

Perpetuating the Lost Cause: The Misinformation Campaign of the United Daughters of the Confederacy in Kentucky, 1895-1925

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Abstract

The research in this article seeks to analyze the activities of the United Daughters of the Confederacy in the state of Kentucky. This paper does not challenge existing scholarship on the UDC, but rather seeks to supplement that scholarship with narratives from Kentucky members. The scope of this article is narrow, looking at the UDC between the years of 1895 and 1925. These years are not random, but reflect the height of the Jim Crow Era in American history. The women of the UDC favored the restrictions that were placed on African Americans that limited their rights. Their activities pushed feelings of white superiority into Southern society. The UDC also spread falsehoods and fabricated narratives, and promoted educational programs that sought to indoctrinate children, among other activities. The mere fact that the United Daughters of the Confederacy were afforded the opportunity to participate in these activities is remarkable. The Daughters were given the opportunity to influence the South because of their sacrifices for the Confederate war effort during the Civil War. It is important to note that the Daughters were successful in their endeavors because of their femininity. The UDC were less imposing when attempting to spread the Lost Cause, so they were able to do it more subtly and effectively. Ultimately the Daughters accomplished what they set out to do; influence the Southern memory.

Introduction

After the end of the Civil War, many people in the South took up the cause of revising the image of the Civil War and the Old South. These people sought to put forth historical narratives that did not entirely capture the truth, in fact omitting key pieces of evidence that would have made the South look culpable. This revisionist view became known as the Lost Cause ideology. This ideology was championed by many after the war, but perhaps the most prominent group to promote the Lost Cause was the United Daughters of the Confederacy. The United Daughters of the Confederacy was an organization founded in Nashville, Tennessee, but spread rapidly across the South, particularly into Kentucky. The Kentucky chapters of the United Daughters of the Confederacy set out to perpetuate an inaccurate view of the Civil War and the Old South by spreading false and inaccurate information, and promoting educational programs for school children.

In order to understand the actions of the United Daughters of the Confederacy, it is important to understand a few key terms. The first term is the “Lost Cause.” According to Anne Marshall in her book *Creating a Confederate Kentucky*, “the Lost Cause combined ideas of an idyllic agrarian past and the Confederacy’s righteousness and valor in defending it.”¹ The women of the UDC sought to ensure they controlled the narrative. Another important term is the “Old South.” The Old South refers to the agrarian Southern United States in the time before the Civil War. Many women in the UDC clamored for a return to the Old South because of the superiority they enjoyed.

This paper will analyze the various activities that the United Daughters of the Confederacy engaged in to promote the Lost Cause. These activities were diverse and covered many areas of public life. The Daughters sought to propagate blatantly false and inaccurate facts through their platform of upper class femininity.² These false and inaccurate facts comprised a whole host of issues, including the origins of the Civil War and the peculiar institution of slavery. The Daughters sought to obscure the Confederacy’s motivations for fighting in the Civil War by promoting a narrative that was not accurate. The UDC also supported the false Lost Cause narrative of a harmonious relationship between slave and master. The Daughters disseminated these falsehoods to all who would listen. Additionally, the Daughters developed teaching techniques that spread these false and inaccurate narratives to children via educational programs in schools.

Historiography of the UDC

Following the end of the Civil War, many Confederate sympathizers in the South fought to promote their ideas about the war. To these people, the Civil War was an act of aggression prompted by the North, with the South simply defending themselves. Immediately following the conclusion of the Civil War, ideas swirled around popular thought in the South, becoming known as the Lost Cause.³ To promote this ideology it was necessary to do so delicately. Those who promoted this cause most efficiently were women, in particular the women of the United Daughters of the Confederacy.

¹ The term “Lost Cause” was coined in an 1866 book by Edward Pollard titled *The Lost Cause: A New Southern History of the War of the Confederates*. Caroline E. Janney, “The Lost Cause,” Virginia Foundation for the Humanities, July 27, 2016, accessed Dec. 2, 2018.

Anne E. Marshall, *Creating a Confederate Kentucky: The Lost Cause and Civil War Memory in a Border State* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010), 83.

² Marshall, *Creating a Confederate Kentucky*, 161.

