

1978

Honoring the Confederacy in Northwest Florida: The Confederate Monument Ritual

W. Stuart Towns



Part of the [American Studies Commons](#), and the [United States History Commons](#)

Find similar works at: <https://stars.library.ucf.edu/fhq>

University of Central Florida Libraries <http://library.ucf.edu>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by STARS. It has been accepted for inclusion in Florida Historical Quarterly by an authorized editor of STARS. For more information, please contact STARS@ucf.edu.

Recommended Citation

Towns, W. Stuart (1978) "Honoring the Confederacy in Northwest Florida: The Confederate Monument Ritual," *Florida Historical Quarterly*. Vol. 57 : No. 2 , Article 8.
Available at: <https://stars.library.ucf.edu/fhq/vol57/iss2/8>

HONORING THE CONFEDERACY IN NORTHWEST FLORIDA: THE CONFEDERATE MONUMENT RITUAL

by W. STUART TOWNS *

ONE OF THE major ceremonial events in the post-Civil War South was the dedication of monuments raised to the honor and memory of Confederate soldiers. Many communities underwrote fund-raising drives for statues and monuments. If a local area could not boast of an authentic hero, they dedicated their monument to the "Confederacy," or the "Boys in Gray," or the "Private Soldier." Each unveiling ritual involved the same essential ingredients: a parade through the city streets to the site, several brief welcoming addresses by local dignitaries, some musical selections "appropriate to the occasion," a poem or two by the local town laureate, and an oration. The draperies were then lifted from around the monument, which would then stand as an enduring symbol of the Lost Cause. The South today is still dotted with these ever-present reminders of the Confederate era.

Pensacola was one of the communities whose citizens felt the need to remember the sacrifices made in behalf of the Confederacy. A monument, originally suggested by Edward A. Perry (later Governor Perry) in 1881, was to have been erected in Tallahassee as the state's memorial.¹ After Perry's death, the project languished, and by 1890 only \$3,005 had been raised. Colonel William D. Chipley of Pensacola revived the idea in April 1890, and since all but \$87.00 had come from Escambia County, the project was turned over to a committee in Pensacola for completion.² On August 15, a Ladies' Monument Association

* Mr. Towns is chairman of the Faculty of Communications Arts, University of West Florida, Pensacola. He wishes to acknowledge the assistance of Mrs. John C. Packard, Elizabeth Pierce, and Billy Grant, all of Marianna, and Marion Viccars of the University of West Florida Library, for their assistance.

1. Occie Clubbs, "Pensacola in Retrospect: 1870-1890," *Florida Historical Quarterly*, XXXVII (January-April 1959), 395.
2. *History of the Confederate Memorial Associations of the South* (New Orleans, 1904), 71-72.

was founded with Mrs. Stephen A. Mallory as president. Mrs. W. D. Chipley was elected vice-president, Mrs. Annie J. McGuire was secretary, and Mrs. Laura Thornton served as treasurer.³ The movement would be placed in Pensacola rather than Tallahassee.

Three months later, a contract was awarded to J. F. Manning of Washington to construct and erect a stone monument at a total cost of \$5,000.⁴ Manning was to use granite from Richmond, Virginia, and was to include inscriptions honoring Edward A. Perry, Stephen R. Mallory, Confederate President Jefferson Davis, and the "heroes of the Confederacy." Perry, from Pensacola, was a general in the Florida Brigade, and Mallory, also from Pensacola, was secretary of the navy in the Confederate cabinet. Besides the inscriptions and a large stone shaft, there was to be an eight-foot tall granite figure on top of the column to be modeled from a painting entitled "Appomattox," which hung in the old Confederate capital building at Richmond.⁵ Manning began work on the monument which was due to be completed and dedicated in 1891. But first, there were the financial problems to be solved.

As late as March 15, 1891, less than three months before the monument was to be erected, the fund was still \$1,235 short of its goal.⁶ The Ladies' Monument Association began a series of projects to raise the necessary funds. The Episcopal minister, Reverend P. H. Whaley, gave a public lecture on "The Charleston Earthquake," which was followed by a benefit supper.⁷ The speaker had been pastor of St. Paul's, Summerville, South Carolina, shortly after the 1886 earthquake and was currently serving as rector in Pensacola. The evening's program included "the well-known local virtuoso," Miss Kauser, who played a piano solo, as well as orchestral music by the Pastime Club of Pensacola.⁸ Tickets to the affair were twenty-five cents, with the food for the dinner being sold at various prices. An enthusiastic young supporter of the Association stood on a chair and auctioned off

3. *Ibid.*, 72-73.

