"Young and Littlefield's Folly": Fundraising, Confederate Memorialization, and the Construction of the Jefferson Davis Monument in Fairview, Kentucky, 1907–1924

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By Joy M. Giguere

In the hamlet of Fairview, Kentucky, stands one of the nation's most imposing, yet obscure, monuments—a 351-foot tall, unreinforced concrete obelisk dedicated to the memory of Confederate president Jefferson Davis. Located in the middle of the Jefferson Davis State Historic Site, the monument's conception dates back to the September 1907 reunion of the famed Orphan Brigade, which had been the largest Confederate unit from Kentucky during the Civil War. At the meeting, Dr. C. C. Brown suggested creating an association that would purchase and preserve the Davis family homestead in Fairview. The nation was, at that time, engaged in apotheosizing Abraham Lincoln. Lincoln's birthplace, near Hodgenville, Kentucky, became a national park in 1916, and the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, D.C., was completed in 1922. Creating a park with a central memorial monument for Jefferson Davis would be Confederate Kentuckians' response to this phenomenon, and within a short period, several members of the Orphan Brigade formed the Jefferson Davis Home Association (JDHA) for the purpose of acquiring Davis's birthplace and turning it into a national park, similar to the Lincoln homestead.[1]

[1] Merrill D. Peterson, *Lincoln in American Memory* (New York, 1994), 177–82, 214–17;

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The Home Association, led by United Confederate Veterans (UCV) commander-in-chief and Louisville attorney General Bennett H. Young, believed the park would serve as a testament to the state's prominent status within the nation, having been the birthplace of *both* Civil War presidents. Explaining the JDHA's motives, Young declared to the national convention of the United Daughters of the Confederacy (UDC) in 1916, "This spirit does not come from the wish to have Mr. Lincoln honored less, but only from the desire to have Mr. Davis honored *more*." In Young's view, Fairview would become a southern mecca, like Richmond, where visitors could pay homage to the memory of the Lost Cause. Eventually completed at a cost of around $200,000, the *Kentucky New Era* happily reported, "The monument, tallest in the world, built of poured concrete and second only to the Washington monument of any kind, is the largest the south has yet raised to any of its heroes and its completion in seven years, despite many stoppages for various reasons, is said to be a record." The obelisk's completion in 1924 capped thirty years of intensive Confederate memorialization activities in Kentucky, but despite the reported enthusiasm of the ten thousand who attended the dedication ceremony—including the aged Union and Confederate veterans who arrived on the heels of the UCV reunion in Memphis—the monument would not have a lasting, transformative effect on the national consciousness, southern perceptions of Davis, or the significance of Fairview as a Lost Cause pilgrimage site. Following the monument's dedication, it largely disappeared from the national press and sank quickly into obscurity, known mostly to locals.[2]

"To Restore Davis Home," *Daily Ardmoreite* (Ardmore, Okla.), June 3, 1908. The Orphan Brigade was the nickname given to the First Kentucky Brigade (CSA). The 1907 reunion was held in Glasgow, Kentucky. The author would like to extend her thanks to David Turpie and the editorial staff at the *Register*, as well as the three anonymous reviewers for offering so much helpful insight and enthusiasm for the subject matter of this article. Further thanks also go to Nathan Pavalko, Jennifer Nesbitt, and Ben Proud for reading early drafts of the manuscript. The research for this article was completed, in part, through a Kentucky Historical Society fellowship, made possible through the KHS Foundation.

[2] *Speech of General Bennett H. Young at Dallas, Texas, November 10, 1916: To the Daughters of the Confederacy concerning a memorial to Jefferson Davis, at his birthplace, Fairview, Kentucky* (n.p., n.d.), 7. The speech was also published in *Confederate Veteran*, February 1917, p. 68

The scholarship on Civil War memory and memorialization activities is extensive, and while much has been written on the ways southern communities advanced the notion of the Lost Cause through monument-making activities, the Jefferson Davis Monument in Fairview remains conspicuously absent from these discussions.[3] Further, the historians who have examined post–Civil War monument-making have primarily focused on the meaning of such monuments to their communities.[4] Anne Marshall, who briefly explores the Jefferson Davis Monument in *Creating a Confederate Kentucky*, maintains that the obelisk, like other Confederate monuments in Kentucky, "represented the sort of history that spoke to grand possibilities lost in the

(first quotation); "Gigantic Obelisk Climax Monument Building in World," *Kentucky New Era* (Hopkinsville, Ky.), June 13, 1924 (second quotation).

[3] The historiography tends to divide between works that focus on the activities of veterans, particularly the United Confederate Veterans, and work on women's organizations, such as the Ladies' Memorial Associations and the United Daughters of the Confederacy. See Herman Hattaway, "Clio's Southern Soldiers: The United Confederate Veterans and History," *Louisiana History: The Journal of the Louisiana Historical Association* (hereinafter *LH*) 12 (Summer 1971): 213–42; Herman Hattaway, "The United Confederate Veterans in Louisiana," *LH* 16 (Winter 1975): 5–37; Charles Reagan Wilson, *Baptized in Blood: The Religion of the Lost Cause, 1865–1920* (Athens, Ga., 1980); Gaines M. Foster, *Ghosts of the Confederacy: Defeat, the Lost Cause, and the Emergence of the New South* (New York, 1987); Karen Cox, *Dixie's Daughters: The United Daughters of the Confederacy and the Preservation of Confederate Culture* (Gainesville, Fla., 2003); Cynthia Mills and Pamela H. Simpson, eds., *Monuments to the Lost Cause: Women, Art, and the Landscapes of Southern Memory* (Knoxville, Tenn., 2003); William A. Blair, *Cities of the Dead: Contesting the Memory of the Civil War in the South, 1865–1914* (Chapel Hill, N.C., 2003); Tom Vincent, "Evidence of Woman's Loyalty, Perseverance, and Fidelity: Confederate Soldiers' Monuments in North Carolina, 1865–1914," *North Carolina Historical Review* 83 (Jan. 2006): 61–90; Caroline E. Janney, *Burying the Dead but Not the Past: Ladies' Memorial Associations and the Lost Cause* (Chapel Hill, N.C., 2008).

[4] For example, see John J. Winberry, "'Lest We Forget': The Confederate Monument and the Southern Townscape," *Southeastern Geographer* 23 (Nov. 1983): 107–121; John R. Neff, *Honoring the Civil War Dead: Commemoration and the Problem of Reconciliation* (Lawrence, Kans., 2005), 1–4; Caroline E. Janney, *Remembering the Civil War: Reunion and the Limits of Reconciliation* (Chapel Hill, N.C., 2013), 134–35, 261–65. Among those who have addressed the Jefferson Davis Monument in Fairview and its cultural symbolism in Kentucky, see Tony Horwitz, *Confederates in the Attic: Dispatches from the Unfinished Civil War* (New York,1998), 100–101; Jack Glazier, *Been Coming through Some Hard Times: Race, History, and Memory in Western Kentucky* (Knoxville, Tenn., 2013), 171–76; Keith A. Erekson, "Lincoln and Davis: Three Visions of Public Commemoration in Kentucky," *Ohio Valley History* 8 (Summer 2008): 48–67; Anne E. Marshall, *Creating a Confederate Kentucky: The Lost Cause and Civil War Memory in a Border State* (Chapel Hill, N.C., 2010), 181–82.

name of defending a beautiful world of the past."[5] The importance of monuments and memorials as representations of shared public values and interpretations of past struggles cannot be overstated. However, historians have not yet examined the significance of fundraising efforts within the monument-making process and the degree to which such efforts shaped public perceptions of the monument projects or reflected the strength (or weakness) of a given memorial movement. Even those who have examined the struggles of monument committees to raise sufficient funds have generally treated such near-failures as part of a broader teleological narrative culminating in inevitable success—that is, the unveiling of a completed monument vested by its promoters with a symbolic message about collective identity to be handed down for posterity.[6]

Historians should regard a monument's completion as neither inevitable nor representative of the success of a broad cultural movement. Locals in the Hopkinsville area and regional Lost Cause advocates provided limited financial support for the Davis Monument during construction. Fundraising was a constant struggle for JDHA president Bennett Young, and a significant proportion of the money that went into the project ultimately came from a handful of wealthy individual donors. Historian Kirk Savage has argued that monument associations "achieved legitimacy only by manufacturing popular enthusiasm (and money)" for their projects, and that project sponsors labored to "sustain the fiction" that their endeavors reflected the general will. In his desire to push the Fairview project to completion, Bennett Young became a master of this kind of fiction. While publicly he argued that his appeals to build a gigantic obelisk "touched the pride and thrilled the hearts of the South," in reality the endeavor would have been doomed from the start without the financial support

[5] Marshall, *Creating a Confederate Kentucky*, 182.

