



THE "OLD LINER" NEWSLETTER

Landon House board plans Civil War museum

By Patrick Dunne

Gazette.net, July 7, 2005

Gen. Ulysses S. Grant, along with his wife, Julia, met up with a commander of the Tennessee cavalry and a rebel showman at the Landon House in Urbana Tuesday afternoon.

The four are part of a growing Board of Directors planning a Civil War museum at the historic site.

In reality, they are living historians Larry and Connie Clowers, Chase Williams and Landon House owner Kevin Dolan. Their mutual passion for the Civil War is the driving force behind the planned Maryland Museum of Civil War History.

"We want to have an interactive museum ... and not just dead things behind glass," Dolan said.

The group plans to have rotating displays of Civil War artifacts at the museum which will be housed inside the Landon House, but special emphasis will be placed on live events.

"Imagine [school children] playing capture the flag, like they do for our Civil War birthday parties, and then Gen. Grant comes riding up to them on his horse," Dolan said.

The planners hope the museum can be funded by donations and Dolan is in the process of setting up a nonprofit organization to handle the funds.

Larry Clowers said he and his wife are excited to be a part of the museum, especially the live events. The Clowers portray the Grants and discuss everything from meeting President Abraham Lincoln to the role of women in the Civil War. "

Williams said it is easy to create the feel of the 1800s at the Landon House.

"I was sitting here on the porch in the evening with a cigar and glass of brandy when we got back from Gettysburg [on July 4]. The lights were out in the buildings, and you couldn't really hear the traffic ... it was like you were right back there," he said.



Landon House (Gazette File photo)

Visitors to the Landon House will get the chance to visit the Civil War days as special programs are expected to begin in August.

The Landon House History, Arts and Wine Festival will be held from noon to 6 p.m. on Saturday and Sunday, Aug. 27 and 28.

It will be the first of weekly Sabers and Roses balls, held each Friday following the wine festival.

Dolan has wanted to use the house as a museum since he discovered the home nine years ago after buying the property.

The Landon House is known in Civil War circles as the site of the Sabers and Roses Ball, a gala thrown by Gen. J.E.B. Stuart to celebrate the Confederates' landing in Maryland. The ball came just 10 days before the battle of Antietam.

"There may have been more than one million soldiers and people that passed through Maryland during the war," Clowers said.

In order to keep the bills paid these days the Landon House is used to host weddings, formal dinners, Civil War birthday parties and the second-

floor rooms are rented out as office space.

When the museum is up and running, the offices will remain on the second floor, Dolan said.

Dolan has other projects in mind for the Landon House in addition to the museum and special events. He has filmed a pilot for a reality television show called "Sabers and Roses." The show will have contestants live the lifestyle of 1860s Americans. Contestants would be judged on how well they perform specific tasks. Eventually, the participants are narrowed to one Rebel and one Yankee who compete for \$1 million in gold, Dolan said.

Franklin's Charge account sufficient to buy land

another grant from national group puts organization over the top for country club purchase

By KEVIN WALTERS,
Tennessean.com

FRANKLIN, TN — a new \$150,000 grant from the Washington, D.C.-based Civil War Preservation Trust will give local preservationist group Franklin's Charge enough money to meet its \$2.5 million fundraising goal for helping purchase the Country Club of Franklin.

This money would be paired with an additional \$2.5 million in public funds city leaders have recently finalized in allocating to buy the roughly 110-acre golf course for \$5 million from Washington businessman Rod Heller. The clubhouse and course sit adjacent to Carnton Plantation, which was used as a battlefield hospital during the bloody Battle of Franklin on Nov. 30, 1864. The land is envisioned as the hub of a potential



THE "OLD LINER" NEWSLETTER

battlefield park that would include a variety of historic sites in the county. The trust's final grant — which follows an earlier \$250,000 grant from the trust and a \$500,000 grant from the American Battlefield Protection Program — is in itself historic for the organization, which bills itself as the biggest U.S. nonprofit devoted to Civil War battlefield preservation.

"It is, hands down, the largest contribution we've ever given to a local group," said Jim Lighthizer, trust president.

The battle's overall significance to the Civil War, the purchase of the battlefield property — which Lighthizer has dubbed the largest U.S. battlefield reclamation — and the fundraising work of Franklin's Charge members in the project spurred the trust's continued interest, Lighthizer said.

"The heroic efforts made by the local people were truly impressive," Lighthizer said.

