

# THE RICHMOND NATIONAL PARKS QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

RICHMOND NATIONAL BATTLEFIELD PARK  
MAGGIE L. WALKER NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE



## **The Superintendent's Letter**

By Cynthia MacLeod

On November 13, 2000, President Clinton signed landmark new legislation for Richmond National Battlefield Park. After years of being able to acquire land only through donation, the park is finally authorized to use federal funds to buy battlefield land. This authority is one that most other battlefield parks have had for years and is one large reason for the relatively few acres owned by Richmond National Battlefield Park.

Key to the passage of the bill was Congressman Thomas J. Bliley, Jr., who introduced and shepherded the legislation in the last months in office prior to his retirement. Congressman Bobby Scott was also a champion of the legislation, which, in addition, provides for a tribute to the 14 black soldiers who won the Medal of Honor for action at the battle of New Market Heights. Senators Robb and Warner ensured the success of the bill in the Senate.

The bill also requires that any land purchased by the park be from a willing seller, effectively eliminating the hostile provisions of eminent domain, commonly known as condemnation. The park has not in its history used its powers of eminent domain and so is not antithetical to this restriction. The bill specifies boundaries around 7,307 acres in several tracts that are eligible to become part of the park. The earlier authorizing legislation from 1936 contained language that was not specific about boundaries of acreage, referencing broadly land that was militarily significant in the Richmond area.

The legislation is an achievement envisioned in the General Management Plan, which was completed in 1996, and should ease the ability of property owners, other interested parties, and the National Park Service to protect Richmond's Civil War battlefield lands.

My heartfelt thanks and appreciation to all who see the legislation as the "win-win" achievement that it will be for generations to come.

### **Maggie Walker Site Represented at Two Events**

For two days during this year's State Fair of Virginia, guest participants from the Commonwealth's eight regions took center stage in the Virginia Showcase Building, representing the best Virginia has to offer. Veronica Harvey, assisted by Monamma AL-Ghuiyy, coordinated and made arrangements to showcase Maggie L. Walker National Historic Site and Richmond National Battlefield Park on September 30th and October 1st. Volunteers Willette Johnson, Diann Foster, Jim and Queen Bell and Rob Hunter helped greet the 1,600 guests and families infatuated with the two parks' array of interpretive stories and activities.

The following weekend, the Annual Second Street Festival, "A Celebration with African American Culture and Businesses," returned for the 12th time to the Jackson Ward National Historic Landmark District in downtown Richmond. Celia Suggs served as coordinator, with combined efforts coming from the Maggie L. Walker Historical Foundation, volunteers and staff from both of Richmond's National Parks.

The Second Street Festival commemorates an era when Second Street was the heart and soul of Richmond's African American community. Also referred to as the "Deuce," Second Street was a place to see and a place to go when one wanted to be seen. Residents of Jackson Ward could select from any number of consumer goods and services that were available, such as banks and insurance companies, like that of Maggie Walker's St. Luke's Organization. Furniture stores, groceries, lawyers, photographers, hotels, restaurants and theaters, made it unnecessary for residents to go much further than Second Street to conduct business.

The Second Street Festival venerated the life and livelihood of the African American community's "golden years from 1920 through the 1940's." Maggie L. Walker National Historic Site's presence helped the community and its legacy come alive. The park staffed two stations at the Festival, an information booth manned by park volunteers and an education center. At least 650 visitors toured the park site, viewing the film, "The Maggie L. Walker Story," and taking walking tours through her restored family home. Special thanks go out to all of the park staff and volunteers who continue to make this event a yearly success.

### **Interpretation Update: Resource Inventory in Hanover**

By David Ruth, Assistant Superintendent and Chief of Interpretation and Cultural Resources

Without question, education is the most important aspect of our job, second only to park preservation. In recent years the National Park Service team in Richmond has worked tirelessly to develop over five miles of new trails with strong educational, or as we call them, "interpretive" messages. We have opened two new visitor centers with educational components, bringing the total park visitor facilities to five. We continue to expand our offerings of ranger tours and curriculum-based programs for school-age children. This work has strengthened our ties to the communities and also helped engender support for the new park legislation, which is described on the first page of this newsletter.

The park team strongly believes that our efforts in education cannot stop at the park boundary. Through Virginia's Civil War Trail program, we have lent our expertise to create more than 35 interpretive markers at public and private historic sites within a 40-mile radius of the park. We have educated landowners about the Civil War resources on their property so that they can be good stewards of our national heritage.

Another cooperative effort is about to be undertaken that will result in the inventory of Civil War resources in Hanover County. Members of the county's historical commission and planning staff have been handicapped by the lack of information about Civil War engagements. Wonderful inventories of historic homes exist, but none of the Civil War battlefields. To remedy the situation, Hanover County, working in partnership with the park, completed a grant proposal to the American Battlefield Protection Program for an assessment and Geographical Information System (G.I.S.) mapping of some three dozen Hanover battlefields. The request has recently been approved for \$11,600. The inventory of Civil War sites in Hanover's G.I.S. system will enable instantaneous correlation between applications for zoning changes and important historical resources so that evaluations of impact can be made.