[6] Cox, *Dixie's Daughters*, 56–60; David Currey, "The Virtuous Soldier: Constructing a Usable Confederate Past in Franklin, Tennessee," in Mills and Simpson, eds., *Monuments to the Lost Cause*, 140; Karen Cox, "The Confederate Monument at Arlington: A Token of Reconciliation," in ibid., 152; Vincent, "Evidence of Woman's Loyalty, Perseverance, and Fidelity," 82–83.

of millionaire Texas cattleman George Littlefield. By 1918, the situation had become so dire that, in a letter to Littlefield, who became the project's most significant financial contributor, Young lamented that it might be necessary to quit entirely, which would mean "the world will call this monument 'Young and Littlefield's Folly.'"[7]

The JDHA did not quit, but despite the *New Era*'s praise for the relative speed with which the obelisk was completed, the Jefferson Davis Monument—largest of all Confederate monuments during its time—should not be regarded as a success of the Lost Cause movement.[8] Rather, it is more accurate to consider the monument, and perhaps also the claims it made about southern identity, southern exceptionalism, and southern devotion to Jefferson Davis, a failure. This failure was due to chronology, location, and subject matter, all of which had a negative impact on public enthusiasm for the project and fundraising efforts.

Serious planning and fundraising for the monument began in 1916, seven years after the JDHA's acquisition of the Jefferson Davis birthplace property. Construction started in 1917, but America's entry into World War I broke the momentum for the project and significantly raised the cost for labor and materials. Moreover, Fairview may have been the Confederate president's birthplace, but it was by no means a center for tourism or a bustling metropolis. A hamlet in the southwestern part of the state, Fairview is ten miles from the nearest town, Hopkinsville, and sixty-nine miles from the nearest major metropolitan area, Nashville, Tennessee. Young hoped that the monument and homestead would transform Fairview into a Confederate pilgrimage site, but the location was too isolated for many people to

[7] Kirk Savage, *Standing Soldiers, Kneeling Slaves: Race, War, and Monument in Nineteenth-Century America* (Princeton, N.J., 1997), 6 (first quotation); Bennett H. Young, "The Jefferson Davis Memorial: The Great Obelisk That Will Mark the Birthplace of the President of the Confederacy," *Kentucky Magazine*, December 1917, p. 593 (second quotation); Bennett H. Young to George W. Littlefield, May 18, 1918, George Washington Littlefield Papers, Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, University of Texas, Austin (hereinafter Littlefield Papers, UT) (third quotation).

[8] The Jefferson Davis Monument remains the tallest freestanding Confederate monument, but in terms of sheer size/expansiveness, Stone Mountain (completed in 1972) is the largest.

be willing to make the journey, even with the addition of an auxiliary route of the Jefferson Davis Highway from Beauvoir, Mississippi, to Fairview. Finally, Jefferson Davis, as the focus of the project, did not generate the kind of southern enthusiasm as did other Confederate heroes like Robert E. Lee or Stonewall Jackson. Those who promoted the project did so on the grounds that the South needed to express its undying love for their much-abused former leader. The lackluster public response when asked for donations, however, reveals the transformations then occurring within the population of the New South. Members of the war generation, especially those who felt a connection with their embattled, yet defiant, leader, were rapidly dying off. Meanwhile the sons, daughters, and grandchildren who carried on the torch of southern heritage did so without much, if any, veneration for Davis. In these ways, the massive obelisk was a poorly located, expensive enterprise, one which expressed a sentiment that had become out of step with the times and the people.[9]

When the surviving members of Kentucky's Orphan Brigade met for their 1907 reunion and decided to create the JDHA, they selected former Confederate officer and postwar Kentucky governor Simon Bolivar Buckner as the first president of the organization. Already in his eighties, however, Buckner could not long manage the rigors of his office; the JDHA, thus, bestowed upon him the title of honorary chairman and elected Bennett H. Young president of the organization in 1909. As a member of John Hunt Morgan's cavalry, Young had earned no small amount of fame in Confederate circles for his exploits during the Civil War, most significantly as the leader of the Confederate raid on St. Albans, Vermont, in 1864. At only twenty-two, Young was one of the youngest Confederates not

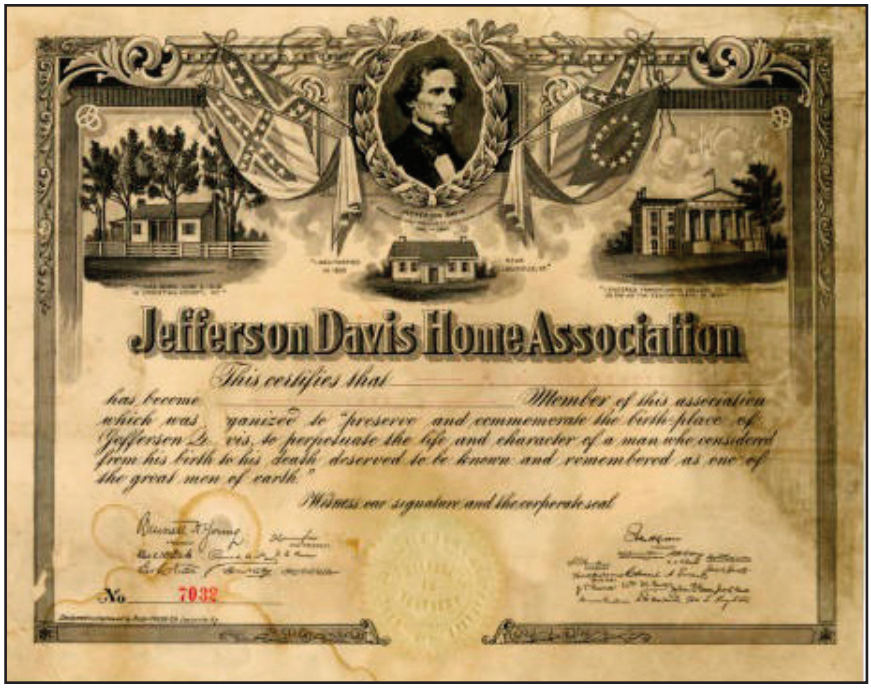
[9] Wilm K. Strawbridge examines the process of how, preceding and following Davis's death, Civil War–generation white southerners ultimately embraced their embattled leader, even with all of his faults, and that their dedication to the Confederate president was as much about irritating northerners as it was about genuine affection for Davis. See Strawbridge, "A Monument Better Than Marble: Jefferson Davis and the New South," *Journal of Mississippi History* 69 (Winter 2007): 325–47. Louisville is 178 miles northeast of Fairview. Bennett Young frequently traveled from Louisville to Fairview and Hopkinsville to deal with construction issues, drum up support from the locals, and observe progress on the site.

included in President Andrew Johnson's amnesty plan. He remained exiled in the United Kingdom until he was able to safely return to the United States in 1868. After his return, he soon became one of the most well-known and successful attorneys in Kentucky. He also became actively engaged in both state and national UCV activities. Sumner A. Cunningham, founder and editor of the *Confederate Veteran* magazine, served as vice president of the JDHA until his death in 1913, while Captain John H. Leathers, president of the Louisville National Banking Company, served as treasurer until his death in 1923. For these men, especially Young, the project became a labor of love, one they pursued as evidence of the South's undying devotion to Davis and the Lost Cause.[10]

Since the June 1907 dedication of the Jefferson Davis Monument in Richmond drew crowds estimated to range from eighty to two hundred thousand, members of the JDHA likely hoped to ride this wave of enthusiasm for remembering the Confederate president. The JDHA initially planned to purchase the property and erect a building in which to house "all the relics that can be secured pertaining to Jefferson Davis and his family. One room also will be devoted to biographical data of all Confederate soldiers and in others will be stored Confederate relics of every description." Even with these initial plans taking shape, no progress was made to secure purchase of the lands until 1909, when the JDHA began an aggressive subscription drive, which included printing JDHA membership certificates for subscribers and a promotional booklet to generate interest in the project, titled *Davis Memorial Park: The Established Mount Vernon of Kentucky*.[11]

[10] "The Mount Vernon of Kentucky," *Confederate Veteran*, July 1909, p. 327; Oscar Kinchen, *General Bennett H. Young: Confederate Raider and a Man of Many Adventures* (West Hanover, Mass., 1981), 41–92. For more on the St. Albans Raid, see Michelle Arnosky Sherburne, *The St. Albans Raid: Confederate Attack on Vermont* (Charleston, S.C., 2014).

[11] Richard Guy Wilson, "Monument Avenue, Richmond: A Unique American Boulevard," in Mills and Simpson, eds., *Monuments to the Lost Cause*, 105; "Jefferson Davis: Memorial at His Birthplace—Movement Takes Tangible Shape," *Daily Public Ledger* (Maysville, Ky.), October 14, 1907 (quotation). While no author or publisher information is indicated on the booklet itself, S. A. Cunningham wrote that he had been the originator of the title "Mount



Jefferson Davis Home Association membership certificate, undated. The text of the document says the JDHA was created "to perpetuate the life and character of a man who considered from his birth to his death deserved to be known and remembered as one of the great men of earth." *William H. McCalister JDHA Certificate, SC 756, Kentucky Historical Society Collections*.