³ Gaines M. Foster, “What’s Not in a Name: The Naming of the American Civil War,” *The Journal of the Civil War Era* 8, no. 3 (2018), accessed September 10, 2018, <https://doi.org/10.1353/cwe.2018.0049>.

Scholars have thoroughly examined the UDC, particularly through the lens of social history. In Anne Marshall's *Creating a Confederate Kentucky*, Marshall approaches the history of the UDC through a social lens. Marshall looked at how the Daughters' presence as a women's organization affected their ability to spread the Lost Cause ideology.⁴ In Sarah Gardner's book *Blood and Irony: Southern White Women's Narratives of the Civil War, 1861-1937*, Gardner finds that women were far more efficient at spreading the revised history than their male counterparts, due to the virtue of being less threatening. The UDC not only wished to promote the Lost Cause in order to romanticize the Confederacy, but also to reinforce the racial hierarchy that had been toppled during the Civil War. In Karen Cox's *Dixie's Daughters*, Cox posits that the UDC glorified the pre-Civil War South in part to maintain their superior position in Southern society.⁵

Scholars have learned much about the Daughters because of documents left behind relating to their activities and views. There is a great many primary sources scattered throughout various archives in the United States. These women were inspired to write so many documents because of the injustices of the Civil War and their loyalty to the Confederacy. Though there are lots of documents that still exist today, a large number of these documents are held by the UDC, which presents a challenge for scholars seeking to study the Daughters.⁶ For scholars studying the UDC, the typical documents that are studied are contemporary newspaper articles; meeting minutes from individual chapter meetings, as well as from the state and national conventions; speeches given by members; and also pamphlets that were distributed to local communities. These primary sources are an invaluable aid in understanding the motivations of these women. The major theory that is posited by scholars about the UDC is that these women were motivated by their desire to ensure their version of the truth was told.

This paper fits well into the narratives of the Jim Crow Era of American history. The United States at the time was a hotbed of segregation, with many attempting to find legal means to exclude African Americans from full participation in public life. The UDC's actions mirrored this almost exactly. The organization desired to ensure that African Americans were aware of their place in society and to avoid trying to rise above that position. The Daughters' lamented that African Americans had been given civil rights after being emancipated, but were

⁴ Marshall, *Creating a Confederate Kentucky*.

⁵ Karen Cox, *Dixie's Daughters: The United Daughters of the Confederacy and the Preservation of Confederate Culture* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 2003).

⁶ According to Dr. Anne Marshall, a leading scholar on the United Daughters of the Confederacy, the national UDC organization collects as many member documents as possible. The national UDC does not allow easy access to these documents for non-members.

particularly incensed about the enfranchisement of African American men.⁷ For these women it was abhorrent that African American men could have the right to vote before them.

The activities and ideology of the United Daughters of the Confederacy are truly what make them a unique topic in American history. The UDC certainly fits well into the subfield of women's history. The gender of the Daughters is a particularly important factor in how they were able to accomplish so much in promoting the Lost Cause ideology. Another subfield of history that the Daughters can fit into is revisionist history. Their entire cause was to revise the history of the Civil War and slavery. The Daughters sought to refute the contemporary Northern narrative of the Civil War because they felt it was not authentic, and portrayed the South in an unsatisfactory way.

The earliest histories of this organization came directly from within. The organization, both at the national and state level, set forth to give an account of their activities. History from within the organization was tarnished by subjectivity. It would not be until the 1980s that external scholarly work would analyze the actions and motivations of the UDC. Once scholars decided that studying the UDC was a worthwhile venture, the scholarship became stagnant fairly quickly. From the outset of external scholarly work on the Daughters, scholars have been quite clear about the motivations of the organization. It is obvious that the Daughters were interested in promoting a revisionist view of the Confederacy. Less obvious was their desire to maintain white superiority, as they were quite subtle in their language. That being said, scholars unanimously agree that the Daughters did seek to maintain their position as white superiors. In the past twenty years, there have been a number of books written about the United Daughters of the Confederacy. These books arrive at the same conclusion about the actions and motivations of the Daughters.⁸ The only deviation in the narrative is diving down to the Daughters' actions at the state level.

