

# THE RICHMOND NATIONAL PARKS QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

RICHMOND NATIONAL BATTLEFIELD PARK  
MAGGIE L. WALKER NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE



## **The Superintendent's Letter: Holding the High Ground**

By Cynthia MacLeod

This spring brought several National Park Service conferences to Richmond, partly to experience the novelty and excellence of our visitor center at Tredegar. I would like to report to you the results of one of those meetings, the Holding the High Ground II Conference that was held here March 27-29, 2001. (The first conference of the same name was held in Nashville, TN, in 1998.) Thanks to John Hennessey of Fredericksburg Spotsylvania National Military Park for his summary. The draft proceedings are a public document, and we are accepting comments. Call the park for a copy at (804)226-1981.

We had three concerns to discuss. The first and most comprehensive addressed the current lack of funds available service-wide to upgrade exhibits, films, brochures, wayside panels, and other interpretive media. This concern includes the need to expand interpretation to tell stories that help visitors understand the whole meaning of the specific resources in their context. To address that need, the superintendents of Civil War-related sites have concluded to undertake the effort themselves by working with others inside and outside the National Park Service developing an Interpretive Concept Plan to tell the comprehensive story of the Civil War using the sites in the NPS system. The final product will provide a mechanism and context that will allow for large-scale funding to upgrade permanent media at Civil War sites in time for the Sesquicentennial of the Civil War.

This will be a true interpretive plan; it will do more than simply establish thematic connections between sites and a media prescription or a list of projects. The plan will identify the major themes and stories that need to be conveyed by the National Park Service at large; it will reflect the NPS commitment to the whole story. While each battlefield will remain committed to its core mission of battlefield interpretation, the plan will indicate how each site can

contribute to the objective of telling a comprehensive story service-wide. This approach will relieve individual parks from the unrealistic (and redundant) responsibility of telling the whole story itself. Instead, it will allow each park to play to its strengths by viewing the larger story through the lens of local resources or events. This in turn will guarantee that we avoid a dye-press approach to interpretation; it will allow visitors to encounter issues of causation, context, and results in varying forms--depending on how those themes are reflected locally.

The other two concerns of the conference--managing public use and protecting significant land--were addressed by consensus on definition of guiding principles:

- 1) Visitor uses shall not adversely affect the integrity of battlefield resources or the ability of visitors to understand and appreciate the mission/stories of the battlefield.
- 2) Working with local communities, partners and other agencies, NPS battlefield managers shall actively seek to protect non-adjacent resources related to the mission of the local park.

Number 2 also has applied principles:

- 2a) The NPS recognizes its responsibility as an important, revenue-producing stakeholder and shall, as good corporate citizens, participate in local and regional land use decisions that may affect non-adjacent related lands. The NPS will work to enable communities to make informed decisions.
- >2b) Non-adjacent battlefield lands can be protected using strategies that are incentive-based and supportive of local economic development objectives.

We welcome your help in reaching our goals and applying our principles in managing these national resources.

### **Interpretation Update: "Riding the Wind" Conference**

The National Park Service, Northeast Region's Interpretation and Education Workshop, "Riding the Wind" was held in Richmond, Virginia on March 19-22, 2001. Five students from Seven Pines Elementary School opened the conference and charmed the participants with highlights of their learning adventures through the use of "Parks as Classrooms". Muriel Branch, president of the Maggie L. Walker Historical Foundation followed with a reading of excerpts from Maggie L. Walker's speeches. Mrs. Walker once said "If you can read and write, you can do anything and go anywhere. You can ride the wind."

This was a fitting beginning to an extensive education workshop that included such topics as educational partnerships, distance learning, working with teachers, teaching in and out of the classroom, homeschooling, life-long learning, connecting stories, parks and people, national and state curriculum standards, grant writing and the NPS Web Education Initiative.

Not all the conference time was spent in workshops. On Tuesday afternoon participants attended ranger-guided tours of Richmond National Battlefield

Park that provided a glimpse into the park's interpretation and education programs. Even though the weather did not exactly cooperate (it was cold and wet) the participants were inspired by the battlefields and their compelling stories. On Thursday participants toured the Maggie L. Walker National Historic Site, which commemorates the life of a progressive and talented African American woman. Mrs. Walker's love of education and children remind us that if you work hard you can realize your dreams. Park rangers interpreted this remarkable story of a 20th century role model, an American heroine who left a legacy of inspiration.

The workshop closed with the "Excellence in Interpretation" awards banquet. Marie Rust, Northeast Regional Director of the National Park Service, presented awards to volunteers and park service employees for outstanding service in the Northeast Region. Jim Gates, our Cold Harbor volunteer, was one of the recipients.