Combining the efforts of the Kentucky chapters of the UDC and UCV—the latter at that time also under the leadership of Bennett Young—funds were raised toward the final purchase of eighteen acres for $7,500. As the JDHA had secured purchase-price options set to expire in April 1909, and subscription efforts were slow to come, Young ultimately loaned $5,000 of his own money in order to finalize the sale of the land. Young's willingness to cover the shortfall, so early in the process, suggested that the public could not easily be convinced to hand over money for a project dedicated to Jefferson

Vernon of Kentucky." This claim and the text of the booklet both appear in *Confederate Veteran*, July 1909, pp. 307, 326–27.

Davis. Young's loan also reveals that his commitment to maintaining the fiction that the JDHA's labors were a reflection of the general will was strong from the very beginning.[12]

The park was formally dedicated on June 3, 1909. Young was supposed to deliver the keynote address, but he was unable to attend the ceremony because of a pressing court case in Chicago. Colonel W. A. Milton, of Louisville, read Young's address in his stead, the entirety of which appeared in the July issue of *Confederate Veteran*. Showcasing his ability to appeal to former Unionists and Confederates, Young's address alternated between messages of reconciliation and Confederate nationalism.[13] Such contradictions often marked the rhetoric at Confederate monument dedications and Memorial Day celebrations.[14] To complicate matters further, Kentucky's postwar identity was increasingly Confederate despite the reality that the majority of soldiers from the Bluegrass State had fought in the Union army. As Anne E. Marshall and Jacob F. Lee have argued, resentment over the Emancipation Proclamation and Thirteenth Amendment led most white Kentuckians to embrace a Confederate identity for their state by the conclusion of the war.[15] The celebration of Confederate Memorial Day and erection of monuments to the Lost Cause had become so commonplace that the Home Association's efforts to purchase the Davis Homestead and transform the site into a Confederate shrine seemingly met with no opposition. Initially a homegrown endeavor—the JDHA's leadership resided mainly in Kentucky—the

[12] "Jefferson Davis's Birthplace Secure," *Confederate Veteran*, May 1909, p. 198; *Hopkinsville Kentuckian*, February 16, 1909; "Birthplace of Davis, President of Confederacy, Sought By Memorial Association," *Daily Public Ledger,* February 18, 1909; "Mr. Davis' Birthplace: President's First Home Will Be Site of Memorial," *Hopkinsville Kentuckian*, February 23, 1909; "Plan Memorial Hall: Directors of Jeff Davis Home Meet at Louisville," *Hickman* (Ky.) *Courier*, April 29, 1909.

[13] "Address of Gen. Bennett H. Young, of Louisville," *Confederate Veteran*, July 1909, pp. 321–23. For coverage of the dedication day events, see also "Fairview the Mecca of Davis Followers," *Hopkinsville Kentuckian*, June 3, 1909.

[14] For an excellent analysis of how such contradictory themes comingled in orations across the South, see Blair, *Cities of the Dead*, 64–65, 75–76, 105–7, 118–19.

[15] Marshall, *Creating a Confederate Kentucky*; Jacob F. Lee, "Unionism, Emancipation, and the Origins of Kentucky's Confederate Identity," *Register of the Kentucky Historical Society* 111 (Spring 2013): 199–233.

Davis Homestead was a locally promoted counterpoint to the federally funded Lincoln birthplace and a reminder of continued resistance among some southerners to true national reconciliation.[16] Bringing Bennett Young's vision for the park to fruition, however, would require a massive outlay of funds, which led him to venture outside the commonwealth to hunt for donors.

With a plan in place at the time of the park's dedication "to raise $30,000 more with which to build a memorial temple," subscription efforts continued over the next few years. During those years, the JDHA was able to pay Young back for his initial loan and proceed with building a fence to enclose the land and make other improvements. By mid-1915, the Home Association had spent $17,000 to, as Young described it, "finish it up"—that is, put the landscaping of the park in order to make it ready for the construction of a monument or memorial building. Around this time Young became acquainted—and in short order, intimate friends—with George W. Littlefield of Austin, Texas. A multimillionaire cattleman, Littlefield was the wealthiest living ex-Confederate and a man who passionately supported Confederate memorialization efforts. Young and Littlefield's friendship not only shaped the plans for the obelisk at Fairview, but Littlefield became, in a manner of speaking, Young's father confessor.[17]

From 1916 until his death in early 1919, Young wrote at least eighty-one letters to Littlefield, each related to the monument proj-

[16] As of 1917, fifteen men comprised the officers and directors of the JDHA. Of these, ten hailed from Louisville, including Bennett Young (president), John H. Leathers (treasurer), and Thomas D. Osborn (secretary). Edmond Haines (E. H.) Taylor Jr. (one of three vice presidents) was from Frankfort. Although the chairman of the Board of Directors, George W. Littlefield, was from Austin, Texas, all seven of the remaining board members were from Louisville. Those also not from Kentucky included Julian S. Carr of Durham, North Carolina (vice president); Virgil Young (V. Y.) Cook of Batesville, Arkansas (vice president); and John A. Webb of Jackson, Mississippi (chairman, advisory board). See Bennett H. Young, "The Jefferson Davis Memorial: The Great Obelisk That Will Mark the Birthplace of the President of the Confederacy," *Kentucky Magazine*, December 1917, p. 596.

[17] "Memorial Park Dedicated to Leader of Lost Cause," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, June 4, 1909 (first quotation); Bennett H. Young to George W. Littlefield, June 10, 1915, Littlefield Papers, UT (second quotation); David B. Gracy II, "George Washington Littlefield: Portrait of a Cattleman," *Southwestern Historical Quarterly* 68 (Oct. 1964): 237–58. Littlefield was also a major financial contributor to and member of the Board of Regents at the University of Texas.

ect. Much of the correspondence revealed Young's intimate thoughts and anxieties as he hoped to complete the obelisk before either he or Littlefield died. More important, they reveal Young's true motivations for pursuing the project. The obelisk had as much to do with glorifying himself and his wealthy backers as it did with honoring the memory of Davis or celebrating the people of the South. Further, Young's letters reveal that his own sense of masculinity intermingled with the scope of the project as the largest southern monument, and that its successful completion would provide the ultimate validation for his and other aging Confederate veterans' dedication to the Confederacy. Indeed, writing to Littlefield in October 1916, as the design for the monument was taking shape, Young suggested a 351-foot obelisk "would make it the greatest thing in America but the Washington Monument, and how you and I could smite ourselves on the breast and say, 'We are the men who did it.'" Young confided such sentiments only to Littlefield. His messages to the public were a complex verbal tapestry about southern love for the Confederacy, Jefferson Davis's dignity in defeat and suffering for his people, and refuting those who argued that secession was wrong.[18]

Young was a flatterer, especially in private correspondence, and he employed compliments regularly to secure both Littlefield's friendship and his financial involvement with the Home Association. Although he tried to entice Littlefield to the 1916 UCV reunion by declaring, "I would rather see you at Birmingham than any living man," Young was ultimately disappointed when the cattleman did not show. He was, however, successful in convincing his new friend to travel to Kentucky to visit Jefferson Davis Park and discuss plans for a monument. The September visit included Young's longtime friend, businessman Julian S. Carr, who also happened to be the wealthiest man in North Carolina. Local newspapers reported on the gathering with excitement. The *Hopkinsville Kentuckian* noted that Young

[18] Bennett H. Young to George W. Littlefield, October 19, 1916, Littlefield Papers, UT (quotation); *Speech of General Bennett H. Young at Dallas, Texas, November 10, 1916*; Young, "The Jefferson Davis Memorial," 590–97.

"expected to get enough [money] from them [Littlefield and Carr] to put up the memorial monument and improve the grounds" and anticipated completion of such a project in time for a June 3, 1917, dedication. By the end of their tour, which included a reception for the men held by the local chapter of the UDC and a "motor trip" on a short stretch of the newly designated Jefferson Davis Highway between Elkton and Russellville, Littlefield committed to support the monument construction. The *Hopkinsville Kentuckian*, in response to the news, reported that given Littlefield's purported $15 million fortune, "whatever plans he may form will be carried out regardless of the expense." The newspaper gave the impression that whatever monument project the Home Association undertook would primarily be paid for by Carr and Littlefield, with the latter as the principal financial backer of the project. Thus, the public would be able to enjoy the spectacle of a massive monument being constructed without having to care enough to contribute to the cost.[19]

Littlefield's presence in Fairview and neighboring Hopkinsville had a profound effect on generating local excitement about the park. While Young had earlier complained to Littlefield about his fundraising issues, he reported in September 1916, "I went to Lexington on Thursday to the meeting of the UDC. They were thrilled and enthused and started out to raise $1,000 for the Jeff Davis Memorial. Your influence has been contagious, your example has stirred the hearts and minds of the people of Kentucky, and they have never been so stirred up before on this subject." As Young had confided to Littlefield prior to his visit, "I may say to you what I would not say outside—that Mr. Davis was never popular in the South and it was difficult to excite and evoke enthusiasm in regard to things which affect him." Littlefield had generated excitement where Jefferson Davis could not, and despite the cattleman's influence, the lack of enthusiasm for the Confederate president would remain an ongoing struggle for Young.

