

5-2020

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COLUMBUS STATE UNIVERSITY

THE SPIRIT OF COLUMBUS: CIVIL WAR MEMORY IN THE FOUNTAIN CITY, 1865-
1880

A THESIS SUBMITTED TO
THE COLLEGE OF LETTERS AND SCIENCES
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

MASTER OF ARTS

DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY AND GEOGRAPHY

BY

KEVIN FABERY

COLUMBUS, GEORGIA

2020

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THE SPIRIT OF COLUMBUS: CIVIL WAR MEMORY IN THE FOUNTAIN CITY, 1865-
1880

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May 2020

ABSTRACT

During the Civil War men and women from Columbus supported the Confederate war effort through direct military service and the Ladies Soldier's Friend Society. After the Civil War, the women of Columbus organized the Ladies Memorial Association to beautify Linwood Cemetery and build a Confederate monument. Their efforts between the years 1865 and 1880 was marked by organization of military parades and speech readings during Confederate Memorial Day, and fundraising projects for the creation of the Columbus monument. No research has been done on the work of Columbus' Ladies Memorial Association. This work is a historic narrative on the efforts of Columbus women's involvement in the creation of the South's Lost Cause identity. The Confederate Memorial Day tradition in Columbus shows that the tradition evolved over time, in response to conflict with Union authorities and social changes as men and women reinterpreted the historical significance of their actions in response to changes in the post-war South.

INDEX WORDS: Civil War, Reconstruction, Memorial Day, Lost Cause

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

There are several people whom I want to thank in supporting my goal of completing this thesis. First, I want to thank my family for their encouragement and support in my efforts to research the history of Columbus. Secondly thank you to Dr. Sarah Bowman for her support as my thesis advisor in supporting my research and ensuring the thesis was thorough and organized. Thank you to Dr. Dan Crosswell for his suggestions on research sources and concepts to connect the themes. Special thanks to Dr. Brad Huff for his assistance in creating the map of Columbus featured in this thesis. Finally, thank you to the staff and volunteers of the National Civil War Naval Museum for their support and fueling my interest in the Civil War that made this thesis possible.

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Introduction: The Spirit of Columbus

During the Homecoming festival of April 14-17, 1915, the fiftieth anniversary of the battle of Columbus, the Springer Opera House aired a silent film titled *The Spirit of Columbus 1865-1915*. Written and directed by O.W. Lamb of the Paragon Feature Film Company, the film was a southern Romeo and Juliet story about Dorothy Watkins, a banker's daughter who meets and falls in love with Richard Wentworth, a regular Columbus resident. After touring the major centers of the city, they stop at the Confederate monument in Salisbury Park, where they meet Colonel Shepard, a Confederate veteran. Shepard entertains the young couple with stories of his experiences in the Civil War, as the picture fades to his experience at the battle of Columbus.

The Civil War was a significant period in the history of Columbus, one that is still present in the city. Fifteen historic markers in downtown Columbus and Linwood Cemetery are dedicated to locations and people of significance to the Civil War and Reconstruction. The National Civil War Naval Museum in Columbus contains the remains of two Confederate warships, ironclad ram CSS *Jackson* and gunboat CSS *Chattahoochee*. Confederate memory in Columbus has not been public in the city streets for decades but beginning after the Civil War public commemoration was common. From the years after 1866 Columbus remembered its Confederate past in public displays of memorialization every April 26, comprising public speeches and marches to Linwood Cemetery where the graves of Confederate dead were cleaned and decorated with flowers. The Ladies Memorial Association of Columbus, members of the city's privileged class who had previously served in the Civil War through the Ladies Soldier's Friend Society, spearheaded public remembrance on Confederate Memorial Day.



Figure 1. *Columbus Daily Enquirer* ad for the *Spirit of Columbus* (*Columbus Daily Enquirer*, January 15, 1915).

Confederate Memorial Day was crucial to the development of the Lost Cause identity of the southern states in the post-Civil War years. The Lost Cause was a historical reinterpretation of the Confederate cause, propagated through public rituals that concluded when residents went to the cemeteries, cleared the graves of Confederate soldiers and planted flowers on their graves. In his study of Civil War memory, *Cities of the Dead: Contesting the Memory of the Civil War in the South, 1865-1914*, William Blair argues “these rituals originated and matured in an era when street processions, parades, and various public displays were instrumental both for partisan political activity and for fashioning a new public sphere.”¹ Cemeteries, or the Cities of the Dead as soldiers cemeteries were called in the 1800s, “provided places for community leaders to reach mass audiences of like-minded people to reinforce partisan ideals and behavior.”² This was the case in Columbus, as the city was under Union occupation from May 1865 to July 1868. The Confederate Memorial Day ceremonies developed in response to events in Columbus and the

¹ William Blair, *Cities of the Dead: Contesting the Memory of the Civil War in the South, 1865-1914* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 1.

² *Ibid.*, 1.

state capital. These ceremonies allowed residents to alleviate their worries about Reconstruction's impact on southern society.

The Ladies Memorial Association of Columbus managed the events held at the city's Linwood Cemetery; their efforts were extensive in organizing Memorial Day functions and fundraising for the Confederate monument. They acquired their organizational skills from their wartime experience as the Ladies Soldier's Friend Society. Their activities during the Civil War were the result of the South undertaking what Drew Gilpin Faust has called "an unprecedented exploration of the implications of gender, as it found itself vesting power with exploration of the implications of gender, as it found itself vesting power with unaccustomed responsibilities for the survival of their families and their nation."³ In her book *Mothers of Invention: Women of the Slaveholding South in the American Civil War*, Faust argues that Confederate women's associations during the war "were intended to be conservative forces, representing and affirming traditional delineations of female roles, dedicating themselves, in the words of the Charleston Soldiers Relief Association to 'assist[ing] the great cause, in the way best suited to the sphere of woman.'"⁴ Her discussion of women during the Civil War also shows that their actions during the conflict empowered them while challenging the societal standards of southern women. The organizational skills and empowerment women gained through these associations allowed them to organize Ladies Memorial Associations after the war to address postwar memory for both Confederate soldiers and their own service.

Despite the significance of Ladies Memorial Associations in the creation of post-war Civil War memory, historiography on these organizations has been overshadowed by work on

³ Drew Gilpin Faust, *Mothers of Invention: Women of the Slaveholding South in the American Civil War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 6.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 24.

the later United Daughters of the Confederacy. For example, Karen L. Cox's book *Dixie's Daughters: The United Daughters of the Confederacy and the Preservation of Confederate Culture*, argues that the United Daughters of the Confederacy "raised the stakes of the Lost Cause by making it a movement about vindication, as well as memorialization."⁵ Their goal according to Cox was "to transform military defeat into a political and cultural victory, where states' rights and white supremacy remained intact."⁶ The UDC was responsible for creating most of the South's Confederate monuments in the 1890s and beyond. However, the Columbus Confederate monument bears the inscription "Erected By The Ladies of the Memorial Association May 1879," although UDC chapters in Georgia did not form until 1895. Although a difference of focus, it shows the oversight of the contributions by the Ladies Memorial Association in Civil War historiography.

Current research on the history of Ladies Memorial Associations is dominated by Caroline Janney's *Burying the Dead But Not the Past: Ladies' Memorial Associations and the Lost Cause*. She writes that "the LMAs' primary objective was to honor the sacrifices and lives of those Confederate men who had fallen in battle."⁷ LMAs were organized at the local level, and in many cases began their memorial work even before Civil War ended. Many Ladies Memorial Associations emerged from the Soldier's Aid Societies, sewing societies, and hospital volunteer groups that were active during the war. Their members comprised the women of the planter elite and old professions of southern society.⁸ Although Janney's work expands the historiography of southern Ladies Memorial Associations, her research focuses solely on

⁵ Karen L. Cox, *Dixie's Daughters: The United Daughters of the Confederacy and the Preservation of Confederate Culture* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2003), 1.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 1.

⁷ Caroline Janney, *Burying the Dead But Not the Past: Ladies' Memorial Associations and the Lost Cause* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2008), 8.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 16-21.

Virginia LMAs, whereas associations were active in other southern states. Janney states “Virginia offers the most fruitful study because of its prominence during the years of the Confederacy and its significance as a bastion of Lost Cause rhetoric and figures.”⁹ Although this is certainly the case, the contribution of LMAs across the South deserve further exploration.

This study focuses on the Columbus Ladies Memorial Association as a study of Lost Cause rhetoric during Reconstruction. The focus of the study is the role of Columbus men and women during the Civil War and the role of women in Confederate Memorial Day traditions. The war impacted the residents of Columbus greatly between the years 1861 and 1865. Over twelve hundred soldiers comprising eighteen military companies fought in the Confederate army during the war. The departure of most of the able-bodied male population offered women the opportunity to serve the war effort through work in the textile mills, iron works and farms as was done by lower-class women. Ladies from the city elite organized as the Ladies Soldier’s Friend Society to host charity drives and concerts and to volunteer as nurses for the hospitals in Columbus.

Examining the history of Confederate Memorial Day in Columbus shows that the practices of Confederate memory developed over time. The large elaborate ceremonies of later years, frequently discussed by historians, began as smaller, solemn events that laid the groundwork for reinterpreting the Confederacy’s cause. Early memorialization developed as passive political events disguised as apolitical memorial activities hosted by the Ladies Memorial Association. Their success was based on the presumption that women were outside the forum of politics, and therefore the ceremonies they oversaw were not deemed politically motivated. Their efforts won the women of Columbus recognition and gratitude by war veterans for their work in

⁹ Janney, *Burying the Dead*, 8.

memorializing the dead. Reconstruction's end in the 1870s and the rise of the Redeemer Democrats in the Georgia government allowed Memorial Day functions to assume larger, livelier displays of Confederate memory.

On each Confederate Memorial Day, it was customary for a speaker to read a speech at the start of the function before the crowd of people went to Linwood Cemetery to clear the graves. Each speaker responded to the challenges and changes created by the South's defeat in the Civil War and subsequent Reconstruction. Columbus speakers reinterpreted the service of men and women during the Civil War to form integral parts of the city's Lost Cause identity. Their focus was to reinterpret the war in a way that preserved antebellum values for southern men and women. Soldiers were romanticized as the embodiment of the Old South in the postwar future. Women were celebrated for their wartime sacrifices and devotion to the soldiers, and for preserving the memory of soldiers for the New South.

The organizational experiences women gained during the Civil War and their Memorial Day planning allowed the Ladies Memorial Association to rally Columbus residents to build a Confederate monument. In the years between 1869 to 1881 the women of Columbus assumed a larger public presence, hosting elaborate fundraising events to collect funds for a monument to the city's military dead. During these years, residents hotly debated the location of the monument, showcasing a fair amount of division over aesthetics. The conflict was only resolved through a public vote which allowed the elites of Columbus to decide the location in their favor. Ceremonies hosted during the construction of the monument placed women at the forefront of the edifice's history, reminding residents that its construction was indebted to the efforts of the Ladies Memorial Association to ensure it would be built.

The history of the Lost Cause in Columbus shows the developments of Confederate memory in relation to the political events of the South during Reconstruction. Confederate Memorial Day was not a tradition that was fully developed when it first began in 1866; rather, it developed over time in response to political developments by Union authorities. The development of Confederate Memorial Day and the Columbus Confederate monument were the result of women's organizational experiences during the Civil War, and the assumption that their gender precluded their actions from being politically motivated despite evidence to the contrary.

Columbus, Georgia during the Civil War

The Civil War was a significant period in the history of Columbus for both the men and women of the city. Multiple military units fought on the front lines from Sewell's Point to Robert E. Lee's surrender at Appomattox. Military volunteers left for the war in defense of their homes and family, expecting to mark themselves in history through military service. Columbus women assumed a larger role in public through the Ladies Soldier's Friend Society, supplying the troops and providing care for wounded soldiers brought to the city's hospitals. Their experiences during the Civil War provided them the experience to organize large public events and coordinate charity drives to supply the military units. The participation of the military companies and Soldier's Friend Society during the war shaped their interpretations of the conflict in the post-war Confederate Memorial Day events.

During the 1860 presidential elections Columbus was divided between two political groups, the secessionists, and co-operationists. Secessionists worried that the Republican Party's hostility to slavery would mean the gradual demise of "the peculiar institution" in the South, fears prevalent in Columbus at the time. Half of Columbus's population of 10,000 were slaves. Emancipation would remove a significant part of the city economy, and the labor cotton plantations used. Columbus was a major cotton distributor, shipping bales down the Chattahoochee to Apalachicola, Florida for delivery to British and northern mills. Columbus's textile mills relied on cotton plantations to maintain production. Besides the centrality of slavery to the local economy, many whites feared emancipation would create competition between the freed people and the white residents for work.

In the decade leading to the 1860 election support for states' rights grew in Columbus. Henry Benning, a staunch secessionist, wrote to a friend in 1849 "the only safety of the South

from abolition universal is to be found in an early dissolution of the union.”¹⁰ In 1853 he, alongside Martin J. Crawford and Hines Holt, called for the creation of a southern sectional party.¹¹ During the November 1860 election Benning warned abolition would “excite an intense hatred between the whites on one side, and the slaves and the North on the other. Very soon a war between the whites and blacks will spontaneously break out...a war of extermination.”¹² The propertied elite supported secession to protect their right to own slaves. In the 1860 Columbus census twenty-eight men owned twenty or more slaves. Only two men owned more than 100 slaves: John Woolfolk owned 180, and Hines Holt owned 118.¹³ Aside from the supporters of states’ rights, unionists maintained a presence in the city that was reflected in the national vote. In the 1860 presidential election the “states’-righters” voted for the pro-slavery candidate John C. Breckenridge, who won 769 from Muscogee County. Constitutional Union candidate John Bell won 767 votes, and Northern Democrat Stephen A. Douglas 160 votes.¹⁴ Statistically the Unionists held a majority over the secessionists in Columbus.

Co-operationists argued that slavery was not entirely at risk, and that the South could work in tandem with Lincoln and the Republican Party to ensure slavery remained. After Lincoln’s election, former congressman Absalom H. Chappell compared the political discussion of secession to a stillness “which prevails in nature just before a mighty earthquake.” He warned “Never did a mighty empire yet fall to pieces without dreadful convulsions and we are the better than all former peoples that the Almighty should make an exception in our favor?” Chappell believed the South’s movement toward secession would result in “dreadful convulsions” of

¹⁰ Virginia Causey, *Red Clay, White Water, and Blues: A History of Columbus, Georgia* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2019), 31.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 31.

¹² Henry Benning, as quoted in *Ibid.*, 32.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 31.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 32.

unrest and instability that would ensure its own internal collapse, but as events in later weeks showed many did not feel the same way.¹⁵

When South Carolina seceded on December 23, Columbus “seemed wild with joy” as the sounds of bells, guns and rockets filled the air during the night into the next day. Buildings across Columbus were lit with candles as residents came out in support of South Carolina’s secession.¹⁶ In Temperance Hall the city’s military companies came out in full uniform, listening to speeches by Henry Benning, James Ramsey, Raphael Moses, and other prominent Columbusites who supported secession and the creation of a southern Confederacy. The companies marched through Columbus in a torch-lit procession on a night “never to be forgotten by those who participated in its rejoicing.”¹⁷ On January 2, 1861 voters went to the polls to select delegates for the state secession convention. Over 200 fewer voters came than in November, with the count at 944 secessionists to 459 unionists, a clear increase in support for secession since November. At the subsequent Georgia secession conference, delegates voted for secession on January 19, 1861.

News of Georgia’s secession was received in Columbus with church bells ringing, cannon fire and lively demonstrations of satisfaction and rejoicing. A celebratory procession from Temperance Hall marched through the city, concluding with a torch-lit vigil inaugurated by a signal of five cannons.¹⁸ This esprit de corps continued through the city following the news of the battle of Fort Sumter. On the morning of the battle cannons were fired three times to announce the battle’s commencement. People celebrated the news in the streets and parks,

¹⁵ Causey, *Red Clay, White Water, and Blues*, 34.

¹⁶ “Columbus, GA in a blaze,” *Columbus Daily Times*, December 24, 1860.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ “The Fifth Blotted Out!” *The Daily Sun*, January 21, 1861.

discussing the battle with celebration.¹⁹ Both the City Light Guards and Columbus Guards offered their services to governor Joseph Brown, announcing they would “hold themselves in readiness to move at the earliest notice from the Government.”²⁰ The Eagle factory hoisted the “broad bars” of the Confederate flag at the news Confederate forces attacked the fort.²¹ Fort Sumter’s fall was received with cannon fire, the toll of bells and steam whistles, and public demonstrations.²²

In the first two years of the war support for the war was similarly strong as it had been for secession. In the early years of the war soldiers were seen off at the train depot by crowds of hundreds.²³ Columbus sent more than eighteen companies into Confederate service, over twelve hundred men in total. Many prominent citizens served as officers in the Columbus units and in other posts in the Confederate military. James Ramsey, one of Muscogee County’s secessionist representatives, served as colonel in the First Georgia Regiment up to Lee’s surrender at Appomattox. Peyton Colquitt, a former member of the Georgia House of Representatives and state senator, served as captain of the Columbus Light Guards at Sewell’s Point, the second battle of the war; Colquitt died at the battle of Chickamauga on September 20, 1863 as colonel of the 46th Georgia Infantry. Raphael J. Moses, a planter who pioneered the commercial growing of peaches, served as the commissary officer for the state of Georgia, and later for General James Longstreet in the Army of Northern Virginia. Henry Lewis Benning and Paul Semmes served as generals in the Confederate Army. Brigadier General Semmes commanded Georgia troops under Robert E. Lee during the Seven Days Campaign, Antietam, Fredericksburg, and Chancellorsville

¹⁹ “Excitement Yesterday,” *The Daily Sun*, April 13, 1861.

²⁰ “The Columbus Military,” *The Daily Sun*, April 13, 1861.

²¹ “The Colors Flying,” *The Daily Sun*, April 13, 1861.

²² “Reception of the News Here,” *The Daily Sun*, April 15, 1861.

²³ “Departure of Soldiers,” *The Daily Sun*, March 13, 1862.

until his death on July 10, 1863 from wounds he sustained on the second day of Gettysburg. Brigadier General Henry Benning commanded Georgia troops in the Army of Northern Virginia alongside Paul Semmes until the war's end in 1865.

Although Benning, Moses and Ramsey supported the war based on maintaining the South's right to sustain slavery, the motivation of enlisted soldiers diverged from the officers. The motive of southern Civil War soldiers varied greatly from their northern counterparts. Union troops understood their cause as an attempt to preserve the Union, and after 1862 to abolish slavery. The Confederacy faced a different issue rationalizing the service of their men. The Confederate States' population numbered nine million in 1861, over half of whom were enslaved African Americans. Government and military leaders needed to rationalize why southerners should fight to win their independence without portraying it as a war for southern planters. In the state of Georgia, half of the population were landless whites. Great planters—slaveowners who owned twenty or more slaves on 200 to 500 acres of land—made up six percent of the population. One third of state legislators in 1861 were great planters.²⁴

Two major acts of legislation passed in 1862 showed favoritism towards the planter class. The passage of conscription in April applied to all men between eighteen and thirty; the passage of the “twenty-slave law” that October created popular resentment as it exempted men from plantations with twenty slaves or more.²⁵ Conscription and the “twenty-slave law” placed a significant burden of manpower needs on the yeomen farmers and lower classes, who struggled to maintain their farms as the planters and their overseers became exempt from the draft. The

²⁴ Dan Crosswell, “Life in Dixie,” (presentation, Columbus State University Department of History and Geography, Columbus, GA, April 2020).

²⁵ Faust, *Mothers of Invention*, 55.

