



The Newsletter of the Bull Run Civil War Round Table — Vol. XXXIII, Issue 1, JANUARY 2026

## **BATTLEFIELD GUIDE/HISTORIAN AARON SIEVER SPEAKS ON "THE BATTLE OF PICKETT'S MILL, GEORGIA 1864" AT THE JANUARY 8th, 2026 MEMBERSHIP MEETING**

**By Mark Trbovich**

The Battle of Pickett's Mill was among the more decisive encounters of the Atlanta campaign during the Civil War, and today, the Pickett's Mill Battlefield Historic Site is one of the most thoroughly preserved and interpreted Civil War battlefields in the nation. In May 1864, the Confederate army successfully prevented Union general William T. Sherman's troops from occupying the town of Dallas, Georgia, which Sherman sought as a strategic base of operations as he moved toward Atlanta. The battle was the bloodiest to that point in the campaign and by all accounts delayed Sherman's eventual capture of Atlanta by at least a week. We are happy to have a renowned battlefield guide tell the rest of the story.

Aaron Siever grew up in the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia. Since he was a child he has been interested in the American Civil War. After graduating from high school, Aaron went into a law enforcement career that spanned 15 years. During his time in law enforcement, Aaron worked many criminal cases, but also gave presentations to the community about potential crimes such as frauds and scams. As an instructor, Aaron was able to teach others not only about law enforcement, but community service as well. In 2004, Aaron started documenting the various Civil War sites he had visited and called this Aaron's Civil War Travels.

### **MEMBERSHIP MEETING**

**THURSDAY, January 8, 2026**

**6 P.M. Social Hour**

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

### **GUEST SPEAKER:**

**Aaron Siever**

### **TOPIC:**

**"The Battle of Pickett's Mill,  
Georgia 1864"**

He created his YouTube channel that same year, and by 2024 he had made over 100 videos at Civil War sites from Virginia to California. Aaron graduated from Liberty University in 2020, with bachelor's degrees in History and Criminal Justice. Aaron also received a certificate in the American Civil War and Reconstruction from Columbia University online (Columbia X). In 2021 he joined the Shenandoah Valley Battlefields Foundation, where he was responsible for maintaining the Valley's Civil War battlefields, overseeing projects and conducting tours and talks as a Park Ranger. In 2024, Aaron started Aaron's Civil War Travels LLC.

Come join us early at our January 8th, 2026 Membership Meeting to have an opportunity to chat with Aaron 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 Whintenton.

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

### NEWSLETTER SUBMISSION DEADLINE

For the **February 2026 issue**, e-mail articles by **February 2nd** to the editor, Don Richardson, at: [don.richardson@erols.com](mailto:don.richardson@erols.com)

### ADVERTISEMENT SUBMISSION DEADLINE

For the **February 2026 issue**, advertisers please see "Instructions for Advertisers" at:

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## UPCOMING MEETINGS

**January 8, 2026** Aaron Siever - "Battle of Pickett's Mill, Georgia, 1864"

**February 12** William Connery - "The Civil War in Northern Virginia, 1861"

**March 12** Tim Duskin - "The Mexican War: Training Ground For The Civil War"

**April 9** Dr. Curt Fields - "An Evening with Gen. U. S. Grant"

**May 14** Rich Condon - "Emancipation in the Department of the South"

**June 18** Patrick Falci - "30th Anniversary of the Making of the Gettysburg Movie"

**July 9** Scott Mingus - "Human Interest Stories from the Gettysburg Campaign"

**August 13** Frank O'Reilly - "Last Days of Stonewall Jackson"

**September 10** Bill Backus - "Opening Manassas: The Iron Brigade, Stonewall Jackson, and the Battle of Brawner Farm, 28 August 1862"

**October 8** Bryan Cheeseboro - "Early Days of the Civil War Defenses of Washington, from Fort Sumter to 1st Bull Run"

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## THE PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

By **Melissa A. Winn**

Photos: **Janet Greentree**

Happy 2026! I first want to say, "Thank you!" Thank you so much for reelecting me as your President for this year. I am truly honored by your confidence and excited to continue serving this remarkable community of Civil War enthusiasts and preservation advocates.

Over the past year, our Round Table has continued to enrich understanding of the Civil War through outstanding monthly lectures, engaging field trips, and some truly remarkable preservation work. I feel so fortunate to be a part of this group and lead the efforts to bring us together.

As we navigate the winter months, I want to remind you that our partners and friends in the community offer a host of interactive ways to engage Civil War history, including podcasts, videos, blogs, etc. In 2026, I hope to be a better steward of some of our social media efforts and sharing these opportunities with you! Stay tuned and check our FB page often for more developments.

In 2026, we also hope to launch an updated and improved website for the group, including a user-friendly menu system and modernized design. All of our great content including lectures, photos, newsletter archives, and more, will be retained, but the experience of using it will be improved. Many in the group have been asking for this upgrade, and we are working hard behind the scenes to deliver it!

Looking ahead this year to our in-person programming, I can easily say that our upcoming season will feature an inspir-

ing slate of speakers on topics ranging from regional campaigns to cultural histories of the war. And our hybrid meeting options continue to expand access for members near and far. We are also planning additional tours and social opportunities that will bring Civil War history to life in dynamic ways.

I'm very much looking forward to sharing these efforts with all of you! Happiest New Year to you all!

Huzzah!



Our December speaker, Bert Dunkerly, and Debbie Whinton with the traditional Christmas Cake



**It's that time of the year again! The Bull Run Civil War Round Table needs members to re-enlist for another campaign. See the back page of this *Stone Wall* for your membership payment options.**

## UNHAPPY NEW YEAR

For soldiers of both armies, the New Year was not an occasion for celebration. Their camps were cold; guard duty still had to be performed; rations were unevenly distributed. Despite that, there were some lighter moments. On New Year's Eve, bands of regiments on both sides of the front lines played favorite songs through the evening. And 17-year-old Charley Howe of the 36th Massachusetts reported to his family that "It being New Year's Day, we had whiskey rations given us - a thing which has not happened before since leaving home."

On the other hand, the fireworks at the New Year were deadly. From December 31st, 1862, through January 2nd, 1863, Gen. William Rosecrans' Army of the Cumberland fought Gen. Braxton Bragg's Army of Tennessee at Stones River in Tennessee, in one of the bloodiest battles of the war. Confederate mistakes eventually gave the Union side a tactical victory, but Rosecrans' Union force was so battered that they did not campaign again until the summer.



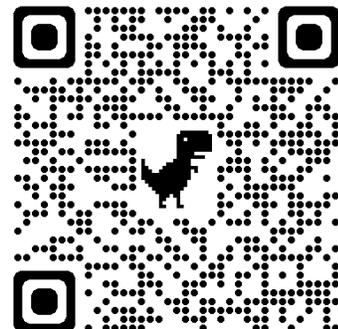
Charge of Gen. Negley's Division (Library of Congress)

## 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 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 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 also accept donated Civil War prints to auction for the benefit of the Scholarship Fund.) We 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.



## Bull Run Civil War Round Table



### Upcoming 2026-2027 Program of Events

<b>Date</b>	<b>Event</b>
January 8, 2026	Monthly Meeting Speaker: Aaron Siever “Battle of Pickett’s Mill, Georgia, 1864”
February 12, 2026	Monthly Meeting Speaker: William Connery “Civil War In Northern Virginia 1861”
March 12, 2026	Monthly Meeting Speaker: Tim Duskin - “The Mexican War: Training Ground For The Civil War”
March 21, 2026	<b>Spring Tour 1: “Wolf Run Shoals - The Best Kept Secret in Fairfax County”</b> Tour leaders Jim Lewis and Brian McEnany (rain date April 4th)
April 9, 2026	Monthly Meeting Speaker: Dr. Curt Fields “An Evening with Gen. U. S. Grant”
May 14, 2026	Monthly Meeting Speaker: Rich Condon - “Emancipation in the Department of The South”
June 13, 2026	<b>Spring Tour 2: “Harper’s Ferry: Bolivar Heights Battleground &amp; Kennedy Farm”</b> Tour leader Kevin Pawlak (rain date June 20th)
June 18, 2026	Monthly Meeting Speaker: Patrick Falci - “30th Anniversary of the Making of the Gettysburg Movie”
July 9, 2026	Monthly Meeting Speaker: Scott Mingus - “Human Interest Stories from the Gettysburg Campaign”
August 13, 2026	Monthly Meeting Speaker: Frank O’Reilly - “Last Days of Stonewall Jackson”
September 10, 2026	Monthly Meeting Speaker: Bill Backus - “Opening Manassas: The Iron Brigade, Stonewall Jackson, and the Battle of Brawner Farm, 28 August 1862”
October 8, 2026	Monthly Meeting Speaker: Bryan Cheeseboro - “The Early Days of the Civil War Defenses of Washington, from Fort Sumter to 1st Bull Run”
October 17, 2026	<b>Fall Tour: “Civil War Alexandria (AM) / Fort Ward (PM)”</b> Tour leaders Don Hakenson and Chuck Mauro (rain date October 24th)
November 19, 2026	Monthly Meeting Speaker: Lisa Samia - “Nameless and Faceless of Manassas And Gettysburg”
December 10, 2026	Monthly Meeting Speaker: Jonathan Jones - “Opium Slavery: Civil War Veterans And America’s First Opioid Crisis”
January 14, 2027	Monthly Meeting Speaker: Jared Peatman - “Hell of a Regiment: The 20th Maine”
February 11, 2027	Monthly Meeting Speaker: Edward J. Hagerty - “Soldier of the South: Lieutenant General Richard H Anderson at War and Peace”

