

Learning Through Archaeology: Rediscovering the Civil War in Georgia

The Society for Georgia Archaeology — Georgia Archaeology Month 2011
Lesson Plan Series, No. 14

What is Archaeology?

Archaeology is the scientific study of how people lived in the past based on the things they left behind. In studying an archaeological site, archaeologists seek to answer questions such as these: Did someone live at this site? If so, who lived at this location? What activities took place here? How long was the site occupied? Did a battle take place here? If so, which regiments fought here? Are there remnants of defensive earthworks above ground? What did the environment look like when the site was occupied? What did the people who stayed here eat? What types of shelter did they live in?



Fort Lawton Earthworks.



Fort Pulaski - National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior.

Did you know that archaeology combines work from several disciplines? These study areas include ethnobotany, historic archaeology, prehistoric archaeology, physical anthropology, and zooarchaeology. Historic archaeologists use diaries, letters, and other documents to help learn about the sites they are excavating. Prehistoric archaeologists study objects, such as pottery and stone tools, left behind by people having no written record of their past. Ethnobotanists study seeds, pollen, and

plant remains from archaeological sites to understand past environments. Physical anthropologists study human skeletons to determine physical and cultural traits such as size, gender, ethnic background, health, diet, social status, and cultural traditions. Zooarchaeologists study animal bones from sites to understand people's diet, as well as their cooking and hunting practices. Can you think of other disciplines that might work in tandem with archaeology?

In many cases, archaeology is the only way we can learn about the past. Even though some people wrote about events that happened during the Civil War, countless others did not write their stories. Many of the enslaved African Americans, poor people, very young children, and females could not read and write. Archaeology can provide a voice to these people from the past. It can even help tell stories of those who were literate by providing unbiased information about the everyday life of the rich, famous, and well educated members of society.



"Halt of a Wagon Train" by unknown artist, possibly Winslow Homer (*Harper's Weekly*, 1864).

War Comes to Georgia

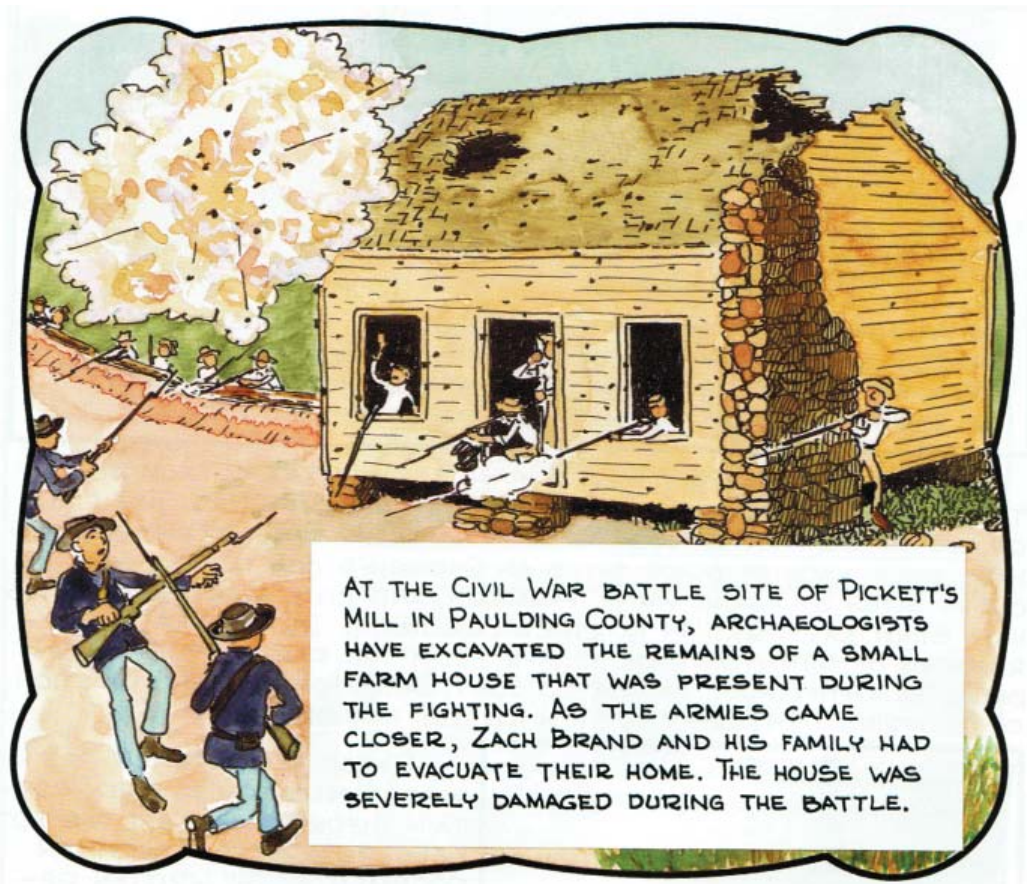
From 1861 to 1865 the United States of America was torn apart by war. This time, there was not a foreign enemy, such as England, France, or Spain. During this war, the fight occurred between two different sections of the country—the North and the South. Soldiers from the North fought for the United States of America. Their forces were known as Union, Federal, or Yankee troops. Soldiers from the South fought for the Confederate States of America. Their forces were known as Confederate or Rebel troops. This conflict is known as the Civil War, although there was nothing civil about it. A number of battles and skirmishes took place in Georgia during the war. Did you know that the second bloodiest battle of the war took place in northwest Georgia at a place called Chickamauga?

