

Marble Minstrels, Voiceless Stones: Confederate monuments in North Carolina county seats

Shirley Robinson
Independent Scholar

Monuments to North Carolina's Civil War dead became a part of the state's human landscape soon after the war ended in 1865. The monuments vary in shape and size from the impressive statues in the grounds of the capitol in Raleigh to simple grave markers found in cemeteries across the state. They provide a very visible and readily accessible source of information on the way people remember the thousands of North Carolinians who fought and died for the Confederacy. Most county monuments were built in the period from 1895 (when the state's Civil War monument was unveiled) until about 1930. Although the rate of monument building slowed after that time and monuments became simpler in form, counties continued to build monuments throughout the twentieth century. In the period from 1980 to the present, several new monuments were built and existing monuments were restored and enhanced. This continued building activity raises the questions: what purpose do these monuments serve, and has that purpose changed over time?

This article presents the results of a field study of seventy-nine Civil War monuments. The monuments selected are those located in county seats and dedicated to those "sons of the county" who fought and died in the War. The study therefore does not include monuments which are dedicated to other groups or are located in towns which are not county seats. Figure 1 shows the distribution of Confederate monuments in county seats across the state. Notice that there are no county monuments in the northwestern part of the state, probably because this area has traditionally been believed to have been more pro-Union than pro-Confederate. In Orange County there is no Civil War monument in the county seat to the citizens of the county. Also some counties in the eastern part of the state (including Duplin and Martin) have no official county monuments commemorating the Civil War.

The map shows how the earliest monuments were built in what were the well-established cities of the time, including Charlotte, Greensboro and New Bern, and that

five contiguous counties Wilkes, Surry, Stokes, Yadkin, and Davie, built memorials to their Civil War dead after 1980. (For a map of North Carolina towns with county Confederate monuments see Figure 2. For a list of monuments by county see Table 1.)

Primary evidence for the study comes from the monuments themselves, including their location, form, and inscriptions. Further information can be found in the collection of chapter histories compiled by the North Carolina Division of the United Daughters of the Confederacy (U.D.C.) first published in 1947 and reprinted in 2007. In this book, members of each U. D. C. chapter in North Carolina recorded the history of their activities, including their extensive work in finding support for building Confederate monuments. Mrs. B.L. Smith's work on North Carolina's Confederate monuments and memorials published in 1941 provides accounts and photographs of a large number of monuments, including many of the ones in county seats.

In 1983 John Winberry published the results of his survey of more than seventy Civil War monuments and their impact on townscapes in southern states, including North Carolina. He suggested that the county monuments, constructed on the grounds of the courthouse, are not just images of the past but also part of the present and represent a desire on the part of southern communities to return to the social and moral values of a past time.

Photographs of North Carolina's Civil War monuments can be found in Ralph Widener's 1982 study of Confederate monuments across the country, and in Michael Hardy's 2006 collection, *Remembering North Carolina's Confederates*. For an architectural perspective on the monuments, see the guidebooks to the historic architecture of North Carolina compiled by Catherine Bishir and Michael Southern.

Among North Carolina's 100 counties, 74 (including five of the eleven counties formed after the Civil War) have at least one monument dedicated to their Confederate soldiers. Site visits to the monuments showed that most share certain similarities even though their locations, forms and inscriptions vary according to the time of their construction. There are also two monuments (in Currituck and Lincoln counties) which are different from any of the others.

Monuments built in the first thirty years after the war were seen as expressions of grief for the fallen and, with one exception (Cabarrus County) were placed in cemeteries. The monument in Cross Creek Cemetery in Fayetteville was the earliest to be unveiled and is one of the first war memorials to be constructed in any of the former Confederate states. Of the ten county monuments erected during this time, four are in the form of simple The pattern of counties having their own monument persisted even in the period of intensive monument building, 1896-1930. Monuments built in this period served a different purpose from the earlier ones. The War had been over for more than thirty years and concerned citizens, especially the U.D.C. and the Sons of Confederate Veterans wanted to make sure that the reasons why the South went

to war would not be forgotten and that what they believed to be the true history of the South would be remembered. Monuments built during this period are therefore usually impressive stone shafts with marble or bronze statues of soldiers. Their inscriptions are designed to portray the soldiers as heroes and in some cases, to provide a justification, etched obelisks with brief inscriptions, (Cumberland, Johnston, Mecklenburg, Wake).

