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# Shifting Authority at the Confederate Relic Room, 1960-1986

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Shifting Authority at the Confederate Relic Room, 1960-1986

by

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Bachelor of Arts  
University of Michigan-Flint, 2013

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Accepted by:

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## DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my grandparents, Clifford and Janet Koan.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This thesis would not have been possible without the internal archives at the South Carolina Confederate Relic Room and Military Museum. Special thanks to the museum's curator, Katie Conley, for granting me access to these files and for assisting me in my research. The staff at both the South Caroliniana Library and the South Carolina Department of Archives and History were invaluable to my research as well and directed me to the best available sources. I am particularly grateful to my advisor, Dr. Thomas Brown for guiding me through the entire process of writing my thesis and for taking the time to make thoughtful comments on every draft. Dr. Allison Marsh not only served as my second reader, but also sparked my initial interest in institutional histories. Dr. Woody Holton supervised the first version of this thesis in his History 800 class and encouraged me to continue working on it. Additional thanks go to Rachel Cockrell for being my mentor, Diana Garnett and Stephanie Gray for keeping me in a constant supply of friendship and baked goods, and finally to my parents and sisters for their unwavering love and support.

## ABSTRACT

This thesis explores the Confederate Relic Room and its final years in the hands of the United Daughters of the Confederacy before the South Carolina state government fully took over the museum. This small, localized perspective on the organization shows that the UDC was still actively commemorating the Civil War well into the late twentieth century, which challenges the current historiography that consistently ends in the 1930s. By researching this museum, insight into how the UDC's mission and public perception had changed can be gained.

In order to fully examine the museum's history in the late twentieth century, this thesis looks both internally at the museum's leadership and daily operations, as well as externally at the museum's relationships with the state government and other local cultural institutions. By looking at three distinct areas of the museum's later history, this thesis will show how the more the local UDC women tried to revive their museum and make it a respected institution, the more the state became involved in its affairs. The fact that the museum had not already been taken over by the state or that it was still in existence shows the unique nature of the museum and how its history can be a valuable resource in expanding the historiography on the UDC and Civil War commemoration.

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

BCB.....	Budget and Control Board
CRR.....	Confederate Relic Room
UDC.....	United Daughters of the Confederacy
WMB.....	War Memorial Building



## INTRODUCTION

On January 15, 1960, Luvie C. Land made an unusual call for help to Columbia, South Carolina's military base, Fort Jackson. Land had found "ten live Civil War shells" in the South Carolina State House and she needed someone to disarm them. The next day, the local paper, *The State*, turned Land's frightening experience into a sensational headline: "Risky Relics: Yankee Soldiers Raid 'Confederate Arsenal.'" It had been almost one hundred years since the Civil War, but the story of a Massachusetts soldier coming to the State House and disarming the shells was too much of an opportunity to pass up, and the reporter ended up making it the main focus of his story. By shifting attention to the northern soldier, however, the reporter glazed over several other important details about the story. How exactly did this old southern woman come across "six cannon balls, three projectiles, and one old-time grenade" and why in 1960 was this so-called "Confederate Arsenal" still at the State House?<sup>1</sup>

This arsenal was actually the Confederate Relic Room (CRR), a museum created in 1896 by the local Wade Hampton Chapter of the United Daughters of the Confederacy (UDC).<sup>2</sup> The museum was created to be a site of commemoration for the Confederacy, as well as the people, both military and civilian, who had fought for its cause. In 1960, when Land found the live shells, the CRR was at the end of an era. The museum had spent

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<sup>1</sup> "Risky Relics: Yankee Soldiers Raid 'Confederate Arsenal,'" *The State*, January 16, 1960, Section B, 1.

<sup>2</sup> Rachel Wynne Overton, "Girls of the Sixties: The Wade Hampton Chapter, United Daughters of the Confederacy, and the Founding of the South Carolina Confederate Relic Room and Museum" (master's thesis, University of South Carolina, 2003), 9.

decades at the State House and now it was moving to the South Carolina Archives Building. This move would start the CRR on a new path that would eventually lead to the UDC losing its authority over the museum and the South Carolina State Budget and Control Board (BCB) gaining full control.

The State House was home to the CRR when it was a shining example of Lost Cause rhetoric. Placed in the home of South Carolina politics, it “received universal admiration and praise” from those nostalgic for the Old South and proud of their Confederate heritage.<sup>3</sup> But by 1960 the museum had been at an impasse for several years. The once-admired museum was now seen as just a tiny room of relics. While passion for the Lost Cause still existed, it was not at same level as it had been during the museum’s foundation and early years at the State House. The move to the Archives Building, however, began a series of changes that would eventually lead a total remodel of the museum.

While the analysis of this museum offers a localized perspective on UDC activity and struggle over authority in the second half of the twentieth century, this paper will provide a broader addition to the current historiography. The study of post-Civil War era southern women’s activities in memorial organizations and clubs has received lots of attention from scholars, but the research usually stops after 1930. Historians have traditionally looked at southern women’s memorialization efforts within the context of the Lost Cause during the 1895-1935 period when this type of rhetoric was in its prime. To stop at 1935, however, is to underestimate the significant role that the UDC still played in country in the mid-twentieth century. A research focus on this period presents opportunities to build from the established historiography.

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<sup>3</sup> “Confederate Relic Room: It Was a Notable Reunion Attraction,” *The State*, May 12, 1901, 1.

W. Fitzhugh Brundage's first chapter, "A Duty Peculiarly Fitting to Women," in *The Southern Past: A Clash of Race and Memory* shows how "white women seized" control of public memory in the South and then eventually lost it to state power. This change in authority was not unexpectedly taken away from the women, but happened via their own volition. Brundage writes that "the erosion of the women's influence followed from their own efforts to coax the state to assume a larger role in historical matters" that led to "the gradual expansion of state authority over the region's heritage, and the resultant waning of women's authority."<sup>4</sup> The CRR is a very similar story, albeit their final takeover from the state happened in the late 1900s, while Brundage's examples happened earlier in the century. By zeroing in on the CRR, this thesis will attempt to expand on Brundage's work and show that women's organization's loss of authority on public memory still resonated in the South throughout the twentieth century.

Highlighting the difference between gender roles and club organizations, but also focusing on Confederate memorialization is Thomas J. Brown's chapter for the 2006 book *Battle Scars: Gender and Sexuality in the American Civil War*, edited by Catherine Clinton and Nina Silber. In his chapter, "The Confederate Retreat to Mars and Venus," Brown looks at the construction of two Civil War monuments at the South Carolina State House, one for soldiers and one for female civilians during the war. Brown notes that the construction of these monuments brought about a "sharpening of distinctions between men and women" as it solidified Confederate monument-building as a feminine

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<sup>4</sup>W. Fitzhugh Brundage, "A Duty Peculiarly Fitting to Women," in *The Southern Past: A Clash of Race and Memory* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 2005), 51.

duty.<sup>5</sup> Brown's work also mentions the CRR and how it was a different form of memorialization for women because it "departed from the model of the Columbia soldiers monument" that was so prevalent at the time.<sup>6</sup> This work is important in understanding how the women who founded the CRR helped cement the southern female's place in Confederate memorialization. It also serves as a good comparison to the Columbia of the 1960s and 1970s, in which the gendered lines of Confederate memorialization begin to blur and in many ways become male dominated, first by the South Carolina Confederate War Centennial Commission and then eventually the director of the CRR itself.

In addition to Brown's work on Confederate memorialization is Karen Cox's 2003 book *Dixie's Daughters: The United Daughters of the Confederacy and the Preservation of the Confederate Culture*. Cox's book is the foremost look into this particular organization. Rather than focusing on one state or chapter of the UDC, Cox looks into the basic principles and goals of the organization by highlighting its efforts in memorialization and education. Cox states that "history, therefore, was highly regarded as a powerful tool of persuasion," which emphasizes the efforts of the UDC to change the negative ways that people portrayed the South.<sup>7</sup> This book lays the groundwork for understanding why the women of the Wade Hampton Chapter wanted to start the CRR in the first place and how different the goals of the CRR and the goals of the BCB were.

