GAR Monthly Meetings

Monthly meetings, open to the public, are held at the Gwinnett County Justice and Administration Building located at 75 Langley Road in Lawrenceville. Gathering at 7pm, the program begins at 7:30pm.

Gwinnett Archaeology Research Society (GARS) next meeting will be held on Thursday, April 10. The guest speaker will be Georgia Gwinnett College Assistant Professor of American Colonial History, Dr. Kathryn Gray White. She holds a ABJ (Bachelor of Arts in Journalism/Minor History), a Master of Arts in American History, and a Ph.D. in education history—all received from the University of Georgia. Her history expertise includes the areas of early American history (colonial), Southern history (antebellum), Georgia history (lost settlements), and education history (Southern schools). Prior to the completion of her Ph.D., for several years she worked as a freelance writer/photographer and published numerous articles for a collection entitled “Georgia’s Lost Settlements.”

Dr. Gray-White will be speaking about the 1787 Battle of Jack’s Creek. Jack’s Creek is located in present day Walton County on Snow Mill’s Road. Dr. Gray-White was aided in the search of the actual location of the battle with help from retired Park Service archaeologist, Jack Wynn.

The battle at Jack’s Creek was just one in a series of violent episodes in the late 1700s between settlers and the Creeks in what was called the “Ocony Wars.” The burning of the Greensboro settlement by the Creeks in Greene County had taken place that same summer in 1787, and then in September 1787 the militia commanded by Elijah Clarke had surprised a group of Creek Indians at Jack’s Creek. The battle is important because it battle took place just prior to Elijah Clarke’s attempt to create a “Trans-Oconee Republic” and just a couple of decades prior to the Battle of Horseshoe Bend under Andrew Jackson.
The Battle of Kennesaw Mountain  
By Bill Pilon

Despite occurring six weeks into the “red clay minuet” of the Atlanta Campaign, the Union assault on the Army of Tennessee’s positions around Kennesaw Mountain was the first “major engagement” of the campaign. Up until this point the campaign had involved a series of turning movements by Sherman’s forces. After evacuating his lines around New Hope Church, Joe Johnston’s Army of Tennessee found an extraordinarily strong position on the ridge running southeast from Kennesaw Mountain. The right of Johnston’s position was anchored atop Kennesaw Mountain, ran south by west for several miles along Little Kennesaw Mountain, Pigeon Hill, and Cheatham’s Hill before coming to rest on Olley’s Creek. Because of topography and the fortifications created by Confederate engineers, the line was nearly impregnable. Sherman, after reconnoitering the position, described it to Washington:

The whole country is one vast fort, and Johnston must have at least 50 miles (80 km) of connected trenches with abatis and finished batteries. We gain ground daily, fighting all the time. ... Our lines are now in close contact and the fighting incessant, with a good deal of artillery. As fast as we gain one position the enemy has another all ready. ... Kennesaw ... is the key to the whole country.

Kennesaw was the “key to the whole country” because the Mountain overlooked the Western and Atlantic Railroad—Sherman’s lifeline back to the depots and warehouses in Chattanooga and Nashville. As long as Confederate artillery was positioned on the mountain commanding the railroad, Sherman’s armies could go no further toward Atlanta. To make things worse, because the nearly constant rain had turned the roads to quagmires, Sherman could not repeat his previous tactic of maneuvering around the Confederate left—forcing them to abandon their position.

If Sherman could not go around the line, he would go through it. The plan of attack was relatively simple. MG Blair’s XVII Corps and MG Dodge’s XVI Corps of McPherson’s Army of the Tennessee would launch a demonstration against the Confederate positions on Kennesaw Mountain—attempting to hold their attention. Meanwhile, MG Logan’s corps would assault MG Loring’s Confederate lines at Pigeon Hill. Further south, MG Palmer’s XIV Corps of Thomas’ Army of the Cumberland would launch an assault on Cheatham Hill held by the divisions of MG Cheatham and MG Cleburn of LTG Hardee’s Corps. Finally, MG Schofield’s Army of the Ohio (actually little more than a Corps) would launch a demonstration against the Confederate left along Olley’s Creek—holding hopefully LTG Hood’s corps in place and preventing to send troops to help Hardee.

