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*"Fare Fac - Say Do"*

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# The Fare Facs Gazette

The Newsletter of Historic Fairfax City, Inc.

Volume 3, Issue 3

Summer 2005

## Historic Fairfax City, Inc. Honored in 4th of July Parade

by Hildie Carney

Congratulations are in order for Historic Fairfax City, Inc. and the 4<sup>th</sup> of July Parade Committee, chaired by HFCI board member Mick Fraiser. The group was awarded 1st Place in the Mayor's and Council Trophy Division and 2<sup>nd</sup> Place in the Float Division.

The float was designed and built by HFCI board member, Brad Preiss, with lots of help from the HFCI Parade Committee. His depiction of the Fairfax Courthouse was perfect in every detail.

HFCI's theme followed the City's slogan of "Bursting with Pride" and the celebration



HFCI board member Brad Preiss and the award winning float he designed, depicting the historic Fairfax Courthouse built in 1800. Also pictured are Tanner Preiss, Shyahn Fraiser and Mick Fraiser. Photo credit Trang Nguyen.

of the bicentennial year by reenacting events throughout the years. Arrayed in period costumes founder "Richard and Mrs. Ratcliff" (Board members Ed Trexler and Karen Stevenson) headed the float and "Antonia Ford and Major Joseph Willard" (Mick Frasier and Hildie Carney) followed, depicting the civil war period.



Ed Trexler and Karen Stevenson, as Mr. and Mrs. Richard Ratcliff, and the HFCI Fairfax Courthouse Float during the 2005 City of Fairfax 4th of July Parade. Note the historic Fairfax Courthouse is in the background. Photo credit Trang Nguyen.

Thanks to antique car owners, Bill Parris and Patrick O'Neill, the 1930's and 1950's decades were interpreted by their wonderful autos with period performers.

The 1930's brought a farming serge to Fairfax and featured were "Mr. and Mrs. Wilcoxin" (David and Cindy Meyer, son Elliott) from the Blenheim farm and our grand judge (John Petersen). The 1950's brought prosperity to the City with a trend to suburban growth. Our Car Hop (Board member Betsy Rutkowski) and Poodle skirted jitterbuggers (Board member Andrea Loewenwarter, and daughter Jacquelyn) and hoola-hoppers depicted that era

Congratulations to the Parade Committee – HFCI will display their trophy and ribbon at the Museum for all to see!

Fairfax, Virginia, July 2005-

Message from the President:

Greetings from the President--

Our Editor, Page Johnson, is fresh from vacation and has written a very informative article about one of our own City residents and his collection of civil war relics.

I hope all of you are having a wonderful summer and exciting vacations. Summer is my favorite time of the year when the 'living is easy'.

The first part of the summer was not so easy for our 4<sup>th</sup> of July Committee crew! Thanks to the hard work of our committee chairman, Mick Fraiser, and his "right hand man" Brad Preiss, HFCI was awarded the top prize for our entry in the 2005 City parade. (please see my write up in this newsletter). HFCI was also awarded the 2<sup>nd</sup> prize in the Float Division. We had a lot of fun doing this but it was a lot of work too!

At our June meeting we selected Dolores Testerman as our representative for the annual InterService Club Council "Volunteer of the Year" Award. Please join us on August 3<sup>rd</sup> at Old Town Hall to honor our very special HFCI board member Dolores Testerman.

Thank you to all of you who helped make our 2005 Homes Tour a huge success. We netted over \$12,000 and made a lot of friends during the tour. Many of our HFCI members either helped on the committee, were docents at the houses, or performed other valuable service. A special thanks goes to our Co-Chairs, Carol Cope and HFCI board member Karen Stevenson.

In May, we had our Spring Annual Meeting with one of our best programs yet! We had a special guest "Mary Todd Lincoln" (aka: Saundra Jordan). Mr. & Mrs. Jordan took us right into the White House and their personal lives as they have never been recounted before. We would love to have them back for another program to recount another phase of their lives.

On July 28<sup>th</sup> our Outreach Committee will be attending the "nonprofit" luncheon hosted by the Fairfax Chamber of Commerce. This is an opportunity for us to reach out for new members, prospective board members and for

financial support. Thanks to Norma Darcey, our representative on this organization, for her hard work.

