

CITY OF HOUSTON CONFEDERATE ITEMS TASK FORCE FINAL REPORT

MARCH 2018

I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The current movement to remove monuments and symbols of the Confederacy in the United States has its roots in the aftermath of the massacre of nine people by a white supremacist at the historic Emanuel A.M.E. Church in Charleston, South Carolina on June 17, 2015. After the Charleston massacre, state officials in South Carolina and Alabama ordered the removal of Confederate flags from state capitals and houses. Since 2015, cities and communities across the South and further afield have examined the question of what to do with Confederate monuments, most of which were constructed during the twentieth century, years after the Civil War ended. In August 2017, a violent white nationalist rally in Charlottesville, VA reignited this issue and caused an urgent public debate around removing such symbols across the United States.

That same month, Mayor Sylvester Turner asked senior staff members to study whether statues related to the Confederacy should be removed from City of Houston property.¹ To that end, the Mayor's Office convened and facilitated a Task Force that investigated how to most effectively make recommendations to the Mayor and City Council on handling several specific Confederate items in the City's possession. The Task Force makes recommendations on two statues, the Spirit of the Confederacy and a statue of Dick Dowling, as well as two paintings in the Julia Ideson Library Building of Arlington House and Beauvoir House.

The Task Force considered several potential recommended actions. Houston could remove the statues altogether. The City could opt to remove the Confederate items from their current locations and move them to other City of Houston property, for example Sam Houston Park. Alternatively, the City could leave the artworks in their current locations but provide additional information about the figures they represent and their historical significance. According to the National Trust for Historic Preservation: "memorials that remain must provide appropriate context about both the war and the perpetuation of injustice and inequality that these statues were intended to embody."²

After thoughtful consideration, the Task Force recommends that the two statues in question should not be displayed on public property. The recommendation is that they not be destroyed. The ultimate decision for exactly what is done with the statues is left to the Mayor. It is also recommended that the two paintings in the Julia Ideson Library Building should be left in place, but the Task Force recommends adding signage to give context to the time and reason for which they were commissioned and displayed.

¹ Mayor's Office Press Release. "Mayor Sylvester Turner Requests Staff Study of Confederacy Statues." 15 August 2017. <http://www.houstontx.gov/mayor/press/staff-study-confederate-statues.html>

² Meeks, Stephanie. "After Charlottesville: How to Approach Confederate Memorials in Your Community." 21 Aug. 2017. National Trust for Historic Preservation. <https://savingplaces.org/stories/after-charlottesville-confederate-memorials#.WgRpVKhSyM8>

While the Task Force unanimously supports this position, it is recommended that Mayor Turner determine the appropriateness of the timing and specifics of the decisions. The Task Force understands the current budget constraints facing the City of Houston, as well as the political sensitivities related to this issue.

This report provides the background for convening the Task Force, an overview of how cities around the country are proceeding on this issue, the process that the Task Force followed, an in-depth background on selected items, and recommendations for Mayor Turner and the City Council. An appendix includes an inventory of Confederate items in the City's possession.

The Task Force would like to thank and acknowledge the following City staff that contributed to the research and writing for this report: Annie Pope, Mayor's Office; Rick Dewees and Mike Isermann, Houston Parks and Recreation; Laney Chavez, Lisa Carrico, and Jason Stephens, Houston Public Library.

II. REACTIONS FROM ACROSS THE COUNTRY

In the wake of the Charleston massacre and the violence in Charlottesville last summer, mayors, governors, legislators, city council members, other elected officials, as well as universities and civic organizations, are considering what to do with the many Confederate items in their art collections. In many cases, they have already taken action, and Houston's Task Force looked at the experience of other jurisdictions.

