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**REPORT OF THE PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT
APPLICATION FOR DESIGNATION
AS A CITY OF JACKSONVILLE LANDMARK SITE**

LS-16-01

GENERAL LOCATION: Jacksonville Hart's Map, Block 39, West Duval Street, West Monroe Street, North Hogan Street and North Laura Street.

Prepared in accordance with the JACKSONVILLE ORDINANCE CODE, SECTION 307.104, the Jacksonville Planning and Development Department hereby forwards to the Jacksonville Historic Preservation Commission, its "Findings, Conclusions and Recommendations" on the Landmark Site Designation, **LS-16-01**, sponsored by the Jacksonville Historic Preservation Commission.

FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

- (A) Consistent with the direction of the Jacksonville Historic Preservation Commission ("Commission") at the December 9, 2015 meeting, the Jacksonville Planning and Development Department ("Department") began preparing a designation application for Hemming Park.
- (B) On July 27, 2016, consistent with the JACKSONVILLE ORDINANCE CODE, SECTION 307.104(d), the Department determined that the application for designation of Hemming Park as a Landmark Site was complete. As required, the Department had signs posted in front of the property being considered for designation, as well as sent notices by U.S. Mail to each owner of real property within three hundred and fifty (350) feet of the proposed site. Notice of the public hearing on the designation of Hemming Park as a Landmark Site was published in the *Financial News and Daily Record*. Proof of publication is attached to this report.
- (C) If designated, certain work affecting Hemming Park will require a Certificate of Appropriateness ("COA") from the Commission or Department. Before issuing the Certificate of Appropriateness, the Commission or Department will review the proposed work (as specifically set forth below) for consistency with any applicable *Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation and Guidelines for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings* ("Secretary's Standards"):

- 1) Routine repairs and maintenance, minor alterations, temporary new construction, events, and activities in the park will not require a COA. However, the following work will require an approved COA application:
 - a. Modifications being made to permanently change the use of any portion of the site from its current use as a public park or public space;
 - b. Relocation, modification, restoration, or any other work conducted on the Confederate Monument or the Coquina Marker commemorating Old King's Road in conflict, or potentially in conflict, with the Secretary's Standards; and
 - c. Any other work which the Department determines to be in conflict, or potentially in conflict, with any applicable Secretary's Standards.
- (D) Since the owner has opposed in writing the landmark site designation for Hemming Park, the Commission must find the proposed landmark site to meet at least four of seven criteria. In preparing the application, the Department has found the application meets four of the seven criteria for Hemming Park: A, B, C, & G, with the Confederate Monument meeting criteria F based on the following;

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FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

- (A) *Its value as a significant reminder of the cultural, historical, architectural, or archaeological heritage of the City, state or nation.*

Although visibly changed numerous times over the past 150 years, Hemming Park is in a significant way the most unchanged site in downtown Jacksonville. This two acre parcel, known at different times as the City Park, the St. James Park, Hemming Park and Hemming Plaza, has had many physical manifestations as its fortune changed with the amount and degree of maintenance and improvements, but it has always maintained its original intent, size and use as a public gathering place. Considered the father of Jacksonville's park system, Hemming Park was appropriately described in a 1991 *Florida Times Union* article in the following manner, "*For generations of Jaxons, Hemming Plaza was the gathering place*

and common ground of the multitude. It was the heart of the town. Its village green."¹

Even before officially a city park, the two acres located on a blackjack oak ridge has served as a stage for Jacksonville's long and rich history. Starting in Colonial times, the British era Old Kings Road cut diagonally across the later site of downtown on its route from New Smyrna Beach to St. Marys, Georgia. Going in a northwest direction from the ferry crossing at the end of present day Liberty Street, this historic roadway probably cut across or skirted the blackjack ridge.²

Another early road that skirted the northern edge of the parcel was the Alligator Road which intersected the Kings Road in the general vicinity of the northeast corner of Hemming Park. Entering Jacksonville following the present route of West Monroe Street, the Alligator Road ran to present day Lake City, called Alligator at the time, eventually reaching Tallahassee. Today at the northeast corner of Hemming Park is a bronze plaque imbedded in a large coquina rock commemorating the intersection of these two historic roads. Reportedly, the coquina boulder was an original road marker that had been at the northeast corner of Hemming Park for well over two centuries. In 1928, the Jacksonville Chapter of the National Society, Daughters of the American Revolution added the informational plaque. With the 1978 redevelopment of Hemming Park, the coquina marker was removed, but returned to its original location in 1998.³

Recognized as the founder of Jacksonville, Isaiah D. Hart owned much of the property in downtown Jacksonville particularly to the north and west of the 1822 original plat. Circa 1859, he produced what is called Hart's Map of the City of Jacksonville that established the current street grid of downtown. His map included all of the property defined by the St. Johns River to the south, Hogans Creek to the east and north, and Clay Street on the west. As part of the map, Hart set aside a block of land for use as a public square. Envisioning Block 39 as a market place and general meeting area, Hart platted smaller half lots facing the park for new shops and businesses. Hart's intent on extending the street grid and establishing a public square was to increase the value of his property by encouraging business development more to the north of the frequently flooded Bay Street.⁴

Although still under private ownership of the Hart family, Block 39 was being used as a public gathering place by the Civil War. The first occupation of

1 Bill Foley, "Hemming Plaza Evolution Has Yet to Change Chemistry of Area", *Florida Times Union*, October 6, 1991, p. E-5.

2 T. Frederick Davis, *History of Jacksonville and Vicinity, 1513 - 1924*. (St. Augustine, Florida: The Record Company, 1925), pp. 26 - 27, 332 - 333,

3 *Florida Times Union*, Westside Community News, May 16, 1998, p.1.

