

Civil War News Roundup - 6/20/2008

Courtesy of the Civil War Preservation Trust

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Manassas battlefield study aims at protecting views of the past
Dan Genz, The Examiner

06/19/2008

DC Examiner (DC)

http://www.examiner.com/a-1448724~Manassas_battlefield_study_aims_at_protecting_views_of_the_past.html

WASHINGTON - Preservationists say it is not enough to protect the grounds at Manassas National Battlefield Park without protecting its views as new development spreads in fast-growing Prince William County.

Researchers extensively photographed and mapped the home of the first major land battle of the Civil War for months, selecting 25 lookouts, including the 10 most pivotal ones to visitors, that they will attempt to preserve from new construction of roads, office parks and apartment buildings.

“When you are trying to visualize the battles, you don’t want to have those distractions,” said Bill Olson, vice chairman of the Prince William Conservation Alliance. “You don’t want to look out on traffic jams or cell phone towers just beyond the fringe of the battlefield.”

Both the county and the National Park Service view the \$60,000 study, set for completion at the end of the year, as a guide for future development that may limit the heights of buildings and mandate the planting of trees to block eyesores.

The researchers will release their study tonight at the battlefield, giving visitors and county officials their first peek at which views need protecting as the study proceeds toward setting development recommendations.

“Protecting those views will give visitors a greater experience and make the site more relatable,” said Ray Brown, the park’s cultural resource manager.

As the Washington region grows, it has made the land beyond the battlefield more valuable and attractive to developers and regional planners.

The Tri-County Connector, a major road set to link Prince William businesses and residents with a faster link to Washington Dulles International Airport, is expected to be placed just outside the battlefield.

Henry Hill, home of the visitors’ center, is an example of what the study imagines preserving. Though there is extensive development to the south, the modern signs of commerce are screened by a thick layer of forest that protects what Brown called a “really iconic view.”

“On Henry Hill, you look out over the heaviest action during the first battle and the closing action of the second battle. It’s a site that has an impressive viewscape as you look out on the rolling countryside with Bull Run Mountain in the distance,” Brown said.

Plantation, foundation part ways due to disagreement over quarry
By Eric Beidel

06/19/2008

The Winchester Star (VA)

http://www.winchesterstar.com/article_details.php?ArticleID=7480

Middletown — A longtime preservation partnership has been threatened by a beef over expanded mining operations near the Cedar Creek Battlefield.

The National Trust for Historic Preservation and Belle Grove Inc. have announced that they will end any involvement with the Cedar Creek Battlefield Foundation.

The Belle Grove Plantation, located on the battlefield south of Middletown, dates to the 18th century, and its board of directors had allowed the use of its property by the Battlefield Foundation for its annual Civil War re-enactment activities.

Belle Grove will no longer allow the use of its property by the foundation because of the foundation's position on the quarry expansion, according to a press release issued Wednesday by the National Trust.

"We certainly respect the Cedar Creek Battlefield Foundation's past contributions to the stewardship of the battlefield," said Anne Buettner, president of Belle Grove Inc.'s Board of Directors. "But we cannot silently and passively overlook the foundation's recent actions, which were taken unilaterally and without the prior knowledge of its partners in the overall preservation effort."

The Belgian mining conglomerate Carmeuse Lime and Stone recently won rezoning approval from the Frederick County Board of Supervisors to expand its limestone mining activities at its Chemstone quarry, located near the Cedar Creek and Belle Grove National Historical Park south of Middletown.

Belle Grove Inc. claims that in April, the Cedar Creek Battlefield Foundation reversed its opposition to the quarry expansion, then cut a deal with the quarry owner to accept a land gift of 8 acres.

"We took no stance" on the quarry expansion issue, said Linden "Butch" Fravel, who serves on the Battlefield Foundation's board. "There was no communication with Belle Grove on this, that was the problem."

Fravel said his board voted two months ago to not use the plantation's property for this October's re-enactment of the Battle of Cedar Creek in an effort to save money.

He said, the foundation had spent about \$70,000 over the past five years renting land from Belle Grove for three days each October.

The foundation will still hold re-enactments on its more than 300 acres of battlefield property.

"I'm disappointed," said Mike Kehoe, another member of the foundation's board.

The gift from the quarry owner "deals with a lot more than 8 acres," he said. "We did what was best to protect the property."

Preservationists have argued that the expanded mining operation would harm views and eat up historical land. Blasting from the mine could damage historical structures, they say.

