



The Quarterly Newsletter of the Monocacy National Battlefield Foundation

the *dispatch*

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We welcome your photos and articles about the people, places, history, and natural resources of Civil War era Frederick County.

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Battlefield Viewshed Restoration

By Jana Friesen McCabe

Monocacy National Battlefield is a fragmented park. It is divided by roads, a river, and a railroad. These obstacles are not a distraction from the battlefield's story, but rather key elements of that story. The Georgetown Pike (today's Urbana Pike), the B&O Railroad (the modern CSX) line, and the Monocacy River were among the primary reasons that the battle occurred where it did. Even the latecomer I-270 highway reflects the connection between Frederick and Washington, DC, that led Jubal Early to choose his line of march. While these features contributed to and shaped the battlefield's story, they also complicate a modern understanding of it and make it impossible to safely travel the battlefield on foot or even see critical features of the landscape.



The fence row in the middle of the image divides the Thomas (background) and the Worthington Farms. During the Battle of Monocacy, Confederate forces on the Worthington Farm struggled to dislodge Union soldiers from the Thomas Farm. The majority of fatalities during the battle occurred here on these two farms. The construction of I-270 in the 1950s severed the physical connection between the farms. Photo credit: Baltimore Sun Historic Photos/TCA

In 2017, the National Park Service published the *Monocacy National Battlefield Public Access Plan: Environmental Assessment (Access Plan)* to explore options for connecting the fragmented pieces of the battlefield. The purpose of the plan was "to develop a comprehensive plan that promotes the public's access to and understanding of the battlefield in order to enhance the visitor experience and increase opportunities for visitors to connect with the park's resources, history, commemorative aspects, preservation activities, and significance, while minimizing impacts to cultural and natural resources." The plan proposed and analyzed the creation of almost eight miles of new trails, construction of pedestrian bridges, a land bridge, and clearing of viewsheds. The plan also addressed the barrier created by I-270 between the Thomas and Worthington farms.

Viewshed cont'd.

While the first shots of the battle rang out on the Georgetown Pike north of the bridge over the Monocacy, the outcome was decided on the Thomas and Worthington farms. With their access to the bridge over the river blocked by Union troops, Confederate cavalry began searching for alternative ways to cross. Around mid-morning, they found the Worthington Ford and began to cross the Monocacy. Unable to fight on two fronts with his limited troops, Union Major General Lew Wallace ordered the bridge over the river burned and refocused his troops to the Thomas Farm. With Confederate forces based around the Worthington House and Union command at Gambrell Mill, the fight for control of the Thomas Farm surged and ebbed throughout the afternoon. Around 3:30 p.m., having gained and lost the Thomas House, Confederates launched their final attack throwing three fresh brigades at the badly outnumbered and exhausted Union line. With his men running out of ammunition, Wallace gave the order to retreat around 4:30 p.m.. It was during this third wave of the fighting that most Confederate casualties occurred: 698 of an estimated 900.

Without a doubt, the construction of I-270 had a significant impact on the Monocacy Battlefield. Constructed in the 1950s, before the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), I-270 caused the loss of archeological resources and the disturbance of the hallowed ground where men bled over the fate of our nation. The interstate also physically divided the Thomas and Worthington farms and as a result complicated our understanding of the events of July 9, 1864. Over time, the growth of trees along roadways and fences severed the visual connection between the two farms and further obscured the role of the landscape in the battle.

The 2017 Monocacy Battlefield *Access Plan* (sidebar above) identified reconnecting the Thomas and Worthington farms as an important tool to provide visitors the opportunity to understand the close connection between the farms and how the battle unfolded. Since removing I-270 was not a realistic option, the *Access Plan* analyzed re-establishing the visual connection between the Worthington and Thomas houses. Researchers located historic photos from the early 20th century that revealed clear views between the two houses. The photos also revealed a kitchen garden at Worthington rimmed with Osage orange trees. The garden plot continued to be visible in aerial photos of the construction of I-270, indicating that the encroachment of trees was a fairly recent occurrence. Using GIS, resource managers confirmed that the removal of a limited corridor of trees would restore the line of site between the houses since that section of I-270 is below grade. Field work further refined and limited the area of trees to be removed on both farms.

