

CONFEDERATE MEMORIAL TASK FORCE FINAL REPORT



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Task Force Purpose

City of Savannah Mayor Eddie DeLoach convened the Confederate Memorial Task Force in October 2017 to provide recommendations for the Savannah City Council regarding the Confederate Memorial in Forsyth Park Extension. Mayor DeLoach charged the Task Force with making simple and sensible recommendations that would address ways to make the Confederate Memorial more representative of Savannah's community while also preserving Savannah's unique history.

Task Force Methodology

The Confederate Memorial Task Force¹ took its charge from Mayor DeLoach very seriously and embarked on a thoughtful and deliberative process that included historical research, observational fieldwork, and a public survey that spanned October through December 2017. The Task Force explored a range of options from complete removal of the memorial to leaving it as is, weighing the pros and cons of each. The members explored elements of the memorial located at Forsyth Park and Laurel Grove North Cemetery in Savannah and Laurel Hill Cemetery in Thomasville, Georgia. They also considered Savannah's memorial in the context of the broader discussion of Confederate monuments around the country, but with an eye towards this monument's specific history and narrative.

¹ During its first meeting, the Confederate Memorial Task Force decided to refer to the Confederate Memorial in all Task Force records as a "memorial" in recognition of the Savannah Ladies Memorial Association's stated desire to erect a memorial to Savannah's Civil War fallen. Historical records refer to it interchangeably as both a "memorial" and a "monument," and it is most often titled the "Confederate Monument" in historical documents.

Confederate Memorial History Timeline

The following timeline is a brief history of the Confederate Memorial, including the fence enclosing it and the Bartow and McLaws monuments that were relocated to the memorial's grounds in 1910.

1867 February 18: The Savannah Ladies Memorial Association held its first meeting at the Independent Presbyterian Church. The Association's initial efforts were focused on the care of Confederate military graves at Laurel Grove North Cemetery.²

1868: As early as 1868, the Savannah Ladies Memorial Association began plans to build a memorial to the Confederate dead, raising money through a variety of fundraising activities.³

1873: The Savannah Ladies Memorial Association appointed a committee led by General Jeremy Gilmer to supervise the procurement and erection of the memorial. In August 1873, they selected the design of Canadian sculptor Robert Reid of Montreal. Reid's executed design (some elements were never completed, including statues of sentinels on the four lower corners) included a shaft constructed of Nova Scotia sandstone on top of an earthwork terrace with stone coping and flights of stairs. The base of the shaft features two bronze panels on the east and west facades. The western panel features the text: "TO THE CONFEDERATE DEAD 1861-1865." The eastern panel features a verse from the Old Testament (Ezekiel 37:9): "COME FROM THE FOUR WINDS, O BREATH, AND BREATHE UPON THESE SLAIN, THAT THEY MAY LIVE." The northern façade features a carved bas relief sculpture of a female figure representing mourning framed by weeping willow trees. The second tier of the shaft featured an open canopy under which stood a marble statue of a female figure depicting "Silence." "Silence" held her right forefinger to her lips and in her left hand held an inverted torch signifying the time of destruction and desolation of war had passed. The top of the shaft was adorned with a second marble female statue representing "Judgement." She held a trumpet in one hand, meant to signify calling the Universe to attention, and a scroll in the other on which were written the words "THE DEEDS OF THE NOBLE DEAD ARE SUBMITTED TO THE HIGH COURT OF THE ETERNAL RIGHT, TRUTH AND JUSTICE. FEELING SURE THAT OUR CAUSE WAS JUST, WE AWAIT WITH CALM CONFIDENCE THE FINAL DECREE OF THE HIGH TRIBUNAL THAT CANNOT ERR!" The sandstone memorial was elaborately decorated with carved swords, drums, flags, wreaths, inverted torches, garlands, and cherubs, and originally featured decorative urns and finials.⁴

² Jordan, Michael L., *Hidden History of Civil War Savannah* (Charleston, SC: The History Press, 2017), 113.

³ Jordan, 115-116.

⁴ Stewart, Dorothy H., "The Monuments and Fountains of Savannah," A Report on an Internship for the Savannah Park and Tree Department (Savannah, GA: Armstrong State College, Department of History, June 1993), 246-247, 254; Jordan, 116-118; "Confederate Memorial," Art Inventories Catalog, Smithsonian American Art Museum, Control Number IAS 76009997, Reference File: Monuments and Markers-Confederate Monument, City of Savannah, Research Library & Municipal Archives (hereafter RLMA).

1874 April 22: Savannah City Council granted permission to the Savannah Ladies Memorial Association to erect a memorial to the Confederate dead in the Forsyth Park Extension where the alignments of Bull and Gwinnett streets intersect.⁵

1874 June 16: In a traditional Masonic ceremony, the cornerstone of the Confederate Memorial was laid.⁶

1875 May 24: The memorial, costing approximately \$21,250, was dedicated by the Savannah Ladies Memorial Association.⁷



Confederate Memorial, circa 1875-1879⁸

⁵ Official Proceedings of Savannah City Council, April 22, 1874, City of Savannah, Clerk of Council's Office (hereafter Council Proceedings).

⁶ Jordan, 120-121; Stewart, 252.

