



The Newsletter of the Bull Run Civil War Round Table — Vol. XXXII, Issue 1, JANUARY 2025

## **HISTORIAN & AUTHOR MELISSA WINN SPEAKS ON “DEAD LETTER OFFICE PHOTOS: THE CIVIL WAR’S INTERRUPTED SENTIMENTS” AT THE JANUARY 9th, 2025 MEMBERSHIP MEETING**

**By Mark Trbovich**

During the Civil War years, hundreds of thousands of soldiers wrote letters home, many containing card-sized photos of themselves. By the end of the conflict, thousands of letters remained undelivered at the Dead Letter Office in Washington, D.C. For decades after the war, the employees of the Dead Letter Office made extraordinary efforts to return these images to their rightful recipients. BRCWRT’s own Melissa Winn will share photos from her collection of Dead Letter Office images and tell the touching story of these interrupted sentiments and the noble efforts by many to send them home.

Melissa Winn is the Director of Marketing and Communications for the National Museum of Civil War Medicine. Previously she worked as the Marketing Manager for the American Battlefield Trust and as Director of Photography for HistoryNet, publisher of nine history-related magazines, including *America’s Civil War*, *American History*, and *Civil War Times*, for which she served as the primary photo researcher, photographer, and a regular writer. She’s a senior editor for *Military Images* magazine, with a regular column focused on women and the Civil War and is a member of the Board of Directors of the Civil War Roundtable Congress. Winn re-

### **MEMBERSHIP MEETING**

**THURSDAY, January 9, 2025**

**6 P.M. Social Hour**

**7 P.M. In-person at the Centreville Regional Library & Streamed on Facebook Live and Zoom**

### **GUEST SPEAKER:**

**Melissa Winn**

### **TOPIC:**

**“Dead Letter Office Photos: The Civil War’s Interrupted Sentiments”**

ceived a BA in English from the University of Wisconsin and has written for and published articles in multiple trade and commercial publications for more than 20 years. She’s a member of the Professional Photographers Association, Authors Guild, and the Center for Civil War Photography. Winn collects Civil War photographs and ephemera, with an emphasis on Dead Letter Office images and Union General John A. Rawlins, chief of staff to General Ulysses S. Grant.

Come join us early at our January 9th, 2025, Membership Meeting to have an opportunity to chat with Melissa and your colleagues before the meeting begins. Doors open at 6:00 PM; hope to see you there.

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The **Bull Run Civil War Round Table** publishes the **Stone Wall**.

**Newsletter Team:** Sandra Cox, Janet Green-tree, Melissa Winn, Debbie and Mark Whitenon.

For meeting dates and other information, please visit the Web site: <http://bullruncwrt.org>

**NEWSLETTER SUBMISSION DEADLINE**

For the **February 2025 issue**, e-mail articles by **February 3rd** to the editor, Don Richardson, at: [don.richardson@erols.com](mailto:don.richardson@erols.com)

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**UPCOMING MEETINGS**

- January 9, 2025** Melissa Winn - "Dead Letter Office Photos: The Civil War's Interrupted Sentiments"
- February 13** Scott Patchan - "Shenandoah Summer: The 1864 Valley Campaign"
- March 13** Dawn Diehl & Linda Harrison - "The Healing: Conversations With Civil War Nurses"
- April 10** Garrett Kost - "The Spirit Fled to God Who Gave It: Dr. Charles Leale & The Medical Treatment of Abraham Lincoln at Ford's Theater"
- May 8** Patrick Schroeder - "Myths About R.E. Lee's Surrender At Appomattox VA, April 1865"
- June 12** John Hennessy - "The People's Army: The Life and Mind of the Army of the Potomac"
- July 10** Ronald Coddington - "Civil War Portrait Photography: Reflections of a Generation"

In This Issue	
<b>President's Column</b>	<b>Page 3</b>
<b>Welcome New Members</b>	<b>Page 4</b>
<b>BRCWRT Calendar of Events</b>	<b>Page 5</b>
<b>Preservation Corner</b>	<b>Page 6</b>
<b>Image of the Month</b>	<b>Page 13</b>
<b>Taking Care of Business</b>	<b>Page 14</b>

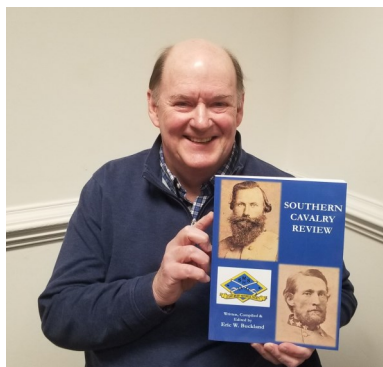


## THE PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

By Kim Brace

Our December monthly meeting featured Historian Eric Buckland speaking on a topic near to the hearts of many of our members: "Mosby: When The Story Ended, The Legend Began". It also featured cake to celebrate the holidays. Members enjoyed both presentation and cake thoroughly.

