

Civil War News Roundup - 09/20/2007
Courtesy of the Civil War Preservation Trust

www.civilwar.org

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Important military crossing at Wellford's Ford
By Clark "Bud" Hall

09/20/2007

Culpeper Star-Exponent

http://www.starexponent.com/servlet/Satellite?pagename=CSE/MGArticle/CSE_MGArticle&c=MGArticle&cid=1173352825461

More than anywhere else in this country, Culpeper County yet retains unequaled topographical gems whereupon one can stand precisely in the footsteps of immortal Civil War commanders. And if you share this ambition of engaging in historical séance - a fantasy so rewarding, yet so bewildering to the unwashed - then I will share with you a place where Lee, Jackson, Stuart, Longstreet, Early, A.P. Hill, Meade, Sedgwick, Buford, Custer, and Upton all walked or trotted within two feet of each other between 1862-1864. This unique feature: Wellford's Ford, on the Hazel River, the "Big Fork's historic gateway to the Little Fork" (or vice versa).

Place yourself in a coach in 1860 which you boarded after debarking a ship in Fredericksburg, with your destination Winchester; or points west. The direct route northwest was via Kirtley's Rolling Road, traversing in front of Madden's Tavern, and on into Brandy Station via the Fredericksburg Plank Road. From Brandy Station (where you enjoy a cup of brandy), your coach passes modest St. James Church as you proceed west on the Jeffersonton Pike, also known as the Winchester Turnpike (now abandoned).

Your coach tops a beautiful hill (Yew Ridge) and suddenly wheels down a gentle slope before Dr. Robert Wellford's estate, Farley. As the wagon circles Farley, you descend a long, steep pitch to a pretty stream once called, sweetly, the Aestham River, but now known (benignly) as the Hazel. To the right stands old Tom Stubblefield's mill and his modest tenant house. To the left, the mill dam, with the mill race roaring just beneath the carriage.

Your coach rolls just a few yards beyond the mill and soon your wagon's wheels dip into the swift water as the coach easily negotiates a flat, hard, shallow bottom-the old English definition of a "good ford." Climbing out of the river, the coach enters the Little Fork and tomorrow night you will sleep in Winchester's venerable Taylor Hotel.

This description of a fictitious journey, occurring in reality thousands of times, conveys historical context for the reasons underpinning Wellford's distinction as the most significant ford on the Hazel during the Civil War.

Consider some trivia questions: Which ford did the entire army of Northern Virginia cross to initiate the Second Manassas and Antietam campaigns? Which ford witnessed as many cavalry crossings and battles in 1862 and 1863 as did nearby Beverly's Ford on the Rappahannock? Which ford witnessed an entire Union army corps of fifteen thousand men guard its banks during the winter of 1863-1864? Wellford's Ford, times three.

Although erroneously labeled on Civil War maps as “Welford’s Ford,” this famous river crossing so well known to Colonial travelers and Civil War soldiers, was named after Dr. Robert Wellford, who owned the land about Farley prior to the war. It is significant to note that the war did not destroy Stubblefield’s Mill as both Gray and Blue soldiers kept this gristmill running throughout the long conflict. Both sides of course consumed bread, and whoever retained custody at the moment kept the big mill wheels grinding, day and night.

A final comment: It is a fact most of Culpeper’s unrivaled Civil War features are in private hands, and we can only hope that those who own the sites are sensitive to protecting the resource they are privileged to control. Many, many Culpeper citizens own historic properties and most protect these homes and adjacent historic landscape with a fierce pride-while realizing that as they generously spend their own assets, they are themselves unselfishly preserving Culpeper’s rich Civil War history.

I can report to you Wellford’s Ford is protected and cared for simply because my friend Scott Stratton and his loving family treasure deeply the history of this nearly forgotten river crossing. But Scott has not forgotten. He never will. After all, Scott walks in the footsteps of giants.

Clark “Bud” Hall is the leading authority on Culpeper’s role in the Civil War. E-mail clarkbhall@aol.com.

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Maury commissioner takes steps to preserve GM land
Heritage tourism, school envisioned on acreage near Rippavilla
By JILL CECIL WIERSMA, Staff Writer

09/19/2007

Nashville Tennessean (TN)

<http://www.tennessean.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20070919/COUNTY0904/709190307/1142/COUNTY04>

SPRING HILL —Thirty acres of Civil War battlefield land are destroyed every day, Maury County Commissioner Ty Cobb said, citing the Civil War Preservation Trust.

It's motivated Cobb to seek support from county commissioners to buy 86 acres, called Parcel A, from General Motors. In his mind, about 30 acres of that land could be used for a new school since the county school board has already pointed out that it will need several more new schools in the near future to keep up with its growth.

"My goal is to build a school there and preserve the rest," Cobb said. "Even if they don't want a school there, they (commissioners) would rather have a school than 1,200 homes on the whole site."

The county's budget committee voted 4-2 to allow Cobb to make GM a \$946,000 offer. It went to the full commission Monday for a vote. Days before, Cobb said he felt pretty certain that many others also believe it is important to preserve this land.

"I was very pleased," he said of the budget committee vote. "I hope I have 15-16 votes from the commission. I know two I don't have."

GM has already committed to turning over 100 acres around the historic Rippavilla Plantation mansion. Along with that, it is giving Rippavilla Inc., which manages the plantation, \$100,000 for each of the next 10 years.

It gives hope to people like Pam Perdue, the nonprofit's executive director.

"We greatly appreciate that," Perdue said, adding that she's excited about Cobb's efforts, too. "To allow that to become strip malls or residential development, it would destroy the historic view shed. And it would also destroy one of the last remaining Civil War battle sites in Middle Tennessee."

