

WILDERNESS DISPATCH

Friends of Wilderness Battlefield, Inc.

Vol. 12 No. 2 • Summer 2007

NPS Upgrading Wilderness Battlefield

FoWB Volunteers Asked to Pitch in on Some Projects

The Wilderness Battlefield is undergoing significant improvements in the next few months and FoWB is being recruited to help by the National Park Service. Here are some of the things planned or already underway.

New Self-Guided Driving Tour

A new Self-guided Driving Tour brochure has been produced by Eastern National and went on sale at its FSNMP stores in mid-July. For the first time, the Wilderness Battlefield has its own tour guide brochure. The new official NPS map of the Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania National Military Park has been revised to also show the new tour stops in all four battlefields.

To coincide with the new tour, larger signs have been installed at each of the tour stops in the battlefield.

Now, the Wilderness Battlefield has a separate guide and the number of stops in it has increased from three in the old guide to eight in the new one. It is available at the Chancellorsville Visitor Center and at the main visitor center in Fredericksburg for 95 cents. Eastern National is a non-profit organization that operates sales outlets in 130 national parks and gives proceeds to the National Park Service. See details in the accompanying article in this Wilderness Dispatch.

Resurfacing Parking Lots

Currently, the park service is having the main parking lots at its four area battlefields resurfaced. The lot at the Wilderness Exhibit Center is one of these, but the lot at Widow Tapp Farm and at the picnic area on Hill-Ewell Drive are not part of the improvements.

The work is being done through the Federal Highway Administration.

Although park roads and visitor center parking lots will remain open, visitors can expect some delays in areas where work is in progress. Work will be completed by October.

FSNMP Superintendent Russ Smith stated, "While we regret any inconvenience that this much-needed work may cause our visitors, we hope that they will appreciate the improvements being made." FoWB volunteers will repaint the Exhibit Shelter once the paving is completed.

Vermont Monument lot cleanup

The new parking area at the Vermont Monument just off the intersection of Brock Road and Orange Plank Road will be cleaned and cleared by FoWB volunteers in August.

Grant's Headquarters

The park service has invited FoWB to make recommendations on possible upgrades to the site formerly

(See *Upgrade*, page 3)



U.S. GRANT WANTS YOU

The National Park Service has invited members of Friends of Wilderness Battlefield to help improve the site of Grant's Headquarters, formerly known as Grant's Knoll. Now that it has been added as stop #1 in the new self-guided driving tour of the battlefield, it is expected that there will be a significant increase in the number of visitors there.

FoWB's Battlefield Resources Committee is forming a committee to meet with NPS historians and develop a plan for the site. Craig Rains, chairman of the BRC, is asking for volunteers to join the committee and propose ideas to make the site more convenient and possibly more educational and meaningful for those who visit it.

Are you interested in serving on this committee?

John Hennessy, FSNMP chief historian, is representing the park service in the project.

He said that the parking area off Route 20 will be improved and that bollards would be put in place to protect signs, which have constantly been damaged by large trucks using the parking lot as a rest area.

The site has been known as Grant's Knoll until the new tour was unveiled in the middle of July. It was not on the old driving tour, which had only three stops in the Wilderness Battlefield — the exhibit shelter, Widow Tapp Farm and the Brock Road-Orange Plank Road intersection.

The site has a path that runs about 100 feet from the parking area to a 30-foot round clearing that is outlined by a border. There is one interpretive panel at the parking lot and two are at the clearing.

When Silver Companies donated six acres of land to the Central Virginia Battlefield Trust in 2001, the park service

(See *Headquarters*, page 2)

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asked FoWB to help develop the site. Tom Van Winkle was president of FoWB at the time and he led the group in the creation of the current site. FoWB also contributed the interpretive panels. Tom and his wife Lisa have agreed to again serve as part of this 'think tank' subcommittee.

Craig said that at this point there was no requirement for heavy lifting, but just a need for people on the subcommittee who could come up with ideas and suggestions.

One suggestion from the FSNMP is to build a gradually sloping ramp from the parking lot to the path to improve footing and to assist handicapped visitors.

If you are interested in serving on this subcommittee, contact Craig at (540) 972-2844 or e-mail him at Craig.Rains@att.net. Times and locations for the meetings will be set based on availability of the members.

