

Civil War News Roundup - 06/08/2007

Courtesy of the Civil War Preservation Trust

- (1) Lincoln urgent in lost letter to General – Washington Post (DC)**
- (2) CWPT, state save property at Perryville – Danville Advocate-Messenger (KY)**
- (3) NPS Plan bodes well for region – Fredericksburg Free Lance-Star (VA)**
- (4) Battlefield park eyes 300 acres at Glendale – Richmond Times Dispatch (VA)**
- (5) Digging up University of Alabama’s past – Tuscaloosa News (AL)**
- (6) Appomattox studies preserving battlefield – Associated Press**
- (7) Bentonville site facing changes - Johnston Herald (NC)**
- (8) State begins planning for Civil War anniversary - Gwinnett Daily Post (GA)**
- (9) Docs: Lincoln Had Severe Smallpox when at Gettysburg – Associated Press**
- (10) Spotsylvania Leads Charge - Fredericksburg Free-Lance Star (VA)**
- (11) State Panel Discusses Ft. Monroe Future – Associated Press**
- (12) Relic Hunters Tear Up Park's Railroad Redoubt - Vicksburg Post (MS)**
- (13) Cheap Power to Northeast US: A Mixed Blessing – Christian Science Monitor**

Lincoln Urgent in Lost Letter to General

President Saw Victory at Hand; Confederates Escaped, Pressed War Two More Years
By Michael E. Ruane, Washington Post Staff Writer

06/08/2007

Washington Post (DC)

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/06/07/AR2007060701240.html?referrer=emailarticle>

Vicksburg had just fallen to Union forces. The Confederates were trapped north of the Potomac River after their defeat at Gettysburg. And after two years of civil war and battlefield calamity, Abraham Lincoln thought he saw the glimmer of victory.

On July 7, 1863, three days after Vicksburg's surrender and four days after Gettysburg, Lincoln took out a sheet of blue-lined paper and wrote to his general in chief, urging that the fleeing rebels be destroyed. If they were, Lincoln wrote, "the rebellion will be over."

But the Confederates escaped over the flooded river seven days later, the war went on for almost two more blood-soaked years, and Lincoln's six-line, handwritten note of optimism vanished into the crumbling files of history.

Yesterday, the National Archives announced that the long-lost note, complete with a misspelled word and Lincoln's neat schoolboy signature, had been found last month in the downtown stacks by an archivist doing research for a Discovery Channel documentary.

Archivist of the United States Allen Weinstein said in an interview that it was the biggest such find since the discovery in 2003 of a diary written by President Harry S. Truman.

"It's incredibly exciting," Weinstein said.

The note, on yellowed stationery and headed "War Department Washington City" was written to Gen. Henry W. Halleck. The besieged Confederate city of Vicksburg, Miss., had fallen July 4 to the forces of Gen. Ulysses S. Grant, and Robert E. Lee's Army of Northern Virginia had just been defeated at Gettysburg by union forces under Gen. George G. Meade.

The war-weary Lincoln sensed the possibilities.

"Now, if Gen. Meade can complete his work so gloriously prosecuted thus far, by the literal or substantial destruction of Lee's army," Lincoln wrote, "the rebellion will be over."

Archives officials said the text of the note was known to historians because Halleck forwarded it to Meade in a telegram that was preserved in the official war records. But the handwritten note had been lost for decades.

Weinstein pointed out that the Archives has a billion documents in its historic building downtown, and 9 billion systemwide. Asked if there could be other lost documents of note, he said, "There must be."

On May 14, archivist Trevor Plante, who specializes in 19th-century military history, was in the stacks searching for material for the upcoming documentary on Gettysburg, according to Plante and Weinstein.

Plante said that morning he chanced on a tattered folder labeled "telegrams received by Halleck." Inside, he said, he spotted the note in the dim light, recognized Lincoln's handwriting and thought, "Whoa!"

But it was not until he researched further that he discovered that while historians had quoted the telegram, no one had ever cited the original note. He said he realized: "Hey, this is even more important than I thought it was."

Plante said it is not certain exactly where Lincoln wrote the note, nor where Halleck received it, but both were in Washington. Meade, who had been in command of the Army of the Potomac only about a week, had just left Gettysburg en route to Frederick in pursuit of the enemy.

Lincoln, tormented by incompetent commanders in the first years of the war, often prodded his generals to take action. He once famously goaded Gen. George B. McClellan by asking to borrow McClellan's army since the general didn't seem to be using it.

Now Lincoln was urging Halleck to urge Meade to go after Lee.

After Halleck telegraphed the note to Meade, he continued to badger Meade to attack. Meade, whose army had been battered at Gettysburg, finally took offense and offered to resign. Halleck backed down, Plante said, but on the afternoon of the 14th, as the rebels splashed to safety, an anguished Lincoln took pen to paper and wrote to Meade:

"My dear general, I do not believe you appreciate the magnitude of the misfortune involved in Lee's escape. He was within your easy grasp, and to have closed upon him would, in connection with our other late successes, have ended the war.

"As it is, the war will be prolonged indefinitely," Lincoln wrote. "Your golden opportunity is gone, and I am distressed immeasurably because of it."

It was one of the harshest letters Lincoln wrote during the war. And he never sent it.

Instead, he wrote on the envelope: "To Gen. Meade, never sent, or signed."

Plante said that letter and the envelope, now in the Library of Congress, came to light years ago, but not during Meade's lifetime.

