



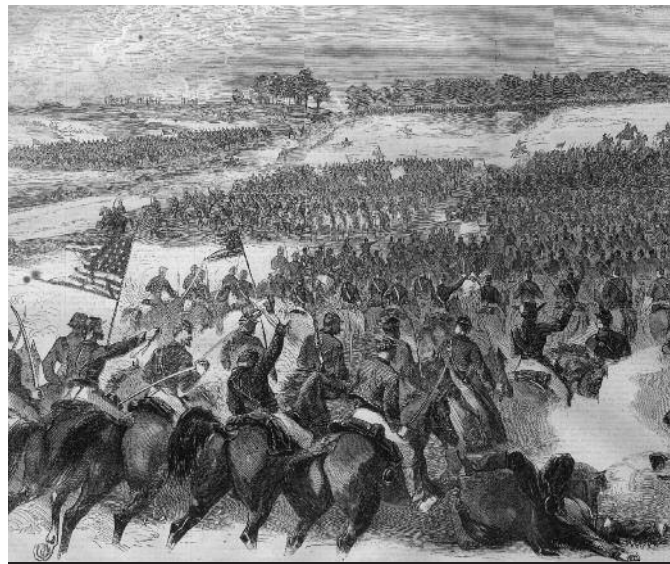
ON THE **skirmish** *line*

Newsletter of The Central Virginia Battlefields Trust

## Don't Miss the Annual Meeting in April!

**T**he Central Virginia Battlefields Trust is preparing for its upcoming annual meeting, which will be held from **April 27 through 29**. Our meeting will begin on Friday, April 27, with a tour of the Cedar Mountain Battlefield, led by NPS Historian Greg Mertz.

We will then visit Kelly's Ford, where Major John Pelham was killed. Greg and well known author and historian Clark "Bud" Hall will be our guides on the Kelly's Ford tour. Following the tour, we will enjoy dinner at the historic Inn at Kelly's Ford, with J.E.B. Stuart IV presenting a talk on his famous ancestor's leadership skills. On Saturday, Bud Hall will lead a tour of Brandy Station, with visits to two local antebellum homes, Auburn and Rose Hill.



**This sketch by artist Alfred Waud depicts the charge of General John Buford's 6th Pennsylvania Cavalry on the St. James Plateau at Brandy Station. The sketch first appeared in *Harper's Weekly* on July 4, 1863.**

Our dinner and annual meeting will take place Saturday evening at the Country Inn & Suites in Fredericksburg. As usual, we will enjoy drinks and camaraderie prior to dinner. Our keynote speaker will be noted author, historian, and CVBT Board Member Robert K. Krick, who will enlighten us with "Some Amazing and Amusing Anecdotes from the Early Days of Battlefield Preservation around Fredericksburg."

Sunday's events will begin with breakfast and a tour of the White Oak Museum,

which NPS Chief Historian John Hennessy has called "perhaps the greatest locally-oriented collection of Civil War artifacts in the country." Later that morning, NPS Historian Eric Mink will lead a tour of the grounds of historic Brompton,

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Exploring the White Oak Museum. Photo Courtesy of Stafford Tourism.

**{APRIL ANNUAL MEETING, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1}**

the wartime home of John Marye. With a commanding view atop Marye's Heights, Brompton is now the home of the President of the University of Mary Washington.

Headquarters for the weekend will be the Country Inn & Suites. We have secured a block of rooms for Thursday, Friday and Saturday nights at a special rate of \$82 per night. Please reserve your rooms by calling the hotel at (540) 898-1800 by April 12 to guarantee the availability of the CVBT special rate. To reserve your space on the CVBT tours and for dinner, please contact us as soon as possible by mail, email at [execdirector@cvbt.org](mailto:execdirector@cvbt.org), or by phone at (540) 374-0900.

Finally, we wanted to let you know of a special program (unrelated to the CVBT meeting) that will be presented in Fredericksburg at 7:30 p.m. on Thursday, April 26. Virginia Tech Professor Emeritus James I. "Bud" Robertson will deliver a lecture at the University of Mary Washington on the daily lives of Civil War soldiers. This presentation will be based on stories described in Professor Robertson's latest book, *The Untold Civil War*. The lecture is free and open to the public. Please go to <http://www.umw.edu/greatlives/> for further details. **sl**

# CVBT to Host Park Day 2012 at Chancellorsville Battlefield

**T**he Central Virginia Battlefields Trust will host Park Day 2012 at the Chancellorsville Battlefield on Saturday, March 31. Park Day, which has been sponsored by the Civil War Trust (CWT) since 1996, is an annual hands-on preservation event designed to bring maintenance projects large and small to Civil War battlefields and historic sites. The day's activities are underwritten with a grant from History™, formerly The History Channel, and the effort is recognized by the U.S. Department of the Interior as a "Take Pride in America" event.

