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IN BLACK AND WHITE: RICHMOND'S MONUMENT AVENUE RECONTEXTUALIZED THROUGH THE PHOTOGRAPHIC ARCHIVE

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IN BLACK AND WHITE:
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THROUGH THE PHOTOGRAPHIC ARCHIVE

THESIS

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in the
College of Fine Arts
at the University of Kentucky

By

Charlsa Anne Hensley

Lexington, Kentucky

Director: Dr. Anna Brzyski, Professor of Art History and Visual Studies

Lexington, Kentucky

2019

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ABSTRACT OF THESIS

IN BLACK AND WHITE: RICHMOND'S MONUMENT AVENUE RECONTEXTUALIZED THROUGH THE PHOTOGRAPHIC ARCHIVE

The release of the Monument Avenue Commission Report in July, 2018 was the culmination of over one year of research and collaboration with community members of Richmond, Virginia on how the city should approach the contentious history of Monument Avenue's five Confederate centerpieces. What the monuments have symbolized within the predominately rich, white neighborhood and outside of its confines has been a matter of debate ever since they were unveiled, but the recent publicity accorded to Confederate monuments has led to considerations by historians, city leaders, and the public regarding recontextualization of Confederate monuments.

Recontextualization of the monuments should not only consider the city's current constituency, but also the lives, testimonies, and representations of Richmond's African-American residents as the monuments were built. A comparative case study of photographs from various institutional archives in Richmond, Virginia, depicting late-nineteenth and early twentieth-century scenes from the city's history reveals that while Monument Avenue and its Confederate celebrations benefitted the city's upper-class white constituency, its messages extended far beyond Richmond and its Confederate veterans. By bringing to light images and testimonies from the archive that highlight African-American presence, a counter-narrative emerges detailing the construction of power in post-Reconstruction Richmond through Monument Avenue.

KEYWORDS: Confederate Monuments, Monument Avenue, Virginia History, African American History, Photography Archives, Richmond Virginia.

Charlsa Hensley
March 15, 2019

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“But man is not a block of marble—measured and squared by rule and compass—so that his inches can be set down on a slate. All that would permanently minister to him must, like himself, contain the element of progress.”

-Frederick Douglass, “Lectures on Pictures,” 1861.

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Introduction

A photograph in the collection of local photographer Huestis Pratt Cook of Richmond, Virginia on the occasion of a Confederate reunion in 1907 depicts a ‘living flag’ of the Confederacy arranged in front of the Robert E. Lee Monument, surrounded by a crowd of white women in bright dresses and dark backs of men in suits. [Figure 1] There were African-Americans amongst the crowd during Memorial Day celebrations, but the photograph does not show them. What it does show through its visual rhetoric is a myth of populist support for the monument, conveyed through a sea of anonymous white bodies organized to seemingly lift the Lee Monument into the heavens. Reports in the local and national press in the North and South, mostly in white-owned and operated newspapers, encouraged this myth. But other photographs and other reports do exist, written by those who were effectively excluded by the monuments, the press, and the men and women who propagated these myths. Several other photographs of Richmond taken on May 30, 1907 include anonymous African-American men, women and children, such as an African-American female domestic service worker standing a pace apart from the white occupants of the house decorated in American and Confederate flags on 2809 Grove Avenue. [Figure 2] In another image, an African-American coachman looked at the camera from the far left, as the decorated carriage’s four white female occupants represented a Maryland division of the Confederate States of America veterans. [Figure 3] At Hollywood Cemetery on the same day, a crowd gathered around a tall white picket fence at the Idlewood Avenue entrance (closest to the Confederate Soldiers Monument), which was also decorated with Confederate flags. [Figure 4]



Figure 1: Huestis Cook, "Human Confederate Flag," 1907. The Valentine Museum.



Figure 2: Huestis Cook, "2809 Grove Ave," 1907. The Valentine Museum.



Figure 3: Huestis Cook, "Confederate Reunion 1907: On Franklin St. Next to All Saints Church," 1907. The Valentine Museum.



Figure 4: Huestis Cook, "Memorial Day," 1907. The Valentine Museum.

In the background, to the right an obelisk was wrapped in garland and topped with yet another Confederate flag, and to the left the grave of Confederate General George E. Pickett had been decorated as well. These decorations are not out of place in the old home of the Confederacy on what was once known as Decoration Day. In this photograph, thirty-six to thirty-eight percent of the population of Richmond was represented by a handful of blurry faces: a small group of young African-American women look onward as a swarm of white men in uniform pour out of the gates.¹ By 1910, Richmond had a population of 46,733 African-Americans, constituting 36.6 percent of the city's population.² At an event with allegedly over 100,000 participants, it is worth asking: where were they? What were they thinking as thousands of ex-Confederates and supporters of the Confederacy from elsewhere entered the city to join, in many cases, their ex-Confederate employers and city leaders in commemorating a rebel group once intent upon upholding their oppression through slavery? It is worth remembering that events like these were repeated not only on memorial days, but also on the state holiday once known as Lee Day and whenever a new Confederate monument was unveiled on Monument Avenue in Richmond, Virginia.

There are currently five monuments honoring Confederate leaders on Monument Avenue, all of which were unveiled between 1890 and 1929 as the city expanded to the west. Declared a "grand avenue," by Richard Guy Wilson in *The Grand American Avenue, 1850-1920*, the neighborhood was a symbol and a promise of the New South

¹ Steven J. Hoffman, "Progressive Public Health Administration in the Jim Crow South: A Case Study of Richmond, Virginia, 1907-1920." *Journal of Social History* 35, no. 1 (Autumn, 2001), 176. Census records reported here indicate that 37.9 percent of the population of Richmond, Virginia were African-American in 1900, which decreased to 36.6 percent by 1910.

² Hoffman, "Progressive Public Health Administration in the Jim Crow South," 176.

after the destruction of Richmond during the Civil War and the Reconstruction period.³

The (mostly) single-family residences housed and represented a flourishing “commercial-civic elite,” comprised of the city’s wealthy white leaders.⁴ What started in 1890 as a lone monument to Confederate General Robert E. Lee in an empty field, would eventually become a parade of statues, over one mile in length, with monuments to J.E.B Stuart (1907), Jefferson Davis (1907), Stonewall Jackson (1919), and Matthew Fontaine Maury (1929).⁵ Much fanfare, mainstream press coverage, and a massive influx of Civil War veterans from across the country to the city marked each unveiling.

The African-American citizens of Richmond were not silent as Monument Avenue grew. They voiced their dissent to the city council and in the local and national African-American press. Monument Avenue’s dependence upon African-American labor for its development and maintenance complicates the preconception of the avenue as a white space due to its overwhelmingly white homeownership for over a century. The objective of this thesis is to recontextualize Monument Avenue by considering not only its physical elements and urban impact, but also the ritual celebrations for which it became a stage for multiple perspectives, including those of Richmond’s African-American residents.⁶ This thesis examines the presence of African-American lives on Monument Avenue, efforts by the white governing elite to suppress the electoral power

³ Richard Guy Wilson, “Monument Avenue: Richmond, Virginia,” *The Grand American Avenue, 1850-1920*, ed. Jan Cigliano and Sarah Bradford Landau (Rohnert Park, CA: Pomegranate Artbooks, 1994), 259-279.

⁴ Steven J. Hoffman, *Race, Class and Power in the Building of Richmond, 1870-1920* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company Inc, 2004), 1.

⁵ Wilson, “Monument Avenue: Richmond, Virginia,” 262-267.

⁶ Christy S. Coleman, Gregg D. Kimball, Andreas Addison, Edward L. Ayers, Stacy Burrs, Sarah Shields Driggs, Kim Gray, Julian Hayter, Laurant Lee, Coleen Butler Rodriguez, and Julie Langan, “2018 Monument Avenue Commission Report,” (Richmond, Va: Office of the Mayor and City Council, 2018), 32-33.

of Richmond's African-American constituency, and the impact of city planning efforts (in which Monument Avenue played a major role) on the African-American communities of Richmond. Investigating the reception and impact of Monument Avenue on the African-American population of Richmond between 1890 and 1930 through contemporaneous photography and press coverage shows Confederate commemoration went beyond intimidation of African-Americans. Celebrations united white northerners and southerners after the war, healing one divide, while exacerbating another. Once these unveilings, reunions, and decoration days instilled confidence in the Richmond economy, development of the avenue and westward expansion of the city benefitted upper middle-class whites while African-American communities became further restricted by Jim Crow laws, a lack of opportunities for upward mobility, and neglect towards a crumbling infrastructure in areas such as low-income sectors of the historically African-American neighborhood of Jackson Ward.

Past literature on Monument Avenue has only briefly addressed the issue of racial dynamics in Richmond, such as the role of deed restrictions, segregation laws, and African-American female domestic workers in the formation of the Monument Avenue community. Works such as *Richmond's Monument Avenue* by Sarah Shields Driggs, Richard Guy Wilson, and Robert P. Winthrop, along with *Monument Avenue: History and Architecture* by Kathy Edwards, Esmé Howard and Toni Prawl include discussions of race and provoke intrigue, but stop short of in-depth analysis regarding race in their comprehensive histories of the avenue.⁷ *Standing Soldiers, Kneeling Slaves* by Kirk

⁷ Sarah Shields Driggs, Richard Guy Wilson, and Robert P. Winthrop, *Richmond's Monument Avenue* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001). Kathy Edwards, Esmé Howard, and Toni Prawl, *Monument Avenue: History and Architecture*,

Savage has focused on the issue of white supremacy in his iconographic analysis of the Lee Monument.⁸ References to Monument Avenue are never explicit in histories of Richmond in the era of Jim Crow; rather they refer to generic phenomena such as suburban development and urban planning. *Race and Masculinity in Southern Memory* by Matthew Mace Barbee traces the history of Monument Avenue from 1948 until the unveiling of the Arthur Ashe Monument in 1996, but only the first two chapters cover the history of Monument Avenue prior to 1948.⁹ Several books that do not address Monument Avenue, its residences or its monuments still provide valuable input on issues related to race and/or commemoration of the Civil War from 1870 to 1930. Regionally specific books such as Steven Hoffman's *Race, Class and Power in the Building of Richmond, 1870-1920* provide further contextualization to the development of Monument Avenue in regards to the context of race in Richmond, Virginia.¹⁰

Numerous primary sources, both textual and photographic, relate to Monument Avenue in regards to issues of race. The *New York Times* covered construction and inauguration of Lee Monument extensively, including a rare mention of the presence of African-Americans in the unveiling celebrations of 1890.¹¹ Editorials by the African-American press, especially the work of John Mitchell Jr. as the editor of *The Richmond*

edited by Alison K. Hoagland (Washington, D.C.: Department of the Interior, National Park Service Cultural Resources, 1992).

⁸ Kirk Savage, *Standing Soldiers, Kneeling Slaves: Race, War and Monument in Nineteenth-Century America*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997).

⁹ Matthew Mace Barbee, "Introduction: Memory and Communal Belonging," and "Memory between Civil War and Civil Rights, 1890-1948," *Race and Masculinity in Southern Memory: History of Richmond, Virginia's Monument Avenue, 1948-1996* (New York: Lexington Books, 2014), 1-40.

¹⁰ Steven Hoffman, *Race, Class and Power in the Building of Richmond, 1870-1920*.

¹¹ "The Lee Statue Unveiled: Thousands of Veterans Honor His Memory," *The New York Times*, May 30, 1890.

Planet, are potentially the most visible record of dissent by local African-Americans circa 1890. Other primary sources of note include photographs of construction and celebration along Monument Avenue, in which inclusion versus exclusion based on race are evident. The Cook Collection of the Valentine Museum of Richmond, Virginia contains a large selection of photographs depicting African-Americans in Richmond and surrounding areas. Examining photographs of African-Americans participating, observing, and/or working in Confederate commemorative events along with photographs of African-American laborers on Monument Avenue will aid in the revision of the avenue's history of development and reception. Local archival research at the Valentine Museum and the Virginia Museum of History and Culture, and research through the Chronicling America digital archive of America's historic newspapers were thus an essential methodological component of this work. In order to emphasize historical documents rather than the monuments themselves, iconographical analysis of all monuments on Monument Avenue is not a part of this research.

My analysis of photographic documents in this thesis was informed by the writings of Ariella Azoulay on the civil contract of photography, her definitions of citizenship, and her concept of constituent violence.¹² While her works referenced in this thesis were investigating the history of Israel and Palestine, her arguments speak to larger issues concerning segregation, discrimination, and the writing of history through the archives that are applicable to Richmond's history and Monument Avenue. Roland

¹² Ariella Azoulay, "Potential History: Thinking through Violence," *Critical Inquiry* 39, no. 3 (Spring 2013), 548-574. Ariella Azoulay and Nato Thompson, "Photography and Its Citizens," *Aperture* no. 214 (Spring 2014), 52-57. Ariella Azoulay, "Getting Rid of the Distinction between the Aesthetic and the Political," *Theory, Culture & Society* 27, no. 7-8 (2010), 239-262.

Barthes' essays "Rhetoric of the Image," and "The Photographic Message" aided in the analysis of linguistic messages and connotations of select photographs included in this study.¹³

The case study will begin with an overview of the avenue's infrastructure, domestic labor force, and documentary photographs of the monuments' construction, in order to bring to light the history of African-American labor on Monument Avenue, and to re-envision a space that has been historically perceived as overwhelmingly white. The layout of the grand avenue included service alleyways for laborers to approach the houses restricted to white ownership, creating a physical delineation of who was to be seen versus who was to remain hidden from view. This is also reflected in the architecture of early twentieth-century residences: back staircases formed service corridors for domestic workers, approximately eighty-five percent of whom were African-American women.¹⁴ Photographs of the construction of the Lee Monument on the avenue further reveal questions of agency and hierarchies of power involved in labor by African-Americans on Confederate monuments.

The next section reviews media reports of Lee Monument in 1890 and compares mainstream press coverage from the *New York Times* and *Richmond Times-Dispatch* with reports from African-American press, including the *Richmond Planet*. The articles reveal how African-Americans voices were exploited to suggest support for Lee Monument, and

¹³ Roland Barthes, "Rhetoric of the Image," *Image – Music – Text*, "selected and translated by Stephen Heath (New York: Hill and Wang, 1977), reprinted in *Visual Rhetoric in a Digital World: A Critical Sourcebook*, ed. Carolyn Handa, 152-163 (Boston: Bedford, 2004). Roland Barthes, "The Photographic Message," *A Barthes Reader* ed. Susan Sontag (New York: Hill and Wang, 1983), 194-210.

¹⁴ Kathy Edwards and Esmé Howard, "Monument Avenue: The Architecture of Consensus in the New South, 1890-1930," *Perspectives in Vernacular Architecture*, vol. 6, *Shaping Communities* (1997), 102.

to serve as a model of appropriate behavior (as dictated by white reporters and ex-enslavers) for other African-Americans. Analysis of photographic evidence further reveals how and where the presence of African-Americans and the mediated testaments of African-Americans were exploited to assert populist support for Confederate memorialization.

Following a conviction that an imbalance in power founded in racial discrimination should not erase the lives and work of African-Americans that went into Monument Avenue, this thesis reframes the history of Monument Avenue to include the laborers that built the monuments, the domestic workers who were forced to use a hidden alleyway to walk to work, and the voices of those who resisted along the way. As the country and the city of Richmond confront their painful histories of Confederate commemoration, their lives and testimonies have the opportunity to shape contemporary opinion, and to further prioritize the education and preservation of African-American history related to Confederate monuments.

