



1864 Shoupade replica



Street sign RLHA logo usage



Chattahoochee River



Hooper-Turner house



Trolley Line Park



Howell's Mill dam



Log Cabin Sunday School



State historic marker



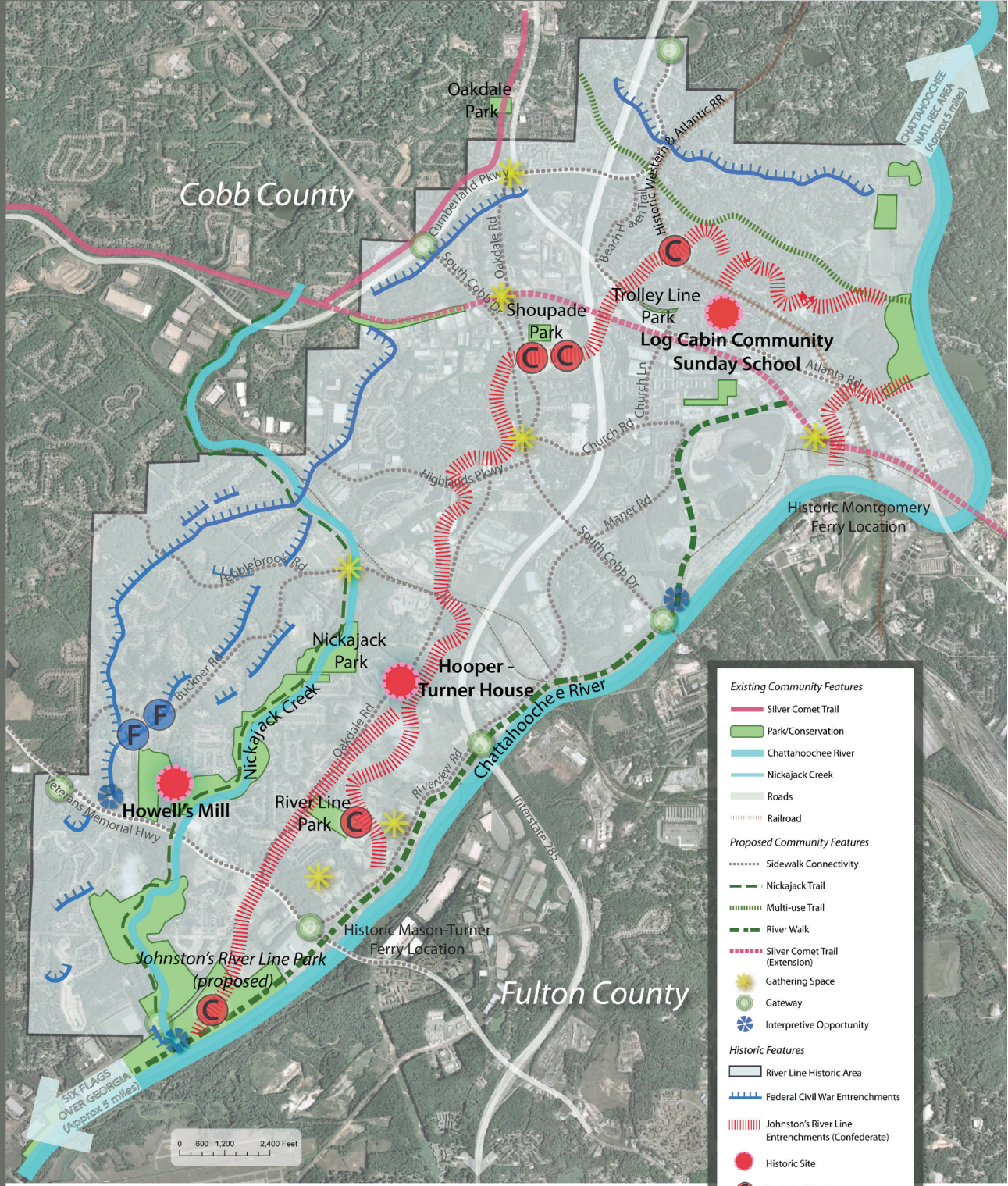
Mayson-Turner ferry

The River Line Historic Area embraces historic and natural resources near the Chattahoochee River to unite the community as a place of distinction.

The River Line Historic Area derives its name from Johnston's River Line - a long line of Civil War trenches named after Confederate General Joseph Johnston, who authorized its construction. Johnston's River Line is particularly significant due to its unique fortifications called Shoupades, a worldwide exclusive to Cobb County designed by Brigadier General Francis Asbury Shoup. The Cherokee Indians occupied this area prior to 1832, followed by European farmers evolving into the diverse culture of today.



