HISTORICAL MONUMENTS AS MATERIAL CULTURE
Sept. 17, 2008

Culture: language, values, beliefs, rules, behaviors, and artifacts that characterize a society (p. 32)
Material culture: artifacts of a society, which represent adaptations to the social and physical environment (p. 93)
Includes clothing, buildings, inventions, food, artwork, writings, music, etc.
Material culture both reflects and shapes nonmaterial culture (e.g., norms, values, ideology)
James Loewen’s Lies Across America (1999): a study of monuments as material culture
Loewen distinguishes between “past” (things that happened) and “history” (what we say about them)

MATERIAL CULTURE

REMEMBERING NATHAN BEDFORD FORREST

Nathan Bedford Forrest was a confederate cavalry leader
Forrest has more statues in Tennessee than any other state has honoring a single person
Historic sites are always the tales of two eras
Era of person or event honored
Era when monument was erected
Forrest monuments erected between Reconstruction and Civil Rights movement
Forrest is symbol of white supremacy
First national leader of KKK
Slave trader before war, hired black convict labor after war
Led massacres of black soldiers during war
FAITHFUL SLAVES OF FORT MILL, S.C.

- Monuments throughout the South honor slaves who were loyal to the Confederacy.
- In fact, most slaves stopped working, fled, joined the Union Army and/or engaged in espionage.
- No monuments in South honor local blacks in Union Army.
- Intent of monuments is to present slavery as a benign institution that had support of slaves.

INDIAN STATUE IN MUSCATINE, IOWA

- Although presented in 1926 by “Muscuitine Tribe” and dedicated to “Mascoutin Indians,” no such tribe existed in Muscatine then.
- Actually built by “Improved Order of Red Men,” a white fraternal organization.
- White-built monuments to Indians tend to justify conquering Indians by:
  - Honoring Indians who helped whites.
  - Honoring Indian tribes who are no longer there.
  - Honoring Indians as “vanishing race” (as by Red Men).