



WESTERN RESERVE CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE

Volume 52

September 2017

Number 1

Meeting: Wednesday, September 13, 2017
6:15 PM Assemble
6:30 PM Buffet Dinner
7:30 PM Business Meeting
7:45 PM Presentation

Place: Colony Room in the Student
Union at Baldwin Wallace
University, Corner of East
Grand & Tressel, Berea OH
(440-570-0009)

Presenter: Dennis Rasbach & Ted Chamberlain

"Joshua Chamberlain & the Petersburg Campaign"

We are starting our 52nd year of the Western Reserve CWRT by looking at a mystery surrounding Joshua Chamberlain and his attack at Petersburg in June 1864. As the Union Army moved beyond Cold Harbor, it crossed the James River and then moved towards Petersburg. Outnumbered, the Confederates held. In the early struggle, Chamberlain's brigade attacked Rebel works, which led to Chamberlain's near mortal wounding and the awarding to him, by Grant, a battlefield promotion.

Our speaker is Dennis Rasbach, who will discuss Chamberlain's attack which has always been thought to have been directly against the Rives Salient. The historical account was immortalized by Chamberlain, then repeated by historians over the years. There was even a battlefield placard where Chamberlain was wounded. But, did this attack actually happen here, on the ground Chamberlain says?



This is the thesis of Dennis' book as he explores this question and uses detective-like evidence to question the accuracy of the location of Chamberlain's attack against Confederate positions. Was it where Chamberlain claims or did it occur somewhere else? You get to decide.

As a special treat, a distant relative of Joshua Chamberlain, Mr. Ted Chamberlain, who also portrays Joshua, will also be attending our CWRT this night. Our two guests are traveling this way from Benton Harbor to be with us. And thanks to Savas-Beatie, we'll have copies of Dennis' book for sale and signing afterwards. See you in September.

Pay Respects To Rebel Dead

RICHFIELD ROUNDTABLERS

PHOTOS AND STORY BY
FRANCES B. MURPHEY

Nearly a century ago thousands of Confederate soldiers were taken as prisoners of war to isolated Johnson's Island in Sandusky Bay.

This summer, by their own choice, 25 members of the Civil War Roundtable of Richfield Library arranged to land on the 300-acre island to view the cemetery where 206 Southern soldiers are buried.

In recent years few visitors came to the island because of poor landing facilities. A turn-of-the-century resort competing with nearby Cedar Point failed to survive. In 1966 Cleveland promoters bought the island, save the one-acre federal cemetery.

Power lines are being laid from the mainland, new docks and homes are mushrooming along the bayfront area. The onetime quarry in the center of the island and long-neglected farm fields are still untouched.

With the allotting of the land, the well-tended cemetery inside an iron fence is likely to get a lot more visitors, even without a Civil War centennial.



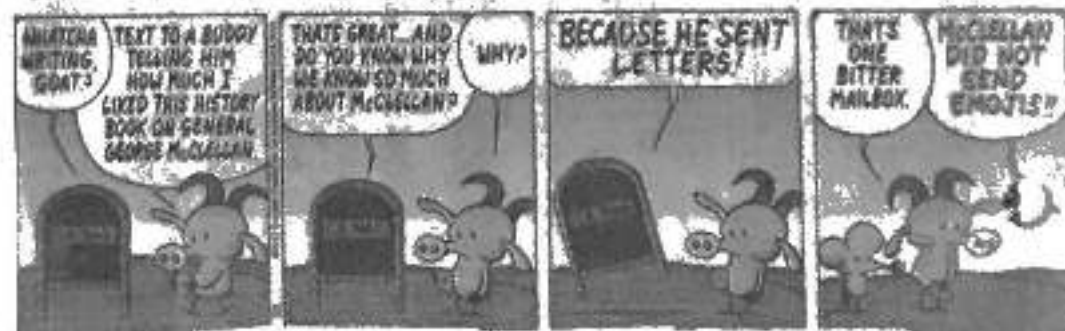
A landing barge takes Akron area Civil War buffs across Sandusky Bay to Johnson's Island, site of a Confederate prison war camp.

Akron Beacon Journal, August 14, 1990



The statue of a Southern soldier, keeping watch from the 206-grave cemetery, was sculpted by Moses Ezekiel who fought with Robert E. Lee.

