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WINTER 2009

NEWSLETTER OF THE J.E.B. STUART BIRTHPLACE PRESERVATION TRUST, INC.
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Look Inside For:

page 2

The President's Page
Newest Reenactor

page 3

What The General Wore

page 4-5

Stuart's Jazz Band

page 6-7

Reflections on a Year Past

page 8

Statement - Jeb Stuart IV
The Letcher Home

page 9

A Statement - Board of Dir.

page 10

Scenes from 18th Annual
Encampment

page 12

Membership Form

THE 18TH ENCAMPMENT AT LAUREL HILL

by Kris Rose Shelton



The 18th Annual Living History and Reenactment was held at Laurel Hill October 4-5, 2008. The event was hosted by the 51st Virginia, 1st Kentucky and 21 NC. In all three hundred and sixty living historians were in attendance. The participants came from all over Virginia and North Carolina. Terry Shelton, 1st Regiment Kentucky Volunteers served as overall event commander and David Cooper, 24th Virginia Infantry served as federal commander. Cooper's company brought a large contingent and together with members of the 28th, 6th, 26th and other North Carolina regiments "galvanized" to participate as federal troops. These units normally are confederate reenactors, but in the interest of having equal representation of troops, will often portray federal soldiers. A total of six cannon were present and several cavalrymen. Two complete military field hospitals, one confederate and one federal provided the public with medical demonstrations.

Saturday morning activities began just as the soldiers would have experienced. Morning parade was held and orders for the day issued. Following the parade a brief memorial service was held for Clif "Cannonball" Lewis who had recently passed away. Clif had been overall artillery commander at Laurel Hill for several years and his presence was dearly missed at this year's event.

The JEB Stuart Birthplace Trust scheduled a long list of period related activities, designed to be both entertaining and historically informative to the public. The living historians educated the public with demonstrations of military drill, equipment and clothing, but it did not stop there. These historians have a well rounded knowledge of the War between the States, its' causes, the men and why they fought it. Their interests enable them to be valuable resources at reenactments and many provide local schools with a rich, well researched understanding of civil war soldiers and their reasons for fighting.

The Saturday battle portrayed the initial contact at Gettysburg on July 1, 1863. Union general John Buford encountered Heth's confederate brigade in what would prove to be crucial in deciding the positions of the two armies and the ground they would occupy during the next two days of desperate fighting. Just as was done last year, the reenactment was staged to wage on both sides and eventually to the front of the spectators, giving them an idea of being in the middle of the fighting. When it seemed his men would succumb to superior southern numbers, General Buford was reinforced at the last moment by federal infantry commanded by General John Reynolds. this saw the confederates momentarily stalemated. Just as in the original struggle, "General Reynolds" portrayed by David Cooper, was shot by a confederate sharpshooter and the federal forces were forced to fall back before the oncoming confederates.

The 51st Virginia Infantry coordinated a spectacular candle light tour the following evening. Spectators were treated to sudden ambushes and an insight to perils the soldiers endured and effects on their loved ones and comrades. The tour was remarkably vivid in its' portrayal of the war's sudden and often tragic incidents.

continued on page 11

THE PRESIDENT'S PAGE

Once again it is my privilege to correspond with you regarding our progress in the ongoing task of improving and preserving Laurel Hill, the birthplace of J.E.B. Stuart. The past year was one of significant progress in both the physical grounds and our outreach programs. All of which were made possible by your steadfast support of our efforts, for which we are most grateful. The article herein "Reflections on a Year Past" by Board member Ronnie Haynes details many of the improvements made to the property and our community participation activities. I would like to thank all who participated in the construction of our new entrance graced by the stone pillars and the polished granite inlays. A picture of the new entrance is in this issue. I hope that those of you that have not had the opportunity to visit Laurel Hill will put this on your "to do" list this year. We are really proud of the progress we have made, and we want to share it with you.

We are most grateful to our contributors of this issue, historian and author Bob Trout who continues to increase our knowledge of the life of General Stuart, to Kris Rose Shelton who writes so marvelously of the reenactment held in October and we are happy to share with you a picture of the newest Shelton arriving shortly after our event. We are grateful to J.E.B. Stuart IV for his support, encouragement and advice throughout the year. I hope you enjoy our past president's article on the "Stuart Jazz Band" as much as I did. To all that contributed to this issue, my sincere thanks.

Looking forward to the coming year the most exciting prospect is that of the possible excavation of the Letcher home area led by Dr. Cliff Boyd, Chairman of the Department of Anthropology at Radford University located in Radford, Virginia. Dr. Boyd will make the final selection of the site chosen to be excavated sometime this spring, and will begin excavation during the month of June. The project will be undertaken by the archaeology students at Radford University. Since our Letcher site holds the promise of revealing a picture of life in southwestern Virginia during the Revolutionary War era, we are hopeful that our site will be the one selected. The article "The Letcher Home" in this issue by Board member Coates Clark provides more information on the possibility of finding the location of the original Letcher home.

