



Staunton River Sentinel

Volume III, Issue I

HISTORIC STAUNTON RIVER FOUNDATION

Winter/Spring 2007 Edition

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The purpose and scope of the HISTORIC STAUNTON RIVER FOUNDATION is to promote, develop, and preserve the 1864 Battlefield at the Staunton River Bridge, the Staunton River Battlefield State Park, and the Staunton River and its historical areas.

Looking for Steamboat Nellie at the bottom of the Staunton

By: Ray McAllister, *Richmond Times-Dispatch*

After the Civil War, Lee Chamberlain says, Virginia's rail system was shot and local economies were hurting. Railroads turned to local steamship operators to move goods inland. They could navigate Virginia's small rivers with shallow-draft boats. Charles Bruce was among them, running two steamboats from Brookneal to Randolph on the Staunton River in south-central Virginia. One, the 85-foot-long Nellie, sank in 1891. It's never been found.

Chamberlain aims to find it, he said confidently yesterday morning, sitting at his kitchen table in northern Hanover County. The search begins in two weeks. It might seem like a long shot, particularly when he says the Nellie, at best is 7 or 8 feet underwater. It could be up to 24 feet underwater. He admits to not knowing where it is, though he found four potential sites through archival research and interviews. Before you get to thinking this is a wild steamboat chase, you might want to know this about 55-year-old Chamberlain: He learned diving while doing reconnaissance work in the Marines. He is nationally certified as a science diver and as a rescue diver. He is the director of a wetlands restoration project. He is the project director for the Northern Neck Shipwreck Survey, a state-sanctioned volunteer underwater exploration group.

Chamberlain says he plans to make a preliminary search with another diver March 21 and 22. They'll report findings to a full dive team of the Shipwreck Survey before continuing. Participants will use their own equipment and donate their time. It doesn't appear Chamberlain will be under-equipped. He talked yesterday shortly after a new storage shed was set up at his home. He will use it for dive gear that he says has turned his home into a dive shop. He displayed weighted dive suits, underwater cameras, sonar units, and depth gauges, dive computers, and other items. He showed various kayaks and boats, including a dive platform. Chamberlain who calls every shipwreck "its own museum," says the group intends to document the Nellie's position and condition. It will become part of the Shipwreck Survey, available for scientists, researchers and others. But otherwise they will leave the boat undisturbed.

"This is a 'leave no trace' dive," he said. But it could be significant. Chamberlain said Bruce's 85-foot Nellie and 91 foot Jean were noteworthy because they dipped only 14 inches into the water. Even loaded, they drafted only 20 inches. Of five steamboats running the Staunton, these were the two farthest west — or upriver — he said.

"Bruce got \$10,000 to improve the Staunton River" so it would be navigable, Chamberlain said. (please see "Steamboat Nellie" on page 2)

Letter from the President



Dear Members & Friends of the Historic Staunton River Foundation,

Since our last newsletter in the Summer of 2006, we have had a most productive and busy Fall and Winter leading up to the Spring of 2007. Our Annual Meeting was attended by 49 Foundation members and Mrs. Themla Dalmas, a Foundation member and past president of the Lynchburg Birding Club and the Virginia Society of Ornithology, was the guest speaker giving a presentation entitled, "The Birds of the Staunton River Battlefield State Park." She brought with her a wealth of knowledge about the different species of bird found in our area. Recently, there has been a renewed interest in birding as there have been several sightings of bald eagles along the river. At the same meeting, four Foundation members were elected to serve as Trustees for a 3-year term. In addition, I was again elected to serve as President, with Janet Johnson as Vice-President, Cindy Nichols as Treasurer, and Anne Buckmaster, Secretary.

Our annual events near Halloween and Christmas proved most successful again this year. The Haunted Harvest Hayride luckily was not postponed due to the recent wet weather we had. The night ghost walk/ride was enjoyed by 256 people and eight wagon rides circled the 'haunted low grounds' to handle the large crowd! A few short weeks ago, the Foundation again benefited from its Christmas Open House that features the Roanoke Station and Mulberry Hill with an Antebellum flair. Attendance this year was record breaking: 104 people came out to enjoy the local history, antique furnishings, period food, decorations, and charm presented by the faithful volunteers who served as docents, re-enactors, interpreters, and workers.

