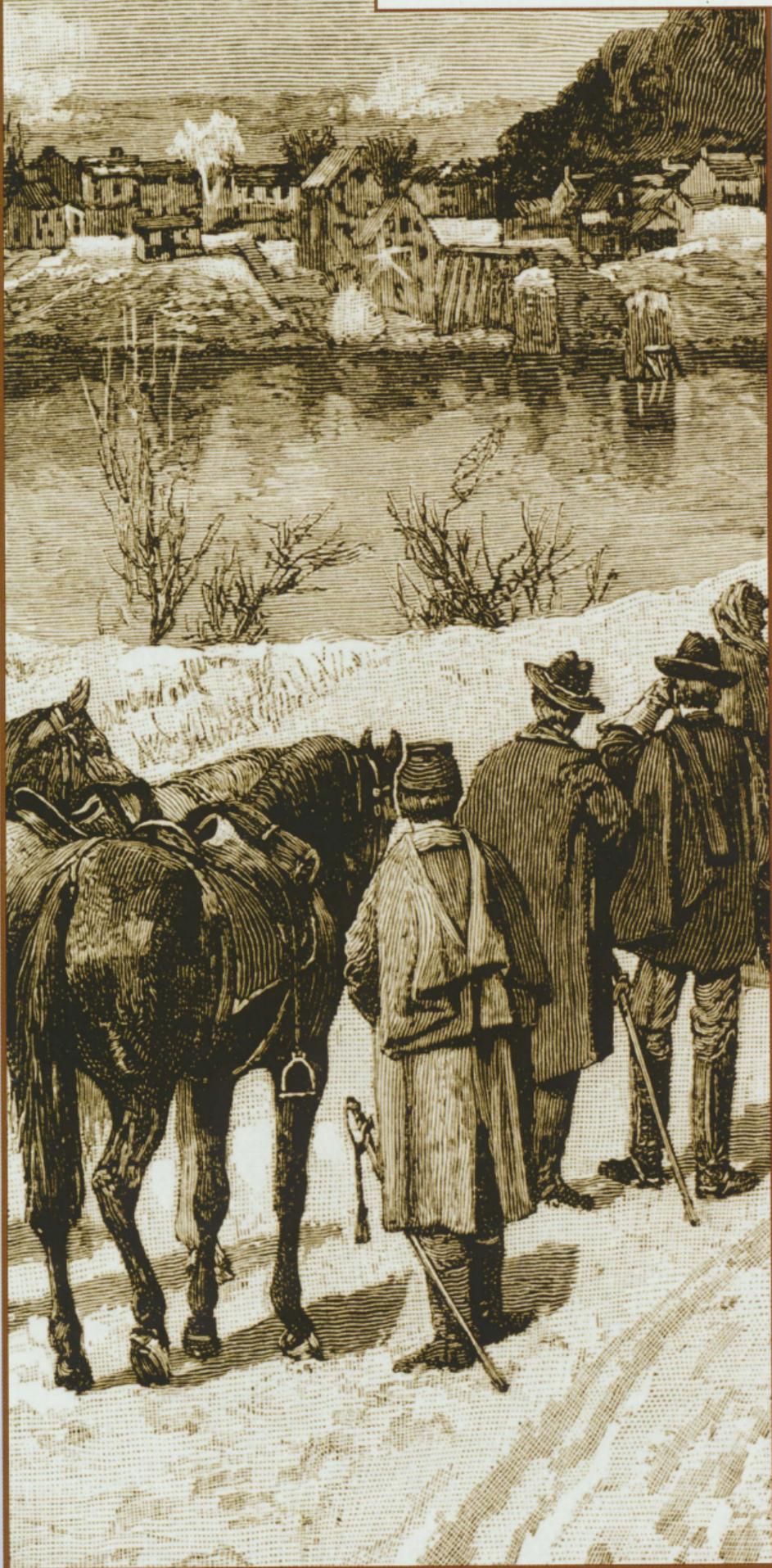


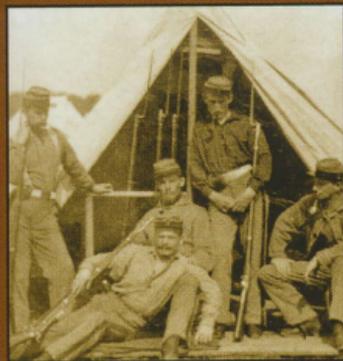
A self-guided
walking tour

The Civil War at Ferry Farm



The Civil War at Ferry Farm

NINETY YEARS after George Washington sold the plantation of his youth, now known as Ferry Farm, the Civil War engulfed it.