This new contribution, which will be paid on the closing day of Nov. 30 along with the other grants, means nearly \$1 million of the \$2.5 million will have been paid for from grants. In addition to cash donations, the remaining \$1.5 million will be covered with a loan from six local banks and repaid over a period of five years with pledges collected from local supporters.

For bankers Tom Powell, senior vice president at Regions Bank, and Pat Campbell, senior vice president at SunTrust, the land purchase provided a means for helping complete a project that might benefit the community.

While it's not unusual for banks to agree to cover loans for churches and other projects that would be paid back through donations, the fact that six banks would agree to work

together to cover the loan struck Powell as unusual.

"This is a little more out-of-the-box than the norm, I think," said Powell, a Franklin resident. "I don't know if there's been a particular project like this where a group of banks have stepped forward to this extent."

A number of the banks in the group have agreed to pay pledges themselves, but specifics about their donations to paying off the loan were not available.

That the project involved both public and private funds spoke well of the project's worthiness, said Campbell, also a Franklin resident. "I think, all in all, it's going to be a very positive thing for Franklin and Williamson County," Campbell said.

Other banks involved in the purchase are National City Bank, AmSouth Bank, First Tennessee and Pinnacle Bank.

Julian Bibb, Franklin's Charge co-chairman, explained that once the group began discussions with a bank about the possibility of a loan, other banks inquired about the project.

"After we started talking to one, it kind of just got out in the community," Bibb said. "Different banks had different relationships with different board members and that's how it got all focused. That's been neat."

Despite the group's \$2.5 million goal being met, however, Bibb again stressed that fundraising will continue because the group will need to pay what will amount to \$400,000 in interest payments on the loan.

"Additionally, the more dollars we raise in cash versus pledges will reduce the amount we'll have to borrow," Bibb said.

So far, Bibb, an attorney, has been surprised lately with instances of people finding out about the project and giving him donations. Strangers

have literally stopped him along the street to give him a donation after learning about the project, he said.

A public celebration about the project is currently being planned for late August at Carnton Plantation. •

Compromise Reached in Gettysburg Park Closing Hours Debate

July 7, 2005-CWi- After careful consideration of public comments received in May 2005 regarding a proposal to change the visiting hours for Gettysburg National Military Park, the National Park Service has announced that the battlefield will change its hours during the winter months only.

From November 1 through March 31, each year, the park will be open from 6 a.m. until 7 p.m. daily. From April 1 through October 31, there will be no change in visiting hours the park will remain open from 6 a.m. until 10 p.m. daily.

"We believe this compromise will strike the right balance between allowing for public enjoyment of the battlefield and ensuring that battlefield resources will be preserved for the enjoyment of future generations," said park Superintendent John Latschar.

The park received more than 200 written comments from the public during a formal comment period that ended May 31, 2005. Local citizens and park neighbors wrote about their enjoyment of the peacefulness and serenity of the park after sunset.

School students and teachers, whose yearly class visits to Gettysburg include an evening of reflection on the battlefield after dark, asked to continue this use. Several families who travel here from great distances



THE "OLD LINER" NEWSLETTER

explained that they can only afford to stay a short time in Gettysburg and wanted to maximize their time on the battlefield by staying past sunset.

The concerns outlined in the National Park Service proposal to change its hours were: threats to park resources during after-dark hours, visitor safety, and lack of adequate staffing.

Park staff will continue to closely monitor potential threats to park resources at Devils Den, Little Round Top, Peace Light Memorial, the Pennsylvania Memorial, and elsewhere as a result of both deliberate abuse and unintentional acts during after-dark use. Visitor safety and adequate law enforcement staffing will continue to be a concern.

"In the future we may have to reconsider this issue if incidents and threats continue or increase," said Latschar.

The new visiting hours will become effective November 1, 2005. The National Park Service will establish a grace enforcement period from November 1 through December 31, 2005, to acclimate the public to the changes in park operating hours.

Beginning January 1, 2006, fines would be enforced as specified. Under the policy, park-approved special events, such as the annual Remembrance Illumination, youth group campground operations, and park sponsored public meetings would continue to be permitted. Certain park avenues would continue to be accessible 24 hours/day for vehicular through-travel only.

For more information contact Gettysburg National Military Park at (717) 334-1124, ext. 422 or 431 or visit the park web site at

www.nps.gov/gett/home.htm

Spotsylvania County, VA promotes tourism

By GEORGE WHITEHURST,
Fredericksburg Free Lance-Star, July 20

If you build--or promote it--they will come.

That's the philosophy behind the new tourism plan the Spotsylvania County Board of Supervisors has set in motion.

Board members voted unanimously last week on a tourism blueprint that calls for construction of a visitor's center at Spotsylvania Courthouse and holding large Civil War reenactments every five years.

The plan also calls for the county to develop a series of tour packages of its historic spots, and to hold more special events such as the Spotsylvania Family Film Festival.

Supervisor Vince Onorato especially is keen for the county to host another large-scale reenactment like last year's, which marked the 140th anniversary of the Battle of Spotsylvania Courthouse. He'd also like to stage some smaller reenactments during summer weekends--perhaps giving tourists a look at everyday life during the Civil War era.

"As our new moniker states, we are the 'crossroads of the Civil War,'" he said. "Spotsylvania Courthouse had more casualties than any other county in the country. That is why we have to differentiate ourselves. Gettysburg was not the high point for the Southern army. It was Chancellorsville."

The county already is working with Fredericksburg and other area localities to draw tourists to the region.

But Supervisor Hap Connors said it's important for the county to differentiate itself from other tourist spots.

"We are participants and partners in the regional tourism marketing effort," he said. "At the same time, we know we have to ramp up our efforts to market Spotsylvania's historical, cultural and environmental assets." He also wants the county to make greater efforts to reach out to its own citizens.

"We have to introduce or re-introduce Spotsylvania County to our residents," he said. "One way to do that is to have these attractions like the film festival, the farmers market, the Courthouse fireworks display--those kind of things to bring people into other areas of Spotsylvania County."

Connors also wants the county to seek help in telling its story from a variety of heritage and history groups.

"We need to work with other groups that have offered their help, like the Civil War Preservation Trust, to leverage our assets into a viable heritage tourism program," he said.

'Confederate' will remain in name of Vanderbilt dorm

'Time to move on,' university says of losing three-year legal fight

By MICHAEL CASS – July 13, 2005 –
Tennessean.com

The words Confederate Memorial Hall — words that evoke images of slavery for some people and fallen heroes for others — will remain inscribed in stone on a Vanderbilt University building after a three-year legal battle.



THE "OLD LINER" NEWSLETTER

Vanderbilt decided not to appeal a state court ruling ordering that the Nashville school either keep the inscription on the building or pay damages that could have topped \$1 million to the United Daughters of the Confederacy, university spokes-man Michael Schoenfeld said yesterday.

The UDC's Tennessee division raised \$50,000 during the Great Depression to help pay for the building, which was part of the former George Peabody College for Teachers at the time, and vigorously challenged Vanderbilt's plans to remove the name in 2002. Peabody merged with Vanderbilt in 1979.

Schoenfeld said the university, which had hoped to create what it considered a more welcoming environment by taking down a word some find offensive, is dropping the matter and leaving the full name on the 70-year-old residence hall.

"We believed the best option for Vanderbilt at this time was to move on," he said. "Taking on this issue was something important for the university to do, and taking it any further was reaching a point of diminishing returns."

UDC representatives said they were thrilled by the decision, which followed a May 3 ruling by the Tennessee Court of Appeals.

"Slavery was terrible, and the Civil War was terrible in terms of the blood shed," said Doug Jones, a Nashville-based attorney for the organization. "But we don't need to forget it."

Vanderbilt said that simply bringing attention to the issue was a victory, and that the building's new name in all other official references, Memorial Hall, was taking hold on campus.

The legal fight concerned only the Confederate Memorial Hall inscription on the building's stone pediment. The Court of Appeals ruled that the

inscription must stay up as long as the building does.

The university plans to create an annual lecture series or other educational events to keep issues of race, history, memory and the Civil War on students' minds, Schoenfeld said.

Dr. Eddie Hamilton, a Nashville physician and Vanderbilt School of Medicine graduate who had offered to give \$50,000 to help Vanderbilt remove the name by paying damages to the UDC, said he was disappointed but not surprised by the decision. He said the university never contacted him about his offer, which he had hoped would inspire other donations.

Hamilton, an African-American, compared Confederate symbols with Nazi swastikas, which he said would not be allowed to stay on a building in Tennessee.

"Slavery was evil, and the Confederacy supported slavery," he said. "For us to be even having a discussion of whether it should come down is inappropriate. But life goes on. We, as a race of people, this is not going to affect us in terms of slowing down our progress."

But Jones and Deanna Bryant, president of the UDC's Tennessee division, said most of the soldiers honored by Confederate Memorial Hall were not slave owners. They were simply men "trying to defend their homes," said Jones, who is a former president of the Battle of Nashville Preservation Society.