Buettner said that Cedar Creek Battlefield representatives took actions that "undermine the efforts of their partners and that jeopardize the region's treasured historic sites."

Belle Grove will continue to use its site to host events commemorating the 1864 battle, but will do so independently of the Battlefield Foundation.

"I'm sorry they took that position," Kehoe said. "We certainly don't want to alienate ourselves from any of our partners. I guess there's a lot of fence-mending to do, because there's still a lot of battlefield to preserve."

A phone message left for the Battlefield Foundation's executive director, Suzanne Chilson, was not immediately returned on Wednesday night.

Where are the missing Civil War flags?
Special to the Oak Ridger

06/19/2008

Oak Ridger (Oak Ridge, TN)

<http://www.oakridger.com/news/x415941205/Where-are-the-missing-Civil-War-flags>

NASHVILLE, Tenn. — As the Tennessee State Museum curators gathered information on historic battle flags for a forthcoming book titled "Volunteer Banners: The Civil War Flags of Tennessee," a mystery unfolded. Where are the banners that were carried by the Tennessee Union troops who fought in the Civil War?

At the beginning of the war, Tennessee found itself divided when the General Assembly voted to secede. Most people in East Tennessee were opposed to the Confederacy and many joined regiments to preserve the Union. Support for the Confederacy was centered in Middle and West Tennessee.

"The museum has located many Confederate flags and has photographs of color guards who carried their banners into battle, which will be included in the book," noted Greg Biggs, renowned Civil War historian, project director and lead author of Volunteer Banners. "Only eight Union regimental flags out of the 60 to 70 believed to have been in existence during the war have been located. As there is no known record of Union flags being destroyed by post-war Confederate sympathizers, there is the possibility that the flags were hidden."

The State Museum, known for one of the finest Civil War and battle flag collections in the nation, has been working on this project for several years. Because Tennessee was the primary western battlefield of the Civil War, with more than 400 battles and skirmishes within its borders, the state has vast holdings of military documents, firearms and uniforms. The institution holds some 60 flags, mainly Confederate in its permanent collection.

The West Point Museum, in Highland Falls, New York, just outside the gates of the U.S. Military Academy, holds seven Tennessee Union Flags as part of its collection. The 12th and 13th Regiment U.S. Colored Troops of Middle Tennessee carried three of these flags. These troops fought in the Battle of Nashville and were also responsible for building the railroad that ran from Kingston Springs to Johnsonville. These seven flags and their history are an example of the stories that will be included in the book.

"We are reaching out to the public to help us find Civil War battle flags and photographs of ancestors who may have been color bearers," Biggs said. "This also includes females who may have been involved in the production of battle flags. Portions of the book will be dedicated to the women behind the banners."

Women, who went to work in huge numbers during the Civil War, making flags, sewing uniforms, rolling bandages and working in arsenals, were responsible for the production of the community's regimental flag. They often selected the fabric and the design and developed the patriotic slogans which appear on many of the flags. If they did not actually sew the flag, they generally hired the company that did. The Flag Presentation Ceremony, where women presented the flag to their men, was considered to be the "social event" of season, as it was the symbol and the bond connecting the soldiers to their home communities.

If the public has any information to contribute to the Tennessee Civil War Flag Book Project, e-mail museuminfo@tnmuseum.org or call Myers Brown or Ron Westphal at (615) 741-2692. Proceeds

from the sale of "Volunteer Banners, The Civil War Flags of Tennessee," will be used to preserve the Civil War Flag Collection of the Tennessee State Museum. For more information about the museum, visit www.tnmuseum.org.

Trading Ford Recognized in Report to Congress

6/16/2008

Lexington Dispatch (NC)

<http://www.the-dispatch.com/article/20080616/NEWS/553352888/-1/WAR>

The Trading Ford area along the Yadkin River has been identified by the National Park Service American Battlefield Protection Program as a site at risk from rapid urban and suburban development.

The park service released its "Report to Congress on the Historic Preservation of Revolutionary War and War of 1812 Sites in the United States" last week.

The Trading Ford was included in the survey along with other historic sites that comprise the "Race to the Dan River." A linear resource, the inclusive "Race to the Dan River," is listed in the "Roads, Trails, and Waterways Needing Further Study" section of the report. These are resources that due to their size and complexity had no equivalent survey methodology that allowed them to be represented in an equitable manner.

