

Chicago's “Harmonious Forgetfulness”



John Cox Underwood and
the Meaning of Reconciliation
at Confederate Mound,
1885–1896

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Introduction

On Decoration Day weekend¹ in 1895, nearly ten years after a failed attempt to perform a national display of reconciliation in Philadelphia, United Confederate Veterans Major-General John Cox Underwood, a former Confederate lieutenant-colonel and lieutenant governor of Kentucky, completed his mission to unite Union and Confederate veterans in a gigantic spectacle attended by thousands of Chicagoans (see fig. 1).² The cause was the erection and dedication of a monument commemorating the approximately four to seven thousand Confederate soldiers who perished at Camp Douglas, a Civil War Union training camp and later

1. Now called Memorial Day.

2. Underwood claimed that over 100,000 attended the dedication in Oak Woods Cemetery, which would have represented close to 10 percent of the population of Chicago. See John C. Underwood, *Report of Proceedings Incidental to the Erection and Dedication of the Confederate Monument*, souvenir ed. (Chicago: W. M. Johnston Printing, 1896), 6, 125, hdl.handle.net/2027/loc.ark:/13960/t3dz0n74x.

Five unidentified prisoners of war in Confederate uniforms in front of their barracks at Camp Douglas Prison, Chicago, Illinois, Library of Congress.

a notorious prison.³ The monument sits in a rather quiet, unassuming plot in the southwestern corner of Chicago's Oak Woods Cemetery.⁴ Beneath the ground lie the bodies of these soldiers, and the site is popularly known as Confederate Mound.⁵ Few people today know of its existence.⁶

The existence of a monument honoring Confederate prisoners in Chicago is surprising, given Chicago's fierce pro-Union sentiment and its growing African American population after the Civil War. Yet the construction and dedication met little resistance in 1895. The federal government gave its blessing to the ex-Confederate Association of Chicago, the organization that conceived the monument, and a group of Chicago

3. "From careful investigation it appears that over 6,000 Confederate soldiers died in Douglas prison. ... There being 4,317 names on the registers of the cemetery and over 400 additional on mortuary lists in the war department at Washington who died with smallpox, ... to which should be added some 1,500, the record of whom was either burned or lost." Underwood, *Report of Proceedings*, 106–7; see footnote 54 for modern estimates of the death toll.

4. National Cemetery Administration, "Confederate Mound," U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, last updated Aug. 28, 2017, www.cem.va.gov/cems/lots/confederate_mound.asp.

5. "The name Confederate Mound seems to have originated in about 1902." National Cemetery Administration, *Federal Stewardship of Confederate Dead* (Washington, DC: Department of Veterans Affairs, July 2016), 238, www.cem.va.gov/CEM/publications/NCA_Fed_Stewardship_Confed_Death.pdf; see also, National Park Service, "Confederate Mound at Oak Woods Cemetery Chicago, Illinois," U.S. Department of the Interior, n.d., accessed Dec. 20, 2019, www.nps.gov/nr/travel/national_cemeteries/Illinois/Confederate_Mound_Oak_Woods_Cemetery.html.

6. Meribah Knight, "Chicago's Forgotten Civil War Prison Camp," *WBEZ*, Mar. 11, 2015, www.wbez.org/shows/curious-city/chicagos-forgotten-civil-war-prison-camp/2aea8281-878c-436f-8311-62747b7be31f; Ted Slowik, "Chicago Houses Confederate Monument at Well-Known Cemetery," *Chicago Tribune*, Aug. 15, 2017, www.chicagotribune.com/suburbs/daily-southtown/opinion/ct-sta-slowik-confederate-mound-st-0816-20170815-story.html.

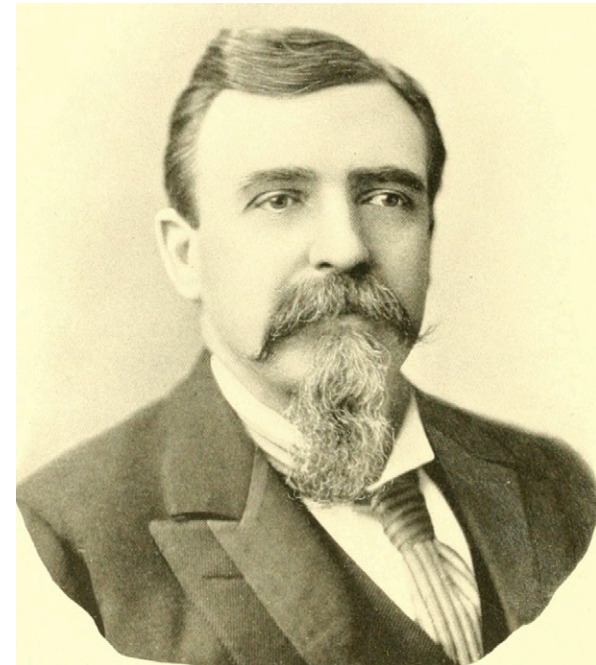


Figure 1: John Cox Underwood.

John C. Underwood, *Report of Proceedings Incidental to the Erection and Dedication of the Confederate Monument* (Chicago: W. M. Johnston Printing, 1896), 2, www.cem.va.gov/cems/lots/confederate_mound.asp.

leaders organized a committee to help Underwood plan the two-day dedication.⁷ Most local and national papers wrote glowing reviews of the ceremonies, praising Underwood and the other distinguished participants for their efforts to heal the country. In the end, barring a couple of noteworthy exceptions, the affair lacked any major controversy or dissent.

Underwood's *Report of Proceedings Incidental to the Erection and Dedication of the Confederate Monument* is itself a monument to the author's determination and a record of his philosophy. His efforts in Chicago

7. Underwood, *Report of Proceedings*, 6, 106, 270.

were part of growing trends in the 1880s and 1890s toward a reconciliation between the North and South; the revalorization of the Confederacy and the Confederate soldier who fought for a “lost cause”; and the renunciation by Northern and Southern white elites of the racial and social egalitarianism of the Reconstruction period. Scholars have written extensively about reconciliation, focused mainly on reconciliationist efforts in the American South; few have tracked the history of reconciliation in the North or in Chicago in particular. Exploring the motivations and actions of Chicagoans and ex-Confederates to memorialize the soldiers who died at Camp Douglas helps illustrate that reconciliationist Civil War memory was a nationwide movement.

This paper uses the Confederate monument at Oak Woods Cemetery as a case study. It looks to the man behind the monument, John Cox Underwood, to explore how the ceremonies in Chicago both reflected and engendered manifestations of reconciliation between ex-Confederates and Unionists and emboldened Southerners to leave a material reminder of the Lost Cause in the heart of Union territory. It examines Underwood’s failed effort to promote a national reconciliationist display in Philadelphia in 1885, analyzes the major themes that emerged in the ceremonies at Chicago, and surveys the backlash to the monument.

Despite the event’s magnitude, few scholars have investigated Underwood’s story, and important questions about the nature of reconciliation in Chicago, and the North at large, remain unanswered.⁸ Why did the demonstration that Underwood organized in Philadelphia fail to evince

8. Rachel Coleman, a PhD student of American history, has written about Underwood’s endeavor for an online writers’ forum; see Rachel Coleman, “The Troubling History of Chicago’s Confederate Mound,” Medium, Aug. 17, 2017, medium.com/@rachel.coleman/the-troubling-history-of-chicagos-confederate-mound-2205951e5545. The US Department of Veterans Affairs discussed Underwood in a thorough survey of Confederate cemeteries; see National Cemetery Administration, *Federal Stewardship of Confederate Dead*, 80–83.

his desired spirit of reconciliation?⁹ What do Underwood’s record of Chicago, the events, and the monument itself reveal about contemporary understandings of the themes of reconciliation, specifically concerning the role of women as a symbol for the country’s peaceful future, sectional culpability over slavery and racial violence, Northern and Southern economic prosperity, the struggle to promote imperialism and white supremacy, and the collective framing of the historical legacy of the Civil War for future generations? Are there any reasons why Chicagoans, especially prominent residents who helped organize the ceremonies, might have appeared so receptive to embracing their former enemies? Finally, given the unexpected nature of the events, what kinds of resistance did organizers encounter?

Underwood, among others, recognized that the commemoration of the monument at Oak Woods presented a chance for both Unionists and ex-Confederates to acknowledge veterans’ shared valor and dedication to their causes in the Civil War and to craft uplifting sentiments of reconciliation. He minimized anti-reconciliationist sentiment against the celebrations and the monument itself by gaining the support of leaders in the press, the military, the church, and the government. Underwood’s efforts to build and dedicate a monument to Southern soldiers in one of the great metropolises of the North helped to forge economic ties between the North and South. Equally important, his efforts redefined the moral and historical legacy of the Lost Cause and presented this altered narrative to future generations. Ultimately, Underwood shaped reconciliation into a dominating vision of “harmonious forgetfulness,” the collective silencing of the evils of the cause for which the South fought.¹⁰

9. Underwood, *Report of Proceedings*, 4–5.

10. Underwood coined the term *harmonious forgetfulness*, as noted in David W. Blight’s *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001), 203.

Following the Civil War, three strands of thoughts emerged in the public life of the nation: reconciliation, white supremacy, and emancipation.¹¹ Through reconciliation, the North and the South dealt with the memory of the Civil War as a collective body; both sides united to celebrate the virtues of the common soldier and minimized the separate causes for which he had fought. White supremacy's "terror and violence"—often in the South, though by no means limited to the region—was an attempt by whites to restore their antebellum political superiority over African Americans.¹² Emancipation emerged out of a uniquely African American memory of the war, with former slaves and free blacks realizing various forms of political liberation, including the end of slavery and equality under the law.¹³ These ideas undergird three related historiographies: Civil War memory; monumentality, memory, and public space; and Civil War Chicago. John Cox Underwood's construction of the Oak Woods Confederate monument engages with each of these historiographies and offers new avenues for the study of the cultural, political, and economic motivations and effects of reconciliation in the late nineteenth century.

Various historians have explored Civil War memory. David Blight's *Race and Reunion* and Barbara Gannon's *Americans Remember Their Civil War* demonstrate how reconciliation and white supremacy emerged in the late nineteenth century as the dominant visions of Civil War memory at the expense of African American emancipation efforts.¹⁴ W. Fitzhugh

11. Historian David Blight defined these three strands in *Race and Reunion* (2001). In the intervening two decades, historians engaged in memory scholarship have almost universally been in conversation with Blight's now "traditional" ideas, regardless of their divergences. See Blight, *Race and Reunion*, 2.

12. Ibid.

13. Ibid.

14. Ibid.; 205; Barbara A. Gannon, *Americans Remember Their Civil War* (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2017), xv.

