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Demolition begins at former Gettysburg Visitor's Center

By ERIN JAMES, Hanover Evening Sun, March 24, 2009

Demolition of the former Gettysburg National Military Park Museum and Visitor Center began Monday afternoon. The building on Taneytown Road is coming down as part of the park's plan to restore the land to its 1863 appearance. The Gettysburg Foundation is paying Maryland-based company Interior Specialists \$800,000 to demolish the former Gettysburg National Military Park Museum and Visitor Center and, if the Park Service prevails in a federal lawsuit, the Cyclorama building, (Evening Sun Photo by James Robinson)

Alone on the sidewalk, Michael Waricher watched as a powerful crane gutted the building in front of him.

Waricher was in Gettysburg by chance on Monday, the day demolition began on the former Gettysburg National Military Park Museum and Visitor Center on Taneytown Road.

A Carlisle resident and frequent visitor to Gettysburg, Waricher said he wasn't going to leave without witnessing the latest chapter in Gettysburg history. He said he supports the park's goal of demolishing the former museum, Cyclorama building and adjacent parking lots in an effort to restore the land to its 1863 appearance.

"I'm glad to see it, quite frankly," Waricher said. "It's served its usefulness and it's time to move on."

By 3 p.m., the former museum was left with a gaping hole in its side. Eventually, there will be nothing left.

The Gettysburg Foundation, the park's private partner that operates the new museum, is paying a Maryland-based company, Interior Specialists, \$800,000 to demolish both the former visitor center and, eventually, the Cyclorama building.

But the fate of the Cyclorama building, which once housed the 360-degree Cyclorama painting of Pickett's Charge, depends on the outcome of a federal lawsuit that pits the park against a preservation group that hopes to save the structure. Officials have said that demolition project will wait until the lawsuit is settled.

The demolition project is one part of a plan that dates back nearly a decade to restore the 6,000 acres of Gettysburg battlefield within the park's boundary to its appearance in 1863.

For years, the park has proceeded with that plan by removing trees from places where they didn't exist at the time of the battle, when Civil War soldiers fought on open land. Telephone poles and utility lines have been relocated underground so as not to impede on a history student's perspective.

Next on the list for rehabilitation is the area where the former visitor center, Cyclorama building and parking lots are located. The 43.5 acres of land, known as Ziegler's Grove, was key to the fighting on the battle's third day.

Working behind the counter of Gettysburg Souvenirs and Gifts on Steinwehr Avenue, Cheryl Mickley said she was "saddened" to hear that demolition had begun at the former museum.

"I hate to see it go," she said.

Even though the former museum closed nearly a year ago - when the new visitor center on Baltimore Pike opened - the building's pending

demolition makes final what many Steinwehr Avenue business owners objected to when the park's plan was first proposed.

Some worried the museum's relocation would deter tourists from visiting the nearby street lined with stores, hotels and restaurants. And, according to many accounts, that's exactly what's happened.

"It has made an impact," Mickley said. "We felt that last summer."

But the economy and high gas prices last year also factored in, she said, adding that business owners are optimistic for the upcoming tourist season.

Gettysburg NMP continues to remove trees

BY SCOT ANDREW PITZER, Gettysburg Times, *March 13, 2009*

Battlefield tree removal in Gettysburg is officially underway this year, with the clearing of 19 acres of woodland along the Baltimore Pike. Non-historic trees were removed near Colgrove Avenue just south of town, adjacent to the new Battlefield Visitor Center.

The project is part of a multi-year plan to transform the 6,000-acre Gettysburg National Military Park to its Civil War-era appearance. According to GNMP spokeswoman Katie Lawhon, cutting probably ends today, as there are signs that birds have begun to nest. Crews are prohibited to cut during nesting season.

"The goal of battlefield rehabilitation is to return major battle action areas to their appearance at the time of the Battle of Gettysburg and to help visitors better understand the soldiers' experiences on the battlefield," Lawhon explained.



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Orrtanna-based Pennington Tree Experts submitted the lowest bid to perform the work. The multi-year contract was awarded in 2003, at a value of \$569,675.

"With the exception of one (contract), Pennington has been selected as the low bidder for all of our projects," said Lawhon.