Historical Background

To understand the suppression of history regarding African-American lives and narratives surrounding Monument Avenue, it is first necessary to understand the development of Monument Avenue. This entails a brief summary of the establishment of the first monument to Confederate General Robert E. Lee, the benefits of annexing property outside of the city, and the attempts at disenfranchisement and racial segregation within Richmond and Virginia, and finally, a few modes of resistance and representation by the African-American constituencies of Richmond and Virginia.

Monument Avenue is a residential neighborhood on the west end of Richmond, Virginia. The portion of Monument Avenue encapsulated within the historic district developed primarily between 1887 and 1930, coinciding neatly with an era of discriminatory Jim Crow laws in the American south, including Richmond. The avenue extends across fourteen blocks, approximately 1.5 miles westward from the General J.E.B. Stuart statue at the terminus of Franklin Street, to the statue of Arthur Ashe at the Rosemeath Road intersection.¹⁵ [Figure 5]

Residential development mostly followed the establishment of Confederate monuments. Starting in 1890 with the monument to Robert E. Lee, subsequent monuments to J.E.B. Stuart, Jefferson Davis, Thomas “Stonewall” Jackson, and Matthew Fontaine Maury were unveiled on May 30, 1907, June 3, 1907, October 11 1919, and November 11, 1929, respectively.¹⁶ The growth of Monument Avenue and the growth of Richmond are inextricable, as land west of the 1888 city limits was annexed in 1892, 1904, 1906, and 1914 in order to extend the avenue.¹⁷ [Figure 6]

These annexations were long preceded by plans for a monument honoring the Confederate General Robert E. Lee, which began following Lee’s death on October 12, 1870.¹⁸ In 1870 the sting of Reconstruction in Virginia was still palpable, as indicated

¹⁵ Sarah Shields Driggs, “Monument Avenue Historic District,” National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form, ed. Susan Kline and Carolyn Pitts (National Parks Service, 1997), 1-4.

¹⁶ Wilson, “Monument Avenue: Richmond, Virginia,” 259.

¹⁷ Kathy Edwards, “Development of Monument Avenue,” *Monument Avenue History and Architecture*, ed. Alison K. Hoagland (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service Cultural Resources, 1992), 40.

¹⁸ Jubal A. Early, “Lee Memorial Meeting,” *Organization of the Lee Monument Association and the Association of the Army of Northern Virginia, Richmond, VA., November 3d and 4th, 1870* (Richmond: J.W. Randolph & English, 1871), 5.

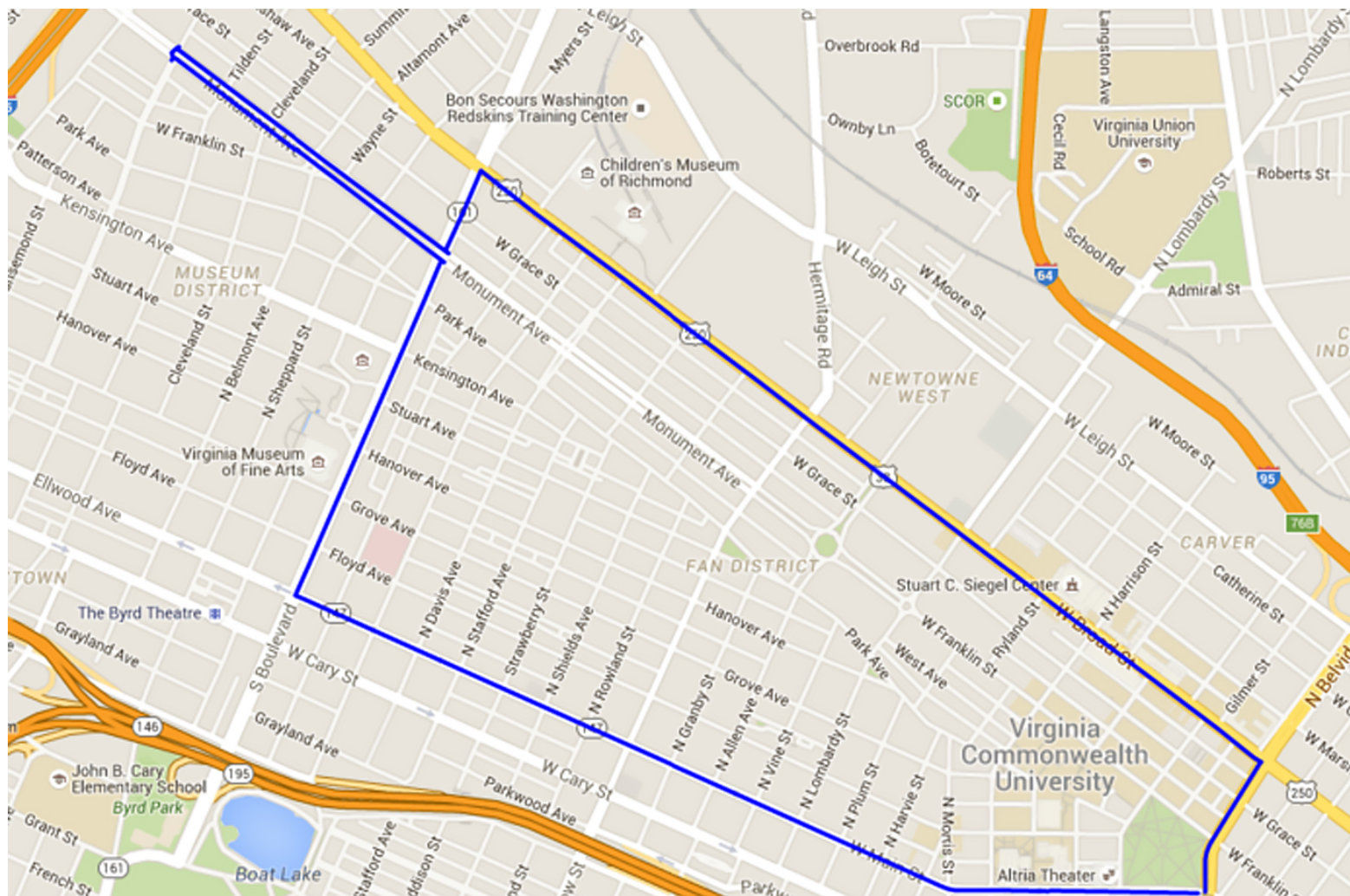


Figure 5: Historic Monument Avenue and Fan District Map, courtesy of the Historic Monument Avenue and Fan District Foundation. Accessed January 7, 2019. <http://www.monumentfanfoundation.org/boundary-map.html>

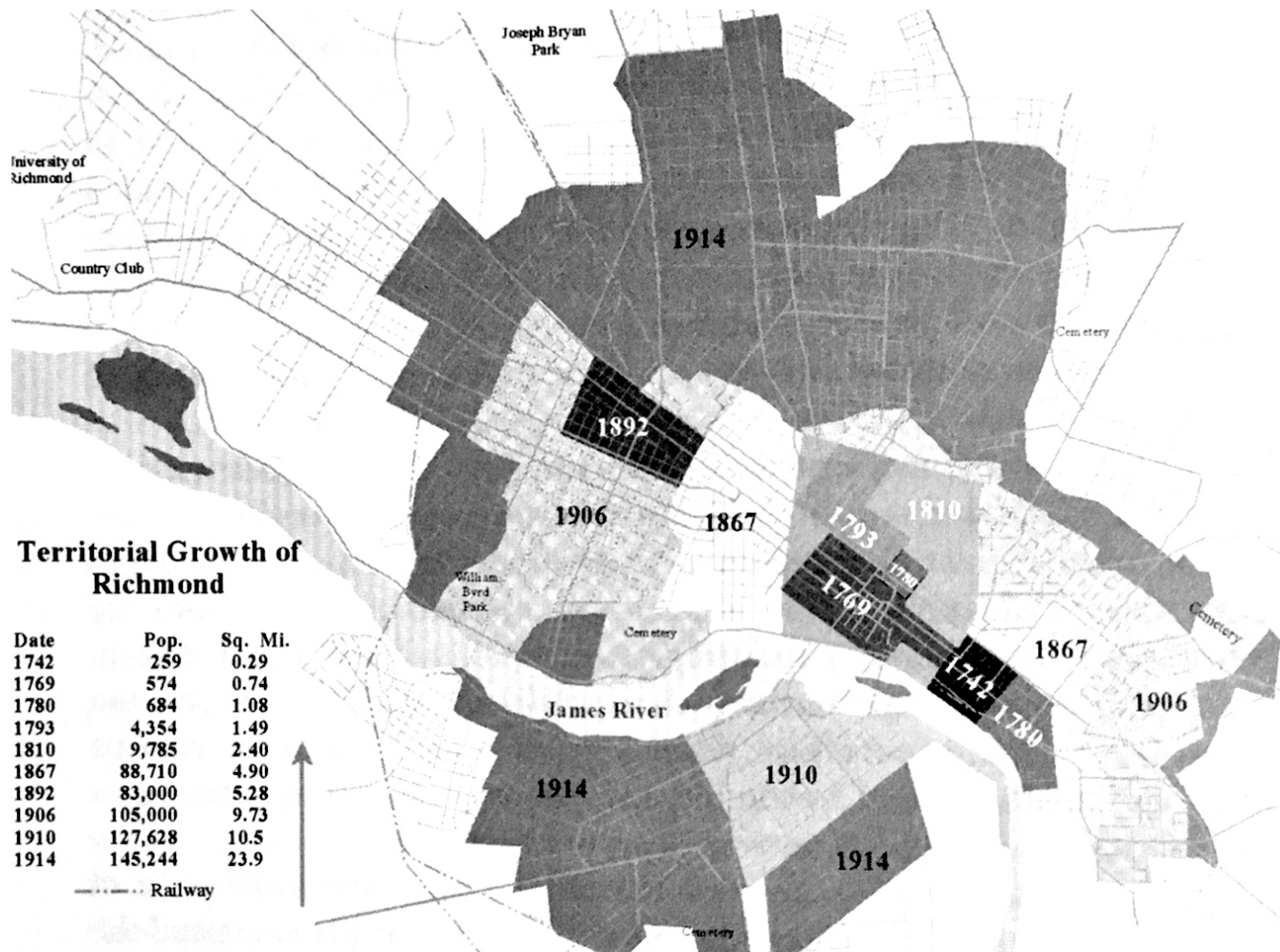


Figure 6: "Richmond annexations to 1926," Steven J. Hoffman, *Race, Class and Power in the Building of Richmond, 1870-1920* (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland & Company, Inc., 2004): 40. The 1892, 1906, and 1914 annexations included here aided in the development of Monument Avenue.

by the comments of ex-Confederate and Richmond Democrat city councilman George Llewellyn Christian that Reconstruction efforts “justified the ‘*Ku Klux Klan*,’ and other like organizations to protect our women, and to preserve the integrity of our civilization and race.”²¹ In the two years prior to the death of Robert E. Lee, the 14th Amendment sought to assure equal protection under the law, due process, and the rights of citizenship for African-Americans.²² The first public call for a monument to Lee came less than two weeks after the death of Robert E. Lee, on October 25, 1870 from Confederate Lieutenant-General Jubal A. Early, a follower of Lee in the Army of Northern Virginia.²³ Early invited survivors of the Army of Northern Virginia and any other interested soldiers of the Confederate armies to meet in Richmond on November 3rd, 1870 for the inauguration of a Memorial Association in honor of General Lee. The group established by Early at first attempted to work in cooperation with the Ladies’ Lee Monument Association led by Sarah Nicholas Randolph. In 1886 the two groups would be united under the name of the Lee Monument Association and leadership of Governor Fitzhugh Lee, the nephew of Robert E. Lee and an ex-Confederate General.²⁴ Prior to the merger, both groups held separate competitions to find a designer for the monument. The Ladies’

²¹ George Llewellyn Christian, *The Capitol Disaster: A Chapter of Reconstruction in Virginia* (Richmond: Richmond Press, Inc.: 1915), 2. It is worth noting that Christian was at the November 3rd meeting, where he was appointed as a temporary secretary. Confederate Lieutenant-General and Ku Klux Klan Grand Wizard Nathan Bedford Forrest was also in attendance, as the Tennessee Chairman on the State Executive Committee.

²² Virginia Historical Society, “Reconstruction,” accessed November 30, 2018: <http://www.vahistorical.org/what-you-can-see/story-virginia/explore-story-virginia/1861-1876/reconstruction>. This contradicted the 1866 Virginia law “for the Punishment of Vagrants,” that targeted unemployed ex-slaves; and the 15th Amendment of 1869 gave African-American men the right to vote. The Vagrancy Act of 1866 remained on the books until 1904, when vagrancy was made a misdemeanor.

²³ Early, “Lee Memorial Meeting,” *Organization of the Lee Monument*, 5.

²⁴ Driggs, et. al., *Richmond’s Monument Avenue*, 29.

Lee Monument Association advocated for artistic merit in the design of the monument, while the Lee Monument Association was more concerned with conveying a “vision of Southern defiance” and absolute verisimilitude in the appearance of Lee.²⁵ According to Kirk Savage, racial theorists of the nineteenth century justified white supremacy by equating classical sculptural figures with “a normative white body.”²⁶ Praises of Lee’s character in the proceedings of the Lee Monument Association reflected this discourse by making an analogy between the figure and Lee’s character. In particular, one comment from the group’s first meeting encapsulated this point of view. General Preston eulogized,

We who have been associated with the man in the gentler affections of friendship, or even in the rage and turmoil of battle, can scarcely appreciate the *perfect symmetry and dazzling splendor* of that character which stands out the foremost of our age. Those who come after us, freed from our personal love, and from the present glow of his virtues, will see in all their plenitude *the god-like hero*, the great Captain, the exalted Christian gentleman, the devoted Son who drew his sword in defence of the honour, the liberties and the sovereignty of Virginia.²⁷

The eventual decision by the Ladies’ Lee Monument Association to commission the French artist Marius-Jean-Antonin Mercié helped to align what would become the most prestigious neighborhood of Richmond with contemporary Hausmannian reconstruction and modernization efforts in Paris.²⁸ The commission of an internationally renowned French artist conveyed that Richmond had not only recovered from the war, but was thriving and sophisticated. C.P.E. Burgwyn, the city planner responsible for the layout of

²⁵ Savage, *Standing Soldiers, Kneeling Slaves*, 145.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 9.

²⁷ John S. Preston, “Remarks of General Preston,” *Organization of the Lee Monument Association and the Association of the Army of Northern Virginia, Richmond, VA., November 3d and 4th, 1870* (Richmond: J.W. Randolph & English, 1871), 21. Emphasis is my own.

²⁸ Driggs, et. al., *Richmond’s Monument Avenue*, 42.

Monument Avenue, traveled to Paris in February of 1890 and remarked on the progress of the statue, “the general judgment is that there is nothing in Paris superior to it.”²⁹ The artistic merit advocated by the Ladies’ Association would not only immortalize Lee as an ideal man, but also represent an ideal white figure in an idealistic future neighborhood, but its impact would be felt beyond the Avenue’s borders.