A subcommittee of the National Park Service Advisory Board gave each resource a ranking. The "Race to the Dan River" received a class of "A, site of a military or naval action with a vital objective or result that shaped the strategy, direction, outcome, or perception of the war."

Paul Hawke, chief of the ABPP, said: "The Race to the Dan, and all of its contributing resources, are considered among the most significant sites we looked at."

During the early days of winter 1781, Nathanael Greene, Southern Commander of the U.S. Forces, divided his forces, baiting Lord Cornwallis and the British to follow suit. After a decisive victory at Cowpens, S.C., on Jan. 17, Greene and his generals began a strategic retreat that would lead both armies 230 miles across the heart of the North Carolina Piedmont.

The Patriots lost beloved General Davidson at Cowan's Ford on the Catawba. Dispirited but forging on, they reached Salisbury on Feb. 2, then moved on to cross the Yadkin at the Trading Ford. The British arrived at the end of the day on Feb. 3, in time to have a brief encounter with Greene's rear guard, only to find that the rest of Greene's forces were safely across the now-swollen river, and that all the boats were on the far shore.

On the morning of Feb. 4, the British furiously cannonaded the Americans before giving up their attack and marching north to the Shallow Ford to cross the river. The pursuit continued until Greene and his army crossed the Dan River at Irwin's Ferry in Virginia Feb. 13, again leaving a swollen river facing the British army who lacked the boats to follow. Greene had led Cornwallis away from his base of supply in Charleston and provided himself with time for reinforcements to reach him. The stage was set for the encounter between the two armies that would occur at Guilford Courthouse on March 15.

Historians widely consider the Race to the Dan to have been a masterful strategic maneuver. A campsite at Abbott's Creek in Davidson County is included in the route.

Salisbury historian Ann Brownlee, having previously surveyed the Shallow Ford site, led a group of volunteers who surveyed the Trading Ford site in 2000 and 2001, under the auspices of the

Carolinas' Backcountry Alliance. The Trading Ford site was submitted as potentially eligible for the National Register.

"The Trading Ford survey opened the door to the discovery of a wealth of historic sites concentrated in the Trading Ford area," said Brownlee, who subsequently founded the Trading Ford Historic District Preservation Association to work toward the preservation of these historic sites.

"I don't know how it will turn out," she said. "But I'd be irresponsible if I didn't do everything I can to preserve this irreplaceable heritage. This has the potential to be developed into a high-quality heritage tourism destination, which would truly enhance the area and enrich us all. We're not against development, but we need a balance, which also includes historic preservation. It's time for us to rise to the occasion, before it's too late."

The ABPP's recognition of the role the Trading Ford played in the Revolutionary War is the second recent national recognition afforded this historic area. The Civil War Preservation Trust recognized another Trading Ford area site, the Yadkin River Bridge battlefield, as among the nation's 25 most endangered 2008 Civil War battlefields.

Chickamauga: Relics Resurrect the Past, Provide Clues about the Civil War
By Chloe Morrison

6/14/2008

Chattanooga Times Free Press (TN)

<http://www.tfponline.com/news/2008/jun/14/chickamauga-relics-resurrect-past-provide-clues-ab/>

A dime dated 1863 and a wedding band, found side by side under several inches of soil on a Chickamauga farm, are the kind of Civil War artifacts that pique the interest of a relic hunter like Con Kellerhals.

“I try to imagine what in the world could have happened,” the longtime Catoosa County educator said. “It’s kind of sad. This guy not only lost a dime, he lost his wedding band and possibly his life.”

Most Civil War artifacts are less unique — from bullets and buttons to tin cans and canteens.

But these remnant treasures from the “watershed event” of our nation’s past tell important stories, and provide valuable insight into history, Chickamauga Battlefield historian Jim Ogden said.

There is sometimes is tension between relic hunters and archeologists.

Experts said the friction arises when a novice seeking treasure robs the public of clues to the past by the careless extraction of relics.

The search

The search for artifacts is like piecing together a puzzle, experts said. Reference books may be used to identify finds. Hunters consult other Civil War enthusiasts or put photos online to help identify their finds.

The search is exciting, hunters said.

“It gets your heart pumping, and you want to hunt some more,” said Kevin Walls with the Chattanooga Area Relic and Historic Association.

Mr. Ogden said there is more importance to a new find than just the object. Its value involves the object’s location, and its context with events, place and other items.

For example, a group of cans or bullets can indicate an area used by soldiers as a camp. “You can determine the layout of the tents in the camp sites,” Mr. Ogden said.

