

Trapped in the Past : How Thomas Hines Escaped Prison, but not the Confines of Remembrance

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Abstract

This essay seeks to complicate prevailing interpretations of Thomas Henry Hines and his 1864 Northwest Conspiracy, an attempt to turn the tide of the Civil War through an invasion of Canada. After the failure Hines sought to, but could not inscribe his version of the plot into American memory by writing a series of essays for the *Southern Bivouac*. Ironically, Hines's account of his earlier escape from jail became a sensationalist hit instead of his serious narrative. Even though Hines tried to refashion himself from a renegade spy to an aspiring historian, he did not succeed. Hines may not have memorialized the Northwest Conspiracy, but he managed to solidify his place in history as a rogue. Like the Conspiracy itself, Hines's ideas were greater than his ability to produce. Ultimately, Hines could not gain a broad audience because he remained insular – trapped within his narrow perspective; in the end, he was an arrogant autobiographer than a thoughtful historian. Moreover, the Northwest Conspiracy may not have captured the collective imagination because it defied easy expectations about the Confederacy and Canada. Despite popular opinion, the connection between Hines and Canada reveals that the man and place alike can deceive upon first glance. In the end, a thrilling story or comfortable narrative may triumph over a more nuanced, problematic truth.

Keywords: *Remembrance, U.S. Civil War, Memory Studies, Northwest Conspiracy.*

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Introduction: Disappearing from History

Without Victor Hugo's *Les Misérables* Thomas Henry Hines would likely have slipped out of history. A Confederate soldier, Hines first read the French novel while incarcerated in a Union prison during the Civil War. After playing a key role in Brigadier General John Hunt Morgan's famous but failed 1863 raid, Hines and his compatriots sat moldering in the Ohio Penitentiary.² There, a brooding Hines promised himself that he 'would neither eat nor sleep until [he] had devised some means of escape.'³ Luckily, he found inspiration in Hugo's novel. After poring over the 'vivid delineations of the wonderful

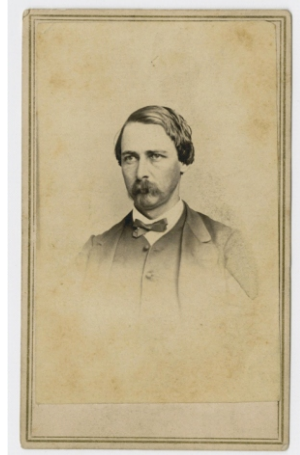


Figure 1¹

escapes of Jean Val Jean,' the captive devised his path to freedom.⁴ Following the example of the book's protagonist, Hines searched for a dry patch on his cell floor. Because mold sprouted throughout the dank room, Hines knew that an air pocket lay beneath one small area of unblemished wood. Like Jean, Hines converted this chamber into a tunnel.⁵ After weeks of clandestine digging, Hines and six comrades snuck into the night on November 27, 1863. Before his dramatic exit, Hines left his warden a note, replicating the words of another beloved character of French literature, Julie d'Etange: '*La patience est amère, mais son fruit est doux.*'⁶ Soon after this daring getaway, Hines convinced Confederate President Jefferson Davis that he was equipped to make a trek to Canada, where he would gather like-minded militants and wreak havoc in the Union.

Stationed near the Confederacy's Secret Service headquarters in Canada, Hines planned an event of greater proportions than his prison break, a grand scheme dubbed the Northwest Conspiracy. In Canada, Hines proposed to muster the forces of former prisoners and secret service members from the South as well as disgruntled Copperheads, Democrats who sought a peaceful end to the Civil War, from the North; he then arranged to mobilize this makeshift army and storm into Illinois, Missouri, Kentucky, Indiana and Ohio.⁷ He aimed to bring much-needed victories to the flagging Confederacy, aspiring to turn the tide of the war. Even though this elaborate plan failed, Hines evaded consequences once again. The

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instincts that served Hines in Ohio also helped him to survive this mission unscathed. Indeed, Hines eluded his checkered past to such an extent that he eventually ascended to the position of Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Kentucky. Remarkably, this slippery figure transformed himself, in title at least, into a respected defender of truth. At this later point in his life, Hines also hoped to reshape how he and the Conspiracy would be remembered.

To recast himself as a legitimate, rather than wily, hero, Hines assumed the role of historian as well as a judge; Hines tried to inscribe his version of the plot into American memory by writing a series of essays for the *Southern Bivouac*. However, *Century* bought out the bankrupt *Bivouac* before Hines could finish his tale. The affiliated *Battles and Leaders of the Civil War* entirely omitted Hines's pieces on the Conspiracy. Ironically, Hines's account of his escape from jail entered into *Battles and Leaders of the Civil War* and other sensationalist publications.⁸ Hines may not have memorialized the Northwest Conspiracy, but instead – and unintentionally – he solidified his place in history as a rogue.

This article recounts the Confederate soldier's ill-fated attempt to revise his narrative, especially the portion surrounding the Northwest Conspiracy. To start, this piece will focus on the scholarship of Canada during the Civil War, which confirms its status as an expected sanctuary for slaves as well as a place of unexpected shelter for Confederates. It will also explore the scant sources that directly mention Hines. These secondary sources, like publications of his time, confine Hines to his early role as a devil-may-care swindler.