ELLWOOD SUMMER HOURS SCHEDULE:

11 A.M.-5 P.M. Friday, Saturday, Sunday through August 26
11 A.M.-5 P.M. Saturday and Sunday, September and October
Also open Labor Day, Sept. 3, and Columbus Day, Oct. 10

FoWB Needs You!

Volunteerism is a phenomenon widespread in American society and is an essential part of our social glue. Volunteers fill gaps in government and social policy in all aspects of our polity. Without them, our nation would not be what it is.

We in this geographical niche of America have special opportunities. Not only do we have all the common areas for volunteer service — schools, special education, children and adults in need, fire/safety, the elderly, and many other areas — but also we have unique historic resources in need of service and support. These resources go back to the very beginnings of our nation, and the service given here by many of our nation's men and women during the Civil War is especially compelling. Resources for telling this story and for maintaining the hallowed land are limited, and the pressures to move ahead without remembering the past are constant. We, as volunteers, can help fill the gap.

We currently have a core of dedicated interpreters for Ellwood and a crew that maintains the grounds so that they are especially attractive and appreciated by visitors. Additionally, we have volunteers that assist the Park Service in projects throughout the Wilderness Battlefield. There is always a need for more.

We have a number of other activities that are not so obvious, but also extraordinarily important. For the past several years we have been engaged in raising funds to support the restoration of Ellwood. This initiative has engaged many people, but there is always a need for additional support in terms of both ideas and labor. If you have a particular talent or interest, please consider.

There are a myriad of other areas for volunteer help — ranging from participation on our committees such as Finance, Education, and Membership to actual participation on our board itself. A growing area of attention and concern is the continuing development pressure on the area, and we need assistance in systematically paying attention to this area and devising plans, in concert with other interested parties, to assure that historic land is not lost. Additionally, there is still more to be done to assist the Park in making visits to the Wilderness special, and help is needed in thinking these ideas through and in turning them into reality. So, please consider.

In closing, I would be remiss if I did not mention your dues, which are essential to our survival. At whatever level you choose, they are deeply appreciated, and we strive to use your funds wisely in support of our mission. Membership is but the first step in making this organization successful. The next is you as a volunteer — so please consider.

If I have struck a note of interest with some of you, please feel free to contact any of our board members to inquire, or Carolyn Elstner or myself. FoWB needs you!

Dan Nickelson
President

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Wilderness Dispatch is published four times annually for the members of FoWB. All FoWB members are invited to submit articles for consideration by the Editorial Board to be included in the *Wilderness Dispatch*. The requirement is that the subject be related to the Wilderness battlefield, the battle itself, geography, events, units, officers or men involved or book reviews.. Articles should not exceed 500 words and may be edited. For comments or questions or to submit articles, contact Craig Rains, Editor, *Wilderness Dispatch*, FoWB, PO Box 576, Locust Grove, VA 22508-0576 or e-mail Craig.Rains@att.net.

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(Upgrade, continued from page 1)

known as Grant's Knoll, but now renamed Grant's Headquarters. The site is designated stop #1 on the battlefield's driving tour. See details on this project on the front page of this Wilderness Dispatch.

Saunders Field

The NPS has asked FoWB to assist in two major projects on Saunders Field.

On the north side of Route 20, FoWB volunteers will clear underbrush from the western end of the field to allow a clear line of sight between the Confederate trenches and the open field. This will provide visitors a more graphic picture of how both sides saw each other on those two days of fighting in May, 1864. Currently, the underbrush is so thick that it restricts views. At the time of the battle, the area was cleared and this will restore that view. This project will take place this fall after vegetation has died back for the winter.

In addition, the NPS plans to relocate the parking lot and entrance path onto the part of Saunders field that is south of Route 20. The lot will be moved 300 yards down Hill-Ewell Drive from its intersection with Route 20. This will make it safer for vehicles to pull over and for busses to park away from the current location that was right at the intersection.

A new path onto the battlefield will be marked and allow visitors to walk out without having to cross trenches. The bridge that presently carries visitors across the trenches will be removed, as will the present path.

FoWB volunteers will be involved in these projects. Watch for details on how you can help.

Tapp Field

The main entrance to what was formerly referred to as the Widow Tapp Farm site is being relocated to the eastern edge of the field along Hill-Ewell Drive. It will now be known as Tapp Field.

