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Causes Lost but Not Forgotten

*George Washington Littlefield, Jefferson Davis, and
Confederate Memories at the University of Texas at Austin*

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In April 1990 two incidents of racial strife shook the campus of approximately fifty thousand students at the University of Texas at Austin (UT-Austin). First, on Monday, April 9, students learned that a car used by the Zeta Tau Delta fraternity during the previous weekend's Sixtieth Annual Spring Round-Up Parade, an annual alumni celebration, had been painted with racial slurs such as "Fuck coons" and "Fuck you nigs die" and smashed with a sledgehammer in an apparent triumphant acclamation of the day's activities. Even though Darrel Armer, president of the Zeta Tau Deltas, denied responsibility for the racial epithets, the university community struggled to deal with the growing controversy as the Student Association and the university's Interfraternity Council debated punishment and possible sanctions. Students had barely begun to digest the news of the Tau Delta incident when Tuesday's edition of the school's student newspaper, *The Daily Texan*, revealed that a second fraternity, Phi Gamma Delta, also faced charges of racism for selling and distributing t-shirts with a "Sambo" caricature at a basketball tournament during the same Round-Up

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weekend. Marcus Brown, president of the Black Student Alliance, declared that the two incidents indicated “that there is racism on campus” and that Round-Up represented “an indication of white supremacy by going back to the vestige of Reconstruction.”¹

The racial strife of UT-Austin’s Round-Up weekend galvanized protesters, according to *The Daily Texan*. For several years black students had already been organizing for the sake of promoting multiculturalism and protesting university investments in apartheid South Africa. Yet the racial incidents involving the two fraternities brought out approximately one thousand people to a rally on Wednesday afternoon, a figure observers recognized as abnormally high despite the short notice and lack of formal planning. The events in question even forced UT-Austin president William Cunningham to plan a speech addressing the incidents for Friday, April 13. In the swirling maelstrom of this racially tinged climate, the controversy surrounding what the Black Student Association called “institutionalized racism” at the school soon engulfed the placement and meaning of a group of statues honoring high-ranking generals and politicians of the Confederacy on the university’s South Mall, where Wednesday’s rally was held. In particular, student anger focused on the statue of former Confederate president Jefferson Davis, first installed on the university grounds in 1933, which held a prominent position near the south entrance of the university’s main building and stood slightly to the west of to the statue of former U.S. president Woodrow Wilson. Tony Barrueta, a second-year law student, exemplified the students’ frustration as he launched a hunger strike to implore university officials to remove the statue. According to Barrueta, he “had to do something” to beseech the administration’s action to prevent the building racial tension stemming from the Round-Up activities from erupting into violence.²

The fact that Barrueta had focused his hunger strike on the Jefferson Davis statue should not have been surprising, especially considering that in the previous year, student angst over the monument had resulted in two significant cases of vandalism. The second incident actually occurred in the fall semester, on September 4, when the words “‘Roots’ (of KKK)” and “fight racism now!” were spray painted in red on its base. According to Lt. R. G. Thomas, a nineteen-year veteran of the UT-Austin Police Department, the South Mall statues have been frequent targets of vandalism. The 1989 incident was the second time that year that the Davis statue had been targeted by angry students. Earlier, in February, unknown assailants had defaced the bronze statue with bleach, resulting in permanent damage to it. And while Barrueta’s hunger strike may have failed to move university officials into removing the statues from the South Mall, the attacks and their meanings continued well after the racially tinged events surrounding the 1990 Round-Up celebration. In September 1990, more than half

a year after the fraternity incidents, the Davis statue was again defaced by vandals who wrote “Am I Your Hero?” on the front of the base. According to one student, the statue was a “disgrace to the campus and an insult to the people of color, and people defacing it is a reflection of the frustration that the people of color on this campus feel.” In contrast, Lieutenant Thomas expressed anger against those who would turn their backs on history, disregarding the social message behind the defacement. “That’s just plain old graffiti,” he said. “People just don’t give a damn about their heritage and about their country.”³

As UT-Austin students grappled with the meanings and implications of an homage to the Confederate States of America on their campus, the truth of the matter remained that most of them had no idea how the Jefferson Davis statue and other Confederate monuments found their place on the South Mall. And while the Davis statue—along with the Wilson monument—holds a prominent location near the university main building’s south entrance, an additional four statues to the purported heroes of Texas and the South—Robert E. Lee, Albert Sidney Johnston, James C. Hogg, and John Reagan—flanked the Davis and Wilson memorials amid the large oak trees lining the two pedestrian paths heading southward to the *pièce de résistance*, the Littlefield Memorial Fountain. Described as a war memorial by university officials established following U.S. participation in the First World War, the Littlefield Fountain ultimately came to encompass an important place in the structural design of the university. Yet the concept and ideas that spurred the late-twentieth-century debates over the judgment and meaning behind monuments that stood for a racist past were actually rooted in the vestiges of the Old South as symbols of reverence to what the memorial’s main benefactor, George Washington Littlefield, considered imperative reminders of the state’s heritage in the newly commercialized and politicized world in which Texans lived. To Littlefield and his supporters, the monuments represented a commemoration of their Confederate past and the South’s proper place in the reunified nation. But more importantly, they would remind future generations about those “who suffered and died in defense of the righteous cause of the states,” even if that cause included the protection of slavery.⁴

George Washington Littlefield was born the oldest of four children in Panola County, Mississippi, on June 21, 1842, before his family moved to Texas in 1850. Like many other children reared during Texas’ early statehood, Littlefield enjoyed a vibrant life at his family’s plantation near Belmont, about fifteen miles north of Gonzalez, before attending Gonzalez College and then later, for a short time, Baylor University. Littlefield cut short his education and returned to help his mother on the plantation, an estate that eventually grew to include more than eighty slaves. When Texas followed the path of her sister states during the secession crisis of 1860–61, Littlefield enlisted in Company I, Eighth Texas

Cavalry, better known as Terry's Texas Rangers, in August 1861. He fought in various engagements, including the Battle of Shiloh, and rose to the rank of major before receiving a wound that cut short his military career in 1864 at the age of twenty-three. After the war Littlefield returned to Texas, where he ventured into the very business he was most familiar with, farming and cattle. By the last decade of the nineteenth century, he had accumulated enough wealth through his ranching ventures that he moved to Austin and organized the American National Bank, of which he served as president until 1918, and acquired a fair stake of other businesses as well.⁵

While Littlefield prospered, his service to the Confederacy remained a vital aspect of his life. As Robert Vinson, a former president of UT-Austin and a friend of Littlefield, observed: "to a degree unsurpassed by any man I have ever known, Major Littlefield lived and died in the firm conviction of the righteousness of that [Confederate] cause." In post-Civil War Texas, Littlefield, like many of his fellow Confederate veterans throughout the South, found an abundance of outlets for soldiers who desired to remember their war experience. Mass-market periodicals like *The Land We Love* and *Southern Magazine* were some of the first publications to devote coverage to battle narratives written by former Confederate soldiers. By the 1870s the *Southern Historical Society Papers* had given these veterans the opportunity to rationalize their cause with thorough, legalistic discussions on the constitutionality of secession in response to northern aggression and analytical articles expounding on strategy and tactics during the war. The goal of the Southern Historical Society (SHS), as explained by former Confederate general Jubal Early in 1873, was to write the South's version of the war for future generations of southerners. Early and his supporters were among the foremost architects of the Lost Cause, a literary and social movement that sought to reconcile the Confederacy losing the war with self-serving justifications that the South was never truly defeated but instead merely overwhelmed by superior manpower and resources.⁶

Former Confederate soldiers inspired by the *Southern Historical Society Papers'* messianic message promoting the Lost Cause soon gave impetus to a different way of remembering the war, the creation of veterans' organizations and monument dedications. The death of Gen. Robert E. Lee on October 12, 1870, spurred them to organize and sponsor a monument to the departed southern icon. As the former soldiers mobilized to revere Lee and other individual heroes, these memorial associations, which existed at a local and regional level, soon helped inspire annual veteran reunions. A formal regionwide Confederate veterans' association emerged in 1889 in the form of the United Confederate Veterans (UCV). The UCV, which was similar in purpose to the Southern Historical Society, dedicated its efforts to preserving the South's ver-

sion of the war. To accomplish this task, the organization produced the *Confederate Veteran* magazine, a monthly periodical first published in 1893, which publicized many of the club's activities. As historian Gaines Foster has noted, the *Veteran's* human-interest stories and devotion to various Confederate celebratory activities made it an immensely popular tool for inspiring southern audiences. As such, camp membership in the UCV increased significantly at the turn of the century, to 850 local camps by 1896 and 1,565 by 1904. The movement to preserve this Confederate heritage proved so popular in fact that organizations for female and male descendants of Confederate veterans, the United Daughters of the Confederacy (UDC) and the United Sons of Confederate Veterans (later known as the Sons of Confederate Veterans), were also formed during the final decade of the nineteenth century.⁷

Yet the Lost Cause activism of these organizations also masked a white-supremacist version of remembering the Civil War. The UCV's leadership denied the centrality of the role of slavery to the onset of the war and instead expended a disproportionate amount of energy advocating the imagery of the brave soldier, the faithful slave, and the suffering yet loyal southern woman. Amid the harsh realities of *Plessy v. Ferguson* and the Jim Crow South, the UCV's representation of the conflict grew to dominate the landscape of Civil War remembrance. James Conquest Cross Black, a former U.S. congressman from Georgia, epitomized this vision when he addressed the audience at a UCV reunion in Augusta, Georgia, in 1903, proclaiming, "We did not fight to perpetuate African slavery, but we fought to preserve and perpetuate for our posterity the God-given right of the freedom of the white man." Black, who had served in the Ninth Kentucky Cavalry, urged his fellow veterans to continue the struggle of recording the South's proper version of the war as he insisted that if any liberation had to be commemorated, it would be the "Anglo-Saxon emancipation" of southern whites from their postwar northern "oppressors." In essence the Confederate memory of the war, as promoted by the UCV and its dependant organizations, served as a bastion against perceived northern biases and distortions of their own idealized past.⁸

Class strife in the postwar South added to the maelstrom of nostalgia and race in the struggle to interpret and memorialize the Civil War. Southern elites, besieged by the social ferment created by the late-nineteenth-century reform movements of the Grange, the Farmers Alliance, and the Populist Party, grew uneasy with the agrarian protests that threatened their supremacy in the region. This oligarchy also felt threatened by perceived northern attacks upon their region. Consequently they used the Confederate historical societies to perpetuate the Old South's values as illustrated through the Lost Cause rhetoric to reassert their political and social influence over disgruntled white and black

farmers. As Fred A. Bailey has argued, southern elites realized that to galvanize support, they had to make sure that all “southern whites must be taught to think correctly, to appreciate the virtue of elite rule, to fear the enfranchisement of blacks, and to revere the Confederate cause.”⁹

In this highly charged atmosphere, George Washington Littlefield, called by his Civil War rank of major by his friends, moved to Austin in 1883 to continue his real estate and banking ventures while gradually becoming a politically influential person thanks to his growing wealth and interest in state affairs. Soon after arriving in the Texas capitol, Littlefield joined the John Bell Hood Camp of Confederate veterans. In the early 1890s the camp joined the UCV in concentrating on following the regional organization’s goals of promoting the South’s interpretation of the war through the preservation of history and the establishment of monuments celebrating the Confederate cause. As William Von Rosenberg, chairman of the UCV’s Confederate Monument Committee of Texas, stated in 1895, Texans “had a special duty upon us caring for the memory of all the heroes of the ‘Lost Cause.’”¹⁰

This proved to be a rallying cry for Texas veteran organizations as they led movements to build monuments throughout the Lone Star State. In 1896 Littlefield and his fellow members of the John Bell Hood Camp received a message from the chairman of the Ben E. McCulloch Camp urging them to forego the minutia of recounting battles for the sake of embracing the bravery and conviction of the Confederate cause. For Littlefield his membership in the UCV and his responsibility as an officer in the Terry’s Texas Rangers Association meant that he played a prominent role in staking a claim to the public memory of the war. In June 1898 Littlefield and his fellow UCV veterans met with Texas governor Charles Allen Culberson and received approval to build a monument in front of the decade-old Texas Capitol to celebrate the bravery of Texans who fought in the Civil War. After a slight delay caused by a lack of resources for construction, Littlefield and his fellow veterans raised the necessary funds to build a monument featuring Jefferson Davis surrounded by figures honoring the four branches of the Confederate military: the infantry, artillery, cavalry, and navy. The monument committee awarded the contract to Frank Teich, a German immigrant sculptor and stonecutter living in San Antonio. Teich in turn advertised for a sculptor for the bronze statue of Davis and found Pompeo Coppini, an Italian immigrant living in New York, who was willing to move to Texas to take on the challenge. In 1901 the monument was unveiled on the south entrance of the capitol grounds. Coppini’s initial work would launch a longstanding relationship between the Italian sculptor and Texas veterans’ groups that would lead to the erection of dozens of additional memorials throughout the Lone Star State.¹¹

Yet Coppini was not solely responsible for the Confederate memorial renaissance that proliferated throughout numerous county seats in Central, North, and East Texas at the turn of the twentieth century. From creating statues dedicated to the pantheon of Confederate leaders, Jefferson Davis, Robert E. Lee, Stonewall Jackson, and Albert Sidney Johnston, to creating monuments devoted to the common soldier of the Confederacy, veterans' organizations and their supporting descendants' groups rallied to preserve the southern memory of the war.¹² In the last decade of the nineteenth century, newspapers throughout the Lone Star State urged readers to unite behind these groups to remember and honor the sacrifices of the Lost Cause generation. As Von Rosenberg, chairman of the Texas monument committee, argued in his "appeal" to the people of Texas: "In the 'lost cause' the south has failed to establish a nation, but the deeds of her heroes who fought, suffered and died for the cause are as exalted . . . as any of which history tells us." He urged citizens to consider how important their state was to the preservation of the Confederate cause, pointing out that in the post-Reconstruction years, people from throughout the former Confederacy now chose to call Texas home. That alone, according to Von Rosenberg, imposed "a special duty upon us of caring for the memory of all the heroes of the 'lost cause' without distinction." From the 1890s to the World War I era, Confederate apologists proved formidable, intertwining monument construction with elaborate unveiling celebrations that sought to bring white citizens together for the sake of civic pride and regional nostalgia.¹³