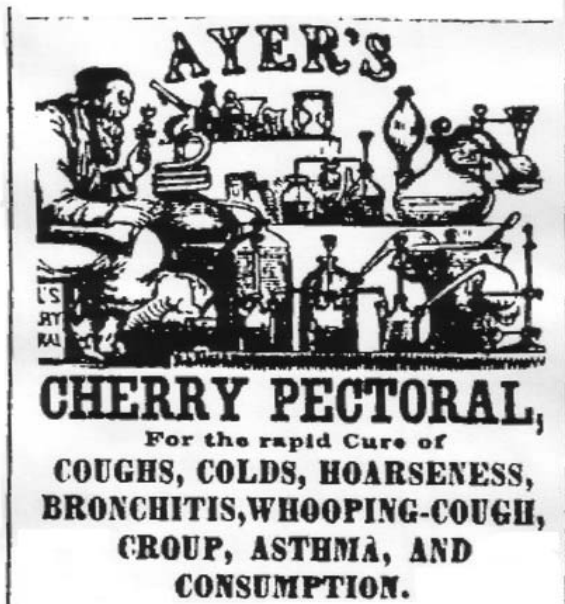
We are excited about the Blenheim Interpretative Center the City Council has approved. We hope to have the redesign and groundbreaking by this Fall. (See article in this newsletter). Thanks to the Blenheim Committee – these members have been working on this project for 4 years. The Ratcliff Cemetery renovation is also in its last stages for completion.

Our July meeting was held at the beautiful historic home of HFCI board member Karen Stevenson – our Annual Summer Social. Just a little bit of business and a lot of socializing and enjoying the beautiful porch and gardens at Karen's. We'll take a break in August and then we'll be back to work on September 14<sup>th</sup> at our regular meeting. Come join us at City Hall, Room 306 at 7:30PM.

Please share this newsletter with a neighbor or friend and if you haven't sent in your membership dues please do! I'd like to hear from you so give me a call or e-mail me anytime if you have questions or suggestions at 703-591-5305 or hilcarn31@aol.com.

Hildie Carney

## Advertisements



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**CHERRY PECTORAL,**  
For the rapid Cure of  
**COUGHS, COLDS, HOARSENESS,  
BRONCHITIS, WHOOPING-COUGH,  
CROUP, ASTHMA, AND  
CONSUMPTION.**

## Getting To Know You

HFCI Board Member Karen Stevenson



Karen has been on the HFCI Board for two terms and for both of these she has had the very difficult job of secretary. She deserves a medal for keeping up with all that happens at these very busy meetings. In addition to that job, Karen serves on the Investigative Historic

Properties and Outreach Committees. You may have seen her as “Mrs. Ratcliff” heading up HFCI’s 4<sup>th</sup> of July parade.

We “found” Karen when her home was suggested for our first Homes Tour. What a find – Karen and her home! Karen’s second job is to take care of her beautiful 1905 historic home and garden. “Barbara Lee” (named after her sister) was so popular on the first tour, she was asked to have it on tour for the second Homes Tour two years later. She graciously agreed. She also agreed to Co-Chair the second Homes Tour and then went on to Co-Chair our third Homes Tour.

On any given day, you will see people driving by “that lovely house with the wrap-around porch” and stopping dead in the street to stare. The Stevenson’s keep their home in tip-top shape and the beautiful garden patch is always arrayed with many colorful flowers. Her home is host to many of our HFCI functions as well as to the neighbors and friends.

Karen is married to Bill Stevenson who retired from the Department of Energy as a Contract Officer in 1989. They purchased the home and then began the hard work of renovating – a job they both did themselves – and is ongoing. Karen’s full time job as a Senior Reference Librarian, Office of Chief Counsel, Internal Revenue Service, takes her downtown every day. Karen hails from Mentor, Ohio, where she did her undergraduate work at Kent State University and furthered her education at Catholic University when she moved here.

Her relaxing moments are working in her garden and biking. She loves to peruse antique shows to add to

her collection. Karen is a member of the Fairfax Ferns Garden Club and the local Book Club.

Preservation is her second name – her legacy will be her 1905 historic home – where her dedication to its preservation has been paramount. She is a great asset to our Board and we thank you and applaud you, Karen, for all your hard work.

—♦♦♦—  
**Visit us on the web:  
 HFCI Website!**

<http://www.historicfairfax.org>

—♦♦♦—  
**FAIRFAX FAST FACT:**

In the early 19th c. the area due north of the City of Fairfax along Chain Bridge Road was known briefly by the rather unflattering name of *Sumac Flats*, probably due to the plant by that name growing in the area. Poison Sumac produces a rash similar to Poison Ivy.

Fortunately, someone had the good sense to rename the area for the immense trees which also grew in the area, a name we still use today - Oakton!

