

# Savannahian counts Ga. Civil War signs

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ATLANTA — The job is simple, repetitive, fascinating: Get in the car. Drive. Find a Civil War historical marker. Note its condition, location, etc.

Return to car. Repeat the process 900-plus times.

That's OK with Will Hanley. With rental car, computer and maps, the 28-year-old Savannah resident is compiling an inventory of Civil War markers across Georgia. Working for the Georgia Historical Society, Hanley is finding signs on roadsides and in state parks, in the blanket-flat reaches of southeast Georgia and the rumples folds

of the state's northwest region. It's part of the state's plan to observe the 150th anniversary of the 1861-1865 war.

Hanley began his travels in late August, blogging as he went. Compiling the inventory should take about 11 months. The society is making the count with a grant for \$132,307 from the state Department of Economic Development. When complete, the inventory will help the organization plan a series of historical driving trails it wants completed by 2011, the first year of the sesquicentennial.

"You get to see a lot of interesting things," said Hanley, who makes forays every other week. Each outing racks up about 800

## SIGNS OF THE TIMES: GEORGIA'S MARKER PROGRAM

Georgia's marker program is the creation of the Georgia Historical Commission, which devoted its efforts in the 1950s to erecting Civil War signs in time for the war's 1961 centennial.

While many signs explain troop movements, others offer a few words about Southern life during the war. The state historical society would like to erect 50 more markers that expand on the role of women, slaves, industry and other segments of life in the South a century and a half ago.

miles on a series of rental cars. Hanley figures he's driven about 5,000 miles so far, cataloging troop movements, battles and other moments in the war.

Hanley uses maps that haven't been revised in three decades. They are the property of the state Department of Natural Resources, which took over the state's historical-marker

program in 1974. Those documents, he said, aren't always complete or accurate.

About 2,000 state-owned historical markers dot the state, said Judd Smith, resident manager of DNR's Parks and Historic Sites division. Signs near the Etowah River explain the lives of mound-builders who vanished centuries ago.

Those near Savannah extol the founding of the colony of Georgia. Markers closer to Atlanta are reminders of Georgia's role in World War II.

Nearly half deal with the Civil War, Smith said.

"We know where they are," said Smith, who paused. "We know where they're supposed to be."

But signs, like time, move on. Cars knock them over. Road crews remove them to make way for highway projects. Some, inexplicably, wind up in basements or living rooms. "A lot of times," he said, "they just disappear."

The state this year allocated \$50,000 to maintain and replace the signs.