



Savannah - Chatham County Historic Site & Monument Commission

Arthur A. Mendonsa Hearing Room
July 7, 2022 4:00 PM
MINUTES

July 7, 2022 Historic Savannah Site & Monument Commission

Members Present: Kristopher Monroe, *Chair*
Ashley Rainge, *Vice Chair*
Lisa Watson, *Secretary*
Eileen Baker
Catherine Kostilnik
Sean Mannion

Staff Present: Pamela Everett, Assistant Executive Director
Leah G. Michalak, Director of Historic Preservation
Caitlin Chamberlain, Senior Planner
Bri Morgan, Administrative Assistant
Julie Yawn, Systems Analyst

I. Call to Order and Welcome

[1. Ashley Rainge begin serving as Vice-Chairwoman](#)

II. Approval of Meeting Minutes

[2. Approve the April 7, 2022 Meeting Minutes](#)

[📎 04.07.22 MEETNG MINUTES.pdf](#)

Motion

Approve the April 7, 2022 HSMC Meeting Minutes as presented.

Vote Results (Approved)

Motion: Sean Mannion

Second: Eileen Baker

Kristopher Monroe - Abstain

Sean Mannion - Aye

Lisa D. Watson - Aye

Eileen Baker - Aye

Ashley Rainge - Aye

Catherine D. Kostilnik, PhD - Aye

III. Regular Agenda

[3. Petition of Georgia Historical Society | 22-001027-HM | 1 East Bay Street | Georgia Historical Marker](#)

[☞ Submittal Packet.pdf](#)

[☞ Staff Recommendation-22-001027-HM.pdf](#)

Ms. Leah Michalak presented the applicant's request for a recommendation of approval from the Historic Site and Monument Commission to install a Georgia Historical Society Historical Marker near 1 East Bay Street in the green space between Bay Street and Factors Walk near the Gamble Building.

The proposed marker is to read as follows:

Southern States Phosphate and Fertilizer
The Fertilizer Industry in the South

The fertilizer industry in the South began when Southern cities like Savannah and Charleston started producing fertilizer following the 1867 discovery of phosphate in South Carolina. Initially wary of the new technology, Southern farmers gradually adopted the use of phosphate fertilizer to counteract decades of poor agricultural practices, leading to a boom in American food production and fostering the industry's growth in an economically depressed South. Founded in Augusta, Southern States Phosphate and Fertilizer Company relocated to Savannah in 1902, taking advantage of the port and expanding global trade.

During World War I, the US production of phosphate-based munitions significantly increased, helping Savannah become the second-largest fertilizer production point in the world by 1924. Southern States was purchased by Savannahians A.D. Strobhar and Franklin Reed Dulany in 1934, and is a subsidiary of Dulany Industries, Inc.

Erected by the Georgia Historical Society and Dulany Industries, Inc.

This project was first heard at the April 7, 2022, HSMC Meeting. The Commission continued the petition to the July 7th meeting to allow the petitioner to address the following condition:

1. Amend the language on the Georgia Historical Society Historical Marker.

The proposed amended language is above.

At the meeting, staff recommended that the Historic Site and Monument Commission recommend approval to the Savannah City Council to install a Georgia Historical Society Historical Marker near 1 East Bay Street, with the following conditions to be submitted to staff for final review, before the item can be docketed on a City Council agenda, otherwise because the proposed work meets the Master Plan and Guidelines:

1. Provide Staff with an exact location of the proposed marker.
2. Confirm with the City's Greenscapes Department that the marker will not damage or disturb significant tree roots.
3. Confirm with the appropriate City Departments that the below ground utilities will not require removal or alteration.

The revised application includes a map with the exact marker location and describes that they will coordinate with Greenscapes and other City Departments prior to installation.

The theme standard is met. As per the applicant:

"The "Southern States Phosphate and Fertilizer Company: The Fertilizer Industry in the South" historical marker demonstrates the themes of Industry and Commerce, Science and Engineering, and Local History.

Before the Civil War, the only fertilizer plant south of Baltimore, Maryland, was in Charleston, South Carolina, which closed due to the war. Upon the discovery of phosphate in South Carolina in 1867, the port cities of Charleston and Savannah became major participants in chemical phosphate fertilizer production and brought the industry to the Deep South. In Georgia, the state's soil, specifically red clay, was known for lacking nutrients. Decades of poor agricultural practices, including an overreliance on enslaved labor, led to significantly reduced crop yields for Southern planters in the years after the Civil War. However, those struggles encouraged significant increase in the reliance on chemical fertilizers, ultimately boosting that fledgling industry throughout the economically depressed South.

