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THE RHETORIC OF PUBLIC MEMORY IN URBAN PARK REVITALIZATION IN 20TH
CENTURY JACKSONVILLE, FLORIDA

by

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B.A. Western Michigan University, 2006

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ABSTRACT

In recent decades the study human geography has become an increasingly enlightening mode of analysis in the historian's repertoire. One area in which this method has proved insightful is in the exploration of the various ways that interpretations of the past in public places shape the public consciousness. Works on this topic have primarily been broad studies that look at public representations of the past regionally, nationally, or even globally. This study seeks to provide a more nuanced perspective on the complex ways in which public memory and place are created, and continually shaped, through a case study which takes an in-depth look at this process in one locale. This comparative analysis of Jacksonville, Florida's Hemming and Memorial Parks throughout the twentieth century explores how monuments, commemorative events, and historical discourses act as rhetorical devices which promote partisan ideologies within public parks, which shape the public perception of the both the past and the present. In particular, this study explores the revitalization campaigns of Hemming and Memorial Parks in the last quarter of the century to demonstrate how the rhetoric of public memory has been used strategically to recreate the public perception of each park in an effort to control access to and behavior within each park.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS/ABBREVIATIONS

CMC	Citizens Memorial Committee
DDA	Downtown Development Association
FHP	Friends of Hemming Park
KKK	Ku Klux Klan
MPA	Memorial Park Association
NAACP	National Association for the Advancement of Colored People
SCV	Sons of Confederate Veterans
UCV	United Confederate Veterans
UDC	United Daughters of the Confederacy

INTRODUCTION

On January 23, 2016, the Friends of Hemming Park (FHP) hosted an event to commemorate the 150th anniversary of the establishment of Jacksonville, Florida's first public park. The celebration included live music, acrobats, a historical trivia contest, and an address by FHP's CEO, Vince Cavin, sharing the organization's plans to ensure Hemming Park's bright future.¹ In addition to the festivities, the event was also used as a way to garner partnerships and financial support for these plans, and as an information gathering venture to survey Jacksonville citizens on what they would like to see Hemming Park become moving forward.² Considering that FHP was organized in 2015 with the mission "to transform Jacksonville's oldest public park into a modern, urban space that engages diverse communities and restores vitality to [Jacksonville's] public square," it is perhaps unsurprising that the sesquicentennial event had much more to do with Hemming Park's future than it did its past.³

While FHP is new, it is but the most recent incarnation of an over four decade effort to revitalize Hemming Park, which began in the early 1970s with plans to rejuvenate the park, which was thought to be "too dense, too cluttered, too disorganized," and generally "feared by the public."⁴ The inclination to revitalize was not isolated to Hemming Park, as it was the first in a string of many of Jacksonville's public parks to undergo revitalization efforts in the last quarter

¹ Matt Soergel, "Hemming Park's 150th a chilly celebration in Jacksonville," *Florida-Times Union*, January 23, 2016, <http://jacksonville.com/news/metro/2016-01-23/story/hemming-parks-150th-chilly-celebration-jacksonville> [accessed March 2, 2016]; and "Friends of Hemming Park: 150 Years of Hemming Park," *Metro Jacksonville*, January 22, 2016, <http://www.metrojacksonville.com/article/2016-jan-friends-of-hemming-park-150-years-of-hemming-park> [accessed March 2, 2016].

² *Florida Times-Union (online slideshow)*, "Hemming Park Party: Hemming Park celebrated 150 years in Down Town Jacksonville," <http://jacksonville.com/slideshow/2016-01-23/hemming-park-party-hemming-park-celebrated-150-years-downtown-jacksonville#slide-33> [accessed March 2, 2016]

³ Friends of Hemming Park, "Come Explore the New Hemming Park!" <http://www.hemmingpark.org/#hemmingpark> (accessed March 2, 2016).

⁴ Jessie-Lynne Kerr, "Park to Become a Plaza?" *Florida Times-Union*, January 30, 1970.

of the twentieth century. Certainly, a number of factors- including urban populations' flight to suburban areas in the mid-twentieth century, increased visibility of urban homelessness, and the general deterioration of park spaces due to age- could have served as catalysts by which Jacksonville's city officials and citizens alike began to recognize the decline of urban parks and initiate efforts to reinforce the parks' importance to the public and restore their former appeal.⁵ However, the focus of this study is not what led to the decline of Jacksonville's public parks, but rather what methods were employed throughout the revitalization efforts, and the ultimate goals that those employing these methods sought to achieve.

Just as the FHP used a celebration of the past to look toward the future, it is argued here that public park revitalization efforts throughout Jacksonville since the last quarter of the twentieth century have used the rhetoric of public memory- or an idea of a shared public perception of the past- to generate meaning within the parks that are tied to particular, action-oriented goals regarding park access and use in the present. Accordingly, this examination will act as a case study, tracing the history throughout the entire twentieth century and the revitalization campaigns of two of Jacksonville's most popular public parks- Hemming Park situated in the center of Downtown, and Memorial Park which is located in the city's historic Riverside neighborhood. Primarily, this study seeks to demonstrate how various city stakeholders utilized the rhetoric of public memory to attempt to transform the parks into places where the meaning they imposed would define the types of appropriate behaviors in the park, and even limit access to only those members of the public that were deemed desirable.

⁵ For more on the decline of urban public parks see Setha Low, et al, *Rethinking Urban Parks: Public Space & Cultural Diversity*, (Austin: The University of Texas Press, 2005).

The Relationship Between Memory, Place, and Rhetoric

Throughout the twentieth century, historians have become increasingly interested in understanding how perceptions of the past have been consciously fashioned in order to achieve social, political, and cultural objectives in the present. The process by which the public comes to accept these constructed versions of the past as historical fact is referred to as collective, historical, or public memory, and has been the topic of a considerable amount of historical scholarship, especially in the past three decades. Most studies on the topic have been concerned with understanding how history has been used to endorse a particular agenda such as the cultural subordination of one group to another, the creation of patriotic tradition or nationalism, or to achieve specific political goals. These studies have largely been conducted over a broad geographical range, and have considered the various ways groups and individuals have worked to create historical memory within that geography.⁶ Despite the broad range of the discourse on the topic, several common themes have emerged including how historical memory is used to establish social hierarchy, how ideas of heritage and tradition are used to create historical memory, and how historical meaning is constructed in public places. This last theme has been of particular importance within the dialogue of historical memory, especially in works produced over the last decade, as historians have revealed how representations of the past in public places propagate particular interpretations of history, and how public places have been the sites of contestation over conflicting visions of the past.⁷

⁶ See, for example, studies with global, national, and regional focus respectively: Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1983); John Bodnar, *Remaking America: Public Memory, Commemoration, and Patriotism in the Twentieth Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992); and W. Fitzhugh Brundage, *The Southern Past: A Clash of Race and Memory* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005).

⁷ For example Brundage and Joseph Tilden Rhea, *Race Pride and the American Identity* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997).

In the years following World War II, the concept of total history promoted by the founding fathers of the *Annales* school, Marc Bloch and Lucien Febvre, triumphed as post-war activism manifested itself in historical scholarship in a demonstrated preference for social and economic history and innovative methodology.⁸ It was in this atmosphere of multidisciplinary egalitarianism that the profoundly influential work of sociologist Maurice Halbwachs was published in 1950. In *The Collective Memory*, Halbwachs argues that the nature of human memory is an inherently collective phenomenon. This work challenged the contemporary psychological analysis of memory to argue that human memory is a social construct and that memories are created within a social framework. Particularly important is the author's discussion of relational patterns between collective memory and historical memory, in which he theorizes historical memory's central function in shaping collective memory.⁹

Halbwachs' work proved to be profoundly influential to historians interested in understanding the impact of public representations of the past and how interpretations of these representations influenced populations. An important example of this is *The Invention of Tradition*, a collection of essays edited by Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger published in 1983. This volume includes several works that act as case studies to demonstrate the diverse origins and uses of 'invented tradition' throughout Europe and European colonies. Hobsbawm and Ranger define 'invented tradition' as "a set of practices, normally governed by overtly or tacitly accepted rules and of a ritual or symbolic nature, which seek to inculcate certain values

⁸ Ernst Breisach, *Historiography: Ancient, Medieval, & Modern* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983), 370.

⁹ Maurice Halbwachs, *The Collective Memory*, trans. Francis J. Ditter, Jr. and Vida Yazdi Ditter (New York: Harper Colophon Books, 1980), ch. 2, 50-87.

and norms of behavior by repetition, which automatically implies continuity with the past.”¹⁰

Many of the essays in this volume demonstrate how public ceremony and ritual are presented as national tradition, for the purpose of establishing social norms and unity under a patriotic symbol.¹¹

This discussion of public demonstration is especially relevant to the proposed study, and, indeed, has influenced many of the works of American scholarship on the topic. One such work is John Bodnar’s 1992 book entitled *Remaking America: Public Memory, Commemoration, and Patriotism in the Twentieth Century*. Here the author examines various forms of public historical commemorations including reunions, monument and landmark dedications, and anniversary and centennial celebrations to analyze the shaping of collective memory in America in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In contrast to Hobsbawm, however, Bodnar indicates that the focus on national leaders and national power fails to acknowledge the reciprocal nature of interpretations of the past between leaders and the public.¹² Instead, he argues that the past that is interpreted through public demonstrations, such as monuments, parades, and anniversary celebrations, is the result of a multi-vocal exchange between ‘vernacular’ memory- memory promoted by ethnic, class, gender, and local groups- and ‘official’ history- memory promoted for the purpose of furthering a national political agenda.¹³

¹⁰ Eric Hobsbawm, “Introduction: Inventing Traditions,” in *The Invention of Tradition*, ed. Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983),

¹¹ Especially David Cannadine, “The Context, Performance and Meaning of Ritual: The British Monarchy and the ‘Invention of Tradition’, c. 1820-1977,” in *The Invention of Tradition*, eds. Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 101-164.; Bernard S. Cohn, “Representing Authority in Victorian India,” in *The Invention of Tradition*, eds. Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 165-210.; Eric Hobsbawm, “Mass Producing Traditions: Europe, 1870-1914,” in *The Invention of Tradition*, eds. Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 263-308.

¹² Bodnar, 18 and 257.

¹³ *Ibid*, 13-20.

Neither Bodnar nor Hobsbawm specifically engage in a discussion regarding the use of space/place theory in their arguments. However, it is clearly an important element to consider since the examples that they use to bolster their arguments are all drawn from commemorations, rituals, and traditions which occur in public places. By the turn of the twenty-first century, understanding how memory is created in relation to place and through public history was well established in historical scholarship. Published in 2001, Jack Davis' work, *Race Against Time: Culture and Separation in Natchez Since 1930*, demonstrates this. While Davis does not directly engage place/space theory or cultural geography to frame his argument, he does explore how historical memory is created and used in a locale, in this case Natchez, MS. Davis maintains that white historical memory in Natchez defined black culture as discordant to a "harmonious" society in order to justify social and political discrimination, which has led to a hierarchical cultural separation. Importantly, some of Davis' most compelling evidence is derived from public representations of the past in Natchez's historical sites and tourist attractions.¹⁴ Building upon this, we see in 2004's *The Southern Past: A Clash of Race and Memory* that W. Fitzhugh Brundage has utilized place theory and concepts of cultural geography as his primary mode of analysis. The author examines the ways in which both white and black southerners have acted to preserve their history, and how these activities have resulted in a constructed historical memory that portrays "southern heritage" or "southern history" as synonymous with white history. He argues that it is the ways in which the past has been preserved in the South's public places that helped to both create and perpetuate the popular conception of the South as being steeped in heritage which "is the exclusive property of whites."¹⁵ Brundage ultimately concludes that it was

¹⁴ Jack Davis, *Race Against Time: Cultural Separation in Natchez Since 1930* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2001).

¹⁵ Brundage, 2.

white southerners' ability to create lasting interpretations of their version of the past on the public places of the South, while African American influence on public places were temporary in nature, that allowed whites' to claim dominance over and ownership of 'southern' history.

Both Bodnar's and Brundage's arguments assume the importance of public representations and interpretations of the past in public places to the creation of public memory. This phenomena can be best explained when these historical representations and interpretations, such as monuments and commemorative events in and historical discourses surrounding public spaces, are understood to be rhetorical devices. Because rhetoric is both inherently public and inherently partisan, it is intended to influence the ideas and opinions of those members of society who act as its consumers. Therefore, historical rhetoric which exists in or around public spaces acts to inspire the creation of public memory in patrons of the space, and to create public meaning within the space.¹⁶ It is at the point when a particular public meaning is recognized in relation to a space that public *space* becomes a public *place*.¹⁷ Additionally, the creation of place is consequential in that the meaning that is associated with that place comes with sociocultural expectations for how that space is used, making behaviors outside of those expectations transgressive.¹⁸

Of course, rhetoric of the past is just one of many ways in which spaces garner meaning and become places, but this relationship between public memory, rhetoric, and place is the central theme upon which the argument of this study is built. Through an analysis of the

¹⁶ Carole Blair, Greg Dickinson, and Brian L. Ott, eds., *Places of Public Memory: The Rhetoric of Museums and Memorials*, (Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 2010); Gerard A. Hauser, *Vernacular Voices: The Rhetoric of Publics and Public Spheres*, (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1999).

¹⁷ Tim Cresswell, *Place: A Short Introduction*, (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2004), 6.

¹⁸ Cresswell, *In Place/Out of Place: Geography, Ideology, and Transgression*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996).

rhetorical devices that have created public meaning in Hemming and Memorial Parks throughout the twentieth century, and how rhetoric was used to define access to and appropriate use of each place, this case study seeks to reveal a nuanced interpretation of the complex ways in which both public memory and place are created and transformed over time in one locale. Chapter One will examine the history of both Hemming and Memorial Parks from their founding, through the first half of the twentieth century, to establish an understanding of how each park garnered meaning throughout their history. This chapter will demonstrate how both historical memory and geography influenced the meaning of the parks to Jacksonville's public prior to revitalization efforts. Chapters Two and Three will focus on each park separately to analyze their revitalization campaigns throughout the last quarter of the century. Chapter Two will examine Hemming Park, demonstrating how the parks' revitalization campaign, whose strategic- and comparatively limited- use of the rhetoric of public memory is revealing of the ultimate goal of revitalization, which was to attempt to exclude Jacksonville's homeless citizens from access to the park. In contrast, Chapter Three will explore Memorial Park, whose renewal effort was framed as a restoration, and which used the rhetoric of public memory at great length, not to limit access *to* the park, but to define appropriate behaviors *within* the park. Taken as a whole, this study highlights just one component of one story in one local, that is part of the complex and dynamic process through which public memory and place are created and transformed over time. It is hoped that this small piece of the puzzle will help to shed light on the much larger picture.

CHAPTER ONE: MEMORY AND GEOGRAPHY IN MAKING MEANING IN HEMMING AND MEMORIAL PARKS, 1898-1960

Strolling through Hemming Plaza, located in what is frequently referred to as the ‘heart’ of downtown Jacksonville, Florida, one might be tempted to draw conclusions regarding the city’s character and that of its citizens. Hemming Plaza is the closest thing Jacksonville has to a traditional town square, acting, through much of its history, as the hub of a thriving city’s business district and public offices. At the center of the square, surrounded by a basin of impressive size, a granite shaft rises over sixty feet above the scene, topped by the figure of a Confederate soldier cast in bronze who has been surveying the city at parade rest for more than a century. Straining to read the bronze plaques at the base of the monument from the considerable distance imposed by the wide pool, one will read about the valor and glory of the Confederate soldiers who sacrificed their lives for the Southern cause, and see the likenesses of Confederate war heroes including Generals Robert E. Lee, ‘Stonewall’ Jackson, and Kirby Smith. Should one assume, then, that the citizens of Jacksonville view Hemming Plaza as a place where Confederate memory and love for the Old South is alive and well? Do the citizens of Jacksonville come here to stare misty-eyed at the soldier, bursting with pride over what they view as ‘heritage not hate’?

Conversely, consider Memorial Park, located approximately 2 miles southwest of Hemming Plaza on the shores of the St. Johns River. The park has been painstakingly restored in pristine historical detail surrounding the gleaming bronze figure of *Life*, the allegorical monument erected in 1924 to honor Florida’s fallen soldiers of the First World War. Memorial Park is considered the centerpiece of the Riverside neighborhood in which it resides. The park’s well-maintained beauty could perhaps speak to Riverside’s status historically as the elite refuge

of Jacksonville's wealthiest white citizens, but would that impression accurately represent remembrance of the war for those whose status did not grant them access to the park? What of those who have resided in Riverside- which has since been noted for its diversity- in more recent years?

The point of these musings is not to attempt to understand the meaning that Hemming or Memorial Park, and their respective monuments, hold for Jacksonville's public, but rather to demonstrate that assigning any sort of singular meaning would be impossible. Indeed, the term 'public' itself is problematic because, as Gerard A. Hauser has argued, a society is not populated by a single public but by a "montage of *publics*."¹ That is to say that the members of any society will invariably hold a multiplicity of groups and individuals with unique and differing opinions, goals, values, beliefs, etc., which they share in a variety of ways. Because one group- or one faction of the *public*- is successful in, for example, erecting a monument to the Confederacy in a public square, it does not necessarily follow that that society as a whole subscribes to the ideology which the monument represents.

Hauser also maintains that various 'publics' communicate and are made visible through their *rhetorical exchanges*- that is, the language, symbols, and discourses which are publicly engaged by a group.² As rhetoric is inherently public- meaning an idea must be published or communicated in some way to be considered rhetorical- the discourses surrounding public *places* can be particularly enlightening in considering the various ideologies of the multiple *publics* which make up a society. Tim Cresswell, historian of human geography, explains that "ideological beliefs, to be effective, must connect thought to action, theory to practice, the

¹ Gerard A. Hauser, *Vernacular Voices: The Rhetoric of Publics and Public Spheres*, (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1999), 35.

² *Ibid*, 35-36. For Hauser's definition of 'rhetoric' see *Vernacular Voices*, 14.

abstract to the concrete. Place, insofar as it is the material context of our lives, forces us to make interpretations and act accordingly. Place thus contributes to the creation and reproduction of action-oriented (ideological) beliefs.”³ Therefore, employing rhetorical devices to convey ideas within public places is an effective strategy in promoting ideology, and the ideologies promoted in a single place can be as numerous and varied as the *publics* which produce them.

The presence of the Confederate Monument in the center of Jacksonville’s oldest and most well-known park is, of course, significant. Such a permanent rhetorical device is certainly revealing of the ideology promoted by those who have held social and political power throughout a great deal of Jacksonville’s history. But as Cresswell argues, “places have more than one meaning. Some meanings are complementary and fit neatly on top of each other. Other meanings seem to be incompatible- to be awkward and displaced- if they are located with other meanings.” Indeed, even the mere existence of these differing meanings and the tensions they create work to continually shape and reshape meaning within place.⁴

This chapter will examine the history of both Hemming Plaza and Memorial Park through the first three quarters of the twentieth century to analyze the ways in which rhetoric and discursive exchanges have shaped meaning within the parks. It would, of course, be impossible to give a full accounting of all of the various meanings that could be assigned to each park by Jacksonville’s “montage of *publics*” throughout their history. Therefore, I have chosen to examine the parks’ histories thematically, illustrating two important themes for each, which represent some of the more prominent ideologies that have imposed meaning on each place. First, as both parks are home to some of Jacksonville’s most popular war memorials, I will look

³ Tim Cresswell, *In Place/Out of Place: Geography, Ideology, and Transgression*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), 161.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 59; Roger C. Aden, “When Memories and Discourses Collide: The President’s House and Places of Public Memory,” *Communication Monographs* 79, No. 1 (March 2012), 72-92.

at each park's function as a place of memory and commemoration. In both cases, the dedication of the monuments established the parks as meaningful places, promoting the ideologies of the groups who worked to erect them and hold commemorative events around them. Next, I will discuss the meaning of each park which as determined by their geography, which defined how each space was used on a daily basis. For Hemming Plaza this is its function as the centerpiece of downtown Jacksonville's business district, and for Memorial Park, it is its position as a source of pride for what was, through most of the twentieth century, Jacksonville's most elite residential neighborhood.

The process of establishing meaning in each of Jacksonville's historic parks examined here is complex and varied. As public life was enacted in the parks, public discourses surrounding the parks were engaged, imposing differing, and often conflicting, ideologies which create plural meanings of place within the parks. This is most important for the present study when viewed in contrast with the rhetoric employed during the revitalization and restoration efforts for Hemming Plaza and Memorial Park in the last quarter of the twentieth century, which will be the focus of Chapters Two and Three, respectively. By establishing an understanding of how ideological meanings of place have been constructed in each park in multiple ways throughout their history, it is possible to discern by comparison the very selective way that the rhetoric of public memory was used in revitalization. Furthermore, this understanding helps us to determine specifically how rhetoric is employed for very specific agendas, which will be discussed in the following chapters.

Hemming Park as the Heart of Jacksonville

Throughout its history Hemming Plaza, or Hemming Park as it was known until 1977, has frequently been referred to as the 'Heart of Jacksonville.' Considering the central role the

park has played, not only geographically but also symbolically, in various aspects of public life in Jacksonville, the nickname is an appropriate one. When I.D. Hart, the founder of Jacksonville, platted the city in 1859, he designated the square, bounded by Laura and Hogan Streets on the east and west and Duval and Monroe Streets on the north and south, as a public square. Previously the center of downtown Jacksonville's business had been along the St. Johns River, on Bay Street between Market and Ocean Streets, but flooding from bad weather inspired Hart to move the city's central activities several blocks northwest to the area surrounding the square which was "intended as a market and general gathering place."⁵ Upon Hart's death in 1866 the square, which was then simply called City Park, was deeded to the city for the sum of \$10. Therefore, from its earliest conception, the square that would come to be known as Hemming Park acted in the capacity of a town square, in and around which public life in Jacksonville was conducted. More than any other public space in Jacksonville, the park would continue to serve this function as it became the place for commemoration and social gathering, and the heart around which downtown business beat.

The Role of Memory in Creating *Place* in Hemming Park

Little remains to speak of the park's public meaning in the early years of its existence beyond the fact that it was an unsightly and unmaintained scrap of land until the city appropriated \$700 in 1887 to add walk ways, landscaping, and a fountain in the center. By that time the park had been popularly known as St. James Park for several years, due to the presence of the St. James Hotel, which opened in 1869 and dominated the adjacent city block along Duval Street.⁶ It is thanks to these improvements that St. James Park was selected by Charles C.

⁵ T. Frederick Davis, *History of Jacksonville, Florida and Vicinity, 1513 to 1924*, (1925; repr., Gainesville, FL: University of Florida Press, 1964), 115.

⁶ *Ibid*, 333.

Hemming as the site for his monument to the Confederate dead. At a reunion of the United Confederate Veterans (UCV) in Ocala in 1896, Hemming, a Confederate veteran who had spent most of his young life in Jacksonville and gone on to become a successful banker following his service, declared his intention of commissioning a monument to honor Florida's fallen soldiers of the Civil War. After viewing several potential sites Hemming wrote to Jacksonville's RE Lee camp of the UCV to declare "his preference for the center of St. James Park, where for a long time the fine fountain had stood."⁷ Having secured the promise of the monument, the city approved moving the fountain to the northwest corner of the park so that the Confederate monument would become the center piece, and the Jacksonville chapters of the UCV and the United Daughters of the Confederacy (UDC) set about planning a dedication ceremony that would be "imposing and impressive, in which all our people should feel pride and gratification."⁸

The notion that the entirety of Jacksonville's population would feel "pride and gratification" at the impending dedication of the Confederate monument is arguable, considering that at the turn of the twentieth century African Americans represented the majority of the city's population.⁹ This idea does, however, speak to the mind of those who were in a position to impose ideological meaning upon the place in 1898, and is revealing of who they deemed consumers of the rhetoric surrounding the dedication ceremonies. Indeed, between 1890 and 1910, the South saw an almost frenzy of activity to memorialize the Confederate soldier as white southerners sought to assert their social and political authority to sooth anxieties wrought by the movement toward sectional reconciliation.¹⁰ At the turn of the century the UCV and UDC, with

⁷ *Florida Times-Union and Citizen*, 17 June 1898.

⁸ *Florida Times-Union and Citizen*, 16 June 1898.

⁹ James B. Crooks, *Jacksonville after the Fire, 1901-1919: A New South City*, (Jacksonville: University of North Florida Press, 1991), 4, 33-38.

¹⁰ W. Fitzhugh Brundage, *The Southern Past: A Clash of Race and Memory*, (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2005), 12-54.

the support of the city government, were the primary forces creating public meaning through rhetoric in the park- not only through the monument dedication, but also through subsequent years of commemorations of Confederate Memorial Day within the space. The efforts of these interest groups firmly established the park as *the* place for memorialization and commemoration in Jacksonville, with rhetoric of public memory rooted in the myth of the Lost Cause that managed to celebrate the Old South while still promoting the importance of reconciliation with the North.¹¹ As the twentieth century progressed, Confederate memorial activities would give way to other commemorations, and public gatherings, not grounded in sectionalism such as the national Memorial Day celebrated in May. However, Hemming Park, having been firmly established as the center for public commemoration, would remain the primary site for many different types of public gatherings in Jacksonville throughout most of the twentieth century.

Charles Hemming's choice for Jacksonville as the site of his Confederate monument is unsurprising in consideration of the fact that Jacksonville is where he himself enlisted in the Confederate Army as a member of the Jacksonville Light Infantry immediately upon Florida's succession from the Union.¹² Furthermore, on the eve of the twentieth century Jacksonville was seen as a New South city, prosperous and progressive, enjoying considerable success in the lumber industry and as a tourist destination, and boasting significant modern amenities to make future growth appear imminent.¹³ For these reasons, Hemming decided during an 1896 visit to

¹¹ Lost Cause mythology (or the myth of the Lost Cause) is the term that scholars generally use to refer to the ideology that developed in the post-Civil War South to explain the Confederacy's defeat and justify the Confederate cause. Lost Cause mythology is typically thought to be representative of an excessively romanticized view of the Old South which was perpetuated by various memorial and veterans associations throughout the South. For an overall analysis of Lost Cause mythology see Gaines M. Foster, *Ghosts of the Confederacy: Defeat, the Lost Cause, and the Emergence of the New South 1865-1913*, (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), Rollin Gustav Osterweis, *The Myth of the Lost Cause, 1865-1900*, (Hamden, CT: Archon Books, 1973), and William C. Davis, *The Cause Lost: Myths and Realities of the Confederacy*, (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 1996).

¹² *Florida Times-Union and Citizen*, 17 June 1898.

¹³ Crooks, *Jacksonville After the Fire*, 8-10.

the city, in which he was courted by the RE Lee chapter of the UCV, that the city of Jacksonville would be the site of the monument which would be officially gifted to the State of Florida. It was during this visit that Hemming himself hand-picked the park that would be renamed in his honor from St. James park to Hemming Park in 1899.¹⁴

When the monument was dedicated in June of 1898 the country was embroiled in the Spanish American War and Jacksonville, as the home of Camp Cuba Libre, was flooded with 29,000 troops from all over the country.¹⁵ As Gaines M. Foster has argued, the Spanish-American war, while brief, was an immensely important moment in the process toward reunifying the North and South. This was the first conflict since the Civil War in which northerners and southerners fought together against an external threat and, therefore, was seen by those in the south as a way to “vindicate the Confederate soldier” and gain northern respect through “a sense of full participation in the Union.”¹⁶ With the war inspiring increased civic patriotism and the presence of the troops as a tangible reminder of the nation’s reunification, the ceremonies surrounding the dedication did not seem to see celebration of the Old South and promotion of sectional reconciliation to be at odds, with speakers of the day marrying the two ideas almost seamlessly. In fact, the dedication of the monument to the Confederate dead could be seen as the perfect venue to simultaneously promote both ideologies, despite their oppositional nature, for two reasons. First, as Foster argued, rituals of Confederate celebration grounded in the myth of the Lost Cause helped southerners cope with defeat in the process of reconciliation by “helping the southern social order weather a period of social stress with a

¹⁴ Hemming reportedly expressed “his preference for St. James Park, where for a long time the fine fountain stood.” *Florida Times-Union and Citizen*, 17 June 1898. Renaming of St. James Park occurred by city ordinance, reported in *Florida Times-Union and Citizen*, 12 October 1899.

¹⁵ T. Frederic Davis, 211-212.

¹⁶ Gaines M. Foster, *Ghosts of the Confederacy: Defeat, the Lost Cause, and the Emergence of the New South 1865-1913*, (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), 145, 148-151.

minimum of disruption and... only a modicum of change.”¹⁷ Second, honoring fallen soldiers of the Confederacy could occur less controversially during reconciliation than any other type of Confederate commemoration because those who died in defense of the Lost Cause were considered to be the only southerners who could truly and justifiably remain “unreconciled.”¹⁸

The rhetoric employed surrounding the dedication of the Confederate Monument in Jacksonville- which took place on June 16, 1898- reveals that, while those participating in commemorating the event recognized the importance of sectional reconciliation for Jacksonville to prosper as a New South city, the main purpose of the day was to commit the ideals of the Confederate cause to the perpetual public memory of Jacksonville’s current and future citizens. Indeed, the notion that the monument would exist to convey the values promoted throughout the ceremony to future generations was highlighted at every stage of the day’s events. The prayer offered at the opening of the dedication put it quite succinctly: “Continue Thy goodness to us that the heritage which we commemorate this day may be preserved in our time and transmitted, unimpaired, to the generations to come.”¹⁹ Virtually every speaker of the day communicated similar sentiments, like Florida Congressman and the event’s main orator, Col. Robert H.M. Davidson, who declared, “This beautiful shaft, dedicated ‘To the Soldiers of Florida,’ with its fitting and impressive inscriptions, though silent, yet eloquently speaks to us, and will so speak to coming generations of the brave men, whose intrepid valor and ardent love of home and country it is intended to commemorate.”²⁰ Even beyond the notion that the monument would perpetuate the memory of the Confederate dead was the idea that it would specifically convey

¹⁷ Ibid, 115-144.

¹⁸ John R. Neff, *Honoring the Civil War Dead: Commemoration and the Problem of Reconciliation*, (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2005), 142-178.

¹⁹ Rev. Edwin G. Reed, quoted in *Dedication of Monument to Confederate Dead of Florida*, (Jacksonville: DaCosta Printing Co., 1898), 5, Subject Files “Confederate Monument,” Jacksonville Historical Society.

²⁰ Col. Robert H.M. Davidson, quoted in *Dedication of Monument to Confederate Dead of Florida*, (Jacksonville: DaCosta Printing Co., 1898), 10, Subject Files “Confederate Monument,” Jacksonville Historical Society.

the contemporary audience's interpretation of that memory, as Jacksonville mayor, R.D. Knight, stated, "we should erect enduring monuments, that those who come after us may realize that we were appreciative of heroic endeavors and that they may be inspirations to all succeeding generations."²¹

Beyond the monument's capacity to communicate to future generations, those who organized and participated in the dedication ceremony understood that its presence in the park imposed ideological meaning within the space. The erection of the Confederate Monument and the subsequent commemorative events surrounding it that would take place in the years to come, were very clearly seen as transformative to the park itself. In his dedication speech Col. Davidson acknowledged that "in this beautiful and henceforth consecrated place, as the years pass away, may that granite column stand and, a silent witness though it be, yet ever testify to all who come here, in behalf of devotion to principle, patriotic valor and love of home and native land."²² Having served as a town square for half a century, the erection of the Confederate Monument in the park recreated it as a place where public memory lived, thus, making it more than publicly used *space*. The monument, as a rhetorical device, and the discourse surrounding it made Hemming Park a *place* where ideologies existed and could be utilized, shaped, and changed.

In the years following the dedication of the monument commemorative events in the park kept the rhetoric of Confederate memory alive there. Confederate Memorial Day at the end of April each year, in particular, was especially honored in the first decade of the twentieth century. The rhetoric surrounding the commemoration of this event did not make concessions to

²¹ R.D. Knight quoted in *Florida Times-Union and Citizen*, 16 June 1898.

²² Col. Robert H.M. Davidson, quoted in *Dedication of Monument to Confederate Dead of Florida*, (Jacksonville: DaCosta Printing Co., 1898), 16, Subject Files "Confederate Monument," Jacksonville Historical Society.

reconciliation as it was seen as “the day of all the year that is peculiarly Southern,” and acted as a venue to not only mourn the Confederate dead, but to also mourn the loss of the Old South.²³ The discourse surrounding Confederate Memorial Day in Jacksonville is emblematic of what W. Stuart Towns describes as a strategy by southern memorial associations to create a narrative of a larger-than-life, heroic Old South that “had an element of thumbing the region’s collective nose at the North.”²⁴ Part of this strategy involved portraying a nostalgic view of antebellum plantation life, and bemoaning the war’s ruthless destruction of this romantic ideal. For example, in a speech delivered for Confederate Memorial Day in Jacksonville in 1906, H.H. Buckman portrays the pre-war South:

“With a culture and refinement engrafted upon it that has not been equaled, each in his own way the dominant lord of a princely estate, it was indeed a truly marvelous people. Generous, open-handed, caring for wealth only as a means of maintaining his station and scattering it in unbounded hospitality.”²⁵

And in describing the destruction following the war:

“Leaning upon his broken sword, the spirit of the Southland bowed his head for a moment in bitterness and sorrow. His eyes looked over the vast domain, but a little while ago rich with ripening harvests, amongst which gleamed the white, palatial mansions, peopled with a noble, chivalrous race. He listened for the happy song of the reapers, but he listened in vain. Silence reigned supreme...”²⁶

Hemming Park always featured prominently in Jacksonville’s Confederate Memorial Day events. The UDC appointed a committee every year to decorate the Confederate Monument with garlands of flowers, and ceremonies commenced for the day with the ritual of laying wreaths of

²³ *Florida Times-Union*, 26 April 1906.