JULY 2009



# RIVER LINE HISTORIC AREA

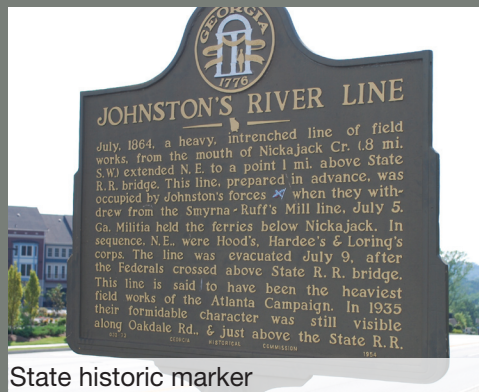
The River Line Historic Area lies west of the Chattahoochee River linking Vinings, Smyrna, and Mableton, Georgia. The River Line Historic Area operates under the Mableton Improvement Coalition nonprofit. A grant from The Community Foundation for Greater Atlanta funded the RLHA Master Plan.





Atlanta Journal-Constitution

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State historic marker



Dorothy O'Connor Photography

2009 Shoupade remains

**S**eventy odd years before the French even dreamed of the Maginot Line, an equally impregnable version of that famous defensive fortification was built in Cobb County. Both met the same fate – outflanked by the enemy.

Built almost entirely with a labor force of over 1,000 African-Americans in July, 1864, the River Line was a series of connected Civil War fortifications intended to stop Sherman's attack on Atlanta.

The line was six miles long, extending from just south of Veterans Memorial Highway (Bankhead Highway) into the community of Vinings. The northern terminus of the fortifications was located at a point off Polo Lane near the river, where a large artillery fort was constructed. The line crossed Woodland Brook Drive near Polo Lane. Continuing on across Elizabeth Lane, Rebel Valley View, Settlement Road, and the CSX Railroad (then Western & Atlantic), the line of fortifications crossed Atlanta Road south of I-285. Then turning in a more southerly direction, the line extended through Oakdale, and followed the ridge on which Oakdale Road is located to a point south of Veterans Memorial Highway, near Nickajack Creek.

In June and July of 1864, armies of the United States under Major General William T. Sherman attacked Confederate fortifications on Kennesaw Mountain. Confederate forces repulsed them in one of the bloodiest battles of the war. Seeing the futility of continuing to attack such a strongly fortified line, the federals resorted to a flanking movement, the same tactic which had pushed general Joseph E. Johnston's Confederate army of Tennessee back steadily from Dalton to the outskirts of Atlanta.

Enjoying a distinct superiority of numbers and equipment, Sherman successfully used

the tactic of confronting the Confederates with a sizable force, while other units of his army moved around the side, or flank of the rebel forces. In order to avoid an attack into their side and rear, the southern forces would fall back and form a new line of defense.

After the Battle of Kennesaw Mountain this flanking movement began again. Not wanting to allow the federal forces to get between him and Atlanta, Johnston once again withdrew, abandoning Kennesaw Mountain and its line of fortifications.

On Johnston's staff was a brilliant officer with a variety of experience, Brigadier General Francis Asbury Shoup. In an effort to stop the pattern of retreating, and to stop the federals short of Atlanta, Shoup conceived the plan for a string of impregnable fortifications backing up to the Chattahoochee River. He presented his plan to Johnston, and the plan was approved in time to complete the fortifications before the rebel forces fell back from Kennesaw through Marietta and Smyrna.

Shoup had spent a part of his life prior to the war in St. Augustine, Florida, where he doubtlessly was inspired by the imposing Castillo de San Marcos. This old Spanish fort is a classic example of the use of bastions, small arrowhead-shaped forts which protrude out from its corners. Gunners in the bastions could fire into the sides and backs of enemies who may be attacking another part of the walls. Likewise, fire from the walls could protect the bastions. A graduate of West Point, Shoup was also well educated in the design and use of military fortifications.

The Chattahoochee river line, sometimes called Johnston's River line, consisted of 36 of these arrowhead-shaped forts, connected by a strong wall of log palisades and trenches. The forts are commonly called "Shoupades" after their designer, Gen. Shoup. Most of them were graded away as Vinings and Oakdale

developed, but a few still remain.

The most accessible, and the one most likely to be preserved, is near the southern end of the line, and is on land now owned by Cobb County. Another is on Oakdale Road, partly in an apartment complex, and partly in the yard of a residence. One is off Atlanta Road in John Wieland's "Olde Ivy" development. A few scattered Shoupades are in the yards of homeowners and on church grounds.

Did the Chattahoochee River Line perform the task for which it was designed and laboriously constructed? Obviously not, or the national capital might be in Richmond today.

Confederate forces briefly occupied the River Line after their withdrawal from Smyrna and Marietta. When federal forces, in hot pursuit, encountered the line, bristling with cannons and Shoupades, they wisely decided not to waste lives by throwing men against such an impregnable obstacle. Sherman resorted to the same old tactic which had brought him from Dalton to the edge of Atlanta, a flanking movement.

As soon as General Johnston heard that Sherman's troops had crossed the Chattahoochee River above and below his fortress, he had his Confederate army abandon the River Line and withdrew into the fortifications around Atlanta.

Just as German forces negated the power of the Maginot line by going around it, so did the United States forces negate the effectiveness of the Chattahoochee River Line.

Historians William R. Scaife and William E. Erquitt wrote a book on the line in 1992, entitled *The Chattahoochee River Line*. The book contains much more information, including photographs of model Shoupades, details of construction, maps of the line and of troop movements, and more details about the Civil War in Cobb County.

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