



## THE "OLD LINER" NEWSLETTER

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### Black Soldier's names revealed by Salisbury historians

Research shows that many more blacks served from Civil War Maryland than once thought  
By Brice Stump, Delmarvanow.com, July 1, 2010

BERLIN -- Civil War history and the Eastern Shore may seem to have little in common, but that's not the case, as Salisbury University history professor Clara Small and the Rev. David Briddell discovered.

Worcester and Somerset, like other counties in the state, were required to fill Union soldier quota obligations. What Small and Briddell found was the previously untold history of the numbers of "men of color," slaves and freed blacks who became Union soldiers to meet the increasing demand for fresh recruits. Their work is now the subject of a book, "Men of Color, To Arms! Manumitted Slaves and Freed Blacks from the Lower Eastern Shore of Maryland Who Served in the Civil War."

"It took us 10 years, doing all the research ourselves, all out of pocket. We are not sponsored by anyone," Briddell said.

Yet their book came about by accident.

"I am not an academician. I was doing a family history and discovered that four of my ancestors, slaves, were sold to be soldiers in the Civil War," said Briddell, now of New Jersey and a Methodist preacher retired from the National Council of Churches in Christ. He contacted Berlin Civil War buff and Ocean City attorney Joe Moore, author of "Murder on Maryland's Eastern Shore," for information.

"He was surprised that slaves were recruited and their owners paid for

them to become soldiers," Briddell said.

But Moore had more information on black soldiers.

"Joe gave me about 83 more names of black men from Worcester County who were soldiers for the Union Army through Deeds of Manumission," Briddell said. "He suggested I might want to do more research."

The discovery came at a time when it was believed there were once only five Civil War veterans in Worcester County.

"I was a history major in college, but I knew I needed help. Someone told me about a history professor in Salisbury, Dr. Clara Small, and I contacted her and asked her if she would help with problems I might encounter as I did my research," Briddell said. "She said she would join me in the project."

The subject dovetailed well with Small's work.

"At the time, I was working on a history of African-Americans on the Eastern Shore from Colonial period to the present. I had touched on some of the areas David was exploring, but my work was to be part of the bigger picture. So this fit in perfectly," Small said. "We went to the state archives together and the numbers (of black soldiers) we uncovered were getting larger. We found 637 names of Somerset County black soldiers and by the time we finished, we found 1,268 soldiers from Worcester and Somerset counties."

At the time of the Civil War, Somerset and Worcester had land that would become Wicomico County in 1867.

"Instead of the 83 names we had, Clara and I discovered that in Worcester County, there were about 647 persons, African-Americans, who served in the Civil War. Not all were

slaves; about 400 were and about 200 were free men," Briddell said.

Small said that blacks weren't allowed to fight in the Civil War until after the battle of Antietam, when the Union needed more able bodies.

"Maryland did not fill its Union soldier quota, so they changed laws and the state paid slave owners \$300 for each man," she said. There was no choice for the slave owner; they agreed or the slave was simply taken or conscripted.

"Somerset and Worcester were two counties right next to Confederate territory, and Maryland had to protect Washington," Small said. "I've come to the conviction, as I've gotten involved in this study, that there was a real possibility that the war could have been lost had it not been for the recruitment of 8,718 black men by the Union Army as a whole.

"Lincoln worked hard to keep Maryland in the Union, because if he hadn't, Washington would have been surrounded by Confederate forces," Small said.

With information hard to find, many black families were unaware of the military background of their ancestors. Small and Briddell have been able to find the age of each soldier on "enlistment" -- free or slave; if a slave, the owner was identified. The two also were able to identify the regiment served in, whether the soldier died or survived and where he was injured.

"I think this is the first time that all of this information has been readily available in a single source," Briddell said.

It became a personal adventure for Briddell, because his great-grandfather, John Fassett, had been a Union soldier, along with his brother, Isaiah Fassett.



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"Isaiah was my great-great-uncle, and was a famous Civil War soldier around Berlin. He lived to be the oldest Civil War veteran, black or white, on the Eastern Shore of Maryland and died at 102 in 1946," Briddell said.

When he was 13, Briddell attended Fassett's 100th birthday party for a man he thought a stranger.

"Everybody called him Uncle Isaiah -- he was, in fact, my great-grandfather's brother, but I didn't know that at the time," he said.