Brundage's *The Southern Past* and Kirk Savage's *Standing Soldiers, Kneeling Slaves* study the material manifestation of Civil War memory in the public sphere, investigating the role that space played and continues to play in furnishing as well as diminishing these visions.¹⁵ Theodore Karamanski and Eileen McMahon's *Civil War Chicago* applies these contributions to track the effects of the war on the economic development of the city and its memory for different social groups: African Americans, Union veterans, and civilians.¹⁶

Civil War scholars have collectively called for greater attention to the study of Lost Cause monuments in Union territory. This paper answers that call by examining how the forces of reconciliation, white supremacy, and enshrining memory in the built environment coalesced within the context of one such ceremony in Chicago. I hope it will enrich historians' understanding of the legacy of such events. A close reading of Underwood's *Report*, published in 1896, contributed heavily to my study. This nearly three hundred-page report includes the speeches made by Chicago and Southern political, religious, economic, and military leaders during the ceremonies; the biographies and contributions of prominent Chicagoans who helped finance the monument's erection and dedication; and the correspondence between Underwood and Chicago institutions that preceded the monument's construction. Underwood organized the report chronologically around four main ceremonies: the private reception at the Palmer House (May 29); the banquet at Kinsley's restaurant in downtown Chicago for distinguished guests (May 29); the citywide parade down Michigan Avenue (May 30); and the dedication

15. W. Fitzhugh Brundage, *The Southern Past: A Clash of Race and Memory* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005), 10; Kirk Savage, *Standing Soldiers, Kneeling Slaves: Race, War, and Monument in Nineteenth-Century America* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997), 5–6.

16. Theodore J. Karamanski and Eileen M. McMahon, eds., *Civil War Chicago: Eyewitness to History* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2014), 1, 284–88.

of the monument at Oak Woods Cemetery (May 30). I also read nineteenth-century articles in Philadelphia and Chicago newspapers to understand public sentiment towards reconciliation and the Confederate Monument prior to, during, and after its construction.¹⁷ The celebration of the monument garnered national attention, which led me to read newspapers from other cities and in the African American press. It was particularly important to examine instances of opposition from the Grand Army of the Republic, the abolitionist Thomas Lowther, and African Americans.

I believe this project constitutes the first major analysis of Underwood's work. It reveals how Confederates and Chicagoans attempted to shape the trajectory of reconciliation at the conclusion of the nineteenth century. Beyond confirming that reconciliation was the dominant philosophy of Civil War memory in 1890s Chicago, this project strives to address two interesting and surprisingly overlooked subjects: What did reconciliation mean to the people who participated in the dedication efforts in Chicago? And how do the events, writings, speeches, and the monument itself expose and complicate these understandings? This project looks beyond the material evidence available in the diaries of Confederate soldiers, which scholars writing about the memory of Camp Douglas have long used as a primary source of analysis. Instead, it turns to the story of John Cox Underwood to answer those questions.

17. Underwood included a few excerpts from newspaper articles in the report, but as might be expected, he selected articles that endorsed his project. See Underwood, *Report of Proceedings*, 143, 145, 155, 157–59, 161–63.

Philadelphia

Why Underwood's First National Attempt at Reconciliation Failed

On June 27, 1885, John Cox Underwood arrived at Fairmount Park, the largest municipal park in Philadelphia. Accompanying him was his cousin and second-in-command, Colonel H. L. Underwood of Kentucky, and many national guardsmen and state troops from the North and South, the “sons of veterans who wore both blue and gray.”¹⁸ John Underwood had planned a week-long encampment, military exercise competitions, and reception for participants and distinguished spectators. He hoped that this display of unity before a massive audience at the competitions would advance the cause of reconciliation between the North and South. Since his failed attempt at the governorship of Kentucky in 1879, John Underwood had helped organize many local and state affairs promoting reconciliation, though Philadelphia was by far his most grandiose attempt to date.¹⁹

Underwood's choice of his cousin as his second-in-command is revealing. H. L. Underwood had fought for the Union, his brother had died at the Battle of Shiloh, and his father had been a federal officeholder and an ardent supporter of President Lincoln and the Union cause.²⁰ Perhaps John Underwood wanted to prove to the people of Philadelphia that his own family's journey towards reconciliation was a microcosm of the nation's future and that his personal experience made him the right person to lead this movement.

18. *Ibid.*, 4.

19. *Ibid.*

20. “The National Encampment: Some Citizens Offended by the Lithographs Posted by Governor Underwood,” *Times-Philadelphia*, June 2, 1885, Newspapers.com. (Unless otherwise noted, the archival source is Newspapers.com.)

Local military authorities and even some of Underwood's own staff disagreed with his choice for the encampment's location; nonetheless, Underwood maintained that Philadelphia presented the necessary conditions for a successful display of reconciliation. Philadelphians, he argued, were "liberal."²¹ They would be open-minded and tolerant of his and other Southerners' presence because of their commitment to the cause of reconciliation.

However, three major obstacles threatened to undermine Underwood's project. First, two lithographs that Underwood posted conspicuously throughout the city were controversial. The first showed lines of Union and Confederate soldiers with Union and Confederate artillerymen behind them firing a volley in salute of two aged generals (one Union and one Confederate) as they rode down the line. The Confederate soldiers had the initials C.S.A. inscribed on their belt buckles. All of the troops carried the United States flag. The second lithograph portrayed the Union and Confederate generals of the Board of Military Control with staff carrying an olive branch. Underwood claimed that the posters represented peace and harmony between the North and the South.²² Philadelphians were eager to include Southerners in their conception of a reunited nation, but the lithographs, which included Union soldiers saluting a Confederate general, left locals believing that Underwood was promoting the idea that the Confederate and Union causes were equally just. A Philadelphia banker who had originally agreed to cosponsor the event declined after seeing the lithographs: "I was glad . . . to do my part in welcoming the men of the South to Philadelphia as members of the National Guard of the United States, but I will have no part in welcoming men with the badge

21. Ibid.

22. "Venting His Ire: Governor Underwood's Opinion of Philadelphia," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, July 31, 1885.

of rebellion on their breasts."²³ Similarly, Theodore E. Weidersheim, commander of the 1st Regiment of the National Guard of Pennsylvania, argued that it was a mistake to include the initials of the Confederate States of America in the lithographs and to allow ex-Confederate soldiers to wear Confederate rather than United States uniforms in the competitions.²⁴ In the minds of many Philadelphians, the lithographs demonstrated the persistence of sectional division. Underwood denied that the uniforms made the event any less suitable for reconciliation; he told a reporter that the images were allegorical and demonstrated unity between former enemies, plus, all of the troops were carrying the United States flag. His arguments did not sway public sentiment, however, and Underwood scrambled to save the enterprise. On June 1, aides found him in his room at the Continental Hotel scribbling out C.S.A. from copies of the lithographs that he had planned to send throughout the entire country.²⁵

The second problem was that Philadelphians were disappointed that their own state and local militia would not be participating in the encampment. Philadelphia soldiers had pushed unsuccessfully for Pennsylvania inclusion in the competitions, knowing that their participation would raise locals' spirits and perhaps allow the event to advance more smoothly, but the governor had refused, explaining publicly that the participation of the Pennsylvania National Guard would keep them from standard duties and create security concerns.²⁶ None of Pennsylvania's military organizations greeted the Southern militias. While they were cordial to the Southern soldiers at Fairmount Park (bringing ice cream,

23. "The National Encampment," *Times-Philadelphia*, June 2, 1885.

24. Ibid.

25. Ibid.

26. "Militia in Camp: Troops from Various States Congregating at the Quaker City," *Pittsburgh Daily Post*, June 30, 1885.

pound cake, fruits, and cigars), most Philadelphians remained upset at the absence of their own militia.²⁷

The third, and arguably most important setback, was that many Philadelphians believed Underwood was turning the encampment into a money-making spectacle equivalent to a circus show. Sensing the encampment to be an excellent opportunity for profit, the Pennsylvania Railroad offered an affordable half-cent-per-mile fare for visitors and soldiers.²⁸ Vendors set up concession stands, and workers constructed bleachers (fifty cents admission) for twenty thousand spectators with standing room (twenty-five cents) for an additional thirty thousand. As one onlooker observed, the encampment turned into an “amusement exhibition on a large scale.”²⁹ The soldiers participating in the encampment were disgusted by the commercial aspect as well. Many claimed that the organizers had lured them with the promise of prizes funded by wealthy private donors in a free public display, only to discover that vendors were charging spectators for admission. These soldiers did not want to be part of a circus display. Dismayed by the entire affair, those that did participate came for the “sole purpose” of winning prize money, rather than to advance the noble cause of reconciliation.³⁰

The appearance of financial gain was the most damning impediment to Underwood’s effort. Though tens of thousands still attended the competitions, many Philadelphians and the military organizations that Underwood had invited accused him of profiting from the endeavor, a claim that he and his compatriots denied vehemently. H. L. Underwood

27. “Pulling Up Tents: Half the Soldiers Leave Camp for Home,” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, July 6, 1885.

28. “Venting His Ire,” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, July 31, 1885.

29. “Troops in the Park: Thousands of Spectators at Belmont and Chamounix,” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, June 29, 1885.

30. Ibid.

wrote: “There is not a dollar in it for us. . . . Governor Underwood’s idea was purely a patriotic one in the beginning, and his motives seemed to have been questioned in a manner which would make it undignified for him to reply. I can assure you he is disinterested from a financial standpoint.”³¹ Such labels offended John Underwood, who had dedicated much of his postwar life to bringing the country together. The accusations were inescapable, however. Underwood was eager to put the fiasco behind him: “I have nothing whatever to say in regard to the encampment. . . . I am paying off what obligations are outstanding against the management, and when that is finished I wash my hands of the whole business.”³²

Reflecting on the matter about a month later, and perhaps still smarting from the accusation of petty profiteering, Underwood issued a thinly veiled warning to Philadelphia, hinting that the city’s own profits would suffer if it remained hostile to a Southern presence in the North: “I think Philadelphia has made a serious mistake. If the ex-Confederates are to be ostracized there they will doubtless accept the ban, and keep themselves and their business away from a people who hold themselves too good to meet them on an equality. Philadelphia might easily have made the tongue of every visitor an advertiser of her advantages and attractions, and filled every mouth with her praise, instead of spreading the story of her narrow partisan spirit and prejudice.”³³ Underwood’s claim that ex-Confederates would “doubtless accept the ban” reflected Southerners’ belief in their own honor. Despite the South’s desperate need for Northern investment, he knew that Southerners would be too proud to accept Philadelphians’ condemnation. As he would later do in Chicago, Underwood suggested that

31. “The Camp in the Park: Troops Expected to Arrive To-Morrow,” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, June 26, 1885.

32. “The Park Uninjured: \$1,000 Will Put It as It Was Before the Encampment,” *Times-Philadelphia*, July 8, 1885.

33. “Venting His Ire,” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, July 31, 1885.

a truly great city must tend its reputation together with its pocketbook—Philadelphia risked being labeled provincial for not seeking the higher ground of North-South reconciliation.

Underwood was greatly surprised that his endeavor failed. Reconciliation intersected with emerging international values and movements. By 1885, the United States had begun to move beyond attending to internal affairs and was establishing the nation on the global stage. In the race for power and recognition, adopting reconciliation as a unifying philosophy was necessary if the United States were to pursue policies of imperial expansion and vie for dominant industrial prosperity in an increasingly competitive world market. The growing popularity of theories of white supremacy and Social Darwinism undergirded these efforts. In 1885, the bloodshed and division of the Civil War still haunted the minds of many Americans, the vast majority of whom had either lived through the war or entertained themselves with the stories of those who had. Though many were not yet ready to forgive and forget, war memories were beginning to fade.³⁴ As America looked outward, reconciliationist forces in both the North and South began to consolidate around shared ideas of whiteness and social superiority as markers of a modern capitalist nation.

Underwood remained bitter about the Philadelphia endeavor long afterwards. Eleven years later, he penned a brief aside about Philadelphia in his introduction to the Chicago monument report: “The demonstration was a military success, but the movement was attempted either too soon or the place unfortunately selected: anyway, the purpose failed, and although it was approved by all the most prominent generals living, who had served in both the Union and Confederate armies, yet the

34. Edward J. Blum, *Reforming the White Republic: Race, Religion, and American Nationalism, 1865–1898* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2005), 4–6.

populace started the cry of ‘rebels in the park.’”³⁵ Yet despite his outward frustrations, Underwood himself recognized that perhaps the country was not ready to unite en masse. Nonetheless, the language that Underwood used in his report portrays Philadelphians as biased against the South. In reality, Philadelphians wanted to accommodate Southerners into the nation, but they were unwilling to compromise on the principles that they had fought for during the Civil War. Moreover, it is clear that Underwood was trying, much as he had after the event, to emphasize the successes of his enterprise and to circumvent some of the more unfortunate truths behind it.

Moving Westward

Grant’s Funeral March and Incomplete Efforts in Columbus and Chicago

Former Union Commander General and President Ulysses S. Grant lost a lengthy battle with throat cancer two weeks after the Philadelphia encampment. His death on July 23, 1885, plunged the country into deep mourning. More than 1.5 million people attended his funeral ceremony in New York. His pallbearers included former enemies: Union generals William Tecumseh Sherman and Phil Sheridan, Confederate generals Simon Bolivar Buckner and Joseph Johnston, Union Admiral David Porter, and Senator John Logan, a former Union general, the founder of

35. Underwood, *Report of Proceedings*, 4–5. Support by prominent generals of Underwood’s Philadelphia effort is questionable; for example, Underwood asked H. W. Slocum, a former Union general, to assume command of the encampment, but Slocum backed down, allegedly dissatisfied with the entire affair. See “Gen. Slocum Refuses: He Will Not Take Command of the National Military Encampment,” *Pittston Evening Gazette*, July 2, 1885.

Decoration Day, and the head of the Grand Army of the Republic.³⁶ In this regard, Grant's funeral march was the nation's largest successful display of reconciliation, and many viewed it as an opportunity to unite the country. Buckner concluded: "I am sorry General Grant is dead, ... but his death has yet been the greatest blessing the country has ever received, now, reunion is perfect."³⁷ Grant's peace with Confederate General Robert E. Lee at Appomattox had allowed the South to rejoin the nation. The symbolism of Grant's funeral gave the United States another chance to heal. Though it is unknown whether Underwood himself was present at the funeral, he and other Confederates noted that Grant's funeral procession motivated them to put together the reconciliationist display at the Confederate burial site in Chicago.³⁸

His faith reinvigorated, over the next five years Underwood moved westward from Philadelphia and attempted two meaningful displays of reconciliation. In the fall of 1889, he set his sights on Columbus, Ohio, where he planned a military reception and exercise competition, a parade, and a ball for former Union and Confederate military officials and those affiliated with his fraternal order, the International Order of Odd Fellows (I.O.O.F.).³⁹ Underwood's efforts to perform reconciliation involved activities that would have appealed to elite citizens, but interestingly, he did not rely on local leaders as he had in Philadelphia. Perhaps he wanted to attract larger donors, or perhaps he was concerned that local narrow-mindedness would once again overshadow his grand vision.

36. H. W. Brands, *The Man Who Saved the Union: Ulysses S. Grant in War and Peace* (New York: Doubleday, 2012), 633–35; "General John A. Logan," National Museum of the United States Army, n.d., accessed Jan 14, 2022, armyhistory.org/general-john-a-logan-memorial-day-founder.

37. Joan Waugh, "'Pageantry of Woe': The Funeral of Ulysses S. Grant," *Civil War History* 51, no. 2 (June 2005): 152, doi:10.1353/cwh.2005.0035.

38. Underwood, *Report of Proceedings*, 6.

39. "20,000 Odd Fellows in the Superb Parade," *Dayton Herald*, Sept. 19, 1889.

This time, the activities were a success. Unfortunately, however, Underwood fell from his horse and suffered a severe concussion and bleeding in his brain during the parade, an accident that "nearly cost [him his] life."⁴⁰ Forced to sit out the reception the following day, Underwood ceded control to his staff.⁴¹ As he recovered, Underwood longed for a triumphant return.

Underwood turned his attention to attention further westward, determined to vindicate his failure in Philadelphia. In August 1890, he put together a large civic-military display with the I.O.O.F. in Chicago. While the demonstration brought together many Northerners, including citizens not affiliated with the order, it lacked strong attendance from Southerners, thus failing in its reconciliationist purpose.⁴² Ultimately, though, these two partial successes were only temporary obstacles in the path toward the commemoration of the Confederate monument in Oak Woods: they proved Underwood's dogged commitment to the cause and contributed to his growing reputation in the North.

A Brief History

Camp Douglas and the Basis for the Confederate Monument

In July 1861, Governor Richard Yates of Illinois established Camp Douglas to train Illinois recruits for the Civil War. The camp was located in what is now the Bronzville neighborhood of Chicago. It covered approximately sixty acres, roughly east to west from Cottage Grove Avenue to

40. Underwood, *Report of Proceedings*, 5.

41. "Grand Drills at the Fair Grounds the Order of the Day: Nature Again Lavishes Her Treasures on the Visiting Militants," *Dayton Herald*, September 20, 1889.

42. Underwood, *Report of Proceedings*, 5, 71.

present-day Giles Avenue and north to south, from 31st Street to present-day 33rd Place (see fig. 2).⁴³ From late 1861 to early 1863, around forty thousand recruits passed through the camp, although the camp did temporarily detain eight thousand Union soldiers awaiting formal parole after their capture during the brutal Union defeat at Harper's Ferry, Virginia, in late 1862.⁴⁴ Beginning in January 1863 and continuing until the surrender at Appomattox in April 1865, Camp Douglas was a Confederate prisoner-of-war camp. By the war's end, approximately 26,060 Confederate soldiers had passed through the camp.⁴⁵

Many of the Confederate prisoners housed at the camp were from the western frontier's deadliest battles, including soldiers captured at Shiloh, Chickamauga, and Vicksburg.⁴⁶ The first 4,500 prisoners arrived in the camp on February 27, 1862, following their defeat at Fort Donelson in Tennessee.⁴⁷ Those transferred from overpopulated prisons, such as Camp Morton in Indiana, were pleasantly surprised at the state of the camp.⁴⁸ William Huff, captured at Chickamauga and imprisoned at Camp Douglas from October 1863 until May 1865, said that the prisoners' barracks "are as comfortable as could be expected for a prison."⁴⁹ Despite these first impressions, the Confederate prisoners soon realized that prison conditions were horrific. Sewage problems had plagued the camp since inception;

43. Dennis Kelly, *A History of Camp Douglas Illinois, Union Prison, 1861–1865* (Washington, DC: National Park Service, 1989), 3–4; National Cemetery Administration, *Federal Stewardship of Confederate Dead*, 77–78.

44. George Levy, *To Die in Chicago: Confederate Prisoners at Camp Douglas 1862–1865* (Gretna, LA: Pelican, 1999), 38.

45. *Ibid.*, 28.

46. Keller, *The Story of Camp Douglas*, 69, 72.

47. *Ibid.*, 69.

48. *Ibid.*, 70.

49. *Ibid.*, 72.

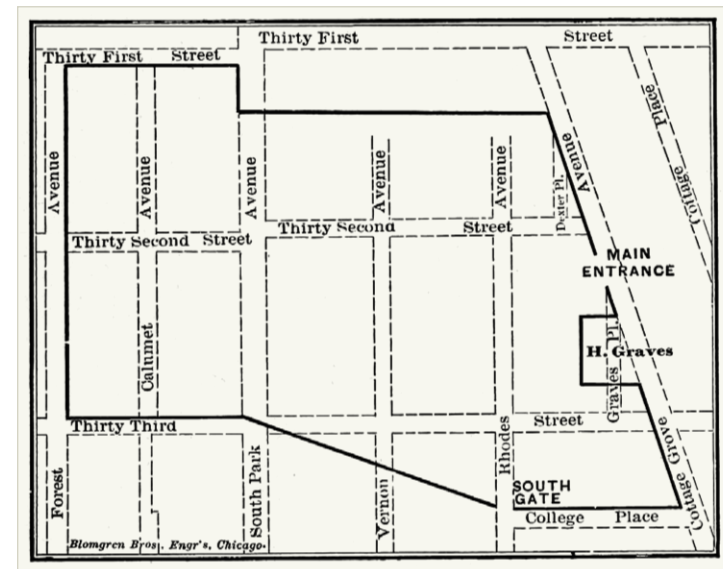


Figure 2: Plan of Camp Douglas 1878, with Superimposed 1884 Streets.

A. T. Andreas, *History of Chicago: From the Earliest Period to the Present Time*, vol. 2, *From 1857 until the Fire of 1871* (Chicago: A. T. Andreas, 1885), 301, archive.org/details/historyofchicago02andr.

the flimsy barracks lacked heat; and the prisoners, most from warm climates and wearing thin, worn uniforms, suffered during Chicago's harsh winters. Weary, hungry, and cold, many prisoners succumbed to dysentery, pneumonia, smallpox, and typhoid fever.⁵⁰

The camp's Union guards were infamous, and many prisoners recorded the guards' inhumane punishments and torture in diaries. John M. Copley, a member of the 49th Tennessee Infantry held at Camp Douglas from December 1864 to June 1865, described a particularly brutal form of the punishment called "reaching for corn." Guards marched every prisoner in a barrack into the freezing cold and deep snow, formed them in a

50. Lonnie R. Speer, *Portals to Hell: Military Prisons of the Civil War* (Mechanicsburg, PA: Stakepole Books, 1997), 135.

line, and forced them to reach into the snow, under which there “could be found plenty of corn for them to parch and eat.” The guards pointed their cocked pistols at the prisoners’ heads and make them bend over until their hands touched the ground under the snow and ice. Copley described the scene:

They would be compelled to stand in this position from half an hour to four hours. . . . Frequently many of those who were being punished in this way would become so exhausted and fatigued that they would fall over in the snow in an almost insensible condition; these were apt to receive a flogging with a pistol belt, administered by the guard, or receive several severe kicks and blows. Often these men would stand in that position until the blood would run from the nose and mouth; the guard would stand by and laugh at it.⁵¹

This sadistic punishment physically tortured men who were vulnerable to cold climates and mentally tortured men who were starving.