Virginia Governor James Kemper had a somewhat different agenda. He hoped to soothe political tensions between the North and South, Democrats and Republicans by representing Lee as an American hero.³⁰ His efforts appear to have been successful by the monument unveiling in 1890, at least among white Northerners. The *New York Times* described the sculpture as “splendid,” and reported that thousands of Confederate flags everywhere were “entwined with the Stars and Stripes, and on no occasion has there been more of genuine loyalty and devotion to the Union displayed than to-day.”³¹ The *New York Times* article suggested a desire to once again unify the North and the South by sentiment rather than by sword. The celebration of a Confederate hero was assuaged by the presence of the American flag alongside the Confederate flag. By appealing to white Northerners and memorializing the Confederate cause with a military figure rather than a political one, white Southerners and white Northerners were temporarily reunited, at least on paper. However, no known appeals were made to African-American communities by the Lee Monument Association. There was only one known contribution to the Lee Monument Association from an African-American community, which came from Terry, Mississippi, and historian Kirk Savage noted that “the board in reality made no effort to

²⁹ Savage, *Standing Soldiers, Kneeling Slaves*, 48.

³⁰ Ibid., 135.

³¹ “The Lee Statue Unveiled: Thousands of Veterans Honor His Memory,” *New York Times*, May 30, 1890.

solicit contributions from African-American communities, and was careful not to make appeals in towns under ‘Radical’ (i.e. Republican or African-American) rule.”³²

Meanwhile, Secretary to Governor James Kemper, Samuel Bassett French sent a letter of commendation to William Bingham, the African-American community member of Terry that organized the contributions, for his work.³³ In the eyes of Kemper and French, Bingham’s work justified the project, or in their own words: “Under Providence the white and black man of the South have had their lots cast in the same place.”³⁴ Before the Lee monument was even built, the association was willing to capitalize on good public representation by recognizing positive responses from African-Americans, but there were no efforts to include them in the decision-making process or fundraising.

The proposed locations for the Lee Monument had included Hollywood Cemetery (where a large number of Confederate soldiers were buried), and Capitol Square (where a statue of President George Washington is displayed), among others.³⁵ In the end, on June 18, 1887 Governor Fitzhugh Lee as President of the Lee Monument Association chose to situate the monument on an eleven-acre field located in the west end of the city, donated by Otway S. Allen, surviving heir of wealthy local builder and slaveholder William C. Allen.³⁶ This was an unsurprising choice among the white, wealthy leaders and businessmen of Richmond: the mere existence of such a monument would attract

³² Savage, *Standing Soldiers, Kneeling Slaves*, 137.

³³ Ibid., 137.

³⁴ Ibid., 137. This is taken from the letter of commendation sent to Bingham.

³⁵ John W. Daniel, “A Crossroads on Monument Avenue,” in *The Public Art of Civil War Commemoration: A Brief History with Documents*, ed. Thomas J. Brown (Boston: Bedford, 2004), 87.

³⁶ Daniel, “A Crossroads on Monument Avenue,” 87. William C. Allen was ordered by the court of Henrico County to release one slave to the county sheriff on January 30, 1865. He may have enslaved more than one person prior to the end of the war. See: “In Henrico County Court...” *The Daily Dispatch*, February 4, 1865, vol. 28, page 1.

developers to the area, and plans were already in motion to create a grand boulevard like those recently developed in Paris, as can be seen in the 1888 plans designed by Burgwyn.³⁷ [Figure 7] As a city desperate to prove itself a capitol of the New South, efforts to revitalize and extend the city through the creation of Monument Avenue were primarily financed by the “commercial-civic elites” of Richmond, to borrow a term from Steven J. Hoffman’s *Race, Class and Power in the Building of Richmond, 1870-1920*.³⁸ The appeal of placing Lee Monument on undeveloped property rather than in a cemetery or next to a statue of George Washington on the capital square was that it would command all attention in a spacious area perfectly suited for future development. *The Richmond Dispatch* called the location “a wise investment,” in 1887, and reported, “already the choicest lots near the monument are being sold at \$100, \$125 and \$150 a foot.”³⁹

Honoring Lee was not only politically advantageous for ex-Confederates; it was also lucrative for nearby property owners and builders as the avenue expanded. Over 260 homes were built between 1904 and 1931, most of which followed the establishment of the monuments.⁴⁰ The new neighborhood represented the potential of Richmond following Reconstruction efforts to establish a new identity that stressed economic vitality and admiration of its antebellum past in a form palatable for white Northerners and Southerners alike. This identity formation needed to incorporate both new forms and old to establish a continuation of white Southern ideals while asserting their national

³⁷ Edwards and Howard, “Monument Avenue: The Architecture of Consensus in the New South, 1890-1930,” 95.

³⁸ Steven Hoffman, *Race, Class and Power in the Building of Richmond, 1870-1920* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company Inc, 2004), 1.

³⁹ “The Monument Grounds,” *The Richmond Dispatch*, October 23, 1887.

⁴⁰ Wilson, “Monument Avenue: Richmond, Virginia,” 259.

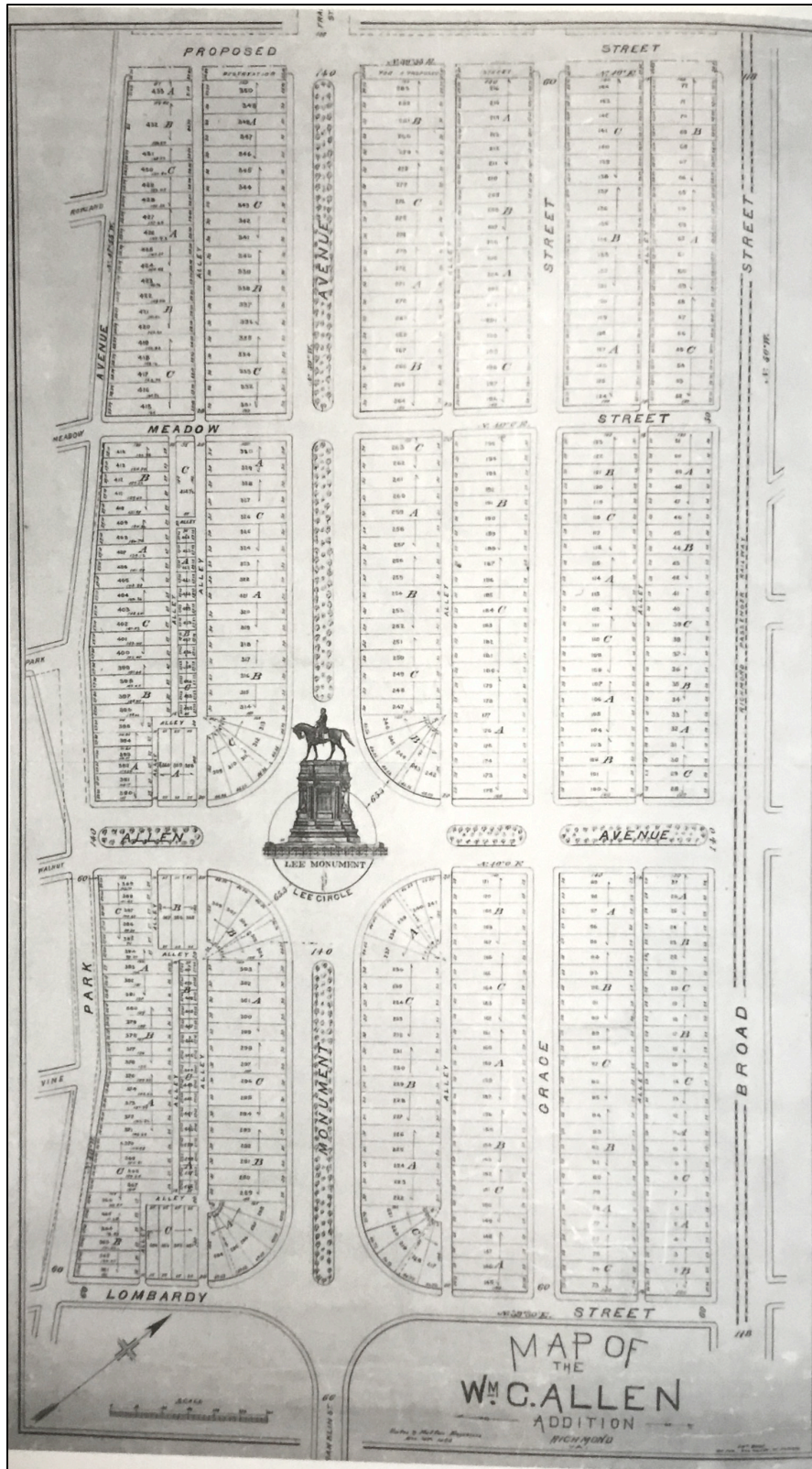


Figure 7: C.P.E. Burgwyn, *Map of the Wm. C. Allen Addition, Richmond, Va.* 1888. Valentine Museum, Richmond, Virginia. In *Richmond's Monument Avenue*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2001.

relevance to contemporary American society and business. For these reasons, the proliferation of colonial revival architectural styles among the residences of the avenue is not surprising, as it indicated reverence for their antebellum history while falling in line with contemporary American historicist eclecticism.⁴²

According to the Monument Avenue scholar Kathy Edwards, annexations of white-owned property allowed city leaders to maintain an African-American and working-class white minority in city politics.⁴³ The mayoral election of 1904 made annexations easier, when Carlton McCarthy won on a campaign heavily catered to the “affluent West End vote,” which stressed urban expansion.⁴⁴ As part of the 1914 annexation from Roseneath Road to Horsepen Road, the city condemned one African-American settlement west of Hamilton in order to acquire their land, with a compensation of \$2,344 for the residents.⁴⁵ Advocating for the welfare or rights for the African-American population of Richmond and surrounding areas would have been undoubtedly difficult after the Virginia Constitutional Convention of 1901-1902: African-Americans were disenfranchised with the requirement of either a poll tax or a literacy test, and the new constitution allowed for wards to be altered the following year, at which time city leaders gerrymandered Jackson Ward out of existence before the next mayoral election.⁴⁶

⁴² Driggs, “Monument Avenue Historic District,” 20-27. Individual descriptions of notable residences can be found in Driggs’ nomination, but the list of buildings indicates a proliferation of revivalist and historicist styles.

⁴³ Edwards, “Development of Monument Avenue,” 7.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 6-7.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 45. The 1902 Virginia Constitution required just compensation.

⁴⁶ *Draft of the Constitution of Virginia as finally adopted by the Convention and referred to the Committee on final revision and adjustment of the various provisions of the Constitution that may be agreed upon, and upon the schedule* (Richmond, Va: J.H. O’Bannon, 1902), 6, 28. Edwards and Howard, “Monument Avenue: The Architecture of Consensus in the New South, 1890-1930,” 100.

Furthermore, after the suppression of the African-American and white working class vote in 1902, the 1904 Code of Virginia included a law allowing for the annexation of property without the consent of the area's residents.⁴⁷ Following in the footsteps of racial zoning legislation in Baltimore, Virginia enacted their own racial zoning ordinance in 1911, allowing cities to zone entire blocks by race.⁴⁸ After 1917, when the Supreme Court declared racially biased zoning unconstitutional in the case *Buchanan v. Warley*, racial exclusion continued through private real estate transactions in racially restrictive deed covenants until 1948.⁴⁹ Richmond was also able to subvert the *Buchanan v. Warley* decision by adopting an ordinance in 1929 that relied upon standing anti-miscegenation laws to prevent African-Americans from living in majority-white neighborhoods. The African-American constituency of Richmond was not a passive recipient of racial exclusion, from both the political life of the city and the overall landscape. Editor of the *Richmond Planet*, anti-lynching activist, and Richmond city alderman John Mitchell Jr. even moved for the three African-American aldermen who once wore the "clanging chains" to be allowed to abstain from voting for Lee Monument unveiling appropriations in 1890.⁵⁰ The 1902 Constitution did not go unchallenged by the African-American constituency of Richmond and Virginia: Edgar Poe Lee of Richmond and Anthony N.

⁴⁷ Hoffman, *Race, Class and Power in the Building of Richmond, 1870-1920*, 42.

⁴⁸ Christopher Silver, "The Racial Origins of Zoning in American Cities," *Urban Planning and the African-American Community: In the Shadows*, ed. June Manning Thomas and Marsh Ritzdorf (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 1997): 192.

⁴⁹ Michael Paul Williams, "Williams: Richmond's segregation is by design," *Richmond Times Dispatch*, April 20, 2015. Kathy Edwards notes that racially restrictive deed covenants existed on Monument Avenue prior to 1917, dating back to at least 1904. Edwards et. al., *Monument Avenue: History and Architecture*, 54.

⁵⁰ "Unveiling Appropriation," *Richmond Dispatch*, March 4 1890, *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers* (Washington D.C.: Library of Congress), <http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn85038614/1890-03-04/ed-1/seq-1/>.

Pinner of Norfolk took their suit to the Supreme Court in 1902, represented by Richmond lawyer James Hayes and Jordan Thomson of the Negro Industrial and Agricultural Society.⁵¹ More importantly, as the number of places where African-Americans could own property shrank, the historically African-American neighborhood of Jackson Ward continued to prosper by “establishing financial institutions and promoting a separate economy that fostered African-American homeownership and business formation.”⁵² The African-American community that became Jackson Ward began before the Civil War along West Leigh Street and Brook Avenue in the late 1850s; after the war, more free African-Americans arrived and the unofficial borders of a newly freed African-American community continued to expand.⁵³ In 1871, the city government officially delineated Jackson Ward as a way to dilute the electoral power of African-Americans by isolating them into a single ward.⁵⁴ [Figure 8] Although the ward contained less than half of the African-American constituency, “the concentration of African-American voters into a single ward diminished their overall political strength by reducing their representation in the other wards.”⁵⁵ This essentially led to African-Americans only wielding significant electoral power in Jackson Ward, as white voters in every other ward of the city outnumbered them.⁵⁶ However, this concentration of the African-American

⁵¹ “The Virginia Constitution,” *The New York Times*, June 20, 1902, 3. “Disfranchised Negroes Sue,” *The New York Times*, December 14, 1902. They lost, but the New York Times covered it periodically.

⁵² Hoffman, *Race, Class and Power in the Building of Richmond, 1870-1920*, 14. This is not meant to overlook the significant discrepancies in living conditions that could be found in Jackson Ward. While there was a prominent African-American middle class in the area by the turn of the century, abject poverty and substandard housing was common.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 169-170.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 118.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 118.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 118.

vote led to an extremely active political life in the ward, complete with parades, speeches, and fiery editorials from John Mitchell Jr. in *The Richmond Planet*, the official African-American newspaper for the city of Richmond.⁵⁷ The Richmond city council voted unanimously in the fall of 1903 to eliminate Jackson Ward, replacing it with a much smaller Henry Ward.⁵⁸ While diminished in size, the ward continued to exist in name until the 1904 election.⁵⁹ This effectively weakened the efficacy of the African-American vote in Richmond.

But hope was not lost for Jackson Ward, as African-American business continued to thrive and African-American organizations formed to provide services unavailable to the community through white-owned businesses and organizations.⁶⁰ Although many records are lost today, numerous weekly newspapers and newsletters were established as a community forum for the African-American community of Richmond. The Independent Order of St. Luke leader Maggie Lena Walker established *The St. Luke Herald* in 1902, the same year of the Virginia Constitutional Convention that would strip away voting

⁵⁷ Hoffman, *Race, Class and Power in the Building of Richmond, 1870-1920*, 118-119.

