



# The Signal Flag



## BRANDYWINE VALLEY CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE

Campaign # 21

Skirmish # 3

November 2007

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### From the Rear Ranks:

In keeping with this our speaker's topic this month (which is sure to be filled with great stories and "factoids"), I wanted to share with all of you some great "factoids" which I recently read in Burke Davis's *The Civil War - Strange and Fascinating Facts*.

Did you know.....

The first organized aerial psychological warfare was the dropping of Lincoln's Amnesty Proclamation behind Southern lines by the use of kites, a technique used experimentally in the Napoleonic Wars.

The first "aircraft carrier" was a boat designed especially for hauling balloons.

The first flares for marksmen shooting at night were calcium lights developed by a Major Edge, of Berdan's Sharpshooters.

A gun battery propelled by an armored locomotive in Federal Service was the precursor of both the tank and the self propelled gun.

The first "economic warfare" was used by the Union in massive counterfeiting of Confederate currency. Union printers flooded the South with the bogus money, its only defect being its superiority to the genuine article; printers went so far as to duplicate five-cent notes of Confederate towns and business enterprises, as a spur to inflation.

Taken from, *The Civil War - Strange and Fascinating Facts* by Burke Davis, Author  
*Gray Fox, Robert E. Lee and the Civil War*

*Mike Liddy, President  
Brandywine Valley Civil War Roundtable*



*~ Officers ~*

**President:** Mike Liddy  
**Vice President:** John Walls  
**Secretary:** Ted Pawlik  
**Treasurer:** Dave Walter

*~ Committee Members ~*

**Preservation:** John Walls, Bob Sprague  
**Nominating / Speakers Committee:**  
Vince Carosella, John Whiteside  
**Speakers:** Roger Arthur, Joe Lehman  
**Monthly Scribe / Trips:** Susan Mahoney  
**Credentials:** Bill Sitman  
**Greeter:** Loretta Thomas  
**Publicity:** Harriett Mueller  
**Historians:** Bill Sitman  
**Our Social:** Flo Williams

*~ Members at Large ~*

David Hoffritz, James Lawler

*~ Official Sutler ~*

Bob Sprague: Books / Periodicals  
610-644-0353

*~ Annual Membership ~*

Individual \$25.00; Family \$40.00; Student \$15.00  
(Full time student up to age 23)

**? Questions ? Contact:**

Mike Liddy  
87 Rittenhouse Place, Apt A-1  
Ardmore, PA 19003  
609-602-0483  
[liddy41@aol.com](mailto:liddy41@aol.com)

**BVCWRT Web Site:**

<http://bvcwrt.home.comcast.net>

**Webmaster:** Jim Lawler

[dtownjim@comcast.net](mailto:dtownjim@comcast.net)

**Signal Flag Editor:** Lynne Fulton

610-647-1039  
[fultonlm1949@aol.com](mailto:fultonlm1949@aol.com)

Unsolicited articles from our members are welcome.  
Please contact Lynne!

\* Our meetings are handicap accessible \*



**What is the BVCWRT all about???**

We were founded in 1987. According to our by-laws, "the purpose of the Brandywine Valley Civil War Round Table shall be to provide a congenial medium through which persons having a common interest in the events of the American Civil War - its causes and effects, engagements, personages, units, armaments and other things pertaining thereto may satisfy their interest and broaden individual knowledge through discussion, lectures, field trips and the exchange of books, paper and other data. The purposed is also to consider the preservation and protection of the battlefields, sites, landmarks, relics and collection of the period."

In plain English, we are an organization of diverse people brought together by our common interest in the American Civil War. This interest can range from the casual to the obsessive. We intend to tailor our activities and presentations to appeal to all our members, novice or expert.

**Welcome New Members & Reenlistments**

The Round Table welcomes our new members since our last meeting. Please welcome them and share your Civil War enthusiasm.