Mr. Kellerhals said the most common items are Union relics.

“The Union had a lot more stuff,” he said. “Their bullets were manufactured and mass produced. The Confederate soldiers, most of them just used whatever gun they had around the house.”

Armed with metal detectors and shovels, relic hunters typically search their own property or get permission to search on someone else’s private property.

National Park Service officials stress it's a federal crime to do any relic hunting at Chickamauga Battlefield, and at many other protected properties.

"Some folks are just not aware that it is inappropriate or illegal to hunt for artifacts on the battlefield," Mr. Ogden said.

Those who are caught relic hunting in the park could face misdemeanor or felony charges.

"It crosses the felony threshold pretty quickly," Mr. Ogden said.

Preservation and protection

Chattanooga and Northwest Georgia were the stage for some critical Civil War events — such as the battles at Chickamauga, Lookout Mountain and Missionary Ridge. Relics left behind can provide deeper understanding of soldier and civilian life, or the logistics of battles.

"Where they are found and what they are could potentially tell us something more about how the battle unfolded," Mr. Ogden said.

The Chattanooga Area Relic and Historic Association is dedicated to preserve and protect history, Mr. Walls said. Though found items have monetary value, most agree the historic and cultural value is most important.

"I wouldn't sell them a bullet for \$100, but I'll give them one," Mr. Walls said about people with an interest. "It is about preserving our history and sharing it with other people."

Despite good intentions of some, experts said there are those only in it for the money.

Mr. Kellerhals and Mr. Walls said they have heard of people faking artifacts to sell.

Not many stores in the area sell relics, but there are frequently trade shows. Anyone buying an item at a store or online should "beware," Mr. Walls said, and buy from a reputable dealer.

Education for generations

Members of the Chattanooga relic and historic group often visit schools to try and educate the next generation.

Mr. Walls said Civil War history may be a small part of the school curriculum. But he said many children are interested in the Civil War and the relics left behind.

"One of the first schools I went to in 1988 — about five years later a boy came up to me and said, 'You gave me a bullet, and I still have it and really love history because of that,'" he said.

As years pass there are fewer artifacts to find, but experts said new metal detecting technology still makes it possible to discover great finds.

And Mr. Kellerhals said, for him, one of the most intriguing aspects of Civil War history is that so much of it happened right in his own back yard.

"I've been other places and found stuff, and they just don't mean as much to me as the things I find 100 yards from my house," he said.

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Kaine Lauds Virginia's Land Conservation Goals
By Jeff Mellott

6/12/2008

Harrisonburg Daily News Record (VA)

http://www.dnronline.com/news_details.php?AID=29159&CHID=2

Timothy M. Kaine told land conservationists on Thursday that their help has helped his administration to be slightly ahead of a pace to permanently set aside 400,000 acres of open space during his four-year term.

Speaking at the Virginia Union Land Trust conference at the Stonewall Jackson Hotel & Conference Center, Kaine said between 260,000 and 270,000 acres would be conserved by mid-July.

"It's really satisfying to work on something that is forever," he said.

Kaine thanked conferees for their help in preserving funding for the tax credit program, which he said has been instrumental in setting the land preservation pace.

The General Assembly appropriated \$30 million for the program, although Kaine asked for \$50 million.

Given the financial constraints of the projected budget shortfall, Kaine said he was "stunned" the legislature retained funding for the conservation program and provided money to administer it.

Open-space efforts also will be aided, he said, by the state agreeing to match funding from the Civil War Preservation Trust, Kaine said.

The trust has agreed to match the \$5 million state funding 2-to-1, providing a total of \$15 million for preserving Civil War sites in Virginia.

Kaine was the featured speaker of the conference, hosted by the Staunton-based Valley Conservation Council for the last two years.

The council is a private, nonprofit organization that shares responsibility for preserving 14,000 acres of open space in a region that extends from Frederick and Warren counties in the north to Botetourt County in the south.

The Virginia Outdoors Foundation in conservation easements primarily holds the land, said John Eckman, who is the council's executive director.

The biggest threat to preserving open space, said Eckman of Harrisonburg, is development sprawl and its effect on water quality.

While agricultural practices can be improved to protect water sources, buildings cannot be torn down, he said.

"That's a much more long-term problem. We have to nip that in the bud earlier and encourage growth in the right places," he said.

Generational Effort

Farmer and conservationist Taylor Cole already has acted. Cole has set aside 319 acres of his 510-acre farm south of Deerfield.

