

**Chicago's "Harmonious Forgetfulness": John Cox Underwood and the Meaning of  
Reconciliation at Confederate Mound, 1885-1896**

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**Abstract:**

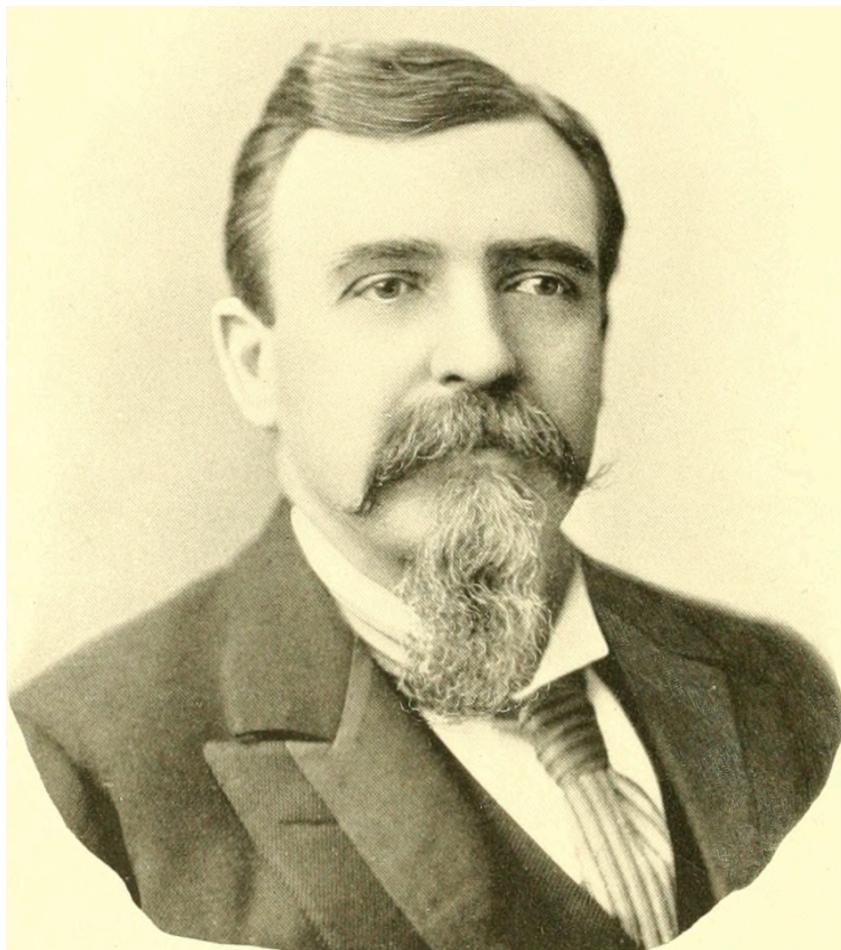
Using the development and commemoration of the Confederate monument at Oak Woods Cemetery as a case study, this paper turns to the man behind the monument, John Cox Underwood, to explore how the ceremonies in Chicago both reflected and engendered manifestations of reconciliation between ex-Confederates and Unionists and emboldened Southerners to leave a material reminder of the Lost Cause in the heart of Union territory. Drawing from contemporary newspaper articles, Underwood's own records, and modern scholarship, this paper examines Underwood's failed effort in Philadelphia, analyzes the major themes that emerged in the ceremonies at Chicago, and surveys the most prominent backlash to the monument. Ultimately, Underwood positioned reconciliation as a cultural and economic force that could not only engender stronger business relations between the North and the South, but also advance a dominating vision of "harmonious forgetfulness," the possibility of a collective silencing of the evils of the causes for which the South fought and the North condoned.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> This thesis would not have been possible without the support of those around me. I wish to thank my colleagues in my thesis seminar group -- Angel Chacon, Silvia Diaz, Anna Hackemer, Andrew Huff, and Isabelle Sohn -- for their constant encouragement and feedback over the past year. Next, I would like to express my deepest gratitude to my two thesis preceptors, Alexander Hofmann and Serena Covkin, for their unwavering determination to help me succeed. Both never hesitated to reach out to meet, recommend scholarly material, and provide constructive criticism for this paper. Finally, I wish to thank my advisor, Professor Jane Dailey, for helping me to steer this paper in the right direction. Without her guidance, this story may have remained untold, and it is to her that this paper is presented.

## I. Introduction: John Cox Underwood, Confederate Mound, and the History and Scholarship of Civil War Memory

On Memorial Day weekend in 1895, nearly ten years following a highly-publicized failed attempt to perform a national display of reconciliation in Philadelphia, United Confederate Veterans Major-General John Cox Underwood, a former Confederate colonel and Lieutenant Governor of Kentucky, finally completed his decades-long mission to unite Union and Confederate veterans in a gigantic spectacle attended by over 100,000 Chicagoans.<sup>2</sup>



John Cox Underwood  
Underwood, *Report of Proceedings*, 2.

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<sup>2</sup> John Cox Underwood, *Report of Proceedings Incidental to the Erection and Dedication of the Confederate Monument* (Chicago: W. Johnston Printing Co., 1896), 2.

The cause was the erection and dedication of a monument commemorating the approximately four to seven thousand Confederate soldiers who perished at Camp Douglas, Chicago's notorious Civil War training camp and prison. The monument sits in a rather quiet, unassuming plot in the southwestern corner of Chicago's Oak Woods cemetery.<sup>3</sup> Beneath the ground lie all of the recovered bodies of these soldiers, and thus, the site is popularly known today as Confederate Mound.<sup>4</sup> Though scholars have claimed that it sits atop the largest mass grave in the entire Western Hemisphere, few people even know it exists.<sup>5</sup>

Many people with even a basic understanding of the Civil War and its effects on sectional divisions might find the existence of a monument honoring Confederate prisoners in Chicago surprising given Chicago's fierce pro-Union sentiment and its growing postwar African-American population. Yet the process occurred rather smoothly. Most local and national papers wrote glowing reviews of the ceremonies, praising Underwood and the other distinguished participants at the ceremonies for their efforts to heal the country. The federal government had even given its blessing to the Ex-Confederate Association of Chicago, the organization that devised the plan to construct the monument.<sup>6</sup> In the end, barring a couple of noteworthy exceptions, the affair lacked any major controversy or dissent at the time.

The process of the North and the South coming together to shape the legacy of the Civil War in the several decades following the war's conclusion is known in academic circles as reconciliation. Scholars have written about it extensively in works on the nineteenth-century

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<sup>3</sup> National Cemetery Administration, "Confederate Mound." [https://www.cem.va.gov/cems/lots/confederate\\_mound.asp](https://www.cem.va.gov/cems/lots/confederate_mound.asp).

<sup>4</sup> National Park Service, "Confederate Mound at Oak Woods Cemetery Chicago, Illinois" (U.S. Department of the Interior).

[https://www.nps.gov/nr/travel/national\\_cemeteries/Illinois/Confederate\\_Mound\\_Oak\\_Woods\\_Cemetery.html](https://www.nps.gov/nr/travel/national_cemeteries/Illinois/Confederate_Mound_Oak_Woods_Cemetery.html).

<sup>5</sup> Ted Slowik, "Chicago houses Confederate monument at well-known cemetery," *The Chicago Tribune*, August 15, 2017.

<sup>6</sup> Underwood, *Report of Proceedings*, 106.

American South, yet few have tracked the history of reconciliation in Chicago and how that history reveals how and why these events occurred. Exploring this history, moreover, is essential to contextualize the motivations and actions of these Chicagoans and former Confederates to memorialize the soldiers who died at Camp Douglas and understand the greater significance of Confederate involvement and reconciliationist Civil War memory in the North throughout the late nineteenth century.

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

Despite the event's magnitude, few scholars have investigated Underwood's story, and many important questions about the nature of reconciliation in Chicago, and the North at large, remained unanswered. Why did the demonstration that Underwood put together in 1885 in Philadelphia fail to evince his desired spirit of reconciliation?<sup>7</sup> What do the records from Underwood's book and the monument itself reveal about contemporary understandings of the themes of reconciliation, specifically concerning the role of women as a symbol for the country's peaceful future, sectional culpability over slavery and racial violence, Northern and Southern economic prosperity, and the collective framing of the historical legacy of the Civil War to future

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<sup>7</sup> Underwood, *Report of Proceedings*, 4-5.

generations? Are there any reasons why Chicagoans, especially the prominent residents of the city that were present at the ceremonies, might have appeared so receptive to embracing their former enemies? And finally, given the unexpected nature of the event, what kinds of resistance did the organizers of the events encounter?

Underwood, among others, recognized that the commemoration of the monument at Oak Woods presented a chance for both Unionists and Confederates to craft uplifting sentiments of reconciliation and acknowledge veterans' shared valor and dedication to their causes in the Civil War. Moreover, because these distinguished participants comprising many parts of the state, including the press, the military, the church, and the government, backed this coordination, the organizers rightly understood that it would minimize displays of anti-reconciliationist sentiment directed at the celebrations and the monument itself. Ultimately, in building and dedicating this monument in one of the great metropolises of the North, Underwood culminated his sixteen-year mission to successfully perform a national display of reconciliation. In doing so, he seized an opportunity to not only forge economic ties between the North and South, but also redefine the moral and historical legacy of the Lost Cause and present that altered narrative to future generations. Thus, Underwood shaped reconciliation into a dominating vision of "harmonious forgetfulness," the possibility of a collective silencing of the evils of the causes for which the South fought and the North condoned.<sup>8</sup>

Following the Civil War, three general visions of post-War thought emerged in the public life of the city of Chicago and across the nation: reconciliation, white supremacy, and emancipation.<sup>9</sup> For the purposes of this essay, reconciliation is defined as the process by which

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<sup>8</sup> The term itself was Underwood's own, though here it is referenced per David Blight (David Blight, *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001), 203).

<sup>9</sup> This paper considers these frameworks to be the traditional methodologies of memory scholarship, though historian David Blight popularized these terms in his work *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory*.

the North and the South dealt with the memory of the Civil War as a collective body. Under this movement, the country united to celebrate the virtues of the common soldier and minimize the causes for which he had fought. White supremacy was a policy of “terror and violence” (often in the South, though by no means limited to the region), under which whites sought to restore their antebellum political superiority over African Americans. The final, emancipation, emerged out of a uniquely African-American memory of the war and their realizing various forms of political liberation, including the end of slavery and equality under the law.<sup>10</sup>

This thesis unites three strands of historiography—Civil War memory; memory, monumentality, and public space; and finally, Civil War Chicago—showing how John Cox Underwood’s history of reconciliationist efforts culminating in the construction of the monument at Confederate Mound engages with each of these branches and offers new avenues for the study of the cultural, political, and economic motivations and effects of reconciliation in the late nineteenth century. Various historians—David Blight, Barbara Gannon, W. Fitzhugh Brundage, Kirk Savage, and Theodore Karamanski and Eileen McMahon—have explored Civil War memory in various media and suggested or otherwise exposed several gaps through their own research that this project might fill.

Blight and Gannon examined the development of reconciliation, white supremacy, and emancipation. Brundage and Savage applied these frameworks specifically to the material manifestation of Civil War memory in the public domain, investigating the role that space played and continues to play in furnishing as well as diminishing these visions. The final two authors,

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This is not to suggest that historians have always used this exact terminology. Rather, this paper refers to the word “traditional” to highlight how modern scholarship in Civil War memory, regardless of specific divergences, has almost universally been in engaged in conversation with other historians using the ideas of reconciliation, white supremacy, and emancipation (Blight, *Race and Reunion*, 2).

<sup>10</sup> Blight, *Race and Reunion*, 2.

Karamanski and McMahon, detailed the relationship between the city of Chicago and the Civil War, tracking the effects of the war on the economic development of the city and its memory for different social groups in the city, including African-Americans, Union veterans, and non-soldier residents. Civil War books whose main focuses have been Civil War memory have largely evolved in conversation, extending upon Blight's seminal work. On the other hand, scholarship centering on Chicago during and after the Civil War has been primarily concerned with how the war transformed Chicago into the economic powerhouse of the Midwest and the experiences of Confederate prisoners at Camp Douglas. These authors, especially those writing about Camp Douglas, have tended to minimally engage with issues of Civil War memory. With this in mind, Civil War historians have identified several overlapping gaps in these areas. Among them, scholars have called for greater attention to the study of Lost Cause monuments in Union territory—an area this project intervenes in by examining the monument at Confederate Mound and its local and national reception in the 1890s.

