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Volume 11 Issue 1

# Snellville Historical Society

*To Research, Document and Publicize the History of Snellville and the Snellville Community*

## **The War Between the States The Sesquicentennial April 12, 1861—April 9, 1865**

1830 to 1860 were growth years for Gwinnett county, and farming was the principal industry. Land was inexpensive and slave labor allowed many landowners to become wealthy.

The census of 1860 indicated that the Cates district was one of Gwinnett's most populous. There were 216 taxpayers. 38 of the residents were slave owners. The Cates district had twenty plantations of more than five hundred acres. J.W. Plummer had 725 acres, John Bankston—686, James S. Russell—876, Daniel M. Byrd—1300, W.B. Roberts—850, Wm. Baugh—560, David Thomas—725, W.D. Byrd—680, Wylie W. Webb—2950, Levi Cooper—1750, M.J. Cochran—675, Robt. Echols—1670, Jas. Flowers—923, Thos. P. Hudson—562, A.G. Holmes—1000, Levi Loveless—650, Jas. Lanier—730, Jas. McDaniel—630, Lewis Nash—535, and Benj. O'Kelley—725.

Although there were many well-to-do people in the Cates district in 1860, there were 149 residents who paid one dollar or less in taxes.

The use of slaves was a controversial subject for citizens of the United States. The south did not want the federal government to restrict their right to do as they chose regarding the use of slaves, and the election of Abraham Lincoln as President for a second term convinced the southerners there would be much control from the Federal government.

The topic of secession was discussed everywhere,

and in November 1860 the Georgia legislature passed a resolution that required each county to elect delegates to meet in Milledgeville the third week in January 1861 to decide if the state of Georgia would secede from the Union. Gwinnett elected as its delegates James P. Simmons, Richard D. Winn and Thomas J.P. Hudson.

An ordinance of secession was introduced at the Milledgeville meeting, but Gwinnett's delegates voted against it. The vote was 208 to 89 for leaving the union. After the vote, James Simmons introduced an ordinance in which he pledged his loyalty to the defense of Georgia if there is hostile invasion from any source.

Eleven slave states decided to secede from the Union. The first state to leave was South Carolina on December 20, 1860. In January of 1861 the following states followed, South Carolina, Mississippi, Florida, Alabama, Georgia and Louisiana, and later in 1861 Texas, Virginia, Arkansas, North Carolina and Tennessee seceded. They called themselves The Confederate States of America. In Kentucky and Missouri secessionist groups set up separate state governments although they stayed in the Union. These two states sent representatives to the Confederate Congress and for that reason they were stars twelve and thirteen on the Confederate flag. Delaware and Maryland were slave states, but they remained in the Union.

The war began April 12, 1861 when Confederate soldiers fired on Fort Sumter in Charleston harbor.

It is not known how long it took the news of the battle at Fort Sumter to reach the citizens of Gwinnett. In 1858 a newspaper was established in Lawrenceville, but it is not known how often it was published or when it first received the news that fighting had begun.

Military companies were formed in the county. Company B 42<sup>nd</sup> Infantry was the only one formed in the southern part of the county. They left the Yellow River on March 10, 1862, and later that day they arrived at Camp McDonald, Georgia. They next went to Knoxville, Tennessee, and on to Cumberland Gap



Capt Benjamin P. Weaver

The officers were Captain Benjamin P. Weaver, who was the son-in-law of Thomas Mc Guire; 1<sup>st</sup> Lieutenant Andrew Ford; 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant Wm. H. Williams; 3<sup>rd</sup> Lieutenant Wm. P. Donaldson; 1<sup>st</sup> Sergeant Jesse S. Bryan; 2<sup>nd</sup> Sergeant James Garner; 3<sup>rd</sup> Sergeant Wm. W. Russell; 4<sup>th</sup> Sergeant Wm. S. Starr; 1<sup>st</sup> Corporal Thomas McCart; 2<sup>nd</sup> Corporal J.C. Crow; 3<sup>rd</sup> Corporal James M. Henry; 4<sup>th</sup> Corporal Joseph A. Hannah.

There were over one hundred privates.

The company was stationed at various locations in Mississippi and was engaged in a fight at Chickasaw Bayou, Mississippi. They received much praise for their performance in that battle. They left Decatur, Georgia on October 2, 1863 and joined General Bragg's army at Chicomauca, Georgia on October 4. The company was engaged in the Battle of Atlanta May 1, 1864 to

1st corporal  
Thomas McCart



Lt. Wm. Henry Williams

September 8, 1864.

