

GEORGIA

BATTLEFIELDS

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Sesquicentennial and Preservation: Status and Prospects

The Georgia Civil War Sesquicentennial steering committee met on 10 December. Much of the meeting was consumed by two presentations: one regarding a survey of state historical markers, and the other on the status of Georgia Civil War Heritage Trails.

Under a grant from the Department of Economic Development (DEcD), the Georgia Historical Society hired Will Hanley to inventory the approximately 950 Civil War-related state historical markers, many of which were emplaced by the Georgia Historical Commission (abolished 1973) in the 1950s in preparation for the Civil War Centennial. Starting his survey on 1 August in Savannah and working his way northwestward, Hanley had visited over 800 of the markers when he spoke to the steering committee. For each marker, Hanley logs the condition and records Global Positioning System coordinates. www.georgiahistory.com/containers/373

Though the guidebook to Georgia historical markers has not been reprinted since 1983, much of the marker information has remained available, especially through the web site maintained by Ed Jackson with support from "marker nuts" such as Dave Seibert and the late GBA trustee Charlie Geiger: <http://georgiainfo.galileo.usg.edu/gahistmarkers/gamarkerscontents.htm>. The advantage to Hanley's survey is that he will compile the information into a searchable data base. The database is key to the stated goals of the project, which are to provide an interactive trove of information, promote tourism, and facilitate education. The steering committee also hopes the survey will help prioritize where to spend any funds for marker repair and replacement.

The second presentation was an update on Georgia Civil War Heritage Trails (www.gcwht.org) by Steve Longcrier, executive director of the trails effort. The GBA newsletter has reported on the trails program since it first won Transportation Enhancement (TE) funding in early 2001. While TE grants are typically substantial, gaining access to the money involves compliance with Federal Highway Administration and state Department of Transportation procedures. These and other bureaucratic requirements have slowed installation of interpretive markers, but Longcrier believes the pace will pick up now that many of the administrative hurdles have been cleared.

The Georgia Civil War Heritage Trails program has five components:

- Interpretive markers (15 installed thus far of an eventual 200 or so)
- Directional signs
- Parking pull-offs (usually the most difficult and costly aspect)
- Marketing (brochures, web site, media coverage)
- Maintenance



Directional sign & interpretive marker

Regarding the brochures, two (of the envisioned six) have already been prepared. The Atlanta Campaign brochure identifies 53 sites from Trenton (in Georgia's northwest corner) to Jonesboro. The overall map shows a trail that winds to accommodate the range of actions resulting from 180,000 troops on the move. Inset maps are provided for Dalton and Atlanta. The March to the Sea brochure identifies 74 sites, starting in suburban Atlanta and ending on the Georgia coast. Basic routes of the left and right wings of Sherman's force are shown on an overall map, and inset maps provide detail for towns along the way. Both brochures indicate locations of interpretive markers and other sites of interest. In each, five articles augment the maps and site descriptions, and contact information is listed for state parks, visitors' bureaus, and chambers of commerce, where the brochure should be available. You can also get copies by writing to GCWHT at P.O. Box 1864, Evans GA 30809-1864.

After the presentations, the steering committee discussed the poor prospects for state funding for the Sesquicentennial. In summary, the governor gives budget preparation guidance to all state agencies in the Fall of each year. After the departments respond, the governor submits a proposed budget for the coming State Fiscal Year (SFY) to the General Assembly in January. The legislators then modify the budget and pass a spending bill, typically in the last days of the session (late March or early April). The governor then signs or vetoes the bill. Additionally, the governor and legislature usually make adjustments to spending for the current SFY, typically within the first days or weeks of each General Assembly.

For SFY 2009 (1 July 2008 – 30 June 2009), Governor Perdue has directed each department and agency to submit proposals for reducing spending by 6, 8, and 10 percent, leaving administrators in the especially uncomfortable position of not knowing how much money they have left to spend before next July. Governor Perdue has directed administrators to propose SFY 2010 budgets reflecting similar reductions.

Other states are suffering similar budget constraints due to a drop in state tax revenues. This is constraining not only Sesquicentennial planning, but also preservation-related expenditures, such as operations and maintenance funds for historic sites and state parks. As an example, Illinois is closing a Lincoln-associated site, even though 2009 is the bicentennial of Lincoln's birth. The Georgia Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Board had already approved a plan to close seven historic sites, though it had not specified which ones (September 2008 newsletter). Reportedly, legislators have reallocated funds to keep at least two of the sites open, though no one knows if the General Assembly will incorporate this change into the SFY 2009 mid-year adjustment or the SFY 2010 budget.

After closing the historical marker maintenance shop in October 2003 and providing no funding for a couple of years, the state government has provided \$50,000 for marker maintenance for the past few years. While Sesquicentennial steering committee discussions in 2007 encouraged increased maintenance funding so that more markers would be available by the Sesquicentennial, a realistic appraisal suggests even the \$50,000 is liable to be cut.

Cobb County buys site of Confederate training camp

Using funds from the recently approved parks bond (December 2008 newsletter), Cobb County has agreed to buy a property in the town of Kennesaw, known during the war as Big Shanty. The land was part of Confederate training Camp McDonald. Guards at the camp witnessed Federal raiders steal a train on 12 April 1862, precipitating the Great Locomotive Chase.

The property was initially considered for purchase with funds from the previous parks bond, but the city of Kennesaw had hoped to buy the land as part of its downtown redevelopment. With the economy affecting development, the county, property owner, and city reached a compromise: Cobb County is buying 3.92 acres for \$834,000; property owner W.E. Hamby is donating 3.65 acres to the county; and the city of Kennesaw is buying 2.39 acres.

Atlanta History Center cancels Grant and Lee exhibition

Last month, we reported on an exhibition titled "Grant and Lee in War and Peace" that was scheduled come to the Atlanta History Center in November 2009. The History Center made the difficult decision to cancel the exhibition because of the costs.

2009 GBA tour with Ed Bearss

For our 2009 tour led by Ed Bearss, we'll cover the Federal cavalry actions of the Atlanta Campaign as well as the climactic Battle of Jonesboro. We'll start with a Thursday evening reception, followed by all day bus tours on Friday and Saturday, and a half day tour on Sunday.

Dates: 12-15 March 2009

Hotel: Comfort Suites, 1444 Southlake Plaza Dr, Morrow GA 30260.

Call 678 674 1300 and ask for the Georgia Battlefields Association rate of \$89 (~\$100 with tax).

Price: \$395.

Note: You must be a GBA member to register for the tour, and your participation is not confirmed until your check (payable to GBA) arrives at 7 Camden Rd NE, Atlanta GA 30309.

Georgia Battlefields Association
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www.georgiabattlefields.org

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