



**The Battle of Kennesaw
Mountain: A Brief History of
the Battle and Sherman's
March through Georgia to
Atlanta**

By

Nicholas Norris



Introduction:

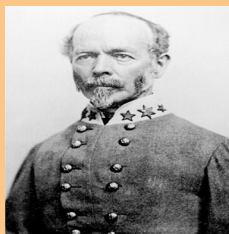
During the Civil War, Sherman's march to Atlanta, and the Atlanta Campaign, played a key role as the Union advanced into Georgia. This action was culminated with the Battle of Kennesaw Mountain, a major engagement during the Atlanta Campaign between Confederate forces and Union forces.

Kennesaw Mountain is located in Kennesaw, Georgia, in Cobb County, which is now part of the north-western suburbs of Atlanta. The battle took place on June 27, 1864. During this engagement, Union forces were under the command of Major General William T. Sherman, while Confederate forces, from the Army of Tennessee, were under the command of General Joseph E. Johnston. Johnston was also joined by forces under the command of General John Bell Hood. Hood ultimately had replaced Johnston later as the Confederate commanding officer during the Atlanta Campaign.

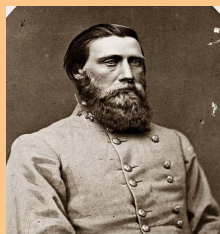
Sherman



Johnston



Hood



This battle is perhaps the greatest known, in a series of battles, that both Union forces and Confederate forces had engaged in during the Atlanta Campaign.

The site of the battle, namely the mountain and its surrounding area, has now been a long standing historical site preserving the history of this Civil War battle and its artifacts.

Prelude to the Battle of Kennesaw Mountain:

There were several preceding battles before the Battle at Kennesaw which was initiated by Sherman's forces as they advanced south towards Atlanta, from Chattanooga, Tennessee, along rail lines at the very beginning of May.

These rail lines were fruitful in providing ample supplies and communication lines to Union forces that were behind. These lines were essential as the supplies were Confederate artillery. However, at times when Sherman left these lines, it proved to be a disadvantage resulting in 100,000 Union soldiers losing their lives.

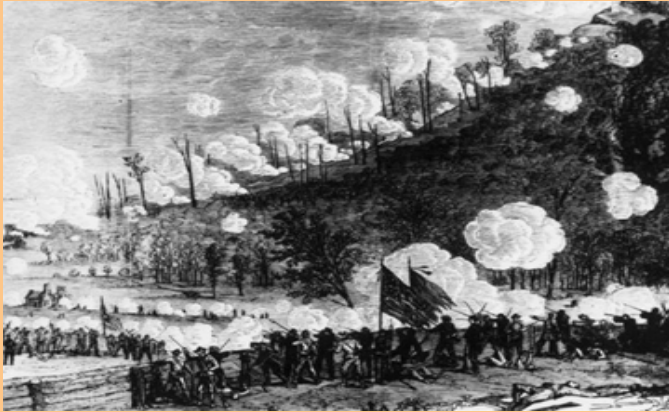
Sherman's march into Georgia was also met with a build-up and several run-ins with Confederate forces around north Georgia in May and June of 1864. Sherman's, Johnston's, and Hood's forces engaged each other in different sized tactics, battles, and skirmishes, in north Georgia down to Cobb County.

May 1 was deemed the official start of the Atlanta Campaign with a skirmish in Ringgold, Georgia, at Old Stone Church. A few small skirmishes continued in that area for the next four days.

Following these skirmishes, several lesser know battles began in Rocky Ace Ridge on May 8. Six days later, two days of battling happened in Resaca on May 14 and 15 as 100,000 men engaged each other.

Then there was a skirmish in Adairsville as Rome fell on May 17. Following Adairsville and Rome falling, this forced Johnston to withdraw and temporarily displace Sherman to Kingston in Bartow County.

Once both forces got back on track; Johnston's, Hood's, and Sherman's forces continued to move south through New Hope Church, Dallas, and Pickett's Mill, while battling on May 25-28, 1864. The battling on these days prompted setbacks for Johnston and Hood.



