

THE "OLD LINER" NEWSLETTER

Gettysburg to Seek Sale of Wills House to Park Service

June 12, 2003 -Courtesy CWI Premium- Call it a case of sticker shock. The Borough of Gettysburg, facing a possible price tag of \$6.2 million to refurbish the Wills House site downtown, has voted to ask the National Park Service to purchase the property for inclusion in Gettysburg National Military Park.

The Wills House, located on the southeast corner of the town square known as the Diamond, is where President Lincoln stayed on his visit to the town for the dedication of the National Cemetery in November of 1863. It was the house in which he is said to have made the final changes on his speech for the event which became known as the Gettysburg Address.

The borough bought the property several years ago with a combination of grant money and private donations, the Hanover Evening Sun reports. The ground floor is rented out to the operator of a small gift shop. The borough council last month approved a design development agreement with the National Park Service as a partner in restoring the historic 19th century house.

The agreement outlined the suggestions of a historic structures report and allowed the borough to choose between two architectural firms selected by the park service, and at the meeting earlier this week they agreed to choose the architectural firm GWWO Inc./Architects of Baltimore to begin preliminary reconstruction designs. Despite that decision, the council members now fear the town simply will not be able to come up with the money to do the actual work.

According to the letter sent to the National Park Service, Gettysburg is "experiencing significant budget shortfalls" and the borough cannot donate the property to the United States or agree to a bargain sale. The sale price of the house would need to be based on its fair market value, which has yet to be determined. The costs of the refurbishment would be in addition to the sale price.

"We want everybody to know that this is not a done deal," said council president Ted Streeter. "We are just exploring our options."

Further indicating their disinclination to put large amounts of money into the Wills House at the present time, council also unanimously approved reallocating \$752,000 previously earmarked for the Wills House project to be used to help refurbish the Gettysburg Train Station.

"We had to prioritize what needs to be done first," Streeter said. "The train station is our most immediate concern. We can't leave all that money sitting waiting for us to do the Wills House when we are short by \$5 or \$6 million for that project." As a show of faith in the Wills House project, which supporters had hoped would be a major part of the project to draw battlefield visitors into taking a trip downtown, the council voted to take \$9,600 from the borough's community revitalization funds to repaint the outside of Wills House to protect it from further deterioration while they are deciding what will be done next.

Streeter said the issue will be revisited at a future meeting. Although no response to the borough's letter had been issued at press time, recent reports of the financial situation of Gettysburg & Eisenhower Parks make it clear that

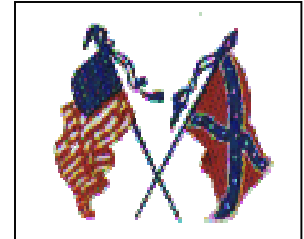
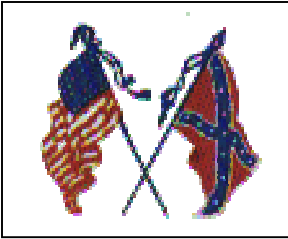
the facility has no money to devote to a purchase of any sort of property without a special appropriation. The parks have been under a hiring freeze as a response to budget shortfalls in fiscal years 2002 and 2003, and is at present unable to replace six out of ten positions where vacancies exist. Among the vacancies which cannot be filled this year are a preservation worker, an exhibit specialist, the park's historic architect, as well as a custodial worker and painter.

Seasonal workers who provide battlefield maintenance and visitor services will also not be hired in the usual numbers this season. Recent executive orders mandated that park service employees receive pay raises, but congressional appropriations did not contain funding for the increased salaries.

Pennsylvania Memorial at Gettysburg Reopens

June 30, 2003 -Courtesy CWI Premium- The long-closed Pennsylvania Memorial, the largest such structure on the Gettysburg Battlefield, is set to reopen July 1, 2003 after a long siege of reconstruction work.

The fence surrounding the Pennsylvania Memorial will be removed and battlefield visitors will once again be free to climb the stairs and take in the panoramic views from the observation deck, according to reports in the Gettysburg Times. The massive restoration project, managed by the Friends of the National Parks at Gettysburg for the National Park Service, has been beset by delays caused by the harsh winter and unending rain that plagued the area for months. Additional delays were encountered when some of the



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deterioration was found to be worse than originally expected.

The original plan was to re-open the memorial in November of 2002 in time for Dedication Day. Then the date was pushed back to mid-January. But as inclement weather continued, the date for re-opening remained unclear.

Recent days of sun and warmer temperatures allowed for the final restoration work to take place and the largest of the more than 1,300 monuments and markers on the battlefield will be open to visitors on



Tuesday.