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

## AFTER ACTION REPORT – GOOSE CREEK TOUR

By Brian McEnany and Jim Lewis

Photos by Brian McEnany, Jim Lewis, Blake Myers and Gary Haskins

On a beautiful Sat., November 8 morning, the Bull Run Civil War Round Table tour of Goose Creek and Edwards Ferry was conducted. Twenty-one members of the Round Table, plus guests, met the tour guides, Jim Lewis and Brian McEnany, at the River Point Drive Trail Head in the Lansdowne Resort, near Leesburg, at 0900 hours.

**River Point Drive Trail Head:** The expected rain-fall in early morning had dissipated and the weather turned sunny and warm. The small parking area at the Trailhead was soon swamped with cars from people joining the tour and those who just wanted to walk along the Creek on a sunny day.

**History of Elizabeth Mills Area:** At 0930, Jim gathered the tour participants around the recently replaced Civil War Trail marker (primarily for our tour) and introduced himself and Brian to the group. Jim elected to conduct the first part of the tour, which included the remnants of the long-lost village of Elizabeth Mills and then the ill-fated Goose Creek & Little



Trailhead Parking Lot



Jim Lewis Outlining the Tour

River Navigation Co. (GC&LRNC) efforts to navigate the creek. Brian would then conduct the second part of the tour regarding the Army of the Potomac's (AOP) arduous journey north and subsequent crossing of the Potomac River at Edwards Ferry, under harrowing conditions, in an effort to catch up with Lee and his Army of Northern Virginia during the Gettysburg Campaign. All of this would be accomplished as the group followed a one-mile trail on the banks of the GC&LRNC canal and then a short trek to the confluence of the Creek and the Potomac River.

Jim began overviewing the history of Elizabeth Mills, which took its name from Samuel Clapham's daughter, Elizabeth, both of whom owned the mill 1807–28. It was originally built to support "Coton," Thomas Lee's nearby plantation. Then he overviewed the GC&LRNC, which had its beginnings in 1830 at the "Peers Hotel" (later, the "Laurel Brigade Inn", Leesburg), when prospective investors discussed the idea of making Goose Creek navigable, thereby enabling 9 mills to access the seaports of Georgetown and Alexandria via the C&O Canal. Their leverage: they projected that it should only take 8 hours, vs. 2 days via road, to transport mill goods to the seaports, as horses had to be rested overnight.

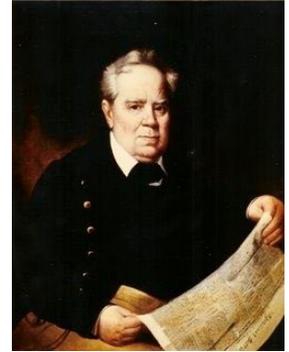


The Laurel Brigade Inn

(cont on page 7)

## GOOSE CREEK TOUR

Two powerful men actively supported the project: George Carter (a man of substantial wealth who owned "Oatlands Plantation") and George Fenton Mercer (Va. congressman, who chaired the Committee on Roads & Canals). Not surprisingly, both owned mills on or just off the creek and stood to benefit financially. After all was said and done, it was agreed to formally charter the GC&LRNC (1832) and attempt to render some 20 miles navigable via a lock & dam navigational system, incorporating several canals to circumvent the more treacherous areas of the creek.



George Carter I



George Fenton Mercer

Ironically, it would take 10 years to raise the capital to begin construction due to a myriad of issues, including the mid-1830s depression and the death of the company's first president, George Carter I. It then took an additional 5 years to complete an engineering survey. Construction of the navigation system finally began in December, 1849. Due to a lack of funds, the system would be shortened to 12 miles in length. By 1854, all construction ended with its terminus at Ball's Mill (today's Evergreen Mill). In 1857, in the midst of a depression, GL&LRNC threw in the towel with only \$1.95 left in its coffers.

**Elizabeth Mill and Bridge Site:** Jim then led the group to see the remains of the old Elizabeth Mill, the mill race, and the remains of the old bridge site. At that point he took the group along the Creek, pointing out where the canal actually began. Within 10 minutes, the trail split and he halted the group to discuss whether everyone was adventurous enough to walk close to the remains of the canal along a narrower path or use the well-traveled trail closer to the Creek. Almost all were adventurous save three who walked with Brian along the trail close to the Creek. The two trails came back together again some 10 minutes later.



Walking along Mill Race & Canal near Eliz. Mills



Remnant of old Eliz. Mills bridge

At that point, there was some commotion as a Loudoun County Emergency Rescue team arrived and conducted the extraction of an overzealous hiker from the Creek banks. We walked past quietly and allowed them to continue their emergency work. When the group arrived at two ravines that cut across the trail, Jim and Brian assisted several of the tour attendees down and up the steep ravine sides. Another 5 minutes beyond that area, the group arrived at the Double Locks.

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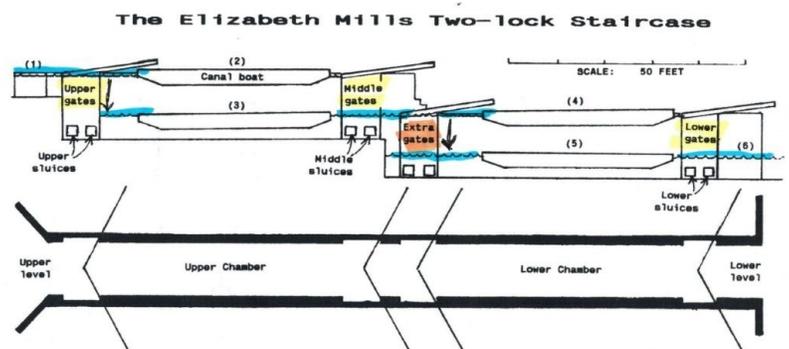
## GOOSE CREEK TOUR

**Double Locks:** Earlier, Jim had referenced the incorporation of a relatively rare double-locks (staircase) configuration into the canal system, designed to accelerate the ascent and descent of canal boats not far from the confluence of the Creek and the Potomac River. The locks have since been preserved by Loudoun County for safety reasons. The photo on the right shows the current wooden support structure and fenced-in area prohibiting any entry to the site. The locks were designed to accommodate boats half the size of those used on the C&O Canal.



Double Locks

At this point, Jim pointed out a little “fly-in-the-ointment” that remains a mystery to this very day. For some unexplained reason, the contractor, either through ignorance or a change in plans, incorporated an entirely useless pair of gates (note, the orange-colored “extra gates” in the illustration on the right). The middle gates went clear to the top of the lock and adequately performed the intended task. If the “extra gates” had been installed, they would not have been high enough to hold back the water in the upper level. It is suspected that the builder simply combined two single-locks together, each with a pair of gates at their ends and forgot/ignored that the lower gates of one served as the upper gates of the other. Compounding the mystery, all the contractor had to do was copy the one constructed 11 years earlier (1838) across the river at the C&O Canals Lock # 25 (just 0.2 mile down the towpath). It had no extra gates. Then again, maybe the contractor realized his mistake and simply never installed the gates here.



Side view of the Double Locks

Ironically, only one boat made the entire trek (with a little help from enslaved men and oxen to traverse sandbars that had built up during a recent severe drought) and that was in order for the contractor and his crew to get paid. Supposedly, that boat remains submerged somewhere near Ball’s (Evergreen) Mill to this very day.

After answering several more questions about the lock and its entry point into the Potomac, Jim turned the tour over to Brian who proceeded to discuss the Army of the Potomac’s march to this area (Edwards Ferry) and its subsequent crossing of the Potomac River in late June during the Gettysburg Campaign. It would not be your everyday march.