### **Maggie L. Walker Makes National Business Hall of Fame**

On Thursday, April 26, 2001, Maggie Lena Walker was inducted into the Junior Achievement National Business Hall of Fame along with five other laureates. Since 1975, the National Business Hall of Fame has honored the nation's most distinguished businesspeople for their outstanding contributions to free enterprise and the promise of a better, stronger society.

Joining Maggie L. Walker as this year's inductees in the Hall of Fame are Glen W. Bell, Founder, Taco Bell Corporation, Henry W. Bloch, Co-Founder and Honorary Chairman, H & R Block, Inc., Mike Curb, Chairman, Curb Records and David Hall McConnell (1858-1937), Founder, Avon Products, Inc.

These five honorees join a distinguished group of 195 men and women who have been inducted into the National Business Hall of Fame over the past 25 years. Historical laureates molded our free enterprise system while contemporary honorees continue to reshape and improve the manner in which American businesses operate.

A special committee consisting of executives from Fortune 1000 companies, past laureates, and other eminent businesspeople chose the 2001 inductees. Johnny Mickens IV of Richmond, 9-year-old great-great-grandson of Mrs. Walker accepted the award, along with his father, Johnny Mickens III, at a black tie induction ceremony held at Symphony Hall in Boston. The induction ceremony will be televised by CNBC in a special program in May and will be hosted by the co-anchor of "Business Center", Ron Insana.

The family has generously offered to donate the award for display at the Maggie L. Walker National Historic Site. Stay tuned.

## **Volunteer Profile: Jim Gates**

Congratulations to Richmond National Battlefield Park's volunteer Jim Gates for receiving the Northeast Region's Interpretive Volunteer Award for 2000.

The "Excellence in Interpretation" awards banquet was held on March 22, 2001 at the Crowne Plaza Hotel in Richmond, Virginia. This award recognizes outstanding performance in the area of interpretation by a volunteer in the Northeast Region.

Jim Gates has been a volunteer at the Cold Harbor battlefield since 1992, and has worked several hours nearly every single day since the Cold Harbor Visitor Center opened in 1995. He enthusiastically greets visitors, answers questions on the battlefields of Gaines' Mill and Cold Harbor and provides guided walking tours. Numerous letters from visitors across the country have been received at the park describing the wonderful experience they had because of Jim's willingness to share his knowledge and time.

Jim has lived in the Richmond area for much of his life. He graduated from Hanover County's Battlefield Park High School in 1941. After serving in the Army Air Force in World War II, Jim began a 35-year career with Eastern Airlines. Once retired he pursued his interest in the American Civil War and model building.

Volunteering at Richmond National Battlefield Park allows Jim the opportunity to share his love and knowledge of Civil War history. With all the support he has given and the visitors he has touched, Jim's dedication and enthusiasm are as strong now as they were on the first day he volunteered.

## **Tredegar Visitor Center Receives Powell Award**

The new visitor center for Richmond National Battlefield Park at Tredegar Iron Works was awarded the John Wesley Powell award from the Society for History in the Federal Government. This biennial award recognizes excellence in the fields of historic preservation of records, artifacts, buildings and historic sites and for historical displays that can include a museum exhibit, film, or any other form of public interpretive historical presentation. The letter of notification from the Society of History state, "All of this year's nominees are fine examples of historical display about the federal government or by a federal agency. But for comprehensiveness, scholarship, and effectiveness, we thought the Richmond Visitors Center deserved first place."

The award is named for John Wesley Powell (1834-1902), an important American ethnologist, geologist, and explorer of the Grand Canyon and Rocky Mountain region. Powell was also a veteran of the Civil War, and lost his arm while serving with the Illinois Artillery at the battle of Shiloh.

Richmond National Battlefield Park's Superintendent, Cynthia MacLeod and Assistant Superintendent David Ruth accepted the award on behalf of the

National Park Service on March 15, 2001, during a ceremony at the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C. Superintendent MacLeod noted that this award is wonderful recognition of the partnership between the National Park Service and Richmond Historic Riverfront Foundation that resulted in a visitor center that all Americans can be proud of. "Visitors of all backgrounds can find interest in the military and civilian stories of Richmond during the Civil War, including the causes of the war and special contributions of the Tredegar Iron Works."

## **The Facts Behind West Nile Virus**

By Kristen Allen, Natural Resources Specialist

>West Nile Virus was first isolated in the West Nile province of Uganda in 1937. Since that time, it has been commonly documented in Africa, Eastern Europe, West Asia, and the Middle East. It had never been documented in the Western Hemisphere until the summer of 1999, when it broke out in New York City. By the spring of 2000, birds infected with the virus were found in nearly every county of New York, Connecticut, Rhode Island and Massachusetts. During the fall and winter of 2000, the virus appeared to move south as infected birds were found in nearly every county of New Jersey and in several counties of Pennsylvania, Maryland and Virginia.

### **Transmission**

Although many animals are capable of contracting the virus, birds (mainly crows) are the only animals capable of infecting mosquitoes, due to the potential for extremely high virus levels in the blood. Virus levels in birds will remain at adequate levels for transmission for only 3-4 days before the animal either dies or recovers. The virus can then be transmitted to humans only when bitten by an infected mosquito. Although the virus has been found in up to eleven species of mosquitoes, the main vector species associated with the outbreak in New York City is *Culex pipiens molestus*.

### **Symptoms and Risk**

Bird infections are a very sensitive early detection device for the virus and don't necessarily indicate that there are infected mosquitoes in the area. In 2000, infected mosquitoes were found in New York, New Jersey, Connecticut, and Massachusetts. However, even in areas with infected mosquitoes, much less than 1% of mosquitoes are infected. Assuming a mosquito is infected, 1% of people who get bitten and infected will become ill. Documented human illnesses caused by the virus in 2000 totaled 17 and were found only in northern New Jersey and New York. A mild infection includes such symptoms as fever, head and body ache, skin rash and swollen lymph nodes. More severe infections may also include high fever, neck stiffness, stupor, disorientation, coma, tremors, muscle weakness, paralysis, and very rarely, death. Among those with severe illness due to West Nile Virus, fatality rates range from 3 to 15% and are highest among the elderly.

### **Treatment and Surveillance**

Mosquitoes are a valuable part of the natural food chain in many types of ecosystems. They serve as an important food source for many kinds of wildlife

such as other insects, fish, birds and bats. In this way, they add to the overall health of the ecosystem. Using pesticides to control mosquitoes may, in addition to limiting a valuable link in the food chain, damage other insect populations. For this reason, mosquitoes and other native species are not typically controlled on National Park Service lands, except in certain instances. These include extreme human health risks defined by the Center for Disease Control. In the case of West Nile Virus, the National Park Service has authorized mosquito control in two parks in the New York City area. However, it has put the majority of its resources into mosquito surveillance to monitor mosquito populations for infected insects. The National Park Service will begin monitoring mosquitoes this spring in parks from Maine to Virginia. The Virginia Department of Health is also conducting surveillance in the Tidewater region, the part of the state known to inhabit the highest levels of mosquitoes.

### **How to Protect Yourself**

Although infected mosquitoes have not yet been found in Virginia, it is unknown what the upcoming spring and summer will hold for West Nile Virus. Richmond National Battlefield Park will remain up to date on the associated news and research findings and will react accordingly. However, there are many things you can do to protect yourself from the possibility of being infected. First, remove or empty any containers around your home which may collect water. Artificial habitats such as these form larval grounds for mosquitoes that are predator free. Second, stay indoors during dawn, dusk and early evening. These are the primary feeding times for most mosquitoes. Third, wear long sleeves and pants when outside, along with insect repellents containing 35% DEET.

For more information on West Nile Virus, visit the Center for Disease Control's website or contact your state or county Department of Health.

### **Temporary Picnic Road Closure**

Picnic Road, located between Varina Road and Battlefield Park Road, is planned to be closed for approximately 45 days beginning in August. Scheduling is dependent on award of the construction contract and on weather conditions. The closure is the result of needed road improvements, which will include new asphalt, culverts, picnic area markings, and signs. This work will necessitate closing the park's picnic area for the duration of the project.

If you have any questions or comments, please call (804)795-5018.

### **Brush Clearing Underway at Cold Harbor Battlefield**

The park's maintenance staff has been working hard this spring clearing vegetation in an effort to give visitors a better idea of the size and extent of the

fortifications built during the June 1864 battle of Cold Harbor. For nearly two weeks the armies confronted one another and during that time over six miles of opposing earthworks and trenches were dug for protection. While many of these works still exist, the build-up of debris had obscured them from sight.

In the last month excess leaves and other litter have been removed from trenches near the tour road and staff has trimmed back brush and removed debris. An impressive section of the Union lines along the interpretive trail and adjacent to Cold Harbor Road is now open, revealing trenches that had been covered up for years.

The effort to restore and maintain an accurate historic appearance is one of the park's primary objectives. Visitors to Cold Harbor now have a wonderful opportunity to better view and understand one of the great battles of the war.

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