While the monuments and the unveiling ritual served vital roles in presenting the proper memory of the South, the apostles of the Lost Cause in Texas had another equally important task at hand: the need to ensure that a correct and proper history of the Confederacy be preserved for future generations. In the late nineteenth century, Texas Confederate societies were appalled by the growing criticism of northern writers who condemned the southern aristocracy for launching the Civil War. Consequently the Texas Division of the UDC spearheaded a propaganda campaign to emphasize the central tenets of the Lost Cause. Allied with the UCV, the two organizations published lists of critical northern texts, urged libraries to eliminate disapproved books, and mobilized southerners to defend their ideological and social values. In June 1897 the efforts of these partisans resulted in the passage of Texas' uniform textbook law, which required all cities with populations of less than 10,000 to adopt state-mandated textbooks. Moreover, with the introduction of a board to review textbooks, hold hearings, and select proper academic works advocating the South's version of the war for subsequent generations, Texas legislators ensured that the state's youth would receive a sanitized version of the Civil War emphasizing the southern spirit and highlighting the state's patriotism. The Texas UCV and UDC even focused their

wrath on colleges that used history texts with a purported northern bias. Through their efforts one highly criticized text, Henry William Elson's *History of the United States of America* (1904), which dared to describe the Civil War as a "Slaveholders' War" and praised Pres. Abraham Lincoln for the preservation of the Union, was removed from the curriculum at Sam Houston State Normal Institute and UT-Austin in the first decades of the twentieth century.¹⁴

George Washington Littlefield found himself directly involved in the UT-Austin's decision to drop Elson and the equally controversial Edward Channing book, *A Student's History of the United States* (1898). As the first decade of the twentieth century came to a close, Littlefield received an appointment to serve on the Texas Library and Historical Commission from Gov. Thomas M. Campbell. A few years later, in 1911, Gov. Oscar Colquitt appointed him to the Board of Regents of the University of Texas. Littlefield's selection to the board led the historian of the Texas Division of the UCV to write optimistically that the Austin banker was now "in a position to lay the ax to the root of this deadly Upas tree."¹⁵ Littlefield's prominent role in Texas Confederate veterans' groups in the last two decades had clearly influenced his way of thinking about the South's legacy in regards to the Civil War and Reconstruction. As Texan native John H. Reagan, the former postmaster of the Confederacy, argued in an address to all veterans, the real causes of the war remained the South's constitutional prerogative in response to the revenue policies of the federal government. Reagan also defended the South's role in relation to slavery, pointing out that national leaders like George Washington and Andrew Jackson were also slaveowners, albeit without the taint of treason painted on the former Confederates by northern partisans.¹⁶ Littlefield, like many of his fellow veterans, were thus privy to the Lost Cause rhetoric espousing the righteousness of secession and supporting the romantic image of the plantation culture, particularly to the innocence of the South regarding slavery.

Littlefield took his newfound responsibilities as an arbiter of southern history to heart. By the time he joined the Board of Regents, he had begun the gradual process of withdrawing himself from his business affairs and viewing his duties to influence future generations of Texans with a deep reverence. Accordingly Littlefield urged UT-Austin president Edward Mezes to seek a reason for why the History Department used the Elson book. The department chairman, Eugene C. Barker, conceded Elson's failings in regards to the views of southern slaveholders and President Lincoln, but he argued that the author's views of Reconstruction were in accordance with the South's general disdain for that era. Barker assured Mezes that he was loyal to the South. "I beg to remind you, sir, that I am a southern man," he wrote. "I was born, and have lived all of my life, in Texas." Even though Barker might have compromised his academic

principles for the sake of appeasing his superiors and retaining his position as department chair, the Elson episode actually gave him an opportunity to petition Littlefield for a donation to develop a southern manuscript collection to provide an adequate basis for a southern interpretation of the past. Despite an added controversy brought on by the John Bell Hood Camp over the university's use of the Channing text, Barker eventually succeeded in winning over Littlefield. In March 1914 Littlefield called the professor to his downtown office. For the next month he negotiated the creation of a fund for southern history, culminating with a gift of \$25,000 to secure adequate resources for a proper history of the South. In a letter to Clarence Ousley, the chairman of the Board of Regents, Littlefield announced his "desire to see a history written of the United States with the plain facts concerning the South, especially since 1860, fairly stated—that the children of the South may be truthfully taught, and persons matured since 1860 may be given opportunity to inform themselves correctly." On April 28 the board formally accepted Littlefield's gift to establish the Littlefield Fund for History.¹⁷

This donation to create a true history of the South drew statewide praise for Littlefield's efforts to curb a growing sense of perceived injustice at the hands of northerners. For southerners, many of whom still felt affronted by biased histories, the idea that an authentic history of the South would be promoted and emphasized was a godsend. Newspapers like the *Fort Worth Record* and the *Austin Statesman* heaped praise on the Austin philanthropist for his efforts to promote the notion that the "South's part in history should be known, not only for the justification of the South in seeking to dissolve the Union, but for the instruction of the nation in the causes which might again imperil the Union."¹⁸

While the media organs trumpeted the virtues of a nonpartisan approach to studying the past, to "enable the world to learn the real facts . . . without prejudice," the truth of the matter was that the history Littlefield extolled sought to vindicate the Confederacy, defend southern culture, and preserve the social strata in the New South as defined by class and race.¹⁹ As one newspaper boasted: "Major Littlefield's gift, to have a true history of the South written, proves that his southern sentiments are not lost in the vortex of commercialism. . . . [T]he white people love Major Littlefield because he is a great man, but the negroes love him because he is a good man. In all industrial affairs, God has interlaced the white man's brain with the negro's muscle, and both must be just, honest, and helpful to each other and when the history is written and published that Major Littlefield knows the world needs, this will be proven." Littlefield's financial support for a southern archival research depository thus touched upon the pro-southern issues that perpetuated in Texas during the Progressive period. These concepts drew widespread support from individuals, who heaped praise

on the former Confederate officer.²⁰ Notably, Littlefield's donation also drew a tribute from Georgia native Mildred Lewis Rutherford, the UDC's official historian from 1911 to 1916, who happened to be in Texas on a speaking tour dealing with the South and history when she received word of Littlefield's bequest. Rutherford, whose views on "true" southern history condemned Reconstruction, praised the Ku Klux Klan as defenders of southern virtue, and offered a benevolent view of slavery, informed the major that his actions in Texas deserved to be replicated in Georgia.²¹

