

Confederate Rest Journal I

Mayor Paul Soglin set off an uproar in 2017 when he ordered several monuments commemorating more than 140 Confederate soldiers buried in Madison's Forest Hill Cemetery to be removed, drawing both strong support and strong opposition to his decision. 2017's controversy is not new – Confederate Rest has been a scene of reconciliation and a source of divisiveness ever since it was created, out of necessity, in April 1862. What follows is the story of how Confederate Rest came to be, and how attitudes towards its presence have ebbed and flowed, from positive to negative and back, ever since.

Why Confederate Rest?

The soldiers buried in the largest Confederate cemetery in the North served in the 1st Alabama Infantry Regiment, Confederate States of America. They were part of a force that evacuated Columbus, Kentucky in the spring of 1862, falling back to heavily fortified Island Number 10 in the Mississippi River south of Cairo, Illinois. General John Pope and Commodore Andrew Foote captured the island and five thousand prisoners on April 7 after a 23-day siege. Such a large number of prisoners had never been taken at one time at that point in the war; there were no suitable prisoner of war camps to house them. Union authorities decided to send them to Camp Randall, the primary training grounds for Wisconsin's volunteer infantrymen. Camp Randall was not equipped to serve as a prison, but it was easily accessible. The prisoners traveled by steamboat to Prairie du Chien, then overland by rail to Madison.

The first group of 881 Rebels arrived at Camp Randall on April 19, crammed into 24 cars on two trains. They were filthy, their shoes were falling apart, and the "cold raw wind of our backward spring was striking through their thin jean clothes." On April 25 a second group of 275 prisoners arrived. Many of these later arrivals were suffering from wounds, malnutrition and disease, and were so weak they had to be carried into Camp Randall on stretchers.

About 4 o'clock yesterday afternoon, three hundred more prisoners from Island No. 10 arrived at Camp Randall. A large crowd awaited their arrival, and when they came regarded their removal from the cars to the camp with curious interest. They were received by a guard of the 19th Wisconsin Regiment, accompanied by a fife and drum band playing lively airs. They passed between the files to the camp – many of them heavily laden with baggage. They all looked tired and jaded, and the pale faces of some of them showed that they were more seriously affected. When they were nearly inside the camp, the band struck up the tune of Dixie and the steps of the prisoners were at once made firmer and their eyes brighter. There were about 60 sick prisoners, and the removal of these afforded a painful spectacle. Its sadness was relieved, though, by the tender manner in which the soldiers of the 19th supported their tottering steps while helping them to the stretchers. One lady accompanied the prisoners, in attendance on a sick brother, and we hear that her husband died on the way from Cairo, as also ten other prisoners, whose bodies were buried at Prairie du Chien. The impression that they were sold out at Island No. 10 seems to be general amongst them. Amongst the late arrival of prisoners was noticed a little fair-faced, black-eyed boy. He looked barely 14 years old, and bore along baggage like his elder comrades.¹

Madisonians flocked to Camp Randall to visit with the captured enemy. They brought jellies, custards, brandy, shirts, postage stamps, tobacco and reading material with them. "Lightening the heavy hours of misguided and unfortunate men is a godly act and one that mutually blesses."² Reported the *Daily Patriot* of a visit by its reporter: "The 38 men of Memphis' Washington Artillery were sitting around a fire, civil and pleasant. Men from Tennessee were playing ball. All were thinly clad in butternut or light gray that failed to protect them from the sharp wind. Some looked barely 16. Many sat listlessly before fires. Some were reading

¹ Weekly Wisconsin Patriot, May 3, 1862

² Daily Patriot, April 22, 1862

light literature, others testaments; some were debating verses. A few were playing cards. 180 guards were carefully walking beats.”

Medical care for the soldiers was provided by Madison’s physicians, Surgeon Martin of the 1st Alabama, and three captured Confederate doctors sent from a camp near Chicago. They fought a losing battle to save lives. The “hospital” was a large drafty building that had been used before the war as a state fair exhibition hall. Union soldiers drank all the medicinal alcohol sent for the prisoners. By April 28 ten of the Confederates were dead.