A growing number of cities and states have removed statues or other Confederate artifacts from their public locations altogether. In December 2015, New Orleans Mayor Mitch Landrieu signed an ordinance calling for the removal of four public monuments to the Confederacy in that city. The first of these was removed in April 2017 and the other three were removed in May.³ In August, Maryland removed a statue of Supreme Court Chief Justice Roger Taney (author of the Dred Scott decision) from the Maryland state house in Annapolis. The Taney statue is a part of Maryland's art collection and has been moved to a secure facility in Baltimore County.⁴ The University of Texas at Austin removed three Confederate monuments from campus overnight in late August, in the wake of the Charlottesville rally.⁵

In December 2017, the city of Memphis removed statues of Confederate President Jefferson Davis and General Nathan Bedford Forrest from two public parks. The Tennessee Heritage Protection Act prohibits the removal, relocation, or renaming of a memorial on public property. In order to remove the statues in

³ Fausset, Richard. "Tempers Flare Over Removal of Confederate Statues in New Orleans." *The New York Times*, The New York Times, 7 May 2017, www.nytimes.com/2017/05/07/us/new-orleans-monuments.html. Accessed 23 Aug. 2017.

⁴ Wood, Pamela, and Erin Cox. "Roger Taney statue removed from Maryland State House grounds overnight." *Baltimoresun.com*, Baltimore Sun, 18 Aug. 2017, www.baltimoresun.com/news/maryland/politics/bs-md-taney-statue-removed-20170818-story.html.

⁵ "University of Texas at Austin Removes Confederate Statues in Overnight Operation." *The New York Times*, 21 Aug. 2017, www.nytimes.com/2017/08/21/us/texas-austin-confederate-statues.html?mcubz=0. Accessed 23 Aug. 2017.

question, Memphis Mayor Jim Strickland had sold two of its city parks to a nonprofit organization, which in turn was able to remove the statues.⁶

Some cities have removed and donated Confederate items to outside museums or organizations. In August, the Mayor of Daytona Beach, Florida, ordered the removal of three plaques commemorating Confederate soldiers, which are slated for donation to a local historical museum.⁷ In Gainesville, the local chapter of the United Daughters of the Confederacy paid for the removal of a statue that stood in front of an administrative building and moved it to a private cemetery outside of the city.⁸

Some cities are instead choosing to keep Confederate monuments in place and adding context. In Savannah, Georgia, a task force recommended renaming a statue from the Confederate Monument to Civil War Memorial, in addition to adding a plaque contextualizing the historical material.⁹ An advisory committee in Denton, Texas, voted to keep a monument of a Confederate soldier on the Denton Square and recommended adding context in the form of a plaque clarifying opposition to slavery.¹⁰

Other cities are struggling with how to proceed on the issue of public Confederate art. The monuments of Robert E. Lee and Stonewall Jackson in Charlottesville, at the heart of the violent rally, have been covered with black tarps ever since the protests last August. In January 2018, a judge ordered the city to take down the tarps, arguing that they interfere with the public's right to view the monuments. One day after the ruling, the tarps were removed. The Charlottesville City Council had previously voted to take the Lee statue down and redesign the Jackson monument, although the city does not have the authority to do so. A legal case is still pending.¹¹

In North Carolina, four petitions have been submitted to the state's Department of Natural and Cultural Resources, petitioning to remove three Confederate monuments from the State Capitol. A commission studying the issue will make its recommendations in April 2018.¹²

⁶ Wamsley, Laurel. "Finding a Legal Loophole, Memphis Takes Down Its Confederate Statues." NPR. 21 December 2017. <https://www.npr.org/sections/thetwo-way/2017/12/21/572654031/finding-a-legal-loophole-memphis-takes-down-its-confederate-statues>

⁷ Harrison, Casmira. "Daytona Beach removes Confederate markers." Daytona Beach News, Daytona Beach News-Journal Online, 18 Aug. 2017, www.news-journalonline.com/news/20170817/daytona-beach-removes-confederate-markers.

⁸ Caplan, Andrew. "Confederate statue removed from downtown Gainesville." Gainesville Sun, 15 Aug. 2017, www.gainesville.com/news/20170814/confederate-statue-removed-from-downtown-gainesville.

