

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

2017 GBA annual tour will continue to follow the Atlanta Campaign

Dates: 9-12 March 2017. We'll cover the River Line, Roswell, Crossings of the Chattahoochee, Battle of Peachtree Creek, and the Atlanta city defense line.

Hotel: Embassy Suites, 2815 Akers Mill Rd, Atlanta GA 30339 (near Cobb Galleria). \$139 per night (\$166 with tax) for king suite. Price includes breakfast. 770 984 9300.

www.atlantagalleria.embassysuites.com

Tour price: \$395 (includes lunch and dinner on Friday and Saturday). Pay online or send check to Georgia Battlefields Association at PO Box 589, Tate GA 30177-0589.

Georgia Battlefields Association will soon have new web site

While we've updated the content of our web site periodically since its inception in 2001, the format has been largely unchanged. Since so many more devices (e.g., smart phones, tablets) now have internet access, we're upgrading to a format that we hope will make the site more compatible with multiple screen sizes. Also, we're adding new features that should allow you to apply for or renew a membership online. Perhaps most importantly, we're establishing a PayPal link that should allow you to pay by credit card. Still, not everyone is equally adept at using the internet, so you'll still be able to print membership forms and send checks by mail.

While we're testing the site before taking it "live," we know the real test will come when our members and others use the site. The newsletter editor has worked for an information technology consulting company for the last 20 years and knows better than to promise that everything will work flawlessly. We'll let you know when the new site is operational.

Ed Bearss returns to the rifle range after 72+ years

This story and photos come to us from Anthony Hodges, our colleague on the board of the Tennessee Civil War Preservation Association. During a previous meeting between Anthony and Ed Bearss, Ed mentioned that he used the M1941 Johnson rifle (designed by a Marine Corps officer) while serving as a combat Marine in the Pacific during World War II; but Ed reported he hadn't seen an M1941 Johnson since except in museums. Anthony mentioned that he had a Johnson rifle and that he and Ed should visit the rifle range the next time Ed was in the Chattanooga area. That opportunity came on 13 October. Ed fired the both the M1941 Johnson and the M1 Garand, the standard U.S. service rifle during WWII and the Korean War. Ed remarked that was the first time he had fired a rifle since being wounded on 2 January 1944.

Wearing his WWII veteran cap and waiting to be seated for lunch after his visit to the range, Ed became the center of attention. After lunch, he discovered that someone else had already paid.



Ed with M1941 Johnson rifle



Ed Bearss with M1941 Johnson and Anthony Hodges with M1 Garand



Ed firing M1941 Johnson rifle

Photos by Hank Boyd.

150 years ago this month

For the Civil War Sesquicentennial, we published articles indicating what happened 150 years ago. We haven't provided detailed coverage of the reconstruction era, but—especially as it concerns Georgia—some deserve mention. At the end of the war, President Andrew Johnson's policies reflected skepticism about the seceded states forming compliant governments. His 29 May 1865 amnesty proclamation restored citizenship to all former Confederates who swore allegiance to the U.S. but excluded governors, diplomats, former U.S. government officials who had served the Confederacy, army colonels or above, navy lieutenants or above, graduates of the military or naval academies, and officers who left the U.S. Army to serve the Confederacy. Senior state government officials were forbidden from continuing in office until new elections were held, and President Johnson appointed a provisional governor of Georgia on 17 June 1865. On 16 August 1865, in one of the first signs that Johnson would be more lenient, he ordered the return of seized land to those who had sworn allegiance to the U.S.

About 20,000 Federal troops were in Georgia at the end of the war: A cavalry corps of over 13,000 men was headquartered in Macon with a detachment in Atlanta, and an infantry division of over 5,000 men was headquartered in Savannah. That number dropped rapidly as the volunteers mustered out. On 1 May 1865, the U.S. Army had 1,034,064 men: By mid November 1866—150 years ago this month—that number had dropped to about 55,000, with about 11,000 being volunteers who had enlisted late in the war. The principal presence in Georgia was an infantry regiment camped in Atlanta, though the mayor had asked that the camp on the city hall grounds be moved so that the building could be repaired and the drum and bugle calls would no longer disturb church services nearby. In the next few months, the Army would construct McPherson Barracks, about where Spelman College is today.

Army influence came also through the Freedmen's Bureau, whose administrators and agents were often army officers. Brigadier General Davis Tillson was the assistant commissioner for Georgia from September 1865 through December 1866. The Freedmen's Bureau and the Army provided food to 460,000 former slaves and to whites in 1865 and into the winter of 1866.

Military administration of Georgia was the responsibility of Major General George Thomas from his headquarters in Nashville. The Army registered voters and monitored the October 1865 election of delegates to write a new Georgia constitution and the November 1865 election of state legislators and a governor. The new legislature's January 1866 selection of Alexander Stephens, former Confederate vice president, and Herschel Johnson, former Confederate senator, to represent the state in the U.S. Senate was construed by many northerners as a refusal of Georgians to acknowledge that the Confederacy was gone; and the Senate refused to seat them. Further, the Congress established a Joint Committee on Reconstruction that heard testimony in early 1866 about resistance to reconstruction and violence towards blacks.

On 2 April 1866, President Johnson declared the insurrection was over except in Texas. Many southerners construed this to mean that reconstruction was over as well. Also in April, Congress passed a civil rights bill over the president's veto and in June 1866 passed a bill extending the Freedmen's Bureau, again over the president's veto. The rift between President Johnson and Congress was growing, and on 13 June Congress passed a proposed 14th Amendment to the Constitution. www.loc.gov/rr/program/bib/ourdocs/14thamendment.html

Summer 1866 saw the peak of mob violence against blacks. Serious incidents in Memphis in May and New Orleans in July 1866 further influenced northerners that Johnson's reconstruction policy was too lenient; and in the November 1866 elections, Republicans gained a veto-proof two-thirds majority in both the U.S. House and Senate. On 13 November 1866, the Georgia legislature declined to ratify the 14th Amendment, further reinforcing the notion that many of the southern state governments were not willing to concede that the Confederacy had lost the war.

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