



## SAVANNAH-CHATHAM COUNTY HISTORIC SITE AND MONUMENT COMMISSION

### MONUMENT PART I RECOMMENDATION

**PETITIONER:** Lucy S. Brannen and Catharine Varnedoe

**FILE No.:** 24-002610-MON

**LOCATION:** Columbia Square

**DATE:** July 1, 2024

**STAFF REVIEWER:** Caitin Chamberlain

#### **NATURE OF REQUEST:**

The applicant is requesting approval for a monument application, Part I: Theme, Location, and Preliminary Design, to install a monument commemorating the seven ladies who founded the historic preservation movement in Savannah, first with the saving of the Davenport House in 1955. The proposed location is Columbia Square with the intention of commemorating these women and making sure their legacy is not forgotten. The monument will include their names and a brief description of their accomplishments.

The Seven Ladies were:

Katherine Judkins Clark (1897-1993)  
Elinor Adler Dillard (1903-1992)  
Anna Colquitt Hunter (1892-1985)  
Lucy Barrow McIntire (1886-1967)  
Dorothy Ripley Roebing (1904-1977)  
Nola McEvoy Roos (1895-1980)  
Jane Adair Wright (1901-1991)

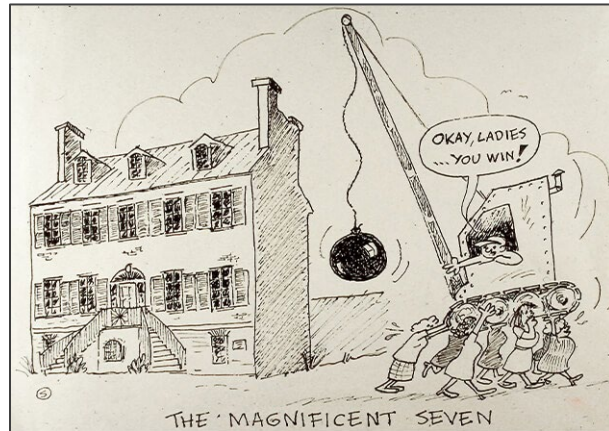


Image: Savannah Morning News via HSF website

Per the applicant:

*"Today many local citizens are not aware of this history. As we approach the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of the Historic Savannah movement in 2025, it is time to tell this story in a permanent way that also honors these seven ladies for their courage and foresight in preserving this history for generations to come. To that end, it is proposed that a monument ~~and bench~~ be erected in Columbia Square to honor these Seven Ladies and their contributions especially those of the summer of 1955."*

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### **PROJECT HISTORY:**

This petition was first presented at the June 6, 2024, HSMC meeting. There were concerns about the inclusion of a bench and whether the proposed location within Columbia Square was the most appropriate placement. The petitioner was open to suggestions and met with the Park and Tree Department staff to identify a new location. This revision is now being presented, after taking the suggestions from last month's meeting into consideration. The applicant has now removed the commemorative bench from the proposal.

The HSMC Decision for June 6, 2024, was as follows:

The Savannah Historic Site and Monument Commission does hereby continue the application of Part I: Theme, Location, and Preliminary Design for the creation of a monument and commemorative bench dedicated to the Seven Ladies, to be installed in Columbia Square, to the July 1, 2024, Historic Site and Monument Commission meeting to allow the applicant time to meet with the City Park and Tree Department and to provide more clarification on the design.

- The applicant met with the City's Park and Tree Department to identify a new location for the monument and has proposed a new location within Columbia Square.
- Clarification is still needed about whether the design of the monument will change, but at this time the bench has been removed from the proposal. The final design is not reviewed until Part II, so staff recommends that if there are any proposed changes to the granite marker, that it is provided with the submittal for Part II.

### **FINDINGS:**

The following standards from the Historic Site and Monument Commission Guidelines for Markers, Monuments and Public Art apply:

***Theme Patterns for Monuments.** There are several established theme patterns of existing monuments in Savannah. These are general patterns only and may occasionally have variations or deviations.*

***Evaluating Themes for Markers and Monuments.** New markers and monuments commemorate and honor people, places, and/or events.*

*Proposed themes should fall into one or more of the following categories.*

*Arts and Humanities. Includes art, architecture, music, theater, literature, education, etc.*

*Science and Engineering. Includes technology, inventions, medical, communications, etc.*

*Civil and Institutional.*

*Social and Humanitarian.*

*Industry and Commerce. Includes economics, agriculture, transportation, etc.*

*Politics and Government.*

*Military History. Includes people, places, or events.*

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*Religious History. Includes people, places, or events.*

*Maritime History.*

*Colonial History.*

*Local History. Includes folklore and/or local heroes.*

*Cultural and Ethnic History.*

*Education.*

The applicant stated that the project meets all the above themes “*due to the far reaching and pervasive impact of the actions and influence of the Seven Ladies and Historic Savannah in the Savannah/Chatham County area. Their work and preservation efforts have preserved the homes, neighborhoods and stories of all elements of the Savannah/Chatham Community by laying the groundwork for the expansion of the original Historic District, preserving and inspiring the restoration of the waterfront area on both sides of the Savannah River, other areas of the county and providing the framework for future projects throughout the district.*”

Staff agrees with the applicant’s assessment, particularly that the results of their efforts have preserved the integrity of the historic area through almost seventy years of development that touches on all of the above themes. Their efforts resulted in the founding of the Historic Savannah Foundation.

