

## **“We Knew No North, No South”: U.S. - Mexican War Veterans and the Construction of Public Memory in the Post-Civil War United States, 1874-1897**

Alys D. Beverton\*

*Department of History, University College London, London, UK*

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In 1874 American veterans of the U.S.-Mexican War 1846-48 formed the National Association of Veterans of the Mexican War (NAVVMW). Until the organization's demise in 1897, NAVVMW members crafted and celebrated a vision of their war with Mexico as a national triumph which had united Americans from all sections of the Union in a common cause. This article examines how, by promoting this particular memory of the war to the American public, NAVVMW members sought to remind their countrymen of their shared national history, and so aid the process of reconciliation between North and South in the post-Civil War era.

Keywords: Civil War; U.S. - Mexican War; reconciliation; memory

On 15 January 1874 three-hundred-and-fifteen veterans of the U.S.-Mexican War 1846-48 gathered at the Masonic Temple, Washington D.C. They had travelled from thirty-two different states and territories to attend a three-day convention to launch a new organization, the National Association of Veterans of the Mexican War (NAVVMW). On the second day of the convention, General Albert S. Pike, former captain of the Regiment of Arkansas Mounted Volunteers, took the floor to deliver a poem he had prepared for the occasion. In twenty-two verses, Pike recounted the experience of the American volunteers in Mexico. For eighteen months, he recalled, these men braved blistering heat, sickness, and exhaustion before finally forcing the Mexican army into surrender. This was a memory of the U.S.-Mexican War clearly designed to please its audience. But Pike's poem was more than an exercise in romantic remembrance; it also contained a message for the present-day. In one passage, Pike described the celebrations which had erupted throughout the United States in September 1847 following news that the American flag had been hoisted over the Halls of Montezuma:

Then, one by one, the days of glory came,  
That neither North nor South alone could claim,  
Nor wished to; whose immortal memories are,  
The common heritage of every Star.<sup>1</sup>

This verse, which recounted the patriotic fervor which had enveloped American society as its troops scored successive victories over the Mexican enemy, may have struck the assembled veterans as particularly poignant. It had been nearly thirty years since the U.S. Army had first entered Mexico in the spring of 1846. Less than nine years had passed since the end of the American Civil War. The more recent conflict's shadow still hung over the nation. Union victory had assured the political reunification of the states. Emotional reconciliation between North and South, however, had proven to be more elusive. The former Confederate states were divided into military districts. Their elections were overseen by federal troops and many of their citizens were still barred from the polls. The nation's

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\* Email: alys.beverton.13@ucl.ac.uk

political culture was highly polarized. Republicans waved the “bloody shirt” over issues ranging from African American voting rights to the tariff, while Democrats muttered bitterly about “negro rule” and “yankee domination.” For Americans living in the 1870s, national unity felt fragile indeed.<sup>2</sup>

The NAVMW was a bastion of cross-sectional unity in an otherwise deeply divided society. Just twelve years separated the end of the U.S.-Mexican War and the start of the Secession Crisis of 1860-1861. The NAVMW’s membership rolls were therefore filled with men who had served in either the Union or Confederate armies. Founded in the midst of Reconstruction, the organization was a unique forum for these former enemies to meet as comrades and friends. It was their shared experience of having fought in Mexico which enabled them to do so. From its establishment in 1874 to its decline in the 1890s, the NAVMW crafted a vision of the U.S.-Mexican War as a representation of a more harmonious time in American history. There had been no Northerners or Southerners among the volunteers of 1846, these veterans insisted, only patriotic Americans united in a common purpose. NAVMW members explained that, while differences may have arisen among them since those days, their sectional resentments soon melted away under recollections of the hot Mexican sun. These veterans believed, furthermore, that the memory of the U.S. - Mexican War could have a similar effect on all post-Civil War Americans. Throughout the last third of the nineteenth century, the society’s members promoted their version of the war against Mexico to the public. By doing so, they hoped to remind their countrymen of their nation’s historic triumphs and achievements. The NAVMW anticipated that this would reawaken a sense of common identity among Americans based on their shared national history, and so bridge the North-South divide with bonds of patriotic pride and devotion.

The memory of the U.S.-Mexican War, however, proved to be insufficient grounds for meaningful reconciliation among post-Civil War Americans outside of the NAVMW. The war’s history was inextricably linked to the evolution of antebellum sectional discord. Those who re-told it had to grapple with controversial issues, including the role of slavery in fomenting sectional tensions, and therefore ran the risk of inflaming debates regarding the Civil War’s causes which occupied much of late-nineteenth-century U.S. historical study.<sup>3</sup> The U.S. - Mexican War’s divisive potential was demonstrated in the postwar writings of Union and Confederate veterans. These veterans, inspired by the NAVMW’s activities to scrutinize the events surrounding the 1846 U.S. invasion, constructed opposing interpretations of that war which they incorporated into their broader readings of recent U.S. history. Ex-Union and Confederate soldiers used these competing narratives to place the blame for the Civil War firmly on their former enemy’s shoulders. Among Civil War veterans, therefore, the memory of the U.S. - Mexican War tended to aggravate rather than alleviate sectional animosities.

The Civil War veterans’ historical writings reveal the limitations of the U.S.-Mexican War’s memory to serve as a basis for sectional healing during this period. Nevertheless, the NAVMW did prompt Americans to confront this troubling episode of their nation’s past. The organization therefore highlights an important dimension of sectional reconciliation and its relationship to public memory in the post-Civil War United States. Scholars have explored how Americans living in the Civil War’s aftermath historicized their wartime experiences in order to make sense of the conflict’s political and social consequences. This negotiation over public memory, however, did not center on the Civil War alone. Postwar Americans also grappled with their country’s more distant history in order to contextualize and understand their recent civil strife. The NAVMW, moreover, compelled Americans to consider the Civil War’s continental causes and significance. Late-nineteenth-century Americans would have to address the issues raised by this particular moment of U.S. history in order to redefine their postwar role in the Western Hemisphere as a reunified, free republic.

Over recent decades scholars have examined the nature of Civil War memory and its power to influence the course of sectional reconciliation in the late-nineteenth-century. They have found that during this time, Americans remembered the conflict in profoundly different ways. These memories, moreover, carried with them different prescriptions for how U.S. society ought to navigate the war's social and political legacies. In one of the most influential works on the subject, David W. Blight argues that towards the end of the century Americans increasingly ascribed to a reconciliationist reading of the war.<sup>4</sup> This narrative jettisoned the conflict's ideological aspects and instead focused, among other things, on the manly valor of the men who fought in both the Union and Confederate armies. This reading of the past served as a cornerstone of the broader culture of conciliation taking shape in mainstream society during the last third of the nineteenth century.<sup>5</sup>

Other historians, however, have warned against the assumption that all postwar Americans came to accept this version of Civil War memory.<sup>6</sup> For Union and Confederate veterans, for instance, this non-ideological reading of the conflict threatened to obfuscate the righteousness of the causes they had fought for. As M. Keith Harris notes, Civil War veterans therefore "worked tirelessly to preserve sectional memories" of the Civil War.<sup>7</sup> Confederate veterans wrote histories which lauded the rebellion as an effort to preserve states' rights and the Southern way of life, while their Northern counterparts infused moral meaning into the Union cause by casting it as a heroic effort to end slavery and preserve the Union.<sup>8</sup> Civil War veterans therefore played an important role in keeping alternative, ideologically-driven memories of the Civil War alive in the late-nineteenth-century United States.