Lieutenant Wm. H. Williams maintained a record of all of the men in the company.

The book contains each soldier's record of charges for uniform needs. The following is the account of three soldiers in 1864:

D.W. Clower		
February 16	one coat	\$14.00
February 2	one pair of shoes	\$10.00
June 8	one pair of pants	\$12.00
J.W. Clower		
March 13	one pair of drawers	\$3.00
J.R. Britt		
February 9	one shirt	\$3.00
February 16	one pair of pants	\$12.00
January 19	one hat	\$2.00
January 25	one coat	\$14.00
February 9	one shirt	\$3.00
April 19	one pair of pants	\$12.00
April 19	one pair of drawers	\$3.00

Letters written by the soldiers gave insight to the conditions the men endured. The following is the final letter Captain B.P. Weaver wrote to his family. His wife was the daughter of Thomas McGuire.

Dear Wife and Children:

*Having stopped to rest I will spend the time in writing you a line. We left our camp near Manchester yesterday morning at 9 o'clock and had a hard day's march as I ever made. The ground was covered about one inch with snow and had frozen, but thawed a little today. We made 14 miles by sunset. Camped where the snow was about four inches deep. Scratched around old logs and then piled in fence rails to lay on and make a fire. It is against orders to burn rails, but we had to do that or freeze. We burned about 500 panels during the night. We are marching in a northwest direction from Manchester. I don't know where we are going to, reports say to Murphreesborough. It looks hard to march good men in such weather. Some of my men*

*are barefooted. I could see the tears trickling down some of their faces this morning, caused by the pain from cold, but not a murmur escaped them. I think we are seeing some hardships that will equal those of our forefathers in the old revolution; but if we can liberate our country and once more see it free, we will be satisfied to endure still more. We have marched about eight miles today and are waiting for the ground to freeze again, as it has thawed enough today to cause it to be so slick that we get lots of hard falls. My feet and ankles have been so stiff that I have but little use of myself. I have taken several hard falls today that hurt me a little. This country here is very mountainous and rough; but few inhabitants living here, no roads. My health is much better than it has been.*

*I would like to hear from home very much, but we will get no mail until we stop again. I wrote to you and your Pa acknowledging and giving the acct. of two letters from you. I hope Mary is well before this. I slept but little last night, it was so very cold I could not sleep. My men are lying around me on the snow fast asleep while I write. I can't help feeling sorry for them when I look on their toil-worn faces as they lie unconscious. Mr. Crolley gave out this morning on the road and has not come up yet. I must close.*

*Goodbye, my dear wife and children, B.P. Weaver*

*(Captain Weaver was killed at Franklin, Tennessee November 30, 1864.)*

Two men with Gwinnett County Cates district connections who volunteered for Company H 16<sup>th</sup> Georgia Infantry called The Flint Hill Greys were Eli Landers whose family farm was near Lilburn and Thomas P. Cofer who was Mrs. Gladstone Snell's father.

In the 1960s, letters written by Eli Landers were found and compiled into a book entitled *Weep Not For Me, Dear Mother*. This book gives much information about the life of a Confederate Soldier. Eli died on October 27, 1863. The military record states he died of disease, but letters indicate that he probably died of typhoid. According to his wishes he was buried at Sweetwater Chapel.

The Snell family has copies of documents regarding the capture of Thomas Cofer at Russellville, Tennessee on March 10, 1864. He was sent to Military prison at Louisville, Kentucky on May 17, 1864, and he was involved in a prisoner exchange in 1865.

James Washington Rutledge has extensive family connections to the Cates district. He was born August 16, 1830 and married Isabella Williams, the daughter of William Pittman Williams. He volunteered for Company I, 55<sup>th</sup> Infantry, and was captured at Cumberland Gap, Tennessee when 2500 Confederate troops were starved into surrender after Knoxville, Tennessee fell.

These Company I, 55<sup>th</sup> Infantry soldiers were taken to Camp Douglas located in Chicago near Lake Michigan. It had the highest mortality rate of any of the Union Civil War prisons. It is reported that one in five prisoners died. Confederate soldiers starved to death as food rations were withheld. To discourage escapes, the prisoners were deprived of clothing. Many wore sacks with head and armholes cut out. Blankets were taken from the few men that had them, and the weakest men froze to death.