Tree work began in the fall of 2020. The work was timed to minimize the impacts to native birds and bats that roost in trees. Contractors began on the Worthington Farm, pushing back the tree line that had crept over the last 50 years from the base of Brooks Hill towards the farm entry lane. Removing trees revealed the remnants of the Osage orange hedgerow around the former garden, as well as middens (historic trash pits) associated with the migrant workers housed at Worthington during the mid-20th century. Monocacy National Battlefield archeologist Alex Vindas Cruz monitored the work to minimize impact on the archeological sites. Landscape architects from the regional National Park Service office evaluated the Osage orange trees and identified trees for retention. The Osage orange trees were then cropped to promote regeneration. Non-historic trees were also removed along the Worthington entry road and the border with I-270. On the Thomas Farm, tree removal focused on the area adjacent to I-270 and historic fence lines around fields. In addition to cutting trees, contractors ground the stumps to allow the park to replant the areas more easily.

As with any remodeling or renovation project, the impacted area looked worse before it began to look better. Many visitors were surprised and distressed to see trees being cut on the battlefield. Moving forward, the disturbed areas will be replanted with native grasses and low growing shrubs to maintain the open viewshed. This Spring, park staff planted native grasses to stabilize slopes and minimize establishment of invasive species. These replanted areas will improve habitat for native birds that prefer to nest in grasslands rather than trees. The Osage orange trees should resprout and the historic hedgerow will be maintained between four to six feet in height. One unintended consequence of the project was the realization that the replica cannon at Worthington House will need to be reoriented; it is currently aimed at I-270 instead of the Thomas House.

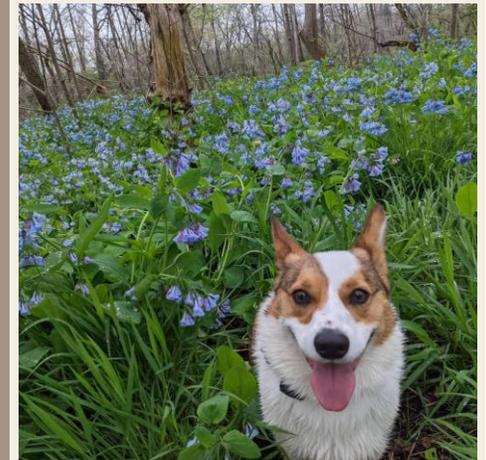
In 1934, when Congress passed legislation to establish Monocacy National Military Park, the battlefield had changed very little in the 70 years that had lapsed since the conflict there. By the time funding was appropriated in the late 1970s to acquire land for the battlefield, the pressure of nearby development was already beginning to show. The construction of I-270 in the 1950s through the heart of the battlefield confirmed the importance of the location and further fragmented the landscape. The National Park Service developed the *Monocacy National Battlefield Public Access Plan* to increase opportunities for visitors to connect to the park's resources, history, preservation activities, and significance. By adding trails and restoring the visual connection between the Thomas and Worthington Farms, the *Access Plan* seeks to unite a battlefield fragmented by humans and nature.

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photos...

**This issue's photos
are from park visitor**

Abby Casarella



Osage Oranges at Worthington Farm

By Angelina R. Jones & Alex Vindas Cruz

Griffin Taylor built the home now known as the “Worthington House” around 1851, situated on 300-acres of agricultural land originally known as Clifton Farm. John F. Wheatley and T. Alfred Ball purchased this and the neighboring Thomas Farm following Taylor’s death in 1855. Ball occupied the house following the sale along with eight enslaved individuals who also lived on the property and ranged in ages between 13 and 30 (1860 Frederick County Slave Schedule). John T. Worthington purchased the farm in 1862, which he renamed Riverside Farm. The Worthington family were living on the farm during the Civil War’s Battle of Monocacy. On July 9, 1864, Confederate troops crossed the Monocacy River to Worthington’s farm and advanced on the Union lines from its fields. Following the battle, the farm was used as a field hospital.

Although the exact date of the Osage planting is unknown, it is presumed that Worthington planted the orange hedgerow that grows south of the Worthington House as a living fence to demarcate boundaries around the kitchen garden and orchard. There were also Osage orange hedgerows lining a sunken road north of the house. Worthington produced winter wheat, Indian corn, hay, and butter on the farm and maintained a variety of livestock including cows, horses, swine, and oxen. The rectangular stand of Osage orange trees would have protected the kitchen garden and orchard from grazing livestock.