'Timing is critical'

It appears GM wants to close a sale by the end of the year, local officials say. Cobb said it makes the timing critical for the commission to take action. If he gets the thumbs-up to make an offer, he said he will send it immediately to GM, which will have the next 45 days to consider it.

Cobb said he has a good feeling about GM's willingness to consider the offer, even though he fully expects developers will outbid the county. General Motors extended its deadline to accept bids specifically so the county could have additional time to prepare an offer.

"Even if GM kicks back our offer, we're still involved," he said. "Hands down, they've been willing to work with us."

Dan Brown, executive director of the Tennessee Preservation Trust, said land where the Battle of Spring Hill was fought is among the trust's top 10 most endangered Civil War sites. It's also one of the 38 most critical sites in the entire war, he said.

Historians consider Tennessee the most important location in the western theater of the war. The state was the last to join the Confederacy and didn't do so on the first vote, Brown said. It was an extremely divided state.

"For the western theater, the sites here are extremely important," he said. "Spring Hill is one of the fastest-developing urban centers. The community is very literally exploding. There's potential to preserve this site in near-original condition."

Could be part of trail

There's a chance to incorporate the land into the National Park Service, Brown said. It has hired a consultant who was in Maury County last week looking at ways to tie together battlefields and other historic sites for a Civil War heritage trail as part of the war's sesquicentennial. That could include "Jackson's Shortcut," a roadway Andrew Jackson used in 1814 on his way to the Battle of New Orleans.

"They're talking about building houses literally against that road," Brown said if Parcel A is developed.

Brown said there's an opportunity to use the land for heritage tourism. It needs to be added to the National Register of Historic Places.

"We're working feverishly to see how we can be advocates to preserve this land," he said. "If you lose them, you lose them forever."

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Historic Sleettown Now Part of Perryville Battlefield
By Brenda S. Edwards, Staff Writer

19/16/2007

The Danville Advocate-Messenger (KY)

http://www.amnews.com/public_html/?module=displaystory&story_id=34627&format=html

SLEETTOWN - Descendants of the Sleet brothers who bought land for a community for free African Americans after the Civil War gathered Friday for a celebration of their freedom.

Two-thirds of the gathering of the "Sleettown: Gateway to Freedom 1865-1931" celebration hosted by the state Department of Parks, Perryville Battlefield State Historic Site and Civil War Preservation Trust were descendants of Henry, Preston and George Sleet, born in Boyle County prior to the Civil War.

"Most of the descendants still live in the Perryville community where they moved after all people in the once thriving community left in the 1930s for bigger towns and cities," said Lyda Sleet Smalley of Perryville. She is the great-great-granddaughter of George Sleet. Her children left work early to attend the ceremony.

Smalley had heard about Sleettown while growing up, but didn't know about a cemetery where her ancestors are buried. There are no visible markers on the gravesite at the top of a hill overlooking the countryside.

The community was where former slaves lived after the Civil War.

Mary Quinn Ramer, of Danville, who began research on Sleettown while she still was in college, is elated with the progress made at the site.

"We didn't know a few years ago if this would happen," she said. "I'm so thrilled to see this day. I used to hang out with Raymond Sleet (late husband of Perryville Mayor Anne Sleet) on Thursdays while I was in college."

Link pen

While Ramer was head of the Danville/Boyle County Convention and Visitors Bureau, she also assisted with a grant application for funds to purchase 97 acres of the 150 originally bought for the town site. The property ties two sections of the 570-acre park where the Battle of Perryville was fought in October 1862.

"This property is the link pen that connects the battlefield properties," said T.J. Miller, commissioner of the state Department of Parks. He was on hand for the celebration and unveiled a new marker on the property.

The state purchased the land earlier this year through a \$324,000 Transportation Enhancement grant. Civil War Preservation Trust donated another \$107,000 to match the grant.

Derrick Ramsey, deputy secretary of the state Commerce Cabinet, recalled a small segregated town in Florida where he grew up during the 1970s.

He said there is nothing left of that African American town - all the hotels, bars and restaurants are gone. It's as if it never existed, he said.

Ramsey, a former University of Kentucky and professional football player, encouraged people of color to tell their stories and said as a historian, he never misses an opportunity to help.

People make history

He praised the Sleet descendants for remembering their people who made a sacrifice for future generations.

Ron Bryant, historian for the state parks system, said it is people who make history and Sleettown was one of more than 30 African-American communities established in Kentucky after the Civil War. They made a stamp on Kentucky history.

"You have inherited a better world through the work of your grand- and great-grandparents," he said. "They taught values that went beyond racial discord."

Bryant said war scared the community at one time but happiness has taken its place.

He told the crowd to tell their children and grandchildren they were a part of the community.

"Sleettown is a symbol of what was good for Kentucky. I want you to relish it and remember it," Bryant said.

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Attacking the Trenches of a Disputed Development

By Linda Wheeler

09/13/2007

Washington Post (DC)

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/09/11/AR2007091102060.html>

Motorists caught in rush-hour traffic along Route 340 outside Harpers Ferry last month encountered an unusual sight. Patio torches flickered along a 1,900-foot path next to the highway but still within Harpers Ferry National Historical Park. Nearby stood a cluster of protesters, each holding a candle.

The torches marked the site and first anniversary of an illegal excavation by a consortium of developers from Jefferson County, W.Va., who dug two long trenches last year and installed water and sewer lines. They did not have a permit. They did, however, have an easement on the land granted by a former owner who had sold the 38-acre Perry Orchard tract to a preservation organization for \$1.5 million in 2005. The land was then given to the National Park Service.

The holder of the easement, Jefferson Utilities, and the other developers have announced plans to build a massive residential and commercial development near the national park. The group had applied for a construction permit but had not completed the process when the excavation took place Aug. 19 and 20 of last year.