Confederacy shifted rationalizations for the war to generate popular support from all classes due to the resentment of the draft and favoritism of the planters.

Confederates articulated their military responsibility by molding personal and political obligations into a new southern identity around which to rally support for the war.²⁶ The political mission of Confederate troops, the creation of an independent Confederate States of America, also fulfilled the southern expectations of honor and manhood.²⁷ American society in the southern states was devoted to home and family; this was especially important to yeomen farmers who worked the fields to ensure good harvests to provide for their family food and income. Columbus newspapers reflected how this dynamic occurred on a local level. The *Columbus Enquirer* praised the response of local men answering the call to serve in an article from July 21, 1863: “We are happy to say that the turnout yesterday afternoon, in response to the call for a general organization of our citizens for home defense, was fully up to the anticipation of the most sanguine.”²⁸ The showing “evinced a united determination of all our people to rally and organize for the defense of their homes.”²⁹ Confederate officers described the defense of their homes as connected to the protection of southern women against Union forces. Major General Patrick Cleburne highlighted the soldiers’ desire to protect women in a letter of thanks to Evelyn Carter sent New Year’s Eve 1863 for the delivery of supplies: “May God enable us to shield our country, and its true-hearted women from all the dangers that threaten them.”³⁰

Military service fulfilled the prerogative of protecting home and family while proving one’s manhood through honorable military service. Military service also implied protecting the

²⁶ Nina Silber, *Gender and the Sectional Conflict* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008), 16.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 15.

²⁸ David J. Dameron, *The Battle of Columbus: April 16-17, 1865* (Madison, AL: Southeast Research Publishing, LLC, 2017), 80-81.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 81.

³⁰ “Letter from Maj. Gen. Cleburne,” *The Daily Sun*, January 9, 1864.

honor of southern women from Union troops. Columbus newspapers factored the importance of honor in the necessity of service—the honor not only of men but also of their wives and daughters. The *Daily Sun* described the war as the protection of the existing social system from destruction by the Union armies. “The highest principles of HONOR are involved in it, not individual honor merely, but the honor of our wives and daughters also; not this merely, but the honor of our posterity as well.”³¹ The *Southern Field and Fireside* claimed in 1863 that women made the “Confederate soldier a gentleman of honor, courage, virtue and truth, instead of a cut-throat and vagabond.”³² Protecting the honor and virtue of the women on the home front gave their service meaning that set them apart from derogatory portrayals in Union propaganda; the desire to safeguard the virtuous lady also allowed men to show their manhood and gain honor in battle.

This theme carried on all the way to the final months of the war. Although the Army of Tennessee suffered irreplaceable losses in Tennessee and Robert E. Lee’s Army of Northern Virginia eventually lost its attempt to defend Petersburg and Richmond, southern armies continued to fight the larger Union armies until the end of the war in April 1865. They considered new interpretations of the meaning for their service. That February, as Sherman’s troops campaigned in South Carolina, the *Columbus Times* exhorted soldiers to defend the honor of their mothers and children from being “despoiled” by the enemy.³³ Soldiers must stand firm, the editor wrote, as they were the “true hero makers—the moulders of a healthy public sentiment—the conquerors of the independence of the South—a blessing and a glory for ages.”³⁴

³¹ “The Situation,” *The Daily Sun*, September 12, 1863.

³² As quoted in Silber, *Gender*, 17.

³³ “Public Sentiment,” *Columbus Times*, February 2, 1865.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

As soldiers mobilized to defend southern women from the Union army, women began organizing themselves at the home front to support the troops. The mass mobilization of men for military service created new opportunities for southern women to support the war effort. Women from the lower class supported the war effort by joining the workforce as factory workers and farm hands. In Columbus, Major Frank W. Dillard of the Confederate Quartermaster Department recruited women to work at the mills during the war; the Confederate sewing center employed over 2,000 female workers.³⁵ Women working at the sewing center earned \$1.00 for each uniform made in 1861, and by the war's end earned \$3.50 per uniform.³⁶

The elite women of the Confederacy faced the crisis of providing “real and substantial aid” to their new country and daily affairs “without moving from the feminine sphere.”³⁷ Educated women from the middle and upper strata of southern society sought to provide material support to the troops in a way that did not challenge their traditional roles in society. The solution to this question was the creation of military aid societies, through which they could rally public support to donate supplies and money through charity drives and concerts. Here as well, Columbus women participated in the broader Confederate trend. On May 21, 1861 elite Columbus women formed the Ladies Soldier's Friend Society at Temperance Hall. Its leadership consisted of Loretto Rebecca Chappell as President, Evelyn Carter as Vice President, Mary Jane Urquhart as Secretary and Martha Patten as Treasurer.³⁸ Their stated purpose was to support the troops through donations of clothing and food and to provide medical care for wounded and sick soldiers when brought to Columbus hospitals.

³⁵ Dameron, *The Battle of Columbus*, 70.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 70-71.

³⁷ Faust, *Mothers of Invention*, 29.

³⁸ “Meeting of Ladies,” *The Daily Sun*, May 22, 1861.

The leaders and members of the Ladies Soldier's Friend Society came from the financially well off families of Columbus. Loretto Rebecca Chappell and Mary Ann Williams were the spouses of former Speakers of the House in the Georgia House of Representatives. Evelyn Carter was married to a physician. Martha Patten was married to a director of the Muscogee Railroad office in Columbus. They had the financial means to work for the society without the burden of providing for themselves and their families, and thus possessed the time and personal connections to hold meetings for charity drives and concerts to raise funds and supplies for the troops.

These events allowed women to gain experience in organization while assuming a larger role in public activities. The society hosted concerts and lectures to accumulate funds from residents to purchase food, medicine, and materials. The "Wren Troupe" hosted a concert at Temperance Hall on August 18, 1863, promising "a rare entertainment" for "a large and intelligent audience." Proceeds from the concert were provided to the Ladies Soldier's Friend Society.³⁹ Tableaux vivants were popular fundraising events because they were staged representations of familiar themes played by women in costumes in a still life performance accompanied by music.⁴⁰ The society received praise for the events and actions they conducted from local newspapers during the war. At Temperance Hall members participated in a tableaux event in 1861 which was described as presenting "the highest compliment that would have been paid to the refined taste and artistic skill" from the women "who have contributed so much to enkindle the fires of patriotism in the land and to encourage our brave volunteers amidst the

³⁹ "The Concert," *The Daily Sun*, August 18, 1863.

⁴⁰ Faust, *Mothers of Invention*, 26.

privations and dangers of the tender field.”⁴¹ A tableaux event on January 27, 1864 by the society generated over \$1,800 with positive reviews by the papers and attendees.⁴²

Their contributions came in response to conditions in Columbus and on the frontlines. The departure of all the military companies from the city raised fears over lack of defense. The society advertised and contributed to the creation “of one or more small brass cannon cast for the defence [sic], if needed, of our own homes.”⁴³ Eighty brass cannons, including the “Ladies Defender,” were produced from the donations of candlesticks, bells and weights made by women.⁴⁴ In response to requests made by the state Quartermaster General “to every Lady in Georgia” to donate one pair of socks, the society advertised in the newspapers to donate at the Cook’s Hotel.⁴⁵ An official statement recorded donations amounting to “3,012 garments, 84 pairs socks, 695 garments, 100 pairs socks.”⁴⁶ In a typical monthly report, the Ladies Soldier’s Friend Society raised \$730.75, and made forty-eight shirts, thirteen pairs of pants, twenty-three pairs of socks, four sheets and eighteen pillowcases.⁴⁷ They prepared between one hundred and three hundred meals a day for soldiers as they marched through Columbus.⁴⁸

In the early months of the Civil War the women of Columbus assisted city doctors in treating Confederate wounded brought to the city. Care for wounded soldiers took place in the homes of society members, but as the number of patients grew, so too did the need for proper hospitals. The Soldier’s Friend society established the Soldier’s Home, a wooden building at the

⁴¹ “The Tableaux,” *The Daily Sun*, November 21, 1861.

⁴² “The Ladies’ Entertainment,” *The Daily Sun*, January 28, 1864.

⁴³ “To the Patriotic Ladies of Muscogee and Adjacent Counties,” *The Daily Sun*, March 25, 1862

⁴⁴ Dameron, *The Battle of Columbus*, 79.

⁴⁵ “Local Intelligence,” *The Daily Sun*, December 30, 1862.

⁴⁶ Confederated Southern Memorial Association, *History of the Confederated Memorial Associations of the South* (New Orleans: The Graham Press, 1904), 116.

⁴⁷ “Report of the Ladies Soldiers’ Friend Society for January, 1863,” *The Daily Sun*, February 24, 1863.

⁴⁸ Causey, *Red Clay, White Water, and Blues*, 37.

corner of Broad and Thomas streets (today's 9th Street) on May 14, 1862.⁴⁹ Society members provided the bedding and furniture for the hospital, with hospital food stores donated by local businessman George W. Woodruff. The members became nurses, their duties including meal preparation, letter writing to soldiers' families, and burial preparation.

One recorded episode of the society's work as nurses occurred in June of 1863. During the Civil War Columbus was headquarters of a small flotilla of ships to defend the Chattahoochee River from attack by the Union navy. Those ships included the CSS *Chattahoochee*, a gunboat newly commissioned under the supervision of Catesby ap Roger Jones, overseer of the Columbus Navy Yard. Under the command of John Julius Guthrie, the ship experienced a boiler explosion in Blountstown, Florida while on route to Apalachicola on May 27, 1863, killing nineteen sailors. The wounded were brought to Columbus and treated at the Soldier's Home by the Soldier's Friend Society. Lieutenant Augustus McLaughlin, who oversaw the ship's construction, described the scene at the hospital in a letter to Jones the next month: "The Home was literally besieged with ladies, and for one week the street in front of the Home was blocked up with vehicles of all descriptions." The four worst cases were placed in an upstairs room. McLaughlin found it difficult to remain inside "sufficiently long to ascertain what was required and to see what service I could render, the atmosphere was so unpleasant, yet the ladies did not seem to notice it and remained at their post till the last."⁵⁰ McLaughlin's description of the scene at the Soldier's Home and the work of the Ladies Soldier's Friend Society is indicative of how Columbus speakers described the efforts of women during the Civil

⁴⁹ "Soldier's Home," *The Daily Sun*, May 15, 1862.

⁵⁰ As quoted in Lynn Willoughby, *Flowing Through Time: A History of the Lower Chattahoochee River* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1999), 96-97.

War. In their speeches during Confederate Memorial Day, orators described their efforts to treat the wounded and dying soldiers in hospitals and on the field during the war

The role of women in the South's war effort received praise from soldiers during the war. Judge Grigsby Thomas of Columbus, serving as a captain in the 54th Georgia Regiment, described the importance of women to the troops in a letter to the *Savannah News*. "Nothing tends more to elevate and refine patriotism than a just appreciation of it by the ladies. It is a good element in any cause, that *Woman is its friend, its advocate*." Aside from God's blessing, he wrote, "the unanimity and enthusiasm with which this war is prosecuted by our good countrywomen" was "the surest pledge of success."⁵¹ Officers were thankful for women's work providing supplies needed on the front. Early in the war, Captain F.G. Wilkins of the Columbus Guards thanked the society for being "ever watchful and ever ready to provide for the wants and comforts of our soldiers."⁵² The company assured the women they appreciated the "patriotic manner with which the ladies have devoted themselves" to providing the aid they needed.⁵³ The Columbus Guards donated \$150 to the society in recognition of "their constantly recurring acts of kindness and frequent contributions for the comfort and relief of soldiers now in service."⁵⁴

Such appreciation for their work continued throughout the war. In January, 1864, Major General Patrick Cleburne wrote to the society that it was "cheering to the soldier" knowing there were women "unwearied by the continual calls on their sympathies, [who] still work for the cause as freely, and give from their diminished resources as generously" as they had when the war first started.⁵⁵ An Arkansas officer stationed in Mobile wrote to a society member praising

⁵¹ "Letter from Judge Thomas," *The Daily Sun*, September 1, 1861.

⁵² "Card from Capt. Wilkins," *Columbus Daily Times*, November 1, 1861.

⁵³ *Ibid*.

⁵⁴ "Donation from the Columbus Guards," *The Daily Sun*, November 15, 1861.

⁵⁵ "Letter from Maj. Gen. Cleburne," *The Daily Sun*, January 9, 1864.

the society for continuing to provide aid to his and other units, and urged them to continue “the war against all skulkers and deserters at home” so that more troops would rejoin the army.⁵⁶ Near the war’s end, R.B. Stover of the 9th Texas Infantry thanked the society for the donation of supplies, especially socks to his unit in the Army of Tennessee. Stover stated his unit wished to state their appreciation of “their indefatigable zeal and energy in providing for our wants.”⁵⁷ Columbus women’s contributions during the war were well received; these types of encomiums would later form a key part of speeches made by veterans in the postwar period.

The society’s contributions to the war effort also included publishing letters which established their views on the war effort. During the Civil War, the society published two letters in Columbus newspapers addressed to Confederate troops, one in 1861 and the other in 1864. In their 1861 letter they stated their thanks as “mothers, wives, daughters, sisters and friends” to the soldiers for their service, whilst encouraging their reenlistment to the army. Reenlistment was “the grandest act of the revolution, and secures immortality to all concerned in it,” and awakened “the enthusiasm with which we began this struggle for liberty, and removes all doubt of eventual success.”⁵⁸ They reassured the troops who imagined themselves as forgotten by the public that they were “constantly present to our minds.” For the entirety of the war they promised to stand “as firm and determined as you in yours, not to lay down your arms until independence is won.”⁵⁹

This letter shows the efforts of Columbus women to create a new identity as Confederate women during wartime. It was part of the effort by public presses across the southern states to

⁵⁶ “Substitutes,” *The Daily Sun*, March 11, 1864.

⁵⁷ R.B. Stover, Letter to the editor, *The Daily Sun*, February 14, 1865.

⁵⁸ Letter, as reprinted in Confederate Southern Memorial Association, *History of the Confederate Memorial Associations of the South*, 118-119.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 118-119.

create the new southern woman's identity.⁶⁰ The Ladies Soldier's Friend Society established their relationship with the Confederate army as one of moral and material support. They could not stand with them in battle because of their gender, but they emphasized that they were with them in mind and spirit. It established the stance of elite women in the first year of the war. The letter showed that although woman had assumed a conservative role during the Civil War, they began to assume a public presence in Columbus during the conflict.

Their second letter, published in December 1864, served as confirmation of their continued support for the Confederate Army. The letter showed the Ladies Soldier's Friend Society's continued efforts to support and rally the troops of the Confederate Army when it was becoming clear the war had taken a disastrous turn for the South. Drew Faust has argued that the war took its toll on elite women, resulting in rising disillusionment for the cause and scrutiny of their circumstances "with a new attention to costs and benefits" from experiencing "the novelty of privation and loss."⁶¹ This letter, however, showed elite women maintaining the fight. They acknowledged that the Confederacy might be disillusioned but maintained that they and the army were not, despite recent circumstances. By December, when they wrote the letter, Sherman had taken Atlanta and had almost completed his March to the Sea John Bell Hood, defeated at Atlanta, had marched his army back into Tennessee; after several battles his Army of Tennessee still existed but was no longer a major fighting force. Losses in Tennessee had led to plummeting morale and a rise in desertions among the troops.

The women of the society wrote the letter after Hood's defeat at the Battle of Franklin at the end of November. Society members wanted to show their appreciation for the sacrifices the men had made in the war. They assured the troops they cherished "the heroic and chivalric

⁶⁰ Faust, *Mothers of Invention*, 17.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 239.

bearing exhibited by you on every field, from Shiloh to Franklin.” The women of the South and the men of the Army of Tennessee stood “undismayed and undaunted” despite low morale against a “foe always numerically superior,” and continued their service with bravery. The ladies of the South, the letter continued, did not fear what was ahead because their “honor and welfare are in the keeping of brave hearts and strong arms.” Their service in the war would be remembered long after the war, “writ[ten] in letters of living light. THEY ENDURED AND CONQUERED.”⁶² The letter assured the soldiers their service would be recounted to future generations as a story of men who continued to fight until the end with bravery, a core concept of the Lost Cause memory Columbus speakers would articulate in the post-war years.

Although R.B. Stover assured the Ladies Soldier’s Friend Society the Army of Tennessee was ready “to meet our common foe, and dye our swords in his heart’s blood” before Union troops would “desolate the beautiful thoroughfares and lay waste the homes of your city,” circumstances in the war’s final months unfolded differently.⁶³ By 1863 Columbus residents felt the strain of the war on the economy. Wages rose but the cost of food, rent, clothing and equipment soared. Confederate currency lost its value due to rising hyperinflation.⁶⁴

The experiences of the society did not represent all Columbus; many women experienced the war differently from their elite counterparts. On April 11, 1863 sixty-five women raided the shops on Broad Street for food; seven months later they warned Governor Joseph Brown they would launch another riot if they did not receive aid. This event is indicative of the way the Lost Cause memory rewrote the wartime divisions on women’s patriotism during the war. It represented the potential for women’s unrest during the war, and the 1863 riot showed that it

⁶² Letter, “To the Army of Tennessee,” as reprinted in Confederated Southern Memorial Association, *History of the Confederated Memorial Associations of the South*, 118-119.

⁶³ R.B. Stover, Letter to the editor, *The Daily Sun*, February 14, 1865.

⁶⁴ Causey, *Red Clay, White Water, and Blues*, 38.

occurred. Although elite women did not face food shortages to such a degree that created worry, lower class women faced constant shortages of food and clothing, issues made worse by rising hyperinflation and prices. When Columbus speakers discussed the patriotism of women after the war, they reinterpreted all women as having persevered through these problems in solidarity with the soldiers.

The food and clothing issues became worse after Sherman's 1864 campaign made Columbus a refugee center as Atlanta residents fled to the city. Wounded Confederate soldiers brought to the city increased the burden on Columbus hospitals.⁶⁵ Despite shortages of food and raw materials, production of military equipment and commerce continued in Columbus until the battle of Columbus in April 1865.

Though it remained untouched for much of the war, Columbus's importance as the second-largest industrial supply center for the Confederacy made it a target for Union forces by the war's end. In late March Major General James Wilson led his cavalry forces across Alabama, capturing Selma on April 2, Montgomery April 12 and Tuskegee on April 15.⁶⁶ The battle of Columbus occurred on April 16 when Wilson's raiders attacked Confederate defenses around Phoenix City; over 12,000 Union cavalymen fought against nearly 4,000 Confederate defenders until nightfall. On April 17 Wilson's troops entered Columbus with full military regalia and marching bands at the heads of several units playing "Hail Columbia."⁶⁷ Wilson ordered the destruction of all property "that could be made useful for further continuance of the Rebellion."⁶⁸

⁶⁵ Causey, *Red Clay, White Water, and Blues*, 40-41.

⁶⁶ Charles A. Misulia, *Columbus, Georgia, 1865: The Last True Battle of the Civil War* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2010), 15.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 183.

⁶⁸ Causey, *Red Clay, White Water, and Blues*, 45.