A new parking area will be cleared and space will be allowed for busses to have easy entrance and exit. By mid-July, construction had begun for a walking path from Hill-Ewell Drive up into the field. The present parking lot off Brock Road on the western end of the field near the cannons will remain open but the new area will be the stop on the newly designed driving tour of the battlefield.

Longstreet Wounding Landscaping

Improvements to the landscape of the new pull-off area on Orange Plank Road will be made this fall. This convenient parking area was built at the same time as the Vermont Monument work was done last year. It has interpretive panels for Longstreet flank attack, the wounding of Longstreet and Federal Cemetery #2.

The immediate area around the pull-off site will be cleared by FoWB. The park service will provide topsoil and FoWB volunteers will spread it and plant grass seed. A call for volunteers will be made in local news media and by e-mail this fall.

There is a lot that will be going on over the next few months to make the Wilderness Battlefield a more educational and exciting area to visit.

We are proud that FoWB will be assisting in many of these projects and we hope that you will volunteer to help develop them.

Silver Companies Donates Six Acres of Wilderness Battlefield to CVBT

A surprise gift is being added to the Wilderness battlefield and comes at a time when significant commercial development is being proposed immediately behind it.

Silver Companies will donate six acres of land on the battlefield to the Central Virginia Battlefields Trust, CVBT President Mike Stevens announced at his group's annual meeting in May.

This incredible gift of property is located on Route 20 at its termination at Route 3, just behind the Sheetz service station at Wilderness.

Dr. Stevens said, "this donation allows not only preservation of historic ground but also of the natural ambiance of this gateway to the battlefield. We are extremely appreciative of this donation by the Silver Company."

It will serve as the gateway to the FSNMP's Wilderness Battlefield and Ellwood from the east. It is outside the Congressionally authorized park boundary but is still a key to preserving the viewshed of the battlefield.

This was the second Wilderness gift from Silver Companies. In 2001, it donated six acres to CVBT at what is now Grant's Headquarters, the first stop on the NPS self-guided driving tour. Formerly known as Grant's Knoll, this is where General U.S. Grant made his headquarters during the battle of the Wilderness in May, 1864.

The Wilderness marked Grant's first battle as commander of all the U.S. forces, his first battlefield encounter with General Robert E. Lee and the first battle in his Overland Campaign that eventually resulted in the surrender of the Army of Northern Virginia 11 months later.

The 2001 gift was the first outright gift of land ever received by CVBT. Since then, CVBT has saved 508 acres of battlefield ground and is currently helping save the 208 acres of Fredericksburg's Slaughter Pen Farm.

The rolling rise on which the 12 acres are located was also the site of a Revolutionary War camp set up by the Marquis de Lafayette who came through the area in battles with Lord Cornwallis in 1781 that eventually led to the decisive battle of Yorktown.

CVBT retains ownership of all 12 acres, for now.

This generous donation of prime commercial property on Route 20 comes as other developers are petitioning to rezone 177 acres of land behind Grant's Headquarters from agricultural to commercial.

If approved, they propose to build Wilderness Crossing, which is designed to include seven fast food restaurants, a strip mall, a hotel, retail outlets, 10 office buildings and a conference center with a four-lane access road running through it from Route 3 to Route 20.

The 177 acres abuts FSNMP property and is in the vicinity of the 12 acres of land donated to CVBT by Silver Companies.

The 177 acres is within the Congressionally authorized park boundary and the National Park Service opposes the rezoning.



Vice president Carolyn Elstner makes auction announcements while President Dan Nickelson looks on at Lake of the Woods clubhouse.

143rd Weekend is Another Great Success

On May 4, 5 and 6, Friends of Wilderness Battlefield commemorated the 143rd anniversary of the first clash of Generals Lee and Grant in the 1864 Overland Campaign. The weekend began on Friday with the annual dinner/auction. On Saturday, historian Howard Coffin led a bus tour tracing the steps of the Vermont Brigade from winter encampment in Culpeper through the Wilderness and onto Spotsylvania Courthouse. Throughout the remembrance, the National Park Service offered Living History at Ellwood and other sites in the battlefield.

Proceeds from the weekend netted \$14,000 for the restoration of Ellwood, bringing the total of funds raised by FoWB to \$270,000. This sum includes grants received this year from the State of Virginia and from Spotsylvania and Orange counties.

