

The Confederate Defenders of Charleston

On April 12, 1861 at 4:30 in the morning, South Carolina began firing her cannons, located on James Island and elsewhere, at Federal troops occupying Fort Sumter. The battle lasted two days resulting in Federal troops withdrawing from the fort. Confederate forces took possession and occupied Fort Sumter until just before the Civil War ended, withdrawing on the night of February 17-18, 1865. During this period, Fort Sumter was subjected to three major and eight minor bombardments, attacks by small boat forays and shelling from both land and sea. It is estimated that approximately 45,000 projectiles were fired at the fort by Union forces. A total of 52 Confederate soldiers were killed and 267 were wounded. Despite the magnitude of Union efforts, Fort Sumter never surrendered.

In addition, the City of Charleston was under blockade and, beginning in August 1863, direct attack by Union batteries located on James Island. The siege of Charleston lasted approximately 22 months, during which time portions of the city was destroyed and the civilian population was subjected to constant bombardment, ending only when Union forces occupied the city in February 1865.

This statue, which honors "The Confederate Defenders of Charleston," was presented to the City of Charleston by the Fort Sumter Memorial Commission on October 20, 1932, 67 years after the end of the Civil War. Around the base of the 25-foot tall monument are the words "Count Them Happy Who for Their Faith and Their Courage Endured a Great Fight." The sculptor Herman A. MacNeil said of the monument: "Its motif in brief, is that the stalwart youth, standing in front with sword and shield symbolizes by his attitude the defense not only of the fort, but also of the fair city behind the fort in which are his most prized possessions, wife and family. And she, the wife, glorified into an Athena-like woman, unafraid, stands behind him with arms outstretched toward the fort, thus creating an inseparable union of the city and Fort Sumter." The steps leading from the street represent the seven states that formed the original Confederacy.

The dedication in 1932 included the only surviving Charleston Confederate veteran, Colonel William Robert Greer. The monument was funded by the estate of local businessman and philanthropist Andrew Murray, who died four years before the dedication.

Sources: “Memorial Bronze To Confederates Is Given To City”, News and Courier,
10/21/1932

“A Walk in the Parks”, John R. Young, 2010