

GEORGIA ENCYCLOPEDIA REVEALS A LOT ABOUT OUR GREAT STATE

As I've said before, one of the finest resources available to learn about the Great State of Georgia is the New Georgia Encyclopedia, a project of the [Georgia Humanities Council](#), the Office of the Governor, the University of Georgia Press and the University System of Georgia. You can find all kinds of information at www.georgiaencyclopedia.org. I doubt other states have anything nearly as good. Of course, other states aren't the Great State of Georgia, either.

While strolling through the encyclopedia's Web site recently, I discovered a list of the 10 most popular searches last month. It is interesting to see what readers want to know about our state. Number one on the list was the City of Atlanta. I can only assume most folks were checking to see how Atlanta ever ended up in Georgia in the first place, given the place has about as much in common with the rest of the state as toads do with toadstools. The Atlanta airport was also high on the list of searches. No doubt a lot of people were looking at the best way to get out of town before the next NBA All-Star game.

Savannah was on the list. That is because the city has historic homes, beautiful parks and UGA VI, the world's most decorated college mascot. Gen. James Oglethorpe also made the list, in part because he decided to establish the colony of Georgia in Savannah, instead of Vermont, which is full of loony politicians and probably has a crummy state encyclopedia to boot. Praise his name.

Brunswick stew was a popular search topic, and Brunswick, Ga., gets credit in the encyclopedia for being the place where the dish was created. No doubt that some people in Virginia and North Carolina take exception to our claim of having invented Brunswick stew. Tough. Let them get their own encyclopedia.

There were a couple of strange items on the list. One was Sherman's March to the Sea. Why would anybody care about that dastardly event? Maybe researchers were checking to see if Sherman took all of his troops home with him after burning the state to the ground, or did he leave a bunch of them behind so their descendants could grow up here and tell the rest of us what a bunch of dumb rednecks we are?

Another popular search last month that didn't make much sense was cotton. This city boy thought boll weevils destroyed our cotton crop years ago and had forced farmers to start growing rayon, but the encyclopedia says cotton is alive and well in Georgia. That's good news. Now maybe we can finally get rid of those ugly rayon bushes that blight the landscape. The stuff grows like kudzu, you know.

Modesty prevents me from saying what nationally ranked university football team got the third most searches of all the thousands of topics in the New Georgia Encyclopedia. (Hint: It is the oldest-state chartered university in the nation, located in Athens, the Classic City of the South.) I hate to admit it, but Georgia fans were probably checking to be sure the West Virginia football team had left town before unlocking their doors and letting their kids go back outside, and wondering whether we might have to play them again anytime soon. I hope not.

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. was on the list, as he should be. So was the late, great Ray Charles. Which reminds me that with Ray Charles gone, nobody should ever again be allowed to sing the sacred paean "Georgia on my Mind" in public, with the possible exception of Willie Nelson.

There were some surprising omissions. Not making the New Georgia Encyclopedia's list last month were President Peanut, Ted Turner, the runners-up to the University of Utah in the Whatzit Bowl, every politician in the state and Sheila the Family Wonder Dog. The others may be nursing hurt feelings that nobody seems to care about them or their opinions, but not Sheila the Family Wonder Dog. Last time her name was entered in an Internet search, she got 47 hits. When you are that famous, who needs an encyclopedia?