**New Members:**

*Welcome to all returning and new members!!*

*Chris Tyson,  
James Roach,  
Hank Fisher  
Olga Leake*





*Brandywine Valley Civil War Round Table*  
*Come to our next meeting*  
*3 October 2007*

**Speaker:** David R. Kohler, CAPT, U. S. Navy (Retired)  
**Topic:** “Whatever Happened To .....? ( The Post-War Lives of Our Favorite Civil War Heroes ”  
**Time:** 7:00 PM  
**Place:** West Chester Borough Hall, Gay Street

CAPT David R. Kohler, U. S. Navy (Retired) was raised in Chester County and attended Owen J. Roberts High School. He graduated from the U.S. Naval Academy in 1973 and served throughout the world for 26 years in Special Operations as a Navy SEAL. He served as Commanding Officer of SEAL Team FOUR, and his final tour in the Navy was as Commodore, Special Boat Squadron ONE in San Diego, CA. He holds several Master’s Degrees in: Strategic Planning/International Relations; Far Eastern, Southeast Asian & Pacific Affairs; and Latin American Affairs from the Naval Postgraduate School, Monterey, CA, and the Johns Hopkins University School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS). He has published several articles and appeared on the “History Channel.” Dave retired from the Navy in 1999, and returned to Pennsylvania where he lives in a restored 180 year-old stone bank barn and is in the process of writing several books.

Being a child of the 1950’s and 1960’s, Dave has always been fascinated by those “**Where Are They Now?**” TV specials about the post-celebrity lives of our favorite TV show child stars after they grew up – long after their TV shows went off the air. Of course, we all know that our Civil War heroes have been long been dead & buried. However, we don’t always know “the rest of the story,” to quote Paul Harvey, regarding their postwar lives and careers. Many lived 30 to 50 years beyond the end of the Civil War. In this vein, Dave has put together a light overview of the post-war lives, with lots of interesting trivia, of our favorite Civil War heroes.

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***Editor’s Note:***

*This month I am featuring General J.E.B Stuart. One of many famous cavalrymen during the Civil War. He was a highly competent soldier whose skills in raiding and reconnaissance were unsurpassed in the Confederate Army. He was Lee’s eye of the war. It was through his skilled reconnaissance that Lee was so successful in his campaigns. Stuart fought the largest cavalry battle in the history of the western hemisphere at Brandy Station in 1863. Stuart was 31 when he died, May 12, 1864 from a wound at the battle of Yellow Tavern. He died in Richmond where he was buried.*

**Minutes of October 3, 2007 Meeting  
BVCWRT  
Submitted by Ted Pawlik**

**The President's Report/Announcements:**

- Bob Sprague was welcomed as the official sutler. All proceeds from sales will go to preservation.
- Mike Kochan will be taking orders for shirts with the BVCWRT logo at the end of the meeting.
- The president acknowledged Bob Sprague for his work with the Round Table Telegram, Jim Lawler for the Web Site and Lynn Fulton for the Newsletter.
- The Round Table was contacted by Ellen Karmany of Immaculata College to participate in a History Fair on March 15, 2008 from 8 AM to 1 PM.

**Treasurer's Report:** There was no treasurer's report. Dave Walter was unable to attend the meeting this month due to a prior commitment.

**Preservation Committee:** Bob Sprague made a motion that \$500 be donated to the Chancellorsville Battlefield (first day) and \$500 be donated to the Franklin Battlefield Preservation. The motion was seconded by John Walls and was accepted by a vote of the membership.

**Other Announcements and Items of Interest:**

- Florence Williams announced that membership is available in the Sgt. Jones Bradbury Camp 149 Auxiliary. She can be contacted for further information.
- Dave Cashin announced that the Fort Delaware Society opened their new center, which contains a library with approximately 3000 volumes and has a meeting room, which can accommodate about 50 people. Their first program at the facility will be on October 16, 2007 at 7 PM. The speaker will be Justin Carisio who will talk on the experiences of the 4<sup>th</sup> Delaware Regiment at the Fort.
- The Civil War Museum/Underground Railroad Museum announced plans to move from their present location on Pine Street to the 1<sup>st</sup> Bank Building located in the Independence Hall area.
- Interest was expressed in a trip to Harrisburg to see the Civil War Flags. The last trip for this purpose was cancelled because of inclement weather.