First brought to the east coast from their native mid-western habitat in 1803, Osage oranges began being sold by commercial growers in the region by the mid-19th century due to their use as hedging. Property owners planted living fences for their visual appeal and effectiveness for corralling livestock and as a windbreak. While the Osage orange hedge south of the Worthington House was pruned to four feet in height during the 19th century, Osage oranges can grow to up to 40 feet tall. Osage oranges were available commercially in Maryland by 1848, but lost favor near the end of the 19th century as they hosted the San Jose scale insect, which damaged orchard produce such as apples and pears.



View looking northwest towards the Worthington House. The freshly coppiced Osage orange hedge is visible to the left of the house. Photo credit: National Park Service



1952 aerial view of the Worthington Farm with a clear view of the Osage orange hedgerow south of the house (indicated by the blue arrow). Photo credit: National Park Service

In 2020, the hedgerow featured scaffold limbs growing from about four feet up the Osage oranges’ trunks, suggesting that historically the hedge was maintained at this height as evidenced in a photograph from 1929. By the time the Worthington family sold their farm to Jenkins Brothers, Inc. in 1953, the hedgerow had grown above this height. Notably, during this period it provided shade and served as a windbreak for migrant workers living seasonally at the Worthington Farm, as evidenced by bottle middens that now line the edge of the hedgerow.

Black laborers worked the fields around Worthington Farm from the mid-nineteenth century through the 1960s, first as enslaved individuals and tenant laborers, then as migrant workers. The migrant workers and their families traveled each year from Florida’s Belle Glade area to stay in Frederick, Maryland from the spring through the fall. These workers primarily tended soybean crops but they also worked in canneries in the fall. Galen Hahn, a migrant minister during the 1960s recalled the poor living conditions of the migrant workers at the Worthington Farm, stating that they lived in the “old farmhouse with a row of barrack-type rooms, and a converted cow barn.” According to Hahn, there was no running water at the encampment and “[the workers] do not seem to be considered even human beings in the agricultural business; they are tools to be used for profit rather than simply human beings looking for a job.” The relatively recent use of the site to house migrant workers highlights the continuation of exploitive agricultural labor practices that predate the Civil War at the Worthington Farm. Ongoing research by National Park Service (NPS) staff promises to yield additional information about the lives of migrant workers at Worthington Farm during the mid-twentieth century.



The Osage orange hedgerow directly south of the Worthington House in October 2020, prior to coppicing. Photo credit: National Park Service

The Worthington Osage orange hedgerow was pruned during a landscape rehabilitation project at the Worthington Farm in late 2020. The project removed a non-historic stand of trees to reestablish views between the Worthington and Thomas Farms that were critical during the Battle of Monocacy. The Osage oranges had grown to their maximum height of approximately 40 feet with a canopy spread of about 20 feet, obscuring the view between the two farms. NPS coppiced the hedgerow to just above the root flare (the base of the tree at the point of transition between the trunk and the root system) and the park will allow its shoots to grow annually to between four and six feet to approximate the historic height of the hedgerow. Coppicing is a woodland management technique that relies on the ability of many tree species to propagate through the growth of new shoots from the stump or roots. During coppicing, a tree is intentionally cut down to a specified height and allowed to regenerate through the shoots it sends up in response. This technique is used to harvest timber but can also be used to manage the size of woody plants, as in the case of Osage oranges.

Angelina R. Jones is Cultural Landscape Architect with the National Park Service Interior Region 1 (National Capital Area) & Alex Vindas Cruz is Pathways Archeologist at Monocacy National Battlefield.



The same Osage orange hedgerow in January 2021 soon after it was coppiced. The reduced height of the Osage orange has reestablished views of the Thomas Farm to the southeast, which is visible in the background of this image. Photo credit: National Park Service

Commanders Corner

Commanders Corner is a continuing feature of the newsletter featuring information on the two commanders at the battle of Monocacy--Union Major General Lew Wallace and Confederate Lieutenant General Jubal Early.