Chancellorsville will be one of more than 60 Civil War battlefields, parks and historical sites that are participating in Park Day this year. We at CVBT look forward to working with other Civil War enthusiasts and citizens at the Chancellorsville site, to share the message and mission of preserving endangered hallowed ground, and to do our part to keep our local battlefields in top condition.

Our work at Chancellorsville will include significant trash pickup along the park roads, painting the cannon carriages at Hazel Grove I and Fairview, making repairs to the rope fence around the Chancellor House site ruins, and cleaning up tree debris around the Chancellor House site. Volunteers who participate in Park Day events will receive a free commemorative T-shirt from the CWT. CVBT will also provide a free DVD entitled "On the Front Line" to all Chancellorsville participants. **sl**



**ON THE SKIRMISH LINE** is published for the CVBT membership at P.O. Box 3417, Fredericksburg, VA 22402. Contact CVBT at **540-374-0900** or [www.cvbt.org](http://www.cvbt.org). The CVBT is chartered as a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. All contributions are tax deductible. A financial statement is available, upon request, from the Virginia Office of Consumer Affairs.

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## Auburn: Culpeper's Architectural and Historical Gem

by Clark B. Hall

**M**ore than twenty years ago when I first began researching Culpeper's rich Civil War history, I was fortunate to meet a truly memorable lady—a lady in the truest sense of that distinguished term. It is a fact that Sallie Ratrie Witten, the matriarch of Auburn, helped set the model for Culpeper graciousness, geniality and unselfishness of spirit.

And although she has been deceased for more than a decade, I can close my eyes and envision the lovely Mrs. Witten sitting serenely on Auburn's porticoed porch while relating tales of an era now gone with the wind. In her beautiful, ancient Virginia dialect, Sallie repeatedly expressed her love for Auburn—she pronounced it “Awhhburrn”—and I know how proud she would be today of the tender care Auburn receives from her two loving daughters, her sons-in-law, and their children.

Built in 1855-1856 for James A. Beckham and located just west of Brandy Station, Auburn is located precisely in the center of the most beautiful 425-acre farm field in Culpeper County. Architects describe Auburn as embodying “Greek Revival” style, and this gleaming, white home situated solidly within the southern sector of the Brandy Station Battlefield repeatedly witnessed significant action during the Civil War.

Someone once inquired, “Which Culpeper farm hosted more general officers, on both sides, than any other?” My answer: “Unquestionably, Auburn.” Some homes indeed received more Confederate generals (Afton; Redwood; Beauregard), while others entertained more Union generals (Farley; Rose Hill; Greenwood; Glen Ella). But, at one time or the other, Auburn observed all the top commanders, both Blue and Gray—including R.E. Lee and Ulysses Grant. (If only those old walls could talk...)

In late 1862, John Minor Botts, a cantankerous Whig from Richmond and ardent Unionist, fraudulently took possession of Auburn (long story) from a demented, incapacitated James Beckham. Franklin Stearns, a Richmond businessman and fellow Unionist, “co-owned” Auburn, and Stearns also purchased nearby Farley at the same time. Botts moved his wife, three daughters and a son into Auburn in January 1863.

Within days of Botts' Culpeper arrival, the Civil War literally landed right on his front doorstep, as General Jeb Stuart—having no love for “Yankee John Botts”—galloped up at Auburn “with his entire cavalry force.” “General Stuart...took possession of every part of my premises,” Botts complained, “with his highly incensed command.”



Auburn witnessed significant action during the Civil War.

Little did Botts know that Jeb Stuart's harassing visit would be the least of his wartime concerns.

More cavalry battles occurred in Culpeper than any other county in this country, and most took place while successive commands advanced and retreated from Fleetwood Hill over the broad, flat plain stretching between Auburn and the railroad tracks. Thousands of cavalry troopers crossed sabers within a bugle call of Auburn's front porch, and there is no doubt that the last structure many dying soldiers witnessed was Auburn itself.

Beginning in November 1863, the Army of the Potomac moved into Culpeper for six months and Auburn's grounds were covered with thousands of tents and drilling soldiers. Sympathetic to the North because of his political alienation from Virginia, Botts invited Generals Ulysses Grant and George Meade, as well as many other Federals to dine at Auburn. Ironically, the evidence is abundantly clear that Auburn survived the war simply because Unionist Botts was “friendly with the Yankees.”