In response, this essay seeks to complicate the understandably cartoonish, though inadequate, portrait of Hines. Even though Hines tried to refashion himself from a renegade spy to an aspiring historian, he did not succeed. His effort at reinvention was precarious from the start, considering the difficulty of crafting an alternate truth more compelling and theatrical than a scene pilfered from a novel. But Hines must also bear some responsibility for his relative anonymity. As with his intrigues during the Civil War, Hines's notions of his authorial talents surpassed his actual skills. In the end, Hines failed to attract the attention he craved due to his myopic approach. He privileged inscribing a favorable portrayal of himself into the records at the expense of his former allies. Thus, Hines misleadingly framed himself as a dispassionate chronicler of the truth

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intent on uniting people and the past. In practice, he concerned himself with the preservation of his version for posterity above all. As a result, it is somewhat fitting that Hines's reputation as a master of daring escapes, rather than of truthful narratives, prevailed.

A Brief Historiography: Simplifying History and Romanticizing Hines

Before delving into Hines's story, it is necessary to situate his tale within the literature. Although few scholars have focused on Hines at length, several have mentioned him. Both older and more recent histories have confined Hines's place to that of a Confederate soldier breaking out of prison. This essay complicates this narrative by demonstrating that Hines was more than an escape artist. That being said, although he could reshape his identity, he could not reconstruct his place in history, especially his ties to Canada.



Figure 2^o. Hines, Eastin, and Morgan, three Confederate Raiders

In a strict sense, Canada remained neutral in the Civil War; however, historians of the subject show such a classification oversimplifies Canada's stance. As Robin Winks notes, 'Ultimately, the Civil War was a shared experience,' a conflict felt on both sides of the border.¹⁰ In this vein, Oscar A. Kinchen demonstrates how Confederates like Bennett H. Young exploited the ambiguity of the border and attacked the U.S. from the north.¹¹ Even more, Frank L. Klement has revealed how Copperheads resisted, with or without force, the Union effort in the U.S. and Canada.¹²

In all, Canada, though not yet an independent nation, was a fluid space in both a territorial and a metaphorical sense. In one way, Canada had porous borders because other empires drew and redrew them. At the same

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time, the fur trade – a global market that followed an ordered, hierarchical structure – thrived in Canada.¹³ This network of people, goods, and ideas opened the Canadian frontier in a unique fashion. Thus, as a man of multiple identities himself, Hines felt comfortable in Canada, a place of various histories.

Even though James D. Horan rescued Hines and the Northwest Conspiracy from historical oblivion, Horan still framed Hines as a boisterous adventurer. In 1954, Horan, a journalist, novelist, and historian, wrote the first and only monograph devoted to Hines, titled *Confederate Agent: A Discovery in History*. As the subtitle implies, Horan uncovered Hines's personal papers before any other scholar. Without Horan's sleuthing – he 'had the curious feeling that I was operating a widespread detective agency' – historians would know far less about Thomas Henry Hines and his importance.¹⁴ That being said, Horan, a prolific author of Wild-West novels, at times made Hines seem as exciting as a member of Butch Cassidy's Bunch. By telling the Confederate soldier's story of 'narrow escapes, intrigue, brilliant failures, fantastic adventures... [Horan felt an internal battle between] the novelist and the historian'¹⁵ – the former ultimately won out. Despite his efforts, Horan's creative flourishes obscured the facts.

Since 1954, academics have not discussed Hines in such a sustained manner, but when mentioned, Hines again appears as a sensationalist caricature. In general, Hines often plays the role of a secondary or tertiary character, a name mentioned, but not remembered.¹⁶ More importantly, when historians discuss the Confederate soldier, they often place the same glossy mystique over Hines that Horan did. Frank Van der Linden mentions Hines a few times in his 2007 book, *The Dark Intrigue: The True Story of a Civil War Conspiracy*¹⁷ Van der Linden stresses the former spy's 'glorious visions of success,' downplaying Hines's eventual maturation into a state justice and aspiring historian.¹⁸ Even those seeking to distance themselves from Horan's prose replicate it.¹⁹ Edward M. Coffman, to give one example, outlines Hines as a 'romantic figure' with such an 'aura of romance' that 'fantasy compounds and excites' anyone who encounters the story.²⁰ Coffman claims that 'The glamour of Hines and his activities has cast a spell over writers' but fails to distinguish himself from the enchanted.²¹

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In short, scholars primarily portray Hines as a cunning Confederate soldier breaking free of a Union prison. Even when historians of popular culture mention the Northwest Conspiracy in passing, they still focus on Hines's fantastic escapes instead of his intricate plans. In equal measure, no one has adequately examined how Hines sought to rewrite his time in Canada through articles in the *Southern Bivouac*. Above all, Hines's inability to imprint his time in Canada onto the American consciousness reveals the divide between the past an individual seeks to promote and the past that is collectively remembered.

This article recounts Hines's transformation from a Confederate trickster to an aspiring historian. Some, such as Wood Gray, have noted that Hines 'so closely approximated... the spies of fiction.'²² But none has yet reconciled Hines's colorful youth with his mature years, his transformation from a conman to a chronicler.²³ In this paper I intend to fill this lacuna by providing information on each end of Hines's life. After all, the Confederate desired first to elude, and then to create, truth.

The Northwest Conspiracy: Failed Magic

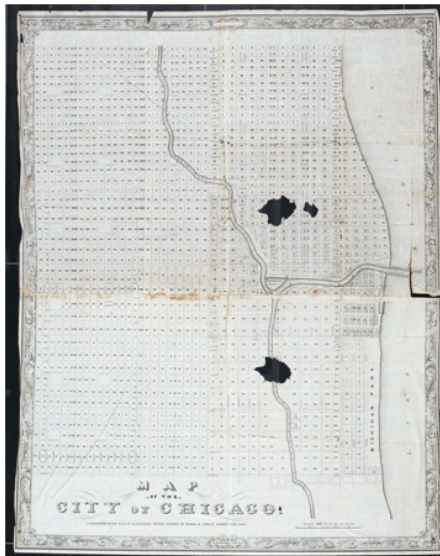


Figure 3. A Plan Wrinkled by Design²⁴

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In Hines's words, 'The year of 1864 opened gloomily for the Confederacy.'²⁵ Aware of this dire situation, Hines traveled to Virginia after fleeing prison. There, he sought out Confederate President Jefferson Davis; Hines hoped Davis would champion his sketch to capitalize upon undercurrents of support. After all, the Kentuckian had heard that various clandestine groups with secessionist sympathies would cooperate with Confederates liberated from Union prisons.