Bernard Snyder, president of Jefferson Utilities, did not return a call asking for comment. The privately owned corporation was formed in 1985 for the purpose of owning and operating a public water system in Jefferson County.

The area where the trenches were dug is part of the park's School House Ridge Battlefield, where Confederate Maj. Gen. Thomas "Stonewall" Jackson orchestrated one of the largest mass surrenders in American military history on Sept. 15, 1862. He took more than 12,000 Union soldiers prisoner, a feat described by Jackson biographer James I. Robertson Jr. as "the most complete victory in the history of the Southern Confederacy."

Although the protests of the developers' work last year at Harpers Ferry were immediate and loud, neither the Department of the Interior nor the Justice Department has taken action. At the time of the excavation, the National Park Service released a statement saying it was "actively reviewing the matter with the Department of Justice and considering options for an appropriate response."

This month, a Park Service spokesman said, "The Department of the Interior still has this matter under advisement. In addition, DOI is working to make sure that easement holders of park lands obtain the necessary permits before undertaking construction on park lands."

The speakers at the Aug. 17 candle- and torchlight vigil expressed frustration with the slow response and concern that others may see what happened as encouragement to do the same.

"What happened last summer at Perry Orchard was nothing short of the wanton destruction of one of the nation's great historic treasures," said James Lighthizer, president of the Civil War Preservation Trust. "Harpers Ferry and the 390 other units of the National Park system belong to all Americans. We are here tonight to ensure that their sanctity will always be protected from pettiness and greed."

He said members of his organization had contributed \$300,000 to buy the land at Perry Orchard.

Alan Spears, legislative representative of the National Parks Conservation Association, told the crowd: "The situation here at Harpers Ferry is particularly tragic because the developers clearly knew they needed to secure permission from the park before undertaking any construction. They applied for the necessary permits but, when the waiting became inconvenient, proceeded without authorization."

Rob Nieweg, director of the Southern Field Office of the National Trust for Historic Preservation, called the vigil "a miserable anniversary."

"A year has passed, but we have not forgotten what happened on this ground," Nieweg said. "We are confident those responsible for this will be held accountable for the destruction they caused."

Scot Faulkner, president of the Friends of Harpers Ferry National Historical Park, has tracked the developers' several attempts to secure approval for construction, even taking their request to two jurisdictions. When their annexation request to Charles Town was turned down, they tried unsuccessfully to get Jefferson County to approve their plans.

"Clearly, when the construction was done, these developers already had massive development plans in mind," Faulkner said. "They must have thought that already having access to water and sewer facilities would all but guarantee their proposal's success. Thankfully, first the City of Charles Town, and then Jefferson County, had the vision to reject their unnecessary and ill-fitting development."

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Sen. Byrd offers bill to study site of Civil War battle

By DAVE McMILLION

09/13/2007

Hagerstown Herald-Mail (MD)

http://www.herald-mail.com/?module=displaystory&story_id=174649&format=html

CHARLES TOWN, W.VA. - U.S. Sen. Robert C. Byrd said Wednesday that he has introduced legislation asking the National Park Service to study the site of the Battle of Shepherdstown to determine the national significance of the property.

The work will help determine if the Civil War battlefield should be declared a National Civil War Battlefield and whether it should be made part of Harpers Ferry National Historical Park or Antietam National Battlefield, according to a news release from Byrd's office.

Some Jefferson County residents began discussing the idea of establishing a park to save the battlefield off Trough Road east of Shepherdstown following a controversial proposal to build 152 homes on 112 acres.

Far Away Farm LLC's proposal to build the homes generated opposition from several residents and preservation groups who say the site was part of the Battle of Shepherdstown.

After winding through a long county regulatory process, members of the Jefferson County Zoning Board of Appeals turned down a conditional-use permit for the development, saying it was not compatible with the area where it was going to be built.

The asking price for the property at one time was \$3.6 million.

The developers are appealing the decision through the state Supreme Court, according to officials trying to save the site from development.

Members of Shepherdstown Battlefield Preservation Association Inc., a local organization that is trying to save the battlefield, have been raising money in an attempt to purchase the site and have raised \$125,000.

The group was working to obtain a \$250,000 state grant, but that was not approved due to a problem at the Jefferson County government level, said Ed Dunleavy, president of the group.

Discussion about the battlefield is on today's agenda for the Jefferson County Commission.

Dunleavy said Wednesday that determining the national significance of the battlefield is straightforward because that is documented.

If that is successful, the next steps would be congressional approval to enlarge either Harpers Ferry National Historical Park or Antietam National Battlefield to take in the site and obtaining funding to purchase it, Dunleavy said.

Shepherdstown Battlefield Preservation Association would hopefully sell it to the federal government if it can purchase it, Dunleavy said.

"We're looking at still another two or three years (of work)," Dunleavy said.

The battle fought in Shepherdstown on Sept. 19 and 20, 1862, brought to an end the Army of Northern Virginia's Maryland Campaign and was a significant factor in Gen. Robert E. Lee's decision to retreat deeper into the Shenandoah Valley, according to Byrd's office.

There were various northern and southern troop movements in the Trough Road area after Lee pulled his army back across the Potomac River and on Sept. 20, the two sides clashed in open fields around the Far Away Farm property, Dunleavy has said.

At least 96 soldiers were killed.

"West Virginia is home to many great landmarks that are a significant part of our nation's history. I am pleased to be working with the Shepherdstown Battlefield Preservation Association to help initiate this National Park Service study," Byrd, D-W.Va., said in the release.