The research in this paper will not be a radical departure from the existing historiography of the United Daughters of the Confederacy; rather it will seek to supplement the existing historiography. The majority of the historiography concerns states in the South that were UDC strongholds, such as Virginia. My contribution to the current scholarship on the UDC will be seeking to analyze how the Daughters operated in Western Kentucky. Kentucky is a unique case in the history of the UDC, as there were a relatively large number of members in a state that did not have a large number of Confederate soldiers. By analyzing

⁷ Fred Arthur Bailey, "Free Speech and the Lost Cause in the Old Dominion," *The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 103, no. 2 (1995): 242, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4249508>.

⁸ Karen Cox, *Dixie's Daughters: The United Daughters of the Confederacy and the Preservation of Confederate Culture* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 2003). Janney, Caroline E. *Burying the Dead but Not the Past: Ladies' Memorial Associations and the Lost Cause*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2008. Anne E. Marshall, *Creating a Confederate Kentucky: The Lost Cause and Civil War Memory in a Border State* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010).

their actions, I hope to better understand the motivations of the Western Kentucky women who joined this organization.

The United Daughters of the Confederacy: An Elite Organization

To fully understand the United Daughters of the Confederacy, it is important to look back before the founding of the organization. The precursor to the UDC was the Ladies' Memorial Association, which was founded in 1865. The LMA was a group made up of the wives and daughters of Confederate veterans that sought to memorialize the Confederate dead.⁹ Women were the ideal vehicle for memorialization because it was a natural extension of their domestic and maternal roles.¹⁰ This memorialization effort undertaken by the LMA was the genesis of the Lost Cause ideology. The popularity of the Ladies Memorial Association lasted until about 1890.¹¹ The decade of the 1890s would see the creation of the United Daughters of the Confederacy.

The rise of the United Daughters of the Confederacy can be traced back to Nashville, Tennessee. It was there that two elite southern women, Anna Davenport Raines and Caroline Meriwether Goodlett, formed the UDC on September 10, 1894. In forming the UDC, Raines and Goodlett brought together thousands of elite Southern women whom had been members of several independent memorial organizations.¹² The efforts of the UDC differed from contemporary ladies memorial groups in that the UDC's efforts to revise the Southern consciousness were far more comprehensive. The Daughters wanted to alter the southern memory in the way they saw fit. To accomplish this goal the organization collected and promoted objects that were educational, memorial, literary, social and benevolent; and collected material for a 'truthful' history.¹³ These objectives covered every facet of Southern life, ensuring that the Lost Cause ideology would become what people remembered about the Civil War and the Old South.

The tenets of the Lost Cause ideology, along with the prestige of membership, made membership in the United Daughters of the Confederacy very attractive to many southern women. By promoting the Lost Cause ideology, the United Daughters of the Confederacy became a very popular organization. The Daughters spread quickly around the South, moving into Kentucky one year after the founding of the national organization. The first chapter of the

⁹ Cox, *Dixie's Daughters*, 9.

¹⁰ Marshall, *Creating a Confederate Kentucky*, 85.

¹¹ Cox, *Dixie's Daughters*, 2.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Constitution and Bylaws for the United Daughters of the Confederacy, 1898, Graves County United Daughters of Confederacy Collection, Pogue Library, Murray, KY.

UDC in Kentucky was formed in 1895. It would not take long for UDC women to spread across the state. Between 1898 and 1920, some 5,300 women joined chapters in nearly seventy towns across Kentucky.¹⁴ Despite Kentucky not having seceded from the Union, there were still pockets of people that viewed the Confederacy favorably. Due to these feelings of admiration, many white Kentucky women took up the promotion of the Lost Cause.¹⁵ Many women also joined the UDC because of the prestige that was conferred with membership in the organization.¹⁶

To ensure that prestige of the organization was maintained, the United Daughters of the Confederacy kept a tight control on which women were allowed to join their organization. Constriction of membership led the UDC to become a homogenous group filled with elite white women. In *The Southern Past: A Clash of Race and Memory*, W. Fitzhugh Brundage argues that “crafting white public memory especially engrossed elite women, who donned the mantle of guardians of the past.”¹⁷ Crafting public memory became essentially elite women’s work. Many of these women gained their elite status because of their descent from wealthy planter families, and were often times the daughters of Confederate officers.¹⁸ It was with a pointed intention that the UDC recruited such women. The social status of the Daughters made it possible to spread the message of the Lost Cause beyond other women, spreading it to everyone in the South.