**Speaker:** Ed Bonekemper, topic was "McClellan: The Failed General".

## **Reinforcements at Gettysburg - New Cyclorama**

By Edward Colimore Inquirer Staff Writer - Published: 2007-10-09  
Source: Philadelphia Inquirer, The (PA); 1220 words

*Reinforcements at Gettysburg - new Cyclorama, a restored you-are-there battlefield painting that moved 1884 viewers to tears caps an up-to-date museum and visitor center opening next year.*

GETTYSBURG, Pa. - Two escalators slowly rise to a cavernous circular room where visitors eye a colossal 377-foot-long canvas depicting the final moments of the epic battle of Gettysburg. Smoke billows from the land, troops fight hand-to-hand, and the dead are everywhere. This is the way the famed cyclorama painting was first seen in 1884. The four-story work by French master Paul Philippoteaux was the Imax theater experience of its time. Displayed with a diorama of fences and roads extending from the canvas to add depth, it moved many to tears. Now, the restored 12.3-ton painting along with a diorama are part of a new \$103 million museum and visitor center whose grand scale, like the battle itself, takes your breath away. Piped-in sounds - the crash of guns and the "vast mournful roar" of troops in combat - will help complete the illusion. When completed next year, the National Park Service building complex will house 11 galleries, nine theaters, and hundreds of thousands of artifacts and archival materials. "I started to preach this sermon in January 1995," said John Latschar, superintendent of Gettysburg National Military Park as he weaved through piles of construction material at the site during a tour last month. "This is a dream come true. . . ."

Designed to evoke a Pennsylvania farm, the museum and visitor center will have 24,000 square feet of state-of-the-art exhibit space, allowing more artifacts to be shown and more room to provide context than the current decades-old facilities. On display will be countless muskets, swords and uniforms as well as a portable wooden field desk used by Confederate Gen. Robert E. Lee, and a sapling branch used as a crutch by George Kistler of the 140<sup>th</sup> Pennsylvania Infantry after he was wounded.

The building complex also will offer amenities visitors don't have today: an expansive bookstore, computer resources room, library/reading room, and food area called the Refreshment Saloon, after the USO-style service during the Civil War. "Gettysburg has one of the most significant collections of Civil War artifacts and archival materials . . . in the country," Latschar said. "In our current visitor center, they're just moldering away. Now we have state-of-the-art and . . . those collections will still be here unimpaired for future generations." Latschar said the existing museum and visitor center outlived their usefulness decades ago. Storage areas in the bedraggled site have no heat, no air-conditioning and no humidity control, allowing artifacts to deteriorate. "We actually had to close some of our artifact storage rooms to our own staff because the mold that was growing on the leather goods . . . had gotten to a hazardous level," he said.

The Philippoteaux painting also was in jeopardy. After a long, tortured history that took it from Boston to Newark and saw it cut up and even set ablaze by vandals, the artwork was purchased by the National Park Service and displayed for more than 40 years in a cyclorama building adjacent to the present museum and visitor center told us it had five years more or less before we had a catastrophic separation of pigment from the canvas."

The National Park Service and the private nonprofit Gettysburg Foundation - which sought donations for the project - broke ground in June 2005 on the new 139,000-square-foot museum and visitor center. The painting was then closed to the public in preparation for its \$11.2 million restoration.

The current museum and visitor center - located along the Union battle line of July 2 and 3, 1863 - is expected to be demolished in about a year or two along with the old cyclorama building. Grounds now covered by asphalt and buildings, and once by 900 dead and wounded Union troops during the fight, will again be part of the uninterrupted battlefield landscape. "We will restore that land to its 1863 appearance," Latschar said. "That's the best way to honor the Union casualties on that ground."

As he entered the new building, amid the whirring and banging of construction, Latschar pointed out one of his favorite parts. "When the visitors come in here, the very first thing they see are rest rooms, which is going to cut down about 90 percent of the questions [Park Service employees] get," he said, pointing also to the site of a huge bookstore, a money generator for the park. Latschar and Robert C. Wilburn, president of the Gettysburg Foundation, then walked to an orientation theater where three 50-inch plasma screens will provide an overview of activities and attractions at the site and in town. Next stop was the Refreshment Saloon, where visitors will sample foods of the period. "If you like beans and cornpone, this will be your place," Latschar said.