⁵⁸ "Plan Blots Jackson Ward from the Map," *The Times Dispatch*, September 29, 1903, page 1, Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers, Library of Congress, <http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn85038615/1903-09-29/ed-1/seq-1/>. There were further debates over the name of the new, smaller ward, including "J.E.B Stuart" and "Henry."

⁵⁹ "Curious Figures as to Voters Here," *The Times Dispatch*, January 14, 1904, page 10, Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers, Library of Congress, <http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn85038615/1904-01-14/ed-1/seq-10/>. "Falling Off in Richmond," *The Richmond Times-Dispatch*, November 9, 1904, page 9, Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers, Library of Congress, <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn85038615/1904-11-09/ed-1/seq-9/>.

⁶⁰ Hoffman, *Race, Class, and Power in the Building of Richmond, 1870-1920*, 147-151. The Independent Order of St. Luke provided a number of services on a local and national level as its membership expanded, including a savings bank, a press, an insurance agency, and a source for employment to both women and men. This African-American fraternal organization was not the only one available in Richmond.



Figure 8: “Illustrated atlas of the city of Richmond, Va” excerpts, with a focus on Jackson Ward boundaries. Image courtesy of the Library of Congress Geography and Map Division. Richmond, Va: Frederick W. Beers, 1877.

rights for many African-American constituents in the state.⁶³

It is clear that African-American representation and community development thrived in Jackson Ward during an era of political repression on the basis of race, albeit with numerous setbacks and struggles. However, the African-American constituency of Richmond existed beyond Jackson Ward. Many African-American individuals worked on Monument Avenue during its heyday, at a time when they were unable to own property in white neighborhoods. The next section will examine sources of African-American labor on Monument Avenue, how African-Americans were hidden from public view, and how their presence can be recovered through photography to present a more comprehensive history of this historic district.

African-American Labor on Monument Avenue

In a recent map generated by the Geographic Information System of Richmond, Virginia using 2010 census bureau data, the area along Monument Avenue remains overwhelmingly white in terms of homeownership. [Figure 9] However, the homeowners were not the only occupants of Monument Avenue ever since the development of its residential architecture in the 1890s. In his book *Town House: Architecture and Material Life in the Early American City, 1780-1830*, Bernard L. Herman suggests “Servants lived in the margins of the house, in kitchen, yard, and passage and in the public world of the street, market, and shop. The advantage of quarters located over kitchens...is the degree

⁶³ “The St. Luke Herald – The trumpet of Progress,” Maggie L Walker: National Historic Site, National Park Service, updated January 4, 2017, <https://www.nps.gov/mawa/learn/historyculture/st-luke-herald.htm>.

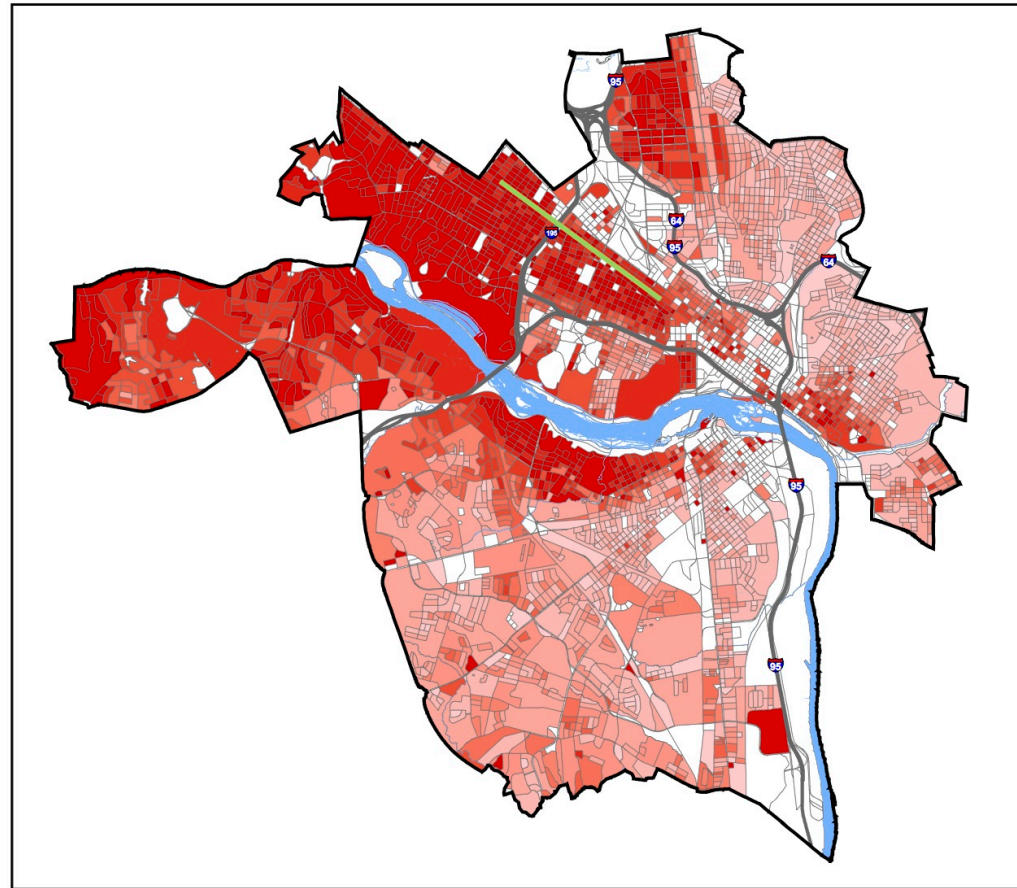
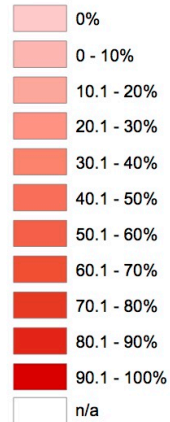
Race: White Alone - 2010 Census

City of Richmond, VA
Geographic Information Systems



Race - White Alone

% white alone



Source:
U.S. Census Bureau, 2010 Census

Disclaimer:
The City of Richmond assumes no liability either for any errors, omissions, or inaccuracies in the information provided regardless of the cause of such or for any decision made, action taken, or action not taken by the user in reliance upon any maps or information provided herein.



0 0.5 1 2 3 4 5 Miles

1 inch = 2 miles
1:100,000

Figure 9: "Race: White Alone – 2010 Census," Richmond, Va.: Planning and Development Review, 2010. The green line indicating Monument Avenue was added by the author for the purpose of this study.

to which the architecture of dominance makes the architecture of service visible.”⁶⁴ The architecture of service remained visible past the abolition of slavery, and it continued to regulate the movement of African-Americans on Monument Avenue.

For example, a review of the floor plans for the residence of John Kerr Branch at 2501 Monument Avenue reveals smaller staircases towards toward the back of the home providing quick access the coatroom, pantry, master bedrooms and attic spaces. [Figure 10.1-10.3] Although the current occupants have retrofitted much of the attic to accommodate storage and office spaces, the rooms likely once provided housing to domestic service workers for the affluent and locally distinguished Branch family.⁶⁵

Herman notes that the placement of servant spaces in the attic was one method of “rendering the human infrastructure of the house invisible,” in other words hiding the labor necessary to maintain the homeowners’ lifestyles.⁶⁶ As Edwards and Howard note:

More than 85 percent of households on the avenue in 1910 employed at least one live-in servant; nearly half had two or more. With few exceptions, these servants were female and black... The grander houses were designed to accommodate several domestics in service areas separated from family living quarters by a second circulation system of stairs, hallways, and back entries. The separation of sphere between servants and employers, between black and white, was also enforced in the larger landscape of Monument Avenue. Except when supervising their employers’ children, servants were rarely seen in the public arena of the mall and the monuments, and they were explicitly forbidden to use the front door of a residence.⁶⁸

⁶⁴ Herman, *Town House, 1780-1830*, 134.

⁶⁵ Esmé Howard, “Chapter 2: The People,” *Monument Avenue: History and Architecture*, ed. Alison Hoagland (Washington D.C.: Department of the Interior, 1992), 81-82. Howard claims “Nearly all of the houses built east of Roseneath... included maid’s quarters, and some were designed to house several servants.” Given the large attic space and architectural prominence of the residence, it is likely that more than one domestic service worker was employed in the household.

⁶⁶ Herman, *Town House*, 142.

⁶⁸ Edwards and Howard, “Monument Avenue: The Architecture of Consensus in the New South, 1890-1930,” 102.

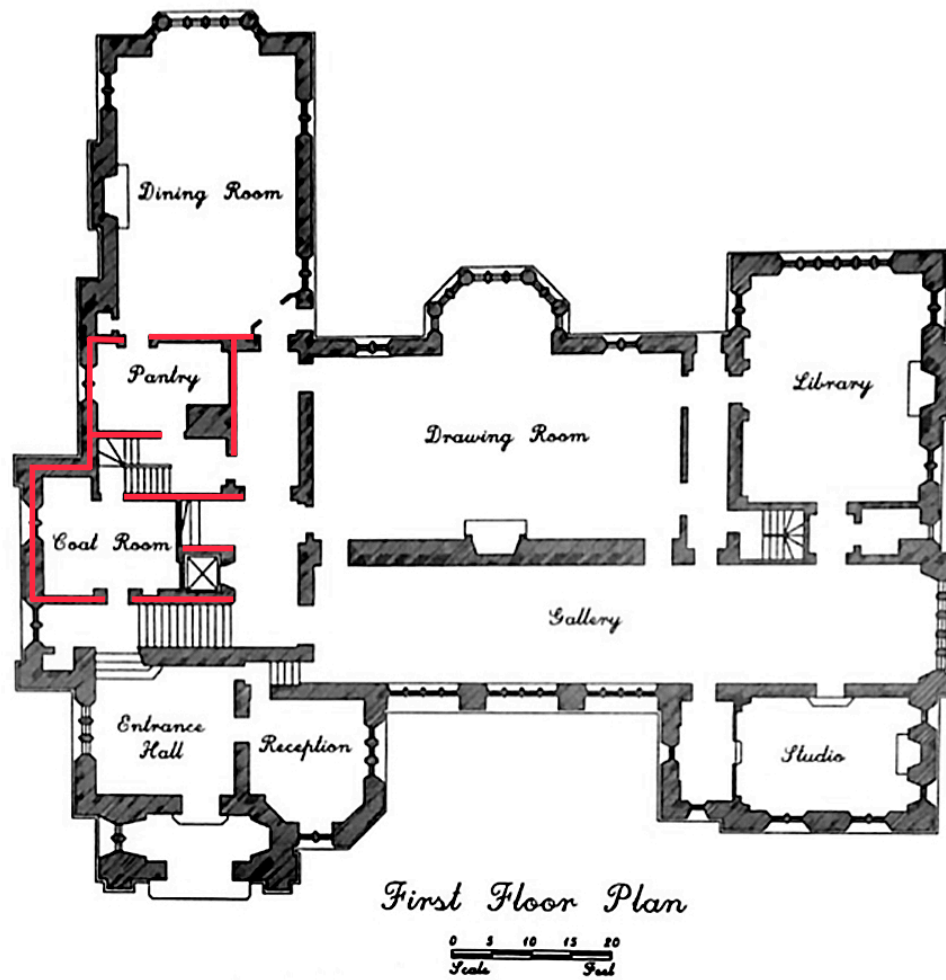


Figure 10.1: The Branch Museum of Architecture and Design original house plan (first floor) by John Russell Pope, located at 2501 Monument Avenue. James B. Garrison, *Mastering Tradition: The Residential Architecture of John Russell Pope*, 160. New York: Acanthus Press, 2004.

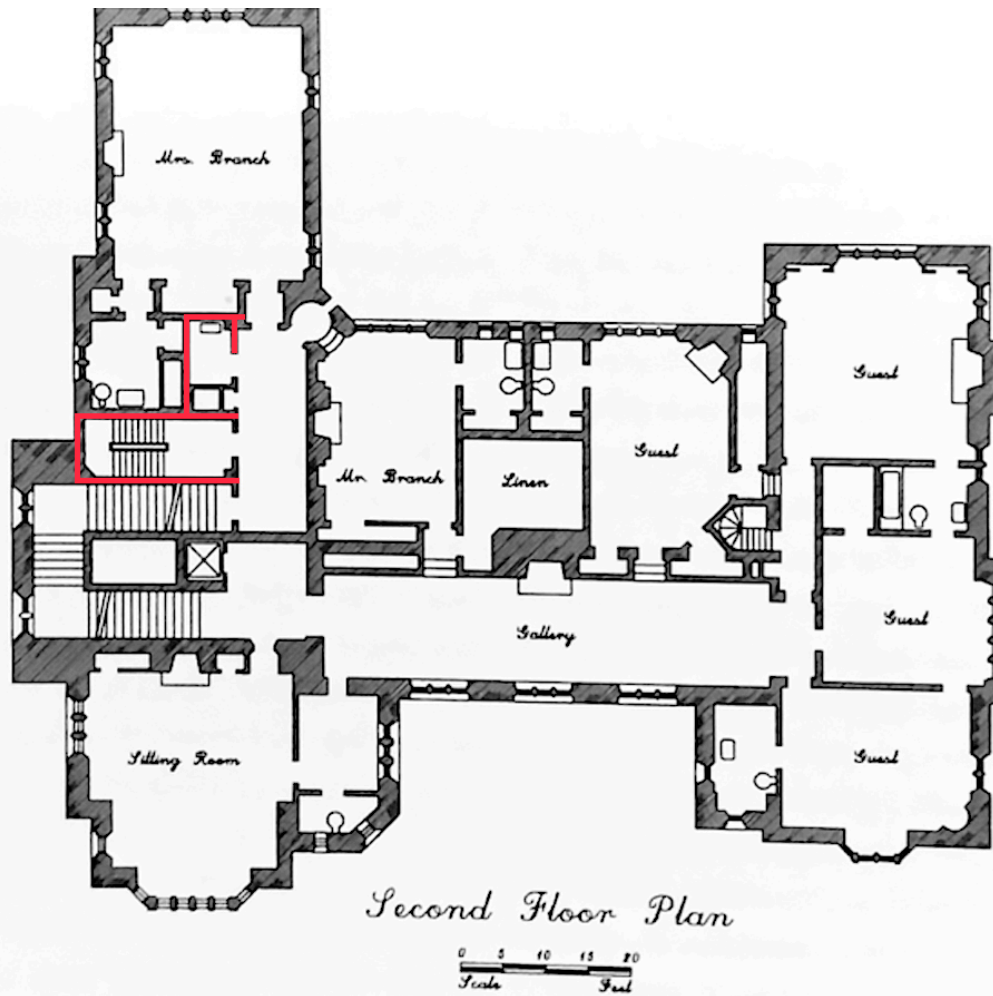


Figure 10.2: The Branch Museum of Architecture and Design original house plan (second floor) by John Russell Pope, located at 2501 Monument Avenue. James B. Garrison, *Mastering Tradition: The Residential Architecture of John Russell Pope*, 160. New York: Acanthus Press, 2004.

