



Maj. Gen. Joseph Wheeler Camp #863, Conyers, Ga.

# GEN. JOE'S DISPATCH



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## Coming Events

Jan. 11, 2011 - **29th Annual Lee-Jackson Dinner** -  
Philologia Lodge, Conyers,  
Georgia

July 14 - 16, 2011 - **2011 SCV Reunion**, Montgomery,  
Alabama

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## Camp Lawton

Civil War News Article; September,



MILLEN, Ga. – The site of Camp Lawton, a Union soldier prisoner-of-war camp near Mil- len, is "pristine," according to East Georgia College Professor Emeritus of History Dr. John K. Derden.



Robert Knox Sneden painted this watercolor interior view of the Millen Prison's Main Street with brick ovens. (Courtesy Virginia Historical Society, Mss5.1.Sn237.1.Vol6.0127.jpg)

On Aug. 18, the unexpected discovery of numerous artifacts from the camp was announced by Georgia Southern University and the two other major organizations involved.

The Georgia Department of Natural Resources (DNR) operates Magnolia Springs State Park, where the majority of Camp Lawton's remains are. The rest are in the adjacent Bo Ginn National Fish Hatchery which the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service administers. The artifacts were found on this site. The DNR commissioned the archeological work by Georgia Southern University which led to the discoveries.

The team is led by Georgia Southern graduate student J.

Kevin Chapman. His faculty mentor, Professor of Anthropology Dr. Sue M. Moore, supervises Chapman and five other graduate students.

Derden, who is writing a book about Camp Lawton, said he was "adopted as the project historian" when he spoke with Chapman, a former student of his, about their mutual interest in the site.

Magnolia Springs State Park has long displayed informational signs about Camp Lawton being there. Earthworks from the fortifications that overlooked the 42-acre wooden prison stockade remain visible. The stockade disappeared over time.

The first serious archeological work at the site was done in 2005-2007 (see CWN July 2007). Nearby U.S. Route 25 was being widened. Ground-penetrating radar (GPR) was used to determine if any historically-valuable land in the park would be disturbed by the upcoming road project, according to Georgia Department of Transportation (DOT) archeologist Sara H. Gale. "They had some down time," former Magnolia Springs State park manager Bill Giles said of the GPR crew in a recent interview.

Because of the close working relationship between the DNR and DOT, the DOT officials agreed to scan the park for traces of Camp Lawton's wooden stockade as a favor, said DOT's Gale.

"We didn't know exactly where the stockade was," Giles said. The outline of the camp's main gate may have been located under a parking lot in a 2006 scan, he said. The effort was not pursued after 2007.

Prof. Moore says the current archeological effort was initiated in the spring of 2009 when DNR Commissioner Chris Clark asked her to conduct a survey of Camp Lawton.

When Kevin Chapman told Moore he wanted to return to Georgia Southern for a master's degree in anthropology, he recalls she said, "Great. I've got just the project for you." She described a little community service project at the park and hatchery. "There won't be a whole lot to it because there's not a whole lot there."

The work began in December 2009. "We originally thought we would find features, things like the stockade walls and maybe the footing for the brick ovens, but we did not expect to find artifacts," Moore said. "We had pretty much assumed those were already gone. It turned out when we excavated they were not, in fact, gone." They were found in the spring on the hatchery side of the camp. Chapman wrote on the project Web site: "We began to retrieve an amazing collection of artifacts proving that the site was of unexpected importance. The artifacts are not only visually im-

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# Our Commanders Comments



*By: Commander Tommy Cook*



Fellow members and friends of Joe Wheeler Camp 863,

Thanks to our hard working camp members the "Old Town Festival" held in his-

toric Old Town Conyers was a success. The festival which was on October 23<sup>rd</sup> featured numerous arts/crafts and food vendors, as well as the booth for the Joe Wheeler Camp. We were joined this year by Judy Bond who presented her Rockdale County Cemeteries project. Special thanks go out to Dan Bass, John Maxey, Gerry New and David Anderson for the set up, tear down and manning of the booth.

If you missed the "Sunday in the Park" event at Oakland Cemetery this past October 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2010 then you missed an opportunity to touch history. The

event which featured tours, music, food, and other activities was well worth the drive to Atlanta. Debbie and I met up with Jerry New and had a full day of fun in the sun and took the "War Between The States" tour which lasted about 45 minutes. Our tour guide was very knowledgeable about the battle of Atlanta and the role of the cemetery during the conflict. I encourage you can visit Oakland Cemetery and experience it for your self.

We continue to accept nominations for Camp Commander, and First and Second Lt. Commanders and will finalize the vote no later than the December meeting.

At our last meeting the program was provided by Monty Laster about his continuing efforts to identify and preserve cemeteries in Newton County. Monty said that they have approximately 260 to 270 cemeteries identified so far. He provided a great pro-

gram and I would like to thank him and his group for their service to the citizens of Newton County, as well as others across the US who have inquired about their ancestor's final resting place. Monty is very passionate about this preservation and we wish him the best of luck as he continues his work.

