

# The Historic Defoor Centre

THE Chattahoochee River was the backdrop of several important scenes in Atlanta's history. The river formed a natural boundary between the Cherokee and Creek Indians. Where Peachtree Creek flows into the Chattahoochee, (near where today's Atlanta Road crosses), a peninsula protruding into the river, created a natural boatyard and made the river crossing easier. An important trading post, "Standing Peachtree," stood there. In 1814, these factors made it the logical site for a small U.S. garrison on the peninsula, which, when built, was called Ft. Peachtree. Standing Peach Tree became a post office in 1825, the first in this part of Georgia. Only 17 years later, a spot about 1500 feet downstream was selected by the Western & Atlantic surveyors as the best river crossing, and the downtown Atlanta site near today's Five Points as the first suitable high ground south of the river to build the maintenance buildings. Later, other railroads ended at the same location, sharing main-tenance facilities.

FOR decades, the three story building, built in the 1840's centered in a sprawling set of relatively new add-ons, was called "The Old Stone House on the Crooked Road", referencing the exterior of the house built with nearby rocks and its presence on Defoor Avenue, which twists in a northwesterly direction through the west side of Midtown. On a map depicting Atlanta in 1864, the spot where Defoor Centre sits today, was labeled "Old Stone House." (See photo.) Neighborhood legend tells us that the house once served as a Civil War hospital. Because of its proximity to the Battle of Peachtree Creek, one of the three major battles in the Battle of Atlanta, it could well have served that purpose for a few days after the battle.



Indeed, when the Forum (the six-sided building) was built in 1975-76 by the Gospel Harvester Church as a sanctuary, and they were connecting the Forum to the original home, Civil War bullets (balls) were found imbedded in the exterior wall. A park dedicated to the battle is located near Peachtree Battle Avenue where it intersects Northside Drive, only a stone's throw from the Centre.

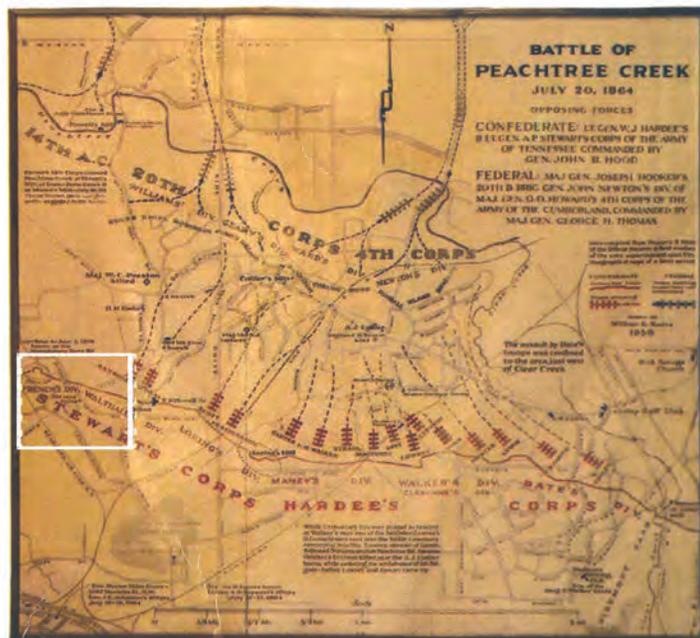
IN the 1900s, the Westside was an important warehouse district. The railroads converged in this area, providing convenient delivery to

warehouses serving downtown retail establishments such as Rich's Department Store and Davison's. Today, in addition to discount warehouse businesses, many of these facilities have been converted into multipurpose lofts.

IN 1996, three Iranian brothers bought the building. They had formed The Deljou Art Group and hired artists to create oils and acrylics, which are

reproduced and sold in quantity to designers of the bedrooms of cruise ship lines and hotels. They purchased a property around the corner on Taylor Avenue and built the 12,000 square-foot room off the back of the original three-story building, and the church sanctuary. The five skylights were installed to create natural light for the artists

to paint by. This space is currently the home for the Defoor Café and Bar, The Encore Gallery, the Gatsby Room and the Rhombus Room. The building was purchased from the Deljous by Deborah Eason in 2002 and its new role began as Midtown West's unique community center.



Original map by Wilbur G. Kurtz, courtesy Atlanta History Center.