Recent memory studies have largely sought to demonstrate how reconciliation ascended to be, along with white supremacy, the dominant vision of Civil War memory in the late nineteenth century. David Blight's *Race and Reunion* laid the foundation for most contemporary scholarship in this field by distinguishing the three general frameworks of memory of the Civil War: reconciliation, white supremacy, and emancipation. Taking a national scope that relied on contemporary books, speeches, slave narratives, diaries, poetry, and papers from individuals across the United States, Blight demonstrated how white supremacy accommodated reconciliation at the expense of marginalizing emancipationist memory of the war in the first five decades following the war's conclusion.<sup>11</sup> This paper, while supported by Blight's understanding

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<sup>11</sup> Blight, *Race and Reunion*, 2.

of reconciliation, extends his brief discussion of the memory of Camp Douglas by examining more closely the buildup to the ceremonies in Chicago and expanding on his identification of the economic motivations of the events and the sociocultural ramifications of “harmonious forgetfulness.”<sup>12</sup>

Barbara Gannon’s *Americans Remember Their Civil War* picked up on Blight’s call to craft the first formal full-length historiography of reconciliationist, white supremacist, and emancipationist memories of the war.<sup>13</sup> In tracking how nineteenth- and twentieth-century historians have written about the contest between the Lost Cause and what she called the “Union Cause,” she explicitly implicated many of these historians in perpetuating an incomplete narrative of Civil War memory by “act[ing] as referees among the competing collective memories of the conflict.”<sup>14</sup> Furthermore, though Blight and Gannon both briefly explored the role of monuments in expressing memory of the war, they each acknowledged that their works unsatisfactorily attended to this particular area and called for further study of the manifestation of Civil War memory in the built environment. This thesis focuses on this gap by exploring the role that the Confederate memorial at Oak Woods cemetery played in both reflecting and riling up reconciliationist sentiment.<sup>15</sup>

W. Fitzhugh Brundage’s *The Southern Past: A Clash of Race and Memory* supported Blight’s and Gannon’s requests for greater attention to be paid to the built environment’s function in reflecting these competing memories of the war. In particular, Brundage argued that public space provided whites with an opportunity to quite literally etch the Lost Cause in stone.

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<sup>12</sup> Blight, *Race and Reunion*, 205.

<sup>13</sup> Blight, *Race and Reunion*, 2.

<sup>14</sup> Barbara Gannon, *Americans Remember Their Civil War* (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2017), xv.

<sup>15</sup> Though neither of their books focused on it, neither Blight nor Gannon engaged in any substantial examination of Camp Douglas or its memory. Blight devoted a total of three pages of his book to Camp Douglas and Gannon did not mention it at all (Blight, *Race and Reunion*, 203-205).

Such space, he claimed, was never truly public nor could be shared by all, as it often “conspicuously excluded any recognition of the recalled past of blacks.”<sup>16</sup> Thus, Brundage concluded that how we remember the past is ultimately an expression of power. While Brundage identified instances of African-American success in securing space for public expressions of memory, he argued that whites largely prevented them from spreading beyond small, isolated examples, especially in the nineteenth century.<sup>17</sup>

Whereas Brundage revealed the lack of black memory in the public realm in his work on the South, Kirk Savage’s *Standing Soldiers, Kneeling Slaves: Race, War, and Monument in Nineteenth-Century America* reached a different, albeit troubling, conclusion for African-Americans residing in the North. Unlike Brundage, who focused on examples of nineteenth-century material history of Confederate Lost Cause heroes, Savage relied on monuments reflecting slavery and emancipation as the primary material for his analysis. In demonstrating how Northern and Southern sculpture embodied the essence of racial inequality, Savage demonstrated the costs of reconciliation nationwide. As emancipation emerged as a competing vision of post-war memory, the dominance of reconciliation highlighted how many whites, even those who may have sympathized with the emancipationist cause, failed to provide a space for emancipation to take a material form that accurately reflected its ideals.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> W. Fitzhugh Brundage, *The Southern Past: A Clash of Race and Memory* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005), 10.

<sup>17</sup> One interesting idea to note about Brundage that would be useful for further research, however, is that he devoted a substantial amount of attention to the role that women played in furnishing public memory in the South. The major reconciliation commemoration of Camp Douglas featured a number of prominent women (including relatives of Confederate and Union veterans and elected officials), and there is primary evidence to suggest that women were instrumental in this effort, although such scholarship is limited. This project briefly discusses the contributions of women in memorialization efforts at Confederate Mound.

<sup>18</sup> Kirk Savage, *Standing Soldiers, Kneeling Slaves: Race, War, and Monument in Nineteenth-Century America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), 5-6.

While Brundage's focus on the American South exposed struggles in white and black identity, memory, and power dynamics that were certainly applicable to the North as well, Brundage chose not to emphasize it. With the understanding that similar processes were occurring all sections of the country in the name of reconciliation, Brundage's analysis could be enhanced with greater attention paid to the North. Savage, on the other hand, prioritized the study of emancipationist memory, articulating how contemporary sculpture reinforced an incomplete version of African-American remembrance of the war, which validates the necessity for scholars to continue to study the relationship between reconciliation and emancipation. My thesis seeks to combine elements of both authors' work, looking to Chicago as part of a larger story of Northern reconciliationist memory and examining how the speeches presented at the various ceremonies and the monument itself reflected an attempt by the promoters of the event to silence any discussion of slavery in America.

Few historians of Civil War Chicago have made the memory of the war the focus of their works. Though the book primarily focused on the economic and military history of the Civil War in Chicago, Theodore Karamanski's and Eileen McMahon's *Civil War Chicago: Eyewitness to History* included an important chapter on memory. They claimed that the Civil War was the defining event that transformed Chicago economically into a vibrant industrial center that pumped out needed materials for the war and laid the foundation for the city's future prosperity. Moreover, the authors argued that Chicago served as a microcosm for understanding the larger cultural and economic effects of reconciliation.<sup>19</sup> Because during the Civil War Chicago became one of the railroad capitals of the country and the major industrial center of the Midwest, it had a

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<sup>19</sup> Theodore Karamanski and Eileen McMahon, *Civil War Chicago: Eyewitness to History* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2014), 1.

unique opportunity to connect with markets in the South, providing Chicagoans a strong economic incentive to craft congenial relations with their Southern neighbors.

Karamanski and McMahon examined the intersection of economics, politics, and memory in Civil War and Reconstruction-era Chicago. Yet despite the book's focus, the authors failed to attend to this connection with regards to the Confederate monument at Oak Woods.<sup>20</sup> Such a consideration would have been appropriate in light of the economic emphasis of their work. This thesis explores the evidence presented in both speeches given at the ceremonies as well as testimony in newspaper articles that revealed that the prospect of Northern assistance in revitalizing Southern markets was a motivating factor in Underwood establishing Chicago as a prime site for reconciliation to flourish. In turn, the possibility of some future Southern investment in Chicago's businesses may have prompted Chicagoans to assist Southerners to help finance the monument at Oak Woods.<sup>21</sup>

Overall, Civil War historians have largely neglected substantial study of the monument at Oak Woods. Though they often spoke of a competition between reconciliationist, white supremacist, and emancipationist memories of the war, those studying this subject have limited their scholarship either by not writing about how these ideas manifested in the material world, or by omitting a comparative geographic scope that neglected Southern presence in the North or vice versa. By examining how these forces coalesced in a case study of the ceremonies in Chicago, this project enriches historians' understanding of the legacy of these events.

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<sup>20</sup> Karamanski and McMahon, *Civil War Chicago*, 284-288.

<sup>21</sup> Though this thesis does not claim that financial interests were *the* motivating factor in bringing about the ceremonies at Confederate Mound, it is certainly possible that this was the case. More research is needed to determine to what extent the prospect of financial and/or infrastructural gain led to a stronger desire to bring about reconciliationist sentiment.

To do so, this paper draws from a collection of nineteenth-century Philadelphia and Chicago newspaper articles in order to highlight public sentiment surrounding Confederate Mound prior to, during, and after the monument's construction.<sup>22</sup> This project also engages with newspapers outside of these two cities as well as with African-American newspapers, since the celebration of the monument at Oak Woods garnered national attention, particularly when examining instances of pushback from the Grand Army of the Republic, Thomas Lowther, and the responses from African Americans.

Additionally, this paper relies on close readings of *The Report of Proceedings Incidental to the Erection and Dedication of the Confederate Monument*, published by John Cox Underwood in 1896. This report of over 300 pages includes outlines and speeches from well-known Chicago and Southern political, religious, economic, and military leaders during the receptions, celebratory parade, and commemoration at Oak Woods; the backgrounds and contributions of prominent Chicagoans who helped finance the monument's construction and dedication; and significant correspondence between Underwood and Chicago institutions that preceded the monument's construction. Underwood organized this book chronologically around the four main ceremonies: the private reception at the Palmer House, the assembly and banquet at Kinsley's restaurant in downtown Chicago for distinguished guests, the city-wide parade down Michigan Avenue, and the dedication of the monument the following day at Oak Woods. This project constitutes what the author believes to be the first major analysis of Underwood's work and explains how the primary source excerpts contained within it reveal how Confederates and

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<sup>22</sup> Underwood also included a few newspaper article excerpts in his own work, but as might be expected, it only displayed endorsements of his project. Any pushback is completely absent from his report, and as a result, this project will turn to the press to find instances of controversy.

Chicagoans both reflected and attempted to shape the trajectory of reconciliation at the conclusion of the nineteenth century.

Ultimately, this project does not merely state that reconciliation was the dominant philosophy of Civil War memory in 1890s Chicago, but strives to answer two far more interesting and surprisingly unanswered questions: What did reconciliation mean to the people who participated in the dedication efforts in Chicago? And how do the events, writings, speeches, and the monument itself expose and complicate these understandings? This project looks beyond the material available in the journals and diaries of Confederate soldiers, which scholars writing about the memory of Camp Douglas have long used as their primary source of analysis. Instead, it turns to the story of John Cox Underwood to answer those questions.

## **II. Underwood's First National Attempt at Reconciliation: Why Philadelphia Failed**

On June 27, 1885, John Cox Underwood arrived at Fairmount Park, the largest municipal park in Philadelphia. Accompanying him was his cousin and second-in-command, Colonel H.L. Underwood of Kentucky, and many National Guardsmen and State Troops from the North and South, the “sons of veterans who wore both blue and gray.”<sup>23</sup> Cox Underwood had planned a week-long encampment, military exercise competition, and reception for the participants and distinguished spectators. Ultimately, he hoped that this display of unity in front of a massive audience of Philadelphians at the competitions, would advance the cause of reconciliation between the North and South. Since his failed attempt at becoming the Governor of Kentucky in 1879, Cox Underwood had helped organize many local and state affairs promoting reconciliation, though Philadelphia was by far his most grandiose attempt to date.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Underwood, *Report of Proceedings*, 4.

<sup>24</sup> Underwood, *Report of Proceedings*, 4.

Cox Underwood's choice of his cousin as his second-in-command was quite revealing of the image he hoped to cultivate for Philadelphians. H.L. Underwood, unlike his cousin, had fought for the Union during the Civil War. His brother had died at the Battle of Shiloh and his father had been a federal office-holder and ardent supporter of President Lincoln and the Union cause.<sup>25</sup> Perhaps having his cousin assist him was Cox Underwood's attempt to prove to the people of Philadelphia that he would lead his enterprise with a visible sign of the success of reconciliation on a personal level --- that his own family's journey at reconnecting could one day be a microcosm of the nation's future.

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

Three additional major obstacles to Underwood's plans, though, threatened to destabilize his entire project. The first was that Underwood had reprinted and posted two controversial lithographs in conspicuous spots throughout the city.<sup>26</sup> The first lithograph presented Union and Confederate soldiers in a line with Union and Confederate artillerymen behind them firing a volley in salute of two aged generals (one Union and one Confederate) riding down the line. The Confederate soldiers had the letters "C.S.A." inscribed on their belt buckles. All of the troops

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<sup>25</sup> "The National Encampment: Some Citizens Offended by the Lithographs Posted by Governor Underwood," *The Times—Philadelphia*, June 2, 1885, Newspapers.com.

<sup>26</sup> A lithograph is a type of printing process in which original works of art can be reprinted on a stone or metal tablet (The Metropolitan Museum of Art, "Lithograph." <https://www.metmuseum.org/about-the-met/curatorial-departments/drawings-and-prints/materials-and-techniques/printmaking/lithograph>).

were carrying the flag of the United States. The second lithograph conveyed a similar sentiment. It contained the portraits of generals, Unionists and Confederates alike, that comprised the Board of Military Control. The staff in the photo carried an olive branch, which Underwood claimed represented peace and harmony between the North and the South.<sup>27</sup>

Philadelphians were eager to include southerners in their conception of a reunited nation, but the lithographs, which included scenes of Union soldiers saluting a Confederate general, left locals believing that Underwood was attempting to promote the idea that the Confederate and Union causes were equally just. In the words of a Philadelphia banker who had originally agreed to be a cosponsor of the event but opted out after seeing the lithographs, “I was glad … to do my part in welcoming the men of the South to Philadelphia as members of the National Guard of the United States, but I will have no part in welcoming men with the badge of rebellion on their breasts.”<sup>28</sup> Theodore E. Weidersheim, commander of the 1<sup>st</sup> Regiment of the National Guard of Pennsylvania, argued that it was a mistake for Underwood to include the letters C.S.A. on the lithographs and further noted that all of the Confederate soldiers would be wearing Confederate rather than United States uniforms in the competitions.<sup>29</sup> In the minds of many Philadelphians, the lithographs demonstrated the persistence of sectional division. Underwood flatly denied that the soldiers’ outfits made the event any less reconciliationist. He held that the images in the lithographs were merely allegorical and demonstrated unity between former enemies. Underwood reminded the reporter questioning him that all of the troops were carrying the United States flag within the lithograph. Still, the lithographs aroused public sentiment in such a negative manner that Underwood himself needed to make some adjustments in order to save the

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<sup>27</sup> “Venting His Ire: Governor Underwood’s Opinion of Philadelphia,” *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, July 31, 1885, Newspapers.com.

