

The Gurley Family Confederates

by

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Hideaway, Texas

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There were ten members of the Gurley family of Georgia who were in the Army of the Confederate States of America. Most of them were from rural Coweta County. They joined the Army when it became obvious that their homeland was being invaded by a hostile and destroying force.

On March 4, 1862, three family members joined the Army during the formation of Company D of the 41st Georgia Infantry Regiment. They were Pvt. David Gurley, his son Pvt. Jesse G. Gurley, and his nephew, Pvt. Mathew P. Gurley. Their active service started with training on March 15th at Camp McDonald, adjacent to Big Shanty (present day Kennesaw). After a short time there, the 41st was transported in April to northern Mississippi near Corinth.

In September, after several skirmishes in Mississippi, they headed for Kentucky. There, they were heavily involved in the Battle of Perryville on Oct. 8, 1862. Mathew was mortally wounded that day, and died on Nov. 1st in a nearby hospital.

The 41st Georgia returned to Mississippi where they participated in several more skirmishes. Then they went to Vicksburg for the defense of that strategically important city. After a 47 day siege by the Federals, the city and its defenders were forced to surrender on July 4, 1863. The 41st Georgia with the remaining two Gurleys, now prisoners, were paroled and exchanged on July 6th. A copy of David Gurley's parole

paper has survived the years and is the only known artifact from his Confederate service.

After re-consolidation of the units of the regiments, they were moved to Tennessee for the defense of Chattanooga, Lookout Mountain, and Missionary Ridge. After the disastrous Battle of Missionary Ridge on Nov. 25, 1863, Gen. Bragg withdrew the entire Confederate Army of Tennessee to Dalton, Georgia.

During the first half of 1864, the 41st fought in a number of north Georgia battles. These included Rocky Face Ridge, Resaca, New Hope Church, Kolb's Farm, and Kennesaw Mountain. During the Kennesaw Battle on June 27th, Jesse G. Gurley was shot in the left hand, rendering it useless the rest of his life; but he survived. There was now only one Gurley, David, left in service of the 41st Georgia.

Soon (on July 3rd) after Kennesaw Mountain, the 41st and the rest of Stovall's Brigade took up positions on the extensive six mile long Smyrna Defense Line. On July 4, 1864 (one year to the day after the Vicksburg surrender), the 41st participated in one of the two battles of Smyrna....the one on the western end of the Smyrna Line near Ruff's Mill. The other engagement was directly in the center of the Line in the small town of Smyrna. Both defensive engagements were victories for the Confederates, but like all battles, there were casualties: in total, 370 for the Federals and 100 for the Confederates. Gen. Sherman came close to getting killed in Smyrna as a bullet cut through his hat as he was reconnoitering near the action front.

During the night of July 5th, the Federals were starting to flank the Smyrna line and Gen Johnson ordered a withdrawal to the last defense line before Atlanta, the very elaborate Chattahoochee River Line. Again, the Federals began flanking that Line and crossing the river at

other locations. On the night of July 9-10, Gen. Johnston withdrew his whole Army to the Atlanta side of the river. Since there was no serious fighting at the River Line defensive position, the Battle of Ruff's Mill on the Smyrna Line was the last before the several Atlanta battles. It was also the last for Gen. Hood as Corps Commander for the 41st Georgia as he was promoted on July 17th to Commander of the entire Army of Tennessee.

In the Atlanta area, the 41st fought in the Battles of Peachtree Creek (July 20), Atlanta (July 22), and Ezra Church (July 28). In the final days of fighting before the Confederate abandonment of Atlanta (believed to be during the battles around Jonesboro, Aug. 28 – Sep. 1, 1864), David Gurley was mortally wounded and died a few days later. The 41st Georgia soldiered on for the first time in its two-and-a-half-year existence without a Gurley family member on duty. They fought in the final battles in Tennessee that winter. After those disasters, the remains of the 41st were consolidated with the Georgia 40th and 43rd and fought on in North Carolina where they were eventually left stranded on April 26, 1865, after surrendering as the war ended.

