

GEORGIA

BATTLEFIELDS

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New Cobb County park contains Civil War trench

In 2008, Cobb County voters approved a referendum allowing the County Commission to issue a \$40 million bond for the purpose of acquiring land for new parks. The recession that began in 2008 and other factors caused the County Commission to defer issuing the bond until January 2017, and then only for \$27.3 million. Still, we appreciate that the county recently used part of the money to acquire from the Kemp family 93.4 acres that contain the remnants of a Civil War trench on the south side of Burnt Hickory Road west of the former location of Gilgal Church. The Kemp family knew of interest by developers but ultimately decided to sell to Cobb County. At a park preview event on 20 July, GBA had a chance to explore the property (see photos).

The property has been in the Kemp family since before the Civil War. A map from the [Atlas to Accompany the Official Records](#) shows the Kemp house on the property and Kemp's Mill to the northwest. See <http://digitalcollections.baylor.edu/cdm/landingpage/collection/tx-wotr>, then search for Atlanta Campaign Third Epoch: Enlarge to show the area around Gilgal Church. The map shows both red (Confederate) and blue (Federal) lines on the property, but Jeff Wright, an expert on Cobb County earthworks, used maps drawn by Ed Bearss in the early 1960s to confirm that the still visible trench was occupied by Mercer's Georgia brigade in the days immediately after the Confederates withdrew from the New Hope Church line on 4 June 1864. Mercer's brigade and Vaughan's Tennessee brigade to its right (northeast) were in an advanced position from the Lost Mountain-Brushy Mountain Line and were withdrawn to the main line not long after Federal forces advanced. The adjacent advanced position on Pine Mountain farther northeast was abandoned after the death of Lt. Gen. Leonidas Polk there on 14 June 1864.

The opening date for public access to the park is uncertain but is at least several months away. We appreciate the Kemp family's willingness to sell to Cobb County and the County Commission's willingness to purchase the property.

Left photo: Jeff Wright (in hat) and William Lathem, both experts on Cobb County earthworks, talk with Cobb County Commission Chair Mike Boyce. District 1 Commissioner Bob Weatherford is in striped shirt at right.
Right photo: Tommy Kemp, whose family agreed to sell the property for use as a park rather than see it developed.



Looking southwest along trench.



Looking northeast along trench.

Mary-Elizabeth Ellard wins Spirit of '61 Award

Georgia Battlefields Association Vice President Mary-Elizabeth Ellard also serves on the executive committee of the Atlanta Civil War Round Table (ACWRT). At ACWRT's June meeting, Mary-Elizabeth received the Spirit of '61 Award for her efforts to have the Round Table formally recognized by the IRS as a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization. Photo shows ACWRT President Grant Moseley presenting the award to Mary-Elizabeth.



Ed Bearss and the All-Star game

Most of our readers are familiar with National Park Service Chief Historian Emeritus Ed Bearss, not only because he leads our annual Georgia Battlefields Association tour, but also because of his remarkably long service as the nation's premier battlefield tour guide.

Ed was born and raised in Montana, but his family roots are deep in northern Indiana. Ed's father was a fan of the Chicago Cubs and installed a long antenna on their Montana farm so he could pick up baseball game radio broadcasts from far-away. Ed's grandfather was also a friend of Kenesaw Mountain Landis, who spent much of his youth in Indiana and was baseball commissioner from 1920 until his death in 1944. Landis was named by his father, Abraham, who suffered a serious wound at the 1864 battle of Kennesaw Mountain and promised himself that if he survived and had a son, he would name the boy after the battle. Thus, when a boy was born in 1866, his father fulfilled the promise, spelling the child's name phonetically.

Ed's grandmother Sara had attended Chicago's 1893 Columbian Exposition, a world's fair celebrating the 400th anniversary of Columbus landing in the western hemisphere, and she wished to attend the 1933 World's Fair in Chicago; but she died early in the year. Sara did leave enough money for the family to travel to Chicago, and Ed suspects his grandfather's friendship with baseball commissioner Landis is how Ed's father obtained two tickets to the inaugural major league baseball All-Star game, held in conjunction with the World's Fair on 6 July 1933, shortly after Ed's 10th birthday, at Comiskey Park, home of the Chicago White Sox. Though not confirmed, Ed may be the last living person to have attended the inaugural All-Star game.

Ed is on the Board of Trustees of the American Battlefield Trust www.battlefields.org, and the Trust staff contacted Major League Baseball (MLB) and related Ed's story, including Ed's subsequent government service as a combat-wounded Marine in WWII, with the U.S. Navy Hydrographic Office, and with the National Park Service. MLB responded by providing four tickets to the 2018 All-Star game held 17 July in Washington. Further, MLB asked Ed to throw out the first pitch at the 13 July Armed Services Classic, an event associated with the All-Star game and the capstone of a softball tournament featuring teams comprised of active duty Army, Navy, Marine, Coast Guard, and Air Force members stationed in the DC area.

Ed's participation received considerable media coverage. Probably the most amusing is his interview with Fox5 TV station www.fox5dc.com/news/346164918-video. Watch as the interviewer attempts to wrap-up the conversation, only to have Ed continue.

At the conclusion of our GBA tour that Ed led last March, he remarked that he would see us for next year's tour. As usual, we'll confirm with Ed that GBA is on his schedule for March 2019. We hope that you'll join us to tour with a national treasure.

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