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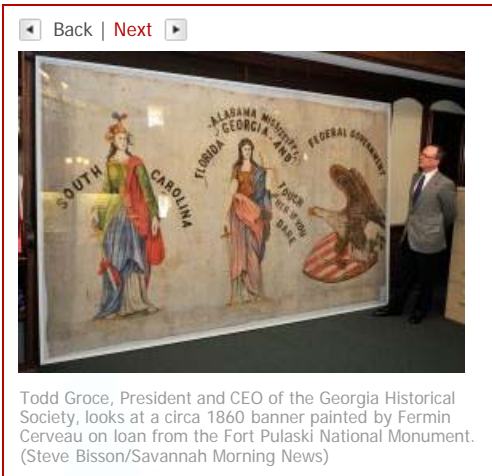
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# Georgia Historical Society to display colorful, evocative Civil War-era banners

Georgia Historical Society to display colorful, evocative banners as part of its commemoration of 150th anniversary of Civil War

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By Chuck Mobley

"Touch Her If You Dare," an outsized political statement stylishly fashioned by Savannah artist Fermin Cerveau in late 1860 amid an outpouring of support for South Carolina's secession, is now on display at the Georgia Historical Society.

It's one of six hand-stitched pieces of history that make up "Conquered Banners: Georgia's Civil War Flags," an exhibition of Southern sentiment and service that will run through Dec. 30, 2011.

Cerveau first won fame in 1837 when he climbed the tower of the old City Exchange (located where City Hall now stands), and crafted "View of Savannah," a colorful canvas that

conveyed a sense of ease as it studied the structures, squares, streets and society of the downtown area.

"Touch Her If You Dare" has a much different temper. An imposing 11 feet, 2 inches wide, and 6 feet, 6 inches high, it was carried through the city's streets during a torchlight parade in December 1860 celebrating South Carolina's decision to leave the Union, said W. Todd Groce, president and CEO of the GHS.

There's no reference in the banner to the Confederacy because it didn't exist yet, said Groce, but it's clear that Cerveau's dramatic painting was warning the federal government not to interfere with or threaten South Carolina.

Another flag in the exhibit, one from Effingham County, was also crafted by Cerveau, a Turkish immigrant who worked for the Central of Georgia Railroad as a painter.

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A burning altar, with the statement "Our Home and Our Country," is emblazoned on one side of this banner, and the Georgia state seal is on the other.

"Mrs. P.H. Stanton commissioned Cerveau to paint this flag for \$15," said Gloria Swift, park ranger/curator at Fort Pulaski National Monument. The receipt from Cerveau is in the fort's collection.

The flags are the property of Fort Pulaski. The exhibit, which coincides with the 150th anniversary of the Civil War, completes an unlikely circle.

Originally, the flags were in the GHS' collections, Groce said. But, by the 1960s, they were in "bad shape," and the society turned them over to Fort Pulaski and the National Park Service so they could be restored and displayed.

They then hung in the fort's museum for years, Swift said, but recent renovations at the fort cut down on the display space, so the fort offered to loan them to the GHS for several years.

"I'm really happy that they're going to be displayed for the sesquicentennial," Swift said.

#### If You Go

What: "Conquered Banners: Georgia's Civil War Flags"

Where: The Georgia Historical Society, 501 Whitaker St.

When: During regular library hours, which are noon-5 p.m. Tuesday through Friday, and 10 a.m.-5 p.m. on the first and third Saturdays of the month.

Details: The exhibit is on loan from the National Park Service. The flags will be shown one at a time and will be rotated through 2011, the first year of the 150th-anniversary of the Civil War. More Cerveau: Fermin Cerveau's panoramic portrayal of Savannah, painted in 1837, is also on exhibit at the GHS.

Admission: Free. Donations are welcome.

Information: 912-651-2125 or www.georgiahistory.com.

The other flags

Go to [savannahnow.com/accent](http://savannahnow.com/accent) to see several of the flags that make up "Conquered Banners: Georgia's Civil War Flags" exhibit at the Georgia Historical Society.

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