This was not the end of the tragic Gurley family story, however. Cpl. William L. Gurley, a cousin of David and a member of Co. G in the 52nd Georgia, died of wounds in an army hospital in Atlanta on June 30, 1863. He is buried in the Confederate section of Oakland Cemetery. Another of David's sons, James W. Gurley, served in the 26th Alabama and died of wounds in Richmond, Virginia, in June 1862. A nephew, James T. N. Gurley of the 13th Georgia Partisan Rangers, died of wounds March 7, 1864, in Atlanta. Another nephew, Henry Gurley of the 39th Alabama, was severely wounded but lived. Three more of David's nephews served and survived the war. They were Jacob E.

Gurley of the 70th Georgia and David and Hiram Gurley both of Terrell's (Georgia) Artillery.

The Gurley Family of Georgia served in large numbers, faithfully and bravely. Of the ten men in this account, five were killed and two others suffered terrible wounds that they dealt with for the rest of their lives. They and their families supported, suffered, and sacrificed very much for the Confederate States of America. I am very proud to be directly related to David Gurley and his son Jesse, and indirectly related to all the others

This poem, published in the Macon *Telegraph and News*, during the darkest days of the War in Georgia, seems a short and appropriate elegy for the Gurley Confederates:

**Fairwell each noble Georgian
son,
Our hearts for you still sigh –
While freedom's triumph will
be won,
Your names shall never die.**

This paper is based on and is an update of an article, *The Gurley Confederates of Coweta County*, **Confederate Veteran** magazine, July/August 2004, by J.S. Gibson. He was a long time resident of Atlanta & Smyrna, GA, and a Lockheed retiree, now living in NE Texas.

The Gurley Confederates

1. David Gurley Pvt 41st GA Mortally Wounded Jonesboro
Died Nearby
2. Jesse G. Gurley (son)* Pvt 41st GA Severely Wounded Kennesaw Mtn.
Survived
3. Mathew P. Gurley (nephew) Pvt 41st GA Mortally Wounded Perryville
Died in nearby Hosp.
4. William L. Gurley (cousin) Cpl 52nd GA Mortally Wounded Mississippi ?
Died in Atlanta Hosp.
Oakland Cem.
5. James W. Gurley (son) Pvt? 26th ALA Mortally Wounded In Virginia
Died in Richmond
6. James T.N. Gurley (nephew) Pvt? 13th GA Partisan Rangers Unknown
Mortally Wounded Died in Atlanta
7. Henry Gurley (nephew) Pvt? 39th ALA Severely Wounded Unknown
Survived
8. Jacob E. Gurley (nephew) Pvt? 70th GA Survived Unknown
9. David Gurley (nephew) Pvt? Terrell's GA Artillery Survived Unknown
10. Hiram Gurley (nephew) Pvt? Terrell's GA Artillery Survived Unknown

* Notations son, nephew, cousin refers to
relationship to number 1. David Gurley.

VICKSBURG, MISSISSIPPI, JULY 6 A. D. 1863.

TO ALL WHOM IT MAY CONCERN, KNOW YE THAT:

I, *David Purby*, a *Private* of *Co. B, 41st Regt. Georgia*
Vols., C. S. A., being a Prisoner of War, in the hands of the United States Forces, in virtue of the
capitulation of the City of Vicksburg and its Garrison, by Lieut. Gen. John C. Pemberton, C. S. A.,
Commanding, on the 4th day of July, 1863, do in pursuance of the terms of said capitulation, give
this my solemn parole under oath—

That I will not take up arms again against the United States, nor serve in any military, po-
lice, or constabulary force in any Fort, Garrison or field work, held by the Confederate States of
America, against the United States of America, nor as guard of prisons, depots or stores, nor
discharge any duties usually performed by soldiers against the United States of America until
duly exchanged by the proper authorities.

David Purby.....

Sworn to and subscribed before me at Vicksburg, Miss., this *6th* day of July, 1863.

