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Address to Return to Gettysburg for Cyclorama Grand Opening

CWi, August 22, 2008

One of only five known manuscripts of the Gettysburg Address will be on display in the Museum and Visitor Center at Gettysburg National Military Park as part of the three-day Grand Opening celebration September 26-28. Gettysburg Foundation President Robert C. Wilburn announced today that the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum in Springfield, Ill., has agreed to loan its copy of the Address to the Foundation for display during those three days, which also marks the opening of the new Cyclorama Gallery that houses the conserved Gettysburg Cyclorama painting, now complete with skyline, canopy and three-dimensional diorama. Known as the Everett copy, the manuscript that will travel to Gettysburg was given by Lincoln to Edward Everett, the orator whose two-hour speech preceded his Gettysburg Address on November 19, 1863. It is the third of the five known manuscripts, and the first to include the words "under God" in the final sentence that calls for "new birth of freedom." Everett asked Lincoln for a copy to include in a volume he was assembling to mark the November 19 dedication of the Soldiers' National Cemetery. He also included in that volume his own two-hour oration, other speeches given that day, maps of Gettysburg and accounts of the day. He wanted to auction it, with the proceeds going to support health care for Civil War soldiers.

"We are exceedingly grateful to the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum for making it possible

for us to display this rare document that continues to resonate throughout the world, and especially here in Gettysburg," Wilburn said. "One hundred and forty-five years after its delivery, I believe the Gettysburg Address is still the best summation in our nation's history of the meaning and price of freedom."

The manuscript of the Address, along with the rest of the volume that Everett assembled, will be on display in the Gilder Lehrman Institute Special Exhibits Gallery during the museum's regular hours of operation, 8 a.m. - 6 p.m., beginning Friday, September 26 through Sunday, September 28.

The Grand Opening also marks the debut of the massive Gettysburg Cyclorama painting, following a five-year conservation campaign that has not only halted deterioration of the country's only National Historic Object, but also resulted in the recreation of 12 feet of sky and other lost canvas, a three-dimensional diorama and canopy. These features, which have been lost for more than a century, will once again enable viewers to feel as if they are standing in the midst of Pickett's Charge, just as viewers would have 124 years ago. It is one of only two Cyclorama paintings on display in the U.S., and the largest painting in the country.

A new sound and light program helps bring the painting to life. In addition to the debut of the conserved Gettysburg Cyclorama painting and display of the Gettysburg Address, the Museum and Visitor Center at Gettysburg National Military Park plans a number of special events and programs throughout the three days. The public is invited to the ceremonial ribbon cutting, at 11 a.m. Friday, September 26. The program will include 19th -century music, a

vignette from a Broadway play featuring actor Stephen Lang, a children's choir and a reading of the Gettysburg Address.

The public also is invited to purchase tickets to a "Party Like It's 1863 Gala Celebration" from 7 p.m. to midnight on Saturday, September 27. Additional information is available on the Foundation's website at www.gettysburgfoundation.org. Tickets can be purchased online or at the door.

Witness Trees Provide Last Living Link to Battle

By Erin James, Hanover Evening Sun (PA), 8/17/2008

They are the last living link to the America's bloodiest battle.

Union and Confederate soldiers who fought at Gettysburg have long since passed. So, too, have the residents who sought shelter in basement cellars while musket and cannon fire engulfed their town.

But a handful of trees that stood then still stand tall today on the Gettysburg Battlefield. They are the silent survivors of the July 1 through 3, 1863 battle that historians say was the turning point of the Civil War. Officials at the Gettysburg National Military Park call them the "witness trees."

There is no official number on how many remain because no one knows for sure. Only parts of the battlefield have been surveyed by experts who can identify 145-year-old trees. And photographic evidence solidifies the history of only a few. Yet the public's interest in the trees' unique brand of living history has not waned.

The storm that damaged a famous honey locust tree in the National Cemetery last week garnered national attention and inquiries as to what would happen to wood from the



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branches knocked to the ground by wind.

"It's always amazing how passionate people are about witness trees at Gettysburg," said Park Service spokeswoman Katie Lawhon.

In an Associated Press article about the storm damage, park historian John Heiser was quoted as saying only four witness trees - including the honey locust on Cemetery Hill - remain in the heart of the battlefield.