Fassett, born into slavery in Sinepuxtenet Neck in 1844, was first Isaiah Bruff, as he was owned by Sarah A. Bruff, but later assumed the name of his father, Andrew Fassett, who was owned by a James Fassett. Bruff acquired a "deed of manumission and release of service" by the Federal Army for Isaiah, a carpenter, along with his three brothers. Bruff was given a compensation of \$1,600 for their service. Conscripted meant freedom for the four slaves.

"Ironically, even though the slave was given his freedom after military service, he was basically sold to the Union Army," Small said. "They were free on paper but they had to serve so much time before they got their freedom. If they came in as free men, they were paid, but the slave owners got the money if they were conscripted as slaves," Small said.

An undated newspaper story about Fassett said he married Sarah Purnell in 1867, and they had eight children and had 59 years together. The two are buried in St. Paul's Church Cemetery near Berlin, not far from his home.

Briddell's wife, Jane, who typed the manuscript, said the book provides an often sad picture of what happened to these soldiers. "Some

were killed within two days of becoming a soldier, or died in training. They were a slave one day, were freed the next (on paper), went into the Army and ended up dead, a brutal thing."

About 200 copies of Briddell and Small's 341-page book were printed, and now the book is already in its second publication of an additional 200. Copies can be obtained for \$25 at the Salisbury University bookstore.

### **CSS Alabama Cannon's Home is in Alabama at the Museum of Mobile**

By Kathy Warnes, suite101.com, June 17, 2010

One of the cannon from the Confederate raider CSS Alabama came to the Museum of Mobile in Mobile, Alabama on Tuesday, June 15, 2010. Saturday June 19, 2010, is the 146th anniversary of its sinking as related in English Shipyards Build the Tallahassee and the Alabama.

The *Alabama's* cannon will become the central exhibit in the 700 foot square exhibit gallery that will open later in the summer. It joins the collection of other artifacts recovered from the *Alabama* that are on loan from the United States Navy.

The cannon is black in color, approximately 10 feet long and weighs 2 ½ tons. It is one of the three recovered of the original six of that size. One is at the Navy Yard in Washington and the other is in Charleston, South Carolina.

According to Mobile lawyer Robert Edington, President of the CSS Alabama Association, French and American divers recovered this cannon from the wreck of the CSS Alabama in 2003. Since then the underwater archaeologists at the Warren Lasch Conservation Center in

North Charleston, South Carolina, preserved the cannon until it was transported to Mobile.

The cannon's original gun carriage had completely rotted away after 140 years underwater and it had to be replaced. Experienced craftsmen from Mobile Public Buildings built a replacement gun carriage. "The expertise of these artisans cannot go without note. The original plans for the gun carriage, dated May 1862, were located in England and copied exactly," Robert Edington said.

The CSS *Alabama* was one of the premier Confederate blockade runners built in the Laird Brothers shipyard near Liverpool, England. From 1862 until 1864, the *Alabama* claimed more than 60 prizes valued at approximately six million dollars and made heavy inroads into United States merchant shipping. The Union's USS *Kearsarge* sank the *Alabama* in a fierce battle off the coast of Cherbourg, France on June 19, 1864.

On October 30, 1984, the French Navy mine hunter *Circe* discovered a wreck in approximately 200 feet of water off Cherbourg, France. French Navy Commander Max Guerout later confirmed that the wreck was the *Alabama*. Despite the fact that the Alabama lies within French territorial waters, the United States government claimed the Alabama as a spoil of war.

In October 1989, the United States and France signed an agreement acknowledging that the CSS *Alabama* is an important heritage of both countries and established a joint French-American Scientific Committee to direct archaeological investigations of the wreck.

In 1995, the CSS Alabama Association and the Naval Historical Center signed an official agreement



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granting the CSS Alabama Association permission to investigate the *Alabama* remains. In 1999, the CSS Alabama Association, based in Mobile, Alabama, joined the French organization to actively support exploring the *Alabama*.

The French exploration team recovered about 200 artifacts from the CSS *Alabama* in the 1990s. The French and the American joint exploration teams recovered about 200 more. They turned most of the artifacts over to the United States Department of the Navy for restoration. There have been no dives on the wreck site since 2005 because of a lack of funding.

The remains of a Confederate sailor were discovered in 2003, encrusted on the bottom of the cannon. American archaeologists raised the cannon during the summer of 2002, and the cannon and the remains were sent to the Warren Lasch Conservation Laboratory in North Charleston, South Carolina.