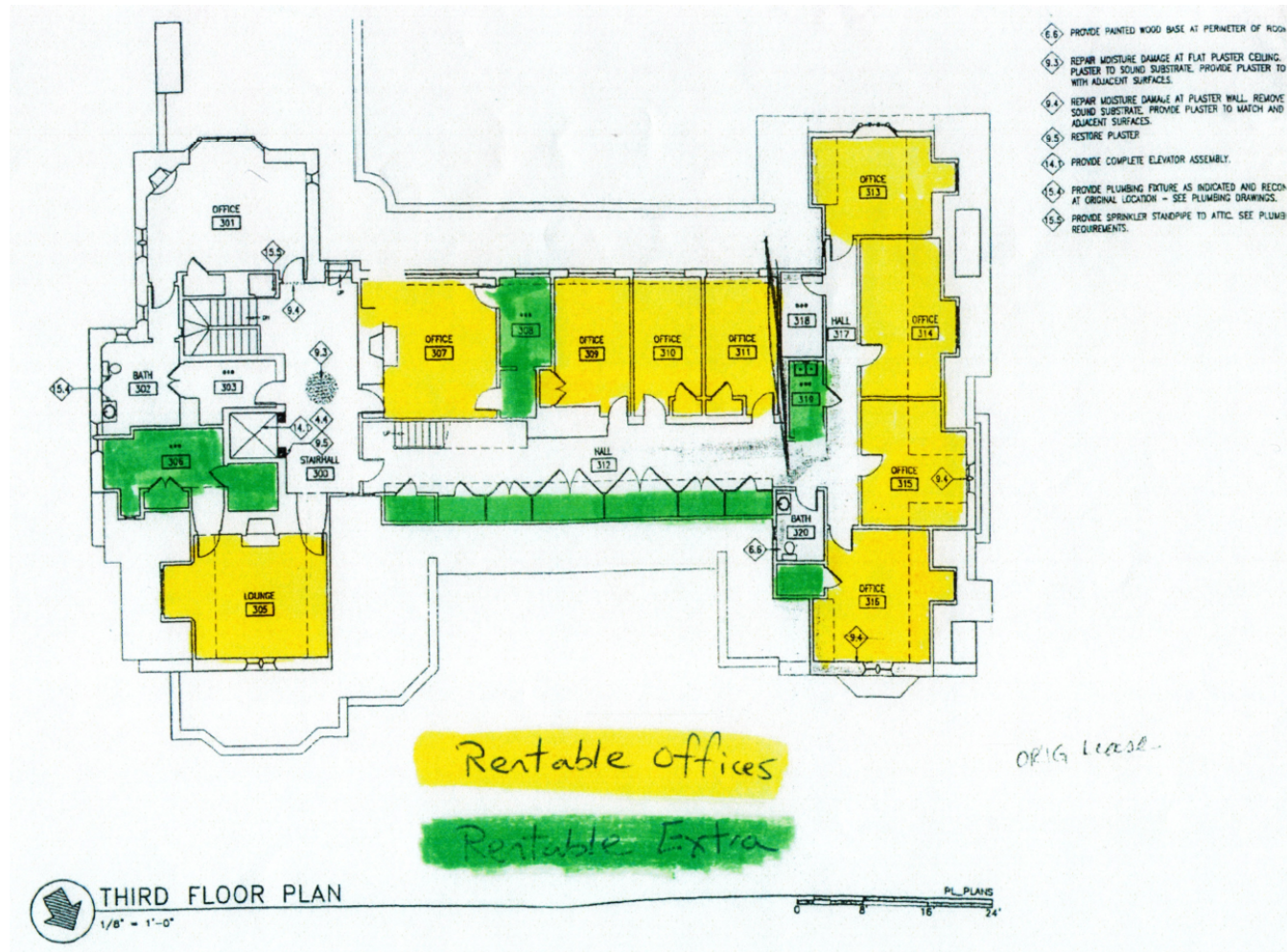


Figure 10.3: The Branch Museum of Architecture and Design, "Third Floor Plan," date unspecified.
Image received via email from Visitor and Tenant Services Manager Manon Loustaunau on March 7, 2018.

These architectural discretions contribute to what Ariella Azoulay calls “the blatant absence of visual traces as a source for writing history.”⁶⁹ When the photographic archive is deprived of the presence of African-American labor in white-owned homes, as a result of architecture designed to keep this labor hidden, it becomes more difficult to recuperate that history of cohabitation in secondary literature.

A photograph of “Black ‘nurses’ with their white charges” on the grassy median surrounding the ‘Stonewall’ Jackson Monument in 1920 demonstrates the permitted presence of African-American employees on Monument Avenue.⁷⁰ [Figure 11] As the women (dressed in domestic service workers’ attire and tending to the children) are faced away from the camera, this snapshot comes across as a candid depiction of the anonymous photographed persons’ labor.

Photographic evidence of African-American labor on Monument Avenue can highlight the overlooked history of labor and exclusion within the district during a time of racially restricted deed covenants and housing segregation. As tours of slave and servant quarters at historic homes such as Monticello and Biltmore Estate grow in popularity and demand, these photographs can highlight the entwined nature of racial and labor history of Monument Avenue, and can bridge the gap between the histories of enslaved and non-enslaved labor in historic residences. These photographs make discreet physical constraints on laborers’ presence more visible and plain for a contemporary audience that may not have access to the back staircases of private residences, or the alleys that now serve as driveways and external storage for Monument Avenue residents.

⁶⁹ Azoulay, “Potential History: Thinking through Violence,” 549.

⁷⁰ Howard, “Chapter 2: The People,” *Monument Avenue: History and Architecture*, 80.



Figure 11: “Black ‘nurses’ and their white charges gather in the avenue’s grass median to watch the parade of traffic around the Stonewall Jackson Monument, ca. 1920. Valentine Museum.” Kathy Edwards, Esmé Howard, and Toni Prawl, *Monument Avenue: History and Architecture*, ed. Alison K. Hoagland (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service Cultural Resources, 1992), 80. Courtesy of the Valentine Museum.

The call in 1870 to build a monument in honor of Robert E. Lee in Richmond was “reclaiming the cultural authority” of the Confederacy in Richmond, according to Maurie D. McNinnis in her analysis “‘To Strike Terror’: Equestrian Monuments and Southern Power.”⁷¹ Both McNinnis’ essay and earlier works by Kirk Savage have delved into visual analyses of Confederate equestrian monuments and their function as sites of Confederate commemoration, but ex-slaves and their descendants were more than spectators of the many parades, reunions, and Decoration Day celebrations honoring the Confederacy in Richmond. Besides the abstaining vote of three African-American aldermen in the appropriation of city funds for the unveiling of the Lee Monument in 1890, African-American labor helped to construct Lee Monument as well, and yet prior scholars do not account for this complex aspect of history. Photographs of African-American and white laborers working on the Lee Monument in some cases may reinforce the oppressive power dynamics of the monument itself, and in other cases imply an uneasy and questionable consensus that could be found in other images and reports of African-Americans in Confederate commemoration ceremonies. However, it is vital to remember who is framing both the images and the textual narratives at the time of the photograph’s initial production, the role of the archive in constructing the linguistic messaging around the images, as well as our own historically contingent connotations when analyzing the photographs.

One set of photographs from construction on the Lee Monument just prior to its unveiling in 1890 portray both African-American and white subjects, but there are

⁷¹ Maurie D. McNinnis, “‘To Strike Terror’: Equestrian Monuments and Southern Power,” *The Civil War in Art and Memory*, edited by Kirk Savage (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016), 134.

distinct differences in their depictions. [Figure 12-13] In Figure 12, the white bodies are foregrounded in a relaxed but possessive pose and addressing the camera. The two white men to the far right and left appear assertive with one hand on each hip and the other hand grabbing the legs of Lee's horse. The older white man in more formal attire is off-center of the frame beneath horse, also clutching a horse leg and facing the camera. The younger white boy is less formal in both attire and pose, appearing barefoot and seated below Lee and his horse. Their placement in the foreground, their dress unsuitable for hard manual labor, their gaze into the camera, and their possessive grip on the monument all suggest this picture exists for them, and not for the four African-American laborers also included in the frame. In comparison, they are pushed into the background, below the white figures, and are caught looking sidelong at the camera but not explicitly posing for it. The African-American man to the far left appears to be dressed for work, with sleeves rolled up to his elbows, and his hand may be blocking the light from his eyes (as the stark shadow below Lee's own leg suggests the sun is behind the cameraman). The image formed part of a small set of four photographs depicting construction of the Robert E. Lee Monument in Richmond, Virginia. Originally belonging in a scrapbook that was disassembled prior to accession, the photographs were donated to the Virginia Historical Society by Dr. Dabney S. Lancaster in 1963.⁷² Dr. Lancaster was a Richmond native and the son of Confederate veteran Robert Alexander Lancaster.⁷³ Although it is not possible to conclusively prove the photos belonged to Robert Lancaster, they were likely not

⁷² Heather Beattie, email correspondence with the author, January 6-15, 2019.

⁷³ "Lancaster-Crump Wedding," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, June 13, 1915. Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers, Library of Congress, <http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83045389/1915-06-13/ed-1/seq-36/>.



Figure 12: "Photographic prints, Robert E. Lee Monument," 1890. Virginia Museum of History and Culture. The second image is a close-up of the first, created by the author for this study.

"Proceedings of the Virginia Historical Society," *The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 85, no. 2 (April, 1977), 228.



Figure 13: "Photographic Print, Lee Monument Unveiling," 1890. Virginia Museum of History and Culture.

commissioned by Dabney, who would have been less than one year old when Lee Monument was unveiled. Another copy of this photograph belonged to John Henry Guy of Richmond Virginia, the son of a Confederate veteran.⁷⁴ However, there is no evidence suggesting the images belonged to the men in the background, either within the composition or in the history of the object. Due to their snapshot quality that cuts off the pedestal, the partially covered form of the statue, and the time at which it was taken, it is unlikely that they were intended for constructive purposes, and rather were commemorative in nature.⁷⁵ Additionally, they never published in *The Times* or *The Times-Dispatch* of Richmond around the time of the unveiling, which suggests they were not taken for the city's major newspapers.⁷⁶

When Barthes wrote of the denotative qualities and connotative procedures involved in the production and reading of photographs, he challenged the idea of the photograph as a purely denotative image by indicating six procedures of connotation detectable within the photograph. It is the second procedure, the pose, most at play in this

⁷⁴ The other copy is a poor digital reproduction, with "John H. Guy, 611 E. Franklin Street" stamped on the back. The Confederate Memorial Literary Society collection contains a diary of his father's time at a prisoner of war camp in 1862. The father was also named John Henry Guy, but it is unlikely that the photograph belonged to Guy Sr, due to his residence at 1110 Capitol Street, as indicated in *The Richmond Dispatch* on June 14, 1890.

⁷⁵ The pedestal was already in place by the time that the statue arrived from Paris in early May, 1890. All the statue pieces were connected by May 16, 1890. "The Pieces Put Together," *The Times* (Richmond, Va.), May 16, 1890, *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers* (Washington D.C.: Library of Congress), <http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn85034438/1890-05-16/ed-1/seq-1/>.

⁷⁶ The Library of Congress claims the first photograph in an American newspaper appeared in 1880, but "it was not until 1919...that American newspapers began to feature photographs routinely." Library of Congress, "Portfolio 2: Pictorial Journalism," *Library of Congress, An Illustrated Guide: Prints and Photographs*, accessed January 19, 2019, <https://www.loc.gov/rr/print/guide/port-2.html>. Additionally, depictions of the Lee Monument before and after the unveiling were illustrations, none of which reproduce these photographs.

first image. When the viewer perceives a pose, they perceive “as a simple denotation what is in actual fact a double structure—denoted-connoted,” as the pose has historical bases in “painting, theater, associations of ideas, stock metaphors, etc.”⁷⁷ The possessive, assertive poses of the white men and the relaxed, reclining pose of the white boy are thus not independent of historical connotations. Rather, these poses seem to reinforce through the photograph and its place within the archive the historical narrative of Monument Avenue as a white space. However, juxtaposing their positions around the monument with the poses of the African-American men observing both the photographer and the spectator of the photograph can also bring forth a more confrontational revisioning of the avenue’s history that stresses the interracial labor involved in Monument Avenue in an unequal but nevertheless shared space.

The second photograph [Figure 13] of African-American and white figures at the construction site of the Lee Monument was likely taken in late-May 1890, after workers raised the statue onto the pedestal, but before they removed the scaffolding for the unveiling ceremony on May 29th, 1890. It is likely that the individuals pictured worked to install the monument, since the statue was kept under wraps until the unveiling, at which time the scaffolding would not be present. Additionally, the installation process required a large crew before the unveiling in order to move the statue into place on the pedestal, once it had been slowly raised to the necessary height.⁷⁸ This image is more carefully composed than the first, as all of the figures are facing forward, and appear to

⁷⁷ Barthes, “The Photographic Message,” 201.

⁷⁸ “A Picture of Repose: glimpses had of the statue of General Lee,” *The Times* (Richmond, Va.), May 22 1890, *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*, (Washington D.C.: Library of Congress), <http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn85034438/1890-05-22/ed-1/seq-4/>.

intentionally address the camera as a group. In comparison to the previous image, here the anonymous African-American men are featured more prominently and in greater detail in the foreground, albeit at a lower register within the composition and at a farther distance from the figure of Lee near the top of the photograph. Although the image was never published, it remains significant as an intentional record of interracial labor on the monument. The overt presence of African-American men in the foreground tacitly suggests their support of the project while their actual views, and context surrounding the taking of the photograph (such as the consent of those pictured, the staging of the figures, and the identity of the photographer) remains unknown.⁷⁹ In other words, while the civil contract between the photographer, photographed persons, and the spectator is known to be “a kind of fiction, as such a contract was never written,” the obscurity surrounding identification in these photographs exacerbates these concerns: one can never know the personal thoughts or political opinions of the photographed persons because they have never been identified; it is unlikely that a textual account surrounding the negotiation of the photographic act was ever made or preserved.⁸⁰ The missing identities of the photographed persons and photographer, rather than hinder the generation of interpretations that give such images meaning, instead allows these processes to proliferate. Roland Barthes claimed that the image cannot seem to escape the linguistic message, but that the parasitical text accompanying many photographs (especially the captions of press photography) function as an “anchorage” that directs the viewers through a sea of possible signifieds for every icon to the signifieds intended by the

⁷⁹ “Unveiling Appropriation,” *Richmond Dispatch*, March 4 1890, *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers* (Washington D.C.: Library of Congress), <http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn85038614/1890-03-04/ed-1/seq-1/>.

⁸⁰ Azoulay and Thompson, “Photography and Its Citizens,” 53.

captioner.⁸¹ In this case, the captioning is left to the archivist and the researcher, temporally displaced from the context in which the image was captured and left with their own categories and connotations. One may be tempted by present understandings of Jim Crow-era oppression against African-Americans to claim that the participation of African-American men in the photograph was coerced by the obligations of labor or the insistence of their employer, but without the testimony of the photographer, employer, or photographed persons, it can never be more than an educated guess. However, this speculation or questioning of the context surrounding the photographic act is not futile.