By the end of 2000, Eric Mink, one of our talented ranger/historians will begin the task of documenting the sites. The goal is to prepare a short contextual overview of the involvement of Hanover County in the Civil War, followed by individual assessments of each battlefield site. Every profile will include an historical significance section that will discuss the pre-Civil War inhabitants of the site, and give a general description of the military engagement that occurred there. An evaluation section will identify the viewsheds both into and from the site, document the current setting, and discuss the importance of original terrain to that site. A list of surviving war-time structures and features, including field fortifications will help to emphasize the present state of preservation at each study area.

One of the most important components will be the maps. All of the information will be compiled on U.S. Geological Survey quad sheets that the county will convert to G.I.S. to provide a useful overlay for planners, commissioners and supervisors. The results will also help to inform and educate the citizens of Hanover about their incredible collection of nationally significant historic resources that any county in the United States would love to call their own.

### **Employee Profile: Kristen Gounaris**

Kristen Gounaris, our most recent addition to the staff at Richmond National Battlefield Park/Maggie L. Walker National Historic Site, is the Natural

Resource Management Specialist. Born September 10, 1972, just outside of Baltimore, MD, Kristen started working here in Richmond just a few weeks after her birthday on September 25, 2000.

As the Natural Resource Management Specialist, Kristen coordinates the park's Geographical Information System, Integrated Pest Management and Prescribed Burn programs. She also identifies necessary natural resource related problems and needs and attempts to solve or fulfill them. In addition, Kristen says, "I try to advise park staff on how to carry out all actions in an environmentally friendly manner."

This is not Kristen's first park. She started her National Park Service career at Rock Creek Park in Washington, D.C. and prior to coming to Richmond, spent a year and a half at Colonial National Historical Park, in the Yorktown district.

Kristen had this to say when asked what drew her to the National Park Service: "Its mission to preserve and protect natural resources. This has always been something I was interested in. Ever since I was a little kid, I have loved being outside, and I was very interested in any sort of nature -- plants, trees, insects, etc. The National Park Service just seemed like a natural aspiration for me."

Most of Kristen's family still lives in the Baltimore area. While there are no children in her life right now, she does have a dog named Curtis. On December 2 of 2000, Kristen and her fiancé, Jerry Allen were married.

As for the future, Kristen hopes to remain with the National Park Service, eventually moving on to a natural park or perhaps a job where she would be specialist for an entire region. She also said, "I am happy to be at Richmond National Battlefield Park/Maggie L. Walker National Historic Site. They are parks with many wonderful resources. I think my position here will provide me with some great experiences."

### **An Endless Search for Sources**

For many years now the park staff has zealously collected sources that address the Civil War in the Richmond area. Usually that means letters, diaries, reminiscences, and newspaper accounts written by participants. Preservation is an important element in the park's mission, and our definition of that extends beyond just land. Every account written by an eyewitness improves our understanding of the sites, and helps us interpret the significant events that occurred around Richmond between 1861 and 1865. Much of this material comes from park visitors, often on an odyssey tracing their ancestors from battlefield to battlefield. Thus far the park has accumulated about 35,000 pages of photocopies, most of it pertaining to the battlefields around Richmond.

To make this tool useful to others outside the park, the historians have been fighting an almost endless battle to keep the multiplying stacks of material organized. Scholars studying specific topic--battles, units, personalities, politics, and morale, for instance--visit the park's library in ever increasing numbers. Recently the park staff has commenced entering some of this material into a ProCite database, which probably is as close to actual indexing as we

ever will reach. That project is in its infancy, and will take many years to complete. But the preservation and use of soldier accounts remains a vital--and rewarding--part of our daily jobs.

## **What I Did Over My Summer Vacation!**

*Alisa Clark was on fire detail this past summer helping the parks out west with their terrible fires. Alisa worked the fire lines in the White River National Forest of Colorado and Utah and at Grand Teton National Park in Wyoming. She graciously allowed us to reprint some of her journal.*

### **BLM land, Colorado and Utah, White River National Forest**

**Day 1:** Twenty-four hours worth of travel on planes and buses to a high school outside of White River National Forest. I caught an hour of sleep in the school hallway with about 800 other firefighters.

**Day 2:** We were fed breakfast and coffee at the school, then we hopped on a bus to White River. The elevation was 11,600 feet! We set up a spike camp -- a very basic camp with no amenities. After setup, we hopped on another bus, drove eight miles toward the fire, then we started walking towards the fire, another seven miles. Our job was to put in a hand line around the fire, which meant more walking. When you put in a hand line, everyone has a tool, either a pick-axe or a shovel, and you line up and start digging down to mineral soil, so the fire's fuel is taken away. The soil is usually one down around six inches, but when you factor in the tough sagebrush and the 40-pound packs on our backs, the going is pretty slow. It took us four days to dig this hand line. In the meantime, our meals were served to us out of five-gallon buckets, and consisted of (no joke) green eggs and ham three times a day. If I never see a piece of ham again....