Our next meeting will feature a program by Madelyn Stark who is the president of the James M. Gresham Chapter of the UDC in Social Circle. I look forward to seeing all of you on November 14<sup>th</sup> at the next camp meeting. Your attendance is needed and appreciated; please make it special by joining us!

Yours in the South,  
Tommy Cook



## Museum of the Confederacy Breaks Ground for an Appomattox Museum



*By: Scott Boyd, November 2010 Civil War News*



Museum of the Confederacy CEO S. Waite Rawls III speaks at groundbreaking for the new museum in Appomattox, Va. (Courtesy MOC)

APPOMATTOX, Va. — "This is the biggest and most important project in the entire nation for the Sesquicentennial, the 150th anniversary of the Civil War, and Appomattox is the right place to put it," announced S. Waite Rawls III at the Sept. 23 groundbreaking ceremony for Museum of the Confederacy — Appomattox.

"We are going to break our necks to be open before April 9, 2012, the 147th anniversary of the surrender here," he said.

The new museum will be on eight acres of

land near the intersection of Route 24 and the Highway 460 bypass, roughly one mile from the McLean House where Gen. Robert E. Lee surrendered to Lt. Gen. Ulysses S. Grant on April 9, 1865.

The 11,700-square-foot facility will include 5,000 square feet of exhibit space and a 1,000-square-foot multi-purpose room for meetings, lectures and educational programs.

Rawls, the museum's executive director and CEO, told the audience, "The MOC recognized six years ago that its one site — in downtown Richmond next to the White House of the Confederacy — would not work if we were to fulfill our mission of using our unbelievable collection to educate the public about the Confederate chapter of American history."

Three people brought the possibility of Appomattox as a museum site to the attention of the MOC. Rawls said State Delegate Watkins Abbitt Jr., former director of tourism Beckie Nix and Recreation and Parks Director Anne Dixon "represented the area very well and drove home to us this opportunity."

Rawls related that he and Rosewell Page III, then MOC Board of Trustees chairman, once were returning from a reception in Appomattox when Rawls asked him, "Why can't we keep Richmond and add a new location to take advantage of the people who go there?"

"That was the moment that the idea of the system of museum sites

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# Camp Lawton



*Civil War News Article; September, 2010 (Continued from page 1.)*

pressive, but they also tell an incredible story individually and as a whole.”

He estimates they have found 350 artifacts so far. Some of them will go on display at the Georgia Southern University Museum



Oct. 10. A clay tobacco pipe with an improvised lead bowl is Chapman’s favorite artifact so far. “The idea of a lead bowl on a pipe is kind of baffling until you think that’s probably the only alternative that soldier had.”

A tourniquet buckle is one of Moore’s favorite finds, she said, “because it tells you a little about things that are going on there, whether it’s the medical care or whether it’s that somebody maybe had a tourniquet buckle that they reused to hold something else, we don’t know yet.”

She said it has preserved cloth in it. “That’s a real rare thing for us to be able to find.” As far as Confederate prisons go, Camp Lawton was one-of-a-kind, according to Chapman. He said the Confederacy had 36 major prisons, 18 of which had stockades. Camp Lawton is the only prison stockade with its remains intact, he said. The rest have been looted or ploughed over.

The camp’s 42-acre stockade was also the largest, exceeding the 26.5 acres at Camp Sumter at Andersonville, Ga. When constructed, the man who ordered it built, Confederate Brig. Gen. John H. Winder, wrote to his superior, “It is, I presume, the largest prison in the world.” (*Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, Series II, Vol. VII, page 869.)

The impetus for the camp’s construction was to relieve the overcrowding at Andersonville.

Millen is in eastern Georgia near South Carolina, between Augusta and Savannah. Camp Lawton work began after its site was selected by Captains D.W. Vowles and W.S. Winder, as noted in their Aug. 5, 1864, message to Gen. Samuel Cooper, Confederate Adjutant General. (*Official Records*, Series II, Vol. VII, page 546.)

Although some accounts claim it was named for Gen. Alexander Robert Lawton, the Confederate Quartermaster-General, “I always doubted that because no other prison stockade had ever been named for a person,” Chapman said. Before the war, Lawton was president of a nearby railroad and founded Lawton Station, where the town of Lawton grew up, Chapman said. This is what the prison was named for, “indirectly for General Lawton, but directly for that town.”

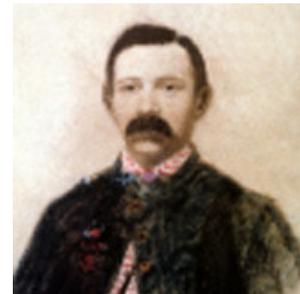
The stockade surrounding the 42 acres where the Union prisoners would live was built so quickly that it was made of unhewn pine from a local forest, according to Giles, the former Magnolia Springs manager. “They took everything wrong with Andersonville and tried to fix it with Camp Lawton,” he said. An example is the poor drainage at Andersonville compared with that at Lawton.