By the end of the war, records listed the official death total at 4,454, with some 1,500 “unaccounted for.”⁵² Modern estimates of the death toll range “somewhere between the 4,243 names contained on the monument at the Confederate Mound at Oak Woods Cemetery and the 7,000 reported by some historians.”⁵³ Poor record keeping, the improper care

51. Keller, *The Story of Camp Douglas*, 155.

52. Death Register from Camp Douglas Chicago, Illinois, 1865, record group 109, National Archive identifier no. 3854696, War Department Collection of Confederate Records, National Archives, Washington, DC, www.docstoc.org/documents/document/death-register-from-camp-douglas-chicago-illinois.

53. Keller, *The Story of Camp Douglas*, 179–80. The US Department of Veterans Affairs estimates the death toll to be 4,039 to 7,500. See National Cemetery Administration, *Federal Stewardship of Confederate Dead*, 77–78.

of the bodies, and the loss of records after the Chicago Fire make the exact numbers uncertain, though David Keller noted that the best estimates are between five and six thousand deaths.⁵⁴

Until Underwood’s arrival in Chicago in 1890, the collective memory of the dead Confederate soldiers of Camp Douglas had faded into obscurity. The US government had first interred 4,275 Confederates bodies in the City Cemetery near Lincoln Park in 1865. It then reinterred them twice: to the smallpox cemetery adjacent to Camp Douglas in 1866 and in Oak Woods Cemetery in 1867.⁵⁵ The government had returned camp land to the original owners in 1866 and had either returned personal effects to the dead soldiers’ families or auctioned them off, together with camp structures.⁵⁶ In the first fifteen years following the war’s conclusion, the camp did appear in newspaper debates over the relative inhumanity of guards at Andersonville Prison in Georgia, the most infamous of the Confederate prisons, and Camp Douglas.⁵⁷ Throughout the 1870s, both Northern and Southern newspapers featured sectional attacks against

54. Keller, *The Story of Camp Douglas*, 179–80.

55. Kelly, *A History of Camp Douglas Illinois*, 158.

56. *Ibid.*, 155.

57. “Andersonville: Was Jeff Davis Responsible for Its Horrors? How the Confederate Prisoners Were Treated At Camp Douglas,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, Jan. 20, 1876, ProQuest Historical Newspapers; Daniel Cameron, “Camp Douglas vs. Andersonville,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, Jan. 20, 1876, ProQuest Historical Newspapers; “Andersonville: The Rebel Prison Pen in 1865,” *New York Times*, Jan. 30, 1876, www.nytimes.com/1876/01/30/archives/andersonville-the-rebel-prison-pen-in-1865-a-commentary-on.html; Secretary of the Society, “The Treatment of Prisoners during the War between the States,” *Southern Historical Society Papers* 1, no. 3 (Mar. 1876): 1–109; “The Treatment of Prisoners of War: Rebel Versions of Their Cruelty,” *New York Daily Tribune*, June 29, 1865, ProQuest Historical Newspapers.

each other's former enemy, but by the close of the 1880s, newspapers began to report on and defend attempts at reconciliation.⁵⁸ In the 1870s and 1880s, Union veterans began decorating the Confederate burial ground in Oak Woods as a sign of respect; Confederates often reciprocated by decorating Union headstones in the South.⁵⁹

58. A poignant example of reconciliation followed the ex-Confederate Association of Chicago's announcement that they were raising funds for the monument at Oak Woods. An op-ed writer decried Southern newspapers' criticism of Underwood asking Northerners for donations: "There was nothing undignified or unbecoming in this. It is a matter of no consequence what motives inspire the givers. One man may give because his sympathies were with the cause in which these men died; another because they were men who, though hopelessly in the wrong, yet added laurels to American valor. ... There is a narrowness about some of these exponents of southern sentiment which is not attractive. Yankee money put into a monument will do them no more harm than Yankee cash invested in southern mills." Note that the op-ed writer recognized that economics factored into Southern motivation to reconcile. See "The South on Its Dignity," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, Aug. 19, 1889, ProQuest Historical Newspapers.

59. The practice of soldiers "decorating" the graves of the fallen with flowers occurred annually on Decoration Day. See "Decoration-Day: Memorial Services Yesterday at the Various Cemeteries," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, May 30, 1880, ProQuest Historical Newspapers; Jessie Kratz, "The Nation's Sacrifice: The Origins and Evolution of Memorial Day," *Pieces of History* (blog), National Archives, May 28, 2018, prologue.blogs.archives.gov/2018/05/24/the-nations-sacrifice-the-origins-and-evolution-of-memorial-day.

Underwood Turns to Chicago

The Leadup to the Commemoration and Dedication of the Monument

By August 1889, Confederate veterans in Chicago, inspired by Grant's funeral procession, had formed the ex-Confederate Association of Chicago for the sole purpose of erecting a monument in Oak Woods Cemetery to their fallen comrades.⁶⁰

On June 26, 1891, the association resolved to appoint John Cox Underwood as a "committee of one, with power to take any necessary action, to raise funds for the purpose of building a monument over the 6,000 Confederate dead in Oakwoods [*sic*] Cemetery."⁶¹ The association had already secured ownership of the Confederate graves and permission to erect a monument from the federal government, but Congress did not appropriate money for the cause.⁶²

To Underwood, this cause was personal. As a Confederate lieutenant-colonel, he had been captured near Tullahoma, Tennessee, in a retreat with General Bragg's army. He spent the next one-and-a-half years in Union prisons in Louisville, Cincinnati, and Boston before receiving parole.⁶³ He quickly realized that unlike his previous endeavors farther east, his new position as major-general of the association enabled him

60. "The South on Its Dignity," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, Aug. 12, 1889; Underwood, *Report of Proceedings*, 106, 251.

61. Ex-Confederate Association of Chicago, *Register of Confederate Soldiers Who Died in Camp Douglas, 1862–65, and Lie Buried in Oakwoods Cemetery, Chicago, Ills.* (Cincinnati: Cohen, 1892), 4, babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=loc.ark:/13960/t6ww7tp9c&view=1up&seq=7.

62. Underwood, *Report of Proceedings*, 106.

63. *Ibid.*, 2.

to reach a broader Southern audience.⁶⁴ This audience would hopefully fund the construction and dedication of the monument and allow Underwood to realize his dream of leading a successful national display of reconciliation.

Underwood's first "Appeal for Monumental Aid" lists the main fundraising targets as "Former Comrades in Arms, Sympathizing Citizens of the Southern States, and to Whomsoever Else it may Concern,"⁶⁵ which suggests that Underwood expected Southerners and Confederate veterans, rather than Chicagoans, to respond to the appeal.⁶⁶ This idea is reinforced by his melancholy description of Southern soldiers buried far from home:

To die at any time is the hardest service a soldier can render to his people, but to die in a prison hospital far from family and friends and be buried beneath soil away from home and in a then adverse section, is the giving of life for the "lost cause," under such circumstances, as might well awaken sympathy even among the most unimpressible. The soldiers of the Confederacy who died within the borders of Southern States have not been forgotten, and their graves are kept green and constantly cared for by loving hands; is it

64. Underwood had joined the ex-Confederate Association of Chicago in the summer of 1891. See *ibid.*, 5.

65. Ex-Confederate Association of Chicago, *Register of Confederate Soldiers*, 5.

66. I organize the main actors in the paper into three groups: *Southerners* reside in the former territory occupied by the Confederate States of America and either experienced the war (as soldiers or civilians) or were their descendants. *Confederate veterans* fought and survived Civil War; most lived in the South but smaller enclaves were spread throughout the United States. *Northerners* lived above the Mason-Dixon line, including people who later accepted the righteousness of the Southern cause.

then not ... a sectional duty from comrades and Southern people to contribute as they can afford—to monument American valor and mark the hero remains of those, who, almost unknown, in a hostile prison camp, ended their service to the cause in the grave?⁶⁷

Compared to this fulsome rhetoric, his appeal to Northerners is a more subdued nod to a "noble charity."⁶⁸

Underwood raised \$24,647.52, slightly less than \$850,000 in today's dollars. Surprisingly, in spite of Underwood's Southern fundraising strategy, more than three-quarters of the funds came from Chicagoans and other Northerners, with only about \$5,000 from Southerners.⁶⁹ Underwood did ask people in every Southern state to contribute a large number of seeds from Southern flowers and trees to scatter on the grounds surrounding the monument; this symbolic gesture would allow the dead soldiers' final resting place in Chicago to be in "southern" soil.⁷⁰

No direct evidence confirms the exact reason why Northerners contributed heavily toward the monument, but I posit two potential explanations. First, for decades, reconciliationist sentiment had been rising in Chicago, due to civic elites who sympathized with the Southern cause and its plight following the Civil War. Potter Palmer's wife, Bertha Honoré, who helped host the private reception for the ceremonies in Chicago at the Palmer House, hailed from a wealthy Louisville family;

67. Ex-Confederate Association of Chicago, *Register of Confederate Soldiers*, 5–6.

68. *Ibid.*, 6.

69. Underwood, *Report of Proceedings*, 14–15.

70. "They Wore the Gray: Confederate Monument Will Be Dedicated May 30," *Chicago Inter Ocean*, Apr. 1, 1895.

and the McCormicks' ties to Virginia dated to the eighteenth century, with some family members having worn the gray during the Civil War.⁷¹

Second, the main donors were prominent Chicago businessmen with expansive interests in the city and around the country.⁷² Forging strong relations with Confederate veterans would give these businessmen a competitive advantage in Southern markets. For instance, George Pullman, the Chicago railroad tycoon and a large donor, stood to profit immensely from the increasing number of train routes using his signature cars that connected Chicago to the South in the 1870s, eighties, and nineties.⁷³ In turn, Southerners reciprocated Northern generosity at the conclusion of the ceremonies, when Underwood worked with the city of Atlanta to invite Chicago businessmen, public officials, and press members to the Atlanta Cotton Exposition later in 1895.⁷⁴ The primary purpose of the exposition was to foster greater trade relations with Latin American countries; it provided a platform for Southerners to introduce their technology to the world and for Chicagoans to promote their own goods and services to the entire South.⁷⁵

71. Underwood, *Report of Proceedings*, 26–27; Leander James McCormick, *Family Record and Biography* (Chicago: printed by the author, 1896), 255, 338–39.

72. For a list of the businessmen and others who donated to the monument effort, see Underwood, *Report of Proceedings*, 258–63.

73. Illinois Central Railroad Company, *Map of Illinois Central R.R.*, 92 x 62 cm (Chicago: Rand McNally, 1892), www.loc.gov/item/98688682.

74. Underwood, *Report of Proceedings*, 274–80.

75. Bruce Harvey and Lynn Watson-Powers, “The Eyes of the World Are Upon Us: A Look at the Cotton States and International Exposition of 1895,” *Atlanta History: A Journal of Georgia and the South* 39, no. 3–4 (Fall–Winter 1995): 5–11.

