

Battle of Frayser's Farm

Frayser's Farm. Glendale. Nelson's Farm. White Oak Swamp. Riddell's Shop. Charles City Crossroads. Each is a legitimate name for the next-to-last battle of the Seven Days Campaign. The confusion in something so simple as the name sets the tone for any study of the June 30, 1862, battle and helps demonstrate just how

confusing the day's events were to the participants.

Over the years historians have agreed only on a few simple points. By any yardstick the momentum of the Peninsula Campaign had shifted when the armies reached the June 30 battlefield. Four days earlier, the Federal army could see Richmond and retained the initiative. Ninety-six hours later seven divisions of that same army uneasily prepared their

defenses on the roads leading to the key intersection at Riddell's Shop, nearly 15 miles southeast of Richmond. The James River and the safety of Federal warships lay less than three miles to the south. But aggressive pursuit by the Confederate army kept the Union columns from a leisurely march to the river. Instead, those seven divisions, representing four of the

army's five corps, lay scattered around guarding the three roads by which the Southern army might approach the bottleneck at Riddell's Shop.

At White Oak Swamp, two miles northeast of the intersection, a pair of Federal divisions blocked the path of a suddenly lethargic Stonewall Jackson. Well to their

The original Frayser House burned in the early 1900's. This 1880's sketch shows part of the farm complex, seen from the Willis Church Road. The Glendale National Cemetery is visible in the right-center, with the flag

> left (Jackson's right), General Henry Slocum monitored the Charles City Road and kept Confederates there from reaching the intersection. Still farther to the left, generals Kearny, McCall and Hooker eyed the Long Bridge Road and the direct approaches from Richmond. John Sedgwick's Second Corps division gathered in reserve around "Glendale," former

ly the Frayser farm but by 1862 the property of the Nelsons.

Whether or not R. E. Lee recognized the significance of the intersection remains debated, yet he surely understood that June 30 represented his last hope of arresting the Union retreat short of the James River. The 30th was Lee's wedding anniversary, and he spent

the day commanding his nation's largest army in its fight to drive away an enemy army from the portals of Richmond. Instead of Mrs. Lee, the general had Confederate presi-Jefferson Davis as his daylong companion. The anxious president had ridden out from Richmond to monitor the army's progress.

With Jackson stalled at White Oak Swamp and General Benjamin Huger inactive on

the Charles City Road, Lee pinned his hopes on the divisions of A. P. Hill and James Longstreet. Pushing eastward up the Long Bridge Road, Longstreet's men found McCall's body "Pennsylvania Reserves" shielded by a menacing line of artillery on Whitlock Farm. The

www.saverichmondbattlefields.org

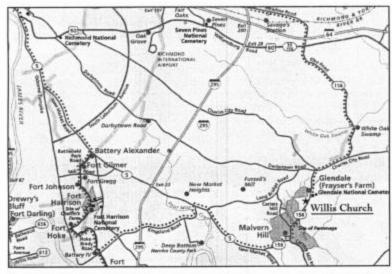


Annual Meeting Offers Rare Chance to See Whitlock Farm

As announced in the last newsletter, the RBA's annual meeting this year falls on Saturday, June 12. The Board of Directors has elected to hold the meeting on the Frayser's Farm/Glendale battlefield. The historical portion of the meeting promises to be rewarding for those in attendance. William J. Miller, an original board member of the RBA and a widely respected historian of the Seven Days battles, will deliver a talk on the penultimate battle of the campaign. He then will lead a walking tour of the battlefield. The tour will cover the southern two-thirds of the battlefield, including a visit to the privately owned Whitlock Farm, scene of the heaviest action of the battle. On that ground George McCall's Pennsylvania Reserves division crossed bayonets with Southern troops from the divisions of James Longstreet and A. P. Hill in a famous fight that resulted in the capture of more than a dozen Federal cannon. The tour will cover about 2 miles roundtrip, some of it through moderately rough terrain. Please prepare accordingly.

After the talk and tour, RBA members are encouraged to attend the business meeting, where members of the Board will talk about the status of the organization and answer questions.