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Civil War Preservationists in Town for First Time
By Eric Brown, Staff Writer

09/08/2007

Vicksburg Post (MS)

<http://www.vicksburgpost.com/articles/2007/09/08/news/news01.txt>

About 150 members of the nation's largest nonprofit organization devoted to Civil War battlefield preservation are in Vicksburg this weekend.

Representatives of the Civil War Preservation Trust, which conducts annually what members call a grand review, are in Vicksburg for the first time.

Melissa Meisner, director of events for the CWPT, said the visit to Vicksburg, like all others, is to allow the trust's color bearers, or individuals who donate at least \$1,000 a year to the organization, to tour Civil War battlefields.

"The grand reviews are a nice way of letting our color bearers see what good their donations are doing," said Meisner, also the CWPT's color bearer coordinator.

The group kicked off the weekend Friday evening with tours of Vicksburg's historic homes. Today, they will head to Hinds County to visit Dillon Plantation and Champion Hill.

A dinner featuring Jeff Shaara, author of the Pulitzer prize-winning novel "Gods and Generals," is set for tonight, and on Sunday the group will tour the Vicksburg National Military Park.

This year's tour group includes about 10 employees from CWPT's headquarters in Hagerstown, Md., and about 140 color bearers from across the country.

For John Bamberl, a color bearer from Scottsdale, Ariz., this was his first trip to Vicksburg. However, he has read books on the Vicksburg Campaign of 1863.

"This was a very pivotal and decisive battle — very crucial to the outcome of the Civil War," Bamberl said.

Also on the group's agenda this weekend is presenting VNMP Park Historian Terry Winschel with the 2007 CWPT National Park Service Preservationist of the Year award, an honor announced in April. Winschel will serve as a tour guide for the group.

"We would like to someday preserve the entirety of the Vicksburg Campaign, which encompasses hundreds of square miles," he said. "This trust is crucial in accomplishing something like that."

The CWPT, formed in 1999, uses the donations of its nearly 70,000 members, about 500 of which are color bearers, to purchase places significant to Civil War history and convert them

to historic sites and parks, said Mary Goundrey, the organization's deputy director of communications.

The organization was created from two trusts — the Association for the Preservation of Civil War Sites and the Civil War Trust. The CWPT has preserved more than 24,000 acres in 18 states, including 4,206 acres in Mississippi and 1,573 acres related to the Vicksburg Campaign. Last year, the CWPT's color bearers toured Charleston, S.C. Next year, they will travel to Washington, D.C.

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Museum Likely to Move Civil War Artifacts Out of Richmond
By Larry O'Dell, Associated Press Writer

09/05/2007

Associated Press/Jacksonville Times-Union

<http://www.jacksonville.com/apnews/stories/090507/D8RFDOB81.shtml>

RICHMOND, Va. - Fewer people are coming to the Museum of the Confederacy, so the museum may be taking its artifacts to the people.

Museum officials said Wednesday that they are exploring the idea of spreading the bulk of the world's largest collection of Civil War artifacts among three sites outside the former Confederate capital while continuing to maintain a presence in Richmond.

Two likely locations are the Appomattox Court House National Park and the Chancellorsville Battlefield Visitor Center near Fredericksburg, museum president and CEO S. Waite Rawls III said. The third site has not been determined.

Rawls said the plan would establish a museum "system" that would better serve the mission of educating the public about the Civil War through exhibits and research.

"This is a major league grand slam home run from that point of view," Rawls said.

The museum's attendance woes were the catalyst for the proposal, he said. Visitation has fallen from about 92,000 in the early 1990s to 44,000 last year.

"But for the declining attendance, we'd prefer to stay on the historic site," Rawls said.

The White House of the Confederacy, where Confederate President Jefferson Davis lived during the Civil War, will continue to operate at the site. Also, the museum would keep its offices, artifact storage, library and research center in the current location.

Rawls attributed the lagging attendance to encroaching development of Virginia Commonwealth University's medical campus.

"It's just too hard for the visitor to get here," Rawls said. "I wish visitors had more perseverance than they do, but if you make it hard for them they will go somewhere easier for them."

Appomattox and Chancellorsville would be easier. Both sites already draw tens of thousands of visitors annually, providing a ready audience for artifacts that would largely be related to those attractions.

Chancellorsville was the site of Confederate Gen. Robert E. Lee's greatest victory, and Appomattox is the site where Lee surrendered to Union Gen. Ulysses S. Grant two years later.

Rawls said officials in those two localities are excited about the economic development potential of the proposed new museum sites.

"The relocation would substantially increase visitation, extend the visitor's stay in our area, and result in a tremendous, positive economic impact for Appomattox," said state Del. Watkins M. Abbitt Jr., I-Appomattox.

Rawls said the plans would require the museum to raise about \$15 million from public and private sources over the next five years. The goal is to complete construction of the new facilities by the Civil War's sesquicentennial in 2011.

Museum officials want to gauge public reaction and gain confidence in the financial feasibility before giving final approval to the plan, Rawls said.

"It's looking real good so far," he said.

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Historian Knows Forest and Trees of Civil War

By Tamela Baker

09/04/2007

Hagerstown Herald Mail

http://www.herald-mail.com/?module=displaystory&story_id=173918&format=html

SHARPSBURG - A long-ago conflict came to life Monday for a dozen or so members of the National Trust for Historic Preservation, who huddled around famed Civil War historian Edwin C. Bearss at Antietam National Battlefield.

Hanging on every word as Bearss described the opening clashes of what would be a long day of bitter battle and bloodshed, they were treated to the kind of detail one doesn't always get in history books.

Evoking, perhaps, an image of Gen. Douglas MacArthur, Bearss waved a well-worn baton to show the direction from which the troops of either side advanced for the inevitable confrontation.

But happily, the only advancing troops on this Labor Day were a few joggers and other tourists. And the closest thing to caissons were farm vehicles.