²⁴ W. Stuart Towns, *Enduring Legacy: Rhetoric and Ritual of the Lost Cause*, (Tuscaloosa, AL: The University Press of Alabama, 2012), x.

²⁵ H.H. Buckman quoted in *Florida Times-Union*, 27 April 1906.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

flowers at the base of the monument. A parade would then proceed from Hemming Park to Old City Cemetery for the decoration of the Confederate graves.²⁷

The rhetoric that existed around the monument and these memorial events in the park had implications for how the park was used and, perhaps, by whom. It could be argued that establishing Hemming Park as a “consecrated place” devoted to the “patriotic valor” of the Confederate cause would have limited the park’s use as a commemorative space to only those segments of the public whose memory of the Confederate cause fell in line with the ideologies promoted by the rhetorical discourse surrounding the monument. As W. Fitzhugh Brundage has argued, “public space serves to reproduce social relations that define some members of a society as worthy of access to public life and others as unworthy.”²⁸ Therefore, by promoting Confederate memory in Hemming Park the UCV and UDC, with support of the City of Jacksonville, were limiting access to the park, at least in terms of its function as a commemorative space, to those purposes which did not transgress the ideology promoted there.

Rhetoric which extolled the Lost Cause and promoted the values of the Old South was not only committing these ideologies to public memory to be passed on to future generations, they also served to affirm and shape the values of the contemporary audience. One of the most prominent themes, particularly in the oratory of monument dedication and Confederate Memorial Day observances, was the issue of slavery. Those seeking to celebrate the Old South used these events as a way to minimize the evils of slavery or marginalize its role in the events leading up to the Civil War, while wistfully recalling an idealized version of plantation life.²⁹ This is the case,

²⁷ For more examples of Confederate Memorial Day rhetoric in Jacksonville see *Florida Times-Union*, 28 April 1903, 27 April 1904, 27 April 1905, 25 April 1906, 26 April 1906, 26 April 1907, 24 April 1908, 27 April 1909, and 26 April 1910.

²⁸ Brundage, 6.

²⁹ Towns, 12-13 and 48-52.

almost without exception in the Confederate commemorative events in the first decade of the twentieth century in Jacksonville. For example, recall H.H. Buckman's 1906 speech quoted above, where he evokes an image of the Old South as a society of generous masters and bemoans the loss of "the happy song of the reapers," referring, of course, to slaves. Indeed, the rhetoric surrounding these events sought to inextricably link the region's plantation history with southern identity. On Confederate Memorial Day in 1906, Jacksonville's *Florida Times-Union's* front page featured "A Pictorial Comment on Current Events" which portrayed the iconic image of the antebellum Southern Belle, whose skirt was prominently labeled "The South," mourning over the decorated graves of Confederate Soldiers.³⁰ Grace Elizabeth Hale has argued that the portrayal of the Old South as a "lost pastoral Utopia" in justifying the Lost Cause had tremendous implications for race relations in the twentieth century south. Namely, that these narratives, grounded in white supremacy, "became legitimating narratives of origin for the culture of segregation."³¹

While Jacksonville's public parks were never officially segregated by law³², this racially charged aspect of the public memory promoted in Hemming Park would, of course, exclude

³⁰ *Florida Times-Union*, 26 April 1905. For more on the Southern Belle as a symbol of the Old South and representation of plantation life see Anne Firor Scott, *The Southern Lady: From Pedestal to Politics, 1830-1930*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1970), and Virginia Bernhard, et al, *Southern Women: Histories and Identities* (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 1992).

³¹ Grace Elizabeth Hale, *Making Whiteness: The Culture of Segregation in the South, 1890-1940*, (New York: Pantheon Books, 1998), 48-54. See also, Hale, "The Lost Cause and the Meaning of History," *OAH Magazine of History* 27, No. 1 (January 2013), 13-17.

³² The collections of City Charters and Ordinances which still exist (for years 1901, 1911, 1917, 1927, 1942, and 1953) make no mention of separation of the races for municipal parks. Likewise, the Florida State Constitution, penned in 1885, does not provide for the segregation of either municipal or state parks (nor were any amendments introduced through 1968, when the State Constitution was revised, which regulated access to public parks based on race). William O'Brien maintains that state-owned parks were segregated by custom, but not by legal provision. Evidence supports that Jacksonville's recreation facilities, such as pools and playgrounds were segregated by custom, but I have found no evidence to suggest that municipal parks that served as general public gathering places (such as Hemming and Memorial Parks) were subject to this custom. For more regarding segregation in state parks see William O'Brien, "The Strange Career of a Florida State Park: Uncovering a Jim Crow Past," *Historical Geography* 35, (2007): 164-184. For examples of segregation in Jacksonville's recreation facilities see, *Florida Times-Union*, 12 August 1920, 19 July 1945, 20 September 1945, and 01 February 1952.

Jacksonville's majority black population from promoting their memory of the Civil War- or their historical perspective in general- there. Indeed, evidence suggests that at the time the Confederate monument was dedicated and the park was being named for one of Jacksonville's Confederate heroes, those interested in preserving black memory in Jacksonville didn't see the city as a place where permanent fixtures of their historical perspective, such as monuments, could live. This is, perhaps, unsurprising in consideration of the social and political marginalization of Jacksonville's black population that was occurring at the time. The first decade of the twentieth century saw heightened racial tension in Jacksonville, including the implementation of increasingly stringent racial segregation measures starting with segregation of the city's public transportation, the brutal beating of well-known civil rights activist, James Weldon Johnson, and the redrawing of voting districts to completely eliminate black representation on the city council, just to name a few.³³ Amid this climate, in 1899, Emma T. Hart, a Jacksonville resident and member of the National Association of Colored Women, spearheaded an effort to raise funds for a monument commemorating the fallen African American soldiers of the Spanish-American war. The effort began with a concert at Jacksonville's Bethel Baptist Church, with the intention that the monument would be erected "in some liberal city," which was not Jacksonville. Ultimately, the monument campaign was aborted by February of 1901 due the perceived "condition of quiescence" among African Americans, and having received only \$500 of the \$25,000 goal.³⁴ While this is but one example, it illustrates the

³³ Robert Cassanello, *To Render Invisible: Jim Crow and Public Life in New South Jacksonville*, (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2013), 92-104; James Weldon Johnson, *Along this Way: The Autobiography of James Weldon Johnson*, (1933; repr., Boston: Da Capo Press, 2000), 165-170.

³⁴ "For the Monument Fund," *National Association Notes* 2 (April 1899), in *National Association of Colored Women Records, Part 1*, reel 23; "Monument Association," *National Association Notes* 4 (February 1901), in *National Association of Colored Women Records, Part 1*, reel 23. See also, Francesca Morgan, *Women and Patriotism in Jim Crow America*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005), 68.

point that the urge to establish lasting memorials existed among Jacksonville's black community leaders, but Jacksonville itself was not thought to be accommodating of such efforts.

Despite the exclusive nature of the memory promoted there, the discourses surrounding the park in the decades following the dedication of the Confederate monument leave little doubt as to the park's prominence in public life in Jacksonville. In fact, less than three years after the Confederate monument's dedication, it was already seen as an important symbol of the city. After the Great Fire of 1901, which decimated most of downtown Jacksonville, including Hemming Park, the monument there was exalted as a physical representation of the city's strength and resilience as the *Times-Union* declared:

“...to the eastward, northward and westward of Hemming Park, an unbroken bed of ashes meets the eye, in which gaunt chimneys rear themselves like monuments in some forgotten city's cemetery. Over all stands sentinel our bronze Confederate soldier on his lofty pedestal of marble, facing undismayed and with erect front a picture equal in sadness to that his prototype saw all over our section after Appomattox. But he knows, God bless him, that Jacksonville will rise from its ashes, as did the South; he has but gone on before, but our hope is his certainty, our faith will be justified.”³⁵

Indeed, evidence suggests that the people of Jacksonville saw the monument as very epicenter of the city. Historian T. Frederick Davis reported in his 1925 work on the city's history that when the fire began, some citizen thought to save household belongings by carrying them to Hemming Park and placing them, “pile upon pile,” at the monument's base.³⁶

As the twentieth century progressed, the events honoring Confederate Memorial Day in Jacksonville became less elaborate, until by mid-century the commemoration of the holiday constituted of a greatly downscaled and somewhat sporadic event held by the UDC and the Sons

³⁵ *Florida Times-Union*, 4 May 1901.

³⁶ T. Frederick Davis, 226.

of Confederate Veterans (SCV) with ceremonies confined to Old City Cemetery.³⁷ By the time the First World War had ended in 1918, the city's main memorial celebration was firmly established as National Memorial Day, held at the end of May each year. What did not change was the location of the commemoration ceremony, as Hemming Park continued to be the site of the city's Memorial Day events throughout the first half of the twentieth century. Perhaps due to the previously unprecedented large-scale violence that occurred during the World Wars, and the continued unrest of the Cold War, the tone of oration at National Memorial Day in Hemming Park was markedly different from that of Confederate Memorial Day. Rather than honoring the soldiers' glory in battle, as was common for the Confederate holiday, the common theme among speakers on National Memorial Day was to simply express their hope for renewed peace and appreciation of the sacrifice made by service men and women.³⁸ Despite the transition away from Confederate sentiment that the day represented, the memory of Confederate Memorial Day ceremonies lingered in Hemming Park, as evidenced by the fact that the decorating of the Confederate Monument and the laying of wreaths at its base to conclude the ceremonies remained an important tradition in Memorial Day ceremonies.³⁹

The Role of Geography in Creating *Place* in Hemming Park

Clearly Hemming Park's role as a place of memory defined much of its importance within Jacksonville, at least to those segments of the public who participated in memorial

³⁷ For example, between 1919 and 1925 the *Florida Times-Union* did not report on any Confederate Memorial Day activities. For more on the ceremonies that did occur see, *Florida Times-Union*, 27 April 1938, 27 April 1941, 27 April 1944, 27 April 1949. In 1945 the Confederate Memorial Association disbanded, but commemorative activities continued through the efforts of the UDC and SCV. The day was honored every year in the decade between 1950 and 1959, however, the ceremonies were much smaller and fewer attended than in the early 20th century; see *Florida Times-Union*, 27 April 1950-1959. On April 24, 1957 the *Florida Times-Union* ran an article about the controversy involved in continuing to commemorate Confederate Memorial Day. The practice did continue into the 1960s, but with the same inconsistency as in the decades following World War I.

³⁸ See, for example, Lieut. Rita Bedell's address at Hemming Park reported in *Florida Times-Union*, 31 May 1943; Lieut. Comdr. Edgar Allan Poe Jr.'s address at Hemming Park reported in *Florida Times-Union*, 31 May 1944.

³⁹ *Florida Times-Union*, 31 May 1923, 31 May 1944, 31 May 1945,

activities there, including those planning the events- such as the UCV, UDC, SCV, the American Legion, the Grand Army of the Republic, and the United Spanish War Veterans- the “huge throng(s)” of citizens who attended memorials in the park, city officials, and business owners in the surrounding area who closed up shop during ceremony hours.⁴⁰ However, while these events were instrumental in lending meaning to the park in the eyes of much of Jacksonville’s public, the way the park functioned the other 364 days of the year cannot be ignored. To understand this we must consider the geography of Hemming Park. That is to say that the park garnered meaning not only from its position as a place of public memory, but also from its day to day use by the public, which was mainly determined by park’s position in the center of downtown Jacksonville’s bustling business district.

Aside from its role as the city’s primary memorial venue, Hemming Park served many other public functions. It was the location of patriotic celebrations such as Constitution and Armistice Day, the site of the annual municipal Christmas tree lighting, a space to promote city wide events, and a stop on the presidential campaign trails of John F. Kennedy, Richard Nixon, and Lyndon B. Johnson.⁴¹ While historic events would certainly stand out in the minds and memories of Jacksonville’s citizens, the way the park was used every day as public a gathering place between downtown businesses is also significant to an overall understanding of how *place* was created in the park. While Hemming Park’s commonplace, daily functions did not create a large body of rhetorical devices and discourses in the way that its memorial functions did, certainly some examples did exist. In fact, the park’s close association with downtown business was evident as early as the mid-19th century, when the St. James Hotel was built in the years

⁴⁰ “Huge throng” specifically quoted from *Florida Times-Union*, 31 May 1944; see also, *Florida Times-Union*, 31 May 1923, 29 May 1943, and 31 May 1945.

⁴¹ See, for example, *Florida Times-Union*, 18 September 1919, 24 December 1919, 12 November 1946, 11 December 1950, 11 November 1952, 19 October 1960, 27 October 1964.

following the Civil War to provide upscale accommodations for northern tourists and businessmen. Not only did the hotel's construction lead to the park's name change from City Park to St. James Park, but it also generated increased interest in the park which led to its first-though short-lived- improvements, made through "private exertions," in the form of the erection of a band shell and surrounding fence.⁴²

Even after the St. James Hotel was decimated by the Great Fire of 1901, Hemming Park's daily use continued to be defined by the area which surrounded it. When the area was rebuilt following the fire, Cohen Brothers', which opened in 1912, became the first of many major department stores to occupy the blocks neighboring the park. As the twentieth century progressed several major retailers followed suit- including Levy's in 1927, Rosenblum's in 1937, Furchgott's in 1941, J.C. Penny and F.W. Woolworth in 1955, and Sears in 1959- making the area surrounding Hemming Park the epicenter of Jacksonville's vibrant retail scene.⁴³ By mid-century, as traffic congestion in the city increased, a discourse regarding the park's value to downtown business arose. While some suggested that the lot on which the park sat would better serve the city by being turned into parking for the surrounding businesses, the *Florida Times-Union* maintained that "it is doubtful [...] the Bronze Soldier would ever yield his historically-won position- even for the sake of progress."⁴⁴ A few years later, the park's importance as the centerpiece of Jacksonville's retail district was affirmed by a study conducted by the University of Florida. Hemming Park patrons were canvassed to determine to what degree downtown retail was benefitted by the park's presence. The results determined that eliminating the park would be a mistake as it functioned in several ways that enhanced the shopping experience in downtown

⁴² T. Frederick Davis, 333.

⁴³ Crooks, *Jacksonville After the Fire*, 101. "The Age of the Downtown Department Store," *Metro Jacksonville*, July 24, 2012, <http://www.metrojacksonville.com/article/2012-jul-the-age-of-the-downtown-department-store> (accessed August 10, 2015).

⁴⁴ *Florida Times-Union*, 29 August 1948.

Jacksonville, including providing a resting place during shopping trips, a shortcut between stores, a place for downtown employees to take lunch breaks, and generally adding to the “charm and beauty” of downtown.⁴⁵ Despite the study also concluding that store owners overall desired additional parking over the presence of the park, and the continually increasing issue of lack of parking downtown, no effort to remove Hemming Park to accommodate traffic was ever made.

The Conflict of Memory and Geography: Hemming Park’s Role in Jacksonville’s Civil Rights Movement

Because of its position as the epicenter of downtown business in Jacksonville in the mid-twentieth century, Hemming Park also came to hold an important role in the city’s Civil Rights Movement. Just as the ideology promoted by Confederate memory racialized Hemming Park in a way that excluded the historical perspective of Jacksonville’s black community, the segregation of downtown businesses had a similarly marginalizing effect in terms of the park’s role as an extension of Jacksonville’s retail center.⁴⁶ Rodney Hurst Sr., one of Jacksonville’s most prominent civil rights activists in the second half of the twentieth century, described the scene:

Hemming Park represented a fascinating study of people movement in Jacksonville. [...]Every morning, hundreds of Blacks waited there to catch buses coming from the south side of Jacksonville – buses filled primarily with white riders who worked in the downtown area. After white passengers disembarked from buses on Laura Street, Black passengers would board, traveling to some of these same areas where the white passengers had come, including white homes where many Blacks worked. We often discussed how whites did not mind Blacks working in their homes, keeping their children and cooking their meals, but did not want Blacks sitting next to them at a lunch counter or restaurant.⁴⁷

⁴⁵ *Florida Times-Union*, 13 July 1950.

