

The General Beauregard Equestrian Statue stands within a circular plot of ground situated at the foot of Esplanade Avenue between Bayou St. John and the entrance to New Orleans City Park. The monument consists of a sizable granite base from which the bronze statue, depicting Confederate General P. G. T. Beauregard astride a prancing horse, rises. The memorial was built in stages, with the base being dedicated on May 28, 1913 and the statue on November 11, 1915.

The landscaped space containing the statue is divided into a series of concentric circles. Its outer edge is defined by a low concrete curb outlining a low planting bed. This bed is crossed by short sidewalks which connect the adjacent street to a circular sidewalk separating the previously mentioned plantings from a low concrete retaining wall. The wall encloses a slightly raised bed containing ground cover, flowers, a hedge of moderate height and, in the center, the monument itself.

The ensemble stands a total of 27 feet in height. Its dark gray granite base is 10 feet tall and rises from a one-foot foundation. The bronze equestrian statue is 16 feet in height.

The base's shape consists of two long, straight sides and two ends, each of which features a large convex curve. Because of the treatment of the upper portions of the base (the upper portions of the straight sides are stepped and the upper portions of the curved ends slant inward in a concave curve), the surface area of the flat plane forming its top is slightly smaller than that of its bottom. The boldly molded and well-detailed statue connects to the base through three of the horse's four legs. (The fourth leg is raised and advanced to simulate movement.) General Beauregard is depicted wearing a Confederate uniform, coat and cap. Hamilton Basso, an early biographer of the general, has described Beauregard's likeness as " . . . a grotesque affair of a giant man . . . looking melancholy and stoop-shouldered . . ." Interestingly, the bronze image does not bear a close resemblance to Beauregard, who was actually slight in stature.

The monument's bas relief inscription, located on one of the base's curved ends, reads as follows:

G. T. Beauregard
1818-1893
General C.S.A
1861-1865

Significant Dates: 1913-1948
Architect/Builder: Statue: Alexander Doyle
Criterion A

The General Beauregard Equestrian Statue is of statewide cultural significance as one of three major Louisiana monuments representing what is known by historians as "the Cult of the Lost Cause." The other two statues, both also located in New Orleans, depict Robert E. Lee and Jefferson Davis. Statues of this type are tangible symbols of a state of mind which was powerful and pervasive throughout the South well into the twentieth century (and some would say even today).

The Cult of the Lost Cause has its roots in the Southern search for justification and the need to find a substitute for victory in the Civil War. In attempting to deal with defeat, Southerners created an image of the war as a great heroic epic. A major theme in the Cult of the Lost Cause was the clash of two civilizations, one inferior to the other. The North, "invigorated" by constant struggle with nature, had become materialistic, grasping for wealth and power. The South had a "more generous climate" which had led to a finer society based upon "veracity and honor in man, chastity and fidelity in women." Like tragic heroes, Southerners had waged a noble but doomed struggle to preserve their superior civilization. There was an element of chivalry in the way the South had fought, achieving noteworthy victories against staggering odds. This was the "Lost Cause" as the late nineteenth century saw it, and a whole generation of Southerners set about glorifying and celebrating it. Glorification took many forms, including speeches, organizations such as the United Daughters of the Confederacy, reunions, publications, and holidays such as Lee's birthday. A particularly popular form of veneration was the memorial, of which the north-facing Confederate soldier was the most common type. Examples of these statues are found in parks and courthouse squares throughout the South. The Cult of the Lost Cause continued to dominate Southern cultural history in the early twentieth century, and it is indeed still alive and well today.

