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Slave village at Monocacy battlefield proposed for national recognition

By Nicholas C. Stern, Frederick News-Post, January 15, 2008

The vestiges of a late 18th century slave village on the Best Farm within the Monocacy National Battlefield may soon be placed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Discovered in 2003 by a group of archaeologists working at the battlefield, the village was part of a 748-acre plantation called L'Hermitage.

At its peak, L'Hermitage had 90 slaves, said Joy Beasley, cultural resources manager for the National Park Service at the battlefield.

The plantation's owners, the Vincendieres, a French-Catholic family, fled a growing slave revolt in Saint Domingue (now Haiti) in 1793. By 1800, they were the second-largest slaveholders in Frederick County.

For the crops the farm was producing, grains instead of staple crops like cotton or sugar, this was approximately 10 times the usual number of slaves.

That circumstance did not sit well with the local English and German population, Beasley said, many of whom were equally bothered by the flagrant torture and cruel treatment at L'Hermitage.

A designation on the National Register would not provide extra funding for excavation, scheduled to resume in 2010, Beasley said. Nor would it give any additional protection, as the site is already protected as part of the Civil War battlefield.

The advantage is the honor it would bring, Beasley said.

Beasley said National Park Service workers also completed a nomination to have the village listed on the National Underground Railroad Network to Freedom.

The network consists of public and private sites. Organizers work to help people understand how the Underground Railroad, or places that had a history of people trying to escape slavery, operated.

Archaeologists have documentation of slaves trying to escape, some successfully, from L'Hermitage, Beasley said.

The National Park Service is also finding ways to broaden the context of events that led to the battle in 1864, she said.

Exhibits at the visitor center will highlight the social, political and economic influences L'Hermitage and the transportation routes surrounding it had on ante-bellum Frederick County.

Cruelty and money

The Vincendieres might have had so many slaves because it made sense to them. In Saint Domingue, the family grew sugar and indigo on large plantations, Beasley said. A large number of slaves was evidence of wealth and power.

According to an account by Julian Niemcewicz, a Polish diplomat who passed by the farm in June 1798, on his way to Frederick from Georgetown, "instruments of torture, stocks, wooden horses, whips, etc." had been used on several black slaves who were crippled.

"What was appropriate in Saint Domingue, was not appropriate in Frederick County," Beasley said.

In 1806, Victoire Vincendiere put an advertisement in a Frederick newspaper forbidding anyone from interacting with her slaves, Beasley said.

At least seven court cases were brought against the Vincendiere family by the state alleging slave cruelty -- the denial of proper food and clothing, and unmerciful beatings, Beasley said.

At most, Beasley said, the Vincendieres received small fines for their transgressions. Beating slaves was not a crime in Maryland at the time.

In many instances, the witnesses against the family were also involved in separate cases that sought repayment of debts from the Vincendieres.

Victoire Vincendiere, the eldest unmarried daughter of the family, became the legal head of the family's 1,000-acre estates, which was very unusual in the United States at that time, Beasley said.

Because the father of the family lived in Charleston, S.C., and a man named Jean Payen de Boisneuf, described in one account as a "gangrenous aristocrat," took up residence at L'Hermitage, it is a possibility that he hid his money from many documented creditors under the Vincendiere name.

Whatever was going on at L'Hermitage was disturbing to people in area, Beasley said, and the complex interactions among the family, the community, and the slaves makes the site important to study.

After 1810, Victoire Vincendiere began to reduce her slave holdings. In the 1820s, she sold off 17 enslaved people at once to a dealer from Louisiana, Beasley said. Others were sold to local iron manufacturers, and a few escaped.

Later in life, Vincendiere liberated many of her slaves; she freed the remainder in her will.

Though excavation has been limited, Beasley said, archaeologists have



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found evidence of slaves' quarters -- set apart from two houses and a barn that still stand -- along with bits of ceramic pottery, buttons, coins and tobacco pipes.

Artifacts from the site may be the most important proof that the slaves existed, Beasley said, though the ultimate fate of the L'Hermitage slaves remains a mystery.

Gettysburg Battlefield guides vote to move headquarters

By CAITLIN HEANEY, Hanover Evening Sun, January 21, 2008

The Association of Licensed Battlefield Guides could start operating out of a downtown Gettysburg office as soon as March after agreeing Friday to relocate its headquarters.

The group voted 78-32 to move to a building behind the Farnsworth House and off South Street that it plans to lease, said president Rick Hohmann. The group will use the building primarily for offices, a library and meeting space, he said.

"We're hoping that this is going to enable us to expand the business and also to accommodate more visitors," Hohmann said.