Littlefield's efforts to ensure a proper reinterpretation of the past involved areas other than textbooks. The monument-building wave that permeated the national landscape in the years following the Civil War showed few signs of abating during the early twentieth century.²² In the decade following the dedication of the Confederate armed forces monument at the capitol, Littlefield had seen an additional three monuments built in his adopted hometown. In 1906 the UDC celebrated the dedication of a monument to Albert Sidney Johnston at the Texas State Cemetery, a celebration followed by the unveiling of a memorial to Terry's Texas Rangers on the capitol grounds the following year. Finally, in March 1910, members of Hood's Texas Brigade dedicated a monument to their unit on the increasingly crowded capitol grounds.²³ And while Littlefield was both directly and indirectly drawn to the monument building in Austin, he also ventured to areas outside the Lone Star State to help with the memorialization of his beloved South, particularly supporting the construction of a monument to Jefferson Davis in Fairview, Kentucky, the birthplace of the former Confederate president. During World War I, he donated \$40,000 to "further honor the memory" of Davis and "the cause which he should personify to the American people" with the building of a 351-foot obelisk column.²⁴

Despite the fact that Davis received a great deal of criticism during the war, including much of the blame for the Confederacy's failures, his postwar career and perceived suffering at the hands of northern Republicans had remade the former president into a powerfully symbolic figure in the postwar South. Davis's death on December 5, 1889, completed the transformation from scapegoat to southern icon. In 1807 more than 200,000 spectators came to witness the dedication of the Jefferson Davis monument in Richmond, Virginia. The following year the newly created Jefferson Davis Monument Association in New Orleans planned a memorial for the one hundredth anniversary of Davis's birth on June 3, 1908. Throughout the South, tributes to the former Confederate president emerged in various forms. Littlefield had been cognizant of the partisans' rhetoric regarding Davis. The UCV had long praised the former president and his interpretation of secession. In Texas the UCV chapters echoed the South's adoration of his leadership during the Civil War as they incorporated him in vari-

ous monuments throughout the state. Yet Texans took the adulation of Davis a step further by tying him to the annexation of Texas. In one address delivered at a meeting of the Pat Cleburne Camp No. 22 on the anniversary of Davis's birth, the Reverend S. A. King pointed out that Davis was a member of the U.S. Congress when the subject of Texas annexation came up and that he "favored the measures leading to the expansion of the United States which took in Texas." As such Davis clearly meant a great deal to those who sought to maintain ties to the state's past and its birth.²⁵

For Littlefield to revere the Confederate president was thus not out of the ordinary in the New South. Yet his desire to commemorate Davis and the heroes of the Confederacy needed some direction. After all, the major facets of the Texas Confederate experience were already memorialized on the capitol grounds and in the Texas State Cemetery. The major would find a new site for maintaining his vision of the South and the Confederacy on the campus of UT-Austin. Through his business ventures and political contacts, Littlefield had found himself drawn to the events on the Forty Acres campus. When he received the governor's appointment to the Board of Regents, he saw it as a responsibility to shape the minds and memories of future Texans. Even though he lived practically across the street from the campus and had contributed small gifts to the school prior to receiving his appointment to the board, the real catalyst and motivation for his utmost devotion to the university in his waning years would stem from his belief that it had been under the negative influence of a disloyal Texan, George Washington Brackenridge, a man who had left the state to avoid joining the Confederacy during the Civil War, for far too long.²⁶

Brackenridge, a native of Indiana, had moved to Texas at the age of twenty-one in 1853 and eventually prospered in the cotton trade by the outbreak of the Civil War. Even though three of his brothers served in the Confederacy, Brackenridge held Unionist sympathies. In 1863 he left the Lone Star State to take a position in the U.S. Treasury Department in Union-occupied New Orleans. After the war he moved to San Antonio and became a wealthy banker and businessman with Republican leanings until he received his appointment to the UT-Austin Board of Regents. In his later years the Harvard-educated Brackenridge directed his philanthropy to educational pursuits, including donations to UT-Austin and Guadalupe College, a school for African Americans in Seguin, among others. His political and educational philosophies thus worked at cross-purposes to Littlefield's views on revering the Old South. This proved especially true in 1910, when Brackenridge remained the lone regent to vote against an offer from the UDC to provide a \$25 award given to the student writing the best paper on southern history at the university. The mere fact that Brackenridge felt the university should not invest itself in discussions of the Civil War was tantamount to

treason to Littlefield, who had devoted a significant portion of his time and money to that very purpose. As Littlefield's biographer, J. Evetts Haley, argues, Brackenridge's views against the pro-southern version of the Civil War only compounded the dissatisfaction the major felt regarding the man's disloyalty to the South during the war and Reconstruction years.²⁷

Although Brackenridge resigned his place on the board the same year Littlefield assumed his duties as regent, the San Antonio residents' antipathy for all things Confederate would move the Austin banker to slowly chip away at the legacies he left behind. Foremost among these was Brackenridge's desire to move the university campus to a five-hundred-acre tract of land by the Guadalupe River and away from Austin's commercial district. Brackenridge had already donated money to establish the Brackenridge Loan Fund for Women Students in Architecture, Law, and Medicine and provided funding for the first dormitory for men on the university campus, Brackenridge Hall, or "B" Hall, before attempting to donate the riverfront property. Yet it was his overall imprint on university life that made Littlefield fume. As UT-Austin president Robert Vinson observed: "When Mr. Brackenridge spoke of the University of Texas he always emphasized the word University. Major Littlefield emphasized the word Texas." For Littlefield, anything that minimized or decried Texas and the views of the Old South that he and his Confederate partisans promoted had to be addressed.²⁸

The idea of memorializing the Confederacy on the UT-Austin campus first surfaced during Littlefield's tenure as regent. According to Coppini, Littlefield had been pondering a way to build a Confederate monument on the university grounds for a few years. Yet it was not until 1916 when Coppini's dire financial circumstances forced him to take the initiative and urge Littlefield to contract him to build a "monument to the Confederate cause at the south entrance of the University Campus" and "keep me in Texas, and from selling my beautiful studio and home." During their negotiations Littlefield divulged his plans to memorialize the South with a monumental arch affixed with statues dedicated to Jefferson Davis, Texas governor James Hogg, Confederate postmaster general John H. Reagan, and Gens. Robert E. Lee and Albert Sidney Johnston. The problem, though, was that Littlefield planned to venerate the southern heroes for the sum of \$50,000, a figure Coppini thought was extraordinarily low. Dejected, the sculptor left his meeting with Littlefield and proceeded to sell his home and studio in San Antonio before moving to Chicago shortly afterward. But the idea to revere the heroes of the South would germinate with Littlefield for the next few years.²⁹

The fact that Coppini suggested to Littlefield the idea for a memorial to the Confederacy should not have been surprising. Coppini after all had established a reputation throughout the South, if not the nation, for his statues and monu-

ments to Texas and the Confederacy during the early twentieth century. His work on Texas memorials, including a statue commemorating the survivors of the Galveston flood and a cenotaph of the Alamo, also brought praise and support from influential figures in the state. U.S. senator Morris Sheppard, in a reference letter supporting the Italian artist's work on a monument to Stonewall Jackson in Richmond, noted that Coppini "has chosen to identify himself particularly with the South and is so thoroughly in sympathy with southern tradition and ideals that I consider him peculiarly well-qualified for a work of this character." Coppini's sympathies for all things southern did not end with a special reverence for fallen heroes. He also took the New South's attitudes in regards to racial relations to heart. In his autobiography Coppini recounts how he was forced to sell his home once a "Negro" moved into his neighborhood, thereby "punishing" all the white residents. The sculptor supported segregation and questioned those willing to challenge "God's will" in regards to racial amalgamation. He thereby epitomized the white-supremacist views that characterized Texas and the South during the Jim Crow era.³⁰

