

ABSTRACT

The Civil War as it Relates to Museums in Texas: Four Case Studies

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The purpose of this paper is to investigate the interpretive methods and narratives used by the Texas Heritage Museum, the Bob Bullock Texas State History Museum, the Texas Civil War Museum, and the Pearce Museum in Texas, in order to determine how they interpret the Civil War and the involvement of Texas. By studying the objects, text panels, and other elements of the exhibits through a combination of observation and interviews with executive staff at the museums, the case studies reveal that the museums employ a combination of academic and popular history. The juxtaposition of older and modern museum methodologies demonstrate a lack of unity within the museum field in Texas.

The Civil War as it Relates to Museums in Texas: Four Case Studies

by

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ABBREVIATIONS

| | |
|----------|---|
| BBTSHM | Bob Bullock Texas State History Museum |
| CRC/HRC | Confederate Research Center/Historical Research Center |
| HJCP/HCP | Hill Junior College Press/Hill College Press |
| SCV | Sons of Confederate Veterans |
| TCM | Texas Confederate Museum |
| TCMC | Texas Confederate Museum Collection |
| TCWM | Texas Civil War Museum |
| TDUDC | Texas Division of the United Daughters of the Confederacy |
| THM | Texas Heritage Museum |
| UDC | United Daughters of the Confederacy |

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

War is a difficult topic to interpret in museums. The topic entails various fascinations for visitors—some visitors seek new knowledge about the specific wars, some seek affirmation of preconceived understandings, and some simply want to revel in the sensory experience of military exhibits. Some visitors carry one or another polarized opinion about the wars or the combatants. Bias in favor of one side can continue long after the end of a war, and such biases can lead to museum exhibits that are unbalanced, or even worse, incorrect. The American Civil War is no exception. That war has been and continues to be particularly contentious due to the divisive nature of civil wars, as well as the abrupt—and arguably incomplete—post-war efforts at reconciling the warring factions. The task of easing that contentiousness has not been helped by the fact that reconciliation between the races and the legacy of racism has also been a long and arduous process. The purpose of this paper is to investigate a regionally-selected group of Civil War museums in Texas, to see how they interpret the war, and to see if they carry any overt or hidden biases instead of more objective academic neutrality.

This paper is based on the hypothesis that history museums in Texas will provide a biased interpretation of the war, through either pro-Confederate or pro-Texan messages. Non-Texans¹ often stereotype Texas as a land of cowboys and other types of rugged

¹ At the time of writing, the author was a legal resident of Georgia.

individuals. Outsiders expect Texans to present a distinct swagger and pride.² It would not unnecessarily be unreasonable to assume that in-state history museums embody a Texas swagger. However, that is an assumption based purely on stereotype unless an outsider visits the museums. The stereotype can be reinforced or dispelled through observation and analysis of the actual museums.

The state of Texas is fairly large, and can easily be divided into smaller regions based on geography, culture, or history. Central Texas, with its strong cotton-growing background and politically-significant historic landmarks, provides a nuanced relationship between Texas and the rest of the United States—particularly that of the southern states which formed the Confederacy. As such, it is an appropriate place to begin an exploration of Texas in the war. Four history museums in the region stand out as being appropriate for an exploration—the Texas Heritage Museum in Hillsboro, the Bob Bullock Texas State History Museum in Austin, the Texas Civil War Museum in Fort Worth, and the Pearce Museum in Corsicana. All four museums openly identify their Civil War-related galleries as a core part of their interpretive mission—along with their modern and professional exhibits—and thus provide a useful first step in an investigation.³

² Ty Cashion, “What’s the Matter with Texas? The Great Enigma of the Lone Star State in the American West,” *Montana: The Magazine of Western History* 55, no. 4 (Winter 2005): 3.

³ The four website sources are as follows: Texas Heritage Museum, “Galleries and Collections Division,” Texas Heritage Museum, <http://www.hillcollege.edu/info/texasheritagemuseum/?d=9> (accessed August 30, 2012). Bob Bullock Texas State History Museum, “2nd Floor (Identity),” Bob Bullock Texas State History Museum, <http://www.thestoryoftexas.com/exhibits/2nd-floor-identity> (accessed August 30, 2012). Texas Civil War Museum, “Visit The Museum: Collections,” Texas Civil War Museum, <http://www.texascivilwarmuseum.com/visit-the-museum/collections/?view=mobile> (accessed August 30, 2012). Pearce Museum, “Civil War,” Pearce Museum, <http://www.pearcecollections.us/page.php?cat=Collections%20and%20Research&id=17> (accessed August 30, 2012).

Given that this paper is based on the author's personal observations at four museums, it would be appropriate to divide the paper into four parts. The bulk of the paper consists of four case studies, one for each institution. However, case studies are only useful with context. Chapter Two explains the institutional histories and initial observations of the four museums as witnessed by a visitor's first impressions of the museum entrances. Chapters Three, Four, Five, and Six provide case studies for the Texas Heritage Museum, the Bob Bullock Texas State History Museum, the Texas Civil War Museum, and the Pearce Museum respectively. Chapter Seven will explore the ideas of academic neutrality or factional bias as witnessed at the museums. Chapter Eight concludes the paper.

The paper is based almost completely on observation and interaction with the museums, instead of research into published sources. The case studies are based upon visits to the museums by the author over the course of two months. The Texas Heritage Museum was visited on October 5, 2012, and October 26, 2012. The Bob Bullock Texas State History Museum was visited on October 19, 2012. The Texas Civil War Museum was visited on November 9, 2012, and November 10, 2012. The Pearce Museum was visited on October 20, 2012. The case studies were supplemented with phone and in-person interviews with museum staff members. An interview was held in Hillsboro with the director of the Texas Heritage Museum on December 7, 2012. Phone interviews were held with the other three museums: an interview with the Director of Special Projects at the Bob Bullock Texas State History Museum on December 5, 2012; an interview with the Executive Director of the Texas Civil War Museum on December 12, 2012; an interview with the director and the archivist of the Pearce Museum on December 13,

2012; and an interview with an independent professional who designed the exhibits at the Pearce Museum on December 6, 2012. Historical context is established through the interviews, along with newspaper and journal articles.

The visits to the museums were guided by a combination of overall observation and specific details on a checklist. The observations focused on the physical appearance of the exhibits: the types of three-dimensional objects and displays; the types of two-dimensional motifs, paintings and graphics; the use of colors and lighting; the layout and discernible pathways in the exhibits; and the use and location of text panels, signs and manuscripts. These physical observations led to a more in-depth investigation of the exhibits: the terminology used in text panels; the length and extent of text panels, compared to objects and non-textual motifs; the apparent reading levels used in the text; and the use of academic or public history within the text. The observations culminated in an analysis of the objects and the tone and terminology of the text panels at an individual and collective level in order to identify a narrative or story for the exhibit, and indications of biases: ethnicity-based bias, based on the inclusion or exclusion of Anglos, Central Europeans, Tejanos, African-Americans, or Native Americans;⁴ factional-based bias, based on the inclusion or exclusion of pro-Unionists, pro-Confederates, non-aligned, and neutral individuals and groups; regional-based bias, and regional-based bias, based on the level of focus on groups and individuals outside of Texas. The relationship between the Civil War exhibits and the rest of the museum likewise was a focus of visitation. The ultimate questions of the visitation focused on whether the museum provided adequate definitions of terms—definitions of “Texas,” “Texan,” and the “Civil War.”

⁴ African-Americans were not originally a part of the author’s visitation plan, but were quickly incorporated after the first museum visit.

The staff interviews centered around institutional history, exhibit history, and future goals for the exhibits. The interviews also allowed the staff of the museums to explain the narrative of the exhibits, as well as their views on how to convey exhibit narratives in an intuitive manner. The staff also resolved lingering uncertainties from the visits.

This paper is based upon the application of Civil War historiography in museums. The actual historiography of the war is not essential for the paper, in part because museums are not expected to follow strictly academic approaches to history—instead, museums rely primarily on public history and educational theories that open the exhibits for most visitors. Nonetheless, this paper needs to provide a brief explanation of Civil War historiography as it relates to Texas. The overall study of Texas during the Civil War has mirrored that of the other participating states, to a certain degree. Whether it is the study of big names and battles, or a sociological approach based on class and ethnicity, the notion of Texan Exceptionalism has pervasively shaped the study of Texan involvement in the war. That belief—that Texas is more than just another political entity within the United States—is presented through multiple arguments. One basis is the geopolitical history of Texas as a part of Mexico, then a sovereign nation, and then a frontier region of the United States.⁵ Another basis comes from the ethnic and cultural composition of the various people within the state, particularly from the divide of natives and immigrants, and the origins of the immigrants.⁶ For the adherents of Texan

⁵ With the exception perhaps of Hawaii and its Kingdom and Republic, no other state shares a similar distinction.

⁶ Although this paper will not argue specifics on the historiography, there are some useful sources out there, particularly in terms of the sociology of the time. See Charles David Gear, *Why Texans Fought in the Civil War* (College Station, TX: Texas A&M Press, 2010).

Exceptionalism, Texas had a complicated involvement in the war that the other states lacked, particularly from the frontier nature of the state⁷ and the varying allegiances of the Texans—heavy factionalism based which states the immigrants left, which nations gave birth to the foreign-born immigrants, and the divided loyalties of the native-born Texans between their tribal affiliations, economic status, home state, and the competing national governments that sought control over the state.

Outside of the Exceptionalism school of thought, Texas receives less attention and significance. Academic and non-academic histories and pseudo-histories related to the war emphasize non-Texan issues, and relegate Texas to being one of many states involved in the war based upon the prevailing issues that define the schools of thought. Historiographies that are more reputable focus on the issues of slavery and its impact on the economy and other geopolitical concerns that ultimately envelop Texas. Less-reputable historiographies focus less on slavery, placing greater emphasis on the cultures and economies of the states—and subsequently presuming Texas to be as homogenous as the rest of the ultimately pro-Confederate States. Pseudo-histories, often informed by the myth of the Lost Cause, minimize slavery as an issue or ignore it altogether and invent a completely different history and society for the southern states that has no basis on reality—instead, those pseudo-histories exist to justify specific historical actions in the face of new historical interpretations.⁸ The pseudo-historical approaches likewise group Texas with the rest of the Confederacy solely because Texas joined the Confederacy,

⁷ Glen Sample Ely, “Gone from Texas and Trading with the Enemy: New Perspectives on Civil War West Texas,” *The Southwestern Historical Quarterly* 110, no. 4 (April 2007): 451.

⁸ Reiko Hillyer, “Relics of Reconciliation: The Confederate Museum and Civil War Memory in the New South,” *The Public Historian* 33, no. 4 (November 2011): 37, 50-51.

without seeking to understand why Texas officially was a Confederate state, and without explaining the factionalism that led to widespread pro-Unionist and non-aligned tendencies within the state during the war. Given such a plethora of historiographies, the various museums in Texas could easily employ one or all of these theories to interpret the war. The only way to determine the usage is to visit the museums.

CHAPTER TWO

Introduction to Museums

Without even entering the physical structures, a visitor can readily appreciate major similarities and differences in the four museums investigated in this paper. The four have unique institutional histories and organization, as well as dissimilar façades. They were selected due to their centralized locations and their coverage of the Civil War. Of the four, the Texas Heritage Museum, the Bob Bullock Texas State History Museum, and the Texas Civil War Museum were selected due to the apparent Texas-centric nature of their exhibits. The Pearce Museum was selected as a control group, in order to determine if there was a contrast between Texas-centric museums and a nationally-focused museum.

Texas Heritage Museum

The Texas Heritage Museum, located on the campus of Hill College in Hillsboro, is a public museum and a department of Hill College.¹ The museum began in 1964 as two conjoined entities within the college—the Confederate Research Center and Hill Junior College Press.² The CRC began as a collection of Civil War books donated by Professor Harold B. Simpson, and the HJCP began as a venue for Professor Simpson to publish his own Civil War books. The two organizations were supplemented by a

¹ Hill College, “Statistical Snapshot,” Hill College, <http://www.hillcollege.edu/info/aboutHC/aid=stats> (accessed January 21, 2013). Hill College, formerly Hill Junior College at the founding of the THM, is a public community college with more than 4000 enrolled students.

² T. Lindsay Baker, “The Texas Heritage Museum at Hill College, Hillsboro, Texas,” *East Texas Historical Journal* 46, no. 1 (2008): 35.

developing collection of Civil War artifacts, and part of the CRC was colloquially known as the “Gun Museum.”³ During the 1970’s the CRC expanded the number and types of artifacts beyond the Civil War. Due to the publication of Professor Simpson’s biography of Audie Murphy in 1975, the CRC acquired numerous artifacts from the Murphy family, and the institution became known as the “Confederate Research Center and Audie L. Murphy Gun Museum.”⁴ The facilities expanded after renovations to the library in 1984, and after the construction of a new library building in the mid 1990’s, the entirety of the old library building became the home for the CRC, the HCP and the Audie L. Murphy Gun Museum.⁵ The old library became the Harold B. Simpson History Complex, and the Audie L. Murphy Gun Museum became the Texas Heritage Museum—a department of the college and a state-recognized entity with a separate line in the state-approved Hill College Budget.⁶ In 2005, the CRC became the Historical Research Center, and the three organizations were formally united into one entity under the THM. The THM, as a part of its mission to the history of Texans at war, placed a memorial to native Medal of Honor recipients in 2007. The state declared the THM to be the official Texas State Medal of Honor Memorial in 2009.⁷

³ Ibid.

⁴ John Versluis, interviewed by author, Hillsboro, TX, December 7, 2012.

⁵ Baker, 36. During this time, the THM hosted the collections of the recently closed Texas Confederate Museum. However, the collections remained at the museum for only six years, from 1994 to 2000.

⁶ Versluis interview. This is due primarily to the influence of Lieutenant Governor Bob Bullock, a central figure in the THM and the Bob Bullock Texas State History Museum histories, and an alumnus of Hill College.

⁷ Ibid.

The focus of the institutions evolved and drove the development of the current exhibits. The CRC began as a research tool for students, and the HJCP was formed to be a publishing outlet for the professors at Hill Junior College and other institutions. Professor Simpson wrote or edited eight of the books published during the HJCP's first decade, and those books, along with the nine others published during that period, focused entirely on the Civil War.⁸ Only ten out of 45 of the books published by the HJCP and the HCP focused on Texas-related topics beyond the Civil War.⁹ The CRC likewise evolved from strictly collecting Confederate materials to books covering other wars that involved Texans.¹⁰ The GM and its heirs followed suit with the acquisition of artifacts outside of the Civil War. This shift was apparent from the development of the Audie L. Murphy Gun Museum; however, the changes became officially recognized outside of HC with the state's establishment of the THM in 1997, the formal renaming of the CRC to the HRC in 2005, and the formal recognition of the THM as the state Medal of Honor memorial.¹¹

The Texas Heritage Museum is officially a department of Hill College, but its Director answers to the president of the college.¹² The college does not place direct influence upon the museum due to institutional control resting solely with the museum.

⁸ Earl Elam, *Welcome to Hill College Press* (Hillsboro, TX: Hill College Press, 2010).

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ *Master Plan 1995, Hill College History Complex, Hillsboro, Texas*. 1995. Mayborn Museum Complex Archives, Waco, TX. Although the museum had an extensive collection of Audie Murphy artifacts, it still relied heavily on a large collection of Confederate artifacts, supplemented by the Texas Confederate Museum's collection on loan. See also, *Master Plan for Hill College History Complex, Hill Junior College, Hillsboro, Texas*, 1994, Mayborn Museum Complex Archives.

¹¹ Versluis interview.

¹² Ibid. All information on the internal organization came from the interview with John Versluis.

Because the state provides funding directly to the museum through a line item on the budget, the college cannot determine the museum's funding and budget. The museum does provide reports on activities to the college's Board of Regents. The leadership of the THM rests with the Director of the museum. Its mission statement is as follows: "The Texas Heritage Museum's mission is to explore Texas and Texans during wartime and how those experiences affect us today."¹³

As noted above, the THM contains multiple divisions. The museum consists of four major subgroups: Galleries and Collections; Hill College Press; the Historical Research Center; and the museum store.¹⁴ Due to its reliance on state funding, the staff positions fluctuate according to the budget provided by state legislature. The staff includes the director, an assistant curator-archivist, an exhibit-curatorial-lab-designer, a collection registrar, a historian-editor, and a museum store manager-receptionist. The staff, past and present, also included various student workers, interns, and other positions.¹⁵ The three subgroups are subdivisions in name only, as the THM enveloped the HRC and the HCP in 2005, combining the staff of all three into one cooperative organization.

The THM receives funding from multiple sources.¹⁶ The museum has a legislature-established budget every year as a part of Hill College's budget. The museum store and Hill College Press provide another source of funding, as HCP sells books

¹³ John Versluis, *Hill College: The Texas Heritage Museum Strategic Plan, 2007-2012* (Hillsboro, TX: Texas Heritage Museum, January 2007): 4.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 3.

¹⁵ Versluis interview. As the staff position descriptions might imply, the state-provided budget is lower than anticipated and staff members wear multiple hats.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, as explained in the interview.

through the museum store. The museum store is both a physical location and an online presence, as HCP publications can be purchased through common online vendors. THM also has membership programs and a memorial brick walkway program, as well as opportunities for donations and research fees at the HRC. Grants supply funds for equipment, supplies, publications, and other non-operating costs. The proceeds of the museum store and the HRC feed back into their respective subgroups. The museum does not charge admissions.

All decisions on exhibit schedules, narratives and physical exhibit designs are made by the Collections Committee. It is chaired by the director, and consists of the director, an assistant curator-archivist, an exhibit-curatorial-lab-designer, and a collection registrar.¹⁷ The committee also reviews the acquisition of all objects. The museum does not actively purchase artifacts due to the budget. The museum accepts donations of objects and money, as well as estates, but only if the donors do not attach stipulations and restrictions to the use of the donations. According to the director, the collection is “mature,” due to the age of the museum. The museum received most of the collection through donations and museum transfers, including the large donation from the Audie Murphy family that established the museum as an independent organization. The museum also has some objects on loan. The collections also include a sizeable number of books and other two-dimensional resources in the Historic Research Center, along with numerous manuscript reproductions from the defunct Texas Confederate Museum.

¹⁷ Ibid. The author discovered all of this information in the interview.

The museum as it stands is fairly stable in terms of exhibit plans and adjustments.¹⁸ The museum includes a traveling exhibit hall that receives temporary exhibits. The THM will expand the exhibits in the near future through developing the current exhibits, without any major construction plans. The museum also has plans for developing the technology used in the exhibits and used for tours,¹⁹ but the technology is sufficient as it stands now.²⁰

The museum itself is an old institution in an old building, despite using a relatively new exhibit design and modern technology in the HRC and the HCP. The structure appears to be a one-story brick structure set upon low hill, with glass doors set into a wide glass façade.²¹ In front of the building, sunk into the hill, is the Medal of Honor memorial, a grey double column and pediment with two black stone tablets on each side and a third between the columns. The flanking tablets list the names of the Medal of Honor recipients from Texas, organized by war and alphabetically listed names. The central tablet reads in large letters, “Medal of Honor Memorial to Native Born Texans,” with an image of Audie L. Murphy above the letters and an image of Samuel D. Dealey below. An ascending walkway to the left of the memorial leads to the museum entrance.

¹⁸ Ibid. One of the first questions asked at the interview.

¹⁹ Assuming that the state will provide the budget for expanding technology.

²⁰ Sufficient in terms of the theater with surround sound, wireless internet accessibility, and the latest computer technology. The theater is also used as a classroom for art appreciation, art history, Texas history, and American history classes.

²¹ It may have a basement based upon its elevation from the road in front of it.

