



Staunton River Sentinel

Volume IV, Issue I

HISTORIC STAUNTON RIVER FOUNDATION

Fall/Winter 2010 Edition

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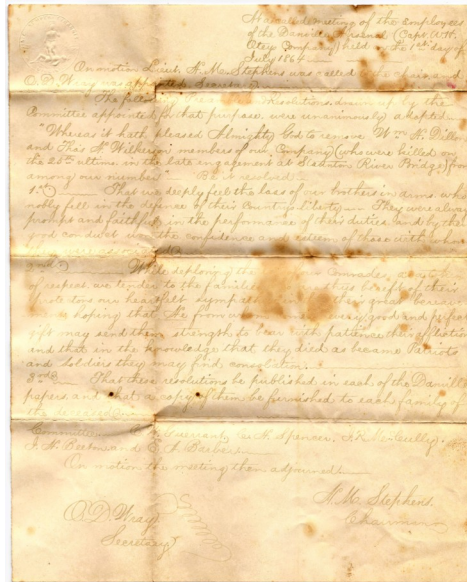
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The scope and purpose of the **Historic Staunton River Foundation** is to promote, develop, and preserve: the 1864 Battlefield at the Staunton River; the Staunton River Bridge; Staunton River Battlefield State Park; the Staunton River historical areas and environs; Roanoke Station; Mulberry Hill Plantation, the ancestral home of the Carrington family; the Randy K. Wade Archaeological Site and any future archaeological discoveries in the area of the Staunton River; and the Sappony Indian Nation.

Donated Letter Sheds Light Into Two Unknown Fatalities During Battle

The hot summer day of June 15, 1864 would forever change the lives of 492 "ole men and young boys" from Southside Virginia. When an urgent plea came from Confederate Captain Benjamin Farinholt to come and assist his 296 Confederate reserves in defending the Staunton River railroad bridge against an approaching Union cavalry force of over 5,000 men, the answer came from every direction in all walks of life. These men came from the neighboring counties of Charlotte, Halifax, Mecklenburg, and even as far away as Pittsylvania and the City of Danville, one of the last Confederate capitals.

It was not until an e-mail to the Historic Staunton River Foundation, the nonprofit, 501 (c) 3 private organization dedicated to the preservation, promotion, and development of the Staunton River Battlefield, that light was shed on the details and accounts of two gentlemen. Both of who were from Danville and participated in the Battle. Ms. **Leslie J. Carter** of Shepherdstown, West Virginia and her father, Mr. **Terence G. Carter** of Irvington, Virginia contacted the Foundation in hopes of learning more about the Battle and to find some details about the death of their ancestor, William Henry Dillon.



In her email, Leslie wrote, "I am researching my family history; my great-grandfather William Henry Dillon [who lived in Danville prior to the War] was killed at the Battle...I have attached a transcript of the letter sent to his widow

following this battle...According to my family, my ancestor and others killed were buried in mass graves near a cornfield, then wagons driven over the site to conceal the burials from Union troops, who might desecrate the dead." Intrigue aroused from the Foundation and those associated with the Battle, and research ensued to not only provide Leslie with answers, but also explain the connection between Danville and the Battle of Staunton River Bridge. It was not too farfetched to realize that an urgent plea, truly meant just that and any soldier – young and old as the story tells – answered that cry, even soldiers as far away as Danville. Most importantly, the Carter family had in its possession "a letter" that told a significant part of this battle!

With a small battle, such as Staunton River Bridge, there are limited resources that provide a glimpse into the past. We are fortunate to have records from both the Confederate and Union forces that speak of preparations for and accounts of the engagement. (Continued on page 3.)