4 Davis, pp. 332 & 333.

Jacksonville in March and April of 1862 by Federal forces was part of a larger campaign to capture Southern port cities in order to create coaling stations and patrolling bases to intercept blockade runners. The significant number of Union supporters remaining in the city hosted a reception in the "public square" for Brigadier General Thomas W. Sherman, commander of the Federal Department of the South. They strongly encouraged General Sherman to fortify the city and make the occupation permanent. However, much to their disappointment and horror, Major General David Hunter, who replaced General Sherman, ordered the evacuation of the city in April of 1862. It was the General's position that Union forces were spread too thin, and it was strategically better to concentrate forces at St. Augustine and Fernandina while still controlling Mayport and Batten Island at the mouth of the river.⁵

During the fourth occupation of Jacksonville in February of 1864, the Union Army headquarters was located, "near the bandstand in the city square". At this location, a crowd congregated on August 2, 1865 to hear a speech by Provisional Governor of Florida, William T. Marvin, who was appointed by President Andrew Johnson. Following the policies of the President, Governor Marvin spoke of his commitment to taking a conservative position as related to voting rights for the recently freed slaves. However, all of President Johnson's more moderate policies were soon replaced by those associated with Congressional Reconstruction.⁶

In January of 1866, the City of Jacksonville acquired the park when all of Block 39 was sold for ten dollars to the municipal government by the executors of the Isaiah D. Hart estate, Ossian B. Hart and Ozias Buddington.⁷ The sale was part of a November 16, 1865 Judge of Probate Order authorizing the executors to sell vacant town lots belonging to Isaiah Hart with proceeds being used for payment of debts and distribution of any remaining assets among heirs. The City of Jacksonville was the successful bidder for Block 39, known as the public square, which was officially approved by the Judge of Probate and conveyed on January 18, 1866. The sale was free and clear of any reversion clause which allowed the city to donate, sell or use the parcel in any manner without having to return the parcel back to the I.D. Hart family.⁸ However, interest to improve the park, at that time called the City Park, did not develop until the St. James Hotel was built immediately to the north in 1869. Soon after the St. James Hotel opened, citizens took the initiative to improve the park with the construction of a perimeter fence and a bandstand in the center.

⁵ Richard A. Martin, *The City Makers*. (Jacksonville, Florida: Convention Press, Inc., 1972), pp. 42 & 43.

⁶ *Ibid*, pp. 82 & 83.

⁷ Duval County Courthouse, *Deed Book M-735*, January 23, 1866, filed February 12, 1866.

Deed Book P-29, July 2, 1868, Quit Claim Deed, Rhody Mott to City of Jacksonville, Block 39.

⁸ *The Florida Times Union*, June 22, 1924.

Davis, p.p. 115, 332-333.

One of the earliest mentions of the City Park was made by distinguished Southern writer and poet, Sidney Lanier, as part of his description of a visit to the large and elegant St. James Hotel. Sidney Lanier was traveling the state in 1875 as part of his commission from the Atlantic Coastline Railway to write a traveler's guide to Florida. He states, "*Farther back in the town a few hundred yards, situated among fine oaks which border a newly-planted open square, is the St. James Hotel; where the chances are strong that as one peeps through the drawing-room windows on the way to one's room, one will find so many New York faces and Boston faces and Chicago faces that one does not feel so very far from home after all*".⁹

By 1873, these improvements had not been maintained resulting in a newspaper editor declaring, "*A good suggestion has been made to turn this plot of ground (the park) into a cemetery, for by this means in the course of time we may have a few handsome monuments and sorrowing relatives will plant around them a few flowers*".¹⁰ Almost ten years later the condition of the park, now called the St. James Park, had not improved causing Charles H. Jones, founder and editor of the *Daily Florida Times* to print an editorial in 1882 describing, "*Our city park is another of the municipal eye-sores. The fence that once surrounded it has rotted down and had been carted off. The old pavilion is a trap that ere long will fall and kill someone*".¹¹ Jones's criticism of the park was one of a number of editorials he wrote condemning the City for its lack of municipal improvements and expressing concern about how this situation may negatively impact tourism.¹²

The condition of the park continued to deteriorate and was being described in newspapers "*as overgrown with weeds, habituated by stray cows and pigs, and a gathering place for "bunko men" and prostitutes*".¹³ A New York resort owner visiting the city couldn't understand why the neighboring St James and Windsor Hotels "*did not take hold of this eyesore and make it a veritable little earthly paradise*".¹⁴ The poor condition of the park may have motivated some city leaders in 1886 to consider selling the parcel to the Federal government for the construction of a new post office. Others suggested donating the land to the

9 Sidney Lanier, *Florida: Its Scenery, Climate, and History*. (Gainesville, Florida: University of Florida Press, 1973, A Facsimile Reproduction of the 1875 Edition), p.69.

10 Davis, p. 333.

11 Martin, pp. 134 – 135.

12 Ibid,

Becoming a nationally recognized journalist and politician, Charles H. Jones sold his Jacksonville paper in 1888 to become the editor of the *Missouri Republican* and later with Joseph's Pulitzer's *New York World*.

While growing up in Jacksonville, James Weldon Johnson worked as an office boy for Jones which influenced his decision to later start his own newspaper in Jacksonville, the *Daily American*.

(Thomas Graham, *Charles H. Jones, Journalist and Politician of the Gilded Age*. (Tallahassee, Florida: Florida A & M University Press, 1990), pp. 41-42, 62.

13 Martin, p. 217; *Florida Times Union*, June 9 & 12, 1887

14 Ibid; *Florida Times Union*, February 1, 1887.

Federal government leaving the entire appropriation for construction of the building with the condition that they maintain all of the parcel.¹⁵ This idea never moved forward and the new post office and U.S. District Court opened in 1895 at the northeast corner of West Forsyth Street and North Hogan Street.

