

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

Next GBA tour led by Ed Bearss is 12-15 March 2015

Subject: Atlanta Campaign from 16 May to 4 June 1864. **Guides:** Ed Bearss and Jim Ogden.
Price: \$395 includes Thursday reception and meals on Friday and Saturday. Your registration is confirmed when your check payable to GBA arrives at 7 Camden Rd NE, Atlanta GA 30309.
Hotel: Fairfield Inn, 20 Canyon Pkwy, Cartersville GA (I-75 exit 288). \$101 (89+12 tax).
 770 387 0400. www.marriott.com/hotels/travel/atlev-fairfield-inn-and-suites-cartersville/

Georgia Battlefields Association is looking for our next treasurer

GBA is looking for our next treasurer. Current treasurer Frank Chew has agreed to remain through our annual tour in March, so there will be time to transition. If you're interested, please contact us at info@georgiabattlefields.org or 7 Camden Rd NE, Atlanta GA 30309.

GBA helps with another new marker

Georgia Battlefields Association helped fund and write content for another Georgia Historical Society marker, this one about the end of March to the Sea, dedicated 11 December in Savannah. This complements the marker relating to the beginning of the March to the Sea, dedicated last month in Atlanta. The new marker is in Madison Square, near the Special Field Orders 15 marker—also supported by GBA—dedicated in March 2011. The ceremony was recorded by a C-SPAN crew. Photo shows Georgia Historical Society board chair Bob Jepson (left) and President W. Todd Groce unveiling the marker while GBA President Charlie Crawford reads the text. Photo by Mary-Elizabeth Ellard.



Ebenezer Creek crossing site formally protected

On 2 December, Trust for Public Land announced that the north bank of the Ebenezer Creek crossing site had been acquired as part of a 275-acre purchase where the creek empties into the Savannah River. The site gained significance in December 1864 when U.S. Brigadier General Jefferson C. Davis ordered that a pontoon bridge be removed before African-Americans following his 14th Corps could cross. We're uncertain how many people made it across, how many drowned or froze, how many escaped through the swampy surroundings, and how many were rounded up by pursuing Confederate cavalry and returned to slavery. Estimates vary from hundreds to thousands in contemporary accounts. News of the incident reached the North in letters from soldiers who were witnesses and those who heard second-hand. One reaction to the news was the visit of Secretary of War Stanton to Savannah about a month later to inquire about the incident and to judge whether General Sherman had encouraged such actions.

Ultimately, the City of Springfield hopes to turn the property into a public park, though access on foot or by vehicle is currently restricted by adjoining private property. Financing for the purchase came through a \$400,000 National Coastal Wetlands Conservation grant from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. An additional \$100,000 came from Trust for Public Land, the Atlanta-based R. Howard Dobbs, Jr., Foundation, and the Houston-based Knobloch Family Foundation.



150 years ago this month

The Federals continue to mount operations against Fort Fisher, which guards Wilmington, North Carolina, the Confederacy's last port available to blockade runners. On 4 January, the latest expedition leaves Hampton Roads under a new commander, Alfred Terry. The ships rendezvous with Admiral Porter's fleet on the 8th and arrive off Fort Fisher on the 12th. 20,000 rounds are fired beginning on the 13th, and 8,000 soldiers and sailors storm the fort on the 15th. The following day, the power magazine explodes due to carelessness, resulting in 25 killed, 66 wounded, and 13 missing.

On the Richmond-Petersburg front, the Dutch Gap canal project fails on 1 January. Grant asks the War Department to relieve General Butler on 6 January, and E.O.C. Ord takes command of the Army of the James the next day. Also on the 7th, Sheridan and most of his troops begin leaving the Shenandoah Valley to join Grant. As they do, Confederate cavalry under Rosser raids Beverly, West Virginia, capturing 580 Federals and desperately needed rations. On 24 January, Grant agrees to resume POW exchanges.

In Savannah, Sherman makes plans for the northward advance of his armies. On 8 January, Logan resumes command the 15th Corps. Secretary of War Stanton arrives on 11 January, in part to investigate reports that escaping slaves were intentionally left behind during the December approach to Savannah. On 12 January, Stanton and Sherman meet with 20 African-American church leaders. In response to questions from Stanton, they endorse Sherman as their friend. On 16 January, Sherman issues Special Field Orders 15, confiscating 400,000 acres of coastal land from secessionist owners and providing it in 40-acre parcels to newly freed slaves. A separate order directs the loan of an army mule to each parcel holder (the origin of the "40 acres and a mule phrase"). On the 19th, Sherman issues orders for the advance into South Carolina, and General Foster and a division arrive from Hilton Head to garrison Savannah. Rain delays the departure of some of Sherman's force, but most are heading through South Carolina by the end of the month, Sherman himself leaving on the 21st. An accidental fire starts late on 27 January at the captured Confederate arsenal, and explosions and fires destroy 100 buildings and kill at least seven people.

Hood leads the remnants of the Army of Tennessee towards Tupelo, Mississippi, arriving on 9 January. On the 13th, Hood resigns his command and is succeeded by Richard Taylor. By 23 January, most of the remaining troops begin an eastward trek through Alabama and Georgia to try to join with the Confederate forces resisting Sherman's advance through South Carolina.

Besides the expedition against Fort Fisher, naval activity includes Confederate agents purchasing the Danish ironclad *Sphinx*, which is then moved from Copenhagen to France with the intent of turning it into *CSS Stonewall*. On 15 January, *USS Patapsco* is sunk by a mine off Charleston: 62 sailors die. On 25 January, *CSS Shenandoah* arrives in Melbourne, Australia, for refitting.

On 28 January, Davis selects Vice President Stephens, Senator Hunter, and Assistant Secretary of War Campbell to represent the Confederacy in peace negotiations. On 31 January, Lincoln directs Secretary of State Seward to meet the Confederate delegation at Fort Monroe.

On 19 January, Lincoln asks Grant to find a staff job for his son Robert. On 31 January, the House of Representatives passes the proposed amendment abolishing slavery. In Richmond, Davis reluctantly signs an act establishing the position of general-in-chief of Confederate armies, then nominates Lee for the position, which the Senate approves on 31 January. Lee again laments increasing desertions from his army.

Operations against the Indians occur in Kansas and in Colorado Territory.

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