But Heiser, unavailable for further comment this week, was most likely referencing the most-famous trees, the ones easily identified by members of the public, Lawhon said.

In fact, there are likely dozens of trees left on the 6,000-acre field from the time of the battle, she said.

Seven have long been documented as witness trees, and Lawhon said about a dozen more have been identified over the years through the park's rehabilitation program to restore the field to a landscape more closely resembling what it looked like in 1863. Witness trees are preserved when they are identified through the project.

But only parts of the battlefield have been studied that closely. "There are so many wooded areas on the battlefield," Lawhon said. "There's definitely more out there."

The seven

A sapling at the time of the battle, a huge white oak tree now stands alone on a hill overlooking Devil's Den - the site of Smith's Battery, which held the Confederates off Houck's Ridge until it was literally overrun.

The tree was spared during the park's recent cuttings of non-historic trees. But judging by the deliberate building of an avenue around its roots, its significance has long been known. The Devil's Den oak is one of the seven Lawhon said are the most

famous, most well-documented witness trees of Gettysburg.

Another three stand on Culp's Hill, where the two opposing armies traded gunfire for two days. Here the Confederates attacked the hill held by Union forces, but the Rebs were never able to dislodge the Union troops of Greene's brigade and their reinforcements. The hill was a more popular tourist spot soon after the battle because of the shot-up trees and log wall - long since deteriorated - used as protection by Union forces.

Just inside the tree line off the Culp's Hill tour road near the monument to the 78th and 102nd New York regiments, the first, a giant white oak, dominates the woods. A makeshift wooden sign identifies it as the "God Tree," and several American and Confederate flags sit at its base.

The tree's unusual shape is tough to miss. It's believed a shell was shot through the trunk during the fighting, causing it to grow almost as two individual trees. Efforts to save the tree are still visible by the concrete someone used to fill the wound.

The other two witness trees on Culp's Hill stand practically side by side, separated only by a boulder. A photograph taken by Matthew Brady 12 days after the battle shows the two trees, much smaller in 1863.

A fifth witness tree hides in plain sight off Hancock Avenue, the road that takes tourists through a line of monuments commemorating Pickett's Charge and the Union's victory there. Its smaller size is deceiving, but the Gibbon Tree is likely the last witness tree in the center of the battlefield.

The black walnut is named for Union Gen. John Gibbon, the divisional commander whose units bore the brunt of Pickett's Charge. Gibbon was wounded in the vicinity of the tree and is supposed to have rested under it.

The tree's roots run under the road, stunting its growth and numbering its days.

Across from Abraham Trostle's farm, a sixth tree with a massive circumference marks the scene of brutal fighting between advancing Confederates and the 9th Massachusetts artillery battery.

But the swamp white oak is most associated with Union Gen. Daniel Sickles, whose headquarters was located in the nearby house.

The seventh is the honey locust damaged in last week's storm. It stands just 150 feet from the platform on which President Abraham Lincoln delivered his most-famous speech. The only witness tree in the cemetery, battlefield guides often point it out to visitors.

And though it was severely damaged in the storm, park officials say it wasn't destroyed. The trunk and several living branches remain. Lawhon said honey locust is a species that tends to sprout new growth, so officials are optimistic.

"We are hoping that the tree will recover," she said. "It's not pretty, but it's alive."

None of the seven trees are officially marked to inform battlefield visitors of their witness-tree status. Park officials reserve that honor for battle-related significance, Lawhon said.

"I think we do have to recognize that while Gettysburg does have these beautiful old trees, the monumentation on the battlefield is definitely more directed toward the fighting of the battle," she said.

More out there

The seven witness trees on Gettysburg's battlefield represent just a portion of the likely total. That's because only in recent years have more been identified through the park's rehabilitation project. Officials



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say about a dozen more have been given witness-tree status since the project began. And Lawhon said she expects they'll find more.

But no complete studies have been done on the topic, and no official documentation exists, Lawhon said.

"There are probably even more in areas where we haven't done studies," she said. "We haven't created a complete listing or map of these trees."

Randy Krichten, the park's biological science technician, said only a handful of trees have gone through the proper testing to determine their age, and he too expects more are scattered throughout the battlefield.