<sup>28</sup> “The National Encampment,” *The Times—Philadelphia*, June 2, 1885.

<sup>29</sup> “The National Encampment,” *The Times—Philadelphia*, June 2, 1885.

enterprise. On June 1, aides found him in his room at the Continental Hotel scribbling out the C.S.A. letters on the lithographs, which he had scheduled to be dispersed throughout the entire country.<sup>30</sup>

The second problem was that many Philadelphians were disappointed that their own state and local militia would not be participating in the encampment. Though the governor's publicly stated explanation for this was that there would be security concerns should Pennsylvania National Guard groups be absent from their standard duties, the lithographs undoubtedly furnished negative sentiment as well.<sup>31</sup> None of Pennsylvania's military organizations came out to greet the Southern militias, though many Philadelphians made efforts at welcoming the Southerners, such as sending off ice cream, pound cake, various fruits, and cigars for the twenty-seven companies currently at the encampment.<sup>32</sup> And while they were cordial to the Southern soldiers at Fairmount Park, most Philadelphians remained noticeably upset at the absence of their own militia. Philadelphia soldiers themselves unsuccessfully pushed for Pennsylvanian inclusion in the competitive drills, knowing that their participation would raise the spirits of locals and perhaps allow the event to move forward more smoothly, but the governor refused to grant them permission, citing the aforementioned security concerns.<sup>33</sup>

The third, and arguably most important setback, was that many Philadelphians believed Underwood was turning the encampment into a financial spectacle equivalent to a circus show, rather than organizing an event aimed at bringing the country together. The Pennsylvania Railroad, sensing the encampment to be an excellent opportunity for profit, offered an extremely

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<sup>30</sup> "The National Encampment," *The Times—Philadelphia*, June 2, 1885.

<sup>31</sup> "Militia in Camp: Troops From Various States Congregating at the Quaker City," *The Pittsburgh Daily Post*, June 30, 1885, Newspapers.com.

<sup>32</sup> "Pulling Up Tents: Half the Soldiers Leave Camp for Home," *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, July 6, 1885, Newspapers.com.

<sup>33</sup> "Militia in Camp," *The Pittsburgh Daily Post*, June 30, 1885, Newspapers.com.

affordable transportation option for visitors and soldiers at a rate of a half-cent per mile.<sup>34</sup>

Vendors rapidly brought stands to cater to the upcoming visitors, and construction workers set up one massive stand that would seat more than 20,000 spectators and fit an additional 30,000 more in standing room areas. Visitors were charged twenty-five cents for admission in standing room and additional twenty-five cents for a seat. It turned the event, as one onlooker commented, into an “amusement exhibition on a large scale.”<sup>35</sup>

Not only did this disgust Philadelphians, but also the soldiers participating in the encampment as well. Though many claimed to be lured into the enterprise with the promise that they would be performing in a free public display for prizes funded by wealthy private donors, they were quickly disappointed to find out that vendors were charging spectators for admission. These soldiers did not want Underwood organizing them into a circus display. Dismayed by the entire affair, when these soldiers arrived in Philadelphia, most arrived for the “sole purpose” of winning the prize money from the competition, rather than to advance the cause of reconciliation.<sup>36</sup>

The appearance of financial incentives was arguably the most damning impediment to Underwood’s effort. Though tens of thousands still showed up to witness the competitions, many Philadelphians and the military organizations that Underwood had invited nonetheless accused him of profiting from the endeavor, a claim which he and his compatriots vehemently denied. H.L. Underwood wrote: “There is not a dollar in it for us. ... Governor Underwood’s idea was purely a patriotic one in the beginning, and his motives seemed to have been questioned in a manner which would make it undignified for him to reply. I can assure you he is disinterested

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<sup>34</sup> “Venting His Ire,” *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, July 31, 1885, Newspapers.com.

<sup>35</sup> “Troops in the Park: Thousands of Spectators at Belmont and Chamounix,” *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, June 29, 1885, Newspapers.com.

<sup>36</sup> “Troops in the Park,” *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, June 29, 1885, Newspapers.com.

from a financial standpoint.”<sup>37</sup> These labels clearly offended Underwood, who had dedicated much of his post-war life to bringing the country together. The accusations were inescapable, however. Underwood was clearly upset that it had taken such a prominent role in the whole endeavor. As he wrote, “I have nothing whatever to say in regard to the encampment. … I am paying off what obligations are outstanding against the management, and when that is finished I wash my hands of the whole business.”<sup>38</sup>

Reflecting on the matter about a month after the encampment ended, he issued a thinly veiled statement to Philadelphia, hinting to potential financial losses the city would suffer by fostering a sentiment hostile to Southern presence in the North. He wrote:

I think Philadelphia has made a serious mistake. If the ex-Confederates are to be ostracized there they will doubtless accept the ban, and keep themselves and their business away from a people who hold themselves too good to meet them on an equality. Philadelphia might easily have made the tongue of every visitor an advertiser of her advantages and attractions, and filled every mouth with her praise, instead of spreading the story of her narrow partisan spirit and prejudice.<sup>39</sup>

Underwood’s claim that ex-Confederates would “doubtless accept the ban” reflected Southerners’ belief in their own honor. Despite the South’s desperate economic need for Northern investment, he knew that Southerners would be too proud to accept Philadelphians’ labels of traitorous behavior. But Underwood also spun the entire endeavor to suggest that Philadelphia’s reputation would not only worsen in the eyes of Southerners, but also to anyone around the country who sympathized with Southern attempts to reconcile.

Underwood remained bitter about the endeavor long after it ended. Eleven years later, as he wrote in his book about the process of dedicating the monument at Confederate Mound,

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<sup>37</sup> “The Camp in the Park: Troops Expected to Arrive To-Morrow,” *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, June 26, 1885, Newspapers.com.

<sup>38</sup> “The Park Uninjured: \$1,000 Will Put It as It Was Before the Encampment,” *The Times—Philadelphia*, July 8, 1885, Newspapers.com.

<sup>39</sup> “Venting His Ire,” *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, July 31, 1885, Newspapers.com.

Underwood penned a brief aside in his introduction about Philadelphia: “The demonstration was a military success, but the movement was attempted either too soon or the place unfortunately selected: anyway, the purpose failed, and although it was approved by all the most prominent generals living, who had served in both the Union and Confederate armies, yet the populace started the cry of ‘rebels in the park.’”<sup>40</sup> The language that Underwood used in his report reveal that he certainly attempted to paint Philadelphians as portraying an anti-Southern bias. In reality, Philadelphians wanted to accommodate Southerners into the nation, but they were unwilling to compromise on the principles that they had fought for during the Civil War. Moreover, it is clear Underwood was trying, much as he had after the event took place, to emphasize the successes of his enterprise and circumvent some of the more unfortunate truths behind it.

### **III. Moving Westward: Grant’s Funeral March and Incomplete Efforts at Columbus and Chicago**

Two weeks after the encampment ended in Philadelphia, former Union commander and president Ulysses S. Grant passed away following a lengthy battle with throat cancer. His death drove the country into a deep state of mourning. His main funeral ceremony in New York had a total attendance of more than 1,500,000 people. Even more notable were his pallbearers: Union generals William Tecumseh Sherman and Phil Sheridan; Confederate generals Simon Bolivar Buckner and Joseph Johnston; Union Admiral David Porter; and Senator John Logan, the head of the Grand Army of the Republic.<sup>41</sup> One might reasonably argue in this regard that Grant’s

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<sup>40</sup> Underwood, *Report of Proceedings*, 4-5. Furthermore, the extent to which all the most prominent generals living supported Underwood’s efforts at Philadelphia are questionable. For example, Underwood had initially tapped Gen. H.W. Slocum, to assume command of the encampment, yet the former Union General backed out of the role after allegedly being dissatisfied about the entire affair (“Gen. Slocum Refuses: He Will Not Take Command of the National Military Encampment,” *The Evening Gazette*, July 2, 1885, Newspapers.com.).

<sup>41</sup> H.W. Brands, *The Man Who Saved the Union: Ulysses S. Grant in War and Peace* (New York: Doubleday, 2012), 633-635.

funeral march was the nation's largest successful display of reconciliation. As such, many viewed Grant's funeral procession as a prime opportunity to bring the country together. Simon Bolivar Buckner said, “I am sorry General Grant is dead, … but his death has yet been the greatest blessing the country has ever received, now, reunion is perfect.”<sup>42</sup> Though Grant had fought for the Union, his peace with Confederate General Robert E. Lee at Appomattox allowed the South to rejoin the nation. Once again, Buckner argued, though no longer alive, Grant had given the United States another chance to heal. Though it is not known whether Underwood himself was present at the funeral, he and other Confederates noted that they were inspired by the actions of Buckner and others, and that Grant's funeral procession motivated them to put together the reconciliationist display at Confederate Mound.<sup>43</sup>

His faith at least temporarily reinvigorated, Underwood began his move westward from Philadelphia over the next five years and conducted various attempts to pull off the feat he could not accomplish before. In the fall of 1889, he set his sights on Columbus, where he planned a military reception and exercise competition, parade, and ball for former Union and Confederate military officials and those affiliated with his fraternal order, the International Order of Odd Fellows (I.O.O.F.).<sup>44</sup> These activities were quite similar to the ones he had overseen in Philadelphia, though local citizens did not appear to feature as prominently. Though the reception was a success, Underwood fell from his horse and suffered a severe concussion and bleeding in his brain during the parade, an accident that “nearly cost [him his] life.”<sup>45</sup> Unable to

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<sup>42</sup> Joan Waugh, “‘The Pageantry of Woe’: The Funeral of Ulysses S. Grant” in *Civil War History* 51, no. 2 (The Kent State University Press, 2005), 152.

<sup>43</sup> Underwood, *Report of Proceedings*, 6.

<sup>44</sup> “20,000 Odd Fellows in the Superb Parade,” *The Dayton Herald*, September 19, 1889, Newspapers.com.

<sup>45</sup> Underwood, *Report of Proceedings*, 5.

complete the affair, he sat out the reception the following day, leaving control to his staff.<sup>46</sup> As he recovered, Underwood longed for a successful return.

Following his health scare in Columbus, Underwood turned his attention to Chicago in 1890, determined to vindicate his failure in Philadelphia with a triumphant display of reconciliation. In August of that year, he put together a large civic-military display with the I.O.O.F. in Chicago. This time, Underwood faced the opposite problem that had troubled him in Philadelphia. While the demonstration brought together many Northerners, including citizens not affiliated with the order, it lacked strong attendance from Southerners, thus failing in its reconciliationist purpose.<sup>47</sup> Ultimately, though his previous disappointments proved to be temporary obstacles in the path toward the commemoration of the monument at Confederate Mound, they demonstrated Underwood's commitment to the cause and continued to cement his growing reputation in the North.

#### **IV. A Brief History of Camp Douglas and the Basis for the Monument at Confederate Mound**

In July 1861, Governor Richard Yates of Illinois established Camp Douglas as a training camp for Illinois recruits fighting in the Civil War. The camp was located in what is now the Bronzeville section of Chicago, east to west from Cottage Grove Avenue to the present Martin Luther King Drive and East 31<sup>st</sup> Street to East 33<sup>rd</sup> Place north to south.<sup>48</sup> From late 1861 to early 1863, around 40,000 recruits passed through the camp, most for training, though a few thousand Union soldiers stayed in detention there following a particularly brutal defeat at Harper's Ferry,

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<sup>46</sup> "Grand Drills at the Fair Grounds the Order of the Day: Nature Again Lavishes Her Treasures on the Visiting Militants." *The Dayton Herald*, September 20, 1889, Newspapers.com.

<sup>47</sup> Underwood, *Report of Proceedings*, 5.

<sup>48</sup> Dennis Kelly, *A History of Camp Douglas Illinois, Union Prison, 1861-1865* (National Park Service, 1989), 3-4.

Virginia in late 1862.<sup>49</sup> Beginning in January 1863 and continuing until the surrender at Appomattox, Camp Douglas served as a prisoner of war camp for captured Confederate soldiers. By the war's end, approximately 26,060 Confederate soldiers had passed through the camp.<sup>50</sup>

Conditions inside the prison were horrific. Sewage problems had plagued the camp since its inception and winters were incredibly harsh, especially for Southerners with no experience navigating the Chicago climate. To make matters worse, the camp did not have sufficient heating and the Confederates lacked adequate clothing. Since most of the Confederates arrived at Camp Douglas already weary, hungry, and cold, the situation was ripe for the spread of disease. Hospital records indeed indicate that most of the deaths at Camp Douglas stemmed from typhoid fever and pneumonia.<sup>51</sup>

By the end of the war, records listed the official death total at 4,454, though historians disagree on the accuracy of that number. David Keller argued that the exact death total was "somewhere between the 4,243 names contained on the monument at the Confederate Mound at Oak Woods Cemetery and the 7,000 reported by some historians."<sup>52</sup> Poor record keeping and improper maintenance of the bodies made the exact numbers uncertain, though Keller noted that the best estimates are between 5,000 and 6,000 deaths.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> George Levy, *To Die in Chicago: Confederate Prisoners at Camp Douglas 1862-1865* (Gretna, Louisiana: Pelican Publishing Company, 1999), 38.

