

THE  
PUNTO

TRAVEL  
TRAVEL

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# The Pulpit of Henry Trumbull

I took the last steps up the stairs to the second floor of the American Civil War Museum in Richmond, Virginia, and lifted my head. The pulpit stood across from me in a glass case (fig. 1). Was that it? The caption for its display read: “Trumbull Pulpit, . . . The Connecticut Historical Society.” The pulpit was chipped and scraped, but a lathering of shellac, reflecting the lights of an evangelizing display themed “Holding On,” disguised the decay (fig. 2). The war was coming to an end, and the objects in the display case—an ever-handy six-shot Colt revolver, a broadside plea for men to join the losing Confederate Army, a piece of a tree destroyed on the Spotsylvania battlefield, the tattered Confederate battle flag of the rallying 47th Virginia Infantry, and the Trumbull Pulpit—were grouped together to evoke survival in the face of destruction of both the North and the South. According to the caption for the pulpit, it was a sign of how “religion tempered the despair and carnage of war,” and a man was quoted as exclaiming, “It’s enough to make a man religious to look at that pulpit.”

Was I supposed to have a similar experience now that I was face-to-face with the pulpit? For over a year, I had been researching what Chaplain Henry Clay Trumbull (1830–1903) described as the “peculiar and rarest intimacy” between him and Major Henry Ward Camp (1839–1864), both of the Tenth Connecticut Regiment.<sup>1</sup> Camp, twenty-five years old, had been shot and killed in an assault on Richmond’s outer lines on October 13, 1864. The regiment was still

Trumbull standing  
behind pulpit (detail,  
see fig. 3).







1  
Pulpit on display at the American Civil War Museum, Richmond, Virginia, August 22, 2014. Photograph by Randy Klemm.

encamped there when, in early 1865, after having buried Camp's body back home in Hartford and returned to war, a thirty-four-year-old Trumbull was writing a biography of Camp called *The Knightly Soldier* (1865). He was also—in addition to his duties counseling men, praying with them, offering solace and the case for Christian conversion—supervising the building of a regimental chapel. When it was finished, he wrote his wife Alice up north, wishing she could see it.<sup>2</sup> He also wrote Camp's family, wishing they could be there, too.<sup>3</sup> He was looking for ways to feel comfortable and at peace again in his work and environment after Camp's death. But, as he told Camp's family, "every time I visit the chapel, or write a sermon, or have a talk with the men—or do anything, or am anywhere I think of [Henry] and grieve. . . . My heart longs for him continually."<sup>4</sup> And while visiting the chapel, his eyes lingered on the "rustic reading desk," the pulpit at its center. It was, he told his wife, "a work of art worthy of preservation in coming years," and he thought to "have it boxed and sent North" when the regiment moved to another camp.<sup>5</sup> In the meantime, he had a melainotype

taken of him standing behind it (fig. 3). In the photograph, you can see that the chapel was decorated with vines and leaves. I had seen the photograph, with hand-drawn accentuations of shrubbery, as the frontispiece of Trumbull's autobiography, *War Memories of an Army Chaplain*, published in 1898. But other than his remark about the pulpit as a work of art, and his thought of preserving it, there was no other mention of this particular pulpit anywhere in his hundreds of pages of letters home during the war. In his *War Memories*, he does confirm that the pulpit was sent north, fitted with its current base, and "preserved as a valued relic in the chaplain's home."<sup>6</sup> That home and its belongings are long gone.

Not knowing whether the pulpit still existed, I wandered unawares by the lighted displays and prop walls of the Civil War

2  
Pulpit, with glass  
display case opened,  
August 22, 2014.  
Photograph by  
Randy Klemm.



Museum, until the moment I looked up and was struck by the sight of the pulpit at the top of the stairs.<sup>7</sup> The melainotype was even reproduced right there next to the caption. What was I supposed to feel, or come to know, when before me now was the actual pulpit, and, even more, an object Trumbull set apart from everything around it then as “a work of art”? It did not look that way now, clumped as it was with four other objects straightforwardly presented as tools and symbols of survival. Even with the additional information I had of the pulpit from Trumbull’s letter and *War Memories*, it still looked to me like a stray set piece from a nineteenth-century pasteboard tableau of nature. What else did he see in it?



