

THE "OLD LINER" NEWSLETTER

Jefferson Davis' Biloxi Home Beauvoir Severely Damaged by Hurricane Katrina

September 6, 2005. Biloxi, MS
Courtesy CWi

At Beauvoir, the 1853 home of the only president of the Confederacy, the storm surge gutted Jefferson Davis' Library and his guest house. Beauvoir's front gallery was ripped off, and the first floor is badly damaged. "That's where many of the valuable artifacts were secured. All is not lost there," said Ken P'Pool, historic preservation division director for the Mississippi Department of Archives and History."

The house was located on the north side of Beach Boulevard, across from a number of "barge style" casinos. One of the closest, the President Casino, was lifted from its mooring pillars and transported across the highway where it came to rest crushing a Holiday Inn.

The house, constructed in 1854, was dedicated in 1998 as the "Jefferson Davis Presidential Library and Museum."

After Davis' death Beauvoir evolved first into the Jefferson Davis Soldiers' Home, serving as a hospital and residence for disabled Confederate veterans and their dependents.

The Beauvoir Confederate Cemetery is located at the extreme northwest corner of the estate and contains over 750 graves. One of them is Sam Davis, father of Jefferson Davis, whose body was moved there when the Mississippi River threatened his original gravesite at Hurricane Plantation.

The Beauvoir cemetery is also the home of the Grave of the Unknown Confederate Soldier in an above-

ground granite shrine. No reports on its condition are available.

Another nearby burial ground, Southern Memorial Park, had its mausoleum torn open by the force of the onrushing water, and witnesses told the Clarion-Ledger that numerous caskets were strewn about the grounds. Most "burials" in the area are above-ground entombments due the high water table.

The home and grounds have been open to the public since 1957. In 1969 Beauvoir survived Hurricane Camille but the museum, at that time in the basement of the house, was severely flooded. The Library cottage suffered severe damage from that storm. Both had since been rebuilt.



A bust of the head of Jefferson Davis lies on what remains of the granite gateway to his last home, Beauvoir, in Biloxi, Miss. The house is in the background. The winds and water of Hurricane Katrina gutted the building of much of its historical contents. (AP Photo/Rogelio Solis)

Research on Monitor casts doubt on old cat story

By LEE BOWMAN, Scripps Howard News Service, August 28, 2005

Conservation technicians sifting through 140 years' worth of muck accumulated inside the turret of the USS Monitor have periodically teased historian Jeff Johnston with a facetious cry of "Cat bones, we got cat bones!"

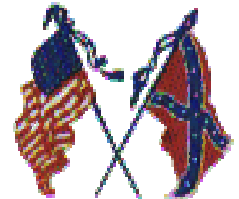
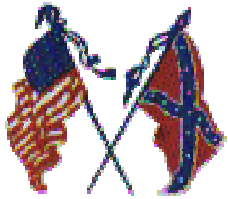
But the researcher with the Monitor National Marine Sanctuary has always been doubtful that a 19th-century memoir claiming a ship's cat had been stuffed inside one of the ironclad's 11-inch cannons shortly before the vessel sank was true.

Now, after more than two years of carefully reaming out and sifting the contents of the guns, Johnston is convinced that not only didn't the cat go down with the ship, there was probably never such a mascot aboard the most famous Union ship of the Civil War.

The source of the story was a Yankee sailor named Francis R. Butts, who in 1885 wrote an account of his brief service aboard the Monitor. He had joined the crew just before the vessel began its final voyage in November 1862.

In the last minutes before the Monitor capsized and sank on Dec. 31, 1862, Butts claimed that he was alone in the turret when he stuffed his boots and overcoat in one of the guns, and shoved a howling black cat into the breech of the other.

"I would almost as soon have touched a ghost, but I caught her, and placing her in another gun, replaced the wad and tampion; but I could still hear that distressing yowl," Butts wrote.



