



MONUMENTS AND SYMBOLS

by

The Regional History Immersion Team 2018

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Introduction

The scope of the Regional History Immersion Team's research included interviews, research of articles, books, videos, databases, and websites regarding confederate symbols with some primary source examination. Group members attended related meetings including the Monument Avenue Commission meetings; "Bending Toward Truth: A Forum on Race and Religion in Richmond at St. Paul's Episcopal Church; and "Creating Community" at Richmond Visual Arts Center. Members were assigned areas in the region and compiled lists of symbols and their background information with the aim of creating a factual timeline. In researching, we discovered a recent and existing national timeline which illustrated the pattern of symbols and we added our regional findings to it. Specific research focused on Monument Avenue.

Findings

Given the relevance and tone of the recent public discourse regarding civil war monuments, the goal of the group was to educate ourselves on the background and basic facts of the confederate imagery throughout the region. This research began with exploring basic facts about the scope and nature of the Civil War in the region. To put in context, the scope and reach of the civil war and the impact of the outcome, we discovered that the number of estimated soldier deaths during the period reflected 2% of the population while the number of enslaved people who were emancipated accounted for 12.6% of the population.

The Civil War ended in April of 1865. The Ku Klux Klan was founded the following year in 1866. The public display of confederate imagery in the United States as well as the Greater Richmond area began to take shape decades after the end of the Civil War as Reconstruction came to an end and the numbers of images accelerated dramatically during the Jim Crow era. Confederate images in the public arena include statues, school names, road names, military bases and even public buildings. This trend of growth in confederate imagery in the public arena is observed again in the 1960's, a time that commemorated the 100-year anniversary of the Civil War and corresponded with the Civil Rights movement taking place throughout the country. Several examples of the regional images that correspond with these timelines of the Jim Crow era include the Stuart and Davis Monuments on Monument Avenue which were unveiled at the height of the Jim

Crow era and were clearly tributes to soldiers and even the Confederate cause. In the civil rights era that included the landmark Brown vs. Board of Education and the Civil and Voting Rights Act legislation along with the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, schools in the region were being named after confederate officers and unrelated segregationists such as the Lee Davis Confederates High School in Mechanicsville and Byrd Middle School in Henrico.

In addition to learning about the timeline of this imagery, our research guided us to explore the origins of several key monuments in the area. Monument Avenue began its tributes to the Confederacy with the unveiling of the Lee Monument in 1890. Jubal Early, a former confederate officer who served with Robert E. Lee spearheaded the early efforts to commemorate the General despite Lee's request to resist such an effort. General Early struggled to get traction with the necessary fundraising on account of his insistence that the project restrict its contributions to only be sourced from confederate veterans. The group that subsequently brought the statue to its existence recognized the need for the statue to be a work of art to endure future generations and enhance it and Richmond's presence on the international stage. This recognition led the group to select a world famous French sculptor, Marius Jean-Antonin Mercie to create the statue. The statue was reported in Richmond newspapers favorably at the time. The Times of Richmond reported on the "Majestic Monument" and its 50,000 attendees filling the air with cheers on the "memorable" day.

There were voices of opposition during that time, even if they were excluded from the primary newspapers of their day. John Mitchell, a black City Council member said the following after the unveiling: "...the Capital of the late Confederacy has been decorated with the emblems of the lost cause and the placement of the Lee Statue handed down a legacy of treason and blood...he 'the African American' put up the Lee monument and should the time come, be there to take it down." Councilman Mitchell's protestation was echoed in newspapers in the North. An article in the New York Times stated, "Treason Glorified" and that "The solid South pays tribute to the memory of Benedict Arnold Lee."

