

From: Ruth Brannigan

To: Advisory Group Members

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Interpretation of Confederate Memorials

In keeping with an additive approach, perhaps this resource could be used to create a statement interpreting the Appomattox Statue and the brass plaque concerning the Jackson/Ellsworth exchange.

http://www.atlantahistorycenter.com/sites/default/files/marker_interpretation_template_-_final_for_website.pdf

This link takes you to the Atlanta History Center's (AHC) template for creating site-specific markers interpreting history recorded in the form of monuments or markers. For convenience, I've copied and pasted the majority of what you find on that site. Additionally, I've included the marker interpretation created by the University of Mississippi using the Atlanta History Center's template generator as a sample of its use.

AHC's Web Site:

Remember that this marker interpretation template is only one solution for approaching issues related to Confederate monuments and collective memory.

[AHC's template format generates a tailored statement using a digital entry form. It has blanks for the following:]

- Monument Name
- Year of Dedication of Installation
- Uploaded Photograph of Monument's Unveiling Ceremony (if available)
- Name the organization originally responsible for the monument's conception and fundraising efforts. (e.g. United Daughters of the

Confederacy). Briefly detail the ceremony conducted for its dedication, the date it occurred, who attended, etc.

- If available, provide a succinct quote from the unveiling ceremony. Ideally, this quote states, in the dedicator's own voice, their reason for erecting the monument.
- Monument inscription: if there is text listed on the monument, provide it verbatim.
- Describe the monument's structure, material composition, and overall imagery/symbolism. Go on to outline its history since it was dedicated: detail instances of it having moved, altered, or how it has been used by the community over time for ceremonies, etc.

The below interpretive text presents a broader historical perspective on the Civil War's legacy and effect on American society and national memory. Should your community choose to utilize the text, it may be presented through interpretive panels, mobile device applications, and/or other methods of implementation as your community sees fit.

The “Lost Cause”

The Civil War claimed the lives of an estimated 670,000 soldiers and civilians. Losses were especially high in the Confederacy, where nearly a quarter of all white men of military age were killed in combat or died of disease. At least 200,000 more were wounded or maimed. After the war, bereavement and the shock of defeat created profound doubts among white Southerners about their faith in God.

It also led them to question the great loss of life spent in defending the Confederate cause. In response, white Southern writers, artists, veterans, women's associations, and political leaders of the late 19th and early 20th

centuries sought to justify Confederate defeat as a moral victory. Collectively known as the myth of the “Lost Cause,” this reasoning maintained that secession was justified in defense of Constitutional liberties. It stated that white Southern men defended their homes nobly against insurmountable odds. It insisted that slavery was not a cruel institution and - most importantly - that slavery was not a cause of the Civil War.

Implicit in the “Lost Cause” was the belief, widely accepted throughout the United States, in white racial supremacy. Celebrations of the Lost Cause often went hand-in-hand with campaigns to enact laws mandating “Jim Crow” segregation and disenfranchising African American voters which also sparked racial violence, including lynching, well into the twentieth century.

Legacy

From the 1870s through the 1920s, Confederate memorial associations throughout the South erected more than 1,000 Confederate monuments in cemeteries, courthouse lawns, and town squares. Similar monuments commemorating Union soldiers were raised in the North, but few mentioned slavery or emancipation. In both North and South, there were some historians, writers, veterans and community leaders, including many African Americans, who consistently argued for a version of history in which slavery was the central cause of the Civil War and freedom its most important result.

Today, historians recognize that although the Civil War wrought a terrible toll in death and destruction, it freed four million enslaved people and fostered passage of amendments to the U.S. Constitution that created national citizenship and equal protection of the laws, regardless of race. These amendments formed the legal basis for the Civil Rights Movement.

Our understanding of history changes over time. Civil War monuments remain important reminders of how history can be influenced by false ideas and misperceptions. This monument was created to recognize the dedication and sacrifice of Americans who fought to establish the Confederate slaveholding

republic. Yet this monument must now remind us that their loss actually meant liberty, justice and freedom for millions of people - a legacy that continues for all of us today.

**University of Mississippi History Faculty Statement about the Plaque Recently Installed
in front of the Confederate Memorial on Campus**

As historians at the University of Mississippi, we call on Chancellor Jeffrey Vitter and the contextualization committee convened by Provost Morris Stocks to revise the plaque recently installed in front of the Confederate memorial on our campus.

The Action Plan on Consultant Reports and Update on the Work of the Sensitivity and Respect Committee, which was released in August 2014, recommended that the University “seek suggestions from various interested constituency groups” to “offer more history, putting the past into context, telling more of the story of Mississippi’s struggles with slavery, secession, segregation, and their aftermath.”

In our professional judgment, the current plaque does not accomplish this goal. In response to Chancellor Vitter’s March 29th call for suggestions to change the wording of the plaque, we submit the following text, which has been adapted from a template created by the Atlanta History Center for this purpose:

From the 1870s through the 1920s, memorial associations erected more than 1,000 Confederate monuments throughout the South. These monuments reaffirmed white southerners’ commitment to a “Lost Cause” ideology that they created to justify Confederate defeat as a moral victory and secession as a defense of constitutional liberties. The Lost Cause insisted that slavery was not a cruel institution and – most importantly – that slavery was not a cause of the Civil War. It also conveyed a belief, widely accepted throughout the United States, in white racial supremacy. Campaigns for legally mandated “Jim Crow” segregation and for the disfranchisement of African Americans accompanied celebrations of the Lost Cause; these campaigns often sparked racial violence, including lynching.

Historians today recognize slavery as the central cause of the Civil War and freedom as its most important result. Although deadly and destructive, the Civil War freed four million enslaved southerners and led to the passage of constitutional amendments that promised national citizenship and equal protection of laws, regardless of race. This monument, created in 1906 to recognize the sacrifice of Mississippians who fought to establish the Confederacy as a slaveholding republic, must now remind us that Confederate defeat brought freedom, however imperfect, to millions of people.

We welcome the opportunity to play an active role in our campus’s ongoing efforts to provide historical context for existing symbols and building names on campus.

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