Willis Methodist Church on Route 156 (Willis Church Road) will be the day's base of operations. Mr. Miller's talk will begin at 10:00 a.m., and the walking tour will end at approximately 1:00 p.m. The talk and tour are free to everyone and will take place regardless of the weather. The RBA will provide light refreshments during the day. Please feel welcome to attend, and bring any interested non-members as well.



This map (adapted from a National Park Service tour map) shows Willis Church.

Battle of Frayser's Farm

Continued from page 1

Confederates attacked. Their drive up the road precipitated some of the war's most prolonged hand-to-Men such as hand combat. Cadmus Wilcox, George Meade, Micah Jenkins, and John C. Robinson won accolades for their work commanding brigades on this field. Meade fell wounded while supervising his brigade in the fight for control of some artillery. The Pennsylvania Reserves finally broke. Longstreet's division fell apart once its energy was spent. A. P. Hill's six brigades took up the contest against Kearny's Union division. All of this action raged on a narrow front of open ground extending on both sides of the Long Bridge Road.

On at least one occasion the Southern infantry penetrated far enough east to see the Willis Church Road. Confederate possession of the road would have put Lee's men astride the Union army's preferred route of retreat. But the tantalizing target proved to be beyond reach. A line of blue-clad artillery stationed along the road swept the fields west of the Nelson House and prevented Confederate infantry from reaching the road. Aging corps commander Edwin V. Sumner, acting as unofficial army commander in General McClellan's absence, coordinated the resistance in front of the Nelson

As in every previous battle of the

Seven Days Campaign, darkness forced the combatants to end the fight. Jubilant Confederates counted more than a dozen captured cannon among their day's trophies. They also snared division commander George McCall in the confusing twilight along the Long Bridge Road. The Federals consoled themselves by remembering that their stout defense prevented any great disaster. The Willis Church Road, threatened but uncompromised, remained open for the retreat past Willis Church and on to Malvern Hill. Each side suffered casualties in the 3200 to 3700 range, for a total of 6400 to 7400 men killed, wounded, and captured.

Continued on page 4



A Cannon Speaks

In recent months a fine account of the June 30 fight from the pen of a Confederate officer has surfaced. Lieutenant E. W. Cannon served in the Sixth South Carolina Infantry of Micah Jenkins's brigade. Some of the better portions of his memoir are excerpted here:

"Late in the evening we were ordered to assemble...and charge the enemy....About this time Wilcox came up with his Alabama Brigade and asked which troops we were. He said General Anderson who was in charge of Division had ordered him to charge the enemy. We joined him and went forward at a run.

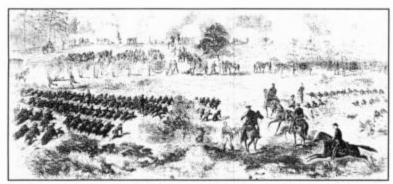
It is at this point that my experience as a wounded Confederate
Soldier begins. We captured all the
Artillery, and killed all the horses.
Some of the Artillerymen stood to
their guns and fired even in our
faces. We were now about ten feet
from the guns and those
Artillerymen who were not killed,
fled behind the Infantry and opened
on our ranks....It was at this time as
I finished replacing my large seven
chambered pistol, having emptied it
at short range, that my right leg was
broken by a minnie ball....

I had a perfect horror of being captured and although I had only one leg I started back with our line and kept up pretty well for seventy five yards or more, when from the loss of blood and the fact that my foot was dangling as I hopped, I felt like fainting and stopped and laid down. I was soon in the hands of the enemy....One crowd got my pistol, but they had already gotten the contents. Another crowd took my sword belt and appeared delighted when they saw S. C. Vol. on the buckle. I had on my hat the letters 6th S.C.V. which attracted considerable attention. They would see it and say, 'This fellow is from South Carolina, let's talk to him. A fresh line came up at double quick and halted about eight or ten feet from me. I had nothing to do but to watch them, they soon got in perfect line, dressing to the right. They were a fine looking set of men and appeared to be under good discipline. In battle, scenes change; I heard in the woods from which we

had charged a short time before, the old 'Rebel Yell.' I could see our men emerging from the woods with line broken, but yelling as if in a fox hunt.....

