Public Abstract

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During the height of the memorialization movement in the United States, varying groups of women, northern, southern, white and black, used the memory of the Civil War to achieve their social, economic and political goals. Southern sympathizing white women and African American women in Missouri took part in this process. Historians have paid close attention to the memorialization movement in the United States, but few have focused on the events and experiences that led to the participation of these women in this contest over memory. This dissertation explores the memorial work of Missouri women from its roots in the Civil War through the height of the memorial movement in the late nineteenth century. The damage and loss brought on by the Civil War and the consequent process of rebuilding their lives culminated in the memorialization efforts of black and white women although through differing methods for their work. Southern sympathizing white women worked through organizations such as the United Daughters of the Confederacy and African American women filed claims to the Federal Government for their men's Civil War pension. Divided by slavery in the antebellum period and by the post war persistence of racial hierarchies, this close examination of the memorial work of forty Missouri women, twenty southern sympathizing women and twenty African American women, explores the ways in which their gendered experiences as mothers, wives and daughters arguably united them.