Our speaker, Eric Buckland  
(Photo: Janet Greentree)



William Miller of the Williamsburg Civil War Round Table did an excellent article last week for the Emerging Civil War listserv on the case for battlefield preservation. After discussing early attempts by Civil War veterans at preserving the places where they fought, Miller noted how in 1987 a few Civil War historians founded the Association for the Preservation of Civil War Sites. This evolved into the Civil War Trust and ultimately the American Battlefield Trust.

Miller wrote: *"But not to be overlooked, and more importantly to be emphasized, are the hundreds of Civil War Round Tables that have been established throughout the land. The Round Tables serve as the local focal points for fellow Civil War travelers that number in the thousands. The Civil War Round Tables are the places where we gather to hear the stories and presentations that increase our knowledge and*

*spike our enthusiasm to do more to preserve our heritage and our hallowed grounds.*

*In a sense, Civil War Round Tables and battlefield preservation are beneficiaries of a symbiotic relationship. Round Table members take inspiration from the educational presentations, and those experiences lead our fellow travelers to commit more treasure to preserve hallowed ground in support of acquisition opportunities as they occur.*

*But make no mistake, our battlefield preservation efforts face great challenges. Profit driven developers with no regard of history are seeking properties on or adjacent to hallowed grounds. At the local level, we must remain vigilant to the encroachment efforts. In a sense, our battlefield preservation organizations and Civil War Round Tables, along with our members, need to assume the role of skirmishers and scouts to establish an early warning network to stem the advance of development threats."*

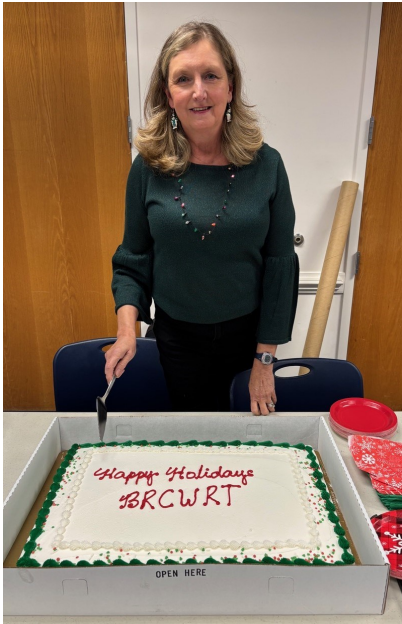
Here in Manassas, your own Bull Run Civil War Round Table (BRCWRT) has been at the forefront of these kinds of challenges, particularly as it relates to the Manassas Battlefield. One of our leaders has been Blake Myers, who has headed up our Preservation Committee for a number of years. Unfortunately, he has chosen to retire and we're looking for someone who can fill rather large shoes. If you are interested, please make yourself known to me.

We are also seeking to solve our troubled monthly meeting broadcast via Facebook and Zoom. Member Dan Patterson has volunteered to help relieve some of the tasks that have fallen on my shoulders, which will help immensely. We're also going to open the connections at 6:45 for our upcoming meeting on

(cont on page 4)

## PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

Thursday so we can verify that people are hearing the sounds via the microphones and the speakers. We won't start the official meeting until 7 PM, but if you have some extra time earlier, please sign on earlier to be one of our guinea pigs.



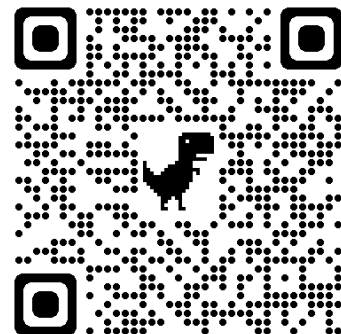
Debbie Whitenton and the Holiday Cake  
(Photo: Blake Myers)

## SUPPORT BRCWRT ACTIVITIES

The Bull Run Civil War Round Table is a 501(c)(3) charitable organization that relies on your donations to continue our excellent programs and initiatives throughout the year. There are many select programs to donate to, including: the BRCWRT Scholarship Fund, Preservation efforts, Civil War Trails sign preservation and maintenance, educational programs, and of course the General donation category (which the Round Table uses as a discretionary fund to offset various expenses, to help keep our membership dues at a reasonable rate). Please consider your Round Table for tax-deductible donations every year. We are a special organization and appreciate our members very much.

There are a number of ways to make a donation. On the BRCWRT website, click the link labelled "Renew/Donate" and select the link at the bottom of that page. Alternatively, you can give a check to our Treasurer at a membership meeting, or mail it to: BRCWRT Treasurer, PO Box 2147, Centreville VA 20122. Make checks payable to BRCWRT, and be sure to note whether it is for the Scholarship Fund, Preservation Fund, or the General Fund.

Finally, you can scan this QR code with the camera on your smartphone to make a donation.



**The Bull Run Civil War  
Round Table Welcomes  
New Members**

Wendy Swanson

David Urban

Richard Willis

## Bull Run Civil War Round Table



### Upcoming 2025 Program of Events

<b>Date</b>	<b>Event</b>
January 9, 2025	Monthly Meeting Speaker: Melissa Winn - "Dead Letter Office Photos: The Civil War's Interrupted Sentiments"
February 13, 2025	Monthly Meeting Speaker: Scott Patchan - "Shenandoah Summer: The 1864 Valley Campaign"
March 13, 2025	Monthly Meeting Speakers: Dawn Diehl & Linda Harrison - "The Healing: Conversations with Civil War Nurses"
March 29, 2025	<b>Spring Tour 1: "Clara Barton Missing Soldiers Office/Civil War Photography"</b> Tour leaders Sam Laudenslager and Melissa Winn
April 10, 2025	Monthly Meeting Speaker: Garrett Kost - "The Spirit Fled to God Who Gave It: Dr. Charles Leale & The Medical Treatment of Abraham Lincoln at Ford's Theater"
April 26, 2025	<b>Spring Tour 2: "Battle of Spotsylvania Court House" (rescheduled from June 2024)</b> Tour Guide Greg Mertz
May 8, 2025	Monthly Meeting Speaker: Patrick Schroeder - "Myths About R.E. Lee's Surrender At Appomattox VA, April 1865"
June 12, 2025	Monthly Meeting Speaker: John Hennessy - "The People's Army: The Life and Mind of the Army of the Potomac"
July 10, 2025	Monthly Meeting Speaker: Ronald Coddington - "Civil War Portrait Photography: Reflections of a Generation"
August 14, 2025	Monthly Meeting Speaker: Dana Shoaf - "Gutbusters: The Development of the Ambulance During the Civil War"
September 11, 2025	Monthly Meeting Speaker: Theodore Savas - "Handshakes, Gambling, & Gunpowder: How George W. Rains and Jefferson Davis Changed The Course of the Civil War"
October 9, 2025	Monthly Meeting Speaker: Patrick Falci - "30th Anniversary of the Making of the Gettysburg Movie"
November 13, 2025	Monthly Meeting Speaker: Jari Villanueva - "24 Notes That Tap Deep Emotions: The Story of America's Most Famous Bugle Call"
December 11, 2025	Monthly Meeting Speaker: Robert Dunkerly - "The Other Surrenders: Spring/Summer 1865"

Monthly Meetings in "Black"    **Tours/Field Trips & Special RT Events in "Red"**    County or outside sponsored events in "Green"



## PRESERVATION CORNER

By Blake Myers

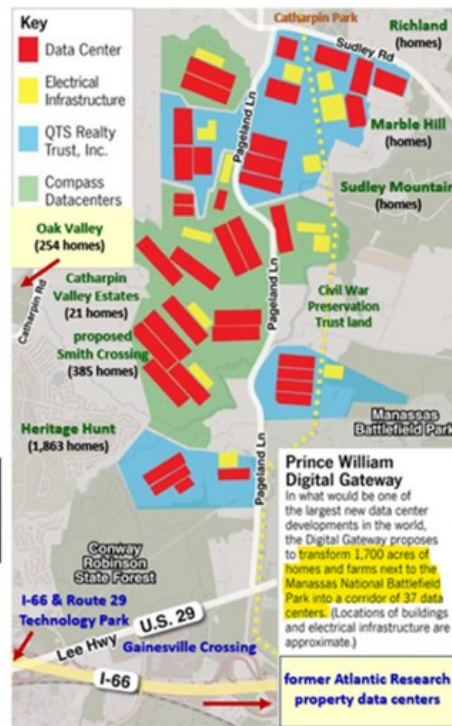
Photos by Blake Myers unless otherwise noted



Greetings BRCWRT Members and Friends - This edition of *Preservation Corner* provides updates on the Prince William Digital Gateway (data centers), the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission (JLARC) study on data centers commissioned by the Virginia State legislature, the Chapel Springs Station (Manassas Logistics Center Phase II) project, and the recent acquisition of significant Battle of Bristoe Station land parcels by Prince William County.

### Prince William Digital Gateway (PWDG)

On December 13, 2023, the Prince William Board of County Supervisors approved three rezoning applications for development of the Prince William Digital Gateway on 1,760 acres adjacent to the Manassas National Battlefield.



On May 23, 2024, Prince William County Circuit Court Judge James A. Willett dismissed an Oak Valley HOA lawsuit challenging the PWDG Comprehensive Plan Amendment approved by the PW Board of County Supervisors in 2021, but ruled that the plaintiffs, which included the Oak Valley Homeowners Association and 10 individual residents, had standing to sue, meaning they had the right to challenge the issue in court. That holding is significant as the plaintiffs have a second lawsuit pending that challenges the rezoning applications approvals. A hearing has yet to be scheduled for the HOA's second lawsuit.

(cont on page 7)

## PRESERVATION CORNER

In January 2024 the American Battlefield Trust (ABT), nine Prince William County (PWC) residents whose properties border the PWDG corridor and the Coalition to Protect Prince William County, represented by attorney and former state senator Chap Petersen, filed a lawsuit challenging the PWDG rezoning approvals. The lawsuit outlined how a lame-duck Prince William County Board of Supervisors illegally approved a trio of rezoning applications to clear the way for constructing the world's largest data center complex immediately adjacent to Manassas National Battlefield Park. The ABT devoted 15 pages of its 77-page petition to a description of the Civil War battles that ebbed and flowed across this area of Northern Virginia, which contains Civil War relics, Civil War soldier burials and remnants of post-Civil War black settlements – an area inappropriate for constructing and operating data centers.

On Thursday, October 3, 2024, six leading national, state and regional conservation organizations filed an *amicus curiae* brief, urging the judge to see it proceed to trial. The brief was filed by the Coalition to Protect Prince William County, Piedmont Environmental Council, National Parks Conservation Association, Preservation Virginia, National Trust for Historic Preservation and Coalition to Protect America's National Parks. These six organizations, while not plaintiffs themselves voiced full-throated support that the historic preservation case to overturn the December 2023 rezoning should be heard at trial.

In a demurrer hearing conducted October 31, 2024, PWC Circuit Court Judge Hudson dismissed the lawsuit on the basis that the complaint was insufficient to make a case against the defendants. The court ruled that the advertisement of the Board's meeting was indeed defective, but that it complied with the "savings" provisions of applicable laws pertaining to the notice. In other words, the defect was cured. The court sustained the demurrer as to all ten (10) of the Trust's alleged defects, in effect dismissing the case.

On December 4, 2024, the ABT announced that it and its nine co-plaintiffs had filed an appeal of the Circuit Court's October 31 demurrer ruling to the Virginia Court of Appeals. As of this date there is no indication of when the appeal may be heard.

### Virginia State Legislature & Data Center Development

Early in the 2024 legislative session 17 bills were introduced recommending guidelines and guardrails for data center developments. Several bills were defeated, but most were "continued" to 2025, awaiting a data center study by the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission (JLARC).

The JLARC Study, *Data Centers in Virginia*, was released and briefed to the Virginia House of Delegates on December 9, 2024. The full report and the JLARC presentation can be viewed at the links, [JLARC | Data Centers in Virginia](#) and [PowerPoint Presentation](#). A report summary is provided below.

(cont on page 8)

## PRESERVATION CORNER

### Findings:

- Data centers provide positive economic benefits to Virginia’s economy, mostly during their initial construction.
- Data centers can generate substantial local tax revenues for localities that have them.
- Data center industry is forecast to drive immense increase in energy demand.
- Building enough infrastructure for unconstrained data center demand will be very difficult and meeting half that demand is still difficult.
- Existing electric utility requirements and processes help limit risks associated with system capacity and reliability.
- Data centers are currently paying their full cost of service, but growing energy demand is likely to increase other customers’ costs.
- Data centers create additional financial risks to electric utilities and their customers.
- Data center backup generators emit pollutants, but their use is minimal, and existing regulations largely curb adverse impacts.
- Data center water use is currently sustainable, but use is growing and could be better managed.
- Localities have allowed data centers to be built near neighborhoods, but some localities are taking steps to minimize residential impacts.
- Changes to the state’s data center sales tax exemption could address some policy concerns related to the industry.

### Recommendations:

- Legislative action:
  - ◇ Clarify that electric utilities have the authority to delay, but not deny, service to customers when the addition of customer load cannot be supported.
  - ◇ Direct Dominion Energy to develop a plan for addressing the risk of infrastructure costs being stranded with existing customers, and file that plan with the State Corporation Commission.
  - ◇ Expressly authorize local governments to require and consider water use estimates for proposed data center developments.
  - ◇ Expressly authorize local governments to require sound modeling studies for proposed data center developments.
  - ◇ Expressly authorize local governments to establish and enforce maximum allowable sound levels for operational data center facilities using alternative low frequency metrics and zoning ordinances.
  - ◇ The General Assembly could make eligibility for data center tax exemption contingent upon one or more of the following:
    - Adopting energy and/or environmental management standards (all data centers).
    - Using lower emission generators (new data centers in Northern Virginia).
    - Conducting Phase 1 historic resource and viewshed studies (new data centers).
    - Conducting sound modeling studies to identify potential noise issues (new data centers).

(cont on page 9)



## PRESERVATION CORNER

- Executive action:
  - ◊ The Virginia Economic Development Partnership should clarify that grants under the Virginia Business Ready Sites Program can be used for potential data center sites.
- Localities should implement several practices to minimize residential impacts:
  - ◊ Classify data centers as industrial use.
  - ◊ Revise zoning maps to prevent by-right data centers next to residential.
  - ◊ Ensure sufficient minimum requirements for data center developments are sufficient (setbacks, building heights).
  - ◊ Designate optimal locations for data center development (away from residential, close to transmission).
  - ◊ Require pre-development sound modeling and revise ordinances to better prevent and address noise conflicts.

Unfortunately, the report did not specifically address the impact of, or provide recommendations concerning, data center developments on or near historic sites, parks and open space.

Now that the Virginia State Legislature has received the JLARC *Data Centers in Virginia* study, stay tuned and attentive as the upcoming 2025 legislative session considers the data center bills 'continued' from 2024, as well as additional data center bills introduced during the 2025 legislative session and beyond.