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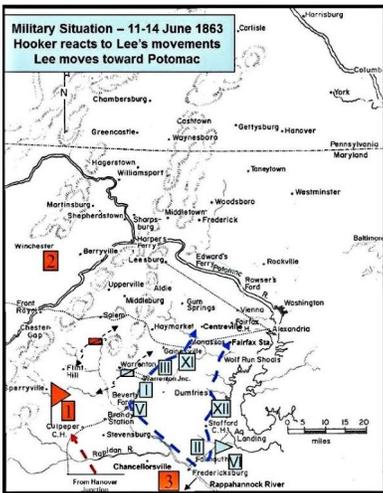
## GOOSE CREEK TOUR

**The March to Edwards Ferry by the Army of the Potomac:** Brian began by positioning both armies shortly after the Battle of Chancellorsville. Gen. Hooker would initiate what would become the Gettysburg Campaign as a result of the June 9 cavalry battle at Brandy Station. By June 11, it was known that Gen. Ewell's 2<sup>nd</sup> Corps was in Pennsylvania and the Governor was frantically asking for support. Gen. Lee's other two Corps began moving up the Shenandoah Valley to possible crossing sites at Williamsport and Shepherdstown. By then, Gen. Hooker knew he had to move north to protect Washington. Still uncertain of Lee's position, but suspicious of the Shenandoah Valley, he split his army into two wings: one under Gen. Reynolds marched west to the RR and then Warrenton, and the other wing under Gen. Slocum was sent up the Telegraph Road (Rte. 1).

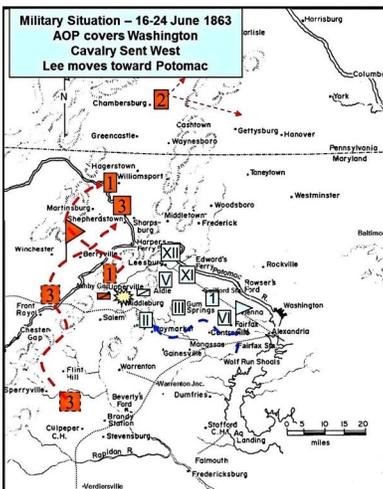


Brian discusses the AOP's arduous journey to Edwards Ferry

The movement north was conducted in the hottest part of the summer. The temperature in Georgetown was 93 to 99 degrees in the shade. Some major units marched at night to avoid much of the heat. Still, numerous soldiers dropped out due to sunstroke and had to be picked up later. The clouds of dust kicked up by tens of thousands of soldiers, horses, mules and cattle quickly coated everyone with a fine layer of white silt. Two tour attendees recounted their "sunstroke" memories from the march via soldier quotes.



Military Situation 11-14 June



Military Situation 16-24 June

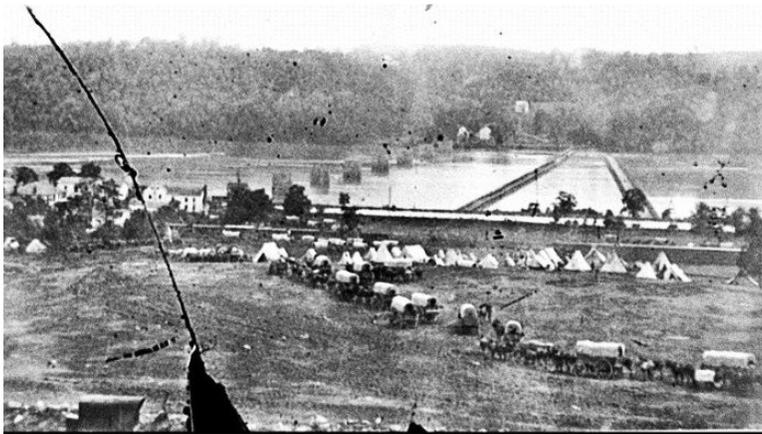
Gen. Hooker, still uncertain about Lee's objective, positioned his Corps in Northern Virginia along major highways and locations for almost a week (June 16 to June 24) to prevent any Confederate movement towards Washington or Baltimore. Needing more information, he ordered his cavalry into the Loudoun Valley, where several battles would occur, and sent Gen. Slocum and the 12<sup>th</sup> Corps toward Leesburg to reconnoiter various crossing sites. Gen. Slocum was aware of the Union Army's guarding several crossing sites since the beginning of the war and recommended that Edwards Ferry be selected.

On June 21, Gen. Hooker ordered that a bridge be erected at Edwards Ferry (River Creek Golf Course area, the north side of Goose Creek). Three days later, Gen. Lee ordered Gen. Longstreet's and Gen. AP Hill's Corps to cross the Potomac and head into Pennsylvania. Hooker then ordered Gen. Reynolds to take command of the 1<sup>st</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, and 11th Corps, cross the Potomac on the upper bridge, and continue north

(cont on page 10)

## GOOSE CREEK TOUR

towards South Mountain in Maryland to protect the flank of the Army as it crossed. He turned to his engineers and directed that a second bridge be erected on the south bank of Goose Creek (Lansdowne Golf Course area) and ordered Gen. Howard to move the 11<sup>th</sup> Corps to the ferry site to protect it. The 11th Corps arrived on the south bank of the Goose to spend the night. Meanwhile, a middle bridge of 11 pontoons had been erected near the mouth of the Goose to allow units access to both bridge sites. Note the example on the right of what the assembly area might have looked like.

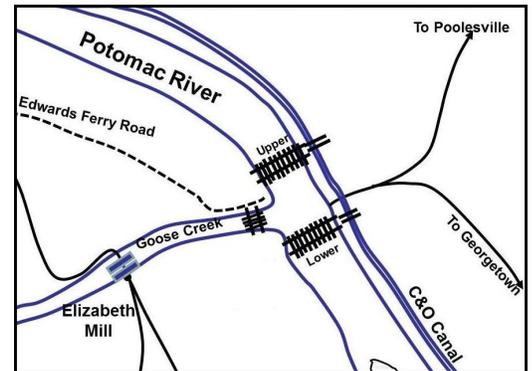


Assembly Area on the Potomac near Berlin, MD

Finally, Hooker issued a circular order to the remainder of the AOP to begin movement toward the ferry sites and detailing which bridge they were to use to cross the river. Gen. Reynold's command crossed the upper bridge on 25 June while movement of the rest of the AOP to Edwards Ferry took place over the next two days.

The order to erect a second bridge could not be completed on June 24 as not enough pontoons were available. Orders went down to Washington to send more boats north along the C&O Canal. They arrived on the morning of June 25 and under horrible conditions, the second bridge was completed by 2:30 PM and ready for troops to cross.

As the extreme heat that had abused the AOP on its way north dissipated, another weather pattern would settle in and seriously affect their continued journey. Very early on the morning of June 25, a steady rain began and continued for the next 2 ½ days, including the AOP's crossing of the Potomac. It turned the areas near the bridges and dirt roads leading to it into quagmires. Soldiers marched through the assembly



Bridges at Edwards Ferry June 1863

ORDERS.] HEADQUARTERS ARMY OF THE POTOMAC,  
June 25, 1863.

General JOHN F. REYNOLDS, Poolesville:

The following movements of troops will take place to-morrow, the 26th instant, viz:

I. The Twelfth Corps (Leesburg) will march at 3 a. m. to-morrow, leaving a sufficient force to hold Leesburg until the Fifth Corps comes up; will cross the upper bridge at Edwards Ferry and the Monocacy at its mouth, and proceed up the Potomac as far as Trammelstown (Point of Rocks), and then to Middletown, unless otherwise ordered. The detachment that remains behind will rejoin the corps on the arrival of the Fifth Corps at Leesburg.

II. The Fifth Corps (Aldie) will march at 4 a. m., crossing Goose Creek at Carter's Mill; thence to Leesburg, crossing the Potomac at the upper bridge at Edwards Ferry and the Monocacy at its mouth, and follow the river road in the direction of Frederick City. The Reserve Artillery will cross on the lower bridge at Edwards Ferry, and follow the Fifth Corps.

III. Headquarters will leave at 3 a. m., via Hunter's Mills, to Poolesville, where the camp will be to-morrow.

IV. The Second Corps (Gum Springs) will march at 6 a. m. to-morrow, via Farmwell, Farmwell Station, and Frankville, cross on the lower bridge at Edwards Ferry, and take the road crossing the Monocacy a little below Frederick City.

V. The Sixth Corps (Centreville and Fairfax) will march at 3 a. m., via Chantilly Church, Frying Pan, Herndon Station, and Dranesville, to Edwards Ferry, and, after covering the withdrawal of the bridges, will follow the Second Corps.

VI. The Cavalry Corps will cover the movement till all the trains have crossed the Potomac, when one division will be thrown forward to Middletown.

