



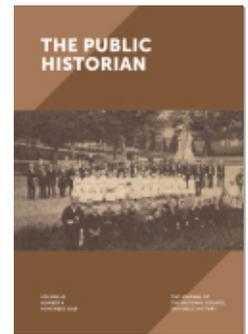
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The (Im)Movable Monument: Identity, Space, and The
Louisville Confederate Monument

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The (Im)Movable Monument

Identity, Space, and The Louisville Confederate Monument

Joy M. Giguere

ABSTRACT: Despite Kentucky's status as a Union state during the Civil War, the Louisville Confederate Soldiers' Monument, erected in 1895 by the Kentucky Confederate Women's Monument Association, is a representative example of Confederate memorialization in the South. Its history through the twentieth century, culminating in the creation of the nearby Freedom Park to counterbalance the monument's symbolism and its ultimate removal and relocation to nearby Brandenburg, Kentucky, in 2017, reveals the relationship between such monuments and the Lost Cause, urban development, public history, and public memory. Using the Louisville Confederate Monument as a case study, this essay considers the ways in which Confederate monuments not only reflect the values of the people who erected them, but ultimately shape and are shaped by their environments.

KEY WORDS: Confederate monument, Lost Cause, public memory, urban development, white supremacy, counter-monument

On Saturday, November 19, 2016, a construction crew removed the 70-foot-tall Confederate Soldiers' Monument that had sat on Third Street in Louisville, Kentucky, for 121 years. Adorned with two bronze soldiers at the base and one atop a four-sided shaft with a crossed-rifle design on the column's capital, the monument was constructed and dedicated in 1895 following nearly a decade of fundraising by the Kentucky Women's Confederate Monument Association. The monument had been the subject of various protests and controversies for years, but the announcement of the decision to finally bring it down came a week after University of Louisville (U of L) professor Ricky Jones, chair of the Department of Pan-African Studies, wrote an impassioned letter to the city's newspaper, *The Courier-Journal*, demanding that the time had come for Mayor Greg Fischer and U of L President James Ramsey to take action.

For 20 years, I have walked by that towering granite and bronze eyesore glorifying the nadir of America's past. For 20 years, I have listened to cries for its removal. For 20 years, we have been plagued by confusion, compromises,

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Louisville Confederate Soldiers' Monument, c.1906. (Library of Congress)

excuses and half measures. One hundred twenty-one years is too long. Twenty years is too long. Twenty more weeks is too long. We've waited long enough. It's time for the statue to go.

Recalling President Ronald Reagan's words to Mikhail Gorbachev in 1987, Jones concluded his appeal, "Mr. Fischer and Mr. Ramsey, tear down this statue!"¹ By the end of the following week, Fischer and Ramsey held a press conference announcing the imminent removal of the monument. "I recognize that some people say this monument should stay here because it is part of history," said Fischer, "but I also appreciate that we can make our own history." Calling this new phase in the city's history "Civil Rights 2.0," Fischer reflected upon the feeling that modern Louisvillians had become more sensitive to the pain experienced in past generations and had become more willing to take part in rectifying past wrongs.² In the weeks following the monument's removal in November, the pieces were first placed in

¹ Ricky Jones, "Remove Confederate Statue at U of L," *Louisville Courier-Journal*, April 21, 2016.

² "Confederate Memorial at U of L to be Removed," *Louisville Courier-Journal*, April 29, 2016.

storage and then relocated to the riverfront town of Brandenburg, Kentucky, about forty miles southwest of Louisville. On Memorial Day, 2017, it was rededicated before a crowd of four-to-five hundred people, including Civil War reenactors, members of the Sons of Confederate Veterans (SCV), and the United Daughters of the Confederacy (UDC), while a short distance away, a small number of protesters held signs. In an interview at the rededication ceremony, Brandenburg Mayor Ronnie Joyner expressed a sentiment shared by many across Kentucky who had opposed its removal in the first place—“it’s part of our history,” and as such, “We need to preserve our history.”³

The removal and relocation of the Louisville Confederate Monument represented the first major example in what would become a tidal wave of subsequent removals in cities across the country in 2017. Following the example in Louisville, New Orleans Mayor Mitch Landrieu ordered the night-time removal of four monuments in April 2017, which included statues to Confederate President Jefferson Davis, General Robert E. Lee, General P.G.T. Beauregard, and the obelisk dedicated to the “Battle of Liberty Place,” an 1874 attempt by the Democratic White League to overthrow the Reconstruction government in Louisiana. Following months of deliberation, in August, the Baltimore City Council approved the removal of all four Confederate-related statuary and monuments in that city—the Confederate Soldiers’ and Sailors’ Monument, the Confederate Women’s Monument, the double equestrian monument to Robert E. Lee and Stonewall Jackson, and the Roger B. Taney monument.⁴ What spurred the decision on the part of Baltimore and the subsequent acceleration in protests, public discussions, and monument removals across the country was the deadly “Unite the Right” protest in Charlottesville, Virginia, in which white nationalists and counter-protesters clashed over the proposed removal of the Robert E. Lee statue from the University of Virginia campus. As of early 2018, over two dozen cities had removed or approved removal of Confederate memorials, including plaques, busts and statuary, fountains, and large-scale monuments. Most of these remain in storage as cities continue to weigh options and costs for relocation to museums, Civil War battlefield sites, cemeteries, or other spaces deemed appropriate.⁵ Such actions, undertaken to show that the residents of these cities no longer laud Confederate soldiers and heroes, and that Americans have moved beyond old Civil War divisions, have ultimately revealed how entrenched those divisions are.

Those opposed to monument removals have often argued that the monuments themselves are “history” and should thus be protected and preserved *in situ*. In the wake of the white supremacist rally in Charlottesville, President Donald Trump

3 “Kentucky Town Welcomes Confederate Monument—Controversial Tower Was Removed from Louisville Campus,” *San Diego Union-Tribune*, May 30, 2017.

4 “List of Removed Baltimore Confederate Monuments,” *Baltimore Sun*, August 16, 2018.

5 Leanna Garfield, “Cities Across the US have Torn Down These Controversial Confederate Monuments,” *Business Insider*, February 17, 2018, <https://www.businessinsider.com/confederate-white-nationalist-monuments-removed-cities-2018-2>.

sided with the position held by monument defenders, tweeting that the “history and culture of our great country” was being “ripped apart with the removal of our beautiful statues and monuments.”⁶ Such arguments operate on the assumption that monuments and memorials generally, and Confederate monuments specifically, are essentially static—that once erected, they have remained unchanging in both meaning and place. Further, such arguments convey the belief that Civil War monuments are artifacts of the war itself rather than artifacts from the time periods when they were erected (which, in the majority of cases, were years or decades after the end of the war).

Rather, Confederate monuments—and all commemorative or memorial objects, be they humble gravestones or triumphal arches—are historical artifacts that are not only reflective of the time periods in which they were made and the people who made them, but they also have a dynamic capacity to change and be changed by the communities and landscapes in which they are situated. Kentucky, one of the four Border South slave states that remained loyal to the Union during the Civil War, offers an example of the way in which divided wartime loyalties translated into a reinterpretation of the state’s identity after the war, the result of which was a widespread embrace of the Confederate mythology of the Lost Cause. Communities around the Commonwealth ultimately erected seventy-two Confederate monuments and only two to the Union cause, and thus established a visual rhetoric on the commemorative landscape heralding the state’s shift in identity after the war.⁷

As a representative example of Confederate monumentation, the Louisville Confederate Soldiers’ Monument has had a complex, and often contested, history in its geographical situation and relationship to the city’s residents. Its early history from the 1890s through the first half of the twentieth century reveals much about the interrelationship between elite white southerners’ efforts to not only defend the Lost Cause mythology, but also maintain a cultural status quo even as the city underwent dramatic transformations in its urban planning. More recent developments since the beginning of the twenty-first century show that, when considered in an international context, the efforts of Americans to grapple with the cultural messages conveyed by Confederate monuments are not unique. Several European countries have endeavored since the end of World War II to counter the problematic past through a variety of approaches, including the elimination of offensive monuments and place names, and the creation of what James E. Young termed “counter-monuments” and memorials.⁸ In Louisville, university officials decided to fashion what amounted to a counter-memorial in 2002—Freedom Park, to be

6 Chico Harlan, “A 121-year-old Confederate Monument Was Coming Down. This Kentucky Town Out It Back Up,” *Washington Post*, August 20, 2017.

7 Anne E. Marshall, *Creating a Confederate Kentucky: The Lost Cause and Civil War Memory in a Border State* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2010), 205n.

