

## 10/24 Revision

### 1.2 Lost Cause Ideology

#### Creating the Story of the Lost Cause

“The Lost Cause entered the lexicon of our history in 1866 when Edward Pollard published *The Lost Cause: A New Southern History of the War of the Confederates*. His second volume, published in 1868, *The Lost Cause Regained*, furthered his claim that the reason for the Civil War was opposing ways of organizing society between the Northern states (and the West) and the Confederacy. In *Regained*. . . he wrote the reason for secession was “state sovereignty”. As for slavery, the southern revisionist history advanced that system as having been the key to nobility. For example, the Charleston Mercury newspaper, in 1862, had declared the Confederate States of America (CSA) was “...fighting to maintain heaven-ordained supremacy of white man over the inferior or colored race” (1)

#### Post-War South

After the war, much of the former CSA property, such as farms, fields, homes, towns, and roads, were in ruins; there was economic collapse. Emancipation had ended the major source of labor for all former slave owners. The tenets of Southern society had been torn apart and there was a sense of dishonor and mourning that accompanied the defeat. The circumstances were such that an alternative rationale such as what Pollard offered was quickly accepted. It was expanded into the cultural milieu of the South, and, ultimately, into areas of academia and the public memory.

#### Lost Cause Narrative Established

Efforts to pursue the reconciliation of Confederate and Union veterans furthered the narrative as the dead were memorialized with monuments. By 1894, when the United

Daughters of the Confederacy (UDC) formed to become guardians of the Lost Cause ideology, the monuments erected on imposing pedestals became glorification of Southern 'heroes'.

Slavery was gone but not racism; it was part of the social structure. The white supremacist vision was presented and maintained through violence. The Ku Klux Klan was the enforcer. Violence had been central to the antebellum slave-based society and, now, violence was accepted in a different form.

### **Promulgation of the Lost Cause Rationale**

By 1904, the UDC had created and published a Catechism for Children. It consisted of a series of questions and answers the children had to learn. The organization reviewed and controlled the content of schoolbooks. One answer: "The wealth of the South was largely invested in Negroes. They did not feel it was just to submit to wholesale robbery." (2)

President Woodrow Wilson was one of the most prominent proponents of the Lost Cause ideology. Many of his decisions were motivated by his acceptance of its tenets. In turn, his words were quoted in Lyon Gardiner Tyler's *A Confederate Catechism – The War of 1861-1865*, written in 1920, fifty-five years after the Civil War ended. Tyler, a son of former president John Tyler, had served as faculty and president of the College of William & Mary. The former president had sided with the Confederacy and his son carried on the family perspective. Over one hundred years later, the Lost Cause is still a divisive issue, though recognition of its total fallacy is now largely accepted. Post-Civil War African American history, from emancipation to re-subjugation is very belatedly being recognized.

### **Effects of the Lost Cause in Fairfax County**

To consider the Lost Cause ideology and the presence of its effects in Fairfax County, one needs to go to newspapers and documents of late 19th and well into the 20th century. According to *Fairfax County, Virginia: A History*, "The county's Confederate veterans

received unending recognition from the newspapers, from the podium at practically all public gatherings, and from every serious political hopeful who stumped in the area, urging the voters ‘to honor the dead! Save the Living!’ Some roads, public buildings, and schools were named for Confederate “heroes”. A monument was erected that commemorated the death of Confederate officer John Quincy Marr during the battle that took place in the village of Fairfax Court House in June 1861.

The Lost Cause mindset significantly affected those citizens who were African Americans. A new Virginia Constitution was proclaimed into law in 1902. Key tenets toward disenfranchisement of blacks were obtained through poll taxes, literacy tests, and racial segregation of schools. As a result, the number of votes cast in Fairfax County in 1904 was one third of the number cast in 1900. (3) Blacks could not vote, their homes were essentially ghettoized, and they were not provided with schools. Segregation and discrimination were a standard presence in their lives well into the 1960s, over 100 years after the surrender of the Army of Northern Virginia at Appomattox Court House.

### **Echoes of the Lost Cause in 1960s Fairfax County**

The Lost Cause element of “remembering” reemerged during the 1960s, when Fairfax County experienced a confluence of circumstances as the Civil War Centennial was enthusiastically nationwide. There were battle re-enactments, publications, erection of new monuments, and, in the South, certainly including Fairfax County, the naming of places to honor the memory of the Confederacy. With the county experiencing significant residential growth, opportunities to apply Confederate names of individuals or events to streets, subdivisions, and public spaces were plentiful. Additionally, the emerging Civil Rights Movement was a challenge to neighborhood segregation; some name assignments were reflective of conflicting social agendas. Finally, the history of Fairfax as a crossroads of war was also remembered through place naming. In some instances new neighborhoods were being established in areas that had been sites of military action. Names referencing those actions as well as Union troops found their way onto county maps.

- (1) “Amid the Monuments Wars . . .” New York Times, September 28, 2020
- (2) *UDC Catechism for Children* (1904), Encyclopedia Virginia, Virginia Humanities & Library of Virginia (digital)
- (3) Netherton, *Fairfax County, Virginia: A History* (1978), Fairfax County Board of Supervisors, pg. 478