

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

GBA continues its mission to raise awareness

On 12 April, over 150 people attended the "Technology and the Civil War" symposium at Georgia Tech. Georgia Battlefields Association provided both a presentation and a tour. On 26 April, the Potato Hill property that GBA helped purchase (August 2012 newsletter) was dedicated as a Whitfield County park. Over 50 people attended the ceremony.



Left: GBA trustee Dr. Mary-Elizabeth Ellard speaks on veterinary medicine at the Georgia Tech symposium. Right: Whitfield County Commission Chair Mike Babb (left) receives the deed to Potato Hill Park from Save the Dalton Battlefields President Bob Jenkins while GBA keynote speaker Charlie Crawford observes.

150 years ago this month

On 2 May, the first session of the Second Confederate Congress convenes. President Davis's opening message indicates no hope for foreign recognition but is optimistic about the military situation. Both sides anticipate that major campaigns will begin this month. In Virginia, Grant leads 122,000 men across the Rapidan on 4 May. Lee with 66,000 men is determined to repulse the Federal movement by attacking, precipitating a battle in the Wilderness 5-6 May. Previous Federal commanders may have retreated after such a fight, but Grant continues southward, leading to combat some part of every day around Spotsylvania Court House (8-21 May), the North Anna River (22-26 May), and Bethesda Church (28-31 May). Union casualties are heavy with over 33,000 men and corpses sent back to a massive hospital complex at Fredericksburg and over 5,000 prisoners sent to a new camp at Andersonville, Georgia. Lee's army has almost 17,000 killed and wounded and over 8,000 captured. Corps commanders are not exempt: U.S. General Sedgwick is killed, Confederate General Stuart is mortally wounded, Confederate General Longstreet is seriously wounded, and Confederate General A.P. Hill is debilitated by illness. Several division commanders are killed or captured, and Lee himself is sick during the North Anna confrontation. President Davis pulls more troops from the coast because of the desperate need for manpower in Virginia. The Army of the Potomac ends the month near Cold Harbor, on some of the same ground it held in June 1862. Grant's frequent communications with Lincoln have a recurrent theme: There will be no turning back.

Grant's other initiatives in the east start well but fizzle before the end of the month. Butler brings 40,000 men by river to Bermuda Hundred but fails in several attempts to cut the railroad connecting Petersburg and Richmond, in part due to Beauregard's outnumbered Confederates but mostly due to Federal incompetence. Sigel and 6,500 men advance up the Shenandoah Valley but are turned back by Breckinridge at New Market on 16 May. David Hunter replaces Sigel on the 21st, is reinforced, advances on Staunton, and sends a raid against Lynchburg on 30 May.

In Georgia, Sherman's advance begins on 7 May, delayed a few days by rain and the difficulty of assembling three armies and their logistics networks. His initial flanking attempt comes to naught, and after the first battles around Dalton (8-9 May), Sherman spars with Johnston at Resaca (13-15 May), Rome (17 May), Adairsville (17 May), and Cassville (18-19 May), moving around the Confederate left after each engagement. Johnston conducts masterful retreats, preserving his strength, but always giving ground. Sherman swings far around the Confederate left, but Johnston moves to intercept the Federal advance, resulting in the Hell Hole battles (New Hope Church, Pickett's Mill, Dallas) in late May. Sherman has not broken up Johnston's army, which was the primary objective, but he has advanced 75 miles by the end of the month.

Banks' Red River Campaign comes to an ignominious end on 19 May, accomplishing little and hampering Sherman by keeping two divisions in the Mississippi Valley. The gunboats and transports narrowly escape down the Red River, though several are lost to Confederate artillery. The supporting Federal advance from Little Rock is turned back by 13 May. Confederate cavalry under J.O. Shelby raids into Arkansas and Missouri, and John Hunt Morgan raids yet again into Kentucky.

For over two weeks (2-19 May), Federals raid in southwest Virginia, intent on keeping the railroad nonoperational, and defeat Confederates at Cloyd's Mountain on 9 May.

On 9 May, S.D. Lee assumes command of the Confederate Department of Alabama, Mississippi, and east Louisiana. For the Union, E.R.S. Canby assumes command in West Mississippi on 11 May, and John G. Foster assumes command of the Department of the South on 26 May.

Shelling of Fort Sumter is periodic but noticeably intense 13-16 May. Riverine warfare is widespread. On 5 May, *CSS Albemarle* engages Federals in the Roanoke River, NC. On 6 May, Confederates capture *USS Granite City* at Calcasieu Pass, LA, and *USS Commodore Jones* is sunk by a torpedo in the James River, VA. On 7 May, *CSS Raleigh* runs aground and breaks apart in the Cape Fear River, NC. Along the St Johns River, FL, a torpedo destroys a U.S. transport on 9 May and artillery disables *USS Columbine* on 23 May, leading to its surrender. On 25 May, Confederates capture *USS Lebanon* on the Mississippi.

Expeditions against the Indians continue, with U.S. troops fighting small battles in California, Utah, Colorado, New Mexico, Arizona, and Minnesota.

On 21 May, Maximilian lands a French force at Vera Cruz and claims the Mexican throne.

Civil War events calendar

April

30 Civil War in Sandy Springs exhibit opens at 6075 Sandy Springs Circle, Sandy Springs. Runs through 1 April 2015. www.heritagesandysprings.org.

May

- 3 10 a.m. "Civil War Atlanta: Why It Still Matters" speech by Georgia Historical Society President Todd Groce at Carter Presidential Library Museum. www.georgiahistory.com
- 3-4 War Days Remembered. Re-enactments and tours of ante-bellum buildings in Old Clinton Historic District, 12 miles NE of Macon. \$5 per adult. 478 986 6383. ochs74@gmail.com.
- 10 11 a.m. Dedication of the Atlanta Campaign Civil War Heritage Trails marker at Tunnel Hill. <http://civilwarheritagetrails.org/civil-war-events/may.html>
- 16-18 Battle of Resaca reenactment. The new state historic site will be open for these days only. www.georgiadiivision.org/bor_reenactment.html
- 19 11 a.m. "The Civil War and the Forging of Character" lecture by Professor John McCardell at the Lovett School. RSVP to 404 262 3032 x1717. www.lovett.org/civilwar.
- 22 7 p.m. "Changing Interpretations of John Bell Hood" lecture by Professor John Fowler at 6110 Bluestone Rd, Sandy Springs. 404 851 9111 x2. www.heritagesandysprings.org
- 22 8 p.m. "A Changing Wind: Commerce and Conflict in Civil War Atlanta" lecture by Professor Wendy Hamand Venet. www.atlantahistorycenter.com

June

26-29 Battle of Kennesaw Mountain Sesquicentennial events. Encampments, cannon and musket firings, lectures, book signings, and more. Donate to help defray expenses or volunteer your time. www.battleofkennesawmountain150.com

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