[19] Bennett H. Young to George W. Littlefield, March 13, 1916, Littlefield Papers, UT (first quotation); "Jefferson Davis Park," *Hopkinsville Kentuckian*, September 16, 1916 (second quotation); "Memorial Is Assured," *Hopkinsville Kentuckian*, September 19, 1916; "Young Wants Memorial for Jefferson Davis," *Hartford* (Ky.) *Herald*, September 27, 1916 (third quotation).

He recognized that the public's interest in his wealthy friend was an opportunity to compensate for the lack of excitement for Davis, and so he took every occasion to encourage Littlefield to appear in public to promote the project.[20]

With the momentum generated by Littlefield's appearance in Kentucky, Young reached out to Louisville civil engineer Samuel F. Crecelius for his thoughts on the design of the proposed monument. In early October, Crecelius wrote to Young and suggested the construction of an obelisk, as it had historically been known as "the most imposing form of memorial." The obelisk had been a popular monumental form in the United States since it was first introduced as part of the Egyptian Revival during the early nineteenth century. Obelisks were commonly used in American cemeteries by the 1830s and 1840s to mark individual and family burial plots, but the form found its most "monumental" expression in the large-scale projects that celebrated the battles and heroes of the American Revolution. The obelisk was a popular expression of the burgeoning identity of the young republic, especially as it was connected to the civilizations of antiquity. Americans regarded Egyptian architecture as the most sturdy and timeless, not to mention the most fit for commemoration of the dead. The monument committees that selected obelisks intended the lofty structures to stand in silent perpetuity, conveying the timelessness of the heroism and principles of American patriots. By the time Young began to conceptualize the construction of a memorial at the Davis Homestead, there were eight significant monumental obelisks scattered around the country—five to commemorate the American Revolution, one in memory of the War of 1812, the Floyd Monument in Sioux City, Iowa, and the McKinley

[20] Bennett H. Young to George W. Littlefield, September 25, 1916, Littlefield Papers, UT (first quotation); Bennett H. Young to George W. Littlefield, March 13, 1916, Littlefield Papers, UT (second quotation). Unfortunately for Young, Littlefield did not always oblige. For example, in addition to not attending the 1916 UCV reunion in Birmingham, Littlefield refused to attend the 1916 national UDC convention, even though it was held in Dallas that year. Young admonished him, in letters dated October 13, 19, 24, and 30, and November 2 and 6, to attend and help stir up the women to make donations. All correspondence, Bennett H. Young to George W. Littlefield, Littlefield Papers, UT.

Memorial in Buffalo, New York. The efforts of the JDHA fit squarely within the Revolutionary War commemorative tradition, especially given the comparisons made, both by the monument's planners and by the press, of the Jefferson Davis Monument to the Washington National Monument.[21]

To help Young visualize the proposed design, Crecelius sent a sketch of the hundred-foot-tall Floyd Monument in Sioux City, which had been dedicated in 1900 to commemorate the death of Sergeant Charles Floyd of the Lewis and Clark expedition. Providing the heights for the obelisks at Bunker Hill in Boston (221 feet) and Bennington, Vermont (301 feet), he suggested the construction of a 250-foot obelisk, which would cost approximately $20,000. Crecelius argued its height would "surpass anything . . . in the South" and "would be aesthetic and harmonious." Young sent a copy of Crecelius's letter, along with the Floyd Monument illustration, to Littlefield, but argued that the monument should be 351 feet tall. If completed, he rapturously predicted, "we would have something that would make a man immortal. The South will not forget the men who put this great thing through." Young often focused on the size of the proposed obelisk as most important, but like the nineteenth-century monument planners, he also viewed the form as symbolic of the timelessness of the cause it would represent. To this end, he wrote, "it will, for ages, proclaim the heroism and sacrifices of our people."[22]

[21] S. F. Crecelius to Bennett H. Young, October 3, 1916, Littlefield Papers, UT (quotation). On Egyptian Revival architecture, see Joy M. Giguere, *Characteristically American: Memorial Architecture, National Identity, and the Egyptian Revival* (Knoxville, Tenn., 2014). For further studies on the significance of obelisks and the Egyptian Revival to the American commemorative tradition, see also John Zukowsky, "Monumental American Obelisks: Centennial Vistas," *Art Bulletin* 58 (Dec. 1976): 574–81; Richard G. Carrott, *The Egyptian Revival: Its Sources, Monuments, and Meaning, 1808–1858* (Berkeley, Calif., 1978); Kirk Savage, "The Self-Made Monument: George Washington and the Fight to Erect a National Memorial," *Winterthur Portfolio* 22 (Winter 1987): 225–42; Kirk Savage, *Monument Wars: Washington, D.C., the National Mall, and the Transformation of the Memorial Landscape* (Berkeley, Calif., 2009); Erekson, "Lincoln and Davis," 54.

[22] S. F. Crecelius to Bennett H. Young, October 3, 1916, Littlefield Papers, UT (first and second quotations); Bennett H. Young to George W. Littlefield, October 4, 1916, Littlefield Papers, UT (third quotation); Bennett H. Young to George W. Littlefield, January 29, 1917,

Despite Young's willingness to squeeze men like Littlefield and Carr for large contributions, he understood such individual donations would not be enough to pay for the construction of a 351-foot obelisk. Given the UDC's reputation for successful fundraising, Young appealed to the women to join the effort without, of course, relinquishing his own power. With plans to attend their national convention in Dallas in November, Young hoped to "awaken an enthusiasm and an interest that would mean $20,000." Littlefield was already committed to match every one dollar raised with two of his own, up to a total of $40,000. Because of his unwavering financial commitment, Young gave the lion's share of praise and credit for the monument to Littlefield whenever he spoke of the project in public. Crecelius had estimated that the cost for a 351-foot obelisk would range somewhere between $49,700 and $63,800, depending upon choice of materials and angle of the shaft. Thus, in Young's view, financing the monument solely by funds from Littlefield, the Daughters, and a handful of other wealthy subscribers seemed well within the realm of possibility. He also hoped to generate around $4,000 from various individuals and businesses in Todd and Christian counties, the area where the Davis Homestead was located, but it was evident that Young found the prospect of glad-handing the locals a distasteful obligation required of him by Littlefield. Young's elitism and proprietary attitude toward the monument project were evident as he wrote to Littlefield, "I hate like a dog to go down there and dragoon those hayseeds and talk to those mutton-head magistrates."[23]

Littlefield Papers, UT (fourth quotation). Regarding the proposed height, Young advocated 351 feet because he wanted to ensure the Davis Monument would be the second-tallest monument in the country. He was deeply concerned that the Perry's Victory Memorial Monument, located in Put-in-Bay, Ohio, might be taller. In a letter to Littlefield, Young noted, "I got quite a jolt the other day on learning that the Perry memorial is three hundred and thirty five feet high." The shaft of the Perry's Victory Memorial Monument's Doric column is actually 340 feet, which, when combined with its twelve-foot base, makes it 352 feet tall. Young did not know this. See Bennett H. Young to George W. Littlefield, November 16, 1916, Littlefield Papers, UT. On the Perry Memorial, see *Perry's Victory Memorial: First Annual Report of the Perry's Memorial Commission* (Washington, D.C., 1921), 19–20.

[23] S. F. Crecelius to Bennett H. Young, November 6, 1916, Littlefield Papers, UT (first quotation); Bennett H. Young to George W. Littlefield, November 2, 1916, Littlefield Papers,

Young went to the UDC convention in Dallas that November on his own. Littlefield declined to attend, because he believed too much had already been asked of the Daughters on behalf of memorial projects. In his speech, Young noted the completion of monuments to Davis in Richmond and New Orleans:

> but however beautiful and indestructible they may be, there is nothing in them just grand enough and great enough for this generation to feel that they justly and truly convey to coming generations, the full appreciation of Mr. Davis and his relations to the people of the South. So, on the soil of that State where he was born, in the keeping of that Commonwealth that gave Jefferson Davis, Albert Sidney Johnston, John C. Breckinridge, John H. Morgan, Roger W. Hanson, Ben Hardin Helm, and forty-two thousand valiant sons to the defense of Confederate rights and the creation of Confederate glory, there ought to be a memorial which will excel and surpass all other monuments built without Government aid, it matters not what cause they represent or what name they bear.

In his closing remarks, Young finally made his appeal to the ladies, declaring that the Home Association wanted the Daughters to aid "as one of [the project's] chiefest and most prominent workers." He assured them that, with their help, the Commonwealth of Kentucky would preserve the monument "in its beauty, grandeur, and splendor, through all the ages to come."[24] As the Austin *Statesman* reported, "Hundreds of dollars were subscribed on the floor, and the association passed a resolution offering its chapters to the call, and suggesting that the Daughters would raise $10,000 to help the cause." According to the paper, flush with his own success, Young rushed to his hotel and wired Littlefield, "My dear friend and comrade: You are a much better judge of cows and calves than I am, but I can beat you all holler

UT (second quotation).

