

# 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)

## Ed Bearss leads GBA tour of Savannah-area Civil War sites

Over 40 people enjoyed the GBA tour led by the incomparable Ed Bearss on 15-17 February. Sites visited included Fort Pulaski, Fort Jackson, Fort McAllister, Buckhead Church, Magnolia Springs (Camp Lawton), Ebenezer Creek, and many historic markers along the way.

This is the second tour organized by GBA, and—based on the enthusiastic response—we're considering more tours. With good planning, we hope to have Ed Bearss lead us again. Let us know what sites you'd like to see on future tours by contacting GBA secretary Elaine Rivers at 1028 Boston Ridge, Woodstock, GA, 30189-3560, or e-mailing [info@georgiabattlefields.org](mailto:info@georgiabattlefields.org).



We gratefully acknowledge the help of the Coastal Heritage Society ([www.chsgeorgia.org](http://www.chsgeorgia.org)) in planning and staging this tour.

Photo: Ed Bearss lectures at Fort McAllister. Tourists take shelter in the Artificer's shed, while Ed ignores the rain.

## Atlanta site makes national "ten most endangered" list

Working with the Georgia Civil War Commission, Georgia Battlefields Association recommended an Atlanta-area site to the Civil War Preservation Trust (CWPT) for inclusion in its annual "ten most endangered sites" list for 2002. CWPT announced its list at a 26 February news conference at the National Press Club in Washington, D.C. The 100-acre site is in southwest Atlanta and contains what may be the only remaining trenches dug by Federal forces as they attempted to cut Atlanta's railroad supply lines. Efforts to preserve the site were initially led by Georgia Civil War Commission member Karl Barnes and have been substantially advanced by Bob Price, a consultant to the Commission.

After Federal cavalry was unable to permanently cut Atlanta's railroad lifelines in July 1864, Major General William T. Sherman determined to use infantry to achieve that objective. After an unsuccessful attempt to get around Confederate forces along Utoy Creek (6 August 1864), Sherman extended his trench lines to the southwest. Good remnants of these trenches are evident in the southwest Atlanta site today. While no fighting occurred at this spot, the trenches are the last of their kind: We know of no other place around Atlanta where Federal trench lines remain.

The current property owners had planned to develop the site but are willing to sell the historically significant portion if they can recover their investment relatively quickly. The city of Atlanta supports the preservation effort and is paying for a property appraisal (an essential step). An informal canvas of the homeowners surrounding the property indicates widespread support for turning the land into a park. Additional interest has been shown by the Conservation Fund, the Blank Foundation and the Civil War Preservation Trust. Even if all the potential funding sources come through, the price of the land is still likely to exceed the money available.

GBA asks for your help in saving one of the few remaining Civil War sites around Atlanta. The battle sites of Peachtree Creek, Atlanta, Ezra Church, and Utoy Creek were lost long ago to development. Please help us save this site for future generations. As always, your contributions to Georgia Battlefields Association are tax deductible and may be sent to treasurer Art Carey at 2331 Fireside Ct, Jonesboro GA 30236-2671.

## **National Park Service web sites back on line**

After two months of down time, Department of the Interior web sites are active again. This also means that you can e-mail National Park Service employees. Links to Civil War-related National Parks in Georgia are on GBA's web site ([www.georgiabattlefields.org](http://www.georgiabattlefields.org)).

## **Newsletter available on the web or by e-mail**

The Georgia Battlefields newsletter is posted on our web site ([www.georgiabattlefields.org](http://www.georgiabattlefields.org)) each month, but not before our paying members have a chance to receive their copies through the regular mail. We also send the newsletter as an e-mail attachment to several other preservation groups and to some individual members. We're always looking for ways to cut administrative costs, especially as the postage rates continue to climb. If you are willing to receive the newsletter via e-mail, please contact the editor at [info@georgiabattlefields.org](mailto:info@georgiabattlefields.org).

## **Coastal Georgia was scene of small-unit operations**

Consideration of Civil War events in Georgia often focuses on the Atlanta Campaign and the March to the Sea, but the coast of Georgia was witness to the almost daily hare and hound drama between blockade-runners and U.S. warships. The bombardment and surrender of Fort Pulaski on 11 April 1862 drastically reduced Savannah's value as a port for blockade runners, but before and after that event, the coastal islands were the scene of smuggling and amphibious operations.

Captain Lewis West of the Federal gunboat *Alabama* wrote of representative incidents. In December 1861, *Alabama* trapped a schooner off Cumberland Island and forced the ship to run aground. Hastily, the schooner's crew began unloading cargo onto the beach, but a warning shot from *Alabama* sent them running, and the schooner was captured for the Union.

In April 1862, *Alabama* was ordered to reconnoiter a reportedly abandoned gun emplacement on the west side of Jekyll Island (just below the present-day airport). Captain West described the fortification as a "perfect masterpiece of engineering, with earthworks thrown up on the sides and a roof." West ordered a landing party to burn the supporting timbers, thus caving in the roof and rendering the earthworks useless.

On a subsequent operation at St. Simons, West took a landing party on a night reconnaissance to "look for 20 rebels hiding on the island." Night missions were exceptionally dangerous because of the potential for misidentification and friendly fire. West described the action: "We commenced plunging through the woods, thickets and swamps, disturbing sundry rattlesnakes and alligators but not finding what we sought. The only trophies of the expedition were two 'secession cats' picked up by the men on the road, which were really valuable, as our old cat died about two months ago and rats have been abounding ever since."

The National Park Service's Southeast Archaeological Center continues to make Civil War-related discoveries along Georgia's coast. The relevant Department of Interior web site is [www.cr.nps.gov/seac/civilwar.htm](http://www.cr.nps.gov/seac/civilwar.htm). Also, check Richard J. Lenz's Sherpa guide to Civil War sites in Coastal Georgia at [www.sherpaguides.com/georgia/civil\\_war/coastal/](http://www.sherpaguides.com/georgia/civil_war/coastal/).

Thanks to Don Farrant of St. Simons Island for submitting material from Captain West's journal.

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