Pearls Before Swine | Stephan Pastis





Western Reserve CWRT - Membership Dues

Annual Dues: **\$30.00 Individual**
 \$40.00 Couple

Dues are to be paid each year on the anniversary month of each person's membership. For example, if a person joins the CWRT in March, then March is the anniversary month for future dues memberships. A member can see their dues status and anniversary month at check-in.

The Buffet Dinner Fee is \$20.00 plus a \$5.00 Speaker Fee for a total of \$25.00 per meeting. If a person chooses not to attend dinner, then the Speaker Fee of \$5.00 is requested to help defray the cost of our speakers.

Civil War Trivia

Month's Question: Ulysses S. Grant spelled out the surrender terms of General Lee's army in McLean's parlor at Appomattox Courthouse. The writing table used to draft these terms was afterwards, purchased by Phil Sheridan and then given to Mrs. Libbie Custer as a tribute to her husband, George Custer.

What price did Sheridan pay Mr. McLean for this writing table?

Nothing	\$10
\$2	\$20
\$5	\$25

Trivia Item: Did you know how the word "bunkum or bunk" came to be in our vocabulary? From Congressman Felix Walker of North Carolina, during the Missouri Compromise controversy in Congress. Representative Walker rose to speak, but was booed. He insisted on speaking and said his constituents expected him to say something about Missouri and he was bound to make a speech for the Buncombe County district he represented. And thus, the word bunkum or bunk entered our vocabulary.

Source: The Missouri Controversy: 1819-1821 by Glover Moore, page 92.

Next Month: At the Front

October 11, 2017

David Castle

"Secession: Self-Determination or Rebellion?"



Artists and Scholars Debate the Rush to Topple Statues

Mark Bradford, the renowned Los Angeles artist, says Confederate statues should not be removed unless they are replaced by educational plaques that explain why they were taken away.

For Robin Kirk, a co-director of Duke University's Human Rights Center, the rapid expunging of the statues currently underway needs to be "slower and more deliberative."

And Lonnie G. Bunch III, the director of the Smithsonian's National Museum of African American History and Culture, proposes that the dismantled statues be grouped together and contextualized, so people understand what they stood for.

In spite of that, after state this week, artists, museum curators, and historic preservationists find themselves grappling with lightning-fast upheaval in a cultural realm — American monuments where they usually have their and change typically unfolds with care. Many said that even though they fiercely oppose President Trump and his defense of Confederate statues, they saw the removal of the monuments as precipitous and argued that the widespread effort to eliminate them could have troubling implications for artistic expression.

"I am loath to erase history," Mr. Bunch said. "For me it's less about whether they come down or not, and more about what the debate is stimulating."

So far that debate has been almost entirely a reaction to Mr. Trump and his views on race, with little discussion about the Confederate monuments and sculptures as works of art or historical artifacts of any cultural value.

On Wednesday evening, after President Trump deflected white nationalists who wanted to preserve these monuments, Gov. Andrew M. Cuomo of New York reported that he would remove the busts of two Confederate generals at the City University of New York's hall of Fame for Great Americans at Bronx Community College. Other politicians have been issuing similar pronouncements rather than going through the more typical process of consulting art historians and curators or forming study commissions.

The anger and action aimed at the statues are reminiscent of recent controversies over two prominent artworks — Dana Schutz's painting "Open Casket" depicting Emmett Till, the murdered African-American teenager, in the Whitney Biennial, and Sacha Duran's sculpture gallows "Scottish" at the Walker Art Center's sculpture garden, which was denounced by Native American



Robert E. Lee on the Bronx Community College campus.

groups for recalling an act of genocide.

Protesters objected to both poses on racial, ethnic, and historical grounds and called for their removal or destruction. Neither work celebrated the Confederacy or slavery, however, and both were created as art rather than as public memorials like some of the statues now being removed.

"These are not works of art, they're propaganda," the artist Adam Pendleton said of the Confederate statues. "To equate them with how a work of art exists in the world is a false equation. They're instruments of a political agenda and it would be real folly to suggest that there is any kind of ambiguity."

"Their artistic merit is irrelevant because it's beside the point," he added. "We don't think about who created the statue of Robert E. Lee and what her intentions were. We think about who and what Robert E. Lee signifies."