In the first week of January 1864, Hines visited Davis in his Richmond home to peddle his bold ideas.²⁶ Although the haggard Confederate president was exhausted from entertaining similarly lofty machinations, he could not resist Hines's proposal.²⁷ After hours of lively debate, Davis announced, 'It is a great plan... Give me some [men], even if only one or two, and I will have confidence in it.'²⁸ This proposition engendered the rudiments of the Northwest Conspiracy.

A few months later, Davis turned his informal vote of support into official policy. On March 16, 1864, Davis called upon Hines to lead the Northwest Conspiracy. Acting on behalf of the southern president, James A. Seddon, the Confederate Secretary of War, instructed Hines to wage 'enterprises of war against our enemies.'²⁹ As he had promised Davis, Hines would gather troops in Canada — including Confederates on the run, expansionist sects like the Knights of the Golden Circle, as well as groups of disaffected Northerners, such as the Copperheads and Sons of Liberty.³⁰ Blind to potential obstacles, Hines believed that his ragtag band would then travel south to destabilize the Northwest United States.³¹ Hines wanted to start this endeavor at Camp Douglas in Chicago; he envisioned liberating fellow Confederates from northern prisons with force and flair. Then, with this small army at his disposal, he would raid Illinois, Missouri, Ohio, Kentucky, and Indiana, toppling the Union strongholds and then persuading the fallen states to join the Secessionist cause. With Panglossian confidence, Hines expected his mission would catalyze the decisive defeat of the North. One contemporary observer, I. Winslow Ayer, worried that, if successful, this plot would bring 'a most terrible disaster' to the U.S.³² Taking Hines's boasting at face value, Ayer proclaimed that the conspiracy was 'one of the most remarkable events of the war.'³³ Even if Winslow overestimated 'the magnitude, the sagacity, the completeness of this Northwest Conspiracy,' his comments convey how the plot was imagined

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at the time.³⁴ Rather than Hines's fantasy alone, this was viewed as a legitimate threat that assumed a life of its own.

However, the distance between theory and practice proved unbridgeable for Hines; rather than amassing the ranks he imagined, Hines lost potential accomplices when they learned more details of his projections. In this sense, the vast scope of the undertaking augured doom even before it began. Indeed, 'the savage hordes of Jeff. Davis' that Winslow feared never united their forces.³⁵ Certainly, the conspirators underestimated how fickle their potential allies could be. Clement L. Vallandigham, leader of the Sons of Liberty, broke negotiations after a series of unsuccessful meetings with Jacob Thompson, head of the Confederate Secret Service in Canada. Upon receiving funds from the Confederates, the Copperheads initially joined the plot but later reneged on their promises. As time passed, these more pragmatic northerners abandoned the project.

In deference to wavering support, Hines delayed the charge again and again. He moved the insurrection's start from July 20 to August 16 and finally to August 29, 1864 – the date of the Democratic National Convention in Chicago.³⁶ Although the cabal temporarily thought that the convention would be an ideal time for action, a traitor informed the Union government. Hence, guards at Camp Douglas preemptively ended the threat.³⁷ Any hopes of the Northwest Conspiracy coming to fruition faded away when Hines and 60 additional Confederates from Toronto found themselves stranded in Chicago without reinforcement.

Even the Confederates involved with the Conspiracy later acknowledged that the mission contained more bravado than substance. Maurice Langhorn, one of its participants, admitted as much before a military court in 1865:

The escaped rebel prisoners in Canada have contemplated five thousand raids. They have planned to sack Buffalo, Sandusky, Ogdensburg, Detroit, and other places; but a great deal of this was braggadocio. In Canada there were some eight or ten of us boarding together, and, when we got an extra bottle of whisky, we had the most bombastic talks and concocted the most terrific raids...³⁸

With words such as 'braggadocio,' 'bombastic,' and 'most' (twice), Langhorn communicates the lack of initiative behind the overblown language. Moreover, the hyperbolic estimate of 'five thousand

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raids betrays the blustering, scattered nature of their ambitions. The word “concocted” conveys the fabricated quality of their aims. Instead of focused strategizing, Hines’s troops created fantasies of victory – fueled by the idealistic haze of intoxication.

Interestingly, Langhorn’s words apply just as well to Hines’s disappearance from the Northwest Conspiracy; despite the failure of his larger venture, Hines added a glamorous twist to his retreat to Canada. As he had in the Ohio Penitentiary, the captain relied upon a ruse. In the aftermath of the Conspiracy, and after days of hiding from prowling Union soldiers in Chicago’s streets, Hines faced almost-certain capture. But when the soldiers entered the house in which Hines had sequestered himself, they only found a sick woman lying prostrate in bed. Like a child engaged in a game of hide-and-seek, Hines lay tucked under the mattress. The next day, which happened to be a rainy one, Hines escaped under the veil of his umbrella as visitors flocked to the woman’s bed to wish her well.³⁹ Then Hines snuck into Cincinnati, where he executed his final trick; he eluded Union troops by locking himself in a closet covered with mortared bricks.⁴⁰

Canada provided Hines refuge from retributions as well as inroads to transition into normal life. Following Robert E. Lee’s surrender to Ulysses S. Grant at Appomattox on April 9, 1865, Hines finally acknowledged that the Confederacy had been defeated. Less than a year after his plot had collapsed, the Southern cause now was lost. Ever averse to confronting the harshness of reality, Hines made two hasty decisions: he married a fellow Kentuckian Nancy Sproule in their home state and then fled alone to Canada, the place of his ruined project.⁴¹

Unsurprisingly, Hines’s customary drama marked his exit to the North. As he entered a port on the Detroit River, bystanders mistook the mustachioed Hines for John Wilkes Booth, the infamous actor who assassinated President Lincoln only two days before.⁴² After scrambling to a nearby ferry, Hines held the boat’s crew at gunpoint and forced the other passengers to leave. Only then did Hines return safely to a Confederate community in Toronto.