As Coppini moved to the Midwest, Littlefield prepared his legacy at the university. He retired from his position as president of American National Bank and began to consolidate his wealth and formulate his last will and testament. In those last years Littlefield set aside additional money for the Southern History Collection, purchasing the John Wrenn Library of rare literary works from Chicago, and provided \$300,000 for the Alice Littlefield Dormitory for freshman girls. More importantly for the major, he set aside a considerable sum for a memorial to the South's heroes on the university campus, providing \$200,000 "to erect a massive bronze arch over the south entrance to the campus of the University of Texas" upon his death. When Littlefield died on November 10, 1920, he left behind a detailed will that named fellow regent Will C. Hogg and American National Bank vice president H. A. Wroe as executors of the project, which would feature President Davis as the centerpiece atop the proposed arch, with Generals Lee and Johnston flanking the former chief executive and Texas heroes Reagan and Hogg supporting the venerated southern icons. The major provided specific instructions for the arch, leaving discretionary orders for his executors to "change" the "design as they wish." Yet he wanted control over choosing the sculptor who would forge the statues of his heroes. So in March 1920, just months before he passed away, Littlefield contacted Coppini and contracted him for the work. By the summer of that year, the sculptor had persuaded Littlefield to donate \$250,000 for the monument, to be divided in two sums, half for the construction costs and half for sculptural work.³¹

Citing the rising costs of labor and material after the Great War, Coppini was never confident that a memorial arch across the southern entrance of the university

could be built with the money Littlefield allotted. Accordingly he and the Littlefield Memorial Committee quickly set out to modify the plans Littlefield left behind. One of the first modifications was to touch on the spirit of national reunification in the post–World War I era by including an homage to the North. Within a few months additional changes came about. Specifically, in lieu of an arch, the committee came up with the concept of commemorating the fallen soldiers of the Great War by building a memorial fountain in front of the university's main building to be flanked with two tall pillars, representing the North and South, being united by a central statue representing the "Spirit of Columbia" in the act of crossing the ocean with her "army and navy" bringing the "inspiration" of "freedom." The memorial would stand on two elevations, according to these early plans: the first level would include the fountain and the Columbia centerpiece, while the second, higher level would consist of the two main columns and the additional statues to the South's heroes that Littlefield proposed. Atop the two pillars would stand figures of U.S. president Woodrow Wilson and Jefferson Davis, the Confederate president thus epitomizing "states rights" and Wilson standing for "world's rights," according to Coppini.³²

Littlefield's will ensured that his vision for memorializing the southern heroes of the South would live on at the UT-Austin campus. Despite the few changes brought about by the monument committee, the fact remained that Littlefield's interpretation of the past and his reverence for his beloved region was meticulously planned. Not only did Littlefield secure the services of the particular sculptor to relate to the rest of the world the design he had envisioned years earlier but also established a strict completion schedule, which specified to his executors that the work must be finished no later than seven years after his death. With such stringent guidelines left behind, Coppini started to work on the first set of sculptures less than a year after Littlefield died. By the fall of 1921, he had finished the preliminary work on the statues of Davis and Johnston.³³

Yet despite all the care and planning that went into Littlefield's last will and testament regarding the memorial, a mild resistance to his nostalgic view of the Confederacy and the Old South began to emerge during the 1920s. Texans were undergoing a gradual transformation in how they perceived themselves. The memories and celebrations of the Confederate past, which unified white Texans with their fellow white southerners at the turn of the century, slowly began to recede after World War I in favor of a Texas exceptionality that celebrated the state's history as uniquely American, more western than southern. As historian Walter Buenger has noted, Texans, who had already distorted their history to perpetuate the popular myth that the Civil War was fought for states' rights and that slavery was a benevolent institution, began to alter their past once more, this time to emphasize the notion that Texans had more in common with the American frontier spirit than the slave-ridden South. As Texas moved toward its

1936 centennial celebration, "Texans abandoned the limited possibilities and racist ideology implicit in the Lost Cause and adopted the mantle of progress of the Texas Revolution."³⁴ Accordingly the Lone Star State shifted from its Old South and Confederate traditions and reached toward a form of Texas nationalism that celebrated its unique past.

This shifting historical emphasis was not the only issue that threatened to minimize Littlefield's vision. More directly related to the monument, President Wilson, a longtime advocate of the Lost Cause and southern history, had refused to participate in Coppini's sculptural vision. President Vinson asked Postmaster General Albert Sidney Burleson (a Texan) to bring the matter to Wilson's attention, secure his support for the erection of his statue, and provide Coppini with articles of clothing for an accurate model. Wilson, however, refused to cooperate because he did not support the notion that the Littlefield project conveyed the spirit of national unity it proclaimed. "I am sorry to say I must express an entire unwillingness to have my effigy mounted as is suggested in association with the proposed memorial," the president wrote. "Moreover . . . I don't fancy the partner [Davis] they offer me." Despite this rebuff, university officials persevered. As Vinson reluctantly informed Coppini: "[I]t was impossible to interest him [Wilson] in the matter, or secure his permission to make use of him for the purpose of the Littlefield Memorial. I am sure that the work will have to be done without his permission."³⁵ Even though Wilson had long propagated insensitive racial views toward African Americans and sympathies with the South during Reconstruction, during the last decade of his life, he demonstrated a more ambivalent view regarding racial matters. In a 1923 letter to Senator Sheppard, Wilson described the recently revived Ku Klux Klan as an "obnoxious" and "harmful" organization.³⁶

While the shifting importance on revering Texas's southern version of history might have proved a significant obstacle for Coppini, a truly formidable challenge for the artist's sculptures came in the form of university officials who grew uneasy with Littlefield's vision. Foremost among them was William James Battle, a professor of classics, a former university president, and member of the Board of Regents. Born in North Carolina and educated at the University of North Carolina and Harvard, Battle arrived on the Forty Acres campus in 1893 as an associate professor of Greek. In addition to his teaching duties, Battle had a certain artistic vision that allowed him to play a prominent role in the development of the university, going as far as designing the official university seal in 1901 and serving as the chairman of the Faculty Building Committee in 1920.³⁷

In 1921 Professor Battle traveled to Coppini's art studio in Chicago to observe the Italian sculptor's progress and to determine how Littlefield's vision would be incorporated onto the university campus. Immediately he balked at the intended national memorial: "The conception of the Entrance Memorial

seems to me open to serious objections. If I understand Mr. Coppini correctly, the monument is intended to commemorate the Reunion of the Nation after the Civil War. The conception is noble and defensible in itself, but a fatal objection is the fact that every single statue represents a southern man. How can a group composed of men from only one section stand for a united nation?"³⁸ Battle did not wholly object to the idea of a southern monument, rather he demurred from the disingenuous description of the memorial as a symbol of reunification. He mildly criticized the sculptor's work on the statues of Davis and Johnston but offered a more damning assessment by openly questioning how Littlefield's memorial would stand the test of time. "The Monument may be out of scale with or not stand in suitable relation to the future buildings on the campus," he reported to President Vinson. Shortly after receiving Battle's letter, Vinson wrote to Coppini and echoed many of the professor's concerns, arguing that the proportions of the monument need to be reconsidered in regards to the "environs of the University buildings."³⁹

