

HAPPY 100th BIRTHDAY PEACHTREE BATTLE AVENUE

The picturesque avenue for which the Peachtree Battle Alliance is named celebrates the one hundred year anniversary of its deeding to Fulton County on September 27, the recording date of the deeds. Today's boulevard is very different in appearance from the fifty-foot wide rural dirt road first built one hundred years ago.

In 1907, Civil Engineer C.S. Robert drew a plat for the subdivision of the W.G. Collier Estate featuring a road called Franklin Avenue running from Peachtree Road west to the border of the Collier property at the land lot line. On July 24, 1909, several adjacent property owners sent a petition to the Honorable Body of County Commissioners of Fulton County proposing extension of that road in a westerly direction to Howell Mill Road. "This Avenue if so constructed would practically traverse much of the historic battlefield of Peachtree Creek- and we suggest that if this road is extended as indicated it be named Peachtree Battle Avenue." (Commissioners of Roads and Revenues Minutes; Kenan Research Center, Atlanta History Center). County engineers L.W. and C.S. Robert drew a plat of the proposed new public highway in August 1909. (Plat Book, Fulton County Courthouse) Donating strips of land for highway purposes were Hoke Smith; Peachtree Creek Land Company by Clark Howell, president and R.L. Foreman, Secretary; David Nichols; Wm. M. Nichols and C.A. Nichols; Thomas B. Felder; George W. Collier and John W. Collier, executors, Estate of W. G. Collier. The Collier deed referred to the donation of "Franklin Avenue (now known as Peachtree Battle Avenue)" (Fulton County Deed Book).

In August 1909, the Atlanta Constitution reported "Peachtree Battle Avenue Donated to County" (AC 1909). "The route as outlined by the county surveyor passes through a large part of the historic battlefield of Peachtree creek the engagement having begun almost at the point where the Howell Mill road crosses Peachtree creek, the federal army marching down the creek valley toward Peachtree road, following practically the line of the proposed Peachtree Battle avenue, which is to be the name given to the new public highway on account of its historic association." (AC August 1909) In January 1910, the Atlanta Constitution reported that full right-of-way had been deeded to the County for the continuation of Peachtree Battle Avenue from Peachtree Road to Bolton Road.

In 1910, a real estate office for Peachtree Heights Park was commissioned from NY architects Carrere and Hastings. Completed in 1911, the Lodge was built on an island in Peachtree Battle Avenue at the junction of Peachtree Road. A bold wall designed to compliment the structure gave distinction to the brick and concrete building. Composed of short and tall brick pillars with globe lights joined by low horizontal concrete stucco sections, the wall anchored the building to the site. The unity of the ensemble created an impressive and welcoming entrance to the residence park.

In 1914, under the leadership of Eretus Rivers of the Peachtree Heights Park Company, a proposal was made to expand Peachtree Battle Avenue into a 100-foot parked boulevard from Peachtree Road to Howell Mill Road with battlefield markers to be funded through federal appropriations: "to locate along this strip monuments and markers commemorative of the battlefield of Peachtree Creek, fought fifty years ago as

the opening battle of the historic encounters around Atlanta, this battle having taken place July 20, 1864.” (AC April 1914) Deeds, secured from landowners along the Avenue in 1915, specified that a condition of the donation of land was that “when said road is laid out for public use and graded and put in order, there shall be left a strip twenty five feet wide in the center of the one hundred feet conveyed, to be reserved and used for park purposes. It is a further condition of this conveyance that Fulton county shall permit this road to become a part of the National Road built in connection with a general plan for marking and commemorating the battles which took place in the neighborhood of the lands through which this road will run during the Civil War between the States, known as the Peachtree Creek Battles.” (Deed Book, Fulton County Courthouse) E. Rivers Realty advertisements carried references to the plan: “Battle Avenue, from The Lodge, at Peachtree Road, clear through to the Howell Mill Road, is to be made a 100-foot driveway. Do you get that? A 25-foot park the full length through the center. Paved driveway and cement walks. Federal markers showing positions of troops. Nothing else like it in the South.” (AC May 1914)

In the spring of 1915, Governor Samuel M. Ralston of Indiana, affiliated with the Dixie Highway movement, wrote the Chairman of Public Works of the Board of Fulton County Commissioners endorsing the Peachtree Battle Avenue scheme: “if this avenue be opened up and broadened into a great boulevard, as I understand is planned, I am sure the federal veterans of Indiana will take proper steps to construct and place markers there indicating the position and participation of our troops in that historic battle.” (AC May 1915)

In November 1915, the Atlanta Constitution reported that the Board of County Commissioners had approved “a project embracing one of the territory’s most impressive parkways... The plans for Peachtree Battle avenue present an imposing driveway, traversing on both sides a smooth, curving parkway in which monuments are to be erected...Ten feet of tiled sidewalk will border each side of the avenue...As it now stands, Peachtree Battle avenue is open, 50 feet in width, serviceable for rural travel. The primary work to be done is that of grading and widening.” (AC November 1915)

