

Ronald Reagan Presidential Library  
Digital Library Collections

---

This is a PDF of a folder from our textual collections.

---

**WHORM Subject File Code:** FE001-02

(Federal Government: Ceremonials – Protocol:  
Wreath-Laying)

**Case file Number(s):** 557962 (4 of 4)

**Box Number:** 1

---

To see more digitized collections visit:

<https://www.reaganlibrary.gov/archives/digitized-textual-material>

To see all Ronald Reagan Presidential Library inventories visit:

<https://www.reaganlibrary.gov/archives/white-house-inventories>

Contact a reference archivist at: **reagan.library@nara.gov**

Citation Guidelines: <https://reaganlibrary.gov/archives/research-support/citation-guide>

National Archives Catalogue: <https://catalog.archives.gov/>

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

March 30, 1988

MEMORANDUM FOR ARTHUR B. CULVAHOUSE, JR.

THROUGH: RHETT B. DAWSON

FROM: JAMES C. MCKINNEY

SUBJECT: Confederate Memorial Committee Observance of  
Confederate Memorial Day

Reference: Letter dated March 18, 1988 from the Confederate  
Memorial Committee

Attached at Tab A is my proposed response to the Confederate Memorial Committee which effectively withdraws White House support/involvement in their observance of Confederate Memorial Day (first Sunday in June). We will continue to honor the Confederate war dead on Memorial Day.

The White House has provided a Presidential wreath and representative to this ceremony in most years since President Wilson dedicated the Confederate Memorial in 1914. The attached chronology (Tab B) reflects a recurring opinion of White House officials that the time has come to put things into proper perspective -- i.e., place recognition of Confederate war dead in line with the Nation's recognition of its other war dead.

Over the years serious questions have arisen concerning the conduct of these ceremonies, specifically:

1. Primary emphasis is on honoring Jefferson Davis, with coincidental recognition of the Confederacy.
2. Disrespect for the American Flag. Our flag is never dipped during ceremonies. You will recall that all nations' flags were dipped during the recent winter Olympics; however, the American Flag was not. Other nations accept this American practice. This group, however, has been known to dip the American Flag for the playing of "Dixie." (There have been other embarrassing comments about the appropriateness of our selection of representatives. See sub-Tab F of the chronology at Tab B.)
3. The growing feud between opposing Confederate factions.

Last August, Peter Keisler, Associate Counsel to the President, agreed to withdraw the White House from this "turf battle."

Before proceeding with my letter to the Confederate Memorial Committee I would feel more comfortable with your personal concurrence. I would warn you that we can expect criticism from some quarters. (See the entry dated 16 Jan 1984.)

Attachments:

TAB A - Draft Response

TAB B - Chronology

557962

## Confederate Memorial Committee

Confederate Memorial Hall  
1322 Vermont Avenue, N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20005  
(202) 483-5700

Mrs. John Tilden Rogers  
Chairman  
John Edward Hurley  
Vice Chairman



Confederate Monument, Jackson Circle  
Arlington National Cemetery

March 18, 1988

President Ronald Reagan  
The White House  
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear President Reagan:

Each year the Confederate Memorial Committee has commemorated the birth of Jefferson Davis and honored the memory of Confederate veterans on the first Sunday of June at the Confederate Monument in Arlington National Cemetery. It has been customary for the President to send a wreath and Presidential representative since 1914, when President Woodrow Wilson dedicated the monument.

Since you have favored us with a wreath in the past, we would be both pleased and honored if you would once again do so for this year's event. Our ceremonies this year will be on Sunday, June 5, at 3 p.m.

A program from last year's event is enclosed for your reference. If you or your staff have any questions concerning the details, please contact our program chairman, Mr. Hurley, at 483-5700.

With my good wishes and many thanks, I remain

Sincerely,

Mrs. John Tilden Rogers  
Chairman

JTR:dm

Enclosure: 1987 Program

Dear Mrs. Rogers:

This in response to your letter of March 18, 1988, which requested a Presidential wreath and representation on Sunday, June 5th, at ceremonies commemorating the birth of Jefferson Davis and honoring Confederate veterans.

I am well aware of long-standing White House involvement in the annual Confederate Memorial Day services. Nevertheless, I must inform you that White House participation will henceforth occur on Memorial Day -- the occasion set aside by the United States to honor all its war dead.

The President pays tribute each year on Memorial Day to our war dead by having four wreaths placed at Arlington National Cemetery. One of these, at the Tomb of the Unknowns, pays homage to those who lost their lives during World Wars I and II, Korea and Vietnam. Others, at the Spanish War Memorial and the mast of the USS MAINE, recognize the dead of the Spanish-American War; another salutes Union forces who paid their price during the Civil War. I hope you will agree that time has now arrived for the fallen heroes of the Confederacy to be honored in the manner, and on the occasion, as their fallen American brethren of other wars and different causes.

