

# GEORGIA

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# BATTLEFIELDS

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## **Bob Rivers resigns as GBA vice president and trustee**

GBA suffered a loss when Bob Rivers resigned as trustee and vice president for membership. We thank Bob for his three years in this position and all the ancillary duties he readily undertook. We're consoled that Bob will remain active in GBA, and his wife Elaine remains GBA secretary.

We're looking for GBA members who are willing to devote more time to the organization's work and become a trustee. Specifically, we're looking for someone to succeed Bob as membership chairman, which includes mailing the monthly newsletter. Please contact Charlie Crawford if you're interested: phone 770 452 1583, or e-mail [info@georgiabattlefields.org](mailto:info@georgiabattlefields.org).

## **Hero of Atlanta gets late recognition -- again**

Tacoma, Washington, is a long way from Atlanta, and 2002 is a long time after 1864; but John Sprague links these cities and these dates. In a 27 April ceremony, a Medal of Honor marker was placed on Sprague's grave in the Old Tacoma Cemetery.

On 22 July 1864, Colonel Sprague commanded the 2<sup>nd</sup> brigade, 4<sup>th</sup> division, XVI Army Corps, Army of the Tennessee. While the Corps was moving into position east of Atlanta, Sprague's brigade drew the boring duty of guarding the Army's wagon trains in Decatur. When the Confederate infantry unleashed its attack on the Army of the Tennessee, Wheeler's Confederate cavalry descended on the wagons. Sprague organized a spirited defense by his own brigade and whatever detached units he could gather, saving the wagons from destruction and preventing the Confederates from gaining any advantage from the Battle of Atlanta. (Read an account of the battle at [www.cwartillery.org/3rdbattery/decatour.html](http://www.cwartillery.org/3rdbattery/decatour.html).) Sprague was promoted to brigadier general for his efforts and after the war became the first mayor of Tacoma.

When the War Department sought to standardize the criteria for the Medal of Honor in 1893, it reviewed all instances of the award as well as many other cases in which the Medal might have been deserved but was not awarded. On 15 December 1893, the Medal of Honor was approved for John Wilson Sprague, but he died on 24 December before receiving the Medal. For over 100 years, Sprague's grave also went unrecognized as that of a Medal of Honor recipient, but that's now been corrected.

## **More on cooperative effort to preserve Rocky Face Ridge site**

Previous newsletter items (January 2002, November 2001) reported on the cooperative effort to preserve historic land on Rocky Face Ridge. In all, 625 acres were purchased for \$711,000. A Conservation Fund press release provides more detail on the organizations involved. (For the complete text of the press release, see [www.conservationfund.org/?article=2507&back=true](http://www.conservationfund.org/?article=2507&back=true).)

Credit should go first to the landowners, who are the Looper family and Rex Investments, a partnership of Julia Looper Rex. Private and public organizations involved were Whitfield County, the City of Dalton, the Dalton/Whitfield Chamber of Commerce, the Georgia Community Greenspace Program, the National Park Service, the Community Foundation of Northwest Georgia, the Turner Foundation, the Gilder Foundation, and the Conservation Fund.

The Conservation Fund is also supporting the effort to preserve the Southwest Atlanta site containing Federal trenches. This site was named to the Civil War Preservation Trust (CWPT) 2002 list of most endangered sites. (See March newsletter.) Frances Kennedy is Director of the Conservation Fund's Civil War Battlefield Campaign. She is also editor of the Fund's Civil War Battlefield Guide, first published in 1990 and updated in 1998. In 2001, CWPT honored Ms. Kennedy and the Conservation Fund for their contributions to battlefield preservation.

GBA would be happy to publish many more articles that feature this sort of cooperation among private and public organizations. Please do what you can in your local area, and let us know.

## **Preserving the memory of famous friends, North and South**

Garland Reynolds has previously been recognized in this newsletter for his preservation-related efforts, most recently (September 2001) as president of Friends of Georgia State Parks and Historic Sites. Reynolds, an architect by profession, is again demonstrating his public service as chairman of the Longstreet Society ([www.longstreet.org](http://www.longstreet.org)) and trustee of the Grant Monument Association ([www.grantstomb.org](http://www.grantstomb.org)). Reynolds thinks Grant and Longstreet's friendship and their efforts to re-unite the nation are especially worth remembering.

Longstreet was raised in northeast Georgia. Grant was raised in southern Ohio. Like many future generals on both sides, they met and formed a solid friendship at West Point and in the pre-war army. Both served in Mexico, and Longstreet was a groomsman at Grant's wedding.

After the Civil War, Longstreet settled in New Orleans. In 1867, he published a letter advising Southerners to acknowledge their defeat and to make the best of the situation by joining the Republican Party, this being the only way to retain political influence. Angered by this advocacy of cooperation with the "Black Republicans," opponents ruined Longstreet's business and threatened his family. Longstreet stayed away from New Orleans for much of the next two years, including a trip to Grant's inauguration in March 1869. Within a week, President Grant appointed Longstreet surveyor of customs for the port of New Orleans. This improved Longstreet's finances, but his closeness to Grant worsened his standing with white Southerners.

As a reward for his support of the Republican governor of Louisiana, Longstreet was appointed to command the New Orleans militia and police forces (composed mostly of former slaves) at a time when the struggle for political power included street fights and murder. In a September 1874 confrontation between 3600 police and 8400 members of the Crescent City White League (many of whom were former Confederate soldiers), Longstreet attempted to persuade the White Leaguers to disperse, but he was dragged from his horse, wounded, and taken prisoner. He was released two days later when Grant ordered Federal troops into the city.

At the urging of family, Longstreet moved back to northeast Georgia, where he wrote articles and a memoir suggesting that Robert E. Lee occasionally made mistakes during the war. Added to Longstreet's earlier actions, this infuriated former General Jubal Early and other Virginians, who then denigrated Longstreet's contributions to the Confederacy. Since Lee died in 1870, he could not defend his "Old War Horse" or curb the dispute. Running a hotel and defending his reputation for another 30 years, Longstreet died in 1904 and was buried in Gainesville.

Grant had greater post-war success but was never free of problems. His presidency was tainted by scandal, and his business efforts failed, as they had in the pre-war years. He spent his last year in New York writing his memoirs, completing them the day before he died in 1885. Thanks to the excellence of Grant's prose and a royalty agreement arranged by Mark Twain, the memoirs earned considerable wealth for Grant's family. In 1897, his remains were placed in a grand monument in New York City. An extensive renovation of the monument's main building was completed in 1997, but the surrounding grounds and buildings still need much work.

Garland Reynolds continues the link between Grant and Longstreet. In his hometown of Gainesville, Reynolds helps insure that Longstreet's grave is maintained and is leading the restoration of the Piedmont Hotel, formerly owned by the General. In New York, Reynolds is chairman of the Grant Monument Association visitor center planning and design committee.

Georgia Battlefields Association salutes Garland Reynolds' recognition of Grant and Longstreet and his efforts to preserve historic sites, whether Federal or Confederate.

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