May 29 – 30, 1895

The Major Themes of Reconciliation

An evening reception for distinguished Confederate veterans and prominent Chicago citizens took place at the Palmer House in downtown Chicago on May 29, 1895. Later that evening, the Citizen's Committee of Chicago held a banquet at Kinsley's restaurant for officers of both armies. The evening ended with eighteen prolonged toasts. Decoration Day, May 30, began with a public parade from the Palmer House, south on Michigan Avenue to the 12th Street Illinois Central train depot. Debarking at 60th Street, the celebrants completed the memorialization by dedicating the monument at Oak Woods Cemetery. Throughout the two days, reconciliation was the cord that bound all events together. Reconciliation informed the demeanor of the guests, their manner of dress, and the decorations around them; it was symbolized in the purity of womanhood; it legitimized remembrance of the Confederate dead and forgetfulness of slavery; it advanced the shared economic interests of the North and South; and it absolved the sins of the recent past and created a historical narrative for future generations, one grounded in shared American virtues of valor, heroism, and honor.

Immediately, there were noticeable differences between the reactions of attendees at Philadelphia and at Chicago. Chicagoans and their guests were undisturbed by sectional fashion displays: “Tiny examples of the American flag were displayed on the corsages of beautiful women with evident pride, and on the bosom of a fair one here and there was pinned a badge of the stars and bars side by side with the stars and stripes.”⁷⁶ The use of the Confederate and American flags as women's adornments rather than as a soldier's battle standard, as was the case in Philadelphia, appeared to signify an endorsement of unity and peace. Additional “[Confederate] flags covered the rotunda of the hotel and other memorials

76. Underwood, *Report of Proceedings*, 23.

reminded the southerners that Dixie's land had not been forgotten in Chicago."⁷⁷ The decoration of Chicago's most famous hotel with Confederate flags would not have surprised anyone who attended the private reception. Bertha Honoré Palmer was personally acquainted with Underwood—he had asked her to welcome former Confederate President Jefferson Davis's wife, Varina, and their daughter, Winnie, during the World's Fair in 1892.⁷⁸

Women were a prominent presence in the entire affair. Reporting from the Palmer House, the *City Press of Chicago* wrote: "And against this background of military shoulders, of noble heads, of tales of daring and suffering were outlined the grace and high-bred beauty of the American woman, the northerner and the southerner, exchanging sisterly affection."⁷⁹ Throughout the report, Underwood describes the women as "beautiful," "fair," "noble," and "devoted."⁸⁰ By contrasting women "against" militaristic men, women symbolized a departure from past violence and a pure new beginning for the country. After the brutal destruction of the Southern homeland, Southerners claimed that "the close of the civil war of 1861–1865 found the south destitute of almost everything save the manhood of the few surviving men and the purity of its women."⁸¹ In part due to this status, it was Southern women who performed symbolic acts during the celebrations. On May 30, Eliza Washington, Isabelle Armstrong, Margaret Cox, Virginia Mitchell, and Laura Mitchell tugged on a rope to ring the Columbian Liberty Bell at the start of the Michigan Avenue parade

77. *Ibid.*, 20.

78. John Cox Underwood to Bertha Honoré Palmer, 1892, folder 1, John Cox Underwood (1840–1913) Papers, Manuscripts and Folklife Archives, Western Kentucky University, digitalcommons.wku.edu/dlsc_mss_fin_aid/1475.

79. Underwood, *Report of Proceedings*, 28.

80. *Ibid.*, 23, 101, 120, 141.

81. *Ibid.*, 105.

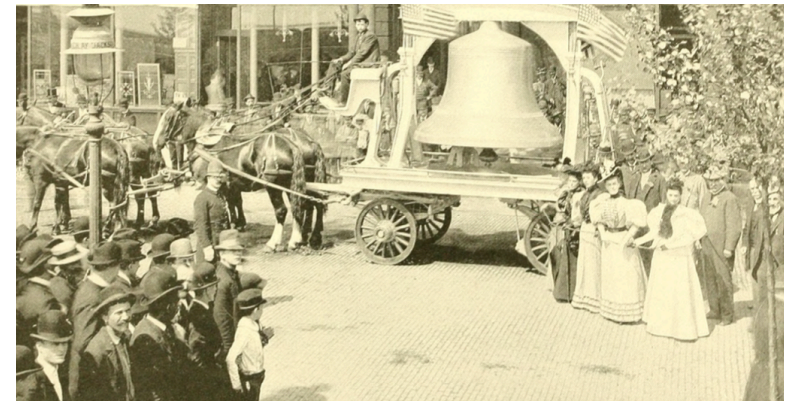


Figure 3: Ringing the Liberty Bell, Underwood, *Report of Proceedings*, 100.

(see fig. 3).⁸² Later at Oak Woods, Lucy Lee Hill, Alice Pickett Akers, Laura Mitchell, Isabelle Armstrong, and Katie Cabell Currie consecrated the four Georgia cannons surrounding the monument and dedicated them to the memory of the valor of the dead soldiers (see fig. 4).⁸³ Southern womanhood was a necessary touch to give the ceremony additional Southern character; and it was Southern women who helped bring about a united future by ringing a bell representing peace and freedom before a crowd of mostly Northerners.

Unlike gender, slavery was on everyone's mind but seldom on anyone's tongue. Underwood wrote that "it is not now profitable to discuss the right or wrong of the past, which has been settled by arbitrament of arms, neither should the question be raised as to the moral of Massachusetts selling her slaves and South Carolina holding hers, nor as to the profit of merchandising the negro on the block in New York or from the sugar cane fields of the Mississippi 'coast' and cotton plantation in other

82. *Ibid.*, 101.

83. *Ibid.*, 135–37.

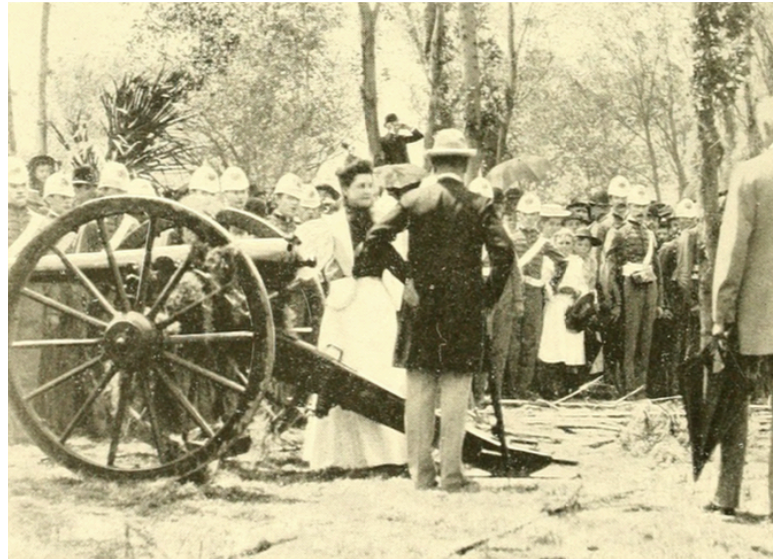


Figure 4: Consecrating One of the Guns, Underwood, *Report of Proceedings*, 136.

parts of the south.”⁸⁴ Underwood went further than others in casting the sin of slavery on both the North and South, and he framed his argument in both moral and economic terms: Northerners acted in self-interest by selling slaves, and Southerners did the same by maintaining the institution. Lieutenant-General Stephen D. Lee of Mississippi supported Underwood’s effort to distance America from its past in his banquet toast: “But was it not worth it all to solve these awful problems, which our forefathers could not solve, but bequeathed to us? The clock of the universe had struck the hour when slavery should be no more; when our Union should be made complete; when the sin of north and south alike should be redeemed by the blood of the patriot.”⁸⁵ Lee built

84. *Ibid.*, 8.

85. *Ibid.*, 61.

upon Underwood’s claims that the entire country was responsible for the sin of slavery and that this was a sin of their fathers that should not be bequeathed to the sons. The message was clear: “the Great God” had settled the problem of slavery.⁸⁶ The newly reconciled Nation would be devoted to *selective* remembering of the shared valor of soldiers on both sides—slavery must be forgotten.

A recurring theme of the evening’s toasts was the hope that fraternal feelings would help establish and cement business ties between the North and the South. Lee concluded his toast with the following statement: “My friends, . . . we accept your friendship with the same generous spirit with which you offer it; that we invite you again to invade us, not with your bayonets this time, but with your business.”⁸⁷ The loss of slavery as an economic foundation required the South to move to a more industrial economy, which required Northern technical knowledge and investments in Southern markets. Confederate Major-General Matthew C. Butler of South Carolina echoed this sentiment:

In the most candid manner, and taking a material view of it—a practical view, outside of the sentiment which you have been indulging in to-night, I doubt very much if there is an old rebel anywhere in the south, who wants to buy anything, who will not say: “Well, I believe I will go to Chicago. (Laughter.) They treated our old chieftains, Hampton and Longstreet and Fitzhugh Lee and Stephen D. Lee and all of those old rebels kind of honestly when they got up there, and I think we will send up there when we have got to buy.” That is the practical side of it. (Laughter.)⁸⁸

86. *Ibid.*

87. *Ibid.*, 37.

88. *Ibid.*, 48–49.

The laughter that followed Butler's remarks was a tacit understanding that mutual financial gain was a motivating factor in bringing about this event. Southerners would secure Chicagoans' investment in their markets, and Chicagoans would emerge as prime beneficiaries of Southerners travelling to purchase their goods along newly constructed railroads linking Chicago to many of the South's most important cities.⁸⁹

At Oak Woods Cemetery, a final theme appeared in the speeches and through the monument itself: memorializing the Confederate dead created a new historical and Christian narrative that would determine the way future generations understand the Civil War. The Reverend Horace Wilbert Bolton said that "as we turn from the past to grapple with the priceless commodities left us, let us remember that to have lived in the nineteenth century in America will be an awful account to meet in the roll-call of eternity. There are 65,000,000 free spirits to be educated and directed in the view of perpetuating the glory we have inherited."⁹⁰ Reconciliation was a holy endeavor, a gift from God bestowed upon those who had fought in the Civil War or otherwise participated in the evils of the nineteenth century, such as slavery. The duty to spread this gospel to future generations was also an opportunity for its messengers to purify themselves before God in the "roll-call of eternity." Bolton's call for "65,000,000 free spirits to be educated" underscored the need to promote reconciliation to the entire population of the United States and especially children, those furthest removed temporally from the Civil War whom supporters hoped would carry on this narrative. To this end, Unionists and Confederates would visit schoolhouses to instruct younger generations with their interpretation of the history and legacy of the Civil War. General John C. Black of Illinois told those gathered at Kinsley's that he had addressed a group

89. Whet Moser, "How the Deep South Came to Chicago," *Chicago Magazine*, Aug. 26, 2014, www.chicagomag.com/city-life/August-2014/Chicagos-Mississippi-Legacy-and-Iowa-Chicago-Legacy.