Cole grew up on a family farm near Lexington and said putting the land in a conservation trust is the right thing to do.

"They're beautiful," he said of the acreage set aside.

Along with operating his farm where he grows grasses for alternative energy sources, Cole is also president of Conservation Partners, which advises landowners on how to conserve open space.

"Generations of Virginians have been protecting these lands for the future and now it's our turn to try and protect it for the next generation," he said.

Cole was among conferees who gave Kaine a standing ovation for his conservation efforts.

Kaine said land conservation ranks with or close behind his top passion of early child education.

"We want our grandkids," he said, "to be able to look on some of the same things we look at and have the same feeling of awe and wonder."

Landowners and Charities Farm Tax Break

By Ashlea Ebeling

6/11/2008

Forbes Magazine (NAT)

http://www.forbes.com/businessinthebeltway/2008/06/10/taxes-deductions-charities-biz-wash-cz_ae_0611beltway.html

Land conservation charities had a banner year in 2007, as big landowners rushed to take advantage of a temporary expansion of the federal tax break for donating land development rights before it expired on Dec. 31, 2007.

But like other tax goodies originally handed out temporarily, the break for "conservation easements" is getting a second serving. As part of the new farm bill, Congress is extending the break through 2009, with an extra sweetener for farmers and ranchers thrown in.

With a conservation easement, you give some or all of the development rights on your land to a government agency or not-for-profit organization. You still own and can enjoy the land, and may even be able to do some construction--say, of duck blinds or a log cabin, for instance. You can also continue to farm the land.

The newly extended incentive allows a non-farmer donor to use a conservation donation deduction to wipe out 50% of his gross income in any year, up from the normal 30%. The temporary break also allows a donor to carry forward any unused write-off for a full 15 years, instead of the normal five.

Farmers and ranchers get an even more generous break: They can offset up to 100% of their adjusted gross income with conservation donations, potentially zeroing out their tax liability for the next 15 years. For that they can thank Senators Max Baucus, D-Mont., and Chuck Grassley, R-Iowa, the Senate Finance Committee's chairman and ranking minority member.

In fact, the conservation break is so generous that it produces a bizarre and seemingly backwards incentive: Donors who keep a piece of land while giving the development rights to a conservation group can sometimes get a bigger tax benefit than if they'd given the land outright to the same group. That's because, if a landowner gives his property away, the normal tax rules apply, meaning he can use the charitable deduction to wipe out only 30% of his adjusted gross and can carry any unused deduction forward for only five years.

Stephen Small, a tax lawyer in Boston who specializes in conservation easements, says the 15-year carry-forward rule can be a remarkable planning tool. "You can bank the deduction and use it against a big income event in the future, say you're planning to sell investment property or take big retirement distributions," he notes.

If you plan to use this break, don't get too greedy. The IRS and state revenue officials have started auditing conservation deductions, with an ongoing crackdown in Colorado. The main problem has been taxpayers claiming inflated appraisals on the worth of the easements, which leads to inflated and improper tax deductions. To stay out of trouble, go with a reputable land trust; hire your own outside tax lawyer to vet the deal; and hire a reputable, experienced and independent appraiser to value what you're giving away.

"A good conservation easement brings with it some philanthropy; you really do give up value," says Small. "If somebody says 'I can put a deal together for you where you can donate an easement and come out ahead financially,' beware." (For more details on using the break, see IRS Notice 50-2007.)

Meanwhile, the Land Trust Alliance, an association of 1,600 local and state land trusts that promote conservation, is already back in Congress, lobbying to make the break permanent. It estimates an additional 1 million acres of land was protected through 2007, thanks to the temporary break.

The Land Trust is leading a coalition of 31 organizations pushing for the break. Among the members: the American Bird Conservancy, the Civil War Preservation Trust, the Mule Deer Foundation and the North American Grouse Partnership.

"We don't want landowners to have to be under the gun of a deadline," says Russell Shay, director of public policy for the Land Trust Alliance. "We're dealing with a perpetual commitment of what's often a family's most valuable asset."

Battlefield-protection Group Awaiting Final Cost of Repairs to Ritchey Mansion
By Derek Spellman

6/8/2008

The Joplin Globe (MO)

http://www.joplinglobe.com/neosho_newton_mcdonald%20county/local_story_160213027.html?keyword=topstory

Local preservationists hope that repairs to the tornado-damaged Ritchey Mansion will be complete by Sept. 1 as thoughts turn to the future of the historic site.

