



Guest view: Oneida Square landmark more than just a monument

By **MALIO J. CARDARELLI**

Special to the Observer-Dispatch

Posted Oct 23, 2010 @ 09:00 PM

Recommend

Be the first of your friends to recommend this.



As the multi-year debate continues over whether to move the Soldiers and Sailors Monument on Oneida Square — one side intent on making it the centerpiece of a roundabout on Genesee Street, and the other motivated to leave it in place — it might be interesting to examine the history of this important Utica memorial with emphasis on what it commemorates.

When a surplus of \$500 surfaced after a welcome-home ceremony for local residents who fought in the Civil War, the idea of a monument came into being. It wasn't until 1888 that serious thought was given to the project when, via a fundraising fair, \$13,000 was added to the \$500 surplus. A city referendum produced another \$15,000 from taxpayers, and the project became a reality.

Where to put it?

The next decision, a difficult one, was where to place the yet-to-be-designed monument. Bagg's Square, Franklin Square, Oneida Square and Chancellor Park were among the more prominent considerations.

In the end, Oneida Square was selected. Karl Gerhardt was commissioned to construct the monument, built in 1891 of granite and bronze. The foundation — and this should be considered by those who favor movement of the monument — is of cement, seven feet thick

On Oct. 13, 1891, before thousands from throughout Oneida County, the unveiling of this important memorial took place, a tribute to the men who fought for preservation of the Union. Its primary inscription reads: "We keep in memory the men of Utica who risked their lives to save the Union." A second inscription, "From Sumter by Land and Sea to Appomattox," describes the start of the Civil War on April 13, 1861, at Ft. Sumter, S.C., at which the Confederate Army claimed a victory — and the end of the war at the home in Appomattox, Va., on April 10, 1865, when Confederate Gen. Robert E. Lee put his signature to surrender papers prepared by Union Gen. Ulysses S. Grant.

To proclaim the unification achieved by the war is the inscription around the top of the circular monument: "One Flag, One Land, One Heart, One Hand, One Nation Evermore." On one side is the year, "1861," designating the start of the conflict, and on the other, "1865," the year it ended. The four 6½-foot statues surrounding the monument represent soldiers, sailors, peace, and victory with a fifth on the very top, representing the city of Utica.

Almost moved

In 1934, there was interest in moving the monument to a triangle at the intersections of Holland Avenue, Prospect Street and Oneida Street because the original Oneida Square location blocked out State Street, which was much busier in 1934 than it was in 1891 when the monument was erected. That never happened.

The Civil War, as most readers know, came about because the southern states insisted on states' rights without interference from the federal government. There were a number of issues the confederacy wanted to unilaterally decide upon, chief among them being the right to own slaves. Absent such concessions from the central entity, the south declared itself a separate government with its own president, calling itself the Confederate States of America.

Slavery just part of it

The war that began in 1861 focused primarily on assuring that all states were part of a central government, which on important, all-encompassing issues such as taxation and slavery, would operate under a single canon. For a century and a half, there has been debate on the question of whether the conflict would have occurred if slavery, and none other of the professed issues, was left to the states. The further debate is whether President Lincoln was only mildly interested in abolition, intent primarily on the solidification of the Union. Some argue that if that were so, it would have been more expeditious and certainly less costly in lives if the slavery issue were conceded in return for a unified America. That controversy will never be settled.

In the end, hundreds of thousands of young Americans saw Civil War battle, some as volunteers, others conscripted into the conflict. The war was brutal, largely hand-to-hand combat with crude weapons inflicting agonizing injuries. Broken and severely wounded limbs, mostly treated by amputation, many times led to death. Starvation, incapacitation due to exposure, untreated diseases and illnesses, and a variety of other debilitating conditions were common.

A symbol forever

An estimated 650,000 combatants, many in their teens, forfeited their lives on the battlefield. All were Americans — those who served on behalf of the Union and those in defense of the Confederacy. While the north prevailed and the Union was assured, the devastation of so many lost American lives has not before or since been transcended in a single conflict.

So this Oneida Square monument, there for 12 decades, now the center of debate, is a momentous memorial. It should be looked upon for what caused it to be erected by the city — forever honoring those who made the supreme sacrifice on behalf of assuring all states in the union remained united.


If the decision is indeed made to alter placement of this memorial, making it the centerpiece of a roundabout or for any other reason, it should be done with dignity and reverence, especially as we approach 2011, the 120th anniversary of the dedication of the monument and the 150th anniversary of the start of one of America's most painful wars.

Monuments are nothing more than an artistic assembly of materials, but what they represent should never be compromised for reasons not associated with the purpose thereupon memorialized.





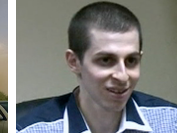

Malio J. Cardarelli frequently writes about local history and is the author of several books on local historical topics. He lives in New Hartford.

Copyright 2010 The Observer-Dispatch, Utica, New York. Some rights reserved

Advertisement

	<p>How this strange 62-cent fruit is making Americans skinny.</p>		<p>The scary truth about snoring you need to hear...</p>
	<p>Do not buy until you read this 4 week study on the results of using the E-Cigarette to quit smoking.</p>		<p>Utica - New trick now allows New York drivers to cut their insurance cost in half.</p>
			<p>Utica - New trick allows any New York resident to get extremely cheap car insurance.</p>

Popular Videos

					
<p>Boston firefighter catches boy after 3-story drop</p>	<p>Drunken Dad Allegedly Forces Daughter, 9, to Drive</p>	<p>Raw Video: Passenger Bus Crashes in New York</p>	<p>Raw Video: Dust Storm Rolls Through Texas</p>	<p>Military: Gilad Schalit Now in Israel</p>	<p>Police: Mich. Man's Daughter, 9, Drives to Store</p>

<p>At Guest At Guest Online. Shop Target.com. www.Target.com</p>	<p>HOT Penny Stock EMBA Invest in the newest Cloud-based ERP firm in the mkt today www.TechStockWire.com</p>	<p>The Next Internet Boom Stock Investment With 1,000% Potential Gains www.smauthority.com</p>
---	--	--

Ads by Yahoo

Loading commenting interface...

 <p>EXTERIOR/INTERIOR SIDING</p>	<p>MILL DIRECT WHOLESALE PRICES</p> <p>Click Here to visit our Web site</p>	 <p>True to the</p>
---	---	--

[Privacy Policy](#) | [Terms of Service](#) | [About our Ads](#)

The Observer-Dispatch, Utica, New York | (315) 792-5000 | 221 Oriskany Plaza Utica, NY 13501

Copyright © 2006-2011 GateHouse Media, Inc. Some Rights Reserved.

Original content available for non-commercial use under a Creative Commons license, except where noted.

SEO by eLocalListing | Advertiser profiles | RadarFrog Merchant Directory | Contest Rules