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<sup>5</sup> Thomas J. Brown, "Confederate Retreat to Mars and Venus," in *Battle Scars: Gender and Sexuality in the American Civil War*, ed. Catherine Clinton and Nina Silber (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 209.

<sup>6</sup> Brown, "The Confederate Retreat to Mars and Venus," 198.

<sup>7</sup> Karen L. Cox, *Dixie's Daughters: The United Daughters of the Confederacy and the Preservation of Confederate Culture* (Gainesville, FL: University of Florida Press, 2003), 96.

Cox writes the history of the UDC as a whole in the early half of the twentieth century, but Rachel Wynne Overton's master's thesis "Girls of the Sixties: The Wade Hampton Chapter, United Daughters of the Confederacy, and the Founding of the South Carolina Confederate Relic Room and Museum," is a look at the CRR's beginning years. Overton's work complements Cox's well by focusing on the foundation of the CRR and the motivations of the Wade Hampton Chapter for starting it. She also sets up the museum's move to the South Carolina State House and at the end notes that "for a period in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century the Relic room stagnated."<sup>8</sup> Overton's work is the foundation of this thesis, which begins right after the so-called period of stagnation and looks at the CRR between 1960 and 1986, the last years of the UDC's direct authority over the CRR.

In order to demonstrate the CRR's revival and changes, this thesis will utilize several primary sources. The CRR's present day facility, the South Carolina Confederate Relic Room and Military Museum, has several boxes of information on both the CRR and the Wade Hampton Chapter of the UDC. The internal archives hold the South Carolina UDC's Annual Reports from 1908 to 1963, the UDC Magazine during the 1960s, the personal correspondence and notes of CRR custodians, exhibit labels, photographs, and multiple histories on the museum. The South Caroliniana Library is another archival source for this essay. The library has the complete papers of Dotsy Diane Lloyd Boineau, curator at the CRR and president of the UDC from the 1970s and 1980s, as well as multiple pamphlets and histories published by women who were involved with the museum as well. The South Carolina Department of Archives and History has its own institutional archives, as well as information on several commissions including the South Carolina American Bicentennial Commission, the South Carolina

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<sup>8</sup> Rachel Wynne Overton, "Girls of the Sixties," 25.

Confederate War Centennial Commission, and the South Carolina State Museum Commission. Both digital collections for the state archives and the South Carolina State Library were utilized as well for their financial information on the CRR. Finally, *The State*, Columbia, South Carolina's local newspaper, maintained coverage of the museum throughout its existence and has been invaluable.

This thesis is divided into three sections. The first section details the CRR's move to the Archive Building and the struggles that it faced under Land's leadership. The second section focuses on the move from the Archives Building to the War Memorial Building (WMB) and how Watson used the move as a chance to elevate the status of the museum. The third and final section focuses on the museum's experience in the WMB and how the museum's growth led to the local UDC's downfall. All three sections feature subsections that address the internal changes in the museum including staff and exhibitions; the CRR's relationships with other cultural institutions; and the interventions of state government into the management of the museum. These sections will show that while the CRR gradually became a respected museum after its move out of the State House, this transition also caused the UDC women to lose sight of their original mission and the state government to take complete control over the institution.

## CHAPTER I: THE EARLY YEARS OF THE ARCHIVES BUILDING

The leadership of the Confederate Relic Room (CRR) envisioned its move in 1960 to the South Carolina Archives Building as a new beginning. Tucked away for the last fifty-nine years in a small room of the South Carolina State House, the museum had not had a chance to expand in collections, exhibitions, or visitation. The first half of the 1960s were also auspicious for the museum because of the upcoming centennial commemoration of the Civil War. After years of collecting Confederate relics, the CRR should have been set to flourish in this grand anniversary. But the early years of the 1960s did not see the CRR expand. Issues revolving around space limitations, artifacts, leadership, other institutions, and government intervention all made the museum remain static.

### INSIDE THE CONFEDERATE RELIC ROOM

For years the women of the Wade Hampton Chapter UDC had wished for the CRR to have more space, and they were thrilled when former chapter president and state legislator Martha Thomas Fitzgerald arranged for the archives building authorized by the legislature in 1957 to include space for the CRR.<sup>9</sup> The women knew that with more space, the museum would have more possibilities for visitors and in turn welcome more people who celebrated the Confederacy. Land anticipated that the move would allow the

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<sup>9</sup> *South Carolina Legislative Manual*, vol. 44 (1956): 86; Charles H. Lesser, “*The Palmetto State's Memory: A History of the South Carolina Department of Archives and History, 1905-1960*,” (Columbia, S.C.: South Carolina Department of Archives & History, 2009), 93.

relics to be “more attractively and better displayed.”<sup>10</sup> By the next year, however, Land’s excitement about the new building had begun to dim. While the space was technically bigger than the room in the State House, “the solid walls and the type of cabinets” meant for Land that “not as much is on display as we should like.”<sup>11</sup> Once again the museum was shoved into a small space inside of another institution and was plagued with constant frustrations involving its exhibitions and collections because the display space and storage areas were not well equipped to handle the museum’s needs.

The limitations in space at the Archives Building meant that the type of exhibitions presented by the CRR had to be limited as well. In the State House, the CRR had followed the period typical idea that museums should display as much and as many variations of their artifacts as possible. Steven Conn has argued that museum administrators felt that collections and knowledge were the same thing. There was an assumption that “careful examination of specimens would produce useful educational results.”<sup>12</sup> Although the museums that Conn focused on were different from the CRR, as they were larger and tended not to be history museums, the theory still applies to the CRR in the early twentieth century and in many ways to the CRR in the early 1960s. Even as many museums were standardizing the idea of having fewer artifacts but more interpretation, Land was trying to squeeze as many artifacts as she could into the

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<sup>10</sup> “Annual Report for the South Carolina Division of the United Daughters of the Confederacy,” 1960, Internal Archives, Box 11, Shelf 63, South Carolina Confederate Relic Room and Military Museum, Columbia, S.C.

<sup>11</sup> “Annual Report for the South Carolina Division of the United Daughters of the Confederacy,” 1961, Internal Archives, Box 11, Shelf 63, South Carolina Confederate Relic Room and Military Museum, Columbia, S.C.

<sup>12</sup> Steven Conn, *Museum and American Intellectual Life, 1876-1926* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 57.



museum. One newspaper article discussing the artifacts on display at the CRR in 1963 mentions the museum displays as featuring “a doctor’s medical kit” and “the flag of a regiment.”<sup>13</sup> The article discusses these objects merely as relics and interesting individual pieces, but not how they could be interpreted as a group on the history of the Civil War.

Even the donation of artifacts slowed during this period. In 1962, a year into the Civil War Centennial, Land wrote that “fewer items have been received than in any previous year of the room’s history.”<sup>14</sup> One would think that a celebration like the one hundredth anniversary of the Civil War would remind people of relics they owned and prompt them to donate, loan, or sell them to the museum so that they could be showed off with other Civil War artifacts. This did not seem to be the case for the CRR. Moreover, Land only accessioned artifacts that focused on the Civil War. In 1926, the current custodian Caroline Girardeau noted in the annual report that, “requests have been made to the Daughters of the Confederacy to preserve the relics of the Spanish-American and the World War.”<sup>15</sup> From this point on the museum had opened its collection policy to include relics from all wars in which South Carolina had participated, until the move to the Archives Building. Now, Land seemed to have limited the museum’s focus.<sup>16</sup> While the centennial was undoubtedly a big factor in this decision, the continued lack of space in

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<sup>13</sup> Kathleen Lewis Sloan, “At the Archives Building Relics Bring Life to Confederate Period,” *The State*, June 11, 1961.