90. Underwood, *Report of Proceedings*, 112.

of one thousand schoolchildren that morning.⁹¹ He attempted to leave them with a legacy of the Civil War that emphasized reconciliationist values: "To us, the survivors of the two armies, is left the rarest privilege, and that is, that we shall, in the same generation that carried on war, bind up all the wounds of war (applause) and leave to those that are to come after us only the heritage of affectionate remembrance of deeds of American valor, American heroism and American honor."⁹² Black confirmed Bolton's sentiment. The veterans who had caused so much evil in the world were fortunate to have the chance to eliminate the past as they saw fit and to, as Chicago Judge Richard S. Tuthill wrote in a letter read at the reception, "forget that we ever differed."⁹³

The Monument

Emblem of the Lost Cause

The Confederate monument in Chicago was a part of a larger project to represent Southern white men as tragic heroes of a noble, but lost cause (see fig. 5). Following the Civil War, Southerners, primarily, began to pepper public squares with statues glorifying the Civil War.⁹⁴ The African American press was the first to condemn these statutes for their expressed purpose of intimidation, as evinced in this report of the 1890 unveiling of the Robert E. Lee monument in Richmond, Virginia: "Of course Afro-Americans took no part in the ceremonies. They were, in the main, silent

91. *Ibid.*, 51.

92. *Ibid.*

93. *Ibid.*, 75.

94. Peaks in the erection of monuments correspond with the Jim Crow and Civil Rights eras. See, "Whose Heritage? Public Symbols of the Confederacy," Southern Poverty Law Center, Feb. 1, 2019, www.splcenter.org/20190201/whose-heritage-public-symbols-confederacy#lost-cause; Brundage, *The Southern Past*.



Figure 5: The Monument. Underwood, *Report of Proceedings*, 86.

spectators. Perhaps no celebration ever took place in the history of mankind in which a whole race stood by, silent and unsympathetic while another race was simply deliriously vociferous and enthusiastic with measureless interest. . . . In no other country in the world could the celebration, symbolizing disloyalty and disunion, have taken place.”⁹⁵

Just five years after the unveiling of the Lee statute in Richmond, some Southerners skirted the issue of whether to invoke the Lost Cause in the North. In dinner toasts and at the dedication, speakers chose their words carefully before a massive crowd of Chicagoans and guests from around the country, including President Grover Cleveland and his entire cabinet.⁹⁶ Underwood’s design of the monument showed no such hesitation.

The monument features four panels on its base, each facing a cardinal direction. The north panel displayed an inscription: “Erected to the memory of the six thousand Southern soldiers, here buried, who died in Camp Douglas Prison, 1862–5” (see fig. 6).⁹⁷

The east panel represents the “call to arms” at the outset of the Confederacy in 1860 (see fig. 7). The figures exemplify class diversity: “The laborer, artisan and professional man” gesture toward each other to enlist in the Confederate Army at a Southern courthouse.⁹⁸ The panel urges

95. “An Incident of the Lee Monument Unveiling,” *New York Age*, June 7, 1890, NewsBank African American Newspapers. Richmond removed the statue in 2021; see Gregory S. Schneider and Laura Vozzella, “Robert E. Lee Statue Is Removed in Richmond,” *Washington Post*, Sept. 8, 2021, www.washingtonpost.com/local/virginia-politics/robert-e-lee-statue-removal/2021/09/08/1d9564ee-103d-11ec-9cb6-bf9351a25799_story.html.

96. “Where Heroes Sleep: Exercises Held in the Cemeteries of the City,” *Chicago Inter Ocean*, May 31, 1895.

97. Underwood, *Report of Proceedings*, 92. It is quite possible that Underwood instructed the architect of the monument, Louis R. Fearn, to use the figure of six thousand deaths to heighten the sense of loss; see *ibid.*, 87.

98. *Ibid.*, 91.

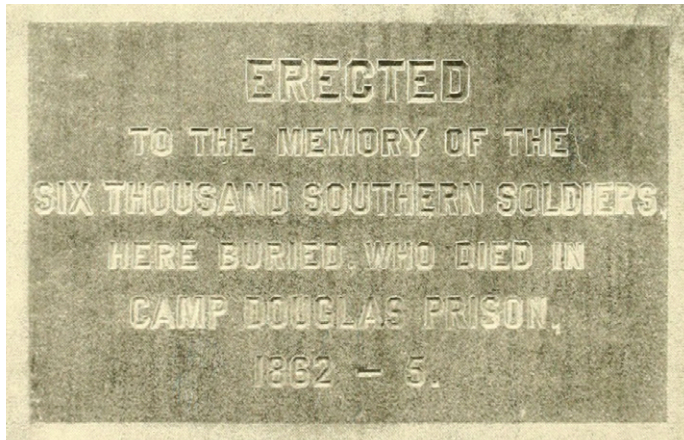


Figure 6: The Inscription, Underwood, *Report of Proceedings*, 92.

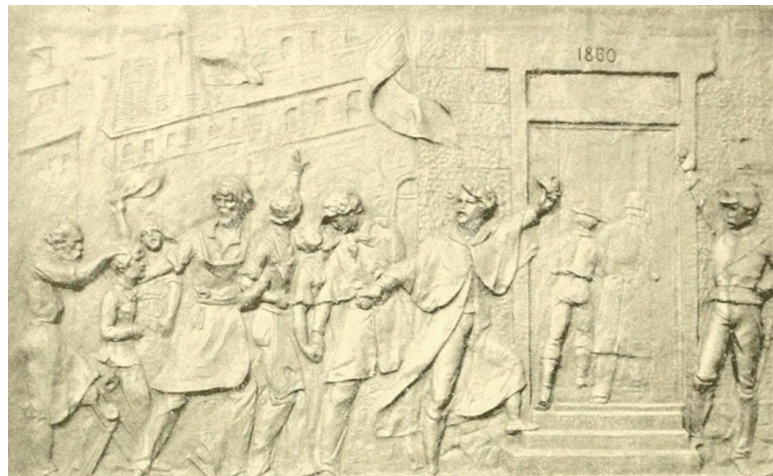


Figure 7: The Call to Arms, Underwood, *Report of Proceedings*, 90.

viewers to witness the valor of the white men who took up the cause of the Confederacy, regardless of circumstances of birth or occupation. Women figure significantly in the background, encouraging brothers, fathers, and husbands to fight for the cause. This panel expresses great hope and a genuine belief that if they fought together, the South would emerge triumphant.

The south panel depicts a Confederate private dying on the battlefield (see fig. 8). He has received a fatal wound and has crawled under the shade of a tree to die. Any soldier would have seen such a death, however lonesome it appears, as honorable. Nearby lies a dead horse, a gun, and various pieces of military equipment. The moon is out, indicating the end of the day's battle. On the far left of the panel, one can make out a faint Confederate flag. The tattered flag still stands, suggests that while this soldier may have lost his life, his sacrifice for the cause allowed the Confederacy to persist.

The west panel shows an unarmed Confederate soldier returning home (see fig. 9). With bowed head, he surveys the ruin of his log cabin's broken door and collapsed roof. He is surrounded by his devastated farm's leafless trees, barren ground, and discarded farm equipment mingled with a cannon. The panel creates an aura of isolation and loneliness, "that of a blighted hope and a ruined substance, portraying the cause that is lost."⁹⁹ The sun, barely visible, must clearly be setting on the old South, and the promise of a new dawn is far off.

At eight-foot-tall, the statue of the soldier atop the column is perhaps the most imposing part of the monument (see fig. 10). Based on the circa 1888 painting, *Appomattox*, by John Adams Elder, the statue depicts a typical Confederate infantryman at the surrender.¹⁰⁰ His clothes and shoes are torn and stained, representing the hardships of war. Overall,

99. *Ibid.*, 91.

100. *Ibid.*, 89; *Appomattox*, Encyclopedia of Virginia, n.d., accessed Jan. 13, 2022, encyclopediavirginia.org/1121hpr-8d12cddb2a791b3.

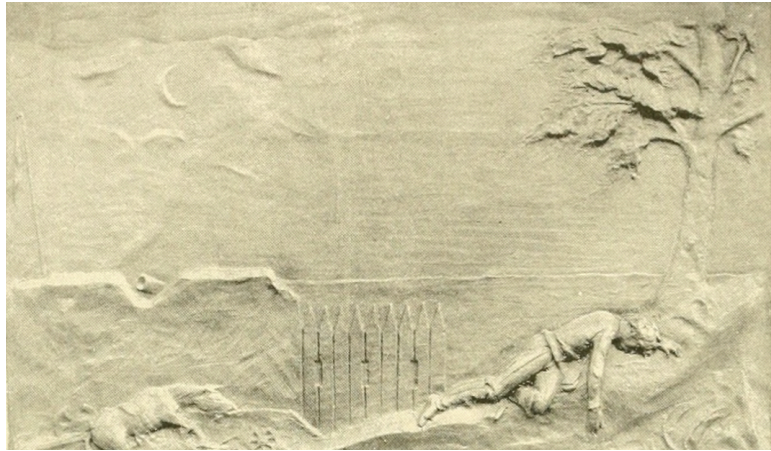


Figure 8: A Soldier's Death Dream, Underwood, *Report of Proceedings*, 92.

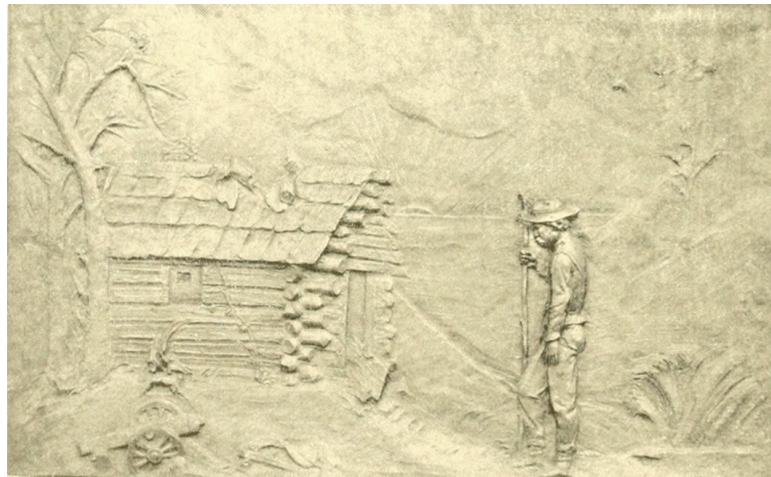


Figure 9: A Veteran's Return Home, Underwood, *Report of Proceedings*, 90.

