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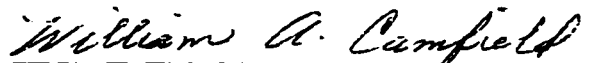
*THE BATTLE OF ATLANTA CYCLORAMA (1885-1886) AS NARRATIVE
INDICATOR OF A NATIONAL PERSPECTIVE ON THE CIVIL WAR*

by

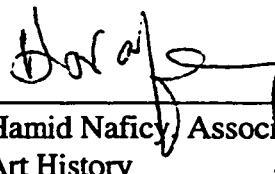
BRIDGET T. CECCHINI

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IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE
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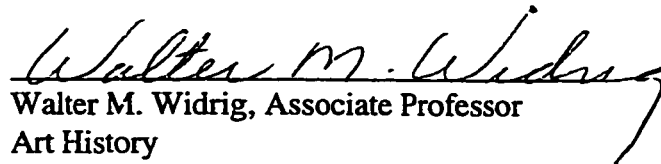
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ABSTRACT

The Battle of Atlanta Cyclorama (1885-1886) as Narrative Indicator of a National

Perspective on the Civil War

by

Bridget Theresa Cecchini

The American Panorama Company's cyclorama, *The Battle of Atlanta*, portrays an important battle during the Civil War. Representations of this engagement in photographs, illustrations, and history paintings presented isolated episodes, while cycloramas exhibited a sweeping narrative of the actual combat. These popular art attractions had a circular design that enabled artists to render a comprehensive view and exhibit characteristics of traditional history paintings. To ensure profits from its exhibition, the painters contemplated their potential spectators, avoiding antagonistic symbols. They considered contemporary attitudes concerning the war and created a composition that would foster the country's desire for reconciliation. The result was a portrayal of the battle that instructed its audiences on the heroic actions of both Union and Confederate soldiers amid the terrible circumstances of battle. Therefore, *The Battle of Atlanta* manifests a didactic narrative of the crucial engagement indicative of burgeoning public sentiment toward the Civil War during the 1880s.

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INTRODUCTION

The cyclorama painting of *The Battle of Atlanta* stands as an enduring reminder of an obsolete type of illusion and a lasting monument of an important time in American history. Cycloramas were a nineteenth-century popular art form capable of reproducing a complete view, utilizing a circular canvas housed inside a specially designed building. Eclipsed by the advent of motion pictures towards the end of the century, a subject I will examine in the epilogue, only three extant cycloramas in North America attest to the formerly fashionable method of painting. One of these, *The Battle of Atlanta* was painted by the American Panorama Company from 1885 to 1886.¹ William Wehner, an entrepreneur, headed the studio company based in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, and supervised the production of numerous paintings including other American Civil War battles and immense encyclopedic views of bible stories.² These cycloramas functioned as a type of pictorial entertainment for mass audiences and were exhibited for a nominal fee to the general public. Aside from their commercial purpose, the paintings were also used to impart educational and historical information. Wehner's staff of approximately eighteen painters worked for a year and a half to recreate a dramatic, inclusive, and didactic visual document of the July 22, 1864, conflict. Originally four hundred feet in circumference and approximately fifty feet tall, *The Battle of Atlanta* [figures 28-52] represents a climactic phase of the bloody fighting, depicting the Union troops rallying to recapture fortifications

¹ Also referred to as the Milwaukee Panorama Studio or the Milwaukee Panorama Company.

² The company may have been a partnership with another businessman, A. C. Zinn. Oliver F. Zinn, to Virgil Adkinson, 3 June 1937, Wilbur G. Kurtz Collection, Special Collections, The Robert W. Woodruff Library, Emory University, Atlanta. For information regarding the productions of the American Panorama Company, see George Peter, Milwaukee, to Virgil Adkinson, Atlanta, 3 June 1937, Wilbur G. Kurtz Collection, Special Collections, The Robert W. Woodruff Library, Emory University, Atlanta; Frances Stover, *The Panorama Painters' Days of Glory* (Milwaukee: Milwaukee County

seized by the attacking Confederate forces. The traveling exhibition of the painting brought favorable responses from both Northern and Southern viewers, including veterans of the battle. On February 22, 1892, Paul Atkinson opened the battle cyclorama in Atlanta to laudatory reviews by the press and spectators alike. Despite initial commercial success, the attraction quickly began to lose money and was eventually sold to Mr. Earnest Woodruff at auction on August 1, 1893, to satisfy outstanding rental payments owed to the lot owner. George V. Gress and Charles Northen promptly purchased the artwork and subsequently bequeathed it to the city of Atlanta for permanent public display. In 1922, the cyclorama was moved to a neoclassical concrete building in Grant Park where it has remained. The symbolic and informative characteristics of the painting were enhanced by the addition of three-dimensional figures and a museum of war memorabilia during the 1934-35 renovation executed by the Federal Art Project and the W. P. A. Beginning in 1979, the city engaged in a more extensive and substantial reconstruction project for the cyclorama building and the painting. It repaired damage from water, humidity, vermin, and previous restorations and installed modifications to prevent further deterioration while modernizing and expanding the entire facility.

Curiously, the American Panorama Company's cyclorama of the Battle of Atlanta has remained an important artwork owing in part to its initial commercial function. As a business venture, the producers of the cyclorama sought to satisfy the interests of the American public and, in doing so, reflected the cultural conditions of the time. After a decade-long effort to forget the decisive conflict, a popular interest in the Civil War emerged. In the 1880s, Americans started formulating a stronger sense of national identity

based on a desire for reconciliation and common experience. The once divided population generally accepted the war into the collective conscious as a horrific event that solidified the United States as a country and demonstrated the integrity of individuals on both sides of the conflict. Cycloramas of the Civil War's important battles provided dramatic, engaging, and noble subject matter that appealed to these post-war audiences. The attractions were profitable because they reinforced the burgeoning sense of nationalism by remembering valorous behavior of its citizens during one of the most important times in American history. As one of the major engagements of the war, the Battle of Atlanta, was an ideal selection for the commercial art form. The images included in the painting by the American Panorama Company were intended to satisfy all possible patrons of the exhibition, in either the North or the South. These commingled cultural and financial considerations resulted in a portrayal of the historical event that instructed its various audiences on the heroic actions of both Union and Confederate soldiers amid the terrible circumstances of battle. The painting fostered the maturing feelings of reconciliation and nationalism towards the close of the century. Moreover, advantageous conditions existed for the American Panorama Company, namely the paucity of images depicting the Battle of Atlanta and the narrative format of cyclorama paintings. Artistic representations of this engagement in previous Civil War photographs, newspaper illustrations, and traditional history paintings were incommensurate the characteristics of actual combat. Cyclorama painters could depict a complete battlefield narrative on their expansive canvases. The characteristics of a cyclorama painting allowed these popular artists to render a complete, unflinching, and nationalistic vision of the bloody clash of General Sherman's and General

Hood's armies just outside Atlanta. Therefore, *The Battle of Atlanta* manifests a didactic narrative representation of the crucial engagement indicative of expanding public sentiment toward the Civil War during the 1880s, a sentiment absent from previous photographs, illustrations, and history paintings.

To comprehend why the cyclorama was the only narrative rendition of the Battle of Atlanta that symbolized the growing reconciliatory attitudes of the American public in the 1880s, several arguments must be correlated. First, the historical significance of the battle must be elucidated. It was the costliest encounter of General Sherman's overall campaign to capture Atlanta and it was an event that impacted the course of the American Civil War. In failing to repel the advancing Union army despite initial advantages gained by a surprise attack, the Confederates missed their best opportunity to prevent the eventual occupation of the city. As a dramatic and important incident essential to the history of the Civil War, the Battle of Atlanta was an event post-war Americans wanted to know about and remember.

Next, the painting needs to be placed within an art historical context, examining its artistic predecessors. *The Battle of Atlanta* stems from two distinct artistic traditions, history paintings and popular art cyclorama paintings. Each art form demonstrated a continuing interest, throughout Europe and the United States, in narrative battle scenes that influenced post-war cyclorama painters. History paintings of military combat, since the Early Renaissance, expounded moral codes of behavior and envisioned a sense of national identity. Prior to the Civil War, these artworks were among the most highly regarded type of artistic expression and they were intended to teach elevated principles by

reproducing a single action in an historical event. The images of warfare were frequently used to arouse feelings of patriotism by visualizing episodes of national importance, giving citizens a sense of unity through common experience. On the other hand, cyclorama paintings were a type of optical illusion primarily concerned with attracting and engaging audiences by recreating a complete view of a dramatic historic affair. Battle scenes in cycloramas chronicled an entire narrative, including all the various incidents of combat occurring at a specific moment in time. These paintings intended to captivate most spectators by allowing them to vicariously experience and learn about contemporary events outside of their daily lives.

Then, the lack of any previous artistic depictions of a patriotic narrative about the Battle of Atlanta requires explanation. During the Civil War, photographers, sketch artists for illustrated journals, and history painters failed to render a complete didactic story of the battle. Contemporary popular art coverage of the engagement, and the Atlanta campaign in general, was hampered by economic, technical, and aesthetic conditions. Several reasons caused the dearth of history paintings depicting Civil War combat and of the few battle paintings produced, no known history painting recorded the momentous July 22nd battle. After the war, images of Civil War battles were essentially abandoned owing to psychological denial of the recent tragedy, fears of renewed discord, and public feelings of disillusionment about warfare.

Following more detailed accounts of these conditions in succeeding chapters, I will explore the environment surrounding the production of the cyclorama in 1885-86 to demonstrate the cultural and financial reasons why it was painted. After the passage of

time and the end of forced reconstruction, the public expressed a growing fascination with the Civil War. Instead of ascribing guilt to inhabitants of the “other” side for causing the war, some people articulated the unifying results of the war, especially the elimination of slavery, reduction of sectional isolation, nobility of the individuals who fought for their respective beliefs, and fellowship of shared experiences. Individuals wanted to understand the historical event that had radically altered the entire nation and therefore sought out information about the war, including written, oral, and visual accounts of major battles. Traditional history paintings of Civil War battles failed to satisfy the new demands, hindered by a declining artistic interest in the genre. The waning cyclorama industry was renewed in history paintings' absence, employing the advantages their expansive format provided. Cyclorama painters of important Civil War battles were capable of documenting the complete historical episode while including the moralizing characteristics of history paintings. In producing *The Battle of Atlanta*, the American Panorama Company seized an opportunity to depict a nationalistic narrative that audiences had not seen in other art forms.

At this point, mindful of the cultural conditions in 1885-86, the actual production of the cyclorama will be explored. Who commissioned the approximately \$40,000 painting remains an unresolved issue, with John A. Logan, a Wisconsin veterans group, and the studio head William Wehner as possible patrons. Notwithstanding the commission confusion, each client was primarily concerned with recouping their expenses with a successful exhibit. In order to satisfy the patrons' intended audiences, the cyclorama painters had to respond to public inclinations. As history painters had done before them,

the American Panorama Company researched the battle and used costumed models for figure studies. They reconstructed a dramatic event using the cyclorama format, careful to include images of everyday heroic citizens while maintaining the historical integrity of the painting.

Finally, an examination of *The Battle of Atlanta* composition will illustrate the manifestation of contemporary social phenomenon, namely reconciliation and nationalism. A description of the whole painting reveals how the cyclorama painters used traditional history painting elements combined with superficial historical details in their visual narrative. Preservation of the nation as one unified whole was partially assured by the costly Union victory at the Battle of Atlanta. Almost twenty years later, it was a meaningful event in the country's past, capable of engendering a sense of common sacrifice that bound citizens together. Analysis of the cyclorama exhibits images intended to indulge Northern and Southern audiences and therefore indicative of increasing civil feelings toward the Civil War. Society lauded dignified, courageous wartime conduct by both Union and Confederate soldiers, a deference symbolized in the painting. The cyclorama painters selectively applied poetic license to enhance the composition of the painting and minimize the presence of minorities that were not considered important in their homogenized view of the battle and individuals whose conduct was deemed unchivalrous or contemptible. Furthermore, the painting presented an emotional symbol of conciliation, idealizing the appropriate behavior of a reunified population.

CHAPTER 1

HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF THE BATTLE OF ATLANTA ON JULY 22, 1864

The Civil War battle represented in the American Panorama Company's cyclorama was a consequential engagement, substantially affecting the Northern military operation intent on capturing the Southern stronghold in Atlanta. Recognizing the commercial potential in visually commemorating this armed conflict, the studio selected it on account of the prominent role it played in the war. The struggle, also referred to as the Battle of Bald Hill or the Battle of Decatur, was the "largest and bloodiest" encounter of the entire Atlanta campaign.³ Its importance as an historical event was predicted in a July 20, 1864 newspaper article stating, "The greatest battle of the war will probably be fought in the immediate vicinity of Atlanta" and "if we are victorious the Peace party will triumph: Lincoln's Administration is a failure, and peace and Southern independence are the immediate results."⁴ The Confederate army had caught the Union forces off guard in a surprise assault. This bold attack by General Hood manifested the last real opportunity for the Confederate forces to repulse Sherman's army from Atlanta. Subsequently, Hood's army was able to break Sherman's military lines and capture Union fortifications and artillery. The Union army was "at its most critical point in the campaign for Atlanta, severely mauled and beaten back in many places by the tireless Confederates."⁵ In spite of their successful advances, the Rebel troops were repelled by Union counterattacks and

³ Albert Castel, *Decision In The West: The Atlanta Campaign of 1864* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 1992), 410-12. Estimates on the Confederate casualty figures have been as high as 10,000 but recent scholarship places the number at 5,500. The number of Union troops lost or taken prisoner was approximately 3,722.

⁴ *Atlanta Daily Appeal* quotation in *New York Times*, 29 July 1864; quoted in Castel, *Decision In The West*, 395.

⁵ Samuel Carter III, *The Siege of Atlanta, 1864* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1973), 224.

suffered massive casualties. The harsh defeat demoralized the Confederate army and forecast the eventual fall of the city. Subsequent engagements in the Atlanta campaign, at Ezra Church and Jonesboro, only stalled the Federal advance.

Known as the Gate City of the South, Atlanta's defense and subsequent occupation affected the course of the Civil War. The 1864 Atlanta Campaign encompassed military, political, and psychological components. Militarily, the city was a strategic point in the Confederate States of America. Atlanta was one of the last Southern industrial centers left, home to important military factories, foundries, and ammunition stores. It furnished the needs of the Confederate forces as well, who by this stage of the war were having difficulty clothing and feeding their troops. As the connecting center for some of the remaining critical Southern railroads, the city provided the means for the vital transportation of supplies, personnel, and communications. Jefferson Davis said of Atlanta, "Its fall would open the way for the Federal Army to the Gulf on the one hand, and to Charleston on the other, and close up those rich granaries from which Lee's armies are supplied. It would give them control of our network of railways and thus paralyze our efforts."⁶

Besides the industrial and military resources possessed by the city, Atlanta held political weight. The upcoming presidential election in November 1864 was perceived by the Confederacy as an opportunity for negotiating a satisfactory peace. Northern

⁶ A. A. Hoehling, *Last Train From Atlanta* (New York and London: Thomas Yoseloff, 1958), 17; On the military significance of Atlanta in Civil War cited in this paragraph, see Castel, *Decision In The West*, passim; Thomas L. Connelly, *Autumn of Glory: The Army of Tennessee, 1862-1865* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1971), 368-371, 467-469; James M. McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom: The Civil War Era* (New York: Ballantine Books for Oxford University Press, 1988), 743-756; Allan Nevins, *The War for the Union*, vol. 4, *The Organized War to Victory 1864-1865* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1971), passim.

sentiment against the war had grown due to a misconceived lack of military progress, a fact the South hoped to manipulate to their advantage. Democrats called the war a failure and advocated settling with the Confederacy to bring an end to the interminable bloodshed. Believing an electorate tired of war would select a Peace Democrat, the South attempted to resist, or hopefully even repeal, the Union advances until after the election. John B. Jones, a Confederate war clerk wrote, "If we can only *subsist* till then, we may have peace,"⁷ In fact, once the victorious Union army took possession of Atlanta, public opinion in the North shifted in favor of Lincoln's re-election. Realizing the consequences of the Confederate defeat in terms of the presidential election, the *Augusta (Ga.) Constitutionalist* wrote:

Atlanta is thus the great strategic point. A crushing, decisive victory will inevitably crush the power of the enemy, and break down the war party of the North. A substantial victory now will lead to peace. If on the contrary, we meet with a reverse of a serious character in Georgia, the war will be hopelessly prolonged.⁸

Politically, the battles for Atlanta affected the fates of the opposing governments.⁹

This political significance coexisted with the psychological import of the Atlanta campaign. As with Richmond, the city had come to symbolize the heroic resistance of the Confederacy. Holding out against the aggressor, the citizens of Atlanta represented the defense of the exalted cause to Confederates. Deprived of the superior resources and armaments of the North, the South persisted in the belief that their ideals would eventually

⁷ Howard Swiggett, ed., *A Rebel War Clerk's Diary*, vol. 2 (New York: Old Hickory Bookshop, 1935), p. 299; quoted in Larry E. Nelson, *Bullets, Ballots, and Rhetoric: Confederate Policy for the United States Presidential Contest of 1864* (University, AL: University of Alabama Press, 1980), 51.

⁸ Castel, *Decision In The West*, 121.

⁹ On the political importance of Atlanta cited in this paragraph, see Nelson, *Bullets, Ballots, and Rhetoric*, passim; McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom*, 721, 743, 760-776, 858; Nevins, *The War for the Union*, vol. 4, *The Organized War to Victory 1864-1865*, 58-116.

prevail. The Northern public, at this time, doubted their ability to win the war. People also began to question the validity of arguments used to support the Union opposition, namely the deplorable institution of slavery, the detriment of sectional aggression, and the need to preserve national unity at all costs. Sustaining warfare against a populace united was difficult, especially since members of the Union often disagreed as to the nature of their own purpose.¹⁰

The seizure of the city by Sherman's army reversed the perspective held on both sides. Atlanta's loss demoralized the rebels, revealing for the first time the idea that a Southern victory might not ever be possible. The heart of the Confederacy had fallen to the invaders and took the population's morale with it. Compounding the psychological impact was the disappointing denial of the possible election of a Democratic president willing to make peace. The North, realizing an important military goal, felt rejuvenated. It revealed the waning strength of the opposition. The superiority of numbers, industry, and supplies was finally starting to produce visible advantages worthy of sacrifice.¹¹ Hence, the Confederate loss of the Battle of Atlanta and subsequent acquisition of Atlanta affected the lives of all citizens, Union and Confederate. Their common experience would later translate into a sense of national rapprochement, symbolized by the cyclorama.

¹⁰ On the psychological importance of Atlanta cited in this paragraph, see Pressly, *Americans Interpret Their Civil War*, 28-51, 99-114, 115-117; McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom*, 743-756, 773-776, 858; Nevins, *The War for the Union*, vol. 4, *The Organized War to Victory 1864-1865*, 29-57; Castel, *Decision in the West*, passim; Carter, *The Siege of Atlanta, 1864*, passim; Hoehling, *Last Train from Atlanta*, passim.

¹¹ On the impact of the fall of Atlanta cited in this paragraph, see McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom*, 754-756, 774-776, 858; Nevins, *The War for the Union*, vol. 4, *The Organized War to Victory 1864-1865*, 220-229, 241-253; Castel, *Decision In The West*, 522-559; Carter, *Siege of Atlanta*, 320-363; Hoehling, *Last Train from Atlanta*, 399-540.

CHAPTER 2

HISTORY PAINTING

Military events of national significance, analogous to the Battle of Atlanta, have been the subject matter of high art for centuries. In rendering the cyclorama, the American Panorama Company artists continued the tradition of nationalistic military art. Battle paintings were a major category within the history painting genre since the Early Renaissance. These depictions of the past embodied feelings of civic pride, elucidating a commonwealth's identity by recalling the events that had affected it. As ascertained by Ernest Renan, collectively held national memories are essential for creating a civil identity.¹² Celebrated triumphs and deprivations in a country's past illicit a sense of solidarity among individuals, and wars are the ultimate manifestation of these experiences. The sacrifices made for the common good during times of war extract the strongest sense of nationalistic devotion. Military history paintings correspondingly instructed viewers on ideal behavior: courage, dignity, honor, and benevolence. In dramatizing the combat actions of important historic individuals, history painters symbolized how every citizen should behave.

Didactic battle paintings were a prominent visual method of defining national identity for approximately five centuries of Western art. As early as 1436, in his momentous treatise On Painting, Leon Battista Alberti codified the representations of human life of a grand and emotional scale.¹³ To fulfill the recommendations for exalted

¹² Ernest Renan, "What is a nation?," in *Nation and Narration*, ed. Homi K. Bhabha (London and New York: Routledge, 1990), 8-21.

¹³ Leon Battista Alberti, *On Painting*, trans. with introduction and notes John R. Spencer, rev. ed. (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1966).

and moving subjects, painters frequently depicted combat and military victories. Paolo Uccello's *The Battle of San Romano, 1430s-1450s (?)* [figure 1] monumentalized the victory of the Florentines over the Sienese. Such scenes of triumph were patriotic, exhibiting the noble behavior of well known individuals fighting for their country. During the Renaissance and Baroque periods, the supremacy of history painting was firmly entrenched. Artists habitually returned to the theme of valor in combat, often relying on works from antiquity. In *The Surrender at Breda [Las Lanzas], 1639-41* [figure 2], Diego Velázquez improved upon the grandiose depiction of military events by including accurate topography, life models, and historical military dress. While his rendition possessed accurate details, the high-minded nature of the composition remained paramount. It symbolized, through the gestures of the Spanish conquerors and the vanquished Dutch, the magnanimity of victory, and the nobility of defeat.¹⁴

European academies in the seventeenth- and eighteenth-centuries further systematized the aesthetic procedures for history paintings by essentially dictating to artists the suitable style and subject matter. André Félibien placed history painting at the summit of his hierarchy of artistic endeavors during a series of conferences at the French Académie Royale de Peinture et de Sculpture in 1667. He ranked the *grand peinture* as the noblest branch of painting, above portraiture, the depiction of animals, landscape, and still life and instructed that "it is necessary to represent the great battles as the

¹⁴ On the early evolvement of history painting cited in this paragraph, see Barbara J. Mitnick, "The History of History Painting," in *Picturing History: American Painting 1770-1930*, ed. William Ayres (New York: Rizzoli in association with Fraunces Tavern Museum, 1993), 29-37; Mark Thistlethwaite, "The Most Important Themes: History Painting and Its Place in American Art," in *Grand Illusions: History Painting in America*, eds. William H. Gerdts and Mark Thistlethwaite, The Anne Burnett Tandy Lectures in American Civilization, no. 8 (Fort Worth, TX: Amon Carter Museum, 1988) 8-14.

Historians.”¹⁵ One of a series of five paintings, *Defeat of Porus by Alexander, 1665-1668* [figure 3] by Charles Le Brun, demonstrates Félibien’s teachings. These military compositions of Alexander the Great’s battles constitute an allegorical symbol of the French reigning monarch Louis XIV and highlight his strength and charitable behavior toward those he dominates.¹⁶ In the next century, one of the most influential of these institutions was the Royal Academy in England, led by Sir Joshua Reynolds. His series of discourses from 1769 to 1790 advised students how best to grasp the moment of heroic action in order to create an aesthetic and moral composition.¹⁷ War imagery provided symbolic, patriotic, and morally instructive stories that were filled with dramatic action. As history painting evolved in the late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-centuries, the genre style gradually shifted from an universal idealistic approach to a more particular realistic manner.¹⁸ Benjamin West has been credited with enhancing the tradition of Western history painting with his 1770 painting, *The Death of General Wolfe* [figure 4]. The artist’s truthful rendition of a contemporary event, while employing poetic license to maintain the grandeur of heroic sacrifice, firmly established recent history as legitimate subject matter for history paintings. West’s achievement inspired other artists, most notably John Singleton Copley, to render contemporary military scenes in the grand

¹⁵ André Félibien des Avaux, *Conférence de L’Académie Royale de peinture et de sculpture*, The Printed Sources of Western Art, ed. Theodore Besterman, no. 8 (Paris: Chex Frederic Leonard, 1669; reprint, Portland, OR: Collegium Graphicum, 1972).

¹⁶ Julius S. Held and Donald Posner, *17th and 18th Century Art: Baroque Painting Sculpture Architecture*, Library Of Art History, ed. H. W. Janson (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc.; New Jersey: Prentice Hall, Inc., 1971), 163-164.

¹⁷ Sir Joshua Reynolds, *Discourses On Art*, ed. Robert R. Wark (New Haven and London: Yale University Press for The Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art (London) Ltd., 1975).

¹⁸ Mitnick, “The History of History Painting,” 29-30, 37-43; Thistlethwaite, “The Most Important Themes: History Painting and Its Place in American Art,” 7-17.

manner. Their epic battlefield compositions conveyed ideas of nationalism as well as exemplifying high-minded values.

These aspects of European history painting informed and inspired artists working in America. Benjamin West and John Singleton Copley, colonists by birth, had become English residents due to the dearth of colonial patronage for artwork in the grand manner. But in the wake of the Revolutionary War, painters in the United States initiated a native tradition of history painting.¹⁹ In most cities, the number of art schools, museums, patrons, and practicing artists rose rapidly, owing to America's desire for a native art to help establish their international status.²⁰ John Trumbull visually characterized the Revolutionary War in a series of paintings, at the suggestion of his teacher, Benjamin West. His dramatic battle compositions, including *The Death of General Warren at the Battle of Bunker's Hill, 1786* [figure 5], manifested a concern for realism and historical authenticity combined with patriotic sentiment.²¹ The images of defiant colonial civilians standing against the professional British army exemplified the characteristics of the American Revolution. Common citizens had fought courageously and died to establish the freedom enjoyed by members of the resulting democracy. Trumbull's artwork reflects the desire of early Americans to establish a national identity by means of history paintings.

¹⁹ For further information on the effect of nationalism on Post-Revolutionary War art, see William H. Gerdts, "On Elevated Heights: American Historical Painting and Its Critics," in *Grand Illusions: History Painting in America*, eds. William H. Gerdts and Mark Thistlethwaite, The Anne Burnett Tandy Lectures in American Civilization, no. 8 (Fort Worth, TX: Amon Carter Museum, 1988), 71-81; Neil Harris, *The Artist In American Society: The Formative Years 1790-1860* (New York: George Braziller, Inc., 1966), 56-88.

²⁰ Lillian B. Miller, *Patrons and Patriotism: The Encouragement for the Fine Arts in the United States 1790-1860* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1966), vii-viii, 3-23.

²¹ Clive Bush, *The Dream of Reason: American Consciousness and Cultural Achievement from Independence to the Civil War* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1977), 142-48; Patricia M. Burnham, "The Case of the Battle of Bunker's Hill," in *Redefining American History Painting*, eds. Patricia M. Burnham

As Renan has elucidated, a nation consists of two principles, a united past and the consent to perpetuate this culture.²² The previous accomplishments of citizens spur on future generations' heroic actions and maintain the purposefulness of continuing the nation. By immortalizing the Revolutionary War battles, Trumbull fostered a new sense of civic identity and gave individuals a set of collective values.

In the early nineteenth-century, most Americans were not interested in history paintings, but artists persisted in their efforts and achieved varying levels of success. Artists including John Vanderlyn, Washington Allston, Samuel F. B. Morse, and Rembrandt Peale painted in the grand style in an effort to inspire individuals, and most other serious painters executed at least one history painting.²³ Patronage of history painters increased slightly, strengthened by the popular interest in legitimizing and sustaining the country's national character as well as artists' modifications to smaller scale paintings of more intimate episodes.²⁴ The War of 1812, resembling the Revolutionary War, gave history painters another patriotic subject. Renditions of America's military aggressiveness in battlepieces like Thomas Birch's *Perry's Victory at Lake Erie, 1814* [figure 6] further characterized the nation's struggle to substantiate its sovereignty not only in the eyes of the entire world, but for the native multitudes.²⁵

By the middle of the nineteenth-century, a flourishing sense of nationalism supported the zenith of American history paintings. Numerous artists, including Peter

and Lucretia Hoover Giese (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 37-53.

²² Renan, "What is a nation?," 8-21.

²³ Thistlethwaite, "The Most Important Themes: History Painting and Its Place in American Art," 21-32.

²⁴ Gerds, "On Elevated Heights: American Historical Painting and Its Critics," 68, 72, 93-94.

²⁵ Mark Thistlethwaite, "The Artist as Interpreter of American History," in *In This Academy: the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, 1805-1976*, Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts (Pennsylvania:

Frederick Rothermel, Junius Brutus Stearns, and William Ranney, produced hundreds of history paintings on a wide scope of subjects.²⁶ The Revolutionary War was frequently rendered, due to its patriotic, instructive, and elevating attributes. These paintings glorified colonial ancestors whose pursuit of high ideals established an exemplary base for contemporary individuals to emulate. To reinforce American inhabitants' will to live in harmony during a time of growing sectionalism, art reminded people of the power and prestige associated with aggregate behavior. Art was seen as a means of unifying the distant parts and citizens of the United States by stimulating "the citizens' feelings of loyalty 'by preserving and multiplying the images of the truly great of the nation' and 'by immortalizing deeds of patriotism and heroism'."²⁷ Artists in the 1840s and 1850s increased their emphasis on realism, striving for greater historical accuracy. Their rising preference for realism was stimulated by the appearance of photography, the heightened attention from the general public, and affiliation with the Düsseldorf school. Mid-nineteenth century art unions promoted the democratization of art, encouraged the maturation of a national culture by diffusing artistic patronage across the country, and showed particular attention to paintings of American history.²⁸ American painters studying in Düsseldorf adopted the characteristics of direct, momentous, public-spirited compositions seen in contemporary German art.²⁹ This straightforward approach infused

Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts, 1976) 99-116.

²⁶ Gerdts, "On Elevated Heights: American Historical Painting and Its Critics," 82-103; Thistlethwaite, "The Most Important Themes: History Painting and Its Place in American Art," 32-47.

²⁷ Miller, *Patrons and Patriotism*, 22.

²⁸ Patricia Hills, *The Genre Painting of Eastman Johnson: The Sources and Development of His Style and Themes* (New York and London: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1977), 10-14; Miller, *Patrons and Patriotism*, 160-172.

²⁹ William H. Gerdts, "The Düsseldorf Connection," in *Grand Illusions: History Painting in America*, eds. William H. Gerdts and Mark Thistlethwaite, The Anne Burnett Tandy Lectures in

history paintings with factual details of portraiture, costumes, and setting. These authentic elements enhanced the artists' visual narratives, contextualizing the past and making their nationalistic messages accessible to a growing middle class audience.³⁰ Declarative pictorial realism augmented the thoughtful, reflective contemplation of past heroics and sacrifices. The most prominent history painter of the time, Emanuel Leutze, exemplified the aesthetic shifts. His epic composition, *Washington Rallying the Troops at Monmouth, 1854* [figure 7] balances realistic ambient factors with an overall heroic, noble, and ideal purpose.

Consequently, considerations of historical accuracy enhanced the didactic nature of battlefield paintings. Epic compositions of warfare perpetuated nationalistic directives, gradually expanding into contemporary history that was more readily understood by citizens. These dramatizations gave individuals a sense of belonging and impressed upon them principles that would sustain the community. This pre-Civil War style of military painting affected subsequent Civil War cyclorama painters, who continued the representational legacy. They indoctrinated the general populace through the combination of historical documentation with symbolic nationalistic imagery.

American Civilization, no. 8 (Fort Worth, TX: Amon Carter Museum, 1988), 125-68.