The earliest example of what came to be the most popular form of monument, a raised statue of a Confederate soldier, was unveiled by the Ladies Memorial Association of New Hanover County in 1872. The monument with its statue "a likeness of one of the young soldiers of Wilmington" can still be seen in the Oakdale Cemetery. Wayne, Craven, and Guilford counties all followed suit with monuments consisting of shafts topped with soldiers, placed in cemeteries and bearing inscriptions reflecting grief for the lost. It is significant that these monuments and every one that followed feature representations not of Confederate generals or political leaders, but of the infantrymen, the sons, brothers, fathers and friends of those left behind.

It was important to the counties of North Carolina that each one had its own monument in remembrance of its citizens who died in the War. There is only one example of two counties sharing a monument. The monument honoring the "soldiers and sailors of Halifax and Northampton Counties" is in Weldon in Halifax County. Even in the vast majority of cases where the basic form of plinth, shaft and statue of soldier form the monument, no two monuments are exactly the same. The figures of the soldiers are varied: some are clean-shaven, others have beards and mustaches, some wear hats, others have caps. Almost all the soldiers have a rifle; most of them are holding it with the butt resting on the ground, a few have their rifles at the ready (Franklin, Granville, Vance). Some counties chose to use an obelisk without a statue (Buncombe, Henderson). Some chose very unusual forms: a pillared cover for a drinking fountain (Lincoln), a granite globe (Currituck). Inscriptions vary

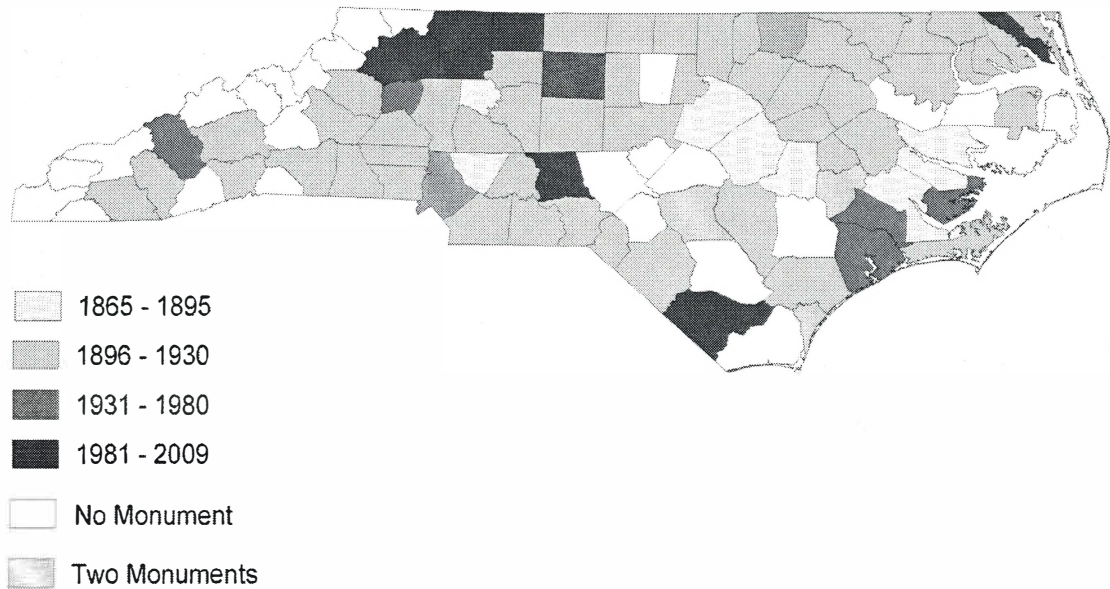


Figure 1. County level distribution of Confederate monuments by period of construction.

