

Confederate Memorial Park Dedicated in Tampa

“The Quest for Liberty is Timeless”

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The world's largest Confederate flag, a 30' x 70', was proudly raised at the new Confederate Memorial Park in Tampa, FL. on Saturday, April 25, one day before the state's official Confederate Memorial Day. Through the tireless efforts of many people, a first class park has been constructed on property owned by a private individual who is a member of the Florida Division of the Sons of Confederate Veterans. Marion Lambert bought the property close to the intersection of I-4 and I-75 with the plan of putting up a memorial park and the largest flag pole possible.

The Jubal Early Camp #556 of Tampa and other area assisting camps was responsible for most of the park work and the carrying out of the dedication event.

The Flags over Florida project was begun by the Florida Division SCV in the mid 1990's. The purpose is to erect memorial poles and parks across Florida on private property and at prominent locations throughout the state. Two other sites in Florida include one on Hwy. 27 near the Georgia line and another one at the White Springs exit on I-75. This particular site, however, boasts a first-class memorial park with a 139' flagpole, a beautiful courtyard with grass, 400 blooming plants, a granite memorial marker, brick walls, and iron fencing.

The site is not finished, however, as there are plans for six inscription granite stones and bronze historical plaques. The names of over 600 Confederate soldiers are yet to be engraved on stones for the area, also. And many more can be added at a later date. The 76 inch granite stone at the foot of the pole carries the dedication inscription. Part of it reads: "To the soldiers, sailors, and marines of the Confederate States of America who fought, bled, and died, in defense of their homeland against ruthless invasion, and who strove to protect America's birthright of Constitutional liberty and freedom dating from 1776. This site is also dedicated to the nine million people of the southern states who in their struggle for states rights and independence, suffered and sacrificed all."

The park dedication was held on an almost hot spring day, just across the road in a 3 acre area loaned out for the event. Over 2000 folks came through the gates during the event. Living history areas, speaker, singers, food vendors, and gift vendors were on site. Speakers included SCV

Commander in Chief Chuck McMichael, Army of Tennessee Commander Kelly Barrow, Florida Division Commander Doug Dawson, author Don Kennedy, and Constitutional Scholar Marshall DeRosa. The keynote speaker for the event was Pastor John Weaver, two times SCV National Chaplain and active pastor. Weaver welcomed the crowd as "my fellow right wing extremists." He said that's what the government is now calling fundamental Constitutional believers. He stated that the Constitutional liberties that the South fought for then are the same liberties Americans must fight for now. Music was provided throughout the day by local bands including Early Camp Boys, Bobby Mountain Band, and Maaziah Mountain. The headliner was the Trey Jewell Band of Nashville. Jewell wrote and performed the song, "Let Her Fly" for the park dedication.

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The culmination of the days events was the raising of the massive flag around 4 PM. Marion Lambert dedicated the sight stating that "The quest for liberty is timeless." Re-enactors lined up to march across the road to the pole while ladies from the Order of Confederate Rose placed flowers along the way. The flag weighing 60 pounds was carried by the Color Guard to the site and slowly attached and hoisted. During the raising of the flag a hush fell over the crowd but as the flag rose into the air and was caught by a breeze the familiar Rebel yell was heard.

The first flag received over 20 days of continuous press coverage and protests by the NAACP. Marion Lambert said that because the SCV stood firm in their beliefs as their ancestors did, they were not defeated and the flag flies today on private property. After the dedication, an African-American member of the camp, Al McCray, was interviewed by a local Tampa television station. His comment should be taken well. He said, "We were slaves for 160 years under the American flag and only four under the Confederate flag. I don't see what the big deal is about the Confederate flag." The Confederate flag, misunderstood by many, was not the flag of a slave nation. It was the battle flag of an army defending their homeland. This man has it right. He's defending his heritage.