⁷ Council Proceedings, May 19, 1875; Stewart, 255.

1878 April 21: The Savannah Ladies Memorial Association voted unanimously to accept the proposal of George Wymberly Jones DeRenne to renovate the Confederate Memorial by removing the statues of “Judgement” and “Silence,” enclose the canopy with stone, and place a bronze statue of a Confederate soldier on the top, at DeRenne’s own expense.⁹

1879 May 16: The Savannah Ladies Memorial Association unanimously adopted a proposal to replace the urns at the base of the memorial with cannon balls.¹⁰

1879 May 22: The new statue, titled “Confederate Soldier,” sculpted by the Welsh artist David Richards of New York, was installed on the memorial under the supervision of local architect Augustus Schwaab. Schwaab, who also oversaw the removal of “Silence” and “Judgement” and the enclosure of the canopy, was paid \$50.00 for his professional services. Robert D. Walker, a local marble dealer, cut the panels for the canopy enclosure, engraved three of them with flags (the south-facing panel was left blank), and took down the statues, for which he was paid \$550.00.¹¹

In a letter presenting the new statue to the Association, G. W. J. DeRenne described the statue as: “A bronze statue of a Confederate soldier... It represents him as he was—marked with the marks of service in features, form and raiment; a man who chose rather to be than to seem, to bear hardship than to complain of it; a man who met with unflinching firmness the fate decreed him, to suffer, to fight, and to die in vain... I offer the statue as a tribute to ‘the MEN’ of the Confederate army. Without name, or fame, or hope of gain, they did the duty appointed them to do. Now—their last fight fought, their suffering over, they lie in scattered graves throughout our wide Southern land, at rest at last—returned to the bosom of the loved mother they valiantly strove to defend... According to your faith, believe that they may receive their reward in the world to come—they had none on earth. With the expression of my profound respect for those women of the South who, true to the dead, have sought to save their memory from perishing.”¹²

In another letter to the Association dated April 28, 1880, G. W. J. DeRenne further described the statue’s design: “Whatever success the statue may have had, seems to me to be largely owing to causes which I do not wish forgotten. First among them is the attitude, originally suggested to me by Mr. H. M. Branch.... It is that which, technically called ‘parade rest’, has moreover an absolute significance: for it indicates submission to the inevitable, without excluding the idea of manly struggle to avoid it. Another effective suggestion from Mr. Branch was, the hat thrown back, that winds might cool the heated head and help the man to rest.”¹³

⁸ Jordan, 117.

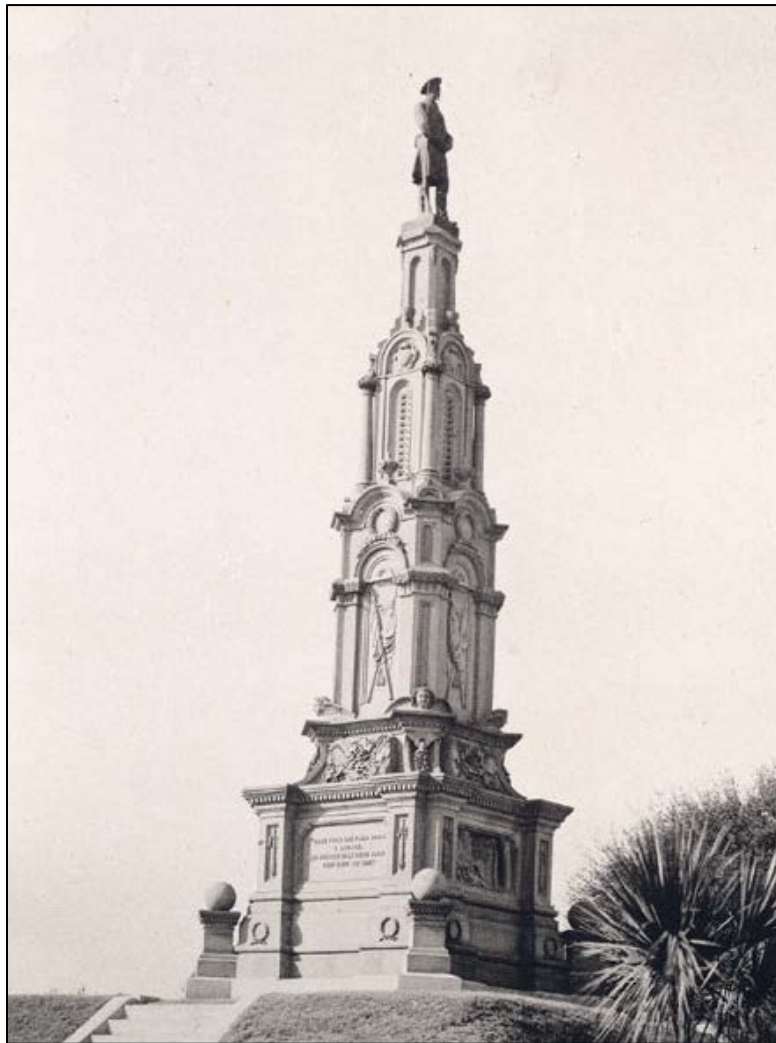
⁹ Jordan, 122-124.

¹⁰ MS473, Ladies Memorial Association, Item 1, Minute Book, May 16, 1879, Georgia Historical Society (hereafter Ladies Minutes).

¹¹ Jordan, 122-124; Stewart, 257, 262.

¹² Stewart, 258-159.

¹³ Stewart, 261.



Confederate Memorial reflecting 1879 alterations

Artwork of Savannah (Chicago: W. H. Parish Publishing Co., 1893)
Armstrong State University, Lane Library Special Collections¹⁴

1879 May 30: The Savannah Ladies Memorial Association adopted a resolution donating the statue of “Judgement” to the Thomasville Memorial Association and adopted a second resolution accepting Captain Dickerson’s offer to place at his own expense the statue of “Silence” on a pedestal over the Gettysburg dead in Laurel Grove Cemetery. The donation to Thomasville was acknowledged in the *Thomasville Times* on June 7, 1879, and in a thank you letter from the Thomasville Memorial Association read at the April 24, 1880 Savannah Ladies Memorial Association meeting. The statue of “Judgement” was placed in Soldier’s Circle in Laurel Hill Cemetery in Thomasville, Georgia.¹⁵

¹⁴ Available online at <http://www.library.armstrong.edu/artwork/images/photo23.JPG> (last accessed October 31, 2017).

¹⁵ Ladies Minutes, May 30, 1879, April 24, 1880; “A Noble Gift,” *Thomasville Times* (June 7, 1879), 3/3.

1880-1881: Starting in April 1880, the Savannah Ladies Memorial Association began an effort to raise money to replace the wooden fence around the Confederate Memorial with an iron fence. Fundraising was slow, with the *Savannah Morning News* reporting in October 1881 that the wooden fence was in a deteriorated condition and still needed to be replaced. In December 1881, the Association petitioned the Savannah City Council to erect the iron fence, but Council declined their request.¹⁶

1882 March 21: In December 1881, Mrs. DeRenne offered to install at her own expense a wrought iron fence around the Confederate Memorial. The offer was accepted by the Savannah Ladies Memorial Association through a resolution on December 26, 1881. At a meeting of the Association on March 21, 1882, a letter from Mrs. DeRenne was read informing them that the iron fence was erected. A letter from the Association president was read thanking Mrs. DeRenne for her donation and accepting the fence for the Association and the citizens of Savannah.¹⁷



Original square configuration of wrought iron fence around the memorial, circa 1890-1901

“Confederate Monument, Savannah, Ga.,” Detroit Publishing Company photograph collection,
Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division.¹⁸

¹⁶ Ladies Minutes, April 24, 1880; MS473, Ladies Memorial Association, Item 2, Account Book, June 1880, Georgia Historical Society (hereafter Ladies Accounts); “Should be Repaired,” *Savannah Morning News* (October 14, 1881), 4/2; Council Proceedings, December 21, 1881.

¹⁷ Ladies Minutes, December 26, 1881, March 21, 1882.

¹⁸ Available online at <https://www.loc.gov/item/2016797861/> (last accessed November 28, 2017).

1897 May 19: Upon petition of the Savannah Ladies Memorial Association, the City of Savannah agreed to become custodian of the memorial and to keep and care for it forever, upon the condition that the fence shall never be removed.¹⁹

1901 March 6: Savannah City Council passed an ordinance giving consent to the McLaws-Bartow Monument Committee of the United Confederate Veterans Association to erect monuments to the memories of Lafayette McLaws and Francis S. Bartow in Forsyth Park on either side of the Gaston Street entrance, provided that the permission of the Park and Tree Commission regarding the exact locations of the monuments shall be obtained.²⁰

1902 April 9: After an April 9, 1902 meeting between the Park and Tree Commission, Mayor Myers, and members of the Confederate Veterans Association, the Park and Tree Commission unanimously voted to propose the McLaws and Bartow monuments be placed in Laurel Grove Cemetery. The Commission stated “that the proper location for memorials of this character is in the grand circle or at the entrance of Laurel Grove Cemetery.”²¹

1902 April 30: In response to the Park and Tree Commission’s objections to the Forsyth Park site, Savannah City Council repealed the March 6, 1901 ordinance and passed a new ordinance appointing a committee of three aldermen to confer with the Commission and representatives of the Confederate Veterans for the purpose of agreeing upon a suitable site for the McLaws and Bartow monuments. The ordinance also authorized the City to reimburse the Confederate Veterans for any expenses already put towards foundations in Forsyth Park. As a result, on May 9, 1902, at a joint meeting between the City Council committee, the Confederate Veterans Association, and the Park and Tree Commission, held in the Mayor’s Office, at the suggestion of Captain Dillon of the Confederate Veterans, a new location of Chippewa Square, east and west of the existing fountain, was determined as satisfactory to all parties.²²

1902 May 14: Savannah City Council passed an ordinance giving consent for the erection of the Bartow and McLaws monuments in Chippewa Square. During a site visit on May 19, 1902, the location was adjusted to grass plats north and south of the fountain. The Bartow and McLaws monuments were unveiled to the public in ceremonies held on June 3, 1902.²³

1909 February 3: A meeting of the Park and Tree Commission was called to consider removal of the Bartow and McLaws monuments from Chippewa Square in order to make room for the new

¹⁹ Council Proceedings, May 19, 1897.

