
Review: [untitled]

Author(s): John D. Fairfield

Reviewed work(s):

Standing Soldiers, Kneeling Slaves: Race, War, and Monument in Nineteenth-Century America by Kirk Savage

Source: *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 104, No. 3 (Jun., 1999), pp. 913-914

Published by: [The University of Chicago Press](#) on behalf of the [American Historical Association](#)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2651042>

Accessed: 22/10/2010 16:09

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of JSTOR's Terms and Conditions of Use, available at <http://www.jstor.org/page/info/about/policies/terms.jsp>. JSTOR's Terms and Conditions of Use provides, in part, that unless you have obtained prior permission, you may not download an entire issue of a journal or multiple copies of articles, and you may use content in the JSTOR archive only for your personal, non-commercial use.

Please contact the publisher regarding any further use of this work. Publisher contact information may be obtained at <http://www.jstor.org/action/showPublisher?publisherCode=aha>.

Each copy of any part of a JSTOR transmission must contain the same copyright notice that appears on the screen or printed page of such transmission.

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.



American Historical Association and *The University of Chicago Press* are collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *The American Historical Review*.

of the Ninth Corps, performing guard duty and work details. Relatively little time was given to improving the combat skills of these new soldiers. In July 1864, the Twenty-ninth participated in the Battle of the Crater and did not perform very well. Following this taste of action, the regiment, like the other African-American troops in the Army of the Potomac, was again relegated to labor details. After Lee's surrender, the Twenty-ninth was sent to western Texas to put down the last remnants of the rebellion and put pressure on the French to withdraw from Mexico. At the end of 1865, the regiment was finally mustered out. Miller concludes his book with a chapter on the postwar lives of the men and officers, most of whom returned to living in poverty and obscurity. For the vast majority, their Civil War experience apparently had hardly changed their lives.

Miller has presented a well-written, highly researched study. He provides the reader with a detailed portrait of the creation and life of a Civil War regiment. Unlike many such books, it is written from the point of view of the common soldier. The vast majority of African Americans did not leave detailed accounts of their military experience, however, as most could not read nor write. The regiment had few officers, and record keeping was not often done. Few newspapers were interested in the military exploits of the ex-slaves. As a result, source material to write the history of a particular African-American regiment is sparse. The official records contain some material, but the major source Miller uses were the pension records. Although full of details about individual soldiers, however, these are records with some problems. Many of the men knew little about their vital statistics, including when and where they were born. The pension forms also tell little about their war experience except for the injuries or wounds that served as the basis for many of the applications. In addition, the soldiers usually submitted the pension forms more than twenty-five years after the war.

Because of the sparse nature of the source material, any narrative of an African-American regiment would be handicapped. Unfortunately, Miller did not improve the situation by the way that he utilized the records. For almost every one of the ten companies of the regiment, he details the backgrounds of many of the soldiers. Since there is little information about each individual, however, this recitation is brief, largely repetitious, and full of suppositions. Little improvement is gained from the repetition. Another problem concerns the regiment's only major battle. Although there is a great deal of information about the Battle of the Crater, there is insufficient about the actions of the Twenty-ninth. As a result, Miller has done little but write a detailed account of the battle. Finally, Miller provides little analysis of the history of the regiment. Even with the paucity of sources, he has made no attempt to assess the similarities or differences of the history of the regiment with that of white regiments.

Miller tackles an important subject, the history of an individual African-American combat regiment in the Civil War. Limited by the nature and type of his source material, he has produced an interested but flawed history.

MARVIN E. FLETCHER
Ohio University

KIRK SAVAGE. *Standing Soldiers, Kneeling Slaves: Race, War, and Monument in Nineteenth-Century America*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. 1997. Pp. xiv, 270. \$35.00.

In his brilliant study of public monuments to slavery, emancipation, and common soldiers, Kirk Savage captures the tragedy of the Civil War era. His central argument is that the effort to erect a monument to emancipation was a cultural enactment of the political tasks of Reconstruction. He concludes that the failure of Reconstruction was not simply political, but a cultural failure to give imaginative form to our best ideals. With the terrible finality of public sculpture, the Freedmen's Memorial in Washington, D.C. (Thomas Ball, 1876) entrapped the freed, kneeling beneath the commanding figure of Abraham Lincoln and passively receiving the gift of emancipation. A product of a series of competitions, the Freedman's Memorial belied the national commitment to racial equality. A haunting photograph that Savage reproduces, of a black youth staring up at the image of white dominance, captures the gulf between aspiration and commemoration.

Savage begins by showing how the concept of race employed the language of sculpture. In racist treatises placing the Negro between men and animals, classical statuary served as an empirical model of white racial superiority. Sculpting black bodies was thus problematic and potentially subversive. Once abolitionists appropriated the sculptural image of the kneeling, supplicant slave as a means of generating benevolent sympathy, slave holders found it difficult to disassociate any representation of the slave from abolitionism. Yet the most ambitious effort to give physical expression to the proslavery ideal relied upon a Northern sculptor and abolitionist, Henry Kirke Brown. Brown's proposal for the South Carolina State House revealed that pro- and antislavery thought converged on a single image of the body of the slave, tainted with barbarism but deserving an elevation that, however different in each camp, was sharply limited.

