

# *Seventy Years of the Louisiana Historical Association\**

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THE YEARS FOLLOWING the Civil War were trying ones for New Orleans, for although it had been spared destruction from military bombardment it had suffered military occupation, and there was extensive evidence to testify to the many hardships which beset the Crescent City. The economic life of the once-proud ante bellum port was in a chaotic condition. Her old merchant class had been nearly wiped out by the war; and many of her banks held worthless notes and Confederate money and bonds. Citizens, returning from the war, crowded the labor market; country folk, seeing little future on ravaged farms and plantations, had thronged to the city in search of employment.

Especially depressing was the destitute condition of Confederate widows, disabled veterans, and war orphans. Under normal conditions it would have been difficult providing for such a large number of unfortunates; but under the circumstances, the task was one of indescribable proportions. It is to the credit of the returning Confederate veterans that they did not allow the wants of their own families to blind them to the needs of these less fortunate victims of the Civil War.

Although most of the survivors of the Confederate Army did not reach New Orleans until May, 1865, by mid-June

\* A paper read at the Louisiana Historical Association convention at Alexandria, March 21, 1959.

they were actively engaged in fund-raising campaigns for the needy, ably assisted by the ladies of the city who never tired in their support of relief activities. Charity races were held at the Fair Grounds; noted Louisiana historian and statesman, Charles Gayarré, was enlisted to lecture for the relief of the Jefferson Davis family; and the first legislature which met after the close of hostilities was induced to establish a home for disabled veterans. In order to make their relief work more effective, the survivors of different commands banded together into benevolent associations, adopting names reminiscent of their old units. Among these were "The Fifth Company, Washington Artillery Benevolent Association," "The Washington Relief Association," and "Gibson's Brigade Benevolent Association."<sup>1</sup>

By the summer of 1866, the Confederate veterans of New Orleans had accomplished much in relieving the hardships of the more unfortunate victims of the Civil War in their city; but it was felt that even more could be accomplished by uniting all the separate benevolent associations into one large organization. With this object in mind, the "Soldiers' Relief Convention" met in Lyceum Hall on July 17, 1866. The spirit of enthusiasm displayed by this gathering was so great that it aroused the fears of Federal authorities, who, soon afterwards, ordered the suppression of Confederate organizations in New Orleans. Henceforth, the work of these associations had to be conducted in the names of the ladies, quietly, and often in secrecy.<sup>2</sup>

Almost from their founding, the Confederate associations in New Orleans had contemplated expanding their programs to include historical activities. The suppression of these organizations ended any plans which they had made in this respect; but, upon the first relaxation of military repression in the city, leading Confederate veterans met and organized the Southern Historical Society in May, 1869. Dr. Benjamin M. Palmer, the famed Presbyterian divine, was elected its first President, and Confederate Generals Bragg, Beauregard,

<sup>1</sup> *New Orleans Daily States*, June 18, 1897.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

Buckner, and Maury were among its founders. Great hopes were entertained for the organization and branches were contemplated in every Southern state. Unfortunately, the political unrest in the Reconstruction South interfered with its growth; it languished, and in 1873 it was moved to Richmond, much to the regret of the Confederate veterans in New Orleans.<sup>3</sup>

With the end of Reconstruction and the overthrow of the Carpet-bag government in the mid-1870's, local Confederate veterans were able to resume their activities without fear of molestation. The Association of the Army of Northern Virginia was chartered in 1876 and in the following year the Association of the Army of Tennessee was organized. Other organizations with similar aims were formed, among them the Association of Veterans of Confederate States Cavalry and the Washington Artillery Association. These Confederate organizations devoted themselves chiefly to relief and memorial activities; but, they also displayed an active interest in historical matters. Through the efforts of historical committees each group was able to collect many relics and historical documents. In time these formed valuable collections which were highly prized by the associations which owned them; but they were not open to the view of the general public. Since the collections were kept separately, they were often poorly housed and consequently exposed to possible loss and destruction. It became increasingly evident to the veterans that something had to be done to insure the future preservation and wider utilization of the valuable historical materials in their possession.<sup>4</sup>

Finally in 1887-1888, Colonel A. J. Lewis, President of the Association of the Army of Tennessee, proposed to the other Confederate Veteran organizations that they unite with the Association of the Army of Tennessee in establishing a common place of deposit for their historical material. His

<sup>3</sup> *Confederate Veteran*, VI (December, 1898), 547; *New Orleans Daily States*, June 18, 1897; E. Merton Coulter, *The South during Reconstruction 1865-1877* (Baton Rouge, 1947), 182-183.

<sup>4</sup> *New Orleans Daily States*, June 18, 1897.

proposal was given careful consideration by the veterans; and Tulane University, the Washington Artillery Hall, the Howard Library, and other places were considered as possible locations for the contemplated joint depository. In the early part of February, 1889, the Association of the Army of Tennessee issued a circular letter to the other veterans' organizations asking that they appoint committees to consider the matter. The committees met jointly, and, after discussing the merits of various locations, decided to respond to an invitation from Frank T. Howard to examine the Howard Memorial Library at Lee Circle.

Howard offered to provide them with suitable space in the library in which to keep their valuable manuscripts and to display their Confederate relics, and the committees voted unanimously to recommend his offer to their associations. Then Howard suggested that possibly the veterans might be interested in enlarging the scope of their proposed joint collection to include relics, books, and documents connected with all periods of Louisiana history. Howard went on to propose that, in the event their associations were interested in doing this and the library could not provide adequate space for the enlarged collection, he "could promise the addition of an annex where the relics could be stored and exhibited in a fire proof building forever." The veterans enthusiastically accepted Howard's generous offer, and their associations soon voted to unite their collections in the Howard Library and to expand the scope of the joint collection to include all periods of Louisiana history.<sup>5</sup>

The idea of the formation of a Louisiana historical association came as a natural development of Howard's proposal. Expressing the belief that there was "plenty of good material" for an historical society, Howard actively assisted the Confederate veterans in organizing a state historical association. After securing copies of the charters and by-laws of several

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, June 18, 1897; Manuscript notes on the founding of the Louisiana Historical Association, in the Louisiana Historical Association Papers, Louisiana Historical Association Collection (Howard-Tilton Memorial Library, Tulane University).

