

ELLWOOD



A Quiet Country Farm

Unlike the grander Chatham, “Ellwood” was no symbol of wealth. Instead it was a typical, prosperous, antebellum agricultural operation of middling size—designed for function, not show. Perched on a knoll overlooking Wilderness Run, Ellwood stood at the center of the modest 642-acre estate. Around the house spread a cloud of outbuildings: stables, barns, slave cabins, a kitchen. A few dozen slaves worked the surrounding fields. The annual bounty—mostly grains and corn—was shipped along the turnpike and Plank Road to markets in Fredericksburg, 15 miles to the east.

William Jones built Ellwood in the 1790s, and he or his descendants would own the place for the next century. The seasonal rhythms of till, plant, tend, and reap; the daily rhythms of rise, cook, work, socialize, and cook some more continued unbroken before the Civil War. Legend holds that “Light Horse Harry” Lee, Robert E. Lee’s father, wrote his memoirs in one of the upstairs bedrooms. In 1824, Revolutionary War hero Marquis de Lafayette dined at Ellwood during his triumphant tour of America. Beyond that, little of note occurred here.

The Civil War

Ellwood's fabric reflects decades of routine use. Its fame arises from its use during the Civil War. Wartime owners Betty Churchill Jones (William's daughter) and her husband, J. Horace Lacy, used Ellwood as a summer home, preferring the more palatial Chatham (now park headquarters) as their primary residence. Lacy was an ardent secessionist who served as an officer in the Confederate army.

Until May 1864, Ellwood stood on the fringe of events. A minor skirmish erupted here in April 1863, as the Confederates tried vainly to delay Union forces advancing toward Chancellorsville. Days later, General "Stonewall" Jackson's chaplain, Beverley Tucker Lacy (J. Horace's brother) chose the family cemetery at Ellwood as the final resting place for his chief's amputated arm.

For months after the Battle of Chancellorsville the house served as a field hospital. In the fall of 1863, Union troops on their way to the standoff at Mine Run, seven miles west, stopped at Ellwood and ransacked the fine Lacy library.

For three days in May 1864, during the Battle of the Wilderness, the eyes of the world focused on Ellwood and its surrounding fields and thickets. The grounds teemed with Union artillery and soldiers as they prepared for, or recovered from, intense fighting a mile to the west. General Ulysses S. Grant—recently appointed commander of all Union armies throughout the country—made his headquarters just a few hundred yards north of Ellwood. Generals Gouverneur K. Warren and Ambrose E. Burnside, two of the Union army's four corps commanders, moved into Ellwood itself. Orderlies and staff officers swarmed around the buildings, carrying orders to front-line troops.

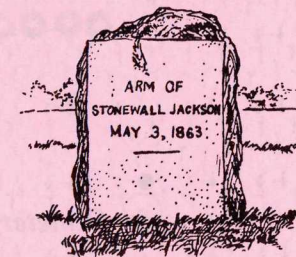
By battle's end, Ellwood's floors were stained with blood, its gardens trampled, its fences gone. Graves dotted the grounds. The house's caretakers had been arrested and sent to Old Capitol Prison in Washington. For the next eight years Ellwood would stand vacant, used only by occasional squatters.

The Postwar Years

In 1872 the Lacys resumed life at Ellwood, having sold Chatham to help pay off debts incurred during the war. Over the next 100 years, Ellwood would be sold only once, to law professor Hugh Evander Willis in 1907. It ended its days as a Virginia farm much as it had begun them: quietly, modestly, subject to unending seasonal and daily rhythms. The National Park Service acquired the house and grounds in 1977.

The Jones's Long Lineage

Five years after losing his first wife in 1823, 78-year-old William Jones married his former spouse's 16-year-old grandniece, Lucinda Gordon. William and Lucinda produced a child, whom William promptly named after his first wife, Betty Churchill. (One can only imagine Lucinda's reaction to that decision!) When William died in 1845, Ellwood passed to his wife Lucinda, but only so long as she did not remarry. Two years later, Lucinda chose heart over home, married her love, and gave up Ellwood to her daughter, Betty Churchill Jones. In 1848, Betty would marry an itinerant tutor named J. Horace Lacy. The Lacys, who also owned "Chatham," would own Ellwood until 1907. Remarkably, a great-grandson of William Jones—a man born in 1750—was still living in 1998.



STONEWALL JACKSON'S ARM