State Pays \$390,000 for Sleettown Land in Perryville

By Brenda S. Edwards

06/03/2007

Danville Advocate-Messenger (KY)

http://www.amnews.com/public_html/?module=displaystory&story_id=32108&format=html

PERRYVILLE - A portion of the land that once thrived as an African-American farm community has been purchased by the state and will be preserved by the state Department of Parks.

A deed recorded in Boyle County clerk's office states that Deborah S. and James P. Mullaney sold 96 acres on Hays May Road to the state for \$390,831. That is a portion of the 150 acres where the Sleettown community was located in the early 1900s, adjacent to the Perryville Battlefield State Historic Site.

"We're excited about the purchase," said J.T. Miller, state parks commissioner. "It's a critical missing piece of the battlefield."

Miller compared the land to a quilt, with all the pieces coming together. Several other tracts have been purchased for the park in recent years.

Miller said the land, which Gen. Buckner used to stage his troops during the state's largest Civil War battle, will be used during the Battle of Perryville re-enactments.

He also said future plans call for connecting the battlefield land from the current park to Perryville city limits. The long-term vision is to have a place for bikers and walkers between the town and park.

The funds for purchasing the land came from the federal government's Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century, or TEA-21 program. Kentucky's share of federal funds is administered by the state Transportation Cabinet. A 20 percent or \$107,000 match will be provided by the Civil War Preservation Trust in Washington, D.C.

Plans call for the Chatham House, the only dwelling left of the early Sleettown community, to be restored by preservationists.

Two Sleet brothers, Henry and Preston, bought the tract from H.P. Bottom, who owned the land where the Battle of Perryville took place, a few years after the Civil War.

The Sleets, along with the Swan, Pope and Fisher families, created a community that had a restaurant, cemetery, general store, church and school. The Chatham House, a silo and a cemetery are the only visible structures on the land.

A formal announcement about the project will be scheduled later this summer, Miller said.

National Parks Plan Bodes Well for the Area

By Rusty Dennen, Staff Writer

06/01/2007

Fredericksburg Free Lance-Star (VA)

<http://fredericksburg.com/News/FLS/2007/062007/06012007/288866>

A plan for the future of America's national parks unveiled yesterday bodes well for the Fredericksburg area, even though the four battlefield parks here are not specifically cited.

"We're not too upset that we were not mentioned. It looks good and they are saying all the right things," said Russ Smith, superintendent of the Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania National Military Park.

The plan, released in Washington by NPS Director Mary Bomar, and Interior Secretary Dirk Kempthorne, is part of the national parks' Centennial Initiative announced by President Bush.

Bush in February asked the agency heads to gather information on how best to address the parks' needs in time for the 2016 100th anniversary.

The president's \$2.4 billion 2008 budget calls for the largest increase ever for operations, which directly effect visitors. Another component is public-private investments that could generate up to \$3 billion to help parks prepare for the centennial.

Nationally, park operations would receive \$150 million to hire 3,000 additional seasonal workers, 1,000 for historic interpretation, 1,000 maintenance workers and 1,000 park rangers.

The battlefield parks here would get an additional \$195,000, which would be used to hire seasonal workers.

That's critical because the Fredericksburg, Wilderness, Chancellorsville and Spotsylvania Court House battlefields have been increasingly relying on volunteers and cutting hours at some attractions to help take up the slack from years of shrinking budgets.

The parks, which cover more than 8,000 acres, could make progress protecting additional historic land. The Park Service would work with private, nonprofit preservation groups to make acquisitions.

Smith applied for a \$5 million matching grant over 10 years to work with the local Central Virginia Battlefields Trust to buy important parcels that are not now protected.

A similar nationwide project would commit \$150 million to the Washington, D.C.-based Civil War Preservation Trust for the same purpose, with the 70,000-member organization raising half.

And Smith said that Ellwood, which straddles Orange and Spotsylvania counties, is well-positioned for centennial funding.

Friends of Wilderness Battlefield have already raised more than \$200,000 to restore portions of the mansion off State Route 20.

Smith is seeking a federal contribution to more than double that amount and to build an orientation center there for the Wilderness Battlefield.

Ellwood was occupied by Union troops during the Battle of the Wilderness in May 1864 and earned a place in Civil War history as the burial place of Confederate Gen. Thomas J. "Stonewall" Jackson's amputated arm.

Projects most likely to get funding already have private sector partners who have raised money. "I think we're in good shape for that project. I think we're way out ahead," Smith said.

Smith also submitted proposals for rehabilitating the battlefield visitors center at Fredericksburg and building a new visitors center at Chancellorsville.

Each of the 391 national parks has weighed in with centennial plans.

What programs get funded depends upon what Congress does in coming months with the president's budget.

Battlefield Park Eyes 300 Acres in Henrico

By Peter Hardin Times-Dispatch Washington Correspondent

06/01/2007

Richmond Times-Dispatch (VA)

<http://www.timesdispatch.com/cva/ric/news.apx.-content-articles-RTD-2007-06-01-0185.html>

WASHINGTON -- Richmond National Battlefield Park appears headed toward acquiring more than 300 historic acres in eastern Henrico County.

The Civil War Preservation Trust has bought the land at Glendale/Fraser's Farm battlefield at a price of about \$4 million, Park Superintendent Cynthia MacLeod said yesterday. Park officials have made a proposal to Washington for acquiring that land, she said.

"It would be another giant step toward preserving all of the battlefields around Richmond," MacLeod said of the proposal.