In the community of Civil War historians, Bearss is an icon. Chief Historian Emeritus for the National Park Service, he has conducted these battlefield tours as if it were a full-time job since retiring in the mid-1990s.

"I wouldn't do this 300 days a year if I didn't enjoy it," Bearss said.

The members of this particular group have traveled from all over the country - Chicago, Kentucky, California - to spend a week on a "Civil War Journey" with Bearss. Their tour continues in Gettysburg, Pa., and concludes Thursday in Washington, where it began Friday. Also included was a tour of Harpers Ferry, W.Va., and lectures on the Battle of South Mountain in southern Washington County.

During Saturday's activities, including a lecture by local historian Tom Clemens at the 18th-century home of Brien and Chase Poffenberger in Sharpsburg, Bearss was treated "like a rock star," tour director Fran Boronski said. He signed autographs and answered questions from people who either knew him from his reputation or recognized him from Ken Burns' PBS documentary "The Civil War." Bearss also was a consultant for the film "Gods and Generals," shot locally.

Clearly relishing the opportunity to spread his knowledge of history, he treated his students to an extemporaneous review of the developing battle as well as those not-so-obvious tidbits that can transform history from dull facts to engrossing story.

For example, while noting the monument near the Joseph Poffenberger farm that commemorates Clara Barton's service during the battle, Bearss explained the nurse's unusual presence on the battlefield evolved in part from a personality conflict.

In Washington, Dorothea Dix was the Union's superintendent of nursing. But "strong-willed people do not like each other," Bearss noted, and "Clara Barton was a lone ranger." So she got permission from Secretary of War Edwin Stanton to serve with the troops, he said.

At each stop, Bearss encouraged questions from the group.

"He's never been stumped that I know of," a visitor from South Dakota said.

Bearss credits that to "a good memory." And he credits his grandmother, a teacher, with engendering his love of history. His early interest was in the travels of Lewis and Clark, he said, but his interest in Civil War history began "in 1937, when I was in the sixth grade," he said.

A World War II veteran wounded in 1944, Bearss said he believes his service in the field gives him credibility that other historians might not have.

"I've been shot at and hit," he said. "I hope I'm an amalgamation of book historian and battlefield historian."

And of all the fields he's visited and all the tours he's given, he said his favorite one-day tours are Antietam and the battlefield at Perryville, Ky.

"They both have maintained their handsome, pastoral character," he said.

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At Gettysburg, A New Battle: Urban Sprawl

09/03/2007

Associated Press/Tri State Observer

<http://www.tristateobserver.com/modules.php?op=modload&name=News&file=article&sid=8671>

GETTYSBURG, PA - In 1863, Abraham Lincoln stood here and gave the speech that was to become his most famous. With brevity and eloquence he spoke of the liberty and equality upon which this country was founded. He looked forward to the Union's salvation, the end of slavery – and "a new birth of freedom."

What he couldn't have foreseen delivering the Gettysburg Address that afternoon was that a Southern colonel would one day claim this hallowed ground in the form of a KFC just beyond its gates. Or that the site of the battle's largest field hospital would be paved over. Today, a sizable chunk of Camp Letterman serves as the parking lot for Giant supermarket – a salmon slab of concrete with a few benches and two small plaques the only reminder of its historical significance.

Last year activists fought off the unthinkable: a 5,000-slot casino within a mile of the battleground. Yet Gettysburg stubbornly remains on a list of "Endangered Battlefields" compiled annually by the nonprofit Civil War Preservation Trust.

It's not just Gettysburg either. The storied sites pored over in every American History class and obsessively revisited by Civil War buffs are far from uniformly protected. From suburban sprawl to mining to a lack of funds for maintenance and repair, threats to Civil War battlefields are legion.

Many are scrambling to spruce up their grounds in time for the Civil War's 150th anniversary in 2011. Far from being diminished through the years, the significance of these battlegrounds, as a sort of collective time capsule, has only grown.

"The bonding between past and present is really the essence of understanding history," says James McPherson, the Pulitzer Prize-winning Civil War historian and Princeton professor, who has led his share of battlefield tours. "If these places didn't exist, we would never have the kind of connection between past and present that we do now."

Yet as soon as one preservation crisis is managed, it seems another crops up. One National Park Service administrator likened the efforts to a game of whack-a-mole:

- Sunday marked the anniversary of the illegal excavation of Harpers Ferry in West Virginia. Antsy developers trespassed onto Park Service land to dig trenches for sewer and water piping in anticipation of a nearby development.
- In Cedar Creek, Va., a mining company is petitioning the county to have more than 600 battlefield acres rezoned so it can add five more quarries to its operations.

- And from Fort Morgan, Ala., to Fort Jackson and Fort Pike in New Orleans, funds are desperately needed to restore sites in sore disrepair.

Driving through Gettysburg, the park unfolds as a patchwork of public and private land. It's the most popular of the country's military parks, with nearly 2 million visitors each year. Yet in a head-spinning equation, only about 80 percent of its 6,000 acres are under Park Service protection. The rest is privately held, its use, in part, up to the discretion of its owners.

Just as troublesome to preservationists is the property beyond the official park boundary. "We have a hard enough time trying to protect what's in the boundaries without even worrying about what's outside," says Jim Johnson, Gettysburg's acting superintendent.

Yet much of that outlying property – such as the Baltimore Pike, a strip of land southeast of Gettysburg dotted with battlegrounds and field hospitals – is of historical consequence. It's also essential to maintaining the integrity of the viewshed. Preservationists worry that instead of cotton-puff clouds, the Gettysburg vistas will be crowded with housing developments.