8 James E. Young, *The Texture of Memory: Holocaust Memorials and Meaning* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993).

located near the Confederate Monument, which promoters argued would serve as a visual and historical “counterbalance.”⁹ However, the monument’s ultimate removal and relocation in 2016 illustrate that, at least in the American context, counter-monuments created with the purpose of establishing a “dual heritage” or “counter-memory” on the landscape are neither effective nor do they address the problematic symbolism embodied by Confederate monuments.¹⁰ With one community rejecting that symbolism, only to have another embrace it with the justification that the monument “is history,” the trajectory of the Louisville Confederate Monument over time and space exhibits the effectiveness of nineteenth-century white southerners’ efforts to maintain the cultural status quo by establishing a parallel narrative of the Civil War and thus shaping public memory of that conflict and its meaning for generations.

Kentucky’s Confederate Identity

Historians have long grappled with Kentucky’s highly contested wartime and postwar identity as a Border South slave state.¹¹ Conservative Unionists, dedicated to both the preservation of the Union *and* of slavery, maintained the state’s fidelity during the course of the Civil War, but the combination of the Emancipation Proclamation in 1863, the recruitment of African American troops in 1864, and

9 “Freedom Park Progresses on U of L Campus,” Louisville *Courier-Journal*, January 19, 2011.

10 Regarding the dual-heritage strategy attempted by some southern communities, see Dell Upton, *What Can and Can’t Be Said: Race, Uplift, and Monument Building in the Contemporary South* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2015), 174–99. For discussions of “counter-memory” in the American context, see Jonathan I. Leib, “Separate Times, Shared Spaces: Arthur Ashe, Monument Avenue and the Politics of Richmond, Virginia’s Symbolic Landscape,” *Cultural Geographies* 9, no. 286 (2002): 286–12; Melanie L. Buffington and Erin Waldner, “Human Rights, Collective Memory, and Counter Memory: Unpacking the Meaning of Monument Avenue in Richmond, Virginia,” *Journal of Cultural Research in Art Education* 29 (2011): 92–108.

11 For example, see E. Merton Coulter, *The Civil War and Readjustment in Kentucky* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1926); Marshall, *Creating a Confederate Kentucky*; Aaron Astor, *Rebels on the Border: Civil War, Emancipation, and the Reconstruction of Kentucky and Missouri* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2012); John David Smith, “Alsace-Lorraine of Pragmatism Between the Crusaders’: Kentucky in the Civil War Era,” *Register of the Kentucky Historical Society* 110, no. 3 & 4 (Summer/Autumn 2012): 231–41; James C. Klotter, “Kentucky, the Civil War, and the Spirit of Henry Clay,” *Register of the Kentucky Historical Society* 110, no. 3 & 4 (Summer/Autumn 2012): 243–63; Aaron Astor, “The Crouching Lion’s Fate: Slave Politics and Conservative Unionism in Kentucky,” *Register of the Kentucky Historical Society* 110, no. 3 & 4 (Summer/Autumn 2012): 293–26; Christopher Phillips, “Netherworld of War: The Dominion System and the Contours of Federal Occupation in Kentucky,” *Register of the Kentucky Historical Society* 110, no. 3 & 4 (Summer/Autumn 2012): 327–61; Jack Glazier, *Been Coming Through Some Hard Times: Race, History, and Memory in Western Kentucky* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2013); Jacob F. Lee, “Unionism, Emancipation, and the Origins of Kentucky’s Confederate Identity,” *Register of the Kentucky Historical Society* 111, no. 2 (Spring 2013): 199–33; Stephen Rockenbach, “The Weeds and the Flowers Are Closely Mixed’: Allegiance, Law, and White Supremacy in Kentucky’s Bluegrass Region, 1861–1865,” *Register of the Kentucky Historical Society* 111, no. 4 (Autumn 2013): 563–89; Patrick Lewis, *For Slavery and Union: Benjamin Buckner and Kentucky Loyalties in the Civil War* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2015); Christopher Phillips, *The Rivers Ran Backward: The Civil War and the Remaking of the American Middle Border* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016).

finally the Thirteenth Amendment in 1865, resulted in a political readjustment across the state in the postwar period. As noted by historian Anne Marshall, white Kentuckians, regardless of their wartime loyalties, rejected emancipation and Radical Reconstruction policies. As a result, the unity of staunch unionists with ex-Confederates resulted in a conservative Democratic party taking control across the state and enacting policies that upheld white supremacy.¹² Part of this process also involved the cultural shift of the state's residents to wholeheartedly embrace a mythical shared identity associated with the Confederate cause rather than the Union efforts—this, despite Kentucky Union soldiers having outnumbered their Confederate counterparts three-to-one.

Similar political and cultural shifts occurred in the other Border South slave states of Maryland and Missouri, where wartime loyalties had likewise been deeply divided. As one Maryland historian in the 1930s aptly observed, the Border South states brazenly embraced a postwar rebel identity while handing political power to ex-Confederates with shocking rapidity after the end of the war. Unlike the former Confederate states, these states never seceded and so were not subject to face the Radical Reconstruction policies and restrictions. The presence of the military in Kentucky and Maryland throughout the duration of the war and the disfranchisement of Confederates in all of the border states had served to further embitter and embolden ex-rebels as Radical Reconstruction policies were being set forth by Congress.¹³ In the case of Missouri, with its history of extreme guerrilla violence throughout the war in the western portion of the state, the publication in 1877 of John Newman Edwards' *Noted Guerrillas* helped to coalesce a shared Confederate identity across large portions of the state and established what historian Matthew C. Hulbert describes as "the state's own irregular Lost Cause."¹⁴

Political readjustments spurred widespread cultural change in these states, and the erection of monuments—sepulchral and public—established a clear symbolic rhetoric that reaffirmed white Kentuckians', Missourians', and Marylanders' embrace of the ideas (and ideals) promoted by the Confederate South and the subsequent postwar fashioning of Lost Cause mythology. From the late 1860s until well into the twentieth century, elite white southerners actively engaged in the memorialization process, not solely to commemorate the dead, but to further promote and uphold their interpretation of the Civil War and its consequences. As elsewhere across the South, elite white women were integral to this process of forming monument committees, collecting funds, holding monument design contests, and then hosting elaborate dedication ceremonies where orators further reaffirmed the message of the monuments to crowds of hundreds or even

¹² Marshall, *Creating a Confederate Kentucky*, 45.

¹³ William A. Russ, Jr., "Disfranchisement in Maryland (1861–67)," *Maryland Historical Magazine* 28, no. 4 (December 1933): 309–28.

¹⁴ Matthew C. Hulbert, "Constructing Guerrilla Memory: John Newman Edwards and Missouri's Irregular Lost Cause," *Journal of the Civil War Era* 2, no. 1 (March 2012), 58–81, especially 61–62.

thousands of people.¹⁵ The results of this lengthy process was the erection of dozens of monuments across the Border South that contradicted the reality of these states' loyalty to the Union during the Civil War. Kentucky represents the most extreme case of Confederate versus Union memorialization efforts, with seventy-two monuments ultimately erected to Confederates and their cause, and only two to the Union.¹⁶ Confederate monuments in Maryland likewise outnumbered those to the Union, although the two sides were far more evenly represented than in Kentucky—the state ultimately contained twenty-nine Confederate monuments, twenty-six Union monuments, four reconciliationist monuments dedicated to both sides of the conflict, and six monuments not associated with either side.¹⁷ In the case of Missouri, there are twenty monuments that, while vastly outnumbered by monuments and markers to the Union cause, still represent a significant number.¹⁸ Like their counterparts elsewhere in the nation, the Confederate monuments in all three states have come under increasing public scrutiny, resulting in monument removals in Baltimore, St. Louis, and Lexington, in addition to Louisville.

The Louisville Monument

Although the effort to raise a monument to the Confederate dead in Louisville did not begin until 1887, Kentuckians had been actively erecting such memorials since the 1860s. The earliest Confederate monument in the state was a marble obelisk erected at Battle Grove Cemetery in Cynthiana, the site of two battles, in 1869. In Lexington, the ladies of that city raised funds for the erection in 1874 of a monument depicting the Confederate flag with a broken staff draped over a cross at Lexington Cemetery, and another monument, depicting a soldier, was erected in the same cemetery in 1893. The city's monument to John C. Breckinridge was erected in downtown Lexington in 1887 (In 2017, it and an equestrian statue to John Hunt Morgan were removed).¹⁹ A soldiers' monument was erected at the rural

15 For examples of historical scholarship examining the role of southern white women in the memorialization process, see Cynthia Mills and Pamela H. Simpson, *Monuments to the Lost Cause: Women, Art, and the Landscapes of Southern Memory* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2003); Karen L. Cox, *Dixie's Daughters: The United Daughters of the Confederacy and the Preservation of Confederate Culture* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2003); 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).

16 Marshall, *Creating a Confederate Kentucky*, 205n.

17 Susan Cooke Soderberg, *"Lest We Forget": A Guide to Civil War Monuments in Maryland* (Shippensburg, PA: White Mane Publishing, 1995), ix.

18 The Sons of Union Veterans in Missouri recently completed their catalogue of Union monuments, plaques, canons, and other memorials across the state. For this list, see <http://www.suvcwmo.org/monuments.html>. The number of Confederate monuments in Missouri is cited in "We Won, You Know? St. Louis Senator Wants to Put Confederate Monuments in a Museum," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, January 4, 2018.

19 "Confederate Statues in Lexington Removed Tuesday Night in Quick Move," *Louisville Courier-Journal*, October 17, 2017. The equestrian statue to Confederate raider John Hunt Morgan was erected in 1911.

cemetery of the state capital, Frankfort, in 1892. Efforts to erect a Civil War monument to the Union dead in Louisville's Cave Hill Cemetery dated back to the 1860s, both during and immediately after the war. The city had been a Union stronghold during the war, but despite exhortations by Unionists to the city's residents to show their enthusiasm (and furnish money), lack of support meant the abandonment of the proposed monument project by the end of the decade.²⁰ No further efforts were made to erect a Civil War monument in Louisville until, following Confederate Decoration Day in 1887, the press announced that "the ladies of Louisville" would initiate plans for the erection of a monument to the Confederate dead.²¹ Across the former Confederate South, Ladies' Memorial Associations (LMAs) had formed in the immediate aftermath of the war and shouldered the work of burying the dead, decorating graves, and raising funds for cemetery monument projects. Despite the efforts of white women in Louisville who were sympathetic to the rebel cause to bury and decorate the graves of the rebel dead at Cave Hill Cemetery both during and after the war, there was no local LMA, and as the United Daughters of the Confederacy (UDC) did not emerge until 1895, a number of the city's leading families formed the Kentucky Women's Confederate Monument Association.

Husbands and wives were both listed on the Association's membership rolls, but women claimed all of the significant leadership positions. Mrs. Susan Preston Hepburn, sister of a Confederate general and first president of the Association, followed a fundraising pattern that would be oft-repeated in the future by other monument associations, including the powerhouse of the Lost Cause, the UDC. As the Association began to raise the anticipated \$30,000 to cover the cost of what they anticipated would be an imposing monument, the Louisville *Courier-Journal*, the enormously influential newspaper run by ex-Confederate Henry Watterson, promoted the endeavor.²² Watterson's paper, albeit a sound-piece for the Democratic party and ex-Confederate interests, encouraged Louisvillians of all political stripes to support the project as an act of city-wide unity. In this way, the newspaper reflected what historians Nina Silber and David Blight contend was the

20 These efforts, both during and after the war, had primarily been undertaken by the German-American residents of Louisville, who numbered amongst the largest foreign-born contingent of Unionists in the area. Newspapers in Kentucky and elsewhere covered the attempts to raise interest and money for this monument project. See "Monument to Union Soldiers," *Louisville Daily Democrat*, February 21, 1864; "Letter from Louisville," *The Xenia (Ohio) Sentinel*, March 15, 1864; "For the Benefit of the Union Soldiers' Monument at Cave Hill Cemetery," *Louisville Daily Democrat*, May 11, 1864; *Evansville (Indiana) Journal*, November 30, 1868; *Boston Daily Advertiser*, February 9, 1869. It would not be until 1914 that veterans would successfully dedicate a memorial boulder with bronze plaque to the Union dead at Cave Hill.

21 "Memorial Day at Louisville," *The Montgomery (Alabama) Advertiser*, May 29, 1887; "Decorating Confederate Graves," *The Hutchinson (Kansas) News*, May 29, 1887.

22 The *Courier-Journal* was a city newspaper, but as Daniel S. Margolies writes in *Henry Watterson and the New South: The Politics of Empire, Free Trade, and Globalization* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 2006), it was "a great and powerful newspaper with a lasting national reputation" (1-2).

reconciliationist atmosphere that increasingly took hold across the country after the end of Reconstruction—that is, the sense that Americans, particularly white Americans, needed to put aside their former differences in the interest of healing the breach and moving forward as a nation.²³ In its announcement of a fundraiser at the city’s Macauley Theater in February 1890, the *Courier-Journal* noted, “This is one of the few cities of the country that has no commemoration of this kind of any event in the civil war. Those in charge of the movement to erect a Confederate monument should receive public support, not simply for that cause, but further with the idea that they will arouse a public spirit in the city” that would ultimately lead to the erection of other monuments “to their leaders and benefactors.”²⁴ By 1893, under Hepburn’s direction, the Association had raised enough from donations—\$800—by sponsoring further events, such as boat excursions and a baseball game, so that the cornerstone for the monument could be laid “and inclosed by a handsome fence.”²⁵

As observed by those involved with the monument’s fundraising, the political unity shared by conservative Unionists and ex-Confederates translated into a more general city-wide atmosphere of white reconciliationism and accord. Mrs. Sophia Irvine Fox Sea, wife of city official and Confederate veteran Andrew Sea, reported, “I cannot recall an instance where we were received harshly, as everyone seemed to sympathize with the movement . . . One old cobbler, who had been in the Northern army, gave us fifty cents, because, he said, he had fought against those men of the South and knew how brave and noble they were.” In another example, Sea explained how as they were canvassing city shops and residences for donations, a “Jewess,” making her business laundering lace curtains, donated five dollars, much to the disbelief of the Monument Association’s members. Such generosity on the part of city residents, combined with the success of the various “entertainments” sponsored by the Association, including luncheons and bazaars, generated over twelve-thousand dollars for the project by August 1894.²⁶ The success of the fundraising process in Louisville thus underscores one of the key components of white reconciliation in the late nineteenth century—that is, the strategic amnesia surrounding the major issue that ultimately led to southern secession and war: slavery. As Sea’s account of the Union veteran’s attitude reveals, by avoiding complex political issues in favor of emphasizing the mutual

23 On the theme of Reconstruction era and post-Reconstruction white reconciliation, see Nina Silber, *The Romance of Reunion: Northerners and the South, 1865–1900* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1997); David W. Blight, *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001). Other historians have contended that reconciliation had its limits. For example, see Caroline E. Janney, *Remembering the Civil War: Reunion and the Limits of Reconciliation* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2013).

24 “The Confederate Monument,” *Louisville Courier-Journal*, February 8, 1890.

25 “Confederate Monument—Many Ways By Which the Association Raised the Money,” *The Courier-Journal*, August 12, 1894.

26 *Ibid.*

self-sacrifice, bravery, and heroism of the soldiers regardless of affiliation, both sides in the conflict thus earned validation.

This idea of white unity based upon shared experiences of hardships found fertile ground in Louisville and across the state of Kentucky, but conflict with a Pennsylvania chapter of the Grand Army of the Republic (GAR)—the national organization devoted to Union veterans—highlighted the limits of reconciliationism on the national scale. Upon hearing of a rumor that the monument's dedication would take place during the GAR's encampment in Louisville, Pennsylvania veterans expressed shock at the idea (not to mention the paradox) that a Union city would flagrantly dedicate a monument to Confederate soldiers during their national reunion scheduled for September 1894. The veterans announced they would not go to Louisville "if a Confederate monument is to be dedicated while they are there."²⁷ Such a reaction thus reinforces historian Caroline Janney's assertion that the war "had been too bloody, too long, and too costly for most Americans to surrender sacred convictions about its meaning, much less to forget."²⁸ In response to the agitation of the Pennsylvania veterans, and particularly the refusal of the Abe Patterson Post 88 of Allegheny to travel to Louisville, Adjutant-General James F. Morrison wrote to the chairman of the Louisville Citizens' Committee regarding the issue. The letter received in response stated, "there had never been a thought of anything that would offend any of the expected visitors, much less to compel them to take part in or witness ceremonies which they did not desire to see." As it so happened, the story of the monument's dedication being timed for the GAR encampment had been fabricated by "some mischief-making brain."²⁹ Whether or not it was true, the letter was effective in deflecting what could potentially build into a major controversy. Further, even though it had only been a rumor, the incident revealed that not all Union veterans were as sanguine as those in Louisville. For their part, Louisville's Union veterans effectively aided in destroying what little may have remained of the public's memory concerning the city's loyalty during the war—this they accomplished through a combination of offering financial support to the project, while remaining silent on the matter of erecting any comparable memorial to the Union soldiers.