"This is an outstanding opportunity to preserve some of the last remaining Civil War battlefields prior to the sesquicentennial [150th] anniversary of the Civil War," said Jim Campi, a spokesman for the Civil War Battlefield Trust.

MacLeod disclosed the land acquisition proposal after Interior Secretary Dirk Kempthorne gave President Bush a report on goals for the National Park Service as it prepares for its centennial in 2016.

Protecting Richmond's Civil War battlefields through land acquisition was highlighted briefly, with no details given, in the report.

If the Richmond proposal is accepted, the federal government likely would spend about \$2 million toward acquisition of the land, located on either side of state Route 156 south of Darbytown Road.

A centerpiece of the National Park Service's centennial planning is joint public and private spending.

A decision on the Richmond proposal may come by late August, when the Interior Department plans to make public its strategies for centennial projects and also programs that should be funded in 2008.

There are fewer than 2,000 acres now in the Richmond National Battlefield Park. The park has authorized boundaries of 7,307 acres, allowing for significant potential expansion.

Digging Up UA's Past

Dig Examines Area of Torched Civil War-era Dorms

By Lydia Seabol Avant, Staff Writer

05/30/2007

Tuscaloosa News (AL)

<http://www.tuscaloosaneews.com/article/20070530/NEWS/705300363/1007>

TUSCALOOSA | Belt buckles, buttons, a toothbrush and even part of an iron bed are some of the Civil War-era artifacts unearthed in an ongoing archaeological dig on the University of Alabama campus.

In a 5-by-20-foot hole in the parking lot behind Gorgas Library, large stone steps lead down to a hard clay floor -- steps that once led to the cellar of Jefferson Hall. Built in 1831, it was one of UA's first dormitories and was burned by federal troops during the Civil War in 1865.

The three-story dormitory housed 96 students in 12 compartments, or suites. Each suite had a sitting room with a fireplace and two bedrooms.

When the building was torched, everything inside collapsed into the cellar, Robert Clouse, executive director of UA's Office of Archaeological Research, said Tuesday.

Before they began excavating, researchers did not know if they would find anything of interest, but they did use ground-penetrating radar to show areas of low soil density in spots where Jefferson and Washington dormitories once stood. It was luck that one of the sites included the old cellar steps, said Clouse, who is leading the excavation.

"It's not predictable what you are going to find, but we got a lot of items out of this," he said.

The dig site is just a few feet deep. Just below the asphalt is a thick layer of bricks left when the site was filled in with rubble after the fire. Below that is a deeper layer of ashes, burned chunks of wood and soot-covered brick fragments.

Most of the artifacts were found within the deeper layer, including part of a chamber pot, smoking pipes, square-pegged nails and even a piece of a hornet's nest.

Most of the items were found at the site of Jefferson Hall. But two other 5-by-20-foot archaeological sites were dug where Washington Hall once stood.

Washington was the school's other dormitory, built in 1831 and burned during the Civil War. It stood just west of the spot where Gorgas Library stands today. Not as many artifacts were unearthed at the Washington site, Clouse said.

The third and final block will be dug this week, so more artifacts could possibly be found, said Darrell Smith, a cultural resource assistant who is working on the dig.

The dig is the most significant archaeological finding on campus since the mid-1980s, when the original site of the rotunda was discovered, Clouse said. In 1975, the site of Madison Hall was excavated.

All of the artifacts found at Jefferson and Washington Halls will be preserved, catalogued and stored by the university. Some of the items will be displayed in the Alabama Museum of Natural History at Smith Hall, Clouse said.

In the meantime, the dig, which began on May 14, could be extended. Clouse is making a request to the university to widen the search area. Very little is left from the university's early period, which makes these findings important, he said.

In 2008, work will begin to close Capstone Drive by building a plaza between Gorgas Library and Clark Hall. Once the dig is complete, researchers will record where the site is located so that utilities can be routed around the site in the future.

While preserving the site with glass floors would probably prove cost-prohibitive, marking the buildings' original footprints could be a possibility, said Dan Clark, professor of military science at UA. On Tuesday, Clark proposed naming the Crimson Ride stops on Capstone Drive the "Washington Stop" and the "Jefferson Stop" to commemorate the sites.

Appomattox Studies Preserving Battlefield

Associated Press

05/30/2007

Associated Press

<http://www.dailypress.com/news/local/virginia/dp-va--appomattoxbattlef0530may30,0,7250682.story?coll=dp-headlines-virginia>

LYNCHBURG, Va. -- Appomattox officials are studying a plan to preserve a Civil War battlefield in the middle of town, along with an antebellum house in the woods near where the fighting took place.

The site, now owned by a trucking company, is in excellent shape, according to a preliminary report from the archaeological engineering firm compiling the preservation plan for the land where the Battle of Appomattox Station took place.

The wagon roads instrumental in the April 8, 1865, battle that led to the South's surrender at Appomattox Court House the following day mostly are visible from the ground. The one-story home is nearly in ruins, but can be fully restored, said Philip Thomason, director of Thomason & Associates.

"I've seen buildings in this condition or worse restored back," Thomason told the Appomattox Town Council at a recent meeting.

Though some parts of the 25-acre former battlefield had been logged, it remains largely undeveloped because its hills make it more difficult to use other than as farmland, Thomason said.

Preliminary recommendations from the study, which was paid for by a grant from the American Battlefield Protection Program, include figuring a way to purchase the several parcels of land that were part of the battlefield.

