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## "To Verify From the Records Every Statement of Fact Given": The Story of the Creation of The Personal Memoirs of Ulysses S. Grant: The Complete Annotated Edition

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**“To Verify From the Records Every  
Statement of Fact Given”:  
The Story of the Creation of *The Personal  
Memoirs of Ulysses S. Grant: The Complete  
Annotated Edition***

*by David S. Nolen and Louie P. Gallo*

For over 130 years, *The Personal Memoirs of U. S. Grant* has been considered a classic of American letters. The story of one of the most prominent figures of the Civil War, told in his own voice, became an immediate bestseller in the late nineteenth century. Ever since its publication, Grant’s book has captivated readers and been utilized by scholars seeking insight into the Civil War era. However, questions of accuracy and even authorship have persisted, and many passages that would have been understandable to an audience familiar with the events and people of that time have become more obscure to the modern reader. What was once considered common knowledge of the Civil War has changed. Even though modern readers have access to numerous editions of the *Memoirs*, the lack of a comprehensively annotated edition of the text has created barriers to understanding and appreciating Grant’s work in context.

In an interesting twist to the story, the effort to bring this American classic to a modern audience has taken place in Mississippi, the state where Grant was launched to national prominence in 1863. In this article, the authors will address the dramatic story of the writing of the *Memoirs*, discuss their enduring popularity, and describe the effort at Mississippi State University to create an annotated edition of Grant’s text that is more accessible for a modern audience.

The history of Grant’s *Memoirs* goes back much further than the

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actual writing process, as publishers had proposed the idea of Grant writing his own story for many years. One of the earliest serious attempts to persuade Grant to write his memoirs came in October 1881 when author Mark Twain, a close friend of Grant, tried to convince him to write about his life and experiences. Grant brushed off the idea, claiming that he did not consider himself a writer. He asserted that other books about his life experiences did not sell and that anything he wrote would result in the same fate.<sup>1</sup>

Another opportunity for Grant came along in November 1883 when publisher Alfred D. Worthington proposed that Grant write a book about his experiences. Worthington was willing to guarantee at least \$25,000 for his efforts, but Grant declined the offer in a letter, stating, "I feel much complimented by your proposition but I schrinck [sic] from such a task."<sup>2</sup>

Grant's circumstances had changed so dramatically by the summer of 1884, however, that he began to seriously consider other offers to write. On May 2, 1884, nearly three years after his discussion with Twain, Grant received troubling news from his associate Ferdinand Ward. Grant & Ward, an investment firm in which Grant and his family had heavily invested, was in serious financial trouble. Ward, a successful Wall Street financier with a reputation for savvy investing, informed Grant that he needed \$150,000 to secure Grant's investments with the firm and the supporting bank. Grant, who had placed significant confidence in Ward, took him at his word and obtained a personal loan from his wealthy friend William Vanderbilt. According to most accounts, Grant was unaware of the impending danger. In truth, Ward had been running what was essentially a Ponzi scheme, using the same collateral to back up multiple loans. In May 1884, the scheme unraveled. On May 6, Grant made his way into the headquarters of Grant & Ward, where his son Buck was waiting. Buck stated, "Father, everything is bursted [sic] and we cannot get a cent out of the concern."<sup>3</sup> After it was all said and done, Grant lost his initial \$100,000 investment, as well as the \$150,000 he had borrowed

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<sup>1</sup> Mark Twain, *Autobiography of Mark Twain, The Complete and Authoritative Edition*, ed. Harriet Smith (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010), 1:71.

<sup>2</sup> A. D. Worthington & Co. to Ulysses S. Grant, November 7, 1883; Ulysses S. Grant to A. D. Worthington, November 9, 1883. In *The Papers of Ulysses S. Grant*, ed. John Y. Simon (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 2009), 31: 163n.