Bob Bullock Texas State History Museum

The Bob Bullock Texas State History Museum, like the Texas Heritage Museum, was one of multiple cultural history preservation ideas proposed by Lieutenant Governor Bob Bullock in the mid 1990's.²² The museum was built in downtown Austin, a few blocks from the Capitol building, the Old General Land Office building, and other historical and cultural state institutions. The overall cost was around \$80 million,²³ and the new building for the museum was designed by E. Verner Johnson and Association of Boston, Massachusetts.²⁴ The exhibits inside were designed by the PRD Group of Fairfax, Virginia.²⁵ The construction spanned from 1998 to 2001, and the museum opened on April 21, 2001.

The museum is the official state history museum, and as a public institution, it answers to the State Preservation Board. As a public institution, it can possibly be influenced by public opinion or influential politicians, and the building is state property. However, the state has not publicly pressured the museum regarding its policies.²⁶ The leadership rests with a director and an administrative staff department. The museum's mission statement is as follows: "The Bob Bullock Texas State History Museum engages

²² A. Phillips Brooks, "State cultural museum another Bullock surprise," *Houston Chronicle*, June 8, 1997. Newspapers provide extensive documentation of this museum's history, an advantage over the other three smaller institutions in the paper.

²³ Terrence Stutz, "State's past spurs hopes for museum," *The Dallas Morning News*, February 26, 2001.

²⁴ A. Phillips Brooks, "Boston firm to design state museum," *Austin American-Statesman* December 2, 1997.

²⁵ "Texas State History Museum to open in April," *The Victoria Advocate*, March 1, 2001. Confirmed in the interview with David Denney.

²⁶ That the author is aware of at the time of writing. That does not mean the State Preservation Board has not intervened in one way or another.

the broadest possible audience to interpret the continually unfolding Story of Texas through meaningful educational experiences.”²⁷

The BBTSHM is divided into multiple departments with large full-time and part-time staff in each. It includes Exhibits, Education, Events, and so forth.²⁸ Besides the exhibit and programming-oriented departments, the museum includes multiple theaters within the exhibits and an IMAX Theater outside of the exhibit area. There is also a museum store and a café along with rental facilities. The exhibit department is one of the largest at the museum.²⁹

The museum is primarily funded by earned income through admissions, museum store, the café, the IMAX and Texas Spirit Theaters, and facility rental.³⁰ In the last fiscal year, 81% of the total income—\$5,364,394—was earned income, while 11% was from contributions and grants, and the last 8% came from state appropriations.³¹ The state funds maintenance and facility operations for the building, while the rest of the operational expenses—totaling \$6,280,627—were funded by the other income sources. The museum cooperates with the Texas State History Museum Foundation to find contributions.³²

²⁷ Joan Marshall, *The Bob Bullock Texas State History Museum Strategic Plan 2011-2016* (Austin, TX: Bob Bullock Texas State History Museum, September 20, 2011): 4. This document was originally posted on the BBTSHM website, and has subsequently been removed from the museum’s website.

²⁸ David Denney, interviewed by author, Waco, TX, December 5, 2012.

²⁹ According to David Denney, Director of Special Projects. The author has not found an official table of organization for the museum.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ Joan Marshall, “The Bob Bullock Texas State History Museum Annual Report, Preliminary September 1, 2011—August 31, 2012,” Bob Bullock Texas State History Museum, http://thestoryoftexas.com/images/PDF_About/TSHM_AnnualReport_2012.pdf (accessed January 20, 2013): 6.

³² Joan Marshall, “Strategic Plan,” 3.

The Exhibits department is formed into two primary teams—the planning team and the production team.³³ Because the BBTSHM does not collection objects, the planning team is responsible for finding and arranging loans. The museum loans objects from a variety of museums, institutions, and private individuals. While the institutions include public agencies and libraries, the most notable loaned object is the shipwrecked remains of the *La Belle* and the artifacts found in the wreck, on loan from the French Republic.³⁴ The exhibits have not fundamentally changed since the museum opened in 2001, but the production team serves to update the exhibits and replace artifacts.³⁵ The museum is planning an update the exhibits in the near future, to accommodate touch pad technology and updated technological visitation programming. The proposed updates would allow visitors to choose paths through the museum based on the histories of different groups, in order to chart their importance and impact in Texas.

The museum, because of its age and size, is an imposing structure when viewed from the outside. It is a large building located in downtown Austin, near other equally imposing buildings. When viewed from the front, it is a stone structure with a gently curving façade and a central semicircular extending element that holds a rotunda on the inside. The outside has an arcade running along the length of the front façade, with high relief sculptures in the square metopes above each arch. There is a large metal star in front of the building. The front doors lead to the inside of the rotunda, with a terrazzo

³³ Denney.

³⁴ Allison Frank, “U.S., France join to bring historic ship to Austin,” *Austin American-Statesman*, April 1, 2003.

³⁵ Denney. Also, see Marshall, “Strategic Plan”, which hints at what Denney stated in the interview.

floor with a pattern of people sitting around a fire that is only apparent when viewed from the top floor of the museum. The entrances to the exhibits are set beyond the rotunda.

Texas Civil War Museum

The Texas Civil War Museum is a private institution located in White Settlement, a western suburb of Fort Worth. It began as the private Civil War collections of Ray and Judy Richey.³⁶ The Ray Richey collection started with Civil War artifacts that Ray Richey displayed in his oil company office. In 1993, the collection became a part of a 12,500 square foot Civil War museum located on 2.5 acres in Branson, Missouri, but it remained open for only a short time.³⁷ In 2003, Ray Richey began the \$2 million process of turning one of his properties in White Settlement into a museum to house the artifacts.³⁸ The museum was a partnership with the Texas Division of the United Daughters of the Confederacy, which had its Texas Confederate Museum in the Texas State Capitol building and the Old General Land Office Austin from 1903 to 1988. The TCM was closed due to renovations at the Old General Land Office,³⁹ and the TDUDC moved the collection to the Hill College library in 1994, where it was a part of the newly

³⁶ Cynthia Harriman, interviewed by the author, Waco, TC, December 12, 2012.

³⁷ “Man translates passion into Civil War Museum,” *Dallas Business Journal*, May 11, 2003. Too many “Yankee tourists,” apparently, so it was a \$1.4 million expenditure for nothing.

³⁸ Paul Bourgeois, “Civil War museum planned in White Settlement,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, May 10, 2003. This article cited \$1.5 million, while subsequent articles cited \$2 million.

³⁹ There are conflicting reasons why this happened. One source (the TDUDC website) claims the State asked them to leave, while another source (a text panel at the TCWM) claims the state tried to exert control over the exhibit and the TDUDC decided to leave on their own volition. See the Texas Confederate Museum section for a clarification.

designated Harold B. Simpson History Complex.⁴⁰ After the renovations to the new THM, it became a part of the “Texans in Blue and Gray” temporary exhibit.⁴¹ It left the THM in 2000,⁴² and was eventually loaned to the TCWM in 2002, while the museum was still in the planning phase. The TCWM was opened on January 25, 2006.⁴³

The TCWM, as a private and independent museum, does not answer to any organization besides itself. The museum has two co-presidents, Ray and Judy Richey, along with an executive director. The mission statement of the TCWM is as follows:

“The mission of the Texas Civil War Museum is to collect and preserve artifacts relating to the history of the American Civil War and the role Texas played in the conflict. The museum interprets the collection to the public through the use of exhibits, [sic] educational programs and publications.”⁴⁴

The museum does not have internal subdivisions.⁴⁵ There are a small number of staff members, paid and volunteer. The museum has the two President-Curators Ray and Judy Richey, an executive director, a museum store director, a historian, and other positions for programming and volunteers. The museum, due to the nature of its

⁴⁰ *Master Plan for Hill College History Complex, Hill Junior College, Hillsboro, Texas, 1994*, Mayborn Museum Complex Archives. Although unpaginated, the document includes both an explanation of the combined collections, as well as a copy of the loan contract between Hill College and the TDUDC.

⁴¹ Texas State Historical Association, “Southwestern Collection,” *The Southwestern Historical Quarterly* 104 (July 2000-April 2001), 98.

⁴² For unspecified reasons, but the library director at Hill College anecdotally claimed during a private conversation that the TDUDC was unreasonable about how to maintain and store the collection. Without confirmation from the people involved at the time, such claims would only be speculation, although the conditions of the loan contract between Hill College and the TDUDC could support such a claim.

⁴³ David Flick, “Striking a Historical Balance—FW’s Texas Civil War Museum blends collections,” *The Dallas Morning News*, February 9, 2006.

⁴⁴ Texas Civil War Museum, “About Us: Our Foundation,” Texas Civil War Museum, <http://www.texascivilwarnuseum.com/about-us/our-foundation/?view=mobile> (accessed August 30, 2012).

⁴⁵ Harriman. Organizational details were excluded from the museum’s website, due in part to its small staff size.

borrowed collection from the TDUDC, works with various re-enactors and living history volunteers to do special programming as a significant part of the educational programming at the museum. The museum store, the “Magnolia Mercantile,” is the only significant department within the museum.

Most of the museum’s income results from a combination of earned income at the museum store and from donations.⁴⁶ The president-curators, besides providing the land and the building, provide donations to the museum.⁴⁷ Other organizations and individuals provide various contributions. The museum funded various projects in the past through grants. The museum uses numerous volunteers for otherwise paid positions.⁴⁸ The museum charges admission, but charges according to a “value experience.”⁴⁹

The museum consists of four collections—two collections loaned from the two president-curators, the collection loaned from the TDUDC, and a small collection of artifacts donated to the TCWM from various donors outside of the president-curators.⁵⁰ The loaned collections from the president-curators will be deeded to the museum as a part of their estate. All exhibit design and maintenance is done by the two president-curators.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Texas Civil War Museum, “Donors,” Texas Civil War Museum, http://storage.cloversites.com/texascivilwarmuseum/documents/TCWM%20Donors%20page_3.pdf (accessed February 1, 2013). Although it does not specify how much was donated, the document lists various groups and individuals who provided funds and objects to the museum.

⁴⁸ Harriman. The president-curators are volunteers. An interesting relationship to the museum given that they own the more than half of the artifacts on display. Other positions at the museum used to be paid but are now volunteer only, due to budget issues. There are currently four paid staff members at the TCWM.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Ibid. All details on internal organization and future planning came from the interview.

The museum has changed slightly since it opened in 2006, but the president-curators are currently working on new exhibit additions, along with an expansion of the museum store. The museum does not have definite plans for updating the technology within the exhibit, due to the cost involved of adding technological features and kiosks.

The museum exterior provides a contrast to the other museums in this paper. While the other three fit the image of public buildings, the TCWM resembles a grey-bricked modern Georgian house, with just three window-door groupings on each floor and five gabled dormers on the roof. Centered in front of the building is a large sign that reads “Texas Civil War Museum” and “Judy Richey’s Victorian Dresses,” topped with a broken scroll and urn pediment. Next to the sign is a short walkway leading from the museum’s entrance, with a circular cement pad and a grey stone tablet set flat into the ground. In the center of the circle is a grey granite obelisk, topped with a star of similar material. The obelisk reads on one side “Our Heroes in Gray; They Did Their Duty.” The opposite side provides a quote about duty from General Robert E. Lee. The third side lists a group of UDC and Sons of Confederate Veterans camps, along with individuals, who contributed to the cooperation between the UDC and the TCWM.⁵¹ The sunken grey tablet lists significant leaders of the UDC and TDUDC. Two grey granite benches are positioned besides the obelisk.

Pearce Museum

The Pearce Museum is a public museum located on the campus of Navarro College in Corsicana. The museum began as a donation of Civil War manuscripts from

⁵¹ The author does not remember what is listed on the fourth side.

Charles and Peggy Pearce to the Navarro College library in 1996.⁵² The number of donated manuscripts expanded into the Pearce Collection, and by 1998, various groups began planning a museum for housing the collection. The museum, which was built into the existing Cook Center building, cost \$3.4 million to assemble, with the funding provided by the state legislature, various foundations, and a matching donation from the Pearce family.⁵³ The construction of the physical museum area began in 2002, and the museum opened on October 8, 2003.⁵⁴ The exhibits were designed and constructed by Museum Arts of Dallas over the course of nine months.⁵⁵

The museum is both a department of Navarro College and the Navarro College Foundation.⁵⁶ The collection belongs to the Navarro College Foundation, and the museum is responsible to both entities. The Cook Center, with its planetarium and rental facilities, is a part of the Navarro College Foundation. The executive director of the Navarro College Foundation is also the Vice President of Institutional Advancement as well as the overseer of the Cook Center. The board of the Navarro College Foundation serves as the board of the Pearce Museum. The museum has a director who answers to the college and the foundation. The museum's mission statement is as follows: "to

⁵² Robert Miller, "Civil War letters, diaries open a window on history Navarro College's Pearce Collection a true masterpiece," *The Dallas Morning News*, January 25, 1998.

⁵³ Robert Miller, "Civil War exhibit gets home," *The Dallas Morning News*, October 27, 2002.

⁵⁴ Art Chapman, "Object Lessons – Civil War artifacts bespeak a national tragedy," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, October 8, 2003.

⁵⁵ Ross Edwards, interviewed by author, Waco, TX, December 5, 2012. Although currently the owner of Creation Nest, Ross Edwards was a leading member of the design team at Museum Arts.

⁵⁶ Holly Beasley Wait and Jennifer Coleman, interviewed by author, Waco, TX, December 13, 2012. All details on the internal organization of the museum in relation to the college came from the director.

preserve, collect, and interpret the history of the American Civil War and the art of the American West.”⁵⁷

The museum has no departments or inner divisions.⁵⁸ The museum’s administration consists of three full time staff members, two part time staff members, and volunteers. This staff includes a director, an archivist, and an art curator. The museum itself is divided into a manuscript and artifact gallery and an art gallery. As a division of the Navarro College Foundation, it shares a building and an organizational structure with other entities within the NCF, while the staff members are all employees of Navarro College.

Navarro College provides funding for staff salaries, overhead costs, and maintenance.⁵⁹ The museum receives funds as well from fundraising, grants, and programs. The interest from the Pearce Endowment, although intended for purchasing items for the collection, is used for other necessary costs because the interest is insufficient for purchasing manuscripts and artwork. The museum does not have any other significant fund resources.

The museum began as a collection donated by the Pearce family. After it was built, the Pearce family continued to donate manuscripts and artwork to the museum.⁶⁰ The collection stopped expanding after 2008, when Charles Pearce died. At the present, the museum contains over 15,000 documents and 270 pieces of art, and the Pearce family

⁵⁷ The Pearce Museum, “What We’re About,” The Pearce Museum, <http://www.pearcecollection.us/page.php?cat=Home&id=15> (accessed August 30, 2012).

⁵⁸ Wait and Coleman.

⁵⁹ Ibid. Details about the museum, particularly details about the organization and funding, are unusually difficult to find outside of directly asking the staff.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

donated over 95% of those items. The museum does not have the funds necessary for purchasing new items for the collection, and a small number of items have been donated to the Pearce Museum by individuals other than the Pearce family. The museum has no plans for expanding the collection, but there are plans for redesigning the current Civil War exhibit to provide grouped themes, narratives and context to the displayed manuscripts.⁶¹

The Pearce Museum has an exterior appropriate for a history museum, but not a Civil War museum. The museum has a parking lot and a curved driveway that leads to the front door, with a brass dome rotunda. Near the entrance to the parking lot is an F-4 Phantom II airplane, angled as though it is taking off from a runway. Along the curved driveway, facing the front door is a grassy circle with a large metal statue of a Native American on horseback. Inside the front are a series of hallways and lobbies that eventually lead to the museum in the back of the Cook Center.

Texas Confederate Museum

The Texas Confederate Museum—the museum of the Texas Division of the United Daughters of the Confederacy—officially closed in 1989, and it no longer physically exists.⁶² However, its collection was loaned to various institutes, and directly affected three of the institutions in this paper. The museum began in 1903 as a small exhibit of personal collections in the Texas State Capitol Building.⁶³ The collections

⁶¹ Ibid. Although the director stated that there were errors in the introductory video, the director did not explicitly state any plans for replacing the video.

⁶² Texas Division, United Daughters of the Confederacy, “History of the Texas Confederate Museum,” Texas Division, United Daughters of the Confederacy, <http://www.txudc.org/museumhistory.html> (accessed September 5, 2012).

⁶³ Ibid.

expanded, and after the exhibit was transferred to the General Land Office Building in 1917, at which point it became the full Texas Confederate Museum. The institution existed in that building until the state began renovations in 1989.⁶⁴ The UDC collection was placed into storage for a short period of time with the Texas State Library and Archives Commission until it was relocated to the Helen Marie Taylor Museum in Waco in 1990. The TCM collection was exhibited for two years, and then the collection was placed in storage.

In 1994, the newly formed Harold B. Simpson History Complex at Hill College, as a part of a plan for a new museum, signed a loan contract with the UDC to display the TCM collection.⁶⁵ The contract included various stipulations regarding the levels of professional care for the objects, the amount of access UDC members had to the collection, the costs involved for maintaining the collection,⁶⁶ the number of UDC members who would become members of the History Complex's advisory board,⁶⁷ and the amount of office space dedicated to the UDC in the new museum building that was required by the contract.⁶⁸ Southwest Museum Solutions of Houston created a master plan for the new museum building based on recommendations and desires of the two

⁶⁴ Debbie Graves, "State asks 2 historical museums to move," *Austin American-Statesman*, September 27, 1989. UDC website claims it was 1988 instead of 1989, which does clash with the *Austin American-Statesman*. See also the staff article, "Confederate Museum to go to Waco," *Houston Chronicle*, April 11, 1990, and the article by the Associated Press, "Confederate Museum leaves Austin for Waco," *Austin American-Statesman*, July 9, 1990.

⁶⁵ *Master Plan for Hill College History Complex, Hill Junior College, Hillsboro, Texas, 1994*, Mayborn Museum Complex Archives. The full text of the loan contract is included in the document.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.* All being paid by Hill College, except when supplemented by voluntary UDC fundraising efforts.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.* Two, including the president of the Texas Division of the UDC.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.* "[A] minimum of 256 square feet," and failure to complete the new museum would be grounds for canceling the contract.

institutions as well as artistic license, to be theoretically named the “Confederate Research Center and Texas Confederate Museum.” To fulfill the contract, the History Complex used students from Hill College and Baylor University to catalogue the collection, which was in poor condition by 1994.⁶⁹ When the old Hill College library building was converted into the state-designated Texas Heritage Museum instead of the Texas Confederate Museum, the UDC moved the collection to storage and sought a different institution for housing and displaying the collection. Some objects remained at the Texas Heritage Museum on loan, while others were loaned at varying times to the Bob Bullock Texas State History Museum.⁷⁰

However, the Texas Civil War Museum has been impacted the most by the Texas Confederate Museum collection, as it currently is displaying the bulk of the collection in an exhibit titled the “Texas Confederate Museum Collection.”⁷¹ The collection is currently on a long-term loan, just as it was at the Texas Heritage Museum.⁷² Although the collection is still owned by the Texas Division of the United Daughters of the

⁶⁹ Ross B. Lyons, “Museum Studies Summer Internship Course Number MST-4V60-01 United Daughters of the Confederacy Collection at the Confederate Research Center, Hill College, Hillsboro, Texas, Summer 1996”, 1996, Mayborn Museum Complex Archives. It was in poor condition by both present and 1994 museum standards, both in terms of storage and the condition of the objects themselves. See also Gwen Sealey, “Record of Internship at the UDC/Texas Confederate Collection,” 1994, Mayborn Museum Complex Archives, and Karen Gerhardt, “Journal for Internship at the Harold B. Simpson Confederate Research Center, Hill College, Hillsboro, Texas,” 1995, Mayborn Museum Complex Archives.

⁷⁰ Both facts noticed through observation at the two museums, based upon text panels displayed next to the objects in question.