“All I know is reception,” wrote Emerson (1803–1882) in his essay “Experience” (1844). “I am and I have; but I do not get, and when I fancied I had gotten anything, I found I did not.”<sup>8</sup> For Emerson, experience is a give-and-take, a process of reception rather than a state of possession, or knowing. When Heidegger (1889–1976) stood before a tree in bloom, he thought something similar. Experience was akin to thinking, even being. “As we are in this relation of one to the other and before the other, the tree and we *are*,” he wrote. “This face-to-face meeting is not . . . one of these ‘ideas’ buzzing about in our heads,” ideas of the tree, of the bloom, ideas a mind can contain or, in Emerson’s words, “get.” “We must first leap onto the soil on which we really stand,” Heidegger continued. “The word ‘idea’ . . . means to see, face, meet, be face-to-face.”<sup>9</sup>

Heidegger discourses elsewhere on the relation between an object of experience and a work of art. We tend to experience and employ most objects in the world without necessarily questioning the parameters of their use and need. The revolver, broadside, and battle flag in the display case of the Civil War Museum would be good examples. A work of art, however, serves a different kind of end. In his book *Strange Tools: Art and Human Nature* (2015), philosopher Alva Noë (b. 1964) summarizes Heidegger’s understanding of the work of art as “bringing into the open, and putting on display, and at the same time instituting . . . the structures and values that,” as Noë puts it, “organize us.”<sup>10</sup> An actual tree in bloom may come to our attention, but a painting, photograph, or sculpture of a tree in bloom is a work that we ourselves arrange, or organize, to reflect on the ways we organize ourselves and our place in the world. We create our own tree in bloom

3  
Chaplain Henry Clay Trumbull at his rustic pulpit, Richmond, Virginia vicinity, 1864–1865. Print. Connecticut Historical Society, Hartford, 1985.219.0. Reproduced in H. Clay Trumbull, *War Memories of an Army Chaplain* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1898), frontispiece.







as a way to think about our relation to trees, blooms, and whatever else we attach to it or it discloses for us.

When we call something a work of art, the implications are that it stands out from its world in order to comment back on it and engage in an exploratory dialogue with us. In that way, art is a “strange tool” for Noë. It does not *do* anything other than reflect. And it is not clear at all what it might be saying. For it is strange. It stands out. Calling it a work of art at least demands that we try to figure out what can be said with it. A traditional art-historical analysis would begin to discover the work the art is doing by looking for meaning in its symbolic and formal features and its materiality—with the belief that the meaning is there to be found. A focus on these features, the method assumes, reveals the artistry of the object all the more clearly for mitigating the subjective experience of the researcher. This logic is a fantasy of separation, and a limiting one at that. As John Dewey (1859–1952) begins his study *Art as Experience* (1934), “The existence of the works of art upon which formation of an esthetic theory depends has become an obstruction to theory about them. . . . The actual work of art is what the product does with and in experience.”<sup>11</sup> Reconnecting “art” to “experience” allows us to more fully unfold what makes art work.

Take the Trumbull pulpit. Its symbolic and formal features might say something new to us about building practices, religious worship, or spiritual uplift. Yet, however a scholar might phrase their meaning, what is actually reflected in our face-to-face meetings with a work of art are the *past* experiences out of which the structures and values of our lives take shape. I would also stress that these experiences are not at all abstract. First, they are embedded within relationships with other people, present and absent others, and, second, they negotiate material and temporal constraints. There is not space in this essay to explore Trumbull’s overlapping experiences in a way that would bring out the workings of the structures and values of his life, whatever they may be, but there is space to point toward the location of the material of experience necessary for a fuller investigation of the work of art.

I have, so far, only sketched this ground *in theory* in order for us to see the larger stakes at play. The rest of this essay traces some of what Trumbull might have experienced in viewing the pulpit as a work of art—to build a new display case, a new chapel to house the material of experience. It is crucial to remember that the experiences I include arose out of real, specific situations and face-to-face encounters, my subjects’ and my own. I have followed Trumbull’s and Camp’s path at war as part of my larger research project, and include here a few of the

photographs I made along the way. The pictures partake in the work of art. They reflect back on, rather than represent, the Henrys' own descriptions of place.