In a *Mobile Register* story, Shea McLean, the Museum of Mobile's curator of collections that he found the remains of the sailor sometime in 2003, on the underside of the cannon as if it had crushed the sailor. He said that the remains were eventually sent to the U.S. Army Central Identification Laboratory in Hawaii and DNA samples were taken. He said that there is no doubt that the remains were of a Confederate sailor and he hoped to use the DNA to trace the sailor's descendants through a list of the crew.

According to the *Mobile Register*, the Confederate sailor was buried on July 28, 2007, in Confederate Rest in Magnolia Cemetery in Mobile, with approximately 1,100 Confederate soldiers. Raphael Semmes, the commanding officer of the CSS

*Alabama*, spent the last years of his life in Mobile and is buried in the Catholic Cemetery there.

David Alsobrook, director of the Museum of Mobile, is quoted in a Fox TV 10 story as being thrilled that one of the deck guns raised from the CSS *Alabama* will be included in the Museum's permanent exhibits gallery. "Since Admiral Raphael Semme's postwar residence and his gravesite are in Mobile. I think our Museum is a logical home for this artifact," he said. Jacob Laurence, curator of exhibits at the Museum of Mobile, said in the Fox TV 10 story that even though the rest of the exhibit gallery design is still being installed, the cannon will go on permanent exhibit immediately. Visitors to the Museum can view the cannon from a distance and watch the final touches being put on the gallery which is expected to be open to the public by late summer.

Chairman of the Museum Board Tony Kendall said that the Museum of Mobile is pleased that "months of diligent efforts have brought a cannon from the CSS *Alabama* to Mobile, the city that Raphael Semmes called home."

### **National Register Application for South Mountain Moves Forward**

By Heather Keels, Hagerstown Herald Mail (MD), May 30, 2010

An application to add the South Mountain Battlefields to the National Register of Historic Places is moving forward despite not getting a recommendation from the Washington County Commissioners.

The state review board for the National Register voted March 16 to recommend the battlefields' nomination to the register, said Peter Kurtze, National Register

administrator for the Maryland Historical Trust.

Kurtze said Thursday he was preparing to forward the application to the National Register office of the National Park Service, which will make the final decision. That office has 45 days from the date it receives the nomination to make a decision, he said.

The National Register of Historic Places is the official list of the nation's historic places worthy of preservation. Inclusion carries prestige, as well as benefits such as grant eligibility and tax credits for approved rehabilitation projects.

The South Mountain Battlefields, which include the land around Crampton's, Turner's and Fox's gaps, were submitted for consideration because the Civil War conflicts that occurred there Sept. 14, 1862, set the stage for the larger Battle of Antietam three days later, according to the application.

The Washington County Commissioners declined Tuesday to give the battlefields' nomination their recommendation, saying they had not heard support from enough of the property owners whose land would be included in the listing.

The commissioners' support was not needed for the application to move forward and the lack of a recommendation from them probably will not influence the final decision, Kurtze said.

"The register makes its decisions based on the merits of the property nominated, so I don't think the lack of a recommendation from the commissioners would affect the consideration of the nomination at all," he said.

The application was taken before the commissioners as part of a local review process that requires



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notification of property owners, and hearings before the local historic preservation commission and the local governing body.

"If either the historic preservation commission or the chief elected official or commissioners make a positive recommendation, the nomination can continue to be processed, and that's what's happened in this case," Kurtze said.

Because the battlefields' listing would span Washington and Frederick counties, local reviews were conducted in both counties, he said.

The Washington County Historic District Commission, the Frederick County Historic Preservation Commission and the Frederick County Commissioners all recommended approval of the listing, he said.

The Washington County Commissioners' reluctance to extend their recommendation arose amid questions about whether a listing on the National Register posed any potential limitations for property owners.

According to a Maryland Historical Trust fact sheet, listing "does not mean the federal government or the State of Maryland wants to acquire the property, place restrictions on the property, or dictate the colors or materials used on individual buildings."

Listing "does not require the owner to preserve or maintain the property or seek approval of the federal government or the State of Maryland to alter the property," the fact sheet says. "Unless the owner applies for and accepts special federal or state tax, licensing or funding benefits, the owner can do anything with his property he wishes, so long as it is permitted by state and local law."

