

Vote for Brian Bock

I'm Brian Bock and I'm running for Chatham County Commissioner. As you consider your vote this year I encourage you to get to know your local candidates. Our backgrounds and policy ideas are very different and can have a much more profound impact on our daily lives than anything coming out of Washington. I'm a Navy Veteran, I've been a small business owner, been a financial professional for over 20 years, and I've had the honor of serving as Chatham Commissioner.

I considered writing about the fact that we have over 50 percent of our workforce driving out of the county and the negative affect that has on our quality of life or 74 percent of our CO2 emissions are created by the commuter problem. I thought about reminding you 91 percent of the cost of services is on the backs of individual taxpayers with only 8 percent derived from a commercial tax base costing us over \$600 million in lost retail sales last year. However, each of those topics is its own article.

I'll limit this article to a couple of issues. You only have to

spend a few minutes in the western part of the county to hear the frustration of being ignored. Some forget how large our county is and not everyone can get to a Commissioner meeting by 6p.m. Leaders need to be in the community and hold regular town hall meetings. I will re-establish these meetings on a regular basis.

To achieve the twin goals of maintaining our rural character and improving quality of life, we have to make providing broadband Internet access a top priority. I will make this a key pillar in achieving our economic growth objectives. My opponent prioritizes installing electric vehicle charging stations and solarizing county buildings over providing the broadband access we desperately need.

Let's stop letting politics get in the way of developing good working relationships with legislators who can advance legislation allowing us the option of building our own broadband infrastructure. We need leaders willing to work with anyone regardless of political affiliation to get the job done. My record of fighting for local control of issues ranging from

anti-fracking to water quality regulation and property rights is well documented.

If JFK could set and achieve the goal of sending a man to the moon in less than a decade, we can get broadband access to everyone in Chatham by 2022. We may need to hire a "broadband tsar" whose primary responsibility is to manage the effort.

I doubt there is a silver bullet idea that will solve every challenge. There are innovative solutions we can begin now that other rural counties are implementing. We can determine our own future. No more excuses.

In short we need a coordinated effort that includes working with State and Federal authorities, working with legislators allowing us maximum flexibility, and implementing best ideas from other rural counties. When considering how to invest our time and money, broadband access has the highest return on investment and has to be priority #1. The future of Chatham depends on putting our people before politics.

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MONUMENT

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the monument and solicit donations to the fund. No—the words “advocate” and “solicit” do not do justice—more like, harass, cajole, harangue and shame. London knew when folks were flush: “With cotton now selling at a good price contributions ought to be made promptly” (October 18, 1906). London appealed to guilty feelings: “Are not Chatham’s soldiers as worthy of being honored as those of any other county? Why wait until all of them are dead?” (December 6, 1906). London called out the slackers: “The last contribution to Chatham’s Confederate monument is one dollar by Mr. A.T. Womble, of Matthews township, a one-arm man. This ought to put to shame those two-arm men who are much more able to give and yet have not given one cent.” (April 4, 1907). And London walked the color line; after a contribution of one dollar from a G.G. Smith of Fayetteville, London noted it as “the first that has been received from a colored person,” and wrote (June 7, 1906):

He was born and reared in this county, near Haywood, and is now a teacher in the graded school for the colored race at Fayetteville, and is highly thought of by all who know him. In his letter sending his contribution (which was unsolicited) he wrote these words: “Gratitude demands that I give my mite to any cause that will perpetuate the glory of the old soldiers.” This surely should stimulate our white county-men to contribute!

The real organizers and heavy lifters on the monument project, however, were the women of the Winnie Davis chapter of the United Daughters of the Confederacy. The former Bettie Louise Jackson, or “Mrs. H.A. London” as she was known in the pages of the *Record*, served as chapter president, and the London home served as a frequent meeting place. Bettie also joined her husband in hectoring the county from the editorial pages of the *Record*. On February 15, 1906, she expressed hope of unveiling the statue that coming August, and entreated her fellow county persons in plaintive all-caps:

[N]ow we appeal to ALL to come forward and make up the balance right away. We know that all will give; but we want it NOW. WE ARE READY FOR IT. Or a written PROMISE for the amount to be paid in June.