By command of Major-General Hooker:

S. WILLIAMS,  
Assistant Adjutant-General.

Hooker's Circular Order

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## GOOSE CREEK TOUR

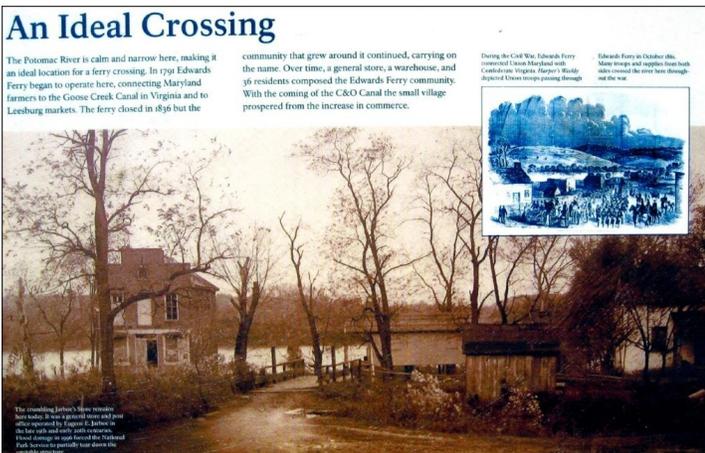
areas and had to camp in ankle deep mud caused by the steady rain. Two more of our tour attendees recounted their “rain-soaked” memories of the march via soldier quotes.

At this point, Brian and Jim led the tour group toward the mouth of Goose Creek and the Potomac River. They pointed out where the middle bridge was situated. When Gen. Hooker ordered Gen. Howard to move to Edwards Ferry to guard the site on June 24, Howard’s 11<sup>th</sup> Corps camped on the south side (Lansdowne side) and used the middle bridge to move his Corps to the upper bridge site on the morning of June 25. The tour group continued along the trail to an overlook at the mouth of the Creek where a clear view of Edwards Ferry and the Potomac River were visible.



Trace of the Canal

**Overlook:** When the tour group reached the mouth of the Creek, Brian and Jim showed photographs of the village of Edwards Ferry (across the river in MD) to the group. Then Brian discussed the fascinating engineering feat that was required to enable the construction of the pontoon bridges and subsequent crossing by the AOP on June 25-27, 1863. Earlier, the Union engineer units (50<sup>th</sup> NY, and Regular Engineer Battalion) sent boats up the C&O Canal. Each boat train was composed of 34 pontoon wagons, 22 shorter plank wagons, and 17 trestle wagons, enough to build a 600-foot-



Historical Marker - Edwards Ferry, MD



Entry Road from the Potomac River into Edwards Ferry, MD

long bridge. The wagons and pontoons were used to create rafts that were pulled up the C&O Canal by the horses and mules that normally pulled the boat train. The engineers then had to build two short bridges over the C&O canal to move the pontoons to the Potomac River. The upper bridge was built out from the far shore on June 21. It was 1340 feet long and composed of 64 wooden pontoons. The lower bridge was built

(cont on page 12)

## GOOSE CREEK TOUR

on June 25 and constructed from both sides at the same time. It was 1350 long and had 65 pontoons.

Building the bridges was accomplished by well-trained engineer teams that operated much like an assembly line. A pontoon wagon was moved as close to the water as possible so the pontoon could be pushed into it. In some cases, a trestle was needed to allow the pontoons to be connected when the water level near the shore line was not deep enough. One construction team then laid 27-foot-long, wooden balks across the pontoon. The next team laid shorter planks to create the flooring over the longer ones. Finally, another team rowed the completed section out into the river and dropped anchor on the upstream side. The raft section then drifted downstream into position to connect to the other pontoons. This process was repeated until the entire bridge was constructed. The engineers had to be extremely careful as the steady rain had caused the river to rise two feet and pick up speed.



Brian Messaging at the Overlook



Pontoon Wagons



Canal Intake Opening

Both bridges were located on the areas of golf courses in both the River Creek and the Lansdowne Resorts. It is believed that both were within 200 to 300 yards of the mouth of the Creek. The movement of the various Corps in the steady rain created a vast muddy area where soldiers had to stand for hours in ankle deep mud due to the continual rain. Obviously, animals and wagons had to cross very carefully. Troops, on the other hand, had to walk versus march across, as their cadence would have caused increasing up and down movement of the pontoons, potentially collapsing the entire bridge.

In summary, the totality of Gen. Hooker's Army of 90,000 soldiers, 350 artillery pieces, and tens of thousands of animals, cattle and wagons, having marched north under "sunstroke" conditions and then, coupled with 2 ½ days of drenching rains, made the crossing of the Potomac even more awe-inspiring. Please be reminded that after having crossed the river, the AOP would lose their commander and then have to force-march to catch up with Gen. Lee. Ironically, he would not be aware of the AOP crossing the river until two days later.

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## GOOSE CREEK TOUR

**Tour End:** The tour ended as Jim and Brian thanked everyone for their interest, participation, and questions. Jim then brought closure to the GC&LRNC canal story by pointing out where the inlet to the C&O Canal was situated.

Last, but not the least, Blake Meyers astutely asked a passerby if he would take a picture of the tour group. Once that final act took place, everyone expressed thanks to Brian and Jim for their efforts and began the trek back to the Trailhead. Jim provided directions to the T’Kila Mexican Kitchen & Bar at the nearby Lansdowne Town Center Plaza, where most everyone continued to enjoy fellowship and have a great lunch.



Intake into the C&O Canal



Group Photo at the Edwards Ferry Overlook

# Wolf Run Shoals

## Fairfax County's Best Kept Historical Secret

### Saturday, March 21



**Subject matter:** This popular tour spans from the Revolutionary War through the end of the American Civil War in Fairfax County. Walk the road that enabled the transport of supplies to the Battle of Yorktown and see traces of several Union earthworks/camps when this area was the default Mason-Dixon line early in the Civil War. Learn about the Union AOP right wing's onerous march through this area to the Battle of Gettysburg and its ironic connection with J.E.B. Stuart's controversial ride to support Lee's ANV. Finally, envision a war-ending event by Mosby's Rangers that occurred here.

**Tour Guide:** Jim Lewis

**Assembly Time / Location:** 9:00 AM / Terminus of Wolf Run Shoals Rd.

GPS: Closest address is 8517 Wolf Run Shoals Rd., Clifton, VA

**Tour Start Time:** 9:15 AM

**Lunch:** [12-Noonish Los Toltecos \[Mexican\] @ Fairfax STN - Individual tabs](#)

**Tour Duration:** Approx. 2 ½ Hours.

**Mode of Transportation & Exertion Level:** Extensive walking over uneven terrain = **not advisable for anyone with special needs**

**Uniform of the Day:** Hiking attire / water / walking stick

**BRCWRT Contact:** Jim Lewis – [antietam1862@verizon.net](mailto:antietam1862@verizon.net) / 703 593-2956

**The tour is FREE! If interested, please sign up via BRCWRT's website.**

## THE CENTREVILLE MILITARY RAILROAD Too Little Too Late

By John Carter

The inscription on the Centreville Military Railroad historical marker reads in part,

These are the remains of the Centreville Confederate Military Railroad built in the fall and early winter of 1861 for the purpose of transporting supplies to the field armies of Generals Pierre G.T. Beauregard and Joseph Johnston ... In order to supply the 40,000 troops who went into winter quarters in Centreville in October, General Johnston decided to build the six mile railroad spur to connect with the railroad lines at Manassas Junction. By the first week of January 1862 a map of the period shows the railroad complete between the Junction and its Centreville terminus.

The wording, however, is misleading as it infers that the railroad was built when the Confederate troops first moved into Centreville, and that the line was built at that time to supply the army. This is not accurate. The troops also did not move into their winter quarters until Christmas, and the Military Railroad was not completed and operational until mid-February.

The *Merriam-Webster Dictionary* defines a railroad as: "a *permanent* road having a line of rails fixed to ties and laid on a roadbed and providing a track for cars or equipment drawn by locomotives or propelled by self-contained motors." The Centreville Military Railroad can be defined as such, except for the first part. It was a railroad in name only since it was a *temporary*, six-mile-long spur attached to a main railroad. At first glance, it would seem obvious that a rail line would need to be built from Manassas Junction to the Centreville fortifications, especially to solve the problem of a deteriorating transportation system during the winter months. A new rail line would certainly be the answer to the mud and ice which would slow down and stop supplies coming from the Junction on the Centreville Road.

This, however, was not the main problem General Joseph Johnston was dealing with. Despite the deteriorating condition of the roadways, supplies had been coming into Centreville. By February 1862, additional supplies were not needed in Centreville, and there was plenty of food stockpiled in the camps and at the mill in Thoroughfare Gap. In fact, delivery of food and supplies to Centreville had been halted in the fall by Johnston who then had them sent to Culpeper. It would have made more sense if the rail line been constructed in early October when Johnston knew he would have to spend the fall and winter in Centreville. What then was its intended purpose?

