

Civil War News Roundup – 07/11/2008

Courtesy of the Civil War Preservation Trust (CWPT)

- (1) Renowned GA preservationist dies - Atlanta Journal-Constitution
- (2) Civil War Sites Secure Grants – Fredericksburg Free Lance-Star
- (3) Town Unveils Civil War Monument – York Daily Record
- (4) Monocacy Site Unlikely for Incinerator – Frederick News-Post
- (5) First Donation Made to Falling Waters Group – Hagerstown Herald Mail
- (6) Coalition Acquires Acre in Battle Hot Zone – Nashville Tennessean
- (7) Editorial: Morris Island Safeguards – Charleston Post and Courier
- (8) NPS Status Said Unlikely for Franklin – Nashville Tennessean
- (9) Shenandoah Valley’s Battlefields Gain Protection – Associated Press
- (10) Trail to Preserve, Highlight History – Charleston Post and Courier
- (11) Board Seeks to Preserve Star Fort – Winchester Star
- (12) Lincoln Collection may come to Washington – Washington Post
- (13) Project Aims to Fix Leaks at Fort - Birmingham Press-Register
- (14) Councilman Spurs Cedar Creek Reenactment Boycott - Winchester Star

JASPER

Charlie Geiger, 82, helped preserve Civil War memorials

By KAY POWELL

07/11/2008

Atlanta Journal-Constitution (GA)

http://www.ajc.com/metro/content/metro/obits/stories/2008/07/10/charles_geiger_obituary.html

Civil War history lured Charlie Geiger beyond blue highways and back roads onto Georgia's dirt roads and remote trails.

The Illinois native and retired engineer spent thousands of hours and his own money to develop a record of the state's historic markers and battlegrounds. He seized every opportunity to buttonhole politicians and bureaucrats to sell them on the economic, educational and historic value of preserving and expanding the state's marker program.

"He was a feisty guy," said Ed Jackson of the Carl Vinson Institute of Government at the University of Georgia.

Mr. Geiger, when presented the Governor's Award in the Humanities in 2006, even then used the occasion to say something to the governor about funding the program, said Mr. Jackson of Athens.

"He has kept this issue alive," said Steve Longcrier of Evans, executive director of the Georgia Civil War Heritage Trails, which is documenting Gen. William Tecumseh Sherman's fiery 270-mile march from Atlanta to Savannah in 1864.

"He was passionate about driving dirt roads," Mr. Longcrier said. "If you know anything about Sherman's march, they didn't take it along interstate highways."

The memorial service for Charles Henry Geiger, 82, of Jasper will be 2 p.m. Sunday at Big Canoe Chapel. He died of complications from a hematoma on the brain June 22 at Peachtree Christian Hospice. The body was cremated. Flanigan Funeral Home is in charge of arrangements.

Mr. Geiger's work brought him to Georgia in 1985, and that's when the passion began. He set about convincing state officials of the tourism money they were letting escape by neglecting the program.

"He was more interested in the tactical side of the Late Unpleasantness, while I'm more interested in the person's side," said his wife, Linda Geiger, a genealogist. She was his able photographer, too, snapping more than 1,000 photographs of Georgia historical markers and sites.

He donated more than 300 marker photographs to the Carl Vinson Institute, and Mr. Jackson is transcribing and preserving each marker's text.

A trustee and former president of the Georgia Battlefields Association, he assisted the state in researching and buying historic sites. He didn't learn to use a computer until eight years ago and never trusted it to preserve his records, his wife said. His backup system was to print everything on his computer and store a copy in one of his four file cabinets.

Mr. Geiger traced and traveled Sherman's march through Georgia from Chattanooga to Savannah. As chairman of the Georgia Civil War Heritage Trails historical committee, he worked on the installation under way of 130 markers, Mr. Longcrier said.

As for older markers, he said, Mr. Geiger is responsible for saving or having repaired several dozen more. The state budget has been cut to \$50,000 to preserve, repair and restore more than 2,000 markers statewide and to erect new markers, Mr. Longcrier said. The Sherman's march marker program is a separate budget.

In his early exploration of Georgia, Mr. Geiger was saddened to see the deplorable shape of historic markers from lack of maintenance, theft, vandalism and road construction projects. "He took it upon himself to be their advocate," Mr. Longcrier said. "Without Charlie's constant efforts for nearly two decades, there is little doubt that the state's historic marker maintenance program would not exist at all today."

"The state in the long run will reap the benefits from his having been here," Mr. Jackson said.

Survivors other than his wife include a daughter, Barbara Karen Cook of Newburyport, Mass.; a son, Jeffrey Howard Geiger of Minneapolis; and a sister, Mary Gray, of Ottawa, Ill.

Civil War Sites Secure Grants
By Robin Knepper

7/8/2008

Fredericksburg Free Lance-Star (VA)

<http://fredericksburg.com/News/FLS/2008/072008/07082008/393361>

Four area historic sites, two in Orange County and two in Spotsylvania County, will receive grants for exhibits on the Civil War.