Union troops joined by freedmen and Columbus residents looted homes, plantations, and businesses for supplies and valuables.⁶⁹ Industrial damage totaled fifteen trains, 200 train cars, the pedestrian bridges, and the railroad. The cotton mills and warehouses, navy yard, iron works, and weapons factories were burned. Over 100,000 cotton bales valued at over 40 million dollars were lost with the warehouses.⁷⁰ Although looting and impressment of livestock and food occurred, Wilson had issued orders against burning properties and forbade the destruction of homes and private property.⁷¹ Though the United Daughters of the Confederacy in 1898 claimed Columbus was destroyed, only the industrial areas were burned along with adjacent homes and properties caught in the fire.⁷²

The experiences of the military companies and Ladies Soldier's Friend Society during the war shaped their interpretations of the conflict in the post-war Confederate Memorial Day events. Of the over 1200 men that enlisted, over a quarter were killed in combat. They had left home with the exultant cheers of hundreds as they boarded the trains but returned with the stigma of defeat and a lost cause. The members of the society received praise for their service in collecting supplies and money for military regiments. Their work for the soldiers provided them a new public role, albeit in service to the men of Columbus. Yet this connection was critical to the development of Confederate Memorial Day and Confederate memory overall in the post-war period. With the beginning of the Reconstruction period, veterans and the women of Columbus would seek to create a new public memory that reorganized public perceptions of their service during the war. The new memory of the war would be one that would speak of the soldier's

⁶⁹ Misulia, *Columbus, Georgia, 1865*, 183-193.

⁷⁰ Charles Jewitt Swift, *The Last Battle of the Civil War* (Columbus: Gilbert Printing Co., 1915), 13.

⁷¹ Causey, *Red Clay, White Water, and Blues*, 46.

⁷² Lizzie Rutherford Chapter, United Daughters of the Confederacy, and Columbus Ladies Memorial Association, *A History of the Origins of Memorial Day as adopted by The Ladies' Memorial Association of Columbus, Georgia, and Presented to the Lizzie Rutherford Chapter of the Daughters of the Confederacy, under whose Direction it is now Published* (Columbus: Thos. Gilbert, Printer and Manufacturing Stationer, 1898), 6.

courage and duty to his home in battle, and the support of the women who tended their wounded and dying friends off the battlefield.

The Ladies Memorial Association and Confederate Memorial Day

Confederate Memorial Day was a new southern tradition that reinterpreted the meaning of the Confederate cause and the sacrifices of men and women. Studying this memorialization in Columbus shows that Lost Cause memory evolved over time, influenced by conflict with Union officials during the city's occupation and Reconstruction. In its early years Confederate Memorial Day occurred during the efforts to reform the state government by maintaining a sectional identity through public displays of Confederate memory. After the end of Reconstruction and the restrictions on public displays of Confederate memory ended, elaborate displays became the focus of Confederate Memorial Day. The women of Columbus assumed a larger, implicit but unacknowledged presence in Columbus, by building on their increasing public role during the Civil War. They organized events and assumed the role of caregiver, activities they performed in the Ladies Soldier's Friend Society during the war, now conducted under a new organizational name. The men of the city showed their appreciation for their work by remembering the women through speeches and memorial services during the holiday.

The inauguration of Confederate Memorial Day less than a year after the war's end was an important act of mourning that aided in the development of Lost Cause ideology. Confederate Memorial Day provided a means by which veterans could circumvent Union regulations against public displays and speeches that honored the late Confederacy. It provided a vehicle to reinterpret the meaning of their service during the changes the South faced during Reconstruction; it allowed them to create a new social identity around the Confederacy. If Memorial Day was useful to southern men, its success rested on the shoulders of southern women, who had gained the necessary confidence and organizational skills during their work in the Ladies Soldier's Friend Society to meet the new social and cultural needs created after the

Civil War.⁷³ Organizations like the Ladies Memorial Association secured a sense of white southern solidarity among ex-Confederates that romanticized the service of both men and women through elaborate ceremonies that drew thousands of attendants.⁷⁴

After the Civil War Union authorities often prohibited public displays that honored the Confederacy. Actions such as the waving of Confederate flags, wearing military uniforms or public speeches honoring the southern war effort were illegal.⁷⁵ Emerging commemorations of late Confederate soldiers in the early postwar years carried a solemn tone as their remembrance carried with it the stigma of defeat in war, in service to a movement that had ended in failure. The memorialization of Confederate soldiers between the years 1865 and 1890 became what LeeAnn Whites described as “the politics of domestic loss.” The decline of men’s public position following the Confederacy’s defeat placed the responsibility of rehabilitating men as a primary activity of southern women in the post-war years. Memorial activities by the LMAs allowed elite southern women to establish a significant role for themselves in creating the New South.⁷⁶ The cemeteries, or the “Cities of the Dead” as labeled in Blair’s research, and “God’s Acre” in the *Daily Sun*, were useful places for passive resistance to Union regulations on public commemoration. The dominant motivation of Confederate commemorations was to maintain a sectional identity that defied assimilation back into the Union; these Confederate Decoration Days attracted former southern Democrats and Whigs who attempted to keep the Confederate past alive and use it as basis for political unity.⁷⁷

⁷³ Cox, *Dixie’s Daughters*, 10.

⁷⁴ Janney, *Burying the Dead*, 40.

⁷⁵ Blair, *Cities of the Dead*, 49-50.

⁷⁶ Cox, *Dixie’s Daughters*, 9-10.

⁷⁷ Blair, *Cities of the Dead*, 50-51.

In Columbus, the tradition that became the holiday known as Confederate Memorial Day was the result of attention placed on Linwood Cemetery's Confederate graves. As early as November 1, 1865 the *Daily Columbus Enquirer* called on city residents to help clean the grounds of the military graves.⁷⁸ Articles such as one published by the *Daily Sun* on February 10, 1866 called for women to tend the graves of the Confederate dead.⁷⁹ In early March Columbus women were cleaning the graves of the Confederate dead in Linwood Cemetery, and making headboards for the graves.⁸⁰ By March 3 several had resolved to meet on the first Thursday of every month to discuss further work on the graves.⁸¹ Although speeches in later years praised women for organizing together to tend the graves of soldiers, the catalyst of their organization's foundation may have been equally the result of calls by men to clean the graves themselves. Women were called on to clear the graves because men viewed it as work suited to them. They had personal interest in tending the area where their loved ones were interred after the war. This also corresponded to their defunct duties from the Ladies Soldier's Friend Society, whose wartime service became moot as Columbus entered the period of Reconstruction. Some members of the society volunteered their time to tend the graves at Linwood. Through this act the Soldier's Friend Society continued its pursuit of caring for Confederate troops even after death.⁸²

The newspapers show that the formation of the Ladies Memorial Association and their work clearing the graves may have been partially the result of the editors pushing women to work on the grounds. The society's official history, published over thirty years after the formation of the LMA, portrayed their founding as the continuation of their previous wartime

⁷⁸ "Neglect of Cemetery," *Daily Columbus Enquirer*, November 2, 1865.

⁷⁹ "The Cemetery," *Columbus Daily Sun*, February 10, 1866

⁸⁰ "The Ladies and the Cemetery," *The Daily Sun*, March 3, 1866.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Blair, *Cities of the Dead*, 50-51.

service. Their organization's beginning occurred when former members of the Ladies Soldier's Friend Society met by chance and discussed among themselves the possibility of hosting an event that became Confederate Memorial Day. This history disregards the newspaper articles in January and February 1866 which called women to clean the graves at Linwood Cemetery.

The official history portrayed the group's push to decorate graves as the continuation of women's service to the Confederacy even after its dissolution, spurred by their support of the troops they conducted during the war. Elizabeth Rutherford Ellis, a former member of the Soldiers' Friend Society and Columbus resident, suggested the concept of setting aside one day each year for a Confederate Memorial Day where people would clear and decorate the graves of the dead.⁸³ Mary Jane Martin, Elizabeth Rutherford Ellis, Evelyn Carter, and Mary Louisa Jones met in the home of Cornelia J. Tyler Miller and founded the Ladies Memorial Association of Columbus. Carter, who had led the Soldier's Friend Society during the war, continued to serve as president, with Margaret Ware as first vice president, and Mrs. J.A. McAllister as second vice president. Martha Patten retained her position as treasurer, and Mary Ann Williams served as secretary of the association.⁸⁴ The women elected to the officer's positions of the newly-formed memorial association were the same women that had previously led the Soldier's Friend Society. Their reappointment to lead the new organization showed direct continuity between the wartime society and its new post-war incarnation, and their fundamental mission in tending to the soldiers of the Confederacy.

The first announcement of Confederate Memorial Day in Columbus appeared on March 11, 1866. In the preceding month there was significant activity in the streets of Columbus. On

⁸³ Confederated Southern Memorial Association, *History of the Confederated Memorial Associations of the South*, 124.

⁸⁴*Ibid.*, 123.

February 1, 1866, an all-black military regiment arrived in Columbus as part of the Union occupation. Cooper Lindsay, a former Confederate officer, and son of a local planter shot a black soldier he accused of attacking him. The unit's white lieutenant arrested Lindsay, but a white mob of a thousand people forced his release shortly afterwards. Tensions between the mob and black soldiers led to an exchange of gunfire between the two groups. Republicans Randolph Mott and James Johnson negotiated the withdrawal of the regiment, who left the city on February 23 after three weeks in Columbus.⁸⁵ Less than three weeks after the regiment left the city, the Ladies Memorial Association issued their recommendation for the creation of Confederate Memorial Day. This incident showed the desire of the people to maintain the social status quo

In her capacity as secretary, Williams sent a letter to the *Columbus Daily Sun* and the *Daily Enquirer*. The letter stated that the Ladies Memorial Association was “engaged in the sad but pleasant duty of ornamenting and improving that portion of the city cemetery, sacred to the memory of our gallant Confederate dead,” but their work was unfinished until a day was set aside for the special attention of their graves. The LMA requested the press and women of the South aid them “in our effort to set apart a certain day to be observed from the Potomac to the Rio Grande, [to] be handed down through time as a religious custom of the country to wreath the graves of our martyred dead with flowers.” Williams invoked religion in her letter, calling Memorial Day a “religious custom” that would make the soldiers’ graves “the Southern Mecca” where southern women could annually bring their “grateful hearts and floral offerings.”⁸⁶ Memory formed the core of the letter—Williams said that victory columns with inscriptions of the soldiers’ heroism could not be raised, but that the LMA could “keep alive the memory of the debt we owe them by dedicating, at least one day in each year, to embellishing their humble

⁸⁵ Causey, *Red Clay, White Water, and Blues*, 51.

⁸⁶ Southern Woman, Letter to the editor, *Columbus Daily Sun*, March 11, 1866.

graves with flowers.” All who died during the war must be remembered, “from the heroes of Manassas” to the “immortal Jackson in Virginia, Johnston at Shiloh, Cleburne in Tennessee, and the host of gallant privates who adorned our ranks.” Their letter showed their attempt to ensure their public role in the creation of Confederate Memorial Day, as their public announcement marks their resumption of the public associational life they performed during the war. The date they suggested in the letter on which memorialization is to occur—April 26—was made by Elizabeth Rutherford Ellis, who chose this date for its symbolic and practical importance. On April 26, 1865, Joseph E. Johnston had surrendered the Army of Tennessee to General William T. Sherman in North Carolina, and many Southerners claimed this as the exact date the Civil War ended. For practical reasons flowers in much of the South would be in full bloom, and ready for the purpose of decorating the graves.

The first commemoration of Confederate Memorial Day began in downtown Columbus’s St. Luke Methodist Church, with opening exercises featuring the united choirs of Columbus, followed by prayers presided over by Reverend J.W. Nell of the Presbyterian church. Former Confederate Colonel James N. Ramsey, who had represented Muscogee County during the Georgia secession conference, gave the speech. Ramsey spoke for thirty minutes about the heroism of the South’s noble soldiers and the cause they fought and died for. He described the custom performed by ancient societies of decorating the graves of fallen soldiers with flowers and garlands, a tradition that, he announced/proclaimed/something, was now the duty owed by the South to the families of the dead that had been reduced to poverty. Ramsey concluded his speech by stating the South owed these families for their loved ones service during the war, and promised to ensure “the memory of the dead should ever be warmly cherished.”⁸⁷ In the

⁸⁷ “The Ceremonies of Yesterday,” *Columbus Daily Sun*, April 27, 1866.

afternoon students from Columbus schools gathered at St. Luke's Church, each carrying a wreath and bouquet, and walked to Linwood with thousands of men and women. The assembly gathered in the southwest corner of the cemetery and decorated each grave with flowers and wreaths. The scene was described thusly: "youth in radiant beauty, manhood in his prime, happy children sportive and joyous, and old age with feeble step and slow—all united in doing honor to their noble dead."⁸⁸

The inaugural Confederate Memorial Day marked the beginning of a custom city residents viewed as "touching and fitting in its character, and so consonant with popular sentiment, that it must become hallowed by future observance." Unlike the torch-lit military parades that Columbus saw at the start of the war, this ceremony did not mark the return of victorious soldiers but a chance to mourn and remember their fellow citizens who fought and died. At the first Memorial Day the people of Columbus were able to "offer up past prejudices and resentments upon the altars of oblivion."⁸⁹ This is a hypocritical stance made by Ramsey and the newspaper editors, as the events preceding this first ceremony and in the succeeding years showed. The Cooper Lindsay incident in February showed the desire of Columbus residents to maintain the social status quo after the war.

The people could look to the ceremony as a means by which they could reevaluate the rationale for the war and the meaning of their service. Although they all suffered in some way or lost someone close to them who served, Columbus's soldiers died "in the hope of victory, and the tidings of defeat cannot follow them to the realms of death."⁹⁰ Although the war ended in the defeat of the South, they took comfort in knowing that the dead do not know how the war ended.

⁸⁸ "The Ceremonies of Yesterday," *Columbus Daily Sun*, April 27, 1866.

⁸⁹ "The Memory of the Dead," *Columbus Daily Sun*, April 26, 1866.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

The inaugural Confederate Memorial Day established a psychologically useful public mourning event in which they assured themselves that their defeat in the Civil War could not really affect the living. They established a new tradition that ensured the continuity of southern culture before and during the war.



Figure 2. The Memorial Day celebration on April 26, 1866, in Columbus, Georgia (As printed in Daniel Bellware and Richard Gardiner, *The Genesis of the Memorial Day Holiday* (Columbus: Columbus State University Press, 2014), 48).

Although the 1866 ceremonies went off without any formal protest by the Union authorities stationed in Columbus, they still held the legal authority to suspend subsequent ceremonies.⁹¹ Residents feared that the 1867 Memorial Day would be cancelled by order of the Union commander Captain Mills. He reassured the LMA that Memorial Day could occur and assured them that far from interference by his authority, he would interpose to protect the

⁹¹ "Memorial Day," *Columbus Daily Sun*, April 25, 1867.

attendees in their “sad and solemn duty” of mourning the fallen. Mills and the officers under his command concluded Confederate Memorial Day conferred “honor to the heads and hearts of soldiers,” an event where “soldiers at least can honor the memories of those who met death bravely, and can sympathize with the feeling which prompts tributes of sorrowful affection to their names.”⁹² The approval of Union officials during the 1860s mattered as the military garrisons had the ability to halt memorial events before or during the ceremonies if they believed the ceremonies violated the ban on Confederate iconography or the speeches instigated disunion or opposition to the Union.⁹³

From the descriptions offered by the newspapers the 1866 and 1867 ceremonies were solemn and simplistic. Within the backdrop of the 1867 ceremonies, the southern states refused to ratify the 14th Amendment, granting citizenship rights and equal protection to former slaves across the South. The refusal of the southern states, apart from Tennessee, to ratify the amendment led to the passage of the Reconstruction Acts on March 2, 1867. Under the acts the states were grouped into military districts under the command of a general who would serve as the acting government head. For the states to be able to reenter the Union they would have to draft a new state constitution and have it approved by Congress, ratify the Fourteenth Amendment, and grant voting rights to black men. The Georgia legislature in November 1866 rejected the Fourteenth Amendment, arguing if Georgia was not a state, its legislature had no role in ratifying amendments, and if it was a state then the amendment had not been placed before it constitutionally.⁹⁴ Thus, Confederate Memorial Day in 1867 was held amidst increasing feelings among white southerners that their society was being revolutionized by the

⁹² “Memorial Day,” *Columbus Daily Sun*, April 25, 1867.

⁹³ Blair, *Cities of the Dead*, 51.

⁹⁴ William Harris Bragg, “Reconstruction,” in *The Civil War in Georgia: A New Georgia Encyclopedia Companion*, ed. John C. Inscoe (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2011), 188.

Reconstruction Acts so former slaves would supposedly be on top of the social ladder in the post-war future.

The ceremonies in 1867 followed the choreography of the 1866 Memorial Day, in which the 1867 ceremonies and later memorial events followed. Confederate Memorial Day began with a public speech from a local veteran to a crowd of spectators, with the main venue held at Columbus's Temperance Hall. The speaker, Dr. C.F. Colzey, delivered a speech that attendees called "a graceful but touching tribute to the departed." He framed his speech around the concept that the Confederacy's cause is similar in spirit to the patriots of the American Revolution, which establishes the southern identity that veterans fought a war to create a new government they believed was better than the previous. The dead, he said, were blessed, "for they are spared the ignominy of the chains cast upon the living." Colzey described the dead as fortunate because they died with the knowledge their families and homes were safe, and did not face the shame of seeing their homes under occupation. The people of Columbus should be grateful to the dead and Dr. Colzey complimented the ladies of the Memorial Association efforts to "deck with floral offerings the resting places of the departed," an act of solidarity for the fallen they had taken the burden of tending in the hospitals.⁹⁵ Colzey's focus was reassuring the people of Columbus that although they feel shame given their current circumstances, the dead remained true to them during the war until the end of their lives.

Although ceremonies in 1866 and 1867 were simple in presentation and intent, the Ladies Memorial Association planned Confederate Memorial Day in 1868 to be larger and more elaborate than before. The ceremony was a dramatic presentation of the city's pride in its Confederate troops, both living and dead. Columbus residents supported the Ladies Memorial

⁹⁵ "The Memorial Day—Exercises in Morning—Decoration of Graves," *Columbus Daily Sun*, April 27, 1867.

Association to provide a lavish reburial ceremony for Brigadier General Paul Jones Semmes as the focus of 1868's Confederate Memorial Day. Semmes had been a prominent banker and businessman in Columbus before assuming command of the Second Georgia Infantry Division at the start of the war. He died on July 10, 1863 in Martinsburg, West Virginia from wounds he sustained at Gettysburg on July 2. Lee reported that Semmes led his brigade "with the courage that always distinguished him," and that he "died as he had lived, discharging the highest duty of a patriot with devotion that never faltered and courage that shrank from no danger."⁹⁶ The Semmes family was prominent in Columbus's business community, principally in banking. His reburial was an important event in Columbus' Memorial Day tradition because it was a full military burial of a Confederate general in broad daylight, with Confederate veterans in full military dress.

The significance of his reburial is the passage of martial law following the murder of Republican leader George Ashburn. Columbus residents distrusted Southern Republicans who supported post-war reconstruction, who they knew derogatorily as "scalawags," Columbus residents. They viewed these "Scalawags" as traitors who collaborated with Union authorities to reap the benefits of the new socio-political order. The most hated scalawag in the city was George Ashburn, a North Carolinian Unionist who had served in the Union Army. He had said in October 1865 that secession was a "hellish crusade against the best government man ever lived under." Ashburn lived in Columbus since 1856 and returned to the city in the fall of 1865, where he became active in the Republican Party and collaborated with the Freedmen's Bureau. As a radical Republican he opposed reconciliation with ex-Confederates, writing "we have not

⁹⁶ Joseph T. Derry, *Confederate Military History: A Library of Confederate States History*, Volume VI: Georgia (Atlanta: Confederate Publishing Company, 1899; Honolulu: University Press of the Pacific, 2004), 453.

consented to let be by-gones, but hold each individual responsible before the laws of the country.”⁹⁷

During the months following the 1867 Memorial Day, debate over Georgia’s political future occurred. Ashburn attended the Georgia Constitutional Convention at Atlanta in the winter of 1867-1868, where he wrote the civil rights section of the state constitution. He opposed efforts by his fellow delegates to limit the rights of African Americans and was described in February 1868 as being “pale with rage” during a debate on the right to vote. Once Georgia was readmitted into the Union, Ashburn began organizing a campaign for election to the United States Senate. His support for the Freedmen’s Bureau and his work with African American leaders such as Henry McNeal Turner of Columbus made him a target among white Georgians.⁹⁸ The 1867 Reconstruction Acts led to organized resistance by white southerners against the laws they believed would allow former slaves and African-Americans into positions of authority over whites.