Letter from the President



Dear Members & Friends of the Historic Staunton River Foundation,

It is hard to believe that 2010 is almost over! It has been a busy time for us this year at Staunton River Battlefield State Park starting with the news that the park may be closed. Many of us were concerned with that a valuable asset to the community would be lost. Fort Hill is a part of the local history, and through the efforts of the trustees and community leaders, it was preserved. If you visited the park during May and June, you would have seen Dr. Brian Bates and his archeology students at work. They are always making new discoveries that increase the scope of the area. In conjunction with the archeological dig, the First Annual Sappony Indian River Festival was held. Everyone enjoyed this event, and plans are underway for next year's festival. At the Commemoration of the Battle of Staunton River Bridge, Bert Dunkerly presented an informative lecture on the weapons of the Civil War. September was the setting for the annual meeting this year. Several conflicts in the schedule prompted the change. The guest speaker for the evening was Glen Abernathy, and his topic was on the history of Confederate currency. The Haunted "Spooktacular" took place earlier that usual as well. The turnout was better than expected. Over 300 people attended the event. The year always ends with the Christmas Open House at Mulberry Hill. A fund was opened this year to help with the restoration of the Overseer's House are Mulberry Hill. Make plans to visit in December.

The park and HSRF could not continue to bring you these special events without the support of you and the public. Please renew your membership and encourage family and friends to join. The foundation continues to grow with 62 people joining this year.

For more information on these events or upcoming events for 2011, please visit the website .

Hope to see you at the

Janet E. Johnson

Park!

Members:
Receive
20% Discount
In the gift shop!

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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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The Foundation has teamed up with other non-profits and schools across the nation to help **recycle** empty laser & inkjet cartridges, cell phones, and more! By collecting and recycling these products, the Foundation, as a non-profit entity, receives **CASH!** A fun and easy fundraiser—but **YOUR HELP** is needed! Please save and collect

- **Inkjet (printer) cartridges & laser cartridges**
- **Cell phones (any and all pieces acceptable)**
- **Video games and consoles**

Bring them to the
Visitor Center or
give them to a
Trustee!



Help the environment
and the Foundation!
Recycle = Cash!



Members of the Foundation that were elected to serve on the Board of Trustees pose with a Confederate Battle flag, donated by Ron and Patt Graves as a door prize during the Foundation's Annual Meeting in September. Pictured (l-r) are Cindy Nichols, Ron Graves, Shane Newcombe, "Junior" Caknipe, and Gerry Johnson. Trustees are elected from within the Foundation's members-at-large and serve three-year terms that run the calendar year.

Donated Letter (continued from front cover)

However, only few documents and primary sources exist that provide names of the Confederate reserves, old men, or young boys that helped to defend the Bridge. One mission of the Foundation is to provide research into these men and their lives. Not long after, the Carter family provided the Foundation with a photocopy of the document and a transcription of it. This document was the original July 1, 1864 “Minutes/Orders/Resolutions At a Meeting of the Employees of the Danville Arsenal.” Researchers for the Foundation and the Carter family learned that the Carter family tradition (regarding the hasty burial of Confederate soldiers and the subsequent concealment with wagon tracks to elude the potential desecration of the graves by the Union army) was purely a legend and nothing more. Information available following the end of the battle does not suggest that any such burial would have taken place or could have take place. Records show that the Confederates suffered approximately 10 fatalities and 24 wounded, while the Union reported leaving 30-42 dead on the field. This family “myth” must have been fashioned given the fact that, following Dillon’s death, no burial information can be obtained.

The “document” details the following, “Whereas it hath pleased Almighty God to remove William H. Dillon and Thomas H. Wilkerson members of our company (who were killed on the 25th ultimately in the late engagement at Staunton River Bridge) from among out numbers. Dillon, along with his counterpart, Wilkerson, was from Danville and was an employes of the Danville Arsenal. In the book, *Danville in the Civil War* by Lawrence McFall, we learn, “artillery units of Danville and Pittsylvania County received the support of a local defense Battery (Danville Arsenal), Captain Walter Hays Otey’s Company Virginia Light Artillery... the unit saw action at the Battle of Staunton River Bridge.” Otey’s company was comprised of workers (employees) at the Danville Arsenal and formed a local defense force. Such local units often drilled sporadically and seldom saw battle action, except in the rare case as witnessed by Otey’s Company at Staunton River Bridge. The author provides more insight into the 128 soldiers of Otey’s Company.