Even though he initially suffered from the melancholy of exile, Hines kept himself busy by edifying his mind alongside former allies. In Canada, he studied law with former U.S. Vice President and Confederate, John C. Breckinridge.⁴³ In March 1866, Hines finished his studies with Albert Pike, another former Confederate, in Memphis.⁴⁴ In the following years, Hines

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returned to the Bluegrass State, raised his family, and ascended to the Kentucky Court of Appeals. It seemed Hines had performed his most miraculous magic trick to date – from disreputable renegade to respected judge.

The Letters: How Hines Planned to Scam Remembrance



Figure 4. Hines's Compliments to The Lost Cause⁴⁵

Fifteen years after planning the Conspiracy, Hines devised how to memorialize it. No doubt, the allure of being celebrated lubricated Hines's shift from trickster to historian of his own life. Over time, Hines collected thousands of pages related to his experiences. As his archives demonstrate, Hines compulsively hoarded all things related to his service in the Civil War. Memorabilia, personal photographs, and other detritus fill the 2.84 cubic feet of his archive.⁴⁶ Although this collection suggests Hines's predilection for preserving, it also indicates something bigger: an eye to the future. The former Confederate Captain hoped to control his narrative arc, particularly regarding the Conspiracy.

In an October 21, 1880 letter to a friend, John B. Castleman, Hines first revealed his desire to forge a tale of his exploits during the war; in doing so, Hines simultaneously hid his dreams of self-aggrandizement.⁴⁷ In this missive, Hines auditions his new identity as a reputable chronicler.

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Here, he adopts the syntax of the collective – disclosing a hope to memorialize while obscuring his stake in the enterprise. Notably, Hines couches his intentions in the plural pronouns and diction of fraternity. The former Confederate Captain claims that he wants to write the history of the Northwest Conspiracy, not for his own sake, but instead for ‘the whole list of our comrades and ourselves as well.’⁴⁸ Inclusivity marks his intent and to that end, Hines uses an ‘I’ only once in his note. On every other occasion, Hines employs ‘we’ to describe his wish to write about his time in Canada. Indeed, in the last sentence of the letter, Hines proposes that ‘we should take this whole matter in hand.’⁴⁹ Thus, he evokes the image of a group, rather than an individual, writing together to preserve a common memory.

Notably, Hines characterizes his yearning to record his adventures as an ethical exercise instead of a private aspiration. In the letter, Hines utilizes moralistic language, choosing words such as ‘duty’ (twice).⁵⁰ With this diction, Hines construes writing as an extension of his soldierly mission – a lingering assignment he feels compelled to finish on behalf of his fellow Confederates and perhaps even Canada. Moreover, Hines uses ‘due’ in its adjectival and noun forms.⁵¹ For Hines “It is due” that he writes on his countrymen’s behalf and ‘in due course’ that he will release his story. Both cases of “due” convey the temporal necessity of Hines’s intervention; enough time has passed that this story must be told and Hines frames himself as the only person up to the task. Above all, these words lend an air of nobility to Hines’s endeavour as a public servant and soldier of memory.

In addition to establishing his status as a principled author, Hines insinuates his credentials as an historian through rhetorical appeals to his readers’ ethos and logos. From the start, Hines stakes his privileged position; after all, he led the Conspiracy and had contemplated its significance since its breakdown. The Captain boasts of his unique insider perspective, a ‘familiarity that no one else had.’⁵² Besides professing intimacy with the plot, Hines argues that he alone ‘must arrange the *data*.’⁵³ With this profession of his singular ability to arrange, as well as to possess, knowledge, Hines further professes his suitability. In the Kentuckian’s view, his intelligence will allow him to compile the facts and corroborate his first-hand observations.

Thus, Hines suggests that in the past he has served as the protector of the truth – a truth curated through thousands of pages of personal papers –

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and in the future he should also be its teller. Hines recognized that the time was ripe to gain public approval and insert his narrative into history. As Castleman noted in his response to Hines's letter on October 28, 1880, 'Time has softened the asperities of the war.'⁵⁴ Whether correct in their assumptions or not, the friends agreed that the public was ready to listen to a Southerner's outlook without latent animosity. For Hines, then, this 'singular and misunderstood period' needed a historian dedicated to rectifying misconceptions – Captain Thomas Henry Hines of course would fill that role.⁵⁵

To be fair, Hines did not simply seek to record the Northwest Conspiracy to protect his name before history. It would therefore be harsh to declaim his motives as purely base ones. Indeed, Hines's desire to 'vindicate the people of the Northwest who were hostile to the war' seems sincere at least to an extent.⁵⁶ Judge Robert Carter Richardson, who supported the Union during the Civil War, described Hines as an honorable man, the 'ideal jurist ... exceptionally free from all judicial bias.'⁵⁷ As well as exhibiting a commitment to veracity before the court, Hines appeared devoted to honesty before history. At least on the surface, Hines hoped to wield his cunning, not to elude, but instead to weave the truth. Hines trumpeted that he diverted the creative energies he once used to escape the Ohio Penitentiary, and dream up the Northwest Conspiracy, to write about them. Of course, Hines did change in the time since his service in the Civil War.