Art “reorganizes” us, to use Alva Noë’s concept. Throughout the course of this essay, my dialogue with the pulpit—with the pulpit’s misplacement, as it appeared to me, in the Civil War Museum, with the photograph of Trumbull and the chapel that once housed the pulpit, with the path the Henrys walked and the sights they saw, with their descriptions of times and places that led me back to the pulpit, to look again—brings into focus the particular moments of the past, and the work of art, to begin to explore how exactly we “hold on” in the present. My intention here is only to show how our meeting with a work of art orders past experience in a way that creates the understanding we seem to find in the work of art itself. All we know is reception, back and forth in space, forward and back in time.



Let us begin, then, by reviewing the circumstances around the building of the chapel that first housed the “Trumbull Pulpit.” It was late November 1864 by the time Trumbull had returned to the regiment, encamped outside Richmond, after he had brought Camp’s body north to Hartford for burial. Winter was setting in, and there was no expectation that the regiment would march on Richmond anytime soon. Soldiers began deserting and morale fell. Those soldiers whose

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Shore of St. Helena  
Island, South Carolina,  
April 29, 2013. Author’s  
photograph.



term of service was up were not reenlisting. As December wore on, and the new year came, Trumbull tried to inspire the men by delivering sermons that related their present circumstances to biblical stories of trial, perseverance, and God's favor to His chosen people. Trumbull preached at different spots, moving from the chapel tent of the Christian Commission, to the field and staff mess house, to the entrance to his own tent. He was planning to have a new regimental chapel built where all the men, of all ranks, could gather together. He had only been waiting for a canvas fly for the roof, which the Christian Commission had promised to regiments erecting their own log chapels.

Trumbull gazed across the ground of low stumps and smoking brands as the men of the Tenth huddled around their fires in "picturesque knots."<sup>12</sup> Two years before, in January 1863, the men had stood barren and adrift on the shore of St. Helena Island, South Carolina (fig. 4). Headquarters had told them they would be away from their camp at New Bern, North Carolina, for only a week. But there would be no return once they boarded the ocean transports. They were to be part of the siege on Charleston. In the meantime, they would have to build a new camp with the most basic supplies and without many of their personal belongings. They pulled trees from the thick backdrop of the Sea Islands and landscaped the entryways to their tents with their broad leaves. Percolating thoughts of their future role in the siege became palmetto-lined streets. The soldiers' quarters were, in Trumbull's words, neatly finished and ornamented. It was an "attractive" army settlement. The men even cleared a large space for a "rustic" embowered chapel. They wove pine branches through wooden poles to make the walls. For seats, the poles were doubled and supported on smaller posts. The pulpit then was an overturned cracker box on a tree trunk covered with pine branches. Every Sabbath, it was draped with the green leaves and "graceful" vines of fragrant yellow jessamine.<sup>13</sup>

The canvas fly for the chapel Trumbull imagined two years later would protect it, and its congregants, from the colder, damper environment outside Richmond. But even after the fly arrived, he could not get the chapel built as easily as he anticipated because logs were sparse. In St. Helena, they had all the lumber they could want. In the last year, however, the army had cleared the way to Richmond, including many of the trees. And in the last few months, the men had to build winter cabins for themselves and were constantly burning wood in them. Slowly, from farther afield, and with Trumbull's and others' persistence, he had the men collect enough wood to finish all but one



5

Northbound road on  
St. Helena Island, South  
Carolina, April 29, 2013.  
Author's photograph.



side of the new chapel by Saturday, February 11. They drove full logs into the ground for the ends. Split logs set in the same way made the sides. A ridge pole and rafters completed the frame. Finally, they stretched and fastened down the immense single sheet of canvas, sixty feet long by forty feet wide.

The structure lent a more settled feeling than the regiment was used to. The chapel two years before in St. Helena, makeshift as it was, was meant to be temporary. The regiment was ready to move on Charleston at any moment. But no one called upon them right away. Soldiers began to complain to their officers that the expedition was moving too slowly, and that other regiments were moving ahead without them.

Trumbull tried to alter their view of the matter in a sermon he delivered in camp on St. Helena on February 22, 1863. He compared the Union forces to the ancient Israelites battling the Egyptians over land and rule. The Israelites found the fight neither as easy nor as speedy as they hoped, he told the men. They, too, were losing faith in their leaders. Yet, surrounded by difficulties, including a sea in front and an army in back, God's order was simple and explicit, Trumbull preached. Go forward, and walk straight to meet the ruin. And so Moses lifted his staff like a paintbrush of creation, and the Red Sea parted for the Israelites to pass, submerging the trailing slaveholders in its tangled depths.