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Johnston, who has dedicated much of his career to studying the Monitor and its Confederate ironclad adversary, the CSS Virginia, has caught Butts stretching the truth in other aspects of his recollections.

The seaman's contention that the ship sailed with its cannons loaded seemed unlikely, but forced the preservation crew to work carefully in cleaning the silt and debris from the guns just in case they still contained explosives. They didn't.

Now, with about 90 percent of the barrels cleared, David Krop, the assistant conservator for the Mariners' Museum in Newport News, Va., where the turret is housed, said Thursday that "we've excavated and screened enough material to say with certainty that neither cannon is loaded. We have also failed to find any trace of organic material, such as leather, wool or bone.

"Although we are still clearing concretion and sediment from inside both bores that may hide cat bones or organics, I seriously doubt anything will turn up," Krop said.

"The excavations confirmed my suspicion that Francis Butts fabricated the whole story," Johnston said.

After it fought the Virginia to a draw at Hampton Roads in March 1862, the Monitor quickly became one of the most celebrated vessels in naval history. Its crew posed for photographs on the deck several times, and thousands of visitors went aboard when the Monitor returned to Washington in October 1862.

Yet no mascot appears in any of the pictures, nor do any contemporary accounts by the crew or others talk about a cat. "It would have been the most famous cat in the Union, but no one else ever mentioned it," the historian said.

Johnston, a cat owner himself, says he thinks about Butts trying to shove a wet, agitated cat into an 11-inch cannon barrel every time he tries to put his own black feline into a cat carrier with a 15-inch door.

The kitty in a cannon is "a great story, and one of the things we get asked the most questions about in preserving the Monitor, but the proof's not there," he said.

Most of the wreck of the Monitor still lies with the marine sanctuary in 240 feet of water off Cape Hatteras, N.C. But the turret, steam engine and other key parts were raised and sent to the Mariners' Museum in 2001 and 2002 in a bid to save the artifacts from eventual destruction by seawater.

The museum and NOAA plan to open a new 63,000-square-foot USS Monitor Center in March 2007 that will display the objects and a full-scale replica of the gun turret.

FORT MONROE: Hampton looks to new uses

BY ANDREW PETKOFSKY, Richmond
Times-Dispatch, August 25, 2005

HAMPTON, VA -- Despite their disappointment in a federal commission's vote to close historic Fort Monroe, city officials say they will quickly plan new uses for 500-acre, waterfront property.

"It is not a great day for us, but we always have hope and vision for the future of Hampton," said Vice Mayor Joseph H. Spencer II.

Following the Base Realignment and Closure Commission's unanimous vote to close Fort Monroe, officials held a city hall news conference to discuss their hopes the land can be converted within six years to a variety

of uses that might include a park, condos and businesses.

City Councilman Charles N. Sapp said the first step will be writing a "re-use scenario" that military officials will review to determine how much environmental cleanup will be necessary.

Details of that conceptual redevelopment plan will be made public after President Bush has a chance to say whether he accepts the nationwide base closure plan on Sept. 8, Sapp said.

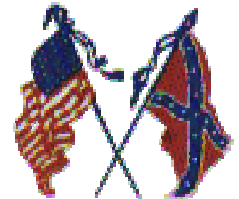
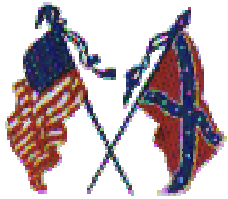
The base-closure process calls for Fort Monroe to stay open for two years after the decision becomes final, around the end of this year, and be completely closed by the end of six years.

Although the property will come under state ownership when it is released by the Defense Department, Hampton officials say they want the city to play a major role in redevelopment decisions. They also said the process will include many opportunities for residents to participate.