<sup>14</sup> “Annual Report for the South Carolina Division of the United Daughters of the Confederacy,” 1962, Internal Archives, Box 11, Shelf 63, South Carolina Confederate Relic Room and Military Museum, Columbia, S.C.

<sup>15</sup> Annual Report for the South Carolina Division of the United Daughters of the Confederacy,” 1926, Internal Archives, Box 11, Shelf 63, South Carolina Confederate Relic Room and Military Museum, Columbia, SC.

<sup>16</sup> “Annual Report for the South Carolina Division of the United Daughters of the Confederacy,” 1908-1963, Internal Archives, Box 1, South Carolina Confederate Relic Room and Military Museum, Columbia, SC.

the Archives Building was certainly a factor as well, as was perhaps the statutory provision that the building was “to house the Archives and Confederate Relics of the State.”<sup>17</sup> Until space issues could be solved, Land did not have the space to acquire many artifacts and even if she did, people apparently were not as willing to contribute them.

Leadership posed another obstacle to the CRR’s realization of its potential. Like all the women before her in the custodian role, Land was not a trained museum professional but instead given the figurehead position because she was a high-ranking UDC member in Columbia. Elizabeth Lamback Brown (1836-1930), for example, was the first custodian of the CRR, serving from 1896 to 1924 despite a “feebleness of age” that meant she was “often absent from her accustomed place, her eyesight having failed.”<sup>18</sup> While Land (1890-1990) might not have been in as bad a shape as Brown, she was still an elderly women who was not really expected to do much to change how she ran the place. By sticking by their traditions, the UDC women in the Wade Hampton Chapter were helping to hinder the museum’s growth.

#### RELATIONSHIP WITH OTHER INSTITUTIONS AND THEIR LEADERS

Before 1960 the CRR was for the most part left to its own devices. The museum was an extra place to stop for those that had chosen to visit the South Carolina State House or a place where they could come in and remember the Lost Cause of the

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<sup>17</sup> Charles H. Lesser, “*The Palmetto State’s Memory: A History of the South Carolina Department of Archives and History, 1905-1960*,” (Columbia, S.C.: South Carolina Department of Archives & History, 2009), 93.

“Annual Report for the South Carolina Division of the United Daughters of the Confederacy,” 1962 Internal Archives, Box 11, Shelf 63, South Carolina Confederate Relic Room and Military Museum, Columbia, S.C.

<sup>18</sup> Mrs. Claude Girardeau and Mrs. Thornley Walker, “South Carolina Confederate Relic Room of Wade Hampton Chapter U.D.C.” 1924, South Caroliniana Library, University of South Carolina, Columbia, SC.; “Confederate Relics on Worthy Setting,” *The State*, July 27, 1924.

Confederacy. The CRR's move to the Archives Building positioned it in the shadow of a larger institution, the South Carolina Archives Department, which was led by a mostly male staff. The reaction by the State Archives director J.H. Easterby is a prime example of how the move from the South Carolina State House made the museum more vulnerable.

Easterby, a man of great importance in Columbia, South Carolina, did not like the CRR and considered it a burden. He believed that the CRR was just another "pressure now brought to bear on us [the staff of the Archives Building]" because the move meant that he had "virtually assumed responsibility" for the museum. Despite these feelings, Easterby and members of the state government saw potential in the CRR's move. He wrote that a conversation with "the State Auditor" had given him the impression that it was only "a matter of time before the Confederate Museum will be absorbed by the Archives Department."<sup>19</sup> Easterby even proposed a new curator position at the Archives whose job would be "to coordinate the work of the Archives Department and the Confederate Museum."<sup>20</sup> These plans never came to pass, probably because the director died in 1960. Other issues, such as finding a new director, became more important to the Archives Department than acquiring the CRR. The projected takeover nevertheless indicated that the Wade Hampton Chapter might have difficulty in maintaining control of the museum.

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<sup>19</sup> J.H. Easterby, letter to Calhoun A. Mays, May 3, 1960, Correspondence of the Director, Archives Department File, 1959-1965, Box 3, South Carolina Department of Archives & History, Columbia, S.C.

<sup>20</sup> J.H. Easterby, letter to South Carolina State Budget and Control Board, November 7, 1960, Justification for Appropriation Request- 1961-1962, Correspondence of the Director, Archives Department File, 1959-1965, Box 3, South Carolina Department of Archives & History, Columbia, S.C.

Even more egregious was the limited role allotted to Land and the CRR by the South Carolina Confederate War Centennial Commission. Easterby, who was vice-chairman of this commission until his death, certainly did not envision a prominent role for the museum. In fact, the only time correspondence between the commissioners even mentioned the CRR was in their budget request letter when Easterby added the museum as one of the many “projects sponsored by the Confederate War Centennial Commission” at the State Archives.<sup>21</sup> In actuality, however, the only association that the two had with each other was that the commission met for meetings in the same building that housed the CRR. It seems that since Easterby believed he was in charge of the CRR and since he was also the commission’s director, that this meant the commission in some way was sponsoring the museum. He did not want Land involved in the centennial, but he was fine with using the museum itself to advance his own projects.

Misogyny in government commissions in the 1960s was not surprising, but what makes the South Carolina Confederate War Centennial Commission’s dismissal of Land and the CRR so particularly harsh is that before the centennial women, particularly the UDC, were the main people who organized commemoration of the Civil War. Confederate veterans had almost all died, and the Sons of Confederate Veterans was a small and weak organization.<sup>22</sup> It was not as if the UDC at large maintained a distance from the centennial. The national UDC magazine featured a monthly newsletter about events concerning the centennial as well as state-by-state observances. South Carolina is

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<sup>21</sup> J.H. Easterby, letter to South Carolina State Budget and Control Board, November 7, 1960, Justification for Appropriation Request- 1961-1962, Correspondence of the Director, Archives Department File, 1959-1965, Box 3, South Carolina Department of Archives & History, Columbia, S.C.

<sup>22</sup> For more information on the gender dynamics of Civil War commemoration see: Thomas J. Brown, “Confederate Retreat to Mars and Venus,” in *Battle Scars: Gender and Sexuality in the American Civil War*, ed. Catherine Clinton and Nina Silber (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).

surprisingly absent from these pages despite the key role of the state in the war.<sup>23</sup> The South Carolina UDC women, including Land and the CRR, were in many ways silenced by the male commission. This silence was ultimately detrimental to the museum, which could have used the publicity surrounding the centennial to grow.

This is not to say that the Wade Hampton Chapter did nothing during the centennial. They still had the power to create their own events, and they did. The chapter helped create a special memorial for Stonewall Jackson for Confederate Memorial Day in 1961 and was also responsible for a banquet in honor of the centennial at the South Carolina UDC Convention in 1962.<sup>24</sup> These events, however, were the kind of commemorations that the chapter had been doing since its foundation. There were no major public celebrations held by the group, and this is most likely because the commission and other non-traditional Civil War commemorators were taking the lead on the big centennial events. Throughout the early 1960s, the Wade Hampton Chapter and by extension the CRR were very low key, filling *The State* with the usual notices about monthly meetings and the occasional dinners, but not much about the centennial. It seems odd that these group of women, whose founding members were such active participants in the early commemoration of Confederacy would be so passive during the centennial, but being overrun by the commission led to their inactivity.

#### BUDGET AND CONTROL BOARD INTERVENTION

The increased interaction between the CRR and state cultural institutions also extended to other parts of the state government. The museum had traditionally attracted

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<sup>23</sup> *The United Daughters of the Confederacy Magazine*, January 1961 to December 1965, Boxes 1 and 2, Shelf 61, South Carolina Confederate Relic Room, Columbia, S.C.