"There a lot of other trees throughout the woods that would potentially be witness trees," he said.

During the rehabilitation project, researchers sometimes had to make an educated guess when deciding what should be removed and what should remain.

They tend to err on the side of caution, leaving trees that may or may not be from the time of the battle. That happened in parts of the Codori-Trostle thicket, where there remain some confirmed witness trees and others surveyors aren't sure about, Krichten said.

"There's a handful in there," he said. "Personally, I don't think that all the trees that were left in the Codori thicket are historic trees."

Determining the exact age of a tree is not as simple as counting rings, Krichten said. It requires researchers to "core" the tree and then send the sample off to a lab to be analyzed, he said.

"It's pretty time-consuming to take a core and then to properly read it," Krichten said.

Lawhon said it's possible the Gettysburg National Military Park

could document witness trees someday, but it's an undertaking that requires time and money the park doesn't have now.

As for how long the remaining witness trees could live on, Krichten said it depends on a number of factors. The species of the tree is one thing, but natural elements are more likely to destroy older trees. The longer a tree has been around, the more vulnerable it is to wind and ice, he said.

"They can't tolerate extremes as well," Krichten said. "That could be a factor that could kill them pretty fast."

'Couldn't get your arms around it' Gettysburg's witness trees are not limited to only those located within the park's 6,000-acre boundary. In downtown Gettysburg, a sycamore tree towers over Alumni Park just off the sidewalk along Baltimore Street.

Unlike the park trees, this one is marked by a plaque which reads: "President Lincoln passed by this tree on November 19, 1863." The plaque was dedicated by the Civil War Preservation Trust in 1978.

Though it is not within the park's congressionally designated boundary, the Baltimore Street tree likely saw fighting. Nearby Winebrenner's Run was the edge of the Confederate skirmish line, and men fought there at the old Wagon Hotel, where a convenience store now sits.

Others could remain in the borough from the time of the battle, but there's no complete list of those either.

Some locals are wondering if, in the same storm that damaged the honey locust, another witness tree was taken down.

Borough Manager John Lawver said crews had to remove a large tree near the borough office on High Street after winds knocked it over.

"There's a lot of word on the street that it was a witness tree because of the size of it," he said. "I mean, you couldn't get your arms around it."

Saving the honey locust

Lawhon said the Park Service turned the wood from the downed branches over to the Gettysburg Foundation, a nonprofit organization that partners with the park on various preservation projects.

Lawhon said she didn't believe any decision had been made yet on what to do with the wood, but it would likely be used to raise funds for preservation money, she said.

Gettysburg Signs owner Gene Golden said he would also like to see it used for fundraising.

It's an idea he said was inspired by the Wye Oak in Maryland. That tree survived for an estimated 460 years in the village of Wye Mills in Talbot County and became the living symbol of the state tree, the white oak.

When it succumbed to a severe thunderstorm in 2002, the wood was made available to artists. That's what Golden said he'd like to see happen with the branches from the National Cemetery's honey locust. "It's worth the effort to save the wood and preserve it," he said.

Federal appeals court panel supports Tenn. school's confederate flag ban

Item could 'disrupt educational process'

By ROSE FRENCH, Associated Press, August 25, 2008

A federal appeals court panel ruled Wednesday in favor of a Tennessee school system that banned the clothing that displayed the Confederate battle flag because of concerns the symbol could inflame racial tensions at a high school.



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Students Derek Barr, Chris White, Roger Craig White and their parents said in a lawsuit their free speech rights were violated by the 2005 flag ban at William Blount High School in Maryville, about 15 miles south of Knoxville.

School officials said the ban came after previous race-related incidents that included a racial slur, a fight, a civil rights complaint, a lockdown and graffiti depicting a Confederate flag and a noose.

The 6th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals pointed to those incidents in ruling that school officials had a right to ban the flag because they could "reasonably forecast" that it would cause disruption.

"The school did not merely find the Confederate flag offensive to some students but rather found that in a context of high racial tensions, race-related altercations, and threats of violence, the flag would disrupt the school's educational process," said the opinion that was filed in Cincinnati.

It cited previous U.S. Supreme Court rulings that allow schools to limit student speech in order to prevent disruptions to education and upheld a lower federal court's dismissal of the lawsuit in 2007.

