



THE COURIER



Northeast Ohio Civil War Round Table



September 8th 2009 Meeting #101

Dino's Restaurant at I90 & State Rt. 306 Willoughby, Ohio

Guest Speaker: Norton London will present a talk on our fall field trip:

The Battle of the North Anna River, Topopotomy Creek and Cold Harbor

Canteen at 6:00 pm

Dinner at 7:00pm

Guests are welcome

Reservations required Please call Steve Abbey

Phone 440 255 8375 e-Mail: abbeyr@yahoo.com

Norton London is one of the founders of the NEOCWRT who has devoted much of his time planning field trips, preparing talks and providing prudent advice to our executive committee on many important matters. Mr. London became interested in the American Civil War when his fourth grade teacher, Mrs. Richards assigned him to read a book on Abraham Lincoln and present a report to the class. Sixty two years later, he is still giving reports on Lincoln, along with Ulysses .S. Grant, R.E. Lee and many other principal men and women from the 19th century. He has never lost his passion for American history. Norton has taught Civil War history for adult education classes at the ILR of Baldwin Wallace College in Beachwood, Ohio; Lakeland Community College and Cuyahoga Community College.

He is a past president of both the Cleveland Civil War Round Table and the Northeast Ohio Civil War Round Table. Mr. London along with fellow NEOCWRT founder, Mr. Bob Baucher, has attended many American Civil War Symposiums hosted by Robert Krick Sr., Gary Gallagher, Dennis Frye and the "Dean" of American Civil War Historians-Edwin Bearss.

Norton is retired from the commercial real estate business. He and his wife Joni live in Cleveland Heights, but you can seldom find them at home. If Norton is not preparing for his next civil war class he and Joni are traveling across the country to visit their four children. The Northeast Ohio Civil War Round Table is honored to have him both as a member and as our speaker for our next meeting on Tuesday September 8, 2009.

“The Battle of Cold Harbor” by Norton London

This article is an edited version of the “Battle of Cold Harbor” written for the National Park Service by Gordon Rhea

Owned and operated by the Isaac Burnett family, the Old Cold Harbor Tavern (the name suggesting shelter without sustenance) stood at the crossroads that was vital to Grant’s operations in the area. This establishment would lend its name to the battle.

The Armies Concentrate toward Old Cold Harbor

On May 31, Lee moved his headquarters to Shady Grove Church to be closer to his army’s right wing, where the next bout of combat seemed imminent. Securing Cold Harbor remained his priority. Once again, Lee had an opportunity to catch a portion of Grant’s army at a disadvantage. He intended to make the most of the windfall.

June 1: By evening, Confederate and union troops faced off behind earthworks extending perpendicularly to the road running from Old Cold Harbor to New Cold Harbor.

Late in the day, Grant decided to attack once more at Old Cold Harbor. Rebel musketry and artillery turned the approaches into killing fields. The Federals made no appreciable headway advancing immediately north of the road. Brigadier General Emory Upton’s brigade met a bloody repulse.

Having gathered both Wright’s and Smith’s corps at Old Cold Harbor, Grant orders an attack to the north, while Hoke contends with Wright’s advance. Along a small creek on which the two Confederate divisions hinge, an undefended gap is discovered by Truex’s brigade. Funneling through the Confederate line, Truex affects a breakthrough only to be stopped by Southern reinforcements. Emboldened by this partial success, Grant plans to follow up with a general assault the next morning. Wright and Smith had lost about 2,200 men and had no gains to show for their efforts. Upton was furious with Grant, whom he complained had “recklessly ordered (Wright and Smith) to assault the enemy’s entrenchment, knowing neither their strength nor position.” The attack also upset Meade, who bridled at Grant’s penchant for ordering assaults without sufficient reconnaissance or preparation. Grant’s popularity with the press also nettled the army commander. “The papers are giving Grant all the credit for what they call successes,” he grouched to his wife. “I hope they will remember this if anything goes wrong.”



June 2: Despite his displeasure over Grant’s fondness for assaults, Meade concluded that an attack in the morning at Old Cold Harbor stood a fair chance of success. The trick was to concentrate sufficient firepower before Lee could bring up reinforcements. Meade sent a message to Wright. “I do not like extending too much,” he began, referring to the miles of union trenches stretching from Totopotomoy Creek cross-country to Cold Harbor. “It is the trouble we have had all along of occupying too long lines and not massing enough.” To remedy this deficiency, Meade proposed shifting Hancock from the northern end of the Union line to Wright’s left flank. When Hancock moved into place, the three Union corps at Cold Harbor-Smith, Wright, and Hancock-were to attack in unison.

During the night of June 1-2, Hancock undertook a fatiguing march to the lower end of the union line. His men reached their destination long after dawn and were too weary to participate in an attack. Bowing to the inevitable, Grant postponed the assault until 5:00 pm, and then put it off again until 4:30 the next morning. He directed his generals to “employ the interim in making examination of the

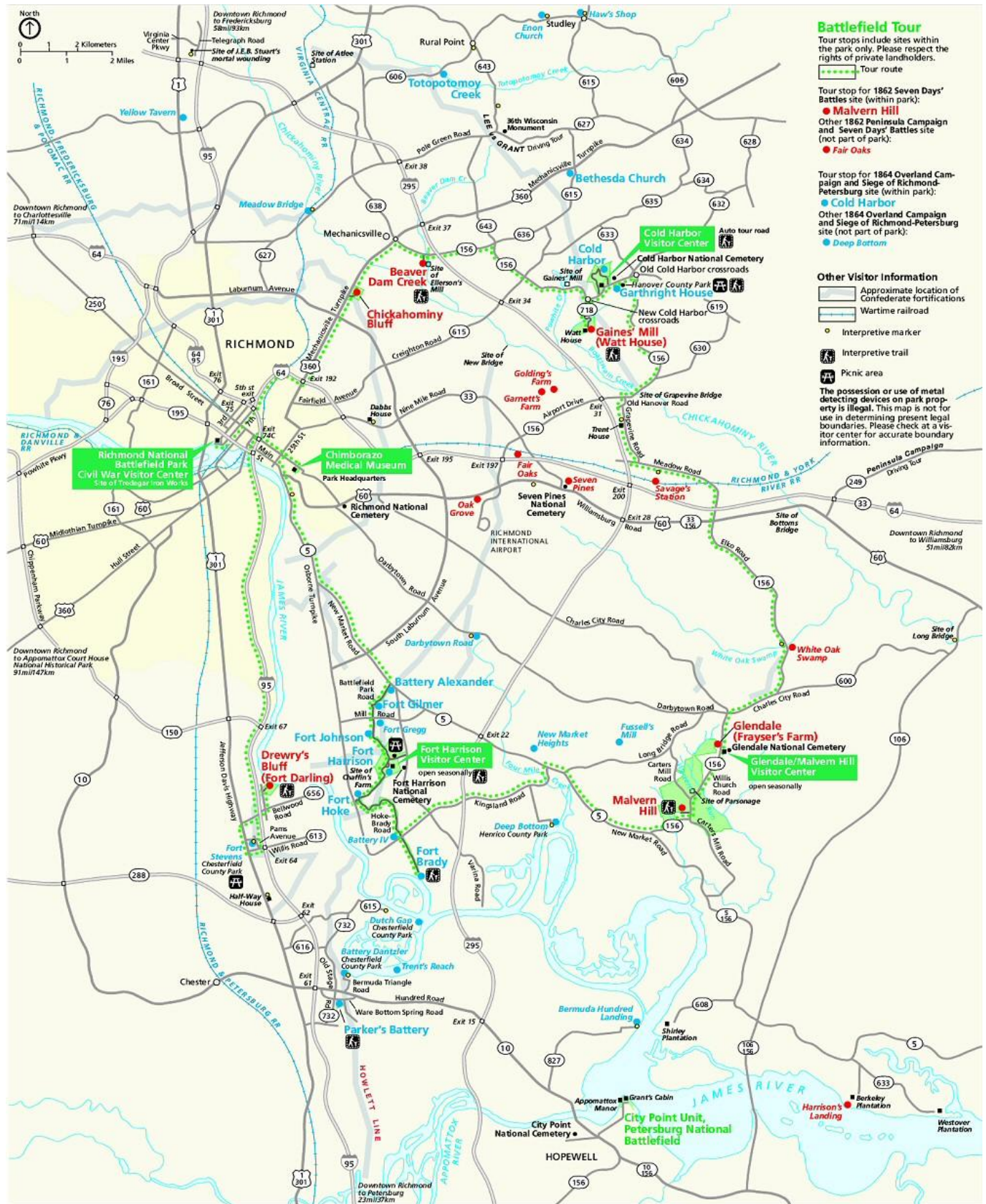
ground in their fronts and perfecting their arrangements for the assault.” Grant’s delay gave Lee time to counter. During the afternoon, Grant tidied up his lines.

By evening on June 2, thanks to the respite afforded by Grant, Lee had shifted his army south and nullified any advantage the Federals had gained by their deployments. Lee’s engineers cleared fields of fire and constructed barricades of earth and logs. Confederate artillerists posted their guns for greatest effect, establishing converging fields of fire and driving stakes in the ground to give the gunners measured ranges to enhance their accuracy. Skirmishers kept the Federals ignorant of the precise location and strength of Lee’s works. The next morning, Grant would march blindly against the most ingenious defensive configuration the war had yet witnessed. Critics have censured Grant for delaying on June 2. Had he attacked with Hancock, he might have won a resounding victory. Grant’s delay departed from the aggressive pattern of conduct that usually characterized his fighting. In Grant’s estimation, a concerted attack ought to break Lee’s line once and for all. Since Lee had no reinforcements to draw upon, Grant was not concerned that waiting until June 3 might affect the outcome. A string of partial successes had dimmed Grant’s memory of the lessons of Spotsylvania Court House. Troops positioned behind well-sited earthworks and supported by well-placed artillery batteries were virtually invulnerable to direct attack. Grant’s soldiers, however, had not forgotten the cost of charging those frowning battlements. During the night, Grant’s staffer Lt. Colonel Horace Porter noticed men pinning names and addresses on their coats to aid in identifying their bodies. This was not the behavior of men expecting to confront a broken and defeated foe.

June 3: Grant attacks again at Old Cold Harbor

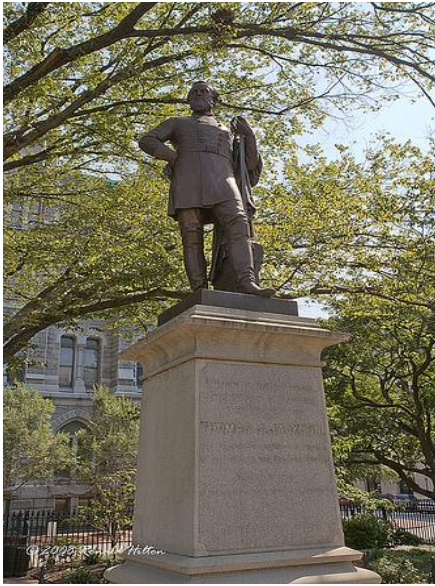
At 4:30am, Federal troops in front of Cold Harbor lunged through a thick ground fog toward Lee’s bristling earthworks. In minutes, massed Confederate firepower generated enormous casualties and pinned attackers in place. Details varied along the line, but overall, the repulse was catastrophic. Grant’s attack along Lee’s nearly seven miles of entrenchments holds little chance for success. On Lee’s right Hancock’s corps manages to penetrate the Confederate line, only to be thrown back by a determined counterattack. In the center, Wright stumbles forward in a lackluster attack that gains little ground, while Smith suffers tremendously from flanking fire resulting from Wright’s sluggish advance and a lack of support from Warren, who claims he cannot move forward. By 8:00, the union assault has spent its momentum and Grant’s men take shelter wherever they can find it, in some areas within mere yards of the Confederate line. “We felt it was murder, not war” a New Yorker complained. A Vermonter recounted that on approaching the rebel earthworks, his compatriots were “simply slaughtered”. Volleys of musketry and artillery fire tore into the blue-clad ranks. An Alabamian watched in fascination as heads, arms, and muskets rained down after each discharge. The files of men went down like rows of blocks or bricks pushed over by striking against one another,” recounted a union officer. Contradictory reports poured into Union headquarters east of Old Cold Harbor. Uncertainty as to what was happening, in addition to the length of the union line, rendered coordination impossible. As coordination dissolved, the Union troops began digging in. When Confederate Postmaster General John H. Reagan rode over from Richmond and inquired what reserves Lee had on hand to repel the Federals if they broke through. “Not a regiment”, Lee answered. “And that has been my condition ever since the fighting commenced on the Rappahannock. If I shorten my lines to provide a reserve he will turn me.”, he observed. “If I weaken my lines to provide a reserve, he will break them.” As the firing subsided, Confederates peered over their earthworks to view their handiwork. “Men lay in places like hogs in a pen,” a rebel noted in horror, “some side by side, across each other, some two deep, while others with their legs lying across the head and body of their dead comrades.” One of Lee’s hardened generals related that he had “seen nothing to exceed this.” Grant’s casualties surpassed 6,000 men.” Lee’s approached 1,500.

Grant wired Washington that his assaults had gained no “Decisive advantage”. His losses, he added, were “not severe”. years later, however, when penning his memoirs on his deathbed, Grant revealed his true feelings about the debacle. “I have always regretted that the last assault at Cold Harbor was ever made.”



Map of the historic sites around Richmond, Virginia from the National Park Service

General Stonewall Jackson's Statue in Richmond, Virginia by Carl Dodaro



If you have ever walked thru Capitol Square in Richmond, Virginia, you may have passed by a statue of Stonewall Jackson that is without a hat, horse or gun, but holding a sword. This statue of Jackson is also unique in its history because it was paid for by British gentlemen-admirers, designed by a renowned Irish sculptor, erected a decade after the civil war ended – and after the artist's death.

The death of General Jackson in May, 1863, has been called 'the greatest personal loss suffered by the Confederacy, and there was widespread sorrow and grief, not only throughout the South but much further afield. Across the Atlantic, the London Times was of the opinion that, "Even on this side of the ocean the gallant soldier's fate will everywhere be heard of with pity and sympathy. Not only as a brave man fighting for his country's independence, but as one of the most consummate generals that this century has produced. Stonewall Jackson will carry with him to his early grave the regrets of all who can admire greatness and genius." It went on to compare his death with that of Nelson at Trafalgar. The Times announced a public meeting, to be held in St. George's Hall, Liverpool, on June 3, "for the purpose of testifying respect to the memory of the late General Thomas J. Jackson" and predicted that it would be well attended. The following day there was a report that "It is proposed to raise a subscription in England for the erection in the Confederate States of A BRITISH MONUMENT to this gallant man". It pointed out that subscribing to the statue would not, of course, imply any bias regarding "the merits of the American struggle", and an account was opened at Coutts Bank on June 29, 1863. By the end of August, 1863, enough money had been raised to allow the start of the statue. The man chosen to create Stonewall's statue was the eminent Irish born sculptor John H. Foley, whose best-known work is the figure of the Prince Consort on the Albert Memorial in Hyde Park. The statue was to be based on a recent photograph, possibly the one taken "a week before the General received his fatal wound", which had been sold around England since April, 1864. Foley was reported to have started work on the statue by July, 1865.

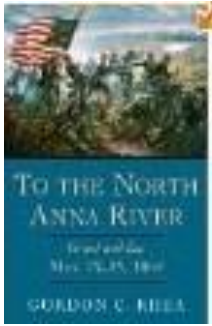
Foley was a conscientious and fastidious artist, who would spend many years working on an individual piece of sculpture, and this anxiety to perfect the likeness, and increasing ill health, meant that Jackson's statue was not completed till shortly before the sculptor's own death in August, 1874. After being formally offered to, and accepted by, the Governor and Legislature of Virginia, the statue set out on its journey, arriving by steamer at Richmond on September 22, 1875. The following day, enclosed in a packing case draped with the flags of Great Britain and the State of Virginia, it was loaded onto a wagon and escorted by a regiment of state troops, was drawn thru the streets by a number of Confederate veterans and leading citizens, to be received by the Governor at the State Capitol, with "the entire population turning out to witness the ceremonies". The man in charge was Brigadier General Bradley T. Johnson, C.S.A., who twelve years before had commanded Jackson's funeral escort. After a pedestal was built, the statue was unveiled on October 12, 1875.

The London Times, the paper who started the whole idea of the statue, then came out a couple of days later and made clear its disapproval of what it regarded as an act of indiscretion on the part of some Englishmen, one considered likely to "revive half-buried resentments by glorifying the prowess of a Confederate soldier" and harm post-war Anglo-American relations. It was a very different attitude from that displayed during the war. The treasurer of the British Jackson Monumental Fund, Alexander Beresford Hope, reminded The Times that the project had originated within three weeks of Jackson's death in 1863, but had been seriously delayed for reasons beyond his control, and had been completely forgotten by the public until it was finished and shown in London before being shipped to Virginia. Furthermore, all involved felt obliged to keep their word and offer the statue to the people of Virginia, to whom it had long been promised. Had the offer been considered "distasteful or inconvenient" it surely would have been refused. It is worth adding that most Confederate monuments actually date from the late 1880's, the 1890's and early 1900's, so General Jackson's statue was rather ahead of its time. As far as can be ascertained, it would also seem to be the only memorial in the Confederacy paid for with British money. The original proposal had been for a marble statue, but for whatever reason (perhaps cost?) the one which finally emerged was made from bronze. On the pedestal are the words:

PRESENTED BY ENGLISH GENTLEMEN AS A TRIBUTE OF ADMIRATION FOR THE SOLDIER AND PATRIOT THOMAS J. JACKSON AND GRATEFULLY ACCEPTED BY VIRGINIA IN THE NAME OF THE SOUTHERN PEOPLE DONE A.D. 1875 IN THE HUNDRETH YEAR OF THE COMMONWEALTH

This is a condensed version of an article published by the American Civil War Round Table of the United Kingdom by John Bennett – December 2004.

To the North Anna River by Gordon C. Rhea Book Review by Tom Horvath



North Anna is one of the battle sites we will visit on our fall trip, and I was looking for a book that could increase my meager knowledge of the time between the Wilderness and Appomattox. This book by Gordon C. Rhea proved to be a good choice. Granted, it addresses only a short section of that time, May 13 through May 25, 1864, and leaves large gaps in my knowledge, but limiting to that short period works well for the book. There is enough activity to keep things lively but the time span is short enough to allow for a nice level of detail.

After a brief introduction that summarizes events at the Wilderness, Spotsylvania, and Yellow Tavern, the narrative begins and continues through the Battle of the North Anna River. Each chapter covers a day or two, depending on the level of activity, and concludes with an analysis primarily, but not exclusively, of Grant's and Lee's performance during that period.

In his introduction, Mr. Rhea states that very little has been written about this particular period. After reading the volume I understand why. There certainly are battles, and the intensity of activity, marching and fighting, is much greater than the Army of the Potomac had experienced under any of its previous leaders. But the significance of all the activity is less obvious and less dramatic than many of the more notable periods. Perhaps to compensate, Mr. Rhea liberally sprinkles the narrative with quotes from soldiers' letters and diaries, newspaper articles, and official dispatches, providing a personal view of the events. These provided some interesting insights into a soldier's life during the campaign and held my interest, even through the quieter periods.

The volume most often takes a Federal perspective, which may be irksome to some readers, but it is probably a natural result of the situation. At this point, the offensive initiative is in the hands of Grant. Most movement and action is initiated by Grant. Lee is on the defensive, looking for an opportunity to attack, but too ill to take advantage of his best opportunity.

As mentioned, Mr. Rhea critiques Grant, Lee, and other generals, and seems to take an even hand in his criticism. To him, both generals are competent, aggressive leaders. He feels that Grant's greatest attributes were his tenacity and the understanding that the Army of Northern Virginia, not Richmond, was his objective. Previous generals seemed to lack either the tenacity or the understanding. Yet he points out the mistakes Grant made, and there were a number of them. Mr. Rhea also explores the militarily strange relationship between Grant and Meade and its deterioration during this campaign.

Lee is equally admired. Despite being outnumbered and on the defensive, Lee continually looked for an opportunity to divide the enemy's army and take the offensive. He almost succeeded. Lee, too, made his share of mistakes, some of which the author blames on his health. The length of the war had taken its toll, and during this campaign he suffered a debilitating bout with dysentery.

Mr. Rhea's writes well and the book is easy to read. The battles and movements of the armies are illustrated with a number of maps. The volume includes an order of battle, index, bibliography, notes section, and a small section of photographs and prints.

Barnes and Noble has the hardcover edition available for \$36.95 and the paperback version is available from Amazon for \$18.21. The ClevNet System has four copies and the Mentor Library has one.

If this book appeals to you, or if you are interested in the different battles of the Overland campaign, Mr. Rhea has written several other volumes. The first is about the Wilderness campaign and the second covers Spotsylvania Courthouse and Yellow Tavern. This volume, published in 2000, is the third in the series and the fourth describes the battle of Cold Harbor. His most recent volume covers the entire campaign from the Wilderness to Cold Harbor.

CIVIL WAR MINUTES by Franco M. Sperrazzo Special Events Coordinator

We hope everyone has had a safe and wonderful cool summer? If you had the opportunity to clean out your basements, attics and closets, please consider donating any books, magazines, disks, etc. to our **Civil War Book Raffle**. We could use some fresh material to replenish this worthy cause.

The day was sunny, the temperature was about 75 degrees and there was not a cloud in the sky for our **5th annual Summer Picnic** on July 12, 2009. All those members and guests attending were entertained by the **51st Ohio Volunteer Infantry**, who regaled us with song and a demonstration of the manual of arms. Our **13th President Arlan** and **First Lady Pat** did their usual superlative best to make all who attended feel like part of their family. Members like **Joe & Debbie Abazzio, Steve & Roberta Abbey, Bob Baucher, Carl Dodaro & family, Ron & Julie Doll, George Grim, Ted & Lee Karle, Norton & Joni London, Bill & Gwen Meissner, Frank Moore & Norma, Ron & Peg Morgan, Terry & Mary Ellen Reynolds, John & Teresa Sandy, Franco & Cyndy Sperrazzo, Joe & Judy Tirpak and Les West**. We also brought along some guests. We presented our hosts Arlan and Pat with a fruit basket filled with cheese, fruit and wine from **Chandler & Rudd Co.** on behalf of the membership of the NEOCWRT.

Those attending the picnic were treated to **Norty & Franco** participating in field maneuvers and target shooting by our special guests the **51st OVI** at their encampment. (Editor's Note: Francis Sperrazzo was the only one able to hit the watermelon this year. Even our NRA sharp shooter Billy Meissner missed his mark!)

Fall Field Trip October 1-4, 2009: We are anticipating more than two dozen members and guests will attending our 12th annual fall field trip to Richmond. We will leave comforts and fine food of Virginia Crossings for the North Anna, Cold Harbor, Yellow Tavern and much more. Our own field trip master **Norty London** will present a talk and overview of our excursion at the September 8th meeting. **Norty calls** this prelude to departure "Cheating Death along the North Anna and Cold Harbor". On site coordinator **Brent**

Morgan and I had a Splendid conversation in July and he assured me that details are moving forward in a positive manner with field commander **R. E. L Krick** at the helm. Remember to send your \$100.00 deposit to Mike Sears, ASAP! It is not too late to climb on board.

Program change: **JET, John Sandy & Franco** are soliciting our member's advice. The speaker for our holiday season gathering on December 8th had to cancel. If you know an interesting candidate to address our group or a musician who plays piano, we would like to hear from you.

Ted Karle Collection: Look for a feature article in the **Civil War Times Illustrated** probably the **Fall Holiday** issue regarding **Ted's** personal **83rd Pennsylvania Volunteer Infantry artifacts**. This was one of the four regiments commanded by Union General Strong Vincent, who was instrumental in implementing the successful plan at Little Round Top on the 2nd day at Gettysburg. **Vincent** was mortally wounded there and died 4 days later.

Special Request: Please keep **Frank Yannucci** in your thoughts and prayers. His wife **Dolores**, the sister of our deceased **founder Dr. Robert Battisti** is battling a serious illness at this time.



The Orange County Virginia Board of Supervisors recently voted to rezone land near the Wilderness Battlefield for commercial use. The vote was 4 to 1 in favor of the Wal-Mart proposal.



Germanna Plank Road, National Park Service Photograph

The Battle of the Wilderness was one of the pivotal engagements between Confederate General Robert E. Lee and Union General Ulysses S. Grant. More than 160,000 men were involved in this struggle on May 5-May 6th, 1864. The Orange County Virginia Board of Supervisors recently voted 4 to 1 to rezone a tract of land near the entrance to the Wilderness and Spotsylvania Court House Battlefields visitors center so that Wal-Mart could build a 148,000 square foot Super-Store. The Civil War Preservation Trust had written to the CEO of Wal-Mart and urged him to seek another location in Orange County. CWPT is certainly not opposed to more jobs or economic development in Orange County, Virginia but

firmly believes that Wal-Mart could find a more suitable location, a mile or so from the battlefield site.

The Central Virginia Battlefields Trust has obtained an option to buy a 93 acre plot of land located on the Wilderness Battlefield. Brothers Phillip and John Atkins III have agreed to sell the land for \$930,000. This land includes the original intersection of the Germanna Plank Road and the Orange Turnpike. The CVBT will be fund raising in order to obtain the necessary money for the down payment on this mortgage. If you are concerned about the preservation of our historic sites and would like to help, please contact the Civil War Preservation Trust or the Central Virginia Battlefields Trust.

This article was posted on August 29, 2009 by Kurt Repanshek for National Parks Traveler

The Courier is the monthly newsletter of the Northeast Ohio Civil War Round Table.

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