In the end, 2006 was a promising year to the Foundation, and we hope 2007 will bring just as many rewards and pleasures for us as it does for you!

I personally, would like to extend a special **THANK YOU** to **ALL** of the **VOLUNTEERS** and **PARK STAFF MEMBERS** and **TRUSTEES** who have helped the Foundation and the Park throughout the past year.

Hope you enjoy this edition of the *Sentinel*!

Warm Regards,

The Sentinel is published by the Historic Staunton River Foundation, Inc.

A non-profit 501 (c) 3 citizen support organization for the Staunton River Battlefield State Park

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Pictured with Foundation Vice-President Janet Johnson (far right) are the four new Trustees elected by the membership at the Annual Meeting held on Thursday, October 5 at the Clover Visitors Center: (left-right) Korey Snead, Helen Gregory, Anne Buckmaster, and Holly Owen.



Steamboat Nellie



(continued from Front Page)

John William Harvey was the ship's captain and made the only known drawing of the Nellie, apparently while it was moored at Brookneal, possible in the 1880s.

While the Jean was sold and worked on another river, legend has it that Nellie hung up on a reef and went down. Chamberlain has talked to Brookneal area residents with various recollections, including a man whose grandfather helped take out the boiler of the Nellie. "It filled with water, broke free and its moorings....and sank."

Finding a wreck is a sustained process of going over an area. "You have a general location and then you have to narrow it down," Chamberlain said.

"Most people have this idea 'X marks the spot,'" he said. But people's recollections are often flawed, stories are wrong, and environments shift. "X does not mark the spot."

"Looking for Steamboat Nellie at the bottom of the Staunton" was written by Ray McAllister, a staff writer for the *Richmond-Times Dispatch*. The article was printed on Thursday, March 8, 2007. The Historic Staunton River Foundation was granted permission from the *Richmond-Times Dispatch* to have it reprinted here, in the *Sentinel*.

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Notice: Membership Renewal



Members are reminded to renew their membership at the beginning of each calendar year. **Dues are \$15.00.** Your financial support helps the Foundation to continue its mission of promoting, developing, and preserving the Staunton River Battlefield State Park.

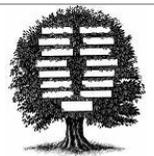
Benefits of membership include:

- a 10% discount in the gift shops,
- subscription to the *Sentinel* Newsletter, and
- invitations to special events.

Foundation members are encouraged to get involved. Members can attend monthly meetings and are especially urged to attend the Annual Meeting which is held each October. Serving on various committees is another way to show support and be involved. Consider giving a membership to a family member or friend!

In Search of Ancestors ??

If you or someone you know is a descendant of an "old man or



young boy" who fought to defend the Staunton River Bridge, then the Foundation would like to hear from you. We are continually compiling information and resources on as many of the "veterans" of this significant battle. Our goal to identify as many volunteers and enlisted men as possible. We annually recognize descendants of Confederate soldiers and the "old men and young boys" during the Commemoration for the Battle held in June. Please contact Vice-President Janet Johnson at 434.454.7157 if you are a descendant, would like to share your genealogy, or would like help in tracing your ancestor.

Richmond Articles Report Battle

By: Douglas Powell

The following Richmond newspaper articles provide additional information on some of the participants of the Battle of Staunton River Bridge and identifies some of the casualties, including one Richmond militia death. The second article provides additional confirmation that Yankee casualties were burned in the Roanoke Station depot by the raiders before they left the area.