The Confederate flag is considered a symbol of racism and intolerance by some, while others consider it an emblem of their Southern heritage.

Lawyer: Ruling appalling

The students argued that there was no evidence the flag caused any disruption. The school is mostly white but about 3 percent of its 1,800 students are black, said Principal Steve Lafon.

"We have all along felt it was in the best interest of our school environment to not allow any symbols ... that might be racially divisive in any

way," said Lafon, who was a defendant in the lawsuit with the director of schools and the school board.

Van Irion, a Knoxville attorney who represented the students, called the ruling "appalling" and said he plans to appeal it to the Supreme Court.

"It's very clear this panel doesn't like the Confederate flag," Irion said. "That was their starting point in coming to the decision they did. The subject matter of the ban is not supposed to be relevant at all in a First Amendment analysis."

The lawsuit is the latest in a string of similar free-speech claims from Texas to South Carolina since the 1990s.

Virginia Gov. Kaine OKs Fort Monroe reuse plan

The future of the 570-acre Army post calls for preserving its history while building anew.

By MATTHEW STURDEVANT, Hampton, VA Daily Press, August 20, 2008

Gov. Timothy M. Kaine on Tuesday approved a broad reuse plan that will allow Fort Monroe to become a combination tourist destination, park, and community of homes, offices and retail businesses.

An 18-member Fort Monroe Federal Area Development Authority has worked with consultants on the delicate act of preserving the post, which is a nationally registered landmark, while coming up with a plan to have it bring in enough revenue to pay for maintenance, restoration and improvements. The authority approved the plan in June and it was submitted to the governor for final approval.

"I am pleased with the work of the FMFADA over the past 18 months to create a plan for Fort Monroe that ensures this spectacular and historic property will be enjoyed by many generations to come," Kaine said in a prepared statement. "I also am pleased that the process to create the reuse plan has included many community and regional leaders, experts in historic preservation and economic development, the city of Hampton, and the National Park Service."

The reuse plan divides the post into management zones. Each zone has a recommended way the land could be used: as open space for a park, in a way that adapts existing buildings for some nonmilitary use, or as a site for new development. The authority will market the property with the goal of getting contracts and leases so the post remains a financially sustainable community, said authority Executive Director William A. Armbruster. Only during the contracting and leasing phase will it be clear what the future of each particular building or lot. The 570-acre fort is revered as a coastal defense site dating back to Colonial times, as a beacon of freedom to slaves who fled there to be deemed contraband of the Civil War, and as an artillery training base from 1824 through World War II. In 2005, the Pentagon announced that Fort Monroe would be closed as part of a military realignment to cut costs and modernize the military. The Army is expected to move out in September 2011 and the land will revert to the commonwealth.

Confederate museum to share surprising collection

By STEVE SZKOTAK, Associated Press, August 24, 2008



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RICHMOND, Va. — With surgical gloves, S. Waite Rawls III pulls out a large drawer in the basement of the Museum of the Confederacy to reveal a startling display: dolls the size of children, neatly lined up like small bodies on a morgue slab.

The dolls are among what the museum calls the "world's most comprehensive collection of Confederate artifacts," a trove valued in the hundreds of millions of dollars, according to Rawls, the museum's president and CEO.

But at any given time, only 10 percent to 15 percent of the museum's holdings are on display on the building's three floors. The rest remains tucked away in gray cabinets, boxes stacked high and, in the case of delicate flags, in clear, sealed containers designed to hold the ancient stitching in place.

In 2011, a portion of the museum collection is scheduled to go on the road, journeying to three historic Virginia sites as part of a plan to bring the artifacts of the Civil War to the people.

While half of the collection will remain at the Richmond museum, the satellite exhibits will draw upon a vast number of artifacts. The 15,000 items include:

— 3,000 military accouterments — spurs, saddles, tack, belts, medals and buttons totaling 1,000.

— 510 of the 13,000 known wartime flags in existence, including one stitched by Robert E. Lee's wife and four daughters.

— 250 uniform pieces, including the one Lee wore when he surrendered to Lt. Gen. Ulysses S. Grant at Appomattox Court House in 1865.