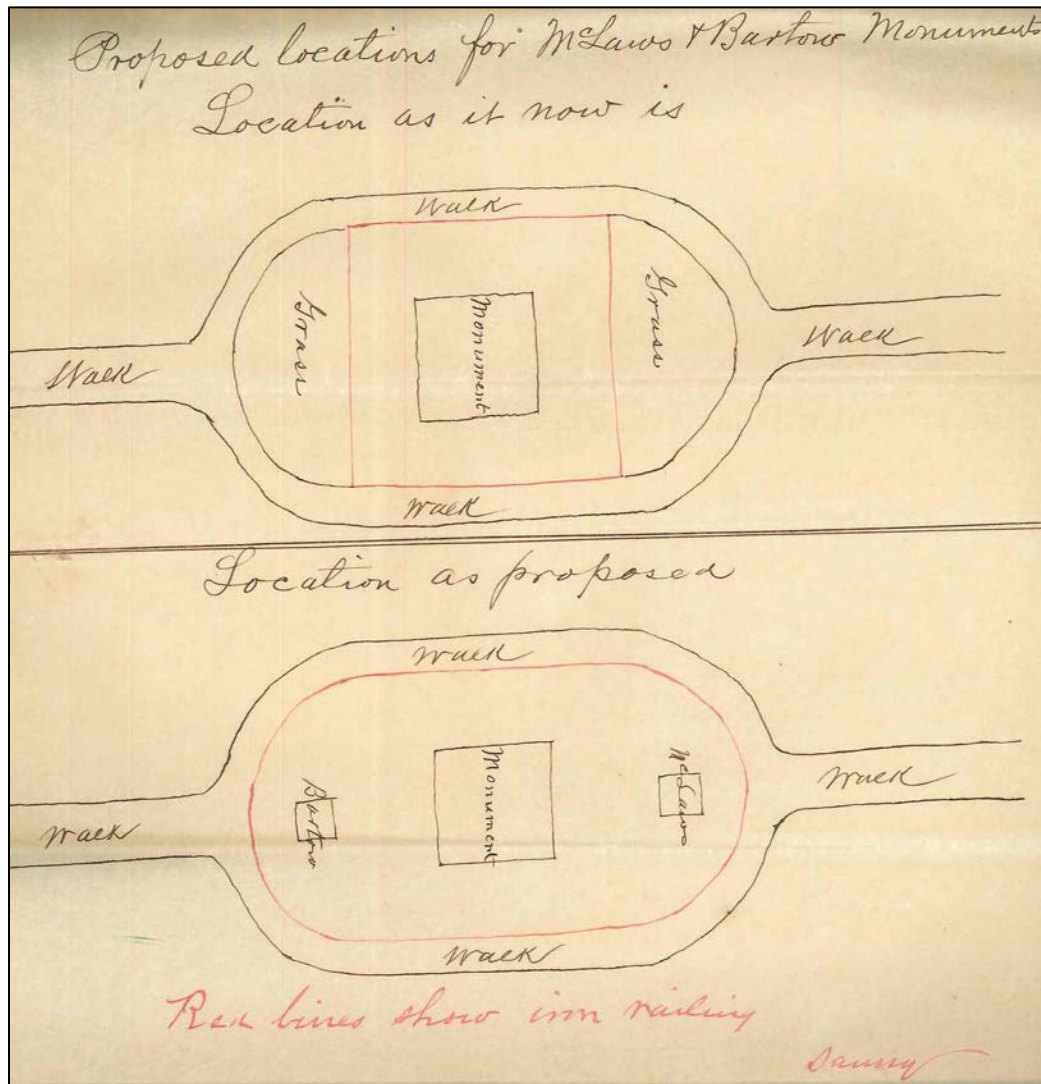
²⁰ Ordinance Book, March 6, 1901, Clerk of Council’s Office, City of Savannah.

²¹ Record Series 5600PC-10, Park and Tree Commission Minutes, Volume 1, page 263, April 9, 1902 (hereafter Park and Tree Minutes).

²² *Report of Hon. Herman Myers, Mayor, ... for the Year Ending December 31st, 1902, ...* (Savannah, GA: The Morning News Print, 1903), 52, 281-282; Record Series 0115-001, City Council Meeting Papers, Box 0115-001-A276, Folder 753 (hereafter Council Meeting Papers).

²³ *Report of Hon. Herman Myers, Mayor, 281-282;* Park and Tree Minutes, May 19, 1902, June 2, 1902; Council Meeting Papers, Box 0115-001-A277, Folder 757.