At Centreville, the real problem General Johnston faced was a familiar one - he was forced to remain in a position he believed was indefensible, just as he had experienced at Harpers Ferry. After their victory at First Manassas the Confederate army had found itself in a position they had not considered beforehand. Due to a lack of manpower, supplies, and armament, coupled with an inefficient supply system, they were unable to follow up their early victory with an attack on Washington, D.C. Instead, General Johnston was told by President Jefferson Davis during the October 1, 1861 Council of War at Fairfax that his army had to remain in Northern Virginia as it was the Confederacy's best defense against an overland attack on Richmond by General George

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## CENTREVILLE MILITARY RAILROAD

McClellan. The Council of War had been called to solve the constant bickering among General Johnston, General P.G.T. Beauregard and President Jefferson Davis about the lack of progress in moving toward a Confederate offensive on Washington, D.C. #1

Johnston now had to turn from thinking of maneuvering in the open field in an offensive operation to building a defensive fortification at Centreville throughout the fall and winter. The fortification had two purposes: one was to provide a cantonment for army to live in while it was in Northern Virginia; the second was to act as a temporary deterrent to a Union *coup de main* allowing the army time to retreat from Northern Virginia. From October 1 through March 6, Johnston committed himself to the defense of the region. However, he did so while simultaneously working toward his ultimate goal, which was to safely withdraw the army behind the Rappahannock River.

Since there had not been a plan for the army to remain in Northern Virginia, there was no need to build winter cabins for the troops. However, after the Fairfax meeting, Johnston contacted Adj. General Samuel Cooper in Richmond about the need to house the troops. Continual bickering between Johnston and Secretary of War Judah P. Benjamin over the construction of the housing led to their not being completed by the troops until Christmas. #2

The coming of fall and winter led to another problem - the closing down of offensive operations, and the difficulty of the movement of supplies along rapidly deteriorating roads due to the mud. The latter also threatened a quick withdrawal from Northern Virginia. An early communication from the Confederate Commissary General had raised the issue of creating military roads.

Quartermaster General's Department Richmond, 26 Oct. 1861

Major W. L. Cabell AQM Centreville, VA. Sir, have you considered the necessity of making military roads from Manassas to the entrenched camp in advance [?] You should obtain if possible free Negro labor, and if you have not done so construct these roads. A.C. Myers, A.Q.M.G. #3

Myers may have been contacting either General Johnston or Johnston's Quartermaster, Major William Lewis Cabell. Since the term "roads" also applied to rail lines, he may have been talking about a rail line as well as a roadway. Before receiving the communication from Myers, Cabell already understood that the approaching winter was turning the Centreville Road to Manassas Junction into an impassable morass, and that something had to be done. On October 19, 1861, he had the Centreville Road to the Junction planked with wooden boards and brought in teams of horses to be used in place of the traditional mules. Some of the wood for this planking came from the Summers family farm nearby at Level Green. The horses were unable to keep their footing on the steep hill between Blackburn's Ford on Bull Run and Centreville, so teams of oxen were brought in to replace them. By early November, however, Myers had stopped their use when he noticed that the oxen teams were eating too much fodder to make the logistical operation practical. #4

If Johnston had previously been considering the construction of a rail line, this probably made him turn his full attention to the construction of a branch line to

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## CENTREVILLE MILITARY RAILROAD

connect Centreville with Manassas Junction, linking it to both the Orange & Alexandria Railroad and the Manassas Gap Railroad. It seemed to be a practical solution, since it would only be a six-mile section of railroad which would need to be constructed, and the O&A could provide the army with some of its extra tracks and cross ties. When approached by Richmond on the matter, however, the railroad refused to help, disapproving the request on November 7, 1861 for using any of their materials to build the military line.

This was not unusual, as southern companies and states generally looked after their own needs first. They would refuse to cooperate with requests coming from Richmond or the army, even when it would benefit the Confederate cause. The Orange & Alexandria said it needed its extra tracks and cross ties to repair its own line (and the Manassas Gap Railroad) during the war. Repeated attempts failed to convince the railroad to change its position, and unlike the North, the South had not militarized its railroads, and had no direct control over them.

There was another solution available: the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad, which ran along the north side of the Potomac River between Baltimore and Wheeling, (West) Virginia. It had been stripped of its remaining railroad equipment by Brigadier General Thomas J. Jackson's forces prior to the Battle of First Manassas. The majority of the rail cars and locomotives had been destroyed when General Johnston, who was then in command at Harpers Ferry, had ordered Jackson to destroy all of the B&O equipment at Martinsburg. Jackson did destroy the majority of the locomotives and cars, but he saved a number of them, and along with the iron rails from the rail yard he carried them south to Winchester. While the locomotives and cars continued south over the roadways to Strasburg (there was no rail line between that point and Winchester), the iron rails had been stored in Winchester. #5 Captain Thomas Sharp, who was assigned to supervise construction of the new railroad spur, saw that the rails could be used to run the line to the fortifications, and they were transported to Manassas. The wood for the cross ties would have to be taken from the trees that could be cut down in the vicinity of the new spur as it was being built.

Much of the information regarding the condition of the roads, their need for being improved, and the means of construction of the rail line came from newspaper reporters embedded in Johnston's army. The *Richmond Dispatch* of November 10, 1861 noted that,

The roads between Centreville and Manassas are very bad indeed, and it is with great difficulty the provision wagons can be driven over them. If the army remains east of Bull Run some better route will have to be opened to transports ... the road by Blackburn's Ford is very poor the greater portion of the way, and hundreds of men are constantly employed in repairing it. With all the trouble it improves but little, and waggoners begin to dread the trip for fear of accidents to wagons or horses. The bridge across Mitchell's ford has been carried away and the ford is dangerous ... I learn that the intention is to build a railroad from Gainesville, on the Manassas Gap road, thus avoiding the Bull Run Heights. That route would make the distance between Manassas and Centreville about eighteen miles. Such a road would be not only a matter of great convenience, but it would seem almost a necessity at the present time.

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## CENTREVILLE MILITARY RAILROAD

Obviously, some of the information reported to the readers proved to be inaccurate. Rumor and hearsay also appeared in the newspapers in regard to its anticipated construction. The *Yorkville (S.C.) Enquirer* reported, "We are informed that laborers are being hired, through the Quartermaster's office, for the immediate construction of a railroad from Manassas to Centreville. As it is estimated that the work will require two months for its completion, a strong indication is afforded of the intention of our forces to winter in the region of the Potomac."

The *Richmond Dispatch* noted on December 14, 1861, "Contracts have just been entered into for building a railroad from Manassas to this point. The line has been surveyed through, and is now being leveled. The grade will be heavy. Manassas is one hundred and sixty-three feet above the level of Bull Run, and is considerably higher than the hills of Centreville. #6 The distance is six miles. It is four miles from the Station to Bull Run, and two miles from there to this point. The work will be one of great accommodation, as a large portion of the army will remain in this immediate vicinity." The contracts may have been related to the construction of the bridge. At this time, the winter cabins for the army were being built along the road to the Junction (Centreville Road) and along the Warrenton Turnpike near Portici on the battlefield.

It is interesting to note that the Centreville Military Railroad is not mentioned by name in the *Official Records*. This may be due to the fact that most of the Confederate Railroad Bureau's records did not survive the war and were probably destroyed when Richmond was burned as the Confederates evacuated Richmond in April 1865. References to its planning and construction are only made through oblique references made by the Quartermaster and Commissary officials in Centreville, Manassas and Richmond. Joseph Johnston never mentioned the planning or the construction of the rail line in his post-war book. Neither Johnston nor Davis mentioned the rail line during their February 1862 meeting in Richmond where they discussed the planned evacuation. The orders assigning Captain Thomas Sharp to supervise the construction of the rail line and later to manage its operations are found in the National Archives and in Sharp's personal diary. #7

While Sharp is given the credit for running the rail line and supervising its construction, it is not clear who was in charge of the day-to-day construction of the road. As Bright mentions in his book, "Captain Sharp did not design it, did not do the early work, but did oversee the conclusion of the work. Somewhere, there is an unrecognized engineer, perhaps from General Johnston's army who performed those early tasks, and probably continued to work under Sharp when he took over." #8 During November and December of 1861, Captain Sharp was frequently traveling back and forth between Centreville, Manassas, and Richmond attending to other railroad business. He served more as a project manager leaving the immediate supervision of the construction to others until February when he was ordered back to Centreville to expedite the completion of the rail line. There was a sense of urgency in this communication. The work had been dragging on in Sharp's absence and he was being ordered to return to Manassas at once to complete the work.

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## CENTREVILLE MILITARY RAILROAD

Office of Chief Quartermaster Potomac District C.S.A., Near Manassas February 3, 62  
Captain T. R. Sharp, having been ordered to this point by Quartermaster General Myers to supervise the construction of the Rail Road between Manassas & Centreville, will enter on that duty & be furnished with every facility for its speedy completion.