Historian Amy S. Greenberg notes that during this period, "the 1847 conflict faded from memory" in the United States.<sup>9</sup> Amidst the fanfare of Civil War commemorative activities, the U.S. - Mexican War's anniversaries passed unobserved by most Americans. John C. Pinheiro expresses the view of many scholars in his conclusion that "in the minds of most Americans after 1865, the Mexican War quickly became known as the conflict that helped cause the Civil War."<sup>10</sup> The war therefore receded, disgraced, from public memory. Given this scholarly consensus, few historians have thought to investigate the place of the U.S. Mexican War in the late-nineteenth-century American imagination.<sup>11</sup> One recent exception is Michael Scott Van Wagenen, whose study of the war's legacy on both sides of the Rio Grande from 1848 to the twentieth century is a much-needed analysis of the subject. Van Wagenen devotes a chapter of his book to the NAVMW's efforts from 1874 onwards to lobby the federal government to provide all survivors of the war in Mexico with a service pension. He pays particular attention to how congressional debates over the Mexican Pension Bill devolved into a partisan squabbling match as congressmen argued over the prospect of pensioning those U.S.-Mexican War veterans who had later served in the Confederate Army. Van Wagenen notes that Republicans and Democrats constructed different images of the veterans - either as "ailing impoverished patriots" or "wealthy southerners who deserted their former flag" - which both reflected and contributed to the highly sectionalized nature of U.S. political culture at the time.<sup>12</sup>

This article builds on Van Wagenen's work, but takes a different approach to the subject. Most importantly, it is less concerned with how Americans viewed the U.S.-Mexican War veterans, than with how these veterans remembered the war itself. From 1874 onwards, the NAVMW crafted a history of their war in Mexico which they hoped would assist the course of sectional reconciliation in the late-nineteenth-century United States. By examining how Civil War veterans, as self-conscious shapers of public memory, responded to the NAVMW's efforts by creating their own narratives of the U.S. - Mexican War, this article broadens our understanding of the negotiation over public memory in the post-Civil War era. Specifically, the NAVMW reveals how Americans engaged and struggled with their nation's

more distant history in order to contextualize their Civil War experiences and, perhaps, carve out a path for postwar reunion.

### **The NAVMW and U.S. - Mexican War Memory**

It would take the U.S. - Mexican War veterans thirty years to band together into a national organization.<sup>13</sup> Before this many were members of local societies, such as the San Francisco-based Association of Veterans of the Mexican War, founded by Alexander M. Kenaday in 1866. Kenaday, a volunteer in the U.S. Army in 1846, had settled in California after the war. There he tried his hand at prospecting and journalism before becoming involved in the 1860s in the promotion of veterans' rights on the West Coast. In 1871 Congress passed legislation which pensioned all veterans of the War of 1812, regardless of their financial means or state of health. Kenaday perceived the time was opportune to press the federal government to grant U.S. - Mexican War veterans assistance on the same terms.<sup>14</sup> In 1873 he issued an invitation to all the nation's U.S. - Mexican War societies to send a representative to a convention which would formally unite them into a single organization.<sup>15</sup> When the delegates met on 15 January 1874 in Washington D.C. they elected James W. Denver, a Democratic politician, as president of the newly-formed NAVMW. This position was largely ceremonial, however. It would be Kenaday, the organization's secretary, who would take the most active role in advancing its agenda over the coming years.

Their business matters completed, the delegates to the 1874 convention settled down to hear an address by their guest speaker, General James S. Negley, a fellow veteran and Republican congressman from Pennsylvania. His chosen topic was the history of the U.S.-Mexican War. In 1835, Negley recalled, Texans had revolted against the Mexicans. By the following year they had won their right to independence. However, the Mexican government, which, as Negley explained, ruled through a "system of merciless oppression, extortion and fraud," continued to claim Texas as its own.<sup>16</sup> The issue was "naturally a question of deep interest" to the liberty-loving people of the United States, and in 1845 they agreed to bring the Texans into their national fold and provide them with all the freedoms and securities which membership in the Union entailed. Mexican president Mariano Paredes was incensed. On 4 April 1846 he ordered General Mariano Arista and his troops to cross the Rio Grande and "attack and destroy the American army."<sup>17</sup> Invoking Americans' traditional veneration of the citizen-soldier, Negley recalled how 50,000 Americans had responded to President Polk's call for volunteers to take up arms to defend their country. With "unwavering courage," Negley enthused, this "gallant army" eventually triumphed over its Mexican foe.<sup>18</sup>

Negley described how the United States had then extracted from Mexico a "vast extent of country."<sup>19</sup> He noted that Mexico's "incompetency" to develop this land had been "known to all the world."<sup>20</sup> Yet since 1848, under the renovating influence of American institutions, "truth, Christianity, and universal liberty" had flourished in those regions.<sup>21</sup> The Mexican Cession had also brought the United States its long-coveted Pacific coast. This addition had enabled U.S. commerce to extend its "influence from sea to sea, from continent to continent, until the waters of the globe are being navigated by the peaceful harbinger of American enterprise."<sup>22</sup> According to Negley, the U.S. - Mexican War had transformed the United States into a world power. The contest should therefore be placed alongside the American Revolution in the pantheon of great wars which had built the American nation.

After Negley's speech, the delegates' final order of business was to approve a petition to be sent to Congress requesting a pension of \$8 a month for the survivors of the war in Mexico. The attached memorial drew heavily on Negley's narrative of the U.S. - Mexican War to support this claim. It noted that the conflict had brought the United States "marvelous benefits and extraordinary advantages."<sup>23</sup> The territory taken from Mexico, for instance, had

given the nation access to the “commerce of the world, while the precious ores concealed beneath its surface” had added to the wealth of the American people “in a degree unparalleled in the prosperity of any nation of ancient or modern civilization.”<sup>24</sup> The memorial insisted that U.S. - Mexican War veterans therefore deserved a service pension in “recognition of ... the valuable services they rendered the Government and people” of the United States.<sup>25</sup> After the delegates approved the memorial, the petition was dispatched to Congress and the first convention of the NAVMW disbanded.

After this initial meeting, the NAVMW grew steadily. In 1879 it launched its own monthly journal, *The Vedette*, edited by Secretary Kenaday. Historian Wallace E. Davies estimates that by the 1890s, the organization had over 5,000 members.<sup>26</sup> The exact number is difficult to determine, however, as Kenaday kept no official membership records. Indeed, the NAVMW lacked the organization of other veterans’ societies of the era, most notably the Grand Army of the Republic (GAR), and there was little co-ordination between the national body and ancillary local societies.<sup>27</sup> What is clear is that a disproportionate number of NAVMW members hailed from Southern, Western, and South-western states, particularly California, Texas, and Illinois.<sup>28</sup> But the NAVMW was a truly national entity. Thirty-three states sent at least two delegates to the 1876 reunion.<sup>29</sup> More importantly, the NAVMW was a self-consciously cross-sectional organization. As its members were quick to point out, the society was composed of men who not only lived on both sides of the Mason-Dixon line, but who in many cases had fought on opposing sides during the Civil War.<sup>30</sup>

The NAVMW’s cross-sectional nature was reflected in its members’ memory of the U.S. - Mexican War. Indeed, when they spoke of their conflict, these veterans read any elements of sectionalism out of its causes, conduct, and consequences. For example, in a letter read aloud to the 1874 reunion General Gideon Pillow, a former slaveholder and Confederate major-general, recounted a de-sectionalized memory of his time in Mexico. As young volunteers in 1846, he recalled, “we knew no North, no South.”<sup>31</sup> Rather, “we were patriots and brothers, each emulous of being foremost in the discharge of duty, and ready to sacrifice our lives for the good of the country.”<sup>32</sup> When they spoke of the war’s legacies, NAVMW members usually emphasized the financial and commercial benefits of the Mexican Cession. On the rare occasions when they addressed the U.S. - Mexican War’s impact on the antebellum slavery issue, members maintained that the war had ultimately done more to unify than divide the nation. “What did the Southern States gain by the acquisition of the vast territory to the west of the Rocky Mountains,” Kenaday asked readers of *The Vedette* in December 1879, “that did not add *vastly more* to the wealth and power of the North?”<sup>33</sup> Kenaday noted that only free states had been carved out of the newly acquired lands. “Had it not been for the enlargement of the field of human liberty under our form of government, directly resulting from the Mexican war,” therefore, “the ‘slave power’ ... would have been stronger politically to-day than it ever was before the war with Mexico.”<sup>34</sup> Kenaday reasoned that the land taken from Mexico had increased the power of the North, and so had ensured Union victory over the South in 1865.