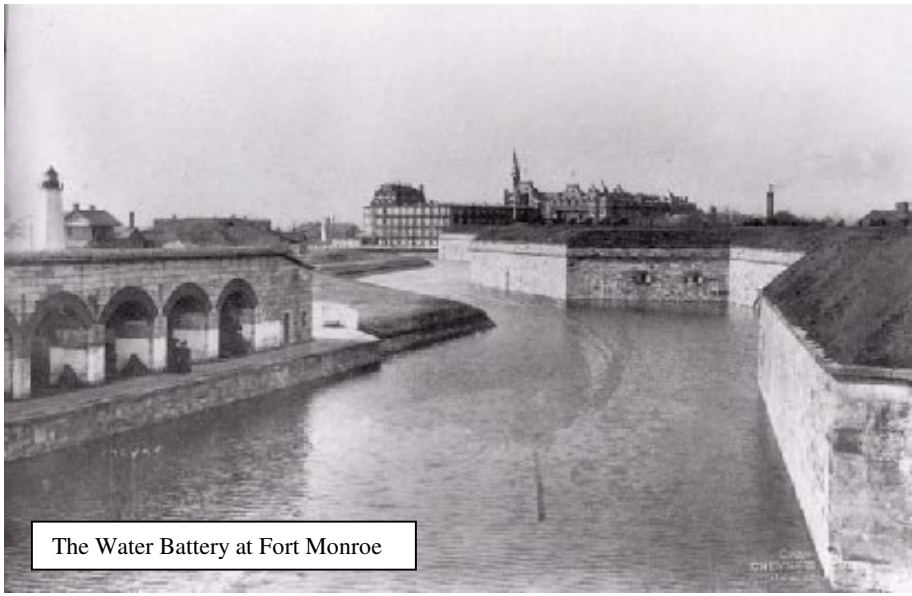
Sapp said that officials have fought for months, along with Gov. Mark R. Warner and members the state's congressional delegation, to convince the commission that its recommendation last May to close the base was not in the nation's best interest.

Hampton has contended that Fort Monroe, built before the Civil War and containing a moat-girded stone fortress, still has military value because its secure location is protected on three sides by water.

The city has also contended that cleaning up unexploded artillery shells and other environmental hazards will cost the federal government \$1.3 billion to \$1.9 billion if the land is slated for civilian use.



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The Water Battery at Fort Monroe

The BRAC commission, which considered Army estimates that closing Monroe will save \$687 million over 20 years, has disregarded cleanup costs on the assumption that job would have to be done whether the property remains in military hands or not.

Closing the base will mean the loss of about 1,400 military jobs, nearly 2,000 civilian positions and about 220 contractor jobs.

Although the fort covers about 500 acres, just under 100 acres are considered "developable," officials said.

Clyde R. Hoey II, president of the Virginia Peninsula Chamber of Commerce, said that the fort's historic moat, fortress and other buildings have the potential to become a "national tourist draw."

Like many others who know the fort, Hoey predicted that commercial and residential developers will be eager for a chance to build on the island-like property offering many spectacular views of the Chesapeake.

"I can see it being developed as a very upscale business and residential community," Hoey said. "Let's face it, we quit making waterfront property a long time ago."

New Trail at Antietam to provide real-life experience

Associated Press, August 30, 2005

The final attack on the bloodiest day of the Civil War was literally an uphill battle.

Now a trail at Antietam National Battlefield lets hikers feel the strain that soldiers from both sides experienced marching over hilly farm fields toward a meeting that ended with the Union failing to corner Confederate Gen. Robert E. Lee.

"When you have an opportunity to see the 200-foot change in elevation, when people come out here and walk, they can see the terrain stopped the Union advance as much as the Confederate soldiers did," said

Brian Baracz, a park ranger and historian. "You don't get much of an idea from your car."

The Final Attack Trail officially opens during a weekend of activities marking the 133rd anniversary of the Battle of Antietam, also known as the Battle of Sharpsburg. More than 23,000 men were killed, wounded or reported missing at the Western Maryland site on Sept. 17, 1862, in the bloodiest one-day clash of the War Between the States.