In the erection of monuments to slavery and common soldiers, Savage finds further evidence of cultural factors in Reconstruction's defeat. Richmond's Lee Monument (1890) seized upon the noble general as slavery's best face. The sponsors' obsessive concern with the relationship between Lee and his animal servant, Traveller, encoded the values of dominance and mastery as slavery's guiding ideals. In the indistinguishable monuments to common soldiers North and South, Savage finds a rehabilitated image of citizen-

soldiers. To submerge the slave-like experience of service in a mass army and mechanized war, soldier monuments had to extinguish any association with slavery or emancipation, especially in the form of freedmen soldiers. In the relaxed attention and white faces of monumental soldiers, local communities pledged allegiance to the new nation-state while effacing its military regimentation and racial obligations.

In bridging politics and consciousness, Savage rightly argues, the history of public sculpture helps us understand the persistence of racial inequality. But in describing Reconstruction as a cultural failure, Savage may underplay his own evidence of the new, if unrealized, possibilities. John Quincy Adams Ward's statuette Freedman (1863) imagined the moment of emancipation from the perspective of the freed. Alert and intent, tense in anticipation, Ward's Freedman was an agent of his own freedom. Harriet Hosmer's design for a Freedmen's Memorial centered on a cycle of four African-American figures, ascending from slave through producer and contraband, culminating in citizen-soldier. Hosmer's design failed to win support and the commemoration of emancipation shifted away from the freed toward Lincoln and his place in history. But whether the decision against Hosmer was a failure of consciousness or politics remains unclear. Savage presents a valuable analysis of the various subscriptions and competitions for the freedman's memorial, but a closer look at the views of contemporary abolitionists and Republicans might have clarified his argument.

Savage's keen analysis of the visual legacy of the Civil War is an essential corrective to our public memory of the Civil War, particularly where the public imagination has been shaped by Ken Burns's *Civil War* (1990). Burns flatters us in showing moral outrage against slavery as the cause of the war, then, without reference to what each had fought for, celebrates the reconciliation of white veterans, North and South. Savage forces us to look more honestly at the limits of that moral outrage and the costs of that reconciliation. An obscure photograph that serves as an antidote to Burns's Gettysburg reunions suggests something of what Burns omits and Savage recovers. It appears to be a typical postwar scene of a wagon moving along a dusty road, impatient whites commanding the labor of diffident blacks. On closer examination, it becomes clear that the wagon is weighed down with the granite base of a Confederate monument. That arresting image, and now Savage's full and moving study, remind us of the aspirations that were sacrificed in postwar reconciliation.

JOHN D. FAIRFIELD
Xavier University

PATRICK J. KELLY. *Creating a National Home: Building the Veterans' Welfare State, 1860–1900*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press. 1997. Pp. viii, 250. \$37.50.

Patrick J. Kelly has written an excellent history of the origins and spread of the Civil War-era National Home for Disabled Volunteer Soldiers (NHDVS). His book joins a growing list of monographs and articles on the history of veterans, their widows and dependents, and the public policy that emerged in response to their needs. These interdisciplinary studies, with which Kelly shows himself thoroughly familiar, are particularly concerned with how a gendered "warfare state" emerged in the postbellum United States, then grew and remained separate from the twentieth-century "welfare state." Rights and responsibilities in the warfare state stemmed from a higher form of "martial citizenship" in which the state made claims on men for military service and in return pledged lifetime support for those damaged in body and spirit by the war. This was the martial contract that became clear in the Civil War era. Rights and responsibilities in the welfare state and the notion of "social citizenship," by contrast, came much later, and more grudgingly. Kelly writes convincingly of the NHDVS as an example of how culture shaped notions of citizenship and the development of state policy. His history of the NHDVS shows how the congressional authorization of long-term care facilities for disabled Union soldiers and sailors emerged as a distinctly mid-Victorian system of "homes" in design so that by 1900, almost 100,000 Union veterans had spent some amount of time in one of the NHDVS's eight domiciliaries.

Kelly divides his chronology of the NHDVS into three periods: origins during the Civil War; formative period from 1865–1873; and then maturity after 1873. He begins his history with a review of the immense number of Union Army and Navy men in need of long-term hospitalization, both from combat casualties and from disease. The scale of the casualty and sick lists after the first year of warfare dwarfed anything seen in the War of 1812 or the Mexican War, and the Union Army soon organized numerous hospitals. However, those facilities were designed for short-term care. The question of how to provide long-term care, especially to amputees, and who would supervise the care, had yet to be determined. During the war, Unitarian leaders of the U.S. Sanitary Commission (USSC) such as Henry Bellows, Charles Loring Brace, and Stephen Perkins outlined what they did not want in long-term care: they wanted to avoid a large Chelsea Hospital or Invalides-style asylum that would only serve to underscore the dependence of the inmates. Instead, they wanted the disabled veterans to be supported as much as possible in their own localities. Women leaders of the USSC also shared this view and began plans for privately financed facilities. Somewhat inexplicably in Kelly's account, Congress ignored the USSC call for local and voluntary treatment, and instead it created the National Asylum for Disabled Volunteer Soldiers (NADVS) before the war's end. The new organization lay dormant until 1866, at which time Benjamin Butler energized it. Kelly sees the Massachusetts politician as one who helped forge the