One day, Trumbull and Camp took a trip on horseback north across St. Helena and toward the town of Beaufort. They saw the

massive live oaks part like the ribbed arches of an immense cathedral (fig. 5). The long, tall obscurity of the forest avenue modeled the cathedral's soft, soaring lines. Their eyes spotted speckles of color amid the green and gray. They saw the berries of the parasitic mistletoe glisten like pearls against a cradle of deep-green leaves. As they drew closer to the trees, the image of the cathedral lost its form, and the viewer his discernment. The live oaks only became walls with perspective.

Trumbull had written the Red Sea into this world by stepping back from it with his pen. It was only as Camp and Trumbull trotted comfortably past the wooded roadside on their horses that their eyes built up the "freshness and symmetry" of the bay tree and the "graceful delicacy of the feathery cypress."<sup>14</sup> Similarly, the regiment had used the trees, vines, and leaves for the chapel in St. Helena to mark a sacred space apart from nature. Only then could they begin to see nature in a new way. What first looked like an inevitable calamity, when the men stood alone on the shore of a new world, became a majestic invitation, foreshadowing what Trumbull described in his Red Sea sermon as the palmy days to come, when Judea was the brightest kingdom on earth.

The act of carving out an environment in St. Helena, whether with their eyes or with their hands, had opened the men up to new possibilities for what victory could look like in the world. Do you think, when Judea had finally come, Trumbull's message echoed on, that those who reveled in its delights, and shared in its benefits, regretted that their fathers had heeded God's voice in their time of doubting? Trumbull wrote that if churches back home could secure such delightful chapels for all whom they desired to aid, with long gray Southern moss to make the place "attractive" to worshippers, they would be eminently successful in their work.<sup>15</sup> These touches pulled more life out of the men of the regiment. Trumbull added that Camp, although loath at home to be heard in public, was now taking a more active role in running prayer meetings and the Sabbath school. The languorous moss lent a heavily relaxing feel to life in St. Helena and began to reflect and shape the space between the Henrys themselves. The world became the background of their "intimacy," which "grew closer day by day," Trumbull wrote.<sup>16</sup>

They were "seldom separated from each other for many minutes at a time."<sup>17</sup> But Camp was confused as to how to go about engaging the Sunday school students as well as Trumbull did. He dreaded teaching them and felt that he could more easily draw out lessons from the

scriptural passages than responses from the students. When Trumbull was away on a leave of absence, Camp took over the prayer meetings and reorganized the Sunday school to the best of his abilities. He found more teachers and looked for more scholars. But the inspiring bloom of jessamine could not last forever. As it went, the need for roots, ground, a system of support wilted back into Camp's awareness. In a letter to Trumbull, he described how his mind was in a "great vacancy." His was a slow embodiment of Trumbull's routine of teaching and preaching. He reviewed the lessons with the teachers in the tent he shared with Trumbull, but, he wrote him, as each new man came in and left, none filled it. A year ago, before the Henrys met at war, Camp had thought that the same tent furnished very narrow accommodations for even one officer.<sup>18</sup>

Camp was dead less than a year later, and Trumbull huddled over the desk in his more spacious cabin near Richmond as the wind picked up outside. He was trying to finish writing the dedication sermon for the new chapel. The wind clouded his mind. He fancied it "an intelligence with a special spite against" him, he told his wife. Camp always admitted, Trumbull continued, that it did often seem as if only Trumbull's papers, and the most valued of them, were "whisked off by the provoking gales playing through our tent," or that his hat alone was "the plaything of a mischievous sprite on a windy day."<sup>19</sup> Camp used to laugh at Trumbull's need to order his belongings so meticulously to protect them against the wind or reorganize them when they were disturbed by it. His anxiety began when, as a boy, he first read *Undine*, the 1811 German novella by Friedrich de la Motte Fouqué (1777–1843). Undine was a water sprite who killed the knight whose love had endowed her with a soul. The knight had betrayed her for a real woman. Undine disappeared into the air. The wind was whipping outside, and about 9:30 that night, it violently pulled the canvas roof off the frame of the chapel, ripping out its fastenings, and pummeled it into the small hospital stewards' tent next door, crushing it. Trumbull delayed the dedication of the chapel. The wind pushed soot and ashes down his chimney, filled the cabin with smoke, and forced him outside. He was even afraid to go to bed lest the wind blow the canvas roof off his cabin, his papers in all directions, and his entire self beyond the lines.