For the historic mansion, a “ballpark” estimate puts the total cost of the damage to the building caused by the May 10 tornado at between \$86,000 and \$100,000, said Kay Hively, a member of the Newtonia Battlefields Protection Association, and an advocate for preserving the house and grounds. The association will not have a final number until after the contractor has finished his work, she said.

Much of the damage to the building will be covered by the association’s insurance, although the organization will have to absorb some of the costs of cleaning up the surrounding property and of running an underground power line to the utility pole at the edge of the property, Hively said. Many of the trees that once studded the front and back lawns are gone.

“The place looks bare now,” she said of the grounds. “It looks like a big house on the prairie.”

The Ritchey Mansion served as a headquarters and a field hospital during two Civil War engagements in Newtonia. The Newtonia Battlefields Protection Association owns the mansion and both of the nearby battlefields.

The tornado that swept through Newton County last month tore off all three of the mansion’s chimneys, part of the brick in the front and several large chunks of the roof. It also inflicted other exterior and interior damage.

Hively said repairs to the outside of the building have been completed. The roof, missing brickwork and damaged windows all have been replaced, and crews have begun restoration work on the inside of the house.

That work will include tearing out and replacing damaged parts of the ceiling, repairs to floorboards, and rewiring the house, she said.

The association has not been asking for donations to help defray its repair costs, although that has not stopped some from contributing money to the effort or volunteering their time to pick up glass and other debris littering the lawn, Hively said.

The association is awaiting the final cost of repairs and the amount that insurance will cover to determine how much of the bill it will have to pay and how to do so, Hively said. The group hopes to have the repairs and cleanup on the mansion property finished by Sept. 1, although it has been and will continue to host tours while the work is under way.

Supporters are hoping that the show of local support will help accelerate a study of the battlefield sites that was approved by Congress and endorsed by President Bush several days before the tornado hit.

The legislation aims to determine the best way to preserve the sites. It authorizes the National Park Service to conduct the study to determine if the battlefields could be made a separate unit of the Park Service or brought under the management of Wilson's Creek National Battlefield near Republic.

Jeffrey Olson, a spokesman for the National Park Service, estimated that the study would cost between \$250,000 and \$300,000, and take between 18 and 24 months.

Opinion: MDOT Plan Will Destroy "Treasured Past"
By Jane Ellis

6/8/2008

Jackson Clarion Ledger (MS)

<http://www.clarionledger.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20080608/OPINION02/806080311/1009>

There is a warning for all Mississippi towns in Port Gibson's David-and-Goliath battle to save its historic district.

Port Gibson, a southwest Mississippi town of about 1,800 which survived the Civil War because Gen. Ulysses S. Grant declared it "too beautiful to burn," is now battling the Mississippi Department of Transportation to stop the routing of a five-lane highway down its most historic street, Church Street.

Church Street is the quintessential Mississippi main street, canopied by century-old live oaks and lined with seven churches and a 19th-century synagogue renowned for its Byzantine architecture. Three of the churches are antebellum, and a total of 52 buildings on the street are on the National Register of Historic Places.

As part of its plan to reconfigure U.S. 61, MDOT has decided to reconstruct the highway through Church Street, despite the existence of other viable alternatives that would leave historic Church Street intact.

While it has used federal dollars in the past to fund pre-construction work on the Port Gibson project, MDOT now states that it will spend only state dollars for the Church Street construction in an attempt to circumvent federal reviews and protective standards.

Central District Commissioner Dick Hall has spoken publicly against the Church Street route.

If MDOT chooses to ignore federal historic preservation and environmental laws and force its way through Port Gibson's National Historic District, it can do the same to any town in this state. The methods used by MDOT to circumvent preservation laws are a threat to all Mississippi towns that wish to preserve their local historic areas.

Please join Port Gibson in opposing MDOT's plan to route a five-lane highway through historic Church Street, and help stop MDOT's plan to evade historic preservation laws that protect all of Mississippi's historic sites. Concerned citizens can sign a petition opposing the Church Street project at <http://www.thepetitionsite.com/1/save-port-gibson-mississippi> and can call their MDOT district commissioner to voice their opposition to this plan. The Mississippi we pass on to future generations must preserve our treasured past.