Although the press promoted fundraising efforts for the project in the interest of city-wide unity, the geographical site selected for its erection made explicit the message that the monument itself was to be an object of pride and representative of the shared identity of Louisville's elite white residents. Located at the corner of Third and Shipp avenues, directly across the street from the Industrial School of Reform (which would later be purchased by the University of Louisville), the monument at the time of its erection sat near the southern boundary of the city limits. Third Avenue—which was later renamed Third Street—was known as

²⁷ *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, September 27, 1894.

²⁸ Janney, *Remembering the Civil War*, 196.

²⁹ "The G.A.R. at Louisville—There Will Be No Dedication of a Confederate Monument," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, October 9, 1894.

“Millionaire’s Row,” a boulevard lined with Victorian mansions that made it “one of the most desired addresses in the city.”³⁰ As noted by the *Courier-Journal* of the site, it “could not have been better selected. The pavements bend around the circular site, and the street continues into the grand boulevard. At the threshold of the principal driveway, it will be an imposing ornament.” At the laying of the cornerstone ceremony, held May 25, 1895, Susan Hepburn placed a “box containing relics of the war” inside the cornerstone, thus vesting the site with greater hallowed qualities for ex-Confederates. Included in the box were, among other things, newspapers from the 1860s and 1890s, Confederate money, a photograph of Jefferson Davis, a photograph of Susan Hepburn, and a cigar lit by Jefferson Davis that he left behind during a visit to Louisville.³¹

Just as the physical location of the monument bore significance to elite white Louisvillians and the capsule placed within the cornerstone contained objects of importance to ex-Confederates and those involved in the monument project, the orations delivered at the cornerstone laying ceremony and dedication accomplished two important goals. First, they reaffirmed the public message of shared white heroism and suffering embodied in the symbolism of the monument; and second, they established a social contract between those living at the time of the monument’s dedication with those in future generations that the monument’s meaning and importance to the community would remain unalterable. At both events, the speakers conveyed a similar message: that, just as their Union counterparts had done, Confederate soldiers had fought with dedication and valor, they had sacrificed their lives in the performance of duty and in the belief that what they were doing was right, and that because of their heroism and self-sacrifice, white southerners had nothing for which to be ashamed. Such themes appeared in memorial and dedication addresses not just in Kentucky but across the South, and aided in the creation and reinforcement of what historian Bradley S. Keefer refers to as the “cult of the common soldier,” a lasting theme in American commemorative culture since the late nineteenth century.³²

Speaking at the cornerstone ceremony, the Reverend E. L. Powell focused on these very ideas by emphasizing the importance of remembering “the deeds of the common soldier,” and the responsibility of the living to honor the dead. “Not to remember them would be to brand ourselves with infamy—to show ourselves wanting in the tenderest and purest feelings which belong to the human heart.” From this perspective, ex-Confederates (and the city as a whole) were compelled to memorialize their dead with monuments *because they were their dead*. What is

³⁰ David Domine and Ronald Lew Harris, *Old Louisville* (Charleston, SC: Arcadia Publishing, 2010), 38.

³¹ “For the Monument. Interesting Relics to be Placed in the Corner-Stone,” *Louisville Courier-Journal*, May 25, 1895; “Put in Place—Corner-Stone of Confederate Monument Laid,” *Louisville Courier-Journal*, May 26, 1895.

³² Bradley S. Keefer, *Conflicting Memories on the “River of Death”: The Chickamauga Battlefield and the Spanish-American War, 1863–1933* (Kent, OH: The Kent State University Press, 2013), 89.

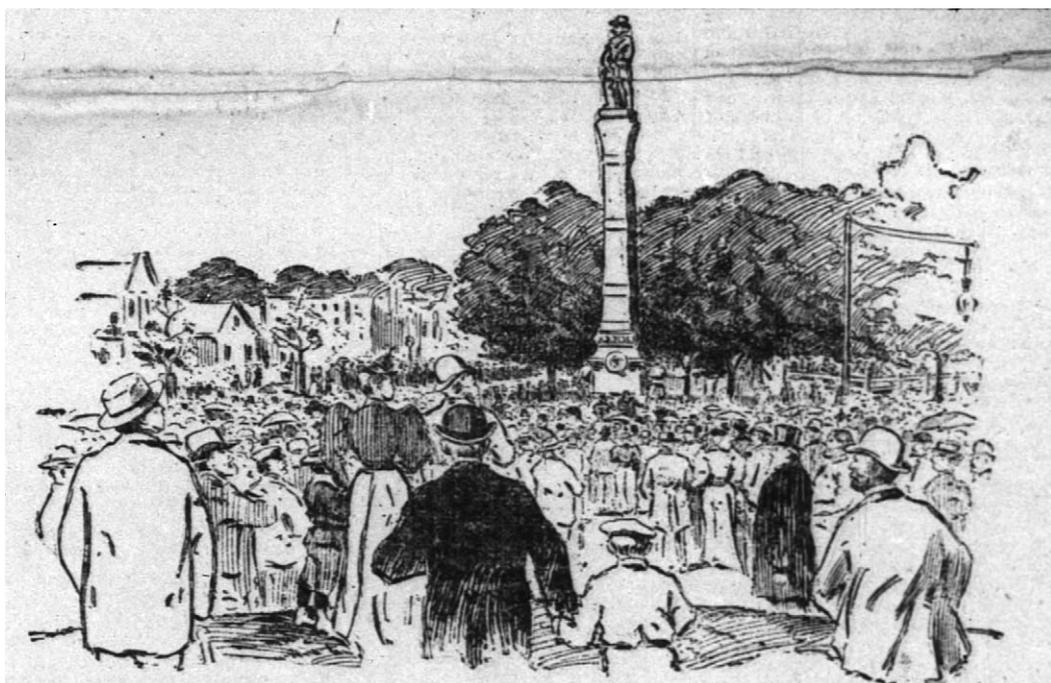
ironic in this admonition, however, is that while this sense of shared responsibility to the rebel dead manifested in successful fundraising for the erection of an imposing monument, the same feeling to honor the Union dead remained largely absent. In conceptualizing what the monument would mean to the community, Powell declared that it would be a symbol of “the glory of self-sacrifice” and would stand as a “silent exhortation to this generation to exemplify in every-day conflict of life those virtues which brave men conspicuously illustrated on the more prominent theater of war.” What the monument would *not* represent, in Powell’s estimation, was the “spirit of rebellion or defiance.” That being said, the erection of a Confederate monument in what had been a Union city and state was itself an act of defiance, against the wartime loyalty of Kentucky and especially of the ramifications for Union victory—emancipation.³³

Powell’s oratorical shifting of the public narrative concerning Louisville’s wartime identity and the experiences of its white population laid the groundwork for how the monument would further be interpreted at its formal dedication on July 30, 1895. Although located at the end of a boulevard occupied by the city’s elite, the dedication was an affair that drew spectators from across the socio-economic spectrum, which lent greater weight to the notion that the monument represented a shared identity and sentiment among white Kentuckians. What aided greatly in achieving a diverse crowd was that city authorities had declared a half-holiday to honor the occasion, and as a result, “wage-workers and business men alike turned out in thousands, while trains from different parts of the state, as well as from across the river in Indiana, brought thousands more.” The parade preceding the dedication included organizations that likewise affirmed the spirit of unity across the city, and included “several divisions of ex-Confederate soldiers, regiments of the Kentucky state guard, the Confederate Veterans’ Association, the members of the Kentucky Women’s Monument Association, Masonic lodges and numerous civic organizations.” The exercises began with a prayer followed by an introductory address, and songs from “the Confederate choir.”³⁴ General Basil Duke, a lawyer for the Louisville & Nashville Railroad and brother-in-law to famed Kentucky Confederate raider John Hunt Morgan, who had distinguished himself as one of the leading Kentucky Confederates and a significant figure among Confederate veterans, delivered the principal oration for the day.

Emphasizing the role of the monument as a memorial to men “who would rather die than aught of harm or wrong should befall the land of their birth,” Duke defended the actions of the Kentucky rebels by arguing that love of one’s home state naturally surpassed love of nation. Duke further cast the sentiments that drove forward the monument project as appealing “beyond the boundaries of mere local and partisan sympathy,” for it symbolized what he regarded as “the noblest

³³ “Put in Place,” 16.

³⁴ “The Confederate Dead—The Monument At Louisville Unveiled Today Amid Much Enthusiasm—The Program Outlined,” *The Minneapolis Journal*, July 30, 1895.