Ironically enough, McFall dier to be buried in the new ceme-may have been Private Thomas H. [Danville] donated a lot to the death in the defense of the interests Bridge’.” However, no mention is “document” mentions the death of Danville Arsenal and privates in (Danville) make provisions for the haps, may be the foundations of the story of the hasty burial! McFall Wilkerson never received a tomb-even to this day; and we can assert he too was laid to rest in the Green suggested that Dillon was a county resident and that may be the reason for Danville providing for one of its “own.”



points out that the “first Confederate soltery (Green Hill Cemetery in Danville) Wilkerson, “on July 5, 1864, the town Wilkerson family in ‘consideration of his of Danville at the Battle of Staunton made of William H. Dillon. The Carter two individuals who were employed by the Otey’s Company; but why would the town burial of one and not the other. This per-fabrication (by the Carter family) of the continues to make an account that stone and his place of burial is unknown – that the same is true for Dillon. Perhaps, Hill Cemetery like his equal. It is also

Soldiers from Danville journeyed a total of 55 miles via rail to join Farinholt in the defense of the Staunton River Bridge. We do not know how many of the 128 soldiers of Otey’s Company saw action at the Bridge, but we know the Company (as a whole) did participate in the engagement. Out of the known 938 men that made up Farinholt’s command, 492 were the infamous “old men and young boys,” 296 were Confederate reserves; and 150 were “regulars.” Those “150 regulars,” as indicated by Farinholt, could have been from the Danville Arsenal/Otey’s Company. The Confederates repulsed four separate Union charges and thus, successfully defended the Bridge.

The *1885 Sketch Book of Danville, Virginia*, by Edward Pollock, tells of the “accidental” destruction of the Danville Arsenal on the morning of April 11, 1865, one day after the news of Lee’s surrender had been received. “The building stood near the river bank at the lower end of Craghead Street, below the depot of the Richmond & Danville Railroad, and at this time contained large quantities of gunpowder, cartridges, bomb-shells, rockets, and other explosives, which had been carefully guarded so long as military discipline existed. The arsenal and its contents were virtually abandoned, and people in town were helping themselves to the contents of the arsenal. The floor was soon inches deep with loose gunpowder. A huge explosion occurred. Nobody could tell how it occurred, because there were no survivors of those who had been near enough to the scene to have any exact information. Nor was it ever known how many persons perished. Fourteen bodies – or, rather, fragments representing that number – were recovered, and laid in one grave. Among those were the bodies of two woman, who had rushed into the river to extinguish the fire that had caught their clothing and were drowned. Others died afterwards of their injuries.” Sadly, the death and destruction of the effects of war even infiltrated the innocent citizens of Danville. The Battle of Staunton River Bridge will continue to leave its mark upon the citizens of Southside Virginia and the descendants of the brave soldiers, who sacrificed their all to defend it, more than 146 years later.

The Historic Staunton River Foundation is grateful to **Ms. Leslie Carter** and her father, **Mr. Terrence Carter** for donating this valuable piece of history! (The photo at center shows the Carters and President Johnson following the recognition ceremony of the Descendants of the Battle during the annual Commemoration in June 2010.)

Annual Meeting Held With Record Numbers

The Historic Staunton River Foundation, the non-profit 501(c) 3 organization formed in 1994 to promote, preserve, and develop the Staunton River; the environs of the Staunton River; the Battle for Staunton River Bridge; Mulberry Hill Plantation; the Randy K. Wade Archaeological Site; and Staunton River Battlefield State Park, held its Annual Meeting for its membership, Board of Trustees, Park employees and staff, and volunteers.