Over 125,000 Georgians fought for the Confederacy. This means that 26% of the State's population served as soldiers in the 1860s. Over 30,000 Confederate soldiers from Georgia lost their lives during the war. Many of these soldiers died as a result of sickness and disease rather than from wounds sustained in battle. In comparison, a small number of white southerners sided with the North and joined the Union Army. They were known as Unionists. Many of the Unionist civilians left Georgia and moved up North. The Unionists who decided to stay in Georgia thought of ways to support the Union. A number of freed African Americans from Georgia joined the Union ranks as well.

A variety of archaeological sites in Georgia are associated with the Civil War. These sites include arsenals, prisoner of war camps, shipwrecks, temporary campsites, battlefields, forts, and other defensive works. Sometimes the battles and skirmishes lasted just a few minutes leaving only a small trace in the archaeological record. Other times, military sieges lasted several months, such as the siege of Fort Pulaski. Defensive strategies used by both sides included the excavation of trenches, artillery batteries, and forts.

In some cases, defensive earthworks stretched for miles, such as the defenses along the Chattahoochee River and those on the west side of Savannah. Cavalry engagements, such as Brigadier General Kilpatrick's cavalry charge in Lovejoy were often brief events with no time for the excavation of earthworks.

Many soldiers from Georgia fought in battles that took place in Maryland, Pennsylvania, and Virginia. Although fighting had taken place along the Georgia coast, much of the state was spared any direct conflict until 1864. In this year, Georgia was unable to escape the wrath of Major General William Tecumseh Sherman and Union troops as they cut a swath from the mountains to the sea. Lovejoy was one of the communities that suffered from Sherman's wrath. Lovejoy's Station was a stop on the Macon and Western Railroad Company Line that



Pickett's Mill, previously printed in *Frontiers in the Soil: The Archaeology of Georgia*.



Engraving by Alexander Hay Ritchie depicting Sherman's March to the Sea in 1864. In this scene, U.S. troops are wrecking the rails while civilians are evacuating Atlanta.

