

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

Annual tour will revisit 1864 campaign, 9-12 April 2026

In 2026, GBA will begin another multi-tour examination of what came to be known as the Atlanta Campaign. Our first swing through the campaign ran from 2004 through 2009, and our second swing ran from 2014 through 2019. While we'll certainly revisit some sites, we'll have some newly preserved land to show you and some changes to sites you may have seen before.

Dates: 9-12 April 2026

Meals: Breakfast at hotel, Thursday through Sunday.

Lunch and dinner provided Thursday through Saturday.

Guide: Chickamauga and Chattanooga National Military Park historian [Jim Ogden](#).

Price: \$600 per person for members. \$625 for non-members, but that price includes membership for a year. Register for the tour at [this link](#).

Hotel: Dalton Fairfield Inn, starting at \$129 per night plus tax. Make reservations at [this link](#).

Here's what happened over the winter of 1863-1864 to prepare for the Spring campaign.

Our 2024 tour ended at the site of the culminating battle of 1863, the November Battle of Ringgold, where the defense of Ringgold Gap by Cleburne's division allowed Bragg to get his routed Army of Tennessee and its remaining wagons and artillery to the Dalton area behind Rocky Face Ridge. With winter weather approaching, Grant, who was present at Ringgold, decided to reduce campaigning in the area, but planning and preparation—by both sides—for the Spring 1864 campaign continued over the next five months.

Grant went to Nashville to establish headquarters for the recently constituted (16 October 1863) Military Division of the Mississippi (MDM), through which he commanded the Departments of the Cumberland, the Ohio, and the Tennessee. Sherman returned to Vicksburg and the units that he had left behind in November when he brought four divisions of the Army of the Tennessee to Chattanooga. In February 1864, Sherman advanced from Vicksburg to Meridian, Mississippi, to drive Confederate forces from that area and destroy the town's value as a transportation hub and supply depot. In the mid-1950s, a young woman's knowledge of the Meridian Campaign impressed a Vicksburg National Military Park historian so greatly that he began courting her. We remember them fondly as Ed and Margie Bearss.

Also in February, the U.S. forces around Knoxville were organized as the 23rd Corps in the revived Army of the Ohio, now under Schofield.

On 12 February, Grant ordered Thomas and the Army of the Cumberland to take the town of Dalton and was disappointed when Thomas waited until 24 February to probe the Confederate defenses on Rocky Face Ridge. Thomas decided not to make a large-scale assault. Grant's—and, later, Sherman's—disappointment with Thomas's performance on offense would become a recurrent theme of the Spring 1864 campaign, but the probe did discover the presence of Snake Creek Gap, an opening in the ridgeline farther south. The gap would become the subject of opportunity and controversy in the coming months.

Impressed with Grant's successes in 1863, Lincoln asked Congress to revive the rank of lieutenant general, last held permanently by George Washington and held since only as a brevet by Winfield Scott. Everyone assumed Lincoln would nominate Grant for the rank. On 29 February, Congress passed the legislation, which Lincoln signed into law and then submitted Grant's name for the promotion, which the Senate approved. Grant traveled to Washington, received his commission on 9 March, and was appointed commanding general of U.S. Army forces on 12 March. Grant returned to Nashville, but he decided to command U.S. forces from the Eastern Theater rather than the West, just as Sherman had feared.

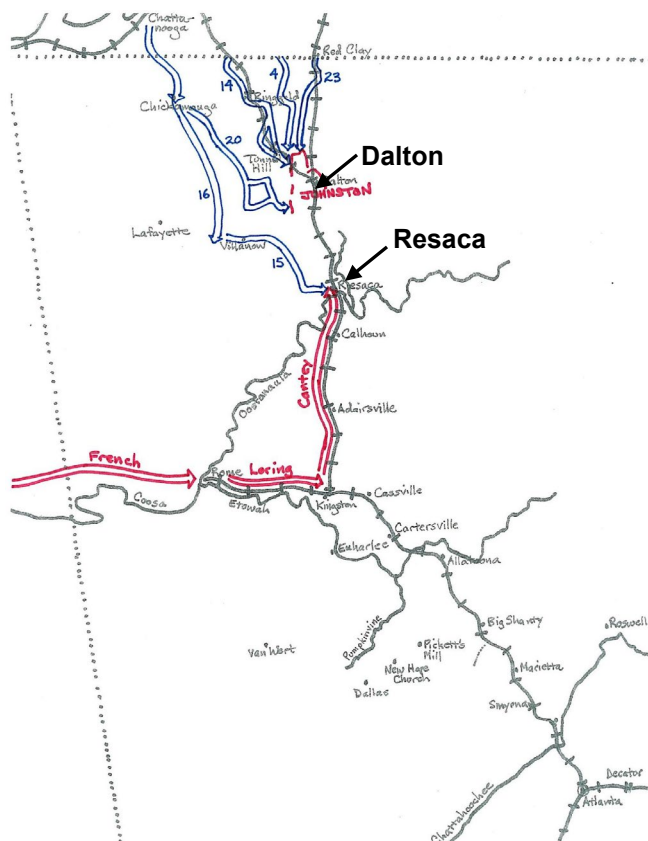
On 18 March, Grant appointed Sherman as his successor to command MDM, and on 19 & 20 March, they traveled together by train to Louisville (which was the main supply base for MDM, with Nashville and Chattanooga as advanced supply bases) and Cincinnati. In discussions during the trip, Grant outlined his plans for 1864. The general strategy would be to have all U.S. forces advance simultaneously so that the Confederates could not move forces from one theater to another (as they had done before the Battle of Chickamauga). The objective in all theaters would