Southern States Phosphate and Fertilizer Industry was established in 1897 in Augusta and later merged with Augusta Guano in 1901. The company moved to Savannah in 1902 to take advantage of the growing industry and port of Savannah. The company and the industry saw further growth following World War I, as phosphate fertilizer also contains key components used in explosives. Before the war, the United States relied on Germany for chemical fertilizer. As the US could no longer rely on Germany, US production of phosphate-based explosives and fertilizer increased during World War I. By the early 1920s, Southern States emerged as the second-largest fertilizer production point in the world. New Deal-era programs, such as the Tennessee Valley Authority, provided educational demonstrations on the proper use of fertilizer to rural farmers. Through such programs, southern farmers increasingly implemented the use of fertilizer in their agricultural practices, and ultimately contributed to the industry's success. At one point, there were more than fourteen fertilizer plants in Savannah alone.

After nearly 100 years of success in the fertilizer industry, the company, which is today part of the family owned Dulany Industries, ended fertilizer production in 2000 and switched its focus towards the manufacturing of sulfuric acid. Southern States played a key role in the global fertilizer industries and agricultural practices in the United States and is now a leader in the sulfuric acid industry. Dulany Industries, along with its subsidiaries, have contributed to the success and expansion of the ports and Savannah's economic growth through the creation of countless jobs that brought employment to generations of Savannahians. This local company continues to have a significant economic impact on Savannah, Georgia, and the nation as the largest certified manufacturer and supplier of sulfuric acid for industrial use in the Southeast.

Today, Southern States Chemical remains headquartered in Savannah and has additional locations in Wilmington, NC, and Hopewell, VA. Its sister companies include Seapoint Industrial Terminal Complex in Savannah, which provides industrial services to manufacturing corporations, and Seagate Terminals, providing logistical services and warehousing with two locations and 850 acres in Savannah and an additional location in Norfolk, Virginia.

In recognition of the role of corporate citizens like Dulany Industries in shaping the history of Georgia over the past century, the Georgia Historical Society has made a focused effort in recent years to acknowledge those contributions through the Georgia Business History Initiative. With the installation of this proposed historical marker, Dulany Industries joins other local companies and organizations such as Colonial Group, Gulfstream Aerospace Corporation, and Georgia Ports Authority, as well as iconic Georgia companies across the state such as The Coca-Cola Company, Delta Air Lines, and Chick-fil-A, as part of this Initiative. In this program, companies work with GHS to develop a historical marker that tells the story of that company's contribution to the development of our state and nation while maintaining the high standards of historical accuracy in the Georgia Historical Marker

program.”

The site standard is met. There are markers along East Bay Street that are appropriately spaced to avoid overcrowding. However, the provided aerial photos do not indicate the exact spot that the marker will be installed. Provide Staff with an exact location of the proposed marker. Staff recommends that the applicant confirm with the City’s Greenscapes Department that the marker will not damage or disturb significant tree roots. Staff recommends that the applicant provide confirmation from the appropriate City Departments that the below ground utilities will not require removal or alteration. The proposed site is large enough to accommodate the marker. The proposed site is not utilized for special events. The proposed site is the grassy area off East Bay Street – a significant distance from the street. The proposed site is next to a public sidewalk which is accessible to pedestrian and the physically challenged.

The bench is adjacent to an existing sidewalk and is easily accessible. The marker is proposed within a City-owned area with low growing plants which are typically easy to maintain. The marker will enhance an empty portion of the area on East Bay Street. The installation of the object will enhance the design of the overall site.

As per the applicant:

“The historical marker will be located in the green space between Bay Street and Factor’s Walk near the Gamble Building. This location is near the former office of Southern States co-owner, A.D. Strobhar, and across the river from where Southern States and several other fertilizer companies were located. The visibility offered at this location will allow for attention to be drawn to the river as a port of industry and the illustrate the growth of Savannah in global commerce. GHS will work with City of Savannah Park Manager Brent Boyd to finalize the exact location.”

The standard for site in relation to theme for markers and monuments is met.

As per the applicant:

“This location is near the former office of Southern States co-owner, A.D. Strobhar, and across the river from where Southern States and several other fertilizer companies were located. The visibility offered at this location will allow for attention to be drawn to the river as a port of industry and the illustrate the growth of Savannah in global commerce.”

