

Peace Monument

In 1857, 100 prominent Atlanta men formed the Gate City Guard of Atlanta as a volunteer militia. Its members were among the first to enlist with the Confederate Army when the Civil War began in 1861. The militia disbanded after its enlistment period ended in 1862, but many members fought with other units in the Confederate army until the war ended in 1865. In 1877, the Gate City Guard was reconstituted immediately after the end of Reconstruction to resume militia service and promote what they deemed “the virtues of the Old South.”

In October 1879, the Gate City Guard embarked on a Peace Mission through Northern cities intended to build goodwill and reconcile ongoing sectional differences. At the time, many white Southerners viewed the war through the lens of Lost Cause mythology. That mythology claimed that despite defeat, the Confederate cause was morally just. Union sentiment initially regarded secession as treason; however, feeling threatened by rising black and immigrant populations, white Northerners increasingly saw native-born white Southerners as similar to themselves with common heritage and “Anglo-Saxon values.” Like white Southerners, they passed segregationist laws. In this context, the Guard was embraced by many Northerners as brothers during the Peace Mission, which they considered a success.



Portrait from circa 1879 of members of the Old Guard of the Gate City Guard, including (left to right): Corporal Charles E. Sciple, Sgt. William M. Camp, Corporal Gordon C. Neff, Corporal M. F. Amorous, Corporal W. B. Cummings, Lt. W. C. Sparks, Lt. J. L. Jackson, Captain S. A. Swearingen, Sgt. E. W. Hewitt, Lt. Joseph Lumpkin, and Sgt. E. W. Reinhert. *Courtesy of the Kenan Research Center at Atlanta History Center.*

In 1893, older members of the Guard formed the Old Guard of the Gate City Guard, adopting the motto, *In Bello, Paceque, Primus*, meaning “First in War, First in Peace.”

This Peace Monument was dedicated October 10, 1911, as a tribute to the 1879 Peace Mission. Celebrations included Confederate veterans as well as 3,000 members of military regiments from Virginia, Georgia, Maryland, Massachusetts, Connecticut, and Pennsylvania. Planned remarks from the ceremony published in the *Atlanta Constitution* focused on themes of Reconciliation and “common heritage.” Those remarks focused on one important outcome of the Civil War, reunification of the country, but ignored the other important outcome—the liberation of four million enslaved African Americans.

The inscription on this monument promotes a Reconciliation narrative centered on white veterans. It excludes all African Americans, of which nearly 200,000 served in the U.S. Army. It describes the reunion of the states as “prosperous” and recognizes the Peace Mission’s cause as “national fraternity,” ignoring the acceptance of segregation and white supremacy by both Southern and Northern populations.

This monument should no longer stand as a memorial to white brotherhood; rather, it should be seen as an artifact representing a shared history in which millions of Americans were denied civil and human rights.



The 1911 dedication of the Peace Monument in Piedmont Park. *Courtesy of the Kenan Research Center at Atlanta History Center.*



The City of Atlanta created the “Advisory Committee on City of Atlanta Street Names and Monuments Associated with the Confederacy,” which recommended that this monument be removed to City storage. This action is not permissible under state law (O.C.G.A. § 50-3-1). In response to this limitation, the City of Atlanta commissioned these panels to promote greater understanding of the conflicts and controversies engendered by this monument.

Race and Reconciliation

The Reconciliation movement focused on repairing sectional animosity after the Civil War. To achieve this, Southern states demanded that pre-war society be restored, with white men returned to social and political power. To this end, in 1877 the U.S. soldiers stationed in the South were removed. They had been present during Reconstruction to ensure African Americans’ voting rights and safety.

Racial segregation soon became law. Georgia legislators argued that emancipation eliminated slavery but did not guarantee citizenship rights. At the same time, African Americans fought to regain and expand Reconstruction-era political rights and secure economic and social equality. In 1896, the U.S. Supreme Court heard the case *Plessy v. Ferguson*. This case argued equal protection for all citizens based on the 14th Amendment of the U.S. Constitution. In its ruling, the Court decided that segregation laws were Constitutional if African Americans were provided “separate but equal” alternatives. In reality, alternatives were usually nonexistent or inferior. This ruling was not overturned until the 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* decision.

White Southerners who felt oppressed by black empowerment during Reconstruction welcomed Reconciliation, naming this period “Redemption.”



Confederate and Union veterans shake hands at the 75th anniversary of the Battle of Gettysburg, symbolizing reconciliation between the two former foes. *Courtesy of Special Collections/Musselman Library, Gettysburg College.*

Segregation was the legal mechanism to enforce race-based inequality. In addition, black rights were suppressed with lynching and other forms of physical violence. In Atlanta, the Race Riot of 1906 is the most infamous example.

Despite these challenges, African Americans created economic and educational institutions while fighting for full citizenship rights. These efforts demonstrate solidarity as well as internal disagreement about the meaning of progress. One example of this was the divergent and sometimes adversarial approaches of Booker T. Washington and Dr. W.E.B. Du Bois.

A famous event demonstrating this was the debate surrounding Washington’s Atlanta Exposition Address. Washington gave his address near this spot during the 1895 Cotton States and International Exposition. The Exposition attracted nearly 800,000 people and was hosted in what is now Piedmont Park. Despite the events being largely segregated, African Americans had a significant presence.

Arguably the most prominent black man in America, Washington stated that African Americans should focus on economic empowerment rather than social integration. Du Bois, a leading educator and civil rights activist, fought for the vote and full social inclusion. He refuted Washington’s position and named his speech the “Atlanta Compromise.” Du Bois was a professor at Atlanta University, one of the Historically Black Colleges and Universities established on the west side of Atlanta after the Civil War.



District of Columbia exhibit in the Negro Building during the 1895 Cotton States and International Exposition. *Courtesy of the Kenan Research Center at Atlanta History Center, Fred L. Howe 1895 Cotton States and International Exposition Photographs Collection.*

He also founded the Atlanta School of Sociology and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP).