



COUNCIL ON AMERICA'S MILITARY PAST - U.S.A.

PRESERVING, INTERPRETING AND SHARING OUR MILITARY HERITAGE

presents

The Persistent Preservationist April 2023

Editor's Note:

Welcome! This is Number 1, Volume IV of a three times/year CAMP newsletter featuring historic sites across the country responding to various challenges involving preservation in some way. Until the last volume, it was the Persistent Pandemic Preservationist. The Pandemic may not be through with us, but we are moving into a different era, where it is not uppermost in the minds of curators and park rangers, so I have broadened our focus here somewhat. Each issue will still focus on preservation at one or more sites. This issue features a Civil War battlefield in Virginia.

The original Persistent Preservationist was an excellent newsletter produced by esteemed CAMP member Col. Hal Youmans, USA (Ret).

Best regards — Nick Reynolds, Editor

Upperville, Virginia: A Young Preservationist Takes the Reins

This month your correspondent ventured out to a well-preserved and well-interpreted Civil War site in Loudon County northwest of Washington, DC to meet a young man who has shown us all how much one person can do for historic preservation.

The site is centered on a good-looking 200-year-old stone bridge over Goose Creek near Upperville, Virginia in a Northern Virginia Regional Park (<https://www.novaparks.com/parks/battle-of-upperville-goose-creek-historic-park>). The creek – and the bridge over it – sit in a little valley between high ground on each side. It is a nearly self-contained place, one on an intimate scale that makes it easy to imagine the fight that took place there in 1863; you can almost sense the Blue and Grey ghosts – one of whose bodies is said to be resting still in an unmarked grave not far from the bridge. The tactically minded can stand near the bridge and ask themselves what pieces of terrain were most important – high ground or bridge or both? In the run-up to the Battle of Gettysburg, the answer was both – as the Confederates were advancing north, generally towards Harpers Ferry, they wanted to keep the Yankees on the far side of the bridge to keep them from observing and obstructing the rebel army. (story text continues on following page)

CAMP is a non-profit, 501(c)(3) tax-exempt organization whose members are interested in the identification, restoration, preservation, and memorialization of old military installations as well as their history and traditions. All persons sharing these interests are invited to join. CAMP publishes an academic journal (*The Journal of America's Military Past*) and a newsletter on recent developments in historic preservation (*Headquarters Heliogram*), as well as holding an annual conference. Find out more at: www.campjump.org.



Your correspondent and Will T. Whitworth walking towards the bridge and the sign he planned and installed. Photos courtesy Travis Whitworth.

The text written by 16-year-old William T. Whitworth that tells what happened next:

Here at Goose Creek Bridge, Confederate mounted cavalry barely got to this spot [on the western bank] before Union cavalry and their horse artillery got into position on the far side. Elements of the 1st South Carolina Cavalry, the last Confederates across, were hit by artillery on the bridge; nine went down from a single exploding shell. The first Union forces trying to cross in pursuit were likewise mounted troopers - from the 6th Ohio Cavalry. Like their Confederate counterparts, there were in perfect range of horse artillery, that of Hart's and Moorman's Batteries of J.E.B Stuart's Horse Artillery positioned on the high ground you can see [behind you, to the west] above the parking lot. Well-ensconced Confederate sharpshooters from Wade Hampton's Brigade were positioned just below them. The Ohioans were turned back. Because horses and cavalry equipment were tremendously expensive and hard to replace, much of the fighting here was done by horse artillery, dismounted cavalry sharpshooters, and infantry. The Federal forces ultimately pushing across Goose Creek Bridge were from the 4th New York Cavalry, assisted by the 16th Michigan Volunteer Infantry. It could not have been done without the simultaneous help of three additional infantry regiments, splashing on foot across the flooded creek under heavy fire. The 44th New York, 83rd Pennsylvania, and 20th Maine would later become famous eleven days later at Gettysburg's Little Round Top. ... [In this region] both sides made considerable progress learning how to employ horse artillery, mounted cavalry, and infantry together for maximum advantage.

Next to the text is a wonderful well-labelled picture of a battle-ready cavalryman, in this case a cooperative re-enactor named Mark Dudrow who has collected enough period gear to outfit himself like a cavalryman in 1863 and was willing to elaborate on his equipment – what was important, how it was used, and so forth.



The son of a good friend, Will lives nearby and has long admired this site for its historic significance as well as its beauty. He wanted to make his contribution to its interpretation and preservation; it was an easy choice among the options for his Eagle Scout project. (A handful of Boy Scouts become Eagle Scouts by planning, developing, and leading a service project.) Will realized that the existing signage offered a good enough overview of the fight, but did not focus on important details, especially what it was like to outfit and employ cavalry.

The project was easier said than done. Will would have to research and write the text, get the text approved by two organizations (the Scouts and the park authority), raise the money to pay for the project by using GoFundMe, and, with the help of his scout troop, create and install the sign. The whole process took about a year, and required patience and perseverance. As Will put it, “There were a couple times in the early stages of the project where I had to completely redo and change up the project to fit the requirements for both groups.”

We preservationists would all do well to emulate this Eagle Scout.