



ON THE  
**skirmish line**

Newsletter of The Central Virginia Battlefields Trust

## CVBT Targets Completion of Our Slaughter Pen Pledge!



**T**he Central Virginia Battlefields Trust has forwarded a payment of \$100,000 to pay down its pledge for acquisition of the Slaughter Pen Farm. When this project on the Fredericksburg battlefield came together, the Central Virginia Battlefields Trust informed the Civil War Preservation Trust that it would pay \$1 million of the purchase price. Since then, we have steadily sent payments of varying amounts to fulfill this promise.

With this latest payment, the amount of the Central Virginia Battlefields Trust obligation drops to \$150,000

with \$850,000 now paid. A pledge of \$1 million is a rather significant amount for an organization of our size, but the tract in question was critical to preserve and had been a property where Central Virginia Battlefields Trust had worked to develop a relationship with the farming family. Although the CWPT, with the resources of a national organization closed the final deal, Central Virginia Battlefields Trust fully supported the outcome and wanted to provide substantial support.

It is our pleasure and our pride to be able to continue to make good on our promise. **sl**



## New Blog by Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania National Military Park

The NPS is trying something a bit different by creating a couple of blogs, the first of which is now up and running. This one entitled, *Mysteries and Conundrums*, focuses on the park staff's discussion about various issues they are trying to solve related to the landscape of battle and life during the Civil War.

It is a “*discussion of all social, political and cultural aspects of the American Civil War battles fought in Spotsylvania County, Virginia, Fredericksburg, Chancellorsville, Wilderness and Spotsylvania. Antebellum to modern day perspective of the material culture effects of these engagements, both military and civilian.*”

The first post is a simple one about the Sandy Bottom houses. Park historian Eric Mink is working on a piece that will present new suggestive evidence about the location of the slave cabins at Chatham.

The NPS plans to share new discoveries and even internal debates on the blog. They will also be doing a blog focused on its continued efforts to improve interpretation and media throughout the park—kind of an insider's look at what they are working on. That one should be up in a few weeks.

See <http://npsfrsp.wordpress.com/> SL

# Acquiring the Wilderness Crossroads

Pushing Walmart out of the Wilderness has been compared with the 1994 fight to keep Disney away from Manassas. When preservationists fought Disney, the stated concern was that traffic and sprawl would overwhelm that battlefield. After a bitter fight, Disney left, but sixteen years later, the traffic and sprawl that everyone decried has come anyway. The impact of growth and development near the historic ground has been staggering. It has become painfully evident that getting Disney to leave Virginia did little to preserve hallowed ground.

Ownership is the surest way to control battlefield terrain. The land that Walmart currently intends to develop is zoned for commercial use and remains well situated at a modern crossroads. Even if the retail giant from Arkansas departs, any other commercial venture can come in and develop the site.

The Central Virginia Battlefields Trust and CWPT have preserved historic ground through acquisition. In the Wilderness, the Central Virginia Battlefields Trust acquired a 93 acre tract that is the truly historic crossroads used by the Civil War armies, which is a different intersection than the one where Walmart will build. The CVBT tract looks much as it did in 1864 and its preservation has the potential to allow the National Park Service to neatly bypass the Walmart intersection when developing tours of the Wilderness battlefield. We must pay down the mortgage, though, so we can keep moving on.

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## CENTRAL VIRGINIA BATTLEFIELDS TRUST WILDERNESS ROAD SITE



*We are aggressively seeking all manner of additional resources to pay off this property as quickly as possible because there are other properties farther east, on the Chancellorsville battlefield, that also need our attention.*

**{ACQUIRING WILDERNESS CROSSROADS, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2}**

The purchase price of these important 93 acres came to \$952,322. Despite a horrendous economic downturn, the Commonwealth of Virginia has managed to provide \$316,667 toward this acquisition. In addition, the CWPT has generously sent us \$95,000. As a consequence, the balance due has already dropped to \$540,655. We are aggressively seeking all manner of additional resources to pay off this property as quickly as possible because there are other properties farther east, on the Chancellorsville battlefield, that also need our attention.

