



# BLUE AND GRAY DISPATCH



Grant's Tomb, New York City | Wikimedia

## "More of the Story" on Monuments

by Waite Rawls – November 5, 2019

Paul Harvey made thousands of radio recordings in which he would tell a story and then add, "the rest of the story." For those of us in the history field, we know there is no such thing as "the rest of the story," because there is always "more of the story." With that in mind, this article gives "more of the story" of the Confederate monuments in Richmond and elsewhere.

In today's public narrative on Confederate monuments, we commonly are told that the great majority of the monuments were erected between 1885 and 1925. Many say that this time period corresponds with the "Jim Crow Era" or the "Lost Cause Era," either of which identify them as products of the white supremacy and black suppression of that time. As a result, the monuments have become testaments to racism and their subject matter is racist and is to be rejected by a modern, enlightened, and appropriately sensitive population. While those causes cannot be dismissed or discounted, they are not the whole story.

Historians of the era would also call it the "Memorial Period" because of all the statues, monuments, and memorials that were being erected all across the country—North and South, East and West, urban and rural. As Dr. Caroline Janney points out in her book, *Remembering the Civil War: Reunion and the Limits of Reconciliation*, the great tidal wave of monuments began shortly after the war with Union veterans going to the various battlefields and erecting markers—many small and some monumental in size—to their participation and valor in battle. And America's Civil War battlefields are covered with these markers. Gettysburg alone now has 1,328 of them. By the 1880s, the effort to remember the valor and sacrifice of the soldiers had spread to the hometowns from which those soldiers came. Again, this phenomenon began in the North; but it quickly spread to the South, with southerners often noting their jealousy of the North or a sense of competition with the North.



The neoclassical Soldiers' and Sailors' Monument on Monument Circle, Indianapolis, circa 1911 | Library of Congress



UDC president Daisy McLaurin Stevens, at the Confederate Monument, Arlington National Cemetery, 1914 | LOC



Detail of Confederate monument standing before South Carolina State House | Library of Congress

The efforts of women across the country quickly caught up and surpassed the efforts of the veterans themselves, with the women of the North again taking the lead. The Daughters of Union Veterans was created in 1885, and the National Society of the Daughters of the Union began in 1912. The southern counterpart, the United Daughters of the Confederacy, started in 1894, but numbered only about half the participants of northern women's groups. Again, there was a sense of rivalry.

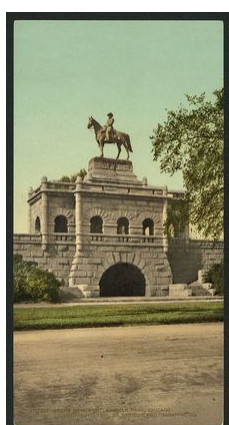
The "Memorial Period" became almost a frenzy of activity, with thousands of statues being erected. At the court house or town square of small towns across the country, monuments went up, usually with inscriptions that sounded like "In Honor of the Men of (your town here) Who Served in the Great Civil War" or something similar. The statues on the top of the pedestals were often ordered from catalog companies, where you could specify the type of hat, whether bearded or clean shaven, carrying a musket or a sword, and looking up and alert or down in silent memorial. In the larger cities, the monuments were larger and more elaborate. Many of the statues were custom made by sculptors who would do a Yankee one month and a Rebel the next. And many of them were monumental in size, much larger than anything in Richmond. The largest in the country is in downtown Indianapolis, erected in 1902 and 285 feet high, more than three times as large as Richmond's biggest, the 90-foot-high Confederate pyramid in Hollywood Cemetery. The 60-foot-high monument in Richmond of Robert E. Lee, dedicated in 1890, was dwarfed a year later in Chicago with a 100-foot-tall monument to Grant and the 165-foot-tall Grant's Tomb in New York in 1897. And all were much smaller than the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, D.C., which was done in the same period—began in 1914 and completed in 1922.

Despite the competition, the South could never keep up, as there are more than twice as many markers, monuments, and statues in the North today than there are in the South. Counting monuments is a little tricky, because statues are clearly in the count, but how about other markers? The Southern Poverty Law Center has tried to count those in the South; but they include statues, schools, buildings, streets, license plates, dams, even a fire department that are all named after Confederates. Their count of Confederate markers comes to 1,728 in the entire country, with 223 in Virginia, only 95 of which are recorded as monuments. In contrast, counting only monuments and statues, websites for New York State claim 280 Civil War statues and monuments and Ohio sites claim 269.

"More of the story" would seem to indicate that most of the Confederate monuments fit into history better as part of a national narrative called the "Memorial Period," during which the entire nation mourned the death of the 750,000 men who died and memorialized the sacrifices of the three million who served for causes which most of them believed were just. To single out the Confederate statues and attribute them wholly and only to the Jim Crow or Lost Cause era seems to me to tell only part of the complicated story of American history. As we contemplate the monuments to Confederates, we deserve to know more of the story.



Confederate Pyramid, Hollywood Cemetery, Richmond, VA | LOC



General Grant statue, Chicago | LOC



Confederate monument, Orangeburg, South Carolina | Library of Congress

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