



**SAVANNAH-CHATHAM COUNTY HISTORIC SITE AND MONUMENT
COMMISSION
HISTORICAL MARKER RECOMMENDATION**

PETITIONER: GEORGIA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

FILE No.: 22-001027-HM

LOCATION: 1 East Bay Street

DATE: July 7, 2022

NATURE OF REQUEST:

The applicant is requesting a recommendation for 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.

CONTEXT:

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.

Board Recommendation – Petition of Georgia Historical Society

File No. **22-001027-HM**

Date July 7, 2022

Page 2

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.

FINDINGS:

The following standards from the Historic Site and Monument Commission Guidelines for Markers, Monuments and Public Art apply:

Evaluating Themes for Markers and Monuments. *New markers and monuments commemorate and honor people, places, and/or events.*

Proposed themes should fall into one or more of the following categories.

Science and Engineering. Includes technology, inventions, medical, communications, etc.

Industry and Commerce. Includes economics, agriculture, transportation, etc.

Local History. Includes folklore and/or local heroes.

The proposed theme should have documented significant, clear and direct local relevance to the history and development of Chatham County. The local focus should be the predominant theme of the monument.

The level of significance should be high enough to warrant a public presence.

The person, place or event commemorated should not have been sufficiently commemorated elsewhere in the County. The theme should be distinct and original, and not be duplicated in other existing markers or monuments.

The theme should reflect a larger connection to the community as a whole, and not only to one distinct group.

Commemorated events should have endured historical significance and have occurred over fifty years ago.

Commemorated persons should have endured historical significance and have been dead at least twenty-five years. Living persons should not be commemorated.

There should be significant documented evidence (written or oral) of the commemorated event, person, or place.

The standard is met.

As per the applicant:

Board Recommendation – Petition of Georgia Historical Society

File No. **22-001027-HM**

Date July 7, 2022

Page 3

“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.

Board Recommendation – Petition of Georgia Historical Society

File No. **22-001027-HM**

Date July 7, 2022

Page 4

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.”

***Evaluating Sites for Markers, Monuments, or Public Art.** Certain factors should be taken into consideration when evaluating whether a site is the appropriate location for a marker, monument or public art [hereto referred to as “object” to indicate the inclusion of all three types]. These factors include:*

The installation of an object should not cause overcrowding of the site if there are existing objects. Objects should be sited far enough away from other objects as to allow the visitor proper appreciation of each individually.

The 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.

The proposed object should not damage or disturb existing established vegetation on the site including low tree limbs, or significant tree roots.

Staff recommends that the applicant confirm with the City's Greenscapes Department that the marker will not damage or disturb significant tree roots.

The proposed object should not require the removal or alteration of existing above or below ground utilities.

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 should be large enough to accommodate an object, and should not encroach on other existing object sites, buildings, or designated green space.

The proposed site is large enough to accommodate the marker.

The proposed site should not be utilized for special events (such as sports, festivals, ceremonies, etc.) on a regular basis which an object would disrupt.

The proposed site is not utilized for special events.

The proposed site should not be prone to frequent automobile accidents which could damage the proposed object.

The proposed site is the grassy area off East Bay Street – a significant distance from the street.

Board Recommendation – Petition of Georgia Historical Society

File No. **22-001027-HM**

Date July 7, 2022

Page 5

The proposed site should be easily accessible to pedestrians and the physically challenged (excluding marker sites).

The proposed site is next to a public sidewalk which is accessible to pedestrian and the physically challenged.

The proposed site should be visible and accessible from a public right of way.

The bench is adjacent to an existing sidewalk and is easily accessible.

The proposed site should be easy to maintain.

The marker is proposed within a City-owned area with low growing plants which are typically easy to maintain.

The installation of the object should enhance the space and character of the surrounding neighborhood.

The marker will enhance an empty portion of the area on East Bay Street.

The installation of the object should enhance the design of the overall site.

The standard is met.

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.”

Site in Relation to Theme for Markers or Monuments. *The relationship between site and theme for a marker or monument is critical in determining the appropriate site for a particular theme.*

Marker. *A marker should be erected in as close proximity to the site to which it is related as possible and be clearly visible from a public right-of-way.*

The standard 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.”

Design. *The design of a marker, monument, or public work of art should be of the highest quality and caliber and enhance public space. In order to promote the high standards, the City of Savannah has historically enjoyed in its markers, monuments, and public art, the following guidelines should be observed.*

Board Recommendation – Petition of Georgia Historical Society

File No. **22-001027-HM**

Date July 7, 2022

Page 6

Markers. *Markers may be mounted on a freestanding pole, wall-mounted, or embedded in the ground. As the primary purpose is to inform the public about an event, place or person, the aesthetic significance of a marker is generally minimal.*

Markers on a freestanding pole should be the standard Georgia Historical Society (GHS) Marker style: two-sided, cast aluminum with a 30" x 42" plate size.

The shape should match the GHS marker shape.

The marker should have a black background with white, silver or gold text.

Markers not erected through the GHS's marker program shall not bear the GHS or state seal.

Except the marker title, the marker text should be not more than 1" in height, and not less than 1/2".

Marker text should be created in a manner that, to the extent possible, prevents fading and erosion.

Markers should be made of an enduring, non-corroding material.

Markers should be considered permanent and designed accordingly.

The standard is met. The marker meets all design requirements.

Funding.

Budget. *The Mayor and Aldermen do not fund new markers, monuments, or works of art. The applicant is fully responsible for funding the design, construction, installation, and any necessary landscaping, paving, or lighting involved with a new marker, monument, or work of art.*

The applicant must provide a realistic budget in Part II Final Design and Funding. The budget should be based on cost estimates provided by the manufacturer, artist, installer and/or contractor, as appropriate. The budget should include funding goals and deadlines. Should funding goals and deadlines fail to be met, the HSMC may, at its sole discretion, reconsider the application. The applicant must be capable of raising the necessary funding. Construction of the monument or installation of the work of art will not begin until all of the funding has been secured.

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.

Escrow Payment. *All markers, monuments and public art erected on public property become the property of the Mayor and Aldermen. The Mayor and Aldermen assume responsibility for the future maintenance and upkeep of the marker, monument or artwork. Therefore, an initial Escrow Payment is required of the applicant subsequent to approval of the application. The Mayor and Aldermen, or their designee, will determine the appropriate Escrow Payment and will notify the applicant. The Escrow Payment must be paid prior to construction/installation of the*

Board Recommendation – Petition of Georgia Historical Society

File No. **22-001027-HM**

Date July 7, 2022

Page 7

monument or public art. Any marker, monument or artwork erected on private property is the responsibility of the property owner.

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.

PUBLIC NOTICE:

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. No comments were received from the public.

RECOMMENDATION TO CITY COUNCIL:

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.

DocuSigned by:

Kristopher Monroe

July 7, 2022

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**Mr. Kristopher Monroe, Chairman
Historic Site and Monument Commission**

Date

DocuSigned by:

Melanie Wilson

July 7, 2022

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**Melanie Wilson, Executive Director
Chatham County-Savannah Metropolitan Planning Commission**

Date

DocuSigned by:

Leah G. Michalak

July 7, 2022

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**Leah G. Michalak, Director of Urban Planning and Historic Preservation
Chatham County-Savannah Metropolitan Planning Commission**

Date

MW: LGM: cc