⁴⁶ See Cassanello, *To Render Invisible*, for more on the racialization of public space in Jacksonville.

⁴⁷ Rodney L. Hurst Sr., *It was never about a hot dog and a Coke: A personal account of the 1960 sit-in demonstrations in Jacksonville, Florida and Ax Handle Saturday*, (Livermore, CA: WingSpan Press, 2008), 53.

For Hurst, the segregation of public life in downtown Jacksonville “openly insulted Blacks daily,” and the movement of people in and around Hemming Park, as a prominent public space, was seen as symbolic of this insult.⁴⁸

In August of 1960, Hurst, along with several members of the Jacksonville chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) Youth Council, of which Hurst was the president, staged the first of several sit-in demonstrations at F.W. Woolworth’s lunch counter. Over the course of the following few weeks, demonstrators attempted to integrate several of the businesses in the area surrounding Hemming Park- including Cohen Brothers, W.T. Gant, Kress, and McCrory Department Stores- because its “strategic location” in the heart of downtown Jacksonville provided the type of visibility deemed necessary to make the demonstrations a success.⁴⁹

On August 27, 1960, the sit-in campaign, which had been peaceful up to that point, erupted into a violent confrontation when a mob of white men, who would later be confirmed as members of the Ku Klux Klan (KKK), attacked the demonstrators in the area in and around Hemming Park with ax handles and other assorted bats or clubs.⁵⁰ Stetson Kennedy, a Jacksonville civil rights activist who became famous for having infiltrated the KKK in the 1950s, seemed to regard the Klan’s staging of their attack in Hemming Park with a sense of irony as he described the scene: “About 30 lined up behind a hardware store delivery truck, which sported a

⁴⁸ Ibid, 53.

⁴⁹ Ibid, 57. Alliniece T. Andino, “40 years ago this weekend, Jacksonville gave itself a national reputation for violence,” *Florida Times-Union*, 25 August 2000, http://jacksonville.com/tu-online/stories/082500/met_axhandle.html#.VckbGvlViko (accessed on August 10, 2015).

⁵⁰ For a full accounting of the events of Ax Handle Saturday see Hurst, *It was never about a hot dog and a Coke*, 70-83; James B. Crooks, *Jacksonville: The Consolidation Story, from Civil Rights to the Jaguars*, (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2004), 20-22; Stetson Kennedy, “Ax Handle Saturday: The Untold Story Behind Jacksonville’s Legendary Race Riot,” *Folio Weekly*, 25 August 2010, 14-20; Abel A. Bartley, *Keeping the Faith: Race, Politics, and Social Development in Jacksonville, Florida, 1940-1970*, (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2000), 99-104.

sign: 'Free Ax Handles.' Overlooking the park, as usual, was the heroic-sized bronze statue of a Confederate soldier, at ease, resting on his rifle...⁵¹ Alton Yates, another member of the NAACP Youth Council recalled witnessing some of the men wielding weapons wearing Confederate uniforms and brandishing Confederate flags. Certainly Confederate memory and white supremacy coexisted in harmony in the minds of the members of the white mob poised to attack, as many were handing out "inflammatory leaflets" signed "White American Christian Patriots." One person was even reportedly dressed in a gorilla costume and carrying a picket sign declaring "Niggers Not Acting Like Colored People."⁵²

The incident, which has since become popularly referred to as Ax Handle Saturday, sparked a week-long series of incidences of race violence in Jacksonville that would ultimately become the catalyst for the formation of the biracial Community Advisory Committee, which was eventually successful in desegregating the lunch counters by the following Spring.⁵³ Ax Handle Saturday is generally considered the most important event in, and turning point of, Jacksonville's Civil Rights Movement. Beyond its historical importance, the event demonstrates how differing public interpretations of meaning in Hemming Park had the potential to clash. As members of Jacksonville's black community fought against the indignity of segregation in the businesses surrounding the park, some members of the white community evoked Confederate memory in the park in their violent attempt to maintain the city's racial status quo.

Memorial Park: Elite Memory for an Elite Neighborhood

Coming out of the First World War, the world was rocked by the extraordinarily rapid advancement in technology that manifested in heretofore unprecedented violence in warfare. One

⁵¹ Kennedy, 18.

⁵² Ibid, 18.

⁵³ Bartley, 103.

way that people sought to soothe the anxiety wrought by the seemingly relentless pace of modernization witnessed throughout the war was to seek solace in memory through avenues such as writing regional histories, designating historic sites, and dedicating monuments.⁵⁴ In Jacksonville, the compulsion to commit those lost to the war effort to the annals of memory was immediate, as the local Rotary Club began their movement to commission a memorial to commemorate Florida's fallen soldiers on November 12, 1918, the day directly following the signing of the armistice that ended the war.⁵⁵ The space that became Memorial Park was previously a privately owned vacant lot and, therefore, did not hold public meaning prior to the establishment of the park. From its very inception, Memorial Park was intended to operate as a place of public memory. Indeed, even from the early stages of development, the park was referred to by the name Memorial Park. However, the geography of the park, being located in Jacksonville's wealthiest and most elite neighborhood, was tremendously important to how memory was interpreted within the park. As with Hemming Park, both memory and geography were essential to creating meaning in Memorial Park, and will be discussed in the following pages.

The effort to establish the World War memorial took much more work on behalf of the citizens of Jacksonville than that of the Confederate Monument in Hemming Park. Charles Hemming purchased and donated the Confederate statue, and hand-picked the monument's location in an already existing park, leaving little to be done other than to plan the dedication ceremonies. In contrast, the making of Memorial Park was a six year endeavor, in which the group calling themselves the Citizens Memorial Committee, had to coordinate every aspect of

⁵⁴ Michael Kammen, *Mystic Chords of Memory: The Transformation of Tradition in American Culture*, (New York: Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group, 1991), Chapters 7 and 8.

⁵⁵ *Florida Times-Union*, 14 December 1924.

the process, including determining the type of memorial to be created, establishing the memorial's location, commissioning and approving a design, and raising the funds needed to accomplish a project of significant magnitude. Therefore, although the movement began immediately following the conclusion of the war, it would be over six years before Memorial Park was dedicated and the monument therein would be unveiled.⁵⁶ Ultimately, as will be discussed in Chapter 3, this effort on the part of Jacksonville citizens would become at least as- if not more- important to how the park lived in public memory during revitalization as the actual rhetorical message conveyed by the monument for which the park was specifically established.

The movement to establish the World War memorial had lofty origins, having begun with Jacksonville's Rotary Club, which was a fraternal organization made up of prominent businessmen and focusing on community service.⁵⁷ Members of the club no doubt had powerful connections and by July of 1919 they had successfully solicited the City of Jacksonville to purchase a 5.85 acre plot of land in Riverside, the wealthy neighborhood where many members of the club resided, for the sum of \$125,000 dollars as a space for the, as yet undetermined, memorial to be placed.⁵⁸ In March of 1920 the original Rotary committee selected to complete the project was dissolved in favor of forming the Citizens Memorial Committee (CMC) with representatives from 31 different civic organizations throughout the city. This decision was the result of opposition on behalf of Jacksonville's American Legion, an organization that generally

⁵⁶ Anne Freeman, "The Development of Memorial Park 1918-2006," Folder 2 'Freeman's Records – Research & History,' MC8.1, Memorial Park Collection, Jacksonville Historical Society.

⁵⁷ Jeffery A. Charles, *Service Clubs in American Society: Rotary, Kiwanis, and Lions*, (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1993), 9-11.

⁵⁸ For members of the Rotary Club residing in Riverside see, for example, Arthur Cummer, Morgan Gress, and George Hardeee in U.S. Census Records, <http://search.ancestry.com/search/db.aspx?dbid=6061> (accessed on 15 August 2015): Year: 1920; Census Place: Jacksonville Ward 9, Duval, Florida; Roll: T625_218; Page: 16B; Enumeration District: 65; Image: 886; Year: 1920; Census Place: Jacksonville Ward 9, Duval, Florida; Roll: T625_218; Page: 8A; Enumeration District: 65; Image: 869; Year: 1920; Census Place: Jacksonville Ward 10, Duval, Florida; Roll: T625_218; Page: 12A; Enumeration District: 67; Image: 959; "Deed of Sale, Robinson Investment Company to City of Jacksonville," 19 July 1919, MC81, Memorial Park Collection, Jacksonville Historical Society; Crooks, *Jacksonville After the Fire*, 133.

viewed themselves as the rightful purveyors of war memory in America.⁵⁹ Despite the establishment of the much more inclusive CMC, it was clear that the committee sought the highest quality in every aspect of the monument's and park's design. The original fund raising goal for the monument and landscaping was \$100,000 as that sum was "thought necessary to erect a suitable monument."⁶⁰ In the end, the committee fell short of its goal, raising approximately \$50,000 in private donations for the monument fund.⁶¹ However, this did not prevent them from commissioning nationally-renowned local sculptor, Adrian Pillars, to create the monument and Olmstead Bros., the country's most elite landscape architecture firm, to design the park.⁶²

While the discussion of Hemming Park considered separately the way that memory and geography established meaning in place, it is more difficult to do so with Memorial Park as the rhetorical devices and discourse closely linked the idea of the park as both a place of public memory and its role within the wealthy Riverside neighborhood. The monument itself, which Pillars named '*Life*,' was somewhat unusual in comparison to others established in America at this time. For example, the American Legion, who tended to dominate the transmission of the memory of the war in the decade following the signing of the Armistice, tended to favor "doughboy" monuments, which "celebrate[d] militaristic ideals, thereby privileging the valor and necessity of war over its tragedy."⁶³ In contrast, Jacksonville's war memorial was allegorical in nature, similar to the type more common in France, which used "iconography that was open-

⁵⁹ *Florida Times-Union*, 30 March 1920; Jennifer Wingate, *Sculpting Doughboys: Memory, Gender, and Taste in America's World War I Memorials*, (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2013), 4.

⁶⁰ *Florida Times-Union*, 3 March 1920.

⁶¹ Anne Freeman, "The Development of Memorial Park 1918-2006," Folder 2 'Freeman's Records – Research & History,' MC8.1, Memorial Park Collection, Jacksonville Historical Society; Joel Freeman, "A Sculptors Work-and His Joy of Creating- Live On," *Shorelines*, 2 July 1994.

⁶² *Florida Times-Union*, 14 August 1921, 14 December 1924.

⁶³ Wingate, 2-5, 7.

ended enough to challenge the prevailing commemorative language of militarism without offending conservative constituencies.”⁶⁴ The program for the monument’s December 25, 1924 dedication ceremony explained Pillars design:

The ball of the group is symbolic of the world enveloped in a whirling flood of earthly passions, selfishness, greed, hatred. Caught in the ceaseless swirl of material forces, the figures of men, women and children are seen battling against submergence, striving to rise above the swirling waters. Standing on tip-toe above this chaos is the figure of Youth risen triumphant to spiritualize life through self-sacrifice. In his figure of winged Youth the artist has visualized the spirit of the men who made the supreme sacrifice- who attained immortality, not through death but deeds- a victory of the spirit rather than of brute force.⁶⁵

Pillars himself described his work as a tribute to those who sacrificed themselves to “a world in the insane grip of greed and ambition... and men caught in the murderous, senseless swirl of selfishness, hate and covetousness...”⁶⁶ *Life* is representative of a small number of war memorials produced during the 1920s that conveys a pacifist message, making it rather unique within America’s World War I memorial landscape.

In addition to the message, Jacksonville’s war memorial was unique in a more obvious way, in that the CMC commissioned it as a one-of-a-kind work of art. Sculptures of this kind were considered elite, a fact that would certainly appeal to the highbrow standards of the original Rotary committee and would be in keeping with the wealthy neighborhood in which Memorial Park was established. In fact, artists producing custom memorial statues charged anywhere from \$25,000 to \$60,000 for their work, while the mass-produced doughboy sculptures could be had for under \$2,000.⁶⁷ Adrian Pillars received the commission for Jacksonville’s memorial as much for his local ties- he was from St. Augustine- as for his “international reputation” as he was

⁶⁴ Ibid, 12 and Chapter 4.

⁶⁵ Memorial Park Dedication Ceremony Program, 25 December, 1924, MC8.1, Memorial Park Collection, Jacksonville Historical Society.

⁶⁶ *Florida Times-Union*, 26 December 1924.

⁶⁷ Wingate, 43.

heralded by the *Florida Times-Union* as “one of the foremost sculptors in America” having previously designed two monuments on the National Mall in Washington D.C.⁶⁸ Seemingly, for Jacksonville’s wealthy citizens spearheading the memorial effort, no expense was spared in commissioning the monument that would be the centerpiece of their neighborhood park.

Perhaps less obvious as a rhetorical device than the monument, the physical space of Memorial Park worked in similar ways to promote the park as a place of memory and reinforce its status as the showpiece of the Riverside neighborhood. Thus, the park itself held meaning grounded in both memory and geography. Indeed, at every stage of design, James F. Dawson, the landscape architect for Olmstead Bros. who designed Memorial Park, navigated a balance between creating a space appropriate to its memorial purpose while being comfortable and accessible for daily use. For example, while the CMC made it clear that there would be “no need of playground or swimming pools” as they would not be in keeping with the park’s memorial function, in Dawson’s design he set aside space that could potentially hold a playground and large shelter, as he thought it likely the committee would want that option upon further consideration.⁶⁹ Even so, Dawson’s design certainly catered to the park’s memorial purpose, placing Pillars’ statue as the centerpiece, encircled by large basin upon which the name of each of Florida’s fallen soldiers could be cast in bronze. The monument would be highlighted by the adjacent “fine open uninterrupted stretches of green field or lawn surrounded with well modeled groupings of plants” that would “permit people to use the field, particularly the soldiers, on

⁶⁸ *Florida Times-Union*, 14 December 1924.

⁶⁹ Notes of James F. Dawson, 23 January 1922, MC81, Memorial Park Collection, Jacksonville Historical Society; Letter from James F. Dawson to Ninah Cummer, 3 February 1922, MC81, Memorial Park Collection, Jacksonville Historical Society. Dawson again suggested a shelter in 1934, when a former CMC officer asked him for a quote on a new flagpole for the park, stating that it was his belief a shelter “would be of more service to the people than a flagpole.” Letter from James F. Dawson to Morgan Gress, 18 October 1934, MC81, Memorial Park Collection, Jacksonville Historical Society.

certain occasions for gatherings they may wish to have.”⁷⁰ Ultimately, the design of the park seamlessly married its purpose as a memorial space and its potential use by Riverside neighborhood patrons:

In general, our conception of the development of this park is that the park be made as simple as possible, unbroken by walks and other objects any more than is absolutely necessary, and to provide a place for the public to come seek as much rest and peace of body and mind as is possible in an area so small and so close to streets and traffic.⁷¹

From the outset, both the monument and landscape design of Memorial Park created a place where the citizens of Jacksonville could not only honor those lost in the war, but to also reflect upon the tragedy of war, or simply relax and enjoy a bit of peaceful rest within the bustling city.

Of course, as with Hemming Park, not all of Jacksonville’s citizens likely had equal access to the refuge of Memorial Park. In addition to the declining circumstances for Jacksonville’s black population in the first decade of the century mentioned earlier, an economic slump at the start of the World War left many of the city’s African American citizens unemployed and in even more destitute conditions, prompting thousands to emigrate north.⁷² By the end of the war, increased patriotism brought with it increased attitudes of white supremacy and less tolerance for diversity.⁷³ Particularly in Jacksonville’s wealthiest neighborhood diversity was not a defining characteristic, as the African Americans who did reside in Riverside did so as servants in white households.⁷⁴ While Memorial Park was not legally segregated, its placement

⁷⁰ Letter from James F. Dawson to Ninah Cummer, 3 February 1922, MC81, Memorial Park Collection, Jacksonville Historical Society.

⁷¹ Letter from James F. Dawson to Ninah Cummer, 3 February 1922, MC81, Memorial Park Collection, Jacksonville Historical Society.

⁷² Crooks, *Jacksonville After the Fire*, 43.

⁷³ *Ibid*, 138-139.

⁷⁴ Census data confirms that within the approximately 75 city blocks that constitute the Riverside neighborhood, all heads of household are white, and those members of the household listed as ‘Negro’ or ‘Mulatto’ are listed as servants. See, for example, U.S. Census Data <http://search.ancestry.com/search/db.aspx?dbid=6061> (accessed on 15 August 2015): Year: 1920; Census Place: Jacksonville Ward 10, Duval, Florida; Roll: T625_218; Page: 8A-14B; Enumeration District: 67; Image: 951-964.

within a wealthy white neighborhood likely limited black access to the park to those acting in a service capacity, either as laborers or in the company of their white charges.