<sup>3</sup> *New York Herald*, May 10, 1884. In *The Papers of Ulysses S. Grant*, 31: 144n.

from Vanderbilt.<sup>4</sup>

After the massive failure of Grant & Ward, Grant was penniless and needed to earn income for his family. Thus, he was forced to start a literary career. In June 1884, he agreed to write four articles about his experience in the Civil War for *Century* magazine's "Battles and Leaders" series. On July 1, Century Publishing issued Grant a \$500 check, his first income from the project.<sup>5</sup> Grant spent most of the summer writing at the family's retreat in Long Branch, New Jersey.

On top of all the family's financial struggles, the first indication of a problem with Grant's health also appeared during this time. One day that summer, while eating a peach, he felt a sharp pain in his throat. At first, his wife Julia presumed he had been stung by an insect inside the peach. She urged him to consult a doctor, but Grant ignored her requests. Instead, he continued to work on his articles, and by August 8, he had decided to write his memoirs.<sup>6</sup>

In spite of his reluctance to visit a doctor, Grant most likely recognized the potential seriousness of his constant sore throat. On September 5, before any confirmed diagnosis, he signed an updated last will and testament. On October 22, he met with leading throat specialist Dr. John H. Douglas, who quickly informed Grant that he had an "epithelial" disease that, in his initial assessment, was "sometimes capable of being cured." Douglas took a tissue sample for testing, but Grant kept the doctor's initial assessment private.<sup>7</sup>

In early November, Mark Twain and his wife were walking out of Chickering Hall in New York City when he overheard Richard Gilder, the editor of *Century* magazine, discussing Grant's Civil War articles and his interest in publishing Grant's memoirs. Twain was stunned by Gilder's statement that Grant was receiving only \$500 per article. He later wrote, "The thing which astounded me was, admirable man as Gilder certainly is, and with a heart which is in the right place, it had never seemed to occur to him that to offer General Grant \$500 for a magazine article was not only the monumental insult of the nineteenth

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<sup>4</sup> Charles B. Flood, *Grant's Final Victory: Ulysses S. Grant's Heroic Last Year* (Philadelphia: Da Capo Press, 2011), 11-13.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 56-58; *The Papers of Ulysses S. Grant*, 31: 171n.

<sup>6</sup> Julia D. Grant, *The Personal Memoirs of Julia Dent Grant (Mrs. Ulysses S. Grant)*, ed. John Y. Simon (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1975), 328-329.

<sup>7</sup> Flood, *Grant's Final Victory*, 83-84; *The Papers of Ulysses S. Grant*, 31: 195-199.

century, but of all centuries.”<sup>8</sup>

Twain understood the importance of Grant’s story and could foresee the potential profits the former president could net for himself. The next morning, Twain went to Grant’s house to verify what Gilder had mentioned the night before. Twain asked if any deal had been signed between Grant and *Century* to publish his memoirs. Grant stated that a contract had been prepared, but that nothing had been signed. He proceeded to read the contract out loud. Twain later wrote that he “didn’t know whether to cry or laugh.”<sup>9</sup> According to Twain, the contract made two propositions: “one at 10 per cent royalty and the other offer of *half the profits on the book after subtracting every sort of expense connected with it*, including office rent, clerk hire, advertising and everything else.”<sup>10</sup> Twain told Grant “the *Century* offer was simply absurd and should not be considered.” Twain asserted that Grant should receive “20 per cent on the retail price of the book, or if he preferred the partnership policy, then he ought to have 70 per cent of the profits on each volume over and above the *mere cost of making* that volume.”<sup>11</sup> Twain offered to publish the book for Grant with more generous terms under the auspices of Twain’s own publishing firm, Charles L. Webster & Co. Grant considered the offer but made no final decision that day.<sup>12</sup>

For the next few weeks, while Twain was travelling in the West, his partner Charles L. Webster met repeatedly with Grant. By November 23, Grant was leaning towards Twain’s offer. In a letter to George W. Childs, he wrote, “On reexamining the Contract prepared by the *Century* people I see that it is all in favor of the publisher, with nothing left for the Author. I am offered very much more favorable terms by the Chas L. Webster & Co. Mark Twain is the Company. The house is located at 658 Broadway. I inclose you their card.”<sup>13</sup>

