

pulled down from their plinths the monuments in two of our neighboring towns, Durham and Chapel Hill. A fierce debate has arisen around the disposition of the statue in Chapel Hill, known as Silent Sam—at whose dedication in 1913 Bettie London herself spoke. [EDITOR'S NOTE: The statue was toppled by protestors in August 2018 and removed by university officials later than night.]

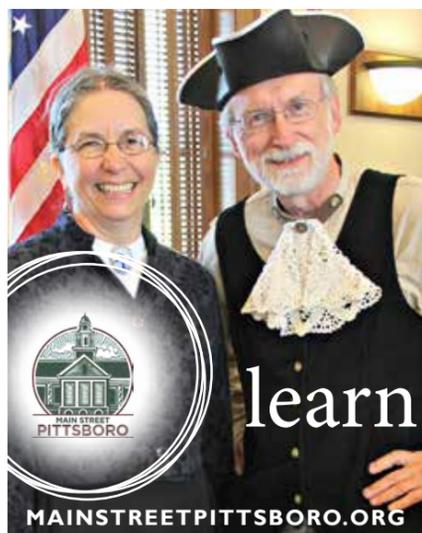
Looming large in any discussion of the monuments is the “Cultural History Artifact Management and Patriotism Act of 2015,” a bill that the NC state legislature passed in a reactionary response to the discourse about monuments that accompanied the murders in Charleston. The NC General Assembly, in the time since Republicans took over in 2010, has proven itself hostile to the history of progressive change and leadership that is part of North Carolina’s story. Further, the Republican majority in NC engages in extreme practices of gerrymandering and limiting access to the ballot, a sad continuation of Jim Crow. The majority that passed the law in 2015 was built on racially gerrymandered legislative maps that were later redrawn at the order of the judiciary.

This regressive and unjust law forces municipalities to maintain monuments in places of reverence whether they reflect the community’s values or not. It makes removing them, and allowing our public spaces to reflect our values, an act of civil disobedience.

In recent months, as has been documented in the Chatham County Line, a group calling itself Chatham for All has argued to the county’s Board of Commissioners that the law does not apply to Chatham’s monument, that the statue is private property owned by the United Daughters of the Confederacy, and that the county will incur no liability for returning it to its owners. Many have shared their own thoughts with the Board, including this author. As I have stated for over decade in my writing about it, I believe that the Chatham Confederate monument should be removed from its place of veneration in public space.

The name of the township in which Pittsboro lies is Center. The traffic circle in which the statue stands is the center of town, an important symbolic crossroads that lies near the geographical center of the NC. The statue stands in the center of public space in the town and the county. That shared, central space should represent our values, and speak of who we are and who we aspire to be. The people who lived here 110 years ago took this truth to heart, and acted on it by placing a memorial there to a lost cause that sought to preserve slavery, while themselves engaging in the suppression of equal representation for those whom the system of slavery and apartheid had wronged.

As long as the Confederate monument stands there in a position of veneration, the public space of Pittsboro cannot reflect the values to which we aspire. There’s no loss to history if we choose to alter that space to do so.



**Excerpts of Public Input to the Chatham County Commissioners, April 16, 2019**

**Larry Brooks, President of the Western Chapter of the Chatham County NAACP:** ...the NAACP is the oldest, largest civil rights organization in the United States and was founded by an interracial group of people who exercised the courage of their convictions to combat racism and inequity in our country. It is the official position of the National NAACP, as articulated by our President and CEO Derrick Jordan and stated on our website that, “symbols of hatred and racism should not be venerated and although striking down statues, flags and memorials will not solve all the challenges concerning race and equality in America, it will symbolize an end to the reverence and celebration of values that have divided us too long”

Our former North Carolina State President William Barber has also said, “it’s not enough just to take down statues, statutes that promote white supremacy need to be taken down as well.”

So, we are proud to join our sister chapters in South Carolina, Tennessee, Florida, Kentucky, Delaware and North Carolina in supporting the removal of symbols that invite, incite and validate both policies and actions that negatively affect the quality of life of any citizen in Chatham County....

**James Dennis Brooks, Re-enactor:** ...The extensive research and study that has been and is required to get into “character” has brought those men to life for me. They were soldiers, all far from home and family, both those in the Blue and the Gray. The greatest fear they possessed was not death, but to be forgotten in death. While I did not serve this country in the military, I can tell you research proves out that in actual combat the sacrifices made are to preserve one another first and foremost. This esprit de corps was the driving force that led to the many monuments and memorials that were created both north and south in remembrance of those who served their respective state, and to fulfill wishes of those who did not survive the conflict that they would never be forgotten.