Resistance to this threat became organized among white Columbus residents in March 1868. Former Confederate general and first Imperial Wizard of the Ku Klux Klan Nathan Bedford Forrest came to Columbus on March 13, 1868. Following his arrival newspapers wrote daily warnings to the city’s Republicans, whom they denounced as traitors who worked “to secure the domination of the negro over the white man.”⁹⁹ Tensions in Columbus rose as the April 20 constitutional referendum approached. A Republican rally attended by Republican leaders Henry McNeal Turner and George Ashburn was held at Temperance Hall on March 30. Just after midnight five members of the newly-formed Columbus chapter of the Ku Klux Klan

⁹⁷ As quoted in William A. Link, *Atlanta, Cradle of the New South: Race and Remembering in the Civil War’s Aftermath* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2013), 94.

⁹⁸ Causey, *Red Clay, White Water, and Blues*, 52-53.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 52-53.

broke into Ashburn's rented room and killed him. By order of military governor Major General George Meade, Columbus was placed under martial law. Thirteen prominent white men were arrested on April 6, and nine of them went to trial from June 29 to July 24. The trial only ended after Georgia ratified the Fourteenth Amendment three days earlier. Meade suspended the trial on the grounds that "the probable immediate admission of the state of Georgia [to the Union] and consequent cessation of military authority" because the Georgia legislature approved the new Constitution, ending the military governorship. The defendants were released, returned as heroes to white residents, and the indictment against them was never refiled.¹⁰⁰

Occurring mere weeks after Ashburn's murder, Columbus Memorial Day represented a community-wide public re-dedication to Confederate principles aided in advancing the political agenda of white supremacy by serving as a defiant celebration of Confederate memory. They accomplished this through the presentation of an apolitical memorial event with the reburial of a fallen Confederate general at the forefront of Memorial Day. On behalf of the LMA Dr. W.J. Fogle left for Martinsburg to retrieve Semmes's remains three days after the murder. He returned with the coffin on April 23, where it lay in state in the city's Presbyterian Church until April 25. In the reburial ceremony the coffin was covered in a pall gifted by honorary Columbus Guards member Laura B. Comer, and a silk flag bearing the Georgia coat of arms. Flowers and wreaths were placed over the flag, alongside a picture of Semmes in military dress. Three former Confederate officers stood as guard to the coffin: Major W.F. Clemons, Captain J.M. Bivins, and Captain Thomas Chaffin.¹⁰¹

¹⁰⁰ Causey, *Red Clay, White Water, and Blues*, 54.

¹⁰¹ Confederated Southern Memorial Association, *History of the Confederated Memorial Associations of the South*, 127.

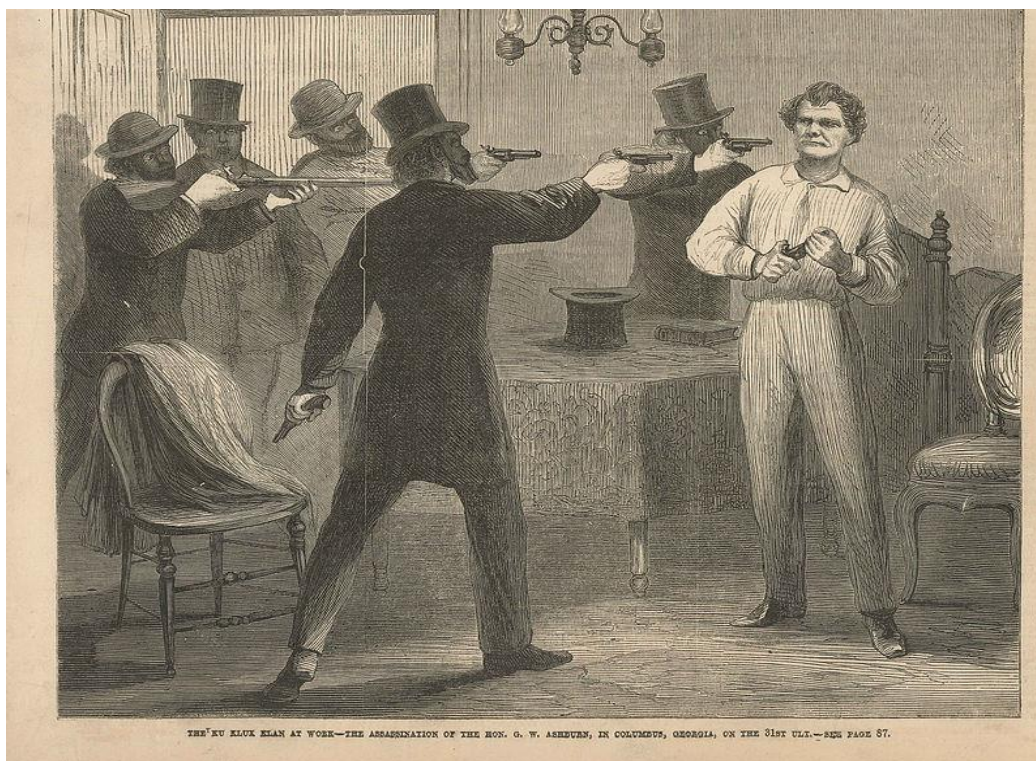


Figure 3. Lithograph of the Murder of George Ashburn (As printed in Causey, *Red Clay, White Water, and Blues*, 53).

On Confederate Memorial Day the funeral procession to Linwood consisted of an informal military escort of one hundred-fifty men from the Columbus Guards and City Light Guards, both veterans and honorary members of the units in military dress without Confederate iconography. Both companies mustered at First Baptist Church, then marched to the Presbyterian Church. a band and the military companies marching in column by platoons led the funeral procession. The hearse with pall bearers followed, after which came the Ladies Memorial Association with General Henry Benning and his staff, Colonel Crawford and Colonel R. Thompson, Major Wilkins, the city council, and a train of carriages. The entire funeral procession measured over a half-mile in length.¹⁰² At Linwood Raphael Moses, the orator that year delivered a eulogy that the *Columbus Weekly Sun* editors stated “gloriously eulogized the lamented, chivalrous Semmes, whom he had

¹⁰² Confederated Southern Memorial Association, *History of the Confederated Memorial Associations of the South*, 128.

seen in battle, and whose new-made grave was before him.”¹⁰³ Semmes was laid to rest, and the attendees continued their work by clearing the graves and placing flowers and garlands on soldiers’ graves. The *Columbus Weekly Sun* wrote that the attendees left with the “recollections of the departed and their deeds glowing in each Southern heart,” reflected in a brief poem written by the editors:

Oh! gallant heroes! Ye who sleep
beneath our banner height;
Who struggled with true bravery,
For freedom and the right,
What need of marble monuments
To tell thy deeds of glory,
When every humble soldier-grave
Has proudly said the story!¹⁰⁴

As scholars have noted, funeral commemorations after the war provided a safe place for the preservation of Confederate spirit. Federal officers found it difficult to stop memorial proceedings if the speakers did not become too outspoken against Reconstruction policies.¹⁰⁵ Confederate symbols predominated throughout the service at the church, in the procession, and at the cemetery. Columbus was still under martial law following George Ashburn’s murder. State leaders were still formalizing a new constitution to be approved by the Union military administration. The parading and public mourning of a Confederate general’s coffin by the city military units, elected officials and former Confederate officers in full military dress kept the memory of the Confederacy alive. But it did more than this. Holding an open military funeral to a Confederate general with the flags and men in Confederate military dress in full parade through the streets, and doing so mere weeks after the murder of a prominent Republican in that city, constituted implicit defiance of military Reconstruction—occupation, martial law, and the 14th

¹⁰³ “Memorial Day – Appearances – Funeral Exercises – Major Moses’ Speech – Decoration of Graves,” *Columbus Weekly Sun*, May 5, 1868.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Blair, *Cities of the Dead*, 84.

Amendment. They showed their opposition to the Union’s forced attempt at reforming the state government by showing their pride for the service of their military veterans and buried troops. They especially eulogize Semmes as an avatar of antebellum values that they view all Confederates embodied during the war, and his reburial defies attempts at what was viewed as unconstitutional political restructuring. A Union officer in Macon recognized this meaning when he called the women of the LMA “worse than hyenas; that they dared to parade the body of a Confederate General through the streets of Columbus and give him a military funeral, and *we dared not molest them.*”¹⁰⁶

The Union officer had observed correctly. Indeed, women were able to conduct Memorial Days because of the assumption by the male-dominant society that women were outside the political sphere.¹⁰⁷ Women could not be considered political actors because of their gender and were not expected to be politically active whereas men participated in politics. This assumption allowed women to do things that, had the men of Columbus and the South done them, would be political—in this case, supporting Confederate identity in a time when it was politically proscribed. The men of the South, their pride wounded by defeat in the Civil War, “certainly found a valuable political reason for supporting women’s efforts that allowed all former Confederates to honor their past.”¹⁰⁸ They needed a means of reinterpreting their service in the war to have meaning in the post-war period, where the shame of defeat could be restructured to have meaning in the face of new realities for themselves and the South. Confederate Memorial

¹⁰⁶ Confederated Southern Memorial Association, *History of the Confederated Memorial Associations of the South*, 128.

¹⁰⁷ Janney, *Burying the Dead*, 6.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 7.

Day functions offered the means in which southern men could reflect on their service with pride and reattribute the meaning of their cause through public speeches.

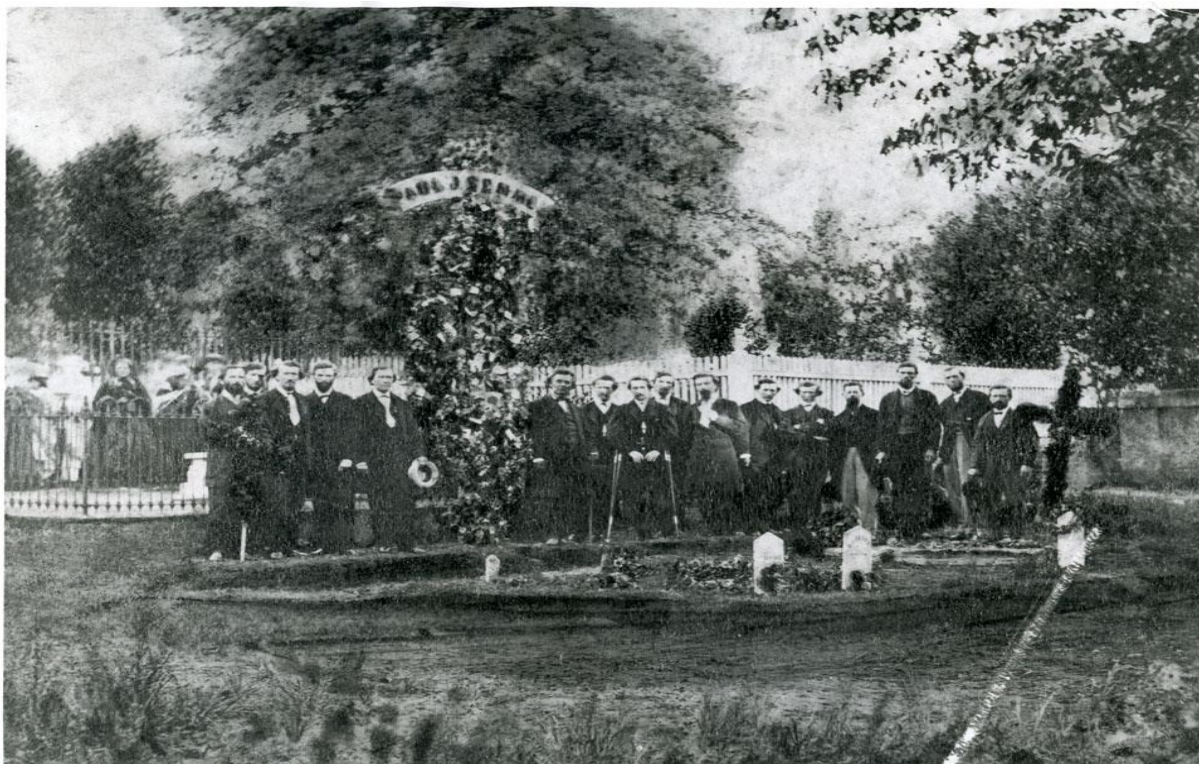


Figure 4. Burial of Paul J. Semmes (Joseph Mahan Collection, Columbus State University Archives and Special Collections).

Male support for Confederate Memorial Day was manifested through financial and material donations, participation through public speaking, military parades, and late, once the planning of the Columbus Confederate Monument began, through consultation with contractors on behalf of the LMA's leadership. Columbus veterans showed their indebtedness to the ladies of the LMA through their speeches, praising them for their wartime service to the Confederate Army, and for beginning Confederate Memorial Day as a continuation of their service to the memory of the soldiers they treated.

Columbus residents showed their appreciation to the Ladies Memorial Association for their memorialization efforts. The inscriptions on the tombstones of Mary Ann Williams and Elizabeth Rutherford Ellis were worded as thanks for their actions in creating Confederate

Memorial Day. Ellis died on March 31, 1873, and was buried in Linwood Cemetery, near the Confederate graves she had tended after the war. Her tombstone reads “The Soldiers’ Friend, Lizzie Rutherford Ellis. She hath done what she could. —Mark xiv. 8. A loving tribute to our co-worker, Mrs. Lizzie Rutherford Ellis.” “In her patriotic heart, sprang the thought of our Memorial Day.” During the Memorial Day functions in 1874 the military units marched to her grave and laid flowers atop her resting place.

Williams died on April 15, 1874. Located several feet away from Ellis’s grave, her tombstone is inscribed: “Mrs. Charles J. Williams, In loving recognition of her memorial work by her co-workers.”¹⁰⁹ Mayor S.B. Cleghorn, a veteran who lost a leg, thumb and several fingers at the battle of the Wilderness, delivered a speech in commemoration. Cleghorn called her an advocate “for the rights of the South,” and the “rear guard of our cause in its retreat from the surrender of our armies, by defending its history from the misrepresentations of power.”¹¹⁰ Williams and her colleagues of the Ladies Soldier’s Friend Society had maintained the home front while the enlisted men served on the front lines. Their service had been important in raising the morale of the wounded troops, even as the war continued to turn against the South. Cleghorn acknowledges the Ladies Memorial Association’s efforts at memorializing the Confederate dead is the equivalent of battle during the war. His eulogy of Williams elevates the importance of women in propagating the post-war memory of Columbus’s dead and veterans. The post-war memorial services they planned offered the South a new opportunity to reevaluate public memory of the Civil War to ensure it was remembered in a way that did respect to military service and their cause. The Columbus and City Light Guards who marched in parade to

¹⁰⁹ Lizzie Rutherford Chapter, United Daughters of the Confederacy, and Columbus Ladies Memorial Association, *A History of the Origins of Memorial Day*, 17.

¹¹⁰ “Ninth Memorial Day,” *Columbus Daily Enquirer-Sun*, April 28, 1874.

Linwood, after placing their wreaths on the graves, marched to Williams' grave. Each man in the units, over ninety in total, placed a rose on her grave and bowed their heads to her.

Every soldier—aye every visitor, breathed a benison o'er the sleeping dust, whose soul, relieved from earth hovered o'er the scene, seemingly whispering blessings o'er those who died for country and for right, and those who honored them for the observance. God be praised for noble women!¹¹¹

Every Confederate Memorial Day speaker from 1866 to 1880 referenced the women of Columbus in their speeches, praising their service in the war and their work in memorializing the dead. They continually expanded their rhetoric in speeches with comparisons to historic women from Greco-Roman history and the Bible. Southern women were held in high regard for their service as the epitome of the dutiful mother and wife. The praise of their actions showed the dependence of men on the women of the South to perform the ceremonies as key to rehabilitating the public's memory of the soldiers' service during the war.

The Confederate Memorial Day that Williams, Ellis, and several other women had inaugurated in 1866 offered a public spectacle to show that Columbus and the South valued the service and memory of the late troops and veterans. Into the 1870s, the ceremonies varied in presentation and decorations, but followed the basic outline used in earlier Confederate Memorial Day events. The Ladies Memorial Association cleared the grounds around the soldiers' graves with support from the city and volunteers prior to Memorial Day. At meetings, several weeks before April 26 the Ladies Memorial Association outlined the program for Memorial Day and designate a speaker to deliver a speech to attendees. the LMA then published the program in the city newspapers. Speakers read their speeches to attendees in Temperance Hall, or, later, at the Springer Opera House; following the speech-attendees marched to Linwood with the military companies in formation.

¹¹¹ "Ninth Memorial Day," *Columbus Daily Enquirer-Sun*, April 28, 1874.

Commemoration became livelier at the beginning of the 1870s because newspaper accounts became more elaborate in their descriptions of Confederate Memorial Day ceremonies. The 1870s is a significant period in memorialization with Georgia's readmission to the Union in July 1870, following the Fifteenth Amendment's ratification in February. Democrats won majority of the seats in both houses of the Georgia legislature.¹¹² Elections in 1871 placed the Redeemer Democrats in the Georgia state government. The Redeemers Democrats included many former Confederates, beginning with ex-Confederate colonel James M. Smith's election as governor to replace Republican Rufus Bullock.¹¹³ Redeemer Democrat control of the state government ensured Confederate Memorial Day functions could adopt more elaborate ceremonies to memory unlike earlier commemorations. The end of Reconstruction ensured planners did not fear censorship from Union authorities on use of Confederate iconography. Commemorations after 1870 included elaborate presentations to support the Lost Cause rationale of the Civil War among residents.

At the 1870 Memorial Day over 7,000 people, including 750 school children, walked on foot or rode carriages in procession through the city to Linwood, carrying flowers and wreaths in their hands. Due to the ban on Confederate iconography, the marshals that led the procession wore a green and red sash.¹¹⁴ Opening exercises in 1871 began at the Springer Opera House with a performance by an all-black brass band.¹¹⁵ The Springer's main stage in 1872 hosted a portrait of Robert E. Lee in the center, with insignias of Columbus' military companies. The afternoon procession included the Columbus Guards, City Light Guards and Georgia Grays

¹¹² Bragg, "Reconstruction," 193.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 193.

¹¹⁴ "Memorial Day—Fifth Anniversary," *Columbus Weekly Sun*, May 3, 1870.

¹¹⁵ "Memorial Day," *Weekly Columbus Enquirer*, May 2, 1871.

forming the center.¹¹⁶ Later Memorial Days became ever more elaborate in decorations and performances. An arch made of evergreens and flowers stood on the Springer's main stage for the 1875 Memorial Day, with the flags of the Columbus Guards and City Light Guards at each end of the stage. Music included Giovanni Vianini's *Veni Creator*, Harrison Millard's *Mass*, Moses' *Prayer in Egypt*, and arias by several Columbus women.¹¹⁷ Members of various church choirs performed "Hymn of Peace," and LMA member Mamie Kivlin and Joe Estes sang "Guide me, oh, Thou Great Jehovah." Confederate Memorial Day over time developed from solemn ceremonies where the focus was mourning the dead to becoming public spectacles in which the city's dead were mourned in events that celebrated the service of men and women in grand events that drew thousands.