Alfred M. Barbour, Major & Chief Quartermaster #9

The creation of the rail line can be broken up into working segments: planning and resource gathering, surveying, leveling the ground, bridge building across Bull Run, and laying the tracks between Centreville and the Junction. Each segment required supervision by an individual with special knowledge and skill sets to complete it. Some could be performed by local troops or laborers sent from Richmond under an officer's supervision, others required the engineering knowledge and skills of engineers. Two engineers who may have begun the railroad project were Col. Thomas H. Williamson, who was listed as Johnston's chief engineer, or Capt. Edward Porter Alexander, an engineer with the Ordnance Corps. Alexander, however, doesn't mention the railroad in his post-war books, *Fighting for the Confederacy* and *Military Memoirs*.

The Engineering Corps had not been created at this time, and engineering projects (like the winter cabins and the fortifications) had been left in the hands of officers with engineering backgrounds. As one historian notes, "There was no specific allocation of engineers to [the] unit staffs. The [War] department assigned officers, and commanders allocated them internally as needed..." #10 The Confederate government finally created a Corps of Engineers on March 7, 1862, with Captain Alfred L. Rives the acting head of the Engineering Bureau. The commanders in the field, however, were still short of engineers. In their absence, they utilized the civil engineers of the provisional engineering corps in "building the rail roads, water works, and similar internal improvements." #11

General Johnston had requested competent engineers to be sent to him. On February 25, 1862, Captain Rives had responded to his request explaining that he had only partly succeeded in filling Johnston's request. His only further recommendation was for Johnston to bring in one of his brigadier generals, like General William H.C. Whiting, to be temporarily assigned as his chief engineer. #12 Whiting would spend most of his time, though, commanding the forces on the Potomac River Blockade. Johnston's early 1861 list of his chief engineers, however, did include Brigadier General Whiting, along with Captain Powhatan Robinson.

Johnston's attention was not focused just on completion of the rail line. He had already started implementing his plan for evacuating the army to the south side of the Rappahannock River. Johnston knew what would be the most difficult to quickly evacuate - the artillery, ammunition, stores, and the sick and wounded soldiers. He removed part of the artillery from that list when in November he sent the brigaded artillery to Culpeper, Virginia, leaving the Reserve Artillery at Centreville under Col. William Pendleton. He also told the Chief Commissary of the army, Colonel Robert Granderson Cole, to stop all stores being sent from Richmond to Centreville, and to send them instead to Culpeper Court-House, where a reserve supply depot had been established. Cole later

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## CENTREVILLE MILITARY RAILROAD

telegraphed the Commissary General in Richmond on January 16 to have shipments to Manassas stopped. #13

The evacuation also included the fixed artillery on the Potomac River Blockade and its supporting regiments which were strung out along the river from Dumfries to Aquia, and under immediate observation by Union forces on the Maryland side. It would be impossible to quickly withdraw the artillery and supplies from those advanced positions. They didn't have a rail line or railroad spur nearby, unlike Johnston who had the rail line at Manassas Junction and another which ran through Thoroughfare Gap to meet it. The earlier suggestion of a rail line from Gainesville to Centreville was rejected in favor of a shorter approach. A rail spur would be built from the Junction to Centreville, some six miles away, but a railroad bridge would also have to be built across Bull Run near Mitchell's or Blackburn's Ford. Along with the bridge, the new line would need rails, wooden cross ties, and large-scale labor to survey, grade, lay the rails and ballast, and to build the bridge - it would take time, which they really didn't have.

General Johnston estimated that it would take two months to build the railroad using local materials and labor provided by his troops. Newspaper articles agreed with the general's assessment. A writer from the *Richmond Dispatch*, who was embedded at Centreville, wrote on December 11 that the "contracts have just been entered into for building a railroad from Manassas to this point. The line has been surveyed through and is now being leveled. The grade will be heavy ... it is four miles from the Station to Bull Run, and two miles from there to this point. The work will be one of great accommodation, as a large portion of the army will remain in this immediate vicinity."

It was the army which was initially used to construct the rail line. Private William C. McClellan of the 9th Alabama Regiment stated in his letter of November 23, that 50,000 men were working on a six-mile railroad about six hours a day. This became a problem since the soldiers were still working on the breastworks, standing picket duty, and working on their winter cabins. The 9<sup>th</sup> Alabama and the rest of Edmund Kirby Smith's division would continue to work on the fortifications until early January 1862. #14 Additional labor would be needed to complete the railroad on time. In late November, slave labor (and non-slave Black labor) was assembled in Richmond to add to the construction force. #15

On December 20, 1861, the *Richmond Dispatch* reporter, *Bohemian*, wrote, "There are two regiments of colored men at Centreville, under the command of Jordan, an old colored veteran of 1812, having been a drummer boy under Gen. Jackson. One of these numbers eleven hundred, and the other fourteen hundred ... these regiments are composed of both free and slave. They are not allowed to do picket duty but are drilled and encamped separate from the white men. Their officers are all colored." #16

During the winter of 1861-1862 the Confederate government had not passed the necessary legislation to impress slaves to work in the engineering labor pool (they would pass it on October 3, 1862), but they did manage to "borrow, hire, and impress" slaves from the local counties and plantations to work on the railroads and fortifications. While most of the early efforts of impressing slaves for this work focused on the

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## CENTREVILLE MILITARY RAILROAD

Tidewater and Richmond areas, on at least one occasion, members of this labor pool were sent north to Manassas. According to one historian,

Black convicts from Richmond's penitentiaries formed another key component of the Confederacy's defensive labor force early in the war. Convict labor was probably the most useful option for engineer officers; once they obtained permission from state authorities, they could use convict labor for long periods of time without any interference from slaveholders. The convicts worked for several months on the entrenchments outside of Richmond before traveling to Manassas in December 1861 to repair roads and bridges ... the Engineer Bureau was particularly careful to arrange guards and overseers for black convict laborers. #17

The designation "regiment" may have come from an earlier Virginia work force which had been put together by Major Harrison Ball Tomlin, who impressed members of the Pamunkey Indian nation to work with Tomlin's Infantry Battalion on the fortifications at Yorktown. #18 It may simply have been, however, that the guards and overseers who accompanied the convicts, had used military drilling and commands to march the men to the worksites and organized their work in military style.

The *Richmond Examiner* had reported on November 30 that laborers were being hired for work on the rail line. From that date, if the completion of the railroad would take two months, it would be at least February before it would become operational. The question arises, if the rail line was expected to be a solution to solving the problem of the transportation of supplies through the fall and winter seasons, why wasn't it begun in October once Johnston knew the army had to remain in Northern Virginia? With the large amounts of materials needed for its construction, and the massive labor force required to complete it, there had to be other reasons for building the rail line.

Sharp was officially put in charge of the Rail Road by Barbour on March 1, 1862, and his duties for operating it were spelled out.

Office of Chief Quartermaster Potomac Department CSA March 1, 1862  
Captain Thomas Sharp

You have been this day placed on duty at Manassas in charge of Rail Road transportation of this department. You are expected to require and command all the Engines & Cars necessary to carry the persons & stores of this department when needed. You will confer at once with the various Rail Roads & bring here all of the cars to be had. You will have conveyed at once and without any sort of delay, from this place, all Q. Master, Hospital, Ordnance stores and Commissary supplies, in the order named. You will then send off all the extra baggage of the army. One passenger train of every morning going towards Gordonsville, will be retained for sick & wounded soldiers, with the exception of one car for the ladies, [which] will be retained until the train reaches the Moore Hospital. In case no ladies go on board the cars before they reach Moore Hospital, the reserved car will then be filled with sick. You will please have full and free interviews with Major Cole, [Chief Commissary], and find out his wants. Do not fail to send daily carloads of grain & supplies to Centreville & Union Mills. Keep the road to Centreville in good condition. Report to me daily, what you have sent off, and to what places. I will see you daily for further directions. Alfred M. Barbour, Major & Chief Q. Master. #19

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## CENTREVILLE MILITARY RAILROAD

The use of the rail line would be short-lived; it would not become operational until around February 15, 1862. Sharp's diary reveals that he had returned to Manassas on February 11, and then went down to Bull Run "on the [rail] road and back," probably inspecting it and the bridge. The bridge crossed Bull Run at Mitchell's Ford rather than at Blackburn's. On February 18, he noted in his diary that he "went to the end of the track beyond Bull Run." #20 This suggests that the track was not operational until that date, since as its construction supervisor, Sharp would have had to completely inspect and approve it before it could be used to transport troops and materials. #21

By this time, Johnston was already having his supplies sent to Culpeper instead of Manassas, so there was little in-bound freight. The out-bound traffic, however, was increasing as Johnston had already begun his evacuation from Northern Virginia, starting with the sick and wounded who were in camp or in local hospitals. The O&A and the Manassas Gap Railroad had already been used in the same manner during the summer of 1861 to transport sick soldiers to the regional hospital at Culpeper. Viewing the Centreville rail line after the Confederate withdrawal, a reporter for the *New Orleans Times Picayune* described the road in its April 1, 1862 edition,

A line of railroad has been built in nearly a direct line from Manassas Junction to Centreville, crossing Bull Run at Blackburn's Ford. It has been built right along the top of the ground, and contains some pretty sharp curves and heavy grades. The only bridge on it, which is the one at Blackburn's Ford, and which was merely a frame trestlework, was fired and burnt. The track remains, however it is in a dilapidated condition. The cross ties are twice the usual length apart, and laid in the sand and swamp without ballast.