The Montpelier Foundation will receive \$35,000 to continue an archeological survey and cultural resource management study on the grounds of the home of President James Madison in Orange.

The work done as a result of a \$25,000 grant awarded in 2003 by the National Park Service's American Battlefield Protection Program has already resulted in the location of seven major regimental camps on the property. This latest grant will fund the surveying for support camps.

According to Montpelier's Director of Archeology Matt Reeves, in the winter of 1863-64, three brigades under the command of Confederate General Cadmus Wilcox were encamped on the grounds of Montpelier. Troops were deployed from the area into the Battle of the Wilderness in 1864.

And the Civil War Preservation Trust received a \$50,000 battlefield protection grant to develop an interpretive plan for the Mine Run Battlefield, which the park service describes as the "first major offensive of the Union Army of the Potomac after the Gettysburg Campaign."

However, Russ Smith, superintendent of Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania National Military Park, has called the Mine Run fighting "the biggest battle in the Civil War that never was."

The battle in eastern Orange lasted a few days in late 1863, but the Union Army of the Potomac so outnumbered the Confederate forces that they withdrew.

"It could have been a huge battle," said Smith. "One of the bravest things done was to withdraw. The men could have been slaughtered."

The grant will be used to explore options for trails and signs and the protection of battlefield resources.

Fredericksburg and Chancellorsville battlefields will get some new exhibits, thanks to a private grant from a Chicago-based preservation foundation.

Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania National Military park received \$10,600 grant from the Tawani Foundation, in cooperation with the Civil War Preservation Trust, for exhibits at the Fredericksburg and Chancellorsville visitor centers.

Part of the money will be used for two "traveling trunks" containing replicas of Civil War-era clothing, and items used during the period. Those will be used in school classrooms and in the visitor centers.

And the money will cover the reproduction of a painting of the Chancellor house by artist Frederick A. Chapman. The house was set on fire by artillery shelling.

The grant was given in honor of George P. McClelland, an infantry sergeant in the 155th Pennsylvania Regiment, whose unit fought in Battle of Fredericksburg in 1862, at Chancellorsville in May 1863 and at the Wilderness in May 1864.

Staff reporter Rusty Dennen contributed to this story.

Town Unveils Civil War Monument; Norvell Churchill's Significance to History Was Saluted in Hunterstown
By Erin James

7/6/2008

York Daily Record (PA)

http://ydr.inyork.com/ydr/newsfull/ci_9797594

Glen Churchill and Jane Churchill Webb never knew their grandfather, a Civil War soldier who died nearly 20 years before either of them was born.

They grew up with tales of Norvell Churchill as a talented horseman and an enthusiastic performer during Fourth of July events in Michigan, where much of the family still resides.

Their grandfather's storied service as a Union cavalryman in the Civil War was only part of those tales, the two said.

It's only been in the last few decades that Glen Churchill, now 85, said he has realized his grandfather's true significance to American history.

"I read it in history books," he said.

But now, for both historians and the Churchill family, Norvell Churchill's place in history will always be reserved as the man who saved Union Gen. George Custer from almost certain death on the Hunterstown battlefield northeast of Gettysburg on July 2, 1863.

As the story goes, 23-year-old Norvell Churchill rescued Custer -- also 23 at the time -- after his horse was shot out from under him and Confederate soldiers were closing in to attack. Churchill killed one of Custer's attackers and hoisted the general off the ground and onto his horse.

Now 85 and 82 respectively, Glen and Jane represent Norvell Churchill's closest living relatives. Their fathers were brothers, each the son of Norvell Churchill.

They were two of about 60 descendants who recently witnessed the unveiling of Gettysburg's newest Civil War monument, which describes both the significance of the Hunterstown battle and Norvell Churchill's role in saving Custer's life.

"I just wish our fathers were here," Jane Churchill Webb said.

The event marked the first time any monument has been erected in Hunterstown, also known as North Cavalry Field, to commemorate the battle between Custer's 1st Michigan Cavalry brigade -- famously known as the Wolverines -- and the larger numbers of a Confederate cavalry brigade commanded by Gen. Wade Hampton.

Historians say the battle between opposing cavalries was significant because it kept the attention of both units on the battlefield's northern end while crucial struggles were taking place to the south on Little Round Top and at the Peach Orchard.

The Hunterstown battle also marks the first time Custer made a name for himself as a gutsy commander. The Boy General led a seemingly suicidal charge of a few dozen men down Hunterstown Road against an enemy who was behind cover and outnumbered him.

Casualties on both sides, however, were relatively light.

Until recently, the battle was unknown to all but the Civil War's most ardent students. That began to change around 2002, when Roger and Laurie Harding purchased Hunterstown's Historic Tate Farm, a property where George Washington stopped on the way back from the Whiskey Rebellion in 1794.

The Hardings established a historic preservation group, The Friends of Hunterstown, when two buildings on Route 394 that dated back to the 1800s were at risk of being torn down and replaced with apartment buildings.