Again, let me express our deepest appreciation for your continued support of our efforts to make Laurel Hill a truly national historical site. From all of us here at Laurel Hill to you and yours our best wishes for a Happy and Prosperous New Year.

With kindest regards always,

James A. Keesee
President



WHAT THE GENERAL WORE

continued from page 3

are stronger. Very little need be said concerning the sketch because so little of the uniform appears in the sketch. Only three buttons on the coat can be seen, two on one side and one on the other of the turned back lapels, so spacing cannot be judged. The collar is a lighter shade than the coat but no rank insignia is visible. Of all the sketches, this gives the least information on what Stuart wore.

The fourth sketch, done by an unknown artist, shows Stuart sitting in his tent at his camp desk working on some report or writing a letter. The sketch is believed to have been made while his headquarters was located near Fredericksburg in 1863 and was included in a letter to his wife, Flora. Stuart is pictured in a shell jacket with what seems to be light colored collar and cuffs.

The rank insignia of a wreath enclosing three stars is clearly depicted on the collar. Only the left sleeve is in view with just a hint of braiding visible. The trousers are of darker shading than the jacket and could represent the regulation dark blue that Stuart was supposed to wear. Two stripes down the left leg indicate his rank as a general. The boots are definitely of the dragoon variety and show how the back of the boot was cut lower to allow for the free movement of the knee. Spurs are strapped to the boots. This sketch is very well done and is perhaps the best of all in what it shows and the details it gives about Stuart's attire. The remaining two sketches will be examined in the next article on "What the General Wore."

THE NEWEST REENACTOR

Terry and Kris Shelton proudly announce the arrival of their daughter Caldonna Pearalanna Shelton who arrived on October 31, 2008. The proud father is the commander of all the reenactment forces which plan and execute the battle reenactments presented at the Birthplace each October. We all send our congrats to Kris and Terry, and look forward to seeing the newest reenactor this year...



THE 18TH ANNUAL ENCAMPMENT AT LAUREL HILL

continued from page 1

On Sunday, the battle of Cold Harbor was reenacted. The original battle was significant in that it almost cost General US Grant his command from public outrage of the very high rate of casualties his army suffered while at the same time started his successful campaign of attrition which would eventually carry him and the Union to victory. As the spectators watched, federal forces repeatedly attacked the well-fortified confederates. During the reenactment, a strange event which occurred during the original battle was highlighted. As a federal regiment advanced toward the fortifications it suffered terrible losses, when at last only the color bearer was left and he was unaware his regiment had been decimated. The compassionate southerners saw no pleasure in shooting him and stopped firing. They implored him to go back. Once he recognized his state of danger, he turned and ran back toward his lines.

The 18th Annual Laurel Hill event was a great success and the ground work has been laid to continue to provide better quality events. With proceeds going to the benefit maintenance and up keep of the birthplace. General JEB Stuart was a significant historical figure from Patrick County, Va. The stage on which his life was acted included the most critical period of American history and the stories of many noble and famous Americans, both north and south. With continued successful efforts, Laurel Hill living histories and reenactments will continue to provide Civil War enthusiasts with not only a view of Stuart and the events of his military career, but also a portal to see those he shared the stage with.

SCENES FROM THE 18TH ENCAMPMENT



*The Museum of
the Confederacy,
Richmond, Virginia,
Photography by
Robert J. Trout*



WHAT THE GENERAL WORE: PART IV GENERAL STUART: THE CONTEMPORARY SKETCHES

by Robert J. Trout



This article will cover six sketches made of General Stuart during the war. While others may exist, these are the only ones with which the writer is familiar. As will be seen they vary in degree of accuracy and detail, but all attempt to capture General Stuart in some fashion. Regrettably, due to a lack of space, it is impossible to print the sketches. However, most of them have been published in books and magazines over the years so that the reader has probably seen the majority of them a number of times.

Of the six sketches, three are definitely the work of Frank Vizetelly, who first met Stuart late in 1862. Certainly, the most well known sketch is that of Stuart at the head of a column of troopers one of which is carrying a bugle and another a battle flag. Stuart appears to be wearing a frock coat with the insignia of a lieutenant colonel (two stars) on the color. However, two stars is the rank insignia of a major general in the Union army and Vizetelly may have adopted that for his sketch. Braiding is visible above the gauntlet, although the number of rows cannot be determined. The trousers have no striping nor are they of the baggy variety, which they should be. A belt is visible but not a sash, though the tassels would be suspended on the other side. The boots are of the dragoon type.