**Vicki Atkinson:** ...I was born in North Carolina and have always lived in this state. I have ancestors who fought for the Confederacy. I believe the statue in front of the courthouse should be removed. This monument and others were put up during the Jim Crow era. They were part of a plan to hold on to white supremacy. The history I learned about the Civil War growing up in North Carolina was limited and misleading. What I heard in my elementary and high school classes was that the North invaded the South in the “War Between the States,” I heard about “the lost cause,” and about state’s rights. But I have since learned the truth: the Civil War was primarily about slavery and the economics of slavery. The cause of the Confederacy was wrong. The monuments honor the wrong side of history....

**Leda Hartman:** I would like to address the idea that the statue is about history and heritage. If that’s so, here’s a piece of history we should consider: Not all white Southerners supported the Confederacy. Not by a long shot. A good number of Southern army officers chose to fight by the side of the Union—including two of Robert E. Lee’s cousins and one of his nephews.

**Bob Pearson:** My family goes back nearly 300 years in the South and ancestors fought in the Revolution and in the Civil War. I am a resident of Chatham County and the Education Chair of the East Chatham County NAACP. I understand the value that many people place on the Confederate statue. A war in which white southerners believed ended in utter defeat and the deaths of hundreds of thousands of their sons, husbands, fathers and brothers. Had that cause prevailed, however, four million black Americans would have been enslaved forever. The Confederate Constitution made this a requirement. Instead the four million became free citizens, with the right to vote and to enjoy the equal protection of the law - like every other American. Those American constitutional rights were destroyed when the southern leadership came home to reimpose an order as close to slavery as possible. Chief among its weapons was lynching—murder by mob—even celebrated and photographed by the mob—to terrorize black Americans and force them to give up their rights. In NC, with one exception, there were only three counties with as many as six lynchings. Chatham County is one of those three. Four people were lynched in a single day. Those six lynchings and the political order that promoted them are as much a part of the history of Chatham County as is a statue honoring Confederate veterans. These six victims too should be properly remembered. Let us use this moment for reconciliation—to share all the history of Chatham County and build a new narrative. Your commitment that the decisions you make will advance the cause of equality and justice for every citizen of Chatham County is the only goal you can morally pursue.

**Monica Jarnagin:** ...Mrs. H.A. London worked tirelessly to fundraise for the monument in the center of Pittsboro. Her husband wrote in 1898 of a meeting in Goldsboro that convened thousands of white men, for the sole and all-important purpose of securing white supremacy. “This meeting,” he said, “was composed of white men regardless of their past party affiliation. For the object in view was not so much the success of any political party as it was to restore Anglo-Saxon supremacy and good government.” He continued, “Those who attended this meeting were not there as Democrats, or as Republicans or as Populists, but as WHITE men.” Just days later, thousands of white men descended on Wilmington to destroy black businesses, murder black citizens and those who support them, and reinstate alt-white control of government. Within a few years, fundraising began for the statue in this town center, with radicalized terror and oppression as expressed by the leaders of the community for context.

PUBLISHER’S NOTE: Chatham County Line did not find a position on the Confederate Monument from the other political parties registered in Chatham County on the official record. We welcome their input and will publish their official positions on the Confederate Monument in Chatham County either online or in future printed editions.

**A RESOLUTION CALLING FOR THE CHATHAM COUNTY COMMISSIONERS TO RETURN THE CONFEDERATE MONUMENT IN FRONT OF THE HISTORIC COURTHOUSE IN PITTSBORO TO ITS OWNERS**

WHEREAS, The confederate statue in front of the historic courthouse in Pittsboro was purchased by and is owned by the Winnie Davis Chapter of the United Daughters of the Confederacy (“UDC”); and

WHEREAS, In 1907, pursuant to a written license granted by the Chatham County Commissioners to that group, the monument was removed from their private property and was permitted to be placed where presently located; and

WHEREAS, When granted such license, the local chapter of the UDC was required to “cut down the tree in front of the courthouse near to the place proposed for said monument; and the said monument may remain in the care and keeping of the said daughters of the Confederacy”; and

WHEREAS, The North Carolina State law that purports to limit the movement or removal of “objects of remembrance” has certain exceptions setting forth circumstances to which the law does not apply; and

WHEREAS, The circumstances here in Chatham County are squarely within one such exception to the law, as follows: “An object of remembrance owned by a private party and that is the subject of a legal agreement between the private party and the State or a political subdivision of the state governing the removal or relocation of that property”; and

WHEREAS, The presence of the monument on public property forces our county government and all taxpayers in Chatham County to endorse the values of the UDC embodied by said monument; and

WHEREAS, Individual citizens have a First Amendment right to keep monuments on their private property, but our government, which is supposed to serve all citizens, should not endorse a symbol that represents the oppression of a group of its citizens;

Now, therefore be it RESOLVED, that the Chatham County Democratic Party support a request to be presented to the Chatham County Commissioners to take measures necessary to return the monument in front of the Historic Courthouse in Pittsboro to its owner, the UDC.

Adopted by the Chatham County Democratic Party, March 30, 2019, Pittsboro, NC