According to NAVMW members, their prior service in Mexico proved their patriotic credentials, including those among them who had later participated in the Southern rebellion. As Kenaday explained, the ordinary Southerner had joined the Confederate Army out of love for his state, not hatred of the Union. Indeed, he mused, the Confederate soldiers’ “motives were as holy, perhaps, in the abstract, as those which animated” Union troops.<sup>35</sup> Kenaday conceded that these men had been mistaken in their belief that Northern tyranny threatened to destroy Southern society. Nevertheless, he maintained, patriotism – albeit misguided and misplaced – had been the actuating force in every Confederate soldiers’ heart. NAVMW members acknowledged that years of sectional strife had obscured the patriotic ties which had once held them together. They believed, however, that when they collectively

remembered their triumphs and hardships in Mexico, their sense of devotion to their country, and affection for one another, was rekindled. At the 1876 reunion, General George McCook rejoiced to see that the enduring “spirit of patriotism,” which had first compelled the assembled veterans to take up arms in 1846, had once again brought them together “from all sections of the Union” to renew “their old ties of fraternal regard and esteem.”<sup>36</sup> By articulating a notion of patriotism which placed a premium on commitment and sacrifice, rather than specific political values, NAVMW members were able to forgive their ex-Confederate members for their past transgressions.<sup>37</sup> When they espoused this particular memory of their time in Mexico, moreover, these veterans felt themselves become what they imagined they had once been on the battlefields of Mexico – patriots united by mutual respect and love for the Union.

Armed with these memories, NAVMW members believed that they could set the standard for post-Civil War sectional reconciliation. “In future years,” President Denver predicted in 1876, “all sections of our common country will meet with the same general good feeling, and fraternize in the same harmonious manner that has hitherto characterized the conventions of the veterans of Mexico.”<sup>38</sup> These veterans believed, furthermore, that as the living symbols of a triumphant episode of U.S. history, they were uniquely positioned to promote both the memory and spirit of that time to other Americans. As General George Cadwalader declared in his address to the 1874 convention, U.S. - Mexican War veterans could “better settle those differences” between North and South “in the true interest of our great republic than any set of mere politicians.”<sup>39</sup> By promoting a view of the U.S.-Mexican War as a testament to the strength of the American nation when its people were unified, NAVMW members hoped they could encourage their countrymen to put aside their sectional differences. One way to do this, they believed, was to push their demand for a service pension on the national political stage.

### **The Mexican Pension Bill in Congress**

At every annual reunion the NAVMW re-submitted its petition to Congress to pass what became known as the Mexican Pension Bill. The organization would have to wait thirteen years, however, for the proposed legislation to become law. During that time, the bill met with strong opposition, particularly from Republican congressmen. In the post-Civil War era, eager to win the support of the Union veteran voting bloc, Republicans styled themselves as the champions of veterans’ interests.<sup>40</sup> But the Mexican Pension Bill struck many of them as a step too far. For one thing, the bill would impose no age, health or financial requirements on its recipients, and would therefore signal an unprecedented expansion of the federal veteran pension system.<sup>41</sup> Another aspect of the bill troubled Republicans even more. As Kansas senator John J. Ingalls warned the Senate in June 1880, “if this bill passes you will place upon the pension-roll a very large number of men who served under the rebel flag in the confederate army.”<sup>42</sup> At the time, ex-Confederate soldiers were denied federal assistance under the terms of a law passed by Congress in February 1862. The Mexican Pension Bill would violate this act and, as Republicans argued, effectively grant these former rebels a reward for their treason.

The bill found most of its support from among Democratic congressmen. They repeated the NAVMW’s argument that the U.S.-Mexican War had brought great riches to the nation, which ought to be shared with those who had fought to acquire them.<sup>43</sup> Democrats also condemned their Republican counterparts’ moves to block and filibuster the bill throughout the late 1870s and early 1880s. In May 1880, for instance, Texas senator Samuel B. Maxey reminded his colleagues that the U.S.-Mexican War veterans had fought for the benefit of the entire nation, and that to deny all of them their just rewards because some of

their number had served in the Confederate Army smacked of vengeful sectionalism. “After all we have had to suffer,” he asked, referring to the South’s experience under Reconstruction, “are these gallant old heroes to be still further punished? Is the bloody shirt to wave forever?”<sup>44</sup> In the run-up to the 1880 presidential election, the Democratic Party turned the Mexican Pension Bill into a campaign issue. Since the end of the Civil War, the party’s 1880 campaign textbook declared, “the Democrats in Congress stood as a phalanx in favor of pensioning” Union veterans.<sup>45</sup> By contrast, Republicans opposed the Mexican Pension Bill because “they hoped to make political capital out of the fact that the bill might pension a few who were not on the Union side” during the rebellion.<sup>46</sup> According to Democrats, the debate over the bill clearly demonstrated their party’s desire to promote goodwill between North and South, while it exposed the Republicans’ determination to keep old animosities alive.

The NAMWV apparently agreed. The society had begun as a non-partisan organization and refrained from formally endorsing candidates in presidential elections. In July 1880, however, *The Vedette* announced that, due to the “insults heaped upon [U.S.-Mexican War veterans] by the Republican party” during congressional debates, “the time has now come . . . for a temporary suspension of this rule.”<sup>47</sup> The newspaper then formally endorsed Democratic nominee and fellow U.S.-Mexican War veteran Winfield Scott Hancock for the presidency. The organization had hoped to stay above the partisan fray. It had also anticipated that the Mexican Pension Bill, by covering all U.S. - Mexican War veterans regardless of their Civil War service, could constitute an important symbolic gesture of reconciliation by the federal government. After six years of campaigning, however, the NAMWV found that its bill had run aground on the shores of sectional animus which still colored much of late-nineteenth-century U.S. politics.<sup>48</sup> Indeed, each political party had used the proposed legislation as a means to question the other’s patriotic credentials. Worse yet, by aligning itself with the Democratic Party in 1880, the NAVMW had become a participant in the country’s polarized political culture. So far, at least in the national political arena, the NAVMW had heightened rather than eased sectional tensions.

