

Ocmulgee Mounds

National Park Service
U.S. Department of Interior

Ocmulgee Mounds NHP



The Civil War in Macon



MACON DURING THE CIVIL WAR

During “The War Between the States” the young city of Macon was threatened with destruction on two separate occasions when Union and Confederate forces met just across the river from the city. Both conflicts took place on the grounds of Ocmulgee Mounds National Historical Park. Today, the Dunlap trail leads to one of the few surviving Civil War earthworks in Macon, a reminder of another time in history adding to our heritage that is Ocmulgee.

Around 1856, Samuel F. Dunlap selected a hilltop in close proximity of Walnut Creek to build his house and establish a cotton plantation. Less than ten years later, in 1864, the city of Macon was sending small arms, cannon and supplies to the Confederate Army in Atlanta. By this late date the Southern forces were defeated but not yet ready to give up the fight. The North needed decisive victories to bring the war to an end. Sherman’s “March to the Sea” became a major factor in the ultimate outcome of the conflict. That march led Union forces to Macon.

BATTLE OF DUNLAP HILL

On July 27, Major General William T. Sherman sent 9,000 Union cavalymen riding south in two columns. Their orders were to join forces at Lovejoy and wreck the vital Macon railroad that fed and supplied the Confederate army defending Atlanta. Major General George Stoneman led one of these columns through Covington and Monticello, intending to march down the east side of the Ocmulgee River before joining the other column led by McCook. To his surprise and dismay, Stoneman soon discovered there were no bridges along that muddy stretch of the Ocmulgee. Reluctant to rejoin Sherman without accomplishing anything, he continued south, hoping to capture Macon and perhaps even liberate the 35,000 Union soldiers imprisoned at Camp Oglethorpe and Andersonville.

Union and Confederate forces met at Macon on July 30, 1864, in an encounter

called “The Battle of Dunlap Hill,” better known as “The Stoneman Raid.” Major General George Stoneman, already involved in the conquest of Georgia, saw potential for strengthening Union forces by freeing the men in the two Central Georgia prison camps. Upon reaching Macon, Stoneman occupied the Dunlap House, set up temporary entrenchment in the yard, and began to shell the city. Stoneman didn’t know that the city had advance warning of his arrival.

On the morning of July 30th, Georgia’s Governor Brown was in Macon conducting business with Confederate officers, Major General Howell Cobb and General Joseph E. Johnston. The governor made an appeal to gather Georgia reserves and militiamen to defend Macon, and Major General Howell Cobb took command. Stoneman’s siege failed and he and his troops retreated northward.

BATTLE OF WALNUT CREEK

In October 1864, as a reaction to “The Stoneman Raid” and news of the destruction Federal troops had inflicted throughout Georgia, additional defense construction was made for the city of Macon. It is believed that the gun

emplacement on the Dunlap Trail was built as a part of this additional defense system. But regardless of when the earthwork was constructed, its 12-pound Napoleon gun and 8 others played an important role in the “Battle of Walnut Creek.” This second

BATTLE OF
WALNUT CREEK
(CONTINUED)

military encounter between Union and Confederate forces near the city of Macon occurred again at the Dunlap Farm. The skirmish, a diversionary ploy for the major troop movements of General Sherman's Union force through Middle Georgia, took place on November 20-21, 1864. When United States Brigadier General Judson Kilpatrick and his men reached Macon, they were met by elements of Wheeler's Confederate Calvary, made up of the 1st and 2nd Convalescent Regiments, the 24th Tennessee, Captain Albrough's command, Captain Atkins' company and nine canons.

In November of 1864, Sherman was well

on his "March to the Sea" when Governor Joseph E. Brown decided to move the capital from Milledgeville to Macon, to keep the state's records safe. A legislature was seated in the old city hall from February 15 until March 11, 1865.

"The Battle of Walnut Creek" was the last skirmish fought in the vicinity of Macon. The Union forces had been successfully driven away until the official surrender. On April 20, 1865, Major General Howell Cobb surrendered to Major General James H. Wilson, eleven days after Robert E. Lee surrendered to Ulysses S. Grant.