

Prescribed Fire Planned at Chickamauga Battlefield

Kim Coons, NPS, February 22, 2024

Fort Oglethorpe, GA: The planned fire will be on approximately 500 acres north of Viniard-Alexander Road and west of Alexander Bridge Road. These areas include Central Viniard Alexander, East Viniard Alexander and Brotherton East, see attached map. This will be the second of five prescribed fires taking place in the next several years.

The goals of this fire are to restore, protect, and maintain the historic and cultural landscapes; restore and maintain fire adapted plant communities; reduce hazard fuel accumulations; eradicate invasive woody and exotic vegetation species which compete with native vegetation and to maintain and promote suitable conditions for limestone glade communities.

Assisting the National Park Service with this burn are the US Forest Service, The Nature Conservancy, Catoosa County fire fighters, and Walker County fire fighters.

Many factors align to conduct a prescribed fire and ensure public and firefighter safety. The timing of the prescribed fire is dependent on weather conditions being within required wind, temperature, and relative humidity parameters. Wildland and local fire engines, fire fighters and both Viniard-Alexander Road and Alexander Bridge Road will serve to create buffers and fire breaks to ensure the fire is contained. Smoke will be visible during the burn, but we do not expect any long duration, major impacts to the park or surrounding area due

to the small size of the unit and prescription parameters. Upon completion of the fire activity, wildland firefighters will continue to monitor the area to ensure the fire is contained.

Temporary Closures Planned: During the prescribed fire, Viniard-Alexander Road will be closed between LaFayette Road and Alexander's Bridge Road, Alexander's Bridge Road between Brotherton Road and the bridge, as well as Jay's Mill Road, south of Brotherton Road. All trails within the burn area will be closed until fire operations are complete. Additional park roads may need to be closed temporarily if smoke conditions reduce visibility.

For more information about Chickamauga and Chattanooga National Military Park, please contact the Chickamauga Battlefield Visitor Center at 706-866-9241, ext. 123, the Lookout Mountain Battlefield Visitor Center at 423-821-7786 or visit the park's website at www.nps.gov/chch.

0-0

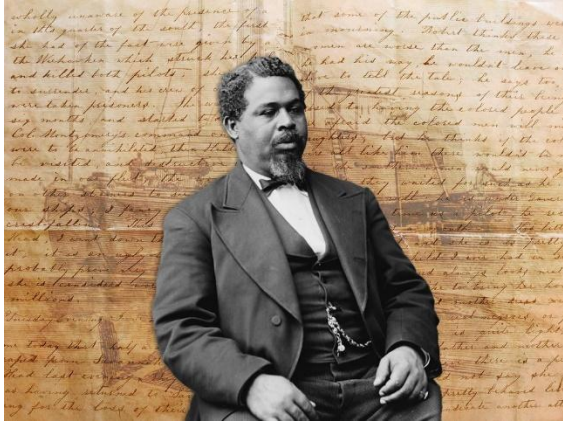
What a Teacher's Letters Reveal About Robert Smalls, Who Stole a Confederate Ship to Secure His Freedom From Slavery

Harriet M. Buss' missives home detail the future congressman's candid views on race and the complicity of Confederate women

Jonathan W. White, Author, *A House Built by Slaves: African American Visitors to the Lincoln White House*

Smithsonian Magazine,

February 13, 2024



A white Baptist woman named Harriet M. Buss taught Civil War hero Robert Smalls (pictured) how to read and write. Illustration by Meilan Solly / Images via Wikimedia Commons under public domain

When Harriet M. Buss, a white, educated Baptist woman from Massachusetts, moved to South Carolina to accept a position as a teacher in March 1863, she likely didn't anticipate that one of her students, Robert Smalls, would go on to become a member of the United States House of Representatives. But the Civil War opened up new opportunities for Black Americans like Smalls—a formerly enslaved man who rose to national prominence after sailing a Confederate ship to freedom in 1862—and many seized every chance they could to gain an education and improve their lives.

Buss taught hundreds of freedpeople over the course of her career. Her letters home provide not only an extraordinary account of the daily experiences of African Americans as they emerged from bondage but also a unique window into Smalls' life after his daring escape from slavery.

Little is known about Buss' childhood (and no photograph of her appears to survive), although she later recalled that she “always thought teaching was my lifework; I longed for it, I aimed and planned for it as soon as I

knew what a school was.” Born in 1826 in Sterling, Massachusetts, Buss grew up to be a highly independent, well-traveled woman. Never married, she told her parents, “I don't want to obey one of creation's lords. Never could I be told to go or stay, do this or that, and surely never could I ask. I submit to no human being as my master or dictator.”