Confederate Memorial Day began as an event permitting Columbus residents to gather and mourn the fallen Confederate servicemen. The ceremonies allowed residents to keep the spirit of the Confederate States alive during the uncertain periods of Reconstruction. Women assumed greater public roles through the planning and organization of Confederate commemoration. The ceremonies became events that attracted thousands of attendants, comprising parades and artistic presentations that celebrated the memory of the Confederate dead. The sacrifice of the Confederate dead was propagated in major displays of memorialization and parades that maintained their memory in the public conscience. These public displays allowed Columbus residents to show the contribution of their fallen in the brief history of the Confederate States of America.

¹¹⁶ "Memorial Day," *Weekly Columbus Enquirer*, April 30, 1872.

¹¹⁷ "Tenth Memorial Day," *Columbus Daily Enquirer*, April 28, 1875.

Confederate Memorial Day Speeches

Captain James Jeremiah Slade summarized the concept of the Lost Cause in his 1873 Memorial Day speech: “A glorious past alone is our undisputed legacy. More unsullied banner never floated over braver, truer patriots than lie here in these narrow beds, all their country has left to give them, of her once rich, sovereign domain, with the privilege ‘to lie free among the slain.’”¹¹⁸ The Civil War had ended and the people looked to create a new meaning for the hardships they endured during the conflict. Confederate Memorial Day created the venue to propagate the memory of the Old South and Confederacy to later generations. Speeches formed a major component of Confederate Memorial Day ceremonies. The key component of the Lost Cause ideology being formed after the war was the creation of a regional cultural identity that could not be undone by the North.¹¹⁹ Edward Pollard, the author credited with writing the first history of the Civil War in 1866, *The Lost Cause: A New Southern History of the War of the Confederates*, epitomized this when he encouraged former Confederates to “foster in the hearts of our children the memories of a century of political and mental triumphs,” and to preserve the heroism and endurance of their cause.¹²⁰

Columbus speakers responded to the challenges and changes to southern concepts of manhood and womanhood created by their defeat in the Civil War and by the socio-political changes created during Reconstruction. Speakers looked to the past to face the postwar future, identifying their city’s heroes from the men and women who served in the war and creating historic narratives about their exploits to develop the rhetoric of the Lost Cause. The theme of secession’s constitutionality, which formed a key component of the Lost Cause, followed the

¹¹⁸ “The Eighth Memorial Day,” *Columbus Weekly Sun*, April 27, 1873.

¹¹⁹ Caroline Janney, *Remembering the Civil War: Reunion and the Limits of Reconciliation* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2013), 136.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, 136.

model of other southern communities and speakers, looking to past political discourse to justify secession.

The historiography of Confederate Memorial Day has examined how southerners created arguments to defend the justness of secession and the actions of women and the soldiers they aided. William Blair discussed how southern speakers sought to “resolve masculinity with defeat and with their political subjugation to Yankees.”¹²¹ The Civil War had removed slavery as the fundamental means that distinguished the privileged white elites, and southerners sought to resolve the issue of manhood in response to a potential social order where freedmen could be equal to or superior to whites. The personal and psychological effects of Confederate Memorial Day for women, as Drew Faust argued, was to “reassure defeated Confederates about their honor, courage, and manhood” by redefining the Civil War as “a noble sacrifice and ultimate moral victory.”¹²² Veterans allowed women to be acknowledged as the creators of Confederate Memorial Day. The memorialization efforts of women and men occurred with the understanding that they would not alter gender relations.¹²³ Women would plan, organize, and appear in ceremonies, but their subordination to men in public memory would not be challenged.

Speeches in Columbus serve as a case study to showcase the broader trends of Confederate memory after the Civil War. The Civil War’s conclusion created uncertainty among the people of Columbus. In this period of socio-political discussion, Columbus residents sought to articulate the meaning of their military service during the war amidst social and political upheaval created by the conflict’s conclusion and the advent of Reconstruction. According to Columbus speakers, the Confederacy lost the Civil War because the Union had the advantage of

¹²¹ Blair, *Cities of the Dead*, 78.

¹²² Faust, *Mothers of Invention*, 252.

¹²³ Blair, *Cities of the Dead*, 78.

superior numbers, yet they fought till the end with honor and courage unlike anything ever recorded in history. Soldiers and the women who served at hospitals remained at their posts until the very end of the war. Their speeches sought to highlight and acknowledge them as the standards of a unified and virtuous past of honor. However, the events in the early years of Reconstruction their actions showed them as hypocritical. Two months before the inaugural Confederate Memorial Day, residents fired on black troops after a Confederate veteran assaulted one soldier. The George Ashburn murder occurred less than three weeks prior to the 1868 ceremonies. In the two years between 1866 and 1868 dozens of assaults against freedmen occurred to prevent their participation in politics.

In these early years of Reconstruction, Columbus remained under Union occupation from May 1865 to July 1868. Veterans returned to their homes with enemy troops marching down the city streets instead of victorious Confederate forces. Their war had ended in defeat and destitution for the South, and the shame of being the defeated power. Slavery, the southern institution which was an integral part of Columbus's culture and economy before the war, ceased to exist. Five thousand slaves, over half of the city's pre-war population, had gained their freedom, and freedmen from neighboring communities came to Columbus in search of work. Yet the Union occupation did not challenge the pre-war social relationship between whites and blacks. In September 1865 soldiers arrested jobless freedmen and forced them to work in chain gangs. Fears of a "Christmas insurrection" in December caused the Union commander to allow veterans Henry Benning and Martin J. Crawford to organize two militias of ex-Confederates to keep the peace.¹²⁴ A company of African-American troops assigned to garrison duty in February, 1866 was forced to leave after former slave owner and veteran Cooper Lindsay shot a black

¹²⁴ Causey, *Red Clay, White Water, and Blues*, 48.

soldier. Lindsay was released after a crowd of a thousand whites forced his release, but shots were exchanged between both groups during the afternoon. The unit left the city on February 23 after three weeks of what residents called “Negro dominance” in Columbus.¹²⁵

Lax policies by Union officers allowed white vigilantes to intimidate freedmen attempting to vote. Between January 1 and November 15, 1868 twenty-five murders and assaults on freedmen were recorded by the Freedmen’s Bureau in Columbus. Early responses by Columbus residents after the Civil War prevented large-scale voting efforts by freedmen in the city during Reconstruction. Attempts at voting were hindered by the state poll tax, enacted in 1868, and by threats of violence if they voted for Republican candidates. These acts of intimidation and political sabotage ensured African American residents could not practice their civil liberties, while reminding them their “sphere was the field, not politics, and that polling places were not healthy resorts for black men.”¹²⁶ In their speeches Columbus orators described the Republican Party as “Black Republicanism,” establishing the connection between African American political activism with the Republican Party.

The relaxed conduct of Union officers allowed the city government and ex-Confederates to focus on rebuilding around old concepts of labor that became non-existent after the war. W.A. Little, the speaker at the 1872 Confederate Memorial Day ceremony, highlighted that Reconstruction was not only political, but also economic. “War’s rude alarms had ceased, and for six years the people of our section have been seeking a restoration of their fortunes amid the busy industries of peace.”¹²⁷ In the antebellum South manhood was based in part on the ability to dominate the household workforce. As an urban center Columbus’s lawyers, doctors and

¹²⁵ Causey, *Red Clay, White Water, and Blues*, 51.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, 52-54.

¹²⁷ “Memorial Day,” *Weekly Columbus Enquirer*, April 30, 1872.

businessmen had been slaveowners; Raphael Moses and James Jeremiah Slade were planters before the war. The Civil War devastated the southern economy, and each state faced Union occupation until the mid-1870s. John Banks, a Columbus resident who lost four sons during the Civil War, owned two-hundred slaves but in May, 1865 recorded “I owned about two hundred negroes, in which my property mostly consisted. This leaves me poor.”¹²⁸ Raphael Moses had forty-seven slaves before the war; one former slave nicknamed Old London remained by his side until Moses’s death in 1893.¹²⁹ Their wealth was tied to their land and the slaves who tended the fields; slavery’s abolition and the state of the southern economy after the war decreased their incomes significantly.

Economic and political changes created by the war undermined traditional concepts of manhood and womanhood. The end of slavery removed the source of cheap labor that elite men relied on for the wealth which allowed Columbus’s educated professionals to focus on their work as doctors and lawyers. Elite women relied on the use of slaves to handle household chores while they managed the home for their husbands. Their actions during the war empowered them by acquiring organizational skills that allowed them to host Confederate Memorial Day but challenged antebellum concepts of womanhood by shifting their attention away from their families. Elite white men and women of the postwar South remembered the rewards of class and racial power in the antebellum South, and desired to maintain their eroding status in the new South.

Politics in the South had been the dominion of white citizens until the Reconstruction Acts and the Fifteenth Amendment extended voting rights to African American males. This promised the possibility of black politicians holding office at the local, state, and national level.

¹²⁸ Causey, *Red Clay, White Water, and Blues*, 47.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, 47.

Southern Republican leaders such as George Ashburn advocated for the new Georgia Constitution that guaranteed voting rights for African Americans. Ashburn hoped the influx of African American voters would secure his future appointment to the United States Congress, but his murder in 1868 secured the understanding that politics remained the domain of white citizens. Attempts by African Americans to vote came at the risk of assault and murder unless they voted for a candidate that white voters supported.

Elite white men and women sought to create a new social identity that preserved the class and racial order of the antebellum South against the new postwar society Republican leaders and Union authorities attempted to create. W.A. Little highlighted the significance of this new southern identity: “It should be the aim of all to restore [the South’s] prosperity and develop her resources. Whatever might be her fate in the future, her past glories can never be forgotten or obliterated.”¹³⁰ Speakers looked to reiterate and instill antebellum southern values in Columbus residents during a period of economic reorganization by adopting the wartime generation as embodiments of what the postwar generations should value.

The images of men and women during the war speakers described were intended to create a new pantheon of heroes who were part of the southern cultural identity. Columbus speakers asserted that the war was a trial for the southern states to become stronger in their dedication to constitutional liberty. Their reward was the creation of a new South that would know prosperity was achieved through the sacrifices of men and women who embodied the principles of southern culture and now became the avatars of those principles

Memorial Day speakers in Columbus propagated the Lost Cause by romanticizing the Confederate soldiers’ service and the work of southern women in the Ladies Soldier’s Friend

¹³⁰ “Memorial Day,” *Weekly Columbus Enquirer*, April 30, 1872.

Society. The speakers from 1866 to 1880 were veterans of the war. James Ramsey had served as a Colonel in the First Georgia Infantry during the war. Dr. E.F. Colzey had treated wounded troops at the Soldier's Home in Columbus. James Jeremiah Slade was a Captain in the Tenth Georgia Volunteers. They were men of the educated elite who supported the Confederate cause of southern independence from the Union.

At the core of Confederate Memorial Day speeches was memorialization of Confederate soldiers. At the first Confederate Memorial Day in 1866 James Ramsey described the heroism of the “noble soldiers” of the South and assured the people and his fellow veterans their memory “should ever be warmly cherished.”¹³¹ The theme of cherishing the memory of Confederate servicemen was part of the project of looking toward the past to look forward. In their speeches they described the actions of Columbus soldiers killed during the Civil War, and how their conduct made them the representatives of the city's Lost Cause memory. These speakers and other orators across the South universally focused on various Confederate leaders and generals for their service during the war as southern figures that epitomized the Confederate nation. Prominent Confederate generals—Robert E. Lee, Thomas “Stonewall” Jackson, Joseph E. Johnston, etc.—were praised in speeches for their leadership of the Confederate Army during the war. Robert E. Lee became a romantic figure to southerners as the embodiment of “all that was good and righteous about the Old South and the Confederacy.”¹³² Every community in the southern states not only described these generals in their speeches but memorialized their personal heroes as well. Their speeches attempted to romanticize them as embodiments of the Old South during Reconstruction and the postwar future.

¹³¹ “The Ceremonies of Yesterday,” *Columbus Daily Sun*, April 27, 1866.

¹³² Janney, *Remembering the Civil War*, 141.

Local soldiers buried in Linwood were memorialized as the city's personal heroes in the larger southern collection of war heroes. Thomas Everitt was the first Columbus soldier killed in the war. Peyton Colquitt, dubbed "the Christian Soldier," was Colonel of the 46th Georgia Infantry Division, killed at the battle of Chickamauga. Colonel Charles Lamar, who embodied "the manly type of Southern chivalry" as Grimes described him, was killed leading a charge against Wilson's raiders at the battle of Columbus in 1865. Brigadier General Paul Semmes was honored as the "first upon the roll of fame" for his service during the war.¹³³ He was the focus of Raphael Moses' speech in 1868, who he eulogized during the reburial ceremony of Semmes in Linwood Cemetery.¹³⁴ Semmes, Colquitt, and the other soldiers speakers described in their speeches were among the dead remembered by Columbus residents on Confederate Memorial Day.¹³⁵ Their purpose when describing the actions attributed to the Confederate dead in Linwood was to incorporate them into the memory of southern war heroes.

W.A. Little said Confederate soldiers had no superiors or equals from the history of the past in his 1872 address. The Confederate soldier embodied chivalry in "its highest type and illustrated its purest." The only comparable equal to the South's soldiery were the Spartans of Ancient Greece, who showed "such unanimity of action, such devotion to principle, such valor in fight, such cheerfulness in adversity, such determination to do or die, as were displayed by Southern men."¹³⁶ The connection of Confederate soldiers to the Spartans of Ancient Greece established the identity of the southern soldier as one who fought against impossible odds for a cause he was duty-bound to defend. The Battle of Thermopylae served as an effective

¹³³ "Memorial Speech," *The Weekly Sun*, May 10, 1870.

¹³⁴ "Memorial Day—Appearances—Funeral Exercises—Major Moses' Speech—Decoration of Graves," *Columbus Weekly Sun*, May 5, 1868.

¹³⁵ "Memorial Speech," *The Weekly Sun*, May 10, 1870.

¹³⁶ "Memorial Day," *Weekly Columbus Enquirer*, April 30, 1872.

comparison to the Civil War from the southern perspective. Their war was fought to protect their home from invasion that threatened the southern way of life. It was this connection to the Spartans that Thomas Hardeman made in 1875 when he said future historians would speak of a “gallant people, who, in their struggle for freedom, challenged the admiration of the world, and in their sorrow and defeat commanded a respect that will intensify in warmth and feeling as the ages roll on.”¹³⁷ Hardeman and other speakers had an affinity with Sparta because of the Spartans historic battle with the Persian Empire at Thermopylae. He and other veterans who spoke in Columbus viewed the Confederacy’s military situation in the war as a conflict against a numerically superior enemy, whom they fought with courage and determination until the end of the war.

Speakers at Confederate Memorial Day focused their speeches not only on the actions of soldiers as the embodiment of the Old South; women were also prominently featured in their rhetoric. Speeches emphasized that their role in the Civil War was separate from the duty of men who fought on the front lines. As the “sweet daughters of the South” it was not their role to participate directly in combat “as did the fair daughters of Sargossa, or as Artemesia did when leading her thinned ranks against the Persian hosts.”¹³⁸ The martial aspects of the Civil War were the domain of men, but women were as honorable as the troops for seeing them off to war. The actions of the soldiers would be recorded in history as a “nobler heroism” for the fight for southern independence. Yet men’s actions were not “more heroic than the patient fortitude, the unwavering devotion of their mothers, wives, and sisters at home.”¹³⁹

¹³⁷“Tenth Memorial Day,” *Columbus Daily Enquirer*, April 28, 1875

¹³⁸ “Memorial Speech,” *The Weekly Sun*, May 10, 1870.

¹³⁹ “Memorial Day,” *Columbus Daily Times*, April 27, 1878.

These descriptions of women showcase the gendered nature of wartime memory in the New South. The descriptions of women's actions during the war framed them as equivalent to those of Confederate soldiers. The women of different familial relations to the southern soldier were celebrated for their wartime sacrifices and devotion to the soldiers. The mother who "with streaming eyes, sent her son, upon whom she leaned, to defend his country's flag" was just as heroic as "the brave boy who followed that flag to the cannon's mouth."¹⁴⁰ The wife who maintained the household while praying for her husband's return "was not less heroic than the husband who marched and suffered, and bled and died upon the battlefield." The men of the South endured "the hardships and privations of the camp" and earned praise in history. Unlike soldiers, "the hardships and privations which the women of the Confederacy endured in their daily home-life found no reward" but the praise they were given by speakers on Confederate Memorial Day. For their service they were to be remembered as the dutiful ladies who supported the men of the South and viewed as "the noble women of the South."¹⁴¹

The postwar memory of women's service emphasized that their wartime service was connected to the work they conducted for the Confederate Army. In speeches they were the dutiful mother and wife who saw them off to war but worked to maintain the home in their absence. Their work was important to the war effort and they were praised for their wartime loyalty in speeches. As with the rhetoric of men's service in response to reexamination of manhood after the war, womanhood was reexamined in response to the loss of slavery and their enlarged public roles during the war. During the Civil War, the elite women of the Ladies Soldier's Friend Society had worked as nurses in Columbus's military hospitals, and organized charity events to raise money for the purchase of food and medicine for Confederate soldiers.

¹⁴⁰ "Memorial Day," *Columbus Daily Times*, April 27, 1878.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*

Though their service and contributions formed the basis of Columbus speaker's descriptions of women's patriotism during the war, they glossed over events such as the bread riot of 1863 which showed women's unrest during the war. Southerners feared the change in the concept of womanhood in response to these social changes; consequently, memorial speakers focused on women's loyalty and devotion to their men during the war. Their experience during the war would teach future generations "lessons of patient endurance, of uncomplaining devotion to duty, of faith, fidelity and purity," which were "as glorious as that transmitted by the valor of your illustrious sires."¹⁴² Women of the New South would learn that their mothers and grandmothers were respected for upholding the values of the antebellum South as the men embodied valor and duty during the war.

Women's post-war service also garnered praise; speakers memorialized how they supported the post-war memory of fallen soldiers. Public memory for Columbus women in the post-war era rested on "the keeping of those they loved better, far better, than life," looking after the graves "of those whose undying loyalty and faith will keep their glory bright." When the work of the Ladies Memorial Association was described directly or indirectly, speakers framed their descriptions to reflect the importance of the fallen and living troops. Their cleaning and adornment of the soldier's graves would engrain them "in the hearts of their living comrades as did the mention of the prowess of those heroines of old awaken proud memories in their countrymen."¹⁴³ Post-war memory of men and women was symbiotic; women's efforts to remember the soldier's wartime service reminded the public of women's work and character during the Civil War.

¹⁴² "Memorial Day," *Columbus Daily Times*, April 27, 1878.

¹⁴³ "Southern Sabbath," *Columbus Daily Enquirer-Sun*, April 27, 1880.

Thomas Hardeman, the speaker in 1875's Confederate Memorial Day, stated he let women host Confederate Memorial Day, which they had started with "her patriotism and her love," because he had "no skilled hand with which to weave garlands for 'the bleeding brows' of the surviving braves." The women of the LMA would show the South's pride for the dead through the language "more appropriate than studied oratory—the true language of flowers and of tears—the breathing eloquence of heart and soul," by laying wreaths on the graves of the Confederate soldiers.¹⁴⁴ In Hardeman's words women were entrusted with preserving the memory of the fallen because they knew how to express appreciation for the Confederate dead's service with flowers. Their personal motivation was to ensure the commemoration of family members who had fought and died in the war. According to Charles H. Williams, as the mothers of the next generation it was their duty to keep alive the "spirit of chivalry by instilling in their children's minds that the fallen Confederate troops were not rebels and traitors, but patriots and martyrs."¹⁴⁵ The ceremonies allowed women to teach boys and girls what Columbus men and women fought for during the war, and how they embodied the values of the Old South to be propagated in the New South.

