

The Lost Cause Attack on the Battlefield Reputation of Lieutenant General James Longstreet and its Effect on U.S. Civil War History

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Abstract

This paper is a comprehensive exploration of the false attacks on the battlefield reputation of Confederate General James Longstreet that occurred after the end of the U.S. Civil War, the role of these attacks in the broader narrative of the "Lost Cause," and how those lies and false representations affect the historical record of the U.S. Civil War to this day.

Keywords: U.S. Civil War; Military History James Longstreet; Lost Cause

Confederate Lieutenant General James "Old Pete" Longstreet ended the U.S. Civil War with one of the most impressive battlefield records of any participant in the war. Despite Longstreet's consistent and outstanding record of superior battlefield performance his reputation and battle record was scurrilously and falsely attacked and maligned after the death of Robert E. Lee. The question presented is why Longstreet's wartime record was attacked so vehemently by the members of the Southern Historical Society and their publication arm, the *Southern Historical Society Papers (SHSP)*. Additionally, why were generations of American historians willing to accept and repeat the false statements about the battlefield conduct of General Longstreet published in the *SHSP*?

A comprehensive and realistic assessment of this occurrence will offer insight into just how such a miscarriage of historical justice occurred and explore why generations of American historians were willing to accept and repeat the false statements about the battlefield conduct of Confederate Lieutenant General James Longstreet published in the *SHSP*. It will assess the rise and effect of the Lost Cause myth and the successful campaign by the politically and personally motivated members of the Southern Historical Society to malign Longstreet and assign him the role of Judas Iscariot to Lee's role as the Christ-like figure of the Confederacy. It will explore the reasons why the campaign against the battlefield record and reputation of Longstreet was successful. Additionally, it will examine the acceptance of the lies and false representations of the Lost Cause mythologists and their effect on the historical record. Finally, it will address the ongoing damage to Longstreet's legacy that continues to exist to this day.

A number of former Confederates and unreconstructed rebels wished to promulgate a "Lost Cause" myth that redefined the U.S. Civil War. The Lost Cause was a politically motivated movement that created a romanticized mythology of the Confederacy that has distorted the historical record for more than a century. A number of basic tenets were foundational to the Lost Cause mythology. These included the denial or marginalization of slavery as a cause of the war and a romanticized version of slavery in the antebellum South; the denial of any true "defeat" of Confederate military forces; the deification of certain Confederate leaders, most importantly General Robert E. Lee and, to a lesser degree, Lieutenant General Thomas "Stonewall" Jackson; and the vilification of other Confederate leaders, specifically Lieutenant General James Longstreet. Longstreet was chosen as the scapegoat of the Lost Cause due to his perceived political apostasy by joining the Republican Party and supporting black voting rights after the war; his vulnerability due to his lack of a true state affiliation; and personal animus held against Longstreet by certain members of the Southern Historical Society. Subsequent generations of historians either blindly accepted these politically motivated lies or were unwilling to challenge the historical inaccuracies presented by the *SHSP*.

The attack on the wartime record of General James Longstreet ranks as one of the greatest injustices in the annals of American military history. The very fact that a group of disgruntled former Confederate officers and leaders could so heavily affect the historical memory with a series of conspicuous lies, presented for obvious self-serving and political reasons, is certainly worthy of further study. The Lost Cause adherents, working primarily through the *SHSP*, were able to promulgate a mythological version of the Civil War that was generally accepted as

historical fact for over a hundred years. The fact that subsequent generations of supposedly legitimate and objective historians accepted the wild inaccuracies of the *SHSP* calls for additional scrutiny of the events leading to such a transgression of historical justice. In recent years, scholars have rejected most of the Lost Cause mythology but, despite this fact, it still impacts the historical memory of the U.S. Civil War to this day.

During the course of the war Lieutenant General James Longstreet's distinguished record included some of the finest accomplishments of the Army of Northern Virginia (ANV).¹ At the end of the war Longstreet was the senior Lieutenant General in the Confederate Army. He was instrumental in Confederate successes at the Battles of Seven Days, Second Manassas, Antietam, Fredericksburg, and Chickamauga. General Lee entrusted him with the main attacks on the second and third days at Gettysburg. He was seriously wounded while leading a decisive counterattack that was rolling up the Union line at the Battle of the Wilderness. He returned to active service five months later and faithfully served Lee until Appomattox. When General Lee was departing to discuss terms of surrender with General Ulysses S. Grant, Longstreet said to Lee; "General, if he does not give us good terms come back and let us fight it out."² When the war ended Longstreet was considered one of the finest corps commanders in either Army.³ When he applied to President Andrew Johnson for a pardon after the war President Johnson said to him, "There are three persons of the South who can never receive amnesty. Mr. Davis, General Lee, and yourself. You have given the Union cause too much trouble."⁴

Longstreet was tasked with the attack on the Union left on the second day of fighting at the Battle of Gettysburg and the attack on the Union center on the last day of that battle and carried out those difficult attacks to the best of his abilities. Longstreet argued with Lee against attacking the entrenched Union position at Gettysburg. He recommended a tactical withdrawal to high ground that would force the Union Army to attack the Confederates in a defensive position to which Lee responded, "If he is there tomorrow I will attack him."⁵ In the alternative Longstreet suggested maneuvering around the left flank of the Union line. That suggestion was also rejected by Lee.⁶

Longstreet received his orders to attack the Union left at approximately 11 a.m. on the morning of July 2, 1863. He maneuvered the divisions of Major General John Hood and Major General Lafayette McLaws into position along concealed routes and was prepared to begin the attack by 4 p.m.⁷ General Hood repeatedly requested permission from Longstreet to move to the right of the Union position, but Longstreet denied his request since Longstreet had already argued such a plan with Lee and had been refused.⁸ Longstreet's men entered the fray and furious fighting ensued at the Devil's Den, the Wheatfield, the Peach Orchard, and Little Round Top. Longstreet's attack on Meade's left at the Battle of Gettysburg was one of the best-conducted operations of the war.⁹ Unfortunately, the Federal position was too strong and the attack was ultimately unsuccessful. Longstreet would later say, "There was never any fighting done anywhere to surpass the battle made by my men on July 2."¹⁰

On July 3 Longstreet was ordered to attack the Union Center on Cemetery Ridge with the three divisions under the command of Major General George Pickett, Major General Isaac Trimble, and Brigadier General J. Johnston Pettigrew. The attack required movement across almost a mile of open, slightly undulating terrain in order to reach the elevated Union position on Cemetery Ridge.¹¹ Longstreet believed that the attack would fail and that duty required he share his objections regarding the proposed attack with General Lee. Longstreet told General Lee:

General, I have been a soldier all my life. I have been with soldiers engaged in fights by couples, by squads, companies, regiments, divisions, and armies, and should know, as well as any one, what soldiers can do. It is my opinion that no fifteen thousand men ever arranged for battle can take that position.¹²

¹ Gary W. Gallagher, "The Army of Northern Virginia in May 1864: A Crisis of High Command." *Civil War History* 36, no. 2 (June 1990): 104. *America: History and Life with Full Text*, EBSCOhost (accessed July 5, 2011), 104.

² Edward Porter Alexander, *Fighting for the Confederacy: The Personal Recollections of General Edward Porter Alexander* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1989), 538.

³ Jeffrey D. Wert, *General James Longstreet: The Confederacy's Most Controversial Soldier* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1993), 402.

⁴ James Longstreet, *From Manassas to Appomattox: Memoirs of the Civil War in America* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Co., 1896), 546.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 304

⁶ Alexander, 237.

⁷ Longstreet, 310-13

⁸ G. Moxley Sorrel, *At the Right Hand of Longstreet: Recollections of a Confederate Staff Officer* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1999), 169.

⁹ Glenn Tucker, *Lee and Longstreet at Gettysburg* (Dayton, Ohio: Morningside, 1982), 64.

¹⁰ "The War Was a Grievous Error." *Civil War Times* 49, no. 2 (April 2010): 37, *America: History and Life with Full Text*, EBSCOhost (accessed July 5, 2011).

¹¹ Longstreet, 325.

¹² Wert, *General James Longstreet*, 283.

Despite Longstreet's reservations Lee responded, "The enemy is there, and I am going to strike him."¹³ With no other choice Longstreet proceeded with preparations for the assault. When the time came for the attack General Pickett said to Longstreet, "General, shall I advance?" Longstreet could not bring himself to speak the order and instead sadly bowed his head in the affirmative.¹⁴ The attack, known as Pickett's Charge, ensued and the Confederates were repulsed with horrendous losses.

In the immediate aftermath of the Battle of Gettysburg and until after the death of General Robert E. Lee, no criticism was ever made of Longstreet's performance at Gettysburg. The principle blame for the loss at Gettysburg was assigned to an overconfident General Lee for attacking the strong Union defensive positions on the second and third days of the battle, as well as disregarding Longstreet's proposal to outflank the Federals. Additional blame was attributed to Lieutenant General Richard Ewell and Major General Jubal Early for failing to seize Culp's Hill and Cemetery Hill on the first day of the battle. Lee recognized that he had simply asked too much of his men on the second and third days of the battle. He acknowledged after the battle, "More may have been required of them then they were able to perform."¹⁵ This overconfidence was noted by Confederate Major General Henry Heath who stated fourteen years after the campaign, "The fact is, General Lee believed the Army of Northern Virginia, as it then existed, could accomplish anything."¹⁶

Confederate writers such as Edward Pollard, John Esten Cooke, James McCabe and other Southern authors agreed that Lee was to blame for the loss at Gettysburg.¹⁷ Pollard was the former assistant editor of the *Richmond Examiner* and outstanding Rebel historian. He strongly castigated Lee, Ewell, and Early for their failure to pursue Major General Otis Howard's shattered corps and take Culp's Hill and Cemetery Hill on July 1 and Lee for his overconfidence on the second and third day of the battle.¹⁸ McCabe, the Richmond born novelist and editor of the *Magnolia Weekly*, also attributed the loss at Gettysburg to Lee's failure to pursue Howard, his disregard for Longstreet's advice, and his overconfidence during the battle.¹⁹ It must be noted that these Southern writers were all great admirers of Lee; they merely recognized his mistakes at Gettysburg.

These assessments for the loss of the Battle of Gettysburg coincided with the appraisals of most Northern and foreign observers, writers, and historians. William Swinton's excellent work *Campaigns of the Army of the Potomac* was the first authoritative and intensive study of the battle of Gettysburg and was originally published in 1866. Although a Union account of the war, Swinton's work was very sympathetic towards the South and the book was respected by ex-belligerents from both sides of the conflict. Jefferson Davis stated that Swinton was "the fairest and most careful of all the Northern writers."²⁰ But, like the other works that came immediately after the war, Swinton fastened the blame for the defeat at Gettysburg upon Lee, Early, and Ewell. Swinton criticized Ewell and Early, in particular, for not taking Culp's Hill and Cemetery Hill on July 1 and for arguing against Longstreet's proposal to outflank the Federals. Additionally, Swinton notes Ewell's failure to demonstrate effectively on the Union right on July 2 and delaying his attack until well after Longstreet's main attack on the Union left had begun. Ewell's demonstration was intended to prevent Union reinforcements being sent to oppose Longstreet's attack and Ewell's delay thwarted this plan.²¹ Swinton faulted Lee for being off balanced, overconfident, and contemptuous of the capabilities of the Federals, and believing that the Army of Northern Virginia could achieve anything. Swinton, relying upon a conversation with General Longstreet, recounts that the first day's success had produced "the taste of blood" and because Lee had lost the "equipoise in which his faculties commonly moved" he chose to attack a Union position equally as strong as the one the Confederates had held when the Union army dashed itself to pieces at the Battle of Fredericksburg.²²

Swinton's views were echoed by prominent foreign observers. Francis Lawley, who witnessed the battle and later became the editor of the London *Daily Telegraph*, typified these opinions. Lawley felt that Gettysburg exposed Lee's tendency towards overconfidence. He also blamed defeat on the activities of Ewell and Early on July 1 and Lee's failure to heed Longstreet's advice. Lawley observed that during the Pennsylvania campaign Lee was "too big for his breeches."²³ The overwhelming informed opinion in the years immediately following the Battle of Gettysburg was that the blame for the loss rested with Lee, Ewell, and Early. Longstreet was the loyal second-in-command whose wise tactical counsel was ignored, but who still bravely and vigorously carried out the commands of his commander Robert E. Lee. This was to change in 1872.

