

**Semmes Statue – Council Address**  
**June 23, 2020**

Ladies & Gentlemen, Greetings ...

I come before you representing Raphael Semmes Camp 11 of the Sons of Confederate Veterans with the specific request that you return the Admiral Semmes Monument to *us*, the successors of its donors.

The *Sons* was founded in 1896. The Commander of the *United* Confederate Veterans gave the *Sons* the charge of "... the defense of the Confederate soldier's good name (and) the guardianship of his history ...." Clearly, Admiral Semmes' good name and the guardianship of his history have been harmed by the illegal removal of his Monument.

Prior to the year 1900, an auxiliary of Raphael Semmes Camp 11 of the *United* Confederate Veterans collected funds and donated a statue of this beloved citizen of Mobile, Alabama. A veteran officer in the navies of both the old United States and the Confederate States, his achievements defending our governments are known and celebrated all over the world. His portrait graces the walls of the Alabama Room in the Town Hall of Geneva, Switzerland. English officers presented to him a sword, a beautiful work of art, in admiration of his Naval service and exploits. The French and United States governments collaborated in the research of the CSS Alabama. The United States Navy has commissioned two warships in his honor ... both named USS Semmes.

In 1900, this veteran's Statue was unveiled to the acclamation of Mobilians and has been proudly displayed for 120 years.

In 2000, Raphael Semmes *Sons* Camp 11, successors to the *United* Confederate Veterans, conducted a centenary rededication of the Monument. In attendance were the Mayor of Mobile, Mr. Mike Dow, and a number of City Council members ... one of whom, Mr. Fred Richardson, welcomed attendees to the private reception hosted by the Camp before the public event.

Semmes family members, including retired US Navy Captain Oliver Semmes, a Camp member and direct descendant of the Admiral, were in attendance. The Admiral's sword, a priceless artifact, was on display. Hundreds of people attended the public rededication as the cannon of Fort Conde boomed in conjunction with those of re-enactors.

Nevertheless, a recent action has intentionally voided the good faith implicit in this Monument's donation.

Despite his oath of office to support the Constitution of Alabama, the Mayor violated our State's Statute protecting such veterans' monuments ... placing himself above our laws. In this he joined in the lawless desecration of monuments throughout these United States - including George Washington, Francis Scott Key, Christopher Columbus, and various veterans' monuments in Washington, D. C.

Historian Will Durant gave us this thought, "From barbarism to civilization requires a century; from civilization to barbarism needs but a day." In Mobile, after 120 years, it required but a night.

This betrayal of public trust incurred a fine on Mobile's citizens. The private fund established to alleviate this fine, whether contributors are simply citizens seeking to lighten it or are accessories to the Mayor's illegal act, does not relieve his guilt. Money cannot buy honor, alleviate guilt, nor restore good faith.

Raphael Semmes Camp 11 is a genealogical memorial veterans' association, a 501(c)3 charitable organization. It has contained many veterans of our wars, including WWII, Korea, Viet Nam, and the recent Middle East conflicts. In particular, these men value the dignity and honor of our veterans' memorials. They instinctively understand such monuments are more than bronze and stone ... they are the very soul of the gratitude and reverence civilizations render to those who put themselves in harm's way ... freedom and independence are not free. It is said that a culture which does not cherish ***and will not defend the honor*** of those who offered their lives for it does not deserve to survive.

For many years of civic pride, our Camp has maintained the island on which stood the Admiral's Statue. In 2007, the United States Navy sent the remains of an American Confederate sailor recovered from the CSS Alabama to the Semmes Camp for interment. Their confidence further qualifies our *bona fides* for the return of this veteran's Statue, which we consider our right.

This Monument's illegal removal was a violation of the good faith in its donation and Alabama Law. ***We*** honor our veterans' Monuments ... ***we*** do not desecrate them ... ***we obey the law***.

Clearly, as the City has ***disavowed this gift***, our Semmes Camp, successor to the donors, is the legitimate, competent, and worthy recipient for its return.