Aside from using their speeches to establish the service of women and veterans as new values of manhood and womanhood, Columbus speakers argued secession was a constitutional right of the states to uphold the system of government as they believed was outlined by the Constitution. At the waning moment of Reconstruction in Georgia, ex-Confederates in the early 1870s became vocal about the rectitude of secession and the wrongness of their opponents. This rhetoric carried specific political meaning as the return of Conservative Democrats to power ended political Reconstruction.

¹⁴⁴ "Tenth Memorial Day," *Columbus Daily Enquirer*, April 28, 1875.

¹⁴⁵ "Memorial Day," *Weekly Columbus Enquirer*, May 2, 1871.

Columbus speakers looked to reinterpret secession away from the preservation of slavery. In speeches read in the 1870s orators in Columbus looked to the debates of political thinkers Thomas Jefferson and Alexander Hamilton on what form of government was meant in the Constitution. Hamilton supported a stronger national government with protective tariffs to encourage industrialization; Jefferson favored a weaker national government with greater rights for the states. The South supported Jefferson's political rhetoric of the "Agrarian Republic," in which farmers were considered truer republicans than Hamilton's industrial worker. Confederate Memorial Day speakers looked to these divergent political discussions to rationalize secession.

Secession's constitutional legality was the core theme of Representative Thomas Wingsfield Grimes. A Confederate veteran and member of the Georgia House of Representatives, he argued the southern states "as independent sovereignties had cause of war an hundred fold, and cause of war is cause of revolution." He claimed southerners were taught to "hold inviolate the principles of the Constitution, which was looked up to as the worship of her idolatry." This worship of the Constitution came under threat when the "black star of black Republicanism" appeared in the North, "shedding its baleful light upon the sacred Constitution of our forefathers; blighting in its breath and Dead sea-fruit in its effect." These sections of his speech were part of a larger political discussion within Confederate memorialization. Although not reconciliatory, the focus of his speech was to describe the political cause of the Civil War as the cause of the Republican Party, and their alleged encroachment on the southern concept of national unity. According to Grimes the Republican Party "refused their assent to laws, the most wholesome and necessary for the public good," obstructed justice and "incited domestic insurrections" against white southerners. Unwilling to compromise further the southern states

declared their independence, fighting to maintain the right of self-government against overwhelming odds.¹⁴⁶

Grimes thus framed the war as an issue of political sectionalism between North and South. The North's accumulation of wealth and power influenced politicians to circumvent the Constitution to further their own economic and political agendas. The South attempted compromises to ensure mutual distribution of wealth and political authority between the two parts of the country. When compromise could no longer benefit both sides, secession became the only option open to the South. Like Grimes, other speakers described their goal as ensuring the formation of a government structured around the concept of the agrarian republic. This republic was centered on agriculture as the backbone of the United States' economy, a concept challenged by freedmen seeking economic independence through land ownership.

On the tenth Confederate Memorial Day, in 1876, the speaker aligned the theme of his speech with the centennial of the Declaration of Independence's signing. Henry W. Hilliard, the speaker in 1876, opened his speech with the statement "standing here today, I represent the South, but I feel too, that I am an American." In the words of Hilliard the Declaration of Independence asserted "the right of the people to alter or abolish their form of government and establish a new government for the protection of their rights."¹⁴⁷ This understanding of the Declaration of Independence framed the understanding of the constitution and the rationale for secession.

Hilliard described the Civil War as a debate over the extent of powers conferred to the national government. Reinterpretation of the Civil War's cause was an attempt by speakers to create a historic framework that allowed their wartime service to be praised in history. A former

¹⁴⁶ "Memorial Speech," *The Weekly Sun*, May 10, 1870.

¹⁴⁷ "Eleventh Memorial," *Columbus Daily Times*, April 27, 1876.

Alabama representative, Hilliard described the United States as “a Federal Republic embracing co-equal states,” whose government was “invested with sovereignty to the full extent of its Constitutional authority; wielding great, well-defined, but limited powers.” In principle the national government had no control over the states’ domestic affairs and institutions within the range of its authorized powers under the Constitution. Hilliard’s speech described the antebellum political discussion as the cause of secession. According to his interpretation, the rise of the Republican Party challenged the existing political order, causing southern leaders to debate whether to remain in the Union or secede.¹⁴⁸ The reevaluation of the southern cause as the preservation of American democracy as they had theorized it to be was an attempt to get future generations to evaluate their wartime service as the defense of liberty.

Speakers at Confederate Memorial Day used the opportunity to create a new interpretation of their service that moved it away from the defense of slavery. By framing the war as the defense of constitutional government, in principle their service had had merit. J.R. McCleskey, the speaker in 1877, described the Confederacy as an attempt to ensure “constitutional liberty and the heaven-approved and inalienable right of self-government.” In Hilliard’s words the North’s disregard of the Constitution and attempt to bring its influence on the South threatened their relationship with the federal government, spurring the southern states to secede and form the Confederate States of America. McCleskey’s speech built on these concepts of the Civil War, showing that what the North called an insurrection the South viewed as a revolution to maintain the principle of free government. The Confederate soldier, according to him, was part of a “grand enterprise of Southern valor and patriotism,” which, “regarded in its true light, is a tributary blessing to good government on this continent, and a most valuable

¹⁴⁸ “Eleventh Memorial,” *Columbus Daily Times*, April 27, 1876.

contribution to the cause of civil liberty.” The Confederate government McCleskey described as “but the ideal form of the expression of a principle dearer than the form itself,” born from “the right of the absolute self-government of the States, subject to no qualification under Heaven except such as the States fixed upon themselves in a common Constitution.” The Constitution as he and other speakers read it held each state was an independent and sovereign state and maintained rights over their own domestic institutions. It was for this Constitution he declared the men of the South fought during the war.¹⁴⁹

Confederate Memorial Day speeches hailed Confederate soldiers, living and dead, as members of a force that had no equal in recorded history and their contemporary period, who embodied honor, chivalry, and duty that could only be compared to the Spartans of Ancient Greece. The southern woman embodied the dutiful mother and wife who sent her husband and sons to war with a heavy heart but supported them and the troops as the “angels of mercy” in hospitals tending the wounded and praying for their safety. To the speakers and public, defeat in the Civil War did not mean the issues of the war ceased with the fighting. Rather it offered new chances to create a new historic narrative where the service of men and women could have meaning. This trend of memorializing their service formed an integral part of Confederate Memorial Day, and their speeches helped to propagate a larger meaning to their service in the Lost Cause ideology. They hoped that one day when future generations asked the “fearless sentinel on the battlements of Time,” “Watchman, what of the night?” they would point a monument of imperishable marble inscribed with the names of the dead, and to the scroll beneath, “Martyred for Liberty.”¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁹ “Twelfth Memorial Day,” *Columbus Daily Times*, April 27, 1877.

¹⁵⁰ “The Eighth Memorial Day,” *The Weekly Sun*, April 29, 1873.

The Columbus Confederate Monument

Karen Cox has argued that the importance of monuments was to vindicate both Confederate troops who had died in the war and those men who survived the shame of defeat. They served to “preserve the values still revered by white southerners. The stone soldier who stand sentinel in southern towns pay homage to white heroes who were revered as both loyal southerners and American patriots, for their defense of states’ rights.”¹⁵¹ Her research has shown that the United Daughters of the Confederacy were the most committed to the construction of monuments. They used their power and influence as elites to raise the funds needed for the monuments through effective fundraising campaigns.¹⁵² In the city of Columbus, however, the monument was primarily accomplished before the advent of the UDC, by the women of the Ladies Memorial Association. Between the years 1869 and 1881 the Ladies Memorial Association of Columbus built on their organizational activities from the Civil War and Confederate Memorial Day to organize large fundraising events to build the Columbus Confederate monument. Their efforts accumulated over \$5,000, estimated at over \$126,150 in 2020, a significant investment by Columbus to construct a monument.

These years of fundraisers coincided with an ongoing debate over the location of the monument based on city aesthetics, as Columbus residents argued between public spots within the city or adjacent to the cemetery. Residents debated over the impact each location would provide to the city landscape, showing that the monument was not just a monument to the Confederate dead but a symbol of Columbus’s status as a city. The final decision over the location—through a vote—concluded the debate in the favor of the city’s wealthier residents. They secured the monument’s location at Salisbury Park because their greater financial

¹⁵¹ Cox, *Dixie’s Daughters*, 50.

¹⁵² *Ibid.*, 50-52.

capabilities allowed them to vote multiple times in favor of their desired location. When construction began, large public ceremonies organized by the women of the Ladies Memorial Association placed women at the forefront. These events established that the Ladies were critical to the creation of the permanent monument that would propagate the memory of Columbus's Confederate dead for future generations.

The development of the Columbus Confederate monument shows that the Ladies Memorial Association assumed the responsibility of deciding its location and the means to accumulate the funding. During the years the LMA worked to create the monument there was conflict between them and Columbus editors. The editors at times made accusations their patriotism to the memory of the Confederate dead was waning as the monument had yet to begin construction. When construction began in 1879 their stance on the women of the Ladies Memorial Association switched to praising them for their efforts to create the Confederate monument. In the years before construction began the newspapers published numerous articles debating where the monument should be located based on how the spots best displayed the city's commemoration of Confederate memory. Unable to finalize a location, the LMA used their 1878 memorial fundraising festival to resolve the debate through a vote that favored the city's elites. The history of the Columbus Confederate monument showcases a period of conflict between men and women over where memory was best displayed, and their efforts to ensure it would be displayed.

Discussion of a monument to the men of the Confederate army in Columbus began barely a year after the end of the Civil War. The editor of the *Daily Columbus Enquirer* suggested on January 14, 1866 that citizens raise funds through small subscriptions for a monument to the men

of Columbus killed during the war.¹⁵³ Its design would be “a handsome and imposing column, bearing the names of all of our fallen soldiers.” His suggestion occurred during the early days of Federal occupation, when public displays of Confederate iconography were considered treasonous, and attention was focused on making headboards for the soldiers’ graves in the cemetery. A follow-up article on January 24 continued the discussion of the monument. The editor stated the monument could be built, and was certain the funds would be cheerily contributed as anybody handing around the subscription paper would be able to easily acquire the funds needed.¹⁵⁴ The *Columbus Daily Sun* published an article on March 10 detailing the proposal to raise five to six thousand dollars for a monument on Broad Street with the names of the city’s military dead.¹⁵⁵ The damage to the city’s industry and wartime inflation meant funds for a monument were short. The Ladies Memorial Association in March said they could not do a monument at that moment. They were focused on cleaning and maintaining the graves at Linwood Cemetery, and the construction of headboards for the soldiers’ graves in 1866.¹⁵⁶ This early episode on the discussion of a Confederate monument shows that the LMA’s immediate focus was the graves in the cemetery, and that they saw this as more important for the moment than building a permanent monument.

Between 1866 and 1868 the LMA and Columbus’s military units built several temporary monuments in Linwood Cemetery. The Columbus Guards placed a floral monument to their dead with the name of general Paul Semmes in the center of the cemetery for the 1867 Memorial Day. In the lower cemetery grounds the names of Confederate generals killed during the war stood on

¹⁵³ “A Monument to the Fallen Braves,” *Daily Columbus Enquirer*, January 14, 1866.

¹⁵⁴ “The Proposed Monument,” *Daily Columbus Enquirer*, January 24, 1866.

¹⁵⁵ “A Monument to the Columbus Dead,” *Columbus Daily Sun*, March 10, 1866.

¹⁵⁶ Confederated Southern Memorial Association, *History of the Confederated Memorial Associations of the South*, 129.

boards written in green paint, with Albert Sydney Johnston's name above the others. Stonewall Jackson's name was written on a board in the upper part of the cemetery with the names of other fallen generals.¹⁵⁷ Placing the names of fallen generals among the dead of Columbus drew a connection to the concepts of honor and duty they came to embody in post-war memory and demonstrated the solidarity between officers and the enlisted men they commanded.

As time went on, temporary markers became more elaborate in their design and presentation. In 1868 Linwood Cemetery had a cenotaph with the names of Columbus's war dead in the upper grounds. Made of wood painted white, it was built in a hexagonal shape standing forty feet high with a dome roof. Beneath the dome written in black letters fringed with gold was "Brig. Gen. Paul J. Semmes." On the arches beneath the roof were the names of six Confederate colonels from Columbus killed in the war, also written in black. The names of forty-eight officers and 274 non-commissioned officers and privates also appeared on the cenotaph in black.¹⁵⁸ This structure marked the first attempt at a monument that memorialized the service of all Columbus dead. The monument showed that people still remembered the collective service of all soldiers, not just Paul Semmes, whom the reburial ceremony had honored that year.

The cenotaph in Linwood Cemetery was dedicated to all of Columbus's military dead, but citizens also placed several other temporary monuments to the city's military units on the grounds in 1868. In the upper grounds a memorial shaft to the Columbus Guards stood near the cenotaph, with a similar shaft to the City Light Guards in the lower grounds. The Columbus Guards shaft was draped with a parade flag bearing the state's coat of arms, given to the unit by the women of Brunswick when they marched through the town to Virginia in June 1861. The

¹⁵⁷ "The Ladies and the Cemetery," *Columbus Daily Sun*, March 3, 1866.

¹⁵⁸ "Memorial Day—Appearances—Funeral Exercises—Major Moses' Speech—Decoration of Graves," *Columbus Weekly Sun*, May 5, 1868.

City Light Guards shaft had its company flag with the state arms, presented to the company in 1860 by Ella Ingram, who after the war became a member of the LMA. This flag flew at Sewell's Point, Virginia in 1861, when the Union gunboat *Monticello* fired on the unit under Captain Colquitt.¹⁵⁹ The flag reflected the connection between the servicemen and the women of the Ladies Soldier's Friend Society. Although these monuments were elaborate, they were made of wood and flowers; thus, they could not survive long, requiring replacement and regular maintenance to stay standing. In later years, the focus of a permanent monument focused on memorializing all soldiers, instead of just the soldiers from individual military units.

The transition from the 1860s into the 1870s marked a transition in the zone of memory from the cemetery to the city itself. Near the end of the 1860s consideration of a Confederate monument in the streets of Columbus began in the city newspapers. In the latter part of 1869, the *Weekly Sun* published an article describing the completion of the Confederate monument in Griffin, Georgia. Funds for the material and construction costs were gathered by the members of Griffin's Ladies Memorial Association, who collected two thousand dollars themselves to cover the expenses. The newspaper suggested that Columbus's Memorial Association should follow their example and raise funds for a monument in Linwood Cemetery through concerts and personal appeals to residents.¹⁶⁰ Another article in December in the *Weekly Sun* suggested twenty thousand dollars be raised to build a twenty-five foot tall monument on Broad Street. The tone of both articles showed conflict between the editors and the LMA, citing that cities in other states had already completed monuments of their own. Ladies Memorial Associations in Virginia completed had two monuments by December 1869.¹⁶¹ The *Weekly Sun* editors directly

¹⁵⁹ "Memorial Day—Fifth Anniversary," *Columbus Weekly Sun*, May 3, 1870.

¹⁶⁰ "IN MEMORIAM," *The Weekly Sun*, September 7, 1869.

¹⁶¹ "Monument to the Confederate Dead," *The Weekly Sun*, December 14, 1869.

challenged the Columbus association's patriotism to the dead, asking if they were the equals of the Virginia LMAs.

During the 1870s the Ladies Memorial Association raised funds for the Confederate monument through creative enterprises. These methods ranged in size from simple donation boxes to concerts and public festivals, methods they had used during the Civil War. For example, they placed memorial boxes with the inscription "Let us erect a monument to our noble dead" at the entrances to Linwood during the 1873 Memorial Day. Witness accounts stated that the collection that day was large.¹⁶² The Old Folkes Concerte, an amateur entertainment group, offered a performance at the Springer the following year to raise funds for the monument. Their performance included a small orchestra of nine instruments, a Indian war dance and an illuminated show of Jacob's dream.¹⁶³ Shows such as this and other events aimed to generate large crowds in order to boost ticket sales for the monument fund. By early 1875, the women's efforts had been of paltry success; a statement they published in the newspapers showed their monument fund was \$764.14.¹⁶⁴

The efforts of the Ladies Memorial Association began increasing their fundraising efforts in 1875. Their membership became more active in their endeavors following challenges to their attempts by the city's newspapers. During the 1875 Confederate Memorial Day function they sold refreshments at the Springer and placed donation boxes at the opera house and cemetery entrances. Donations totaled \$35.25 for the monument. The *Columbus Daily Enquirer* published a column titled "To Our Ladies," which praised them for their observance of Memorial Day while criticizing their lack of attendance and the small amount raised.¹⁶⁵ The editors wrote that

¹⁶² "The Eighth Memorial Day," *Columbus Weekly Sun*, April 27, 1873.

¹⁶³ "A Monument in Columbus to the Confederate Dead," *Columbus Daily Enquirer*, June 14, 1874.

¹⁶⁴ "Ladies Memorial Association," *Columbus Daily Times*, February 14, 1875.

¹⁶⁵ "Tenth Memorial Day," *Columbus Daily Enquirer*, April 27, 1875.

observances that year saw women form a small proportion of attendees. The crowd was mostly composed of men. The editor argued that support from the women of Columbus was waning, as evident by the smaller number attending the event. To them their support for the veterans and fallen soldiers had eroded.

Why do we write this? To show the North we care nothing for our dead or cause? Truly not. We love our South, we were born here, but on the very day when our annual anniversary is attended by the largest number, we appeal to our ladies not to let the custom depend upon the military, the few ladies that love our dead or are willing to sacrifice ease for them, and those who will adorn private lots. We need not add a word more.¹⁶⁶

The decline in attendance by women, the writer argued, was testament to what he perceived as their reduction in support for the city's military dead. In the long term, he felt, their non-attendance affected the meaning of hosting Confederate Memorial Day every year. Only the North benefited from their lack of attendance, as it showed support for the Lost Cause was waning. Confederate Memorial Day's success was reliant on all members of southern society coming together to promote the concept that their service had been meaningful. Women had offered their services during the war in the Ladies' Soldier's Friend Society and offered goods the troops needed for their use. They needed to show the public they were still committed to the goal of a Confederate monument in the city.

Perhaps in response to these attacks on their character and support to the memory of the soldiers, the association stepped up their fundraisers. Their fundraising efforts in Columbus centered around the notion that the members of the Memorial Association would gather the funds on their own through private donations. The LMA discussed hosting a memorial festival during a meeting on May 27, 1875. Consensus among the members supported hosting a memorial festival that fall; they hoped if two thousand dollars could be raised from the festival they could complete

¹⁶⁶ "Tenth Memorial Day," *Columbus Daily Enquirer*, April 27, 1875.

a monument within one to two years.¹⁶⁷ In September the LMA decided to hold the “cheerful service” in the late fall of 1875.¹⁶⁸ The memorial festival would be a major undertaking, requiring significant planning and organization prior to ensure its success. Several committees under the Ladies Memorial Association were formed on November 15 to secure catering and items for sale from the wards of Columbus for the festival to be held on December 21. Fifteen committees were assigned to oversee supplies and catering from Muscogee County and neighboring counties in Georgia and Alabama.¹⁶⁹

The memorial festival served as an important event, providing the largest contribution to the monument fund; it shows the elaborate measures the Ladies Memorial Association of Columbus made through public events such as this. The memorial festival—held in the Perry House, a prominent Columbus hotel—opened in the main dining room with every pillar and post decorated, and portraits of “the most illustrious of Georgia’s dead” hung on the walls. The festival focused heavily on elaborate displays of the items and food offered to the attendees. Committee members prepared fourteen tables, each named for famous American figures and Columbus residents or the food they offered. Foods presented included a lemonade well, cakes and sweetmeats, coffee, oysters, fish, assorted meats, fruits, custards, and jellies. The Georgia coat of arms made of candy served as the centerpiece of the “Georgia Table.” Pin cushions, vases, dolls, and cigars were among the items sold to attendees alongside the food. Portraits of Columbus Confederate officers—Captain Jas. Ware, Captain Giittinger, Colonel John A. Jones, and Colonel Charles Williams—hung on the walls alongside a portrait of General Stonewall Jackson with his name on a banner in the colors of the Confederate flag.¹⁷⁰ The level of

¹⁶⁷ “The Memorial Festival,” *The Daily Times*, May 28, 1875.