In addition to the demographic of the Riverside neighborhood, the nature of World War I remembrance in general held implications for the racialization of memorial spaces. One major issue was the lack of representation of black soldiers that characterized much of the memorial landscape- or the segregated nature of memorials that did include African Americans- which served to reinforce the perception that “national membership” did not include African Americans, despite their service in the war.⁷⁵ Given that the Citizens Memorial Committee was an effort on behalf of white citizens to establish, in a white neighborhood, a monument which featured the figure of a white youth, memorialization of the World War in Jacksonville is certainly representative of this type of exclusivity. Additionally, the original intent of the committee was to list the names of each soldier who perished on the exterior of the monument without displaying rank so that “the true spirit of democracy will be demonstrated in their like treatment,” declaring that “all are equal and each gave his all in the bloodiest of all human struggles.”⁷⁶ However, this democratic spirit did not apply regarding race, as the committee also asserted that the plaques would be segregated: “Our list will read White; then a space; then Colored.”⁷⁷

It was clearly the goal of the CMC that Memorial Park would act as an important place of public memory in Jacksonville. Originally, the basin surrounding the monument was designed to hold several bronze plaques to list the name of each individual Florida soldier who perished in

⁷⁵ Mark Whalan, *The Great War and the Culture of the New Negro*, (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2008), 195-199.

⁷⁶ *Florida Times-Union*, 12 April 1920.

⁷⁷ Letter from CMC to Olmstead Bros., 25 May 1922, MC81, Memorial Park Collection, Jacksonville Historical Society.

the war effort. Ultimately, the committee underestimated the number of names at 768, and the plaques had to be abandoned when the actual casualties came in in excess of 1,100. Instead, the names were written on parchment in India ink, sealed inside a lead box, which was then sealed inside a cornerstone of the monument basin so that “the names will be readable hundreds of years hence.”⁷⁸ Despite this, Memorial Park actually appears to have held marginal importance in terms of Jacksonville’s commemorative activities. By the time the park and monument were dedicated, Hemming Park was already firmly established as *the* place of public memory in Jacksonville. In fact, memorial events held within the park were few over the course of the twentieth century.⁷⁹ While Memorial Park was established as a place of public memory, in reality its lack of use for public memorial events- and subsequent lack of rhetorical discourse- make it difficult to discern how, or to what degree, the park actually lived in Jacksonville’s public memory. In fact, it isn’t until the 1980’s, when the movement to restore the park and monument begins, that a clear narrative of Memorial Park’s meaning to the public begins to take shape, as will be discussed in Chapter 3.

Conclusion

Hemming and Memorial Parks garnered public meaning through both the historical memory promoted within the space and through their daily functions as determined by their geography, or location within the city. As is evident through the preceding analysis of the rhetoric surrounding each park, Hemming Park held a much more prominent public role in Jacksonville than Memorial Park. Although Memorial Park was specifically established as a place of public memory, the city already had a firmly established space for that function in

⁷⁸ *Jacksonville Journal*, 26 December 1924.

⁷⁹ Memorial Park’s use as a commemorative space is, in fact, conspicuous in its lack of frequency. The *Florida Times-Union* only reported two instances of the park’s use as a Memorial in the years between 1930 and 1966. See *Florida Times-Union*, 30 May 1938 and 31 May 1958.

Hemming Park. As the revitalization and restoration efforts of each park began toward the last quarter of the twentieth century, a new rhetorical discourse would be created around both parks, each highlighting the parks' geographical and memorial meaning to differing degrees, ignoring some aspects of the parks' histories while highlighting others. In the following two chapters, each park will be considered separately to determine how these new discourses worked in service to particular agendas, to redefine meaning in each park, and to define access to each space.

CHAPTER TWO: FROM PARK TO PLAZA: HEMMING PARK REVITALIZATION AND THE RHETORIC OF MEMORY IN DEFINING TRANSGRESSIVE BEHAVIOR

By the first decade of the twenty-first century, the City of Jacksonville, Florida boasted more public recreation land than any other city in the nation.¹ While public parks are certainly an asset to any city, boasting such a massive park system does not come without its drawbacks—namely a continual dearth in the city budget to properly maintain the numerous public parks.² The problem is not a new one. Decline of the city's parks had been noted starting as early as the 1960s, with commenters bemoaning the deterioration of aesthetic appeal and the increase of crime as the parks became gathering places for Jacksonville's homeless citizens.³ Not only did this decay lessen the parks' general appeal, but there was a sense among those most concerned by the decline that something of their history and character had been lost. It was seen, by some, that to allow the parks to come to such a state was to allow their public meaning, their sense of *place*, to wither away. Seeing the parks in such deplorable condition would spark efforts, beginning in the 1970s, to reclaim the parks and reassert their sense of place, and, in so doing, stake claim to the parks for those people and uses that were deemed appropriate. Having established, in Chapter One, a narrative of both Hemming and Memorial Parks' history through the first half of the twentieth century, our examination will now consider each park separately. While both parks garnered meaning through both their position as memorial spaces and through their function as determined by their location within the city, the following two chapters will examine how the revitalization campaigns for Hemming and Memorial Parks utilized, to varying degrees of success, rhetoric of public memory in an attempt recreate a public consensus place

¹ *Jacksonville Daily Record*, 7 October 2004.

² *Ibid.*

³ See for example, *Florida Times-Union*, 27 October 1968 and *Florida Times-Union*, 30 January 1970.

meaning within these two parks. Ultimately, as will be shown, the effort to reclaim meaning in these two historic parks- meaning that was not necessarily representative of the parks' originally established meaning and history- was, in fact, an effort to dictate behavior in, and use of, public space.

To understand how a historical discourse was employed to recreate and manipulate the public meaning of Hemming and Memorial Parks, it is necessary to understand the process by which places become meaningful. Tim Cresswell provides a straightforward model in which *place* can quite simply be understood as “a meaningful location.”⁴ While the terms *place* and *space* are frequently used interchangeably, in this model they are distinguished in relatively basic way. *Place* is a specific locale, usually having a material form, which has “some relationship to humans and the human capacity to produce and consume meaning,” whereas *space* is a more abstract concept.⁵ In Cresswell's model, we understand *space* to be distinctive from place in that it is a “realm without meaning,” and “when humans invest meaning in a portion of space and then become attached to it in some way it becomes place.”⁶ Therefore, it can be assumed that to refer to Hemming and Memorial Parks' effort to assert meaning into the space through revitalization and restoration, is to refer to their effort to turn *space* back into *place*.⁷

Doreen Massey provides a further distinction in understanding *place* that is instructive for the purpose of this study. She demonstrates that *place* must be considered for not only its spatial qualities, but also for its temporal qualities. That is, *place* is not only located in a geographical sense, but it is also located within a moment in time. Therefore, *place* as a meaningful location

⁴ Tim Cresswell, *Place: A Short Introduction*, (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2004), 7.

⁵ Ibid, 7-8.

⁶ Ibid, 10.

⁷ For clarification purposes, the term 'place' is used here to indicate a location that has meaning, but the term 'space' may be used to indicate either a location with no clearly defined meaning or to simply refer, in a very general sense, to an area or local.

“can be understood as articulations of social relationships,” both within and beyond the place, which “influence its character, its ‘identity.’”⁸ Furthermore, Massey maintains that places are inextricably linked to both the past and the present in an “envelope of space-time” in which “the identity of places, indeed the very identification of place *as* particular places, is always in that sense temporary, uncertain, and in process.”⁹

This concept of place as ever-changing- always in the process of developing new meaning rooted in the past but continually being adapted in the present- is essential to understanding the role of establishing meaningful places in society. The aspect of what Massey refers to as the “envelope of space-time” that is rooted in the past is tied to what has been variously termed in modern scholarship as collective memory, social memory, popular memory, cultural memory, and public memory. All of these terms, while nuanced with particular and complex interpretations, all refer to the assumption that members of a society have some sort of shared understanding of the past.¹⁰ This shared understanding is not inert, nor does it ever reach a consensus among the public amid which the memory exists. Therefore, places and their meanings are always in flux as memory of the past is adapted to various political, social, and cultural agendas in the present. “Memory of place is not static but is constantly being contested and redefined. A community seeking to maintain a sacred site must constantly reaffirm its attitudes toward the past.”¹¹

⁸ Doreen Massey, “Places and Their Pasts,” *History Workshop Journal* 39, (Spring 1995), 183-186.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 190.

¹⁰ Carole Blair, Greg Dickinson, and Brian L. Ott, eds., *Places of Public Memory: The Rhetoric of Museums and Memorials* (Tuscaloosa, AL: The University of Alabama Press, 2010), 6.

¹¹ Brian Black and Bryn Varley, “Contesting the Sacred: Preservation and Meaning on Richmond’s Monument Avenue,” In *Monuments to the Lost Cause: Women, Art, and the Landscapes of Southern Memory*, edited by Cynthia Mills and Pamela H. Simpson (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 2003), 235.

To understand the complex and dynamic relationship between memory and place, we must understand the rhetoric that is employed to create meaning within a place. That is, we must understand the discourses, events, objects, and practices that occur within (or in relation to) a locale which convey ideas to the public. Because rhetorical devices are inherently public, rhetoric engaging ideas of the past are always linked to ideas of ‘public memory.’¹² Examining the rhetoric of public memory which exists within a place helps us to understand how meaning is created within a place, and to what purpose that meaning is employed. Looking at the particular rhetoric used during the revitalization of Hemming Park and the restoration of Memorial Park illustrates not only how public memory was used to recreate the parks’ meaningfulness to the public in the last quarter of the twentieth century, but also the fact that the underlying purpose, or agenda, of articulating a particular meaning was to define access to these public spaces in terms of appropriate, or non-transgressive, behaviors.¹³

Indeed, at the most basic level, defining the type of effort that would be employed to renew Hemming Park as a revitalization rather than a restoration, was in itself an important rhetorical device. A revitalization effort can be rooted in, and justified by, the public memory of a place, but it is not *bound* to this memory in terms of establishing the space as a *place of public memory*. Therefore, in Hemming Park, the City of Jacksonville was able to launch a campaign to save the park which paid lip service to the park’s history, but which was still free to completely change the physical space of the park. The idea here was to change the essence of the park from a place for public recreation and relaxation to a place that would serve as a function of the downtown business core as a thoroughfare for commerce. The ultimate goal was to define the

¹² Blair, et al, 2-3. For clarification, the term ‘public’ is one which has been employed in scholarship to portray a multitude of ideas. Here, the term ‘public’ is used simply to refer to all members of a society.

¹³ See Tim Cresswell, *In Place/Out of Place: Geography, Ideology, and Transgression* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), in which the author argues that place meaning is used to define normative behavior within the space.

place as one in which a particular kind of behavior would take place (that which pertained to conducting or patronizing downtown business), thus limiting access to the park to only those segments of the public engaging in those behaviors and making all other activities or uses of the park transgressive.

The Revitalization of Hemming Park

As discussed in Chapter One, Hemming Park played an important role in public life in Jacksonville throughout the first half of the twentieth century. Its station as the city's primary locale for memorial activity as well as its position in the heart of Jacksonville's downtown business district clearly imposed a publicly-recognized meaning on the space as a place where a multitude of social interactions could take place. By the 1970s, however, Hemming Park was suffering from a serious decline in status and tarnished reputation that reflected the general decay of downtown Jacksonville during this time.¹⁴ Unlike the park's early improvements in the late 1880s, when \$700 dollars and a fountain were enough to remake the park's public image, the effort to reform Hemming Park in the last 45 years has not been a simple matter of appropriating money for the purpose of beautification. The problems facing the park stem from much deeper social issues that are rooted in ideas of poverty and the ideological use of public space. The struggle to renew Hemming Park is a struggle between ideas of sanctioned and transgressive behavior, between adhering to an enduring public image and resisting the inevitable change of an urban landscape, and between maintaining control of a commercial center and maintaining the democratic ideal of public space.

"The Old Order Changeth... But Not Hemming Park." So declares a 1951 pictorial record of the city of Jacksonville, printed to commemorate the semicentennial of the Great Fire

¹⁴ Jessie-Lynne Kerr, "Park to Become a Plaza?" *Florida Times-Union*, January 30, 1970.

of 1901 and to celebrate the achievements of the city in the first half of the twentieth century. “In Boston it’s The Common; in New York, Central Park; in San Francisco, Union Square. In Jacksonville it’s Hemming Park, a city block of palms, oaks, shrubs and grass, refuge of checker players and pigeons, smack in the middle of the bustling business district.”¹⁵ This was the image of Hemming Park throughout the first fifty years of the twentieth century; it was both the vital and unchanging center of downtown Jacksonville’s commerce, and also a place of public interaction and recreation. By the late 1970s, when the general deterioration of downtown could no longer be ignored, Hemming Park became the focal point of plans to revitalize Jacksonville’s business core by the Downtown Development Association (DDA), the Jacksonville Chamber of Commerce, and the City Council.¹⁶ In promoting the revitalization of the park as essential to restore downtown, planners harkened back to the memory of the park as the centerpiece of Jacksonville’s vibrant and bustling business district from earlier in the century, but generally ignored the other ways in which Hemming park acted as venue for enacting public life in the city. The rhetoric utilized during the early revitalization effort proclaimed that revitalization would return the park to its former glory as a “public open space and focal point.”¹⁷ However, whether the park was intended to be restored as a truly democratized public space is questionable. An examination of the revitalization efforts of Hemming Park demonstrates the exclusionary nature of the park as a ‘public’ place. Attempts to revitalize the park were, in fact, attempts to endorse certain behaviors and uses of the public space, intentionally designed to eliminate those members of the public who did not fall in line with the ideology promoted.

¹⁵ Carolina Rawls, *The Jacksonville Story: A Pictorial Record of a Florida City, 1901-1951* (1951), Florida Historical Society, Cocoa, FL.

¹⁶ *Florida Times Union*, 15 July 1977.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

In his essay, “The End of Public Space? People’s Park, Definitions of the Public, and Democracy,” Don Mitchell articulates the inherently oppositional nature of public space. He maintains that “struggles over public space are struggles over opposing ideologies, over the ways in which members of society conceptualize public space. These public utterances reflect divergent ideological positions, adhering more or less to one of two poles in discourse about public space: public space as a place of unmediated political interaction, and public space as a place of order, controlled recreation, and spectacle.”¹⁸ Understanding the different ideologies regarding what constitutes public space is important to understanding the nature of the revitalization efforts in Hemming Park. Additionally important to this discussion is an understanding of how ideological meaning is constructed within a place. Tim Cresswell explains how perceptions of meaning within a space are used to define normative behaviors that relate to social structures. He writes that these perceptions are “expectations about behavior that relate a position in a social structure to actions in a space. In this sense ‘place’ combines the spatial with the social- it is ‘social space.’ Insofar as these expectations serve the interest of those at the top of social hierarchies, they can be described as ideological.”¹⁹ To clarify, when Mitchell refers to ideology, he is referring to the ideology of what public space *is* in a universal sense- a place of unmediated interaction verses a place of social order. When Cresswell refers to ideology, he is referring to the particular ideology that exists within a particular place that defines the behavioral expectations of that place. To understand the case of Hemming Park, and the revitalization efforts in the last quarter of the twentieth century, we must understand how both of these uses of ideology were taking place within the space. This examination demonstrates how the idea that

¹⁸ Don Mitchell, “The End of Public Space? People’s Park, Definitions of the Public, and Democracy,” *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 85, No. 1 (March 1995), 125.

¹⁹ Tim Cresswell, *In Place/Out of Place: Geography, Ideology, and Transgression* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), 3.

Hemming Plaza should be a place of social interaction was limited to those interactions that fit within the controlled behavior model laid out by the city and those wishing to revitalize the park. Ultimately, this idea was promoted through a discourse of public memory which promoted the those aspects of the park's history as the center of Jacksonville's business core, and conveniently ignored the multitude of other ways that Hemming Park was an important venue of public life in the city.