Witness trees, those present during the battle, are not hacked. "One of our bio-technicians goes out and looks for witness trees," GNMP Chief of Resource Planning Jim Johnson said previously. "We want to make sure that they're not cut, so they're marked...with a ribbon. One of the fortunate things is that we have so many photos that were taken right after the battle to help us map this whole thing out."

Battlefield tree removal costs are influenced by the park's bidding requirements, per GNMP officials, making the project more expensive than a typical commercial logging operation. For example, contractors may only work when the ground is dry and hard, to avoid disturbing the landscape.

"Generally, this means they may work in the late winter when the ground is frozen, and in the late summer or early fall when there is little rain," Lawhon says.

According to park historian Kathy Harrison, the Baltimore Pike site — dubbed the Welcome Traveler Campground — was the Civil War era farm of James McAllister. The property was a privately owned camping area until acquired by the Park Service in May 1994. During the Battle of Gettysburg in July 1863, the farm was used intermittently, and sometimes concurrently, as a military camp, staging area and artillery park. The field was occupied by Brigadier

General Alpheus Williams and the 12th Corps of the Union Army. Tree removal on the property is likely the first stage of a three-phase project, which aims to include woodland to the south and west of nearby Spangler's Spring, as well as trees on the eastern slope of Powers Hill.

The overall battlefield rehab project, which officially began in the summer of 2000, aims to reshape the battleground to its 1863 landscape. In the 145 years since the battle, park records show that the landscape has changed significantly, evidenced by the growth of new trees, changes in field dimensions, and the gradual eroding of farm lanes, orchards and fences.

"Battlefield rehabilitation was a major initiative called for in the park's 1999 General Management Plan and Environmental Impact Statement, which was the result of a two-year public planning process," said Lawhon.

Park records show that in 1863, there were 898 acres of battlefield trees. In 1993, the landscape was covered with 1,974 acres of woodland. The overall project includes the removal of 576 acres of trees. More than 170 acres is already cut. Also, the project involves planting trees in historic woodlots, maintaining historic woodlots, building fences, replanting orchards, grasslands, wetlands and historic orchards. Tree removal over a 15-year period in Gettysburg, according to previous reports, is estimated to cost \$2.3 million.

Museum reveals engraving hidden in Lincoln watch

By BRETT ZONGKER, Associated Press, March 10, 2009

WASHINGTON — For nearly 150 years, a story has circulated about a hidden Civil War message engraved inside Abraham Lincoln's pocket watch. On Tuesday, museum curators confirmed it was true. A watchmaker used tiny tools to carefully pry open the antique watch at the National Museum of American History, and a descendant of the engraver read aloud the message from a metal plate underneath the watch face.

"Jonathan Dillon April 13 - 1861," part of the inscription reads, "Fort Sumpter (sic) was attacked by the rebels on the above date." Another part reads, "Thank God we have a government."

The words were etched in tiny cursive handwriting and filled the the space between tiny screws and gears that jutted through the metal plate. A magnifying glass was required to read them.

Jonathan Dillon, then a watchmaker on Pennsylvania Avenue, had Lincoln's watch in his hands when he heard the first shots of the Civil War had been fired in South Carolina. The Irish immigrant later recalled being the only Union sympathizer working at the shop in a divided Washington. Dillon's story was passed down among his family and friends, eventually reaching a New York Times reporter. In a 1906 article in the paper, an 84-year-old Dillon said no one, including Lincoln, ever saw the inscription as far as he knew.

Dillon had a fuzzy recollection of what he had engraved. He told the newspaper he had written: "The first



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gun is fired. Slavery is dead. Thank God we have a president who at least will try."

For years the story went unconfirmed. The watchmaker's great-great grandson, Doug Stiles, first heard the tale of the engraving from his great uncle decades ago. He said the story had reached extended family as far away as Ireland.

A few months ago, he used Google to find the New York Times story, and last month he passed the information along to Smithsonian curators, who knew nothing about the engraving.

On Tuesday, watchmaker George Thomas, who volunteers at the museum, spent several minutes carefully opening the watch as an audience of reporters and museum workers watched on a video monitor.

"The moment of truth has come. Is there or is there not an inscription?" Thomas said, teasing the audience, which gasped when he confirmed it was there. He called Stiles up to read his ancestor's words, drawing smiles and a few sighs of relief.

"Like Pearl Harbor or 9/11, this was the reaction he had (to the Civil War,)" Stiles said of the inscription.

Later, Stiles said he felt closer to the 16th president.

"My gosh, that was Lincoln's watch," he said, "and my ancestor put graffiti on it!"



This picture provided by the National Museum of American History in Washington shows a "secret"

inscription inside a watch owned by 16th US President Abraham Lincoln. The message was inscribed by watchmaker Jonathan Dillon who was repairing it when the Civil War broke out in April 1861. (AFP/HO/Hugh Talman)

Lincoln's family kept the watch until it was donated to the museum in 1958. It was Lincoln's everyday pocket watch, one of the president's only valuable possessions he brought with him to the White House from Springfield, Ill., said Harry Rubenstein, curator of the museum's politics and reform division.

"I think it just captures a bit of history that can transform you to another time and place," he said. "It captures the excitement, the hope of a watchmaker in Washington."

The watch will go back on display at the museum by Wednesday as part of the exhibit, "Abraham Lincoln: An Extraordinary Life." It will have a new label to tell Dillon's story and a photo of the inscription.

Booth Walking Stick to be sold

A walking stick that belonged to John Wilkes Booth - the man who assassinated US President Abraham Lincoln as he sat in his box at the theatre - is to be sold.

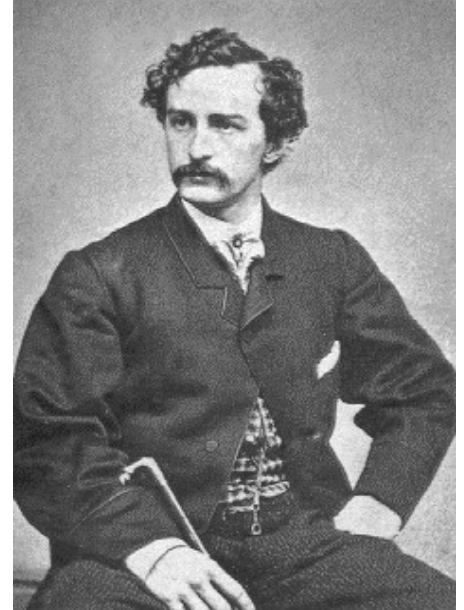
London Telegraph, March 5, 2009
Booth famously shot the American hero in the back of the head as he watched a production at the Ford's Theatre in Washington.

The cane is engraved to Booth from actress Laura Keene, who was on stage at the time of the murder on April 14 1865.

It was she who identified Booth as the killer and some reports state that the actress cradled the dying president's bloody head in her arms.

The 32 inch long stick is topped with an ivory handle with the inscription on

a silver band around the top of the shaft.



Booth holds what is believed to be the walking stick on sale in this Matthew Brady Photograph

The inscription reads: "John Wilkes Booth from Laura Keene" - with the final "e" missing from the actress's surname.

A photograph of Booth - an actor - shows him holding what could be the same stick and looking older than the 26 years he was when he died days after the killing.

The cane was previously held in the Boothbay Theatre Museum in Maine, America, but now belongs to a collector who is selling it.

Richard Davie from International Autograph Auctions, who is selling the cane, said: "This is a unique and historic item.

"It belonged to one of the most famous men in America and one of the world's most notorious assassins.

"It is inscribed to Booth from the actress Laura Keene, although her surname is not spelt correctly.

"She was on stage at the time of the assassination.



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"The cane has an ivory handle and the inscription is on a silver band below the handle.

"Previously it has been exhibited in a museum in America but now belongs to a collector who is selling it through us.

"There has already been a great deal of interest from people on the other side of the Atlantic."

Booth was a Confederate sympathiser who hated Lincoln for his proposed abolition of slavery and improved voting rights for minorities. He was a famous actor who had access to all areas of the Ford Theatre where he carried out his murderous act.

Before entering the President's box he drilled a hole into the door so he could tell if Lincoln had arrived to watch the play *Our American Cousin*.

At about 10pm Booth walked into the box and shot Lincoln in the head with a .44 calibre Derringer gun.

Booth jumped onto the stage and made his escape, but was hunted down and shot dead 12 days later.

Electric Map cut into pieces, moved to storage facility

BY SCOT ANDREW PITZER,
Gettysburg Times, *March 18, 2009*

The historic Electric Map was cut into pieces Tuesday at the former Gettysburg Battlefield Visitor Center, and transported to an undisclosed storage unit where it will remain, pending a decision on its future. No announcement has been made on where the park plans to store the gigantic map.