# A Battlefield Souvenir?

By William Page Johnson, II

Recently, a longtime City of Fairfax resident, Tom Deshazo, came into my office to discuss a tax issue. The matter was quickly resolved and Tom thanked me and turned to leave. He stopped short of the door and pulling an object out of his pocket he said, “I know that you are interested in history. Have you ever seen one of these?” In the palm of his outstretched hand he held a round metal disk.

The disk was made of either copper or brass and was about the size of a quarter. There was a hole punched into the top.



On one side is a shield with the inscription:

A-G-A-I-N-S-T R-E-B-E-L-L-I-O-N  
1-8-6-1

The reverse side is the inscription:

H-E-N-R-E-Y A. C-O-R-N-W-E-L-L  
1-2-1-<sup>st</sup> P-A V-O-L-S  
1-8-6-3.

I indicated that I did indeed know that the object he held was a Union Identity Disc from the American Civil War – the grandfather of the modern military identification tag, or Dog Tag, worn by every American soldier since World War I.

It is difficult for us to imagine the carnage and death wrought by the Civil War. A soldier’s odds of survival, either in battle or from disease, were slim. At the beginning of the war, both the Union and Confederate governments gave almost no thought to the identification and burial of

their dead. Still, Union soldiers fared better than their Confederate counterparts. In 1862, the U.S. Congress established the first National Cemetery for the burial of Union soldiers. Proper identification and burial of the Confederate dead was not even officially dealt with until well after the war. As a result of these deficiencies, nearly forty percent of all Civil War dead remain unidentified.

**Attention. Soldiers!**

Every soldier should have a BADGE WITH HIS NAME MARKED DISTINCTLY upon it. The Subscribers will forward to any soldier in the Army a solid Silver Badge, with his Name, Company, and Regiment engraved upon it, on receipt of One Dollar. The above cut represents size and style of Badge furnished. It can be fastened to any garment. Address



In solid 18 k. gold, \$8 50.

**DROWNE & MOORE,**  
Manufacturing Jewelers, 208 Broadway, New York.

*Harper’s Weekly*, September 19, 1863, p. 607, c. 4.

Some pragmatic soldiers took matters into their own hands to ensure that their remains would be identified should they die on the battlefield. Their methods were varied and crude by today’s standards. Because theft was a problem, many soldiers had already taken great care to mark all their personal belongings. So identifying themselves was just a natural extension of this practice. Some troops would write their names and unit designations on paper tags or handkerchiefs and pin them to their clothing. Others fashioned their own identification tags out of pieces of wood or bone, boring a hole in one end so that they could be worn on a string around the neck. *Harper’s Weekly* and other popular magazines of the day carried advertisements for ornate gold or silver “soldier badges” that could be worn on a man’s coat.

As casualty rates climbed enterprising Sutlers provided soldiers a popular and cheaper alternative – brass or lead identity tags. These tags, or discs, had a hole in the top for attaching a string or chain that could be worn around the neck. There were several variations of these tags but most featured an eagle, shield and the words “War of 1861”, or similar patriotic message, on one side and the soldier’s

name, regiment and company on the other. For a small fee, a soldier could purchase one of these from a Sutler who set up his shop in a roadside tent or wagon. The Sutler would hand stamp the soldiers' personal information on the disc while the soldier waited. In all probability, this is how Pvt. Henry A. Cornwell came by his identity disc.

I asked my visitor about the object he held, "Where did you get this?" He replied, "It was my grandfather's." I then stated what I thought was obvious, "So your grandfather was in the 121<sup>st</sup> Pennsylvania Infantry." "No," he stated, and quickly added, a little indignantly, "ALL of my people were from King George County, Virginia. They were on the OTHER side!" Intrigued, I pressed him, "So your grandfather was in the Confederate Army?" "No," he said, and when he saw my puzzled look, he added, "He was only 10 years old when the war ended." Now I really was intrigued. A genuine mystery was developing.

He went on to say that he had inherited his grandfather's trunk after his death in 1954. When he acquired the trunk he found the identity disc in the bottom with no other information. He also told me that he and his wife had attempted to identify the soldier whose name appeared on the disc by writing to the State of Pennsylvania decades ago, but that they had heard nothing. I knew that although the soldier was clearly a volunteer from Pennsylvania, the Pennsylvania State archives was not the repository of the records they had attempted to find. Those records are located in the National Archives in Washington, DC. However, with the growth of the Internet many of these records are now available online almost instantaneously. I bid my visitor good-bye with a promise to try and find out more information about Henry A. Cornwell.

