

Confederate memorial to be dedicated Sunday

By Margaret Maree
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The old Gwinnett County courthouse on Lawrenceville's square will take on the look of another era this weekend as Confederate re-enactors set up camp and await the unveiling of a new Confederate memorial.

Lawrenceville Camp 96 of the Sons of Confederate Veterans will unveil the 8-foot monument at a dedication ceremony Sunday at 2 p.m. on the north lawn of the renovated courthouse.

Related activities will begin earlier, as sights and sounds from the past set the scene for the unveiling.

Beginning today, several units of Confederate re-enactors will stage a "living history" on the square, offering explanations and demonstrations of various uniforms, tools and weapons of the Civil War era. Some re-enactors will provide "first-person impressions" of Civil War soldiers.

The activities will run today 10 a.m.-6 p.m. and Sunday 10 a.m.-3 p.m.

The events mark the Sunday unveiling of the monument and its related dedication ceremony, which will include performances by bagpipe players and speakers.

Gwinnett County commissioners approved plans for the Confederate memorial last year with little fanfare. Some county residents hope the day will pass just as uneventfully.

"While we can't honor the notion of a struggle fought to suppress or oppress black people, we do recognize and re-

spect the prerogative of any individual or organization to honor their history and heritage," said Kenneth Spruce, spokesman for the NAACP Gwinnett chapter.

The monument features a granite base and bears the engraving of a Confederate soldier flanked by a bronze Confederate States of America seal.

One of the two side wing pieces bears a quote from Sir Winston Churchill: "Any people with contempt for their heritage have lost faith in them-

selves, and no nation can long survive without pride in its traditions."

"The memorial is not a symbol of slavery but is instead meant to honor the soldiers from Gwinnett who died defending their homes and families," said Robert Biggers, former commander of Lawrenceville Camp 96. He said Gwinnett is one of just five counties in Georgia never to have erected a memorial to their Civil War dead, and that their intention has never been to inflame racial

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