⁹ Ray, Brittini. "Task Force: Change name of Savannah's Confederate Monument." *Savannah Morning News*. 1 February 2018. <http://savannahnow.com/news/2018-02-01/task-force-change-name-savannah-s-confederate-monument>

¹⁰ Sarder, Sarah. "Denton committee recommends keeping Confederate monument on downtown square, adding context." *Dallas Morning News*. 1 February 2018. <https://www.dallasnews.com/news/denton/2018/02/01/denton-committee-recommends-keeping-confederate-monument-downtown-square-adding-context>

¹¹ Held, Amy. "Shrouds Pulled From Charlottesville Confederate Statues, Following Ruling." NPR. 28 February 2018. <https://www.npr.org/sections/thetwo-way/2018/02/28/589451855/shrouds-pulled-from-charlottesville-confederate-statues-following-ruling>

¹² Stancill, Jane. "Silent Sam protesters have a new strategy to remove Confederate statue." *News Observer*. 28 February 2018. <http://www.newsobserver.com/news/local/education/article201038639.html>

Houston's Task Force closely followed the examples set by our peer cities over the course of our work, drawing lessons and guidance from their experiences.

III. TASK FORCE MEMBERS & PROCESS

Mayor Sylvester Turner wanted various viewpoints to be incorporated into the Task Force discussions; therefore, members were chosen to represent three different perspectives:

- City officials with responsibility for the items and historic preservation
- Area scholars engaged with public affairs and history
- Community leaders involved in arts and education

With these viewpoints in mind, the following nine task force members were selected by Mayor Turner. The Task Force was facilitated by James Koski, Deputy Chief of Staff, and Deborah McNulty, Director of Mayor's Office of Cultural Affairs.

City Officials

1. Margaret Wallace Brown, Historic Preservation Office, Planning Department
2. Dr. Rhea Lawson, Director, Houston Public Library
3. Steve Wright, Director, Houston Parks and Recreation

Scholars

4. Dr. Michael O. Adams, Interim Dean, Barbara Jordan – Mickey Leland School of Public Affairs, Texas Southern University
5. Dr. Lawrence Curry, Professor Emeritus, History, University of Houston
6. Dr. Mary Lee Webeck, Director of Education, Holocaust Museum Houston

Community Leaders

7. Michelle Barnes, CEO, Community Artists' Collective
8. Ron Franklin, Practicing Attorney and Former President, Houston Independent School District
9. Eureka Gilkey, Executive Director, Project Row Houses, Emancipation Economic Development Council

Task Force Process

While the efforts of the Task Force were initially delayed by the arrival and aftermath of Hurricane Harvey, the group met several times in the Fall and Winter of 2017. They considered information provided by historic organizations and scholars, public feedback, analysis by the Houston Public Library, and the practices of other cities and states across the country to develop a series of options on how to handle Confederate items in the City's possession.

After the topic of Confederate monuments was initiated by multiple speakers at two Public Session meetings of City Council the Mayor's Office of Cultural Affairs categorized over 300 email, mail and phone responses. These were split nearly evenly between recommendations to remove or keep items honoring the Confederacy in public spaces, although many individuals also added that they would like to

see the statues relocated, rededicated with historical context, or would like to see additional statues honoring civil rights leaders dedicated alongside existing ones.

City departments were asked to inventory all items related to the Confederacy. The list of all identified items is included as an appendix to this report.

While there was a consensus among the Task Force members that all items included on the inventory list could benefit from further public awareness about their place in history and context, it was determined that the scope of the Task Force should remain focused on specific recommendations for City-owned objects related to the Confederacy. As such, the group used the following criteria to determine the items to receive specific recommendations:

- Street names were not considered, as there is a process identified in the Municipal Code for street name changes
- Confine recommendations to City-owned items or items displayed on City property
- Review statues, portraits, or other commemoration of individuals representing their Confederate service
- Review items commemorating the Confederacy absent historical context
- Review items promoting the narrative of the Lost Cause or Jim Crow laws

IV. SPECIFIC ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION

With the aforementioned criteria in mind, the Task Force identified four items for recommendation. Background information and historical context for each follows below.