James Rutledge contracted scurvy while at Camp Douglas and never recovered, but he lived nine years after returning home from the War. At his death he was blind and crippled. His wife buried him in the William Pittman Williams family cemetery on Springdale Drive in Snellville. On his headstone is the following inscription: "*Rest soldier rest, thy warfare is over.*"



**Sandra Pate Sorrow with Chap. Wm. Haslett's Bible**

Sandra Pate Sorrow is the owner of a Bible carried by Chaplain William Haslett for the 21<sup>st</sup> Georgia Regiment. He resigned his position on August 18, 1863.

Clark Britt's great, great grandfather Levi T. Deaton volunteered for Company H., 35<sup>th</sup> Infantry at its organization at Hog Mountain September 24,

1861. He was captured at Gettysburg, Pennsylvania on July 3, 1863 and held a prisoner at Point Lookout, Maryland until February 13, 1865 when he was paroled for exchange.



Pinkston Willis Clark Britt 1865

Gwinnett county was not the setting for any major battles of the war, but during the Battle of Atlanta many Union soldiers came into the county. There were small skirmishes, but the main objective of the enemy when in Gwinnett was foraging for food. Since most of the Confederate soldiers

were assigned to locations other than Gwinnett County, the Union soldiers found the home guard awaiting them. The home guard was composed of men who were too old to be on active duty and young men who were not old enough to serve.

The union soldiers took anything they could use, and destroyed and burned anything they could not take with them. The only documented destruction committed by the Yankees was in the diary of Thomas McGuire who had the large plantation called The Promised Land. After confiscating all of the food on the plantation, they burned all of the dependencies but did not burn the big house. At times when the soldiers were on the property Mr. McGuire and his sons hid in the woods for several weeks at a time.

The main objective of the Yankee soldiers was to destroy rails and bridges and to acquire needed supplies. At that time Gwinnett County had no rails so the soldiers did not remain in the county for long. If they saw bales of cotton, they burned them.

Wiley Webb who was a large landowner that lived in the Rosebud Community lost all of his stock, cattle, hogs and sheep. He had 300 bales of cotton that the Yankees burned.

At the surrender at Appomattox on April 9, 1865, General Grant agreed for the Confederate soldiers to receive one day's rations and to be released on parole. They were allowed to keep their horses, and officers were allowed to keep their sidearms.

When the war ended, men walked home. Some families report that their relative walked as far as one thousand miles.

Over 500 Gwinnett County men died during the war. Many died of disease because of the living conditions they faced. This was a great loss for the county. Half of the wealth of the county was lost during the Civil War. Everyone had to start again. There were no more plantations only small farms.

After the War, Federal soldiers were stationed in the county for the purpose of supervising elections. The presence of these men was greatly resented by the citizens. It was during the era from 1870 to 1890 that the Klu Klux Klan was formed. This came about primarily because the Yankee soldiers elevated the rights of the freed blacks. The soldiers supervised the blacks' work with white people and furnished them with food and clothing. The southerners became particularly enraged when the soldiers tried to elevate the black man's social and political status so that he would be equal to the white population.

In 1870 Georgia was readmitted to the Union.



Surrender at Appomattox

Sources:

*History of Gwinnett County Georgia 1818-1943—J.C. Flanigan*

*History of Gwinnett County Georgia 1818-1993—Marvin Nash Worthy*

*Gwinnett: A Little above Atlanta—Elliott E. Brack*  
*About Lawrenceville—Mary Frazier Long*

*The World Book Encyclopedia*

*The World Wide Web*

*Family documents*

*Editor's note:*

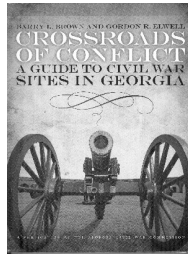
*In researching for this article it was noted that there was a variation in the spelling of Thomas McGuire's name. His son-in-law spelled it Thomas McGuire, but on some of the early documents it is spelled Maguire. Current descendents spell the last name McGuire.*

**Some Thoughts from**



**President  
Emmett Clower**

The spring meeting of our Historical Society is scheduled for April 10th at 2:30 at Snellville City Hall. In remembrance that this is the sesquicentennial of the Civil War, our speaker will be Barry Brown who with Gordon Elwell authored the book *Crossroads of Conflict: A Guide to Civil War Sites in Georgia*. His book will be available for purchase.



There will be Civil War memorabilia on display. If you have items you would be willing to share and so that we have enough tables prepared, call Carolyne Kirkland at 770-972-4729 or call the office

Monday or Friday from 10:00–12:00 at 770-985-3512.