Preserving and promoting Hunterstown has been a goal of the couple ever since.

The event symbolized the accomplishment of another objective: to erect a permanent monument dedicated specifically to the battle at Hunterstown. After the monument's unveiling, the fourth annual walking tour of the battlefield was offered to visitors.

"It's a very moving day for us," Laurie Harding told the dozens who attended the unveiling, held on the battle's 145th anniversary.

That significance of both the battle and of the event was not lost on at least some members of Norvell Churchill's family.

"I think Norvell is looking down now, in disbelief maybe," said Pat Stephens, a great-granddaughter.

Though Norvell Churchill's connection to the famous Boy General was never the focus of his family's tales, Glen Churchill said he now knows that his grandfather played an even greater role in history.

"I think it's wonderful that he saved (Custer's) life," he said. "This battle started the end of the war."

MONUMENT

Designed by Codori Memorials of Gettysburg, the new Civil War monument includes a bust of Gen. Custer and a written description of Hunterstown's significance in history. It is located on the Harding's farm at the corner of Shrivvers Corner and Hunterstown roads in Adams County.

Monocacy Site Unlikely for Incinerator
By Meg Tully

7/5/2008

Frederick News-Post (MD)

<http://www.fredericknewspost.com/sections/news/display.htm?StoryID=77158>

"Very unlikely."

That's how Frederick County Commissioners President Jan Gardner characterizes the chances that an electricity-producing trash incinerator will be built near the Monocacy National Battlefield.

Gardner wrote that in an e-mail this week to dozens of county residents and officials who have been following the incinerator debate.

Contacted by phone Wednesday, Gardner said the commissioners haven't officially discussed a location for the plant.

"I think that the majority of the commissioners aren't going to want to have an impact on the Monocacy battlefield," she said.

The commissioners have requested construction bids for a waste-to-energy plant on land in the McKinney Industrial Park off Buckeystown Pike, near the battlefield.

But they always planned to consider other sites, and named McKinney because they needed a specific site for bid pricing, Gardner said.

At a public hearing last year, battlefield superintendent Susan Trail said the roughly 150-foot-high incinerator smokestack would be visually intrusive.

The Civil War Preservation Trust named the battlefield one of the most endangered Civil War sites this year because of the incinerator threat.

Known as the "battle that saved Washington," the one-day conflict at Monocacy delayed Confederate troops as they marched unsuccessfully on the capital in 1864.

The county is looking at other sites, but until they have reached an agreement with a property owner, the commissioners will not discuss those options publicly.

The county already owns the McKinney site.

Several commissioners said they weren't willing to discount that location because it could add as much as \$40 million to the cost to build the plant elsewhere.

If the county builds on the McKinney site, it could use the incinerator to dispose of biowaste, or sludge, from the existing wastewater treatment plant there.

With the incinerator at another site, the county might have to construct another disposal facility at the McKinney site specifically to dispose of the sludge. Such a plant is estimated to cost \$40 million.

That would only happen if the county can't find a way to transport the sludge to another incinerator site.

Commissioner Charles Jenkins said he would consider costs when making a decision, though he will also keep in mind the battlefield concerns.

"I'm not married to one particular site, but I just know if you're looking at it from the dollar and cents perspective, it doesn't get much better than (the McKinney site)," Jenkins said.

Commissioner David Gray said the \$40 million savings is "no small consideration."

But he would like to consider other sites, particularly one with enough land to set up a resource recovery park with recycling and composting that would sort out reusable trash before sending the rest to be burned.

"I understand the park's concern about the viewshed and if there's a better site, that's fine with me," he said.

Land for the plant would be paid for through the same bond the county will use to build it. Compared to the several hundred million dollar construction cost, land acquisition would be a relatively minor expense, Gardner said.

A spokeswoman from the Civil War Preservation Trust said the trust is monitoring the situation and is glad the commissioners are not jumping to a decision.

"That location would have such a visual impact on a huge part of the battlefield," spokeswoman Mary Koik said of the McKinney site.

The commissioners expect to receive final bids in August. They will then decide whether to proceed with building a waste-to-energy plant.

--(5)-----

First Donation Made to Falling Waters Battlefield Preservation
By Matthew Umstead

7/3/2008

Hagerstown Herald Mail (MD)

http://www.herald-mail.com/?cmd=displaystory&story_id=197799&format=html

MARTINSBURG, W.VA. — Advocates of preserving land where the Battle of Falling Waters was fought 147 years ago in northern Berkeley County announced the first donation to the cause Wednesday, the anniversary of the Civil War engagement.

The donation of less than a half acre (0.43 acres) along Hammonds Mill Road near St. Andrew's Drive near Spring Mills, W.Va., was finalized in February, said Gary Gimbel, president of the Falling Waters Battlefield Association.

Allen Henry made the donation on behalf of Panhandle Builders & Excavating Inc., the company he leads.