Please understand, also, that the President's wreath is provided only to honor Confederate war dead. It is not, and never has been, intended to commemorate any one individual -- no matter the greatness of achievement or brilliance of leadership. Presidential wreaths at Arlington National Cemetery are placed solely to acknowledge the debt of all Americans to those who have fallen in the service of their country.

Sincerely,

JAMES C. MCKINNEY

Mrs. John Tilden Rogers  
Chairman  
Confederate Memorial Committee  
Confederate Memorial Hall  
1322 Vermont Avenue, N.W.  
Washington, DC 20005

## CHRONOLOGY OF THE HISTORY OF CONFEDERATE MEMORIAL DAY

- 4 Jun 1914 - Confederate Monument dedicated and accepted by President Woodrow Wilson
- 17 May 1949 - Mrs. Maud Howell Smith wrote to President Truman requesting name of Presidential rep (tenor of letter implies that was an annual formality).  
  
(NOTE: White House Military Office files date back only to 1949.)
- 23 May 1949 - General Vaughan, Mil Aide to Pres, responded that Pres Truman had cut down the number of wreaths and that WH would not participate. Explanation was that a wreath was laid at Confederate Monument on Memorial Day.
- 3 Sep 1949 - Chairman, Confederate Memorial Committee (CMC), appealed decision to General Vaughan; however, decision stood.
- 10 Nov 1949 - Chmn, CMC, again complained to Gen Vaughan. No response by Vaughan.
- 15 Feb 1950 - Gen Vaughan wrote CMC inquiring as to which ceremony, Memorial Day or Confederate Memorial Day, was preferred for Pres wreath. (NOTE: It appears that political pressure was applied to Gen Vaughan to readdress.)  
  
(No further correspondence during Truman Administration.)
- 8 Jun 1953 - Memo for the record from Naval Aide to Pres Eisenhower stating that he laid the Pres wreath on Confederate Memorial Day (CMD).
- 15 May 1954 - Letter to Mrs. Smith from Naval Aide advising that he would participate in CMD celebration.  
  
Annual correspondence exchanged thereafter between CMC and WHMO concerning WH participation in ceremony.
- 27 Apr 1966 - Mrs. Robert Bachman assumed duty as Chairman, CMC, upon the death of Mrs. Smith following previous year's ceremony.

2 Jun 1968 - Official Signal Corps Photo Lab photo of ceremony shows US Flag being dipped for placement of Conf streamer. Photo also has a note on it indicating that US Flag was dipped for playing of Dixie.  
(See Tab A)

3 Jun 1968 - Maj Paul Dresser, USA, Pres rep, wrote memo for the record questioning value of this ceremony to the Presidency. Recommended placement of wreath on Memorial Day or early in the morning of CMD -- not in concert with CMC ceremony. (See Tab B)

Annual correspondence exchanged thereafter between Mrs. Bachman and WHMO concerning WH participation in ceremony.

Jun 1970 - Internal WHMO memo emphasized preference for "Southern gentleman" as rep for ceremony.

5 May 1972 - Internal WHMO MFR recommended against further WH participation because the CMC requests for rep to be "a White Southerner." Gen Scowcroft, WHMO, decided against taking action because of it being an election year.

27 Feb 1973 - WHMO memo to H. R. Haldeman/Dave Parker recommending that support of this ceremony be eliminated and a wreath be placed on Memorial day instead. (Response did not address issue.) (See Tab C)

16 Apr 1975 - Last of the written requests from Mrs. Bachman seeking the name of Pres rep. She was elderly and had a difficult time hiring someone to type for her.

Thereafter, annual arrangements were coordinating with Mrs. Bachman by phone, although she did write to Pres Carter in 1978.

Undtd May 83 - First appearance of Mrs. Stuart Charlesworth who wrote to Pres Scheduling requesting a Pres rep at Statuary Hall ceremonies commemorating the anniversary of the birth of Jefferson Davis.

20 May 1983 - Pres Scheduling response mistakingly advised that rep (who was actually our Pres rep for annual CMD ceremony) would be representing the Pres at Statuary Hall ceremony commemorating 175th anniversary of Jeff Davis' birth.

(By now, Mrs. Bachman was becoming quite frail and Mrs. Charlesworth was anxiously waiting in the wings.)



Undtd Dec 83 - Mrs. Charlesworth requested wreath and rep for ceremony in Statuary Hall on 21 Jan 84 honoring Robert E. Lee.