By December 1884, Grant was working diligently on his memoirs, but without a contract in hand. Twain had offered him \$25,000 for each manuscript volume submitted and a \$50,000 advance. According

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<sup>8</sup> Twain, *Autobiography*, 1:77-78.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 78.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 79.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>13</sup> Ulysses S. Grant to George W. Childs, November 23, 1884. In *The Papers of Ulysses S. Grant*, 31: 237.

to Twain, however, the offer “seemed to distress him.” Grant did not feel comfortable taking such a considerable sum of money with a chance of the publisher losing out and was thus not ready to decide on a publishing contract.<sup>14</sup> On February 19, 1885, the official results of Grant’s tissue sample revealed that he indeed had throat cancer.<sup>15</sup> Two days later, Ulysses and Julia’s eldest son Fred informed Twain about the cancer diagnosis while Twain was visiting Grant in New York. He told Twain that the physicians considered Grant “to be under sentence of death and that he would not be likely to live more than a fortnight or three weeks longer.”<sup>16</sup>

Six days later, on February 27, Grant signed a contract with Charles L. Webster & Co., and rumors immediately started to spread about Twain’s “scheme” to publish Grant’s book. There were unfounded accusations that Grant declined the *Century* offer because they would not give his son Buck a position.<sup>17</sup> Nonetheless, the deal was in place. Grant spent the next few months writing at his house in New York City. The newspapers regularly reported on Grant’s health to a public who eagerly desired news about his condition. A serious decline in Grant’s health at the end of March resulted in reports that Grant was within days or hours of death, but Grant rallied and those reports proved to be premature.<sup>18</sup> On June 16, Grant and his family traveled to Mount McGregor, New York, to escape Manhattan’s summer heat.<sup>19</sup> By July 20, Fred Grant wrote that his father had finished his work on the manuscript. Just a few days later, Grant passed away around 8:00 a.m. on July 23, 1885.<sup>20</sup> When Twain received the news, he made an entry in his journal:

On board train, Binghamton, July 23, 1885- 10 a.m. The news is that Gen. Grant died about 2 hours ago- at 5 minutes past 8. The last time I saw him was July 1st & 2d, at Mt. McGregor [...] He was still adding little perfecting details to his book- a preface, among other things. He was entirely

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<sup>14</sup> Twain, *Autobiography*, 1: 80-81.

<sup>15</sup> *The Papers of Ulysses S. Grant*, 31: 294n.

<sup>16</sup> Twain, *Autobiography*, 1: 84.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 95.

<sup>18</sup> Flood, *Grant’s Final Victory*, 131-132, 144-146.

<sup>19</sup> *The Papers of Ulysses S. Grant*, 31: xxxi.

<sup>20</sup> Frederick Grant to William T. Sherman, July 20, 1885. In *The Papers of Ulysses S. Grant*, 31: xxxii, 427n.

through, a few days later... I think his book kept him alive several months. He was a very great man- & superlatively good.<sup>21</sup>

On August 5, the grand funeral cortège of the former general and president wound through the streets of New York. The procession was seven miles long, starting at the southern end of Manhattan Island and moving northward to Grant's temporary mausoleum in Riverside Park. Grant's popularity and influence were on full display that day, with one of the longest funeral processions in American history. There were approximately 1.5 million people in attendance to pay their respects.<sup>22</sup>

Despite Grant's death, the final steps in publishing his manuscript continued. There were hundreds of thousands of pre-orders before the book was even in print. The first volume was published on December 1, 1885, and the second volume came out on March 1, 1886. Depending on the quality of the binding, the price of the book was between \$7 and \$25. Initially, the book sold over 300,000 copies, and Julia Grant received the largest royalty check ever written up to that point – \$200,000. In all, Mrs. Grant received close to \$450,000 in royalty checks for the *Memoirs*. According to Grant biographer Ron Chernow, the *Memoirs* were one of the best-selling books of the 19th century, right next to *Uncle Tom's Cabin*.<sup>23</sup>