On May 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> the city of Snellville will host the 38<sup>th</sup> Snellville Days Festival. The theme this year is *Bringing Families Together*. The Snellville



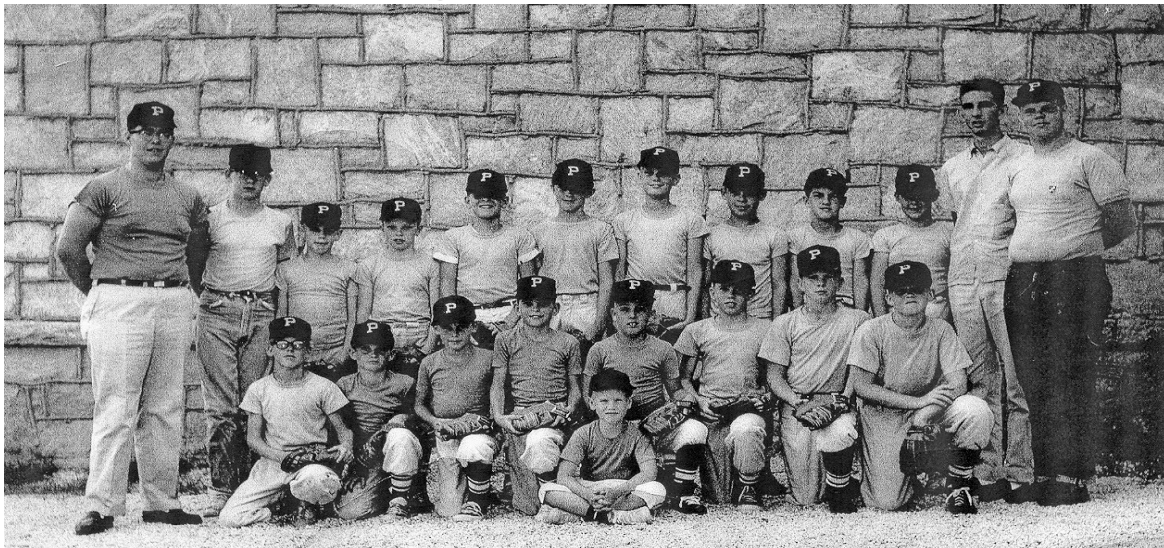
**Jerry Waldrip with his baskets**

Historical Society will again have a display at the Courtland Williams Building, and this year we are fortunate to have Jerry Waldrip demonstrating his ability as a master craftsman basket weaver. In addition to weaving baskets, he also weaves chair bottoms. Mr. Waldrip will have baskets for sale. Come by and learn more about Snellville history and how beautiful baskets are made.

I look forward to seeing you on April 10<sup>th</sup>!

Emmett

## Little League Comes To Snellville



**The Pirates in 1961**

**Standing:** Johnny Pate, manager; Dan Pate-coach, John Hancock, Jimmy Jackson, Jimmy Buchanan, John Williams, Jewett Clower, Zachery Foster, Jeff Davis, Ronald Pate, Tommy Roberts-asst. manager, and Woody Clower-asst. manager  
**Kneeling:** Al Webster, Hoyt Stancil, Hugh Snell, Steven Nash, Tony McCart, Art Stancil, Joel Jackson and Johnny Nash  
**Sitting in front:** Jeffrey Clower, the bat boy

## **Little League Comes to Snellville**

**By Johnny Pate**

The first little league team in Snellville was in 1961. I received a call from a representative from the Lawrenceville Little League who asked if I was interested in getting a team together and playing in the minor league. We got a team together and called ourselves the Pirates. In 1962, our second year, now known as the Mets, we won all 16 games.

After such a successful year we began work to start a League in Snellville with four teams, and we played behind the old school. This was the beginning of the South Gwinnett Athletic Association. Earl Snell was the President.

If we were going to grow, we needed fields on which to play. Earl, Ronald Chadwick and myself went to see Mr. Harvey Ewing, Jr. about some land he owned on McGee Road. Mr. Ewing agreed to donate one or two acres on condition that the land would go back to his family if the league did not make it.

Mr. E.R. Snell graded the land and Walton Electric donated the lights. The community helped us acquire the equipment we needed from the catcher's equipment to uniforms. Each of the players furnished items needed.

In 1962 we received a trophy for our accomplishments. Joel Jackson who was the MVP that year now owns it.