However, as his letters to Castleman indicate, Hines had not fully abandoned his old ways. Throughout, Hines displayed a characteristic craftiness. He seemed to be aware that he must sell his ideas, keeping himself as the center of attention while paying lip service to others. In this sense, Hines was more of a memoirist than a historian. Admittedly, even historians, though committed to the truth, still must *perform* to captivate their audience. The historian must create a scene out of the past, choose its characters, and stage the events into a coherent narrative.⁵⁸ Perhaps Hines

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felt comfortable adopting this theatrical aspect of a chronicler.

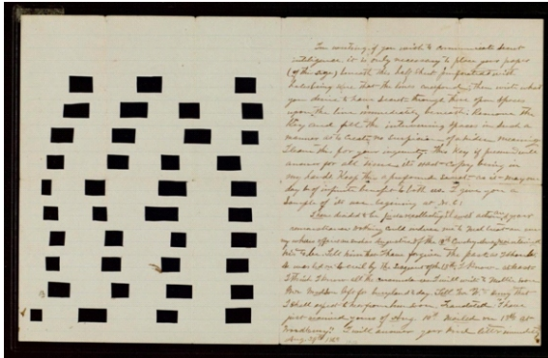


Figure 5. Hines could not fill in the blanks of his own story⁵⁹

In December 1886, six years after Hines first expressed his intent to write a history of the Northwest Conspiracy, he finally got his chance. This opportunity surfaced through the *Southern Bivouac*, a magazine devoted to the remembrance of the Confederacy. In a series of monthly installments, Hines planned to present his account ‘from a regard for the truth of history.’⁶⁰ Unfortunately for him, The Century Company bought the *Southern Bivouac* in May of 1887 after Hines had completed only a few articles.⁶¹ As a result, Hines could not finish his version of the Conspiracy. Even if granted more time, Hines likely would not have penned a bestseller. In fact, Hines’s completed essays cast doubt on his skill as a chronicler. Though he dreamed of conjuring his new narrative through a final sleight of hand, he failed.

Admittedly, in the several articles written for the *Southern Bivouac* between December 1886 and April 1887, Hines adopted at least the guise of a good historian. Hines spoke of himself in the third person singular, using the syntax of the distanced scholar.⁶² In addition, Hines provided ample evidence through careful citations of the various documents he had kept over the years. Most often, Hines included numerous official letters to support his claims. Perhaps to appease those who declaimed him as a spy,

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Hines even provided ciphers to decode his secret messages.⁶³ In this way, he infused his past persona with an air of gravitas, if not repentance.

However, Hines's pieces in *Southern Bivouac* suggest that he was not the impartial historian that he had claimed he would be to Castleman. More specifically, Hines displayed pettiness when evaluating others' actions. Often, he disparaged his comrades for failing to possess a proper degree of dedication. For instance, he complained peevishly about the northerners who left him stranded in Chicago over twenty years ago; to Hines, these organizations proved to be 'quite as harmless and as impotent for any practical purpose as an association of children would have been.'⁶⁴ In one fell swoop, the acerbic Hines emasculated and infantilized his compatriots. Additionally, Hines bracketed the names of the various clandestine groups with quotation marks, as if questioning the very existence of these societies. Hines also sarcastically referred to the Sons of Liberty's 'Ritual and Declaration of Principles'— he criticized that their hollow preaching lacked the corresponding follow-through.⁶⁵ To level this opprobrium at the Sons was particularly ironic considering that Hines had pontificated to Castleman about his wish to immortalize a sense of brotherhood. Ultimately then, Hines characterized himself as a potential hero betrayed by inept subordinates. As a result, Hines was not an objective historian and relied upon a self-selected array of documents. In an effort to vindicate his reputation for posterity, he blamed the failure on his collaborators. Nonetheless, Hines seemed to believe that this task would proceed just as smoothly as his earlier transformations. Still a narcissistic performer, Hines concerned himself more with his image than the truth.

When *The Century Company* absorbed the *Southern Bivouac* to replace their *Battles and Leaders from the Civil War* series, they edged out Hines's plans to glorify himself and the Conspiracy.⁶⁶ After all, *Battles and Leaders*, which had run from November 1884 to November 1887, sought to ease lingering animosity between Northerners and Southerners. Richard Gilder, editor of *The Century Company*, outlined the project as a form of reconciliation. He hoped that his new project would also increase 'respect for each other ... the strongest of a reunified people.'⁶⁷ With this desire to revive the past and ease current tensions, Gilder shared only some of Hines's objectives. While Gilder hoped the new *Southern Bivouac* would be a continuation of this Reconstruction vision, Hines remained trapped in old grievances.

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Around this time, Gilder also moved ahead to expand the purview of the *Battles and Leaders* series; Hines's time in Canada was not remembered in this set. Initially, Gilder allotted the task to Robert Underwood Johnson, a writer and diplomat. Many years later, Peter Cozzens, a retired State Department agent and military historian, took over. The two editions and many reprints of *Battles and Leaders* spanned thousands of pages and became a commercial and academic success, eventually spawning a six-volume opus.⁶⁸ In 2006, Timothy P. Caron deemed *Battles and Leaders* 'the cornerstone of Civil War historiography.'⁶⁹ Another historian even mentioned Homer, Herodotus, and Tacitus in the same breath as the authors of *Battles and Leaders*.⁷⁰ However, Hines seldom appears in either edition. Beyond the occasional mention of him as one of General Morgan's lackeys, Hines is invisible in Johnson's version. Similarly, Cozzens granted Hines's escape from a Union prison only a few pages.⁷¹ The story of the Northwest Conspiracy that Hines most wanted to preserve for future generations was lost.