That same year, the city made its first appropriation to improve the park by earmarking \$700 for walkways and the sinking of a well in the center for a fountain. In addition to the public shaming, this municipal investment may have been in response to the opening of the first Subtropical Exhibition on January 12, 1888 with an anticipated visit by President and Mrs. Grover Cleveland. Arriving on February 22, 1888, President and Mrs. Grover Cleveland visited the exhibition before returning to their accommodations at the St. James Hotel. Thousands of people congregated in the St. James Park hoping to catch a glimpse or even shake the hand of the president. It has been reported that 10,000 people went through the reception line that night. Since another 15,000 were unable to get inside the hotel, the crowd of people caused the wooden porch of the St. James Hotel to collapse.¹⁶ Contributing to Hemming Park's status as the center of Jacksonville's social and cultural life was the opening of the St. James Skating Rink at the southeast corner of North Laura and West Duval Streets which was replaced in 1884 by the 1200 seat Park Theater. With the destruction of the Park Theater by fire in 1887, the four-story Park Opera House was constructed on the site. Until destroyed by the 1901 fire, the Park Opera House featured plays, musical productions, and boxing matches.¹⁷

A 1895 publication in its brief description of the park painted a more idyllic scene. In S. Paul Brown's *The Book of Jacksonville* the park was described as, "a small but exceedingly lovely spot, with its fountains, flowers, shrubbery and trees, a perfect little garden, and a favorite resort for loungers, nurses, and children with their pets".¹⁸ Since 1898, the most prominent and enduring feature in Hemming Park is the Confederate Monument made by George H. Mitchell of Chicago. The 62 foot high marble and bronze monument crowned with a single Confederate soldier gazing to the south was a gift of former Jacksonville resident and Confederate veteran, Charles C. Hemming. His father was John C. Hemming who was born in Straford-on-Avon, Warwickshire, England in 1812. Coming to Jacksonville in the 1840s, John C. Hemming held several public offices in his adopted city including town

15 *Florida Times Union*, June 22, 1924.

16 Martin, p. 204.

17 Howard Zoll, *History of Hemming Plaza*, unpublished paper produced by the Jacksonville Parks and Recreation Department, Vertical Files, Jacksonville Planning and Development Department.

1884 Sanborn Map of Jacksonville

Richard A. Martin, "Hemming Plaza, Named in 1899 for Donor of Civil War Memorial, Was Social Center", *Consolidator*, newsletter of the City of Jacksonville, April, 1995.

18 S. Paul Brown, *The Book of Jacksonville. A History*. (Poughkeepsie, New York: The Eagle Printing, House of Mr. A.V. Haight, 1895), p.56.

councilman and public auctioneer. A veteran of the Third Seminole War, John C. Hemming joined the Jacksonville Light Infantry with the outbreak of the Civil War.¹⁹

Called Colonel Hemming because of his service in the Third Seminole War, he is best known for scuttling the famous racing yacht, *America*, which at the time was being used as a blockade runner. John C. Hemming was joined in the scuttling of the *America* up Dunn's Creek by his sixteen year old son, Charles C. Hemming. Originally a member of the Jacksonville Light Infantry, Charles C. Hemming went on to serve as a sergeant in Company A of the Third Florida Infantry. He was captured during the Battle of Missionary Ridge in Tennessee, and taken to the notorious Rock Island Prison in Illinois. While imprisoned, he and his hometown friend, John Kernan, made a dramatic escape using a wooden replica of a pistol to fool the guards. Traveling through Union territory, Hemming crossed over into Canada and caught a sailing vessel to Cuba. After the war, Charles C. Hemming started a new life in Brenham, Texas, first in the mercantile business and later serving as a bank cashier.²⁰

After moving to Colorado, Charles C. Hemming became a successful banker and had accumulated a large fortune part of which he used to make a gift to Florida and Jacksonville. To honor fellow veterans, Hemming commissioned the Confederate Monument that was unveiled in a grand ceremony on June 16, 1898 in the St. James Park in downtown Jacksonville as part of the reunion of the United Confederate Veterans. Being in the middle of the Spanish American War, the 7th Army Corps, stationed at nearby Camp Cuba Libre, escorted members of the United Confederate Veterans into the park for the unveiling. In attendance was Major General Fitzhugh Lee, commander of the 7th Army Corps and nephew of General Robert E. Lee, as well as Lieutenant Algernon Sartoris, the grandson of General Ulysses S. Grant, who was staying at the Windsor Hotel across from the park. Dedicated to all Florida soldiers and sailors that served during the war, the monument was officially accepted by

¹⁹ Angela D. Tooley, *Old City Cemetery's Florida Confederate Heroes*. Kennesaw State University, www.scv-kirby-smith.org.

²⁰ In addition to serving on blockading squadron, the *America* was also used as a training ship at Annapolis. In 1870, the yacht went to England to defend the cup, and while able to beat British competitors, she lost to three other American yachts (Davis, p. 126).

Daniel Schafer, *Thunder on the River, Northeast Florida During the Civil War*. (Gainesville, Florida: University Press of Florida, 2010), P. 78.

Davis, p. 126.

Rowland H. Rerick, *Memoirs of Florida*. (Atlanta, Georgia: The Southern Historical Associates, 1902), p. 567.

Angela D. Tooley, *Old City Cemetery's Florida Confederate Heroes*. Kennesaw State University, www.scv-kirby-smith.org.

Davis, p.p. 216 & 333

Pleasant Daniel Gold, *History of Duval County Florida*. (St. Augustine, Florida: The Record Company, 1928), p. 195.

Wayne W. Wood, *Jacksonville's Architectural Heritage, Landmarks for the Future*. (Jacksonville, Florida: University of North Florida Press, 1989), p. 50.

Governor William D. Bloxham. When Miss Sarah Elizabeth Call, daughter of Judge Rhydon M. Call, was unveiling the monument accompanied by a thirteen gun salute from the Wilson's Battery, the cord broke requiring the Fire Department to come and remove the wrappings. By ordinance action on October 26, 1899, the City Council officially renamed the City/St. James Park to Hemming Park to honor his donation of the \$20,000 monument.²¹

The Confederate Monument was fabricated and installed by George M. Mitchell out of Chicago. The 17 ½ foot shaft of the monument, which is constructed of solid granite, sets on a ten ton die stone resting on a cement base composed of three terraces with the bottom one being 20' 8". The square die is composed of four panels defined by square pilasters that visually support a cornice and four pediments. The tympanums of the pediment have carved anchors and a pair of oars honoring the Confederate Navy on the east side, with crossed cannons on the west side. The north and south panels have crossed muskets. Framed in each of the panels are bronze plaques with the busts of General E. Kirby-Smith, General J.J. Dickison, Commander of the Florida Division of the United Confederate Veterans, General Robert E. Lee on horseback and General Stonewall Jackson with drum corp. The shaft is crowned by a bronze statue of a soldier standing at ease resting his hands on top of his musket. In the cap of the soldier is the initials J.L.I., which stood for the Jacksonville Light Infantry in which Charles Hemming was a member.²²