But others argue that it is possible to defend the Confederate memorials as art without defending the subject matter.

"They also were the work of artists," said Hollis Robbins, a humanities professor at Johns Hopkins University's Peabody Institute. She cited Laura Gardin Fraser, whose double equestrian statue of Generals Robert E. Lee and Stonewall Jackson was one of those removed overnight in Baltimore this week. Ms. Robbins said that artwork should not necessarily be discarded because the sub-

ject matter or the artist's personal history is offensive. "Do we ditch T. S. Eliot, who was anti-Semitic, or the films of Roman Polanski, who was charged with rape?" she said. "Should we play Wagner in Israel?"

"While I am personally in favor of these sculptures' going away, I think it's important to understand that many of these artists did not have a political motivation," Ms. Robbins added. "They had an aesthetic motivation."

Several people in the art world said there is an important distinction to be made between private artworks and public monuments. Unlike artwork made by individual artists, many of the Confederate monuments were supported by city or state governments — sometimes including tax dollars — and placed on public land, suggesting official approval of what the statues stand for.

"The Confederate monuments are meant to convey a message that we value the history of oppression," said Adrienne Edwards, the Walker's visual arts curator at large.

The statues needn't be destroyed, many said — simply moved to an environment in which they can be studied and understood as historical relics rather than enduringly potent symbols of oppression.

Joshua David, the president and chief executive of the World Monuments Fund — which is usually on the side of protecting monuments — said it can be appropriate to move them to museums or other centers of learning.

THE NEW YORK TIMES NATIONAL SATURDAY, AUGUST 19, 2017

"There are vacuums on pedestals, and when you place something on a pedestal you're putting something in a position to worship it," Mr. David said. "To create a kind of hero worship around it, Confederacy and to support state supremacy, it's appropriate to re-examine them and to change their context."

But others argue that removing a statue from its place of origin diminishes the power of its historical significance. "The meanings and the history that we are able to draw from them is a different site, especially a sort of sanitized site like a museum, are not going to be the same," said Michele H. Bogart, a professor at Stony Brook University. "That is a historical loss."

And there are those who warn against rashly removing public art without thoughtful and thorough public discussion. Ms. Kirk of Duke suggested that people in Durham, N.C. — where one statue was pulled down and another was defaced — could brainstorm about monuments that might be substituted for those that were removed.

"Why don't we have a monument to justice, to the arts?" Ms. Kirk said. "Why don't we have a monument to John Coltrane? He's a North Carolinian."

Simon Bankoff, executive director of the Historic District Council in New York, also suggested that public officials nationwide, including Governor Cuomo, were moving too quickly on removing the monuments.

"We believe that in instances where there can be a further discussion of public art or the removal or medication of it, that there should be," Mr. Bankoff said. "The public discourse is a very important one."

Mr. Bradford, the artist, said that it was important to have a public process around replacing the Confederate statues so that the broader citizenry could grow from a painful chapter. "If this whole conversation is about the history of this country, then you have to talk about the history of this country," he said. "Don't just leave these empty spaces. Contextualize the action. I don't feel like that can be rushed."

But Mr. Pendleton suggested that the removal of the statues is in itself a positive form of artistic expression, a "performative act" and long overdue.

"Part of what's being debated is what these statues represent," I said. "It's very clear what they represent. They memorialize a very dark period in American history. We're talking about a moment when people were enslaved. It's the opposite of everything America is supposed to stand for. Get them down."

What General Lee Wrote to The Times About Slavery in 1858

By JACEY FORTIN

One day in January, a few years before the Civil War, Robert E. Lee wrote to The New York Times, seeking a correction.

The man who would become the top Confederate general was trying to set the record straight about the slaves on his wife's estate in Virginia, and about the last wishes of a dying slave owner.

He wrote that the people enslaved on his family's property, in what was then known as Alexandria County, were not "being sold South," as had been reported. And he implied that he would free them within five years.

The letter is one of many written by Lee that sheds slivers of light on his thoughts about slavery. Historians have clashed — and are clashing still — over the strength of his support for the system of forced labor that kept millions of people in bondage for generations.

Now that statues of Lee and other Confederate leaders are the focus of an intensely heated national debate, the issue is an especially pertinent one.