Last week, park personnel were completing a preservation treatment on the 90 bronze tablets that surround the base, which list the names of every man in every Pennsylvania regiment that fought in the Battle of Gettysburg. And contractors were installing a handrail

in the spiral staircase that leads to the observation deck.

Dedicated in 1910, the monument's structural support systems suffered a great deal of deterioration due to age and water damage, which was evident in the spiral staircase leading to the observation deck. The upper sections of the memorial were closed frequently, and those lucky enough to tour it when it wasn't closed could see broken concrete exposing rusted framing members in numerous spots.

Fort Washington Undergoing Repairs of Repairs

June 26, 2003 –Courtesy CWI Premium- A fort that once served as the last line of defense for Washington, DC from attack up the Potomac River, and which was once restored by Robert E. Lee during his engineering days, is in grievous danger of falling apart, due in large measure to subsequent restorers who used a strong but wrong material to hold it together.

Fort Washington was built in 1824 to replace an earlier, nearby installation called Fort Warburton, which proved inadequate to the task of national security during the War of 1812. British ships sailing up the Potomac blew it into little bits on their way to capturing Alexandria.

The replacement fort was considerably stronger, and got even more so after its walls were strengthened in the 1840s. US Army engineers, including Lt. Robert E. Lee, added thick layers of red brick that made the walls 60 feet high in some points. During the Civil War, it was the primary coastal fortification protecting Washington.

Now a national park, the aging fort is fighting a new battle that poses a

threat graver than enemy gunfire, the Washington Post reports. Rain, poor drainage, neglect and misguided repairs have left Fort Washington's walls precariously fragile.

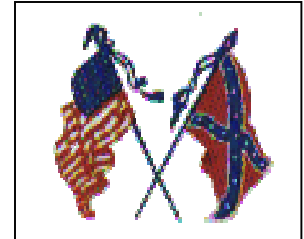
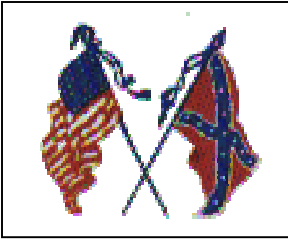
"Birds would alight on the wall and bricks would fall," said Bill Clark, who oversees the fort for the National Park Service. "The wind would blow and bricks would fall." A section near the gate collapsed in 1999, and lime from dissolving mortar has formed tiny stalactites on ceilings. Vegetation, including at least one tree, has taken root in cracks on the walls.

A large part of the problem, Clark said, is that the repairs that were done over the years were mostly patchwork, with materials that ended up doing more harm than good. Chief among those was Portland cement, a common, durable mortar used for most repairs on the fort in the 20th century.

Although Portland cement is strong, it proved to be the wrong material for the fort's walls, Clark said. Lime-based mortar, a flexible material that allowed the structure to absorb and release water with little damage, was used during the 19th century. The newer Portland cement trapped water that seeped into the walls, causing deep cracks.

A renovation and restoration project on the walls was begun by the park service in 2000 and is expected to continue until 2006. Clark credited the Maryland congressional delegation with assistance in getting appropriations for the fort repairs, which are expected to total around \$10 million.

The lime and Portland cement also reacted to each other, essentially dissolving the mortar and further weakening the walls, according to Ananth Badrinath of contractor



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Desbuild Inc. of Hyattsville and a lead project manager for the reconstruction. Desbuild consulted with castle historians in Switzerland and studied historical building plans to figure out how to repair the building.

The only solution is to replace most of the Portland cement with lime mortar, Badrinath decided. That requires workers to remove scores of bricks and replace them after the cement is scraped away.

"It is a very slow and tedious process," Badrinath said. Fort Washington was based on a plan drafted by Pierre L'Enfant, the designer of Washington. Advances in naval guns and ships eventually made the fort obsolete. The fort's last military use was during World War II as an officer school for the Adjutant General's Corps, and it was turned over to the Department of the Interior in 1946.

Park officials say about 260,000 people visited the park last year, mostly tourists and Washingtonians "getting tired of the downtown hustle and bustle," said Ranger Don Steiner.

Gettysburg Cyclorama Painting in "Worse Shape Than Expected"

June 30, 2003 -Courtesy CWI Premium- The cost of conservation treatment and moving the Cyclorama painting at the Gettysburg National Military Park could top out at \$9 million, according to Park Superintendent John Latschar. The condition of the painting is, to put it mildly, worse than initially thought to be the case, and that was entirely bad enough.

Latschar informed the Gettysburg Advisory Commission of the condition of the painting recently during the

group's quarterly meeting at the Cyclorama building. The draft condition assessment and treatment plan for the massive painting has been reviewed by the Gettysburg National Battlefield Museum Foundation, the park, and the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission.

Perry Huston and Associates and Olin Conservation Inc. have studied the painting and their report provided the basis for the conclusions, the Times said.

"Everything we feared about the condition of the painting was confirmed and in some aspects its condition is worse," said Latschar. "For instance, the canvas is too weak to support the painting." Latschar said the painting will be closed from mid-November to mid-January as conservators test possible restoration strategies on two of the cylindrical painting's 17 panels. "The panels will be taken from the building to test the restoration methods," Latschar said. The process should take 9 or 10 months. "The

painting will reopen in mid-January" said Latschar.

The area missing panels will be draped, and visitors will learn of the restoration efforts, he said. Congress has earmarked \$5 million for restoration of the painting, which depicts Pickett's Charge.

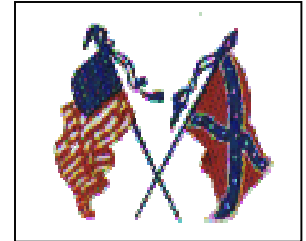
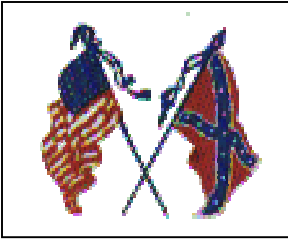
If the cost of restoration escalates to \$9 million, Latschar said, the Foundation has committed to raising funds to complete the work and move it into the new visitor center and museum complex.

The Cyclorama painting is housed in a structure designed by famed American architect Richard Neutra, which has never functioned properly since the day it was completed. Leaks in the roof and improper humidity controls have accelerated the deterioration of both the paint, which in many places is flaking away from the underlying canvas, and the canvas itself.

The cylindrical structure, which has been compared to everything from a drum to a parking hangar for the Starship Enterprise, was placed near



Detail from Cyclorama painting



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the center of the battle line of the 1863 battle, to comply with park design theory of the mid-century which advocated visitor buildings in the middle of the scene of the action. More recent belief advocates preservation or, in this case, restoration of battle action areas, with visitor facilities moved to areas where little or no fighting occurred. Once funds for the new Visitor Center are in hand and the park's collections are relocated to the new site on Hunt Avenue, the Cyclorama and current Visitor Center buildings will be demolished and the battle area known as Ziegler's Grove restored. The expense of the Cyclorama repairs, along with the vast space required for it to be displayed in the manner intended, has caused some to question whether artifact is worth moving into the new Gettysburg Visitor Center, which has experienced cost overruns of its own. The Cyclorama's value as an artistic and historical artifact in its own right has thus far been regarded as sufficient to require its preservation. Cyclorama paintings were a popular form of entertainment in the late 1800s, a time when travel was expensive and rare. They were made in sections so they could be moved from place to place, for instance, to displays at World's Fair type exhibitions. Several were done depicting scenes from Civil War battles, of which the Atlanta and Gettysburg cycloramas are the only ones still on display.

New Rules on Teaching History Cause Confusion in Pennsylvania

June 9, 2003 –Courtesy CWI Premium- The authors of the new rules on the teaching of history in Pennsylvania schools are clear on one thing--they want more emphasis on Pennsylvania history and less on the rest of the country, much less the world. Pennsylvania history, though, should not include too much on that Civil War thing.

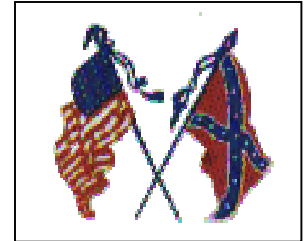
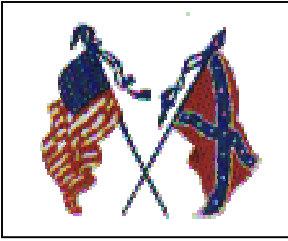
The state Board of Education adopted new guidelines in January, with the expectation that schools follow them by fall 2004. The new history guidelines - which provide examples of the types of subject matter that should be taught - contain three pages of facts, issues and concepts about Pennsylvania. That is the same number of pages devoted to the nation's history, the Philadelphia Inquirer's Kellie Patrick notes in a recent report. The rest of the world fits on two pages. David Saxe, a Pennsylvania State University history professor, who helped create the standards as a member of the state Board of Education, said that many schools have neglected Pennsylvania history, even though a state law has required that it be taught since 1949. Prior to the adoption of the new rules, Pennsylvania had no universal history guidelines. What students learned about depended on their school and in some cases their teacher. Some say that was freedom, but Saxe says that there was abuse.