¹³ Ibid., 284.

¹⁴ Longstreet, 330.

¹⁵ Gary W. Gallagher, *Lee and His Generals in War and Memory* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana University Press, 1998), 74.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Thomas Connelly and Barbara Bellows, *God and General Longstreet* (Baton Rouge, Louisiana State University Press, 1982)32

¹⁸ Edward Pollard, *The Southern History of the War: The Third Year of the War* (New York: Charles B. Richardson, 1865), 26-

36. Edward Pollard, *Lee and His Lieutenants* (New York: E.B. Treat, 1867), 110-111.

¹⁹ James McCabe, *Life and Campaigns of Robert E. Lee* (New York: Blelock & Co, 1867), 391-395.

²⁰ Thomas Connelly, *The Marble Man: Robert E. Lee and His Image in American Society* (New York: Knopf, 1977), 56.

²¹ William Swinton, *Campaigns of the Army of the Potomac* (New York: Charles Scribner's and Sons, 1882), 354-5.

²² Ibid., 340-3, (quoting a conversation between the author and James Longstreet).

²³ Connelly, *Marble Man*, 57.

On January 19, 1872 former Confederate Lieutenant General Jubal Early presented an address at a birthday memorial service for Robert E. Lee held at the chapel of Washington and Lee University. This address was later published as *The Campaigns of Robert E. Lee: An Address*.²⁴ In his address Early concocted a new version of the events of the Civil War. In Early's version Robert E. Lee and his faithful lieutenant Stonewall Jackson were the leaders of the Army of Northern Virginia and the great hope of the Confederacy. Lee's second-in-command and "old war horse," James Longstreet, was marginalized and reduced to a level of unimportance. Early argued that even after Jackson's tragic death, Lee was still the unbeatable military genius who would have won the Battle of Gettysburg, if not for the actions of his disloyal subordinate Longstreet. Early submitted that it was Longstreet who delayed the Confederate attack on July 2nd, 1863 and caused the loss at Gettysburg, and as a result, the loss of the entire war. Early's address can be regarded as one of the first major salvos in the propaganda war of the Lost Cause, a movement that created a romanticized mythology of the Confederacy that has distorted the historical record for more than a century.

Jubal Early was one of Lee's most unpopular and disliked subordinates. As Thomas Connelly points out, "Early's war record held no promise of postwar eminence....In politics and war, Early was the Ishmael of the Confederacy, a loner often out of step with his colleagues."²⁵ As a lawyer and delegate to the 1861 Virginia secession convention he was a staunch Union delegate who fought hard to keep Virginia in the Union. After Virginia voted to secede, he became an avid supporter of the Confederacy. Early was profane, opinionated, and dogmatic. He had an eccentric and sour disposition and was indiscreet in his public criticisms of other officers and generally regarded as sarcastic, brusque, and irascible.²⁶ While Early gained some respect as a soldier he remained unpopular with his fellow officers.²⁷ Early was a reasonably capable division commander under Stonewall Jackson and Richard Ewell, but his performance at Gettysburg was highly criticized. Lee chose Early to initiate a threat against Washington in 1864. After a failed and disastrous raid on the Union capital Early retreated into the Shenandoah Valley where, after a series of battles against the forces of Major General Phillip Sheridan, his army was virtually obliterated, and Lee was forced to relieve him of his command in 1865.²⁸

After the war Early, an unrepentant rebel, self-proclaimed "Yankee-hater," and white supremacist declared, "I cannot live under the same Government with the Yankee," and fled to Mexico, Cuba, and then Canada before returning to Virginia in 1869 to practice law.²⁹ Despite Early's poor reputation and the opinion that he had deserted the South after the war, Lee was kind to Early in their correspondence and furnished him with letters of recommendation during his self-imposed exile.³⁰ Connelly points out that since he had opposed succession, then fought for it, and then fled the South while others remained, he seemed to have developed a "Cassius complex" and thundered that "my motto is still 'war to the death'"³¹ Perhaps because of the kindness that Lee had shown him after the war, and to rehabilitate his own limited and tarnished reputation, Early appointed himself the guardian of Lee's memory after Lee's death in 1870.³²

The attacks against James Longstreet intensified and continued through the Southern Historical Society and its publication arm, the *Southern Historical Society Papers* and Lost Cause writers such as Early, William Pendleton, Reverend J. William Jones and other members of the "Virginia Cult." The Southern Historical Society was a pseudo-historical organization, dominated by Virginians, which sought to control the public memory of the war and to rewrite it as a noble struggle against insurmountable odds. The *SHSP* sought to deify Lee, Jackson, and the ANV, as well as the righteousness of their cause. Their beliefs, which came to be known as the Lost Cause, played an important role in post-war political thought and Longstreet became their major scapegoat. Longstreet was particularly vulnerable for attack because of his perceived apostasy by joining the Republican Party, calling on southerners to submit to Union reconstruction, and supporting black voting. Early, who became the President of the Southern Historical Society, and others members of the *SHSP*, steadily increased the ferocity of their attacks on Longstreet.

The basis of their attack was the fiction of a "sunrise order" for Longstreet to attack the Federal left on the morning of July 2. This provided the foundational myth for the initial assault on Longstreet's reputation. William Pendleton, the former nominal chief of Lee's artillery and member of the Southern Historical Society, embellished Early's story and claimed Lee had personally told him on the night of July 1 of the order for Longstreet to attack at dawn. Pendleton's claim was, of course, a pure fabrication, but that did not stop Pendleton from publishing the

²⁴ Jubal A. Early, *The Campaigns of Robert E. Lee: An Address* (Baltimore: John Murphy & Co., 1872).

²⁵ Connelly, *Marble Man*, 52.

²⁶ Allen C. Guelzo, *Gettysburg: The Last Invasion* (New York: Vintage, 2013), 23.

²⁷ Douglas Southall Freeman, *Lee's Lieutenants: A Study in Command, Vol. II* (New York: C. Scribner's Sons, 1942), 415

²⁸ Connelly, *Marble Man*, 52.

²⁹ Tracy J. Power. "Jubal A. Early (1816–1894)." *Encyclopedia Virginia*. Ed. Brendan Wolfe. Virginia Foundation for the Humanities (5 Apr. 2011), under http://www.EncyclopediaVirginia.org/Early_Jubal_A_1816-1894. (accessed July 20, 2011).

³⁰ Allen W. Monger, "Letters to General Lee After the War." *The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography*, vol. 64, no. 1 (Jan. 1956): 32, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4246194> (accessed June 30, 2012).

³¹ Connelly, *Marble Man*, 53.

³² *Ibid.*

story in the *SHSP* and touring the South on a lecture circuit repeating his claims. The fact that the sunrise order never occurred or existed and that Longstreet did not receive his orders to attack the Union left until somewhere around eleven in the morning was of no consequence to Early and Pendleton. Eventually the myth of a sunrise order was refuted by no less than four of Lee's own staff members.³³ Additionally, even if the fictional sunrise order had existed it was impossible for Longstreet to have his divisions in line of battle in time to attack at dawn due to simple logistics. Hood's division, which had marched most of the night, did not even reach Gettysburg until *after* sunrise on July 2.³⁴ Such facts did not deter Early and the Lost Cause writers. They continued to repeat the lie and the myth of the sunrise order became a standard version in accounts of the Battle of Gettysburg.

Early also made the amazing claim in 1877 that he had a conversation on the night of July 1, 1863 with General Lee and that he had kept this a secret for almost 15 years. In this conversation General Lee is supposed to have said to him; "Well, if I attack from my right, Longstreet will have to make the attack...Longstreet is a very good fighter when he gets in position and gets everything ready, but he is *so slow*." (emphasis in the original)³⁵ This is an amazing statement. Supposedly Lee, the commanding general, was grouching to Early, a division commander, about the conduct of Longstreet, a lieutenant general and Lee's second-in-command. This would be an amazing breach of military protocol and totally out of character for Lee. Of course all of the witnesses to this alleged conversation were dead by 1877, so no one could verify or deny the veracity of this incredulous statement. As Gary Gallagher points out, "It is quite simply beyond belief that Lee would criticize his senior lieutenant in front of junior officers."³⁶ This was the nature of the scholarship of the *SHSP*, attack Longstreet with dubious evidence and logic and, when convenient, "remember" damning evidence that no one alive could dispute.

James Longstreet attempted to respond to the lies and allegations spread through the *Southern Historical Society Papers*, but was generally unable to stem the tide of misinformation that was printed and as a result his reputation was largely ruined in the South as the Lost Cause version of the events of the Civil War were accepted. Longstreet was a lifelong soldier, not a trained lawyer or writer, and was unable to match the ferocity and volume of the lies that poured from the *SHSP* and the pen of Jubal Early. Early's 1872 address marked the formal beginning of the first "Lee cult" and Early became its most vehement proponent. A scapegoat was needed to repair the reputation of Lee and Early for the loss at Gettysburg and Longstreet was chosen as that scapegoat. Early was vicious, unscrupulous, and venomous with his pen. Even Early's allies "probably feared Early more than they liked him" and as Robert Stiles mused, "no man ever took up his pen to write a line about the great conflict without the fear of Jubal Early in his eyes."³⁷ Early's and his acerbic pen even stooped to mocking the difficulty Longstreet experienced trying to write due to the war wound that crippled his right arm.³⁸

The unrelenting attacks and lies relating to Longstreet's battle record continued to issue from the Lost Cause adherents and the *SHSP*. Longstreet was even attacked and derided for his tactical successes. At the brilliant Confederate victory at Second Manassas Longstreet's wing made an excellent and speedy march from their position on the Rappahannock to Thoroughfare Gap where they were ordered by Lee to bivouac for the night. Longstreet's wing was in motion again at daylight and arrived on the field around ten o'clock on August 29, 1862 and were deployed by noon. Jackson's wing was in a defensive position and engaged with Federal forces. Lee, naturally aggressive, desired an immediate assault by Longstreet's wing. Longstreet, however, cautioned against an immediate attack, first to give him time to reconnoiter the ground first, then because of formidable Union troop movement on his right, and finally due to the lateness of the hour. Instead it was decided to launch a reconnaissance-in-force that evening. When the heavy Union assault came against Jackson the next day, Longstreet responded quickly by bringing up batteries to help break the Union formations. Longstreet then anticipated Lee's order and executed a magnificent counterattack with his entire wing. As Gary W. Gallagher points out, "This commitment of 30,000 men in half an hour was a remarkable performance, unmatched on any other battlefield of the war. Lee could not have asked for a better response from a subordinate than he got from Longstreet on the afternoon of August 30."³⁹ At Second Manassas Lee had sought and heeded the advice of his trusted subordinate, Longstreet, and the result was one of the greatest Confederate victories of the war.

The members of the *SHSP* elected to interpret the Battle of Second Manassas in a totally different fashion. In their version of the events they claimed that Longstreet was dangerously slow reaching the battlefield. This false accusation of Longstreet's slowness would be repeated again and again, particularly with reference to Gettysburg. Further, they contended that Longstreet thwarted Lee's plan for immediate attack, leaving Jackson to do the brunt of the fighting, and that Longstreet wrongly claimed all of the glory for the victory.⁴⁰ This allowed the *SHSP* writers to create a completely false narrative of an egotistical Longstreet who was consistently slow in moving his

³³ *Southern Historical Society Papers*, Vol. 5 (1878), 54-86.