<sup>24</sup> "UDC State Convention Committees Announced," *The State*, October 7, 1962; "Confederate Memorial Day Will honor Stonewall Jackson," *The State*, May 10, 1961.

little administrative attention, as its budget was very small. In 1961 the budget was just \$3473 and it only grew slightly in 1962 to \$3777.<sup>25</sup> By 1963, the museum had even gained some recognition from *The State* newspaper for remaining South Carolina's "smallest appropriation" in the state government at \$3800. Considering that total appropriations in 1963 were "almost 200 million dollars," the CRR's budget was incredibly low.<sup>26</sup> Even in comparison to similar cultural institutions, with the South Carolina Archives and the State Library's appropriations at \$119,782 and \$11,445, respectively, the museum's budget was still tiny. The CRR was the obscure little relic room that did not cause the BCB any problems, and in return, the board usually left the museum alone. The low budget meant that the CRR could not grow or adapt, and so while the appropriation helped maintain a semblance of freedom, it also caused the museum to grow stagnant.

The BCB directed the internal affairs of the CRR for the first time in 1962, when Land, who had been either custodian or assistant custodian for ten years, was forced to retire because she had reached the state's mandatory retirement age. Past custodians had retired on their own volition or died in office.<sup>27</sup> The women of the Wade Hampton Chapter were able to replace Land with another honored UDC member of their own

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<sup>25</sup> "Current, Proposed Fund Allotments," *The State*, January 4, 1962.

<sup>26</sup> Hank Leifermann, "Relic Room's Money: The Smallest Appropriation," *The State*, April 28, 1963.

<sup>27</sup> Mrs. Claude Girardeau and Mrs. Thornley Walker, "South Carolina Confederate Relic Room of Wade Hampton Chapter U.D.C." 1924, South Caroliniana Library, University of South Carolina, Columbia, SC.

choosing, LaVerne Watson.<sup>28</sup> With the ability to hire its own custodian, the CRR was still able to maintain some independence from other government agencies.

The early years that the CRR spent in the Archive Building did not turn out to be a dramatic change for the museum. Against Land's wishes, the museum's move to a new space could not create a revitalization of the museum. It remained as it was, with a new address and a new landlord, who thought of the museum as a complete bother. However, the early years at the Archives Building did see one major change, the hiring of LaVerne Watson. While for many this change in custodian must have seemed like a run-of-the mill ritual for the Wade Hampton Chapter UDC, it was actually a catalyst for a new CRR, one that would eventually take the museum to a new location, a new ideal of exhibit practices, new friends, new vulnerabilities, and unfortunately, the eventual increase in government intervention.

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<sup>28</sup> Annual Report for the South Carolina Division of the United Daughters of the Confederacy," 1962 Internal Archives, Box 11, Shelf 63, South Carolina Confederate Relic Room and Military Museum, Columbia, S.C.

## CHAPTER II: MOVING TO THE WAR MEMORIAL BUILDING

When Land retired from the CRR in 1962, she believed that her successor Watson was “well qualified to fill the place. She has the intelligence, tact, charm, and love of history which eminently fit her for this work.”<sup>29</sup> She was right. The forty-eight year old Watson stepped into the CRR’s open leadership role just when the museum needed her to. When she found out that the State Archives director was trying to push the CRR out of the Archives Building, Watson not only found a new place to house the museum but also a better way to interpret it.<sup>30</sup> The CRR, under Watson’s direction, was no longer just a little room of relics but an active museum. While this move to the WMB made the CRR less static, it also opened the museum up to outside forces and opinions that made it vulnerable to intervention.

### INSIDE THE CONFEDERATE RELIC ROOM

The first stages of change at the CRR came from the inside. Watson completely transformed the role of the custodian. It was not just her job to greet visitors, accept donations, and correspond with the public, but also to make political connections, to become active in the community, and to make strides in learning more about the way modern museums worked. Watson’s personal correspondence records show that on any given day she was in charge of organizing school tours, sitting in on various historical

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<sup>29</sup> Annual Report for the South Carolina Division of the United Daughters of the Confederacy,” 1962 Internal Archives, Box 11, Shelf 63, South Carolina Confederate Relic Room and Military Museum, Columbia, S.C.

<sup>30</sup> “Notes on the move to the War Memorial Building,” Internal Archives, Box 1, Move to the War Memorial Building, South Carolina Confederate Relic Room, Columbia, S.C.



committees throughout Columbia, and attending seminars on museum and exhibit technique.<sup>31</sup> In order for the museum to change, Watson realized that leadership had to change as well.

Once Watson had found the WMB available and had obtained permission to move in, she began to make plans on how she was going to fill the much larger space. Watson created an entire blueprint and artifact location sheet that listed where every exhibit would be, followed by dimensions, and the type of cabinets that would be placed in each spot.<sup>32</sup> In the artifact location sheet, Watson clearly defined the exhibition spaces and divided them into various periods of South Carolina history. Each artifact had a specific reason for being in the exhibit and correlated well with the surrounding objects. For example, a Mexican war helmet and a cartridge box plate from 1834 were both displayed in the case of artifacts from 1807-1846. These artifacts have clear dates assigned to them as well as provenance to the state of South Carolina, showing the thoughtful planning and purposefulness Watson had given to the new museum layout.<sup>33</sup>

Changes in exhibition design illustrated not only Watson's impact on the museum but also her creativity. When faced with the opportunity to redesign the WMB, Watson did not just resort to the museum's standard display method. Instead, she did an entire exhibit using only mannequins and labels. The exhibit, designed for the South Carolina

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<sup>31</sup> Internal Archives, Box 2, Laverne Watson Correspondence, South Carolina Confederate Relic Room and Military Museum, Columbia, SC.; Governor Robert E. McNair, letter to Mr. William J. Everhart, June 24, 1968, Internal Archives, Box 2, Laverne Watson Correspondence, South Carolina Confederate Relic Room and Military Museum, Columbia, SC.

<sup>32</sup> "Notes on the move to the War Memorial Building," Internal Archives, Box 1, Move to War Memorial Building, South Carolina Confederate Relic Room, Columbia, S.C.

<sup>33</sup> "List of artifacts and their locations in the war memorial building," Internal Archives, Box 1, South Carolina Confederate Relic Room and Military Museum.

Tricentennial, featured figures dressed to look like famous South Carolinians such as “Marion, Pickens, Sumter, Poinsett, Calhoun, Henry Woodward, and others.” With a limited budget, Watson was able to complete this project by not only sewing the reproduction clothing herself, but also salvaging some of Belk department store’s old mannequins. She then contacted a theatre employee who helped her make the mannequins more lifelike.<sup>34</sup> The exhibit, which consisted of at least eight mannequins dressed as prominent figures in state history and had labels explaining their contributions to the state, may sound fairly pedestrian to museum visitors today, but at the time it was an innovation for the CRR to be displaying more than just artifacts.<sup>35</sup> The exhibit was a step outside of Conn’s “collection is knowledge” theory, which the museum had been hanging on to for so long. The artifacts in the museum were no longer sufficient to interpret the Confederacy. Watson had found that there was more to museum display than setting out as many relics as possible.

#### RELATIONSHIP WITH OTHER INSTITUTIONS AND THEIR LEADERS

Part of the CRR’s makeover was the museum becoming more vocal within the local community. Watson’s personality was not one to sit back and wait. She either did things herself or she called upon her carefully forged relationships with trusted individuals and asked that they help her. The museum’s move to the WMB, instead of yet another cramped location, would have probably never of happened without Watson’s reliance on other male leaders in the state. In her attempts to open the WMB up to her

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<sup>34</sup> LaVerne Watson to Mr. Milby Burton, March 9, 1970, Internal Archives, Box 1, LaVerne Watson Correspondence with Milby Burton, South Carolina Confederate Relic Room, Columbia, S.C.

<sup>35</sup> *Exhibit Mannequins of Joel Roberts Poinsett and Robert Mills- “Great South Carolinians”*, no date, Internal Archives, Box 1, Photographs of Museum/Exhibits, South Carolina Confederate Relic Room, Columbia, S.C.

museum, Watson used several professional connections in order to turn the move into something beneficial for the CRR.