"If you have a teacher who spends an inordinate amount of time on the Civil War, or too much on the Battle of

Gettysburg, that's inappropriate," he said. "I visited a world-cultures course where the teacher did not do an admirable job. He said I should come back during his course on the Civil War," Saxe said. "How was he teaching that in a world-cultures class?"

Informing students about world history cannot be addressed until they know more about their own nation, Saxe said. And Pennsylvania history is so entwined with the nation's, he added, that many of the lessons can be taught together. Other states have been known to take a similar attitude to their state's importance in the great scheme of things. At least until recently, those who had passed a course in Virginia history were exempt from a required class in US history, apparently on the assumption that the two were essentially one and the same. At least some attention will have to be paid to the Civil War even under the new rules, the Inquirer story notes. One of the items mentioned in the new guidelines of "Pennsylvania military leaders whose contributions students should be able to analyze by the end of ninth grade" is one John Hartranft.

None of the teachers or students interviewed for Patrick's article were familiar with the life or works of Hartranft, including one high school teacher who said he had a master's degree in history. Born in Montgomery County in 1830, was a two-term Pennsylvania governor note for, among other things, reorganized the state's National Guard. He was, however, elected largely on the basis of being a Civil War hero, famous at least at the time if not today. The writers of the standards for teaching history did not explain how students were to be impressed



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with the significance of his achievements without devoting "inordinate attention" to the conflict in which he came to fame.

Students in several classes were given an informal quiz on several of the items contained in the new standard guidelines requirements. In one group of ten, all knew the significance of events at a Pennsylvania site known as Three Mile Island. At least two, however, were unclear of the importance of William Penn, revered as the founder of the state.

One student who fell into the "unclear" category with regards to Penn wrote: "There's a statue of him in Philadelphia, he sometimes wears a Phyllis hat."

"Learning about the Revolutionary War, the Civil War - it's not just American history. You're learning about all wars, what happens to winners and losers, the issues involved," another student said about the new standards.

Susan Adler, a social-studies professor at the University of Missouri and former president of the National Council for the Social Studies, said that Pennsylvania's history guidelines were "the reverse of what I see happening in most states." Most of the students in one sociology class at Central Bucks West High School said that they have spent a lot of time learning about their country, but that the lessons could be improved if they were not so repetitive, and if they delved deeper and focused more on modern history.

Rare Civil War-Era Coffin Under Investigation at Smithsonian

June 5, 2003 –Courtesy CWI Premium- All that Giles County, Tennessee, development officials wanted to do was build a new industrial park. This required them to move an old cemetery, and now they've turned up some exceedingly rare artifacts that are being examined by top scientists at the Smithsonian Institution in Washington DC.

The rare items in question are cast-iron coffins, which were produced for only a short time in the mid-1800s and were just about the most expensive items available for use in the burial of the dead. A total of six such coffins were found, of which one appears to be completely intact. That's the one that was sent to the Smithsonian, the Nashville Tennessean reports.

Tennessee State Archaeologist Nick Fielder said the discovery of the coffins was somewhat of a novelty in the archeological world. 'Cast-iron coffins are very rare,' Fielder said. This type of coffin was in use only from about the 1850s to the 1870s, he said. 'Before these were found, there were only three or four found in Tennessee.'

One reason cast-iron caskets were rarely used was their tremendous expense. A pine box coffin more typically used in the period cost just three or four dollars at most, or nothing at all if made at home as was often the case with poorer or rural families.

The iron burial box was an elaborate construction, and the price of \$50 to \$100 reflected this. Research reports

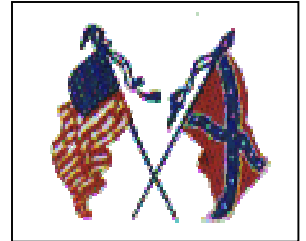
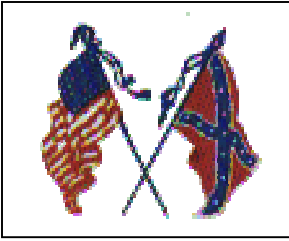
compiled by Duvall & Associates, a Franklin, Tenn., archeological firm hired to move the cemetery, described the unidentified coffin as 'straight-sided but torpedo shaped with three iron handles down each side. ... The case was undecorated including the metal plate covering the glass faceplate.'

Three handles per side were none too many since the iron coffins weighed about 300 pounds, not counting the weight of the deceased. The iron, however, lasts far longer than wood and preserves the contents accordingly. Thus the Smithsonian's interest.