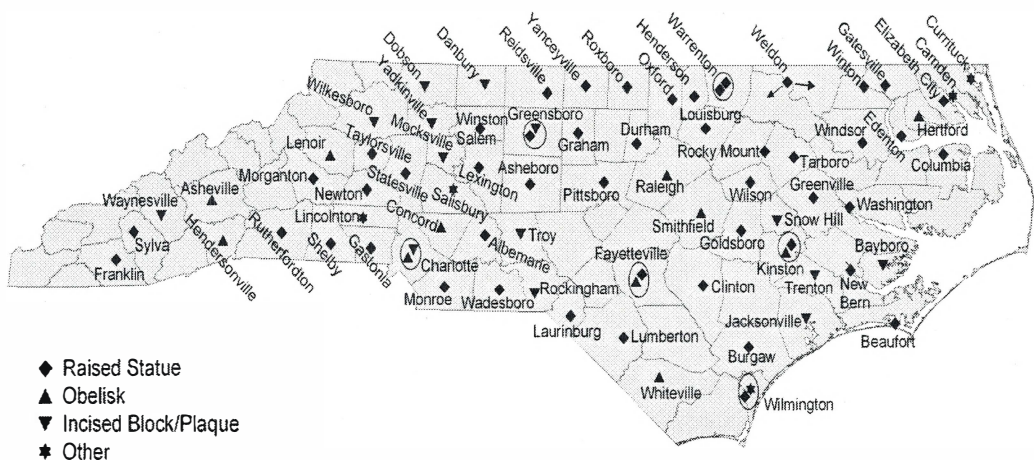


Figure 2. Towns with Confederate monuments by monument type.

from the very simple to those that include quotations from poems and statements about the reasons for the war. Many monuments also carry the names of the organizations that sponsored their construction.

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In order to fulfill their purpose of educating the citizens of the county, especially children, the monuments were not tucked away in cemeteries, but placed downtown often on the grounds of the county courthouse. The fact that many of them received public funds to help with construction costs also made this placement appropriate, and conveyed the impression that the views expressed on the monuments had the approval of the local government. In three counties, where monuments already existed in cemeteries, an additional monument was erected downtown during this period (Cumberland, Lenoir, Warren). Nowadays, given that in many towns the commercial activity has shifted from the downtown area to shopping malls on the bypass, these monuments are no longer seen by very many people.

Some monuments were placed at intersections of downtown streets. In later years, many of them had to be moved because of increased amounts of traffic, including Davidson, Caldwell, and Scotland. The Rowan County monument, however, still stands at the intersection of Church and West Innes Streets in downtown Salisbury. Rockingham County

placed their monument on a traffic island in downtown Reidsville, and as recently as 2009 placed a new concrete barrier around it to protect it from careless drivers. In two cases when new county courthouses were built the county went to the expense of moving the Confederate monument to the new courthouse site (Gaston, Robeson).

What do these monuments mean to us today? Only two of them are truly original works of art. The Rowan County monument was designed by the sculptor Frederick Ruckstuhl and cast in bronze by the Luppens Foundry in Brussels, Belgium. It features a figure of Fame holding a laurel wreath in her hand and supporting a very young soldier. It represents, in the words of the artist, "the dying of the Confederate army in the arms of Fame." In downtown Wilmington, the statue erected in 1924, a bronze sculpture by Francis Packer, features two soldiers representing "courage and self-sacrifice." The majority of other county monuments were produced by various companies, including the McNeel Marble Company in Marietta, Georgia who specialized in such structures and marketed their services to groups wishing to build memorials.

What the monuments do tell us is that the way people wanted to remember the Civil War soldiers changed over time. Grief for the dead expressed by the early monuments changed into the desire to portray the civil war soldiers as heroes. The words "Our Confederate Dead" appear on the early monuments, where many of the later ones say "Our Confederate Heroes." Excerpts from heroic poems are inscribed on several monuments, including "The Charge of the Light Brigade" (Pitt, Franklin), and "The Bivouac of the Dead," (Alamance, Forsyth).

Some counties decided to use their monument not only to honor the heroes but to provide a permanent record of why the Confederate soldiers went to war. The soldiers of the Confederacy were fighting to protect the southern "nation" and make of it a new country. The Bertie, Scotland and Caswell County monuments all refer to the soldiers' service to "their country," and the Craven County monument refers to the soldiers' "native land."

