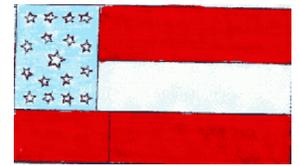




The Vidette

CALIFORNIA DIVISION

Sons of Confederate Veterans



The J. P. Gillis Flag



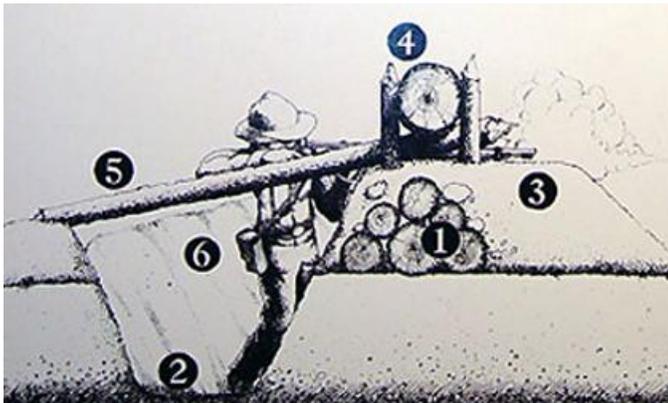
Division Newsletter Issue 3. Published by Division Adjutant Vernon R. Padgett, 3 September 2002 vp09@earthlink.net

Marching Through Georgia: Notes on Our Southern Travels

THE ATLANTA CAMPAIGN

By Gerald W. Dupree, Past Commander,
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We just returned from our trip to Georgia. We had previously toured northern Georgia in 1999 and had toured Chickamauga, Chattanooga, Lookout Mountain, and Missionary Ridge.



Confederate Trench System

This year we established a base of operation near Atlanta to cover the Atlanta campaign, the Battle of Atlanta, and Sherman's March. I took more than 1000 digital images, which I can print, or project on a television monitor with a computer.

Kennesaw Mountain

We began with the Battle of Kennesaw Mountain. It is some 3000 acres of land where blood was spilled in 1864. The battlefield area includes the "Dead Angle," and Pine Mountain, where General Leonidas

Polk was killed by a direct hit from a 10 Pounder Parrot Rifle while reconnoitering enemy positions. Generals Polk, Hardee, and Joseph E. Johnston were standing together when they were in sight of Federal artillery.

We prepared by copying information taken from the writings of Dr. John G. Dupree, who was serving in the First Mississippi Cavalry, and from Sam Watkins' book, *Company Aytch*, which gave graphic first person impressions of the battles.



General Patrick Cleburne's Saber

Park Ranger Wrong!

When we went to the Visitor's center we were met by a park ranger, saw the exhibits and a short video of

the battle. I asked him about other battlefields or Civil War sites nearby. He said there was nothing but roadside Historical Markers, other than the Kennesaw Mountain park.

We found that the Ranger was wrong because we located several significant points of interest by just driving around. We didn't tour Tunnel Hill, Ringgold, Ezra Church, Altoona gap, New Hope Church, or some of the others. For example, we went to the battlefield of Kolb's Farm and Pickett's Mill, as well as Big Shanty, where the "Great Locomotive Chase" began.

The state of Georgia is building a new exhibit hall and the Smithsonian Institute is restoring the locomotive, "General" which was taken by Union soldiers in order to burn bridges and tear up track to disrupt the Confederate Army's supply line. They were followed by a fast acting southern train crew with the locomotive, "Texas," and were captured.

The "Texas" is on exhibit in the Atlanta Historical Museum. The battlefield trenches are very visible and are well maintained. The area is much more hilly and forested than I had previously envisioned from reading about the Atlanta campaign.

Trench Design

The trenches are dug three feet deep, with a log placed on top, with smaller logs placed perpendicular underneath to allow riflemen to aim their muskets under the protection of the top log. They braced the top log with angled logs across the trenches, so that if artillery blasted the top log back, it would roll down over the heads of the men, not land on them.



Polk Memorial

The trenches are dug in a zigzag pattern to prevent enfilading fire down the trenches in case of a breach and to allow concentrated cross firing against advancing forces. They also dug trenches perpendicular to the line of battle to allow

reinforcements, resupply, and to carry off dead and wounded.

The so-called "dead angle," as described by Sam Watkins in *Co. Aytch* was a part of the battlefield that protruded further toward the enemy line on top of a hill about 50 feet high with a fairly steep slope. A thickly forested area backs it up. The Federal line was only 20 yards at their front, so they could actually talk to each other and see each other's faces.