As Azoulay points out,

Linking the photograph to the situation and the act of taking the photograph... means not giving up on the urgency of restoring and re-establishing as many links as possible between the photograph and the situation in which it is taken. The aim of this effort is to enable us as spectators to re-position ourselves in relation to the disaster we are watching and to let us be engaged with its happening.⁸²

The act of speculation, rather than attempting to excavate a historical truth surrounding the photograph's production, may serve as an exercise in empathy informed by historical conditions that impacted the lives of African-American laborers.

Despite the physical presence of African-American labor that went into the construction of Monument Avenue, and the lives of African-American domestic service workers occupying many of the residences on the avenue, photographs of these individuals are sparse. One reason they are few in number in the photographic archive was built into the avenue. On Google Maps, the reason is labeled "Allemeadmonupark-d

⁸¹ Barthes, "Rhetoric of the Image," 155-156. Barthes, "The Photographic Message," 205.

⁸² Azoulay, "Getting Rid of the Distinction between the Aesthetic and the Political," 241-242.

Alley.”⁸³ The Alley runs parallel to Monument Avenue and Park Avenue, starting where North Allen Avenue connects to the Lee Monument roundabout and ending at the Branch Museum of Architecture and Design, or along North Davis Avenue. [Figure 14] Few tourists are likely to see Allemeadmonupark-d Alley, although it is in plain sight. The alley has always acted as a service corridor, first for services such as commuting domestic service workers, “the ice man, the coal man, and the ‘pig’ man,” and now as private parking, extra storage, trash collection, and other municipal services.⁸⁴ [Figure 15] The pristine Monument Avenue and its grand private residences for white families only appeared as such because of service alleys hiding the labor, often by African-American women, that made such living possible. In 1900, domestic service workers could walk to work unseen, and in 2019, the avenue’s sanitation workers are also hidden from the view of residents and tourists along Monument Avenue.

Recognizing the role of service alleys and highlighting photographs of labor and laborers on Monument Avenue reframes how the avenue’s history is told in terms of race. It has been easy to write off Monument Avenue as a white neighborhood, because doing so conveniently allows historians and the public to address issues of racial segregation around a comforting and progressive narrative of societal change and groundbreaking civil rights legislation. However, this narrative overlooks the structures that have remained in place, hiding African-American lives and labor on the avenue, with all of the difficult power dynamics it would entail in the Jim Crow South. Bypassing the history

⁸³ “Robert E Lee Memorial,” Google Maps, accessed January 8, 2019. <https://goo.gl/maps/mojyqjdp4H62>.

⁸⁴ Esmé Howard, “Chapter 2: The People,” *Monument Avenue: History and Architecture*, ed. Alison Hoagland (Washington D.C.: Department of the Interior, 1992), 83. The latter claim on present usage is my own, derived from personal experience and evident via Google Street View images taken along the alley.

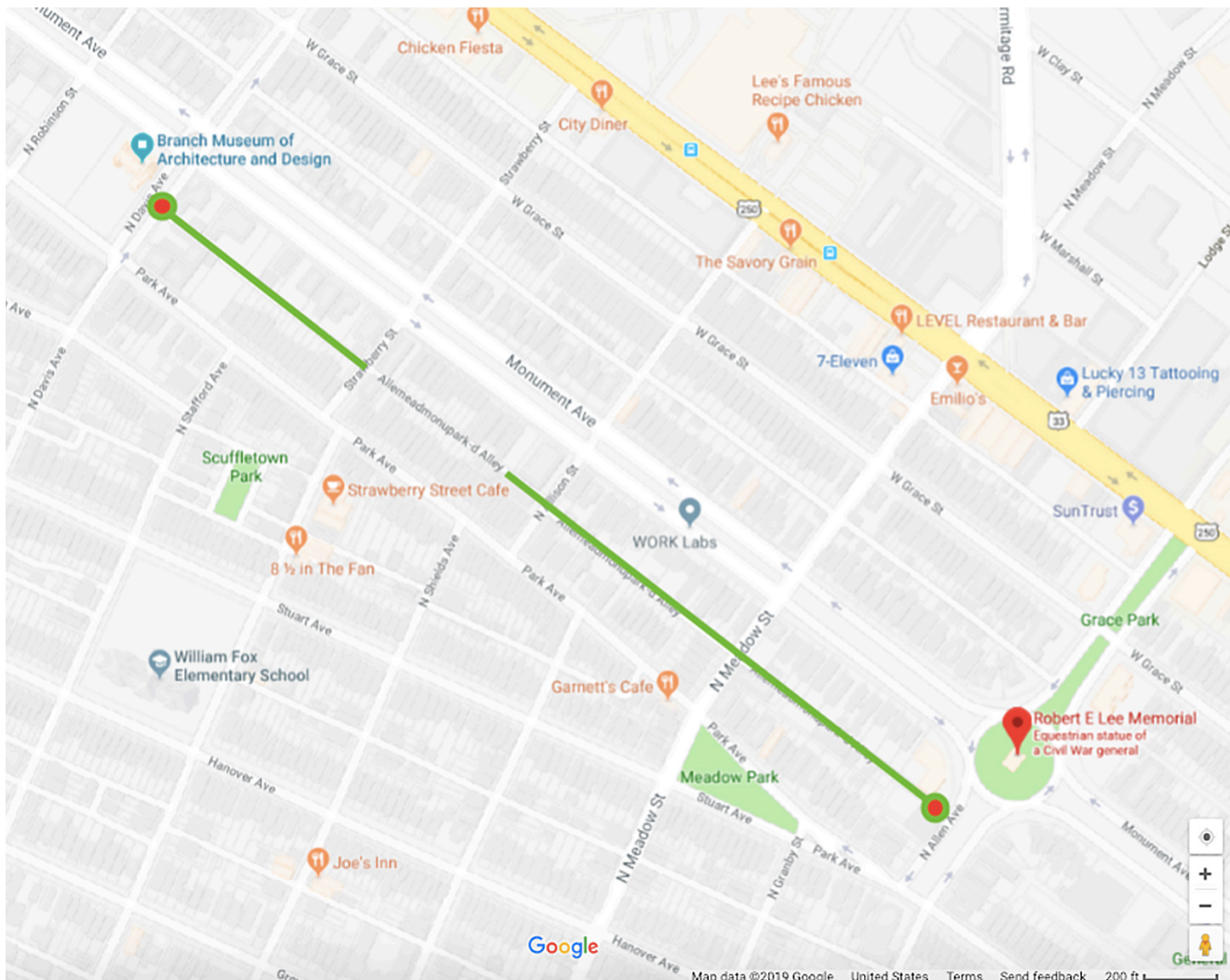


Figure 14: “Robert E Lee Memorial,” Google Maps, accessed January 8, 2019. <https://goo.gl/maps/mojyqidp4H62>.



Figure 15: “2025 Allemeadmonupark-d Alley, Richmond, VA 23220,” Google Maps, accessed January 8, 2019.
<https://goo.gl/maps/Xxs24GiPYa82>.

of African-American labor on Monument Avenue acts as a “basic division of history,” as noted by Azoulay in the “invisible conditions” of the archive that told the history of the Jewish people and the State of Israel apart from the history of the Palestinians.⁸⁵ These divisions can prioritize one history over another when in fact they are inextricable.

Press Coverage of Confederate Commemorations

In the final subsection of the *New York Times*’ lengthy report on the Lee Monument unveiling in 1890, the “Incidents of the Day” included a rare mention of African-American individuals present during the celebration. Following their claim that everywhere Confederate flags were “entwined with the Stars and Stripes,” the anonymous author introduced “four or five old colored men who followed the army from the opening of the war to its close.”⁸⁷ The *New York Times* reported that the 82 year-old “body servant” of Judge John L. Cochran, “Uncle” Tarleton Alexander, was covered in Confederate badges and “has always voted the Democratic ticket.”⁸⁸ Jubal Early, the man who first proposed a monument to Lee in Richmond following his death, introduced Judge Charles T. O’Ferrall to two men—Benjamin and Pleasant Saunders—who had once been enslaved by Early. They had accompanied Early to the celebration. They were reported to tell O’Ferrall, “We is Mars’ Jubal’s niggers... We is, and we done cum ovtwo hundred miles to pay our ‘specs to him.”⁸⁹ Early’s response? “These are respectable darkies.”⁹⁰

⁸⁵ Azoulay, “Potential History,” 548.

⁸⁷ “The Lee Statue Unveiled,” *New York Times*, May 30, 1890.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

The *New York Times*' reporting of African-American presence and testament at the unveiling is worthy of scrutiny (especially the transcription of their dialect) but more importantly to the purpose of this study is the function of its inclusion in the *New York Times* report, especially alongside Early's remark. Multiple scholars of the Lost Cause have credited Early with its propagation after the war, and his unrepentant advocacy of white supremacy continued until his death in 1894.⁹¹ In 1875, Early opposed the participation of African-American companies in a parade for the unveiling of a monument to Stonewall Jackson in the Capitol Square of Richmond, Virginia.⁹² Yet in 1890, he introduced Benjamin and Pleasant Saunders to notable members of Richmond society. However, Benjamin and Pleasant's first alleged comment already places them in a subservient position in which Early retains control while suggesting their consent. Regardless of the truthfulness of these statements, their power in the press is clear: Early has suggested what he considered to be acceptable behavior from a class of citizens that he clearly placed beneath his own white race. It follows from the *New York Times* report that Early believed the respectable African-American man was one that continued to serve and pay respects to the white man that once enslaved him. By placing this account in their coverage of the unveiling celebrations, alongside their comments on the intertwined flags, there is an implication of resolution. The report suggests that Northerners and Southerners were unified at the unveiling, and that African-Americans

⁹¹ Kathryn Meier, "Jubal Early, Model Civil War Sufferer," *J19: The Journal of Nineteenth-Century Americanists* 4, no. 1 (Spring 2016), 206-214. Jubal Early, *Lieutenant General Jubal Anderson Early C.S.A.: Autobiographical Sketch and Narrative of the War Between the States* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1912), ix-x.

⁹² Millard Kessler Bushong, *Old Jube: A Biography of General Jubal A. Early* (Boyce, Va.: Carr Publishing Company, 1955), 295-296.

were not unwelcome, but only if they appeared to continually and consensually serve the same people that enslaved them, proclaimed support for a party that opposed Reconstruction efforts, and supported the celebration of the Confederacy after its demise. However, in a city of over thirty-two thousand African-Americans, the reporter personally saw only five that were perceived to be at the celebrations on their own accord, and none were noted as Richmond residents.

The *Richmond Planet* and other African-American newspapers across the nation told a different story. In a brief comment published shortly after the unveiling, John Mitchell Jr. famously proclaimed,

The Negro was in the Northern processions on Decoration Day and in the Southern ones, if only to carry buckets of ice-water. He put up the Lee Monument, and should the time come, will be there to take it down.⁹³

When speaking to a predominantly African-American audience, Mitchell contextualizes the participation of African-American individuals in these celebrations through the obligations of labor by commenting “if only to carry buckets of ice-water.”⁹⁴ The second comment strikes a hopeful and consoling chord. The photographs I have analyzed in this thesis are proof that African-American men worked to install the monument. Mitchell must have been aware of this fact, yet he declared the aspiration of its removal to his audience. Consent is a key, underlying component in this passage: the labor of African-American men in the construction of the Lee Monument may have been burdened by the necessity of a wage and the fear of retribution for opposing the monument, and under these conditions would have more in common with coercion than enthusiastic support.

⁹³ Untitled, *The Richmond Planet*, June 7, 1890, *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*, (Washington, D.C.: Library of Congress), <http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn84025841/1890-06-07/ed-1/seq-2/>.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

But, there is a sense of potential consent one day in the future regarding the monument's place in their city.

This was not Mitchell's only reference to the Lee Monument in the June 7th edition of the *Richmond Planet*. Mitchell wrote,

An old colored man after seeing the mammoth parade of the ex-Confederates on May 29th and gazing at the rebel flags, exclaimed "The Southern white folks is on top!" After thinking a moment, a smile lit up his countenance as he chuckled with evident satisfaction, "But we's got the government!" Yes, our party has the government, and from present indications, the most people will allow them to keep it.⁹⁵

Although the *Richmond Planet* uses a similar dialect for their main subject as the *New York Times* anecdote, context is crucial. When juxtaposed with the *New York Times* report, Mitchell's own report offers an alternative position wherein the African-American man is not subservient to the Confederate veterans and ex-enslavers in attendance, and recognizes that while the symbolic power of the flags, monuments and parades is palpable and even alarming, there is now hope for retaining electoral power capable of enacting change within their government.

The *Richmond Planet* also published reprints from other African-American newspapers that were critical of the Lee Monument unveiling celebrations and the Confederate symbols employed within it. While the *New York Times* quoted African-American men in support of the monument, Mitchell published a quote from the white Republican Congressman Jonathan Dolliver of Iowa at the Metropolitan Opera House:

Yesterday amid the shouts of popular acclamation, the surviving leaders of the south stood about the figure of Robert E. Lee, set up in the Capital of Virginia. In the throng were doubtless aged men and women who had heard the jargon of the auctioneer repeated over their defenceless heads, for near at hand lay the dismantled market place where for over two centuries men were bought and sold,

⁹⁵ Untitled, *Richmond Planet*, June 7, 1890.

while from the dome of the State House waved the captured flag of the fallen empire of American slavery. [Cheers] Measured by what we know of the past or by what we hope for the future, the statue at Richmond seems like a weak and clumsy protest against the flood of years. It is meant for more than the tribute of a brave people to the favorite leader of their misfortune, it will only serve to show how vain and empty are the plans of men against the increasing purpose that ever through the ages runs. [Great applause.] Time will teach them, let us hope so that they will some day be able to distinguish between the flag of their country and the common curiosities of history.⁹⁶

There are several reasons why the inclusion of this report in *The Richmond Planet* is significant. First, it is a sign of outside recognition of Richmond's African-American population, many of whom were the survivors of slavery, in the midst of a massive Confederate celebration. Such a report may have served to validate a dissent that could not be freely or safely voiced by the local African-American constituency. *The Richmond Planet* also chose to include captions of cheers and applause, which suggests this sentiment was held not only by the orator, but by the audience in attendance as well. While Lee Monument and its parades signaled one form of populist support for a Confederate leader and quite arguably Confederate causes, these cheers symbolized the opposite: populist dissent against the messages being sent by Confederate symbols and celebrations. The quote worked well in conjunction with Mitchell's claim "He put up the Lee Monument, and should the time come, will be there to take it down," by also reflecting hope for change: "Measured by what we know of the past or by what we hope for the future, the statue at Richmond seems like a weak and clumsy protest against the flood of years."⁹⁷

⁹⁶ Untitled, *The Richmond Planet*, June 7, 1890, *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers* (Washington, D.C.: Library of Congress), <http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn84025841/1890-06-07/ed-1/seq-2/>.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

Dolliver addresses the issue of flags twice in this quoted passage from the *Richmond Planet*, and this was far from the only protest in the press about Confederate flags surrounding the unveiling proceedings. *The Richmond Planet* reprinted editorials from other African-American newspapers: the Indianapolis *World*, the New York *Age*, the *State Capital* of Springfield, Illinois, the *Champion* of Louisville, Kentucky, and the *National Home Protector* of Baltimore, Maryland, all of which opposed the celebrations of the Confederacy at the Lee Monument unveiling.⁹⁸ The *World* claimed, “a severe penalty should be insisted upon any one who dared to unfurl that rag, emblematic of rebellion and crime,” according to its reprint in *The Richmond Planet*.⁹⁹ The *State Capital* of Springfield was more conciliatory:

We appreciate the spirit which prompted his [Robert E. Lee’s] followers to rear a monument in his honor. He had many virtues which are worthy of emulation, but when they put up that ensign of his treason—the stars and bars—and make it a god to display, and to worship, we, as an American citizen, offer our solemn protest and demand in the name of our fathers, in the name of the constitution and in the name of every patriotic impulse that such things shall not be tolerated.¹⁰⁰

In *Colors and Blood: Flag Passions of the Confederate South*, Robert E. Bonner attributes African-American condemnations of the Confederate flag to “a broader struggle for national existence.”¹⁰¹ It is in this light that the quote from the *State Capital* remains significant. The newspaper aligned itself, its staff, and its supporters in the African-American community of Springfield, Illinois with a major pillar of American

⁹⁸ “Voice of the Colored Press,” *The Richmond Planet*, June 7, 1890.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid. The Library of Congress categorizes the *State Capital* as an African-American newspaper that began publication in 1886. Microfilm and digital editions are available from 1891 onward, but 1890 editions are not readily available.