The inscriptions on county monuments bear witness to the belief that the Confederate States rose in response to a perceived Northern aggression that threatened to destroy states' rights and constitutional liberties. "[Our soldiers] believed in our social institutions and our rights of self-government imperiled by the avowed hostility of a large section of the union," (Anson County monument). The Taylorsville attorney, V. G. Beckham who designed the Alexander County monument in 1958, points out in its inscription that the soldiers were fighting "not for the preservation of slavery but for our greatest heritage – states' rights." A monument to the soldiers of Mecklenburg County erected outside Charlotte's City Hall in 1977 describes how the soldiers "struggled nobly for the cause of independence and constitutional self-government."

The number of statues that face North makes it tempting to suggest that they were put in a position that deliberately demonstrates an intention to repel any future invasion on the part of Union soldiers. This idea does not hold up to examination. As John Winberry discovered in his study, the orientation of the statues seems to have been determined by their placement in front of the courthouse. (He therefore asked the next logical question, "why do courthouses in the South face North?" – but did not provide an answer). The soldier on the monument usually faces in the same direction as the courthouse, with his back to the building. An exception is the Chowan County monument, which in its original location faced towards the courthouse and as the soldier has his rifle at the ready, he appeared to be about to fire into the building. This monument has been moved, and is now in downtown Edenton.

In defining the Civil War as protecting states' rights, it was understood to be a continuation of the fight for freedom from the Revolutionary War. A plaque added to the Wilson County monument in 2003 describes the "reverences for freedom that their grandfathers held when they fought the British during the American Revolution."

The county monuments provided a very effective means of ensuring that even though the war may have been lost, The Cause was not forgotten. The Franklin County monument in Louisburg says it best. "At Appomattox, God said to the Confederate soldier, About Face /In obedience to the celestial order/ There was a change of front/ And the gray line faced the future/ Unashamed and unafraid."

In more recent times, counties constructed monuments as memorials to their citizens who served and died in all wars that have involved the United States and some have included the Civil War dead on those monuments, (Montgomery, Yadkin). A few acknowledge that some sons of North Carolina fought on the other side in the War between the States. In a unique memorial Henderson County in 2008 erected a marble plaque with the following inscription: "In honor of the citizens of Henderson County who served in the Union army during the Civil War for the preservation of the United States of America and in gratitude to their families."

Many monuments acknowledge the support of the community fundraising efforts responsible for their construction. The North Carolina Chapters of the U.D.C. were by far the most active of such groups and are mentioned by name on thirty- six of the seventy-six monuments.

In some cases, wealthy individuals stepped forward to fund a monument. The impressive marble statue in Nash County (now unfortunately missing four of its original five marble figures) was paid for by Robert H. Ricks, a Confederate veteran. (The local chapter of the U.D.C. took the money they had raised for a monument and sent it to France to benefit the soldiers fighting in the First World War.) In Burke County, in 1918 a Confederate veteran provided the funds needed to replace the finial on the monument with a bronze soldier. The finial can still be seen by the side of the statue in the grounds of the courthouse in Morganton. The story behind the Currituck County monument is told on an interpretative panel at the site of the courthouse in Currituck. The county decided in 1912 to build a raised

statue of a soldier and got as far as constructing the base when the money ran out. Ten years later, Mr. Joseph Knapp, a wealthy industrialist who had a summer residence in Currituck County, offered to pay for a statue of a soldier. The county commissioners accepted the offer. However, when faced by strongly negative popular feeling, the commissioners changed their minds. Mr. Knapp was from Philadelphia.

Costs for county monument construction ranged from \$1,000 to \$15,000, with most of them in the \$2,000 – 3,000 range. Some communities were able to reach their fundraising goals quickly. The Cleveland Guards Chapter of the U.D.C. in Shelby raised \$2,500 in just one year. More typical was Rutherford County where it took eight years to find the \$2,500 needed. Chapters of the U.D.C. organized oyster suppers, balls, and quilt raffles. In Forsyth County, the proceeds from ticket sales to the first moving picture ever shown in the county were used to help defray the cost of their Confederate monument.