### **Chapel Springs Station (Manassas Logistics Center Phase II) Project (Bristoe Station and Kettle Run Battlefields & Bristoe Station Battlefield Heritage Park)**

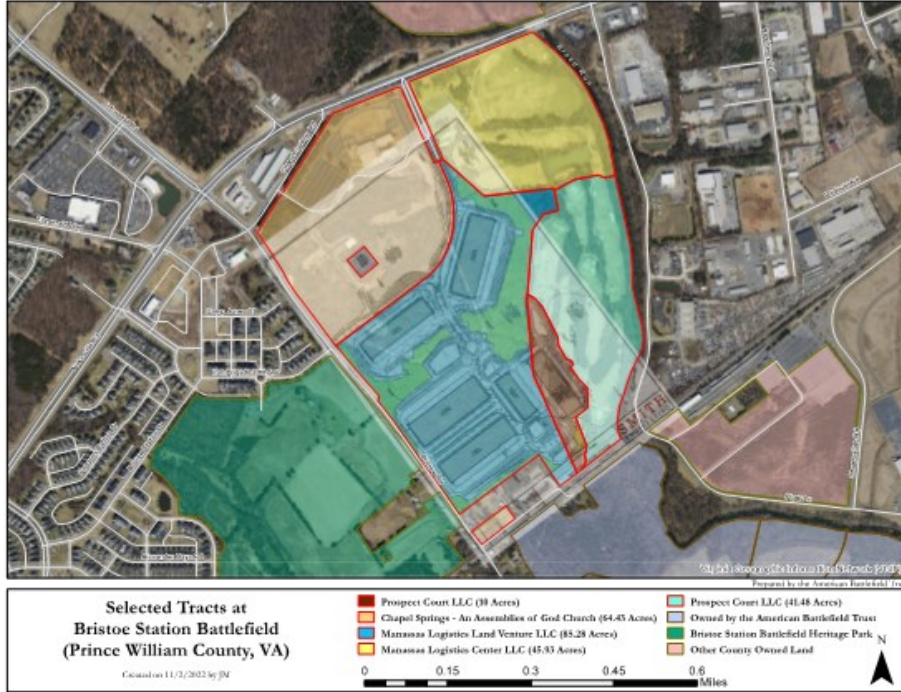
In accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), the wetlands permitting authority for the Manassas Logistics Center PH II project, continues its Section 106 review which began in January 2024. Consistent with NHPA Section 106, the review's purpose was to identify any adverse effects on historic lands and sites (Kettle Run/Manassas Station Operations battlefield, Bristoe Station battlefield, Davis-Beard House, Village of Bristow Historic District, and archaeological site 44PW0971) caused by the proposed project within the project area, and to determine specific measures and/or actions to avoid or mitigate those adverse effects.

Within this review, major focus areas for historic site avoidance and adverse effects mitigation included the southern section of the project area (see annotated maps, below) that contains:

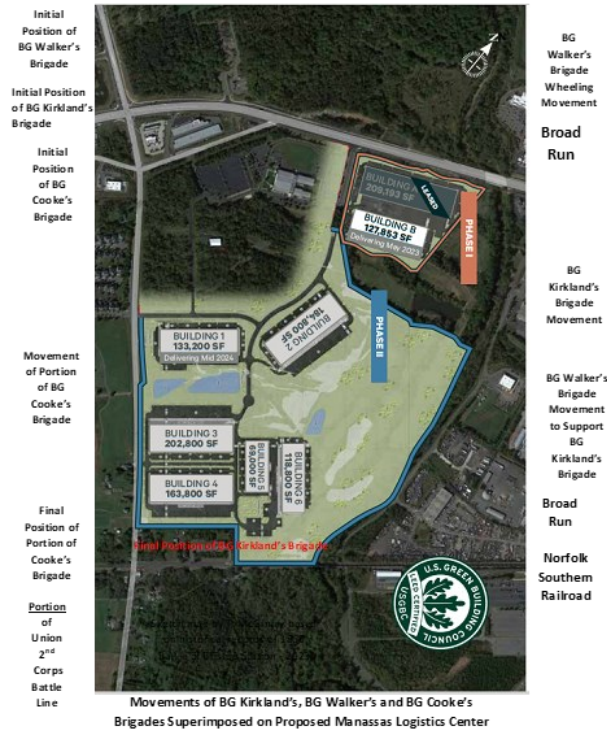
- Land over which Brigadier General William Kirkland's NC Brigade attacked Federal forces positioned along the Orange and Alexandria Railroad (Battle of Bristoe Station),
- Remnants of hut sites of a Civil War era encampment with earthworks, and an associated cemetery containing military graves/burials (archaeological site 44PW0971) that has been recommended as potentially eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places, and
- Historic viewsheds to and from Bristoe Station Battlefield Heritage Park and American Battlefield Trust (ABT)-owned land that is within the Bristoe Station Battlefield Core Area.

(cont on page 10)

# PRESERVATION CORNER



Manassas Logistics Center Phase II Project Concept Overlaid on Parcel Map (courtesy Prince William County)



(cont on page 11)

## PRESERVATION CORNER

A series of consulting party meetings with the USACE and the Applicant/Permittee during the period January 22 – October 16, 2024 focused on developing a Memorandum of Agreement among the Applicant/Permittee (Manassas Logistics Land Venture, LLC), the Virginia State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) and the USACE. On December 10, 2024, USACE distributed the final, executed MOA that was signed by the Applicant/Permittee, the USACE and the SHPO, but was not signed by the Army Cemeteries Office or other consulting parties.