Oglethorpe Monument. The Chairman was directed to meet with the Confederate Veterans Association regarding new locations for the monuments, with the preferred new location being Laurel Grove Cemetery. If he should fail to negotiate that site with the Confederate Veterans, he was directed to offer as a second option the intersection of the walks at Bull and Hall streets in the Forsyth Park Extension.²⁴



Sketch of Proposed Installation of Busts and Alteration of Iron Fence, 1910

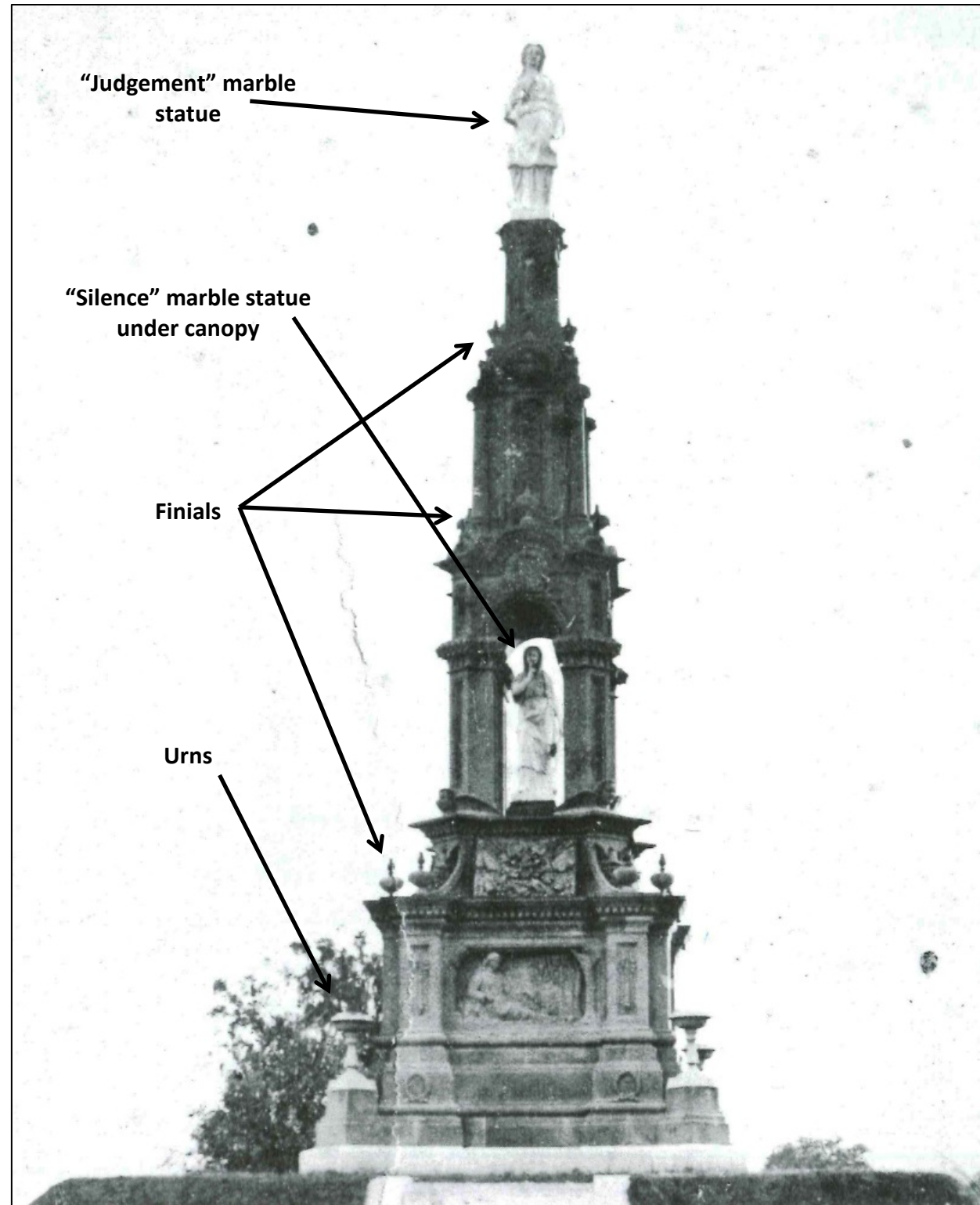
“Proposed locations for McLaws & Bartow Monuments; Location as it now is [top];
Location as proposed [bottom]; Red lines show iron railing”

Sketch by Clement Saussy, Confederate Veterans Association, February 8, 1910
Record Series 0115-001, City Council Meeting Papers, Box 0115-001-A317, Folder 1084,
City of Savannah, Research Library & Municipal Archives

²⁴ Park and Tree Minutes, February 3, 1909, February 4, 1909.

1910 February 8: The Confederate Veterans of Savannah, including the Confederate Veterans Association and McLaws Camp No. 596, petitioned Savannah City Council through the Park and Tree Commission to relocate the Bartow and McLaws busts to the Forsyth Park Extension. They asked that the busts be located north and south of the Confederate Memorial and that they be enclosed within the present fence by altering it to be semi-circular in shape. On February 23, 1910, Savannah City Council approved the relocation of the busts, at the expense of the Oglethorpe Monument Committee and under the direction of the City Engineer.²⁵

²⁵ Council Meeting Papers, Box 0115-001-A317, Folder 1084; Council Proceedings, February 9, 1910, February 23, 1910; Park and Tree Minutes, March 7, 1910.