This was typical of many Southern railroads: poor track construction and locomotives that were generally too small to pull large loads. The Centreville Military Railroad, which was a temporary light rail line, was of even greater concern for the transportation of large numbers of sick soldiers. Johnston must have been concerned about the reliability and safety of the rail line for the use of heavily loaded trains carrying people. He initially did not allow the use of the trains for transporting the sick, however he changed his mind when larger locomotives were brought in, allowing for the evacuation of the soldiers to the regional Confederate hospital in Charlottesville, Virginia. The Orange and Alexandria Railroad, however, disagreed with Johnston's decision and actions, but in a rare instance, they were over-ridden by orders from Johnston to Major Alfred Madison Barbour, the Chief Quartermaster of the Potomac Department.

It wasn't just the Centreville Rail Line which was used during the withdrawal. A problem that had surfaced in transporting the troops from Piedmont Station to Manassas Junction prior to the start of the Battle of First Manassas resurfaced once again. The lack of locomotives, cars, and poor communication had led to 6,000 of Johnston's troops not arriving on the battlefield in time for the battle. Another problem was that both the Orange & Alexandria and the Manassas Gap Railroads were single track lines with few turn-offs to allow on-coming trains to pass each other. As was the case at First Manassas, there were few available locomotives and cars to do the job. It was not that they were short on these vehicles, but they could not be accounted for and brought together. The lack of coordination was due to a rail system that was not nationalized

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## CENTREVILLE MILITARY RAILROAD

for a war. A communication from Col. Abraham Charles Myers, the Quartermaster General of the Confederacy, to President Davis on March 7, 1862 stated,

“All of the cars belonging to the Virginia Central Railroad, in running order, are on the Orange Road [O&A]. All of the engines which are acceptable ... I am inclined to think that there are too many trains now on that road; they are not able to pass each other on the turnouts. Some engines have been thirty-six hours making the trips from Manassas to Gordonsville.” He also mentioned that the president of the Virginia Central Railroad expected to have all of the stores away from Manassas, and that some pork on the Manassas Gap road would require four or five days more for removal. “The cars and engines of the Manassas Gap road and Orange road and Virginia Central road are all, I believe, in use at Manassas, No further increase can be made...” #22

Like many of the early Confederate logistical operations, the construction of the Centreville Military Railroad was hampered by poor leadership decisions and using military strategy which was being cobbled together on-the-run. Most of all it suffered from a Southern infrastructure whose transportation and logistical systems were severely lacking as compared to those of the North. The best efforts of Joseph Johnston and the Confederate government could not overcome the shortcomings which had existed in the South for decades. Although the rail line was too little and too late, it was a testament to the men who created it, and to their will and persistence to see it through to completion. The use of the Centreville Military Railroad to evacuate supplies and personnel was successful in many respects; however, like the earlier use of the Manassas Gap Railroad during the Battle of First Manassas, it would leave a lot to be desired, and a lot was also left behind at the Junction.

### NOTES

#1 *The Complete History of the Civil War Fortifications at Centreville: The Long Path to War for a Virginia Community*, John C. Carter, Denver: Outskirts Press, 2023, pp. 57-61.

#2 Carter, *Complete History*, pp. 148-156.

#3 National Archives, AQM 10/26A/1861.

#4 A.C. Myers is Col. Abraham Charles Myers, the Confederate Quartermaster General; for the name see Earl Hess, *Civil War Logistics: A Study of Military Transportation*, Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2017. p. 31; and Jerrold Northrop Moore, *Confederate Commissary Lucius Bellinger Northrop and the Subsistence Bureau of the Southern Army*, Shippensburg, White Mane Publishing Company, 1996., p. 75; *Buff Facings and Gilt Buttons Staff and Headquarters Operations in the Army of Northern Virginia 1861-1865*, J. Boone Bartholomees, Jr., Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1998, p. 48.

#5 “The Great Train Robbery- or The Confederates Gather Steam,” Arthur Candenquist, Winchester, Virginia, CWEA, August 2008

#6 The Heights of Centreville range from 350-400 feet. The elevation at Manassas Junction is 300-320 feet, and Route 28 is below 300 feet between Manassas Park and Old Mill Road.

#7 David L. Bright has brought this to light in his book, *Locomotives Up the Turnpike: The Civil War Career of Captain Thomas R. Sharp, C.S.A.*, Shelby, Westmoreland Press, 2016.

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## CENTREVILLE MILITARY RAILROAD

#8 Bright, pp. 52-54

#9 National Archives, MG 2-3-1862.

#10 Bartholomees, Jr., p. 103.

#11 *Field Armies and Fortifications in the Civil War: The Eastern Campaigns, 1861-1864*, Earl J. Hess, Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2005, pp. 18-19.

#12 *OR*, v. 5, pp. 1081-1082. Whiting had also served as Johnston's engineer at Harpers Ferry.

#13 *Narrative of Military Operations during the Civil War*, Joseph E. Johnston, New York: Da Capo Press, 1959 (1874), pp. 98-99. According to Johnston, supplies continued to be sent to Manassas Junction despite his orders.

#14 David Bullock Harris papers, David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University.

#15 *Welcome the Hour of Conflict William Cowan McClellan and the 9<sup>th</sup> Alabama*, John C. Carter, ed., Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 2007, pp. 106, 109; see also: Carter, *Complete History*, pp. 156-159.

#16 *Bohemian*, December 20, 1861; Carter, *Welcome*, p. 109. The term "regiment" did not mean a military regiment.

#17 Jaime Amanda Martinez, *Confederate Slave Impressment in the Upper South*, Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2013, pp. 7, 21, n.189.

#18 In 1917 Virginia Indians would be designated as colored

#19 National Archives, MG 3/1/1861. Arthur Candenquist believes "the railroad began operating with cars and locomotives borrowed from the O&A and the Manassas Gap railroads in the first week of February 1862." *World's First Military Railroad*, 12/27/2017.

#20 Bright, pp. 53-54

#21 Bright. The time scale for the construction and completion of the rail line can be found in the National Archives files and in Captain Thomas Sharp's diary. See: *Locomotives Up the Turnpike, The Civil War Career of Quartermaster Thomas R. Sharp, C.S.A.*, David L. Bright, Westmoreland Printers, Shelby, 2016.

#22 *OR*, v. 5, 1093

## GHOST FORTS DO EXIST!

By Brian McEnany

Ghost Forts exist in Northern Virginia and there are ways to find their locations. Using the process outlined in this article allowed me to pin down the location of one Ghost Fort near Oakton and it may prove useful to determine the location of others.

Civil War records and local histories often contain statements about the locations of fortifications and/or camp sites. Too often those locations are qualified. What do I mean by that? The locations are written down in letters and official reports as "near the village" or a "rifle shot away from the village." One example is the official report of one of the early warning cavalry camps, a part of the 22nd Corps, Dept. of Washington in 1864. The headquarters of Col. Lazelle's cavalry brigade in November 1864 was listed in official records as "near Fort Buffalo." As long as you know where Fort Buffalo is, then you have a general, but not exact location of the cavalry camp.

Fort Buffalo was constructed by a Union unit on Upton's Hill in Falls Church in 1861. A Fairfax County historic sign stands next to the Fort Buffalo Seven Corners Fire Station on Sleepy Hollow Road. It states that the fort was located nearby. The fort was abandoned at the end of the Civil War and destroyed when the Seven Corners Shopping Center and surrounding areas were built in the 1950s. Local history points out that several local inhabitants, when they were younger, played in the earthworks of Fort Buffalo. Those earthworks now lie under a building across the street from the Fire Station. The cavalry camp "near Fort Buffalo" is still not located as there are no reports that identifies which side of Upton's Hill mass it was located on. Therefore, the camp site remains a Ghost Fort, even though Fort Buffalo was identified.

My research into finding other Ghost Forts was associated with writing a driving tour pamphlet entitled *Early Warning in Northern Virginia* about the 1864 early warning line cavalry camps. The pamphlet allowed the reader to drive along old Chain Bridge Road and see where historic documents state that early warning camps were located.