The story told at the Appomattox Court House national park is incomplete because it only shows the picture of the surrender, Thomason said.

"The reason you have the surrender is because of the fighting that took place all around here," he said. "It's not the bloodiest fight, but it's of great strategic importance."

It also was unique because the fighting involved mounted Union cavalry troops attacking about 28,000 Confederate artillery troops, Appomattox Court House historian Patrick Schroeder said.

"You don't have to just hit the man, you have to hit the horse," he said.

Schroeder urged town officials and representatives to start putting together a preservation group to save the battlefield.

Organizers expect a completed draft report within several weeks. The plan will then be reviewed by both local officials and the National Park Service. A meeting to discuss the proposal likely will happen by the end of the summer.

"It's a unique story that has been overlooked for a long time because people always focus on the surrender," Schroeder said. "They forget why the surrender took place."

Bentonville Site Facing Changes

By Suzette Rodriguez, Staff Reporter

05/29/2007

Johnston Herald (NC)

<http://www.smithfieldherald.com/front/story/3971.html>

In the past six years, the Bentonville Battlefield Historic Site has added 900 acres, thanks largely to the Civil War Preservation Trust. The organization uses grants and private donations to buy the land, and then deeds it to the state.

Today, a big part of the 1,100-acre battlefield is farmland. And last year, the site earned about \$13,000 in farmland rent, says Site Manager Donnie Harris.

The income goes into the state's coffers for general use. But a nonprofit group supporting the battlefield would like to see the money set aside in an interest-bearing account that would be overseen in the state's Division of Historic Sites.

Earlier this year, Ricky Howell of Princeton, a member of the Bentonville Battlefield Historical Association, drafted a legislative bill to set up the fund, which would be used to run and maintain the site as well as to preserve and expand it.

"It's not a tremendous amount of money - especially since the tobacco allotments are gone," Howell said.

"But if we cut timber one day as part of a management plan, we'd like to keep the receipts from timber sales."

While the site has grown in size, the budget for running the Bentonville Battlefield Historic Site hasn't, Howell says. But if the site could keep the revenue, then it could pay for needs without seeking more tax dollars.

"We would have a little endowment without having to go with out hats in our hand every year," said Howell, who is a retired state employee. For years, he was the operations manager for the State Historic Site Program, which operates within the Department of Cultural Resources.

In February, state Senator Fred Smith sponsored the Senate version of the Bentonville bill while state House Representatives J.H. Langdon and Leo Daughtry, both of Johnston County, and Rep. David Lewis of Harnett County co-sponsored the House version. In both chambers, the bills were moved to the Appropriations Committees where they are today.

If passed, the bills would not set a precedent. Howell says the state allows Tryon Palace and the Roanoke Festival Park to keep the money they generate at the historic sites.

Bentonville's Harris says the battlefield could use another full-time employee. "It would be nice to have another interpreter and to get help for our groundskeeper. He's mowing 25 or 30 acres a week."

The site has four full-time employees, including Harris, and five part-time employees.

About 30,000 people visit the site every year. During the busy season, from April to October, as many as 100 people visit every day, he said.

Every five years, the battlefield has a reenactment. And six times a year, it puts on a living history program. Harris says visits have increased since the battlefield added four interpretive stops and became a stop along the N.C. Civil War Trail. It also gained national attention when the History Channel made mention of Bentonville in a show titled "Sherman's March." Also, the channel filmed twice at Bentonville for another show titled "Sherman's War Tactics." Steve Thomas was the host.

The Battle of Bentonville was the largest ever fought in North Carolina. Confederate and Union troops fought for three days, March 19-21, 1865.

State to Begin Planning for Civil War Anniversary

By Dave Williams, Gwinnett Daily Post Staff Writer

05/27/2007

Gwinnett Daily Post (GA)

http://www.gwinnettdaily.com/index.php?s=&url_channel_id=1&url_article_id=28432&url_subchannel_id=&change_well_id=2

ATLANTA — At the turn of the 21st century, Georgia was poised to remember the 19th.

The state bought more than 500 acres just off of Interstate 75 in Northwest Georgia in 2000 with plans to develop the site into a park commemorating the Battle of Resaca, the opening engagement of Union General William T. Sherman's Atlanta campaign in 1864.

A nonprofit historic preservation group was eyeing a new network of Civil War heritage trails in Virginia intending to emulate the concept in Georgia. But the state's economy turned sluggish early in this decade, drying up public funding for the projects.

Only now, seven years after the purchase of Resaca, are Georgia lawmakers hoping to get the money flowing again. The 2008 budget adopted by the General Assembly last month includes \$700,000 to begin developing Civil War trails and help state tourism officials start preparing for the upcoming 150th anniversary of the conflict.

The question is, with the Civil War Sesquicentennial kicking off in 2011, whether there's time to do the job right.

"The problem is people think about the Civil War Sesquicentennial being some years away, and it's really not," said Charlie Crawford, president of the Georgia Battlefields Association. "I don't think they have a lot of time to play with."

Big spenders

Heritage tourism has long been a favorite with chambers of commerce. A 2003 study conducted by the Travel Industry Association of America and Smithsonian Magazine found that the typical heritage tourist spends \$623 on a trip, not counting transportation costs, compared to \$457 for other types of vacations.

Georgia is well suited to compete for the dollars of heritage tourists, being second only to Virginia in the number of Civil War battlefields. The list of just the better-known sites includes Chickamauga, site of the last major Confederate victory in 1863, Kennesaw Mountain, another battlefield from the Atlanta campaign and Andersonville, site of the largest camp for Union POWs in the Confederacy.