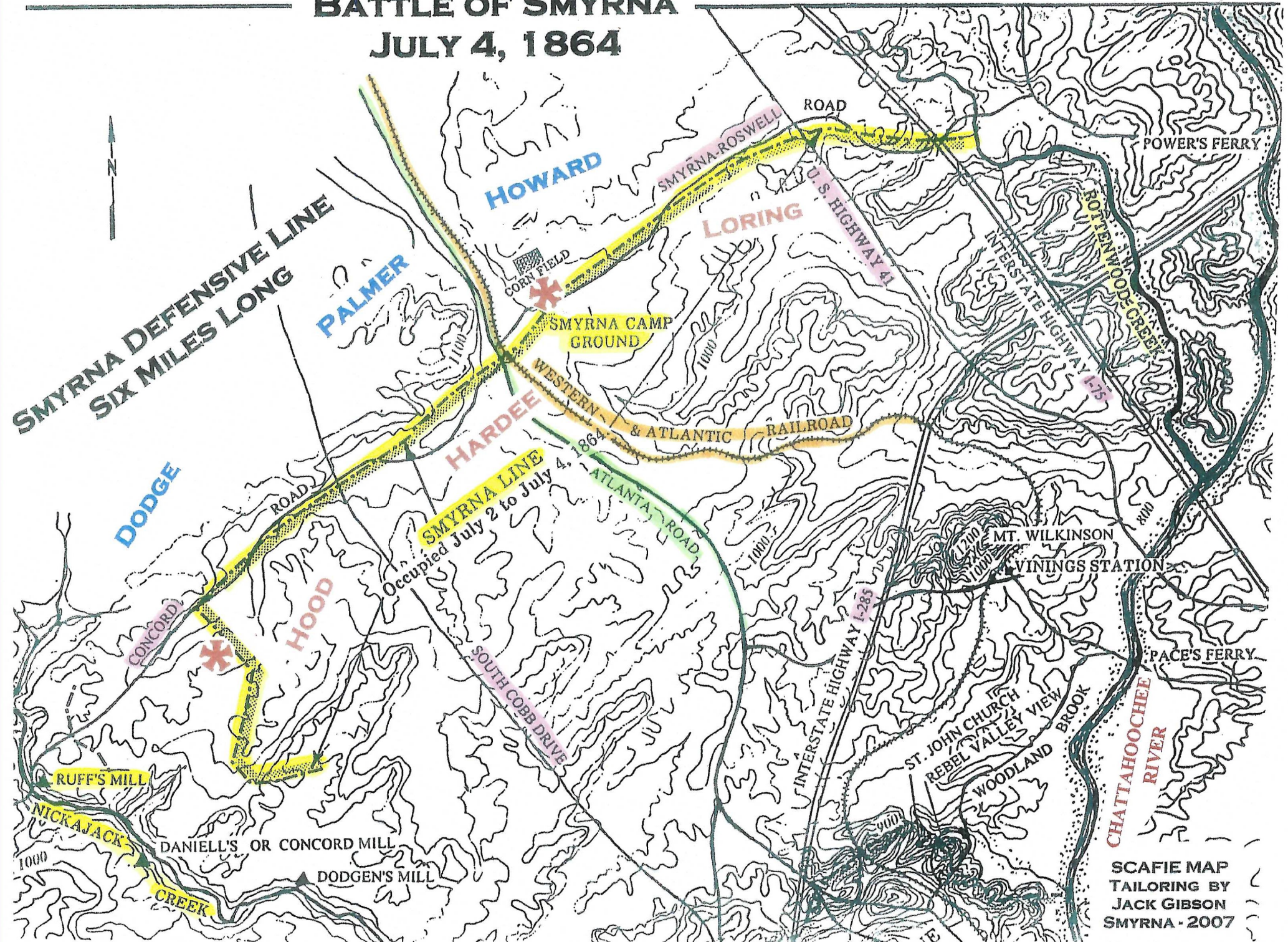
John C. Gray *20th* Regt *Ohio* Vols.
AND PAROLING OFFICER



