

History in our Backyard

2018



Compiled by:



FRIENDS OF WILDERNESS BATTLEFIELD

To preserve, protect and interpret the Wilderness Battlefield in partnership with the National Park Service

FoWB

P.O. Box 576

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Friends of Wilderness Battlefield is a non-profit organization of volunteers dedicated to the preservation, advocacy, and interpretation of the Wilderness and the battlefield. For more information, or for information on joining, please visit our website at www.fowb.org.



PREFACE

Friends of Wilderness Battlefield, Inc. (FoWB) began in 1995 as a small group of local residents who recognized a need to assist the National Park Service (NPS) in the preservation and maintenance of the Wilderness Battlefield which was located in their back yard. Over the years the organization has evolved and grown to over 200 members with dozens of member volunteers who not only provide maintenance assistance to NPS, but also provide education and advocacy for the Park, the battlefields and the local area.

One of the pressing questions we, as an organization, continuously ask is “How do we instill a sense of ownership in the general public so that they feel compelled to preserve our national treasures, like our battlefields?” One of the answers is “Educate folks on the rich and varied history of the area in which they live”.

This series of articles called **History in our Backyard** will hopefully help local residents, and all visitors to the area for that matter, realize that the local history of Orange and Spotsylvania Counties needs to be preserved and shared with generations to come.

Kudos to all of our volunteers who have taken the time to write these great articles!

Mark Leach
President FoWB



INTRODUCTION

History in our Backyard, a product of the Friends of Wilderness Battlefield (FoWB), was created by FoWB's Special Programs and Education Outreach Committees. It consists of a series of articles designed to share the history of the Wilderness region with the residents who live in and around this hallowed ground. The articles focus on either a particular event or a historical period that brings to life the area's rich and vibrant history dating from the earliest settlers to the present day. These brief glimpses into the Wilderness' history are intended to encourage residents of all ages living in and around Spotsylvania and Orange Counties to learn and appreciate the significant impact that this area has had on our local and national history.

For years the Battle of the Wilderness has been under-appreciated by most Americans. Experience tells us that local residents have a limited knowledge of the 1864 battle's impact, as the first battle in the Overland Campaign and the first face-to-face encounter between Generals Ulysses S. Grant and Robert E. Lee. Further, many residents are unaware that the history of the Wilderness in general is both a microcosm of Virginia history even predating the birth of our Nation and a story of agricultural and general economic development in a rural setting.

History in our Backyard is also designed to capture our FoWB members' wealth of knowledge about various aspects of the Wilderness. We encourage our volunteers to share with others a particular moment, event, or period in Wilderness history about which they are knowledgeable. These are not intended to be scholarly works of history but rather tidbits of information about the land for the people who share that land today. We hope our neighbors will become more engaged with their surroundings by having their neighbors – our volunteers – share their insights into the region through this brief picture.

Our initial concept was to make these short pictures into history available to local communities' newspapers, magazines, newsletters, and websites. But **History in our Backyard** is growing beyond our initial expectations. We anticipated no more than a handful of articles a year but that number is increasing and we are reaching more local communities and at least one county-wide medium. Possibly the most significant expansion will be this compilation of all the articles, as they get published elsewhere, residing on our webpage.

We welcome your comments and suggestions for improving our product and for future subjects. We would even welcome your participation as an author of an article on a topic that is of interest to you and would add to the knowledge of our readership.

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1 HOW THE WILDERNESS BECAME THE WILDERNESS

Early May 1864 witnessed the first time that Confederate General Robert E. Lee and Union General Ulysses S. Grant – the two giants of the Civil War - met in battle in an area known then and forever more as the Wilderness. The area had been known as the Wilderness for more than one hundred years before the Civil War but it was this bloody battle that would put the Wilderness on the map and in the history books forever. What made these seventy square miles different from the rest of early Virginia? How did the Wilderness become the Wilderness? To answer these questions, we must go back to the early 1700's when Virginia was still a British colony and Lieutenant Governor Alexander Spotswood envisioned starting an iron smelting industry in this area.

Spotswood arrived in Hampton Roads in June, 1710, after being appointed Lieutenant Governor of the Virginia Colony. Iron ore was known to exist in the area that would become the Wilderness even before Spotswood arrived in Virginia. The British Government at that time restricted manufacturing to the home islands and looked to the colonies to produce and export raw materials back to England while importing finished goods manufactured from those raw materials. Despite the lack of permission from the British Government to smelt iron in the colonies, Spotswood initiated the iron smelting operation in Virginia anyway. His initiative was in fact the first attempt at moving away from an agricultural to an industrial based economy in Virginia and actually in any of the colonies.

There are three elements in that land that are critical to the smelting of iron ore: the ground must contain iron ore; there must be large forests for fuel, and water for power must be available. All of these features were abundant in what was to become the Wilderness and Spotswood began acquiring land in this area shortly after his arrival in Virginia. Within just a couple years he controlled over 80,000 acres in present day Orange and Spotsylvania Counties.

