

# GEORGIA

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# BATTLEFIELDS

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Published by Georgia Battlefields Association, Inc., a non-profit organization dedicated to preservation of Georgia's Civil War history and sites. Contact newsletter editor by e-mail: [info@georgiabattlefields.org](mailto:info@georgiabattlefields.org)

## **Rocky Face Ridge purchase a model of cooperation**

Some of the most beautiful and important Civil War land in Georgia has been saved, thanks to the cooperation of two local governments and a private foundation. 625 acres of the Rocky Face Ridge battlefield, recognized as a prime site by the Civil War Sites Advisory Commission report in 1993, have been preserved. (See November newsletter item.)

According to Mike Babb, Chairman of the Whitfield County Board of Commissioners, "Things really began with the greenspace funds appropriated by the state legislature (in 2000)." Whitfield County's share of the funds was \$182,917. The City of Dalton joined forces with the County, adding its \$74,344 share of the greenspace dollars, but an unexpected problem arose: As more of Georgia's local governments qualified for the greenspace program, Whitfield and Dalton's share shrunk by \$41,000. (For more on the greenspace program, see [www.state.ga.us/dnr/greenspace](http://www.state.ga.us/dnr/greenspace).)

Still united in their efforts, County and City officials then turned to the Community Foundation of Northwest Georgia, a non-profit organization "dedicated to enhancing the quality of life in northwest Georgia." The Foundation donated \$41,000 to compensate for the reduction in greenspace funds. (See the Foundation's web site at [www.cfnwg.org](http://www.cfnwg.org).)

The combined County, City, and Foundation funds came to \$514,000. When the National Park Service matched one federal dollar for every two obtained from other sources, the total amounted to \$711,000, enough to purchase 625 acres of hallowed ground.

Commissioner Babb says, "The acquisition of Rocky Face Ridge is positive proof of the degree of accomplishment a community-wide comprehensive effort can achieve. The land will remain undeveloped but with trails and vista Civil War buffs and many others will enjoy."

## **Remembering Gilbert Smith: One man can make a difference**

A fine walking trail in Rome, Georgia, has been named in honor of Major Gilbert Smith. Smith's death last January was the only thing that could stop him from working to make Rome's citizens aware of their city's Civil War history. The name of the trail reflects the honorary rank bestowed on Gilbert Smith by the Sons of Confederate Veterans (SCV) and the City of Rome, though he'd actually been in the Navy and Merchant Marine during WWII.

According to Buddy Autry, commander of the local SCV camp, "Gilbert Smith was a great guy. He worked countless hours and spent thousands of his own dollars to make us Romans appreciate how important Rome was during the Civil War. Gilbert's the person who got Fort Norton on the National Register. He did this as an individual. He never asked for a dime."

Anxious to preserve ante-bellum buildings that would otherwise be torn down, Smith convinced the owners of Barnsley Gardens, formerly an ante-bellum mansion and now a resort west of Adairsville, to accept Rome's historic Rice house. Still containing bullet holes, the house was moved from Rome under Smith's watchful eye, and it now serves as the resort's dining area.

In his years of research on Rome's history, Gilbert Smith went to the original records, poring over old documents. He publicized Rome's importance as a wartime munitions manufacturing center and railroad terminus. He reminded his fellow citizens of Nathan Bedford Forrest's 3 May 1863 victory that saved Rome from a raiding Federal force. He made sure the Confederate cavalry who defended the city at Farmer's Bridge on 15 May 1864 received a proper monument. He often recounted the fierce artillery duel in Rome as Federal forces approached on 17 May 1864, the Confederate guns firing from Forts Norton and Stovall in the heart of the city.

Even when Smith knew he was dying from cancer, he never missed a day promoting the walking trail near Fort Norton. According to Autry, "He never wanted any glory. He just wanted the quarter-mile trail, which runs past the old trenches, open for the public." Autry added that the Major Gilbert Smith Walking Trail should soon have appropriate markers and a brochure. On the anniversary of Gilbert Smith's passing, we remember a person who made a difference.