Over time, educator Harriet M. Buss developed a shared mission with her students and devoted herself to training the next generation of Black teachers.

In the years immediately preceding the Civil War, Buss—then working as an educator in the frontier state of Illinois—wrote with increasing earnestness about national politics. She was incensed by the foolishness and incompetence of the men running the nation and believed that women were better suited to solve America's problems. “How they so act at Congress, what contemptible and unprincipled men we have there!” she wrote in January 1860.

When Buss learned that Stephen A. Douglas, a Democratic senator from Illinois, was proposing a “sedition” law to silence abolitionist speech, she opined, “Even if he could stop the men's tongues, he would find another job after that. He must silence the women's, too, and that is more than he can do.” If Republican leaders like William H. Seward were thrown in jail, she added, “it will be time for the women to act boldly and decisively; and I for one shall be ready, if I have life and health when that day comes.”

Buss found her life's purpose when she began teaching formerly enslaved people in the South. Between 1863 and 1871, she worked as a teacher in three different

regions: the Sea Islands of South Carolina; Norfolk, Virginia; and Raleigh, North Carolina. In this final post, she helped establish Shaw University, a historically Black college.



Shaw Hall, a building at the historically Black university that Buss helped establish Public domain via Wikimedia Commons

When Buss arrived in South Carolina in 1863, she wrote about her students in ways that suggest how culturally removed she felt from them. She wanted to “elevate” the formerly enslaved, and she considered herself a “pioneer.” With condescension, she told her parents that they “would be amused if you could come into my school. You would see darkey traits manifested to your satisfaction.”

Over time, however, Buss came to see herself as sharing a mission with her students. She believed the most important thing she could do was to help empower the next generation of Black teachers and ministers through education. “The longer I am engaged in this work,” she wrote in 1869, “the more do I find to convince me that the great masses of this people are to be reached and elevated by the efforts of well-trained theologians and teachers of their own race.”

Of the many revelations contained in Buss’ correspondence, some of the most noteworthy are what she had to say about Smalls, who would go on to serve in Congress for five terms between 1875 and 1887. On May 13, 1862, Smalls had escaped from bondage by seizing command of a Confederate steamer, the CSS Planter, in Charleston, South Carolina, and sailing to the Union blockading fleet. This bold, dangerous action won freedom for Smalls; his wife and two young children; and 12 other men, women and children.



Illustration of the CSS Planter, the Confederate steamer that Smalls sailed to freedom Public domain via Wikimedia Commons

Smalls instantly became a hero in the North. The African Methodist Episcopal minister Henry McNeal Turner called him “a living specimen of unquestionable African heroism.” The New York Tribune similarly proclaimed, with a mix of condescension and amazement, “This man, though Black, is a hero—one of the few history will delight

to honor. He has done something for his race and for the world of mankind. ... He has added new proof to the evidence that negroes have skill—and courage and tact, and that they will risk their lives for the sake of their liberty.”

In August 1862, Smalls traveled to Washington, D.C., where he met with President Abraham Lincoln. Though no contemporaneous account of that meeting appears to exist, evidence suggests that Smalls helped persuade Lincoln to arm Black men in the Union Army. Up to this point, Lincoln had opposed allowing African Americans to fight in the war, in part because he maintained publicly that the purpose of the war was to preserve the Union, not to end slavery, but also because he feared that Black men might prove cowardly on the battlefield.

Smalls helped convince the commander in chief to make an important change in military and public policy. He returned to South Carolina bearing a letter from the War Department that authorized Black military recruitment. Lincoln would make the policy national a few months later, with the Emancipation Proclamation.



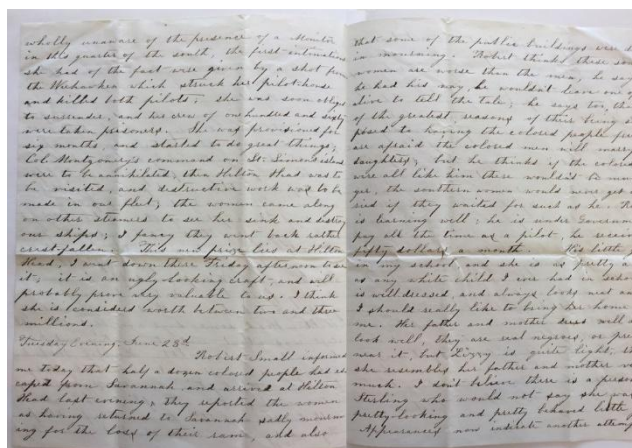
ROBERT SMALLS.