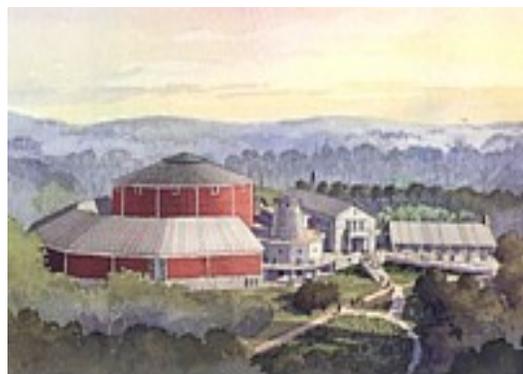
The two officials also passed through a rotunda where large photographic murals of the battlefield and town will give a sense of Gettysburg as it looked in 1863. And they toured now-empty galleries and exhibit areas that will use artifacts and films to take visitors through the battle, the Gettysburg Address, the Civil War and its aftermath, the assassination of Abraham Lincoln, and the preservation of the battlefield. But one of the greatest attractions was the cyclorama, where several of the 14 original Philip-poteaux panels have been rehung. One shows a self-portrait of the painter, standing next to a tree, sword in hand, while the chaos swirls around him. Another shows the Confederate surge at the "Angle" and Southern Gen. Lewis Armistead falling from his mount with a mortal wound. Armistead was actually on foot.

When the painting was originally unveiled in Boston, the Herald declared, "It tells, and in the most vivid manner possible, the whole story of that dreadful afternoon." "You have the illusion you're in the middle of battle," said Wilburn. "There's a canopy overhead so you can't see the top of the painting. The diorama gives you the sense of being there. There will be some objects from the period. This is the way it was done in 1884. The difference is that instead of escalators coming up in the middle of the platform, there was a spiral staircase." David Olin, chief art conservator of the restoration project, was overseeing the hanging of two more panels during the visit by Wilburn and Latschar. "It's exciting to be this far, to see the image come together," he said.

The visitor center and museum are scheduled for a "soft" opening in April. The full site, including the cyclorama, will hold an official grand opening ceremony in September. In the meantime, even amid the heavy construction, Latschar and Wilburn can easily visualize the crowds. "It's so close now we can taste it," the superintendent said.

Contact staff writer Edward Colimore at 856-779-3833 or ecolimore@phillynews.com.

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## **Anniversary of the Death of Gen. Robert E. Lee**

*From J.B. Hood Historical Society: obtained from Temple Website*

*By: Calvin E. Johnson, Jr. Author of "When America Stood for God, Family and Country." 1064 West Mill Drive Kennesaw, Georgia 30152*

### **Goodbye General Robert E. Lee**

Americans have always had a admiration for sport celebrities and the heritage of their ancestors who made this nation great. Free people are those who remember their past. Are young people still taught about Davy Crocket, Daniel Boone and George Washington Carver? Do you know who Robert E. Lee was?

October 12th, was the 137th anniversary of the death of Robert E. Lee. The United States flag, which Lee had defended as a soldier, flew at half mast in Lexington, Virginia and throughout the South.

General Lee died at his home at Lexington, Virginia at 9:30 AM on October 12, 1870. His last great deed came after the War Between the States when he accepted the presidency of Washington College, now Washington and Lee University. He saved the financially troubled college and helped many young people further their education.

Some write that Robert E. Lee suffered a cerebral hemorrhage on September 28, 1870, but was thought to greatly improve until October 12th, when he took a turn for the worse. His condition seemed more hopeless when his doctor told him, "General you must make haste and get well---Traveller---has been standing too long in his stable and needs exercise."

The rains and flooding were the worse of Virginia's history on the day General Lee died. On Wednesday, October 12, 1870, in the presence of his family, Lee quietly passed away. The church bells rang as the sad news passed through Washington College, Virginia Military Institute, the town of Lexington and the nation. Cadets from VMI College carried the remains of the old soldier to Lee Chapel where he laid in state. Many buildings and homes were covered in black crepe for mourning. Memorial meetings were held throughout the South and as far North as New York. At Washington College in Lexington eulogies were delivered by: Reverend Pemberton, Reverend W.S. White--Stonewall Jackson's Pastor and Reverend J. William Jones. Former Confederate President Jefferson Davis brought the eulogy in Richmond, Virginia. Lee was also eulogized in Great Britain.

When all settled down, Mrs. Robert E. Lee said, "If he had succeeded in gaining by the sword all the South expected and hoped for, he could not have been more honored and lamented." Many thousands witnessed Lee's funeral procession marching through the town of Lexington, Virginia, with muffled drums and the artillery firing as the hearse was driven to the school's chapel where he was buried.

US President Dwight D. Eisenhower knew and appreciated our nation's rich history. While President, Eisenhower was criticized for displaying a portrait on Robert E. Lee in his office. This was part of his response; "Robert E. Lee was, in my estimation, one of the supremely gifted men produced by this nation."

Robert E. Lee was the hero of the Southern people and admired both North and South of the Mason-Dixon Line. This Christian-gentleman's last words were, "Strike the Tent."