The Bull Run Civil War Round Table (BRCWRT) did not sign the MOA as a concurring party based on the following MOA shortcomings:

- The refusal to include the Bristoe Station Battlefield as one of the properties listed in the MOA to be treated as a historic property for the purposes of Section 106,
- The refusal to include Bristoe Station Battlefield Heritage Park (located on Bristoe Station Battlefield Core Area), as one of the historic properties/contributing resources for which the design and installation of vegetative screening around the build site shall obscure the development from the viewshed of,
- The refusal to include in the MOA procedures for protecting archaeological and cultural resources revealed during the fieldwork – the underlying assumption being that only burials will be discovered, and
- The refusal to define in the MOA what constitutes 'completion of monitoring' (bioarcheological monitoring) before construction activities begin.

Execution of the MOA does not complete the Section 106 process, as the MOA requires the Applicant/Permittee to submit several supporting plans to USACE for distribution to the SHPO and consulting parties for consideration and review during plan-specific 30-day comment periods:

- A Phase III Archaeological Data Recovery Treatment Plan shall be submitted to Corps and consulting parties within twelve (12) months of Agreement execution.
- An Archaeological Monitoring and Human Remains Treatment Plan shall be submitted to Corps and consulting parties within twelve (12) months of Agreement execution.
- A Conservation Easement Plan shall be submitted to Corps and consulting parties within twenty-four (24) months of Agreement execution.
- A Vegetative Screening Plan shall be submitted to Corps and consulting parties within twelve (12) months of Agreement execution.
- An Interpretive Signage and Crosswalk Plan shall be submitted to Corps and consulting parties within eighteen (18) months of Agreement execution.

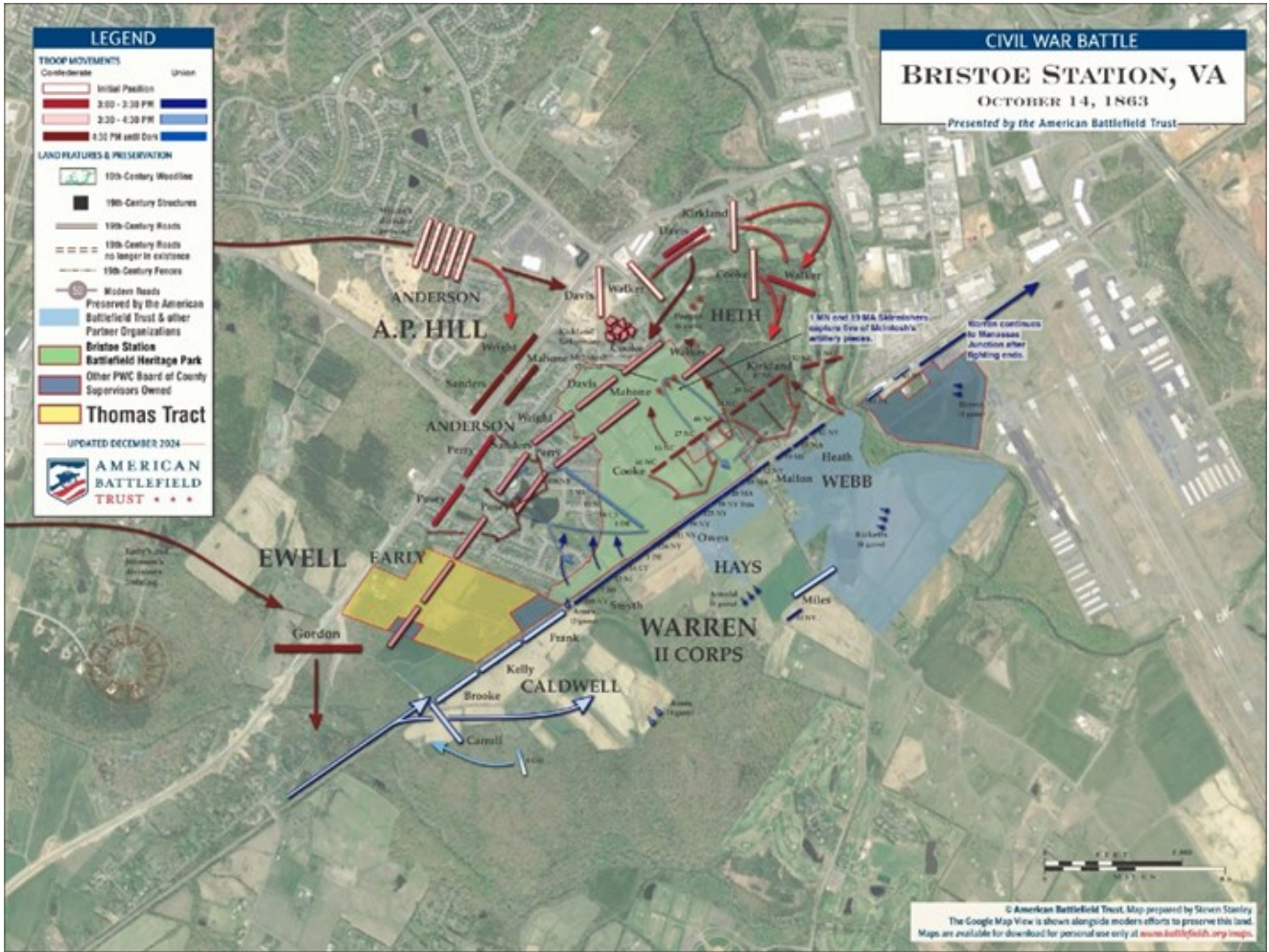
Consulting parties will continue to work within the on-going Section 106 review process to review and provide feedback and comments on the supporting plans as they are submitted.

