

Kettle Creek battle site expands with KCBA's 60-acre purchase

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The purchase of 60 acres, outlined in black, is the first extension of the Kettle Creek Battlefield site in a century. Wilkes County's best-known Revolutionary War battle site has expanded for the first time in nearly a century after officers of the Kettle Creek Battlefield Association purchased more than 60 acres adjacent to the present site, expanding the size of the battlefield park to some 75 acres total.

Last Tuesday, January 14, KCBA President Walker Chewning, Board Chairman Joe Harris, Treasurer Tom Owen, and Secretary Amanda Aycock met in Thomson to sign the contract to purchase 60+ acres from Plum Creek Timber Company. "This will increase the size of the Kettle Creek Battlefield Park to 75 acres total," Chewning said. "We've just

been out to walk around the new property, and it's a pretty piece of land, a nice place for walking trails among the pines."

With the completion of the closing, the title to the new acreage was conveyed to Wilkes County.

This is the first time in almost 100 years that this historic park has been expanded, Chewning said, and it is the beginning of the effort to create an even larger historic and recreational park at the site. "Past studies have shown that a larger park with recreational areas, better parking, restroom facilities, trails, and historic signage will attract significant tourism to the city of Washington, to Wilkes County, and to the surrounding area."

The benefits will also be educational, he said. "An expanded and improved Kettle Creek Battlefield Park is expected not only to have a beneficial effect on the local economy, it will provide greater educational opportunities for the citizens of the state of Georgia to learn about the significance of the Battle of Kettle Creek in the American Revolution."

The expansion has been years in the making. "More than ten years ago, the Georgia Society Sons of the American Revolution began conducting a wreath-laying ceremony at the monument on War Hill," Chewning said. "Since that time, the Battle of Kettle Creek celebration on the second weekend of February has become a three-day event which includes a parade, militia skirmish, and living history characters, all of which delight of hundreds of spectators and participants of all ages who visit Wilkes County during the celebration."

Serious academic study has also increased in recent years, making the expansion possible. "In 2008, archaeologists with the Lamar Institute conducted a battlefield survey which culminated in the publication of the book *Stirring Up a Hornet's Nest*," Chewning said. "During the study, not

only were many artifacts found that dated back to 1779, the study also determined the location of the core area of the battlefield and laid the groundwork for another study conducted in 2013 by the CSRA Regional Commission. With the co-operation of the Kettle Creek Battlefield Association, founded in February 2011, and the Wilkes County Commissioners, this study produced the Kettle Creek Battlefield Park Master Plan, published in April 2013.

In July 2013, the KCBA began the effort to raise funds to be used to purchase additional acreage adjacent to the existing battlefield site. “The KCBA board members reached out to individuals and organizations who had a similar interest in American history and the preservation of historical sites,” Chewning said. “The enthusiasm for this effort was overwhelming. The KCBA received substantial contributions from organizations such as the Georgia Society Children of the American Revolution, individual chapters of the Georgia Society Daughters of the American Revolution, the Georgia Society of the Sons of the American Revolution, and many individual chapters of the GASSAR, as well as over 200 individuals from around the country. With this strong support, the KCBA was able to raise sufficient funds to make a purchase offer to the land owner, Plum Creek Timber Company.”

The land acquisition is expected to be celebrated at the annual KCBA banquet, which this year is open to all Wilkes County residents. The dinner, during which the Sons and Daughters of the American Revolution will celebrate the 234th anniversary of the battle, is set for Friday, February 7, at 6:30 p.m., at the Pope Center, with a reception beginning at 5 p.m. The cost of the dinner is \$30, and reservations should be made by January 31. Contact Walker Chewning at 678-409-4644 for more information.