⁷¹ Harriman. Approximately “two-thirds” of the collection, according to the executive director.

⁷² However, the author does not have access to the Texas Civil War Museum loan agreement.

Confederacy, and the UDC has a committee dedicated to overseeing the collection,⁷³ its current status is tied directly to the Texas Civil War Museum.

⁷³ TDUDC, “The Texas Confederate Museum Collection Board of Trustees 2012-2014,” TDUDC, <http://www.txudc.org/boardoftrustees.html> (accessed February 9, 2013).

CHAPTER THREE

Texas Heritage Museum Case Study

The Texas Heritage Museum provides a useful starting point for an exploration of Texas interpretation of the Civil War, due to its preeminence as the oldest Civil War-related museum in Central Texas still operating under its original mission and control.¹ Although all of the exhibits focus on the Texans, and most relate to the Medal of Honor, one exhibit area has an interesting relation to both topics—“The Experiences of Texans in the War Between the States.”² The first exhibits at the old Gun Museum were simple display cases of firearms and equipment.³ Dating back to the first exhibits in the THM, the Civil War exhibit was constructed by staff, volunteers, a Baylor University intern,⁴ and an apprentice from Texas Parks and Wildlife using local supplies and donated Plexiglas.⁵ The THM modified the themes and contents of the gallery—rotating objects, and adjusting displays and entire cases to reflect different methods of supporting their message. The area for the Civil War exhibit, particularly the area dedicated to Reconstruction, was shortened when part of the area was partitioned for the Vietnam War

¹ Given that the Texas Confederate Museum officially closed in 1989 and the United Daughters of the Confederacy officially lacks operational control over the Texas Civil War Museum, the claim properly belongs to the Hill College institution that, despite its name changes, has continued its original mission.

² Unless otherwise noted, all information in this and the subsequent case study chapters result from direct and personal observations.

³ Versluis, interview.

⁴ Doug Stockton, “Baylor University, Internship Journal in Partial Fulfillment of Requirements for 5V60 Museum Internship, Summer – 1999, Museum Studies,” 1999, Mayborn Museum Complex Archives.

⁵ Versluis, interview.

exhibit. Although the overall layout of the exhibit remained the same—if slightly smaller—the removal of the Reconstruction area and adjustments to the remaining exhibit provided a subtle change in message.

The Civil War exhibit is located near the front entrance to the museum, and is readily apparent to a visitor. After entering the museum into the central lobby, the visitor is presented with a statue of a farmer’s family surrounded by foreign and American flags that used to fly over Texas. Although there are multiple doorways and entrances in the central lobby, the only entrance that stands out is a corridor with a handicap-accessible ramp, with a sign reading “Medal of Honor Recipients: Native-Born Texans.” The gallery map depicts the corridor as the beginning of the Civil War exhibit. Although technically true, the exhibit appears to begin at the end of the corridor with the free-standing cannon in front of a large blue sign reading “The Experiences of Texans in the War Between the States; Harold B. Simpson History Complex.”⁶ That sign, like the cannon, is not attached to an exterior wall or a load-bearing structure, and serves as a breakwater for those entering the exhibit area. The entire Civil War exhibit and the nearby Vietnam War and Texas Revolution exhibits are divided into different areas with short walls and thick exhibit cases that form little islands in the exhibit area. This third of the building is one large room with a ceiling of moderate height. Another third, hidden in the back, contains the Historic Research Center, the Hill College Press, and administrative and curatorial rooms. The rest of the building is dedicated to traveling

⁶ Or it could be gray, but the author is partially color blind and struggles to distinguish between light gray and light blue.

exhibits, the World War II exhibit, a theater,⁷ and a “Weapons Gallery.”⁸ Such a layout is obvious when a visitor enters from the central lobby.

However, a visitor can just as easily enter the exhibit from the World War II exhibit area. The contrast between the two is jarring—the World War II exhibit contains comparatively narrow, serpentine pathways with low ceilings⁹ that fork before the Pearl Harbor attack. Passing right at the fork leads to a curious hallway, with Audie Murphy artifacts and displays on one side and Civil War artwork on the other. This corridor leads past the glass walls of the Historical Research Center into the Civil War exhibit, but at a point approximately one-third of the way through a conventional visitor’s path. The gallery map provides a logical and chronological method of following the exhibit, but the logic is not apparent from that second exhibit entrance.¹⁰ The map’s logic only fits if one does not deviate from the path while in the room. Of the two areas of the room not on the path, one appears to be a non sequitur to the theme—the Civil War art hallway that is technically in the Civil War exhibit room—and the other area appears to support the exhibit by demonstrating race and international politics during the war.

The Civil War exhibit contains a variety of artifacts and materials, but at the same time, it relies on text panels to relay information. The exhibit is easily summarized as an exhibit of text panels with supporting artifacts and objects. Given the exhibit’s title wall,

⁷ Which has a strong connection to the Civil War and will be described below.

⁸ Which is either a callback to the original museum, or a method of displaying World War I firearms that do not fit in the other exhibits.

⁹ Perhaps they just appeared to be low. The exhibit felt like it started to shrink before exploding into wider paths and multiple directions at the fork.

¹⁰ Hence, the author passed through the exhibit multiple times, with the benefit of a map on the last walkthrough.

it is not surprising that all of the text panels reveal information either about Texans during the war or about events outside of Texas that are relevant to Texans. The text panels relay a chronological story for the exhibit, with only a few outliers. The first area that stands out is the entrance to the exhibit—after turning left at the cannon, a visitor will see a statue of Robert E. Lee. Perhaps a Civil War museum would not be complete without a statue or painting of Robert E. Lee. However, this particular statue was sculpted by Pompeo Coppini, a man who sculpted notable statues of Confederate leaders in Texas and was considered an “adopted Texan” according to the text panel in front of the statue. After passing this statue, the exhibit appears to start a chronological path.

Although not apparent from walking through the exhibit, the room appears to follow a path that is shaped like a four-leaf clover. The leaf on the left is a path that flows along a curved wall, containing the statue of Robert E. Lee, an antebellum display, and an area dedicated to secession in Texas. This path leads to the top leaf which rotates around an island display with text panels about the various nationalities and ethnicities that are considered Texans, and their reaction to the beginning of the war. On the other side of this island, a visitor would find panels and cases on the various regiments that were formed during the war. The leaf on the right side follows a course past a display on the Medal of Honor, and then to a second island display containing more regimental histories, exhibit cases on military life, cases on battles in Texas, and a private soldier’s tent in the twilight. The bottom leaf is fully formed if a visitor restarts the exhibit. The last leaf continues from that tent in the twilight past a display on emancipation and the end of the war and around a third island that contains information on post-war veteran organizations, with the entrance sign and cannon on the opposite side of the third wall.

Only one area of the exhibit remains outside of the imaginary clover. A wall case that appears to be a peninsula jutting from the main building's wall rests between the top and right leaves. On one side, visible from the logical path, a visitor would see information about battlefield casualties and prisoners of war. On the other side of this peninsula are three displays—an area about Mexico during the war, an area about African-Americans inside and outside of the war, and an area with a large cart that explores the cotton trade from Texas to Mexico during the war. All three topics are closely related in a triangular fashion. However, exploring this physical outlier would cause a visitor to break from the prepared cloverleaf pathway as well as requiring an awkward about-face when the visitor discovers that the outlier area abruptly ends instead of curving or banking along a smooth path. A visitor would likewise turn around and revisit areas in the exhibit by wandering off the path to see the corridor with the paintings—a corridor that is both a physical and chronological outlier in an otherwise chronological exhibit.

The artifacts and objects that follow the prepared cloverleaf path follow a chronological development. The two areas outside of the cloverleaf do not follow that chronology. The corridor with the paintings shows modern artistic renditions of Civil War topics, while the Mexico/African-American micro-gallery appears to be frozen in time instead of flowing to an obvious conclusion. Beyond those, the only chronological outlier within the cloverleaf path is the statue of Robert E. Lee with the flanking portrait frame holding two letters, one typed order and small portrait photograph.

The objects as a whole embody three distinct subgroups. The first subgroup is the objects with listed provenance ranging from simplest explanations to detailed

descriptions of prior ownership. These objects are outnumbered by those of the second subgroup—the objects without listed provenance. The objects of the second group represent “typical” items used by soldiers from Texas. The third group of artifacts—on par with the second group—consists of props and replicas. Most of the objects reflect the text on the wall. The walls discussing regiments, the war, and army and camp life contain cases with military and private equipment. The text panel discussing the Native Americans includes a supporting case of Native American reproduced artifacts. The antebellum and secession walls have cases with appropriate artifacts. While those wall cases contain a mixture of the first and second subgroups, the exhibit hall concentrates most of the third subgroup around six manikins.¹¹ Half of the manikins stood out in individual cases, wearing reproduction uniforms with weapons from the second subgroup. The other three were positioned to form various mockups: a sergeant reading a letter in his tent; a cotton trader guiding a cart to Mexico; a freedman looking over farmland. The exhibit included reconstructed houses, tents and equipment to support the three mockups.

Due to the chronological nature of the cloverleaf pathway, the exhibit includes artifacts of subgroup one that were created after the Civil War. The exhibit begins with one such object—the statue of Robert E. Lee. The exhibit also ends with the non-Civil War artifacts. The wall dedicated to the veteran associations includes various plates, ribbons and artifacts from veteran reunions. Except for those specifically mentioned as being reproductions, the rest of the objects between the beginning and the end of the exhibit date to the Civil War. The text panels for the post-war objects explained the

¹¹ Or is it seven? The author cannot remember if the tent in the twilight had any manikins.

pertinence of the specific objects for the exhibit, instead of providing generalities and statements of being “typical” for the period.

The low number of artifacts in the exhibit is deeply contrasted by the high number of text panels. The exhibit appears to presume that a visitor would bring a lack of knowledge of Texan involvement in the war, while bringing a strong knowledge of Civil War military history outside of Texas. The text panels maintain a comfortable high school reading level, using language which military history enthusiasts would recognize without difficulty. The vocabulary outside of military terminology seems to fit the expected audience—the students from the college, researchers visiting the Historic Research Center, and history enthusiasts in the area. Some of the language was simpler for non-historians, and while the text panels provided few definitions, the definitions could be found through context.

The text panels provide an interesting mixture of academic and vernacular expressions that would equally fit their expected audiences. Outside of quotes, the text panels did not use loaded terms such as “Yankee.” Instead, the panels used “Federal,” “the Union,” “Confederate,” and “Texas.” Geographical terms were used to describe geographical movements of bodies of soldiers, with the exception of the derivatives of “south,” which were used to provide contrast between Texas and the rest of the Confederacy. These academic terms clashed with the almost complete lack of reference to the “Civil War”; instead, the exhibit frequently refers to the “War Between the States” and “the War.” The only references to the “Civil War” occurred on the wall panels for the Freedmen, one of the last sections of the exhibit to be compiled. The Freedmen area also used derivatives of “slave,” while derivatives of “farmer” and “plantation” occurred

frequently throughout the rest of the exhibit. The cause of the war was ascribed to “state sovereignty” over the issue of slavery, and the room used “the Southern Cause” once. “African American” and “black” were nearly interchangeable in the exhibit. In reference to non-Anglos, the text panels used specific nationalities, as well as references to “Native Americans,” “Indians,” and “Kickapoo.” The room uses the terms “Hispanics” for Tejanos.¹²

The exhibit made use of two-dimensional items and motifs, but primarily through reproductions printed on text panel foam. There were multiple reprinted photographs, as well as letters, manuscripts, and military and battlefield illustrations. There are a few original and reproduction flags, along with one daguerreotype and one photograph of unspecified production. There is one large motif in the exhibit—a reproduced photograph of a group of five soldiers, accompanying a statement that the museum will add more material at that location. The walls are almost entirely of a single color, primarily white, with a few exceptions: the red secession wall; the yellow regimental walls; the red Douglas’ Texas Battery wall; the light gray veterans’ wall. The areas with mockups and dioramas use painted scenic backgrounds.

The exhibit relies almost entirely on visual senses for providing educational experiences. There are no tactile learning devices or interactive displays. The only source of sound outside of other visitors is the looped video in the Vietnam exhibit. There are no smells outside of other visitors, due to the objects being protected and encased. The lighting throughout the exhibit is track lighting along the ceiling. The lighting is located to illuminate the objects and cases on the walls. The lighting systems

¹² The room also uses “Mexican,” but that term was implied to refer only to citizens of Mexico and those that do not self-identify as a Texan of Hispanic origin.

inside of the cases are obscured by plastic grates. The lighting in the sergeant's tent is low to demonstrate nighttime. The lights around the private tent are covered with a blue film to reproduce twilight.

The twilight military tent represented a subtle aspect of the exhibit's theme and narrative. The narrative of the exhibit follows that of the museum—the stories of Texans at war. The exhibit, at its original design, followed the narrative literally.¹³ The exhibit began with secession, but near the secession wall is a free-standing case holding a Texan soldier with his personal shotgun, representing some of the first volunteers from the state. The exhibit path was meant to follow that soldier, a representative of any sort of Texan but quite possibly one from Hood's Texas Brigade. The exhibit continues to document why he fought, what sort of regiments he joined, what he did in battle and inside military camps and hospitals and prisons, and the exhibit ended with the tent in the twilight at the end of the war, across the aisle from the soldier returning to his farm, and ending with the veteran group wall. This original exhibit was intended to draw focus on two important elements of the war—cotton, and Hood's Brigade. The veteran group wall showed as much emphasis on the Sons of Confederate Veterans as it did the Hood's Texas Brigade Association. The exhibit was modified after the initial construction, and one of the changes replaced the soldier's homecoming with emancipation and the start of sharecropping in order to retain the information that was held in the area transformed into the Vietnam War exhibit. The change included replacing an Anglo soldier in a tattered

¹³ Versluis, interview.

uniform with an African American wearing what appeared to be the same tattered uniform.¹⁴

Despite the changes, the exhibit remained constant in its message. The most basic theme of the room can be broken down into the fact that Texans fought in the Civil War. That theme expands into the experiences of specified groups to varying degrees—the experiences of Anglos, Tejanos and Mexicans, Native Americans, and African Americans. However, the theme seems to focus on Anglos, and to focus primarily on pro-Confederate Anglos. Amongst the non-Anglos, the focus was divided almost equally between the pro-Confederates and the pro-Unionists. Attention to African Americans was minor, despite their important role in the cotton trade. The Native Americans were limited to half of a wall. Tejanos were mentioned in one regimental wall, while Mexicans were mentioned in the area dedicated to the Mexican cotton trade.

Outside of nationality divides, the attention of the exhibit was thoroughly towards the pro-Confederate factions in the state. The pro-Unionists were relegated to text panels about early-war massacres and a small section of a wall describing Unionist cavalry. The exhibit included African Americans as both slaves and freedmen soldiers, including a section highlighting the Medal of Honor recipient Milton Holland. However, the exhibit mentioned pro-Confederate labor pools filled with African Americans, and it hinted at slaves fighting on an individual basis in pro-Confederate forces. The exhibit appeared to relegate the people who were not pro-Confederate as outliers and statistical anomalies. The tone of the text easily lends such an interpretation. Hispanics were raiders, traders and occasionally pro-Confederate, while utterly rarely pro-Union. The German and

¹⁴ Versluis, interview. The change was noticed in one of the videos played in the museum theater, and confirmed by the director.

European immigrants were blended into the general pool of pro-Unionists, and were portrayed as people who fled to Mexico, blended into the surroundings, or fought in negligible numbers in pro-Union forces raised in Texas.¹⁵ The pro-Confederates mentioned were either volunteers or conscripts, although one wall takes time to mention anecdotes of faked illnesses and other excuses to avoid the war. The extent of Native Americans in the exhibit was a small area of a wall describing their raids during the war and the Anglo reaction to the raids.

Despite the text panels describing raids and other combat situations, the exhibit avoids the minutiae of combat, tactics and weapons. The text panels do not describe the manufacturing methods of military equipment, nor do they explain why or how tactics and equipment changed over the course of the war. There are perhaps two reasons for such a choice. The exhibit is text heavy—it is driven by the text panels and the various themes and narratives that visitors can read. By including more text panels explaining the details of technological advances and tactical evolutions, the visitors could be easily overwhelmed by the sheer number of text panels. The exhibit would become a three-dimensional book instead of a gallery.

The second reason for this lack of military minutiae is that such minutiae would clash against the apparent theme of the exhibit and the museum. Despite the themes and displayed artifacts, the THM is not a military history museum. It is a Texas history museum with a large number of military exhibits and artifacts. The driving force behind the Civil War exhibit and the other exhibits is the idea of presenting stories of Texans at war, while avoiding political biases, historical controversies, and unpopular and ugly

¹⁵ They were also portrayed as participants in “battles” such as the “Battle” of Nueces, and in one text panel, they were accused of being “purported traitors.”

aspects of war. The exhibit strikes an unusual balance between presenting narratives on an individual level and on a societal level—Milton Holland, General Hood, and the hordes of nameless people who represented various subgroups within Texas.

The videos in the theater likewise attempt to provide a balance of attention. The videos related to combat show different levels of human importance.¹⁶ The primary level focused on Texans at war throughout history, using pre-2005 exhibit cases and artifacts to supplement a chronological narrative. The next level focused on a specific unit—Hood’s Texas Brigade—that was both a collective of many nameless individuals and a significant individual in its own right. The third level displayed information about the Texans who were awarded the Medal of Honor throughout a similar chronology of the museum. The Audie Murphy video provided the ultimate level of attention, by dedicating 13 minutes to one individual.

That balance is repeated throughout the museum. The text panels and displayed artifacts try to blend Texans as individual people and Texans as assumed typical individual units within the various identities labeled as Texans. The World War II exhibit highlights that attempt for equilibrium. Although most of the text panels attempt to focus on Texas during the war and Texans during the war, many of the objects show the equipment of a “typical” Texan while a few focused on specific individuals. Perhaps due to the orderly quartermaster systems used by all combatants of the war, the objects instead showed the equipment of a “typical” American. However, the World War II and the Vietnam exhibits make juxtaposing claims about the combatants. In multiple cases and pathways, a visitor is faced with turning left to view the equipment of a “typical”

¹⁶ One of the videos was a recording of the Medal of Honor Memorial’s dedication.

Texan and turning right to view the equipment of a “typical” enemy as appropriate. Some of the comparisons are conventional—the American rifleman’s Springfield and the Japanese rifleman’s Arisaka contrast in an agreeable and simple fashion. Despite seeking to avoid controversy, the entrance to the World War II exhibit opens with a bold statement, contrasting the Boy Scouts with the Hitlerjugend. The most complex comparison revolves around a trio of display cases, holding the American, Japanese, and German equivalents of light machine guns, pistols, cigarettes, helmets, grenades, personal equipment, and photographs of loved ones back home. The Vietnam War exhibit likewise establishes a controlled contrast, comparing the gear and tactics of Americans with that of the various enemies of the war. The two rooms appear to use the similarity in equipment and appearances to show a commonality between the Americans and the enemies.¹⁷

The Civil War exhibit notably lacks a strong system of juxtaposition. This is due to the strong emphasis of the Anglos over other groups, as well as a different message the exhibit attempted to convey. The exhibit focused on the stories of Texans, but to do so would require defining a “Texan.” The exhibit did not openly provide such a definition, leaving a visitor to draw a conclusion based on one’s opinions. The focus on Anglos could easily cause a visitor to think that the Anglos were foremost Texans, and the groups with less focus were less likely to be Texans. Such an opinion is a mistake if a visitor asks the right questions.¹⁸ Given that the exhibit is the stories of Texans, all of the groups mentioned in the exhibit—when not openly contrasted as “the other”—were considered

¹⁷ Or the author is reading too much into simple display cases.

¹⁸ Versluis, interview. The museum’s definition of a Texan came from his explanations, rather than from observation.