Coppini was incensed with Battle's evaluation. In a private letter to Vinson, he questioned Battle's credentials for critiquing his sculptural work and castigated the classics professor for not divulging his apprehensions while he visited with him in Chicago. More importantly Coppini argued that the direction and the vision Littlefield marked in his will remained incontrovertible: "Why should then this Prof. Battle alone in his condemnation approach you with such a contentable [*sic*] affront to my work, to my conception, to the Architects' work and studies, to your judgment in approving it, and to the judgment of Major George W. Littlefield in wanting what he wanted in that Monument and in selecting me and you for your ability, honesty, and integrity?" The day after he wrote Vinson, Coppini contacted Harry Hertzberg, a San Antonio lawyer, and asked him to examine his contract with the university to see how much artistic control he really had over the Littlefield monument. The sculptor also asked Hertzberg to "smooth the rough" waters between him and Vinson, who also happened to be a friend of the attorney. Hertzberg advised Coppini that he should not worry about Battle's letter and urged him to show a bit of restraint when communicating with Vinson. He even went as far as to compose a letter for Coppini that retreated from calling Battle a "snake rattler" in lieu of a more diplomatic but equally terse message suggesting that the professor misjudged Coppini's conception and pointed out how the "criticisms are not only unjust [*sic*] but villainous." Coppini complained about the matter, but he followed Hertzberg's advice and continued to work on the memorial's statues throughout the winter of 1921–22.⁴⁰

Battle's critique and the accompanying doubts expressed by Vinson served as the opening salvos in what would eventually be a decade-long struggle over Littlefield's vision to memorialize his southern heroes and university officials'

concerns about the propriety of a massive shrine to the Confederacy on the campus grounds. Yet the aesthetic and architectural interpretations of the memorial were not the only problems at hand. Within a year after the Battle debacle, Coppini was writing to the Trustees of the Littlefield Memorial, President Vinson, and H. A. Wroe to complain about the litany of difficulties he faced, including rising costs of materials and the poor facilities in his Chicago studio. Adding to these woes, university officials and the monument committee threatened to reduce the opulence of the memorial due to budgetary shortfalls and its failure to harmonize with the university's architectural design. Coppini realized that it had been more than six years since Littlefield had passed away, and time was running short on the seven-year deadline. Conscious of time and his own dwindling resources, Coppini furiously wrote letters to his architects, James R. M. Morison and Frank Chase Walker, which outlined his frustrations working with the university and their failure to recognize Littlefield's vision. Not one to quell his anger, Coppini fired an angry letter to the Littlefield trustees at the end of 1926, charging the committee, which now included Dr. William R. M. Splawn, who had taken over for Vinson as university president in 1924, with "neglect in studying the contract." In essence he hinted that the Littlefield Memorial funds had been misappropriated by the committee. Coppini continued to campaign to preserve Littlefield's vision by writing letters to influential Texans, hoping to gain their support.⁴¹

For the next three years, as the deadline came and went, Coppini's battle with the university and the monument committee centered around school officials' resistance to the lavish southern memorial and the trustees' refusal to use the accrued interest of the \$250,000 bequest to pay for the cost overruns caused by the ensuing delays. Undaunted by the challenge of facing the university and the committee, Coppini argued that he did not seek to become a wealthy man but wanted "the vision of Littlefield preserved." By 1928 he bragged that "[a]t last the fight has started and the battle from now on will be as furious as the Chicago Election." In a letter to newly appointed UT-Austin president Harry Y. Benedict, Coppini threatened that "there shall be no redesigning of the Littlefield Memorial" lest the university wants long litigation. Despite the sculptor's pleas for common sense and devotion to Littlefield's vision, the committee remained steadfast, informing him that the money just simply was not available and that the memorial had to be completed "within the limits of the sum provided." Even Coppini's complaints that the university architects contradicted Littlefield's intentions went unheeded. By 1929 an exasperated Wroe informed Coppini that his goal of fulfilling the major's bequest looked bleak.

Your contract was signed by Major Littlefield. Neither the courts nor the executors will recognize any alleged verbal agreement, and if you care to

listen to your legal advisors, the courts are open for you. As to the trustees or executors of the Estate putting up additional funds to complete this memorial, that is impossible and will not be done. . . . You state in your letter that the design was accepted by Major Littlefield. That may be true, but the funds are not sufficient to erect it according to the plans and specifications furnished. As far as Mr. [Herbert M.] Greene is concerned, he is the architect for the University of Texas, and has something to say as to the location of the buildings, etc., on the grounds, and we conferred with Mr. Greene after we found that it was impossible to use the plans and specifications that had been submitted.

Even though Coppini fired off another letter to Hertzberg, he and his architects began to consider revised plans for the Littlefield Memorial by the fall.⁴²

If money and design were the bane of Coppini's artistic vision during the last few years, an additional challenge surfaced in the last few weeks of 1929. On December 9 Wroe informed him that the Board of Regents did not want the memorial on the southern entrance to the university and preferred a more discrete location just east of the football stadium, approximately six hundred yards to the east. This latest development deeply exasperated Littlefield's widow, Alice, and the UDC, who still longed to see a memorial to the heroes of the South on campus. Mrs. Littlefield threatened to donate the completed monument, whose statues were still being held in storage, to the City of Austin if her husband's wishes in regards to the specific location were not observed. This latest challenge festered for several months while Mrs. Littlefield sought alternatives to fulfill her late husband's wishes. In the meantime Coppini's associates urged him to demonstrate a bit of restraint when communicating with university officials. Still, by January 1930 the board had made no decision regarding the monument.⁴³

By the spring of 1930, the university had finally moved to resolve the issue of the Littlefield Memorial. On March 8 the Board of Regents hired Paul Phillipe Cret as UT-Austin's supervising architect and commissioned him to draw up a general development plan for the campus. Even though his master plan would not be submitted until 1933, Cret quickly offered the board a series of sketches that dealt with the Littlefield Memorial and how it would fit with the aesthetic quality of the overall campus design. He supported keeping the fountain as the centerpiece of the memorial on the south entrance of the school. But instead of the two-tiered design with the statues to the heroes of the South surrounding the fountain, Cret recommended that the six figures could go on each side of two different pedestrian sidewalks leading from the main building southward to the fountain amid separate rows of majestic oaks. He hoped the statues would serve as sentinels that would stand guard in front of six new buildings to be sep-

arated by a large lawn designed to inspire students to congregate. Cret argued that his design for what would eventually be known as the South Mall would bring about the best sense of symmetry and order to the campus. Battle, who first showed ambivalence about the Littlefield Memorial almost nine years earlier, had worked tirelessly behind the scenes as the chairman of the Faculty Building Committee to persuade the regents to hire Cret. It remains unclear if Battle's initial opposition to Littlefield's design made it into his discussions with the regents nine years later. Nevertheless, unexpected funding from the federal government's Public Works Administration during the Great Depression made Battle and Cret's vision a reality. On July 16, 1930, the Board of Regents officially approved the plans for the Littlefield Memorial within the confines of the campus master plan.⁴⁴

