

Georgia Uncovered: Investigating Our State's Legends: Tomochichi's Grave



Landing of Oglethorpe, Georgia, 1733

Today in Georgia History

October 12, 1739 - Tomochichi

When James Oglethorpe and the English colonists arrived in Georgia in 1733, Tomochichi was here to greet them. It was his artful diplomacy between the English settlers and the native population that ensured Georgia's peaceful beginnings.

Tomochichi was chief of the Yamacraw tribe, which he created from a group of Creek and Yamasee natives. They settled on the bluff overlooking the Savannah River, where Tomochichi's ancestors were buried.

During Georgia's first five years, Tomochichi set up trade and diplomatic connections between the English and the Creeks. He traveled with Oglethorpe to England to lobby in person for fair trade and the rights of his people. When he returned, he assured the Creeks that the Georgians would make good allies.

Tomochichi died in his late 90s and was buried beneath a pyramid of stones in what became Wright Square in Savannah. One hundred and fifty years later, Savannah replaced the stones with the granite monument that now honors Tomochichi and serves as a reminder that the first Georgia colonists had no better friend than the great Yamacraw chieftain who died on October 5, 1739.



The Legend

A local legend exists that Tomochichi's grave site was desecrated and the pyramid of stones erected by General Oglethorpe was flattened in 1882 to make way for a monument to William Washington Gordon, founder of the Central of Georgia Railroad. What do you think?

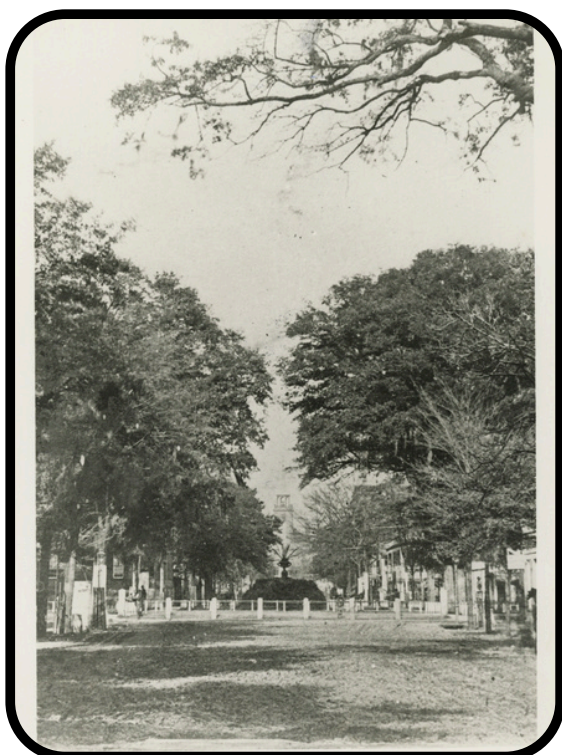
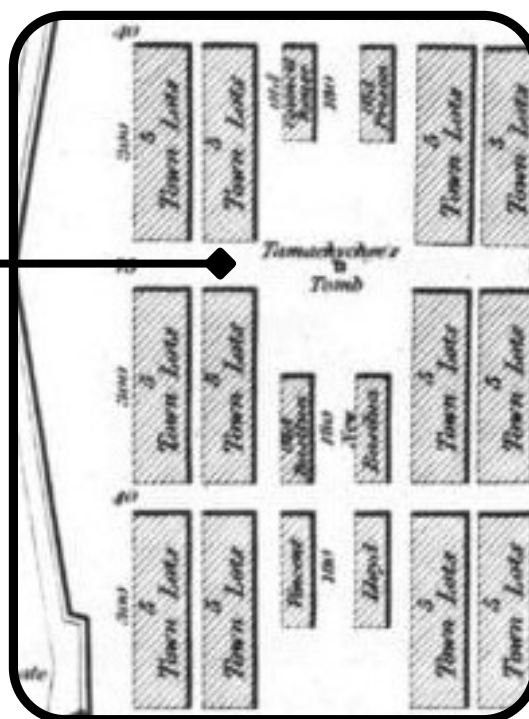
Georgia Uncovered: Investigating Our State's Legends: Tomochichi's Grave

Investigation Through Images

Look at the four images of Wright Square across time. What are the changes that you see? What reasons might be given for the removal of the original stone pyramid? Do you think the 1899 monument to Tomochichi is fitting? Why or why not?

1739 - Tomochichi wanted to be buried in Savannah, the town he helped to create. Oglethorpe arranged for him to be buried in Wright Square (formerly Percival Square). His grave was marked with a pyramid of stones.

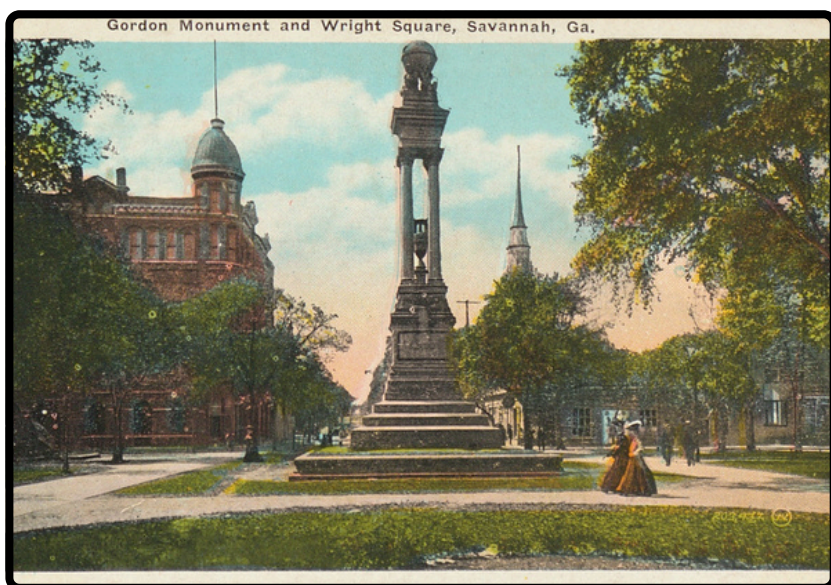
"Tomochichi's Tomb" Detail of De Brahm's The Plan of the City of Savannah and Fortifications, 1757



1837 - By the mid-1800s, the pyramid of stones was no longer visible. A decorative mound was instead placed in the square, possibly by the city to prevent street car tracks from being laid.

Georgia Uncovered: Investigating Our State's Legends: Tomochichi's Grave

Investigation Through Images



1883 - The mound in Wright Square was replaced with a stone monument in honor of William Washington Gordon. There was some resistance to this by citizens who did not want Tomochichi forgotten.

1899 - Gordon's daughter-in-law, Nellie Kinzie Gordon, advocated for a new monument in honor of Tomochichi. The inscription reads:

*In memory of
Tomo-Chi-Chi*

*The mico of the Yamacraws and companion of
Oglthorpe and the friend and ally of the colony of
Georgia.*

*This stone has been here placed by the Georgia Society
of the Colonial Dames of America.*

1733-1899