¹⁰¹ Robert E. Bonner, *Colors and Blood: Flag Passions of the Confederate South* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004), 7. Bonner focuses more on their advocacy for the Union Stars and Stripes flag, but condemnation of the Confederate Southern Cross worked in conjunction with this aim.

identity, the Constitution of the United States of America. If the Confederate flag was perceived by these newspapers as treasonous, it was treasonous against the very principles that defined who was and was not an American citizen according to the law of the land, including African-Americans after the establishment of the Thirteenth, Fourteenth, and Fifteenth Amendments to the U.S. Constitution.¹⁰² In the aftermath of Reconstruction efforts in the South, a powerful Southern white constituency endangered these rights when ex-Confederates were allowed once again to run for office. In the reprinted oration of John J. Ingalls, the Kansas senator indicted the recently honored Lee for violating his oath to the union and claimed

Those who profess to have accepted the results of the war in good faith, who profess that they have furled the flag of treason and rebellion forever, who profess that they came back under the Constitution and laws of the United States with honor and patriotism, choose this occasion of all other anniversaries in the 365 days in the year, with every augmentation of insolence which they should copy, a Confederate flag is placed in the hand—the bronze hand—of the statue of Washington!¹⁰³

This was in response to an incident printed in the *New York Times* report of the unveiling, in which a “venturesome boy climbed the Washington Monument in the Capitol Square and placed a Confederate flag in the hands of the Father of His Country.”¹⁰⁴ The *New*

¹⁰² U.S. Constitution, amend. 13, 14, 15. The Thirteenth Amendment abolished slavery in 1865; the Fourteenth Amendment granted the rights of citizenship and equal protection under the law to all persons born or naturalized in the United States, including previously enslaved persons, in 1866; the Fifteenth Amendment prohibited the denial of a right to vote according to race, color, or previous condition of servitude in 1869. All were passed and ratified during the Reconstruction Era following the end of the Civil War.

¹⁰³ “Decoration Day, Senator Ingall’s Great Oration. Rebel Flags at Richmond. The North Discountenances the Display. The Feeling in Dixie,” *The Richmond Planet*, June 7, 1890, Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers (Washington, D.C.: Library of Congress), <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn84025841/1890-06-07/ed-1/seq-3/>.

¹⁰⁴ “The Lee Statue Unveiled: Thousands of Veterans Honor His Memory. A Great Day for the City of Richmond—Tributes Paid to the Confederate Commander’s Worth,” *The New York Times*, May 30, 1890, ProQuest Historical Newspapers.

York Times author commended the perpetrator for his daring climb, but the incident was not further addressed despite the political potency and salient symbolism of the act. *The Richmond Dispatch* reported the incident as well, where three anonymous young men were credited for the act. The reporter added, “There it will probably float as a reminder of the 29th until some strong wind blows it away,” indicating that there were no immediate calls for the flag to be removed.¹⁰⁵ If anything, the Confederate flag in the hands of President George Washington was treated by the local mainstream newspaper as amusing and commemorative of the day’s festivities. However, the reprinted speech in *The Richmond Planet* stands as testimony to an opposing view held not only by Senator Ingalls, but by the local African-American press as well.

Mitchell reprinted most of these remarks opposing the Confederate celebrations and the Stars and Bars without comment, with one notable exception. The *Washington Bee* reported in polemic,

The surprising thing in the unveiling of the Lee monument at Richmond, Virginia, was the colored militia, making application to participate in the ceremonies. When will the Negroes learn sense? The idea of intelligent colored men making application to men to participate in a demonstration that was in honor of a man who attempted by force of arms to destroy a republic and perpetuate slavery. It is a most damnable outrage on civilization; it is a mockery to the memory of those many thousand Union heroes that fell in defense of liberty. Every Negro that participated in those ceremonies ought to have a rope around his neck and swung to the tail of the horse upon which the dead ex-Confederate is mounted.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁵ “A Confederate Flag on the Washington Monument,” *The Richmond Dispatch*, May 30, 1890, *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers* (Washington, D.C.: Library of Congress), <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn85038614/1890-05-30/ed-1/seq-2/>.

¹⁰⁶ Untitled, *The Richmond Planet*, June 14, 1890, *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers* (Washington, D.C.: Library of Congress), <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn84025841/1890-06-14/ed-1/seq-2/>.

Rather than omit the *Washington Bee* report from the June 14th, 1890 edition of *The Richmond Planet*, Mitchell corrected the anonymous author,

Our contemporary is mistaken. No such application was made and no Negro militia companies participated in the ceremonies. We trust that the correction will be made and justices done the Afro-American militia of the Old Dominion.¹⁰⁷

Mitchell's decision to respond to the *Washington Bee* provides evidence of the role of African-Americans in the ceremonies. While the *New York Times* report suggests there were African-Americans in attendance, Mitchell clarifies the record in order to prevent the implication that African-American Union veterans supported the Lee Monument and/or Confederate commemorative celebrations. One imagines it was also crucial for Mitchell to correct the *Washington Bee* as an anti-lynching activist. Readers of the *Washington Bee* may not have seriously considered the suggestion of lynching African-American militias in attendance, but it was a severe attack in light of Mitchell's ongoing efforts to prevent lynching in the state of Virginia.¹⁰⁸

When Azoulay proposed a consideration of citizenship based on a "form of being together, a form of sharing a world with others," rather than accepting a definition of citizenship formed by governing powers that distinguish a citizen as one granted legal status by a sovereign state, it was in order to counteract what she called "constituent violence."¹⁰⁹ Constituent violence takes more than one form, but one way in which it is

¹⁰⁷ Untitled, *The Richmond Planet*, June 7, 1890, *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers* (Washington, D.C.: Library of Congress), <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn84025841/1890-06-14/ed-1/seq-2/>.

¹⁰⁸ Library of Virginia, "Lynch Law Must Go!" *Born in the Wake of Freedom*, online exhibition, accessed February 7, 2019, <http://www.lva.virginia.gov/exhibits/mitchell/lynch1.htm>. This online exhibition provides a general overview of Mitchell's anti-lynching activism. The *Richmond Planet* would print a tally of lynching victims in every edition under Mitchell's direction.

¹⁰⁹ Azoulay, "Potential History," 556-557.

enacted through categorization of individuals as citizens and non-citizens. Azoulay's reconsideration of the definition of citizenship is crucial in this history of a time and place "when the meaning, boundaries, and distribution of citizenship were very much at stake."¹¹⁰ Azoulay applies her concept of citizenship to the history of the foundation of Israel and the expulsion of Palestinians, but it is also applicable to the Jim Crow era and the rise of the New South. The constitutional amendments that guaranteed citizenship to African-Americans were challenged repeatedly in Richmond. At the same time, the New South attempted to balance economic growth with select antebellum values that continued to celebrate the Confederacy and perpetuate a Lost Cause mythology. Nowhere in the visual culture of Monument Avenue is the debate over citizenship clearer than in the entwined flags of the United States and the Confederacy, and opposition towards the latter from the African-American press. The Confederate flag represented an army that sought to maintain slavery, an institution that withheld the designation and benefits of legal citizenship to millions of African-Americans. Attempts to normalize the presence of the Confederate flag alongside the flag of the United States of America in Richmond were a form of constituent violence through their suggestion that the values embodied by both symbols were not antithetical, or that they could exist alongside one another. In fact, the values embodied by the Confederate flag did not support the rights of citizenship for African-Americans. The alliance between the flag of the oppressor and the flag of the sovereign state is a threat to the very notion of citizenship because it overlooks the disparity in the two entities' notions of who is and is not a citizen to the detriment of the nation's African-Americans.

¹¹⁰ Azoulay, "Potential History," 557.

Photographing African-Americans at Confederate Reunions

Confederate commemorative celebrations were not limited to the unveiling of monuments in Richmond, Virginia. They also occurred on Decoration Day (later known as Memorial Day) and Lee Day on January 18th (later known as Lee-Jackson Day, it is still a legal state holiday in the state of Virginia). Photographs by a local photographer represent two occasions of Confederate celebrations in the Cook Collection at the Valentine Museum of Richmond, Virginia. In truth, there are hundreds if not thousands of photographs from Confederate celebrations and reunions in Richmond from 1890 to the present. However, the photographs from May 30, 1907 and June 22, 1922 are exceptional. They are blurry and rarely if ever published, but they were clearly important to their creator as indicated by the inscriptions included on the backs of the photographs.

Along with several photographs of crowds outside Hollywood Memorial Cemetery in 1907 that include several figures of African-American women in the periphery, there is one photo of an African-American man at the head of a carriage that contains four white women and is accompanied by one elderly white man at its side. [Figure 3] Although the photograph was taken on Franklin Street, it was part of a parade that culminated in the unveiling of the J.E.B. Stuart Monument on Monument Avenue.¹¹¹ The photograph of a domestic service worker in the parade highlights how presence can imply consent when not contextualized within the obligations of labor. It is unlikely we will ever know the driver's name, and it is much less likely there is a record of his support of, or opposition toward Confederate commemoration. The myth of African-

¹¹¹ "Reunion Program for First Day," *The Times Dispatch*, May 30, 1907, Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers (Washington, D.C.: Library of Congress), <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn85038615/1907-05-30/ed-1/seq-1/>.

American support for the Confederacy is not limited to Early's introduction of Benjamin and Pleasant Saunders in 1890, or even the presence of African-Americans in photographs of Confederate commemorative events. It can also be traced to the myth of the African-American Confederate soldier that was propagated through photographs after the Civil War, as Kevin Levin outlines in his upcoming book *Searching for Black Confederate Soldiers: The Civil War's Most Persistent Myth*.¹¹² According to Levin,

Masters assumed their slaves were loyal to them and to the Confederate cause, which can be seen in their letters and diaries as well as in the photographs taken with uniformed slaves.¹¹³

These photographs originated before the close of the war, but they served a major role in Confederate and neo-Confederate arguments that ex-slaves supported the Confederate cause, and that the war was not fought over slavery. Levin presents as evidence of this Lost Cause myth-building the accounts of camp slaves by Confederate veterans, but stresses that the myth of the African-American Confederate soldier would not appear until much later. Instead, these early post-war accounts stressed "black loyalty to their masters and the natural order that placed whites at the top of the political and social hierarchy."¹¹⁴ The presence of an African-American coachman in the 1907 photograph communicates this as well: the photographer included him in the photographic collection of the parade celebrating the Confederacy, but notably in a labor position.¹¹⁵

¹¹² Kevin Levin, "Searching for the Black Confederate Soldiers: The Civil War's Most Persistent Myth," *Civil War Memory*, accessed February 7, 2019: <http://cwmemory.com/searching-for-black-Confederate-soldiers-the-civil-wars-most-persistent-myth/>.

¹¹³ Levin, "Searching for the Black Confederate Soldiers."

¹¹⁴ Levin, "Searching for the Black Confederate Soldiers."

¹¹⁵ The connotations surrounding labor are historically contingent here, as I believe Barthes would argue: One can surmise to what degree an African-American coachman of the era would be free to excuse himself from the parade or express his opposition to it

The myth of African-American support for the Confederacy is evident again in a series of photographs from the June 22, 1922 reunion of the United Confederate Veterans in Richmond. [Figure 16-18] The photographer captured these scenes in order to depict African-Americans participating in Confederate commemorative celebrations. The depicted individuals are anonymous, but descriptions provided on the back as well as their forward-facing gaze into the camera suggest that the images are not candid and that the photographer spoke to them before or after the photographs were taken.

The word ‘follow’ appears in each description of the images: the first photograph [Figure 16] depicts a “faithful follower,” and the men in the other two photographs [Fig 17-18] were said to have “followed” their masters into war.¹¹⁶ The “omnipresence of categories shaped by political regimes... as a prism through which the various events are discussed,” is another form of constituent violence that Azoulay saw functioning within institutional archives, particularly in regards to labels such as “refugees, occupied, collaborators, citizens, Illegal aliens, and others.”¹¹⁷ The persistence of the word ‘follow’ in these photographs functions in a similar way, as to claim these men were followers undermines the coercion of slavery that likely compelled such an action, and when combined with their image as part of a collection depicting Confederate celebrations, implies willing consent. The word ‘follow’ acts as a linguistic anchorage as defined by Barthes, in order to control the use of the message: it is a signifier alongside the image of the men themselves placed in the context of a Confederate celebration, that reference a

based on the social and labor conditions for African-Americans employed by white Southern families at the time, but it is not made explicit by the photograph or its caption.

¹¹⁶ The Valentine Museum, verso of museum objects V.45.15.1110, V.45.15.1116, and V.45.15.1106, originally taken on June 22, 1922, accessed June 15, 2018.

¹¹⁷ Azoulay, “Potential History,” 549.



Figure 16: "A faithful follower of his master and General Robt. E. Lee. Confederate Reunion Richmond, Va. June 22nd 1922. A Good Old Man," 1922. The Valentine Museum.



Figure 17: "Old Camp Cook or body servant who followed his master in Civil War. Capitol Square Richmond, Va. Confederate Reunion June 22nd 1922." 1922. The Valentine Museum.



Figure 18: "Old Colored men who followed their masters in the Civil War. Confederate Reunion Richmond June 22nd 1922. The one standing is from Mississippi. He has a chicken under his arm. He said he was 102 years old and could touch his toes with his hands bending forward standing. His wife was only 50 she said." 1922. The Valentine Museum.

common signified in the previously enslaved African-American man. This same signified man exists in Jubal Early's comment on Benjamin and Pleasant Saunders, and he exists for a simple reason: "Connotation drawn from knowledge is always a reassuring force—man likes signs and likes them clear."¹²⁰ The signifier of the follower, the subservient and loyal body servant, or the African-American fundraiser for the Lee Monument in Terry, Mississippi, once embodied by the power of the press or the photograph provides institutional support for the argument that Confederate commemoration and the Monument Avenue project were not indebted to notions of white nationalism (in spite of evidence to the contrary, such as the views of Jubal Early, the aims of the Confederacy, and contemporaneous efforts to limit African-American upward mobility, segregate residential neighborhoods, and disenfranchise African-Americans).

