

N E W S



THE HIGHLAND HISTORICAL SOCIETY

L E T T E R

Vol. 3 No. 1
Fall 1999

*Helping to Preserve the Past, to Enrich the Present,
for the Benefit and the Education of the Future*

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ANNUAL MEETING HOWARD KITTELL OF THE BATTLEFIELD COMMISSION TO ADDRESS MEETING

The annual meeting of the Highland Historical Society will be held on Sunday, December 12 at 3:00 o'clock in the Mountain View Room at the Highland Public Library in Monterey.

Howard Kittell, Executive Director of the Shenandoah Battlefields National Historic District Commission, will give a presentation on the work of the Commission and will unveil its plans for the McDowell Battlefield and its impact on the future in Highland County.

(See associated article on the Battlefield Commission on Page 4.)

All members are invited to attend, and are eligible to vote for the year 2000 Board of Directors. Refreshments will be served following the meeting.

Have YOU
remembered
to renew your
Highland Historical
Society Membership?
If not - please do -
We need your help and support!!!!



SOCIETY WORKS TO SAVE THE MCDOWELL BATTLEFIELD

The Highland Historical Society is in the midst of a full-scale battle - to raise the funds to save a part of the core McDowell battlefield area: The Bullpasture River Field.

The 25 acre field bordering the Bullpasture River comprises a major portion of the "viewshed" in historic McDowell, as well as occupying its vital position as a piece of the core battlefield.

When the property came on the market in early 1999, the society realized both the importance of the field, and its peril: zoned light industrial, the field was in danger of being lost to development. So the society took a bold and unusual step, and took out a loan from a local bank and went ahead and purchased the field, thus beginning the process of protection and preservation.

Some of the members of the Board of Directors signed on the note as guarantors, putting their personal finances to a somewhat severe test. Under the terms of the contract, the society has just two years to raise the funds to pay off the loan; if it is not paid off by then, the property will be put back on the market, and another piece of history will
con't page 2

THE HIGHLAND HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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1999 Board of Directors:
Diane Klein, Chairman
Sarah Samples, Secretary
Hazel Corbett, Treasurer
Tom Atkeson
George Bird
John Field
Elizabeth Hefner
Jacob Hevener
Janet Mullenax
Norma Varner
Lorraine White
Kathryn Wright

SAVING THE BATTLEFIELD (cont)

possibly disappear forever.

So, the society is now in the midst of a major fund-raising campaign. It is sending out letters to all Highland County landowners, as well as letters to people who are on the society's mailing list. All profits from the 1999 McDowell Battlefield Heritage Days went toward the loan - as well as those from sales of the maps of The Battle of McDowell, from the sale of McDowell Days t-shirts, and from the sale of the artist Bradley Schmehl's prints of "Reconnaissance at McDowell."

"We hope that everyone will help us in our fight to save this important piece of Highland's history," urges society treasurer Hazel Corbett. Donations - which are fully tax-deductible - may be sent to the society at Box 63, McDowell, VA 24458.

HIGHLAND HISTORICAL SOCIETY HOLDS Y-T-T

COMMUNITY INFORMATION MEETING

On Saturday, August 28, there was a full house at the Highland Center when ten organizations came - at the invitation of The Highland Historical Society - to an "Information Fair" for the entire community.

Named "Y-T-T" - for "Highland - Yesterday - Today - Tomorrow" - posters, balloons, free-handouts, information booths and leaders from the ten organizations were all present to inform the county about plans for the future. Each organization had a 10-minute presentation, followed by a question period; following the official presentations, each booth was manned by the representatives of the organizations to personally answer county residents' questions.

The organizations represented were:

The Valley Conservation Council, VDOT, The Association for the Preservation of Civil War Sites, The Civil War Trails, The Staunton/Parkersburg Turnpike, The Shenandoah Battlefield Commission, The Department of Historic Resources, and the Highland Chamber of Commerce. A week after the event, APCWS representative Robert Edmiston wrote to the society about the impressive turnout at the meeting: "If we had the rate of turnout at other meetings we go to, we would have to hire an arena!"



MCDOWELL BATTLEFIELD HERITAGE DAYS NAMED "LOCAL LEGACY" BY LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

The Highland Historical Society was informed in June, 1999 that the McDowell Battlefield Heritage Days has been designated as a "Local Legacy" by the Library of Congress.

The Local Legacies project is designed to document and pay tribute to the nation's rich cultural heritage, ensuring that future generations will have access to important "cultural snapshots" of American tradition, folklore and everyday life.

(cont.)

It will be celebrated during a special event at the Library of Congress in Washington in May 2000, to which participants and their U.S. Senators and Representatives will be invited.

Nominated for the honor by Rep. Robert Goodlatte, the event will thus join the collections in the American Folklife Center and be preserved by the Library of Congress for generations to come. Information about the Heritage Days event will be available to researchers as a representative example of the culture of this part of the country at the end of the 20th century. The Library will share select materials as widely as possible by placing them in a special section on the Library's popular website at www.loc.gov/.