Initially, the *Memoirs* were well received by nearly everyone other than a select number of detractors who claimed the work was either fatally flawed by errors or stylistically unimpressive.<sup>24</sup> In 1887, approximately two years after the publication of the *Memoirs*, Carswell McClellan, a brevet-lieutenant-colonel and a staff member of Union General Andrew A. Humphreys, published *The Personal Memoirs and Military History of U.S. Grant Versus the Record of the Army of the Potomac*, which critiqued some of Grant's assertions. He stated, "The object aimed at now is to incite investigation which shall decide the historic value of this widely published work."<sup>25</sup> McClellan's book

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<sup>21</sup> Mark Twain, *Mark Twain's Notebooks & Journals, Volume III: (1883-1891)*, ed. Frederick Anderson et al. (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1979), 168.

<sup>22</sup> Joan Waugh, *U.S. Grant: American Hero, American Myth* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009), 216.

<sup>23</sup> Ron Chernow, *Grant* (New York: Penguin Press, 2017), 953.

<sup>24</sup> Waugh, *U.S. Grant: American Hero, American Myth*, 209-210.

<sup>25</sup> Carswell McClellan, *The Personal Memoirs and Military History of U.S. Grant Versus the Record of the Army of the Potomac* (New York: Houghton, Mifflin and Co., 1887), 3.

questioned some of Grant's factual assertions which resulted in a critical analysis of Grant's opinion of various generals.

These claims, in conjunction with other critiques of Grant's assertions, inspired Grant's eldest son Frederick D. Grant to publish a second edition of the *Memoirs* in 1895. In the preface of the second edition, Fred stated that he wanted to supplement the first edition by adding marginal annotations based on references to sources that his father had consulted when he wrote his story on his deathbed. The second edition turned out to be extremely useful to readers, because the marginal notes provided brief identifications and references to the documents in *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*. Although the second edition contains many useful marginal notes, it does not comprehensively annotate the text or provide details that would help contextualize the *Memoirs* for the modern reader.

Despite the initial criticism, the *Memoirs* secured a place in the American literary landscape, with additional reprints and subsequent editions of the text produced in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Although the *Memoirs* remained widely available after the publication of the second edition, another critically annotated edition did not appear until 1952. Civil War scholar E. B. Long edited that version, which contained more explanatory notes than the second edition. However, the notes did not contain identifications of every person and place mentioned. In 1990, William and Mary McFeely completed an annotated edition of Grant's *Memoirs*, which was published by Library of America. This edition contained selected letters by Grant and his contemporaries, a helpful chronology of Grant's life, and approximately one hundred explanatory endnotes. In 1999, renowned Civil War scholar James M. McPherson compiled an annotated edition of the *Memoirs* published by Penguin Press. He added an introduction along with approximately one hundred explanatory endnotes in addition to parenthetical, in-text identifications of many people mentioned by Grant.

The availability of so many quality editions and the text itself being available in the public domain may initially raise questions of why a new edition of the Grant *Memoirs* is even necessary. While the text itself is readily accessible, for modern readers the context of the *Memoirs* can be a daunting obstacle to fully understanding the work. It is important to note that Grant wrote for an audience that was



familiar with the Civil War in a way that readers 150 years later are not. Many of Grant's readers would have been more familiar than a modern reader with the large and small stars in the galaxy of Civil War personalities. On many occasions Grant, as the narrator of the tale, referenced a participant in the Civil War and simply reminded his reader that he or she should be familiar with that named individual from his service during the Civil War.