"In all of (the state Department of Economic Development's) surveys, the No. 1 tourist attractions relate to what I call the War Between the States," said state Sen. George Hooks, D-Americus, the legislature's resident expert on Georgia history. "It's one of the best things we can do to bring tourists to the state."

Gov. Sonny Perdue agrees. He asked for \$5 million in the midyear budget to help restore Civil War sites across the state, including Resaca. But that money fell victim to a political squabble over the midyear budget that resulted in a stripped-down bill that only funded emergency needs.

As a result, state tourism promotion officials were left with just \$500,000 in next year's budget to jump-start preparations for the Sesquicentennial and another \$200,000 for the planned Civil War trails.

As with everything else in the '08 budget, those items are subject to final approval from the governor.

"It's not anything like what I'd like to see," Hooks said. "(But) it's a small step."

Trail plans

The \$200,000 allocation would represent the first state money for the trails project. Steve Longcrier, executive director of Georgia Civil War Heritage Trails, said the nonprofit group is planning three trails following the route of the Atlanta Campaign, Sherman's March to the Sea — which took his Union army from Atlanta to Savannah — and the route Confederate President Jefferson Davis took at the end of the war in an ill-fated escape attempt that ended at Sandersonville.

Each will include stops where historic events took place, marked by signs. Some of the stops will be established historic sites, such as the former state Capitol and Governor's Mansion in Milledgeville, while others will be simply highway turnoffs.

While linking sites along a trail should help increase visitation at established sites, Longcrier said he expects lesser-known places off the beaten path to see the biggest jump in business.

"Smaller communities that ... don't have budgets to promote their sites probably will benefit the most," he said.

Brochures advertising the trails will be distributed at Georgia's welcome centers on interstate highways along the state's borders.

Prime location

A visitors center is also a key part of the planning for the Resaca Battlefield park. Crawford, of the battlefields association, said Resaca has the potential to become a premier attraction because of its proximity to I-75, a major corridor for tourists traveling from the Midwest to Florida.

"(To go to) Chickamauga, you have to leave the road," he said. "The advantage to Resaca is they drive right through it. ...You're literally right on the interstate."

But those plans will have to wait because of the loss of funding for Resaca from the midyear budget. While Crawford and others working on the project continue pushing for money to develop the park, he said at least the state can start marketing the Sesquicentennial.

Crawford noted that some of the major events leading up to the Civil War already have marked their 150th anniversaries, including the U.S. Supreme Court's Dred Scott decision in 1857, which upheld the Fugitive Slave Law.

“They need to get out publicity and information,” he said. “The time to start preparing for it is right now.”

Docs: Lincoln Had Severe Smallpox when at Gettysburg

By Lindsey Tanner, Associated Press Medical Writer

05/23/2007

Associated Press

<http://www.herald-review.com/articles/2007/05/26/news/state/1023679.txt>

CHICAGO (AP) - Abraham Lincoln has been dead for 142 years, but he still manages to make medical headlines, this time from doctors who say he had a bad case of smallpox when he delivered the Gettysburg Address.

Physicians in Baltimore said last week that Lincoln might have survived being shot if today's medical technology had existed in 1865. Last year, University of Minnesota researchers suggested that a genetic nerve disorder rather than the long-suspected Marfan syndrome might have caused his clunky gait.

"If you play doctor, it's difficult to shut down the diagnostic process" when reading about historical figures, said Dr. Armond Goldman, an immunology specialist and professor emeritus at the University of Texas Medical Branch in Galveston. He and a colleague "diagnosed" serious smallpox in Lincoln after scouring historical documents, biographies and old newspaper clippings.

Their report appears in May's Journal of Medical Biography.

"Lincoln is such a famous figure in American life that people are just automatically drawn to him," Goldman said.

Heart illness, eye problems and depression are among other ailments modern-day doctors have investigated in the 16th president.

But smallpox is the one that might come as the biggest surprise to the general public, especially if Lincoln had it when he spoke at Gettysburg.

According to Goldman and co-author Dr. Frank Schmalstieg, Lincoln fell ill Nov. 18, the day before giving the speech in Pennsylvania.

When Lincoln arrived at the battlefield to dedicate a cemetery for the fallen soldiers, he was weak, dizzy, and his face "had a ghastly color," according to the report.

On the train back to Washington that evening, Lincoln was feverish and had severe headaches. Then he developed back pains, exhaustion and a widespread scarlet rash that turned blister-like. A servant who tended to Lincoln during the three-week illness later developed smallpox and died in January 1864.

The smallpox theory isn't news to many historians, although some say documents suggest Lincoln had a mild form of the disease.

“In historians' minds, it really doesn't matter too much if he was suffering from the slightly milder case or more serious disease,” said Kim Bauer, head of the Lincoln Heritage Project in Decatur. “It was still severe enough that people were still concerned.”

Rodney Davis, a Lincoln historian at Illinois' Knox College, said people who don't read Lincoln biographies may not know about his smallpox, but “it's not anything that's ever been suppressed. It's just never been all that significant given the highlights of his career.”

Citing an autobiography of J.M.T. Finney Jr., an early 20th century surgeon, the report says a physician summoned by Lincoln's personal doctor diagnosed a mild form of smallpox. Upon hearing the contagious diagnosis, the report says, Lincoln joked that while he was constantly hounded by people who wanted something from him, ““For once in my life as President, I find myself in a position to give everybody something!””

