

GEORGIA

BATTLEFIELDS

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A different sort of preservation story

During Georgia Battlefields Association's tour based in Savannah, the visit to The Mighty Eighth Air Force Museum prompted member and former trustee Jeff Wright to provide a family story involving a preserved B-17G bomber named "City of Savannah". The nose art indicates the reason for the name: It was the 5,000th aircraft processed thru Hunter Field, Georgia in 1944.



Restored B-17G "City of Savannah" at museum.



B-17G at Hunter Field, 1944.

The World War II photo at right shows the crew that took delivery of the plane. For public relations purposes, the U.S. Army Air Forces wanted a Georgia-born pilot to command the aircraft and chose Ringgold, Georgia, native 1LT Ralph Kittle (standing second from right in the photo), the cousin of Jeff Wright's grandfather. After flying the bomber to England, the crew members were assigned to an older aircraft, and the new plane was given to a veteran crew. On 5 March 1944, during the crew's 13th mission, the aircraft to which the crew was reassigned was heavily damaged by anti-aircraft fire that disabled three of the four engines. Pilot Kittle turned the bomber towards the southeast, hoping to get to an area controlled by Russian forces, but Kittle had to order a bail-out before the aircraft crashed near Kraslice, in what was then German occupied Czechoslovakia. The tail gunner went down with the plane. Of the nine men who bailed out, the co-pilot evaded capture, but the other eight became prisoners of the Germans, including Kittle, who was injured before bailing out and injured again when he was hit on the head with a brick while being paraded through the streets on his way to a POW camp. For his actions that day, 1LT Kittle received the air medal and two purple hearts. After the war, he got a law degree, had a distinguished career in New York and Washington, D.C., and died in 2001.

Preservation of a site—or, in this case, an aircraft—facilitates telling a story, often anchoring the facts of the narrative, so that history can be inspiring as well as accurate.

7th Annual Vince Dooley Leadership Seminar 17 June

Kennesaw State University will hold its [7th Annual Vince Dooley Leadership Seminar](#) at 9:00 a.m. on 17 June in room 400 of the KSU Center (I-75 exit 271, go east and take the first right onto Busbee Drive: KSU Center is on the right). Speakers are Professor Brian Wills, director of the Center for the Study of the Civil War Era, Kent Masterson Brown, and Craig Symonds.

Dr. Wills is biographer of Generals Bedford Forrest, George Thomas, and Dorsey Pender, and he has authored books on the Civil War in cinema, non-combat deaths, and other topics. He is a past president of the Atlanta Civil War Round Table and a notable and convivial tour guide.

Kent Masterson Brown, J.D., practiced law in Lexington, Kentucky for 47 years, simultaneously establishing a reputation as an author of history books, notably *Cushing of Gettysburg*, *The Civil War in Kentucky*, *Retreat from Gettysburg*, and *Meade at Gettysburg*. Perhaps not as widely known is his critical role in preserving the Perryville battlefield and his service on the Gettysburg National Military Park Advisory Commission. He has spoken to the Atlanta Civil War Round Table and preservation conferences and led tours for the American Battlefield Trust. He will be speaking about Gettysburg.

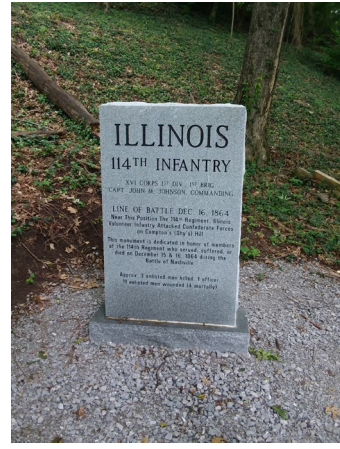
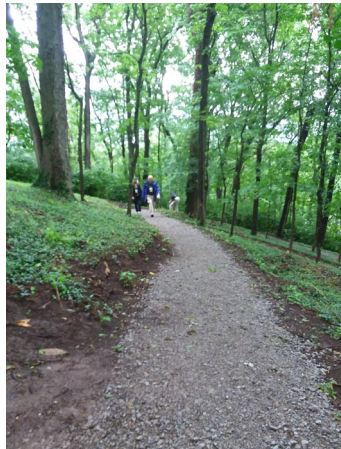
Dr. Craig Symonds is a Navy veteran who taught at the U.S. Naval Academy for 30 years, including a term as chair of the history department. He also taught at the Naval War College and has published books on the Revolutionary War, the Civil War, and World War II, often focusing on naval operations and command. His biography of Joseph E. Johnston is perhaps the most even-handed assessment of the sometimes admired and often criticized general. Unsurprisingly, Professor Symonds has spoken at conferences and led tours. He will be comparing Admirals Farragut and Nimitz.

American Battlefield Trust annual conference in Franklin 18-21 May

The 2023 American Battlefield Trust (ABT) conference was held 18-21 May in Franklin, Tennessee. Since its 1987 founding, ABT has saved over 56,000 acres of battlefield land. Georgia Battlefields Association (GBA) is pleased to have worked with ABT since our own founding in 1995, and we have the common objectives of preservation and education.



GBA represented at ABT conference.
L to R: Bill & Mary Porter, Cheryl & Joe Trahan, Kathleen & Larry Peterson, Charlie Crawford, Dan Hanks.



Conference tours featured dozens of Tennessee sites. Notable were the improvements at Shy's Hill, a landmark of the 16 December 1864 Battle of Nashville. Due to continuing preservation and interpretation efforts by local preservation organizations, the hill's summit is much more readily accessible due to a switchback gravel trail (center photo above), and an Illinois monument (right photo above) was installed earlier this year.

War-related national parks visitation rankings

Kennesaw Mountain National Battlefield Park (KMNBP) remains the most visited of all National Park Service war-related parks. The relevant parks include sites from the French & Indian War, Revolutionary War, War of 1812, Civil War, and wars against the Plains Indians. In 2022, KMNBP had 1,322,003 visitors. Even though that was fewer visitors than in 2021, KMNBP retained the most-visited ranking it has held for over ten years. Second most-visited park in 2022 was Chickamauga and Chattanooga National Military Park (NMP) with 964,272 visitors. Gettysburg National Military Park was third with 764,576. Chickamauga and Chattanooga NMP passed Gettysburg NMP in 2019 and has held second place since then.

KMNBP and Chickamauga and Chattanooga NMP have the relative advantage of being nearer to cities (Atlanta and Chattanooga) compared to Gettysburg, but this also means that many visitors come to those parks for recreation rather than to learn about history. A study done over 20 years ago essentially concluded that the purpose of the parks was to serve the people, and nothing should be done to restrict visitation. Still, a higher number of visitors means more wear and tear on the park facilities, as well as more traffic and a greater need for maintenance.

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