



PHOTO BY PHIL AUDIBERT  
 Re-enactors have reconstructed a typical winter quarters shelter at Montpelier. Earth chinking filled the gaps between logs, and a tarp over a ridge pole served as a roof. The hearth and chimney were made of earth and logs as well. A typical shelter is pictured at left.

turnpike, clattering to safety over the covered bridge at Liberty Mills. During this engagement, Lt. John Magruder was mortally wounded. He managed to make it home to Frascati near Somerset where he died. All told, Magruder's father lost three more sons and a son-in-law to the Civil War.

*At the intersection of Rt. 20 and 231, take a right on Rt. 20 and go to the old Montpelier Visitor's Center on the left. Park and follow the walking trail into the encampment.*

### Stop number 5 Montpelier encampments

We've all heard about the winter of 1863-64, where the Confederates established a series of encampments along the Rapidan line. That line included Montpelier, and three brigades camped there, including Gen. Samuel McGowan's South Carolinians.

Winter camps were usually organized as villages by rank with each company occupying a "street." Officers and regimental commanders lived in larger quarters at the head of the village. A typical log hut was 12' x 12' and housed six men. Often the hearth and chimney was made of logs and earth too. The roof was usually a tarp. The latrines were located a respectful distance away...downwind.

It was here that the troops wiled away their hours, playing cards, whittling, carving, playing music, attending church services. In McGowan's case, the soldiers built the plank road between Montpelier and Orange. Other units, such as Billy Mahone's, occupied themselves by making shoes at the Zion Church in Madison Run after Sunday services had concluded. And it is reported that 40 chapels were constructed in Orange County during that winter, with baptisms being conducted in the freezing river in full view



PHOTO BY PHIL AUDIBERT  
 Depressions in the ground show the location of 12-foot by 12-foot huts used by McGowan's South Carolinians during the winter of 1863-1864 at Montpelier.

of Union pickets.

But, when the order came to break camp and march off to what became the Battle of the Wilderness, McGowan's men only needed 30 minutes to prepare for departure. Barely eight days later, they were in the teeth of the Bloody Angle at Spotsylvania Courthouse.

There were also darker elements to camp life. When 10 North Carolina deserters were returned to their unit at Montpelier, 100 of their comrades were selected to carry out the executions, 10 riflemen per deserter. The 10 men were tied to posts and gunned down simultaneously upon the command of "Ready, Aim, Fire!" Their deaths served as an example to the rest. One of the men selected for burial detail wrote, "It cast a gloom over the entire army, for we had never seen so many executed at one time before."

And one early spring night in 1864, officers sent out ambulances around the county to collect as many eligible young ladies and their chaperones as they could to deliver them to a ball at Montpelier. Confederate commander Jubal Early was watching the dancing from the sidelines. He turned to one of the chaperones and reportedly said, "Now ladies if any of you have any messages that you'd like to deliver to the hereafter, I think you can leave them with any of the young men out here dancing." The next 11 months would prove him right.

*That concludes our two-part series about Orange County's role during all four years of the Civil War. For more information, on this fascinating topic, we would recommend you read our sources for this article:*

- Fannie Page Hume's Diary of 1862*, edited by J. Randolph Grimes;
- Soldiers, Stories, Sites and Fights-Orange County Virginia 1861-1865*, by Patricia J. Hurst;
- Remembering, a History of Orange County, Virginia*, by Frank Walker.



# ALL FOUR YEARS

### Part II-

Two weeks ago, we traveled a route that started with a cavalry engagement on the streets of Orange through the Confederate encampments of the winter of 1863-64, to the Mine Run Campaign of late November and early December 1863. Now we'll explore the rest of Orange County's role in the Civil War during all four of its years.

*At Locust Grove Town Center, turn left onto Rt. 20. Continue for a couple of miles, and at Saunders Field, turn right onto Hill-Ewell Drive. Park right there on the side of the road and walk over the bridge that spans Ewell's earthworks still plainly visible snaking off to the east.*

### Stop number 3

You are standing on ground that was literally soaked in American blood. Paddy Ryan's 140th New York advanced across this field to the point that Confederates surrounded them. They had to charge in retreat! Of the 529 men who advanced across this field, only 268 came back.

Welcome to the Battle of the Wilderness, a battle that was extensively covered in the May 4 and May 11 2006 *Insiders*. We will not go into such detail here other than to say that most of the first day of this two-day battle was fought in and around this "ragged uneven old corn patch," which had caught fire. One of the Union



PHOTOS BY PHIL AUDIBERT  
 Top photo, the Gilmore cabin stands just a few yards away from Confederate encampments at Montpelier. Above, Fredericksburg Spotsylvania Military Park Historian Kris White shows a period photograph that depicts a tree and the Orange Turnpike running pretty much in the same place through Saundser's Field in eastern Orange County. Most of the action during the first day of the Battle of the Wilderness happened here.

