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THE CIVIL WAR IN DeKALB
JULY 21, 2002

Video opens with Richard Sams standing in front of an audience in the courtroom of the Old Courthouse on the Square in Decatur, Georgia. A projector and screen are behind him; but, although the images he shows throughout the presentation are visible to the audience, they do not show up on the video.

MR. SAMS: A hundred and thirty-eight years ago today General William Tecumseh Sherman was a very busy man at the corner of Briarcliff Road and North Decatur Road, about half a block west from where I live. He was planning for the next day's event, which was certainly more tragic an event than what we have just experienced [the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks on New York City and Washington, D.C.]. As tragic as September 11th was for us to experience, 138 years ago almost seven thousand people lay dead about three miles from here on DeKalb County soil in one day's fighting. So people of DeKalb County have experienced something that the rest of the nation, till just this last year, woke up to: that American lives, as much as we treasure them, are very fragile. And it was in the course of building this great nation that DeKalb County's history comes alive for you today, I hope. We will always remember those tragic events of September 11th, as more than 2,800 persons died their untimely deaths in that single day. But let's go back today to DeKalb County's own history and think about what happened on these roads in these hills in this land in 1864. [*Changes slide on screen; image is visible to audience but not on video.*]

The first thing that we have to ask is, "Why? Why Atlanta? Why was Atlanta the focus of this terrible war?" And, of course, what you're seeing here is a photograph of the principal view of the Cyclorama. And I would heartily recommend, as a follow-up of this program, if you would go to the Cyclorama once again and review what went on. Beneath your feet right here in this particular spot, a terrible, terrible battle took place on the morning of the 22nd of July. But let's go back. Why Atlanta? Why Decatur? Why DeKalb County when we were the focus of this terrible war? The answer lies in [*Changes slide*] what you see here. I don't know if you can understand what that—what that's showing you, but those two steel rails changed America forever. The invention of the railroad engine changed our entire economy and began a program that split the North from the South. The industrialized North became more oriented toward

manufacturing; the South utilized the railroads to move its products to the market. And so instead of a cohesive, growing-together country, the country became divided in its economy—in its economic intent. And so that war came to Atlanta because of the railroads. And the steam engine was a critical part of this particular war, because it brought forth the ability of an army to move its troops. The army could move its troops efficiently and effectively; and so Atlanta became the focus point, because Atlanta had the four important railroads coming to it [*Points to screen*], one right there within our sight, the Georgia Railroad, the most important one in what came in our history. But those railroads were the key.

The two opposing generals [*Changes slide*—on the Southern side, General Joseph E. Johnston had been assigned the command of the Confederate troops, wintering over in Dalton in the winter of 1864. And opposing him was General William Tecumseh Sherman, commanding general of the Federal army that was to--assigned the one task: catch Johnston, destroy Johnston's army whatever you do. Now, an interesting thing about Sherman was that in the battle of Shiloh in Mississippi—or if you're a Yankee, you would call it Pittsburgh Landing—Sherman, after that battle, reached down and picked up a piece of spent Confederate artillery, a shell piece. He turned it over; on the back of it he saw the words "Atlanta Iron Works." So the message came to him real quick. Atlanta must be taken. If the spirit of the Confederacy is found at Richmond, her heart is in Atlanta. Her vital organs are in Atlanta, because it was Atlanta that allowed the troops to be moved efficiently. And Atlanta was very heavily fortified.

Johnston knew this, and a year before he had turned almost half of the houses and certainly most of the country around Atlanta into something that looked [*Points to screen*] like this, a strongly fortified city. And so Sherman's assignment to catch Johnston was going to follow the strategy of wherever Johnston goes. But Johnston, outnumbered two to one in men and certainly more than that in equipment, must stay with his supply lines, those railroads. And he was forced to fight a defensive battle, because in such defenses one man is worth three men out there in the field. He could load, he was protected while he was loading, and he could repeat his shots three to a [*inaudible—could be "minute" or "man" or something else*]. So to charge and take over this type of fortification was a very difficult thing, and it required that excess number of people. But more than that, because Atlanta was fortified, Johnston fought continuously to protect his supply lines coming out of Atlanta.