The authors in the May journal argue that Lincoln's symptoms suggest it was instead full-blown smallpox, which was common at the time and killed many Civil War soldiers despite an early vaccine.

It is unclear if Lincoln was ever vaccinated, the authors wrote. There are few descriptions of his disease, and notes from his personal physician that might shed more light have not been found, they said.

If Lincoln had smallpox, it's unclear where he got it. Goldman and Schmalstieg suggest it might have been from Lincoln's 10-year-old son, Tad, who was bedridden with a feverish illness and rash around the same time. But that is speculation since details of what sickened Tad are not known, the authors said.

Dr. William Schaffner, an infectious disease specialist at Vanderbilt University who scanned the report and just finished reading a Lincoln biography, said he's skeptical that Lincoln had any form of smallpox.

“I find the argument entrancing, but I don't find it convincing,” Schaffner said.

Lincoln's symptoms could have been chickenpox or scarlet fever, a strep infection that also can cause a blister-like rash, Schaffner said.

“Here we are in the 21st century and we're trying to know and understand and read language of physicians in the 1850s,” Schaffner said.

Spotsylvania Leads Charge

Planning begins for Civil War's 150th anniversary

By Rusty Dennen, Fredericksburg Free-Lance Star Staff Writer

05/23/2007

Fredericksburg Free-Lance Star (VA)

<http://www.fredericksburg.com/News/FLS/2007/052007/05232007/285141>

FREDERICKSBURG, Va. (AP) -- Spotsylvania County officials want the upcoming 150th anniversary of the Civil War to include a prominent role for central Virginia, where some of the most intense battles took place.

The county's Board of Supervisors voted earlier this month to create a planning group, making Spotsylvania the first locality in the state to form such a committee for the national commemoration from 2011 to 2015.

"It's not too early at all to start getting things ready," said Russ Smith, superintendent of Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania National Military Park, who is leading the National Park Service's efforts in the region to mark the event.

Virginia has 12 national parks with Civil War themes, Mr. Smith said. In the Fredericksburg area, the Wilderness, Chancellorsville, Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania Courthouse battlefields occupy more than 8,000 acres and get more than 200,000 visitors each year.

Putting the 150th anniversary into a broader perspective is a major goal, Mr. Smith said.

"What we're trying to do, first of all, is redefine what a Civil War site is," he said. "It's not just strategy and tactics. We're using the motto: 'The Civil War is not just battles anymore.' "

More than 70 sites nationwide have Civil War themes. Even locales such as the Martin Van Buren National Historical Site in New York could be included because of the eighth U.S. president's stand on anti-slavery politics.

Some of the overall themes would include causes of the war, the military experience, ethnicity, race, industry and economics, the role of women and civilians, the ordeal of the border states, Reconstruction and reconciliation.

Legislation is pending in Congress to establish a national sesquicentennial commission, which would include funding for related projects.

Virginia last year formed a Sesquicentennial of the American Civil War Commission, headed by state House Speaker William J. Howell, Stafford Republican, and state Senate Finance Committee Chairman John H. Chichester, Northumberland Republican.

The Civil War Preservation Trust group also is involved.

With the relentless pace of development in central Virginia, "there are only a couple years left to do any meaningful preservation work," said group spokesman Jim Campi. "You can safely say that anything not done [before the 150th anniversary] is not likely to be done."

With the help of partners such as the Central Virginia Battlefields Trust, group members last year purchased Slaughter Pen Farm, a crucial part of the southern end of the 1862 Battle of Fredericksburg. As a result, Spotsylvania, Fredericksburg and other localities could generate more tourism dollars, Mr. Campi said.

"If it's anything like the centennial [in 1961], there will be a big surge of interest in the Civil War -- people researching their ancestors and wanting to visit places where they fought or lived," he said.

Mr. Campi said he is not surprised that Spotsylvania has taken an early interest.

"There's been a lot of growth and it's a great tourism location on [Interstate] 95," he said. "It doesn't get much better than that."

State Panel Discusses Ft. Monroe Future

Associated Press

05/22/2007

Associated Press

http://www.wvec.com/news/hampton/stories/wvec_local_052107_ft_monroe_state_panel.8ebd167a.html

HAMPTON, Va. (AP) -- A new group is set to study what to do with Fort Monroe when the Army leaves in 2011.

The group met for the first time Monday and chose Virginia Natural Resources Secretary Preston Bryant as its chairman.

The Army is leaving the historic waterfront fort in Hampton in 2011 after the Base Realignment and Closure Commission ordered its closing.

Virginia's General Assembly created the Fort Monroe Federal Area Development Authority to oversee the base's future. The board replaces a two-year-old group that has a draft plan that calls for redevelopment of the fort with houses and offices.

The Army says it costs about \$15 million a year to maintain the moated fort and its buildings.

Historians and conservationists have objected to that plan.

Another option is to create a national park.

The new board will discuss the options at its next meeting on June 18th.

The group's 18 members include Preston and four other members of Governor Tim Kaine's cabinet -- four state legislators -- seven members appointed by the Hampton City Council and two Kaine picks with experience in historic preservation and tourism.

Fort Monroe is surrounded by a moat and was built between 1819 and 1834 on a peninsula that stretches into the Chesapeake Bay. It was in Union hands during the Civil War and is where Confederate President Jefferson Davis was imprisoned.