A delicious potluck supper was enjoyed by all who attended the meeting at Roanoke Station (Randolph Depot). Special guest Mr. Glen Abernathy (pictured at podium), a local numismatist and historian, gave an insightful presentation on the subject "History of Confederate Money." Mr. Abernathy shared several pieces of currency from his personal collection, spoke on currency production methods, the rarities of local county currency before and during the War, and



informed the attendees on how to identify counterfeit pieces.

Following Mr. Abernathy's talk, several Park and Foundation business reports were presented and volunteers were recognized. The Board was pleased with the overwhelming number of attendees: 43 in all! If you were not able to make it, please mark Thursday, September 1, 2011 on your calendars!

For more information on this and many other events hosted by the Historic Staunton River Foundation, or to learn more about Staunton River Battlefield State Park, please visit the Foundation's website www.stauntonriverbattlefield, follow the Foundation on *Facebook*, or phone 434.454.4312.

Halloween Spooktacular Best Ever

Pirates, Ghosts, and Soldiers ! Oh my! This past October 16 marked the most successful Halloween event to date at the Staunton River Battlefield State Park. For the past nine years, the Foundation has hosted a "Haunted Hayride;" last year, with the support and creativity of the Park staff, a "Haunted Trail" was added. It received raves of positive reviews. With the onset of this year's event, the Foundation and Park staff decided to build on the success of the previous years and as a result the 2010 "Halloween Spooktacular" was formed. It consisted of the three amazing and fun-filled events. The afternoon kicked off with "Halloween Pirate Adventures" for children 0-12. Following the revelry of those sea adventures, night crept in and the high-water marks of the night were the "Haunted Trail," the PG-13 rated tour of the "haunted" Edgewood Nature Trail; and the "Haunted Harvest Hayride," the enjoyable and historic ghost walk/hayride through the battlefield and grounds stopping ever so often to encounter a spook or phantasm. Concessions for the day were provided by the Sappony Indian Nation. **59 volunteers worked** together and logged a combined total of **898 volunteer hours** for this event! A tremendous amount of hard work, dedication, and devotion went into making this event the success that it became. A special thank you is extended to each and everyone who had a helping hand. Over the years, this event has turned into the biggest fundraising event for the Foundation. It is reassuring to know that **305 people** took the time to enjoy the day's events. If you would like to volunteer just contact the Foundation for this and its many other events throughout the year!





2011 Calendar of Events



Spring & Summer:

Easter Egg Hunt: Saturday, April 16: Clover Visitors Center, 1-3:30P.M.

Children ages 10 and under need to be accompanied by an adult. Here comes Peter Cottontail and he has brought lots of goodies to share. Join us at Staunton River Battlefield State Park's Clover Visitor Center, as the Historic Staunton River Foundation, along with the park staff presents an Easter Egg Hunt. But that's not all; you will have the chance to visit with the Easter Bunny, pet live bunnies, participate in a wide-array of games and activities, and much more. So don't miss out on all the excitement. Bring your baskets and bring a friend. Registration will begin at 1P.M., and the Easter Egg Hunt will be held from 1:15 until 1:45. Other activities will be held from 2:00 - 3:30. Don't forget your cameras. In event of inclement weather, the rain date will be Sunday, April 17.

Antebellum Fashion Show: TBA, May, Dress in your "hoop skirt" or uniform or just come on out and sit a spell to enjoy the promenade of Southern Belles and Gents in an Antebellum Fashion Show. More information to come! Check out our website often!

Dinner in honor of Longwood University Archaeology Field School & Dr. Bates: Thursday, June 2, Clover Visitors Center

Foundation members are invited to join in with a pot-luck dinner to thank the Longwood University Archeology students under the skilled direction of Dr. Brian Bates for all of their hard work and research at the Randy K. Wade Archaeological Site.



Sappony Indian River Festival: Saturday, June 4, Clover Visitors Center

Enjoy a day on the "Sappony" River.....more information to follow. Check out our website!