The movement to preserve Civil War battlefields took hold in the late 1980s with the formation of the Association for the Preservation of Civil War Sites. In 1999, it merged with another organization to form the Civil War Preservation Trust (CWPT), which today has 70,000 members.

Not everyone is an enthusiastic conservationist, however. Once land comes under the jurisdiction of the National Park Service, it's off the tax roll – which can be burdensome for cash-strapped towns.

But the movement is proud of its successes. The CWPT says it has helped save more than 24,000 acres in 18 states. In fact, despite the work left to be done, Professor McPherson says American Civil War sites "may be the best preserved series of battlefields anywhere in the world."

"Europeans who come here are astonished by how much battlefield land has been preserved in the national park system," he says.

For Steve Braden, a visitor from Georgia here with his family, that can only be a good thing.

"To me this is as close as you get to sacred or hallowed ground in America," he says, wearing a baseball cap with the CWPT acronym. He is a member, visiting this battlefield for the first time since his college days in the 1970s.

Gettysburg Undergoes Major Renovation
By Stevenson Swanson, Tribune National Correspondent

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Chicago Tribune (IL)

http://www.chicagotribune.com/news/nationworld/chi-gettysburg_for_websep03,1,4682320.story?ctrack=1&cset=true

GETTYSBURG, Pa. - Stacks of recently cut tree trunks wait to be hauled away from the area around Devil's Den. A modern building on Cemetery Ridge that sits close to the scene of Pickett's Charge stands empty, facing demolition. On another part of the battlefield, construction workers are building a large structure shaped like a round barn.

With an estimated \$131 million in projects under way, the fields and farms around this small town in southern Pennsylvania probably haven't seen this much sustained activity since the three crucial days in July 1863 when 165,000 Union and Confederate troops clashed here in what is widely considered the turning point of the Civil War.

Gettysburg is at the forefront of an effort to restore many Civil War battlefields to something more closely resembling their appearance when they were the scenes of bloody struggles between the forces of North and South.

"If you can think of an historic landscape the same way that we're used to thinking of historic structures, the whole reason for doing this follows suit," said John Latschar, superintendent of the 6,000-acre Gettysburg National Military Park. "It's as important at Gettysburg as not adding stucco to Independence Hall." At the heart of these rehabilitation projects is a task that would seem an odd undertaking for the National Park Service, which administers many of the battlefields: cutting down hundreds of acres of trees.

In the 142 years since the war's end, fields that were once farmed have fallen fallow, allowing trees to grow and obscure what were clear lines of fire in 1863. At Gettysburg, where Civil War cannon are placed in the locations that artillery occupied during the battle, that has given rise to some odd juxtapositions.

"We had batteries of artillery pointing straight into mature stands of trees," said Gettysburg spokeswoman Katie Lawhon. "And over the years, we had lost a lot of fences. At Gettysburg, a fence could be the difference between life and death." Under a 1999 restoration plan, the park service will cut down 576 acres of woodland at Gettysburg that did not exist at the time of the battle, and replant 115 acres of trees that were there but have since disappeared. This year, work is focusing on clearing out trees around Devil's Den, a rocky outcropping that saw bitter fighting, and along a section of the Confederate line on Seminary Ridge.

In the course of the project, foresters are working to preserve "witness" trees, which were present on the gently rolling Pennsylvania hills when the forces of Confederate Gen. Robert E. Lee and Union commander Gen. George Meade collided.

The ambitious plan also calls for rehabilitating or reconstructing nearly 10 miles of historic farm lanes and roads and restoring 39 miles of fences, hedgerows and other field boundaries. And one of the most pervasive anachronisms on the battlefield--overhead power lines--are being buried.

Similar but smaller efforts have been undertaken at many other Civil War battlefields, including Antietam in Maryland, Chancellorsville and the Wilderness in Virginia, Chickamauga in Georgia and Vicksburg in Mississippi.

"It's much more difficult to explain the events that occurred on these battlefields if they don't look like they did during the Civil War," said Jim Campi of the Civil War Preservation Trust, a non-profit group that works to preserve Civil War battlefields. "If people can't see what decision-makers could see, they can't grasp what happened." But the park service and the non-profit Gettysburg Foundation, which is raising \$125 million toward the project's overall cost, are doing more than restoring the landscape at Gettysburg.

A new \$103 million museum and visitors center, designed to resemble a Pennsylvania farm to help it blend into the historic landscape, is under construction to replace the park service's cramped and outdated facility, which sits across the road from the national cemetery where Abraham Lincoln delivered the Gettysburg Address later in 1863.

The new building, which will open in April, will contain more extensive and updated exhibits, telling the story of the battle from the standpoint of the commanders, the common soldiers, the citizens of Gettysburg and the war correspondents who covered the battle.

Among the highlights of the new museum will be the newly restored Gettysburg cyclorama, a 360-degree painting that depicts the key moment of the battle, Pickett's Charge, when Rebel soldiers came close to breaking through the center of the Union army's position on July 3, the last day of the battle.

The massive 1884 painting, by Paul Philippoteaux, measures nearly 360 feet long and 27 feet high, and it weighs more than three tons. A team of conservators is repairing extensive damage and adding a missing 14-foot strip to the top of the cyclorama. Foundation spokeswoman Dru Anne Neil said the \$11.2 million project, which will be finished in September of 2008, is the largest art conservation project in America.

On such a historic site, controversy is almost bound to accompany any change. A group of architectural preservationists has sued the park service over its plans to demolish the building that used to house the cyclorama, a striking 1962 concrete structure designed by famed Modernist architect Richard Neutra. The building is on the National Register of Historic Places.