4. *Ibid.*

5. *Pensacola Daily News*, March 29, 1891.

6. *Ibid.*, March 15, 1891.

7. *Ibid.*, April 15, 1891. See also Albert Sidney Thomas, *A Historical Account of the Protestant Episcopal Church in South Carolina, 1820-1957* (Columbia, 1957), 425.

8. *Pensacola Daily News*, April 12, 15, 1891.

HONORING THE CONFEDERACY IN NORTHWEST FLORIDA 207

various articles as they were handed to him. A pickle brought the high price of \$1.00 and a glass of lemonade sold for \$20.00.⁹

Reverend Whaley apparently did his enthusiastic best also, and was warmly received. Newspaper accounts noted his “good voice and form,” and “his description of the memorable event which formed the theme of his discourse was thrilling in its pathos and intense realism.” According to the writer, Whaley’s “auditors were profoundly impressed with the effort.”¹⁰

On March 19, the Ladies’ Confederate Monument Association met to begin their final planning. The local newspaper urged “every lady [to be] present” for this important session.¹¹ The women decided not to have a cornerstone-laying ceremony, as the actual work on the monument had begun, but agreed to focus their efforts on the dedication observance.¹² The major work at this meeting was to prepare the four inscriptions that were to be carved into the granite column.¹³

The monument was to be placed atop the hill near the site of Fort George overlooking downtown Pensacola and the bay. The statue would sit in the large Robert E. Lee Square and the Ladies’ Association purchased 800 thirty-two pound cannon

9. *Ibid.*, April 16, 1891.

10. *Ibid.*, April 15, 1891.

11. *Ibid.*, March 15, 1891.

12. *Ibid.*, March 20, 1891. The cornerstone-laying ceremony was often used as an additional event to call attention to the monument. The following account describes a cornerstone ritual in Augusta, Georgia: “About half-past three o’clock the ladies met at the site. . . . And going down into the excavation made for the foundation . . . took off their gloves and prepared themselves for work. . . . It was indeed a novel sight to the large number of spectators to see the ladies, with delicate unglowed hands, laying brick and handling the trowel, but it was a holy duty they performed . . . that of rearing a shaft of marble in memory of the brave men who fought and died for a cause they considered just.” “The Hero Dead,” *Augusta Daily Chronicle and Sentinel*, April 27, 1875.

13. *Pensacola Daily News*, March 22, 1891. The south face inscription reads: “The Uncrowned Heroes of the Southern Confederacy, whose joy it was to suffer and die for a cause they believed to be just. Their unchallenged devotion and matchless heroism shall continue to be the wonder and inspiration of the ages.” The east face is inscribed to “Jefferson Davis, President of the Confederate States of America. Soldier, Statesman, Patriot, Christian. The only man in our nation without a country, yet twenty million people mourn his death.” The west face is dedicated to: “Edward Aylesworth Perry, Captain of the Pensacola Rifles, Colonel of the Second Florida Regiment, General of the Florida Brigade in the Army of Northern Virginia. Among the first to volunteer in the defence of his adopted state, faithful in every position to which his merit advanced him, his life and deeds constitute his best monument.” The north face was inscribed simply: “Stephen R. Mallory, Secretary of the Navy of the Confederate States of America.”

balls and two old cannons to decorate the park across from Public School Number 1.¹⁴ In 1889, the name of the park had been changed from Florida Square to Robert E. Lee Park, and the authority to erect a Confederate monument on it was later given to the Ladies' Monument Association.¹⁵

Fund-raising programs continued throughout the spring. A Miss Cary, a "talented elocutionist," presented a program with her students. The Hotel Escambia was the scene of a musical by Mrs. Quarrier of Louisville, Kentucky, at which \$52.00 was collected for the fund.¹⁶ In addition to cultural affairs, sporting events were also held to raise money. In April, the Pensacola Driving Association sponsored three closely matched races at Kupfrian's Park and donated the proceeds to the monument fund.¹⁷

Finally, the money was secured and all was in readiness for the dedication of the monument, which was set for Jefferson Davis's birthday, June 3, 1891. But troubles interfered. The project foreman from the J. F. Manning Company became ill and was not able to arrive in time to complete the job. Some of the granite being shipped to Pensacola was lost by the railroad somewhere south of Richmond, and additional stone had to be ordered. Finally, however, all these problems were solved, and the ceremony was rescheduled for June 17, 1891.