1. Mural of Arlington House (home of Confederate General Robert E. Lee) in Julia Ideson Building
2. Mural of Beauvoir House (home of Confederate President Jefferson Davis) in Julia Ideson Building
3. Spirit of Confederacy statue in Sam Houston Park
4. Dick Dowling statue in Hermann Park

MURALS: ARLINGTON AND BEAUVOIR

Murals depicting Arlington, the home of Confederate General Robert E. Lee, and Beauvoir, the home of Jefferson Davis, adorn the walls of the second floor of the Julia Ideson Library, once the Central Library for the City of Houston. The artist, Emma Richardson Cherry, was a well-known local artist retained through the Public Works Art Project (PWA) of the Civil Works Administration (CWA) in 1934.¹³ Ms. Cherry was obligated to do only one mural as a part of this project, but completed a total of four to “balance the room” and fill all four of the corners of the allotted space. Two of the murals (those depicting the Texas State Capitol of 1837 and the Texas President’s House in which Sam Houston resided) were funded through the PWA and painted in 1934-1935. The Arlington and Beauvoir murals were commissioned by the Jefferson Davis Chapter of the Daughters of the Confederacy and gifted to

¹³ Margaret Swett Henson, *Handbook of Texas Online*, "Cherry, Emma Richardson," Accessed 21 November 2017. <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/fch24>.

the library. Mrs. H. F. MacGregor funded the mounting of the murals on the walls in the library in 1936.¹⁴



Title: Arlington (Robert E. Lee's Home)

Artist: Emma Richardson Cherry

Date: 1936

Type: Mural

Medium: Oil in canvas

Location: Julia Ideson Building, 2nd Floor, West Wall, Lobby

Dimensions: 8.5' x 6.8'

Photo credit: Joel Draut



Title: Beauvoir (Jefferson Davis' Home)

Artist: Emma Richardson Cherry

Date: 1936

Type: Mural

Medium: Oil in canvas

Location: Julia Ideson Building, 2nd Floor, East Wall, Lobby

Dimensions: 8.5' x 6.8'

Photo credit: Joel Draut

¹⁴ *Houston Public Library Minutes*, vol. 6: 1935-1937.

Background

The application to the Civil Works Administration included, among other projects, “Four Decorations for second floor main lobby over bookcases, by Mrs. D. B. Cherry, depicting the homes of famous Americans in a decorative setting.”¹⁵

In January 1934, the Building and Grounds Committee of the Houston Public Library approved the design for the murals and their intended locations, and finalized the subject matter: the home of Robert E. Lee, the home of Jefferson Davis, the first capitol of Texas, and the home of General Sam Houston. These murals were a part of a larger effort to redecorate the building in a distinctly more southern theme.¹⁶

The designs were required to have the approval of the Director of the Museum of Fine Arts, and in a January 1934 letter, he expresses some displeasure concerning the subject matter chosen for the murals: “I regret that neither of the three artists working on the Library have thought much of distinctly Texas subject matter from Texas History.” All three of the artists selected different themes ranging from Spanish influence in Texas, to library history, and in the case of Ms. Cherry, the Antebellum South. Still, he goes on to note: “I doubt very much whether another artist could be assigned to the Library at the present time as our quota is about filled and the time is extremely short.”¹⁷ The library also expressed some reservations about committing to indefinite retention of the murals.

Those completed with PWA funding (the capitol and Sam Houston’s home) are the property of the United States government and cannot be destroyed, but can be removed if needed.¹⁸ The other two murals, having been gifted by the artist, are property of the City of Houston and may be removed or disposed of per City policy.

Historical Context

The mural designs for the library were not undertaken in isolation. In 1934, there was a movement to redecorate the Central Library; efforts to this effect seemed to have been largely inspired by auxiliary groups such as the Daughters of the Confederacy and the Daughters of the Republic of Texas. These legacy groups supported the library in many ways including donating money, gifts, and organizational records. During the early-to-mid 1930s, the Jefferson Davis Chapter of the Daughters of the Confederacy donated several decorative items to be displayed in the library including the Father Ryan Fountain (dedicated to the memory of Abram Joseph Ryan, poet-patriot of the Confederacy), a portrait of Robert E. Lee, and a portrait of Jefferson Davis. The latter portraits were the inspiration for the Arlington and Beauvoir murals.