Jane Ellis
Chairman, Highway 61 Committee
Port Gibson Heritage Trust

Editorial: A National Park for Fort Monroe

6/8/2008

The Virginian-Pilot (VA)

<http://hamptonroads.com/2008/06/national-park-fort-monroe>

FORT MONROE has outlived its usefulness as a military installation, according to the Base Realignment and Closure Commission. But the 570-acre fort, whose history stretches back to the early 1600s and includes epic events in the formation and growth of our nation, has a bright and prosperous future as one of Virginia's premiere tourism attractions, education centers and recreational parks - if local, state and federal leaders do not let the opportunity slip away.

In recent days, several key reports have been released that are likely to play critical roles in determining what will become of Fort Monroe when the U.S. Army departs in three years.

Among them is a preliminary reuse plan generated by the Fort Monroe Federal Area Development Authority, an 18-member group composed primarily of officials from the city of Hampton and state government.

The plan contains good news for those who grasp the tremendous economic potential in the fort's historic and recreational assets. All but gone is the assumption - widespread in the months after the announcement of Fort Monroe's pending shutdown - that the base's open spaces must be heavily developed to pay for upkeep of the property and offset the effect of the base's closure on the Hampton economy.

The authority's consultants estimate annual maintenance costs would be about \$4 million, far below the Army's initial projections of \$14 million. The consultants also predict that Fort Monroe's history could attract 100,000 to 150,000 visitors annually and that its beachfront another 115,000 to 125,000.

There isn't quite as much cause for celebration in a long-anticipated "reconnaissance study" by the National Park Service. Not surprisingly, the agency concluded that the fort is "an exceptionally important portal" through which to examine our nation's history and is "worthy of preservation and protection." Equally unsurprising is the conclusion that the cash-strapped agency is in no hurry to take on the job of preservation and protection.

The Park Service's report recommends that Congress delay authorization of "a Special Resource Study," a more comprehensive review that could lead to national park designation, until a reuse plan is approved by the redevelopment authority and by others engaged in the process.

Two major challenges now face local, state and federal leaders who recognize Fort Monroe's rich but little-known history and can envision the day when it could join Colonial Williamsburg, Jamestown and Yorktown as major attractions.

The obstacles, bluntly put, are (a) Fort Monroe is not likely to achieve its potential without the expertise, resources and reputation of the National Park Service and (b) the National Park Service is unlikely to become part of the project unless others contribute large sums of money.

In a meeting with The Pilot editorial board last week, Gov. Tim Kaine re-stated his administration's commitment to preserving the fort's historic assets, broadening public access to the site and laying

the groundwork for a self-sustaining operation. He said "revenue maximization" - i.e., selling or leasing open spaces for development - "should not be goal one." That's good news.

Kaine, understandably, is unwilling to dip into the state's treasury to help Fort Monroe build a partnership with the National Park Service. But Kaine and the General Assembly should be willing to marshal support from a wide range of groups - the National Trust for Historic Preservation, the Civil War Preservation Trust and the National Parks Conservation Association, among others - to begin building a permanent funding mechanism for Fort Monroe. A similar venture has succeeded at The Presidio, a former military installation added to the Golden Gate National Recreation Area almost 15 years ago.

Fort Monroe has many stories to tell - stories about, among others, Capt. John Smith, Chief Black Hawk, the Monitor and the Merrimac, Edgar Allan Poe, Jefferson Davis, Harriet Tubman and three enslaved men, Frank Baker, Sheppard Mallory and James Townsend, whose brave actions at the fort played a direct role in the Emancipation Proclamation.

But none of those stories will be told as effectively or reach as broad an audience unless the National Park Service is involved in the next stage of Fort Monroe's history, unless preservation groups commit resources to establishing a public trust for its protection, and unless local, state and federal leaders unite in the obvious - creating Fort Monroe National Park.

Resaca Battlefield Project Marches On
By Lori Yount

6/2/2008

Chattanooga Times Free Press (TN)

<http://www.tfponline.com/news/2008/jun/02/georgia-resaca-battlefield-project-marches/?local>

Gen. William T. Sherman's Atlanta campaign was bad news for the Confederacy in 1864. But almost 150 years later, it's good news for Georgia's economy.

With Gov. Sonny Perdue's final approval of \$3 million in bonds last month, local and state officials believe the development of a Resaca Battlefield park near the Gordon-Whitfield county line is secured.

The facility will become a clearinghouse of Civil War information, and be complete before an influx in heritage tourists expected in 2011, the 150th anniversary of the war's beginning.

Groundbreaking on the visitors center is expected late this summer.