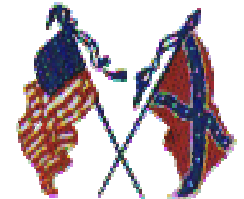
The 1.7-mile trail is the fourth at Antietam. A planned fifth trail will create a network of footpaths across the 3,288-acre park.

The Final Attack Trail winds through a cornfield where the day's last engagement took place, starting at about 3:40 p.m. Lee's 2,800 troops were retreating, aiming to cross the Potomac River to safety. Union Gen. Ambrose Burnside's 8,000 soldiers were moving through the 40-acre cornfield on a course that would cut off Lee's line of retreat.

Then Confederate Gen. A.P. Hill arrived from the south with 2,500 troops. Burnside's troops were driven back in a nearly two-hour clash that resulted in 3,470 casualties, according to the park's Web site. There were twice as many Union casualties as Confederate.

The next day, Federal and Confederate leaders struck an informal truce so they could gather their wounded and dying. That evening, Lee began withdrawing his army across the Potomac.

The fighting took place on land that remained in private hands until three years ago, when the National Park Service acquired 136 acres of the Shade Farm. The field is dotted with monuments erected by veterans organizations and states with soldiers who fought there.



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"Most of the troops were from New York, Connecticut, Rhode Island and Ohio, and we get a lot of letters from folks in those areas wanting to see this. It's really important for them to be able to walk in the footsteps of the soldiers," said Superintendent John Howard.

Grant will help Chancellorsville planning

By NATASHA ALTAMIRANO,
Fredericksburg Free Lance-Star,
August 30, 2005

The Spotsylvania County Board of Supervisors last week unanimously voted to accept a National Park Service grant to help preserve the Chancellorsville battlefield.

The park service has earmarked \$46,500 from its American Battlefield Protection Program Fund for the county's 18-month plan to guide development around the battlefield area. The county is one of 12 recipients of ABPP grants totaling \$350,854.

Board Chairman Bob Hagan said it's important to preserve battlefields and consider land use in surrounding areas.

"This grant's going to give us the opportunity to create the kind of gateway that will be pleasing to visitors and enticing to tourists," Hagan said in a telephone interview Wednesday. "If you had the world's biggest car wash next to the battlefields, it might not be so enticing. So you want to have some kind of transition from a heavily industrial or heavily commercial area to a preserved battlefield--that's one of the things I'm hoping we'll get out of this grant."

Supervisors have always expressed support for battlefield protection, county planner Brenda Schulte said.

"It's a significant resource for the county," Schulte said. "It's what defines us as a community--it's a part of our history."

The money will be used to hire a consultant to study transportation and development issues around the site. The consultant also will hold community meetings for public input on future development.

"We don't have a specific land-use plan for that area--that's what we're hoping to accomplish with this," Schulte said.

The Planning Department will cover other expenses associated with the plan.

"It makes your grant more competitive if you show how serious you are and are willing to take on some expenses," Schulte said.

Lawmakers and local preservation groups wrote recommendations on behalf of the planning department when planners submitted the grant application earlier in the year, she said.

"We work very closely with the American Battlefield Protection Program on grants similar to this and we're very excited that they're going to be involved in giving the county money to do this project," Civil War Preservation Trust spokesman Jim Campi said. "I think the study of historic lands around Chancellorsville battlefields is very important and we're happy to see the county becoming so actively engaged in the process."

USS Kearsarge has storied past

Concord, NH Monitor, 8/24/2005

The USS Kearsarge that was narrowly missed in a rocket attack in Jordan is named for a famous civil war ship, which, in turn, was named for New Hampshire's Mount Kearsarge. Which Mount Kearsarge is a point of contention among historians and townspeople in the state.

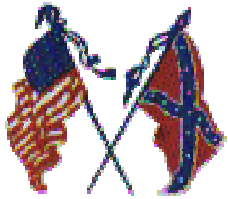
New Hampshire has two: One is in Warner, and the second is farther north, near Conway. Both towns claim the boat bears their mountain's name.