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# PRESERVATION CORNER

## Bristoe Station Battlefield (Bristoe Station Battlefield Heritage Park)

On December 10, 2024, the Prince William Board of County Supervisors voted to purchase the Rollins Farm property and the Manassas Business Park property from ABT (see annotated map, below). The Manassas Business Park property will convey to the County once it is under conservation easement. Both properties lie within the Bristoe Station Battlefield Core Area and will be incorporated into Bristoe Station Battlefield Heritage Park.



Battle of Bristoe Station Annotated Map – Rollins Farm and Manassas Business Park Properties in Light Blue (courtesy American Battlefield Trust)

Thank you for your continued interest in, and support of, Civil War historic preservation in general and in BRCWRT’s preservation projects, actions, and activities.

Blake Myers, BRCWRT Preservation Committee

## THE MEDICAL DEPARTMENT

### By Melissa A. Winn

Walt Whitman in his postwar memoir, *Memoranda During the War*, said, "It seem'd sometimes as if the whole interest of the land, North and South, was one vast central Hospital, and all the rest of the affair but flanges...." The writer spent months in the hospitals of Washington, D.C., caring for soldiers, and he observed firsthand the rapidly expanding medical infrastructure of a nation at war with itself. By December 1864, the Department of Washington administered 25 hospitals with 21,000 beds. Whitman recalled that no matter what direction he looked, he could see the "grim clusters" of hospital wards "dotting the beautiful landscape." At times there were 50,000 patients in the District and the surrounding counties.

The Medical Department structure pictured here was one of many built in the capital to serve the healthcare needs of the region. Its specific purpose is unknown, but the stacks of supply crates at the left side of the image indicate it might have been used as a warehouse. Sharply dressed civilians stand in front of stacks of crates with rope handles. The civilians might be some of the thousands of government workers who helped keep the Union war machine going.

Two Veteran Reserve Corps soldiers wear the distinctive sky blue coats of that corps. The VRC was formed in 1863 of men who could still serve guard duty and other rear area functions, but who were no longer fit for the front lines. The corporal is relaxed, but the private stands at support arms. Picket-fence guards around trees were used to prevent the thousands of horses in Washington, D.C., from nibbling the bark. A long row of barrels lines the curb. One serves as a footrest for a soldier.



## TAKING CARE OF BUSINESS

By Don Richardson

When Civil War armies went into winter quarters, both officers and men found themselves with much time on their hands. BG Israel B. Richardson's Brigade (2<sup>nd</sup> Michigan, 3<sup>rd</sup> Michigan, 5<sup>th</sup> Michigan, and 37<sup>th</sup> New York) spent the winter of 1861-62 at Camp Michigan, located in a pine forest south of Alexandria VA. Many men spent their idle time writing letters, playing cards, or visiting interesting places such as George Washington's home at Mount Vernon. Apart from reconnaissance missions to keep an eye on the Confederates, there wasn't much military action going on.

Many of the officers did as their men did, but some of them also took the time to deal with personal business matters. General Richardson, concerned that the Army was going to be paid only in Treasury notes from the first of the year, and worried about their potential drop in value, wrote home seeking advice from his parents about the best way to send his money home and invest it.



### Richardson's Brigade, Camp Michigan, Jan 7<sup>th</sup> 1862

My Dear Mother,

I received your kind letter, at which we were much pleased, and answered immediately. Marcella's letter, which you spoke of in yours, had failed to reach me. I have written five times on one subject and could never yet get any answer, and am going to write on the same subject again, and on no other. Will you please answer me as quickly as possible, if it is only five words.

The banks of the city of New York, on the 1<sup>st</sup> of this month refused to assist the government any farther with either silver or gold, consequently the treasury department has been ordered to pay the army in nothing but treasury notes hereafter. I am fearful that these notes, within another month, will depreciate very much in value. I have a considerable amount on hand and can get gold for them at a small discount.

If I should send the notes home, could they be put out at interest immediately, or had I better change them into gold and send that home to be put out at interest? I would like to have Father express his opinion about it. Please answer as soon as possible, so that I may know what to do. Fannie and myself send love to all. Susan's cold is better. All the rest are well.

Your Affectionate Son,  
I. B. Richardson

The 46-year-old General mentioned his 20-year-old wife Fannie, who at the time was almost 7 months pregnant. Susan, the eldest of his three sisters, was living near the army with her husband, Joseph Peck, and two of their four children – eldest son Anning and four-year-old Clara. Peck had acquired a sutler's license at the outset of the war and had been travelling with the army since then. The Peck family had to deal with the same hardships as the soldiers – Susan and both children were ill at various times. Joseph Peck decided to get out of the sutler business and take his

(cont on page 15)

## TAKING CARE OF BUSINESS

family home to Michigan; the General gave him advice on these transactions. He also informed his father of the disposition of his assets mentioned in the previous letter.