The first key relationship was with Charles Lee, Easterby's successor as director of the Archives Department. He and Watson shared a strained relationship with each other. In some ways they were cordial, as when Lee wrote Watson a letter of recommendation to attend a professional seminar, but Watson's notes on the WMB move paint a fractured relationship between the two.<sup>36</sup> It was Lee's insistence that "he needed more space" which prompted the CRR's move from the Archives Building in the first place. The room that housed the museum was in Lee's opinion needed more by the State Archives, and when his opinion started getting very vocal, Watson decided to look for new accommodations. Despite wanting the CRR to move out of the Archives Building as soon as possible, Lee was unwilling to help the CRR find a new place, telling Watson "he wouldn't go to bat" for the UDC women to help them get a larger space. At one point he even questioned whether the "State" or the "W.H.Chap. [Wade Hampton Chapter]" truly owned the museum's artifacts. Watson let her anger about Lee and his refusal to work with the CRR known, but she also took advantage of the move. Watson was going to get the CRR housed in a better space than it had ever had. She even used Lee's hostility as leverage into getting the new space, because as she told state officials, "she didn't want to move to begin with."<sup>37</sup> Watson turned an unpleasant situation with Lee around and made the CRR move on her terms, not his.

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<sup>36</sup> Charles Lee to Mr. William J. Everhart, July 1, 1968, Internal Archives, Box 2, Laverne Watson Correspondence, South Carolina Confederate Relic Room and Military Museum, Columbia, SC.

<sup>37</sup> "Notes on the move to the War Memorial Building," Internal Archives, Box 1, Move to the War Memorial Building, South Carolina Confederate Relic Room, Columbia, S.C.

In order to do that, however, Watson would need allies. E. Milby Burton, director of the Charleston Museum, happened to be just the right confidante Watson needed to carry out her plans with the WMB. Burton was already experienced in designing exhibit space for the CRR, as Easterby had hired him to do so when the museum had first moved to the Archives Building in 1960.<sup>38</sup> He was not a local to Columbia so he was a fresh outside perspective on the matter, but since he was from Charleston he was at least familiar with all the people that Watson would have to deal with during her move. It probably helped Watson to know that Burton highly disliked Lee, saying that “Lee was trying to take over all the museums in S.C.” and that people “should watch their backs.”<sup>39</sup> Burton served as a paid consultant to the museum on the move, and Watson heavily relied on him throughout the project. She asked Burton questions about everything from advice on which state officials she should discuss the move with to which type of display cases the CRR should buy. Burton also took a role in planning the CRR’s design, right down to the color swatches that Watson sent him, which he thought were “lovely” and encouraged her to use.<sup>40</sup> Burton helped with the logistics of making the WMB a viable museum space for the CRR; without his support, Watson would have had a much harder time moving.

Watson’s experiences with Lee and Burton helped prepare her for her dealings with the University of South Carolina, which had taken over the WMB when the

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<sup>38</sup> Charles H. Lesser, *“The Palmetto State’s Memory:” A History of the South Carolina Department of Archives and History, 1905-1960,* (Columbia, S.C.: South Carolina Department of Archives & History, 2009), 97.

<sup>39</sup> “Notes on the move to the War Memorial Building,” Internal Archives, Box 1, Move to the War Memorial Building, South Carolina Confederate Relic Room, Columbia, S.C.

<sup>40</sup> LaVerne Watson to Mr. E. Milby Burton, July 17, 1970, Internal Archives, Box 1, LaVerne Watson Correspondence with Milby Burton, South Carolina Confederate Relic Room, Columbia, S.C.

Archives Department moved into the Archives Building. The university continued to use the second floor after the CRR's move and also remained in charge of the maintenance of the building. For her communications with the university, Watson talked mostly with Hal Brunton, the university's vice-president of business affairs. Brunton did not mentor Watson the way Burton had, nor did he antagonize her like Lee. For Brunton, the CRR moving into the WMB was a business transaction for the university and he treated it as such. The university was "critically low on space," and while he agreed that the CRR's move to the WMB was "what was best for the State," Brunton still wanted to make sure that the university was getting a good deal out of it. He proposed that the "University would charge the Confederate Museum a yearly fee" that "would cover both maintenance, utilities, and amortization." The fee, which the university described as "nominal," was \$1.80 per square foot; as the museum covered 3,216 square feet of the WMB, the CRR owed the university about \$6,000 every year. This deal, which Brunton negotiated with Furman E. McEacheron, director of the Division of General Services of the Budget and Control Board, was on top of the \$60,000 that the state had already paid the university to help renovate the WMB before the museum could be opened.

The move to the WMB proved to be a very costly venture for the legislature. The utilities were factored into the museum's yearly appropriation, while the renovation money was a lump sum that the state gave to the university.<sup>41</sup> This was a big change for the state, which was used to the CRR not costing much money at all.<sup>42</sup> At the Archives Building, the CRR's appropriation was \$3800 total, but now the state was paying \$6,000

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<sup>41</sup> Hal Brunton to Mr. Furman E. McEacheron, February 8, 1969, Internal Archives, Box 1, Correspondence Miscellaneous, South Carolina Confederate Relic Room, Columbia, S.C.

<sup>42</sup> Hank Leifermann, "Relic Room's Money: The Smallest Appropriation," *The State*, April 28, 1963.

for utilities and maintenance. Yet, in order to make both Lee and Watson happy the state was willing to spend some money on the CRR, and Watson was going to make sure that the money was spent remodeling the WMB into something that the CRR could grow into.

It was not just fees, however, that Watson had to consider with this move. After discussing the museum's vast collection with Watson, Brunton indicated that it would be "highly appropriate" for the CRR to change its name to the "South Carolina Relic Museum."<sup>43</sup> In her correspondence with Brunton, it seems that Watson had at least pretended to consider that suggestion, but she never followed through.<sup>44</sup> Brunton was proposing that the CRR give up the word Confederate, the word that undoubtedly meant the most to Watson and her fellow UDC members. The women did not want to lose this cornerstone of their institutional identity, but in order to guarantee the move to the WMB, she had to look at all the options that were handed to her and act like she was considering them.

#### BUDGET AND CONTROL BOARD INTERVENTION

The state government of South Carolina, specifically the BCB, was very much a behind-the-scenes player in the move to the WMB. Lee may have wanted the CRR out, but the legislature had the final say in what happened to the museum. They eventually agreed with Lee that moving was the best solution, but they also worked closely with Watson to assist her in the move. Due to the necessity of the state's involvement, Watson made sure that she cultivated several state government relationships throughout the move.

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<sup>43</sup> Hal Brunton, letter to Mrs. LaVerne Watson, September 9, 1970, Internal Archives, Box 1, South Carolina Confederate Relic Room, Columbia, S.C.

<sup>44</sup> "Notes on the move to the War Memorial Building," Internal Archives, Box 1, Move to the War Memorial Building, South Carolina Confederate Relic Room, Columbia, S.C.

In Watson's opinion, the most important relationship she had to have was with Governor Robert McNair. Pat Smith, a state auditor who worked closely with Watson on the move as well, told her that the governor was "90% of the Budget and Control Board." If he truly had that much influence over the department that the CRR was under, then Watson knew that she had to go directly to him and ask him for his support. For the meeting she also brought with her a well-known fellow Wade Hampton UDC member and disability activist Rose Walker Mayne Lowe, and her husband, South Carolina Association of Schools Boards executive director Thomas Jackson Lowe, in order to help convince the Governor.<sup>45</sup> The Lowe's were the type of well-connected couples that Watson could utilize to help make the Governor side with her plans.

While securing the governor's approval was important, it was not the most important state government connection Watson made. McEacheron was a major participant in the move as well. McNair might have been able to soothe Watson's fears because he was the governor and had a certain amount of sway, but McEacheron was in charge of all the practical matters that actually secured the WMB for the CRR. He was one of the first people to assist Watson in finding an open place for her to move the museum and he was integral in mediating the relationship between Watson and the university.<sup>46</sup> When Watson decided on the WMB, McEacheron was the driving force behind getting Thomas Jones, the president of the University of South Carolina, to agree

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<sup>45</sup> "Notes on the move to the War Memorial Building," Internal Archives, Box 1, Move to the War Memorial Building, South Carolina Confederate Relic Room, Columbia, S.C.