Many of North Carolina's Civil War monuments have now passed their centenary and it speaks to the persistence of the respect for the monuments and what they represent that many local communities have managed to find the funds to restore, refurbish and make additions to their monuments. Restoration of damaged monuments began as early as 1928, when the Warren County monument, built in 1903 and placed in Fairview Cemetery, had to be entirely rebuilt at a cost of \$800.00. Unfortunately, despite the restoration efforts undertaken in Guilford County in 1969 and again in 1984, the monument erected in 1888 in Green Hill cemetery in Greensboro shows serious signs of damage. In 1990 the Robert F. Hoke Chapter of the U.D.C. successfully raised the \$14,000 needed to take apart the Rowan County bronze and granite monument to clean and repair the damages to the structure caused by standing in the middle of Salisbury's traffic for more than eighty years. Cleveland County refurbished the monument in Shelby in 1991, and Iredell County marked the centenary of its

monument with a re-dedication marked by a new plaque in 2006. The Lenoir County monument, after two previous relocation moves, has recently been placed in front of Kinston's Visitor Center giving it a place of prominence in the city's attractions.

"Peace to their Ashes, Honor to their memory, Glory to their cause" is inscribed on the Vance County monument erected in 1910. The statement provides a succinct expression of the purpose of this and other monuments. The emphasis placed on each of these three ideas has changed over the years since the war. The earliest monuments reflect the grief caused by the enormous loss of human lives. From 1896-1930, monuments were designed to represent the fallen soldiers as heroes who died in a glorious cause. As the twentieth century progressed and other wars took the lives of North Carolinians some counties built monuments to honor those who died in all wars. In recent years (from 1980 to the present) some counties have built new monuments that include lists of the names of Civil War soldiers, (Davie, Wilkes) and some counties have added such lists to monuments that already exist (Wayne, Alexander).

The distribution of Confederate monument building in North Carolina illustrates the traditional spirit of local independence. Each county felt the need for a monument of its own, which though sharing similarities with others, was unique to them. The character and variety of these seventy-nine distinct memorials demonstrates the complexity of civil war remembrance in the counties of North Carolina.



Figure 3. Cumberland County. Obelisk in a cemetery (period 1, 1868-1895).

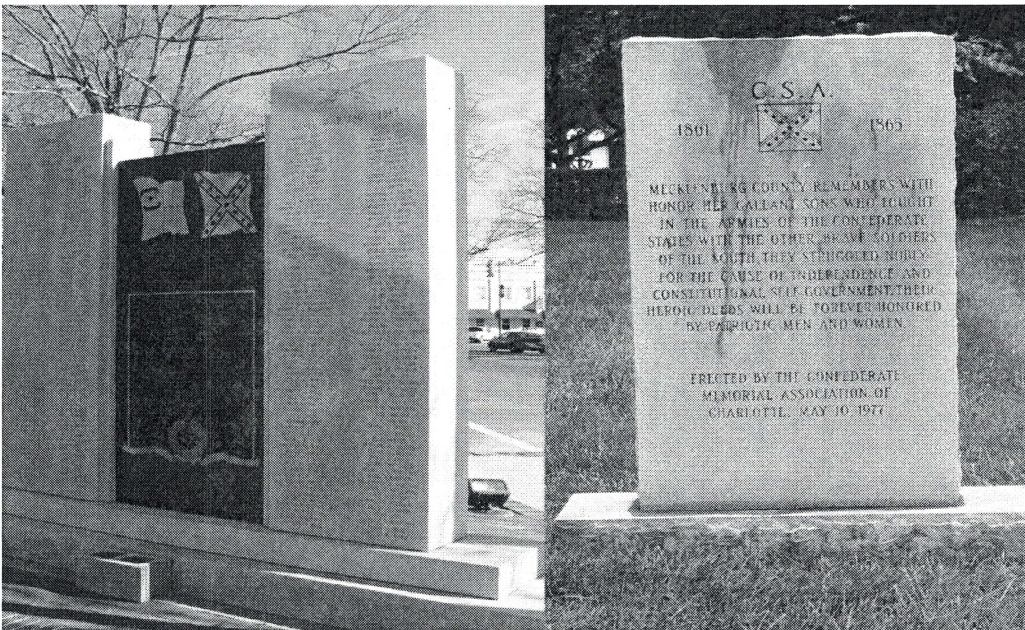


Figure 4. Stone incised with list of names in Davie County (left, period 4, 1981-2009), and an engraved marker in Mecklenburg County (right, period 3, 1931-1980).