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## **Gwinnett County 100 Years Ago**

### ***An Old Soldier Tells Experience Recalls Times of the Early Sixties, but Says the Grandest Warfare Is to Be A Soldier in Christ's Kingdom***

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Editor News Herald: I often see something in the newspapers about the old soldiers. I am a confederate soldier. I was in the Virginia army and enlisted in company A, 18 Georgia Regiment. That regiment was in Wofford's brigade and was made a battalion of sharpshooters, Judge Hutchins being our colonel. He was good and kind to his men and we all loved him.

I often meet old soldiers. We all had the same experience. There are not very many old soldiers now. They will soon all be gone. I could not describe how

we had to suffer during the war. I am thankful my life was spared. I have been in ill health nearly since the war. I have had a sad experience on account of sickness and death in family. I lost my first wife. My present wife is the mother of ten children and five of them are dead. I can sympathize with those who have had sickness and death in the family.

We old soldiers were engaged in what was called a civil war and made very great sacrifice for our country but the greatest warfare we can engage in is to be a soldier. The banner in this warfare is peace on earth and good will to all men, and love, mercy and truth and deal justly with all mankind and have a Samaritan heart. I am glad I often meet with a good many old soldiers who say they are living for a better life than this. A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things, and an evil man out of evil treasure bringeth forth evil things.

George A. Smith  
Carl, Ga.

*News Herald May 8, 1911*



## Civil War Food

Feeding the troops was the responsibility of the Commissary Department. The North had a greater advantage at providing the needs of the troops than did the South because their commissary system was already set up when the war began. The South struggled with getting food to their troops throughout the war. The meats were salted or smoked and the fruits and vegetables were dried or canned. Because it was so difficult to store food for the troops, the men had little variety.

The daily allotment of food the men received was called rations. Everything they received was uncooked.

The Confederate soldiers did not have as much variety in their rations as Union soldiers did. The Confederates usually received bacon and cornmeal, tea, sugar or molasses and when available, fresh vegetables. Bacon was cooked in a frying pan with water and cornmeal and it made a brown gravy that the soldiers called "coosh".

"Johnnie Cake" was a favorite side dish of the soldiers. It could be made as biscuit sized "dodgers" or fried in a skillet with hot oil.

The soldiers had to have cooking equipment. Two of the most frequently used pots were the 15 inch skillet and a Dutch oven. Both of these could be used over a campfire.

### "Johnnie Cake"

two cups of cornmeal  
2/3 cup of milk  
2 tablespoons of vegetable oil  
2 teaspoons baking soda  
½ teaspoon of salt

Mix ingredients into a stiff batter and form eight biscuit-sized "dodgers". Bake on a lightly greased sheet at 350° for twenty to twenty five minutes or until brown.

OR

Spoon the batter into hot cooking oil in a frying pan over a low flame. Remove the corn dodgers and let cool on a paper towel, spread with a little butter or molasses, and you have a real southern treat!

## *We Remember...*

*Snellville High School  
Alumni Deaths:*



**Alta Mae Chesser** who graduated in the class of 1948 died December 12, 2010.

**Rossie Ilabelle Johns** died December 30, 2010. She graduated in 1939.

On January 4, 2011, **Inez Wells Townsend** died. She graduated in the class of 1947.

**Boyd Lee**, who graduated in 1939, died February 25, 2011.

## *We Also Remember...*



**Lauri Jean Brown Wade** died November 29, 2010.

On January 20, 2011 **Dorothea Bennett Freeman** died.

**Hoyt Cates** died on January 26, 2011.

**Betty McMichael**, who was the city of Snellville's first clerk, died February 4, 2011.

**Tommie Mae Smith** died February 9, 2011.

On February 12, 2011 **James Ernest Stevens** died.

**Lucile Braden Brownlee** died on February 13, 2011.

On February 17, 2011 **Ralph Hewatt** died. He was 99 years old. Mr. Hewatt was an active member of the Snellville Lion's Club.

**Vera Lucille Kerlin Doss** died February 24, 2011.

**Dorothy Bruce Byrd** died March 13, 2011. She was a retired teacher in the Gwinnett County Public Schools, and from 1951–1957 she taught home economics at Snellville Consolidated School. When Snellville School closed, she continued her career at South Gwinnett High School until her retirement in 1983.





