

Media Release

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New Southeast Tennessee Civil War trail guide

CHATTANOOGA, Tenn. (July 15, 2008) – Tennessee is already gearing up for the 150th commemoration of the Civil War beginning in 2011. A newly produced driving trail directs people all across southeast Tennessee, serving up a mixed batch of sites and stories from this significant time in history.

Southeast Tennessee's *Civil War Trails, Fighting for the Rails* brochure provides a designated path for travelers to follow as they explore sites associated with the American Civil War in Tennessee. The brochure has 47 sites and covers 10 counties. Southeast Tennessee Tourism Association (SETTA) worked in conjunction with the Tennessee Civil War National Heritage Area and the Tennessee Department of Tourist Development. Dr. Carroll Van West of the MTSU Center for Historic Preservation provided research and wrote the text for the brochure.

“Southeast Tennessee has some of the most important and most compelling Civil War era resources in the state,” West said. “Not only are there major battlefields but historic cemeteries remind us of the terrible costs of the war at the same time that historic African American churches remind us that the war also led to emancipation and new definitions of freedom and citizenship in America.”

The guide takes visitors throughout Chattanooga and throughout the Great Valley region of Bradley, Rhea and Meigs—through the Overhill region of McMinn and Polk—and up to the Cumberland Plateau region of Sequatchie, Marion, Bledsoe and Grundy. All sites date between 1861 and 1865.

Some well-known Chattanooga sites and locations include the Chattanooga National Cemetery, Lookout Mountain, Missionary Ridge and the National Medal of Honor Museum. The guide also includes sites not generally known to area travelers. The Silverdale Confederate Cemetery off of Lee Highway, for example, is a Civil War gem inside Chattanooga. The stone wall entrance to the cemetery dates to the 1930s and the cemetery is home to some 155 Confederate soldiers from the command of Gen. Braxton Bragg. The Wiley Memorial United Methodist Church in downtown

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Chattanooga is also a unique stop for Civil War buffs and travelers alike. This historic church dates to 1867 and was once used as a military prison by both Confederate and Federal armies.

The Great Valley region includes some spectacular sites including several monuments and cemeteries. The Grand Army of the Republic (GAR) Monument in Fort Hill Cemetery in Cleveland is one of very few monuments in the South. GAR was the major Federal veteran's organization and this monument is one of only three in Tennessee. During the war Federal troops occupied this area. Utilized for its location overlooking downtown Cleveland, it also held commanding views of the railroad and adjacent turnpikes. The cemetery contains the remains of several unknown Confederates as well.

This area also provides an exceptional story of some female rebels from the Smith's Crossroads area in Dayton. The lady 'Spartan's, as they became known as, all had family in the Confederate Army and began meeting for support, but soon found themselves spying on Federal troops, which landed them in rough water. Rounded up and made to stand on the banks of the river, the ladies were loaded onto the *USS Chattanooga* and marched up Market Street in Chattanooga. They were forced to sign oaths of loyalty to the United States before being escorted back up the river, dropped off at the river landing, and made to make their way home on foot.

Paul Archambault, Southeast Tennessee Development District Historic Preservation Planner, helped in the guide research process. "This story of the 'Spartans' came out of a committee meeting during our research phase, and we were thrilled to learn of this great history from our region, Archambault said.

The Overhill region takes visitors to the East Tennessee and Georgia Railroad Depot in Niota where they'll find the oldest railroad depot in Tennessee, currently home to City Hall. Built in 1854, the brick depot had two separate sections—one as a ticket booth, office and customer seating and the second as a large open warehouse for freight. Federal Troops occupied this area during the war and turned the depot into a mini-fortification by knocking out bricks from the freight section so their rifles could fire on passing troops.

High atop Chilhowee Mountain visitors can observe a lone confederate memorial and burial site. Built to mark the location of a skirmish in February 1865, this location offers a unique perspective of this war as it relates to the mountainous Tennessee region. "Loyalties to the Confederacy and the Union armies were greatly divided in this region," Archambault said. "Many renegade units were involved in numerous skirmishes, often referred to as guerilla warfare."

The Cumberland Plateau region offers visitors several stops, including the Bean-Roulston Cemetery in South Pittsburg and Sequatchie College in Pikeville. The country road leading to the cemetery offers spectacular rural landscapes and is the

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burial spot for some 20 unknown Confederate soldiers. And though Sequatchie College closed its doors during the war, it played a significant role right after the war when it reopened and Confederate and Federal veterans were both invited to sit side by side just months after trying to kill each other.

This brochure will augment the future statewide Civil War Trail program by the Tennessee Department of Tourist Development in preparation for the 150th commemoration of the Civil War beginning in 2011. Many of the sites are well suited for these new heritage markers. The guide will also be promoted as part of a larger region 3-state Civil War Heritage promotion for the 150 year commemorative events.

The brochures are currently being distributed across the State of Tennessee at Welcome Centers and locally at area hotels, retail shops and other tourism outlets.

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Southeast Tennessee Tourism Association's mission is to develop and implement heritage based programs in the ten-county region known as Southeast Tennessee. For more information, go online to www.southeasttennessee.com.