<sup>50</sup> Levy, *To Die in Chicago*, 28.

<sup>51</sup> Lonnie R. Speer, *Portals to Hell: Military Prisons of the Civil War* (Mechanicsburg, Pennsylvania: Pelican Publishing Company, 1997), 135.

<sup>52</sup> David Keller, *The Story of Camp Douglas: Chicago's Forgotten Civil War Prison* (Charleston, The History Press, 2015), 179-180. To clarify, Keller derives the number 4,243 based on plaques containing the names, regiment, and company of the soldiers whose records confirmed that they were indeed buried at Confederate Mound. In 1911, the Commission for Marking the Graves of Confederate Dead paid to have the monument raised to include space for these plaques (National Park Service, "Confederate Mound at Oak Woods Cemetery" (U.S. Department of the Interior). Because this paper is focused on the 1895 ceremonies, it does not analyze the state of the monument beyond the nineteenth century.

<sup>53</sup> In addition, the Great Chicago Fire of 1871 also destroyed some of the records (Keller, *The Story of Camp Douglas*, 179-180).

After the war, the U.S. government reinterred 4,275 bodies of the dead Confederates three times: first to the City Cemetery near Lincoln Park in 1865, then to the smallpox cemetery adjacent to Camp Douglas in 1866, and finally to Oak Woods Cemetery in 1867.<sup>54</sup> By 1866, the government returned all of the land which had housed Camp Douglas to its original owners, and it either sent to the families of Union and Confederate soldiers or auctioned off all of the various structures and objects still remaining in the camp.<sup>55</sup> Beyond that, the Confederate soldiers who had perished at Camp Douglas largely vanished into obscurity until Underwood's arrival in Chicago in 1890.

Camp Douglas itself, however, continued to be in the public spotlight for the next two decades as the flames of sectionalism slowly continued to burn. Most often, Camp Douglas emerged in the papers as a contestant in a fight between Northerners and Southerners on whether guards there or at Andersonville Prison in Georgia, the most notorious of the Confederate prisons, treated their prisoners with more inhumanity.<sup>56</sup> While there were no immediate plans for a monument in the 1870s and most of the 1880s, during this time, Union veterans began decorating the grounds of Confederate Mound as a sign of respect to Southerners, who often reciprocated by decorating Union headstones. This practice of soldiers placing flowers on the graves of the fallen occurred annually on Memorial Day, often referred to at the time as Decoration Day (named after this practice of decorating graves with flowers).<sup>57</sup> No later than August 1889, Confederate veterans residing in Chicago, empowered by the funeral procession of

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<sup>54</sup> Dennis Kelly, *A History of Camp Douglas Illinois, Union Prison, 1861-1865* (National Park Service, 1989), 158.

<sup>55</sup> Kelly, *A History of Camp Douglas Illinois*, 155.

<sup>56</sup> "Andersonville: Was Jeff Davis Responsible for Its Horrors? – How the Confederate Prisoners Were Treated At Camp Douglas," *The Chicago Daily Tribune*, January 20, 1876, ProQuest Historical Newspapers. Daniel Cameron, "Camp Douglas vs. Andersonville," *The Chicago Daily Tribune*, January 20, 1876, ProQuest Historical Newspapers.

<sup>57</sup> "Decoration-Day: Memorial Services Yesterday at the Various Cemeteries," *The Chicago Daily Tribune*, May 30, 1880, ProQuest Historical Newspapers.

U.S. Grant, had formed the Ex-Confederate Association of Chicago based solely for the purpose of erecting a monument above Confederate Mound where those soldiers now lay.<sup>58</sup> The problem that remained for the organization was determining how to raise the necessary funds for the monument's construction.

## **V. Underwood Turns to Chicago: The Leadup to the Commemoration and Dedication of the Monument**

On June 26, 1891, Jonathan White, President of the Ex-Confederate Association of Chicago, held a meeting in which the Association resolved that John Cox Underwood would be appointed a "committee of one, with power to take any necessary action, to raise funds for the purpose of building a monument over the 6,000 Confederate dead in Oakwoods Cemetery."<sup>59</sup> Underwood had joined the organization upon his move to Chicago the previous year. The Association had already secured ownership of the graves of the Confederate dead and permission to erect the monument over Confederate Mound from the federal government, but Congress had not appropriated money for the cause.<sup>60</sup>

To Underwood, this cause was personal. As a Confederate colonel, he had been captured near Tullahoma, Tennessee in a retreat with Confederate General Bragg's Army. He spent the next one-and-a-half years in Union prisons in Louisville, Cincinnati, and Fort Warren in Boston before receiving parole.<sup>61</sup> He quickly realized that unlike his previous endeavors farther east, his new position as Major-General of the Association enabled him to reach a broader Southern

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<sup>58</sup> "The South on Its Dignity," *The Chicago Daily Tribune*, August 12, 1889, ProQuest Historical Newspapers. John Cox Underwood, *Report of Proceedings*, 106; 251.

<sup>59</sup> Ex-Confederate Association of Chicago, *Register of Confederate Soldiers Who Died in Camp Douglas, 1862-65 and Lie Buried in Oakwoods Cemetery, Chicago, Ills.*, 1892 (Cincinnati: Cohen & Co., 1892), 4.

<sup>60</sup> Underwood, *Report of Proceedings*, 106.

<sup>61</sup> Underwood, *Report of Proceedings*, 2.

audience. This audience could not only provide funds for the construction and dedication of the monument, but might finally allow Underwood to realize his dream of successfully leading a national display of reconciliation.

Underwood's plea in his first "Appeal for Monumental Aid" highlighted whom the Ex-Confederate Association planned to target as its main source of funding for the project. Underwood addressed the appeal to "Former Comrades in Arms, Sympathizing Citizens of the Southern States, and to Whomsoever Else it may Concern."<sup>62</sup> The order of the address suggests that the Ex-Confederate Association may have been substantially more confident that their appeal would garner greater financial support from Southerners and Confederate veterans than Chicagoans.<sup>63</sup> Language invoking the Lost Cause in his appeal demonstrated that Underwood's main targets were in fact the first two groups, arguing that it was a "sectional duty" from Confederate veterans and Southerners, whereas from Northerners it would only be "noble charity."<sup>64</sup>

In total, Underwood amassed \$24,647.52 for the monument, slightly more than \$750,000 at today's dollar value.<sup>65</sup> Surprisingly, of that amount, in spite of Underwood's attempts to solicit money from Southerners, more than three quarters of the funds received for the monument came from Chicagoans and other Northerners.<sup>66</sup> Only about \$5,000 came from Southerners.

Underwood expected Southerners to contribute in other ways, however, that did not total into the

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<sup>62</sup> Ex-Confederate Association of Chicago, *Register of Confederate Soldiers*, 5.

<sup>63</sup> To clarify, there are three groups this paper discusses here. Southerners are a broad category of people who reside in the geographic region of the southern United States known as the South, here defined as those who resided in the former territory occupied by the Confederate States of America. These people were descendants of Confederate veterans (and included Confederate veterans themselves). The second group, the Confederate veterans, were those who fought for the Confederacy and lived through the Civil War, though they were spread throughout the United States and did not necessarily reside in the South, though most did. The third group were those in the North who, while they did not fight for the South, believed in the righteousness of the Southern cause.

<sup>64</sup> Ex-Confederate Association of Chicago, *Register of Confederate Soldiers*, 5-6.

<sup>65</sup> Ian Webster, "\$24,647.52 in 1895 → 2020 | Inflation Calculator."

<sup>66</sup> Underwood, *Report of Proceedings*, 14-15.

financial cost outlined in his report. For example, he had previously reached out to every Southern state and asked its people to contribute a large number of seeds for Southern flowers and trees that the participants would lay on the grounds next to the monument. This was a largely symbolic gesture that would allow the dead soldiers at Confederate Mound to have their final resting place be on “southern” soil.<sup>67</sup>

Though there is no direct evidence that points to an exact reason why Northerners contributed more toward the monument than Southerners, this paper posits two potential explanations. First, many Chicagoans themselves, particularly those who showed up to the ceremonies, were Confederate sympathizers and/or had Southern roots.<sup>68</sup> Second, and perhaps more importantly, the main donors to the monument were prominent Chicago businessmen with expansive interests both in the city and around the country.<sup>69</sup> Forging strong relations with Confederate veterans would have been extremely wise for these businessmen. Southerners venerated their generals, and thus respectable treatment probably would have allowed Chicago to have a priority placement in Southern markets. That Southerners reciprocated to this generosity is fairly clear. At the conclusion of the ceremonies, Underwood coordinated with the city of Atlanta to host major Chicago businessmen, public officials, and press members at the Atlanta Cotton Exposition later that year.<sup>70</sup> Though the primary purpose of the exposition was to foster greater trade relations with Latin American countries, it provided a platform for Southerners to

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<sup>67</sup> “They Wore the Gray: Confederate Monument Will Be Dedicated May 30,” *The Inter Ocean*, April 1, 1895, Newspapers.com.

<sup>68</sup> For more on this, see pages 26-27 (i.e. Potter Palmer and his wife Bertha, a Kentucky native, who hosted a major reception at the Palmer House).

<sup>69</sup> For a complete list of the businessmen and others who donated to the monument effort, see Underwood, *Report of Proceedings*, 258-263.

<sup>70</sup> Underwood, *Report of Proceedings*, 274-280.

introduce their technology to the world. In turn, the Chicagoans who attended promoted their own goods and services to the entire South.<sup>71</sup>

## VI. May 29-30, 1895 – The Palmer House, Kinsley’s, and Dedication Day: Major Themes

### Accompanying Reconciliation

On May 29, 1895, the stage was set for an evening reception at the Palmer House for distinguished Confederate veterans and prominent Chicago citizens. Immediately, there were some noticeable differences between the reactions at Philadelphia and at Chicago. For example, Chicago reception guests seemed perfectly content with sectional fashion displays. As Underwood wrote, “Tiny examples of the American flag were displayed on the corsages of beautiful women with evident pride, and on the bosom of a fair one here and there was pinned a badge of the stars and bars side by side with the stars and stripes.”<sup>72</sup> The proximity of the Confederate flag and the American flag appeared to signify an endorsement of unity, only this time, the displays did not provoke any backlash.

Visitors to the Palmer House were welcomed to a series of Confederate flags that adorned the rotunda before the entrance to the hotel, a reminder to all Southerners that they were among friends.<sup>73</sup> That the most famous hotel in Chicago was decorated with Confederate flags must not have surprised anyone who attended the private reception the night before the city-wide ceremonies. The hotel was owned and operated by Potter Palmer, whose wife Bertha hailed from one of Kentucky’s most prominent families. She was personally acquainted with Underwood, as

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<sup>71</sup> Bruce Harvey and Lynn Watson-Powers, “The Eyes of the World Are Upon Us”: A Look at the Cotton States and International Exposition of 1895” in *Atlanta History* 39 (Fall/Winter 1995), 5-11.

<sup>72</sup> Underwood, *Report of Proceedings*, 23.