Texans. The Native American tribes in the geographic area, relegated to half of a display wall, had an equal claim of being Texan, despite the lack of physical space dedicated to their stories. The emphasis on Anglos likewise confuses the issue of defining Texas, and its role in the Civil War. The text panels do not explicitly state such a theme, but the inclusion of pro-Confederate, pro-Union, and neutral individuals indicate that the museum does not define “Texas” and “Texan” along the lines of factionalism. Texans were people who lived in the state, or people who wanted to live in the state—the term was inclusive based on outside opinion and self-identity, and not on rare birth certificates and church records. This loose definition applies just to the Civil War exhibit, as the prominent Medal of Honor memorial in front of the museum and the collection of binders filled with names and stories of Medal of Honor recipients limits the rest of the museum to defining Texans purely by birthplace.

The importance of birthplace limits the THM in the other exhibits. Rather than showing the stories of a variety of people to indicate that they too are Texans, the World War II exhibit almost avoids categorizing people. The exhibit does mention Hispanics and women during the war, but in that exhibit, it is assumed that no definitions would be needed—the identity was already set by the homogenization of the states into smaller units of the nation and the reduced regional segregation of the armed forces. This notion, an undercurrent in the World War II exhibit, is a driving force in the Vietnam War exhibit, which openly states that the story of Americans in the war and the stories of Texans in the war were the same. The Civil War exhibit could not make the same claim, due to the nature of the armed forces as state militias as well as the plethora of groups

claiming to be Texans. However, that is a difficult claim to make, given that the subgroups had different visions of the “Texan” based on their factional interests.¹⁹

All of the exhibits ultimately return to the front lobby, which serves as a museum store. The objects in the museum store are approximately 50% knickknack and 50% educational, but the educational items stand out significantly, as they are primarily academic books. The books include children’s books, academic books from various publishers, and samples from the HCP. The museum store served as a way for visitors to continue learning about the stories presented in the museum along with stories left out due to a lack of space. One of the books established a high standard for future museum store perusal at the THM and other museums—without any attempts to hide or downplay such a book, the museum store included multiple copies of José Enrique de la Peña’s *With Santa Anna in Texas*.²⁰ The museum store demonstrated a desire to stimulate intellectual debate instead of simply affirming public expectations. Such a desire appeared to be an overall theme to the museum—to make visitors think about the importance of the past instead of limiting visitor experience to predetermined knowledge. In that regard, the museum follows its mission.

¹⁹ It is also quite possible that the subgroups, particularly the Native Americans, could just as easily reject the very notion of a “Texan.”

²⁰ A highly controversial book in regards to its Alamo content, but an interesting narrative nonetheless.

CHAPTER FOUR

Bob Bullock Texas State History Museum Case Study

The Bob Bullock Texas State History Museum, in its institutional history, represents multiple departures from the THM. Although both museums are public museums, the BBTSHM is a far more recent institution with a higher operational budget. The “Secession and the Civil War” room¹ began with the rest of the museum. The museum planners included it with the original design, and it was built at the same time as the rest of the museum in 2001.² The museum did not assign a specific budget for the room, and the cost was included with the rest of the roughly \$12 million contract, with each square foot priced at approximately \$325.³ Like the rest of the museum, the Civil War exhibit was designed by the PRD Group of Fairfax, Virginia. The PRD design team included historians as well as professional museum designers. This design, and nearly all of the features, remained the same since the original exhibit opened to the public. The original message remains the same, although due to the non-collecting nature of the museum, the objects rotate as loan agreements expire and other institutions offer new objects for the BBTSHM to borrow.

¹ As it is addressed on a visitor map. The most prominent text panel in the exhibit’s entrance reads “Our Destiny is with the South 1861-1865,” although it is easily addressed as the Civil War Room. It does not appear to have an official name, and is just a room that addresses one particular subject matter – the Secession and the Civil War – out of many rooms that address different topics over the course of the history of Texas.

² Denney, interview. Newspapers and journals neglected to describe the individual details of the construction of each exhibit area, while David Denney was a key person on the museum’s staff in 2001.

³ Ibid. The detailed descriptions of the exhibit area as they appeared in October of 2012 resulted from the author’s observations.

With this inherent stability, a visitor to the exhibit can expect the room to be the same no matter when that visitor enters the museum. The layout of the exhibit remains the same—a roughly rectangular room with slightly curved walls and a niche formed from wide exhibit cases. The exhibit begins with a large mockup of a cotton trade riverboat forming an elaborate doorway. The doorway is more or less a ruse—the pre-war area and the Civil War area are one large room, with the riverboat standing in as a pseudo-wall. The floor consists of an imitation of a dock and boat decking, with the cotton bales and superstructure reinforcing the previous exhibit area about the history of the cotton trade in Texas. On the other side of the pseudo-wall, the cotton trade riverboat becomes of cotton-clad gunboat, and a visitor is immediately forced into the war. On the right along a curving wall are a few introductory panels and wall casings that lead to a wall-length timeline providing national history above state-level history. On the left, a visitor views the bow of the gunboat, with cannons prominently aimed at a reproduced drawing of a naval battle in Galveston. The right wall turns into a long display case filled with artifacts. The display case and the timeline end close to a table-height stand in the back of the room. On the back wall is another wall-length display case. The two display cases form a niche with benches and a moderately-sized video screen. The entrance to the next exhibit room interrupts the wall with the timeline, and a few text panels and wall cases occupy the short space on the opposite side of the doorway explaining the end of the war and the outcome.

This simplistic layout at first appears to be an anomaly compared both to the rest of the museum and to the THM. In the preceding sections of the museum, the visitor is presented with multiple doorways and sidings, as well as turns, corners, and open floors.

The Civil War exhibit, on the other hand, follows one path. It has two doors, one plainly labeled as an entrance and another—unadorned—doorway understood to be the exit. Unlike the THM exhibit on the Civil War, there is no free flow to the room, no options to choose one path over another. At the same time, the BBTSHM Civil War exhibit represents the museum's actual themes and narratives, and the alternative pathways represent outliers in a museum that acts as a wide and flat Trajan's Column instead of a free-wheeling academy.

The non-collecting nature of the museum throws an unusual stick into the spokes of the theme. Although the message essentially remains the same, the objects change too frequently to make a claim of stability. The exhibit was ultimately designed to create a narrative, supported with objects to be found at a later date. The constant message reconciles the inherent adjustments of a borrowing institution. While the objects in the display cases are of historic and cultural interest to the understanding of Texas history, they merely support the message and the text panels on the wall.

All of the objects on display are originals. There are no reproductions or objects that lack relevant provenance in the cases. The objects are primarily weapons and military equipment, while the remaining objects encompass a variety of purposes ranging from non-martial items carried by soldiers to purely civilian items embodying relevant themes presented by the text panels. The military gear represents the sorts expected in a Civil War exhibit—firearms, bladed weapons, cannonballs, canteens, and regimental flags.⁴ The civilian and non-military items included a soldier's pocket watch, some

⁴ Given the nature of the exhibit, the items on display in the fall of 2012 might not be on display in the spring of 2013. Mentioning specific items would create disappointment for those seeking to find the carbine manufactured by E.P. Bond of London, the short rifle manufactured by the Tyler Texas Armory,

cotton, and a section of a display case filled with construction materials found in the wreckage of a blockade runner. The mockup of the gunboat, including its cannons and cotton cladding, represented the only reproductions in the exhibit as well as the only permanent items in the exhibit.

The variety of objects formed two coherent display cases—“Fearless and Faithful” and “Texas Cotton: Life Line of the Confederacy.” The “Fearless and Faithful” case, the one opposite of the long timeline, represented combat and combatants during the war. The objects belonged to named soldiers or civilians affected directly or indirectly by combat, either through their use in military life or in supporting industries in Texas. The case itself represented the involvement of Texans and the impact of the war outside of combat on Texas, as shown by the materials related to the manufacture of firearms in Texas. The second case, “Texas Cotton: Life Line of the Confederacy,” represented both the importance of cotton and the direct impact of combat on Texas. Part of that case focused on actual battles in the state and out of state battlefields close to the border, while including the importance of the reciprocating trade of cotton and war materials between Texas and England. This case contained more non-military items than the first case. However, each object in the room falls within one of three categories: objects used by Texans; objects used in Texas; or objects made in Texas. These categories overlap for a few objects.

Along with three dimensional objects, the exhibit showed many two dimensional objects, illustrations and motifs. However, the vast majority of the two dimensional elements consisted of reproduced photographs and drawings. The timeline wall consisted

Samuel P. McDowell’s personal Colt Navy revolver, or any other specific object on display if the objects changed since the writing of this paper.

entirely of photographs and illustrations to reinforce the listing of events, with a panoramic illustration rendered in subdued colors. The gunboat faces a similar subdued panoramic illustration. The text panels included similar reproductions related to the presented themes and objects. The video in the corner niche was flanked by reproductions of portraits. The only original two dimensional items in the exhibit consisted of a flag, two manuscripts and a diary. The room includes a reproduced flag and a reproduced painting.

The driving force of the exhibit area is the two dimensional panel. Each object is supported by multiple text panels, and each case is introduced with large panels in bold text. The panels vary in length from partial captions for objects to a maximum of three complete paragraphs for introductory text panels. Like the THM, the exhibit partially resembled a textbook replete with black and white illustrations, while the objects served as full-color plates. The actual text fits closely to a high school reading level, and the exhibit avoids defining military-related vocabulary. The language is both jargon-heavy and academic, referring to the Civil War as the “Civil War” and slavery as “slavery” throughout the text panels. Likewise, the exhibit addresses the “Tejanos,” as well as derivatives of “Union” and “Federal” elements. Given the text-heavy nature of the exhibit, it appears to be designed for an already educated audience by supplementing existing knowledge with useful examples rather than introductory knowledge. The cases follow this intent closely. The timeline fits more closely with the intent to introduce the Civil War to the audience. The only other element that served such an introductory and novitiate approach was the table in the center of the room, which provided a map and some sociological impacts of the war on Texans.

The one element of technological education in the exhibit resides in the niche next to that table. The niche contained a video that looped every five minutes with quotes from various Texans—two pro-Confederate Anglos, one girl, one woman, one pro-Confederate Tejano and two slaves—relating their wartime experiences and opinions. The 32 portrait photographs on the wall in the niche include the quoted individuals. This video provides the only source of sound in the exhibit area. The video also provides the only source of emotional appeal in the room—ranging from somber⁵ to humorous,⁶ the quotes contrast greatly with the formal and placid elements beyond the niche. The levels of light provided by the overhead track lighting and in-case lights, while dim and restrained, do not create an emotional display. While the subject matter can create emotional responses, it is provided in a rational manner that does not intentionally appeal to senses beyond vision, with the sole exception of loaded case and section titles that appeared intermittently in the exhibit.⁷

The overall narrative of the room is the same narrative of the rest of the museum: the developing identity of Texas and Texans through providing the stories of Texans.⁸ The exhibit allows for different interpretations of the Texan identity. It enables visitors to develop their own understanding of the Texan identity. The exhibit presents the argument that the Civil War affected how Texans identified themselves both through

⁵ Individuals afraid of the death and devastation of war.

⁶ A child angry with the Confederate soldiers who ate her pet turkey, while wishing failure and death upon them.

⁷ To be fair about the loaded titles, they appear to merely repeat quotes and mottos used during the war. One of those panels, titled “Love of Country Leads Us,” reproduces the motto of Terry’s Texas Rangers in bold letters above two paragraphs and two images describing the unit during the war.

⁸ Although evident by walking through the exhibit, this theme was confirmed during the interview with David Denney.

their actions during the war and through a never-ceasing process that began long before the war. A visitor could easily leave the room with the understanding that although the war never settled the issue of Texas identity, the Texans involved in the war acquitted themselves through their behavior in battle and back home.

A visitor could just as easily leave with the feeling that the exhibit had a certain pro-Confederate bias. The small size of the room both prevents the development of bias and ensures it in a contradictory reality. The room is too small to develop a completely independent narrative—it can only reinforce the narratives provided in previous and subsequent rooms. At the same time, the room is too small to provide a balanced accounting of every narrative. One text panel pointed out the statistical reality of the war: “[a]t least 60,000...fought for the Confederacy. Approximately 4,000-5,000 Texans fought for the Union.”⁹ Due to such levels of support during the war, the museum would be remiss to fail to provide information about the pro-Confederate faction within Texas. However, the museum does not fully expound upon the internal conflict that led to a moderate number of pro-Union soldiers from Texas. The exhibit hints at the divide by mentioning the opposition to secession, but covers it up through revealing the change in heart of all but one of the opposition politicians. Pro-Unionists were mentioned in the timeline, but they were relegated to being “Union sympathizers” who were “accused of treason against the Confederacy.” The only other elements of the pro-Union faction to be mentioned in the exhibit were the African-American freedmen, who were briefly described in photograph captions in the section dedicated to the cotton trade during the war.

⁹ Quote reproduced thanks to the author failing to see the “no photography” warnings in the museum and later on the visitor map.

The freedmen highlight a second potential vector for imbalance accusations. The overwhelming emphasis of the exhibit is on Anglos, particularly the pro-Confederate Anglos. The previous exhibit made clear in no uncertain terms that the cotton trade and slavery were important in Texas. The introductory panel to the Civil War exhibit leads a reader to believe that secession occurred because Texas desired to maintain their economic reliance on slavery. However, the cases and the timelines focused on the Anglos involved in the war. Slaves were identified as such in photograph captions, and the two text panels at the exhibit's exit focus on emancipation as the outcome of the war. Tejanos and Native Americans were mentioned in the timeline. The non-Anglos appeared to be nothing more than brief asides to remind the visitors that there were non-Anglos in Texas during the war. This is most likely due to the brevity of the exhibit as a whole.

The exhibit's brevity appears to be the main culprit due to the otherwise inclusive coverage of non-Anglos in the rest of the museum. The exhibits increasingly dwell upon diversity as one travels along the chronological path of the entire museum. Thematically, the Civil War exhibit does not completely fit that development. While it provides evidence of the existence of other groups within Texas during the Civil War, it does not fully expand upon their involvement. This is most likely due to the size of the room and the utilization of the limited space. The timeline, while useful for the information it provides, occupies a large portion of the small exhibit area. Exhibits use less than a third of the wall space, and while there are few empty expanses of wall, there are many areas without artifacts. This is expected for a non-collecting museum that planned its exhibits around narratives instead of objects, but it leaves the exhibit with an empty appearance.

This empty appearance, while reinforced by the neighboring exhibits, contrasts greatly with the geographic and architectural mockups in the other sections of the museum, along with the overall frenetic atmosphere of the exhibit layouts on the third floor and first floor. The Civil War exhibit is orderly, without any twists or turns or obvious juxtaposition. It does not replicate dwellings or places of occupation, nor does it give the impression that a visitor is physically entering the time period.¹⁰ The Civil War exhibit fits within the chronological flow of the museum, and physically serves as a small niche on the second floor, but in terms of appearances, the room stands out.

The room also stands out thematically. The purpose of the museum is to aid visitors in defining the Texas identity. Throughout the exhibits, the definition is inclusive, demonstrating the actions of various peoples and how their actions could be interpreted as a part of the Texas experience. The exhibits focus on the people to be considered Texans without creating an obvious “other” as a foil to the Texans. Overall, the museum is fairly nationalistic and patriotic¹¹ without drawing common enemies—a display of the achievements of Texans to create a source of pride for future generations.

The Civil War exhibit stands out from that goal. Instead of providing an exclusive vision of Texans, it divides the people to be considered Texans. The language used hints at pro-Union people to be something other than true Texans—the terms “sympathizers” and “treason” do not engender positive thought and emotions.¹² The other exhibits that highlight the interaction between different political, social, or ethnic

¹⁰ Even the next room over, the small Reconstruction room, hints at a time displacement with Victorian wallpaper and interior details that hint at post-Civil War furniture.

¹¹ At least at the state level. And note that these are just the best terms to use, as outside of the Civil War exhibit the museum overall avoids any racial overtones of difference.

¹² Although that was not the museum’s intention.

groups appear to demonstrate the equal claims to the “Texan” label that both groups share. Perhaps due to the size of the room, the exhibit could not fully present an argument that pro-Union factions could be Texans too. The same statement can be made about non-Anglos during the Civil War—despite extensive attention throughout the museum, this particular exhibit minimizes the participation and impact of African Americans, Native Americans and Tejanos, as well as non-Anglo Europeans. The museum was designed to let visitors decide on a definition of “Texan,” but the exhibit does not provide enough material for including groups outside of the mainstream pro-Confederate faction.

Contrasting to the museum’s constructivist educational style for “Texan,” the museum provides a strongly didactic experience for visitors seeking to understand “Texas.” The exhibits show a variety of landscapes and localities, and in clear tones proclaim all of those areas to be Texas. A visitor is not allowed to determine whether or not an area is Texas. In part, this is due to Texas being defined inside and outside of the museum as a geographic and political entity. Although the museum tries to create a dialogue between the visitors regarding a definition of a Texan identity through intellectually and emotionally stimulating experiences, the museum’s strong focus on their preconceived definition of Texas that all instances of the museum mentioning non-Texas geographic and political areas becomes jarring. The Civil War room does that quite well, with the geographically separated timeline and the fine distinction between Texans leaving the state to fight and Texans remaining in the state.

The Civil War exhibit, like the third floor area dedicated to post-Depression history, creates a strong sense of foreignness to the war.¹³ The Civil War is presented as a ruckus for everybody else that Texas had to join. The preceding and following rooms demonstrate a context for the Civil War, and the exhibit itself maintains elements of that context, but only to maintain consistency. Unlike the wars mentioned in preceding exhibit areas, the Civil War was treated as a fight that began in foreign territory—politically and emotionally—that only reached Texas at the end of the war. The first panels in the exhibit emphasized how the precursor events happened outside of Texas and involved non-Texans. The state seceded because outside issues influenced Texas to secede. Even the Texas Revolution exhibits lacked this strong “us versus them” portrayal—the Mexicans attacking the Alamo were treated with the same considerations and respect as the defenders. With this strong “otherness” of the Civil War and the outside activities, it would not be unexpected for a visitor to develop the impression that pro-Unionists were not really Texans. However, the apparent reluctance of the Texans to participate cemented the exhibit to the rest of the museum—the Texans were strong, rugged individuals and collectives who did what they had to do. While this was the particular focus in the other areas of the museum that focus on economical issues,¹⁴ it carried over into the Civil War exhibit through showing the war as another problem for the Texans to overcome.

¹³ World War II is given a similar treatment as the Civil War exhibit, only with a greater emphasis on the home-front industries and activities. That war is treated as something going on elsewhere that forced Texans to participate.

¹⁴Texans apparently pulled themselves up by their bootstraps to find oil, minerals, decent farmland and pastures, and technology-based industries. At least that is the impression the museum tries to leave with the visitors, and is only reinforced by the “Spirit of Texas” movie.

These themes appeared to disappear once a visitor enters the museum store. Most of the gifts centered on patriotic knickknacks and clothing, along with toys for children. The walls were lined with book shelves, but the books consisted of a blend of academic history, public history, and coffee table materials. Davy Crockett's famous quote, "You may all go to hell, and I will go to Texas," adorns a large number of items, ranging from mouse pads and apparel to hip flasks. The museum store items, while all related to Texas, appear to be less of an additional resource for continuing the educational experience beyond the physical confines of the BBTSHM, and more of a method of using the emotional reactions from exhibits to generate income. Given that 95% of the museum's annual funding comes from earned income—admission tickets to the museum and the two theaters, museum store sales, the café,¹⁵ and space rental—such an assumption about the museum store might not be incorrect.¹⁶

During the visit, the museum overall fit within the expectations created by the pre-visit knowledge. Given how the museum relies heavily on earned income, it was not surprising to see a large museum store and a large café area. The wide open lobby area, with the long counter and crowd-control ropes and stanchions, gave the impression more of a movie theater or bank lobby than a museum lobby. Despite seeing the educational qualities of the museum, that feeling could cause a visitor to forget the museum's mission of working together to understand Texan history.