Commemoration of the Battle: Saturday, June 25: Clover Visitors Center, (9A.M.-Until); Free: A day-long event where we honor "old

men and young boys" who gave so much to defend their bridge on that hot-summer day knowing that victory would keep the supplies flowing to Petersburg. There will be a Confederate encampment, musket firing, music, United Daughters of the Confederacy medal presentation, interpretive programs, guest speakers, cannon-firing demonstrations, and more. So, if you are a Civil War enthusiast or you would like to know more about our nations' history from a local perspective, come by for a truly eventful day here in historic Southside Virginia. Programs will begin at 9A.M. and there will be events throughout the day.



Fall & Winter:

Annual Meeting: Thursday, September 1: Clover Visitors Center, 6-9PM; Pot Luck Supper, Members-Volunteers

Annual Dinner Meeting and Special Speaker/Lecture/Presentation. Want to know more? Become a member. Information will be mailed to members in early August.



Halloween Spooktacular: Saturday, October 15: Clover Visitors Center, 7:00-Until; \$5

Come and enjoy our 9th annual Haunted Hayride. "Spooky" fun intended for the whole family. Enjoy local ghost stories and legends while you are riding on a hayride through the battlefield and low grounds. Tour lasts approximately 90 minutes; it is a part walking and part riding ghost tour. After you register for the Haunted Harvest Hayride, enter "if you dare" our Haunted Trail with optical illusions, witches and specters at every dark corner, and many other "hair-raising" special effects! RSVP in advance! Call 434.454.4312.

Christmas at Mulberry Hill: Sat. & Sunday – December 3 & 4, Randolph, 1-4PM; \$5

Come and enjoy an Antebellum period Christmas at Mulberry Hill Plantation, the ancestral home of the Carrington family. Enjoy touring the historic home and grounds, joining in with Confederate re-enactors in the historic boxwood gardens in campfire cooking and living history demonstrations. Light refreshments are served with the hopes of a visit from Ole St. Nick.

Volunteers and Re-enactors are welcome ! Tell a friend.



From Playing Solider to Being a Real-Life Soldier



Alex Johnson has been portraying a young Confederate soldier at many events sponsored by the Historic Staunton River Foundation—since he was a little boy. He has participated in the Haunted Hayride, greeted guests at Mulberry Hill, and dressed in Confederate uniform for community events. Now he has become a soldier in real-life! Johnson graduated from Halifax County in 2009 and had already decided that the military is where he was being called. In January 2010, he arrived at Parris Island, South Carolina to begin thirteen weeks of training to become a U. S. Marine, PFC Alexander Johnson. From there, he went to Camp Geiger for combat training and then Camp Johnson for schooling. At the beginning of September, Alex flew to Okinawa, Japan where he will be stationed for two years serving as an embarkation specialist.



He is adjusting to life in Japan. “I like the people that I have met and enjoy working with my fellow service men,” stated Johnson. Adjusting to the food has been a challenge for Johnson, “Most of it I like, but not the miso soup!” The weather in the Pacific is different from Southside. “It is more tropical here and there are typhoons. Communication can be difficult at times because here in Japan we are 14 hours ahead of you all on the eastern seaboard of the U.S.,” explained Johnson. Johnson encourages anyone who is interested in knowing more about Japan or just wants to say hello to contact him on *Facebook*, just search “Alexander Johnson.”

Since being there, he has received a promotion. He is now Lance Corporal Alexander Johnson. Our thoughts and prayers are with you, **Lance Corporal Johnson**, and all service men and women of the United States throughout the nation and world.

Donated Door Prizes Big Win at Annual Meeting



Door Prizes were the big hit at the end of the Foundation’s Annual Meeting. A big thank you is extended to Patt and Ron Graves for donating a personalized Confederate Battle Flag that read, “Battle for the Staunton River Bridge, June 25, 1864, Captain Benjamin L. Farinholt, CSA Commander of the Local Defense, Plus 492 Old Men & Young Boys from Charlotte, Halifax, and Mecklenburg Counties.” Additionally, a big thank you is extended to Ron Epps of the Sappony Indian Nation who donated a framed “Chuck Ren Native American Print.” Two lucky winners were drawn from a hat and Sappony Chief **Otis Martin** won the Battle Flag and **Alice Powell** was presented with the beautiful Native American Print.