The Stuart Monument saw a shift in the imagery from a docile Lee sitting on top of a docile horse to Stuart in an attacking posture with his sword drawn on top of a horse. It was interesting to learn that the very clear tribute to a military officer for his military contribution, a clear contrast to the Lee statue, was unveiled in 1907, three years after the Virginia legislation that protects war memorials. The unveiling of the Stuart monument began the largest confederate reunion with an estimated 200,000 people attending. Again in 1907, very colorful language is observed in the Richmond newspapers with dissenting voices being noticeably absent from the papers we referenced. The language observed includes references to the "Gallant Stuart" and reports on "The Great Army in Gray" being welcomed home to the "Heart of the Confederacy".

The Jefferson Davis monument was unveiled just four days after the Stuart monument and closed the week's reunion. The monument is the only one on Monument Avenue to pay tribute to the Confederate cause in addition to highlighting an individual. The 13 columns of the statue represent the 11 Confederate states and the two additional states that sent representatives to the Provisional Congress of the Confederate States. The statue has multiple Latin inscriptions that are consistent with the "Lost Cause" sentiment. One inscription, "Deo Vendice" or "By God the Protector" is taken from the Confederate seal. Additionally, the statue advertises "For the Rights of States" and proclaims "Jefferson Davis, exponent of Constitutional principles, defender of the rights of states." The Lost

Cause is an effort to divert public attribution of the cause of the Civil War away from slavery to the cause being protecting states rights from an over reaching federal government. To put in perspective these proclamations on the Davis statue, our group revisited text from the succession decrees of the states that seceded as well as several key speeches. We found important background information. In one key speech, Jefferson Davis's Vice President of the Confederacy, Alexander Stephens, proclaimed the following: "Our new government is founded upon exactly the opposite idea; it's foundations are laid, its cornerstone rests upon the great truth, that the negro is not equal to the white man; that slavery – subordination to the superior race – is his natural and normal condition."

The Texas declaration of causes for secession stated the following: "We hold as undeniable truths that the governments of the various States, and of the confederacy itself, were established exclusively by the white race, for themselves and their posterity; that the African race had no agency in their establishment; that they were rightfully held and regarded as an inferior and dependent race, and in that condition only could their existence in this country be rendered beneficial or tolerable." Most of the states' "causes for secession" clearly states that the right being impaired by the federal government is the right to own slaves. The language displayed on the Jefferson Davis monument referencing the protection of states' rights, is a clear example of "Lost Cause" sentiment and revisionism. The cause of the civil war may have been about states' rights, but according to their own words, only as those rights related to the ability to own a fellow human being.

Our team recognizes, as many voices in the community have stated, that this topic and the related civil discourse is complex. The discussion intersects with people's identity, their story, their values and all of our collective history. The research that led us to our final presentation has certainly expanded our group's understanding of the topic and we encourage those interested in this discussion to research the topic further.

Recommendations/Call to action

Recognizing the complexity, we are not taking a stance on the discussion regarding the course of action on Monument Avenue. We do however, encourage and call all citizens to research the history highlighted here and beyond. Our group also encourages all who live in the area to engage with the Monument Avenue Commission and the discussions that are taking place in our community. Several suggestions to engage are:

- **On Monument Avenue:** <https://onmonumentave.com/>
- **Monument Avenue Commission** <https://www.monumentavenuecommission.org>
- **"Whose Heritage, A Report on Public Symbols of the Confederacy"**, The Southern Poverty Law Center 2016 which includes what you can do in your community and responding to objections and myths Community Action Guide

Interviews

- **Christy Coleman**, LMR '10, CEO, American Civil War Museum
- **Bill Martin**, LMR '07, CEO, The Valentine
- **Kim Sicola**, Historian, Henrico County, VA

Footnotes:

¹ “Civil War Casualties.” <https://www.civilwar.org/learn/articles/civil-war-casualties>, n.d., Civil War Trust. Accessed 4/25/2018

² Gunter, Booth, Kizzire, Jamie. “Whose Heritage? Public Symbols of the Confederacy.” <https://www.splcenter.org/20160421/whose-heritage-public-symbols-confederacy>, April 2016, Southern Poverty Law Center. Accessed 4/25/2018