## *History Comes Alive At J. E. B. Stuart Birthplace*

*By Geni Dowd (Surry Messenger)*

ARARAT, Va. – In the days before the Civil War, the streets of Mount Airy were home to one of the men who would later play a key role in its battles. Jeb Stuart, an instrumental general in the Confederate Army, was born five miles from the Mount Airy city limits. Every October, during the first weekend of the month, a Civil War reenactment is held at Stuart's birthplace. While few know of James Ewell Brown "Jeb" Stuart and his proximity to Mount Airy, 150 years ago, he could have been seen strolling down Main Street.

"This was his hometown," said by historian Tom Perry. "This is where he came to church, where his family shopped and picked up their mail. I can't find any record of any time his family went to Stuart\*, county seat of Patrick County, except for court stuff because his father was a lawyer." Perry said there were many stories of women who say their mothers or grandmothers danced with Stuart at the Mount Airy Hotel. Even during the Civil War, Stuart desired to return to neighboring Patrick County and live out the rest of his days in quiet. "I try to tell people, he is the most important historical figure that walked these streets. Jeb is a historical figure. He almost changed the course of history, not necessarily for the best, but that's history. It's not up to me to say who is bad or good," Perry said. "Good, bad, or indifferent, Jeb was important."

Stuart was born on Feb. 6, 1833. His parents were Archibald Stuart and Elizabeth Letcher Pannill Stuart. His father was a lawyer who loved to have a good time, loved to drink, and was the life of a party. His mother, on the other hand, was "a very refined woman, intellectual, and well spoken," Perry explained, Jeb was one of 11 children, one child perished as an infant, and another died before reaching age 10. The Stuart family had a 1,500-acre farm, called Laurel Hill, one mile from the Carolina-Virginia state line, where they grew wheat, hay and tobacco and raised cattle. The farm was Elizabeth's inheritance and was where the Stuart family moved. Archibald was the fifth richest man in the county, surpassed only by the Reynolds and the Hairstons. "They were very prominent," said Perry.

"There's not a lot known about Jeb as a child," Perry said. Stuart grew up on the farm until he entered Emory and Henry College in 1848. At school, Stuart joined the Methodist church and became a devout Christian. He also joined the temperance movement. "He gave speeches on temperance," said Perry. "During the war he bought his men copies of scripture. He was deeply religious." Stuart was the eighth child and the youngest son. His career options were lawyer, preacher or military and he pursued the latter. Stuart went to the U.S. Military Academy at West Point where he graduated in 1854. Stuart wrote to his acquaintances after graduating from West Point, "Write me at Mount Airy, North Carolina," according to Perry. "It's like people today in Ararat, they drive to Mount Airy. They don't drive to Stuart." In 1855, Stuart was appointed to the 1st US Calvary and married. "He spent seven years total in the U.S. Army," said Perry. "He rose up to be captain and was a really promising young officer. He was stationed in Wyoming, Kansas and Texas." During that time, the "very political" Stuart, met Robert E. Lee and became friends with him. In 1861, Virginia seceded from the union. "Stuart resigned from the U.S. Army and offered his sword to Virginia," Perry said. He became commander of Lee's cavalry and a major general. "There were 10,000 men on horseback under Stuart". Stuart was a highly competent soldier whose skills in raiding and reconnaissance were unsurpassed in the Confederate army. He was instrumental in the successes of Lee's forces in the eastern theater, Perry explained. Stuart fought the largest cavalry battle in the history of the western hemisphere at Brandy Station in 1863. "Stuart was 31 when he died May 12, 1864," Perry said. He was wounded at the battle of Yellow Tavern and died in Richmond where he was buried.

"I've read every letter ever written by Stuart and he keeps saying things like, 'I wonder if we could buy the old farm in Patrick County.' He obviously loved this place and that's why I think it's important to preserve it. He wasn't a perfect human being, but he was an important one," Perry said. "He was Lee's cavalry commander in the Civil War. If the Confederates had won, he could've been President Stuart. But if he was going to die, he died at probably the best time—before they started sieging Richmond." Stuart is most notorious for the Gettysburg battle. "He went on a raid under orders from Lee and he arrived one day late. Many said that if Stuart had been there it would've ended differently. Jeb was

called 'Lee's eyes' and without Jeb there, Lee was blind,"

Perry said. "He fought Custer in a cavalry battle and they fought back and forth for the next year." It was Custer's men who gave Stuart his fatal stomach wound. "He lived from 4:30 p.m. until 7:30 p.m. the next day," Perry said. "He just became progressively weaker. He was conscious and very much aware of what was going on. The president came to see him and there were five doctors and five ministers there. Shows how important he was." Supposedly, Stuart's last words were, "God's will be done."