The marker meets all design requirements.

As per the applicant:

The estimated overall cost for a historical marker within the Georgia Historical Marker Program is \$5,000.00. The Georgia Historical Society has secured funds of \$5,000.00 for the total cost of the historical marker. The applicant has accepted and taken on the role of all future maintenance of the marker, relinquishing the requirement of supplying an escrow payment to the City of Savannah.

As required in the Master Plan and Guidelines, written notice was sent to all property owners, and the neighborhood association, within 200 feet of the subject property. A sign was posted on the property fifteen days prior to the meeting.

PETITIONER COMMENTS:

Ms. Elyse Butler, Georgia Historical Society, stated she worked with Park and Tree to determine best location.

Mr. Monroe stated the text is better than initial presentation. He thanked the Board for their

suggestions and Ms. Butler for incorporating them.

Ms. Watson asked why was it not located at 1818 East 35th Street.

Ms. Butler stated that was the original location, but the prominent location that they were tied to is Bay Street and the port.

Ms. Watson expressed concern with the glorification of the history tied to this project. **Ms. Butler** stated history is history and deserves to be told. The historical presentation is based on fact, not emotion. This industry helped shape the state.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

There was no public comment.

BOARD DISCUSSION:

The Board was pleased with the rewrite of the text. **Ms. Watson** encouraged all to consider how this industry has taken a toll on the environment.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends that the Historic Site and Monument Commission recommend approval to the Savannah City Council to install a Georgia Historical Society Historical Marker near 1 East Bay Street, with the following conditions to be submitted to staff for final review, before the item can be docketed on a City Council agenda, otherwise because the proposed work meets the Master Plan and Guidelines:

- 1. Confirm with the City's Greenscapes and other departments that the marker will not damage or disturb significant tree roots or that the below ground utilities will not require removal or alteration.**

Motion

The Historic Site and Monument Commission recommends approval to the Savannah City Council to install a Georgia Historical Society Historical Marker near 1 East Bay Street because the proposed work meets the Master Plan and Guidelines. Confirm that marker will not damage trees or underground wiring.

Vote Results (Approved)

Motion: Sean Mannion

Second: Catherine D. Kostilnik, PhD

Kristopher Monroe	- Abstain
Sean Mannion	- Aye
Lisa D. Watson	- Nay
Eileen Baker	- Aye
Ashley Rainge	- Aye
Catherine D. Kostilnik, PhD	- Aye

IV. Other Business

4. Informational Presentation - City of Savannah - Sculpture Installation

Ms. Luciana Spracher, City of Savannah, presented the plans for the sculpture installation

on Stiles Avenue. She provided a the biography of the artist, Jerome Meadow. The basis of Mr. Meadows concept of the sculpture includes the material usages and its representations, and community experiences.

Mr. Monroe asked why was this not presented to HSMC for consideration and approval.

Ms. Spracher stated they did not think it made sense to come from the City, only to return to the City for final approval.

Mr. Monroe stated HSMC is a board of volunteers that are responsible for vetting such projects, ensure of maintenance plan and schedule.

Ms. Spracher stated they will do better in the future.

Mr. Mannion stated this should have come before the Commission; the process should be followed.

Ms. Rainge asked if additions will come before HSMC.

Ms. Spracher replied yes.

Ms. Michalak acknowledged a key part was left off of the application; will be corrected.

5. Commissioners Review of Mural Policy

Ms. Michalak stated there will be changes to the HSMC Master Plan and Guidelines, to include the HSMC to review all monuments, murals, markers and work of art, public and private property. The application will reflect this as well.

There was discussion regarding after-the-fact/non-conforming murals/works of art. **Ms. Watson** reminded about making accessing the application easier for the public. **Mr. Mannion** reminded about rotating murals clarification. **Mr. Monroe** directed that any concerns or needed changes to the policy be submitted to **Ms. Michalak**.

V. Adjournment

6. Next Meeting: August 4, 2022 at 4pm - 112 East State Street: Mendonsa Hearing Room

7. Adjourn

There being no further business to present to the Commission, the July 7, 2022 Historic Site and Monument Commission adjourned at 5:06 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Leah G. Michalak
Director of Historic Preservation

/bm

The Chatham County - Savannah Metropolitan Planning Commission provides meeting minutes which are adopted by the respective Board. Verbatim transcripts of minutes are the responsibility of the interested party.