

3. Wilderness Run

Follow the paved road to your right to reach the bridge across Wilderness Run.

Wilderness Run and its marshy tributaries served as Ellwood plantation's lifeblood. The run supplied water to the plantation since its earliest days, and momentous events and visitors passed by its waters.

The Marquis de Lafayette camped south of this bridge in the summer of 1781 during his Virginia Campaign and later visited Ellwood in his 1824 tour of the United States.

4. Orange Turnpike and Germanna Plank Road Intersection

Once across Wilderness Run, continue about 200 feet. Stop just before you reach the farm lane. This is the historic intersection of the Orange Turnpike and the Germanna Plank Road. The Germanna Plank Road intersected from the northwest (your left), and you are rejoining the historic roadbed of the Turnpike.



The Battle of the Wilderness overran the rolling landscape stretching from Wilderness Tavern southwest to Ellwood and beyond, as shown in this 1864 sketch by Edwin Forbes.

In the early eighteenth century, Germanna Road became the first to connect the German immigrant settlement of Germanna to the more settled areas of the Rappahannock River to the southeast. Nearly a century later, efforts were underway for a new road to connect Fredericksburg with Orange to the west. Despite its convenient placement, the Orange Turnpike faced several problems, including Virginia red clay swallowing the crushed stone pavement and users who avoided toll gates. Greater troubles soon engulfed both roads, however.

Troops marched south and east on these roads during the 1863 Chancellorsville campaign and again during the 1864 Battle of the Wilderness. Once fighting ensnared the armies in the Wilderness in May 1864, both Union Army of the Potomac commander George G. Meade and commander of all Union armies Ulysses S. Grant established nighttime headquarters to the northwest of this intersection. At these headquarters, both made decisions that shaped the war's future, including Grant's determination to advance despite the battle's stalemate.

5. Wilderness Tavern Dependency

Cross over Lyons Lane (a private road—please do not walk along the road) to the trail climbing the hill in front of you. Stop by the chimney at the top of the hill. These remains are all that is left of a dependency building for Wilderness Tavern, which stood beneath modern Virginia Route 3.



The Wilderness Tavern dependency building photographed in 1884.

The chimney and foundation stones here once served a dependency of Wilderness Tavern, a complex including a tavern, which stood across the Orange Turnpike (beneath modern Rt. 3), and several dependencies. These buildings stood watch above the intersection since the turn of the 19th Century, and at the time of the Civil War, the complex was the home of William and Rebecca Simms, their family, several workers, and ten slaves. The Simms family operated both the tavern and a store from the roadside, but by the 1860s, most of the tavern's operations had concluded.

War arrived on the threshold of Wilderness Tavern in May 1863, as Union troops marched east to Chancellorsville. Days later, this area became the Confederate rear after Thomas "Stonewall" Jackson's flank attack.



View of the open vista toward Ellwood Manor from the remains of Wilderness Tavern

When Jackson was accidentally shot on the evening of May 2, 1863, staff officers and doctors rushed him to a field hospital tent north of the tavern, where Dr. Hunter McGuire amputated Jackson's left arm on the Simms' kitchen table. After the surgery, Reverend Beverly Tucker Lacy trod much of this trail to bury Jackson's arm in his brother's family cemetery at Ellwood.

In the years following the Civil War, the Tavern and its surrounding buildings were destroyed, except for this dependency, which accidentally burned in 1978. The road network changed first in 1925 and again in 1962. As you walk back toward Ellwood, consider the open vista full of soldiers or farm workers, along with the well-traveled roads that served as the lifeline of farmers and settlers and guided the steps of soldiers.