Richmond Daily Dispatch

June 30, 1864

The fight at Staunton River bridge

From a member of the Richmond militia, who was engaged in the affair, we have some particulars of the fight with Kantz's [General Augustus Kautz's] raiders at Staunton River bridge, on the Danville railroad, on Saturday last. On Wednesday, the 22d inst, a detachment of men from Col Danforth's militia regiment left Richmond for Danville in charge of some prisoners. The detachment consisted of three commissioned officers, six non-commissioned officers, and fifty-three privates, all under the command of Capt James E Riddick. They arrived at Danville on Wednesday night, and remained there until Friday evening, when they returned to Staunton River bridge, reaching there some time after dark. Capt Farrinhalt [Farienholt] was in command of the forces at this point. Nothing of importance occurred during that night or the next morning; but in the afternoon, between 4 and 5 o'clock, the Yankees came in sight and advanced upon our position. Our batteries on the Danville side of the river at once opened upon them, and the enemy, having got a battery in position, returned the fire. In this artillery duel our loss was but slight, while it is believed that the enemy suffered heavily. About half past 5 o'clock the Yankees advanced a line of sharpshooters, but our basuccessive charges, all of which were repulsed. After this the enemy came up with out much vim, and about half past 8 o'clock the firing ceased, with the exception of some desultory shooting between skirmishers. During the night the enemy removed their battery. On Sunday morning, after some eight or ten rounds of artillery were fired, the Yankees moved off, and left our troops in undisputed possession of the bridge. General W. H. F. Lee's cavalry followed, and continued to harass their rear.

The enemy lost in this affair some 250 killed and wounded, while our loss was only eight killed and twenty-four wounded.

The following is a list of the casualties in the Richmond militia.

Killed: 2d Sergeant J. E. Walker; wounded on Saturday and died on Sunday at 3 o'clock. He leaves a large family who were dependent upon him for support. Wounded Capt. James E. Riddick, thigh, sent to Danville; Lieut. J. H. Cook, flesh wound; 2d Lieut. B. L. Wilson; private H. C. Calvert, flesh wound in the leg; private James Fletcher, ball in the shoulder. According to the dispatch of Gen. Lee this fight must have taken place on Sunday; but strengthened by the testimony of men engaged, we can but believe that the confusion of dates is simply a telegraphic error. tteries continued to play, and nothing was accomplished by the movement. About 6 o'clock, Captain Riddick's men were sent across the bridge to reinforce our troops in the rifle pits, and while there the Yankees made four

Richmond Daily Dispatch

July 5, 1864

The fight at Staunton river bridge

This engagement was fought, on our part, entirely by the militia reserves and convalescents from the hospitals at Lynchburg [Danville]. The enemy left forty-two dead on the field, and many bodies have been found since the fight on the land adjacent. A heap of human bones were found in the ruins of Staunton [Roanoke Station] Depot, on the Richmond and Danville Railroad, about a mile from the bridge. This building was burnt by the enemy, and it is believed that a large number of their dead, as well as badly wounded were consumed with it. A gentleman who was a prisoner in the hands of the enemy at the time informs us that the wounded were placed in the depot, and he is not aware of their having been removed. Our loss in this fight was 10 killed and 24 wounded.



Battle Commemoration Schedule



Friday, June 22, 2007

8pm-Dusk: Wagon Ride and Tour of the Battleground will depart from Fort Hill at 8pm. Please arrive a few minutes early and please bring a flashlight.

Dusk: Night Cannon firing demonstration by Cumming's Battery/Cape Fear Light Artillery in Fort Hill.

Saturday, June 23, 2007

Tentative Schedule

9:00am – 10:00am: Military Service Award Ceremony at Fort Hill near UDC monument, presented by the Halifax Chapter of the **United Daughters of the Confederacy** and the Historic Staunton River Foundation. These service awards are presented to veterans who are lineal descendants of Confederate veterans. The **Historic Staunton River Foundation** will present commemorative medals to recognized descendants of the participants of the Battle for the Staunton River Bridge.

10:00am – 1:00pm: Members of the Sappony Indian Nation will be present at Roanoke Station in Randolph with displays pertaining to their heritage and history. Sappony will demonstrate wood carving methods and the art of using a blowgun. In addition, Sappony food and merchandise will be available for purchase.

10:30am-12:00pm: Guided Battlefield tour and narration by **Douglas Powell**, Adjutant for the John M. Jordan Camp of the Sons of Confederate Veterans and a Trustee of the Historic Staunton River Foundation. The walking tour will begin at the Roanoke Station in Randolph and conclude at the Clover Visitors Center. Parking is available at both locations, and a bus will be provided for transportation.

11:30am: Lunch - Hotdogs, BBQ, chips, and beverages will be available for purchase at the Picnic Shelter at the Clover Visitors Center.