"He was not a pro-slavery ideologue," Eric Foner, a Civil War historian, author and professor of history at Columbia University, said of Lee. "But I think equally important as that, unlike some white Southerners, he never spoke out against slavery."

When Lee wrote his letter to The Times, he was an accomplished United States Army officer acting as the executor of his father-in-law's will. His wife, Mary Anna Custis Lee, a descendant of Martha Washington, had recently inherited her father's estate, Arlington House, along with the slaves who lived there.

In his will, Ms. Lee's father, George Washington Parke Custis, said his slaves should be freed five years after his death.

But an article that was first published by The Boston Traveller and reprinted in The Times on Dec. 30, 1857, contended that the slaves "will be consigned to hopeless Slavery unless something can be done" because Mr. Custis's heirs did not want to free them.

It also said that Mr. Custis, while dying, told his slaves that they should be freed immediately, rather than five years on.

Lee challenged that account. In his letter to The Times, he said that "there is no desire on the part of the heirs to prevent the execution" of the will. And he said Mr. Custis, who was "constantly attended" by family members during his final days, had never been heard granting immediate freedom to his slaves.

The Slaves of Mr. Custis

From the Boston Traveller

Washington, Thursday, Dec. 30.

The emancipation of the slaves left by the late Gen. W. F. Custis, of Arlington, will, it is feared, be much retarded, if not wholly prevented, by the opposition among his heirs, says the Boston Traveller, Dec. 30. The man who once owned the old Capitol building of Mount Vernon is well for money, and who charges a high price for a head for the privilege of selling the land of Washington, and who has turned the name of the father of his country into a profitable one. Abstracts to see the will of Mr. Custis have proved abortive. After much delay, it has been admitted by the heirs that the slaves are to be set free in five years. The poor darkeys tell a different story. They of the Arlington House say that they were called into the room, and stood by the deathbed of their master, and that after having taken leave of each of them personally, he told them that he had left them, and all his servants, their freedom. At Arlington there were about one hundred negroes. Mr. Custis owned two plantations about fifty miles above Richmond, on which were about two more slaves. According to the statements of those who were about him at the time of his death, he died in the full possession of his senses. Besides, it is well known that the old gentleman always said that he intended to free his slaves at his death. I have frequently heard him say to some, though not in exact terms. Unfortunately, when this declaration was made to the public through the Arlington, an article was sent to the press, and the influence of negroes will not be taken in court. It is already whispered about town that the will in its proper form is ready to show negroes on the Virginia plantations; that they are now being sold South; and that all of them will be consigned to hopeless slavery unless something is done. Whether the will is perfected, nothing can be done. And that there is a will, and that the will contains something in regard to the emancipation of the negroes, has been publicly admitted by the heirs. It would be worth it, if the last remaining member of the household of Washington should not be allowed, should be prevented by force, from carrying out those provisions which he had formed, standing by the altar, and leaving from the lips of that heavenly Saviour.

The Will of Mr. Custis

We copied lately from a Washington letter to the Boston Traveller a paragraph concerning the emancipation of the slaves of the late Mr. Custis, which we are glad to find corrected in the following letter:

Answered Monday, Jan. 4, 1858.

My attention has been called to an article from the Boston Traveller, dated Washington, 30th December, reprinted in the New York Times of the 30th, under the caption of "The Slaves of Mr. Custis."

It is there charged that the emancipation of the slaves will be much retarded, if not wholly prevented, by the opposition of the heirs, and so forth. Mr. Lee tells me that all attempts to open the will of Mr. Custis have proved abortive; that it is understood in Washington that the will is in progress in regard to the negroes on his plantations in Virginia, and that they are now being sold South; that all of them will be consigned to hopeless slavery unless something is done; and that nothing can be done unless the will is perfected, &c.

As it is also stated that Mr. Washington, of Mount Vernon, in the article, among the heirs who have consented to support the will of Mr. Custis, to emancipate the negroes, I think it proper to mention that Mr. Washington is not one of the heirs, but an executor in Mr. Custis's estate, and, as far as my knowledge extends, is ignorant of the contents of his will. Mr. Custis left no property to his children, and only made a few donations. His will was deposited in the American County Court in Alexandria, the executor of the American County Court to settle the estate of the executor of Arlington, and after his death in the same manner, James H. Thompson.