The latitude that the United Daughters of the Confederacy had to spread the ideology of the Lost Cause was unprecedented. Prior to the Civil War, women were barred from participating in the public sphere, being relegated to the domestic sphere. Women certainly would not have the opportunity to freely speak publicly. After the Civil War, there was a paradigm shift in who was allowed to participate in the public sphere. Elite white women were granted the ability to speak publicly because of their sacrifices during war time.¹⁹ The UDC used this paradigm shift to begin reshaping the Southern memory of the Civil War and the Old South.

Spreading Inaccuracies and Falsehoods

The United Daughters engaged in a wide variety of activities for the purpose of influencing Southern memory in regards to the Civil War and the Old South. One of the ways

¹⁴ Marshall, *Creating a Confederate Kentucky*, 160.

¹⁵ Marshall, *Creating a Confederate Kentucky*, 83.

¹⁶ Cox, *Dixie's Daughters*, 29.

¹⁷ W. Fitzhugh Brundage, *The Southern Past: A Clash of Race and Memory* (Harvard University Press: Cambridge, MA, 2005), 15.

¹⁸ Karen Cox, *Dixie's Daughters*, 5.

¹⁹ Karen Cox, *Dixie's Daughters*, 10.

the Daughters sought to influence Southern memory was through the dissemination of mostly untrue, and at times outright false, claims promoting the Lost Cause. The UDC began spreading these false claims among members in the organization, and eventually to their children.²⁰ Another avenue the Daughters used to influence the Southern memory was through the education of school children on the “truths” of Southern history. The activities that the United Daughters of the Confederacy participated in were all in an attempt to promote the message of the Lost Cause. In a speech entitled “The Wrongs of History Righted,” Mildred Lewis Rutherford, Historian General of the UDC from 1911 to 1916, proclaimed to the United Daughters of the Confederacy that they were the protectors of the true story of the Old South.²¹ This speech inspired the Daughters to go out and spread the message of the Lost Cause. There were two big truths that the Daughters hoped to spread: the origins of the war and the benevolence of the institution of slavery. These so-called truths of history present a complicated mix of Confederate patriotism and the desire to protect the Daughters’ idealized view of the South. Kentucky members of the UDC were particularly energized to educate their respective communities about their version of the truth.

The United Daughters of the Confederacy took great interest in how the Civil War was framed. At the time, Northern publications sought to portray the South in a negative light for their motivations and actions during the Civil War. These publications exclaimed that the South was corrupt and rebellious. Many Southerners took offense to this harsh depiction, but the UDC is perhaps the organization that took it the hardest. In response to the Northern publications, the Daughters embarked on an aggressive damage control campaign. The main thrusts of this campaign were portraying the war as legal and the soldiers as valiant.

To frame the Civil War as a legal war between two separate states, the United Daughters of the Confederacy began referring to the war as the “War Between the States.”²² According to Gaines M. Foster in his article “What’s Not in a Name,” “the United Daughters of the Confederacy pushed to have the name of the war changed because it fit more neatly with their interpretation that secession was legal and constitutional therefore the Confederacy was an independent nation.”²³ The Daughters were concerned with the nomenclature Civil War because they felt that the Confederacy had legally seceded and was its own distinct nation

²⁰ Karen Cox, *Dixie’s Daughters*, 2.

²¹ Mildred Lewis Rutherford, “Wrongs of History Righted” (speech, Savannah, GA, November 13, 1914), Hathi Trust Digital Library.

²² The origin of the term “War Between the States” can be traced back to the writings of two prominent Confederates Raphael Semmes and Alexander Stephens. E. Merton Coulter, “A Name for the American War of 1861-1865,” *The Georgia Historical Quarterly* 36, no. 2 (1952): 109-31, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/>.

²³ Gaines M. Foster, “What’s Not in a Name: The naming of the American Civil War,” *The Journal of the Civil War Era* 8, no. 3 (2018): 427.

separate from the United States. The emphasis on the term War Between the States also supported the Daughters' state's rights interpretation of the origins of the war.²⁴ The Daughters claimed that the root cause of the War Between the States, was not the peculiar institution of slavery, but rather differing interpretations of the Constitution in regards to what rights were reserved for the states.²⁵ The Daughters were not the first group to promote this narrative on the origins of the Civil War, but they were perhaps the most vocal.