Dedication to memorializing the Lost Cause brought Bettie renown and admiration; the *Record* on May 16, 1907 conveyed the following *Fayetteville Observer* report on the recent Memorial Day parade there:

[W]hen the Fayetteville Independent Light Infantry reached the Highsmith hospital, on the decorated balcony of which sat Mrs. H.A. London, they halted and presented arms, then



Betty and Henry London could look down Hillsboro Street from their home and see the monument looking northward in front of the Chatham County Courthouse. PHOTOS COURTESY RANDY VOLLER

came the veterans, seventy-five strong, who raised their hats and gave the “rebel yell.” Mrs. London acknowledged the compliment by waving a Confederate flag.

The fund-raising did not come easily in hard-scrabble Chatham, and the memorial project took longer than the Londons had expected. Target dates came and went, and the fund grew in dribs and drabs. By early summer 2006, it had languished for months, but a pair of fifty-dollar pops in April-May 1906 got it going again. One came from Dr. Isaac Emerson of Baltimore, inventor of Bromo-Seltzer and “a native of this county,” and the other from American Tobacco Company attorney W.W. Fuller, a Durham transplant to New York, and “one of the most successful lawyers in the United States.” With the balance at \$1343.84 in October of 2006, London still complained that “in several other counties twice that amount has been raised in half that time for their soldiers.” Even as the fund approached the target amount of \$1600, London’s edge of disappointment never dulled. In February of 2007, he wrote:

When the effort was started three years ago to raise money enough for the proposed monument many persons laughed at the prospect and predicted that even \$500 would never be raised. Of course more should have been contributed [than] has been, but enough is now on hand to make certain that the required amount (\$1600) will soon be raised.

Finally on July 19, 1906 the *Record* announced that the Daughters had signed a contract with Durham Marble Works, and threatened that the monument “will not be unveiled, but will remain covered, until every dollar due for it is paid.” Nearly a year later, on July 4, 1907, the newspaper announced the

date of August 23 for the unveiling. The full moon would provide light for those traveling to Pittsboro, but also, it was one of four days of the year on which the Daughters could present “crosses of honor” to the veterans. By August 8 the monument at last stood in place, draped in white cloth and awaiting the grand occasion of its unveiling.

As the day of the unveiling drew close, the London home became de facto headquarters of the Winnie Davis chapter of the U.D.C., who met frequently as the final plans for the unveiling ceremony took shape. The Raleigh drum corps, “composed of Confederate veterans, who were musicians during the war, ... said to be the only Confederate drum corps now in existence,” committed to the program. A repair and paint job improved the looks of the courthouse. A dinner in the corridors of the courthouse was planned for the veterans.

Henry London devoted the editorial page of the August 22 edition of the weekly *Record* to framing the next day’s events. Just a week earlier, he had announced the start of the paper’s thirtieth volume, three decades over which “no other paper has been exclusively and continuously owned and edited... by the same person.” This former Confederate courier and longtime voice of the county took the moment to wax editorial:

The bronze figure, standing on this monument, will forever typify and call to mind the most magnificent soldiers who ever marched to battle in any age or country. In the ages to come that silent sentinel, standing with his empty musket at parade rest, will speak more eloquently than the glowing words of the impassioned orator, in perpetuating the memory of the heroism and self-sacrifices of the Confederate soldier. In a few more years the last of

those whom he represents will like him, be at rest. Let posterity revere their memory so long as that bronze figure stands its silent watch!

It has been well said that “A people who forget their dead deserve themselves to be forgotten.” It is eminently right and proper, therefore, for the people of Chatham county thus to honor the memory of their Confederate heroes.

So it rained buckets that day, and the paper ran an item announcing the deaths of the snare and kettle drummer from the Raleigh drum corps. The Londons probably worried, as any organizer does the night before the grand event. But these setbacks would not have blunted the underlying sense of satisfaction with which both Henry and Bettie lay their heads down that night.

Their efforts of three-and-a-half years had placed a seven-foot “bronze statue or figure of a fully equipped Confederate soldier with his gun at parade rest” atop a twenty-foot granite base practically within sight of their own front porch. It stood facing north in the town center, in the shadow of the stately courthouse they had seen built there a quarter-century earlier. It stood, in fact, in the very center of civic life in the county that London had chronicled in his newspaper for three decades, and would for one more. Over the years, London had made himself a fixture at veterans’ reunions all over the south. For him and Bettie, remembrance of the war provoked a passion and a deep commitment to public service. Now as they entered into old age, they could point to an embodiment of that passion, in the form of a durable stone-and-bronze figure that would watch over the affairs of Chatham County for years to come.

Will Sexton, a Pittsboro resident, is an archivist at Duke University.

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