

Kennesaw Mountain

Kennesaw Mountain
National Battlefield Park
Georgia

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior



The Battle of Kennesaw Mountain, by Thure de Thulstrup.

Atlanta was too important a place in the hands of the enemy to be left undisturbed, with its magazines, stores, arsenals, workshops, foundries, and more especially its railroads, which converged there from the four great cardinal points.

William T. Sherman

Campaign for Atlanta By the spring of 1864 the Confederacy was weakening and the mighty war power of the Union was at last being employed. Gen. Ulysses S. Grant, recently promoted to military commander-in-chief, ordered a concerted offensive by all Union armies. His orders to Gen. William T. Sherman at Chattanooga, Tenn., were to attack the Confederate army in Georgia, "break it up, and go into the interior of the enemy's country as far as you can, inflicting all the damage you can upon their war resources."

Sherman's 100,000 men and 254 pieces of artillery departed their encampments south and east of Chattanooga during the first week in May. Confronting them along Rocky Face Ridge, near Dalton in the mountains of northwest Georgia, were Gen. Joseph E. Johnston's 65,000 Confederates with 187 cannon. Although Confederate authorities wanted Johnston to march north into Tennessee, the campaign quickly devolved into a contest for Atlanta, railroad hub and war manufacturing and storage center for the Confederacy.

Sherman approached Rocky Face with two-thirds of his men on May 9, while the rest

marched 15 miles southward through Snake Creek Gap, threatening the Western & Atlantic Railroad, Johnston's vital supply connection with Atlanta. Johnston hastily retreated and dug in at Resaca, where, on May 13-15, the Confederates repulsed Sherman's attacks. Johnston, however, fell back after a Union column crossed the Oostanaula River and again threatened the railroad.

Time and again the same strategic situation was repeated. Whenever Sherman found the Confederates entrenched in strong positions, he would attempt to hold them in place with part of his force while dispatching another portion behind their flank, attempting to cut the Western & Atlantic. Johnston retired backwards to intercept the threats. By late May he had pulled back to an impregnable position in the Allatoona Mountains. Sherman swung wide to the southwest, but Johnston, alert to Union movements, sidestepped to meet him with stubborn fighting at New Hope Church on May 25, Pickett's Mill on May 27, and at Dallas on the 28th. Sherman then returned to the railroad at Acworth, while Johnston took position across Lost, Pine, and Brushy Mountains.

Battle at Kennesaw

Sherman resumed his advance on June 10. A southwestward twist of the railroad forced him to operate south and west of Marietta so as not to endanger his own supply line. By June 19, although hampered by weeks of continual rain, Sherman's troops had forced Johnston to withdraw again, this time to a prepared defensive position anchored by Kennesaw Mountain, a lofty humped ridge with rocky slopes rising above the surrounding plain. Confederate engineers had laid out a formidable line of entrenchments covering every approaching ravine or hollow with cannon and rifle fire.

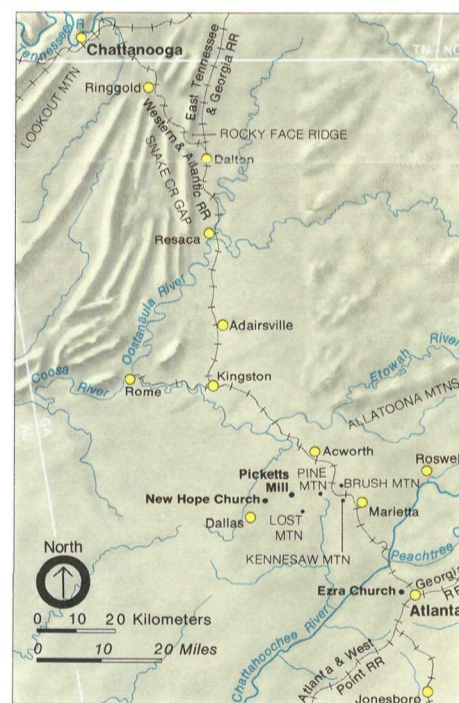
Again Sherman extended his lines to the south to get around the Confederate flank. Johnston countered by shifting 11,000 men under Gen. John Bell Hood to meet the threat. At Kolb's Farm on June 22 Hood struck savagely but unsuccessfully. His attack failed to drive the Northerners away, but it did temporarily check their southward extension.

Stalemated and immobilized by muddy roads, Sherman suspected that the Confederate lines, although very strong, might be thinly held and that one sharp thrust might break through and destroy the entire Southern army.