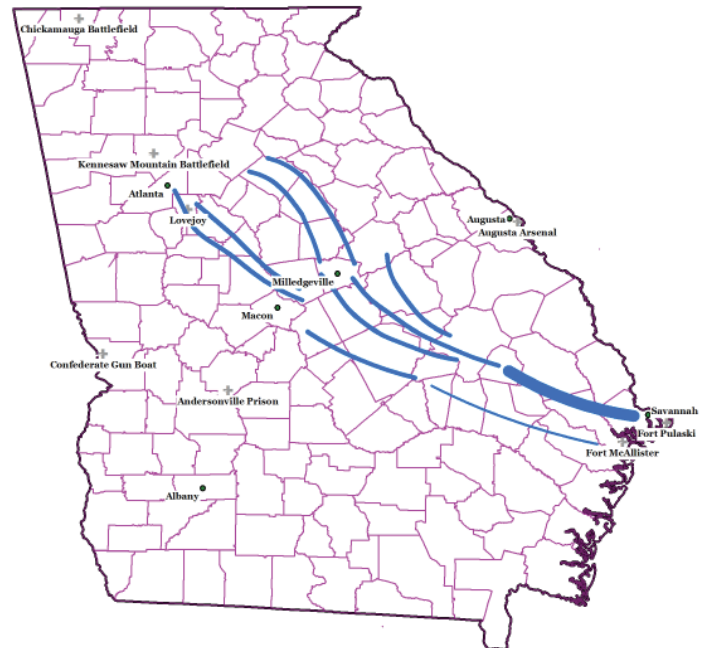
ran between Atlanta and Macon. This train stop was located 29 miles south of Atlanta. A major Union objective during the war was to destroy the railroads across the South, effectively cutting off the lifeline of the Confederacy.

Lovejoy/Nash Farm, July – November 1864

Lovejoy, previously known as Lovejoy's Station, is located in Henry County just south of Jonesboro. Although many places in Georgia escaped conflict, four battles occurred near Lovejoy in 1864. The battle that took place on August 20, 1864 is the

one most remembered. On that day, the Confederates surrounded over 4,000 U.S. Cavalry troops. Brigadier General Lawrence Sullivan Ross was the commander of the Confederate forces. Brigadier General Hugh Judson "Kill Cavalry" Kilpatrick commanded the Union troops. Kilpatrick's task at hand was to figure a way out of this bind.

Kilpatrick decided to mount a cavalry charge through the weakest section of the Confederate line. Log barricades constructed by the Confederates stalled, but could not stop the Union advance. During the charge, more than 4,000 Union soldiers on horseback rode over fewer than 1,000 dismounted Texas Cavalrymen. Kilpatrick's men engaged the Texans in a fierce saber fight. Known as Kilpatrick's Charge, this event was the largest cavalry charge in the history of Georgia.



Sherman's March to the Sea.

Today, the site is known as Nash Farm Battlefield. It was named for the Nash family that once occupied the site. Archaeological evidence of the battle was discovered in 2007. More than 1,000 battle-related artifacts were recovered during a partial survey of the site. A research report fully documents details of the events leading up to the battle and results of the survey. Archaeologists were able to track the movement of the U.S. Cavalry across the field where the troops were shelled by canister shot. The recovery of several finger rings, other jewelry, and sword fragments provides clues as to how gruesome this battle must have been.

Archaeologists gained valuable information by mapping the location of each artifact collected across the site. Researchers also interviewed local relic collectors to try and figure out where they found various types of artifacts. Did you know that certain types of bullets were used by the Confederates and other types by Union



"The War for the Union, 1862 - A Cavalry Charge" by Winslow Homer (*Harper's Weekly*, 1862).

soldiers? Opposing forces were often equipped with different types of guns. On the other hand, some types of bullets may represent either Union or Confederate ammunition. Much of the ammunition used by the Cavalry is also distinguishable because many of those soldiers used pistols. Clusters of specific artifact types, such as bullets, help archaeologists figure out which forces were located in particular areas of the battlefield.

Although over 5,000 horses and mules were present on that fateful day, researchers hit a snag in interpreting the distribution of horse tack across the battlefield. Can you think of any reasons why? A clue lies in the name of the battlefield itself—Nash Farm. The battle took place on a farm where horses and mules were used to plow the fields. These animals were also used to pull carriages and wagons during everyday farm life. Following the battle, the property was farmed well into the 20th century. Certain pieces of horse tack can be attributed to either the U.S. or Confederate Cavalry. For instance, the U.S. Cavalry outfitted their horses with breast harnesses that had heart-shaped brass like the one seen here. The horseshoes, horseshoe nails, currycombs, and hoof picks collected were essential for the Cavalry as well as life on the farm, so it hard to tell which time period they represent.



