

Augusta historical marker erected to commemorate civil rights riot

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Body

Oct. 03-- Oct. 3--SAVANNAH -- The Georgia Historical Society announced this week the virtual dedication of a new Georgia historical marker for The Riot of May 11-12, 1970, in Augusta. In keeping with safety protocols relating to COVID-19, the marker is being highlighted in a virtual dedication across all GHS social media platforms and on the web.

The marker is located at 535 Telfair St. in Augusta, in front of the Augusta-Richmond County Municipal Building.

The rollout will take place this week with a series of blog posts available on all GHS social media platforms throughout the week.

"The Georgia Historical Society is dedicated to telling the stories of the civil rights movement in Georgia," W. Todd Groce, president and CEO of the Georgia Historical Society, said in a news release. "We hope that all who visit this marker will learn about the history of the civil rights movement in Augusta and its wider impact on the nation."

"Very few people outside of Augusta and academia know of this uprising," said Corey Rogers, historian at the Lucy Craft Laney Museum in Augusta and a member of the 1970 Augusta Riot 50th Observance Committee. "It was a pivotal point in the history of not just Augusta but the post-1965 civil rights movement. This event, along with incidents that occurred at Jackson State University and Kent State University the same year, reminded America that there was still a struggle for equality in America and that even though some progress had been made in the 1960s, more was needed for America to fulfill the notion that all men are created equal."

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For more information about the The Riot of May 11-12, 1970 historical marker, follow the Georgia Historical Society on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and LinkedIn. For more information about the Georgia Historical Society Historical Marker Program, contact Pattye Meagher, GHS director of communications, at pmeagher@georgiahistory.com or by cell at (434) 996-7085.

The marker reads:

The Riot of May 11-12, 1970

On May 11, 1970, Augusta became the site of Georgia's largest uprising during the civil rights era. Hundreds of black citizens gathered at the Municipal Building to demand an investigation into the beating death of Charles Oatman, a 16-year old African American, in the county jail. When white officials resisted, long-simmering grievances about racial injustice boiled over. Some protesters targeted Chinese-American and white-owned property for destruction. As the riot escalated, police fired shotguns, killing six and wounding dozens. The Georgia National Guard occupied Paine College and black neighborhoods. Local trials convicted nearly 100 protesters. Despite an FBI investigation and federal trials of two white police officers, no official was convicted. "Kent-Augusta-Jackson-S.E. Asia" later became a national rallying cry, and the protests galvanized activism and accelerated desegregation in Augusta.

Erected by the Georgia Historical Society, The Lucy Craft Laney Museum of Black History, and The Augusta Riot 50th Observance Committee.

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