Monument Dedication Day, *Louisville Courier-Journal*, July 31, 1895.

attribute of the race”—the belief in “My country, right or wrong!” In his estimation, Kentucky’s Confederate soldiers died with devotion to home, to God, and to duty, and that as such, the community had a responsibility to honor their memory. To this end, he concluded,

we, who are in every sense their countrymen; we, who share the blame if they were wrong; we, who have a right to be proud of their glory and should be jealous guardians of their fame, if the unprejudiced verdict of future generations approve their conduct—we would commemorate their deeds that they may be judged for what they did, in the full assurance that such record will show, if it show naught else, that men never strove with nobler confidence in the justice of their cause, or fell with sublime resignation to any fate that duty demanded they should accept.³⁵

With these closing words, Duke sealed the social contract between present and future generations that the memory of these men would remain fixed and that the monument would symbolize the values of white heroism and self-sacrifice in answer to the call of duty. Throughout his speech, Duke neatly avoided any language referring to the historical context for the war, Kentucky’s divided

³⁵ “The Tribute of Women to Those Who Fell in Battle For the Cause of the South,” *Louisville Courier-Journal*, July 31, 1895.

loyalties, or emancipation. Such an approach to defining the meaning of the monument was not, however, unique. As scholars have observed, public monuments, as physical manifestations of public memory, explicitly serve the needs of the living; they are propaganda fashioned by the elite but promoted with universal messages of shared values rather than erected with the intention to accurately depict or interpret the causes and consequences of the conflicts they commemorate.³⁶

By focusing on the soldiers themselves, the Monument Association and orators were able to rewrite the history of the Civil War as though Kentucky *had* seceded, emphasizing states' rights arguments and soldiers' devotion to home and family as the driving impulses for the southern cause. By reframing the soldiers' cause as one of self-defense in the face of northern invasion, not only would survivors from the war generation feel validation and justification for their sacrifice, but combining the oratory of these addresses with permanent monuments in granite and bronze in prominent spaces on the urban landscape solidified the ideology of the Lost Cause for future generations as well. Finally, by strategically locating the monument in a space of white habitation and activity, the Monument Association placed a seemingly permanent fixture upon the urban landscape that would offer a visual reinforcement of shared white identity.

A Traffic Target

In the century following the Confederate monument's erection and dedication, the city of Louisville transformed and although controversies arose concerning the physical location of the monument, residents' feelings of ownership and protectiveness translated into its remaining a fixture upon the landscape. During this time, even as Jim Crow restrictions began to be lifted in the 1950s, anyone who may have objected to the monument's symbolism as an artifact of Lost Cause mythology kept their feelings private. It was not until the end of the twentieth century that any public discourse addressing the monument in particular, and Confederate symbols more generally, became common in either Louisville or the state of Kentucky. Even then, it was not until the early twenty-first century when city residents, political leaders, and those associated with the University of Louisville began to seriously question the propriety of allowing an object that many regarded as a symbol of white supremacy and pro-slavery interests to remain unchallenged and *in situ*, especially given its location at the corner of the increasingly diverse Belknap campus of the U of L.

The controversies associated with the monument during the first half of the twentieth century centered on the combination of urban development and the needs of city planners to effectively address the growing popularity of automobiles

³⁶ See, for example, Kirk Savage, *Standing Soldiers, Kneeling Slaves: Race, War, and Monument in Nineteenth-Century America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), 6; David Rieff, *In Praise of Forgetting: Historical Memory and Its Ironies* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016).

and the traffic problems that inevitably resulted. A “stone fence, broken by four large squares supporting iron lamp-holders” had been erected on the circular grass island upon which the monument sat, but the fence proved incapable of protecting the monument from poor drivers.³⁷ By the early 1920s, Thomas B. Crutcher, chairman of the Board of Works, recommended removal of the monument to a place of “safety”—fifty feet away to the entrance of Triangle Park—as it had been “rammed by numerous automobiles.”³⁸ Beyond this initial suggestion, nothing further transpired, although the area surrounding the monument continued to change. The most significant development at this time was the purchase in 1925 by the University of Louisville of the forty-seven-acre Industrial School of Reform property, with the College of Liberal Arts renaming it the Belknap Campus in 1927. It was also in that year that the Speed Art Museum opened, one of the most important features of the U of L Belknap Campus. Although the monument had not moved, the university’s presence altered its condition as a symbol of the elite white community’s shared identity, for it was now situated at the corner of the campus, directly opposite from the museum. Regarded by many as an extension of the campus itself, the monument became an embedded part of university life, including those parts that might be considered less dignified. For example, as one student reflected in the university’s yearbook in 1931, while walking to class one morning he observed how the soldiers on the monument had been covered in “several gentleman’s undergarments in varying stages of decay and disrepair” as part of a fraternity’s “initiation fracas” the night before.³⁹

By the 1940s, Third Street had become “southern Louisville’s busiest thoroughfare” and concerns about traffic and the monument’s location entered public discourse in 1947 and again in 1954; at both times, public resistance to relocating the Confederate monument, even a short distance, won out. In 1947, the board of alderman considered plans to alter Second, Third, and Shipp Streets to improve the flow of traffic. As had been suggested in the 1920s, City Engineer W. W. Sanders proposed moving the Confederate monument to Triangle Park; if not relocated, then “the circular base, at least should be changed to an elliptical shape by narrowing the east and west sides,” which would allow two lanes of traffic to flow on either side of it. By this time, the city limits had extended four miles beyond their location when the monument was first dedicated in 1895, and the accompanying problems of traffic congestion near the university was reaching a critical state.⁴⁰ The local chapters of the UDC and the Sons of Confederate Veterans (SCV)

37 Bess Laub, “The Art of Louisville—Confederate Monument,” *Louisville Courier-Journal*, November 18, 1917.

38 “Moving Confederate Monument from Autos’ Path is City’s Plan,” *Louisville Courier-Journal*, May 4, 1921.

39 *The Thoroughbred* (University of Louisville, 1931), 214.

40 “Seeing Big-Time Industries Will Destroy Illusion about Leisurely Louisville,” *Louisville Courier-Journal*, July 28, 1940; “Plan to Shift Monument Threatens ‘Civil War’—Would Move Confederate Statue to Park in Extending 3d, 2d, Shipp As One-Way Streets,” *Louisville Courier-Journal*, September 3, 1947.



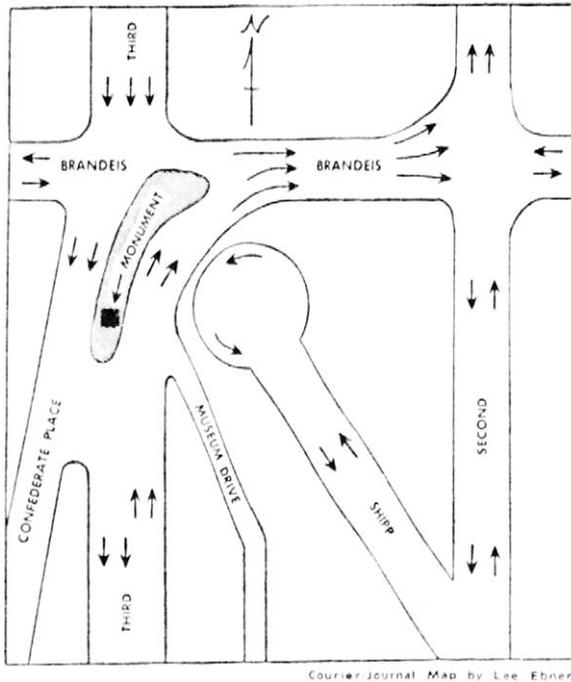
Intersection near Confederate Monument, Louisville, Kentucky, 1933. (Caufield & Shook Collection, University of Louisville Archives)

publicly opposed the possibility of relocation, with the head of the Sidney Johnston Chapter of the UDC, Mrs. John Woodbury, expressing concerns that due to age and weathering, the monument would crumble if removed; further, if “[p]eople can drive around monuments in other cities . . . Why can’t we?”⁴¹ Attorney Charles Farnsley, commander of the Andrew Broaddus Camp No. 361 of the SCV, who served from 1948–53 as one of the city’s most celebrated mayors, stood guard over the monument in 1949 brandishing his rifle as the issue of the monument’s location remained unresolved.⁴²

When the issue resurfaced again in 1954, city residents flooded the *Courier-Journal* with letters of protest. Laurence Lee Howe, a resident of Confederate Place facing the monument, made a two-fold argument—first, that the monument was one of the few in the country “that is really attractive” and that it would be a shame to keep it “hidden from visitors to the city” if removed to Triangle Park; and second, that removal would not fix the bad traffic situation. In his estimation, the real problem was “the intersection of too many streets” and that the monument’s presence actually forced cars to slow down and thus made such a congested area

⁴¹ “Plan to Shift Monument Threatens ‘Civil War.’”