Perry said that the last owners of the birthplace were the couple who sparked his interest interested in Jeb Stuart. George and Icy Brown sold the 70 acres to the birthplace group. "Icy got me interested," said Perry. "They had a picture of Jeb on the end table and had always wanted the place preserved." The Browns shared with Perry the stories they knew of the Stuarts and the times in which Jeb grew up in. Twenty years ago, Perry began trying to preserve the old farm where Stuart was born and raised. The birthplace now owns 70 acres of Laurel Hill and has five acres across the river where Stuart's grandfather was buried. The birthplace is on the Virginia Civil War Trail as well as being in the National Registry of Historic Places. It has been preserved through private money and fundraisers.

The birthplace has only markers and signs to remember what was once an antebellum farmstead. However, it is a preserved park that is open for people to visit from dawn to dusk. Perry said many come to picnic and walk around or explore the trails. Couples have even been married at the birthplace. "It's set up to be a park and we just have the reenactment once a year to highlight its ties to Jeb," Perry said.

Perry's webpage about J. E. B. Stuart's Birthplace History is [www.freestateofpatrick.com/Laurelhill](http://www.freestateofpatrick.com/Laurelhill)

Learn more about historic Ararat Virginia [www.freestateofpatrick.com/ararathistory](http://www.freestateofpatrick.com/ararathistory)

Recent Surry Messenger Articles On Patrick County History.  
J. E. B. Stuart Birthplace Page 2 on <http://www.surrymessenger.com/Archives/9-26-07.pdf>



## \*Stuart, VA Incorporation (1753-1830)

The Town of Stuart was incorporated formerly as Taylorsville, Virginia, in 1792, in honor of [Revolutionary War](#) hero [George Taylor](#). Stuart has been the county seat of [Patrick County](#) since the county's inception from [Henry County, Virginia](#) in 1791. With the courthouse at its center, the Stuart Uptown Historic District encompasses the historic core of the county seat and includes government, financial, religious, and commercial buildings dating from the mid-nineteenth to the mid-twentieth centuries.



*The Stuart Train Depot, circa 1895*

## Antebellum (1831-1860)

By 1850, Taylorsville had grown to include approximately 50 dwellings and businesses. The 1850 census reported 18 households with 50 adults (including 29 boarders) and 60 children living in the area of the courthouse. Occupations listed included four farmers, two innkeepers, three merchants, attorneys, two physicians, two cabinetmakers, two saddlers, one harness maker, three tailors, one bricklayer, nine laborers, a clerk, a mail carrier, and a sheriff with two deputies. The Danville and Wytheville Turnpike, following present-day Route 8, was established in the 1850s. In 1848, the Richmond and Danville Railroad was chartered, and tracks were completed to Danville by 1856.

## War, reconstruction and growth (1860-1916)

Following the economic difficulties of the war, the residents of Taylorsville focused their energies on expanding railroads to boost the economy. The Danville and New River Railroad was chartered in 1873, with the line completed to [Martinsville, Virginia](#) in nearby Henry County by 1881. In 1883, citizens of Patrick County approved a bond of \$150,000 to expand the line. The first train pulled into Taylorsville in August 1884. With the growth associated with the railroad, Taylorsville was incorporated as a town in 1884 and was renamed Stuart in honor of Confederate Major General [J.E.B. Stuart](#), who was born 20 miles west of town in [Ararat, Virginia](#).

Following the completion of the railroad, the town of Stuart continued to grow steadily. The population increased 25% from 300 in 1884 to 371 in 1900. While occupations continued to center around the courthouse activities and the typical needs of a community, the 1900 census reflects the influence of the railroad by citing four railroad employees, eight salesmen, one insurance agent, one mining engineer, and one timber dealer. Five teachers, three hotels, two druggists, and two bartenders also indicate the growth of the town. The construction of the railroad led to the distinction of "uptown" and "downtown" Stuart, since the original courthouse village was situated at the crest of a hill and an industrial and commercial area developed adjacent to the railroad, which was located further downhill along the Mayo River. "Uptown" continued to serve as the center of the town with the courthouse, churches, school, attorneys' offices, banks, hotels, and stores. The two areas, however, were closely related and interdependent as is evidenced by the town's first telephone line at the turn of the twentieth century being run between the railroad depot downtown and the Hotel Perkins uptown.