Troops in uniform came from St. Augustine, Daytona, Leesburg, Starke, Gainesville, and Ocala to take part in the parade and ceremonies.¹⁸ The railroads provided them free passes for travel to Pensacola, and private citizens coming to the ceremony were allowed to ride for only one cent per mile.¹⁹ The visitors could find lodgings in Dunn's Hotel for \$2.50 per day. Dinner was seventy-five cents, breakfast and supper, fifty cents. The Hotel Escambia charged \$1.00 per day with two in a bed; baths were twenty-five cents extra.²⁰

Newspaper accounts told of some 3,000 visitors to Pensacola

14. *Ibid.*, May 13, 1891.

15. Special Collection 68-13, folder 29, John C. Pace Library, University of West Florida.

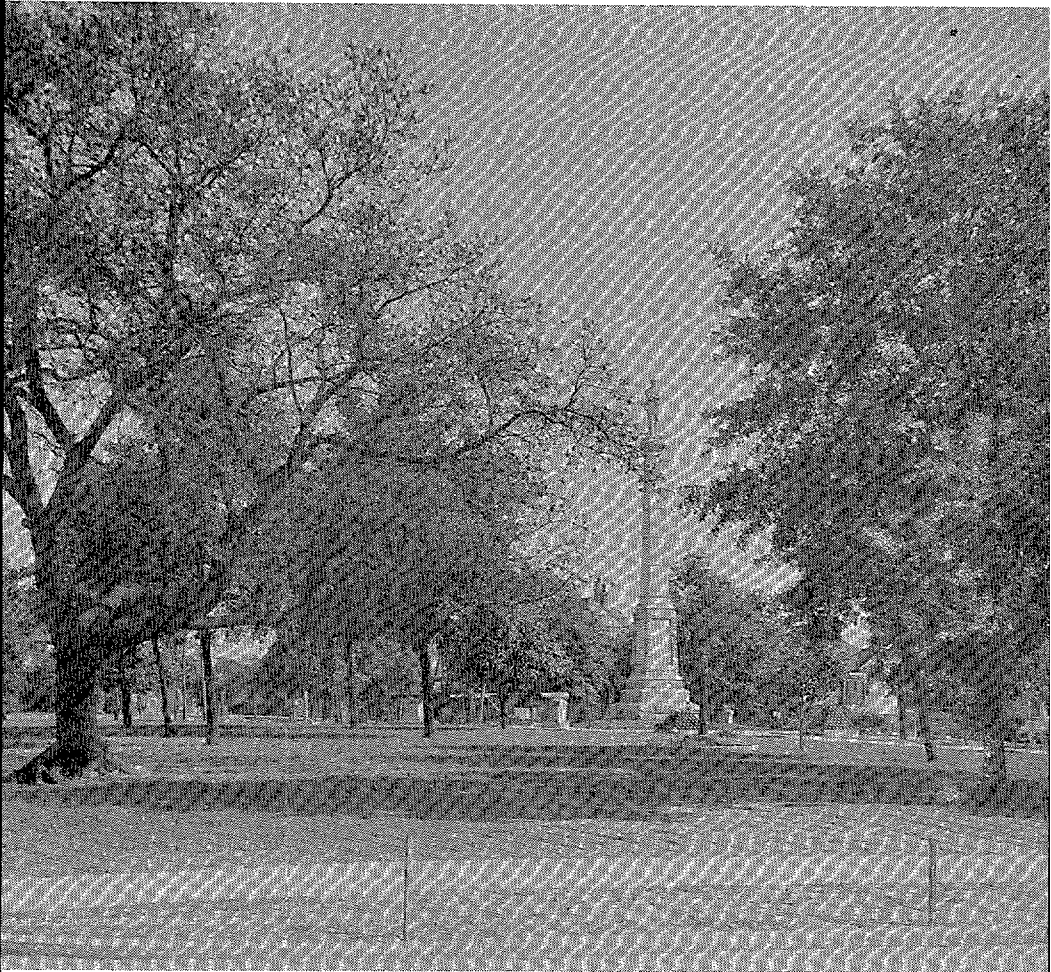
16. *Pensacola Daily News*, March 29, 1891.