Later that night I did some quick investigation on my computer at home. I typed the name Henry A. Cornwell into my favorite Internet search engine. The first two hits, or results, yielded the following information:

1. Company A, 121st Pa. Regiment. . . July 6. Cpl. Henry A. Cornwell, 22, wounded Gettysburg, July 1, died July 8. John F. Hughes ... <http://www.rootsweb.com/~pavenang/alanstory.html>
2. The 121st Regiment, PA Volunteers. Company AEF... Corporals: Jonathan W. Brink; Samuel Fair, Henry Aten; John B. Allender; Jacob Allebach; John Burns, Henry A. Cornwell; Aaron H. Harrison; Solomon

S. Engle Privates ... <http://www.rootsweb.com/~pavenang/war121companya.htm>

There it was. Corporal Henry A. Cornwell of Co. A, 121<sup>st</sup> Pennsylvania Volunteers was mortally wounded on July 1, 1863, the first day of the Battle of Gettysburg, and died a week later. At least part of the mystery was solved. A few more searches revealed that Cpl. Cornwell was interred in Soldiers National Cemetery at Gettysburg after the battle.<sup>1</sup> But how did he die and how did the Jones family come into possession of his disc?

Henry A. Cornwell was born in Alleghany Township, Venango Co., PA about 1841. He was the only son of Aspinwall and Frances M. Cornwell. Henry's grandfather, also named Aspinwall Cornwell, settled on the Warren Road, near Pleasantville, Alleghany Township, Venango Co., PA about 1819. Originally from Fishkill, Dutchess Co., NY, the elder Aspinwall was an officer during the American Revolution.<sup>2, 3</sup>

The 121<sup>st</sup> Pennsylvania Infantry was organized at Philadelphia & Venango Co., PA in the summer of 1862. Henry Cornwell enlisted in Co. A, 121<sup>st</sup> Pennsylvania Infantry on August 23, 1862 at the age of 21. Several days later Henry wrote to his sister Lucy from Manayunk, PA:

*"Manayunk, August 27, 1862*

*Sister Lucy you will excuse me for not writing to you before, but I have not had time since I got here. We arrived in Philadelphia last Saturday all right. We are in camp five miles from Philadelphia. We are shainted in a hall this week. The camp is not quite done but we shall go in next week. We have plenty to eat & drink & every thing convenient except beds. I will describe them. They are 3 - inch maple planks — on — for us. But that is nothing, for you now that I am used to hard beds. I like soldiering very well. The ladies in this place made a ball for us last night & who do you think I went with? Well, I will tell you, it was a married lady! Her man is in the war, so I went with her, but don't you tell. Manayunk is a very pleasant place. There are three factories in the place. This is all I can think of at the present. Give my*

*love to Dave and Jane. Write as soon as you get this. Write a good long letter. Direct your letters:*

*H.A. Cornwell  
Company B, 145 Reg  
In care of Capt. G.E.  
Ridgeway, Philadelphia*

*Miss Lucy J. Cornwell  
Don't let anybody see this."*<sup>4</sup>

In September 1862, the 121<sup>st</sup> Pennsylvania Infantry left Philadelphia for Arlington, Virginia. Several months later Henry participated in his first combat, the Battle of Fredericksburg, fought December 12-15, 1862. The Union was soundly defeated at Fredericksburg and suffered many casualties. Henry's own regiment suffered over twenty percent casualties in the fighting. Henry was promoted to Corporal on December 14, 1862 following the death of Cpl. John Burns who was killed in action.<sup>5</sup> As a witness to, and participant in, this carnage Henry purchased his identity disc shortly afterward.

Almost seven months later Henry's regiment was engaged in the initial fighting of the three-day Battle of Gettysburg.

The Battle of Gettysburg began on July 1<sup>st</sup> 1863. Much of the initial fighting occurred on the land of two local farmers, Edward McPherson and John Herbst. The McPherson and Herbst farms were located west of Gettysburg, between the Chambersburg Pike (aka the Cashtown Pike) to the north and the Hagerstown Pike (aka the Fairfield Road) to the south. The farms consisted of open fields except for a small timber lot mistakenly referred to as McPherson's Woods.<sup>6</sup> The woods were actually located on the Herbst farm just south of the Chambersburg Pike. The farms lay between two low ridges, Herr Ridge to the west and McPherson Ridge to the east, separated by a small stream known as Willoughby Run. The Confederates occupied Herr Ridge and had been attacking Union positions along McPherson Ridge all morning without success. By noon, a lull in the fighting occurred allowing fresh Union reinforcements to enter the battle.