be to destroy Confederate forces rather than seize specific locations (such as Atlanta). Principally, Grant would go after Confederate forces in Virginia, and Sherman would go after Confederate forces in Georgia.

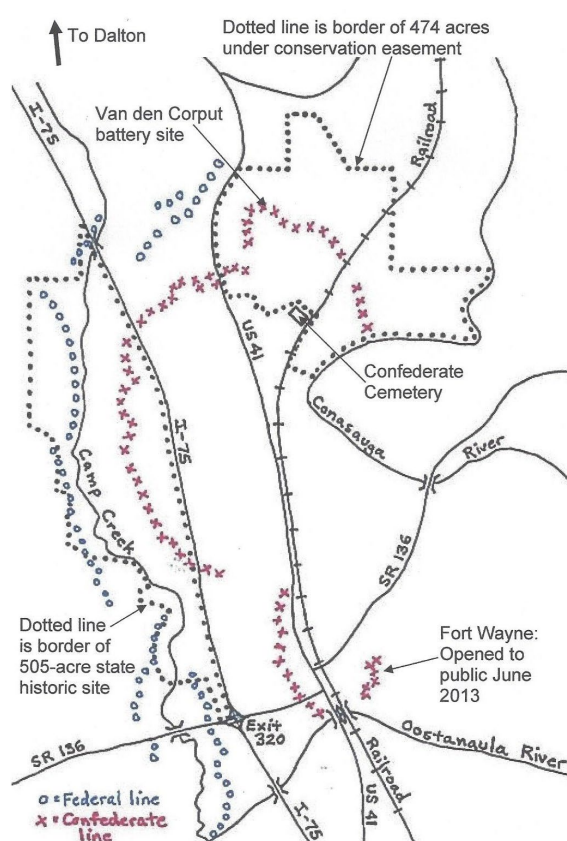
Sherman spent the next several weeks inspecting his new command. His staff's analysis of supply requirements indicated 130 loaded railroad cars would need to arrive in Chattanooga every day. Sherman seized the railroad assets from Nashville southward, much to the chagrin of the railroad owners. He also appointed Colonel William Wright to command a railroad repair brigade of 2,000 men and Colonel Adna Anderson to be the sole authority for scheduling rail traffic. He ordered the move of more of the Army of the Tennessee from Vicksburg to Chattanooga and was angered to find that two of his divisions were still tied up in the Red River Campaign despite Banks' promise to conclude that campaign before April. Sherman's disdain for delay will also be a feature of the coming campaign. On 10 April, Sherman sent Grant a ten-page letter specifying how he intended to implement Grant's directives.

Grant had ordered that the general advance of all U.S. forces should begin in early May, and the Army of the Potomac advanced into the Wilderness in Virginia on 5 May. Sherman had gathered the Army of the Cumberland and the Army of the Ohio (one corps) and the available divisions of the Army of the Tennessee in the Chattanooga area in late April, but the beginning of what would become known as the Atlanta Campaign is generally marked as 7 May.

NEXT MONTH'S NEWSLETTER: What did the Confederate forces do over the winter?



Opening of the Atlanta Campaign



Resaca Preservation

Shoupade Park work day 19 October

Shoupade Park will have a work day to remove brush from 1 p.m. to 2:30 p.m. on 19 October. Details are on the River Line Facebook site <https://www.facebook.com/share/17KAkCui69/> or on the River Line Historic Area calendar <https://riverline.org/calendar/>.

Note new address

Georgia Battlefields Association
4203 Newpond Trail NE
Kennesaw GA 30144-1667

www.georgiabattlefields.org

October 2025