Pictured (l-r) are Ron Epps presenting his donation of a “Chuck Ren Native American Print; Patt and Ron Graves flanking their donation of a monogrammed Confederate Battle Flag. The two donations were given away as door prizes at the Annual Meeting in September.



By: **Tiffany Snow**,
Administrative & Program Specialist III

Tallying Volunteer Hours

It's that time of year to tally your volunteer hours. You can easily report the number of hours you have worked by phoning 434.454.4312.

Why is reporting your volunteer hours important to you?

1. You get awesome benefits like parking passes and free camping for reaching service hour marks. A list of the benefits is available from the Park Office. These are for cumulative hours, not just the hours achieved this year. So turning in any and all of your hours is extremely important!
2. You also get the satisfaction of being involved into something very special to you, the Foundation, the Park, your friends and family.

Why this is important to Staunton River Battlefield and Virginia State Parks that you report your hours?

1. A report goes to the General Assembly every year of the total number of volunteer hours in our parks. This shows public support for our parks and helps us get continued funding. When volunteers show through their service hours that the parks are valuable to them, the General Assembly takes notice.
2. Volunteer hours help Staunton River Battlefield receive money for projects and grants. It can also help "sell" our park to potential donors like our Overseer's House project. When potential donors and grantees see high volunteer numbers (in both number of volunteers and number of hours) they are impressed because they see how much so many people value our great resource.

Even if you don't care about receiving benefits, please report the hours you served this year so that we can update our database and help you represent your State Park.



Rewards Abound



Benefits as a Foundation member include **20% Off Discount in Gift Shop** (increased from 10%!), **The Sentinel Newsletter**, **Invitations to Foundation events such as Annual Meeting, guest speakers, etc., Admission Coupons**, and the reward of knowing that you are helping to support the Foundation's mission of promoting, developing, and preserving the Staunton River Battlefield and this rich history and heritage of Southside Virginia.



Current & Upcoming Events

Many Summer Events & Activities!

Call for details.....

Antebellum Christmas Open House, Mulberry Hill—Sat. & Sun, Dec. 4-5, 1-4 P.M., \$5/ person

Please see the 2011 Calendar of Events in this edition of The Sentinel and mark your calendars!

Please volunteer !

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!

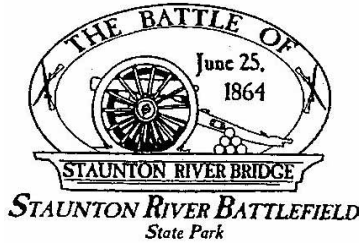
The Clover Visitor Center is open Monday thru Saturday from 9:00 AM til 4:30 PM., and on Sundays from 1:00-4:30 PM. Hours for Mulberry Hill and Roanoke Depot can be arranged by calling the Park Office.

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



Find us on Facebook
Historic Staunton River Foundation
www.stauntonriverbattlefield.org



Have you remembered to **renew** your membership?
Membership runs the calendar year!
Share it with a friend or family member!

Join the Foundation Today! Invite a FRIEND!

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. **Donations and monetary contributions are tax deductible.**

Yes, I would like to join the Foundation. Enclosed is my check/payment for the **\$15.00 for annual dues.** Please add my name to the mailing list of the Staunton River *Sentinel* Newsletter and I look forward to receiving my **20% discount in the gift shop.**

Miss/Mr./Mrs./ _____ Date: _____

Address: _____ Renewal: YES / NO

Volunteer: YES / NO

City _____ State _____ Zip code _____

Phone: (____) _____ E-Mail: _____ @ _____

Mail to: *(checks payable to Historic Staunton River Foundation)*

Historic Staunton River Foundation, Inc.

Staunton River Battlefield's Web Address:

P.O. Box 1
Randolph, Virginia 23962

www.stauntonriverbattlefield.org

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