

GEORGIA

BATTLEFIELDS

Published by Georgia Battlefields Association, Inc., a non-profit organization dedicated to preservation of Georgia's Civil War history and sites. Contact newsletter editor by e-mail: info@georgiabattlefields.org

A different sort of preservation issue

As our name indicates, Georgia Battlefields Association's efforts go towards saving battle fields. Historic buildings are also worth saving, but we leave that task to the Georgia Trust for Historic Preservation www.georgiatruster.org and like-minded organizations. The state of Georgia is facing a preservation challenge that falls in a somewhat different category. The Zero Milepost signifies the very beginnings of Atlanta and the development of railroads in Georgia.

Since the U.S. Military Academy was the principal source of civil engineers in the U.S. for much of the 19th Century, army engineers were permitted and sometimes detailed to perform tasks that had only peripheral relevance to the military but still enhanced the national infrastructure. Thus, Major Stephen Long, already renowned for his explorations of the west and his work on routes for other railroads, was hired in 1837 to survey a rail route that would connect Chattanooga to the southeast side of the Chattahoochee River. Long established the point—or zero mile—from which rail distances would be measured. In 1850, the zero milepost was placed to commemorate the location, now in a town called Atlanta.

For over 70 years, the zero milepost sat in the open, subjected to weathering and damage. With the advent of the Atlanta viaduct system in the 1920s, a bridge was built above the zero milepost; and until the 1980s, you could see the post beneath Central Avenue, just north of the railroad. A historical marker was added in 1958. In the 1980s, the post was enclosed in a building that served many purposes, and the marker was moved to the basement of a nearby parking garage. The building was vacated a few years ago, and the Georgia Building Authority controls access to the site. A National Park Service web site shows the post in the building, along with a backdrop 1905 photo of Atlanta. www.nps.gov/nr/travel/atlanta/wes.htm. Those who have taken GBA's Civil War Atlanta downtown walking tour have stood directly above the milepost while viewing the November 1864 location of the Atlanta Car Shed.



Zero Mile Post and adjacent marker in late 1950s. *Atlanta Journal Constitution* archives.



Photo: Ed Jackson

Relocated historical marker after construction of a building around the post in the 1980s. Ed Jackson photo from the University System of Georgia web site.

To facilitate parking access under the new Central Avenue bridge (currently under construction), the Georgia Building Authority intends to demolish the building that houses the post and is convening meetings for all relevant parties, including the State Historic Preservation Office and the Federal Highway Administration.

Atlanta Preservation Center www.preservatlanta.com is advocating for preservation of the milepost at its current location and has the post and surrounding area on its endangered list, while the Atlanta History Center has suggested that the post might be better preserved in a museum and replaced by a replica at the site, as is often done to prevent further damage to monuments or statues exposed to the elements.

We're confident the post will be preserved, but where it will be preserved is uncertain. Its significance derives from its location, which adds to the complexity of the issue.

American Battlefield Trust conference

The American Battlefield Trust www.battlefields.org conference was held in Newport News, Virginia, from 30 May to 3 June 2018. Tours of battlefields from both the Civil and Revolutionary Wars (Yorktown being relevant to both) were featured. In presentations, President Jim Lighthizer highlighted some accomplishments of the Trust and its predecessor organizations. Since establishment of Chickamauga and Chattanooga National Military Park in 1895, the U.S. government has saved about 80,000 acres of battlefield land. Since 1989, the Trust has saved 50,000 acres. One half of the \$325,000,000 used to acquire those sites has come directly from Trust members, with the rest coming from matching grants and Federal funds. Relations with Congress are critical to continued Federal funding of the American Battlefield Protection Program www.nps.gov/abpp/index.htm, and the Trust has asked that the annual appropriation be increased from \$10 million to \$20 million, with 10% of that amount designated for restoration and interpretation rather than acquisition. Considering just the 48 most significant Civil War battlefields, the Trust estimates over 36,000 acres remain to be saved at a cost of \$520,000,000. Telling the stories of those sites is crucial, so the Trust will continue to emphasize its education mission, conducting teacher institutes and developing lesson plans.

Georgia Battlefields Association was well-represented at the conference, as illustrated by the photo. From left: Dan Hanks, Bill Porter, Mary Porter, Charlie Crawford, Cheryl Trahan, Joe Trahan, Vince Dooley. Not shown: John Killey and Greg Grant. Coach Dooley is also an American Battlefield Trust board member.



Every little bit helps

Georgia Battlefields Association recently received its quarterly distribution from the Kroger Community Rewards Program, through which people with Kroger Plus cards have designated GBA as recipient. Thanks to those of you who have done so. For others, with your Kroger Plus card handy, search for Georgia Battlefields Association at www.krogercommunityrewards.com/.

Annual Collector's Showcase at Kennesaw State 21 July

Sponsored by the Georgia Civil War Commission www.georgiacivilwar.org, the showcase will be 9 a.m. to noon at the KSU Center, 3333 Busbee Drive in Kennesaw. The collectors enjoy showing and explaining their extensive and rare holdings. A \$5 donation is collected at the door. <http://cwc.hss.kennesaw.edu/about/news-events/e-cwc-2018-07-21-131416/>

150 years ago this month

On 4 July 1868, the newly elected Georgia legislators—186 white and 36 black members—convened the first General Assembly under the April 1868 Constitution. On the same day, President Andrew Johnson issued a pardon for all people involved in Confederate service or government except those under indictment for treason or a felony. On 9 July, the 14th amendment was ratified, and the U.S. Congress approved the return of representation from North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Florida, Alabama, Arkansas, and Louisiana. On 30 July, military authority in Georgia was lifted and the Third Military District disbanded.

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