

The Origins of the Longstreet Controversy 1865-1890



How James Longstreet became “controversial”

Origins of the Longstreet Controversy Timeline



1865-1890

From Appomattox To New Orleans

- After surrender travels to Lynchburg, VA to visit family with T.J. Goree en route to Texas.
- Party includes Gen. Longstreet, son Garland Longstreet, servant Jim and T.J. Goree.
- Travel by mule driven ambulance and horseback through Carolina's, Georgia, Alabama and Mississippi visiting family along the way.

William L. Richter

- Mark 6:4 - "A prophet is honored everywhere except in his own country and among his relatives and his own family."
- Quoted in essay, "*The Road to Hell is paved with Good Intentions: James Longstreet in War and Peace*" in *Lee and His Generals: Essays in Honor of T. Harry Williams*.

May 24, 1865

- *“As there is nothing left to take hold of except prejudice, which cannot be worked for good for anyone, it seems proper and right that we should seek some standing which may encourage hope for the future.”*

James Longstreet in New York Times interview, May 24th, 1865

The most powerful grounds for accepting the new order were “the obligations under which we were placed by the terms of our paroles.”

1866 in New Orleans

- January 1st – Starts Cotton Brokerage business with former Washington Artillery Captain, William Miller Owen. Longstreet, Owen & Co.
- March 1st – Becomes President of the Great Southern and Western Fire, Marine and Accident Insurance Company. Unsuccessfully sought presidency of the Mobile and Ohio Railroad but was made President of the Southern Hospital Association.

William Swinton publishes *Campaigns of the Army of the Potomac*, 1866

- The original source for the “Lee promising to fight a defensive campaign.”
- Pg. 340 - “Indeed, in entering upon the campaign, Gen. Lee expressly promised his corps commanders that *he would not assume a tactical offensive*.”
- Footnote: “This and subsequent revelations of the purposes and sentiments of Lee, I derive from Gen. Longstreet, who, in a full and free conversation with the writer, after the close of the war, threw much light on the motives and conduct of Lee during this campaign.”
- Opinions – Praised in both sections as fair and balanced; Blames Lee, Early and Ewell for Gettysburg defeat.

The 1866 Civil Rights Act

- Grants citizenship and same rights enjoyed by white citizens to all male persons “*without the distinction of race or color, or previous condition of slavery or involuntary servitude.*”
- President Johnson’s veto of the bill was overturned by two-thirds majority in both houses of Congress and Johnson’s attitude contributes to the influence of the Radical Republicans ultimately leading to Johnson’s impeachment.
- Three similar additional Acts: 1870, 1871, 1875.

1867

- Longstreet receives pardon
- More correctly this was an amnesty which had been refused previously in Nov 1865 by President Johnson who was quoted, *“There are three persons of the South who can never receive amnesty: Mr. Davis, General Lee, and yourself. You have given the Union cause too much trouble.”*
- Gen. Pope adds Longstreet’s name to list of names from Georgia seeking amnesty.
- Timing coincidental but fanned paranoia of the South's Lost Cause advocates.

March 1867

- New Orleans Times solicits 18 prominent citizens for their opinions on Congressional Reconstruction
- Longstreet responds immediately writing:
 - Southerners were a conquered people
 - Accede to the congressional plan
 - Appomattox surrender marked three developments-
 - *The end of secession*
 - *The end of the Confederacy*
 - *The end of slavery*

Advice for Subsequent Letters

Prior to sending second letter to the newspapers for publication Longstreet shares the contents with several people. Their reaction and advice:

- His business partners (Owen Bros.) cautioned him *“not to let it be published.”*
- John Bell Hood warned - *“They will crucify you.”*
- Uncle Augustus Baldwin Longstreet – *“It will ruin you, son, if you publish it.”*