And let's look at what that looked like. [*Changes slides*] If we look at the railroads, you'll notice there are—here is the Georgia Railroad, which, as I pointed out, lies right over there outside that window. The year before, in the battle around Chattanooga, particularly in the northwestern tip of Georgia, the battle of Chickamauga, [Confederate General Braxton] Bragg was opposed by General [William] Rosecrans of the Northern army over the battles of Lookout Mountain, etc. And the army that Bragg had mustered there was actually reinforced by Lee by rail, moving all the way down through Columbia [South Carolina] to Augusta over to Atlanta and back up to Chatta—to Chickamauga area, an entire force of General [James] Longstreet's artillery. It only took 182 hours--852 miles. So the railroads themselves became the root—the vital root by which any general was going to have to hang onto his resources. All of those supplies would be fed by that railroad. And as Johnston continually was forced to retreat to Resaca, into Cassville, and Allatoona Landing, finally Kennesaw Mountain, a—battle after battle of strategic retreats, luring Sherman ever further distant from his supply lines, hoping that President Davis would allow the calvary [sic; means "cavalry"] to come from the west and cut those supply lines and capture his opponents. So this was Johnston's strategy.

On the other hand, as I said, Sherman's strategy was wherever Johnston was forced to go, follow him. And, of course, he was forced to retreat constantly to the final fortifications of Atlanta. Now, when Kennesaw had been fought and Johnston was finally forced to retreat across the Chattahoochee River into those fortifications we saw, everything sort of reached a little bit of a stalemate; and the armies rested. Actually they rested for about a whole week before the actual crossing of the Chattahoochee River, which was the main obstacle that Sherman had left in his way besides the fortifications—the outer fortifications and the inner fortifications—around Atlanta.

So when the armies once again began to move, Sherman had studied this map of Fulton County and DeKalb County intensely; and he chose the following routes. [*Refers to images on screen*] You'll notice that, on this map, what he has done is create a pinwheel movement, first to the north, then to the east, with one objective in mind. He had been talking to Grant, and he was certain to get Grant's approval. But the first real object was to cut that Georgia Railroad right out here near Stone Mountain. [*Points to map on screen*] And so if he cut off those supply lines here--and he had this supply line cut off because he had fought his way down it—there only

remained this supply line feeding into Atlanta. And if he could cut it, then Atlanta was his.

So that was the strategy that Sherman had, and he took his armies—he had three major armies to work with. The Army of the Tennessee River—of the Tennessee, headed by General James B. McPherson, who went—who was sent to Roswell along this route to cross at the Roswell Bridge and come south to what we now know as Tucker, Georgia, and this [sic; thus?] to attack the railroad and break it out here at Stone Mountain and then to move westward along the railroad, through Decatur here, and west to Atlanta. His second general, with whom he traveled himself, was General John Schofield. Schofield crossed at what was known as the Paper Mill on Soap Creek. Schofield sent his men across Soap Creek and up to the highlands along Mt. Vernon Road over to Johnson's [sic; now "Johnson Ferry"] Ferry and down through Sandy Springs along Nancy's [sic; now referred to as "Nancy Creek"] Creek, where he encountered some small resistance, about the only real resistance that was opposing him by General Wheeler's cavalry, who will play a very important part right here around our [DeKalb County] courthouse later on.

The third army that Sherman had under his control was that of General George Thomas. And Thomas had under him also General Oliver Howard, whom he sent across the Chattahoochee River at Powers Ferry and down the Powers Ferry Road to Buckhead, while he crossed Paces Ferry Road at Vinings and came up the Paces Ferry Road towards Buckhead and then down the Peachtree Road to approximately where Piedmont Hospital is today. It was at that point that Thomas was engaged.

But a whole lot of history has come since--before that point, and that was July the 20th. As the armies approached the river, they got a rest. [*Changes slides*] As Samuel Carter has described it: [*Begins reading from notes, quoting Samuel Carter*]

along the Chattahoochee River the war arrived at a bucolic pause. Union troops tripped and plunged into the river for the first good bath they had had in eight weeks. And they were joined by naked Confederates from the south bank. Those remaining in the rifle pits on both sides simply sunned themselves and placidly watched the water carnival.