³⁰ William H. Truettner, "The Art of History: American Exploration and Discovery Scenes, 1840-1860," *The American Art Journal* 14, no. 1 (Winter 1982): 4-31; Thistlethwaite, "The Most Important Themes: History Painting and Its Place in American Art," 32-47.

CHAPTER 3

CYCLORAMAS

While cyclorama painters in the 1880s were inspired by the characteristics of history paintings, they also appropriated from the history of cycloramas. The American Panorama Company learned from the experiences of previous cyclorama enterprises, and factored that knowledge into their own commercial considerations concerning subject matter and methods of presentation. Cyclorama paintings rendered a comprehensive landscape vista or a dramatic chronicle of topical incidents. They were a commercial subsidiary of the grand manner in popular culture, capable of disseminating information to the average populace. The potential of these exhibitions was recognized early on by the leaders of the contemporary art world. Sir Joshua Reynolds and Benjamin West heralded the cyclorama invention, admiring the representation of nature and referring to it as a significant augmentation to the art of painting.³¹ Additionally, William Dunlap wrote:

panorama exhibitions possess so much of the magic deceptions of the art, as irresistibly to captivate all classes of spectators, which gives them a decided advantage over every other description of pictures; for no study or cultivated taste is required fully to appreciate the merits of such representations. They have the further power of conveying much practical, and topographical information, such as can in no other way be supplied, . . . and if instruction and mental gratification be the aim and object of painting, no class of pictures have a fairer claim to the public estimation than panoramas.³²

Not all art critics, then or now, were so acclamatory of the cyclorama, voicing the general opinion that illusion was not necessarily art. As form of illusionism, cycloramas were subject to reproofs. Etienne Gilson has asserted that optical illusions are not a

³¹ Richard D. Altick, *The Shows of London* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1978), 132.

³² William Dunlap, *History of the Rise and Progress of the Arts of Design in the United States*,

fundamental element of art.³³ John Constable concurred, stating that true art “pleases by reminding, not by deceiving.”³⁴ In spite of these criticisms of optical deceptions, cyclorama paintings indoctrinated a considerably larger portion of the population with nationalistic ideas than traditional history paintings.

Cycloramas were invented by Robert Barker, an Irish painter, who formulated a method of executing the circular concept. He obtained a comprehensive patent³⁵ for his “La nature à coup d’œil” on June 19, 1787, detailing the techniques required to record a complete vista.³⁶ Anecdotes recounting his formulation of the cyclorama include revelations during a term in debtor’s prison or while sketching under an umbrella. The most probable story relates his envisioning the unbroken circular painting while observing a “total” view from the Observatory atop Calton Hill in Edinburgh. He visualized drawing the scene within a fixed framing device, repeatedly shifting the device to capture views of the entire vista, and then connecting these drawings into a circle. As both a painter and drawing teacher, Barker applied optical laws to create a comprehensive view of a moment and place in nature, improving upon procedures used in painting seventeenth-century

vol. 2, ed. Alexander Wyckoff, new and rev. ed. (New York: Benjamin Blom, 1965), 165.

³³ *Painting and Reality*, Bollingen Series 35, 4, The A. W. Mellon Lectures in the Fine Arts 1955 (New York: Pantheon Books, a division of Random House, Inc. for the Bollingen Foundation, Inc., 1957), 246-7.

³⁴ *John Constable’s Correspondence*, ed. R. B. Beckett, vol. 6 (Suffolk Records Socieity, XII, 1968), 134n; quoted in Altick, *The Shows of London*, 188.

³⁵ See Appendix B for a complete version of Barker’s patent.

³⁶ German artist Johann Adam Breysig asserted in 1799 that he invented the panorama. It is possible that he developed the idea separately from Barker. Nevertheless, Barker painted and constructed the first cyclorama according to the terms delineated in his patent. The first German cyclorama did not appear until 1800, displayed in Berlin. Hermann Hecht, *Pre-Cinema History: An Encyclopaedia and Annotated Bibliography of the Moving Image Before 1896*, ed. Ann Hecht (London, Melbourne, Munich, and New Jersey: Bowker-Saur in association with the British Film Institute, 1993), 60, 67, 94; Evelyn J. Fruitema and Paul A. Zoetmulder, eds., *The Panorama Phenomenon: Mesdag Panorama 1881-1981* (The Hague: Foundation for the Preservation of the Centenarian Mesdag Panorama, 1981), 13-15; William Dunlap, *History of the Rise and Progress of the Arts of Design in the United States*, vol. 1, ed. Alexander

interior decorations, engraving elongated topographical drawings, and fabricating false perspectives in formal gardens.³⁷ His methods actualized a credible visual recreation, with multiple vanishing points along the picture plane.³⁸

Barker's invention was an innovative visual illusion designed for public exhibition. The term "cyclorama" combines the Greek roots "cyclo-" meaning circle and "-orama" meaning spectacle.³⁹ Also referred to as panoramas, cyclorama paintings recreated a whole view of a scene on the inside of a single cylindrical surface with the spectator placed in the center.⁴⁰ Perceived as static and unsophisticated to modern observers, cycloramas were antecedents of motion pictures and the recently developed virtual reality attractions. Their design concentrated on inducing the spectators to lose their perception of time and place, making them feel as if they were located in the painted scene. Previous artistic attempts to present the pictorial illusion of reality were obstructed by the presence of frames and other measures of size and distance surrounding the picture plane.⁴¹ Real elements outside the painting were removed or hidden in cycloramas, preventing

Wyckoff, new and rev. ed. (New York: Benjamin Blom, 1965), 315-316.

³⁷ Interior walls have been painted to simulate continuous or serial vistas for centuries and were a common ornamentation in Renaissance villas. Starting in the sixteenth-century, engravers portrayed broad, bird's eye views of cities and towns. Painted canvases were used to extend long walks in formal gardens, creating an illusion of a larger landscaped area. These artistic traditions were fashionable in the decades preceding the development of the cyclorama. Altick, *The Shows of London*, 128-129.

³⁸ On the information about Barker's invention included in this paragraph, see Altick, *The Shows of London*, 128-132; "The Panorama: With Memoirs Of Its Inventor, Robert Barker, And His Son, The Late Henry Aston Barker," *The Art Journal* 19 (February 1, 1857): 46; "Panoramas," *Chambers's Journal of Popular Literature, Science, and Arts* 13, no. 316 (January 21, 1860): 33-35; Germain Bapst, *Essai Sur l'histoire des panoramas et des dioramas: extrait des rapports du jury international de l'exposition universelle de 1889, avec illustrations inédites de M. Édouard Detaille* (Paris: G. Masson, 1891), 7-13; Fruitema and Zoetmulder, *The Panorama Phenomenon*, 13-19; Hecht, *Pre-Cinema History*, 57, 113-114, 125-126, 168-169, 237, 430-431.

³⁹ *The Oxford English Dictionary*, 2nd ed., s.v. "cyclorama."

⁴⁰ Hereafter, the term "cyclorama" will be used to designate three hundred sixty degree paintings to prevent confusion resulting from the various connotations the term "panorama" might evoke.

⁴¹ See footnote #37.

individuals from determining real scale. To formulate a complete and realistic visual experience, the paintings were rendered with comprehensive details, enumerating all aspects of the subject matter or landscape in a continuous composition. The immense, seamless paintings illustrated flowing narratives, displaying the motivations for actions or the environmental features of a given scene. Barker's technique, primarily concerned with astonishing viewers, also informed individuals about distant places and historical events by making them comprehensible. To encompass the viewer's optical experience, the paintings were housed in specially designed circular or polygonal structures. After entering through a darkened tunnel, spectators stood on a viewing platform placed in the center of the building. Every element of the composition was related to the spectator's viewpoint from the platform, using the laws of perspective. All the surroundings were portrayed so the viewer would feel right next to them. The light source, diffused and hidden by a false umbrella ceiling, only illuminated the canvas and prevented the viewers from casting shadows on the work. Faux terrain objects or fabric integrated the bottom edge of the painting with the floor plane, and a false ceiling obscured the top edge of the artwork. Complementing the pictorial illusion were lectures, sound effects, and printed pamphlets introducing additional temporal and topographical elements.⁴² These accessories aided the cycloramas' secondary informative function as well, by further explaining to the viewers about the painting's subject matter.

⁴² The description of cyclorama paintings' characteristics comes from Altick, *The Shows of London*, 129-134; Bapst, *Essai Sur l'histoire des panoramas et des dioramas*, 7-9; Fruitema and Zoetmulder, *The Panorama Phenomenon*, 13-19, 25-27; E. H. Gombrich, *Art and Illusion: A Study in the Psychology of Pictorial Representation*, Bollingen Series 35, 5, The A. W. Mellon Lectures in the Fine Arts 1956 (New York: Pantheon Books for the Bollingen Foundation, Inc., 1960), 252-254.

Cycloramas were a popular art form, enlightening visual illusions exhibited by late eighteenth- and nineteenth-century entrepreneurs. Barker created his first cyclorama painting, a landscape view of Edinburgh, with the assistance of his young son Henry Aston. The *View of Edinburgh*, twenty five feet in diameter, was first exhibited during 1788 in Archer's Hall, at the Place of Holyrood and later transferred to London in the spring of 1789. Opening his permanent exhibition building in 1794 on Leicester Square [figure 8], Barker sparked a new trend in the visual entertainment industry. Competitors, including Robert Ker Porter, Ramsay Richard Reinagle, and even Barker's elder son Thomas Edward, quickly erected rival works in London. Robert Barker was succeeded by his other son, Henry Aston, and John Burford, who were in turn followed by John's brother Robert Burford as the century progressed. These cyclorama entrepreneurs promptly realized the commercial potential of battlefield spectacles depicting contemporary European wars.⁴³ Scenes of important military battles were capable of awing and educating mass audiences. Meanwhile, various forms of cyclorama paintings spread rapidly across the European continent. On April 26, 1799, the American inventor and painter Robert Fulton patented the right to use Barker's invention in France. He, in partnership with another American, James Thayer, to whom he had assigned the rights of his patent, introduced the style on Paris's Boulevard Montmartre [figure 9].⁴⁴ The

⁴³ On the exhibitors and cycloramas cited in this paragraph, see Hecht, *Pre-Cinema History*, passim; Altick, *The Shows of London*, 134-220, 470-509; "The Panorama," 46-47; Fruitema and Zoetmulder, *The Panorama Phenomenon*, 27-34; John Timbs, *Curiosities of London: Exhibiting The Most Rare And Remarkable Objects Of Interest In The Metropolis; with nearly Sixty Years' Personal Recollections* (London: John Camben Hotten, 1867; reprint, Detroit: Singing Tree Press, 1968), 280-283, 514 (page citations are to the reprint edition); Bapst, *Essai Sur l'histoire des panoramas et des dioramas*, 13-19.

⁴⁴ John S. Morgan, *Robert Fulton* (New York: Mason/Charter, 1977), 63-64; Yvon Bizardel, *American Painters In Paris*, trans. Richard Howard (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1960), 65-67;

attractions were an immediate success in Paris and other major European cities and reaped substantial financial rewards for exhibitors. Cycloramas of battlefield action found particular favor with political leaders, most notably the French emperor Napoleon Bonaparte, who realized the nationalistic potential of glorifying his military exploits. The innovation also sparked other methods of pictorial illusions of battles, especially dioramas and mechanical panoramas that utilized transparent colors, three-dimensional forms, lighting effects, and moving canvases.⁴⁵

At the same time the cyclorama industry was expanding in Europe, it spread over to the United States and attracted the attention of prominent history painters. Upon his return to London to pursue his history painting career, John Trumbull brought sketches of Niagara Falls in hopes Robert Barker would transform them into a cyclorama, but this plan was never realized.⁴⁶ Charles Willson Peale may have also made preparatory drawings for a cyclorama painting. As leaders of America's burgeoning school of history painting, these artists may have wanted to encourage native cyclorama painting as a profitable method for artists depicting national topics. In 1784, Peale designed and exhibited a mechanical shadowbox where paintings were refined by transparent panels,

Richard McLanathan, *The American Tradition In The Arts* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1968), 229-30, 304-306.

⁴⁵ For further information on other types of painted illusions see Altick, *The Shows of London*, 163-172, 198-220; Bapst, *Essai Sur l'histoire des panoramas et des dioramas*, 19-30; [Louis Jacques Mandé] Daguerre, *An Historical and Descriptive account of the Daguerreotype and the Diorama* (London: McLean-Nutt, 1839; reprint, New York: Kraus Reprint Co., 1969), 1-53, 55-60, 81-86 (page citations are to the reprint edition); Helmut Gernsheim and Alison Gernsheim, *L. J. M. Daguerre (1787-1851): The World's First Photographer* (Cleveland and New York: The World Publishing Co., 1956), 13-45; Hecht, *Pre-Cinema History*, passim; Ralph Hyde, "Mr. Wyld's Monster Globe," *History Today* 20, no. 2 (February 1970): 118-123; Timbs, *Curiosities of London*, 307-309; William T. Whitley, "Girtin's Panorama," *The Connoisseur* 69, no. 273 (May 1924): 13-20.

⁴⁶ Trumbull blamed his former teacher, Benjamin West, for frustrating his plan. He, using an overheard conversation as evidence, accused West of convincing Barker to reject Trumbull's views as unbefitting a cyclorama treatment. West denied the charge. Dunlap, *History of the Rise and Progress of*

changing lights, and accompanying sound effects, indicating his interest in the potential of optical illusions.⁴⁷ Despite their efforts, Barker's invention was not exhibited in the United States until 1795 by the British painter William Winstanly. According to William Dunlap, Winstanly showed the first cyclorama, a scene of London, on Greenwich Street in New York.⁴⁸ The temporary display in major Eastern cities of imported British canvases, including battlefield paintings and topographical scenes, continued until the close of the eighteenth-century.⁴⁹

In the first half of the nineteenth-century, the cyclorama industry had difficulty maintaining a steady profit margin. European exhibitors were constantly modifying and augmenting their exhibitions to entice a following.⁵⁰ Despite similar distinguished undertakings in America, the public sporadically frequented cyclorama expositions. John Vanderlyn, a well known history painter, designed the first permanent exhibition space in the United States, *The Rotunda*, in New York City. Built in 1817, the neoclassical polygonal structure housed European works of Athens, Geneva, and the Battle of Waterloo until his *Panorama of the Palace and Gardens of Versailles* [figure 10] was ready for display in 1819. His public display failed to attract the expected audience, and his subsequent efforts to exhibit the Versailles cyclorama in Philadelphia, Charleston,

the Arts of Design in the United States, vol. 2, 51-2.

⁴⁷ Charles C. Sellers, *Charles Willson Peale* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1969), 204-211.

⁴⁸ Dunlap alleges this work was copied from a engraving of Barker's work and therefore can not be considered an original. Dunlap, *History of the Rise and Progress of the Arts of Design in the United States*, vol. 2, 77; Altick, *The Shows of London*, 204.

⁴⁹ On the artists and exhibits cited in this paragraph, see Virgil Barker, *American Painting: History and Interpretation* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1951), 288-290, 303; Rita Susswein Gottesman, *The Arts And Crafts In New York 1777-1799: Advertisements and News Items from New York City Newspapers* (New York: The New-York Historical Society, 1954), 18, 23-24, 29, 33; Lee Parry, "Landscape Theater in America," *Art in America* 59, no. 6 (November/December 1971): 54-55; Charlotte

Montreal, Washington, Boston, and Savannah were also met with frustration.

Vanderlyn's loss was predicted by an art critic, who reproved the history painter's venture into profit making and suggested renditions of recent American battles including Chippewa, Erie, New Orleans, and Lake Champlain would be more popular and edifying.⁵¹ The artist was evicted from the exhibition building in 1829 by the city of New York, bringing an end to his ventures with the mass medium.⁵² Thomas Cole made panoramic sketches of the Bay of Naples in 1832 but never actualized a final circular painting.⁵³ The only established cyclorama success in the United States was achieved by Frederick Catherwood, an Englishman who trained in England under Robert Burford, one of Barker's successors. Opening his New York exhibition building in 1836, Catherwood often imported cycloramas from London based on sketches he made during his extensive travels. Frequently interchanged, these exotic subjects attracted significant attention from

Willard, "Panoramas, the First 'Movies'," *Art in America* 47, no. 4 (1959): 66.

⁵⁰ Altick, *The Shows of London*, 135-62, 173-97.

⁵¹ *The National Advocate*, 21 April 1818 in W. Kelby, *Notes on American Artists* (New York: New York Historical Society, 1992), 54; quoted in John W. McCoubrey, ed., *American Art 1700-1960: Sources and Documents*, Sources And Documents In The History Of Art Series, ed. H. W. Janson (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1965), 43-44.

⁵² On Vanderlyn's involvement in cyclorama painting cited in this paragraph, see Dunlap, *History of the Rise and Progress of the Arts of Design in the United States*, vol. 2, 162-168; Kathleen Luhrs, ed., *American Paintings in the Metropolitan Museum of Art*, assisted by Carrie Rebor, and Patricia R. Windels, vol. 1, *A Catalogue of Works by Artists Born by 1815*, by John Caldwell and Oswaldo Rodriguez Roque, with Dale T. Johnson (New York: The Metropolitan Museum Of Art in association with Princeton University Press, 1994), 257-264; Kenneth C. Lindsay, *The Works Of John Vanderlyn: From Tammany to the Capitol* (Binghamton, NY: University Art Gallery, State University of New York at Binghamton, 1970), 56-59; Barker, *American Painting: History and Interpretation*, 300-304.

⁵³ Louis L. Noble, *The Life And Works Of Thomas Cole*, ed. Elliot S. Vesell (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1964) 119; Parry, "Landscape Theater in America," 56-61; Willard, "Panoramas, the First 'Movies'," 66-67.

urban audiences. Despite the entertainment draw, his entrepreneurial achievement was cut short by a devastating fire in 1842.⁵⁴

During the mid-nineteenth century, the traditional cyclorama industry in England and America experienced a steady deterioration. The growth of illustrated newspapers and photography fulfilled public demands for prompt visual accounts of sensational news stories. Painters executing cycloramas of contemporary events had difficulty competing with these rapidly produced popular art mediums.⁵⁵ Vanderlyn's financial and critical failure subdued attempts by serious artists to render further circular murals. In addition, rival moving panoramas captivated audiences that had previously attended cyclorama exhibitions. A moving panorama utilized a scrolled canvas depicting either a series of related scenes or a single continuous narrative or vista [figure 11]. These pedagogic paintings of battles, landscapes, bible stories, and contemporary news were unwound in front of spectators, often accompanied by foreground objects, light effects, and pyrotechnics. Technical innovations in moving panoramas allowed for an impression of movement and the passage of time impossible to recreate in the static cyclorama canvases. Furthermore, their spindle format traveled easily and adapted to diverse spaces like auditoriums or theaters. This allowed exhibitors to reach larger audiences and prevented patrons from becoming bored with the same painting.⁵⁶

⁵⁴ On Catherwood's exhibitions cited in this paragraph, see Barker, *American Painting: History and Interpretation*, 447; Fruitema and Zoetmulder, *The Panorama Phenomenon*, 73-74; Theodore Bolton, "Vanderlyn and American Panoramania," *Art News* 55, no. 1 (November 1956): 52.

⁵⁵ On the decline of panoramas in England, see Altick, *The Shows of London*, 470-509; Hecht, *Pre-Cinema History*, 65, 237, 308; Errol Sherson, *London's Lost Theatres of the Nineteenth-Century with Notes on Plays and Players seen There* (London: John Lane the Bodley Limited, 1925), 211, 323.

⁵⁶ On the moving panorama phenomenon cited in this paragraph, see Barker, *American Painting: History and Interpretation*, 447-450; McLanathan, *The American Tradition In The Arts*, 306-310; Altick, *The Shows of London*, 204-208; Joseph Earl Arrington, "Lewis and Bartholomew's Mechanical Panorama

On account of the increased competition, the cyclorama industry waned for several years. Still, the American public became accustomed to the popular art form. The prosperity of cyclorama exhibits recording contemporary military topics inspired later painters. When the cyclorama industry rebounded, the experiences of foregoing artists shaped presentations in the 1880s. Studios and exhibitors examined cultural conditions to avert the aforementioned deficiency of public interest. They understood it was a business imperative to lure an extensive audience with sensational subjects people wanted to learn about. Moreover, the entrepreneurs realized the value of edifying uncultivated citizens about their national past, foreign places, or moral directives. These marketing lessons affected the decisions made by the American Panorama Company in 1885 when selecting subjects and the techniques they adopted to propagate the contemporary temperament of the nation.

of the Battle of Bunker Hill," *Old Time NE* 52, nos. 2-3 (October 1961- January 1962): 50-58, 81-89; "Banvard's Panorama," *Scientific America* 4, no. 13 (December 16, 1848): 100; Lincoln Bates, "As Big As Life," *MD Magazine*, February 1985, 157-159; Bruce W. Chambers, *The World of David Gilmore Blythe* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press for the National Collection Of Fine Arts, 1980), 145-146; Bertha L. Heilbron, "The Sioux War Panorama of John Stevens," *Antiques* 58, no. 3 (September 1950): 184-186; John Francis McDermott, *The Lost Panoramas of the Mississippi* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1958); Philip F. Purrington, "Sailor with a Brush," *Art in America* 50, no. 3 (1962): 20; Perry T. Rathbone, ed., *Mississippi Panorama: the life and landscape of the Father of Waters and its great tributary, the Missouri; with 188 illustrations of paintings, drawings, prints, photographs, bank notes, river boat models, steamboat appurtenances and the Dickeson-Egan giant moving Panorama of the Mississippi*, new and rev. ed. (St. Louis: City Art Museum of St. Louis, 1950); "A Painting Three Miles Long," *Chambers's Edinburgh Journal* 7, no. 181 (June 19, 1847): 395-398; Opal Thornburg, "The Panoramas of Marcus Mote, 1853-1854," *Art in America* 41, no. 1 (Winter 1953): 22-35; Willard, "Panoramas, the First 'Movies'," 67-69.

CHAPTER 4

LACK OF NATIONALISTIC NARRATIVES OF THE BATTLE OF ATLANTA
IN CIVIL WAR ART

Apart from the traditions of history painting and cycloramas, the American Panorama Company selection of the Battle of Atlanta stemmed from the deficiencies in Civil War art. Artists, namely photographer, newspaper illustrators, and history painters, could not or chose not to provide public-spirited narratives of major battles during the war. Their neglect in depicting the combat on July 22, 1864, depended on the characteristics of each artistic medium and Civil War society in general. Of the few representations of the Battle of Atlanta, none showed the actual fighting and therefore precluded the delineation of nationalistic ideals via symbolic battlefield actions.

Civil War Photography

Photographers of the American Civil War were hindered from picturing the major battles of the Atlanta Campaign by a combination of circumstances. As popular artists, they were foremost entrepreneurs induced by the contemporary economic environment. There are no known Confederate photographs of the fighting in Georgia. In the first year of the war, camera operators in the South customarily photographed portraits of soldiers leaving for battle, giving their families an inexpensive likeness. They likewise made admirable representations of important politicians and Confederate army generals for mass consumption. Because photographers were pressed into satisfying public demands for portraiture, few pictures of the Confederate army's forts, bivouacs, weaponry, and warfare exist. Difficulties in obtaining equipment and chemicals, combined with a bankrupt

economy, effectively ended Confederate photography after 1861. Southern photographers lost their financial incentive for obtaining expensive smuggled supplies needed to produce pictures.⁵⁷

The Battle of Atlanta also attracted relatively little attention from Northern photographers, though for different economic reasons. Only three pictures were taken of what remained of the engagement, all by George Barnard, weeks after the fighting. Analogous to the initial situation in the Confederacy, Civil War photographic businesses in the North were principally employed in portraiture. Union soldiers had small cheap carte de visite prints or stereographic views made of themselves as keepsakes, permanent representations in case they did not survive. Portraits of governmental and military leaders were popular among loyal individuals as well. Since nearly all Civil War photography was a commercial enterprise, the unprecedented photographic coverage of the war was primarily composed of portraits, and professional photographers only occasionally depicted other aspects of the hostilities.⁵⁸ The public demand for pictures also determined what military campaigns would be reproduced. Strong consumer markets in northeastern cities called for images of the Eastern front, where the family members of most consumers were stationed. Local operators of photographic studios in these cities would visit nearby battlefields to capitalize on the public interest. The concentration of photographers

⁵⁷ On the status of the Confederate photography cited in this paragraph, see Frederic E. Ray, "The Photographers of the War," in *The Image of War 1861-1865*, vol. 1, *Shadows of The Storm*, ed. William C. Davis (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Co., 1981), 409-414; Leslie D. Jensen, "Photographer of the Confederacy: J. D. Edwards," in *The Image of War 1861-1865*, vol. 1, *Shadows of The Storm*, ed. William C. Davis (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Co., 1981), 344-47.

⁵⁸ Mathew B. Brady, Alexander Gardner, Timothy H. O'Sullivan, George N. Barnard, James Gardner, Jacob F. Coonley, James F. Gibson, Samuel A. Cooley, Thomas Roche, and J. D. Edwards were some of the accredited photographers of the era who produced most of the tens of thousands of photographs.

covering this profitable theater lead to a disparity in photographic coverage of the entire Civil War. Therefore, commercial photographic enterprises invariably neglected smaller campaigns in the West, including Sherman's campaign to capture Atlanta, in the Gulf, and along the Mississippi.⁵⁹

Secondly, technological constraints necessitated the general omission of photographs depicting the combat in remote theaters of the Civil War. These restrictions hindered extensive travel to remote locations, where safe transport and replacement supplies were not readily available. The wet collodion process used by Civil War photographers required large bulky cameras, a specially equipped darkroom, and hard-to-find chemical supplies. Cameras and wagons outfitted for developing could not handle rough terrain and long marches to the distant campaigns. Traveling photographers had to remain near Northern cities, mainly Washington D.C. and New York, where they could readily replace their equipment and chemical materials. In addition, the fragile glass plate negatives were prone to breakage, scratches, and other mishaps. Since photographers needed to preserve their developed negatives for multiple commercial prints in the future, they wanted to make sure the plates survived intact.⁶⁰

⁵⁹ On the commercial aspects of Civil War photography cited in this paragraph, see Keith F. Davis, "A Terrible Distinctness: Photography of the Civil War Era," in *Photography in Nineteenth-Century America*, ed. Martha A. Sandweiss (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., Publishers; Fort Worth, TX: Amon Carter Museum, 1991), 131-47; William A. Frassanito, *Antietam: The Photographic Legacy of America's Bloodiest Day* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1978), 27-33; Alan Trachtenberg, *Reading American Photographs: Images as History, Mathew Brady to Walker Evans* (New York: Hill and Wang, a division of Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1989), 72-73, 77, 80-89, 107-111; Temple D. Smith, "The Frontier of American War Photography," in *Citizens in Conflict: Prints and Photographs of the American Civil War*, comp. Sally Pierce and Temple D. Smith (Boston: The Boston Athenaeum, 1981), 30-41; William F. Stapp, "'These Terrible Mementoes': Civil War Photography," *Chicago History* 9, no. 4 (Winter 1980-1981): 197-211.

⁶⁰ On the technical hindrances of Civil War photography cited in this paragraph, see Robert Taft, *Photography and the American Scene* (Macmillan Co., 1938; reprint, New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1964), 223-47 (page citations are to the reprint edition); Keith F. Davis, "A Terrible Distinctness,"

Finally, the combination of commercial and technical limitations resulted in aesthetic inadequacies in Civil War photographs. Contemporary photographers were not capable of envisioning the grand narratives of battlefield confrontations. Their wet plate procedure was unable to capture dramatic combat action. Movements blurred the image, due to the slow exposure speed of the chemically treated negative plate. Thus, battlefield photographs were restricted to previews and postscript observations of the combat. These still pictures of fortifications, weaponry, casualties, and landscapes could only provide a single instant in the extended duration of a complex event, precluding the passage of time and causality of a battle. The wet collodion process hampered photographers' endeavors to dramatically chronicle entire engagements even further. After the negative plates were chemically sensitized and tediously exposed, they had to be developed immediately while still moist.⁶¹ Cameramen in the field had to remain near their darkroom wagons, away from the shelling that might destroy their equipment, damage their chemical vats, or spook the horses hauling their supplies. The small stereographic format of most negative plates similarly restricted photographers to isolated scenes or portraits. Photographers used smaller 4 by 4 inch stereo cameras instead of the larger 8 by 10 inch single plate cameras, since they were less cumbersome and produced inexpensive marketable images. Attempts

131-47; Roy Meredith, *Mr. Lincoln's Camera Man: Mathew B. Brady* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1946), 92-3. William F. Stapp, introduction to *Landscapes of the Civil War: Newly Discovered Photographs From The Medford Historical Society*, ed. Constance Sullivan (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1995), 15-20.

⁶¹ For a complete discription on the wet collodion photography process, see Reese V. Jenkins, *Images and Enterprise: Technology and the American Photographic Industry 1839 to 1925*, Johns Hopkins Studies In The History Of Technology, ed. Thomas P. Hughes (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1975), 36-45; Doug Munson, "The Practice of Wet-Plate Photography," in *The Documentary Photograph as a Work of Art: American Photographs, 1860-1876*, comp. Joel Snyder and Doug Munson (Chicago: The David and Alfred Smart Gallery, The University of Chicago, 1976), 33-38.

to picture broad vistas of battlefields from afar resulted in a loss of visual clarity and details, particularly obscuring the soldiers. Contributing to this inability to take narrative panoramas of the fighting from a distant range, a haze of dense white smoke from black gun powder often hid the military action.⁶²

The aforementioned circumstances influencing Civil War photography resulted in only three known pictures representing the Battle of Atlanta by George Barnard. He was the only photographer to record evidence of the summer engagement just outside the city of Atlanta. Unlike many professional photographers, Barnard spent part of his distinguished career as a Civil War photographer in the service of the Union army.⁶³ His military post gave him access to safe transport of his equipment on Union railroads and reliable supply lines for obtaining photographic materials. These logistical advantages allowed Barnard freedom from some of the technical factors restricting other commercial photographers. In 1863, Barnard had been appointed the official photographer of the Chief Engineer's office in the Military Division of the Mississippi, a position that removed most financial considerations affecting other photographers. Instead, the photographer was primarily employed to document the abandoned Confederate defenses and to produce

⁶² On the aesthetic limitations of Civil War photography cited in this paragraph, see Trachtenberg, *Reading American Photographs*, 72-78; Keith F. Davis, "A Terrible Distinctness," 131-47; Taft, *Photography and the American Scene*, 223-47; Joel Snyder, "Photographers and Photographs of the Civil War," in *The Documentary Photograph as a Work of Art: American Photographs, 1860-1876*, comp. Joel Snyder and Doug Munson (Chicago: The David and Alfred Smart Gallery, The University of Chicago, 1976), 17-22; Dorothy Meserve Kunhardt, Philip B. Kunhardt, and The Editors of Time-Life Books, *Mathew Brady And His World* (Alexandria, VA: Time-Life Books, 1977), 226-37.