June 3, 1867

- First letter to J.M.G. Parker advocating suffrage for blacks.
- *“It is fair to assume that the strongest laws are those established by the sword. The ideas that divided political parties before the war--upon the rights of the States--were thoroughly discussed by our wisest statesmen, and eventually appealed to the arbitrament of the sword. The decision was in favor of the North, so that her construction becomes the law, and should be so accepted.”*
- *“If I appreciate the issues of democracy at this moment, they are the enfranchisement of the negro...”*

1867 Continued....

- Longstreet wrote to General Lee asking his approval of his (Longstreet's) position; but Lee answered: *"I cannot think the course pursued by the dominant political party the best for the interests of the country, and therefore cannot say so.... This is the reason why I could not comply with the request in our letter."*
- "The great crimes of his life have been partially atoned for by the sincerest repentance that has yet been brought to light."

New Orleans Republican, August 9, 1867

Reaction to letter

- Upon receipt of the letter, the paper, (NO Picayune) refused to publish a single line but ran an editorial instead calling Longstreet a traitor to the Southern people and to the white race. Longstreet receives death threats as a result.
- Business interests fail as a result.
- Relocates family to Lynchburg, Va.

"By Order of Gen. Longstreet."

It is a hard job the tyrant at Washington has saddled upon Gen. Longstreet. What an appalling moral fall is Longstreet's! Once the honored, loved and trusted leader of Southern men, now the supple tool of a master to persecute them. Truly do times change and men with them. But the change some men undergo is enough to make a very devil weep with shame. The government of the people of Louisiana, seized by a base set of usurpers, Longstreet is ordered to play the role of arresting and imprisoning the chosen rulers of the State.

Scalawags

- “Scalawags....verminous, shabby, scabby, scrubby, scurvy cattle.” Southern Magazine, 1871
- “A scalawag is a white man who thinks he is no better than a Negro and in so thinking makes a correct appraisal of himself.” Daniels, Tar heel Editor

Contemporary Grade School History Book, Fairfax County, VA., ca. 2005.



James Longstreet believed that building factories would help the South rebuild its economy.

A **scalawag** (ska•lih•wag) is a rascal, someone who supports a cause for his or her own gain. Many scalawags were white Southerners who had opposed the Confederacy. Some were thinking only of themselves. Others felt they were doing what was best for the South.

Among the most famous of the scalawags was James Longstreet, a former Confederate general. Longstreet believed that the South needed to cooperate with the North in order to prosper. He and other leading business people wanted to build factories to lessen the South's dependence on agriculture.

REVIEW Why did Southerners blame higher taxes on state legislators and other state government leaders? 🗣️ **POINT OF VIEW**



Reconstruction Ends

Many white Southerners did not want their way of life to change. Burdened by heavy taxes and a changing society, they began to organize to regain their authority. One way to do so was to control the way people voted.

In the 1860s there was no secret ballot as there is today. A **secret ballot** is a voting method that does not allow anyone to know how a person has voted. Before the secret ballot was used, the names of voters and how they voted were published in newspapers.

Secret societies were formed to keep African Americans from voting or to make sure they voted only in certain ways. Those who joined the secret societies included white Southerners who resented the fact that African Americans were now considered their equals. Members of one secret society, the Ku Klux Klan, used violence to keep African Americans from voting or to make sure they voted as they were told.

Over time, white Southerners once again took control of their state governments and society. Despite the Fifteenth Amendment, new state laws were

passed that made it very difficult, if not impossible, for African Americans to vote. African Americans also were required to go to separate schools and churches and to sit in separate railroad cars. Laws such as these led to **segregation**, or the

Many carpetbaggers who came to the South during Reconstruction carried their belongings in bags made of carpet material.

1868-1869

- Congress restores his rights of citizenship in June.
- Joins Republican Party and continues to advise Southern state governments to extend civil and voting rights to freed slaves much to the chagrin of his former Confederate comrades.
- Accepts position of Surveyor for the port of New Orleans at a salary of \$6K annually.
- Fitz Randolph Longstreet, youngest son, born in Lynchburg, Va. July 1st, 1869.