"The Resaca battle was the beginning of the end of the Confederacy," said John Culpepper, chairman of the Georgia Civil War Commission and Chickamauga city manager. "The war ended in Georgia."

Tourism is the second largest industry in Georgia, and historic tourism is steadily becoming a larger part of that. Leaders said they hope transforming the battlefield — conveniently located just off Interstate 75 — can attract and direct Civil War buffs along in the footsteps of Gen. Sherman and to sites throughout the state.

Most of the initial state funding for the project in last year's budget was re-directed to other projects, stalling construction of the visitors center, but the bonds approved by Gov. Perdue last month already were being sold last week, said Rep. John Meadows, R-Calhoun.

"It's an awfully good project — good for the state of Georgia and the whole Southeast," he said. "It's just an economic boon."

And now with state money secure, it's time for the local communities to finish the mission with supplemental funds.

Ken Padgett, president of the nonprofit group Friends of Resaca Battlefield, said his organization has secured a \$10,000 grant from the Calhoun-Gordon County Community Foundation for site development. The money will be directed to the Department of Natural Resources, the state agency in charge of transforming the 500-acre site.

Uncertainty in state money threatened the grant, Mr. Padgett said.

"We have until October to spend that money," he said. "If the governor had not signed (the bonds), we would likely have re-routed the money."

Mr. Padgett said the organization also will help the community raise \$500,000 for park furnishings, such as benches and fountains.

“(Fundraising) plans in the next month are really going to gear up and go,” he said.

To complement the state’s battlefield preservation project, the nonprofit group and Gordon County continue a preservation effort to buy and plan to develop land near what is considered the Fort Wayne part of the battlefield, where Mr. Padgett said the first shots of the battle were fired.

The state Department of Transportation budget includes \$200,000 to develop the land by blazing interpretive trails and an entrance.

“We hope to have it opened to the public before the state opens the battlefield,” he said. “They’ll be in a bird’s eye view of each other. They’ll both complement each other.”

The two sites represent only about 20 percent of the area in which the May 1864 clash took place, Mr. Padgett said, with the rest held by private owners.

The Fort Wayne project should be finished by the end of 2009, he said.

The state is projected to finish the visitors center within 18 months of receiving the \$3 million. The next phase of the development, which includes interpretive trails, might require more money from the state Legislature next session and may not be completed until the end of 2010, Mr. Padgett said.

Meanwhile, Mr. Culpepper said Civil War commissions in the region are banding together to promote their areas for the 150th anniversary. He said a tri-state committee of Georgia, Tennessee and Alabama preservationists are pooling funds to buy billboards, fliers and special offers to advertise sites already open to the public.

“We need to promote more of what we have now, and we’re doing that,” Mr. Culpepper said.

Students Raise \$250 to Preserve History
By Lucy Weber

6/1/2008

Jackson Clarion Ledger (MS)

<http://www.clarionledger.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20080601/NEWS/806010368/1001/news>

By looking to the future, history students at Madison Middle School are preserving the past.

A small plot of land has been purchased by the school's Junior Historical Society and added to the acreage of the Civil War Preservation Trust, which is working to save at the Battle of Champion Hill site, near Edwards.

"We helped save a part of history," eighth-grader Xavier Cheatham said.

"It's rewarding to know we got this land so it won't go to residential development," said Rod Bridges, president of the school club.

The officers and all-A students in the society recently got the opportunity to present their check for \$250 - raised by sponsoring a day when students could pay \$1 to wear a hat to school - to Vicksburg National Military Park Ranger Terry Winschel, a national board advisor to the Civil War Preservation Trust.

"You should be pleased and proud. Your children and your grandchildren can come to this spot and know you had a role in preserving it," Winschel told the students as he gave them a tour of the area where the battle took place on May 16, 1863.

Called the Spicer tract, the total of three acres, which includes the one-sixteenth of an acre the students bought, sits at the southeast quadrant of the Crossroads, the middle line of the battle that ended in defeat for the 22,500 Confederate troops who fell that day to the 32,000 Union soldiers under the command of Gen. Ulysses S. Grant. The guns of the Alabama battery were on the spot during the battle.

The Crossroads is in the center of the battle area and several hundred yards south of the actual Champion Hill.

"I cannot stress enough the significance of this," Winschel said. "This makes them stakeholders of our history."

The preservation of this Civil War battlefield is important, he said, because that war was a defining event in American history.

"The role of government today can be traced back to Civil War society. It helps us to understand who we are and to know what's important today."