¹⁵ While an interesting and controversial part of the museum based on the original inclusion of beans in their chili, the café was not a part of the observation efforts in part because the author was not hungry and the prices seemed a bit high.

¹⁶ Marshall, "Annual Report," 6.

CHAPTER FIVE

Texas Civil War Museum Case Study

The Texas Civil War Museum appears to be the polar opposite of the BBTSHM in terms of exhibit philosophy.¹ Of the three major Texas-oriented museums in Central Texas, the TCWM is the newest. Due to the focus of the museum on Civil War history, the entire museum will be considered an exhibit, with the exception of the Victorian Dress room. The exhibits in question have not changed greatly since the museum was opened in 2006, very little beyond the rotation of light-sensitive objects—particularly the 26 flags—on display. The building and the initial exhibits were designed by President-Curator Ray Richey, and the cases were built by Displays Unlimited from Arlington, Texas.² The museum, including the exhibits, cost \$2 million to construct.³ Ray Richey was responsible for subsequent changes and modifications to the exhibits.

Because the entire museum was built at the same time and planned by one person, it has a remarkable uniformity in terms of exhibit design and message.⁴ The museum's entrances lead to a central lobby that doubles as a museum store. From there a visitor can

¹ But not in terms of acquisition policies. The majority of the items within the TCWM are on loan from the President-Curator Ray Richey, with more objects on loan from President-Curator Judy Richey, more on loan from the Texas Division of the United Daughters of the Confederacy, and the few remaining objects are actually possessed by the TCWM.

² Harriman. Outside of the cost, all details about the museum's construction and ongoing maintenance came from the interview. Ray Richey is responsible for planning and executing the ongoing expansion plans, and the museum may very well be completely different in the summer of 2013.

³ Matt Curry, "Civil War Treasures – Museum born of fascination – Oilman needed place to house his massive collection," *Houston Chronicle*, January 29, 2006.

⁴ As compared to the THM, a museum which was constructed one exhibit at a time, by multiple designers, and is an ongoing project. The BBTSHM, although designed by one company with a centralized message, had multiple aesthetic visions and executions.

either enter one door into the theater or enter another door to the exhibits. A third door serves as an exit from the exhibit. Excluding the theater, the entire museum forms an inverted “U,” with straight lines and a singular path with the exception of a small partitioned area in one room. The left side of the “U” consists of the TCWM collection and the Ray Richey collection interspersed within the cases. The right side of the “U” consists of the Texas Division of the United Daughters of the Confederacy’s collection and the Judy Richey collection.

The four independent collections are divided into three major areas, and the entire museum can be divided into eight rooms.⁵ Unlike the THM and the BBTSHM, the TCWM follows a path of categorization instead of chronology. The first room a visitor enters is the infantry room, based upon the content of the room. The room did not have a sign indicating a room name—a theme throughout the TCWM-Richey Civil War area. This room is a wide hallway with display cases running nearly the entire length of the long walls and partially on the short walls. The wide hallway is partitioned by five display cases formed in two lines parallel to each other and to the walls. The next room is the flag room, based upon the majority contents of the room. The flag room is approximately square in shape, and as its title indicates, it contains five flags in flat display frames, a flagpole in a flat display frame, and a sword in a free-standing case. The next room, still along the long arm of the inverted “U,” is the cavalry room. It is modeled after the infantry room, without long cases in the middle. The cavalry room does contain four freestanding cases close to the walls, but the middle of the room is open, along with a corner dedicated to a video and benches. Although the video provides

⁵ Physically, the exhibits are divided into six rooms, but to simplify the understanding of the layout the continuous room that spans between the TCWM and the UDC exhibit areas will be separated.

information about infantry, the rest of the cavalry room contains artifacts related to cavalry. The room beyond this is the artillery room, with wall cases along the long walls filled with artillery-themed objects, but the middle of the room is occupied by a cannon and a Coehorn mortar. The artillery room opens to the last room of the TCWM-Richey Civil War area, a room serving as the short arm of the inverted “U.” This room, the medical-navy room, contains wall cases and freestanding cases with objects related to medicine, field surgery and the two navies involved in the war.

The short arm of the “U” is not actually divided into two rooms, but the room completely transforms close to the end of the short arm, with the only warning coming from a banner hanging from the ceiling. This banner announces the Texas Confederate Museum Collection, which spans more than half the length of the right side of the inverted “U.” The TCMC is formed into one continuous room, although a large battlefield diorama gives the impression that this room contains a second room. The main TCMC room consists of a wall case following the outside walls and the end of the room, along with freestanding cases. All cases contain items from the defunct Texas Confederate Museum.⁶ The second pseudo-room contains more flags, all from various Texas units from the Civil War. The TCMC area has a blend of chronological and thematic order, with the themes along the main path of cases generally reaching the end of the war by the end of the path, with post-war items at the beginning and post-war items at the end of the room, which will be explained below.

The last room is of deceptive prominence. This paper is concerned with the interpretation of Texas and the Civil War, and the last room is the Victorian Dress room.

⁶ A museum of a museum and a museum inside a museum, as the objects range from military to civilian to post-war memorialization.

This exhibit area contains items from the Judy Richey collection, and focuses entirely on civilian female fashion from the mid 1860's to the 1890's. The room is essentially one of three separate museums within the TCWM museum complex.⁷ Outside of the chronological order of the room and the long cases perpendicular to the wall, it follows similar exhibit methods to the Ray Richey collection.

The artifacts and the display methods in the Civil War area demonstrate the disparate exhibit philosophies of the TCWM and the THM. Whereas the THM presents a narrative and displays objects that support the narrative, the TCWM provides wall after wall filled with similar artifacts that tell their own stories. Besides six ship models and the carriage of the cannon,⁸ all of the three-dimensional objects are original to the Civil War. Besides the occasional personal object such as a pocket watch, all items in this part of the museum are military equipment. The objects are organized based upon the general themes of infantry, cavalry, artillery, the various medical corps and the two navies. The objects are further organized based upon the types of objects—infantry rifles grouped with infantry rifles, cavalry uniforms grouped with cavalry uniforms, artillery fuses grouped with artillery fuses, and so forth. The first four rooms—the infantry, flag, cavalry, and artillery rooms—all use one other method of grouping: the left side of the room contains Union-related artifacts, while the right side contains Confederate-related

⁷ This labeling of the TCWM is purely the author's choice, as the TCWM does not refer to itself at any point as a complex of multiple museums, but rather one museum that contains four separate collections, with two of those collections mixed together.

⁸ And possibly the Coehorn, but either it did not specify as such or the author did not notice anything stating that the carriage was not original.

artifacts.⁹ Most of the objects were possessed by non-notable soldiers, junior officers, and field-grade officers¹⁰ during the war, while a few objects were used by more notable officers and general. That can be further divided into three subgroups: regular objects possessed by notable people, such as General Benjamin Butler's bicorne hat; extraordinary objects possessed by notable people, such as General Ulysses Grant's gem-encrusted Kentucky sword; objects that border on relics, such as a lock of General J.E.B. Stuart's hair and Captain Charles Gould's blood-stained hospital sheet.

While the TCMC area contains items of equally varying importance and rarity, it lacks the object-oriented exhibit philosophy. Given that the area was a memorial to a defunct museum, the exhibit follows a method of a chronological and thematic distribution, instead of purely displaying similar objects. The first objects to be seen in the TCMC area rate similarly to the TCWM-Richey relic objects—the ultra-rare items that were possessed by the most preeminent politicians and generals of the Confederacy and the state of Texas, replete with locks of hair, a tea set, furniture, and other special items. Only after turning the corner to enter the right side of the inverted “U” will a visitor find the chronological and thematic exhibit cases. These themes range from military and civilian activities in and out of Texas to post-war veteran activities of the United Confederate Veterans and the Sons of Confederate Veterans. These cases contain objects that support the themes. The only reproduction in this section of the museum is a large battlefield diorama, complete with a narrator describing the events of the Battle of

⁹ It is unknown if it was intentional that the left side of the building faced northwards, due to the west-east orientation of the museum building that resided next to a north-south section of an interstate highway.

¹⁰ Note that junior officers are just that, while field grade officers were regimental officers below the rank of general.

Palmito Ranch. The exhibit ends with a case describing the flight of veterans and civilians after the war to Texas, with a prominent sign reading “Gone to Texas” above the case filled with civilian homemade and consumer goods.

The vast majority of the text panels in both sides of the museum are simply captions for the artifacts. The first room of the exhibit provides a few text panels stating that the war happened and when it began and ended, but beyond that, the text panels only provide provenance and limited context to the objects. The panels are more oriented towards explaining how objects were made or used. A series of text panels provided total production numbers of various pieces of equipment during the war, with the left half tallying Northern production and the right half tallying Southern production. Each text panel group was titled “Was the South Ready for War?” On the TCWM-Richey side of the building, the museum apparently expected their intended audience to know the basic information about the war. The caption panels frequently provided the names of battlefields and high-ranking officers without explaining why or how the opposing armies fought at those times, and what role the person who originally possessed the object would have played in the battle. Although the exhibit had two videos to explain some details of military life, and the museum had an introductory movie in the theater, most of the exhibit presumed previous knowledge of military terminology and Civil War knowledge and trivia.

The TCMC provided far more context in the text panels. Although the TCMC and the TCWM-Richey areas were designed and built by the same President-Curator, the two exhibits appeared to be from completely different museums. The text panels of the

TCMC presumed knowledge of the greater war experience and basic Texas knowledge,¹¹ but the exhibit overall seemed to be oriented towards providing a introduction to the involvement of Texas in the Civil War and the impact that the Civil War had on Texas and Texans.¹² The exhibit also included two text panels explaining the history of the Texas Division of the United Daughters of the Confederacy and the Texas Confederate Collection. The text panels also included maps explaining the locations of the battles and other significant places. Unlike the TCWM-Richey area,¹³ most of the caption panels included information on who donated the items to the UDC, and the flags included placards listing the groups that sponsor all ongoing conservation of the flags.

The text panels are not the only two-dimensional objects in the exhibits. The museum contains 26 flags being exhibited at a time, concentrated primarily in the TCMC area. The left half of the museum contains a modern painting and a print of a modern painting, while the right half of the museum contains an older painting of Jefferson Davis's daughter. Many of the text panels in the TCWM-Richey area contain reprinted photographs of the people who possessed the objects during the war. The cases in the TCMC area contain reprinted photographs and artwork. It also contains multiple all-photograph displays on the walls and within the cases, which consisted of a mixture of

¹¹ As embodied in one text panel relating a topic to the "Twin Sisters" from the Battle of San Jacinto; while Civil War minutiae includes plenty of anecdotes about brothers, twins, and people with other varying familial relations, a visitor from out of state would be perplexed about women at an unknown battle.

¹² In this regard, the exhibit appeared to be a more object-oriented THM.

¹³ With only a few noticeable instances, the TCWM-Richey museum object captions do not state that an object was donated or on loan from another person, because the vast majority of the objects in that part of the museum were purchased by Ray Richey.

prominent Texans and less-prominent soldiers. This was a feature found in the non-Civil War section of the THM, interestingly enough.

The TCWM makes a sharp departure from the THM and the BBTSHM in the near-sensory overload a visitor experiences. The exhibits play to visual senses with the walls of guns and uniforms against a white background. Although the exhibits are not driven by text panels, the high number of artifacts requires a large number of panels providing the history of the objects. In a similar manner, the exhibits contain a reasonable variety of technological and interactive elements despite the museum's desire to keep the museum object-oriented. The museum contains two videos within the exhibit areas—a 23 minute video explaining the sociology of the average infantrymen fighting for the Union and the Confederacy, and a five minute video explaining how to load and fire muzzle-loading cannon. The infantry room includes buttons a visitor can press to hear short recordings of various bugle and drum calls that were played through an overhead cone speaker to restrict the sound. Overhead speakers throughout both Civil War exhibit areas play martial songs such as *Dixie*, *The Star-Spangled Banner*, *The Battle Cry of Freedom*, and *La Marseillaise*.¹⁴ The TCMC exhibit furthered the auditory enhancements with a diorama of the Battle of Palmito Ranch, combined with a recorded description of the battle and various bulbs that light up to guide a visitor to various areas of the diorama.

¹⁴ Which, according to one re-enactor from the 8th Georgia Regiment Band that the author met on various occasions in the past, was a popular song in the Confederacy for its message of freedom as well as aesthetic reasons. It is not known if the bands of the period were aware of the irony stemming from that song dedicated to democratically-inclined peasants shedding the shackles of aristocracy, given that the war was fought to prevent democracy from banning slavery (as the introductory text panels claimed).

Despite the musical ambiance and the two looped videos played at a reasonable volume¹⁵, the museum was overwhelmingly visual. The lighting was low throughout the exhibits, primarily overhead track lighting that focused on specific cases and panels, and smaller lights within the wall cases. The walls inside and outside the display cases were painted a flat white, and the text panels were white and off-white.¹⁶ The exhibits included heavy shadows due to the low levels of lighting. The actual levels of lighting contrasts greatly with the museum's appearance on its website and in travel brochures, perhaps due to a heavy flash being used to take the publicity photographs. The Victorian Dress room appeared to be the darkest room in the museum, followed closely by the infantry room. The low levels of lighting in the first and last rooms of the exhibits provide an unusual transition between exhibit area and the museum store that contains floor to ceiling doors and windows to the outside world, along with strong lighting overhead to highlight the products for sale.

Despite the heavy shadows in the exhibit areas, the objects had strong lighting. This gave an interesting multi-room message that crossed over between the museum store and the exhibits—the exhibits almost appeared to be an extension of a museum store with purchased items still on display. There was no intentional narrative in the three exhibit areas and the museum store. There were themes based upon object categorization, much as the museum store was sorted based upon product type. The museum appeared to have

¹⁵ The artillery video could only be heard in the artillery room, and most of the infantry video was audible only in the corner of cavalry room that housed the video and the benches, but the ending credits included music that was slightly louder than the rest of the video and definitely audible in the surrounding rooms, so visitors who were unaware of the video's presence would be perplexed by a seemingly random overlap between ambient music in the first exhibit room.

¹⁶ At least they appeared to be off-white or yellowed in color. This could be due to the shadows, or yellowing of the text panels, or any other visual trick if they were all originally white.

a two-fold goal: to display the objects in order to let the objects provide their own stories; and to display the objects for the sake of displaying them. While the infantry, cavalry, artillery, medical, and naval areas had a thematic organization based upon branches within the military, the flag room in the TCWM-Richey area broke this branch-based organization. That room also contained a completely unrelated and overly exuberant object in middle of the room—the Kentucky sword. The sword had no apparent connection to the flags in the room, and given its provenance of being a gift from wealthy Unionist Kentuckians to the general, it does not appear to belong anywhere in the museum. The rest of the objects on display are military issue or civilian personal items that are grouped according to the primary branch of the original owner. General Grant began his military service in the infantry, but the provenance of the sword—a gift in 1864, the year General Grant transcended all branches to become the supreme commander of the army—prevents its placement anywhere in the museum.¹⁷ Its composition and its high profile cause it to stand out as well, as it is utterly unsuitable for war unlike the various practical combat and ceremonial swords on display elsewhere. The glistening, gem-encrusted silver and gold sword is nothing more than a display of wealth and prestige, to show an extreme example of what is possessed within the Ray Richey collection.¹⁸

¹⁷ Heritage Auctions, “General Ulysses S. Grant’s Civil War Presentation Sword,” Heritage Auctions, <http://historical.ha.com/c/item.zx?saleNo=663&lotIdNo=1009> (accessed November 11, 2012). Unless the sword was mass-produced, this is presumably the Kentucky sword on exhibit.

¹⁸ Antiques and the Arts Online, “Ulysses S. Grant Presentation Sword Leads At Auction,” Antiques and the Arts Online, http://antiquesandthearts.com/Antiques/AuctionWatch/2007-08-14__10-44-36.html (accessed November 11, 2012). The sword sold for \$1,673,000 at the auction, nearly the entire construction cost of the museum and more than the cost of the Branson, Missouri museum.

The sword epitomizes the entire spirit of the museum. Whereas the THM and the BBTSHM have an educational narrative of the history of Texas and the Civil War, the TCWM-Richey area is nothing more than a catalog of military items and a display of President-Curator Ray Richey's conspicuous consumption. It is a museum, in a historical sense, as it mirrors the old style of museums that lacked narrative and merely displayed the best and unusual from a collection. The attempts at an absolutely neutral balance only further that impression, as the museum appears to counterbalance everything from the Union with items from the Confederacy throughout the entire TCWM-Richey exhibit.¹⁹ The Kentucky sword stands out because its counterbalance—the General J.E.B. Stuart reliquary²⁰—is located in the next room and not on the opposite side of the same room. The presence of such rare and expensive items outside of major metropolitan or university museums can easily lead to the impression that the museum is simply showing off the wealth of the donors or the museum itself.²¹

The TCMC and the Victorian Dress areas of the museum, on the other hand, actually possess narratives beyond the display of objects. The TCMC exhibit, as a museum within a museum, explores the involvement of Texas and Texans in the war while presenting the history of the Confederate veteran organizations, the immediate post-war history of Texas, and the old Texas Confederate Museum. The Victorian Dress

¹⁹ The cannon in the artillery room was a Noble Brothers piece from Rome, Georgia, and if the author remembers correctly the Coehorn was from a forge in the North.

²⁰ It is nothing less than that, as it mirrors a religious shrine with relics from a saint – in this instance, the shrine contains spurs, the box Stuart used to store the spurs, his compass, his pocket watch, and a lock of his hair cut from his head while he was on his death bed. A cynical visitor might wonder if the lock of hair suffers from the same phenomenon that other saintly relics experience – the overrepresentation of artifacts that lead to saints with too many limbs or a dozen True Crosses.

²¹ Which is not entirely true in terms of the TCWM organization. As described earlier, the museum itself is private, but it does not have a large operating budget, nor does it own these rare and expensive objects.

room is a simple chronological examination of the evolution of upper-class female fashion in the United States. The TCMC exhibit is not a display of wealth and influence, as most of the text panels list who donated the artifacts to the old TCM. The flags, although typically to be rare and expensive, include lists of groups—almost entirely private except for a grant from the Texas Historical Foundation—that cooperate to fund the conservation of the individual flags. The Victorian dresses on display, despite being examples of historical wealth, provide a narrative instead of serving as items in a three-dimensional catalog. In terms of balance, the two exhibits on the right side of the museum provide equilibrium—the purely Texan and Confederate TCMC area against the post-war Northern upper-class Victorian Dress area.

Despite the attempts at physical and factional balance within the museum, there are perceptible biases. The museum is definitely inclined towards the Confederacy. The approximately 30 minute introductory video in the theater does not allow for non-Confederate Texans. It gave an inclusive narrative about Anglos and non-Anglos—particularly the Tejanos and the Germans—uniting in a struggle of bravery and sacrifice. The pro-Unionists were belittled as being “Jayhawkers” and “bandits,” incredibly loaded terms that imply that pro-Unionist feelings were foreign concepts. The violence against the pro-Unionists was reduced to local feuds and ethnic troubles that scarcely required mentioning. The video combined academic and public vocabulary, and freely used both “the Federals” and “the Yankees” outside of quotes. The video was somewhat nationalistic and emotional, and ended with phrases such as “Texas did its share in the Civil War,” with “honor intact,” and the events of the war “set the stage for the Texas we

love today.” The video also prominently mentioned the Confederate veteran societies at the end of the video.