⁶³ Barnard began his professional life by taking portraits and photographing news events in New York state. At the start of the Civil War he took pictures for Mathew Brady's gallery and later worked for Alexander Gardner's studio, whose catalogue gave name recognition to the individual photographers. As with other commercial photographers, he mainly stayed in the Eastern theater for the first half of the war to capitalize on the public interest. Only when affiliated with the Union Army did he venture to more remote campaigns. Keith F. Davis, *George N. Barnard: Photographer of Sherman's Campaign* (Kansas City, Missouri: Hallmark Cards, Inc., 1990), 20-77.

maps of captured territory.⁶⁴ Because of his documentary function, he did not receive his transfer orders to Atlanta from Nashville until September 4, 1864.⁶⁵ On this and subsequent visits to the area in early November 1864 and May 1866, Barnard made a series of battlefield scenes in various formats. Hence, his photographs of the July 22nd battle pictured the consequences of General Sherman's army in their quest for Atlanta, not narratives of the actual conflict.⁶⁶

George Barnard's photographs of the Atlanta Campaign were static images, revealing neither a sense of time nor causality. Barnard, arriving in Atlanta around mid-September and again in early November, had to reconstruct the visual details of the campaign from the remaining aftermath. His Civil War photographs of desolated battlefields, fortifications, and buildings, illustrated the destructive force of war but failed to render what had occurred. Originally made for the Union Army's official records, the pictures reflect the military's dual emphasis on factual representation informed by artistic refinements.⁶⁷ Barnard, unhurried by the threat of incoming artillery or the need to satisfy

⁶⁴ Military cameramen photographically illustrated the written descriptions of current military technology and fortifications. Barnard took photographs of Chattanooga and Knoxville as part of his duties. One account of his documentary work for the military engineer division appears in the official Union records, Capt. O. M. Poe "The accompanying photographic views are. . . the work of Mr. Geo. N. Barnard, photographer at the chief engineer's office, Division of the Mississippi" *War of the Rebellion . . . Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, Series 1, Vol. 31, part 1, p. 314; quoted in Taft, *Photography and the American Scene*, 486.

⁶⁵ Orlando Poe, "Letterbook, August 7, 1864-November 14, 1864," p. 78, Poe Collection, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, DC; quoted in Keith F. Davis, *George N. Barnard*, 78.

⁶⁶ On George Barnard's work as a Civil War photographer cited in this paragraph, see Keith F. Davis, *George N. Barnard*, 77-105, 170-77; Beaumont Newhall, preface to *Photographic Views of Sherman's Campaign* (New York: George N. Barnard, 1866; reprint, New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1977), iii-vii (page citations are to the reprint edition).

⁶⁷ Starting in the 1850's, training at the West Point academy sought to enlighten cadets about art. The interest in art transposed an aesthetic aspect onto the informative visual depictions, resulting in many beautiful renderings of military and combat subjects. See Keith F. Davis, "A Terrible Distinctness", 152-55.

the public demands for rapid, inexpensive views of present-day news events, carefully composed his sophisticated representations of the battle. His leisure allowed the use of 6½ by 8½ and 12 by 15 inch cameras, giving him a greater view for exhibiting consequences of Sherman's Atlanta Campaign. Barnard's large format renditions of historical sites demonstrate detailed, clear, and thoughtful compositions. The Battle of Atlanta appears in only three of these photographs [figures 12-14], recording the fields where the fighting occurred and the site of Maj. General James Birdseye McPherson's death. Mangled trees, abandoned defenses, and spent artillery shells served as symbols of the intense combat and casualties incurred on July 22nd. Supplanting the denotation of causality, the photographs evinced a sense of suspended time. The absence of people, Union or Confederate, further eliminated the explication of valiant ideals.⁶⁸ Instead, Barnard created an illusion of unadulterated historical reality, notwithstanding his modifications of the ambient factors in some of his pictures.⁶⁹ Forasmuch as these pictures were inadequate narratives of the fighting and devoid of nationalistic symbols, George Barnard's photographs of the battle had a hauntingly beautiful quality.⁷⁰

⁶⁸ Casualties were buried an average of two days after a battle, so photographers were often unable to reach the battlefield in time to take symbolic pictures of the dead. Keith F. Davis, "A Terrible Distinctness," 135.

⁶⁹ Barnard's original photos of the campaign reflect descriptive adherence to the raw material of the battlefield. Later works are more artistically considered and evidence more aesthetic transfiguration. In his later photograph of where McPherson was shot, in either early November 1864 or late May 1866, he manipulates the material by arranging a horse's skull and bones, pulling back foliage, and, obscuring the inscription. He also used double-printing to include clouds so the skies would not look blank and create a romantic landscape effect. Keith F. Davis, *George N. Barnard*, 77-80, 95-106. These additions and repositioning of materials by photographers was not unusual, as discovered by subsequent 20th century scholarship. William A. Frassanito, *Gettysburg: A Journey In Time* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1975), passim; Kunhardt, Kunhardt, and The Editors of Time-Life Books, *Mathew Brady And His World*, 248-57.

⁷⁰ On the Civil War photographs taken of the Battle of Atlanta taken by George N. Barnard, see Keith F. Davis, *George N. Barnard*, 77-88; *Photographic Views of Sherman's Campaign* (New York: George N. Barnard, 1866; reprint, New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1977); Keith F. Davis, "A

Civil War Illustrated Journalism

As with photography, newspaper illustrations of the American Civil War had commercial and aesthetic limitations that precluded visualizing detailed battlefield narratives. Many of the same economic factors affecting photographers impelled illustrated newspapers to neglect the Battle of Atlanta. In the Confederacy, the prosperity of the illustrated news industry waned alongside photography and the whole Southern economy. Established illustrated weeklies in the North had been distributed in the South before the war but the advent of hostilities discontinued circulation. An attempt to publish an illustrated news magazine, *Southern Illustrated News*, folded after two years. Due to the shortage of able-bodied soldiers, it could not maintain a field artist and lacked qualified personnel capable of producing engravings. Attempts to include engravings made from antiquated portrait photographs failed as well when the magazine ran out of newsprint. Only one popular artist employed by the *Illustrated London News*, Frank Vizetelly, accompanied the Confederate armies and he was unable to cover many campaigns.⁷¹ Therefore, the deprivations in the South during the years of war and naval blockading prevented publishers from visually recording Confederates in battle.

Northern illustrated publications had fewer financial hindrances, yet few pictures were drawn of the Battle of Atlanta. Only one professional artist, Theodore Davis, observed the fighting in July, and his images barely accounted for the occurrences of the

Terrible Distinctness," 168-70.

⁷¹ On the decline of illustrated journalism in the Confederacy cited in this paragraph, see Mark E. Neely, Harold Holzer, and Gabor S. Boritt, *The Confederate Image: Prints of the Lost Cause* (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 1987), 23-30; William P. Campbell, *The Civil War: A Centennial Exhibition of Eyewitness Drawings* (Washington, DC: National Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institution, 1961), 10-13.

battle. Similar to photography, Civil War illustrated newspapers in the North were commercial enterprises concerned with producing inexpensive visual accounts of the war for public consumption. In the decade preceding the war, these weekly publications had emerged as profitable additions to the popular art scene.⁷² Engravings, accompanying captions and texts, were an effective means of animating news stories. Once the war started, the illustrated weeklies sent numerous “special artists” to visually record the fighting and gratify the public demands for prompt information.⁷³ Consumer interests caused the special artists to focus on the campaigns along the Eastern front, just as their counterparts in photography had. Most subscribers lived in the Northeast and wanted to know about struggles that affected their family members. Based in New York, the illustrated newspapers also sought to quickly publish depictions of current military actions, before the drawings were outdated. The time required to transport sketches to the home publication office and translate rough sketches into printable engraving affected the assignments of field artists. Battles in the East were regularly drawn and published in about three weeks while pictures from remote theaters in the West and other areas took nearly two months. In fact, the monetary incentive to stay current on the Civil War news at times led illustrated weeklies to publish contrived engravings by home artists.

⁷² *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper* founded in 1855, *Harper's Weekly* founded in 1857, and *New York Illustrated News* founded in 1859. Campbell, *The Civil War: A Centennial Exhibition*, 10; W. Fletcher Thompson, Jr., *The Image of War: The Pictorial Reporting of the American Civil War* (New York and London: Thomas Yoseloff, 1960), 19-22.

⁷³ I am using the term “special artist” to refer to individuals employed by illustrated weekly newspapers sent to work in the combat theaters of the Civil War, including Alfred R. Waud, Theodore R. Davis, Winslow Homer, Arthur Lumley, Henri Love, William Waud, Edwin Forbes, William T. Crane, and Frank H. Schell. The title was also applied at times to amateur artists whose sketches the weeklies solicited but these individuals and their work are beyond the scope of my argument.

Moreover, special artists pursuing distant campaigns had to rely more heavily on food, shelter, and communication from the Union army.⁷⁴

The commercial temperament of illustrated journalism compelled artistic compromises as well. Special artists were obliged to quickly complete their sketches for immediate shipment to home offices in the North. In their haste to finish drawings of a day's activities or fighting, the illustrators sometimes forfeited careful composition. Correspondingly, artists working under these time constraints only invested a certain amount of detail in their work and generally had to utilize reference notebooks of standard models of officers, terrain, horses, uniforms, artillery, guns, and other military attributes. Besides, the engraving process completed in the Northern publishing houses affected the pictures' aesthetic characteristics. Ordinarily, the transfer of sketches onto printing blocks lost the individual impressionist style of the special artist and the artistic refinements of the drawings. Some of the field illustrations were incomplete and finished by the block engravers [figures 15-16]. Adherence to the original drawing varied widely, depending chiefly upon the engraver and the importance of the story. Generally home artists maintained a respectable level of fidelity to the original content and primarily made minor alterations, often condensing the composition to fit the format. Union soldiers often attested to their accuracy and Confederate Generals remarked how they used smuggled newspapers as a source for military data on the enemy. Still, some sketches were

⁷⁴ On the commercial aspects of illustrated newspapers during the Civil War cited in this paragraph, see Thompson, *The Image of War*, passim; Campbell, *The Civil War: A Centennial Exhibition* 22-7, 47-58, 66-72, 87-9; Jan Zita Grover, "The First Living-Room War: The Civil War In The Illustrated Press," *Afterimage* 11, no. 7 (February 1984): 8-11.

significantly revised by the engravers who removed or added figures and eliminated the more gruesome aspects of combat [figures 17-20].⁷⁵

Special artists rendering illustrations of Civil War battles, notwithstanding the business factors, experienced other aesthetic limitations. Unlike the photographer, the field artist was less encumbered with equipment and had the ability to depict battlefield actions, if he could observe them. Visibility and the rapid pace of modern warfare hindered their attempts to reproduce narrative accounts of combat. Physical danger⁷⁶ prompted field artists to keep a safe distance from the fighting and use a field glass to see the skirmishes. Even if the artist ventured onto the battlefield, dense terrain and the white gunsmoke oftentimes obscured his view of the actual fighting. Given these considerations, special artists frequently preferred to sketch scenes close to their protected position that were clearly discernible. Civil War battles involved massive numbers of soldiers, fighting in numerous different episodes across a wide area and further restricted the artists' ability to record the conflict. Sketch artists could not possibly execute an entire narrative of the fighting, since the multitude of troops were constantly in action. Instead, they utilized a selective viewpoint that witnessed only certain segments of the engagement. In isolated scenes, illustrators could effectively draw sketches of the fleeting combat. Though able to quickly sketch some incidents, they often missed other interesting or important aspects of

⁷⁵ On the effects of the home office engraving process on illustrations and the reliability of the pictures, see Campbell, *The Civil War: A Centennial Exhibition*, 49-65, 72-84, 88-9; Louis M. Starr, *Bohemian Brigade: Civil War Newsmen in Action* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1954), 252-255; Thompson, *The Image of War*, 72, 83-85, 89, 137-39.

⁷⁶ Several special artists were either killed, wounded, or captured during the course of the war. Campbell, *The Civil War: A Centennial Exhibition*, 34-41; Thompson, *The Image of War*, passim.

the battle. Because of these visual and time restraints, a sketch of a single episode ineffectively represented an entire battle.⁷⁷

On account of the commercial conditions surrounding Civil War illustrated journalism, the only pictures of the Battle of Atlanta were drawn by Theodore Russell Davis, a “special artist” for *Harper’s Weekly*. An exception among sketch artists who remained in one theater, Davis had roving assignments under *Harper’s* on several different campaigns. He fostered favorable relationships with Union officers and was able to procure passes, ensure reliable mail service, and avoid military censorship. As a result, Davis had exceptional opportunities to execute illustrations of the military theaters outside of Virginia. He was the only special artist accompanying the 1864-1865 advance of Sherman’s armies through Georgia and the Carolinas. Another special artist for *Frank Leslie’s Illustrated Newspaper*, C. E. F. Hillen was following the Atlanta campaign through Georgia but he was severely wounded observing an advance in late June or early July.⁷⁸ William Waud, also working for *Leslie’s*, joined the March to the Sea after the fall of Atlanta.⁷⁹ Davis ingratiated himself with the officer corps and befriended General Sherman, who was notoriously hostile to the press and characterized them as spies. His friendly relationship with Sherman’s officer corps at times compromised his journalistic integrity, causing favoritism in some of his work. Nevertheless, he created an important and authentic visual record of the Atlanta Campaign.⁸⁰

⁷⁷ Thompson, *The Image of War*, 37-44, 66-85, 184-185; Campbell, *The Civil War: A Centennial Exhibition*, 42-54, 84; Theodore R. Davis, “How a Battle is Sketched,” *St. Nicholas* 16, no. 9 (July 1889): 661-668; Grover, “The First Living-Room War,” 9.

⁷⁸ “The Crossing Of The Chattahoochee,” *Frank Leslie’s Illustrated Newspaper* 18, no. 463 (August 13, 1864): 331.

⁷⁹ Thompson, *The Image of War*, 31, 79, 81, 151.

⁸⁰ Theodore R. Davis, “With Sherman in His Army Home,” *Cosmopolitan Magazine* 12, no. 2

Theodore Davis's illustrations of the Battle of Atlanta demonstrated the aforementioned aesthetic limitations brought about by characteristics of Civil War combat. Most of his original drawings were lost during the illustrated newspaper's method of production, leaving the published engravings as the principal extant resource. His eyewitness views of the battle consist of two engravings [figures 21-22], a group portrait of officers watching the distant fighting from a signal station and an imprecise rendition of skirmishing in Decatur.⁸¹ Davis neglected the majority of the day's fighting, including strategic Confederate assaults, successful Union counterattacks, and the deaths of general officers on both sides. As with Davis's other depictions of the Union advance through Georgia, the illustrations are removed from the action, composed at a safe background location. One of his visual accounts individualized the observing Union officers while the distant soldiers actually fighting were barely discernible [figure 21]. In the other sketch of Decatur [figure 22], he showed a stronger interest in the surrounding landscape and buildings, not the embattled troops. Reflexive actions of the Union forces suggest an enemy presence, although actual Confederate men do not appear in the pictures. His disengaged viewpoint also produced sanitized reflections, typically devoid of the graphic casualties endured during the battle. Therefore, Theodore Davis's illustrations of the Battle of Atlanta failed to depict even partial narratives of the fighting or symbolize an event that helped to define the United States.

(December 1891): 195-205; Henry Hitchcock, *Marching With Sherman: Passages from the Letters and Campaign Diaries of Henry Hitchcock, Major and Assistant Adjutant General of Volunteers November 1864-May 1865*, ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1927; London: Humphrey Milford, Oxford University Press, 1927), 39-40, 53-54, 113, 130, 153, 186-189, 217, 256, 268; John R. Marszalek, *Sherman's Other War: The General and the Civil War Press* (Memphis: Memphis State University Press, 1981), passim; Thompson, *The Image of War*, 75-79, 115, 158, 161-162.

⁸¹ Stephen W. Sears, ed. *The American Heritage Century Collection of Civil War Art* (New

Civil War History Painting

Whereas American Civil War photographers and illustrated journalists were not readily capable of rendering didactic pictures of combat, history painters could have executed nationalistic narrative paintings of the Battle of Atlanta. Yet, high art depictions of significant engagements were similarly insufficient in furnishing comprehensive visuals of battlefields. Given the distinguished tradition of military art, the lack of history paintings commemorating the Civil War with didactic images of combat action was unusual. Artists, from the beginning of the domestic hostilities, maintained a sporadic interest in the war as a pictorial subject on account of social conditions and artistic considerations. Records from art exhibitions during the war chronicle the infrequent display of Civil War subjects.⁸² Even the art shows held at Sanitary Fairs to aid the Union effort included few military paintings.⁸³ American painters never embraced the episodes of combat as their European counterparts or native predecessors, discussed in Chapter 2. They preferred instead to focus on landscapes of battle sites and portraits of military personnel, genres that constitute the majority of later nineteenth-century American art.

York: The American Heritage Publishing Co., Inc., 1974), 240, 303-307.

⁸² "The National Academy," *Harper's Weekly* 6, no. 279 (May 3, 1862): 74; "The National Academy of Design," *Harper's Weekly* 7, no. 331 (May 2, 1863): 274; "Art: Painting and the War," *The Round Table* 2, no. 32 (July 23, 1864): 90; "The Exhibition of the National Academy," *Harper's Weekly* 9, no. 437 (May 13, 1865): 291; Maria Naylor, ed., *The National Academy of Design Exhibition Record 1861-1900*, 2 vols. (New York: Kennedy Galleries, Inc., 1973).

⁸³ Sanitary fairs were fund-raisers, often showing contemporary art, organized by the Union Army's Sanitary Commission. The Sanitary Commission, founded in 1861, provided medical relief to soldiers and was a predecessor to the contemporary American Red Cross. For further information on the Commission see George M. Fredrickson, *The Inner Civil War: Northern Intellectuals And The Crisis of The Union* (New York and Evanston: Harper Torchbooks, Harper and Row, Publishers, 1965), 98-112.

Theories explaining the exclusion of Civil War battle imagery from contemporary history paintings are as complex as the war itself, with no single determinant rationalization.⁸⁴

Several factors have been cited to rationalize the dearth of battle paintings during the Civil War. As with the popular arts, the four years of armed conflict and the accompanying naval blockade drained the South of the painters, patronage, and materials required to sustain history painting. In the North, a few artists enlisted and were too preoccupied with fighting to continue their work, but the majority of artists did not actively participate in the fray.⁸⁵ Therefore, military obligation to one's country does not explain why artists chose not to paint didactic narratives of the fighting. The initial fears that arts would be neglected in the public's focus on the war, voiced by the officers of National Academy of Design, were never realized.⁸⁶ Reports in the Academy's historic annals recorded the high prices for paintings, strong attendance at exhibitions' receptions, and successful fundraising for a new building, evidencing a steady patronage for American art.⁸⁷ Still, American painting seemed bereft of the momentous events that engrossed the nation as reported in *Harper's Weekly*:

War so absorbs the public mind——our literature in every form in so full of it——it is so much in our hearts and mouths——that, as you ascend the staircase to the gallery of the National Academy's thirty-eighth annual exhibition, you will find

⁸⁴ On the lack of history paintings of battles produced during the Civil War, see Lucretia Hoover Giese, "'Harvesting' the Civil War: Art in Wartime New York," in *Redefining American History Painting*, eds. Patricia M. Burnham and Lucretia Hoover Giese (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 64-81; Thistlethwaite, "The Most Important Themes: History Painting and Its Place in American Art," 47-54; Harold Holzer and Mark E. Neely, Jr., *Mine Eyes Have Seen the Glory: The Civil War in Art* (New York: Orion Books, 1993), *passim*.

⁸⁵ "Postscript. —Artists Going to the Seat of War," *The Crayon* 8, no. 5 (May 1861): 120; "Sketchings," *The Crayon* 8, no. 6 (June 1861): 133-135.

⁸⁶ Thomas S. Cummings, *Historical Annals of the National Academy of Design* (Philadelphia: George W. Childs, Publisher, 1865; reprint, New York: Kennedy Galleries, Inc., and Da Capo Press, 1969), 300-301, 304, 309-310 (page citations are to the reprint edition).

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 295-394 (page citations are to the reprint edition).

yourself asking yourself whether the noise of war has not reached the quiet studios of the painters also, and whether it will make itself felt in art, as in all other forms of life.⁸⁸

James Jackson Jarves declared in his 1864 The Art-Idea that the American artists were technically deficient in the skills required for depicting warfare, unable to recreate the heroic figure in action.⁸⁹ His viewpoint seems extreme and can be disputed by an examination of American history paintings. The scant paintings of the Civil War and battle compositions produced earlier in nineteenth-century adequately illustrate the artists' requisite painting abilities.

Lucretia Giese, Bruce Chambers, Mark Thistlethwaite, Harold Holzer, and Mark E. Neely, Jr. offer more inclusive, contextual accounts for the scarcity in history paintings of Civil War fighting. They cite as contributing factors the lack of critical and governmental direction for war imagery, the disruptive nature of fratricidal war, and competition from the popular arts. Contemporary art critics, who were unsure how to interpret the war or its causes, provided the artists with contradictory advice. They wrote that artists should be depicting the dignified conduct on the battlefields while at the same time advocating the production of pleasant subjects like landscapes to provide an escape from the harsh realities of war. Furthermore, criticism of factual errors in military history paintings dissuaded many painters from undertaking the subject. Similarly, the support of governments on either side of the Civil War was disheartening. Each refrained from

⁸⁸ "The National Academy of Design," (May 2, 1863): 274.

⁸⁹ *The Art-Idea*, ed. with introduction Benjamin Rowland, Jr. (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University, 1960), 197, 208.

sponsoring an active campaign of artistic propaganda during the war.⁹⁰ Given the reluctance of artists to embark on time-consuming projects without the comfort of critical and governmental support, these painters understandably chose to feature genre paintings of camp life and landscape settings of battles rather than military engagements. Since genre and landscape paintings were popular in nineteenth-century America, the incorporation of unspecified military references was a fairly secure enterprise.⁹¹ Christened the best chronicler of the war, Winslow Homer preferred genre camp scenes like *The Briarwood Pipe, or Making Briarwood Pipes, 1864* [figure 23] instead of battlefield compositions. Albert Bierstadt, a leading landscape artist, executed only one Civil War painting, *Guerrilla Warfare (Picket Duty in Virginia), 1862* [figure 24] that focused primarily on the picturesque surroundings rather than the fighting.⁹²

Secondly, artists suffered from the same confusion experienced by the general population during the four years of armed conflict. The Civil War was different from previous American hostilities captured on grandiose canvases and provided little direction for painters wishing to memorialize the fighting. Most battles had inconclusive outcomes and lacked the traditional battlefield heroics of gallant military leaders in action that had been the staple of military compositions. Due to the massive size of Union and

⁹⁰ Collins relates how the Union published photographs of emaciated prisoners of war as a propaganda campaign to raise a public outcry, rally support for the war, and deflect attention from conditions in Northern prison camps. But even this crusade did not spread to the fine arts. Kathleen Collins, "Living Skeletons; Carte-de-Visite Propaganda in the American Civil War," *History of Photography* 12, no. 2 (April-June 1988): 103-120.

⁹¹ "Artists' Studios," *The Round Table* 1, no. 3 (January 2, 1864): 44; "American Art," *The Knickerbocker* 58, no. 1 (July 1861): 48-52.

⁹² On the responses of artists to Civil War conditions cited in this paragraph, see Bruce W. Chambers, "Painting the Civil War as History, 1861-1910," in *Picturing History: American Painting 1770-1930*, ed. William Ayres (New York: Rizzoli in association with Fraunces Tavern Museum, 1993), 117-132; Giese, "'Harvesting' the Civil War: Art in Wartime New York," 64-81; Holzer and Neely, *Mine*

Confederate armies, officers generally remained in rear observatory positions to direct the fighting instead of physically leading the troops. Since warfare had also changed from a series of momentous events into an ongoing complex process of attrition during the Civil War, painters had difficulty finding an appropriate method of visual interpretation. Michael Kammen explains that painted renditions of history as a process, instead of distinct episodes, were extremely problematic for artists to depict.⁹³ In addition, the myriad of causes expressed during the war and the trepidation about the eventual results hindered the formulation of a simple, inclusive didactic interpretation.⁹⁴

Finally, traditional history painters vied against the modern special artists and photographers in depicting the Civil War. The popular, inexpensive media visually informed the population promptly, with veracity and detail that paintings could not easily match. The years of laborious research necessary for historical fidelity discouraged most artists from attempting rival battlefield compositions.⁹⁵ Indeed, the public confidence in the truthfulness of illustrations and photographs based on actual observation far surpassed their belief in history paintings. These considerations led history painters to relinquish nearly all the depiction of contemporary military events to the illustrated press and combat photography.⁹⁶ Since these popular art forms were ineffective in portraying battlefield

Eyes Have Seen the Glory, 1-39, 208-35, 263-319.

⁹³ Foreword to *Picturing History: American Painting 1770-1930*, ed. William Ayres (New York: Rizzoli in association with Fraunces Tavern Museum, 1993), 12.

⁹⁴ On the difficulties artists encountered in their attempts to depict Civil War battles cited in this paragraph, see Chambers, "Painting the Civil War as History, 1861-1910," 117-132; Giese, "'Harvesting' the Civil War: Art in Wartime New York," 64-81; Thistlethwaite, "The Most Important Themes: History Painting and Its Place in American Art," 50-52; Holzer and Neely, *Mine Eyes Have Seen the Glory*, 42-83; Pressly, *Americans Interpret Their Civil War*, 28-51, 99-114, 115-117.

⁹⁵ "Fine Arts," *The New York Times*, 14 October 1864, p. 5.

⁹⁶ On the dominance of Civil War photography and illustrations over traditional history painting, see Chambers, "Painting the Civil War as History, 1861-1910," 117-132; Giese, "'Harvesting' the Civil

actions, the deficiency of sequential history paintings delineating nationalistic ideals was even more acute. Therefore, a combination of reasons resulted in the absence of a patriotic narrative painting of the Battle of Atlanta in the Civil War art world.

CHAPTER 5

POST-WAR DECLINE OF CIVIL WAR ART

In the decade following the Civil War, artistic renditions of the armed conflict did not increase but steadily declined. The Battle of Atlanta was not represented in a single new artwork in the years after the war. Given the post-war zeal for art in the 1870's, evidenced by the establishment of prominent public art museums including the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the increase in the breadth and frequency of nationwide exhibitions, the general absence of Civil War paintings requires rationalization.⁹⁷ Visual narratives of significant battles were forsaken by both popular artists and painters, on account of the temperament of society following the war. Art of the Civil War was subdued by the population's widespread attempts to eliminate the memory of the war, fears of recommenced hostilities, and reactions to the detrimental costs of military warfare. The lately reunited American people experienced a period of psychological denial, whilst they strove to forget the traumatic circumstances of the armed conflict. Characterizing the overall disposition of the nation, Walt Whitman wrote:

The Four Years War is over, and in the peaceful, strong, exciting, fresh occasions of today, and of the future, that strange sad war is hurrying even now to be forgotten. . . . A new race, a young and lusty generation, already sweeps in with oceanic currents, obliterating the war, and all its scars, its mounded graves, all its reminiscences of hatred, conflict, death. So let it be obliterated. I say the life of the present and the future makes undeniable demands upon us each and all, south, north, east, west.⁹⁸

⁹⁷ John Wilmerding, *American Light: The Lumist Movement 1850-1875, Paintings, Drawings, Photographs*, with contributions by Lisa Fellows Andrus, Linda S. Ferber, Albert Gelpi, David C. Huntington, Weston Naef, Barbara Novak, Earl A. Powell, and Theodore E. Stebbins, Jr. (Washington, DC: National Gallery of Art, 1980), 217-218.

⁹⁸ quoted in Allan Nevins, "A Major Result Of the Civil War," *Civil War History*, 5, no. 3 (September 1959), 249.

The whole nation's population appeared to disown memories that were too immediate and agonizing to endure. Van Wyck Brooks has discussed the significance of contemporary national psychology in defining the selective cultural memory of past incidents.⁹⁹ Ralph Ellison has also observed the tendency of Americans to selectively forget, perhaps due to an unwillingness to solve national quandaries.¹⁰⁰ Writing in 1877, the editor of *The North American Review* explained the paucity of Civil War paintings:

This may be accounted for by lack of public encouragement, or by the more charitable supposition that artists and the public were willing that the recollections of our civil war should drop into oblivion.

If this be so, it is well that painters should have led the way in this patriotic feeling, and done nothing to commemorate a struggle which all are now willing to forget.¹⁰¹

Accordingly, the psychological disposition of the nation following the Civil War hindered the artistic commemoration of the Battle of Atlanta.

In addition, people feared striking visuals of battles would renew the discordant feelings that had sparked the conflict and were still held by embittered people, especially Southerners. Images of the Civil War did not elicit from citizens the desire to live together in harmony, as predicated by Renan.¹⁰² The harsh critical reaction to Peter F. Rothermel's *Battle of Gettysburg- Pickett's Charge*, 1867-70 [figure 25] at the United States Centennial Exhibition exemplified the prevailing cultural attitude against this type of

⁹⁹ In a discussion of American literature, Brooks asserts that the country's past has been continually censored by commercial and moralistic ideas. He relates how other countries perception of American history is different from our own and each others. These disparate interpretations evidence the existence of a national psychology, where Americans elect to remember that things that will be creative impulses for the present and forget the rest. "On Creating a Usable Past," *The Dial* 64 (April 1918): 337-341.

¹⁰⁰ *Going To The Territory* (New York: Random House, Inc., 1986), 123-125. I am beholden to Michael Kammen's foreword to *Picturing History: American Painting 1770-1930*, 14 for this reference.

¹⁰¹ "The Progress of Painting in America," *The North American Review* 8, no. 256 (May-June 1877): 458-59.

combat scene where fellow citizens attacked and murdered each other.¹⁰³ Clarence Cook wrote:

For the picture is not a picture of heroism. It is a picture of blood and fury, of men—of brother men, of fellow-citizens—murdering one another in the lust of hate; . . . of soldiers, brave men of South and North, in the spasms of dead men with blue faces and swollen hands—horrors piled on horrors. . . .

[The painting] will make us the laughingstock of every foreign critic. But we might stand being laughed at, if the picture were one in sympathy with the time and place; one that would prove bond to bind our people closer together, instead of being, as it will prove to be, one that will sow ill-will and discord, and reopen wounds once closed.¹⁰⁴

Indeed, the celebration of the 1876 centennial during the decade after the Civil War refocused public attention on the events and noble ideals upon which the recently divided nation had been founded. Barbara J. Mitnick points out that an American population striving for reunification preferred the nostalgia of Revolutionary history, whose imagery rendered a renewed sense of nationalism instead of the discord and dissension associated with the Civil War.¹⁰⁵ These critical observations confirmed the overall public concentration on rebuilding the nation and suppressing the painful war memories that might incite renewed friction during the years of reconstruction.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰² Renan, "What is a nation?," 8-21.

¹⁰³ Since Rothermel was a respected history painter whose successful career was burgeoning in the 1850s, he possessed the essential artistic aptitude necessary to complete a grand masterpiece and the backlash therefore reflects the apprehensive temperament of the nation.

¹⁰⁴ "A Centennial Blunder: Mr. Rothermel's Picture Of The 'Battle of Gettysburg'—Is It To Have The Place Of Honor At The Centennial?" *New York Tribune*, 4 May 1876, p. 2.

¹⁰⁵ Mitnick's analysis correlates to Francis Haskell's justification of European artists' perusal of their national histories for expressive outlets in which they reflected concerns about contemporary events. See Haskell, "The Manufacture of the Past in Nineteenth-Century Painting," *Past and Present* no. 53 (November 1971): 109-120.

¹⁰⁶ Mitnick, "Paintings for the People: American Popular History Painting, 1875-1930," in *Picturing History: American Painting 1770-1930*, ed. William Ayres (New York: Rizzoli in association with Fraunces Tavern Museum, 1993) 157-166; James M. McPherson, *Ordeal By Fire: The Civil War and Reconstruction* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1982), 493-590.