"Mr. Henry has always been a strong supporter of the community and we are extremely grateful for his company's generosity in donating this important piece of the battlefield to the association," Gimbel said in a press release.
advertisement

The land donated is known as Stumpy's Hollow, according to Gimbel, and was where the battle began and where Confederate Col. J.E.B. Stuart and members of the 1st Virginia Cavalry were able to surprise and capture almost an entire company of Union infantry.

The Battle of Falling Waters was the first Civil War engagement in the Shenandoah Valley, and helped start building the "mystique" that would surround Stuart, Gimbel said.

The developer's land donation came just before the Civil War Preservation Trust in March placed the battlefield site, also known as Hoke's Run, on its list of threatened battlefields for the first time, Gimbel said.

An interpretive Civil War Trails marker has been approved by state officials for the battle site, which Gimbel said many Falling Waters area residents have admitted not knowing anything about.

"We hear that all the time," Gimbel said.

Stumpy's Hollow is less than a half-mile west of Interstate 81 at Exit 20. It is the low spot where St. Andrew's Drive splits as it intersects Hammonds Mill Road (W.Va. 901), creating a triangle containing a number of large oak trees.

Gimbel said the battlefield association still hopes to preserve the Porterfield house, a historic home built, in part, by Davy Crockett's grandfather in the 1700s. The home is part of the battlefield area not far from the intersection of U.S. 11 and W.Va. 901.

"We haven't given up," Gimbel said.

Coalition Acquires Acre in Battle Hot Zone
By Bonnie Burch

7/2/2008

Nashville Tennessean (TN)

<http://www.tennessean.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20080702/COUNTY0902/807020305/1352/COUNTY>

FRANKLIN, TN - A one-acre tract of Columbia Avenue property has been through many changes since 1864, when it was covered with injured and dying Civil War soldiers.

Now, plans are to turn the spot at 1219 Columbia Ave. once again into open space as a memorial to the men who fought and died there more than 140 years ago.

Franklin's Charge Inc., a coalition of 11 nonprofit historical and preservation organizations, has bought this core piece of battlefield property for \$950,000 in private funds with the intention of creating a park. The newly acquired property is adjacent to 4 Star Market & Beauty Supply and La Villa Market and diagonally across the street from the Carter House.

Already, the city owns a small park area at Columbia Avenue and Cleburne Street where a Pizza Hut restaurant once stood until 2005. The Heritage Foundation of Franklin and Williamson County also owns the adjacent Carter Cotton Gin property to the south of the new Franklin's Charge acquisition, while the Carter House has the land to the property's north side. Both organizations are in the coalition.

"This is a significant puzzle piece which will bring us closer to having a Civil War battlefield park," said Ernie Bacon, Franklin's Charge president.

A two-story beige house on the property — formerly the offices of Kenneth Holt Construction Co. — will be moved. The land the 1904 farmhouse sits on is more significant than the structure, which was not around for the bloody battle, Bacon said.

"We hope to attract a homebuyer," he said. "You can have the house as long as you take it with you."

But a portion of the current house will stay behind and become a centerpiece of the new park. Originally, a cenotaph memorializing Confederate Gen. Patrick Cleburne, who was killed on the spot, was erected. But when the lot was sold and subdivided long ago, the new owner took down the monument and used it as the rock in the house's foundation, said Robert Hicks, an author and Franklin's Charge board member.

The group hopes that enough of that cenotaph remains that it'll be re-erected once the house is gone. The park setting should be set up by 2011.

"It's not simply acquiring this and other land," Hicks said. "I firmly believe we'll all live to see the rebuilding of the cotton gin and the trench in front, and the rebuilding of the cenotaph."

In 2007, Franklin's Charge raised more than \$5 million, including a dollar-for-dollar match of \$2.5 million from the city, to purchase the old Country Club of Franklin in front of Carnton Plantation in what is now the Eastern Flank Battlefield Park.

But if all goes as planned, the Holt property will not be the last bought by the coalition. The group hopes to purchase additional land important to the Civil War battle with money received through individuals, private companies and other donations and various fundraisers.

Editorial: Morris Island Safeguards

6/30/2008

Charleston Post and Courier (SC)

<http://mail.google.com/mail/?hl=en&tab=wm&shva=1&ui=1>

Morris Island passed into the public domain just before completion of the master plan calling for virtually no development on the island. The city of Charleston, which now owns the island's Cummings Point, should follow the guidelines set forth in the study released Thursday by the Charleston Park and Recreation Commission.

Initially, the PRC was expected to have a stake in the ownership of the island, since it planned to use \$1.5 million in half-cent sales tax funds to help with its purchase.

But owner Bobby Ginn decided to sell the 62-acre tract at the island's northern tip at a reduced price, and PRC's allocation wasn't required. Cummings Point provides the primary point of access to the island and was its last large privately owned tract. The beach and island's dredge spoil disposal area are owned by the state.

Apparently, the city will now take the lead in planning for the island's future. But Matt Compton, director of operations for the city Parks Department, told our reporter that the PRC master plan will be "a very important part" of the process.

Indeed, the plan should guide what happens — and what doesn't happen — on Morris Island. Respondents to a consultants' survey and a subsequent online citizens petition were insistent that the island be kept free of development.