<sup>73</sup> Underwood, *Report of Proceedings*, 20.

he had requested her to host former Confederate President Jefferson Davis's wife Varina and her daughter Winnie during the World's Fair in 1893.<sup>74</sup>

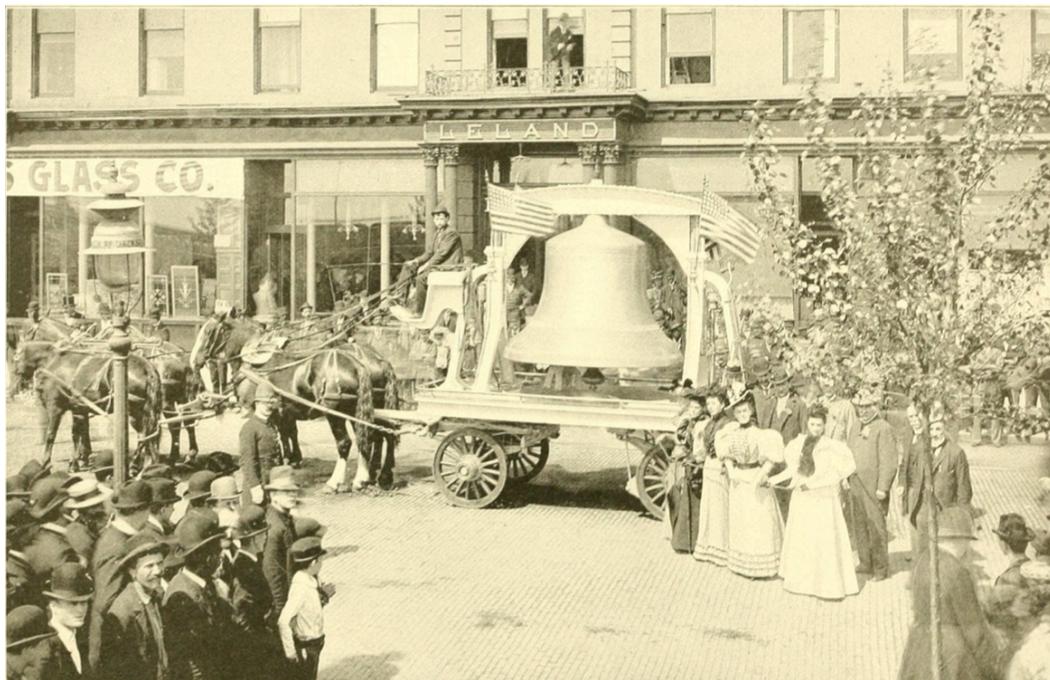
Though few gave speeches at the Palmer House or at the later banquet at Kinsley's restaurant, both Northern and Southern women had a prominent presence in the entire affair. Reporting from the Palmer House, the *City Press of Chicago* wrote: "And against this background of military shoulders, of noble heads, of tales of daring and suffering were outlined the grace and high-bred beauty of the American woman, the northerner and the southerner, exchanging sisterly affection."<sup>75</sup> Amidst the entire process of reconciliation in Chicago, women in particular were instrumental in defining the character of the event because they symbolized a new beginning for the country. By contrasting them "against" the male military leaders present, women represented a departure from past violence. After the brutal destruction of the Southern homeland, Southerners claimed that "the close of the civil war of 1861-1865 found the south destitute of almost everything save the manhood of the few surviving men and the purity of its women."<sup>76</sup> Southern manhood and femininity could not be destroyed. They were ideals that persisted in spite of physical ruin.

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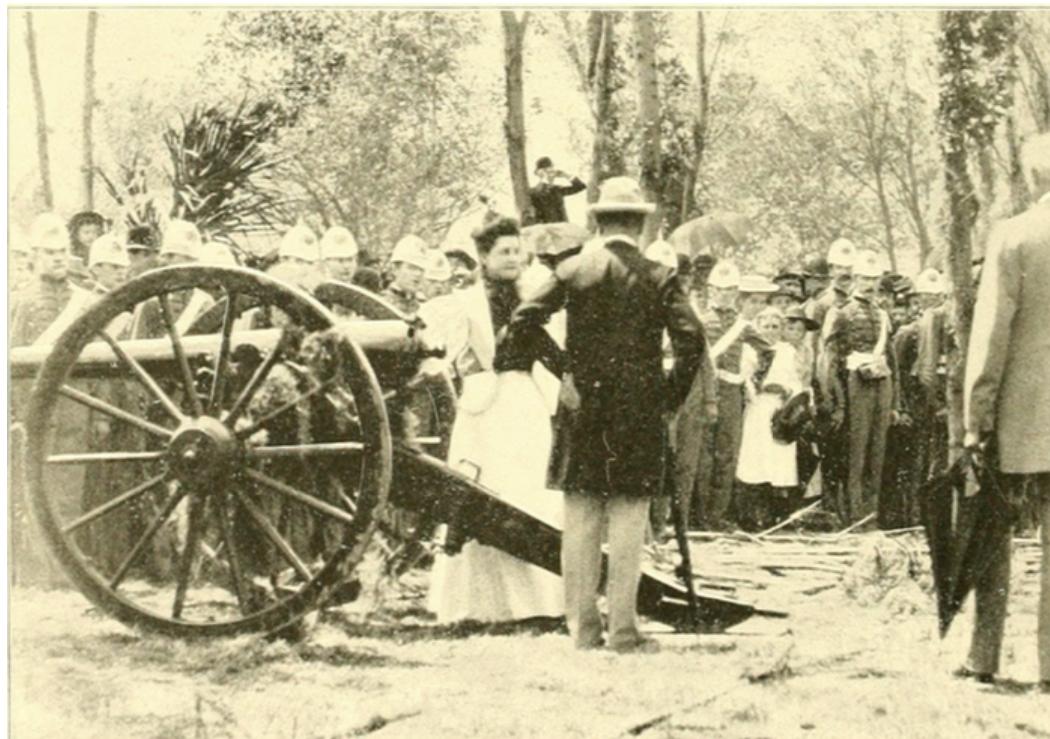
<sup>74</sup> Correspondence from John Cox Underwood to Varina Howell Davis, 1892, in "Underwood, John Cox, 1840-1913 (SC 2331)," MSS Finding Aids, Paper 1475, Kentucky Museum Library Special Collections, Bowling Green, Kentucky. <https://westernkentuckyuniversity.pastperfectonline.com/archive/F526CF26-6548-420C-89CA-465478975433>

<sup>75</sup> Underwood, *Report of Proceedings*, 28.

<sup>76</sup> Underwood, *Report of Proceedings*, 105.



Eliza Washington, Isabelle Armstrong, Margaret Cox, and Virginia and Laura Mitchell Ringing the Columbian Liberty Bell at the Start of the Parade to Oak Woods Cemetery  
Underwood, *Report of Proceedings*, 100.



Woman Consecrating One of the Cannons at Confederate Mound  
Underwood, *Report of Proceedings*, 136.

In part due to this status, it was women who often performed the highly symbolic displays at the celebration. For example, at the start of the parade down Michigan Avenue the following day, Eliza Washington, Isabelle Armstrong, Margaret Cox, and Virginia and Laura Mitchell tugged on a rope to ring the Columbian Liberty Bell before a massive crowd of Chicagoans.<sup>77</sup> Later at Oak Woods, Lucy Lee Hill, Alice Pickett Akers, Laura Mitchell, Isabelle Armstrong, and Katie Cabell Currie consecrated the four Georgia cannons surrounding the monument and dedicated them to the memory of the valor of the dead soldiers resting beneath.<sup>78</sup> These separate acts demonstrate that Southern women fulfilled two purposes during the ceremonies. To give the ceremony additional Southern character, Southern womanhood was a necessary touch. At the same time, in ringing a bell representing peace and freedom before a crowd of mostly Northerners, it was Southern women who helped bring about a united future.

Unlike gender, slavery was on everyone's mind but very seldom on anyone's tongue. Underwood himself wrote in his report: "It is not now profitable to discuss the right and wrong of the past, which has been settled by arbitrament of arms, neither should the question be raised as to the morals of Massachusetts selling her slaves and South Carolina holding hers."<sup>79</sup> Underwood went beyond several others in casting the sin of slavery on both the North and South. Though he framed the argument in moral terms, Underwood made an implicit economic assertion as well. Northerners acted in their best self-interest by selling their slaves, and Southerners did the same in maintaining the institution. While he was correct in stating that both the North and the South had practiced slavery, the rhetoric suggested that Underwood intended to push back not only on the idea that the South was solely responsible for slavery, but further

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<sup>77</sup> Underwood, *Report of Proceedings*, 101.

<sup>78</sup> Underwood, *Report of Proceedings*, 135-137.

<sup>79</sup> Underwood, *Report of Proceedings*, 8.

deny that the question of slavery was still unresolved. War, Underwood insisted, had ended the need for such a discussion.

Lieutenant General Stephen D. Lee of Mississippi supported Underwood's effort to distance the South from its past. In his speech at the reception he asked: "But was it not worth it all to solve these awful problems, which our forefathers could not solve, but bequeathed to us? The clock of the universe had struck the hour when slavery should be no more; when our Union should be made complete; when the sin of north and south alike should be redeemed by the blood of the patriot."<sup>80</sup> According to Lee, slavery was settled. Moreover, Lee framed his question in such a way as to insist that Southerners were victims of slavery because their forefathers "bequeathed" the problem to them. This built upon Underwood's claim that the entire country was responsible for the sin of slavery, not simply the South. Furthermore, Lee's use of "clock of the universe" suggested that slavery was out of the hands of not only those attending the event, but also those who had participated in the war more broadly. Slavery was an issue that only answerable to and solvable by God, and thus its fate was inevitable.

One of the recurring themes of the evening's speeches was the hope that fraternal feelings between the North and the South would help establish and cement strong business ties between the two sections of the country. Lee, for example, concluded his speech with the following statement: "My friends, ... we accept your friendship with the same generous spirit with which you offer it; that we invite you again to invade us, not with your bayonets this time, but with your business."<sup>81</sup> Though the South had been slowly recovering in the decades following the Civil War, the loss of slavery as an economic foundation required Southerners to transition to a

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<sup>80</sup> Underwood, *Report of Proceedings*, 61.

<sup>81</sup> Underwood, *Report of Proceedings*, 37.

more industrial-based economy. Northern entrance into their markets would strengthen this type of economy immensely.

Many other attendees echoed this sentiment. Confederate Major-General Matthew C. Butler of South Carolina said to the crowd:

In the most candid manner, and taking a material view of it—a practical view, outside of the sentiment which you have been indulging in to-night, I doubt very much if there is an old rebel anywhere in the south, who wants to buy anything, who will not say: “Well, I believe I will go to Chicago. (Laughter.) They treated our old chieftains, Hampton and Longstreet and Fitzhugh Lee and Stephen D. Lee and all of those old rebels kind of honestly when they got up there, and I think we will send up there when we have got to buy.” That is the practical side of it. (Laughter.)<sup>82</sup>

Butler emphasized how Southerners’ reverence for their generals would translate into economic opportunity for the North. Thus, the economic benefits would be mutual. Southerners would gain Chicagoans’ investment in their markets, which would help the South rebuild. Chicagoans, in turn, would emerge as prime beneficiaries of Southerners travelling to purchase their goods along newly constructed railroads linking Chicago to many of the South’s most important cities.<sup>83</sup> The laughter that followed Butler’s remarks, then, was not a laughter discounting his ideas, but rather indicated a tacit understanding among the attendees that financial gain was a motivating factor in bringing about this event.

At Oak Woods, one final theme appeared among the speeches given and through the monument itself: that memorializing the Confederate dead was a means of bolstering a historical narrative that would permanently alter the way that future generations would understand the Civil War. The entanglement of Christianity to this effort was pivotal. The Reverend Horace Wilbert Bolton said: ““As we turn from the past to grapple with the priceless commodities left

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<sup>82</sup> Underwood, *Report of Proceedings*, 48-49.

<sup>83</sup> Whet Moser, “How the Deep South Came to Chicago” *Chicago Magazine*, August 2014. <http://www.chicagomag.com/city-life/August-2014/Chicagos-Mississippi-Legacy-and-Iowas-Chicago-Legacy/>.

us, let us remember that to have lived in the nineteenth century in America will be an awful account to meet in the roll-call of eternity. There are 65,000,000 free spirits to be educated and directed in the view of perpetuating the glory we have inherited.”<sup>84</sup> Under this view, reconciliation was a holy endeavor, a gift from God graciously bestowed upon those who had fought in the Civil War or otherwise participated in the evils of the nineteenth century, such as slavery. Though it was a duty to spread this gospel to future generations, it also offered an opportunity for its messengers to purify themselves before God. By referencing the “roll-call of eternity,” the reverend may have suggested that survivors needed to promote reconciliation to save themselves from damnation.

Bolton’s call for “65,000,000 free spirits to be educated” underscored the need to promote reconciliation to those that were furthest removed from the war. To this end, many former Unionists and Confederates involved in the monument process had themselves ventured into schoolhouses to instruct younger generations on what they hoped to frame as the history and legacy of the Civil War. For example, General John C. Black of Illinois told the crowd at Kinsley’s that on that morning, he had addressed a group of one thousand schoolchildren.<sup>85</sup> He attempted to leave them with a legacy of the Civil War that emphasized reconciliationist values. Black said: “To us, the survivors of the two armies, is left the rarest privilege, and that is, that we shall, in the same generation that carried on war, bind up all the wounds of war (applause) and leave to those that are to come after us only the heritage of affectionate remembrance of deeds of American valor, American heroism and American honor.”<sup>86</sup> Black confirmed the sentiment that Bolton had voiced. The veterans who had caused so much evil in the world were

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<sup>84</sup> Underwood, *Report of Proceedings*, 112.

<sup>85</sup> Underwood, *Report of Proceedings*, 51.