— 5,000 domestic items such as homemade soap, slave-woven coverlets, baskets, dolls, china, silver

sets and serving bowls the size of small tubs.

The collection of dolls includes "Lucy Ann," which was used to smuggle quinine over enemy lines. The medicinal compound was hidden in the doll's head — a compartment revealed when her hat and hair are removed.

Rawls said as significant as the collection is, the origins of each item is important — its provenance, in the vernacular of museum curators.

"How did we get all of Robert E. Lee's stuff? From his son," Rawls said. "How did we get all of Stonewall Jackson's stuff? From his widow."

The collection, nonetheless, has been unable to slow a steady decline of visitors.

Located next to the executive mansion of Confederate President Jefferson Davis, the museum is difficult to find amid the maze of the ever-expanding Virginia Commonwealth University medical complex, which towers over the mansion and the museum.

The museum has also suffered in recent years as the traditional Southern reverence of all things Confederate has fallen flat with newcomers and black Southerners who see no celebration in the Confederacy.

Critics have called the museum a shrine, a relic of the Old South.

The American Civil War Center, which is on the other side of downtown Richmond, is cast as a contemporary answer to the museum. It strives to present the African-American, North and South perspectives of the Civil War, with a greater emphasis on education than artifacts.

John Motley, chairman of the board of the Civil War Center, said he visits the Museum of the Confederacy each

year because of the quality of its collection and programs.

While he said he disagrees with the museum's point of view, he added, "I think it is critical for the telling of the history of the United States that the valuable MOC collection is preserved."

Kevin Levin, who teaches American history at a private school in Charlottesville and is the creator of the lively, irreverent blog Civil War Memory, said the museum has attempted to make itself relevant in recent years but has become a divisive symbol.

"Certain groups are unable to draw a distinction between a museum for the Confederacy as opposed to a museum of the Confederacy," Levin wrote in an e-mail.

Rawls is mindful of the perception, but strongly disagrees that the museum celebrates the Confederacy. "We don't. We tell the Confederacy's story in depth," he said.

Rawls said the museum strives to educate.

"There are very few people who are willing to face the controversies of the Civil War, and we do," he said.

In less than three years, the sesquicentennial of the Civil War, the museum aims to share its wealth at: Appomattox; Fredericksburg, where one-third of all Civil War casualties were recorded within a 20-mile radius; and Fort Monroe, a Union outpost in Hampton where Davis was imprisoned after the war.

"At each site, we have an unbelievable historic place, a bunch of themes to explore," Rawls said with enthusiasm. He envisions 400,000 visitors annually at the three locations and the museum, where its substantial scholarship will continue. That is 10 times greater than the museum's annual visitors.



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"I think in practical terms, getting the artifacts out there is the right move," Levin said.

On a recent August afternoon, the museum was humming with visitors who peered into glass-enclosed display cases that included poignant reminders of the deadly conflict: a soldier's bloodstained letter to home and a field notebook pierced by a shot that felled its owner, Stonewall Jackson's cartographer. The same volley also wounded Jackson.

Richmond Civil War Center agrees to accept Jefferson Davis statue

By Will Jones, Richmond Times-Dispatch, Aug 13, 2008

The American Civil War Center announced today that it would accept a life-size bronze statue of Confederate President Jefferson Davis from the Sons of Confederate Veterans.

The decision, however, comes with no guarantees on where or whether the statue will be displayed. It would become part of the center's collection and available to display and use as it sees fit, said center officials.

The center controls the Tredegar property for its owner, NewMarket Corp., which also must agree to accept the statue.



This photo provided by the Sons of Confederate Veterans shows a statue of Jefferson Davis near

completion in a studio in Lexington Va. The Statue has been commissioned by the Sons of Confederate Veterans for the American Civil War Center in Richmond.

The statue is being prepared by Lexington sculptor Gary Casteel and it depicts Davis standing with his son Joe and with Jim Limber, a mixed-race orphan who was taken in by the Davis family.

The Sons of Confederate Veterans has offered the statue to help mark this year as the bicentennial of Davis' birth. Members also were upset by a decision to place the statue of Abraham Lincoln at the Tredegar site in 2003.