³⁴ Tucker, *Lee and Longstreet at Gettysburg*, 59.

³⁵ *Southern Historical Society Papers*, Vol. 4 (1877), 274.

³⁶ Gallagher, *Lee and His Generals in War and Memory*, 68.

³⁷ Robert Stiles, *Four Years Under Marse Robert* (New York: Neale Publishing Co., 1903), 190-191.

³⁸ *Southern Historical Society Papers*, Vol. 5 (1878), 273-74.

³⁹ Gallagher, *Lee and His Generals in War and Memory*, 156-7.

⁴⁰ *Southern Historical Society Papers*, Vol. 5 (1878), 275-78.

troops and tended to exhibit reluctance and procrastination in carrying out the orders of Lee. These were the very same false accusations they claimed resulted in the loss at Gettysburg.⁴¹ According to the Lost Cause mythologists, even Longstreet's victories on the battlefield were evidence of his flawed character.

The Lost Cause adherents who controlled the *SHSP* even managed to twist the warm personal friendship between Lee and Longstreet into a critical judgment of Longstreet. The close relationship between Lee and Longstreet bedeviled the anti-Longstreet camp. Their deep friendship was undeniable and did not support their contention that Longstreet was inefficient and insubordinate. As Edward A. Pollard observed, Longstreet's "relations with Gen. Lee...were not only pleasant and cordial, but affectionate to an almost brotherly degree; an example of beautiful friendship in the war that was frequently remarked by the public."⁴² Lee, in contrast, did not have a particularly close personal relationship with the dour Jackson. Since the Lost Cause writers could not deny that Lee was close with Longstreet, and habitually pitched his camp near Longstreet's pleasant and convivial headquarters, they manufactured a nefarious reason for this closeness. They contended that the reason Lee was always near Longstreet was the he somehow did not trust him and felt the need to be near Longstreet to hasten his movements and more closely supervise him.⁴³ The Lost Cause mythologists managed to take the fact that Lee valued Longstreet's advice, sought it on a regular basis, and enjoyed his second-in-command's company and managed to turn it into a negative indictment on Longstreet's character.⁴⁴

The attacks and criticism of General Longstreet by the *SHSP* and the purveyors of the Lost Cause knew no bounds and the assaults on Longstreet's war record and character continued with great frequency and ferocity. As Longstreet sadly stated, "If the charges so vehemently urged against me after his [Lee's] death had been preferred, or even suggested, in his lifetime, I do not believe they would have needed any reply from me. General Lee would have answered them himself, and have set history right."⁴⁵ However, the personal attacks against Longstreet did not stop and continued throughout the closing decades of the nineteenth century. This along with Longstreet's perceived political heresy severely damaged his reputation among many in the South.

Despite the intensity, ferocity, and volume of the attacks on Longstreet by the members of the *SHSP*, many refused to succumb to the lies promulgated by the Lost Cause mythologists. In 1863 British Lieutenant Colonel Arthur Fremantle published his *Three Months in the Southern States: April-June 1863* in which he noted the close relationship between Lee and Longstreet and how the soldiers considered Longstreet, "the best fighter in the whole army."⁴⁶ Many former Confederates also came to Longstreet's defense. G. Moxley Sorrel, Longstreet's former chief of staff, published *At the Right Hand of Longstreet: Recollections of a Confederate Staff Officer*, a memoir after the war that dealt fairly and honestly with Longstreet's excellent battlefield record. Edward Porter Alexander, the chief of the First Corps Artillery, published his own memoirs after the war and refuted the attacks against Longstreet. Alexander, who is viewed by many historians as one of the most reliable and objective sources in the Confederate Army, steadfastly defended Longstreet. In his book *Fighting for the Confederacy: The Personal Recollections of General Edward Porter Alexander*, Alexander describes the criticisms of Longstreet by the Lost Cause adherents as, "...very unjust &, indeed absurd...."⁴⁷ The attacks on Longstreet's reputation did little damage to him in the North and he was often interviewed for northern publications.⁴⁸ In addition to Swinton's *Campaigns of the Army of the Potomac*, other publications, such as J.H. Stine's *History of the Army of the Potomac*, fairly assessed Longstreet's performance at Gettysburg.⁴⁹ *Battles and Leaders of the Civil War* originally published in four volumes between 1884 and 1888, also accurately portrayed Longstreet as a decisive, loyal, and important general. Longstreet even contributed a number of articles to the publication, as did many famous participants in the war including Ulysses S. Grant.⁵⁰ In 1896 Longstreet published his wartime memoirs *From Manassas to Appomattox: Memoirs of the Civil War in America*. Additionally, it must be noted that Longstreet never lost the loyalty of the troops that he commanded during the war. Whenever Longstreet attended Southern veteran's events he was met with enthusiastic support and thunderous cheers from his former soldiers.⁵¹

The Lost Cause version of events and the unfair attacks on Longstreet may have eventually been forgotten or dismissed, as the personally and politically-based propaganda that they were, if not for their treatment by the next generation of historians, most notably Douglas Southall Freeman. In 1934 Freeman published *R.E. Lee: A*

⁴¹ Ibid., 280.

⁴² Gallagher, *Lee and His Generals in War and Memory*, 143.

⁴³ Ibid., 143-44.

⁴⁴ Wert, *General James Longstreet*, 205.

⁴⁵ *Southern Historical Society Papers*, Vol. 5 (1878), 269.

⁴⁶ Arthur Fremantle, *Three Months in the Southern States: April-June 1863* (Edinburgh: William Blackwood and Sons, 1863), 242.

⁴⁷ Alexander, *Fighting for the Confederacy*, 245.

⁴⁸ "The War Was a Grievous Error," 33-39.

⁴⁹ J.H. Stine, *History of the Army of the Potomac* (Washington D.C.: Gibson Brothers, 1893), 500-43.

⁵⁰ Robert Underwood Johnson and Clarence Clough Buel, eds., *Battles and Leaders of the Civil War*, 4 vols. (New York: The Century Co.), 1884-1888.

⁵¹ Piston, 164-5.

Biography, an epic four volume work that won the Pulitzer Prize for biography. Freeman, a Virginian and Lost Cause supporter relied heavily on the *SHSP* in his scholarship stating that the *SHSP*, "Includes more valuable, unused data than any other unofficial repository of source material on the War between the States."⁵² According to Freeman, Longstreet's performance at Gettysburg was the key to the Confederate defeat. Relying almost exclusively upon the *SHSP*, Freeman assassinated Longstreet's character. Freeman portrays Longstreet as a petty, disobedient, self-willed subordinate with delusions of strategic ability that he did not possess. He claims that an interview with the Confederate Secretary of War had swollen Longstreet's head with dreams of grandeur, that Jackson's death had increased his belief in his own self-importance, and that Longstreet knew that Jackson was first in Lee's esteem, and further, that Jackson's death resulted in an ominous and unhappy change in Longstreet.⁵³ Freeman describes Longstreet at Gettysburg as, "disgruntled", that he "sulked", "was of bad humor", "insubordinate" and that his "slow and stubborn mind rendered him incapable of the quick daring and loyal obedience that had characterized Jackson"⁵⁴

Freeman became the greatest advocate for every Lost Cause lie the *SHSP* ever manufactured regarding the battlefield record of James Longstreet. He repeated and gave legitimacy to all of the allegations ever created about Longstreet, but now instead of these things being stated by disgruntled ex-Confederates with a political agenda, they were being stated by an eminent historian. All of Freeman's negative observations regarding Longstreet came from the *SHSP* and Lost Cause sources, which he accepted as gospel. He took Lost Cause aspersions and lies and restated them as historical fact without ever considering that they might not be true or seeking to validate them through independent and unbiased historical sources. The fact that the conclusions Freeman reached were based on completely subjective Lost Cause sources and were unsupported by objective evaluation was lost on generations of subsequent historians. If, in truth, Jackson held "first place in the esteem of Lee" as Freeman asserts, why is it that Lee promoted Longstreet ahead of Jackson, purposefully giving Longstreet date of rank?⁵⁵ If Longstreet was truly the sullen and insubordinate lieutenant that Freeman claims, why did Lee refer to him as "my old war horse" and "the staff of my right hand"?⁵⁶ If Longstreet had performed so badly at Gettysburg, why did Lee fight so hard with the War Department to have Longstreet returned to the Army of Northern Virginia from detached duty in the West?⁵⁷ These questions were not addressed for many years and Freeman's Pulitzer Prize winning mischaracterizations remained historical dogma for generations.

Even Freeman would come to regret his harsh and unfair treatment of James Longstreet. In his subsequent work *Lee's Lieutenants: A Study in Command*, Freeman would lighten his harsh and unfair treatment of Longstreet.⁵⁸ He would still contend that Longstreet was a flawed individual, and partially responsible for the loss at Gettysburg, but in a less harsh tone. Freeman stated in *Lee's Lieutenants* that Longstreet was "...always at his best in battle a reliable lieutenant."⁵⁹ He further states that Longstreet "received at the hands of some of his former military associates far less than justice as a soldier."⁶⁰ It is reported that Freeman stated to a friend, later in life, that he hoped to revise his Lee biography "because I have done some deserving men injustice, especially Longstreet."⁶¹

After the publication of Freeman's works the lies and misrepresentations of Longstreet's battlefield record originally promulgated by the Lost Cause mythologists became accepted by most mainstream historians and continued to be accepted for decades. The 1930s saw an additional blow to Longstreet's reputation with the publication of *James Longstreet: Lee's War Horse* in 1936. Relying on very little research, the book's authors, J. Eckenrode and Bryan Conrad, claimed to know Longstreet's mind and portrayed him as "an average corps commander" and a man obsessed by the sin of "overweening ambition."⁶² Few historians of this time stepped forth to defend the reputation of Longstreet; two who did were Thomas R. Hay and Donald B. Sanger. These two historians would eventually write their own biography of Longstreet. Hay pointed out that the authors of *James Longstreet: Lee's War Horse* made dogmatic statements,

⁵² Douglas Southall Freeman, *R.E. Lee: A Biography* (New York: Scribner, 1934), 4:554.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 3:15.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 3:149-50.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 3:149-50.

⁵⁶ Gallagher, "The Army of Northern Virginia in May 1864: A Crisis of High Command," 103-4.

⁵⁷ William Garrett Piston, *Lee's Tarnished Lieutenant: James Longstreet and His Place in Southern History* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1987), 86.

⁵⁸ Douglas Southall Freeman, *Lee's Lieutenants: A Study in Command* (New York: C. Scribner's Sons, 1942).

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, III, xxiv.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, III, 769.

⁶¹ Stephen W. Sears, "General Longstreet and the Lost Cause." *American Heritage* 56, no. 1 (2005): 52. *America: History and Life with Full Text*, EBSCOhost (accessed July 5, 2011).

⁶² H.J. Eckenrode and Bryan Conrad, *James Longstreet: Lee's War Horse* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1936), 367.

without citation, which make Longstreet appear; "...more as a querulous, fault-finding subordinate than as the splendid fighter and leader he was."⁶³

Donald Sanger defended Longstreet's actions on the second day of the Battle of Gettysburg effectively arguing that Longstreet could not have moved his troops into position earlier than he did due to the realities of logistics.⁶⁴ But the defenders of Longstreet were few and the opinions of Freeman and Eckenrode dominated the historical view of James Longstreet for decades. Any attempt to hold Lee responsible for the Confederate loss at Gettysburg or to relieve Longstreet of blame was quickly assailed by the majority of historians.⁶⁵

By the early twentieth century the Lost Cause version of events, and their unfair judgment of James Longstreet, were firmly and deeply enconced as the true history of the Civil War. The version of events that had been manufactured by Early and the other members of the *SHSP* dominated the historical memory in both academic and popular circles. Even the epic Pulitzer Prize-winning poem, *John Brown's Body*, written by the Northern poet Stephen Vincent Benét, reflected Lost Cause mythology in its portrayal of Longstreet. The section of the poem entitled *The Army of Northern Virginia* describes Longstreet in the following way:

Dutch Longstreet follows, slow, pugnacious and stubborn,
Hard to beat and just as hard to convince,
Fine corps commander, good bulldog for holding on,
But dangerous when he tries to think for himself,
He thinks for himself too much at Gettysburg,
But before and after he grips with tenacious jaws.⁶⁶

It would appear the Lost Cause adherents had won the battle for the historical memory of James Longstreet and the U.S. Civil War. Fortunately, that was not to be the case.