He was caught unawares beyond the lines before. It was July 20, 1863, the morning after the Battle of Battery Wagner, a prime fortification of Charleston Harbor. After months of waiting and creeping motion, the regiment was finally about to fight, entrenched amid the



6  
Shore of Morris  
Island, South Carolina,  
May 1, 2013. Author's  
photograph.



sand hills of Morris Island, just outside Charleston. The Henrys cradled themselves in their folds, thrown up by the ocean in a century's succession of storms (fig. 6). When they stood to watch the nighttime battle raging before them on land and sea, they could only see the "swift tongues of flame piercing deep into the darkness and bringing out in momentary distinctness," and "with vivid brilliance," the upward rolling smoke, the water, and the "immense hull [of the ship] from which they sprung."<sup>20</sup> From their perspective, the scene was one of absolute magnificence to Camp.

Later the next morning, their commanding officer informed them that an armistice had been arranged for both sides to retrieve the dead and wounded they saw strewn across the undulating marsh. The Henrys were on their way to help the men groaning and almost drowning in the crevices when a Confederate officer stepped in front of them and cut them out of the scene. "Prisoners! gentlemen."<sup>21</sup> The officer maintained that there was a cessation of hostilities to care for the dead and wounded only within one's own lines, and they had unknowingly crossed them. The Henrys were sent to a jail in Columbia, South Carolina, and held there together for months.

The world was no longer their own, but the captain of the guard would allow Trumbull to preach to the other prisoners and loaned him a hymnal. Another guard stood over him with fixed bayonet. There was no pulpit to lean on, but as he stood under guard, there welled within his own restraint a voice more commanding and imperative. Other guards and even their friends outside the prison came to listen.



“Concerning this house which thou art in building” — Trumbull preached from 1 Kings on February 19, 1865, to the “prominent officers from other regiments” around Richmond who had come for the dedication of the new chapel, still unfinished — “if thou wilt walk in my statutes, and execute my judgments, and keep all my commandments to walk in them; then will I perform my word with thee.”<sup>22</sup> The men who built the chapel “enjoy and are proud of it,” Trumbull wrote Alice.<sup>23</sup> It was part of the work they did as pioneers throughout the war, building trenches in order to fight it and shelters in order to live in it, and once borrowing benches from a nearby church for a place to sit on the picket line to watch it.

When the Henrys were released from prison on exchange, months apart, and reunited again in the summer of 1864, they “sought retirement” together one Sabbath, deep in the woods, on the side of a ravine some miles southeast of Richmond where the Tenth was stationed. The shade was refreshing. “Here and there a bright little flower of soft or more striking hue” appeared in the grass. They sat on an old log as “commodious as a drawing room sofa.” The winding path through the woods was “temptingly romantic,” and after “loiteringly” descending it and drinking cool, sweet water from a spring, they “clambered back again, joying in the inviting repose, the soothing stillness, and the hallowing retirement of the picturesque . . . spot.”<sup>24</sup> All their senses were at play as each turn of the head, each new perspective opening on their path, wove the dense ingredients of nature into an experience that changed with each view.

Around Trumbull, standing in the new chapel less than a year later, scarlet holly berries popped in bright relief among clusters of leaves strung around the wooden poles. The carved stone flora of cathedral walls was alive here. It was “really a most attractive spot,” Trumbull wrote Alice from inside it. One of their sergeants, he said, had the taste, aided by all that Trumbull could suggest, to trim and finish the interior with “marked appropriateness and beauty,” meticulous order. Trumbull drew attention to the dark-green vines and boughs that decked the columns and walls. He described how the arms for the candlesticks on the central pillars formed crosses with the “rustic” columns, and the “dear old flag” formed a background for the preacher. The commodious log sofa in the mossy ravine was here replaced by benches of doubled poles, “clean,

elastic, comfortable,” as they had been in the St. Helena chapel as well. But now they sat on a carpet of sawdust to absorb the moisture from the damp ground.<sup>25</sup>