There is concern by members of the Morris Island Coalition, a citizens group that has worked for its preservation for many years, that the deed for the Cummings Point property sold by Mr. Ginn allows docks and restrooms on the island. Both were eliminated from the PRC plan as intrusive to the pristine island. But Mayor Joseph P. Riley Jr. tells us that the deed's allowance for docks or restrooms on the island doesn't mean they will be provided. Nor does it give Mr. Ginn any right to insist on either, he said.

Further, Mr. Ginn has said: "I'm not going to try to dictate what happens out there."

The deed also allows the use of flat-bottom tour boats to bring visitors to the uninhabited island. Those boats have restrooms on board, and can access the island without docks that critics say will require dredging and encourage visitation. It's clear that those boats should serve as the vessel of choice for tour groups, since their use has generated no apparent controversy.

Of course, there will continue to be access by private boats, though it is to be hoped that a higher level of protection will be provided from the off-leash dogs and all-terrain vehicles that the PRC's consultants documented.

Morris Island is a nationally important historic site where black U.S. troops fought for the first time in the nation's history. Many soldiers were buried where they fell, beneath its sands. The island provides valuable habitat for wildlife in an area where habitat has rapidly diminished in recent years.

Greater protection from current abuse should be one of the major benefits of public ownership. Keeping the island in a pristine state should continue to be the goal.

National Park Status Said Unlikely for Battle of Franklin
By Bonnie Burch

6/30/2008

Nashville Tennessean (TN)

<http://tennessean.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20080630/COUNTY09/80630046>

FRANKLIN, TN - Although he cautioned that a feasibility study is still out on the matter, National Park Service official Tim Bemisderfer told attendees of a Civil War symposium that it's unlikely there will be a new national park in Williamson County.

The main reason: Those organizations that currently own and operate historical sites such as the city with Fort Granger, a nonprofit organization at Carnton Plantation and the state with the Carter House, are doing a good job on their own.

"We have had many discussions with these partners, both publicly and in a private setting, and what we've heard is that a lot of these organizations would like to continue managing the properties themselves," Bemisderfer said. "For the National Park Service to have a management presence, you've got to have something to manage, first off."

Development had gobbled up some of the sites related to the 1864 Battle of Franklin, in which thousands of men in the Union and Confederate armies were wounded or killed, as late as the 1980s. But that trend has reversed in recent years, especially with the city's plan to turn the old Country Club of Franklin golf course into a memorial park and purchases by local preservation groups of assorted sites.

"Sometimes we are asked to assess resources for inclusion in the system because no one else can take care of them and they are under great threat of being lost," Bemisderfer said. "The resources in Franklin are being exceptionally cared for by wonderful, qualified groups from across the spectrum, so we don't necessarily feel the need to step in to save a resource."

That doesn't mean the National Park Service might not have a role in preserving historical Franklin landmarks in the future. Scenarios could include entering Williamson County Civil War sites into a congressionally mandated Partnership Park program or providing technical support and grants through National Park Service programs.

"But it is unlikely that the ownership and management of historic properties here would fit into a traditional National Park Service unit," the official said.

Shenandoah Valley's Battlefields to Gain Protection
Associated Press

6/30/2008

Associated Press (NAT)

<http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2008/jun/30/shenandoah-valleys-battlefields-to-gain-protection/>

RICHMOND, VA - Preservationists are expected to announce Tuesday a state and federal initiative to protect more land in the Virginia's Shenandoah Valley, where nearly a third of roughly 50,000 acres of Civil War battlefields are unprotected.

The effort follows the recent announcement by the National Trust for Historic Preservation that a quarry expansion threatens the Cedar Creek and Belle Grove National Park battlefield, which is in the valley.

Kathleen S. Kilpatrick, director of Virginia's Department of Historic Resources, said that the announcement will be made at a news conference in Middletown and that the initiative involves a state-federal partnership to preserve additional acres within the core area of the battlefield.

"Broadly speaking, we see any battlefield that is not protected as threatened," she said.

Miss Kilpatrick declined to give further details until the formal announcement, sponsored by the Shenandoah Valley Battlefields Foundation.

Every year, the Cedar Creek battlefield attracts thousands of Civil War history buffs for one of the largest battle re-enactments in the country. Congress designated 3,700 acres as the boundary of the park, but much of the land is in "partnership park" owned by the nonprofits, the National Park Service and local governments.

The park service and its partners protect a total of 1,339 acres. The remaining acres are in private hands.

Earlier this month, the National Trust warned that an expansion of a limestone quarry mine will threaten Belle Grove, a historic plantation house, and the battlefield's vista.

Spencer Stinson, a representative of Carmeuse Lime & Stone, disputed the National Trust's contention that the mining threatens the battlefield or the estate.

Miss Kilpatrick said the partnership was long in developing and was not in response to the quarry dispute.

The Oct. 19, 1864, battle of Cedar Creek played a key role in the Civil War.