Any fair historical assessment of James Longstreet's battlefield performance shows an outstanding record of consistent success and a remarkable ability to handle large bodies of troops in tactical situations that far exceeded that of any other Confederate officer.⁶⁷ James Longstreet graduated from West Point in 1842 near the bottom of his class. By his own admission, "Old Pete" had more of an interest in "the school of the soldier, horsemanship, sword exercise, and the outside game of foot-ball than in the academic courses."⁶⁸ Commissioned a brevet second lieutenant, Longstreet was assigned to the Fourth Infantry at Jefferson Barracks, Missouri, where he eventually renewed his close friendship with his former classmate, Brevet Second Lieutenant Ulysses "Sam" Grant, who graduated in 1843. Grant would meet and later marry Longstreet's third cousin Julia Dent. Longstreet, meanwhile, courted and eventually married Marie Louise Garland, the daughter of his regimental commander Lieutenant Colonel John Garland.⁶⁹

Promoted to second lieutenant, Longstreet was assigned to the Eight Infantry which was soon ordered to join Major General Zachery Taylor's Army of Observation in Texas. As hostilities with Mexico ensued Longstreet saw his first combat action at the battles of Palo Alto and Resaca de la Palma. Longstreet emerged as a promising young officer skillfully leading Companies A and B of the Eight Infantry in combat at the Battle of Monterrey and as a result of his performance was promoted to first lieutenant.⁷⁰ Longstreet saw further action at the Siege of Vera Cruz, the Battle Cerro Gordo, and the capture of San Antonio. At the Battles of Contreras and Churubusco Longstreet was brevetted a captain for his gallant and meritorious conduct.⁷¹ Shortly thereafter Longstreet was again brevetted, this time to major, for his gallant and meritorious conduct in the Battle of Molino del Rey. Longstreet was in front of the Eight Infantry carrying its flag at the storming of Chapultepec. As he led his men up the hill Longstreet was severely wounded when hit in the thigh by an enemy musket ball. He handed the colors to Lieutenant George E. Pickett who carried it over the wall.⁷² After the conclusion of the Mexican-American War, Longstreet served in various frontier posts in line and staff positions, primarily in Texas. At the outbreak of the

⁶³ Thomas R. Hay, review of *James Longstreet, Lee's War Horse* by H. J. Eckenrode and Bryan Conrad, *The American Historical Review* 42, No. 2 (January 1937): 368.

⁶⁴ Donald B. Sanger, "Was Longstreet a Scapegoat?" *Infantry Journal* Vol. VIII, no. 1 (Jan/Feb 1936): 39-45.

⁶⁵ Kirkwood Mitchell, "Lee and the Bullet of the Civil War." *The William and Mary Quarterly* Second Series, Vol. 16, No. 1 (Jan., 1936): 26-37. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1919729> (accessed July 8, 2011).

⁶⁶ *John Brown's Body: Army of Northern Virginia* by Steven Vincent Benét (1928), <http://rinabeana.com/poemoftheday/index.php/2008/02/23/army-of-northern-virginia-by-steven-vincent-benet/> (accessed September 23, 2012).

⁶⁷ Gallagher, "The Army of Northern Virginia in May 1864: A Crisis of High Command," 104.

⁶⁸ Longstreet, 3.

⁶⁹ Wert, *General James Longstreet*, 34.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 40-2.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 44.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 45.

secession crisis Longstreet was a major serving as paymaster in Albuquerque, New Mexico. Although he did not embrace secession he chose to support the South in the impending conflict.⁷³

Longstreet wrote to the governor of Alabama offering his services as a soldier and was commissioned a lieutenant colonel of infantry in the Confederate States Army.⁷⁴ After a meeting with President Jefferson Davis in Richmond, Longstreet was promoted to the rank of brigadier general and ordered to report to General P.G.T. Beauregard at Manassas Junction.⁷⁵ Shortly thereafter Longstreet's 1,400 man brigade fought a successful action against a Federal assault at Blackburn's Ford.⁷⁶ From the day he took command of his brigade Longstreet focused on training and drill. It is said that the finest officers demanded discipline, incessant drill, and care for the needs of the troops. Longstreet immediately attended to all three in his command.⁷⁷ Additionally, he began the development of a personal staff composed of men of intelligence, perception, and organizational skills. It is generally accepted that Longstreet put together the best staff employed by any general officer in the U.S. Civil War and his effective development of a modern staff greatly increased the battlefield proficiency of the units he commanded.⁷⁸

In October 1861 Longstreet was promoted to major general and assigned the Third Division of Beauregard's corps. Beauregard held him in such high esteem that he attempted to have Longstreet designated his second-in-command. Because other officers in the corps outranked him this request was denied, but Longstreet remained Beauregard's most trusted subordinate.⁷⁹ Longstreet also came to the attention of Beauregard's superior, General Joseph E. Johnston, who remarked after the war that he was particularly impressed by Longstreet's "promptness of thought and action" and his ability in difficult situations to reach "correct solutions expressed with such quickness as to be termed by some intuition."⁸⁰ Longstreet continued to focus on training and was the only commander to hold drills on a divisional level and his ease and skill at moving and directing large numbers of men was noted by observers.⁸¹

After Beauregard's transfer to the western theater Johnston considered Longstreet one of his finest officers and gave him greater responsibilities and more difficult assignments. In May 1861, as the outnumbered Confederates were withdrawing up the peninsula in the face of Major General George McClellan's advance, Longstreet commanded the rear guard of some 9,000 men. Near Williamsburg Longstreet fought a sharp action against the advance units of the Federal army that allowed the bulk of Johnston's men to safely continue their retreat. Johnston arrived on the scene in the late afternoon and stated in his report that he was "a mere spectator, for General Longstreet's clear head and brave heart left me no apology for interference."⁸²

However, Longstreet's performance at Seven Pines, fought later that month, was less than distinguished. Longstreet was given tactical control of the entire right wing of the army. Operating under somewhat confused verbal orders, Longstreet shifted his troops farther south than had been intended and over the wrong route, thus robbing the Confederate advance of coordination and striking power. McClellan's forces were successfully driven back, but Longstreet was unable to deliver the type of blow necessary for a decisive victory.⁸³ Despite the complications and errors of Seven Pines, Johnston praised Longstreet in his formal report. Edward Porter Alexander would describe Seven Pines as "a monument of caution against verbal understandings."⁸⁴

Joseph Johnston was wounded at Seven Pines and General Robert E. Lee assumed command of the renamed Army of Northern Virginia. Lee then embarked on the Seven Days campaign, a strategic and tactical offensive to drive McClellan's forces back from Richmond. Longstreet's performance during the campaign was outstanding, particularly at Gaines's Mill and Glendale. His quick troop movement and effectiveness in battle were in sharp contrast to General Thomas "Stonewall" Jackson's generally sluggish and inept performance. Longstreet emerged from the campaign as Lee's most reliable commander and Lee referred to Longstreet as the "staff of my right hand."⁸⁵ In the reorganization that followed the Seven Days battles Lee increased Longstreet's command and responsibilities and decreased Jackson's, giving Longstreet command of five divisions and reducing Jackson's

⁷³ Ibid., 51.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 54.

⁷⁵ Piston, 12.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 12-3.

⁷⁷ Wert, *General James Longstreet*, 62.

⁷⁸ Richard L. DiNardo, "Southern by the Grace of God but Prussian by Common Sense: James Longstreet and the Exercise of Command in the U.S. Civil War." *Journal of Military History* 66, no. 4 (October 2002): 1011-1032. *America: History and Life with Full Text*, EBSCOhost (accessed July 5, 2011).

⁷⁹ Piston, 15.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 16.

⁸¹ Ibid., 17.

⁸² Wert, *General James Longstreet*, 106.

⁸³ Piston, 19.

⁸⁴ Wert, *General James Longstreet*, 123.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 151-2.

command to three.⁸⁶ Subsequently, at the Battle of Second Manassas, Longstreet wisely counseled General Lee to avoid a piecemeal attack on the Federals and wait until Union Major General John Pope committed his forces to an attack on Jackson's defensive position. At that point Longstreet was able to enfilade the enemy with his artillery and order in his entire command for a devastating counterattack that inflicted a decisive defeat on Pope's forces.⁸⁷

Longstreet's excellent performance continued during the hard-fought campaign into Maryland in 1862. Longstreet achieved operational success by holding off the Union army at South Mountain until he could retire to Sharpsburg to await Jackson, thus taking away the intelligence advantage that McClellan had gained from his possession of the copy of Lee's Order No. 191.⁸⁸ During the Battle of Antietam Longstreet's units held the hilly grounds and the sunken road, which would later be called the Bloody Lane. Longstreet took advantage of the available woodland to mask his troop movement and to skillfully move his brigades to meet the Federal assault. When the Union forces threatened to enfilade his forces in the sunken road Longstreet expertly directed the units near him and again exhibited his great personal courage, inspiring his men by directing the cannon and rifle fire of the units near him. Longstreet even had his personal staff replace missing cannon crews and stood by calmly, chewing on a cigar and holding the reins of their horses, as he ordered them to fire canister into the advancing federals and pushed them back across the Bloody Lane.⁸⁹ After the days fighting was over, Lee called a meeting of his senior subordinates. Longstreet had stopped on the way to the meeting to help a family whose house was on fire from an artillery shell and Lee became concerned at his absence. When Longstreet finally arrived Lee walked forward and grasped his hand and said, "Ah! Here is Longstreet; here's my old *war-horse!* Let us hear what he has to say."⁹⁰

Shortly after Antietam President Jefferson Davis signed into law an act providing for the appointment of lieutenant generals and the creation of army corps and the Army of Northern Virginia was formally reorganized into a corps structure. Lee recommended both Longstreet and Jackson for promotion to lieutenant general. Lee's recommendation of Longstreet was without reservation or hesitation. However, Lee had some reservations about Jackson and felt the need to explain his endorsement. Longstreet was purposefully promoted on October 9, 1862 making him the senior lieutenant general in the Provisional Army of the Confederacy and second-in-command of the Army of Northern Virginia. Jackson was promoted a day later.⁹¹

Together Lee, Longstreet, and Jackson developed into a tremendous triumvirate of battlefield skill and ability and the three talented generals presented a formidable and effective senior leadership for the Army of Northern Virginia. This was again illustrated at the Battle of Fredericksburg. The newly appointed commander of the Army of the Potomac, Major General Ambrose Burnside, attempted to steal a march on Lee by moving his army 70 miles south, where he planned to cross the Rappahannock River at Fredericksburg. Burnside was hampered by a delay in the delivery of the pontoon bridges he needed to cross the river and the Confederate forces reached the town before he was able to cross the river.