[24] *Speech of General Bennett H. Young at Dallas, Texas, November 10, 1916*, pp. 14–16.

when it comes to judging women."[25]

Despite his success with the Daughters, Young did not rest upon his laurels. Within days of the convention, he published an open letter in the *Hopkinsville Kentuckian*, shaming the local business community—those "hayseeds and mutton-head magistrates"—for not responding to his initial pleas for funding. Arguing, "I believe I can do more for Hopkinsville than any other person" with the monument project, Young bypassed appeals to love of Davis and instead tried another approach—spend money to make money. Alluding to the economic benefits such a monument would ultimately bring to the community, Young wrote, "If we could build this structure it would mean twenty thousand people would visit Hopkinsville every year. No city in the South could present such an attraction as this obelisk would be." Hopkinsville was by no means a metropolitan center, but as Young suggested, the completion of the monument might mean the town and its business community would reap long-term benefits. With the Jefferson Davis Highway under construction and the automobile rapidly increasing in popularity, Young anticipated such developments in modern transportation would turn the area into a Confederate destination akin to Richmond and Atlanta.[26]

The Hopkinsville business community's response to his admonitions was tepid. A. H. Echols and John H. Bell of the Planters Bank & Trust Company, for example, both sent letters to Young in response, and while Bell's brief missive concurred that the monument represented a "tremendous opportunity" to the community, he qualified his assertion, adding "if your plans are carried out." Echols also placated Young with congratulatory language but gently rebuked the lawyer by telling him that he needed to generate a specific fundraising plan and "get the matter properly before the public"—including the Hopkinsville Business Men's Association and other "prominent county people"—if he wished the community to respond liberally with funds. In forwarding these letters to Littlefield, Young noted that

[25] "Austin Banker Called Richest Ex-Confederate," *Statesman* (Austin, Tex.), n.d., Littlefield Papers, UT.

[26] "Plans for Monument," *Hopkinsville Kentuckian,* November 14, 1916.

he had made an offer to go down to Hopkinsville to speak with the entire community but appeared blithely unaware that the community's lack of donations was due, at least in part, to his bullying and condescending tone in pushing forward the idea of the monument.[27]

By November 1916, Young had also secured large donations from his friend Julian Carr of Durham, North Carolina; merchant and real estate developer Virgil Y. Cook of Batesville, Arkansas (though originally from Boydsville, Kentucky); cattleman and whiskey distiller Colonel E. H. Taylor Jr. of Frankfort; and Jefferson Davis's son-in-law, Jefferson A. Hayes of Colorado Springs. Now, foremost among Young's ideas was to offer a permanent place of recognition on the interior of the monument. While he suggested a plaque bearing the names of those who contributed $1,000 to the cause, for the officers and directors of the JDHA he wanted a bronze plate made by Tiffany & Company, which would include the members' names and both Young's and Littlefield's faces in bas-relief. Littlefield was against the idea from the start, but Young insisted, "I feel this about it; that when a hundred years from now people come to visit the monument they would have the features of George W. Littlefield and Bennett H. Young before them. This monument will be immortal and the men who built the monument should also be entitled to a reasonable degree of immortality." Young never let the prospect of personal immortality for him and Littlefield go, and as late as April 1918, after being admitted to the Lakeside Hospital in Cleveland for surgery, Young reminded Littlefield, "If I don't get through, 'Goodbye.' Finish the monument and don't forget to put our profiles and names on the base." The bronzes that Young longed for were never commissioned, but his ongoing insistence on their importance attests to the degree to which, despite his public overtures about Davis and southern nationalism, the obelisk was also a self-serving project.[28]

[27] John H. Bell to Bennett H. Young, November 13, 1916; A. H. Echols to Bennett H. Young, November 13, 1916; Bennett H. Young to George W. Littlefield, November 17, 1916, all in Littlefield Papers, UT.

[28] Regarding donors, see Bennett H. Young to J. A. Hayes, November 15, 1916; Bennett H. Young to George W. Littlefield, November 30, 1916, both in Littlefield Papers,

By early 1917, Young's successful fundraising efforts were enough that Littlefield, as the new chairman of the board (a title bestowed upon him for his $2 to $1 matching commitment up to $40,000), gave his approval to begin preliminary drilling of the site to determine its stability for the foundation. The state legislature had appropriated $7,500 in 1912 to support the project, while Young had secured a commitment of $3,500 from Carr and $500 from Hayes, and, by August, $2,500 from Taylor. From the Daughters, he had already received $1,500 in pledges, and he joked to Littlefield that "if we do not get $7,500 from the efforts of these women, I will agree to eat two or three of them." Young had also begun, in coordination with the UDC, a dime-bank "scheme" in the hopes of raising $25,000. The small banks, which bore an image of the proposed obelisk along with one of Davis, each held five dollars' worth of dimes. The Daughters were responsible for distributing these banks among members and to children throughout the South. Anyone who filled a bank was promised to have their name etched on the interior of the monument. By the end of February, the JDHA board of directors had passed a resolution to begin work on the monument's foundation, while in the following month, Young contracted with the Louisville-based firm C. G. Gregg to build the obelisk for $60,000, which was $5,000 below Crecelius's final estimate.[29]

UT. Regarding the plaques, see Bennett H. Young to George W. Littlefield, November 16, 1916 (first quotation); Bennett H. Young to George W. Littlefield, April 18, 1918 (second quotation), both in Littlefield Papers, UT.

[29] The appropriation came via HB 455 in the 1912 session of the General Assembly. Wallace Brown (Democrat, Nelson County) introduced the bill for $7,500. See *Journal of the Regular Session of the House of Representatives of the Commonwealth of Kentucky, Begun and Held in the City of Frankfort, the Second Day of January, in the Year of our Lord, 1912, and of the Commonwealth, One Hundred and Twenty* (Frankfort, Ky., 1912), 696. See also *Hopkinsville Kentuckian*, September 19, 1916. Regarding Taylor's commitment, see Bennett H. Young to E. H. Taylor Jr., August 8, 1917, Taylor-Hay Family Papers, Filson Historical Society, Louisville, Ky.; Bennett H. Young to George W. Littlefield, December 16, 1916, Littlefield Papers, UT (quotation); Bennett H. Young to George W. Littlefield, March 15, 1917, Littlefield Papers, UT; "The Jefferson Davis Memorial," *Confederate Veteran*, April 1917, p. 145; Bennett H. Young to George W. Littlefield, January 20, 1917; Jefferson Davis Home Association resolution, February 26, 1917, Littlefield Papers, UT.

With fundraising efforts yielding a steady cash flow and the contract signed stipulating the completion of the work by October 10, 1917, construction began in early April. Newspapers reported plans for an October 22 dedication day. Littlefield had hoped to delay the dedication until June 3, 1918, Jefferson Davis's birthday, but Young convinced him otherwise with the argument that the weather in Kentucky was far better in October, not to mention further delays might tempt fate—"You, Carr, or I might die."[30]

Work on laying the concrete for the foundation proceeded smoothly through April and into May. Despite U.S. entry into World War I and the fact that the workers on the project struck for a pay increase from $1.50 to $2.00 per day, Young found that there were still plenty of white men outside the military draft who were "very anxious for work." Young traveled to Fairview in mid-May to inspect the construction, and the *Kentucky New Era* reported the JDHA's "president and live wire" came away from the visit as "well pleased with conditions as he found them." By the end of the month, however, all matters related to construction and funding took a turn for the worse.[31]

The first major problem concerned the workers hired by the JDHA. Young reported to Littlefield that it was necessary to make a shift in their labor force, as "the white men burned out, that is the work was too fierce for them and we have all the negroes we want and they are satisfied and they can do the work and are getting good wages and are willing to work and want to work." Young did not comment to Littlefield on the historical irony of having to pay black

[30] "Work Begins on Obelisk," *Hopkinsville Kentuckian*, April 7, 1917; "Monument to Jeff Davis," *Boston Sunday Globe,* April 8, 1917; Bennett H. Young to George W. Littlefield, April 9, 1917, Littlefield Papers, UT (quotation). Julian Carr had, by this time, pledged $3,500 to the monument project, but Young hoped to get another $1,500 commitment from him, bringing the total to $5,000. Carr was promoting the monument project in his travels, so he also received credit from the press as one of the driving forces behind the monument. In Young's view Carr "has gotten fully $5,000 worth of glory out of this monument." See Bennett H. Young to George W. Littlefield, April 14, 1917, Littlefield Papers, UT.