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Union soldiers camped at Ferry Farm in 1862 and, again, in 1863 prior to the Battle of Chancellorsville.

During the five years of horror, the farm was transformed from an outwardly idyllic, Virginia country setting to a ruined, barren landscape.

While the war brought ruin and despair to some at Ferry Farm, it also provided remarkable, life-altering opportunities to others.

Ferry Farm Map

Walk in the footsteps of Union soldiers as they made their camps on the land where George Washington grew up.



*“If there is a worse place than hell,
then I am in it.”*

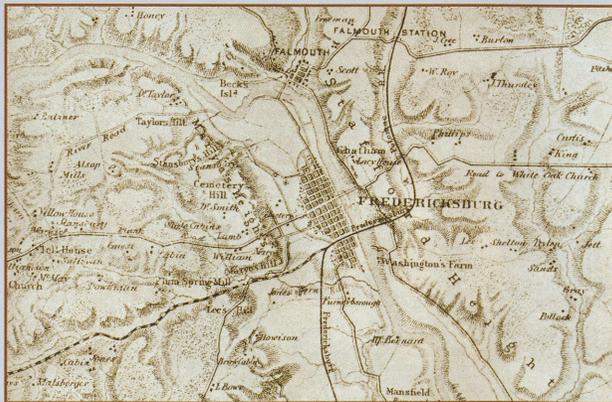
Abraham Lincoln after the Battle of Fredericksburg



A Before the War

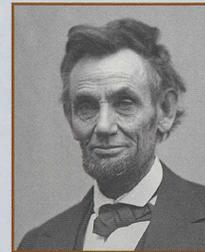
Ferry Farm was owned by Winter Bray in the 1840s and 50s. Bray, a wealthy landowner who lived in Fredericksburg, built a new farmhouse and hired an overseer to run the Washington farm.

In 1852, Bray died and his widow's new husband took control of the farm. Along with an overseer, 22 slaves lived and worked on the plantation. In 1862, two Union soldiers from different units commented that the overseer had a slave “wife” and children.



B Spring/Summer 1862

Abraham Lincoln, an admirer of Washington, made a point of touring the Washington farm on his way to review troops in Fredericksburg that spring.



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In August, the Union troops were recalled to Washington. In making their hasty retreat, they abandoned and burned much of their surplus military stores and equipment.

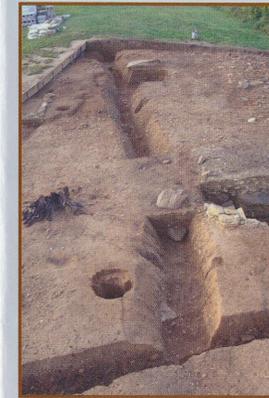
C The Federals Return: Battle of Fredericksburg, Dec. 1862

In November, 1862, the Army of the Potomac, 130,000 men strong, arrived on the Stafford County side of the Rappahannock River.

While they waited for pontoons to make bridges, soldiers tore down what they believed was the Washington house to use in their temporary shelters and for camp fires. It was actually the house built by Winter Bray for his overseer.



A trench was dug along the ridgeline of the terrace overlooking the river and the dirt was mounded up on the river side. A smaller trench connected the cellar ruin to the main fortification, allowing soldiers sheltered in the cellar ruin to walk to the main trench without drawing enemy fire.



Archaeologists at The George Washington Foundation uncovered the evidence of small

campfires in the cellar ruin and numerous artifacts discarded by the Union soldiers. Also found were large quantities of plaster covered in graffiti created by the soldiers.



While the main army camped away from the front line, Union pickets (advance outposts or guards for a large force) were established at Ferry Farm. Picket duty was hazardous as these men were the first to encounter any enemy movement.

In April, 1862, Union soldiers captured Fredericksburg. Soldiers, in charge of keeping the peace in the occupied town, camped at Ferry Farm and built a canal boat bridge connecting it to Fredericksburg.

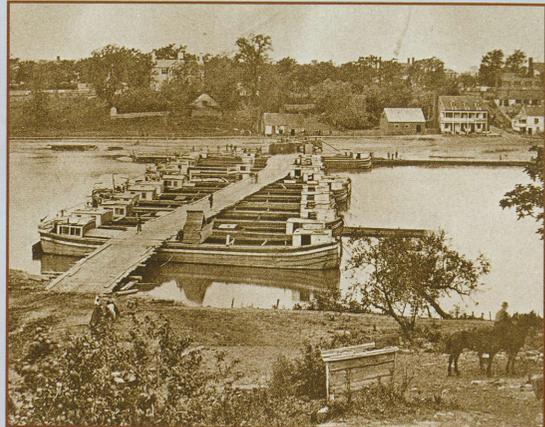


IMAGE COURTESY OF THE MARC AND BETH STORCH COLLECTION

As slaves fled from Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania County in search of freedom, one soldier estimated that hundreds crossed the river at Ferry Farm every day. More than

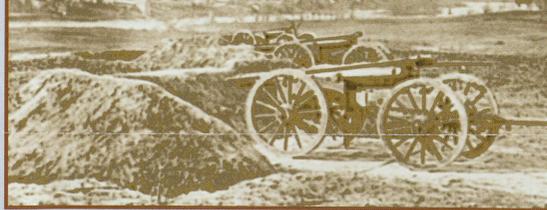


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10,000 slaves used the bridges during 1862, and the Ferry Farm slaves

joined the exodus seeking freedom in the north.

The Union soldiers were well aware that they were camping at George Washington's boyhood home and mentioned it in journals and letters home. They understood the irony of waging a divisive war at the home of the man who had fought so hard for the creation of a united country.



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Waiting for battle, soldiers encamped at Ferry Farm remembered the famous cherry tree story and whittled cherry tree branches into souvenir crosses, pipes, and rings that they mailed home along with cherry pits.

Ferry Farm became a combat zone on December 11, the first day of the Battle of Fredericksburg. Cannons situated at Ferry Farm fired on the town. The 89th New York Volunteers rowed across the Rappahannock attempting to dislodge Confederate sharpshooters who were preventing the construction of pontoon bridges.

During the bombardment, Union soldiers, inspired by the tales of a young George Washington, held a contest to see if anyone could throw a stone across the Rappahannock River. Only one soldier from Michigan succeeded.

After two days of fighting and with mounting casualties, the badly mauled Union army retreated across the pontoon bridges and set up their winter camps throughout Stafford County.

D Winter Camp 1862/1863

After the battle, the Bray house cellar ruins became part of a fortification system created by the Union soldiers to protect themselves from Confederate sharpshooters and bad weather.

E Battle of Chancellorsville

In May, 1863, pontoon bridges were re-established by Union troops situated at Ferry Farm in preparation for the Battle of Chancellorsville.

While waiting for the battle, Union pickets swam into the river to exchange news and trade newspapers for tobacco with their Confederate counterparts. This time, Union troops easily took Fredericksburg, but they lost the battle west of the town and were once again forced to retreat across the Rappahannock.

F After the War

During the first occupation of Ferry Farm, Union troops tried to limit the impact of their presence. However, when they returned in late fall of 1862, crops and livestock were consumed by the army and buildings and fences were razed for shelter construction.



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All available trees were fed to the campfires. By the time the war was over, all that survived at Ferry Farm was a barren landscape, so scarred by the war that corn was the only crop that would grow in the damaged soil.



Conserving this special place, its wildlife, and the river are part of everyday life today at Ferry Farm. However, preservation is only the beginning. Plans have been made to rebuild the plantation where George Washington grew to manhood and developed the remarkable traits that helped him lead the Continental Army, become the first U.S. president, and guide a fledgling nation to its place in history.

Your support is needed to preserve the legacy of the Father of Our Country and his family, and tell the story of his early life through educational programs for all ages. You can help by sending a tax-deductible contribution to:

**The George Washington Foundation
1201 Washington Avenue
Fredericksburg, VA 22401**

www.ferryfarm.org

The George Washington Foundation is a 501(c)(3) organization. Financial data is available from the state Office of Consumer Affairs at 800-552-9963.