At about noon, the brigade of Colonel Chapman Biddle, with a total strength of approximately 1,000 men, and the brigade General Roy Stone, with approximately 1,300 men, entered the battle. Biddle's brigade was

deployed on open ground to the left of Herbst's Woods, near the Fairfield Road. To the right and forward of Biddle's brigade was the brigade of Union General Soloman Meredith, aka the Iron Brigade, numbering approximately 1,800 men. The Iron Brigade was located in Herbst's Woods and had been engaged in fighting all morning. Stone's brigade, aka the Bucktail Brigade, were ordered to deploy to the right of Meredith.

Henry Cornwell and the rest of the 121<sup>st</sup> Pennsylvania Infantry were part of Biddle's brigade, which also included the 142<sup>nd</sup> and 151<sup>st</sup> Pennsylvania Infantry, the 80<sup>th</sup> New York Infantry and a six-piece battery (Cooper's) of the 1<sup>st</sup> Pennsylvania Artillery. The 121<sup>st</sup> Pennsylvania held the extreme left of this brigade and entire left flank of the Union line. Because of their exposed position with an unsupported left flank, Biddle and the 121<sup>st</sup> Pennsylvania took unusually heavy fire from Confederate artillery and infantry for most of the day.

After several unsuccessful piecemeal attacks, a coordinated Confederate attack began at about 4 PM. A line of battle consisting of the brigades of Gen. James J. Archer (Col. F.D. Fry, 30<sup>th</sup> Alabama Commanding), Gen. James J. Pettigrew of North Carolina and Col. John M. Brockenborough of Virginia, supported by the fresh Confederate Division of Gen. William D. Pender some 4,400 men, began to advance. Pettigrew's North Carolina brigade was unusually large, numbering approximately 2,500 men in four regiments – the 11<sup>th</sup>, 26<sup>th</sup>, 37<sup>th</sup>, and 52<sup>nd</sup> regiments. Brockenborough's Virginia brigade consisted of the 40<sup>th</sup>, 47<sup>th</sup> and 55<sup>th</sup> regiments and the 22<sup>nd</sup> Infantry Battalion, approximately 2,000 men. The Archer/Pettigrew/Brockenborough line began to advance on the Union positions. After advancing only a short distance, Archer's brigade, positioned on the right of the line, discovered a large body of Union cavalry on its right flank. Archer's brigade changed its front and dropped out of the attack to protect the Confederate flank during the remainder of the engagement.

Lt. Marcellus E. Jones, 8<sup>th</sup> Illinois Cavalry witnessed what happened next:

*"Seeing the danger threatening Biddle's brigade, our regiment moved forward in [a] column of squadrons, in the direction of Pender's right, and increased our speed to a trot - as if about to charge. At the*



same time, the squadron on picket appeared in the orchard to the left of the Fairfield road and opened fire. Pender's whole division halted. His right brigade changed front and fired a volley. The report startled Biddle's brigade. His men jumped to their feet and moved in good order across the field toward Seminary Ridge, halting and facing about to answer the fire of Pender's division from the crest of the ridge. Having accomplished our purpose, we left rapidly to the left and fell back across Seminary Ridge. As we came into the open ground near the Emmetsburg [sic] road, a motley crowd met our division. Trains, wagons, horses, mules, drivers, stragglers, wounded and prisoners, all in a heap of confusion and consternation." <sup>7</sup>

Pettigrew and Brockenborough continued to advance. Brockenborough, on the left (the Union right), advanced on Stone's Bucktail brigade and a portion of Meredith's Iron brigade, the 2<sup>nd</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> Wisconsin. Pettigrew, on the right (the Union left), advanced on Biddle's brigade and a portion of Meredith's. The left of Pettigrew's brigade, the 11<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup> North Carolina, engaged the 19<sup>th</sup> Indiana and 24<sup>th</sup> Michigan of the Iron brigade. The right of Pettigrew's brigade, the 47<sup>th</sup> and 52<sup>nd</sup> North Carolina, engaged Biddle's brigade. Owing to the disparity between the two opposing brigades, the 52<sup>nd</sup> North Carolina of Pettigrew's brigade actually overlapped Biddle and 121<sup>st</sup> Pennsylvania nearly a quarter of a mile. The Union troops were severely outnumbered to say the least. Biddle's, Meredith's, and Stone's combined strength was approximately 4,500 men.<sup>8</sup> Pettigrew, Brockenborough and Pender's combined strength is estimated to have been 9,000.

*"Pettigrew's Brigade of North Carolinians swept across Willoughby Run south of the McPherson wood [Herbst wood] and struck Biddle's Brigade, lapping its left a considerable distance. Biddle, after a sharp contest, was outflanked and his small brigade driven from the crest to the seminary."* <sup>9</sup>

Lt. Colonel Alexander Biddle described the action in his official report:

*"I saw the line of the enemy slowly approaching up the hill, extending far beyond our left flank, for which we had no defense. As the enemy's faces appeared over the crest of the hill, we fired effectually into them, and, soon after, received a crushing fire from their right, under which our ranks were broken...."* <sup>10</sup>

Another Union eyewitness reported:

*"The enemy's line of battle extended far beyond the extreme left of the Union line, lapping around it, his fire completely enfilading the 121<sup>st</sup> Regiment. Wounded men of the brigade, who were left on upon the field, afterwards reported that none but scattered troops ever passed over the position; but his forces swarming in upon the left, and completely outflanking the brigade gave no chance for successful resistance. The ground was, however, held until the brigade battery was withdrawn in safety, when the fragment of the command remaining, retired to a barricade in the woods, to the rear of the Seminary."* <sup>11</sup>

After flanking and dislodging Biddle's brigade, the Confederates, low on ammunition began to slow their assault. Three fresh brigades from Pender's division resumed the attack against the Union forces that attempted to rally at the Seminary, pushing them off Seminary Ridge and through the town of Gettysburg.

Major William H. Medill, 8<sup>th</sup> Illinois Cavalry recalled:

*" [We] saved a whole brigade of our infantry and a battery from being captured and cut to pieces. The rebels had them nearly surrounded and hemmed in.... The rebel line halted suddenly, faced about... we returned fire with our carbines and galloped away. But during the time they were delayed, the infantry escaped."* <sup>12</sup>

Pender's fresh troops raced onto Seminary Ridge arriving just as the Union officers ordered their men to retreat. As Union troops began a withdrawal through the town they were pursued and a street battle ensued. Pender's troops subjected the retreating Union troops to a severe crossfire from the shelter of fences and buildings in the town. Confederates raced after their enemy in blue, taking prisoners and shooting down those who didn't surrender quickly enough. What began as an orderly retreat turned into a confused, chaotic race for the safety of Cemetery Hill, the Union rallying point. Lost soldiers ran from one unfamiliar street to another finding themselves repeatedly confronted by pursuing Confederates. Others took refuge in private homes and cellars. Wounded Union soldiers collapsed in doorways or staggered into churches where Gettysburg civilians tried to tend to their wounds.

After the Union retreat from Seminary Ridge to Cemetery Ridge the Confederate attack halted. In spite of the overwhelming force against them, the Union had checked the Confederate advance and retired through Gettysburg to the safety of Cemetery Ridge south of the town. By late evening the Town of Gettysburg was in possession of the Confederates. Those Union wounded who were not left on the field were placed in the Lutheran Seminary and the many churches of the town all of which had been converted into makeshift hospitals.



A mortally wounded Henry Cornwell was brought here, the United Presbyterian and Associated Reform Church located on the S.E. corner of Baltimore and High Streets, Gettysburg, PA. Source: Gettysburg United Presbyterian Church.

Biddle's brigade was decimated by the days fighting. Of the 263 officers and men of the 121<sup>st</sup> Pennsylvania, 12 were killed, 106 wounded, with 10 missing – a casualty rate of forty-eight percent. Cpl. Henry Cornwell was one of these casualties. He had been mortally wounded sometime during the fighting. But exactly when, where and how he was wounded is not known. Only his date of death, July 8, 1863, is recorded in his official service record.<sup>14</sup> It is known that Henry was buried at the United Presbyterian and Associated Reform Church.<sup>15</sup> The church is located on the corner of Baltimore and High Streets in Gettysburg. It is likely that a mortally wounded Henry was taken to this church, which was being used as a hospital, shortly after the battle. Henry almost certainly died there on July 8, 1863. His body was initially buried in a mass grave in the churchyard. However, shortly afterwards he was disinterred and became one of the first to be buried in the newly created Soldiers National Cemetery at Gettysburg – Pennsylvania Section, Row B, Grave 36, which, four months after the battle, President



Grave of Corporal Henry A. Cornwell, Soldiers National Cemetery, Gettysburg, PA. Photo credit: Page Johnson.

Abraham Lincoln would dedicate with his immortal *Gettysburg Address*.

Henry Cornwell sacrificed his life to preserve the Union. His decision to purchase the identity disc apparently was a wise one. His body was identified, recovered and properly buried. But, a critical question still remained – how and when did a Confederate family come into possession of his identity disc?