But there was still one feature missing before Spotswood could turn his dream into reality and that was the presence of experienced manpower that could conduct the smelting operations. So he arranged for the emigration of German iron workers to Virginia; the first emigrants began arriving here in April, 1713. They were the original settlers of the Germanna community, located on the south bank of the Rapidan River near today's State Route 3 and Germanna Community College. By 1715 Spotswood had established the Tubal Furnace below the confluence of the Rapidan and Rappahannock rivers and was smelting iron. By 1750 there would be at least six blast furnaces smelting the area's iron ore.



The smelting process required a fire hot enough to reach the iron ore's melting point, 2,190 to 2,810 degrees Fahrenheit, and it had to be burning continuously for weeks at a time. The amount of fuel for smelting the iron was enormous – nearly two acres of hardwood per ton of smelted iron – and some furnaces could burn as much as seven hundred acres of timber per year. To obtain the fuel required clear cutting vast segments of the virgin forest in the area. The second growth forest that sprang up afterward consisted of smaller, scrubbier trees which allowed the growth of ground covering vegetation. The vines, briars, honeysuckle, poison ivy and other lower growing vegetation created an almost impenetrable wall of vegetation and resulted in the area, by at least 1750, becoming known as “The Wilderness.”

Exhibit 1 The Wilderness Virginia



It was this second growth forest that was in place during the Civil War. Although the 1863 Battle of Chancellorsville was fought in and around the Wilderness, it was really the first encounter of Lee and Grant in May 1864 - right in our backyard - that the iconic name of “The Wilderness” became forever etched in Civil War and American history.

Author: Don Shockey

Date: August 2017



2 THE WILDERNESS – THE EARLY YEARS

Initially, this series on History in Our Backyard described how the Wilderness became the Wilderness. Now we will delve into the early inhabitants who came to what would become known as “The Wilderness.” All things Wilderness were synonymous with Alexander Spotswood, the colony’s Royal Lt Governor in the early 1700s. He initiated the economic progress of the region through his efforts to establish Germanna fort and an iron industry. One source states that “there, thirty miles from the last outlying farms, the Germans set to work, clearing a site on the riverbank and building a fortified town.” The same source references the fort being supplied by pack-trains of mules and horses.

Exhibit 2 Germanna Fort



Those same pack-trains were instrumental in his 1716 venture into the mountains to the west. His band of adventure-seeking explorers departed from the Germanna fort accompanied by animals laden with supplies including a healthy supply of spirits. He later awarded each participant with a golden horseshoe pin thereby identifying them as the “Knights of the Golden Horseshoe” for eternity.

At the time of Spotswood’s term as Lt Governor of Virginia in 1722, he had firmly established his presence in the area. Through a somewhat devious plan he had accumulated over 80,000 acres of land. Records show that he never sold a single acre of the land, choosing instead to lease lots, mostly in 50 acre parcels, a few in parcels of up to 500 acres.



English law at that time dictated that settlers construct a home and plant an orchard on their leased property within three years. They also had to clear and plant a minimum one-acre garden and/or cropland. Initially, many chose to plant tobacco. The Colony was cash-strapped in those days and tobacco became the medium of exchange in most commercial transactions.

A 1724 inventory of Spotswood's properties shows that he owned his fort, his large home, dozens of farm animals and the basis of the iron works, namely the Tubal site, about 12 miles east of his residence. At Germanna, he established the first County seat of Spotsylvania and held court in his home. The presence of the court quickly brought its own society; travelers arrived routinely for appearances before the justices.

County courts developed "Order Books" in those days. Both the Spotsylvania and later Orange (after 1734) books contain references to orders issued to Spotswood, primarily dictating that he organize work crews to maintain the road to Germanna and the bridge over Wilderness Run, located near the present day intersection of State Route 3 and US 20. Local residents provided the labor for the crews, usually their slaves. Spotswood did maintain the ferry that operated over the Rapid Anne River, today's Rapidan. He also maintained his own road from Germanna to the Tubal Iron Works.

Eventually, small enterprises sprang up in the area. Those that were not located at the Court complex would be found along the Germanna Road. Retail stores, grain mills, saw mills, post offices, wagon makers and leatherworks businesses all found their place. Physicians took up residence in the area and church spires began to become part of the local scenery. By 1725 there were 7 plantations alone in the area surrounding the Tubal Iron Works site. The new Wilderness society was beginning to take shape.

Author: Bob Epp

Date: September 2017



3 PLANTATION LIFE IN THE WILDERNESS

The plantation system was fully established in Virginia well before our independence from England. Plantations often included several tenant farms and almost certainly used slave labor to work the land. Tenant farmers frequently hired laborers to work the land with the family. If they could afford it, they would choose to purchase slaves, which would be a step up prestige wise, but they had to provide for their basic needs. Plantations with a significant slave population hired overseers to manage the slave workforce. The overseers were usually experienced farmers and in most cases their abuse of slaves was rampant. Both the owner and the overseers regularly carried large whips to “encourage” higher rates of work. They worked the slave labor force tirelessly - usually 6 days a week - and the daily routine rarely varied: rising at sunrise, working all day, and returning at dusk. On larger plantations, slave labor was also used to support the owner and his family as cooks, maids, and nannies. The lady of the manor organized the supervision of her children, the preparation of family meals, and upkeep of the gardens while the actual work fell to the house servants. Other female slaves worked in the fields. Slaves also became skilled craftsmen in such fields as blacksmithing that allowed the plantation to become nearly self-sufficient.

Exhibit 3 Ellwood Manor



Weekly activities included market days – usually Wednesday and Saturday - when produce would be transported to town; plantation owners often used trusted help, including slaves, to conduct varied business activities in town. During the winter months after harvest, the plantation owner often provided slave labor to court-ordered road construction gangs. Otherwise, the owner would focus on further developing his acreage.

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Sundays, for a plantation's white residents, were for worshiping and socializing with friends and family. Organized social activities included events such as county fairs, weddings and horse races. Slaves' Sunday activities were much more limited; that day was a time to rest, socialize with other slaves, tend their small garden plots, when allowed, and hold religious services.

Slaves' lives were extraordinarily difficult. Life expectancy - to mid-30s - was about half that of the white citizenry. Their homes were crude dirt-floored cabins with little furniture. Tattered hand-me-down blankets, coarse fabric materials fashioned into apparel, and basic foods usually lacking in real nutritional value were the norm. In a benevolent plantation environment, slave children might be able to play with non-slave children, even the owner's children, but generally they were pressed into labor at an early age and abuse was prevalent. In its ugliest forms, young slave girls served as mistresses to the plantation's white population. As a result, the number of "mulattos" in the slave community rose rapidly.

This plantation system persisted in Virginia and the Wilderness with only slight variations for 150 years until the Civil War in the 1860s brought an end to plantation life and slavery.

Author: Bob Epp

Date: October 2017



4 AN ORAL HISTORY OF A LOCAL SLAVE FAMILY

Do you know your family's history? How far back can you trace your lineage? If you are an African American descended from slaves, that quest can be very difficult, often impossible. Most of what we know about the history of slaves and their families comes from oral traditions carried from generation to generation. Such is the case of Anthony Jones, a slave on the Ellwood Plantation in the first half of the 19th century, and his family.

Shortly before his death in New York City, Jones shared a believable story of his family and their roles at the plantation. Anthony was the son of Ester and Anthony Jones, Sr., likely the Black Minister for the plantation's slaves. Anthony, Sr. and Ester had 8 children, some of whom are documented on slave censuses from Spotsylvania and Orange Counties.

William Jones, the owner of Ellwood, was widowed in 1825. He remarried a few years later at 78 to Lucinda Gordon, a 16 year old grandniece of his first wife. She brought her personal slave, Patsy, with her to Ellwood. Like most slaves during this period, Patsy developed a specialty – her skill was weaving. The younger Anthony took a shine to Patsy as she sat weaving and, after wooing her for an extended time, asked her to marry him. Patsy agreed and Anthony, as the law then required, had to ask for permission from the plantation owner; after William Jones agreed, Anthony and Patsy took up residency in the laundry house at Ellwood. They had four children over the next 13 years - the first three (Isaac, Aaron, and Lucy) died in infancy.

Exhibit 4 Slave Auction Block



Over time, Anthony grew increasingly unhappy with his Ellwood life, working the fields and gold mining on plantation property. In the early 1840s he opted to run away, leaving his then pregnant wife Patsy, his parents and his 7 siblings behind. He was captured and returned to

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Fredericksburg where he was jailed and sold to a slave trader, John Ellis. After the sale, Anthony had to accompany his master on a trip into the Deep South. On their return by boat, Ellis became sick and died, leaving Anthony in charge of the owner's personal belongings. Instead of returning to Fredericksburg, Anthony stayed on the ship headed to New York. On arrival, he locked his owner's trunk, gave the key to the ship's captain, and announced that he was going to Church. He never returned to the ship.

Anthony obtained employment in New York and for the next few years attempted to correspond with Patsy; she later claimed to have received only one letter which had to be read to her by the local postmaster (Almond). Unfortunately, she lost that letter during the Civil War. She and her youngest child, Anthony III, later laid claim to the wealth her husband accumulated during his New York working days. The elder Jones' siblings, Isaac Smith and Elizabeth Keaton, also pursued the estate through the New York probate court. Those proceedings (1873-1876) and their related testimonials afforded considerable insight into the family, some of which are shared in this article.

(The rest of the story, obtained from the court proceedings, will appear in the next episode.)

Author: Bob Epp

Date: March 2018

5 AN ORAL HISTORY (CONTINUED)

In April, 1875, the *New York Sun* reported that Anthony Smith, commonly known as Anthony Jones, died in New York at the age of 70. Smith was a former slave who had run-away from the Wilderness of Virginia. During his life in New York Smith had accumulated a considerable estate but had neglected to write a will. Lacking a legal heir, the New York Court System took control of his affairs.

On his death-bed interview, Smith told the story of his life. Once the property of William Jones, owner of the Ellwood Manor estate in the Wilderness of Spotsylvania, His master William Jones had become a widower in the 1820s and several years later William remarried Lucinda Gordon who brought with her to Ellwood Mansion a personal slave, Patsey.

Anthony eventually wooed Patsey and with the consent of their owners they took up housekeeping on the Ellwood Manor grounds. Four children were born to the couple, but only one, the fourth, survived. About the time of William's death in 1845, Anthony ran-away from his then pregnant wife and the Ellwood estate. He was captured, returned to Fredericksburg and sold

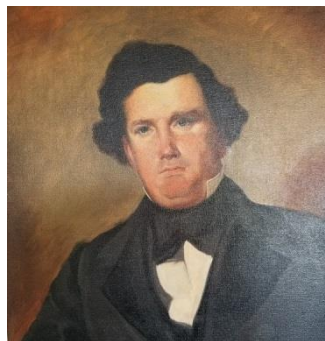
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to a new owner. After a trip to the South with his new master, Anthony again escaped and made his way to New York City, where he lived out his remaining years. Following the Emancipation, Anthony attempted to restore contact with his family back in the Wilderness, but with limited success. Patsey did retain one of his letters and later cited it as proof of their marital relationship.

The story as related above was published in the New York papers sometime after Anthony's death. It was soon picked up and published by Richmond, Virginia papers. As a result, two sets of claimants to Anthony's fortune came forth to the New York Court. One, the remaining sister and brother of Anthony declared extreme poverty. They were represented by J. Horace Lacy, their former owner through his marriage to Betty Churchill Jones, William Jones' second daughter and heir to Ellwood.

Exhibit 5 J. Horace Lacy



The second claimants were Patsey, his first wife, along with the sole living child who was born after Anthony's first escape. They were represented by lawyers Alexander & Green of Fredericksburg. When interviewed by the New York court, Patsey explained that she had waited a number of years following Anthony's departure before taking in a new partner. Though partnered, she claimed to have been the wife of Anthony (citing the letter she retained) and therefore a legal heir to his estate.

The New York Court wrestled with the judgment for nearly a year. They recognized that New York and Virginia laws on marriage differed considerably in the pre-war era. Numerous testaments and affidavits were heard or submitted. Many of the claimants appeared before the referee at least one time. In the end, based on Patsey's proof of their pre-war marital relationship, the court sided with Patsey. She received the estate, then valued at \$20,000, cash and property.

Author: Bob Epp

Date: March 2018

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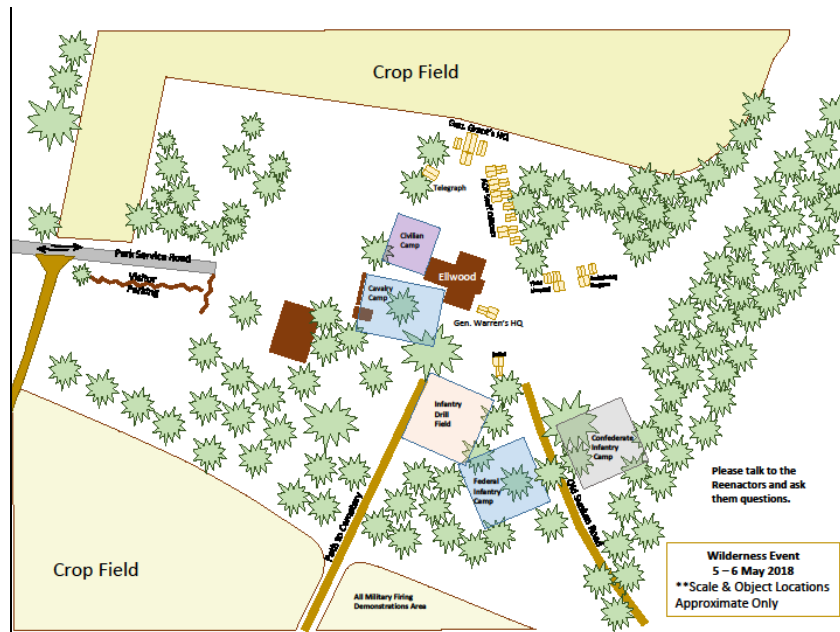


6 RELIVE THE BATTLE OF THE WILDERNESS

Next month marks the 154th anniversary of one of the largest and most significant battles in America’s Civil War, the Battle of the Wilderness. Conducted around, and sometimes on, our community’s grounds during the first week of May 1864, the battle is often considered the beginning of the end of the Confederacy. This year, during the weekend of May 5 and 6, the National Park Service (NPS), in conjunction with local living history re-enactor organizations and the Friends of the Wilderness Battlefield, will offer to the public, free of charge, a full range of events and demonstrations commemorating this momentous battle.