On last Saturday Wm. Hamm died of lung fever. He was aged about 25 years, and a little before he breathed his last, when death was rising in his throat, he called the surgeon to him and gave him a small testament. When the spirit had flown to the land of peace, the surgeon opened the testament and saw on a label “Presented by the churches of the Eufala Baptist Association, Alabama.” This gift of a simple testament was more soothing to a weary mortal than riches and fine linen.

In a separate room lay a woman, suffering from lung fever, who had lost her husband and two children on the way from Cairo. She came to attend on her brother, a sick prisoner. She seemed to be very ill, but is well-attended and cared for. Her conduct affords an inspiring instance of womanly devotion in the midst of sorrow and suffering that must make all feel a sympathy for her.³

It was impractical to send Hamm’s body back to Alabama. Forest Hill Cemetery, established in 1858, was located less than a mile and half from Camp Randall. So, by default, Hamm was buried in Section 13, the potter’s field. Over the next two months he was joined by 140 more soldiers from Alabama, Tennessee, Mississippi, Louisiana and Arkansas, victims of malarial fever or severe bowel affliction. Their graves were fifty or so yards south of where Union soldiers who’d died while training at Camp Randall were buried, also by default, although there were only a handful resting there in early 1862. Because Forest Hill was so new, for many years more Confederates occupied the grounds than Madisonians.

The surviving prisoners were transferred from Camp Randall to Camp Douglas in Chicago between the end of May and beginning of July.

After the War

Alice Whiting Waterman (October 18, 1820–September 13, 1897), the “guardian angel” of Confederate Rest, began caring for the neglected Confederate graves after she settled in Madison in 1868. Alice was born at Baton Rouge, Louisiana, and moved to New York City at the age of ten. She was widowed soon after her marriage, then went to Chicago where she was matron of the Briggs House for eleven years. Later she was matron at the Newhall House in Milwaukee. In 1868 she moved to Madison, where she was matron of the Vilas House until it closed in 1883. After that she made her home with Major and Mrs. Frank Oakley.

Alice took responsibility for Confederate Rest. She heaped up neat mounds over each grave, planted trees in the plot and an evergreen hedge along the east and south sides, cleared away weeds, trimmed the grass, erected headboards containing name, company, regiment, state and date of death, and surrounded the plot with a white board fence. Each Memorial Day she decorated the graves with flowers. She replaced the headboards marking the soldiers’ graves three times. When the board fence began to decay she replaced it with a granite coping. It cost \$800 and practically consumed the last of her fortune.

Alice was assisted in her activities by Governor Lucius Fairchild. Fairchild, colonel of the 2nd Wisconsin Volunteer Infantry, lost his left arm at Gettysburg, and apparently had no antipathy towards these particular Confederate dead. He was the state’s first governor to place with his own hands a floral tribute on a grave in Confederate Rest.

We learn that by order of Governor Fairchild, Captain A. R. McDonald has had new headboards made, with the name, age, regiment, state and date of death, of the Rebel dead buried at Forest Hill Cemetery. The

³ Weekly Wisconsin Patriot, May 3, 1862

*graves are to be taken care of, the old headboards replaced with new ones, and the whole to be surrounded with a neat and substantial fence. Work was commenced today.*⁴

In 1887, when Fairchild was national commander of the Grand Army of the Republic, he learned at the beginning of a GAR function that President Grover Cleveland had just ordered the return of captured Confederate battle flags to the South as a peace gesture. Fairchild rose to speak. “May God palsy the hand that wrote that order! May God palsy the brain that conceived it! And may God palsy the tongue that dictated it!” Thereafter he was known as Fairchild of the three palsies. He was an outspoken Radical Republican who fervently supported civil rights for African Americans and opposed President Rutherford B. Hayes for appeasing southern segregationists in what he called a “second civil war.” He believed Reconstruction ended too early, and pushed for more severe measures in the South to guarantee civil rights by force.

Reconciliation

Confederate Rest was the site of one of the earliest acts of reconciliation between North and South, on Memorial Day 1872.