Furthermore, artists evinced a tendency not to commemorate events whose causes were opaque or whose discernible impact was distressing. A definitive explanation of the Civil War's causes was not forthcoming, since different interpreters were principally occupied assigning blame to one side or another.¹⁰⁷ Michael Kammen pointed out that American history painters "tend not to immortalize what is retrospectively embarrassing, inconclusive, or divisive."¹⁰⁸ The advent of total warfare during the Civil War exposed the majority of the population to the horrors of war. Romantic illusions about the nature of combat were destroyed by these experiences. Eugene Benson suggested that "the representation of the destructive and aggrandizing action in war of great nations does not offer us a civilizing spectacle" and that such violent scenes of battlefield carnage were odious and unchristian.¹⁰⁹ Clive Bush and Mark Thistlethwaite later asserted the Civil War's involvement of the whole society, citizens and soldiers, combined with the photographic documentation of the carnage sobered audiences to the destructive nature of armed conflict.¹¹⁰ Given these cultural circumstances, sanitized images of battles exemplified in previous historical pictures were now suspect to the public.

Consequently, the environmental of post-war society resulted in the omission of Civil War battle in art and the cessation of popular arts' presentation of war images. Paintings of the hostilities became scarce and most artists ignored the recent military events. Mark Twain, upon visiting Academy of Design in 1867 remarked, "Now, after

¹⁰⁷ Pressly, *Americans Interpret Their Civil War*, 28-51, 73-95, 115-117.

¹⁰⁸ Kammen, forward to, *Picturing History: American Painting 1770-1930*, 12.

¹⁰⁹ "Historical Art in the United States," *Appleton's Journal of Popular Literature, Science, and Art*, 1, no. 2 (April 10, 1869): 45.

¹¹⁰ Bush, *The Dream of Reason*, 137-170; Mark Thistlethwaite, "A Fall from Grace: The Critical Reception of History Painting, 1875-1925," in *Picturing History: American Painting 1770-1930*, ed. William Ayres (New York: Rizzoli in association with Fraunces Tavern Museum, 1993), 178-182.

four of five years of terrible warfare, there is only one historical picture in the Academy. . . [and] there isn't a single battlepiece. What do you suppose is the reason?"¹¹¹ In fact, nearly all the artists who had assimilated wartime images into historical genre scenes or battlefield landscape paintings changed to new subject matter. After the assassination of Lincoln, the circulations of popular illustrated newspapers covering the Civil War shrank.¹¹² Fletcher Harper even considered terminating publication of his newsmagazine because of the drop in sales and lamented that "the public was tired of reading about the war."¹¹³ In response, the publishers printed very few illustrated articles about the recent hostilities for a decade and special artists moved on to other subjects, including the expansion of the West and the Indian wars.¹¹⁴ Along with these artists, Civil War photographers encountered a dwindling consumer market for their pictures. E. & H. T. Anthony and Company, who owned many of the negatives produced by prominent photographers and Mathew Brady's galleries, stopped promoting Civil War prints in 1866.¹¹⁵ By 1869, public interest had declined so much that Mathew Brady could not find a patron for his extensive catalogue of Civil War negatives. Since he had invested heavily in creating the historical collection, he went bankrupt and the plates were sold at auction to repay storage debts in 1874.¹¹⁶ Commercial failures of Civil War photographers and

¹¹¹ *Mark Twain's Travels with Mr. Brown: Being Heretofore Uncollected Sketches Written by Mark Twain*, eds. Franklin Walker and G. Ezra Dane (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1940) 241. I am obligated to Mark Thistlethwaite "The Most Important Themes: History Painting and Its Place in American Art," 49-50 for this reference.

¹¹² Grover, "The First Living-Room War: The Civil War In The Illustrated Press," 8, 11.

¹¹³ J. Henry Harper, *The House Of Harper: A Century Of Publishing In Franklin Square* (New York and London: Harper & Brothers, Publishers, 1912), 233, 243-244.

¹¹⁴ Stephen Davis, "'A Matter of Sensational Interest': The Century 'Battles and Leaders' Series," *Civil War History* 27, no. 4 (December 1981): 338-339; Thompson, *The Image of War*, 179-186.

¹¹⁵ Joel Snyder, "Photographers and Photographs of the Civil War," 19.

¹¹⁶ Taft, *Photography and the American Scene*, 238-44.

illustrated newspapers combined with the negligence of history painters demonstrated Americans' unwillingness to purchase and perpetuate images of the recent fighting.

CHAPTER 6

CONDITIONS SURROUNDING THE PRODUCTION OF *THE BATTLE OF
ATLANTA CYCLORAMA*

Feelings of resentment and psychological denial in the wake of the Civil War dissipated over time and American society began to embrace the major historic event in the late 1870s and beyond. The “terrible war slowly but surely became a common possession, to be remembered. . . without bitterness. . . .”¹¹⁷ General attitudes about the war shifted from hostility and condemnation to reconciliation and civil allegiance. The effects of the hostilities, namely the abolition of slavery, abatement of sectionalism, exhibition of heroic conduct, and establishment of a communal past, were perceived as supports for heightened nationalism. As a result of society’s evolving perspective of the Civil War, the public interest in all types of historical accounts of the conflict rose dramatically. Artists, because of a variation in painting styles, still disregarded Civil War battles. The cyclorama industry, on the other hand, had rebounded in the later part of the nineteenth-century and saw the financial advantage in fulfilling the public demands. All of these components prompted the American Panorama Company to paint *The Battle of Atlanta* cyclorama narrative composition indicative of the emerging nationalism.

Post-Reconstruction Society and Its Attitudes Toward the Civil War

Passage of time lessened the emotional immediacy of the Civil War and allowed people to observe it from a detached viewpoint akin to the twentieth-century reception of the Vietnam War. Dawning in the 1880s, individuals wrote and spoke about the conflict

¹¹⁷ Bruce Catton, foreword to *The American Heritage Century Collection of Civil War Art*, ed. by Stephen W. Sears (New York: American Heritage Publishing Co., Inc., 1974), 10.

in a dispassionate manner. New explanations of the war contained an implicit acknowledgment of the opposition's viewpoint and an abatement of bitter personal attacks on individuals.¹¹⁸ Radical Reconstruction of the former Confederacy ended with the removal of occupying troops in 1877, reinstating the political status quo. The restitution of state and local political authority, while reflecting the Northern resignation that requiring compliance to the Reconstruction enforcement acts was futile, eased white Southerners' resentment.¹¹⁹ With the presidential election of Democrat Grover Cleveland in 1884, national politics primarily transcended Civil War matters.¹²⁰ Economic growth across the nation and especially in the South also promoted a sense of stability among citizens. Starting in 1878, the economy rebounded from years of depression, and urban industrialization rapidly expanded existing manufacturing and developed modern enterprises.¹²¹ These financial changes required increased cooperation from former enemies and fostered a national economic structure. Commercial exchanges and political submissions restored public optimism about the future and generated nationalistic feelings.

The aforementioned steadfast political and economic conditions permitted cultural meditations on the past discord. In the later nineteenth-century, society instituted a reformed outlook on the Civil War, one of rapprochement and nationalism. Instead of ascribing war guilt to inhabitants of contrary sections for causing the war or justifying

¹¹⁸ Pressly, *Americans Interpret Their Civil War*, 121-34.

¹¹⁹ McPherson, *Ordeal By Fire: The Civil War and Reconstruction*, 591-608, 612-16; Grady McWhiney, "Reconstruction: Index Of Americanism," in *The Southerner As American*, ed. Charles Grier Sellers, Jr. (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1960), 89-103.

¹²⁰ Pressly, *Americans Interpret Their Civil War*, 124.

¹²¹ Pressly, *Americans Interpret Their Civil War*, 123-4; McPherson, *Ordeal By Fire: The Civil War and Reconstruction*, 609-10. These commercial improvements, however, were generally restricted to the white male population. Minorities, especially freed blacks, continued to suffer economically in the North and South.

their own actions against the enemy, people emphasized the unifying results of the war. The principal foundations for increased nationalism were the eradication of slavery, reduction of sectional isolation, nobility of the individuals who fought for their respective beliefs, and the fellowship of shared experiences. James Schouler wrote that slavery “obstructed the destiny and growth of the American people in homogeneous grandeur” and accordingly the Civil War excised an impairment to nationalism.¹²² His perception that slavery was an impediment to the development of the entire country reflected the conclusion of several writers in the 1880s, including Southerners. Woodrow Wilson, stated in 1880,

*because I love the South, I rejoice in the failure of the Confederacy. Suppose that secession had been accomplished? Conceive of this Union as divided into two separate and independent sovereignties! . . . We cannot conceal from ourselves the fact that slavery was enervating the Southern society and exhausting the Southern energies. . . . Even the damnable cruelty and folly of reconstruction was to be preferred to helpless independence. All this I can see at the same time that I recognize and pay loving tribute to the virtues of the leaders of secession, to the purity of their purposes, to the righteousness of the cause which they thought they were promoting—and to the immortal courage of the soldiers of the Confederacy.*¹²³

The issue of slavery, though still regarded as an immoral practice by some, was repeatedly characterized as a hindrance to the economic and social development of the United States.¹²⁴

At the same time, the Civil War ended most of the provincialism that had characterized American society since the Revolution. Prior to the war, the principles of

¹²² *History of the United States of America Under the Constitution* vol. 5 (New York: n. p., 1880-1891), 511; quoted in Pressly, *Americans Interpret Their Civil War*, 130.

¹²³ Ray Stannard Baker and William E. Dodd, eds., *College And State: Educational, Literary and Political Papers (1875-1913) by Woodrow Wilson*, vol. 1, (New York and London: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1925), 56-57. I am beholden to Pressly, *Americans Interpret Their Civil War*, 166 for this reference.

¹²⁴ On the post-Reconstruction attitudes toward the abolition of slavery cited in this paragraph,

self-reliance and constitutional rights of state sovereignty and secession, coupled alongside an agrarian based economy had isolated citizens from one another. Warfare necessitated social, political, and economic associations on an unprecedented level and altered the constitution of the nation. The Confederate and Union armies exposed men to individuals outside their localities who were patriotic citizens worthy of respect and forged bonds of friendship that would translate into national connections. Soldiers also saw areas of the country most had never seen; thus their conception of the United States was expanded beyond their native section or region. Politically, the conditions and results of the Civil War conferred on the federal government an increase in official powers including the control of currency, direct taxation, and redefinition of citizenship. On both sides of the conflict, the general population observed the indispensability of interstate organization for the military effort and how local and state authorities could not handle all the complicated facets of government. Citizens realized the political need for central leadership, standardizations, and national cooperation in order to function efficiently. These wartime experiences stimulated the ongoing continuation of a strong federal government and silenced the threat of future succession over regional or sectional disputes.

Simultaneously, the Civil War revolutionized the United States's economy.

Advancements in technology, mass production, and interstate commerce were vitalized by the demands of the military. Outfitting and maintaining an army for the duration of war rapidly transformed the bulk of national economy from agrarian to industrial. In the Confederacy, where the Northern blockade forced unprecedented manufacturing and commercial resourcefulness, the economic changes were profound. Individuals, learning

from their experiences during the armed conflict, recognized the financial potential for national business organization and eventually fostered economic ties in the 1870s and 1880s that further diminished the regionalist character of the American economy.¹²⁵

Contemporaneously, Americans began to emphasize the sentiment that individuals on both sides had conducted themselves with honor, bravery, and chivalry. Soldiers behaved nobly in their battlefield struggles against one another and the severe effects, particularly scavenging and prisoner mistreatment, were excused as intrinsic consequences of warfare.¹²⁶ Former Union officer Theodore A. Dodge pronounced that "Each side in our Great Civil War, . . . believed itself in the right, and fought with the courage so engendered."¹²⁷ John W. Burgess and the aforementioned James Schouler, writing Northern histories of the war, reiterated these reformed opinions and acknowledged the earnestness of Southern convictions.¹²⁸ This magnanimous attitude was echoed by former Confederates who commended the conduct of the victorious Union army and admitted their satisfaction about the preservation of the nation. In an 1886 oration, Charles E. Fenner rejected the postwar habit of his fellow Confederate officers proclaiming the wrongs of the North and pointed out how the South's loss had preserved the nation.¹²⁹ The subsequent writings of R. E. Colston and Confederate General James Longstreet

¹²⁵ On the decrease in America's provincial isolation cited in this paragraph, see Allan Nevins, "A Major Result Of the Civil War," *Civil War History* 5, no. 3 (September 1959): 237-50; Frank E. Vandiver, "The Confederacy and the American Tradition," *The Journal of Southern History* 28, no. 3 (August 1962): 277-86; Robert Penn Warren, *The Legacy Of The Civil War: Meditations on the Centennial* (New York: Random House, 1961), 8-13; Harold D. Woodman, ed. *The Legacy Of The American Civil War* (New York, London, Sydney, and Toronto: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1973), 15, 37.

¹²⁶ James Ford Rhodes, *History of the United States from the Compromise of 1850 to The Final Restoration Of Home Rule At The South In 1877* vol. 5 (New York and London: The Macmillan Company, 1909), chapter 29; quoted in Pressly, *Americans Interpret Their Civil War*, 144.

¹²⁷ *A Bird's Eye View of Our Civil War* (Boston: n. p., 1883), ix; quoted in Pressly, *Americans Interpret Their Civil War*, 128.

expressed the same attitude, that the Northern victory had resulted in stronger sense of national pride and contentment in the South.¹³⁰

Society's accentuation of individual virtues and the centralizing results of the Civil War worked in concert with a recognition of communal past sacrifices in cultivating feelings of nationalism. Walt Whitman wrote:

I consider the War. . . not as a struggle of two distinct and separate peoples, but a conflict . . . between the passions and paradoxes of one and the same identity—perhaps the only terms on which that identity could really become fused, homogeneous and lasting.¹³¹

Unlike previous American wars, the Civil War directly affected the lives of nearly all the population. The war became “our only “felt” history—history lived in the national imagination. . . . It is an overwhelming and vital image of human, and national, experience.”¹³² American memories of soldiers' heroism and collective suffering provided the civil resources for solidifying a national identity and rallying the public.¹³³ In the later nineteenth-century, the social experiences in the army, growth of the federal government, and increased economic interaction and industrialization prompted individuals to call themselves Americans, not using state appellations. The reinstitution of the union by military force did not guarantee its continuation, unless feelings of cohesion supplanted citizens' separatist posture.¹³⁴ The aforementioned factors of reconciliation in the North and especially the South manifest the consent of citizens for a common future. Without

¹²⁸ Pressly, *Americans Interpret Their Civil War*, 129-33.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, 128-9.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, 133.

¹³¹ Walter Lowenfels, *Walt Whitman's Civil War: Compiled & Edited from Published & Unpublished Sources*, with the assistance of Nan Braymer (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1960), 286.

¹³² Warren, *The Legacy Of The Civil War*, 4.

¹³³ Renan, “What is a nation?,” 19; Horace Bushnell, “Our Obligations to the Dead,” in *Democratic Vistas 1860-1880*, ed. Alan Trachtenberg (New York: George Braziller, 1970), 35-50.

common desire for a unified destiny, the violent annexation of people against their will would have eventually resulted in renewed attempts at independence.¹³⁵ Therefore, the common heritage of the Civil War solidified and strengthened the United States as a country and as a people in the final quarter of the nineteenth-century.

Public Interest in the Civil War

The conciliatory and patriotic temperament toward the Civil War in the 1880s propelled public interest in historical descriptions of battles and their participants. Starting in 1880, the official government collection of war documents, The War of Rebellion . . . Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies, was published in a hundred twenty-eight volume set. Each side praised the objective fairness of these records, reflecting the sincere civil efforts for reconciliation. A year later, Scribner's began issuing a set of fifteen books titled Campaigns of the Civil War that also covered the numerous battles of the War. Regimental histories, pamphlets, and the memoirs of both officers and common soldiers—met the public demand for legitimate Civil War history as well. Popular magazines, affordable to the average citizen, produced chronicles of the hostilities recollected by former military leaders. The *Philadelphia Weekly Times* published The Annals of the War Written by Leading Participants North and South in 1879 and demonstrated the acceptance of opposing viewpoints. Veterans began to hold well attended "Blue and Gray reunions" towards the end of the century where former enemies expressed mutual admiration and justified their conduct during the war.¹³⁶

¹³⁴ Woodman, *The Legacy Of The American Civil War*, 27.

¹³⁵ Renan, "What is a nation?," 11-20.

¹³⁶ On the 1880s' public interest in the Civil War cited in this paragraph, see Pressly, *Americans Interpret Their Civil War*, 125-29; Edmund Wilson, *Patriotic Gore: Studies in the Literature of the*

Americans' demand for Civil War history engendered a resurgence of popular military artwork. Edwin Forbes, a special artist for *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper*, published his artistic memoirs of the sketches he drew during the Civil War. His Life Studies in the Great Army and Thirty Years After: An Artist's Story of the Great War compiled hundreds of war illustrations, those made during the combat plus later work from memories, and received laudatory praise. *Century Magazine's* Battles and Leaders of the Civil War (1887-89) prominently displayed illustrations of the Civil War. The inexpensive Battles and Leaders emphasized the battles of the war and sold an unparalleled number of issues. Engravings of battles, officers, and maps were reproduced from earlier wartime photographs and sketches of former special artists or drawn by the magazine's professional illustrators. Some of these popular artists were veterans, who used their combat memories to render realistic pictures. The success of the periodical series and inundation of more historical information and drawings prompted the subsequent printing of a four-volume book set. These sets of wartime illustrations evinced the market desire for visual remembrances of the battles and incidents surrounding the conflict.¹³⁷

History Painting in the Last Quarter of the Nineteenth-Century

Despite the general acceptance of the war into the national collective conscious, the renewed public interest did not translate into a marked increase in history paintings. In

American Civil War (New York: Oxford University Press, 1962), 131-299; Jim Cullen, *The Civil War in Popular Culture: A Reusable Past* (Washington and London: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1995), 182.

¹³⁷ On the 1880s' widespread interest in visual representations of the Civil War cited in this paragraph, see Bruce Chambers, *Art And Artists Of The South: The Robert P. Coggins Collection* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1984), 27-9; Stephen Davis, "'A Matter of Sensational Interest': The *Century* 'Battles and Leaders' Series," 338-349; Bruce Catton, foreword to *The American Heritage Century Collection of Civil War Art*, 6-11; Hermann Warner Williams, Jr.,

the last quarter of the nineteenth-century, the history painting genre underwent an overall deterioration that affected the production of Civil War battle paintings. Now that the Civil War subject matter was acceptable, the attitude toward the artistic style itself had changed. The growing disregard toward history painting is reflected in Mark Twain's satirical assessment of a Civil War history painting, that the work meant nothing without its label and history paintings labels could be interchanged easily.¹³⁸ Mark Thistlethwaite cites a competition held in 1882 by the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts as marking the end of traditional American history painting. The contest offered a hefty \$3,000 first prize for original paintings displaying a significant aspect of the Revolutionary War, but no known artists were enticed to submit entries.¹³⁹ Academic styles, especially history painting, were subject to critical revision and rejection towards the turn of the century. William H. Gerds relates how critics admonished any future history painters by denouncing previous American history paintings as naive and academically severe.¹⁴⁰ Moreover, the economic prosperity and international standing of the United States after the war prompted American art patrons to import contemporary European paintings. American artists, motivated by the increased competition, traveled more often to the art center in Paris, instead of London or Düsseldorf, to train in the modern styles. The influx of imported artworks of the Impressionists and Realists likewise influenced the aesthetics

introduction to *Civil War Drawings* (New York: Eastern Press Inc., 1974), [4-18].

¹³⁸ Mark Twain, *Life on the Mississippi*, new ed. (New York: Limited Editions Club, 1944), 259.

¹³⁹ Thistlethwaite, "The Most Important Themes: History Painting and Its Place in American Art," 52.

¹⁴⁰ Gerds, "On Elevated Heights: American Historical Painting and Its Critics," 110-117.

of homebased painters. As a result, the traditional grand manner history paintings seemed outmoded to artists and patrons who enthusiastically adopted more cosmopolitan styles.¹⁴¹

Besides, the later nineteenth-century emphasis on a more comprehensive and scientific interpretation of history affected the arts. History was no longer restricted to recording prominent events and involving principally members of the elite classes of society. Instead, Americans began to covet a more democratic interpretation of the past that incorporated everyday events and personages. Historical genre paintings depicted ordinary individuals in historic settings while genrefied history paintings portrayed important historical figures engaged in commonplace activities.¹⁴² The difficulties artists encountered incorporating extensive historical details likewise contributed to the decline of historic battle paintings. Scenes reflecting the reality of Civil War combat demanded by the public were almost impossible to compose aesthetically. A complete vision required tremendous numbers of troops engaging in numerous episodes of combat on expansive battlefields. Bruce Chambers believes the paintings could not document the battlefields of the Civil War to the extent required by veterans and other patrons.¹⁴³ Enlightened by explicitness of photographs and comprehensive books of illustrations of the Civil War, post-war commissions preferred a documentary style incompatible with the compositions

¹⁴¹ On the influx contemporary European paintings and American artists training in Europe cited in this paragraph, see Madeleine Fidell Beaufort and Jeanne K. Welch, "Some Views of Art Buying in New York in the 1870s and 1880s," *The Oxford Art Journal* 5, no. 1 (1982): 48-55; H. Barbara Weinberg, "The Lure of Paris: Late-Nineteenth-Century American Painting & Their French Training," in *A New World: Masterpieces of American Painting 1790-1910*, by Theodore E. Stebbins, Jr., Carol Troyen, and Trevor J. Fairbrother (Boston: Museum of Fine Arts, 1983), 16-32; Thistlethwaite, "A Fall from Grace," 177-197; Harris, *The Artist In American Society*, 315-316.

¹⁴² Mitnick, "Paintings for the People," 157-74; Thistlethwaite, "The Most Important Themes: History Painting and Its Place in American Art," 34-44, 52-4.

¹⁴³ Chambers, "Painting the Civil War as History, 1861-1910," 117-132.

of traditional battle paintings. These inherent difficulties in visually commemorating battles further distanced artists from Civil War combat subjects.

Revival of the American Cyclorama Industry

Consequently, history painters failed to satisfy the public demand for inclusive narrative paintings of Civil War battles during the 1880s. The artists' insufficient attempts to visually commemorate the fighting faltered, just as the work of preceding photographers and illustrated journalists. Due to this deficiency, cyclorama paintings of the significant battles emerged as a viable pictorial alternative. Realizing the profit potential of the widespread market for Civil War representations, the cyclorama industry responded with edifying battlefield paintings. The industry itself had been rehabilitated in the 1880s, with an infusion of European painters and canvases. On the European continent, particularly in France and Germany, the mass entertainments had recently achieved financial prosperity with warfare spectacles. Conflicts, especially the Franco-Prussian War from 1870-71, inspired artists from either side including Louis Braun, Anton von Werner, Jean Charles Langlois, and Henri Emmanuel Félix Philippoteaux to produce numerous renditions of glorious combat.¹⁴⁴ These cyclorama painters generally possessed better artistic training than their predecessors and their works demonstrated more refined compositions and a higher quality of painting. In addition, the European industry had realized the benefits of standardizing the dimensions of their paintings and rotunda exhibition buildings, so canvases could be rotated in a manner similar to modern movies.¹⁴⁵ Their commercial innovation allowed exhibitors in different cities to frequently interchange

¹⁴⁴ Altick, *The Shows of London*, 470-509; Hecht, *Pre-Cinema History*, 71, 229-230, 237.

¹⁴⁵ Fruitema and Zoetmulder, *The Panorama Phenomenon*, 26-29.

cycloramas before the public lost interest and owners of exhibition buildings in the United States embraced this marketing advancement.

Anticipating commercial success, American entrepreneurs recruited experienced cyclorama painters from Europe and financed expensive canvases. European artists perhaps saw the United States as an alternative market for their scenes or wanted to explore different subjects and landscapes. Cycloramas manifested the interests of a diversified American population with breathtakingly beautiful natural wonders, didactic religious themes, and action filled battle scenes. Paul Philippoteaux, French émigré and son of renowned cyclorama painter Henri Emmaneul Félix, recreated Paris at night while Walter Burrage executed a topographical study of Hawaii's Kilauea volcano. These landscapes allowed people who were unable to afford distant travel an inexpensive full-color alternative. Religious topics gave working and middle classes an opportunity for wholesome, educational, and affordable family amusement. The American Panorama Company produced biblical accounts of Christ's Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem, Judgment before Pilate, and Crucifixion.¹⁴⁶ Dramatic battle pictures of Antietam, Bull Run, Chattanooga, Manassas, Vicksburg, and the Monitor vs. the Merrimac were rendered in the 1880s to satisfy renewed public fascination with the Civil War. Theophile Poilpot, supervising a staff of twelve painters, did an extensive representation of the fighting at Shiloh now known only from extant photographs. Philippoteaux, building on the experience he gained assisting his father on Franco-Prussian canvases, repeatedly

¹⁴⁶ Oliver F. Zinn, Milwaukee, to Virgil Adkinson, Atlanta, 3 June 1937, Wilbur G. Kurtz Collection, Special Collections, The Robert W. Woodruff Library, Emory University, Atlanta; George Peter, Milwaukee, to Virgil Adkinson, Atlanta, 3 June 1937, Wilbur G. Kurtz Collection, Special Collections, The Robert W. Woodruff Library, Emory University, Atlanta.

depicted the *Battle of Gettysburg* [figure 26].¹⁴⁷ Wehner's Milwaukee studio contributed another Battle of Gettysburg, the Battle of Missionary Ridge, and the Battle of Chicamaugua to the popular art records of history. Each of these painters responded to the surrounding cultural environment, earning profits from audiences demanding nationalistic Civil War battlefield paintings not provided by other artists.¹⁴⁸

In depicting military combat, the aforementioned cyclorama painters were not encumbered by the artistic restraints imposed on contemporary history painters and the previous Civil War photographers and special artists. Virgil Baker pointed out that, "For the majority in this generation who wanted an exactitude which they could praise in calling it 'photographic,' subjects were best rendered in the large-scale circular panoramas."¹⁴⁹ The focus of cyclorama painters on encyclopedic depictions produced more egalitarian records of battles than traditional history paintings. Late nineteenth-century audiences were exposed to all aspects of combat, not just the single dramatic actions by prominent military leaders.¹⁵⁰ This historical thoroughness, however, did not preclude the didactic characteristics of prior military art. Cyclorama painters could still include the moralizing symbolism intrinsic to the history painting genre. Similarly, cycloramas expansive, unbroken size permitted the itemized explication of the narrative on an entire engagement,

¹⁴⁷ One of Philippoteaux's Gettysburg cycloramas survives and is currently on display at the Gettysburg National Park in Pennsylvania.

¹⁴⁸ On the resurgence of cycloramas in America during the 1880s cited in this paragraph, see Bates, "As Big As Life," 159-162; Fruitema and Zoetmulder, *The Panorama Phenomenon*, 26-30, 75-78; Stover, *The Panorama Painters' Days*, 3-5; John M. Carroll, ed., *Cyclorama of Gen. Custer's Last Fight* (El Segundo, CA: Upton & Sons, 1988), 9-15; Holzer and Neely, *Mine Eyes Have Seen the Glory*, 172-99; Don Johnson, "Connoisseur of Cycloramas Preserved Civil War Scenes," *Insight* 12, no. 3 (January 22, 1996): 32-35.

¹⁴⁹ Barker, *American Painting: History and Interpretation*, 560.

¹⁵⁰ Altick, *The Shows of London*, 136, 138, 176, 186-197; Holzer and Neely, *Mine Eyes Have Seen the Glory*, 172-99; Fruitema and Zoetmulder, *The Panorama Phenomenon*, 30.

unavailable to other popular art forms. Although they envisioned the grand scope of battlefield confrontations, the cyclorama paintings remained as easily understood and affordable to the general public as photographs and newspaper illustrations. Therefore, the aesthetic characteristics of the cyclorama format made it the most appropriate method for recreating the Battle of Atlanta in the 1880s.

CHAPTER 7

PRODUCTION OF *THE BATTLE OF ATLANTA* CYCLORAMA BY THE
AMERICAN PANORAMA COMPANY IN 1885-1886

Since American history painters were neglecting the Civil War fighting and the available photographs and illustrations were inadequate narratives, the American Panorama Company stepped in to render a complete visual account of the Battle of Atlanta. This selection reflected a desire to capitalize on the aforesaid public interest in the Civil War and cycloramas during the 1880s. Unfortunately, no documentation exists concerning who directly ordered this cyclorama and the commission remains a matter of debate. Tradition, repeated at the present-day lectures about the painting, contends that Major General John A. Logan commissioned the battle scene in 1884. A senator from Illinois, he became James G. Blaine's vice-presidential running mate after an unsuccessful bid for the Republican Presidential nomination. During their 1884 campaign against Grover Cleveland, Logan frequently publicized his status as a military hero in order to appeal to veterans.¹⁵¹ According to this theory, the cyclorama painting of the Battle of Atlanta was conceived as a means to exalt Logan's gallant behavior. One prominent scene in the cyclorama depicts Gen. Logan--in a full dress uniform despite the hot arid conditions of the July day--leading a charge of Union troops to regain their captured fortifications. Evidently, the painting was even advertised as "Logan's Great Battle" in

¹⁵¹ For further information on Logan's Presidential aspirations and his role in the 1884 election see J. W. Buel, *The Authorized Pictorial Lives of James Gillespie Blaine and John Alexander Logan*, assisted by W. E. S. Whitman (Philadelphia: W. H. Thompson, Publisher, 1884), 433-502; George F. Dawson, *Life And Services Of Gen. John A. Logan As Solider and Statesman* (Chicago and New York: Belford, Clarke & Co., 1887), 309-361; James P. Jones, *John A. Logan: Stalwart Republican from Illinois* (Tallahassee: University Press of Florida, 1982), 171-197.

the *Detroit Free Press* on February 27, 1887.¹⁵² These factors seem to bolster John A. Logan's traditional position as the patron of *The Battle of Atlanta*.

On the other hand, some other aspects of the commission by Logan are suspect. If the cyclorama was supposed to be used during the 1884 presidential election, why did the American Panorama Company head painters wait until 1885 to visit the site of the battle?¹⁵³ The sketches drawn of the battlefield landscape were the preliminary step in formulating the composition of the painting. Given this condition, the artists would have presumably traveled to Atlanta much earlier if they intended to complete the cyclorama for John Logan during the campaign. In fact, the painting took almost two years to complete, further discrediting the theory that Logan commissioned the cyclorama for personal publicity. Secondly, why was a second version of the same cyclorama produced?¹⁵⁴ At a combined cost of approximately 80,000 dollars, the price of these two works would have been exorbitant for Logan's campaign. Moreover, the second painting was presumably started after the death of John Logan on December 26, 1886. The Milwaukee studio could not accommodate two canvases and had to produce works sequentially, and the first cyclorama had been finished in the week following Logan's death. Assuming Logan had

¹⁵² Alma Hill Jamison, "The Cyclorama Of The Battle Of Atlanta," *The Atlanta Historical Bulletin* 2, no. 10 (July 1937): 63.

¹⁵³ Their are two separate dates for the trip, both in 1885. A newspaper article says the artists were in the city in October. "A Company Formed to Present the Battle of Atlanta By the Cyclorama." *Atlanta Constitution*, 20 October 1885, p. 7, col. 3. The dating of the newspaper account conflicts with Wehner's introductions, in *Souvenir of the 22 July 64 Battle of Atlanta Panorama*, [1], Cyclorama Subject Collection, Atlanta History Center Library/Archives, Atlanta and *Manual of the Cyclorama of the Battle of Atlanta*, [1], Detroit, Michigan: Detroit Cyclorama Co., [1887], Cyclorama Subject Collection, Atlanta History Center Library/Archives, Atlanta. Each state the visit occurred in the summer and as do subsequent accounts discussing the visit. Perhaps the company changed the dating to reinforce the credibility of the work, knowing that the battle took place in late July, not late October.