There is no objection on the part of the heirs to open the will, and the provisions in relation to the slaves are in their own hands, and the will is in their hands, and they are not being sold South.

What Mr. Custis meant to have done in the Washington correspondence of the Boston Traveller, or in his article, is not clear, as he never said he knew the contents of the will. But it is well known that during the last days of his life, Mr. Custis was constantly attended by his children, grand-children and great-grand-children, and his wishes and feelings were fully known to all of them, and that there was no objection on the part of the heirs to open the will, and to carry out those provisions which he had formed, standing by the altar, and leaving from the lips of that heavenly Saviour.

S. S. LEE, Executor.

THE NEW YORK TIMES

The Times published Lee's letter on Jan. 8, 1858 (though the letter itself, written shortly after New Year's, appears to be mistakenly dated 1857), and said it was "glad" to be corrected on the matter.

The war came three years later. Lee joined the secessionists in April 1861. He left Arlington House, and the estate was eventually overtaken by Union soldiers. (The dead were buried in its grounds, which would later become the site of Arlington National Cemetery.) Over the course of the conflict, many slaves were killed or escaped from the property.

In 1862, in accordance with Mr. Custis's will, Lee filed a deed of manumission to free the slaves at Arlington House and at two other plantations Mr. Custis had owned, individually naming more than 150 of them. And in January 1863, President Abraham Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation, declaring that all people held as slaves in the rebelling states "are, and henceforward shall be free."

Of all the letters by Lee that have been collected by archivists and historians over the years, one of the most famous was written to his wife in 1856. "In this enlightened age, there are few I believe,

but what will acknowledge, that slavery as an institution, is a moral & political evil in any Country," he wrote.

But he added that slavery was "a greater evil to the white man than to the black race" in the United States, and that the "painful discipline they are undergoing, is necessary for their instruction."

The 1857 article in The Times noted that slaves' own voices were missing from the story of Mr. Custis's dying wishes. It said that when he told his slaves they would be freed, "no white man was in the room, and the testimony of negroes will not be taken in Court."

But years later, in 1866, one former slave at Arlington House, Wesley Norris, gave his testimony to the National Anti-Slavery Standard. Mr. Norris said that he and others at Arlington were indeed told by Mr. Custis they would be freed upon his death, but that Lee had told them to stay for five more years.

So Mr. Norris said he, a sister and a cousin tried to escape in 1859, but were caught. "We were tied firmly to posts by a Mr. Gwin, our overseer, who was ordered by Gen. Lee to strip us to the waist and give us fifty lashes each, excepting my sister, who received but twenty," he said.

And when the overseer declined to wield the lash, a constable stepped up, Mr. Norris said. He added that Lee had told the constable to "lay it on well."

Dr. Foner said that after the war, Lee did not support rights for black citizens, such as the right to vote, and was largely silent about violence perpetrated by white supremacists during Reconstruction.

The general did, however, object to the idea of raising Confederate monuments, writing in 1869 that it would be wiser "not to keep open the sores of war but to follow the examples of those nations who endeavored to obliterate the marks of civil strife."

AUGUST 19, 2017

THE NEW YORK TIMES

'The Lees Are Complex': Descendants Grapple

With a Rebel's Legacy



AUGUST 23, 2017

THE NEW YORK TIMES

Few American families are as deeply embedded in the nation's history as the Lees of Virginia. Members of the clan signed the Declaration of Independence, served the new nation as judges and generals, lawmakers and governors, and one, Zachary Taylor, even became president.

For decades, the family appeared to be united in promoting the adulation of its best-known member, the pre-eminent Confederate general Robert E. Lee. But now, as tempers flare around the country over Confederate monuments and what they stand for, the Lees are grappling anew with the general's checkered legacy. And along with many other families, they are divided over what to do about public statues of a famous forebear.

"Like so much else in this world, the Lees are complex," said Blair Lee IV, 62, a retired real estate developer from Maryland who describes Robert E. Lee as a "distant cousin."

"The war pitted brother against brother and cousin against cousin," he said, "and we're still at this today."

Some of the Lees have issued public calls for the statues to come down, and want to distance the family from the white supremacists who marched in Charlottesville, Va., to protest the proposed removal of a Lee statue there.

