

ASM, Inc. Mid-Potomac Chapter
November 15, 2005
Meeting Notes

Next Meeting: Thursday, December 15, 2005

Time: 7:00 pm. – 9 pm

Holiday Party: bring a side dish and wrapped gift for \$15 or under for gift exchange

In Attendance: Heather Bouslog, Anton & Kathy Steuer, Don Dilworth, Jerry Glynn, Elsie Bergamini, Vivian Eicke, Don Housley, Jean Goertner, Jeanne Springmann, Sue Gagner, Jack Marshall, Vicky Surles, Jim Owens, Jim Sorensen

The chapter meeting started at the Thai Farm Restaurant in the King Farm in Rockville. After a delicious dinner, members drove to Needwood Mansion to listen to Charles Jacobs share his extensive knowledge of the Civil War in Montgomery County.

Mr. Jacobs began his presentation with an introduction to the Civil War in Montgomery County:

Montgomery County was perhaps unique in the combination of factors which affected its citizens throughout the war. As a county of a border state which could possibly secede from the Union and in immediate proximity to the nation's capital, it was subjected to early occupation by federal civil and military authorities. With its many crossing points of the Potomac River, it was a potential invasion route for Confederate attacks on adjacent Washington. In several instances, it experienced major "invasions" by Confederate and Federal forces moving through its territory. Its citizenry was split between sympathy with the Union and with the Confederacy, occasionally, and for the most part temporarily, turning long-time friends and neighbors against each other.

As a slave holding border county with many southern sympathizers, the county was assured of an early occupation by federal military forces. The homes of suspected pro-southerners were raided, any arms found were seized, and the owners were arrested on a myriad of dubious charges and imprisoned without hearing or trial. Meetings were monitored and the more vocal anti-Union speakers arrested. The local newspaper, *The Montgomery County Sentinel*, was suppressed on several occasions by the arrest and imprisonment of its editor.

In 1860, Montgomery County had a population of 18,322, including some 5,500 slaves and 1,500 free blacks. There were some 760 slave owners in the county with the vast majority (674) owning fewer than 15 slaves. Not subject to President Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation, Maryland would remain a slave holding state until the Maryland Constitution of 1864 outlawed slavery within the state as of November 1, 1864.

Politically, voters in the county were split among the several candidates for President in the 1860 elections. Of the 2,400 votes cast in the county, 46% voted for John C. Breckinridge, Southern Democrat, 47% for John Bell of the Constitutional Union Party, 4% for Stephen A. Douglas, the Northern Democrat, and 2% (50 votes) for Republican Abraham Lincoln. President Lincoln was still in disfavor four years later when he received 25% of the county's vote to 75% for George B. McClellan. Of significance also is the county vote on the Constitutional Convention of 1864 when 1,367 votes were cast against the new state constitution while only 422 votes were in favor of the passage. Statewide, the 1864 constitution would have failed but for the vote of Maryland soldiers then in the Union Army.

Compared with its neighboring counties in Virginia, Montgomery County suffered relatively little physical damage as a result of actual conflict between Union and Confederate forces. Considerable economic damage was caused, however, by the occupation of many parts of the county by federal forces camped for extended periods in the towns, fields, and forests. Damage

frequently was inflicted on the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal by both sides during the conflict, creating hardships on those dependent on the operation of the canal.

Politically and emotionally, the citizens were split in their allegiance to the north or south. The citizens of northwestern Montgomery County, with more social, economic, and personal ties to adjacent Loudoun County, Virginia, tended to sympathize with the south while the lower county was more evenly divided between the two governments. Many of the southern leaning men “went South” early in the war to join such rebel units as the 35th Battalion, Virginia Cavalry, the 1st Virginia Cavalry, and the 1st Maryland Cavalry, CSZ. Those who remained behind—at least the more visible and vocal—were periodically imprisoned in Old Capitol Prison in Washington as a result of their views. Conversely, a few pro-Union citizens were subject on rare occasion to capture and/or harassment by Confederate forces in temporary control of areas of the county.

Recovery from wartime wounds came relatively easily for Montgomery County. The comparatively little physical damage was soon repaired. Prewar friendships were restored, and returning Confederate veterans readily assimilated and, for the most part, resumed their prewar positions in county society, businesses, and government.

(Charles Jacobs: Civil War Guide to Montgomery County, Maryland, 1983, rev. 1996)

After the introduction, Charles Jacobs presented a Montgomery County map showing the Civil War troop movements and Potomac River crossings. As an introduction to November 19’s Civil War Van Tour, he emphasized the C & O Canal and certain areas near the Potomac River Fords and crossings: among these were the area around Pennyfield Lock* known as Muddy Branch, Violet’s Lock* (Rowser’s Ford), Potomac* (Offut’s Crossroads), Seneca*, Edwards Ferry*, White’s Ford, White’s Ferry*, Beallsville*, Monocacy Church*, and Sugarloaf Mountain, the area across from Harrison’s Island (the Battle of Ball’s Bluff.)

Regaling us with stories of the DC Militia, General Stone, the Battle of Ball’s Bluff, Generals Lee and McClellan and others, Mr. Jacobs made the Civil War come alive for us. We could picture 30,000 confederate troops crossing the Potomac at White’s Ford with their rifles held high above their heads, the Army of the Potomac marching up Rockville Pike towards Frederick, South Mountain and Antietam and see the small band of Mosby’s Raiders looting Richard Bently and Alban Gilpin’s store in Sandy Spring only to be caught by a posse of Quakers in the Battle Rickett’s Run in Derwood.

*Places visited on November 19, 2005 Van Tour

November 19, 2005 Civil War Van Tour

As a follow up to Tuesday evenings presentation, Charles Jacobs led us on a wonderful tour of the towns and fords that he had mentioned in his talk. We spent 4 hours cruising the countryside, envisioning the troops movements and crossings of the Civil War era in Montgomery County.

Note: To gain a better understanding of the Civil War in Montgomery County, I would seriously recommend getting a copy of Charles Jacobs, “Civil War Guide to Montgomery County, Maryland”, 1983, rev. 1996. The Montgomery County Historical Society sells them in their gift shop at the Beall-Dawson House.

Upcoming Events:

Sunday, December 4, 2005

Join the Richard Montgomery High School Volunteers in Archaeology Club

Excavation at the Palmer-Robinson Rockshelter

Time: 9 am – 2 pm.

Meet at Needwood Mansion at 9 am

(or meet at Pennyfield Lock between 9:45 – 10 am---call cell phone: 240-687-1035 or 240-687-1036 to get site location)

Contact: Heather Bouslog or Jim Sorensen at 301-840-5848 or

heather.bouslog@mncppc-mc.org

Note: Please call 301-840-5848 Sunday morning before you leave the house to make sure that the fieldwork is still on!

Thursday, December 15, 2005

Mid-Potomac Chapter Holiday Party

Where: Needwood Mansion

When: 7 pm – 9 pm

What to Bring: a side dish (Mid-Potomac will be providing turkey, mash potatoes, gravy, paper products and drinks) and a wrapped gift for under \$15 for the “back by popular demand” gift exchange!