Because we have been able to tap into the state grant, donating to the Wilderness Crossroads will increase the impact of each of our member donations. Every dollar donated will be matched by additional dollars. Being able to attract public funds when times are so tough indicates that the Commonwealth of Virginia recognizes the importance of the Wilderness Crossroads site as well. While the threat of Walmart has not diminished, the Central Virginia Battlefields Trust has been able to keep this critical terrain intact. In time, it will allow visitors to bypass the modern commercial intersection no matter what gets built there. **st**

# Central Virginia Battlefields Trust Releases Newest Journal

Since 2002, the Central Virginia Battlefields Trust has published an annual journal of history called *Fredericksburg History and Biography*. This eighth issue, which was published at the end of 2009, is fine addition to this series. It contains three well researched articles, a transcribed diary, and a close look at a period photograph.

The first piece in this new journal is volume one of the diary of Doctor Brodie Strachan Herndon, transcribed and annotated by Russell P. Smith. The period of this diary is 1847 through 1848. While it contains the thoughts and observations of a well respected local person, its themes echo the larger history of the nation. It is thus a window into how these larger events were viewed from this local perspective. Russ Smith has done similar work on volume two of Dr. Herndon's diary, which was published in two parts, in the journals of 2007 and 2008. He has also put together a glossary of the many people that were Dr. Herndon's friends, relations, and acquaintances.

Another article is from John S. Harrison, whose Civil War ancestors came to Fredericksburg with the South Carolina Pee Dee Light Artillery. There were two Harrison brothers, in Stonewall Jackson's corps, posted on the far right of the Confederate line, on December 13, 1862. Their artillery positions can be seen at the end of Lee Drive, in the Fredericksburg Battlefield Park. Tragically, both brothers were killed on that day of battle.

John Harrison is an attorney in North Carolina, whose brother is Lloyd B. Harrison, III, a local banker. His thor-



ough research traced the fateful steps of the two young artillerymen to Fredericksburg and on the 136th anniversary of the 1862 battle, he and his brother Lloyd stood at the exact spot where the two other Harrison brothers had bravely served their guns. It is a very moving piece.

Noel Harrison is a National Park Service historian who meticulously studies Civil War period photographs. His focus in this journal is to figure out when a scene of the upper pontoon crossing site was taken, following the Battle of Fredericksburg. Years ago, Civil War photographs were often misidentified when they were published, but in 1975, a former U.S. Army intelligence officer did a systematic study of Civil War period photos and since then historians have been more careful with this visual record. Noel Harrison and other historians in the region have mined the rich photographic record that exists for Fredericksburg and this article is one of those rare treats when something familiar to many readers yields additional details and information through a careful look and analysis. On a side note Noel will be featured on Comcast's new local TV series "History Scene" April 1st.

In a section called Southern Exposure, Noel Harrison presents another photograph, this one from his personal collection. The photo was taken at the time of the Spanish American War when the area near Fredericksburg's old Gunnery Springs was used as a training ground for soldiers preparing for overseas duty in Cuba. It shows a group shot

**{CONTINUED ON PAGE 5}**

**{CVBT RELEASES NEWEST JOURNAL, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 4}**

of infantrymen in the Army's uniform of that period. Once more, through careful research, Mr. Harrison pinpoints the time and place of the photo. It is an excellent bit of detective work.

Author Joe Rokus has penned an article about Daniel D. Wheeler. Wheeler was a Civil War volunteer with the 4th Vermont Infantry Regiment. He fought with the Union army at Fredericksburg and other fields and had an affinity for military life. He requested transfer to the Regular Army and was allowed to make the transition from volunteer soldier to professional at the end of the war. He then pursued a distinguished career at military posts throughout the country. Of special interest is his return to Fredericksburg and marriage to a local girl named Nannie Phillips. Joe Rokus has uncovered all manner of detail related to General Wheeler (he attained that rank just prior to his retirement) although his life in Fredericksburg was a quiet one. Many photographs round out this article very nicely. In the spirit of full disclosure,



Labels: Dr. Herndon and last photograph were rescued at her parent's home, Salisbury, in Orange County on November 25, 1877. (M.H. 10/1/19)

**Oh, the Wonders of the 19th Century!**  
The Diary of Doctor Brodie Strachan Herndon,  
VOLUME 1  
TRANSCRIBED AND ANNOTATED BY RUSSELL P. SMITH

The year 1847 was a time of great events, great change, and great controversy for the United States. The dispute with Great Britain over the Oregon Territory had been settled peacefully, but was had been one with Mexico over expansion in the Southwest. The possible acquisition of new territories intensified the bitter sectional debate over the extension of slavery. The tidal wave of Irish immigration, fueled by the Great Famine, was at its peak and immigrants provided the muscle to expand the nation's network of canals, roads, and railroads. Steam-powered trains, ships, and factories further expanded the nation's economy. People could no longer communicate over long distances through letters. Mail lines literally straggled across the national landscape through circuitous paths. The stockings of good Irish girls and boys at Christmas. All of these things as well as the everyday life of Fredericksburg, Virginia are chronicled in the 1847 diary of Dr. Brodie S. Herndon.