12 Jan 1984 - Dir, WHMO, memo to Pres Scheduling requested Scheduling respond to Mrs. Charlesworth. Memo reiterated WH policy re support of CMD ceremony ONLY. Also indicated WHMO perception that there are opposing factions within Confederate community.

16 Jan 1984 - Pres Scheduling letter to Mrs. Charlesworth declined WH participation in Jan 21 Statuary Hall event and reiterated WH policy to support CMD ceremony only.

NOTE: Coincidentally, in January 1985 another controversial situation arose from the many Confederate organizations which are also involved in the CMD ceremony. An organized letter-writing campaign was initiated following the "snub of Robert E. Lee by the White House" in not providing a wreath for the annual Statuary Hall event honoring Lee. Significant interest was aroused in the congressional community (including Sen Jesse Helms, Sen Strom Thurmond, Rep Webb Franklin, Rep C. W. Bill Young, Sen John P. East, etc.). The whole incident centered around a misunderstanding perpetuated by the Confederate organizations that the White House had changed a policy; that simply was not true; the WH had never provided a wreath or a rep for this particular ceremony. WHMO responded to each inquiry and some correspondents actually apologized for the confusion. The bottom line was that the supporting organization had for many years purchased their own wreath and labeled it "The President."

25 Apr 1985 - Thomas Warner Smith, Chairman, CMC, wrote to WHMO requesting name of rep for annual CMD ceremony. This was when WHMO learned that Mrs. Bachman had died after 1984 ceremony. Mr. Smith's letter said that John Hurley would be the program chairman and our point of contact.

29 Apr 1985 - Dir, WHMO, letter to Mr. Smith provided rep's name and confirmed that WH would continue to support CMC's observance of CMD.

3 Jan 1986 - Letter from John Hurley, Conf Memorial Association (first communication from this group), requesting Pres participation at Jan 18 Statuary Hall ceremony commemorating Robert E. Lee.

- 15 Jan 1986 - Dir, WHMO response to Mr. Hurley restated policy of supporting CMC's CMD ceremony only.
- (NOTE: After the 1986 ceremony at Statuary Hall honoring Robert E. Lee WHMO learned that the Marine Corps had been supporting that ceremony with a USMC general officer representing the Pres. That has been corrected.
- 2 May 1986 - Mr. Thomas Warner Smith, CMC, wrote asking for rep's name for CMD ceremony. Again Mr. Hurley would be point of contact
- 8 May 1986 - Dir, WHMO, letter confirmed WH support and provided name of rep.
- 14 Apr 1987 - Mr. Smith, CMC, wrote advising that CMD ceremony would be on May 31st as opposed to the normal first Sunday in June. Mr. Hurley was again point of contact.
- 21 Apr 1987 - Dir, WHMO confirmed WH support and provided name of rep.
- 11 May 1987 - Letter from Richard Hines, identifying himself as Chairman, Confederate Memorial Committee, requesting support of CMD ceremony on June 7th. Hines had Mr. Smith sign bottom of his letter that he (Smith) had abdicated his chairmanship for Hines.
- 13 May 1987 - WHMO memo for the record re phone call from Mr. David Williams, which: inadvertently provided info that the primary purpose of CMD observance is to serve as tribute to Jefferson Davis; and, surfaced power struggle between factions. (See Tab D)
- 18 May 1987 - Dir, WHMO, letter to Chairman, CMC, at Confederate Memorial Hall Headquarters, requesting clarification as to who is in charge. Letter also stated that WH support was being withdrawn pending clarification.
- 20 May 1987 - Mrs. John Tilden Rogers responded that she had assumed Chairmanship from Mr. Smith (she was the Vice Chairman).
- 21 May 1987 - Dir, WHMO, responded to Mrs. Rogers that WH support of the May 31st ceremony was reinstated.
- 21 May 1987 - David Williams, Sons of Confederate Veterans, wrote requesting support of the June 7th ceremony. (First communication from this group.)

