

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

Bearss 2014 tour will focus on opening of the Atlanta Campaign

Dates: 13-16 March 2014

Hotel: LaQuinta, 715 College Dr, Dalton, just north and west of I-75 exit 333. 706 272 9099. GBA rate is \$84 (\$95 including tax) per night. www.lq.com.

Guides: National Park Service Chief Historian Emeritus Ed Bearss

Chickamauga-Chattanooga National Military Park Chief Historian Jim Ogden

Tour focus: Sesquicentennial of the opening of the Atlanta Campaign, including Ringgold, Tunnel Hill, Varnell, Prater's Mill, Crow Valley, Rocky Face Ridge, Mill Creek Gap, Dalton, Dug Gap, Villanow, Snake Creek Gap, and Resaca.

Reserve your place on the tour by sending \$395 to GBA at 7 Camden Rd NE, Atlanta GA 30309.

GBA appears in documentary about Ed Bearss

The June 2013 newsletter mentioned GBA members Gene Murphy and Charlie Crawford being interviewed for a documentary on the life of Ed Bearss. See a trailer for the documentary at www.encorecreative.net/?portfolio=american-journey-the-life-and-times-of-ed-bearss

Historic house in Dalton

The house in Dalton that served as Confederate General Joseph Johnston's headquarters in the winter of 1864 is also noteworthy as the site where Major General Patrick Cleburne presented his 2 January 1864 proposal to arm slaves to compensate for the Confederacy's dwindling manpower (see 150 years ago this month article below). A marker relating to the proposal was installed outside the house on 14 July 2011 (see August 2011 newsletter). Kenneth Boring, who owned and kept his business office in the house, supported installation of the marker. When Mr. Boring died in April 2012, he left the house to the Whitfield-Murray Historical Society.

The house is interesting in other respects. Owned by the Cook family in 1864, it was later a residence for the Huff family for many years and is often referred to as the Cook-Huff house. In 1864, it faced the railroad that still runs on the east side of the property; but in the early 1900s, it was jacked up and, using teams of mules, rotated about 160 degrees so that it now fronts on Selvidge Street to the west. We'll see the house during our March 2014 tour (see above).



150 years ago this month

The year opens with unusually cold temperatures penetrating as far south as Georgia. Much of daily life was consumed with finding water, food, and warm shelter. The chill is difficult for everyone, not just soldiers in the field. On 17 January, the need to keep warm results in a fire that kills two officers and destroys supplies at Camp Butler, Illinois. On 4 January, President Davis writes to General Lee that food must be seized without compensating civilians if necessary to feed the army.

A week into his tenure as commander of the Army of Tennessee, Joe Johnston is presented with an explosive issue at a 2 January meeting of his senior subordinates in Dalton, when division commander Cleburne proposes arming slaves to compensate for the Confederacy's dwindling manpower. Division commander W.H.T. Walker and others object strongly. Johnston orders that no mention be made of the proposal, but Walker asks Cleburne for a copy and sends it to President Davis. Davis orders suppression of discussion about the incident, and no copies of the proposal are found until one of Cleburne's aides dies in California in 1890.

Johnston makes his greatest contribution to the Confederate war effort over the winter when he restores morale by granting furloughs, declaring amnesty for those absent without authorization, undoing some of Bragg's disastrous brigade reassignments, and improving the flow of supplies. On 13 January, Davis writes to Johnston that withdrawal from northern Georgia would be politically as well as militarily detrimental but the next day writes that Johnston may have to detach troops from his army as the U.S. Navy is preparing to attack Mobile and a Federal cavalry force is operating from Memphis towards Meridian, Mississippi. On 20 January, U.S. ships do reconnoiter Forts Morgan and Gaines at the entrance to Mobile Bay.

On the Federal side, Military Division of the Mississippi commander Grant returned to Nashville in December, but the Army of the Cumberland, under Thomas, maintains the Federal presence in Chattanooga and north Georgia, though they have trouble getting supplies over the oft-damaged rail line from Nashville. Skirmishes occur west of Rocky Face Ridge.

In other military developments: Skirmishing continues around Longstreet's winter camp in East Tennessee, including a 16-17 January cavalry clash near Dandridge. On 25 January, the Federals evacuate Corinth, Mississippi. Union bombardment of Charleston intensifies on 29 January. Several blockade runners, hoping that shorter daylight hours and winter weather will help screen their transit, are nonetheless seized by the U.S. Navy during the month. Kit Carson conducts U.S. operations against Navajos in New Mexico and Arizona territories for most of the month. On 12 January, U.S. troops are sent by ship to Matamoros, Mexico (across the Rio Grande from Brownsville, Texas) to rescue the U.S. consul from fighting between Mexican groups.

In command developments, Davis asks Bragg to come to Richmond (from Montgomery) on 27 January. For the U.S., Samuel Curtis assumes command of the Department of Kansas (16 Jan), Rosecrans is named commander of the Department of the Missouri (22 Jan), Schofield is named commander of the Department of the Ohio (22 Jan), and Frederick Steele assumes command of the Department of Arkansas (30 Jan).

Responding to North Carolina Governor Vance's late December letter, Davis writes that peace negotiations can begin only when the Federals are convinced the South cannot be conquered. Illustrating Vance's concerns, anti-draft protests occur on 18 January in western North Carolina.

Reflecting the lack of trust in paper currency, the price of gold continues to rise. On 23 January, the U.S. Treasury Department lifts most sanctions on trade in Kentucky and Missouri.

The U.S. Congress' Joint Committee on the Conduct of the War votes to expand its powers. The winter lull in military activity means many army witnesses are called to the Capitol this month. Committee members, led by Ohio Senator Ben Wade, are especially skeptical of West Point-trained generals. Historians characterize many committee hearings as witch hunts.

President Lincoln tries to hasten formation of loyal state governments in Louisiana, Florida, and Arkansas by writing to the respective military department commanders.

On 11 January, John Henderson of Missouri proposes in the U.S. Senate a joint resolution to abolish slavery throughout the U.S. by Constitutional amendment.

On 21 January, the scarcity of grain in Ohio causes authorities to forbid distillation of whisky.

Georgia Battlefields Association
7 Camden Rd NE
Atlanta GA 30309

www.georgiabattlefields.org

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