They fought all day and all night for the entire Atlanta campaign of one hundred days. At night, a third of the army fought in the trenches while the rest could get some sleep.

When the dead angle was attacked, the Confederates shot as fast as they could reload. Sam Watkins attests that he personally shot more than 100 of the enemy.



The Federals attempted to dig a tunnel under the Confederate trench to explode it. The Confederates withdrew before the tunnel was completed.

Federal bodies were piled as many as 12 to 15 high. Watkins said that one reason the Federals couldn't advance to take the works, was because there were so many of their own dead comrades they couldn't climb over them.

No Angel of Atlanta

During a lull, a Confederate soldier attempted to repeat the act of mercy done at the battle of Fredericksburg where the "Angel of the Battlefield" carried water in canteens to fallen Union soldiers. He was bringing water to a wounded Union soldier and while climbing back into his own works; he was shot dead by a Yankee. That was his payment for a humanitarian act.

The Federals attempted to tunnel under the rebel line to set explosives, but the idea was abandoned. After the dead were lying on the field between the two lines for several days, a truce was held to remove the corpses. Both armies mingled during that time.

Almost the same thing happened during the battle of Cold Harbor the following July by Grant's army, except that field was level. We also visited Pickett's Mill, so called because there was a mill existing that was incidental to the battle, but became the name of the battle. It was a lopsided battle—more than 3000 Federals were killed and only about 800 Confederates.

A Defensive Battle

The battlefield was very heavily wooded and there was a steep ravine that the Federals had to climb down, and up the other side to attack the entrenched Confederates at the top.

The angle of the ravine was about 45 degrees on each side, and at least 60 feet deep. I do not see how it would have been possible to keep a command in line, because of the thickly wooded area. Some units did not advance when they were expected to, and were cut to pieces.

Pine Mountain

Pine Mountain is very close to Kennesaw Mountain, but is on private property. In fact it is in someone's back yard and the property owner has built a gazebo a few feet from the monument marking the position where General Leonidas Polk was killed immediately before the action moved to Kennesaw Mountain. I do believe the state of Georgia, and or the Sons of Confederate Veterans, should acquire this important historical site.

The Death of General Polk

Generals Polk, Hardee, and Joseph E. Johnston were gathered on top of Pine Mountain directly in front of their own trenches. They were warned that Yankee artillery had their range when a projectile from a 10 Pounder Parrot rifle entered the chest of Gen. Polk from the left side and exiting through the right side while his arms were crossed in front of him.

He bent down as though to kneel as the round passed through his body.

Polk had attended West Point with Johnston, Jefferson Davis, fought in the Mexican War, and was the Episcopal bishop of Louisiana. The trenches were three feet behind them.

As an observer, I don't see how an artillery piece could have been aimed at the general unless it was closer than 100 yards from its target, due to the terrain and thick forest of southern yellow pine, oak, hickory, black cherry, cedar, gum, and other species of tree. It would have had to be trained directly up the hill and over the heads of the men in the trenches.

Johnston's Superb Work

In my opinion Joe Johnston performed a superb job of the Atlanta campaign by protecting his men,



Guns at Kennesaw Mountain

choosing the terrain, entrenching, reinforcing his army from any direction of attack, and never giving an inch that was not earned at great sacrifice from his adversary with superior numbers.

An axiom of war quoted from Napoleon was that it required an attacking force three times the size of an entrenched defensive force to prevail. Johnston proved that over and over again during the Atlanta campaign.

[To be continued next issue.]

Contact Cmdr Dupree at gwdupree@aol.com

Researching Your Confederate Ancestor:

The National Park Services Soldiers & Sailors System

www.itd.nps.gov/cwss/info.htm

With the cooperation of the United Daughters of the Confederacy, 5 million soldier records are now in place on an easy-to-navigate web site. Enter the URL above then click on "Soldiers." Enter your ancestor's name in the fields on the web site (shown below).

Search by Soldier Name

Franklin D. Roosevelt. In this form, click on the question

Last Name

First Name

Union or Confederate

State (or Origin)

From the NPS Soldier's web site:

The Civil War Soldiers and Sailors System is a computerized database containing basic facts about servicemen from both sides during the War between the States.

The focus of the CWSS is the *Names Index Project*, a project to enter names and other information from 5.4 million soldier records in the National Archives. The facts about the soldiers are entered from records that are indexed to many millions of other documents about Union and Confederate Civil War soldiers maintained by the [National Archives and Records Administration](#).

