



PHOTO BY PHIL AUDIBERT

The only engagement over open ground during the Mine Run Campaign happened here on the Payne farm when 5,300 Confederates stumbled into 33,000 federals.



PHOTO BY PHIL AUDIBERT

On November 28, 1863, Robert E. Lee dug in on the high ground that is the west bank of Mine Run to await an attack that never came.

the Rapidan at the 93,000-man Army of the Potomac, under General George Meade, the "old snapping turtle." They didn't always glare; there are numerous accounts of fraternization between the troops on both sides of the river.

J.S. Moore of the 6th Pennsylvania Cavalry was assigned picket duty near Somerville Ford on the Rapidan. "After exchanging salutations and arranging for an exchange of papers—a bottle of brandy to be thrown in by the liberal Virginian, I placed my stack of *Heralds* in a small canoe and pushed it out into the stream; and after some little uncertainty as to the successful landing of my little cargo, I had the great satisfaction to see it finally reach the opposite shore in safety." Unfavorable wind and current conditions prevented the Confederates from returning the favor.

In another account, George Neese of Chew's Battery, Stuart's Horse Artillery writes, "Today the pickets were friendly and talking to each other like brothers, and I think doing some trading, bartering tobacco for coffee, and exchanging newspapers; tomorrow they may be shooting at each other like savages."

Turn left on Everona Road, Rt. 617. At Rt. 522, go straight across the road onto Pine Stake Road, Rt. 621. When you reach the Orange Turnpike, Rt. 20, turn left and go to Locust Grove. Turn in and stop at the Town Center and note that yellow house behind the shopping center is actually the original Robinson's Tavern that has been moved back from the Orange Turnpike.



PHOTO BY PHIL AUDIBERT

Re-enactors fire a 12-pound Napoleon in observance of the 145th anniversary of the Battle of the Wilderness.

## Stop Number 2

### Locust Grove Town Center

"Shooting at each other like savages," was indeed the case in late November of 1863, when the "old snapping turtle," reluctantly responding to mounting pressure from Washington, launched the ill-fated Mine Run Campaign.

It was snake-bit from the get-go. The Federals were one pontoon short of a span across the Rapidan River. One of Meade's commanders, William French who was described as being "comfortably drunk," managed to get lost not once, but twice.

And in the middle of all this were wild turkeys. A flock of them reportedly ran

between the battle lines. Men on both sides risked being shot at trying to fetch the game birds. And to think this all happened around Thanksgiving!

The only significant open engagement occurred at Payne's Farm (off the Zoar Road, about two miles northwest of Locust Grove) when Confederate General, Edward "Allegheny" Johnson with 5,300 men stumbled into two entire corps of federals, numbering some 33,000 men. Still, the outnumbered Confederates made a fight of it for awhile. It is here that a Captain John C. Johnson, who was described as "a stout man," issued a challenge. "Thinking that some of his men were not doing as well as they

ought [he] walked out to the brow of the hill, lay down on its top broadside to the enemy, and then called to some of his men to come up. If they were afraid, he said, they could use him as a breastwork. Several of them promptly accepted his challenge. They lay down behind him and fired steadily from this position until the fight was over...the gallant captain was not injured," reported one of his men.

Johnson and the rest of Lee's army was rescued by darkness. Lee withdrew to the high ground on the west bank of Mine Run, dug in and awaited a general attack from Meade that never came. A chilling rain set in. Two days later it had turned into a deep freeze. Temperatures hovered in the single digits. Some men froze to death. Meade, in his usual foul humor, retreated back over the Rapidan with 1,653 casualties to show for it.

Lee, appalled by the extent of looting and wanton destruction, was in a foul humor as well. "Houses were torn down or rendered uninhabitable, furniture and farming implements broken or destroyed, and many families, most of them in humble circumstances, stripped of all they possessed and left without shelter and without food," he wrote, bitterly. "I have never witnessed on any previous occasion such entire disregard of the usages of civilized warfare and the dictates of humanity."

That concludes Part 1 of our two-part series on the Civil War in Orange County for all four of its years. Part 2 of the tour resumes in two weeks from the Locust Grove Town Center at the intersection of Rts. 20 and 663.

# ALL FOUR YEARS



PHOTO BY SUSIE AUDIBERT

Civil War re-enactors held a funeral service for Alexander Beddingfield of North Carolina who contracted pneumonia in November 1863 and died en route to the Gordonsville Receiving Hospital. War or no war, death and suffering were part of Orange County life in the 1860s.

## Part I—

About a year ago, we published an historical tour in two parts, entitled, "Right Here in Orange County." The idea was to provide an overview of this community's vibrant past in the form of a tour you could drive from one end of the county to the other. Of course, that tour touched on—but could not elaborate on—Orange County's considerable role in our nation's greatest conflict, the Civil War. The intent of this two-part series is to fill in that gap.

Although our neighbor, Spotsylvania County holds the title as the one community in the nation most affected by the Civil War, Orange and Culpeper counties could be tied for second if this were a macabre contest of who suffered the most. If it's misery that we are measuring here, we'll give the advantage to Culpeper because it hosted a 93,000-man enemy occupation force, essentially eight invaders for every

local, during the winter of 1863-64. When, in May of 1864, Union Generals George Meade and Ulysses Grant abandoned Culpeper for the thickets of the Wilderness, they left behind a wasteland; nary a fence, barn, shack or shed still stood. No wonder the people were bitter.

Life was marginally better just across the Rapidan River in Orange County, but it certainly was no picnic. Playing host to 45,000 Confederate soldiers, albeit friendly soldiers, still had its challenges. And it wasn't just that one winter and following spring with the resulting Battle of the Wilderness that Orange County felt the affects of this conflict; it was all four years.

Communities for whom famous battles are named certainly experienced the living nightmare that was the war. Gettysburg is one such community. But after the soldiers moved on, after the burial parties completed their grisly task, Gettysburg returned to relative normal. Not so, with Orange County. The war and its horrors were felt here from two days after the

first major land engagement of the conflict in July of 1861, until March of 1865, when the last soldier, a Union cavalryman, died at the Exchange Hotel.

What follows is a driving tour of Orange County that focuses not just on the county's Civil War history, but its impact on the populace. Please realize, there is no way we can tell every story or list every engagement or quote every diary. Also, please appreciate that none of this would be possible without the help of J. Randolph Grymes who edited and researched *Fannie Page Hume's Diary of 1862*, Patricia J. Hurst who authored *Soldiers, Stories, Sites and Fights-Orange County, Virginia 1861-1865*, and most of all Frank Walker, author of *Remembering: a History of Orange County, Virginia* and whose tireless research and boundless knowledge of the topic should be an inspiration to us all.

So load up the car, designate a driver who does not have to read and drive at the same time, and let's explore Orange County's Civil

## ORANGE COUNTY'S ROLE IN THE CIVIL WAR

## Stop Number 1 The Orange County Visitors Center

Main Street, Orange. You're standing in what was pretty much the center of town in 1861. Most of the current buildings on the east side of the railroad tracks would not have existed then because they burned in the Great Fire of 1908, a fire started by a veteran of the Wilderness who was smoking in bed.

Up at the corner by the 7-Eleven was the major intersection of the Plank Road (Byrd Street) and the Orange Turnpike (Main Street). In the other direction, the courthouse we see today would have been standing in that same spot, brand new, having replaced the old courthouse which was closer to the railroad tracks, roughly where Jean's Café is today. That old courthouse served as the Orange Receiving Hospital.



Civil War diarist Fannie Page Hume.

### The diary

A glimpse into what life was like in Orange in those days comes from the daily diary of a young woman in her early 20s. Her name was Fannie Page Hume and she lived with her grandparents on a small farm near where Selma Road joins the Rapidan Road. This was open countryside in those days.

Her diary is full of the usual mundane things that would appear in anybody's diary: what the weather was like, who came to dinner, what she did that day (usually sewing). She also notes rather breathlessly how "handsome and gentlemanly," some of the visiting Confederate officers are.

And, suffering from chronic back pain herself, she noted illnesses and ailments and life's major events such as births and deaths among her family, friends and acquaintances. If it seems that people were dropping like flies in those days; well, they were. Fanny herself died four months after her wedding day in 1865 at the age of 26! Death

and suffering was no stranger to these people, war or no war.

It is from her that we learn that Orange soon bore witness to the horrors of the conflict when Confederate wounded arrived here by rail barely two days after the first major land engagement of the war, the Battle of First Manassas. It was July of 1861. "Such a horrid sight," she writes. "A long car loaded with dead and wounded was at the depot, the latter was being carried to the hospital." Later, she continues, "Soldiers, soldiers everywhere. It made my heart ache to see these poor suffering creatures lying about." Her cousin, Dr. Horace Taliaferro ran the hospital until it was moved to Farmville.