"It's a victory for the entire South," Bryant, who lives in Franklin, said of the decision to keep the inscription on the building. "Regardless, the War Between the States happened. Just because somebody doesn't like something, you can't erase it from the history books."



The name Confederate Memorial Hall will stay on the building's pediment, but will gradually disappear in other official references.

RICKY ROGERS / Tennessean.com FILE

Confederate sons hit Nashville headed in new direction

By LEON ALLIGOOD,
Tennesseans.com, July 18, 2005

The Civil War ended in April 1865 at a courthouse in Appomattox, Va., when Confederate Gen. Robert E. Lee surrendered to Union Gen. Ulysses S. Grant.

A century and forty years later, another kind of civil war — a protracted dispute among male descendants of the men and boys who fought for the South — also appears to be coming to a close.

When the Sons of Confederate Veterans holds its 110th reunion this week at the Music City Sheraton in Nashville, representatives of about 800 "camps," as the local units are called, are expected to approve measures that will cement a new direction for the 30,000-member organization, which is headquartered in Columbia, Tenn.

With a former reputation often characterized as a gathering of stodgy history buffs, the new SCV is decidedly different: proactive and confrontational. The shift began in earnest about 10 years ago but has accelerated to warp speed since



THE "OLD LINER" NEWSLETTER

2002, yielding a fracture in the fraternal organization.

This has been a dispute between the "grannies" and the "radicals," the names each side has given to their opponent. Grannies are members who would like for the SCV to remain a history-based organization. They accuse the radicals of flirting with political extremism, which they say is a disservice to their ancestors who wore Confederate gray.

Radicals are those who want the organization to be more forceful in promoting and protecting Confederate symbols, particularly the battle flag. They accuse the grannies of forfeiting the group's First Amendment rights by kowtowing to political correctness.

A cause for alarm, some traditionalists say, are SCV members with ties or former ties to organizations such as the League of the South, which espouses a new secession by Southern states, or the Council of Conservative Citizens, which advocates white supremacy and a reversal of immigration laws. At least six past or current members of the SCV's General Executive Council have belonged to one of these organizations.

Traditionalists fear that the SCV's coffers, which have more than \$5 million, will be raided by one of these organizations in a silent merger.

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The SCV was chartered in 1896, 31 years after Appomattox. In 1906, Confederate Lt. Gen. Stephen D. Lee laid out his goals for the group. To the Sons of Confederate Veterans "will be given the defense of the Confederate soldier's good name, the guardianship of his history, the emulation of his values," the general admonished.

For much of the past century, the SCV carried out that mandate by preserving Confederate cemeteries, restoring Confederate battle flags and offering interpretative education programs from a Southern perspective via speeches and re-enactments.

However, toward the end of the 1980s, a shift occurred that put the SCV on the defensive. Members point to resolutions by the NAACP against the Confederate flag and the flag wars in Georgia, South Carolina and Mississippi as the causes of a deeper activism that some believe has led to extremism.

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The battleground between the grannies and the radicals has mostly been a cyber war, fought in endless salvoes of e-mails.

"Some good men have said some foolish things. E-mail is a detriment," said the Rev. Charles E. Baker, a longtime Birmingham SCV member who proudly notes he does not use a computer nor a cell phone.

According to the Southern Poverty Law Center's Heidi Beirich, many of the e-mails zipping back and forth were forwarded to her.

The center exposed the Echo, a Web chat forum that was not endorsed by the SCV but was aimed at its membership. The Echo was started by Allen Sullivant, who served as Chief of Heritage Defense on the national level.

Posts from the now-defunct site frequently featured jokes containing the "N" word and exploitative caricatures of African-Americans. The forum was not moderated so posts were not censored.

"That's the kind of stuff that has been happening behind the scenes," she said.

Sullivant discounted the criticism.

"I'm sure somewhere along the line there were some things that people shouldn't have said, that were crude and tasteless, but then that's what you get when you have an un-moderated electronic forum," Sullivant said.

Allen Trapp Jr., a lawyer from Carrollton, Ga., rose through the ranks during the 1990s to serve as Georgia Division Commander. In recent years he's noticed a fundamental change in the national organization.

"Giving books to a library or marching in a parade, cleaning 500 headstones and identifying 200 new Confederate graves was no longer enough. Rather it was more about have you had any political success and are you fighting?" said Trapp, who resigned from the SCV earlier this year in reaction to the "extremist takeover."

Even so, Trapp said, the desire to honor the valor and courage of Confederate kindred remains an honorable pursuit.