[31] Bennett H. Young to George W. Littlefield, May 19, 1917, Littlefield Papers, UT (first quotation); "Gen. Young at Davis Park," *Kentucky New Era*, May 18, 1917 (second and third quotations).

laborers to construct a monument to the president of the Confederacy. The transition to black laborers still did not put an end to the project's chronic labor problems. Young complained at the beginning of July that he could secure neither "skilled [nor] common labor." By August, the monument project had to contend with a nearby army camp where laborers were earning three to four dollars per day. Local tobacco farmers also siphoned off Young's workforce, offering men three dollars per day plus board to cut tobacco. As a result, half of the laborers quit, and Young could only write, "Who could blame them? We were paying $2 a day without board." Given such "devilish labor condition[s]," Young placed part of the blame for the lack of progress on his new batch of laborers, the "lazy, trifling, good-for-nothing Negroes," and the rest on the contractor, Gregg, who had been slow to get his machinery in order and had already lost three pulverizers because of the hardness of the limestone. With such a situation before him, Young acquiesced to Littlefield's original plan for the dedication and moved it to June 1918, the first of many delays.[32]

Making matters worse, America's involvement in World War I began to have an effect on fundraising efforts.[33] More specifically, the financial needs of the Red Cross and the nationwide push for Americans to purchase liberty bonds took away from the already low enthusiasm to donate funds to the monument project. Even the UDC

[32] Bennett H. Young to George W. Littlefield, May 30, 1917 (first quotation); Bennett H. Young to George W. Littlefield, July 2, 1917 (second quotation); Bennett H. Young to George W. Littlefield, August 7, 1917; Bennett H. Young to George W. Littlefield, September 6, 1917 (third quotation); Bennett H. Young to George W. Littlefield, August 7, 1917; Bennett H. Young to George W. Littlefield, August 10, 1917; Bennett H. Young to George W. Littlefield, August 16, 1917 (fourth and fifth quotations), all in Littlefield Papers, UT.

[33] The Jefferson Davis Monument was not the only major monument project negatively affected by U.S. involvement in World War I. The MacDonough Monument in Plattsburgh, New York, is a 135-foot-tall Indiana limestone obelisk erected in honor of the American soldiers and sailors who were victorious in the Battle of Plattsburgh during the War of 1812. While state and federal appropriations were made in 1914 for its construction, the wartime federal ban on spending for such projects meant that it was not completed and dedicated until 1926. Jessica Blondell, "Macdonough Memorial Stands Tall for all of Plattsburgh: The City of Plattsburgh is home to the historic Thomas Macdonough Memorial," *All Points North* (blog), available online at http://www.apnmag.com/spring2014/storypages/Jessica/Macdonough/macdonough.html (accessed May 24, 2016).

redirected its efforts to raise money to pay for hospital beds on the war front. With such struggles increasing, Young bemoaned to Littlefield, "Had I known what was before me, I would never have undertaken it but there is nothing to do now but to drive it through." Money from the dime banks continued to arrive, but construction progress was only possible because of Littlefield's regular infusions of cash into the JDHA's treasury. Young wrote to Littlefield in September asking for $6,000 as soon as possible, and further requested that he plan to send a check for the same amount on the first of every month.[34]

For readers of *Confederate Veteran*, however, the emerging financial struggles of the association remained veiled. JDHA treasurer John H. Leathers reported the monthly receipts into the Jefferson Davis memorial fund, and these totals included Littlefield's contributions without recognizing them as such. For example, Leathers reported in the September 1917 issue that the fund had received $8,732.30 from July 15 to August 15; in the October issue the figure was $7,615.86 received between August 15 and September 15; and it was $6,282.10 from September 15 to October 15 in the November issue. The project's financial struggles were more apparent during the months when Littlefield did not supply a check. (The figure quoted by Leathers in the May 1918 issue, for example, totaled only $132.90.) Construction proceeded through the end of November 1917, at which point, as the *Hopkinsville Kentuckian* reported, the work ceased until the spring, because pouring concrete in the wet winter months was impossible. At that stage, the monument was eighty-eight feet off the ground, comprising "three-fifths of the job" in Young's estimation, given that the thickness of the walls would decrease as the shaft continued to rise.[35]

Early 1918 brought a glimmer of hope to Young's ongoing labor woes. At the end of January, he reported to Littlefield that he had

[34] Cox, *Dixie's Daughters,* 153–57; Bennett H. Young to George W. Littlefield, July 2, 1917, Littlefield Papers, UT; Bennett H. Young to George W. Littlefield, September 8, 1917, Littlefield Papers, UT.

[35] *Confederate Veteran*, September 1917, p. 392; *Confederate Veteran*, October 1917, p. 440; *Confederate Veteran*, November 1917, p. 488; *Confederate Veteran*, May 1918, p. 187; "Work Stopped for the Winter," *Hopkinsville Kentuckian*, November 27, 1917 (quotation).

The seven financial architects of the Jefferson Davis Memorial. The *Confederate Veteran* included states of residence, to make the project appear to have significance throughout the South. *"Builders of the Jefferson Davis Memorial," Confederate Veteran, October 1917, Kentucky Historical Society Collections.*

met with the prison commissioners and that fifteen convicts would be available for a period of six months. By the end of February, twenty men—all African Americans—would be released on parole to help finish the obelisk. Young told Littlefield, "As far as I am concerned I prefer negroes. I think the negroes will be more disposed to keep their obligations which they may make, than white men. I judge it will

take about six months to finish if we had these hands." At this stage and given his desperation to resume work on the monument, Young had gone to the prison commissioners on his own initiative without consulting the board of directors, for as he described the situation to Littlefield, he also noted, "of course this is confidential." In late March, Young finally presented the opportunity of hiring convict laborers to the members of the board, who unanimously voted to approve the plan.[36]

While resolving the labor situation, Young also fretted about how to proceed with the project in light of America's ongoing commitment to the war and the rapidly aging members of the association. Despite the possibility of running out of funds, Young was "extremely anxious to get this thing done." With Carr, Taylor, and Cook—the three largest individual donors to the project after Littlefield—now serving jointly as vice presidents of the JDHA, the list of individuals Young wanted to see survive to the monument's dedication grew. All of the men were over seventy years old. Especially given Taylor's advanced age of eighty-eight, Young wrote, "we will have to hustle a wee bit." The rush to see the project to completion was further exacerbated by Young's concerns that if they halted construction until the end of the war, at which time more people would have money on hand to make donations, then it would become impossible to "reawaken the interest in the monument." The prospect of never completing the obelisk, Young confided, "would distress me very much." Regardless of the dwindling supply of money, when the board convened in March 1918 and voted in favor of using the convict labor, they likewise voted to push forward with construction as long as possible.[37]

With April and the return of warmer weather, the convicts arrived to resume work on the monument. Still, Young faced a new batch of

[36] Bennett H. Young to George W. Littlefield, January 26, 1918; Bennett H. Young to George W. Littlefield, February 23, 1918 (quotations); Bennett H. Young to George W. Littlefield, March 25, 1918, all in Littlefield Papers, UT.

[37] Bennett H. Young to George W. Littlefield, February 23, 1918 (first and second quotations); Bennett H. Young to George W. Littlefield, March 25, 1918 (third quotation); Bennett H. Young to George W. Littlefield, March 2, 1918 (fourth quotation), all in Littlefield Papers, UT.

issues, not the least of which were his flagging health and magnified sense of loneliness as the project's leader. At home recovering from a surgical procedure and feeling "a little worse for wear," all of Young's accumulated frustrations began to bubble forth in his correspondence with Littlefield. He attributed the heavy responsibilities of his leadership position within the association as the major factor in his declining health, especially all of the travel required of him as president. "In my trips to Dallas, Chattanooga, Cleveland, Lexington, Danville, Frankfort, Columbia [Missouri], with chasing the State authorities to get the convicts and quieting disturbances which were raised by the people of Hopkinsville, I have had a very rough time and a full time since I undertook to build this monument," he wrote. Such was his exhaustion that Young became desperate for someone else to take over as president, and despite his overtures to John Leathers and board member Major John B. Pirtle, no replacement was forthcoming. Feeling defeated and without the prospect of anyone willing to take over as president of the JDHA, Young also pondered quitting the project entirely. He wrote to Littlefield, "Of course I can stop the work now. We could make a good excuse, labor troubles, difficulties of railroad transportation, and the interest of the people in the war which prevents them from doing anything now for us." At his lowest point, he accepted the idea that the unfinished concrete stump would be dubbed "Young and Littlefield's Folly" and was willing to bear whatever criticism that might come with the suspension of construction. However, Young's determination and desire for personal glory trumped his exhaustion. Despite all evidence in favor of quitting, the project continued.[38]

During the summer months of 1918, the project's financial woes continued, and Young reached out to new potential donors, including surviving members of the Orphan Brigade, Terry's Texas Rangers, Morgan's Men, and Forrest's Cavalry. In his bid for extra funds, as he explained in a letter to Colonel Henry A. Martin of Morgan's Men, "The high price of labor and railroad transportation, etc. have added

[38] Bennett H. Young to George W. Littlefield, May 18, 1918, Littlefield Papers, UT.

to the cost of the monument and will make it cost considerably more. When we started it we had the money but these changed conditions make it impossible to finish the work at the original figure." Leathers's financial report to the *Confederate Veteran* for the September issue indicated that Young's efforts had been effective and that the project was once again gaining momentum. Yet, that same month, work on the obelisk halted because of the demand for concrete for war purposes; the Davis monument was considered "nonessential" to the war effort.[39]

As much as Young promoted the significance of the obelisk in his speeches, correspondence, and through the pages of the *Confederate Veteran*, the national press largely ignored the monument. Indeed, from the purchase of the Davis homestead to the conceptualization, fundraising efforts, and initial construction of the obelisk, criticism for the project in the local or national press was conspicuous by its absence. Newspapers outside of Kentucky ran Associated Press reports on the monument's progress, but these were printed without comment. The general absence of negative commentary may have been a reflection of the triumph of white reconciliation and white northerners' tacit approval of southern efforts to valorize Confederate heroes with lofty monuments, but, more likely, it was indicative of the public's view that the project was simply irrelevant given the scope of national and international events currently unfolding.