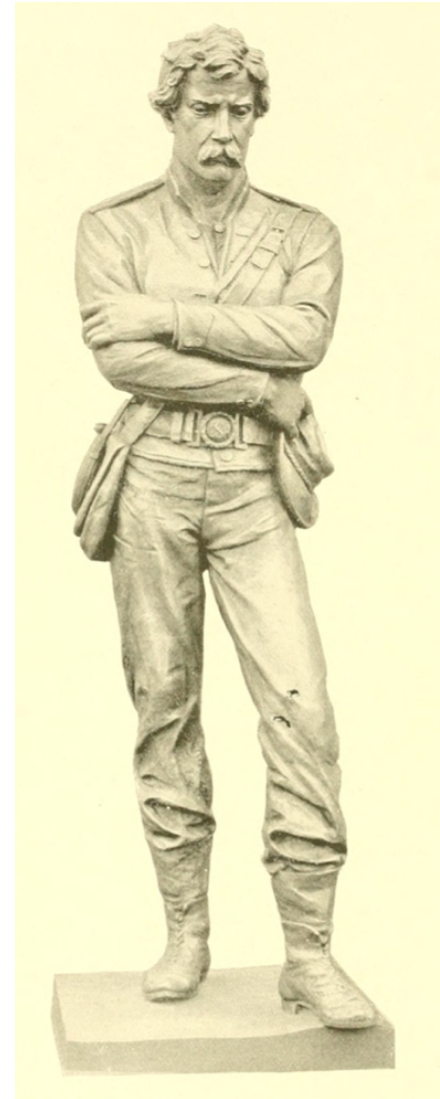


Figure 10: Bronze Statue of Confederate Infantry Soldier Surmounting Capital of Column. Underwood, *Report of Proceedings*, 88.



Figure 11: Seal of the Confederate States on the Monument.

Photograph by Nancy Stone, 2017. Nereida Moreno, “Confederate Monument Stands on Chicago’s South Side as Questions Swirl Around the Country,” *Chicago Tribune*, Aug. 17, 2017.

the soldier has a strong look of regret as he watches over his fallen comrades buried below him.¹⁰¹

The Seal of the Confederate States is embedded in the base below the dedicatory panel. It depicts a bas-relief of General George Washington on his horse, surrounded by the agricultural bounty of the South (cotton, sugar cane, rice, tobacco, and corn) (see fig. 11).¹⁰² Perhaps Underwood was attempting to claim ownership of Washington on behalf of the South: most Americans at the time considered Washington to be the perfect embodiment of the American patriot, and he was, after all, a Virginian Southerner and a slaveholder. If Washington had the fallible distinction of being at once a slaveholder and the father of the Republic, then history might even begin to look kindly on Southerners as well.

101. Underwood, *Report of Proceedings*, 88–89.

102. Ex-Confederate Association of Chicago, *Register of Confederate Soldiers*, 87.

Backlash to the Monument

The Grand Army of the Republic, the “Ugly Rock” Cenotaph, the African American Press, and the Emancipation Monuments

At the conclusion of the ceremonies, the distinguished participants and thousands of the spectators headed to a Chicago armory for a final informal reception.¹⁰³ Guests conversed as a concert of popular Northern and Southern songs entertained them. Underwood was pleased with the outcome of the endeavor and appreciative of Chicago’s efforts to welcome the South: “No city could have done more, no people could have shown greater liberality; the church, the press, the state, united and vied with each other in the discharge of the duty of harmonization.”¹⁰⁴ With the backing of prominent leaders from every sector of society, Underwood hoped that the Chicago memorial events would overpower the criticisms that had marked his failure in Philadelphia.

While those present at the ceremonies were indeed supportive of the monument, groups in other parts of the country objected to it for various reasons.¹⁰⁵ The Grand Army of the Republic criticized the monument’s commemoration on Decoration Day.¹⁰⁶ The G.A.R. was the largest fraternal

103. Underwood, *Report of Proceedings*, 146–47.

104. *Ibid.*, 149.

105. Note: members of the Illinois National Guard did not share the Union veterans’ objections to the monument. See, “Illinois Militia Will Co-Operate: Company Will Participate in Dedication of Confederate Monument,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*. Mar. 31, 1895, ProQuest Historical Newspapers.

106. A chief aim of the group was the celebration of Decoration Day. Senator John Logan, a pallbearer at Grant’s funeral and the G.A.R.’s commander in chief, “requested members of all posts to decorate the graves of their comrades on May 30,” beginning in 1868; see Library of Congress, “The Grand Army of the Republic and Kindred Societies,” n.d., accessed Apr. 27, 2020, www.loc.gov/rr/main/gar/garintro.html.

organization of Union veterans, peaking at more than four hundred thousand members in 1890.¹⁰⁷ In early May, Joseph Thayer, a Massachusetts commander of the G.A.R., voiced his opposition to the monument's location and planned dedication on May 30: "It is giving a false impression to the rising generation to picture the Confederate this way. The monument is out of place, decidedly, north of Mason and Dixon's line; but our principal objections is that this monument should be dedicated on Memorial Day. . . . Memorial Day belongs to the Union soldier, and has been set apart as a day in which to commemorate the deeds of the men who died to save the Nation."¹⁰⁸ He made a point to emphasize that the G.A.R. was not out of step with the national mood of reconciliation: "There is perfect harmony in Massachusetts between the members of the Grand Army of the Republic and the ex-Confederates."¹⁰⁹ G.A.R. chapters around the country joined the Massachusetts G.A.R. in opposing the dedication, and G.A.R. headquarters announced that none of its chapters would be attending the dedication ceremonies.¹¹⁰ A week after the dedication and flush with success, Confederate General Wade Hampton, who had given the

107. The Encyclopedia Editors, "Grand Army of the Republic," *Encyclopedia Britannica*, last updated May 21, 2018, www.britannica.com/topic/Grand-Army-of-the-Republic.

108. "That Confederate Monument Question: Thayer Insists that It Should Not Be Dedicated Memorial Day," *New York Times*, May 4, 1895, timesmachine.nytimes.com/timesmachine/1895/05/04/issue.html.

109. *Ibid.*

110. "Chicago G.A.R. Men Disagree with Commander Thayer," *Washington Evening Star*, May 3, 1895; "Many G.A.R. Men Protest: Veterans Hope to Prevent the Erection of a Confederate Monument," *Chicago Inter Ocean*, May 4, 1895; "Late News by Wire," *Leavenworth Herald*, May 11, 1895, Newsbank African American Newspapers; "G.A.R. Will Not Be Present at the Dedication of the Confederate Monument at Chicago," *Savannah Tribune*, June 1, 1895, NewsBank African American Newspapers.



Figure 12: Cenotaph Erected by Thomas D. Lowther.

Photograph by R. Leach, 2020. "Thomas D. Lowther," Find a Grave, Oct. 24, 2017, www.findagrave.com/memorial/184580707/thomas-d_-lowther.

dedicatory oration at Oak Woods, pointedly referenced Thayer in a Virginia newspaper: "Chicago cannot be too greatly praised for persistency in her noble and generous deed, in spite of the sneers and scoldings administered by Massachusetts."¹¹¹

The most visible and lasting criticism of the Confederate monument at Oak Woods rests on the edge of the mound itself. A large granite cenotaph honors the memory of Southern abolitionists (see fig. 12). Confederate sympathizers call the cenotaph "Ugly Rock." They feel that

111. "Chicago's Confederate Monument: The Dedication To-Day Considered to Be the Greatest Event that Has Ever Taken Place in this Country to Cement the North and the South," *Norfolk Weekly Landmark*, June 5, 1895.

its location and inscription insult the memory of the Confederate soldiers buried nearby:¹¹²

To those unknown heroic men,
Once resident in the southern states,
Martyrs for human freedom,
Who at the breaking out of the Civil War,
Refused to be traitors to the Union;
Who, without moral and material support,
Stood alone among ruthless enemies,
And, after unspeakable suffering, either
DIED AT THEIR POST OF DUTY,
Or, abandoning home and possessions,
SOUGHT REFUGE,
And scant bread for their families,
Among strangers at the North;
To those pure patriots who,
Without bounty, without pay,
Without pension, without honor,
Went to their graves
Without recognition even by their country,
This stone is raised and inscribed,
By one of themselves,
An exiled abolitionist.¹¹³

112. Steve Scroggins, "The Ugly Rock 'Cenotaph' in Chicago's Oak Woods Cemetery: Insult to Camp Douglas Confederate POWs," n.d., accessed Dec. 20, 2019, www.scvcamp1399.org/uglyrock.php.

113. "Cenotaph," Find a Grave, Oct. 24, 2017, www.findagrave.com/memorial/184580707/thomas-d_-lowther.

Thomas D. Lowther funded the cenotaph's construction in 1896. Lowther was born in England and spent much of his antebellum life in Florida. After neighbors forced him out of his home during the Civil War for his abolitionist beliefs, Lowther later moved to Chicago and engaged in business pursuits.¹¹⁴ He dedicated the monument to Southern abolitionists like himself.¹¹⁵ Lowther claimed that the G.A.R. supported his endeavor, but the organization ignored his petition to erect the cenotaph.¹¹⁶

Lowther recognized that a monument dedicated to the Lost Cause in Chicago emboldened Southerners: "The Confederates have been treated so magnanimously by the North that they have come to assume the position that they were entirely right in the war, and that anything which can be construed into a criticism of their attitude is contemptible and unpatriotic."¹¹⁷ Like the ex-Confederates who had supported the monument, Lowther focused on its ramifications for the education of future generations: "I know that in their schools and in other ways they are educating their children to look forward to a time when they shall lift again the banner of the 'lost cause.'"¹¹⁸ Lowther was well aware that

114. "It Tells His Life Story: Abolitionist Shaft in Oakwoods Erected by T. D. Lowther," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, June 9, 1896, ProQuest Historical Newspapers; Michael Zimecki, "Monumental Evil," *Another Chicago Magazine*, Dec. 5, 2019, anotherchicagomagazine.net/2019/12/05/monumental-evil-by-michael-zimacki.

115. "It Tells His Life Story," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, June 9, 1896. One could infer that the cenotaph also honored slaves as another group of "resident[s] in the Southern states, / martyrs for human freedom."

116. Ibid. A few G.A.R. veterans held positions in Congress and had served on the committee that granted federal approval for the monument, which perhaps explains the group's reluctance to support Lowther. See "Commander Thayer Should Apologize," *New York Times*, May 23, 1895, www.nytimes.com/1895/05/23/archives/commander-thayer-should-apologize.html.

117. Ibid.

118. "It Tells His Life Story," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, June 9, 1896.

Southerners were succeeding where the former abolitionists had not. With each passing day, those who had lived through the war were dying and the number with no memory of it was growing. It was essential for Lowther to correct the historical record with the principles for which the abolitionists had fought.