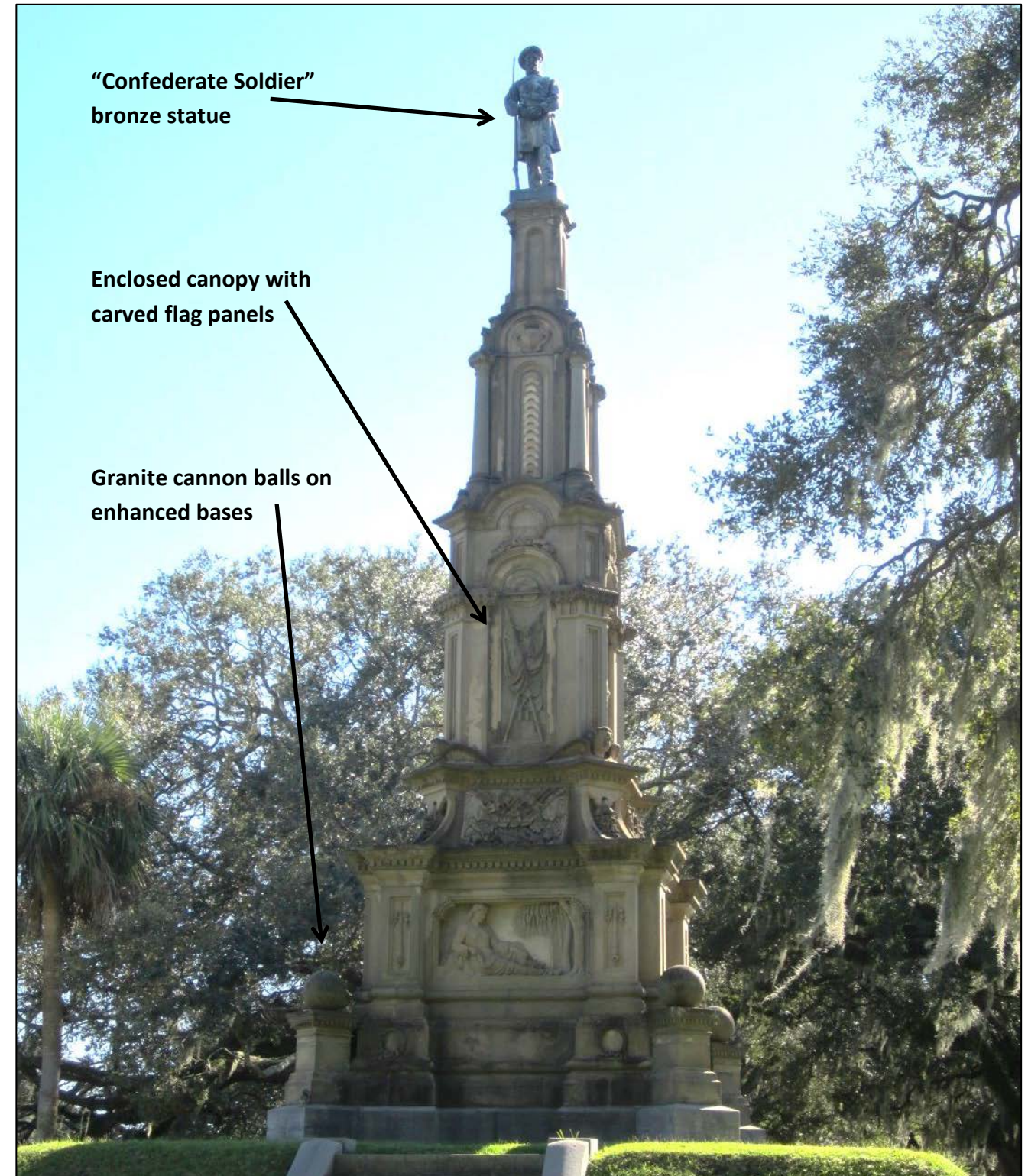


Confederate Memorial, photograph circa 1875-1879

Items Removed 1879*:

"Silence" and "Judgement" statues, finials, urns

**photographic documentation shows some of the finials existed after 1879*



Confederate Memorial, photograph 2017

Items Added 1879:

"Confederate Soldier" statue, generic flags (no detail on them), cannon balls (on enhanced bases)

Public Survey Summary

In order to gauge the Savannah community's opinions about the Confederate Memorial and what its future should be, the City of Savannah issued a call for public comment during a two-week period from October 30, 2017, 5:00 pm through November 13, 2017, 5:00 pm. Three portals were available for the public to submit their feedback, including postal mail, email, and an online survey. After accounting for duplicates, a total of 4,901 responses were received by the City during the two-week period. Of those, 2,442 identified themselves as Savannah residents, 2,304 identified themselves as non-residents, and 155 were not identified as either. The Task Force decided to focus more or place greater weight on the opinions of Savannah residents as this is a Savannah memorial.

The online survey asked respondents what they thought the future of the Confederate Memorial should be, by selecting one of the following options: do not change; relocate; modify; or add interpretation. For those who responded via email and mail, answers were free form and to provide statistical data they were sorted into these four choices. Upon analysis and review of the free form comments, the Task Force decided "modify" and "add interpretation" were both forms of alteration in some way. Based on this, a review of the data shows that of the Savannah residents who responded 1,564 (64.05%) selected "do not change," 378 (15.48%) selected "relocate," and 500 (20.48%) selected options that indicated alter. If one considers "relocate," "modify," and "add interpretation" as some form of do something, then compared to the 1,564 who selected "do not change," 878 (35.95%) selected options that indicated do something.