Longstreet established extensive field fortifications on the heights behind the town. For days Longstreet oversaw the preparations of these positions, making adjustments and creating an effective "kill zone." He used rifle pits, trenches, breastworks of logs and earth, and abatis, in addition to an existing stone wall, to fortify his position. He also centralized his supporting artillery so that the fire would converge upon the enemy.⁹² When Jackson arrived he was moved into position on Longstreet's right flank. When the battle ensued and after repulsing three Union attacks Lee said to Longstreet, "General, they are massing very heavily and will break your line, I am afraid." Longstreet replied, "General, if you put every man now on the other side of the Potomac on that field to approach me over the same line, and give me plenty of ammunition, I will kill them all before they reach my line." Referring to Jackson's position Longstreet said, "Look to your right: you are in some danger over there but not on my line."⁹³ Longstreet's assessment proved correct as Burnside dashed twenty-two brigades against Longstreet's three brigades and supporting artillery. Fifteen of the Union brigades assaulting Longstreet's position were decimated.⁹⁴

Longstreet's force was detached to gather supplies in North Carolina and did not participate in the Battle of Chancellorsville which saw the tragic death of Jackson. In the ensuing invasion of Pennsylvania in the summer of 1863, as previously related, it was Longstreet who was burdened with the herculean task of assaulting the Federal positions on the second and third day at Gettysburg. Faced with as daunting an enemy position as the one the Confederates had held at Fredericksburg, Longstreet was unable to win the day. Lee never blamed Longstreet for

⁸⁶ Piston 22.

⁸⁷ Ibid., 23-4.

⁸⁸ Harold M. Knudsen, *General James Longstreet, The Confederacy's Most Modern General* (Girard, IL: USA Publishing, 2007), 15.

⁸⁹ Wert, *General James Longstreet*, 198.

⁹⁰ Ibid., 200.

⁹¹ Piston, 30.

⁹² Knudsen, 28-9.

⁹³ Wert, *General James Longstreet*, 221.

⁹⁴ Knudsen, 30.

the loss at Gettysburg, either immediately after the battle or until his death. Colonel William Allen, Lee's close friend and admirer, submitted the question to Lee after the war: Why was Gettysburg lost? The substance of Lee's answer was that he did not know the Union army was at Gettysburg because of the absence of Major General J.E.B. Stuart's cavalry and so found himself unexpectedly involved in the battle. Lee stated that a victory could have been won if he had been able to effect one continuous attack along the whole line. However he was unable to get General Ewell's three divisions, including Jubal Early's division, to act with decision and the Federals were able to oppose each of the Confederate corps in turn. In General Lee's answer there was no censure of Longstreet and no contention that the battle had been lost because of any slowness or inaction his part.⁹⁵

Shortly after the Pennsylvania campaign Longstreet with eight brigades and six batteries was dispatched to the Tennessee theater of operations. There Longstreet was instrumental in achieving the greatest Confederate victory of the war in the West.⁹⁶ Longstreet and his men endured a byzantine train ride from Virginia to Georgia to aid General Braxton Bragg's Army of Tennessee. Longstreet and his men arrived in the middle of the Battle of Chickamauga. Longstreet disembarked from the train, located the headquarters of General Bragg, and was immediately given command of the left wing of the army.⁹⁷ Longstreet stacked the seventeen brigades under his command in depth which allowed a powerful attack over the rough wooded terrain. Longstreet's assault broke through the Federal lines, routed the enemy, and resulted in one of the worst Union defeats of the war.⁹⁸ After the battle the Tennessee soldiers gave Longstreet the nickname "the Bull of the Woods."⁹⁹ William Garrett Piston wrote that "Chickamauga was the greatest achievement of his [Longstreet's] career."¹⁰⁰

Unfortunately, General Bragg failed to follow-up the success of Chickamauga and Longstreet became embroiled in the conflict that arose between the acerbic Bragg and his subordinate generals. In retaliation Bragg exiled Longstreet with only the forces he had brought with him, in an ill-conceived attempt to liberate Knoxville.¹⁰¹ In the interim General Lee had continued to petition the War Department for the return of Longstreet and his troops to Virginia. Writing to Longstreet during his absence Lee stated, "I missed you dreadfully and your brave corps. Your cheerful face and strong arm would have been invaluable. I hope you will return to me."¹⁰² Lee's request was granted and Longstreet and his command returned to the Army of Northern Virginia in the spring of 1864.

Lee and Longstreet were now facing Longstreet's old friend, Lieutenant General Ulysses S. Grant, who had taken command of all Union forces and had placed himself with Major General George Meade's Army of the Potomac. Longstreet again distinguished himself during the Battle of the Wilderness. Lee had placed Longstreet's two divisions between Gordonsville and Mechanicsville, which necessitated a thirty-six mile forced march on Longstreet's part to reach the battle. Once Longstreet reached the field he managed to make troop dispositions in a matter of minutes and sent his lead brigades crashing into the vanguard of Major General Winfield Scott Hancock's II Corps. Longstreet advanced six brigades in heavy skirmish lines followed by stronger supporting units. This allowed for Longstreet's to utilize the rough terrain and deliver continuous fire on the massed ranks of the Federals.¹⁰³ Longstreet then put together a flank attack that further drove back Hancock's troops. Wilderness historian Edward Steere attributed the success of the Confederates to "the display of tactical genius by Longstreet which more than redressed his disparity in numerical strength."¹⁰⁴ Hancock would state to Longstreet years later, "You rolled me up like a wet blanket."¹⁰⁵

As Longstreet and his staff were riding down the road and preparing a larger flanking movement Longstreet was severely wounded in the throat and arm by Confederate flanking fire. Bleeding profusely and with blood frothing on his lips, Longstreet would not let himself be carried from the field until he gave Major General Charles Field careful instructions on the counterattack he had been organizing.¹⁰⁶ Unfortunately, without Longstreet's leadership, the Confederate counterattack faltered and the Battle of the Wilderness ended in a draw. It is also worth noting that another factor for the stalling of the Confederate counterattack, in addition to the wounding of

⁹⁵ Glenn Tucker, *Lee and Longstreet at Gettysburg*, 218.

⁹⁶ James R. Furqueron. "The Bull of the Woods, James Longstreet and the Confederate Left at Chickamauga," in *James Longstreet, The Man, the Soldier, the Controversy*, eds. R.L. DiNardo and Albert A. Nofi, (Pennsylvania: Combined Publishing, 1998), 100-1.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 108.

⁹⁸ Wert, *General James Longstreet*, 321.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*,

¹⁰⁰ Piston, 71-2.

¹⁰¹ Gallagher, "The Army of Northern Virginia in May 1864: A Crisis of High Command," 104.

¹⁰² Glenn W. LaFantasie, "Considering Longstreet's Legacy." *MHQ: Quarterly Journal of Military History* 11, no. 2 (Winter 1999): 68. *America: History and Life with Full Text*, EBSCOhost (accessed July 5, 2011).

¹⁰³ Wert, *General James Longstreet*, 384-5.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 385.

¹⁰⁵ Shelby Foote, *The Civil War: A Narrative: Red River to Appomattox* (New York: Random House, 1974), 177.

¹⁰⁶ Piston, 88.

Longstreet, was General Ewell's corps failure to attack, which was the result of strong personal appeals from General Early to delay the attack.¹⁰⁷

The loss of Longstreet was a crippling blow to Lee and the Army of Northern Virginia. For the next five months Lee was forced to fight the Union forces of General Grant without the aid of his most trusted subordinate and Longstreet was sorely missed during the battles of the Overland Campaign. When Longstreet had sufficiently recovered from his wounds, Lee actively sought his return to the Army of Northern Virginia and the command of First Corps. When Longstreet did return the ANV was pinned down in the Petersburg entrenchments.¹⁰⁸ Longstreet continued to serve Lee faithfully during the final months of the war. Shortly before the surrender at Appomattox, Grant sent a message to Lee proposing a surrender of the Confederate troops. Lee passed the note to Longstreet, who read it, passed it back to Lee and said, "Not yet."¹⁰⁹ But eventually Lee was forced to surrender and after the fateful meeting at Appomattox, when Lee was leaving for Richmond, he warmly embraced Longstreet, then turning to Captain Tom Goree of Longstreet's staff he said, "Captain, I am going to put my old war-horse under your charge. I want you to take good care of him." Lee rode away on his horse Traveller, and the two men never saw each other again. Arguably, no man in the war served General Lee better, longer, or more faithfully than James Longstreet.

Longstreet's admirable performance on the battlefield was not without flaws and despite his outstanding record he did perform in a less than outstanding manner on a few occasions. As stated earlier, Longstreet's performance at the Battle of Seven Pines was poor. But Longstreet was a new and very young major general at the time and tasked with the tactical command of half of the army. While Seven Pines represented a low point for Longstreet, it was one that was not repeated. Longstreet set for himself a very high learning curve and did not make a mistake more than once. His ability to command large bodies of troops continued to grow and Seven Pines was an aberration that was not duplicated.

Some historians have criticized Longstreet's Suffolk Campaign in southeast Virginia and northeast North Carolina in the spring of 1863. It must be remembered, however, that Longstreet's primary mission was to forage for much needed supplies, not to engage enemy forces. Thanks to the tireless efforts of Longstreet, the Army of Northern Virginia began to receive adequate supplies. Longstreet successfully completed his primary mission and his reluctance to waste the lives of his men attempting to attack entrenched Federal positions protected by Union gunboats is indicative of Longstreet's respect for defensive warfare and cannot be seen as a failure.¹¹⁰

Longstreet's performance at Knoxville in the winter of 1863 was certainly a low-point and the campaign was generally ineffective. However, Longstreet never had adequate men or resources to properly invest General Burnside's troops, who were heavily fortified in Knoxville and to do so would have invited disaster. When Longstreet was leaving Virginia for the Tennessee theater Lee said to him, "Now, general, you must beat those people out in the West." Longstreet replied, "If I live; but I would not give a single man of my command for a fruitless victory."¹¹¹ Longstreet lived up to that promise and never wasted the lives of his men in fruitless enterprises. Longstreet was not a perfect general and made mistakes during his career. However, any fair assessment of his overall war record shows that he was the finest corps commander in the Confederate Army and, arguably, the best corps commander in the conflict on either side.¹¹²

The question remains, how could a commander with the outstanding record of James Longstreet be so effectively maligned and vilified *after* the conclusion of the war? It must be remembered that Longstreet's battlefield record was never a source of controversy during the war. It was only after the war, and the death of Robert E. Lee, that controversy was manufactured. In order to understand the effectiveness of the unfair attacks on James Longstreet's battlefield record, it is necessary to look at the phenomenon that was the Lost Cause.

The Lost Cause attacks on Longstreet's war record were political, not historical, in their nature and represented the fight for the historical memory of the U.S. Civil War. The Lost Cause mythology did not begin with Jubal Early's 1872 attack on James Longstreet. The Lost Cause apologists predated Early's work and began immediately after the end of the war. W. Stuart Towns describes the beginning of the Lost Cause movement in the following manner:

The guns had hardly cooled after Appomattox when Edward A. Pollard published a 700-page apologia for the Confederacy, *The Lost Cause: A New Southern History of the War of the Confederacy*. Pollard wrote, "It would be immeasurably the worst consequence of defeat in this war that the South should lose its moral and intellectual distinctiveness as a people, and

¹⁰⁷ Gallagher, "The Army of Northern Virginia in May 1864: A Crisis of High Command," 112-13.

¹⁰⁸ Piston, 90-1.

¹⁰⁹ Wert, *General James Longstreet*, 401.

¹¹⁰ Piston, 36-7.

¹¹¹ Longstreet, 375.

¹¹² Wert, *General James Longstreet*, 405.

cease to assert its well-known superiority in civilization, in political scholarship, and in all the standards of individual character over the people of the North."¹¹³

Pollard's work laid the foundation for the mythology of the Lost Cause in 1866, but it was the efforts of Jubal Early, William Pendleton, Reverend J. William Jones and the "Virginia Cult," working primarily through the *Southern Historical Society*, who intentionally created the principles and spread the misinformation of the Lost Cause.¹¹⁴

The *Southern Historical Society* was founded on May 1, 1869 and dedicated itself to preserving the Confederate perspective of the war.¹¹⁵ Once again, it must be pointed out that the organization claimed to be historical but was actually political, not historical, in its nature.¹¹⁶ As Richard Starnes explains:

The Society was uninterested in academic history, with its emphasis on objective evaluation of facts, sources, and interpretations. Rather, the organization dedicated itself to the creation of a Confederate historical memory. Historical memory is an individual's or a group's recollection of past events. Historical memories do not represent the past as it occurred, but rather the past as it is perceived.¹¹⁷

The *Southern Historical Society* had no desire to record actual history, rather it, and associated organizations like the United Daughters of the Confederacy, which was formed in 1894, the United Confederate Veterans, formed in 1889, and the Sons of Confederate Veterans, formed in 1896, sought to create a historical memory that would rationalize and glorify the antebellum South and the Confederate cause.¹¹⁸ The Lost Cause movement rationalized the war in a way that was sympathetic to the former Confederacy and attempted to do so by the control and manipulation of the historical record.