Also during this time, both Arlington and Beauvoir were receiving public attention on a national level. Arlington had been recently renovated and turned over to the National Park Service to make it into a public attraction. Beauvoir was serving as the Jefferson Davis Soldiers’ Home, where hundreds of

¹⁵ *Houston Public Library Minutes*, vol. 5: 1932-1934.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

veterans and Confederate widows took up residence. The Jefferson Davis Shrine, as Beauvoir is also known, would open to the public soon after the unveiling of the murals.

By the Great Depression, a sense of reminiscence, or the desire for a return to an idealized past, was on the rise for many Americans. For instance, during this time, the City of Houston recognized San Jacinto Day, Decoration Day, Jefferson Davis' Birthday, and Armistice Day as holidays.¹⁹ The difficulties of the Great Depression created a general nostalgia for "better days," which became captured by revisionist epics like "Gone with the Wind," with Confederates described as shining knights who fought for honor.

This tide of "Lost Cause" mythology created a surge in monuments to the Confederacy, which would be seen again during the Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and 1960s, and seems to be the driving influence in the resurgence of Confederate Depression-era public art. This further explains the rationale behind the acquisition of antebellum and Civil War themed art during this period.

DICK DOWLING STATUE



Title: Dick Dowling

Artist: Frank A. Teich

Date: 1905

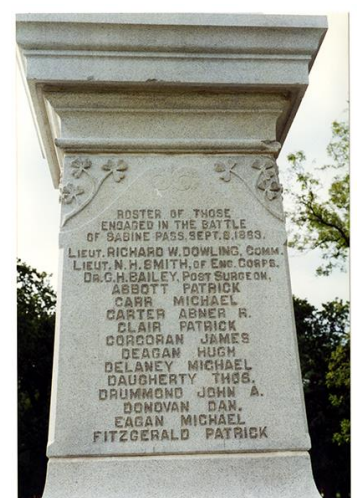
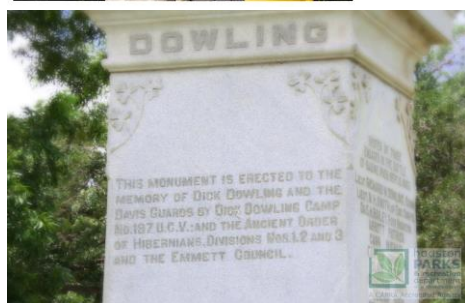
Type: Statue

Medium: Marble

Location: Hermann Park

Dimensions: 8' height x 2'6" wide x 2' deep (base: 20' height x 10' wide x 10' deep)

Photo credit: Barbara Estrada



Dick Dowling emigrated to America after enduring years of famine in Ireland. He arrived in Houston in 1857 and struck out to make a life as an entrepreneur, establishing several businesses in the fledgling

¹⁹ Ibid.

city. When Texas seceded from the Union, Dowling enlisted in the Davis Guards, officially known as Company F. Cook's Regiment, Texas Heavy Artillery, CSA. The Davis Guards were primarily Irishmen recruited among the laboring class in Houston and Galveston. Following a decisive Texas Civil War battle, Dowling and his comrades were presented with medals. Upon his return to Houston in 1865, Dowling became a member of Houston's first Fire Department and acquired large areas of land in present day downtown and other parts of Harris and Brazoria counties.²⁰

Background

Fundraising for a Dick Dowling statue began in the late nineteenth century with the United Confederate Veterans, Dick Dowling Camp, No. 197 of Houston. The Dick Dowling Monument Committee was formed with the purpose of planning and fundraising, and was composed of members of the Dick Dowling Camp, United Confederate Veterans, members of the Ancient Order of Hibernians, and a Catholic organization called the Emmet Council. Among those who participated in fundraising were George Hermann, whose statue is located near the Dick Dowling Statue; John Kirby, a prominent businessman; John T. Browne, a former mayor of Houston; Mrs. Adele Looscan, Houston's first Director of the Library; and William P. Hobby, future governor of Texas.