Trying to solve the remaining mystery, I contacted Tom Deshazo again and asked him what his grandfather's name was. "*Gordon Jones*," he said. I am I certain groaned a little. The surname Jones is second only to Smith in commonality in the United States and thus very difficult to research. "*How about your great-grandfather, was he a*



*Confederate soldier?*” I asked. *“I don’t know,”* he stated. I am certain a frown was forming now. *“What was his name?”* I asked. *“I don’t know, I never knew it. He died before I was born.”* After a little more detective work, I was able to piece together a possible answer.

I discovered Gordon W. Jones, Tom Deshazo’s grandfather, was born in King George Co., VA in 1855. He was the son of William M. and Catherine Jones. He married Lucy Roy Montieth, daughter of James Monteith and Frances Dean Cox. The Jones family lived near Potomac Creek in Stafford Co., VA. William Mason Jones, Tom’s great-grandfather, was born in King George Co., Virginia in 1824. He was an Overseer. He married Catherine Park Bowie about 1852.<sup>16</sup> Many members of the Jones, Montieth, Deshazo, Cox, and Roberson families joined the Confederate Army in the spring of 1861. Thirty-nine-year-old William Jones enlisted in the Confederate Army in June, joining Co. A, 47<sup>th</sup> Virginia Infantry. The 47<sup>th</sup> Virginia Infantry was part of Col. John M. Brockenborough’s Brigade, Heth’s Division. Ironically, Heth’s Division was heavily engaged with Meredith’s and Stone’s Brigade on the first day’s battle at Gettysburg, being immediately to the right of Biddle’s Brigade.

Could it be that Tom Deshazo’s great-grandfather, Pvt. William Jones, actually encountered a dying Henry Cornwell on the battlefield over one hundred and forty years ago? No. William Jones was discharged before the Battle of Gettysburg. But, perhaps another Jones relative encountered Henry Cornwell on the battlefield.

Brockenborough’s and Pettigrew’s brigades did not participate in the street fighting in Gettysburg. They retired west of Willoughby Run for the evening and remained there the next day. Undoubtedly, members of these regiments went souvenir hunting during this time, a common practice. Perhaps, someone simply found the disc on the battlefield. Perhaps they came upon a wounded Henry and assisted in transporting him to the Presbyterian Church. Did Henry give up his disc and ask that his family be notified? Or were his pockets rifled of all valuables, including the identity disc? Although the two regiments, the 121<sup>st</sup> Pennsylvania and the 47<sup>th</sup> Virginia, were in close proximity that is not how disc came into the possession of the Jones/Deshazo family. After talking to Tom Deshazo a final time he revealed that he was born on his grandfathers farm near Belle Plain. He also recalled that his grandfather was a

farmer who worked the land. A final letter from Henry Cornwell helped solve the mystery:

*“Camp Near Bells Plains  
Virginia, January 26, 1863,  
Monday 10 o’clock*

*Dear Sister Lucy*

*I seat myself to let you know that I am well & hope that this will find you the same. I had a letter from Julias yesterday he thinks he will soon be able to come back to the Reg. But I think he is very foolish for coming back. I wrote at length to Uncle James yesterday. General Burnside made another grand move. One week ago today we left camp. We went up the river twelve miles to cross but it rained so that we could not get our artillery along, nor the pontoon trains. If it had not of rained we would of seen some fighting. I think we cold of whipped them this time. The mud is 18 inches deep here. We got back to our old camp Saturday night. It was the hardest tramp we ever had & we had a very large load to carry. I heard one of S.L. Dunkam’s boys was dead, but I did not hear which one it was. Davy Tripp got a letter from P. That is the way we found out. There is nothing new hear. I have nothing to write of importance. We will get our pay tomorrow. Give my love to all the friends & write a longer letter next time you write to me. I never got that tobacco, nor postage stamps.*

*From your true Brother,  
Henry A. Cornwell”*

Herny Cornwell probably lost his identity disk somewhere the vicinity of his regimental camp, ‘near Belle Plain’, on the Jones farm. Gordon Jones probably found the disc while working his fields one day.

## BLLENHEIM UPDATE

At a work session on July 14, the City of Fairfax Council

Approved building an interpretative center at the city owned Blenheim Historic site. The new building will be approximately 3,500 sf and will house an exhibit room, a multi-purpose room, office space, bathrooms and a kitchen.

Plans to design the building are in progress and hopefully begin the construction in the Fall. This is a positive step for the future of the site.

The Blenheim Estate rest on approximately 12 acres on Lee Highway and includes the antebellum mansion of the Wilcoxsen family.

For questions or more information contact Dr. Chris Martin, Director of Historic Resources, 703-273-5452.