This mission was greatly enhanced by the *Southern Historical Society Papers* the publication arm of the *Southern Historical Society*. The *SHSP* began publication in 1876 and continued in print in some form until 1959. The sheer longevity of the *SHSP* magnified its effect on the fight for the historical memory of the Civil War. The *SHSP* is second only to the *War of Rebellion* records as the largest collection of battle accounts, unit rosters, and primary source material about the Confederate army. However, it is a collection with a historical agenda, and, as such, presents a possible trap to legitimate historians. As Starnes explains, "The articles that appeared in the *Papers* were carefully selected by the Society's editors to achieve one overriding goal: The acceptance by white southerners of the Lost Cause as the explanation of southern defeat."¹¹⁹

A number of basic tenets were foundational to the Lost Cause mythology. These included the denial or marginalization of slavery as a cause of the war and a romanticized version of slavery in the antebellum South; the denial of any true defeat of Confederate military forces; the deification of certain Confederate leaders, most importantly General Lee and "Stonewall" Jackson; and the vilification of other Confederate leaders, specifically James Longstreet. This romanticized and mythological version of the war was very comforting to many in the post-war South. As Peter S. Carmichael points out, "Shortly after Appomattox, many white southerners found intellectual and psychological comfort in the Lost Cause's depiction of a cavalier South, valiantly losing a war over states' rights, republicanism, and Christianity to the industrial might of Yankeeedom."¹²⁰

By focusing on the war in Virginia and generally ignoring the other theaters, the adherents of the Lost Cause submitted that the South was not truly defeated on the battlefield, but merely overwhelmed by massive Northern

¹¹³ W. Stuart Towns, "Haunting the South for a Century and More: Lost Cause Rhetoric and Ritual," *North & South: The Official Magazine of The Civil War Society* 14, no. 1 (May 2012): 40.

¹¹⁴ Alan T. Nolan, "The Anatomy of the Myth," in *The Myth of the Lost Cause and Civil War History*, eds. Gary A. Gallagher and Alan T. Nolan, (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2010), 14.

¹¹⁵ Richard D. Starnes, "Forever Faithful: The Southern Historical Society and the Confederate Historical Memory," *Southern Cultures* 2, no. 2 (Winter 1996): 177.

¹¹⁶ Adam Fairclough, "Scalawags," Southern Honor, and the Lost Cause: Explaining the Fatal Encounter of James H. Cosgrove and Edward L. Pierson," *Journal Of Southern History* 77, no. 4 (November 2011): 799-826, *America: History and Life with Full Text*, EBSCOhost (accessed July 6, 2012); Kevin M. Levin, "William Mahone, the Lost Cause, and Civil War History," *Virginia Magazine Of History & Biography* 113, no. 4 (September 2005): 378-412, *America: History and Life with Full Text*, EBSCOhost (accessed July 6, 2012).

¹¹⁷ Starnes, 177-8.

¹¹⁸ Fred Arthur Bailey, "Free Speech and the 'Lost Cause' in Texas: A Study of Social Control in the New South," *The Southwestern Historical Quarterly* vol. 97, no. 3 (January 1994):452-3; Adam Wesley Dean, "Who Controls the Past Controls the Future," *Virginia Magazine Of History & Biography* 117, no. 4 (September 2009): 319-355, *America: History and Life with Full Text*, EBSCOhost (accessed July 6, 2012).

¹¹⁹ Starnes, 179.

¹²⁰ Peter S. Carmichael, "Truth is Mighty and Will Eventually Prevail: Political Correctness, Neo-Confederates, and Robert E. Lee," *Southern Cultures* 17, no. 3: 9, *America: History and Life with Full Text*, EBSCOhost (accessed July 5, 2012).

manpower and materials. As Alan Nolan points out, "This was presented with a suggestion that the North's superior resources constituted Yankee trickery and unfairness."¹²¹ Additionally the South's loss was presented as inevitable from the beginning, suggesting that since the Confederacy could not have won the war, it did not lose it.¹²²

After his death in 1870, the Lost Cause proponents transformed Lee from an admired general and individual and he was "metaphorically resurrected into a Christlike figure of perfection and the embodiment of the Lost Cause as envisioned by his former comrades."¹²³ They re-imagined Lee as a person who personally abhorred slavery, but heroically chose to defend his home state of Virginia. The Lost Cause pronounced Lee unbeatable on the battlefield and the man the Confederacy most looked to as their supreme hope and hero throughout the war.¹²⁴ Of course this characterization was largely at odds with the facts. Lee, while certainly an admirable man and a talented general, was hardly the flawless Christian knight-soldier the Lost Cause presents him to be. Lee was not anti-slavery, but rather a strong believer in the institution.¹²⁵ While he was an able and talented tactician, he pursued a strategy of offensive operations that bled the Army of Northern Virginia to death. In the first three months of his command in 1862 he lost 50,000 men. The manpower drain that resulted from Lee's generalship was inconsistent with both the Confederacy's defensive strategy and the realities of the South's manpower shortages.¹²⁶ Additionally Lee was soundly defeated by General Meade at Gettysburg and General Grant in the Overland and Petersburg campaigns.

The Lost Cause adherents were not bothered by most of these facts. They could rationalize most of them away. They could ignore the realities of Lee's life and the wasted blood that he shed in his offensive operations. They could further rationalize that Grant had merely overwhelmed Lee with numbers during the closing year of the war. The major problem they had to contend with was Lee's defeat at Gettysburg. If Lee was the Christ-figure of the Confederacy, they needed a Judas Iscariot to explain his loss at Gettysburg, and for them this Judas Iscariot was James Longstreet.

James Longstreet, due to his perceived political apostasy by joining the Republican Party after the war and supporting civil rights for blacks, as well as his lack of a true state affiliation, was viewed as an appropriate scapegoat for the Lost Cause adherents. Prior to Longstreet's political activities his reputation in the South was best summed up by P.W. Alexander, who wrote in the *Southern Literary Messenger* that, "as a fighter, General Longstreet stands second to no man in the army. Indeed, I have heard that General Lee considers him 'the best fighter in the world'"¹²⁷ Edward Pollard in his writings frequently referred to Longstreet's in the most glowing manner. Pollard states that Longstreet was a commander of great skill and energy and describes him with terms such as "conspicuous, "effective" and "brilliant". Pollard characterizes Longstreet as "trusted, faithful, diligent, a hardy campaigner, a fierce obstinate fighter, an officer who devoted his whole mind to the war, and, indeed, seldom gave excursion to his thoughts beyond the vocation of arms."¹²⁸ Longstreet was described in the same exemplary manner by the other Civil War writers of the time, such as James D. McCabe in his *Life and Campaigns of General Robert E. Lee* (1866) and Reverend Robert Lewis Dabney's *Life and Campaigns of Lieu.-Gen. Thomas J. Jackson (Stonewall Jackson)* also published in 1866.¹²⁹ In short, Longstreet was properly recognized as one of the finest generals of the Confederacy and Lee's most trusted lieutenant.

However, in 1867 Longstreet wrote the first in a series of letters to the *New Orleans Times* counseling patience and cooperation with Republicans and Reconstruction. He further believed that southerners should support and attempt to positively influence the voting rights of newly freed slaves.¹³⁰ When Longstreet showed one of the letters he planned to have printed to his uncle, Judge Augustus Longstreet, his former guardian predicted grimly, "It will ruin you, son, if you publish it."¹³¹ But Longstreet, never one to back down from what he believed was right, published the letters. Longstreet further exercised the courage of his convictions and joined the Republican Party. He was eventually pardoned and after endorsing his good friend and kinsman, Ulysses Grant, for president, Longstreet was appointed surveyor for the port of New Orleans, the first in a number of political positions he would receive as a Republican.¹³²

¹²¹ Nolan, 17.

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ Carmichael, "Truth is Mighty and Will Eventually Prevail," 9.

¹²⁴ Thomas L. Connelly, "The Image and the General: Robert E. Lee in American Historiography," *Civil War History* 19, no. 1 (March 1973): 52, *America: History and Life with Full Text*, EBSCOhost (accessed July 6, 2012).

¹²⁵ Nolan, 26.

¹²⁶ Thomas L. Connelly, "Robert E. Lee and the Western Confederacy: A Criticism of Lee's Strategic Ability," *Civil War History* 15, no. 2 (June 1969): 118, *America: History and Life with Full Text*, EBSCOhost (accessed July 6, 2012).

¹²⁷ Alexander, P.W. "Confederate Chieftains." *Southern Literary Messenger* 25 (Jan. 1863): 37.

¹²⁸ Pollard, Edward A. *Lee and his Lieutenants*. New York: E.B. Treat, 1867, 411-420.

¹²⁹ Piston, 98-99.

¹³⁰ Ibid., 104-6.

¹³¹ Ibid., 105.

¹³² Ibid., 109.

Longstreet, ever the pragmatist, saw reconciliation as the best way for the South to recover from the misfortune of the war. However, most people in the racist and reactionary post-bellum South could only see that Longstreet was siding with the newly freed slaves and the hated Republicans, who had brought destruction on the South, against his former comrades. Longstreet's perceived apostasy would reach its zenith in New Orleans in 1874. The Crescent City White League, a racist paramilitary organization were accused of executing six Republican officeholders. Martial law was declared and rioting broke out. Longstreet, who had been appointed adjutant general of the state militia, led a force of 3,600 mostly African-American police and militia troops against a large force of 8,400 White League rioters.¹³³ This was viewed by many as both a betrayal of the South and the white race.

In addition to Longstreet's perceived political and racial heresy, Longstreet also lacked any clear state affiliation. Longstreet was born in South Carolina, but was raised in Georgia and Alabama.¹³⁴ He received his appointment to West Point and original Confederate commission from the State of Alabama.¹³⁵ During his time in the U.S. Army he was stationed at various posts and spent the greatest amount of time in Texas. After the war he first moved to Louisiana but eventually relocated back to Georgia.¹³⁶ In a time where state affiliation was an important part of an individual's identity, Longstreet was sorely lacking in that regard. To attack a Southerner was often seen as an attack on that person's home state. Longstreet, unfortunately, had no real home state to defend him. This mixture of political and geographic factors made Longstreet particularly vulnerable to attack by the leadership of the *Southern Historical Society Papers*.

While politics was the primary motive for the Lost Cause attacks against Longstreet, a number of Lost Cause leaders, such as Jubal Early and William Pendleton, were motivated by personal, as well as political reasons, for their assaults upon his record. Jubal Early's attacks on Longstreet served to divert attention from his abysmal performance at the Battle of Gettysburg. Although Early always claimed that he was the trustee and protector of Lee's reputation, it was Early, not Lee, whose reputation needed protecting.¹³⁷ Every attack on Longstreet shifted the blame away from Early's poor battlefield performance. Additionally, Longstreet amassed a battlefield record and the love of his troops that Early never attained. Longstreet, not Early, was Robert E. Lee's close friend, confidant, and "staff of his right hand." These were all things that Early certainly coveted, but never achieved. The jealousy that Early felt for Longstreet's war record and relationship with Lee must have been substantial.

