



These Men Held that the States Made the Union

Gould Hagler, January 11, 2021
blueandgrayeducation.org



Confederate memorial, DeKalb County, Georgia | courtesy of the author

The Confederate memorial in DeKalb County, Georgia, stood at the courthouse in Decatur for 112 years. On June 12, 2020, Superior Court Judge Clarence Seeliger ordered it removed, declaring it to be a public nuisance. Six days later, the monument was taken down and carted off.

Georgia’s monument protection act states that it is “unlawful for any person, firm, corporation, or other entity to mutilate, deface, defile, or abuse contemptuously any publicly owned monument located, erected, constructed, created, or maintained on real property owned by an agency or the State of Georgia.” The law applies to structures “dedicated to a historical entity or historically significant military, religious, civil, civil rights, political, social, or cultural events or series of events.”

The DeKalb monument had been the scene of protests and had been the target of vandalism. Judge Seeliger determined the monument to be the nuisance, not the vandals.

The Confederate Memorial Association of DeKalb County commissioned the obelisk. It was to be unveiled in October 1907, but while the shaft was being hoisted onto the base, it fell and suffered irreparable damage. A company in nearby Marietta carved a replacement, which was unveiled on April 25, 1908, before a crowd of 2,000.

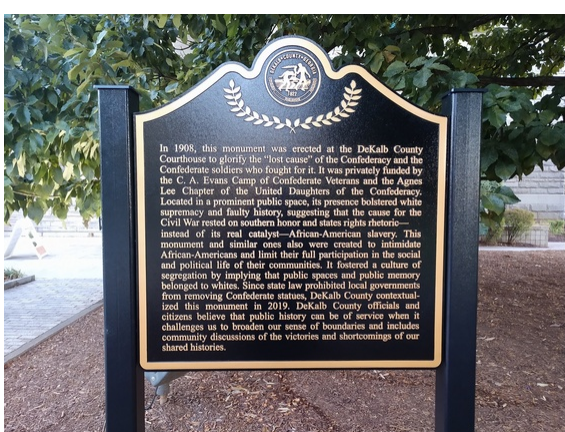
An article in the April 23, 1908, *Atlanta Constitution* described the effort to raise the \$2,000 needed for the project. The funds were “contributed by people of all classes and all ages throughout DeKalb county. The pupils and teachers of more than thirty schools throughout the county have contributed generously in amounts ranging from 1 cent from the smallest tots all the way up to large amounts. It is said that more than a thousand people contributed to the monument fund.”

The April 26 edition of the *Constitution* described the dedication ceremony and quoted from the oration delivered by Gen. Clement Evans. General Evans likened the South’s attempt to secede to the Magna Carta and argued that the seceding states “had indeed sufficient provocations and grounds of despair when the sectional spirit which had distressed our country for many years loomed before them and lowered over them in 1860 with destructive threatenings.”

Evans told the assemblage that the purpose of the “sectional party” empowered by that year’s election was to use “the powers of the common government adversely to the privileges, rights and interests of the southern people which were under constitutional protection. But secession was not undertaken by the people because of dissatisfaction with the constitution. They were indeed disturbed by the violations of that great charter.”

One of the inscriptions on the base mirrors the points General Evans made in his address:

THESE MEN HELD THAT THE
STATES MADE THE UNION,
THAT THE CONSTITUTION IS THE
EVIDENCE OF THE COVENANT,
THAT THE PEOPLE OF THE STATE
ARE SUBJECT TO NO POWER
EXCEPT AS THEY HAVE AGREED
THAT FREE CONVENTION BINDS
THE PARTIES TO IT, THAT THERE
IS SANCTITY IN OATHS AND
OBLIGATION IN CONTRACTS,
AND IN DEFENSE OF THESE PRINCIPLES
THEY MUTUALLY PLEDGED THEIR LIVES
THEIR FORTUNES AND THEIR SACRED HONOR.



The contextualization | courtesy of the author

The DeKalb monument had been in the news for some time before Judge Seeliger determined that it was a nuisance. In 2019 protesters demanded its removal, but at the time county officials believed that the law protected the structure and chose to erect a tablet that “contextualized” the memorial. This contextualization offers an interpretation of history that differs markedly from the speech by General Evans and the inscriptions carved in the granite. The plaque also states (erroneously) that it was “funded by the C.A. Evans Camp of Confederate Veterans and the Agnes Lee Chapter of the United Daughters of the

Confederacy.”

In 1908 the monument was unveiled at 10:00 a.m. in bright daylight. In 2020 it was removed in the dark of night.



This Civil War Dispatch has been brought to you by the Blue and Gray Education Society, a non-profit 501-3C educational organization. Please visit us at www.blueandgrayeducation.org.

Share this email:



Manage your preferences | Opt out using TrueRemove®
Got this as a forward? Sign up to receive our future emails.
View this email [online](#).

P.O. Box 1176
Chatham, VA | 24531 US

This email was sent to .
To continue receiving our emails, add us to your address book.



[Subscribe](#) to our email list.