Skepticism about the monument did appear in the October 1918 issue of *Life* magazine, wherein the editor was surprised to learn about the obelisk from an article in the September issue of *Popular Mechanics*. The author was not angry but was flabbergasted that such a project

[39] Bennett H. Young to Henry L. Martin, July 6, 1918, folder 5, box 10, MSS 20, H. L. Martin Papers, Kentucky Historical Society, Frankfort, Ky. (hereinafter KHS) (quotation); *Confederate Veteran*, September 1918, p. 416; "Halts Work on Obelisk: Tall Memorial to Jefferson Davis Must Wait," *Baltimore American*, September 15, 1918; "War's Demands Halt Jeff Davis Memorial," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, September 29, 1918. The War Industries Board, established in July 1917, regulated industrial production during the war. See Paul A. C. Koistinen, "The 'Industrial-Military Complex' in Historical Perspective: World War I," *Business History Review* 41 (Winter 1967): 378–403; "What War Industries Board Did to Construction," *Concrete* 18 (May 1921): 234.

existed. Asking the magazine's readers, "Why so tall a monument to Mr. Davis?," the editor reflected the mood of the time. He explained that few still alive cared about Davis's life and failures, and, ultimately, the monument would not say anything about Jefferson Davis at all. Rather, "It will say: 'It took the states to the north of me four hard and bloody years to persuade the states south of me not to leave the Union.' They may call it a monument to Jefferson Davis, but it will really be a monument to the Civil War." Given such comments, the *Life* article affirmed the sense of apathy within the national press toward the monument project. Regardless, its publication merited a swift rebuttal from at least one southern newspaper, as the *Houston Post* argued that the editor at *Life* had aroused "sectional feeling; and just at this time, when all the people of this great nation are knit together in one common and patriotic purpose, and geographical lines are blotted out, and sectional feeling finds no expression, no man or no newspaper has the right to 'even by a breath fan into flame' the embers of settled strife."[40]

Bennett Young's response to the *Life* article in the December issue of *Confederate Veteran* was more measured. Young agreed with the editor that it would not be a monument to Davis alone: "it is a monument to the men and women of the South who fought, sacrificed, struggled, and suffered in the war of 1861 to 1865." Whereas the *Life* article claimed that few living remembered or cared about Davis, Young maintained, "The heroic memories that gather about [Civil War battlefields] are immortal" and the obelisk "stands for the Confederate name and the Confederate cause. It is great and ought to be great, for it will stand through the ages to come to tell of the deeds of a people who in four years made a history that will live forever, that has crowned the Southern name with imperishable glory."[41]

Following this brief episode, Young's health worsened and on

[40] "A Monument to the Civil War," *Life*, October 3, 1918, p. 478 (first quotation); "An Untimely Utterance," *Houston Post* reprinted in *Confederate Veteran*, December 1918, p. 511 (second quotation).

[41] Bennett H. Young, "Honor to Whom Honor Is Due," *Confederate Veteran*, December 1918, p. 510.

February 23, 1919, he passed away. Although few understood Young's fundraising struggles, finding his replacement proved difficult. In May, the board of directors met and elected fellow director William B. Haldeman of Louisville, son of Walter Haldeman who had been the editor of the pro-Confederate *Louisville Courier* during the war, to succeed Young as president. Haldeman learned in the ensuing months how extensive the time commitment to the project had been for Young.[42]

After Young's death, an overwhelming sense of obligation to complete the obelisk was evident in Confederate circles. Newly elected JDHA president Haldeman delivered an address at the UCV reunion in Atlanta in which he praised the efforts of "the eloquent and matchless Young" and proceeded to give a detailed overview of the status of the monument, including the memorial fund's treasury, major financial contributions, and his plans for completing the obelisk. Since the November 1918 armistice meant the war effort no longer needed concrete, Haldeman optimistically anticipated a June 3, 1920, dedication. Noting that construction was halfway done, Haldeman asserted that he had already received a commitment from the Daughters that each chapter nationwide would contribute twenty-five cents per member, thus securing $10,000. While Littlefield had initially pledged to pay up to $40,000 total, Haldeman noted that he had, in fact, already paid $43,000 and that he had pledged to contribute another $3,000. Another "prominent Confederate" had pledged $4,000. In addition to the pledges already received, then, Haldeman stated that an additional $30,000 would be required "to complete the memorial and to put the park in proper condition to turn it over to the State of Kentucky."[43]

In an effort to set himself apart from Young and his fundraising methods, Haldeman declared that as the new leader of the JDHA,

[42] "The Passing of the Gray," *Confederate Veteran*, March 1919, p. 76; Haldeman's election as successor to Young was first announced in *Confederate Veteran*, July 1919, p. 244.

[43] "Jefferson Davis Memorial: General Haldeman Makes Statement at Confederate Reunion in Atlanta; Monument Not Completed Owing to Death of Matchless Young," *The State* (Columbia, S.C.), October 12, 1919.

"I prefer to make my appeal to the masses for the sum needed . . . and not to make it solely to a few wealthy men, for I believe that the people of the great South will promptly make response and give the world full knowledge of their continued love for the great president of the Confederate States." Unfortunately for Haldeman, the response of the public was lackluster. Convincing fellow white southerners that they should give money as a sign of love and reverance for Jefferson Davis was a hard sell, given the long history of vitriol that was attached to the Confederate president's memory. Funds did not flow in as Haldeman expected they would, and by the end of the year the pages of the *Confederate Veteran* revealed the slow progress.[44]

Throughout 1920 and into 1921, as Haldeman increasingly relied upon the UDC to shoulder the task of fundraising, the Daughters remained committed to raising twenty-five cents per member. While their efforts yielded a steady stream of money into the memorial fund, outside contributions remained insufficient. Construction therefore remained stagnated, and the projected dedication was again delayed, this time to June 3, 1921. The UDC continued to post their progress with the twenty-five-cent campaign in the pages of the *Confederate Veteran* throughout the year, and it became increasingly apparent that the Daughters were now the primary force behind ensuring the monument's completion. Littlefield died on November 10, 1920, but within the week the UDC announced the resumption of construction. The UDC continued to urge their chapters to fulfill their twenty-five-cent pledges, and while issuing a call to all division directors to renew their efforts to this end, President General May M. Faris McKinney, of Paducah, declared in January 1921 that the "unveiling of this great monument depends upon the U.D.C."[45]

In April, after yet another stoppage in construction, the obelisk stood at 176 feet and the dedication was pushed back to 1922. Con-

[44] Ibid.

[45] "Working on Davis Obelisk: Monument to Confederate President Is To Be Dedicated in 1921," *Kansas City Times*, April 3, 1920; "U.D.C. to Resume Davis Memorial," *Daily Herald* (Gulfport, Miss.), November 16, 1920; "Memorial Work Begun after Founder's Death," *El Paso* (Tex.) *Herald*, November 19, 1920; *Confederate Veteran*, January 1921, p. 32 (quotation).

currently, the board of trustees of the newly established Jefferson Davis Monument Association (JDMA) met with representatives from the UDC and the Confederated Southern Memorial Association (CSMA) to "devise ways and means to complete the project." Historically, the national UDC had only committed itself to completing monuments that the organization considered as important to the whole South—the Jefferson Davis Monument at Richmond, the Confederate Soldiers' Monument at Arlington, and the Confederate Monument at Shiloh, for example. Their willingness to step in and save Haldeman demonstrates that the Daughters thought that completing the obelisk was not just a matter of southern pride but one of principle. To allow the monument to remain unfinished would be an embarrassment to the entire South. With $30,000 to raise, the Daughters' commitment was solidified, since the amount only represented the final push and was less than what Littlefield alone had contributed.[46]

Historically, the UDC had shamed men into contributing to their causes. In the case of the Jefferson Davis Monument project, the UDC leadership adopted the tactic of shaming the membership for not working hard enough to raise funds. In September 1922, Lenora R. Schuyler, the new president general of the UDC, wrote, "I am forced to say, with deep pain, that unless the Daughters send in large contributions from the sale of certificates the work on this monument will have to be suspended. Surely we cannot allow this to happen." Subsequently, at the national convention of the UDC in November, with construction stalled at 216 feet, the members of the UDC's Davis Monument Committee reported that contributions "during the last year have been discouragingly small" and scolded the Daughters present by adding, "if you honor Jefferson Davis as you are contributing to his monument, then surely your interest in him

[46] The JDMA appears to have been a subsidiary of the Jefferson Davis Home Association. The leadership of each was the same, with the exception that the president general of the UDC was included, at least in an advisory capacity, in the JDMA leadership. The CSMA also worked on the fundraising effort but did not wield the kind of influence or generate the level of funds as the UDC. *Confederate Veteran*, April 1921, p. 124; *Confederate Veteran*, May 1921, p. 193.

