Part 4 in the series: Pickens Historical Markers

A Big Part of our history: Georgia Marble & the village of Tate

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How many times have you gone across those railroad tracks at the old Tate train station? Too many to count, I bet. Have you ever stopped to look at the marker that sits just off to the right as you look at the depot from the highway?

It's another of Pickens' Historical Markers, and it recognizes Georgia Marble, "known the world over for its beauty and enduring qualities."

Georgia Marble, as most Pickens residents know, has been used in buildings ranging from the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, D.C. to the New York Stock Exchange. It was also used in the Air and Space Museum in Washington. In fact, more than sixty percent of the monuments in Washington, D.C. contain Georgia marble.

But you don't have to go to the nation's capitol to see the beautiful Pickens County marble—as there's plenty of it right down the road in Atlanta, including the state capitol , Lenox Square Mall and several buildings on the Emory University campus. Or, you can just go out on Main Street and admire the Oglethorpe Monument in Jasper, made from the county's beautiful marble.

Here's another interesting fact: Pickens County's primary vein of marble is 5 to 7 miles long, a half mile wide, and up to 2,000 feet deep.

Sam Tate was credited for being the father of the marble industry—having begun about 1850 to mine the marble. But that didn't last, due to transportation issues. So by 1880, the marble industry just about shut down. Then came the railroads, and the industry was instantly revitalized, sending marble from Tate across America. It was then, in 1884, that Tate founded the Georgia Marble Company.

While Sam Tate gets credit for starting the Georgia Marble Company in 1884, he wasn't the first one to mine marble. To be historically accurate, the Native Americans had used the marble since as early as 800 A.D. (yes, that was well before the Quik Trip came to Jasper). And before Tate's success, a man named Henry Fitzsimmons established

When you visit this marker on Highway 53. Take a stroll through the old Tate Cemetery located beside the Train Depot.

New Georgia Encyclopedia / Photo
Tate and Foremen - "Colonel Sam" Tate (second from left), the grandson of Georgia Marble Company founder Samuel Tate, poses with a group of foremen at the Pickens County plant, circa 1925. Colonel Sam served as president of the company from 1905 until his death in 1938.

the first marble quarry in Pickens County, which was part of the Murphy Marble Belt.

Back in the 1830's, the town of Tate was a settlement known as Harnageville, after Ambrose Harnage, in whose house the early court was held.

According to Pickens County Historian Luke E. Tate wrote in 1935 that "…the post office at this place was officially known as Marble Works for a period of years; then it was re-named Harnageville; and when the railroad came through in the early 1880's the town received its present name."

The Tates owned the marble business until the late sixties, when it was purchased by Jim Walter Corporation and had other owners until Polycor bought the stone division of Georgia Marble Company in 2003.

One other thing you'll want to do when you visit this marker on Highway 53. Take a stroll through the old Tate Cemetery located beside the Train Depot, and you'll see grave markers from the civil war and even before that. It's in need of some repair, but it also captures the rich history of the men and women who helped to build Tate and Pickens County.

Directions: Go out Highway 53 toward Tate and you will see the marker on your left when you cross the railroad tracks (adjacent to the Train Depot).

Sources: New Georgia Encyclopedia, www.lat34north.com, History of Pickens County, by Luke E. Tate, roadsidegeorgia.com