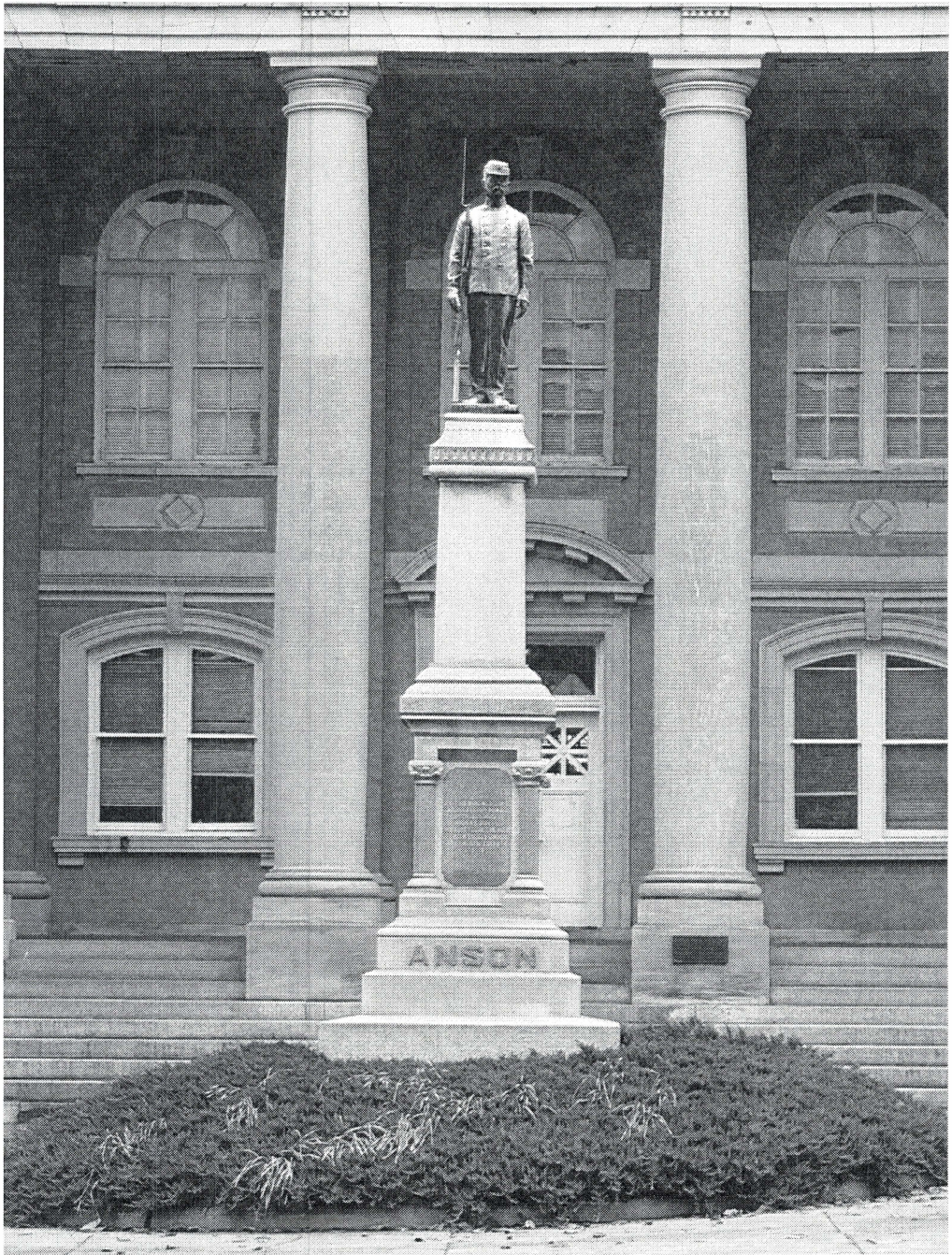


Figure 4. Statue placed in front of the Anson County courthouse (period 2, 1896-1930).