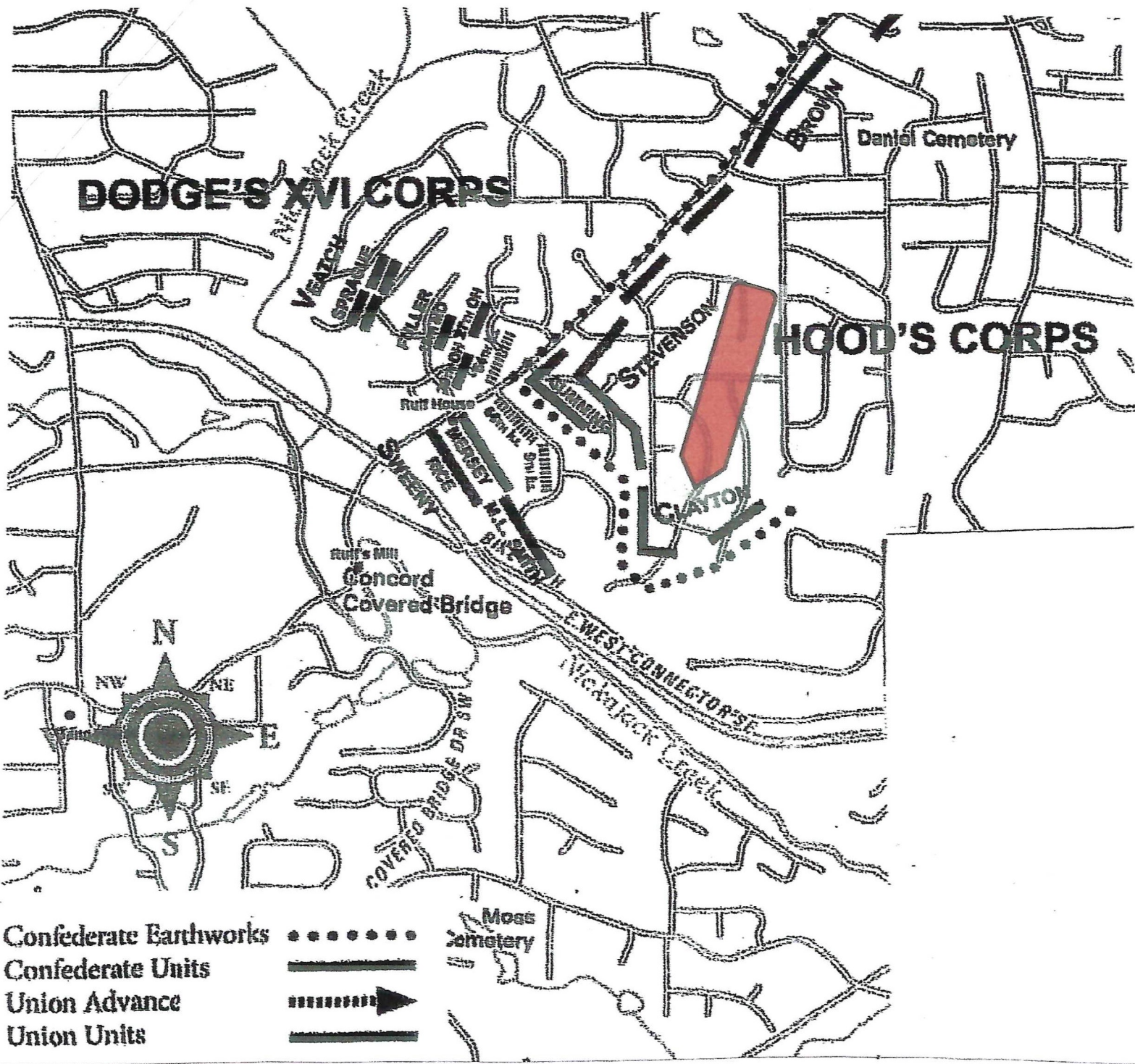
Oakland Cemetery, Confederate Section – Atlanta, Georgia