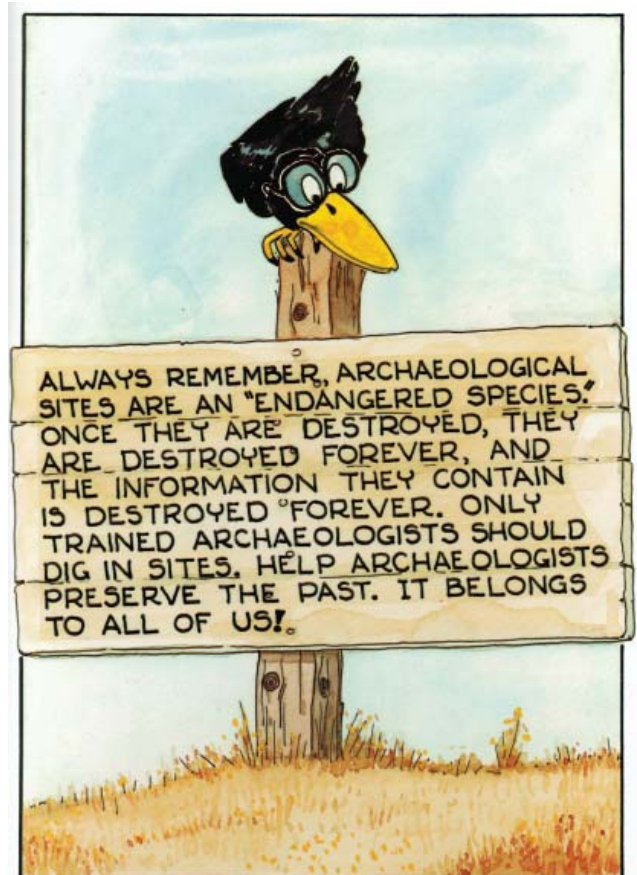
Since troops were in the area for several months, one would expect there to be campsites for both Union and Confederate armies. Researchers have recovered several artifacts associated with camp life from particular areas at Nash Farm. These include buttons, carved bullets, melted bullets, harmonica parts, large grommets (such as those found on tents), and pieces of cast iron cookware. How can buttons help determine where soldiers who camped on a site were from? Sometimes the design on the buttons of a soldier's uniform represented the state he was from. Buttons found on one campsite were representative of North Carolina. Based on accounts from the period, researchers know that troops from North Carolina were stationed in the area.

Conclusion

Advances in historic archaeology and battlefield archaeology have improved our understanding of events in Georgia during the Civil War. This subject is of great interest to the public and has been since the days of the war itself. *For the archaeologist, context is key.* The geographic locations of the battle objects are a vital part of the story. Once these clues have been removed from their battlefield context, their scholarly value is greatly reduced.

All too often, written accounts of events only highlight famous leaders while the brave efforts of the common soldier remain unnoticed. Battlefield archaeology is a “who-dun-it” on a massive scale. Buckles, bullets, buttons, and regimental insignia tell a story of who is firing at whom, and where they were standing at the time. In many cases, the telltale evidence left by the battle artifacts tells a more accurate version of the battle story.

Keep in mind that archaeologists have had years of class and field training in how to excavate a site to retain the maximum amount of information available. Training includes how to recognize important stains and clues in the soil; how to record the data properly; how to clean, process, and conserve the artifacts; how to interpret the data to understand the story the site is trying to tell; ways to share this information with the public; and ethics that are part of the responsibility of doing archaeology.



Previously printed in *Frontiers in the Soil: The Archaeology of Georgia*.

Archaeological sites offer unique and important information about our past through not only the artifacts they contain, but through the clues in the soil. When soil on sites is disturbed, then these valuable clues are destroyed, along with the stories they contain. Sites are destroyed every day in Georgia through construction and vandalism (looting). Sometimes archaeological excavation is required before a construction project begins. When this happens, the information from a site can be saved by careful scientific excavation, interpretation, and report production. These artifacts and notes are curated (saved forever) so they can be displayed in exhibits and studied by future researchers. To learn more about Federal and State laws relating to archaeology and how *you* can contribute to Georgia Archaeology, we encourage you to visit <http://thesga.org> and http://shapiro.anthro.uga.edu/GASF/site_pamphlet.html. We hope that you have enjoyed this lesson plan and learned some interesting details about the Civil War in Georgia.