Lew Wallace >>>

By Gail Stephens

When the words “Fort Donelson” are mentioned in connection with the Civil War, the name U.S. Grant springs to mind. The battle of Fort Donelson was indeed the beginning of the rise of U.S. Grant. It was also the battle where an untested 35-year-old Lew Wallace earned his second star and learned something important about himself: “that in the confusion and feverish excitement of real battle I could think.” In other words, he had learned he possessed an important attribute for a general officer.

After the fall of Fort Henry on February 6, 1862, U.S. Grant and his fighting partner, commander of the U.S. gunboat fleet in the West Flag Officer Andrew Hull Foote, moved on their next target, Fort Donelson. About 20 miles to the east, it controlled access via the Cumberland River to the key Confederate city of Nashville.

Fort Donelson was a much more formidable target with its batteries of heavy guns aimed down the Cumberland and 20,000 Confederate soldiers. Grant’s movement on Donelson was held up while the gunboats steamed down the Tennessee and up the Cumberland to get into position. They also escorted steamboats loaded with new regiments for Grant’s army which increased to about 25,000 men. Meanwhile, his original army made the march to Fort Donelson in less than a day and began to move into place on the land side of the fort.

On his arrival at Donelson, Grant organized his much larger army into three divisions, and Wallace became a division commander, along with fellow Brigadier Generals C.F. Smith and John McClernand. Grant took Wallace’s old brigade and gave him command of the new 3rd Division. Grant’s trust in Wallace was reflected in the fact that his division was largely composed of green regiments which had never fought together as a unit. Wallace repaid that trust in spades

By mid-afternoon on February 14, Grant had his three divisions placed in a ring around Donelson with McClernand on the right, Wallace in the middle and C.F. Smith on the left. The gunboats had also arrived with the new troops and on the afternoon of February 14, made an attempt to suppress the big gun batteries on the river. This was not Fort Henry. The placement of the guns and the trained gunners at Fort Donelson inflicted immense damage on Foote’s gunboats and they were forced to retreat. It was up to Grant’s army. Wallace was eager, writing “[n]ow, now certainly, I will see a great battle.”

Jubal Early >>>

By Joseph McGraw

In the fall of 1838, only slightly over one year following his graduation from West Point, Jubal Early’s military career in the US Army was over. His time of service in the Second Seminole War in Florida had been unrewarding and disappointing to him. It also had hardly proved to be a significant training experience to prepare the future Confederate general for combat in the Civil War. Early resigned his Army commission and returned to southwestern Virginia to commence the study of law and lay the foundations for a life in politics. According to Early’s most prominent biographer Charles C. Osborne, “[g]oing to West Point had been a means of answering a call of ambition” for Early, but in late 1838, he “was quite ready for civilian life” even if that meant returning to the backwater region of his birth in Franklin County and “even if he had only vague ideas about what his role there should be.”

Following the advice of his brother Samuel, Early pursued a legal career and began his studies under a prominent local attorney and future judge, Norborne F. Taliaferro. Once certified by the local court and an examining board, Early began his legal career at age 23. This career would occupy his life for most of the next 20 years (with the exception of his time of service in the Mexican-American War of the 1840s).

As a new, inexperienced member of the bar, Early handled simple, routine legal work such as drafting wills and minor lawsuits involving disputes over small debts. Quickly he developed a reputation as a competent and, most importantly, an honest attorney. His fees were modest as required by the rural area in which he lived and the nature of his general practice. A legal career in Franklin County was certainly not the pathway to wealth but that fact did not seem to disturb Early. He even was willing to help poor clients or those in distress without undue concern for payment of his legal fees. As time passed, Early’s high standing as an attorney grew quietly. The origins of this standing were strikingly unusual for an antebellum lawyer in the United States, especially in southern and rural areas, where flamboyant courtroom drama was highly prized by the general public as a major source of theater-like entertainment. Early was anything but a flamboyant lawyer. He was most effective in arguments before a judge without any jury involved. Undramatic, closely reasoned appellate work was where he excelled. By Early’s own account, he had little talent for “popular speaking.” In his *Autographical Sketch*, he added that “I was never blessed with popular or captivating manners, and the consequence was that I was often misjudged and thought to be haughty and disdainful in temperament.” Early’s Civil War comrades certainly would come to agree with him on this aspect of his personality!