Dr. Herndon was a native Fredericksburger. He and his wife, Lucy Ellen Haulsham, both Herndon, moved to Fredericksburg in 1847. Lucy was born on July 7, 1818, in Danbury Herndon (1783-1824) and Elizabeth Hall (1789-1825). Dr. Herndon had become the cashier of the Farmers Bank here. The National Bank of Fredericksburg, the year before Dr. Herndon's death. From 1825 to 1828, she finally lived in the new Farmers Bank building.



**Daniel D. Wheeler:**  
Medal of Honor  
Recipient Returns to Fredericksburg  
By JEAN W. ROUS

The National Park Service has a photograph of five officers of the 4th Vermont Infantry Regiment, one of whom is a Lieutenant Daniel D. Wheeler. Wheeler would receive the Medal of Honor, as the official citation reads: "For distinguished bravery in action, at the Highgate, Virginia, 3 May 1863, when he was wounded and had a horse shot from under him." The Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania National Military Park also has Wheeler's field glasses on display in the Chamberlain Visitor Center, donated in 1977 by Nancy Waller Peres, a resident of Fredericksburg, whose father, Dr. Robert J. Peres, had been Wheeler's family doctor. This Union soldier who fought bravely as Salem Church developed into a Fredericksburg legend after the war. Who was he? The Wheeler family traces its roots back to George Wheeler, Daniel's sixth great-grandfather, who came from England around 1636, to the Concord area of the Massachusetts Bay Colony. Daniel Wheeler's father, Daniel Honore Wheeler, was born in Jeffrey, New Hampshire, in 1816. He married Susan Davis in 1839. In 1860 U.S. Census, Daniel Honore Wheeler was listed as a merchant.

Daniel Davis Wheeler was born in Concord, Vermont, on July 12, 1841. Concord is still a small community that has recognized its Russian writer and historian. More recently, Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, the Russian writer and historian, lived there from 1976 until 1994. A constituent of the Vermont Legislature, received the Medal of Honor for bravery at the Battle of Spotsylvania Court House, on May 10, 1864. Native son Daniel Wheeler, who was also awarded the Medal of Honor, has apparently been forgotten.

one of the photographs in this piece was mislabeled, but an errata sheet is provided to fix this error.

The journal itself is a handsome publication, elegantly designed by Jackson Foster, of the graphic design firm, The ID Entity.

The covers alone are of great interest. This volume, for instance, has a cover photo of a group of Union officers who have the air of veterans. They wear their uniforms comfortably and project an attitude of confidence.

On the back cover, by comparison, is a photo of soldiers still in training. Their uniforms are new and the men wearing them are obviously not yet battle hardened.

Also included on the inside back cover is a list of articles to be found in earlier issues. The CVBT is justly proud of this series of journals and this volume is a worthy addition. All earlier additions are available on the Central Virginia Battlefields Trusts web site. [www.cvbt.org](http://www.cvbt.org) **sl**

## Stay on the Skirmish Line!



Take a look at the mailing label on your latest Skirmish Line newsletter. You will note your personal Central Virginia Battlefields Trust membership expiration date. To help us save on mailing costs and time, please be sure you are up to date on your membership. While we would love to offer the newsletter to everyone who has supported us in the past, economics dictate that we can only afford to send it to our current members. So please, please renew your subscription at the appropriate time to ensure that you will continue to receive your newsletter. You might also consider upgrading your membership level to increase our ability to save the hallowed ground we all seek to preserve.



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The Trust's mission is to purchase Civil War battlefield terrain and to advocate for battlefield protection at the local, state, and federal levels of government.

For information on membership, please write to the Trust at P.O. Box 3417, Fredericksburg, VA 22402; call our office at (540) 374-0900; or visit our website at [www.cvbt.org](http://www.cvbt.org).

Contributions to the CVBT are tax-deductible.

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