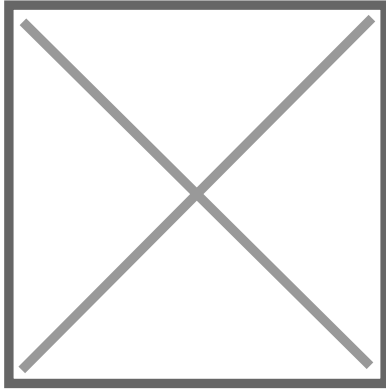




The Lost Cause Finds a Home at the Glorieta Battlefield

Description

Pecos National Historical Park

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

The Texas Volunteers and the Battle for Pigeon's Ranch

Final Assault of the Texans

The Confederates who invaded New Mexico and fought at Glorieta enlisted largely from south central and east Texas. Most had been born in other states, however, with the majority coming from the states of Mississippi, Arkansas, Tennessee, and Alabama. The average age of these troops was twenty-four, only a quarter of them were married, very few had children, and the overwhelming majority owned no significant real estate or slaves. Most listed their occupations as laborers, stock raisers, or farmers. They were young men with an adventure before them.

Major John Shropshire, twenty-eight, left a wife, fortune, and infant son behind in Columbus, Colorado County, Texas. After enduring bouts of cold wet weather and mounting physical discomforts, he penned a note to his wife saying "if I could... have been back at home with dry clothes, a good toddy on hand, and lounge to be upon I would be the happiest man on earth. But these are no times to long for the comforts of home when the home itself is threatened." Shropshire fell—shot through the head—while leading a Confederate advance against the Union flank very near where you are standing.

Wayne Justus, renowned Western artist, captured the final frontal assault by the Texans, led by Lt. Col. William Scurry, against the Federal lines. Note the puffs of smoke coming from the ridge in the background. This represents the flanking attack by the Texans on the Federal right, which led to the collapse of the Federal defenses at Pigeon's Ranch. Take a moment to reflect on the bravery of the soldiers who fought here on March 28, 1862.

Lt. Col. "Dirty Shirt" Scurry
Confederate commandant
at the Battle of Glorieta
Courtesy of Archival Division,
Texas State Library, Austin, TX.

This painting offers a panoramic view of the final phase of the Battle of Glorieta Pass—the "Pigeon's Ranch" battle—on March 28, 1862 in the valley below. After more than five hours of continuous fighting over rugged terrain the Texans surged forward. By flanking movements and frontal assault, they broke the Federal defenses at Pigeon's Ranch and caused the final Federal retreat from the battlefield. The Pigeon's Ranch complex was later used as a temporary hospital for the treatment of the wounded.

Major John Shropshire
Courtesy National Memorial
Library, Columbus, TX.

Donated by Texas Division United Daughters of the Confederacy
New Mexico Division Sons of Confederate Veterans
In memory of General Sibley's Texas Brigade
Thanks to Donald S. Frazer and the McWhirley Foundation

There are few examples of right triumphing over wrong more unambiguous than the Union Army's defeat of the Confederate Army of the West in the first year of the Civil War.

The Confederate Army invaded the Territory of New Mexico in February of 1862 to extend slavery through the Rocky Mountains and to the Pacific Coast. Only three months later, the same army retreated back to Texas after suffering a resounding defeat at the Battle of Glorieta Pass at the hands of the Union Army and volunteers from Colorado and New Mexico.

The site of the Battle of Glorieta Pass is under the jurisdiction of the National Park Service. In a recent visit to the Glorieta Battlefield Trail, I was stunned to find that the National Park Service has erected three large signs at the very heart of the battlefield that erase the role of slavery and extol the honor of the Confederacy, going so far as to liken the invading Confederate soldiers to “patriot forces during the American Revolution.”

These signs are textbook examples of “Lost Cause” ideology, through which the South consciously revised history in order to convince themselves and the nation that their cause had been just, that slavery was not the reason for secession, and that they lost the war with their honor intact—all in the service of white supremacy in the aftermath of the war.

Why would the National Park Service purvey this false history on the very ground on which Union soldiers died? The answer is not hard to find. Each sign acknowledges the organizations and individuals who “donated” them: the Texas Division of the United Daughters of the Confederacy and the New Mexico Division Sons of Confederate Veterans. The signs also thank the McWhiney Foundation and Donald S. Frazier. Every one of these individuals and organizations is linked to Lost Cause and neo-Confederate ideologies.

