

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

Governor signs Vince Dooley Battlefield Trust Fund Act

On 13 May, Georgia Governor Brian Kemp signed into law the act establishing the Vince Dooley Battlefield Trust Fund, which will be used to acquire battlefield properties. Read American Battlefield Trust's account of the signing at [this link](#).

Another estimate of the Civil War death toll

The late 19th century analyses by U.S. Army Civil War veterans Thomas Livermore and William Fox have long served as the base references for the war's casualty totals. In round numbers, they calculated 360,000 U.S. and 260,000 C.S. participants died, for a total of 620,000. Notice that the term combatants would be misleading, since the majority of the dead died of disease. Despite the earnest efforts of Livermore and Fox and others, they—and all subsequent researchers—were handicapped by missing, incomplete, and inconsistent records, notably the records destroyed by the Confederate government during the chaotic evacuation of Richmond in April 1865. No improvements in computing power or searchable databases can totally overcome that obstacle.

In 2011, demographic historian J. David Hacker posited a revised calculation by comparing census records (which have their own limitations, such as pre-war censuses not naming enslaved men who later joined the U.S. Army after they escaped) from before and after the war. Hacker acknowledged the obstacles and used sampling techniques to arrive at a total of 750,000.

Recently, four New York University researchers tried again using census records and had their findings published in the November 2024 [Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences](#). That article prompted coverage by [The New York Times](#) and the [Atlanta Journal Constitution](#), among other media. Without rehashing the methodology (available at the link to the National Academy of Sciences article), the death total from this latest effort was 698,000, less than Hacker's estimate but more than Livermore and Fox. It's understandable that Livermore and Fox would be more likely to undercount, and it's also understandable that neither the 2011 or 2024 estimates claim to be precise. The conclusion drawn by every estimate is the same: The Civil War was the deadliest conflict in American history, and it is likely to remain the deadliest conflict since the dead on both sides were Americans.

Meet Georgia Battlefields Association trustee Larry Peterson

[February's newsletter](#) reported the addition of four new trustees elected at our annual meeting in January. Larry Peterson is already familiar to many of you. He's a 20-year GBA member, and he and his wife Kathleen have been on many GBA tours. Larry has a B.S. from UCal Davis and an MBA from the University of Alaska. He was briefly a U.S. Park Service ranger, then a U.S. Air Force communications officer. Next, he trained to fly and served several organizations as a pilot and instructor before joining United Airlines for a career that culminated as a Standards Captain. His childhood interest in the Civil War led to a multi-year search for information about his great-great-grandfather that resulted in the biography [Confederate Combat Commander, The Remarkable Life of Brigadier General Alfred Jefferson Vaughan Jr.](#) He subsequently wrote books in the *Command Decisions in America's Civil War* series, including 1862 Kentucky Campaign, Battle of Perryville, Battle for Chattanooga, Atlanta Campaign, Battle of Kennesaw Mountain, and Vicksburg Campaign. He is past president of the Rocky Mountain Civil War Round Table, and both Larry and Kathleen are long time Color Bearers of American Battlefield Trust. Larry and his wife Kathleen are longtime residents of Colorado and have two grown sons, one of whom is an Air Force lieutenant colonel, and six grandchildren, two of them in college.



As Ed Bearss (white shirt) listens during the 2006 GBA tour, Larry describes the 4 July 1864 action in which his great-great-grandfather was wounded.

Meet Georgia Battlefields Association trustee Joe Gaskin

Many of you will recognize Joe Gaskin from his participation in several GBA tours. His interest in the Civil War was motivated in part by the service of five great-great-grandfathers in the Confederate army. His professional career began after he received a civil engineering degree from Southern Technical Institute. He's now a senior construction manager for the global engineering firm [Arcadis U.S.](#) Joe has been active in community affairs, such as the Cobb County Chamber of Commerce's support for the military units at Dobbins Air Reserve Base. He led the Chamber's Honorary Commanders Association and currently serves as co-chair of Team Dobbins, which brings together business and military leaders to spread the word about the value of the base to the community.

His engagement also includes serving as a U.S. Air Force Reserve Command National Civic Leader and as Chairman, Navy Talent Acquisition Group-Atlanta Recruiting District Assistance Council, and assisting the Air Force's 351st Recruiting Squadron and the U.S. Army Recruiting Battalion-Atlanta. For years, Joe and his wife Terry have lived in Cobb County, where they raised two children, and they now have two grandsons, one of whom serves in the Air Force Reserve. Joe and Terry are also supporters of Georgia Tech athletics and the Atlanta Braves. Joe's long interest in military history has led to his membership in the Cobb County Civil War Round Table, Blue and Gray Education Society, and American Battlefield Trust, as well as GBA.



Ed Bearss and Joe Gaskin examine a 3-inch ordnance rifle Kennesaw Mountain National Battlefield Park's 24-gun battery site.

Meet Georgia Battlefields Association trustee Russ Hickman

Russ Hickman is a native of Atlanta. He earned Bachelor's and Master's degrees in Industrial Engineering from Georgia Tech. In 1974, he began a long career at Eastman Kodak and successor companies until retiring in 2016 after assignments in Tennessee and Texas.

Russ's interest in the Civil War began in elementary school as he lived and attended school within the Utoy Creek battlefield footprint. As a Boy Scout and Explorer, he earned medals in the hiking programs at Kennesaw Mountain and Chickamauga battlefields. As an adult, he has been an amateur genealogist for over 30 years and had direct and collateral ancestors serve in CSA units from Georgia and South Carolina. Currently, he maintains the Georgia Battlefields Association's Facebook page. He is also a member of the Atlanta History Center, Georgia Historical Society, and American Battlefield Trust, and a former member of the Tri-Cities Civil War Round Table.



Russ and wife Judy split time between residences in Cumming, Georgia, and Kingsport, Tennessee. They have three children and two grandchildren.

New web site for State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO)

Under the 1966 National Historic Preservation Act, every state must have a State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO). The Georgia SHPO has a recently improved web site that includes a more readily accessible guide to services.

<https://dca.georgia.gov/community-assistance/historic-preservation>

GBA 2026 tour: Will be 9-12 April and will cover the opening of the Atlanta Campaign.

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