¹⁵⁴ George Peter, Milwaukee, to Virgil Adkinson, Atlanta, 3 June 1937, Wilbur G. Kurtz Collection, Special Collections, The Robert W. Woodruff Library, Emory University, Atlanta; Stover, *The Panorama Painters' Days*, 7; Jamison, "The Cyclorama Of The Battle Of Atlanta," 64-70.

commissioned the works, it is unlikely the American Panorama Company would have produced another expensive painting without a patron.

Another popular theory accounting for the commission of the cyclorama is equally problematic. A local group of Wisconsin veterans supposedly ordered the painting as a commercial and historic venture. As with Gen. Logan, these veterans wanted to reap in profits and glorify their wartime conduct. Included in the painting is the bald eagle, Old Abe, a famous mascot of the 8th Wisconsin Regiment. Veterans groups in Wisconsin were known to have contact with the American Panorama Company. The veterans were used by the staff of painters as models and as sources of factual information concerning the particulars of the fighting.¹⁵⁵ Careful scrutiny of military records, however, reveals that the 8th regiment and its mascot were not present at the July 22nd battle.¹⁵⁶

Given the lack of documentation and deficiencies in the other theories, William Wehner, the executive head of the studio, emerges as the most plausible patron of *The Battle of Atlanta*. As an entrepreneur, Wehner observed the success of previous Civil War cycloramas and recognized a commercial opportunity for expansion into the exhibition side of the cyclorama business. He could have selected the subject for his staff of artists to render, planning to reap financial rewards from its subsequent display across the nation. The production of two identical paintings would have allowed him to reach more cities, thus capitalizing on the renewed public interest in cycloramas and the Civil War. In

¹⁵⁵ On the use of the veterans' group as models, see Oliver F. Zinn, Milwaukee, to Virgil Adkinson, Atlanta, 3 June 1937, Wilbur G. Kurtz Collection, Special Collections, The Robert Woodruff Library, Emory University, Atlanta.

¹⁵⁶ William R. Scaife, *Order of Battle: The Campaign for Atlanta* (Saline, MI: McNaughton and Gunn, Inc., 1992); Robert Wernick, "Getting a glimpse of history from the grandstand seat," *Smithsonian* 16, no. 5 (August 1985): 80.

retaining ownership and managing the exhibition of his company's paintings, Wehner could possibly earn more profits than he could earn from commissions. In fact, he organized the cyclorama's first documented exhibition in 1886.¹⁵⁷ This theory that William Wehner himself produced the cyclorama, however, has faults too. The death of Gen. Logan before the commission was finished would have left the painting in his possession. In this circumstance, Wehner may have decided to recoup the cyclorama's cost, about \$40,000, by exhibiting it himself.

In order to satisfy either his patron or the viewing audience, William Wehner employed an accomplished staff of cyclorama painters. Most of the artists at the American Panorama Company were experienced history painters recruited from Germany and Austria. The entrepreneur enticed them to immigrate by presenting Milwaukee as a "little Munich" where these painters could feel comfortable while earning a considerable salary.¹⁵⁸ August Lohr, one of the artists hired by Wehner, had assisted in the production of *The Battle of Sedan* that celebrated the German victory in the Franco-Prussian War.¹⁵⁹ The staff artists who worked on the Atlanta battle painting included August Lohr, Frederick William Heine, Richard Lorenz, Bernard Schneider, Wilhelm Schorter, Gustave Wendling, Albert Richter, Herman Michalowsky, Franz Rohrbeck, Th. Brietwiser, Robert Schade, Otto Dinger, Paul Wilhelm, George Peter, Otto Von Ernest, Feodor Von Lurzer, Johannes Schultz, and Johan N. Levy.¹⁶⁰ In addition to having an accomplished staff,

¹⁵⁷ G. W. Grant, Minneapolis, to Nellie Gerhard, Reading, PA, 10 October 1886, Cyclorama Subject Collection, Atlanta History Center Library/Archives, Atlanta.

¹⁵⁸ Jamison, "The Cyclorama Of The Battle Of Atlanta," 3-8.

¹⁵⁹ Jamison, "The Cyclorama Of The Battle Of Atlanta," 3-4.

¹⁶⁰ The number and names of the artists included in literature on the cyclorama varies. The list of names provided here comes from William Wehner, foreword dated June 1, 1886 to, *Souvenir of the 22 July 64 Battle of Atlanta Panorama* (Indianapolis: Cyclorama Publishing Co., 1888), [1], Cyclorama

Wehner employed Theodore R. Davis as a consultant for the cycloramas of the Battle of Missionary Ridge and then the Battle of Atlanta. The former special artist for *Harper's Weekly* was a valued eyewitness, whose recollections and sketchbooks of these Civil War battles included an artistic regard absent in other historical chronicles.

The method of cyclorama production centered on creating a marketable exhibit that would capture the attention of the mass audience seeking edification of the Civil War in the 1880s. As with foregoing history paintings and cycloramas, the studio endeavored to display a climatic military battle. The cyclorama painters attempted to preserve a certain level of historical accuracy, complying with the expectations of the American public discussed in the preceding chapters. Accompanying the concern for historic correctness, the painters used the cyclorama to satiate the popular demand for narrative battlefield paintings of the Civil War not seen in earlier artworks. Since the cyclorama format could accommodate the comprehensive account of the immense Battle of Atlanta, the painters included as many details and average soldiers as possible while retaining the morally instructive arrangement. At the same time, the American Panorama Company had to manufacture an optical illusion that transported spectators into the midst of an exciting battlefield. Cycloramas were designed to entrance audiences by visually recreating the known elements of the battle through careful use of mathematical and atmospheric perspective.

The organization of the Milwaukee studio was reminiscent of a traditional art workshop. Since the canvas was so large, the work was divided among the assembled staff and the painters used palette knives for the bulk of the work, reserving brushwork for

the finest details.¹⁶¹ Artists painted areas according to their specialty: landscape, figures, or animals. Their collaborative undertaking enabled the studio to complete a cyclorama in an opportune amount of time. Approximately eight thousand pounds of paint were layered onto the canvas in quick, thick, textured strokes. By only roughly delineating the figures and forms, they could complete the canvas in a time to benefit from public interest. This “impressionistic” style, however, still gave a refined appearance to the spectators on the distant viewing platform. In charge of all the painters was Frederick W. Heine “who ‘laid out’ the panorama and instructed the other artists as to where and what to paint.”¹⁶² Heine prepared the compositional sketch, that was then enlarged and transferred to the canvas using a square grid pattern. Following the enlargement of the composition, the head artist adjusted the drawing to compensate for gaps and defects caused by the increased size. Coupled with the composition drawing, a small canvas painted by Heine indicated the characteristics of color, modeling, and lighting he desired for each section of the work.¹⁶³ The expansive format of the cyclorama canvas allowed Heine to portray an egalitarian representation of the historical battle and create a sense of causality in painting. Figure painters, benefiting from the proliferation of Civil War photographs, were able to include portraits of common soldiers alongside those of leading officers. Their attempt to commemorate the actions of average individuals reflected the cultural transition to a comprehensive mode of history, and consequently history painting, in the later nineteenth-

¹⁶¹ Stover, *The Panorama Painters' Days*, 6.

¹⁶² Oliver F. Zinn, to Virgil Adkinson, 3 June 1937, Wilbur G. Kurtz Collection, Emory University, Atlanta.

¹⁶³ For further information on the production of cycloramas see Theodore R. Davis, “How a Great Battle Panorama is Made,” *St. Nicholas* 14, no. 2 (December 1886): 99-112; Fruitema and Zoetmulder, *The Panorama Phenomenon*, 20-25; Kurtz, *The Atlanta Cyclorama: The Story of the Famed Battle of Atlanta*, 24-26; Stover, *The Panorama Painters' Days*, 6.

century. Because of the cyclorama format, Heine also had the capacity to preserve the flowing narrative of the battle at a given point in time. Cycloramas presented the many facets of Civil War combat lost in other popular art representations and other military history paintings. Allusions to fighting that had occurred earlier on in the day were recorded as well.

These painters worked in a manner similar to traditional history painters, striving to produce a dramatic military vision while maintaining an impression of historical fidelity. Analogous to earlier artists, including Emanuel Leutze, the cyclorama painters used costumed models for their figure studies [figure 27]. They clothed local Civil War veterans in authentic uniforms and then sketched numerous action poses in the natural light of a special outdoor garden studio.¹⁶⁴ Augmenting the illustrations of Union army equipment, weapons, and medical provisions in Theodore Davis's sketchbooks, the painters also worked from a collection of Civil War artifacts. The painters of *The Battle of Atlanta* took advantage of certain historical circumstances when composing the cyclorama as well. Towards the end of the war when Confederate resources were nearly exhausted, uniforms in the standard Rebel gray were replaced by ones made of homespun fabric dyed to a mustard color using butternut squash.¹⁶⁵ The depiction of khaki Confederate uniforms, while historically correct, was an aesthetically expedient means of creating a clear contrast to Union Blue. In addition, the cyclorama studio used portrait photographs of military personnel to include correct likenesses in their composition.

¹⁶⁴ Theodore R. Davis, "How a Great Battle Panorama is Made," 101-103.

¹⁶⁵ Wilbur G. Kurtz, "Story of the Cyclorama," [photocopy], p. 45, Cyclorama Subject Collection, Atlanta History Center Library/Archives, Atlanta; W. R. S. Swartz, "Over a Battleground with Soap and Water." [photocopy], p. 2, Cyclorama Subject Collection, Atlanta History Center Library/Archives,

Hence, the cyclorama painters placated public stipulations for historical integrity with research on factual details while applying poetic license to create a vivid combat action spectacle that would attract the public.

In addition to these traditional history painting techniques, the American Panorama Company painters utilized the deceptive effects of the cyclorama. One purpose of the cyclorama was to transport its audience to another place, so the painters had to recreate a complete vision of the battle. To achieve the optical illusion, Frederick Heine, August Lohr, and Richard Lorenz, accompanied by Theodore Davis, first made a trip to Atlanta.¹⁶⁶ Erecting a tower at the height calculated for the later viewing platform, the artists sketched several viewpoints of the battlefield terrain in oils. These preliminary studies recorded the scene using both atmospheric and mathematical perspective, so the resulting cyclorama would appear realistic. Along with these painted representations, photographs were possibly made of the landscape for compositional and detail reference.¹⁶⁷ Davis's eyewitness information helped these head artists understand where the particulars of the combat had taken place, since time had altered certain aspects of the battlefield. The visiting artists also interviewed Joel Hurt, whose family had owned two houses used as fortifications during the fighting.¹⁶⁸ These structures, destroyed days after the battle, were important landmark features of the cyclorama and Hurt's consultation

Atlanta.

¹⁶⁶ "Atlanta On Canvas: A Company Formed to Present the Battle of Atlanta By the Cyclorama." *The Atlanta Constitution*, 20 October 1885, p. 7 col. 3; "A Great Battle to be Vividly Portrayed Upon Canvas." *The Atlanta Constitution*, 8 November 1885, p. 14, col. 1; "Right At Home: The 'Battle of Atlanta' Being Re-Enacted Here." *The Atlanta Constitution*, 23 February 1892, p. 9, col. 3.

¹⁶⁷ Paul M. Atkinson, to W. T. Waters, Atlanta, GA, 7 January 1913; quoted in Jamison, "The Cyclorama of the Battle of Atlanta", 68-69; Stover, *The Panorama Painters' Days*, 7; "Panoramas," 35.

¹⁶⁸ Sarah Simms Edge, "Other Interests." *The Atlanta Historical Bulletin* 9 no. 37 (April, 1955): 323-325.

helped the artists envision where they once stood. Once in the studio, Heine used these sketches for his overall compositional drawing. Since the large canvas curves under its own weight, a system of curved lines developed by Robert Barker was implemented to resolve distortion inherent in a concave surface. Moreover, Wehner's studio artists listened to the advice of former combatants. Veterans often attended these exhibitions for free and were quick to point out factual errors in terrain, troop movements, costumes, and armaments. Fearful these mistakes would distract from the optical experience, frequent visits and letters from Atlanta Campaign participants supplemented the entire painting process. Theodore Davis recounted the corrections and changes made by artists even during the painting process according to the advice of the veterans.¹⁶⁹ Thus, the American Panorama Company balanced the varied concerns of their audience in composing the cyclorama. As a result of their efforts, their production of a visual amusement encompassed historical details, commonplace battlefield actions, and a chronological scene of the fighting in *The Battle of Atlanta*.

¹⁶⁹ Theodore R. Davis, "How a Great Battle Panorama is Made," 107.

CHAPTER 8

The Battle of Atlanta, 1885-1886

An examination of the painting reveals the optical and historical contemplations of the painters, especially their efforts to elucidate an egalitarian narrative. *The Battle of Atlanta* depicts the fighting taking place outside of the city at approximately 4 p.m. on July 22, 1864 [figures 28-52]. It displays all the action taking place across the expansive battlefield during that time period, including pitched fighting, troop movements, and treatment of casualties. The main engagements of troops were at the Troup Hurt house, atop Bald Hill, and near Stone Mountain in the town of Decatur. These struggles are seen from the perspective of the viewers' platform, placed above the railroad tracks, creating a flowing narrative of the entire battle scene at the given point in time.

The cyclorama also alludes to previous military actions during the day long battle. Before the scene rendered in the cyclorama, the Confederate army had launched a bold surprise attack on the exposed left flank of McPherson's Army of the Tennessee around noon. Believing Hood's army had retreated to the fortifications protecting Atlanta, Sherman had ordered a division of his troops to destroy the railroad supply lines and was caught off-guard by the assault. The enemies fought each other on the Georgian terrain for the rest of the afternoon and inflicted heavy casualties, including two prominent officers, Union Major General James Birdseye McPherson and Confederate Major General William H. T. Walker. A subsequent Confederate offensive broke the line of Union troops, capturing breastworks, the guns of Battery A, 1st Illinois Light Artillery, and Captain Frank DeGress's Battery H, 1st Illinois Light Artillery. The cyclorama delineates

the following contest between the Federal and Confederate troops for control of fortified territory as well as other battlefield actions.

The composition rhythmically bombards the viewer with images of dramatic figural actions separated by brief intervals of landscape scenes with few people. Above the serpentine troop movements swaying back and forth across the canvas, one third of the canvas presents a cloudy blue sky, typical of a hot summer afternoon in Georgia. The standard description of the cyclorama begins with the view [figure 28] showing the Georgia railroad linking Atlanta, on the distant horizon, with the battle scene raging around the Troup Hurt house in the foreground. The spires of the city, the object of all this fighting, stand beyond the railroad tracks littered on each side by dead soldiers and slaughtered horses from the seizure of Battery A, 1st Illinois Light Artillery. In between the distant city and the brick house lies the two story white house of the Widow Pope, the site of an earlier Confederate triumph over Union brigades. The episode that dominates the foreground of the cyclorama narrative, similarly to the right of the rails and dirt road, is the attempt by Union troops to recapture fortifications lost during an earlier Rebel attack. The area nearest the viewing platform is filled by soldiers in Brigadier General Manigault's brigade who had successfully penetrated the Federal XVth Army Corps line. Alongside Manigault's regiments from South Carolina and Alabama, Colonel Jacob H. Sharp's Mississippi brigade is now entrenched behind a makeshift barricade of cotton bales and logs [figure 29]. Behind the breastwork, mangled trees and an unfinished plantation house stand in the crossfire. The scrupulously rendered large pines and brick Troup Hurt house dominate the middle ground of the painting, distracting attention away

from the fighting. This aesthetic diversion may have been designed by the painters to give spectators a rest from the intensity of the adjoining combat scenes. Next to the house are abandoned cannons that the Confederates could not seize due to the retreating Union's slaughter of all available horses. These dying horses thrash in a group to the right of the artillery, ringed in a loop of gunsmoke [figure 30].

In front of the horses, waves of Colonel August Mersy's brigade of the XVIth corps and Captain Francis DeGress's battery counterattack the overextended Rebel line [figure 31]. In the background, behind the block of charging blue figures, rolling hills and clumps of trees lead back to Kennesaw mountain. This natural landmark was the site of the Confederate repulse of Sherman's invaders on June 27th. At the rear of the Union line Lieutenant Edward Jonas [right of center in figure 31], reigning in his horse, turns away from the pitched fighting to observe Brigadier General Charles Wood's division of XVth corps rushing across the middle ground. The officer manifests the aesthetic characteristics of a military equestrian statue, a stationary portrait study on horseback instead of an active part of the surrounding composition. This area of the composition allows the eye to relax, with only a large cloud of gunsmoke and tiny background figures speckling the landscape's grassy slopes. Directly behind Lt. Jonas lies Colonel Mersy, who had fallen into a bush when his horse was shot out from under him. The aforementioned images of Wood's division fills the section behind the officers [right side of figure 31 and far left side of figure 34]. Lines of Confederates and Union troops, amid the billows of smoke, charge attacking each other in the far background behind the officers. To the right of the infantry in the background, lies the Union Headquarters at the Augustus Hurt house. Obscured by

a clump of trees, the white house is barely distinguishable. To the left of the house, General Sherman surveys the battlefield on horseback, unrecognizable as a tiny dark stroke of paint amid the vast canvas [figure 32]. In the same way, the composition depersonalizes the body of Major General McPherson, placed in a black ambulance to the right of the house [figure 33].

In contrast to the static portrait of Jonas or obscure representations of Sherman and McPherson, the charging Union officers in the next portion of the cyclorama display aesthetic and dramatic qualities [figure 34]. Dominating the foreground, Major General “Black Jack” Logan races across the land on a black steed, theatrically waving his hat in the air [figure 35]. Assuming command from the fallen McPherson, he starts the line of mounted Union officers, including Capt. Francis DeGress, rushing to rally their struggling regiments [figures 36-37]. The painters’ rough, broad brushstrokes suit the equestrian dash, capturing the sense of speed and individual character without becoming mired in distracting details. Above the charging Logan, the severely wounded General Force is carried to Union headquarters in an ambulance wagon traveling next to an abandoned trench. As the painting proceeds, the landscape gradually takes over the composition [far right side of figure 34 and far left middleground of figure 38]. The setting of a forest strewn with stumps after being axed for makeshift wooden fortifications shows another ravage of warfare while balancing the dramatic action of the surrounding views.

In the following vista [figure 38], the damaged Georgia railroad’s diagonal recession into the canvas similarly stabilizes the composition. By repeating the image of mangled tracks, the artists reconnect the opposite sides of the cyclorama and reinforce the

continuous narrative of the mid-afternoon's fighting. To the east of the Georgia railroad, the second half of *The Battle of Atlanta* [figures 38, 41 & 48] recreates the other combat struggles and army movements occurring during the same time period. On the west side of the rails lies the army field hospital with a yellow flag waving next to the chimney [figure 39]. Furthermore, the rails direct the eye back to the image of Stone Mountain in the distant background where gunsmoke rises from a cavalry skirmish in Decatur [figure 39]. General Joseph Andrew Jackson Lightburn leads six of his regiments out of the forest towards the Union counterattacks [middle of figure 38]. Lightburn's division, recovering from the earlier assault by the Confederates that broke the XVth Army Corps' line, resolutely advances back into the fray. An ammunition wagon, seen in the far middle ground, follows the infantrymen's march up Decatur Road. The left flank of Lightburn's soldiers begins to tramp across a golden wheat field creating a beautiful genre scene of Civil War combat. Marching in a diagonal line, the dark blue figures contrast against the yellow light of the field. Behind the radiant pasture, a vision of dead soldiers and ambulance wagons littering a barren terrain produces an opposing compositional component [figure 40].

Parallel to the medical area, the stone building of Beer's Tannery stands bombed out from the artillery assaults that had caused so many casualties [far right side of figure 41]. In front of the stone building, the wheat field scene continues, with a few lead soldiers collapsing in the oppressive summer heat [figure 42]. Behind the field and to the right of the Tannery, soldiers race into the fighting [figure 43]. Undeterred by the numerous corpses to the rear and in front of them, 1st Iowa battery rides horseback across

the distant middle ground [figure 44]. Along with a regiment of foot soldiers, these troops were moving to reinforce General William Harrow's besieged 4th division. In the middle of this segment, a group of mounted officers in a gully engrosses the foreground. Colonel Willard Warner, Captain Frederick Whitehead, Colonel Wells S. Jones, General Morgan L. Smith, and Captain F. C. Gillette resemble equestrian portraits [figure 45]. This detailed and stationary style isolates the Federal leaders from the rest of the composition's spectacular action. In the distant open field, a group of Confederate prisoners is led away from the fighting [figure 46]. To the left of the trench [the right side of figure 41], lines of the Union army cut a wide diagonal across the green fields of the painting. In the far horizon looms the desolate arid slope of Bald Hill¹⁷⁰ where Confederate Major General Carter Stevenson's and Brigadier General George Maney's divisions launch an attack on Brigadier General Mortimer D. Leggett's 3rd division of the XVIIth corps, entrenched along the tree line [figure 47].

The final portion of the cyclorama [figure 48] reprises the tumultuous combat action of the earlier sections. Colonel James Martin, astride a gray horse at the rear of the fighting, echoes the observatory pose of Lt. Jonas [far right foreground of figure 48]. To the right of the officer, a small group of Confederate prisoners walks near the base of a large pine tree [figure 49]. In the middle ground, scores of Union and Confederate soldiers fire at each other amid clouds of gunsmoke and dense foliage. Martin's brigade rushes up the wooden hill to confront Brigadier General Marcellus Augustus Stovall's Rebels, commanded by Colonel Abda Johnson. Amongst the broad lines of figures, a few

¹⁷⁰ Later renamed Leggett's Hill when Brig. Gen. Leggett attempted to purchase the property.

wounded soldiers are graphically depicted, at times captured at the moment of injury [figure 50].

The aforementioned images of the Battle of Atlanta on July 22, 1864, illustrate the events occurring around four p.m. in the afternoon. Due to the nature of combat in the Civil War and the fragmentary information recorded by the combatants, there is no way to verify that all the events portrayed took place at exactly the same time. R. S. Tuthill, a member of the Union artillery, wrote, “The exact sequence of events that afternoon I cannot give, nor do I believe any man can.”¹⁷¹ No one participating in the battle had the omniscient point of view available in the cyclorama on account of the large scale fighting, thick gunsmoke, and imminent danger surrounding the combatants. The artists consolidated various historic accounts in their attempt to produce an accurate, informative, and thrilling composition. Therefore, these events may not all be happening at the same exact moment in time but are representative of the battle taking place around four o’clock in the afternoon of July 22, 1864.

Taken as a whole, the cyclorama reads as a nationalistic, reconciling commemoration emulating society’s flourishing coalescence of opinion concerning the Civil War. The decisive moment in the battle selected by Wehner and his staff granted them the freedom to render episodes former Union and Confederate citizens could identify with or admire. Painters used a variety of tactics to express unifying heroic messages, namely traditional style portraits of officers, landscape elements, employment of poetic license, and genre scenes. These images of the Battle of Atlanta were in accord with the

later nineteenth-century public posture of rapprochement, especially the heroic sacrifices of individuals on both sides. The commercial desire of the American Panorama Company for financial success caused them to reflect the nationalistic atmosphere of the society in the mid-1880s. They realized the commercial risks of offending potential spectators as the painting toured the country and tried to represent the attitudes of reconciliation and unity in the composition. If their painting had been overly defamatory to either side, viewers would have criticized it. Wehner, as head of the company and first owner, boasted about soliciting information from the surviving Union and Confederate officers about the July 22, 1864, battle.¹⁷² He also advertised that "Officers of the Confederate army, appreciating our desire to make 'Atlanta' a historical painting, have taken special pains to verify statements concerning their positions."¹⁷³ He clearly wanted the attendance of a mass audience and therefore tried to avoid antagonizing any possible audiences.

The cyclorama displays abundant images of the conquering Union Army, whose defeat of the Confederates ensured the continuation of the nation. At the stage of the battle depicted, Federal soldiers were valiantly fighting their way to ultimate victory. Masses of Union troops move across the length of the painting, oftentimes dominating the foreground. Their struggle against the vanquishing Confederate attacks at the Troup Hurt House and Bald Hill emulates the eventual outcome of the entire Civil War, the North has lost the initial advantage and some of their fortifications but they will eventually be

¹⁷¹ quoted in Otto Eisenschiml and Ralph Newman, *The American Iliad: The Epic Story of the Civil War as narrated by Eyewitnesses and Contemporaries* (Indianapolis and New York: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1947), 624.

¹⁷² Wehner, foreword dated June 1, 1886 to, *Souvenir of the 22 July 64 Battle of Atlanta Panorama*, [1], Cyclorama Subject Collection, Atlanta History Center Library/Archives, Atlanta.

¹⁷³ Wehner, foreword dated February 15, 1887 to, *Manual of the Cyclorama of the Battle of Atlanta*, [2], Cyclorama Subject Collection, Atlanta History Center Library/Archives, Atlanta.

victorious. Their military superiority in numbers and equipment gave them the advantage in the ongoing war of attrition. Throughout the cyclorama, several American flags are prominently displayed, held aloft amid the combat. These bright, waving emblems epitomize the Union's struggle to maintain the unity of the nation made all the more apparent in comparison to the Confederate battle flags that are depicted falling to the ground or scarcely visible. The inclusion of the bald eagle named after Abraham Lincoln, though historically inaccurate, likewise connotes the power of the United States Government over state's rights. In triumph, the North eradicated major impediments to the future success and prosperity of the United States.

Frequent views honoring the Confederate States of America were not precluded by the preponderance of Union troops in the painted battlefield. In capturing the interval of fighting where the Union forces were counterattacking, the cyclorama also illustrated the triumphant assaults made by the Confederates. Painted in the foreground of the composition, Manigault's brigade has control of the Federal fortifications at the Troup Hurt House, after overrunning DeGress's battery [figure 29]. It was a brief moment of triumph but it exemplified the tenacity of Rebels encumbered by unbalanced military odds. In fact, the Confederate brigades only relinquished the captured fortifications after they were unexplainably ordered by Brigadier General John C. Brown to retreat and "there was nothing left for us to do but obey."¹⁷⁴ Another striking result of the artist's composition is their placement of most Confederate soldiers so their faces confront the viewer. They are seen clearly as individuals while the majority of the Union soldiers are shown with their backs to the viewers, which is a traditionally derogatory pose. This face to face technique

humanizes the Rebels and may have elicited sympathetic responses from Northern audiences toward their former enemy. It likewise provided Southerners personal heroic representations amid the copious Union troops. Symbols of the Confederate successes are furthermore represented in the far horizon. The distant images of Kennesaw mountain allude to other Confederate victories. In the June 27th Battle of Kennesaw, General Joseph E. Johnston had successfully repelled General Sherman's massive assaults and slowed the Union advance into Georgia by inflicting heavy casualties. The clouds of gunsmoke obscuring Stone Mountain likewise indicate the seizure of Decatur from Spragude's Union brigade by Major General Joseph Wheeler's Confederate Cavalry during the Battle of Atlanta [figure 39].¹⁷⁵

In the more traditional history painting passages of the cyclorama, portraits of officers are posed and refined to reflect the nobility of the Union cause. All the of mounted officers in the picture are Union commanders, except Confederate General Brown whose horse had just been shot out from underneath him.¹⁷⁶ Federal soldiers dominate the foreground area because the viewing platform was positioned amid the Union lines. Confederate officers, at the rear of the Union lines, were positioned too far in the background to be distinguished by spectators. Some of the Union officers are depicted in military portrait style, clothed in full dress uniforms unruffled by combat and astride stationary horses [figure 45]. Prominently treated in the massive composition, the gallant charge into the fray by Major General Logan on horseback [figure 35] provided a more

¹⁷⁴ quoted in Castel, *Decision In The West*, 408.

¹⁷⁵ Wheeler's calvary's efforts to capture or destroy MrPherson's wagon train essentially failed.

¹⁷⁶ The lack of discernible portraits of Confederate officers might not have been planned initially. "A Great Battle to be Vividly Portrayed on Canvas," *The Atlanta Constitution*, 8 November 1885, p. 14,

dramatic didactic spectacle in the tradition of grand history paintings. He embodies the bravery and honor of the Union army, an officer willing to fulfill his sworn duty disregarding any personal sacrifice.

For the same commercial and cultural reasons, the landscape of the cyclorama exemplified the unifying consequences of the Civil War. The inferiority of Confederate transportation systems, industries, and commercial resources is symbolized by the bent railroad tracks in the painting. By destroying the vital supply routes leading from Atlanta to the rest of the South, the North further isolated the enemy and won the war, preserving the nation. Broken trees, blasted houses, and desolate fields serve as remembrances of the enormous sacrifices endured by the country in wartime. Memories of these hardships bonded individuals with a common heritage and admonished them to refrain from future dissension. Union soldiers trampling over the golden field of wheat [figure 42] reflects the destruction of the agrarian society the South was trying desperately to preserve. This scene embodies how sectionalism and commerce based on slavery stifled the Southern economy's development and how the war's outcome provided the former Confederacy opportunities for urban industrialization.

As with traditional history paintings, the cyclorama evidences a certain amount of poetic license. While the majority of the painting is historically accurate, there are discrepancies. The cyclorama painters through conscious manipulation, omission, and administration of advantageous historical circumstances enhanced the work's composition and accommodated the current cultural environment. Inaccuracies concerning the placement of the Troup Hurt House and certain regiments were necessitated by the artist's

col. 1 recounts that Hood, Hardee, and other Confederate officers portraits were to be included.

desire for a spectacular composition. The house was not as close to the railroad as depicted in the painting, but the modification maintains the dramatic tone of the combat scene with soldiers rushing in from all sides. Likewise, some of the troops shown charging the fortifications were actually closer to the railroad. If the attacking Union lines had been placed accurately, they would be in the space occupied by the viewing platform and the painters massaged history to keep them in the picture plane.¹⁷⁷ Their manipulation enhances the composition and retains the sense of Union advantage manifested throughout the cyclorama. This view of the Battle of Atlanta excludes the presence of minorities and only portrays one female and one black man, both set off in the distance.¹⁷⁸ The deliberate selection of this homogenized viewpoint eschews the discordant racial questions the nation was still struggling with and endorses the dominance of the white male in contemporary society. Furthermore, the cyclorama painters took advantage of historical facts to downgrade certain images that may have offended audiences. Due to the large nature of modern warfare, neither General Hood nor General Sherman was actively engaged on the battlefield. Each leader observed the masses of troops from distant headquarters, far removed from the actual fighting. This fact allowed the artists to eliminate Hood and include Sherman as only a few strokes of paint on a horse, standing next to a remote house [figure 32]. While Northern audiences could still identify with one of their victorious commanders, Southerners were spared a portrait likeness of a man who had

¹⁷⁷ For information on the historically correct position of the House and soldiers, see Rodgers, Robert L. *Report of Robert L. Rodgers, historian to Atlanta Camp no. 159, U.C.V., on the capture of the DeGress Battery and Battery A, 1st Ill. Light Artillery, in the Battle of Atlanta, July 22, 1864, with other papers bearing thereon*. Atlanta, n.p., 1898.

¹⁷⁸ The woman is a nurse, depicted in a red skirt near the chimney of the field hospital [figure 39]. The African-American man sits astride a horse in the rear of Lightburn's regiments [figure 38].

inflicted widespread devastation on their region. The absence of Hood's visible portrait likely suited all of the cyclorama audiences, North and South. In his 1880 memoirs, Hood blatantly criticized his own troops for cowardly behavior and blamed his subordinate officers for the defeat at the Battle of Atlanta.¹⁷⁹ These harsh condemnations and denial of personal responsibility diminished the view of the Confederate General in many Southern eyes.