Other publications continued to give voice to a part, but not the whole, of Hines's tale. Another title under the *Company*'s aegis – the popular *Famous Adventures and Prison Escapes of the Civil War*–included Hines's prison escape narrative.⁷² Once again, *Century* chose his story of intrigue over articles that Hines considered vital to his claim as a leader of the Conspiracy. The presence of Hines's narrative in the 2002 collection of factual and fictional tales titled *The Greatest Escape Stories Ever Told* reveals where the Confederate lies in American memory: he plays the role of an entertaining hustler. The editor of *The Greatest Escape*, Derren Brown, notes that men like Hines exude 'daring and romance,' exciting rather than instructing audiences.⁷³ To future readers, then, Hines would not morph into anything far beyond a glamorous conman.⁷⁴

Conclusion: Confined in the Prison of Memory

Although Hines never managed to propagate his account of the Northwest Conspiracy, at least one side of his identity remains. Ultimately, it may be fitting that Hines is remembered as a trickster. When first considering to write about his experiences, Hines used moralistic rhetoric, rather than the cover of night or an umbrella, to obfuscate his desire for fame; his letters

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suggest a latent belief that historians must also be conmen, skilled in narrative manipulation. Moreover, when he later tried to immortalize the Conspiracy through his articles in the *Southern Bivouac*, he operated with a biased perspective; Hines submitted to the impulse to aggrandize himself while diminishing his comrades. Hines could not attain, nor fully record, the complexity of his dual drives as an avoider and a creator of truth.

But Hines's failed stint as a historian trying to craft a more nuanced identity also provides lessons on Canada. As Canada and Hines reveal, identity and history are malleable and can shape each other. Indeed, Hines's forays into Canada, and his outsized plans to conquer the Northwest, stretch the conventional Civil War narrative. Moreover, Hines's account challenges the common notion of the Civil War as a conflict between the North and the South, a battle conceived and waged within the U.S. boundaries. Hines's exploits in Canada reveal the vast Confederate Secret Service network stationed in Canada, challenging the insular view of the Civil War as a domestic affair. That being said, Hines's jail-break narrative would always remain more alluring and neater than the convoluted story that stumbles along the border between countries and comprehension.

Hines could not transform himself into an unbiased or generous historian. Hines's yearnings to elevate himself diminished his credibility as a chronicler. Although he intended to immortalize himself as a hero, his extant articles mostly reveal him as a small-minded man. In blaming others, Hines exposed his flaws. Certainly, he seemed to lack the nuance to understand that a historian cannot dictate what will be remembered. Hines sought to be his autobiographer, a task that strains even the most impartial of judges. Besides, memory does not move along a straight line; complex cultural communities help decide who and what remains for posterity. Hines may have once been able to don the mask of Jean Val Jean, but in the end, he could not escape the confusing confines of collective remembrance or the cramped prison of his limitations.

Endnotes :

- ¹ 46m97: Box 6, item 80, Thomas Henry Hines papers, 1772-1954, bulk 1860-1889, University of Kentucky Special Collections Research Center.
- ² On June 11, 1863, Morgan and his almost 2,500 Confederate cavalymen embarked from Sparta, Tennessee on a raid to distract the Union Army. As the days passed, Morgan moved his troops through Kentucky, Indiana, West

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Virginia, and Ohio. Even though Morgan faced defeat at the Ohio River on July 26, 1863, the marauders captured thousands of soldiers, stole goods and money from various towns, and terrorized the Union.

³ Basil W. Duke, and Richard W. Knott, eds. *Southern Bivouac: June 1885-May 1886* (North Carolina: Broadfoot Publishing Co., 1992), p. 50.

⁴ Basil W. Duke, and Richard W. Knott, *Southern Bivouac*, p. 50.

⁵ Basil W. Duke, and Richard W. Knott, *Southern Bivouac*, p. 50.

⁶ Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Oeuvres complètes De J. J. Rousseau. Avec Des Notes Historiques* (Vol. 2. Paris: Firmin Didot frères, éditeurs, 1861), p. 54. In English, this reads ‘patience is bitter, but its fruit is sweet.’

⁷ Nostalgic for the Jacksonian era, Copperheads sought to end the Civil War and return to the days of a unified country. These leaders often emerged from the Midwest and belonged to a faction of the Democratic Party who wanted to conclude the conflict peacefully. That being said, some Copperheads such as Clement L. Vallandigham, an Ohio politician, met with Confederates in Niagara Falls about the Northwest Conspiracy.

⁸ This appeared in the June 1885 installment of the *Southern Bivouac*.

⁹ “General John Morgan, Captain George B. Eastin, and Captain Thomas Hines.” ExploreKYHistory.. <https://explorekyhistory.ky.gov/files/show/1663> Accessed May 4, 2020.

¹⁰ Robin W. Winks, *The Civil War Years: Canada and the United States* (Montréal: McGill-Queens University Press, 1998), p. 380.

¹¹ Young was a friend of Hines and leader of the famous 1864 St. Alban’s Raid, a scheme not dissimilar from Hines’s own.

¹² Frank L. Klement, *Dark Lanterns: Secret Political Societies, Conspiracies, and Treason Trials in the Civil War* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1989). This work by Klement is most germane to my own study. With *Dark Lanterns*, Klement deflated sensationalist accounts of plots such as the Northwest Conspiracy and deepened our understanding of “dark lantern” societies. I grant that the Conspiracy was overblown, an impossible Confederate dream. But for my purposes the feasibility of the project remains somewhat beyond the scope of this piece. I take for granted the lunacy of this plan and analyze why textbooks seldom mention it.