In summary, slightly less than two-thirds of the Savannah residents who responded to the call for public comment desired no changes to the memorial, while slightly more than one-third of the Savannah residents who responded felt that there needed to be some form of change to the memorial.

Task Force Recommendations

The Confederate Memorial Task Force presents the following recommendations to the Savannah City Council. Our intent is to make the Confederate Memorial more representative of Savannah's entire community (both currently and during the Civil War) while preserving the artifact in situ as a part of Savannah's unique history. These recommendations are in keeping with the spirit of Savannah, her dedication to the principles of preservation, and her recognition of history. These recommendations address Savannah's Confederate Memorial, the memorial's history, and not the history of the Civil War in general. As the Confederate Memorial was altered in 1879 and again in 1910 to better meet the needs of shifting community ideals, the Task Force believes this memorial is not a static object, but one that can adjust with community mores. This memorial is not alone in being modified over time: the Nathanael Greene Monument in Johnson Square, erected in 1825-1830, was modified and rededicated in 1886 and altered again in 1902. The Task Force also acknowledges that there is room for future generations to tell additional stories and expand the lessons from Savannah's history.

While the following recommendations are presented as individual recommendations, the Task Force believes that collectively they are the best solution for preserving the Confederate Memorial for the Savannah community.

Recommendation #1: Rename from "Confederate Monument" to "Civil War Memorial"

Explanation: The Confederate Memorial is historically referred to as the "Confederate Monument." The name placed the focus on the Confederacy, while the use of the word "monument" over "memorial" belied the original intent of its purpose as a memorial to the Confederate dead, as reflected in the goals of the Savannah Ladies Memorial Association. Renaming it to "Civil War Memorial" serves two purposes: "memorial" returns to the original intent of it being a memorial to the dead; and "Civil War" rather than "Confederate" makes it more inclusive to all of Savannah's Civil War fallen.

Recommendation #2: Preserve all historical material on the memorial

Explanation: In keeping with Savannah's long tradition of preservation, the Task Force recommends removing no historical material from the memorial as it was erected in 1875 and altered in 1879 by the Savannah Ladies Memorial Association. While the Task Force explored options for replacing the "Confederate Soldier" statue at the top (swapping it with "Silence" in Laurel Grove Cemetery; or returning "Judgement" from Thomasville; or installing an entirely new statue; or even leaving the top empty), in the end it was decided the statue represented the "everyman" soldier rather than a specific individual. Additionally, there were conservation concerns that swapping or reinstallation of "Silence" or "Judgement" might bring.

Recommendation #3: Install a new bronze plaque on the blank horizontal panel on the south side of the memorial with this text: “This memorial was originally erected in 1875 to the Confederate dead, redesigned in 1879, and rededicated in 2018 to all the dead of the American Civil War.”

Explanation: Affixing a bronze plaque to the memorial emphasizes the move by the community to formally rededicate the memorial and makes it more historically comprehensive. The proposed plaque text also honors the memorial’s complete history. The addition of the new plaque should only be done after the proper assessment of that area of the memorial by a stone conservator to ensure that the stonework is sufficiently stable to support such a plaque.²⁶

Recommendation #4: Do not alter the blank vertical panel on the south side of the memorial

Explanation: As the Task Force recommends making use of the blank horizontal panel to make the memorial more representative of Savannah’s history, they encourage leaving the south-facing vertical panel blank so that future generations will also have the opportunity to make contributions to this memorial as they see fit.

Recommendation #5: Relocate the McLaws and Bartow monuments to Laurel Grove North Cemetery

Explanation: The McLaws and Bartow monuments were added to the Forsyth Park site 35 years after the erection of the memorial and are distractions from the original memorial. While the memorial honors the Civil War fallen, the busts are monuments to two specific Confederate leaders (only one of whom died in the Civil War), shifting the focus from all to the individual. In keeping with the Park and Tree Commission’s recommendations from 1902 and 1910, these monuments to individuals are more appropriate in Laurel Grove North Cemetery, where both are buried and where the Gettysburg section is located. Possible locations for relocation include Bartow’s and McLaws’ respective burial lots, the Gettysburg section, and the Grand Circle first proposed by the Park and Tree Commission in 1902. The Task Force recommends that a conservator examine the monuments to recommend the safest way to relocate them without damage, and that the Cemeteries Department determines the best location for their preservation and access within the cemetery.

Recommendation #6: Do not replace the Bartow and McLaws monuments at the memorial site

Explanation: The McLaws and Bartow monuments, once relocated from the memorial site, should not be replaced. Their relocation would once again make the memorial the focal point within the fence enclosure, restoring the memorial’s prominence at this site.

²⁶ The City of Savannah Park and Tree Department recently contracted Terra Mare Conservation, LLC to complete a city-wide assessment of public monuments. Terra Mare rated the Confederate Memorial as Priority 1 on a scale of 1 to 3, with 1 being noted as needing “interventive conservation treatment,” the highest priority for treatment. They recommended additional condition assessment, as well as development of treatment and maintenance plans. “City of Savannah Monument Assessment Services Event #4816 Final Report,” Terra Mare Conservation, LLC, June 12, 2017.

