

Republican Perspective

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by John Littig

Traveller

For years, there have been occasional and seemingly unconnected efforts to erase symbols of the Confederate States of America---to tear down a statue, rename a school, or remove a Confederate flag.

Then came the June 2015 South Carolina church massacre by a white supremacist. That heinous act galvanized public opinion, and the previously sporadic efforts became a nationwide movement.

A primary target for historical erasure is the plethora of statues of Confederate military leaders. And most prominent among those are statues of General Robert E. Lee.

Like other Confederate generals, statues of Lee almost always depict him astride his horse Traveller. Lore is that Traveller was fast, strong, and brave---a fitting horse for a renowned military commander of that era.

Unlike Lee, Traveller was presumably not a slaveholder. His heart likely was not even committed to the Confederate cause. But, as Lee's warhorse, in a sense he too was a Confederate hero. And of course, as the statues are taken down, Traveller is being scrubbed from history as surely as his rider.

Barring some unforeseeable shift in public sentiment, the erasing of Confederate leaders will continue until there is no more Robert E. Lee astride Traveller in any public place in America.

The historical expunging will be complete. Or maybe not.

As it turns out, the University of Southern California has a horse named Traveler as its mascot. Traveler attends home football games and, with his Trojan rider, gallops around the field whenever USC scores---which is far too often.

Traveler first appeared at USC in the 1961 football season. Of course over the years USC has had a succession of Travelers. The original one was, according to its owner Richard Saukko, named in honor of---you guessed it---General Lee's Traveller.

So even after the removal of Confederate statues and flags, and even after the renaming of streets, schools, and buildings, a symbol of the Confederacy will endure in the name of USC's mascot.

The historical erasure enthusiasts should turn their attention to this living, breathing, galloping Confederate namesake. USC's Traveler and all of his successors will have to be renamed.

Renaming efforts have often included a jujitsu component: the now-disfavored names would be replaced by those of prominent minorities or civil rights leaders. For example, the renaming of San Francisco's Army Street as Cesar Chavez Blvd.; the so-far-unsuccessful campaign to rename J.E.B. Stuart High School in Virginia after Thurgood Marshall; and the fizzled renaming of San Francisco's Washington High in favor of Maya Angelou.

For now, the historical erasure folks are busy with removing the Confederate statues and flags and with the renaming of schools and such. But once they are finished up with those more tangible targets, USC officials should expect a knock at the door.

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