### **Union Veterans and the History of the U.S.-Mexican War**

By the early 1880s the Mexican Pension Bill’s prospects looked dim. In 1885, however, the political winds began to turn in its favor. In January of that year, GAR Commander-in-Chief John S. Kountz issued an order to his organization’s posts nationwide which directed them to publicly support the NAVMW’s demands. The *National Tribune*, the GAR’s official organ, responded to the order with enthusiasm. Editor George F. Lemmon believed that the Mexican Pension Bill was based on the simple principle of justice. “The Government had the benefit of the veteran’s best days,” he editorialized in January 1885, “therefore, the Government should take care of him when he can no longer take care of himself.”<sup>49</sup> The GAR was not moved by principle alone, however. As the *National Tribune* opined in November 1884, “the bane of pension movements in the past has been the lack of unity of effort among soldiers.”<sup>50</sup> The newspaper advised its readers “who are anxious for the passage of other measures” to “remember that the passage of the Mexican Pension Bill . . . paves the way for the same” for Union veterans.<sup>51</sup> The GAR leadership perceived that the NAVMW’s bill could ease the legislative way for the expansion of federal benefits for ex-Union soldiers in the future.

Kountz ordered his comrades to give the bill their “immediate and active attention.”<sup>52</sup> Local GAR posts began to circulate petitions in their communities, which they then gave to their state legislatures to press them to pass resolutions in favor of the Mexican Pension Bill. The *National Tribune* followed the legislation’s progress through Congress and reprinted long extracts of speeches by politicians who spoke in its favor. These efforts by the GAR proved decisive in the bill’s eventual success.<sup>53</sup> Established in 1866, the GAR was the largest

society of Union veterans in the country and by the 1880s it wielded a significant amount of political clout.<sup>54</sup> As the GAR's activities intensified, congressional Republicans, unwilling to jeopardize their good relationship with Union veterans, relented. In January 1887 both Houses approved the Mexican Pension Bill and President Cleveland signed it into law. Henceforth, all U.S. - Mexican War veterans over the age of sixty-two would be eligible to receive a pension of \$8 a month from the government.

The alliance between the NAVMW and the GAR, however, soon fell apart. On 11 February, having just put his signature on the Mexican Pension Bill, Cleveland vetoed a different piece of veterans' pension legislation. The Dependent Pension Bill would have provided all disabled Union veterans with government assistance, regardless of whether or not their disability was the result of service in the U.S. Army.<sup>55</sup> The *National Tribune* was outraged. Cleveland had rejected this legislation, the newspaper fumed, and yet had approved the Mexican Pension Bill even though the two were "based on precisely the same principle."<sup>56</sup> Over the following years, still seething from this injustice, the *National Tribune* made a volte-face in its attitude toward the U.S.-Mexican War veterans. In particular, it launched an effort to undermine the perceived quality of these veterans' military service. "The average volunteer in the Mexican War," the *National Tribune* derided in January 1890 in a typical article, "did not begin to perform the amount of service rendered even by the average three-months' man during the rebellion."<sup>57</sup> Measuring the wartime achievements of the U.S. - Mexican War veterans with those of their Union counterparts, the newspaper concluded that "there is simply no comparison."<sup>58</sup> It was therefore an injustice that the former should receive a government pension on more generous terms than the latter.

The GAR went beyond derogating the U.S. - Mexican War veterans' quality and length of service. Its members also questioned the legitimacy of the U.S. - Mexican War itself. This was perhaps best illustrated in the postwar writings of GAR founder John A. Logan.<sup>59</sup> Prior to his service in the Union Army, Logan had served in Mexico as a second-lieutenant in the First Illinois Infantry. In the 1870s and 80s he became active in national politics and served his state in both the House and the Senate.<sup>60</sup> Always an outspoken defender of veterans' rights, Logan had been one of the first politicians to lend his support to the Mexican Pension Bill. Indeed, he had presented the NAVMW's initial petition to the Senate in 1874.<sup>61</sup> By the late 1880s, however, it was evident that Logan's support for the Mexican Pension Bill was based on his conviction in the abstract principle that republics ought to honor their citizen-soldiers, rather than approval of the U.S. - Mexican War itself.

Logan's *The Volunteer Soldier of America* was published posthumously in 1887. The book was intended to demonstrate the historic role of volunteer soldiery in the United States. It also sought to place the Civil War in a "world historical context dating back to the beginning of time."<sup>62</sup> According to Logan, from this broad perspective it was clear that the Civil War was a direct consequence of the U.S. invasion of Mexico in 1846. That invasion, he explained, had been instigated by American slaveholders, who had engineered a "pretext for war with our feeble neighbor."<sup>63</sup> Their purpose had been to add to the United States, "by conquest, territory to increase the political power of the Southern states."<sup>64</sup> The war had therefore been waged in the "interest of an unrepublican aristocracy resting upon the equally unrepublican and thrice-accursed system of human slavery."<sup>65</sup> Logan also explained that, far from uniting the nation in patriotic fervor as NAVMW members claimed, the U.S.-Mexican War had split public opinion at the time. Northerners, aware of the designs of its architects, had objected to the war. As such "volunteering from the Northern states was ... slow."<sup>66</sup> Logan ended his account by concluding that the consequences of such an immoral war "needed no gift of prophecy to clearly foresee."<sup>67</sup> Throughout the 1850s, Americans had divided over what to do with this tainted land stolen from Mexico. Their debates had reached a fever pitch with the outbreak of civil war in 1861.



Logan's account of the U.S. - Mexican War differed from the NAVMW's interpretation in almost every salient aspect. Indeed, his views reveal how even U.S.-Mexican War veterans themselves could differ in how they viewed the conflict.<sup>68</sup> Logan believed that, far from being a noble contest free of sectional intrigue, the war with Mexico had been a Southern scheme intended to enlarge the immoral system of slavery. By perpetrating an unjust attack on a neighboring republic, moreover, these Southerners had contradicted the United States' founding principles and so had jeopardized both its international reputation and domestic harmony. This reading of the U.S. - Mexican War therefore supported an interpretation of Civil War history, often espoused by Union veterans, which blamed slavery and Southern disloyalty for having precipitated the conflict. According to Logan and other Union veteran writers, the war in Mexico had been an early instance of Southern treachery and disregard for the values and integrity of the Union which would find their full expression in the Confederacy's bid for independence twelve years later.

M. Keith Harris notes that during the post-Civil War era, Union veterans frequently promoted sectionalized readings of Civil War history.<sup>69</sup> Faced with mainstream society's apparent amnesia regarding the Civil War's true causes and significance, these veterans continued to portray the war as a battle between the villainous slavocracy and heroic Union troops who fought to preserve the U.S. republic. Many Union veterans treated the history of the U.S.-Mexican War in a similar way. Logan, himself a veteran of Mexico, refused to embrace the NAVMW's whitewashed reading of the conflict for the sake of sectional conciliation. As he explained, while aware that his account of the U.S. - Mexican War might "fan the flame of sectional crimination," he was convinced that his version of events was an "indisputable fact."<sup>70</sup> To soften the edges of his account would not only make it historically inaccurate, but would also contradict Union veterans' reading of the Civil War and undermine the significance of their victory over the South. The NAVMW's de-sectionalized narrative of the U.S. - Mexican War, therefore, held little appeal for Union veteran writers in the late nineteenth century.

### **Confederate Veterans and the History of the U.S.-Mexican War**

Ex-soldiers south of the Mason-Dixon line were not silent as their Union counterparts wrote histories of the Civil War. Indeed, Confederate veterans had begun to historicize the conflict soon after Appomattox. In 1868, for instance, former Confederate major general Dabney H. Maury founded the Southern Historical Society. In January 1876, the Society began publishing the *Southern Historical Society Papers*, a journal which documented Southern military and civilian wartime experiences in a "conscious effort to prevent the victors from writing the history" of the Civil War.<sup>71</sup> In the late 1880s, prompted by the national political debate surrounding the Mexican Pension Bill, the *Papers* published a series of histories of the U.S. - Mexican War. These articles crafted a narrative of the conflict which buttressed a distinctly Southern understanding of the Civil War's meaning and the terms upon which postwar reconciliation through public memory ought to take place.