And so the diary goes. In the spring of 1862, she talks of crowds of Confederate soldiers on the streets of Orange; how some rudely demanded to be taken in and fed. In April of 1862, she writes "a perfect caravan of refugees passed up the road before dinner—carriages, wagons, and horses—about 50 servants in the crowd singing 'Dixie' at the top of their voices." They were fleeing their homes in Fauquier, now pretty much in Federal hands.

Another entry reads, "Early's entire division marched past the gate...such a mass of armed men I never beheld before." And she quotes newspaper accounts of how various campaigns were faring. "Poor old Fredericksburg has been handed over to the enemy," she notes wryly. When her brother Frank was wounded and came home in early July, she proudly enters these words: "Frank fought long after he was wounded, then helped

a wounded comrade from the field—assisted the wounded till next morning, then marched across the country 50 miles to Hanover Junction, took the train and came home." That's her story and she's sticking to it.

Throughout July of 1862, tensions mount. She reports the federals have destroyed the Rapidan Bridge. "Oh tis dreadful to think of their coming—they are said to be committing many outrages—all sorts of reports," she says ominously. And then four days later, "The Yankees are all around us—whilst I write—the yard and porches are full of them." She tells how her wounded brother barely escaped, how her grandfather and uncle were arrested for "aiding and abetting...the man who arrested them was exceedingly harsh and impertinent—with that exception they behaved well—except breaking open the meat house and helping themselves to all the whiskey....We are completely surrounded—campfires raging all around."

And then the very next day, July 18, the Yankees in her yard are replaced by Confederates! "They are crowding in and out begging for something to eat—poor fellows! They look rough and dirty."

But the best entry of all is what she called "another memorable day." It was August 2 of 1862, when a running cavalry battle between the 1st Vermont, 5th New York and elements of the 7th Virginia, many of them local boys, was waged on the streets of Orange. Once the Yankees learned the lay of the land, they drove the vastly outnumbered Confederates out of town. When the Confederates came back, the Yankees had withdrawn to Rapidan and Raccoon Ford.

Fannie first learned of it when pickets came scurrying back from Rapidan hollering, "The Yankees are coming"...And sure enough they soon came rushing by in immense force, firing in every direction at our pickets. A sharp fight took place in the Village, a Yankee Colonel or Major was killed just before Mr. Robinson's door [unsubstantiated] and many were wounded on both sides. They took 25 or 30 of our men prisoners- brought many of the wounded in our yard...it was a sickening sight, blood in every direction." The Yankees even stole the family carriage. "My blood fairly boiled," she fumes.

Enough was enough. The family packed up its belongings and made plans to evacuate to Gordonsville or beyond, presumably with the help of someone else's carriage. And then two days later, she breezily writes, "What a change. Instead of being on the road to Fluvanna here we are at home surrounded by Jackson's army."

Stonewall Jackson had camped earlier near Woodley (on Rt. 15), in the words of his mapmaker, "amid the open groves and in the grassy fields of that charming region." Jackson was on his way to the August 9 Battle of Cedar Mountain in Culpeper County where he prevented John Pope from advancing through Orange to take Gordonsville. Two days later, Jackson paroled some 400 federal prisoners from the courthouse steps, to the consternation of the locals. And a short while later, from here, he launched his



Civil War re-enactor, Louis Gipson of Unionville portrays a cavalryman. Vastly outnumbered, elements of the 7th Virginia fought a brisk engagement against Vermont and New York horsemen on the streets of Orange, August 2, 1862.

advance northwards that would culminate with America's bloodiest single day, the Battle of Antietam.

Speaking of blood, one of Fannie's entries reads cryptically, "The first time I have been to church since it was used as a hospital-it is still very dirty, though it has been repeatedly cleaned." She's talking about blood stains on the floor at St. Thomas Episcopal Church. Those stains are believed to still be there, hidden by a new floor that was laid on top years later.

"Oh such a sinking homesickness feeling I have tonight—when will all this trouble end?" asks Fannie rhetorically on August 13. Little did she know two more years of this was in store.