<sup>46</sup> "Notes on the move to the War Memorial Building," Internal Archives, Box 1, Move to the War Memorial Building, South Carolina Confederate Relic Room, Columbia, S.C.

to let the CRR move there.<sup>47</sup> He then worked out all the financial and logistical operations of the move, and made sure that Watson was kept informed of the progress.<sup>48</sup> Next to Burton, he was possibly the most supportive of Watson achieving her goals at the WMB and made sure that the university was setting fair terms for the CRR.

The departure from the Archives Building helped to make the CRR a stronger, modernized entity through its internal development, but the move also showed where fault lines were beginning to show in the UDC's hold on the museum. The more Watson planned and talked with others about the move to the WMB, the more state government became entangled and interested into the affairs of the museum. The CRR was now a large state investment, and the legislature was going to make sure that the museum followed its rules and regulations. When the CRR officially opened its doors at the WMB, the women opened themselves up to an era where the state would be making decisions in almost every aspect of the museum.

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<sup>47</sup> Thomas Jones, letter to Furman E. McEacheron, January 20, 1969, Internal Archives, Box 1, Move to War Memorial Building, South Carolina Confederate Relic Room, Columbia, S.C.

<sup>48</sup> Furman E. McEacheron, letter to LaVerne Watson, February 10, 1970, Internal Archives Box 1, Move to War Memorial Building, South Carolina Confederate Relic Room, Columbia, S.C



### CHAPTER III: THE CONFEDERATE RELIC ROOM- 1970-1986

Once the CRR opened its doors at the WMB, the institution began to change at a rapid pace. With more active supervision by the South Carolina BCB, the museum gained more funding, staff, and public recognition. Changes made under Land's reign, namely the singular focus on only objects relating to both South Carolina and the Confederacy, were lifted and a return to the collection of South Carolina's involvement in all military affairs began again. This time the collections policy even started to focus more on South Carolina history in general. In order to justify the government's expanded investment in the museum, the CRR had to widen its scope even more than it had done in the past, and bring in new people. Yet, with every step the museum took in this direction, it changed and many times these changes were permanent.

#### INSIDE THE CONFEDERATE RELIC ROOM

The CRR maintained an extremely small staff before moving to the WMB. Usually the custodian was the sole museum employee, although Land came in as assistant custodian during the last years of Caroline Girardeau's term, which ran from 1923 to 1956, because Girardeau was in her nineties and unable to keep up with the job, not because the museum had a pressing need for more help.<sup>49</sup> This staff situation changed a few years after the museum moved to the WMB. By 1976, the CRR had accumulated three new staff members, two museum attendants and a secretary, while Watson received

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<sup>49</sup> "Annual Report for the South Carolina Division of the United Daughters of the Confederacy," 1954, Internal Archives, Box 1, South Carolina Confederate Relic Room and Military Museum, Columbia, SC. ; Joan Reynolds Faunt, "Unreconstructed Rebel: Carolina Girardeau, Custodian of the Confederate Relic Room," *South Carolina Magazine*, January 1951, Internal Archives, Box 1, Carolina Girardeau, South Carolina Confederate Relic Room, Columbia, S.C.

the new title of director.<sup>50</sup> She was no longer the lone custodian of Confederate relics, but a museum executive with significantly more funding and an entirely new staff alongside her to bring the CRR out of the nineteenth century and into the future.

One of the biggest differences that the new staff members brought to the museum was the inclusion of male employees. Scott M. Miller was the first male employee to work at the museum. He worked alongside the female A. Lee Magnum as the CRR's first two museum attendants. Although these employees shared the same title, they had different job descriptions that were clearly distributed along gender lines. Both were assigned to tasks such as research and tours, but Magnum was also responsible for "keeping the museum area clean and attractive" and "making costumes," while Miller was responsible for "carpentry" and "cleaning guns, sword, etc."<sup>51</sup> Miller did not stay at the museum long, but within three years two other male employees, John A. Martin, Jr. and John M. Bigham would join Magnum at the museum under the new job title of "associate curators."<sup>52</sup> By then, the job descriptions for all of the associate curators were lumped together, but it seems probable that the gender lines continued between Magnum and her male colleagues.<sup>53</sup> These three would remain the associate curators throughout

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<sup>50</sup> "Annual Report: Confederate Relic Room," 1976-1977, South Carolina Library Digital Collection, Columbia, S.C.

<sup>51</sup> "Annual Report: Confederate Relic Room", 1976-1977, South Carolina State Library Digital Collections, Columbia, S.C.

<sup>52</sup> "Annual Report: Confederate Relic Room", 1977-1978, Internal Archives, Box 1, South Carolina Confederate Relic Room, Columbia, S.C.

<sup>53</sup> "Annual Report: Confederate Relic Room", 1979-1980, Internal Archives, Box 1, South Carolina Confederate Relic Room, Columbia, S.C.

the 1970s, until the early 1980s when Bigham would leave and be replaced by Dotsy Boineau, a prominent member of the UDC and the local community.<sup>54</sup>

The increase in staff members, as well as the amount of space in the WMB, helped change the overall interpretation of the museum as well as the 3,216 square feet occupied by the CRR was much larger than its previous size at both the State House and the Archives Building.<sup>55</sup> The CRR could now display artifacts that it couldn't before such as a large loom from the Civil War and more Confederate flags.<sup>56</sup> But it was not just objects from the Civil War era that were now getting displayed more. With more exhibit space, the museum had the ability to display objects outside of its original mission of the Confederacy in South Carolina. For instance, in 1981 the museum sponsored an exhibit on South Carolinians who went to space, which not only showed the museum catching up to the current century but also showed the CRR's willingness to expand outside of the Confederacy and military history.<sup>57</sup> The exhibit, which included spacesuits, photographs, and commemorative awards, was just the start of the CRR's growing number of exhibits that covered "the 1500's to the Space Age" and "over 400 years of South Carolina History."<sup>58</sup> Other examples of the museum's broadened interpretation include an exhibit

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<sup>54</sup> "Annual Report: Confederate Relic Room", 1983-1984, Internal Archives, Box 1, South Carolina Confederate Relic Room, Columbia, S.C.

<sup>55</sup> LaVerne Watson to Pat Smith, January 11, 1977, Internal Archives, Box 1, LaVerne Watson Correspondence, South Carolina Confederate Relic Room, Columbia, S.C.

<sup>56</sup> "Photo of the Confederate Relic Room in the War Memorial Building," no date, Internal Archives Box 2, South Carolina Confederate Relic Room, Columbia, S.C.

<sup>57</sup> "Annual Report: Confederate Relic Room", 1981-1982, Internal Archives, Box 1, South Carolina Confederate Relic Room, Columbia, S.C.

<sup>58</sup> "Photo of the Confederate Relic Room exhibit *Pioneers in Space*," 1981, Internal Archives, Box 1, Photographs of Museum/Exhibit, South Carolina Confederate Relic Room, Columbia, S.C.; "Message from Dotsy Boineau, Curator of History," 1986-1987, Dotsy Diane Lloyd Boineau Papers, Box 3, UDC, MSS, no date, South Caroliniana Library, Columbia, S.C.

on historic quilts made in South Carolina and of course Watson's South Carolina Tricentennial mannequin exhibit, *Great South Carolinians*.<sup>59</sup> The Confederacy may have still been the first priority of the museum, but Watson and her employees were willing to display several subjects and times in South Carolina history.

