



The vacant location where the Confederate Memorial once stood at the Madison County Court House.

In the Dark of night, Thursday, October 22nd the City/County politicians removed the Confederate monument from the courthouse grounds to Maple Hill Cemetery. An attempt to get an injunction to prevent the removal was refused.

In Honor of Her Men, By Marjorie Ann Reeves

Many of Huntsville's citizens in 1905 remembered the invasion by the Union Army; the destruction and the hunger of the 1860's. After the war, the ladies of the South formed local organizations to help the men who did make it home from the War Between the States and their families. Many had lost everything to destruction by the "yankees". The ladies also wanted the men who didn't make it back to be remembered. The ladies' organizations across the South joined together to become the United Daughters of the Confederacy (UDC). *"Objects of the UDC organization shall be social, benevolent, collection of records and incidents of the Confederate war, and preservation of the historical truth. This is to perpetuate the memories of the men who lost their lives in that struggle, to lay before the rising generation an impartial and just account of their deeds. Qualifications of members, any woman who is the mother, widow, wife, sister or lineal descendant of one who served in the army, navy, or civil service of the Confederate States, or who gave personal aid to the cause, and was loyal to the South during the war shall be eligible."*

The Huntsville Alabama Chapter #195 was organized on February 5, 1898. The charter was signed by Mrs. Annie Southern Tardy, Mrs. E. C. Humes, Mrs. J. C. Clanton, Mrs. S. Dox, Mrs. J. B. Laughlin, Miss Sarah Lowe, Miss Floren Lyle, Mrs. James Matthews, and Mrs. Sallie Pynchon. In 1905, Mrs. Mae made the motion that the chapter name be changed to Virginia Clay-Clopton and the chapter received its charter on October 4, 1907. The main duty of the organization was to care for the veterans by visiting them, giving parties for them, and paying for their health care. Mattie Allison, a member, wrote, "Confederate soldier's return was more pathetic than his departure. He returned weary, ragged, heavy hearted, leaving many comrades in nameless graves. If there was a home to come back to, it was destitute."

The Huntsville Alabama Chapter of the UDC organized a fund-raising campaign to have a statue made in honor of those that were lost to the war. These ladies were wives, daughters, and sisters of the men of war, and the UDC wanted to show their love and appreciation for the lives given for the protection of their homes and families. The ladies held fund-raising teas, handkerchief sales, rummage sales, socials, masked balls, and afternoon parties working for six years to raise funds for a statue. The members of the UDC chapter raised \$2,500 which purchased a block of Vermont granite and hired a sculptor, Mr. Oscar Hummel of Huntsville, who did the sculpture of Mr. Jim Mott Robinson of Hazel Green as he posed.

The UDC joined in many activities of the Egbert J. Jones Camp of the United Confederate Veterans (UCV) in Huntsville. The ladies contributed money to the courthouse for the Confederate room and maintained it where the veterans met each month. At the meetings there was always a special seat for Matt Gray, a well know black who served in the Confederacy. The ladies attended with refreshments for all and contributed to the programs. They furnished the room with many pictures including General Robert E. Lee, General Thomas Jackson,

and others. The chapter also honored the Veterans with a Christmas party every year. As the veterans passed away, Commander J. A. Steger of the Egbert J. Jones Confederate Veterans Camp assigned all relics, effects, and property of the camp to the Virginia Clay-Clopton Chapter on April 5, 1934.

The date November 21, 1905, was set to celebrate the presentation to the citizens of Madison County. A large parade started the celebration. Giving a speech, Mrs. Clay-Clopton said, "We have come to offer our loyalty, our homage, and undying devotion of our hearts to those who, though dead, yet live in the hearts of their countrymen and countrywomen."



Confederate Veterans Magazine,
1905.

She pulled the cord unveiling the statue and the ceremony began. There were 300-400 Confederate Veterans that attended the event.

Governor Jelks and ex-Governor Joseph Johnson spoke to the crowd. In attendance were General George Harrison, General J. N. Thompson, Captain Milton Humes, Congressman William Richardson, Mayor Thomas W. Smith, E. H. Foster, Judge W. T. Lawler, and Robert C. Brickell served as master of ceremony.

Thousands of citizens were on hand for the dedication. A luncheon was provided for all the veterans at the Huntsville Hotel.

A Union soldier wrote, "All the bitterness has gone out of my heart, and, in spite of the Confederate bullet in my body, I do not hesitate to acknowledge that their valor is part of the common heritage of the whole county." Statues were placed at courthouses across the South between 1905 and 1920 because the veterans were dying and it took years for the South to recover economically from the war. The North had already begun putting up statues soon after the war and having Congress make battlefields into Federal Parks.



In front of the 3rd Madison County
Courthouse.

During the 1966 construction of a new courthouse, the statue was moved across the street to a spot in the historic courtyard north of the First National Bank building next to Cotton Row and tied to a stone column with heavy rope to prevent vandalism. Unfortunately, one day a strained cable collapsed and a massive brick wall fell on the statue June 29, 1966. Mrs. R. G. Moore, president of the chapter, was working in her garden and couldn't be reached. The city sent a patrol car out to her home and brought her back to the scene of the crime. Again, the UDC paid for a statue to be made by taking the demolition contractor, Gadsden Scaffold Company, Inc., to court winning a \$9,810 settlement in 1968. The Madison County Commission stated they would give \$2,657 more to help cover the hunk of the award taken for lawyer's fees. The City Council agreed that the statue belonged to the UDC and they could decide where to place it which was on the courthouse square where the original was placed. James Records, the County Commission Chairman, said the statue would be placed back in its position on the courthouse square facing South.

Now, just as in the beginning of the organization, the UDC Chapter continues to honor the men who serve their country. During World War I, the chapter



Statue side of the 1960's Madison County Courthouse.

knitted sweaters for the boys of Madison County who were in the armed forces. Mrs. Annie Robertson used the same knitting needle that was used to knit for the Confederate soldiers. The UDC ladies provided a \$5,000 bench for the Madison County Veterans Memorial Park. They often provide gifts and visits to the veterans at the Floyd E "Tut" Vann State Veterans home. The Virginia Clay-Clopton chapter gave pictures of General

Robert E. Lee and President Jefferson Davis to Huntsville High School and books to schools and libraries. The UDC is a part of the community organizations that work for the good of their cities wherever they are located and support the armed forces. The Virginia Clay-Clopton Chapter of the UDC continues to look after the Confederate statue at the courthouse and defend it when necessary against the changing times and the efforts to destroy Southern history. One organization that is working hard to prevent removal, and educate the public on the true purpose of the monument, is Heritage Protection of North Alabama (HPNA, hpna-usa.com).

References:

- Confederate Veteran Magazine, *Confederate Monument at Huntsville*, December, 1905.
- Huntsville Times, *The Confederate Monument was Unveiled Yesterday*, November 22, 1905.
- Leigh, Philip, *More Unfair Censure of Confederate Monuments*, September 28, 2020.
- Roop, Lee, *Huntsville's Controversial Confederate Statue is 1960's replica*, US News, June 12, 2020.
- Garner, Phil, UDC Delivers Demand, City Bows Under, Huntsville Times, November 27, 1968
- UDC Boxes in the Main Huntsville Madison County Library
- Johnston, Beulah, "History of Virginia Clay Clopton Chapter 1107 United Daughters of the Confederacy", *Commemorative Album celebrating our city's Sesquicentennial of Progress 1805-1955* © 1955
- Court records on the lawsuit filed against the Gadsden Scaffold Company by the Virginia Clay-Clopton Chapter of the United Daughters of the Confederacy.