Reaction to the Confederate monument in the African American press was muted. The *Savannah Tribune* and the *Leavenworth Herald* printed several articles about the monument itself as well as objection to it by Thayer and the G.A.R.¹¹⁹ For the most part, the stories ran without editorial comment, although the editorial tone of one *Tribune* article was incredulous (“without a parallel,” “does not appear . . . anywhere else on the face of the globe,” “never been witnessed”).¹²⁰ Another unsigned *Tribune* editorial stated simply that “the [Civil War] is surely ended,” if a Confederate statue could be erected in the North.¹²¹ African American editors scoured the wire services for any mentions of African Americans nationwide and filled their local newspapers with this news. Seeing the negative reaction to Lowther’s and the G.A.R.’s criticisms, perhaps they concluded that it was prudent not to join the choir of opposition about this particular monument. The mood of reconciliation that pervaded the event and the rise of racial violence in the 1890s may have also been a factor.

119. “Late News by Wire,” *Leavenworth Herald*, May 11, 1895; “Federal Monuments in the South,” *Savannah Tribune*, June 1, 1895; “G.A.R. Will Not Be Present,” *Savannah Tribune*, June 1, 1895; “Monument to Confederate Dead Unveiled,” *Savannah Tribune*, June 8, 1895. All articles from NewsBank African American Newspapers.

120. “Without a Parallel,” *Savannah Tribune*, June 8, 1895, NewsBank African American Newspapers.

121. “The war is surely ended . . .,” *Savannah Tribune*, June 8, 1895, NewsBank African American Newspapers.

Effective criticism of Civil War symbols in the built environment only gained momentum in the twenty-first century in response to the rise of violence by white supremacists, such as the killing of African American parishioners at a Charleston church in 2015 and the Charlottesville riot of 2017.¹²² Since 2015, the Southern Poverty Law Center has identified the removal of 114 Confederate symbols, including monuments, school names, and flags, among others.¹²³ In Chicago, groups and individuals have criticized the presence of the Confederate monument in what is now a majority African American neighborhood and in a cemetery that includes the graves of the activist Ida B. Wells and Chicago’s first African American mayor, Harold Washington.¹²⁴ The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, which maintains the memorial, has no plans to remove or alter it.¹²⁵

For African Americans at the conclusion of the nineteenth century, vigorous public protests would have been impossible. Their response to

122. Jason Horowitz, Nick Corasaniti, and Ashley Southall, “Nine Killed in Shooting at Black Church in Charleston,” *New York Times*, June 17, 2015, www.nytimes.com/2015/06/18/us/church-attacked-in-charleston-south-carolina.html; “Charlottesville Removes Confederate Statues,” Equal Justice Initiative, July 13, 2021, eji.org/news/charlottesville-removes-confederate-statues.

123. “Whose Heritage?” Southern Poverty Law Center, Feb. 1, 2019.

124. Adeshina Emmanuel, “How the South Side Came to House a Not-So-Controversial Confederate Memorial,” *Chicago Magazine*, Sept. 21, 2017, www.chicagomag.com/city-life/september-2017/chicago-south-side-confederate-monument/; Rachel Hinton, “Community Organizers Want Confederate Monument Removed from Oak Woods Cemetery,” *Chicago Sun-Times*, Apr. 7, 2018, chicago.suntimes.com/2018/4/7/18406056/community-organizers-want-confederate-monument-removed-from-oak-woods-cemetery/; Katherine Cavanaugh, “Chicago: ‘No Monuments to Racism,’” *Workers World*, Apr. 12, 2018, www.workers.org/2018/04/36554/; Zimecki, “Monumental Evil,” *Another Chicago Magazine*, Dec. 5, 2019.

125. National Cemetery Administration, *Federal Stewardship of Confederate Dead*, 79–87.

the Lee monument in Richmond demonstrates awareness that the purpose of Confederate monuments was to silence as well as to celebrate.¹²⁶ Rather than provoke Southerners by protesting the construction of monuments devoted to new historical narratives of reconciliation and the veneration of the Lost Cause, African American elites focused their attention on the creation of monuments honoring their own history of Emancipation.

From 1889 to 1892, a group of African American leaders in Illinois attempted to erect a monument to the Emancipation and Civil War soldiers and sailors, first in Springfield and later at the World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago.¹²⁷ They concluded by denouncing the exposition's commissioners that rejected their effort:

We asked for a space of 55 x 55 feet and after promise upon promise for a year and over, the commissions of the World's Columbian Exposition, imbued with a spirit of hate, and actuated by a caste prejudice that has characterised their every ruling in the recognition of the colored race, they ruled us out, even though the crowning act of American valor and principle was Abraham Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation, and the bravery of the colored soldier and sailor who "snatched victory from defeat" and saved the Union flag.¹²⁸

126. "An Incident of the Lee Monument Unveiling," *New York Age*, June 7, 1890.

127. "The Emancipation Monument to Be Erected in Springfield, Ills.," *Indianapolis Freeman*, Jan. 11, 1890; "The Monument Association," *Washington Bee*, June 28, 1890; "Emancipation Monument," *Detroit Plaindealer*, Aug. 21, 1891. All articles from NewsBank African American Newspapers.

128. "National Emancipation Monument," *Indianapolis Freeman*, Dec. 24, 1892, NewsBank African American Newspapers. See, also, Elizabeth R. Varon, "The Statue that Never Was," John L. Nau III Center for Civil War History, July 6, 2020, naucenter.as.virginia.edu/statue-never-was.

Various other African American groups planned monuments around the country throughout the 1890s. In 1890, a Brooklyn group launched a separate effort to erect "a monument to the Afro-American soldiers and sailors who were killed in the war of the rebellion."¹²⁹ In 1891, a G.A.R. post in New Orleans sought funds for a statue of Captain André Cailloux, "the first Negro officer killed in the Union army."¹³⁰ In 1898, a national group organized in Chicago attempted to honor the thirty African American sailors killed by the explosion of the *U.S.S. Maine* during the Spanish-American War.¹³¹ John G. Jones, the group's president, said that "we as a race of people owe it to the memory of those brave soldiers who sacrificed their lives on the battle field in defense of national honor."¹³² Finally, following the death of Fredrick Douglass in 1895, the African American activist, John W. Thompson, succeeded in erecting a monument of Douglass in Rochester, New York, in 1899—the statue still stands today (see fig. 13).¹³³

129. "Race Doings," *Leavenworth Advocate*, Oct. 11, 1890, Newsbank African American Newspapers.

130. It is not clear whether the New Orleans G.A.R. post was fundraising for a separate Cailloux monument or the Illinois group's Emancipation Monument, which would have been topped by a statue of Cailloux. See "Race Gleanings," *Indianapolis Freeman*, Nov. 14, 1891, Newsbank African American Newspapers.

131. "A Worthy Cause," *Springfield Illinois Record*, July 16, 1898, Newsbank African American Newspapers.

132. "The National Colored Soldiers' [and Sailors'] Monument Association," *Indianapolis Freeman*, Apr. 30, 1898, Newsbank African American Newspapers.

133. "Doings of the Race," *Cleveland Gazette*, Apr. 18, 1896, Newsbank African American Newspapers; "Fredrick Douglass: Memorial Monument," National Library of Scotland, Oct. 4, 2018, www.nls.uk/exhibitions/treasures/fredrick-douglass/monument.



Figure 13: Frederick Douglass Monument, Rochester, NY.

Photography by John Howe Kent, c. 1899. Box 5, folder 128, Walter O. Evans Collection of Frederick Douglass and Douglass Family Papers, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University, collections.library.yale.edu/catalog/17374014.

Conclusions

On November 19, 1963, Abraham Lincoln spoke at the Gettysburg battleground: “We have come to dedicate a portion of that field, as a final resting-place for those who here gave their lives, that that nation might live.”¹³⁴ After the conclusion of the Civil War and throughout the nineteenth century, Americans on both sides of the conflict, including John Cox Underwood, sought to remember the approximately 620,000 soldiers who perished during the war.¹³⁵

Beginning in his home state of Kentucky in the late 1860s, Underwood executed small gatherings of veterans from both armies to come together under a banner of friendship, but these reunions never garnered much attention outside of local presses.¹³⁶ By 1885, national sentiments for reconciliation were on the rise. Underwood saw his chance to realize his project before a larger audience in Philadelphia, but his publicity posters for the event backfired due to their Confederate imagery—what today would be called “bad optics.” The poorly executed project left the Philadelphians feeling financially cheated and distrustful of Underwood’s insistence that his aims were genuine. The united Confederate and Union pallbearers at Grant’s funeral in the summer of 1885 convinced Underwood to attempt another display of reconciliation in Columbus, Ohio, in 1889, which succeeded. Underwood moved to Chicago in 1890. He had become a better publicist and fundraiser, a

134. Abraham Lincoln, “The Gettysburg Address,” Cornell University Library, Nov. 19, 1963, rnc.library.cornell.edu/gettysburg/good_cause/transcript.htm.

135. American Battlefield Trust, “Civil War Casualties,” n.d., accessed Dec. 20, 2019, www.battlefields.org/learn/articles/civil-war-casualties.

136. “I, as far back as the later ‘sixties’ . . . determined that I would attempt through a life work if necessary, to bring about a general recognition of the valor and endurance displayed by both of the formerly opposing elements [of the Civil War].” Underwood, *Report of Proceedings*, 4.

skilled organizer, and a savvy political strategist. He convinced Southern ex-Confederates and Chicago elites from every sector of society to support his vision. They helped him mount a massive spectacle that silenced most of the opposition and managed what would have once seemed improbable: the erection of a monument to Confederate prisoners of war in a Northern city.

John Cox Underwood fulfilled his twenty-five-year quest to further national reconciliation with the Confederate Monument in Chicago. Honoring the Confederate soldiers who had died at Camp Douglas was but a small piece of a larger puzzle. He made a persuasive argument for reconciliation based upon the necessity of North-South economic commerce and the elimination of slavery from the national conversation. This dual argument created a bond that linked Chicagoans to Southern markets and accelerated the South's journey out of the destruction wrought by the Civil War. Ultimately, Underwood's vision of "harmonious forgetfulness" was part of the wider movement to silence the underlying evil of slavery for which the South had fought, a movement that would culminate in the separate-but-equal decision of *Plessy v. Ferguson* in 1896 (the same year as the publication of Underwood's *Report*) and the prolonged era of Jim Crow in the South.

Scholars often frame reconciliation as a method of "dealing with the dead."¹³⁷ Ironically, the Chicago ceremonies to honor the Camp Douglas dead were as much, if not more, about the living. Reconciliationist events were a forum to bury the past sins of the living; to celebrate the symbolic role of womanhood in a new era of harmony for the nation; to valorize the nobility of Southern manhood and the purity of Southern womanhood, which had survived the brutality of the Civil War; and to secure what they hoped would be their future legacy with new historical narratives. They embedded these narratives into the built environment with a growing number of memorials to the Lost Cause, which reminded Southerners

137. Blight, *Race and Reunion*, 2.

of their inherent superiority and intimidated African Americans in their nascent efforts to exercise the full rights of citizenship. Those standing at the podium in Chicago spoke across the country to many Americans. In the end, they hoped to secure their own legacies, to reinforce incomplete narratives, and to dismiss one of the most tragic tales in American history. Those narratives etched in stone sheltered the dead at Confederate Mound and served as a permanent, tangible reminder of what so many tried for so long to hide. ○

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