With this approval secured, Coppini moved quickly. By late 1931 the figures of Davis and the other champions of the South had already been shipped to Texas. Coppini continued to work on the statue of Columbia, but rising construction costs and a general lack of funds continued to frustrate him. Over the next year the sculptor and the trustees exchanged letters that resonated with the same themes of the previous decade: Coppini asked for more money; the trustees refused.⁴⁵ Finally, on March 3, 1932, Coppini instructed Hertzberg to threaten a lawsuit against the trustees and the Board of Regents for failing to fulfill Littlefield's gift, which should have been completed five years earlier. With the school's fiftieth-anniversary celebration looming on the horizon and the potential public-relations nightmare that accusations of malfeasance might have caused, the board approved the additional funds needed to complete the project by dipping into the university's general fund. In a letter marked "personal" to Coppini's attorney, UT-Austin president H. Y. Benedict offered a prognostication on the board's decision just days before the regents met. As soon as the board made it official, Hertzberg sent Coppini a telegram offering his congratulations on fulfilling Littlefield's project. By the fall of 1932, the *San Antonio Express* reported that the remaining figures for the Littlefield Memorial had been shipped from New York City.⁴⁶

While the university's challenges to Littlefield's original design and the budgetary struggles over his bequest served as the main points of conflict between Coppini and school officials, a new source of friction stemmed from the final placement of the statues and a miscommunication regarding the monument unveiling. Even though he was aware that the spirit of Littlefield's design was not going to be incorporated into the university's general plan, he was still angry that he had no control over the final stages of construction. Coppini was disconcerted with Cret's sentinel design.⁴⁷ Particularly Coppini felt that the figures should have faced south, like many Confederate statues throughout the region.

"My memorial has been crippled by those in charge of that institution," he complained to Hertzberg, "but the truth will come out and their name will be despised if not forgotten."⁴⁸ Also troubling the sculptor was his belief that the university would not celebrate Littlefield's Memorial with an elaborate unveiling alongside the school's dedication of several new buildings. It irked him that he would not be visibly recognized for his artwork. In a bold move Coppini asked a few newspaper reporters to expose the failure of university officials to publicly acknowledge Littlefield's grand memorial and his artistic contribution to the project. Ironically, the same day that Coppini was attempting to sabotage the celebration, Read Granberry, an officer in the Ex-Students Association, invited Coppini and Hertzberg to attend the memorial unveiling ceremony during the university's Round-Up festivities, scheduled for April 29, which would also coincide with the school's dedication of several new buildings on the Forty Acres campus. As soon as he received this official notification, Coppini sent telegrams to his newspaper contacts and asked them to stop the publicity highlighting his erroneous belief that he was to be ostracized from the unveiling.⁴⁹

On April 29, 1933, the date of the commemoration, *The Daily Texan* declared that the Littlefield Memorial would be among the "Most Magnificent in World." The newspaper merely repeated what Coppini told them. The dignitaries, the alumni, and the invited guests for Round-Up viewed an elaborate dedication that not only included the tribute to the Littlefield Memorial but also the dedication of nine new school buildings. President Benedict and Professor Battle proudly proclaimed a historic benchmark for the university, one that would herald UT-Austin, in Benedict's words, "becoming the greatest institution of its kind in the world in the next fifty years." This camaraderie and spirit of generosity soon dissipated, however. Despite Coppini's positive outlook at the unveiling, he reminded Benedict that the university narrowly averted a lawsuit for forsaking Littlefield's vision. Within two years Coppini had no qualms charging that university officials had ruined the monument. In a speaking engagement with the Texas-Exes in October 1935, the sculptor reminded his audience that university officials had betrayed Littlefield's vision. The *San Antonio Express* heralded the news: "Maj. Littlefield Memorial Ruined Sculptor Asserts." In his autobiography, written more than fifteen years after the unveiling, Coppini maintained many of his previous points, asserting that although he carried out his contract to the letter, there were forces at work beyond his control that prohibited the erection of the memorial as originally planned. On that point he cannot be disputed. Key university officials saw through the charade of the Littlefield Memorial standing as a symbol of national reunification when it actually represented an homage to the southern Confederacy and supported a certain nostalgic vision of the South. Littlefield's vision was so strong that he tied

it to more than a million dollars he bequeathed to the university. School officials had little recourse but to accept his monument or risk offending the school's largest donor during its first fifty years.⁵⁰

When the Littlefield Memorial was completed during the Great Depression, the Lone Star State was in the midst of a general movement commemorating the Confederacy. Just two years prior to the unveiling, legislators passed a resolution to celebrate Robert E. Lee's birthday, January 19, as a state holiday. This measure coincided with a general mood throughout the state. For the remainder of the decade, cities and towns throughout Texas celebrated their Confederate past by venerating an icon of that period. Newspapers carried pleas for donations to build shrines; restore the Lee home in Stratford, Virginia; and to restore Camp Cooper (in present Shackelford County), where the future Confederate general was stationed during the 1850s. Texans were particularly interested in tying Lee to the Lone Star State despite his brief service as part of the U.S. Second Cavalry. Yet by the centennial celebration in 1936, Texans slowly began to distance themselves from their Confederate past in order to embrace the spirit of exceptionality and maintain a stronger tie to the American frontier. As such, by the mid-twentieth century they began to identify more with the symbols of cattle and oil than with the images of the Lost Cause and Confederate heroes.⁵¹

As Texans moved away from their Old South past to embrace the spirit of modernization, the statues on the South Mall and the nostalgia they were designed to inspire were largely ignored for two decades—that is until civil-rights activists began to chip away at UT-Austin's segregationist policies during the 1940s and 1950s. Like many schools throughout the South, UT-Austin practiced segregation. But on June 5, 1950, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled unanimously in *Sweatt v. Painter* that the separate-but-equal concept was inherently flawed and ordered the university to admit Heman Sweatt and several other African American students to various graduate school programs. Within six years UT-Austin became the first major university in the South to admit blacks as undergraduates. The following decade, as civil-rights forces galvanized, university students and those from Huston-Tillotson College (a historically black college in eastern Austin) staged demonstrations urging integration throughout the university and the capital. The Civil Rights Act of 1964, which outlawed racial discrimination in public accommodations, accelerated this process.⁵²

By the late 1960s the student body furthered the cause of civil rights by militant student organizations like the Afro-Americans for Black Liberation (ABL) and Mexican American Student Organization (MASO), which championed the plight of ethnic minorities. The ABL and MASO demanded affirmative action, dismissal of racist faculty, and a sensitivity to the history and study of ethnic minorities. Begrudgingly, the administration gave in to some demands, creating

an ethnic-studies program in 1970 and frowning upon the racist caricatures and stereotypes that continued to pervade some student groups at the school. In one case the Texas Cowboys, a university male-student organization, discontinued the use of blackface in its annual minstrel show.⁵³