## THE HISTORY OF LAUREL HILL

The land along the Ararat River was home to Native peoples speaking a variation of the Siouan language long before anyone related to Jeb Stuart ever set foot in North America. Artifacts from these peoples have been found and are displayed as part of the interpretation at the site.

The story of Jeb Stuart begins at Laurel Hill in the year of 1778 with the marriage of William Letcher and Elizabeth Perkins in Pittsylvania County, Virginia. Soon after the wedding, the couple presumably decided to go west in search of a new home. West in those days, generally meant Kentucky, so during this journey, which undoubtedly was most difficult, one could readily surmise that when they came to the foot of the mountains, and saw the beautiful, pristine stream that is today the Ararat River, they decided to settle upon its banks. It is possible that Letcher moved to the area to be source of leadership for the Patriot cause during the American Revolution.

Letcher, along with the slaves that he owned at during the family's occupancy built his home and began a subsistence farm. The names of the slaves that worked building and planting at various times have come down to us. They were: David, Ben, Randolph, Craft, Nann, Look, Abraham, Will and Dick. The home is believed to have been situated on the west bank of the Ararat River across from the site of Stuart's birthplace. There is no evidence that William Letcher ever owned the property, and if he did the deed was never recorded.



On March 21, 1780, a daughter Bethenia was born to William and Elizabeth Letcher. Tragedy would soon strike the young family, for on the second day of August 1780, William Letcher was shot and killed by one "Nichols" a Tory or British sympathizer. Of the many oral and traditional accounts of the murder, which vary widely, it is generally agreed that his murder was politically motivated. Nichols was subsequently apprehended and paid for his crime with his life. Later Elizabeth would take her young child and return to Henry County where she would later marry George Hairston of the Beaver creek Plantation, who was by all odds the richest man in Virginia of his time. By 1800, Bethenia married David Pannill, by whom she bore two children William and Elizabeth named for their maternal grandparents. Elizabeth would become the mother of James Ewell Brown Stuart.

Through a series of complex land transactions, William and Elizabeth Letcher Pannill found themselves the owners of approximately 1500 acres of land, which was to comprise the future plantation called Laurel Hill. In a series of land swaps, Elizabeth traded with her brother William, certain land she held in partnership with him in Campbell and Pittsylvania counties, and she became the sole owner of the Patrick County property.

In 1817, Elizabeth Pannill at the age of 16 married Archibald Stuart. Archibald, age 22 was just then beginning a career in politics and in law. After the marriage the family lived in Campbell County Virginia where Archibald was elected to the state legislature for the first time. In the ensuing four years, the Stuarts had produced three daughters and a son, none of whom were born on the Patrick County property. By October of 1823, Archibald had journeyed to Patrick County where he was granted a license to practice law, and may have begun arrangements to bring his family to Patrick County.

It is not certain just when construction started on the home that was to be called Laurel Hill, however most agree that it was completed by 1830. It was in this home that the first child of Laurel Hill was born, William Alexander Stuart. Six more children were to see the first light of day at Laurel Hill including the seventh child and youngest surviving son, James Ewell Brown Stuart, who was born at eleven a.m. on the 6th of February 1833.

The Laurel Hill home has been described as a comfortable, unpretentious farmhouse Unfortunately the home was completely destroyed by fire in the winter of 1847-48, and no contemporary detailed descriptions of the house have survived. James himself in a later letter described the fire as a "sad disaster". After the fire, Archibald along with his son Dr. John Dabney continued to live in the outbuilding that had served as the family kitchen for several years thereafter. Archibald passed away in 1855 and was buried at Laurel Hill, and remained there until 1952 when he was moved to Saltville, Virginia to lie beside his wife. By 1859, Elizabeth sold the property to two Mount Airy North Carolina men and the property passed out of the Stuart family hands forever.

In 1845, some two or more years before the catastrophic fire, James had left Laurel Hill and moved to Wytheville, there to go to school and work for his brother William Alexander. In 1848, he matriculated at Emory and Henry College for two years, until Representative W.D. Averitt appointed him to the United States Military Academy at West Point, New York. Graduating in 1854, in a class filled with latter day Civil War luminaries, James began his career in the United States Army.