The first photograph of the "faithful follower" is staged with a solitary figure centered against a low wall.¹²¹ The solitary figure is at first remarkable because the photographer captured his image alone within the context of a reunion, complete with parades, parties, and thousands of people in the streets. Unlike the photograph of the "Camp Cook", white men do not accompany him, and unlike the "Old Colored men" he is not pictured alongside other African-American attendees of the reunion.¹²² Despite allegedly being a "faithful follower of his master," the ex-slaveholder is not present in the image.¹²³ By 1922, it is possible that the ex-slaveholder was deceased, which would make

¹²⁰ Barthes, "The Photographic Message," 208.

¹²¹ The Valentine Museum, verso of museum object V.45.15.1110, originally photographed on June 22, 1922, accessed June 15, 2018.

¹²² The Valentine Museum, verso of museum objects V.45.15.1110, V.45.15.1116, and V.45.15.1106, originally photographed on June 22, 1922, accessed June 15, 2018.

¹²³ The Valentine Museum, verso of museum object V.45.15.1110, originally photographed on June 22, 1922, accessed June 15, 2018.

the unnamed individual's decision to participate in the reunion even more remarkable for an embedded photographer on the scene. However, it was not remarkable enough to include the subject's name. Neither were the other African-American participants names noteworthy for the photographer in their description of the photographs, despite being singular in terms of recognition by the photographer amidst the day's festivities.

The objects pinned to the jacket of the "faithful follower" are somewhat unremarkable in comparison to other photographs of individuals at the reunion that day.¹²⁴ The Valentine Museum and the American Civil War Museum in Richmond, Virginia are both replete with small memorabilia from Confederate reunions and monument unveilings that were intended for pinning onto jackets; additionally, the reunion organizers sold tickets and identification certificates for the day's events.¹²⁵ When comparing the figures within the photograph of the "Old Camp Cook," the declared subject of the image has a slip of paper attached to his lapel, whereas the other white figures are varied: the men to his immediate left and right wear a ribbons on their lapels, but the figures to the far left and right do not.¹²⁶ While tickets, identification certificates and badges were clearly issued for the event, it is less clear if the reunion organizers required them on the lapels of attendees for admission.¹²⁷ The visibility of the

¹²⁴ The Valentine Museum, verso of museum object V.45.15.1110, originally photographed on June 22, 1922, accessed June 15, 2018.

¹²⁵ "5,000 Veterans At Richmond Reunion," *Highland Recorder*, Monterey, Virginia, June 2, 1922. *Virginia Chronicle*, Library of Virginia, accessed February 12, 2019, <https://viriniachronicle.com/cgi-bin/virginia?a=d&d=HR19220602.2.6&e=-----en-20--1--txt-txIN----->

¹²⁶ The Valentine Museum, verso of museum object V.45.15.1106, originally photographed on June 22, 1922, accessed June 15, 2018.

¹²⁷ "Will Meet Heroes At Trains As They Set Foot In City," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, June 18, 1922, *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers* (Washington, D.C.:

ephemera on the lapels of the African-American figures in the 1922 photographs could have indicated belonging within the crowd not only to the viewer of the photographs, but to the white Confederate veterans in attendance that day well.

The viewers of these photographs are invited to accept the inscriptions as valid in part due to their proximity to the photograph, but to scrutinize their validity may be more productive. Barthes believed the caption of the press photograph was “‘innocented’ through the photograph’s denotation,” and that due to its proximity in comparison to the headline or the body text, “appears to duplicate the image, that is, to be included in its denotation.”¹²⁸ This is misleading according to Barthes, because language cannot help but to introduce connotations.¹²⁹ The caption author wrote directly on the backs of these photographs; in such proximity, the text gains the reader’s trust in terms of validity. An investigation of the word ‘follow’ indicates that these inscriptions are not objective, but instead reiterate misleading connotations of African-American support for Confederate commemoration.

Kevin Levin suggested African-American men fulfilled the myth of the “loyal camp slave” through their participation in Confederate veterans’ reunions, but also questions their agency in the choice to participate “given the continued power of white landowners over their black employees.”¹³⁰ While it is unknown if the old men in the automobile were compelled to attend by their employers--especially given their old age

Library of Congress), <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83045389/1922-06-18/ed-1/seq-1/>.

¹²⁸ Barthes, “The Photographic Message,” 205-206.

¹²⁹ Barthes, “The Photographic Message,” 206.

¹³⁰ Kevin M. Levin, “The ‘Loyal Slave’ Photo That Explains the Northam Scandal,” *The Atlantic*, published and accessed February 12, 2019, <https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2019/02/ralph-northam-and-myth-loyal-slave/582619/>.

and the increasing likelihood that the old ‘masters’ were deceased—they do seem to fit within a larger trend of lending Confederate reunions the appearance of African-American support. This extends from the early photographs of enslaved persons alongside slaveholders during the Civil War [Figure 19] through the reports like the one discussed in the *New York Times*, and within photographs of monument construction and Confederate commemorations in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Conclusion

The photographs included in this study make a visual argument on behalf of their white creators and owners, appropriating the visibility of African-Americans in the creation of the Lee Monument and at Confederate commemorative ceremonies to support a narrative of consent, inclusivity, and shared celebration. In reality the layout of the avenue hid African-American laborers, and the city government undertook extensive efforts to suppress the African-American constituency’s means of dissent, representation, and upward mobility.

Ariella Azoulay’s civil contract becomes inescapable as we view these photographs today. Did the maids in the median turn their back to avoid the lens’s gaze, were they not allowing the camera to dictate their movement at all, or were they completely unaware of the camera’s presence? Did the African-American men photographed at the 1922 reunion want their picture taken, as they gaze and in some cases smile at the viewer? More importantly, were any of the subjects able to express consent or a lack thereof safely and freely, especially those in labor positions? Azoulay claims that in the process of archiving photographs wherein political labels are applied to the subjects,



Figure 19: “Sergeant A.M. Chandler of the 44th Mississippi Infantry Regiment, Co.F., and Silas Chandler, his family slave, with Bowie knives, revolvers, pepper-box, shotgun, and canteen.” Library of Congress. Levin extensively discusses this image in his upcoming book *Searching for the Black Confederate Soldiers: The Civil War’s Most Persistent Myth*. Some Civil War enthusiasts use this photograph to support the argument that there were African-American Confederate soldiers.

We are invited to repeat these categories as if they designate what is in the photograph... These kinds of political categories that we automatically project onto a photograph's subject reveal how easy it is to be complicit in sovereign violence through photography.¹³¹

One political category was literally written onto the image, in the case of the 1922 followers.¹³² To follow implies the acceptance of leadership, which in the aftermath of the Civil War becomes a problematic notion when discussing the forced labor and enslavement of African-Americans. If the spectator of the 1922 photographs accepts the captions as objective descriptions of the photograph, they are accepting the “follow” label applied to the photographed persons as objective as well. By interrogating the objectivity of the captions and questioning the context surrounding the photographic act, one can view these photographs as politically charged artifacts that supported a Lost Cause narrative brewing in Richmond and the American South at large between 1890 and 1930.

While Mitchell and the *Richmond Planet* covered the 1890 unveiling of the Lee Monument over several editions, mentions of Confederate reunions and unveiling are scarce in the publication over the next forty years, even more scarce than photographs of African-Americans at these celebrations. At the same time, there were two highly notable African-American photographers in Richmond, George Brown and James Conway Farley, who extensively documented their community.¹³³ Neither seemed to have taken photographs of African-American men and women participating in the Confederate reunions; what remains of their credited work is mostly studio portraiture (which notably often involves negotiation and consent between the photographed person and the

¹³¹ Azoulay and Thompson, “Photography and Its Citizens,” 54.

¹³² The Valentine Museum, verso of museum objects V.45.15.1110, V.45.15.1116, and V.45.15.1106, originally photographed on June 22, 1922, accessed June 15, 2018.

¹³³ Samantha Willis, “Reflections of the Past,” *Richmondmag*, updated October 4, 2018, <https://richmondmagazine.com/news/richmond-history/reflections-of-the-past/>.

photographer, since it is a commissioned work). In her article on “white sight” or visual illiteracy complicit in the perpetuation of racism, Sarah Blackwood stresses how the textual narratives written by African-Americans in response to visual culture are an essential component of the African-American visual culture archive when there was a “high cost of entry for participation” in control over their visual depiction.¹³⁴ Although the cost and availability of commissioned photography for African-Americans had improved by the 1890s and thereafter, editorials in African-American press surrounding the scenes at Richmond during the Lee Monument unveiling in 1890 still attest to the power of the press and the potency of the image in popular narratives of historic events. From the refutation of an African-American regiment allegedly partaking in the Lee Monument Unveiling, to the proliferation of Confederate flags on the city’s streets, to the spectacle of unveiling proceedings, the responses of the African-American press provide a counter-narrative to accounts by white owned and operated newspapers in the North and South, and to photographs in which the consent and representation of African-Americans is, at best, questionable.

Three Richmond resources contributed photographs to this study, and are all now working together to recontextualize Monument Avenue.¹³⁵ The Valentine Museum, the Virginia Museum of History and Culture, and the American Civil War Museum each have controversial histories that served the myth of the Lost Cause, similar to Monument

¹³⁴ Sarah Blackwood, “‘Making Good Use of Our Eyes’: Nineteenth-Century African-Americans Write Visual Culture,” *MELUS* 39, no. 2 *Visual Culture and Race* (Summer 2014), 44.

¹³⁵ “Online Exhibits,” *On Monument Avenue*, accessed March 13, 2019, . Hosted by the American Civil War Museum, the website features objects from the American Civil War Museum, the Library of Virginia, The Valentine, and the Virginia Museum of History and Culture.”

Avenue. In 1898, Edward Valentine, a sculptor of Confederate statuary, first opened the Valentine Museum to the public.¹³⁶ Mann S. Valentine and Edward Valentine established the Museum in the 1812 Wickham House, which now frankly discusses the lives of its enslaved occupants in tours, interactive exhibitions, and the short film *Shared Spaces, Separate Stories*.¹³⁷ Founded in 1831, the founding organization of the Virginia Museum of History and Culture, the Virginia Historical Society, invested its entire endowment in Confederate bonds during the Civil War, and came to occupy the former wartime home of Robert E. Lee in Richmond by 1893.¹³⁸ In 1946, the society acquired a building known as the Battle Abbey, commissioned by the Confederate Memorial Association to honor the Confederate dead in 1912.¹³⁹ Murals honoring the branches of the Confederate military, which the Confederate Memorial Association commissioned from Charles Hoffbauer between 1913 and 1920, remain on display in the Battle Abbey.¹⁴⁰ Since 2018, the museum has rebranded itself, transitioning from “Virginia Historical Society” to “Virginia Museum of History and Culture” in order to “tell a more inclusive story for a

¹³⁶ “History & Mission,” The Valentine, accessed March 13, 2019, <https://thevalentine.org/about/history-mission/>. Valentine’s work includes the “Recumbent Lee” statue in Lexington, Virginia’s Lee Chapel, several busts of Confederate martyrs, and the Jefferson Davis statue on Monument Avenue. Gregg D. Kimball, *Southern City, Southern Place: A Cultural History of Antebellum Richmond* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2003), 256.

¹³⁷ “The 1812 Wickham House,” The Valentine, accessed March 13, 2019, <https://thevalentine.org/exhibition/the-1812-wickham-house/>.

¹³⁸ “Our History,” Virginia Museum of History and Culture, accessed March 13, 2019, <https://www.virginiahistory.org/about-us/our-history>.

¹³⁹ “Our History,” Virginia Museum of History and Culture, accessed March 13, 2019, <https://www.virginiahistory.org/about-us/our-history>.

¹⁴⁰ “The Memorial Military Murals by Charles Hoffbauer,” Virginia Museum of History and Culture, accessed March 13, 2019, <https://www.virginiahistory.org/exhibitions/memorial-military-murals-charles-hoffbauer>.

more inclusive audience.”¹⁴¹ In 1896, the Confederate Memorial Literary Society first established the Confederate Museum in the home of Confederate president Jefferson Davis. The Confederate Museum is now known as the American Civil War Museum, and under the direction of Christy Coleman, the museum has reshaped the narrative of its permanent exhibition to include the histories of antebellum free and enslaved African-Americans alongside Union and Confederate soldiers and civilians.¹⁴² The current work of these institutions indicates a common resolve to confront their controversial histories, which is further reflected in their projects revolving around Monument Avenue. The website On Monument Avenue, established by the American Civil War Museum, with artifacts from the Valentine Museum and the Virginia Museum of History and Culture, offers a document reader, two online exhibitions, a reading list, and a blog series, in order to facilitate “a conversation rooted in evidence-based history,” as the Confederate monuments continue to be debated.¹⁴³

Through the Monument Avenue Commission established by Mayor Levar Stoney in 2017, local institutions are working to recontextualize the monuments by engaging the public to decide what actions should be considered, or how an old story can be retold. This includes the aforementioned website “On Monument Avenue,” but the work really began with the meetings of the Monument Avenue Commission that sought public input

¹⁴¹ “Our History,” Virginia Museum of History and Culture, accessed March 14, 2019, <https://www.virginiahistory.org/about-us/our-history>.

¹⁴² The Valentine, “The White House of the Confederacy,” Our History, accessed March 13, 2019, <https://acwm.org/about-us/our-story/museum-white-house-confederacy>. “Our Mission,” The Valentine, accessed March 13, 2019, <https://acwm.org/about-us/our-mission>.

¹⁴³ “How Shall We Remember?” On Monument Avenue, accessed March 13, 2019, <https://onmonumentave.com/>.

from Richmond communities.¹⁴⁴ The Monument Avenue Commission expanded the opportunity for public input through their website, which allowed citizens to register their input and read an inventory of all other comments from October 2017 to May 2018.¹⁴⁵ Although the initial modes of citizen input may be seen as a vital aspect of the recontextualization by itself, the Monument Avenue Commission further issued ten recommendations on “how best to tell the real story of these monuments.”¹⁴⁶ The Commission divided these options between unidirectional messaging through videos, signage, and exhibitions, and discursive processes capable of generating new works and narratives.¹⁴⁷ These ideas are valuable and worthy of implementation, but none specifically address the history of African-Americans on Monument Avenue.

If Monument Avenue continues to be perceived as a historically white space, it not only overlooks the labor requisite to build and maintain it, but also a more pervasive legacy of power over the African-American population of Richmond. The narrative of segregation is easily told, but Monument Avenue was always more than that, from its hidden alleyways, back staircases and attic bedrooms, to its family photo albums, institutions of cultural memory, and a strange class of monumental overseers. When the history of Monument Avenue is reframed to include the lives and work of African-American laborers, it not only expands the scope of the avenue’s history, but also enriches the political history of Richmond and highlights gaps in official archives in regards to the

¹⁴⁴ Coleman, et. al., *2018 Monument Avenue Commission Report*, 12-18.

¹⁴⁵ “Citizen Input,” Monument Avenue Commission, accessed March 13, 2019, <https://www.monumentavenuecommission.org/input>. “View Recent Submissions,” Monument Avenue Commission, accessed March 13, 2019, <https://www.monumentavenuecommission.org/view-recent-submissions>.

¹⁴⁶ Coleman, et. al., *2018 Monument Avenue Commission Report*, 32-33.

¹⁴⁷ Coleman, et. al., *2018 Monument Avenue Commission Report*, 32-33.

African-American history of Richmond. A recontextualization of Monument Avenue through the photographic archive reflects that none of these histories are separate from one another.

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