It was this "unless" clause that led some of the Washington County Commissioners to conclude there might be potential limitations associated with listing and to seek more information about whether the affected property owners wanted to be included.

However, Kurtze said, listing does not create any new limitations on property rights.

Whenever a project involves state or federal funding or permits, that triggers a review of whether the project will affect historic resources, regardless of whether the property is listed on the historic register, Kurtze said.

Jeremiah Hornbaker, president of Friends of South Mountain State Battlefield, said he carefully researched the effects of listing before his group initiated the application process.

As a libertarian, Hornbaker said he is normally against government involvement, but he concluded that listing on the National Register carried significant benefits for the battlefields, and no negative effects for the lands or their owners.

"It opens the South Mountain State Battlefield to receive grant money," Hornbaker said. "They're not eligible for a lot of these grants that they write for, everything from wildlife habitat grants to land purchase grants, historic home restoration grants ... because the registry's not there."

Daniel Spedden, park manager for the South Mountain Recreation Area, said officials from the state battlefield park supported the application and are excited about the battlefields' possible listing.

"It brings the battlefield an enormous amount of prestige, and it makes it ... a much more marketable entity for visitors," Spedden said. "And it gives

us a certain level of protection against things like power lines, natural gas compression stations, cell phone towers and other things that you generally would rather locate outside the historic district."

Spedden said park officials are sensitive to private property owners' rights and are convinced that individuals would not be affected by the listing.

"You could paint your shutters blue, you could pave your driveway, you could add on a deck or build a mini barn," he said.

Hornbaker said he didn't think the groups would continue to seek the Washington County Commissioners' support because the application had already progressed beyond that level.

The commissioners suggested the Friends of South Mountain follow up with non-responsive property owners to get their feedback. Of 68 included properties in Maryland, owners of 34 responded to a letter seeking feedback and 19 of those wanted their properties included.

"I don't know what more to do," Hornbaker said. "If the people don't respond to it— for us to go around and knock on every door— we could try, but a lot of the private property owners don't even live in the area."

In addition to the 68 properties in Washington County, there were more than 200 properties in Frederick County included in the application, he said.

### **Texas State**

### **Astronomers Solve Walt Whitman Meteor Mystery**

By Jayme Blaschke, University News Service, May 28, 2010

In his landmark collection *Leaves of Grass*, famed poet Walt Whitman wrote of a "strange huge meteor-procession" in such vivid detail that



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scholars have debated the possible inspiration for decades.

Now, a team of astronomers from Texas State University-San Marcos has applied its unique brand of forensic astronomy to the question, rediscovering one of the most famous celestial events of Whitman's day--one that inspired both Whitman and famed landscape painter Frederic Church--yet became inexplicably forgotten by modern times.

Texas State physics professors Donald Olson and Russell Doescher, English professor Marilyn S. Olson and Honors Program student Ava G. Pope publish their findings in the July 2010 edition of *Sky & Telescope* magazine, on newsstands now.

"This is the 150th anniversary of the event that inspired both Whitman and Church," Donald Olson said. "It was an Earth-grazing meteor procession." Fires in the sky

Whitman, known as a keen observer of the sky, included significant references to contemporary as well as cosmic events in his poem "Year of Meteors. (1859-60.," published in *Leaves of Grass*. A "great comet" in the poem that appeared unexpectedly in the northern sky is readily identified as the Great Comet of 1860, which follows the path Whitman described and was seen by most of the world.

From Whitman's description, the Texas State research team immediately suspected the other celestial event he wrote about was the rare phenomenon known as an Earth-grazing meteor procession.

"Meteor processions are so rare most people have never heard of them," Olson said. "There was one in 1783 and a Canadian fireball procession in 1913. Those were all the meteor processions we knew of."

An Earth-grazing meteor is one where the trajectory takes the meteor

through the Earth's atmosphere and back out into interplanetary space without ever striking the ground. A meteor procession occurs when a meteor breaks up upon entering the atmosphere, creating multiple meteors traveling in nearly identical paths.

The rarity of meteor processions, however, has proven problematic to scholars. Whitman's description has alternately been ascribed to the 1833 Leonid meteor storm, the 1858 Leonids and a widely-observed fireball in 1859. Although Whitman is documented as having observed the 1833 Leonids, the Texas State researchers were able to discount that meteor storm because the timeframe conflicts with the poem's, and Whitman's descriptions of the two events are very different. The 1858 Leonids were also discounted after the research team discovered a dating error misattributing some of Whitman's observations of the 1833 Leonids to the latter year.