ELLWOOD RESTORATION UPDATE

At a June 26 meeting of President **Dan Nickelson**, Ellwood Restoration Project chair **Carolyn Elstner** and **Noah Bradley** of Blue Mountain Builders, the ground work was laid for signing the contract that will begin Phase I of the restoration as soon as Ellwood closes for the season on October 28. Phase I includes the first-floor parlor, entry hall and north room.

The wallpaper for the three rooms is on order, and furnishings designer **Bill Brown** reports near-completion of his purchases for General Warren's headquarters room, which was the parlor. The most recent item acquired is an 1864 camp chair, the third of three needed.

At FoWB's request, FSNMP Superintendent **Russ Smith** has given the go-ahead for the Park to begin the compliance process for Phases II and III of the restoration.

Phase II is the stairhall/breezeway and the first-floor west room.

Phase III encompasses the entire second floor.

Ellwood Season 2007 is off to an excellent start. The landscape is immaculate, thanks to the Ground Force, and as of mid-June the volunteer interpreter staff had greeted 1,344 visitors.

The successful fundraising thus far leaves us looking at a final push for the remaining balance of \$90,000.

With all of your continued support as well as the new interest in the Wilderness Battlefield and Ellwood, we will achieve our ultimate goal of \$360,000 by the end of 2007.

A Huge Thank-You ...

A special thanks goes out to the following sponsors and auction item donors who helped make the Fifth Annual Dinner and Auction for the Ellwood Restoration Project such a success.

Sponsors

Lead Sponsors, \$1,200: Mr. and Mrs. Frank S. Walker, Jr.

\$500 Sponsors: Auction Man & Associates, John Brier III, Mary Carter Frackelton, Mr. and Mrs. Robert Lang in memory of her grandmother, Sue Lightfoot Boulware

\$250 Sponsors: Best Western of Fredericksburg, Mr. and Mrs. Warren Billings, copy Right, Inc., Culpeper Star Exponent, Orange County review, Village Framework and Gallery, Mr. and Mrs. R. Duval Dickinson, Dr. and Mrs. Tom Elstner, Mr. and Mrs. Dan Nickelson, Susan Roche-McGinty, Dwight L. Mottet, Mr. and Mrs. Enos Richardson

Auction Item Donors

Alan's Photography Studio of Culpeper; "All Things Irish" in Culpeper; American Forests Historic Tree Nursery, Jacksonville, Florida; Barboursville Vineyards;

Barter Post Antiques of Culpeper; Belle Grove Plantation, Middletown; Beck's Antiques, Fredericksburg; Lula Blu of Culpeper; Blue Ridge Frame Shop of Culpeper; Leslie Brier, Brier Design;

Paula and Dale Brown; William R. Brown III; Classic Custom Framing; Civil War Life - the Soldier's Museum - at Massaponax; The Country Store, Culpeper; Designer's Choice, Culpeper; Carolyn and Tom Elstner; Jessica Embrey; Nick Ferro; 4 County Players, Barboursville;

Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania National Military Park; Gordonsville Exchange Hotel Civil War Museum; Green Waste Recyclers of Culpeper; Jeff Heidig; Chris Heisey (North and South Photography); Historic Fredericksburg Foundation, Inc. Rex Hovey, North Carolina;

The Inn at Meander, Locust Dale; Inn at Narrow Passage, Woodstock; Irish Pub, Shenandoah Valley; It's About Thyme, Culpeper; Jaberwocky Children's Books; Janet and Gene Jacobs; Jamestown Colonial National Historical Park;

Sue and Bob Lang; Richard Lindenauer; John and Sam Lougheed; Lucio Restaurant of Culpeper; Jim Matz; Miller Farms, Locust Grove; Zann Miner; Nu Way Image, Culpeper;

Paymon Fine Rug Imports, Fredericksburg; Plow and Hearth; Pomme Restaurant in Gordonsville; Pepperberries, Culpeper; Purple Parrot, Culpeper; Quail of the Wood Antiques, Culpeper; Craig Rains; Raymond W. Smith; Rappahannock River Campground; James Rogers & Suzanna Ridgely-Rogers; Second Bank and Trust; Stratford Hall;

The Thai Restaurant, Culpeper; Time Travel Antiques of Culpeper; Trolley Tours of Fredericksburg; TruLuvs, Fredericksburg; Ulman's Jewelry, Fredericksburg;