BATTLEFIELD COMMISSION GIVES DEMO GRANT TO HISTORICAL SOCIETY

The Shenandoah Valley Battlefields National Historic District Commission awarded one of their first "demonstration grants" to the Highland Historical Society.

The grant is to replace the old, rusted chain-link fencing around the historic McDowell Presbyterian Church with an historically accurate split-rail fence. Work is presently in progress: the old fence has been removed, and visitors can see a completed section of the replacement fence in the area behind the church - which includes the Civil War Trails sign marker.

Authentic split chestnut-rails have been generously donated by some local county residents; in addition, the society is purchasing some rails to make the needed amount. Under the terms of the grant, some of this cost will be reimbursed. In addition, as specified by the grant, some local residents are donating their labor in the removal of the old and the building of the new fencing. This will satisfy the "in-kind" portion of the grant.

Setting off the historic structure, which was both headquarters and hospital during the Civil War, the fence is expected to add greatly to the historic appeal of the area.



Jim and Nathan White work to install a post in the new (old) chestnut-rail fencing around the Civil War Trails sign behind the McDowell church



"Reconnaissance at McDowell" by Bradley Schmehl

BATTLE OF MCDOWELL PICTURED FOR FIRST TIME

Recognized for the first time by a noted Civil War artist, the Battle of McDowell at last joins the ranks of other noted battles with the introduction of "Reconnaissance at McDowell," a painting showing "Stonewall" Jackson and his staff atop Sitlington's Hill, with his mapmaker Jedediah Hotchkiss, overlooking a McDowell filled with Union troops.

The well-known Civil War artist Bradley Schmehl came to McDowell during this year's McDowell Battlefield Heritage Days; using George Moor (whose impression of Jackson made such an impact at the event) as one of his primary models. Schmehl himself can be seen portrayed as the furthestmost left figure in the group, and local resident Justin White modeled for the fourth figure from the left.

The painting is one of a series depicting Jackson's brilliant Shenandoah Valley Campaign; the McDowell painting is the first in the series. Schmehl calls the Valley Campaign a "masterpiece of military strategy... still studied today." Other battles represented in the series are New Market, First Winchester, Cross Keys and Port Republic.

Prints of the painting were unveiled at the November Highland Historical Society Board of Directors Meeting. Chairman Diane Klein informed the board that Schmehl had made five of the artist's personal proofs available to the society to use in its efforts to save the McDowell Battlefield. (see associated article on page 1.) After the information was released in The Recorder, the prints were sold in two days. The artist then made more prints available. Mrs. Klein said that "the society is thrilled and extremely grateful to Mr. Schmehl for his generosity." Two of the society's board members are also purchasing one of the artist's prints reproduced on canvas as a gift for the future Highland Museum.

RANDOLPH HEVENER AWARDED 1999 HIGHLAND HISTORICAL SOCIETY SCHOLARSHIP

The Highland Historical Society awarded its 1999 annual scholarship to Highland High School graduating senior Randolph Hevener, class of 1999.

The society made the award based on recommendations made by the History Department at the school. Mr. Hevener was given a cash award and a certificate which reads: "Award for Excellence for Outstanding Interest and Achievement by a Graduating Senior."

Mr. Hevener is the son of Edmund and Sandy Hevener of Blue Grass, and is majoring in history at Virginia Commonwealth University in Richmond.

SOCIETY AIDS IN TEXT AND PLACEMENT OF HISTORICAL MARKER ON SHENANDOAH MOUNTAIN

The Department of Historic Resources, VDOT and the Highland Historical Society worked together to re-word and then erect a new historic marker - marker # W149, entitled "Fort Edward Johnson" - at the edge of the parking area on top of Shenandoah Mountain.

The fort, identified as "The Confederate Breastworks," was built and used prior to the Battle of McDowell, in 1862.

The Department's original planned text was inaccurate, and the society helped to correct the errors. Members of the society's board of directors, the Chairman of Highland County's Board of Supervisors Ron Malcolm, and Larry Curry from VDOT unveiled and dedicated the new sign on Friday, October 15.

Text on the sign reads:

FORT EDWARD JOHNSON: Confederate troops, the remnant of the Army of the Northwest commanded by Brig. Gen. Edward "Allegheny" Johnson, constructed this fortification about 1 Apr. 1862 to protect the Shenandoah Valley, the "Breadbasket of the Confederacy." Federal troops briefly occupied the fort after he withdrew to West View near Staunton later that month. With Maj. Gen. Thomas J. "Stonewall" Jackson's Army of the Shenandoah, Johnson's command confronted Union forces under Brig. Gen. Robert H. Milroy and Brig. Gen. John C. Fremont at the Battle of McDowell on 8 May. Johnson's ankle was shattered during this first victory in Jackson's famous Valley campaign.