In 1888, the *Papers* published an address by Lieutenant-General D. H. Hill delivered on Memorial Day in 1887 before the Society of the Army and Navy of the Confederate States of Maryland. In a portion of his speech entitled "Indebtedness of the Nation to the Old South," Hill gave an overview of the U.S. - Mexican War.<sup>72</sup> Like members of the NAVMW, Hill stressed that the Mexican Cession had "extended the power of the government from the Atlantic to the Pacific, and gained the richest farming and grazing grounds on the globe" for the United States.<sup>73</sup> Unlike the NAVMW, however, Hill believed that the war had primarily been a Southern endeavor. The annexation of Texas and the extraction of territory from Mexico, he noted, "were notoriously Southern measures, advocated by Southern statesmen,

and carried out by Southern Presidents.”<sup>74</sup> This had been, furthermore, a recurrent pattern throughout American history. As Hill proudly declared, from Jefferson to Taylor to Polk, “every inch of territory that has been added to the area belonging to the original thirteen States had been added under Southern Presidents.”<sup>75</sup> Indeed, Hill told his audience, ever since the nation’s founding, Southerners had been the driving force behind all serious efforts to improve and enlarge the U.S. republic.

Hill also insisted that, contrary to Logan’s accusations, antebellum Southern expansionism had sprung from a generous desire for national aggrandizement, not the advancement of slaveholders’ interests alone. “The statesmen of the Old South,” Hill asserted, “were all broad-gauge men, with nothing narrow and contracted about them.”<sup>76</sup> Indeed, this reading of U.S. history turned the tables on Union veterans’ narratives of Southern disloyalty. In January 1890, for instance, the *Papers* reprinted an address by Virginian senator John W. Daniel delivered in commemoration of the life of former Confederate president Jefferson Davis. As he reviewed U.S. history, Daniel claimed to detect a countervailing force which had persistently acted against Southern efforts to strengthen the United States. He noted that, as Jefferson had been annexing Louisiana, “Massachusetts legislators were declaring against it.”<sup>77</sup> While Jefferson Davis carried the “Stars and Stripes in glory over the heights of Monterey,” future Union president Abraham Lincoln “was denouncing the war as unconstitutional.”<sup>78</sup> Daniel surmised that throughout history, Northern statesmen, jealous of the South and anxious to restrict its growth, had repeatedly opposed all efforts to extend the country’s borders, even at the expense of the national good.

Looking back over history, Daniel explained that Southerners’ love for the Union had usually manifested in plans to strengthen and enlarge the republic. He concluded that this form of patriotism, infused with the Jacksonian expansionist spirit, had repeatedly clashed with the small-minded sectionalism of the North. As he described it, the antebellum North and South were “two incompatible and hostile civilizations” which “were in ceaseless conflict.”<sup>79</sup> Whenever territorial additions to the nation threatened to tip the “equilibrium” in the South’s favor, Northerners had retaliated.<sup>80</sup> “Northern hostility to the Louisiana, the Texas, and Mexican annexations,” for instance, were due to that section’s jealousy of the South.<sup>81</sup> According to Daniel, tensions had escalated until 1860 when Northerners had elected anti-slavery Republican Abraham Lincoln to the presidency. The election amounted to a declaration by the envious North of its intention to launch an assault on the very fabric of Southern society. The South had therefore been pushed towards secession in order to protect itself from Northern aggression. According to Daniel, a proper reading of history at once proved the South’s unerring loyalty to the Union, and justified its bid for independence in 1860.

Both Union and Confederate veterans co-opted the history of the U.S. - Mexican War to prove their respective section’s historic patriotism. Ex-Confederate soldiers’ historical analyses emphasized the South’s efforts to improve and expand the United States. Their Union counterparts stressed Northern concern with national unity and integrity. To an extent, these competing narratives echoed the political fault lines which had emerged during the U.S. - Mexican War itself. Then, too, Democratic expansionists had argued over the wisdom of new territorial additions with Whigs, many of whom were concerned about the preservation of domestic homogeneity and investment in internal improvements.<sup>82</sup> Moreover, Union and Confederate veterans used their different notions of patriotism to vindicate their respective Civil War causes. Ex-Union soldiers insisted that history proved the threat which the slavocracy had posed national unity, while Confederate veterans blamed the North’s spiteful moves to restrict the South’s growth for pushing that region towards secession. Given their competing agendas, neither Union nor Confederate veterans were moved to embrace the NAVMW’s de-sectionalized reading of the U.S. - Mexican War. As M. Keith Harris notes,

while they may have judged sectional reconciliation to be a laudable goal, both Union and Confederate veterans were determined that, at least in the realm of public memory, reconciliation must only occur “on their own terms.”<sup>83</sup> The U.S. - Mexican War was another field upon which these Civil War veterans fought their battle over their nation’s history during the final decades of the nineteenth century.

### **The Legacy of the U.S.-Mexican War in Non-Veteran Society**

Congress’ approval of the Mexican Pension Bill in 1887 marked the start of a steady decline for the NAVMW. Its main goal accomplished, the organization lost its unifying focus. Lack of interest and the passage of time gradually thinned its aging ranks. In 1893 *The Vedette* permanently ceased publication. With no agenda to push, the NAVMW retreated from the national political stage and continued to hold its annual reunions largely unnoticed by the rest of American society. In 1897 Kenaday, the society’s most tireless promoter, died. With his passing, the organization became defunct and ceased to operate as a national body.<sup>84</sup> The end of the NAVMW also marked the demise of its members’ particular memory of the U.S. - Mexican War. As has been shown, the organization’s de-sectionalized reading of the conflict held little appeal for Civil War veterans. Historians have also noted that most non-veteran Americans in the late nineteenth century preferred to focus their commemorative attentions on the Civil War’s legacy.<sup>85</sup>

Certainly, the U.S. - Mexican War’s divisive potential may have made many post-Civil War Americans hesitant to celebrate its memory. Nevertheless, given that scholars have noted a burgeoning culture of conciliation in mainstream U.S. society during the late nineteenth century, it is worth asking why the NAVMW’s version of the war failed to penetrate the collective American imagination during this time. After all, the NAVMW celebrated the U.S. - Mexican War as a glorious national triumph which had obliterated sectional identities and demonstrated the strength of a unified U.S. republic. It is therefore curious that this particular version of this period of U.S. history was not embraced by a society apparently eager for symbols, values, and myths upon which to forge a new sense of national identity.<sup>86</sup>

M. Keith Harris notes that through their historical writings, Civil War veterans fought “against a changing national commemorative ethos that increasingly redirected commemorations away from a divisive past and towards progress, expansion, and a modern unified nation.”<sup>87</sup> It appeared to many at the time that the nation had arisen phoenix-like from the ashes of the Civil War and begun a new stage of development through the extension of commercial and financial networks overseas. Old sectional frictions were apparently subsumed by this national ethos of progress and development. The transformation of U.S. - Mexican relations during this period demonstrated Americans’ new internationalist outlook. In 1876 Porfirio Diaz established himself as dictator of Mexico. While hardly heralding a triumph for democracy, his regime did mark the beginning of a period of political stability and economic growth in Mexico. Americans were particularly receptive to Diaz’s overtures to foreign industrialists and entrepreneurs to develop his country’s resources, and U.S. commercial activity and financial investment in Mexico grew rapidly during the last three decades of the nineteenth century.<sup>88</sup>