Widow of Confederate soldier dies at 93

By PEGGY HARRIS, LITTLE ROCK, Ark. (AP) — Maudie White Hopkins, who grew up during the Depression in the hardscrabble Ozarks and married a Confederate army veteran 67 years her senior, has died. She was 93.

Hopkins, the mother of three children from a second marriage who loved to make fried peach pies and applesauce cakes, died Sunday at a hospital in Helena-West Helena, said Rodger Hooker of the Roller-Citizens Funeral Home.

Other Confederate widows are still living, but they don't want any publicity, Martha Boltz of the United Daughters of the Confederacy said Tuesday.

Hopkins grew up in a family of 10 children, did laundry and cleaned house for William M. Cantrell, an elderly Confederate veteran in Baxter County whose wife had died years earlier.

When he offered to leave his land and home to her if she would marry him and care for him in his later years, she said yes. She was 19; he was 86.

"After Mr. Cantrell died I took a little old mule he had and plowed me a vegetable garden and had plenty of vegetables to eat. It was hard times; you had to work to eat," she said in an Associated Press interview in 2004.

Hopkins later married Winfred White and started a family. In all, she was married four times.

For decades, she didn't speak about her marriage to Cantrell, concerned that people would think less of her. Four years ago, she came around after a Confederate widow in Alabama died amid claims that she was the last widow from that war.

"I didn't do anything wrong," Hopkins told the AP in 2004. "I've worked hard my whole life and did what I had to, what I could, to survive. I didn't want to talk about it for a while because I didn't want people to gossip about it. I didn't want people to make it out to be worse than it was."

Military records show Cantrell served in Company A, French's Battalion, of the Virginia Infantry. He enlisted in the Confederate army at age 16 in Pikeville, Ky., and was captured the same year and sent to a prison camp in Ohio. He was exchanged for a Northern prisoner, and after the war moved to Arkansas to live with relatives.

In the interview, Hopkins referred to her first husband as "Mr. Cantrell" and described him as "a good, clean, respectable man." She recalled one description he gave of life as a Civil War soldier, how lice infested his sock supports and "ate a trail around his legs."

Baxter County records show they were married in January 1934 by a justice of the peace. She said Cantrell supported her with his Confederate pension of "\$25 every two or three



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months" and left her his home when he died in 1937.

The pension benefits ended at Cantrell's death, according to records filed with the state Pension Board.

Historic cannon missing from Civil War park

Newport News, VA Daily Press, August 26, 2008

ISLE OF WIGHT, VA — - Someone stole a cannon.

First, it was simply some vandalism near Fort Huger, a Civil War park in northern Isle of Wight that was reported to the sheriff's office on Aug. 19. The next day, a replica Civil War cannon was gone, along with a historic sign, 1st Sgt. Paul Phelps said.

So far, investigators don't have any leads, he said. The crime scene is in a remote area, so no one saw anything, he said.

Phelps said he doesn't know how someone made off with the cannon, which was behind a low red-brick wall on three pedestals. He doesn't know how much it weighs or what it was made of. He can't tell whether it was a prank, or someone in search of scrap metal, or someone who wanted a piece of history.

The sheriff's office has handled stolen-gun cases before, but this is the first stolen cannon that Phelps is aware of.

Deputies have stepped up patrols of the area.

The cannon is owned by Lawnes Point on the James, a development company that sells large-acreage home sites.

George Pickett's "Other" Son

Ferndale, WA Record-Journal, August 14, 2008 - Although the Civil War concluded almost 25 years before Washington became a state, that didn't make the scattering of pioneers and settlers who were hard at work carving out a living in the wild frontier of the Pacific Northwest immune from its many deep and lasting repercussions.

In 1861, soon after hearing about the bombardment of Fort Sumter, U.S. Army Captain George Pickett abandoned his post as commander of Fort Bellingham and returned, by steamship, to his home state of Virginia.

Like many Southern soldiers at the time, Pickett personally detested the institution of slavery, but he felt compelled to defend his ancestral home in service of the Confederate Army.

During his stint at Fort Bellingham, Pickett became smitten with and eventually married a young Haida woman, who he met while on a survey trip near Semiahmoo Bay. Her name was Morning Mist, and not long after giving birth to their first son -- James Tilton Pickett -- she died.



James Tilton Pickett, age 20.