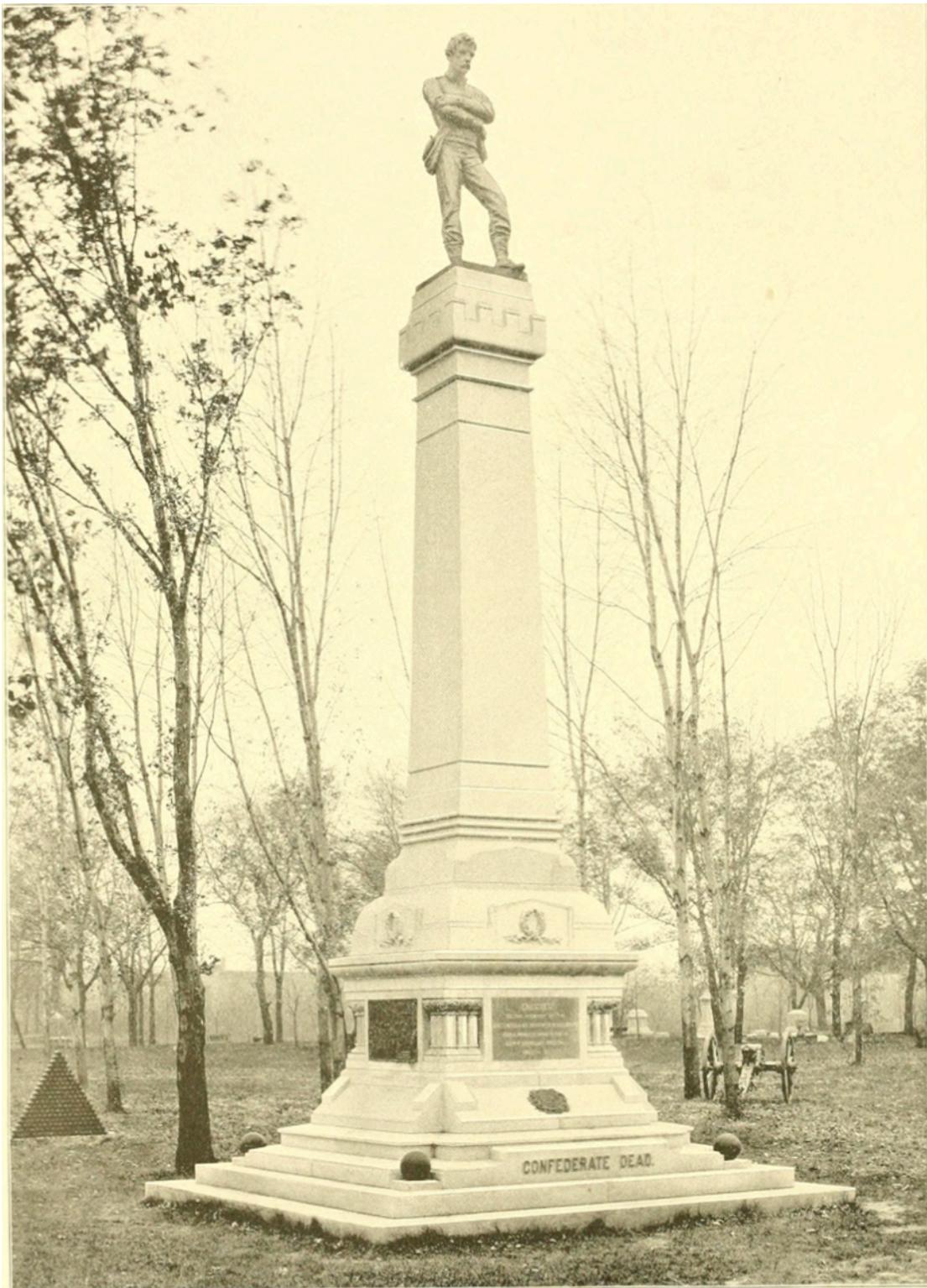
<sup>86</sup> Underwood, *Report of Proceedings*, 51.

fortunate to have the chance to eliminate the past as they saw fit and to, as Chicago Judge Richard S. Tuthill wrote in a letter read at the reception, “forget that we ever differed.”<sup>87</sup> Overall, it is clear that the participants at the ceremonies understood that they were the orchestrators of a larger effort to rewrite the history and shape the legacy of the Civil War.

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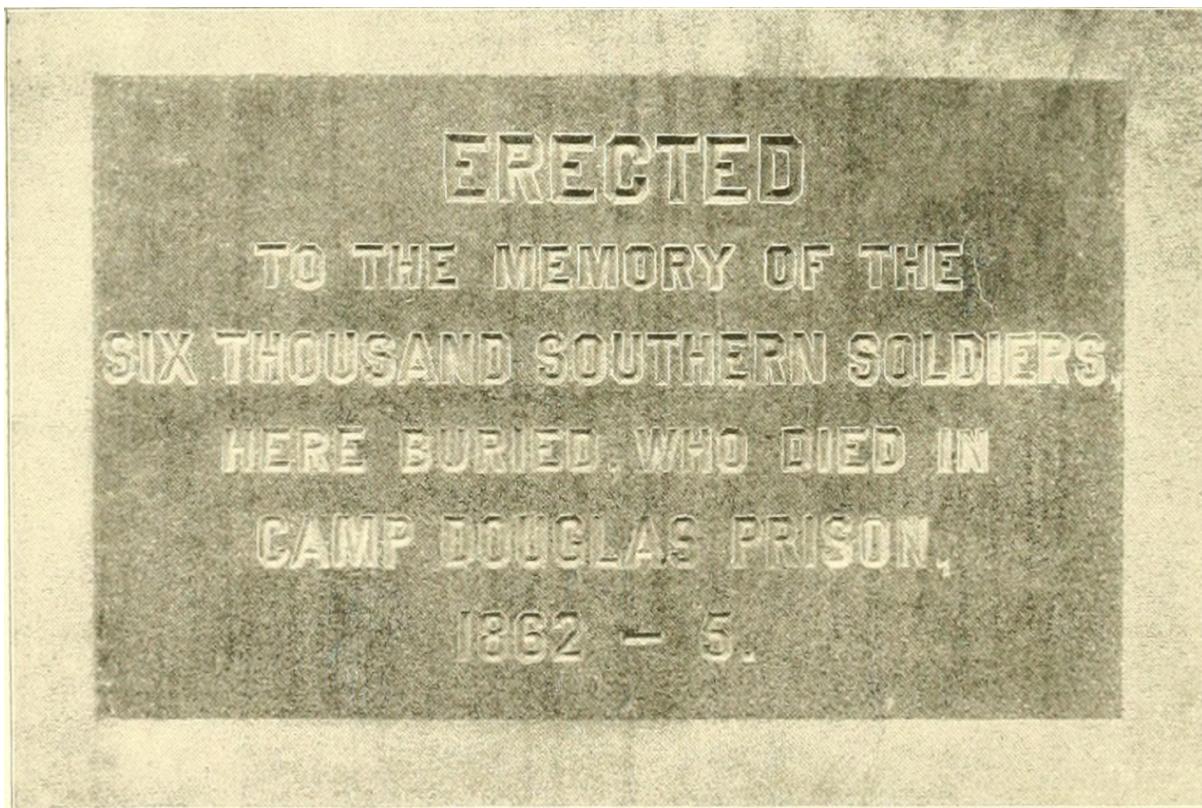
<sup>87</sup> Underwood, *Report of Proceedings*, 75.

VII. The Monument at Confederate Mound: An Emblem of the Lost Cause



The Monument as it Appeared in 1895  
Underwood, *Report of Proceedings*, 86.

The monument at Confederate Mound was a part of this larger project to minimize one of the greatest tragedies of antebellum America. That being said, it was not emblematic of reconciliationist values, but rather illustrated and venerated the Lost Cause. Following the Civil War, Southerners sought to materialize the Lost Cause into the built environment as both a glorification of their past as well as a political intimidation tactic against African-Americans.<sup>88</sup> In the speeches at the receptions and at the monument's dedication, the decision of whether to invoke the Lost Cause varied among participants. Some skirted the issue more than others. Speakers chose their words carefully, as they were before a crowd of 100,000 Chicagoans and guests from around the country, including President Grover Cleveland and his entire cabinet.<sup>89</sup>



Inscription of the Monument  
Underwood, *Report of Proceedings*, 92.

<sup>88</sup> For examples and more information, see W. Fitzhugh Brundage, *The Southern Past: A Clash of Race and Memory* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005).

<sup>89</sup> "Where Heroes Sleep: Exercises Held in the Cemeteries of the City," *The Inter Ocean*, May 31, 1895, Newspapers.com.

Underwood designed four panels, each one facing a different cardinal direction on the monument's base. The panel facing north displayed the monument's inscription: "Erected to the Memory of the Six Thousand Southern Soldiers, Here Buried, who Died in Camp Douglas Prison, 1862-5." As mentioned earlier, no one knew the exact number of Confederates who perished at Camp Douglas, with the range estimated between four thousand and seven thousand deaths.<sup>90</sup> It is quite possible that Underwood may have instructed the architect of the monument, Louis R. Fearn, to use the figure of 6,000 deaths to heighten the sense of loss.<sup>91</sup>



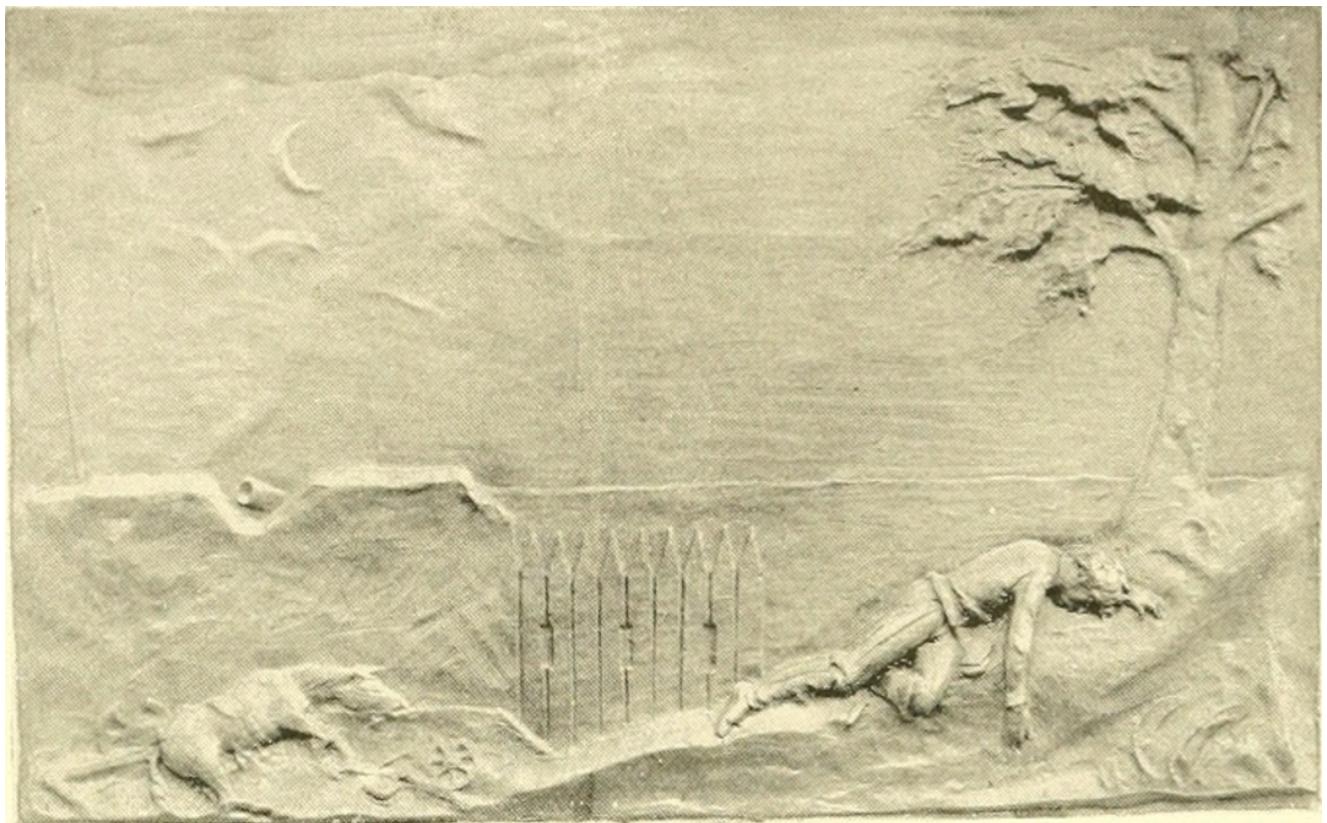
The "Call to Arms" Panel  
Underwood, *Report of Proceedings*, 90.

The panel facing east represents the original "call to arms" at the outset of the Confederacy in 1860. The drawings exemplify the diversity of backgrounds of the Confederate

<sup>90</sup> David Keller, *The Story of Camp Douglas* (Charleston, The History Press, 2015), 179-180.

<sup>91</sup> Underwood, *Report of Proceedings*, 87.

soldier. Underwood depicts “the laborer, artisan and professional man” all gesturing toward another to enlist in the Confederate Army at a Southern courthouse.<sup>92</sup> The panel suggests that viewers should identify valor in all Southerners who took up the cause of the Confederacy, regardless of the circumstances of their birth. Furthermore, women once again figure significantly in the background. They are seen encouraging their husbands and fathers to go fight for the Lost Cause. In this panel, there is a great deal of hope and a genuine belief that together the South would emerge triumphant.