The national leadership of the United Daughters of the Confederacy ensured that all the members of the organization understood the revised view of the war. The Daughters not only needed to understand the intricacies of the "War Between the States," but they also needed to be able to regurgitate the UDC's approved statements on the war. In an open letter to all state historians and chapter historians, Mildred Lewis Rutherford laid out the Historian General's "Don'ts" regarding the war. "Don't say Civil War, but War Between the States; Don't say Lost Cause - our cause was never lost; Don't in sport call yourself a rebel - the North rebelled against the Constitution, not the South."²⁶ In these few short commands, Rutherford was able to portray the South as the victim of the Civil War, while also giving tools to the members of the UDC to educate their respective communities.

In addition to their reframing of the war, the United Daughters of the Confederacy sought to portray those who served the Confederacy as righteous. The Daughters looked back fondly on their grandfathers and fathers who served during the Civil War. The UDC women sought to immortalize these men forever in monuments that would be predominantly displayed.²⁷ The Daughters also sought to highlight the contributions that Confederate women made to the war effort. In Mayfield, six volumes of *Women of the South in War Times* were distributed to the various schools in town.²⁸ The text detailed the courage, endurance, and self-sacrificing devotion of Southern women during war time. It was important for the Daughters to promote texts that honored Southern women to improve the image of the South.

The Daughters were not solely focused on reframing the Civil War, but were also particularly aggressive at revising the history of slavery. The Daughters did not seek to totally remove slavery from the southern memory, but rather they sought to portray it as a benevolent institution through the promotion of the Lost Cause. The Daughters were concerned with the

²⁴ Foster, "What's Not in a Name: The Naming of the American Civil War," 437.

²⁵ Rutherford, "Wrongs of History Righted."

²⁶ Mildred Lewis Rutherford, "Fourth Open Letter to All State Historians, Chairmen of Historical Committees and Chapter Historians of the United Daughters of the Confederacy," MS 86, box 2, file 6, J.N. Williams Chapter Collection, Pogue Library, Murray, KY.

²⁷ For a deeper discussion on Confederate monuments and the controversy surrounding them, consult Anne Marshall's *Creating a Confederate Kentucky* and Karen Cox's *Dixie's Daughters*.

²⁸ UDC, *Minutes of the Twenty Ninth Annual Convention of the Kentucky Division of the UDC*, Maysville, KY, Oct. 21-22, 1925, 66.

claims of brutality against slaves, because these claims implicated many of their fathers and grandfathers. These women rarely rebuked their families for owning slaves, and in many cases vindicated them. In a petition attempting to block a play based on Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* from coming to Lexington, the Daughters of the Lexington Chapter claimed "Many of our fathers and grandfathers owned slaves, not of their own choice, but because this burdensome legacy was left them by those of bygone days."²⁹ This claim by the Daughters indicates that they believed their fathers and grandfathers were innocently carrying on a legacy left to them. The women of the UDC sought to promote a positive view of slavery in order to protect the integrity of their families.³⁰

In addition to defending the integrity of their families, The United Daughters of the Confederacy also promoted a sanitized view of the peculiar institution as a way to reminisce about a bygone era. The Daughters' revised history of slavery began with framing it as a necessary system of the Old South, and even touted slavery as having been an ultimately better situation than freedom for slaves. In her pamphlet *A Brief Synoptical Review of Slavery in the United States*, Mrs. Sophie Fox Sea of the Albert Sidney Johnston chapter in Louisville stated, "laws were in force in all of the slave states for the protection of slaves."³¹ The women of the UDC believed that enslavement had been the best way for the two groups to coexist. For Mrs. Eugenia Dunlap Potts of the Lexington chapter of the UDC, "the fact remains that the highest order of social enjoyment, and of the exercise of the charming amenities of life, was blotted out when the old plantation of Dixie Land was divided up by the spoils of war."³² Potts claimed that times were better when African Americans were part of the plantation and strictly controlled. This view of looking back fondly on the restriction of African Americans was not a radical view within the UDC. According to Fred Bailey in his article "The Textbooks of the Lost Cause," "The United Daughters of the Confederacy constructed a culture upon the premise of man's innate inequality and assumed that social order was best served when every individual resided in his "proper place."³³

²⁹ *Uncle Tom's Cabin - Daughters of the Confederacy Petition Mr. Scott Not to Allow It to Show Here.— Send a Unique Appeal*, 1902, Kentucky Historical Society, Frankfort, KY.