The objects in the TCWM-Richey area did not show a bias, because all of the Union artifacts were counterbalanced with Confederate artifacts. The caption for the individual objects likewise fairly and equally provided nothing more than simple histories of the objects. The General J.E.B. Stuart shrine, unlike its Kentucky sword counterbalance, evokes a somber impression of pride and disappointment over his death. The adjacent painting of Stuart posed on horseback in front of a faded Confederate battle-flag and a Georgian mansion only reinforces the emotional evocation of the shrine. The Kentucky sword, on the other hand, would not provide such an emotional response. If anything, the sword demonstrates a material disparity in wealth between the Union and the Confederacy, which is a common theme amongst the wall text panels. The series of “Was the South Ready For War” panels provide evidence for an apparent attempt at creating a material wealth disparity argument that is not supported by the object captions. The text panels on the walls seem to generate sympathy for the Confederacy as an underdog—particularly the panel explaining the causes of the war in part being due to a Southern fear of being “governed by the majority.” The Confederate states also feared that “the Federal government could simply legislate its will upon the Southern states” because the “South had effectively lost its ability to block legislation that was detrimental to its interests” after the passing of various restrictions on the expansion of new slave states. The text panels claimed that it was antagonism towards the Southern states, particularly that from the election of Abraham Lincoln, that caused the Civil War, and not the issue of slavery itself. The text panels for the original copies of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*,

exhibited at the front of the infantry room, stated that the book outraged Southerners because of “negative stereotyping.” Because of the militarily-inclined nature of the TCWM-Richey area, that is the only text panel that mentions the often ruthless conditions of chattel slavery in the South.

The TCMC area naturally is inclined towards interpreting the Confederate aspect of the Civil War, because it is an exhibit of objects from the old Texas Confederate Museum, founded by the Texas Division of the United Daughters of the Confederacy. The Union aspect of the war consisted of outsiders who invaded Texas, along with Texans who left Texas to fight with outsiders against other outsiders. The “Gone to Texas” exhibit case shows some reconciliation between all three groups by demonstrating that Northerners and Southerners equally wanted to become Texans after the war.

Overall, the museum provides an almost bipolar attempt at providing a narrative of the Civil War. Visitors witness academic attempts at understanding the war through the material culture and sociology²² of the war. Except for the introductory video and the first text panels in the infantry room, the TCWM-Richey area does not try to exclaim specific causes or reasons for the war or the justness of the war. The TCWM shares this commonality with the THM—for this part of the museum, the war was just a war, and it happened. The display cases did not try to provide a definition of the “Civil War,” outside of it being a war between two factions with different industrial capabilities and different colored uniforms. The TCMC area does not provide too much information on why the war happened, and instead focused on the actions of the state of Texas once the

²² This is especially true in the infantry video, which explores the reasons why individual soldiers fought, including conscription.

vote for secession passed. The “Civil War” was a fight of Texas—and the Confederacy—versus the Northern outsiders.

The exhibits likewise do not try to define a “Texan” in great detail. Unless an object was specifically possessed by a Texan during the war, the TCWM-Richey area ignores Texas. The video and the TCMC area strip the history of nuance and simply summarize Texas to be a Confederate and Southern state. The video stated that “Texans” included non-Anglos, and the definition of the term revolved around a person’s participation and feelings for the Confederacy. The TCMC area lacks an argument regarding non-Anglos, and seems to be an argument by absence that that non-Anglos and non-Confederates were not Texans. Germans and “Mexicans” were mentioned in passing in the TCMC area, but they were neither Unionists nor explicitly Texans. The “Gone to Texas” case does allow for the idea that non-Texans could become Texans through self-identity, but the operating term of defining a Texan during the war rested on “Confederate.”²³

Despite the attempts at providing some academic methods of interpreting the war, the museum relies almost entirely on non-academic methods, to the point of falling victim to pseudo-history. It is not readily apparent in the exhibits, but the museum carries a driving theme of patriotism.²⁴ This could explain why the exhibits do not openly state why individuals and factions fought in the war and which sides they fought for outside of the majority. The video makes the claim that Texans fought to protect their

²³ However, one could argue that because this exhibit is the old UDC museum, it would have no interest in focusing on non-Confederate Texans. Hence, pro-Unionists could be Texans as well, but the exhibit would have no need to remind visitors of that as it would not be essential to the narrative of pro-Confederate Texans. That does assume that visitors would be aware of pro-Unionist Texans before they visited the museum, which is not necessarily a safe assumption.

²⁴ Harriman, and only revealed in the interview. The author did not find it during the visit.

homes and their rights, as shown through the quotes employed in the video as well as the exhibit materials shown in the video. The video's title, "Our Homes, Our Rights," is a motto on a flag within the collection.²⁵ The opening text panels to the TCWM-Richey area provide the museum's interpretation of the cause of the war, while the infantry video provides reasons for why soldiers fought.²⁶ Some of the text panels in the TCMC area provide explanations for why Texas fought in the war,²⁷ but not why Texans fought beyond the presence of Northern invaders. The museum makes the assumption that visitors would already be patriotic, thus, the exhibits would not have to remind the visitors that people from the past were also patriotic.

The museum store—the "Magnolia Mercantile" according to the large sign on the wall—plays upon the assumed patriotism of the visitors. It is a combination of educational toys, battlefield museum store styles of knickknacks,²⁸ public and academic history books, and various books and products related to the Victorian Dress exhibit room. There is also some overlap between the BBTSHM and the TCWM in terms of non-Civil War related patriotic Texan knickknacks and books. Outside of the products oriented towards the Victorian Dress exhibit, most of the products are for men and

²⁵ Which draws an interesting parallel to the BBTSHM, which also uses loaded phrases drawn from mottoes and flags.

²⁶ Northern soldiers primarily fought due to conscription, pro-Union sentiments, and abolitionist sentiments; Southern soldiers primarily fought due to conscription, a fear of industrialized Northern economic power, and a fear of Union threats of invasion and actual invasions of Southern territories. The video seemed to emphasize conscription more than political viewpoints. The infantry video dates to 1987, and was produced by American Historical Productions, Inc. They are apparently from the North.

²⁷ State level peer pressure, apparently. The panel in question stated "Once secession from the Union of Southern States began, Texas was to be included." A visitor from overseas might be inclined to believe that there was a "Union of Southern States," and Texas wanted to leave that organization.

²⁸ Toy guns, cheap plastic hats, shirts, and so forth.

children.²⁹ The museum store products seem to mirror all of the issues within the museum, particularly the lack of narrative and the questionable themes and interpretation. The shelves seem to carry an incredibly diverse collection of products, ranging from toys and educational products to purely consumable goods such as food and greeting cards. While such items can be expected, the museum store does provide unexpected products. The large number of prominently placed Confederate battle-flags on many of the items in a balanced museum could be a surprise. The presence of books dedicated to historic revisionism such as the Kennedy Brothers' *The South Was Right!* can be shocking. The placement of a book titled *Black Confederates* next to Thomas Wentworth Higginson's noted *Army Life in a Black Regiment* is easily a source of confusion. Moreover, the paucity of products related to African Americans in the war can be confusion as well, given the extensive participation of freedmen for the Union.³⁰ If the museum store is to be an extension of the exhibits, it makes an unfortunate statement about the exhibits that they could contain pseudo-history and gross inaccuracies.³¹

The museum seems to emulate the mission statement quite thoroughly, as it appears to simply present objects it acquires, instead of providing an interpretive message to the visitor or engaging the visitor into learning about the war. The educational programming could be useful for actually engaging visitors, but the exhibits themselves

²⁹ Ibid. A problem noted by both the author and the Executive Director.

³⁰ The scarcity of African Americans overall within the museum is also unusual.

³¹ Which, as the controversy over the Battle of Palmito Ranch diorama shows, it may very well have inaccuracies. The diorama is a recreation of an earlier diorama donated to the Texas Military Forces Museum (Texas Army National Guard museum in Austin), which the museum dismantled because it allegedly contained inaccuracies. See the article by Mike Lee, "Fort Worth museum paying to repair diorama," Fort Worth Star-Telegram, January 29, 2009, as well as the article by Isadora Vail, "Civil War battle lives again with rebuilt diorama," Austin American-Statesman, November 16, 2009.

are simply visual presentations for visitors to look at. Perhaps there is an unstated expectation that visitors should create their own narratives from the exhibits as at the THM, but the museum does not convey that notion.

CHAPTER SIX

Pearce Museum Case Study

Despite the fact that the Pearce Civil War and Western Art Museum lacks a singular focus on Texas, it is a useful institution for understanding how Texans interpret the war overall while providing a non-Texan view of the war.¹ Of the two primary galleries at the Pearce Museum, the relevant exhibit is the Civil War gallery. The Western art gallery, while of artistic and academic interest, is not directly relevant to the Civil War. The two galleries share a theme of sorts, showing the outcome of the Civil War as the opening of the West. The galleries also share a lack of significant modification. The museum rotates the items on display at varying times, and some sections of the Civil War gallery are temporary.² However, the exhibit itself has not changed its shape, theme or objective since the museum was built.

The two galleries were designed and constructed by contract through Museum Arts.³ A small group of designers led by Ross Edwards planned and built the Civil War gallery over the course of nine months in 2001.⁴ The major components, particularly the large display berms and dividers in the middle of the exhibit areas, were constructed in the shop at Dallas, and were shipped down to Corsicana for installation. Other parts were built on site. The design revolved around using the extensive collection of manuscripts

¹ Wait and Coleman. This theme was also explained by the docent at the museum.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid. The museum itself was built in previous years by architects not associated with Museum Arts.

⁴ Edwards.

and pieces of art to present a narrative about the Civil War, while allowing for continued expansion of the collection. At the time of the exhibit construction, the manuscript collection contained around 6000 documents.⁵ At present, the collection contains around 15000 documents.⁶

The museum itself is unconventional when compared to the other three. The institution is housed within the Cook Education Center, and shares the building with a planetarium, events hall and an omnibus museum store. On the outside of the building is a perplexing F-4 Phantom II airplane. Although the exterior fits the expectations for a museum, and the statue of a Native American announces the nature of the Pearce Museum, the airplane confounds understanding.⁷ The interior of the building is also confounding if visitors do not realize the building serves multiple institutions. The signs and people in the front lobby easily let visitors know which direction to follow—a path that goes past a large events hall to a set of stained glass windows flanking a door. The windows, like the statue out front, reinforce the museum’s nature due to their images of a man in a blue uniform and a man in a gray uniform. The door leads to a second lobby with pamphlets, donor information, and a desk for a docent. On the other side of the lobby is a third doorway and lobby, forming a rotunda with the staff offices and three doors leading to the galleries. The rotunda is well-lit and contains a display case with manuscripts and a video to introduce the galleries. A large statue of a Confederate soldier resting on battlefield damage occupies the center of the rotunda. The statue is

⁵ Wait and Coleman.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid. It turns out the airplane was related to Forrest Green, who served on the Navarro College Foundation.

supposed to represent an introductory reconciliation of an initial thought that visitors bring to the museum—the statue combines the ideas of Western art and Civil War history to help visitors understand the place.⁸

The actual Civil War gallery represents a rough looped shape⁹ that begins in the rotunda. The door on the left is the approved entrance to the exhibit, as noted by the sign that reads “Civil War Gallery.” The door on the right is the exit. The entrance leads to a small introductory room with a painting of General Sheridan next to donor plaques. The small room leads to a second room containing a diorama with two manikins wearing uniforms and apparently locked in a melee. The manikin representing the Union soldier is dressed with uniform and equipment that appear to be of recent manufacture. The manikin representing the Confederate soldier is dressed in a ragged uniform. The manikins hold two different types of weapons—the Unionist is holding a repeating rifle, while the Confederate is holding an older rifled musket. The second room is just slightly larger than the first, and a door leads to a third room and the first significant departure from the other Civil War-related museums in the area.

Unlike the other major museums covered in this paper, the Pearce Museum has a theater with a video in middle of the exhibit. The THM’s theater is located beyond the Vietnam War exhibit; the BBTSHM’s theaters are located on the outskirts of the building, one being within the exhibit areas but on an outside wall; the TCWM’s theater is located next to the museum store and admissions desk, outside of the exhibit areas. The significance of this difference could be the result of the content being played in the

⁸ Ibid., although also explained by the docent and somewhat obvious after walking through both galleries.

⁹ Or perhaps a Formula 1 street circuit.

theaters. The THM and the TCWM theaters play videos that introduce and supplement the information in the exhibits—a visitor could pass through the museums without seeing them and still receive an educational experience. The Spirit of Texas Theater plays a video that provides an educational¹⁰ introduction to the concept of Texas, and a visitor again would not be lost in the museum if the video were the last part of the museum visited. The Pearce Museum's video, unlike the others, is important for certain visitors because of the content displayed in the Civil War exhibit. Because of the themes, content and layout of the exhibit area, visitors who lack a strong knowledge of the Civil War would need to watch the movie, as the Pearce Museum's movie is primarily an overview of the war.

A door in the theater leads to the fourth room of the exhibit—the main room of the Civil War Gallery. The main exhibit area is formed of a series of display cases lining the walls and pseudo-walls breaking up the room into small areas. The pseudo-walls are formed to resemble mockups of battlefield terrain, and contain display cases and reproduced two-dimensional items for visitors to see at eye level. The walls and pseudo-walls form a chronological path through the exhibit room. The chronology is broken up by two temporary exhibit areas, free-standing object exhibit cases and a mockup of a medical tent and battlefield surgery. The flow of the room assumes a visitor would view the left walls before viewing the right walls, which would otherwise leave a person confused by the appearance of a pre-war case after 1861, and 1865 occurring before 1864. The main room also contains a smaller room in the back that has doors on two ends and large projector screens on the walls without doors. This area is meant to

¹⁰ And perhaps strongly emotional, particularly for those who have never seen *The Star of Destiny* before.

provide a visitor with an experience of a battlefield by playing videos of re-enactors on each screen. After passing through the chronological area, a visitor would pass another temporary exhibit area, and then run a gauntlet of exhibit cases.

The entirety of the gallery provides a microcosm of the conflict within the museum. The exterior of the building has an artistic statue and a retired military aircraft. Half of the building is a museum, and the other half is used by other unrelated institutions. Half of the physical museum is a history museum focusing on the Civil War, and the other half is a Western Art gallery. Finally, half of the Civil War Gallery contains manuscripts, and the other half contains artifacts. The signs in the museum do not explain this apparent fractal setup, although docents at the Pearce Museum willingly provide explanations.

The duality of the Civil War exhibit, in reality, is an optical illusion. More than half of the exhibit area contains two-dimensional items. Most of the items are manuscripts reproduced on paper or foam board. The manuscript display cases alternate object and manuscript, but the objects in those cases were small items such as buckles, buttons, hat flashings, pins, Minié balls, and pencils. The pseudo-walls displayed manuscript and photograph reproductions at eye level. The pseudo-wall and wall display cases within the chronological path contained just manuscript reproductions and small objects. The chronological path contained two temporary display areas: one on the side of the area formed of multiple small cases containing original manuscripts pertaining to a short timeline;¹¹ the other in the middle of the room, formed of larger cases that contained

¹¹ These cases are changed every two weeks, and pertain to letters and events occurring 150 years ago to the date, according to the docent.

small objects and reproduced manuscripts related to specific battles.¹² A display case containing additional original manuscripts rested at the end of the chronological path, marking the end of the manuscript area of the exhibit.¹³ However, the manuscript area did contain a display case of firearms and a display area in one corner for Texas-related artifacts and manuscripts.

The object section of the exhibit is much smaller in appearance, and contains a few staggered cases of objects related to specific concepts: Union cavalry; officers; battlefield drummers; Confederate forces. This area is functionally a hallway between the main exhibit area and the rotunda. A high-profile drummer boy's uniform creates an area of focus in the corridor, as visitors otherwise would face the open arch of the Civil War Gallery's exit door.

The gallery focuses almost entirely on visual senses. The vast majority of the items in the gallery fall within categories of two-dimension or three-dimensional objects, and the text panels provided transcripts of the manuscripts as well as historical information for the chronological timeline. There were no tactile or interactive items available within the gallery,¹⁴ and the exhibit appealed to only one other sense, that of hearing. The gallery contained a video next to the medical tent, and the back room battlefield experience video provided five minutes of re-enactors and discussions of battlefield conditions and combat. The introductory video at the start of the Civil War

¹² These cases are changed every six months, according to the docent and confirmed in the interview with the director.

¹³ The contents of this case are rotated every two months, according to the docent and confirmed in the interview with the director.

¹⁴ According to the director, there are such things available, just not at the author's visit. The author was not able to visit the museum with a school group, and was not available to experience hands-on learning.

Gallery played for 17 minutes, and displayed multiple screens to show maps, flags, and portrait photographs underneath the main video screen. All three videos used reenactors, and the introductory video used information from the manuscripts in the collection to aid the introduction to the war. Music played in overhead speakers in the exhibit, although there were no visible signs providing a track listing. The martial music, the purple-red walls,¹⁵ and the dim track lights that focused on object cases provided a somber atmosphere in the exhibit. The only other light sources in the exhibit were the small LED lights inside of the display cases.

Unlike the other three museums, the Pearce Museum does not have a strongly apparent narrative or theme. The driving force of the exhibit is the timeline. The timeline is formed by manuscripts and reinforced by information taken from manuscripts.¹⁶ There are different messages to be taken from the information and the choices made for manuscripts and objects, but the manuscripts and objects merely support the timeline. One such message is the nature of the war as a brutal fight between infantry from two sides that were not particularly different. A visitor could also draw the conclusion that one event led to another—the pre-war slavery led to the war, that one battle caused another to occur, that the war ended with Union victory for a variety of reasons. Regardless of the visitor's conclusion, the exhibit focuses on the experience of war as it affected the common soldier. Established with the opening diorama of the

¹⁵ Again, the reader must forgive the author for color-blindness issues. The walls may very well be blue.

¹⁶ As well as a strong intervention from a docent. For some of the cases, the connections between the manuscripts might otherwise be difficult to understand, even though it is just a simple chronology of events based upon when the manuscript, letters, and paperwork were completed.

dueling soldiers, that narrative was reinforced with the manuscripts that focused on individual experiences and greater battlefield stories.

The manuscripts, created by literate soldiers and military bureaucrats, spanned a wide range of legibility and levels of intellect and literacy. The manuscripts ranged from official documents and forms to private letters to and from home. The text panels provided some means for understanding the manuscripts, as well as identifying the subjects of the large photographs on the pseudo-walls. The museum employed academic language and terminology within the exhibit and the videos. The most notable example was the singular use of the “Civil War” throughout the museum. Likewise, the introductory video stated clearly that African Americans did not fight for the Confederacy, and despite claims of what it described as being questionable research, “it never happened.”

Although authoritative regarding certain topics, the museum avoids establishing a clear division between different factions and different groups. The tone of the exhibit was somber, and the exhibit does not create a definitive difference between the actions and emotions experienced by the soldiers in the different factions. The display cases of manuscripts did not separate the factions—instead the Union and the Confederacy were randomly represented throughout the manuscripts. The only exception for this was the section dedicated to Texas—however, that section stood out against the timeline theme. The exhibit did not call attention to any potential juxtaposition, and the only obvious contrasting areas were the dueling diorama at the beginning of the exhibit and the battlefield experience projectors. The exhibit blurred the line between the soldiers fighting for the Union and the Confederacy.

Given this pervasive blurring, it is difficult to determine if the museum possessed any factional bias. There is no easy method to determine if the museum provided uneven representation unless a visitor tallied the total number of manuscripts based upon the origin of the authors or the bureaucrats. The object and manuscript captions likewise did not provide any obvious bias. The videos, object selections and text panels indicate an academic approach to the exhibit design, one based upon the input of historians. The exhibit does not glorify any faction or any individual, despite the museum's origins in an interest in an individual.¹⁷ Although the museum is not necessarily pro-Union, it is definitely not pro-Confederate. The exhibit lacks controversial and pseudo-historical claims about the Southern states. The museum does not glorify war either. The Union and Confederate soldiers are portrayed as equal participants, perhaps to the point of being equal victims.