And here was soldiers on two sides of our nation who would square off in a few days and shoot at each other. The animosity was not between our citizens. The old story, "It's a rich man's war and a poor man's fight," certainly was borne out by that. "We were not fifty yards apart," wrote Andy Neal [sp? Could be Neil or Neill] to his sister. "Yet we walked along the riverbanks talking as friendly and courteously as if we were

old acquaintances. The men laid aside their guns and were scattered up and down the river, swapping canteens and hats and bartering for one commodity or another.” Hardly the kind of thing we see in today’s war, is it?

Well, that lull soon ended, as the troops were given orders by Sherman to cross. And Sherman proceeded toward Atlanta along the routes we just discussed. [*Changes slides*] Here was Atlanta, strongly fortified—[*Glancing up at images on screen*] I’m sorry, but you—maybe I could focus that a little bit. It’s an old—this is actually the official military map. [*Adjusts images*] And you can see at least Decatur—well, they can’t see Decatur. [*Makes more adjustments*] There. Here we are. Here is Decatur, and we are sitting right at that spot. [*Points to screen*] Sherman—here is the city of Atlanta to the west of us approximately six miles, and the heavy lines that you see here are those Confederate trenches and fortifications that were pictured earlier. Here is the Georgia railroad on its way into the city. You might recognize Kirkwood, East Lake, etc. This is approximately the county line where DeKalb County’s to the right, and Fulton County’s to the left; and the major part of the engagement that you see from the Cyclorama takes place from a vantage point about in here. Looking in all directions—that beautiful painting, which you must see if you haven’t seen it lately. It’s been restored. It’s well worth seeing. It’s a remarkable painting. It’s a full, round view, as if you were standing here and are pivoting the action at approximately 4:00 in the afternoon of the 22nd of July.

But I’m getting ahead of my story; because Sherman, as he came across with his armies—he traveled with General Scofield and—in the center of his army. He was very much concerned about a gap in his lines, because Thomas was over here, and Scofield would be ordered here at Briarcliff and North Decatur Road. But in between there was a large gap, and he was very much concerned about that. And so he had sent orders to have General Thomas order three divisions—two divisions—of General Howard’s two divisions to make a force march to Buckhead down through what we now know—what was called Durand’s Mill at that time—[*Points to map*] this is Wesley Woods—along Old Briarcliff Road and along Briarcliff Road, back up join General Scofield and his troops, who are encamped at what is now the Emory University campus.

Prior to—when he gave those orders, he was headquartered back here at about where the—this is Clairemont Road, going into Decatur—and his headquarters there—we’re very fortunate to have a record of them. Very interesting, because Sherman did not like newspapermen. And war correspondents would have to sneak in behind him

and sketch things after he was gone. This is a sketch of Sherman's headquarters on the 19th of July, two days prior to today. It was known as the James Oliver Powell house. Oliver was off in the Confederate army, but his family reportedly was here. And you'll notice in the yard a church pew. That church pew came out of a church just about four hundred yards west of there, which was used as a hospital and barracks known as the Hardman church, an old, old pioneer church that existed until it was later burned after the—You'll notice that activity here—not only was it headquarters, but it was an army field hospital. And numerous amputations were made following the skirmishes, in which the people were simply—if you got hit with one of these miniballs—and it was about an ounce or so of pure lead—instead of piercing your shoulder, it would smash it. And there was not much but shattered bone left, and so what was left was nothing but shattered bone that had to be severed from the rest of the body. So if you got hit, generally you got amputated [sic] afterwards. So this was a horrible, horrible war. But here were the surgeons. Dr. Edward Shippen is recorded to have been the doctor in charge here of the amputations. And the children of this home reportedly later found a whole barrel of arms and legs cast off in the ravine behind the house. So war was extremely cruel and horrible as the army moved on, and the people were the ones who suffered the most.

[*Changes slide*] I want to go back a second to look at Sherman's approach. As you can see, McPherson was coming in from the west, had taken Decatur; and Scofield was coming in the center, and Thomas was off on the right. As the armies approached, something very tragic happened for the Confederate states. There was an ongoing conflict between President Jefferson Davis and Joe Johnston. And the people were waiting for him to fight. Johnston knew that he was outnumbered, he knew that he had to fight defensively, and he would not take on his enemy, as the president of the Confederacy had wanted. Of all places, if they lost Atlanta, they knew they would be defeated.