⁴² “Louisville Gets A Strange New Mayor,” *Life*, April 5, 1948, 39; “Confederate Memorial at U of L to be Removed,” *Louisville Courier-Journal*, April 29, 2016.



Map showing road alteration for flow of traffic, Louisville *Courier-Journal*, June 14, 1956.

safer for vehicles and pedestrians alike.⁴³ Another concerned citizen, Frances C. Bate, posited that the monument should be preserved *in situ* for the sake of beauty—that as a work of art, it was an ornament to Louisville that made it attractive to visitors and placed it on par with such cities as Washington, DC, and Paris, France.⁴⁴ Ben Strother of Henderson, Kentucky, defended the sacred quality of Confederate monuments and blasted the proposed relocation as an “ignoble plot” by “some damyankee.” In his view, removal would be “just as sacrilegious” as it would be to move “the statue of Jefferson Davis from the Capitol grounds in Montgomery.”⁴⁵ In the face of public opposition, Mayor Andrew Broaddus advocated for the monument’s relocation given his concern that it remained a traffic hazard. Ultimately, however, the final decision approved in 1956 involved closing Shipp Street at Third and then surrounding the monument with a new grass plot so that it would function as a traffic island.⁴⁶ Thus remaining a key feature of the corner of the U of L campus, the Confederate monument likewise became part of the functional solution to that area’s traffic problems.

43 “Readers’ Point of View: In Defense of Louisville’s Confederate Monument,” *Louisville Courier-Journal*, May 3, 1954.

44 “Can Spare a Moment to Beauty,” *Louisville Courier-Journal*, October 12, 1954.

45 “Suspects Damyankee Plot,” *Louisville Courier-Journal*, October 17, 1954.

46 “Advisors Back Moving Confederate Monument,” *Louisville Courier-Journal*, January 15, 1955; “Shipp Will Be Closed at 3d; Confederate Statue Stays,” *Louisville Courier-Journal*, June 14, 1956.

"No place in a compassionate, forward-leaning city"

In the midst of the public backlash against the monument's proposed removal during the 1920s to the 1950s, questions about the propriety of a Confederate monument in a city and state that had remained loyal to the Union never surfaced, at least not publicly. People wrote of pride, heritage, beauty, and tourism, and, despite the fact that the proposed relocation would only be fifty feet away to a public park, they objected to the very idea of removal on the principle that it would be hidden away. During all of this, no one seemed to object to the monument's existence. However, Louisville prided itself on being a modern, forward-thinking southern city, and by the time the traffic controversy was resolved, the University of Louisville had been admitting African American students for five years. The university's enrollment of black students aided in the desegregation of other municipal facilities in Louisville, such as parks and public schools, and in 1963, the city's board of aldermen "passed a public accommodations law, banning discrimination of services on account of race," when restaurants near campus refused to serve black students.⁴⁷ The Black Student Union formed in the 1960s, but their actions were largely directed toward highlighting the few African American faculty members and "high-profile black athletes," while also encouraging greater efforts for recruitment of minority students and teachers, increased financial aid for black students, and courses in the university's curriculum on black history and literature.⁴⁸ Overt student activism on campus during the 1960s and 1970s remained focused primarily on either the Vietnam War or issues that related specifically to the quality of life for students on campus, and so public discussion about or objections to the Confederate monument remained obscured during this period.

It was not until 1989 that the first public call for the monument's removal was made, albeit only as part of a longer list of demands made by the university's newly formed Black Student Alliance (BSA) to address systemic problems of racism and exclusion on campus. In that year, Dawne Jones, a U of L freshman psychology major from Dayton, Ohio, found herself the victim of "verbal and racial slurs in the Pan-Hellenic dormitory, where she was the only black" resident. The BSA formed in the wake of this incident to demand policy changes by the university to "ease racial tensions" on campus. These changes included renaming the Confederate Apartments to University Towers Apartments, a requirement for dormitory advisers to learn African American history and culture as part of their training, the construction of a multicultural center on campus, and removal of the Confederate monument.⁴⁹ The university complied and worked with the BSA to address their

⁴⁷ Dwayne D. Cox and William J. Morison, *The University of Louisville* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2000), 136.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 146.

⁴⁹ "U of L Makes Policy Changes in Wake of Allegations of Racial Harassment," *Louisville Courier-Journal*, November 18, 1989; Cox and Morison, *The University of Louisville*, 200.

demands except one—removal of the Confederate monument. The outcry against the monument came from within the university, but it was not university property—it was the property of the city of Louisville. Without calls for the monument’s removal from city residents, no further action could take place, and university students and faculty continued to see the monument daily as they traversed to and from campus.

National discussions concerning the public display of Confederate symbols, particularly the Confederate flag, emerged in the 1990s, and during the early 2000s, Confederate monuments began to come under greater scrutiny. Widespread questioning of the public display of the Confederate flag was spurred, at least in part, by the 1995 death in Kentucky of white nineteen-year-old Todd County Central High School graduate David Westerman, who was shot by seventeen-year-old Freddie Morrow, who was black. The incident presumably occurred because Morrow and his friends took offense at the Confederate flags waving from Westerman’s pickup truck. Like other parts of Kentucky that had embraced a post-war Confederate heritage, Todd County Central High School’s mascot was the “Rebel,” and located nearby on the border of Todd and Christian counties sits the 351-foot-tall obelisk to Jefferson Davis, constructed from 1917 to 1924 at the site of the Confederate president’s birthplace. The incident, taking place in an area of the state suffused with Confederate symbolism, prompted newspapers in Kentucky and nationwide to begin printing articles questioning the value and relevance of Confederate iconography, while public discussions prompted arguments about First Amendment rights as well as the “Heritage vs. Hate” dichotomy that is still invoked by defenders of Confederate symbols today.⁵⁰

The sequence of events that eventually led to the removal and relocation of the Confederate Monument began with an unrelated decision on the part of University of Louisville officials to address public perceptions of theirs as a “commuter campus.” In October 2002, University trustees decided that it was time to build a new dormitory building and possibly tear down several of the Victorian homes that were occupied by various fraternities and sororities. These were all located in the area known as Confederate Place, adjacent from the monument.⁵¹ A new community park was envisioned as part of the refurbishment of this portion of the campus, and further discussions in November that included input from students and other members of the campus community led to the renaming of Confederate Place to Unity Place. With recommendations from the Pan-African Studies Department, the trustees further decided that the community park would

⁵⁰ For a lengthy discussion of the Westerman episode and the issue of Confederate identity and racial politics in Todd County, see Tony Horwitz, *Confederates in the Attic: Dispatches from the Unfinished Civil War* (New York: Vintage Books, 1998), 89–124. See also, “A Clash of Symbols,” *Louisville Courier-Journal*, February 25, 1998.

⁵¹ “Dormitory to Be Built; Houses May Be Replaced,” *Louisville Courier-Journal*, October 18, 2002.

be called Freedom Park.⁵² In conceptualizing its design, those involved in the planning for Freedom Park intended it to counterbalance the historical message conveyed by the Confederate monument with a more complete presentation of Louisville's nineteenth-century history. Reactions to these decisions varied. One city resident complained that the name change of Confederate Place to Unity Place "smacks mightily of political correctness," but agreed that creating the Freedom Park to add "a much broader understanding of the Civil War, its legacy, is a good idea."⁵³ This attitude reflected the general sentiment expressed toward the proposed park, although differences of opinion emerged regarding whether the Confederate monument should remain as part of the new visual narrative. As one African American U of L student, Miaunna Williams, noted, "If they're going to broaden it from every aspect of the Civil War, I don't have a problem with that, but I do have a problem with the Confederate soldier on the statue," and with the monument as a whole "glorifying the Confederacy." Invoking the language commonly used by defenders of Confederate symbols, a white student, Field Keeling, supported the park and keeping the monument, arguing "It's our heritage, and it exemplifies what happened in our history." Blaine Hudson, chairman of the university's Pan-African Studies Department at that time, regarded the park and monument together as a way to represent "all the different players in that drama" of the late-antebellum and Civil War experience.⁵⁴ Despite differences of opinion regarding the Confederate monument, a spirit of mutual collaboration marked the overall atmosphere of the proposed project. To this end, trustee Nathaniel Green praised the university's "approach of working together to resolve history's dilemmas" without transforming the issue into a "controversial situation."⁵⁵

By conceptualizing a park with historical markers that would effectively counterbalance the cultural message of the Confederate monument, the U of L trustees undertook the effort to establish what Dell Upton refers to as a strict "dual-heritage strategy" on the landscape, in which the historical narratives of southern whites and southern blacks would be presented side-by-side but would not intersect "in uncomfortable ways."⁵⁶ South Carolinians had made a similar effort just one year prior by dedicating the state's African-American History Monument on the state house grounds amidst several monuments to the Confederacy, and a number of scholars have regarded the Arthur Ashe statue on Richmond, Virginia's Monument Avenue as likewise serving a similar function. The inherent problem with such efforts, however, is that although the monuments—or in the case of Louisville, park—are intended to serve as a means to expand the historical narrative to be more

52 Stephanie Smith, "Confederate Soldier Joins the Union," *Louisville Cardinal*, December 2002.

53 "Race Issues Not Always as Clear as Black, White," *Louisville Courier-Journal*, November 28, 2002.