**Richardson's Brigade, Camp Michigan, Jan. 19<sup>th</sup> 1862**

Dear Father,

Mr. Peck sold out his privilege of suttling yesterday for \$1,000, and sells his other things off at cost; amounting to in all about \$1,900, of which he gets one third down, and the rest secured by two signers, payable half in thirty days, and the rest in sixty days. He also collected a few days since, all his debts of the soldiers, at the pay table. He was offered \$500 first for the privilege of suttling, but I advised him not to take less than \$1000. He and his family will go home in a few days and I shall endeavor to send by them a small box of grape seeds of which I have found six superior kinds, (all labeled) on Dr. Mason's plantation near here. The Dr. abandoned his house some months since and went into the secession army.

I have also some valuable books, among others the "Crimean War Reports" and the "Pacific Railroad Reports", furnished me by Mr. Brown, Sergeant-at-Arms of the Senate, which I intend to send home through the mail, after having them franked by some Senator. The survey of the Pacific Railroad belongs to Fannie, but she wishes to present them to you.

I think that if present movements are successful, the war must end in a few months. Gens. Buell & Halleck are advancing with some two hundred thousand men toward the railroad leading from northern Alabama to Manassas and Gen. Burnside's will probably land at New Bern, North Carolina, and take possession of the other road leading from S. Carolina to Manassas. These two furnish the whole of the army lying opposite to us with provisions, and by getting possession of these two roads which form their base, the enemy will either be obliged to attack us in our fortifications here, or move part of their forces back upon their base, in which latter case we should move forward against them; and in either case I think we must succeed in the end.

I think that there will be a movement at the same time from Fortress Monroe toward the Atlantic railroad, for the support of Burnside, and the two divisions of Fitz John Porter and Franklin, 30,000 strong, are now under orders to move to some point, and it is thought against the batteries on the Potomac, which will act as a still further support.

I sent, yesterday, to you \$700 in treasury notes by the Adams Express Co., expense \$6.00. This is the money which Judge Van Valkenburgh requested to have for Mr. Spalding, on a mortgage, which he is to give to me. He is to have the money at ten percent interest, payable every six months. He is also to pay the expenses of making out the deed, of recording and of sending the money to him. I wrote you a letter yesterday to this effect, hoping that if you do not receive one, you may receive the other. Please answer as soon as you receive this money.

Tell Pepy I am going to send him a very valuable present, namely an Arkansas Toothpick and belt which I picked up after the Bull Run defeat. Give my love and Fannie's to all the family.

Your Affectionate Son,  
I. B. Richardson

It is interesting to read Israel Richardson's speculations on upcoming military operations; even the higher ranking officers did not have especially accurate crystal balls. He also took time to send home samples of grape seeds, some books that

(cont on page 16)

## TAKING CARE OF BUSINESS

would interest his parents (including one that had belonged to Fannie's late father, a former railroad company engineer and surveyor), and a souvenir for his other nephew, Israel Putnam Peck, known in the family as Pepy. The Arkansas Toothpick was a large, double-edged dagger.

Civil War soldiers had a love/hate relationship with their sutlers. On one hand, the rations and other supplies provided by the army were limited, and what food did arrive was often spoiled and inedible. Other items that most people would consider necessities were not provided by the army at all. Sutlers filled the gap by selling things like soap, needles and thread, combs, razors, tin plates and cups, canned meats, eggs, butter, potatoes, fruit, ginger ale, newspapers, writing paper, pens and ink, books and tobacco. Although it was illegal for sutlers to sell alcohol, many did.



Conversely, the sutler held an exclusive license to operate, usually issued by the regimental commander – itinerant peddlers were banned from the camps. Sutlers could, and did, charge very high prices for their goods and the soldiers had no alternative, unless there was a town nearby and they could get leave to go. Sutlers also were a semi-official part of the army – they were under orders, and their goods travelled in army wagons. This frequently caused friction among the officers who had to compete with the sutlers for wagon space to transport military gear.

Sutlers often issued their own coinage in various amounts, and would only accept them in payment. Soldiers could buy on credit, and on payday the sutlers would collect what was owed directly from the paymaster before the soldiers received what was coming to them. By law, a soldier's credit limit was one-third of his monthly pay. Generally, the sutler paid a tax on his profits that went into what today's soldiers would call a unit Morale, Welfare and Recreation Fund.



One specialty item that soldiers could purchase from a sutler was a metal disc, generally brass or lead, stamped with his name, unit identifier, and hometown. These forerunners of modern "dog tags" were purchased by many Union soldiers to guarantee that if something happened to them, their families back home could be notified. This was an alternative to the practice of writing their identifying information on a slip of paper and pinning it inside their uniform.





**THE BULL RUN CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE  
P.O. Box 2147, Centreville, VA 20122**

<http://www.bullruncwrt.org>

A 501(c)(3) non-profit organization

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\_\_\_\_\_  
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\_\_\_\_\_