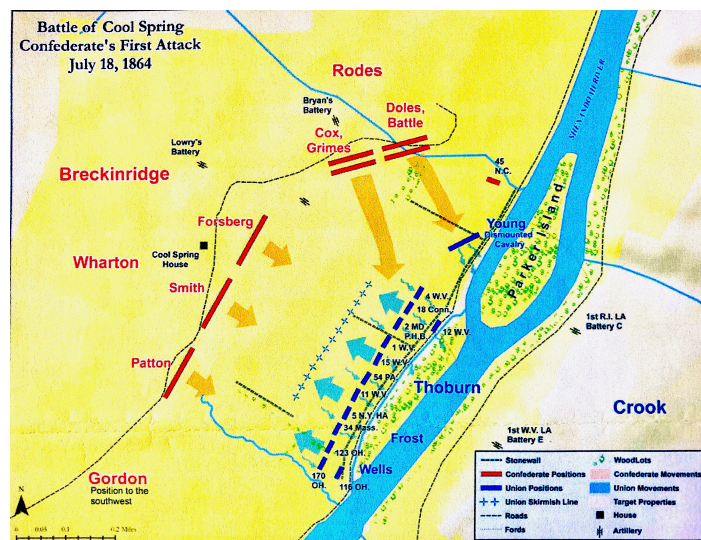


Bull Run Civil War Round Table (BRCWRT) Preservation Corner
April 26, 2021



Greetings BRCWRT Members and Friends - I trust you and your family and friends are doing well and remain safe and healthy. This edition of *Preservation Corner* highlights the preservation and interpretation of Virginia's Cool Spring Battlefield and Shenandoah University's River Campus at the Cool Spring Battlefield located at 1400 Parker Lane near Bluemont, Virginia.

On July 18, 1864, Federal Forces of General Horatio Wright's VI Corps, and in particular Colonel Joseph Thoburn's Division, battled along the banks of the Shenandoah River with Confederate forces of General Jubal Early's II Corps of the Army of Northern Virginia in the largest and bloodiest Civil War battle fought in Clarke County, Virginia - the Battle of Cool Spring. This battle followed on the heels of the Battle of Monocacy and Early's incursion into Washington DC, and was a precursor to General Phil Sheridan's 1864 Campaign in the Shenandoah Valley.



Map showing the initial Confederate attack and Island Ford (south of Parker Island) where Thoburn's Division crossed the Shenandoah River (Map courtesy of the American Battlefield Trust)

Today Shenandoah University's McCormick Civil War Institute (MCWI) interprets the battle at the University's River Campus at Cool Spring Battlefield. An eight-page, nine-stop self-guided walking tour is available for site visitors. Special programs, guided tours and access to the exhibits and artifacts from the battle in the Lodge at Cool Spring are available on select weekends throughout the summer. Entrance to the River Campus is free, and donations to support the interpretive work of MCWI at the River Campus are greatly appreciated.

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Recent MCWI Guided Tour in vicinity of Island Ford



Shenandoah University's River Campus Lodge

Recently the American Battlefield Trust and Shenandoah University received the 2020 Wingate Mackay-Smith Clarke County Land Conservation Award for their partnership in preserving the Cool Spring Battlefield. The following Press Release was distributed by the American Battlefield Trust (ABT):

AMERICAN BATTLEFIELD TRUST, SHENANDOAH UNIVERSITY HONORED FOR WORK AT VIRGINIA'S COOL SPRING BATTLEFIELD

Wingate Mackay-Smith Clarke County Land Conservation Award recognizes the partnership that transformed a former golf course into a battlefield park and an outdoor classroom

The [American Battlefield Trust](#) and [Shenandoah University](#) were recently honored with the 2020 Wingate Mackay-Smith Clarke County Land Conservation Award for a partnership that transformed a former golf course into a battlefield park and outdoor university classroom.

The award from the county [Conservation Easement Authority](#) recognizes the preservation and stewardship of the [Cool Spring Battlefield](#). The site along the Shenandoah River is now protected from development and is an enriching learning space for Shenandoah University while the park has become unparalleled community resource, especially in this past year as residents sought outdoor space for socially distanced recreation.