other state historical societies, he and representatives of the veterans drew up a charter and by-laws for the new organization. The final draft of the charter was adopted in April, 1889, and the Louisiana Historical Association was incorporated under the laws of the State of Louisiana on the eleventh of that month.<sup>6</sup>

In outlining the aims of the Association, the charter provided that: "The objects and purposes for which this corporation is formed are to collect such books, pamphlets, papers, documents, flags, maps, plans, charts, paintings, engravings, lithographs and other pictorial representations, manuscripts and other things appertaining to the history of the territory of Louisiana, both before and after its cession to the United States, and especially the collection and preservation of all papers, documents, relics, etc., relating to the War between the States from 1861 to 1865. And this corporation shall have the right to compile and publish and to have compiled and published, books, plans, charts and other papers and documents relating to the purposes for which it is organized, and to apply for and hold copyrights and patents necessary to its protection."<sup>7</sup>

The powers of the Association were vested in a board of governors, consisting of twenty-five members, equally distributed among representatives of the Association of the Army of Tennessee, the Association of the Army of Northern Virginia, the Battalion of Washington Artillery, the Association of Veterans of Confederate States Cavalry, and the trustees of the Howard Memorial Library Association. The members of the first board of governors were: J. B. Wilkinson, Jr., George H. Frost, R. S. Venables, J. K. Renaud, and W. P. Johnston, representing the Association of the Army of Tennessee; John T. Purves, E. D. Willett, Peter Blake, T. S. Campbell, and Thomas Higgins, representing the Association of the Army of Northern Virginia; W. M. Owen, E. I. Kureshedt, C. L. C. Dupuy, Joseph H. DeGrange, and J. H. Dug-

<sup>6</sup> Frank T. Howard to "Dear Col." (William Miller Owen), March 9, 1889, in the Louisiana Historical Association Papers; *Act of Incorporation and By-Laws of the Louisiana Historical Association* (New Orleans, 1915), 5.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 6-7.

gan, representing the Battalion of Washington Artillery; J. H. Behan, D. A. Given, T. E. Davis, S. S. Prentiss, and W. R. Lyman, representing the Association of Veterans of Confederate States Cavalry; Frank T. Howard, G. T. Beauregard, J. N. Galleher, Robert Maxwell and Charles E. Fenner, representing the board of trustees of the Howard Memorial Library Association. This board elected as the first officers of the association: Frank T. Howard, President; W. R. Lyman, First Vice-President; William Miller Owen, Second Vice-President; D. A. Given, Secretary and Treasurer; and Charles A. Nelson, Custodian.<sup>8</sup>

The by-laws of the Association provided for a general membership, consisting of "white persons of good moral character, who were in the service of the Southern Confederacy, and of their white descendants of good moral character, and also of white persons of good moral character who were not in such service, but who have been citizens of Louisiana for more than five years previous to their application for membership." It also provided for an honorary membership to be chosen by the board of governors. The initiation fee of the Association was set at \$2.00 and the dues were fixed at \$1.00 per annum.<sup>9</sup>

The first board of governors wasted no time in launching the activities of the Louisiana Historical Association. The collections belonging to the various Confederate veterans' organizations were moved into a compartment of the Howard Library provided for the use of the Association. Under the enthusiastic influence of Colonel William Miller Owen, the Louisiana Historical Association's collection grew with such rapidity that it was evident almost immediately that it would soon outgrow its quarters in the library. True to his promise, Frank T. Howard induced the board of trustees of the Howard Library to acquire a lot of ground which adjoined the library, fronting Camp Street. In early July, 1889, he reported that he intended to erect new quarters for the Asso-

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 7-8.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 13-14.

ciation at this location and that he expected to have plans for the new building drawn that very summer.<sup>10</sup>

While preparations were being made for the erection of this structure, the officers of the Association devoted themselves enthusiastically to the work of enlarging the general membership and within a short time the number of names on the membership rolls increased considerably. Efforts were made to publicize the work of the Association and interested parties were encouraged to place historical relics, documents, and books in the Association's collection. Special efforts were made to induce prominent Confederate veterans to turn over their personal effects. Accordingly, President Jefferson Davis, Commodore William Wallace Hunter, General Joseph E. Johnston, and General John B. Gordon were elected honorary members of the Association. Although President Davis died shortly after his election, his widow was contacted by Colonel Owen, a friend of the Davis family, and she agreed to place a large part of her husband's papers and mementoes in the Association's collection. As a result, over 2,000 of the President's belongings were entrusted to the safekeeping of the new organization. Among other prominent Confederates who responded favorably to the Association's appeal were Commodore Hunter and Mrs. Braxton Bragg, who contributed many valuable items. Although the Civil War period was stressed in the Association's activities, other phases of Louisiana history were not ignored. In order to make this clear, an official seal was adopted on which important dates in Louisiana history were prominently displayed, and efforts were made to collect items from Louisiana's colonial and ante-bellum past.<sup>11</sup>

Less than two years after its founding, the Louisiana Historical Association took possession of its new quarters. Completed in December, 1890, the building exhibited the very

<sup>10</sup> Manuscript notes on the founding of the Louisiana Historical Association in the Louisiana Historical Association Papers; Frank T. Howard to W. R. Lyman, July 3, 1889, Louisiana Historical Association Papers.

<sup>11</sup> William M. Owen to D. A. Given, September 27, 1890, Louisiana Historical Association Papers; *First Circular and Catalogue of the Louisiana Historical Association*. (New Orleans, 1891), 4-5.

latest in museum eloquence. The architects, Messrs. Sully and Toledano, had designed it so that it would conform in a general way with the Romanesque type of architecture of the Howard Library which adjoined it. The structure consisted of one story and a basement surrounded by a high terrace. Its outer walls were of pressed brick, ornamented with richly carved, semi-glazed terracotta trimmings; while the retaining wall and steps were of Long Meadow brown stone. The interior was finished in highly-polished cypress. Handsome display cases lined the walls in the main hall, which was equipped to serve as a meeting place as well as a museum. A large, fireproof vault in the basement provided adequate storage space for valuable manuscripts.<sup>12</sup>

The Louisiana Historical Association expressed its great satisfaction with its new quarters by planning a memorable celebration for the day of the formal dedication of the building. January 8, 1891, the seventy-sixth anniversary of the Battle of New Orleans, was the date chosen for the ceremony. Numerous invitations were sent out and many business houses adorned their buildings with flags and declared a holiday in honor of the occasion. Despite a "continuous and penetrating rain" on the afternoon of the eighth, many Confederate veterans and local military units participated in a grand parade preceding the dedication of the new building. The procession dispersed in front of the quarters of the Association and the veterans entered the building to the inspiring notes of the "Bonnie Blue Flag," played by the Washington Artillery band.