"Three weeks ago, I asked them if they knew where it was going, and they said: 'We don't know,'" said Walton Jones, representing the

Rosensteel family that created the Electric Map. "Of course they know. That's ridiculous — they know exactly where they're going to store it." According to park officials, the map was cut into three or four sections and moved out of the old visitor center.

The park claims that it does not have any room for the map at its new \$103 million, 139,000 square-foot Visitor Center along the Baltimore Pike. "To me, it was an educated guess that the map would go to the basement of the new Visitor Center, or to the park's storage facility on the Taneytown Road," said Jones. "I'm not saying that a barn would be a bad place for the map, but they'd just have to explain it. The thing is though, we haven't heard a word about it."

In mid-April 2008, the map's plug was pulled, and it was replaced by a 22-minute feature film and other attractions at the new Battlefield Visitor Center, which opened that same month. The Gettysburg Foundation, the park's fundraising and management partner, operates the new facility.

"We have an audio-visual program that serves the same purpose of the Electric Map," Gettysburg Foundation spokeswoman Dru Anne Neil said previously. "It does the same job." For decades, the popular map was the primary attraction at the park. It delighted visitors — or bored them, according to critics — with 625 flashing Christmas bulbs, illustrating the movement of troops during the Battle of Gettysburg in 1863. "It's mechanically obsolete," Gettysburg National Military Park Supt. John Latschar said previously. "The technology has not kept up with the times."

Advocates Tout Bill to Disclose Slaveholder Insurance Policies

By MICHAEL FROST, Southern Maryland Online, March 10, 2009
ANNAPOLIS (March 10, 2009) -- Law students and civil rights activists endorsed a bill Tuesday that would require insurance companies to report pre-1865 slaveholder insurance policies in order to do business in the state of Maryland. The legislation would require insurance companies to disclose the information, including the names of the slaves and slaveholders involved, to the state's insurance commissioner. The commissioner would then prepare a report for the public that would also be posted on a state web site.

Gov. Martin O'Malley and members of the General Assembly would be provided with copies of the report. "We need to learn a lot more, and part of the point of this bill is to provide us with some information about the role of insurance companies in all of these aspects of slavery and the slave trade," said Sherrilyn Ifill, a law professor at the University of Maryland who testified alongside several of her students. Ifill said insurance companies were connected to slavery in various ways, including issuing policies on individual slaves, receiving slaves as payment from debtors and permitting slaves to be used as collateral for loans. Before the slave trade was abolished in 1808, policies also existed for ships involved in the slave trade. The bill, sponsored by Sen. Lisa Gladden, D-Baltimore, was heard before the Senate Finance Committee. Similar legislation is



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already in place in California and Illinois, while Iowa requested the information on a voluntary basis. Disclosure of slaves' names could also help people trace their roots. "It seems like a simple piece of information, but very often that's the missing piece," Ifill said. Ifill testified alongside several students from her "Reparations, Reconciliation and Restorative Justice" seminar, which looks at the legal response to incidents of racial and ethnic violence and genocide nationally and internationally. Law student Bryan Saxton testified about similar laws already in existence. Under Chicago's disclosure laws, Wachovia Corp. revealed connections to several predecessor entities that profited indirectly from slavery, including the Bank of Baltimore and the Savings Bank of Baltimore, he said. Wachovia's extensive disclosure illustrated how closely the pre-Civil War economy was intertwined with the institution of slavery, and could provide a hint of what's to come. Susan Russell, a member of Baltimore Racial Justice Action, said the bill would help people understand the far-reaching effects of slavery. She said it was important that any discussion include white Americans, many of whom have very little understanding of the extent of slavery's role in the pre-Civil War economy. Neither the Property Casualty Insurers Association of America nor the American Insurance Association had a comment on the bill at press time. Joe Norton, a spokesman for American International Group Inc., said he could not comment on the proposed legislation, but he added

that his company fully complied with a similar California law passed in 2000.

Collector: Lincoln photo uncovered in Grant album

Collector says he has newly discovered photo of Lincoln in front of White House
BRETT ZONGKER Associated Press, March 9, 2009

A collector believes a photograph from a private album of Civil War Gen. Ulysses S. Grant shows President Abraham Lincoln in front of the White House and could be the last image taken of him before he was assassinated in 1865.