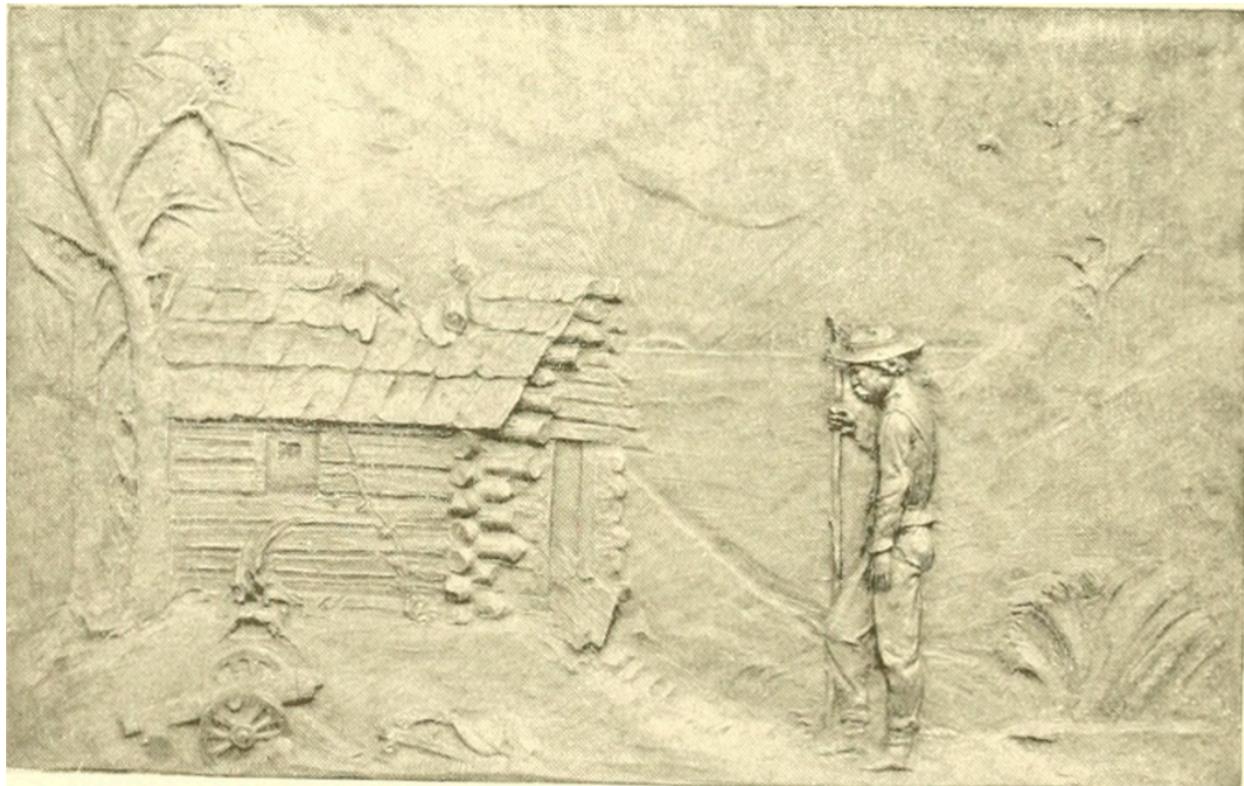
The “Soldier’s Death Dream” Panel  
Underwood, *Report of Proceedings*, 92.

The panel facing south depicts a Confederate private dying on the battlefield. He has received a fatal wound and is crawling under the shade of a tree to die. Any soldier would have

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<sup>92</sup> Underwood, *Report of Proceedings*, 91.

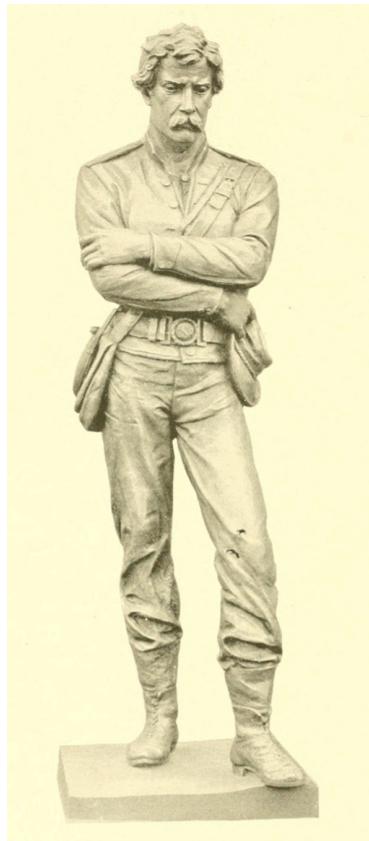
seen such a death, however lonely it appears, as extremely honorable. Nearby lies a dead horse, a gun, and various pieces of military equipment. The moon is out, indicating the end of the day's battle. On the far left of the panel, one can make out a faint Confederate flag. The flag is drooping yet still standing, and accompanied by the imagery of the dying soldier, suggests that while this soldier may have lost his life, his giving his life for the Lost Cause allowed the Confederacy to persist.



The “Veteran’s Return Home” Panel  
Underwood, *Report of Proceedings*, 90.

The panel facing west shows a Confederate soldier returning to his home. The unarmed soldier is observing his dismantled log cabin, with a broken door and farm equipment and a roof that has been carried away. The soldier is gazing sorrowfully at his home, thinking longingly of

the past. The entire panel creates an aura of isolation and loneliness, that in Underwood's words is "that of a blighted hope and a ruined substance, portraying the cause that is lost."<sup>93</sup>



Bronze Statue of Confederate Infantry Soldier Atop the Monument  
Underwood, *Report of Proceedings*, 88.

The statue of the soldier atop the monument is perhaps the most imposing part of the entire structure. It is eight feet tall, and resembles the appearance of a typical Confederate soldier at the surrender at Appomattox. His clothes and shoes are torn and stained, representing the many hardships of war. Overall, the soldier has a strong look of regret as he watches over his fallen comrades buried below him. Taken together, the statue and the panels presented the story of the Confederate soldier that Underwood and other Southerners wished to illustrate.<sup>94</sup>

<sup>93</sup> Underwood, *Report of Proceedings*, 91.

<sup>94</sup> Underwood, *Report of Proceedings*, 88.



#### Confederate Wreath on the Monument

Nereida Moreno, "Confederate Monument Stands on Chicago's South Side as Questions Swirl Around the Country," *The Chicago Tribune*, August 17, 2017.

In addition to the statue and panels, one more element of the monument is worth detailing. On the front of the upper half of the base there is an enlarged model of a Confederate seal, within which depicts a relief of General George Washington on his horse, surrounded by native Southern foliage.<sup>95</sup> Perhaps Underwood was attempting to claim ownership of Washington on behalf of the South. He was, after all, a Southerner (Virginian) and a slaveholder. Since nearly all Americans considered Washington to be an icon and the perfect embodiment of the American patriot, perhaps this was a method of Southerners suggesting that if Washington had the fallible distinction of being a slaveholder, history should thus reflect kindly on Southerners.

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<sup>95</sup> Ex-Confederate Association of Chicago, *Register of Confederate Soldiers*, 87.

## VIII. Backlash to the Monument: The Grand Army of the Republic and the “Ugly Rock”

### Cenotaph at Confederate Mound

While those present at the ceremonies were supportive of the commemoration of the monument, there were many in other parts of the country who, for different reasons, objected to it. In particular, the Grand Army of the Republic (G.A.R.) criticized that the monument’s commemoration date was Memorial Day. The G.A.R. was the largest fraternal organization of Union veterans, peaking at around 400,000 members at the start of the 1890s. The group’s chief aim was the celebration of Decoration Day, known today as Memorial Day. Senator John Logan, one of the pallbearers at Grant’s funeral, was Commander-in-Chief of the G.A.R. and had “requested members of all posts to decorate the graves of their comrades” annually on Decoration Day beginning in 1868.<sup>96</sup>

Joseph Thayer, a Massachusetts Commander of the G.A.R., faced the most backlash for his outspoken disapproval of the monument. Confederate General Wade Hampton, who gave the dedicatory oration at Oak Woods, told the local papers, “‘Chicago cannot be too greatly praised for persistency in her noble and generous deed, in spite of the sneers and scoldings administered by Massachusetts.’”<sup>97</sup> In response to criticisms of his protest, he said:

It is giving a false impression to the rising generation to picture the Confederate this way. The monument is out of place, decidedly, north of Mason and Dixon’s line; but our principal objections is that this monument should be dedicated on Memorial Day. ... Memorial Day belongs to the Union soldier, and has been set apart as a day in which to commemorate the deeds of the men who died to save the Nation.<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>96</sup> The Library of Congress, “The Grand Army of the Republic and Kindred Societies.” <https://www.loc.gov/rr/main/gar/garintro.html>.

<sup>97</sup> “Chicago’s Confederate Monument – The Dedication To-Day Considered to be the Greatest Event that Has Ever Taken Place in This Country to Cement the North and the South,” *The Norfolk Weekly Landmark*, June 5, 1895, Newspapers.com.

<sup>98</sup> “That Confederate Monument Question: Thayer Insists that It Should Not Be Dedicated Memorial Day,” *The New York Times*, May 4, 1895, The Times Machine.

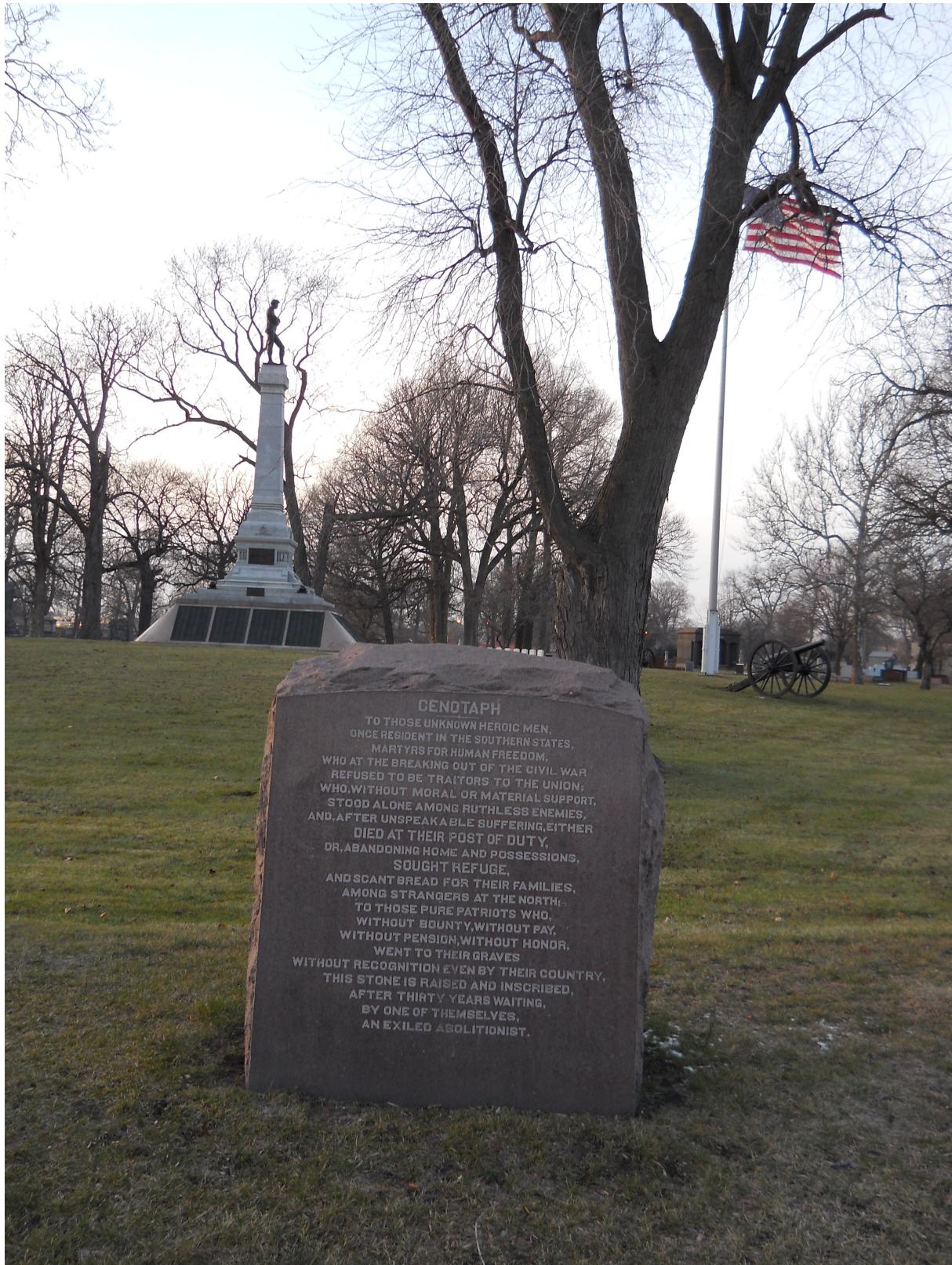
Thayer, like many of the ceremonies' participants, was concerned about the legacy of the monument and its impact on those who had not lived through the war. He recognized the oddity of its location, but insisted that the primary reason for his objections was that it was offensive to the Union soldier to dedicate the monument on Memorial Day. In doing so, Thayer redefined the meaning of the holiday. It was not, as Confederates insisted, a day to honor fallen soldiers, but rather soldiers who had died in defense of the United States. Moreover, it was not only the Massachusetts regiment of the G.A.R. that denounced the monument. G.A.R. chapters around the country opposed its dedication, and G.A.R. headquarters announced that none of its chapters would be attending the dedication ceremonies.<sup>99</sup>

By far the most prominent criticism of the Confederate monument at Oak Woods, however, actually appeared on a stone sitting outside the Mound area. The granite stone, inscribed with a cenotaph, honored the memory of Southern abolitionists. Most Southerners and Northern Confederate sympathizers called the cenotaph "Ugly Rock" because they felt it was an insult to the memory of the Confederate soldiers buried beneath the monument.<sup>100</sup>

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<sup>99</sup> "G.A.R. Will Not Be Present At The Dedication of the Confederate Monument at Chicago," *The Savannah Tribune*, June 1, 1895, NewsBank African-American Newspapers. "Many G.A.R. Men Protest: Veterans Hope to Prevent the Erection of a Confederate Monument," *The Inter Ocean*, May 4, 1895, Newspapers.com. "Railroad War Goes On: Western Lines Passenger Association Thing of the Far Future," *The Leavenworth Herald*, May 11, 1895, Newsbank African-American Newspapers.

