



An Excellent Primary Source

By Bert Dunkerley, August 4, 2020

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Confederate Veteran, January 1907

Published between 1893 and 1932, *Confederate Veteran* magazine is an incredible source that I mine for many different topics. Not only is it a good source for battle or wartime accounts, the magazine documents early preservation efforts, and it is a window into the formation of postwar culture in the South. I think it is one of the best sources on Civil War preservation, commemoration, and memory.

One thing that makes the publication special is that common soldiers contributed. *Battles and Leaders* includes many accounts written by officers. The *Official Records* includes valuable correspondence and reports. Yet this magazine features hundreds of letters by both officers and privates.

These accounts can be found nowhere else. Often a soldier is recalling an incident during camp or battle. Sometimes they are correcting or adding to a previously submitted article. These primary accounts are invaluable and provide unique insights to the battles and campaigns of the war. Some articles discuss a unit's history, others its battle flags. Some are opinion pieces on commanders or battlefield decisions.

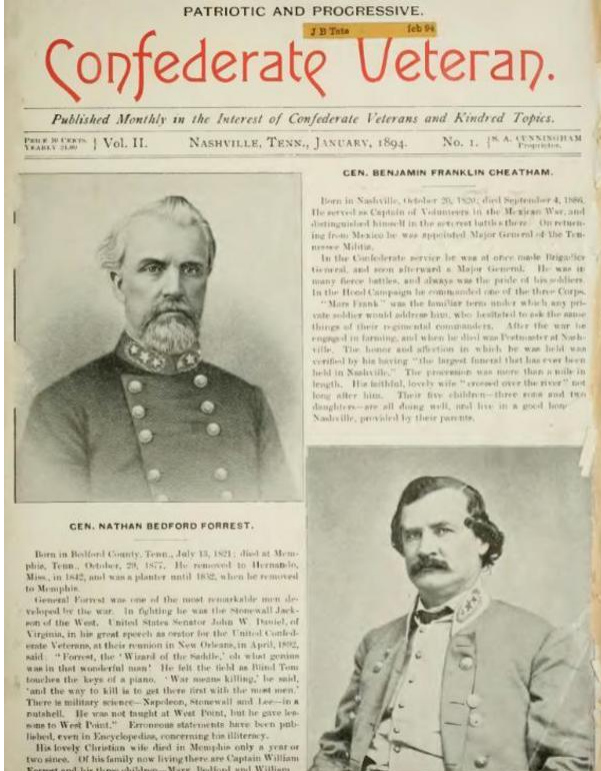
The periodical also chronicles early preservation efforts. The 1880s and 1890s saw the creation of the first National Military Parks at battle sites, and *Confederate Veteran* issues include many articles on their establishment and debates about their planning. The magazine includes articles about monuments, both in battlefields and on town squares and city centers.

The periodical's advertisements reveal a market catered to veterans and veteran's needs. Issues are filled with advertisements for artificial limbs, Confederate-themed medals and pins, flags and banners, walking canes, medicines, hotels and railroads close to battlefields and reunion sites, and even retirement communities for veterans.

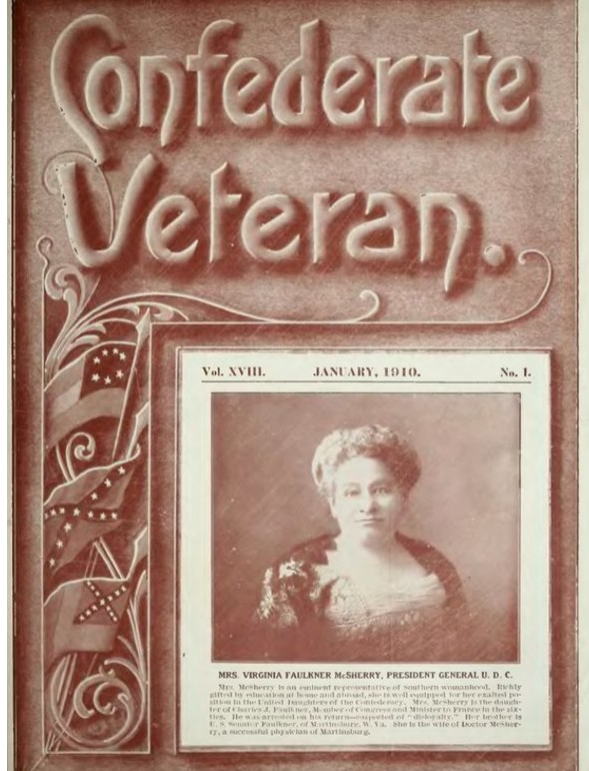


S. Cunningham

Summer Archibald Cunningham, the founder of *Confederate Veteran*



January 1894



January 1910

It is also possible to see the growth of a Confederate culture in the postwar South. Issues include articles on veteran reunions, the establishment of pensions, and the activities of various veteran associations. Some issues contain poetry, others short articles of fiction. Along with the eyewitness accounts and notes from reunions, they emphasize common themes: bravery, service, duty, sacrifice, and honor. Together, these activities influenced how the war was commemorated.