BATTLE OF SMYRNA

JULY 4, 1864



SCAFIE MAP
TAILORING BY
JACK GIBSON
SMYRNA - 2007



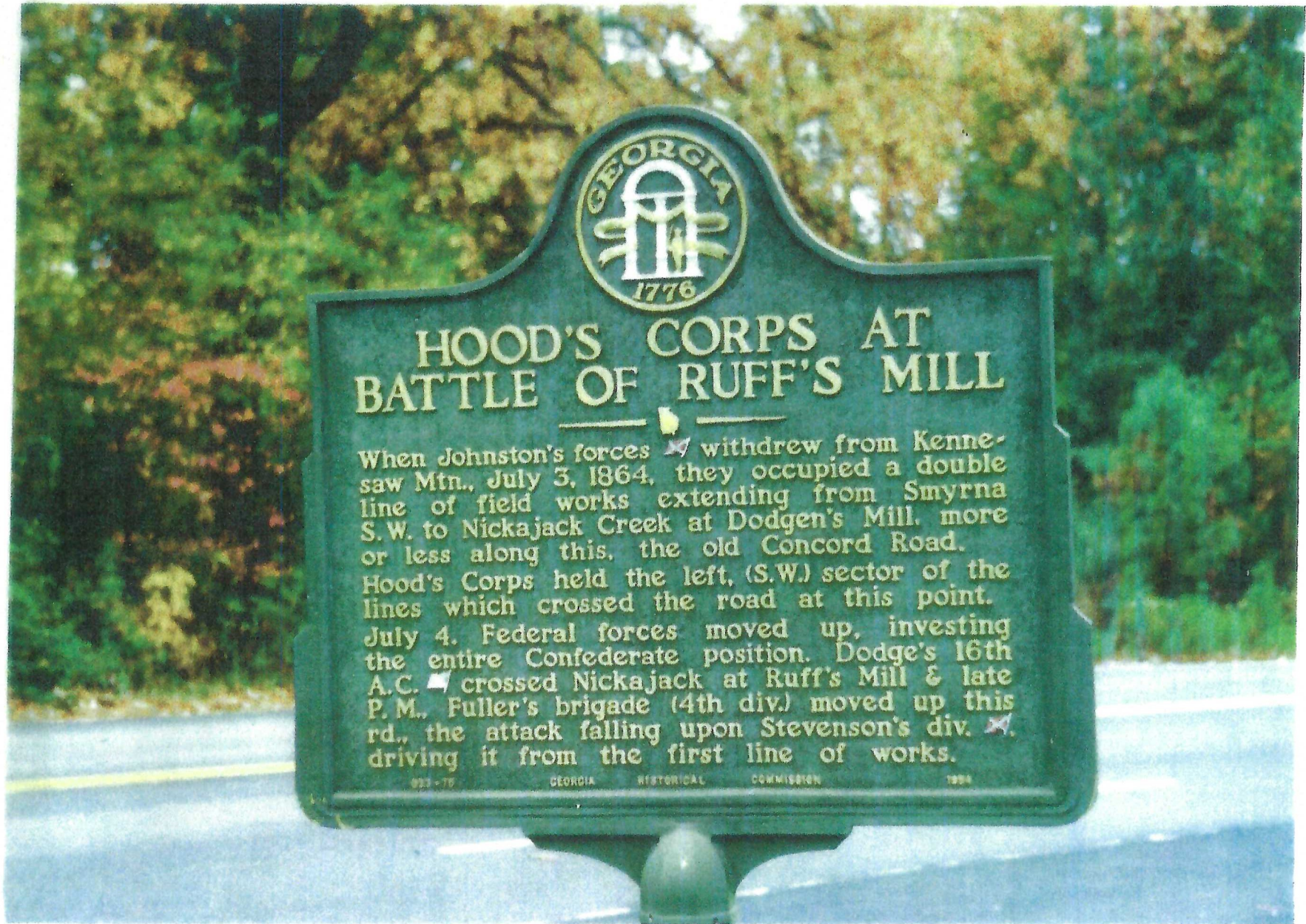
Smyrna Battle of Ruff's Mill

July 4, 1864

Location of Clayton's Div., Stovall's Brigade

Jenkins' Map, 2015

JSG Coloration



Historic Marker on Concord Road near the Wooden Covered Bridge over Nickajack Creek and the site of Ruff's Mill – Smyrna, Georgia