NAVMW members embraced this new national mantra of progress, unlike many of their Civil War counterparts who looked askance at non-veteran society’s apparent desire to forget the past and focus on the future.<sup>89</sup> Indeed, the NAVMW believed that this new wave of U.S. commercial and industrial activity in Mexico was the consummation of the mission they had begun in 1846. In 1885 *The Vedette* published a history of the U.S. - Mexican War by Marvin Scudder Jr., former colonel in the Fourth Illinois Volunteers. The 1846 American

invasion, Scudder contended, had been a boon for Mexico's long-term economic development. He noted that while in Mexico, U.S. troops had acted as ambassadors of civilization. They had treated the locals with respect, stimulated their economies, and stabilized their lawless communities. Through their interactions with these soldiers, Mexicans had "realized their degraded condition and were inspired with a desire for something better."<sup>90</sup> "Right then and there," Scudder declared, "were sown the seeds of progress that have since sprung up, and are budding forth fruit, that will produce a wonderful yield in the harvest of the future."<sup>91</sup> According to Scudder, Mexicans had the U.S. Army of 1846 to thank for their country's ongoing transformation into a modern, civilized nation.<sup>92</sup>

Scudder portrayed the U.S. - Mexican War as a triumphant stage in the United States' prophetic mission to spread freedom and progress throughout the Western Hemisphere.<sup>93</sup> By connecting the war's legacy to Mexico's present-day economic development, moreover, Scudder cast the recent growth of U.S. commercial and industrial activity south of the border as part of that same self-proclaimed national duty. He hoped that by doing so, he would encourage his countrymen to forget their sectional differences and work "harmoniously to build up and strengthen our common country" in order to continue the "grand work" begun in 1846.<sup>94</sup> In short, Scudder crafted a narrative of the U.S. - Mexican War intended to remind Americans of their nation's hemispheric mission and encourage them to renew their efforts to complete it. This national destiny, he believed, pre-dated antebellum sectional discord and could therefore erase its lingering influences in the post-Civil War United States.

U.S. industrialists active in Mexico during this period were aware that many Mexicans did not share this view of their war with the United States. Ulysses S. Grant, for example, became involved in a number of different projects to develop Mexico's transportation system after he left the White House in 1876. In 1880, he helped to form the Mexican Southern Railroad Company and over the following years was frequently in Mexico City seeking concessions from the Mexican government. Grant, the hero of the Union Army, was also a veteran of the U.S. - Mexican War. However, he never ascribed to the NAVMW's version of the conflict. In his 1886 memoirs, Grant famously condemned the 1846 U.S. attack on Mexico as the "most unjust ever waged by a stronger against a weaker nation."<sup>95</sup> Like John A. Logan, Grant traced the roots of the Civil War to the political fallout of the Mexican Cession. "Nations," he concluded, "like individuals, are punished for their transgressions. We got our punishment in the most sanguinary and expansive war of modern times."<sup>96</sup> Travelling throughout Mexico in the 1880s, Grant found that many Mexicans held a similar view of the U.S.-Mexican War. As he intimated to a *New York Times* journalist in May 1880, many Mexicans were "very much opposed to any connection with the United States, on the ground that they are afraid of us – afraid that we will want to take their territory."<sup>97</sup> Grant sympathized with their concern that the growing yankee presence in their country could pose a threat to Mexico's national sovereignty.

Nevertheless, Grant worried that this anti-Americanism might hinder his countrymen's efforts to take advantage of Mexico's burgeoning economy. He therefore took it upon himself to act as a spokesman for his country while travelling south of the Rio Grande. As he informed the *New York Times*, he assured Mexicans that they "need have no alarm whatever about our wanting any of their territory."<sup>98</sup> "Their apprehensions were, at one time, very well grounded," Grant admitted, "because the time was when we wanted Southern territory; that we had the institution of slavery in our country" which "always sought more territory."<sup>99</sup> He insisted, however, that since the Civil War, "the institution of slavery was at an end."<sup>100</sup> Now all that Americans desired "was to see [the Mexicans] like ourselves – a stable, prosperous Government."<sup>101</sup> Grant insisted that since 1865, the United States had been reborn. As part of this regeneration it had redefined its role in the Western Hemisphere and

re-committed itself to its self-proclaimed duty to spread progress and prosperity throughout the region.

Grant did indeed speak for many postwar Americans when he declared that the United States had lost its appetite for territorial expansion. As several scholars have shown, the post-Civil War era was characterized by an ethos of liberal internationalism among U.S. industrialists, financiers, and entrepreneurs.<sup>102</sup> They searched Mexico for markets, trade connections, and investment opportunities to exploit, rather than land to possess. In this climate, the legacy of the U.S. - Mexican War – an aggressive land-grab based on questionable pretexts – was an awkward reminder of a now out dated mode of national aggrandizement. Certainly, it was ill-suited to serve as a basis for popular celebration, as the NAVMW had wished. Unlike veterans of the U.S. - Mexican War, most Americans had no personal attachment to the conflict and therefore felt no particular compulsion to endeavor to refashion and resuscitate its memory. Indeed, in this new era of international cooperation and collaboration, many of them found it easier to forget the conflict altogether.

## **Conclusion**

In terms of its principal goal, the NAVMW was a success. Thirteen years after its formation, the organization had secured for its members a service pension of \$8 a month. The NAVMW's foray into the national political arena, moreover, had brought U.S. - Mexican War veterans a degree of public recognition for their services to the country. Yet NAVMW members believed that their organization might also have a higher, more profound purpose. Living in an era of deep domestic division, these veterans were conscious of their significance as living symbols of a time when Americans had supposedly been united against a common foe. As representatives of this moment of U.S. history, NAVMW members believed they were uniquely placed to aid the process of sectional reconciliation between North and South by promoting its memory to the public. Popular remembrance of their nation's past triumphs in Mexico, they believed, would reawaken a sense of common history among post-Civil War Americans. By casting the U.S. - Mexican War as part of the United States' preordained hemispheric mission, moreover, NAVMW members hoped to remind their countrymen that they were the inheritors of a grand legacy and were therefore duty-bound to set aside their differences in pursuance of their nation's higher purpose. In short, the NAVMW believed that Mexico had been, and could be once again, the locus of sectional union where Americans renewed their patriotic ties by working collectively to advance their nation's interests overseas.

The NAVMW members' efforts to encourage popular celebration of the U.S. - Mexican War's memory were, however, doomed to failure. The largest obstacle they faced was the fact that the history of their war was inextricably tied to that of the evolution of sectional discord in the antebellum era. Try as they might, NAVMW members could not persuade Americans to forget this aspect of the U.S. - Mexican War's legacy, an aspect all the more apparent after 1865 when the roots of the Civil War could be easily traced to the political fallout of the Mexican Cession. The sectional tensions embedded in the U.S. - Mexican War's history were brought to bear in the writings of Civil War veterans during this period. Partly prompted to scrutinize the events of 1846 by the formation of the NAVMW, Union and Confederate veterans crafted opposing interpretations of the conflict which buttressed their respective sectionalized views of the causes and significance of the Civil War. According to Confederate veterans, the war in Mexico had exposed the North's jealousy and aggression towards the South. Ex-Union soldiers, by contrast, viewed it as an early manifestation of the same Southern disloyalty which would eventually lead to secession and

rebellion. In this sense, the U.S. - Mexican War's memory was a force for division rather than unity between North and South in the late nineteenth century.

