

Historical look at famous avenue

By Judy Tindel

A 1907 plat for the subdivision of the W.G. Collier Estate featured a road called Franklin Avenue running west from Peachtree Road to the land lot line. By 1909, adjacent property owners petitioned Fulton County proposing extension of that road 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."

In August 1909, the Atlanta Constitution reported "Peachtree Battle Avenue Donated to County" and within a few months full right-of-way was deeded for continuation of the avenue to Bolton Road.

In 1910, the E. Rivers Realty office for Peachtree Heights Park, known as the Lodge, was commissioned from NYC architects Carrere & Hastings and sited on a median island on Peachtree Battle Avenue.

Four years later, in anticipation of the 50th anniversary of the Battle of Peachtree Creek, Eretus Rivers spearheaded a proposal to expand the avenue into a parkway boulevard. Company advertisements described 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 ... 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."

Deeds secured in 1915 specified that "there shall be left a strip 25 feet wide in the center of the 100 feet conveyed, to be reserved and used for park purposes ... 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."

In 1915, Governor Samuel M. Ralston of Indiana, affiliated with the Dixie Highway movement, endorsed the scheme: "If this avenue be opened up and broadened into a great boulevard ... 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."

That fall, the Atlanta Constitution reported that Fulton 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."

Newspaper accounts 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 12 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 Get-

tysburg, with its monuments and beautiful driveways."

By 1916, citizens expressed frustration at delays: "Long ago a hundred-foot boulevard, called Battle Avenue ... was passed up by the county commission. Then it seems that it was passed by, as it was never yet built!" "Atlanta is likely to lose the \$100,000 monument ... officially promised by Governor Ralston, of Indiana ... unless the county commissioners proceed with all possible dispatch to ... work out Peachtree Battle Avenue." A March 1917 article indicated that the county had undertaken grading work but median parks were installed only in the Peachtree Heights Park section.

A 1924 quit claim deed returned land donated for road purposes to Haynes Manor developer Eugene V. Haynes. A small section of park extended beyond the land lot line into Haynes Manor near Dellwood Road, housing the 1926 Haynes Manor real estate office with columns flanking the avenue.

Peachtree Battle was paved only to Habersham Road until 1925. Local engineer Littleton H. Fitzpatrick revised the plat for Peachtree Heights Park in 1925, replacing the Parkway Lake of the original Carrere & Hastings plan with median parks and cross-overs at Nacoochee and Woodward Way.

In 1930, the Atlanta Constitution reported that Fulton Commissioners "officially turned over to [82nd] division members in Atlanta a strip of land on Peachtree Battle avenue ... 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 ... 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 ... to ... make this thoroughfare a boulevard of monuments to soldiers on both sides killed in the Civil War as well as those who lost their lives in all other American wars."

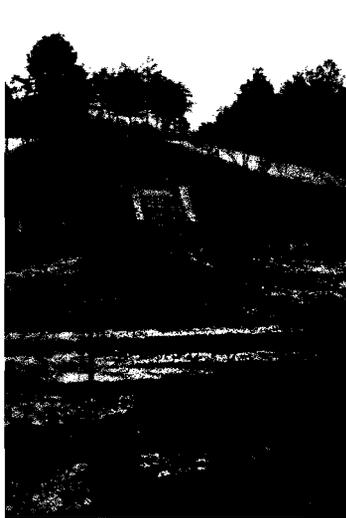
In 1932, the Habersham Garden Club voted to "take the plot at Habersham Road and Peachtree Battle Avenue as our project for Civic work" and the Primrose Garden Club "voted to improve the parkway on Peachtree Battle Avenue". In 1935, the Old Guard of Atlanta Post Number 1 dedicated the War Veterans' Monument on Peachtree Battle Avenue as "a tribute to American valor." In 1937, the Neighborhood Garden Club landscaped a "beautiful background for the monument ..." planting young ginkgo trees.

Today, Peachtree Battle Avenue with its towering ginkgo trees remains a signature boulevard and enduring cultural landscape.

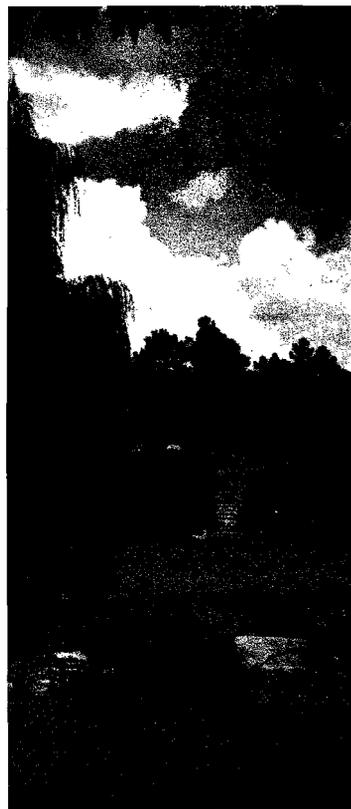
Judy Tindel is a resident of Haynes Manor, serves on the board of directors of the Peachtree Battle Alliance and is a member of the Buckhead Heritage Society.



Judy Tindel



These photos from the scrapbooks of the Habersham Garden Club show the work the club did in the early 1930s to beautify the gully park area between the two roadways that form Peachtree Battle Avenue. The old photo above shows the area as work was being started and the photo at right shows the same area after the plantings had matured. The Habersham Garden Club and the Primrose Garden Club both worked on parts of the project to create a parkway feel for the street.



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