

Civil War Veterans Memoria

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The Civil War Veterans Memoria are small scale interventions that demonstrate architecture's capacity to serve as an agent promoting community activism. The commemorative pieces work in the realm of social justice enacted in open public space.

The project is part of a larger initiative by the community, the city, and the university to reclaim and rehabilitate Odd Fellows Cemetery, an abandoned African-American burial ground in a predominantly minority neighborhood. The rehabilitation's primary goal is to address the negative physical and social influences affecting the area and to offer the community a safe, engaging, and respectful environment to rediscover its heritage.

The specific purpose of the memoria was to highlight and bring attention to the standing headstones of Civil War veterans in the cemetery. The original stones are visible reminders of the pride and hope of brave men, but many are worn and the information they bear is often illegible. The memoria restate and clarify the text. They also provide a permanent sleeve to hold the American flag, used to celebrate the Sesquicentennial of the war and for future Veterans Day remembrances.

The work is the product of twelve architecture students and was conducted as an introductory study in a studio course that focused on architectural ritual and engagement. Design proposals were reviewed by faculty, peers, and community members. The favored design

was refined and fabricated for each of the fourteen veterans whose headstones currently stand in the cemetery.

The Memoria: Four concrete bars march at the foot of each veteran's headstone. Inscribed text gives identity to the men, especially important where the stones are faded or damaged.

Bar 1 gives the veteran's Christian name.

Bar 2 provides place for birth and death dates. Most of these bars are intentionally left blank reflecting the lack of records for former slaves.

Bar 3 identifies each veteran's rank, company, and unit. Most were from the 1st United States Colored Heavy Artillery, founded in the city.

Bar 4 proudly states the status of the men as Civil War Veterans and provides the sleeve for the placement of the flag.

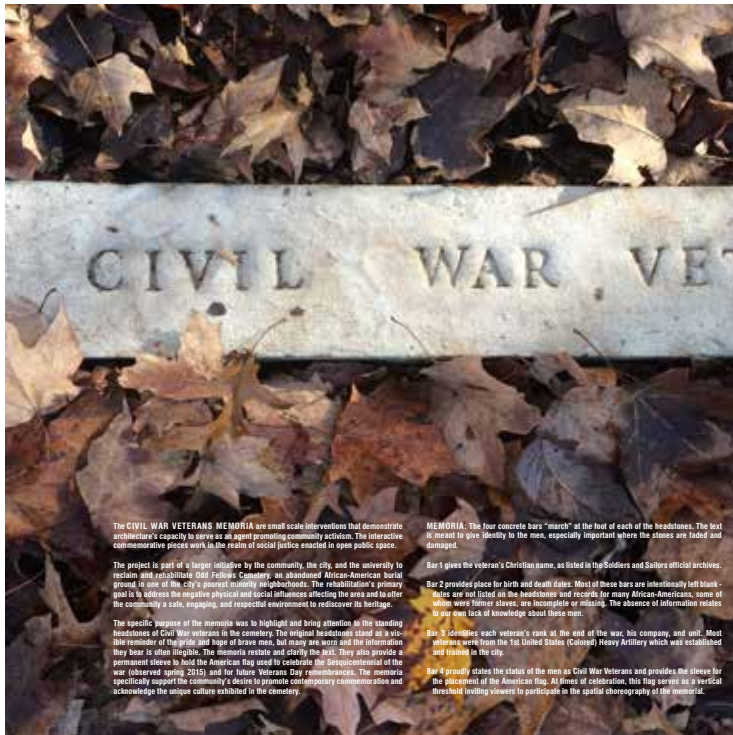
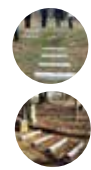
The tops of the bars are coated with powdered glass to reinforce one of the goals of the reclamation- to take something that is worn and neglected and reveal its true beauty. The glass references the discarded bottles found littering the cemetery. The transformed nature of the powdered glass reflects sunlight and brings strong attention to the markers.