## **GBA's Kolb Farm efforts acknowledged in national pubs**

Previous newsletters (November, August, and June 2001) have related GBA's efforts to help save the fourth corner of the Kolb Farm intersection. Those efforts have now been recognized in two national publications: the November issue of the monthly *Civil War News*, and the winter issue of *Hallowed Ground*, a quarterly publication of the Civil War Preservation Trust (CWPT).

Kolb Farm Coalition, a local group that came together to prevent commercial development on the land across from the historic farmhouse, needed to raise \$30,000 in 120 days to satisfy the Cobb County Board of Commissioners that the parcel was worthy of funds from the Georgia Greenspace Program. Coalition President Bob Hovey acknowledged the efforts of GBA in the *Civil War News* article: "They made a \$5,000 pledge when we were just getting started. It gave us a real boost at a critical juncture." The *Hallowed Ground* article acknowledged both GBA's pledge of money and our requests to the Civil War Preservation Trust to get involved.

In a December phone interview, Hovey said, "Until the GBA helped us, we were a brand new citizens group, knowing nothing about saving historic land. GBA's \$5,000 made the difference. It gave us encouragement. Until then, we'd been getting \$25 and \$30 checks. GBA's \$5,000 pledge gave us credibility. Larger sums of money flowed in. Best of all, GBA's donation and recommendation caught the Civil War Preservation Trust's attention." As the Coalition neared its fund-raising goal, CWPT pledged a "last-dollar-in" grant of up \$10,000. The Kolb Farm Coalition presented the \$30,000 check to the Cobb County Commission in late September.

The landowners subsequently accepted Cobb County's purchase offer. On 11 December, the County Commission unanimously approved using Greenspace funds to buy the "fourth corner." The County hopes to transfer the parcel to Kennesaw Mountain National Park in January.

## **GBA battlefield tour of Savannah area sites: 14-17 February**

Almost everyone familiar with preservation has heard of Ed Bearss. The Civil War Preservation Trust named its annual preservation award after Ed, and several Civil War Round Tables give awards in his name. Among his many accomplishments while with the National Park Service, Ed located the Federal gunboat *Cairo* near Vicksburg and began its recovery and preservation. He helped establish the boundaries of several other battlefield parks and was a member of the 1993 Civil War Sites Advisory Commission. Since retiring as Chief Historian, Ed has remained active conducting tours, giving speeches and lectures, and appearing on TV documentaries.

Ed was seriously wounded as a Marine in WWII, and his personal archives have been transferred to the Marine Corps Research Center. Don't miss this opportunity to tour with Ed!

**Guide:** Ed Bearss, Chief Historian Emeritus of the National Park Service.

**Headquarters:** Howard Johnson Inn, corner of Boundary and Hull Streets (\$62 + tax),  
912 232 4371, 800 673 6316, hojosav@bellsouth.net, or [www.savannahhowardjohnson.com](http://www.savannahhowardjohnson.com).

**Cost** (incl. lunch and dinner on Fri. and Sat.): \$275 for GBA members, \$325 for non-members.

**Transportation:** 47-passenger bus with on-board facility.

**Schedule:**

Feb 14 Thu 8 p.m. Reception with Ed Bearss.

15 Fri 8 a.m. Bus departs hotel. 7 p.m. Buffet dinner at Fort Jackson.

16 Sat 8 a.m. Bus departs hotel. 7 p.m. Sit-down dinner at Savannah History Museum.

17 Sun 8 a.m. Bus departs for Civil War sites in city. Noon: Return to hotel. End of tour.

**Sign up or more info:** Contact Elaine or Bob Rivers, 770 592 5611 or [rivers.2@juno.com](mailto:rivers.2@juno.com),  
or see GBA's web site [www.georgiabattlefields.org](http://www.georgiabattlefields.org).

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