Of course, Union and Confederate veterans did not speak for all post-Civil War Americans. Indeed, most non-veterans during this time paid little attention to the U.S.-Mexican War's legacy at all. Historian Amy S. Greenberg argues that by the late nineteenth century, the "Republican" view of the U.S. - Mexican War, which condemned it as an unjust attack on a weak nation, had become mainstream and, as such, most Americans felt uncomfortable recalling its memory.<sup>103</sup> As Grant's experiences in Mexico in the 1880s suggest, late-nineteenth-century Americans were aware that the war reflected badly on their image overseas. Americans were particularly conscious of this in light of their post-Civil War efforts to expand their country's commercial connections and influence abroad. However, the historical writings of both the NAVMW and Confederate veterans during this period show that there was more than one way for Americans to remember their war with Mexico. And perhaps this was the problem. The history of the U.S. - Mexican War was inherently connected to the issues of antebellum slavery and sectional separation, topics which were highly divisive in the post-Civil War United States and which those concerned with conciliation and domestic harmony would therefore rather avoid. Despite the NAVMW's efforts to promote a unifying vision of the U.S. - Mexican War, therefore, most Americans simply found it easier to try to forget the conflict entirely.

Nevertheless, to the extent that the NAVMW did compel Americans to grapple with this contentious moment in their nation's history, the organization reveals an important, often over-looked dimension of post-Civil War reunion. Scholars have shown how Americans debated the causes and meaning of the Civil War as a necessary part of postwar reunification. But understanding the Civil War also required Americans to engage with and attempt to make sense of their country's more distant past. Civil War veterans, for instance, incorporated opposing readings of the U.S. - Mexican War into their competing narratives of recent U.S. history in order to contextualize and support their interpretations of Civil War memory. The NAVMW, furthermore, prompted postwar Americans to specifically consider the continental causes and dimensions of the Civil War. Americans would need to address these issues as they tried not only to reunify their nation, but also define what implications this reunification would have for the United States' future role as a post-emancipation republic in the Western Hemisphere.

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### **Notes**

<sup>1</sup> Pike, "Poem," in *Proceedings 1874*, 17.

<sup>2</sup> On how fears of a second civil war haunted postwar Americans, see Summers, *A Dangerous Stir*.

<sup>3</sup> For one of the earliest historical accounts of the Civil War, see Pollard, *The Lost Cause*. Pollard's defence of the Confederate cause set the tone for much of the historical work on the subject that followed.

<sup>4</sup> Blight, *Race and Reunion*, 383. While he posits that many late-nineteenth-century white Americans ascribed to the reconciliationist reading of the Civil War, Blight is attuned to the contested nature of

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Civil War memory. See, for example, Blight, "Forgetting Why We Remember," *New York Times*, 29 May 2011. [http://www.nytimes.com/2011/05/30/opinion/30blight.html?\\_r=2](http://www.nytimes.com/2011/05/30/opinion/30blight.html?_r=2).

<sup>5</sup> See Buck, *The Road to Reunion*; Silber, *The Romance of Reunion*; Blum, *Reforging the White Republic*; and Smith, *The Golden Age of Battlefield Preservation*.

<sup>6</sup> Several strands of Civil War memory existed during this period. For studies on the mythology of the Lost Cause, see Foster, *Ghosts of the Confederacy*; and Gallagher and Nolan, eds., *The Myth of the Lost Cause*. For emancipationist readings of the war, see Clark, *Defining Moments*.

<sup>7</sup> Harris, *Across the Bloody Chasm*, 1.

<sup>8</sup> For Confederate veterans' memories of the Civil War, see Wilson, *Baptized in Blood*; and Marshall, *Creating a Confederate Kentucky*. Historians have debated whether Union soldiers saw their wartime efforts principally as an anti-slavery crusade (see Manning, *What This Cruel War Was Over*), or as an effort to preserve the Union (see Gallagher, *The Union War*). Other important works on veterans' Civil War memories include Neff, *Honoring the Civil War Dead*; and Janney, *Remembering the Civil War*.

<sup>9</sup> Greenberg, *A Wicked War*, 274. Mexicans suffered no such amnesia regarding their war with the United States. See Santoni, "'Where Did the Other Heroes Go?,' 807-44; and Rodriguez, *The Literatures of the U.S.-Mexican War*.

<sup>10</sup> Pinheiro, *Manifest Ambition*, 165. Winders makes a similar argument in *Mr. Polk's Army*, 204.

<sup>11</sup> There are, of course, some excellent studies on the war's political significance and consequences. See Bauer, *The Mexican War 1846-48*; and Frazier, ed., *The United States and Mexico at War*. For the war's impact on 1840s popular culture, see Johannsen, *To the Halls of the Montezumas*; and Streeby, *American Sensations*.

<sup>12</sup> Van Wagenen, *Remembering the Forgotten War*, 167. One of the only other studies on the NAVMW is Davies, "The Mexican War Veterans as an Organized Group," 221-238. Although somewhat outdated, Davies' article is a useful overview of the organisation's structure and lifespan.

<sup>13</sup> U.S. officers of the U.S. - Mexican War formed a society at the war's end named the Aztec Club of 1847. Closely modelled on the Society of Cincinnati, the organisation's elite membership included Winfield Scott, Zachary Taylor, and Ulysses S. Grant. It still exists today as a hereditary society. See Aztec Club of 1847. 2010. <http://www.aztecclub.com>.

<sup>14</sup> For the role of veterans in the expansion of the nineteenth-century U.S. pension system, see McConnell, *Glorious Contentment*, 125-165; Bensel, *Sectionalism and American Political Development, 1880-1980*; and Logue, "Union Veterans and their Government," 411-34. For analyses of the growth of the veterans' pension system as a social, rather than political phenomenon, see Skocpol, *Protecting Soldiers and Mothers*; and McClintock, "Civil War Pensions and the Reconstruction of Union Families," 456-80.

<sup>15</sup> Kenaday, *Proceedings 1874*, 5.

<sup>16</sup> Negley, "Oration of General J. S. Negley," in *Proceedings 1874*, 14.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 13-14.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>23</sup> Kenaday, *Proceedings 1874*, 21.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>26</sup> Davies, "The Mexican War Veterans," 223.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.* The NAVMW was persistently plagued with financial issues. Kenaday often used *The Vedette* to implore readers to keep up to date with their subscription and membership fees. See, for example, "Important Notice to Delinquent Subscribers." *The Vedette*, April 1880, 16.

<http://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=umn.31951p01056965j;q1=national%20association%20of%20veterans%20of%20the%20mexican%20war>.

<sup>28</sup> Davies, "The Mexican War Veterans," 223.

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<sup>29</sup> States which were not represented were Nebraska, Maine, Vermont, Delaware, and Florida. Both Washington DC and Washington Territory sent delegates to the 1876 reunion. “*Centennial Reunion*,” 4.

<sup>30</sup> Verifying this claim is difficult since, as far as this author can find, Kenaday kept no consistent membership records which still exist today. In *Proceedings of the 1877 Reunion*, Kenaday published the numbers of enrolled members listed according to their 1846 and 1847 state regiments. According to these records, 1,274 members had enlisted in states which would later go on to form the Confederacy. 2,044 hailed from states which would remain in the Union during the Civil War, including Kentucky and Missouri. The numbers for Virginia (40 members in 1877) have been left out of these calculations, due to that state’s split into Virginia and West Virginia in 1861. Of course, these figures do not tell us how many of these men saw military service during the Civil War. *Proceedings 1877*, 12-4.