The bars are placed to measure a human step and are meant to encourage visitors to walk

toward the historic headstones. Some visitors stand at the foot of the memorial and view all the pieces in composition. Others feel invited to step between the bars, to approach the headstone and kneel down at the final bar to pay their respects. Note that the memoria do not mark the position of the veterans' bodies underground, which here is usually on the opposite side of the headstone. The memoria are for the visitor, symbolizing his or her current participation in contemporary commemoration.

CIVIL WAR VETERANS MEMORIA

Contemporary markers designed and fabricated to honor African American Civil War Veterans during the City's Sesquicentennial Celebration - Odd Fellows Cemetery



The CIVIL WAR VETERANS MEMORIA are small scale interventions that demonstrate architecture's capacity to serve as an agent promoting community activities. The interactive commemorative pieces work in the realm of social justice enacted in open public space.

The project is part of a larger initiative by the community, the city, and the university to reclaim and rehabilitate Odd Fellows Cemetery, an abandoned African-American burial ground in one of the city's poorest minority neighborhoods. The rehabilitation's primary goal is to address the negative physical and social influences affecting the area and to offer the community a safe, engaging, and respectful environment to rediscover its heritage.

The specific purpose of the memoria was to highlight and bring attention to the standing headstones of Civil War veterans in the cemetery. The original headstones stand as a visible reminder of the pain and hope of brave men, but many are worn and the information they bear is often illegible. The memoria restore and clarify the text. They also provide a permanent sleeve to hold the American flag used to celebrate the Sesquicentennial of the war (observed spring 2015) and for future Veterans Day remembrances. The memoria specifically support the community's desire to promote contemporary commemorations and acknowledge the unique culture exhibited in the cemetery.

MEMORIA: The four concrete bars "match" at the foot of each of the headstones. The text is meant to give identity to the men, especially important where the stones are faded and damaged.

Bar 1 gives the veteran's Christian name, as listed in the Soldiers and Sailors official archives. Bar 2 provides place for both birth and death dates. Most of these bars are intentionally left blank - dates are not listed on the headstones and records for many African-Americans, some of whom were former slaves, are incomplete or missing. The absence of information relates to our own lack of knowledge about these men.

Bar 3 identifies each veteran's rank at the end of the war, his company, and unit. Most veterans were from the 1st United States (Colored) Heavy Artillery which was established and trained in the city.

Bar 4 prominently states the status of the men as Civil War Veterans and provides the sleeve for the placement of the American flag. At times of celebration, this flag serves as a visual meshwork inviting viewers to participate in the spatial choreography of the memoria.



SEQUICENTENNIAL EVENT: The Civil War headstones, with the memoria, were visited during the Sesquicentennial Event in early spring 2015. Dignitaries dressed as 1st United States Colored Heavy Artillery soldiers explained the role of the unit in the war. American flags were placed at each veteran's headstone, held by Bar 4 of the memoria, which identified the person as a veteran of the war.

DESIGN: The work was the product of twelve architecture students and was conducted as an introductory study in a studio course that focused on architectural ritual and engagement. Teams of students proposed designs which were reviewed by faculty, peers, and community members. The favored design was refined and fabricated for each of the fourteen veterans whose headstones currently stand in the cemetery.

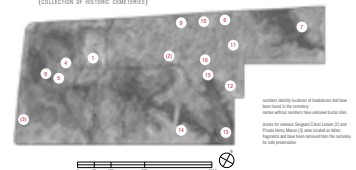
The design is composed of four concrete bars with inscribed text that gives identity. The tops of the bars were coated with powdered glass to reinforce one of the goals of the reclamation - to take something that is worn and neglected and reveal its true beauty. The glass references the discarded bottles found littering the cemetery. The transformed nature of the powdered glass reflects sunlight and brings strong attention to the markers.