But guides, currently operating out of the Gettysburg National Military Park Visitors Center, will still have space in the new park Visitors Center when it opens later this year.

"There'll be a waiting room for guides waiting to go out on tours at the new visitors' center," Hohmann said.

The group mailed out ballots about two weeks ago to its entire membership, but anyone who was not a member and wanted to join was allowed to do so Friday night, Hohmann said. Those new members were allowed to vote, he said, and

members were allowed to change votes they might have already sent in. "Anybody who was swayed by a debate during the meetings were able to reclaim their ballot," Hohmann said.

Hohmann said the building the group plans to lease is zoned for medical use but Gettysburg Hospital "has no interest in it." A hearing on a zoning variance for the property is scheduled for Jan. 23, he said, and a waiting period would follow. But Hohmann said he expects the group could move in by March 1.

"There's a small amount of work that has to be done on this facility," he said.

Hohmann said he would not comment on the group's reasoning for moving. He has said previously the group will offer tours starting at Gateway Gettysburg, the American Civil War Museum on Steinwehr Avenue and elsewhere, such as borough hotels.

The guides, created by Congress in 1915, and the National Park Service clashed recently after the group criticized a reservation and payment system the Gettysburg Foundation proposed for tours. The foundation, a private, nonprofit organization raising money for and overseeing the new \$125 million visitor center project.

Katie Lawhon, public affairs specialist for Gettysburg National Military Park, said 1.7 million people visit the park every year. Of that number, about 16 percent hire licensed battlefield guides, she said.

"It's an excellent service," she said.

In the summer, park rangers provide some free walking tours and programs, she said. The tours given by licensed guides are different in that they are "commercial and directly for the visitor," she said.

The park found problems in the manner in which visitors could hire a tour guide, Lawhon said.

"Generally, we did not allow reservations for individuals and families," she said. With no advance reservations, some faced a first-come, first-served situation, she said. To better serve visitors, the park created a reservation system that could be paid for in advance with a credit card, she said.

The Gettysburg Foundation, which will operate the park's new museum, now manages ticket sales and reservations for licensed battlefield guides, she said.

"We're improving our visitor service," she said.

In the past, most guided tours were offered on a daily basis as visitors entered the park's visitor center.

Guides would put their names on a rotational list, and visitors chose from available battlefield tour times. That system matched visitors to guide availability and kept the guides' downtime to a minimum, association officials say.

But the park abolished that system. Starting this month, tickets are sold for guided tours and other park attractions.

Tours used to be limited to larger groups in vans and buses that paid a higher tour fee than smaller groups, but the new system takes reservations for groups of all sizes and allows visitors to choose their tour times. Under the new procedure, park visitors will miss out on tours, which means guides will lose income, and idle time will consume too much of the touring schedule, said Chris Rebmann.

"We're forced to choose between efficiency and a fair distribution of bus reservations," he said. "Many of our



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members depend on bus reservations, especially in the spring." Visitors paid guides in cash after tours since 1915, and Hohmann has said he opposes the proposed payent plan because it could hurt guides' ability to swap tours with each other and limit tips. Now, guide fees are paid in advance to the Gettysburg Foundation, a private, nonprofit educational organization working in partnership with the National Park Service. The foundation pays the guides every two weeks.

For some guides, this change causes a financial hardship, Rebmann said.

"For others, it's a matter of principle," he said. "This attempt to collect our earnings in advance and pay us later is an inappropriate intrusion in our financial relationship with our clients."

Under a new system, visitors also would be able to reserve guides by credit card through a Web site, but the foundation would hold the guides' money until a twice-monthly pay period following the tour.

Lawhon also said that despite the existence of the association, the park and the licensed guides have a "one-on-one relationship."

"We are happy to work with the association," she said.

However, Lawhon said park Supt. John A. Latschar received a letter from an attorney hired by the association. Last week Latschar responded with his own letter.

"First, the members of the (association) did not vote overwhelmingly to reject the new reservation system," Latschar's letter read. ". . . the guides were asked if they were willing to participate in a reservation system that does not work. Put that way, I probably would have voted in the negative myself . . . Since all our indications are that the system will work, I have largely

discounted the validity of that particular question."

The letter also states that more than 85 percent of the guides have already completed and returned availability forms indicating dates and times they are willing to guide in 2008.

Latschar's letter also states that meetings were held in September and October to discuss how the new system would work. Guides, including association members and non-members, attended.

"Every guide who attended that meeting received a 9-page handout detailing how the system will work." Latschar stated. "Not a single guide at that briefing asked a question or expressed an opinion that could remotely be considered a rejection of the new system."

