

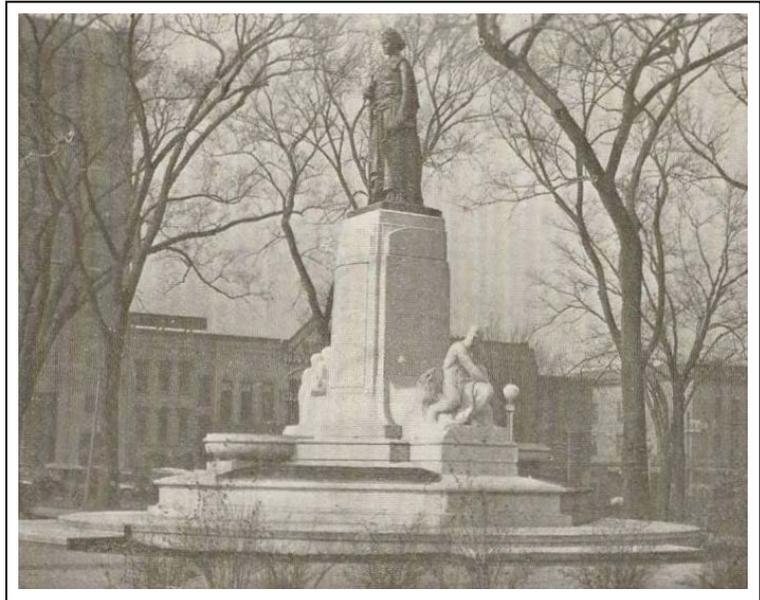
THE CIVIL WAR MEMORIAL: Soldiers' Monument

Soldiers' and Sailors' Monument honors the Civil War veterans of Morgan County. Local men joined the Union Army by the hundreds and at least two fought for the Confederacy. Located in the center of historic Downtown Jacksonville, this unique memorial is the focal point of the Central Park Plaza.

Central Park was deeded to Morgan County in 1825. Prior to the 1868 county courthouse construction, it was used for livestock grazing and railroad access. After the present courthouse was built, the city began beautification plans. Sometime around 1874 an iron fence replaced the high board park enclosure while benches, sidewalks and a central metal fountain were added. A pagoda replaced the fountain from about 1904 to 1920, when it was moved to its present location in Nichols' Park to make way for the Soldier's Monument. Central Park also once had a white, wooden arch honoring the Spanish-American War.

In March of 1916, W. H. Jordan revisited the long discussed idea of a Civil War monument and successfully established a committee, the Morgan County Monument Association, to realize this vision. This group was comprised at various times of Mr. Jordan, C. Riggs Taylor, C. E. McDougall, J. M. Swales, J. F. Self, T. B. Orear, Hasses Hopper, John E. Wright, Samuel Warren Nichols, Dr. Charles Henry Rammelkamp and Judge Montreville T. Layman.

After Morgan County voters gladly passed a tax for its erection, permission was granted for the monument to be built in Central Park in 1917. Although the submitted plans were requested to be in a format that kept the artist's and/or company's identity unknown to the selection committee, attempted graft accusations were still made. Architects Morrison and Walker and sculptor Leonard Crunelle, all of Chicago were the successful in their bids for the work.



Born in France in 1872, Crunelle was brought to the United States when he was nine. Once Decatur, Illinois, teachers noticed his talent, Crunelle was sent to Chicago to study with the famed Lorado Taft and Augustus St. Gaudens. In fact, Taft's influence (as one of the most important sculptors of the 20th century) is evident in this particular work with the use of draping rather than period clothing on figures. Crunelle became well known for his Negro War Memorial in Chicago, the Gov. John Palmer monument in Springfield, the Gen. Artemus Ward Monument in Washington, D.C. and for Lincoln figures in Dixon, Freeport and Springfield, Illinois, before dying in September 1944.

Former Illinois Gov. Richard Yates gave the monument dedication address on November 8, 1920. Yates, then a State Representative, was the son of Illinois' Civil War Era governor and hailed from Jacksonville. Due to rain, the dedication ceremony was moved to Yates' childhood church, Centenary Methodist.

During his speech, Yates recounted the Civil War's course and expressed his father's sufferings during the war when he had even urged President Lincoln to accept more Illinois troops. Lincoln's telegraphed response was: "Hold still, Dick, and see the salvation of the Lord." Yates noted former Jacksonville

resident Stephen Arnold Douglas' attempts to prevent the conflict from escalating and Union assistance later. Yates also honored Morgan County's women for their contributions and sacrifices during the war.

Designer Crunelle also commemorated women's roles in the Civil War by using the figure of a woman with a child (on the west side) to signify "Sacrifice; offering her choicest gifts to the great cause." This was purportedly the first such monument in the country to acknowledge war's effects on the family.

Another woman adorns the monument, described by Dr. Rammelkamp at the dedication: "Columbia, that stately figure on top, crowning all and gazing in the direction in which the boys of 1861 marched, typifies the spirit of America, calling us to a better and nobler citizenship." This bronze section, done in great detail, contrasts with the stark Georgian granite figures with glistening feldspar flecks on its east and west. The granite for the monument came from Southeast Granite Company near Stone Mountain, Georgia, also home of the country's largest Confederate monument and the largest bas relief in the world.

George Salages, a 23-year-old Greek-born undefeated professional middleweight Chicago boxer, modeled for Crunelle's east figure, depicting "Patriotism; answering the call to arms." In 1963, Salages finally saw the statue after retiring from boxing and later the Ford Motor Company and, according to his wife, changing "from 158 pounds of muscles of steel to 175 pounds of blubber."

Bronze panels around the base of the monument list the names of military personnel from Morgan County who served, with an additional panel added later on the east containing corrections and late listings. As part of the American Bicentennial observance, James Marker, an Illinois College senior, researched names to replace a bronze panel that had gone missing over the years. One of the panels lifts to provide entry into the "deep-room" below, which allows access to the mechanical elements of the two fountains added in 1976 as another part of that observance. Originally, the fountains were planters, then converted into "single bubbler" fountains.

In 1990, the monument's original bronze finish was restored during a complete restoration process, which included cleaning the granite and re-pointing, done by Mid-Continental Restoration Company. Then in 2012, Jacksonville Main Street thoroughly cleaned the statue and again repaired the bronze plates and caulking. Future plans include installation of light fixtures on all four sides.

To view the monument and the many downtown buildings dating back to the Civil War: take S. Main north from Community Park to historic downtown Jacksonville. The handicapped accessible Central Park offers free parking and a variety of shopping, food, beverage and entertainment choices.



Thanks to Jack Barwick, Charles Kirchner and Associates and Robert W. Dalton for information contained in this article.

Jacksonville Main Street is a locally supported non-profit preservation-based economic development organization working to revitalize Jacksonville's historic business district through the National Main Street's Four Point Approach. For more information contact:

Jacksonville Main Street * P. O. Box 152, Jacksonville, Illinois 62651 * 217-245-6884