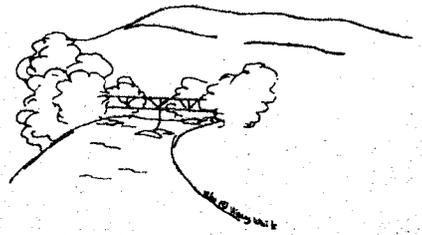


# Strasburg Heritage Association



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Strasburg, Virginia

## A Look At Jackson's Great Train Robbery

Slated for the June Membership Meeting

Don't miss the Strasburg Heritage Association membership meeting at the Strasburg Museum Sunday, June 13, from 4 to 6 PM! Strasburg's old train depot is the ideal location for this program! Guest speaker Arthur Candenquist's slide presentation is entitled "The Great Train Robbery or The Confederates Gather Steam."

It was clear from the outset of the War that the Confederacy needed to supplement its short supply of railroad rolling stock. In response, Brigadier General Thomas J. Jackson contrived and executed a brilliant scheme to "appropriate" the needed cars, locomotives, and equipment from the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad, which was under his control. Jackson's men transported cars and locomotives 125 miles across overland roads. This incredible episode in the annals of wartime logistics amazed officials on both sides of the Mason-Dixon line.

Arthur Candenquist will explain how the enterprise was executed, sketch the personalities involved, and examine the obstacles that had to be overcome in order to guarantee the success of the scheme. Such an undertaking had never before been attempted on such a large scale, and the Confederacy benefited from the Herculean task of hauling the rolling stock from Martinsburg to Staunton, where the equipment was placed on the tracks of the Virginia Central Railroad and distributed throughout the South. You will see Jackson in one of his finest hours and meet the men who masterminded this daring wartime exploit. In their wildest dreams, Jesse and Frank James could never have equaled the eccentric former VMI professor's "appropriation" of the Iron Horse. Join us June 13!

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## Aunt Millie and the Fishers Hill Picnics

By Doug Cooley

During a recent visit with my 97 year old Aunt Mildred Cooley Hammock and her husband, Statton, age 98, who live in their home in Front Royal, I asked her if she ever attended the Fishers Hill

Picnics. "Oh yes, many times, when I was a young girl," she replied.

Millie is the youngest and seventh child of my father's immediate family who grew up on their farm near Belle Grove. It was so near the Cedar Creek Battlefield that her father, Benjamin Cooley, when he was twelve years old, climbed up a tree near their home to watch the battle occur. A few days after the battle he and a friend went on the field and picked up rifles and other items that both Confederate and Union soldiers had left behind. He never forgot the horrible scene where men of both armies were being killed and wounded.

A number of years after the Civil War, the Fishers Hill Picnics were held annually as a memorial and celebration that the war had ended. Many families including the Cooley's, who had been close to at least a part of the war, attended these picnics on many occasions. Aunt Millie said she looked forward to this special outing each year. Her family left early in the morning by horse and buggy for the three-mile trip to the picnic grounds. A lot of food was taken for the family and extra to share with friends who would stop by for a visit. She said they went so often that her family built a special table on the grounds and it remained there to be used by them each year.

Aunt Millie vividly remembers the large crowds, the veterans from both armies in their uniforms, the brass band, and visiting with relatives and friends. She said they even had a merry-go-round there for the children! I asked her if she rode it but her response was no, she didn't, "It made me dizzy."

We visit Aunt Millie and Uncle Statton often. Whenever we leave we kiss and express our love for one another. I tell her that I will see her again soon. She always says, "Don't make it too Long!"

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## To be remembered is to live again

By Kathy Kehoe

Can you imagine? Picture in your mind a grassy meadow in Fishers Hill. It is August 6, 1961 and you are a child, curiously watching your grandfather mingle among the crowd, looking very important in his gray jacket. Everyone in town is there...and many people you've never laid eyes on in

your life. You watch them arrive by horse and buggy or by wagon and mules and you get excited every time you hear the train whistle and see the crowd descend from the tracks to the picnic grounds. You can taste the lemon freshly squeezed into your cool drink and your mouth waters when you notice the many picnic baskets. When your parents read the Strasburg News later in the week, they will repeat the headline back to you and your siblings... "The Greatest Reunion of All." But now, all you can think about is which you want most....watermelon or peanuts. You know that you want to eat it somewhere near enough to your grandfather so that you can hear him tell about the Battle of Fishers Hill. He and other elderly men are gathered around the spring and you know the talk is going to get interesting when you hear the words...." War Between the States."

In 1985, two life long residents of Fishers Hill recalled the Civil War Veterans Picnics as they remembered them as boys. Hughie Keller and Maynard Baker both still lived in the same houses they grew up in when they agreed share their memories with me. "Everybody looked forward to it for six months ahead of time." said Maynard. "People would come from Cedar Crik with four horses or four mules in spring wagons or buggies. The women wore bonnets and you didn't see no shorts." he said with a chuckle. He described "speeches, merry-go-rounds, lemonade, confectionery and watermelons by the carload."

Hughie remembered milkshakes made from raw milk and flavored with vanilla, chocolate, strawberry and pineapple. "Five cents worth was all you could drink!" declared Hughie. With a twinkle in his eye he told me, "Over on Cedar Crik, across the mountain, some of them would have as much as six mules. And some of them got over to the picnic grounds but they never got off the wagon. They had too much HOOCH!" (So there you go, it's when you fall OFF the wagon that you quit drinking.)

Hughie described the pipe stuck into the ground sprouting the cool spring water where people could fill their cups. One year his family was picnicking near the spring when a man stopped to ask if he could buy a glass of water. "Heavens no!" they answered. "Don't buy none. It's runnin' away by the gallons." Another year, Hughie said that the people who sold the cokes at the reunion put a sign at the spring with the words "Please don't drink this water. It ran through a cemetery." Before embalming was standard practice, this was not a good thought. Hughie remembered the music as Dave Keller's Brass Band and Charlie Lake and his boys playing fiddle and banjo. The Strasburg News reported the Timberville Band entertained at the 1904 reunion.

In the basement archives of the Northern Virginia Daily in Strasburg, is a fragile copy of the 1904 Strasburg News dated August 12 describing the reunion that year. A group of Confederate Veterans

named their chapter of the United Confederate Veterans after Major Jacob Stover of the 10<sup>th</sup> Va. Infantry who died at Chancellorsville. The paper reported that "Stover Camp, accompanied by the ladies' auxiliary, spent several days in extensive preparation of the grounds by decorating the speakers' stand and cabin headquarters with bunting and flags." Quartermaster Josiah Stickley made "ample preparations", and 7000 to! ! 8000 people attended that year. J. A. Coffelt made tintypes, Druggist C. L. Kneisley dispensed soda water, Mr. Will Miley sold orangeade, C. H. Estep sold ice cream and confection, and E. C. Eberly peanuts and watermelons. Fifth District Rep. Claude A Swanson, keynote speaker that year, was introduced as "the son of a brave and gallant Confederate soldier." Two years later, Swanson was elected governor of Virginia and remained so until 1910. He began by thanking the Stover Camp for the "opportunity to visit this grand valley whose natural grandeur is alone superseded! ! ed by the deeds of Christian virtue and firm determination of her people." Swanson noted that "the army of Northern Virginia was to the Confederate cause as the Tenth Legion was to Caesar and Nay's troops were to Napoleon. The arrival of the Valley boys never failed to bring cheer from the armies awaiting reinforcements, and how frequently were the small army routes checked by the invincible band from the Valley under 'Stonewall Jackson.' "No sacrifice was greater" than what the women and children gave up he said, "And may we never forget the fair women who stood by the boy in gray, the matchless and peerless soldiers." "I am proud," he added, "to be here to pay tribute in the midst! of ! these hills covered with deeds of patriots and meet the battle scarred veterans."

The Strasburg News reported that the reunion ended with the 'Rebel Yell' and once more the historic old hills sounded as of yore."

To be remembered is to live again.

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## Why a Battle at Fisher's Hill?

By 1864, Union leaders viewed Federal control of the Shenandoah Valley as crucial to Union victory. The Valley had seen little warfare since Jackson's brilliant 1862 campaign, and continued to produce a large portion of the food required by the Confederate army. Its southwest to northeast alignment made it an excellent avenue of approach from South to North. The excellent road system, including the hard surface Valley Pike, allowed rapid movement into vulnerable Federal areas - Maryland, Pennsylvania, and Washington, DC. Union General Grant saw the Valley as protection for the flank of the Union army operating against Lee in eastern Virginia. But

Confederate victories at New Market (15 May 1864) and Lynchburg (18 June 1864) allowed Early to dominate the lower Valley and raid Washington, DC, Martinsburg and Chambersburg.