The Confederate Monument in the center of Hemming Park also has the distinction of being the only structure in the path of the 1901 fire to survive completely intact. Ignited at noon on May 3 at the corner of North Davis Street and West Union Street, the Great Fire traveled quickly and was consuming the grand St. James and Windsor Hotels by 3:30 that afternoon. Fleeing from the fire, many residents had earlier piled household goods around the base of the monument hoping that the park would be spared. The flames soon consumed the entire park and destroyed the material placed around the monument. One witness stated that the cement base of the monument grew glowing red from the heat but did not fall. The fire left only the stumps of burnt trees, the monument and a fountain. In her memory of the fire as a ten year old, Linda Frost Sheddan, 1891 – 1976, stated, "*The tall monument to the soldiers of the Confederacy stood gaunt and alone among the ashes and debris, the soldier at its top retaining his dignity and still clasping his musket. Hemming Park, in which it stood, was a mass of shriveled, curled, and ruined shrubs and trees.*"²³

21 James C. Craig, "The Confederate Monument in Hemming Park": *Jacksonville Historical Society*, 1954, pp 25 – 28.

Davis, pp. 216.

22 Craig, pp. 25 – 28.

23 Bill Foley and Wayne W. Wood, *The Great Fire of 1901*. (Jacksonville, Florida: The Jacksonville Historical Society, 2001), pp. 16, 45, 48, 49, & 132.

During the night of May 3, homeless residents camped out in the open at Hemming Park. Later the park was used to set up a commissary especially for women's relief efforts. Protected by Marine guards, the commissary at Hemming Park was under the direction of Mrs. W.W. Cummer, the mother-in-law of Ninah H. Cummer who was head of the Women's Auxiliary Relief Association, which was also housed in the park. In addition to distributing food, clothing, tools, and household supplies, the Women's Auxiliary Relief Association set-up a sewing tent where women were hired to make sheets and pillow cases. Within a six week period, the women had made and distributed 1,642 sheets and 1,245 pillow cases. Being occupied through the summer of 1901, the commissary also included a dispensary and access to nurses. In addition, a Red Cross Commissary was set up at Hemming Park where cots and bedding were distributed.²⁴

Jacksonville had a quick and amazing recovery from the most destructive fire in the South at that time. Within three years, downtown had as many new buildings as were destroyed in the fire. Cleaned up and replanted with trees, shrubs, and grass, Hemming Park resumed its role as the heart of the city. A few years after the fire, both the Windsor Hotel and the Seminole Club were rebuilt; however, the St. James parcel remained empty and was used for several public events including accommodating the crowd that came to hear President Theodore Roosevelt's speech from the balcony of the Seminole Club. In March of 1905, the owners of the old St. James Hotel parcel immediately to the north of Hemming Park offered the block of land to the City for \$75,000 with the condition that it be used forever as a public park to be called the St. James Park. Although the owners were agreeable with installment payments and were willing to return \$40,000 to the City to improve and maintain the park, Mayor George M. Nolan and the City Council turned the offer down.²⁵ An usual resident of Hemming Park after the fire was "Big Joe" an alligator who lived in the fountain pool. For safety purposes, the City had a warning that small animals should not go close to the fountain, and smaller alligators not be released into the pool. "Big Joe" later was moved from his happy home in Hemming Park to the Jacksonville Zoo.²⁶

²⁴ Ibid, pp. 79, 120 – 121, , 126, 167 & 179.
Davis, p. 225.

The commissary at Hemming Park only served only white women. Blacks were probably served at the LaVilla commissary located at West Adams Street and North Myrtle Avenue.

²⁵ Davis, p. 231.

Robert C. Broward, *The Architecture of Henry John Klutho, The Prairie School in Jacksonville*. (Jacksonville, Florida: University of North Florida Press, 1983), pp. 126 – 127.

At the time City leaders believed that development of the parcel by a tax-paying entity was a better use of the property.

²⁶ *Florida Times Union*, September 5, 1999, A-2.

Another official city alligator was "Old Joe" who lived in the reservoir at Waterworks Park. Dying in 1904, "Old Joe" was reportedly brought from Polk County during one of the Subtropical Exhibitions.

Hemming Park's unofficial role as the center of the city was significantly enhanced with the construction of the St. James Building on the block previously occupied by the St. James Hotel. The St. James Building is recognized more for its avant-garde architectural design and for being the signature work of noted Jacksonville architect, Henry John Klutho. However, the building and site also has significance because of its long and unique association with Jacksonville's history, and the continued role it plays in the community. The St. James Building also served as a physical representation of not only the tremendous retail growth of the Cohen Department Store, but also the significant role that downtown Jacksonville once played as the primary retail center for the region. When it finally closed in 1987, May-Cohens Department Store at the St. James Building was the last of the large department stores remaining in downtown Jacksonville that once included Furghotts, Ivey's, Levy, J.C. Penney, Woolworth, Kress, W.T. Grant, Sears, and McCrory's. Because of its significant location fronting Hemming Park, the St. James Building with its ever changing window displays, its great variety of merchandise, popular restaurants, and numerous professional offices on the third and fourth floors, came to be recognized and treated as the center of Downtown's retail and social life well into the 1960's.²⁷