By contrast, the 1859 fireball was well-documented and happened during the timeframe of the poem. The fireball, however, was a single meteor, not a procession. Compounding the problem, the 1859 fireball was a daylight meteor, whereas Whitman describes the procession as happening at night.

The art of rediscovery

A chance clue from the 19th century artist Frederic Church proved key to unraveling the mystery. A decade ago, Olson saw a painting on the back cover of an exhibition catalog which showed the scene Whitman had described. Church's painting, titled "The Meteor of 1860," clearly depicted a meteor procession. Not only that, but the catalog gave the date of Church's observance: July 20, 1860, well within the timeframe of

Whitman's poem. An accomplished landscape painter, Church was a member of the Hudson River School, living beneath the same skies as Whitman.

"We went to Church's house, and the people who know him and his art well, who've studied him, say, 'Oh, he wouldn't have painted it like that based on somebody's say-so. He must have seen it,'" Olson said. "The artist and his wife, who were honeymooning that summer, kept the painting in their bedroom for many years."

"We went to a small research library and found old diaries of Theodore Cole, a friend of Church's, from July of 1860," Pope said. "They tell us Church was, in fact, in Catskill, New York, so he wasn't off in some far distant land."



Photo courtesy The Independent Earth-grazing meteor processions are an extremely rare phenomenon. Until now, astronomers believed there were just two in the last 220 years. But the discovery of this painting by Frederic Church, and its link to Walt Whitman's "Year of Meteors" poem, has led to the re-discovery of another example of the event, witnessed by both men in 1860

Armed with this intriguing new date, the Texas State researchers began poring through newspapers of the time for verification. What they found surprised even them. A large Earth-grazing meteor broke apart on the evening of July 20, 1860, creating a spectacular procession of multiple fireballs visible from the Great Lakes



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to New York State as it burned through the atmosphere and continued out over the Atlantic Ocean.

"Any town that had a newspaper within all those states is going have a story on this," Olson said. "We have hundreds of eyewitness accounts, but there are probably hundreds more we don't have.

"From all the observations in towns up and down the Hudson River Valley, we're able to determine the meteor's appearance down to the hour and minute," Olson said. "Church observed it at 9:49 p.m. when the meteor passed overhead, and Walt Whitman would've seen it at the same time, give or take one minute."

Some of the most influential publications in the U.S.--including the New York Times, Smithsonian and Harper's Weekly--devoted major coverage to the event, and countless letters about it were published. Scientific American went so far as to declare it "the largest meteor that has ever been seen."

"They describe it just as Church painted it. It was visible for about 30 seconds, and passing horizontally, so it was, in fact, an Earth-grazer," Pope said. "A really cool part is that the Catskill newspaper describes it as dividing into two parts with scintillations, exactly like the painting."

This broad public attention, as well as study by many professional astronomers of the day, made the meteor procession of 1860 one of the single most famous celestial events of its day, and quite possibly the most documented meteor appearance in history. Despite this, memory of the dazzling event faded so much that by the middle of the 20th century

scholars were left puzzled over what Whitman had actually seen.

"Its appearance, right before the Civil War, at a time growth and anxiety for America, made it a metaphor and portent in the public imagination," Marilynn Olson said.

### Unveiling of Custer statue attracts thousands

The Agora (Monroe MI), July 1, 2010  
Thousands crowded the streets of downtown Monroe on June 3-5 to view the unveiling of General George Armstrong Custer's statue.

The 14-foot statue was designed by sculpture Edward Potter of Connecticut and placed in Monroe 100 years ago.

The statue represents Monroe's own Gen. Custer, who was honored for his heroism in the Civil War during the Battle of Gettysburg.

Potter's statue, called "Sighting the Enemy," depicts Custer on Rommel's Field at Gettysburg. It was first dedicated in 1910 in Loranger Square by President William Howard Taft and Custer's widow, Elizabeth Bacon Custer.

Then in 1923, the statue was moved to Soldiers and Sailors Park on the south bank of the River Raisin in Monroe.