1870

- April 2nd – Elected to Board of Directors New Orleans, Jackson and Great Northern Railroad, president June 8th.
- May 13th – Appointed Adjutant General State of Louisiana, controlled State Militia.
- Named president New Orleans and Northwestern Railroad, annual salary \$3K annually. Total salary with other interests reaches \$15K annual.

General Order 39

- July 20, 1870 Longstreet has members of state militia sign oath embracing Republicans egalitarian creed:
- *You, and each and all of you do solemnly swear that you accept the civil and political equality of all men, and agree not to attempt to deprive any person of color, race or previous condition of any political or civil right. That you will support the constitution of the US and the state...So help you God...*
- Louisiana Adjutant General's office annual report.

October 12, 1870

- Robert E. Lee dies in Lexington, VA after several years as president of Washington College.
- Competing Memorial Associations formed and contest where he will be buried.
- The Lee Memorial Association in Lexington enlists William N. Pendleton and Jubal Early as fundraising agents.

January 19, 1872

- Jubal Early's speech in Lexington, VA to the Lee Memorial Association.
- Contains initial allegations against Longstreet's actions at Gettysburg asserting he was slow and disobedient. The *Sunrise Attack Order*, although historically false, became the accepted explanation of Confederate defeat.
- Later widely distributed in pamphlet form

January 19, 1873

- William N. Pendleton, Lee's former chief of Artillery, reiterates Early's completely fabricated allegations and they continued to be printed and widely distributed throughout the South. Their indictment exonerated Lee of all blame and further bolstered their Lost Cause interpretation of Gettysburg. Longstreet does not respond until 1875.

1873

- Jubal Early and his followers seized control of the fledgling Southern Historical Society and used the organization as the central organ for the espousal of their views. Three years later, J. William Jones, former war clerk, begins publishing the Southern Historical Society Papers in which the Lost Cause interpretation prevailed in its pages numbering 52 volumes.

April 13, 1873

- Colfax Massacre, Easter Sunday 1873, Knights of the White Camellia attack Republican office holders at Colfax, Louisiana, executing them after forcing their surrender. Approximately 80 killed.
- Reported and recorded as a riot!



June 1873

- James Longstreet named to the four year position on the Levee Commission of Engineers in New Orleans.
- Longstreet exchanges letters with Lafayette McLaws about the Gettysburg controversy where McLaws reconciles with Longstreet. (Recollect the Humbug letter of 1863). This letter makes it clear that McLaws did not believe Longstreet could have attacked earlier.

August 1874

- Coushatta Massacre
- Members of the Crescent City White League assassinate 6 local Republican office holders after forcing them to sign statements they would leave Louisiana. None brought to trial.

