

Today in Columbus History:

On April 28, 1874, the *Columbus Daily Enquirer* reported on the observance of the Ninth Memorial Day in Columbus. As the 26th fell on a Sunday that year, the observance occurred to Monday, April 27. This was the first Memorial Day without Mrs. Charles J. Williams, the woman whose letter to the press in 1866 inaugurated the holiday. She died less than two weeks before, on April 15, 1874. The ladies of the Memorial Association had just met at her home on March 26 to choose the orator for that year's tribute. They made a special effort afterwards to recognize her efforts, first in a story honoring her on Sunday, April 26, and again during the exercises at the cemetery on April 27.

The orator that year was Mayor Samuel B. Cleghorn. He was a young lawyer elected mayor in December 1870 at the age of thirty-one. This followed a brief stint at the Georgia House of Representatives where he was appointed chief engrossing clerk to proof-read legislation for errors. During the Civil War, Cleghorn was severely wounded in battle in May 1864, losing his right leg, above the knee, the thumb of left hand and first two fingers on his right. After his term as mayor, Cleghorn sought other government positions such as state comptroller and county tax receiver. He eventually landed a position, possibly doorkeeper, in the U.S. House of Representatives. He died at the Perry House in Columbus in 1881 at age 41, after an illness of several weeks, leaving a wife and daughter. He is buried in Linwood Cemetery.

The story in the *Enquirer* on the ninth Memorial Day noted that Cleghorn was propped up on crutches as he addressed the gathering at the Springer Opera House at 4 pm. His speech centered around Mrs. Williams and the efforts taking shape to erect a monument to the war dead. Those efforts were just beginning in earnest after languishing for several years. The speech was followed by singing and poetry.

After the exercises at the Opera House, the Columbus and City Light Guards marched to the cemetery, along with the Friends of Temperance, the Machinists and Blacksmith's Union and others. They reported one of the largest gatherings since the holiday began with thousands in attendance. The Guards stopped first at the lower lot to decorate the graves (near the present-day office). They then proceeded to the upper lot, near General Paul J. Semmes' grave. Lastly, they visited the grave of Mrs. Williams where they stacked arms, and each deposited a rose on her grave.

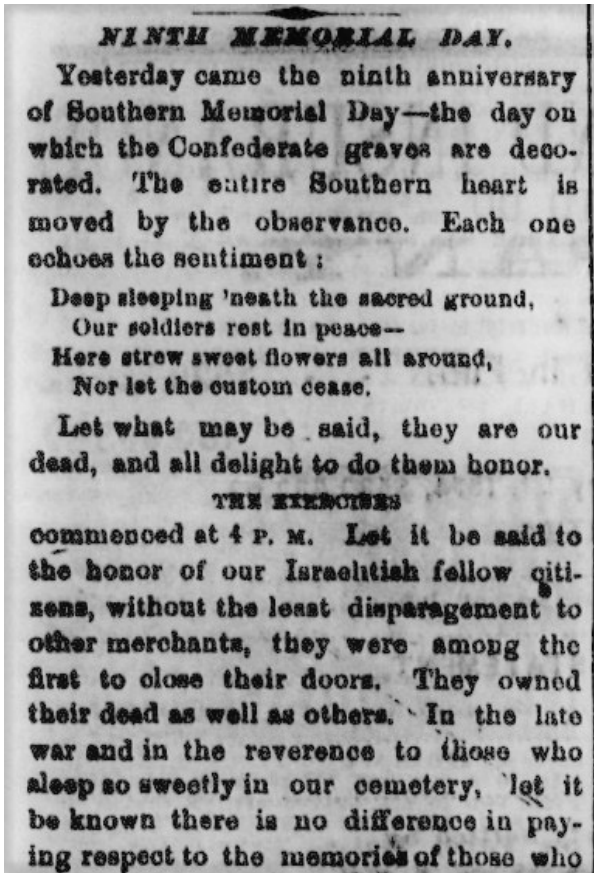
In addition to describing the current decoration exercises, the article gave a brief history of the exercises so far, detailing the previous speakers, locations, and times of day from the prior eight tributes. Two of the prior orations were done from the cenotaph, a large hexagonal wooden structure with a dome supported by six pillars in the cemetery. It had the names of the dead painted on it and listed by rank, starting with General Semmes on the dome. The cenotaph weathered poorly and was one of the main reasons for the renewed interest in a stone monument to replace it. The article ended with a Roll of Honor listing all two hundred and forty-nine names formerly painted on the cenotaph.

Compiled by Daniel A. Bellware, Muscogee Genealogical Society

Clipping from Georgia Historic Newspapers (GALILEO).

Our weekly snippets of Columbus history are usually based on a few days-worth of searching through the most popular sources for Muscogee County history. Meant to inspire readers to explore more about Columbus history, they are not exhaustive dissertations on the topic and

may contain mistakes. If you have corrections or additional information, feel free to share them with the group.



Story about the Ninth Memorial Day in the *Columbus Daily Enquirer* on April 28, 1874, <https://gahistoricnewspapers.galileo.usg.edu/>.



Mrs. Charles J. (Mary Ann) Williams, *History of the Confederated Memorial Associations of the South* (1904), from books.google.com.



Graves of Mary Ann Williams (left) and her husband, Colonel Charles J. Williams (right) at Linwood Cemetery (photo courtesy of Daniel Bellware).



Graves in the lower lot, near the office (photo courtesy of Daniel Bellware).



Graves in the upper lot, near General Paul J. Semmes' grave (photo courtesy of Daniel Bellware).

**Tribute to Mrs. Chas. J. Williams by the
Ladies of the Columbus Memo-
rial Association.**

On this day, 26th of April—a day forever associated with the beloved memory of Mrs. Charles J. Williams—the ladies of the Columbus Memorial Society desire to lay a wreath upon her grave.

Sister, Mother, Friend! What words can do justice to our Love and to our Loss. We, who have long had the privilege of working with so noble a coadjutor,

Portion of the story on Mrs. Charles J. Williams from the *Columbus Daily Enquirer*, April 26, 1874, <https://gahistoricnewspapers.galileo.usg.edu/>.

Daily Enquirer.
COLUMBUS:
TUESDAY..... APRIL 28, 1874.
CITY AFFAIRS.
Cotton Market.
Yesterday being a Georgia holiday, we cannot give receipts. They were good. We give all to-morrow. Prices are unchanged since last report, and receipts are about 100 bales against 85 last year. Already this week's receipts greatly exceed those of last year for the same time.

Story noting that April 27 was a Georgia holiday from the *Columbus Daily Enquirer*, April 28, 1874, <https://gahistoricnewspapers.galileo.usg.edu/>.