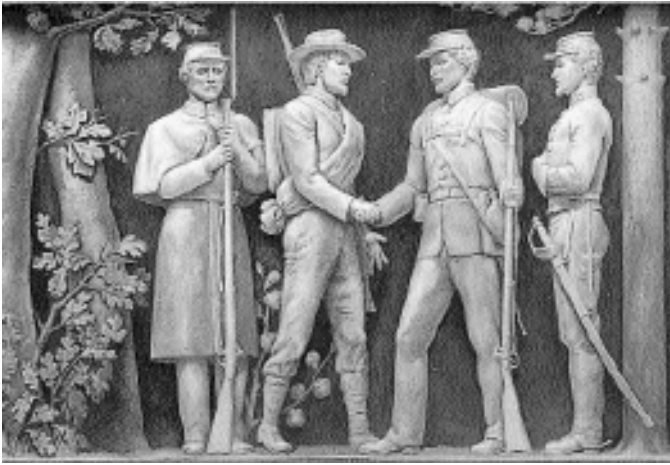
Lisa and Tom Van Winkle; Wolftrap Farm Bed and Breakfast, Gordonsville; Alan Zirkle; Diane Zumatto.

Thanks!

Has the Original Art for FoWB Logo Been Discovered in Washington?

The original art that was the basis for the illustration that was used to create the logo for Friends of Wilderness Battlefield may have been found.

Craig Rains, an FoWB director, made the discovery recently while on business in the U.S. Capitol building in Washington. Walking through the Rotunda, he glanced up to admire the artwork that encircles it as a frieze. Always on the lookout for Civil War segments of history, he spotted a panel that featured men wearing uniforms of that era. A second look told him that the scene was familiar and then he realized the two soldiers featured in it were in the same position as those on the FoWB logo.



The frieze contains a painted panorama depicting 19 significant events in American history, starting with the landing of Christopher Columbus and ending with the first flight at Kitty Hawk.

The frieze is painted in grisaille, a monochrome of whites and browns that resembles sculpture. It measures 8 feet 4 inches in height and approximately 300 feet in circumference. It starts 58 feet above the floor. From floor level, the art looks to be three-dimensional.

Three artists created the 19 panels. The first two were Italian emigrants who painted the first 16 panels between 1877 and 1889. But there was a gap of 31 feet that needed three more panels to complete the circle.

It was not until 1951 that Allyn Cox was commissioned to paint the last three panels tracing the growth of the nation from the Civil War through the birth of aviation.

He titled panel 17: "Peace at the End of the Civil War." The Architect of the Capitol describes the scene: It depicts a Confederate soldier and a Union soldier shaking hands, marking the reunion of the country after the devastation of the Civil War. A cotton plant and a northern pine tree symbolize the South and the North, respectively.

It is possible that an unknown artist modified the concept shown on panel 17 during the centennial commemorations of the 1960s, turning it into the line art that served as a guide for the FoWB logo used for the past 12 years.

The FoWB Communications Committee will make a recommendation on the logo to the board at its August 11 meeting.

TAKE THE TOUR

A complete work-over of the self-guided driving tour of the Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania National Military Park is putting the Wilderness Battlefield on the map.

For the first time, the Battle of the Wilderness has its own tour route apart from the other three battlefields, along with a separate tour brochure. The National Park Service has revamped and expanded the list of Wilderness stops in its official battlefield area map to match these. The Wilderness stops have increased from three in the old brochure to eight in the new one.

Driving tour routes and stopping numbers have been revised and large new driving tour signs have been erected at all eight sights.

The stops featured in both the self-guided driving tour brochure and the NPS map are:

1. Grant's Headquarters
2. Wilderness Battlefield Exhibit Shelter
3. Saunders Field
4. Higginson Farm
5. Chewning Farm
6. Tapp Field
7. Longstreet's Wounding
8. Brock Road-Plank Road Intersection

It had been somewhat confusing to have the long line of 16 tour stops that ran continuously over all four battlefields. Most visitors did not cover all four at the same time.

Each battlefield now has its own self-guided driving tour brochure that may be purchased for 95 cents each at the Eastern National stores at the Fredericksburg NPS headquarters site and at the Chancellorsville Visitor Center.

The revised full-color NPS fold-out map of the entire FSMNP area is still available at no charge.