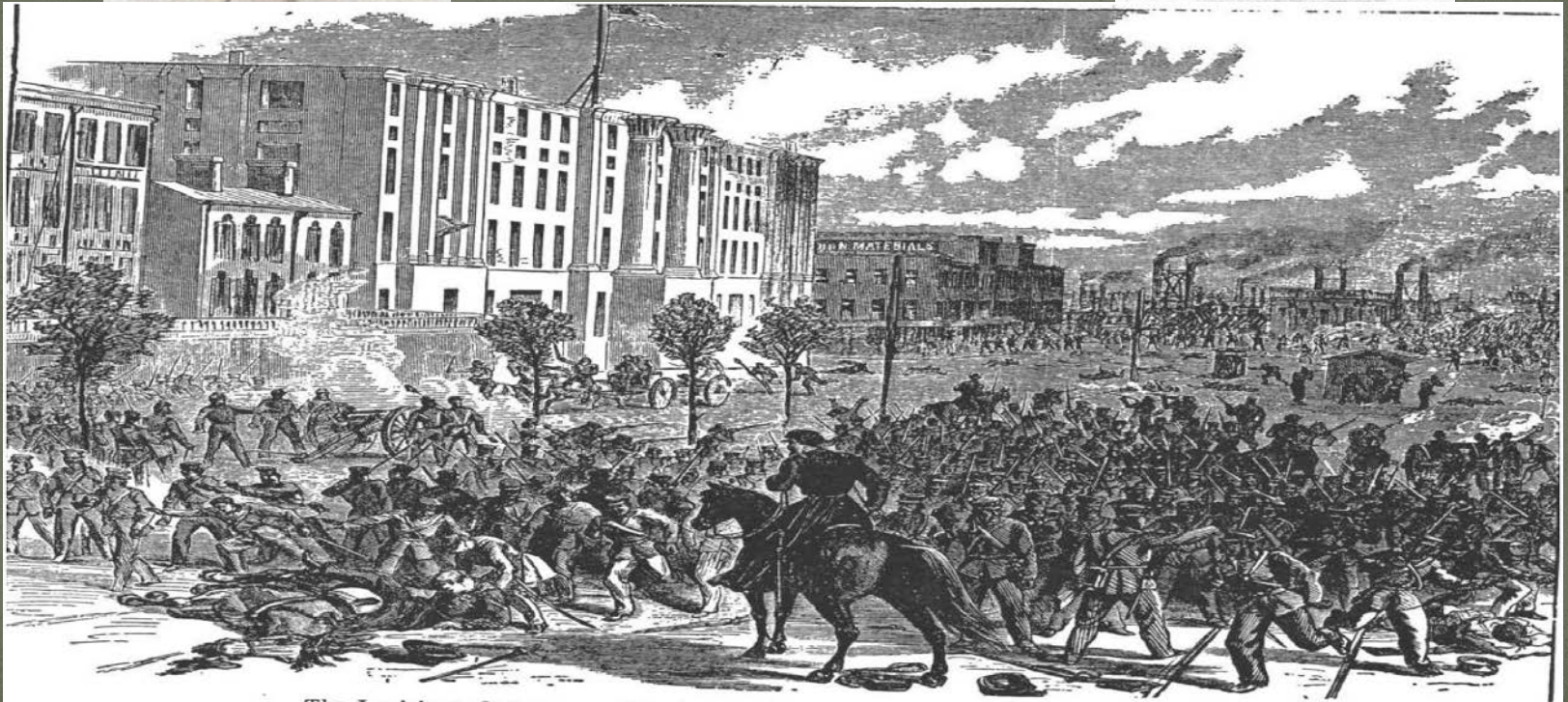
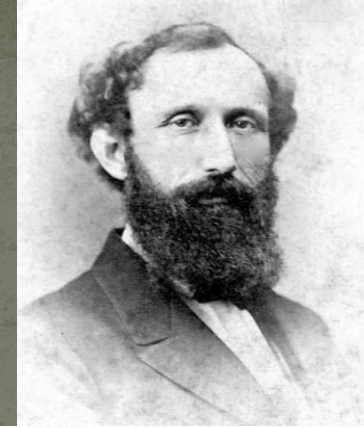
Battle of Liberty Place Sept. 14, 1874

- Also known as the “*the Third Battle of New Orleans.*”
- Crescent City White League made up of former Confederate soldiers demand Rep. Gov. Kellogg resign.
- 3,600 police and militia under Longstreet including blacks
- White Leaguers attack first and drive the militia who fled. Longstreet wounded.
- 38 killed, 79 wounded

James Longstreet



Gov. William Kellogg



*The Louisiana Outrages — Attack upon the Police in the Streets of New Orleans
(From Harper's Weekly, Oct. 3, 1874 — Courtesy Leonard V. Huber)
Note the Iron Building in the distance at the right*