Although Robert E. Lee was the centerpiece of the cult, another integral component was the veneration of other Civil War generals. The latter were often memorialized by citizens of their native states. Pierre Gustave Toutant Beauregard was born at Contreras Plantation, St. Bernard Parish, Louisiana on May 28, 1818. Highlights of his career in the U.S. Army before 1861 included his graduation from the Military Academy in 1838, service in the Corps of Engineers, two brevets for gallantry during the Mexican War, and appointment as superintendent of West Point. On January 28, 1861 (only six days after receiving the latter assignment) he resigned his commission in order to join the Confederate army. The following month he was appointed as the Confederacy's first brigadier general. The high point of his Civil War service was probably his command of the Southern forces at Charleston, including his responsibility for ordering the bombardment of Fort Sumter on April 12, 1861. Beauregard's defeat of federal forces in this battle made him the Confederacy's first hero. His other important contributions to the war effort included commanding roles in the battles of First Manassas (June 1861) and Shiloh (April 1862), command of coastal defenses in Georgia and South Carolina (September 1862-April 1864), direction of the defense of Petersburg ((June 1864), and command of the Military Division of the West (October 1864). After the war Beauregard settled in New Orleans, where he was active in business, civic and political endeavors.

The effort to commemorate General Beauregard can be traced to a meeting of the New Orleans chapter of the United Veterans of the Confederacy (UVC). Meeting on the evening of February 21, 1893 (Beauregard had died earlier in the day), the group decided to form a separate association to raise funds for . . . the erection [in New Orleans] of a monument commemorative of the patriotic deeds and noble achievements of the great Louisiana soldier and General, . . .@ They incorporated the Beauregard Monument Association two days later. The initial contributions of UVC members and other Louisiana citizens (who joined the association through a series of graded memberships) were insufficient to build the proposed monument. Although the Ladies Confederate Memorial Association, the United Daughters of the Confederacy, the Sons of Confederate Veterans, the Louisiana Historical Society, the City Park Association, and a Tennessee UVC camp all either took part in fund raising efforts or made outright donations, acquiring the needed monies proved to be a difficult and slow process. Over the years fund raising activities included a sham battle, an "entertainment and musical," a "Tournament Festival" held in the local fair grounds, and public appeals through newspapers and circulars. For example, the following quote from a speech appeared in the newspaper coverage of a 1908 ceremony dedicating a bust of General Beauregard for display at the local Confederate museum:

"Louisiana cannot afford to be behind her sister States in thus honoring her gallant son, one of the full generals in the Confederate Army. For us it is enough that Pierre Gustave Toutant Beauregard was a great soldier; that he is ours; that it is our duty to see that his monument is erected, and that speedily."

A useful fund raising strategy was the decision by the association's executive committee to invest in premium bonds of the city of New Orleans, a move which netted \$5,000 for the memorial project.

Because of the funding difficulties, the monument was erected in stages. The site was donated in 1907 and dedicated on May 28, 1908. On December 15 of the latter year the association contracted with New York sculptor Alexander Doyle to make the statue. Citing his acquaintance with and respect for General Beauregard, Doyle quoted the association a "low" price of \$15,000 for the work. The organization approved his design on May 28, 1912 and shortly thereafter contracted with the Albert Weiblen Marble Company of New Orleans to create the statue's foundation and pedestal. This work cost \$5,900, with the pedestal being dedicated on May 28, 1913. Two years later, on November 11, 1915, the completed statue was dedicated at an elaborate public ceremony.

Each of the Beauregard memorial's construction milestones received extensive press coverage. Samples of the speeches made at these gatherings reflect just how strongly the citizens of New Orleans clung to the Cult of the Lost Cause. Said former governor and Civil War veteran Francis T. Nicholls via letter to the audience at the 1908 site dedication:

"General Beauregard's military genius, his characteristic Creole courage, and his brilliant services to the Southern Confederacy from Fort Sumter to the close of our struggle, have won him enduring fame to which no word of mine, however sincere, no monument we can raise, however beautiful, can add one tith."

"It is particularly and specially fitting and right," Nicholls continued, "that Louisiana should pay this permanent tribute to the great soldier, who has left to her the glorious legacy of his military skill, devotion and achievements."

Said Judge John St. Paul at the same occasion: AWell, indeed, may they worship at at ([sic] his shrine, for he was one, and not the least, of that galaxy of heroic men whose glorious deeds have placed their age and the struggle in which they took part among the grandest that adorn the annals of all times.@

Note Regarding Period of Significance:

The fifty year cutoff was used to end the period of significance. However, the General Beauregard Equestrian Statue continued to have the symbolic value described above well past the fifty year cutoff. In fact, the deification of Southern heroes such as Beauregard and Robert E. Lee has continued to the present.

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