Upcoming Conference News

Atlanta Fun Facts: What's In a Name?

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So, NASIG's conference is actually being held in Irbyville. Could be worse. You could be in New London. Names change around here. The general vicinity now referred to as Atlanta is an amalgam of dozens of former independent communities, from Sandtown to Cross Keys and Kirkwood. The downtown area was once designated as Terminus on plans for a railroad running north to Chattanooga, although no one ever really called it that. When that project began, a young man named John Thrasher got the contract to build an embankment across a low area, and the houses he built for his workers were briefly referred to as Thrasherville. Former Governor Wilson Lumpkin came through with surveyor Frederick Pryor, looking for a spot on which to build a train station and a town, and the spot they chose a quarter mile eastward of that terminus they called Marthasville, named for Lumpkin's daughter.

This brings us back to that initial railroad project. The dreamers and engineers who imagined this great inland city thought big. The railroad to Chattanooga would connect with the Tennessee River, the Mississippi River, and the West. Since that railroad would connect with the Georgia Railroad in Augusta, and thereby to the Atlantic Ocean, that project was named the Western & Atlantic Railroad. Chief Engineer of the Georgia Railroad, Edgar J. Thomson, didn't think much of the name Marthasville and in 1845, he coined a new name for his new depot: Atlanta, a feminized form of Atlantic. Pretty soon, freight and packages began arriving

addressed to Atlanta, although it didn't become the official name until 1848.

In truth, names changed frequently during those early days of settlement. In 1839, visitors arrived at the village of New Gibraltar to marvel at and picnic atop the massive granite dome there, but by 1847 that same village had embraced Stone Mountain as a moniker. In the late 1870s, the settlement of New London's name honored the hometown of one of its founders, Thomas Snell, but Snell and a partner ran a grocery store out at Snell's homestead, which he had named Snellville. The business prospered and grew until they were drawing trade from towns ten and twenty miles away, with every one of those customers headed for Snellville. When a city charter was granted, New London had become Snellville.

Conversely, in 1838, Henry Irby bought 202 ½ acres at the intersection of Peachtree Road, the Roswell Road, and the road to Pace's Ferry. He built a tavern and grocery store at the crossroads. In 1841, he even got a U.S. post office established for Irbyville, but the name never caught on, and you won't find it on a map. You see, back in 1840, someone shot a large deer and mounted the head on a post near a well-used spring. (Some accounts say the deer's head was hung in Irby's tavern; the exact original location is hard to pinpoint.) In no time, the entire locality, including Irby's tavern and post office, became known as Buckhead. Enjoy your visit!