# ORANGE COUNTY'S ROLE IN THE CIVIL WAR



PHOTO BY PHIL AUDIBERT

Ellwood in eastern Orange County served variously as a Confederate and Union hospital and headquarters during the Civil War. Stonewall Jackson's amputated arm is reportedly buried here.

Corps commander's headquarters was located at Ellwood. A year prior, during the Battle of Chancellorsville, this was a Confederate hospital, and on its grounds is buried Gen. Stonewall Jackson's amputated left arm.

The reason this was called the Wilderness is because 70 square miles of surrounding forest had been laid to the axe a century prior to feed iron furnaces originally established by Gov. Alexander Spotswood. Because of poor soil, what had grown back was described in one diary as "a jungle of switch 20 to 30 feet high and more impenetrable than pine."

Load up and head down Hill-Ewell Drive, noting the earthworks to your left. Feel free to stop and read the various placards along the way. At the stop sign, turn right onto the Orange Plank Road (Rt. 621).

The major fighting of the second day of the Battle of the Wilderness happened in and around this field to your right. This is where the Confederates were routed, where Corps Commander Gen. James Longstreet arrived in the nick of time after an all-night march, and the Texans saved the day. This is also where Gen. Robert E. Lee tried to lead the Texans into the fray, and they refused, with calls of "Lee go back." They contin-



PHOTO BY PHIL AUDIBERT

The intersection of the Orange Plank Road and the Turnpike--this is where napping Confederate Cavalry commander, J.E.B. Stewart was surprised by Federal raiders and lost his plumed hat. He had another narrow escape at Liberty Mills at the western end of the county about a year later.

ued their advance only when their commander agreed to join Longstreet the rear.

This is also where the Confederates took advantage of an unfinished railway cut that allowed them to flank the federals that Gen. Winfield Scott Hancock later testified "rolled me up like a wet blanket." And it is the scene where Mahone's Brigade mistakenly fired on some South Carolinian troops marching on the road, hitting and gravely wounding Corps Commander James Longstreet.

The Battle of the Wilderness sputtered to a close with some 23,000 casualties. But federal troops were heartened to learn that their new overall commander, Ulysses Grant, would not withdraw back across the river as all before him had. The Union had found a man who would relentlessly pursue Lee, making the Battle of the Wilderness the beginning of the end for the Confederacy. "I think the army has found a leader who will lead us through a sea of blood to victory," prophetically wrote one Union soldier in his diary.

*Continue up the Plank Road through Mine Run to the intersection with Rt. 20. Pause and then turn left on Rt. 20 and head back to Orange.*

### Jeb Stuart's Hat

Right there on your left at the intersection of Rts. 20 and 621 used to stand a house on the porch of which Major Gen. J.E.B. Stuart was taking a nap the morning of Aug. 18, 1862. He was rudely surprised by elements of the 1st Regiment Michigan Volunteer Cavalry. "One large fine looking officer, with a hat too large for him, pulled down to his ears, came out into the yard, unhitched a horse, mounted it bareback, leaped two rails of the bars, and was away like the wind," related 1st Lt. Ford H. Rogers. The Union cavalryman gave chase, crying for him, "Halt!" and firing three shots before running into a "sea of grey coats."

Back at the house, the Federals discovered numerous personal items including "a broad-brimmed, light brown soft hat with a long feather in it." A Confederate prisoner identified it as J.E.B. Stuart's. Even more of a prize was a patent leather dispatch case that yielded "a lot of papers of the utmost importance to the Union cause." Apparently the papers outlined Lee's intent to advance on Washington, prompting Union Gen. John Pope to pull back from southeastern Culpeper County.

A few days later, Stuart himself captured Pope's dress uniform and offered to trade it for the hat. But Pope could not make the trade; he had no idea what had become of the hat. It should be noted that this was not the last time that J.E.B. Stuart's carelessness almost got himself captured.

*Continue through Orange and drive to Gordonsville. Go through town and park at the Exchange Hotel Civil War Museum. Time your trip for when it is open (daily except Wednesdays) and take a tour. It is well worth it.*

### Stop number 4

#### The Exchange Hotel Museum, Gordonsville

Back in those days, Gordonsville was bigger and more important economically and militarily than

Orange. Why? Roads of course, both iron and dirt. At the time of the Civil War, Gordonsville was a strategic hub. The Blue Ridge Turnpike (today's Rt. 231) and the Rockingham Pike (today's Rt. 33) connected the town to Lee's breadbasket, the Shenandoah Valley. So did the Virginia Central Railroad which ran all the way from Richmond to Staunton via Gordonsville. And the Orange and Alexandria connected Gordonsville to points north. This was an important crossroads town, and the Federals knew it. Ever since 1862, they'd been trying to capture it.

It is through this town that Gen. Robert E. Lee

building itself housed the surgery, administrative offices, and perhaps a few wards for wounded officers. The lucky ones, the common foot soldiers, were housed in a sea of tents outdoors, in the fresh air, where they actually had a better chance of surviving infection than those stuck in stifling hospital rooms.

This receiving hospital served as something of a triage facility. It maintained telegraph contact with convalescent hospitals in Lynchburg, Farmville and Richmond and would send wounded to those facilities by rail, based on available space. This explains why the Gordonsville hospital only recorded 800-plus deaths



PHOTO BY SUSIE AUDIBERT

Re-enactors play cards in the front yard of the Exchange Hotel in Gordonsville. During the Civil War, the grounds here were covered with thousands of Confederate wounded who passed through this major receiving hospital before being sent on to convalescent hospitals elsewhere.

passed in April of 1861, just after Virginia seceded. He reportedly urged the populace to put its "affairs in order for a long and bloody war."

And, Gen. Stonewall Jackson passed through this town numerous times, worshipping at the Gordonsville Presbyterian Church. His last trip through, in May of 1863, he was on his way to burial in Lexington. "Men and women took their children to see the train -- children cried at the sight of the coffin - and to look at the face of the corpse lying in state. Ladies, especially, wept profusely over the dead hero. Some pressed their lips upon the coffin," wrote Charles Royster.

Gordonsville was also important because, since March of 1862, the Samuel Moore Receiving Hospital had been located on the grounds of the Exchange Hotel. This was a busy place during the Civil War. Boxcars bearing wounded rattled into town. The hotel

out of tens of thousands of wounded coming through. After examination, the wounded were sent on to these other facilities where they promptly died of disease.

In one 12-month period, from June 1, 1863 to May 5, 1864, the Moore hospital recorded 23,642 patients passing through its doors. We'll never know how many passed through here in the month of May 1864 following the battles of Wilderness and Spotsylvania Courthouse; the surgeons were too busy hacking and sawing to keep records.

Tales of wagons pulling away from the open surgery window filled to the gunwales with amputated limbs are largely exaggerated. Besides, most amputations were conducted at field hospitals. But amputation was the routine treatment for a wound to the limbs in those days. The procedure could take as little as a minute. And minie balls (there's nothing mini about them) have

been found on the premises with teeth marks in them, a sobering reminder of the expression, "bite the bullet."

*Time to load up and head north on the Blue Ridge Turnpike, Rt. 231.*

### Battle of Bell's Mountain

As mentioned earlier, Gordonsville was a strategic target for the Federals. They tried repeatedly to capture the town. One such attempt, Gen. Phil Sheridan's Christmas raid in late December of 1864, made it as close as the top of Cameron's Mountain, then called Bell's Mountain.

Cavalry troopers, numbering some 3,000, came through Madison and crossed the Rapidan at Liberty Mills, where a brisk engagement occurred resulting in a canon ball lodging in the wall of the Somerset Christian Church. Although the Confederates burned the covered bridge, Gen. Alfred Torbert's troopers made it across and advanced on Gordonsville. Lee sent 3,000 troops by rail from Richmond, and the attack was thwarted. Torbert retreated having lost seven men and 268 horses. In those days, when you ran out of gas, you parked the "car" by the side of the road, made sure that it could not be used by the enemy, removed the tack, and walked.

### The story of Nannie Goss

Further up the Blue Ridge Turnpike, beyond what's known as New Somerset, you will notice Somerset House on the hilltop to your left. This was the home of Nannie Goss, age 16 at the time. Her father was away to war. Her mother was ill upstairs abed with an infant child, and the Yankees--probably Torbert's men--had established a camp at the foot of the hill. The intrepid Nannie, who had already rounded up the servants, the family silver, even her pony, and hidden them in the basement, marched down to the regimental commander's tent and demanded he post a guard on her home. Somewhat taken aback by this precociousness, the startled commander complied. Nannie Goss went on to marry a Cpt. Robert Stringfellow Walker of Mosby's Rangers. Together with his sister, they founded Woodberry Forest School. Their grandson is Orange County's historian, Frank Walker.

### Stuart's escape

Remember when we said Gen. Jeb Stuart's carelessness would get him in trouble again? Well, here's another example. The occasion was Sept. 22, 1863. Gettysburg was already history, and the Confederacy had hunkered down behind the Rapidan line that stretches from Liberty Mills to Mine Run. With approximately half of his command, Stuart was scouting about in Madison County. Meanwhile a capable Federal cavalry commander named John Buford, was doing the same.

Buford learned of Stuart's presence. He split his force and came up behind Stuart on the Blue Ridge Turnpike while sending the others around to Stuart's front. Stuart, who had stopped for a leisurely breakfast and some blacksmithing work at Jack's Shop was surrounded. At one point in this engagement he fought Buford in three directions at once. He eventually ran a gauntlet down the



PHOTO COURTESY OF THE BEDDINGFIELD FAMILY

Alexander Beddingfield of North Carolina died in Orange County of pneumonia en route to the Samuel Moore Receiving Hospital at Gordonsville.



PHOTO BY SUSIE AUDIBERT

Re-enactors fire a volley in Maplewood Cemetery near Gordonsville as they honor the death of Alexander Beddingfield who died in Orange County of pneumonia in November of 1863. Two thirds of the deaths in the Civil War were caused by disease, not wounds.