

THE PIG MONUMENT OF WASHINGTON COUNTY

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A mile or so south of the tiny hamlet of Oconee, Georgia, a small green sign reading “Pig Monument” points off into the forest beside the road. A hundred feet or so inside the woods stands an impressive granite stele some six feet high and four feet across. Under the bas-relief carving of the image of a pig, the following inscription is found:

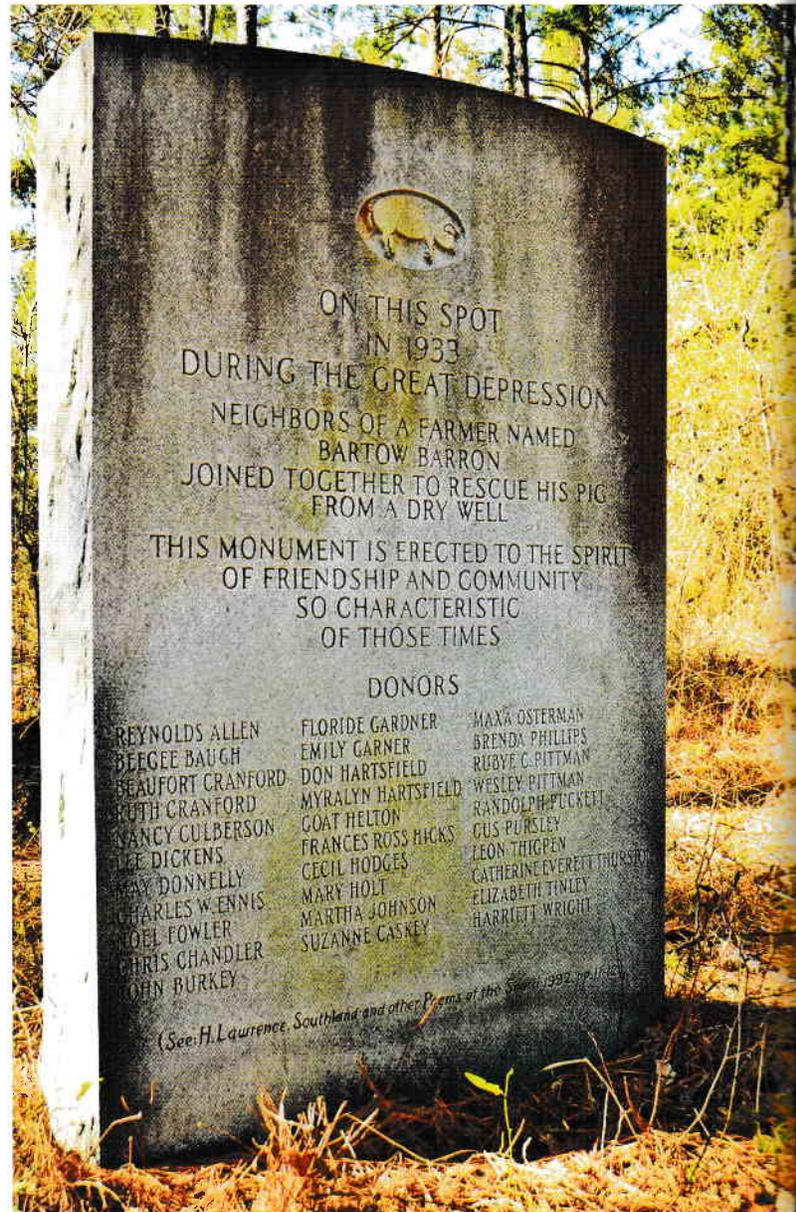
On this spot in 1933 during the Great Depression neighbors of a farmer named Bartow Barron joined together to rescue his pig from a dry well. This monument is erected to the spirit of friendship and community so characteristic of those times.

The story, as recounted by a newspaper article two-thirds of a century later, has it that Bartow Barron was a poor but honest farmer who one day discovered his pig missing. For two weeks he searched fruitlessly, unwilling to give in to the apparent loss of his prized animal. The pig, so the story goes, represented Barron’s meat for the entire winter. There was a deep dry well on the place. He had looked in it before, but retracing his steps, decided to take one last look. There, from forty feet below at the bottom of the narrow pit, his pig stared back at him.

Determined to recover his pig, Barron began the arduous task of filling the well a shovelful at a time, waiting for the animal to trample down the earth before depositing another scoop of dirt. As one man working alone, it would have taken weeks to fill the hole enough to allow the pig to climb out. In the meantime, it would need to be fed and watered.

Barron was a respected member of the community, having helped others in time of need. On becoming aware of his plight, his neighbors banded together to take turns filling the well. In a matter of days the pig was rescued.

This oft-repeated tale, perhaps apocryphal, but inspiring none the less, attracted the interest of the Rev. Harold Lawrence, at the time pastor of the First United Methodist Church in nearby Milledgeville. Lawrence penned a poem, “The Depression Pig,” and organized an effort to erect a memorial to the event. In 1992, the monument, bearing the inscription above and the names of donors to the effort, was erected at the site of the former dry well. It remains there for all to see, a unique snippet of Georgia history. ■



Important Information: The Pig Monument is located on the west side of Ga. Highway 272, approximately 1.8 miles south of the railway crossing in Oconee, Georgia, and approximately 0.7 miles south of the city limits. The GPS coordinates are Latitude 32.83502 and Longitude -82.93998.