

Confederate Memorial Day Observed in Columbia

Confederate Memorial Day was observed in Columbia on Saturday, May 1, beginning at 10 AM at Elmwood Cemetery and concluding at the State House around 1 PM. Officially, the SC State Confederate Memorial Day is Monday, May 10, the same day as General "Stonewall" Jackson's birthday. However, throughout the state, observances are held on various days in different towns and cities as May is Confederate History Month in South Carolina.

Three UDC Chapters were in charge of the service held at Elmwood Cemetery including Mary Boykin Chestnut Chapter, Columbia Chapter, and Wade Hampton Chapter. Nita Keisler, SC Division Recorder of Military Service Awards, presided over the event. Introduced were the SC Division UDC President Retta Tindal, the President of the SC Division Children of the Confederacy; Josh Herron, SC Division SCV Commander Mark Simpson, and Military Order of Stars and Bars Commander Joe Payne.

But it was the keynote speaker Kristina Dunn Johnson who brought a tear to the eye. "Krissy" is the Curator of History and the Confederate Relic Room and Military Museum in Columbia. She holds a Bachelor Degree in History from Emory University and a Master Degree in History from USC. Krissy also is the author of her first book "No Holier Spot of Ground." This young lady has a passion for Confederate and Southern History and is already widely in demand as a speaker. Her topic, though unnamed in the program, was based on "An Army Overwhelmed But Not Defeated." Her inspiring talk drew us into the days of 1861-1865 and the hardships endured by the common soldier. In closing, Krissy said that those of us who dedicate ourselves to the preservation of the truth about the War for Southern Independence can be likened to the army surrendered at Appomattox - "Overwhelmed But Not Defeated."

A wreath was placed on the grave of the Unknown Soldier by Mrs. Tindal, Mr. Simpson, and Mr. Herron. The Palmetto Battalion gave a military salute. After the playing of "Tattoo" and "Taps" and the retirement of colors, many in attendance formed a procession to march to the Statehouse for the SC Division SCV Service.

The SCV Service began around 12 noon and was called to order by SC Division SCV Chaplain Ken Temples. Distinguished guests included SCV Commander Mark Simpson and SC Society Order of Confederate Rose Representative Ashley Stevens along with Gene Hogan, Councilman, Army of Northern Virginia. Mr. Hogan was the keynote speaker saying that in the days of the Sesquicentennial of the War Between the States, we will be questioned, ridiculed, and challenged. His hope is that we will be able to educate and change those who may be against what we believe in. If not, that we will be unchanged and undaunted in our resolve to continue to preserve our history.

Eight men were given the "Guardian Award" by Commander Simpson. These men have dedicated themselves for the rest of their lives to guarding and caring for the grave of one or more Confederate Soldiers. Among those receiving the Guardian award were Gary Lee Davis, 2nd Brigade Commander, SC Division SCV. Both Davis and Commander Simpson are members of the McGowan Camp #40 in Laurens.

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A cannon salute rocked the glass windows of nearby tall buildings and the rebel yell went up after the singing of Dixie. Another Confederate Memorial Day completed but just the beginning of many to be held this May in SC.