17. *Ibid.*, April 4, 1891.

18. *Ibid.*, June 16, 1891.

19. *Ibid.*, May 13, 1891.

20. *Ibid.*, June 16, 1891.



Pensacola Confederate Monument, Lee Square, circa 1903.

Courtesy John C. Pace Library, University of West Florida, Pensacola,
and the Library of Congress, Washington, D. C.

HONORING THE CONFEDERACY IN NORTHWEST FLORIDA 209

for the event.²¹ The parade was scheduled to start promptly at 4:00 p.m., and marchers were warned that “no delay will occur, and divisions not in position at that hour will be left.”²² The plans were to try to start late enough to miss some of the oppressive summer heat and humidity and yet early enough to complete the program by dark. Fortunately, there was a sudden rain storm earlier in the day which settled the dust on the unpaved streets and moderated the heat somewhat.

The parade wound its way up Palafox Street to the top of the hill, and the crowd assembled itself around the statue to hear the opening prayer by Reverend H. S. Yeager, local Presbyterian minister. The audience then sang “My Country ‘Tis of Thee,” Miss Jennie Henderson from Tallahassee unveiled the monument, and the band played “Dixie.” Governor Francis P. Fleming gave a short speech of welcome in which he recalled the glorious past and predicted an optimistic future.²³ Fleming’s speech set the oratorical stage for the rest of the evening.

The Reverend J. H. Curry of the Pensacola First Baptist Church then introduced Colonel Robert W. Davis of Palatka, former speaker of the Florida House of Representatives and future congressman from Florida.²⁴ Most ceremonial events include as a major part a speech of dedication or eulogy, and Pensacola’s Confederate monument dedication was no exception. Davis devoted most of his speech to praise of the South’s leaders and troops during the Civil War. Words praising the southern effort during the war were still important in 1891, and the speakers on this occasion in Pensacola obviously met the audience’s expectations.

The Pensacola monument was dedicated and seemed destined to stand unaltered forever. But in succeeding years, debate flared over the park in which the statue was located. In 1938-1939, 1947-1948, and 1963-1964 the issue of what to do with the square surfaced. A 1939 letter to the *Pensacola Journal* by Idelette N. Reese expressed a typical reaction about the controversy and shed

21. *Ibid.*, June 18, 1891.

22. *Ibid.*, June 14, 1891.

23. Walter Stuart Towns, “Ceremonial Speaking and the Reinforcing of American Nationalism in the South, 1875-1890” (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Florida, 1972); *Pensacola Daily News*, June 18, 1891.

24. *Makers of America, Florida Edition* (Atlanta, 1909), I, 133; *Pensacola Daily News*, June 18, 1891.

more light on the community's feelings about the monument—feelings that were typical to the South in the post-war generations. “To destroy this memorial . . . where all the descendants of these men and all persons might go to study the record of their heroic deeds, and receive inspiration and to also dedicate their lives to build and maintain a re-united country—such action would destroy the purpose for which Lee Square was dedicated . . . and this monument was builded.”²⁵ Gradually, the park area was reduced in size to make way for motor traffic. Palafox Street was the leading approach to the downtown area, and the park stood astride that avenue. Currently, Lee Square is only a small circle not much larger than the monument itself. By 1963, the issue was so controversial that the Confederate Monument Association was revived in November of that year under the leadership of Mary Turner Rule, Mrs. Louis R. Compo, and Mrs. John Taylor Bibb. Their task was “to enhance the beauty and significance of the square.”²⁶ Apparently encroachments on the square have stopped and it safely guards the monument. The memorial statue serves still today as a focal point for oratory and ritual. Turned over to the Pensacola Chapter of the United Daughters of the Confederacy in 1903, the square is the scene of the annual observance of Confederate Memorial Day on April 26.²⁷

