

G E O R G I A

BATTLEFIELDS

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

Sign up for GBA tour with Ed Bearss, 10-13 March 2005

To register for our next tour with Ed Bearss, you can e-mail info@georgiabattlefields.org; but your seat is confirmed only by sending a check for \$320 per person to GBA at 2331 Fireside Ct, Jonesboro GA 30236-2671. **Note: Each registrant must be a GBA member.**

Also note that the price has increased slightly (to \$320 from \$295) from previous years. While we try hard to provide a quality experience at a reasonable price, our expenses (such as fuel for the tour bus) have increased. Whatever money we make above tour expenses is used to buy land, place historical markers, or support other preservation efforts consistent with our charter.

The 2005 tour will continue our study of the Atlanta Campaign with stops at Rome, Adairsville, Kingston, Cassville, the Etowah River, and the Hell Hole sites (New Hope Church, Pickett's Mill, and Dallas). We'll also see the Allatoona Pass battlefield from Hood's Fall Campaign.

Headquarters hotel is the Country Inn & Suites, just east of I-75 exit 290 near Cartersville. Rate for participants is \$65 for a standard room and \$85 for a suite. Breakfast is included. The hotel will be the site of the welcome reception on Thursday evening (10 March). Call 770 386 5888.

Friday (11 March) dinner will be at the Booth Western Art Museum (www.boothmuseum.org). Saturday (12 March) dinner will be at Grand Oaks, a historic (though post-war) mansion. A box lunch will be provided on Friday and Saturday. Come enjoy another great tour led by Ed Bearss.

Vandals deface Chickamauga battlefield monuments

Early on Veterans' Day, vandals painted vulgarities on monuments, tablets, signs, and exhibits at Chickamauga National Military Park. Park Superintendent Pat Reed reports that staff members have already cleaned all but two of the stone monuments, for which he has requested technical advice. The signs were replaced and the wayside exhibits cleaned, but ten cast-iron tablets will require repainting. The tablets had recently been repainted as part of periodic maintenance.

This outrage follows a January 2004 incident in which two juveniles defaced 60 monuments with paint balls, with clean-up costing \$10,000. The senselessness of these crimes is beyond words.

If you know anything about the 11 November vandalism, please contact district ranger Jim Staub at 706 866 6627 or james_staub@nps.gov, or call the park's main office at 423 752 5213. Donate to the repair costs through Friends of the Park at P.O. Box 748, Chattanooga TN 37401. For more info on the Friends of the Park, see www.chickchatt.org or call 423 624 6914.

Tunnel Hill Heritage Center now open to visitors

The Tunnel Hill Heritage Center is now open to visitors from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Saturday. The newly completed building was the site of a lunch for the GBA tour led by Ed Bearss in March 2004, but only recently have the interior displays been finished. Displays relate to the railroad tunnel, the Civil War, the Dixie Highway, Cherokee Heritage, and notable families. Admission is \$2.50 for adults and \$1.50 for children under 12 and includes access to the nearby railroad tunnel that figures in the Great Locomotive chase and the opening phase of the Atlanta Campaign. For more information, call 706 673 3300 or e-mail cvb@citydalton.net.

Across from the Center is the Clisby Austin House, which served as a hospital after the battle of Chickamauga and as Sherman's HQ for five days in May 1864. The Holcomb family has restored the house and arranged for its preservation (see March 2003 newsletter).

This newsletter has frequently referred to the cooperation of several organizations in saving historic sites in Whitfield County (see newsletters for November 2001 and January, June, and October 2002). Many of these same groups also helped substantially in our 2004 GBA tour led by Ed Bearss. We hope to report more of their successes soon.

War in Georgia: 140 years ago – December 1864

The month opens with Sherman's two columns continuing to cut paths of destruction through Georgia. The troops notice the terrain change as they move from the piedmont onto the sandy coastal plains. Food is less plentiful, though the recent harvest has been good. Sherman is angered when his troops encounter land mines, and he directs that prisoners march ahead of the columns. He also authorizes his cavalry commander, Kilpatrick, to retaliate for any incidents in which Federal stragglers or foragers have been executed. The Federals find a large prison camp at Millen, but the 10,000 prisoners who had been there in late October are gone.

The most egregious incident of Federal forces abandoning escaped slaves occurs on 8 December at Ebenezer Creek, when General Jefferson C. Davis, who had already shown intolerance for Negroes, orders the pontoon bridge taken up when the last troops are across. Some number, probably in the hundreds, of former slaves are stranded. Many plunge into the icy current, but not all get across. General Wheeler reports recapturing slaves during this period before leading his Confederate cavalry into South Carolina on 9 December.

The Federal columns draw up in front of the Savannah defenses beginning on 9 December. The 10,000 Confederates defending the city are a cobbled-together force led by General Hardee, who has chosen a good defense line; but Hardee has been shipping equipment out of Savannah for the last few weeks: He has been ordered to save his troops even if it means he must abandon the city.

To establish communications with the navy, Sherman turns his attention from Savannah south to Fort McAllister, which guards the Ogeechee River's outlet to the Atlantic. On 13 December, General William B. Hazen's division—which Sherman had commanded in 1862—overruns the fort; and the Federal armies—and the 12,000 former slaves that are still attached—can now be supplied by sea. Sherman informs the navy that his men have plenty of meat but need bread, sugar, and coffee, as well as shoes and uniforms. Most important for morale is the 16 December delivery of mail for the first time in a month.

Sherman is now able to communicate with Grant, who commends Sherman's march and urges him to bring his armies to Virginia by sea. Sherman replies that he wants to capture Savannah first, but he also prefers to reach Virginia by marching through the Carolinas.

In Savannah, Hardee rebuffs Federal demands for surrender but feels the hopelessness of his position. On the night of 20 December, Hardee orders a bombardment using the heavy guns that he can't withdraw, and the sound helps mask the Confederate withdrawal into South Carolina across three pontoon bridges, also covered with straw to reduce the noise of tramping feet and hooves. The Federals enter the city the next day; and on 22 December, Sherman dispatches a message to President Lincoln, begging to present as a Christmas gift the city of Savannah, with 150 heavy guns and 25,000 bales of cotton. Sherman's message understates the eventual haul, which includes 200 heavy guns, 35,000 bales of cotton, 13 locomotives, 191 rail cars, and tons of ammunition. Sherman and his senior subordinates establish headquarters in the city, while 60,000 men are camped around the outskirts. General Geary, former mayor of San Francisco and territorial governor of Kansas, is appointed to govern Savannah, which he does effectively.

In his assessment of the March to the Sea, Sherman reports that, of his 62,000 men, 103 died, 428 were wounded, and 500 were missing, of which 60 were killed after being captured. Most of his troops did not see an opposing soldier during the march. As many as 25,000 slaves followed his columns. His men stole 6900 horses and mules, 20,000 cattle, and 10 million pounds of food and fodder. Altogether, he believes the campaign caused \$1 billion damage, \$20 million of which was appropriated for Federal use and the rest wasted. He writes the destruction is as if a volcano erupted in Atlanta and a 60 mile wide stream of lava flowed 300 miles to the sea.

**Georgia Battlefields Association
2331 Fireside Court
Jonesboro GA 30236-2671**

www.georgiabattlefields.org

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