After the customary preliminary ceremonies, Frank T. Howard, President of the Louisiana Historical Association and donor of the building, made a brief address and formally transferred the museum to the Board of Governors for the perpetual use of the Association. Colonel William Preston Johnston accepted the gift on behalf of the Board. After a stirring address by Judge C. E. Fenner, the dedication cere-

<sup>12</sup> Frank T. Howard and D. A. Given to "the President and Members of the Benevolent Association, Army of Tennessee, Louisiana Division," November 10, 1890, copy in the Louisiana Historical Association Papers; New Orleans *Times-Democrat*, January 9, 1891.



monies were concluded. The Historical Association's museum was given the name "Memorial Hall," in compliance with Howard's wish that the building and its collection might forever proclaim "how a brave people and their descendants hold the name and the fame of their heroes and martyrs with admiration undiminished by disaster or defeat and with a love unquenched by time."<sup>13</sup>

Possession of Memorial Hall encouraged the Association to seek even greater accomplishments than those already achieved. Through the untiring interest of President Howard and other members of the Board of Governors, the organization made notable progress. The general membership increased steadily and the illustrious name of Charles Gayarré, famed Louisiana historian, was added to the list of honorary members. In August, 1891, the Association issued its first publication, entitled: *First Circular and Catalogue of the Louisiana Historical Association*. Thanks to the continued efforts of Colonel William Miller Owen, Second Vice President and Custodian of Memorial Hall, the Executive Committee was able to report that the Association's collection contained "over 4,000 valuable manuscripts, books and papers . . . besides portraits of distinguished men, arms, uniforms, regimental flags, etc." In the words of the *First Circular*, the results of the Association's activities were "highly encouraging."<sup>14</sup>

Shortly after its dedication, Memorial Hall became the scene of a most solemn occasion, which made it a place of considerable historic interest in its own right. On December 6, 1889, Jefferson Davis, only President of the Confederate States of America, died in New Orleans. Following an impressive funeral pageant, the dead chieftain's body had been given temporary burial in the Army of Northern Virginia's tomb in Metairie Cemetery. After three-and-a-half-years, the

<sup>13</sup> New Orleans *Times-Democrat*, January 9, 1891; Frank T. Howard to the Board of Governors of the Louisiana Historical Association, January 8, 1891, copy in the Louisiana Historical Association Papers.

<sup>14</sup> Charles Gayarré to D. A. Given, May 14, 1891, Louisiana Historical Association Papers; *First Circular and Catalogue of the Louisiana Historical Association*, 3-5.

President's widow decided that Mr. Davis' remains should be permanently laid to rest in Richmond, Virginia. In accordance with her wishes, the copper casket containing the President's body was removed from its vault in the tomb of the Army of Northern Virginia on May 27, 1893. The casket was then placed in a brass-trimmed oak coffin and transported under military escort to Memorial Hall, where it lay in state until the next evening, when it was removed to the Louisville and Nashville Railroad depot for its final trip to Richmond. The short period when the Confederate President's body lay in state in the Louisiana Historical Association's museum is of such interest that fuller treatment should be given to this brief event in the Association's history.<sup>15</sup>

The hearse bearing the President's remains arrived at Memorial Hall late in the afternoon of Saturday, May 27th. Amid a "stifling" silence broken only by the slow rolling of thunder in the west, the casket was carried into "the relic-hung hall" and placed on a simple, antique oak bier at the upper end of the long room. Here, beneath tattered battle flags and amid thousands of relics of the people whom he had guided in their ill-fated war for independence, the Confederate leader's body spent its last few hours in New Orleans. Covered only with the faded Mexican War flag of the First Mississippi Rifles which he had commanded long before the Civil War, and guarded by survivors of the vast armies which once had marched under his command, Jefferson Davis' casket lay in state. During the evening of the twenty-seventh and late into the afternoon of the twenty-eighth, a steady stream of people filed silently into Memorial Hall in order to pay their last respects to the departed Southern leader. Finally, as evening shadows began to appear in Camp Street, immense crowds formed outside the Hall, while a distinguished gathering assembled within. On the platform sat Governor Murphy J. Foster of Louisiana, his lieutenant governor, the mayor of Richmond, and Miss "Winnie" Davis and other relatives of the late President. At the appointed

<sup>15</sup> Edison H. Thomas, *Story of the Jefferson Davis Funeral Train* (reprinted from the *L.&N. Magazine*, February, 1955), 3-5.

time, the Governor arose and spoke briefly of the solemnity of the events which were taking place. Then letters were read authorizing the transfer of the President's remains from New Orleans to Richmond. After a fervent prayer delivered by the Rev. A. Gordon Bakewell, "an impromptu body of pall-bearers, from among the veterans in the crowd," formed, carried the casket out of the Hall, and placed it upon a crepe draped catafalque drawn by four black horses. While bands played mournful music, the funeral procession moved slowly up Camp Street and Jefferson Davis' remains were carried out of sight of the Louisiana Historical Association's museum.<sup>16</sup>