Trumbull was “not unmindful of war” on that peaceful summer Sabbath day.<sup>26</sup> The Henrys could see from where they sat in the ravine a line of flame ignited by burning shells, which, in the nights before, had blazed in “brilliancy and magnificence” for a mile or so. Such a grand illumination you never witnessed, Trumbull wrote Alice then. They saw it through the branchless trunks of the towering pines, where the fire struck in bleeding relief against the “latticed foreground.” The Henrys’ eyes shifted with the land, and a new picture emerged from where they stood. It seemed that they were looking at “a lighted church, with myriads of gas jets gleaming among countless columns of sculptured beauty.” “Melrose by moonlight,” a central image in the popular 1805 narrative poem *The Lay of the Last Minstrel* by Sir Walter Scott (1771–1832), was, in comparison, “a pasteboard toy lighted by a penny taper.”<sup>27</sup> Melrose Abbey in Scotland, in ruins after centuries of destruction and fire in the Middle Ages, was still burning here. As Scott described the tracery of the Gothic church:

*Thou wouldst have thought some fairy’s hand  
’Twixt poplars straight the osier wand  
In many a freakish knot had twined,  
Then framed a spell, when the work was done,  
And changed the willow wreaths to stone.*<sup>28</sup>

Trumbull thought the night more solemn for the “wild beauty” and “weird grandeur.”<sup>29</sup>

The “lighted church” continued to shape the horizon of their thoughts when, a few days later in the ravine, they knelt side by side on the moss by the fallen log, “prayed and praised,” and together read Trumbull’s sermon on “active service.”<sup>30</sup> He first delivered it in response to the waning desire of the regiment to rejoin the fight when they were convalescing in St. Augustine, Florida, after the Battle of Battery Wagner. “A life of effort, a life of sacrifice, lifts men out of, and above themselves, as could no life of inaction or passive enjoyment of temporal advantages,” he had preached. And toward what imagined end (fig. 7)<sup>31</sup>? To what forever promised Judea of old?

“Do you wonder,” Trumbull wrote Alice, that it took so long for the men to gather the timber for the new chapel?<sup>32</sup> Not merely because there was not much to be had but also because he contemplated for



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Looking up from the shore of the James River some miles southeast of Richmond, Virginia, July 29, 2011. Author's photograph.



the chapel such a huge structure. Soon after it was done, many of the men who before had showed no interest in Trumbull's religious services came out for the prayer meeting at the chapel on February 26. He was more than surprised. It was the biggest crowd he ever had at an army service. He added that the chapel was already widely known as the prettiest one around. Its design appeared to be open to a flow of nature that did not fully exist outside its walls. Its services were open to soldiers of any belief or religious view. The chapel was regularly visited by soldiers from other camps. In the midst of war, they could gain a glimpse of the protection and order found in the natural world, consider again the prospects of a bereft land. But whatever explicit lesson visitors may have found or heard there, its imaginative design generated a disruptive wonder that was itself a refuge against a vanishing world—as long as the roof held tight against the wind.

The Henrys felt happier and stronger for all the improvements of their Sabbath in the shelter of the ravine. Yet their experience was of a fragile peace. As the Union was driving the war to a bloody conclusion in the fall of 1864, it was harder for Trumbull to preach or

hold a prayer service because the regiment was increasingly in line, or in reserve, for battle. General Grant's total war threw men blindly into the space and pauses of peace until experience itself disappeared in the soldiers' fatigue and collapse. The sky exploded in their faces. Trumbull felt that all plans for even a day ahead were uncertain. He wrote under fire and composed his home letters standing with his paper on a tree, tracing the scrolls of lessons in how to live and die from the carved buttresses of a falling cathedral. One letter picked up where another left off, as one experience led to another. An image, a moment, emerged from the world in relief, paused, and then retreated back, engulfed by its own nativity.

