



SONS OF UNION VETERANS OF THE CIVIL WAR
DEPARTMENT OF WISCONSIN

KENT A. PETERSON
PAST DEPARTMENT COMMANDER

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14 October 2007

Cannons Ad Hoc Committee
c/o Racine City Clerk
730 Washington Avenue
Racine, WI 53403

RE: DISPOSITION OF MONUMENT SQUARE CANNONS

Dear Committee Members:

I understand that the Racine City Attorney will be rendering his opinion as to the disposition of the Monument Square Civil War cannons. In crafting his statement I am sure he will take into account the fact that there are going to be legal issues with respect to ownership and Federal law concerning dismantling veteran's memorials. But there are other important considerations.

Mayors and aldermen are elected to be good stewards of the city's resources and make decisions that are in the city's best interests, now and in the future. Legalities aside for a moment, you are facing a "good steward" decision with the situation of these cannons.

For many years after the Civil War, a grateful nation erected one monument after another in cities, town and villages across the country, to respect and to honor the veterans who sacrificed and served their country. Civil War Union veterans pledged that never again should the United States fight such a divisive war, pitting one state against another. To that end, these veterans worked the rest of their lives making sure that people would never forget the lessons of the Civil War. Their monuments and memorials served as public reminders of a painful lesson learned at great cost.

Monument Square's impressive soldier's monument and its cannons are memorials not only to Racine's sons who served and died, but to an important part of our nation's history. It isn't just about Racine's past – it's about our American history. It is all about remembering a crucial turning point in our nation's development and the many lessons that came with it.

These monuments do not belong in museums. They belong in full public view, preserved and protected by their stewards, as silent sentinels and reminders that the rights and liberties we enjoy came with a very great cost.



- 2 -

As city officials, you have been entrusted to manage Racine's resources – past, present and future. As a member of the Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War, I have been entrusted to preserve and protect the nation's memory of the courage and sacrifice of our Civil War ancestors.

In the case of Racine's Civil War monument, it seems you and I should be working toward the same end. We shouldn't be debating a decision to disrespect American veterans by dismantling, even partially, one of their memorials.

I urge you to do the right thing. Celebrate Racine's rich heritage and history. Don't give it away to other cities.

Monument Square is what it is – a small part of Racine which was set aside for her citizens to reflect, remember and appreciate those who came before them. If some people have forgotten that, then it's our responsibility – yours and mine - to remind them. Make sure they never forget.

There is plenty of room for parties and festivals only a couple of blocks away in your fine lakefront parks and festival grounds. Refurbish the Square – and keep it for its intended purpose. I urge you to do the right thing for Racine's past, present and future, and keep the cannons where they belong.

And never forget why they were placed there. The SUVCW will be watching your decision closely.

Respectfully and sincerely,



Kent A. Peterson
Past Department of Wisconsin Commander
Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War

CC: City Attorney Robert Weber