The Jefferson Davis Monument in Fairview partially completed. At the time of this photograph, the obelisk was seventy-five feet tall. *Kentucky Geological Survey Photographs, folder 11, box 3, Graphic 8, Kentucky Historical Society Collections*.

is growing less and less." They proceeded to issue a call for pledges to be "taken from the floor." Such tactics were effective, for Schuyler reported afterwards that "nearly eight thousand dollars was subscribed from the floor, including one thousand dollars from the treasury, said to be the largest subscription ever made at one session of a U.D.C. convention."[47]

Following the convention and through 1923, Schuyler and Haldeman—who was now also serving as commander-in-chief of the UCV—effectively became equals in terms of responsibility and

[47] Cox, *Dixie's Daughters,* 59; *Confederate Veteran,* September 1922, p. 350 (first quotation); "U.D.C. Plans to Complete Davis Obelisk in Year," *San Antonio Express,* November 18, 1922 (second, third, and fourth quotations); *Confederate Veteran*, January 1923, p. 32 (fifth quotation).

division of labor, with Haldeman in charge of the construction end of the project and Schuyler responsible for fundraising. In July 1923, Schuyler once again appealed to the Daughters, stating:

> If you could only realize how anxious General Haldeman and I are to complete this monument, I believe every Daughter would double her contribution. We cannot, until this monument is done, make the world believe that we hold Mr. Davis as typifying the cause of the Confederacy. It rests with us what others think of the South's part in the War between the States, for this monument stands, as does that of Washington in the Capitol [*sic*] of the nation, for the *President of the Confederacy*.

The UDC's tactics worked. After so many stoppages and financial struggles, Haldeman was finally able to report with some degree of certainty that construction would resume in August with the plan to bring the height from 216 to 316 feet before cold weather set in. Thus, only a final thirty-five feet would remain to be completed in time for a June 3, 1924, dedication.[48]

Although the intended dedication date for the Jefferson Davis Monument had consistently been the Confederate president's birthday, June 3, the JDHA ultimately decided to hold the ceremony on June 7, after the closing of the UCV reunion in Memphis on June 6. Hoping to maximize attendance and ensure the presence of the aging veterans, the Home Association made special arrangements for veterans who wished to attend both events to take the train directly from Memphis to Hopkinsville and then be shuttled to Fairview at no charge. Any surviving veterans who were in attendance—Confederate or Union—were considered the honored guests of the day. In 1917, Bennett Young had envisioned a "vast throng" of fifty thousand people at the ceremony. For the long-awaited dedication day in 1924, however, newspaper reports and the *Confederate Veteran* estimated the crowd at around ten thousand people. Reports of the proceedings

[48] *Confederate Veteran*, July 1923, p. 269.

made the attendance seem impressive, but, with the passage of time, the deaths of veterans, and the nation moving into the 1920s, public enthusiasm for the project had dwindled. Most in attendance were local citizens, state politicians, those who had participated directly in the project, and what remained of the graying veterans.[49]

The ceremony itself took nearly the entire day. The exercises began at eleven in the morning with the invocation by the Reverend Dr. E. Y. Mullins, president of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, preliminary remarks by Haldeman, the presentation of the color bearer and color guard, and brief addresses by Colonel Robert J. McBryde, who formally turned the monument over to the state of Kentucky, and Governor William J. Fields, who received the monument on behalf of the commonwealth. Dinner and a musical program followed the opening events. Thirteen more formal addresses delivered by members of the UDC and CSMA, as well as Jefferson Hayes, who thanked the Home Association for its efforts in memory of his grandfather, along with the closing benediction finished the day.[50]

Reports from the event waxed poetic about the size and impressiveness of the obelisk, while also noting the history of its construction. Those who had been most significant in driving the project forward, however, were sidelined, and the financial woes of the construction phase were not mentioned. Reducing a complex fundraising and construction project down to the simplest narrative, Morton Milford of the *Miami News* opined, "More than once has the leader in the movement, and upon whom all seemed to depend, been stricken by death and the success of the movement thus jeopardized. But each time some one stepped into the fallen man's place and took up the work and carried it on." The July 1924 issue of the *Confederate Veteran* briefly recounted Young's contributions as the initial driving force for the project and the construction problems presented

[49] Bennett H. Young to George W. Littlefield, January 29, 1917, Littlefield Papers, UT (quotation); "Gigantic Obelisk Climax Monument Building in World," *Kentucky New Era*, June 13, 1924; *Confederate Veteran*, July 1924, p. 254.

[50] "Jefferson Davis Monument Exercises at Fairview, Ky., Saturday, June 7," scrapbook 1898–1924, folder 2, box 30, MSS 111, United Daughters of the Confederacy Collection, KHS.

by the world war, then noted his death prior to the monument's completion without further comment. Regarding finances, the magazine estimated the "grounds and monument have cost more than $200,000," and that in addition to a $15,000 appropriation by the state of Kentucky in 1922 and Littlefield's massive outlay of money, the largest financial contributors were W. B. Haldeman, Robert J. McBryde, Bennett Young, E. H. Taylor Jr., Julian S. Carr, V. Y. Cook, and John A. Webb. Finally, "many small contributions helped to swell the fund." As far as these reports were concerned, the Home Association's efforts resulted in unqualified success.[51]

In the months following the monument's dedication, the finished obelisk fell out of public view, as the fundraising efforts pushed by the JDHA, UDC, and CSMA were no longer necessary. The national press largely ignored the obelisk, which no doubt hastened its obscurity on the memorial landscape despite its physical stature. With its completion, little more could be said or written, though the UDC reported in the November 1924 issue of the *Confederate Veteran* that "more than three thousand tourists" had visited the monument since its dedication in June. This was a far cry from the twenty thousand visitors per year Young had promised the residents of Hopkinsville when he was trying to rally support in 1916. Finally, Haldeman's death in October meant the passing of the last major figure within the JDHA, and thus all who had a stake in keeping the public eye on the obelisk were gone. He was eulogized in the December issue of the *Confederate Veteran* for "his indomitable efforts in raising funds" for, and ultimately finishing, the monument. Unlike Young, Haldeman had enjoyed the fruits of his labor: "It was a happy day for him when he presided over the dedicatory exercises on June 7, 1924, and marked the realization of one of his fondest dreams." Thus, with the

[51] Morton Milford, "Southern Hopes Splendidly Realized in Dedication of Imposing Shaft in Memory of Jefferson Davis, Confederate Statesman, at Fairview, Kentucky," *Miami News*, June 14, 1924 (first quotation); *Confederate Veteran*, July 1924, pp. 254–55 (second and third quotations). Between the checks he wrote to the JDHA and posthumous gifts made by his estate, George Littlefield's contributions ultimately totaled $48,000. See "Towering Obelisk of Enduring Concrete Dedicated to Memory of President of Confederacy," *San Antonio Express*, June 8, 1924.

exception of Confederate Memorial Day and reunion events at which members of various surviving Confederate organizations convened at the Davis Memorial Park, all official organizational ties to and promotional efforts for the Jefferson Davis Monument at Fairview ended.[52]

Like other monumental obelisks that came before it, the lack of adornment on the exterior of the Jefferson Davis Monument conveys to visitors a sense of its enormity but little in the way of explaining its purpose or meaning. Even with explanatory signage, monuments may easily be misread by visitors, and this seems especially true for America's monumental obelisks. Erected by their promoters with the immensity of the event or person in mind, these structures often fail to convey to the public the initial beliefs or ideals of those who built them, and they remain open to ongoing debate and interpretation. In the case of the Jefferson Davis Monument at Fairview, its very conception was based upon a work of fiction: the South's love for Jefferson Davis. Despite the unpopularity of the cause and the fundraising issues that plagued the entire process, the small group of elite ex-Confederates who began the project blinded themselves to public opinion and the reality of the era. The eventual completion of the obelisk required a massive, coordinated effort between multiple organizations, but its dedication was by no means a grand triumphal moment for the Lost Cause. Given the deterioration of the concrete and the need for the state of Kentucky to spend tax money to ensure the monument did not crumble, the obelisk has been more of a burden than the gift the Home Association purported it to be when it was formally handed over to the commonwealth in 1924.[53]

[52] *Confederate Veteran*, November 1924, p. 438 (first quotation); "Plans for Monument, Gen. Young Tells Something about the Obelisk at Fairview," *Hopkinsville Kentuckian*, November 14, 1916; *Confederate Veteran*, December 1924, pp. 451–52 (second and third quotations).

[53] Sarah J. Purcell, "Commemoration, Public Art, and the Changing Meaning of the Bunker Hill Monument," *Public Historian* 25 (Spring 2003): 55–71; Glazier, *Been Coming Through Some Hard Times*, 176.