A passage in Chapter 10 is an excellent example of this pattern. Grant, in describing his experiences in the Mexican-American War, wrote the following words: "These reconnoissances [sic] were made under the supervision of Captain Robert E. Lee, assisted by Lieutenants P. G. T. Beauregard, Isaac I. Stevens, Z. B. Tower, G. W. Smith, George B. McClellan, and J. G. Foster, of the corps of engineers, all officers who attained rank and fame, on one side or the other, in the great conflict for the preservation of the unity of the nation."<sup>26</sup> In this passage, Grant named a number of both Confederate and Union officers and simply reminded his readers that they should have at least heard of them because of their exploits during the Civil War. But, for the modern, general reader, few of these names pop off the page with instant recognition. In fact, it may be safe to say that very few people (outside of Civil War scholars and historians) would recognize most of the names in that list. Thus, identifying named (and even unnamed but mentioned persons) in the text became a priority in the annotation process.

A similar issue occurs with places that Grant mentioned in his text. Many such towns and other landmarks underwent considerable change in the years between the Civil War and the writing of the *Memoirs*, and those places have undergone even more change in the years since Grant wrote about them.

A final reason for creating a thoroughly annotated edition of the *Memoirs* relates to the claims about the veracity of the text. Grant wrote in his preface, "I have used my best efforts, with the aid of my eldest son, F. D. Grant, assisted by his brothers, to verify from the records every statement of fact given."<sup>27</sup> The fact that Grant aspired to this level of fact-checking and put forth his work as an accurate rendition of the events in question has led to vigorous debate about

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<sup>26</sup> Ulysses S. Grant, *The Personal Memoirs of Ulysses S. Grant: The Complete Annotated Edition*, ed. John F. Marszalek, David S. Nolen, and Louie P. Gallo (Cambridge: Belknap, 2017), 88-89.

<sup>27</sup> Grant, *The Personal Memoirs of Ulysses S. Grant*, 4.

how reliable the *Memoirs* actually are.

Furthering scholarship on Grant has been integral to the mission of the Ulysses S. Grant Association (USGA) since its founding in 1962. An annotated edition of Grant's *Memoirs* had been part of the plans of the USGA since its early days,<sup>28</sup> but the primary focus of the USGA's work for many years was the collection, selection, transcription, and annotation of letters and other documents to be included in *The Papers of Ulysses S. Grant*, which has become an invaluable source for scholars delving into Grant and his era.

In 2008, the USGA left its long-time home at Southern Illinois University, Carbondale and found a new home at Mississippi State University under the leadership of Dr. John F. Marszalek as executive director and managing editor. Under Dr. Marszalek's guidance, in 2012 the USGA completed the work begun by his predecessor, Dr. John Y. Simon, on the Grant papers project by publishing Volume 32 in the series. The completion of *The Papers of Ulysses S. Grant* was a major milestone in setting the stage for work on the *Memoirs*, making possible the verification of many of the statements about dates, places, and correspondence presented in the *Memoirs*. The text of the *Memoirs* could be cross-referenced with the relevant volumes of the *Papers* in order to provide additional context for Grant's narrative.

Ironically, the completion of both the *Papers* project and the *Memoirs* could not have been achieved without the substantial support provided by Mississippi State University (MSU) and, in particular, the MSU Libraries. The unique partnership between the USGA and one of Mississippi's largest universities made possible the completion of these two significant projects that further Grant scholarship.

One of the pitfalls that the editors sought to avoid in annotating Grant's text was the temptation to interrupt Grant's narrative by intervening unnecessarily. Early on in the process of drafting annotations for the project, the editors found themselves interjecting with annotations in a preemptive manner when Grant would offer a summary description that left out what could be considered an important detail. Often these details would eventually emerge in Grant's telling of the story, and so the editors frequently had to examine placement of annotations to make sure those notes occurred in the best location in the text to preserve Grant's own structure and

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<sup>28</sup> *The Papers of Ulysses S. Grant*, 1: xxx.

narrative flow.