“Cool Spring is a remarkable landscape, simultaneously significant in both historic and ecological contexts,” said Trust President David Duncan. “We often speak of a protected battlefield’s landscape to function as an outdoor classroom, but nowhere has this been more fully realized than on the banks of the Shenandoah River in Clarke County.”

The site was protected through a public-private partnership between the Trust and Shenandoah University that began in 2011. Once home to the Virginia National Golf Club, the Trust secured the 195-acre property using member donations and matching grants from the National Park Service’s [American Battlefield Protection Program](#) and the [Virginia Battlefield Preservation Fund](#) to finance the \$2 million purchase price.

During a 2013 celebration, ownership of the site was turned over to Shenandoah University, which integrated the land’s crucial role in the July 18, 1864, Battle of Cool Spring and its 10,000 linear feet of frontage on the Shenandoah River into a hands-on learning venue for students. Thanks to a perpetual conservation easement held by the [Virginia Department of Historic Resources](#), the site will remain forever pristine and free of inappropriate development.

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Today, the [Shenandoah River Campus](#) at Cool Spring Battlefield supports several university departments and activities. Classes in the environmental studies, outdoor leadership, and history programs investigate the property's history and ecology and develop leadership skills, while students, faculty, staff and administrators all visit the River Campus for meetings, recreation, team building, and inspiration. Students pursue both interpretation of the battlefield and research into native habitats and water quality.

With hiking and biking trails, as well as river access, recreational opportunities are legion — both for students and the general public, which is welcomed to the site daily. Cool Spring Park is now a local destination for walking, biking, bird watching and other wildlife observation. Commonly seen creatures include bald eagles, cormorants, red-winged blackbirds, a nesting colony of great blue heron, bats, a dozen species of turtles, red foxes, muskrats, deer and beavers. Notable flora includes large swaths of Virginia bluebells, century-old giant sycamores, silver maples, box elders and the rare bur oak.

Shenandoah University is conscious that we are the stewards of a remarkable resource at Cool Spring and take that responsibility quite seriously,” said Jonathan Noyalas, director of Shenandoah University’s McCormick Civil War Institute. “We have the opportunity to build a true heritage tourism destination and train the next generation of historians with real-world experience using Cool Spring’s rich historical landscape.” “The permanent stewardship of this property by Shenandoah University was an ideal outcome for the property,” said Trust Chief Land Preservation Officer Tom Gilmore, who accepted the award on the organization’s behalf. “We frequently cite this partnership as a model we seek to replicate across the country.”



Walking Tour Stop #3 - Well's Bde Leads the Crossing



Artillery Artifacts from the Battlefield

“Through Their Eyes”

Under the direction of Shenandoah University's McCormick Civil War Institute (MCWI) Director, Jonathan Noyalas, and after two years of research, writing, development, filming, editing, collaboration and testing, MCWI recently unveiled "Through Their Eyes"-- an app that allows visitors to the Cool Spring Battlefield to explore the July 18, 1864 battle experiences and its consequences for soldiers and their families through the lens of individual soldiers who fought in the battle.

The app's content is based on the primary accounts of soldiers who fought at Cool Spring. The accounts highlight the various ways in which the fighting that occurred along the banks of the Shenandoah River

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on July 18, 1864, impacted soldiers not only on that day, but in the days, weeks, months, and even years after the battle. The app was created with the assistance of students in Shenandoah University's Civil War Era Studies Program and in the University's Center for Immersive Learning.



The app (which is FREE) is available for download in the App Store and on Google Play (search "Through Their Eyes"). The app contains two components; a 360 degree, 3D "AR Map" video experience which can be used anywhere, and a GPS-enabled augmented "Soldiers' Voices Tour" audio experience which can only be used on site at the Cool Spring Battlefield.

Readers are strongly encouraged to visit the Cool Spring Battlefield and Shenandoah University's River Campus at Cool Spring. It is a wonderful site and setting in which to learn about the Battle of Cool Spring and the soldiers who fought in that battle, to view battlefield artifacts and to learn about the history of the River Campus in the exhibit located inside the River Campus Lodge to attend MCWI tours offered during the summer months, and to enjoy the hiking trail and self-guided walking tour.

Until next month.

Blake Myers, BRCWRT Preservation Chair