³⁰ Marshall, "The 1906 Uncle Tom's Cabin Law and the Politics of Race and Memory in Early-Twentieth-Century Kentucky," 373.

³¹ Mrs. Sophie Fox Sea, *A Brief Synoptical Review of Slavery in the United States*, Albert Sidney Johnston Collection, Kentucky Historical Society, Frankfort, KY.

³² Eugenia Dunlap Potts, *Historic Papers on the Causes of the Civil War*, MS 111, Box 1, Folder 6, Kentucky Historical Society, Frankfort, KY.

³³ Fred Arthur Bailey, "The Textbooks of the "Lost Cause": Censorship and the Creation of Southern State Histories," *The Georgia Historical Quarterly* 75, no. 3 (1991): 508, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40582363>.

For the United Daughters of the Confederacy the strict control of slavery had been coupled with a sense of paternalistic care from slave owners. Kind interactions between white slaveholders and their black slaves were an essential element of the Lost Cause ideology. Mildred Lewis Rutherford claimed “the Southern people are their [slaves] best friends - have ever been, and will ever be - and they stand ready to give them a helping hand to make their race all that they rightly deserve it to be.”³⁴ Mrs. Sophie Fox Sea established that the white Southerners had “trained them in industrial arts.”³⁵ This statement makes it clear that the women of the UDC believed that slavery had been a beneficial situation for African Americans. Rather slavery had been helpful to those who profited from the work of slaves, the owners. Further, the image of the kind slaveholder was not accurate, discounting the rampant violence that a majority of slaves faced.

The Daughters’ also insisted that African Americans stay in their “proper place” by not exercising their rights granted to them after being emancipated. Women like Eugenia Potts who were influenced by the Lost Cause were irate that African Americans would have the nerve to participate in civic life. Potts was angered that the Fifteenth Amendment “gave the ignorant black man rights even above white citizens.”³⁶ This view was not unique to Potts; many of the UDC women had felt that African Americans should not have been given equal rights. The Daughters were not outwardly vocal toward African Americans about their disdain for equality. Rather they subtly supported groups dedicated to ensuring African Americans did not have equality.

It is important to understand the views of the United Daughters of the Confederacy on slavery and African Americans because of the influence these views had on their activities. The views of the women of the United Daughters of the Confederacy coalesced to show an air of superiority over African Americans, as well as a rejection of the violence and exploitation of slavery. These feelings of superiority manifested themselves openly in how they viewed slavery. The UDC women romanticized a time when society was rigidly divided along racial lines. The inaccuracies sponsored by the UDC were made apparent in the initiatives they enacted. Through monument building and educating children, the United Daughters of Confederacy promoted half-truths and outright falsehoods of the Lost Cause ideology, indoctrinating successive generations.

³⁴ Mildred Lewis Rutherford, “What the South May Claim,” (speech, Athens, GA, 1916).

³⁵ Sea, *A Brief Synoptical Review of Slavery in the United States*.

³⁶ Potts, *Historic Papers on the Causes of the Civil War*.

Educating the Next Generation

The Daughters took the false and inaccurate views of the Lost Cause and made them the center point of their exhaustive educational programs for school children. Around the time of the inception of the UDC, the teaching profession became more dominated by women.³⁷ In addition to the boom of female teachers, the women of the UDC were able to take part in influencing children because their social status afforded them the opportunity. The Daughters were affluent enough that they were unencumbered by traditional domestic duties, which allowed them to take up reviewing textbooks and lobbying schools boards.³⁸ The Daughters took advantage of this trend and coupled it with their social standing to influence an incalculable number of Southern children.