¹⁶⁸ “Memorial Fair,” *The Daily Times*, September 10, 1875.

¹⁶⁹ “Memorial Committees,” *The Daily Times*, November 17, 1875.

¹⁷⁰ “Memorial Festival,” *The Daily Times*, December 22, 1875.

presentation and items offered to attendees created a lively event meant to draw people in through the variety of food and drink. Portraits of Confederate dead from Columbus showed the attendees that their memory still lived on through the work of the Ladies Memorial Association and sent a message that the monument would keep their memory alive as well. The festival lasted two days, closing on Christmas Eve with a total contribution of \$1,100 for the monument fund.¹⁷¹

The success of the memorial festival influenced the Ladies Memorial Association to host similar fundraising events to gather the remaining funds needed for the monument. In the April 18, 1876 edition of the *Daily Times* the LMA announced they would host a memorial picnic that Saturday. Attendees would travel down the Chattahoochee on the steamer *Julia St. Clair* to Oswehee, Alabama for a day-long picnic. Tickets were sold at one dollar per adult and fifty cents for children and servants.¹⁷² Over seventy-five people attended the memorial picnic on April 22, enjoying a plethora of food and drink in Oswehee and a river cruise. Smaller in scale than the memorial festival, the cruise enjoyed limited success—some thought the endeavor lost the LMA \$25 over what they gained.¹⁷³ Nevertheless, the event showed the ingenuity and organizational skills of the Ladies Memorial Association.

Four days later during Memorial Day the Ladies raised over \$57.10 through an admission cost of ten cents, almost three dollars short of their \$60 goal.¹⁷⁴ Fundraising efforts in 1876 showed the Ladies Memorial Association using these large public events in conjunction with the admission costs for the speeches to raise funds in the campaign to build the monument. These events gathered support from the people while providing activities that made people want to

¹⁷¹ “Monumental Festival,” *Columbus Daily Enquirer*, December 25, 1875.

¹⁷² “Memorial Picnic,” *The Daily Times*, April 18, 1876.

¹⁷³ “The Boat Excursion: Benefit of Memorial Association,” *Columbus Daily Enquirer*, April 23, 1876.

¹⁷⁴ “Eleventh Memorial Day,” *Columbus Daily Enquirer*, April 27, 1876.

spend their money to support the fundraiser. The LMA had raised \$2,077.02 by March 25, 1877.¹⁷⁵ By April 1878 the Ladies Memorial Association had raised \$2,300 for the monument.¹⁷⁶ Although not ready financially, that April the Ladies began to hold meetings with contractors for the construction of the Confederate monument. These meetings showed people they still intended to complete the monument as soon as possible, and their discussion over where it would be placed would restore public support to the Ladies Memorial Association.

The final design picked by the LMA was from several designs provided by Mulden & Co. of Louisville, Kentucky. Their choice comprised a granite base nine feet square, with a shaft made of pure Italian marble thirty feet tall topped with a funerary urn, to be delivered within a year for a cost of \$4,500. The Ladies Memorial Association intended to inscribe the names of the soldiers who were killed during the Civil War on the base of the column. Because of its size this could not be achieved. Instead of inscribing the names they placed inscriptions on each side of the monument's base that honored the service of the soldiers.¹⁷⁷

These inscriptions propagated the ideology of the Lost Cause—principally the inscriptions on the south face of the monument, which called the war a conflict to maintain constitutional rights and state sovereignty. The south face read “their glory shall not be forgotten,” “erected by the Ladies Memorial Association, May 1879. To honor the Confederate soldiers who died to repel unconstitutional invasion, to protect the right reserved to the people and to perpetuate forever the sovereignty of the states.” These quotes established the Ladies Memorial Association's place in the history of the Confederate monument as a public acknowledgment of their efforts to propagate the memory of Columbus's soldiers after the war.

¹⁷⁵ “Memorial Association Meeting,” *Columbus Daily Times*, March 25, 1877.

¹⁷⁶ “The Confederate Monument,” *Columbus Daily Times*, April 3, 1878.

¹⁷⁷ Isabell Smith Buzzett, *Confederate Monuments of Georgia* (Atlanta Chapter No. 18, United Daughters of the Confederacy, 1984), 10-11.

The east face displayed the words “in memoriam” and “no truth is lost for which the true are weeping nor dead for which they died.” These inscriptions show the concept of Lost Cause memory of reinterpreting the rationale for the South’s war effort. Their focus was creating a new historical narrative of Confederate military service in response to the socio-political changes created after the war.

The west face was dedicated to the soldiers of Columbus: “Honor to the Brave,” it read. “Gather the sacred dust of worriers tried and true, who bore the flag of our nations trust and fell in the cause tho lost still just and died for me and you.”¹⁷⁸ The north face was inscribed “our confederate dead” below the Confederate States seal surrounded by the inscription “the Confederate States of America – 22 February 1862 – Deo Vindice.” These inscriptions followed the concept of Confederate monuments outlined by Karen Cox as edifices honoring “white heroes who were revered as both loyal southerners and American patriots, for their defense of states’ rights.”¹⁷⁹ They claimed that the Civil War had been fought to defend the South from invasion by the Union, which had attempted to challenge the rights of the state governments and the people. The monument declared that dust may have settled on their graves of Confederate soldiers, but their actions and the movement they fought for would be remembered as just. The monument’s inscriptions vindicated their actions and cause.

Though the design and the inscriptions honored the service of Columbus’s war dead, it still needed to be built. Under the terms of the contract the LMA would not pay Mulden & Co until delivery and placement of the marble shaft. The Ladies Memorial Association accepted the firm’s proposition to build the monument at the cost of \$4,500.¹⁸⁰ Interest in the construction of

¹⁷⁸ Buzzett, *Confederate Monuments of Georgia*, 10-11.

¹⁷⁹ Cox, *Dixie’s Daughters*, 49.

¹⁸⁰ “The Confederate Monument,” *Columbus Daily Times*, April 3, 1878.

the monument encouraged offers from other contractors to build the monument. A counteroffer made by Columbus marble dealer Mr. Henry McCauley proposed he could complete the monument at the cost of \$3,500. The LMA accepted Mulden & Co's bid over McCauley as their contract agreed to wait for the payment until after the monument was completed. To raise the remaining funds needed for the monument, the *Columbus Daily Times* recommended that churches and military companies of Columbus suspend their annual festivals so that the Ladies Memorial Association could host another memorial festival to raise the remaining funds for the monument.¹⁸¹ A meeting on April 23, 1878 concluded with finalized plans for a memorial festival from May 8-9 to raise \$1,000 for the monument fund.¹⁸²

The Ladies Memorial Association planned the fundraiser as a large event to be held at the armory of the City Light Guards in downtown Columbus. As with the prior memorial festival, members of the LMA hosted tables offering drinks and food for sale for five cents. The armory interior was decorated with lighting and a lemonade well.¹⁸³ Following previous examples the festival offered entertainment and drink at cost to attendees to raise the remaining funds for the monument. Its aesthetic appeal and lively atmosphere encouraged attendees to return the next day, increasing revenue for the monument fund. It also served another important purpose aside from raising funds for the monument: it provided a forum to finalize the location of the Columbus Confederate monument, a discussion that had been ongoing since 1875.

Discussion over the monument's location during the 1870s focused on the premise of the structure's aesthetic significance to the city landscape. Arguments over its placement discussed the importance of its location's accessibility to the public and its impact on the appearance of the

¹⁸¹ "More about the Confederate Monument," *Columbus Daily Times*, April 4, 1878.

¹⁸² "Memorial ASSOCIATION MEETING YESTERDAY," *Columbus Daily Times*, April 24, 1878.

¹⁸³ "The Memorial Festival," *Columbus Daily Times*, May 9, 1878.

city. The main sites proposed were areas suitable for the creation of a city park where the monument would serve as the centerpiece. The locations considered for the monument included Mott's Green, the intersection of Broad and Randolph, the intersection of Randolph and St. Clair, Monumental Park, Prospect Park, and Salisbury Park. Supporters and opponents of each site based their reasoning on the influence the site would have on the city's overall aesthetics and on what was the best location to display the city's pride for its Confederate past. These debates showed residents had different interpretations of how these locations best showed the people's commemoration of the past.

In the debate on the monument's location, the editors of the *Daily Times* argued their support for the intersection of Broad and Randolph Street, today's Broadway, and Twelfth Street, at the heart of the city's business district. The monument was "a public memorial of a public cause and raised in honor of our common heroes by publicly contributed funds," and the intersection was a suitable location in their opinion. Their argument was that the monument would show future generations that the memory of the dead continued to be cherished, and would show visitors they embodied the principles of duty and honor that motivated them during battle. Placing the monument, a mile away from the city in the cemetery, hidden "among the vines and evergreens which shades the graves" would diminish this purpose. To the *Daily Times* editors, the best location was thus at the center of the city's business district; if not possible in that exact location, it should be placed somewhere nearby between Crawford and Randolph streets.¹⁸⁴

Opponents of the Broad and Randolph site argued that the intersection of sewers at the spot could not support the foundation; supporters replied by stating that it could support the

¹⁸⁴ "The Monument Again," *The Daily Times*, December 10, 1875.

monument.¹⁸⁵ Experts from “competent parties” examined the location and confirmed the monument would not interfere with the sewers or cisterns at that spot.¹⁸⁶ However, the location proposal ran into trouble because legally the city council could not donate any part of the streets for such purposes. Supporters argued that the mayor would give the land parcel if the LMA applied for it, as the mayor had commanded a regiment during the war and the city council consisted of war veterans. Property owners in the vicinity of the proposed site, they insisted, would support the monument because it “would improve and ornament that portion of the street.”¹⁸⁷

Although the LMA supported placing the monument in the city, they were themselves divided on where it should be built. A meeting of the association’s officers on March 4, 1876 concluded with no location decided among four possible sites: Mott’s Green, the intersection of Broad and St. Clair streets, and the lower and East Commons.¹⁸⁸ Each location was within the bounds of the city proper, showing they did agree with the editors that the monument should be built not in the cemetery, but in the city for the people to see.

Columbus newspapers offered new locations where the monument could be placed. A letter to the *Daily Times* written by “Confederate” suggested on April 17, 1876 the creation of a new park in the East Commons, two to three hundred yards south of the cemetery’s upper gate. The author suggested the site because its surface “being undulating and sufficiently elevated to overlook most of the city, and partially covered with trees, renders it peculiarly suited for the purposes of a park.” Two to five acres would be fenced off in iron railing to mark the area to be allocated for the park. The monument would be in the center, allowing it to be seen from various

¹⁸⁵ “The Location of the Monument,” *Columbus Enquirer-Sun*, April 5, 1878.

¹⁸⁶ “The Confederate Monument,” *Columbus Daily Times*, April 3, 1878.

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁸ “Ladies Memorial Association,” *Columbus Daily Enquirer*, March 5, 1876.

parts of the city; it would thus serve as an “attractive feature to travelers passing through” on Columbus’s Western Railroad.¹⁸⁹

The proposed Monumental Park on the East Commons, as it was called in later discussions, promised a major financial and aesthetic investment to the city landscape. Although it would place the monument away from the city streets, it would guarantee a spacious park with room for floral decorations and free rein to design a park. The “Confederate” had argued that the intersection location would deny the monument potted plants and shrubbery to provide an appealing site to visitors. Dust and trash from road traffic and pedestrians would dirty the marble and granite, and the churches in the vicinity would eclipse the monument.¹⁹⁰ He envisioned that creating Monumental Park would place the monument at the pinnacle of the city skyline and offer opportunities to alter the landscape with flowers and shrubbery. The park’s location would place it within walking distance of the cemetery where the men the monument would be dedicated to were buried.

The letter published by the “Confederate” appeared in the press two days before a meeting of the Ladies Memorial Association at the Springer Opera House on April 19, 1876. In his letter he stated “I think that this suggestion may meet with the favorable consideration of the ladies of the Memorial Association and result in its adoption.”¹⁹¹ At their meeting on the 19th Monumental Park won the final vote over the intersection of Broad and Randolph.¹⁹² A letter written by “A friend to the Lost Cause” summarized the significance of the choice to convert the area of the Commons into Monumental Park:

Then, with some money judiciously expended, with taste and good judgment in laying out the grounds, Columbus can have a park which will be an ornament to the city, a healthful and

¹⁸⁹ “Confederate,” Letter to the Editor, *The Daily Times*, April 18, 1876.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid.

¹⁹¹ Ibid.

¹⁹² “Location Decided Upon,” *The Daily Times*, April 20, 1876.

pleasurable resort for its people in the future, with befitting surroundings for the monument designed to commemorate the fame of its dead heroes.¹⁹³

Although the decision had been made, the LMA still needed the city government to allocate the money needed for the cost and labor to build the iron fencing, to mark the boundaries of the park. The LMA met with the mayor and city council several times after the vote in the Springer but could not agree on a concrete decision on building the requested fencing for Monumental Park. The uncertainty of securing the fences renewed the discussion over the monument's location. Two years after their initial decision on Monumental Park the association switched their preference for the monument's location back to the intersection of Broad and Randolph streets, with the secondary option the intersection of Randolph and Oglethorpe streets.¹⁹⁴

In the months leading up to the memorial festival in May 1878, the Ladies Memorial Association attempted to choose between Monumental Park and the intersection at Broad Street for the monument's location. Amidst their discussions over the location, the editors of the city newspapers suggested new ideas about the spot for the monument. A letter to the editor in the *Columbus Daily Times* on April 18, 1878 suggested another location the same day the LMA held a meeting in the Springer Opera House about the monument's location. The letter argued that the monument should be in a public park for people to see, and this park should be located on a hill known as Cemetery Hill, opposite the cemetery. Named Prospect Park, the site would be two to five acres in size, with the monument in the center of the site, and enclosed with a wooden fence instead of an iron fence. Construction would be overseen by a committee who would solicit contributions of plants and volunteers to work on the site one or two days a week.¹⁹⁵ Detractors

¹⁹³ A Friend to the Lost Cause, Letter to the Editor, in "The Monument, and Park," *The Daily Times*, April 20, 1876.

¹⁹⁴ "The Confederate Monument," *Columbus Daily Times*, April 3, 1878.

¹⁹⁵ "The Monument," *Columbus Daily Times*, April 18, 1878.

argued that the site would place the monument outside the city, and that the ground would eventually be taken by the cemetery for new graves. Financially it would be a significant investment, one that the city did not have the money to use in the creation of a new park.¹⁹⁶

In these discussions over location the people of Columbus and the Ladies Memorial Association accepted the concept that monuments were meant to be seen. Support for each site highlighted the strengths of presentation on displaying the monument to residents and visitors. Supporters of Prospect Park and Monumental Park agreed the monument should be in a park where the grounds around it could be decorated with flowers and shrubbery to enhance the aesthetics of the site. Their detractors shared the argument that these locations were too far from the city to be regularly visited. The intersection of Broad and Randolph streets would place the monument in the heart of the city but had no opportunities for floral decorations. Instead the site would make the monument susceptible to dust and filth from the streets. Debates in Columbus papers shows that residents were quite divided on the issue of location.

Unable to decide on a final location for the monument the Ladies Memorial Association eventually arranged to settle the question not through continued debate on appearances, but by allowing residents to vote over where they believed it should be placed. Their decision to host a public vote on the location allowed them to limit the possible spot to four sites: Prospect Park, Mott's Green, the intersection of Broad and Randolph, and Salisbury Park. Monumental Park was removed from consideration because of past discussion about the iron fencing proposed to surround the park, as the LMA failed to secure a commitment from the Columbus city council to provide the iron fences. The substitute location of Salisbury Park was an area of downtown Columbus located on Broad Street between Baldwin and Few streets (today's Eighth and

¹⁹⁶ "Which of the Two," *Columbus Daily Times*, April 25, 1878.

Seventh streets). The park was named for William Salisbury, a colonel who fought in the Georgia Grays of the Fifth Georgia Regiment during the war.¹⁹⁷ Salisbury was a member of the city council when he was murdered less than a month before the memorial festival in April 1878. Prior to his death supporters of Monumental Park voiced their belief Salisbury would support the association's efforts in creating a park with the Confederate monument as its centerpiece. Nominating Salisbury Park as a candidate for the monument site, an area within the city named after a Confederate veteran, strengthened its role as a symbol of Columbus's Confederate identity.

The 1878 memorial festival featured tables selling food, drinks, and items for sale, encouraging residents to return to raise as much money as possible for the monument, and accumulate as many votes as possible. Attendees at the 1878 memorial festival could pay ten cents to cast their vote among the four sites, and they could vote as many times as they wanted to. The vote at the 1878 memorial festival concluded with Salisbury Park at 4,335 votes, Broad and Randolph at 3,786 votes, Mott's Green at 2,550 and Prospect Park on Cemetery Hill at 2,038.¹⁹⁸ Because the voting took place over the course of two days and cost ten cents each time, the city elites swayed the results in their favor. The wealthier residents of Columbus were able to cast multiple votes in favor of their desired location over the other discussed locations.

When the memorial festival's monument vote concluded on May 10, the final decision was announced at the closing ceremony. Local businessman George Gunby Jordan revealed the results of the vote in his closing speech for the festival, thanking all for attending and voting as well as the LMA for agreeing to the vote in order to allow all in attendance to show their support

¹⁹⁷ "The Death and Burial of Col. W.L. Salisbury," *Columbus Daily Times*, April 23, 1878.