An illustration of Smalls Public domain via Wikimedia Commons

Smalls’ escape and rise to national prominence are well known. But undocumented until recently is how he pursued an education. In the spring of 1863, a few months after Smalls returned to Beaufort, South Carolina, from Washington, he began participating in private reading lessons taught by Buss.

On June 11, Buss told her parents that “I have Robert Small[s] (the one who ran that steamer Planter out of Charleston last year) for a private scholar now; he comes to the house every afternoon. He will soon learn to read and write.” Buss also taught Smalls’ daughter Elizabeth “Lizzy” Lydia Smalls, who was just 4 years old when she escaped from slavery with her father in 1862. Lizzy was “as pretty a child as any white child I ever had in school” in the North before the war, Buss wrote. She added that Lizzy “is well-dressed, and always looks neat and clean; I should really like to bring her home with me. ... I don’t believe there is a person in Sterling who would not say she was a pretty-looking and pretty-behaved little girl.”

Buss' letters home preserve fascinating conversations she had with freedpeople in the Carolinas and Virginia during the Civil War and Reconstruction. Perhaps the most historically significant was a discussion she had with Smalls regarding the Confederate war effort. On June 23, 1863, Smalls told Buss that six African Americans "had escaped from Savannah and arrived at Hilton Head last evening." These Black refugees reported that the Georgia city's Confederate women were "sadly mourning for the loss of their ram," the CSS Atlanta, described by Buss as "an ugly-looking craft" captured by the Union earlier that month.

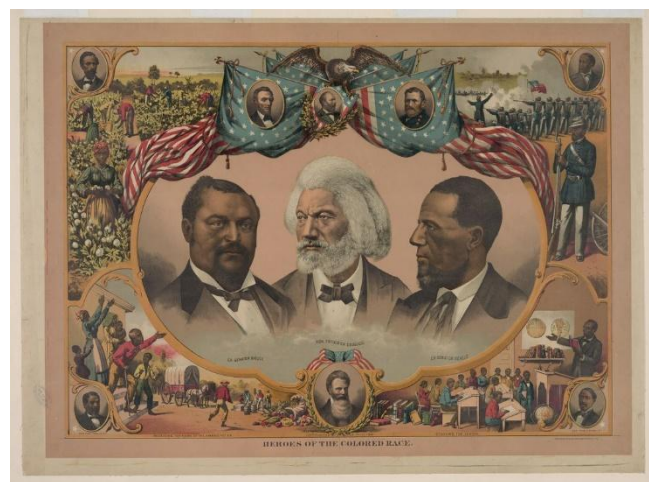


Buss' June 1863 letters about Smalls and his daughter Jonathan W. White

Smalls then shared his views on Confederate women:

Robert thinks these Southern women are worse than the men. He says if he had his way, he wouldn't leave one of them alive to tell the tale; he says too that one of the greatest reasons of their being so opposed to having the colored people free [is] they are afraid the colored men will marry their daughters, but he thinks if the colored men were all like him, there wouldn't be much danger. The Southern women would never get married if they waited for such as he.

None of Smalls' biographers have utilized Buss' writings, but they offer important insight into the freedman's thinking during this formative time in his life. (He was then only 24 years old.) This conversation between teacher and student also speaks to broader political debates that were taking place during the Civil War era. For years, Democrats like Douglas had used racial "amalgamation" as a political wedge to win votes. Douglas routinely accused Republicans of wanting to end slavery so they could "authorize negroes to marry white women."



An 1881 illustration of "Heroes of the Colored Race." Smalls appears at bottom left. Public domain via Wikimedia Commons

Smalls' comments to Buss reveal his political awareness and his vehement rejection of the ways pro-slavery apologists talked about race. Of even greater significance, Smalls found that the white women of the South were far "worse" in their support of the Confederacy than white men. If he could have his way, he said with confidence, he would have them all dead, even though they were noncombatants.

It's telling that Smalls and Buss developed a relationship that enabled them to speak so

candidly with each other. Both were fiercely independent, quick-witted and highly motivated individuals. They saw in each other a willing and trustworthy collaborator who would do what they could to overthrow the system of slavery that existed in the American South. Moreover, their personal interactions had a lasting effect on Smalls' life. The education that he received in 1863 helped prepare him for his work on the state and national stages, where he served with distinction as a vocal advocate for equality and Black Americans' political rights.