Grant then sent Sheridan to destroy Early's army and the Valley's infrastructure. After Third Winchester, he chased Early back to strong positions on Fisher's Hill, where the mountains narrow the Valley floor to less than five miles wide. However, Early did not have the manpower to hold the entire distance in strength, so he extended his line westward with a thin band of dismounted cavalry. From his Hupp Mansion headquarters, Sheridan decided to exploit this weakness in the Confederate line, using Hupp's Hill to block the view of Confederate signalmen on Massanutten Mountain. On 22 September, Sheridan sent Crook's 8<sup>th</sup> Corps on a circuitous march which brought it in perpendicular to the Confederate flank while the rest of the Federal force made a strong demonstration on Early's front. The 8<sup>th</sup> Corps, again assisted by the Federal cavalry, rolled up the Confederate flank.

As Crook advanced, two other Federal corps attacked in front into the Tumbling Run ravine and up Fisher's Hill. Confederate Sandie Pendleton, who had served nobly under Jackson, was mortally wounded while trying to stem the advance. Early and his men were forced to retreat as far south as Harrisonburg, with Federal cavalry in pursuit most of the way. Sheridan then embarked upon the economic destruction of the Valley referred to as *the Burning*. Returning to the lower Valley mid October, Sheridan moved to camps along Cedar Creek, where the fate of the Valley was decided.

*Edited from The Battle of Belle Grove or Cedar Creek by Joseph W. A. Whitehorne,  
Compliments of Stonewall Jackson Museum at Hupp's Hill*



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## Air Force One Exhibit

The Museum of American Presidents is proud to announce the grand opening of the *Air Force One* exhibit on July 4. *Air Force One* contains many of Chuck Violette's most poignant photographs as well as artifacts and mementos gleaned from his intimate coverage of four presidential administrations.

Tennessee native Charles (Chuck) Violette began his career in 1974 at WLAC-TV in Nashville

during a major transitional period in the television industry. Chuck helped pioneer the skills and techniques required for the switch from standard 35mm filming to Electronic News Gathering (ENG) during the "video mini-cam revolution. By the time the major networks began investing heavily in the new technology, Charles Violette was a seasoned veteran in the field. Hired initially by CBS in New York, Chuck was quickly assigned to the White House beat in Washington, DC, where he spent the next 22 years, first as a topnotch videographer, and later as a still photographer. As you view the exhibit, you will see Charles Violette's truly unique perspective on the presidencies of Jimmy Carter, Ronald Reagan, George H. W. Bush, and Bill Clinton.

Come visit the Museum of American Presidents, *where history is fun!*

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## Confederate Veterans Reunion Picnics

By Barbara Adamson

2004 marks the 140<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Valley Campaign and the Battle of Fisher's Hill during the Civil War. These events are being commemorated throughout the Shenandoah Valley. SHA is pleased to be a co-sponsor of a unique commemoration: the Confederate Veterans Reunion Picnics held for many years at Fisher's Hill. These gatherings began in the 1870s and continued until the 1930s, drawing thousands of people from the area as well as out of town. While they were held to honor the sacrifices of those in war, they were also full of fun, food, speeches, music and visiting. You can read more about the picnics elsewhere in this newsletter.

Our commemoration is to be held **Saturday, August 7 at the Fisher's Hill Battlefield site on Battlefield Rd. from 4 p.m. to around 9 p.m.** Just like at the original picnics, activities will include a carousel (no longer steam powered), speeches, music and lots of food. Our period music will be provided by the Tuscarora Brass Band and Nordica, a duo that includes vocals and a variety of acoustic instruments. We will also have walking tours of the battlefield and the old picnic grounds (now on private property), exhibits of old picnic memorabilia and photos and living history provided by the 10<sup>th</sup> Virginia, Company K Re-enactors group. Food vendors will be on site though visitors are welcome to bring their own picnic dinner. There is no admittance fee. And there is no rain date.

SHA is please to co-sponsor this event with the support of the Shenandoah Valley Battlefield Foundation, Stonewall Jackson Museum at Hupp's Hill, Shenandoah County Historical Society, Shenandoah Preservation League, Shenandoah County and private individuals.