

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

National Parks reopening in phases

Civil War-related national parks in Georgia are reopening in phases. While each park may have variations, they will generally open trails, picnic areas, parking lots, and roads but will NOT open visitors' centers or restrooms, so plan accordingly. Check the park web sites for updates. The general format for web sites is www.nps.gov/xxxx. Substitute for the xxxx as follows: chch = Chickamauga; kemo = Kennesaw Mountain; ande = Andersonville; fopu = Fort Pulaski; chat = Chattahoochee River National Recreation Area.

Students' knowledge of history is poor and will get worse

One of Georgia Battlefields Association's objectives is to educate people about what happened at Civil War sites in Georgia because we believe that awareness of site history increases support for site preservation. Thus, we give presentations and respond to questions, normally via e-mail. In last month's newsletter, we provided a list of online history teaching resources since almost all schools closed their facilities because of the virus pandemic. Preliminary data indicates the transition to distance learning—supplemented by family instruction—has not been widely effective, and student knowledge will suffer in all subjects.

Even before the advent of the pandemic, the periodic National Assessment of Educational Progress revealed a dismaying lack of historical knowledge. The results for the 2018 survey of 16,400 eighth grade students were released on 23 April 2020 and showed a decline in all categories compared to 2014. Scores decreased for white, black, and Hispanic students, females as well as males. The report is available here <https://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/ushistory/>

River Line Park finally named

At a 12 May meeting, the Cobb County Board of Commissioners voted unanimously to name a 103 acre property Discovery Park at the River Line. Long time Georgia Battlefields Association members will have read many articles about this site over the past 20 years, but here's a review.

Over the first month of the spring 1864 campaign in northwest Georgia, the Confederate Army of Tennessee retreated from the Dalton area to the Lost Mountain-Brushy Mountain Line in Cobb County. Noticing the pattern of withdrawals, Brigadier General Francis Shoup, chief of artillery, approached army commander General Joseph Johnston and proposed constructing defensive fortifications on the north bank of the Chattahoochee River to protect the principal road and railroad bridges connecting Marietta and Atlanta. On 10 June, Johnston approved, and by 18 June, Shoup was supervising construction performed by around a thousand slaves.

Shoup designed a unique system of triangular forts and artillery redans connected by palisades in a saw tooth pattern. The line originally measured about six miles, but when Johnston inspected the construction in late June, he ordered that the line be extended southward to include the Mayson-Turner Ferry crossing (where Veterans Memorial Boulevard now crosses the river). This hastily added extension was more of a conventional infantry fortification with only one triangular fort, and it ended in an artillery fort near the mouth of Nickajack Creek. The now seven mile long fortifications would come to be called Johnston's River Line. The original line and the extension are easy to see on the Fourth Epoch of the Atlanta Campaign map (plate 60) in the [Atlas to Accompany the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies](#).

