

kennesaw mountain

In the series of military events that led to the fall of Atlanta in the third year of the Civil War, the battle of Kennesaw Mountain was decisive. Here Confederate soldiers bested their Northern opponents on the battlefield but had to give up their positions when the larger Union Army succeeded in moving around the mountain toward its objective.

When Ulysses S. Grant assumed command of all the Federal Armies in 1864, Maj. Gen. William T. Sherman succeeded to the direction of the principal military operations in the West. In May 1864, Sherman, with a virtually independent command but coordinating his movements with those of Grant in the East, launched his three armies south from Chattanooga. His goal: Atlanta, rail hub and manufacturing center of the Confederacy. He intended throwing his force of nearly 100,000 men against Gen. Joseph E. Johnston's Confederate Army of about 50,000, crushing it if possible, but certainly keeping the Southerners constantly on the defensive by a series of flanking movements.

In a series of movements, Sherman forced Johnston back to the vicinity of Kennesaw Mountain. Here, by June 5, Johnston began taking up positions, turning the area into a fortress, and trusting that the difficult terrain and strong fortifications would make up for the disparity in numbers.

Possession of the high ground might have been comfort enough to the Southern defenders, but the weather also came to Johnston's aid. For a month the rains poured, turning the roads into quagmires and preventing Sherman from again marching around the Confederate position. Still, Sherman forced Johnston's Southerners back to the mountain.

During June there were constant skirmishes and artillery duels. On June 22, the two armies met at Kolb's farm, 9.7 kilometers (6 miles) south of Big Kennesaw Mountain. The Confederates suffered heavily. Despite this action, Sherman's men were still impatient. They were tired of the rain, the marching, and the interminable flanking movements. They wanted to fight.

At 9 a.m. on June 27, Sherman gave them their wish and launched two coordinated attacks against the Kennesaw line. Both thrusts failed; even the Southern defenders shuddered at the carnage. At the Angle, an exposed and hotly contested point in Johnston's line, a Southern cannoneer described the aftermath. "When the Yankees fell back and the firing ceased, I never saw so many broken down and exhausted men in my life. I was sick as a horse, and as wet with blood and sweat as I could be, and many of our men were vomiting with excessive fatigue, over-exhaustion, and sunstroke; our tongues were parched and cracked for water, and our faces blackened with powder and smoke, and our dead and wounded were piled indiscriminately in the trenches."

The rains now ended. The roads began to harden, and Sherman, able to use his flanking tactics again, ordered his big army into motion. Johnston, to avoid being cut off from his supply line reaching out from Atlanta, was forced to follow, and on the night of July 2, he abandoned his Kennesaw Mountain stronghold. By the 9th, still giving ground, he was across the Chattahoochee River, the last major barrier between Sherman and the Union objective. The siege and fall of Atlanta soon followed. Then Sherman began his devastating March to the Sea.

A Trip Around Kennesaw Mountain

Kennesaw Mountain National Battlefield Park is open all year. Organized groups receive special services if advance arrangements are made with the superintendent.

Picnic areas are at the visitor center and on Cheatham Hill. Please use only gasoline stoves or charcoal burners for fires. Camping is not permitted.

For the best tour of the battlefield, we suggest that you follow the numbered route (shown on the map) which begins at the visitor center.

1. Visitor Center Here museum exhibits and a 15-minute slide program depict the history of the Atlanta Campaign with emphasis on the fighting around Kennesaw Mountain. You will find other exhibits along the route through the park.

2. Summit of Big Kennesaw Mountain The road up Big Kennesaw Mountain begins behind the visitor center and takes you to a parking area near the summit. A short, moderately steep trail leads to the top itself. Along the trail you will pass an overlook, gun emplacements, exhibits, and a recorded message station with an explanation of some of the battle action.

On the panorama below you may readily imagine the vivid scenes of battle which cost both Union and Confederate forces dearly in dead and wounded.

Return to the base of the mountain, and follow the signs to Cheatham Hill about 8 kilometers (5 miles) to the south by road from the visitor center.

