

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

2025 Georgia Battlefields Association tour will be 27-30 March

Chickamauga is the subject. [Web site tours page](#) and October newsletter will have more info.

Restoration & Interpretation: Margaret Mitchell house reopens

On 10 July, the Atlanta History Center (AHC) reopened the Margaret Mitchell House for public visitation. The building was originally a single-family residence in 1899 but was converted into apartments in 1919-1920 and narrowly escaped being torn down in the 1980s.

Margaret Mitchell was described as spunky, among many other adjectives, in her youth. She wrote for various publications, married at age 21 and divorced at 23, then married John Marsh on 4 July 1925. A few months later, they moved into Unit #1 on the ground floor of what were then known as the Crescent Apartments on Crescent Avenue just south of 10th St. and one block west of Peachtree Street in Atlanta. Mitchell soon decided she would give up full time journalism to become more of a wife, though she dabbled in feature articles. She began writing *Gone With the Wind*, her only book published during her lifetime, in 1928 and largely finished the manuscript in 1931. She and her husband moved from the apartment in 1932. The book was finally published in 1936 and won the Pulitzer Prize. The apartment in which it was written did not have such lasting success. By the 1980s, it was run down and suffered a 1984 fire that heavily damaged the upper floors. It survived efforts to have it torn down, but the restoration was hindered not only by lack of funding but also by heavy damage in 1994 and 1996 fires of suspicious origin. It survived to become a functional museum and was acquired by the Atlanta History Center in 2004.

The centerpiece of the museum was Unit #1, which was restored to look as much as possible as it did in the years that the Marshes lived there. When COVID greatly reduced visitation, AHC closed the museum in 2020 and decided to revamp both the facility and the presentation, focusing more on the cultural influence of the book and movie rather than replicating the 1920s apartment and recounting the creation of the book and film. For more information and tickets:

<https://www.atlantahistorycenter.com/exhibitions/telling-stories-gone-with-the-wind-and-american-memory/>

For all the sociological analysis of the novel and the film, no one can find fault with the wartime references in either. Margaret Mitchell was already familiar with Wilbur Kurtz, an Indiana graphic artist who became fascinated with the Andrews Raid and came to Atlanta in the early 1900s to interview survivors of the event. He married conductor William Fuller's daughter, moved to Atlanta, and went on to become the premier historian of Atlanta's Civil War years. Historians owe Kurtz a great debt for all the research he did during his years in Atlanta.

Mitchell would send manuscript sections to Kurtz as she completed them and ask him to verify the background events, such as "When did the Gettysburg casualty lists appear in the Atlanta newspapers?" When movie producer David O. Selznik asked Mitchell to come to California to help verify the depiction of events, she replied, "You don't want me: You want Mr. Kurtz." Kurtz traveled to California during the filming, even taking jars of Georgia red clay so the filmmakers could best replicate the appearance of the city's trenches and Tara's soil. Next time you see the film's opening credits, watch for Wilbur G. Kurtz listed as technical advisor.



Atlanta History Center Vice President of Collections and Research Services Paul Crater (orange shirt) shows original Civil War documents to a visiting group.

Kurtz's research materials, articles, photographs, and some paintings are in the Atlanta History Center's archives, which also include many other items related to the Civil War.

<https://www.atlantahistorycenter.com/buildings-and-grounds/kenan-research-center/archival-collections/military-history/>

Public History Award for Atlanta History Center curator Gordon Jones

Emerging Civil War (ECW) is recognizing Gordon L. Jones of the Atlanta History Center as the recipient of the 2024 ECW Award for Service in Civil War Public History. The award recognizes the work of an individual or organization that has made a significant impact on the field of Civil War public history in a way that better helps the public connect with America's defining event. Writes ECW editor-in-chief Chris Mackowski: "The Atlanta History Center is a world-class attraction, and Gordon helped situate the city's Civil War history as one of the Center's crown jewels." "With such show-piece artifacts as the Atlanta Cyclorama and the locomotive *Texas*, Gordon has made the most of the Center's treasures to share a full, balanced, and remarkably rich story."

Jones is Atlanta History Center's Senior Military Historian and Curator. He is responsible for the care and interpretation of more than 12,000 objects relating to the American Civil War era. He's been on staff at the Center since 1991.

Gordon led the completion of a five-year project to move, conserve, restore, and exhibit the 1886 cyclorama painting, *The Battle of Atlanta*, which opened at the Atlanta History Center in 2019. He also curated the accompanying exhibition, *Cyclorama: The Big Picture*, as well as the 9,200 square-foot permanent exhibition *Turning Point: The American Civil War*, to be updated by 2026.



Gordon leading a tour of the Cyclorama in July.

Support for the award to Jones was universal, including appreciative remarks from historians Todd Groce, Jim Ogden, Steve Davis, and Dave Powell, all of whom lauded Gordon for his help to them, and all of whom are familiar to Georgia Battlefields Association members.

Emerging Civil War is the collaborative effort of more than thirty historians committed to sharing the story of the Civil War in an accessible way to the general public. Founded in 2011, Emerging Civil War features public and academic historians of diverse backgrounds and interests, while also providing a platform for emerging voices in the field. Initiatives include award-winning books; an annual symposium; a speakers' bureau; and a daily blog: www.emergingcivilwar.com.

Atlanta Civil War Round Table meetings moving to Atlanta History Center

While we're on the subject of the Atlanta History Center (AHC), the Atlanta Civil War Round Table (ACWRT) will be moving its monthly meetings to AHC beginning in September. Because of the Labor Day holiday, the September meeting will be on 9 September, but the regular meetings will switch to the first Monday of every month for the remainder of the campaign year (through June 2025). ACWRT has been meeting on the second Tuesday of every month for the past several years at the Capital City Club. See <https://atlantacwrt.org/> for more info.

Historian Brian Wills retires from Kennesaw State University

Director of Kennesaw State University's (KSU) Center for the Study of the Civil War Era, history professor, and good friend of Georgia Battlefields Association (GBA) Brian Wills retired from his KSU positions at the end of July. Brian came to Atlanta from the University of Virginia at Wise and will be returning to southwestern Virginia. His last event in Atlanta was helping to lead a tour with GBA, and we will miss him.

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September 2024