AARP Chapter 5239 of Lake of the Woods send 51 volunteers into the area to participate in the annual National AARP Day of Work in May. Six of those worker bees headed to Ellwood. They were: team leader Marilyn McKay, Jim Fargo, Lee Anne Hamilton, Carol Moffa, Ron Moffa and Val Protiva. Many thanks to this great chapter and its 480 members for continuing support of FoWB. Photo by Ruth Hood.

Wilderness Frock Coat Sells at Auction for \$101,575



GETTYSBURG -- A frock coat that was worn by a Confederate officer who purportedly was killed on May 5, 1864 at the Battle of the Wilderness was sold at auction at Gettysburg. Heritage Auction Galleries of Dallas included the coat in its 2007 June Civil War Grand Format Auction.

It was described as “**A Very Rare Confederate Colonel’s Frock Coat - Colonel John Thompson Brown (1835-**

1864), 1st Virginia Artillery, killed at the Battle of the Wilderness.”

The catalog said, “This beautiful frock coat has been superbly preserved since Colonel Brown’s death on May 5, 1864 at the Battle of the Wilderness. A Union non-commissioned officer, Sergeant Watson from Michigan, removed the coat from Brown’s body and took it back home where it has been held in his family until just ten years ago. It was then that a descendant returned the coat to Virginia.

“This Confederate frock coat, one of the most rare in existence not only because of the rank signified but also due to its historical significance, is being offered here for the first time at auction.”

The coat had been exhibited at the Liberty Heritage Society Museum in Old Town Warrenton, Va. and was part of the Tharpe Collection of American Military History. Heritage Auction Galleries bills itself as the world’s largest collectibles auctioneer and has an outstanding reputation in the industry.

But is the description true? Was Col. Brown killed on May 5 at the Wilderness?

Was the 1st Virginia Artillery Richmond Howitzers at the battle of the Wilderness?

One unit history indicates the 1st Virginia was part of Cabell’s Battalion of Longstreet’s Corps that came up Orange Plank Road to Parker’s Store and at 3 A.M. on May 6 “where we were obliged to halt, there being no suitable ground for more artillery on the front... The dense growth of the Wilderness left few openings for the use of artillery, so the battery had not been able to find an opportunity in the battle of the Wilderness.”

Is there any area during the May 5 fighting at the Wilderness where an artillery battalion’s position might have been overrun and a Union soldier might have had time to stop and remove a frock coat from a dead Confederate officer?

His tombstone in historic Maplewood Cemetery in Charlottesville reads: Brown, Col. J. Thompson, Commissioned Lt. Richmond Howitzers 4/21/61, Commanded artillery reserve battalions of II corps ANV, Fell in Battle of the Wilderness.

Does anyone have any more information on Colonel Brown or his unit during the Battle of the Wilderness? If so, please let me know at Craig.Rains@att.net.

Oh, and Colonel Brown’s frock coat was one of the six most expensive bid items. The top bid was a presentation sword belonging to General U.S. Grant that went for \$1.67 million. It was presented to him in April 1864, just a month before the Battle of the Wilderness. Wonder if he brought it along with him? Maybe not, since it included 26 mine cut diamonds, a large amethyst and trim of pure silver and gold.



Howard Coffin (right) took a break from his battlefield tour to allow descendants of U.S. Brig. Gen Alexander Hays to lay a wreath at the general’s monument on Brock Road near where he was killed on May 5, 1864. Left is Alexander Hays V of Washington and center is his father, Alexander Hays IV of Canton, Ohio.

Coffin Brings Vermonters to Life with Battlefield Tales

by Craig Rains

I was standing at the intersection of Brock Road and Orange Plank Road, but the traffic noise could not drown out the braying of mules, the cluck of chickens and the squeals of pigs that raced through my mind as Howard Coffin told the story of how Vermont soldiers made a cacophony of such animal sounds to chase away the anxiety of oncoming battle at this crossroads 143 years ago.

Those of us on this Friends of Wilderness Battlefield bus tour were transported back to the battle of the Wilderness by Coffin, who was recounting how this most important intersection was saved for the Union by a bunch of country boys from Vermont, whose brigade was helping defend it on May 5 and 6, 1864.

Coffin is the foremost authority on Vermont’s part in the War, so we tend to believe him. The fact that he lives in Montpelier, that state’s beautiful little capitol, does not color his interpretation of Vermont in the War in any way, I am sure.

