

COMMENTARY

Our Confederate monuments

■ It took 40 years to raise the money for Chester's statue.

In the three-county area of York, Lancaster and Chester, five monuments honor Confederate veterans.

York County has three, the first and the last two constructed. But unlike Lancaster and Chester, York does not have one in the county seat.

The first was placed in downtown Fort Mill's Confederate Park. One is in front of the Ebenezer ARP church, a village separate from Rock Hill in 1908 when the statue was erected. The last was unveiled in Rock Hill in Confederate Park in 1908 but later moved to Laurelwood Cemetery.

Lancaster's Confederate monument, said to be the first granite monument sculpted in the South, was erected on the front courthouse lawn in 1909.

Chester's monument, dedicated in 1905, is on the town square.

Four of the statues resulted from money-raising activities of the United Daughters of the Confederacy. The exception was the Fort Mill statue built with a subscription drive led by Capt. Samuel E. White, a veteran who founded the Jefferson Memorial Association (as well as founding Fort Mill Manufacturing Co., the first plant of Springs Industries Inc.).



Nearby
history

LOUISE
PETTUS

Actually, the first attempt at fund-raising came at Chester and, surprisingly, in the fall of 1865, only a few months after the war ended. Students at Ellen Elmore's school in Chester held theatricals with the stated purpose of raising money for a statue to honor Confederate soldiers. They didn't raise enough money for a statue but did mark Confederate graves in Evergreen Cemetery.

In 1870 another fund-raising attempt surfaced. Ellen McKee tried but failed. The state was occupied by federal troops and the economy was stagnant. In 1890, another woman, Maude McLure, attempted to raise the money. She also failed.

A fourth attempt was led by Julia Killian Campbell, president of the United Daughters of the Confederacy. After four years of entertainments and bazaars, the Daughters had \$1,267.05 of the needed

\$2,000. Then the Walker-Gaston Camp Confederate Veterans joined them and helped the women raise the remaining money.

The statue was ready for special services on May 10, 1905. May 10 was Gen. Thomas J. "Stonewall" Jackson's birthday and became known across the South as Confederate Memorial Day.

The front windows of all the Chester business houses displayed Civil War mementos and pictures. McKee Bros. exhibited a genuine copy of the Ordinance of Secession surrounded by \$10,800 in now-worthless Confederate money.

A Masonic ceremony was used in the laying of the cornerstone. The "Lafayette trowel," originally used at the dedication of the monument to Baron de Kalb at Camden by the Marquis de Lafayette, was used. There were speeches at the Opera House followed by dinner on the courthouse grounds. A special table was set for the Confederate veterans with "crosses of honor" awarded to veterans: John A. Graham, H.M. Stevenson, J. Means Sanders, John G. McGill, Uriah Jordan and J.B. Atkinson.

The crowd, estimated at be-

tween 1,500 and 2,000, went back to the Opera House to hear the Springsteen Band and sing old songs such as "Going Back to Dixie" and "Bonnie Blue Flag," the perennial favorite. "Tenting on the Old Camp Ground" was sung on the way to Evergreen Cemetery to decorate the soldiers' graves with spring flowers.

Around 50 items were placed in the cornerstone of the Confederate monument. Besides company rosters of all Chester units, there were newspapers, church manuals, poetry, roll of county officers, and veterans' cards that had belonged to Col. William Lee Davidson, J.A. Owens, and E.P. Moore. There was also a box of gun and pistol caps used in the Civil War.

The unveiling of the monument took place on June 27, 1905. There were speeches and more singing but not as elaborate a program as the cornerstone laying had been. The unveiling was done by Nancy Brice, May Douglas, Savilla Shannon and Eliza Walker, all little granddaughters of Confederate veterans.

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