In 1955, the Custer Monument was moved to its current location in St. Mary's Park on the north bank of the River Raisin at the corner of North Monroe Street, where it stands today. The Custer Statue was placed on the State Register of Historic Sites in 1992 and on the National Register of Historic Places in 1995.

Dr. Dennis Montagne, director of the monument research and preservation program for the National Park Service, along with Andrzej Dajnowski, director of the

Conservation of Sculpture & Objects Studio in Forest Park, Ill., were selected to recondition the statue, which has been aging in the outdoor environment for the last 100 years.

### Burglar takes 25 Civil War-era rifles bound for museum

By Amy Crawford, Pittsburgh Tribune-Review, June 15, 2010

Twenty-five long rifles from the Civil War-era that a man wanted to donate to the Senator John Heinz History Center were stolen from his Indiana County home, state police said.

"They're very long and very heavy," said Trooper Michael Sbardella of Indiana, noting it would be difficult for a thief to hide or sell the guns without attracting notice.

The 6-foot-long percussion and flintlock rifles, some from the 1840s, disappeared from the home of Bill Jacobson, 68, who fell ill while on vacation in Rome in February and, after months in the hospital, came home this month and found his collection missing.

Jacobson, who estimated the guns could be worth as much as \$40,000, said he left a door unlocked so a neighbor could feed his cat, and the neighbor did not notice anything amiss. The rifles, stored throughout the house, were the only items taken from the home in Burrell Township.

He said the rifles were used in the Mexican War and Civil War and stamped with the years they were made, from the 1840s to the 1860s.

"I really wanted to donate them," he said. "You could bring kids in and see what guns used to be."

Jacobson hopes the thief might feel remorse and return the rifles.

"Even if I could recover one or two of them, I'd be happier than I am now," he said.



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### Nation's Historians Speak Out Against Proposed Gettysburg Casino

To mark the 147th anniversary of the bloodiest battle in American history, 272 American historians, including some of the country's most respected academics, today sent a letter to Pennsylvania Gaming Control Board chairman Gregory Fajt, urging the rejection of the application for the Mason-Dixon Gaming Resort. If approved, the proposed gambling hall will be located just one-half mile from America's most hallowed battleground.

Among the signers are some of the most prominent historians in America, including James McPherson, author of the Pulitzer Prize-winning *Battle Cry of Freedom*; Garry Wills, author of the Pulitzer Prize-winning *Lincoln at Gettysburg: The Words That Remade America*; Carol Reardon, director of graduate studies in history at Pennsylvania State University; Jeffery C. Wert, author of the acclaimed *Gettysburg, Day Three*; and Edwin C. Bearss, Chief Historian Emeritus of the National Park Service.

In part, their message states that as professional historians, they "feel strongly that Gettysburg is a unique historic and cultural treasure deserving of our protection. Gettysburg belongs to all Americans equally—future generations no less than those of us alive today," before concluding that "there are many places in Pennsylvania to build a casino, but there's only one Gettysburg."

Beyond the individual signatories, the message and its sentiment has received the endorsement and support of the American Historical

Association, National Coalition for History, National Council on Public History, Organization of American Historians, Society for Military History and Southern Historical Association.

Although the proposed casino site along the Emmitsburg Road lies outside the current administrative boundaries of Gettysburg National Military Park, it would be on land identified as historically sensitive by the American Battlefield Protection Program, an arm of the National Park Service. The application before the Pennsylvania Gaming Control Board would retrofit an existing family-friendly hotel complex into a gambling resort with an initial 600 slot machines in addition to table games.

In addition to the inappropriate juxtaposition, historians also fear negative indirect impacts on their efforts to interpret the battlefield and share their knowledge with students and heritage tourists. Gettysburg resident and director of the George Tyler Moore Center for the Study of the Civil War at West Virginia's Shepherd University, Dr. Mark Snell is extremely concerned about the increased traffic and certain commercialization with which visitors and guides will have to contend should the casino be approved.

"As someone who has tried to give a tour to my students at South Cavalry Field — within easy walking distance of the proposed casino," said Snell, "I personally can attest that the last thing that is needed on the Emmitsburg Road, where that fight took place, is any increased traffic. It wouldn't just be noisy, it would be dangerous."

In 2006, when a previous proposal to bring gambling to the fringes of the Gettysburg Battlefield was under consideration, a group of prominent historians similarly spoke out against

the ill-advised project. Such thorough and widespread public opposition was among the reasons explicitly cited by the Gaming Control Board in its rejection of the application.