At the annual election of officers in 1893, Frank T. Howard, first President and patron of the Louisiana Historical Association, retired from office. He was succeeded by Lieutenant Colonel Edward A. Palfrey, a noted Confederate veteran. It was during Colonel Palfrey's presidency that the future development of the Association's museum was seriously threatened by the collecting activities of several other museums throughout the South, and particularly by the formation of the Confederate Memorial Association which had been organized in the mid-1890's in order to raise funds for the erection of a "National Confederate museum" or "Battle Abbey" in Richmond, Virginia. To meet this challenge, the Louisiana Historical Association was fortunate in having as a member Colonel Joseph A. Chalaron, a man of tireless energy. As Chairman of the Association's Archives Committee, Colonel Chalaron, early in 1897, exhorted the Association "to be up and moving; to act now, if we wish to hold in its entirety what we have already accumulated, and carry our Museum to what its Projectors aimed to have it—unsurpassed by any in the South." Warning that relics and historical records still in private hands would "go where most energy is shown," he urged that the favorable sentiment aroused by the Battle Abbey movement not be overlooked or disparaged; but that it be taken advantage of and directed as much as possible to the benefit of the Louisiana Historical Association. Accordingly, he advocated that the Association approach its

<sup>16</sup> New Orleans *Times-Democrat*, May 27, 28, 29, 1893.

activities in a more "thoughtful, earnest, and businesslike way" than it had in the past; and that it employ systematic solicitation as a means of enlarging its collection.<sup>17</sup>

In response to Chalaron's appeal for renewed vigor, the Association took immediate steps to strengthen its position. Until this time, the activities of the organization had been financed chiefly by annual contributions from the Confederate veterans' organizations which met in Memorial Hall. It was evident that this method of financing was inadequate and that new sources of revenue had to be developed in order to increase the effectiveness of the Association. Thus a movement was begun with the object of raising an endowment fund for the maintenance of the museum. In an effort to enlist public support, the work of the Louisiana Historical Association was featured in a full page spread in the "Confederate Veteran Edition" of the *Daily States* of June 18, 1897. Although this publicity made the Association better known, it produced relatively little in the line of voluntary contributions.

In hopes of providing a steady source of income, the Board of Governors decided to appeal for state support of the Association's museum. Accordingly, plans were made to enlist the aid of the Louisiana Constitutional Convention which was scheduled to meet in New Orleans in 1898; and a committee was formed to contact the convention delegates and induce them to draft and adopt a provision in the new constitution for the support of Memorial Hall. In order to meet a pressing need for additional space in the museum, the Association's patron, Frank T. Howard, enlarged Memorial Hall by adding an attractive gallery running the full length of the building. This fire-proof annex, equipped with specially constructed steel and glass museum cases, provided ample room for the rapidly increasing collection.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>17</sup> *Act of Incorporation and By-Laws of the Louisiana Historical Association*, 2; *Confederate Veteran*, VI (December, 1898), 547; Minutes of the Louisiana Historical Association, II, 3-8, 89, in the Louisiana Historical Association Papers.

<sup>18</sup> *New Orleans Daily States*, June 18, 1897; Minutes of the Louisiana Historical Association, II, 26; *Confederate Veteran*, VI (December, 1898), 547.

The enthusiasm displayed by Colonel Joseph A. Chalaron in all movements for the improvement of the Association and its museum so impressed the Board of Governors that, at their annual meeting in March, 1898, they elected him Secretary and Treasurer of the Association and Custodian of Memorial Hall. Chalaron made every effort to justify the trust placed in him. Combining a considerable amount of natural ability with a tremendous capacity for work, he made the years subsequent to his election some of the brightest in the history of the Louisiana Historical Association. A great aid to Chalaron in his valuable work was Louisiana's new constitution, adopted in May, 1898, which provided that "The General Assembly shall appropriate not less than twelve hundred dollars per annum for the maintenance in New Orleans of a Memorial Hall or repository for the collection and preservation of relics and mementoes of the late Civil War, and of other objects of interest." With this guaranteed annual income at his disposal, Chalaron was able to devote his undivided attention to the activities of the Association.<sup>19</sup>

Working closely with President Palfrey, Colonel Chalaron improved the museum collection. Long lists attest to the many historical items which came into the Association's possession when he was Custodian. Especially noteworthy were large additions to the Davis Collection, which made the Louisiana Historical Association's collection of such items far superior to any other in existence. Another acquisition of considerable interest was the "Lady Slocomb," an eight inch Columbiad used by the Fifth Company Washington Artillery during the defense of the Confederate fortifications at Mobile, which was placed in front of Memorial Hall during the summer of 1899. This large gun attracted much attention and proved quite helpful in drawing increased crowds into the Hall.<sup>20</sup>

The turn of the century found the Louisiana Historical

<sup>19</sup> Minutes of the Louisiana Historical Association, II, 30, 46; Benjamin W. Dart, *Constitutions of the State of Louisiana and Selected Federal Laws* (Indianapolis, 1932), 655.

<sup>20</sup> Custodian's Report, July 5, 1899, copy in the Louisiana Historical Association Papers; Minutes of the Louisiana Historical Association, II, 61-62, 72.

Association's museum at its height. Its historical collection had reached such proportions that it was estimated to contain over 8,000 articles. Through Colonel Chalaron's efforts, the exhibits were kept in splendid shape; and an average of better than 10,000 visitors viewed them annually. In addition to Confederate veterans' organizations, local units of the Sons and Daughters of the Confederacy met regularly in Memorial Hall and aided in maintaining public interest in the collection.

The Louisiana Historical Association's museum proved such an outstanding success during this period that it completely dominated the imagination of the officers; and, as a result, other important aspects of the organization's work were largely ignored. This was especially true of the general membership, which had been neglected for some years. By the end of President Palfrey's administration in 1901, "a marked decrease" in the roll of members was very much in evidence. The matter caused some concern at the time, but mainly because the museum's revenue from this source had decreased. When other means were found for replacing this lost source of income, no serious attempt was made to revive the declining membership, and, in a short time, the rolls of the Association dwindled to the twenty-five members of the Board of Governors.<sup>21</sup>

On the death of Colonel Palfrey in 1901, another prominent Confederate veteran, Captain George A. Williams, succeeded to the presidency of the Louisiana Historical Association. During Williams' eight-year administration, the museum continued to prosper and the large annual flow of visitors through Memorial Hall occasionally exceeded 20,000 persons. In 1909 President Williams retired from office and was succeeded by Colonel Benjamin F. Eshleman, famed Civil War commander of the Washington Artillery. A few months after his election Colonel Eshleman died and within days the Association suffered another serious loss in the death

<sup>21</sup> *Confederate Memorial Hall of the Louisiana Historical Association* (n.p., n.d.), 5; Minutes of the Louisiana Historical Association, II, 72-73, 79, 83-84, 95, 104.

of its dynamic Secretary and Treasurer, Colonel Joseph A. Chalaron.