Their writing tried to configure these moments and images into a longer, lasting view. They gained perspective and understanding of their present position and future prospects the more artfully they described what had past. It was while drawing a picture of the new chapel in his letter to Alice that Trumbull singled out the pulpit as a work of art, "and while I write," he added, "the idea strikes me that I will have it boxed and sent North."<sup>33</sup> An artful way of looking, and writing, cut out a work of art from the fabric of one man's perception to be considered again by others. The work of art had already begun in its making. The building of the chapel had pulled more than a few soldiers out of their ever-gathering aimlessness, like wilting stems, and, in a spell, with a "fairy's hand," as Walter Scott put it, wove them all together into a structure within which all the men, Trumbull included, could stand upright and hopeful. In the photograph of Trumbull standing behind the pulpit, he is resting for a moment on the work, and sacrifice, of the war in the form of the pulpit. The pulpit was not just a pulpit. It was an argument for how spiritual uplift, moral bearing, and grace — qualities we cannot fully explore here — gave lasting structure to people's lives.

Trumbull had preached and read scripture aloud during the war without a pulpit. His own person organized the space and brought the men to attention. While Trumbull had never been so close to so many soldiers shot down in battle in the summer and fall of 1864, he "took real pride in watching [Camp] stand erect" as the shells rose above, burst, and fell to pieces around him. Camp was "so cool, so brave, so manly at such a time," giving form to the bleary scene so that the viewer could deepen his discernment.<sup>34</sup> Camp wrote that Trumbull had his regular narrow escapes as well, the fragments of shells striking everywhere except where he stood. The

other men began to think Trumbull, too, was “bomb-proof,” bearing inspiring messages along the front lines.<sup>35</sup> The men’s future work on the chapel was partly in appreciation of Trumbull’s ongoing service to the regiment. In the name of that chapel, this house, that man, God’s word was protection and sustenance. On October 13, Camp led an attack, waving his sword to reform the line of the regiment after the entangled ground, wild with commotion, tripped and blunted their charge through the woods (fig. 8). Camp cleaved a higher law from the surrounding violence and tangle of wills. “His tall and manly form was too distinct a target to escape special notice from the foe,” Trumbull wrote in *The Knightly Soldier*.<sup>36</sup> But, as Camp turned back toward the enemy, he was only a moment’s experience for the Confederate soldier who shot him dead in the chest and face.

Trumbull was “crushed, heart broken.”<sup>37</sup> It took a long time to build himself up and stand straight again. We look again at the photograph of Trumbull standing behind the pulpit. The pulpit is stuck firmly into a ground we cannot see. Vines appear to grow from it in crisscrossing ascent toward new, unseen ends. They take the form of Gothic arches buttressing the higher views voiced above. We look at Trumbull again, trying hard to stand tall and firm. The pulpit brings him into sharp, sobering focus.

“Oh! how sad it is to have anything attractive or enjoyable in camp now with dear Henry not here,” he wrote Camp’s family then.

8  
Place of Camp’s death  
outside Richmond,  
Virginia, July 28, 2011.  
Author’s photograph.





“Every time I visit the chapel, or write a sermon, or have a talk with the men—or do anything, or am anywhere I think of [Henry] and grieve. . . . My heart longs for him continually.”<sup>38</sup> The knightly soldier could not be laid to rest anywhere inside Trumbull’s mounting cathedral of experience.

In the chapel I have built here, the art has done its work. We move on with new understanding, and the art recedes from our view.