<sup>100</sup> Steve Scroggins, "The Ugly Rock 'Cenotaph' in Chicago's Oak Woods Cemetery - Insult to Camp Douglas Confederate POWs." <https://www.svcamp1399.org/uglyrock.php>



### The “Ugly Rock” Cenotaph

“Thomas D. Lowther,” Find A Grave™. [https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/184580707/thomas-d\\_lowther](https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/184580707/thomas-d_lowther)

The text is as follows:

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

Thomas D. Lowther, a former abolitionist born in England but who spent much of his antebellum life in Florida, funded the cenotaph's construction in 1896. His neighbors in Florida forced him out of his home during the Civil War for his abolitionist beliefs, and he eventually wound up Chicago and engaged in business pursuits.<sup>101</sup> He dedicated the monument to Southern abolitionists like himself.<sup>102</sup> Though it is not known if Lowther intended to imply this, one might infer that the cenotaph also honored another group of "resident[s] in the southern states / [and] martyrs for human freedom": the slaves. While some abolitionists were executed for their support, slaves undoubtedly comprised a greater share of literal "martyrs."

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<sup>101</sup> "Thomas D. Lowther," Find A Grave™. [https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/184580707/thomas-d\\_lowther](https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/184580707/thomas-d_lowther)

<sup>102</sup> "It Tells His Life Story: Abolitionist Shaft in Oakwoods Erected by T.D. Lowther," *The Chicago Daily Tribune*, June 9, 1896, ProQuest Historical Newspapers.

Though Lowther claimed that the G.A.R. supported his endeavors, the organization ignored his petition to erect the cenotaph.<sup>103</sup> Perhaps this was because a few veterans of the G.A.R. that had positions in Congress had already approved the appropriation of the aforementioned four Georgia cannons and had served on the committee that granted federal approval for the monument.<sup>104</sup> No matter the reason, Lowther took it upon himself to fund the cenotaph.

Like the ex-Confederates who had supported the monument, Lowther focused on its ramifications for the education of future generations. Lowther said, “I know that in their schools and in other ways they are educating their children to look forward to a time when they shall lift again the banner of the ‘lost cause.’”<sup>105</sup> Lowther was well aware that Southerners were succeeding where former abolitionists were not. He recognized that with each passing day, those who had lived through the war were dying and the number of those with no memory of it was growing. For Lowther, what was particularly worrying was the potential for some to omit from the historical record the principles for which each side had fought.

Moreover, Lowther also identified that by consecrating a monument dedicated to the Lost Cause in the North, Chicagoans had emboldened Confederates to assert a false sense of righteousness. As Lowther said, “The fact is, the Confederates have been treated so magnanimously by the North that they have come to assume the position that they were entirely right in the war, and that anything which can be construed into a criticism of their attitude is contemptible and unpatriotic.”<sup>106</sup> Chicagoans had enabled ex-Confederates to foster an environment that not only absolved the South of its past evils, but also generate the conditions

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<sup>103</sup> “It Tells His Life Story,” *The Chicago Daily Tribune*, June 9, 1896, ProQuest Historical Newspapers.

<sup>104</sup> “Commander Thayer Should Apologize,” *The New York Times*, May 23, 1895, The Times Machine.

<sup>105</sup> “It Tells His Life Story,” *The Chicago Daily Tribune*, June 9, 1896, ProQuest Historical Newspapers.

<sup>106</sup> “It Tells His Life Story,” *The Chicago Daily Tribune*, June 9, 1896, ProQuest Historical Newspapers.

necessary to quash any demonstration that attempted to call out Southerners for their malicious behaviors. Such criticism, these Chicagoans and Southerners argued, was hostile to the project of reconciliation, an effort that they held was pure, noble, and financially beneficial.

While Lowther spoke on behalf of abolitionists, there is very little available evidence that displays pushback from emancipated slaves or free-born African-Americans. Perhaps this is precisely because they understood that those critical of the monument received such serious pushback. It is possible that African-Americans, particularly in Chicago, may have feared for their physical safety should they have spoken against it. Regardless of the reason, there is surprisingly more evidence available for that demonstrates African-American support of the monument. An unnamed writer for the prominent Chicago African-American newspaper, *The Broad Ax*, wrote a very positive 1919 editorial reflecting on the life of Ferdinand Peck. Peck was the President of the Chicago Citizens' Committee, the local organization responsible for helping Underwood plan the ceremonies at the Palmer House, Kinsley's, and Confederate Mound.<sup>107</sup> In the editorial the writer called Peck's work to bring about the monument an "achievement."<sup>108</sup>

More notably, it seemed as though African-Americans in Chicago, at least at the conclusion of the nineteenth century, focused on supporting the creation of monuments honoring those of their own race rather than protesting the construction and dedication of those promoting the Lost Cause.<sup>109</sup> John C. Jones, arguably Chicago's most prominent African-American citizen of this era, endorsed the National Colored Soldiers' Monument Association of the United States, an organization dedicated to promoting greater representation for African-American veterans in

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<sup>107</sup> Underwood, *Report of Proceedings*, 33.

<sup>108</sup> "Hon. Ferdinand W. Peck," *The Broad Ax*, December 20, 1919, Newsbank African-American Newspapers.

<sup>109</sup> The author recognizes that this claim is questionable due to the limited evidence he found in African-American newspapers. It is uncertain to what extent African-Americans protested the monument at Confederate Mound, and this paper does not claim to present the actual realities beyond the evidence presented. More research is needed in this area, perhaps through media other than nineteenth-century newspapers, to determine more accurately African-American thought of the monument.

the built environment. He said, ““We as a race of people owe it to the memory of those brave soldiers who sacrificed their lives on the battle field in defense of national honor.””<sup>110</sup> Though at the time Jones spoke in reference to the thirty African-American soldiers who died serving on the U.S.S. Maine during the Spanish-American War, his statement is quite revealing of contemporary black attitudes toward monumentalizing their own. Much as Thayer had insisted, African-Americans wanted to continue that same spirit of honoring those who had fought to protect and defend the country.

## **IX. Conclusion: The Aftermath of the 1895 Ceremonies and the Meaning of Reconciliation in Chicago**

Unfortunately for Lowther and others, such backlash never became mainstream, and Underwood finally fulfilled his quest to further national reconciliation while cementing the Lost Cause into the material world. In doing so, he created a bond that linked Chicagoans to the South’s markets, forging an economic partnership that could accelerate the South’s journey out of the destruction wrought by the Civil War. As a result, Underwood positioned reconciliation as a cultural and economic force that could not only engender stronger business relations between the two regions of the country, but also provide the South and Confederate sympathizers in the North an opening to silence those who attempted to expose the underlying evils for which the South had fought.

The Confederate soldiers who had died at Camp Douglas were merely a small piece of this larger puzzle. Thirty years earlier in 1865, the Americans who survived the Civil War were tasked with determining how to remember the approximately 620,000 soldiers that perished

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<sup>110</sup> “The Negro as a Soldier,” *The Freeman*, April 30, 1898, Newsbank African-American Newspapers.

during the war.<sup>111</sup> The strife had pushed American sectionalism to its brink, and many on both sides of the country were longing to restore the country to its former glory. One Confederate soldier made realizing that goal his life's mission: Colonel John Cox Underwood of Kentucky.

Beginning in his home state at the close of the 1870s, Underwood executed small gatherings of veterans and soldiers from both armies to come together under a banner of friendship. These reunions never garnered much attention outside of local presses, leading Underwood to conclude that the reason behind this was that these celebrations needed to include widespread public support and public participation.

For about six years, that goal eluded him. By 1885, however, Underwood had made a name for himself as Lieutenant Governor of Kentucky as well as through his failed gubernatorial run. He correctly saw his chance to amplify his project before a larger audience in Philadelphia. Yet his assessment of Philadelphians' mindsets backfired. He left the public feeling financially cheated and distrustful of Underwood's insistence that he was making a genuine attempt at reconciliation.

Over the following decade, motivated in part by the reconciliationist displays at U.S. Grant's Funeral March in New York, Underwood continued his journey. By 1889, he had journeyed to Columbus and nearly realized his goal before a near-death experience left him bedridden and unable to participate in the remainder of the event. The following year in Chicago, Underwood had secured the participation of thousands of Chicagoans in a parade organized by his fraternal order, but he could not muster up sufficient attendance from Southerners.

Once he was appointed Major-General of the United Confederate Veterans, Underwood saw an opportunity to reach a wider audience than he had previously. He invited some of the

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<sup>111</sup> American Battlefield Trust, "Civil War Casualties." <https://www.battlefields.org/learn/articles/civil-war-casualties>

country's most prominent Union and Confederate veterans, religious, political, business leaders, and reporters to a ceremony honoring the memory of the Confederates who perished during their imprisonment at Camp Douglas. This time, Underwood succeeded in bringing both groups together with the support of 100,000 Chicagoans.

During the ceremonies, many important themes surfaced. In the process of uniting, the events revealed the particularly symbolic role of womanhood in reflecting in a new era of harmony for the nation, and the persistence of the belief that Southern manhood and femininity survived the brutality of the Civil War, even as the South lay in ruins. Recognizing this destruction, Southerners called on Northerners to act upon the friendly relations produced by the ceremonies and invest in the South, and the South in turn would reciprocate. Finally, in order for the events to proceed without disruption, both Northerners and Southerners had to carefully eliminate slavery from the national conversation. This goal was part of a larger effort to silence the evils of the past, paint the Lost Cause in a positive light, and spread these messages to future generations too young to have experienced the truth themselves.

At the conclusion of the ceremonies, the distinguished participants and thousands of the spectators headed off to a Chicago armory for a final reception. The event was significantly more informal than the previous ceremonies. Guests conversed as a concert of popular Northern and Southern songs entertained them in the background. Underwood was pleased at the outcome of the entire endeavor and appreciative of Chicago's efforts to welcome the South. He wrote: "No city could have done more, no people could have shown greater liberality; the church, the press, the state, united and vied with each other in the discharge of the duty of harmonization."<sup>112</sup> Underwood implied that what made Chicago successful (and what made Philadelphia

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<sup>112</sup> Underwood, *Report of Proceedings*, 149.

unsuccessful) was that all of the elements of the state came together. Thus, Underwood's story demonstrates that in order to succeed at executing a functional and effective display of reconciliation, he needed to organize all of the participating components that, when grouped together, would overpower any criticism. Chicagoans and all of the ceremonies' sympathizers needed to shut down Thomas Lowther, the G.A.R., African-Americans, and anyone else who might see past their glorification of the monument and the reconciliationist movement. Instead, it would not be until the twenty-first century that this criticism began to become more conventional.<sup>113</sup>

Per David Blight and others, scholars have often framed reconciliation as a method of dealing with the dead. There is no doubt about the validity of that claim, but ironically what the ceremonies at Oak Woods prove is that despite the affair honoring those who died at Camp Douglas in an actual cemetery, reconciliation targeted the living just as much, if not more. To the many Northerners and Southerners attending the ceremonies who either condoned slavery or outright participated in it, reconciliationist events, such as the ceremonies at Oak Woods, provided a forum to reject the evils of the nineteenth century. But in order to secure their own legacies, those standing at the podiums spoke across the country to Americans who did not know any better, further reinforcing incomplete narratives and dismissing one of the most tragic tales in American history. At the close of the nineteenth century, those narratives etched in stone sheltered the dead at Confederate Mound and served as a permanent, tangible reminder of what so many tried for so long to hide.

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<sup>113</sup> For more on modern backlash to the monument at Confederate Mound, see the following: Adeshina Emmanuel, "How the South Side Came to House a Not-So-Controversial Confederate Memorial," *Chicago Magazine*, September 21, 2017. Michael Zimecki, "'Monumental Evil,'" *Another Chicago Magazine*, December 5, 2019. Rachel Hinton, "Community Organizers Want Confederate Monument Removed from Oak Woods Cemetery," *Chicago Sun-Times*, April 7, 2018. Katherine Cavanaugh, "Chicago: 'No Monuments to Racism,'" *Workers World*, April 12, 2018.

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