Another change in the CRR's exhibits was the inclusion of artifacts by people who were not of European descent. Considering the original mission of the museum, to honor and commemorate the Confederacy, artifacts about non-whites were not a priority of the museum. However, in 1977, the state set aside a specific budget amount that was "limited to Black and Indian articles."<sup>60</sup> The exhibits that followed the money were not groundbreaking. The Native American exhibit was a monolithic display of mostly arrowheads, and the African American exhibit "Black Culture," contained only sweet grass baskets of Gullah-Geechee people. But their inclusion at the museum was a definite change from the CRR's other exhibits.<sup>61</sup> These were not exhibits that the CRR staff necessarily wanted to do, but the BCB specifically set aside that money so the museum had no choice. Never before had the state had as much power in the interpretation and display at the museum as it did with these two exhibits.

The biggest sign of the CRR shedding its relic room image was its accreditation by the American Association of Museums (AAM) in 1977. This landmark recognition

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<sup>59</sup> "Photo of the Confederate Relic Room exhibit on South Carolina quilts," no date, Internal Archives, Box 1, Photographs of Museum/Exhibit,, South Carolina Confederate Relic Room, Columbia, S.C.; "Photos of the Great South Carolinians exhibit," no date, Internal Archives, Box 1, Photographs of Museum/Exhibit,, South Carolina Confederate Relic Room, Columbia, S.C.

<sup>60</sup> "Annual Report: Confederate Relic Room", 1977-1978, Internal Archives, Box 1, South Carolina Confederate Relic Room, Columbia, S.C.

<sup>61</sup> "List of artifacts and their locations in the war memorial building," Internal Archives, Box 1, South Carolina Confederate Relic Room and Military Museum, Columbia, S.C.; "Photo of the Confederate Relic Room exhibit *Black Culture*," no date, Internal Archives, Box 1, Photographs of Museum/Exhibit, South Carolina Confederate Relic Room, Columbia, S.C.

meant that the CRR had been found to follow the “defined guidelines and professional standards” of an ethical museum. Earning this accreditation was not a simple matter. Watson and her staff had to fill out surveys, and a representative of AAM had to visit the museum to see if it operated under museum standards for proper collections management and preservation.<sup>62</sup> The AAM found that the CRR was following these procedures, and the museum staff detailed through their annual reports how they maintained their accreditation status. The staff insisted that “it is necessary to keep abreast of the latest techniques in Preservation” and that “if we know not how to preserve our heirlooms, then we would be wasting our time in collecting them.”<sup>63</sup> This shows that the museum was making an effort not only to care properly for its artifacts, but to make sure that these artifacts could be around for generations to come as educational tools for the public. The CRR’s staff recognized that without proper care for their artifacts they would not have a museum, so they sought accreditation both as a way to make the CRR a more prestigious institution and also to hold themselves accountable. Overall, the accreditation was a validation for the museum and a gratifying culmination of Watson’s hard work. However, the accreditation also indicated how far removed the museum was moving from its roots. The tiny relic room of 1961 that was focused on the Confederacy and was only appropriated \$3800 a year would never have received accreditation. The resources the CRR gained by becoming more directly linked to the BCB were what made the recognition to be possible.

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<sup>62</sup> “Accreditation Given Confederate Museum,” *The State*, May 2, 1977.

<sup>63</sup> “Annual Report: Confederate Relic Room,” 1976-1977, Internal Archives, Box 1, South Carolina Confederate Relic Room, Columbia, S.C.

## RELATIONSHIPS WITH OTHER INSTITUTIONS AND THEIR LEADERS

The CRR also began to draw increased recognition from other cultural institutions and groups in Columbia. The CRR of the 1960's had been left out of the South Carolina Confederate War Centennial Commission, but the CRR of the late 1970's was different. This time the United States was celebrating the two hundredth anniversary of independence, and American Revolution Bicentennial Commissions were everywhere in the country. Watson was asked to join both the state and the local commissions. For the state commission, she was listed as a volunteer, meaning that the organizers could call on her when they needed help with bicentennial events and Watson would say whether or not she was available.<sup>64</sup> It was an admittedly minor role that Watson played in the commission, but compared to Land's experience with the South Carolina Confederate War Centennial Commission, it was much better. Watson, and by extension the CRR, were not to be forgotten by the state commissioners yet again.

For the Richland County Bicentennial Commission, Watson was invited by Dr. Edmund and Mrs. Mary Taylor, the co-chairs of the commission, "to write articles of historic interest for a bicentennial corner in the state newspaper." Watson was chosen because of her involvement in the CRR and for her efforts in the "contribution to the preservation of Richland County" as well as "the history of South Carolina."<sup>65</sup> While there is no record of Watson actually writing an article for the bicentennial corner, just

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<sup>64</sup> "August 28, 1974 Meeting Minutes," South Carolina American Revolution Bicentennial Commission, Box 1, Central Correspondence and Office File- 1970-1976, August 28, 1974 Meeting, South Carolina Department of Archives and History, Columbia, S.C

<sup>65</sup> Mr. E.R. Taylor to Mrs. A.C. Watson, September 30, 1975, Internal Archives, Box 1, Miscellaneous Correspondence, South Carolina Confederate Relic Room, Columbia, S.C.

having the opportunity shows that Watson was now recognized as a professional historian and the CRR as a legitimate cultural institution in the Columbia area.

Despite gaining respect within the field, the CRR remained overshadowed by the South Carolina State Museum (SCSM). The SCSM did not actually open its doors until 1988, but its existence had been a topic of conversation since at least the 1960s.<sup>66</sup> When Watson was looking for various places to move the CRR, she also discussed how the state was looking for a place to house the SCSM as well. At one point in 1968, Watson and state auditor Pat Smith even discussed the possibility of both museums being housed at the Hampton-Preston House. Watson quickly dismissed the idea due to the lack of space at the house and was allowed to move into the WMB, but the SCSM remained without a building.<sup>67</sup> Despite not having an actual space into the early 1980s, the SCSM was already a considerable collecting and institutional presence in Columbia, with a building appropriation of more than \$350,000 and several staff members on payroll.<sup>68</sup> The CRR, even with its new site and staff, was not in a position to fill the objectives of SCSM promoters. Even though the museum was experiencing more recognition and had expanding their mission, it was still known as the relic room and not as a museum of South Carolina history. The CRR would never receive the same support as the SCSM.

The SCSM, whose commission started collecting artifacts in 1962, was a distinct competitor in artifact acquisition. Since the CRR had opened its mission to include

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<sup>66</sup> "About," *South Carolina State Museum*, Accessed March 20, 2015, <http://scmuseum.org/about/>.

<sup>67</sup> "Notes on the move to the War Memorial Building," Internal Archives, Box 1, Move to the War Memorial Building, South Carolina Confederate Relic Room, Columbia, S.C.

<sup>68</sup> "Master Ledger," Museum Commission Files, Box 1, Records of the Museum Commission- Administration and Planning- General Ledgers- 1976-1978, South Carolina Department of Archives and History, Columbia, S.C.

essentially all of South Carolina's history, the museums were now after the same objects. Because it had a larger appropriation and because it was distinctly known that *the* South Carolina museum, the SCSM got more of the artifacts. In 1976, the SCSM used both grant money and its own funding to acquire a "rare portrait" of John C. Calhoun, something that the CRR would have undoubtedly wanted as well.<sup>69</sup> The SCSM also received support from other museums such as the Columbia Museum of Science and Art, which agreed to "share their collections" with the SCSM, and even the Columbia Art Museum Commission, which "pledged to continue to build the collections from its assets for the state for its future use."<sup>70</sup> These institutions were working together so that the SCSM could have a far-reaching collection, but the CRR was not included.

#### BUDGET AND CONTROL BOARD INTERVENTION

The CRR's appropriation may have been considerably less than that of the SCSM, but it was still getting much more funding than it previously had. In 1977-1978, the museum reported that its yearly budget was \$62,060 with "personal services" amounting to \$41,048 and "operational expenses" amounting to \$21,012.<sup>71</sup> The budget only grew from that point and within five years the legislature appropriated \$120,663 to the CRR, almost double the amount in the 1977-1978 budget.<sup>72</sup> Twenty years earlier the museum had only been appropriated \$3,800, but now that the museum had to factor in an increase

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<sup>69</sup> "Return John C. Calhoun to South Carolina," *News from the South Carolina Museum Commission*, Volume 2, Number 1, (Winter 1976), South Carolina Library Digital Collections, Columbia, S.C.