- 1     Chaplain H. Clay Trumbull, *The Knightly Soldier: A Biography of Major Henry Ward Camp, Tenth Conn. Vols.* (Boston: Nichols and Noyes, 1865), vi. The events described in this essay are drawn from the following sources: Trumbull, *Knightly Soldier*; H. Clay Trumbull, *War Memories of an Army Chaplain* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1898); Henry Ward Camp Papers (MS 881), Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University Library (hereafter cited as Camp Papers); and the private collection of Pauline Howard (unless otherwise stated, all the letters quoted from are in this collection). In addition to the references provided below, consult the following for additional context on specific events and topics: On the chapel at Richmond, see Trumbull to Alice, Feb. 12, 1865, Before Richmond, Virginia; and Trumbull to Alice, Feb. 27, 1865, Before Richmond, Virginia. On the Red Sea sermon delivered Feb. 22, 1863, at St. Helena, see Trumbull, *War Memories*, 73–75. On the Henrys' St. Helena trip, see Trumbull, *War Memories*, 384–85. On Camp's role in the Sabbath school, see Trumbull, *Knightly Soldier*, 115–16, 127–28. On the Battle of Battery Wagner, see Trumbull, *Knightly Soldier*, 53. On Camp and Trumbull as prisoners, see Trumbull, *Knightly Soldier*, 157; Trumbull, *War Memories*, 26; and Trumbull's prison journal, July–Nov. 1863, private collection of Pauline Howard. On life at war, see Trumbull to Alice, June 1, 1864, Bermuda Hundred, Virginia; and Trumbull to Alice, Aug. 18, 1864, battlefield near New Market. On the Henrys' summer Sabbath retreat outside Richmond, see Trumbull to Alice, June 15, 1864, Bermuda Hundred, Virginia.
- 2     Trumbull to Alice, Feb. 27, 1865, Before Richmond, Virginia.
- 3     Trumbull to Camp family, Feb. 15, 1865, Before Richmond, Folder 5, Camp Papers.
- 4     Trumbull to Camp family, Mar. 6, 1865, Before Richmond, Folder 6, Camp Papers.
- 5     Trumbull to Alice, Feb. 27, 1865, Before Richmond, Virginia.
- 6     Trumbull, *War Memories*, 37.
- 7     I later learned a relative donated the pulpit to the Connecticut Historical Society, but it was not listed in its catalog.
- 8     Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Self-Reliance and Other Essays* (New York: Dover, 1993), 100.
- 9     Martin Heidegger, *What Is Called Thinking?*, trans. Fred D. Wieck and J. Glenn Gray (New York: Harper & Row, 1968), 41.
- 10    Alva Noë, *Strange Tools: Art and Human Nature* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2015), 199.
- 11    John Dewey, *Art as Experience* (New York: Perigee, 1980), 3.
- 12    Trumbull to Alice, Nov. 18, 1864, Before Richmond, Virginia.
- 13    Trumbull, *War Memories*, 19. This source cites Trumbull's letters from the time. See also Trumbull, *Knightly Soldier*, 113–114. This source cites Camp's and Trumbull's letters from the time.
- 14    Trumbull, *War Memories*, 385.
- 15    Ibid., 19.
- 16    Trumbull, *Knightly Soldier*, 116.
- 17    Ibid., 115.
- 18    Ibid., 127–28.
- 19    Trumbull to Alice, Feb. 12, 1865, Before Richmond, Virginia.
- 20    Trumbull, *Knightly Soldier*, 53.
- 21    Confederate officer, quoted in ibid., 157.
- 22    Sermon text, quoted in Trumbull to Alice, Feb. 12, 1865, Before Richmond, Virginia; Trumbull, *War Memories*, 36 (“prominent officers”).
- 23    Trumbull to Alice, Feb. 27, 1865, Before Richmond, Virginia.
- 24    Trumbull to Alice, June 15, 1864, Bermuda Hundred, Virginia.
- 25    Trumbull to Alice, Feb. 27, 1865, Before Richmond, Virginia.

- 26 Trumbull to Alice, June 15, 1864,  
Bermuda Hundred, Virginia.
- 27 Trumbull to Alice, June 1, 1864,  
Bermuda Hundred, Virginia.
- 28 Sir Walter Scott, *The Lay of the Last Minstrel*  
(London: Longman et. al., 1805), Canto II, lines 116–20.
- 29 Trumbull to Alice, June 1, 1864,  
Bermuda Hundred, Virginia.
- 30 Trumbull to Alice, June 15, 1864,  
Bermuda Hundred, Virginia.
- 31 The quotation comes from the pamphlet version  
of the sermon, which was published a few months after  
Trumbull delivered it: *Desirableness of Active Service*  
(Hartford, CT: Case, Lockwood, 1864).
- 32 Trumbull to Alice, Feb. 12, 1865,  
Before Richmond, Virginia.
- 33 Trumbull to Alice, Feb. 27, 1865,  
Before Richmond, Virginia.
- 34 Trumbull to Alice, Sept. 13, 1864, picket  
trenches before Petersburg.
- 35 Trumbull, *Knightly Soldier*, 286–287.
- 36 *Ibid.*, 316.
- 37 Trumbull to Camp family, Oct. 13, 1864,  
10th Army Corps Hd. Qtrs., Folder 3, Camp Papers.
- 38 Trumbull to Camp family, Mar. 6, 1865,  
Before Richmond, Folder 6, Camp.