Union Maj. Gen. Philip Sheridan's counterattack on Lt. Jubal A. Early's Confederate troops broke the back of the South's forces in the Shenandoah Valley and was critical to other Northern victories. Nearly 53,000 troops were engaged in the battle, which resulted in 8,575 casualties.

"It was a key focal point for Union valley campaigns," Miss Kilpatrick said.

The battlefield, she said, has the "power of place" that links the past with the present.

"It connects with people in a way that cannot be found in classrooms or textbooks," Miss Kilpatrick said.

Trail to Preserve, Highlight History
By Glenn Smith

6/29/2008

Charleston Post and Courier

http://www.charleston.net/news/2008/jun/29/trail_preserve_highlight_history46024/

From the grounds of old plantation homes to the spot where the first shots of the Civil War were fired, James Island is a community steeped in colorful history.

A history trail inaugurated Saturday is an effort to preserve that rich heritage by highlighting the people, places and events of James Island's past.

More than three dozen people gathered at Septima P. Clark Academy to launch the history trail as part of the Island Heritage Festival. Among those attending were members of the Wassamassaw Native American Tribe.

Each year, organizers of the trail plan to mark a different site on the island to commemorate its historical contribution. There are many to choose from, said Eleanor Kinlaw-Ross, founder and executive director of the Island Heritage Foundation.

One marker already in place marks the site of the 1863 Battle of Sol Legare fought by the Massachusetts 54th Regiment. James Island also is home to Fort Johnson, where the first shots of the Civil War were fired at Federal forces at Fort Sumter. Sammie Smalls, a disabled beggar immortalized as "Porgy" in the American folk opera "Porgy and Bess," is buried on the island. There are other sites as well, including the slave cemetery at McLeod Plantation.

The foundation plans to work with a community advisory board to identify and interpret potential sites. Nominations for additions to the trail will be solicited from the community, Kinlaw-Ross said.

"With the addition of each new marker, the trail becomes further established and the journey to history comes alive," she said.

Rep. Wallace Scarborough, R-James Island, read a proclamation from Gov. Mark Sanford and applauded efforts to preserve the island where he was born. Retired lawman Eugene Frazier, author of "James Island: Stories From Slave Descendants," told the crowd gathered for the inauguration about the island's abundant plantations and how slaves contributed to its history.

Blake Hallman, treasurer of the South Carolina Battleground Preservation Trust, said that amid its urban sprawl, James Island is littered with important evidence of the Civil War that must be remembered. "You are the custodians," he told the crowd. "You are the ones who will decide whether these pieces of our history will remain or be bulldozed for further expansion."

Board Seeks to Preserve Star Fort
By Robert Igoe

6/26/2008

Winchester Star (VA)

http://www.winchesterstar.com/article_details.php?ArticleID=7642

WINCHESTER - Frederick County officials are prepared to take over management of one of the county's historic landmarks.

At its regular meeting on Wednesday, the county Board of Supervisors approved a resolution to ask the Frederick County Circuit Court to find that the Star Fort site on U.S. 522 (North Frederick Pike) near Winchester is of significant public interest, and that the county has the authorization and means to collect assessments from property owners in the Star Fort development to preserve the Civil War stronghold.

The resolution came following a report by attorney Robert Mitchell detailing the results of his examination of the terms of the master development plan for the Star Fort residential development.

In his findings, Mitchell said the plan includes specific language requiring that a homeowners' association was created with the purpose of collecting mandatory annual payments from the developed properties to fund the preservation and operation of Star Fort as a public education and historic site.

However, Mitchell said the assessments were not collected properly.

While the homeowners' association was later dissolved by the state Department of Corporations, Mitchell said that each deed of dedication for the Star Fort development continues to state the purpose of the association, and that the master plan agreement calls for the assessment funds to be turned over to an agency that would continue to do the assessments.

Mitchell said the site's preservation is "of significant public interest" and recommended that the county take over the assessments of the subdivision.

The 7-acre fort was first used during the Civil War as cannon placements ordered by Confederate Gen. Thomas J. "Stonewall" Jackson, and served to protect the area from Union advances.

The fort changed hands on at least two occasions, and was finally taken over by Union Gen. Philip Sheridan in 1864 during the Third Battle of Winchester.

The site soon fell into disrepair and was often used as a site for recreational vehicles until it was taken over by the Confederate re-enactment group Middlesex Artillery Fleet's Battery in 1980.

The property has since been conveyed to the Shenandoah Valley Battlefields Foundation, which has approved funding to put a fence around the site to prevent its further deterioration.

Board of Supervisors Chairman Richard C. Shickle Sr. said he hopes Wednesday's resolution is a first step toward preserving the site's history.

"I'm glad we have the opportunity to deal with the issue," he said. "I hope to see Star Fort restored to a fine condition, and I feel we can count on cooperation from the homeowners."

In another action, the supervisors scheduled a public hearing for their Aug. 13 meeting to discuss proposed amendments to the Rural Areas zoning district ordinance.