³ Gunter, Booth, Kizzire, Jamie. “Whose Heritage? Public Symbols of the Confederacy.” <https://www.splcenter.org/20160421/whose-heritage-public-symbols-confederacy>, April 2016. Southern Poverty Law Center. Accessed 4/25/2018

⁴ Allen, Erin. “Mapping Slavery.” <https://blogs.loc.gov/loc/2012/10/mapping-slavery/>. October 31, 2012. Library of Congress Blog. Accessed 4/25/2018

⁵ Gunter, Booth, Kizzire, Jamie. “Whose Heritage? Public Symbols of the Confederacy.” <https://www.splcenter.org/20160421/whose-heritage-public-symbols-confederacy>. April 2016. Southern Poverty Law Center. Accessed 4/25/2018

⁶ Raddatz, Martha. “Erasing History?: The Debate Over Confederate Monuments.” <http://abcnews.go.com/ThisWeek/video/erasing-history-debate-confederate-monuments-49322678>. August 20, 2017. ABC News. Accessed 4/25/2018

⁷ Stephens, Alexander “ ‘Corner Stone’ Speech.” https://www.nps.gov/liho/planyourvisit/upload/cw_slavery_site_bulletin.pdf. March 21, 1861. TeachingAmericanHistory.org, Ashbrook Center at Ashland University. Accessed 4/25/2018

⁸ “The Declaration of Causes of Seceding States, Declaration of the Immediate Causes Which Induce and Justify the Secession of South Carolina from the Federal Union.” <https://www.civilwar.org/learn/articles/civil-war-casualties>. December 24, 1860. Civil War Trust. Accessed 4/25/2018

⁹ “The Declaration of Causes of Seceding States, A Declaration of the Causes Which Impel the State of Texas to Secede from the Federal Union.” <https://www.civilwar.org/learn/articles/civil-war-casualties>. February 2, 1861. Civil War Trust. Accessed 4/25/2018

¹⁰ “The Declaration of Causes of Seceding States, A Declaration of the Immediate Causes which Induce and Justify the Secession of the State of Mississippi from the Federal Union.” <https://www.civilwar.org/learn/articles/civil-war-casualties>. January 15, 1861. Civil War Trust. Accessed 4/25/2018

¹¹ Stephens, Alexander “ ‘Corner Stone’ Speech.” https://www.nps.gov/liho/planyourvisit/upload/cw_slavery_site_bulletin.pdf. March 21, 1861. TeachingAmericanHistory.org, Ashbrook Center at Ashland University. Accessed 4/25/2018

¹² Robert C Layton, “Discovering Richmond Monuments”, The History Press, 2013

¹³ Sarah Shields Driggs, Richard Guy Wilson, Robert P Winthrop, “Richmond’s Monument Avenue”, The Historic Monument Avenue and Fan District Foundation, 2001

Additional sources:

Sedore, Timothy S. An Illustrated Guide to Virginia's Confederate Monuments. Southern Illinois University Press. 2011. #285 Chesterfield, Courthouse Common Soldier, p232

"There are hundreds of Confederate monuments across the US — here's when they were built", Business Insider, Leanna Garfield and Anaele Pelisson, August 18, 2017:

<http://www.businessinsider.com/confederate-statues-meaning-timeline-history-2017-8>

Stuart Monument, Henrico County Web Page Our History:

<https://henrico.us/history/ourhistory/stuart-monument/>

The Historical Marker Database "Bite-Size Bits of Local, National, and Global History" [J. J.](#)

[Prats](#), Editor and Publisher: <https://www.hmdb.org/nearby.asp> & *Historical Highway Markers*, *Virginia Historical Highway Markers*: State of Virginia Department of Historical Resources: http://www.dhr.virginia.gov/hiway_markers/hwmarker_info.htm