The LCM goes public: Civil War Monuments

Extension of the LCM in the 1880s

- The Civil War monuments began to spring up in cemeteries in the late 1860s

  - Fear that Union would object to any Confederate monuments in towns; however, all those objections were sporadic.
  - After 1885, more monuments were placed in towns and cities.
  - Committees of prominent citizens often spearheaded monument building along with local daughters of the Confederacy and Confederate veterans organizations.
  - Private money would be raised for the monuments and cooperation would be had with the local governmental authorities for placement and design.
  - From 1886 to 1899, more than 60% of the new monuments featured an unidentified Confederate soldier.
The LCM changes concerns

By the 1890s, Confederate memories no longer were of mourning or explaining defeat, but of pride in heroism of men and women of the South

- Monuments evidenced pride in conservative traditions by which the entire country could find relief from racial, political and industrial disorder.

- Although defeated, Confederate soldier provided a model of masculine devotion and courage in an age of gender anxieties and ruthless material living.
  - LCM became a tonic against fear of social change, a preventative ideological medicine for the sick souls of the Gilded Age.

LCM armed those determined to control the rise of Black people in the social order.
The unveiling of the Robert E. Lee statue in Richmond in 1890 attracted more than 100,000 people.

- It was a commemoration of Lee’s character and leadership
- Was a LCM celebration in itself.

- Northern papers objected though that Lee had become figure for a traitors’ cause. Others though saw Lee as a symbol of reconciliation.

- For Blacks Lee statute represented a south seeking reunion and respect, a society poised to forge a new racial system that would reinvigorate the cause Lee had fought for.
Remembrance of the war was no longer relegated to cemeteries, but now became standard in public places.

- The public Confederate monument occupied a public place within the daily patterns of the life where all could see it and profit by it
- Usually the Confederate soldier was nondescript and relaxed in his pose
- Most mass produced from models purchased from monument companies
- Served as a form of history for the young and encouraged the workingman.
Monuments were for the sake of the living in the busy Industrial Age

- A private soldier portrayed as a disciplined loyal supporter of society.

- Working men learned that republics even in this industrial age rewarded men who gave their lives for their country

- The revealing ceremonies richly aligned the common man with the social order

- Some monuments became a way of calming labor strife as well as an interpretation of the wars aims and triumphs.
March 22!!!!!!!: Jim Crow comes to town