Civil-rights activists spurred a counter-reaction from pro-segregationist forces that resisted the integration of schools and facilities. Many of these conservative advocates of the status quo rallied behind the images of the Confederacy and the states' rights philosophy it upheld. To many of these white southerners, the civil-rights movement stood as a second war of "northern aggression." Accordingly, in the mid-1960s organizations such as Society for the Prevention of Negroes Getting Everything (SPONGE) and other counter-protesters waved the Confederate flag and sang "Dixie" to counter the "We Shall Overcome" spirit of integrationist forces at UT-Austin. Yet as the struggle for civil rights continued at the university, the anti-segregationists also attacked the images of the Old South around which white students rallied. *The Daily Texan* noted the parallels to the Confederacy during April 1965, the centennial of the South's surrender in the Civil War. Stories and editorials discussed how the South was undergoing a "Second Reconstruction Era" on the hundredth anniversary of Appomattox. Students criticized the university's perpetuation of the "racist tradition of the South" and urged others to unite against the "myopic Confederate pomposity" of white supremacy.⁵⁴

By the American bicentennial celebration, the activist movement of the sixties, which included aspects of the counterculture and antiwar protests, waned significantly, a trend that was only exacerbated by the "Reagan Revolution" of the 1980s. During this decade the conservative backlash against left-leaning students, their organizations, and their agendas polarized the student body at UT-Austin as organizations like the White Students' Association challenged the legacy of the counterculture. New student organizations like the Mexican American Youth Organization (MAYO) and the Black Student Alliance (BSA) struggled to overcome what they perceived were decades of established racism at the school. These groups—and others—advocated women's rights, gay rights, and multicultural studies at UT-Austin and protested South African apartheid and university-sponsored celebrations like Texas Independence Day because it glorified the abuse of Mexican Americans.⁵⁵

This was the highly charged environment in which the Zeta Tau Delta and Phi Gamma Delta incidents in the spring of 1990 occurred and forced the university to deal with its legacy of insensitivity to ethnic-minority students. As the stories of fraternities using outdated and insensitive negative stereotypes circulated, additional students organized to counter these remaining relics of the South's racist past. Candlelight vigils and marches marked some of the student

activism following the events at Round-Up. Yet conservative white students resisted what they perceived was an attack on their history and their heritage. In one instance Greg Smith, a student at the university and member of the Chi Phi Fraternity, caused an uproar at a BSA march when he held a sign that read "Keep Sambo." Even though Smith eventually quit Chi Phi to avoid drawing additional ire to the fraternity, his unwanted notoriety led him and others to charge that too much was "already given" to minorities. Smith argued that he and others were "tired of hearing a small, vocal group of blacks . . . complain about the supposed inequalities" in America. Later that year university officials suspended the two fraternities, but student angst continued. Especially troubling to minority students was the meaning of the Confederate statues that lurked amid the large oak trees on South Mall. Students at UT-Austin, which was now more diverse than ever, openly questioned the legitimacy of statues of men who were not directly tied to the university, who supported slavery, and who championed the segregation of blacks and other minorities. This antiracism movement proved so great that Dr. Tom Philpott, a history professor at the university since the early 1970s, claimed that he had "never seen as much life in the students" in his nearly twenty years on campus.⁵⁶

University students continued to protest the Confederate statues well after the spring of 1990, the discourse carrying over to the following year when Democratic representative Sam Hudson from Dallas sponsored a bill urging their immediate removal from campus. Hudson, who had joined students on their April 1990 protest march against racism, believed the Davis statue in particular "could be recognized in other places rather than on that campus." But after more than an hour of testimony from students and Texas citizens, the legislature buried the bill in subcommittee. The whirlwind over the six statues did not die with the stalled bill, though, and minority students continued to agitate for greater sensitivity to their heritage and their past.⁵⁷

But university officials soon seemed to have found a safety valve. Ever since September 1989, a group of students had sought support for erecting a statue for civil rights leader Martin Luther King on campus. Becky Helton, the group's founder, criticized the university for not giving its full-fledged support despite two years of lobbying efforts. But in the wake of the April 1990 incidents, plans for a King statue were approved on December 7, and construction commenced the following spring. Financial shortfalls and other problems delayed the unveiling until September 1999. But if university officials hoped this would finally ease the student angst that had marked the early nineties, they were mistaken. Soon after the statue was unveiled on the East Mall, vandals attacked the monument on several occasions. This proved so troublesome that Dr. Larry R. Faulkner, president of UT-Austin, created the Task Force on Racial Respect and

Fairness to investigate the situation. Among their recommendations, which were released on January 2004, the committee urged the relocation of Littlefield's Confederate statues in order to include more racially diverse figures on the South Mall. Incoming president Larry Faulkner responded to this report in May. Faulkner questioned whether any committee could challenge the artistic value of the statues and demurred from outright removal because it resembled "censorship." Among the ideas he had under consideration was putting the statues back at the originally planned site, near the Littlefield Fountain, in order to provide a broader historical significance to each piece. As students, professors, and other citizens continued to clamor for their removal, Confederate heritage groups galvanized in support of the statues.⁵⁸

By January 2007 the issue of what to do with those Littlefield statues was still unresolved as groups from both sides continued to debate the matter. Adding fuel to the fire was Texas land commissioner Jerry Patterson, who argued for a more "balanced" view of history and accepted a donation from the Descendants of Confederate Veterans for an archive-preservation project on Confederate Heroes Day. Patterson, himself a descendant of a Rebel soldier, argued that opponents of Confederate memorials were unfamiliar with southern heritage. "All too often," he said, "the introduction of a young black man in the South [to the Confederacy and its history] is when a pickup truck blows by and a beer bottle comes flying out and on the back of the bumper is a Confederate battle flag."⁵⁹

As students and other observers await a resolution to the debate, lost is the original purpose of the Littlefield Memorial and its controversial aspects during the 1920s and 1930s. While university officials considered returning the statues to the original position as Coppini intended, they have paid little heed to Littlefield's actual goals. Littlefield remained a southern nationalist who wielded the Lost Cause as a weapon against any dissenting opinions. While his supporters praised his generosity to the university and his benevolence to African Americans, the Austin banker remained rooted to the Old South ideology of racial superiority. Contrary to what Coppini later wrote in his autobiography, the original intent for the memorial was not to show the unity between North and South after World War I, rather Littlefield used his wealth and influence to impose his cultural and social views on a financially needy university by tying his artistic vision to more than a million dollars worth of donations. Professor Battle and university officials altered Littlefield's original design because they recognized the inherently pro-South message the memorial implied. At present UT-Austin campus has the country's largest homage to the Confederacy in a major public institution. What those statues stand for is a reminder of what Littlefield had always wanted: a positive interpretation of the Old South

and its social values. As neo-Confederate groups and other advocates argue that the statues stand as symbols of the South's heritage of states' rights and individual sovereignty, they fail to note that the revered heroes themselves would have had no qualms about admitting that they supported the subjugation of African Americans.



The 1863 Exhibit, Pearce Civil War Museum,
Navarro College, Corsicana, Texas.
Courtesy Julie Holcomb