*The proposed theme should have documented significant, clear and direct local relevance to the history and development of Chatham County. The local focus should be the predominant theme of the monument.*

There is local relevance to the theme, as these efforts directly influenced historic preservation in Savannah. Additionally, the placement of the monument is in the square which both the Davenport House and the Historic Savannah Foundation office are located on. The standard is thoroughly met.

*The level of significance should be high enough to warrant a public presence.*

The level of significance in the era of the Seven Ladies as well as today is high, especially as the Historic Savannah Foundation is still an active organization in the community. “*Venues have been restored and developed to highlight the stories of the many citizens who contributed to the life and livelihoods of every segment of our community and its cultural and ethnic heritage. Numerous works of art, volumes of literature, dramas, movies, television productions, and educational materials have been created to tell the story of the almost 300 years of existence of Savannah, its culture and citizens. The warmth and strong character of the community, the Hostess City of the South, is a continuing reflection of the strong character and love for their home exemplified by the actions of these Seven Ladies.*”

*The person, place or event commemorated should not have been sufficiently commemorated elsewhere in the County. The theme should be distinct and original, and not be duplicated in other existing markers or monuments.*

There are no other monuments for these women in Savannah or elsewhere in the County.

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*The theme should reflect a larger connection to the community as a whole, and not only to one distinct group.*

The advocacy and historic preservation work done by the Seven Ladies has positively impacted the community as a whole for the reasons mentioned above.

*Commemorated persons should have enduring historical significance and have been dead at least twenty-five years. Living persons should not be commemorated.*

In 1993, the last of the Seven, Anna Colquitt Hunter passed away. All of the ladies have been deceased for more than 25 years and have endured historical significance.

*There should be significant documented evidence (written or oral) of the commemorated event, person, or place.*

This history is widely documented.

***Evaluating Sites for Markers, Monuments, or Public Art.*** *Certain factors should be taken into consideration when evaluating whether a site is the appropriate location for a marker, monument or public art [hereto referred to as “object” to indicate the inclusion of all three types]. These factors include:*

*The installation of an object should not cause overcrowding of the site, if there are existing objects. Objects should be sited far enough away from other objects as to allow the visitor proper appreciation of each individually.*

The proposed location of the site in Columbia Square is within the center of the square, on a grassy area between two benches. The monument would be situated in a way where the viewer would be facing the Davenport House.

*The proposed object should not damage or disturb existing established vegetation on the site including low tree limbs, or significant tree roots.*

Based on the June meeting, the applicant now proposes placing the monument in the center of Columbia Square, to the north of the Wormsloe fountain. The petitioner met with the City’s Park and Tree Department who agreed that the newly proposed location meets the above standard. This work will be contracted through the Park and Tree Department and paid for by the petitioners’ group.

*The proposed object should not require the removal or alteration of existing above or below ground utilities.*

There are no above-ground utilities affected and the applicant is working with the City to ensure that there are no below-ground utilities affected either.

*The proposed site should be large enough to accommodate an object, and should not encroach on other existing object sites, buildings, or designated green space.*

The site is large enough to accommodate the monument without encroaching on other elements of the square.

*The proposed site should not be utilized for special events (such as sports, festivals, ceremonies, etc.) on a regular basis which an object would disrupt.*

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Though Columbia Square is open to the public, the placement of the monument would not disrupt any special events that could occur in the square such as weddings.

*The proposed site should not be prone to frequent automobile accidents which could damage the proposed object.*

The site is not prone to automobile accidents.

*The proposed site should be easily accessible to pedestrians and those with mobility issues (excluding marker sites).*

The site is within a public square with walkways and benches. Street parking is available within the vicinity.

*The proposed site should be visible and accessible from a public right of way.*

The standard is met. The site is accessible from Habersham, York, and State Street, and is highly visible.

*The proposed site should have adequate parking nearby (excluding marker sites).*

Street parking is available.

*The proposed site should not have a high probability of significant archaeology unless an archaeological study is part of the proposal.*

The soil in this area has already been disturbed, and the site is unlikely to yield a high volume of archaeological data.

*The proposed site should be easy to maintain.*

The standard is met.

*The installation of the object should enhance the space and character of the surrounding neighborhood.*

*The installation of the object should not require the alteration or removal of existing signage (traffic, street, etc.).*

The standard is met.

*The installation of the object should not significantly affect automobile traffic sight lines.*

Although visible from the road, being within the square allows this to not significantly affect traffic sight lines.

*The installation of the object should enhance the design of the overall site.*

The standard is met.

*The installation of the object should not require the removal or alteration of existing sidewalks, unless it is part of a comprehensive redesign for the entire site (which is generally discouraged).*

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No sidewalks or walkways will be removed or altered with this project. A brick area will be slightly altered for the placement of the monument, but it is not within a walkway.

*If periodic memorial services are likely, the site should be able to accommodate them without causing undue disruption to the neighborhood, plantings, etc.*

The ability of Columbia Square to accommodate memorial services will not be decreased by the addition of this monument.

***Site in Relation to Theme for Markers or Monuments.*** *The relationship between site and theme for a marker or monument is critical in determining the appropriate site for a particular theme.*

***Monument.*** *Monuments should be erected on sites to which the theme has relevance.* There is relevance to this site because it is in direct proximity to the Davenport House and the Historic Savannah Foundation's offices- both sites hold significance to the theme.

*The proposed site should not disrupt an established theme pattern.*

There is currently no established theme pattern that this would disrupt.

*The proposed site should be the most relevant location available to the monument theme, as demonstrated through the documentation regarding the direct local relevance of the proposed theme.*

See above sections for explanation on why this is the most relevant location available.

*The context of the proposed site should be a major consideration in the mass and scale of the proposed object.*

The context of the site is highly appropriate, and the size of the monument is in scale with the layout of the square.

***Design.*** *The design of a marker, monument, or public work of art should be of the highest quality and caliber and enhance public space. In order to promote the high standards, the City of Savannah has historically enjoyed in its markers, monuments, and public art, the following guidelines should be observed.*

***Monuments and Public Art.*** *Monuments may take on many forms including works of art, benches, statues, sculptures, obelisks, sundials, etc. Monuments are typically commissioned, site-specific pieces.*

This monument takes the form of a granite marker. This would be a commissioned, site-specific monument.

*The applicant may choose to commission a work of art or monument. The artwork or monument must be of the highest quality and should adhere to the guidelines.*

*Monuments should not be fabricated prior to approval.*

The monument is not yet fabricated.

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*Monuments should be considered permanent and designed accordingly.*

The standard is met.

*Monuments and public art should be designed and constructed of materials suitable for outdoor display. All proposed materials should have performed satisfactorily in the local climate for a period of time long enough to assure permanence. Future maintenance and conservation requirements should be considered.*

The proposed designer is the DePue Monument Company of Savannah, GA, and was inspired by the Liberty Ships monument on River Street (pictured in the application packet). The material is granite, which performs satisfactorily in the local climate.

*Monuments and public art should be designed to be reasonably resistant to vandalism.*

Any monument in a public square is subject to vandalism. There are other granite monuments in Savannah that have not been vandalized but removal of graffiti on granite can be done with masonry graffiti cleaners if the need arises.

*Monuments and public art should be designed so as not to pose a danger to the curious public, such as the use of sharp objects or loose parts.*

There are no sharp objects or loose parts proposed.

*Monument and public art design should include landscaping, paving, seating, drainage, lighting, fencing, or other protective measures which may be considered necessary.*

The monument is being placed within the square which already has such elements.

*Monuments and public art should be of superior quality and craftsmanship.*

The standard is met.

*Monuments should not resemble gravestones.*

Gravestones come in many different shapes, sizes, and materials. While it could be argued that the monument somewhat does resemble a gravestone, a similar design was approved for the Liberty Ships monument. The fact that a plaque with text will be installed atop the granite will easily differentiate it from a gravestone that is etched directly into.

*A monument should be of original design, and public art should be an original work of art (one of a kind) or reproduced in editions of less than 200.*

Because the design is a granite marker, the content is what is original. There are granite markers throughout the City, but this is the only one that will tell the story of and commemorate the Seven Ladies.

*Monuments and public art should not replicate an original monument or work of art.*

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In this case, the proposed monument is not a sculpture, statue, or work of art. The medium to which the information is conveyed is a granite marker which itself is not original or copyrighted to one specific monument. As mentioned above, the content is original. It is inspired by the Liberty Ship Monument, but it is not an exact replica. The Liberty Ship Monument is stacked on two granite slabs, whereas this is proposed to be atop one granite slab. The Liberty Ship Monument has one plaque affixed to it, whereas the Seven Ladies will have a bronze plaque of the ladies' silhouettes, and a second plaque with text.

*Monuments and public art should be designed to complement and enhance the site in which it is located. It should not compete with, dominate or encroach upon existing monuments, public art, or buildings.*

There is a fountain at the center of the square and a historical marker sign at the corner near the Davenport House. The inclusion of the proposed monument will not overcrowd the site because the placement is proposed to be between two benches on a grassy area facing the Davenport House where the monument would not impose upon either.

*Monuments and public art should be respectful of the architectural, historical, geographical, and social/cultural context of the site.*

The standard is met.

*Monuments and public art should be compatible in scale, materials, and form with its context. Context includes the buildings, monuments, public art, landscaping and open space to which the monument or public art is visually related.*

The standard is met.

*The format of the monument should effectively convey the message of the monument to the public.*

The monument is proposed to convey the message clearly.

*Donor names and monument sponsors may be incorporated into the design (such as inscribed on bricks or on a separate plaque) but should be discreet and not detract from or dominate the monument or artwork.*

*The artist's name may be incorporated into the design but should be in a discreet location on the work of art.*

These are not proposed.

*The designer and/or fabricator (for a monument) should have completed projects of similar size and scale in the public arena and be able to provide appropriate documentation.*

*The designer and/or fabricator (for a monument) and the artist (for public art) should have an excellent reputation and be able to provide verifiable references attesting to the quality of work.*



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*The designer and/or fabricator (for a monument) should be able to provide images or samples of existing similar monuments or works of art.*

*The designer and/or fabricator (for a monument) and the artist (for public art) should be able to demonstrate the ability to meet the proposed timeframe.*

The DePue Monument Company has served the Savannah area since 1974. Their work does include the creation of memorial stones for gravesites, but they are not limited to that. Other works can be seen at the WWII Memorial on River Street and the Sugar Explosion Memorial in Port Wentworth. The DePue website also has a photo portfolio of their work and they have been in business in Savannah since 1974.

The applicants have begun discussions with DePue and are confident that they can meet the proposed timeframe of 14 months after Part II: Final Design and Funding is approved.

***Funding.***

***Budget.*** *The Mayor and Aldermen do not fund new markers, monuments, or works of art. The applicant is fully responsible for funding the design, construction, installation, and any necessary landscaping, paving, or lighting involved with a new marker, monument, or work of art.*

The applicant is aware of their financial responsibility.

*The applicant must provide a realistic budget in Part II Final Design and Funding. The budget should be based on cost estimates provided by the manufacturer, artist, installer and/or contractor, as appropriate. The budget should include funding goals and deadlines. Should funding goals and deadlines fail to be met, the HSMC may, at its sole discretion, reconsider the application. The applicant must be capable of raising the necessary funding. Construction of the monument or installation of the work of art will not begin until all of the funding has been secured.*

The applicant mentioned that their fundraising efforts are underway and will provide the numbers with the submittal of Part II. There is currently an estimate of \$35,000 to complete the project.

***Escrow Payment.*** *All markers, monuments and public art erected on public property become the property of the Mayor and Aldermen. The Mayor and Aldermen assume responsibility for the future maintenance and upkeep of the marker, monument or artwork. Therefore, an initial Escrow Payment is required of the applicant subsequent to approval of the application. The Mayor and Aldermen, or their designee, will determine the appropriate Escrow Payment and will notify the applicant. The Escrow Payment must be paid prior to construction/installation of the monument or public art. Any marker, monument or artwork erected on private property is the responsibility of the property owner.*

The escrow payment will be determined by the City after the project has been approved. The applicant is aware of this requirement.

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***Public Notice.*** *As required in the Master Plan and Guidelines, written notice was sent to all property owners, and the neighborhood association, within 200 feet of the subject property. Many public comments were received after the first report was written ahead of the June 6 meeting, which were posted to that meeting’s agenda as a matter of public record. They were evenly divided between supporting and opposing. At the time of the writing of this report, one written comment was received and has been uploaded to the agenda.*

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**RECOMMENDATION TO CITY COUNCIL:**

**The Historic Site and Monument Commission does hereby recommend approval to City Council for the application of Part I: Theme, Location, and Preliminary Design for the creation of a monument dedicated to the Seven Ladies, to be installed in Columbia Square, as requested, to be docketed on a City Council agenda because the project meets the standards in the Master Plan and Guidelines for Markers, Monuments and Public Art.**

DocuSigned by:

*Catherine Kostilnik*

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**Catherine D. Kostilnik, Chair  
Historic Site and Monument Commission**

**July 1, 2024**

**Date**

DocuSigned by:

*Melanie Wilson*

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**Melanie Wilson, Executive Director & CEO  
Chatham County-Savannah Metropolitan Planning Commission**

**July 1, 2024**

**Date**

DocuSigned by:

*Jonathan Mellon*

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**Jonathan Mellon, Director of Historic Preservation & Urban Design  
Chatham County-Savannah Metropolitan Planning Commission**

**July 1, 2024**

**Date**