Table 1. Location, form, and sponsors of monuments surveyed in this study, with year of placement.

County	County Seat	Date	Form	Location	Sponsors *=named on monument
Alamance	Graham	1914	Raised statue	Courthouse	Graham Chapter, UDC*
Alexander	Taylorsville	1958	Raised statue	Courthouse	Local attorney - V G Beckham
Anson	Wadesboro	1906	Raised statue	Courthouse	Anson Chapter, UDC*
Beaufort	Washington	1888	Raised statue	Oakdale cemetery	Ladies Memorial Association
Bertie	Windsor	1896	Raised statue	Courthouse	Confederate Veterans Assoc of Bertie *
Buncombe	Asheville	1905	Obelisk with finial	Courthouse	Asheville Chapter UDC and Friends*
Burke	Morganton	1918	Raised statue	Courthouse	Samuel McDowell Tate Chapter, UDC
Cabarrus	Concord	1889	Obelisk with finial	Courthouse	
Caldwell	Lenoir	1910	Obelisk	Courthouse	Vance Chapter of the UDC Caldwell County*
Camden	Camden	2002	Brick walk	Courthouse	Local citizens
Carteret	Beaufort	1926	Raised statue	Courthouse	Fort Macon Chapter, UDC Beaufort*
Caswell	Yanceyville	1921	Raised statue	Courthouse	Caswell County Chapter, UDC*
Catawba	Newton	1907	Raised statue	Courthouse	People of Catawba County*
Chatham	Pittsboro	1907	Raised statue	Courthouse	Winnie Davis Chapter, UDC*
Chowan	Edenton	1904	Raised statue	S. Broad St.	Bell Battery Chapter, UDC*
Cleveland	Shelby	1906	Raised statue	Old courthouse	UDC*
Columbus	Whiteville	2005	Obelisk	Whiteville Cem.	Sons of Confederate Veterans*
Craven	New Bern	1885	Raised statue	Cedar Grove Cem.	New Bern Ladies Memorial Association*
Cumberland	Fayetteville	1868	Obelisk with cross	Cross Creek Cem.	Ladies Memorial Association
Cumberland	Fayetteville	1902	Raised statue	Morgan Road	Women of Cumberland County
Currituck	Currituck	1922	Granite globe	Courthouse	
Davidson	Lexington	1905	Raised statue	Courthouse	Robert E Lee Chapter UDC*
Davie	Mocksville	1987	Incised block	Courthouse	
Durham	Durham	1924	Raised statue	Courthouse	People of Durham County*
Edgecombe	Tarboro	1904	Raised statue	Tarboro Commons	William Dorsey Pender Chapter, UDC
Forsyth	Winston Salem	1905	Raised statue	Courthouse	James P. Gordon Chapter, UDC*