One example of this tension occurs in relation to Grant's references to Union general Edward Canby, who first appears in Grant's narrative in Chapter 46, and then is mentioned in several subsequent passages. However, it is not until Chapter 69, when Grant provides his reflective assessment of Canby's generalship that Grant mentioned his death during the Modoc War.<sup>29</sup> Grant's decision to include those details near the very end of the *Memoirs* forced the editors to choose between either interrupting the narrative flow of the account with interesting details of Canby's later life in his initial identification, or waiting on Grant to introduce those details to provide clarifying annotations once Grant addressed the events at the end of Canby's life. The editors opted to follow Grant's lead in telling Canby's story. The initial identification did not include specific details regarding Canby's death, but the editors instead included those details in Chapter 69 to clarify Grant's first reference to Canby's demise.

In the end, the editors eventually settled on an annotation policy inspired by Robert Underwood Johnson's own instructions to Grant on how to write his memoirs. Johnson was a young editor with *Century Publishing* at the time that Grant began work on his articles for *Century Magazine*.<sup>30</sup> According to Johnson's memoirs, when the first draft of what became Grant's article in *Century* about the Battle of Shiloh arrived at the *Century* office, Johnson and the other editors felt a collective sense of despair because the style of the article rendered it unpublishable from their perspective. According to Johnson's account, the article was a dry, factual report on the battle that read just like the well-known documents included in *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*.<sup>31</sup>

Johnson was tasked with speaking to Grant about the article draft and breaking the news to him, so he traveled to visit Grant in Long Branch, New Jersey. He arrived and sat down with the former general and president and began their conversation by simply conversing with Grant about his experiences at Shiloh. Like others of that era, Johnson found Grant to be an engaging and interesting storyteller who was

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<sup>29</sup> Grant, *The Personal Memoirs of Ulysses S. Grant*, 473, 745-746.

<sup>30</sup> Flood, *Grant's Final Victory*, 56.

<sup>31</sup> Robert Underwood Johnson, *Remembered Yesterdays* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1923), 213-214.

anything but dry in his re-telling of the events of Shiloh. He told his story with energy and enthusiasm and included numerous personal details that he had not included in his first draft.<sup>32</sup>

As Grant spoke, Johnson jotted notes on a newspaper in his hand. When Grant finished, Johnson urged him to re-write his Shiloh article employing the conversational style he had used when telling the story. He also urged him to include the personal details of his experiences. Johnson suggested that Grant imagine himself telling about his experiences at Shiloh in an after-dinner speech. He recommended that he envisage himself at a dinner with friends—some of whom knew much about the battle, while others knew very little. In this imagined scenario, Johnson encouraged Grant to focus on his own personal experiences at the battle and share the details of what he had heard and seen.<sup>33</sup>

According to Johnson, Grant was initially skeptical that readers would be interested in those elements,<sup>34</sup> but this conversation appears to have been a watershed moment for Grant as a writer. He then diverged from his traditional no-nonsense writing style, which had produced such clear and precise wartime communications, and instead adopted a more conversational story-telling style that one sees in the *Memoirs* today.

In preparing Grant's *Memoirs* for a modern audience, the USGA editors took this imagined scenario to heart. In an effort to allow Grant to tell his own story, the editors pictured themselves as guests at that dinner, seated facing the audience. If what Grant "said" in the *Memoirs* was accurate, the editors would not intervene and would remain silent. However, if Grant erred in his facts or was vague in his description, then the editors would "speak up" in the form of an annotation and briefly interrupt Grant's story.

Another piece of the overall philosophy behind the annotation policy was the consideration of what to annotate to help a reader understand the context. Because of the advent of web-based dictionaries and maps, the editors decided against intervening in the text when a reader could easily access the relevant information via the web.

With this overall philosophy in mind, the editors set about the work of creating annotations to provide greater context to the *Memoirs* in

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 214-215.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 215.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

order to help modern readers understand the text, but also to mark where the text can be trusted factually and where there are mistakes in Grant's memory or source material.