His plan called for diversionary moves against Kennesaw and the Confederate left, while the real blow, a two-pronged assault, hit Johnston's center. The attack brigades moved into position before dawn on June 27. At 8 a.m., after an artillery bombardment, they surged forward. Both attacks were brief, bloody failures. Astride Burnt Hickory Road three Union brigades totaling 5,500 men crossed swampy, heavily wooded terrain. Sheets of fire drove them under cover before reaching their objective, a mountain spur today named Pigeon Hill. Confederates on Little Kennesaw rolled huge rocks downhill at them. As soon as it became obvious that the attack would not succeed, it was recalled.

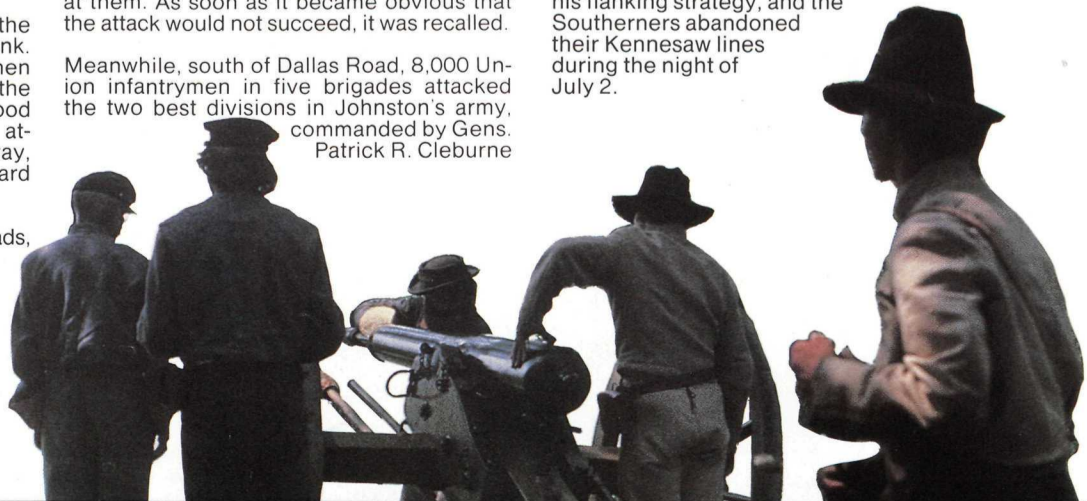
Meanwhile, south of Dallas Road, 8,000 Union infantrymen in five brigades attacked the two best divisions in Johnston's army, commanded by Gens. Patrick R. Cleburne

The Atlanta Campaign



and Benjamin Franklin Cheatham. Most of those in the assault waves were shot down. Some got to close quarters and for a few minutes there was brutal hand-to-hand fighting on top of the defenders' earthworks. Both sides grimly nicknamed this place the "Dead Angle."

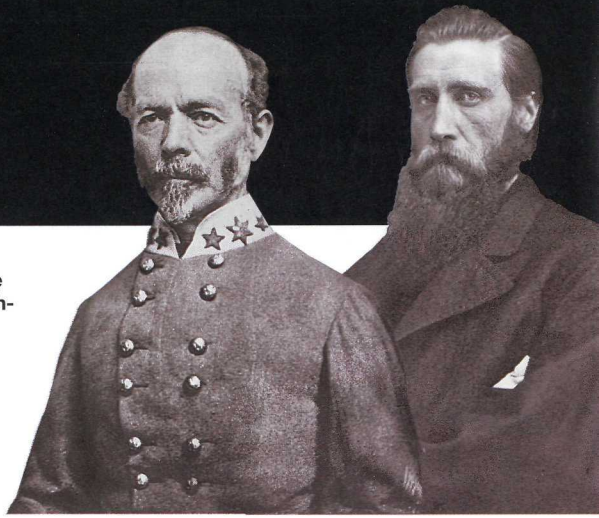
The Northerners lost 3,000 men, the Confederates 800. Ironically the diversionary movement on the Confederate left seized an important road intersection that placed Sherman closer to the Chattahoochee River crossings than Johnston. Sherman resumed his flanking strategy, and the Southerners abandoned their Kennesaw lines during the night of July 2.





After burning Atlanta, Gen. William T. Sherman (left) produced rancor in the South that lasted for generations as a result of his devastating "March to the Sea." In January 1865, after Gen. John Bell Hood (far right) was relieved from command at his own

request following a disastrous defeat the month before at Nashville, Tenn., Gen. Joseph E. Johnston (near right) returned to command his old Army of Tennessee.