"Once upon a time we didn't need much protection or preserving," said Trapp, noting that in 1949 and 1951 the United States Postal Service issued stamps honoring the last respective meetings of Union and Confederate veterans.

"There was no question that both sides were honored. That all changed in the last 25 years," Trapp said.

The watershed year for that movement came in 2002 with the election of Ron Wilson of Easley, S.C., as commander-in-chief. Wilson quickly inserted others looking for change into leadership positions.

Last summer, they confirmed their grip on the organization with the election of Denne Sweeney, a West Point graduate and retired software engineer who lives near Dallas as Commander-in-Chief.



THE "OLD LINER" NEWSLETTER

The SCV "hit critical mass," said Dr. Anthony Hodges, who was elected to national office along with Sweeney. Last winter, Hodges and others led what essentially was a takeover of the organization, employing a little-known provision of the Mississippi law under which the SCV is chartered. Although headquartered in Columbia, the organization is chartered, for now, in Mississippi. One of the items the membership will vote on this week is moving the group's charter to Texas.

The Mississippi law allowed a majority of the General Executive Council, the group's board of directors, to remove officers. Sweeney and others were removed from their posts by a coalition that included Hodges, but that decision was reversed by a Maury County judge.

"I think the majority of us feel it's over. At some point the SCV will become, if it's not already there, a fringe group. In essence, its opinion won't matter anymore because they're so far out there," said Hodges, who was stripped of his office after the failed ouster. The dentist said he plans to resign his membership this week.

CSS Alabama cannon raised

Tuesday, July 12, 2005

By **GEORGE WERNETH** - *Mobile Register*

The 7,000-pound main battery pivot gun of the Confederate sea raider CSS Alabama was recovered from the bottom of the English Channel this past weekend, where the vessel was sunk 141 years ago by a Union warship, a project spokesman said.

"The cannon was brought to the surface by the French naval vessel Elan which is equipped with a special 'A' frame on the stern to facilitate

lifting heavy objects," according to Gordon Watts, an underwater archaeologist from North Carolina. Watts has been overseeing the project.

Watts reported to the *Mobile Register* by e-mail from France that the mammoth cannon was recovered Saturday by a team of French divers and American archaeologists. The wreck site is in some 200 feet of water, about 7 miles off the coast of Cherbourg, France.

"The cannon will be placed in a specially constructed container to be shipped back to the United States for conservation," said Watts.

The divers were faced with treacherous currents while working to prepare the huge cannon for raising. Divers worked with the crew of the *Elan* to attach a lifting cable to nylon straps on the Alabama's biggest cannon, Watts said.

"Highly experienced French divers" worked for the past two weeks "to excavate sufficient sediment to permit two lifting straps to be put around the gun," Watts said.

The cannon--also known as the aft pivot gun-- is the heaviest artifact to have ever been recovered from the CSS Alabama wreck site, project officials report. The ship's site was discovered on Oct. 31, 1984, by a French naval mine hunter.

"Recovery of the aft pivot gun completes a collection of the ship's ordnance that includes the forward pivot rifle and examples of two types of 32-pound smoothbore cannon," Watts noted.

Robert Edington, a Mobile attorney who is president of the CSS Alabama Association, reported earlier that about 200 artifacts were recovered from the CSS Alabama by the French in the 1990s and about 200 more were recovered after the Americans

took over some five year ago with French cooperation. He said most of the artifacts have been turned over to the U.S. Department of the Navy and restored. A number of them, including the ship's bell, are on display at the Museum of Mobile.

The association which Edington heads is involved in raising money for the project and in planning the dives. The dives can only be made during brief annual periods because of the dangerous channel currents. This latest series of dives began in the last week of May and concluded Sunday. These summer dives were hampered at times by foul weather, and the Americans faced delays in getting their equipment to the site.

The Confederate ship, which preyed on Union merchant ships around the world during the Civil War, was sunk June 19, 1864, in a battle with the USS *Kearsarge* off the French coast.

When the Alabama was sunk, its commanding officer, Raphael Semmes, and about 40 crew members were pulled out of the channel by the British yacht *Deerhound* and taken to England. Others were picked up by the *Kearsarge* and some were rescued by French boaters who were watching the battle. About a dozen crew members drowned.



Captain Raphael Semmes, *Alabama's* commanding officer, standing by his ship's 110-pounder rifled gun during her visit to Capetown in August 1863. His executive officer, First Lieutenant John M. Kell, is in the background, standing by the ship's wheel.