By the 1970s it was clear to city officials, local businesspersons, and the media in Jacksonville that something had to be done about downtown. Businesses in the area were suffering and downtown seemed to be in a general decline. The primary reasons offered for the decline were traffic congestion making the area inaccessible and a sense that the area was unsavory and unsafe.²⁰ When the plan to rejuvenate the downtown area was laid forth by the City and the Downtown Development Association, Hemming Park was at the top of the list of projects that would be vital to restoring the area to its former state as a bustling business district and hub for social activity. The plan for the park was to create a pedestrian friendly, mall-like plaza that would create a single-layered brick surface from storefront to storefront encompassed by Laura and Hogan Streets, with the park as the center.²¹ For Hemming Park, this constituted the removal of trees, lawns, and the Bandshell, which had been a popular gathering place for park patrons, as well as the removal of the public bathrooms.²² It was the expressed hope of the planners that this “new” Hemming Park would “provide a public open-forum space focal point in keeping with the new image of Jacksonville.”²³ The design was intended to make the businesses

²⁰ *Florida Times-Union*, 3 December 1978. This article reports on the grand reopening of the park as Hemming Plaza, but looks back on some of the problems faced prior to revitalization.

²¹ *Florida Times-Union*, 15 July 1977.

²² *Florida Times-Union*, 3 December 1978.

²³ *Florida Times-Union*, 15 December 1977.

along Laura and Hogan a part of the park, to encourage pedestrian traffic and increase commerce.²⁴

From the early planning stages we see evidence of rhetoric promoting an ideology about what Hemming Park should be and who should have access to it. “The planners hope to make the park once again a center for wholesome activity,” was the declaration of a 1977 *Florida-Times Union* article about the revitalization and beautification plan.²⁵ But what constituted this wholesome activity? We can assume it was not the activity to which park patrons had become accustomed, as it seems that every effort in planning was made to change the use of the park. In his essay, “Fortress Los Angeles: The Militarization of Urban Space,” Michael Davis argues that one way city officials seek to control the city’s urban space and define its appropriate use is through “a relentless struggle to make the streets as unlivable as possible for the homeless and the poor.”²⁶ We see in the planning for the new Hemming Plaza what Davis refers to as “ingenious design deterrents,” in the removal of the lawn, trees, and Bandshell, which would, of course, be necessary comforts for any sort of prolonged stay in the park under the Florida sun.²⁷ Additionally, the bathrooms were removed, much to public dismay, a move that Davis refers to as “the real frontline of the city’s war on the homeless.”²⁸ Clearly, what the planners saw as ‘wholesome’ activity did not include use of the park beyond its proposed purpose as a pedestrian thoroughfare to promote commerce.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Michael Davis, “Fortress Los Angeles: The Militarization of Urban Space,” In *Variations on a Theme Park: The New American City and the End of Public Space*, edited by Michael Sorkin (New York: Hill and Wang, 1992), 160.

²⁷ Ibid, 161.

²⁸ Ibid, 163.

The park reopened to mixed reviews on December 2, 1978, just in time for the Christmas shopping season with a new name, Hemming Plaza.²⁹ In terms of rhetorical devices, the importance of the name change cannot be overlooked. One of the main, and most easily observed, ways that a place garners meaning is through its name.³⁰ Whereas a park is a place for recreation, a plaza is a place for public business, with implications of retail and commerce. Through renaming, the City and the DDA were sending a strong message that this is a place for people to shop, not for people to sit. Most people did not care for the name change, and even fewer cared for the plan which was not complete. The construction of bricked walks that would connect Laura and Hogan was delayed in order to ensure that the building would not interfere with holiday shopping.³¹ This left what was once a lushly landscaped park, a square of unwelcoming, unfinished brick. On one hand, those planning the revitalization were thrilled with the result and optimistic that it would be the start of great things to come for downtown business. Mayor Hans Tanzler declared at the Hemming Plaza opening that “this is what people think of when they think of Jacksonville. It is the very heartbeat of our city.”³² But not everyone agreed as some in the crowd at the opening were “displeased with the unfinished, rather barren look of the new plaza,” and some in attendance bemoaned the general public dismay at the removal of the band shell, bathrooms, and other concessions to comfort.³³ However, it is not difficult to ascertain the reasoning for their removal as the article maintained that “the old hiding places for ne’er-do-wells are gone. In their place are terraced planters and open spaces.”³⁴ By making the park as *unpark-like* as possible, the revitalization of Hemming Park was clearly geared toward

²⁹ *Florida Times-Union*, 30 September 1984.

³⁰ Cresswell, *Place*, 8.

³¹ *Florida Times-Union*, 30 September 1984.

³² *Florida Times-Union*, 3 December 1978.

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ *Ibid.*

promoting business traffic and excluding anybody who did not have money to spend on commerce.

It didn't take long for the Hemming Plaza renewal to prove a resounding failure. As early as the following year, the plaza was already beginning to show signs of deterioration and the failure of its use as a commercial thoroughfare.³⁵ The major problems stemmed from the fact that planners, under the administration of Mayor Tanzler, failed to provide any sort of provision for maintenance of the new plaza, and the fact that the money originally earmarked to complete construction on the brick paths was redistributed for other projects.³⁶ For the next six years, Hemming Plaza existed as an island of level brick amid the busy streets of downtown Jacksonville. Rather than connecting area business to the park and promoting pedestrian traffic as was originally intended, the result of the 1978 revitalization was to make the plaza an uncomfortable and unwelcoming square serving to further isolate park patrons from downtown commerce.³⁷ Or as one commentator put it, "somewhere about that time, people stopped thinking of Hemming Park as a park."³⁸

The enduring result was that business suffered even more, and stores had begun to leave what was once the core of downtown business in droves by the mid-1980s.³⁹ In 1984, in an attempt to once again restore the square to its former glory, with the goal of revitalizing downtown Jacksonville, the city and the DDA once again returned to plans for Hemming Plaza. Their solution for the problem was to pick-up where the 1978 renewal left off, and finish the

³⁵ See for example, *Florida Time-Union*, 15 April 1979, article referring to "drifters and others" occupying space in the park. Also, *Florida Times-Union*, 11 August 1979, article discussing possibility of changing the Jacksonville Transit Authority transfer point because bus traffic was causing uncleanliness.

³⁶ *Florida Times-Union*, 20 January 1980 and *Florida Times-Union*, 6 October 1991.

³⁷ *Florida Times-Union*, 29 September, 1991.

³⁸ *Florida Times-Union*, 6 October, 1991.

³⁹ *Florida Times-Union*, 21 July 1986.

construction that would extend the plaza to the storefronts along Laura and Duval Streets.⁴⁰ This era of revitalization was intended to encourage commerce just as the earlier plan did, however, in reality, downtown business suffered tremendously as construction dragged on for nearly two years, making the area aesthetically unpleasant and difficult to traverse, and keeping bus traffic diverted away from the square.⁴¹ The final nail in the coffin for hopes of restoring Hemming Plaza as ‘The Heartbeat of Jacksonville’ came in 1987 when May Cohen, the last major retailer on the square moved out.⁴²

By the early 1990s, it seemed to be a widely accepted fact that attempting to rejuvenate downtown business through promoting commercial use of the space was an utter failure. In 1991, journalist Bill Foley quipped, “From Day 1, Jacksonville had Parks. From Day 2, they were neglected. From Day 3, they were renewed. They live on. Rooted in the past. Renewed each day. Islands in the urban-space. Changing but twig by sprig. Except for Hemming Park. They flat out did that one in.” Foley goes on to lament that “Hemming Park became history. Hemming Plaza became whatever it is. It has fallen into disuse as a park, although many city buses stop there. What used to be Hemming Park is significant in a discussion of parks mostly because of what it once was.”⁴³ The tone of Foley’s diatribe seems to suggest a citizen exasperated and displeased with the mishandling of what was once a glorious city landmark. Hemming Plaza was a failure, Hemming Park was missed, and the city and the DDA had botched the job from day one.

A New Method: Making Ideologically Transgressive Behaviors Illegal Behaviors

Having failed to restore the glory of downtown through beautification and promoting Hemming Plaza as a commercial space- with the goal of excluding the non-commercial public-

⁴⁰ *Florida Times-Union*, 26 January 1984.

⁴¹ *Florida Times-Union*, 4 October 1986 and *Florida Times-Union*, 23 June 1987.

⁴² *Florida Times-Union*, 25 December 1996.

⁴³ *Florida Times-Union*, 29 September 1991.

the city sought a new direction. A *Florida Times-Union* article from 1992 demonstrates the sentiment regarding Hemming Plaza at this time:

Hemming Plaza, the aching heart of Jacksonville, has become a haven for homeless, a roost for pigeons and a fertile ground for dreams. If downtown is to be revived, the once-proud Hemming must be part of the plans. So as the City Council ponders sweeping restrictions of hoboes, here's a look at the plaza and its problems.⁴⁴

The article then goes on to describe a daily scene around Hemming Plaza, starting with a young white woman, Pam Horne, who works in the area, being approached- and feeling threatened by- an African American homeless man who proceeds ask her for money and then harass her when she refuses. "Ms. Horne, 24, is the kind of person city leaders want downtown. The Romeos and moochers they can do without."⁴⁵ The article then proceeds to interview area business proprietors who insist that the homeless in Hemming Plaza are hurting business as they offer graphic descriptions of them defecating in the street, hassling patrons for money, and just generally making people uncomfortable. Finally, we see here the murmurings of a new direction in city action to rejuvenate downtown as the article maintains that "City Council has proposed a law making it illegal for people to panhandle. It also would be unlawful to sleep, bathe or wash one's clothes on public property."⁴⁶

Don Mitchell's essay, discussed earlier, looks at the same issue as enacted in Berkeley, California's City Park in 1991. Responding to virtually the same situation in Berkeley as the one that existed in Jacksonville, Mitchell demonstrates how behaviors which are legitimate when carried out in private, such as bathing, using the bathroom, and sleeping, become illegitimate when carried out in public space. He writes that "the existence of homeless people in public thus undermines the ideological order of modern societies... For reasons of order, then, the homeless

⁴⁴ *Florida Times-Union*, 31 May 1992.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

have been eliminated from most definitions of ‘the public.’”⁴⁷ This need to maintain order, then, is offered as the justification to criminalize behaviors such as sleeping and using the restroom when carried out in a public space. Furthermore, as Michael Davis argued, this positions a city’s police force as ‘space police,’ requiring them to enforce the ideologically sanctioned use of the space.⁴⁸

Having failed to revitalize downtown through creating a definition of the ‘public’ as sanctioned by the ideological use of Hemming Plaza as a commercial thoroughfare- and the appropriate public as those in a position to act in this capacity- city leaders in Jacksonville sought a new avenue to define use of the public space. While the revitalization effort in the 1970s sought to push Jacksonville’s homeless citizens out of Hemming Park by physically altering the space and attempting reform the public’s conception of the park, by the early 1990s they were able to target the homeless in a much more direct manner. Perhaps one explanation for this new tactic is the changed perception of poverty and the homeless that prevailed throughout the 1980s, as Middle America embraced a more conservative ideology which equated economic prosperity with individual responsibility and morality. Having come through a decade of political and social conservatism which championed social order and stability, by the early 1990s it was possible for rhetoric to take shape which could essentially justify the criminalization of poverty as necessary in order to maintain social order.⁴⁹

In December of 1995, the city enacted an ordinance that prohibited sleeping, camping, or lying down in streets, sidewalks, cars, or doorways. The offense was punishable by a \$25 fine,

⁴⁷ Mitchell, 118.

⁴⁸ Michael Davis, 174-176.

⁴⁹ David Farber, *The Rise and Fall of Modern American Conservatism: A Short History*, (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2010); Ella Howard, *Homeless: Poverty and Place in Urban America*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013).

10 days in jail, and a minimum of 50 hours of community service.⁵⁰ The ordinance was not without critics, and was ultimately overturned less than a year after its enactment and declared unconstitutional.⁵¹ Once again, the city had failed to force a definition of the appropriate ‘public’ on Hemming Plaza. However, as evidenced by the fact that the homeless were set up as a threat to local merchants, and business owners were portrayed as champions of the ordinance, it seems that this was, in fact, the ultimate goal of the ordinance.⁵² Shop owners in the area around the park lamented the overturning of the ordinance. “Those of us who are making a contribution, paying our taxes, trying to run a decent business, where are our rights? ... It's going to make it worse for us again. There are people who won't walk through the plaza because of this element.”⁵³ Another shop worker in the area said “it really scares me to leave this building... a customer is not going to come in here when it's dark outside and there's a homeless guy right in front of that door.”⁵⁴

The failure of the 1995 ordinance to define the appropriate use of Hemming Plaza did not end the city’s effort to use legislation in this way. Other efforts came and went throughout the late 1990s that advocates for the homeless criticized as unfair attempts to make homelessness illegal.⁵⁵ Indeed, even despite the promise of increased business to the downtown area, the memory of Hemming Park is still mourned.⁵⁶ A 2012 article, tellingly titled “Hemming Plaza Deserves a Better Fate,” summarized the last 40 years of the parks existence quite succinctly:

It's not just the homeless... The plaza, over the decades, has had all kinds of personalities as the make-up of area businesses changed. Once a center of retail activity in downtown

⁵⁰ *Florida Times-Union*, 3 November 1996 and *Florida Times-Union*, 22 November 1996.

⁵¹ *Florida Times-Union*, 22 November 1996.

⁵² *Florida Times-Union*, 23 November 1996.

⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵ See for example *Florida Times-Union*, 19 January 1998 and *Florida Times-Union*, 15 June 1998.

⁵⁶ *Florida Times-Union*, 28 May 2007 and *Florida Times-Union*, 6 March 2012.

Jacksonville, the area gradually declined until government buildings were moved there as part of a revitalization effort. But also moving there were homeless and panhandlers and transients. If not dangerous, they tend to make visitors feel uncomfortable... Among the reasons for lack of agreement on solutions: This is not a simple issue. Also, there are constitutional protections regarding free assembly...There still are businesses that have survived, however, and they deserve to be heard.⁵⁷

Finally, one more point must be made regarding the revitalization campaign of Hemming Park. As stated earlier, the use of the rhetoric of public memory throughout revitalization was very strategic, and that strategy is made conspicuous when those aspects of the park's history that were ignored throughout revitalization are taken into consideration. Both, the park's role as the center of memorial activity in Jacksonville and its position as the epicenter of the city's Civil Rights Movement received no mention in the rhetorical discourse espousing Hemming Park's importance in public life in Jacksonville. As demonstrated in Chapter One, both were essential factors in making meaning in the park in the first three quarters of the twentieth century, but the rhetoric of revitalization made absolutely no mention of the Confederate Monument, commemorative activities and public celebrations, or Ax Handle Saturday. This could be, in part, due to a desire to avoid topics which had the potential to ignite controversy around the revitalization campaign. However, considering that the revitalization effort ultimately sought to recreate the park in the minds of the city's citizens as a place that was not for general gathering and recreation, it is equally likely that these aspects of Hemming Park's history were avoided because they would serve as a reminder of its former position as a place where public life was enacted openly and in a multitude of ways.

Conclusion

Up until very recently the rhetorical devices employed to revitalize Hemming Plaza can be seen as two fold. First, to create a discourse that harkened back to the days when Hemming

⁵⁷ *Florida Times-Union*, 6 March 2012.

Park was the venerated center of local business, in order to promote use of the park by endorsing the segment of the public who could engage in commerce and exclude that segment who could not. And second, to attempt to take physical control of the space through legislation which essentially criminalized the behavior of the public who did not fit with the park's approved use as a business thoroughfare. The failure thus far to revitalize Hemming Park can be attributed to the City's failure to redefine the park's meaning and, therefore, to dictate public access and use to the park based on that meaning. However, the struggle to revitalize Hemming Park continues today, and the most recent efforts seem to be attempting to correct past mistakes. In September 2014, the City of Jacksonville entered into a public/private partnership with a non-profit organization called the Friends of Hemming Park (FHP), which will be jointly funded through the City and private donations to manage the park. Hemming Park is still seen as an essential element in the overall revival of downtown Jacksonville. As the president of the FHP stated, "the park is an important domino... Once it's in motion the other downtown projects will follow."⁵⁸ In September of 2015, FHP announced their improvement plans which include restoring trees, planters and lawn spaces, building a kids' zone, and providing space for live music and concessions. This plan, which is geared toward making the park a welcoming public recreation space once again, seems to indicate that FHP understands that what will save the park is to restore its public image *as a park*. In this regard, they have already achieved one major success: as of September 2015, Hemming Plaza was official renamed to Hemming Park, once again.⁵⁹

⁵⁸ *Florida Times-Union*, 9 September 2014.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

CHAPTER THREE: MEMORIAL PARK RESTORATION: RHETORIC IN CREATING A “PLACE OF PUBLIC MEMORY”

Throughout the 1980s and 90s the effort to revitalize Hemming Park was the topic of much public criticism in Jacksonville. Many of the city’s citizens did not understand how city officials, the DDA, and the Chamber of Commerce could justify fundamentally changing so much of what the park was- and what it represented to the city- as an attempt to make the park great again. It was amid this air of general discontent with the city’s efforts toward the park- at a point when the revitalization’s utter failure was made evident with the impending closing of May Cohen, the last major retailer on the square- that the campaign to renew Memorial Park began in 1986. In contrast to Hemming Park, the renewal of Memorial Park was undergone as a restoration which, in terms of rhetoric, both rooted efforts in ideas of public memory and bound park restoration to ideas of historical significance and authenticity. In much the same way revitalization attempted to make Hemming Park a place for business or commerce, the restoration of Memorial Park attempted to lend it an air of sacredness, by making it a *place of public memory*.

