

G E O R G I A

BATTLEFIELDS

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Properties will add to Kennesaw Mountain National Battlefield Park

On 9 June, the Cobb County Board of Commissioners voted to donate two properties to the National Park Service (NPS). The March 2019 Natural Resources Management Act (April 2019 newsletter) authorized the NPS to enlarge the boundaries of Kennesaw Mountain National Battlefield Park (KMNBP) by accepting the two properties that include the Wallis House, which served as a headquarters during June 1864, and the high ground northwest of the house, known as Signal Hill or Harriston's Hill, which was the site of a U.S. Army signal station.

Georgia Battlefields Association, among other organizations, has been assisting in efforts to preserve this area for almost 20 years. Unfortunately a developer bought land between the two properties and built 42 houses. In May 2002, Cobb County bought the 5.5 acres containing Signal Hill, and Cobb Land Trust bought 1.09 acres on the northeast corner of the intersection of Barrett Parkway and Burnt Hickory Road, immediately south of the Signal Hill property. In December 2003, Cobb County bought the 1.224 acre property containing the Wallis House, hoping that federal legislation would eventually approve expansion of KMNBP to include the two properties, which, as noted above, finally occurred in March 2019.

In the intervening years, Cobb Land Trust built a parking lot so visitors can park close to both historic properties; but the Wallis House property has become overgrown, and it will be some time before KMNBP can make the properties safe for visitors and install interpretive markers.



Location of properties on Burnt Hickory Rd.



January 2003: Looking N along Wallis House driveway. Signal Hill is beyond construction in middle distance.



January 2003: Looking E towards house.



January 2003: Looking W towards house. Note marker in foreground.



June 2020: Looking E towards house.



June 2020: Brush obscures marker.

Protest & Preservation

Since September 2017, this newsletter has had several articles relating to monument desecration, contextualization, removal, or controversy. As we've written, most recently in the January 2020 and May 2019 newsletters (www.georgiabattlefields.org/newsletters.aspx), Georgia Battlefields Association's core missions are to preserve battlefields and educate people about what occurred at those sites. The education mission encompasses preserving monuments and historical markers on battlefields, even those such as Peachtree Creek and Atlanta that are not preserved and are now part of urban landscapes. Preservation of monuments not on battlefields is outside our core missions. Still, we can't avoid the topic; and some of our trustees—because Georgia is in our name—have been approached wanting to know if we are Confederate apologists: We are not. We preserve and educate without preference for either side.

Congress shall make no law ... abridging freedom of speech, or of the press, or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.

Many of you will recognize this as an extract of the First Amendment. People have a right to protest, but there is no right to destroy or damage property, private or public. Consequently, we oppose painting, hammering, and other types of damage to monuments and related structures.

Damage to monuments, often in the form of graffiti, has proliferated recently. In selected examples in Georgia, the John B. Gordon monument on the state Capitol grounds was painted with graffiti, and calls for the monument's removal increased. Graffiti was also sprayed in Atlanta's Oakland Cemetery on two monuments, the Obelisk and the Lion of Atlanta, both of which commemorate Confederate dead and both of which had contextual markers installed last year (September 2019 newsletter). In Atlanta's Westview Cemetery, established post-war on part of the Ezra Church battlefield, obscenity-laced graffiti was sprayed on the Confederate monument and the Ezra Church plaque. The plaque's wording did not glorify the Confederate cause but was a straightforward account of the fighting. At both Oakland and Westview, black Xs were spray painted on individual Confederate gravestones. In Columbus, the National Civil War Naval Museum had two incidents of arson at a storage building, destroying irreplaceable artifacts. In Savannah, the General McLaws bust was covered with a pillow case with eye holes, and the base was spray painted with a black fist. We expect such activities to continue.

Regarding the Confederate monument behind the old courthouse in Decatur (October 2019, May 2019, June 2018, and February 2018 newsletters), on 12 June a DeKalb County judge overcame the state law forbidding monument relocation by agreeing with the Decatur city attorney's complaint that the monument was a threat to public safety because of repeated vandalism and concerns that protestors would attempt to pull it down and cause death or injuries in the attempt. The county government removed the obelisk over the night of 18-19 June.

Grace period for late renewals

We hope you and all your family have avoided serious illness. In light of the disruption that the virus has imposed on our lives, GBA has decided to allow extra time for current members to pay their renewal dues. Please renew as soon as you can.

150 years ago this month – July 1870

On 15 July, President Grant signs legislation permitting Georgia to have Congressional representation. Georgia is the last state to be readmitted, though U.S. Army troops remain.

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