Relic Hunters Tear Up Park's Railroad Redoubt

By Paul Bryant

05/12/07

Vicksburg Post (MS)

<http://www.vicksburgpost.com/articles/2007/05/12/news/news01.txt>

Relic hunters stole America's heritage when they left more than 100 holes around the Texas Memorial in the Vicksburg National Military Park, Patty Montague said Friday as archaeologists began surveying the damage.

“The park is continually plagued by varying degrees of looting, digging and excavation,” Montague, the park's supervising ranger, said. “They're stealing America's heritage. This belongs to the American people.”

Archaeologists and historians with the National Park Service arrived from Florida to begin meticulously processing the crime scene, which extended west of the memorial near a Confederate marker to the Railroad Redoubt.

The Texas Memorial is on the south loop of Confederate Avenue at the Railroad Redoubt. It cost \$100,000 to build and was dedicated on Nov. 4, 1961.

“It was the only fort penetrated by Union forces,” Montague said.

She said the vandalism was found about a week ago by Virginia Dubowy, the park's resource program manager, during a walk-through. Damage is estimated to be “tens of thousands of dollars,” Montague said.

“We are very upset about this,” she said, pointing at an area east of the monument where it appeared the vandals concentrated their efforts. “We need the public's help in finding who did this, and we will be offering a reward” for information leading to the arrests and convictions of the suspects.

Under the Archaeological Resources Protection Act of 1979 (ARPA), it is against the law to excavate, remove, damage, alter or deface archaeological resources on federal or Indian land. It's also illegal to traffic materials or items found on such land.

“What these people did is a violation of ARPA,” Montague said. “This is classified as a felony, and we will work with the U.S. Attorney's Office. The park has a 100 percent conviction rate.”

Penalties for ARPA violators include being fined \$20,000 and imprisoned two years. Subsequent convictions could result in \$100,000 fines and five years in prison.

The relic hunters were looking for artifacts they could auction on Web sites, Montague said.

“They're selling them or keeping them for their private collections. You can go on eBay and find stuff from Vicksburg, which fetches a pretty penny.

For the artifact snatchers, vandalizing federal land is “a hobby,” the ranger said.

“It's their main line of business. Our mission at the National Park Service is to preserve generations of history, and things like this make it very difficult for us to do that.”

The most noted vandalism at the park came in November 2003 when Mark Vincent Peterson, then 33, was accused of spray painting 11 monuments. Reports of vandalism found Nov. 20-23 included 12 locations inside the park's boundaries and nine outside.

Six churches, a Jewish temple, an outdoor city restroom at Riverfront Park and the military park's North Carolina monument on Confederate Avenue were vandalized. The spray painted messages read: “Jesus is coming. Repent y'all.”

Peterson was taken into custody Nov. 25 at Navy Circle, off Washington Street near the Mississippi River bridges. He was indicted by a federal grand jury in March 2004.

After two years of confinement at a mental health facility within the U.S. Bureau of Prisons, Peterson was released to his parents by U.S. District Judge David Bramlette III.

Under state and federal laws, a person who is mentally incompetent when a law is broken cannot be held responsible.

Before that, in 2001, then-27-year-old Charles W. Morfin of Los Angeles faced a possible one-year prison sentence and \$100,000 in fines for taking a piece of wood off the USS Cairo, the military park's ironclad Union gunboat. He ended up spending three years on probation and paying \$3,000 in fines. He was also prohibited from entering any national park during his probation.

Under Mississippi law, vandalism that causes more than \$1,000 in damage carries maximum penalties of five years in prison and a \$10,000 fine.

At the Texas Memorial, the 11 steps leading to its main portion honor other Confederate states. A live yucca plant, native to Texas and the southwestern United States, stands next to a bronze statuary that symbolizes those who served from Texas.

The memorial lists all Texas units on the defense line, in Johnston's Army and in Walker's Texas Division.

Cheap Power to Northeast US: A Mixed Blessing

By Mark Clayton, Staff Writer

05/09/2007

The Christian Science Monitor

http://news.yahoo.com/s/csm/20070509/ts_csm/arightofway

A major move to boost grid capacity is under way to bring more cheap coal-fired electricity to the high-cost Northeast. New transmission lines could lower utility bills for millions of consumers and avert blackouts that sometimes hobble the region.

At least eight lines, stretching some 2,000 miles through six states at an estimated cost of more than \$9 billion, are under active consideration or have been formally proposed. But the plan faces rising resistance.

The move would send high-voltage wires and towers up to 200-feet high through some of the most scenic areas of the mid-Atlantic states, where they could conflict with views of national parks, dedicated conservation easements, and Civil War and other historic sites. It would change the Northeast's energy mix, boosting its reliance on coal-fired energy while undercutting state efforts to move to renewable power and cut greenhouse-gas emissions, critics say.

And for the first time, final say on these projects would lie not with the states, which have often balked at siting transmission lines, but with the US Department of Energy, which supports the idea. Two weeks ago, it unveiled its plan for "national corridors" for power lines to improve reliability and reduce grid "congestion."

"These draft [corridor] designations set us on the path to modernize our constrained and congested electric power infrastructure," Energy Secretary Samuel Bodman said in a statement at the April 26 unveiling of the corridors.

But critics say profits – not reliability – are the driving factor behind these projects.

"This is really all about transferring inexpensive coal power into areas of the country that have higher-priced electricity," says Mark Brownstein, a managing director in the climate and air program at New York-based Environmental Defense. "These parts of the country have taken a stand to reduce greenhouse-gas emissions.... So these lines become pipelines that undo policy positions that the Northeast has taken."

