

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

Ready to try again: GBA tour set for 31 March to 3 April in Macon

In August, the Georgia Battlefields Association trustees postponed the October 2021 tour because of a resurgence of COVID-19 infections. We're ready to try again and have set the dates for 31 March to 3 April 2022. We hope—and expect—that the virus situation will have improved by then. In any case, tour participants tend to be older, and underlying conditions often come with age, so for your own sake and the sake of everyone else, GET VACCINATED.

The principal obstacle we couldn't work around was how to social distance on the bus. We suspect the bus company may change its policy by March 2022, but for now, participants should assume that masks will be required while on the bus.

We're glad to report that Chickamauga & Chattanooga National Military Park historian Jim Ogden plans to join us for the tour. For several years, GBA has coordinated with Jim to succeed Ed Bearss as principal guide for our annual tours. We changed our annual tour dates to late March or early April because Jim usually has a very full schedule in March.

Content below is largely the same as what was in the June, July, and August newsletters.

Schedule: We'll begin as usual with a Thursday evening reception at the hotel. We'll set up around 5 p.m., hand out maps near 6 p.m., and conclude by 7 p.m. so you can head for dinner on your own. Typically, people renew acquaintances and head for dinner in small groups. A selection of restaurants is available at I-75 exit 169, two miles south on Sheraton Drive or I-75. Friday: Route of the Left Wing during the early days of the March to the Sea: Eatonton, Cobb Plantation, and Milledgeville, followed by a stop at Ocmulgee National Historical Park (NHP) to cover cavalry actions of July and November 1864. Dinner at Michael's on Mulberry in Macon. Saturday: Route of the Right Wing: Old Clinton, town of Griswoldville, Griswoldville battlefield, Gordon, and Ball's Ferry. Dinner at Cannonball House in Macon. Sunday: Rose Hill Cemetery and downtown Macon sites relating to the town's significance as a manufacturing and supply hub and Jefferson Davis' capture.

Hotel: Springhill Suites at 4630 Sheraton Drive. The hotel is at I-75 exit 171 and is visible from the interstate. Phone the hotel at 478 803 9100. Note: Do NOT press 1 for reservations. Wait for one of the hotel staff to pick up and ask for the Georgia Battlefields Association rate of \$99 per night, which with the unavoidable taxes is about \$119.

Cost & Registration: \$430. Register online at www.georgiabattlefields.org/tours.aspx, or mail check payable to Georgia Battlefields Association to PO Box 669953, Marietta GA 30066.

Battlefield preservation process

Georgia Battlefields Association has participated in three types of battlefield preservation: Outright purchase, conservation easement, and development set-aside.

While GBA owns a property that is part of the New Hope Church battlefield, ownership is not our goal. We would rather help in the purchase of a property that will be owned and managed by other preservation-minded organizations, ranging from the National Park Service to local groups. On several occasions, we have contributed to the American Battlefield Trust or its predecessor organizations so they could purchase battlefield land, examples being properties that were subsequently added to Chickamauga National Military Park and Resaca Battlefield Historic Site. Similarly, we contributed to purchase of a 473-acre conservation easement that is now managed by Gordon County. Most often, we have appeared at county rezoning hearings to argue against development that would destroy earthworks. Most developers will not agree to forego development entirely, but they often concede to not build on earthworks or at least retain a portion of them. In some cases, the developer then uses the preserved earthworks as a marketing tool to entice people to buy a house on a historic property.

When we are considering purchasing or contributing to the purchase of a property, we don't publicize the fact for several reasons. Often, the property owner wishes to keep the negotiations confidential, and it would damage our chances if we violate that confidence. Also, drawing attention to the property might invite outside parties to relic hunt or otherwise alter the property

(by climbing on the earthworks, for example). Further, publicity might draw competing bids from others who were unaware the property might be available.

Our criteria for preservation are significance, condition, availability, and threat. The 1993 Civil War Sites Advisory Commission report rated 398 battlefields for significance and condition, and a 1998 report funded by the Georgia Civil War Commission found almost 400 Civil War sites in Georgia, including the 27 cited in the CWSAC report that ranked two Georgia battlefields—Chickamauga and Jonesboro—of highest significance because they determined the outcome of major campaigns. While we have no argument with the significance of Chickamauga and Jonesboro, ranking all the sites in order of importance would inevitably be influenced by the judgment of those doing the ranking. Even acknowledging that difficulty, we would prefer to use our limited resources to preserve more important sites, but the other criteria apply.

As examples of sites affected by the condition criterion, Peachtree Creek and Atlanta are important battles, but the battlefields themselves are now impossible to preserve because they are almost totally covered with commercial buildings, hospital buildings, and residences built, in some cases, over a century ago. Some open space has been preserved, such as Tanyard Creek Park on the Peachtree Creek battlefield, but the sites are revealed as battlefields almost exclusively by historical markers along the streets through these urban and suburban areas. Under the condition criterion, we have to ask whether we can preserve the site in any fashion that would allow its interpretation as a battlefield.

The availability criterion covers both willingness of an owner to sell and the price a preservation organization would have to pay. We have encountered owners who appreciate the historical significance of their property and say they will never allow development of the site. The rebuttal to this approach—but someday you'll die—is difficult to work into a discussion. We had one case where the husband entertained selling the site to us, but his wife was reluctant. When the wife died, we properly decided to wait for a decent interval before approaching the husband. Unfortunately, the husband died a few months later, and now we're faced with squabbling heirs.

The other aspect of availability is price. Land purchased for preservation at Resaca ten years ago cost about \$3,000 per acre. At roughly the same time, a well preserved earthwork in Cobb County was on land that was valued at \$900,000 per acre. We would like to have bought both properties, but it was obvious where we would get a greater return on the investment.

Threat is the last criterion. If a developer's bulldozers are about to roll, we have intervened even if the earthwork was an eroded trench on a less significant site. Action was required to prevent permanent loss.

While we choose—for good reasons, we think—not to reveal negotiations about purchase or easement, GBA is in discussions about three sites. We are always looking for opportunities, and you can always help by donating. <http://georgiabattlefields.org/donate.aspx>

Volunteers needed at Shoupade Park at 4:30 p.m. on 2 November

A triumph of historic site preservation was the 2006 establishment of Shoupade Park, which preserves two unique fortifications and also preserves a trench line and an artillery redan. At 4:30 p.m. on 2 November, the park needs volunteers, preferably those who have their own pruning shears, to cut back the foliage that obscures the earthworks <http://riverline.org/calendar/>. The park's address is 4757 Oakdale Road in Smyrna. If you'd like to help, please respond to riverlinega@gmail.com. If you see Roberta Cook, thank her for over 20 years of efforts to preserve the River Line and other Civil War sites in Cobb County.

Georgia Battlefields Association
PO Box 669953
Marietta GA 30066

www.georgiabattlefields.org

November 2021