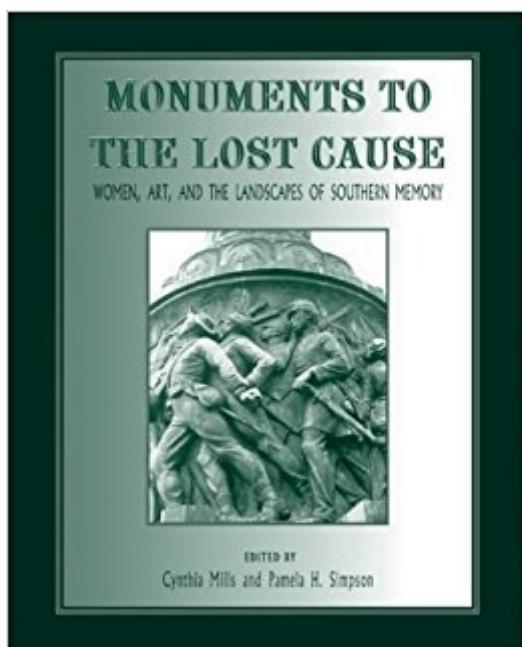


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Monuments To The Lost Cause: Women, Art, And The Landscapes Of Southern Memory



Synopsis

This richly illustrated collection of fourteen essays examines the ways in which Confederate memorials – from Monument Avenue to Stone Mountain – and the public rituals surrounding them testify to the tenets of the Lost Cause, a romanticized narrative of the war. Several essays highlight the creative leading role played by women’s groups in memorialization, while others explore the alternative ways in which people outside white southern culture wrote their very different histories on the southern landscape. The authors – who include Richard Guy Wilson, Catherine W. Bishir, W. Fitzhugh Brundage, and William M.S. Ramussen – trace the origins, objectives, and changing consequences of Confederate monuments over time and the dynamics of individuals and organizations that sponsored them. Thus these essays extend the growing literature on the rhetoric of the Lost Cause by shifting the focus to the realm of the visual. They are especially relevant in the present day when Confederate symbols and monuments continue to play a central role in a public – and often emotionally charged – debate about how the South’s past should be remembered.

The editors: Art Historian Cynthia Mills, a specialist in nineteenth-century public sculpture, is executive editor of *American Art*, the scholarly journal of the Smithsonian American Art Museum. Pamela H. Simpson is the Ernest Williams II Professor of Art History at Washington and Lee University. She is the coauthor of *The Architecture of Historic Lexington*.

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Customer Reviews

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them testify to the tenets of the Lost Cause, a romanticized narrative of the war. Several essays highlight the creative leading role played by women's groups in memorialization, while others explore the alternative ways in which people outside white southern culture wrote their very different histories on the southern landscape. The authors who include Richard Guy Wilson, Catherine W. Bishir, W. Fitzhugh Brundage, and William M.S. Ramussen trace the origins, objectives, and changing consequences of Confederate monuments over time and the dynamics of individuals and organizations that sponsored them. Thus these essays extend the growing literature on the rhetoric of the Lost Cause by shifting the focus to the realm of the visual. They are especially relevant in the present day when Confederate symbols and monuments continue to play a central role in a public and often emotionally charged debate about how the South's past should be remembered.

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There are hundreds of outdoor sculptures and architectural memorials across the South telling of the valor and virtue of the Civil War generation. The history of many are told here. The two generations after the war erected them to come to terms with the region's defeat and the Reconstruction era following. They were built first in grief and later in celebration as history was written from the Confederate perspective. The meaning of public sculpture is not fixed, but changes with the distance of time. Covered here is what exactly was "The Lost Cause" in thought and how it manifested in the memorials. The building moved from the cemeteries to the public spaces and events were held all mostly guided by the hand of white Southern women. You see the role of women turning from keeper of the home to memorial committee member to worker for women's rights. These small circles of women raised money, approved the designs, exerted pressure on public officials, and crafted the public memory in their communities to preserve their heritage. "Contesting the Sacred" is apt to express today. The conflicting views are also covered here, ending with a chapter titled "Contesting the Sacred"

"The Lost Cause" of the Confederacy and the effort to revitalize the Confederate historical memory by imposing monuments in cities and towns throughout the US was much more aggressive and

connected to related issues of segregation, the KKK and other racist causes. This book covers many of those monumental efforts and the politics associated, but it is weak in describing the Monuments Movement's basic purpose of strengthening and maintaining White Power. A revealing example by omission is that among the hundreds of monuments detailed, it gives no mention of the monument by the Daughters of the Confederacy and championed by other racist forces and placed in Harpers Ferry in tribute to the "Negros" "loyal" to the Confederacy. This monument on Federal Park land remained controversial for many years and involved major struggles. Just Google "Heyward Shepherd Memorial" and "Healing and History: The Dilemmas of Interpretation" and you will get a sense of how important this struggle was. I suggest it is revealing of a bias that the authors of this book obviously chose to leave out this important and still existing monument. I have no idea of why this omission, but this is like doing a book on the Civil War and leaving out the fact that poor white farmers, escaped slaves and sometimes indigenous Americans joined forces and held "liberated" areas in the South during the war. Oh, that's right, in fact it is left out of all the school books I have seen. Heyward the subject of the Harpers Ferry monument was not a "loyal slave" to the Confederacy, and the effort of the Monuments Movement was no more true to history or humanity than the lies on that monument that stands today in Harpers Ferry.

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