U.S. Naval Historical Center Photograph



THE "OLD LINER" NEWSLETTER

'Widow' gives new life to Franklin's historic Carnton plantation

With 200,000 presales, Hicks' first novel may bring Franklin worldwide attention

By KEVIN WALTERS,
Tennessean.com

LEIPER'S FORK COMMUNITY —

The dead have always been a part of Carrie McGavock's story. So has writing.

First, the soldiers and then historians wrote about her bloodstained Carnton mansion that served as a field hospital in the wake of the Nov. 30, 1864, Battle of Franklin — the dead littering its grounds.

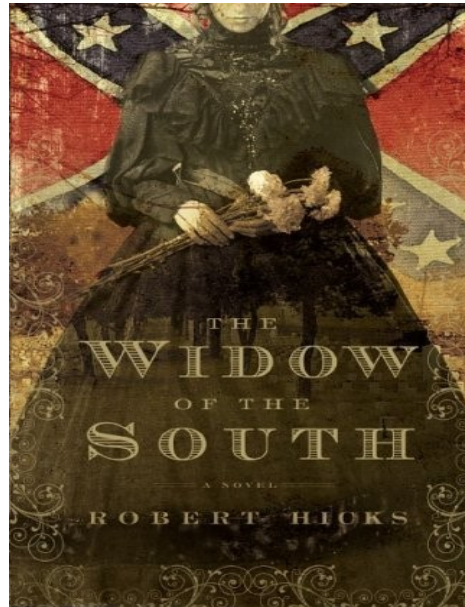
"Every room was filled, every bed had two poor, bleeding fellows, every spare space, niche, and corner under the stairs, in the hall, everywhere — but one room for her own family," wrote Capt. William D. Gale, the adjutant general for Lt. Gen. Alexander P. Stewart of the Confederacy, remembering that night that claimed more than 8,000 dead and wounded.

"(Carrie McGavock) walked from room to room, from man to man, her very skirts stained with blood," Stewart wrote.

McGavock herself recorded the names and regiments of the more than 1,400 soldiers she and her husband John buried in the McGavock Cemetery in her "book of the dead." After she died in 1905, obituary writers memorialized the woman called "The Good Samaritan of Williamson County" in more than a dozen U.S. newspapers.

So the notion that McGavock would be the heroine of what could be this year's publishing sensation should be no surprise. While other books about

the battle have been written, maybe no one until first-time novelist and Franklin's Charge co-chairman Robert Hicks has stood as good a chance of turning the events of her life into a bestseller.



If Hicks' historical fiction *The Widow of the South* captures the American popular imagination as officials and publishing people anticipate, the novel could propel Franklin, Carrie McGavock and efforts led by Hicks to create a battlefield park here to a worldwide audience.

As of this week, Warner Books has received 199,000 presale orders from booksellers for hardback editions of *The Widow of the South*, which goes on sale Sept. 1. That's a staggering number when you consider that most first printing runs for novels only top around 5,000 copies.

Already it's U.K. and French publishing rights have been snapped up and negotiations are under way to have it published in Italy. Hollywood has shown interest though no firm plans — or stars — have been signed to a potential project.

Seven years ago, the idea to write a novel about McGavock came to Hicks while he was sitting at his desk at PolyGram records on Nashville's Music Row. A member of the Carnton Plantation's board since 1987, Hicks oversaw a historically accurate renovation of the mansion. But he feared for the house's future.

"I had this chilling thought, 'What happens after me?' " said Hicks. How's Carnton going to survive? I don't know."

Writing the novel, Hicks said, would be a way of ensuring tourists came to Franklin, supporting the mansion through the largely untapped vein of heritage tourism in Williamson County. Earlier efforts to bring a national battlefield park to Franklin were opposed by the community.

Hick's literary agent, Jeff Kleinman, who gets about 400 novels a week, read a portion of *The Widow of the South* on an airplane flight to New Orleans. In the middle of the flight, he broke down weeping.

For Warner executives, the novel provoked stronger, happier responses. Kleinman sold the novel to Warner Books on just 100 pages and an outline — "a very, very rare" occurrence, he said.

They're making it one of their biggest fall novels, rolling out a \$500,000 advertising campaign to tout it and a book tour as well. Blurbs about the novel have already appeared in *USA Today* and other publications though the book is still months from hitting stores.

Kleinman believes the novel has three things going for it: it's based on a true story, it has Hicks as a spokesman and Hicks' writing.

"I think it's extraordinarily beautiful," Kleinman said. "I could literally not believe how beautiful it was."