**Officers of the Snellville Historical Society**

President	Emmett Clower
Vice President	Jim Cofer
Secretary	Marlene Buchanan
Treasurer	Lynette Couch

**Directors at large**

Clark Britt  
Snell Buchanan  
Shirley Alexander Smith

**Annual Membership**

Individual \$15

Family \$25

**For information contact**

Emmett Clower at 770-972-9211

Or

Lynette Couch at 770-972-1457

**Snellville Historical Society Office Hours**

Snellville City Hall

Monday and Friday

10:00–12:00 noon

**For appointments at other times**

call Carolyne Kirkland at 770-972-4729

**Editorial Staff**

Editor: Sybil Pate Deacon—770-963-0216

Wayne and Gloria League

Carolyne and Nick Kirkland

Dick Deacon

**Snellville Historical Items for Sale:**

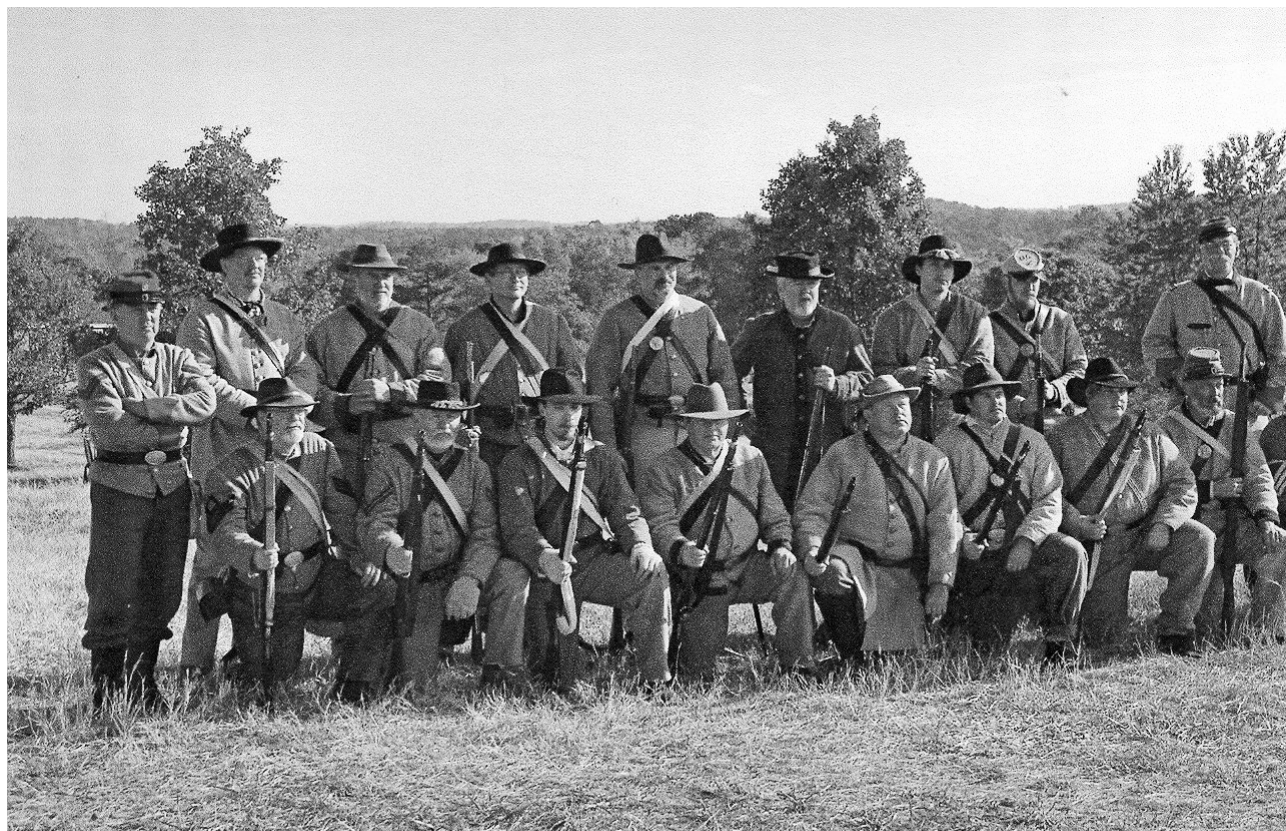
Historical afghans \$30  
Membership pins \$5

**Books:**

The Snellville Consolidated School \$45  
Crossroads of Conflict \$15  
*A Guide to Civil War Sites in Georgia*

**Media:**

A CD with all of our newsletters \$30  
that can be shown or printed on  
your computer  
A DVD containing a slide show \$45  
with about 700 of our Snellville  
historical photos and the Snellville High  
School annuals from 1947–1958 that can  
be shown on your TV



**The 42nd Georgia Volunteer Infantry Company B Civil War Reenactors**