Hemming Park also served as the primary political stump for speeches, rallies and free entertainment provided by candidates running for a variety of public offices on the local, state, and national level. At the turn of the twentieth century, candidates and their supporters were always in competition with their opponents to commandeer the park for political events and forcing opponents to seek less desirable locations to stage speeches and rallies. Perhaps one of the most unusual events to occur in Hemming Plaza was associated with the 1915 mayoral race. Elected in 1913, a major objective of Mayor Van C. Swearingen was to clear the city of brothels and open prostitution. With strong support from the Ministerial Association, Mayor Swearingen joined with the City Council in 1914 to approve a motion to close the district down because of general moral outrage and concerns about impact on tourism. In the 1915 race, Mayor Van C. Swearingen was challenged by ex-mayor, J.E.T. Bowden who supported keeping the houses open. To make a statement about his position, and of course to generate publicity, J.E.T. Bowden's speech in Hemming Park on election eve was followed by a parade of "girls" from "down the line", dressed in red-tights and carrying red lanterns while circling the park on horseback, much to the delight of many present. Following this publicity stunt, J.E.T. Bowden prevailed over Van C. Swearingen in the second primary before rolling over the Socialist candidate in the final election.²⁸

²⁷*Designation Application and Report of the Planning and Development Department of the City of Jacksonville Regarding Proposed Designation of the St. James Building, 117 West Duval Street, LM-01-06.*

²⁸ Davis, p. 304.

Lillian Gilkes, *Cora Crane, A Biography of Mrs. Stephen Crane*. (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1960), pp. 326 - 327;

Over the years, many luminaries stayed in the adjacent St. James Hotel and the Windsor Hotel overlooking the park, especially Presidents and presidential candidates including the previously mentioned visits by Presidents Grover Cleveland and Theodore Roosevelt. With the death of President Warren Harding, who was a frequent guest at the Windsor Hotel, over 5,000 people crowded Hemming Park to honor his memory. Perhaps the most unusual political event to occur at Hemming Park was on October 18, 1960 when the park hosted both presidential candidates. Republican candidate, Richard M. Nixon, had a rally in the morning followed in the afternoon by one for the Democratic candidate, John F. Kennedy who drew a particularly enthusiastic crowd.²⁹ The week before, vice president candidate, Lyndon B. Johnson, was greeted by a crowd of 3,000 people at Hemming Park. He spoke again at the park in October of 1964 as part of his presidential campaign. His opponent, Senator Barry Goldwater also made an appearance at the park.³⁰

New oak trees were planted in the park following the 1901 fire and grew for half a century before being removed by the City during the “Great Starling War of the 1950s”. In the evenings, the trees in Hemming Park filled with thousands of starlings (Purple Martins) making it unsafe and unpleasant to use the park. The City’s first attempts to discourage the birds were by bright lights, bird repellent, firecrackers, and a periodic spraying of the trees with high-pressure hoses, before finally deciding on a more permanent solution of simply removing the oaks. However, this was not the first attempt to address a bird problem in Hemming Park. In 1923, City Commissioner, Chic, St. Elmo Acosta, sent a city worker with a gun to shoot pesky sparrows. Unfortunately, he could not distinguish a sparrow from a mockingbird, and was jailed for killing the later. Since no corpse of the bird was found, the judge only fined the city worker \$10 for discharging a firearm within the city limits.³¹

(B) *Its location is the site of a significant local, state or national event.*

Hemming Park has over time become recognized as the epicenter of Jacksonville’s Civil Rights movement of the early 1960s.³² Although actual

This was the same J.E.T. Bowden. who as the last mayor of the Town of LaVilla in 1887, personally raided houses “Down the Line” in a crusade against a corrupt town council.

29 The Jacksonville Building and Construction Trade Council commemorated President Kennedy’s appearance at the park with a bust of Kennedy attached to a gray marble stone (*Florida Times Union*, July 15, 2003, p.B-5).

30 *Florida Times Union*, July 15, 2003, p.B-5 & *Florida Times Union, River City News*, January 24, 1998, W-3.

31 *Florida Times Union, River City News*, December 21, 1996, W-3.

32 Information about “Axe Handle Saturday” and other demonstrations and sit-ins were summarized from: Rodney L. Hurst, Sr., *It Was Never About a Hot Dog and Coke!* (Livermore, California: WingSpan Press, 2008) and James B. Crooks, *The Consolidation Story, From Civil Rights to the Jaguars.* (Gainesville, Florida: University Press of Florida, 2004).

demonstrations and violent clashes in Hemming Park were limited, it was the significant public space that tied together physically and emotionally most of the other locations associated with the Civil Rights demonstrations. These included Woolworth's, Morrison's Cafeteria, and Cohen's Department Store in the St. James Building, all fronting the park, and W.T. Grants and the S.H.Kress stores only a block away at the corner of West Adams Street and North Main Street. Most of these businesses fronting the park have closed and buildings have been demolished or significantly remodeled. The Woolworth building has been demolished and the building that housed the Morrison Cafeteria has been significantly remodeled for other uses. Although having much of its original exterior appearance, the St. James Building has been completely remodeled on the interior to accommodate City Hall.

The demonstrations and sit-ins were organized and carried out by the Jacksonville Youth Council of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) under the leadership of local teacher and Youth Council Advisor, Rutledge Pearson. The focus of the sit-ins was more about respect, human dignity, and equal rights than necessarily about obtaining service at white lunch counters. But it was also a dangerous challenge to an established system of racial segregation and discrimination. The first sit-in on August 13, 1960 preceded "Axe Handle Saturday" and focused on the strategically located Woolworth Building at the northwest corner of West Monroe Street and North Hogan Street. After being strengthened with prayer and song, 100, predominately black high school students, left the Laura Street Presbyterian Church headed for Woolworth's. Once in the store, the captains of the sit-in, Alton Yates and Rodney Hurst, Jr., gave the signal to sit-down at the lunch counter reserved for whites only. After the waitresses refused them service, the store manager came up and read a statement that the store has the right to refuse service, and ordered the lunch counter closed. However, demonstrators remained at the counter through the lunch period during which they received both verbal and physical abuse from white customers. Afterwards they returned separately back to the church.³³

Following up on calls reporting troubling activities at Hemming Park on Saturday, August 27, 1960, Rutledge Pearson, Arnett Girardeau and Ulysses Beatty went by the park and witnessed a large group of white men, some in Confederate uniforms, congregated in Hemming Park where axe handles and baseball bats were being distributed. When informed of the situation at the park, members of the Youth Council voted unanimously to go on with the planned sit-in, but move it to W.T.

Please note that other civil rights activities not related to Downtown demonstrations also had been initiated such as legal challenges to unequal pay for teachers, separate but unequal public schools, and segregation of public facilities. 33 Hurst, pp. 57 – 59 & 62.

A white sit-in demonstrator, Richard Charles Parker, who was threatened by a group of angry whites, was physically removed from the lunch counter by members of the Boomerangs, a group of young black males, and escorted back to the safety of the church (Hurst, pp. 67, 68 & 69).

Grant store at the northwest corner of West Adams Street and North Main Street. When demonstrators sat down at the lunch counter, the manager of W.T. Grant turned the lights off and completely closed down the entire store. The demonstrators came out of the Grant store, and were met by a group of whites armed with axe handles and baseball bats. While being attacked, many of the demonstrators covered their head and tried to run for safety.³⁴

Life magazine carried a story about the incident and used a photograph of a police officer holding the arm of a young black male whose face and shirt were splattered with blood. Ironically, the young man was not a member of the Youth Council, but was in the area only to shop. When the news of the attack reached the nearby black neighborhoods, a gang known as the Boomerangs, accompanied by other groups, headed downtown to assist and protect members of the Youth Council. The demonstrators were escorted to LaVilla where they sought refuge in nearby residences and businesses. Although there was no police presence during the attack, over 200 hundred squad cars and fire trucks quickly moved into the area to restore order. The black business district along West Ashely Street was closed down while the police went searching for demonstrators.³⁵

Sporadic violence and vandalism by both blacks and whites in different parts of the city continued through the night. The many Florida and regional newspapers that covered the event had differing estimates on the number arrested and injured with the *St. Petersburg Times* reporting a high of 150 arrests and 70 injuries. Using local police statistics, the *Florida Times Union* reported that 33 blacks and 9 whites were arrested on a variety of charges including fighting, inciting a riot, vandalism, resisting arrest and assault. An estimated 300 whites participated in "Axe Handle Saturday" which reportedly was planned by the Ku Klux Klan with prior knowledge of the police.³⁶

The violent attacks of the young demonstrators on August 27, 1960 shocked the white community which in turn galvanized action, particularly by the business community, to address race relations. Concerned about continued national exposure to Jacksonville's negative racial climate and its impact on the city's business appeal, the Jacksonville Chamber of Commerce and other community and religious leaders, circumvented the lack of action by Mayor Haydon Burns to create a biracial committee to address this explosive issue. Their efforts eventually lead to the integration of downtown restaurants, but more importantly created the momentum needed to address other problems that have plagued the

34 Hurst, pp. 70, 71, 72, 76 & 77).

35 Crooks, p. 21.

Hurst, pp. 72, 76, 77, 88 & 89.

36 Hurst, 76, 77, & 89.

According to Crooks, 57 blacks and 20 whites were brought in but only 8 whites and 35 blacks were charged (p.21).

black community for decades such as segregated and unequal educational opportunities, lack of neighborhood infrastructure, as well as the need for economic development and jobs.³⁷

Frustrated with the speed of desegregation by downtown business, demonstrators in March of 1964 attempted to have a meal at the restaurant located in the new Robert Meyer Hotel immediately behind Woolworth's and J.C. Penney. After being not being served, demonstrations broke out in different parts of downtown in the middle of the rush hour. Mayor Burns responded with the swearing in of 496 firefighters as special police officers that joined the 508 member force in arresting many of the demonstrators. Without the authority of Rutledge Pearson and the local NAACP branch, some members of the Youth Council assembled in Hemming Park on March 23, 1964, but were forced by the police to disperse with most re-grouping at the new Stanton High School. Again, sporadic outbreaks of violence and vandalism occurred during the evening resulting in the arrest of 200 demonstrators. One particularly violent incident was the murder of Mrs. Johnnie Mae Chappell, a black mother of ten, shot while walking along Kings Road looking for her wallet.³⁸

(C) *It is identified with a person or persons who significantly contributed to the development of the City, state or nation.*

Hemming Park and the associated street grid still being utilized today is a direct contribution of the productive life of Isaiah David Hart, generally accepted as the Founder of Jacksonville. Over the years, Hart's contribution to Jacksonville had become less known and was not widely recognized publically until the opening of the Isaiah Hart Bridge in 1967. Except for his relocated grave at Evergreen Cemetery and the city's original plat, no tangible reminders exist that reflect his life and contributions to Jacksonville. The continued presence of Hemming Park over the last 150 years as a public space is attributed to the vision of Isaiah Hart.

Isaiah Hart's father, William Hart, a saddler by trade, moved from his native Pennsylvania to New Jersey, then south to Loudoun County, Virginia and eventually settled in Burke County, Georgia. William Hart moved his family to East Florida in 1801 attracted by land grants being made by the Spanish governor. After settling on a 640 acre land grant near the Moncrief Creek and the Trout River, William and his sons Isaiah and Dan, served in the Spanish militia, but joined the Patriot War of 1812, an ill-fated attempt to wrestle control of East Florida from the Spanish. With the

37 Crooks, p. 22

Hurst, 132, 133, & 156.

38 Crooks, pp. 27, 28 & 29.

destruction of their home at the mouth of the Moncrief Creek by the Spanish militia, William and his family settled along the St. Marys River.³⁹

With the Spanish having little control over vast and unpopulated East Florida, many settlers including a young Isaiah Hart organized gangs to raid Florida plantations for slaves and cattle. However, after marrying Nancy Nelson, Hart settled down at the King's Ferry where the old King's Road crossed the St. Marys River. When Florida became under American control, Hart noticed that traffic on the King's Road had significantly increased as people traveled to seek opportunities in the Florida Territory. Hart began to realize the commercial potential of the undeveloped but busy Cowford where a ferry transported people across the St. Johns River. On May 18, 1821, Hart purchased eighteen acres along the north bank of the river from Lewis Z. Hogans, who owned much of the surrounding land that was part of the old Taylor grant. The land was exchanged for \$72 worth of cattle. Near the present south side of East Forsyth Street near North Market Street, Hart constructed a combination store, tavern, and residence, as well as constructed a dock on the river called Hart's Landing. His store and tavern, which provided meals and nightly accommodations, was only one of two businesses at the Cowford that included John Brady's ferry and the store operated by William G. Dawson and Stephen Buckle.⁴⁰

Seeing more potential opportunities with the creation of Duval County in 1822, Hart was able to convince his neighbors, John Brady and Lewis Z. Hogans, to join him in having a town platted. At the suggestion of John Warren, the town was named Jacksonville in honor of popular military leader and provisional governor, Andrew Jackson. The original plat was extended to include all of Hart's property and was the foundation of Hart's Map of Jacksonville (1859), that extended west into what became the east part of LaVilla.⁴¹ As part of the plat, Hart set aside a "blackjack ridge" for use as a public square (block 39). Envisioning this block as a market place and general meeting area, Hart platted smaller half lots facing the park for new shops and businesses.⁴²

Hart continued to expand his real estate holdings, as well as owned a timbering and farming operation. By the early 1830s, Hart had purchased a 2,000 acre parcel located ten miles west of town near present day, Marietta where he established a plantation at Cracker Swamp called Paradise. As his income grew, Hart went on to make investments in banks and railroads, in addition to expanding his number of slaves. In 1824, Hart was appointed East Florida's Deputy U.S. Marshal, and served

39 Canter Brown, Jr. *Ossian Bingley Hart, Florida's Loyalist Reconstruction Governor*. (Baton Rouge, Louisiana: Louisiana State University Press, 1997), pp. 6, 7, 8, 10 & 12

40 Ibid, pp. 14 – 19.

James C. Craig, "Isaiah David Hart, City Founder", *Papers – The Jacksonville Historical Society*, Volume III, 1954, p. 1 & 2.

41 Hart's Map of Jacksonville was the first known plat of any part of LaVilla.

42 Davis, pp. 53 – 58, 115, 332 - 333.

as the Clerk of the County Courts in 1826. Appointed postmaster for a period, Hart went on to pass the Florida Bar. Although a slave holder, Hart was a strong supporter of the Union and as a result was one of the founders of the Florida Whig Party which was opposed to secession, a position he took while serving in the Territorial Senate.

At the time of his death in 1861, Isaiah Hart was one of the wealthiest men in Florida with his extensive real estate and slaves holdings supplemented by his investments in the Florida, Atlantic & Gulf central Railroad, the Jacksonville Natural Gas Company, the Bank of St. Johns County, and a steamship line. One of the executors of his estate was his son Ossian B. Hart who was active in the Republican Party and elected in 1873 as the state's tenth governor and the first Florida born native to hold that position. Isaiah D. Hart was interred in the large family vault located on the block between West Union Street and Orange Street. The tall pyramidal shaft of the brick vault reached nearly four stories in height. After being severely vandalized in 1896 and significantly damaged by the 1901 fire, nine members of the Hart family, including Isaiah and his wife Nancy, were relocated to Evergreen Cemetery and the vault demolished.

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- D) *It is identified as the work of a master builder, designer, or architect whose individual work has influenced the development of the City, state or nation.*

It is the determination of the Planning and Development Department that the proposed landmark Site, Hemming Park, does not meet this criteria.

- (E) *Its value as a building is recognized for the quality of its architecture, and it retains sufficient elements showing its architectural significance.*

It is the determination of the Planning and Development Department that the proposed landmark Site, Hemming Park, does not meet this criteria.

- (F) *It has distinguishing characteristics of an architectural style valuable for the study of a period, method of construction, or use of indigenous materials.*

The Confederate Monument reflects a period during the late 19th and early 20th centuries when memorials were being erected in towns and cities in both the North and South to honor Civil War veterans. By this time, the number of living veterans was declining and first-hand memories of the war were being erased. These monuments were being erected earlier in the North because of the South's war-ravaged economy and Republican political control during Reconstruction. The movement to erect markers and monuments in the South usually started with the initiative of women's organizations such as the United Daughters of the Confederacy and the Ladies Memorial Associations. In more recent years, discussion has been generated about whether these Civil War memorials in the South had intentional or

unintentional political meaning at the time beyond memory and sacrifice. In the South, most of these memorials were erected after states were considered “redeemed” by white democrats from political control by Republicans. This political redemption was closely followed by Jim Crow laws to disenfranchise and segregate blacks. It has also been suggested that erection of these monuments in both the North and the South represented a symbolic unification of the two regions as attention was being directed on developing economic partnerships and less on civil rights for blacks. However, many of the Confederate memorials, such as in Jacksonville, were erected years after the state was back under Democratic control. Similar Civil War monuments in Jacksonville during this period include the Monument to Women of the Confederacy completed in 1915 under the sponsorship of the Florida Division-United Confederate veterans and a statue in the Evergreen Cemetery privately placed to honor members of the Grand Army of the Republic (GAR).

The most common type of monument used was the “silent sentinel” as found in Hemming Park. It is usually a single soldier at “parade rest” with his hands holding the end of the musket barrel. The number of “silent sentinel” erected is estimated to be over 2,500 spread out over thirty states with more than a thousand found in the South. The “silent sentinel” monuments were all made in the North, particularly in Connecticut, Massachusetts, and Ohio, using Italian marble or New England granite. The monument in Hemming Park was made and erected by a Chicago company owned by George H. Mitchell. Born in 1848, George Mitchell followed in his father’s footsteps as a stone cutter working in his native state of Massachusetts. By 1887, Mitchell had relocated his business to Chicago where he developed a reputation for making large monuments and mausoleums. He died on February 28, 1905 in Hinsdale, DuPage, Illinois.⁴³

The “Silent Sentinel” did not represent any particular person although in some locations people found the soldier to bear a resemblance to a local resident. For example in Jacksonville, the soldier was supposedly modeled after a local resident and Confederate veteran, Leonard Dozier. Later moving to Ocala where Dozier served for a time as postmaster, the *Ocala Evening Star* (June 16, 1898) stated, “*The star is pleased to say that the figure of the soldier that adorns the apex of the Hemming monument is intended to represent in marble what Len Dozier typified as an ideal soldier. The honor is great, but the subject is worthy of the great distinction*”. However his name was not on the dedication program or mentioned as the model for the statue during the two-day celebration. The bronze soldier does have the letters J.L.F., Jacksonville Light Infantry, in the cap which was probably done at

⁴³ *Granite, Marble & Bronze*, Volume XVIII, April, 1905.