Dru Anne Neil, spokeswoman for the Gettysburg Foundation, said she didn't want to comment on the issues between the guides and the park.

The foundation works to preserve, honor and protect the natural and cultural resources associated with the park, the Gettysburg Campaign, and the Eisenhower National Historic Site, Neil said. It also partners with the national park system to "provide service to everyone," she said.

Frederick City Hall's courtyard may be revamped for Taney plaque

by Keith L. Martin, Gazette.net, January 24, 2008

A compromise to keep the Roger B. Taney bust at City Hall could include a remodel of the courtyard where the statue sits. Frederick officials are looking into a proposal to extend walkways in front of City Hall to access a plaque that would explain the former Chief Justice of the U.S. Supreme Court's role in the 1857

Dred Scott v. Sanford decision. Taney authored the majority decision, stating that blacks, even those freed from slavery, were not citizens and had no rights.

The plaque would be placed between the existing Taney bust and North Court Street, near the fountain. Alderman Marcia A. Hall (D) has also secured a pending grant of \$2,500 from the Heart of the Civil War Heritage Area to help pay for the proposed plaque. The city would have to match any of the funds that come from the program through the Tourism Council of Frederick County. Last summer, the Frederick County chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) asked the city to remove the bust, but has tentatively agreed to adding a plaque.



Photo by Skip Lawrence, Frederick News-Post

Since then, local attorney E. Kevin Lollar has been working with city officials and the NAACP on a compromise to keep the bust in place. Following the latest meeting on Jan. 9, Lollar, who also serves as



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development director for the Frederick Housing Authority, said he is excited about the progress by all involved.

"We are moving forward, everyone is on board and that is great," Lollar said. "You can't ask for more than that ... We all see the good this can bring to the city."

Mayor W. Jeff Holtzinger (R) said that language proposed by Lollar and Alderman C. Paul Smith (R) was reviewed and critiqued by a team of local experts, ranging from Marc Hudson, executive director of The Historical Society of Frederick County, to former Alderman Bill Hall. That language will go to the aldermen this week, he said, for their input.

Lollar said that as the language for the plaque is being finalized, so are plans for its placement, including the courtyard design being done for free by Frederick-based Zavos Architecture and Design.

"I think [this plan] will be something Fredericktonians can learn from and be proud of," Lollar said.

Civil War detective solves grave mix-up

Piper, a rebel, is really Pfeiffer, a Yank

By Josh Shaffer, (Raleigh) News & Observer, January 3, 2007

Jacob Pfeiffer caught a rebel's bullet on the hip at Gettysburg in 1863, a wound that took a month to kill him.

That was bad enough. But then the luckless New Yorker was mistaken for a Confederate prisoner of war, boxed up and shipped to Raleigh, where he has spent 145 years resting among his foes.

His discovery last month makes him the second Yankee found reposing in the Gettysburg section of Oakwood Cemetery, a sanctuary for fallen Dixie fighters. It also notches a second

mistake corrected by Charles Purser, self-appointed Civil War detective.

"This poor fellow," said Purser, a retired airman and letter carrier in Garner. "He did not go with his boys." Purser's sympathy spreads to 137 others buried under a hill at Oakwood. In the early 1980s, he and a handful of others helped identify the Gettysburg dead who were transported south and buried there.

At the time, they had no markers other than numbered stones hidden by knee-deep weeds. Purser pored over muster rolls, troop rosters, cemetery records -- learning each man's rank, hometown and death date.

He soon found that 19th-century recordkeeping was shoddy at best, especially after a battle that left 51,000 Union and Confederate soldiers dead or wounded, and in post-battle hospitals where the amputated limbs lay in piles.

Last year, Purser learned that one of the men he had identified, John Dobson of North Carolina, was actually John Dolson of Minnesota -- a Yankee interloper sent south because of a clerical error.

Then last month, a fellow buff in New York called with a new Gettysburg burial list unearthed from deep in government archives. The list showed a Jacob Pfeiffer of New York had also been shipped south to Raleigh -- his name spelled at least four ways, depending on the document.

"Who's this Pfeiffer?" Purser asked himself.

Mingling between Northern and Southern dead isn't so rare, said A. James Fuller, history professor at the University of Indianapolis.

Sometimes, he said, Union soldiers died on their way to prison camp and were buried in the nearest cemetery, alongside the enemy.

Cemeteries exclusively for Confederates were a product of post-war bitterness, he said, and they were set up as monuments to Southern culture. Raleigh's Gettysburg section was created by the Ladies Memorial Association. In 1871, it arranged for 137 bodies -- all of them supposedly from North Carolina -- to be reinterred.

But poor record-keeping was bound to create mistakes. For example, there is no complete roster of Union dead to this day, said Harry Watson, director of the UNC Center for the Study of the American South.

The soldier now known to be Pfeiffer was originally listed as J. Tiffie, Company I of the 40th North Carolina Infantry.

But when Purser checked records of the 40th Infantry, he found no Tiffie.

He did, however, find a George Piper with nearly the same unit who died in the same spot on roughly the same day.

And on many of Piper's rosters, he is listed as Fifer, which looks curiously like Tiffie in the elaborate 19th-century script.

J. Tiffie became George Piper, the name still chiseled on the stone.

It wasn't until a call from Glen Hayes, a frequent partner in New York, that Purser heard about a soldier named Pfeiffer from New York being shipped to Raleigh from Gettysburg.

Raleigh's cemetery has no Pfeiffer, let alone a Pfeiffer from New York.

Purser dug into census records, church records, hospital records and cemetery records and discovered that the only possible man was Jacob Pfeiffer, a German immigrant from the Big Apple.

The date he was shot, the day he died, the company he fought for all matched the man originally thought to be Tiffie.



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His name is spelled three ways on three consecutive census reports -- Pfeiffer, Pheiffer and Pfeifer -- but Purser chose the one that occurs most often.

Tiffée became Fifer became Piper became Pfeiffer.

All that remains is to change the stone, which Purser has already ordered and the federal government will provide for free.

You can imagine the sullen New Yorker, dead more than a century, shooting an underground wink to the fellow Yankee further down the row.

National parks robbed of heritage

By Judy Keen, USA TODAY, January 24, 2008

Looting of fossils and archaeological artifacts from national parks — such as Native American pottery and Civil War relics — is increasing as demand for such items rises on the Internet and the world market, U.S. National Park Service officials say.

Over the past decade, an average of 340 "significant" looting incidents have been reported annually at the 391 national parks, monuments, historic sites and battlefields — probably less than 25% of the actual number of thefts, says park service staff ranger Greg Lawler. "The trends are up," he says.

It's "a chronic problem that we simply have not even been able to get a grasp on," says Mark Gorman, chief ranger at South Dakota's Badlands National Park.

Park service investigators search websites and the FBI helps track looted items, some of which are sold to collectors in Europe and Asia. Prices are rising for some items, including Native American pottery and garments, says Bonnie Magness-Gardiner, manager of the FBI art theft program.

The most coveted items can cost "in the tens of thousands, sometimes hundreds of thousands of dollars," she says. Thieves caught last year at Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania National Military Park sold a Confederate belt buckle for \$3,300 and buttons for \$200 each.

The park service has 1,500 law enforcement rangers and 400 seasonal law enforcement rangers — one for about every 56,000 acres. "We really don't have enough manpower," Lawler says.

That can make it difficult to catch criminals such as the three men who dug 460 holes at the Fredericksburg-Spotsylvania military park in search of artifacts and the man who pleaded guilty to taking 252 relics last year from Colorado's Mesa Verde National Park.

Under the 1979 Archaeological Resources Protection Act, first-time felony offenders can be fined up to \$20,000 and imprisoned for a year.

Todd Swain, a National Park Service special agent, says the problem is far worse than statistics show. In a report he wrote for the 2007 *Yearbook of Cultural Property Law* he concluded, "The true scope of the looting problem is staggering. ... Our shared cultural heritage is disappearing before our eyes."

MOCK TRIAL VERDICT MAY CHANGE TOMBSTONE

Albemarle group says N.C.'s Sgt. Ivy Ritchie is mistakenly buried in a Union grave

By HANNAH MITCHELL, Charlotte Observer, January 22, 2008

An Albemarle group's efforts to honor the remains of a Confederate soldier could be resolved in an unusual proceeding by the National Park Service.

On Feb. 13, the park service will hold a mock trial near the Petersburg, Va., National Battlefield to decide whether Sgt. Ivy Ritchie is buried in a Union soldier's grave under a mismarked headstone.

Ritchie, who lived near Richfield in what is now Stanly County, fought with the 14th N.C. Regiment in nearly every major battle of the Civil War in Virginia. Confederate historians say he died in the last battle at Appomattox Court House, the final engagement of the war in that state.

"It's heart wrenching to go through all that hell and get killed on the morning of April 9 when it's all over. It brings tears to the eye," Jim Harwood of Albemarle said Monday. "And then to know he's laying up there in a Yankee grave just tears me up. He hasn't rested in a hundred years or more."

Harwood and other members of the Albemarle-based Sons of Confederate Veterans' Ivy Ritchie Camp 1734 have been trying for years to get their namesake's remains moved to North Carolina -- or at least get his tombstone corrected.