Of course, as with the Hemming revitalization, ultimately the specific rhetoric employed during the restoration effort was used strategically to promote a specific outcome beyond simply returning the park to its former aesthetic appeal. In their discussion of the complex relationship between rhetoric, memory, and place, Carole Blair, Greg Dickinson, and Brian L. Ott maintain that rhetoric is inherently partisan. “Rhetoric has understood, in most of its western renditions, that discourses, events, objects, and practices have attitude. They are not ‘neutral’ or ‘objective,’ but tendentious. They are understood as deployments of material signs serving as the grounds for

various identifications or perceived alignments to take shape.”¹ Essentially, rhetorical devices are used to promote a specific point of view, and result in a specific outcome. Those that exist within a space communicate ideas about what the space *is* that are consequential to how the space is *used*. Like the campaign in Hemming Park, the Memorial Park restoration tied ideas about appropriate and transgressive behaviors within the park to the meaning that was created throughout the restoration campaign. By constructing the idea of the park as a place where public memory lived, the restoration, in fact, defined appropriate behavior as those which were respectful to the park’s historical meaning.

The Restoration of Memorial Park

Without doubt, the rhetorical devices that were utilized through the development and founding of Memorial park were intended to establish it as a place of public memory. The monument’s meaning of youth overcoming tragedy, the bronze tablets honoring the memory of the fallen soldiers and commemorating the efforts of Duval County citizens for their contributions, the placement and landscaping of the park, all sent a message of civic unity and articulated the idea that the park was a place of dignity and remembrance. However, as the events that memorials commemorate grow less immediate to the public over time, these messages also grow less immediate, or are lost to the general public altogether.² This was certainly the case with Memorial Park. In an article published 50 years after the park’s founding, it was said of *Life* that “he has been around so long, he only receives an occasional glance from passersby, and strollers and fishermen alike in the waterfront park generally ignore the whole

¹ Carol Blair, Greg Dickinson, and Brian L. Ott, eds., *Places of Public Memory: The Rhetoric of Museums and Memorials*, (Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 2010), 4-5.

² David Glassberg, *Sense of History: The Place of the Past in American Life*, Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 2001), 54-57.

thing.”³ That is not to say that the park and its monument were not well-known or recognized—they were. Rather the rhetorical devices which established the park as a significant memorial space were no longer remembered or recognized to the majority of citizens and, therefore, the park had lost its position as a place of public memory.

It wasn't until Anne Freeman, who organized the Memorial Park Association (MPA) in 1986 for the purpose of restoration and beautification of space, conducted extensive research into the park's past that the history and original memorial meaning were fully recognized once more.⁴ Freeman's primary concern in beginning the movement to restore Memorial Park was the “abuse and deterioration” of the landscaping and monument, as well as the presence of “undesirables” in the park.⁵ Once Freeman's research had revealed the history and “national significance” of the park, the MPA embarked upon a restoration effort that would make known the park's history and original meaning as a memorial. As will be shown here, the rhetorical devices used in MPA's revitalization campaign served the purpose of reaffirming the park's position as an important place where public memory lived in Jacksonville, and in so doing, was able to articulate a standard of appropriate use of the space in keeping with the newly asserted meaning.

This discussion of the Memorial Park restoration campaign will follow thematically, to examine how the rhetoric employed in restoration is consistent with that of public memory. It is prudent at this point, therefore, to clarify what makes a *place of public memory* and what rhetorical devices are employed to do so. The concept of public memory has been explored

³ Judge May, “City's 1st Streaker Struck in Bronze,” *Florida Times-Union*, 20 March 1974.

⁴ Memorial Park Association, “Articles of Incorporation for the Memorial Park Association, Inc.,” MC8.2 Box 1, Memorial Park Collection, Jacksonville Historical Society. Anne Freeman to Laura D'Alisera, 18 June 1987, MC8.3 Box 4, Memorial Park Collection, Jacksonville Historical Society.

⁵ Anne Freeman, Report compiled for Gifford Grange, February 1986, MC8.2 Box 2, Memorial Park Collection, Jacksonville Historical Society. For clarification, the term “undesirables” is never clearly defined in the documents relating to park restoration. Based on the synthesis of all available sources, it is assumed here that “undesirables” is a term employed to refer to both homeless citizens and citizens engaging in criminal behavior in the park.

extensively in historical scholarship of the twentieth century and has, therefore, been defined differently in numerous studies in ever more complex and nuanced ways. Given the essentiality of rhetoric to the present argument, the definition employed here will be that set forth by Blair, et. al. in their study of the relationship between rhetoric, memory, and place. These authors tell us that public memory is “a shared understanding of the past” which is “activated by concerns, issues, or anxieties of the present,” and which “constructs identities that are embraced, that attract adherents (as well as dissidents).”⁶ An important way that public memory is constructed is through the employment of rhetorical devices in public places that mobilize partisan and consequential messages in order to promote the political, social, or cultural agendas of various interest groups. The places where this occurs, then, become *places of public memory*.⁷ Rhetoric in (or in relation to) public space is used to create places of public memory in a variety of ways and utilizing various rhetorical devices including (but certainly not limited to) discourse relating the past and present in a particular space, objects such as monuments and markers, and events and practices held within the space. It is through these devices that certain messages are conveyed to signify a space as a place of public memory. First, places of public memory are upheld as places that hold significant historical value. They are heralded as *the* places of civic importance and fulfill an expectation of authenticity that make history visible and tangible. Second, places of public memory serve to create continuity between the past and present, which has the potential to establish a sense of public unity and create public identities. Finally, places of public memory mobilize power through the messages they convey. Inherent in this is the ability

⁶ Blair, et. al., 6-22.

⁷ Ibid, 22-32.

to promote partisan ideologies, the most important of which for the current discussion is the ability to define normative behaviors within a space.⁸

For nearly thirty years now, the MPA has worked in partnership with the City of Jacksonville to complete various projects to restore and beautify Memorial Park, including repairing the grounds and landscaping, restoration and preservation of *Life*, and upgrading the lighting and irrigation systems. The rhetoric employed throughout the entire restoration process is exemplary of that which signifies places of public memory. First, the MPA has sought to convey the historical significance of the park, both locally and nationally, attempting to return the park as authentically as possible to its original state and relating the park's history and memorial meaning, which generally is believed to have been forgotten. Second, the MPA has promoted the idea that restoration of Memorial Park provides the citizens of Jacksonville with an opportunity to reclaim a connection to their past, maintaining that the park is part of Jacksonville's identity and a source of unifying civic pride. Finally, having established the park's historical and civic importance, the restoration of Memorial Park has articulated what behaviors in and uses of the park are appropriate in consideration of the ideologies set forth through restoration.

In a report compiled for District One City Councilman, Gifford Grange, in February of 1986, Anne Freeman proclaimed that "Memorial Park is Jacksonville's most beautiful landmark. The memorial statue is the finest in the City and the setting on the waterfront looking down the mouth of the St. Johns River is unequalled." Freeman goes on to assert that "in recent years the park has suffered abuse and deterioration," and that "a total restoration and renovation is needed

⁸ Ibid, 25-30. Cresswell, *In Place/Out of Place*, 3-8.

to return the park to its original glory and purpose.”⁹ In the report, she prioritizes the park’s needs. At the very top of the list- the number one priority to save Memorial Park- Freeman lists the need for a “usage policy.”¹⁰ This report, which was created several months prior to the establishment of MPA, indicates how the park’s history was inextricably linked to present concerns even from the earliest mobilization of restoration efforts. Freeman’s report demonstrates that at the heart of restoration efforts is the idea that Memorial Park should be returned “to its original glory and purpose,” and that the primary component of making this happen is to define policies for the park’s appropriate use.

In order to reconcile the park’s past as justification for regulating use of the space in the present, the MPA sought to establish the park as a place of public memory and relied on rhetoric extolling the park’s historical significance to do so. One of the first accomplishments that the MPA could claim was the completion of extensive research into the park’s history.¹¹ Although, as discussed in Chapter One, by the time Memorial Park opened in 1925, the city of Jacksonville already had a park that was considered the focal point of public remembrance in Hemming Park, the rhetoric employed throughout the Memorial Park restoration campaign generally ignored this fact, extolling the park as the most significant memorial space in the city. Furthermore, through conducting its research, the organization began to realize a claim to significance that Hemming Park could not claim: that Memorial Park was not only a local landmark, but that it also held national significance, at least in the minds of the members of the MPA. “I have learned that our park is of national value... We are doing on a small scale the same thing that Central Park

⁹ Anne Freeman, Report compiled for Gifford Grange, February 1986, MC8.2 Box 2, Memorial Park Collection, Jacksonville Historical Society, 2. For clarification, Gifford Grange was the councilman representing the district in which Memorial Park is located at the time MPA was established. We see from this that from the outset restoration efforts occurred in compliance and partnership with the City of Jacksonville.

¹⁰ Ibid, 3.

¹¹ Memorial Park Association, Membership Drive Pamphlet, May 1988, MC8.2 Box 2, Memorial Park Collection, Jacksonville Historical Society.

Conservancy is doing.”¹² Freeman’s reference to Central Park is not surprising, as Memorial Park’s position as an Olmstead Bros. park, the firm famous for designing Central Park, was seen as one of two primary factors lending the park historical significance. The other was the legacy of the park’s statue, *Life*, as the work of nationally renowned sculptor Adrian Pillars. MPA literature and local newspapers nearly always relate the history of the park as of unique importance to Jacksonville because of these two claims to national significance.¹³

The park’s historic value became one of the most important aspects of promoting restoration efforts, because it was not simply that the park’s past mattered, but that restoration was the means through which Jacksonville’s citizens would realize the value of what they had. In essence, MPA used promotion of Memorial Park’s historical significance as a rhetorical device to reaffirm meaning in the park based on the past. The idea that the public should come to an understanding of why the park was originally founded became synonymous with discussion of the historical significance. In an article fittingly titled “Friends of Memorial Park Seek to Restore Area to Original Splendor” Anne Freeman was quoted saying, “I don’t think most people realize why the park was built and what it means.”¹⁴ The story goes on to maintain that “they are about to find out. Memorial Park is much more than one neighborhood’s piece of greenery. It’s a special place for all of us. The spirits of 1,220 Floridians who died too young, too horribly and too far from home hover there.”¹⁵ Further emphasizing the visibility of the park’s memorial

¹² Anne Freeman quoted by Cynthia Parks, “‘Winged Victory’: Taking Care of a Riverside Treasure,” *Florida Times-Union*, 25 January 1988.

¹³ See, for example: Memorial Park Association, Membership Drive Pamphlet, May 1988, MC8.2 Box 2, Memorial Park Collection, Jacksonville Historical Society. Cynthia Parks, “Neighbors Restore *Life* to Memorial Park,” *Florida Times-Union*, 12 June 1989. National Association for Olmstead Parks Newsletter, Fall 1991, MC8.1, Memorial Park Collection, Jacksonville Historical Society. Anne Freeman to Paul Crawford, 15 July 2005, MC8.3 Box 4, Memorial Park Collection, Jacksonville Historical Society.

¹⁴ Anne Freeman quoted by George Harman, “Friends of Memorial Park Seek to Restore Area to Original Splendor,” *Florida Times-Union*, 1 November 1987.

¹⁵ George Harman, “Friends of Memorial Park Seek to Restore Area to Original Splendor,” *Florida Times-Union*, 1 November 1987.

meaning is the fact that the original membership drive in 1988 was conducted in conjunction with Memorial Day, despite the fact that the park was not the site of the Jacksonville's Memorial Day Ceremonies.¹⁶ The promotional pamphlet for the drive proclaimed:

It has been said that a park can be viewed as being as well endowed as a museum with visual beauty... as emotionally uplifting as a symphony orchestra... and as rich as a library in opportunities for instructional and arts activities... and as a living memorial to the 1,220 Florida soldiers who laid down their lives for liberty, such are the cultural qualities of the Memorial Park we envision.¹⁷

Ultimately, the idea being touted was that support for the restoration effort constituted the “rescue of a commemorative park too precious to write off.”¹⁸ By conveying the park's original meaning as a memorial in conjunction with restoration efforts, the MPA was essentially using this discourse as a rhetorical device to reassert the park's historical meaning to a contemporary audience. Therefore, the discussion of Memorial Park's historical significance served to not only inform the park's physical restoration, but also to assert meaning in the park in relation to its past.

One final point should be considered regarding historical significance and rhetorical devices used to establish Memorial Park as a place of public memory, and that is the “expectation of and investment in ‘authenticity.’”¹⁹ Before any work had actually been completed it was said of the MPA that “most of all, the association wants to restore the park as nearly as possible to the plan devised by the Olmstead Brothers at the end of World War I.”²⁰ At every phase of the project the association adhered to this goal, meticulously renewing the statue,

¹⁶ “Memorial Park Membership Drive Set for this Weekend,” *The Westside Neighbor*, 28 May 1988.

¹⁷ Memorial Park Association, Membership Drive Pamphlet, May 1988, MC8.2 Box 2, Memorial Park Collection, Jacksonville Historical Society.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ Blair, et. al., 26. The authors discuss how an impression of historical authenticity is a signifier of places of public memory related to the place's perceived historical significance.

²⁰ George Harman, “Friends of Memorial Park Seek to Restore Area to Original Splendor,” *Florida Times-Union*, 1 November 1987.

landscaping, plaza, sidewalks, entrances, balusters, benches, lamp posts, and trash receptacles along the park's original designs.²¹ Perhaps most telling of all was the heated debate that took place among members of MPA in 2005 when it was first proposed that the restoration of two eagles statues, which originally stood in park but had been gone for many years, be cast in bronze rather than stone as were the originals. It was felt by some in the MPA that bronze would be both more aesthetically pleasing and easier to clean should the statues be vandalized. Other members responded vehemently that to compromise the original design would compromise the entire project proclaiming that "this proposal deviates from our restoration commitment and threatens the Association's future funding as well as that of the Parks Department for Memorial."²² Ultimately the purists in the group lost the debate, but it took several years. In 2011, the eagles were restored in bronze in what was justified as a "contemporary representation" of the original design.²³ In the entire history of MPA, the bronze eagles are one of a very few compromises to the park's original design, which will be discussed later.

So far, the discussion of the rhetoric of Memorial Park's restoration has focused on the importance of the *past* in creating places of public memory. We turn our attention now to the ways in which rhetoric is used to convey ideas about the *present* in relation to places of public memory. The rhetoric used in these places bear the message that memory places are where we experience continuity with the past. Through this continuity- which is perceived as a shared

²¹ See, for example: "Restoration of Memorial Park Depends on Citizen Generosity," *Florida Times-Union*, 9 April 1989. *Florida Times-Union*, 3 November 1993. "Park Will Have New Amenities," *Florida Times-Union*, 24 February 2001.

²² Anne Freeman to Paul Crawford, 15 July 2005, MC8.3 Box 4, Memorial Park Collection, Jacksonville Historical Society. Herschel Shepard to Wade Hampton, 27 June 2005, MC8.3 Box 4, Memorial Park Collection, Jacksonville Historical Society. Wade Hampton to Herschel Shepard, 23 August 2005, MC8.3 Box 4, Memorial Park Collection, Jacksonville Historical Society. Herschel Shepard to Wade Hampton, 1 September 2005, MC8.3 Box 4, Memorial Park Collection, Jacksonville Historical Society.

²³ Memorial Park Association, "The Eagles Have Landed!" 29 May 2011, Subject Files "Parks, Memorial Park," Jacksonville Historical Society.

experience with other members of the community- places of public memory attempt to convey a sense of civic unity and community identity.²⁴ In this way, the campaign to restore Memorial Park did not simply look to the past, but attempted to promote the park as meaningful in the present because of its capacity to unify citizens of Jacksonville in the present through their shared past.