Other information will include: Histories of regiments in both the Union and Confederate Armies, links to descriptions of 384 significant battles of the war, and other historical information. Additional information about soldiers, sailors, regiments, and battles, as well as prisoner-of-war records and cemetery records, will be added over time.

The Civil War Soldiers and Sailors System (CWSS) is a cooperative effort by the National Park Service (NPS) and several other public and private [partners](#), to computerize information about the Civil War.



The goal of the CWSS is to increase the American people's understanding of this decisive era in American history by making information about it widely accessible.

Volunteers from across the country have completed entry of data for the 5.4 million soldier records. The [records](#) now are being edited for accuracy, consistency, etc. by two of our main partners, the [Genealogical Society of Utah](#) (GSU) and the [Federation of Genealogical Societies](#) (FGS).

The CWSS database now contains more than 5 million soldier names from more than 30 states and territories.

Prospective Members: To document your ancestor's service for full membership in the Sons of Confederate Veterans, find your ancestor on this web site and print out the single page of information on him that documents the location of his records in the Federal archives. Enclose that with your member application when you send it to the adjutant listed in the camp nearest you.



Evidence supports belief that coin protected Dixon

Wednesday, August 28, 2002

BY BRIAN HICKS
Of The Post and Courier Staff

It was a legend almost too fanciful and romantic for anyone to believe: that a gold coin once saved the life of the Hunley's captain on a Civil War battlefield.

But now there is evidence proving that, sometimes, legends are true.

Scientists studying the remains of the Confederate submarine's crew say that Lt. George Dixon's left femur has a nasty dent in it that was almost certainly made when a Union bullet hit a \$20 gold piece in his pants pocket at the battle of Shiloh.

Maria Jacobsen, chief archaeologist on the Hunley project, says that if not for the coin, Dixon likely would have been crippled or could have died.

"If that coin had not been there, there is no doubt there would have been severe damage to his leg. It probably would have shattered his femur," Jacobsen said Tuesday. "Without the coin, the man probably would not have walked again."

Dixon was lucky, Jacobsen said, that the impact didn't burst a major artery, which could have killed him.

The story of Dixon's incredible luck, made almost cartoon-simple through the years, was discovered in a letter written by an officer in his company, the 21st Alabama. Dixon, the letter said, was shot in the leg in the early morning while fighting at Shiloh, Tenn., on April 6, 1862, but that a gold piece deflected the bullet, saving his life.

The gold piece was supposedly a gift from his sweetheart, Queenie Bennett of Mobile, Ala., and after that day, he carried it everywhere.

Scientists were skeptical until May 2001 when Jacobsen pulled a warped gold coin out of the sediment that filled the Hunley.

On the coin was an inscription:

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"Shiloh  
April 6th, 1862  
My life Preserver  
G.E.D."

Experts with the State Law Enforcement Division have since determined that the black marks on the face of coin are lead streaks, which would support the story. Minie balls were made of lead.

Now, Jacobsen said, ballistics experts will examine the bone, which CT scans show has "radio-dense" particles imbedded in it. Those particles could be lead fragments from the Minie ball that hit the coin.

The injury, discovered during an examination by Smithsonian Institution forensic scientist Dr. Doug Owsley, is on the upper part of the femur, where Dixon's thigh and left hip met. It was most likely, Jacobsen said, an ugly wound. The coin may have imbedded in his flesh or, at least, left a horrible bruise.

Warren Lasch, chairman of Friends of the Hunley, said Owsley will continue his examination of Dixon next month and, by looking at his knees, ankles and toe joints may be able to tell if he still walked with a limp when he and the crew of the Hunley sank the USS Housatonic on Feb. 17, 1864.

Lasch said the discovery proves the legend.

"There's no doubt that the gold coin saved Lt. George Dixon's life on that battlefield at Shiloh," Lasch said.

Contact Brian Hicks at 843.937.5561 or [bhicks@postandcourier.com](mailto:bhicks@postandcourier.com)

Learn more at the [Friends of the Hunley](#) web site

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## Film Preview:

# Gods and Generals

**"You have got to see this movie -- It is very pro-Confederate" -- Compatriot Sinclair, Camp 1445**

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My wife and I saw a sneak preview of "Gods and Generals." It was 3 hours 5 minutes long. It did Robert E. Lee and Stonewall Jackson justice.

Much emphasis was put on the reasons the South was fighting: The South was fighting for its second independence-- and because we were being invaded. It also showed why many blacks chose to support the Southern cause.

One battle was a little overdone, but overall it was a great movie. Stephen Lang did an outstanding job showing the personal side of Stonewall Jackson. If you didn't know that Robert Duvall was playing General Lee, then you would think it was Lee himself.