Jack Green, of the Naval Historical Center, said that the ship was named for the Southern Kearsarge and christened by the wife of Henry McFarland, who edited Concord's New Hampshire Statesman.

But according to William Marvel, who wrote a book about the civil war ship, it is unlikely that McFarland's wife is responsible for the name. McFarland claimed to have suggested the name in a letter to Gideon Wells, the secretary of the Navy, but Marvel was unable to find a record in Wells's letters.

Marvel believes that Gustavus Fox, the assistant secretary of the Navy, was responsible for the name. Fox's wife summered at a Conway hotel called the Kearsarge house, and Wells recollected Fox making the suggestion.

What is well established is that the first USS Kearsarge won a very important naval battle, when it defeated the confederate ship CSS Alabama off the coast of Europe. Because it was such a famed ship, Congress ordered the Navy to make an exception to its naming policy to name a battleship built during World War II after the Civil War vessel.



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"By law, a battleship must be named after a state," Green said. "Because Kearsarge was so famous, an exception was made."

Since then, two other boats have carried the name Kearsarge. The christener of the newest USS Kearsarge is well established. Alma Powell, the wife of Gen. Colin Powell, named it in 1992.

Maritime Museum features Civil War exhibit

By Stephen Furness,
Delmarvanow.com, August 12, 2005

The story of Chincoteague's involvement on the Union side of the Civil War is no revelation to most.

It's true that the Battle of Cackle Creek, the only violence that occurred near the banks of Chincoteague, was no more than a mere show of force by the Union to protect the island from a suspicious Confederate ship.

And yet its relevance to the island's history is important to the ever-changing face of Chincoteague.

So thinks Cindy Faith of the Oyster and Maritime Museum, who originated the idea to devote a section of the building to the history of the incident at Cackle Creek, along with some insightful stories and anecdotes, and an amazing Civil War uniform and gun display, courtesy of island collector and reenactor Phil Carpenter.

"There's really a big history here on Chincoteague," Faith said. "And I think people from Chincoteague don't even realize how much history is here."

Though it's probably not even mentioned in most history books, the Cackle Creek incident is a fascinating story that relates well with the rest of the island's history.

It began with the constant threat of pirates and looters of the Confederacy stealing from Chincoteague because of its allegiance to the Union. The island's channel remained unguarded, much to the chagrin of many residents.

One day, a large ship waving the flag of the British army and dubbed Venus was seen in Chincoteague Bay, flanked by several smaller boats. Island residents were ignorant of the ship's intentions until the flag was lowered and replaced with a Confederate banner.

Immediately the Union dispatched the Louisiana to protect Chincoteague and its residents. Its speedy arrival, apparently, sent the Venus into high alert. Not much is known about the intensity of the battle, except that the Venus' crew was frightened.

The Louisiana burned and sunk the Venus into the marsh mud of the opening of Cackle Creek.

"And I guess what's left is still out there right now," Faith said. "I'm surprised nobody has gone out to search for its remains."

After the Venus had sunk, the Louisiana remained in port at Chincoteague for about two days. It is reported that some of the crew opted to remain on the island. Faith believes that some native island residents are descendants of the ship's crew.

Through research, Faith was able to locate an artist's rendering of the Louisiana, as well as a photo of what may be crewmen aboard the vessel. Both are part of the Oyster Museum's historic display.

Of course, no island history would be complete without a humorous, local anecdote that breathes a little more humanity in with the history. Inside the Oyster Museum, a picture of Mary Thornton Young just about says it all.

Living up into her late 90s, Young was the wife of Theodore Young, who was enlisted in September 1863 by Lt. Oliver Thomas. Frightened by her husband's emanant absence, she immediately volunteered to accompany him into the war as a cook. From what has been written, she "raised a time," remaining steadfast that if "Theodore Young goes, I'm going too!"