But others want the monuments to the general to remain where they are, and Blair Lee is among them, even though he is descended from a branch of the family that sided with the Union in the Civil War.

"I don't understand how tearing down Confederate monuments advances the cause of racial harmony in this country," said Mr. Lee, whose father was governor of Maryland in the 1970s. "If we're looking for people to be angry about, why not erase the names of English monarchs from many places?"

The statue debate provides a glimpse into how the Lees of today are reacting to what historians say has been a masterful propaganda campaign aimed at restoring and bolstering white supremacy in the South through the mythology of the "Lost Cause."

White nationalists appropriated the term from Sir Walter Scott's description of the failed 18th century struggle for Scottish independence, and used it to soften and romanticize the Confederate rebellion, according to James C. Cobb, a historian.

Robert E. Lee himself opposed building public monuments to the rebellion, saying they would just keep open the war's many wounds. But after his death in 1870, admirers in the South made

him the centerpiece of the Lost Cause campaign. His remains are kept in a Virginia mausoleum near those of his wife, their seven children and even his horse, Traveller — an echo of the reverence some Latin American nations lavish on their national heroes.

The propagandists insisted that under General Lee, the South had fought nobly for the principles of self-determination and states' rights, despite having little hope of defeating the more industrialized North. Slavery, in their telling, was a side issue, and had been a fairly benign institution that offered blacks a better life than they would have had otherwise.

By glossing over the maintenance of slavery as the South's overriding war aim, the proponents of what came to be called the Lee cult diverted attention from General Lee's own record as a slave owner, and from any discussion of how the Lee family tree came to include African-Americans.

"There was a rebranding campaign that promoted a total fallacy about what the Civil War was about," said Karen Finney, 50, a great-great-great-grandniece of Robert E. Lee. Her mother, Mildred Lee, a social worker, is white; her father, Jim Finney, a civil rights lawyer, was black.

"It's simple: my ancestor was a slave owner who fought to preserve slavery," said Ms. Finney, who worked as a spokeswoman for Hillary Clinton's 2016 presidential campaign. "If his side had won, that system of enslavement would have included me as well. Supporters of the statues still want to persuade people they're not about white supremacy. It's time to bring the statues down."

Though they are on different sides of the statue debate, what Ms. Finney and Blair Lee IV have in common, along with hundreds of other close and distant relatives, is their ancestral connection to Richard Lee, an early settler of Virginia in the 17th century who is thought to have come from Staffordshire in England's West Midlands.

Over the decades, that ancestry came to confer considerable prestige, abetted by the creation in 1921 of the Society of the Lees of Virginia, an organization to "promote a better knowledge of the patriotic services of the Lee Family."

Carter B. Refo, the society's membership secretary, declined to discuss the statue issue or the Lee family's long association with slavery before the Civil War. "The Society has a policy of not making public statements, so I am unable to help in that regard," he said.

Lee descendants maintain a tradition of curating the family's place in history. Edmund Jennings Lee compiled a genealogical tome in 1995 that remains an important reference work on the family. Today, one of the descendants who helps organize and edit the family's papers is Robert E.L. DeButts Jr., who works in the financial crime compliance group at Goldman Sachs.

Much of the admiration for Robert E. Lee centers on his long and distinguished military career, on his opposition to secession, on claims that he disliked slavery and on his postwar years, when he supported reconciliation between North and South as president of Washington College (now Washington and Lee University) in Lexington, Va.

"There was this promotion of the general as a Christian gentleman who only fought to side with his homeland, the Commonwealth

of Virginia," said Thom Lohmeier, a professor of Civil War history at Western Kentucky University. "Of course, Lee was much more than that, an owner of slaves and a man who sought the sale of his runaway slaves. He fought to perpetuate slavery."

When his command, the Army of Northern Virginia, invaded Pennsylvania in 1863, some units went on a spree, kidnapping fugitive slaves for their Confederate former masters. Lee urged his soldiers to avoid "the perpetuation of barbarous outrages upon the unarmed," but did not stop the kidnappings.

Slavery's importance in forging the fortunes of the Lee family has gained greater attention through the work of Elise Harding-Davis, 70, a prominent African-Canadian historian who says that she, too, is a relative of Lee's.