The amendments would limit the density of buildings in these zones to one unit per 10 acres, rather than one unit per 5 acres, and set the minimum lot size at 10 acres.

Attending the meeting in the Frederick County Office Complex were Shickle, Gene E. Fisher, Philip Lemieux, Gary W. Dove, Bill M. Ewing, and Charles S. DeHaven Jr. Gary A. Lofton was absent.

--(12)-----

Group Hopes to Bring Lincoln Collection to Washington
By Jacqueline Trescott

6/25/2008

Washington Post (DC)

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/06/24/AR2008062401472.html>

Four major Washington institutions are jointly pursuing an extensive collection of materials related to Abraham Lincoln and his times with hopes of bringing it to the capital.

The Library of Congress, the National Museum of American History, Ford's Theatre and President Lincoln's Cottage have formed a partnership to obtain the collection of the privately owned Lincoln Museum in Fort Wayne, Ind. The museum is closing next week after 77 years of operation.

The Fort Wayne museum was suffering from a lack of visibility and attendance, said Annette Moser, a spokeswoman for Lincoln Financial Group, the company that runs the foundation that owns the museum.

"The Lincoln Financial board decided they really wanted to make the collection more visible to a greater number of people. With the bicentennial of [Lincoln's birth] next year, it would be a great way of celebrating by gifting the collection," Moser said.

The foundation decided to donate the artifacts to public-spirited organizations and has received proposals from about 40 parties. The decision will be made by January.

Washington "is a natural place" for the museum's collection, said John Sellers, a Lincoln specialist at the Library of Congress. "It is where Lincoln became famous and made his mark. It is a natural place because the assassination happened here. It is a natural place because of the wealth of material related to Lincoln and the assassination."

"There really isn't any group that can match the visitorship and financial stability of the Washington group," Sellers said.

The foundation board plans to narrow the proposals in the fall, invite the finalists to meet with the curators in Fort Wayne, and then make site visits to the competing groups. Moser declined to talk about the applicants. "They ranged from the small, not-for-profit institutions who are interested in one or two items to the nationally known institutions," she said.

The museum's collection includes a signed copy of the Emancipation Proclamation and a signed copy of the 13th Amendment, which abolished slavery in the United States. The museum has a mock office, with an original desk, reading glasses and inkwell. The furniture includes a Gardner Gallery chair, seen in some of the familiar photographs of the president. The museum also owns Lincoln's leather portfolio wallet, a bronze life mask, campaign medals, his shawl and a lock of his hair.

The artifacts include 350 documents signed by Lincoln, as well as thousands of 19th-century prints and photographs, and 18,000 rare books and pamphlets. The collection's value has been estimated at \$20 million.

"The collection is a wonderful resource that has gathered information and files on Abraham Lincoln that will be useful for researchers in generations to come," said Harry R. Rubenstein, the chairman of the division of politics and reform at the American History museum.

For example, "They have copies of every single sermon given in churches the Sunday after Lincoln's assassination," said Paul R. Tetreault, Ford's Theatre's producing director.

The collection is becoming available at a time when both Ford's and the American History Museum are undergoing extensive renovations. The museum is expected to reopen in November. The work at the theater is expected to be complete by February.

The cottage, on the grounds of the Armed Forces Retirement Home, recently was restored and opened to the public for the first time in February.

The Library of Congress has taken the lead in forming the local partnership. After the Lincoln foundation held an informational meeting in Philadelphia for prospective bidders, the Washington representatives held an impromptu summit on Amtrak. "Everyone saw the advantages of working together. So on the way back we plotted our strategy," Sellers said.

"We believe we would be hard to beat, given the foundation's criteria of visitation, financial ability and the ability to maintain the collection," said Ford's Tetreault.

The manuscript division of the Library of Congress has a vast collection of Lincoln material, including his presidential papers. Other artifacts at the library include the items found in his pockets at the time of his death.

Ford's Theatre, operated by the National Park Service, has preserved the box where Lincoln and his guests were sitting the night of the assassination. It has John Wilkes Booth's derringer pistol, the clothing worn by Lincoln that night and the hoods placed over the co-conspirators at their hanging.

Artifacts at the history museum include the top hat Lincoln was wearing the night of his assassination, his patent model of a device for raising boats off sandbars, the brass inkstand used to draft the Emancipation Proclamation, and the cup he used just before going to Ford's Theatre. "They have the inkwell used at the signing of the Emancipation," Rubenstein said. "Some of these items will be reunited for the first time since the 1860s."

Project Aims to Fix Leaks at Fort
By Guy Busby

6/23/2008

Birmingham Press-Register (AL)

<http://www.al.com/news/press-register/index.ssf?/base/news/1214212527252990.xml&coll=3>

FORT MORGAN, AL - Preservation, not archaeological excavation, is the main intention of crews digging up sand and bricks on the top of the east wall of Fort Morgan.

Work stopped June 13 for the afternoon after crews found a rare Union cannon shell unseen since around the time of the Battle of Mobile Bay.