Finally, the painting exhibits genre scenes honoring the admirable conduct and valorous sacrifices of the Union and Confederate troops. Instead of having a traditional military martyr scene of either the death of McPherson or Walker, the cyclorama portrays the loss of regular infantrymen. Numerous soldiers, Union and Confederate, lay dead on the battlefield canvas [figure 50]. They represent the ruination of an entire generation of young Americans wrought by the Civil War. While the inclusion of such incidents was previously criticized in earlier battlefield paintings for rekindling hostility toward the responsible enemy, these illustrations serve more often now as a reminder of the national sacrifice of the country. Other views of ordinary soldiers illustrate the brave conduct frequently heralded in reunions and literary accounts of former enemies. Union enlistees courageously charge into pitched fighting at several places on the canvas, undeterred by the casualties of their comrades. An episode of Confederates attempting to capture the Federal colors in a like manner reflects their determination [figure 51], despite stronger Union forces. The genre scene of the Martin Brothers [figure 52], adjacent to the Troup Hurt House, stands out among these universal images. This revealing image, spoke to

¹⁷⁹ John B. Hood, *Advance and Retreat: Personal Experiences In The United States & Confederate States Armies*, ed. Richard N. Current, new and rev. ed. (Bloomington, IN: Indiana

every spectator of the cyclorama. Following their respective convictions, these Tennessee natives had joined on opposite sides of the war. The painting reproduces their encounter on the battlefield, where upon recognizing his wounded Confederate brother, the Union soldier cradles his head and gives him water from a canteen.¹⁸⁰ These brothers symbolized the feelings of conciliation fostered during the late nineteenth-century. His magnanimous behavior visually instructed how the reunited country should behave, with the North healing the wounds inflicted on the South.

Therefore, the cyclorama painters elicited a composition symbolic of the burgeoning American desire for reconciliation following the Civil War. They legitimized citizens' participation in the war and exemplified the valiant struggle of individuals to perform their civic duty in defiance of the personal costs. Audiences responded to the pictorial illusion, whose imagery reflected the noble conduct of all the war's participants. *The Battle of Atlanta* traveled across the country, from Detroit to Minneapolis to Indianapolis, opening to throngs of spectators who lauded the painting.¹⁸¹ After the initial acclamatory receptions, however, the cyclorama often lost money due to public disinterest after seeing the attraction a few times. The cyclorama changed ownership several times before it was purchased by Paul Atkinson between 1887-1890.¹⁸² Atkinson brought the

University Press, 1959), 173-192.

¹⁸⁰ The legendary brothers may not have been at the Battle of Atlanta. No historical record confirms or disproves that the Martin brothers were at the battle. Their presence is doubted because neither Mersy's Union brigade or Manigault's Confederate brigade had regiments from Tennessee. Dennis A. Walters, Ken Raveill, and William R. Scaife, *The Battle of Atlanta* (Kansas City, MO: Terrell Publishing Co., Inc., n. d.), 29 Cyclorama Subject Collection, Atlanta History Center Library/Archives, Atlanta.

¹⁸¹ Helen Valodin, "Cyclorama Founded Here in 1888 Again on Exhibit in Atlanta, GA," *The Indianapolis Star*, 1 February 1937. Wilbur G. Kurtz Collection, Special Collections, The Robert W. Woodruff Library, Emory University, Atlanta.

¹⁸² Paul M. Atkinson, to W. T. Waters, Atlanta, GA, 7 January 1913; quoted in Jamison, "The

painting from Chattanooga to Atlanta in 1892 to replace his *Battle of Missionary Ridge*.⁹¹
¹⁸³

The opening of the exhibition on February 22nd drew large laudatory crowds, including veterans who declared there could not be a more accurate portrayal of the battle. One newspaper article declared, "every Southerner will find in it the only cyclorama that does justice to the cause of the South. The glorious valor of her heroes is wonderfully portrayed. . . ." ¹⁸⁴ These accolades from Atlanta's citizens attest how the treatment of the battle by the American Panorama Company produced a dramatic picture indicative of the cultural environment.

Cyclorama of the Battle of Atlanta", 68-69.

¹⁸³ Some of the Confederate prisoners in the painting were repainted in blue Union uniforms before the cyclorama was displayed in Chattanooga because the owner did not want to risk offending his Southern audience. Paul M. Atkinson, to W. T. Waters, Atlanta, GA, 7 January 1913; quoted in Jamison, "The Cyclorama of the Battle of Atlanta", 68-69. Later restorations returned the prisoners to their original Confederate designation.

¹⁸⁴ "The Battle of Atlanta: The New Cyclorama Has Captured The Town," *The Atlanta Constitution*, 1 March 1892, p. 3, col. 3. For further news stories on the public reception of the painting, see "The New Cyclorama: 'The Battle of Atlanta' proves very popular here in Atlanta," *The Atlanta Constitution*, 28 February 1892, p. 18, col. 5; "Right At Home: The 'Battle of Atlanta' Being Re-Enacted Here," *The Atlanta Constitution*, 23 February 1892, p. 9, col. 3; "Outside Towns visiting the Cyclorama, Etc.," *The Atlanta Constitution*, 16 March 1892, p. 7, col. 1; "Cyclorama will be open 2 to 6 P.M. today [Sunday]," *The Atlanta Constitution*, 20 March 1892, p. 4, col. 5.

CONCLUSION

The Battle of Atlanta was praised in the last quarter of the nineteenth-century because it reinforced America's national identity in the wake of the Civil War. Images of common sacrifice and honor reunited former enemies and commemorated their performance of duty. The symbolism and composition of the painting manifest a central component for sustaining a unified country, namely the memories of a communal Civil War past comprised of celebrated deeds and collective sufferings.¹⁸⁵ As a commercial art form, the cyclorama's didactic conception exemplified the belief system fostered by post-reconstruction society. Americans had begun to stress the importance of rising above partisan sentiments that had divided a nation and adapted the war experiences to perpetuate nationalistic feelings. The removal of sectionalist antagonisms, especially slavery and provincialism, helped to unify the discordant regions of the United States. Meanwhile, the industrialization and empowered organization of the government brought about by the war eventually resulted in economic stability and political growth.

Americans' focus on assimilating the events and results of the Civil War into their national consciousness, after a period of psychological denial and fear of renewed hostility, influenced the cultural environment. Individuals across the country purchased books, attended reunions, and read magazines about the war at an unprecedented rate. Almost twenty years after the war, publication of wartime photographs and illustrations grew alongside these written histories, attempting to provide a visual record of the conflict. The American Panorama Company responded to this shift by rendering a truthful representation of a significant battle of the war, the Battle of Atlanta. Cycloramas of

important Civil War battles were savvy business ventures, recognizing the transformed demands of the public. As a popular art form, the cyclorama painting was more comprehensible than photographs or engravings to a greater percentage of the population and disseminated complex historical information about the large scale nature of combat.

Other popular arts, namely photography and illustrated journalism, were incapable of representing the extensive combat scenes of the Civil War. A combination of commercial, technical, and aesthetic factors restricted photographers and special artists from rendering significant battles. While affordable to the ordinary citizen, these pictorial means of communication did not present unambiguous, comprehensive narratives of the various skirmishes occurring during a modern battle. Instead of involving massive numbers of soldiers, they captured small portions of battle very dramatically and effectively. History paintings, the classic means of artistically representing armed conflicts, also faltered when depicting the American Civil War. During the four years of fighting, artists were confused by the emergence of modern warfare, the fluctuation of support from critics, patrons, and the government, the competition from photography and illustrated journalism, and the want of clear moral directives. In the shattering aftermath of the war, most artists avoided battlefield topics in the face of harsh criticism. By the time the American public wanted to remember the war in the late 1870s, painters had migrated to innovative European styles, especially Impressionism and Realism. Concurrent with the loss of their artistic dominance, academic pedagogical paintings could not meet the expectations of patrons of military art. History, previously established as the record of powerful leaders, began to encompass the daily lives of the general population.

¹⁸⁵ Renan, "What is a nation?," 19-21.

This more democratic viewpoint, combined with the public call for the detailed realism provided in photographs, could not be accommodated in the traditional history painting format.

In representing a significant battle in the Civil War, *The Battle of Atlanta* manifested a seamless, narrative account of the historic battlefield action that other popular arts and history painting could not provide. The cyclorama format allowed the exposition of average individuals in the midst of an exciting spectacle. Cyclorama painters incorporated moralizing compositional elements from the long tradition of military history paintings. Gallant charges, noble portraits, and chivalrous genre scenes enlightened citizens to the consolidating aspects of their recent past. Their attempts at truthful realistic representation and didactic purpose simultaneously built on the heritage of the cyclorama industry. As educational amusements, these optical illusions recreated scenes for the benefit of general audiences. The American Panorama Company responded to the desires of the popular art market, representing the historical circumstances of the Battle of Atlanta, creating a sensational illusion, and rendering images former enemies could embrace. The painting's nationalistic message, a result of the patron's desire to be financially prosperous, reinforced the developing cultural conditions in the contemporary viewer's environment. Therefore, *The Battle of Atlanta* displays a didactic narrative representation of the crucial engagement exhibit of the widespread attitude toward the Civil War during the 1880s and absent from previous photographs, illustrations, and history paintings.

EPILOGUE

In the years ensuing *The Battle of Atlanta's* inaugural exhibition in Atlanta, the cyclorama endured periods of deterioration and rehabilitation. After a year, most people in and around Atlanta had seen the cyclorama and the novelty had ceased to attract patrons, resulting in a severe loss in profits. The rationale for the public's neglect of this and other cycloramas was the emergence of motion pictures into the American popular culture in the late nineteenth-century. American and European inventors developed the rudimentary film technology in the 1890s and began to exhibit the first movies. Thomas Edison's laboratory invented and obtained a patent for the Kinetoscope, a device that showed a series of photographs in motion to a single viewer, in 1891. The machine rapidly became popular in peep show arcades and vaudeville theaters across the United States and exhibited films produced at Edison's studio, the "Black Maria." Subsequent development of equipment to project films to an audience launched the popular motion picture industry. In Europe, the first publicly projected films by the Lumiere Brothers in 1895 and subsequently by Max Skladanowsky, Birt Acres, Robert William Paul were focused on creating the illusion of reality, especially the ability to reconstitute movement in time and space.¹⁸⁶

Films visualizing contemporary events captured the popularity of cycloramas, that could not equal the rapid production, moving images, and consecutive narrative of a

¹⁸⁶ For further information on the early development of motion pictures, see David Robinson, *The History Of World Cinema*, 2d ed., rev. and updated (New York: Stein and Day/ Publishers, 1981), 1-21; Charles Musser, *Before the Nickelodeon: Edwin S. Porter and the Edison Manufacturing Company* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and Oxford: University of California Press, 1991), 29-102; Gordon Hendricks, "The Kinetoscope: Fall Motion Picture Production," in *Film Before Griffith*, ed. John L. Fell (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 1983), 13-21; Alan Williams, "The Lumière

motion picture. The inexpensive mass duplication of a single print allowed for wide distribution and circulation of films across the nation.¹⁸⁷ Travel journals, once a staple of cyclorama and moving panoramas, were surpassed by motion pictures taken of distant locales that were shown in a similar controlled environment with narratives and sound effects.¹⁸⁸ Gradually, European and American film makers also realized the artistic and narrative opportunities available in this new art form.¹⁸⁹ Films contained an abundance of details that were manipulated and emphasized by either the photographer, producer, or exhibitor to relate a story while retaining the "illusion of a direct presentation of events."¹⁹⁰ The success of "war films" illustrating the Spanish-American War convinced filmmakers of the marketability of realistic historical recreations of military subjects. Fulfilling the same audience demand for cycloramas, these war movies, especially William Paley's reels recorded in Cuba, portrayed the dramatic contemporary events with varying degrees of factual accuracy.¹⁹¹ During the last decade of the nineteenth-century, the

Organization and 'Documentary Realism'," in *Film Before Griffith*, ed. John L. Fell (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 1983), 153-161.

¹⁸⁷ Jeanne Thomas Allen, "Copyright and Early Theater, Vaudeville, and Film Competition," in *Film Before Griffith*, ed. John L. Fell (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 1983), 178-181.

¹⁸⁸ Raymond Fielding, "Hale's Tours: Ultrarealism in the Pre-1910 Motion Picture," in *Film Before Griffith*, ed. John L. Fell (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 1983), 116-130.

¹⁸⁹ For more information on the development of narrative film, see Charles Musser, "The American Vitagraph, 1887-1901: Survival and Success in a Competitive Industry," in *Film Before Griffith*, ed. John L. Fell (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 1983), 23, 27-66; Tom Gunning, *D. W. Griffith and the Origins of American Narrative Film* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1991), passim.

¹⁹⁰ Gunning, *D. W. Griffith and the Origins of American Narrative Film*, 22.

¹⁹¹ Musser, "The American Vitagraph, 1887-1901: Survival and Success in a Competitive Industry," 31-43, 48, 54; Eric Breitbart, "The Painted Mirror: Historical Re-creation from the Panorama to the Docudrama," in *Presenting the Past: Essays on History and the Public*, eds. Susan Porter Benson, Stephen Brier, and Roy Rosenzweig (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1986), 105-17.

exhibition of motion pictures became the purveyor of historical information and brought about the downfall of the cyclorama industry.

Encountering the competition from the prosperous movie industry, many cyclorama exhibitions failed and most of the paintings were lost. Canvases deteriorated in storage, were cut up for theatrical scenery, or abandoned in dilapidated wooden buildings to decay. The survival of *The Battle of Atlanta* was a rare exception, since most of the painting remained intact and it was protected from natural elements. After a wane in popularity, the cyclorama was transfigured into a Civil War monument to the Atlanta Campaign. The aforementioned nationalistic images of Union and Confederate heroism sanctioned *The Battle of Atlanta*'s transformation into a revered memorial to the July 22nd contest. George V. Gress and Charles Northen, purchased the painting, convinced that the cyclorama should stay in the city and the proceeds of its' exhibition should benefit the people of Atlanta. The civic minded Gress and Northen originally intended to give the cyclorama to the Methodist Orphan's home of Decatur, an institution filled with the descendants of Confederate soldiers. That plan did not work out and then they resolved to deed the artwork to the city itself in 1893.¹⁹² Mr. Gress's donation of the cyclorama was delayed until 1898, due to controversy over who would finance the painting's much needed repairs.¹⁹³ With its permanent installation into L. P. Grant Park, *The Battle of Atlanta* began its role of commemorating the Civil War engagement. The park was

¹⁹² "Park Commission Will Meet Today." *The Atlanta Constitution*, 15 August 1893, p. 8, col. 1.

¹⁹³ After 1893, news accounts concerning the cyclorama fail to mention Mr. Northen as an owner of the cyclorama. Perhaps Mr. Gress bought him out of their partnership agreement. Whatever the circumstances, Mr. Gress is given the credit for bequeathing the cyclorama to the City of Atlanta. "Park Commissioners Meet: Busy Session Yesterday of Routine Matters," *The Atlanta Constitution*, 10 July 1897, p. 7, col. 2.; "City Will Accept the Cyclorama: Park Board decides at last to accept Mr. Gress'

donated by Colonel Lemuel P. Grant, who designed the twelve miles of fortifications surrounding Atlanta during the war. Grant Park had a fort outfitted with breastworks, rifle pits, and four brass cannons in honor of Gen. William H. T. Walker and a walk named for Major General McPherson.¹⁹⁴ Amid these other memorials, the cyclorama symbolized the meritorious conduct of the ordinary Civil War soldier, Union and Confederate. School children and veterans were admitted for free, ensuring the remembrance of a battle that altered the course of the war.¹⁹⁵ In fact, the city's repairs on the cyclorama were completed on a tight schedule in order to ensure its opening for the Confederate Veterans' Reunion in July 22-23, 1898. As the actual battlefield was overtaken by Atlanta's growth, subsequent generations defaulted to the cyclorama's visualization of the costly encounter.

In the century since its production, *The Battle of Atlanta* had undergone several renovations to maintain the painting and retain public interest. The first overall restoration took place in 1922, after the spooled canvas was moved into a new concrete and steel building. The neoclassical architecture of the "fire proof" structure was designed to protect the painting from future weather damage while admitting in natural light from a hidden sky light. Its relocation into the new space allowed the painting to hold more spectators and assuaged public fears of being trapped in a wooden inferno. Frank Mack, a New York artist, bathed the cyclorama in soap and water to remove layers of dust. He

Gift," *The Atlanta Constitution*, 13 March 1898, p. 10, col. 1; "Cyclorama Given City: Great Painting of Battle of Atlanta Formally Transferred By G. V. Gress," *The Atlanta Journal*, 15 April 1898, p. 5, col. 1.

¹⁹⁴ *Atlanta in 1890: "The Gate City"* (Neenah, WI: George B. Pratt Publishing Company and the Art Publishing Company, 1890; reprint, Macon, GA: Atlanta Historical Society, Mercer University Press, 1986), 30 (page citations are to the reprint edition).

¹⁹⁵ Medora Field, "Over A Million People Have Seen Atlanta's War Picture," *The Atlanta Journal*, 20 March 1921, p. 9.

then retouched portions of the painting damaged by rain seeping into the old wooden building, restoring several figures and repainting the entire sky.¹⁹⁶

The second restoration was a Public Works of Art Project during the 1930s. W.P.A. artists, headed by Joseph V. Llorens worked from 1934 to 1935 repairing and making improvements to the cyclorama. These Depression era art projects, while employing insolvent artists, generally focused on regional or nationalistic topics. The restoration of what had become a city monument to a Civil War battle adhered to the characteristics of these public commissions. W.P.A. artists discovered the canvas had been cut to fit the smaller concrete building, the disappearance of Decatur Road and the repainting a group of Confederate prisoners as Union soldiers [figure 46]. Working from old photographs, the original composition of the painting was restored.¹⁹⁷ The canvas was coated with pure refined linseed oil to repair the cracked paint and then a layer of buttermilk was added to dull the shiny surface. Augmentations were made to enhance the illusionary effects of the cyclorama, forever altering its original design. A program of electric lighting was installed, a feature that allowed the lecturer to highlight portions of the painting during their description but prevented the viewer from being overwhelmed by the whole composition in natural light. Three-dimensional plaster casts of soldiers, artillery, and landscape were installed on the floor between the spectator's platform and the canvas to extend the visualization of the narrative. The artists removed the previous faux terrain and placed these sculptures on a bed of Georgia red clay that was blended to

¹⁹⁶ Angus Perkerson, "How Atlanta's War Picture Was Given A 'Bath'," *The Atlanta Journal Magazine*, 2 July 1922, 1.

¹⁹⁷ Kurtz, Wilbur G., Atlanta, to R. L. MacDougall, Atlanta, 14 December 1934. Cyclorama Subject Collection, Atlanta History Center Library/Archives, Atlanta.

match the canvas.¹⁹⁸ While the addition of objects was thought to enhance the cyclorama's illusion, it somewhat overwhelmed and definitely altered the original painted composition. The final part of the Art Project involved creating an annexed museum to house other Civil War artifacts. The locomotive, Texas, from an unsuccessful Union raid into Georgia in 1862, had been enshrined in the cyclorama building since 1927.¹⁹⁹ Relics, photographs, and engravings were sought from all over the city and the state for display with the train engine, thereby expanding the commemorative function of the cyclorama and the surrounding Grant Park. The museum also elevated educational character of the exhibition, disseminating even more historical information to the public.

The final restoration of *The Battle of Atlanta* was the most far reaching and expensive. Begun in 1979, the seven million dollar project expanded the original concrete building, corrected previous refurbishment errors, and saved the painting from its eventual deterioration. Years of exposure to Atlanta's humid weather in an inadequately climate controlled building had warped the aged canvas, resulting in numerous tears and moisture streaks. The weight of the clay and plaster figures at the base of the painting caused even more stress on the fabric while attracting insects and rodents who did additional damage. A severe storm in 1976 had inflicted the worst harm: a gaping hole from water damage. Moreover, the coating of buttermilk had formed a type of glue that was now cracking and causing the paint to flake off. Gustav Berger, one of the few experts in cyclorama restoration, was hired to fix all of these problems. In order to alleviate the risks involved in cutting the painting for its renovation, Berger designed a method of refacing the canvas

¹⁹⁸ Llorens, Joseph V., Atlanta, to R. L. MacDougall, Atlanta, 30 December 1935. Mrs. Robt. L. MacDougall Collection, MSS #288, Atlanta History Center Library/Archives, Atlanta.

while it still hung upright by placing the canvas on a monorail system, cutting a portion out of the rear wall, and working on vertical sections from scaffolding towers. Once hazardous chemicals were removed from the rear side of the canvas, a previous attempt to ward off insects, a fiberglass backing was applied to strengthen the canvas and prevent it from tearing. The plaster casts and clay landscape were replaced with fire retardant wood and fiberglass models. A remodeling of the museum and spectators' area was also part of the historical preservation project. Museum artifacts were placed in new cases, with updated information panels. The most fortunate acquisition, a canvas figure study by the original artists was put on display as well. A climate control system was installed behind the canvas to monitor the humidity in the building and prevent radical temperature shifts. The original spectators' platform was replaced by a state of the art revolving one, accommodating two hundred people on tiered seating platforms. To suit the new mechanical revolution of the platform, a spotlighting system was developed to pin point areas of interest as the viewers are turned.²⁰⁰ This system, while a technical marvel, eclipses the original intent of the cyclorama and its painters. The painting can no longer be seen in the round, far reducing the impact of the composition. Given these alterations, the preservation of the cyclorama canvas itself was the real lasting benefit of the Historical Conservation Project.

¹⁹⁹ Kurtz, *The Atlanta Cyclorama: The Story of the Famed Battle of Atlanta*, 29.

²⁰⁰ For further information on the latest restoration of the cyclorama, see Cyclorama Subject Collection, Atlanta History Center Library/Archives, Atlanta.

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Wilbur G. Kurtz Collection, Special Collections, The Robert W. Woodruff Library, Emory University, Atlanta.

APPENDIX A



Figure 1.
Paolo Uccello. *Battle of San Romano: Niccolò da Tolentino at the Head of the Florentines*, ca. 1435-38.



Figure 2.
Diego Velázquez. *The Surrender at Breda [Las Lanzas]*, 1634-35.



Figure 3.
Charles Le Brun. *Defeat of Porus by Alexander*, 1665-73.

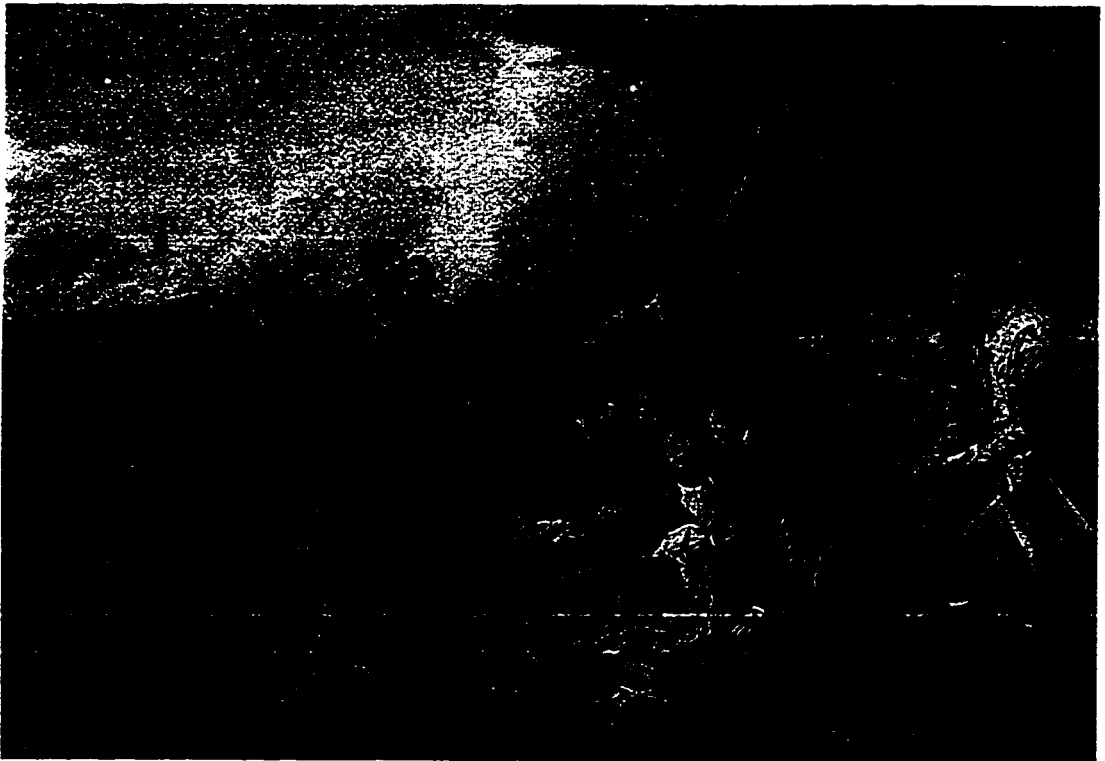


Figure 4.
Benjamin West. *The Death of General Wolfe*, 1770.



Figure 5.
John Trumbull. *The Death of General Warren at the Battle of Bunker's Hill, June 17, 1775*, 1786.



Figure 6.
Thomas Birch. *Perry's Victory on Lake Erie*, 1814.



Figure 7.

Emanuel Leutze. *Washington Rallying the Troops at Monmouth*, 1854.

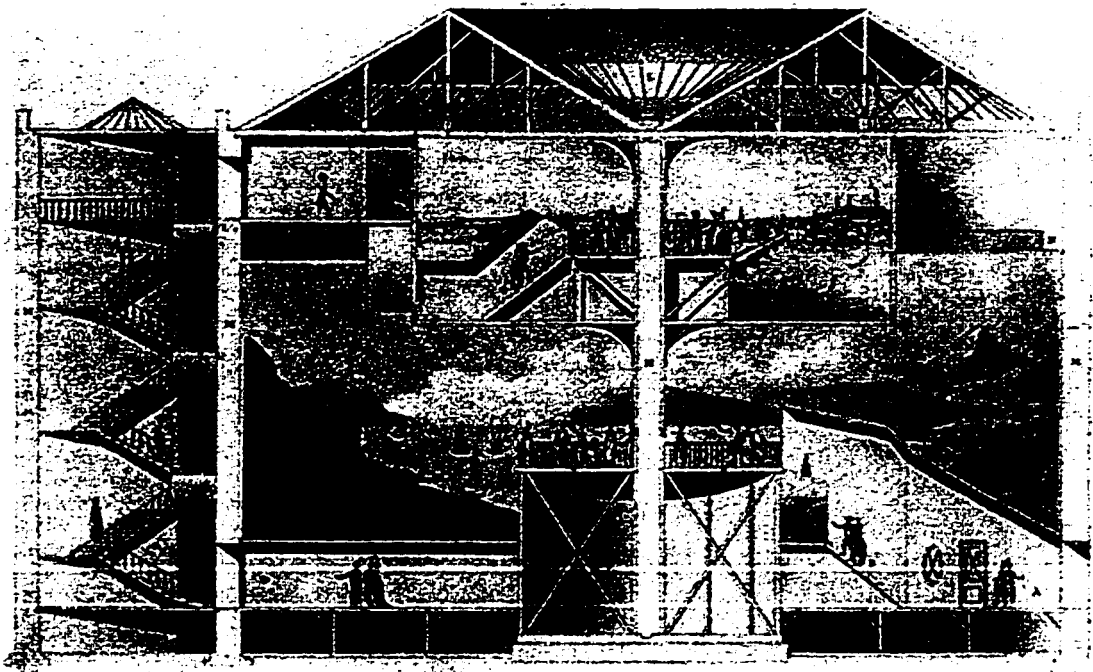


Figure 8.
Barker's Panorama, Leicester Square, 1794, Cross-section.

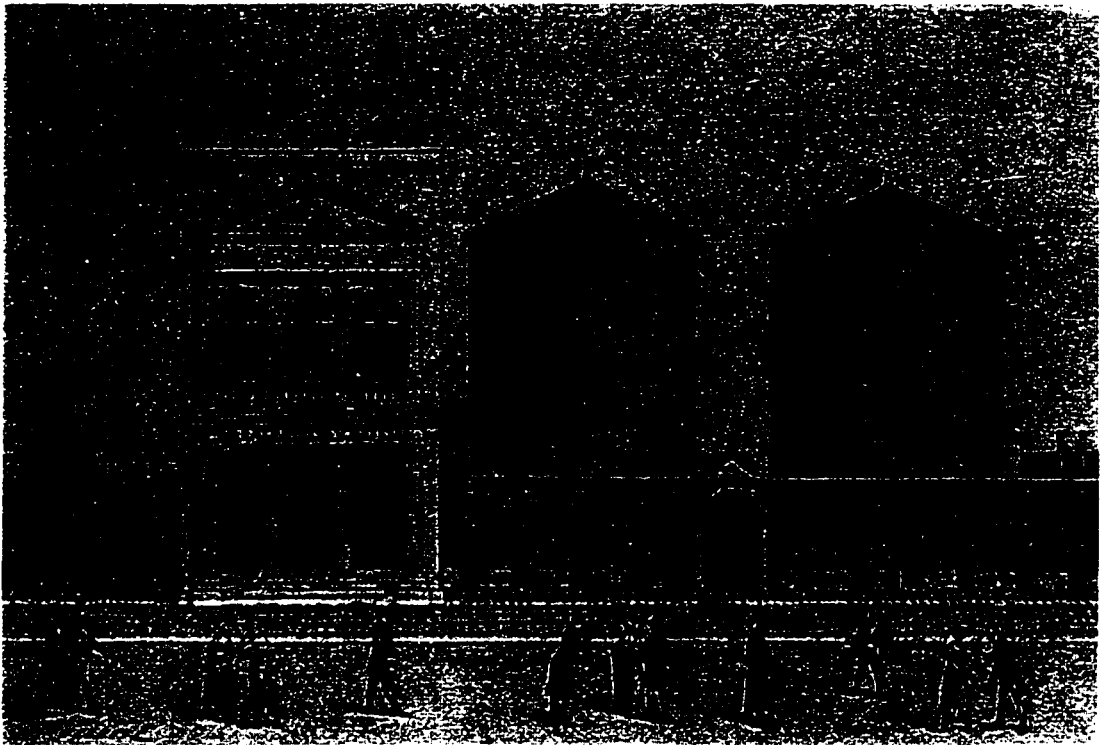


Figure 9.
Thayer's Two Circular Halls on the Boulevard Montmartre, 1802.

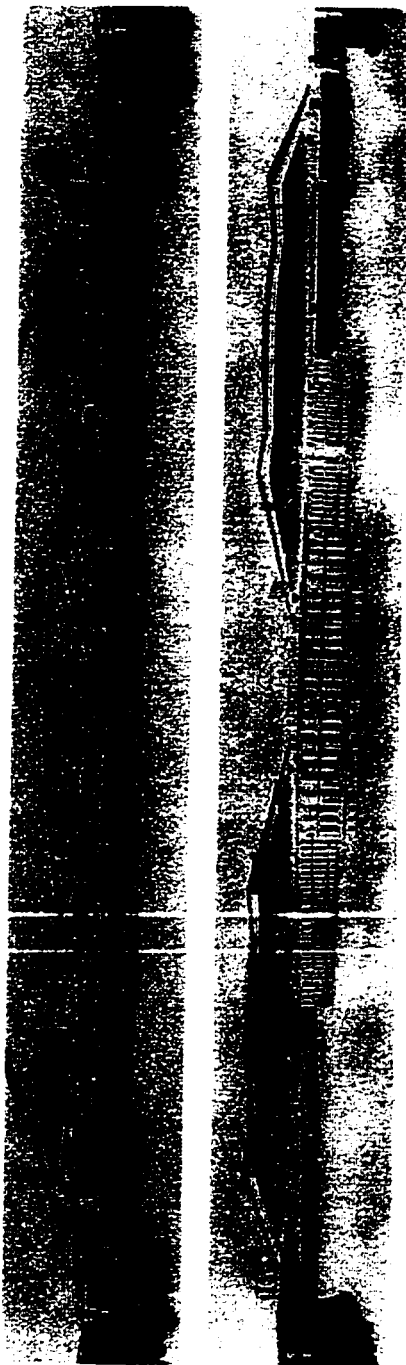


Figure 10.
John Vanderlyn. *The Palace and Gardens of Versailles*, 1819.