Madison first celebrated Memorial Day in 1868. All businesses in town shut down, and hundreds of citizens marched in a body to Forest Hill for a ceremony honoring the dead buried in Soldiers’ Lot, the resting place of many Union veterans. The practice became a tradition. In 1872 the speaker of the day was Wisconsin’s Governor Cadwallader C. Washburn, a Union general who’d led troops against Vicksburg. Washburn began his speech by rhetorically asking why Memorial Day was worth celebrating. He then answered his own question.

“I would not have these ceremonies perpetuated for the purpose of keeping alive resentments or dividing a people that ought to be united, but only to remind us of the priceless value of our glorious union, and our obligations to those who sacrificed their lives to uphold and maintain it and to the near and dear ones they have left behind.

Here, almost side by side, and in one silent bed, are laid not only those who sacrificed their lives to preserve – but also those to destroy our fair fabric of governance.

*Misguided as the last were, you wage no war with lifeless clay and your resentments stop with the grave. Let us then after we shall have decked the graves of our brave defenders, scattering pansies, forget-me-nots and the ‘rosemary of remembrance,’ not forget the lowly bed of those who sleep so far away from their once happy and sunny homes.”*⁵

Orphans from the Soldiers’ Orphans Home then sang. A poem by Ella Wheeler, soon to be renowned across the nation, was read. Then the orphans strewed flowers on the Union graves.

*After the graves of the Union soldiers had been handsomely and befittingly decorated, Governor Washburn stepped to the front, with more courage than has ever been shown on these occasions, asking volunteers to go with him to scatter flowers over the graves of the rebel dead who reposed nearby. No one can go beyond us in renouncing the cause of secession in all its forms, but we say Governor Washburn’s conduct yesterday was that of a high-minded, magnanimous soldier – of one who dared to sustain his professions by his public acts – and show charity for the erring and misguided ‘boys in gray,’ who like our own soldiers were brave beyond parallel, though sadly in the wrong. So little an act as this will do more to wipe out the asperities of the war than we can estimate. We can say it with credit to the old soldiers present that the Governor was not without a following in his work of merciful charity. All the officers of the day, chaplains, and veterans of a hundred battlefields joined in strewing the graves of the rebel dead.”*⁶

⁴ Wisconsin State Journal, June 2, 1868

⁵ Madison Democrat, May 31, 1872

⁶ Madison Democrat, May 31, 1872

Alice's finances were stretched to the breaking point caring for Confederate Rest. In 1884 Madison's mayor stated his attention had been called to the fact that the graves of the Rebel dead in Forest Hill had heretofore been cared for by private subscription, and, on request, he brought the matter before the city council that it might inquire into the propriety of caring for said graves at the expense of the cemetery fund. The matter was referred to the cemetery committee.⁷ Nothing happened.

After Alice

Alice Whiting Waterman died in 1897 and was buried in a corner of Confederate Rest among "her boys." Afterwards, Confederate Rest was cared for by Major Frank Oakley, a veteran of the 7th Wisconsin who'd lost his right arm at Rappahannock Station in 1862. He did his best to interest a Confederate organization in taking responsibility for it.

He was assisted in the effort by Captain Hugh Lewis, a veteran of the Iron Brigade who'd lost his left arm at Second Bull Run and later served as doorkeeper of the U.S. House of Representatives for forty years. Lewis appeared before the Confederate Veterans Association at their headquarters in Washington, D.C. and called attention to the fact that something should be done for the care and preservation of Confederate Rest. Stimulated by his address, the Association decided to solicit funds for a suitable monument. However, with the outbreak of the Spanish American War, the movement languished, until, in 1906, the Daughters of the Confederacy finally came forward.

The Monument Dedicated

A monument was placed at Confederate Rest in June, 1906, to commemorate the Rebel dead. The *Wisconsin State Journal* detailed the upcoming exercises in its June 14 edition.

A monument to the Confederate dead buried at Forest Hill is to be unveiled and the exercises will be carried out under the direction of men once arrayed in deadly conflict against them. Lucius Fairchild Post GAR will have charge of the exercises. All ex-soldiers, members of the Relief Corps and Sons of Veterans are requested to meet at the entrance to the cemetery, where a procession will be formed and a march made to Confederate Rest, led by the post drum corps.

