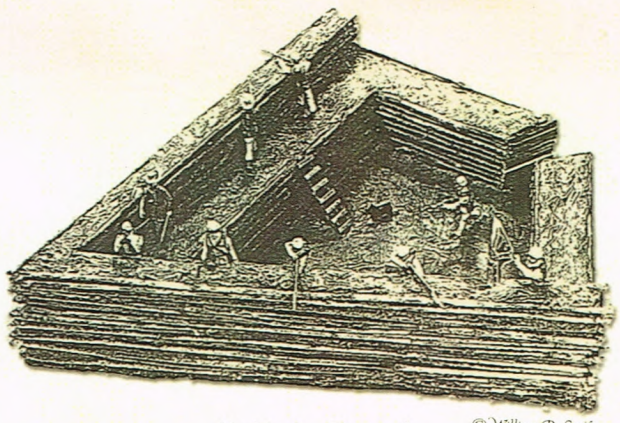
Living With History

Johnston's River Line, 1864

Welcome to Pulte Homes. Here you'll do more than enjoy an incredible home and superb community. You'll have a unique opportunity to live on a historic Civil War site. Named Johnston's River Line, this site played a significant role in the Atlanta Campaign of May to September 1864.



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Model of a Shoupade.
36 such forts made up the River Line.

THE FEDERAL ARMY PUSHES SOUTH

In mid 1864, Federal forces under Major General William T. Sherman had reached northern Georgia, and they began to push south. They were opposed by a Confederate army under the command of General Joseph E. Johnston. After a series of confrontations between the two forces, and subsequent withdrawals by the outnumbered Confederate army, General Johnston was approached by his chief of artillery, Brigadier General Francis A. Shoup. Shoup proposed to build a defensive line on the north bank of the Chattahoochee River. Should the Confederates have to retreat again, this line would protect the important road and rail crossings leading to Atlanta. Johnston agreed, and Shoup set to work.

A UNIQUE FORTIFICATION

Rather than construct the usual trenches and barricades, Shoup designed a totally new type of defensive line. From above, it resembled the cutting edge of a saw blade. At the point of each saw tooth was an arrowhead-shaped fort, 25 feet long and 15 feet high, that could hold about 80 riflemen. The trenches and log palisades connecting these forts receded towards the river until they met at an angle. At the angle were smaller works–called redans–that held two cannons. Shoup envisioned that any Federals attacking this line would be driven away from the forts by rifle fire and into the space between the forts, where artillery fire would sweep the field. Thirty-six of these arrowhead-shaped forts were constructed, and the fortification came to be known as Johnston's River Line.

THE "SHOUPADES" GAIN ATTENTION

As the Confederate troops marched into Shoup's defensive line and prepared to make a stand, many of the men were skeptical of the strange structures. But Major General Patrick Cleburne, perhaps the most respected division commander in the army, pronounced them excellent. Major General G.W. Smith proclaimed that they would make their designer famous, and he named the forts "Shoupades." Even the opposing commander was impressed. Sherman called them the strongest field fortifications he had ever seen. He deployed part of his forces in an opposing line, but he had no intention of attacking the defenses. Instead, he sent troops up river to find a place to bridge the Chattahoochee far away from the imposing forts. Flanked out of a position, Johnston withdrew his army from the River Line. The ingenious Shoupades had been abandoned without ever being tested.

PRESERVING THE HISTORIC SITES

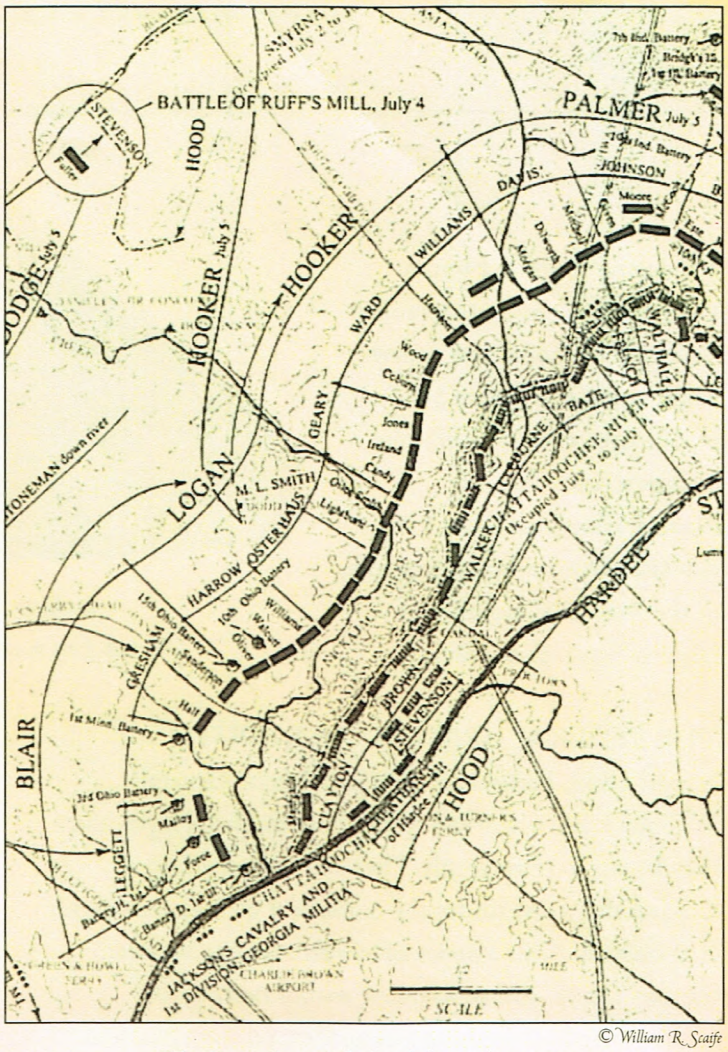
Of the 36 Shoupades that once formed such a daunting position, the earthen evidence of only nine remained as of 2006.

PARK AVENUE SITE

- Three of those nine–and the only remaining artillery redan–are along Fort Street, which was named for the unique fortifications.
- The arrowhead-shaped earthen remains of the first Shoupade sit along the southern property line of the community.
- Remains of a second Shoupade are in the green space south of Fort Street.
- Between the first and second Shoupades is the only remaining evidence of an artillery redan.
- Remains of a third Shoupade are located along the eastern property line of the community.

REGENCY AT RIVERLINE CROSSING SITE

- Evidence of rifle pits and more earthwork remains are located in two separate areas just inside the community.



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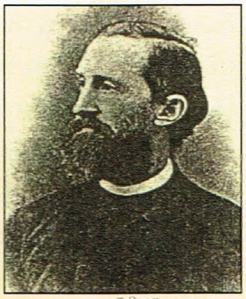
The River Line with detailed unit locations.



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Francis Asbury Shoup

Pulte Homes is pleased to be able to help preserve these historic sites at our Park Avenue and Regency at Riverline Crossing communities. For more information on Johnston's River Line, the Shoupades, and other historic Civil War sites in Georgia, visit georgiabattlefields.org.

Pulte Homes

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