

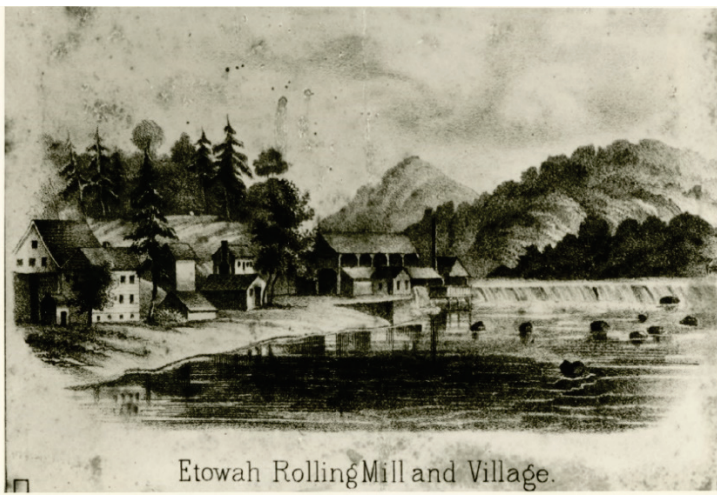
The following paper was prepared under the direction of Dr. Jennifer Dickey at Kennesaw State University for an Introduction to Public History course.

Mark Anthony Cooper's Iron Works was a critically important part of Bartow County's history. The marker provides an interesting look into Bartow County's past and into the time in which it was erected.

Mark Anthony Cooper's Iron Works were once at the location of modern-day Allatoona Lake. Today, the only trace of the ironworks comes in the form of a roadside marker and the ruins of a single furnace. The marker is located at the foot of the Allatoona dam in Cartersville, and it is meant to commemorate both the ironworks itself and the founder, Mark Anthony Cooper. Mark Anthony Cooper was born near Powelton, Georgia, in 1800. By 1821 he was licensed to practice law, and he opened a law office in Eatonton. By 1833 he worked very briefly as a politician, serving in the 26th, 27th, and 28th Congresses before resigning to run for governor of Georgia in 1843. In the course of his political campaigning in the 1840s, Cooper stayed a night at and became fascinated by a small iron furnace owned by Moses Stroup.ⁱ This experience planted a seed in Cooper's mind – one that would bear fruit after he lost the gubernatorial election in 1843.

Cooper quickly bought a 50 percent interest in the ironworks along with about 1,300 acres of surrounding land.ⁱⁱ The area was well suited to a larger factory operation, having “easy access to limestone, agricultural land, and timber.”ⁱⁱⁱ Cooper quickly worked to establish all of the various industries required to run and maintain an iron factory, and this growth of industry swiftly “required a growing work force.”^{iv} The town of Etowah grew in an orderly fashion, with the design planned under the guidance of Mark Cooper. The town continued to grow as Cooper added land to its holdings until it reached some 12,000 acres. The endless improvements were

costly, and Moses Stroup was unable to pay his share. Stroup would be bought out of the business by Cooper and his newer partner Leroy Wiley.^v



Aggressive expansion would soon prove to be a problem for the Cooper Iron Works.

While wildly successful, the industry was somewhat unstable, and in the aftermath of the panic of 1857 “The Etowah Iron Works, like many other great enterprises, was in financial difficulties.”^{vii} Cooper’s friends, however, came to his rescue. Thirty-eight of them raised some \$200,000 dollars, which Cooper used to save the business. By 1860, he paid back the full amount.^{viii} As a result, Cooper celebrated paying off his debt by erecting a marble monument to his creditors. Cooper later sold the property to the Etowah Mining and Manufacturing Company for \$400,000 dollars.^{ix} After the outbreak of the Civil War, the Confederate government paid some \$500,000 in Confederate currency for the business.^x This money quickly became worthless, however, and the industrial center of Etowah was eventually destroyed as General Sherman made his way through Georgia.

The historical marker for Mark Anthony Cooper’s Iron Works was erected in 1962 by the Georgia Historical Commission. The location was chosen perhaps in part because of its importance to the Confederacy. Civil War-related markers were extremely popular choices during this time, with 750 of Georgia’s 1,747 markers related to the war.^{xi} The Civil War was the

defining aspect of southern culture, and the 1960s marked the centennial of this war. Segregation was among the final remnants of the institutions of slavery left in the South, and white Southerners fought the process fiercely. White southerners sought to maintain their political and social supremacy, and the veneration of the Civil War was one way that they resisted.

There was some controversy regarding the centennial celebration of the Civil War, with some claiming that it turned history into “nothing more than a carnival” and that a four-year commemoration was simply “too long.”^{xii} Controversy regarding ongoing segregation difficulties also occurred. Charleston, South Carolina, was chosen as the location for the fourth national assembly of the National Civil War Centennial Commission. For the sake of the black members of their committee, New Jersey representatives boycotted the event and called on President Kennedy to intervene.^{xiii} The National Civil War Centennial Commission conceded under Kennedy’s scrutiny, opting to have their meetings and a second banquet at the nearby Charleston Naval Base to “avoid South Carolina’s segregation practices.”^{xiv} Mark Anthony Cooper’s Iron Works seem unrelated to all of this, but the enterprise’s importance to the Confederacy as a center for weapons production likely made it a strong candidate for the erection of a historical marker.

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- ⁱ Mark Cooper Pope and J. Donald McKee, *Mark Anthony Cooper: The Iron Man of Georgia* (Atlanta: Georgia Publishing Company, 2000), 93.
- ⁱⁱ Pope and McKee, *Iron Man*, 95.
- ⁱⁱⁱ "The Mineral Resources of Georgia," *The National American*, 1859.
- ^{iv} Pope and McKee, *Iron Man*, 100.
- ^v Lucy J. Cunyus. *The History of Bartow County* (Easley: Southern Historical Press, 1976), 194
- ^{vi} Wilbur G Kurtz, "Bartow County, Georgia (Stroup Furnace, Unidentified Houses Near Allatoona, Georgia, Ruins of Cooper Iron Works, And Old Clayton House Near Allatoona, Georgia). 1935/1949.
- ^{vii} Walter G. Cooper, "Erection of a Unique Monument to Friendship At Etowah, Ga., by Major Mark A. Cooper Marked the Climax of a remarkable Career," *The Atlanta Constitution*, May 24, 1931.
- ^{viii} W. R. Frier Jr., "Dead Town of Etowah Now Stands As Monument to Industry of Past," *The Atlanta Constitution*, July 3, 1938.
- ^{ix} Cunyus, *History of Bartow County*, 196.
- ^x Mark Cooper Pope, "Mark Anthony Cooper," *The Atlanta Journal*, October 26, 1949.
- ^{xi} "Timetable of Events in Reverse," *The Atlanta Constitution*, February 23, 1962.
- ^{xii} "Robertson Thinks Commemoration 'Will Wear Itself Out' – Raps 'Carnival Air of Civil War Centennial'," *Iowa City Press*, June 6, 1961.
- ^{xiii} "A Centennial Snag," *The Ogden Standard-Examiner*, March 21, 1961.
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