Jonathan W. White is a historian at Christopher Newport University and the author or editor of 17 books, including My Work Among the Freedmen: The Civil War and Reconstruction Letters of Harriet M. Buss and A House Built by Slaves: African American Visitors to the Lincoln White House, which was a co-winner of the 2023 Gilder Lehrman Lincoln Prize. He recently published a children's book, My Day With Abe Lincoln.

0-0

Trust Debuts 'Boom Goes the History' Podcast Series

Weekly episodes featuring historians, researchers and battlefield guides will share history and stories from battlefields

Mary Koik, Melissa Winn,, ABT, February 13, 2024

(Washington, D.C.) — The American Battlefield Trust today launched its podcast series Boom Goes the History, a new endeavor for the leading preservation group, that hopes to use the series to engage listeners with the important history that happened on the more than 155 battlefields it's helped to preserve.

Hosted by American Battlefield Trust historians, the weekly podcast transcends traditional storytelling by leveraging the power of modern technology to transport listeners to the very locations where history unfolded.

“Audiences everywhere view our popular videos and utilize our digital tools to connect to the stories and scenery of America’s hallowed ground,” said Trust President David Duncan. “We’re excited to offer this podcast series as a new opportunity for multiple generations of history enthusiasts to engage with our content.”

Based on the Trust’s YouTube video series, the first installment of the series will run for 16 weeks and focuses on the Battle of Chancellorsville, fought April 30 to May 6, 1863. The next installment will feature stories and history from the Gettysburg Battlefield. New episodes will be released every Tuesday on our website at <https://www.battlefields.org/boom-goes-history>.

The Trust’s renowned historians will be joined by special guests ranging from fellow historians to descendants of key historical figures, adding a layer of personal connection to the stories being told.

Boom Goes the History offers a fresh perspective on familiar tales, making history accessible, engaging, and relevant to a broad audience.

The American Battlefield Trust is dedicated to preserving America’s hallowed battlegrounds and educating the public about what happened there and why it matters today. The nonprofit, nonpartisan

organization has protected more than 58,000 acres associated with the Revolutionary War, War of 1812 and Civil War across 155 sites in 25 states. Learn more at www.battlefields.org.

0-0

American Battlefield Trust’s ‘Road to Freedom’ Expands to Two New States, Lifts up Black Civil War Experience

Nonprofit adds 46 historic sites to state-specific apps that highlight under-told stories across Tennessee and North Carolina

Colleen Cheslak-Poulton, ABT, February 22, 2024

(Washington, D.C.) — The American Battlefield Trust’s Road to Freedom initiative, which amplifies stories of Black contributions and sacrifice during the Civil War-era, has expanded to include 46 sites across North Carolina and Tennessee. Now available via the Apple App Store and Google Play, Road to Freedom: TN and Road to Freedom: NC provide users with a variety of touring options to discover sites where they can explore lesser-known perspectives in each state’s history.

The Road to Freedom initiative launched in 2021, when the American Battlefield Trust teamed up with Civil War Trails, Inc., to offer a digital app tour and fold-out map guide highlighting battlefields, churches, cemeteries, highway makers and other historic places throughout the Commonwealth of Virginia. The effort has been recognized with a Silver Anthem Award, a cause-driven offshoot of the Webby Awards. With the latest iterations in

the Volunteer and Tarheel States, the Trust was supported through state-funded grant programs: in Tennessee, a grant from the Wars Commission Grant Fund, administered by the Tennessee Wars Commission, the Tennessee Historical Commission, Department of Environment and Conservation; in North Carolina, a grant directly from the State of North Carolina.

“The Road to Freedom offers a unique historical perspective on Black participation in the Civil War for locals and visitors alike,” said Trust President David Duncan. “Expanding this program to two new states highlights the power of place and the importance of Black stories in telling the full history of these states and the nation as a whole.”

The new digital trails currently highlight 26 spots across Tennessee and 20 across North Carolina, but by the end of spring, each will have grown to include approximately 40 sites that hold ties to the Underground Railroad, the activities of the U.S. Colored Troops (USCT units), the development of free Black communities and more related events of the antebellum, wartime and Reconstruction eras.