The UDC felt that educating children was one of the most vital elements of public life that could be manipulated. The path to educating children on the truths of the Lost Cause included “expunging offending works from schools and libraries, silencing dissident teachers, and indoctrinating Southern children with aristocratic social values,” writes Fred Bailey.³⁹ Education was the key to informing the next generation of the South on the “truths” of the Civil War and the Old South. Teaching the “truth” to students was so important to the UDC that every chapter had a committee on education.

The primary educational initiative the United Daughters of the Confederacy embarked on was petitioning school boards to place UDC preferred textbooks in schools. The Daughters were concerned that the South was portrayed unfairly in textbooks. To combat this perceived false view of the South, the ladies of the John C. Breckinridge chapter in Owensboro lobbied the county commissioners to replace the textbooks in the schools. The chapter’s petition was granted and copies of Lawton B. Evans *Essential Facts of American History* were distributed to the county schools.⁴⁰ In this text, Evans makes several contentious claims, but one of the most striking was the claim that “the negroes have learned not to expect social equality with white people.”⁴¹ Further, Evans claimed that the Ku Klux Klan’s violence toward blacks was necessary “to hold negroes in check, force the evil ones to behave, and made the idle ones work.”⁴² The

³⁷ Kathleen Weiler, “Women’s History and the History of Women Teachers,” *The Journal of Education* 171, no. 3 (1989): 9, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/42742161>.

³⁸ Bailey, “Mildred Lewis Rutherford and the Patrician Cult of the South,” 516.

³⁹ Bailey, “The Textbooks of the “Lost Cause”: Censorship and the Creation of Southern State Histories,” 508.

⁴⁰ United Daughters of the Confederacy, *Minutes of the Thirteenth Annual Convention of the Kentucky Division of the UDC*, Hopkinsville, KY, Oct. 13th and 14th, 1909, 157.

⁴¹ Lawton B. Evans, *The Essential Facts of American History* (Norwood, MA: Norwood Press, 1914), 442.

⁴² Evans, *The Essential Facts of American History*, 441.

Daughters of the John C. Breckinridge chapter lobbied tirelessly to have this book included in the history curriculums of the schools in Daviess County, so this can be seen as an implicit endorsement of lessons taught in the book.

In addition to recommending textbooks that were amenable to the UDC's interpretation of Southern history, the ladies also requested to review textbooks in schools for historical accuracy. Mildred Lewis Rutherford, historian general of the UDC, instructed the historical committees of each chapter to implement an initiative to review textbooks. In her open letter to historical committees and chapter historians, Rutherford writes, "Insist that all textbooks in your community be examined for historical accuracy. If books have *false* information recommend *corrections* so that teachers can *teach the truth to their pupils*."⁴³ This letter shows the UDC's willingness to attack information that is not agreeable to the Lost Cause ideology.

Another tactic that the United Daughters of the Confederacy used to attack the veracity of educational curriculums was essay contests. These essay contests were open to students in the communities of the chapters. The Paducah chapter announced at the 1925 state convention that they would be holding an essay contest where essays would be submitted critiquing history taught in school or college.⁴⁴ The plot to undermine the curriculum being taught in schools demonstrated the Daughters' desires to take their views mainstream. By pressing these essay contests, the Daughters were attempting to draw others, namely students into questioning their education.

Not only did the United Daughters of the Confederacy attempt to indoctrinate white students, they also made attempts to indoctrinate black students as well. In her speech "What the South May Claim," Mildred Lewis Rutherford declared, "the history of the negroes needs much to be rewritten, for what they have been taught and are still being taught is the grossest injustice to them and falsifies the truth."⁴⁵ This statement by Rutherford highlighted her fear that outside groups of people would cause black children to question their place in Southern society. The educational programs of the United Daughters of the Confederacy sought to keep blacks in their place of inferiority to whites, so as not to disturb the racial hierarchy of the segregated South.

Through the use of educational propaganda, the women of the UDC ensured that children would continue to be indoctrinated outside the classroom. In Mayfield, the Graves County chapter constructed a program that would commemorate the Confederacy in the local

⁴³ Rutherford, "Fourth Open Letter to All State Historians, Chairmen of Historical Committees and Chapter Historians of the United Daughters of the Confederacy."

