

Key section of preservation law is threatened

The [National Historic Preservation Act](#) (NHPA) was signed into law in October 1966. It has served as a foundation document for preservation ever since, but current efforts to modify its implementation may gravely damage the cause of preservation for an unknowable number of years.

Like most Acts, NHPA has many sections. The section of concern is Section 106, which specifies that any organization (for example, [Georgia Department of Transportation](#), or GDOT) that accepts federal funds to pay for even part of a project (for example, road widening) must assess (before ground is broken) whether any historic property (or, more broadly, any cultural resource) will be adversely affected by the project. As examples, in the case of a battlefield, will an earthwork or a significant topographic feature or a viewshed be destroyed.

One persistent criticism of Section 106 is that it slows down any project. This is true, but is permanent loss of a historic site worth reducing the project length? If the NHPA and Section 106 had been in effect at the time, would I-75 run directly through the Resaca battlefield, or would I-20 construction of the Moreland Avenue interchange have so thoroughly removed the Bald Hill that was such a salient feature of the Battle of Atlanta.

In Georgia, as in many states, Section 106 reviews are overseen by the [State Historic Preservation Office](#) (SHPO). Any SHPO typically hires a historical consulting firm to do the administrative work of notifying potential interested parties, soliciting comments, researching applicable historical records (such as maps), performing archaeological digs, taking photographs, holding public meetings, etc., and compiling all the inputs into a report.

For over 25 years, Georgia Battlefields Association (GBA) has been designated an interested party by GDOT; and GBA has commented during the Section 106 review process on over 30 projects, especially those in corridors where armies marched and battles were fought, such as the Chickamauga area, along the route of I-75 in northwest Georgia, around Atlanta, and in Savannah.

Like many Acts, NHPA relies on federal agencies to interpret the Act and regulate its implementation. The relevant agency for Section 106 is the [Advisory Council on Historic Preservation](#) (ACHP), with 19 of the 24 members having been appointed since President Trump's second term began. Now, ACHP proposes to eliminate many opportunities for interested parties and the general public to comment.

The [National Trust for Historic Preservation](#) (NTHP) and [Georgia Trust for Historic Preservation](#) focus principally on preserving historic structures. American Battlefield Trust (ABT) and GBA focus principally on preserving battlefields. Preservation groups in general are greatly concerned about the proposed changes. ABT is preparing recommendations for and has requested an in-person meeting with the [Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs](#) that can approve or reject the changes. NTHP has an [online analysis](#) of the proposed changes and recommendations on how to comment. See [NTHP's letter to Congress](#), especially the paragraph about completely eliminating protection for battlefields. Soon, [ABT's web site](#) will have a page where members can comment on Section 106.

Helping publicize another preservation effort

Camp Alexander Stephens, two miles north of Griffin, Georgia, was a training camp for Georgia troops in 1861-1862 and subsequently used by the Georgia Militia. Two five-sided earthen redoubts, still readily discernible, were constructed. The site is now protected by the [Griffin-Spalding Historical Society](#) (GSHS), and the Garden Club of Georgia has offered a \$3,000 matching grant to begin restoration of the earthworks (litter removal, pedestrian bridge repair, secure entrance gate installation, etc.). To receive the full grant, GSHS must match the \$3,000. While GBA will consider matching, you can help directly by contacting Drew Payne at drewpaynejr@gmail.com.

Lessons from the Civil War can help animal shelters

Since 2013, Georgia Battlefields Association (GBA) trustee and current corporate secretary Mary-Elizabeth Ellard, Doctor of Veterinary Medicine (DVM), has spoken about veterinary care for horses during the Civil War. She constructed her presentation from the very few sources that address the subject directly, including the journal of one officer who functioned as a “horse doctor” after receiving some veterinary education and training. She continually adds content as she discovers even tangential references to care for horses during the Civil War era. She also gave the presentation during GBA’s annual tour in 2023.

Her presentation particularly highlights the stressful conditions and failure to provide for basic needs of the horses and mules as causing the worst epizootic of Glanders the U.S. has ever seen. Outbreaks can result in 95% mortality. Glanders is an exotic disease that has plagued military horses since the time of Julius Caesar, and there remains no cure, though it is—thankfully—no longer found in the United States.

The same problems—stressed living conditions and failure to respect the basic needs of the animals—that caused Glanders in military horses during the Civil War can lead to infectious disease outbreaks in animal shelters today,

Dr. Ellard has spoken at several veterinary conferences, adapting the presentation to a more medically knowledgeable audience. Soon, she will be speaking to the National Animal Care and Control Association (NACA) to share lessons that can improve animal care and outcomes in shelters today.

While GBA may not be top of mind when considering animal welfare, this lesson from history reminds us of yet another reason to support historical preservation and education. Lessons learned in wartime can have lasting positive effects in unanticipated ways.



Dr. Mary-Elizabeth Ellard (left). Photo by Dr. Thorne Winter III, a long-time GBA member who died in June.

Victories and coming preservation opportunities

In the 30-plus years of Georgia Battlefields Association’s existence, we have occasionally gone years between opportunities to buy battlefield properties, principally because the overriding determinant is a property owner’s willingness to sell. Then comes a year like 2025, when we had four opportunities—Kennesaw Mountain/Cheatham Hill, Resaca, Rocky Face Ridge/Mill Creek Gap, and Ringgold Gap—and were ultimately successful in helping [American Battlefield Trust](#) purchase them all. This year is also presenting opportunities, and we are currently pursuing three more sites. Thus, we continue to ask that you help us “refill our limber chests” with your donations or elevated memberships.

As was mentioned in previous newsletters, Georgia Battlefields Association (GBA) does not reveal the location of sites until the purchases are closed. As has unfortunately proven to be necessary, this is to prevent organizations (often real estate developers), who usually have more readily available funds, from making better offers to current owners of properties that are historically significant.

Kennesaw Mountain National Battlefield Park is site of 9/11 remembrance

Kiwanis Club of Marietta and volunteers have set 2,977 American flags in the “[Field of Flags](#)” at Kennesaw Mountain to honor the victims killed on 9/11. On 11 September 2026, each person’s name will be read aloud. A flag can be purchased during flag removal on 19 September.