Questions

1. If 26% (125,000) of the people from Georgia fought for the Confederate States of America, what was the total population of Georgia in the 1860s?
2. Can you list several types of defensive earthworks constructed during the war?
3. Why did Union troops target Lovejoy's Station?
4. How did Nash Farm Battlefield get its name?
5. What did the Confederates use to stall Union troops at Nash Farm?
6. What have we learned from archaeological studies at this site?
7. Why would you want to leave some part of Nash Farm Battlefield unexcavated?
8. Imagine you are the archaeologist preparing to excavate at Nash Farm. Which part or parts of the site would you choose to excavate? Would you examine the Confederate campsite, the battlefield, a larger area surrounding the battlefield and parts of the outlying countryside, or somewhere else such as the site of Lovejoy's Station? Why? Make a list of the research questions you would hope to answer by your excavation. How could artifacts help you to answer these questions?
9. How does conducting excavations help refine our knowledge of the past?
10. Why shouldn't people dig up sites if they are not archaeologists?

Activities

1. Locate Chickamauga on a map of Georgia. Research the Battle of Chickamauga. How long did the battle last? How many Union vs. Confederate casualties were reported?
2. Research the other three battles that took place in the vicinity of Lovejoy. When did they take place? Who was the victor of each, Union or Confederate forces? Who commanded the troops during each engagement?
3. Research how Brigadier General Hugh Judson Kilpatrick came to be nicknamed "Kill Cavalry."
4. Supply students with Civil War letters or other documents from *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*. Ask them to transcribe the handwriting as best they can. Letters can be found in the digital collection of The Library of Congress at <http://www.loc.gov/index.html>. One example available online through The Library of Congress can be found in a collection called "Civil War Treasures from the New-York Historical Society" at <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/ndlpcoop/nhihtml/cwnyhshome.html>. This collection contains a letter written by Sarah R. Blunt to her family concerning the care of hospitalized soldiers. Sarah worked as a Union nurse during the war. Her four-page handwritten letter can be viewed online and is catalogued as Item 2 of 32 in the Blunt Collection.
5. Supply students with copies of historic Civil War photographs. Ask them to consider the archaeological site the people and material culture in the image would have left behind. Did you know that some woman insisted on following their husbands to war? Women worked in the camps as cooks, laundresses, and nurses. Others chose to fight alongside their husbands in battle. This photograph shows a camp scene with a woman holding a basket beside a soldier, three children with their puppy, and other soldiers in the background. This image may also be

found in the resources of “Teaching American History in Maryland: Documents for the Classroom” under “Civil War Camp Life” at <http://teachingamericanhistorymd.net/000001/000000/000150/html/t150.html>.



Camp of 31st Pennsylvania Infantry near Washington, D.C. Mathew Brady Studio. 1862, printed later. Prints and Photographs Division. LC-USZC4-7983. <http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/98507952>.