Song: How Firm a Foundation, Ye Saints of the Lord

Prayer by chaplain of the post

Music

Reading of letters from the governor of Alabama and the Society of Daughters of the Confederacy

Address by Commander McKay

Unveiling of the monument by Major Hugh Lewis and Major Frank W. Oakley

Solo: The Blue and the Gray

Singing: America

Taps

The monument will bear the names of the dead it is intended to commemorate. It was prepared by Abbott of Madison and cost \$450. The funds were raised by the Daughters of the Confederacy, who will also erect monuments at other places in the North where Southern dead are buried.

A Complicated Legacy

In the century and a half since Confederate Rest was created, attitudes towards it have reflected changing times and attitudes.

⁷ Wisconsin State Journal, June 9, 1884

Governor James O. Davidson, speaking at Andersonville, Georgia in 1907:

*“In Forest Hill Cemetery, in the city of Madison, are buried the remains of 132 sturdy and brave sons who fought for the South. They died in a military prison in that city. No Memorial Day passes but a child’s gentle hand, assisted by the veterans who wore the blue, places a flag and a wreath of flowers upon each of the many hundreds of soldier graves in that cemetery. The distinction of uniform was forgotten with the announcement of a reunited country. They fought and died for their convictions, which they cherished. They were all American citizens.”*⁸

*The graves of the Confederate dead in Forest Hill Cemetery were decorated by friendly hands yesterday, about thirty people taking part in the ceremony. James B. Stuart, the only Confederate veteran living in Madison, laid a wreath on the Confederate graves. W. Sauthoff, representing the Union army, laid a wreath upon the Union graves.*⁹

*Judge E. W. Keyes has received a circular announcing that the War Department will erect marble headstones over the graves of Confederate soldiers lying at rest in Forest Hill Cemetery. The sealed proposals to create these headstones will be received by William C. Oates in the office of the commissioner for marking Confederate dead at 410 Lemon Building, Washington D.C.*¹⁰

Your letter of the 14th and the photographs of the Confederate section of your city cemetery have been received, and I beg that you will accept my warmest thanks for both... I know it will be of great interest to the people of Alabama and especially to those whose dead have been so kindly cared for not only by this devoted woman [Alice Whiting Waterman], but by the general government of our common country and the kind hearted people of the community among whom they rest.

*E. F. Andrews
Corresponding Secretary
Sophie Bibb Chapter United Daughters of the Confederacy
December 17, 1909*

On December 3, 1923, the Lucius Fairchild Post of the GAR rejected the request of Mrs. Livingston Rowe Schuyler to permit Confederate flags to be placed over the resting places of soldiers of the South who are buried at Forest Hill Cemetery. “If the American flag was not good enough for them, then no flag at all shall be placed on the resting places,” says Jesse S. Meyers, commander of the post.

On Memorial Day 1930, two representatives of the United Daughters of the Confederacy, Mrs. J. M. Burt and Mrs. J. H. Crewshaw, came from Alabama to decorate the graves at Forest Hill. The graves continued to be decorated with Confederate flags the week before and after Memorial Day until 2000, when the city imposed restrictions after a single individual complained that honoring the Confederate dead in such a manner “created a hostile environment” for the citizens of Madison.

In 2017, after racist incidents of national importance, Mayor Paul Soglin removed the monuments from Confederate Rest without any community discussion.

History is messy. My ancestors moved from Pennsylvania to the Shenandoah Valley in the 1770s. In the 1820s half moved to Ohio while the rest remained in Virginia. And so my ancestors fought for both the North and South. One Southerner served in the Stonewall Brigade, another on Robert E. Lee’s staff, and another fought with Quantrill’s raiders. One Northerner fought at Vicksburg while another was fighting at Gettysburg. Both fought at various times in their ancestral Shenandoah valley. Two ancestors were captured; one survived

⁸ Wisconsin State Journal, October 17, 1907

⁹ Wisconsin State Journal, May 11, 1909

¹⁰ Wisconsin State Journal, May 20, 1909

Andersonville Prison. Cousin literally fought against cousin at the Battle of Port Republic. Several died, several were wounded. My family's story is fairly typical.