"It's too important a structure to demolish and just throw away," said Christine Madrid French, president of the Recent Past Preservation Network, the Arlington, Va., group that filed suit, charging that the park service did not study alternatives such as moving the building. "The building has a lot of life left in it, and a lot to give to people in terms of helping them understand the architecture of the time." But park service officials say the

Neutra building never functioned well, citing a leaky roof and inadequate temperature and humidity controls that contributed to the cyclorama's deterioration.

Latschar, the Gettysburg superintendent, said about 970 Union soldiers were killed, captured, or wounded in the area around Neutra's cyclorama building and the current visitors center, adding to the importance of returning that part of the battlefield to its 1863 condition.

No major action took place at the site of the new museum and visitors center.

Latschar said moving the cyclorama building would be prohibitively expensive, but French said she is getting more detailed proposals from companies that specialize in relocating large buildings.

Despite the effort and expense that is being devoted to preserving the battlefield, Gettysburg was included on the Civil War Preservation Trust's list of the top 10 endangered Civil War sites earlier this year because of what's happening outside the battlefield's boundaries. Housing development is threatening the region's rural character as more people move to the area who commute to Baltimore or Washington.

"For a long time, it was just outside commuting distance," said trust spokeswoman Mary Goundrey. "What had been a really rural area is almost in danger of becoming a bedroom community."

Unison Group Presses For National Battlefield Status

By Margaret Morton

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Leesburg Today (VA)

<http://www.leesburg2day.com/articles/2007/08/31/news/fp817unison083107.txt>

If the efforts of the Unison Preservation Society are successful, the three-day 1862 Battle of Unison could soon receive national recognition as an engagement of tactical and political significance that helped protect Confederate Gen. Robert E. Lee's retreat southward following the Battle of Antietam.

The battle received considerable contemporary attention in national newspapers, including a comment in the New York Times that the Union had lost a great opportunity because of Gen. George B. McClellan's procrastination in moving against Lee and the fierce opposition by Confederate Gen. J.E.B. Stewart that effectively held up the Army of the Potomac for enough time to allow Lee to escape a Union trap. Lee's escape ultimately resulted in McClellan's being fired as commander of the Army of the Potomac by President Abraham Lincoln.

But the Unison engagement failed to make the 1993 National Park Service list of "significant" Civil War battles and in recent years it has been thought of more as one of that war's innumerable small skirmishes.

The Unison Preservation Society has been seeking to change that perception, working over the past year with the American Battlefield Protection Program of the National Park Service to elevate the battle's significance in Civil War history, according to society president Paul Hodge.

The society received a \$20,000 study grant from the ABPP last fall to take a fresh look at the battle and to map the battlefield. The society expects to have both the revised history and the map in time for the Oct. 27 Unison Heritage Day when the small southwest Loudoun village hopes to celebrate the completion of the study and the establishment of an official Battle of Unison battlefield.

Preservation Society member Mitch Diamond has been the guiding force behind the effort, digging deep into the history of the battle, which today is seen as having a significant influence in the events following the bloody stalemate at the Sept. 17, 1862, battle at Antietam.

Diamond disputes the characterization of the engagement as a small skirmish, noting the 5,000 cavalry, infantry and artillery that fought in and around Unison between Philomont and Upperville Nov. 1-3, 1862. Stewart's 1,000-strong force managed to delay the vanguard of the far larger, 90,000 Army of the Potomac for just enough time to enable Lee to get away. When the Union forces finally broke through Nov. 3, Lee had escaped to Culpeper, with the way south to Richmond unimpeded.

A group of historians studying the battle believes the engagement was of much greater significance than earlier thought, according to Diamond-in large part because of the direct involvement of President Lincoln. The president visited McClellan at the battlefield shortly after the Battle of Antietam.

According to historians, Lincoln saw clearly that if McClellan moved quickly and took his large force down the east side of the Blue Ridge he could cut Lee off from reaching Richmond. But, McClelland did not follow the president's direction until weeks later, when Lincoln sent a long, hand-written letter ordering McClellan to take action. Similarly, Lee waited around to see what action the Union general would take. A week after receiving Lincoln's letter, McClellan started to move. Lee, anticipating McClellan's route, dispatched Stewart and his men, who moved through Bloomfield and Unison to engage the Union cavalry stationed at Philomont and hoping to block Lee's path.

"Stewart was very clever, both by his tactics and his knowledge of the terrain," Diamond said, noting that it took until the third day for Union Gen. Alfred Pleasanton's cavalry to break through at Upperville: "just long enough for Lee to escape."

An irate Lincoln saw the ruse was foiled and fired McClellan at Rectortown, Diamond said. "If he'd done it at once as Lincoln asked him to," the war could have ended or been much shorter, Diamond said.

How the new mapping, being conducted by National Park Service staff historian David Lowe, and the historical report will be used is as yet uncertain, according to Diamond.

"If we want to go further and put [the battlefield] on the National Register, we can use it for strong evidence," because the text lists the importance of Stewart's actions, Diamond said. Virginia Department of Historic Resources Director Kathleen Kilpatrick wrote a letter to the society stating that the battle was of sufficient significance for it to be eligible to be considered for listing on the state and national Register of Historic Properties.

Paul Hawke, Chief of the American Battlefield Program, said the battle site "deserves the opportunity" to go through the process of being considered for register listing and for the chance to see if it is found nationally significant. The ABP is helping the Unison society gather the information that would allow them to further pursue national recognition, he said this week.

"They have a good site, although there is some endangerment," he said.

Upperville resident and Civil War enthusiast Paul Ziluca is chairman of the county's Citizens Committee for the Historic Cavalry Battles of Aldie, Middleburg and Upperville. Those three battles, which Ziluca says really should be listed as one action, and the 1862 Battle of Ball's Bluff, today are the only Loudoun battles recognized on the federal 1993 Civil War Sites Advisory Commission. Ziluca said the study took a new look at the more than 10,000 known engagements and came up with a tally of 384 significant battles.

