

GEORGIA

BATTLEFIELDS

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GBA president appears before state senate committee

On 30 October, GBA president Charlie Crawford appeared before the Georgia Senate Study Committee on the Location of Electric Transmission Lines. The invitation to appear resulted from the September newsletter item on the potential preservation implications of the August power blackout in the Northeastern U.S. Here is the text of the prepared statement:

Georgia Battlefields Association is a private, non-profit group incorporated in 1995 to preserve historic sites throughout the state. Georgia Battlefields Association believes that preserving battlefields is important to the nation's survival and success, because if we better understand history, we're better prepared to cope with situations that confront us today. Further, we believe that people learn best about what happened when they can visit the place where it happened. The very best learning occurs when the site looks much as it did when it became historic. Unfortunately, most battlefields don't look anything like they once did.

Atlanta serves as a prime example of destroyed Civil War sites. Four significant battles—Peachtree Creek, Atlanta, Ezra Church, and Utoy Creek—occurred within today's city limits, but not one of them appears even remotely as it did in 1864. This detracts considerably from anyone's understanding of what happened at these places. In Cobb County, much of the Kennesaw Mountain battlefield is preserved as a national park; but most views from the park have been altered dramatically by development in the last 20 years. Today, Coweta and Paulding county historic sites that were once considered far from the city are threatened by Atlanta's growth. And those new houses and businesses will need utilities, which will likely infringe on historic sites even if the core battlefield is preserved.

Within the past year, preservation groups, neighborhood associations, private foundations, and the city government cooperated to save a Civil War site in southwest Atlanta. This extremely rare site contains the remains of trenches dug in August 1864 by Federal forces attempting to outflank Atlanta's defenses. Running along the parcel's eastern boundary is an overhead power line that significantly detracts from anyone's ability to envision the site's wartime appearance.

Georgia Battlefields Association is not against progress or modernization: We recognize the value of reliable electricity. Though the organization's focus is history and preservation, many of our members have technological educations or professions. While we would like every battlefield to look as much as possible as it did in the 1860s, we don't want to live with the darkness, heat, cold, and disease that people did in the 19th century. But the great benefits that come from the availability of electricity should not override all other considerations.

We also recognize the need for the power of eminent domain, which has allowed the preservation of historic sites that would otherwise become housing developments, shopping centers, or parking lots. But eminent domain is a tool to be used sparingly, because property rights were also a founding principle of this country. Further, eminent domain is such a dangerously powerful tool that it should be given only to governments, which are ultimately accountable to the electorate. The awarding of this power to a commercial enterprise or utility, even one that provides a necessary service such as electricity, removes a vital check on the power of a non-governmental organization.

We don't ask that all transmission lines be forced underground or that their approval process be made so cumbersome as to frustrate efforts to deliver reliable electricity at a reasonable price. Rather, we ask only that checks and balances be restored to a system that—at this point—seems to favor the transmission line builders unequivocally. Restoring this balance will make the law more just, which was an objective of the people who fought on the sites we're trying to preserve.

Thanks for your time and consideration.

GBA participates in effort to identify Atlanta area sites

At the invitation of the Atlanta History Center, Georgia Battlefields Association participated in a 25 October meeting with the Atlanta Urban Design Commission to identify the 100 most significant Civil War sites within the city limits of Atlanta. Also attending were:

- Dr. Gordon Jones, Atlanta History Center Director of Exhibitions and Collections.
- Stephen Davis, author of [Atlanta Will Fall](#) and several articles on the Atlanta Campaign.
- Doug Young, Historic Preservation Planner for the Atlanta Urban Design Commission.
- Marquis Glenn, Georgia State University graduate student who is developing a site database under contract from the Atlanta Urban Design Commission

Ultimately, the Commission plans to have an interactive database of historic sites within the city limits. If a property owner or developer asks if a parcel of land is historic, the Commission can enter a query rather than trying to find an expert who knows all the sites in the city.

On 10 November, GBA submitted its list of Atlanta sites with amplifying text, including a list of Civil War-related historical markers placed by the Georgia Historical Commission in the 1950s (see November 2002 newsletter). The principal battles (Peachtree Creek, Atlanta, Ezra Church, and Utoy Creek) were naturally a focus, but the headquarters sites and the dozens of roads used as march routes were identified as much as possible. GBA is happy to have helped in this effort.

First “Hell Hole” symposium scheduled for 6 March

The Friends of Civil War Paulding County are sponsoring the first “Hell Hole” symposium on Saturday, 6 March 2004, at Chattahoochee Technical College (www.chat-tec.com) Paulding Campus, 400 Nathan Dean Blvd, Dallas GA. Believing that the Atlanta Campaign is the most understudied Civil War event of comparable importance, the Friends have selected topics and speakers to give the campaign the attention it deserves.

- “Tactical Developments in the Army of Tennessee during the Atlanta Campaign”
Dr Keith Bohannon, assistant professor of history at State University of West Georgia
- “Historic Preservation along the Atlanta Campaign Trail”
Jim Miles, journalist and author of tour guides for battles and campaigns in the West
- “John Bell Hood and the Battles for Atlanta”
Dr. J.D. Fowler, assistant professor of history at Kennesaw State University
- “Lincoln’s and Davis’s Connection to the Atlanta Campaign”
John Cissell, Superintendent of Kennesaw Mountain National Battlefield Park

To register for the symposium, send \$25 to Friends of Civil War Paulding County, P.O. Box 861, Hiram GA 30141 or call 770 443 1459.

GBA March 2004 tour led by Ed Bearss now has waiting list

Thanks to the enduring attraction of the nation’s premier historical tour guide and the marketing skills of GBA vice president Olly Keller, the March 2004 GBA tour led by Ed Bearss is full. With any group this size, a few people always drop out, so please let Olly know if you want to be on the waiting list. Olly can be reached at 404 351 1211 or okeller@webtv.net.

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