The editors sought to place annotations where the modern reader would naturally pause and question the text. As mentioned above, instances where Grant cited someone or referred to someone (at times without naming that person) were priorities for editorial annotations. Because the editors briefly identify people who appear in the narrative, the reader has the opportunity to appreciate, in a fuller way, Grant's inclusion of each person in his story.

In addition to identifying people, the editors also set out to identify places. The list of named places in the *Memoirs* is lengthy, and, going back to the overarching philosophy behind the annotation policy, many of the towns and cities named in the text still exist and can be easily located through modern web resources. The editors thus limited place identifications to those that were difficult to locate either because their names had changed significantly or because those places simply no longer exist. The latter was a particularly common scenario in the chapters that discuss the Vicksburg campaign: the meandering route of the Mississippi River and its tributaries has left many formerly bustling settlements high and dry in the years since the Civil War, and so those sites are now unfamiliar and difficult to locate.

Another emphasis in the annotation policy concerned instances where Grant wrote about orders given or letters sent and provided enough details for the reader to locate those texts in the *Papers*. Generally, these are main entries in *The Papers* and of sufficient importance that they stand out for their content. The editors developed a policy that if Grant mentioned a letter he had written and 1) the correspondent and the date of the letter were clear from the context and 2) that letter did indeed appear as a main entry in the *Papers*, then the editors did not intervene with a footnote to direct readers to the specific page where that letter appears in the *Papers*. However, if Grant mentioned a letter or orders that he had sent without contextual information, then the editors added a note to explain where to find the correspondence he referenced. Likewise, if Grant mentioned a letter that is in a note in the *Papers* (and does not appear as a chronological main entry), then the editors added a note to explain where to find it.

This approach to annotation prevents interruptions in the sections of the *Memoirs* where Grant is factually accurate and the text can be

relied on. However, it also parses the details that do not match the established facts and timelines clarifying where to find additional information. Grant wrote that he and those working with him (including his sons) had attempted to “verify from the records every statement of fact given,” but he also wrote that “The comments are my own, and show how I saw the matters treated of whether others saw them in the same light or not.”<sup>35</sup> This approach allows modern readers to move more easily beyond the classic questions of accuracy in a memoir and interrogate the sections that are heavy with “comments,” where Grant puts forward his opinions of what happened. To attempt to annotate those commentaries would have been futile: there are entire books that have been or can be written on the debates that Grant weighed in on and there are large historiographical essays that would necessarily accompany any interpretive lens brought to bear on those commentaries. The editors of this edition of the *Memoirs*, published by the Belknap imprint of Harvard University Press, have left those tasks up to the reader, who can now more easily get beyond the initial questions of fact and fiction and dive more readily into the interpretive elements of the *Memoirs*.

The state of Mississippi provided the backdrop for U. S. Grant to become one of the leading military figures of the Civil War. His wartime activities in the state, which form a critical portion of his *Memoirs*, were essential to the Union victory. It is important to recognize that Mississippi has yet again provided the platform for examining Grant's rise to prominence. It has furnished the vital support necessary to carry out the work of the USGA and to make the publication of this new edition of the *Memoirs* possible. The contributions of Mississippi's people and institutions have highlighted Grant's important role in one of the most significant periods in American history.

In providing these annotations, the editors of this edition of Grant's *Memoirs* aim to allow readers to more effectively engage with the text. By using this edition, modern readers can more readily identify where Grant's telling of the story is reliable and where it needs to be more critically interrogated. Readers can more easily parse the facts of the story from the sometimes more intriguing “comments” that Grant offers on his life and times and on the people he encountered. The staying power of Grant's *Memoirs* is a testament to the enduring value of being

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<sup>35</sup> Grant, *The Personal Memoirs of Ulysses S. Grant*, 4.

able to hear from one of the key players in the events of the Civil War and understand how he viewed those events. One of the goals of this edition is to add to the understanding not just of the Civil War but also of the memory of that time — how the memory was created and preserved, and how Grant's legacy including his contribution to the body of Civil War writings participated in that important process.