So on the 17th of July, just two days before Sherman arrived here, Jefferson Davis replaced Joe Johnston as commanding general of the Confederate army protecting Atlanta with a bold and brash general who was beneath him named John B. Hood, a Texan by training. And Hood had lost an arm at Chickamauga, a leg at Gettysburg—or vice versa. [NOTE: General Hood had to have his leg amputated after Gettysburg and lost the use of one arm after Chickamauga.] But he was a fighter. He was a scrapper. And Hood was one that appealed to Jefferson Davis because he would come forth and

fight. And, of course, when Sherman found this out, he was somewhat pleased because he said, "I can fight him if he will come out of these fortifications and fight on equal terms." Sherman knew he had him. So at that time, as he arrived here, and he was able to get Howard to close this gap surrounding the northeast part of the city, sure enough, General Hood sent his army out beyond the fortifications and attacked General Thomas here at Peachtree Creek on the 20th of July. The battle was disastrous—for both sides, actually, because nothing was lost, nothing gained—and nothing was lost but lives. But in fact it forced the Confederates to abandon these outer fortifications and fall back to Atlanta's inner fortifications [*referring to slide*] back here.

So on the 20th, when Sherman was here at Briarcliff and North Decatur, and the 21st, when he was preparing his battle plans even further, a battle had already been fought here where some five thousand lives had been lost as well, five thousand on the 20th of July in Fulton County. But what happened here was even a bigger tragedy, and it centered around the Georgia Railroad. [*Changes slides*] Let's take a little closer look at that. At 4:30 in the afternoon this was the situation. And if you can relate it to today's roads, you'll notice that the—[*Stops to adjust slide*] let me turn it somewhat, a little bit more like that. This is how present-day Highland Avenue—what you're looking at here, the Carter Center is located at about right in here, and this is Moreland Avenue. The position of the photograph that the slide that I showed at the beginning is from a position if you were high up about at the intersection of I-20 and Moreland Avenue, if you know where Moreland crosses over I-20. You're looking—you begin the program at the Cyclorama looking to the west, and you begin—this is the lower end of Springvale Park in Inman Park. And you're looking across, and you're seeing that house that was in the foreground right here, known as the Troup-Hurt House, that red brick house that you saw in the slide. Interestingly enough, what had happened here was that the Federal—the Confederates had withdrawn back to their inner defenses and had begun at this point to come—sally forth by the afternoon.

Now, in the early morning of the 22nd [*Displays new slide*] Hood had directed—I'm sorry [*Repositions slide*]*—General Hood had directed one of his divisions under General Hardy to retreat back in through the fortifications. So they marched all night long, through Five Points, south out to McDonough Road, almost down to the town of—what we know as the airport and the Constitution—down around Constitution [Road] and back up along the road to Decatur. And he sent Hardy's division, led by Wheeler's*

cavalry. Wheeler came straight on up the Fayetteville Road. This is the road that went to Fayetteville, [*Points*] right out there. And early in the morning Wheeler's cavalry entered—found themselves in the woods out here [*Points to outside grounds that surround the Old Courthouse*] spread out and ready to do battle. And they attacked General McPherson's army, which had bivouacked here in Decatur, all around the courthouse here. Suddenly the whole woods over there [*Points*] out this window was full of rebels charging. They came across the railroad track, and they drove the Yankees straight through the city, out Clairemont Road, almost to Clairemont and North Decatur [*Road*], trying to capture their wagons, and they did so. There were bodies all around this courthouse. And after it was over, it was a clear victory for General Wheeler's cavalry.

But what happened was that there was more trouble back here. General Hardy's groups—his two divisions had split here, and one division had come up through Terry's Mill and had encountered General McPherson's army that had begun to move out and move westward, as instructed, toward the fortifications of Atlanta. And when they got to approximately I-20 and Moreland Avenue, suddenly out of the woods from the south comes General Walker and General Bates and their divisions coming back to the northwest. And in the afternoon—I mean--about—just—in the early afternoon General McPherson himself heard the fighting as the two armies collided here and went to see what was happening; and he, too, was shot and killed in this spot right here, just east of Moreland Avenue between Memorial Drive and Greenwood [*sic—likely means "Glenwood"*] Avenue. [*Indicates location on screen*]

So the battle engaged—became a massive killing field. It lasted all day long until dark. And the next day the two armies declared a truce to bury dead. [*Sorts through slides and places one on the projector*] McPherson had been killed, General Logan had been placed in charge in the field, and the field itself looked not unlike what you see here [*referring to image on the screen*], littered with bodies. General Logan reported the U.S. Federal army's losses: 3,521; the Confederate losses, dead: 3,220; for a total of 6,741 dead on those grounds right out here on one day, the 22nd of July, tomorrow. Prisoners taken by the Federals were around 1,017, reported by General Logan, and at least a thousand captured and wounded. So this was DeKalb County's tragic day for the soldiers—for certain, for the soldiers.