In 1905, the descendants of the Irish unit which fought with him donated the Dick Dowling statue to the City; it was the first piece of civic art for the city conceived of and given through fundraising efforts. The sculptor, Frank Teich, was responsible for, or worked on, many monuments throughout Texas and other states, many of them Confederate monuments in the Southern states.²¹ The statue stood in front of City Hall on Market Square until 1940 when it was moved to Sam Houston Park. It was moved once again in 1958 to its current location in Hermann Park.

In 1988, the Dick Dowling Heritage Society was formed for the purposes of fundraising for restoration of the statue, which was badly deteriorated. The group sponsored a series of events which allowed it to make the 20 percent matching funds contribution necessary to receive an Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA) grant. These federal highway funds were given to state highway departments to disperse. In the case of the Dowling statue, the ISTEA grant was administered through the Save Our Outdoor Sculpture Program of the Texas Historical Commission (THC) and the Municipal Arts Commission of Houston. In 1996, \$18,400 in federal highway funds were channeled to the THC to conserve the statue, as well as \$4,600 in public funds from special interested groups.²²

²⁰ Caraway, Ann. 1996. "About the Dick Dowling Statue." Houston, TX.

²¹ *Handbook of Texas Online*, "Teich, Frank," accessed 22 November 2017.
<http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/fte05>.

²² *SC 1268-03 Dick Dowling Scrapbook Small Collection*, "Dick Dowling Monument Association Scrapbook," Houston Metropolitan Research Center, Houston Public Library.

SPIRIT OF THE CONFEDERACY STATUE



Title: Spirit of The Confederacy

Artist: Louis Amateis

Date: 1908

Type: Statue

Medium: Bronze

Location: Sam Houston Park

Dimensions: 12' height x 5' wide x 5.6' deep (base: 4' height x 6' wide x 6' deep)

Photo credit: Barbara Estrada



In the early 20th century, the United Daughters of the Confederacy (UDC) commissioned a monument that would “commemorate the spirit of the Confederacy and honor all Confederate soldiers.” The statue was intended to represent the spirit of the “Old South” and commemorate those who died in the Civil War.²³ The statue depicts a larger than life-sized winged, male, nude figure holding a palm frond and a sword. The inscription on the plaque reads, “To all heroes of the South who fought for the principles of states rights.” The sculptor, Louis Amateis, also created the Texas Heroes Monument in Galveston, TX.

²³ *Houston Chronicle*. January 20, 1908.

Background

The Robert E. Lee Chapter no. 186 of the United Daughters of the Confederacy raised \$7,500 over a nine-year period to dedicate the statue, which was unveiled in Sam Houston Park in January 1908.²⁴ The statue pays tribute to the memory of the Confederate soldiers in Houston who died fighting in the Civil War.

In 1996, \$7,500 in federal highway funds were channeled to the Texas Historical Commission to conserve the statue, along with \$1,500 in local matching funds from the Houston United Daughters of the Confederacy, Albert Sidney Johnston Camp #67 Sons of Confederate Veterans (SCV), and donations to the Municipal Art Commission.

In similar fashion to the Dick Dowling Statue, this monument was intended to honor Confederate values and serve as “a permanent symbol dedicated to the total war, the fighting men, and the struggling families.”²⁵

Historical Context: Dick Dowling and Spirit of the Confederacy Statues

Very few monuments honoring the Confederacy were erected throughout the United States during Reconstruction. The few monuments that were built during the years immediately following the war mostly honored fallen Southern soldiers rather than war heroes and Confederate leaders like Robert E. Lee or Jefferson Davis. Immediately following the war “funereal monuments were erected in Southern cemeteries – the ‘city of the dead’ – to honor slain Confederates in keeping with nineteenth-century customs.” During this time, such monuments to lost soldiers were typically spearheaded by Ladies Memorial Associations (LMAs) and veterans’ groups.²⁶

By the turn of the century, the memorial movement had evolved, and veterans’ groups and LMAs gave way to auxiliary organizations like the Sons of Confederate Veterans and the United Daughters of the Confederacy. According to the collection of essays *Confederate Symbols in the Contemporary South*:

More than any other group, the UDC was responsible for constructing monuments, markers, plaques, boulders, drinking fountains, and other tangible reminders of Southern pride, especially in and around public facilities, generally outside of cemeteries. Through these and other activities to ‘win the peace,’ the UDC attempted to keep the Southern heritage alive and promote Confederate values. The UDC also helped to sustain the myth of the ‘Lost Cause,’ a concept that encapsulated the longing and morose feelings of people in the defeated region by promoting the belief that, despite failures on the battlefield, the South was redeemed because it was a place where old times and cherished ways of honor duty, family, and patriotism were not forgotten.²⁷

²⁴ Cleave, Kit Van. 1968. “Oldest UDC Chapter Lists Achievements.” *Houston Tribune*, May 2, 1968.

²⁵ RG A 0033 *Houston Municipal Arts Commission Collection*, Chairman of the Art Commission letter, 1996. Series 1: Permanent Art: Spirit of the Confederacy. Houston Metropolitan Research Center, Houston Public Library. Available at the Central Library, Jesse H. Jones Building, Houston Public Library.

²⁶ Edited by Martinez, J. Michael, William D. Richardson, and Ron McNinch-Su. 2000. *Confederate Symbols in the Contemporary South*. Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2000. eBook Collection.

²⁷ Ibid.

The most notable spike in the Confederate monument movement occurred in the early twentieth century, when the Dick Dowling and Spirit of Confederacy statues were built. During this time, many Southern states were establishing repressive race laws in the wake of *Plessy v. Ferguson*, the Supreme Court decision in 1896 that upheld racial segregation laws. After 1912, the first Confederate memorial movement declined. However, another noticeable increase in monument construction occurred between 1955 and 1970, during the height of the Civil Rights Movement. There is a strong correlation between the building of Confederate statues and the passage of notable civil rights legislation, suggesting that the monuments were not meant so much to honor lost soldiers, but a political tool to intimidate the public and push back against civil rights gains.²⁸

In a Houston Municipal Arts Commission letter from 1996, the chairman reflected on the Spirit of the Confederacy statue in particular: “by the latter half of the twentieth century, changing times and sensibilities had transformed the perceived meaning of Confederate monuments.”²⁹ Construction of monuments of famous Confederate officers or those that honored the “Lost Cause” narrative had ceased. Still, for some modern audiences, these monuments “glorified the ideals of slavery, bigotry, and white supremacy.”³⁰

RECOMMENDED ACTION

The Task Force recommends that the two paintings in the Julia Ideson Library Building of Arlington House and Beauvoir House should be left in place, but that signage should be added to give context to the time and reason for which they were commissioned and displayed. The historical context described in this report, in an abbreviated form, should provide the basis for the new recommended signage for these two murals.

Given the historical context in which they were commissioned and their perceived meaning for modern audiences, the Task Force recommends that the two statutes, Spirit of the Confederacy and Dick Dowling, should not be displayed on City public property. The Task Force recommends that they not be destroyed and leaves the ultimate decision for what is done with the statues to the Mayor.

Conscious of the budget constraints facing the City of Houston and the political sensitivities of these issues, the Task Force supports Mayor Turner in judging the appropriateness of timing and details regarding the recommended actions.

²⁸ Ullendorff, Jonah. 2017. “Contextualizing America’s Confederate Monuments.” Accessed November 22, 2017, <http://uchicagogate.com/articles/2017/9/24/contextualizing-americas-confederate-monuments/>

²⁹ RG A 0033 *Houston Municipal Arts Commission Collection*, Chairman of the Art Commission letter, 1996. Series 1: Permanent Art: Spirit of the Confederacy. Houston Metropolitan Research Center, Houston Public Library. Available at the Central Library, Jesse H. Jones Building, Houston Public Library.

³⁰ Martinez, J. Michael, William D. Richardson, and Ron McNinch-Su. 2000. *Confederate Symbols in the Contemporary South*. Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2000. eBook Collection.

V. APPENDIX

City of Houston items related to Confederacy and/or subjects with ties to Civil War or slavery (attached).