If it is indeed Lincoln, it would be the only known photo of the 16th president in front of the executive mansion and a rare find, as only about 130 photos of him are known to exist. A copy of the image was provided to The Associated Press. Grant's 38-year-old great-great-grandson, Ulysses S. Grant VI, had seen the picture before, but didn't examine it closely until late January. A tall figure in the distance caught his eye, although the man's facial features are obscured.

He called Keya Morgan, a New York-based photography collector and Lincoln aficionado, who helped identify it as Lincoln.

"I was like, 'I don't know who this is, Keya,'" said Grant, a Springfield, Mo., construction business owner.

Although authenticating the 2 1/2-by-3 1/2-inch photo beyond a shadow of a doubt could be difficult, several historians who looked at it said the evidence supporting Morgan's claim is compelling and believable.

Morgan talked Grant into taking the photo out of the album and examining

it for clues, such as the identity of the photographer.

"Not knowing who the photographer is is like not knowing who your mother or father is," Morgan told Grant.

Grant carefully removed it and was shocked to see the handwritten inscription on the back: "Lincoln in front of the White House." Grant believes his great-grandfather, Jesse Grant, the general's youngest son, wrote the inscription.

Also included was the date 1865, the seal of photographer Henry F. Warren, and a government tax stamp that was issued for such photos to help the Civil War effort between 1864 and 1866.



Photo of the White House from Collection of Keya Morgan, LincolnImages.com, AP

Morgan recalled the well-documented story of Warren's trip to Washington to photograph Lincoln after his second inauguration in March 1865. Lincoln was killed in April, so the photo could be the last one taken of him.

Warren, a commercial photographer from Massachusetts, enticed Lincoln into his frame shortly after the inauguration by taking pictures of young Tad Lincoln and asking the boy to bring his father along for a pose, according to the book, "Lincoln in Photographs: An Album of Every Known Pose," by Charles Hamilton and Lloyd Ostendorf.



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"This is the first act of paparazzi ever toward a president," Morgan said. "Lincoln is not too happy at all." Historians say it has been decades since a newfound Lincoln image was fully authenticated. And in the Grant photo, it's not obvious to the naked eye who is standing in front of the executive mansion.

You can see the White House, a short gate that once lined the building, and, on the lawn, a Thomas Jefferson statue that was later replaced with a fountain. Five people can be seen standing in front of the building. The tall man's face is obscured, but zooming in on the image with a computer reveals a telling beard.

"Once you scan it and blow it up, you can see the whole scenario — there's a giant standing near the White House," Morgan said.

At 6-foot-4, Lincoln was the tallest U.S. president.



Below is a detail from the photo showing the tall figure that could be President Lincoln.

Morgan, who has sold photographs of Lincoln and other historical figures to the Smithsonian Institution, the White House and others, said he purchased the image from Grant for \$50,000 in February. It will be added to Morgan's \$25 million collection of Lincoln artifacts and original images.

Several historians say Morgan has a good case.

Will Stapp, who was the founding curator of the National Portrait Gallery's photographs department and who now appraises fine art and photographs, said he's usually cynical about such claims. But he said he

was "very satisfied that it's Lincoln" in the picture.

"It looks to me like Lincoln's physique," he said. "I can see his hairline. I can see the shadow of his beard."

White House curator William Allman said the photo appears to include Lincoln. "I guess there's always an element of doubt," he said. "It feels pretty likely, though."

Even if it's not Lincoln, it would be among the oldest photographs of the White House.

The significance of the photo is difficult to judge, Stapp said. It does show the relative freedom Lincoln had compared with presidents today, and offers a unique view of the White House from the 1860s, he said.

"We don't so much think of (Lincoln) as living at the White House," Stapp said. "In that respect, I think it's an important find."

Mississippi to restore Jefferson Davis Monument

By SHELIA BYRD - Associated Press, March 10, 2009

JACKSON, Miss. -- What began as legislation to place a bronze statue of Jefferson Davis on the grounds of the Mississippi Capitol is now a law to restore another monument dedicated to the president of the Confederacy.

Gov. Haley Barbour signed a bill Monday that directs state officials to restore the Confederate Monument near the Old Capitol museum, several blocks from the current statehouse in downtown Jackson. The legislation takes effect July 1.