The best-preserved coffin was opened last week and examined over several days by a forensic anthropology team headed by Douglas Owsley, senior scientist for Smithsonian's department of anthropology. Owsley is best known to the Civil War community as the chief consultant on the CSS Hunley recovery.

As in the case of the Hunley sailor's remains, part of Owsley's task in this project is to attempt to identify the deceased. The other iron coffins found in the Giles County cemetery were buried under tombstones identifying their last name as Mason. The one Owsley is working on, however, had no grave marker associated with it. The cemetery had around 40 graves it it but was apparently used as a burial ground by several different families.

Texas residents Fran and Guy Mason thought the coffin belonged to their relative Isaac Newton Mason, who is thought to have died in 1862. The couple flew to the Smithsonian to witness the coffin's examination. Neither the Masons nor Owsley gave any details to the press about what the investigation found.



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For those interested in the history of mortuary science, a similar cast iron coffin is on public display at the Carter House in Franklin, TN, south of Nashville and not that far from Giles County. It was dug up by grave robbers in the 1970s who were intent on looting the corpse of its occupant, Col. William Shy, who was killed in the Battle of Nashville.

The coffin had done its job of preserving Shy's remains so well that police investigating the grave robbery thought at first they were dealing with a recent murder, as the body appeared to be of a person dead only six months or so.

Birthday Party Leads to Windfall for Missouri Battlefield Group

July 2, 2003 –Courtesy CWI Premium- Civil War fans who dread the coming of birthdays because they mean an influx of such gifts as the "Gods and Generals" DVD, ugly statuary, copies of "The Civil War for Dummies", or similar items, should take a clue from Ed Bearss. When he has a birthday he throws a party and asks everybody to bring money. The money, needless to say, is not for the well known lecturer and tour guide himself, which would be tacky. Instead all the dough raised at the



party is bundled up and given to a deserving Civil War site, usually a lesser-known facility that lacks federal or state park status or a high-powered "Friends" group for fundraising purposes.

The recipient of the Bearss Bash Bonanza this year is the Newtonia, Missouri, Battlefield Protection Association. The small but fierce group has done an amazing job of preserving the sites important to not one but two Civil War battles in a town so small that a baseball well hit on one side of town could easily fly across the entire municipality and land in a cornfield on the other side. Bearss recently led a tour of Missouri Civil War sites that included a visit to Newtonia, according to NBPA official Tom Higdon. The showplace of the group's preservation activities is the Richey Mansion, which they are working to both keep in period style and modify to be used as a 21st century dwelling.

The property includes the mansion house, an outbuilding used as a carriage house, a family cemetery and the surrounding 11 acres which were once part of the Richey family farm. The society's holdings stretch in a narrow band north from county road EE to Mill Street, where the Richey family stone barn once sat, and across Morgan Street to an 8 acre property called the Weems Farm. That was the first property donated to the group in 1997.

The Ritchie farm property had to be bought, however, which the group did last year with the help of a no-interest bank loan. The Bearss donation, some \$6000, was deeply appreciated as it will assist in paying this loan off. "Even though our generous benefactors have made all this possible, we must turn some of our time and energy to raising money to

pay them back," Weems said last year. "We are a very small group with small resources, so we will have to search for funds anywhere they can be found. We hope our friends and supporters will help us out. We didn't like going into debt, but we had no other way to protect these wonderful pieces of history."

Based on official reports and archaeological research, the battle which occurred in Newtonia on Sept. 30, 1862, included a charge from the north side of town by four Union companies from the 9th Wisconsin Infantry straight into the Ritchey barnyard.

The 9th Wisconsin was backed up by the 29th Ohio Battery, the 6th Kansas Cavalry and the 3rd Indian Home Guard Regiment. These Union forces clashed with Confederate forces which included the 31st Texas Cavalry, the 34th Texas Cavalry and a battalion of Cherokee Indians. "This land is very important to the 1862 battle," explained Tom Higdon, a member of the Association and a student of the two Civil War battles in Newtonia.

"All the property our group now owns had a major role in the 1862 battle, and also served at least a secondary role in the 1864 battle. This whole area was either fought on, marched over, retreated from, or was part of an encampment."

The 1864 battle was a late event in the raid into Missouri by Confederate Gen. Sterling Price. Following his defeat at the Battle of Westport, Union forces continued to pursue his retreating forces throughout the month of October. They fought a rear-guard action in Newtonia on Oct. 28, 1864, with much of the battle taking place just west of the Ritchie Mansion.