Forest Hill Cemetery reflects history's complications. Native Americans rest there in effigy mounds, near Madisonians like Ebenezer Brigham and James Halpin, who fought against their descendants and helped herd them from their ancestral lands and onto reservations. Union soldiers lie near Confederates, amidst Madisonians who strongly opposed the war (Stephen A. Douglas and George McClellan received more votes for president than Abraham Lincoln in Madison). Veterans of World I, like Marion Cranefield and Glenn Dahlem, lie near men who opposed that war, such as "Fighting Bob" La Follette and William Evjue. Slaves, like Eston Hemings Jefferson and Hettie Pierce and Howard Brooks, lie near slaveholders, like James Morrison. And people who supported the war in Viet Nam rest among those who marched against it.

Should the monuments at Confederate Rest have been removed? Should they be restored? Should new markers telling a different story be put in their place? Who is right? Who is wrong? And for how long? The only certainty is that, at some point, the answer will probably change.

Potential illustrations

Confederate Rest, pre-1898
Confederate Rest, 1961
Vets with Confederate flags at CR
Waterman headstone and CR graves
Ella Bennett Bresee placing American flag at CR
Effigy mound with soldier stones
Tombstones decorated with Confederate flags
Confederate flags decorating graves
Map of Forest Hill Cemetery

Sidebar listing the dead

APRIL 24

David Rives, Company G, 1st Alabama
R. M. Hutson, Company C, 11th Arkansas

APRIL 25

Jas. H. Barker, Company B, 1st Alabama
Edward Bates, Company G, 1st Alabama

APRIL 26

Wm. Hamm, Company F, 1st Alabama

APRIL 27 W. C. Mathews, Company E, 1st Alabama

APRIL 28 Geo. Carr, Company F, 1st Alabama

Jacob Leden, Company D, 1st Alabama

APRIL 29 J. Williamson, Company C, 55th Tennessee

J. S. Pinkney, Company C, 55th Tennessee

T. C. Adams, Company K, 1st Alabama

APRIL 30

John Bowen, Company D, 1st Alabama

Aug. Holliday, Company H, 1st Alabama

W. T. Richardson, Company F, 1st Alabama

N. J. Williams, Company G, 1st Alabama

William M. Pipkin, Company D, 55th Tennessee

Zelick Davis, Company F, 55th Tennessee

MAY 1

John Wickes, Company F, 1st Alabama
J. H. Lockridge, Company B, 1st Alabama
Samuel Conn, Company D, 1st Alabama
F. M. Hood, Company I, 1st Alabama
Richard Kelly, Company I, 1st Alabama
M. French, Company F, Memphis Artillery

MAY 2

E. C. Lisenby, Company C, 1st Alabama
Wm. Infinger, Company D, 1st Alabama
Hamilton Infinger, Company D, 1st Alabama
F. M. Horton, Company D, 1st Alabama
Wm. Tillery, Company C, 40th Tennessee

MAY 3

John H. Jones, Company H, 1st Alabama John K. White, Company I, 1st Alabama
Henry Glesson, Company D, 1st Alabama
Thomas Kainnater, Company H, 1st Alabama
Henry Meader, Company F, 1st Alabama
George Davidson, Company D, 12th Louisiana
Mathew Grantham, Company D, 1st Alabama

MAY 4

John Mills Wylie, Company H, 1st Alabama
Thomas Ludlin, Company G, 1st Alabama

MAY 5 John Bracken, Company D, 1st Alabama

Isaac Taylor, Company H, 1st Alabama
I. T. Morrison, Company C, 1st Alabama

MAY 6 Joshua Bowden, Company G, 1st Alabama

J. C. Damron, Company I, 1st Alabama
Thomas Mirns, Company D, 1st Alabama
Daniel D. Bird, Company I, 1st Alabama
John Brandon, Company H, 1st Alabama
H. J. Aoner, Company B, 1st Alabama

