

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

Old Clinton rezoning again defeated: "War Days" Festival is 4-5 May

On 16 April, the Jones County Board of Commissioners again denied a rezoning application that would have allowed commercial development of a property in the Old Clinton Historic District. The applicants had asked for a rehearing, which is their right. Georgia Battlefields Association had again e-mailed the commissioners urging a denial.

Reminder: The annual Old Clinton War Days event www.oldclinton.org/war-days-3/ occurs on 4 & 5 May. On both days, gates open at 9 a.m. and battle reenactments (Sunshine Church and Griswoldville) start at 2:05 p.m. The event also features food, crafts, and artifact displays. Proceeds (\$5 for adults, \$3 for children age 6 to 18) are used to preserve the Old Clinton Historic District. The memorial service at 8:05 p.m. Saturday at the Old Clinton Cemetery is free. Old Clinton is 12 miles northeast of Macon, just a block west of US 129.

Battle of Resaca annual reenactment 17-19 May

The Resaca reenactment is always one of the best such events. A portion of the proceeds goes towards preservation. For details, see www.georgiadivision.org/bor_reenactment.html.

American Battlefield Trust annual conference 29 May-2 June

The American Battlefield Trust annual conference will be based this year in Lexington, Kentucky, and will cover both Revolutionary War and Civil War action. Georgia Battlefields Association will again be represented. <https://www.battlefields.org/events/annual-conference>

GBA supports archaeological study of Ruff's Mill

Georgia Battlefields Association wrote a letter to the American Battlefield Protection Program supporting a grant for an archaeological study of the Battle of Ruff's Mill and other actions of early July 1864.

McPherson's death ride tour

On 17 April, in response to a request, GBA led a tour focusing on the last hours of Major General James McPherson's life, which ended in east Atlanta at a site marked by a monument.

The continuing monument issue

Georgia Battlefields Association's mission is to preserve battlefields, and this includes battlefield monuments that honor units or people who participated in a battle and markers that indicate what happened, even at those sites where a battlefield has not been preserved.

Almost from GBA's establishment in 1995, the organization has been asked to comment on or take sides in the controversy about Confederate symbols. We respond by making the case for preservation, so that—whatever peoples' perception or inclination—they can better understand what happened by visiting the site where it happened.

After the August 2017 events relating to the Robert E. Lee statue in Charlottesville, Virginia, media organizations asked GBA to comment, and we responded in the hope of explaining that battlefield monuments and historical markers should be considered separately and should be exempt from alteration, removal or relocation. Below are updates on three Georgia cases on which we have reported.

In October 2017, the City of Atlanta government formed an advisory committee to recommend the disposition of Confederate monuments and street names within the city, and the committee's report was issued shortly after the 2017 mayoral election. In October 2018, the names of Confederate Avenue and Confederate Court were changed, but removal or relocation of monuments is prohibited by a state law passed in 2001. An Atlanta City Council committee charged with implementing the recommendations of the 2017 advisory committee proposed

instead to contextualize four monuments by placing markers explaining that slavery was the cause of the Civil War and the monuments were erected when race inequality was local government policy and the wording on the monuments to some extent reflects that policy. See December 2017, September 2018, November 2018, and January 2019 newsletters.

The Atlanta City Council's plan to contextualize the monuments has been frustrated by the city government's own bureaucracy. At a 17 April city council meeting, the members could not decide on how to fund the new markers. They were also informed that several city departments will have to review any proposal before it is brought to a full council vote.

The 1908 monument behind the old DeKalb County courthouse is again in the news. In the wake of repeated defacing of the monument, usually with paint or blood, the DeKalb County Commission voted to relocate the monument, citing its protection as a reason; but no other entity, public or private, was willing to take it. See June 2018 newsletter.

In January, the DeKalb County Commission voted to install a historical marker near the monument. Sponsored by the Montgomery-based Equal Justice Initiative <https://eji.org/>, the marker will address lynchings and will be unveiled in September.

In March, the DeKalb County Commission voted to install a historical marker that will contextualize the monument. Here is the text approved by the commission.

In 1908, this monument was erected at the DeKalb County Courthouse to glorify the 'lost cause' of the Confederacy and the Confederate soldiers who fought for it. It was privately funded by the Clement A. Evans Camp of Confederate Veterans and the Agnes Lee Chapter of the United Daughters of the Confederacy. Located in a prominent public space, its presence bolstered white supremacy and faulty history, suggesting that the cause for the Civil War rested on southern Honor and States Rights rhetoric—instead of its real catalyst—American slavery. This monument and similar ones also were created to intimidate African Americans and limit their full participation in social and political life of their communities. It fostered a culture of segregation by implying that public spaces and public memory belonged to Whites. Since State law prohibited local governments from removing Confederate statues, DeKalb County contextualized this monument in 2019. DeKalb County officials and citizens believe that public history can be of service when it challenges us to broaden our sense of boundaries and includes community discussions of the victories and shortcomings of our shared histories.

On 26 April, Governor Kemp signed a bill that amends the above-mentioned state law that prohibits the removal or relocation of monuments. The prohibitions have been strengthened, and penalties for vandalizing monuments, even those on private property, have been increased. See the wording of the bill at www.legis.ga.gov/Legislation/en-US/display/20192020/SB/77.

150 years ago this month – May 1869

Senator Henry Wilson of Massachusetts asks President Grant to use the U.S. Army to prevent further political murders in Georgia, “the worst of all states.”

Department of the South Commander Brigadier General Alfred Terry reports to Secretary of War Rawlins that the Klan operates with impunity in rural Georgia and proposes that Congress reinstate military administration because the Georgia legislature violated conditions of the state's readmission to the Union by expelling Negro legislators and seating former Confederates.

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