<sup>70</sup> "First Annual Report of the South Carolina Museum Commission," 1974-1975, South Carolina State Library Digital Collections, Columbia, S.C.

<sup>71</sup> "Annual Report: Confederate Relic Room," 1977-1978, Internal Archives, Box 1, South Carolina Confederate Relic Room, Columbia, S.C.

<sup>72</sup> "Annual Report: Confederate Relic Room," 1981-1982, Internal Archives, Box 1, South Carolina Confederate Relic Room, Columbia, S.C.



in staff as well as frequent display changes, it could no longer settle for a low appropriation. Of course unlike the days when the museum was costing the state of South Carolina less than \$4,000, the museum was now more on state's regulatory radar and had to abide by all of the BCB's rules in order to get said funding.

One of these rules was the audit and report that the museum had to file each year. This annual report to the state government summarized the museum's yearly activities, statistics, and costs. In many ways the CRR wrote its report as a justification for the funds allocated to the museum. After discussing how much money the museum cost the state, the report for the fiscal year 1978 specified that "the value of the collection far exceeded the monies appropriated by the state during the life of the museum" and "therefore the collection of gifts has made money for the State rather than cost the State."<sup>73</sup> Despite the ethical issues surrounding the potential sale of a collection, the report is trying to make the CRR sound like a good investment, something that the BCB should continue to fund. The report also justified the museum through statistical data. The 1980-1981 report showed data on everything from the number of visitors to "senior citizens on tour" meaning that the museum had to continuously show that it was useful and that people were still coming to see the museum.<sup>74</sup>

These annual reports are significant because they show how much the control of the museum had shifted to the BCB. Until 1963, the CRR only submitted annual reports to the South Carolina Division of the UDC. Instead of focusing on appropriations and an itemized list of services the museum rendered, the reports to the UDC detailed every new

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<sup>73</sup> "Annual Report: Confederate Relic Room," 1977-1978, Internal Archives, Box 1, South Carolina Confederate Relic Room, Columbia, S.C.

<sup>74</sup> "Annual Report: Confederate Relic Room," 1980-1981, Internal Archives, Box 1, South Carolina Confederate Relic Room, Columbia, S.C.

artifact that the museum had collected as well as a brief overview of visitors. The women who read the UDC reports did not care about the financial breakdown of the museum, all they cared about was that relics of the Confederacy were still being collected and that people were continuing to visit the museum. As long as their pro-Confederate ideals were being interpreted at the museum, they were happy. The BCB on the other hand did not care about the mission of the museum as long as it could prove its worth as a state-funded institution.

The shift in power reached its climax in 1986 when Watson retired after more than twenty years as head of the CRR. The UDC women of the Wade Hampton Chapter had chosen her as Land's replacement in 1962, much as the chapter members had chosen every previous custodian of the CRR. As an organization under the BCB, however, the CRR had to follow state hiring protocols. The first step of the process was naming an acting director, or somebody who would fill in for Watson before a permanent replacement was found. The choice for acting director was narrowed down to two people, Martin and Boineau. Both had served as associate curators of the museum. Boineau, fifty-seven years old in 1986, had served as national president general of the UDC in 1981-1982 and also ran the Children of the Confederacy for several years in the 1970s and 1980s.<sup>75</sup> If the UDC women went through the same process as they did in hiring Watson, Boineau would have no doubt become director of the museum.

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<sup>75</sup> "Message of the President General," *The United Daughters of the Confederacy Magazine*, December, 1982, The Dotsy Diane Lloyd Boineau Papers, Box 3, UDC, MSS, Oct-Dec 1982, South Caroliniana Library, Columbia, S.C.; The Dotsy Diana Lloyd Boineau Papers, Box 1, Children of the Confederacy, South Carolina Library, Columbia, S.C.

But the BCB was in charge of the selection, and it unanimously voted for John A Martin, Jr. as the new acting director of the CRR.<sup>76</sup> Little is known about Martin's background except that he was the child of former South Carolina state senator, John A. Martin (1953-1960 and 1965-1993) and that Martin himself had served as a curator at the CRR for several years.<sup>77</sup> Martin's connection to the South Carolina legislature was most likely a key element in him becoming director of the CRR. During the selection process, his father was a high ranking member in the South Carolina legislature and this fact probably influenced the decision. Martin was an obvious choice to all but the UDC, who wanted one of their own running the museum. Boineau, a respected UDC member and former president, fit their needs perfectly. She actively worked to keep both the museum and the organization well and oftentimes she would do projects that helped both. An example would be *Pioneers in Space*, which was displayed in conjunction with the UDC's efforts to award medals to astronauts with ties to the Confederacy.<sup>78</sup> Boineau was a link between the CRR and the UDC, but it was Martin who appealed to the BCB, and that was the only opinion that mattered. Martin would eventually be named director of the museum and Boineau would stay on as a curator of the museum, joined by Bigham again and another man, Christopher Craft, but the damage was already done. The uneasy balance between the UDC and the BCB had completely shifted to the side of the state.<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> William A. McInnis to Dotsy L. Boineau, April 8, 1986, The Dotsy Diane Lloyd Boineau Papers, Box 3, UDC, MSS- Jan-April 1986, South Caroliniana Library, Columbia, S.C.

<sup>77</sup> Rachel Cockrell, interviewed by Kristie DaFoe, Columbia, SC, March 31, 2015; John A. Martin, Sr., interviewed by James Duffy, South Carolina Political Collections, the University of South Carolina, Columbia, S.C, November 9, 1999.

<sup>78</sup> The Dotsy Diane Lloyd Boineau Papers, South Caroliniana Library, Columbia, S.C.

<sup>79</sup> "Annual Report: Confederate Relic Room," 1991-1992, Internal Archives, Box 1, South Carolina Confederate Relic Room, Columbia, S.C.

## CONCLUSION

In 2002 the museum left the WMB and moved to the old Columbia Mills Building, sharing the space with its competitor, the SCSM. Boineau, the last UDC representative, had left her position as curator in 1998, and the UDC no longer had any direct connection to the museum. The museum, now known as the South Carolina Confederate Relic Room and Military Museum (SCCRRMM), had officially narrowed its focus to displaying artifacts related to South Carolina's military history. South Carolina's role in the Confederacy is still a part of the museum, but its only one part of the museum's overall mission. The women of the Wade Hampton Chapter who founded the museum would probably be dismayed to see how much their museum has changed under complete control of the South Carolina state government, and yet for many the perception of the museum has not changed a bit.

Despite the loss of direct authority, the legacy of the UDC still lingers throughout the museum. Ask someone in Columbia who runs the museum, and it's likely that they will still say the UDC. The museum has become synonymous with the memory of the Lost Cause, and it does not look like that reputation is fading quickly. The UDC ran the museum for almost one hundred years, and the women have become embedded in the memory of the CRR. Today the museum acknowledges its former affiliation with the UDC with introductory panels explaining the history of the museum. At the top of one panel is a picture of Watson, smiling out at the visitors.<sup>80</sup> It is fitting that out of all the

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<sup>80</sup> "Main Gallery," South Carolina Confederate Relic Room, Columbia, S.C., February 21, 2015.

CRR's custodians it is Watson that the panel depicts. Without her taking over the CRR and completely transforming the museum through the move to the WMB, it could possibly not exist today. The day that Land found those live bombs in the State House was the most activity the museum had seen in years. The museum was dying until Watson became custodian and made the museum something that the state legislature could no longer ignore. The CRR might be a small, localized story about UDC activity in post-1960 America, but it serves as a building block for historians to further research the UDC's impact on gender, political, economic, and racial lines in the mid-to-late twentieth century. The organization may have lost their power over the museum, but the fact that by 1986 they still had any power and persuasiveness at all should raise further inquiries by historians.

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