**Day 5:** We started working in the black. This means this is a place that had previously burned, but still has hot spots that might flare up. They need to be put out before they can spread. Our equipment was upgraded to pumps and fire engines, as well as the ever-present hand tools.

**Day 8:** We successfully contained the fire and drove to a lower elevation to a high school where we took cold showers; our first running water since arriving in Colorado! Several hundred pizzas were delivered to feed us all. Many people were hospitalized because of bloody, blistered feet. An entire Virginia crew was sent home due to altitude sickness. Hot temperatures during the day spent wearing the heavy yellow Nomax jackets meant to protect us from the fires and freezing temperatures at night combined to provide us all with colds. I determined that yellow is not my color.

**Day 9:** On to Utah! The bus ahead of us broke down, so we had to take its occupants on board. Trapped for eight hours with 20 people on a bus with no air conditioning! We eventually made it to yet another high school, where we had to sleep on the football field, but I was too tired to care. I used my boot as a pillow.

**Day 10:** The days passed in a fire-fighting blur. The highlights: good food; hot, daily showers; ice cream!

**Day 13:** We were told that we would have the day off in camp to relax, but then wound up being awakened at 5 am to be told that we were being flown in by helicopter to a new fire. It was nice not to have to walk in for a change. We were able to prevent the fire from spreading and we got to walk downhill the whole way out. I laughed to myself about how something so small could make me so happy.

**Day 14:** The school made us do yard work to earn our keep. We slept there that night, then got flights home! I was home for a week and then was sent to another fire, in Grand Teton National Park of Wyoming, with Bill Reese and Bill Piercy, two guys from my division at Richmond National Battlefield Park.

### **Vegetative SWAT Team Arrives in Park to Fight Invasive Alien Plant Species**

By Leslie N. Winston, Jr. Park Ranger, Protection

You might not have seen them but the invasive exotic plant species *Ailanthus altissima* knew they were there!

The "Vegetative SWAT Team" met *Ailanthus* head on.

The Vegetative SWAT Team, composed of four National Park Service employees, travels among eight Virginia parks eradicating numerous exotic species in the vegetative ecosystem. Richmond National Battlefield Park is among the eight parks benefiting from the special SWAT Team, which is funded by a Natural Resources Protection grant for fiscal years 2000 and 2001. The other National Parks are Appomattox Court House, Booker T. Washington, Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania, George Washington Birthplace, Petersburg, Colonial and Shenandoah.

In Richmond, the SWAT Team worked from September 7 through September 13 battling the *Ailanthus*. *Ailanthus* is a fierce competitor, but was no match for their main weapons, sharp-bladed chain saws. In addition to the chain saws the SWAT Team used the herbicide Garlon. Garlon was applied directly to stumps left behind once the *Ailanthus* trees were cut down.

The common name of *Ailanthus* is the "Tree of Heaven". This fast growing invasive has been located in just about every unit of the park. Tree of Heaven is typically found along forest, road and field edges. One of the characteristic of an alien exotic is the fact that it can rapidly invade and out-compete other trees and plants for moisture, light and nutrients. Alien exotic plants do this through one or more of the following: high rate of photosynthesis, an ability to withstand high temperatures, a prolific reproduction capacity (meaning they mature quickly, are great producers of seeds, and have extensive root systems), a highly successful seed germination and seed dispersal rate, by producing biological toxins that suppress the growth of other plants, and/or relative freedom from natural controls.

Other exotics on the SWAT Team hit list include *Lonicera japonica* (Japanese honeysuckle), *Microstegium vimineum* (Japanese stiltgrass), and *Ligustrum* (Privet).

Dedicated professionals from every division in the park assisted the SWAT Team while they were here. The staff of Richmond National Battlefield Park/Maggie L. Walker National Historic Site will maintain a constant vigil to keep these exotic species from taking over.

The history, origin, and mandate of the National Park Service can be found in the 1916 Organic Act. The Organic Act states that "the service thus established shall promote and regulate the use of the Federal areas known as national parks, monuments, and reservations by such means and measures as conform to the fundamental purpose of the said parks, monuments, and reservations, which purpose is to conserve the scenery and the natural and historic objects and the wildlife therein and to provide for the enjoyment of the same in such manner and by such means as will leave them unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations."

The words to "preserve and protect" found in the Organic Act can be used to implicate among others, the threat of the alien invasive plant species that menace Richmond's National Park sites. The ecosystem of the parks can be forever changed if these exotic species are not kept in check!

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