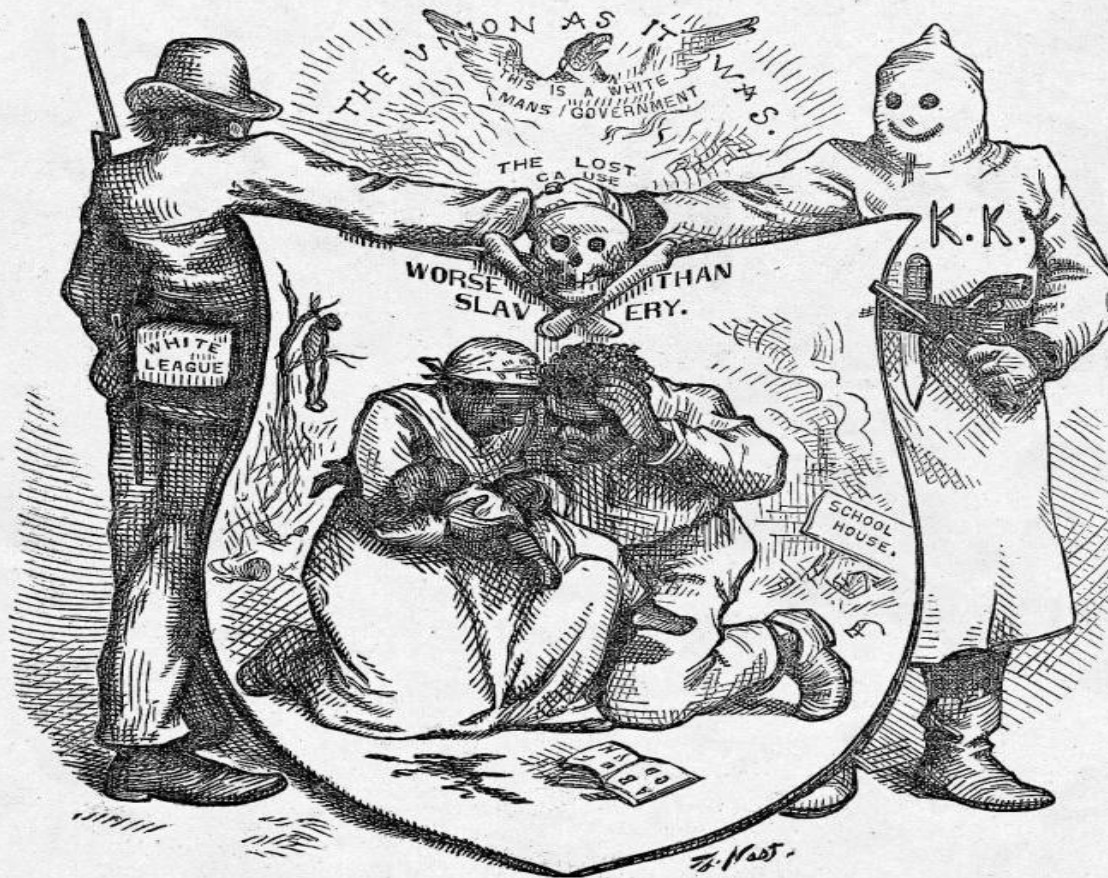
Frank Leslie's Illustrated Oct 1874



*Image of Longstreet against former Confederates
printed in newspapers across the country*



Harper's Weekly Oct. 1874



January 1875

- Longstreet leaves New Orleans and returns to Gainesville, Georgia where he'd purchased the Piedmont Hotel.
- Finally responds to Jubal Early in the SHS published as *Longstreet's Account at Gettysburg*.
- Back and forth responses between Longstreet, Jubal Early, Fitzhugh Lee over Gettysburg through 1876

1879

- Longstreet contributes articles regarding Gettysburg to Philadelphia Weekly Times published as Annals of the War
- *Lee in Pennsylvania*
- *The Mistakes of Gettysburg*
- Reiterates statements made to Swinton in 1866

1888

- Contributes articles to the *Century Series* published as *Battles and Leaders*
- *The Invasion of Maryland*
- *The Battle of Fredericksburg*
- *Lee's Invasion of Pennsylvania*
- To this day there are mixed reactions

1889

- April, 1889 – Longstreet's home at Park Hill Farm in Gainesville, Georgia burns down under what was written at the time as "*suspicious*" circumstances. Since Longstreet was trying to make his Gainesville, Georgia location a Republican political base it was also believed to be politically motivated. The fire consumes all papers he'd accumulated for his memoirs.
- December 1889 – Longstreet's first wife, Maria Louisa Garland Longstreet, passes away in Gainesville, Georgia

Fredericksburg Reunion



Front Row: Pvt. Warren Foster; Maj. Smith; Gen. Roy Stone; Maj. Stein;
Vespasian Chancellor, scout for Stuart.
Back Row: Gen. Herbert; Gen. Robinson; Gen. Kniflin; Gen. Rosecrans;
Gen. Henry Hunt; General James Longstreet; Gen. Dickenson.

Gettysburg 1893



“Of Course We Went with Holtzworth.”



Gettysburg Reunion

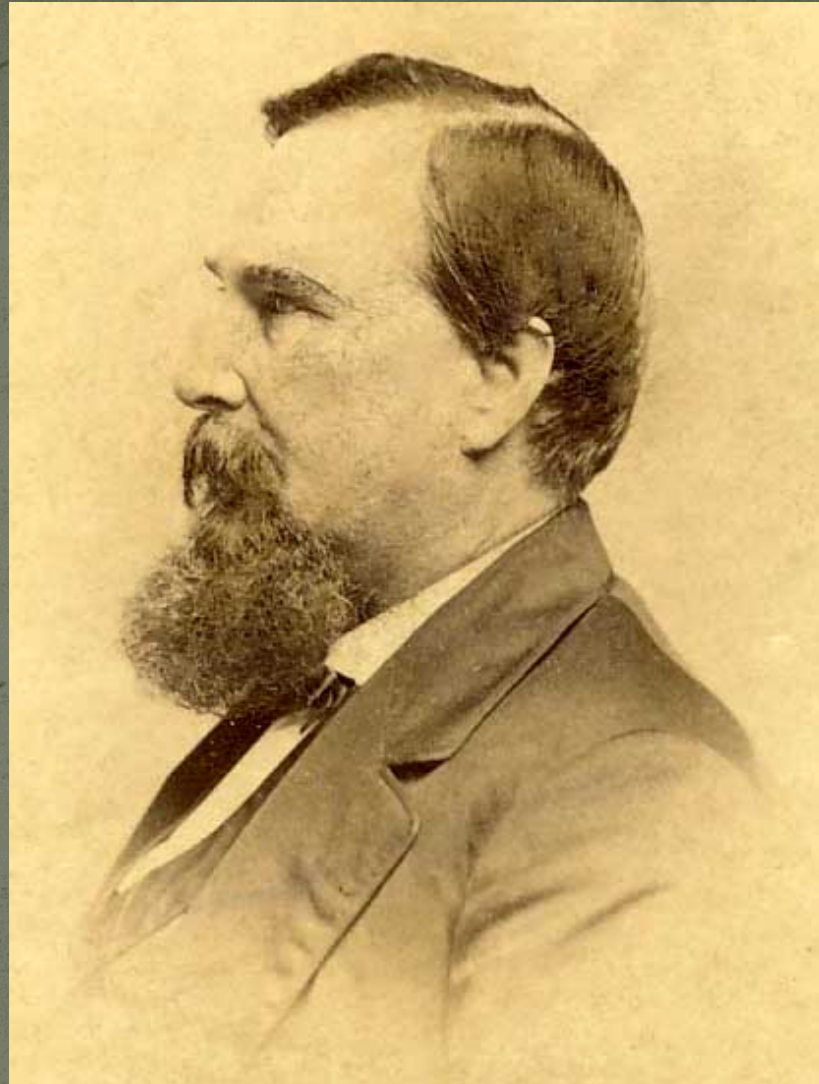


1890's The Lost Cause Regained

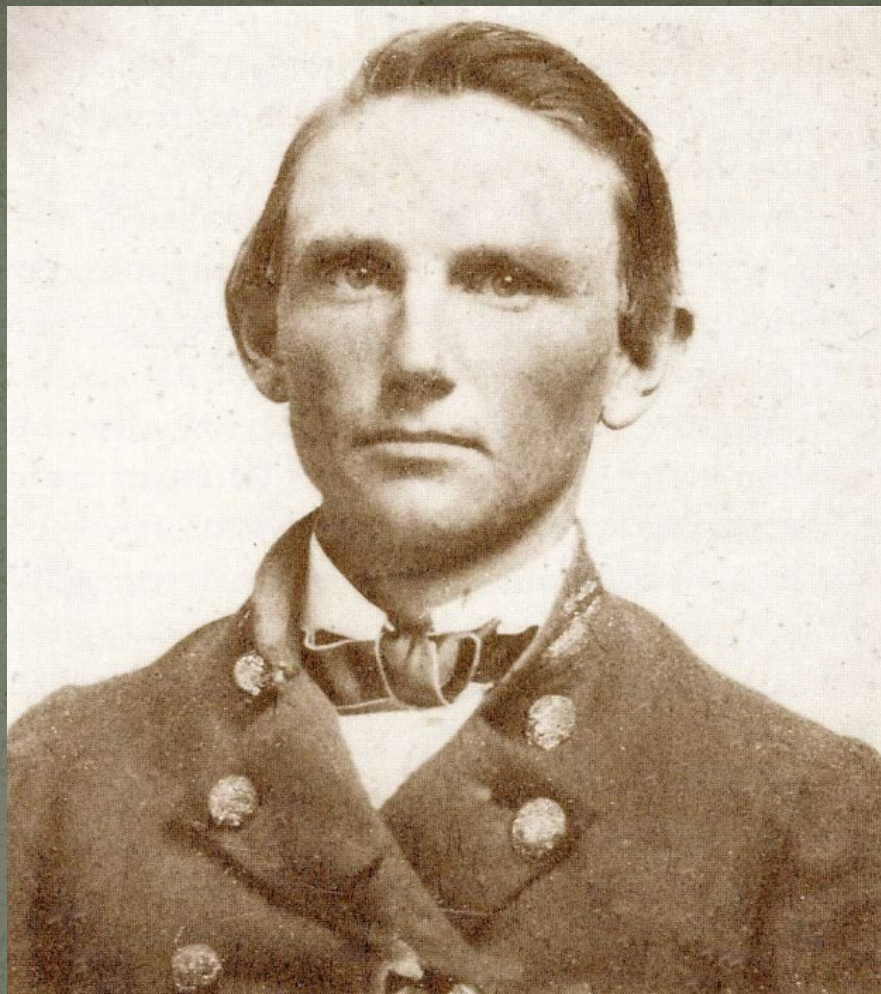
- Lost Cause reborn after nearly a generation with formation of Confederate Veterans organizations
- Slavery written out of the history of the war; books burned by southern academics containing anything about slavery
- Monuments begin to appear across the south
- Longstreet's Memoirs published 1896 – *From Manassas to Appomattox*, originally well received and also sold well. Written from memory with ghost writer as notes burned in house fire in 1889.

