

G E O R G I A

BATTLEFIELDS

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Final state budget saves some proposed preservation cuts

On 7 May, Governor Deal signed the Fiscal Year 2013 appropriations bill. As reported in the February newsletter, the Governor proposed eliminating all state funding for the Georgia Humanities Council (\$50,000) and Georgia Historical Society (\$70,000), both of which advocate for awareness of historic sites; but the budget he signed allowed legislative adjustments to stand: GHC will receive \$50,000, and GHS will receive \$50,000. As has been true for the past few years, the Georgia Civil War Commission received no funding. The Historic Preservation Division loses three positions and over \$18,000 in operating funds. Parks, Recreation, and Historic Sites Division loses five positions. Preservation remains a low priority for the state.

River dredging and the continuing relevance of the Civil War

The proposal to deepen the Savannah River has proven contentious as several ports and the governments of their respective states fight for a larger share of ship traffic. A speech made on the cusp of the Civil War relates. On 21 March 1861, Georgian Alexander Stephens spoke in Savannah shortly after his selection as vice president of the new Confederate government. Often called the Cornerstone Speech because it declared that slavery was the cornerstone of the new government, Stephens addressed many other topics, including his aversion to state or national governments funding local improvements: "If the mouth of the Savannah River has to be cleared out, let the sea-going navigation which is benefited by it bear the burden."

Deepening the Savannah River will be impeded not only by its cost and political opposition, but also by a relic of the Civil War. *CSS Georgia* was an unwieldy ironclad that served as a floating battery, and its engines ran mainly to power the pumps that tried to compensate for its leaky hull. It was scuttled and sank late on 20 December 1864 when the Confederates evacuated Savannah. For almost 150 years, it has rested just on the north edge of the shipping channel that runs past Old Fort Jackson. An 1868 attempt to salvage the ship or remove the impediment recovered 80 tons of iron and used explosives, and past dredging has further damaged the hulk. Subsequent salvage efforts have recovered some artifacts; but the remaining pieces could solve the mystery of the ship's length and width (contemporary accounts vary) and recover other material. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers estimates that salvaging the wreck would cost \$14 million, which doesn't seem like much compared to the \$653 million cost to deepen the river. Dredging within 50 feet of the wreck is now forbidden because of its listing on the National Register of Historic Places, so it must be removed or its status changed before the channel can be deepened. The task is complicated by the murkiness of the water and the potential presence of live ammunition. The ship itself is property of the U.S. Navy, which is responsible for captured or abandoned enemy vessels. A history of the ship and salvage efforts are contained in two extensive 2007 reports:

www.chsgeorgia.org/assets/CSS_Georgia_Archival_Study.pdf.

http://sav-harbor.com/Cultural%20Resources/CSS_Georgia_Site_Investigation_Report.pdf.



The buoy in the Savannah River marking the site of *CSS Georgia*'s remains is visible from Old Fort Jackson.

150 years ago

In Virginia, the wounding of J.E. Johnston on 31 May causes President Davis to appoint his military advisor as the new commander of the Army of Northern Virginia. R.E. Lee's pre-war reputation has been diminished by his failure in western Virginia in October 1861 and his tenure on the southeastern coast from November 1861 to April 1862, where his advocacy of digging earthworks earned him the derisive nickname "King of Spades." Lee reorganizes the army according to Davis' wishes to have brigades contain units from one state. He authorizes a cavalry reconnaissance that Jeb Stuart will turn into a sensational 12-15 June ride around McClellan's army. Upon the culmination of Jackson's Valley Campaign at Port Republic on 9 June, Lee brings Jackson's force to the Peninsula and on 26 June launches a counteroffensive that will become known as the Seven Days. Although outnumbered, impeded by a balky command structure, and diminished by casualties that mount with each fight, Lee's army changes the momentum on the Peninsula and forces a befuddled McClellan and his army into an enclave around Harrison's Landing.

The Federal forces in the Shenandoah Valley and northern Virginia are reorganized into a new Army of Virginia, and President Lincoln appoints John Pope as commander on 26 June. Lincoln hopes that Pope, successful in his efforts along the Mississippi earlier in the year, will be more responsive to instructions than McClellan has been.

Federal advances continue along the Mississippi River. Federal naval superiority causes the Confederates to evacuate Fort Pillow on 4 June, and this opens the way for an engagement at Memphis on 6 June. Only one of eight Confederate warships escapes, and Federal troops land in the city later in the day. Farther south, a contingent of Farragut's squadron runs north past the Vicksburg defenses on 28 June.

Federal General Ormsby Mitchel's force, in northern Alabama since April, strikes eastward and shells Chattanooga on 7 June but is unable to take the city. Part of Mitchel's April advance was the Andrews Raid, an attempt to sabotage the railroad between Atlanta and Chattanooga (see April newsletter). On 7 June, Andrews is taken by rail from Chattanooga to Atlanta and hanged that afternoon in a wooded area that surrounds what is now the intersection of 3rd and Juniper Streets. Later that day, the other 21 raiders also arrive by train in Atlanta. Seven are hanged on 18 June near what is now the intersection of Park Ave and Woodward Ave, south of Oakland Cemetery. Andrews and the others are buried at the site of their hanging. The seven are disinterred in 1866, but Andrews' body is not recovered until 1887. All are now buried around a monument capped by a model locomotive in Chattanooga National Cemetery.

On 17 June, the principal Confederate army in the west, concentrated at Tupelo, Mississippi, receives a new commander when Braxton Bragg is appointed to succeed P.G.T. Beauregard.

On 19 June, President Lincoln signs a law prohibiting slavery in U.S. territories.

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