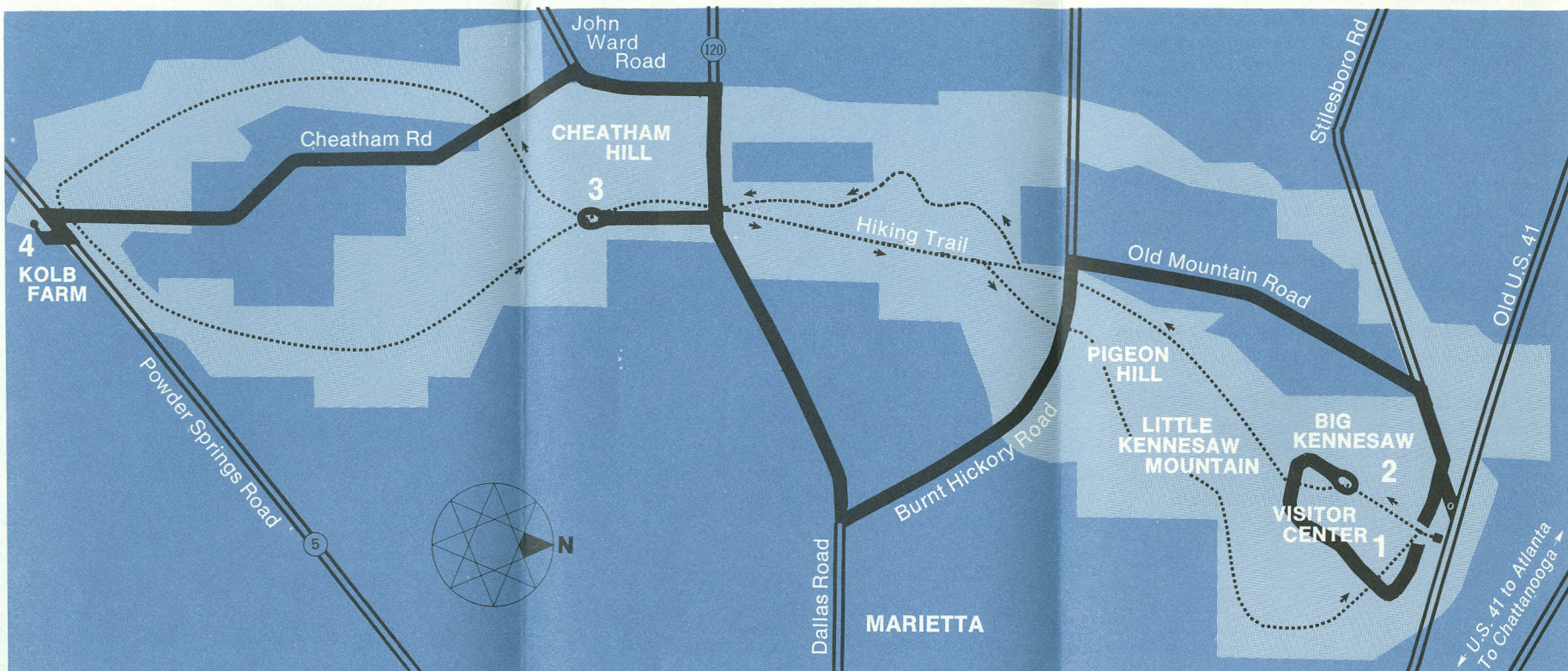
3. Cheatham Hill From the Cheatham Hill parking area take the 0.4-kilometer (1/4-mile) walk out to the Illinois Monument. Along the trail are exhibits, gun emplacements, and original Confederate earthworks.

Five Union brigades, 8,000 strong, assaulted the earthworks here. Two of the brigades, Kimball's and Wagner's, attacked Cleburne's Confederate division entrenched to the north. The other three brigades, Mitchell's, McCook's, and Harker's, hit this salient. Southern gunfire dotted the fields with casualties, forcing the Federals to stop and entrench short of their goal. Sherman lost 1,580 men at Cheatham hill; Johnston, 206.

To see the Kolb Farm area of the park, drive back to the highway (Ga. 120) and follow the Kolb Farm signs.

4. Kolb Farm This farmhouse has been restored to its appearance during the Civil War. It is not open to the public. An exhibit and recorded message help recapture the scene when on June 22, 1864, Federal Gen. Joseph Hooker was setting up his headquarters at the Kolb House. About 2 p.m. Confederates struck the Union position and heavy fighting broke out on the farm. At sundown the Southern forces finally withdrew after suffering heavy losses.

An exhibit, up the trail diagonally across the road from the farmhouse, explains the attack of John B. Hood's Confederate corps.



The park trails, starting at the visitor center, can be used for short walks or long hikes. The round-trip distances are 3.2 kilometers (2 miles), 8 kilometers (5 miles), 16 kilometers (10 miles), and 26 kilometers (16 miles). All the trails require some moderately steep climbing. The 3.2-kilometer (2-mile) hike is a self-guiding history and nature trail with a guide booklet. If long hikes are planned,

please register at the visitor center. Please respect the historical and natural features of the park and leave them unimpaired for others to enjoy.

Help Protect the Park and Yourself

Motorists and motorcycle drivers should drive at low speeds, especially in congested areas and at the intersections with heavily traveled state roads. Please be alert for pedestrians and hikers at trail crossings.

Hikers should register for long hikes at the visitor center. Keep track of your party and be careful to avoid a fall or twisted ankle. Please stay on the marked trails and avoid taking shortcuts which can cause soil erosion and can be dangerous.

Do not walk on the original earthworks. Help us preserve them for future park visitors.

All natural features, historic artifacts, and other park property, including signs and markers, are protected by Federal law. They must not be removed or damaged. The possession or use in the park of any metal detection device is also prohibited.

Kennesaw Mountain National Battlefield Park

The park, which is located 3.2 kilometers (2 miles) north of Marietta, Georgia, a short distance off of U.S. 41, is administered by the National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior. The superintendent's address is Box 1167, Marietta, GA 30061.

As the Nation's principal conservation agency, the Department of the Interior has responsibility for most of our nationally owned public lands and natural resources. This includes fostering the wisest use of our land and water resources, protecting our fish and wildlife, preserving the environmental and cultural values of our national parks and historical places, and providing for the enjoyment of life through outdoor recreation. The Department assesses our energy and mineral resources and works to assure that their development is in the best interests of all our people. The Department also has a major responsibility for American Indian reservation communities and for people who live in Island Territories under U.S. administration.

**National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior**