

THE RICHMOND NATIONAL PARKS QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

RICHMOND NATIONAL BATTLEFIELD PARK
MAGGIE L. WALKER NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE



The Superintendent's Letter

By Cynthia MacLeod

Our energies have been pouring into creating the new Visitor Center at Tredegar, now scheduled to open June 17th, with a special address at 1:00 p.m. by the National Park Service Director, Bob Stanton. Please join us on June 17 and consult our website for up to date information on Tredegar as well as other park scheduled events.

Ever mindful, however, of the supreme value of the battlefield lands themselves, we are also actively exploring opportunities to preserve the remains of the battlefields near Richmond. The prohibition on using federal funds to buy land for Richmond National Battlefield Park is still in effect, requiring us to rely on private sector and state and local government efforts. Recently a private individual initiated a complex plan for preserving land associated with the Totopotomoy Creek battle along with a development plan for less historically significant acreage. The land to be preserved is in three different ownership parcels and includes impressive earthworks from the May 1864 battle and the remarkable historic Shelton home known as Rural Plains, significant for its architecture as well as its witness to key events. The county declined to consider zoning changes that would have made that particular preservation/development arrangement possible, although there were no comments hostile to the preservation aspect of the plan. I was pleased to hear the reasoning from the developer's lawyer that the location of commercial zoning can be shifted on a plan but the heart of a battlefield cannot be relocated, and I understand his rationale that private preservation must find a way to pay for itself. I mention this example not that I want to second guess the county's decision necessarily, but rather that I do want to applaud and encourage this kind of creative thinking that is necessary in lieu of using government funds to buy historic property. The more people who understand that battlefields are sacred, can be an amenity to the local community as well as a national icon, and

can assist economic development as well, the more battlefields will be preserved. Battlefields in the National Park System hold their value in perpetuity; they are not "class A" space for a mere 10, 20, or even 50 years, which is longer than I have seen any county plans project. There are many of you who do believe in preservation of our country's heritage in all its diversity, and I thank you for your support of the Richmond battlefields.

Park Launches New Map Project

For nearly 40 years Richmond National Battlefield Park has relied upon a series of battlefield maps prepared by legendary Park Service historian Ed Bearss. These troop movement maps show, in as much detail as possible, the positions of each unit at the battlefields of Beaver Dam Creek, Gaines' Mill, Savage's Station, Glendale (Frayser's Farm), Malvern Hill, Cold Harbor, Fort Harrison, and Darbytown Road.

Work commenced this winter to revise and improve those maps. Beaver Dam Creek will be the first in the series to be produced. Park historians have the advantage of using research tools that are far more complete and numerous than what was available in 1960. The first step is to pursue every primary account of the battle they can find. Using those sources, the historians hope to piece together the correct alignment of each regiment, Union and Confederate, that fought in that battle.

The base map for this project is being prepared by a cartographer in Fredericksburg. It will be multi-colored, showing the ground as it was in 1862, with terrain lines, streams, houses, and roads all clearly marked. The final product will be a series of six maps that document the evolution of the battle near Mechanicsville on June 26, 1862.

These new maps will be important tools in the park's research arsenal for many reasons. They will benefit battlefield visitors (many of them descended from Civil War soldiers) by providing accurate and accessible information on where specific units fought. The maps and their accompanying documentation also will prove, with more thoroughness, where action occurred. This will increase awareness of these historic sites, and can only help in the preservation of hallowed ground.

The set of Beaver Dam Creek troop movement maps should be available for purchase some time in the latter part of 2001.

Interpretation Update: Tredegar Exhibits

By David Ruth, Chief of Interpretation and Cultural Resources

The last several months have been very exciting for all of us preparing for the opening of our new Tredegar Iron Works visitor center. One of the early challenges was to find significant artifacts to display, since our own collection lacked key objects that we needed to illustrate the diverse interpretive themes in the museum space. With the help of the designers, we canvassed local history museums and parks to search out what items might be available, how long we could use them, and what were the conservation requirements.

Six institutions came to our rescue, including Richmond's Ethyl Corporation, The Museum of the Confederacy, The Valentine Museum, and the Virginia Historical Society. We also received support from both Gettysburg National Military Park and Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania National Military Park, who loaned us important medical items and the key to Libby Prison, where Union officers were held captive in Richmond. The Museum of the Confederacy loaned us, among other items, Libby's wooden door that was liberally carved with names and regiments of Union soldiers.

Some of our most fascinating items came from the Mariner's Museum of Newport News. During my research trip, I was treated to a tour of the massive tanks where electrolysis was being used to stabilize hull plates that were recovered from one of the most famous American fighting ships, USS Monitor. The Monitor was important to our interpretive story because of the unsuccessful attempt that it and four other warships had made to pass the Confederate defenses at Drewry's Bluff in 1862. The Mariner's Museum offered us the loan of a large piece of the Monitor's deck plate, along with an assortment of bottles and other Monitor related artifacts. Then we hit the mother lode; Mariner's also had a piece of armor plating from the Confederate war ship, CSS Virginia. The plating was bowed and cracked where a solid shot ripped into the Virginia's casemate during its epic battle with the Monitor on March 9, 1862. The armor plate of the Virginia was particularly appropriate for display at Tredegar since it was manufactured by the Iron Works in 1861. Early in the war Tredegar was the only Confederate foundry capable of rolling the 2-inch thick armor plating required by the C.S. Navy for their ironclad fleet.

The exhibit potential was obvious and Mariner's agreed to loan us both the Virginia armor plate and the Monitor deck plate, as soon as conservation was completed in February 2000. The two now rest side by side in front of an eight-foot long model of the CSS Fredericksburg, which was also covered by Tredegar rolled iron.

Employee Profile: Anjanette Walker

Anjanette Walker is the Maintenance Management Assistant for Richmond National Battlefield Park and has been here since May 10, 1998. Born on May 18, 1966 in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, Anjanette began working for the National Park Service at Independence National Historical Park. When asked why she joined the park service and what drew her to us in particular, Anjanette replied "I would go to work with my mother every summer (since 1976). I loved talking and seeing different people from all over the world. I always wanted to work in Virginia." Anjanette runs the Maintenance Management System, balances the Maintenance Division's budget and also picks up supplies, equipment and materials for the Maintenance division as part of her busy day here at Richmond National Battlefield Park.

Anjanette has three children, William (17), Anjanette (15) and Dawn (12), plus a cat, Oreo. She describes herself as "happily divorced". Her favorite hobbies are reading, walking, tennis, and football.

Anjanette also wanted to say that she thinks the NPS is a great and interesting place to work, visit and study. When asked what she sees herself doing in ten years, Anjanette responded, "I will be doing some type of financial work."

Park Partnerships

Partners in History

Richmond National Battlefield Park is currently working with Hanover County Parks and Recreation to develop additional interpretive signs for a 50-acre site that the county owns within Cold Harbor battlefield. The park site has recently extended its one-mile walking trail that takes visitors past well-preserved Union trenches and artillery positions near the Garthright House. Two additional trail signs will focus on the experiences of soldiers that served in the area. An additional interpretive/ orientation panel will be located in the parking lot, describing the early fighting at Cold Harbor and the best way to tour the battlefield.

Hanover County and the National Park Service have worked closely together co-managing the Cold Harbor battlefield resources. In 1989 the county purchased 50 acres that surround the Garthright House, protecting the battlefield from residential development. Since then, the county has installed a one-mile walking trail and requested that our staff historians prepare the ten wayside exhibits that would interpret the trail. With the trail extension and new interpretive kiosk planned for the parking lot, visitors to Cold Harbor battlefield will have a greater understanding and access to one of the most important engagements of the war.

Partners in Preservation

In 1975, the Maggie L. Walker Historical Foundation was established with the goal of restoring Mrs. Walker's residence at 110 1/2 East Leigh Street. The year, the Foundation celebrates its 25th anniversary. The Foundation, by cooperating with the National Park Service, helps to foster the legacy of Maggie L. Walker through a variety of activities, including sponsoring birthday anniversary celebrations, co-sponsoring the Christmas Open House and laboring to clean up Mrs. Walker's gravesite in Evergreen Cemetery. Many of the members also serve as volunteers in the Maggie L. Walker National Historic Site Visitor Center. Many Foundation members have written books, plays, poems, articles and a television documentary, keeping Mrs. Walker's memory alive.

Tredegar Iron Works: An Introduction

By Janet Schwartzberg

One of the most formidable problems the Confederate States of America grappled with during the Civil War was the acquisition of artillery. Throughout the conflict, the Confederate government filled its need by purchasing European cannon, capturing Union pieces, and increasing domestic production. This last source proved to be the most reliable, eventually supplying Confederate armies with more than 2,200 cannon. Of this total, the Tredegar Iron Works forged nearly 50%.

A private firm, Tredegar was the South's largest major antebellum rolling mill capable of producing cannon and railroad rails. Since 1843 its proprietor had been Joseph Reid Anderson, a West Point graduate and ardent secessionist. Under Anderson, Tredegar's foundries and machine shops developed into a first-class operation, fabricating cannon and gun carriages for the U.S. Government.

With Virginia's secession and the advent of war Tredegar, employing 900 workers, was flooded with state and private contracts. The iron works concentrated initially on casting heavy-caliber seacoast and siege guns. It also rifled and rebored scores of antiquated field cannon from the Virginia State Armory, pieces that served Confederate forces in Virginia while new cannon were being made. Pig-iron supplies, however, diminished rapidly, and soon were completely exhausted. For nearly a month late in the summer of 1861, Tredegar Iron Works produced not a single cannon.

By 1863, Tredegar had expanded its work force to 2,500. The works also operated shoemaking shops, a firebrick factory, a sawmill, a tannery, and nine canal boats. Anderson even dispatched agents into other states to purchase livestock, which he ordered slaughtered and sold to employees at cost to help relieve the problems they faced with food shortages.

But the scarcity of skilled mechanics and raw materials plagued the foundry's operations throughout the war. In November 1863, the Ducktown copper mines outside Chattanooga, Tennessee, the source of 90% of the Confederacy's copper, was captured by the Federals. This brought the production of the bronze light 12-pound Napoleon to a halt. The foundrymen, however, had developed an iron Napoleon that partially filled the need.

The shortage of skilled labor increasingly affected the production of cannon due to the lack of Tredegar mechanics who were organized into a defense battalion which late in the war was often called upon to serve in Richmond's defenses.

By 1865, a shortage of iron had affected both the quantity and quality of Tredegar ordnance. Production at the gun mill came to a complete halt by March 1865. Richmond was evacuated the next month. A battalion of 350 Tredegar workers successfully repulsed fire and mobs during the Confederate evacuation of Richmond, sparing the Tredegar Iron Works for a major role in post-war Southern reconstruction. The United States Army occupied Tredegar for about four months following the war and considered possible government use of the works. Anderson and his partners were able to secure Presidential pardons and quickly reopened the Iron Works with the aid of Richmond industrialists.

In 1867, Anderson and his partners reorganized the firm into a new operation, the Tredegar Company, which saw six years of expansion and prosperity.

New departments were established and technological improvements included the upgrading of rail rolling facilities and introducing new chair mills, spike machines, and, after 1870, horseshoe machines.

Tredegar faced a depression in 1873 from which it never fully recovered. Iron gave way to steel in the 1870's and 1880's. Tredegar Company, hampered with a large debt, lacked the capital to make the transition. Richmond eventually had to give up its position as the industrial capital of the South to ever-growing Birmingham, Alabama.

Before Joseph Reid Anderson died in 1892, he had built the Tredegar Iron Works into a profitable, primarily local, operation. Unfortunately, a fire in 1952 gutted the old plant, leaving behind only a few buildings as a testimony to the industrial economy of the South that once thrived on a few acres of land in the capital of the Confederacy.

Bibliography:

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A New Tool to Bring Back the Past

A common question asked by visitors to Richmond National Battlefield Park is, "What did the battlefields look like?" To help answer that question and to guide planning, the park recently completed the Gaines' Mill Cultural Landscape Report and Archeological Survey. The report focuses on 60 acres of the June 27, 1862 battlefield now managed by the park service. Gaines' Mill was the costliest of the Seven Days battles before Richmond and some of the severest fighting took place on park land owned by Sarah Watt in 1862. The Watt House still stands within the park.

The 192-page report is an important tool supporting park efforts to preserve battlefield resources and make them available. First and foremost, it documents the landscape's appearance in 1862. Included are maps showing the historic location of fields, woods, roads, fence lines, buildings and orchards. It is worth noting the ground occupied by the Watt Farm was far more open in 1862 than it is today. Other elements of the report include a thorough site history, landscape archeology (the first professional survey at the Gaines' Mill battlefield), an analysis of landscape characteristics and features, and a discussion of management issues and options for re-establishing the 1862 landscape.

The park is already acting on the report's recommendations. Last winter an archeologist used its 1862 landscape map to locate the site of one of the Watt farm outbuildings. Even more noticeable is the clearing of two acres of woods near the Watt House to recreate the open fields that stood during the battle.

Long term plans call for cultural landscape reports for each of the park's major battlefields with work commencing this summer at Malvern Hill and Glendale.

As stewards of America's heritage, it is critical that the National Park Service base resource management on solid scholarship. The Gaines' Mill Cultural Landscape Report provides park managers with a vital tool to make informed decisions while preserving one of our national treasures.

Copies of the report are available for review at park headquarters (3215 E. Broad Street, Richmond).

Access Management: Private Roads and Driveways Across Park Land

Richmond National Battlefield Park's rural agricultural surroundings are changing to residential and commercial development, which sometimes desires access to park maintained roadways across park land. It is the position of the National Park Service to recognize all legally deeded access but not to grant new access unless there are mitigating circumstances and no net loss to the park. Most access roads, and related local traffic, have a negative impact on the visitor experience, and many have disturbed or destroyed earthworks and other historic resources.

Since 1996, the park has been assessing the extent of potential legal accesses, i.e., how many unbuilt accesses (driveways, etc.) exist according to reservations found in the deeds that were used to create the park. The park's staff has begun examining park deeds for any references to reserved or implied access rights in order to identify existing legal accesses, accesses that appear to be illegal, and accesses that are not built. The park has prepared a draft Access Management Policy, on which we invite your comments.

The park has been responding to access questions on a case-by-case basis with the assistance of the Northeast Region's Solicitor's Office, with an average of 10 requests per year. The process of performing an "Access Study" can take between three weeks and six months depending on the complexity of the issues. An access study requires the researching of deeds and associated documents often dating back to the mid-1800's.

A legal access gives an adjacent land owner the ability to build, use, and maintain a passage across park land and is a "deeded right." This access does not constitute ownership of the property on which it is built but rather the right to cross the land. The land is still owned by the United States.

Legal accesses are restricted to their deeded width, identified location (when available) and surface and construction compatibility with the park setting. All required access maintenance, i.e. grading, culvert placement and/or repair, snow removal, etc. is done by the access user at her/his expense according to park specifications, which are detailed in the draft policy on Access Management.

Effective management of the access issue parkwide is critical to preserving the park's cultural and natural resources and their enjoyment by visitors. Every

effort will be made to work with neighboring landowners to ensure that their right to access park owned land and/or roads is honored in keeping with the intent of the original deed reservation.

The public is invited to comment on the Access Management Policy. Copies of the park's policy are available by calling (804)795-5018.

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