John Minor Botts died in 1869 and a court decision resulted in his heirs losing the farm back to the Beckham family from which it was originally stolen. Turner Ratrie, Sallie Witten's father, purchased Auburn in 1915, and this acquisition signaled the beginning of the present ownership of this magnificent estate.

### Now for some great news...

Based on an extraordinarily impressive application submitted by Auburn's owners, Sarah Witten Barron and her husband, Bill Barron, and Crimora Witten Ayers, the Board of Historic Resources has placed Auburn in the Virginia Landmarks Register, honoring Auburn as one of the Commonwealth's precious historic resources. Further, Auburn has been entered into the National Register of Historic Places, meaning of course, Auburn is now recognized as a national historic treasure. What an honor!

Congratulations to Auburn's entire family! Gazing down from upon high, your beloved Sallie Ratrie Witten must be deeply proud of each of you.

## CVBT Teams Up With Muvico Village 12 / Splitsville For A Special Charity Event

ONCE EVERY SO OFTEN A CHANCE ENCOUNTER LEADS TO something that is truly special. Last fall, a CVBT Board member had the opportunity to speak with one of the partners involved with the Muvico Village 12 (now Paragon) Movie Theater / Splitsville bowling alley complex in Spotsylvania County. The partner offered to let CVBT present a short preservation film prior to the showing of regular movies at the theater. However, after the partner saw the Trust's film spot, he indicated that Muvico / Splitsville might be able to do something more to help CVBT save "dirt and grass."

After some discussion, the concept of Muvico hosting a Battlefield Preservation Weekend was born. The event was held on February 11 and 12. On Saturday, February 11, guests were treated to see "Gone With The Wind" or "Glory" on the Muvico big screens, for a five dollar donation for each show. All proceeds from the movie sales went to CVBT. Movie-goers were also able to meet Civil War historians Russ Smith, Eric Mink and Erik Nelson on site, and purchase the new volume of CVBT's *Fredericksburg History & Biography* journal, which the historians



Authors Erik Nelson, Eric Mink and Russ Smith sign copies of *Fredericksburg History & Biography*.

wrote. Guests could also admire the battlefield photographs of Kerri Williams, who promised to donate 40 percent of her on site sales to CVBT.

On the following day, families and friends enjoyed several hours of bowling and hors d'oeuvres from the in-house restaurant while supporting the preservation of battlefield land. The Trust was also able to secure generous financial sponsors for the bowling event. All in all, the events on both days were extremely successful, and a lot of fun.

The CVBT Board is extremely grateful for the tremendous generosity that the owners and staff of the Muvico Village 12 (now Paragon) / Splitsville complex showed us, and for their willingness to partner with us to support the preservation of hallowed ground. Our thanks and appreciation go out to you! sl

## Fredericksburg History & Biography: The 2011 Volume is Now Available

As the Central Virginia Battlefields Trust embarks on its sixteenth year of preserving hallowed ground, we are proud to have reached another very notable milestone: the publication of the tenth annual volume of *Fredericksburg History & Biography*. While CVBT remains focused on its primary mission of preserving battlefield lands, we are pleased that we have been able to provide this scholarly journal for our members and interested readers for a full decade.

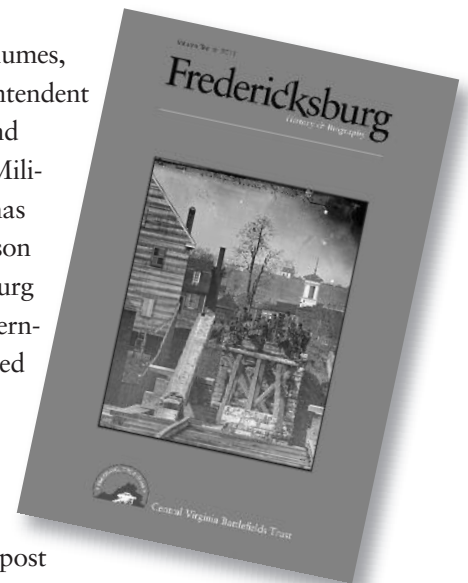
As indicated above, we celebrated the journal's publication with a book signing event at the Muvico Village 12 theaters on February 11. Copies of the journal have been mailed to all members who are at the Active (\$135 per year) level or above, as a benefit of their CVBT membership. Journals are also available at several local bookstores, at the National Park Service's Fredericksburg Battlefield Visitor Center, and through our web site at [www.cvbt.org](http://www.cvbt.org).

