

# Georgia Department of Natural Resources

## Historic Preservation Division

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

## **Chickamauga Coal and Iron Company Coke Ovens Listed in National Register**

ATLANTA (May 8, 2009) –The Chickamauga Coal and Iron Company Coke Ovens, located on state highway 341 in Chickamauga, Walker County, was listed in the National Register on April 9, 2009. The city of Chickamauga sponsored the nomination. The preservation planner of the Southeast Tennessee Development District prepared nomination materials.

The Chickamauga Coal and Iron Company was chartered in 1891 and the following year began to mine coal at its Durham mine on Lookout Mountain. Within three years the company was supplying coal throughout the region. In September of 1897, the company constructed 50 coke ovens in Chickamauga. Coke is a byproduct of coal that is produced by heating coal at high temperatures in controlled conditions. It is the main fuel in the iron-smelting process and is used to make steel in blast furnaces because it burns longer, hotter, and more evenly than coal. In 1899, the company purchased a railroad to transport the Durham coal to the coke ovens in Chickamauga. The coke was then shipped to Chattanooga to fuel the iron industry there. As business increased at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the company built 50 more coke ovens in Chickamauga. In the 1920s, as the Durham mine was playing out, the company ceased coking operations in Chickamauga.

The Chickamauga Coal and Iron Company Coke Ovens are significant at the state level in the areas of engineering and industry because they are associated with the iron and steel industry in north Georgia, northern Alabama, and southeast Tennessee between 1870 and 1929. The battery of beehive coke ovens in Chickamauga is typical of the coke ovens that were built throughout the southern Appalachians. These coke ovens incorporated factory-like efficiency

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*Chickamauga Coal and Iron Company Coke Ovens listed in the National Register, page 2*

and railroad transportation to process vast amounts of coke and ship it to the iron and steel foundries. Similar coke ovens are located in southeast Tennessee and northern Alabama.

The Chickamauga Coal and Iron Company Coke Ovens are located in a small city park on the north side of Chickamauga in northwest Georgia. The domed ovens are built of brick, reinforced with an outer wall of limestone blocks, and covered with earth for insulation. Coal tenders ran on tracks on top of the two parallel rows of ovens, which were charged from small holes in the tops of the ovens. Rail beds are located on the north and south sides of the battery. Finished coke was emptied from the front of each oven and hauled away in rail cars. The earth covering many of the ovens has eroded, exposing the brick domes and some ovens have collapsed. More than half of the coke ovens have been demolished since the 1950s, many when an adjacent carpet factory was constructed. The surviving 36 coke ovens are located in a park that includes a grass lawn, trees, a pond, picnic tables, and a dozen interpretive signs that explain the history of the coking operation in Chickamauga.

The Historic Preservation Division (HPD) of the Georgia Department of Natural Resources serves as Georgia's state historic preservation office. Their mission is to promote the preservation and use of historic places for a better Georgia. HPD's programs include archaeology protection and education, environmental review, grants, historic resource surveys, tax incentives, the National Register of Historic Places, community planning and technical assistance. For more information, call 404-656-2840 or visit their Web site at [www.gashpo.org](http://www.gashpo.org).