The real prize, however, in the work is a chance to stop some of the leaks and cracking that have plagued the fort since the structure was completed in the 1830s, said Mark Driscoll, historic sites manager for the Alabama Historical Commission, the agency that operates the fort.

Using a \$500,000 federal grant, officials are trying to slow some of the deterioration in the fort caused by water leaking down from the wall tops through the casemates, the vaulted rooms beneath. Driscoll said workers are going to remove all the soil and bricks at one point on the east wall to get an idea of the state of the structure.

"We're digging all the way down to try to find out what the conditions are," he said. "As part of that, we're digging across the width of the casemate at that point."

Driscoll said archaeologists and architects are studying the condition of the wall and any items found. He said the fact that a shell from a Union 100-pound Parrott gun fired during the Civil War was found during the work indicates that no one has done such extensive work since the fort was built.

"The Army did a lot of work here, but obviously they never dug down that far," he said.

Mike Bailey, Fort Morgan curator, said leaks have long been a problem at the site. White shapes that look like icicles hanging from the curved ceilings of the casemates often intrigue visitors. The figures are formed by mortar leached from the bricks overhead by water that has leaked through the roof and is weakening the structure, he said.

Lead sheeting was placed over the brickwork during construction to protect the masonry from leaks. As part of the current work, soil contaminated by the lead is being removed by Alabama Department of Corrections crews certified in cleaning areas with unacceptable levels of lead contamination, according to a statement from the Alabama Historical Commission.

Over the years, cracks have been found in the bricks along the fort walls. Fort officials checking damage after Hurricane Katrina, found that the storm had worsened many of the cracks. The \$500,000 grant is from federal programs set up to repair damage from the 2005 hurricane, Driscoll said.

Councilman Spurs Battlefield Boycott
By Robert Igoe

6/21/2008

Winchester Star (VA)

http://www.winchesterstar.com/article_details.php?ArticleID=7537

MIDDLETOWN, VA - As the celebration of an important local Civil War battle approaches, a civil war of sorts involving historic preservation groups and elected officials continues to escalate.

Middletown Town Councilman Marshall J. "Mark" Brown said he is asking Middletown business owners to boycott the Cedar Creek Battlefield Foundation's Oct. 18-19 re-enactment of the Battle of Cedar Creek.

Brown's call for the boycott stems from an agreement the foundation reached with Chemstone during the company's efforts to rezone 394 acres to the north and south of its Middletown quarry from Rural Areas to Extractive Manufacturing.

The Frederick County Board of Supervisors approved the request on May 28, despite the Frederick County Planning Commission's recommendation that the request be turned down in 2006.

Chemstone sought the new zoning to allow the company to mine high-grade limestone from this property.

Several organizations, including the CCBF, were part of an effort to oppose the rezoning out of fears that it would mean increased truck traffic and threaten historical landmarks such as the battlefield and the Belle Grove Plantation.

To address these concerns, the company changed its application and proffer statements to reduce the rezoning area from 639 acres to 394 acres, eliminating 245 acres along the perimeter of the property.

The company also agreed to a general limit of 86 truck trips per day.

But in addition to the proffer changes, the company reached an agreement with the CCBF to provide vegetation on the 30-foot-high berms between the battlefield and the quarry, to turn over an eight-acre tract of property as a historic preserve and to pay for an architect and historian of the CCBF's choice to examine the company's property for artifacts and other historical significance.

All artifacts found will be turned over to the CCBF and property deemed of great historic importance could be added to the preserve.

"We're extremely dissatisfied with the foundation's actions," he said. "There's an old story about 30 pieces of silver and I think it applies well here."

Foundation officials say their actions compromised no one's position, and was vital in protecting the battlefield's historic resources.

"Sooner or later, we felt that this rezoning would be approved due to the amount of high-grade limestone on this piece of land," said CCBF Executive Director Suzanne Chilson. "We saw (the agreement) as a win-win situation and something that was not against anyone else's interests."

Chilson said that many of the foundation's critics do not have all the facts and she is preparing a statement on the agreement that she hopes will resolve their concerns.

In a letter to the Board of Supervisors, Chilson said "the mission of the Cedar Creek Battlefield Foundation is to acquire, preserve, and interpret the land upon which the Battle of Cedar Creek was fought, and to collect and preserve documents and artifacts related to the battlefield. In that respect, the concerns of the Cedar Creek Battlefield Foundation were satisfied."

Brown said the boycott is not only because of the agreement, but because the festival has been the source of safety concerns.

"We've asked them for many years to offer shuttle buses for the fans and re-enactors," he said. "The festival creates increased pedestrian and vehicle traffic and we've asked them in the past to help address this."

Aside from the boycott, two of the groups involved in opposing the rezoning, The National Trust for Historic Preservation and Belle Grove Inc., announced Thursday they were severing ties with the CCBF over their agreement.

Another CCBF official, Vice President L.A. "Butch" Fravel, declined to comment on Brown's allegations, saying that "our aim is not to escalate any bad blood," but said that the foundation has no issue with any other organization involved.