All this time the officers of this fresh line were calling to their men to be steady. The command was given to fire by file. This command was so different from our way of firing in time of battle that I watched Our line passed over me and drove the enemy from their position. Night coming on a feeling of helplessness and loneliness came over me."

[surgeons amputated Lieutenant Cannon's leg in Richmond. Just twenty years old at the time of the battle, he survived to attend the 1896 Confederate reunion in Richmond]



A well known sketch, executed at the time, showing infantry and artillery of Slocum's division blocking the progress of Benjamin Huger's division on the Charles City Road.

them very closely. It was now late in the evening and the cartridges used then was powder and ball wrapped with paper. You had to bite off the powder end and ram [the] cartridge down. Being directly in front of their line the fire from the burning paper was falling all over me. My hat was by my side, so many having examined it. My face being uncovered, a tall soldier with auburn hair and a large mustache stepped out of ranks, handed my hat to me and said, 'put it over your face to keep the fire out....' When the line broke I could not help raising up and giving a good old 'Rebel Yell, helping on the stampede. They were reinforced and rallied at the woods about three hundred yards from where I lay. I was now between the fire of both armies in an open field. I watched our boys coming at a run yelling for all they were worth. I then received my second wound another ball shattering my right hip passing down my thigh-coming out just above my knee. About the time I got through examining myself to see if the ball had gone through my body a third ball struck my good foot tearing the bottom off my shoe, but only cutting a line across the ball of my foot.

On Richmond's

is published for the RBA membership at P.O. Box 13945, Richmond, VA 23225. The web address is: www.saverichmondbattle-fields.org. The RBA is chartered as a 501(e)(3) non-profit organization. All contributions are tax deductible. A financial statement is available, upon request, from the Virginia Office of Consumer Affairs.

The Richmond Battlefields Association Board of Directors

Julie A. Krick
President
Derek E. Leake
Vice President
David M. West
Treasurer
Patricia Walenista
Secretary
Claude Foster
Scott Frantel
C. Hobson Goddin
Robert K. Krick
Don Pierce



Frayser's Farm/Glendale

Continued from page 2

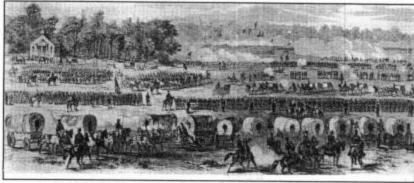
At that time, for a few hours at least, it counted as the third largest

battle American history. Malvern Hill would supplant it the following day.

The battlefield today largely unchanged. Individual homes and planned developments are springing all around the battlefield, but

none has yet ruined the primary portion of the battlefield. National Park Service owns nearly 100 acres on the battlefield's south-

ern tip, where Hooker's division fell upon an exposed Confederate flank at one point during the battle. But the frantic pace of development



A good view of the Battle of Frayser's Farm/Glendale. The sketch shows Second Corps troops facing west, toward Confederate infantry surging out of the trees on the Whitlock Farm. Willis Church (site of the RBA's annual meeting) is on the left.

has prompted the Civil War Preservation Trust to place the Frayser's Farm battlefield on its 2004 list of the nation's most endangered battlefields. The permanent fate of this field will be decided in the very near future.

v	_	0	ı	
1	ᆮ	5	٠	8

I WANT TO HELP PRESERVE OUR NATION'S HERITAGE, PLEASE SIGN ME UP.

			(Please print)
Name			
Address			
City	State	Ziq	,
Daytime Phone	E-mail Address		
Type of Membership:			
□ \$1000 Benefactor □ \$500 Patron	□ \$250 Sustaining Member	□ \$100 Active Member	□ \$35 Annual Member-
Additional Contribution:		2 .	- 14

Please return completed membership form with a check payable to: Richmond Battlefields Association Mail completed form to: Richmond Battlefields Association, P.O. Box 13945 Richmond, Virginia 23225



Richmond Battlefields Association P.O. Box 13945 Richmond, VA 23225