It was here at this intersection in Virginia where Coffin recalled the Vermonters “had a queer habit: making a cacophony of animal sounds.” The sounds transported them from the horrors of war back to their homes and the sounds with which they were familiar. Just before going into battle the Vermont boys would make these sounds and they would be heard up and down the Union lines.

So, why chickens and pigs and mules, and why does that have any importance to separating the Vermont troops from others? Coffin had the answer.

The sounds carried them back home and helped calm their pre-battle fears with noises that made them think of the farms and families they left behind.

“Vermonters were country boys, who had no street smarts,” he said.

“They were good soldiers because they followed orders well. They grew up learning to take orders because the old man always told them what to do on the farm.”

The boys from Vermont were good shots, having learned at home to be good marksmen in hunting game to feed their families.

Early on in the war, Vermont soldiers died in large numbers, not from battle wounds, but from diseases carried by city boys with whom they came in contact but for which they

had no immunity. It was reminiscent of the Native American Indians who died after coming in contact with the original colonialists that brought European diseases with them in 1607.

Coffin pointed out that the Vermont boys were also very religious. "They had a strong belief in the afterlife," he said. "It gave them comfort on the battlefield."

In May 1864, the Army of The Potomac began its spring offensive (the Overland Campaign). The Vermont Brigade mustered approximately 2,850 soldiers at the start of the campaign as they moved away from Brandy Station where they had wintered.

On May 4 and 5, 1864, the brigade camped at what is now Lake of the Woods along Route 3.

On May 5, it was the Vermonters who had the responsibility for the southern end of the Union flank on Brock Road at the Plank Road intersection. Coffin had his tour group line form a line at the Vermonters earthworks and move into the Wilderness together to experience how the regiments charged toward the Confederates that day. The Vermont Brigade fell back to their works and held the road, but Coffin noted that it was the bloodiest day of the war for the brigade.

Losses totaled 1,269 killed, wounded or mission. That is more than 44 per cent casualties. During the war, the Vermont brigade suffered a higher percentage of casualties than any other U.S. unit.

On May 6, General Longstreet launched his flank attack from the unfinished railroad. The Union troops were caught by surprise. Errant federal artillery fire raked Vermonters from the rear. The men of the Vermont regiments absorbed the brunt of the Confederate fire. With most of their Federal comrades in rout, the Vermonters held the intersection of Brock and Orange Plank roads. The Confederates continued to attack until the Union line again was stabilized.

"The battle of the Wilderness is the most important Civil War battle no one knows about," Coffin says. He has been coming here to study it since 1969.

Coffin pointed out that few Vermonters ever returned to the Wilderness after the war.

"Apparently the horror of the Wilderness was so great to the former soldiers that they wanted no more of it after the war," he said. "Very few ever came back to visit." And although the unit was not engaged, but held only in reserve at Gettysburg, thousands of them returned there over and over.

"Vermont's great story in the Civil War was the Wilderness," Coffin emphasized.

Membership Activity: Summer, 2007

Membership Renewals

Barton ALLEN, Dallas, Texas; William BACKUS, Rocky Hill, Conn.; Bill BOYLE, Merrimack, N.H.; Bruce and Anne BOYD, Locust Grove, Va.; Lois R. BOYD, Ruther Glen, Va.; Richard and Kathleen BRADIE, Locust Grove, Va.;

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John LACEY, Old Saybrook, Conn.; John MARIS, Stafford, Va.; Dan NICKELSON, Spotsylvania Va.; Steven PIERCE, Westfield, Wash.; Barbara SELF, Fredericksburg, Va.; Ken TILLMAN, Locust Grove, Va.;

Frank and Bernice WALKER, Orange, Va.; Barry YORK, Burnt Hills, N.Y.; Diane ZUMATTO, Spotsylvania, Va.

Welcome to These New Members

Jinny BERTEN, Cinicinnatti Ohio; Kenntth BOHEIM, Locust Grove Va.; James CASHA, Sumerduck, Va.;

James and Carolyn DIONNE, Locust Grove, Va.; Richard DURPHY, Locust Grove, Va.; Debbie FLEAGLE, Locust Grove, Va.; Brad HENDERSON, Locust Grove Va.;

Noble and Carol INGUANTI, Locust Grove, Va.; Bob and Marie JOHNSON, Locust Grove, Va.; Anna JONES, Fredericksburg, Va.; Donna LABELLE, Fredericksburg, Va.; Judy MCCANN, Locust Grove Va.; Elaine PRATT, Locust Grove, Va.; Ian TURNER, Lititz, Penn.;

Alain and Patricia WHALLEY, Orange, Va.; Stewart WHITE, Gainesville Fla.; Terry YOUNT, Rochester, N.Y.