Ms. Harding-Davis said that Lee family documents had corroborated oral history in her family that Kizzie, her enslaved great-great-great-great-grandmother, was a daughter of Lee's father, Henry Lee III, known as Light-Horse Harry, a Revolutionary War cavalry commander. That would make Kizzie the Confederate general's half sister.

"We don't take pride in being Lees, but in being pioneers North America," Ms. Harding-Davis said, emphasizing that her ancestors moved to Ontario generations ago in search of freedom. "When you understand the ugliness of the Civil War, and what Robert E. Lee fought for, you know that the statues must come down."

Researchers at Stratford Hall, the historic plantation in Virginia where Lee was born, have described the kinship claim by Kizzie's descendants as "tantalizing" and offered the hope that with further research, "maybe their journey will indeed lead to the Lees of Stratford."

Other descendants remain proud of Robert E. Lee, while rejecting what the far right of today would have him symbolize.

"There are a lot of wonderful things General Lee is known to have done, and this is the antithesis of what he wanted," Tracy Lee Crittenberger, 58, said of the violence in Charlottesville, where white supremacists and their opponents brawled in the streets and a man plowed his speeding car into a crowd of counter-protesters, killing one woman.

"But we have to acknowledge, we're not living in General Lee's time period any more," said Ms. Crittenberger, an admissions official at the Madeira School, a private boarding school for girls in McLean, Va. "If communities decide to take the statue down," she said, "then I'm not against it."

New Monuments to the Confederacy Are Rising, on Private Property

GEORGETOWN, Del. — One of the president's nominees of Robert Eldredh's life was erecting a Confederate monument on a patch of grass behind the Georgetown Historical Society in 2007. It was the first monument to Delawareans who had served the Confederacy, and the fact that it came 142 years after the end of the war hardly mattered.

"It's a lesson in history," said Mr. Eldredh, who led the group that put it up. "It's about our roots and the sacrifices that those citizens here in Delaware made. To me that's so honorable."

But amid the furor over Confederate monuments, touched off by the violence in Charlottesville, Va., two weeks ago, an unspoiled reality has largely been overshadowed. While old monuments erected in bygone eras are coming down, new ones continue to go up.

In Crenshaw County, Ala., a new monument to "unknown Confederate soldiers" was unveiled on Sunday in a private park. In the small East Texas town of Orange, a giant concrete ring of 13 columns, representing the states the Confederacy claimed as its own, is going up on private land at the intersection of Interstate 85 and Martin Luther King Jr. Drive. In North Carolina, a bronze statue of the Confederate general Joseph Johnston was installed at the Beaufort battlefield in 2010.

"There has been a Civil War memorial boom going on over the last 20 years," said W. Fitzhugh Brundage, the chairman of the history department at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. At least 98 have gone up in North Carolina alone since 2000, he said, as many as were put up between 1849 and 1860. Of those, 20 are to Confederates and four are to Union forces. The rest memorialize the war in general, including one dedicated in 2012 to Civil War heroes.

But if the memorials of yesterday were just in busy public squares, today's are mostly appearing far from the bustle of daily life on pieces of private land, or on battlefield sites. Professor Brundage said. It's a sign that while most Americans may oppose the tearing down of old monuments, the building of new ones is no longer finding acceptance in broader society, something even proponents of the monuments acknowledge.

"As far as on public property, I don't think you'll see any go up," said Jimmy Hill, the commander of the Alabama division of the Sons of Confederate Veterans. More will go up, he said, but on private property.

But that doesn't mean all are modest.

The original plans for the memorial in East Texas, considered the largest Confederate monument built in a century, called for benches, scores of Confederate flags, a walkway lined with flagpoles, landscaping and fencing. The Sons of Confederate Veterans, which sponsored the project, estimated the total cost of the memorial at \$80,000 in 2011. The region of Texas where the memorial sits has a long history of racial tensions. The small town of Vidor has never fully shaken its reputation as a Ku Klux Klan stronghold.

Stephen Brint Carlton, Orange County's chief executive, said there was nothing that county officials could do about the memorial because it sits on private land.

"People do have a right to freedom of speech," said Mr. Carlton, a Republican who is the county judge, the county's top elected official. But, he added, "it's not setting the image I would like for Orange County."

The battle over Civil War memory is as old as the war itself. But in this era of deep ideological divide it has taken on forms of mod-

ern partisan warfare.