54 "New Park May Balance Confederate Monument—U of L Would Install Features Near Memorial," *Louisville Courier-Journal*, December 9, 2002.

55 "University Approves Park for Civil War Monuments," *The Tampa Tribune*, November 28, 2002.

56 Upton, *What Can and Can't Be Said*, 177.

inclusive, their presence side-by-side with monuments valorizing Confederate heroes and soldiers further validates the cultural message of southern white supremacy.⁵⁷ Whereas counter-monuments erected in the 1980s and 1990s in Germany were intended to contradict and ultimately smash apart traditional memorial forms while forcing Germans to grapple with the more troubling aspects of their nation's history, the monuments and spaces in the United States dedicated to African American history and civil rights supplemented the historical narrative without fundamentally challenging the mythological narrative of the Lost Cause that elite southern whites had fashioned in the century prior.⁵⁸

It was this fundamental problem, the lack of an overt challenge to the validity or value of the Confederate monument, that led Reverend Louis Coleman, executive director of the Justice Resource Center (JRC), to contest the city's commitment to retaining the monument. In a letter to Mayor Jerry Abramson in February 2005, he stated, "A statue of this nature does not belong in the middle of a roadway that connects to a college that boasts on its diversity."⁵⁹ Public reactions to Coleman's call for removal were swift and defensive—one writer to the *Courier-Journal* called Coleman's proposal "preposterous," declaring that since it is a memorial to the Confederate dead of Kentucky and the South, "It is not a monument symbolizing slavery." Another writer accused Coleman and the JRC of trying to "destroy portions of our area's history." Other detractors invoked the "states' rights" argument for the Civil War (as opposed to slavery being the main issue), claiming "Coleman needs a history lesson" and that there needs to be less emphasis overall on encouraging "diversity" with the result of fashioning "an American Europe."⁶⁰ To counteract such criticisms of Coleman and the JRC, yet other residents wrote to the paper, including one who objected to the argument made by the states' rights advocate. In March, Mattie Jones of the JRC, questioned why Mayor Abramson had remained silent since Coleman's February letter, while also calling out the African American faculty at the U of L who had accepted the Freedom Park compromise rather than stand firm on their opposition to the Confederate monument.⁶¹

57 Leib, "Separate Times, Shared Spaces," 286–312; Buffington and Waldner, "Human Rights, Collective Memory, and Counter Memory," 92–108.

58 Regarding the "counter-monument" movement in Germany, see James E. Young, "The Counter-Monument: Memory against Itself in Germany Today," *Critical Inquiry* 18, no. 2 (Winter 1992): 267–96; Young, *The Texture of Memory*; Noam Lupu, "Memory Vanished, Absent, and Confined: The Countermemorial Project in 1980s and 1990s Germany," *History and Memory* 15, no. 2 (Fall/Winter 2003): 130–64; Thomas Stubblefield, "Do Disappearing Monuments Simply Disappear? The Counter-Monument in Revision," *Future Anterior: Journal of Historic Preservation, History, Theory, and Criticism* 8, no. 2 (Winter 2011): 1–11.

59 "Activists Renew Call to Remove Monument—Confederate Statue Called out of Place," *Louisville Courier-Journal*, February 22, 2005.

60 "Proposal to Remove Controversial Confederate Monument 'Preposterous,'" *Louisville Courier-Journal*, February 28, 2005.

61 "Plea to Remove Controversial Confederate Monument Debated," *Louisville Courier-Journal*, March 7, 2005.

By 2008, the two million dollars necessary for construction to begin on Freedom Park had become available, and both city and university officials remained committed to the idea of the park and monument counterbalancing each other and thus educating the public on the city's dual heritage. City spokesman Chris Poynter conveyed this sentiment to the *Courier-Journal*, stating that it was important to leave the monument "where it is. It is part of our history. But it tells only one side of the story, and we feel it is important to tell the other side."⁶² In addition to including historical markers charting the history of Louisville through the struggle for civil rights, park planners commissioned African American artist Ed Hamilton to create a sculpture at a cost of \$500,000 to be the park's centerpiece, a work that Hamilton intended to function as a "counterbalance" to the Confederate monument "in a good way."⁶³ The funds for this sculpture, however, appear not to have transpired, for it was never executed and the park was ultimately completed in 2011 with the inclusion of informational placards and obelisks, but no central monument.

Despite the intended purpose of the park, it did not fundamentally challenge the narrative of white supremacy embodied by the Confederate monument and calls for the monument's removal persisted. Much of the pressure at this time came from the university faculty. Shortly after the February 2012 shooting of seventeen-year-old Trayvon Martin in Florida, with the national debate regarding contemporary racism and race-based violence that followed, U of L Fine Arts Professor Christopher Fulton wrote, "today the monument exists only as a reminder of the bitter division of the war and all its attendant causes and outcomes, including human bondage, Jim Crow, segregation and institutionalized racism." As for the park, Fulton argued "it succeeds only in betraying the memorial function of the monument by politicizing it, and further exacerbates the divisions that the monument continues to invoke."⁶⁴ Continued acts of race-based violence and murder escalated both local and national debates concerning the public messages conveyed by Confederate monuments. A few weeks following the mass shooting at the Emmanuel A.M.E. Church in Charleston, South Carolina, by neo-Confederate white supremacist Dylann Roof, U of L professor of political science Dewey Clayton wrote to question what kind of message the presence of the monument conveyed to students, residents and visitors to the city. He further noted, "Over the years, many students, faculty, and staff have told me they find this Confederate monument offensive." The Freedom Park represented only a first step in reorienting the public understanding of who Louisvillians are and what they value, and "the time [has] passed when we can continue to deceive ourselves, and our children, about what the Confederacy stood for and what these symbols and monuments represent to this day."⁶⁵

62 "Confederate Monument Site to be Freedom Park," Louisville *Courier-Journal*, November 18, 2008.

63 "Freedom Park Progresses on U of L campus," Louisville *Courier-Journal*, January 19, 2011.

64 "Readers' Forum—Move Monument," Louisville *Courier-Journal*, April 1, 2012.

65 Dewey Clayton, "Commentary: Time to Move Past the Confederacy," Louisville *Courier-Journal*, July 13, 2015.

In the period of fundraising, construction, and dedication of the monument, neither the members of the Confederate Monument Association nor the orators at the dedications explicitly spoke about issues related to slavery or racism. From the perspective of the white Louisvillians who erected the monument, it was a necessary memorial to the Confederate dead. However, this and all other monuments erected to the dead of the Civil War bear the weight of the times in which they were made, and thus carry the cultural and political baggage of what white southerners ultimately fought for. Although most white southerners did not own slaves, it does not negate the major political motivation for secession—the preservation of the institution of slavery and black subordination in the interest of promoting white supremacy. Thus, in erecting monuments to the Confederate dead, white southerners effectively established a competing visual narrative with the one fashioned by the victors; they were in fact counter-monuments erected by a defeated people, promoting the ideology of the Lost Cause in efforts to erase slavery as the central issue of the war and thwart the narrative of Union victory. For decades, Lost Cause mythology prevailed as many Americans failed to question the historical validity of this idea, favoring the romantic *Gone With the Wind* visions of the antebellum past over reality. It has only been since the beginning of the twenty-first century that not only have historians and public history sites become more proactive in reorienting Americans' understanding of the causes and consequences of the Civil War, but also citizens, especially in larger cities with more diverse populations, have become increasingly vocal in challenging the legitimacy of keeping monuments to Confederate soldiers and heroes in public venues. In his letter advocating for the removal of the Louisville Confederate monument, Dewey Clayton noted that its removal, and the removal of Confederate symbols more generally, would ultimately be a unifying act: "It is only when we rid ourselves of these divisive artifacts of the past that we will be able to move forward as the United States of America—one nation, under one flag and one history."⁶⁶

David Rieff, in his extended essay, *In Praise of Forgetting: Historical Memory and its Ironies*, echoes Clayton's sentiment. "The reality, however unpalatable, is that collective remembrance has not always been a salutary goad to peace and reconciliation. . . . To the contrary, at numerous times and in numerous places, remembrance has provided the toxic adhesive that was needed to cement old grudges and conflicting martyrologies."⁶⁷ Thus, rather than aiding in the process of healing old wounds and fostering reconciliation, Confederate monuments like the one in Louisville only helped to perpetuate the divisions of the Civil War era into the twenty-first century; their words and images muddy the historical record and public understanding of what the war was about. In the case of Kentucky, where Confederate monuments vastly outnumber those to the Union, the public interpretation and memory of the war is even more confused, as the narrative of the

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Rieff, *In Praise of Forgetting*, 87.

conflict as it is laid out on the cultural landscape speaks to a heritage and identity that not only applied to a minority population within the state, but breaks with the reality of Kentucky's loyalty to the Union during the war.