6. Ask students to imagine they are going on a military campaign. What items would they take with them to remember their families? What items would they take to make the journey easier?
7. Present students with images of soldiers in complete dress with equipment. Ask them to consider alternate, creative uses for everyday objects the soldiers would have had. For instance, a kepi (hat) could have been used as a container for rations.
8. What are some physical (natural and altered) features of the landscape that archaeologists can use to figure out what may have happened during a Civil War battle?
9. When archaeologists recover an artifact, they carefully record its exact position. This may not tell us who dropped the item, but it may tell us how and why it was lost. How is this different from an object that was not recovered as carefully?
10. Visit <http://www.nps.gov/archive/gett/gettkidz/hardtack.htm> to learn about “Civil War Food.” Pick a recipe from the website and figure out how many servings it will yield. Pretend you are a cook in the army. If you had to feed a company, how much of each of the ingredients would you need? A company consisted of approximately 100 men. If you had to feed a regiment, how much of each of the ingredients would you need? An infantry regiment was typically made up of 10 companies or 1,000 men. Imagine feeding an entire brigade! Brigades were composed of 4-6 regiments, sometimes more, sometimes less. Divisions and Corps were larger still!
11. Research which states were considered Union states, which Union states were considered Border states that permitted slavery, and which states were Confederate.
12. Walk, bike, or ride around your community. Make a list of places where archaeological sites might exist, such as cemeteries, old house sites, Native American sites, underwater sites, and other places. Make a list of places where construction, looting, and other ground-disturbing activities are taking place. Do any sites on your two lists overlap? Why or why not?
13. Research whether your community, town, or county has any legal requirements to preserve archaeological sites or excavate them if they are threatened by construction. If there are no such ordinances, consider writing a letter to your community leaders expressing your concerns. Share the results with the class. Visit the following site, http://www.co.dekalb.ga.us/planning/pdf/hp/hp_cty_code.pdf, to view the DeKalb County Code regarding

Historic Preservation. You may also visit <http://www.co.dekalb.ga.us/planning/pdf/hp/soapStnFcts.pdf> to learn more about the Soapstone Ridge Historic District located in DeKalb County.

14. When archaeologists excavate a site, they do not find everything that people left behind. Bone, cloth, wood, and other organic material usually decompose in the ground. Iron artifacts rust. Other metals also deteriorate. Make a list of things you might expect archaeologists to excavate from this Confederate campsite. Make another list of things shown that would not survive in the moist, acidic soil of Georgia. How does this affect the story of the past?



Read More About It! Resources and Recommended Reading

Barney, William L.

2001 *The Civil War and Reconstruction: A Student Companion*. Oxford University Press, New York.

Barry L. and Gordon R. Elwell

2010 *Crossroads of Conflict: A Guide to Civil War Sites in Georgia*. The University of Georgia Press, Athens.

Cohn, Scotti

2003 *Beyond Their Years: Stories of Sixteen Civil War Children*. The Globe Pequot Press, Guilford, Connecticut.

Davis, William C.

1989 *Rebels & Yankees: The Fighting Men of the Civil War*. Gallery Books, New York

Dickens, Roy S., Jr. and James L. McKinley

2003 *Frontiers in the Soil: The Archaeology of Georgia*. Originally published in 1979 by Frontiers Publishing Company. Carl Vinson Institute of Government, University of Georgia, Athens.

This book is a must have for any educator interested in teaching about archaeology. Learn about the time periods of history recognized here in Georgia, how an archaeological excavation takes place, and activities you can try. Check it out at your local library or purchase your own copy from The Society for Georgia Archaeology. Visit http://thesga.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/04/Frontiers_order_form_11_04 to download a copy of the order form.

Elliott, Daniel T. and Tracy M. Dean

2007 *The Nash Farm Battlefield: History and Archaeology*.

http://www.thelamarinstitute.org/images/PDFs/publication_123.pdf

Heidler, David S. and Jeanne T. Heidler, (Editors)

2000 *Encyclopedia of the American Civil War: A Political, Social, and Military History*. ABC-CLIO/Greenwood, Santa Barbara, California.

Katcher, Philip

2000 *Flags of the Civil War*. Osprey Publishing, Limited, New York.

Marten, James

1998 *The Children's Civil War*. The University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill.

Meltzer, Milton

1989 *Voices from the Civil War: A Documentary History of the Great American Conflict*. Thomas Y. Crowell, New York.

Miles, Jim

2002 *To The Sea: A History and Tour Guide of the War in the West, Sherman's March Across Georgia and Through the Carolinas, 1864-1865*. Cumberland House Publishing, Inc., Nashville, Tennessee.

Mountjoy, Shane

2009 *Technology and the Civil War*. Chelsea House, New York.

Murphy, Jim

1990 *The Boys' War: Confederate and Union Soldiers Talk About the Civil War*. Clarion Books, New York. Contains first hand accounts by young soldiers.