1:00pm – 2:00pm: “The Staunton River Bridge and Homeland Defense,” a lecture presented by **Colonel-Select Greg Eanes** in the Conference Room of the Clover Visitors Center. Following his lecture, Colonel-Select Eanes will be available to autograph copies of his authoritative book, *“Wilson-Kautz Raid – The Battle for the Staunton River Bridge.”*

Throughout the day: Living History Encampment presented by Confederate re-enactors from the **14th Virginia Infantry, Co. K, Oliver's Battery, 21st Virginia Artillery, Co. C,** and the **23rd Virginia Infantry, Company I, Central Guards** will be located next to Fort Hill.

Throughout the day: Cannon firing demonstrations by **Cumming's Battery/Cape Fear Light Artillery** in Fort Hill. A “firing schedule” will be available in the Clover Visitors Center.

This is a “tentative schedule” and every effort has been made to maintain and keep it accurate. If you or someone you know is a descendant, please inform a representative from the contacts below. Let us know if you are interested in helping plan or volunteer for this or one of the Foundation and Park's many other events held throughout the year. For more information on the Battle Commemoration and upcoming events, please visit the Foundation's website at www.stauntonriverbattlefield.org, email info@stauntonriverbattlefield.org, or call the Battlefield Park at 434.454.4312



The Staunton River Fight



(The following is the 3rd reprint in our series of a Letter to the Editor of the Charlotte Gazette written by James T. Gilliam, who was a mere boy of 16 at the time he participated in the Battle. This article was originally published on December 10, 1891.)

Two lines were formed for the attack on the bridge. One marched down, in columns of four, the deep ravine, which makes from the direction of Mr. McPhail's down to the river road, and filed into line on the edge of the low grounds. A line of skirmishers were thrown out about 50 yards in advance of the main line and the charge commanded. Our three six-pounders, in the pits about the bridge, opened upon this line with shell and canister.

At the same time another line formed right at the depot on the south side of the railroad. We first noticed the cut just above the depot to be full of Yankees. Lieut. Ragland gave the order to load, and we dropped a shell right plumb into this cut densely packed with the Yanks. The cut was quickly emptied. This was the farthest, with one exception, that any of our pieces placed a ball. One six-pound rifle piece put a shell upon a hill near a barn and killed a man, who was buried near the barn.

The fort opened on the line on the south side of the railroad, first with shell, and as they got into range, with canister. We pounded it into them for all we were worth, but on they came, as pretty and straight a line as was ever seen on dress parade. As they moved they struck into a double quick, with loud hurrah's, until, within about one hundred yards of the bridge, Col. Coleman gave the order to his men to fire, and the advancing column was met by a storm of buckshot and shell. But on they came, nearer, closer, until they were shot off the railroad embankment within ten steps of the mouth of the bridge. So close did they get before breaking, that some of them ran clear into our lines and were captured. Hear what the 1st D.C. Cav. has to say about the charge:

As the bridge across the Staunton River was of great importance to the enemy it was fortified and strongly guarded. On this side of the river, at the distance of three-fourths of a mile, running parallel with it was a range of hills; between the hills and the river the ground was open and level. On the left of the railroad was a broad field of wheat, while on the right a luxuriant growth of grass and weeds rising nearly to the height of a man's shoulders, covered the ground. The bluff on the opposite side and below the bridge, while a strong line of the enemy's skirmishers had been thrown across the river and deployed along the shore. Wilson's object was to burn the bridge, and the 1st D.C. Cavalry was detailed to do it. The undertaking was a perilous one. Its wisdom the reader will be likely to question, and yet when the final order was given to charge across the level ground in face of the Rebel batteries the gallant 1st D.C. Cav. moved forward in splendid style dismounted. The advance squadron had not advanced far, when, from the line of the enemy's works in front, a murderous storm of grape and canister was hurled into their ranks with terrible effect. Officers and men went down in large numbers. Still, without the least protection, in the face of that withering fire, these brave men pressed on till near the bridge. Efforts were made to burn it, but they were unsuccessful, when at length it was discovered that the object could not be accomplished but at too great a sacrifice of life, the advance was ordered back, and as nothing else was to be done in this direction, the return march was commenced.

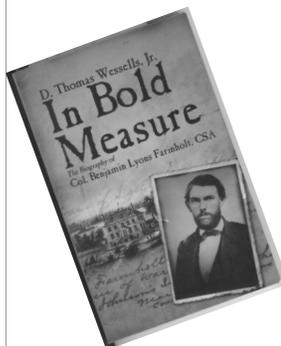
After a march of 32 miles due east, the command halted for the night, near Oak Grove. A march of 88 miles brought them to the Iron bridge, across Stony creek, here they had a severe engagement with the rebels, losing heavily, and at Reams' Station, which Wilson supposed was in the possession of the Yank's, he found Mahone across his line of retreat, when abandoning his artillery, ambulances, wagons, &c, by a wide detour avoided the rebels and regained their own lines." (From History 1st D.C. Cavalry)

As soon as this charge had been repulsed all of the troops in the ditches on the Halifax side of the river were hurried across to the Charlotte side, and stationed along the riverbank. This movement of troops from one side to the other gave strength to Mrs. McPhail's statement of the arrival of re-enforcements.

(To be continued in the next edition....)

Gift-shop Additions

The Battle of Staunton River Battlefield June 25, 1864
(cannon logo) Coffee Mug **\$5 (members \$4.50)**

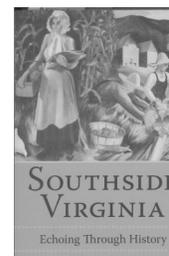


In Bold Measure: The Biography of Col. Benjamin Lyons Farinholt, CSA

By D. Thomas Wessells, Jr; Publish America, 158 pp. , June 2006; Book traces the life of Col. B. L. Farinholt, the commander of the post at the 1864 Battle for Staunton River Bridge; includes many photographs and images of significant places and people in his life as well as many of his letters. **\$20 (members \$18)**

Southside Virginia: Echoing Through History

By Herman Melton; The History Press, 128 pp., November 2006; This is a collection of historical vignettes that explore the past of seven picturesque counties in Virginia, revealing an exciting array of intriguing characters and fascinating stories, and highlights the important Battle for Staunton River Bridge. **\$18.99 (members 17.00)**



To order call 434.454.6219 or email-info@stauntonriverbattlefield.org. Please visit our Clover Visitors Center gift-shop to purchase these and many more items. Foundation members receive a 10% discount. Your purchase helps support the Park!



Scenes from the March 30 Easter Egg Hunt



Current & Upcoming Events

**Many Summer
Events & Activities!**

Haunted Harvest Hayride—
Saturday, October 20; 7PM-until

Annual Meeting—Thursday,
October 4; 6-9PM

Board Meeting & Elections—
Thursday, November 1; 7PM

Antebellum Christmas—
Saturday & Sunday, Dec 1-2;
1-4PM

Many other events like nature walks, bird watching, river runs, and other interpretive programs will be offered through the coming months. Call the Park for details.

Be sure to check us out on the web, with our re-designed and up-to-date website at:
www.stauntonriverbattlefield.org.

Don't forget to renew your membership. Foundation membership runs the calendar year. Dues are just \$15 with so many benefits included!

The Clover Visitor Center is open Monday thru Saturday from 9:00 a.m. til 4:30 a.m., and on Sundays from 1:00-4:30 a.m. Hours for Mulberry Hill and the Randolph Depot can be arranged by calling the Park Office.

Be sure to mark your calendar with these important dates! Check our website for more upcoming and exciting events!

Call the park for exact program details and times.
434.454.4312

Historic Staunton River Foundation, Inc.

Post Office Box 1
Randolph, Virginia 23962



Check out our website:
www.stauntonriverbattlefield.org

Join the Foundation Today!

You are invited to join the Historic Staunton River Foundation. The mission of the Foundation is to promote, develop, and preserve the 1864 Battlefield and to preserve the integrity of the Staunton River environs and archaeological sites.

Yes, I would like to join the Historic Staunton River Foundation. Enclosed is my check for \$15.00 for annual dues. Please add my name to the mailing list of the Staunton River *Sentinel* Newsletter.

Miss/Mr./Mrs./ _____

Address: _____

City State Zip code
() Phone _____ E-Mail

Mail to:

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