

GEORGIA

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

Renewed threat to Brown's Mill battlefield

Readers of this newsletter will recall several articles about Brown's Mill over the last four years (March 2004, October 2003, September 2003, July 2001). Brown's Mill was the site of a cavalry battle on 30 July 1864, when a Federal force under Brigadier General Ed McCook was caught and attacked by a Confederate force under Major General Joe Wheeler. On perhaps his best day as a commander, Wheeler led his troops to a near total rout of the Federals. The results of this battle and the failures of other Federal cavalry raids led General Sherman to conclude that a major infantry strike was the way to isolate Atlanta, which he did a month later at Jonesboro.

David Evans, premier historian of cavalry operations during the Atlanta Campaign, reports that recent developments have renewed the threat to the Brown's Mill site. First, the Georgia Department of Transportation has resurrected a 12-year old plan for a Newnan bypass. The proposed highway would pass just north of the site where the battle began (now Haynes' junk yard) and would widen the eastern portion of Millard Farmer Road, which—when it was called Ricketyback Road—was the site of Wheeler's primary flank attack. Recent residential development may force DOT to consider more southerly alternate routes that would traverse the heart of the battlefield. Second, Haynes' junk yard—on the site where Wheeler's force first struck the head of the Federal column—is now for sale. While the junk yard doesn't help one envision how the site appeared in 1864, a cluster of multi-story houses or an even more commercial development would be worse. Finally, a proposed communications tower may further damage the viewshed (already marred from some vantage points by a major power line).

Newest rezoning proposals affect River Line

Although some parts of the River Line have been saved in the last few years (see newsletters for January 2005, September 2004, August 2004, November 2003, and May 2003), the threats continue to other portions of this extended site in eastern Cobb County. The Confederate earthworks subsequently known as Johnston's River Line were built beginning 18 June 1864 when Brigadier General Francis Shoup gained General Joseph Johnston's approval to prepare earthworks on the north bank of the Chattahoochee River. Under Shoup's direction, Confederate engineers conscripted slaves from Atlanta-area plantations to build a unique set of fortifications, including arrowhead-shaped forts subsequently called Shoupades. Confederate troops marched into the earthworks during the night of 4-5 July 1864. When Major General Sherman observed the works on the morning of 5 July, he concluded that they were the finest field fortifications he had ever seen and determined not to assault them directly. Instead, he deployed only part of his forces opposite the works, and those Federals dug corresponding trenches for the next five days while other detachments sought a place to cross the Chattahoochee. When the Federals successfully established bridgeheads upriver on 8 and 9 July, Johnston decided to abandon the River Line. His 10 July telegram to President Davis announcing withdrawal from the Line was another exasperating event that led Davis to remove Johnston from command one week later.

As late as the 1960s, one could walk both the Confederate and Federal lines with considerable continuity; but the last forty years have seen both lines fragmented into dozens of small pieces. Of the original 36 Shoupades, one has been saved and two have been lost since 1998: Only seven are still identifiable. Because the Shoupades are unique, they continue to draw more interest than other earthworks. In January of this year, GBA first fielded an inquiry from the Indiana Historical Bureau about General Shoup and his design of the River Line. Shoup was an Indiana native and 1855 West Point graduate who moved to Florida when he left the U.S. Army in 1860. He stayed with the South when Florida seceded, but the state of Indiana is erecting a historical marker at his birthplace. Along with historian Bill Scaife, GBA has provided information about the River Line and confirmed that the Shoupades are unique to this location.

An exhibit that addresses the Shoupades is running at the Marietta Museum through 31 August. The "All About Vinings" exhibit was organized by Marion Blackwell and B.J. Boyes, and it features Bill Scaife's model of a Shoupade in displays about the River Line. The Marietta Museum is in the former Kennesaw House Hotel, where Andrews' Raiders stayed before stealing a train and precipitating the Great Locomotive Chase.

Since 2000, efforts to save remaining portions of both the Confederate and Federal lines have been spearheaded by Roberta Cook, who formed the River Line Historic Area and lives between the lines. Recently, she's been aided by Jan Loftis, a 2004 appointee to the Georgia Civil War Commission (October 2004 newsletter). Ms. Loftis is chairing the River Line Parks Alliance, which was formed specifically to get the state to accept as a park the 100 acres that include the southernmost portion of the Confederate line, featuring a Shoupade and an anchor fort as well as infantry trenches. Some politicians, including Smyrna city councilman Wade Lnenicka and Cobb County Commission chair Sam Olens, have expressed concern for saving sites, but no government—city, county, state, or national—has made funding preservation a priority.

Most recently, a rezoning request (Z-107) is endangering two of the seven remaining Shoupades and two artillery redans along Fort Drive, whose name derives from the forts. A developer proposes to build homes and condominiums in this area of unincorporated Cobb County. The rezoning hearing for the county board of commissioners is scheduled for 9 a.m. on 19 July. Georgia Battlefields Association is asking the county commission to give maximum protection to the earthworks if the rezoning application is approved, and we ask that you do the same. You may contact the county commission in several ways:

- Through the web site www.cobbcounty.org/boc
- By mail to 100 Cherokee St, Ste 300, Marietta GA 30090 or by phone at 770 528 3300.
- Commission chairman Sam Olens: solens@cobbcounty.org or 770 529 3305.
- District 2 commissioner Joe Thompson: jthompson@cobbcounty.org or 770 528 3316. Fort Drive is in District 2.
- District 1 commissioner Helen Goreham: hgoreham@cobbcounty.org or 770 528 3314. Before her election, Ms. Goreham was a founder of the Kolb Farm Coalition (December 2002 newsletter). She continues to be a friend to preservation efforts.

If you send e-mail, please copy all the commissioners, including Tim Lee tlee@cobbcounty.org (District 3) and Annette Kesting annette.kesting@cobbcounty.org (District 4).

Survey of ironclad wreck site shows most of the hull is gone

The December 2002 newsletter reported the start of another survey of the wreck of the ironclad *CSS Georgia*, which was destroyed by Confederate forces when they evacuated Savannah in December 1864. The wreck sits on the bottom of the Savannah River near Fort Jackson. The murky water at the 40-foot depth limits visual or photographic inspection, so much of this latest survey was done by SONAR (SOund Navigation And Ranging). The SONAR scans indicate the ship's armor, engines, boilers, propellers, and some of its cannons (other cannons and equipment were removed during previous surveys) are still at the bottom of the river despite damage and dispersion during dredging and other shipping activities over the last 140 years. Surprisingly little of the hull and other wooden components remains. While this is disappointing in some ways, it might facilitate the raising of the wreck: Since less of the ship remains, the cost of raising the fragments should be reduced. Coastal Heritage Society has long been advocating the recovery, preservation, and eventual display *CSS Georgia* (January 2003 newsletter).

CSS Georgia is both a historic artifact and a hazard to navigation, so the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, responsible for maintaining the ship channel, must consider how to both preserve and remove the ship's remains. See a SONAR image of the wreck on Coastal Heritage Society's web page www.chsgeorgia.org/ccs/history.htm, which also has a link to the Corp of Engineer's web site pertaining to their plans.

**Georgia Battlefields Association
7 Camden Rd NE
Atlanta GA 30309**

www.georgiabattlefields.org

July 2005

**Address correction requested
Return postage guaranteed**