Ancestry.com – George H. Mitchell

Chris Carola, *Civil War “Silent Sentinels” Still on Guard in the North, South*. April 18, 2015

www.yahoo.com/news/civil-war-silent-sentinels-still-guard-north-south.

www.al.com/opinion/index-ssf/2016/05/confederate-monuments-are-abou.html

the request of Charles Hemming.⁴⁴

(G) *Its suitability for preservation or restoration.*

As described below, Hemming Park has had several physical manifestations over the last 150 years as the city grew and changed. During most of its life until the early 1980s, the park has been characterized with straight and serpentine walks of varying widths that converged in the center connecting it with the four corners of the parcel which were later crossed with straight walks running north – south and east - west. In the center of the park was originally a bandstand that was replaced by a fountain that in turn was relocated to accommodate the Confederate Monument. In between the various walks were predominately grass, shrubs, and trees. Other enmities added and removed over the years included comfort stations, bandstands, and visitors center. The only consistencies during the historic period are the size and use of the parcel as a public space, as well as the Confederate Monument as the park's focal point. Therefore, its suitability for preservation or restoration would relate only to those two factors.

The first improvements to the Hemming Park were made in the 1870s in order to enhance its appeal to visitors at the new St. James Hotel. Private donations were used to fence the park and construct a centrally placed wooden bandstand covered by a thatched roof. Unfortunately, these improvements were not maintained and had significantly deteriorated by the early 1880s. After briefly considering selling the park to the Federal government for a new post office, the city appropriated \$700 to sink a well and to construct a fountain in the center of the park to replace the severely deteriorated octagonally shaped bandstand. Other improvements made at the same time included new wider walkways, addition of benches, and improved landscaping.

In order to accommodate the new Confederate monument in the center of the park, the fountain was relocated towards the northwest end of the park. The Confederate Monument survived the 1901 fire and remains in its original location as the most prominent feature in the park. In 1909, Hemming Park was enhanced with a new lighted fountain followed by a new concrete bandstand and comfort station completed in 1920. Replacing the temporary thatched roof structure built shortly after the fire, the new bandstand had a domed roof topped with an elevated vent, as well as a series of raised decorative rings around the base of the dome and a dentil course along the fascia. The dome was supported by concrete columns with Corinthian capitals. Located to the west of the Confederate monument, the bandstand was elevated to accommodate restrooms on the lower level.⁴⁵ To the west of the monument near

44 *Florida Times Union/Journal*, May 30, 1982, B-1

Florida Times union, May 14, 1982, B-1

45 *Florida Times Union*, December 20, 1916.

North Hogan Street, a one-story building housing the Jacksonville Tourist and Convention Bureau Office was completed in 1937, but was replaced with a larger facility in 1961. In 1952, new below ground segregated comfort stations were constructed along North Laura Street. Over the years, the walkways in the park continued to be enlarged and surfaced with concrete pavers. The walkways were lined with park benches. For many years, Hemming Park also served as a major transit station for city buses. In 1965, the park was re-landscaped and the bandstand replaced with a simple metal dome roof supported by unadorned metal poles with metal balustrades. With the first phase of converting Hemming Park to a plaza in 1977, the 1965 bandstand was removed.⁴⁶

The most significant physical modification to Hemming Park was initiated in the late 1970s in a phased project to convert it to a paved plaza. To address growing concerns about the run-down appearance and safety of Hemming Park, the 1971 Downtown Master Plan envisioned it being transformed into a pedestrian plaza with a transit terminal for buses. The plan also included the idea of creating an enclosed raised galleria connecting the various department stores around the park. A final design for converting Hemming Park into an urban plaza was completed in 1978 by KBJ Architects. Starting in January of 1978, the first phase included removing shrubbery, benches, trees, sidewalk pavers, bandstand, comfort stations, and the King's Road marker. Once the site was cleared, the entire park was paved with brick, fountain constructed around the Confederate Monument, and the addition of concrete planters, benches, and extensive landscaping. This phase was dedicated on December 2, 1978 and included renaming the park as Hemming Plaza.

After being delayed for approximately four months due to contractor bids being much higher than engineered cost, the final stage of construction was initiated in September of 1984. To create the urban plaza, the curbs were removed in order to make the park level with the adjacent streets and stores. Separation of pedestrians and vehicular traffic was achieved with the use of movable barriers. The construction required West Duval Street, West Monroe Street, North Laura Street and North Hogan Street to be closed for fifteen months which significantly disrupted access to the surrounding stores. The new Hemming Plaza officially re-opened on July 26, 1986.⁴⁷

Report of the City Commission, 1917 – 1920.

Florida Times Union, December 31, 1920, p. 64.

46 Zoll, pp.7, 8, & 9

Memorandum to Richard Campbell, Research Assistant, City Council Office, from Joel McEachin, Historic Preservation Planner, March 25, 1998. Vertical files of the Jacksonville Planning and Development Department. The metal dome of the 1965 bandstand was sold in 1978 to Council Member Jim Wells who intended to relocate it to St. Johns Park (Metropolitan Park?) or to a park in his north side district. Apparently, the bandstand dome was never re-used and in the 1980s was being stored near Evergreen Cemetery (*Jacksonville Journal, January 19, 1978*).
47 Ennis Davis, pp. 105, 107, 109, 113, 114, 118, & 120.

Zoll.

The Jacksonville Planning and Development Department recommends the Jacksonville Historic Preservation Commission approve the designation of Hemming Park **LS-16-01** as a City of Jacksonville Landmark Site. This action is based on the park meeting four standards, A, B, C, & G and the Confederate Monument meeting standard F.