Research for the pamphlet took me to the history rooms of several local libraries, the Fairfax County 1860 property records office, the Fairfax County Historic Commission offices, and the local histories of Falls Church, McLean, Lewinsville, Vienna, Oakton, Fairfax Court House and Fairfax Station, including the Official Records of the Civil War. In most cases, those sources did not identify the actual locations of the various camps/fortifications. Consequently, I became convinced that those 1864 early warning locations were pretty much lost in Civil War history, and I called them "Ghost Forts."

I selected one of those Ghost Forts to explain how current day internet sources available in Fairfax County may help find locations of similar sites. One early warning fortification was identified as being at the south end of the village of Flint Hill (currently Oakton) in 1864. There are no visible remains of Fort Flint, just a general location on a rise near the war time trace of old Chain Bridge Road. The closest one

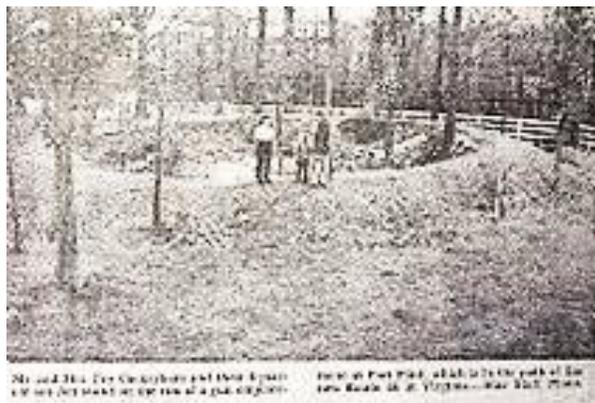
(cont on page 27)

## GHOST FORTS

can come to that location is along Rosehaven Street on the western side of the current Chain Bridge Road (Rt 123).

During advance preparation for a recent BRCWRT tour of Vienna and Oakton Civil War locations, I went back through the source material I previously found about Fort Flint. As preparations for the tour continued, I found a way to determine a more exact location. Please note that Fort Flint was not a fort in military terms. It is more properly identified as a redoubt that could be circular, square, or star shaped. Local histories identified it as a fort. Also note, there is little information about early warning camps/fortifications in B.F. Cooling's excellent books about Washington's defenses during the Civil War. The northern Virginia early warning camps were well beyond Washington's actual defenses.

Local and official histories state that both Confederate and Union units occupied the general area around Flint Hill and along old Chain Bridge Road during the early years of the war. Official records do not identify which side initially built Fort Flint. I did direct questions about its location to several local historians. Ron Hubbard responded by sending me a November 1960 article from the *Washington Evening Star* that showed a photograph of a redoubt, located in the front yard of the Cockerham's farm. The article noted that restrictions were written into property deeds that prohibited any destruction of the redoubt. In that article, various people described Fort Flint as a gun emplacement, or a rifle pit, or even that it had a moat surrounding it. It truly is a Ghost Fort!



The story was prompted by actions taken by various historic organizations in the circuit court and with the State Civil War Commission to contest current plans to destroy it. The redoubt blocked construction of the proposed western access road from Chain Bridge Road to I-66 when the interstate highway was under construction in 1960. Actions taken to preserve Fort Flint were overturned after the State Highway Department condemned the property and the redoubt was destroyed. The loss of this historic site left historians and researchers alike still wondering where it was actually located.

During the BRCWRT tour, I needed to take tour attendees close to the current Chain Bridge Road to be able to point out the location of Fort Flint in the highly developed area south of Flint Hill (Oakton).

I found that using several online Fairfax County databases helped me find the location of Fort Flint. Three different online Fairfax County data bases were used – the Fairfax County History Commission 1860 Fairfax County Maps database shows land ownership; the Fairfax County historic aerial photograph database (1937- 2025); and the Fairfax County Property Search database.

(cont on page 28)

## GHOST FORTS

Finding Cockerham's property in the Fairfax County 1860 Map data base showed that the property was owned by Squire Millard. Using the Fairfax County aerial photograph database, I found two photos (1937 and 1953) of Cockerham's property on Rosehaven Road – the 1953 aerial showed a highly visible, circular fortification located just north of a farmhouse. See Figure 1.

The trace of the old roads on each side of Chain Bridge Road parallel the boundary lines of current tax parcels. By extending lines along those roads toward one another, their intersection passed through the redoubt. By extending the same boundary lines in the 2024 aerial photo, the actual location of Fort Flint was pinpointed as lying near the concrete center median of the current Chain Bridge Road just before you start turning onto the west bound access ramp to I-66. See Figure 2.



Fig. 1 - 1953 Aerial photo of Fort Flint



Fig. 2 - 2024 Aerial photo of Chain Bridge Rd.

This is just one example of what can be done using current County internet resources and historic documents. Hopefully, it allows one to think more about Civil War history when driving down Chain Bridge Road. I shall try to write about other sites that I have identified in later editions of the *Stone Wall*.

*Until then... Just imagine -- perhaps on a clear, cool, misty Sunday morning you are walking along Chain Bridge Road when you hear a sound - a bugle call - then voices yelling "To Horse", and the rattle of chains as a gate opens. Suddenly, a ghostly image of a Civil War fortification appears in the morning mist. Then*

*the sound of hoofbeats can be heard as a cavalry troop thunders through the gate and down to the open road – perhaps in answer to a call from a lonely vedette or redoubt along one of the early warning lines in Northern Virginia – imagine that! Ghost Forts do exist!*

Evans, D'Anne, *The Story of Oakton Virginia*. (Oakton Citizens Assoc. VA) 1982 p. 42-45.

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*The Washington Evening Star*, Nov 30, 1960 (copy provided by Ron Hubbard).

Fairfax County Historic Aerial Photograph Data Base.

Fairfax County Property Search Map.

Fairfax County Historic Commission, "1860 Fairfax County Maps – Landownership in 1860".

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Official Records of the Rebellion, Vol. 37/1, 363, "Report of Col. Lazelle," Nov. 1864.

## PRIVATE JESSE FRANKLIN LEATHERWOOD

Company D, 10<sup>th</sup> Alabama Infantry, 1840-1861

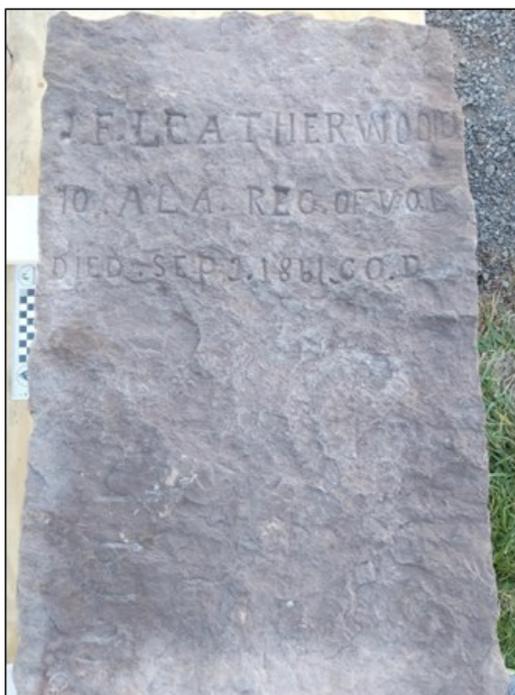
By Jeff Joyce

Jesse Franklin Leatherwood was a 21 year old farmer when he enlisted on June 4, 1861 in Company D of the 10<sup>th</sup> Alabama in Alexandria, Alabama. His parents, Zachariah and Agnes Leatherwood, were originally from South Carolina and moved to Alabama in the late 1830s. Jesse Franklin was the first of their nine children born in Alabama.

He died at Camp Jones of typhoid fever or measles (or a combination of the two) on September 2, 1861. His obituary was published in the *Jacksonville Republican* newspaper in Jacksonville, Alabama on December 12, 1861:

“With buoyant hope of rendering efficient service in maintaining Southern independence, Jesse F. Leatherwood entered the ranks of Capt. Woodruff's company, 10th Regt. Ala. Vol. stationed near Bristoe; but alas his experience as a soldier was brief and sad; he was attacked by measles and relapsed, and was seized by hemorrhage, which terminated his existence Sept. 2nd, 1861 at age 21 years, 4 months, and 13 days. His time had come, and all the help of friends could not prevent his death. His sufferings were severe. Although he had not made a public profession of religion yet, from corresponding friends who were with him in his last hours, we have hope of his acceptance with God. Although he had been but a short time in service, we learn that he had by good moral deportment, and fidelity as a soldier, gained the confidence and esteem of both privates and officers. His service is done in this world, but still he lives in memory, and his patriotism and virtue will never be forgotten.”

In 2012, when the Alabama memorial was dedicated at the Bristoe Station Park cemetery, Jesse Franklin's descendant, Frank Leatherwood, visited Bristoe Station. Jesse Franklin's grave was one of several with a stone marker, which stood in the cemetery until about 1990. It has since been returned to the Prince William County Office of Historic Preservation and is in storage.





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\_\_\_\_\_