- 26 May 1987 - Dir, WHMO, response to Williams that WH support would be provided to CMC (Mrs. Rogers) observance of CMD on May 31st.
- 5 Jun 1987 - Letter from John Hurley forwarding a number of items further confirming the internal strife in this organization.
- 26 Jun 1987 - John Hurley letter forwarding copy of letter re legal action taken against Hines, who allegedly took over the fiscal holdings of the CMC. More confirmation of internal strife.
- 24 July 1987 - John Hurley letter forwarding copy of Southern Partisan article on Richard Hines' efforts to keep the Confederate Flag aloft.
- 4 Aug 1987 - WHMO memo for the record. Telecons between James C. McKinney, Dir, WHMO, and Peter Keisler, Associate Counsel to the President, resulting from 24 May 87 letter to David Williams. Agreement to "withdraw White House from this turf battle" by placing wreath at Conf Memorial on Memorial Day. (See Tab E)
- 1 Sep 1987 - Peter D. Keisler letter to Mr. Hines advising that the WH does not endorse either faction's claim to legitimacy and that this is purely a private matter in which the WH has no interest.
- 15 Sep 1987 - WHMO memo for the record. Personal observations of WH rep at 1987 CMD services: "...definite reservations about WH participation...merely an excuse to commemorate Jefferson Davis and perpetuate the Confederacy..." (See Tab F)



Dipping the American  
flag to attach a  
confederate steamer

flag also lowered for  
playing of Dixie.



TAB. A





THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

3 June 1968

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

At 2:30 p. m. on Sunday, June 2nd, I placed the President's wreath on the Confederate Memorial Monument at Arlington National Cemetery. While attending the ceremony, I actually had the feeling that I was participating in a subversive meeting. It is apparent that this ceremony does nothing more than to perpetuate the greatest protest of all -- The Civil War and the right of a state to secede -- and to present a slanted, white washed view of the events that occurred.

As a background, President Wilson dedicated the Confederate Memorial at Arlington in 1914, and every year hence a ceremony is conducted on the 1st Sunday in June - on or about the date of Jefferson Davis' birthday. In 1949 President Truman did not send a wreath to the ceremony and the Confederate Memorial Committee stated "this refusal is deeply resented and is regarded as a snub to every Confederate Veteran and those of kindred interest." This correspondence is available in the Wreath files.

As the decision for future Presidential participation will rest with the next administration, I will place in the Wreath file backup material so that determination can be made at an appropriate time next year.

I do not consider this event to be in the best interest of the Presidency and recommend the following:

1. Presidential participation at the ceremony cease and that a wreath be placed at the Confederate Memorial on Memorial Day when similar honors are accorded for other memorials at Arlington National Cemetery.

2. As an alternative recommendation have the Presidential Wreath placed early on the day of ceremony to eliminate any active participation by a representative of the President during the ceremony.

  
PAUL A. DRESSER, JR.

TAB B

C



MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

March 1, 1973

1973 MAR 1 PM 2 20

MEMORANDUM FOR: DAVID PARKER

FROM: BILL GULLEY

*BS*

I have attached a memorandum prepared by Bill Golden. I don't know how much heartburn this would cause certain Southern elected officials, it could be considerable. Maybe what we should do is continue the wreath laying and give ~~absolute~~ guidelines to the committee responsible for this ceremony. We, of course, will be guided by your decision.

*- no flag dipping or other infringements etc.*

*NP. 3/9*

*TAB C*

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

February 27, 1973

DAVE-PARK-K  
MEMORANDUM FOR ~~H. B. HALDEMAN~~

THRU: ~~BGEN SCOWCROFT~~

FROM: LTC GOLDEN *g*

SUBJECT: Presidential Wreath-laying at the Confederate Monument, Arlington National Cemetery

In the near future, we will receive the annual request from a representative of the Confederate Memorial Committee of the District of Columbia for the President, or his representative, to lay a Presidential wreath at the Confederate Monument during the annual Confederate Memorial Services. The practice of sending Presidential representation to this event has been exercised every year since the acceptance of the Monument in 1914 by President Woodrow Wilson with the exception of 1949 when President Truman declined and had a wreath placed on Memorial Day instead.

Past services have included some acts which, had they been noted, could have and might, if repeated, precipitate criticism of Presidential association during the ceremony. These acts included dipping the National Colors during the playing of "Dixie", affixing Confederate streamers to the National Colors, requesting that a white Southerner represent the President, and the uttering of flammatory and devisive Confederacy-oriented remarks as part of the commemorative address at the ceremony.

To preclude the possibility of receiving criticism of Presidential representation at this and future years' ceremonies, we can decline the request and substitute therefore the laying of a wreath on Memorial Day, the same day we lay wreaths at the Mast of the USS Maine, Tomb of the Civil War Unknown (Union), Spanish War Memorial, and Tomb of the Unknown Soldier (World Wars and Korea), thus paying tribute to all the war dead at the same time.

This was President Truman's tack in 1949 for which he received flack sufficient to cause the reinstitution of ceremony participation in 1950.

OPTION ONE: Decline this year's invitation with a suitable reply but lay a wreath on Memorial Day.

\_\_\_\_\_ Approve \_\_\_\_\_ Disapproved

OPTION TWO: Participate in this year's ceremony as in the past.

