

THE RICHMOND NATIONAL PARKS QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

RICHMOND NATIONAL BATTLEFIELD PARK
MAGGIE L. WALKER NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE



The Superintendent's Letter

By Cynthia MacLeod

You will read in this newsletter that your National Park Service employees in Richmond are busy as ever, fueled by the positive energy of our new Civil War Visitor Center at Tredegar, the success of our evening walks and talks on the battlefields, and the anticipation of a major building restoration project at the Maggie L. Walker National Historic Site.

The national fire emergencies have required, however, that we send nine of our staff to help with suppression, leaving the remaining staff stretched pretty thin. We are aware of the potential problems of the West Nile virus carried by some mosquitoes in New York and are working to reduce the mosquito larvae in the most vulnerable part of the Fort Harrison area. We have also initiated a project to eliminate the most aggressive of the exotic vegetation in the park, the so-called Tree of Heaven, that threatens the survival of the indigenous plants and trees.

We hope to see you this summer at one of the sites we manage for you, even if you are only stopping by to purchase one of the new National Park Passports, which will allow you free entry into the other units of the National Park System for a year after the purchase date. You can access up-to-date information about the Richmond sites on the Internet at www.nps.gov/rich and www.nps.gov/mawa. While our sites are historic, there's often something new on the web page.

New Exhibits Transform Old Visitor Center

If you haven't stopped by Richmond National Battlefield Park's Chimborazo Visitor Center lately, you are really missing a great opportunity. A new exhibit has replaced the antiquated "Campaigns for Richmond" displays, those having been made obsolete by the Civil War Visitor Center at Tredegar Iron Works. The site has been reborn as the Chimborazo Civil War Medical Museum.

Some Richmonders may recognize the exhibit as it belongs to the Museum of the Confederacy and was previously on exhibit there. The Museum has graciously loaned the exhibit to the Park until November 2000. Our permanent exhibit will be in place in 2001.

The large 6 foot by 8 foot diorama of the Chimborazo hospital is now in the room that formerly housed our research library. Researchers should have no fear however; the library is now in a much larger space--the former first floor auditorium that is now an ideal place for conferences and quiet studying of our reference material. Hats off to the maintenance staff who renovated the space.

Archeology Dig at Watt House Uncovers the Past

Sarah Jordan, Sarah Boles and Maggie Tyler, under contract with Sweet Briar College, began digging up the lawns around the Watt House early in June. They have been searching for out-buildings that were part of the Civil War-era Watt Farm. When Ms. Tyler was interviewed at the beginning of June, she had just started to uncover the remains of a root cellar which had been filled in with trash from the main house and outbuildings. Tyler said that trash heaps are some of the best resources to find because they can give an archeologist a more complex picture of life on the site. Tyler pointed out pieces from a chamber pot and shards of an unglazed dish, as well as glass, colored cobalt blue and green.

The "two Sarahs", as they are referred to around Richmond National Battlefield Park, have been busy in an area closer to the Watt House. So far they have found brick foundations for some outbuildings, but have been unable to determine what those buildings were used for. Because of a dearth of artifacts, further research will hopefully determine their purposes.

A previous archeological dig conducted in the fall of 1999 found evidence of a structure 100 yards from the main house that is most likely one of the Watt barns. Tyler, Jordan and Boles will follow up to determine if it is a Civil War-era building. The archeologists are also looking for the site of the plantation orchard. The orchard is featured in many soldiers' descriptions of the battle, and its discovery will help determine precise troop movements essential to interpreting the battle story.

To begin their investigations, the archeologists relied on a geophysical survey conducted by Dr. Bruce Bevan in fall 1999 using ground penetrating radar.

His report helped the team focus on areas that had the greatest archeological potential. The archeologists also used maps from the recently completed Gaines' Mill Battlefield Cultural Landscape Report that identified the probable locations of many of the site's important cultural resources. Tyler used these maps in her search for the Watt slave quarters. There have been many shovel tests to try to find those quarters, but to date no evidence of their location has been found. There were at least three buildings associated with the Watt slaves, one for the house servants and two for field hands. Finding these buildings will assist the Park in telling a more complete story of the site's inhabitants.

The archeological contract has been extended several weeks into mid-September to continue the investigation around the house and the search for the elusive slave cabins and orchard. If you are interested in more information on the Watt House findings please call Assistant Superintendent David Ruth at (804)226-1981.

Employee Profile: Veronica Harvey

Veronica Sabrina Harvey (or "Ronnie" as she is known to her friends here at Richmond National Battlefield Park and Maggie L. Walker National Historic Site) was born on October 15, 1978. That makes her the youngest permanent employee at the two Richmond parks! Ronnie's primary duty station is at Maggie L. Walker National Historic Site where she is a park guide in the division of interpretation. She began working for the park on January 31, 2000.

Ronnie has worked at two other Virginia National Parks: George Washington Birthplace National Monument and the Thomas Stone National Historic Site. You could say that the National Park Service is in Ronnie's blood; her cousin Roberta works at George Washington Birthplace and her father, Lester, is the only Maintenance employee at Thomas Stone. In fact, it was her father who encouraged her to apply for the Maggie Walker NHS position when it open last winter.

Born in Fredericksburg, Virginia, Ronnie is a real home-town girl, quite a feat considering the transient nature of the National Park Service. Ronnie and her fianc , Robert Hunter, have a two-year-old son, Elijah. They have no pets thus far, although Elijah does have a toy barking dog. Her hobbies and favorite pastimes include talking, reading, shopping and being outside.

When asked about her future plans, Ronnie said that someday she would like to be a superintendent and, further along the line, to be the "youngest Director of the National Park Service ever".

Ronnie also said that she enjoys working here at the Richmond parks (she has also led EARTH programs at the Tredegar Iron Works site this summer) and likes working with everyone, so we hope that she will be around for a while before she follows through on her ambitions. It's great to have you here, Ronnie!

Barry Krieg Receives CFC "Team of the Century" Award

By Jim Kisicki, Campaign Manager, Combined Federal Campaign, United Way Services, Richmond, VA

Late year, in a fitting end to the last century, the fine staff of Richmond National Battlefield Park showed their caring spirit for others by generously contributing over \$2400 to those in need through the Combined Federal Campaign (C.F.C.). Payroll, cash and check pledges by Battlefield Park and Maggie L. Walker National Historic Site staff have tripled over the past two years. Such success doesn't happen without the tireless support of dedicated volunteers, spreading the good word about C.F.C.

Recently, Barry Krieg, Richmond National Battlefield Park/ Maggie L. Walker National Historic Site C.F.C. Agency Campaign Manager (A.C.M.) for the past two years, was honored as a recipient of a local C.F.C. "Team of the Century" award. This award was presented only to those A.C.M's who truly distinguished themselves in running an outstanding fundraising campaign. There are over 70 federal agencies/installations in this area, but only 14 received this award.

Richmond Civil War Visitor Center Dedication Remarks

By Robert G. Stanton, Director, National Park Service

Good Afternoon. I'm honored and privileged to be here with you today.

The National Park System has responsibility for maintaining a remarkable number of places associated with this nation's military history. We have this task because most nations measure themselves at least in part by the yardstick of conflict. "Battle-tested" is a term used with respect for men or machines.

This nation--OUR nation--has been battle-tested. Nowhere has that test been any sterner than at Richmond.

For four years, two competing armies, supporting different notions of the suitable political, social, and economic future of our Constitutional Democracy engaged in combat for control of the political and industrial hub of the South: Richmond.

To help new generations of Americans understand both the tactics and the purposes of these opposing forces, the National Park Service has long maintained a series of properties around this great city where we could recount that story.

Today, the story gains a new, and stronger, voice from a new, a better platform.

Just as the city was the linchpin over which two armies fought long and hard, the Richmond Civil War Visitor Center will be the linchpin to the tale of what happened in and around this great city nearly a century and a half ago.

The mission of the National Park Service can be summarized in four words: protection, preservation, presentation, and perpetuation.

We have been handed a trust. We have been given responsibility for the heritage of this great nation. We are responsible for places and things that represent the values of America and American society.

We have been asked to protect that heritage from loss or damage from cataclysmic acts of God and malicious acts of man.

We have been asked to preserve that heritage in the face of ordinary daily deterioration or extraordinary dramatic destruction.

We have been asked to present it in ways that will foster understanding of that heritage by those who share it with us and those who will inherit it from us.

And we have been asked to perpetuate it--to make certain to the best of our ability that it will be undiminished when we pass on the mantle of responsibility to the next generation.

That's a tall order. . . .

This visitor center will tie together the elements, not just of war, but of the time that spawned the war and the time that grew from it. And the site itself, now so wonderfully restored, reminds us that the Tredegar Iron Works not only supplied vital weaponry and munitions to the Confederate forces, but jobs and products that were essential to family finances and regional economics.

And this center is ready just in time. . . .

The National Park Service is already pointing toward 2010 and the resurgence of interest in the Civil War that will inevitable come with the 150th anniversary of the conflict. This will be the staging ground for a new army of visitors, hungering for an understanding of what brought a great nation into great conflict with itself. Our responsibility is to use the opportunity afforded by that anniversary to enhance public understanding of the varied meanings and enduring legacy of the people, places and events of that time and this place that has shaped a direction for the America of our own time and beyond.

We have a leading responsibility, but as those who helped make this facility possible have proven, as the exhibits within will show, it is too great a challenge for the National Park Service to undertake alone. We are here as partners of the city, the state, the business community, and--most of all--the visitors who will be served in ever-growing numbers.

But how do we do that?

Back in 1929, a career parks man named Carl P. Russell wrote: "Any plan involving assistance to the visitor must include an examination of the attitude of the park visitor to what is presented. We are not concerned merely with the fact that many things may be large or wide or deep or highly colored or have an interesting evolutionary development. . . . From the point of view of the visitor, we are interested in their meaning to them in terms of their most fundamental thinking, and their significance in relationship to their everyday lives."

And we do that because nothing in our care matters if it can't be related to people. We have to look at what matters in their lives and help them see how what we are doing relates to that.

A generation before Carl Russell, the Spanish-American philosopher George Santayana taught us a simple, stark truth: "Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it." The horrors of history, once forgotten, can be revived. That's too high a price to ignore; it's too great a responsibility to neglect.

To keep the story--and its context--alive, we now have this magnificent center. I see the Richmond Civil War Visitor Center as a shrine to the spirit of Dr. Mary McLeod Bethune's wise counsel to, in her words, "always have a thirst for education."

We are now a generation removed from America's last great military conflict. It increases the burden on us to do our job better. I won't shed a tear because this generation hasn't personally learned the meaning of war--or even the meaning of readiness for war. I might, however, shed a tear because they have no understanding of the reasons for war--the causes, events, and circumstances that would justify putting the best of our youth in harm's way for a higher purpose.

We have long taken responsibility for explaining the mechanics of war--the availability, use, and evolution of strategy. . . tactics. . . logistics. But we've left it to the old warriors, the successive generations of fighters themselves, to tell the children, friends, and neighbors why they did what they did.

It was safe for us and in its way, it was successful, too. But the trouble with informal systems is that they break down. Sadly, we were so unused to the notion of an entire generation without a serious breakout of armed hostility, we didn't consider how that message would be carried forward in such circumstances.

My message to you is as direct as any soldier's war story: It's them or us. And it's better if it's us.

We must tell the stories of why, not just the stories of who, what, where, when and how. And as any reporter will tell you, "why" is a lot harder to tell.

The interplay of conflicting and overlapping reasons is a great challenge. But it is a challenge we must not shy away from. To go to war without a reason would be a national shame. To tell of war without the reasons should be no less so. . . .

I'm proud that right here, we are beginning the new millennium with a new perspective. Right here, we now have an exhibit that says forthrightly: "More than seventy years after the adoption of the Constitution, a nation founded on principles of liberty and equality still allowed human enslavement and quarreled over the balance between state and federal powers. These interrelated issues led to Constitutional crises that were merely patched over, satisfying neither North nor South."

The challenge of the 21st century is to make America understand the reasons our most hallowed places should be respected and remembered. It is unquestionably important that the classic battlefield tactics employed at Cold Harbor, Drewry's Bluff, Gaines' Mill, Malvern Hill and other nearby places deserve careful study. But it is just as important to know why those troops were there, what impelled them to fight, what values deserving of our continuing attention and concern motivated the strategy, courage and sacrifice we so admire.

As we face that challenge, let us remember the words of Theodore Roosevelt, who . . . went on to become our first great conservationist President: ". . . credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena; whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood; who strives valiantly, who errs and comes short again and again; who knows the great enthusiasms, the great devotions, and spends himself in a worthy cause, who at best, knows in the end the triumph of high achievement; and who, at the worst, at least fails while daring greatly."

Can that story be complete if we ignore the "great enthusiasms, the great devotions," and the "worthy cause" while we tell of the people and actions that they inspired? I don't think so.

As the guardians truly of the nation's heritage, we must tell that part of the story to keep the legacy intact for future generations.

Protection, preservation, presentation, and perpetuation. Those four come together at the Tredegar Iron Works today.

The stories of the Civil War are rich and compelling. They merit scrutiny, study, analysis, and consideration. On behalf of the National Park Service and our partners and contributors, large and small, I'm proud to be here to dedicate this great facility that will provide opportunity to visitors from near or far to acquire a new and fuller understanding of, and respect for, what took place here.

Thank you.

New Interpretive Marker Recognizes First Marine Medal of Honor Recipient

On May 20, 2000, nearly 100 visitors attended the dedication ceremony at Drewry's Bluff for a new interpretive wayside. Featured on the wayside is the

first United States Marine Corps Medal of Honor recipient, Corporal John F. Mackie. The Medal of Honor is the highest decoration for valor that can be bestowed upon a member of the United States armed forces.

During the ceremony, Marine Corps historian David M. Sullivan vividly described the heroic circumstances in which Corporal Mackie earned the Medal of Honor on May 15, 1862, while serving on board the U.S.S. Galena during the battle of Drewry's Bluff. During this engagement, a Union fleet that included the Galena attempted unsuccessfully to force their way past the powerful Confederate fortification known as Fort Darling. Mackie led a detachment of Marines who served Galena's guns after most of the naval gun crew were killed or wounded.

Brigadier General Lief H. Hendrickson, commanding general of the Marine Corps base at Quantico, followed with his observations on the Medal of Honor and the importance of never forgetting the heroic deeds of Corporal Mackie and other Medal of Honor recipients.

The sign was made possible by the hard work of living history volunteers from Company C, Confederate States Marine Corps, who proposed the idea and raised the money for the wayside.

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