The United Daughters of the Confederacy are among the foremost proponents of the Lost Cause myth. University of North Carolina historian Karen L. Cox has noted that from its inception, the “fundamental mission” of the UDC has been “to shape the way future generations of white southerners remembered the Civil War, the Confederacy, and slavery, as well as to vindicate the men and women of the Confederate generation.”^[1] Over the course of decades of monument construction and memory-creation, the UDC has promoted “a conception of a victimized South, fighting nobly for high Constitutional principles and defending a civilization of benevolent white masters and contented African slaves.”^[2] And in the words of historian David W. Blight, “In all their efforts, the UDC planted a white supremacist vision of the Lost Cause deeper into the nation’s historical imagination than perhaps any other organization.”^[3]

The Sons of Confederate Veterans has been identified by the Southern Poverty Law Center as a white supremacist hate group. According to College of Charleston historian Adam Domby, “throughout its history, the SCV has been linked with white supremacist groups, and historically it has avowedly supported white supremacist groups.”^[4] UNC historian Cox agrees, describing the SCV as “an explicitly racist group dedicated to the creation of an “Anglo-Celtic” Christian state that would dominate black people and other minorities.”^[5] The SCV has worked directly with the UDC, as here, to continue to advance the Lost Cause myth in support of white supremacy.^[6]

The McWhiney Foundation was formed by controversial Southern historian Grady McWhiney. McWhiney, described by the Southern Poverty Law Center as “in many ways the intellectual grandfather of the neo-Confederate movement,”^[7] was one of the founders of the League of the South, another group identified by the Southern Poverty Law Center as an extremist hate group:

Originally founded by a group that included many Southern university professors, over the years the group lost its academic luster as it became more explicitly racist. The League [of the South] denounces the federal government and Northern and Coastal states as part of a materialist and anti-religious society they call The Empire. In recent years, it has increasingly embraced violence, criticized perceived Jewish power and warned black people that they would be defeated in a future race war.^[8]

Finally, Donald S. Frazier is the President and CEO of the McWhiney History and Education Group and is a prominent promoter of Texas history and culture. As writer and director for the video *Texas in the Civil War: Our Homes, Our Rights*, which he made for the Texas Civil War Museum in Fort Worth, Texas with the assistance of the McWhiney Foundation, Frazier presented a Lost Cause narrative omitting the role of slavery as a cause of

southern secession, and celebrating the succession of Texas and its rebellion against the United States in support of slavery as not only virtuous, but indeed entirely beneficent. According to Frazier, Texans “fought, and fought well, in the cause of their country. They returned with their honor intact from having done their fair share.” In many ways, [the Civil War] set the stage for the Texas we love today.^[9]

Given these sponsors, it is not surprising that the National Park Service’s signs at the Glorieta Battlefield propagate the false Lost Cause narrative of the Civil War that is expressly designed to rehabilitate the image of the Southern succession and to deny the role of slavery as the cause of the Civil War.

Erecting these signs represent a serious failure on the part of the National Park Service to guard our national heritage and to serve its mandate of interpreting the Glorieta Battlefield fairly and honestly – a failure that is compounded every day these fallacious signs are permitted to remain.

[1] Karen L. Cox, *No Common Ground: Confederate Monuments and the Ongoing Fight for Racial Justice* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2021), 2.

[2] Blight, *Race and Reunion*, 278. In furtherance of its mission, the UDC also erected a large road-side monument in 1936 near the site of the Battle of Valverde and another in 1940 near the Battle of Glorieta, both dedicated to “the loyal memory of the Texas mounted volunteers who died in service.” As W.E.B. Du Bois wrote in 1931, such monuments to the Confederacy should actually say, “Sacred to the memory of those who fought to Perpetuate Human Slavery.” W.E.B. Du Bois, “The Perfect Vacation,” *The Crisis*, August 1931, quoted in Cox, *No Common Ground*, 67.

[3] David W. Blight, *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory* (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 2001), 273.

[4] Jason Wilson, “Revealed; neo-Confederate group includes military officers and politicians,” *the Guardian* online, accessed December 13, 2021, <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2021/jun/28/neo-confederate-group-members-politicians-military-officers>.

[5] Cox, *No Common Ground*, 24-25.

[6] Ibid. In 2012, Daughters and the SCV teamed up again to erect another Confederate war monument in New Mexico, this time in the Socorro Cemetery, not far from the Battle of Valverde. This monument states on the front side that it “honors and perpetuates the memory of the brave Texas citizen volunteers who offered their lives and fortunes in the defense of the Confederate states of America during the war for southern independence throughout the New Mexico campaign of 1861-1862.” On the back side of the monument is engraved the Confederacy’s first official national flag (featuring a circle of eleven white stars representing the seceding states of the Confederacy) over the words “Victory awaits you.”

[7] “The Ideologues,” Southern Poverty Law Center, accessed December 16, 2021, <https://www.splcenter.org/fighting-hate/intelligence-report/2004/ideologues?page=0%2C3#8>.

[8] “League of the South,” Southern Poverty Law Center, accessed December 13, 2021, <https://www.splcenter.org/fighting-hate/extremist-files/group/league-south>.

[9] “Our Honor, Our Rights: Texas and Texans in the Civil War,” YouTube video, posted by Don Frazier Feb. 26, 2016, 26:28, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JijbQJeMYyo>.