

SUMMARY OF PROPOSED NATIONAL REGISTER/GEORGIA REGISTER NOMINATION

1. Name: Brier Creek Battlefield

2. Location: Approximately one mile south of Old River Road along Brannen Bridge Road, Sylvania vicinity, Screven County, Georgia

3a. Description: Brier Creek Battlefield is located largely within the state of Georgia's Tuckahoe Wildlife Management Area (WMA) in Screven County. The battlefield is delineated in the Georgia Archaeological Site Files as archaeological Site 9SN254. The National Register historic district boundary comprises 2,686 acres of this site: 2,521.3 acres are owned by the Georgia Department of Natural Resources as part of the Tuckahoe WMA, while 164.7 acres are privately owned by Warsaw Pines and Timberland LLC, in a silviculture area known locally as Chisolm Farm. These two tracts contain thirteen contributing resources and one noncontributing resource, all of which are archaeological sites, clustered in the western half of the district. The battlefield is located on a natural peninsula formed by the confluence of Brier Creek and the Savannah River. The topography is relatively low and flat, and vegetation consists of mature stands of planted loblolly pine trees actively managed for silviculture. Anhydric soils in the peninsula are surrounded by wet, swampy cypress forests which border Brier Creek and the Savannah River. A dirt road loops the peninsula, running southeast from Brannen Bridge Road. The property's integrity of location and association are evidenced by historic documentation along with the recovery of military artifacts during archaeological studies, while the open pine forest, bordering cypress swamps, and the battlefield's overall rural character effectively portray integrity of setting and feeling.

3b. Period of Significance: February 26 – March 4, 1779

3c. Acreage: 2,686 acres

3d. Boundary Explanation: The boundary is defined by Brier Creek to the south and the Savannah River to the east. The north and west boundaries were defined by a 2015 archaeological study of the property.

4a. National Register Criteria: A and D

4b. National Register Areas of Significance: Military; Archeology; Historic- Non-Aboriginal

4c. Statement of Significance: In 1778, the British military high command planned to win the Revolutionary War in America by conquering the South. The British seized the city of Savannah in December 1778 with only minor losses, planning to push an occupying force inland to take control of the upcounty around Augusta. When a British expeditionary force failed to capture Augusta in January 1779, they began retreating slowly back to Savannah, with American forces following close behind. The British burned Miller's Bridge across Brier Creek as they retreated, slowing the American pursuit. The Americans set up camp on the north side of the creek on February 26, 1779. It was here that the British would attack the American encampment on March 3, resulting in a major American defeat. Brier Creek Battlefield is significant at the state level under Criterion A, in the area of military history. It is associated with the American Revolutionary War (1776-1781), an event which made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of history. The Battle of Brier Creek is one of the few major battles that occurred in Georgia during the Revolutionary War. The battlefield was first occupied by General John Ashe's American army on February 26, 1779. The battle occurred on March 3, 1779, and the victorious British army, along with surviving American prisoners, vacated the area on March 4, 1779. The overwhelming American defeat firmly established British military control of the Georgia side of the Savannah River, between Savannah and Augusta. General William Moultrie of the South Carolina militia later stated that the American defeat at Brier Creek was so disastrous that it extended the war by at least a year, and that without this British victory, the subsequent 1780 British invasion and capture of South Carolina would likely never have happened (Moultrie 1802, 2:321-326). The Brier Creek Battlefield is also significant at the state level under Criterion D in the area of historic archeology. As an American defeat, historians and archaeologists have largely neglected study of the Battle of Brier Creek. Archaeological investigations (Battle and Owens 2015; Butler et al. 2017) have documented important combat zones, bivouac areas, and battlefield landscape features, and the potential for significant further research. Additional investigation is necessary to fully delineate the locations of American picket posts, British main line, American main line, American camps, building sites, fields, and possible gravesites.

4d. Suggested Level of Significance: The property is being nominated at the state level of significance as the location of one of the most influential American Revolutionary War battles that occurred in Georgia.

5. Sponsor: The nomination is sponsored by the Georgia Department of Natural Resources, Historic Preservation Division, and nomination materials were prepared by consultant Scott Butler, Senior Archaeologist and Vice President of Brockington and Associates.