By Leslie Faulkenberry

Brunswick, Georgia’s own troops, the Brunswick Riflemen, marched off to the War Between the States in June 1861 as part of the 26th Georgia Infantry Regiment. The 26th surrendered to Union troops on April 9, 1865, with only 85 of its original 1,100 men surviving.

Northern newspapers seemed completely unaware of the depth of the average Southerner’s commitment to the cause early in the conflict. A Harper’s Weekly article published on October 26, 1861 stated, “Brunswick, Georgia, has an excellent harbor. Some years since, it was proposed to establish a naval depot there, and by constructing a railroad to build up a new cotton port. A landing there would develop the Union sentiment of Georgia.” If the writer had been familiar with the sentiment in Brunswick at the time, he would not have made such a rash and inaccurate statement.

In early March 1862, the Port of Brunswick was captured and occupied. A naval force commanded by Commodore DuPont approached the harbor while General Wright marched in from land. Harpers Weekly reported that the Union Army benefited from the “works left behind,” but this statement was in error. The few citizens who were left in town and the remaining Confederate soldiers fled as the Union forces approached. Before they abandoned the city, most of the city’s infrastructure that would have given aid or comfort to the enemy was destroyed. The town’s largest hotel, the original antebellum Oglethorpe House, was burned to the ground when it became apparent that the defense of the town would have been futile. The hotel would have made an ideal field hospital.

Wharves in the excellent deep-water harbor were also set ablaze to remove the possibility of their being helpful to Union troops. Beaufort, SC, Pensacola, FL and Brunswick GA were the only 3 southern harbors where large ships could enter, so there was a great deal of speculation about which port would be attacked first at the beginning of the war. The defensive actions by the Confederates were a significant loss of
opportunity for the Union Army. Capturing a functional port in Brunswick would have aided in the delivery of troops to the southernmost region of Georgia.

The most agonizing loss was the destruction of the railroad tracks that had only been in use for six years. Investors and local civic leaders had worked to develop rail service into Brunswick since the early 1830s, with numerous interruptions and financial setbacks. Rail lines were completed into town in 1856; their destruction was a stunning blow to the economic health and welfare of the city.

Grief and Remembrance

Along with other Southerners, Maria McIntosh Madden mourned the loss of so many young men, and the destruction of lives of their loved ones at home. Her first husband, Adjutant General Thomas McIntosh, had been killed at the Battle of Sharpsburg only 14 months after their wedding. She was paralyzed with grief. Her pastor noted in letters to his wife, later published in *Children of Pride*, that she was so distraught that he questioned her survival. She did recover, and made a new life for herself five years later when she married former Confederate battlefield surgeon Dr. Madden. The Maddens moved to Brunswick. Dr. Madden was so sickened by the carnage of battlefield surgery, the suffering and loss, that he did not practice medicine again and moved into banking and investing instead. Both Dr. Madden and his wife bought considerable amounts of property in Brunswick, and he became a member of several boards of directors for major businesses in the city.

Maria Madden’s passion was not for making a fortune, but for showing respect for the soldiers who had served in the Confederacy. She founded the Memorial Association of Brunswick. Also referred to as the Ladies Memorial Association, the group spent fifteen years raising money for a commemorative statue to be erected in Hanover Square. There is no official count of how many cups of lemonade or pieces of cake were sold on Sunday afternoons in the park, no list of the number of socials in private homes or raffles. But Maria Madden’s quiet grace and determination guided the group through a decade and a half of steady progress, never to be discouraged when the goal seemed impossible to reach.

Mrs. Madden asked the city to move the bandstand further away from the monument, presumably to protect the site and keep crowds away from the floral offerings that she knew would be placed there by families of the fallen soldiers. The city complied with her request, and moved the bandstand to the southeast, on the opposite side of the fountain from its original location. When the final date had been selected for the unveiling and dedication for the monument, there were still things that needed to be done and paid for—but no more money. Mrs. Madden’s requests to the city for financial
support and assistance were met with a regretful denial of outright cash contributions, but a promise of in-kind services in preparing the mound upon which the monument would be placed. The daughter of Confederate General Robert E. Lee made the only large cash donation the Memorial Association received.

**Dedication Day**

A photo taken on the day of the unveiling shows three elderly women in black mourning attire and two men standing near the monument, which had just been mounted on its base a few days before. A city worker in overalls, obviously disgruntled and out of place, stands impatiently to one side waiting for the photographer to close the shutter and let him get on with his work. The finishing touches were obviously put on at the very last minute before hundreds of people, on foot and in buggies, watched the veil fall away from the monument. The address was delivered by Colonel Albert Cox on that day of satisfaction for Mrs. Madden and her dedicated ladies: April 26, 1902.

The twenty-foot tall white stone monument, which is located on the north end on Hanover Square, bears a marble statue of a Confederate soldier. His head is slightly bowed, not in defeat or disgrace, but in dignified reflection.