"Jimmy" Pickett was only a toddler when George Pickett decided to head back to Virginia and enter the war. Pressed for time and worried that his mixed-race son would not be accepted into "Old Virginian" society, George left him to be raised by friends in Olympia.

George cared deeply about his son, making sure to keep in close touch through letters and supporting Jimmy financially until his death in 1875. But they never saw each other again.

Jimmy became a talented well-respected artist and, in adulthood, took jobs as an illustrator/reporter for the Portland Oregonian and Seattle Post-Intelligencer, painting landscapes and seascapes in his spare time.

However, even though Jimmy Pickett did manage to achieve some success in his short illustrious life, he always longed to see his father.

When he died of typhoid fever on Aug. 28, 1889, at the age of 28, Jimmy was reportedly holding his father's heirloom sword -- the very same sword General George Pickett held aloft as he lead his ill-fated rebel division over open ground towards unbreakable Union defenses during the culminating moments at the Battle of Gettysburg.

Editor's note: The Pickett Society has a fascinating article on their website. For more information on Jimmy Pickett go to <http://www.pickettsociety.com/jimmie.html>

Preservation Groups Oppose Wilderness WalMart

By CLINT SCHEMMER, Fredericksburg Free Lance-Star (VA), 08/22/2008

Preservation groups have fired the opening salvo of a battle over



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development proposed in the Wilderness battlefield area.

The newly formed Wilderness Battlefield Coalition has informed Wal-Mart that it opposes its plan to build a 142,000-square-foot Supercenter near State Routes 3 and 20. On Wednesday, the trust e-mailed a "Take Action!" bulletin to its 20,000-plus activists and friends, urging them to write Wal-Mart President and CEO H. Lee Scott Jr. and express their views.

"This is just the wrong project at the wrong place at the wrong time," Civil War Preservation Trust spokesman Jim Campi said yesterday. "This kind of commercial development is absolutely incompatible with a battlefield park.

"Our principal concern is that this will create a mushroom effect and development is going to explode in that very sensitive Route 3 and Route 20 region, if this is allowed to proceed."

The nonprofit trust, headquartered in Washington, has joined forces with the Piedmont Environmental Council, the National Trust for Historic Preservation, the National Parks Conservation Association, the Friends of the Wilderness Battlefield, and the Friends of the Fredericksburg Area Battlefields to create the coalition.

Wal-Mart proposes to build a 141,487-square-foot store on about 15 acres of a 50-acre tract just north of Route 3, according to local officials. The parcel extends from Wilderness Run at the Spotsylvania County line toward Vaclause Road, wrapping around a 7-Eleven, a Wachovia Bank branch and the Wilderness Center strip mall.

Another group has proposed a 1.65 million-square-foot retail, office and government complex, named

Wilderness Crossing, on 846 acres adjacent to the planned Wal-Mart site.

Wal-Mart spokeswoman Kelly Hobbs confirmed yesterday afternoon that the world's largest company intends to build on the smaller site in concert with developer JDC Ventures of Vienna.

"Wal-Mart is continuing our due diligence, and hopes to submit an application to the county within the next few weeks," Hobbs said. "We've been working with county staff for some months on design criteria in hopes our project will be consistent with the look and feel of Orange County."

The tract is within a quarter mile of Fredericksburg & Spotsylvania National Military Park. It's on ground where some of the Battle of the Wilderness was fought on May 5-6, 1864, but is not within the boundary Congress authorized for the park.

Park Superintendent Russ Smith said the issue is not one of the store's design, but of land use. "It's not appropriate to put a massive development like that right next to a national park," Smith said he told Wal-Mart officials and its attorney in a meeting earlier this summer about the project.

"We would hope that Wal-Mart will consider other locations, both on aesthetic grounds, because of the way a Wal-Mart would change the character of the area, and because of the traffic that would be generated."

JDC's site plan calls for a Wal-Mart Supercenter and four other pad sites large enough for "junior big boxes," Smith said. Such a cluster of large stores could completely alter the setting of the Wilderness battlefield, he said.

The battlefield, only part of which is protected by the Park Service, draws

some 170,000 visitors annually and is the largest tourism destination in Orange County.