Wallace cont'd.

He did – courtesy of the Confederate commanders in the fort, who knew they were surrounded and Grant was being reinforced. They decided to evacuate Fort Donelson and march to Nashville. The attack came early on February 15, when an assault force of 8-10,000 men attacked McClernand's men on the right. Their objective was to seize the road to Nashville and hold it long enough for the entire Confederate army to evacuate the fort.

Slowly, the weight of the Confederate attack began to push McClernand back. Wallace had ordered his men to be ready to fight when he first heard firing on his right, but he did not, could not, move as Grant had given his three commanders strict orders to hold their positions and not bring on an engagement. Grant was also not on the field; he had gone downriver to confer with Foote. McClernand asked Wallace for help which he initially refused but after a second, more frantic request, Wallace decided to send a brigade.

In spite of Wallace's reinforcements, the Confederates succeeded in seizing the road to Nashville about noon and McClernand's men began to break under the pressure. The woods around Wallace's division were full of fleeing Union soldiers. Wallace decided to act. The enemy was driving forward in front of him and his green troops could easily give in to the panic around them and flee. He had no choice but to move forward to engage the enemy in order to blunt the Confederate attack and hold his division together. Wallace wrote: "Altogether that moment tested my nerve more than ever before."

Wallace found a ridge directly in the line of Confederate attack and placed his infantry and artillery as carefully as possible given the need for speedy action. When the first line of Confederates appeared in the woods, Wallace's artillery began firing double charges of canister and his men opened fire. Wallace's counterattack worked. It stopped the Confederate forward movement and gave McClernand's men a rallying point. They began forming a line behind him. Thus, when Grant appeared in the early afternoon, he found general quiet along Wallace's line.

Grant immediately ordered McClernand and Wallace to retake the ground lost on the right. McClernand deferred to Wallace who took command. Grant had sent Wallace his old brigade with his beloved 11th Indiana, so with them and two of his new brigades, Wallace drove the Confederates on the right back into Fort Donelson, while C.F. Smith on the left actually seized part of the fortifications. The next morning, February 15, the Confederate commander at Fort Donelson surrendered to U.S. Grant.

Wallace had done very well in his first major battle and his contribution was recognized. With his two fellow division commanders he was promoted to major general, the youngest in the Union army at age 35. But Wallace, with his prickly sense of honor and his sense of what was "right," made the huge mistake of alienating two important members of Grant's staff. Captains William Hillyer and Clark Lagow asked him to mention them in his official report of the battle. He refused, stating he had not seen them, and made a major mistake. This seemingly small action caused Hillyer and the rest of Grant's staff to turn against Wallace. It would have significant repercussions at the battle of Shiloh.

Gail Stephens is an historian and author of Shadow of Shiloh: Major General Lew Wallace in the Civil War and numerous other articles and monographs.

Early cont'd.

In order to increase his visibility as an attorney, Early entered state politics. In 1841, he won one of two seats from Franklin County in the lower house of the Virginia General Assembly, the House of Delegates, and served there during the 1841-1842 session as the youngest member of the state legislature. He was elected as a member of the Whig political party which fit well with Early's background as a well-educated, professional member of the southern planter class. (At the national level, Henry Clay of Kentucky was the paragon of this type of Whig.) Southern Whigs largely supported tariff protection for American manufacturers; government funding for roads, railroads, and canals; a national bank; and other economic goals vital to commerce and industry. They also generally opposed the expansion of the borders of the US, a policy position that did not prevent Early from later becoming involved in the Mexican-American War.

During the state legislative session (December-March), Early joined the Whig majority. Much of his work dealt with lightweight local issues that the state controlled. Among more serious matters were debates over policy and funding for public education and the financing and management of insane asylums. Early notably supported a state loan for the Richmond, Fredericksburg & Potomac Railroad. Finally, he strongly supported a controversial proposal for additional funding to support the Virginia Military Institute (founded just 3 years before in Lexington). At the end of the session, Early ran for re-election but was defeated in an election year that saw numerous Democrats swept into office. He moved on to service as a prosecuting attorney in both Franklin and Floyd Counties where he would remain until the early 1850s (with time off to serve as an officer of Virginia Volunteers in the Mexican-American War, the next significant chapter in his life).

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