Newspaper accounts of the time emphasized the potential benefits of the project: “The importance of this movement can be understood when it is known that the little town of Gettysburg is visited every twelve months by 250,000 people from all parts of the world who do not leave less than \$5 each for the purpose of looking over the battlefield of Gettysburg, with its monuments and beautiful driveways.” (AC June 1916) Citizens expressed frustration at delays: “Long ago a hundred-foot boulevard, called Battle avenue, connecting Peachtree road with Howell’s Mill road at the creek, was passed up by the county commission. Then it seems that is was passed by, as it was never yet built!” (AC November 1916) “Atlanta is likely to lose the \$100,000 monument referred to as having been officially promised by Governor Ralston, of Indiana...unless the county commissioners proceed with all possible dispatch to meet the requirements of the governor, viz., work out Peachtree Battle avenue north of Peachtree road...Governor Ralston, about a year ago, asked if any progress had been made in working out this highway. Upon being told that the work had not commenced he expressed the hope that this highway would be worked out before his term of office expired, as his successor

might not feel the same interest in the matter that he felt. His term expires Jan 1 next.” (AC November 1916)

Enthusiasm for the project seemed to fade and newspaper coverage waned. A reference was buried in a March 1917 article announcing the New Peachtree Heights Public School, indicating that the county had undertaken the grading work on the avenue. Median parks were installed only in the Peachtree Heights Park section of the Avenue, ending at the land lot line. A 1924 quit claim deed returned land previously donated to Fulton County for road purposes to Haynes Manor developer Eugene V. Haynes who intended to develop the land for residential purposes. Only a small arc of median park extended beyond Peachtree Heights Park property into Haynes Manor near Dellwood Road. This portion of the park housed a Spanish style stucco real estate office for Haynes Manor with a fountain and elaborate columns flanking the avenue and opened in 1926.

Peachtree Battle Avenue was paved only to Habersham Road until 1925 when it was finished with concrete paving. Local civil engineer Littleton H. Fitzpatrick revised the plat for Peachtree Heights Park in 1925, replacing the massive Parkway Lake running beneath the avenue on the original Carrere & Hastings plan with the median park design, placing crossovers at Nacoochee and Woodward Way. In 1930, the Atlanta Constitution reported that Fulton County Commissioners “officially turned over to [82nd] division members in Atlanta a strip of land on Peachtree Battle avenue 300 feet from Peachtree road, running through Peachtree Heights park to Haynes Manor, to be used for erection of a handsome memorial... The monument itself will probably be in the form of a shaft of granite, and the provisions of the gift are that it shall be ‘in memory of the dead and wounded members of the Eighty-Second Division... Originally the gift to the county of E. Rivers, the strip of land lies in the middle of Peachtree Battle avenue and is about 100 feet in width. It was deeded to the county for park purposes and ‘to memorialize the valor of the American soldiers in any war in which the United States of America has participated’... A large part of the area was developed by Mr. Rivers and the thoroughfare now is considered as one of the most beautiful in the entire south. Eventually it is the plan of those interested in the movement to place markers and monuments on historic ground about the city, to make this thoroughfare a boulevard of moments to soldiers on both sides killed in the Civil War as well as those who lost their lives in all other American wars. The property was deeded originally as a memorial to the soldiers of the War Between the States, but the Peachtree Heights Park company recently consented to its use as a memorial to soldiers of any war....” (AC September 1930)

No evidence exists of a comprehensive landscape plan for the median parks. In September 1932, the Habersham Garden Club voted to “take the plot at Habersham Road and Peachtree Battle Avenue as our project for Civic work.” (Kenan Research Center, Atlanta History Center) In the same month, the Primrose Garden Club “voted to improve the parkway on Peachtree Battle Avenue” (Kenan Research Center, Atlanta History Center) and in December, “Mesdames Bolling Jones Jr., and Edward Cauthorn were appointed... as chairmen for the plot of ground on Peachtree Battle avenue, which will be beautified by members of the Primrose Garden Club.” (AC December 1932). In 1935, the Old Guard of Atlanta dedicated by Atlanta Post Number 1, the War Veterans’ Monument on Peachtree

Battle Avenue as “a tribute to American valor, which they of the blue and they of the gray had as a common heritage from their forefathers of 1776, and to the pervading spirit thereof which, in the days of 1898 and the great world conflict of 1917-18, perfected the reunion of the North and the South.” In 1937, the Neighborhood Garden Club chose for its project the first parkway off Peachtree road on Peachtree Battle Avenue with a goal of providing a “beautiful background for the monument...” (AC September 1938) and a “garden of memories” on “hallowed ground” (Club Scrapbook, May 1941, Kenan Research Center).

Through the years, Peachtree Battle Avenue and its median parks have inspired the imagination and caring attention of neighbors. For one hundred years, the avenue has served as a good road and gateway to a community of historic neighborhoods that endure today.