The monument features a life-sized statue of Davis, who spent his last years living on the Mississippi Gulf Coast.

The bill began as an effort to authorize the state to accept a

different statue of Davis from the Sons of Confederate Veterans. The group's statue depicts Jefferson holding the hands of two little boys. One was his son, Joe Davis. The other was an African-American boy named Jim Limber, who was adopted by the Davis family.

Lawmakers changed the bill to strip it of any reference to the statue offered by Sons of Confederate Veterans.

The Sons of Confederate Veterans has been shopping for a home for the Davis statue for more than a year. It was first offered to a Civil War history center in Richmond, Va., the former capital of the Confederacy. But the Confederate group later rescinded the offer because the center wasn't sure where the statue would be placed.

Richard Forte, the director of Beauvoir - Davis' last home, in Biloxi - said on Tuesday he's still waiting to hear whether the group will accept his offer to take the statue.

Larry McCluney of Greenwood, a division commander for the Confederate group, said "it looks like it's going to go to Beauvoir." But McCluney said he was disappointed lawmakers didn't consider accepting the statue.

The monument at the Old Capitol museum was dedicated June 3, 1891, with Davis' widow, Varina, in attendance. The structure is 64 feet tall and includes a life-size statue of Davis, four columns and a statue in Italian marble of a Confederate soldier and gun in parade rest.

Under the bill, the state Department of Archives and History is authorized to restore and renovate the structure that's fallen into disrepair. The agency can use funds from public and private sources, but the bill doesn't provide any money.



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The agency will spend \$95,000 in grant money to renovate the structure, said Jim Woodrick, acting director of historic preservation at the Department of Archives and History.

Funds make Gettysburg country club purchase possible again

Gettysburg National Military Park has \$2.2 million to spend on land acquisition, and the Gettysburg Country Club is a high priority on the list of potential purchases.

By ERIN JAMES, Hanover Evening Sun, March 23, 2009
For the first time since 2001, Gettysburg National Military Park has a budget that includes money for land acquisition - to the tune of \$2.2 million.

And, if the pieces fall into place, some of those funds could potentially be used to purchase an easement to protect the Gettysburg Country Club from further development.

"At the moment our goal is to discuss an easement," said park spokeswoman Katie Lawhon. But the park might consider outright purchase if an easement limiting development weren't possible, she said.

The 120-acre golf course is listed as a high priority on the park's list of properties within its 6,000-acre boundary but not owned by the National Park Service. In Gettysburg, that is true of about one out of every six acres.

But properties are not always up for sale, and when they are, the park does not always have the funds to make a purchase.

"Now we've got both of those, potentially," Lawhon said.

The Gettysburg Country Club fell into financial distress last year, and the bank ultimately foreclosed on the

property. It went up for sale at a sheriff's auction for a minimum of \$2.79 million in February, but no one placed a bid. That transferred the property back to Susquehanna Bank as the new owner.

At the time, the bank's attorney implied that the property would eventually be up for sale.

"Banks don't operate golf courses," Eugene Pepinsky said.

The park had been in discussions about purchasing the property with the club's

previous owners, but an agreement was never reached. Now that the property is for sale and the funds are available, Lawhon said the park will likely try again.

"I think it shows that there's certainly a greater chance," she said.

The Gettysburg Country Club was the site of significant fighting during the Battle of Gettysburg. On the first day of the battle, the famed Iron Brigade attacked across Willoughby Run onto what is now the golf course, driving back a Confederate brigade and capturing its commander, Gen. James Archer. Later in the day, Confederate Gen. James Pettigrew's North Carolina brigade advanced across the golf course to attack the Iron Brigade near the run. Both brigades lost more than 1,000 men that day.

If the park does succeed in acquiring the property, it couldn't come at a better time for some preservationists. Earlier this week, the Civil War Preservation Trust (CWPT) released its annual History Under Siege report, which names the top 10 endangered Civil War battlefields.

As usual, Gettysburg is on the list. But this time, the Gettysburg Country Club is specifically named as a property at risk of further development.

"We'd love to see it preserved," said Mary Koik, spokeswoman for the CWPT.

Like the park, the CWPT has also inquired about purchasing the property, but Koik said the asking price is just too high.