The Battle of Kennesaw Mountain:

Sherman's forces finally left the rail lines towards the end of May. Come June, Sherman and his forces moved towards the towns of Kennesaw and Marietta. During this time, Sherman's forces had seen Confederate lines at Knob's Farm which is near the base of Kennesaw Mountain. Sherman knew this confrontation would be the first time that his forces would legitimately be tested and fight, as the region around Kennesaw Mountain and its surrounding foothills were all part of a continuous mountain chain.

This forced Sherman's forces to eventually settled in Big Shanty, which is another base of Kennesaw Mountain. Johnston's and Hood's forces, which were also in the region and familiar with it, set up various defensive positions. This included stations to counter Sherman's forces. Johnston's and Hood's forces utilized the terrain of the mountainous region to place equipment, dig trenches, and set up communication posts using various methods of signals to execute military action. [1], [6], [11]

The culminating effects of both forces actions ultimately came to a head.

Johnston's and Hood's forces had monitored the advancement of Sherman's forces as they came to Kennesaw and Marietta. Once Union and Confederate lines met in the area, Sherman gave the commanders under him choices and leeway on how to attack.

This provided an initial advantage for Union forces to keep Hood, Johnston, and their forces in place and away from Kennesaw Mountain itself. Confederate forces were kept in place, nearby, between Little Kennesaw Mountain and Pigeon Hill.

Union forces also set up lines to the south setting back Confederate forces there by setting a "dead area." This initially kept Confederate forces from being able to get themselves reinforced. [1], [2], [11]

This is where the primary battling began. This began with operations around Marietta with both forces engaging each other in skirmishes. The primary battle took place at Kennesaw on June 27, 1864.



Between the skirmishes in Marietta and the battle at Kennesaw Mountain, there was only a difference of two to three miles between the two points. Through the rugged mountainous terrain, Union and Confederate forces engaged in battle through a series of flanks and frontal attacks in an arc-shaped line. Sherman's forces made some headway by engaging Confederate forces first. However with Confederate forces familiarity with the area, and already set defensive methods, proved Sherman's attack futile as his forces were ultimately out-gunned in the end.



By noon, the fighting had ended with Union forces suffering the most casualties. There were 4,000 soldiers that died in the battle – 3,000 casualties for the Union forces and 1,000 casualties for the Confederate forces. This battle was a major part of the Atlanta Campaign which ultimately paved the way for Sherman's successful capture of Atlanta despite the casualties. [7], [8], [12]

As Sherman, Johnston, and Hood, and all of their forces marched towards Atlanta after this; other military leaders, and the Confederate government, began to assess the situation as Sherman neared the city. It was decided that Johnston should be replaced by Hood. Hood then assumed leadership right before the Battle of Atlanta, as it was another battle in its own right, which resulted in Sherman and his forces burning the city as Atlanta fell to Union forces under Sherman. [1], [2], [9], [10]



Kennesaw Mountain Becomes a Historically Preserved Site:

Since around the turn of the 20th century, there have been acts and transfers taken to preserve the history of the battle site at and around Kennesaw Mountain.

The first act came in 1899 when the State of Illinois purchased part of the land, near the battle site, to build a memorial for five-hundred soldiers that died in the battle.

August 13, 1904, saw sixty acres of land be transferred to designate Kennesaw Mountain as a national park, preserving the history of the battle.

1914 through 1926 saw the completion and review of the park, along with the completion of more memorials. By 1939, additional land was purchased for the park.

Kennesaw Mountain National Battlefield Park was officially established in 1947.

By the 1960's, the establishment and building of a visitors center was in place. Due to the fragile historical value of the site and its artifacts, expansions around Marietta and Kennesaw have put a strain on the park. The park management, however, does what they can do to preserve the park.



Various groups like the Kennesaw Mountain Trail Club routinely preserve and maintain the upkeep of the park; specifically the trails, shrubbery, and artifacts on the mountain itself.



There are also tours of the park which stretch for eight miles and are accessible from various points of Marietta. [3], [4], [5], [13]

Bibliography:

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