Similarly, former Brigadier General William Pendleton had an unhappy army career, filled with neglect, rebuffs, and slights which "reached the peak of futility at Gettysburg."¹³⁸ Pendleton, who was ordained an Episcopal priest in 1838, was the nominal chief of artillery for the Army of Northern Virginia, but served mostly as an administrator. Pendleton was notoriously incompetent and Lee never gave him real control of the artillery in action. On the last day of battle at Gettysburg Pendleton meddled with the preparations for the artillery bombardment and ordered to the rear the ammunition and several howitzers that had been assigned to support the Pickett/Pettigrew/Trimble charge. By the time Pendleton's error was discovered it was too late to correct it and the troops advanced without that needed artillery support.¹³⁹

Additionally, shortly before Appomattox, Pendleton, representing a group of officers who wanted the army to surrender, approached Longstreet to ask him to take their proposal to Lee. Longstreet exploded at Pendleton and reminded him that the Articles of War provided the death penalty for an officer that asked his commander to surrender in the face of the enemy.¹⁴⁰ Longstreet told Pendleton that his corps was still able to whip four times their number and that he was there to back up Lee, not pull him down.¹⁴¹ Longstreet finally stormed to the pastor-general that, "If General Lee doesn't know when to surrender until I tell him, he will never know."¹⁴² Longstreet could be blunt, and this was not the sort of rebuke that would be easily forgotten by Pendleton.

Early, Pendleton, and the other members of the *SHSP* were unmitigated willful liars who hated James Longstreet.¹⁴³ William Garret Piston described them as "weak, insecure individuals whose postwar manipulation of Lee's memory gave meaning to otherwise empty lives."¹⁴⁴ These men all had a significant amount to gain personally by attacking Longstreet's war record. Longstreet, in one of his more rancorous moments, referred to them as "the Virginia crowd of thirbrates."¹⁴⁵ But these "thirbrates" were voracious in their attacks and had the

¹³³ Wert, *General James Longstreet*, 415-6.

¹³⁴ Longstreet, 1-3.

¹³⁵ Wert, *General James Longstreet*, 52.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, 417.

¹³⁷ Connelly, *God and General Longstreet*, 33.

¹³⁸ Glenn Tucker, *Lee and Longstreet at Gettysburg*, 4.

¹³⁹ Albert Nofi, "History, Politics, and James Longstreet," in *James Longstreet, The Man, the Soldier, the Controversy*, 22.

¹⁴⁰ Glenn Tucker, *Lee and Longstreet at Gettysburg*, 3-4.

¹⁴¹ Alexander, 528.

¹⁴² Longstreet, 533.

¹⁴³ William Garret Piston, "Marked in Bronze," in *James Longstreet, The Man, the Soldier, the Controversy*, 205.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 202.

¹⁴⁵ Glenn Tucker, *Lee and Longstreet at Gettysburg*, 3.

powerful *SHSP* as the platform for their lies. Thomas Connelly described the efforts to discredit Longstreet as "the most cynical manipulation that ever occurred in the writing of Civil War history."¹⁴⁶ False evidence was manufactured, official reports were redacted and edited, and backroom deals were struck to shift the blame from other officers to Longstreet.¹⁴⁷ Overall, it was arguably one of the worst cases of historical manipulation to ever occur U.S. history, all to discredit an authentic Confederate hero for political and personal reasons.

The negative impact of Douglas Southall Freeman's work and his attacks on James Longstreet, which relied completely on *SHSP* sources, cannot be overestimated. It resulted in widespread acceptance of the Lost Cause's lies and misrepresentations concerning Longstreet by most historians. As William Garret Piston points out, "Freeman is important not because he was a bad historian, but because he was, except when writing about Longstreet, a superb one, meticulous and painstaking in his analysis of Civil War personnel."¹⁴⁸ Freeman's acceptance of *SHSP* sources gave their lies the imprimatur of legitimate history. When Freeman died in 1953 Bruce Catton wrote that students of history had lost "one of their most learned, readable and ingratiating mentors."¹⁴⁹ Freeman was considered a legend whose works were acclaimed as classics that would last forever.¹⁵⁰

Amazingly enough, in an address given shortly before his death, Freeman himself warned historians against accepting the credibility of the testimony of those writing years after the war, stating; "It is a very grave mistake to give the same measure of acceptance to the late witness that is given to the early witness."¹⁵¹ Freeman must have never realized the *SHSP* testimony he so readily used was just that, the testimony of politically-motivated late witnesses. As Piston points out, "In thirty-eight years of research Freeman never uncovered a single wartime document which reflected negatively on Longstreet's relationship with Lee; his criticism of Longstreet was based exclusively upon the postwar writings of Longstreet's avowed enemies."¹⁵²

Freeman was himself a product of the South and son of the Lost Cause. A Virginian, he was raised on the lies and misrepresentations that the Lost Cause promulgated. Additionally, his great work *R.E. Lee: A Biography* was an epic, four-volume, Pulitzer Prize winning love letter to Robert E. Lee. Freeman described Lee as "one of the greatest human beings of modern time."¹⁵³ Freeman considered Lee's birthday "a personal holy day."¹⁵⁴ He placed Lee on the same Christ-like pedestal that the *SHSP* writers had strived to create. The vilification of Longstreet was as necessary to his narrative as it had been to the Lost Cause writers of an earlier generation. The lies of the *SHSP* served the storyline Freeman desired to write, so instead of questioning the dubious sources the *SHSP* provided, he accepted them without question because they served his purpose. Freeman was not even able to properly characterize Longstreet's physical characteristics. He described Longstreet as heavy and of low stature, giving the impression of squatness. Contemporary accounts describe Longstreet as a huge, giant of a man, six foot two inches tall, weighing well over two hundred pounds.¹⁵⁵ Such mischaracterizations are hardly the mark of a great historian.

Fortunately, a battlefield record as stellar as James Longstreet's could not remain hidden forever behind politically and personally motivated lies, historical bias and mischaracterizations. As additional generations of historians researched and wrote about the Civil War, the excellent battlefield record of Longstreet began to assert itself and some historians began questioning the Lost Cause version of events. In the 1950s a reevaluation of Longstreet's reputation began to emerge. Sanger and Hay released *James Longstreet: Soldier, Politician, Officeholder, and Writer*. This biography evaluated Longstreet more fairly, recognized his gifts as a battlefield commander, and rightfully placed the loss at Gettysburg with Lee.¹⁵⁶ Additionally in 1958 Glen Tucker published *High Tide at Gettysburg: The Campaign in Pennsylvania*, a highly readable and well-researched book that is devoid of Lost Cause mythology and truthfully portrayed Longstreet as the hard fighter and loyal subordinate that his record of service reflected.¹⁵⁷

A short time thereafter Shelby Foote began releasing his massive three-volume *The Civil War: A Narrative*.¹⁵⁸ Foote's 1.2 million word narrative history of the Civil War is enigmatic in the sense that it repeats

¹⁴⁶ Connelly, *Marble Man*, 86.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 88-9.

¹⁴⁸ Piston, "Marked in Bronze," 217.

¹⁴⁹ "Douglas Southall Freeman 1886-1953." *Military Affairs* (April 1953): 57-58. *America: History and Life with Full Text*, EBSCOhost (accessed July 5, 2011).

¹⁵⁰ T. Harry Williams, "Freeman, Historian of the Civil War: An Appraisal." *The Journal of Southern History*, Vol. 21, No. 1 (Feb., 1955): 91-100. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2954829> (accessed July 9, 2011).

¹⁵¹ Douglas Southall Freeman, "An Address." *Civil War History* 1, no. 1 (March 1955): 7-15. *America: History and Life with Full Text*, EBSCOhost (accessed July 5, 2011).

¹⁵² Piston, "Marked in Bronze," 217.

¹⁵³ Connelly, *God and General Longstreet*, 80.

¹⁵⁴ Connelly, *Marble Man*, 145.

¹⁵⁵ Glenn Tucker, *Lee and Longstreet at Gettysburg*, 166.

¹⁵⁶ Donald B. Sanger and Thomas R. Hay, *James Longstreet: Soldier, Politician, Officeholder, and Writer* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1952).

¹⁵⁷ Glenn Tucker, *High Tide at Gettysburg: The Campaign in Pennsylvania* (Gettysburg, PA: Stan Clark Military Books, 1958).

¹⁵⁸ Shelby Foote, *The Civil War: A Narrative*, 3 vols. (New York: Random House, 1958-73).

many of the same *SHSP* lies that Freeman does, such as Early's alleged conversation regarding Longstreet's slowness, but Foote's narrative lacks many of the subjective opinions that Freeman interjected regarding Longstreet's motivations and state of mind.¹⁵⁹ As a result Longstreet comes across as a much more appealing figure in Foote's work than in other earlier works that relied on the *SHSP* and Freeman. In short, Foote's work is so painstakingly thorough that Longstreet's battlefield excellence emerges despite the inclusion of Lost Cause mythology.

It is in 1974 that Longstreet's legacy truly begins the path to redemption and it was another Pulitzer Prize winning book that helped bring this about. Michael Shaara's *The Killer Angels* is a historical novel that details the Battle of Gettysburg.¹⁶⁰ Longstreet is portrayed sympathetically and heroically as Lee's trusted lieutenant who is burdened with the attacks of July 2nd and 3rd. It is amazing that after over a hundred years of scholarship it is a work of historical fiction that begins to set the historical record straight and force the revision and redemption of Longstreet's legacy.

During this same time period historians, such as Thomas L. Connelly, began questioning the Lost Cause deification of Lee and the corresponding vilification of Longstreet.¹⁶¹ James I. Robertson, Jr. examined the historiography of Gettysburg and the Lost Cause mythology surrounding the battle and had high praise for Tucker's *High Tide at Gettysburg: The Campaign in Pennsylvania* for his reevaluation of the battle.¹⁶² Overall the 1970's saw a greater tendency among historians to question the *SHSP* inspired version of events presented in Douglas Freeman's work and more historians began looking at Gettysburg and Longstreet with fresh historical eyes.

In the intervening years there has been a tremendous re-examination of Longstreet's historical legacy. In 1987 William Garret Piston published *Lee's Tarnished Lieutenant: James Longstreet and His Place in Southern History* a fair and well-researched book that examines Longstreet's military record, his post-war life, and the attacks he endured at the hands of the Lost Cause proponents. *General James Longstreet: The Confederacy's Most Controversial Soldier*, a complete biography of Longstreet by Jeffry Wert was published in 1993. Wert holds Longstreet more than accountable for any shortcomings he may have had, but effectively refutes the unfair attacks that Longstreet has endured at the hands of the Lost Cause supporters over the years.

In addition to these books many articles supported the rectification of Longstreet's legacy. In 1990 Gary Gallagher wrote; "Longstreet's distinguished record boasted some of the finest accomplishments of the Army of Northern Virginia" and "...his facility at handling a corps in tactical situations exceeded that of any other Confederate officer."¹⁶³ In a 1998 article Gallagher would again address many of the erroneous claims regarding Longstreet. He rejected the Lost Cause claims that Longstreet was a slow marcher, pointing out the 1875 statements of George Clay Eggleston that Lee himself said, "...that Jackson was by no means so rapid a marcher as Longstreet, and that he [Jackson] had an unfortunate habit of never being on time" and William P. Snow's 1867 work that describes Longstreet as "bold, daring, dashing and a rapid marcher."¹⁶⁴ Gallagher goes on to examine the charge that Longstreet was slow in reaching the battlefield at Second Manassas, another Lost Cause claim, concluding that; "By any reasonable standard, it was an excellent march that compared favorably with what Jackson's troops accomplished in covering the same ground."¹⁶⁵

In the same article Gallagher addresses whether Jackson or Longstreet was Lee's principal lieutenant concluding that; "The implication that Lee viewed Jackson rather than Longstreet as his principal lieutenant...is inaccurate" and "...the evidence makes amply clear that Lee did not consider Jackson the superior and Longstreet the inferior subordinate."¹⁶⁶ Gallagher has repeatedly defended Longstreet's reputation and attacked the inaccuracies of the Lost Cause authors, most recently in a 2011 article in which he reviews the historiography of the issue noting that; "Longstreet ended the war as a widely admired commander who deserved a position alongside Stonewall Jackson as one of the Confederate Army's top two corps commanders."¹⁶⁷

In a 2005 article historian Stephen Sears wrote a very stirring review of Longstreet's war record and the injustices done to him by the purveyors of the Lost Cause. Sears argues that Longstreet was not controversial as a soldier but rather as an *ex-soldier* and submits that Longstreet's story provides a cautionary tale to historians and supports the reason why history should be rewritten every generation or so to rectify injustices like those done to Longstreet. Sears states that "...General Longstreet was as loyal and as devoted to his country's cause as anyone in

¹⁵⁹ Shelby Foote, *The Civil War: A Narrative, Fredericksburg to Meridian* (New York: Random House, 1963), 488.