In other words, there's no guarantee the country club will go from the bank to a group, like the park or the CWPT, interested in preserving it.

It's also not the only property the park could use the \$2.2 million land-acquisition funds to purchase. The country club is one of 80 parcels of land within the park not owned by the Park Service. Of those 80, 33 are listed as high priority.

Lawhon wouldn't comment specifically on what other parcels are on the park's radar. Again, it depends on whether there's a willing seller, she said.

"If somebody wants to talk to us about selling an easement or selling their property, we want them to call us," she said. "It's not going to do us any good if the owners aren't interested in talking to us."

Lawhon said the park received word of its \$6.5 million 2009 budget just recently. In addition to the \$2.2 million for land acquisition, the budget also includes an increase of \$689,000 for park operations and \$200,000 for battlefield rehabilitation.

About \$152,000 of the operations increase is allocated for fixed-cost increases, such as salaries, and the rest is allocated for additional programming, Lawhon said.

The operations budget increase is welcome news, Lawhon said, because the park has for years not been able to fill positions when employees left or retired. The result is a total of 17 vacant positions in Gettysburg, she said.



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"That (increase) is a direct response to that concern," she said. "There's so many vacant positions because money has been so tight."

Bicycle Donation to Gettysburg Law Enforcement Rangers

CWi, March 25, 2009

Holmes Cycling and Fitness, of Camp Hill, Pa. and Giant Bicycles presented Law Enforcement Rangers at Gettysburg National Military Park with a donation of three bicycles for use in patrolling the Gettysburg battlefield and the Eisenhower National Historic Site on March 24, 2009. The bikes will be used to improve visitor and resource protection. The donation also includes helmets, water bottles, back racks, and a car/trunk bicycle carrier.

Steve Silsley, of Holmes Cycling and Fitness, made the presentation of the three bicycles to Park Rangers Maria Brady, Doug Murphy, and John Sherman at a brief event held at the Pennsylvania Memorial on the Gettysburg battlefield. Brady, Murphy, and Sherman were more than happy to try them out, peddling up and down Hancock Avenue in the beautiful spring weather.

Gettysburg gun law under review

Current ordinance does not address re-enactors shooting blanks.

By ERIN JAMES, Hanover Evening Sun, March 19, 2009

In a few weeks, Gettysburg's annual onslaught of tourists with a taste for Civil War history will again descend upon the borough and the battlefield that surrounds it.

And when that happens, some Gettysburg officials want to be ready with a firearms ordinance that clearly states the borough's policy on discharging firearms within the borough.

At Tuesday's Public Safety Committee meeting, Mayor William Troxell read a prepared statement in which he asked Borough Council members to consider revising the current firearms ordinance, which dates back to 1968.

As it reads now, the ordinance says, "No person shall, except in defense of person or property, fire or discharge any gun or other firearm within the Borough of Gettysburg."

That may sound clear cut, but the ordinance neglects to address the longtime Gettysburg tradition of discharging guns during re-enactment events and military ceremonies.

Following in the footsteps of previous mayors, Troxell said he often grants permission to groups like the American Legion and Veterans of Foreign Wars, which request the right to fire blank cartridges.

But Troxell said he was advised several months ago that Councilman John Butterfield had called that practice into question, given the language of the firearms ordinance.

The issue comes down to interpretation and can be easily resolved by a council's review and eventual amendment to the ordinance, Troxell said.

"It is my belief that the intent of the ordinance was to protect the citizens of Gettysburg from having guns firing bullets that were being indiscriminately fired in the borough," he said. "I don't believe the intent of the ordinance was to eliminate the firing of black powder or the firing of blank cartridges."

Borough Solicitor Harry Eastman said that he has reviewed the ordinance and concurs with the mayor's recommendation to amend it.

He suggested revising the ordinance so that its language is consistent with the established practice of permitting the firing of black powder and blank cartridges.

"My thought is that the borough has been handling this in a very common-sense approach," Eastman said.

Most council members present at Tuesday's meeting, including Butterfield, were receptive to the idea. Butterfield said the tradition of firing blank cartridges is a part of Gettysburg history and an important practice to maintain.

"Certainly visitors would be disappointed if we weren't doing the re-enacting role," he said.

Councilman Michael Birkner cautioned officials, however, about approaching the revision with the attitude that guns are harmless without bullets.