Seventy miles east of Pensacola in Walton County, another Ladies' Memorial Association erected a monument in 1871. Jeannet I. McKinnon was the president of the Walton County group. After raising \$250, they erected the monument, apparently Florida's first stone memorial to the Confederacy.²⁸ This monument had a peripatetic existence. Its first home was at the Euchee Valley Presbyterian Church, the site of some Confederate graves. For a time, it stood at Eucheeanna while that community was the Walton County seat. Finally, it was moved to DeFuniak Springs where it resides today on the courthouse lawn.²⁹

Still further to the east, the community of Marianna surpassed both its western neighbors by consecrating not one but two monuments to the Confederacy. Little is known about the

25. *Pensacola Journal*, December 2, 1939.

26. Special Collection 68-13, folder 29, John C. Pace Library.

27. *Ibid.*; *Pensacola Journal*, April 25, 1974.

28. *DeFuniak Springs Herald-Breeze*, February 27, 1975.

29. *Ibid.*; John L. McKinnon, *History of Walton County* (Gainesville, 1968), 373, 376-77.

HONORING THE CONFEDERACY IN NORTHWEST FLORIDA 211

small memorial which now resides beside the courthouse. It was dedicated on November 30, 1881, and its inscription reads: "In Memory of the Confederate Soldiers of Jackson County, Florida." Marianna was the scene of one of the few Civil War battles fought in Florida. Apparently there was a great deal of pride in this fact and considerable Confederate sentiment and memory, as in 1921 a second monument was constructed under the auspices of the Florida Division and the William Henry Milton Chapter of the United Daughters of the Confederacy.

Mrs. Frank D. Tracy of Pensacola, who was president of the Florida Division, rallied statewide support for the monument, and the state legislature appropriated \$5,000 for its construction.³⁰ Some 4,000 people observed the mile-long parade of Confederate veterans, decorated cars, floats, the Florida National Guard, Boy Scouts, and other groups.³¹ After the parade, the thirty-five foot granite shaft was unveiled by the Misses Mary Bruce Milton and Floie Criglar.³² The dedication ceremony was again filled with oratory, as Mrs. Tracy; Mrs. R. S. Pearce, president of the local U. D. C. chapter; Mayor N. A. Baltzell; Dr. Theop. West, a veteran of the Civil War; and Amos Lewis, a grandson of Arthur Lewis, Sr., a veteran of the Battle of Marianna, all addressed the large audience. The dedication speech was delivered by Governor Cary A. Hardee.³³

An important facet of these southern Confederate monuments is the role the women played in their conception and construction. Apparently, as was the case in Pensacola, Walton County, and Marianna, it was usually the women of the community who developed the idea and brought it to fruition throughout the South. It provides interesting speculation about the role of women in an era before women's rights were accepted. As a number of southern historians have pointed out, the southern woman was often placed on a pedestal, not supposed to dirty her

30. "The Confederate Monument at Marianna, Fla.," *Confederate Veteran*, XXX (January 1922), 5.

31. Unknown newspaper clipping dated November 2, 1921, scrapbook of Mrs. John C. Packard, Marianna.

32. "Confederate Monument at Marianna." 5. Miss Milton was the granddaughter of Major William Henry Milton, for whom the Marianna United Daughters of the Confederacy chapter was named, and Miss Criglar was the grandniece of General William Miller, a hero of the Battle of Natural Bridge, fought near Tallahassee in 1865.

33. Packard Scrapbook, Marianna.

hands in politics or fund-raising or to be too outspoken and involved in community affairs.³⁴ Her “place” was still in the home in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, yet women were in the forefront of the three drives to perpetuate the memory of the Confederate cause. Obviously many southern women welcomed this outlet for their organizing and speaking talents. Perhaps some saw it as an opportunity to move into a place in society outside the home. At any rate, women were the prime movers of the Confederate monument building surge, and as a result, they left their mark on their communities.

34. See Clement Eaton, “Breaking a Path for the Liberation of Women in the South,” *Georgia Review*, XXVIII (Summer 1974), 187-99, and Anne F. Scott, *The Southern Lady: From Pedestal to Politics, 1830-1930* (Chicago, 1970).