Collaborative in nature, the expanded program called on the knowledge of Civil War Trails and the African American Heritage Preservation Foundation, in addition to numerous community stakeholders who are well familiar with these sites and their accompanying backgrounds. The Trust then enlisted on-the-ground research assistance from rising scholars at Middle Tennessee State University and Elizabeth City State University — one of 10 accredited historically Black colleges and universities

in North Carolina — as well as within the doctoral program at Vanderbilt University.

The program is designed to be flexible and easy to navigate. Travelers can seek out a single stop, find a destination along an existing journey or plan an adventure exploring several sites grouped by theme or proximity. For example, in North Carolina, the seven sites scattered throughout the Inner Banks can be sought out over the course of a long weekend. Meanwhile, in Tennessee, the seven sites in the city of Nashville or five in Memphis could all be visited in one day, while finding the three included national cemeteries would cover 351 miles and clock over five hours of drive-time.

“Millions of tourists come to Tennessee each year, but they’ve never had a tool like the Road to Freedom to encourage them to dive into this fascinating aspect of the state’s history,” said Nina Scall, director of programs for the Tennessee Wars Commission. “Further, being on the ground where history was made, and lives were molded by tragedy and triumph, allows people to better connect with and understand the past.”

While the State of North Carolina manages the grant supporting the initiative, staff from the North Carolina Department of Natural and Cultural Resources (DNCR) have provided pivotal guidance on the Tarheel State iteration of the app. “With a variety of locations that highlight this transformative time in U.S. history, North Carolina’s Road to Freedom promises to immerse its users in authentic, human stories that relate the broad Black experience during the Civil War-era,” said Ramona Bartos, director of the Division of Historical Resources at DNCR.

The Road to Freedom apps are GPS-enabled, but images and historical content can be accessed from anywhere on the globe. The free apps are now available for download via the App Store and Google Play, or online as a web app, available through any browser. Learn more at www.battlefields.org/RoadtoFreedom.

The apps will soon be accompanied by a printed, fold-out map guide that is targeted for placement at visitor centers and distribution sites in Tennessee and North Carolina.

0-0

The Tree that Witnessed History in Smyrna, Tennessee

Steve Murphree, February 12, 2024,
blueandgrayeducation.org



Sam Davis House | CC

There are many mature trees on the campus of the Historic Sam Davis Home and Plantation, in Smyrna, Tennessee, many that are well over 100 years old. Visitors to this historic site—which preserves the family home of the Confederate soldier who was hung by Union forces in Pulaski, Tennessee, in 1863—are attracted to the stately tulip or yellow poplars along slave cabin row, the many southern magnolia trees with their large white, lemony-smelling summer

blossoms, and the massive September elm at the corner of the Davis family cemetery that has been measured as one of the largest in the state.

However, a less noticeable tree, a white oak, has, since the site opened for tours in 1930, been dear to the Sam Davis Home staff as well as the trustees and directors of the Sam Davis Memorial Association. Standing next to a rock at the site that bears a commemorative plaque placed by the United Daughters of the Confederacy (UDC) in 1932, is the historic Sam Davis White Oak.

Though this famous tree lost its highest branches during a windstorm in 2020, its most important limb, the one to which Sam Davis tied his horse during his last visit home on the evening of November 14, 1863, remains. In the past, many a middle Tennessee schoolchild, after learning the significance of that limb from a site interpreter, has swung from that limb. Unfortunately, the limb has grown too high to be easily reached for a good swing today.



The oak tree | courtesy of the author

The UDC plaque reads: “In the shadow of this great rock Sam Davis hid his horse fastened to a swinging limb of this old oak on the night of his last visit home just before he was captured Nov. 19, 1863, erected by

Nashville Chapter No. 1, United Daughters of the Confederacy, 1932.”

In recent years the Sam Davis Home was contacted by Phyllis and Tom Hunter of American Heritage Trees in Lebanon, Tennessee. They had heard of the Sam Davis White Oak and expressed their desire to partner with the historic site to propagate offspring from the famous tree and make them available to anyone who wanted to plant them. Readers can learn more about American Heritage Trees at <https://americanheritagetrees.org>.

Visitors can see the Sam Davis White Oak along the drive west of the historic house.