At the next annual meeting, held in March, 1910, Lewis Guion was elected President. Early in his administration President Guion entertained hopes of improving the facilities of the Association by adding a story to Memorial Hall. He proposed to accomplish this by making a further appeal to the generosity of the Association's patron, Frank T. Howard; but Mr. Howard's untimely death in 1911 ended any hopes which Guion had in this regard. In making his will, however, Mr. Howard had not forgotten the Association; and thus the treasury received \$5,000 from his estate to be used for the improvement of Memorial Hall. Since this sum was inadequate for enlarging the building, it was invested in 5% City of New Orleans Public Improvement Bonds, the interest of which was to be used by the Association.<sup>22</sup>

The deaths of Chalaron and Howard mark the close of the Louisiana Historical Association's brilliant first years. From this period until the mid-Twentieth Century the story of the Association is one of gradual decline. At first this decline was imperceptible and a succession of prominent citizens to the presidency tended to distract attention from the obvious fact that the Association was ceasing to progress.<sup>23</sup> Despite the fact that the museum collection in Memorial Hall continued to be kept in good condition, a study of the minute book covering the early twenties indicates lack of progressive thinking on the part of the Board of Governors and a considerable number of Board meetings which had to be postponed because of lack of quorum. Neglect of the general membership had restricted the members of the Louisiana Historical

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, II, 79, 81, 165, 185, 189, 191; III, 16, 33, 63, 66, 68, 70, 74.

<sup>23</sup> Lewis Guion retired from office in 1914 and was succeeded by George A. Williams, who retired in 1915. The next President was Captain E. M. Hudson, formerly of the Confederate Diplomatic Corps. Hudson died in 1916 and was succeeded by Joseph A. Breaux, Ex-Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Louisiana, who served until his death in 1926. His successor was Major General William J. Behan, former Mayor of New Orleans, who died in 1928, whereupon Dr. E. S. Lewis became President. Dr. Lewis held the office until his death in 1935. (*Minutes of the Louisiana Historical Association*, III, 124, 156, 190, 198, 200; IV, 98, 150, 152, 161-162.)

Association mainly to a relatively small number of Confederate veterans. While these men were active, little need had been felt for enlarging the rolls of the organization, but now, as they became infirm with age, there was no younger membership to take up their work.<sup>24</sup>

As the years progressed the Board became increasingly conscious of "the inevitable early end" of the Louisiana Historical Association as a body of Confederate veterans; and much thought was given to the future of the Association's valuable museum and archives. By the late twenties the Howard Memorial Library's holdings had grown to such proportions that there was dire need for additional space in which to expand the library facilities; and members of the board of that institution, viewing Memorial Hall as an easy answer to their problem, began to cast doubt upon the legality of the Historical Association's title to the building. The matter dragged on for several years; but early in 1931, efforts were made to induce the Louisiana Historical Association to vacate Memorial Hall and move its collection into the quarters of the Upper Pontalba Cultural Museum Committee on Jackson Square. When this failed, and representatives of the Howard Memorial Library intimated that the Association might be forced to vacate the premises, Captain James Dinkins, an elderly Confederate veteran on the Board of Governors, vowed that he would fight the move "as long as there was animation in his body" and promised to use "every particle of force or influence which he possessed to oppose such an action." The irate captain then enlisted the aid of Governor Huey P. Long. Within days the Governor appointed Richard W. Leche as his special representative in the matter. Leche soon succeeded in working out a compromise, whereby the Louisiana Historical Association granted use of the basement of Memorial Hall to the Howard Library, in return for a promise that the Association would not be disturbed in its use of the remainder of the building. The speedy action of Leche restored calm and the Association soon returned to

<sup>24</sup> Minutes of the Louisiana Historical Association, IV, 42 ff.



that state of complacent inertia which had come to characterize it.<sup>25</sup>

In 1936 Major General Allison Owen, son of Colonel William Miller Owen and former commanding officer of the Washington Artillery, was elected President. During his administration the few remaining Confederate veterans in the Association passed away; and the Board of Governors dwindled to fifteen members, representing the Association of the Army of Tennessee, the Battalion of Washington Artillery, and the trustees of the Howard Memorial Library Association—those three of the original five organizations which had made provision for a self perpetuating membership. Although the Louisiana Historical Association was now but a sad remembrance of its former self, it was largely through the efforts of General Owen that the organization was able to survive at all. This state of affairs continued for several years. The annual appropriation from the State of Louisiana made it possible to manage Memorial Hall with a reasonable degree of efficiency, but little could be done to improve the exhibits or modernize the facilities. General Owen entertained hopes of improving the situation, but numerous other commitments and lack of enthusiasm on the part of the Board frustrated most of his efforts.<sup>26</sup>

General Owen died in January, 1951.<sup>27</sup> Shortly before his death, attempts were made to bring new life into the Association by enlarging the Board of Governors to include representatives of the Sons and Daughters of the Confederacy. These efforts came to naught, however, when those charged with the responsibility of amending the Association's Charter to include this change failed to fulfill the duty assigned to them. Affairs dragged on in an unsettled state until December, 1956, when the author of this article was elected Presi-

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, IV, 161, 174-179, 181, 185.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, IV, 192-193, 195, 197, 208, 211.

<sup>27</sup> Owen was succeeded in the presidency by Colonel Henry B. Curtis, who held office from March, 1951, until October, 1952. The next President was Edward A. Fowler, who resigned in December, 1956. (Minutes of the Louisiana Historical Association, March 26, 1951, October 6, 1952, December 19, 1956.)

dent and resolved to rejuvenate the Association and modernize the museum.

