

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

Cobb County earthworks lost

The October 2018 newsletter mentioned earthworks on an 11-acre property at 1825 Stilesboro Road, not far west of the Kennesaw Mountain National Battlefield Park 24-gun battery site. The property was first annexed by the City of Marietta, then rezoned for the construction of 36 senior living residences instead of the single family home that had been there for years. Despite stipulations that the applicant would conduct another archaeological survey (confirming a 2014 survey that found earthworks on the site), use best efforts to preserve a portion of the Civil War earthworks, and place a historical marker, we discovered in late May that the site had been precipitously cleared and the earthworks destroyed. Subsequent correspondence with the developer and the city government has not yielded a satisfactory explanation.

American Battlefield Trust conference

Georgia Battlefields Association was once again well-represented at the American Battlefield Trust (ABT) conference held 29 May-2 June in Lexington Kentucky.



L to R: Charlie Crawford, Vince Dooley, Barbara Dooley, Jim Wentworth, Kathleen Peterson, Larry Peterson, Michael Marx, Cheryl Trahan, Joe Trahan, Bill Porter, Mary Porter, John Killey. Not shown: Bill Gurry. Photo by American Battlefield Trust's Molly Nesbitt.

Some highlights of information presented during the conference.

Preservation

Since 1890, the U.S. government has saved 85,000 acres of battlefield land.

Since 1999, ABT (and its predecessor organizations) have saved 51,000 acres.

ABT still owns 11,000 acres; 40,000 acres have been deeded to national or state parks.

Using funds from grants and donations, ABT has spent \$430,000,000 on battlefield land.

Education

American schools are de-emphasizing history, especially military history and events before the 20th century, and universities report a 40% decline in history majors.

Latest National Assessment of Educational Progress report on 12th graders indicates 12% are proficient in history and 55% are below basic.

Woodrow Wilson Foundation surveyed 41,000 Americans and found only 40% were able to pass a multiple choice U.S. history exam, with the number declining to 27% for those under age 45.

ABT hopes to counteract these trends by increasing emphasis on education, providing even more lesson plans, materials, training, and field trips to teachers.

ABT has sponsored battlefield trips for 33,000 students over the years, and half of the ten million annual ABT web site visits are by students.

Shoupade Park work day 6 July

Shoupade Park is having a work day from 9 to 11 a.m. on 6 July. Purpose is to remove wisteria choking the trees. Shoupade Park is just south of Fort Drive on the east side of Oakdale Road in Smyrna. See the River Line Historic Area calendar <http://riverline.org/calendar/> for more info.

Responding to historical inquiries

Over the years, Georgia Battlefields Association has often been asked about the significance of properties, such as what happened at the site. The requests are often accompanied by unverified tales about events, such as Sherman didn't burn the house because he used to date the woman who lived there, the site was used as a hospital and bodies were buried there, an apparent earthwork runs through the land, etc. While it's flattering that people think of us when they have history questions, and we sometimes already know the answers, perhaps our more valuable service is we know who else to ask to get better answers. Here are a few of the recent questions we received. Let us know if you have better answers than the ones we provided.

A person noticed some land for sale that abuts Pickett's Mill State Historic Site. We researched the property and found it's about 30 acres with no structures, and the asking price is \$780,780. We don't have that much in our checking account, and we'd want to know more about the property even if it was much cheaper. We contacted our friends in the area, and their response was that the Federal lines ran to the north and the Confederate lines ran to the south of the property, so there was little likelihood of earthworks on the site unless some rifle pits remained. While it would be ideal to save the property so that houses could not affect the viewshed from the historic site, we couldn't justify the investment compared to other potential acquisitions that contain verified earthworks or have greater significance.

Georgia Tech is investigating the history of its president's house and what occurred on the property before the house was built. Historians have known for years that the Federal lines ran through the property from late July to late August 1864, but an architectural firm that was hired to do the research wanted to know about a prior house, owned by the Landis family, that was on or near the site. The Landis family was reported to have unionist sympathies and left town when the Federals approached the city. The house allegedly served as a Confederate sharpshooter's position and Confederate gold was buried there (both false). We knew enough to ask Georgia Tech city planning Professor Bill Drummond, a geo-referencing expert, about structures on the site in 1864, and he was able to locate one that was at least nearby. GBA trustee Carlton Mullis, mining the old newspaper files at Georgia State University, found a 1900 article reporting an interview with a Mrs. Landis who still lived in a successor house in the area. Several of Mrs. Landis's recollections were clearly wrong or embellished, and we were able to correct some of the information that accompanied the inquiry and provide some new information.

Another inquiry came to support a National Register of Historic Places nomination for Paces Ferry United Methodist Church (built 1877) and the earlier-established cemetery at the intersection of Paces Ferry Road and Mt. Paran Road in northwest Atlanta. While Federal troops certainly marched past the site on 17 & 18 July 1864, we could find no evidence that the site was used as a hospital or that any contemporary burials were made there.

Oakland Cemetery tour

Georgia Battlefields Association is planning an Atlanta's Oakland Cemetery walking tour that will cover the Civil War significance of the site as well as Civil War people buried there. Our idea is to wait for autumn for cooler temperatures and less chance of storms. More details later.

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