This event will be held on the grounds of Ellwood Manor, a restored plantation home located on Route 20, approximately a half mile from intersection of Route 20 and Route 3. Participating in the weekend’s activities will be Confederate and Union infantry and cavalry re-enactors as well as individuals depicting key battle commanders such as Generals Ulysses Grant, George Meade, and Gouverneur Warren. Each participating organization will set up a campsite near Ellwood that will allow you to view several demonstrations of camp life, including stepping into the life of a soldier or learning about the medical realities of war in the mid-19th century.

Exhibit 6 Ellwood Event Layout



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Anyone who wants to learn more about this hallowed land where we live should not miss this event. The activities will be held on the grounds of Ellwood each day on May 5 and 6 from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.; some will be ongoing and others scheduled at specific times, usually on the hour.

There will be multiple infantry and cavalry battle demonstrations between the Confederate and Union re-enactors each day. At 12 p.m. and 3 p.m. both days, the NPS will conduct live fire artillery demonstrations. At 4 p.m. on Saturday, all of the infantry, cavalry, and artillery units will conduct a combined battle demonstration. You don't want to miss these! Just prior to the midday firing demonstrations each day, you will be able to witness a major confrontation among Generals Grant, Meade, and Warren just as it may have occurred on May 5, 1863. There will be opportunities to talk to each of the participants and plenty of photo ops in front of the manor house as well as with all re-enactors and horses.

Regardless of what you know about the Wilderness Battle or the Civil War writ large, you will leave Ellwood with a better understanding of and new perspectives about the events that occurred on this hallowed ground and how they affected the final outcome of the war less than a year later.

For more information about this Living History event, you can visit the local NPS website (www.nps.gov/frsp) or the Friends of the Wilderness Battlefield website (www.fowb.org). They will provide you with additional details about the events and participants, as well as the timeline for specific activities and demonstrations. Mark your calendars – this weekend is a must see!

Author: Dick Rankin

Date: April 2018



7 JACKSON'S FLANK ATTACK AND WOUNDING

On the evening of May 1, 1863, during the Battle of Chancellorsville, General “Stonewall” Jackson and Confederate commander General Robert E. Lee held an historic meeting sitting on a “cracker box” near the intersection of Plank and Furnace Roads.

They agreed upon a plan for Jackson to maneuver around the Union army and initiate a flank attack. The next morning Jackson and approximately 28,000 troops, nearly half of Lee’s Army, started their march. Charles Wellford, owner of Catherine Furnace, and his son guided them along back roads for 12 miles ending up on the right flank of the Union Army’s XI Corp. Around 5:15 p.m., rebel soldiers attacked, routing the Union troops and pushing them back until nightfall. Jackson considered pressing the attack but decided to conduct his own personal reconnaissance before committing to an unusual nighttime attack.

Jackson set out around 9 p.m. with his entourage. His guide, 19 year old Private David Kyle, took them down a narrow road passing through Confederate lines and riding to within a few hundred yards of the enemy when Jackson’s staff cautioned that it would be too dangerous to go further. They turned around, retracing their path when they were fired upon by their own soldiers, mistaking them for Union skirmishers. Jackson was hit three times – once in his right hand and twice in the left arm. His staff rushed to his side, summoned his surgeon, Dr. Hunter McGuire, placed Jackson in an ambulance, and transported him to a field hospital – a large tent at Wilderness Tavern - near today’s Routes 3 and 20 Intersection; there, Dr. McGuire amputated Jackson’s left arm. Jackson’s chaplain, Beverly Tucker Lacy, carried Jackson’s amputated arm to Ellwood plantation, a mile away and owned by Lacy’s brother, where he buried it in the family cemetery; it remains there today. When Gen Lee heard of Jackson’s wounding, he exclaimed that “Jackson may have lost his left arm, but I have lost my right arm!” After his amputation, Stonewall Jackson was transported 27 miles to Guinea Station, near exit 118 on Interstate 95, where he died of pneumonia on May 10.

Exhibit 7 Arm of Jackson



Visit the Chancellorsville Battlefield Visitor Center, off Route 3, to learn more about Jackson’s flank attack and even follow along the Jackson Trail. Ellwood Manor on Route 20 offers an opportunity to view the burial site of Jackson’s arm and hike to nearby Wilderness Tavern. Finally, Guinea Station is a shrine to Jackson and readily accessible off Interstate 95.

Author: Joanne Pino

Date: May 2018

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8 LAFAYETTE DINED HERE

Along Route 20 about a half mile before it intersects with Route 3 (where the Sheetz gas station is located) is a marker erected by the Virginia Department of Historical Resources describing an event in the Campaign of 1781 called Lafayette's Maneuvers. While many of us are familiar with the area's role in the Civil War, the marker is a small reminder of events that affected the area in Revolutionary times.

The Marquis de Lafayette, not quite 20 years old, had come to the Colonies in 1777 to help us during the American Revolutionary War. He was commissioned a Major General by Congress, and soon met General Washington, with whom he had a lifetime friendship. He went back and forth to France several times over the next few years, and even returned one time with 6000 troops. He returned in the spring of 1781 and was asked to join General Anthony Wayne, to stop British General Cornwallis' army.