¹⁶⁰ Michael Shaara, *The Killer Angels* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1974).

¹⁶¹ Thomas L. Connelly, "The Image and the General: Robert E. Lee in American Historiography." *Civil War History* 19, no. 1 (March 1973): 50-64. *America: History and Life with Full Text*, EBSCOhost (accessed July 16, 2011).

¹⁶² James I. Robertson, "The Continuing Battle of Gettysburg: An Essay Review." *Georgia Historical Quarterly* 58, no. 2 (June 1974): 278-282. *America: History and Life with Full Text*, EBSCOhost (accessed July 5, 2011).

¹⁶³ Gary W. Gallagher, "The Army of Northern Virginia in May 1864," 104.

¹⁶⁴ Gallagher, *Lee and His Generals in War and Memory*, 144.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 153.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 151.

¹⁶⁷ Gary W. Gallagher, "How Lee's 'Old War-Horse' Gained a New Following." *Civil War Times* 50, no. 3 (June 2011): 21-23. *America: History and Life with Full Text*, EBSCOhost (accessed July 5, 2011).

Confederate gray, and that he had no superior as a hard fighter for that cause. He fully merits ranking alongside Stonewall Jackson as one of Lee's paramount lieutenants."¹⁶⁸

In addition to the 1993 biography of Longstreet, Jeffry Wert has written a number of articles rejecting the relentless and unfair attacks that Longstreet endured at the hands of the *SHSP* and later historians, noting how the untrue accusations haunted the general for the rest of his life.¹⁶⁹ In a 2006 article Wert again submitted that Longstreet was both a gifted tactician and arguably the Confederacy's finest corps commander.¹⁷⁰ Other historians such as Richard DiNardo rejected the Lost Cause attacks and also note Longstreet's skill as a superb tactician and his effective development of a modern staff which greatly increased his battlefield proficiency.¹⁷¹ Other historians have re-evaluated Douglas Freeman's work noting that many of Freeman's observations have withstood the test of time, the notable exception being his unrelenting attack upon James Longstreet.¹⁷²

It would seem that the historical reputation of Lieutenant General James Longstreet has gone full circle and his rehabilitation and return to his rightful place among the pantheon of Confederate heroes is complete. Unfortunately, that is far from true. Attempting to right a historical wrong is similar to trying to unring a bell. The damage and after effects of the Lost Cause, the *SHSP*, Douglas Freeman, and others still permeates the historical memory. Even when historians defend Longstreet's legacy they are often unduly harsh and willing to criticize any perceived flaw. An example of this tendency is seen in Glenn LaFantasie's 1999 article on Longstreet, which defends Longstreet's military record, while harshly questioning his loyalty to Lee and describing him as aimless and inconsistent when not on the battlefield.¹⁷³

Despite the historical re-evaluation and the recognition of the wrongs done to Longstreet's historical reputation many of the Lost Cause misrepresentations still survive in the historical record. To see an example of the still lingering effects of the Lost Cause on the modern historical landscape one merely has to look in *The Oxford Companion to Military History*. The article that appears on James Longstreet is generally fair, although only about half as long as the one for Stonewall Jackson. However, it makes the erroneous statement that Longstreet rose, "rapidly through division and corps command to emerge, *after the death of Jackson*, as Lee's principal lieutenant" (emphasis added).¹⁷⁴ This is simply pure Lost Cause nonsense. Any review of the actual historical record clearly shows that Longstreet was *always* Lee's principal lieutenant. It was Longstreet that Lee promoted first, it was Longstreet who was always given larger numbers of men to command, and it was Longstreet that Lee always turned to first for counsel.¹⁷⁵ Even *The Oxford Companion to Military History*, a respected, modern, and international historical reference book, that boasts 150 military historians and experts on its staff, cannot escape the specter of the Lost Cause lies of the past.

While the academic world of professional historians may have rejected, or is in the process of rejecting, many of the misrepresentations and mythology of the Lost Cause, this does not mean that the Lost Cause has disappeared from the historical memory. The landscape is littered with monuments and markers commemorating the Lost Cause. During the period of Lost Cause domination of historical thought hundreds of monuments and historical markers were erected. As James Loewen explains:

In those decades neo-Confederate organizations like the United Daughters of the Confederacy and Sons of Confederate Veterans distorted why the South seceded and made hash of Civil War history from beginning to end. To these groups, erecting monuments was a way to continue the Civil War by other means. As a result, to this day those who worked for civil rights in the nineteenth century, like ex-confederate General James Longstreet, get far less recognition on the landscape than people who worked against civil rights....¹⁷⁶

¹⁶⁸ Stephen W. Sears, "General Longstreet and the Lost Cause." *American Heritage* 56, no. 1 (2005): 53. *America: History and Life with Full Text*, EBSCOhost (accessed July 5, 2011).

¹⁶⁹ Jeffry D. Wert, "Lee's Old War-Horse." (cover story). *American History* 33, no. 1 (March 1998): 16. *America: History and Life with Full Text*, EBSCOhost (accessed July 5, 2011).

¹⁷⁰ Jeffry D. Wert, "The Best Subordinate." (cover story). *Civil War Times* 45, no. 6 (August 2006): 22-29. *America: History and Life with Full Text*, EBSCOhost (accessed July 5, 2011).

¹⁷¹ Richard L. DiNardo, "Southern by the Grace of God but Prussian by Common Sense: James Longstreet and the Exercise of Command in the U.S. Civil War." *Journal of Military History* 66, no. 4 (October 2002): 1011-1032. *America: History and Life with Full Text*, EBSCOhost (accessed July 5, 2011).

¹⁷² Peter S. Carmichael, "The Classics." *Civil War Times* 43, no. 5 (December 2004): 62. *America: History and Life with Full Text*, EBSCOhost (accessed July 6, 2011).

¹⁷³ Glenn W. LaFantasie, "Considering Longstreet's Legacy." *MHQ: Quarterly Journal of Military History* 11, no. 2 (Winter 1999): 60-69. *America: History and Life with Full Text*, EBSCOhost (accessed July 5, 2011).

¹⁷⁴ Richard Holmes, ed., *The Oxford Companion to Military History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 517.

¹⁷⁵ Wert, *General James Longstreet*, 205.

¹⁷⁶ James Loewen, *Lies Across America: What Our Historic Sites Get Wrong* (New York, N.Y.: W.W. Norton, 1999), 39.

After 150 years the field of Civil War history is still haunted by the ghosts of the Lost Cause and those phantoms still inhabit the historical memory of James Longstreet. Anything that one reads regarding the Civil War has most likely been affected by Lost Cause mythology. Any historical work or assessment of Longstreet must be scrutinized for Lost Cause inaccuracies because they impact his memory even today.

Longstreet died in 1903, deaf and nearly blind from cancer, and after enduring nearly four decades of pain from the severe wounds he received in the Battle of the Wilderness. When he died a number of Confederate groups, like the Savannah chapter of the United Daughters of the Confederacy, voted not to send flowers to his funeral and a North Carolina group of Confederate veterans refused to send condolences to his family. At the time of his death some Southern newspapers printed editorials suggesting it was time to *forgive* General Longstreet.¹⁷⁷ But, as Thomas Connelly and Barbara Bellows so poignantly asked: forgive him for what? What did James Longstreet ever do to deserve the lies, hate, and vitriol that he received prior to his death and that continued for close to 100 years? William Garret Piston submits that Longstreet was the victim of a double standard. He fought bravely and proficiently for a cause in which he believed. He sacrificed his physical health, fortune, and welfare for that cause as gallantly and heroically as any man in the Confederacy. When defeated he advised compromise and reconciliation with his enemies. As Piston states, "In other men, such as Robert E. Lee, this is nobility of character, but Longstreet has been labeled a traitor for his actions."¹⁷⁸

Edward Porter Alexander believed that the greatest error Longstreet ever made was to criticize Lee.¹⁷⁹ Longstreet made the mistake of thinking that he was dealing with the man that he had faithfully served with throughout the war. He failed to realize that the proponents of the Lost Cause had deified Lee and placed him on a god-like pedestal which put him above even the slightest criticism. But what man was better qualified to offer critical insights into the battlefield performance of Robert E. Lee than his "old war horse" and second-in-command? Longstreet's criticism of Lee was generally both gentle and fair. Lee was Longstreet's friend and long-time commander for whom he had the deepest respect. The most critical comment that Longstreet ever made about Lee was regarding Gettysburg. Longstreet stated, "That he [Lee] was excited and off his balance was evident on the afternoon of the 1st, and he labored under that oppression until enough blood was shed to appease him."¹⁸⁰ This, it can certainly be argued, is a fair assessment of what occurred. Lee, flushed with the victory of the first day of battle, believed his men could accomplish anything and dashed the Army of Northern Virginia against a hopelessly strong enemy position. No man can fairly be placed beyond all criticism, but that is the rule that the Lost Cause insisted be applied to Robert E. Lee, and for generations that rule was broken by very few men. As "Old Pete" wryly stated in an interview a few years before his death, "No Southern writer dares to admit that General Lee ever made a military mistake."¹⁸¹

The historical wrong done to James Longstreet, as well as the damage done to the historical record of the U.S. Civil War, by the mythology of the Lost Cause is an important example of how history can be hijacked and manipulated for political reasons. It provides a warning to all historians, because historians were willing accomplices to the injustice that was done to James Longstreet. It is the role of the historian to search for and assess historical facts and truth. In this instance, generations of historians were manipulated into taking an active part in the personal and politically motivated attacks upon a man who in no way deserved such treatment. The fact that such a miscarriage of historical justice occurred and continued for so many years is sobering simply because it could certainly happen again.

In 1998 General Longstreet was finally honored with a statue at the Gettysburg Battlefield.¹⁸² The statue sits on the southern end of Seminary Ridge, slightly out of the way in Pitzer's Woods, and has no pedestal. While equestrian statues of other generals such as Robert E. Lee, George Meade, Winfield Scott Hancock, and John Reynolds stand proudly on tall and exquisite pedestals, General Longstreet's statue does not. It is almost as if to signify that Longstreet has finally, but not completely, returned from the historical purgatory that he was unfairly cast into almost 140 years ago. As James Longstreet stated in 1878, "I do not fear the verdict of history on Gettysburg. Time sets all things right. Error lives but a day--truth is eternal."¹⁸³

¹⁷⁷ Connelly, *God and General Longstreet*, 36-7.

¹⁷⁸ Piston, "Marked in Bronze," 191-2.

¹⁷⁹ Connelly, *God and General Longstreet*, 37.

¹⁸⁰ Longstreet, 323.

¹⁸¹ Tucker, *Lee and Longstreet at Gettysburg*, 226.

¹⁸² "Gettysburg's Worst Monuments." *Civil War Times* 50, no. 3 (June 2011): 43-47. *America: History and Life with Full Text*, EBSCOhost (accessed July 5, 2011).

¹⁸³ *Southern Historical Society Papers*, Vol. 5 (1878), 269.

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