*From the Visitor's Center drive out the Rapidan Road (Rt. 615), past where Fanny used to live. Continue towards Rapidan and turn right on to Clark's Mountain Road (Rt. 627). Continue past Battlefield Farms.*



The Rapidan River marked the boundary between north and south in this region from the spring of 1862 until May of 1864. During the winter of 1863-64, troops from both sides of the conflict fraternized across this narrow band of water.

### The Rapidan line

As you drive out through the rolling Orange County countryside, consider the fact that from the spring of 1862 until the late spring of 1864, the Rapidan River marked the de facto northern boundary of the Confederacy in this region. Orange County was southern territory; Culpeper was pretty much the north.

That's not because the Rapidan River was such a raging torrent that it was impossible for the federals to cross. Numerous fords and bridges spanned this relatively narrow, shallow gentle stream. No, it's because of what was behind the river on Orange County soil that kept the Union at bay.

The reason the Rapidan River does not continue its southeastward march from the Blue Ridge to the sea is because it runs smack dab into a wall that forces it to turn northeast for 20 miles, before it can turn southeast again and join the Rappahannock. That wall is known as the Southwestern Mountains, and they were a perfect rampart upon which the Confederacy could dig in and observe.

Barely a month after the defeat at Gettysburg, Lee was hunkered down behind this wall in Orange County, and, in spite of one unsuccessful foray into enemy territory, he wouldn't leave this position until the following May.

His primary observation point was atop the 1,082-foot tall Clark Mountain. It is from here that he observed the awakening of General George Meade's army in the late spring of 1864, marking the beginning of the infamous Overland Campaign that would not con-



The view into Culpeper County from atop Clark's Mountain. It is from here that Robert E. Lee's troops, having spent the entire winter in Orange County, observed the Union army awaken and march towards Germanna in early May 1864.

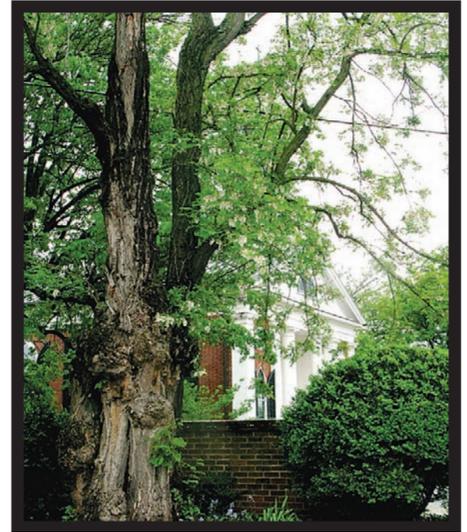
clude until 11 months later at Appomattox.

There were three distinct companies of local boys in the 13th Virginia Regiment: the Montpelier Guard, reportedly formed as early as 1859, the Gordonsville Greys, and the Barboursville Guard. And it is most likely that they joined some 25,000 men for a grand review September 9, 1863 just across the road from Fannie's Page Hume's house. Robert E. Lee and Traveler reportedly outdistanced everyone as they galloped past the regiments who dipped their flags in respect.

But now winter had set in, and it was all along this line, from Liberty Mills to Mine Run that Lee's army camped. Corps Commander, James Longstreet was dispatched to Tennessee. Lee's other Corps Commanders, A.P. Hill and Richard Ewell lived in relative luxury at Mayhurst just outside Orange and Morton Hall near True Blue. But Robert E. Lee himself spent the winter in a tent! "My camp is near Mr. Erasmus Taylor's house [Meadow Farm] who has been very kind in contributing to our comfort," he writes. "His wife sends us every day, buttermilk, loaf bread, ice and such vegetables as she has. I cannot get her to desist."

But it is believed that Lee had already suffered a heart attack the winter prior in Fredericksburg, and was suffering now from angina. He complains of the cold in letters to his wife. He regularly attends services at St. Thomas Episcopal Church on Caroline Street. His pew was located at the center of the hall, presumably so he could be near the stove. His horse, Traveler, was tethered to a locust tree outside. The original pew still sits in a side room, and a gnarled and split descendant of that same tree stands to this day in the same place.

And so the Confederate Army, some 45,000 strong, spent the winter glaring across



Robert E. Lee regularly attended services at St. Thomas Episcopal Church during the winter of 1863-64. His pew is still in the church, and he tied his horse Traveler to an ancestor of this Locust tree.