As equal participants and perhaps equal victims, the exhibit makes little effort to subdivide the factions. When a state is mentioned, it is usually with the understanding that the people from that state supported one faction over another. Hence, Texas was just another Confederate state, when it was mentioned at all. The area dedicated to Texas does not impress upon the visitor that Texas was particularly divided over the war.¹⁸ The exhibit likewise does not provide any real sign of division within ethnic groups and religious groups in the United States of America at the time. The war, as portrayed by the exhibit, was purely regional in its division. With few exceptions, the manuscripts

¹⁷ As the rotunda video explains, the entire museum began due to an interest in Colonel Joseph Chamberlain.

¹⁸ According to the director, that section was added to remind visitors that Texas had an impact in the war as an active participant.

were generated by Anglo-Saxon and other Western European peoples. The exhibit overall attempted to avoid providing nuances, or any exceptions that prove the rules.

The contrast between this section of the museum and the rest of the museum becomes visibly apparent immediately after leaving the Civil War Gallery. The most obvious difference is the lighting. The rotunda and the Western Art Gallery are both well lit, and the walls in the two areas share a similar shade of reflective white. Although the Western Art Gallery employs lights that are dimmer and more selective than that of the rotunda, the light levels are still at a much greater level than that in the Civil War Gallery. The two galleries also conflict over exhibited objects and collections. The Civil War Gallery naturally displays items related to the Civil War, primarily manuscripts. The exhibit began as a way to display the manuscripts—objects were an afterthought. The Western Art Gallery likewise started as a means of displaying the artwork in the Pearce Collection. The similar purposes collapse when a visitor enters the art section.

The art section possesses a far more uplifting atmosphere. This shift in mood is amplified by the similar features shared by the two galleries. Both rooms have dividers, but the art gallery uses moveable walls decorated with Southwest motifs, while the Civil War exhibit uses heavy berms decorated with the detritus of war. The galleries both use music; however, the art gallery music is enthusiastic Western-styled music heavily contrasted to the martial music of the Civil War Gallery. Both galleries give the impression of rambling pathways without straight lines or singular paths, although the art gallery has no chronology. The art gallery does not appear to have any sort of rational plan, as the subject matters in the different areas do not form any apparent plan.¹⁹

¹⁹ Naturally, there might be a plan that the author does not realize.

The museum as a whole does have a plan, and the apparent contrast is easily removed. The last pseudo-wall in the Civil War Gallery is a ravaged house representing 1865. When a visitor leaves that exhibit and enters the Western Art Gallery, the visitor is faced with wide-spread ranches and farms, nomadic life, and the post-Frontier Thesis artistic interpretations of the West. The purpose of the contrast is to demonstrate—through artistic means—one of the results of the Civil War. The Westward expansion occurred in part because of the devastation of the war, and the search for new homes or new economic opportunities caused Easterners to migrate westwards. The natural flow from war to the West can be discovered by an astute visitor. However, the rest of the visitors rely on a docent to explain the post-war history of the West and the connection between the two galleries.

The Pearce Museum shares this theme very closely with the TCWM, and yet the Pearce Museum nearly avoids mentioning Texas. Texas is mentioned in the Civil War Gallery in a handful of manuscripts, along with the area in a corner with the Texas-related manuscripts and objects. However, Texas is not treated exceptionally within the exhibit. The art section has one statue that includes Texas in its name, but otherwise Texas is either completely ignored or assumed to be just a part of the generic “West,” much as Texas during the Civil War was assumed to be just a part of the generic “Confederacy.” This is intentional on the part of the museum staff—they envision the museum to be a national museum and not a Texan museum.²⁰

Due to this vision, some of the nuance of the war was lost in the attempt to create a balanced national museum. Texas was one of multiple states that, due to sociological and demographical variety within the geographic region, struggled to identify itself as a

²⁰ Ibid.

unified entity. This struggle appeared in the Border States as well during the war, and continued even after the war. The Pearce Museum appears to adopt the same attitude as the TCWM in this regards—because the majority of the population appeared to be pro-Confederate, it would be safe to label Texas as pro-Confederate. Texans likewise could be safely considered pro-Confederate. Because the museum is a national museum and not focused on Texas, it does not try to define the “Texan.” As a national museum seeking balance, it did not dwell upon any individual state. States were merely locations listed after names of authors or names of battlefields. By portraying the war at the individual level, through the eyes of the literate soldiers, the museum did not need to interpret regionalism.

The museum store did not stand out as being of immediate relevance to the museum, as it was not the museum’s museum store. It was actually the museum store for the Cook Center’s planetarium, with an assortment of items that appeared to be relevant to the Civil War and Western art. The museum store was not notable and it did not support the museum’s mission or any of the themes and narratives present in the galleries. The mission overall appears to adequately fulfill the preservation and collection aspects of its mission statement, but the location of the galleries within in the Cook Center and foreknowledge of the unusual institutional relationship detracts from a visitor’s experience. The interpretation element of the mission appears to be nearly ignored, but the museum otherwise appears to fulfill the mission.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Analysis

The four museums provide four different, but not necessarily contradictory, views of the Civil War. The exhibit designs themselves were slightly similar, and certain areas of the exhibits shared common design themes. Despite the thematic and physical layout differences, all four overlap on no less than one detail. The museums all seemed to share some common themes regarding why Texas fought, what the Texans did in the war, and what the Texans apparently did not do in the war.

All four of the museums either provided a definite cause for the Civil War, or hinted at a factor that could have affected the beginning of the war. For the Texas Heritage Museum, the war was the result of secession, and secession came about because the Southern states—which included Texas—wanted to maintain sovereignty. The issue was state sovereignty according to the panels, even though a copy of the Ordinance of Secession placed next to that text panel clearly states the reasons why Texas was leaving. Claiming that Texas seceded in order to maintain sovereignty is correct but pedantic.¹ Such a claim glosses over the issue that was the root of the state and federal dispute—the fear of further restrictions on slavery that the election of Abraham Lincoln supposedly represented. This sovereignty issue is confirmed by the next text panel grouping, which demonstrated the Federal evacuation of the Texas frontier and the Texan response to their new border duties. The subsequent text panel grouping greatly reduces the significance

¹ Interestingly enough, the first clause of the Ordinance claimed the Federal government failed to protect the “persons” and “property” in the state, subtly hinting that the Federal government left too much sovereign power to the state. Which is a digression to the topic at hand.

of this argument by showing a noteworthy amount of indifference to Texan independence and the ongoing war in the East.

The BBTSHM presents a different cause for the war, which was secession. However, it was secession over the fears of the admittedly slave-dependent economies collapsing because of the election of a presidential candidate who was opposed to the expansion of slavery beyond existing state lines. The preceding exhibit does not shy away from describing in detail the importance of slavery and plantation cotton to the Texas economy, and the Civil War exhibit itself continues the theme of the importance of cotton. The museum maintains strong continuity throughout the museum—cotton is mentioned in the following exhibits until the third floor strips cotton of its importance compared to mineral and petrochemical mining.

The TCWM provides a third cause for the war, which was the Southern assault on Fort Sumter that followed secession. According to the TCWM-Richey area, the Southern states left the United States because of their philosophical opposition to Federalism. Slavery was not an issue so much as it was one of multiple methods of defining the Southern states. The industrialized and highly populous Northern states upset a political balance, and the slaveholding states feared being “governed by the majority.” This concept is reinforced by the material culture nature of the museum, the artifact captions that commonly include a place of manufacture, and the frequent text panels tallying the production of various types of equipment. This continuity is disrupted by the TCMC area, which does not explain in detail why secession came about. It happened outside of Texas, and Texas wanted to be with the rest of the Southern states.

The Pearce Museum employs a fourth cause for the war, which was secession. Secession came about because of the issue of slavery and the debate over whether the United States should possess a single and unified society. The exhibited manuscripts provided the argument for slavery, while the video concentrated more on American social patriotism. However, this argument was not reinforced throughout the rest of the exhibit, unlike the other three museums that carried the causes as part of their themes. The manuscripts and objects on display did not return to the arguments presented at the beginning of the chronological path, because the exhibit abruptly changes its message from the causes of secession to the deplorable nature of combat.

The Pearce Museum and the TCWM both proclaim to be national museums and not regional or state museums. That is true at the Pearce Museum, as it does not dwell upon regionalism or state identities. The inclusion of a few cases dedicated to Texas appears to be nothing more than mollification for visitors seeking to learn specifically about Texas during the war. The TCWM, despite seeking to be a national museum, dedicates a quarter of the exhibit space to Texas. The introductory video to the museum is specific only to Texas, and perhaps it might cause a visitor to think the purpose of the war was to inspire migration to Texas. Only half of the museum is a national presentation of Civil War history, and the last quarter of the museum is completely unrelated to the Civil War.

Due to the heavy representation of Texas, the TCWM can be considered a Texas museum, and accordingly relegates the Pearce Museum to being a control group for an investigation of Texas and Texans in the war. In the Pearce Museum, the narrative of Texas is nothing more than the narrative of the Southern states during the war and the

narrative of the Western states in the postwar period. Outside of anecdotal evidence from the individual manuscript pieces, it does not provide an explanation for the participation of specific states and individuals in the war. A visitor is left to think that the two manikins in the exhibit are grappling because one wanted to protect slavery while the other wanted to unify the country.

The other three museums explore the sociology of the soldiers in varying degrees. The Texas Heritage Museum and the Texas Civil War Museum provide the most in-depth reasons for individual participation. For the THM, participation in the war—as soldiers and as non-combatants back home—depended more upon factional, ethnic, and economic distinctions than on personal reasons. The TCWM carried the hidden subtext of patriotic duty to one’s state or nation, but the infantry video unintentionally states the most common personal reasons for fighting. However, those reasons only provided motivations to overcome apathy towards the war and to explain why people volunteered instead of waiting for conscription. The THM provides a narrative of local conflict between neighbors, while the TCWM only assumes that the people within each state would side with their respective state governments. The TCMC exhibit lists 20 counties in Texas that voted against secession, and a text panel stated that Governor Sam Houston was opposed to secession—but the exhibit did not explain the opposition to secession.

The BBTSHM states and implies motivations for participation, but the exhibit relies on political reasons for individual participation. The pro-Confederate Texans fought because it was their duty to the South and the Confederacy. The exhibit focuses on the importance of the cotton trade, so a visitor would assume that Texans fought because they had connections to the cotton trade in one form or another. However, the

exhibit does not fully explain the connection between the soldiers and the cotton trade outside of Union efforts to cut off the cotton trade. The rest of the museum explores the sociology of Texans, and although there are multiple notions of a “Texan” presented in the exhibit based upon an ethnic basis, the Civil War exhibit focuses on just the previously “Southern” pro-Confederate Anglos, with lip service paid to the non-Anglos within the state.

In terms of providing a narrative of Texan activities, the three Texas-oriented museums focused on the actions of the pro-Confederate individuals and forces. The Texas Heritage Museum provides introductory stories for multiple Texan infantry and cavalry units in the war, but it focuses extensively on the actions of Hood’s Texas Brigade and its actions in the Eastern Theater. The entire exhibit equally provides information about the war inside and outside of Texas, both for soldiers and civilians. The exhibit treated pro-Unionists as groups and individuals with agency and not merely parties that the pro-Confederates acted upon during the war.

The BBTSHM on the other hand relegated the few pro-Unionists to be mentioned at all to be simply incidents involving the primary actors of the exhibit. As a smaller exhibit than the THM Civil War exhibit, the BBTSHM Civil War exhibit provides less information about Texans in the war. The timeline separates the actions of Texas and the rest of the war, while the two primary display cases serve to reconcile Texas to the war. The cases demonstrate the actions of a smaller group of Texans inside and outside of the state. The greater war effort was described through text panels providing the story of Hood’s Texas Brigade, Sibley’s Army of New Mexico, and Terry’s Texas Rangers.² The

² The THM included these units in its exhibit, along with greater detail of their involvement in the war.

second case, elements of the first case, the map table, and the video all focused more on the war within Texas and the actions of Texan soldiers and civilians in combat and in the cotton trade. This part of the exhibit placed greater emphasis on civilian life and the cotton trade than on military actions outside of the blockade's impact on the cotton trade and consumer goods.

The different exhibit areas of the Texas Civil War Museum provided various levels of detail about the involvement of Texans. The video and the TCMC area focused exclusively on Texas, and they equally explored the events inside and outside of Texas as they related to Texans. Although both areas mention many military units, they appeared to give more attention to Hood's Texas Brigade. The TCMC area highlighted the Battle of Palmito Ranch over the other engagements by focusing the attention of the room upon the large diorama. The flag room provided a spread of reminders about Texan military involvement. The TCMC area placed greater emphasis on military and governmental actions than on civilian life and merchant activities. A small case with artifacts related to Terry's Texas Rangers provided the TCWM-Richey area with the only notable occurrence of Texas.

The three Texan museums thus contained a significant amount of overlap. The THM and TCWM exhibits had significant focus on military aspects of the war, especially in terms of following the activities of Hood's Texas Brigade and the Battle of Palmito Ranch. The THM and BBTSHM extensively explored the importance of the cotton trade and civilian life during the war. The TCWM and the BBTSHM give varying levels of information about events of the war that were not connected to Texas. However, the three museums contained significant differences in the details provided by the exhibits.

Because each museum carries a different narrative and method of interpreting history, the missing details may very well be the result of a lack of relevancy.

The THM's introductory panels provide an interesting statement about the irrelevancy of events outside of Texas. It provides historic background to Texas before the war, and then explains the secession process, and then Texan military units began traveling east to Virginia. There is a significant gap in this presentation—the exhibit completely leaves out the *casus belli* for the Civil War. The TCWM has the opposite problem—there were ongoing battles, conflicts and campaigns, then veteran groups formed, and then a great migration to Texas began. The war ended, but the outcome was not clearly explained.³ Visitors do get the impression that Texas was the victor, in part because of the emphasis on the Battle of Palmito Ranch, and in part because Texas did not experience the devastation that occurred in the rest of the South.

As mentioned above, the museums focused on different groups of people to provide their stories. The TCWM and the BBTSHM focused on pro-Confederates in Texas. The BBTSHM provided narratives about African Americans during this era, but mainly in the preceding and succeeding exhibits. The TCWM practically ignores African Americans outside of mentioning slavery in the introductory text panels of the TCWM-Richey area and the presence of African American soldiers at the Battle of Palmito Ranch. Neither museum provides any information about Milton Holland. That in itself is a surprise, given the importance THM rests upon him. The TCWM likewise neglected pro-Confederate individuals and groups who were not Anglo.

³ The Pearce Museum has a similar situation, but does not specifically mention Texas as a destination for the migration, and it leaves out the veteran groups.

For the TCWM, the lack of focus on non-Anglos in Texas may very well be the result of outside influence. Despite claims to the contrary,⁴ it would be highly unusual if the Texas Division of the United Daughters of the Confederacy had no input into the museum. Their collection is on loan to the TCWM for the near future, and the TCMC exhibit is a permanent exhibit area. It would be nonsensical for an institution to loan its objects for a permanent exhibit without expecting some control over how they are arranged and interpreted. The UDC obelisk in front of the museum reinforces that impression, as does the certificate from the UDC in the lobby and the brochure rack below it that contains UDC and SCV literature.⁵ The presence of multiple pseudo-history books in the Magnolia Mercantile indicates an interest in pseudo-history and historical revisionism amongst the visitors.

However, the Texas Civil War Museum is difficult to understand completely in terms of outsider and insider influences because the museum's directors and curators are husband and wife who happen to own personally the majority of the items on display. Ray Richey designs the exhibits that house the objects that he loans to his museum, and he periodically donates funds to the museum. He also contacted the UDC to offer them space in his museum.⁶ The museum was built on land originally owned by Ray Richey,

⁴ Harriman, interview; an interview with the executive director, who is a member of the United Daughters of the Confederacy, Trustee Emeritus for the Texas Confederate Museum Collection, and former director of the Texas Confederate Museum.

⁵ There is also literature for the Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War, but the SUVCW is a rather insignificant organization in terms of overall membership, community impact, and presence in the South.

⁶ Texas Division, United Daughters of the Confederacy.

next door to the offices of Ray Richey & Company, Incorporated.⁷ Ray and Judy Richey are listed as the most prominent donors to the museum's endowment fund.⁸ However, the UDC and the SCV are also listed prominently as donors to the endowment fund, as well as donors to the Education Department, the Museum Enhancement, Tributes/Honorees, and Memorials. The UDC has also donated artifacts.

The other three museums do not carry such possibilities of obvious influence from groups outside of the institution. The benefactors of the Pearce Museum passed away in 2005 and 2008,⁹ and the museum relies on state funding, grants, its endowment, and internal methods of fundraising to cover operational costs.¹⁰ The BBTSHM heavily relies on earned income, and although it does borrow objects from private groups such as the UDC, it merely places objects within its pre-designed exhibits.¹¹ The THM relies on state funds, earned income, grants, and memberships.¹² While seeking artifact related to wars not as heavily covered in the museum, the THM is not actively searching for artifacts.¹³ There are a few cases that have placards denoting the sources as donations, including multiple items related to the defunct United Confederate Veterans and the

⁷ Paul Bourgeois, "Civil War museum planned in White Settlement," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, May 10, 2003, indicates the circumstances of the land donation and the loaning of the TDUDC collection. A visitor would easily note the text on the neighboring building, which reads "Ray Richey & Co., Inc."

⁸ Texas Civil War Museum, "Donors."

⁹ The Pearce Museum, "History," The Pearce Museum, <http://www.pearcecollection.us/page.php?cat=Home&id=14> (accessed August 30, 2012).

¹⁰ Wait and Coleman.

¹¹ Denney.

¹² Versluis, interview.

¹³ Versluis, interview. The museum instead hopes visitors will donate family heirlooms related to those wars.

original and renewed Hood's Texas Brigade Association. Given the museum's past as the Confederate Research Center, it is not surprising that the THM has some potentially questionable elements in the Civil War exhibit,¹⁴ but at the same time, the museum does not avoid updating itself.

All four of the museums have been the subject of controversy,¹⁵ but at a variety of different levels. Because of the subject matter at hand, the museums have naturally heard from disappointed visitors. The occasional visitor has expressed disapproval over the portrayal of slavery,¹⁶ or the lack of their favorite aspect of the war,¹⁷ or the lack of flags flying out front.¹⁸ However, the levels of controversy at the Pearce Museum and the Texas Heritage Museum rank as minor issues compared to those of the much larger TCWM and BBTSHM. The TCWM, with its ties to the UDC, has been viewed as both polarizing and uniting by various researchers and journalists. The BBTSHM's existence caused some controversy when it was first proposed, due in part of the high cost and the fears that a large state cultural museum would strip smaller museums of visitors. There were also controversies revolving around the attendance of former Governor George W.

¹⁴ Most notably the exhibit name that includes "War Between the States."

¹⁵ According to all four of the executive staff interviewed.

¹⁶ Wait and Coleman; Versluis, interview. The inclusion of Milton Holland initially caused hate mail.

¹⁷ Wait and Coleman; Versluis, interview; Denney. The BBTSHM is a victim of visitors expecting to find battle flags throughout the exhibit, as well as visitors expecting more diversity.

¹⁸ Harriman.