At its root it is a power struggle over who has the right to decide how history is remembered. It is painful because it involves competing narratives for the Civil War, the most traumatic event the nation has ever experienced, and one that is still, to some extent, unprocessed.

"Ultimately this is about competing stories, and who gets to tell them," said David Blight, a Civil War historian at Yale University. "The Civil War is always there, waiting to explode in our faces when we least expect it. That's what's happening right now. We are having a new extended racial reckoning."

The monument in Delaware stands by itself at the back of a tiny open-air museum operated by the Georgetown Historical Society, barely visible from the road behind a red one-room schoolhouse. A local branch of the Sons of Confederate Veterans erected it. The group, together with its counterpart, the United Daughters of the Confederacy, has been



A monument behind the Georgetown Historical Society in Delaware went up in 2007 to honor Delawareans who had helped the Confederacy.

putting up monuments since the end of the 19th century.

It has over 850 local chapters, known as camps, and each one is "pretty active in the preservation of monuments, beautification of graves and replacing monuments," said Michael L. Landrum, executive director of the group. He said his camp in Tennessee has put up at least 10 monuments in the past decade, including one to Dr. Rufus Weaver, a Pennsylvania doctor who sent Confederate dead home from Gettysburg.

Mr. Eldredh, 50, a contractual utility worker, noted humorously that no one seemed to mind when they erected the monument — a short obelisk flanked by Confederate and Delaware flags with names inscribed on its base. Local political leaders even came to the opening. But after the events in Charlottesville, the NAACP called for its removal. When it emerged that the land it sits on is

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prison, part of the Marvel Museum, a personal collection of antique carriages, blacksmith tools and telephones, the N.A.A.C.P. asked the state to cut funding to the Historical Society instead. A spokesman for the governor said he would support the cut if the monument and the Confederate flag stayed.

The statue simply honors Delawareans who helped the Confederacy, Mr. Eldredh said, like Washington Vickers, who went to fight with the South and later became one of Delaware's first lifeguards.

Mr. Eldredh understands how black people might take offense at a Confederate symbol like the flag. He said racists like those in the Ku Klux Klan — and white supremacists who came to Charlottesville — have hijacked it. He said he wants to restore its true meaning: a symbol of resistance by ordinary people from the South who stood up to the rapacious North. Slavery, he said, had nothing to do with it.

"My family was dirt-poor sharecroppers from North Carolina who didn't own slaves and weren't fighting to keep them," he said over dinner on Tuesday. "They were fighting for fairness. What they believed in was states' rights."



Robert Eldredh, at home with family members, led the group that put it up. "It's about our roots and the stories that those citizens here in Delaware made," he said.

But most historians say the view that the Civil War was not fought over slavery is clearly off base. Many say it has its roots, at least in part, in postwar writings by Alexander Stephens, the former vice president and intellectual leader of the Confederate States, who was trying to reframe the Southern rebellion as legal and justified.

William Price, the former head of North Carolina's division of archives and history, noted that it

was Mr. Stephens who said slavery was the "cornerstone of the Confederacy," in a speech in 1862. But he had changed his tune by 1867, playing down slavery and emphasizing states' rights. He coined the term "war between the states" that is still used by many Southerners in place of "Civil War."

"He was a smart enough politician and lawyer and lover of the South to change the direction of his argument," Dr. Price said.

"People talk about rights, to maintain our institutions, our way of life. But what was that right? It was the right to own slaves."

But the war's aftermath was complicated. And while the current debate focuses on the sins of the South, the North lost the political will to finish Reconstruction, abandoning its commitment to blacks' constitutional rights and turning away when the South began imposing racial segregation, said Eric Foner, a historian at Columbia University.

Mr. Eldredh likes to point out that the legislature in his home state, Delaware, which stayed in the Union and prefers to remember itself that way (a large bronze statue of Alfred Tubert, a Union general and Delawarean, was erected in Milford in 2008), repeatedly opposed banning slavery. It did not ratify the 13th Amendment until 1901, long after most Confederate states.

As for the monuments, someone's racist is another's relative.

"If someone keeps stealing your grandfather's tombstone, what would you do?" said Jeffrey Plummer, a member of the Sons of Confederate Veterans from Delaware. "Put it back, right? That's how we feel."

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