Like previous volumes, the 2011 journal provides a combination of new historical research and previously unpublished primary material.

In three previous volumes, Russell P. Smith, Superintendent of the Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania National Military Park (F&SNMP), has shared detailed first person accounts of Fredericksburg resident Dr. Brodie S. Herndon. In his final annotated transcript of Dr. Herndon's diary, "The Good Lord Raises Us Up Friends in Every Need,"

Mr. Smith describes the post war years that Dr. Herndon spent in Fredericksburg prior to his move to Savannah, Georgia in November 1868. CVBT is most appreciative of the time and intensive labor that Superintendent Smith has taken over the years to transcribe and share Dr. Herndon's diaries with our readers.

The second article in volume 10: "Each Man His Own Supply Train," was written by Erik F. Nelson, past president and a founding member of CVBT, as well as the



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founding (and current) editor of the journal. Mr. Nelson's piece examines the Battle of Chancellorsville from a unique and thoughtful perspective. While acknowledging the humiliating defeat that the Army of the Potomac suffered at the hands of Robert E. Lee's Army of Northern Virginia in May 1863, Mr. Nelson asserts that the Union's spring campaign was in fact a success in terms of the logistics lessons that it learned in supplying its field armies. Mr. Nelson concludes that the Union's efforts to attain greater field mobility—learned and tested at Chancellorsville—would eventually help it win the war.

The predicament of Stafford and Spotsylvania residents who remained loyal to the Union during the war is examined in detail by Donald C. Pfanz, staff historian for the F&SNMP in "Strangers in Our Own Land: The Plight of Unionists in Stafford and Spotsylvania Counties, Virginia." Mr. Pfanz describes a number of ways in which Union sympathizers were intimidated by Southern loyalists, and suffered significant consequences for holding their beliefs. Mr. Pfanz's article further examines the records of the Southern Claims Commission for Stafford and Spotsylvania Counties. Since the purpose of the Commission was to reimburse loyal Union citizens living in the south for damages they had suffered at the hands of the Union army, the Commission's records for the two counties provide considerable information regarding the Unionists who lived in the Fredericksburg area during that time.

Eric J. Mink, Cultural Resources Manager for the

F&SNMP, has again contributed important new information to the Southern Exposure section of this journal. A widely published photograph was taken in April 1863, which depicted a group of Confederate soldiers standing on a ruined railroad bridge in Fredericksburg. In his article "Captain Andrew R. Govan of the 17th Mississippi Infantry," Mr. Mink presents additional photographs that were taken alongside this well-known image, and he is able to use handwritten notations from the original paper mounts to identify an officer who is standing at the center of the group. Based on this information, Mr. Mink is able to bring us the story of Captain Andrew Govan's life and service in the Army of Northern Virginia.

In marking the tenth anniversary of *Fredericksburg History & Biography*, we of the CVBT Board want to stop and recognize the tremendous amount of effort and dedication that founding editor Erik F. Nelson has consistently given to ensure the success of this journal. Erik's on-the-job performance and his incredible work ethic have been a constant example to all of us, and his editorial skills are simply unsurpassed. Most importantly, perhaps, he has been a source of inspiration to all would-be CVBT journal contributors, and he has thus been instrumental in keeping this scholarly journal on track and always moving forward. Erik's dedication to the journal is clear from the fact that even though he has taken a well-deserved break from his service on the CVBT Board of Directors, he is still serving as our Editor in Chief. All of us send Erik our heartfelt thanks and appreciation for a job well done! SL



**Remember to order all your Amazon.com items through the CVBT Amazon web link. CVBT receives a percentage of the order to help preserve hallowed ground!**



## Stay on the Skirmish Line!

Take a look at the mailing label on your latest Skirmish Line newsletter. You will see that it includes your CVBT membership expiration date. As a dirt and grass outfit, members can help us save on mailing costs by checking that expiration date and sending in their renewal on their own. If the date is highlighted, your membership has expired. While we would like to share the Skirmish Line with everyone, we can only afford to send it to current members. So please renew your membership at the appropriate time. You might also consider upgrading your membership level, to increase our capability to save hallowed ground in central Virginia.



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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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### Membership Categories

Annual Member	\$ 35	Patron	\$ 500	Life Patron	\$10,000
Active Member	\$ 135	Benefactor	\$ 1,000	Corporate Member	\$ 500
Sustaining Member	\$ 250	Life Member	\$ 5,000	Corporate Patron	\$ 1,000

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