As Sherman ordered, on June 27 promptly at 8am the Union artillery began shelling the Confederate positions all along the line. At 8:30am, right on schedule, MG Logan corps began their assault on Pigeon Hill. However, Logan’s commanders had not adequately reconnoitered the Confederate positions before the attack forcing them to attack through thick brush and briars, across a gorge choked with timber, and in one case even to ford a swamp. Although a few men actually made it all the way to the Confederate line, no one came anywhere near breaking through, and shortly thereafter, Logan rode out ordered the attack to stop and withdrew his forces.

In front of Cheatham’s Hill things went even worse. Thomas’ men were not in position at 8am and did not attack until 9am—an hour late. The end result was not any better: The Union force was stopped cold at the Confederate line. Because of a mistake in the layout of the Confederate lines, there was a small area a few meters from the crest of the hill which the Confederates could not see or shoot at. This area became crowded with Union troops sheltering from Confederate fire. By 10:45am Sherman had received word from both Thomas and McPherson that their assaults had failed. A few hours later, after taking stock, Sherman pointed out to Thomas that, compared to the East, casualties were relatively light and asked if Thomas’ troops could renew the assault. Thomas replied, “We have already lost heavily today without gaining any material advantage; one or two more such assaults would use up this army.” Sherman decided against pressing the attack.

Ironically enough, Scholfield’s “demonstration” against the Confederate left provided the key to Sherman’s further progress. During the first week of July when the rain had stopped and the roads had dried up, Sherman used Scholfield’s advanced position (within five miles of the Chattahoochee River) as the pivot of another turning movement. Johnston was flanked out of his impregnable position on Kennesaw Mountain. As a result, Sherman resumed his progress toward Atlanta.

(Note: See Page 3 for details on an upcoming field trip to Kennesaw Mountain.)
Field Trip to Kennesaw Battlefield
By Leslie Perry

Members of GARS will be visiting the **Kennesaw Battlefield on Sunday, April 13**. The guided tour will commence at 1PM from the new parking area l/2 mile north of the Visitor Center on Old Highway 41 in Kennesaw. Civil War historian and author Brad Quinlan will give an approximately 2.5-hour guided tour. There will be a car caravan from the new parking area to the battlefield sites to limit the amount of walking on the site. If you are going to attend, please email Leslie Perry. If you are interested to know more about the battle that occurred at Kennesaw Mountain, please read the article on Page 2.

Save the Date!

May is Georgia Archaeology Month, and this year’s theme “Site Destruction: Pieces of Our Past Lost Forever.” You can celebrate by participating in local and statewide events—like the Scout Day at Fort Daniel (See Page 4) or the Society of Georgia Archaeology’s Spring Meeting on Saturday, May 10 at Red Top Mountain State Park. For more details about local and statewide events celebrating Archaeology Month, visit the SGA’s Web site.
Scout Day at Fort Daniel

By Catherine Long

The Fort Daniel Foundation will be inviting Boy and Girl Scouts to come and visit the Fort Daniel archaeological site in honor of the celebration of Archaeology Month on Saturday, April 26 from 10AM to 3PM. (Scout leaders are encourage to participate too.)

The Scouts will be able to discover archaeology and learn how archaeologists examine artifacts discovering Gwinnett County’s rich history. The program will feature opportunities to learn about the history of the site, participate in excavating the soil and looking for artifacts, and catalogue the artifacts. Interactive stations will be set up to explore the exciting subject of archaeology!

If you are going to participate, please bring a sack lunch and wear comfortable clothing. For more information please email Catherine Long.

Fort Daniel Work Days

Members of FDF and GARS (and other volunteers) are invited to the work days on April 16–17 at Fort Daniel beginning at 10AM. This will involve the first stage of finishing the basement, will include moving items away from the wall to prepare for painting, and will comprise other tasks. If you are planning to volunteer, please email John Hopkins.

Congratulations to Fort Daniel Elementary!

They celebrated their 20th Anniversary with a reception on Sunday, March 30. On display was the Fort Daniel scale model and new tabletop FS display featuring involvement of young students at the Fort Daniel archaeological site. Both were among educational items purchased with funds made possible by a recent grant from the Ramlose Foundation.