No Conclusion

Heated public debate followed the April 2016 announcement by Louisville Mayor Greg Fischer and U of L President James Ramsey that the Confederate monument would be removed. Objections to removal included criticisms that the city leaders were trying to erase history, while others expressed concern that the mayor planned for the monument's removal without having a definitive location to which to move it.⁶⁸ As the mayor's office and the city's Commission on Public Art (COPA) grappled with this question, resistance led by the local chapter of the SCV resulted in a temporary restraining order against its removal. Following testimony in the Jefferson County Circuit Court, Judge Judith McDonald-Burkman lifted the order, thus clearing the way for removal, while Mayor Fischer and university President Ramsey pledged to relocate the monument "to an appropriate historical venue in the near future," rather than let it sit indefinitely in storage or be destroyed.⁶⁹

In July, COPA heard proposals from about two dozen people interested in giving the Confederate monument a new home. These included officials from the nearby town of Brandenburg, Kentucky, who wished to have the monument "as a tourism boon that fits with the city's Civil War history and riverfront"; the Democratic state representative from Louisville, Steve Riggs, who advocated for the monument to be placed at the Perryville Battlefield State Park, which was the site for one of the most significant battles in the state during the Civil War; others who felt it should remain in Jefferson County and be placed in a museum, historical society, or at the city's famed Cave Hill Cemetery; SCV spokesman John Suttler, who advocated for its relocation to Paducah, Kentucky; and Matthew Hankins from the Ratcliffe Foundation of southwest Virginia, who said his non-profit group "wouldn't mind taking it either."⁷⁰ After reviewing COPA's report, Mayor Fischer decided the town of Brandenburg would be the monument's new home. His justification for the decision rested on several factors, including Brandenburg's desire to use the monument as part of its biennial Civil War reenactment, and the town's location along the Ohio river. "This new location provides an opportunity to remember and respect our history in a more proper context," noted Fischer, and "it's close enough that Louisvillians can visit."⁷¹ Removal and

68 "Readers' Forum: Monument's Removal Stirs Debate," *Louisville Courier-Journal*, May 4, 2016; "Readers' Forum: Confederate Monument Can Be Removed," *Louisville Courier-Journal*, May 30, 2016; "Panelists Joust over Confederate Monument," *Louisville Courier-Journal*, June 9, 2016.

69 "Louisville Judge Clears Way for Confederate Monument Removal," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, May 26, 2016.

70 "Suitors Line up to Claim Confederate Monument," *Paducah (Kentucky) Sun*, July 27, 2016.

71 "Confederate Monument Moving to Brandenburg," City of Louisville website, <https://louisvilleky.gov/government/confederate-monument-moving-brandenburg>.



The Confederate Monument in Brandenburg, Kentucky, on the Ohio Riverfront (Wikimedia Commons, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Confederate_Monument_in_Brandenburg,_KY.jpg)

relocation to the riverfront park in Brandenburg cost \$400,000, most of which was paid by the University of Louisville Foundation.⁷²

From the perspective of Brandenburg's mayor Ronnie Joyner, the monument represented an important piece of history that needed to be preserved, and its presence would aid the tourism efforts of the city while also being incorporated into the local Civil War reenactments. Further, whereas in Louisville those who advocated for the monument's removal had primarily based their arguments on the links between Confederate symbolism, slavery, and institutionalized racism, Joyner insisted "that's not what this monument is about," thus making explicit the ongoing divide in attitudes regarding the cultural implications and meaning conveyed by its presence. When faced with one local detractor—a white woman—who asked how Brandenburg and Meade County's African American community felt about the

⁷² "Monument Will Cost \$400,000 to Move," *Louisville Courier-Journal*, November 17, 2016.

relocation, Joyner responded, “We don’t have an African-American community as such.” Meade county’s black population is only about 4 percent; in Brandenburg, there are 67 African Americans, who comprise 2.5 percent of the town’s residents. By contrast, African Americans make up 23 percent of Louisville’s population.⁷³ In making such arguments that the monument is not about slavery or racism, and that it is inoffensive in Brandenburg *because of* the comparative lack of African Americans in the town, Joyner thus reinforced the false interpretation that slavery was not the primary issue during the Civil War while also denying the possibility for resistance to the monument’s presence.

Joyner was ultimately proven wrong—not only were there protesters at the monument’s rededication, which occurred shortly after the removal in New Orleans of four of the city’s Confederate monuments, the national media also took notice of the relocation. *USA Today* noted the exorbitant cost of the monument’s removal as one factor explaining why more Confederate monuments nationwide remained in place, while the San Diego *Union-Tribune* and New Orleans *Times-Picayune* noted the incongruity of a removed Confederate monument being put back up again; and not just being re-erected, but also having a major rededication ceremony on Memorial Day.⁷⁴ Other monuments, from Massachusetts and Maryland to California, have been removed and remain in storage, awaiting their ultimate fate to either remain hidden or be placed in a new setting, such as a museum or cemetery. The case in Kentucky also indicates the possibility that, given the will of the public and available funds, other monuments removed from their urban settings could likewise be relocated to more rural locations where Confederate heritage and memory remain embraced and where the monuments continue to be regarded as historical artifacts of the Civil War rather than as propaganda valorizing the Lost Cause.

Although many may regard the wave of Confederate monument removals since 2016 as evidence that twenty-first century Americans recognize the cultural baggage of Confederate symbols and are finally moving beyond the romance of the Lost Cause, the relocation and rededication of the Louisville Confederate monument provides an important and revealing counterpoint to this idea. Even as many individual towns and cities—particularly those in major metropolitan areas with diverse populations—choose to relinquish their ties to the Confederate past, it is clear that this is by no means a universal trend. For example, in an effort to counter growing public sentiment against Confederate symbols, several southern states, including Tennessee, Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Alabama, and Mississippi, have passed legislation to prevent the removal or alteration of any

73 “Brandenburg Celebrates Monument to Slavery,” *Louisville Courier-Journal*, May 29, 2017.

74 Rick Hampson, “Confederate Monuments Reopen Old Racial Wounds,” *USA Today*, May 23, 2017; “Kentucky Town Welcomes Confederate Monument—Controversial Tower was Removed from Louisville Campus,” *San Diego Union-Tribune*, May 30, 2017; “Memorial, Shunned by One Kentucky City, Is Welcomed by Another,” *New Orleans Times-Picayune*, May 31, 2017.

such monuments.⁷⁵ In other parts of the country, there is little to no public opposition to Confederate symbols. Thus, just as the intensification of protest reveals the transformations that have occurred across the United States in terms of diversity as well as illustrates efforts toward social justice, inclusion, and historical consciousness, the absence of protest is likewise telling, suggesting that the Confederate narrative remains salient for many Americans today. Even for those who do not outwardly embrace a Confederate heritage or identity, there is the persistent belief that monuments like the one from Louisville are “history” and that, as examples of public art and historical artifacts, they need to be protected and preserved where they stand regardless of the cultural implications. For many, like the mayor of Brandenburg, Confederate monuments have nothing to do with institutionalized racism or the history of enslavement. The perpetuation of such ideas not only reveals the intergenerational damage caused by the 150+ years of competing narratives on the cultural landscape, they also show that the challenge to professional historians to help reshape public understanding of the Civil War and of Confederate monuments and symbols, while already decades old, is nowhere near complete.

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⁷⁵ David A. Graham, “Local Officials Want to Remove Confederate Monuments—But States Won’t Let Them,” *The Atlantic*, August 25, 2017.