While steps were being taken to accomplish these objectives, he was appraised of the fact that Edwin A. Davis, Head of the History Department of Louisiana State University, had called a meeting of professional historians and other interested persons to organize a new, active, state-wide historical society. This meeting was scheduled to assemble at Louisiana College in Pineville on March 29, 1958. Feeling that here was a splendid opportunity for assuring the future of the Louisiana Historical Association, the writer phoned Davis and suggested that a new society might not be necessary, if those attending his proposed meeting would agree to join the Louisiana Historical Association; reorganize it; and make it a really active and worthwhile historical society for the entire state. Davis expressed great interest in this suggestion and invited the author to repeat it at the Pineville meeting. This was done, with the result that those present at this meeting accepted his invitation to join the Louisiana Historical Association; and soon the names of over thirty-five new members were added to the rolls of the organization.<sup>28</sup>

Steps were immediately taken to completely revise the antiquated charter of the Association. On June 6, 1958, a general meeting of the organization was held at Memorial Hall and appropriate amendments to the charter were adopted. By this act the Louisiana Historical Association was reorganized and a new slate of officers took command. Edwin A. Davis became President; Kenneth Trist Urquhart, Vice-President; and John C. L. Andreassen, Secretary and Treasurer.

The first activity of the newly reorganized Historical Association was to inaugurate an intensive campaign to enlist new members throughout the entire state. To this end, a booklet, entitled: *An Invitation to Join the Louisiana His-*

<sup>28</sup> Allison Owen to Edward A. Fowler, August 21, December 12, 1950, in the Louisiana Historical Association Papers; Minutes of the Louisiana Historical Association, May 21, September 17, 1951, December 19, 1956; "Minutes of Meeting for Organization of Louisiana Historical Association," March 29, 1958; *An Invitation to Join the Louisiana Historical Association* (New Orleans, 1958), 5-6.

*torical Association*, was published in July, 1958. This publication was distributed freely to prospective members throughout the state and soon a steady stream of applications began to arrive in the office of the Secretary. To date the activities of the reorganized group have proved highly successful. With the great interest and enthusiasm that is being displayed by the officers and members, there seems little doubt that the Louisiana Historical Association can look forward to a bright and active future.<sup>29</sup>

<sup>29</sup> *An Invitation to Join the Louisiana Historical Association* (New Orleans, 1958), 6-7, 23-25.