Exhibit 8 Marker OC 22



Exhibit 9 Lafayette



Over the next few months, the colonists and Cornwallis played a game of "cat and mouse" in the region from Richmond to Charlottesville to Williamsburg. On June 4, 1781, Lafayette and his troops crossed the Rapidan River after drawing Cornwallis away from the coast. They made camp in a field just east of the river on Ellwood Plantation that belonged to William Jones. At this time, Ellwood Manor had not yet been built, so William and his wife, Betty, were living in a small settlement house. Field hands alerted Mr. Jones that soldiers were in the field so Mr. Jones had a meal prepared for Lafayette and his officers and sent food down to the fields for the troops. The chase continued the next day, and finally ended October 19, 1781, when Cornwallis and his men surrendered at Yorktown, VA.

Lafayette soon returned to France, but retained the desire to return. Forty-one years later, President Monroe invited Lafayette to visit the U.S. on the eve of the country's 50th anniversary.

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Lafayette arrived August 15, 1824, along with his son and his secretary. On October 19, 1724, he was at Yorktown for the anniversary of Cornwallis' surrender. In November, he spent time at Monticello with his friend, Thomas Jefferson, whom he found very frail. While there James Madison, from nearby Montpelier, dropped in unexpectedly. The entourage then began a journey to Fredericksburg for a reception, stopping at Wilderness Tavern, which was owned by William Jones. Mr. Jones may have even provided a nice "coach and four" and accompanied the entourage to Fredericksburg. The trip of 15 miles took almost 2 hours.

They wintered in D.C. with the expectation of returning to France in early spring 1825 but Lafayette wanted to visit his friend Jefferson once more, so they journeyed again to Virginia. On August 15, 1825, he stopped at Ellwood Manor, now completed and William Jones fed the group a plantation breakfast. On August 16, he stopped at Montpelier to visit Madison again, and they visited Jefferson August 18 to 21. He returned to D.C. for his birthday, September 6, celebrated at the White House with President John Q Adams. He returned to France the next day, taking with him soil from Bunker Hill, which was buried with him upon his death in 1834. His visit, which was supposed to last 4 months with visits to 13 states, stretched into 13 months with visits to all 24 states.

So, yes, Lafayette "dined" at Ellwood Plantation – twice.

Author: Milbrey Bartholow

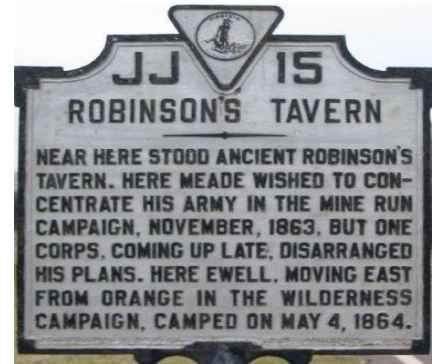
Date: June 2018



9 ROBINSON'S TAVERN

Back in 2012, as I was driving down Route 20 toward the Locust Grove Town Center, I noticed a sign near the intersection of Route 20 and Zoar Road. The silver sign was erected by the Virginia Department of Historical Resources stating that Robinson's Tavern was nearby. At that time, there was a restaurant in the Locust Grove Town Center called Robinson's Tavern and I wondered why that restaurant would have an historical marker. Thus began my research into Robinson's Tavern.

Exhibit 10 Marker JJ 15



In 1791, John Robinson bought 168 acres from Brigadier General Alexander Spotswood on the north side of Orange Turnpike, now known as Route 20, as part of Spotswood's efforts to civilize the Wilderness area of Spotsylvania County. John's son, Thomas, built the tavern about 1815. The tavern was located about where the sign "Locust Grove" is today. In addition to being a typical tavern, it also served as a stagecoach stop between Charlottesville and Washington.

During the Civil War, the tavern served twice as a hospital for Union troops.

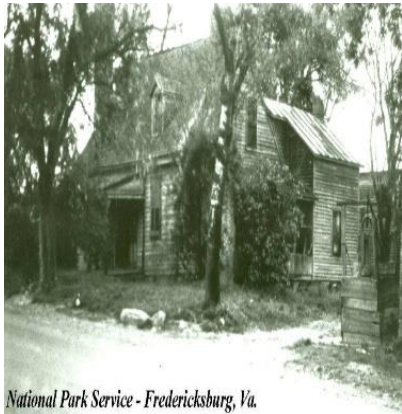
In the fall of 1863, after the Battle of Gettysburg, both Generals Robert E. Lee and George G. Meade returned their armies to Virginia along the Rappahannock and Rapidan Rivers. After engaging in several small battles, Meade developed a plan for his 80,000 troops to attack Lee's 50,000 troops to end the fight. Lee's troops were south of the Rapidan. Meade heard that Germanna Ford and two others were unguarded, so he planned to attack from that direction. The Union crossed the Rapidan on November 26, and, the Confederates, having heard of the planned attack, began moving towards the Union. On November 27, the two sides met near Robinson's Tavern and Mine Run. The two armies moved around each other for two days. Finally, on December 1, Meade, frustrated, moved his troops back across the Rapidan towards Culpeper. The tavern was used as a temporary hospital during the fight.