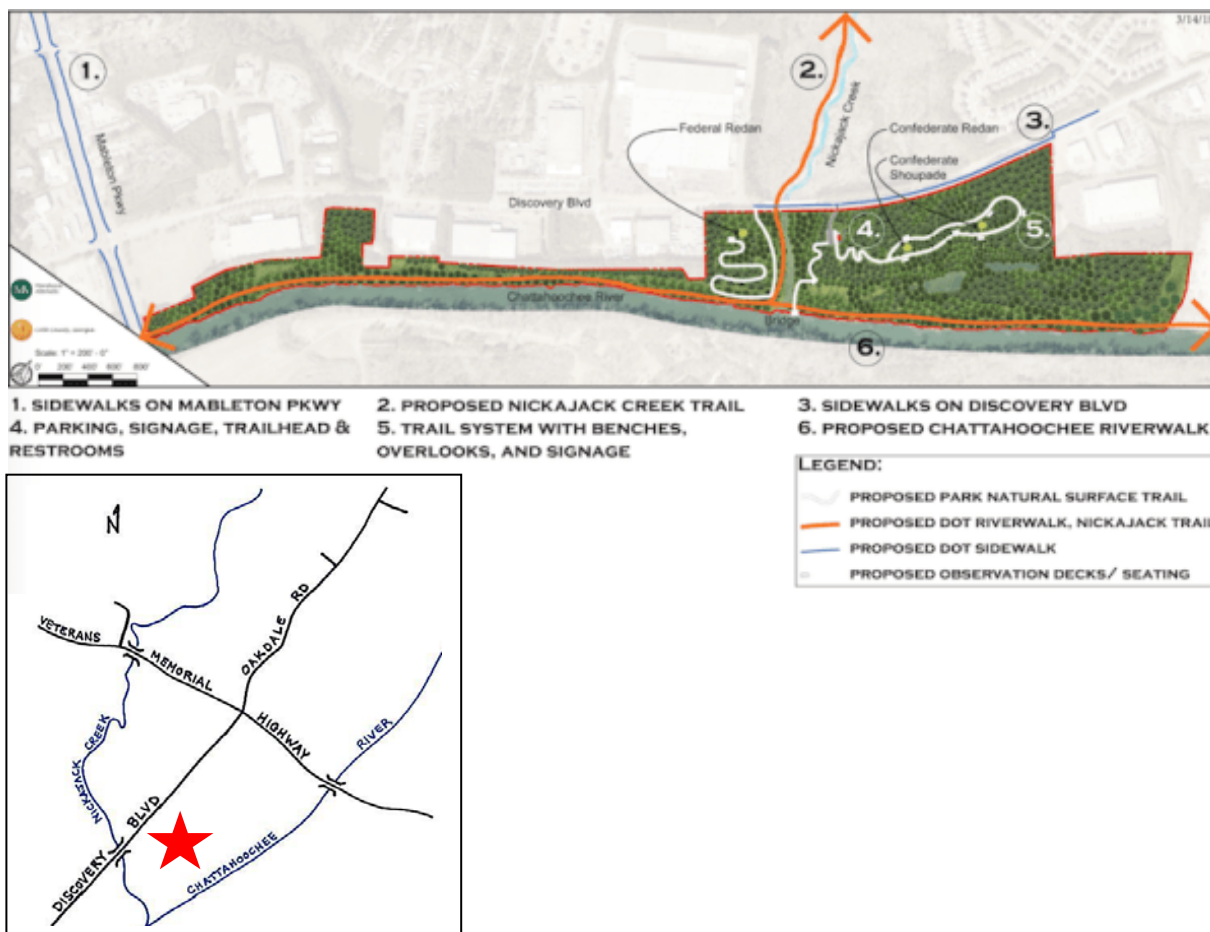
Currently, most of the extension's remnants are contained in a 103 acre property that has been preserved by Cobb County since the early 1990s and is within the city limits of Mableton. Another virtue to the site is that it contains the remnants of a Federal artillery battery on the west bank of Nickajack Creek. This is the only place where earthworks from the Confederate line and the opposing Federal line are present without intervening development.

When Major General G.W. Smith saw the unique triangular forts (whose design was not endorsed by some of the soldiers who would occupy them), he dubbed them Shoupades, combining Shoup's name with the prevailing French military suffix for several types of

fortifications. Shoup did not seek the honor, but the triangular forts are still known as Shoupades. The best remaining example of the design, including two forts and a redan, is in Shoupade Park, accepted as a county park in 2004 largely through the efforts of Roberta Cook and the River Line Historic Area <http://riverline.org/>.

The 103 acre site on Discovery Boulevard not far south of Veterans Memorial Highway has been unmarked by historical signage and largely unvisited except by preservationists and people with considerable knowledge of this period of the Atlanta Campaign. In March 2018, the Cobb County Board of Commissioners approved a county master plan for the park, and construction is underway on a parking area and trails. The plan will put a parking lot off Discovery Boulevard and within the viewshed of the Confederate line, but it will also make the Federal battery site much more accessible. See map below. A primary purpose of preserving and interpreting historic sites is to use them as teaching tools, though access to sites can result in damage from people walking on earthworks or littering or egregiously vandalizing the sites. GBA and others have expressed these concerns to the county government over the last two decades.

The name for the park presented another problem. Even though the park contains earthworks built by slaves, many African-Americans and their representative organizations have expressed concern that the park will celebrate the Confederacy. This made the moniker Johnston's River Line problematic because it includes a Confederate general's name. Some community groups proposed Mableton Discovery Park, combining the names of the city and the road but ignoring the historical basis for preserving the site. Cobb County commissioner Lisa Cupid, who represents the area, tried for two years to broker a compromise, and the result is Discovery Park at the River Line.



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