Young served until her husband was in an accident which broke his back. Both were sent home so he could recover from his injuries.

There's also the story of the Chincoteague oyster, which had a fanatical following on the docks of New York City. In her research, Faith said that people would wait for the Chincoteague boats to dock in the city to get their share of the delicious seafood treat.

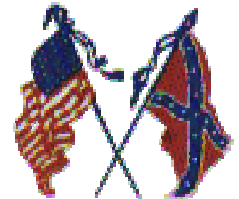
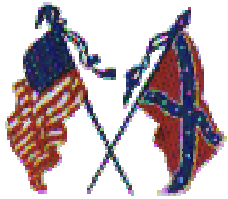
"They used to call them patriot oysters, or patriotic oysters," she said. "There was even a dance that was made about the Chincoteague oyster. They were really popular."

Another important shard of Chincoteague heritage is J.M. Whealton's influence on the cultivation of those oysters. It has been written that Whealton himself urged Chincoteague residents to side with the North, to help preserve the island's seafood livelihood.

Hanging on the wall in an ornate, intricately carved frame is the discharge paper of a Chincoteague man.

In the center of this section of the museum is a well-thought display of Civil War-era uniforms, on loan by Phil Carpenter, who is a sought after reenactor who specializes in Virginia General Robert E. Lee.

"(Carpenter) really turned the exhibit from mediocre to fantastic," Faith



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said. "I really think he did an outstanding job."

Faith plans to keep the one-of-a-kind exhibit open through the fall season. She hopes that island and Shore schools will want to bring classes through to read and learn more about its local Civil War roots.

"Because we're keeping the admission free, we want to encourage schools to come out and see it," she said. "I really think it's important for all people here to learn and understand all that their forefathers did."

Pamplin Historical Park constructs education center

The Progress-Index, 8/23/2005

DINWIDDIE - The sight of new buildings rising out of the woods and fields at Pamplin Historical Park is nothing new.

But unlike the reproduction barns and Civil War soldier camps that recently opened at the park, the most recent construction project is strictly modern.

The park's education center, a \$900,000 complex of structures, is designed to serve a growing number of student visitors. Located behind the Battlefield Center on the park's eastern edge, the education center will fulfill a number of critical functions. It is primarily a classroom building with the flexibility to accommodate up to three groups at a time. It can also double as a theater with seating for 154 guests. The main building will be linked by an open frame timber element to expanded restroom and covered picnic facilities. "Nearly half of Pamplin's visitors are students arriving in buses," said Al Neale, the park's chief of education and visitor services. "There has been no great sense of arrival for these guests as they begin their educational experience at Pamplin. The new education center will remedy that, while giving us expanded space in which to conduct programs." Glave and Holmes of Richmond provided the architectural design of the education center. Canavan Construction of Richmond is the

general contractor. "If the weather continues to cooperate, we expect to occupy the education center by Oct. 1," said A. Wilson Greene, the park's executive director. "We plan to hold our symposium in that building on Oct. 15-16."

The education center is the 22nd building constructed, restored or renovated since Pamplin Historical Park opened 11 years ago.

Civil War Trivia

At the beginning of our recent meetings, Don MacReadie has posed a few Civil War Trivia questions. I have decided to enter the fray. See if you know the answer to this question:

Years before the war, Jesse Grant, father of U.S. Grant, worked for Owen Brown. Who was Owen Brown?

Answer in next week's newsletter.

BCWRT Fall Battlefield Tour

The Baltimore Civil War Roundtable is sponsoring, on October 15, 2005, a tour of the First day's fighting at Gettysburg.

The guide will be the Roundtable's own Bob Mullauer.

Currently, plans are to carpool from the Tall Cedars hall. Alternatively, those wishing to do so can meet the group in Gettysburg at a site to be determined.

At this time, there are no plans to charge a fee.

If you are interested in attending, please contact Earle Hollenbaugh at 410-788-3525

If the response is large enough, we will charter a bus.

More information to follow.