## BALLYNAHOWN: THE BEST KEPT SECRET IN FAIRFAX

Looking for an intimate setting for your next party? Why not consider *Ballynahown*, the historic Wilson Farr House, a beautifully restored colonial revival style home in the heart of Fairfax City. Beginning with the Wiley-Farr wedding almost a hundred years ago, it has a long history of parties and gatherings. The home features a great room with French doors opening into a cheerful sunroom with a piano and space for a bar. There is also a cozy library, a lovely dining room, fully equipped kitchen and large deck. For reservations or information, please call 703 591-5059. Website: [www.Farrcrofthoa.com](http://www.Farrcrofthoa.com)

### (Endnotes)

<sup>1</sup> Section B, Site 36, Gettysburg National Military Park, 97 Taneytown Road, Gettysburg, PA 17325.

<sup>2</sup> *The Titusville Herald*, October 14, 1970; 209 W. Spring St., Titusville, PA 16354.

<sup>3</sup> Venango County Genweb, <http://www.rootsweb.com/~pavenang/index2.htm>

<sup>4</sup> Letter, Henry A. Cornwell to Lucy Jane Cornwell, August 27, 1862, MMS 1401, *Cornwell, Henry A.*, Center for Archival Collections, Bowling Green State University, Jerome Library, Bowling Green, OH 43403.

<sup>5</sup> Service Record of Henry A. Cornwell, Compiled Service Records of Confederate Soldiers, Record Group 109, National Archives, Washington, DC.

<sup>6</sup> *Edward McPherson Farm: Historical Study*, Georg, Kathleen R., © 1977, Gettysburg National Military Park, Gettysburg, PA.

<sup>7</sup> Journal of Lt. Marcellus E. Jones, Co E, 8<sup>th</sup> Illinois Cavalry, Perrin-Wheaton Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution, Wheaton, IL.

<sup>8</sup> *Regimental Losses in the American Civil War 1861-1865*, Fox, William F., © 1889, Albany Publishing Co., Albany, NY.

<sup>9</sup> *Pennsylvania At Gettysburg*, V. II, p. 908, 1914.

<sup>10</sup> Report of Lt. Colonel Alexander Biddle, Thursday, July 2, 1863, Official Records of the War of the Rebellion, Series 1, v. 27(pt. 1), p. 323 & 324, © 1889, U.S. Govt. Printing Office, Washington, DC.

<sup>11</sup> *History of Pennsylvania Volunteers, 1861-1865*, prepared in compliance with acts of the legislature, p. 32, Bates, Samuel P., © 1869, Harrisburg, PA.

<sup>12</sup> *History of the Eighth Cavalry Regiment, Illinois Volunteers, During the Great Rebellion*, Hard, Abner, © 1868, Aurura, IL.

<sup>13</sup>

<sup>14</sup> Service Record of Henry A. Cornwell, Compiled Service Records of Confederate Soldiers, Record Group 109, National Archives, Washington, DC.

<sup>15</sup> *These Honored Dead: The Union Casualties at Gettysburg*, Busey, John W., © 1988, Longstreet House, Hightstown, NJ. (703) 305-2532.

<sup>16</sup> U.S. Census 1850, King George County, VA, p. 224; U.S. Census 1860, Stafford Co., VA, p. 904.



**The HFCI Board meets on the 2nd Wednesday of each month in room 306, at City Hall, Fairfax, Virginia. Visitors are welcome!**

# Welcome New Members!

The Board of Directors of HFCI extends a hearty welcome to all new HFCI members.



## HISTORIC FAIRFAX CITY, INC.

Do you want to know more about the history of where you live?

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We are looking forward to having you be a part of the City's bi-centennial in 2005. We need and value your support. Together we will preserve the heritage that has been left to us.

The Board of Directors of  
Historic Fairfax City, Inc.

*City of Fairfax – Celebrating 200 Years*



## HFCI MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION/ RENEWAL

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Enclosed is my tax-deductible membership application and check made out to Historic Fairfax City Inc. for: \$\_\_\_\_\_

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Telephone #: \_\_\_\_\_

Contact name: \_\_\_\_\_

e-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Return to: Historic Fairfax City, Inc.,  
Attention: Membership Committee  
10209 Main Street  
Fairfax, VA 22030

*"Preserving the Past. Protecting the Future."*

Return Address -  
Historic Fairfax City, Inc.  
Hildie Carney, President  
10209 Main Street  
Fairfax, VA 22030



## The Newsletter of Historic Fairfax City, Inc.

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Editor: William Page Johnson, II

*City of Fairfax – Celebrating 200 Years*

*1805 – 2005*



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Feel Our Pride*

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