The Fall of Atlanta Sherman crossed the Chattahoochee River near Roswell on July 9, and Johnston withdrew to the fortifications of Atlanta. On July 17, exasperated by Johnston's retreats and lack of aggressiveness, President Jefferson Davis relieved him of command and replaced him with General Hood. Meanwhile, Sherman was closing in on Atlanta from the north and east. Hood tried unsuccessfully to destroy the army of Gen. George H. Thomas as it crossed Peachtree Creek on July 20.

Two days later, at the Battle of Atlanta, he struck at Gen. James B. McPherson's army and again

was repulsed with heavy losses. When Sherman tried to outflank Atlanta's outnumbered defenders by maneuvering west of the city, Hood lashed out with another attack at Ezra Church on July 28. Again he was defeated.

In August Sherman placed Atlanta under siege. Both sides attempted cavalry raids to break the other's grip, but it was to no avail. Always Sherman shifted troops to cut the railroads that linked Atlanta with the rest of the South. On August 31 he seized the last one, the Macon and Western. Hood, after losing a two-day battle near Jonesboro, ordered all public property

destroyed and the city evacuated. Sherman entered on September 2 and triumphantly telegraphed the news to Washington, "Atlanta is ours, and fairly won."

The fall of Atlanta was a crippling blow to the Confederacy's capacity and its will to make war. Coupled with Union victories elsewhere, the war's end was now in sight. In the North there was rejoicing, and on November 8 Abraham Lincoln was re-elected President, endorsing a fight to the finish. A week later Sherman left Atlanta in ruins and began his devastating March to the Sea.

Visiting the Battlefield

Kennesaw Mountain National Battlefield Park commemorates the 1864 Atlanta Campaign. Begin your visit at the visitor center. Here you will find information, a short film, exhibits, and a bookstore. Park staff can answer questions and help you plan your visit. The visitor center is open daily except December 25.

Activities Recreational activities are permitted only in the designated activity areas (see map below). Camping is not permitted in the park. Living history programs and ranger talks are given during the summer.

Trails The park trails offer short walks and long hikes. Starting at the visitor center, the round-trip distances are two miles, five miles, 10 miles, and 16 miles. All trails require moder-

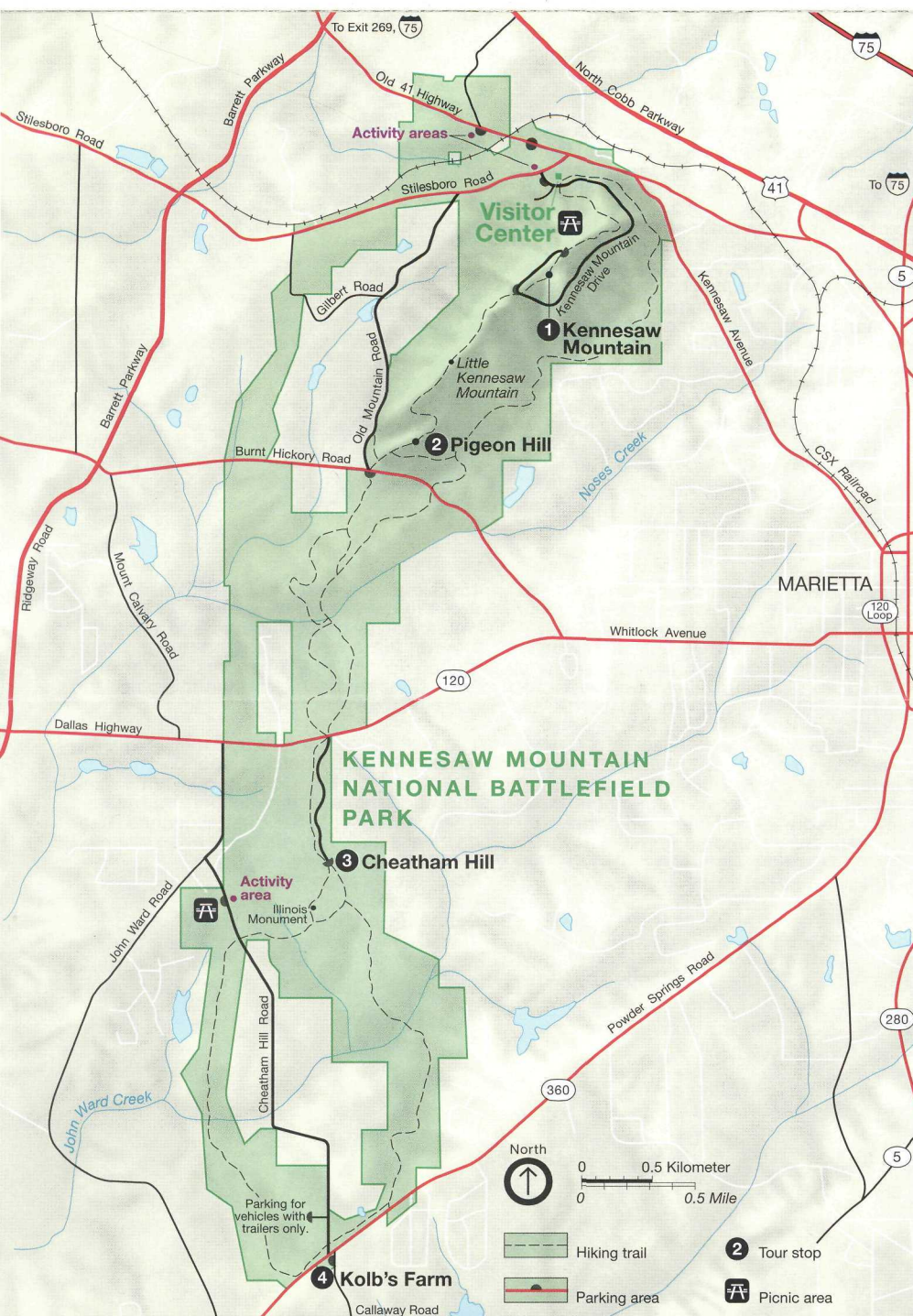
ately steep climbing. Be prepared: there is no water, shelter, or food along the way, and conditions can be hazardous. Stay on trails, wear sturdy shoes, and carry water.