Figure 11.
Banvard's Panorama, ca. 1848.

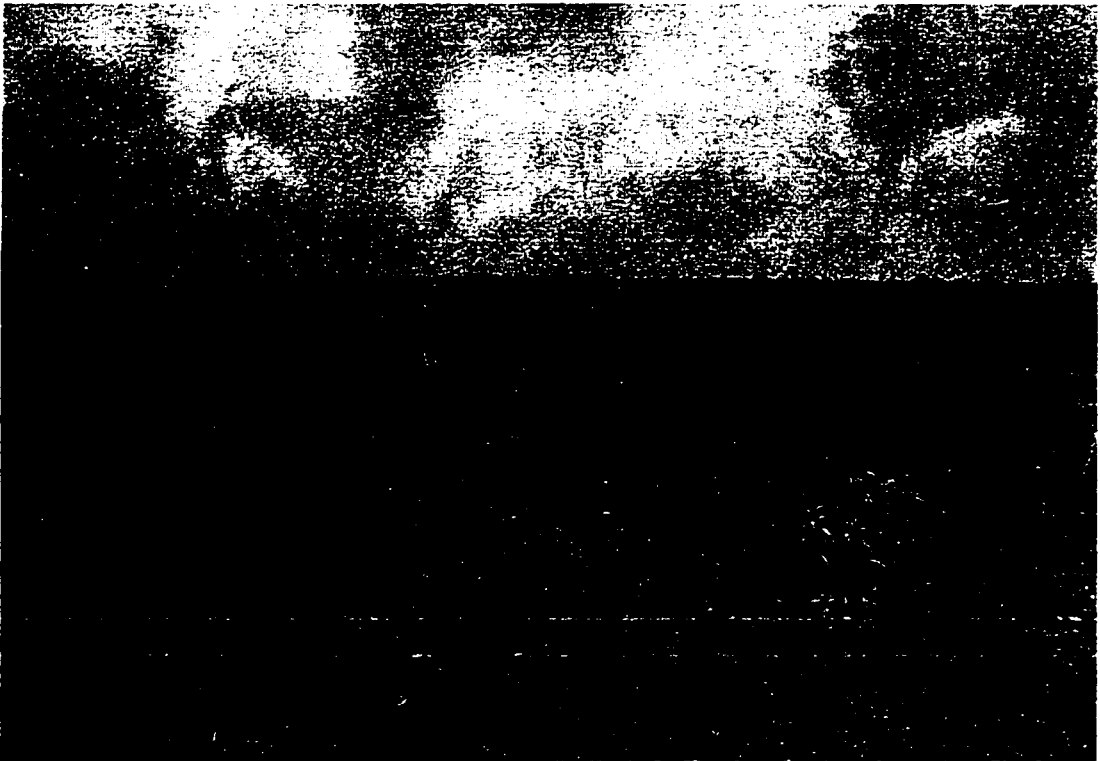


Figure 12.
George N. Barnard. *Battlefield of Atlanta, Ga., July 22, 1864, No. 1*, 1864-1866.

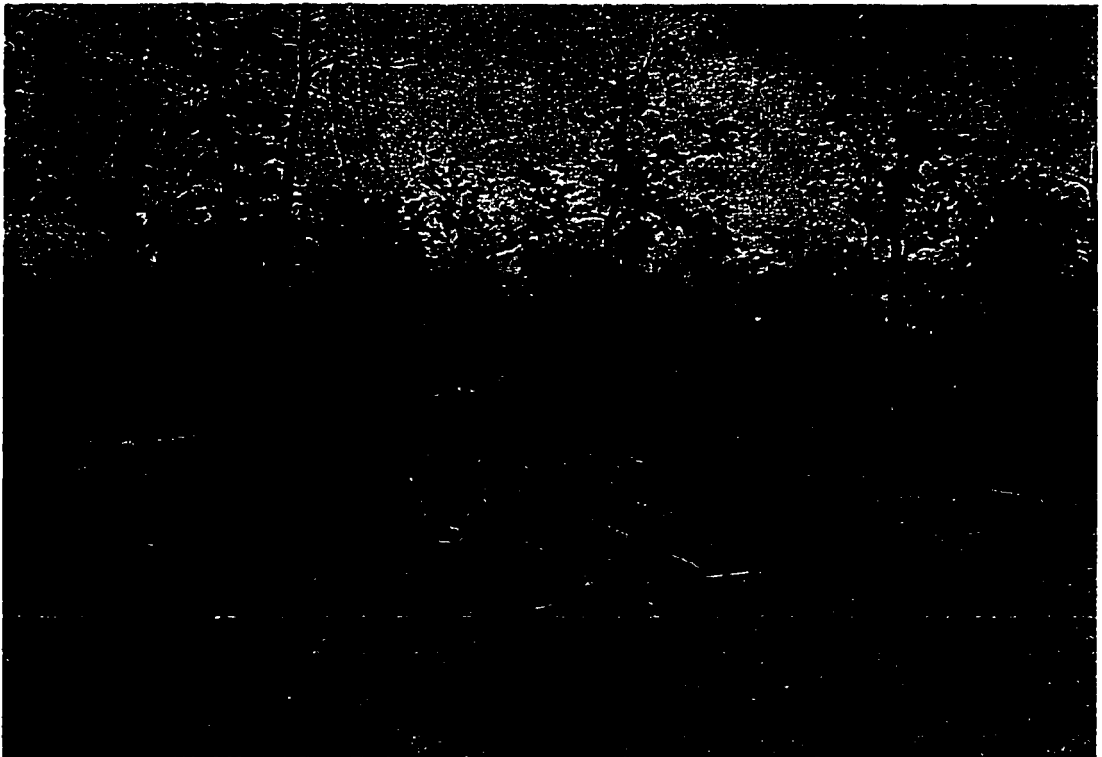


Figure 13.
George N. Barnard. *Battlefield of Atlanta, Ga., July 22, 1864, No. 2*, 1864-1866.

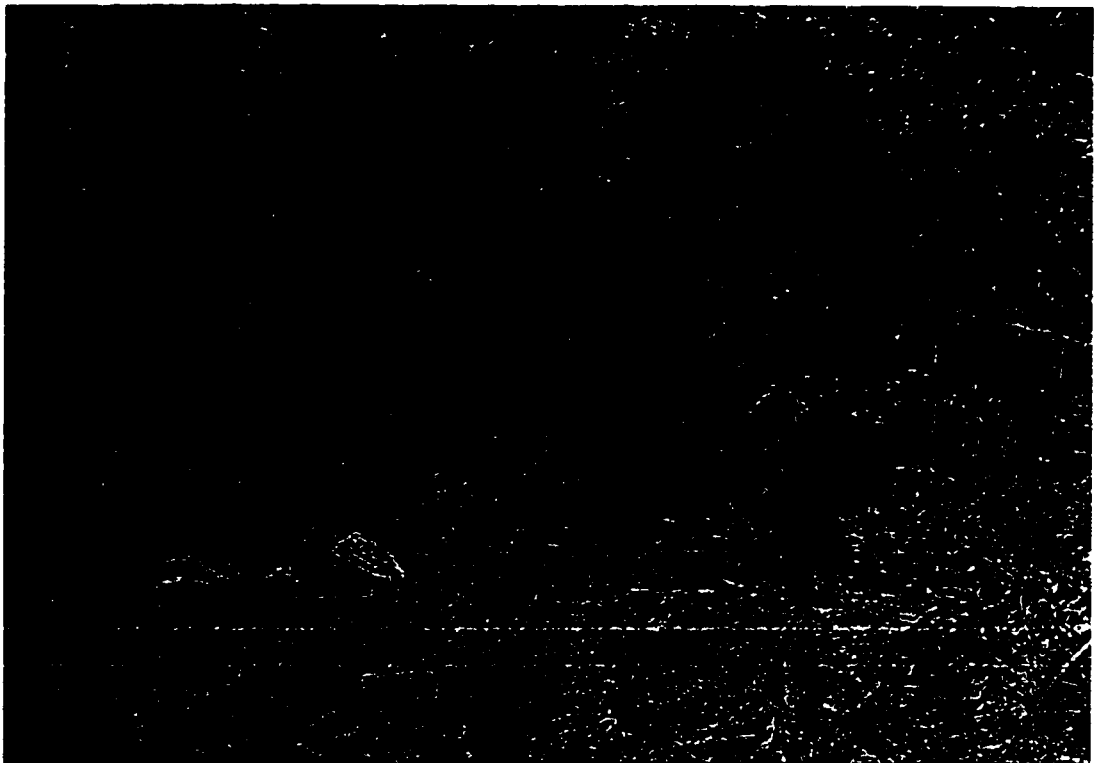


Figure 14.
George N. Barnard. *Scene of Gen. McPherson's Death*, 1864-1866.



Figure 15.

A. R. Waud. *Charge of Humphreys' Division at the Battle of Fredericksburg, Virginia, December 13, 1862*, ca. 1862.

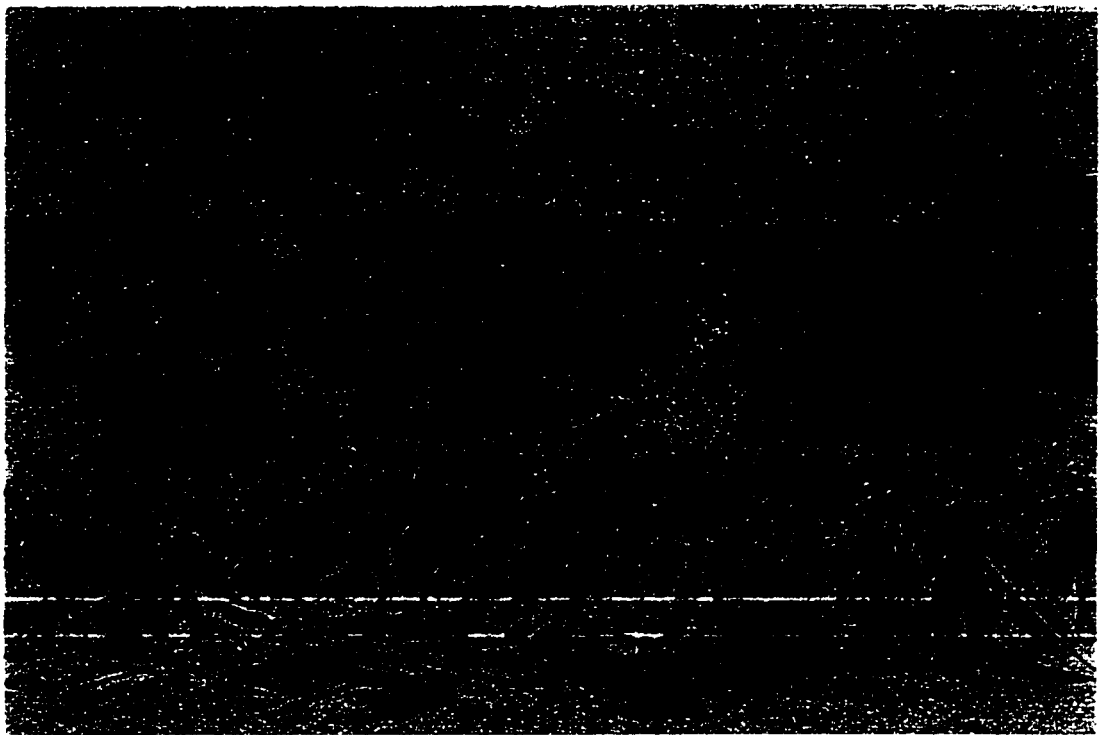


Figure 16.
Gallant Charge of Humphrey's Division at the Battle of Fredericksburg, 1863.

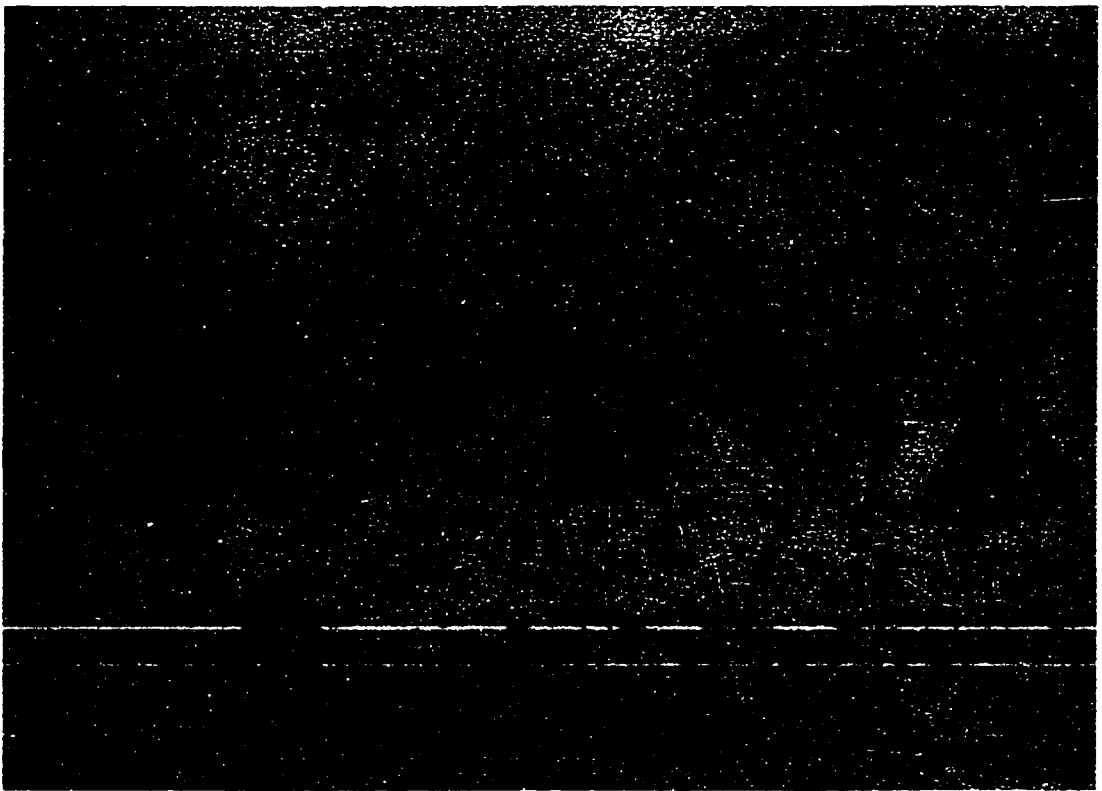


Figure 17.

Edwin Forbes. *An Army Graveyard, February 15, 1863*, ca. 1863.



Figure 18.
Soldiers' Graveyard In The Camp Near Falmouth, VA, 1863.

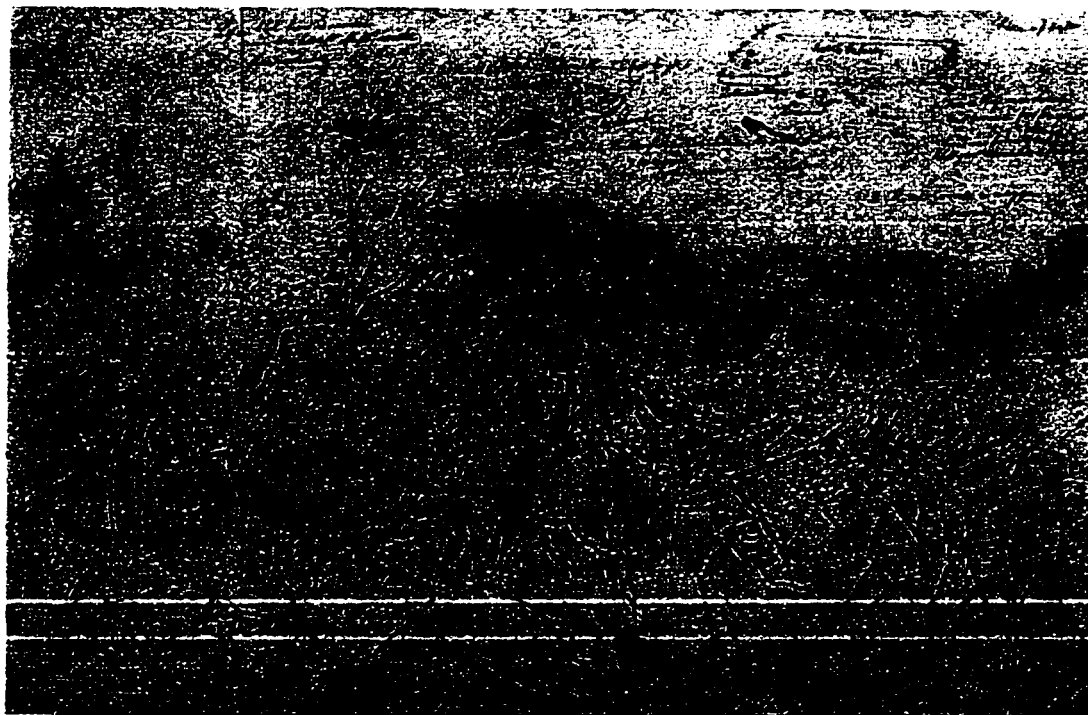


Figure 19.
Henri Lovie. *Death of General Lyon at the Battle of Wilson's Creek, Mo. August 10, 1861*, ca. 1861.

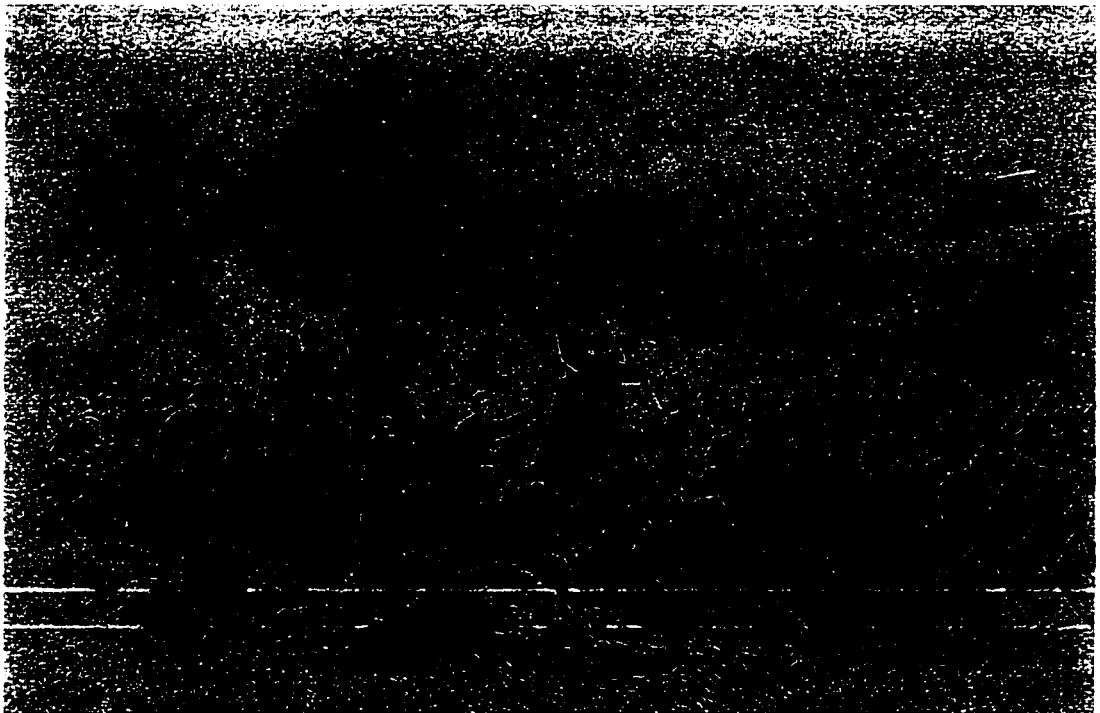


Figure 20.

The Charge of the First Iowa Regiment, with General Lyon at its Head, at the Battle of Wilson's Creek, near Springfield, Missouri, August 10, 1861, 1861.

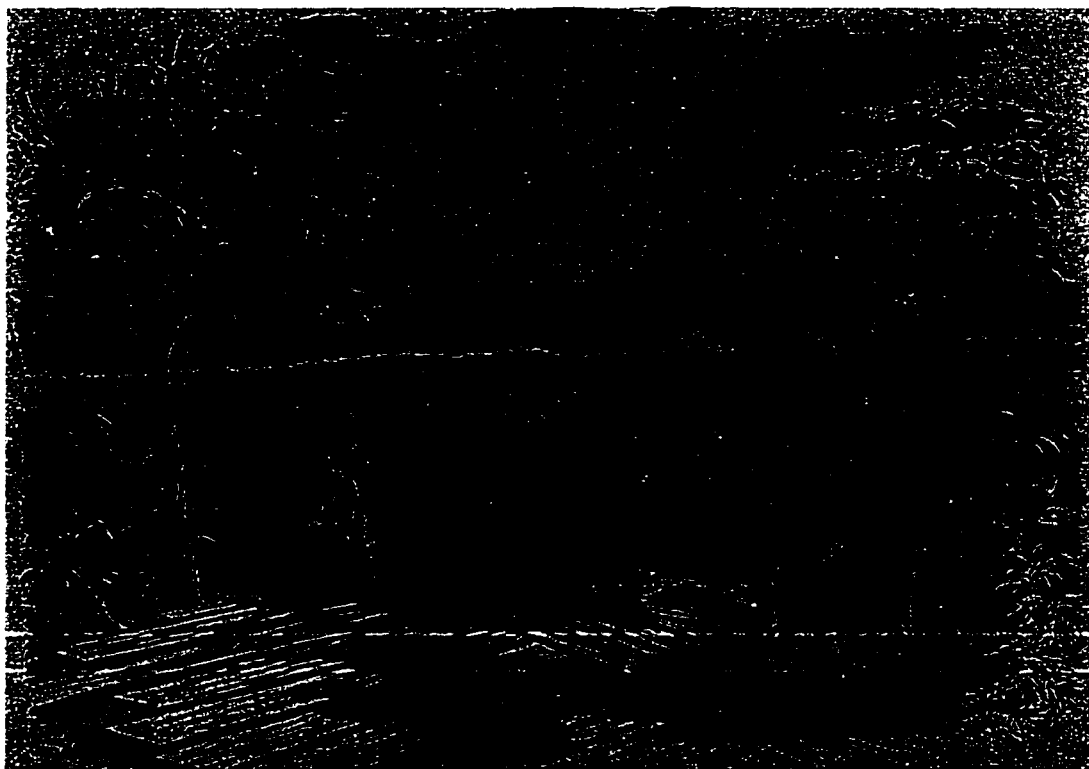


Figure 21.

Theodore R. Davis. *General Sherman's Advance—View Of Atlanta From The Signal Station*, 1864.

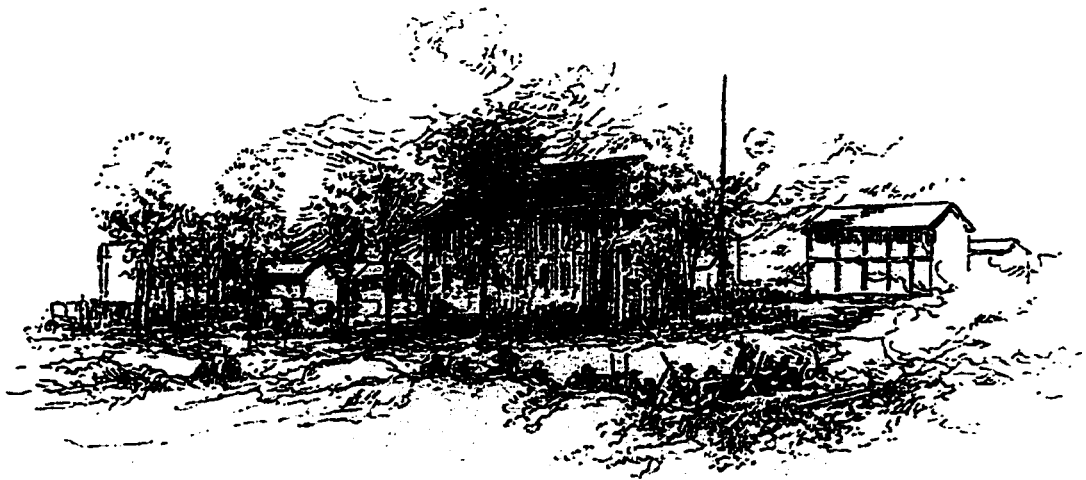


Figure 22.

Theodore R. Davis. *Sprague's Brigade Protecting The Wagon Trains of Sherman's Army at Decatur, July 22nd, 1864*, ca. 1864.

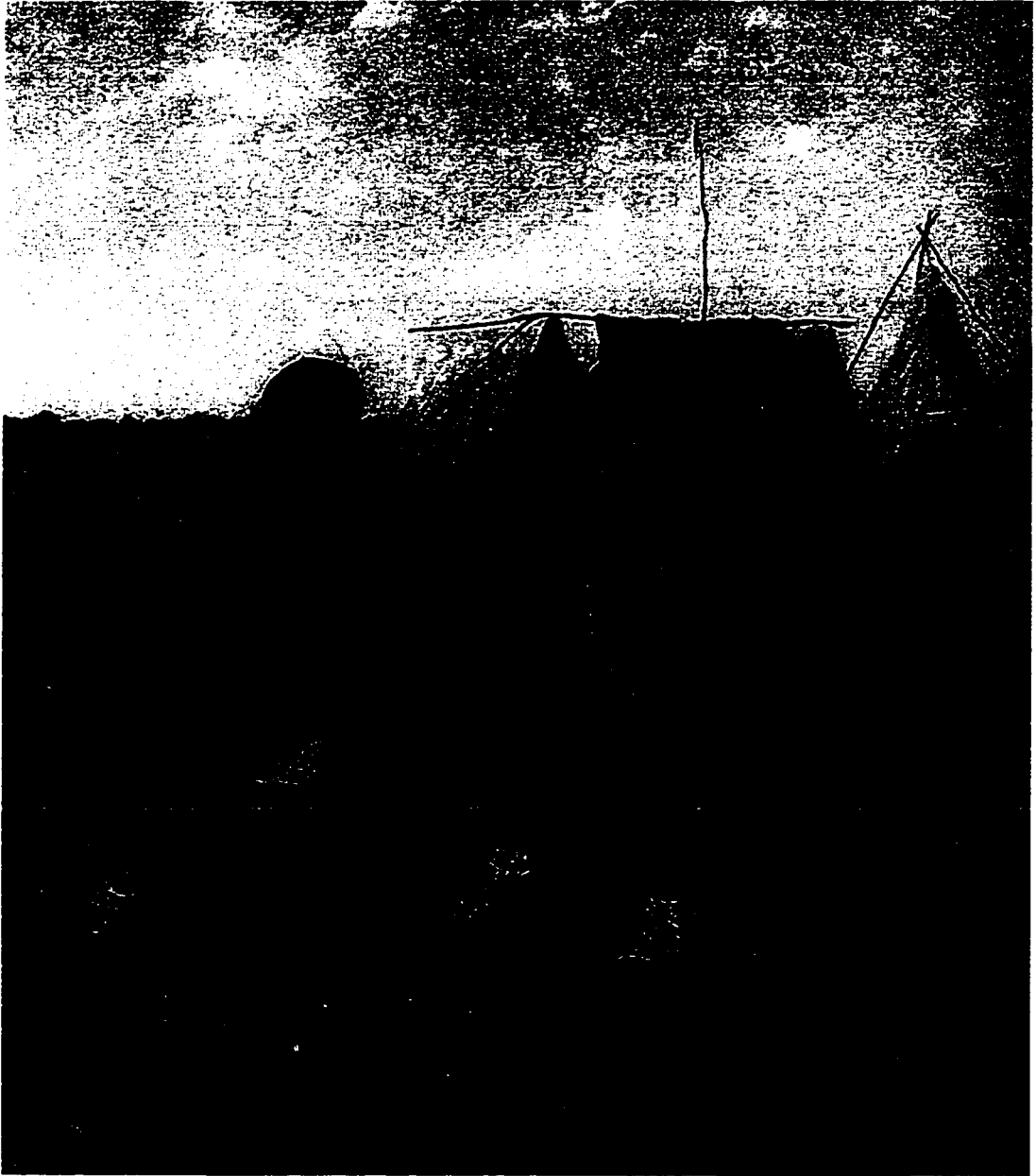


Figure 23.
Winslow Homer. *The Briarwood Pipe, or Making Briarwood Pipes*, 1864.



Figure 24.
Albert Bierstadt. *Guerrilla Warfare (Picket Duty in Virginia)*, 1862.



Figure 25.
Peter F. Rothermel. *Battle of Gettysburg--Pickett's Charge*, 1867-70.

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Figure 26.

Front Page of Souvenir Pamphlet, Paul Philippoteaux. *The Battle of Gettysburg*, 1884.



Figure 27.

The American Panorama Company. Figure study for *The Battle of Atlanta*, 1885-1886.



Figure 28.
The American Panorama Company. *The Battle of Atlanta*, 1885-1886, First section.

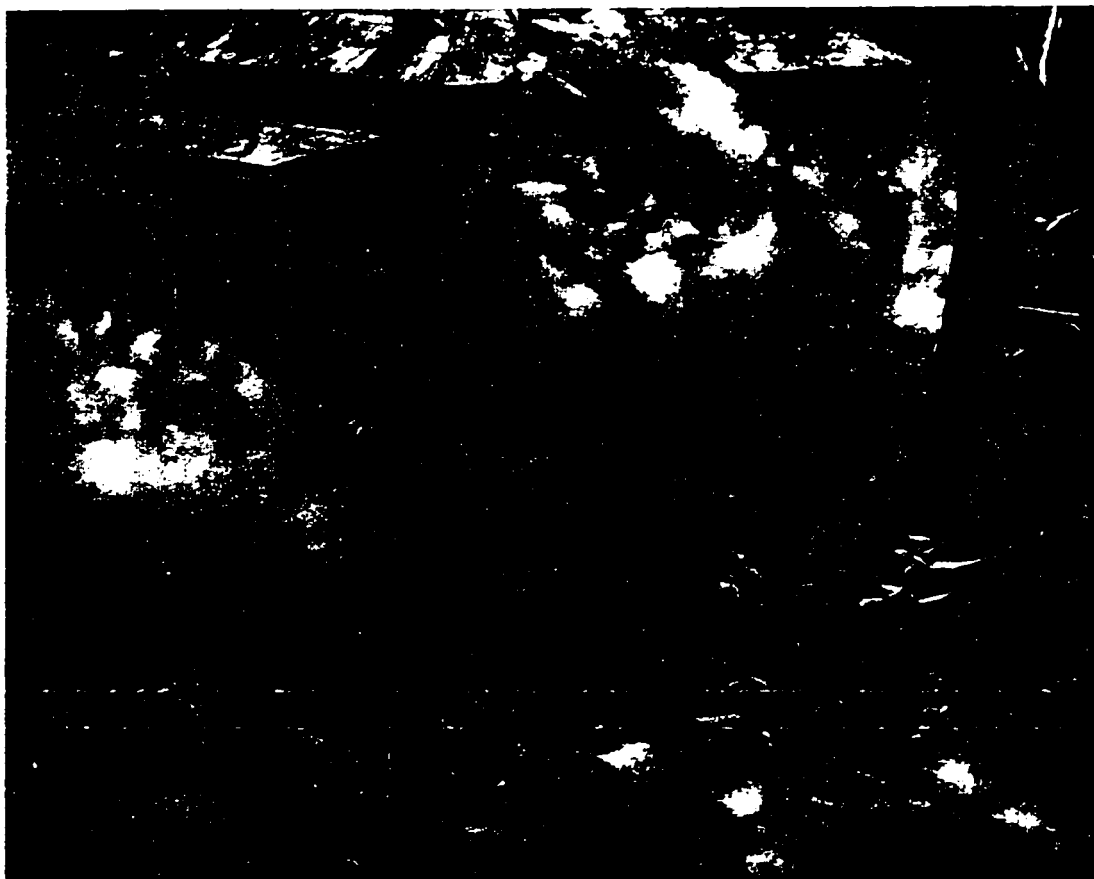


Figure 29.

The American Panorama Company. *The Battle of Atlanta*, 1885-1886, detail of the fighting at the Troup Hurt House.



Figure 30.

The American Panorama Company. *The Battle of Atlanta*, 1885-1886, detail of the dying horses.

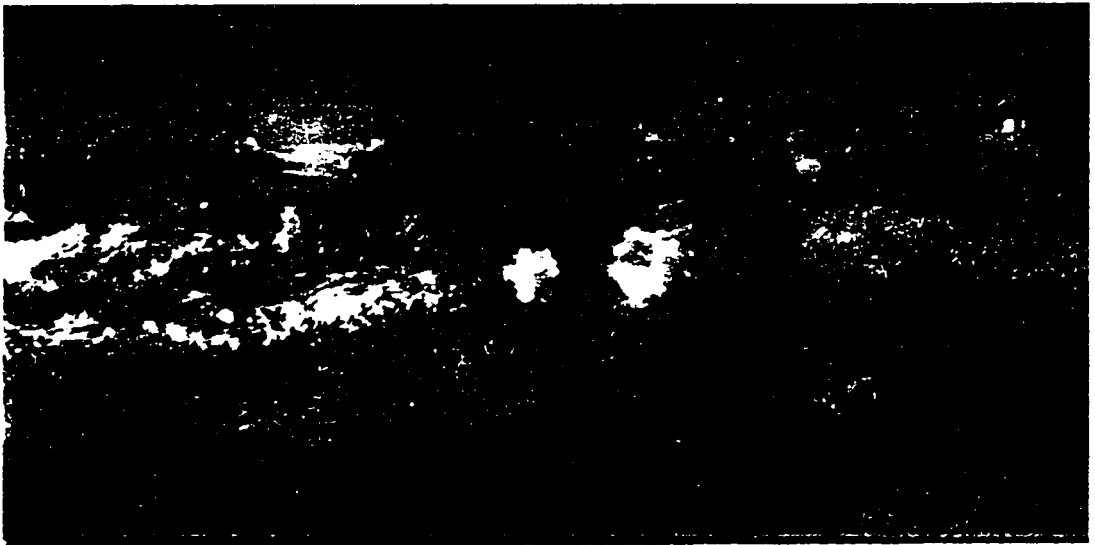


Figure 31.
The American Panorama Company. *The Battle of Atlanta*, 1885-1886, Second section.

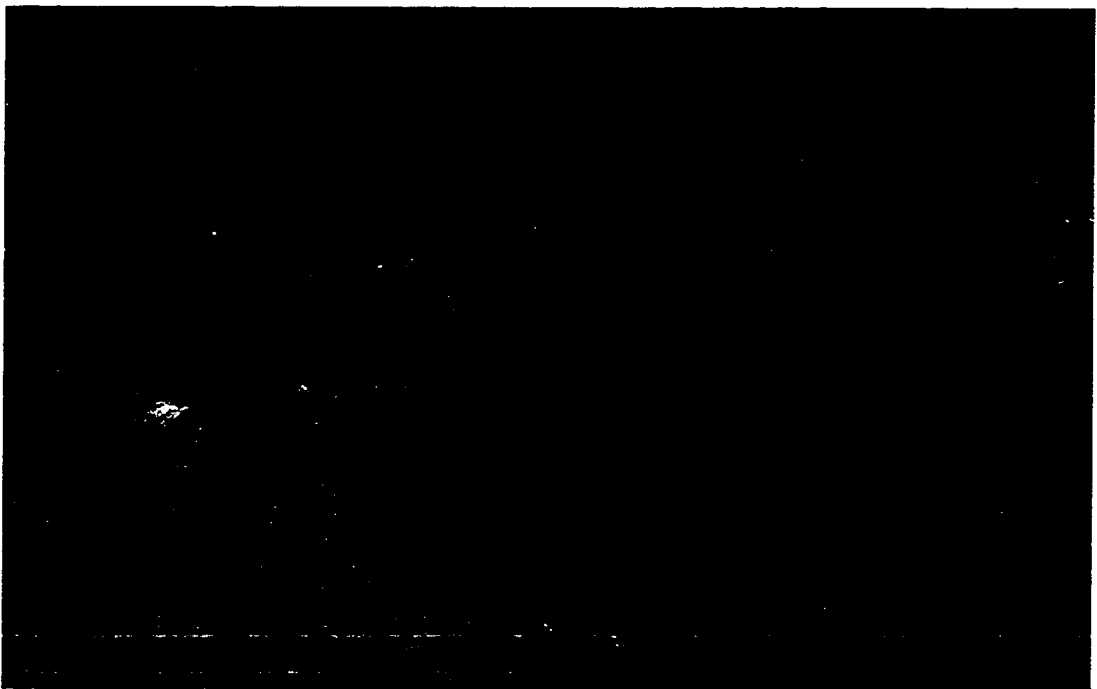


Figure 32.

The American Panorama Company. *The Battle of Atlanta*, 1885-1886, detail of Sherman on horseback next to his headquarters.



Figure 33.
The American Panorama Company. *The Battle of Atlanta*, 1885-1886, detail of the
ambulance wagon holding Maj. Gen. McPherson's body.



Figure 34.
The American Panorama Company. *The Battle of Atlanta*, 1885-1886, Third section.



Figure 35.
The American Panorama Company. *The Battle of Atlanta*, 1885-1886, detail of Maj.
Gen. John A. Logan's charge.

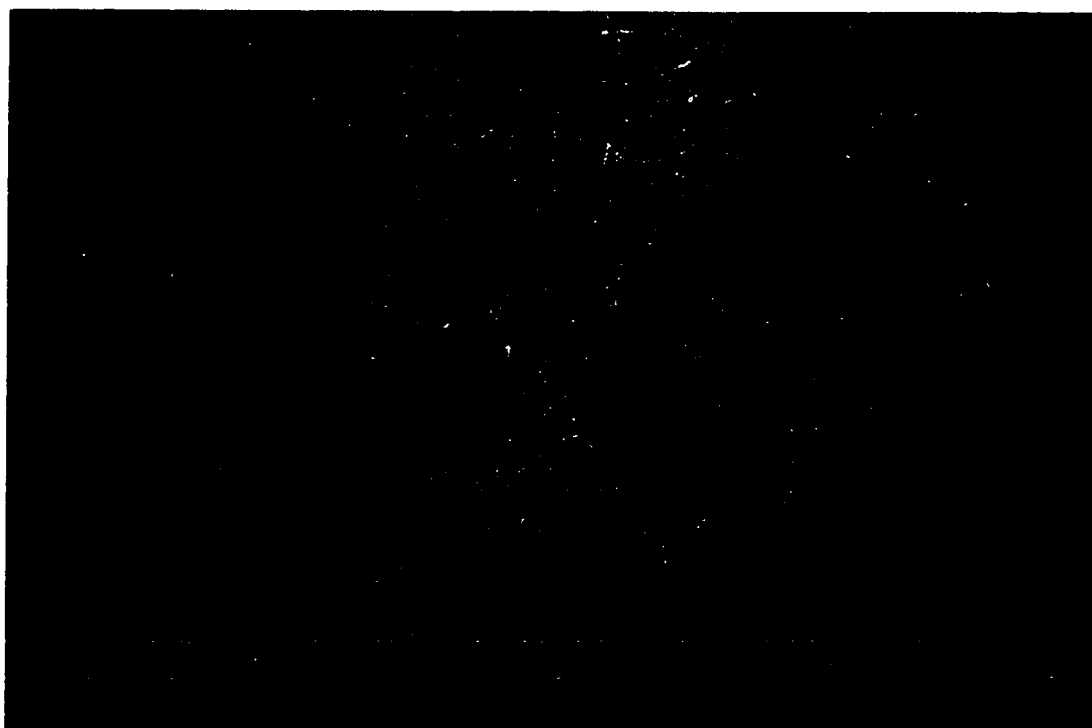


Figure 36.
The American Panorama Company. *The Battle of Atlanta*, 1885-1886, detail of Capt.
Francis DeGress and other officers following Logan's charge.



Figure 37.

The American Panorama Company. *The Battle of Atlanta*, 1885-1886, detail of other officers following Logan's charge.



Figure 38.
The American Panorama Company. *The Battle of Atlanta*, 1885-1886, Fourth section.

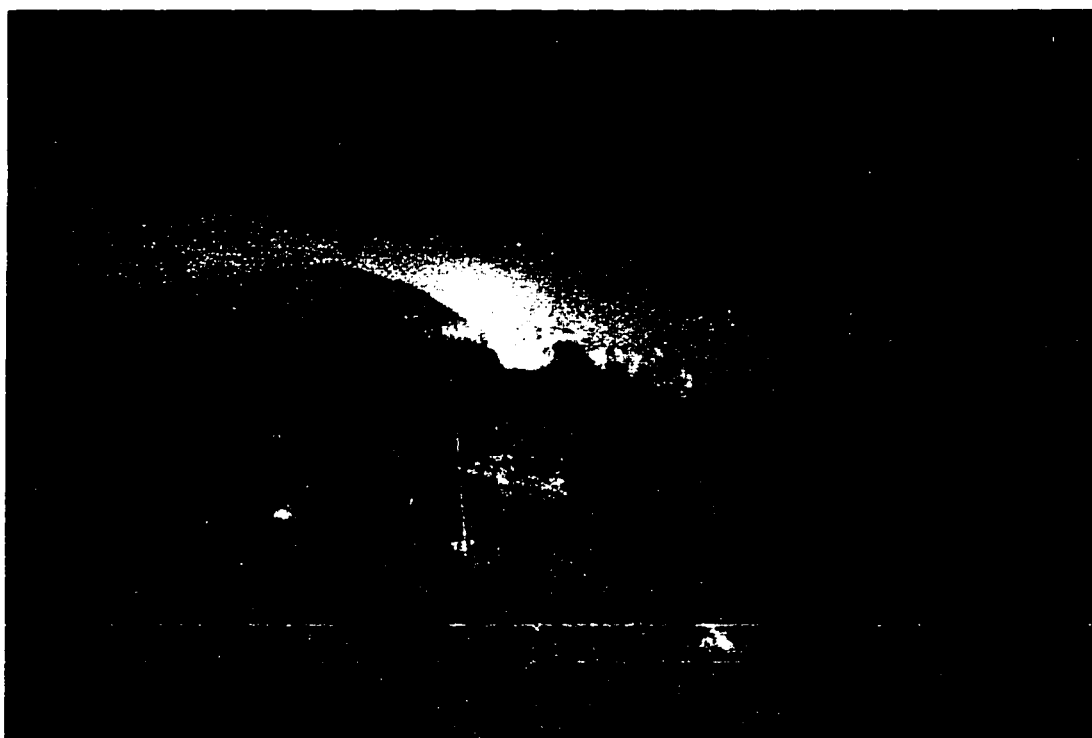


Figure 39.

The American Panorama Company. *The Battle of Atlanta*, 1885-1886, detail of a field hospital and the distant fighting at Stone Mountain.



Figure 40.

The American Panorama Company. *The Battle of Atlanta*, 1885-1886, detail of ambulance wagons and casualties in a barren field.

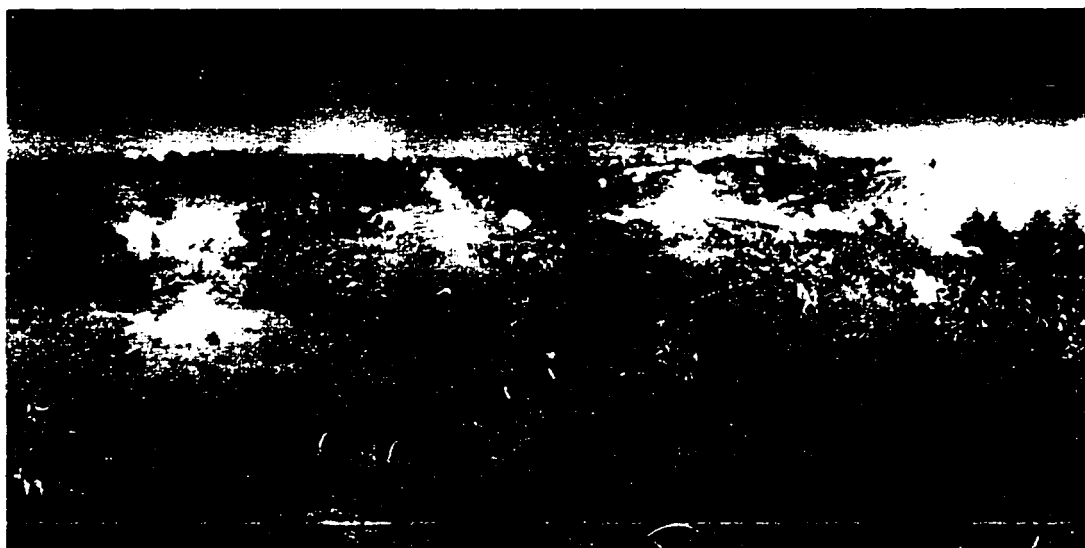


Figure 41.

The American Panorama Company. *The Battle of Atlanta*, 1885-1886, Fifth section.

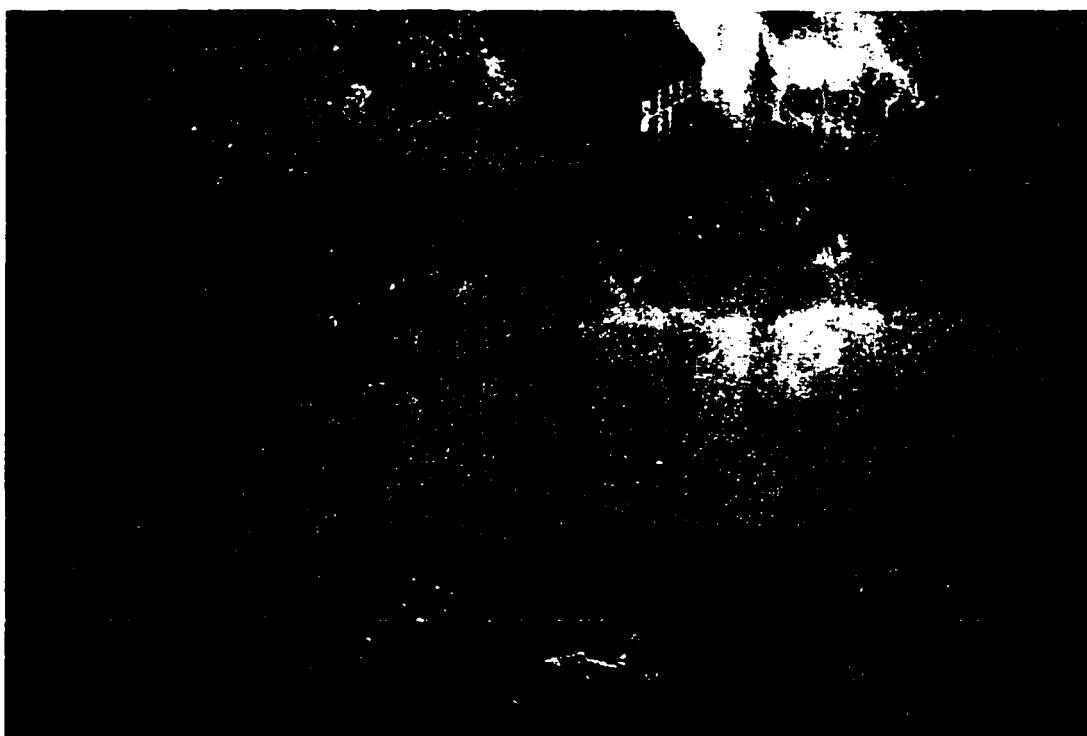


Figure 42.

The American Panorama Company. *The Battle of Atlanta*, 1885-1886, detail of Gen. Lightburn's regiments trampling a wheat field.



Figure 43.

The American Panorama Company. *The Battle of Atlanta*, 1885-1886, detail of Union soldiers rushing towards the front.

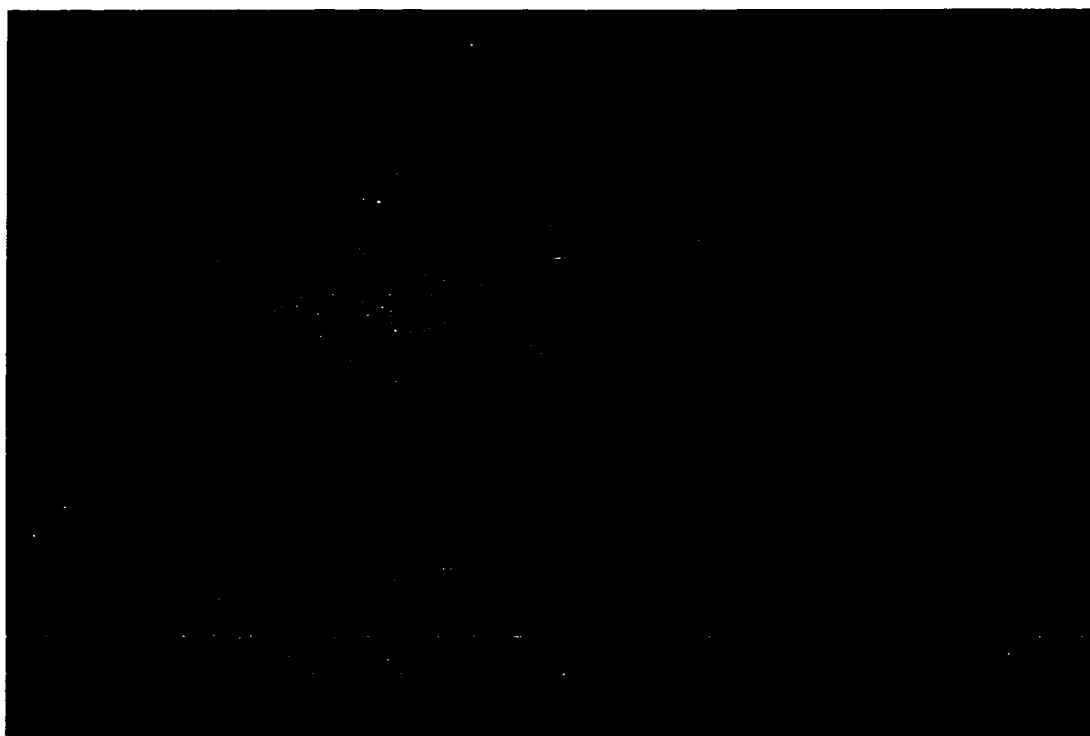


Figure 44.

The American Panorama Company. *The Battle of Atlanta*, 1885-1886, detail of the 1st Iowa battery charging past fallen soldiers.



Figure 45.
The American Panorama Company. *The Battle of Atlanta*, 1885-1886, detail of Col. Warner, Capt. Frederick Whitehead, Col. Jones, and Gen. Smith.



Figure 46.
The American Panorama Company. *The Battle of Atlanta*, 1885-1886, detail of
Confederate prisoners being lead away from the fighting.

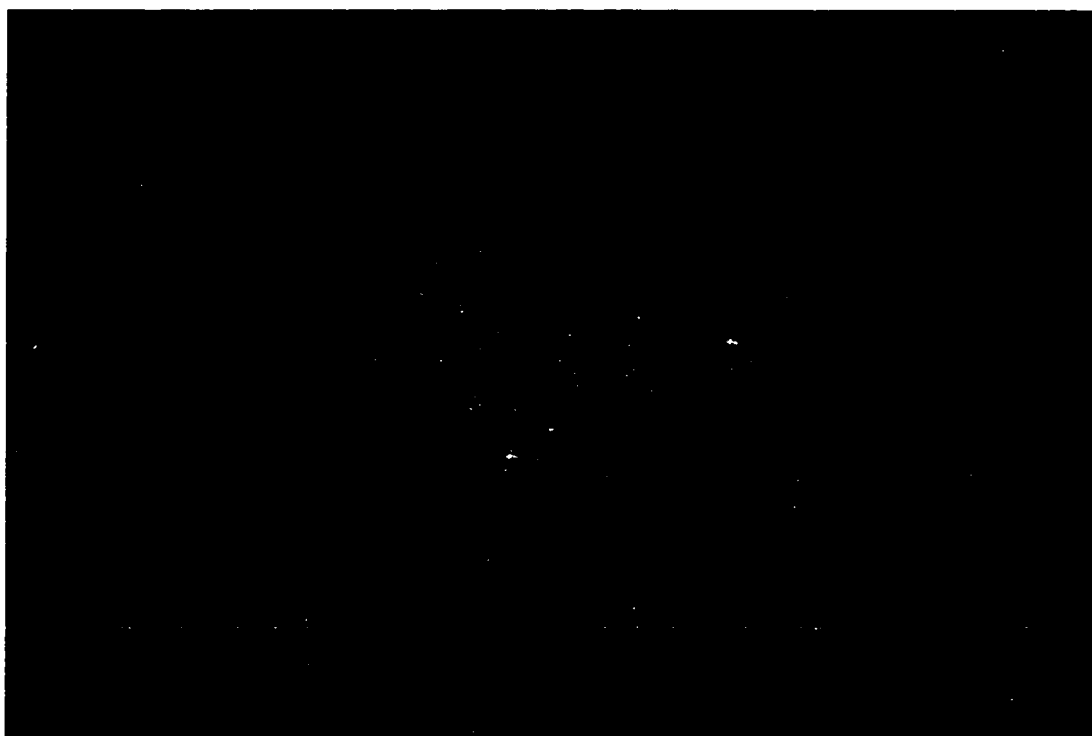


Figure 47.
The American Panorama Company. *The Battle of Atlanta*, 1885-1886, detail of
Confederate troops attacking Union entrenchments at Ball Hill.

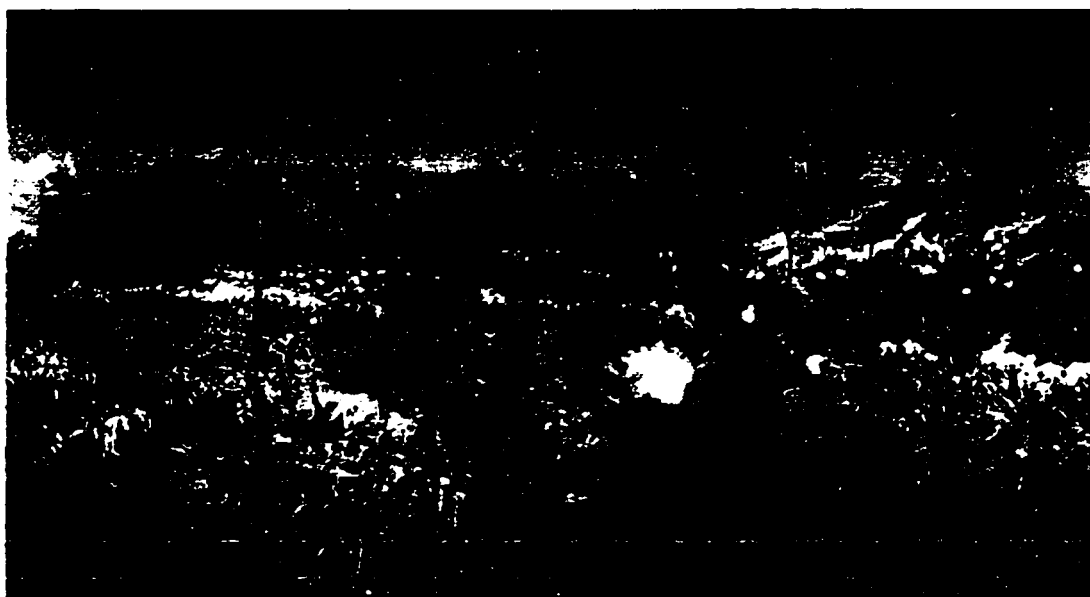


Figure 48.

The American Panorama Company. *The Battle of Atlanta*, 1885-1886, Sixth section.



Figure 49.
The American Panorama Company. *The Battle of Atlanta*, 1885-1886, detail of
Confederate prisoners being led away from the fighting.



Figure 50.

The American Panorama Company. *The Battle of Atlanta*, 1885-1886, detail of soldiers being shot and lying dead.



Figure 51.
The American Panorama Company. *The Battle of Atlanta*, 1885-1886, detail of
Confederates fighting for an American flag.



Figure 52.
The American Panorama Company. *The Battle of Atlanta*, 1885-1886, detail of the
Martin Brothers.

APPENDIX B

Specification of the Patent granted to Mr. Robert Barker, of the City of Edinburgh, Portrait-Painter; for his Invention of an entire view Contrivance or Apparatus, called by him *La Nature à Coup d'Oeil* *, for the Purpose of displaying Views of Nature at large, by Oil-Painting, Fresco, Water-colours, Crayons, or any other Mode of painting or drawing.

Dated June 19, 1787

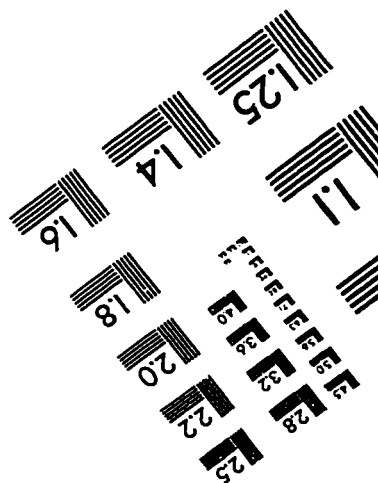
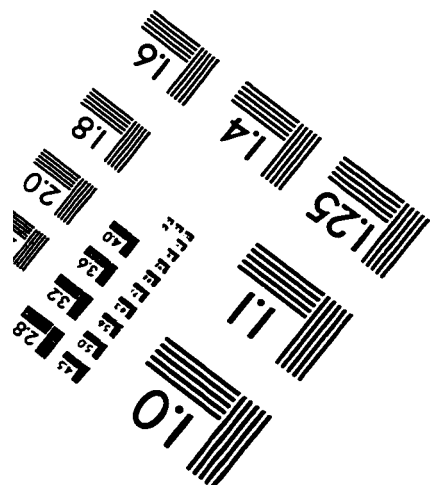
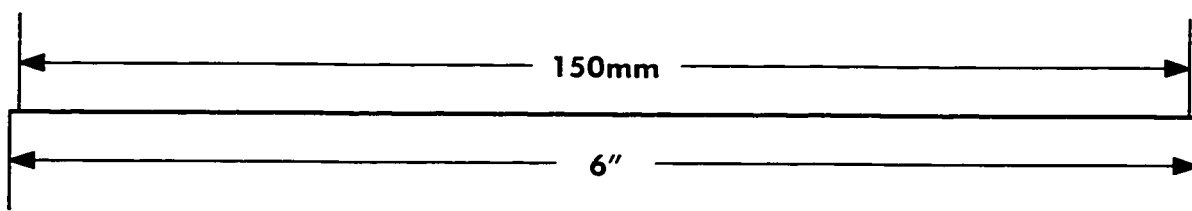
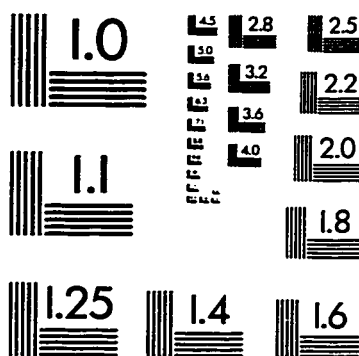
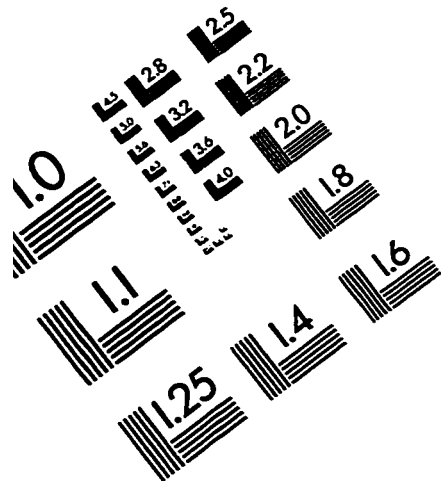
* This invention has been since called the Panorama.

To all to whom these presents shall come, &c, NOW KNOW YE, that by my invention, called *La nature à coup d'oeil*, is intended, by drawing and painting, and a proper disposition of the whole, to perfect an entire view of any country or situation as it appears to an observer turning quite round; to produce which effect, the painter or drawer must fix his station, and delineate correctly and connectedly every object which presents itself to his view as he turns round, concluding his drawing by a connection with where he begun. He must observe the lights and shadows, how they fall, and perfect his piece to the best of his abilities. There must be a circular building or framing erected, on which this drawing or painting may be performed; or the same may be done on canvas, or other materials, and fixed or suspended on the same building or framing, to answer the purpose compleat. It must be lighted entirely from the top, either by a glazed dome or otherwise, as the artist may think proper. There must be an inclosure within the said circular building or framing, which shall prevent an observer going too near the drawing or painting, so as it may from all parts it can be viewed, have its proper effect. This inclosure may represent a room, or platform, or any other situation, and may be any form thought most convenient, but the circular form is particularly recommended. Of

whatever extent this inside inclosure may be, there must be over it, (supported from the bottom, or suspended from the top,) a shade or roof; which, in all directions, should project so far beyond this inclosure, as to prevent an observer seeing above the drawing or painting, when looking up; and there must be without this inclosure another interception, to represent a wall, paling, or other interception, as the natural objects represented, or fancy, may direct, so as effectually to prevent the observer from seeing below the bottom of the drawing or painting, by means of which interception nothing can be seen on the outer circle, but the drawing or painting intended to represent nature. The entrance to the inner inclosure must be from below, a proper building or framing being erected for that purpose, so that no door or other interruption may disturb the circle on which the view is to be represented. And there should be, below the painting or drawing, proper ventilators fixed, so as to render a current circulation of air through the whole; and the inner inclosure may be elevated, at the will of an artist, so as to make observers, on whatever situation he may wish they should imagine themselves, feel as if really on the very spot. In witness whereof, &c.²⁰¹

²⁰¹ Repertory of Arts and Manufactures, consisting of original communications, specifications of patent inventions, and selections of useful practical papers from the transactions of the philosophical societies of all nations &c. &c. London: Printed for the Proprietors, 1796, vol. 4, pp. 165-167.

IMAGE EVALUATION TEST TARGET (QA-3)



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