Hobbs dodged a question as to whether the Arkansas-based retailer would consider sites other than the JDC Ventures property. Under the county's recently adopted big-box ordinance, the developer must obtain a special-use permit.

As to the concerns expressed by the Wilderness Battlefield Coalition, Hobbs noted the property has been zoned for commercial development for more than 20 years and is in the Route 3 "growth corridor" that Orange has designated for economic development.

"We certainly respect their mission to preserve the battlefield, but feel our project--in a commercially zoned area--will be the best fit possible for the local economy, while keeping the historical interests in mind," she said of the coalition.

Hobbs said Wal-Mart officials look forward to meeting with Park Service officials, as well as coalition leaders and area residents, as soon as its plans for its store are complete.

The Battle of the Wilderness, one of the Civil War's largest and most important conflicts, was the first clash between Gens. Robert E. Lee and Ulysses S. Grant. The battle began Grant's grueling Overland Campaign, which drained both armies and eventually brought Union troops to the gates of Richmond.

More than 160,000 men fought in the two-day struggle along the Orange Turnpike (modern State Route 20) and the Orange Plank Road. Nearly 29,000 Americans were killed, wounded or captured in the fighting at The Wilderness.



THE "OLD LINER" NEWSLETTER

ATF: Spark caused deadly cannonball blast in Va.

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By STEVE SZKOTAK, Associated Press, August 11, 2008

RICHMOND, Va. - A Civil War relic hunter who was killed in an explosion in February was cleaning a cannonball when a spark ignited black powder within the ancient ordnance, a federal investigation concluded Monday.

Sam White, 53, was working on the 9-inch naval cannonball in the driveway of his suburban home with a wire-brush grinder, which ignited the powder, exploding the shell, according to the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms investigation.

A 4-inch piece of shrapnel dug from the asphalt of the driveway contained evidence the shell had been made inert, either by White or the person who sold him the shell, said Bill Dunham, resident agent in charge of the Richmond ATF office.

But naval shells were built to shield the powder from water and other elements, so all of the cannonball's 3 or 4 pounds of black powder were not thoroughly flushed from the shell's casing, Dunham said.

The explosion sent a 1- or 2-pound section of the shell hurtling from the Chester subdivision where White lived and through the roof of a house one-quarter of a mile away. No one else was injured in the Feb. 18 explosion.

Dunham said the investigation did not determine whether White had flushed the shell with water or if he had purchased the shell as inert. "I don't see any criminal responsibility," he said.

White, a respected, widely known member of the Civil War relic hunting

community, was using the grinder to clean off residue from the shell, which dated to the 1850s or 1860s. In published accounts before his death, White estimated he had worked on 1,600 shells for collectors and museums.

Brenda White said she has "absolutely no clue" where her husband obtained the shell.

"As far as I'm concerned, Sam did nothing wrong and was doing what he loved and it was one of those freaky, horrific accidents," White wrote in an e-mail to The Associated Press.

White's death rocked the passionate fraternity of Civil War collectors and relic hunters, who search trash pits and river bottoms for munitions, clothing and buttons. They fear White's death has inspired officials to destroy any cannonballs that are found.

"The big thing is, we revere Sam's memory and one way to honor him is to allow this hobby to keep on going," said Ben Greenbaum, president of the Central Virginia Relic Hunters Association. "The greater danger is in destroying history."

The Park Service did not immediately return a telephone message left by the AP.

Explosives experts said White's death was an extraordinary event and one rarely recorded since the end of the Civil War. But a U.S. Army explosives expert strongly disagreed that munitions from that period do not pose a modern threat.

"My position is that these old cannonballs, and any cannonball that has an energetic filler, is dangerous and potentially unstable," said Jimmy L. Langley, an explosives and toxic chemical agent safety specialist with the U.S. Army Technical Center for Explosives Safety in Oklahoma.

"These items are dangerous, they were designed as weapons of war to kill people and they can still do just that," he wrote in an e-mail.

Brenda White said her husband would be pained to know his death would "bring such scrutiny to the relic community."

"The majority of these people want nothing more than to see history preserved _ not destroyed or hidden away in a museum closet," she wrote.

Dunham said 43 shells were taken from White's home after the explosion and flushed of powder.



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BALTIMORE CIVIL WAR ROUNDTABLE