But it was also a tragic period that began for the civilians. When Sherman finally managed to conquer Atlanta some--a month and a half later, after shelling it for forty-

two days, he left utter destruction. [*Changes slides*] And besides on the battlefield, most of Atlanta and a lot of DeKalb County looked like this [*referring to photograph on screen*]. There were certain people we are fortunate to have had, in particular one, particularly right here in DeKalb County in Decatur, a lady by the name of Mary Ann Harris Gay. [*Changes slides*] This is her picture. She wrote a very interesting book about 1890 entitled *Life in Dixie During the War*. And that book became a major part of Margaret Mitchell's background material for *Gone with the Wind*, because Mary Gay described what she saw here in Decatur in those days. And she described some very, very heartbreaking things that the civilians had to see—had to witness and that they had to endure. Here's some of her words. She was forced to make a long tramp to Stone Mountain to try to find food, and she went there. And as she did, she wrote—came back, she wrote [*Reads from text*]:

Not a living thing overtook or passed us. We soon crossed over the line and entered a war-stricken section of the country where stood chimneys only, where lately were pretty homes and prosperity. The chimneys, called "Sherman's sentinels," seemed to be keeping guard over those scenes of desolation. The very birds of the air and the beasts of the field had fled to other sections.

She arrived in Stone Mountain and spent the night and was given shelter at a hotel. But early in the morning, hungry and footsore, she says [*Reads from text*]:

I started out all alone walking back to Decatur. The solitude was terrific, and the feeling of awe was so intense that I was startled by the breaking of a twig. Constantly reminded by ruined homes, I realized that indeed within the arbitrary line—I was within the arbitrary lines of a cruel, merciless foe. If not for my lonely mother, anxiously waiting my return to Decatur, I would have turned and run for dear life.

She had planned to stop overnight from Stone Mountain at the home of William—Reverend William Henry Clark [Clarke?] along the way. And when she arrived at the site, she stood amazed, bewildered [*Reads from text*]:

Elegant rosewood and mahogany furniture, broken into a thousand fragments, covered the face of the ground as far as I could see, and china and glass looked as if it had been sown. And the house, alas, it too had been scattered to the four winds of Heaven in the form of smoke and ashes. Not even a chimney stood to mark its site.

Union soldiers had passed over William Henry Clark's [Clarke's?] land three times in those last days—August, October, and finally in November, when they marched to the sea. In October the soldiers took nine hundred loads of forage and provisions from the farms and plantations for five miles around and left the Clark[e?]

house a flaming ruin. In due time Decatur appeared in sight on her journey, and Mary Gay was [Reads] “startled and discouraged to see a mother and child, each with a tin can, picked up off the enemy’s camping ground, run after me and beg for just a little something to eat, just enough to keep them from starving.”

Back in Decatur her mother and her slave Telitha spent the day picking grains of corn off the ground and from the crevices of bureau drawers that had been improvised as troughs to feed the horses by the Federal soldiers. In this diligent and persevering work about a half a bushel was obtained from the now-deserted camping ground of Gerard’s cavalry. The corn was washed and dried and carried to the only area mill that survived burning to be ground into coarse meal.

So the civilians suffered, too, as much from deprivation. They didn’t necessarily lose their lives. And there was a gentlemanness [sic] about this war that was hot and cold. The officers were very much gentlemen and very considerate of their conquered foe, but not so the bummers who traveled with the army, who followed the army and took advantage and sold wares to the army.

There were new dangers in and around this part of the county. In Atlanta in the fall after Sherman had gone, there was such a lack of food. Sarah Huff, who lived in Atlanta, recalled:

The baying of dogs in unison was the only sound to break the profound silence. Ravenous cats grew bold and entered homes, glaring, ready to devour the scanty food before anybody could scare them away from a pot, the skillet, or the half-canteen plates on the table.