In New York, regulators are already wrestling with a proposal to build a 190-mile power line, 73 miles of it through the valley of the Upper Delaware Scenic and Recreational River, a unit of the National Park Service. In Virginia, last Friday, another test case for these transmission lines fell into the laps of state regulators now reviewing a proposal by a division of Dominion Resources. The Richmond-based company, one of the nation's largest utilities, wants to build a 60-mile segment of a 330 mile-long line that would link West Virginia and Pennsylvania grids more closely to Virginia's. The new line could ease congestion when one region is trying to import more electricity than current lines can handle.

Current transmission lines jammed

With Midwest-to-East-Coast transmission lines often full during peak periods, power companies can't bring in all the cheap coal-fired power they would like from the Midwest, an Energy Department study found last year. The new lines would also support the expansion of coal power by providing a new market for approximately 6,700 megawatts of electricity from coal-fired power plants expected to come online by 2012 in western Pennsylvania, western Maryland, Kentucky, Ohio, and West Virginia, the study said. If its newly proposed line isn't built to bring in some of that power, Dominion warns that "rolling blackouts" could result.

But local criticism is building quickly. While Dominion's new proposal is being evaluated, recent past proposals would have cut swaths across the Appalachian Trail, narrowly skirting or going through 11 existing historic districts, one National Historic Landmark, 19 state and National Historic Sites and seven Civil War battlefields, including Manassas, Monocacy, Cedar Creek, according to the Civil War Preservation Trust.

"Our biggest concern is the likely possibility that these electric lines will be developed within the park viewshed," says Bryan Faehner, a spokesman for the National Parks Conservation Association, a nonprofit group based in Washington. "It degrades the experience of park visitors who are going to places to be inspired, to know what makes our country what it is today – and then look across a national historic site and see a big power line."

The current plan would affect about 100,000 acres of land protected by conservation easements, opponents estimate. Although much of the line follows an existing corridor, critics say the new line's much taller towers – at least 120 feet high – would stick out above the tree line and could be visible from long stretches of the Appalachian Trail in Virginia.

"We can't have huge transmission power lines cutting through existing neighborhoods or over huge swaths of open space, especially historically significant land," Rep. Frank Wolf (news, bio, voting record) (R) of Virginia said in a recent statement. "Every area of the country could confront the same controversy we're seeing."

Mr. Wolf is working with a bipartisan group to reverse provisions in the Energy Policy Act of 2005 that allow the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission to preempt local and state zoning rules by creating two "national corridors," zones for transmission lines that encompass major chunks of 11 states. Both the mid-Atlantic and Southwest corridors (crossing Southern California and Arizona) are still officially "draft" proposals set to be finalized next month.

In fact, company officials say the lines move mostly along existing right-of-ways for power lines and that they will work through state regulators – not ram the line through using a federal mandate.

"We plan to go through the state process to address local concerns and to use mainly existing corridors," says Paul Koonce, CEO of Dominion Energy, the transmission and pipeline division of Dominion Resources. "We want to minimize any impact and we will do that."

But neither he nor other Dominion officials will rule out using the new national corridor as a backup option should Virginia deny it a permit.

While the company, federal officials, and regional transmission authorities are pushing a wider plan for the Northeast that includes at least seven other lines as a way to improve reliability, expert opinion is split on the matter.

One recent study by PJM Interconnection, which oversees power trading and grid reliability across all or parts of 13 states from the Midwest to the East Coast, found that consumers pay an extra \$2 billion or more because of grid congestion.

Others, however, say the new lines will mean vast profits for power companies that can sell far more cheap coal power into high-price areas on the East Coast like New York City and Long Island.

"Basically, the folks with an economic interest in more transmission are promoting this concept that it will improve reliability," says George Loehr, vice chairman of the executive committee of the New York State Reliability Council, a nonprofit that works closely with the New York Independent System Operator to ensure grid reliability. But reliability depends on daily operating standards and better oversight, not new lines, he says.

"You can take any system and add transmission to it and you're not going to make the system more reliable just by doing that," he says.

Is an interconnected grid weaker?

It's also possible for transmission lines to make the grid less reliable, some experts say.

"The reliability problem is a subtle one because the larger, more interconnected the system is, the more vulnerable you are to cascading blackouts and failures," says Hyde Merrill, a transmission expert who has analyzed grid data for the Piedmont Environmental Council, a group opposing the Dominion power line.

PJM, which has applied to the Energy Department for three new corridors for proposed power lines, rejects that notion.

"We can order transmission owners to build lines, but we cannot order generation to be built," says Ray Dotter, a PJM spokesman. "So if we are seeing overloads developing, the only thing we can order is power lines. Our primary mission is to keep lights on. So you need to do what you need to do if generation is not available locally."

Federal officials say the fact that power companies may make more money off such projects is beside the point.

"I reject the notion that this is somehow inappropriate," adds Kevin Kolevar, director of the Energy Department's Office of Electricity Delivery and Energy Reliability. "The point here is to provide a balance to the system."

But for Cameron Eaton, a Delaplane, Va., resident who teaches horseback riding, having a Dominion Resources power line run through her 100-acre farm raises legal liability questions that would wreck her business, she says.

"This is a gem of our country," she says. "It's just a crying shame that instead of residents and visitors looking out across a valley not much different from Civil War times, they might be staring at a bunch of power lines instead."

"It may look like I'm just one little spot on many miles of power lines," she adds. "But I'm not going to go down easy."