They say the remains were removed from Appomattox after the war, mistakenly buried at a new national cemetery for Union dead in Petersburg, Va., and marked with a gravestone for a Sgt. J. Richie of Company H, 14th New York Infantry. The National Park Service, which maintains Petersburg National Battlefield, refused to exhume the remains in grave #4824 in the Poplar Grove National Cemetery section of Petersburg.

But it agreed to do its best to correctly identify them without the benefit of physical analysis.

The mock trial will take place at the pre-Civil War-era Dinwiddie Court



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House, about a half-hour's drive southwest of Petersburg.

A historian for the National Park Service, Chris Calkins, says the Petersburg National Battlefield has never held such a trial and he's unaware of any proceedings like it.

Historical experts on both sides will present evidence to three more experts acting as judges, who will decide if there's proof beyond a reasonable doubt that Ritchie's remains rest among the enemy.

If they agree with the Stanly County veterans group, the identification on Ritchie's grave could change.

Though the Sons members preferred DNA analysis, they're excited about the chance to prove their belief, which they base on a book written by Calkins.

Harwood became aware of questions surrounding Ritchie's whereabouts after founding the Sons camp in 1995. Searching Confederate records of Stanly County soldiers, he came across Ritchie's name. He said the records indicated Ritchie was the last soldier in the Army of Northern Virginia to fall.

Harwood tracked down Calkins, the chief of interpretation at Petersburg National Battlefield. Calkins' book, "The Battles of Appomattox," theorizes that the remains in grave #4824 might be Ivy Ritchie's, though the expert doubts claims that Ritchie was the last man in Gen. Robert E. Lee's army to be killed in battle.

Quoting from his book, Calkins said, "It is believed Ivy Ritchie is mistakenly buried as a federal soldier ... Since the 14th New York did not exist in 1865, chances are this is Sgt. Ritchie of North Carolina."

Calkins, who will represent the park service at the trial, said he's since found evidence that may prove otherwise.

"It could be the guy from New York (as marked) or it could be somebody else with a close-to name," Calkins said by phone from Virginia on Monday.

Regardless of the mock trial's outcome, the camp has already remembered Ritchie with a permanent marker at New Bethel Lutheran Church in Stanly County, where the soldier's parents are buried.

Harwood said Ritchie married Clara Ridenhour while recuperating from a wound he suffered at Chancellorsville, but the couple had no children.

Camp members hope to prevail at the trial.

"I felt it was an important part of my state's history to get this man identified," said camp member Tony Way, who pressed the park service to honor the group's request. "I guess I'm a driven individual and I don't really take no for an answer."

Calkins is close-mouthed about the evidence he'll present for the park service at the trial. "Putting it on record, which I did in my book, and changing a tombstone is another thing," he said. "Only God knows who is in that grave."

Lincoln's relatives planning to gather at museum opening

By Byron Crawford, Louisville (KY)
Courier-Journal, January 22, 2008

Many of Abraham Lincoln's relatives remain in Kentucky, including Nina Warren Clooney, the mother of actor George Clooney.

She is among numerous descendants of Lincoln's family who are expected to gather in the small Boyle County community of Forkland, near Perryville, on March 1 for the opening of a Lincoln Museum at the Forkland

Community Center. Clooney, a descendant of Lincoln's grandmother, Lucey Shipley Hanks Sparrow, and wife of media personality Nick Clooney, will join the others related to the famous family in genealogical discussions in the Lincoln Room of the center as part of the national Lincoln Bicentennial observance.

"My mother's father's family, the Edwardses, had always said that they were related to Lincoln," said Clooney. "My mother actually went back and put the lineage together. The connection is through Lincoln's mother."

Historian Shirley Sheperson's grandfather used to tell her and her siblings they were related to Abraham Lincoln, but he didn't know how.

"We laughed at him," said Sheperson. "But after we got interested in our history and heritage and started doing more genealogy of the area, we found out he was right. Abraham Lincoln's grandmother was my great-, great-, great-, great-grandmother on my mother's side."

It turns out that Sheperson's father and mother, the late Cecil and Alma Ellis, both shared Lincoln family connections.

Her father was descended from Naomi Shipley Mitchell, the sister of Lucey Shipley Hanks Sparrow. Naomi was killed by Indians at Crab Orchard in Lincoln County and her daughter, Sarah, was captured and held by the Indians several years before she was released.

Sarah, who was Sheperson's great-, great-, great-, great-grandmother, and Lincoln's mother, Nancy Hanks, later lived with their aunt and uncle, Rachel and Richard Berry, in Washington County.