¹³ See Jay Gitlin, “Empires of Trade, Hinterlands of Settlement,” in *The Oxford History of the American West*, ed. Clyde Milner et al., chapter 3, pp. 79-113.

¹⁴ James D. Horan, *Confederate Agent: A Discovery in History* (New York: Crown Publishers, 1954), p. xv.

¹⁵ James D. Horan, *Confederate Agent*, p. xviii.

¹⁶ Most speak of General Morgan, the man Hines led raids with, instead of Hines

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himself.

¹⁷ See pages 100, 101, 105, 176.

¹⁸ Frank Van der Linden, *The Dark Intrigue: The True Story of a Civil War Conspiracy* (Golden, CO: Fulcrum Pub., 2007), p. 101.

¹⁹ George Fort Milton and Harvey H. Smith move even further into the realm of fiction when they describe Hines.

²⁰ Edward M. Coffman, "Captain Hines' Adventures in the Northwest Conspiracy", *The Register of the Kentucky Historical Society* 63.1 (1965): p. 38.

²¹ Edward M. Coffman, "Captain Hines' Adventures in the Northwest Conspiracy", p.31, p.38.

²² Wood Gray, *The Hidden Civil War: the Story of the Copperheads* (New York: The Viking press, 1942), p. 207.

²³ Although near synonyms, the words historian and chronicler do not carry the same meaning. In using the two words interchangeably to describe Hines, this essay does not intend to confuse distinctions between them. Instead, it seeks to suggest how Hines's approach to writing history resembles that of a nostalgic chronicler more so than a detached academic.

²⁴ 46m97: Case 4, drawer 8, Thomas Henry Hines papers, 1772-1954, bulk 1860-1889, University of Kentucky Special Collections Research Center.

²⁵ Basil W. Duke, and Richard W. Knott, eds. *Southern Bivouac: June 1885-May 1886* (North Carolina: Broadfoot Publishing Co., 1992), p. 437.

²⁶ Duane P. Schultz, *The Dahlgren Affair: Terror and Conspiracy in the Civil War* (New York: Norton, 1999), p. 40.

²⁷ Duane P. Schultz, *The Dahlgren Affair*, p. 42.

²⁸ Duane P. Schultz, *The Dahlgren Affair*, p. 44.

²⁹ Duke, Basil W., and Richard W. Knott, eds. *Southern Bivouac: June 1886-December 1886*. North Carolina: Broadfoot Publishing Co, 1992, p. 443.

³⁰ See Frank L. Klement, *Dark Lanterns: Secret Political Societies, Conspiracies, and Treason Trials in the Civil War* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1989).

³¹ Basil W. Duke, and Richard W. Knott, eds. *Southern Bivouac: June 1885-May 1886* (North Carolina: Broadfoot Publishing Co., 1992), p. 443.

³² I. Winslow Ayer, *The Great Northwestern Conspiracy in All Its Startling Details: The Plot to Plunder and Burn Chicago—release of All Rebel Prisoners—seizure of Arsenals—raids from Canada—plot to Burn New York, Piracy on the Lakes—parts for the Sons of Liberty—trial of Chicago Conspirators—inside Views of the Temples of the Sons of Liberty—names of Prominent Members ...* (Chicago: Rounds & James, Book and Job Printers,

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1865), p. iv.

³³ I. Winslow Ayer, *The Great Northwestern Conspiracy in All Its Startling Details*, p. iii.

³⁴ I. Winslow Ayer, *The Great Northwestern Conspiracy in All Its Startling Details*, p. iv.

³⁵ I. Winslow Ayer, *The Great Northwestern Conspiracy in All Its Startling Details*, p. iv.

³⁶ James D. Horan, *Confederate Agent: A Discovery in History* (New York: Crown Publishers, 1954), pp. 192-193.

³⁷ James D. Horan, *Confederate Agent: A Discovery in History*, pp. 192-193.

³⁸ 46m97: Box 2 folder 28, Thomas Henry Hines papers, 1772-1954, bulk 1860-1889, University of Kentucky Special Collections Research Center.

³⁹ Matthews, Gary Robert. 2005. *Basil Wilson Duke, CSA: the Right Man in the Right Place*. Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, p. 252.

⁴⁰ James D. Horan, *Confederate Agent: A Discovery in History* (New York: Crown Publishers, 1954), pp. 200-206.

⁴¹ Some Confederates resettled in British Honduras and others created the New Virginia Colony in Mexico. But the most popular destination proved to be Brazil. Named Confederados, thousands of ex-Confederates settled around the country and even founded the city Americana, which still bears the name today. Castleman, for example, went to France and studied medicine.

⁴² James D. Horan, *Confederate Agent: A Discovery in History* (New York: Crown Publishers, 1954), pp. 200-261, 262.

⁴³ H. Levin, *The Lawyers and Lawmakers of Kentucky* (Chicago: Lewis Pub. Co., 1897), p. 102.

⁴⁴ H. Levin, *The Lawyers and Lawmakers of Kentucky*, p. 102.

⁴⁵ 46m97: Box 2, folder 26, Thomas Henry Hines papers, 1772-1954, bulk 1860-1889, University of Kentucky Special Collections Research Center.

⁴⁶ Among his many carte de visites, letters, and other personal documents, perhaps the most notable item of Hines's collection is a saw (one of thirteen) that he sent to John Castleman in October 1864 while the latter suffered in a military prison in Indianapolis under the death sentence.

⁴⁷ Castleman was related to John C. Breckinridge, the man who taught Hines law in Canada. In addition, Castleman served as a brigadier general for the CSA and published his autobiography, *Active Service*, in 1917.