¹⁹⁸ "Count of the Monument Vote," *Columbus Daily Times*, May 11, 1878.

for one spot or another. Jordan’s speech described the monument’s location as an opportunity to perpetuate the memory of Colonel Salisbury:

It is, therefore, determined that the monument is to be located at Salisbury Park, and the result is highly pleasing to me, although what slight influence I had was given to another place. I can but feel gratified the monument has been located among such generous and patriotic citizens. With such friends it can but be expected that its surrounds will be beautified, and this splendid location be, as it should be, a fitting exponent of the memory of him whose name it bears—Columbus’ best and most liberal citizen—a man whose proudest ornament was pure integrity, whose success added to the bounds of his generosity.¹⁹⁹

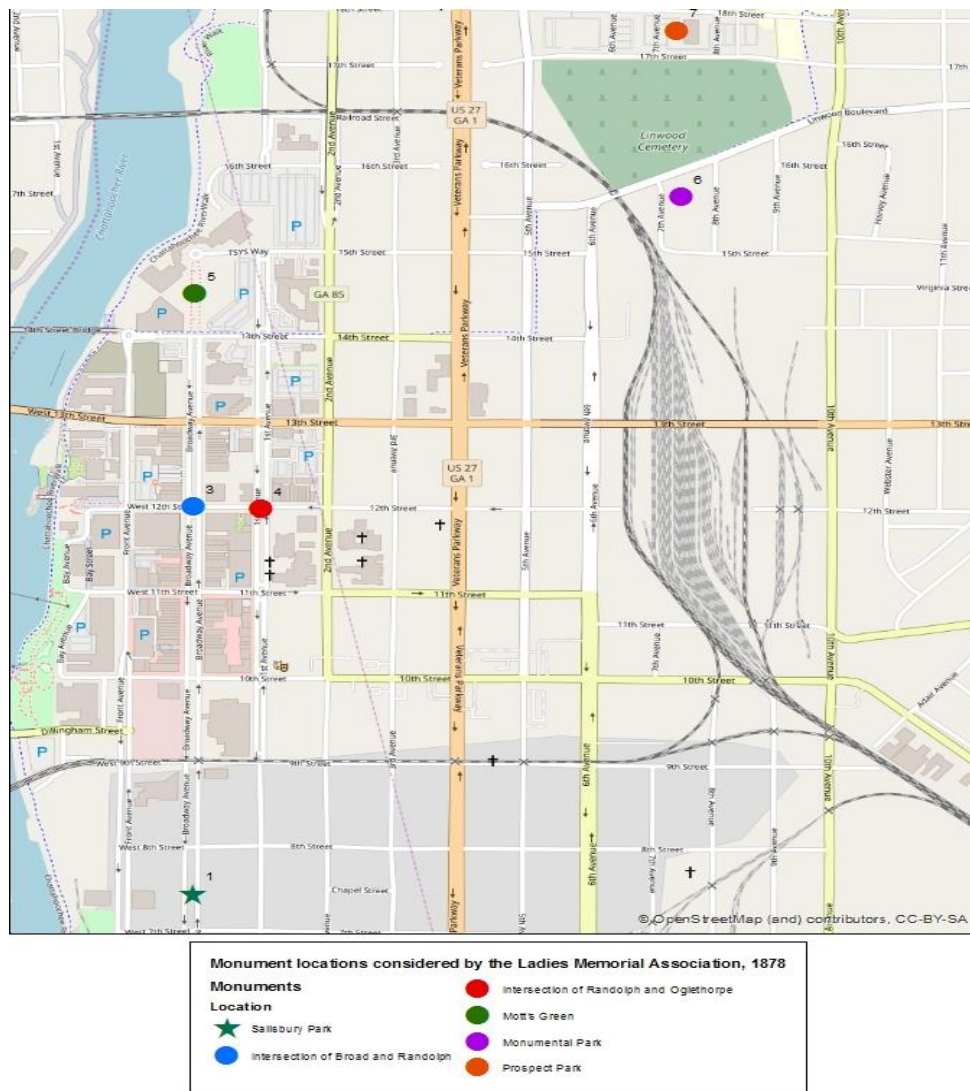


Figure 5. Map of sites considered by the Ladies Memorial Association for the Columbus Confederate Monument’s location in 1878 (Courtesy of the Author and Dr. Brad Huff).

¹⁹⁹ “Count of the Monument Vote,” *Columbus Daily Times*, May 23, 1878.

Jordan's speech highlighted the influence of the city elites on the election process that selected Salisbury Park as the site of the monument. He described his own effort to sway the vote but does not elaborate. His comments illustrated that the well off and elite residents had the financial means to sway the vote in their favor unlike the working-class people of Columbus. Regardless, the memorial festival of 1878 concluded the discussion over where the monument should be placed. The focus of the Ladies Memorial Association shifted to the construction of the monument.

After the debate over the monument's location was concluded, construction of the monument began in 1879. Two ceremonies were held during the monument's construction—the foundation and cornerstone ceremonies. The Ladies Memorial Association used both events as a show of civil support from the population after ten years of fundraising and five years of discussion on location. Both ceremonies placed the women of the LMA at the forefront of Columbus society, as they were acknowledged for their efforts to create the monument and perpetuate Confederate memory. At both ceremonies, speakers emphasized that their efforts to create the monument would be remembered.

In the spring of 1879, a committee of gentlemen was formed to arrange a program for the cornerstone laying ceremony, which would be officiated by the Masonic fraternity of Georgia as part of a building's construction. Prior to the cornerstone ceremony, construction began on the monument's foundation. The editors of the *Columbus Daily Enquirer-Sun* suggested the women of the Ladies Memorial Association lay the first stone for the foundation "to finish the work the ladies so nobly begun, and prosecuted with so much zeal for so many years."²⁰⁰ Their hands would spread the cement with "love and pure devotion" to "unite the mass that is to sustain the

²⁰⁰ "The Monument," *Columbus Daily Enquirer-Sun*, February 23, 1879.

monument erected by them to the dead martyrs and living heroes.”²⁰¹ Bestowing them the right to lay the foundation established the connection between the women of the LMA, the earlier Ladies Soldier’s Friend Society, and the Confederate dead whose graves they tended to after the war.

The foundation ceremony was held on April 1, 1879 at Salisbury Park. Attending the ceremony were the gentleman’s committee members, the ladies of the Memorial Association, and several spectators gathered around the spot where the monument would stand. At 11 o’clock the ladies each began placing a brick in the foundation, starting with President Evelyn Carter, who dedicated her brick to the memory of the “Confederate soldier.” Vice President Margaret Ware followed suit, laying the brick in memory of “all members of the Memorial Association who have died.” For the rest of the ceremony the officers and members laid bricks in memory of fallen Confederates and past members of the association.²⁰² When each member of the association announced the person or group the brick was for, they were ensuring the memory of the men of the Confederate Army and the women of the Ladies Memorial Association continued on as embodied in the Columbus monument.

After the foundation ceremony, a committee was formed to arrange the program for the cornerstone ceremony.²⁰³ The men in the committee— John King, Judge B.F. Coleman, John Hill, H.V. Meigs, N.N. Curtis and Henry McCauley—were prominent Columbus residents with positions in city government and connections with the city’s major industries. They oversaw the work on the foundation until its completion on April 5. Completed it stood five feet above ground; its base was eleven square feet at the bottom and nine square feet at the top. Bricks were

²⁰¹ “The Monument,” *Columbus Daily Enquirer-Sun*, February 23, 1879.

²⁰² “Memory of the Dead,” *Columbus Daily Enquirer-Sun*, April 2, 1879.

²⁰³ *Ibid.*

supplied locally from Mr. M.M. Tye, with cement and lime from the Eagle and Phenix company.²⁰⁴

Carter and the cornerstone committee began arranging the program for the cornerstone ceremony the same day as the foundation was completed. The ceremony was scheduled for Monday, April 14 at 3 p.m., officiated by Colonel J.M. Mobley, Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of Georgia. Invitations went to the presiding officers or secretaries of Columbus's major societies and organizations. The Masonic Lodges, Columbus Guards, City Light Guards, Muscogee Rifles, Hebrew Society, Knights of Honor, and the mayor and city council were among the groups invited to attend. Prior to the ceremony the committee readied a box of deposits with donated items from private citizens to be placed in the cornerstone. These items included Confederate currency from several states and Columbus bank notes, photos of Confederate generals, cards of Jefferson Davis, Alexander Stephens, and Stephen Mallory, newspapers, maps, letters, books, and rolls of the Soldier's Friend Society and the military companies.²⁰⁵ The intention of the box was to contain valuable material to be used in the future to make known the history of the South during the Civil War.²⁰⁶ The box was meant to hold, in essence, the "spirit" of the men and the period to whose memory the monument would be dedicated. The contents showed the city's connection to the past as the city looked to the future.

At the cornerstone ceremony the speakers framed their speeches to thank the women for ensuring the monument's construction and to establish how the monument honored the memory of the Confederate dead. The principal architect, Lionel C. Levy, declared the monument "the embodiment of a holier idea—the crystallization in chaste, proud marble of a nation's life—its

²⁰⁴ "Confederate Monument," *Columbus Daily Enquirer-Sun*, April 6, 1879.

²⁰⁵ "Confederate Monument: Corner Stone to be Laid To-morrow," *Columbus Daily Enquirer-Sun*, April 13, 1879.

²⁰⁶ "The Monument," *Columbus Daily Enquirer-Sun*, February 23, 1879.

faith, its hope, its illustrious deeds.” Columbus’s monument was intended to serve as a reminder of “the first grand virtue of a great people, the sublime virtue of unselfish patriotism!” Levy assured the audience that the monument would tell others of their experiences “in tongueless eloquence.” Columbus’s Confederate monument stood to show that the South fought to win back “the liberties bequeathed by their ancestors to them, and to the oppressed throughout the world,” to create a new future for the United States.

In Levy’s description of the monument, it served as a physical representation of the themes propounded by Columbus speakers during Confederate Memorial Day. The monument would be a visual display to show visitors the values Confederate soldiers embodied through their actions during the war. The tale of women as expressed through the monument was the “voiceless anthem to Southern Heroines!”²⁰⁷

Grand Master Mobley followed suit after setting the cornerstone, praising the men and women who had served in the war. His speech focused more on the women of the Ladies Memorial Association, whose work to create the monument filled the hearts of men with “the same emotions that inspired you and them, to respond at your country’s call in defense of your firesides and sacred homes.” He assured the ladies of Columbus the people “shall ever thank, honor, and love the blessed ladies who have toiled long and faithfully to complete this holy work, who will soon behold with pride and gratitude its lofty shaft pointing to the skies.”²⁰⁸

Both speakers focused on praising the women’s efforts to ensure the monument’s construction. Although the monument was technically dedicated to the men of the Confederate Army, Levy and Mobley assured women that they had the gratitude of the men for their work to

²⁰⁷ “To the Confederate Soldier: Corner Stone of Monument Laid with Masonic Honors,” *Columbus Daily Enquirer-Sun*, April 15, 1879.

²⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

preserve and propagate memorialization in the postwar years. The monument had taken over ten years of fundraising before the money needed to cover the costs for its construction could begin. Both Levy and Mobley conveyed that the people of Columbus were thankful for the perseverance they had shown in their efforts to ensure the monument would be created.

Following the cornerstone ceremony, construction on the monument continued with the expectation of completing it in time to unveil it during Memorial Day. The monument shaft arrived before April 19 and was deposited in Salisbury Park, but could not be raised yet. The granite base for the shaft had not yet left the quarry in Stone Mountain—due to rain and mud, the blocks could not be moved to the train station six miles away.²⁰⁹ In light of this development, the LMA arranged to place a “magnificent floral monument” over the foundation to be unveiled and dedicated on Memorial Day. At its base it would be ten square feet, standing thirty feet tall with an urn of flowers four feet high at the top; the structure would be covered in assorted flowers.²¹⁰ Confederate Memorial Day in 1879 was planned to be the day of the monument’s unveiling, overseen by Georgia Governor Alfred Colquitt as speaker. Although the monument was not completed, that would not deter plans to host the speech at Salisbury Park. The floral monument would substitute for the marble and granite monument for Confederate Memorial Day functions.

The floral monument was completed four days before April 26, in time for the opening ceremonies. Memorial Day in 1879 recorded attendance of 10,000-15,000, the highest recorded over the past fourteen years. Colquitt opened his speech by acknowledging that cities and towns across Georgia were building permanent memorials to the Confederate dead, not for the “expression or perpetuation of hatreds or revenges” or for a sense of pride and glory. Instead, he insisted, the monuments did more to vindicate the claims of the Confederate dead’s “prowess

²⁰⁹ “Memorial Dots,” *Columbus Daily Enquirer-Sun*, April 20, 1879.

²¹⁰ “Memorial Day: Floral Monument to be Erected,” *Columbus Daily Enquirer-Sun*, April 22, 1879.

and unequalled self-sacrifice before some of their judges, than their noblest boast that all that was suffered, offered and sacrificed by them was for a principle.”²¹¹ The Civil War was fought over the issue that “a large minority in this and all other lands would rather have decided in their favor with as little obtrusiveness as possible.” His interpretation of the war was as a conflict of northern aggression against the southern states; the Confederacy wanted to avoid war as much as possible. Thus, Colquitt attempted to write off the war fever that swept through Columbus and the South after the battle of Fort Sumter in 1861 and instead implicate the North as the aggressor in the Civil War.

In Colquitt’s telling, the South went to war to uphold constitutional liberty as the compact of the states and national government, against the large minority that believed “expediency supercedes law—that constitutions and the awful sanctions under which they are supposed to exist may be postponed if self-interest is strong enough to put them aside.” Since Appomattox the South had been ready to “clasp hands with every good man and true patriot” to build up and make “a government for these States and a proud and happy Union under it that shall endure till the latest syllable of recorded time.”²¹²

His words reinterpreted the conduct of the South during Reconstruction as one of reconciliation, when clearly, they were not ready to rejoin the Union. Colquitt retold the events of the previous decade as the South waiting for the North to understand that the national government was fine the way it was already. Colquitt provided Columbus residents an opportunity to assure themselves that they had been good Americans since before the Civil War and during its aftermath. Columbus’s Confederate monument served as “the prophecy and

²¹¹ “14th Memorial Day,” *Columbus Daily Enquirer-Sun*, April 27, 1879.

²¹² *Ibid.*

assurance” that the “great cause of self-government” was the main issue of the war, not just slavery.²¹³

Colquitt’s message was the war had been the cause of all southerners, against a minority elite who attempted to supersede the law for the gain of the North. The Constitution was a compact between states which acknowledged their equality between them. By his interpretation secession was legally guaranteed because they had the right to withdraw if the Constitution could not guarantee a system of equal standing between the states. As a former Confederate general, Colquitt framed the Confederate soldier as men who fought against the elite few who sought to use the national government to advance their interests over the rest of the country.

In his rationale their war was an attempt to preserve the constitutional relationship between the state and national governments. Colquitt thus redirected the motivation of the war away from preserving slavery as the South’s main cause. His discussion of Reconstruction described it as a period in which the South sought reconciliation with the rest of the country, whereas the events of 1866-1868 show the state was against the Union’s policies for readmission into the Union. Columbus’s Confederate monument, Colquitt implied, would show the world the people honored the memory of soldiers who fought to maintain constitutional liberty for all Americans, despite their contradictory actions in the post-war years to prevent freedmen from exercising their newly-acquired political rights.

Colquitt concluded his speech by thanking the women of the Memorial Association for their “persistent, patriotic zeal and labors” on behalf of Georgia’s history and the history of modern nations. They would be remembered for their support during the war, and for teaching “how the American character is to be honored.” His theme on the women of the Ladies

²¹³ “14th Memorial Day,” *Columbus Daily Enquirer-Sun*, April 27, 1879.

Memorial Association was gratitude for their work in memorializing the war. The monument they built and the Confederate Memorial Day ceremonies they established, as he described it taught “that a self-respecting love of truth and one’s rights, is the safest defense of a people’s liberties.” His speech concluded that if the South survived as a free people the monument would be “a reminder that for our ideas of liberty we poured out our blood and treasures in rivers.” But if southerners should “sink into the misery and degradation of serfs,”

It will tell us in a still small voice, that shall thrill what sense of honor may be left, that we have dishonored God in the abuse and neglect of great opportunities, degraded human nature by our lack of manhood, and show to the world that we have been unworthy of your companionship and your love.²¹⁴

The monument they funded would be remembered as an example of women’s work memorializing the Confederate dead. His speech reminded the Columbus population to be grateful for the work the LMA had put into commemorating the past. When complete the monument would stand to show others how the women of America memorialized their fallen.

After the spectacle of the Memorial Day ceremony the monument was quietly completed that year in June.²¹⁵ The following year, the LMA planned the addition of granite steps to the foundation of the monument, funded through donation boxes at Memorial Day in 1880.²¹⁶ The steps to the monument were placed in 1881 at the cost of \$500, bringing the total cost of the monument to \$5,000.²¹⁷

Following ten years of fundraising efforts and debate on the location, the Columbus Confederate monument had finally been completed in Salisbury Park. During these years the

²¹⁴ “14th Memorial Day,” *Columbus Daily Enquirer-Sun*, April 27, 1879.

²¹⁵ Confederated Southern Memorial Association, *History of the Confederated Memorial Associations of the South*, 130.

²¹⁶ “Memorial Association,” *Columbus Daily Enquirer-Sun*, January 15, 1880; “Memorial Association,” *Columbus Daily Enquirer-Sun*, April 22, 1880.

²¹⁷ Confederated Southern Memorial Association, *History of the Confederated Memorial Associations of the South*, 130.

women of Columbus had assumed a larger role in public, using their organizational skills developed during the war to raise resources for the monument. Columbus gained its monument as the ornament of a public park, secured by the wealthy elite after extensive discussion over aesthetics. The ceremonies reminded the people of the efforts by women of Columbus to memorialize the Confederate dead through Confederate Memorial Day and the monument. It would stand as testament to their contributions to the public memory of Columbus.



Figure 6. The Columbus Confederate Monument (courtesy of the author).

Conclusion: The Spirit of Columbus's Ladies Memorial Association

Between December 23, 1860 and April 13, 1861 Columbus residents celebrated the secession of South Carolina, Georgia's secession, and the battle of Fort Sumter in the streets, marching in military parades to show their support for the Confederate States of America. Columbus men and officers participated in many major battles of the Civil War, from Gettysburg to Appomattox, while elite women supported them through charity drives and donations at home. These activities provided women the organizational skills they would later use to organize the Confederate Memorial Day ceremonies that allowed veterans to reinterpret the meaning of their service. Veterans returned home not to celebrating crowds, but to the understanding they were the defeated power; Columbus women, by inaugurating Memorial Day, provided them a vehicle to shape that defeat into a Lost Cause that glorified their service.

The focus of Civil War memory in Columbus was the work of local elite women who used the experiences and organizational capabilities they had gained during the Civil War to marshal the city to remember their service and that of the city's veterans. These ceremonies acknowledged the men and women who served as their local heroes in the region's understanding of the Lost Cause identity. Because women were not seen as part of the political process, the Ladies Memorial Association offered the opportunity for women and veterans to reinterpret their experiences in the war to have meaning. Confederate Memorial Day ceremonies developed over time, often in response to the socio-political changes of Reconstruction; the ceremonies allowed Columbus residents to challenge these attempts at restructuring southern society. During these ceremonies' speakers created a new understanding of manhood and womanhood by highlighting the actions of fallen soldiers, surviving veterans and Columbus women as the personification of these identities. Speeches allowed Columbus to identify its local

heroes and how they formed the community's understanding of their role in the local Lost Cause memory.

The history of the Columbus Confederate monument's development is a story of the efforts of women in planning and hosting fundraisers to construct a marble and granite edifice that presented the memory of the Confederate dead in the city. Its development showed conflict between the men and women of Columbus as the newspapers criticized what they perceived to be declining patriotism for local Confederate memory as LMAs of other communities and states constructed monuments to their military dead. The conflict extended to where the monument should be located among several sites proposed in the city's newspapers, debating the significance of each location's impact on projecting Confederate memory. Its settlement through a public vote which required payment to cast a vote over a two-day voting period secured the location desired by the city's elites, who had the financial means to cast multiple ballots in favor of their preferred location. Once construction began the press shifted away from criticism to open praise of the Ladies Memorial Association's efforts, expressed through the ceremonies of the monument's construction, and unveiling.

Examining Confederate memory in Columbus between the years 1865-1880 shows a society attempting to deal with the socio-political changes created by the South's defeat in the Civil War by rhetorically establishing a new historical narrative about their regional cause while resisting the social changes Reconstruction attempted to create. The efforts of the Ladies Memorial Association established patterns of memory that grew in the coming decades until its full flowering of the Lost Cause identity in the 1890s under the United Daughters of the Confederacy. Columbus's United Daughters of the Confederacy would name itself after Elizabeth Rutherford Ellis to establish their direct connection to the earlier Ladies Memorial

Association. The efforts of the Ladies Memorial Association established the rhetoric that the UDC followed in the decades beyond.

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