The bars are placed to measure a human step and are meant to encourage visitors to walk toward the historic headstones. Some visitors stand at the foot of the memorial and view all the pieces in composition. Others feel invited to march between the bars, to approach the headstone and kneel down at the foot bar to pay their respects. Note that the memoria does not mark the position of the veteran's body underground, which here is usually on the opposite side of the headstone. The memoria, located on the front side of the headstone, is for the visitor and symbolizes his or her current participation in contemporary commemoration.

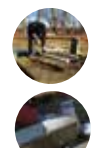
FABRICATION: The assignment specified the use of concrete as a material because of its versatility and because of how it complements materials already in use in the cemetery. Production efforts needed to be simple and easily replicated by unskilled volunteers. (Markers may be replicated in the future for veterans who fought in other wars.) Students used reclaimed wood for the form-work and base-out chipboard for the lettering. The wet concrete was coated with sand-blasting glass and a simple brass primer was used for the stone. All materials can be purchased at local hardware stores and can be assembled with simple tools.

ODD FELLOWS CEMETERY, c. 1880

(COLLECTION OF HISTORIC CEMETERIES)



- | | | |
|---|---|--|
| ODD FELLOWS CEMETERY | DAUGHTERS OF JOHN CEMETERY | GOOD SAMARITAN CEMETERY |
| 1. HENRY CALDWELL From: Co. B - 1st US CA Died: 1862 From: Co. B - 1st US CA | 1. MARCEL ONE BIRTH From: Co. B - 1st US CA Died: 1862 From: Co. B - 1st US CA | 1. JAMES LEROY BRIDGEMAN From: Co. B - 1st US CA Died: 1862 From: Co. B - 1st US CA |
| 2. JOHN W. BROWN From: Co. B - 1st US CA Died: 1862 From: Co. B - 1st US CA | 2. JAMES W. BROWN From: Co. B - 1st US CA Died: 1862 From: Co. B - 1st US CA | 2. JAMES W. BROWN From: Co. B - 1st US CA Died: 1862 From: Co. B - 1st US CA |
| 3. JOHN W. BROWN From: Co. B - 1st US CA Died: 1862 From: Co. B - 1st US CA | 3. JOHN W. BROWN From: Co. B - 1st US CA Died: 1862 From: Co. B - 1st US CA | 3. JOHN W. BROWN From: Co. B - 1st US CA Died: 1862 From: Co. B - 1st US CA |
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| 18. JOHN W. BROWN From: Co. B - 1st US CA Died: 1862 From: Co. B - 1st US CA | 18. JOHN W. BROWN From: Co. B - 1st US CA Died: 1862 From: Co. B - 1st US CA | 18. JOHN W. BROWN From: Co. B - 1st US CA Died: 1862 From: Co. B - 1st US CA |
| 19. JOHN W. BROWN From: Co. B - 1st US CA Died: 1862 From: Co. B - 1st US CA | 19. JOHN W. BROWN From: Co. B - 1st US CA Died: 1862 From: Co. B - 1st US CA | 19. JOHN W. BROWN From: Co. B - 1st US CA Died: 1862 From: Co. B - 1st US CA |
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INSTALLATION: The memoria were installed by the studio design students and also by other volunteers from the college and community. Many of these volunteers had participated in previous research or service activities for Odd Fellows Cemetery; for others, this was their first introduction to the rehabilitation and reclamation project.



RECOGNITION BY THE COMMUNITY: One of the primary objectives of the Memoria Project was to bring attention to the headstones of the Civil War veterans. On the day following our initial installation, we found red citations placed on several of the memoria. This was evidence that the work had been recognized by the community and that they, in turn, were offering their respects.



DEDICATION CEREMONY: After the initial installation (and prior to the Sesquicentennial Event for which the memoria were designed), the class held a dedication ceremony. We were joined by several members of the community who have been active in the rehabilitation efforts. The dedication was conducted as a scripted, closed ceremony in which each attendee played a part. Community members served as primary narrators for specified dialog; students acted to "produce" each script note by marking the bars with a pastel chalk line, tacitly acknowledging their own dedication.