Recommendation #7: Preserve the fence around the memorial in the current elliptical shape

Explanation: In keeping with the 1897 acceptance by City Council to care for the memorial in perpetuity upon condition that the fence shall never be removed, the Task Force recommends the fence be maintained and preserved. It is recognized that its current elliptical configuration reflects the 1910 alterations, but it is not recommended the fence be changed back to the pre-1910 square shape as it aligns with the configuration of the park's walkways.

Recommendation #8: The community expands the story of the Civil War, its causes, and its effects throughout Savannah, other than at the Forsyth Park Confederate Memorial site

Explanation: The Task Force's purview is limited to the memorial and the confines of the surrounding fence. After lengthy debate regarding additional memorials and interpretive signage to tell additional stories about the people, places and events of the Civil War and Savannah, the Task Force believes that the Confederate Memorial in Forsyth Park, within the enclosure of this fence, is not the place for these stories. The addition of new memorials and signage at this site would take away from the Confederate Memorial as a memorial to the Civil War dead. By relocating the McLaws and Bartow monuments, renaming the memorial, and adding the bronze plaque to the memorial, they hope to restore this memorial to what it was intended to be, a memorial to the fallen, but in a new light, inclusive of all of Savannah's Civil War fallen. With that said, Savannah needs to expand its Civil War interpretation throughout the city, as well as the contributions to Savannah by African Americans, such as Susie King Taylor, March Haynes, and Rachel Brownfield. The dialogue regarding additional memorials and monuments needs to be ongoing; there are other stories to be told throughout town. The Task Force recommends individuals and organizations use the existing avenues available to them to propose new memorials, monuments and markers, including the City of Savannah's Historic Site & Monument Commission, administered by the Chatham County-Savannah Metropolitan Planning Commission, and the Georgia Historical Society's Historical Marker Program.

Appendix A: Current Photographs of Confederate Memorial



Western façade



Western façade



Western façade:
**TO THE
CONFEDERATE DEAD
1861 – 1865**



West-South corner



West-South corner



Southern façade



Southern façade



Southern façade



Eastern façade



Eastern façade



Eastern façade:

**COME FROM THE FOUR WINDS, O BREATH,
AND BREATHE UPON THESE SLAIN, THAT
THEY MAY LIVE**

[Ezekiel 37:9]



Northern façade



Northern façade



Northern façade

***Appendix B: Current Photographs of Statue of Silence
Gettysburg Section, Laurel Grove North Cemetery, Savannah, Georgia, October 24, 2017***



**TO
THE
CONFEDERATE
DEAD
HERE REST "TIL ROLL CALL
THE MEN OF GETTYSBURG**

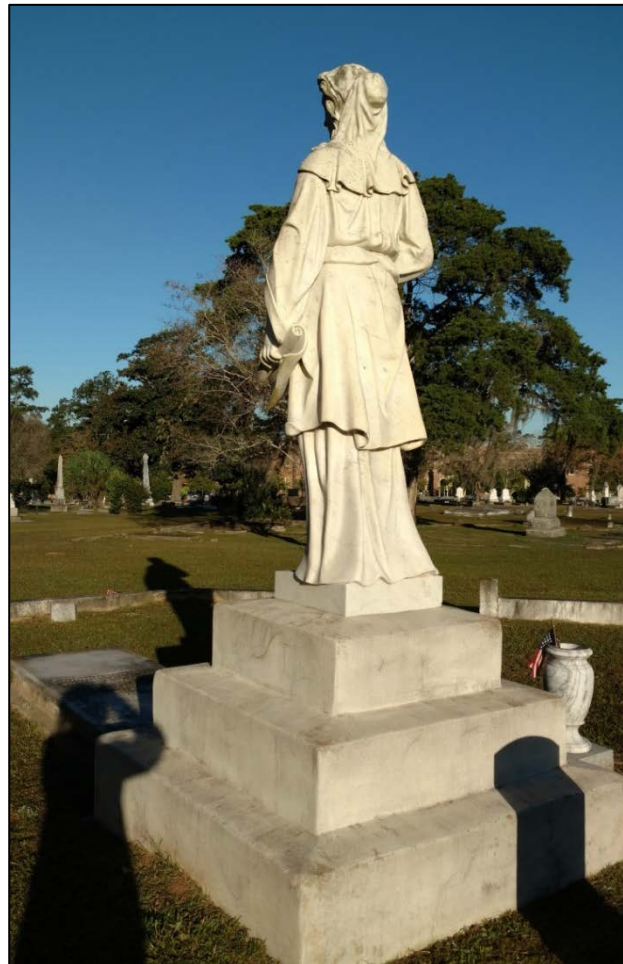






Gettysburg Section, Laurel Grove North Cemetery

***Appendix C: Current Photographs of Statue of Judgement
Soldier's Circle, Laurel Hill Cemetery, Thomasville, Georgia, October 20, 2017
Photographs courtesy of Kha Thomas McDonald, Assistant City Manager, City of Thomasville***



Appendix D: Current Photographs of Bartow and McLaws Monuments



McLaws Monument, North of Confederate Memorial



Bartow Monument, South of Confederate Memorial

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