ADDENDUM

Staff and Family Photographs



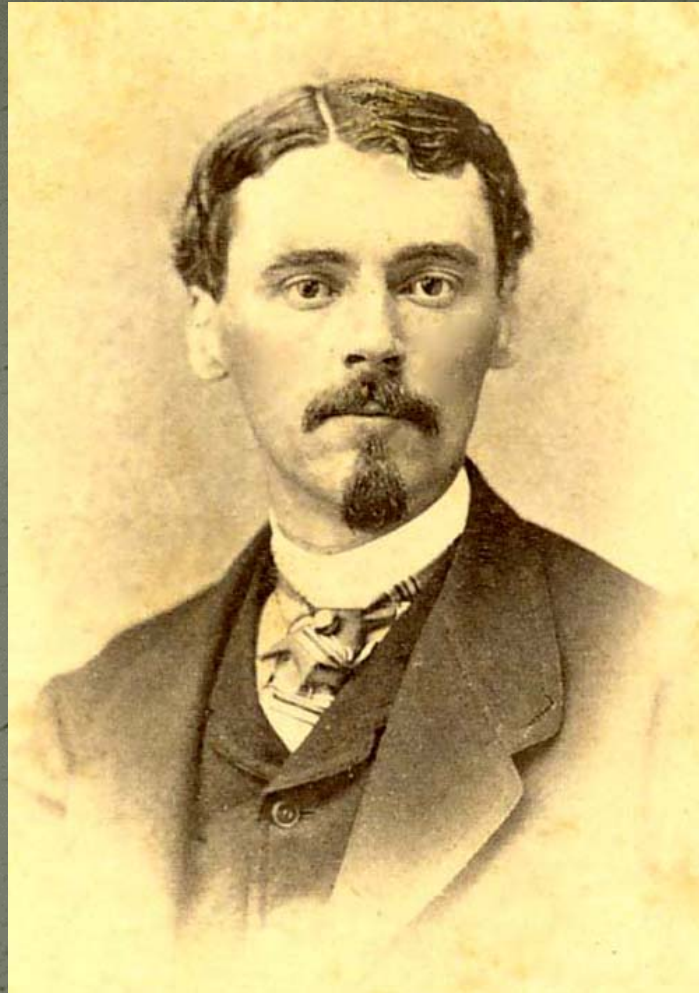
James Longstreet
(Photograph taken in New Orleans)



Thomas Jewett "TJ" Goree

(Nov. 14, 1835 – Mar. 5, 1905)

Lieutenant, eventually Captain, Longstreet's Staff



Gilbert Moxley Sorrel
(Feb. 23, 1838 – Aug. 10, 1901)
Aide de Camp, Longstreet's Staff



Maria Louisa Garland Longstreet



Maria Louisa Garland Longstreet and sons who died in Richmond in 1862, along with their sister Mary Ann.



James Longstreet, Jr. (1865-1922)
Buried in Arlington National Cemetery



Fitz Randolph Longstreet (1869-1951), youngest son of JL and Maria Louisa Garland Longstreet, father of Jamie Louise Paterson nee Longstreet, mother of William D. Paterson, Jr. (Photo ca. 1890)



Dedication of the Longstreet Bridge, Gainesville, GA 1948

L-R: Maria Louisa Longstreet Whelchel (Aunt Luler; daughter of JL), Helen Dortch Longstreet (2nd wife of JL), Ben Ames Williams (author and grand-nephew of JL), Jamie Louise Longstreet (grand-daughter of JL (and mother of William D, Paterson, Jr.) Right rear: Zelia Stover Longstreet (Mrs. F.R. Longstreet and daughter-in-law of JL)



Jamie Louise Paterson nee Longstreet,
William D. Paterson, Jr., and others. -August 1969



Ed Bearss, William D. Paterson, Jr. , Jamie Louise Paterson nee Longstreet, and William D. Paterson, Sr. - May 1999



Reverse angle

Unveiling of James Longstreet Monument
Gettysburg, PA - July 3, 1998



Longstreet Family – Gettysburg , PA – July 3, 1998

L-R: Bill Longstreet (CT); Clark Thornton (GA); Dan Paterson (VA); Sherry Paterson; Shane Comegys; Jamie Longstreet Paterson (MD); William (Bill) Paterson, Sr. (MD); James Randolph Paterson (MD); Paul Longstreet (CA); David Whelchel and daughter (MN); Louise Longstreet Whelchel Wagner (DE)