U.S. War Department

1880-1905 *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*. Series I-IV, 128 volumes. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C. Online: <http://www.ehistory.com/uscw/library/or/index.cfm>.

White, John R.

2005 *Hands on Archaeology: Real Life Activities for Kids*. Prufrock Press, Inc., Waco, Texas.

Woodworth, Steven E.

2000 *Cultures in Conflict--The American Civil War*. ABC/CLIO/Greenwood, Santa Barbara, California.

Websites

Civil War Preservation Trust: <http://www.civilwar.org/education/teachers>

This non-profit organization seeks to preserve endangered Civil War battlefields and to educate the public about the war and the root causes of it. The website contains The Civil War Curriculum, PowerPoint presentations

associated with the curriculum, classroom resources, activities for students, and information from the Civil War History Center.

Dig Magazine: <http://www.digonsite.com>

This website promotes *Dig*, an archaeology magazine for children. Visitors to the website can test their archaeology IQ, submit archaeology related questions that will be answered by an archaeologist, browse the glossary, learn interesting facts about the field, and find more amazing resources to tap.

Georgia Civil War Commission: <http://www.georgiacivilwar.org>

This commission was created by the Georgia legislature in 1993 to assist with the preservation of battlefields and other historic sites and structures relating to the war and to promote heritage tourism at these sites. Visit this website to learn more about the Civil War in Georgia and events scheduled to take place during the Sesquicentennial.

Library of Congress: <http://www.loc.gov/teachers/classroommaterials/themes/civil-war/>

This website offers a number of ready-to-use materials for teachers based on information archived at The Library of Congress. These materials include lesson plans, themed resources, primary source sets, presentations & activities, and collection connections.

Nash Farm Battlefield: <http://www.henrycountybattlefield.com/index.html>

This website provides a wealth of information about the historical context for Nash Farm and the military operations that took place near Lovejoy. The site also includes historic maps of the area, a digital version of the archaeological report, and comments from the archaeologist.

Society for American Archaeology (SAA): <http://www.saa.org>

The SAA website features a great educational webpage through “Archaeology for the Public.” It includes Teacher Training & Fieldwork Opportunities, Educational Resources for Educators, Archaeological Law & Ethics, Frequently Asked Questions About Archaeology and Archaeologists, Mystery Artifact, and much more!

Teaching History: <http://www.teachinghistory.org>

This is an awesome website that offers a number of lesson plans and related materials regarding the Civil War.

The Archaeology Channel:

http://www.archaeologychannel.org/content/TR_Group.asp?category=276640&name=Lesson%20Plans

Visit this website to learn more about archaeology all over the world and receive information on lesson plans.

The Civil War in Georgia: Commemorating 150 Years: <http://gacivilwar.org/>

This website contains information regarding events scheduled throughout the state, attractions to visit pertaining to the war, a timeline of the war in Georgia, maps of Civil War sites and driving trails in Georgia, a gallery of photos and images, and stories from those who witnessed the war.

The New Georgia Encyclopedia: <http://www.georgiaencyclopedia.org/>

Learn about Georgia’s heritage. This is a great resource for history and archaeology buffs.

The Society for Georgia Archaeology (SGA): <http://www.thesga.org>

Interested in learning more about Georgia archaeology and how you can preserve it? Visit the SGA website to learn more about upcoming events and resources. Several local chapters exist throughout the state, so find information about where a chapter meets near you and attend a meeting to learn about archaeology that it is being conducted in your area.

“Learning Through Archaeology: Rediscovering the Civil War in Georgia” is one of a series of educational packets produced annually by The Society for Georgia Archaeology for Archaeology Month activities in May. The series reflects new themes annually and is available free-of-charge via the website, along with a calendar of events occurring throughout the state during the month of May. An associated poster is also distributed to all middle/junior high public schools in the state and other entities. With the exception of the Event Calendar, the posters and educational packets are timeless. Librarians at schools are encouraged to catalog these materials so that they may be used in the future by educators and patrons. The 2011 issue represents the 14th in the series. We hope you enjoy it!



thesga.org