Sneak Peek. A Special Fall Treat

The famous Frank J. Walker Jr. Orange County Historical Tour is scheduled for Friday, October 19, 8:30 A.M. to 5 P.M. Sponsored by FoWB, this bus tour hits all the high spots of Orange County history as no one but Frank can do.

Tickets are \$70 per person, or \$65 for FoWB members.

For more information, contact Dwight Mottet at (540) 972-3204. Reservations will be confirmed by payment. Checks, made payable to FoWB, may be mailed to Dwight Mottet, 215 Creekside Drive, Locust Grove, VA 22508.

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I am interested in being an FoWB volunteer. Please have someone contact me about:

- Becoming an interpreter and visitor guide at Ellwood, the Lacy House, on the battlefield (FoWB membership reequired)
- Helping the National Park Service in maintenance of landscaping, trimming, mowing or general upkeep of the grounds surrounding Ellwood as well as painting and repair of signage, monuments, trails and other areas of the battlefield
- Being part of a public relations program that promotes FoWB through such things as a speakers' bureau, civic and social club presentations and area school projects
- Assisting in answering genealogy questions concerning ancestors who may have fought in the battle of the Wilderness or were in the area at any other time during the War
- Becoming a member of one of FoWB's other ongoing committees: Battlefield Preservation, Board Enhancement, Communications, Education, Ellwood, Finance or Membership (circle the committee you would prefer)
- Making myself available wherever needed

Membership Benefits

Quarterly newsletter *Wilderness Dispatch* ● Advance notice for FoWB-sponsored tours and events
Reduced rates for some FoWB events ● Invitation to special FoWB events at historic Ellwood on the Wilderness Battlefield
Pride in knowing you are playing an important part in preserving, protecting and promoting the Wilderness Battlefield.

FRIENDS OF WILDERNESS BATTLEFIELD

PO Box 576
Locust Grove, VA 22508-0576
E-mail: fowb@fowb.org
Web: http://www.fowb.org

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Summer Schedule of Some Area Events

- * July 27. Caught in a Firestorm: May 3 and the Ordeal of the Chancellors. 7:00 p.m. Tour led by FSNMP's Janice Frye & Greg Mertz. Park on Hooker Drive, between Ely Ford's Road and River Road. History at Sunset Program. Free.
- * July 29. "Frank Stringfellow & Will Farley: J.E.B. Stuart's Most Daring Scouts" presented by Virginia Morton. A \$5 tax deductible contribution is requested. Graffiti House at Brandy Station. 2 P.M. (540) 727-7718.

- * August 3. War on the Kenmore Ridge: An Exploration of Washington Avenue. 7:00 p.m. Tour led by FSNMP's Eric Mink & Janice Frye. History at Sunset Program. Free.
- * August 10. Life of a House: Chatham by Candlelight. Tours begin at 7:30 and 8:00 led by FSNMP's Mac Wyckoff and the Chatham volunteers. History at Sunset Program. Free
- * August 11-12. Artillery Weekend at Marye's Heights. NPS Artillery programs and firing demonstrations on Marye's Heights overlooking the Sunken Road. Free.

TIME TO RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP? Your expiration date is shown on your mailing label above.



JOIN / RENEW Friends of Wilderness Battlefield TODAY (Clip and mail this form)

Yes, I want to help preserve, protect and promote this significant area in our country's history.

Please indicate the desired annual membership level. This membership includes you and your immediate family members. FoWB is a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organization. Donations are tax deductible to the fullest extent of the law.

- General \$ 500
- Colonel \$ 250
- Captain \$ 50
- Lieutenant \$ 25

- Major \$ 100
- Student \$ 10

School: _____

Please check one: New Member Renewal

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone () _____ E-mail address _____

(This information for use only by Friends of Wilderness Battlefield to inform you of FoWB events and announcements. It will not be made available to any other organization or for any other use.)

Make check payable to **Friends of Wilderness Battlefield** and mail with this completed form to:
FoWB, P O Box 576, Locust Grove, VA 22508-0576