In a letter soliciting support for the restoration, the MPA declared that “in these uncertain times, it is reassuring to have tangible connections to our past. Strong links to our roots. The comfort of the familiar in our fast-paced world. For many of us, Memorial Park is the connection.” The language used promotes a sense of shared memory as it goes on to say “the beautiful park is steeped in the history of our lives and in the lives that the LIFE statue memorializes.”²⁵ Consistently associated with this idea of Memorial Park as a link to the community’s past, is the idea that the park inspires civic unity. In the rhetoric used to garner support for the restoration campaign, the park’s founding by a citizens’ group is continually harkened back to in order to draw comparisons between the efforts of the Citizens Memorial Committee and support for the modern day efforts of the MPA.²⁶ Indeed, support for restoration was seen as the measure by which the city could compare its present to its past- “How well Jacksonville Citizens... respond to the effort to revive Memorial Park will tell us how well our civic spirit today compares with the pride of our citizens in 1918.” Finally, there is a sense that the park provided the citizens of Jacksonville a way to not only compare themselves with past

²⁴ Blair, et. al., 27.

²⁵ Memorial Park Association to Friends of Memorial Park, 28 May 2004, MC8.3 Box 4, Memorial Park Collection, Jacksonville Historical Society.

²⁶ See, for example: “Association Raises Funds to Redo *Life*,” *Florida Times-Union*, 19 August 1989. Memorial Park Association, Membership Drive Pamphlet, May 1988, MC8.2 Box 2, Memorial Park Collection, Jacksonville Historical Society. Anne Freeman to Laura D’Alisera, 18 June 1987, MC8.3 Box 4, Memorial Park Collection, Jacksonville Historical Society. *Westside Neighbor*, 10 December 1986.

citizens, but a way to be united in the present. Through the effort to save this piece of the past “anyone in the community can be a part of the message Pillars left.”²⁷

Along with providing a sense of civic unity, rhetoric conveying the idea that the park provides continuity with the past also sought to position the park as essential to community identity. The park was deemed throughout the restoration efforts as both symbolic of the Riverside neighborhood, in which it sits, and of the city of Jacksonville as a whole. In an article discussing the park’s history it is emphasized that despite its national significance, the park “was established, however, as a purely Jacksonville project.” The article goes on to urge support for “the repair of *Life* so that the park will be what it once was – a fitting memorial and a symbol of a city’s spirit.”²⁸ The MPA certainly didn’t hesitate to define their importance to the city of Jacksonville when they declared that “parks act to define the shape and feel of a city and its neighborhoods. For 80 years, Riverside’s Memorial Park has played that role in Jacksonville.”²⁹ Both the sense of civic unity and community identity that were promoted throughout Memorial Park’s restoration served to convey the same message: Memorial Park is an essential part of life in Jacksonville and is immediately important to citizens in the present.

Thus far it has been established that the rhetoric of Memorial Park’s restoration attempted to define meaning in the park based on the past and establish the park’s importance to citizens in the present. These ideas are, of course, interconnected and both are important aspects of how a space is established as a place of public memory. What remains is to discuss how these ideas are used to mobilize power within places of public memory. As stated earlier, in the case of Memorial Park, one of the primary goals of the park’s restoration was to define use of the space.

²⁷ “Long Awaited Project Started,” *Florida Times-Union*, 3 March 1992.

²⁸ “Restoration of Memorial Park Provides a Measure of Civic Spirit,” *Florida Times-Union*, 17 June 1989.

²⁹ Memorial Park Association, *A Walk in the Park* Vol. 1 Is. 4 (2005), 4.

Concern over behavior in the park was not a vague notion to be addressed through restoration- it was the motivating factor behind Memorial Park's restoration:

Parks created in the early years of this century as emblems of civic beauty have deteriorated as their surrounding neighborhoods have declined. Such parks inevitably become ill-tended, unkempt and insecure. Shunned, they are abandoned to socially undesirable uses like drugs sales or opportunistic robbery, and the increasing notoriety gives them an even bleaker reputation. As loyal and patriotic Americans, the extremely offensive arrogance of these creeps and thugs proliferating the Park finally transformed our outrage into determined action.³⁰

Thus motivated to eliminate criminal behavior enacted by "creeps and thugs" the MPA worked to reverse the decline by restoring the deteriorated park both physically and figuratively. The authentic restoration could reestablish Memorial Park's beauty, but fully restoring the park to "its former glory and purpose" could only be done by eliminating "socially undesirable uses" of the park space.

As stated earlier, very few compromises were made in authenticity to the original design in the Memorial Park's restoration. Where concessions were made, they were always in service to increasing park security and reducing the likelihood or impact of criminal behavior in the park. First, low walls around the park's borders were replaced with tall wrought iron fences to discourage people entering the park after hours (after 10 p.m.).³¹ Next, increased lighting was installed with vandal resistant globes to increase park security.³² Finally, the hotly debated issue

³⁰ Memorial Park Association, Membership Drive Pamphlet, May 1988, MC8.2 Box 2, Memorial Park Collection, Jacksonville Historical Society.

³¹ Randall Berg memo to MPA Trustees, 29 December 1993, MC8.2 Box 1, Memorial Park Collection, Jacksonville Historical Society.

³² Memorial Park Association Meeting Minutes, 17 April 1993, MC8.2 Box 1, Memorial Park Collection, Jacksonville Historical Society.

of the bronze eagles, which were agreed upon- after 6 years of debate among the MPA- in concession to the practical fact that graffiti is easier to clean off of bronze than stone.³³

The MPA did not operate under the illusion that these fairly minor alterations to the park would completely eliminate “socially undesirable” behavior, but it would go a long way toward reducing the worst offenses of vandalism, drug use, and robbery. Perhaps even more importantly, under urging of Riverside citizens, Councilwoman Ginny Myrick convinced the City to establish a police foot patrol in the area surrounding the park.³⁴ Finally, according to an agreement entered into with the City of Jacksonville in 1987, members of the MPA could act as custodians who do not enforce laws or park rules, but who can observe and report violations to the proper authorities.³⁵

Of course, illegal activities were not the only behavior that the MPA was concerned about. In September of 1986, Anne Freeman compiled the first report for association board members, in which she acknowledges that MPA “does not have the right to deny access to a park by any person” according to the, at the time, pending agreement with the City.³⁶ However, the desire to establish concrete rules for behavior in the park is evident as she set as a priority to “discuss with City officials park usage and endeavor to establish policies.” Further, she indicates that “this would be more successful if done shortly after an agreement with the City has been reached and prior to any publicity or notice of our organization and its future plans” as “adverse

³³ David Bauerlein, “Eagle Statues Now on Guard at Memorial Park in Jacksonville,” *Florida Times-Union*, 30 May 2011.

³⁴ Riverside Avondale Preservation, Inc., “Bond Money Allocated for Revitalization of Jacksonville Park System,” Fall 1989 Newsletter, MC8.2 Box 2, Memorial Park Collection, Jacksonville Historical Society.

³⁵ “Agreement between the City of Jacksonville and Memorial Park Association, Inc.” 23 March 1987, MC8.2 Box 1, Memorial Park Collection, Jacksonville Historical Society.

³⁶ Anne Freeman, “Memorial Park Report,” September 1986, MC8.2 Box 2, Memorial Park Collection, Jacksonville Historical Society, 1.

publicity has devastated Stockton Park.”³⁷ Ultimately, the official agreement between the City and the MPA was less specific than what Freeman was likely hoping for:

The Park Area, in conformity with posted park rules, shall be opened to any member of the public to be used in a dignified manner commensurate with the fact that the Park Area is a memorial park dedicated to those who gave their lives in the service of their Nation in World War I.³⁸

The policy is vague, perhaps, but certainly useful as the MPA restoration efforts established the park as a place of public memory. Stating that the space was “to be used in a dignified manner” in keeping with the meaning established through the rhetoric of the restoration allowed the association to interpret the policy broadly and establish rules accordingly. The activities that were deemed inappropriate to the park’s memorial purpose and which are prohibited are any violation of the law as well as littering, homeless sleeping, dog defecation, leaving fishing debris, skateboarding, and overflowing the trash receptacles.³⁹

One final point should be made regarding the regulation of public space in Memorial Park. In contrast to the revitalization of Hemming Park, the issue of homelessness does not seem to be nearly as imperative in Memorial Park. A couple of different factors could account for this. One reason may be that while certainly Jacksonville’s homeless citizens did utilize Memorial Park, the evidence suggests that they did so comparatively less than in the city’s other parks. Prior to the establishment of MPA, Anne Freeman indicated to Councilman Grange that “a clean up campaign several years ago greatly improved the scene and rid the park of many

³⁷ Ibid, 3.

³⁸ “Agreement between the City of Jacksonville and Memorial Park Association, Inc.” 23 March 1987, MC8.2 Box 1, Memorial Park Collection, Jacksonville Historical Society.

³⁹ “Survey of Maintenance and Improvement Needs, and Use and Operation of Memorial Park,” June 2005, MC8.3 Box 4, Memorial Park Collection, Jacksonville Historical Society.

undesirables.”⁴⁰ Additionally, the media coverage in the mid-1990s of the debate surrounding the city ordinance to prohibit homelessness in the parks- which emphasized the issue for Hemming and Confederate Parks- does not mention this as a concern for Memorial Park at all.⁴¹ The other reason that homelessness was not under attack at Memorial Park could simply be that the MPA had succeeded in regulating behavior in the park based on appropriate use commensurate with the park’s meaning as asserted through the rhetoric of restoration. Despite the rule banning sleeping in the park, overall the attitude of park patrons toward homeless in Memorial Park seems to be one of tolerance. According to a frequent park visitor, in 1990 Memorial Park was seeing increased use while other parks were continuing to deteriorate. She said of other patrons “they’re realizing places this nice are rapidly disappearing” and “the vagrants don’t bother you much here.”⁴² A more recent article even affectionately told the story of one park regular, a homeless man named Steve Ballinger, whose habit it was to make the trip to Memorial Park several times a week in order to rid the area of litter.⁴³ Whatever the reason, it seems that in Memorial Park the primary concern is with *behavior* in the park rather than *access* to the park. Homelessness in Memorial Park is tolerated as long as patrons are not engaging in ‘homeless behavior.’

Conclusion

The MPA is still active today and working to maintain the fruits of their successful restoration of Memorial Park. By 1999 the park was deemed “pristine” by one observer and by 2005 it had earned the title of Favorite Waterfront Park on America’s First Coast by *Waters Edge*

⁴⁰ Anne Freeman, Report compiled for Gifford Grange, February 1986, MC8.2 Box 2, Memorial Park Collection, Jacksonville Historical Society.

⁴¹ See, for example: *Florida Times-Union*, 3 November 1996. *Florida Times-Union*, 22 November 1996. *Florida Times-Union*, 22 November 1996.

⁴² Ellie Covara quoted by Karla Leonard, “Memorial Park Offers Refreshment to the Urban Soul,” *Florida Times-Union*, 25 April 1990.

⁴³ Matt Soergel, “Everyday Trash Collector,” *Florida Times-Union*, 18 September 2011.

Magazine.⁴⁴ For the restoration work the MPA has received an award from the Northeast Florida Zoning Council, as well as two awards from the Jacksonville Historic Preservation Commission.⁴⁵ Through the mobilization of rhetoric in the park, the MPA seems to have succeeded in asserting the park as a place of public memory, defining meaning in the park based on its history, and establishing a model of appropriate behavior in keeping with that meaning. It is difficult to provide a gauge through which to measure their success, but continued community support for the Memorial Park project is telling. Even after having accomplished all major projects set out through restoration, the MPA has still managed to raise \$520,000 in the last decade to continue their mission of maintaining the park as a “fitting memorial and symbol of a city’s spirit.”⁴⁶

⁴⁴ P. Douglas Filaroski, “Meaningful Pose in Memorial Park,” *Florida Times-Union*, 11 November 1999. Memorial Park Association, *A Walk in the Park* Vol. 1 Is. 4 (2005), 1.

⁴⁵ Memorial Park Association to Friends of Memorial Park, 15 May 1991, MC8.2 Box 1, Memorial Park Collection, Jacksonville Historical Society. *Florida Times-Union*, 6 October 1994. Jacksonville Historic Preservation Commission Awards Ceremony Program, 18 May 2005, MC8.3 Box 4, Memorial Park Collection, Jacksonville Historical Society.

⁴⁶ “Memorial Park *Life* Sculpture Restored,” *Florida Times-Union*, 13 June 2014.

CONCLUSION

We encounter the rhetoric of memory in public places daily, which influence our perception of the world around us and our place within it. Just as rhetorical devices and discourses have created and continually shaped public meaning in Jacksonville's Hemming and Memorial Parks, the meaning that exists in the places in which we enact our public lives have been fashioned in numerous ways and by a multitude of factors. Furthermore, these places are not stagnant. Although places which are fashioned by constructions of the past are frequently touted as our unchanging links to a shared history, their meanings are, in fact, fluid and changeable through ongoing processes of reinterpretation and contestation. This case study demonstrates just one example of this process.

Even while this study is narrowly focused, examining primarily the revitalization efforts in two parks in one locale, the relationship between public memory and place is so dynamic and multifaceted, that much remains to be explored even within scope of this project. First, further discussion is needed of how the rhetoric of public memory created both Hemming and Memorial Parks as racialized spaces. While the scope of this study allowed for only a brief discussion of this process, a more complete analysis of how rhetoric promoted exclusionary ideology within both parks is necessary for a full understanding of how public memory has been shaped in Jacksonville. Additionally, further exploration of the impact of the Civil Rights Movement would be vastly enlightening, as Jacksonville's black community created a counter narrative to the predominant public meaning in the parks through demonstration and interpretation of their historical perspective in the parks in the second half of the twentieth century. Furthermore, the study could be expanded to include a comparison of public parks to public recreation facilities such as pools and playgrounds, which, unlike parks, were legally segregated in Jacksonville. The

history of Jacksonville is exemplary of many cities in the South in terms of its volatile racial landscape, which must be understood to gain a complete understanding of how place has been created, and continues to be shaped, in the city.

Confederate Memory in the South continues to be a hotly contested political issue, and offers another area for further consideration in this discussion of Jacksonville's public parks. While Confederate Memory dominated public memory through much of Hemming Park's early history, the topic was generally ignored in revitalization, making the Confederate Monument something of a metaphorical elephant in the room of the Hemming Park revitalization campaign. It remains to more fully explore the justification for this omission, as well as to attempt to understand how the Confederate Monument continues to be interpreted in the ongoing effort to improve Hemming Park. In the context of current events, it seems impossible that the presence of the Confederate Monument could be ignored in the current revitalization movement, and a discussion of the modern interpretation of Confederate memory is necessary for ongoing study of this topic.

Finally, in consideration of the fact that Jacksonville is a city rich with public parks and public recreation land, a full understanding of the impact of the rhetoric of public memory in the city's parks would necessitate a greatly expanded study. This project conducted a comparison of just two of the many parks in Jacksonville that underwent some degree of revitalization in the last quarter of the twentieth century. Further research should include an analysis of the processes that occurred in other parks throughout the city. This could shed light on how place has been created in different areas of the city, how representations of race and gender in public parks have been interpreted, and what rhetorical devices are used to create public memory in parks that did not serve as commemorative spaces.

This study has shown how the rhetoric of public memory has been used to promote specific, action-oriented ideologies within public parks in Jacksonville, Florida throughout the twentieth century, particularly in the last quarter of the century. In Hemming Park, the rhetoric extolled in revitalization sought to recreate the park as an extension of downtown Jacksonville's business core, and define any activities in the park that did not pertain to commerce as transgressive and, therefore, out of place. The rhetoric utilized by the City and the DDA in this campaign highlighted the meaning the park had garnered through its position in Jacksonville's retail core, but ignored its position as the city's primary memorial space. Ultimately, the transformation of Hemming Park into Hemming Plaza was a failure because the public memory of the park as a democratized public gathering place was too strong. Even while many of Jacksonville's citizens saw homelessness in the park as a major problem, they did not see eliminating this problem as sufficient justification for changing everything that the park had come to mean to the public. Conversely, the restoration campaign of Memorial Park was largely successful, despite the fact that this park held a much less prominent role in public life in Jacksonville. The rhetoric employed by the MPA in Memorial Park's restoration effort did not seek to change the park's public meaning; rather they sought to *enhance* the park's public meaning beyond what it had ever been. By framing restoration efforts in Memorial Park around the idea of historical authenticity, the MPA was able to promote the perception of the park as a sacred place of public memory, where they could use the park's history as justification to dictate behavior within the park. Ultimately, the success or failure of each park's revitalization came down to how effectively each campaign was able to use the rhetoric of public memory to influence the public perception of the park's meaning. In Hemming Park, revitalization failed because the City and the DDA were unable to change the public's image of the park as an open

forum for enacting public life in Jacksonville. In Memorial Park, on the other hand, the MPA was successful because they were able to convince the community that the park was of essential importance to public life in the city- a perception which had not previously existed, but which the MPA created.

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