

First Monument to the Unknown Confederate Dead



On October 21, 1869, four years hence the Civil War, the citizens of Obion County, Tennessee dedicated the first monument to the lasting memory of the unknown Confederate dead, some of whom were buried nearby.

-the following is an excerpt from a newspaper article of the time, describing the dedication ceremony

Dedication of Confederate Cemetery

At last, after incessant and persevering labor, the noble work of fitting up a cemetery, erecting a monument, and reintering the remains of those who fell on the field of honor in defense of Southern rights was accomplished, and the morning of October 21, 1869, fixed for the funeral ceremony and final dedication of the holy place. As by special providence, the morning broke in perfect harmony with the solemn occasion, the heavy clouds hung dark and drifting over the face of the sky, the sun itself scarcely visible, seemed to participate in the pervading gloom, and every individual appeared impressed with the dignity and grandeur belonging to the day.

“About 9 o’clock, the death-like stillness was broken by the Union City brass band, by previous arrangement, meeting at the courthouse corner, and as if by inspiration, sounded the grave notes of martial music upon the pulse-less air deeper, clearer, sweeter, and sadder than ever before. In the meantime, the courthouse was crowded with ladies and gentlemen waiting to join the procession as soon as it was formed. Shortly afterwards the Independent Order of Odd Fellows, who had formed at Morgan’s Hall, in their bright and beautiful regalia, came marching up First street, and halted under the music of the band. Then came the Masonic fraternity, from the same direction, with similar tokens to distinguish them from those who had never entered into obligations to devote their lives to the great cause of suffering humanity. Upon these two associations of Benevolence and Charity the procession was formed as follows:

“The band in front, next ministers of the gospel, ladies, Odd Fellows, Masons, lawyers, physicians— all followed by the vast throng of strangers and citizens in general. Marching to the slow, solemn strains of the band, it passed through the city, and on to the hallowed resting place of departed valor—“

(This excerpt was taken from a newspaper article carefully preserved in the scrapbook of Dr. John H. Morton, who was a principle worker for the cause of the cemetery - *Special thanks to the Obion County Historical Society for sharing the archive of events related to the cemetery dedication.*)

The monument is located at 946 Summer Street, Union City, Tennessee