Bush at the museum's opening ceremonies,¹⁹ perceived inaccuracies in the narratives provided by the exhibits, and the presence of beans in the café's chili.²⁰

There is an interesting common factor from three of the museums—at the Pearce Museum, the Texas Heritage Museum, and the Bob Bullock Texas State History Museum, the sources of complaints about the Civil War exhibits arrive from visitors who anticipated some form of pseudo-history or historical revisionism.²¹ On the other hand, the Texas Civil War Museum has been accused in the past of pseudo-history or historical revisionism.²² At the same time, the TCWM is, correctly or incorrectly, associated with groups that are accused of historical revisionism.²³ That, combined with the presence of the TCMC at the museum, could easily lead a visitor to assume that the museum has a narrative outside of accepted academic or public history.

The academic historiographies of the Civil War are both accepted and rejected by the four museums examined in this paper. The Texas Heritage Museum's Civil War exhibit combines past curatorial discretion²⁴ with past and recent research at the Historic Research Center and the Hill College Press. Given that Hill College Press began in 1964

¹⁹ Including protests, and lawsuits accusing the police of brutality at the protests. See David Hafetz, "Officers cleared of rights violations – Jury finds that police acted within law during 2001 protest," *Austin American-Statesman*, January 18, 2003.

²⁰ John Kelso, "Thanks to me, museum's chili to be bean-free," *Austin American-Statesman*, June 12, 2001.

²¹ Wait and Coleman; Versluis, interview; Denney.

²² Harriman; Bud Kennedy, "Battle flag belongs in museum display," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, January 10, 2006;

²³ Note their association with the United Daughters of the Confederacy as an essential part of the museum. An interesting study of the UDC's involvement in historical revisionism was written by Fred Arthur Bailey, "Free Speech and the "Lost Cause" in Texas: A Study of Social Control in the New South," *The Southwestern Historical Quarterly* 97, no. 4 (January 199): 452-477.

²⁴ Specifically T. Lindsay Baker's discretion.

and continues today, the resources at the museum's disposal represent a wide range of research. Although the museum—like most museums—tries to utilize the most modern and relevant ideas, it is faced with older resources, persistent reminders of the older exhibits, and insufficient state funding. This may explain why the exhibit provides a combination of sociological and academic approaches to history with some questionable statements and constant reminders of Hood's Texas Brigade.²⁵ The exhibit bears the name of the man who was responsible for the museum, and it still contains most of the original layout established while T. Lindsay Baker was director. The States Rights argument the exhibit makes is the result of the combination of past and present.

The Bob Bullock Texas State History Museum, on the other hand, does not carry reminders of institutional history. The museum was designed by groups of historians, and it is apparent from a walkthrough that the museum adheres to a slightly nationalistic version of history, if only because the museum was designed to celebrate Texas culture. There is nothing necessarily incorrect in the exhibits, although the exhibit simplifies the war and removes entire groups from the narrative. The exhibit proclaims the war was fought over the issue of slavery, specifically the Southern and Texas view that they had a right to own slaves, which is in line with academic views of the war.

The Texas Civil War Museum cannot make such a claim. Although the museum is the youngest of the four in the region, it uses the oldest historical methodology. The exhibit cases avoid historical inaccuracies by avoiding text panels that provide any information beyond object provenance. The introductory video, the Texas Confederate Museum Collection area, and the introductory text panels in the Richey collection area

²⁵ Elam. The first book published by Hill College Press was about Hood's Texas Brigade. Since then it has published 8 additional books about the unit.

present a combination of half-truths, missing facts, and a painfully obvious attempt to avoid admitting that slavery was involved in the causes. The Texas Confederate Museum Collection part of the museum simply ignored the causes of the war and presented a chronological narrative of Texas in the war. The Richey collection area made a combined claim of democratic tyranny and industrialization, which it constantly reinforced with text panels tallying armament production and enlistment numbers. The exhibits utilize older historic ideas in order to strip the war of chattel slavery in order to make a visit somewhat more pleasant.

The Pearce Museum combines a modern archivist-historian view of the war with a lack of narrative.²⁶ The exhibit initially employs a historic idea based around the war being fought over slavery and national self-identity. This argument ignores other aspects of the nature of the war, and overall sounds like the museum is applying modern social standards towards history, instead of providing an understanding of the historical society. The rest of the exhibit area simply presents the objects as they exist without providing context to the war beyond a chronology.

The four museums also freely accept and reject museum standards for exhibits. The Texas Heritage Museum, as outlined in its mission statement, seeks to inspire people to think about the past and its relationship to modern life. The Civil War exhibit avoids direct pontification of historic facts, instead focusing in part on historic experiences of individuals and social groups. The exhibit mentions cotton trade with Mexico because the museum wants visitors to consider the experience of walking to Mexico after harvest season. However, the exhibit is geared towards visitors who learn based upon passively

²⁶ “Archivist-historian” is used because the Pearce Museum is the only one of the four that does not employ curators.

reading exhibit labels or watching videos.²⁷ It does not provide other sensory experiences, nor does it allow a visitor to interact and engage in an active learning experience. The lighting system matches the sort of track lights that other museums use, if almost imperceptibly brighter than others, but the climate inside felt slightly less than perfectly comfortable.²⁸ Nothing stood out in the exhibits as being questionable besides that lack of multiple learning methods.

The Bob Bullock Texas State History Museum likewise is very text heavy, and quite unusual in its non-collecting status. The museum does leave an impression of being very modern, except it likewise does not fully make use of technology to provide multiple learning experiences, at least not in the Civil War exhibit. Elsewhere, the museum uses videos, interactive tests on kiosks, boxes to demonstrate smells of various minerals, and the notorious Spirit Theater—a theater with moving seats, water sprayers, foggers, and unfortunate smells. In the Civil War exhibit, the museum simply provides facts for visitors to consider.

The Texas Civil War Museum utilizes an old method of exhibit design.²⁹ The museum, at least in the Richey collection area, is wall after wall of similar objects grouped together with few text panels and no openly stated narrative. The educational experience is limited unless a visitor seeks simply to view objects or listen to bugle and

²⁷ When the theater equipment works properly. Because the theater is used as a lecture hall for classes that use slideshows, the theater system has to be reset after every class by the museum staff.

²⁸ During the visit on October 5, 2012, at 8:15 AM, the author noticed an analog hygrometer in one of the exhibit areas that stated the relative humidity was approximately 68%, while the temperature was approximately 72° Fahrenheit.

²⁹ Harriman. The executive director admitted that the museum is “kind of old school.” However, it includes costumed docent-guided tours and an extensive number of themed educational programs to offset the poor design.

drum calls. The exhibit does not completely explain the significance of one rifle over another, nor does it explain how the objects work, how they were used, and what is meant by the terminology used. The two videos inside the exhibit provide some help in that regard, but the exhibit expects massive amounts of prior knowledge. It is more of an art gallery with three-dimensional objects than it is a history museum, at least in the Richey Civil War section of the museum. The Texas Confederate Museum Collection area is a combination of dissimilar objects grouped together³⁰ along with some cases that follow a narrative and theme. The Battle of Palmito Ranch diorama included a narrator reading a script about the battle, and different lights would shine on different parts of the exhibit to highlight the story, but that was the only element of the exhibit that provided a learning experience outside of pontification and pure reading. Overhead music enhances the experience. Besides the old style of “walls of guns,” the exhibit appeared to use materials and climate control methods appropriate for museums.³¹

The Civil War exhibit at the Pearce Museum is more or less an archive with a museum-quality exhibit area,³² as the main part of the exhibit consists of manuscripts displayed without themes, narratives, or interpretation beyond chronology. The Civil War gallery allows visitors to view manuscripts—just as the Western Art gallery allows visitors to view paintings and sculptures. The Civil War gallery includes a lengthy video and a shorter video that provide information for a visitor. The battlefield experience

³⁰ They are dissimilar, unless one considers that part of the exhibit to be a shrine to the old Confederacy.

³¹ The author cannot remember if the exhibit cases contained data loggers or hygrometers. The objects looked like they were safely arranged on shelves and hooks affixed to the walls or resting on clear plastic mounts and stands, but the corners of the wall-length cases were not sealed. The free-standing artillery was surrounded by a Plexiglas fence.

³² Museum quality in terms of attempting to adhere to the best museum standards and practices.

video room is more of an active learning experience, in that visitors physically place themselves between two opposing groups of soldiers. The museum provides school groups with more interactive programs, but the exhibits are otherwise just viewing galleries not conducive to multiple learning methods.

Despite having different educational and design styles, the three Texas-oriented museums provide similar messages about the concept of a “Texan.” The museums state and demonstrate that Texan is a concept of self-identification. The Texas Heritage Museum and the Bob Bullock Texas State History Museum treat the term as purely inclusive. Anybody in the geographic area of Texas before, during, or after the war who considered himself or herself to be a Texan was by definition a Texan. At the Texas Heritage Museum, the museum demonstrates the stories of Texans, and a visitor can assume that if a story is being presented, then the story is about a Texan.³³ The pro-Unionists, the pro-Confederates, the Tejanos, the Native Americans, the African Americans, and other non-Anglos were Texans. In the rest of the exhibits, the definition of a Texan is based upon that self-identification and geographic connection to Texas. The definition of a Texan changes for the Medal of Honor Memorial, which limits a Texan to being just those born in Texas. The Bob Bullock Texas State History Museum similarly considers the definition to be an issue of self-identification, and is inclusive. However, it leaves the definition open to visitor interpretation.

The Texas Civil War Museum does not openly state a definition of a Texan, but that is in part due to the almost-hidden subtext of patriotism. A Texan during the Civil

³³ Naturally, the citizens of the Empire of Japan are not Americans, as well as the other enemies presented in the museum. Outside of the Civil War exhibit, the museum provides just the stories of Americans, except when providing a material comparison to the aforementioned enemies.

War was a person who was either living in Texas or trying to live in Texas. That concept is combined with the concept of defending one's home and nation, to form a definition of a Texan as someone who was a soldier during the war. The definition theoretically should include Unionists, but in practice, the museum failed to demonstrate that people with pro-Union feelings outside of Sam Houston were actually Texans. It did demonstrate that non-Anglos who fought for the Confederacy were Texans, such as the Germans, the Tejanos³⁴, and theoretically the Native Americans.³⁵ The topic was not specifically approached at the Pearce Museum, and given that the museum simply grouped Texas with the other Southern States, the museum most likely would have a similar definition that groups Texans according to their allegiance to the Confederacy.³⁶

These different ideas leave a perplexing situation of finding one definition. Perhaps it is more important to ponder over whether it is even relevant to define a "Texan," especially in a global society where such terms could create harmful divisions within society. However, the pursuit to define such terms has significant relevancy in understanding both society and history. The historic understanding of the term "Texan" provides insight into today's Texas through understanding how Texas evolved into its current form. The Bob Bullock Texas State History Museum places the Civil War and this issue of a "Texan" into a proper context. Although there is a considerable contrast

³⁴ The "Hispanics," according to the text panels.

³⁵ The "Civilized Indians" such as Stand Watie, according to the executive director, although he was technically from the Indian Territory and not associated with Texas, and the author does not recall if Watie or other Native Americans were specifically mentioned outside of the introductory video that grouped them with "Jayhawks," "Bandits," and other threats to the peaceful stability of Texas during the war.

³⁶ The director noted that the museum does consider "Texan" to be a self-identifying term based upon culture and attitude, and Tejanos and Native Americans would be Texans if they considered themselves to be Texans.

between the Civil War gallery and the rest of the museum, the Texas Heritage Museum also appears to place the Civil War into a context that explains the formation of a modern Texan. The other two museums do not provide a historical context for the definition of a Texan—for the Pearce Museum, the term is irrelevant, and for the Texas Civil War Museum, the term should already be understood by a visitor. The latter two museums provide an interesting statement about defining a “Texan,” by ignoring it or making it clear that it is not the place of the museum to define people. Although the Pearce Museum and the Texas Civil War Museum seek to establish stories about individuals through their exhibit methods, they divorce the exhibits from the rest of society, robbing them of the ability to provide a meaningful connection to modern times.

CHAPTER EIGHT

Conclusion

Overall, the museums defied expectations to a certain extent. Given that the museums were in Texas, they theoretically would have been far more nationalistic in their portrayal of Texas. Instead, the exhibits excluded hero-worship and avoided turning Texas history into mythology. The Bob Bullock Texas State History Museum did rely on the concept of the rugged individual in most of the exhibits, but that concept was more or less absent in the Civil War exhibit. Both the Bob Bullock Texas State History Museum and the Texas Heritage Museum proclaimed the fact that many Texans joined cavalry regiments instead of infantry regiments, and while that could have reinforced an impression of a state full of cowboys, the artifacts in the former museum were primarily not cavalry-related, and the latter museum emphasized Hood's Texas Brigade of infantry over other military units. The Texas Civil War Museum, through the Texas Confederate Museum Collection exhibit, engaged in hero-worship to a degree through the artifacts and human remains related to non-Texans, while the rest of that museum avoided providing substantial exhibit space for Texans. The Pearce Museum, as expected from its national-centric design, provided as much attention to Texas as it did to the rest of the states, and the exhibit primarily avoided displaying manuscripts from high-profile historical figures. Texas swagger did not play an important role in the interpretation at the museums.

The other expectation, of a pro-Confederate bias, did not on the whole appear in three of the museums. The museum institute at Hill College, given its original focus of

Confederate artifacts on display at the original Confederate Research Center, greatly changed the balance of its historical narratives with the founding of the Texas Heritage Museum. The focus on Hood's Texas Brigade is a remnant from the earliest museum interpretations and Hill County's ties with the original and resurgent Hood's Texas Brigade Association. The amount of interpretation on pro-Unionists at the Texas Heritage Museum exceeded the interpretation at the other museums, although the Bob Bullock Texas State History Museum provided some attention to the Unionists. The other two ignored the factional divides within the state—such a concept would be anathema for one museum,¹ and factional divides would have created a level of nuance that would violate the expectations of a purely national interpretation for the other museum.

In three of the four museums, the narratives appeared to minimize or completely ignore the roles of African-Americans in the war. The Texas Heritage Museum placed great emphasis on Milton Holland and other soldiers,² as well as slaves and slavery during the war. The Bob Bullock Texas State History Museum and the Pearce Museum provided some information about African-Americans as soldiers, but the former focused more on the cotton trade and slavery. The Texas Civil War Museum completely ignored African-Americans as soldiers, outside of the Battle of Palmito Ranch diorama that was built by students without intervention from the museum or the UDC. The museums

¹ The Texas Civil War Museum, to be precise. The UDC is an organization based upon the Lost Cause of the Confederacy, and the fact that the museum uses both the Texas Confederate Museum's collection and former director would lead the Texas Civil War Museum to suffer the pitfalls of their historical visions, protests from the museum to the contrary.

² This created a false expectation for the other Texas-centric museums to mention him as well, in part because as the state's official Medal of Honor memorial, it would focus in great detail on people who were exceptional, and exceptional actions beyond the call of duty are part of the requirements for receiving the Medal of Honor.

likewise minimized the pro-Unionist aspects of Texas during the Civil War, except for the Texas Heritage Museum. The other three gave the impression that Texans were overwhelmingly pro-Confederate to the point of relegating pro-Unionists to statistical error.

Despite the commonalities of the museums in terms of missing elements and broken expectations, their content did not overlap significantly. The three actually Texas-centric museums provided three separate visions of the war. Although that creates a justification for having multiple Civil War-related museums, that is jarring when one expects similar narratives. The Texas Heritage Museum is on face value the military version of the Bob Bullock Texas State History Museum, and the Texas Civil War Museum claims to be a compatriot of the Pearce Museum's national focus. Those declarations do not hold up to scrutiny, particularly for the Texas Civil War Museum. Both the TCWM and the Pearce Museum lack strong narratives, and their object-oriented designs cause the two museums to take completely separate paths. The BBTSHM Civil War exhibit could be considered a condensed version of the THM Civil War exhibit, if perhaps too condensed and missing elements that would provide more balance.

With that said, there is little to improve the Bob Bullock Texas State History Museum and the Texas Heritage Museum beyond expanding the size of the exhibit areas. The BBTSHM has limited space, and while the timeline wall could be turned into exhibit or text panel space to provide more information about the neglected factions and parties, the exhibit would lose the national context that is essential for visitors. The Texas Heritage Museum lacks a strong contextual base for the exhibit, at least at the beginning of the exhibit. Visitors can deduce the context through viewing the text panels scattered

through the exhibit, but the first wall of the exhibit area would benefit with additional context.

All four museums base their exhibits either on the presumption that a visitor already knows about the history of the Civil War, or on the presumption that knowledge of the war beyond Texan involvement is not important for understanding the war as it related to Texas. Visitors who are military history enthusiasts would have no difficulty viewing the exhibits, particularly the exhibits at the Texas Civil War Museum, but the visitors who are not aware of distinctions between various elements of military technology and terminology would become lost and confused. The museums need to improve their methods of explaining the terminology of the war and the events of the war beyond Texas,³ or they need to acknowledge their assumption that visitors would already be aware of the war outside of Texas. Likewise, the three Texas-centric exhibits presume some knowledge of Texas history outside of the Civil War, which would not be helpful for non-Texans and non-Americans visiting the museums.

The most glaring facet of the interpretative methods is the lack of interactive learning techniques and the exhibits' reliance on simply providing facts for visitors to read, memorize, and understand. The Texas Heritage Museum and the Bob Bullock Texas State History Museum attempt to convince visitors to relate military camp life during the war to modern life, but they provide few tools for doing so. Excluding music and sound effects, the only real attempt at using such tools is at the Pearce Museum, through the battlefield experience room. The Texas Civil War Museum stands out as the worst example of this problem—despite the videos, the Richey-TCWM half of the

³ That is to say, the explanations of military terminology can be subtly inserted into the text panels, instead of having large glossary text panels near the entrances of the exhibits.

museum is nothing more than walls of guns and uniforms with no attempt at providing a learning experience beyond reading text panels for descriptions of who manufactured the weapons and who used the equipment during which battles. All four museums could benefit from interactive elements, whether they are simple mechanical-tactile devices⁴ or the latest in computer technology.

Given that appreciable need for exhibit changes, as well as the planned exhibit redesigns at the four museums, future researchers should look for future changes within the exhibits to see how they influence the interpretation of the war. The Hill College institute that became the Texas Heritage Museum has changed greatly over the course of the past 48 years, and upcoming years could easily reveal new evolutionary paths. The other three institutions are much younger, but a prevailing concept in the museum field is to change exhibits or displayed objects approximately every ten years, to avoid damaging objects from exposure to sunlight and other environmental elements. Even the simple turnover of objects can change the narrative of an exhibit. As the Pearce Museum has plans for completely redesigning their Civil War Gallery, this paper could be irrelevant within five years.⁵

Even if the four museums remain static, this paper could provide a starting point for an expanded exploration of the Civil War in other museums in the state. The state of Texas is large, and contains many museums beyond the Fort Worth-Austin corridor. Battlefield parks near the coast and the borders may very well provide completely

⁴ This would include something as simple as a display with square pieces of re-enactor wool and cotton cloth, so visitors could feel the material and develop an appreciation of the differences between modern textiles and Civil War-era textiles.

⁵ That presumes that the museum can find the funding necessary for redesigning the gallery.

different approaches to Texas in the Civil War, as well as smaller institutes dedicated to county or town histories. The four case studies could prove to be the standards for the state or statistical outliers.

Ultimately, this paper could be used as a part of the debate over Texan Exceptionalism. Future researchers would benefit from exploring the concept beyond the four museums. They could also debate whether or not the concept should be employed as an active part of historical interpretation. Alternatively, to use a phrase from popular culture, researchers could determine if the very concept of Texan Exceptionalism “belongs in a museum” as an artifact of the past. A more thorough survey of Texas museums beyond these four could determine the extent of Texan Exceptionalism within museum interpretation. Likewise, additional surveys could uncover other forms of bias in Texan museums. The impact of groups like the UDC can be either subtle and lingering, or blatantly obvious, but that would be a worthwhile follow-up investigation for other museums in the state.

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