For the animals went wild. The lack of food and the army had taken it all. There were those who refugeed [sic], knowing that this kind of horror was coming. And when the troops—it was known that the troops had crossed the Chattahoochee River and were headed directly into Atlanta, [Changes slide] many people went to the train depot with all their possessions and boarded the last train from Atlanta to seek refuge just anywhere—north, south, east, or west—out of the path of destruction. [Refers to slide] And here they are with their—with their belongings. What they could carry they put on top of the cars, and they crowded themselves into these boxcars whenever a train left Atlanta. Of course, during [military action in and around] Kennesaw, Atlanta’s population—the [Kennesaw area] refugees came to Atlanta. So the total number of people in Atlanta at the time had to almost double with refugees from Marietta. But those who could, and had a place to go, would leave.

Tallulah House Cook, whose—whose [sic; means “who was the”] granddaughter of Samuel House, who had a large plantation out here at Brookhaven Country Club—a large—was one of our DeKalb pioneers. Tallulah House recalls this [*Reads*]:

I remember a lot of the hard times we went through the last years of the War Between the States. My mother refugeed [sic] with Uncle William Palmer, who was a cripple and couldn't go to war. They took their slaves, horses, mules, and some cows. My mother had many hogs and cattle that she could not take, so she had them driven to a lot. And before leaving, we all went out and looked at them. I guess we did it to tell them goodbye, since we didn't ever see them again. We went somewhere in Hall County and rented cabins from a Mr. Turk. I remember we got so short of food that my mother was killing her milk cows to feed us. And when he found us so short of food, he went home and sent us a wagonload of provisions by an old slave named Seb.

There were those who refused or for some reason or another could not leave and stood by and stood their ground. [*Replaces slide on projector screen*] Here are two individuals dear to me, my Great-grandmother and [Great-] grandfather Houston, who lived right in Sherman's path. Major Houston, as he was later called—he was never a major; but he was in charge of troops and supplies and transferring—worked for the railroads. So he had a critical skill and an exemption from the draft, and I have that—or at least Emory [University] has that now. But Major Houston had a very key job, because those train that came into Atlanta and left Atlanta were on different-gauge track. So you couldn't just move on through; you had to unload that train and load it on another train if you were going to go to Chattanooga with the same supplies. So he had a critical job, and that kept him in Atlanta while his wife was out here a mile from north of Decatur taking care of five little children.

Amanda Catherine Houston, my great-grandmother had—the story is told; and I don't know if this is true or not, but Vivian Price saw fit to print it in her book on the history of DeKalb County. She said [*Reads*]:

Amanda Powell Houston refused to surrender. Katie, as she was called, was living with her children at the Powell homeplace near the intersection of Clairemont and North Decatur Roads while her husband was performing his duties as transportation agent for the Confederacy. She had gone to the fields, dug up some potatoes, and when a Yankee soldier appeared, demanding the potatoes that she had already dug, when he stooped to pick over the potatoes, she hit him with a shovel. [*Audience and Mr. Sams laugh.*] It was such a hard blow that the invader was definitely inhibited from further depredations and arrogant demand.

So three cheers for Great-grandmother.

But we've talked about the soldiers and the citizens. But what of the slaves? What about those people who were just here not by their own choosing? There were not a lot of them, but there were some. Only about five percent—[Places slide on projector and repositions it] let me see if I can get that down here. Now, this is based on some data that Vivian Price had gleaned from our census. There were about 5,800 people in DeKalb County in 1860. And the war broke out in 1861, so not a whole lot [of change] except for those who refuged [sic]. There were eight free Negroes registered; 1,929 slaves, of whom 934 were males and 995—about equal—a little—few more female. These slaves were owned by only about five percent of DeKalb County's population, and it sort of breaks down this way. [Repositions slide] There.

The majority of slave owners only owned one or two, maybe three, maybe four slaves. Generally they fell in the category of house servants. And the story from most of these house servants that gets reported is that they stayed with their owners when the [Union] army marched through and told them they were free. A larger group of somewhere—five to nine--slaves were owned by the small farmers. A number of outlying farms were small, [owned by] poor, white people. The affluent farmers who owned ten to twenty or maybe twenty or more slaves, really the largest group were all those few scattered, large plantations like Sam House's and a number scattered in the southern part of the county. Interestingly enough, because only five percent of the population in DeKalb County, some 300 whites, owned slaves, DeKalb County actually voted against secession, and—at least the representatives were instructed and did vote against seceding from the Union. So DeKalb County was not a very strong slave area.

