

MULTIPLE RESOURCES OF GREENVILLE

BUTLER COUNTY, ALABAMA

Historic name:	Confederate Park	Owner:	First Methodist Church 112 Adam St. Greenville, AL 36037
Common name:	Confederate Park		
Address:	E. Commerce St.		
Acreage:	less than one acre	UTM:	A-16/535/720-3521/410 B-16/535/720-3521/340 C-16/535/640-3521/340 D-16/535/640-3521/410
Verbal Boundary:	Lot 7, Block 56, 192' x 225'		
Architectural Design:	not applicable		
Date of Construction:	1902-1928		
Architect, Builder:	unknown		

Statement of Significance:

Criterion A - Social/humanitarian:

Confederate Park (1903-1928) is significant for its association with the United Daughters of the Confederacy and the glorification of the old South at the turn-of-the-century.

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The formation of the park was a joint citizen effort headed by the U.D.C. with the backing of the city government which later supplied park maintenance and the Methodist Church which provided the park site. The U.D.C. founded in 1894, was the synthesis of a turn-of-the-century national movement toward the formation of a number of middle and upper class women's clubs, i.e. garden clubs, Junior League etc., and a general southern interest in the apotheosis of the Confederacy. Confederate Park was initially conceived by the local U.D.C. chapter when the site was chosen and leased to the city for 99 years from the Methodist Church as the location for a Confederate statue.

Criterion A - Landscape Architecture:

Confederate Park (1903-1928) in downtown Greenville is a good local example of a broad turn-of-the-century southern interest in honoring Confederate veterans. Like many towns all over the South, Greenville set aside a small plot of land (1903) with a statue in honor of those who had served the Confederacy.

Additionally, the park is a good local representation of a nationwide interest in city beautification. In 1909, the park was beautified with the addition of sidewalks, a cast iron fountain and benches. This occurred during the height of the "City Beautiful Movement" which was widespread at that time.

Description:

Confederate Park is located on the south side of E. Commerce Street between Posey and Park Streets in the heart of downtown Greenville. The property measuring approximately 200' x 212' is almost a complete square with concrete sidewalks running along Commerce Street and diagonally crossing the center of the park. A sixteen foot high marble statue of a Confederate soldier stands near the center of the park. A triple-tiered cast iron fountain (1909) is located near the northwest corner of the property. The landscaping includes numerous shrubs and trees planted along the sidewalks and street edges of the park.

Historical Summary:

During the 1870's the lot on which Confederate Park is now located was the site of the Methodist School. According to O. R. Porter in his "Greenville Reminiscences" the lot was surrounded by a fence and in the front section facing toward Commerce Street were located "Flying Jennies" for amusement. Further up the lot was a large one-story frame building that was later torn down for the erection of a two story brick school building. This school was properly named the Greenville Collegiate Institute but was more commonly known as the "Methodist School" and was founded by James H. Dunklin in 1872. The large two story building was later destroyed by fire.

In 1902 the Father Ryan Chapter of the United Daughters of the Confederacy began work on the erection of a memorial to the Confederate Soldiers of Butler County to be located on the vacant lot owned by the Methodist Church. The chapter signed a 99 year lease with the church for the lot on which the monument was to be erected.

The chapter met with a representative of a Columbus, Georgia marble works on December 6, 1902 to discuss the plans for the purchase of a suitable commemorative statue. The statue agreed upon was to be a total of sixteen feet in height including base foundation, stone steps and the statue. In June 1903 this statue was unveiled in a ceremony at the park.

After the statue was in place the Father Ryan Chapter turned their efforts towards the beautification of the park grounds. A landscape gardner was employed by the group with the responsibility of caring for the grounds. The beautification plans were delayed because of the debris left on the lot following the extensive renovation of the First Methodist Church which faced the park on the Walnut Street side. The U.D.C.'s plans included the planting of several hundred shrubs for use as hedges and the planting of several shade trees. In March 1909 Mayor Claude E. Hamilton donated the fountain which is now located in the park and the Eliza Parks Chapter of the U.D.C. donated iron benches for use as seating. Mr. W. J. Beeland donated the construction of a sidewalk on the Commerce Street side of the park and later the Father Ryan Chapter and the Methodist Women's Missionary Society had walkways constructed diagonally through the center of the park which was located between the monument and the fountain. R. S. Corry was the engineer who surveyed the park for the placement of the walks. Before these walks were constructed the park grounds were leveled off with dirt and other debris.

In 1928 the Father Ryan Chapter employed landscape architect S. E. Washburn of Bolling Farms Nursery who was in charge of the planting of evergreens and flowering shrubs within the park. During this period the upkeep of the park became a joint U.D.C. city project where previously the care had been the responsibility of the U.D.C.

At present the park is still owned by the First Methodist Church and still under the original base of the U.D.C. but the upkeep is now the responsibility of the city of Greenville.