In May 1864, General Ulysses S. Grant began his overland campaign, marching east from Culpeper. Confederate General Ewell and his troops camped on the grounds of the tavern on their way to the Wilderness on May 4, 1864. On May 5 and 6, 1864, the Battle of the Wilderness



broke out a few miles up Orange Turnpike. As the fighting got more intense, and Saunders Field began burning, the tavern was set up as a Union hospital for two days.

Exhibit 11 Robinson's Tavern



After the war, life returned to normal. Modernization came to the corner in the early 1980's. With the paving of Orange Turnpike, the purchase of the land around the intersection by Ken and Lora Dotson and the construction of Locust Grove Town Center's first building and the Exxon Station, Robinson's Tavern was moved about ½ mile west on Zoar Road. The original building can still be seen there today.

Upon completion of the second building in the town center, Robinson's Tavern Restaurant became one of the occupants until it closed in 2012. Mountain View Barbeque became the next occupant from about 2013 to 2014. The site has been Generals Quarters Restaurant since February 2016.

Author: Milbrey A Bartholow

Date: May 2018



10 THE “UNFINISHED RAILROAD”

The term “unfinished railroad” refers to the roadbed without track that existed during the Civil War. This article will give a brief description of its history. Another article will discuss its use specifically during the Civil War period.

Exhibit 12 Standard Gauge (left) vs. Narrow Gauge



The “unfinished railroad” had a role in the Civil War, but later it was two different working railroads run on the same roadbed. Although incorporated in 1853 no track had been laid as the Civil War began. Running between Orange and Fredericksburg, it existed under several names and configurations existing operationally from 1877 until 1984. The first line was narrow gauge, best known as the Potomac, Fredericksburg and Piedmont Railroad (PF&P). It provided passenger and freight service for almost fifty years. The second venture was standard gauge. It also hauled freight and passengers

under the name of the Virginia Central Railway between 1927 to 1937 and freight within Fredericksburg until 1984.

Incorporated in 1853, the Fredericksburg and Gordonsville Railroad Company’s (FGRRC’s) “purpose was to build a railroad between Fredericksburg and Gordonsville or Orange Court House in order to connect with the rail lines already running to Gordonsville.” The company failed by November 1857. Road grading from Fredericksburg on 18 miles of the project had taken place by the time of the Civil War but no track had been laid, thus the “unfinished railroad” term. The project was resurrected in 1871. Some progress was made by the new company, however, after many delays, the State took possession of the railroad in December of 1873. It restored the property to the original owner, the FGRRC. In March 1876 the railroad was again reorganized and the name changed to the Potomac, Fredericksburg and Piedmont (PF&P), best known to locals as the “Poor Folks, and Preachers” due to its clientele. The first train to Orange arrived on February 26th, 1877.

PF&P showed a profit for many years. 1910 proved a banner year with 18,000 passengers and \$56,000 in freight revenue. The high point for number of employees was 63 in 1920 but the decline was coming. The automobile and the truck “offered portal to portal service and substantial reductions in labor costs.” Furthermore the line could not interchange freight with mainline connections. In 1925 the line was sold and reorganized as the Orange and

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Fredericksburg Railroad but that was quickly sold to Langhorne Williams, a Richmond banker. The new name was the Virginia Central and the first upgrade was to install standard gauge track in 1926.

The line generally operated at a loss until it petitioned the Interstate Commerce Commission in 1937 to abandon the 37 miles between Orange and West Fredericksburg. It would continue to operate one mile of track in Fredericksburg as a switching operation for 15 industrial customers. The Williams family continued to operate that line until 1967 when it was transferred to the city. The line was quickly recognized as a white elephant and although several schemes promised a profit, in March of 1984 the ICC approved final abandonment

Exhibit 13 PF&P Engine and Tender



Three excellent sources of reading are “Richmond, Fredericksburg & Potomac Railroad Historical Society, Inc.” Volume 5, Issue 4, Fall 2009, “The Virginia Central Railway,” Ames Williams, pages 18-28, Remembering: A History of Orange County, Frank S. Walker Jr., pages 252-256 and “Tracks Through Time; A Railfan Tour of Orange County, Virginia”, Frank S. Walker Jr., page 20, a pamphlet available at the Orange County Visitor Center.

Author: Bob Lookabill

Date: July 2018



11 THE UNFINISHED RAILROAD IN THE BATTLE OF THE WILDERNESS

Another article described the history of the “unfinished railroad.” This article tells how it was used during one of the Civil War’s battles.