Probably the most significant thing about what happened to the slaves was what they expected. And there's an old song that I remember from childhood. It's called "Wake Nicodemus." And this pretty well sums up what they expected: [Reads]

Nicodemus was a slave of African birth,
Who was bought for a bagful of gold.
There were none of his masters on all of this good earth
Who would free him at last, I am told.
So his last sad request, as they laid him to rest
In the trunk of an old hollow tree,
"Wake me up," was his charge, "on the first break of day.
Wake me up for the Great Jubilee."

There's good times coming, and it's not far off.
Been long, long, long on the way.
So go and tell Elijah to hurry up home
And meet us by the gum-tree down in the swamp
For to wake Nicodemus today.

They looked for the Jubilee, the freedom that was going to be granted. And when the army came, they thought this was it. It was going to solve their problems.

Mary Gay said [*Reads*]

When the fighting was over, the slave cabins had not been burned, and the slaves were still there. Men, women, and children [inaudible—could be “stomped” or “stalked”] about in restless uncertainty. They had been led to believe that the country would be apportioned to them.

But it is quite clear—historically it is quite clear—that Sherman was not fighting for the slaves. For in writing home during the siege of Atlanta in August, he complained to his wife Ellen: [*Reads*]

Agents—and I quote—agents are coming to me from Massachusetts, Rhode Island, and Ohio to recruit Negroes as fast as we catch them to count as soldiers. I remonstrated to Mr. Lincoln in the strongest terms, but he answered it that it was the law, and I had to submit. Half of my army are driving wagons, loading and unloading cases, and doing the work which they, the Negroes we have captured, might do whilst these are the soldiers only on paper. W. T. Sherman.

Miles Lane, in his book entitled *Marching Through Georgia*, which is—I highly recommend it; it is Sherman’s memoirs—adds this: [*Reads*]

The freemen wandered to the cities to test freedom in 1866 and 1867, but they returned after a while to the plantations as renters and sharecroppers. And social life resumed its accustomed place and its pace when this war was over.

So what was gained by the black man at that time? Virtually nothing. More trouble. And what of conquered DeKalb County and the South? The South had been whipped. The conquerors left us with a wrecked economy, a wrecked railroad, a worthless currency, a provisional military rule that would last for five years, and over 1,900 freed but unemployed [former] slaves, and a new social order to be established. Think of that. There were no retraining programs for the now-freed slaves. Only the Freedmen’s Bureau was finally established to intercede for those who couldn’t read and write in making their contracts for work. And if you didn’t have a skill such as a blacksmith or something of skilled labor in a mill and you were black, you were just out of luck. You saw anything you could do. And unfortunately a lot of them turned to crime, and this added to the social order that had to be reestablished. DeKalb citizens turned to churches for spiritual hope and faith to heal their hate, to rebuild their land,

to educate their young people, and to establish the new social order as best they could under the watchful eye of military rule.

Following Lee's surrender at Appomattox Courthouse and Joe Johnston's surrender at Bennett's house in North Carolina on April 26, 1865, the war was finally over. But DeKalb County residents were left devastated and hungry. Their sentiments had not been strongly in favor of secession, for most of them owned few slaves. But their economy was a shamble[s] [sic], with their Confederate currency worth about four-and-a-half cents to the U.S. dollar. And land values had decreased to half the pre-war price. Atlanta must rebuild, and it did. Except for that portion attached to Atlanta and its growth, DeKalb County remained rural until about 1960; 1960—almost a hundred years. It was 1960, though, that the world's next great invention conquered our land. It was known as the automobile.

Thanks for your attention. I hope that some of DeKalb County's rich history has stuck with you today.

[Audience applause]

I would make one footnote to invite you, if you're interested, if you're a Civil War buff and you want to get down to look at where these troops moved throughout DeKalb County, there is a map which is the supplement to what we threw up here on the screen in the Clark Harrison Room on this floor behind us back here, in the room behind, that plots up not only the wonderful Civil War markers that Wilbur Kurtz originated and put together for Georgia's Civil War History Centennial—it's got those markers, and it's got the routes, with today's roads, as you can see them. If you want to look at it, it's in the back.

END OF RECORDING