"Unison was not among them," he said. But, further research and the "nailing down" of Lincoln's words to McClellan as well as the significance of Stewart's tactics indicate a different take on the battle, he suggested.

But Hawke said the 1993 Civil War sites list won't change, noting the reduction was a conscious decision to arrive at a manageable chunk of battle sites. "Why Unison was left off, I don't know," he said.

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Civil War Battle Remembered

By Toni Walthall Editor news@jacksonvillepatriot.com

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Exactly 144 years ago Monday at 1 p.m., a small crowd gathered on a site just north of Reed's Bridge on Arkansas 161 to dedicate a history panel depicting the Jacksonville Civil War battle that delayed the Union's approach on Little Rock.

"Aug. 27, 1863 federal troops came in from Brownsville in full force," said Reed's Bridge Battlefield Preservation Society President Tommy Dupree.

Comparing Monday's sticky summer heat to what Civil War period armies would have endured, Dupree said federal forces embedded along a nearby ridge and pointed their cannons toward Reed's Bridge.

Just south of the old Bayou Meto crossing, near present day Cloverdale Road, Confederate troops had already encamped, facing six cannons northward to ward off Union forces from crossing at the Jacksonville site.

"For two to three hours, there was literally nothing but cannon fire," Dupree said. "At dusk, the federal army couldn't make a crossing anywhere on the bayou, so they turned back to Brownsville where they found a lower spot on Bayou Meto."

Though the southern force's intervention in Jacksonville didn't stop the advance, it did delay the Union's arrival in Little Rock.

For more than a century, people overlooked the significance of the Reed's Bridge battlefield. Acres of land served as homesteads and trailer parks over the past few decades, until Reed's Bridge Battlefield Preservation Society (RBBPS) formed with its sole mission being to preserve the historical integrity of the forgotten piece of Arkansas heritage.

Dupree and the RBBPS is credited for turning the neglected site into "one of the greatest heritage opportunities we've seen in Arkansas," said Mark Christ, community outreach director for the Department of Arkansas Heritage. "It's bringing out another untold story about the considerable Civil War fought in Arkansas. Jacksonville's participation is really commendable."

Dupree and the RBBPS have worked to regain historically significant areas of the battlefield and continue to move forward in preserving the valuable slice of the nation's history and a key to Jacksonville's economic future, according to Christ.

"This is really a remarkable effort that is drawing attention to Jacksonville. There are masses of people who love to visit historical sites. They tend to be older, richer, smarter and they

stay longer,” said Christ. “And for a Civil War buff, there isn’t much to see in this part of the state.”

Christ said that economic development officials in Nevada County, around Prescott, were inspired by the RBBPS’ plan and mapped plans for two Civil War sites within the south Arkansas county after Jacksonville’s success.

“They know what Civil War history can do for economic development. They get it,” said Christ. “Everyone wins, you preserve important history and draw attention to your city.”

University of Arkansas at Little Rock history professor Jan Sarna was in attendance Monday.

“Reed’s Bridge may not have the [attention] Gettysburg had, but this sweeps the notion that nothing big happened west of Gettysburg,” said Sarna, also a member of the Civil War Roundtable of Arkansas.

The Little Rock Campaign was important to the Union army. Maj. Gen. Frederick Steele maneuvered Confederate troops under Maj. Gen. Sterling Price out of the Arkansas capital, thus returning Little Rock to federal control and giving the Union effective control of the strategically important Arkansas River Valley.

Even though Union forces eventually made it to their target, the Jacksonville battle was helpful to Confederate forces in need of time to evacuate the city.

According to Sarna, Confederate officials didn’t want to get trapped, like Gen. John C. Pemberton’s army in Vicksburg, Miss.

“You could also make an argument that some of the most serious action of fighting took place right here,” Sarna said.

“The rest of the war was easy,” said Evans Benton. “They [Union forces] just walked right in and took over.”

Three Jacksonville aldermen — Robert Stroud, Terry Sansing and Marshall Smith — were in attendance Monday. Smith said, in acknowledging Dupree’s roll in the site’s preservation, said the new panel shows the importance of the Jacksonville battle in Little Rock campaign.

“So many people don’t know the significance of this,” he said.

Smith said the city council was happy to help pass an ordinance in 2006 prohibiting the removal of historic artifacts from the Reed’s Bridge site. The RBBPS would have liked to have seen it passed sooner to prevent the loss of valuable historical evidence.

Don Hamilton, general counsel for the Little Rock Wastewater Utility, said, “This surpasses anything I’ve ever dreamed of. This is going to be a real draw for Jacksonville and will really pay big dividends in helping tourism.

The RBBPS started a membership drive this month. For \$20 a year, anyone can be a part of preserving Jacksonville's history. The society recently purchase the McCraw Cemetery on Military Road and has preserved neglected grave sites.

According to Dupree, even though the battlefield extends "way out" Military Road, 412 acres in the core area have been registered with the National Register of Historical Places. The city has title to about 60 acres. RBBPS has ownership of less than five acres.

Some of the battlefield land is family-owned property and will likely never transfer ownership, but some of the families have committed to allow for easements to the city when development progresses.

"The battlefield really starts way out Military Road where 600 troops fanned out and then did a great big screen door through what is now Excel Park and a spring near Eubanks Veterinarian office," said Dupree. "Where James Street dead ends, there's a hill — all of that was a part of it, but it's gone now, it's been development and we'll never get it back. That's why it's important to buy land when you can. We have to be ready for it."

Five more panels will be erected at a site on Military Road to commemorate Jacksonville's Civil War action, Indian Removal along the Trail of Tears and the history of Military Road donated by the Daughters of the American Revolution.