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Prospects on a Cultural History of Images of the Shenandoah Valley

Civil War Photography:

I presented my research on Civil War photography as a guest lecturer at the McCormick Civil War Institute's Fall 2003 conference, and at Centre College, Danville, Kentucky, in May 2004. I further developed it and my key themes—sublimity and memory in battlefield images—for a lecture at the SU History and Tourism Center (2004-05 Lecture Series, September 15, 2004), repeated for the Massanutten Regional Library Lecture Series (November 4, 2004). I subsequently mounted a small exhibition on maps and images of Stonewall Jackson's Valley Campaign for SU (September-October 2005). The goals are, first, a collaborative article for *The Valley Road: Its History, Landscape, and Architecture* (University of Virginia Press, forthcoming); a full-length scholarly article, which will be submitted to a refereed publication in the field of American History or Civil War studies; and promotional literature for the SU History and Tourism Center. The latter may include one or more illustrated catalogs and displays in their new building and exhibition space.

Valley Road Imagery

My lecture, "The Sublimity of Battle and the Quietude of Remembrance," frames the heightened, excited, and hyperbolic landscapes of Shenandoah Valley battles within the image structures of the Valley developed in the antebellum years and refined in the post-bellum years. Beginning with an overview of the codified picturesque, the lecture moves to a retrospective assessment of Valley portfolios published in the 1840s and '50s and centered on singular and poetic views. Through a more detailed voyage through Civil War and post-Civil-War-era illustrated battle articles, bolstered by images created for those articles from the Union-controlled Civil War weeklies to the Eastern seaboard-controlled turn-of-the-century monthlies, the audience is brought to a peak of the illustration era, the railroad-dominated 1880s through the 1920s. The complexity of Valley imagery is brought home further, by means of a strong component of retrospective, memorial literature which appeared in the 1920s under the authorship of regional writers and photographers. "Sheridan's Ride" concludes the journey. Throughout, it is argued that the Valley was by no means a singular image or even a series of images, but a structure that evolved and metamorphosed according to structures of vision that its empowered "authors"—primarily publishers, railroad executives and, looking forward to the 1930s, the Federal government—imposed. This process by no means eliminated the possibilities of regional or local identities, but it made those identities more of a challenge to locate and pinpoint.

Valley Road Material Culture

"From Corridor to Metaphor: Images of the Valley Road, 1860-1930," a small exhibition installed at the Shenandoah University History and Tourism Center in conjunction with the conference "The Valley Road of Virginia: History and Landscape, 1700-2000" (on view June 4-September 24, 2004), examined both regional and national structures of landscape in the Valley. The exhibition featured the following time frames: Pre-1860, antebellum Valley Imagery; 1861-1865, the Civil War and particularly the campaigns of Generals Thomas J. ("Stonewall") Jackson and Philip Sheridan; 1875-1900, the period of the first railroad and tourist boom, as well of veteran photography and memoirs; 1915-25, the period of retrospective renewal and particularly the writings and photographs of John W. Wayland; and the 1920s and 1930s, two decades of regional landscapes and identities as pictured by the Hugh Morrison, Jr. Studio in Woodstock. Images in the exhibition comprised maps, photographs, selected postcards, brochures, booklets, and advertising materials. The exhibition also featured a selection of modern prints of Valley Road sites made from negatives taken in the 1920s and '30s by the Morrison Studio.

Outline of Presentation:

**"The Sublimity of Battle and the Quietude of Remembrance:
Images of the Shenandoah Valley and the Valley Road as a Theater of War"**

Key Concept: The Sublimity of Battle in the Panoramic Theater of War, 1861-65: mapping and drawing spectacles for the magazines

Background: The Improved Agro-Pastoral-Traveler's Landscape, 1830s-1850s: topography, scenery, descriptive and pictorial literature

Concept: The Macro- and Micro-Scopic Marches of Jackson, 1862: plotting the Valley in large strokes and in detail

Concept: The Topographic Conquests of Sheridan, 1864: capturing and absorbing Confederate maps, completing the field

Concept: Sheridan's Ride: enduring equestrian emblems

Concept: Memorial Literature and Imagery, ca. 1880-1900: art and quietude in the fields of remembrance

Concept: Railroad- Embattled Tourism, ca. 1870-1890: the railroaded and reconstructed pastoral-mineral landscape; railroad tourism

Concept: Heritage Tourism, the 1920s and beyond: the automobile and the Valley Road; vernacular vision and historical tourism

Question: How would vernacular vision survive in a culture of corporatization and nationalization?