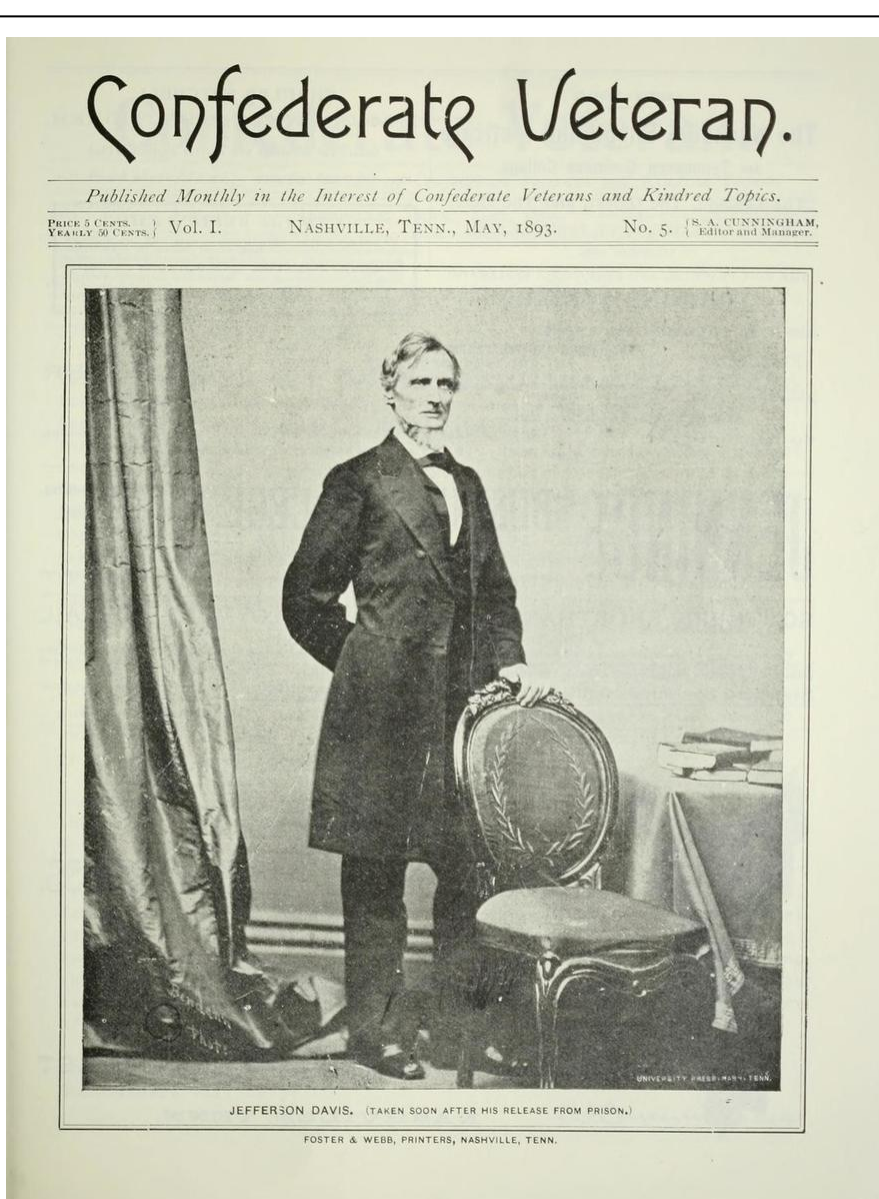
The United Confederate Veterans formed in 1889, and the United Daughters of the Confederacy in 1894. *Confederate Veteran* magazine chronicled their origins and follows their growth and evolution over several decades.

Another fascinating aspect of the periodical are the changes over time from early to later issues. By the 1920s and '30s there are less advertisements aimed at veterans: Their number were thinning rapidly. The 20th-century issues also feature new merchandise for sale such as printed histories of battles and generals. By the 1920s and '30s, the history of the war was being codified and published.

Later issues also feature fewer firsthand battle accounts and more reporting of and discussion of veteran issues. By this time veteran groups and associations, along with women's groups, were fully developed, with their own internal hierarchy and politics.

Lastly is the Roll of Honor, a feature of later issues that chronicles the passing of veterans with a short death notice and biography. In these later issues we see the passing of the torch: The veterans are passing on and descendants groups are carrying on their legacy.

I believe you could spend a lifetime doing nothing other than studying *Confederate Veteran* and culling it for insights into the war and its legacy. Published as a set of 39 bound volumes by the National Historical Society, many large research libraries and university libraries have this valuable resource.

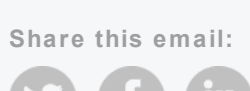


May 1893



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