The prisoners arrived by train in the first week of October and left the same way on Nov. 22, 1864, Prof. Derden said, as Union Maj. Gen. William T. Sherman’s army approached. He hypothesizes many artifacts were left “because the prisoners were rousted out late at night without a chance to get all their belongings.”

Most of the prisoners were shipped to Florence, S.C. Some were sent back to Andersonville, which had just been evacuated. There was even an attempt to liberate the prisoners. Derden said that historian Noah Andre Trudeau, in his book *Southern Storm: Sherman’s March to the Sea*, cites an account published in the National Tribune after the war about a flying column of Union cavalry that raided Camp Lawton, but found it abandoned.

The only headcount for the prison, dated Nov. 8, 1864, gives a total of 10,229 prisoners. Of those, 486 were said to have died there and 349 enlisted in the Confederate Army (with 285 of those working at the camp), leaving 9,394 imprisoned. (*Official Records* Series II, Vol. VII, pages 1113-1114.)

So much remains to be learned about Camp Lawton that Chapman expects research will continue for three or four decades. One of the big mysteries is how many prisoners died there, Derden said. Besides the 486 dead in the *Official Records* report, the Union prisoner who kept the death register said there were between 900 and 1,300 dead.



That prisoner was artist Robert Knox Sneden. He turned his wartime sketches, including several of Camp Lawton, into watercolors

after the war. They were published in the books *Eye of the Storm* (2000) and *Images from the Storm* (2001).

Another mystery Derden noted is the shape of the prison stockade. A drawing in the *Official Records* shows it nearly square, while two drawings by Sneden show it to be distinctly rectangular. “Sneden was in several prison camps and I have the feeling he confuses some things,” Derden said.

Something no guest at Magnolia Springs State Park should be confused about is the prohibition against digging for artifacts. Even possession of a metal detector on the property is illegal, much less using one, Chapman said. Besides a fence, there are passive infrared tripwire cameras, ground-vibration sensors and other precautions Chapman declined to specify protecting the excavation site. “Very high-tech security measures” are in both in the park and the fish hatchery properties. For information about the camp go to [www.georgiasouthern.edu/camplawtonand](http://www.georgiasouthern.edu/camplawtonand) [www.fws.gov/camplawtonsite](http://www.fws.gov/camplawtonsite)

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**We're on the Web!**  
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## Museum of the Confederacy Breaks Ground for an Appomattox Museum

*By: Scott Boyd, November 2010 Civil War News (Continued from page 2)*



was hatched,” Rawls said.

Appomattox is the first of three new museums planned. The other two under consideration are at Fort Monroe in Hampton and somewhere in the Fredericksburg area.

This was the “inspiration” part.

“Then came the perspiration part, which had to start with the money,” Rawls said.

The total cost is \$7.5 million “and we already have \$6 million committed,” according to Rawls. The largest donation was \$2.8 million from the Virginia Tobacco Commission.

MOC trustee John Nau challenged the other trustees to raise \$1 million and “led by Paul Bryant, Ivor Massey, Don Wilkinson and Sam Witt, they put \$2.3 million of their own money where their mouth was,” Rawls said.

Two other major donors were Joe Luter and Stan Pauley. The Town of Appomattox gave

\$350,000 as well. Landowner Fred Jones sold six acres and donated two for the site Rawls calls “perfect.” The town will provide water and sewer.

To cover the \$1.5 million gap, Rawls said he would ask the MOC general membership for help in the coming weeks. Naming opportunities for various components of the new museum are available for “significant gifts.”

“God willing and the creek don’t rise, we will choose a contractor for the site and break ground for real before Thanksgiving,” Rawls said. “We’ll finish the building by the end of 2011, install the exhibits and open in the spring of 2012.”

Exhibit design will go on parallel to the museum’s construction. Rawls said in addition to the end of the war and beginning of Reconstruction, there will be an overview of the start and general course of the war.

The immediate aftermath of the war will be

covered, such as “the concept of home to a woman refugee whose home was burned and husband killed” and what “home” meant for newly freed slaves, said Rawls.

Delegate Abbitt, of the 59th District, spokes of tourism’s importance to the region. He said tourism in the surrounding counties in 2009 generated \$286 million and over 3,300 jobs.

Appomattox Mayor Paul D. Harvey said, “We anticipate this is going to increase visitation to the area by over 100,000 people in a year’s time.” He hopes the museum “will be part of the spark for igniting some economic development in the area.”

At the close of remarks, Rawls and seven others picked up their ceremonial shovels and officially broke ground at the site.

For more information about Museum of the Confederacy — Appomattox go to [www.moc.org/appomattox](http://www.moc.org/appomattox)