Birkner cited the pending legal case of a 44-year-old re-enactor, who is charged with two counts of aggravated assault for allegedly shooting a 17-year-old re-enactor with an unloaded black powder rifle at point-blank range. The shot resulted in powder burns to two of the teen's toes and the partial amputation of one, according to court documents.

"It's clear from that case that you can hurt somebody," Birkner said.

But, he added, some level of danger is present in every activity, and the borough cannot prevent every injury.

"We don't live in a risk-free world," Birkner said.

Troxell said the borough should also consider requiring individuals to have proof of insurance before receiving permission to shoot blank cartridges or black powder.



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Officials said they hope to have a revised draft of the ordinance ready to be voted upon at the council's April 13 meeting. After it is advertised, the ordinance could then be adopted as early as May.

Members highlight Falling Waters battlefield by installing more roadside markers

By Erienne Greene, Martinsburg Journal-News, April 5, 2009

FALLING WATERS - Members of the Falling Waters Battlefield Association hope to keep people interested in the region's rich history by installing interpretive roadside signs that highlight significant local sites.

Gary Gimbel, the president of the FWBA for the last two years, is confident that the association will continue to keep both locals and tourists coming back to scope out the region's history. Part of the group's goal is to install more roadside marker signs that inform drivers of historical sites, such as the Civil War battle fought on July 2, 1861, along present-day U.S. 11.

"We're excited to have a couple more signs coming. Generally, it's a long process, about six to eight months, to get each sign," Gimbel said.

He described these signs as classic ones that are generally found at a national park, standing on a two-pier pedestal. Unlike a plaque or monument, these rather simple markers are placed close to a roadway and/or alongside battlefield parks.

In addition, there will be red, white and blue "trailblazer" signs, bearing the image of a bugle, alerting those passing by about an upcoming roadside marker.

"The association has been very fortunate to work with the West Virginia Civil War Trails Signs program as well as the local Martinsburg-Berkeley County Convention & Visitor's Bureau in placing two markers on the Falling Waters battlefield in October," Gimbel said.

He went on to say that the FWBA hopes to do more this year to help to educate the public and provide information about the battle.

"So often when we're out to promote the battlefield, someone will come up and say, 'Gee, I've lived here all my life and didn't know there was a battle here until I read the sign.' You can hear the pride in their voice," he said.



Jason Shaffer installs one of the newest West Virginia Civil War Trails Signs at the Stonewall Jackson Monument in Berkeley County, in the area where the Battle of Falling Waters took place in 1861. (Journal photo by Erienne Greene)

In addition to installing more signs, saving the historic Porterfield House and its surrounding 14 acres of land still tops the list of the FWBA's main priorities.

"That's the biggest thing. We don't want to put in under a glass case and preserve it, but rather we would like to have a business of some sort come in it and use it for an office," Gimbel said about the Porterfield House, which was built by Davy

Crockett's grandfather and is a major landmark of the battle.

While the local Civil War site has been listed as an endangered site for the second year in a row, Gimbel doesn't think that is such a bad thing considering that the "dubious honor is mainly because of the speedy level of development going on so closely to the land. The site is off of the Spring Mills exit from Interstate 81, where new development includes a Wal-Mart, many businesses and housing subdivisions.

"We are excited that the Falling Waters Battlefield continues to receive this much-needed attention, but we wished more of the site was already protected," he said.

"But battles were fought where they were fought for a reason, mainly transportation factors. It's not a coincidence," he said in reference to the site's proximity to the county's current main roadways and busier areas.

State song hangs on, but change is in the air

By Julie Bykowitz, Baltimore Sun, April 8, 2009

"Maryland, My Maryland" will retain its place as official state song, for now. State lawmakers rejected an attempt this year to change the Confederate-era poem, but key senators recently vowed to revisit the issue when the legislative session ends next week. Among those who have changed their tune is Senate President Thomas V. Mike Miller, a history buff who previously defended the song for its historical value. "It was a great war song. The words were just stunning, but of course offensive to a great many people," the Democrat from Calvert County said Tuesday, adding that "it certainly needs to be modified." He suggested keeping the first half of James Ryder



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Randall's poem and rewriting the final verse or two (a reference therein to "Northern scum" is considered the most offensive). That way, Miller said, laughing, "people could sing whatever stanza they'd like."