

GEORGIA

BATTLEFIELDS

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GBA trustee spurs Ezra Church marker installation

How much time should pass between the production and installation of a historical marker? Does 40 years sound about right? Many of you are familiar with the Georgia Historical Commission markers, most of which were emplaced in the mid to late 1950s in preparation for the Civil War Centennial. Wilbur Kurtz wrote the text for the Civil War-related markers between Chattanooga and Atlanta, while Colonel Ned Julian, director of the Atlanta Historical Society, wrote the texts for the markers between Atlanta and Savannah (November 2002 newsletter). For the City of Atlanta Parks Department, Julian also wrote texts for a series of plaques that were to be emplaced on the battlefields of Peachtree Creek, Atlanta, and Ezra Church. The Peachtree Creek tablets were installed in the mid 1960s. The Atlanta tablets were never produced, and the Ezra Church tablets were manufactured but never installed.

In June 2001, Billy Townsend, then chief of the historical marker program for the Department of Natural Resources (DNR, which assumed responsibility for the marker program from the Georgia Historical Commission in 1973), discovered the Ezra Church plaques in the DNR marker maintenance shop at Panola Mountain State Park. Frustrated with the lack of funds to get the markers installed (February 2004 newsletter), Townsend contacted Charlie Geiger, then president of GBA, who had a record of getting things done. For over three years, Geiger worked with Sushma Dersch, technical services manager for the Atlanta Department of Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Affairs; and the plaques were installed in late March. Seven plaques relating to the 28 July 1864 Battle of Ezra Church are now in place at the southeast corner of Mozley Park on the site of the church for which the battle is named.

While we're glad the markers are finally in place, the long wait between manufacture and installation reduced the accuracy of Julian's texts and the map, designed by Beverly M. DuBose, Jr.: Some of the street names have changed in the past 40 years.

Photos by Linda Geiger



The group of seven plaques at Ezra Church.



The map prepared by Beverly M. Du Bose, Jr.

Civil War Commission receives state funds: Markers don't

The fiscal year 2006 budget passed on 31 March by the General Assembly included \$50,000 for the Georgia Civil War Commission, which had not been funded for fiscal year 2005 (June 2004 newsletter). The commission, chartered by the legislature in 1993, will be eligible to spend state money beginning 1 July.

We're disappointed to report that historical marker maintenance (February newsletter) did not appear in the FY2006 budget. Please tell the governor and your state senator and representative that historical markers are a cheap and effective way to encourage the heritage tourism that many people in the state executive branch and legislature say they support.

War in Georgia: 140 years ago – May 1865

Confederate President Davis, on the run through Virginia and the Carolinas for a month, enters Georgia on 3 May and stops first at Washington, where the government is disbanded. After being paid the treasury's remaining silver coins, Davis's mounted escort leaves, though a picked group of Kentucky cavalymen volunteer to remain with the president for the sole purpose of helping him flee the country. Except for Postmaster General Reagan, the cabinet members also depart, allowing the small group to move more quickly. On 7 May near Dublin, Davis catches up to his wife and children, who left Richmond well before him. General James Wilson's Federal cavalry, which have been operating in central Georgia since mid-April, pursue tips and rumors in search of the Confederate president. On 10 May, two Federal detachments surround Davis's camp near Irwinville, at first firing on each other in the dark, damp, early morning. Davis and the bulk of his party are captured, though some manage to get away.

Davis and his family are brought to Macon by wagon, then taken by rail to Atlanta and Augusta, where they are grouped with other captured Confederate officials, including Vice President Alexander Stephens, who had waited at his home in Crawfordville for the Federals to arrive. From Augusta, the group is transported by boat to Savannah, where they are transferred to an ocean steamer and not told of their destination until they land at Fort Monroe, Virginia. Against their wishes, Mrs. Davis and the children are put on a boat back to Savannah.

Other Confederate officers, including cavalry General Wheeler, are captured in Georgia and imprisoned at Fort Pulaski or at forts in the North. Some Confederate officials avoid capture and are eventually left in peace, while others (such as Secretary of War Breckinridge and Secretary of State Benjamin) make incredible escapes across Georgia and ultimately out of the country.

On 12 May at Kingston, General William Wofford formally surrenders 3,000-4,000 Georgia troops not paroled under other agreements. This is the last surrender east of the Mississippi.

On 16 May, Federal troops arrest Andersonville commandant Major Henry Wirz.

On 24 May, Federals escorting money from private banks in Richmond are attacked by former Confederate troopers near what is now Chennault. Former General Porter Alexander, paroled to his home near Augusta, recovers \$110,000 from the looters and returns it to the Richmond banks; but at least \$250,000 is missing. Rumors of buried treasure in the area persist to this day.

The fighting in Georgia is over, though the state will take years to recover politically and a century to recover economically. The impact of the Civil War persists in Georgia to this day. GBA is trying to save the sites that help us understand this defining event in American history.

Civil War Interpretation Symposium rescheduled for 18 June

Kennesaw Mountain National Battlefield Park (KMNBFP) and Kennesaw State University (KSU) scheduled a "New Interpretations of the Civil War" symposium for 28-29 January, but weather forced cancellation of the 29 January session. That program has been rescheduled for 9 a.m. on Saturday, 18 June, at the University Rooms in the Carmichael Student Center at KSU.

-- Dr. John Inscoe on Unionists in the South.

-- Dr. Anne Bailey on Significance of the Western Theater in Civil War Historiography.

-- Dr. Keith Bohannon on Civilians on the Kennesaw Mountain Battlefield in 1864.

-- Dr. David Evans on Interpreting the Kennesaw Mountain Battlefield.

A discussion panel will occur over lunch, with adjournment at 1 p.m. Attendance at the lectures is free, but the lunch is \$12.50. To register or for more information, call 770 423 6254 or see www.kennesaw.edu/research/crhc. For directions: www.kennesaw.edu/about/directions.shtml.

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