



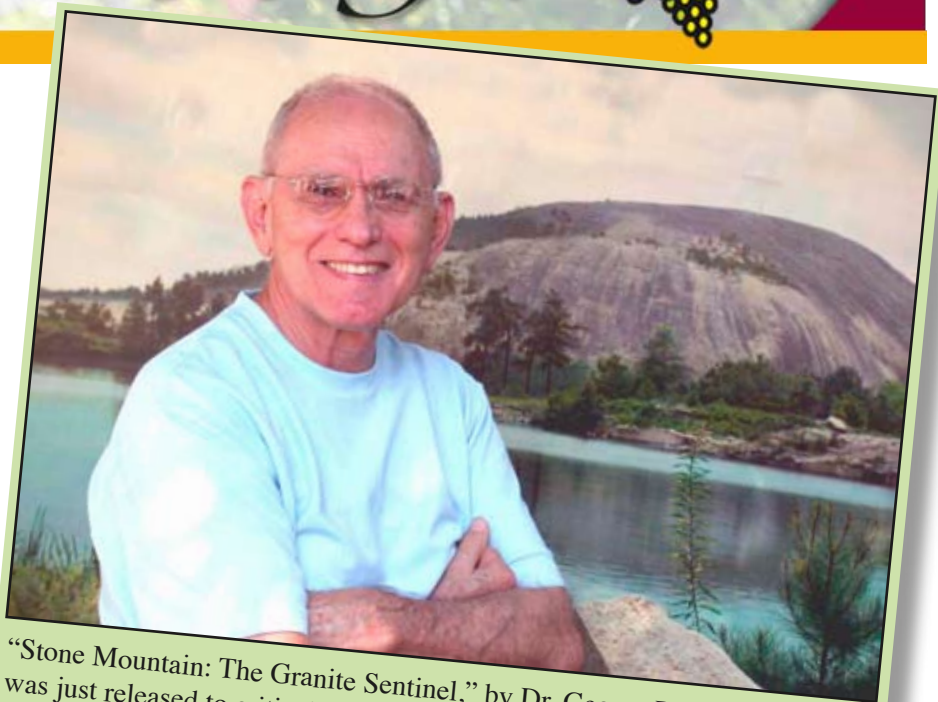
## STONE MOUNTAIN: THE GRANITE SENTINEL Civil War Tourism Gets A Boost

By Doc Lawrence

The official start of the Civil War Sesquicentennial is 2010, but people, places and events are already positioned to make this multistate commemorative celebration one of the country's most meaningful and popular observances since the Bicentennial Celebration of America. It is the Civil War with all the epic stories, heroes, battles and struggles that attract visitors to these hallowed places from the world over. After all, who doesn't come to Atlanta silently looking for Tara?

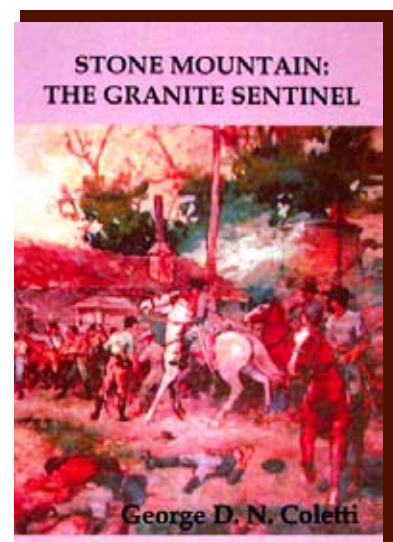
New books, dramas, movies, lectures and tours are just beginning. The first great work comes in the form of an amazing new book by a Georgia native son, Dr. George Coletti. "Stone Mountain: The Granite Sentinel" was written by Coletti who literally lives near the base of the mountain and state park. Coletti knows the subject like no other, serving as a curator for the Quarry Exhibition at Stone Mountain and a prominent historian and civic leader. "Stone Mountain," said Coletti, "is one of the most popular and accessible family-friendly parks in America and the Civil War theme here will bring in hundreds of thousands of new visitors. This will happen throughout the states where the war was fought."

As a son of the South, my early and profound influences were formed largely through oral history and some very good books. I knew who fought with what army where in the War Between the States. I take pride in sharing DNA with some who did their duty and served these great armies and cavalries until all was lost. I supplemented my knowledge with even more books, notably *Life in Dixie During the War*, by Decatur, Georgia heroine Mary Gay and, of course,



"Stone Mountain: The Granite Sentinel," by Dr. George D.N. Coletti was just released to critical acclaim as one of the best Civil War era books since "Gone With The Wind." Coletti, a member of one of Georgia's most prominent families. This highly entertaining and informative book, serves as an introduction to the Civil War Sesquicentennial.

*Photo courtesy of Dr. George D. N. Coletti*



*Gone With The Wind*. These could have satisfied my curiosity about life back then, but reading George Coletti's monumental new work *Stone Mountain: The Granite Sentinel*, was an eye-opener, awakening me to how little I actually knew.

## VISITS TO HISTORY

Prompted by Coletti's brilliantly told stories, I began visiting many of the places near my home. The Andrew Johnson cemetery, holding the remains of a Stone Mountain founding family, the Stone Mountain Cemetery with the mass graves in the Confederate section, an uncomfortable experience as you think of the wartime tragedy leading to such impersonal burial, knowing how their surviving families likely never knew what happened them.

Grown men make war and everyone somehow loses something, a life, a few years of youth, a healthy body or hope. There are magnificent heroes in *The Granite Sentinel* to be sure, but the overriding sentiment is that war is senseless, attacking the core of our collective humanity. That's not to take anything away from the brave soldiers who gave their lives-my own family shares a similar heritage-but more a personal lament that any of God's children had to die unnaturally.

It takes a mighty effort to bring a reader's interest back to the events of long ago, but Coletti is equal to the Herculean task. The characters seem to leap from the pages grasping for a heartstring. There is a message: "Never forget us."

As the United States approaches the Civil War Sesquicentennial, *The Granite Sentinel* is perfectly positioned to make these tumultuous events and brave, good people live once again through the power of good storytelling, something Southern writers have nailed down from time immemorial.

All the elements of greatness are drawn together in *The Granite Sentinel*: romance and love, loyalty and duty, chivalry and generosity, and most of all honor. Reading the debate between two of the South's finest statesmen-orators, Alexander Stephens and Robert Toombs during Georgia's Secession Convention in 1861, is a stunning example of the remarkable power of language, history, law and love of place. Two men destined to lead the Confederacy, one as Vice President, the other as Secretary of State. One opposed to Secession, the other in favor. Both were close friends and shared a love for the South that transcended differences.

That's just one of the powerful lessons Coletti leaves us. *The Granite Sentinel* is profoundly important and belongs in the home library of all who love both the South and America.



Because of George Coletti's epic saga so skillfully produced in *Stone Mountain: The Granite Sentinel*, those who read this book may feel moved to answer the calls from those gray spirits that seem to still cry out.

"Rest now. We will not forget you."

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