The viewers were mixed in the theater and we all had to rate the movie afterwards. What is scary is that my wife and I compared our ratings after we finished, and we marked the same answers.



Jeff Daniels did not do a good job as Chamberlain. You could tell he was just there to do a movie. No emotion, just there. The actress playing Anna Jackson was very convincing.

You have got to see this movie when released. It is very pro-Confederate. The movie even goes on to state that slavery didn't become an issue until after the North found themselves losing. As a political ploy, they used the slavery issue.

When is *Gods and Generals* going to open nationwide? I have heard "November" but it may open before that. The critics will probably kill it, as it is not politically correct. A black man in the movie stated to General Jackson that he wanted to help defend Virginia, and signed on as cook. He led General Jackson's horse during his funeral.

I think this will show the soldiers' side as to why they fought. Robert E. Lee states it best, when he was asked to take charge of the Union Army, by saying that he could not fight against Virginia.

I can't wait to see it again.

My wife cried, and there was much sniffing during some moving scenes. The Georgia Irish firing upon the Union Irish was a very moving scene. But as General Jackson stated several times: "Kill them-- kill them all!" -- referring to the Yankee invaders.

Respectfully, Claude Sinclair  
Witherspoon/Barnes SCV Camp 1445  
Lancaster, South Carolina

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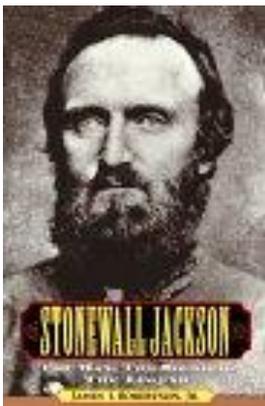
**James I. Robertson, Stonewall Jackson's biographer, has just seen the latest three hour and forty-five minute version of Gods and Generals at a private screening in NYC. His comment, "The greatest Civil War movie I have ever seen, and I have seen them all."**

## Ron Maxwell's Films

[Ron Maxwell](#), film writer, director, and producer, is best known for his landmark film [Gettysburg](#). Ron is currently involved in post-production on the feature film, [Gods & Generals](#) and in pre-production on Last Full Measure, the prequel and sequel to [Gettysburg](#), altogether comprising an epic Civil War trilogy.

## James I. Robertson's comments on **GODS & GENERALS** screenplay

I very much appreciate the opportunity to read the script for "Gods and Generals." Quite frankly, I have never been more enthusiastic about a movie project. As a lifelong student of Gen. "Stonewall" Jackson, as well as one who spent seven years producing the most recent biography of the man, I have the strongest desire to see him depicted on film in the most accurate light.



Anything less would be insulting to Jackson's memory and more fodder for the long-standing criticism that moviemakers have neither the desire nor the ability to be truthful in historical productions.

The Turner movie *Gods and Generals* would go farther than any other modern film in dispelling those charges.

Indeed, I see an even more positive contribution. The present script would reveal for the first time the real essence of one of history's most famous individuals. Most important of all, you have the opportunity to present a film that will inspire as well as inform.

**James I. Robertson, Jr.**, Alumni Distinguished Professor and Executive Director of the Virginia Center for Civil War Studies at Virginia Tech and award winning author of [Stonewall Jackson: The Man, The Soldier, The Legend](#)

**Image Credits This Issue: All photos taken by Jerry Dupree; editing by Floyd Farrar. Compatriot Farrar took all photos in last issue.**

## SCV Credit Card available

APR 12.65%. Confederate flag logo, with soldier image, VISA. I have three applications left—contact me at [vp09@earthlink.net](mailto:vp09@earthlink.net) --Ed.

## Visit Oklahoma Confederate Pension Records Site today

Visit the pension index for Confederate Veterans from Oklahoma. Our hit rate is getting real low and the State Library (who maintains the index) is threatening to drop it due to low use.

Could everyone take a minute to go to the site so the count will increase? Some of you may find it useful.

Dave Easterling, Adjutant, ATM  
<http://www.odl.state.ok.us/oar/docs/pension.pdf>

## New California SCV Web Site Up

Check [www.scvcalifornia.net](http://www.scvcalifornia.net) for the revised and fresh-looking California SCV website. Thanks to Gary Waltrip, Commander Camp 1440, The Stainless Banner, San Jose, for putting his expertise to the service of the California SCV Division. See Gary's own site at [www.RebelGray.com](http://www.RebelGray.com). Thanks also to Adjutant John Kindred of Camp 302 San Diego for his outstanding service in the past in getting our web site up and running.