⁴⁸ Basil W. Duke, and Richard W. Knott, eds. *Southern Bivouac: June 1885-May 1886* (North Carolina: Broadfoot Publishing Co., 1992), p. 437.

⁴⁹ Basil W. Duke, and Richard W. Knott, eds. *Southern Bivouac*, p. 437.

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- ⁵⁰ Basil W. Duke, and Richard W. Knott, eds. *Southern Bivouac*, p. 437.
- ⁵¹ Basil W. Duke, and Richard W. Knott, eds. *Southern Bivouac*, p. 437.
- ⁵² Basil W. Duke, and Richard W. Knott, eds. *Southern Bivouac*, p. 437.
- ⁵³ Basil W. Duke, and Richard W. Knott, eds. *Southern Bivouac*, p. 437.
- ⁵⁴ Basil W. Duke, and Richard W. Knott, eds. *Southern Bivouac*, p. 437.
- ⁵⁵ Basil W. Duke, and Richard W. Knott, eds. *Southern Bivouac*, p. 437.
- ⁵⁶ Basil W. Duke, and Richard W. Knott, eds. *Southern Bivouac*, p. 437.
- ⁵⁷ Levin, H. *The Lawyers and Lawmakers of Kentucky*(Chicago: Lewis Pub. Co., 1897), pp. 107-108. *The Biographical Encyclopædia of Kentucky of the dead and living men of the nineteenth century* (Cincinnati: J.M. Armstrong, 1878), p. 264.
- ⁵⁸ Paul Ricœur, *Memory, History, Forgetting* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006), p. 4.
- ⁵⁹ 46m97: Box 3, folder 16, Thomas Henry Hines papers, 1772-1954, bulk 1860-1889, University of Kentucky Special Collections Research Center.
- ⁶⁰ Moore, Rayburn S. "'A Distinctively Southern Magazine': The 'Southern Bivouac'". *The Southern Literary Journal* 2, no. 2 (1970): 51-65. www.jstor.org/stable/20077384. Accessed May 4, 2020. p. 51. Duke, Basil W., and Richard W. Knott, eds. *Southern Bivouac: June 1886 December 1886*. (North Carolina: Broadfoot Publishing Co, 1992), p. 328.
- ⁶¹ Matthews, Gary Robert. 2005. *Basil Wilson Duke, CSA: the Right Man in the Right Place* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky), p. 252.
- ⁶² Basil W. Duke, and Richard W. Knott, eds. *Southern Bivouac: June 1885-May 1886* (North Carolina: Broadfoot Publishing Co., 1992), p. 442.
- ⁶³ Basil W. Duke, and Richard W. Knott, eds. *Southern Bivouac*, p. 443.
- ⁶⁴ Basil W. Duke, and Richard W. Knott, eds. *Southern Bivouac*, p. 442.
- ⁶⁵ Basil W. Duke, and Richard W. Knott, eds. *Southern Bivouac*, pp. 504-505.
- ⁶⁶ Caron, Timothy P. "How Changeable Are the Events of War": National Reconciliation in the "Century Magazine's 'Battles and Leaders of the Civil War'" *American Periodicals* 16.2 (2006): 151-71. Accessed May 4, 2020. www.jstor.org/stable/20770956. p. 151.
- ⁶⁷ Gilder, Richard Watson. "Topics of the Time." *Century Magazine*, October 1884.
- ⁶⁸ Caron, Timothy P. "'How Changeable Are the Events of War': National Reconciliation in the 'Century Magazine's 'Battles and Leaders of the Civil War'" *American Periodicals* 16.2 (2006): 151-71. Accessed May 4, 2020. p. 152. Over 250,000 people read it while in circulation the magazine series at its height. From 127,000 to 250,000.

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- ⁶⁹ Caron, Timothy P. “How Changeable Are the Events of War”: National Reconciliation in the “Century Magazine’s “Battles and Leaders of the Civil War.”” *American Periodicals* 16.2 (2006): 151-71. Accessed May 4, 2020. www.jstor.org/stable/20770956. p. 152.
- ⁷⁰ Miller, C.T. (1958). [Review of the book *Battles and Leaders of the Civil War*]. *Civil War History* 4(2), 208-210. To supplement the various reprints of the original four editions, in 2002 and 2007, respectively Cozzens published volumes 5 and 6 of *Battles and Leaders*, adding even more legitimacy to this story as the official one.
- ⁷¹ Peter Cozzens, ed. *Battles and Leaders of the Civil War, Vol. 6*. (Champaign, University of Illinois Press, 2007), p. 341.
- ⁷² Fewer than 30 years after its first release in 1885, *Famous Adventures and Prison Escapes of the Civil War* underwent six editions.
- ⁷³ Darren Brown, *The Greatest Escape Stories Ever Told* (Guilford: The Lyons Press, 2003), p.1. Even more, the essay’s title *General Morgan’s Flight from the North* shifts agency away from its mastermind and author, Hines himself. That being said, Hines wrote this piece, so it was ultimately his choice to give Morgan the spotlight.
- ⁷⁴ Despite Hines’s beliefs, one cannot transform into a historian with a snap of the fingers. No number of magic tricks can fool an audience that Hines’s articles actually stand as legitimate research. Although historians appeal to the pathos and logos of their readers, they must first establish their ethos. Hines did not realize this last but fundamental point of credibility. Historians must convince and should entertain but they must base their performance on the primary sources. Hines did not let the archives tell him how to write; he told them how to fit his narrative. It is no wonder that others were left to create Hines’s remembrance for him. In the end, Hines suffered from a myopic vision that could not go beyond the trick and look to the past.