⁴⁴ United Daughters of the Confederacy, *Minutes of the Twenty Ninth Annual Convention of the Kentucky Division of the UDC, Maysville, KY, Oct. 21-22, 1925*, 71.

⁴⁵ Mildred Lewis Rutherford, "What the South May Claim," (speech, Athens, GA, 1916).

schools. This program included biographical sketches of Confederate soldiers, recitations, songs, and the celebration of notable events.⁴⁶ In Madisonville, the Daughters celebrated General Lee's birthday by presenting pictures of Lee and Jefferson Davis to the local public schools.⁴⁷ These instances showed the lengths to which the United Daughters of the Confederacy attempted to indoctrinate the next generation.

The education of children did not stop in schools, several chapters of the UDC in Kentucky organized children's auxiliary chapters. For example the Owensboro chapter arranged a children's chapter in 1905, naming it in honor of the Confederate General Robert E. Lee. The purpose of the children's auxiliary chapters was to educate the future generation on the wonders of the Confederacy. The ladies of the parent chapter stated at the 1905 state convention that they would be teaching their children the true causes of the war, and perpetuating the memories of the heroes.⁴⁸ The Constitution of the Children's chapter of the UDC for Mayfield further states that the purpose of the children's auxiliaries were to advance the educational interests of descendants of Confederate soldiers.⁴⁹ The formation of these auxiliary chapters ensured that the UDC would be able to influence as many children as possible. The United Daughters of the Confederacy went to great lengths to craft a wide variety of programs to target children.

Conclusion

The United Daughters of the Confederacy ultimately achieved what they set out to do; shape the southern conscious. From their very inception, the Daughters attempted to refute the northern narrative that the Civil War was fought because the South refused to free their slaves. The Daughters were intent on spinning this narrative of the Civil War. The Daughters argued that slavery was not motivating factor, but rather regional differences. The Daughters also set out to set the record straight that it was not a Civil War, but rather a war between two distinct states.

In addition to spinning the truth of the Civil War, the United Daughters of the Confederacy sought to keep alive the history of a segregated society in which they had fared quite well, and thrived. The Daughters reminisced about the Old South, a time when African Americans were enslaved on the plantation. The women of the UDC also made sure to

⁴⁶ "United Daughters of the Confederacy Inviting Co-operation on the Part of Teachers of the County", *The Daily Messenger*.

⁴⁷ United Daughters of the Confederacy, *Minutes of the Ninth Annual Convention of the Kentucky Division of the UDC*, Bowling Green, 1905, 150.

⁴⁸ UDC, *Minutes of the Thirteenth Annual Convention of the Kentucky Division of the UDC*, 157.

⁴⁹ Constitution of Children's Chapter U.D.C., Graves County United Daughters of Confederacy Collection, Pogue Library, Murray, KY.

conceal the horrors of the peculiar institution to protect the righteous image of their fathers and grandfathers, many of whom had been slave owners. The Daughters preferred the way things had been in the Old South, and sought to carry them on, particularly the segregated society with a strict racial hierarchy. This hierarchy allowed them to maintain their place as an elite superior class.

These narratives that the United Daughters of the Confederacy put forward manifested into action. The Daughters were not content with these views only being circulated amongst other members, but it was important for the rest of the South to know the greatness of the Old South and the glory of the Confederacy. These narratives would eventually become part of the Daughters' educational initiatives. The UDC worked exhaustively to educate the children of the South. These women sought to indoctrinate children in their beliefs. A major part of this educational initiative was the veneration of the Confederate leaders General Robert E. Lee and Jefferson Davis. This education also included learning about the values of the Old South and the falsehoods of the Northern narrative on the Civil War.

All of these beliefs ran counter to the widely accepted contemporary narrative on the Civil War and the Old South. This contemporary narrative was that slavery was a horrible abomination and that the Civil War was a rebellion conducted by a traitorous part of the nation. The beliefs these women held certainly challenged that narrative, but they truly believed in it. Though their beliefs were problematic, it is nonetheless surprising the amount of influence these women wielded. The efforts of these women influenced the next generation of people and have led to a blatant misunderstanding of the Civil War and slavery by a worryingly large percentage of the country. The United Daughters of the Confederacy were the preeminent Confederate memorial group for a reason, they were able to shape the Southern memory well beyond their years.

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