James spent seven years mainly with the First United States Cavalry in Kansas before resigning in May 1861 to offer his services to Virginia. During this time, he would rise in rank to Captain; dabble in real estate, law and other ways to supplement his income. He married Flora Cooke, daughter of Phillip St. George Cooke, and had three children with her. In 1859, he was in Washington selling a patent of an invention to the War Department when John Brown's raid on Harpers Ferry occurred. Stuart offered his services to then Colonel Robert E. Lee and accompanied him to put down the insurrection. During his time in Kansas, he offered to purchase part of Laurel Hill from his mother, and sent money for a church in the community.

He would rise to fame as the commander of Robert E. Lee's cavalry in the Civil War, but his heart was always at Laurel Hill. He wrote while still at West Point that he had not appreciated how beautiful a place in which he had grown up and longed to ramble "over the dear old hills of Patrick amid all the pleasures of a mountain home for a lifetime." Stuart died in Richmond on May 12th 1864 after being wounded in the Battle of Yellow Tavern, but his spirit lives on at the place of his birth and the place he had hoped to return to had not the Civil War ended his life too soon.

The J.E.B. Stuart Birthplace Preservation Trust Inc. purchased the property in 1992 for the express purpose of preserving and interpreting the birthplace of General Stuart. The College of William and Mary performed an extensive archaeological survey of the property locating the remains of the buildings as well as other valuable archaeological information.

The Trust was able to purchase an additional five acres containing the grave of Stuart's great-grandfather William Letcher and the probable site of the Letcher home. In addition, the Trust has outlined the important locations with white granite posts connected by stainless chain as well as placing interpretive signs at each location. The graveyards have been restored and fenced with wrought iron.

To celebrate the life of General Stuart a Civil War reenactment is held each year on the first weekend in October. A Revolutionary War reenactment is held in the spring to commemorate William Letcher, an American Patriot. The fifth biennial symposium on the life of Jeb Stuart is being planned after the next Revolutionary War encampment, which is scheduled for the spring of 2003. Laurel Hill was placed on the Virginia Landmark Register in 1998, and included on the National Register of Historic Places later that year.



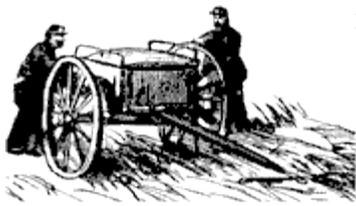
**JEB Stuart (February 6, 1833 – May 12, 1864)**

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## Membership Dues

*Remember to bring you membership application and check for your dues and give to Dave Walter, our Treasurer at our next meeting.*



## *Scheduled Speakers for 2007 - 2008:*

**Sep 5, 2007:** Dan Cashin - "Ben Butler"

**Oct 3, 2007:** Ed Bonekemper - "McClellan: The Failed General"

**Nov 7, 2007:** Dave Kohler - "Whatever Happened to our Favorite Civil War Heroes?"

**Dec 5, 2007:** Elizabeth Brown Pryor - "Reading the Man: A Portrait of Robert E. Lee Through His Private Letters", plus our Christmas Social

**Jan 2, 2008:** Dennis Kelly - Topic is to be announced

**Feb 6, 2008:** Chip Crowe - "General George Thomas"

**Mar 5, 2008:** BVCWRT Members - "Show and Tell", plus our Spring Social

**Apr 2, 2008:** Jean Baker - "Mary Todd Lincoln"

**May 7, 2008:** Roger Arthur - "The Importance of John Brown"

**May 13, 2008:** (Annual Banquet): Jean Edward Smith - "U. S. Grant"

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### **Brandywine Valley Civil War Round Table Membership Application**

Application Type: New  Renewal

Last Name: \_\_\_\_\_ First Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Note: Monthly newsletters are distributed by E-mail only.

Membership Type: Individual (\$25)  Family (\$40):  Student (\$15):

If family membership, please list other names:  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Bring the completed form and a check payable to BVCWRT to a meeting or mail it to:  
**Dave Walter, Treasurer, 937 Thorne Drive, West Chester, PA 19382**

**BRANDYWINE VALLEY  
CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE**

c/o Lynne Fulton, Editor  
144 West King Street  
Malvern, PA 19355

**FIRST CLASS MAIL**