One of those at the forefront of that effort was Ed Bearss, chief historian emeritus of the National Park Service and America's foremost battlefield guide. A former historian at Vicksburg National Battlefield, who feels that site was irreparably damaged by the emergence of gaming nearby, his opposition to this newer proposal has not diminished in the least. Over the course of his storied career, Bearss has spent many thousands of hours leading tours of the Gettysburg Battlefield.

"Gettysburg, if it embraces the casino, is forfeiting that which has undeniable national and international significance," said Bearss. "Do you want the most iconic battlefield in America and the site of Abraham Lincoln's immortal Gettysburg Address, or do you want just another slots parlor?"

The letter was circulated among the historian community by a coalition of preservation groups which have opposed both efforts to bring gambling to Gettysburg. The Civil War Preservation Trust, National Parks Conservation Association, National Trust for Historic Preservation and Preservation Pennsylvania have consistently emphasized that their opposition stems from the direct threat posed to the battlefield by the site's proximity and potential for increasing traffic and development pressures on the park, as opposed to any objection to gaming.



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### Vermont prepared to seize cannon from re-enactors

By Brent Curtis, Rutland Herald, July 5, 2010

Vermont officials are preparing to seize a Civil War era cannon at the center of a longstanding and pitched battle between the state and a group of historic re-enactors. The bronze, 12-pound Napoleon cannon paid for by the Proctor family is owned by the state but has been maintained, repaired and used for three decades by re-enactors from the 2nd Battery Vermont Light Artillery — named after the original unit that used the cannon. That arrangement worked comfortably until the state ordered the re-enactors to stop firing the gun to both preserve it and protect the public from injury. Differences between the re-enactors and the state prompted state legislators in 2007 to pass an act requiring the state Department of Housing and Community Affairs to enter an agreement with the 2nd Battery that "allows the organization to continue to safely use, maintain and store the cannon." But more than a year after sending an agreement offer to the group, agency officials said they have not received a reply and are done waiting. "We sent a proposed agreement awhile ago and they have not responded so we're moving forward," said David Mace, spokesman for the state Agency of Commerce and Community Development. "Frankly, all we're getting is a lot of delays so we're moving forward." "Moving forward," means moving the cannon which for the the better part of the last decade has been housed in the federal Watervliet Arsenal

Museum in New York. Mace said state National Guardsmen will take the cannon to the Vermont Veterans Militia Musuem at Camp Johnson in Colchester. Mace said he didn't know when the Guard would move the cannon. The agency's decision to take possession of the gun was made over the objection of a state senator who appealed to state administrators on Thursday to finish the agreement with the re-enactors. "The difference between what the re-enactors do and what you get in a museum is that it makes people understand what it was like and how they had to do things and it's especially nice around holidays like the Fourth of July," said Sen. Richard Sears, the Bennington Democrat whose letter to Mace suggested a resolution "in the best interests of both (the re-enactors) and the state of Vermont."



An image released by the 2nd Battery Vermont Light Artillery Civil War reenactment unit shows the unit's Napoleon 12-pounder canon being fired.

"With all the things going on in this state regarding the need for economic development I don't know how the Agency of Commerce has time for something like this," Sears said.

James Dassatti, a leader among the re-enactors, was also critical of the agency.

"There is such an unagreeable climate," Dassatti said of the administration.

Asked why his group hadn't responded to the state's requirements for an agreement to use the cannon — requirements that included increased insurance coverage — Dassatti said his group had difficulty finding an insurance carrier able to provide coverage until recently. He said the group also wanted to sit down with the state to renegotiate some of the proposed language. The state's plan to move the cannon to the musuem in Colchester would be a waste of the gun's potential, he said.

"You'll get 200 people a year looking at it there as opposed to many more if we take it out in the field," he said. "It's very shortsighted on the state's part."

But Mace said the state had bigger plans than just the museum. With the 150th anniversary of the start of the Civil War coming up next year, Mace said the gun would have a place of honor in St. Albans — scene of the only Civil War skirmish in Vermont. Asked if the state had any interest in reconsidering an agreement with Dassatti's group, Mace said it was too soon to tell. "That may or may not happen," he said. "But the gun has been in Watervliet long enough. It belongs to Vermont and the people of Vermont should be able to enjoy it."