0-0

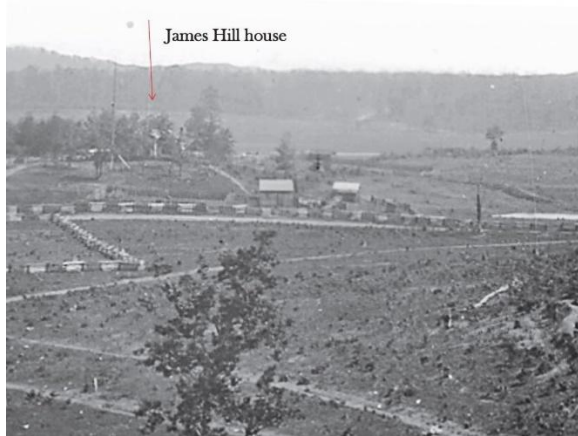
Resaca: A Battlefield in Pictures

Tony Patton, February 5, 2024,
blueandgrayeducation.org

The Battle of Resaca, which took place on May 14–15, 1864, in Gordon County, Georgia, represented the first major engagement of Union general William T. Sherman's Atlanta Campaign. The Union army suffered around 2,800 casualties, as did Confederate forces led by Gen. Joseph E. Johnston. The following photographs, some taken by official army photographer George Barnard, represent the town from wartime to the present day.



George Barnard took this photograph of Resaca in 1866 and included it in his book, Photographic Views of Sherman's Campaign. These Confederate works were the last line of defense on the outskirts of town, occupied by Leonidas Polk's corps during the battle. National Archives



This is the same photo as above, zoomed in to show the James Hill house. According to the 1860 census for Resaca, James W. Hill, originally from Texas, was a 36-year-old merchant with a personal estate value of \$11,500. He shows up in several postwar claims as a witness for folks who were trying to receive payment for losses associated with the war (such as lost fence rails, livestock, and personal property), making him a loyal Union man.

During the Civil War, both sides used the house: the Confederates as headquarters before the battle, and by the 115th Illinois Infantry as headquarters while they garrisoned Resaca afterward. National Archives



Rafter damage by an artillery shell in the dining room of the James Hill house. Period accounts report that most of the buildings in Resaca had been perforated by Union artillery fire. Relic hunters have recovered lots of shrapnel from the hilltop years ago.

Records don't show exactly when the house was built, but it stood up to 30 years before 1860. Construction was the method of joining, mortising, and pegging, with the use of square nails. The ceilings and wall planks were handplaned. The framing was sawed and undressed, and the sills were handhewn. | courtesy of the author



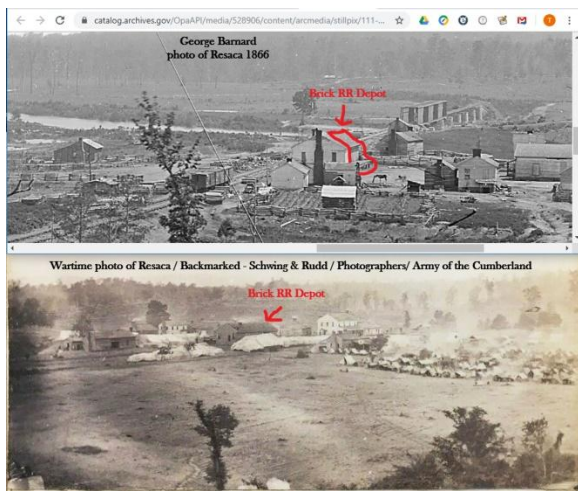
The James Hill house photographed in the 1930s by Wilbur Kurtz. It was purchased by Joseph Walker of Atlanta and moved to the Buckhead area north of Atlanta, where it still stands today as a private residence. Atlanta History Center, Wilbur Kurtz Collection



An article discussing the history of the James Hill house



The site of the railroad depot today. The town fire department building sits on the site of the depot. courtesy of the author

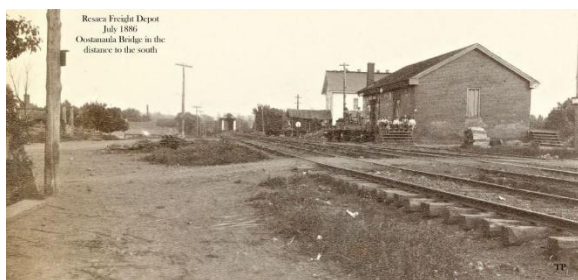


Barnard photographed the town in 1866 (above), in comparison with a wartime photograph, taken from the east looking toward town (below). The railroad depot, outlined in both photos, was destroyed by fire in July 1914. National Archives, Army of the Cumberland



Resaca Battlefield Historic Site today encompasses much of the historic town. courtesy of the author

0-0



Built in the 1850s, the Western & Atlantic Freight Depot at Resaca would be witness to the Battle of Resaca. This photograph was taken in 1886. U.S. Army Heritage and Education Center