## *Illustrations*

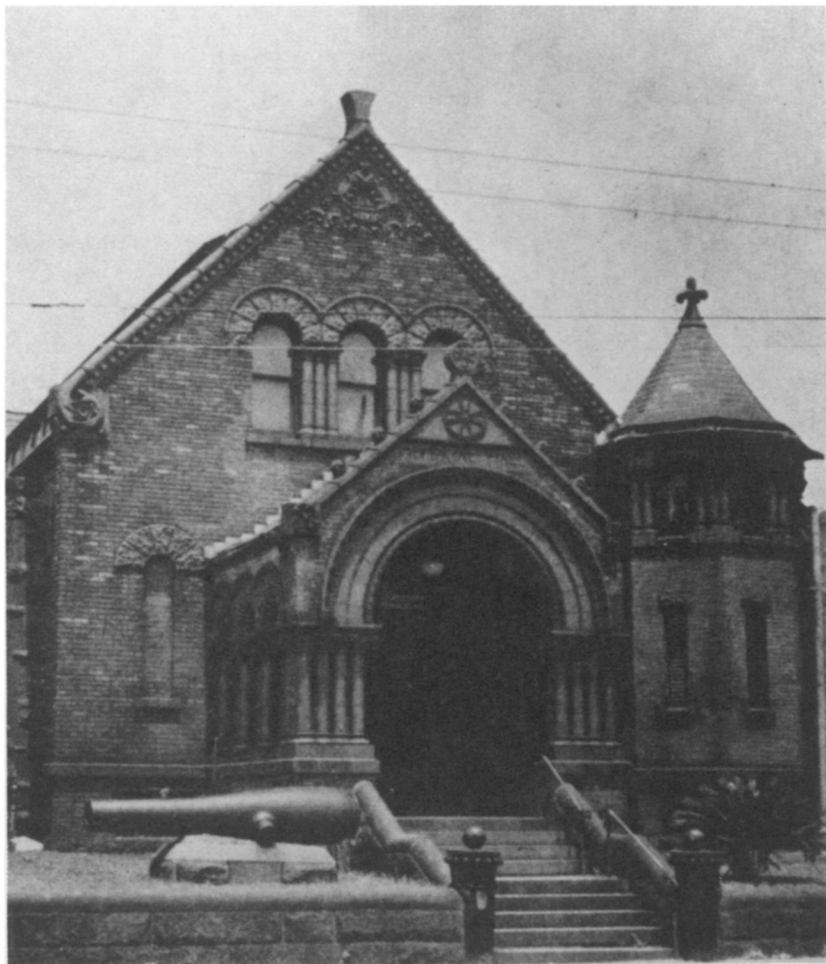
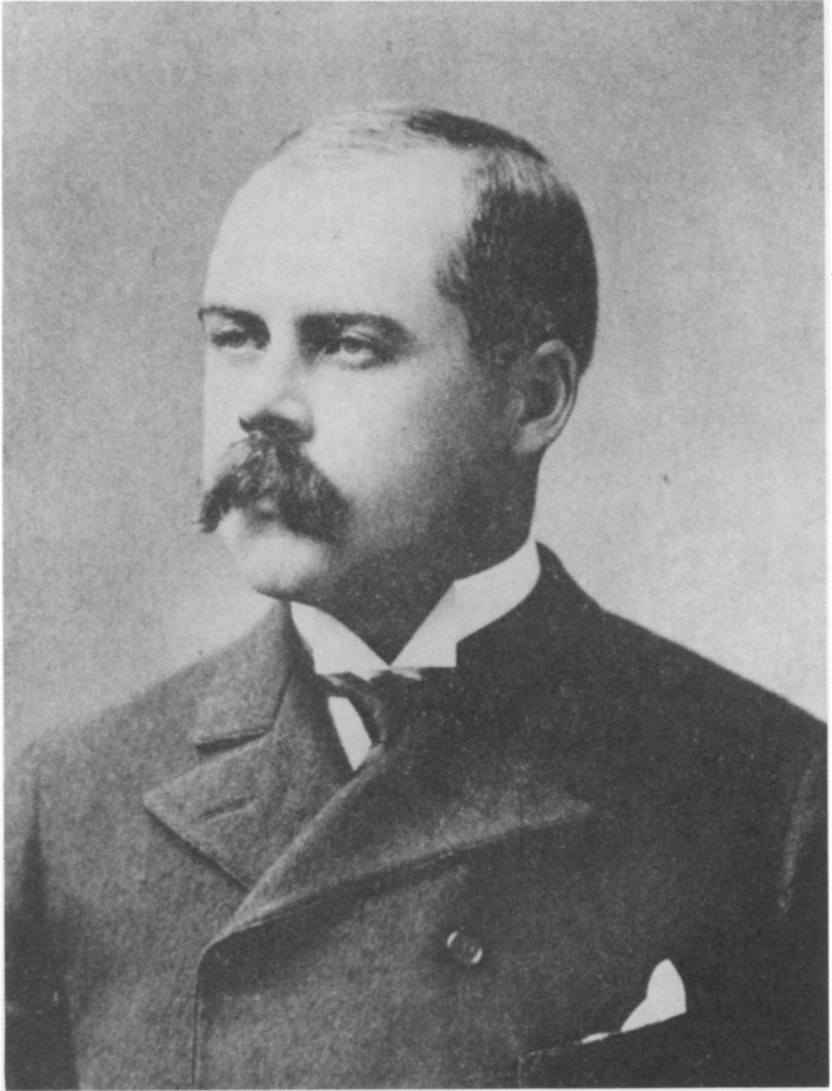
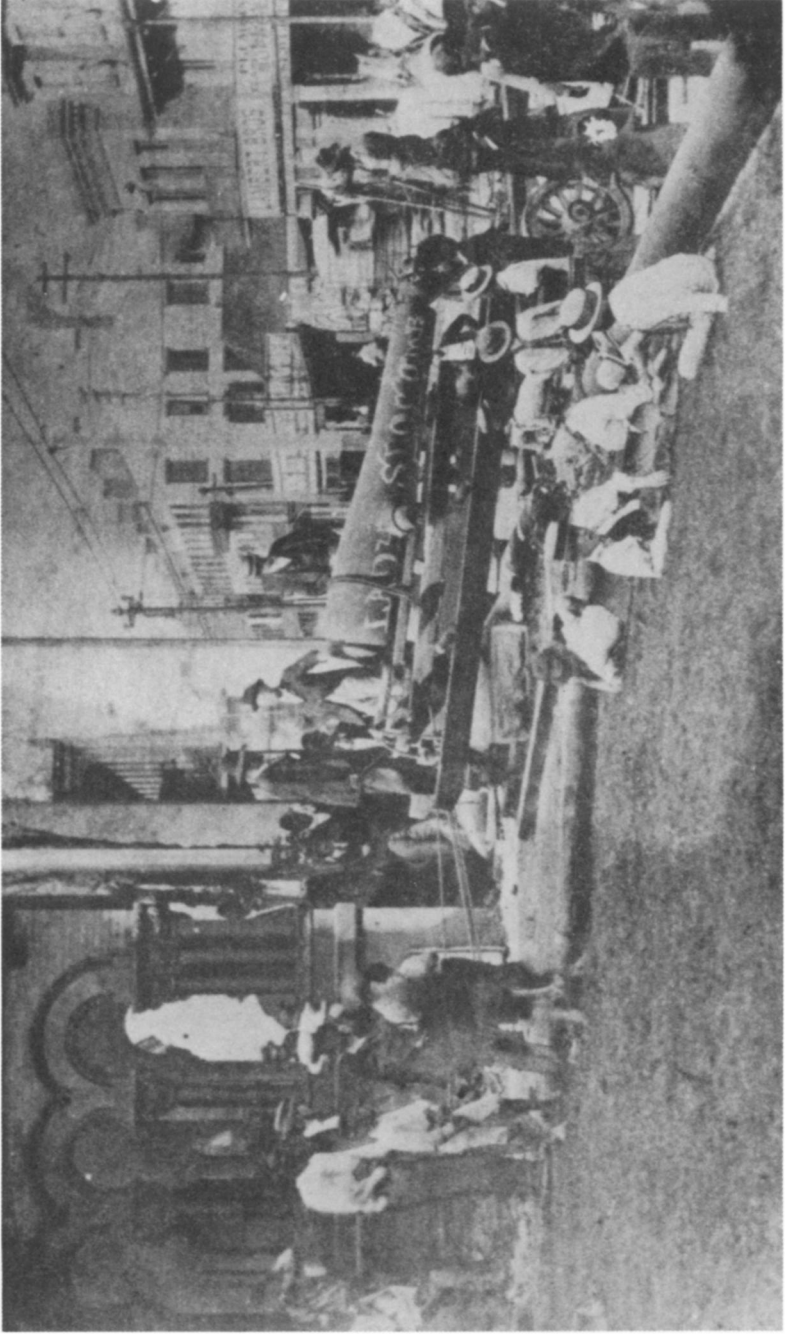


Fig. 1—Memorial Hall, Museum of the Louisiana Historical Association in New Orleans, Louisiana.



**Fig. 2—FRANK T. HOWARD**  
Patron and First President of the Louisiana  
Historical Association.



**Fig. 3—Placing the “Lady Slocomb” in Front of Memorial Hall in 1899.**



Fig. 4—Map.