\_\_\_\_\_ Approve \_\_\_\_\_ Disapproved

*D*

13 May 87 - MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD, WHMO

SUBJECT: Confederate Memorial Day Observance,  
May 31, 1987

On the afternoon of May 11, I received a call from David Williams, who identified himself as being with the Confederate Memorial Committee. He indicated that he had a problem with the wreath for ceremonies honoring Jefferson Davis on June 7th. I quickly corrected him in clearing the air that we do not provide a wreath for Jefferson Davis -- period. Williams realized he had touched a nerve!

Williams said that he wanted to clarify the date for the Confederate Memorial Day observance -- it would be on June 7th, vice May 31st. I told him that I had a letter to the President from Thomas Warner Smith, Chairman, Confederate Memorial Committee, stating the date as May 31, and that Mr. Hurley was the program chairman. Williams alluded to the fact that Mr. Hurley "did not know what was going on."

I placed a call to Mr. Smith on May 11th to verify Williams' information. Mr. Smith was unavailable; however, they would have Mr. Hurley call back.

On the morning of May 12th, I talked to Mr. Hurley. He was very cordial and verified that the information that we received from Mr. Smith was correct. He stated that Williams "does not represent the organization" and is part of the (infamous) "Mrs. Charlesworth faction." Mrs. Charlesworth's group, which has been redesignated "The Arlington National Monument Committee," is having their ceremony on June 7th. NOTE: Mrs. Charlesworth uses UDC stationery, while official correspondence concerning the annual Confederate Memorial Day is on Confederate Memorial Committee stationery.

I also spoke to MDW Ceremonies concerning their support. They are supporting the May 31st official ceremony with troops, color team, and band; the only support MDW is providing to the June 7th event is a color team.

Conceivably, the Charlesworth faction could dominate the Confederate Memorial Committee!

B. Chunn

*E*

4 Aug 87 - MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD, WHMO

SUBJECT: Confederate Memorial Day

Mr. McKinney received a call on Aug 3 from Peter Keisler, Associate Counsel to the President. Mr. Keisler was concerned about our letter dated May 26, 1987 to Mr. David A. Williams concerning Confederate Memorial Day. Specifically Mr. Keisler was concerned about our use of "...White House support..." to the Confederate Memorial Day observance sponsored by the Confederate Memorial Committee (CMC), chaired by Mr. John Tilden Rogers.

I briefed Mr. McKinney this morning about the sequence of events that occurred this year, i.e., our normal correspondence with Mr. Thomas Warner Smith, CMC;; our response with name of Pres rep; notice of resignation of Mr. Smith in Richard Hines letter where Hines assumed the chairmanship; our letter to CMC withdrawing WH support of ceremony; response from Mr. Rogers, new Chairman, CMC; reinstatement of support, etc.

I indicated to Mr. McKinney that Bill Cuff and I had talked frequently about this growing void between the two opposing camps of the Confederate group and that we were planning to approach Mr. McKinney with a proposed plan to withdraw WH involvement with either group.

Mr. McKinney talked to Mr. Keisler and explained that WHMO was merely continuing to work with the group (Confederate Memorial Committee) that we have worked with for several years. Mr. Keisler understood where we were coming from and indorsed our plan to withdraw the WH from this turf battle. Our alternative plan is to have a wreath placed at the Confederate Memorial on Memorial Day by our representative that places the other four lesser wreaths (the main ceremony, of course, will be placed by a very heavy at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier).

With the indorsement by the Counsel's office of our plan, I feel very confident that we may be successful in withdrawing before one group swallows up the opponent.

B. Chunn





15 Sep 87 - MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD, WHMO

SUBJECT: Confederate Memorial Day 1987 - comments  
from Sid Rodgers, 1987 Presidential Rep.,

In preparation for our goal to do away with White House support of the Confederate Memorial Day observance, I asked Sid Rodgers to comment on his reaction to it. Sid was our Presidential representative this year.

Sid indicated to me verbally that he had definite reservations about White House participation in this event. This group does not really concentrate on Confederate war dead -- it is merely an excuse to commemorate Jefferson Davis and perpetuate the Confederacy.

Sid also expressed some concern about the fact that the group was slightly prejudiced -- they were surprised that the President's rep was Jewish and from New Jersey. After the group's initial display of dismay, there was no outward sign of prejudice.

It is obvious that Sid was reluctant to express his true feelings in the attached memo. I can understand his reluctance. Because of our past experience with the growing "feud" in this organization, and our desire to extricate the White House from their internal strife, I felt a need to record his gut feelings, myself.

B. Chunn