Getting Here From I-75, take exit 269 and drive 2.1 miles west on Barrett Parkway. Turn left onto Old 41 Highway and proceed 1.2 miles to Stilesboro Road at the first traffic light after entering the park. Turn right onto Stilesboro Road, then left onto Kennesaw Mountain Drive. The visitor center is on the left.

More Information Write: Superintendent, Kennesaw Mountain National Battlefield Park, 905 Kennesaw Mountain Drive, Kennesaw, GA 30152-4855. Call: 770-427-4686. Internet: www.nps.gov/kemo.

Safety and Regulations For a safe and enjoyable visit, please observe these regulations.

- Do not climb on the cannons, monuments, or earthworks. The earthworks are fragile; disturbing them causes irreparable damage.
- All buildings, historic objects, geologic specimens, plants, and animals are protected by federal law.
- Stay on the roadways and trails to help prevent erosion and to protect the mountain ecology.
- Pets must be kept on a leash at all times. Clean-up after your pet; bags are available in the parking lots.
- Picnicking and all recreational activities are restricted to designated activity areas.
- Alcoholic beverages are prohibited.
- Watch out for insects, snakes, and poisonous plants.
- Bicycles are prohibited on all trails.
- Recycle all cans, glass, and plastic.
- Park only in designated areas.



Self-guiding Auto Tour

The following self-guiding auto tour (see the map at left) takes you to the major points of interest. Each tour stop contains a parking area and wayside exhibits. Short interpretive trails are located on the mountaintop and at Cheatham Hill.

Parking is very limited in the Battlefield Park and is restricted to designated parking areas. Please carpool whenever you can.

- 1 Kennesaw Mountain** An overlook near the summit offers a panoramic view of the northern Georgia terrain, where Sherman's and Johnston's armies struggled in the late spring and summer of 1864. Modern Atlanta dominates the southern skyline. A short, moderately steep trail leads to the mountain top. Along the way are exhibits and gun emplacements dug by Confederate cannoners to command the Western & Atlantic (now CSX) Railroad.
- 2 Pigeon Hill** A foot trail leads to Confederate entrenchments on this mountain spur, where one of Sherman's two major attacks was repulsed.
- 3 Cheatham Hill** To protect the hill now named for Confederate Gen. Benjamin F. Cheatham, the Southerners created a salient in their lines. The fiercest fighting of the battle raged here. Along a trail to the imposing Illinois Monument are Confederate earthworks and markers where prominent Union soldiers fell. Near the base of the monument is the entrance to a tunnel begun by Union soldiers intending to blow up the Confederate position with a mine. Nearby are Union entrenchments dug under fire and held for six days.
- 4 Kolb's Farm** Damaged by gunfire, Peter Valentine Kolb's 1836 log house has been restored to its historic appearance. It is not open to the public. On the afternoon of June 22, 1864, General Hood's Confederates were repulsed in an ill-fated attack just north of Powder Springs Road. Union Gen. Joseph Hooker used the Kolb house for his headquarters after the fight.

Possession or use of metal detectors within the park is unlawful.

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