MAY 7 Henry Albritton, Company B, 1st Alabama

J. C. Warren, Company G, 55th Tennessee

MAY 8 M. F. Buttery, Company C, 55th Tennessee

MAY 9

William Drinkhard, Company B, 1st Alabama
T. Damson, Company I, 1st Alabama
J. S. Hagins, Company C, 1st Alabama
T. D. Deemins, Company I, 1st Alabama
T. D. Fulton, Company G, 1st Alabama
Abel Gilkriss, 12th Louisiana
J. C. Hillhare, Company K, 12th Louisiana
W. J. Sanders, Company H, 40th Tennessee
J. K. Seyers, Company F, 40th Tennessee

MAY 10 L. D. Parker, Company B, 55th Tennessee

Elijah Braning, Company C, 1st Alabama
W. J. Russell, Company F, 1st Alabama

MAY 11 C. A. Hollingsworth, Company E, 1st Alabama

James Odum, Company C, Walken's Regiment

MAY 12 Franklin Bajkim, Company G, 1st Alabama

J. J. Gilmore, Company F, 1st Alabama

A. F. Spears, Company B, 1st Alabama

Thos. Essry, Company G, 1st Alabama

W. T. Reynolds, Company H, 55th Tenn.

T. T. Tucker, Company G, 40th Tenn.

MAY 13 A. J. Skipper, Company C, 1st Alabama

S. T. Olevor, Company C, 1st Alabama

MAY 14 B. F. Mansell, Company G, 1st Alabama

J. H. Strickland, Company F, 1st Ala.

MAY 15 J. T. Smith, Company K, 1st Alabama

W. D. Beard, Company C, 1st Alabama

J. V. Stogner, Company C, 1st Alabama

Pierce Register, Company E, 1st Alabama

Lee Galoway, Company E, 1st Alabama

Robert Riley, Company D, 1st Alabama

J. M. Edwards, Company E, 1st Alabama H. Faulk, Company D, 1st Alabama

W. H. Ingraham, Company C, 1st Ala.

MAY 16

Edward Smith, Company E, 1st Alabama J. M. Mays, Company K, 40th Tennessee

G. W. Spears, Company B, 1st Alabama

MAY 17

J. M. Paul, Company G, 1st Alabama

MAY 18

A. Smart, Company C, 1st Alabama

MAY 19

J. H. Flowers, Company G, 1st Alabama

MAY 20

S. M. Barber, Company C, 1st Alabama Robert Taylor, Company D, 55th Tennessee

MAY 21

J. M. Ross, Company I, 1st Alabama

MAY 22

William Smith, Company D, 1st Alabama P. L. Drinkhard, Company B, 1st Alabama

T. J. Yeager, Company B, 1st Alabama D. M. Scott, Company F, 1st Alabama

W. T. Farned, Company E, 1st Alabama

J. N. Gordon, Company H, 55th Tennessee

MAY 23

Charles Mettler, Company A, 1st Alabama Benagee Peacock, Company D, 1st Alabama

Samuel Niles, Company H, 1st Alabama

MAY 24

W. D. Hadox, Company B, 1st Alabama J. H. Bearley, Company C, 1st Alabama

S. M. Smith, Company C, 40th Tennessee John R. Holt, Company I, 40th Tennessee

MAY 25

J. W. Gilmore, Company C, 1st Alabama Isham Grew, Company D, 1st Alabama

MAY 26

G. E. Tucker, Company G, 40th Tennessee Wm. Brooks, Company G, 1st Alabama
Wm. Moore, Company H, 1st Alabama J. F. Patrick, Company H, 1st Alabama
B. W. Bracken, Company I, 1st Alabama

MAY 27

A. B. Bridges, Company B, 11th Arkansas Thomas Osborne, Company E, 1st Alabama

MAY 28

Jas. P. Jainegan, Company F, 1st Alabama

MAY 29

R. S. Castleberry, Company I, 1st Alabama W. Christwood, Company D, 1st Alabama

MAY 30

F. L. Meacham, Company H, 1st Alabama Jas. E. Henry, Company K, 1st Alabama
Joel Browder, Company G, 1st Alabama