May 6, 1864 was a day of changing fortunes as the Union fought the Confederates along Orange Plank Rd. It began with a 5 AM attack by the Union II Corps, reinforced by divisions from V and VI Corps, under command of General Hancock. The attack drove General A.P. Hill’s III Corps from its positions. They fled west towards Parker’s Store. The 7 AM arrival of General Longstreet’s I Corps stemmed the rout. Longstreet’s counter attack at Tapp Field drove the Federals back toward their starting positions to the east. By 10 AM the two armies were at a standstill facing each other astride Orange Plank in the vicinity of the monument to Union General James Wadsworth.

Exhibit 14 General Wadsworth Monument



General Lee sent his Chief Engineer, General Smith, to see if there was a way to break the stalemate. Smith and his party walked east along the unfinished railroad, which lay south of the Union’s flank. Both armies were aware of the unfinished railroad about ¼ mile south of and parallel to Orange Plank. In the chaos of battle, neither army had thought about using it as an attack route, or about defending it against such an attack, until Smith’s reconnaissance. Smith found the railroad grade undefended. He returned and reported his findings to Longstreet.

Exhibit 15 Unfinished Railroad Cut



Longstreet sent four brigades to attack the Union flank under the command of his aide Lt. Col. Sorrel. Sorrel arranged the men along the railroad grade and, when all men were in position, began the attack shortly after 11 AM. It burst upon the Union flank in total surprise. In addition, as soon as the fighting started on the flank, Longstreet’s remaining troops attacked the Union’s front.

McAlister’s brigade on the Union flank was first to feel the Confederate onslaught. It was quickly routed. Soon all eight Union brigades south of Orange plank had collapsed like dominos. Union General Wadsworth, in command of Union



forces north of Orange Plank, heroically attempted to organize a defense on the north side of the road. It was to no avail leaving him mortally wounded. By 12:30 PM, all Union positions had been overrun with the defenders withdrawing east to Brock Road or north to the Lacy House (Ellwood Manor).

The Confederate's success quickly turned to failure. While riding to the front to direct a continued advance, General Longstreet was accidentally shot by soldiers of the 12th Virginia of Mahone's Brigade. While he survived, it wasn't until four hours later that the Confederates were able to reorganize and resume the attack. By then the Union had strengthened its defenses along Brock Road. The renewed attack failed. In addition to the short term loss, it would be months before Longstreet recovered sufficiently to resume command.

Author: John Bell

Date: July 2018



12 BEEF ON THE HOOF

Both Napoleon and Frederick the Great have been credited with the saying “An army marches on its stomach.” Provisioning an army, especially one that numbered over 125,000 – the size of the Army of the Potomac at the beginning of General U.S. Grant’s Overland Campaign in May 1864 - would prove to be a monumental logistical challenge.

Fresh beef – 1¼ pounds daily according to the US War Department Army Regulations – was an important component of the Federal Civil War soldier’s ration. The most practical way to furnish beef to campaigning soldiers was to have herds of cattle march with the army.

Exhibit 16 Cattle Crossing the Rapidan River



So how much beef was needed? An estimate given by Lt. Colonel C. W. Tolles in 1864 stated “A bullock will furnish about 450 rations, so that an army of 100,000 men needs over two hundred beef cattle for its supply.” Based on 450 rations per head of beef, an army of 125,000 men consumed 278 head of beef daily.

At least 6,000 head crossed the Rapidan River with the Army of the Potomac in early May of 1864. These 6,000 documented head produced approximately 2.7 million rations, enough to supply an army of 125,000 for 21½ days.

The 6,000 head were gathered from holding pens in Pennsylvania, Maryland and Washington, D.C. How did 6,000 head of cattle get to the Army of the Potomac for the Overland Campaign?

An excerpt from *Feeding a Great Army* " in the *United States Service Magazine* in February 1880 by Brevet Brigadier General Thomas Wilson tells how:

“...to carry out my orders of supply, it would be necessary to have sent up to the front from Alexandria, some 50 miles distant, about 6,000 head of beef cattle, with the forage, corn in the ear, and hay necessary to subsist them until the march began, and this feat had to be accomplished between one Friday morning and the next Tuesday night; or, in other words... an average of 1,200 head of beef cattle had to be sent daily by me for five days, with the necessary forage for their maintenance.

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The existing capacity of the Orange and Alexandria Railroad in cattle cars was, at this time, for only 300 head daily...

The sudden call and the subsequent remarkable feat of shipping 6,000 cattle over this road of a single track, in the time required and with its limited resources was accomplished by the authorities seizing all the flat cars within reach and placing fences around them... In this manner, 1,800 head were sent up in one day of twenty-four hours. At one time during the shipment an endless train of cattle cars was in transit, most of the railroad sidings being filled with them... We received all the cattle asked for before the time needed.

Three hundred men were kept constantly employed in unloading the cattle cars on their arrival at the front, so that the emptied cars might be sent back without delay."

The herds and animals that we see today in the rural parts of Spotsylvania and Orange Counties are insignificant when compared to those that travelled with General Grant. The Army of the Potomac had more than 50,000 horses and mules and at least 6,000 head of beef. Big armies meant big numbers.

Author: Rod Lackey

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