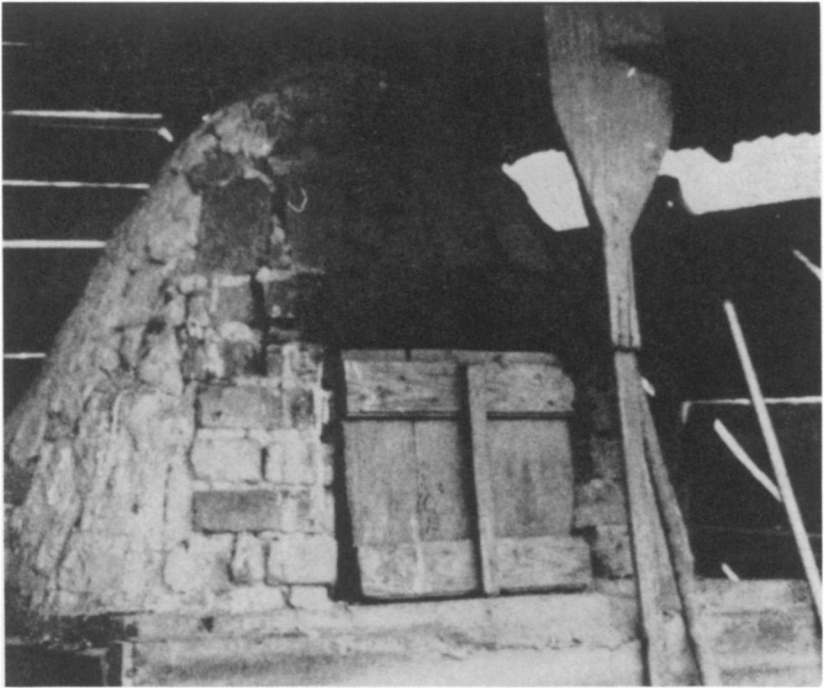


Fig. 5—French Oven, Cut Off, Louisiana (1950).



Fig. 6—Italian Oven, Independence, Louisiana (1950).

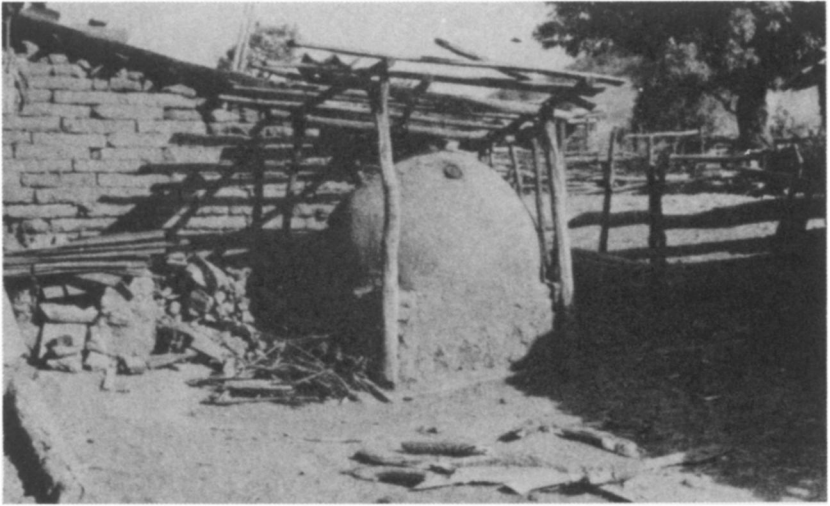


Fig. 7—Spanish Oven, Michoacan, Mexico (1947)  
(Courtesy R. C. West).

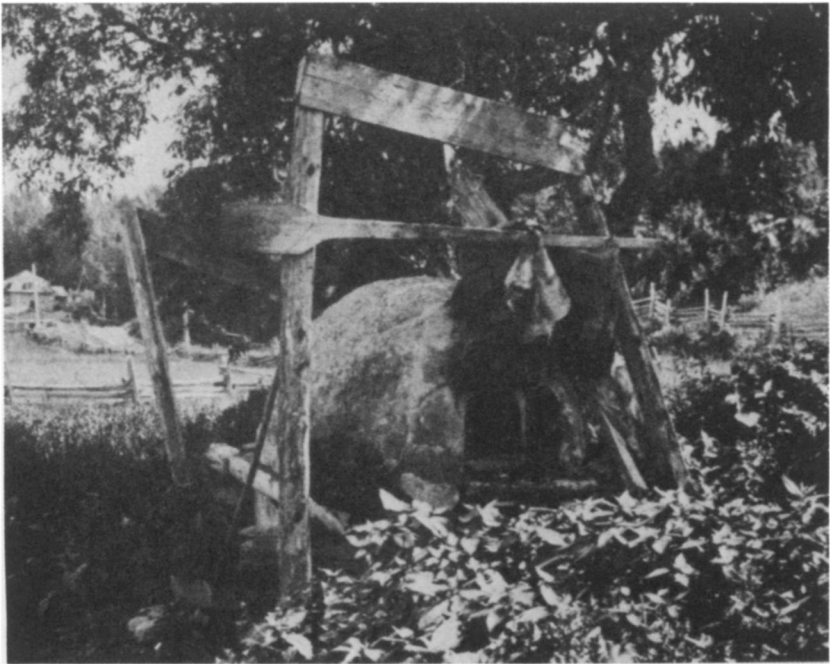


Fig. 8—French Oven, Quebec (ca. 1908). Note framework of roof covering, also pans, wooden hoe, and paddle. (Reproduced by permission of Keystone View Co.).



Fig. 9—Oven in Roman Gaul. (Reproduced from W. M. West's *The Story of Modern Progress*, 27, by permission of Allyn and Bacon, Inc.).

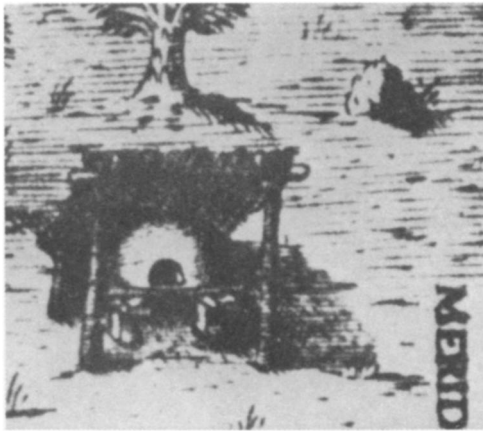


Fig. 10—French Oven at Fort Caroline, Florida (1562-1565). Compare Figure 7 with Figures 5 and 8, French ovens of Quebec and Louisiana, respectively. (Reproduced from LeMoynes picture by permission of The Clements Library, University of Michigan).



Fig. 11—French Oven, Slidell, Louisiana (1950).



Fig. 12—Hungarian oven, Albany, Louisiana (1950).