<sup>31</sup> General Gideon Pillow to the NAVMW, *Proceedings 1874*, 10.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>33</sup> “The Abolition of Negro Slavery One of the Results of the Mexican War,” *The Vedette*, December 1879, 8.

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

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

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>37</sup> Silber identifies a similar notion of patriotism emerging in the North during the 1890s. Silber, *Romance of Reunion*, 180.

<sup>38</sup> Denver, Address, in “*Centennial Reunion*,” 1876, 12.

<sup>39</sup> Cadwalader, “Address,” in *Proceedings 1874*, 28.

<sup>40</sup> Skocpol, *Protecting Soldiers and Mothers*, 63-152.

<sup>41</sup> During this time estimates of how many U.S.-Mexican War veterans were still living varied. In 1874 the Bureau of Pensions reported that there were 39,000 survivors. The NAVMW claimed that the number was 9,000. The reality is most likely somewhere in between. Between 1887 and 1902, after the bill had become law, the Bureau of Pensions granted 20,533 pensions to U.S.-Mexican War veterans. Van Wagenen, *Remembering the Forgotten War*, 68.

<sup>42</sup> *Congressional Record*, 46<sup>th</sup> Cong., 1<sup>st</sup> sess. (1880), 4479.

<sup>43</sup> Democratic senator from Indiana Daniel Wolsey Voorhees made this argument in the Senate in May 1880. See “Senator Voorhees on Mexican War Pensions,” May 1, 1880, *National Tribune*, 5. <http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn82016187/issues/>.

<sup>44</sup> *Congressional Record*, 46<sup>th</sup> Cong., 1<sup>st</sup> sess. (1880), 4482.

<sup>45</sup> National Democratic Committee, *The Campaign Textbook*, 362.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>47</sup> “Proceedings of the Washington City Veterans,” *The Vedette*, July 1880, 8.

<sup>48</sup> For more on the intersection of racial and sectional issues with postwar U.S. politics, see Calhoun, *From Bloody Shirt to Full Dinner Pail*.

<sup>49</sup> “It Will Lighten the Tax-Payer’s Burdens.” *National Tribune*, January 1, 1885, 4.

<sup>50</sup> “Rally on the Mexican Pension Bill.” *National Tribune*, November 27, 1884, 4.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>52</sup> Grand Army of the Republic, *Journal of the Nineteenth Session*, 350.

<sup>53</sup> Van Wagenen, *Remembering the Forgotten War*, 76.

<sup>54</sup> McConnell, *Glorious Contentment*, 18-83.

<sup>55</sup> Cleveland explained in his message to the House that, while the Mexican Pension Bill imposed an age restriction on its recipients, the Dependent Pension Bill proposed to pension all disabled Union veterans, and so would mark an extravagant liberalization of the existing pension system. Grover Cleveland, “Veto of Military Pension Legislation.” February 11, 1887, Miller Center, University of Virginia. <http://millercenter.org/president/cleveland/speeches/veto-of-military-pension-legislation1>.

<sup>56</sup> “Veterans! Make Reply.” *National Tribune*, February 24, 1887, 4.

<sup>57</sup> “In Comparison with the Mexican War.” *National Tribune*, January 16, 1890, 4. The experience of American volunteers in Mexico differed widely. Some fought in battles, others never made it to



Mexico at all, and a great many had the mundane task of guarding territory already won by the predecessors. See Winders, *Mr. Polk's Army*, 70-71.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> For other Union veteran histories of the U.S. - Mexican War, see Morton Jr., ed. *Sparks from the Campfire*, 584; Lockwood, "Chapter VII," 8.

<sup>60</sup> McConnell, *Glorious Contentment*, 195-6.

<sup>61</sup> Kenaday, *Proceedings 1874*, 29.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., 197.

<sup>63</sup> Logan, *The Volunteer Soldier of America*, 478.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., 548.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., 555.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., 548-9.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid., 555.

<sup>68</sup> Some U.S. soldiers, particularly Whig officers, expressed reservations about the U.S.-Mexican war during the conflict itself. See Winders, *Mr. Polk's Army*, 206.

<sup>69</sup> Harris, *Across the Bloody Chasm*, 9.

<sup>70</sup> Logan, *The Volunteer Soldier*, 555.

<sup>71</sup> Neff, *Honoring the Civil War Dead*, 160.

<sup>72</sup> Hill, "The Old South." *Southern Historical Society Papers (SHSP)* 16 (1888): 423-43.

<http://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=pst.000063006810;view=1up;seq=7>. Other examples of similar histories of the U.S. - Mexican War printed in the *Papers* include General Evans, "Contributions of the South" and Wheeler, "Causes of the War".

<sup>73</sup> Hill, "The Old South," 441.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid., 440.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid.

<sup>77</sup> Hon. John W. Daniel, "Life, Services, and Character of Jefferson Davis," *SHSP* 17 (1889): 146-47.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid., 148.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid.

<sup>82</sup> Of course, opinions regarding the U.S. - Mexican War did not always follow partisan lines. For more on the complexities of anti-war dissent in the 1840s, see Schroeder, *Mr. Polk's War*.

<sup>83</sup> Harris, *Across the Bloody Chasm*, 67.

<sup>84</sup> Several U.S. - Mexican War societies succeeded the NAVMW, although they mostly operated at the state level in places such as California and Texas. See Van Wagenen, *Remembering the Forgotten War*, 111.

<sup>85</sup> This was certainly true on the national level. Various U.S.-Mexican War anniversaries were celebrated sporadically in parts of the southwest and California during the late nineteenth century. See Van Wagenen, *Remembering the Forgotten War*, 101-127.

<sup>86</sup> Historians have examined how postwar Americans forged a sense of national solidarity based on different values and cultural concepts, including religion, gender, political economy, and race. See, for example, Blum, *Reforging the White Republic*; Silber, *The Romance of Reunion*; and Richardson, *West of Appomattox*.

<sup>87</sup> Harris, *Across the Bloody Chasm*, 7.

<sup>88</sup> For more on the evolution of U.S. foreign relations during this period, particularly in the Western Hemisphere, see LaFeber, *The New Empire*; and Sexton, *The Monroe Doctrine*. For studies on U.S. - Mexican relations in the post-Civil War era, see Schoonover, *Dollars over Dominion*; and Hart, *Empire and Revolution*.

<sup>89</sup> Silber, *Romance of Reunion*, 169-72.

<sup>90</sup> Oswaldel, *Notes on the Mexican War*, 638.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid.

<sup>92</sup> Concepts of modernity and civilization were, of course, malleable. In the late-nineteenth-century United States they were increasingly associated with economic liberalism, industrialisation, and

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global commerce. See, Ninkovich, *Global Dawn*. For more on notions of modernity during the Porfiriato, see Overmyer-Velaquez, *Visions of the Emerald City*.

<sup>93</sup> Scudder's view of the U.S.-Mexican War echoed the arguments made by the war's supporters at the time. See Johannsen, *To the Halls of the Montezumas*, 288-96.

<sup>94</sup> Oswaldel, *Notes on the Mexican War*, 642.

<sup>95</sup> Grant, *Personal Memoirs*, 16.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>97</sup> "Mexico as Seen by Grant." *New York Times*, May 7, 1880, 2.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>102</sup> Ninkovich, *Global Dawn*; Nugent, *Habits of Empire*; and Hendrickson, *Union, Nation, or Empire*.

<sup>103</sup> Greenberg, *A Wicked War*, 274.

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