

**Confederate Monuments Committee, City of Atlanta, Georgia
Public Comment Presentation to the Committee November 1, 2017
The Peace Monument in Piedmont Park, Erected 1911**

Good evening, Ladies & Gentlemen of the Committee, and thank you for the opportunity to speak to you tonight. My name is Colonel John Dietrichs, and I am here representing the Old Guard of the Gate City Guard of Atlanta, the organization responsible for commissioning and erecting the Peace Monument in Piedmont Park in 1911. I have been honored to be the Commandant of the Old Guard in 2014 and 2016, and am a native Atlantan. I would like to speak briefly about the history and purpose of the Peace Monument, which was defaced and damaged on Sunday, August the 13th. I and the Old Guard Command believe this Monument represents one of the best efforts made in the Southern States toward the amicable reunification of the United States after the Civil War ended.

The Gate City Guard of Atlanta was originally formed in 1855 as a militia unit in Atlanta to assist the police and firemen in times of emergency within the City. In 1878, after Reconstruction had ended, and Southern state military units were once again allowed by law, the Gate City Guard of Atlanta came together again to assist in protecting the civilian population of Atlanta when needed. The Guard decided in 1879 to make a gesture of reconciliation between one of the most war-ravaged of southern cities, Atlanta, and many of the great cities of the northern states. Accordingly, in 1879, the Gate City Guard travelled by rail to Boston, New York, Hartford, Philadelphia, and other cities. Marching with military precision in their uniforms, they were received enthusiastically by cheering crowds. Many positive newspaper articles were written about our visits in these northern cities, recognizing Atlanta reborn as the center of the New South, a name given by our own great Journalist, Henry Grady.

In the 1890's, many members, now too old to perform military duties, retired from the Gate City Guard to form the Old Guard. Many of Atlanta's great civic leaders of the time joined the Old Guard over the next few years, and in 1910 these Members decided that this famous March for Peace in 1879 should be commemorated in a Monument, paid for by privately raised funds, and placed in Piedmont Park, the location of the great Cotton Exposition of 1895.

The Monument was dedicated on October 10, 1911, with an estimated 60,000 people gathered at Piedmont Park and 14th Street for the ceremony. Six state Governors and five City Mayors, including the Democratic Mayor of Atlanta, Courtland S. Winn, attended. Colonel Joseph Burke of the Old Guard presented the Monument to the City as a gift, celebrating our reunited and once again unified country. And this was done in the presence of hundreds, if not thousands, of surviving Veterans of the War, both North and South.

The Old Guard Members of today, most of whom have served in the U.S. Armed Forces, re-dedicate this Peace Monument every year in October. The image is of the Angel of Peace holding an olive branch in one hand, the other hand restraining a Confederate soldier, saying "Cease firing – Peace is declared!" The language in the bronze tablet placed under this image in 1911 and still present today reads as follows:

"The Gate City Guard, under the Command of Captain Joseph F. Burke, desiring to restore fraternal sentiment among the people of all sections of our country, and ignoring sectional animosity, on October 6th, 1879, went forth to greet their former adversaries in the Northern and Eastern States, inviting them to unite with the people of the South to heal the Nation's wounds in a peaceful and prosperous reunion of the States. This "Mission of Peace" was enthusiastically endorsed by the Military and Citizens in every part of the Union, and this Monument is erected as an enduring testimonial to their Patriotic contribution to the cause of national Fraternity."

Dedicated October 10, 1911

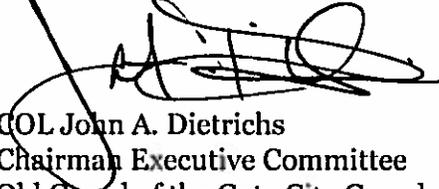
By

Hoke Smith, Governor of Georgia and Simeon E. Baldwin, Governor of Connecticut

Many famous Atlanta names are listed on the Committee and City Council plaques surrounding the base, including Asa Candler, Frederic Paxon, Edward Inman, J.H. Nunnally, and others.

As a proud native Atlantan, I believe this image to be an important part of Atlanta's history, and I ask that this Monument continue to be valued and cherished as a symbol of the reunification of the United States after the War, and that it remain in the place it has occupied in Piedmont Park for 106 years.

Thank you very much for your consideration.



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