IF YOU ARE INTERESTED IN HIGHLAND COUNTY HISTORY OR ARE DOING GENEALOGICAL RESEARCH, DON'T FORGET THE EXCELLENT SITE AT www.rootsweb.com/~vahighla/index.htm

Just a few of the things you'll find:

- On-line records of early Highland families - including 6,450 individuals
- Indexed queries and surname registry
- Genealogies of Highland Pioneer families
- Highland soldiers in the Revolutionary War
- Highland soldiers in the War of 1812
- Population per census year

A special thanks once again to Coordinator Pat Sheild

R O O T S W E B . C O M

SHENANDOAH VALLEY BATTLEFIELDS NAT'L HISTORIC DISTRICT COMM.

The Civil War battlefields of the Shenandoah Valley are an important part of our heritage. To many, Valley battlefields are "hallowed ground," honoring the memory of the thousands lost on those lands and therefore worthy of protection. That heritage is imperiled; the Valley is a landscape facing rapid changes, population growth and urban development - transforming the Valley's rural character and threatening the battlefields.

The 19-member Battlefields Commission is made up of Shenandoah Valley residents representing all sectors of the local community. The Commission was created in 1996 to develop an action plan to protect, preserve and interpret Valley battlefields and to promote tourism within the Historic District. This action plan will be unveiled and presented at the society's Annual Meeting on Dec. 12.

MCDOWELL BATTLEFIELD HERITAGE DAYS 1999: SUCCESS STORY FOR HIGHLAND COUNTY

from *The Camp Chase Gazette* - June 1999:

"...mark your calendar now for May of 2001." "Mere words cannot accurately describe the experience I had at McDowell. Yanks and Rebs and the many civilians will long remember this event as one of the truly high quality experiences of their reenacting lives. Two words describe it all: it was real, and it was awesome!"

On the weekend of May 1-2, 1999, the third McDowell Battlefield Days - renamed this year: McDowell Battlefield Heritage Days - brought several thousand people to Highland County. And the success of the event has echoed through writings on the Internet, in Civil War magazines, in local and non-local media, and in letters written to the society by some of the people who attended the event. In early summer, the event was designated as a Local Legacy by the Library of Congress. (see associated article on page 2)

On Friday, April 30, reenactors began filtering in, registering and filling up the Union and Confederate campsites. By Saturday morning, the little village of McDowell and many of its people stepped back into 1862, as Union soldiers 'occupied' the town, and the interactions of Living History presentations swept through the area. A brief time-out was taken as the new Civil War Trails marker was unveiled; it is located behind the McDowell Presbyterian Church.

Throughout the entire weekend, lectures, craft demonstrations, medical demonstrations, book-readings and book-signings, and more Living History events centered at the McDowell Presbyterian Church. Women in long dresses, barefoot youngsters in ragged clothes, and men in 1862 uniforms and civilian clothing alike all met and wove living stories for the tourists and visitors who came and watched.

Horse-drawn wagons drove continuously through the town, taking people from site to site - until the reenactment of the Battle of McDowell at 2:30 on Saturday afternoon. Led by "Stonewall" Jackson and his men, the Confederates at last swept the battlefield and the town of the "occupiers."

All joined together in a big community -cooked dinner, and socializing ended only when the weary troops retreated to their camps; quiet reigned until early morning when the reenactors staged "Jackson's Pursuit" - pushing the Union troops from the town. Period church services followed, and the rest of the weekend was filled with the continuing demonstrations and lectures, crafts and Living History presentations. All profits from the weekend went to the Save the Bullpasture River Fund.



Confederate troops fording Bull Pasture River during a flanking maneuver



Photography
by David Allen



Skirmishers clash in the early phases of the Battle of McDowell

THE HIGHLAND HISTORICAL SOCIETY



attn: Hazel Corbett, Treasurer
HCR 4 - Box 135 - Mustoe, Virginia 24465

MEMBERSHIP

Annual Individual..... \$5.00
 Annual Business or Organization..... \$25.00
 1999 2000 RENEWAL NEW
 Life Membership..... \$150.00
 Patron - any amount over..... \$250.00
Gift to the Endowment Fund for future Highland Museum.....
Donation to Save The Bullpasture River Field.....

name _____

address _____

city _____ state _____ zip _____ - _____

All dues and contributions are tax-deductible

THE HIGHLAND HISTORICAL SOCIETY
POST OFFICE BOX 63
MCDOWELL, VIRGINIA 24458

hhs Life Members

Lucinda Angle
Mary Ann Avery
Louisa S. Barry
Laurie Berman
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Clay Hamilton
Donovan Hower
Hamill D. Jones, Jr.
Rosalee Malcolm Siron
Garnett Rudolph Siron
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Dr. Bernard Tabatzenik
David Whistleman

please note: (If you have not paid your dues for 1999, you will notice a RED MARK beside your name on the mailing label. To keep your membership current, and to receive future mailings - and to have a vote at the annual meeting, your dues need to be paid no later than December 12, 1999.)

WE ARE NOW COLLECTING DUES FOR THE YEAR 2000.

Please help keep YOUR Historical Society active by continuing your support.