



Wines down South

Sherman's Neckties THE MARCH TO THE SEA BEGAN HERE

By Doc Lawrence



STONE MOUNTAIN, GA – A new and very original Civil War monument was unveiled in this incredibly beautiful village just outside Atlanta.

The story is captivating. The monument, “Sherman’s Neckties,” located in the city of Stone Mountain marks the approximate place where General William T. Sherman’s “March to the Sea,” actually started, giving it added importance to historians and tourists now and in the future. From here, this part of the Civil War became a military campaign of total destruction and more than one observer said it was also the beginning of modern warfare.

Around Midnight on July 20, 1864, two days before the Battle of Atlanta, Sherman published an order mandating the melting and twisting of rails along the designated railroad tracks preventing rail transportation during the remainder of war. The red-hot rails were bent around trees and telegraph poles, and coined by soldiers and journalists as “Sherman’s Neckties.”

The impressive monument was an effort from the City of Stone Mountain’s Civil War Committee

chaired by noted author and prominent civic leader, Dr. George D. N. Coletti. Dr. Coletti’s acclaimed historic novel, *Stone Mountain: The Granite Sentinel* tells a compelling story about life, death, suffering and survival during the tumultuous war years in Georgia and adds greatly to an understanding of the impact of this war on women, children, refugees and soldiers caught in the tragedy.

The stories told during the ceremony were often dramatic. The honor guard, composed of uniformed Union and

Confederate reenactors, lowered the ceremonial Confederate flag and then raised Old Glory as the crowd sang “God Bless America.” Dignitaries represented a cross-section of this town and nearby Atlanta, including clergy, business leaders, historians, university professors and even



Joined by state and local dignitaries, noted author George Coletti (far right) talks about the memorial and the destruction to Georgia during the March to the Sea.



“Sherman’s Neckties” Monument Dedicated



Blue and Gray soldiers met in peace for the historic dedication

the popular local sheriff, Thomas Brown, an African-American and local lifelong resident. Descendants of the Civil War still residing in one of America's most historic communities joined in the ceremonies which at times brought tears to those moved by the irony and the spiritually uplifting meaning of the morning.

Hovering over the "Sherman's Neckties" monument and the dedication ceremonies was Georgia's inland Gibraltar, Stone Mountain. Drawing over five million visitors each year, the mountain and vast park features the enormous Civil War carving, plus museums, Indian trails, outdoor recreation and of course, a stunning view of Atlanta from the mountain top that will steal your breath.

Stone Mountain is prominently mentioned in Dr. Martin Luther King's "I Have a Dream" speech. On this spectacularly beautiful North Georgia morning, Dr. King's vision manifested. One minister said it almost like he was here saying, "I told you someday this would happen."

SHERMANTOWN

Shermantown, a community within Stone Mountain, was part of the dedication ceremonies. The community was named to honor the liberator and the African-American population there today is largely descended from those who were here in 1864. Shermantown has few counterparts in the South and on this day, its people were recognized and honored.

We took time to walk with along the historic streets, view beautiful homes, the granite railroad depot, and the hauntingly beautiful Confederate cemetery and meet some mighty friendly people.

A reception held in the old Confederate hospital had Shermantown leaders sharing pound cake and hot coffee with business leaders, local ministers and Georgia tourism officials. Professor Hermina Glass-Avery, a Kennesaw State University official who spoke during the ceremonies, said that rail twisted into an "S" on the monument meant to her, "slavery no more."

With Atlanta's arts, culinary and sports offerings a short drive away, this community demonstrated the profound tourism potential of the Civil War Sesquicentennial.

The events reaffirmed why Americans are such special people. There is common ground where truth is the centerpiece. We share a majestic heritage and we move forward. We know there is always a way.



Part of the historic dedication: left to right, Historian Rusty Hamby, Georgia Tourism official Brittney Gray, Professor Hermina Glass-Avery and author George Coletti



Frank Spence, on left, shares stories with Dr. Dan Parker, pastor, Stone Mountain First Baptist Church. Spence, a noted civic leader, is a former ranking executive of the Braves and the Falcons