Franklin	Louisburg	1914	Raised statue	Louisburg College	Joseph J. Davis Chapter, UDC
Gaston	Gastonia	1912	Raised statue	Courthouse	Gastonia Chapter, UDC + J D Moore Chapter Children of the Confederacy*
	Gatesville	1915	Raised statue	Courthouse	Confederate Memorial Organization *
Granville	Oxford	1909	Raised statue	Public Library	Granville Grays Chapter, UDC
Greene	Snow Hill	1929	Block with plaque	Courthouse	Greene County Chapter UDC*
Guilford	Greensboro	1888	Raised statue	Green Hill Cem.	Ladies Memorial Association*
Guilford	Greensboro	1986	Block with plaque	Davie & McGee	Sons of Confederate Veterans*
Halifax	Weldon	1908	Raised statue	Maplewood Cem.	Junius Daniel Chapter UDC*
Haywood	Waynesville	1940	Block with plaque	Old Courthouse	Haywood Chapter UDC*
Henderson	Hendersonville	1903	Obelisk	Courthouse	
Hertford	Winton	1913	Raised statue	Courthouse	Hertford County Chapter, UDC
Iredell	Statesville	1905	Raised statue	Courthouse	UDC and Ruben Campbell Camp of Veterans
Jackson	Sylva	1915	Raised statue	Courthouse	
Johnston	Smithfield	1887	Obelisk	Riverside Cem.	admirers and fellow citizens*
Jones	Trenton	1960	Block with plaque	Courthouse	Trenton Chapter, UDC*
Lenoir	Kinston	1880	Obelisk	Maplewood Cem.	UDC*
Lenoir	Kinston	1924	Raised statue	New Bern Road	A.M. Waddell Chapter, UDC*
Lincoln	Lincolnton	1911	Water fountain cover	Courthouse	Wallace Reinhardt Chapter, Children of the Confederacy*
Macon	Franklin	1909	Raised statue	Courthouse	Macon County Monument Association
Mecklenburg	Charlotte	1887	Obelisk	Elmwood Cem.	Women of Charlotte*
Mecklenburg	Charlotte	1977	Incised block	City Hall	Confederate Memorial Association*
Montgomery	Troy	1998	Incised Block	Courthouse	
Nash	Rocky Mount	1917	Raised statue	Battle Park	Robert H Ricks, Confederate Veteran
New Hanover	Wilmington	1872	Raised statue	Oakdale Cemetery	Ladies Memorial Association*
New Hanover	Wilmington	1924	Statue of two soldiers	3 rd and Dock St	Gabriel James Boney, Confederate Veteran*
Onslow	Jacksonville	1957	Block with plaque	Courthouse	Onslow Guards Chapter UDC*
Pamlico	Bayboro	1940	Block with plaque	Courthouse	Oriental Neuse Chapter UDC*

Pasquotank	Elizabeth City	1911	Raised statue	Courthouse	D H Hill Chapter, UDC*
Pender	Burgaw	1914	Raised statue	Courthouse	Pender County Chapter, UDC*
Perquimans	Hertford	1912	Obelisk	Courthouse	Perquimans Chapter, UDC*
Person	Roxboro	1922	Raised statue	Courthouse	Person County Chapter, UDC*
Pitt	Greenville	1914	Raised statue	Courthouse	People of Pitt County*
Randolph	Asheboro	1911	Raised statue	Courthouse	Randolph Chapter, UDC*
Richmond	Rockingham	1930	Block with plaque	Courthouse	Pee Dee Guards UDC
Robeson	Lumberton	1907	Raised statue	Courthouse	UDC*
Rockingham	Reidsville	1910	Raised statue	Scales Street	Reidsville-Rockingham Chapter UDC
Rowan	Salisbury	1909	Statue of soldier	W. Innes Street	UDC*
Rutherford	Rutherfordton	1910	Raised statue	Courthouse	Davis-Dickson- Mills Chapter UDC*
Sampson	Clinton	1916	Raised statue	Courthouse	Ashford-Sillers Chapter UDC*
Scotland	Laurinburg	1910	Raised statue	Courthouse	Laurinburg-Scotland Chapter UDC
Stanly	Albemarle	1925	Raised statue	2 nd street	Albemarle Chapter, UDC*
Stokes	Danbury	1990	Incised Block	Courthouse	Stokes County Historical Society + Sons of Confederate Veterans*
Surry	Dobson	2000	Incised Block	Courthouse	Sons of Confederate Veterans*
Tyrrell	Columbia	1902	Raised statue	Courthouse	Tyrrell Monument Association*
Union	Monroe	1910	Raised statue	Courthouse	Monroe Chapter UDC*
Vance	Henderson	1910	Raised statue	Courthouse	Vance County Chapter UDC*
Wake	Raleigh	1870	Obelisk	Oakwood Cem.	Ladies Memorial Association
Warren	Warrenton	1903	Raised statue	Fairview Cem.	Memorial Association of Warren County*
Warren	Warrenton	1913	Raised statue	Courthouse	Warren Chapter UDC and Sons of Warren*
Wayne	Goldsboro	1883	Raised statue	Willowdale Cem.	Goldsboro Rifles*
Wilkes	Wilkesboro	1998	Incised block	North Bridge St.	Sons of Confederate Veterans*
Wilson	Wilson	1902	Raised statue	Maplewood Cem.	
Yadkin	Yadkinville	1987	Incised block	Courthouse	Veterans of Foreign Wars*

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