The hat is a mystery as the plume is attached high on the crown and, except for George W. Neese's description of Stuart at one of the Brandy Station reviews, it is on the wrong side. Neither side of the brim appears to be fastened up, a Stuart trademark. From all we know, Stuart's slouched hats always had the right side pinned up by some device. The hat cord is also different in that it has tasseled ends when acorns would be more in keeping with photographic evidence and the remaining sample.

As to Stuart accouterments, a canteen and mess kit can be seen with the former suspended over the general's shoulder by a strap and the latter attached to his saddle in some manner. A saber appears beneath the horse, but no pistol or holster is attached to the belt. However, a saddle holster, presumably one is on the other side, is pictured. Though Stuart may have used saddle holsters, no confirmation exists from any other source, including the existing

saddle. As to the saddlecloth, Stuart undoubtedly used something but nothing is known about it. Obviously, this Stuart sketch has some unique features that cannot be verified by any other means. All things considered, Vizetelly here gives an incorrect impression of Stuart. It could be argued that the figure does not even look like Stuart. This is especially true considering the two Vizetelly sketches to follow. Romanticism rather than realism governs this sketch. This fact must be taken into consideration when evaluating any artist's work. What is portrayed is not always what actually existed.

The second Vizetelly sketch catches Stuart in camp with some of his staff and bereft of his legendary finery. He was not always attired in his "Sunday best" as it were. The sketch lacks detail, but is appreciated for what it does convey, Stuart at work. The famous shell jacket, fastened back, as usual, to reveal a vest, has the familiar and correct button arrangement - eight per side grouped in pairs. A hint of braiding appears on the right sleeve, while the collar ranking is absent or, more likely, indistinguishable due to the size of the sketch. No sash is visible, but a haversack hangs on Stuart's right side, suspended by a strap over his left shoulder. A belt is barely discernable and it requires a careful study to see the lightly drawn saber along Stuart's left leg. The trousers are of the loose variety and have no striping. Stuart is viewed from the front, which makes it impossible to identify the style of boots he is wearing. The hat again is a bit of a mystery in that it sports no plume or turned up brim. As with the previous sketch it is not in alignment with all that is known of Stuart's slouched hats. Again, Vizetelly presents some unique features in Stuart's garb. Unlike the first, there is no sign of the "cavalier" in this sketch. The soldier is seen and cavalry headquarters appears "Open for Business." The final Vizetelly sketch, what could be described as a formal portrait, is very similar to a photograph of Stuart that will be discussed in a future article. Vizetelly may have simply used a copy of the photograph for his model, rather than having Stuart pose for him. Arguments could be advanced but in this writer's opinion those favoring the photograph

continued on page 11

STUART'S 'JAZZ' BAND AND SAMUEL D. SWEENEY

By: JOHN R. BROUGHTON



Sam
Sweeney

The planets in our solar system must have been perfectly aligned on that fateful evening in 1862 when General Stuart first heard the magical notes emanating from the banjo of an obscure army private by the name of Samuel D. Sweeney. Indeed it might rightfully be said that it was the beginning of a marriage made in the heavens. What followed was an epoch unparalleled in the history of the Civil War. It added luster to the already burgeoning Stuart legend, and made the name of Sam Sweeney a byword throughout the Army of Northern Virginia. Before we more closely examine this unique relationship between general and private, a brief examination of the role of music in the life of an army is in order.

Music and the military are, so to speak, joined at the hip. If one could stand and peer down the long corridor of history and view armies about to be joined in battle one would, almost without exception, find musicians of some type urging their army, by means of their music, to greater heights of courage and valor. Instead we will cite a few examples from that great fratricidal conflict that enveloped our nation in 1861, to the present time. Music is a language that all can understand from the lowest private to the loftiest general. It raises morale with its stirring marches, it consoles the homesick soldier who sang its songs around countless campfires, it provided entertainment for weary battle worn soldiers and it comforted those who grieved. From the Civil War period, such tunes as "The Bonnie Blue Flag", "Dixie", and "The Battle Hymn of the Republic" and countless others like them provided the quick step, that feeling of invincibility so treasured by battlefield commanders. The sad and mournful tunes of that war such as "Lorena" and "Just Before the Battle, Mother" sung by men who well knew that tomorrow they may be numbered among the slain. We think of the soggy and disease ridden trenches of World War I in France, where amidst constant shelling, one would find men singing "It's a Long, Long Way to Tipperary", and "Madamoselle from Armeniteres" which raised their spirits and their will to fight. The music of World War II is voluminous, abounding with sentimental, patriotic and martial type songs throughout that great conflict.

And, to add a personal note, it is now nearly sixty years since I, as a young airman, marched across the tarmac of Lackland Air Force Base in honor of some now long forgotten general's retirement. What was not forgotten about that day was, as my flight approached the reviewing stand, the band began playing John Phillip Souza's great march "The Stars and Stripes Forever" which put a lump in my throat, straightened my shoulders a little more, and more importantly made me realize that I was a very small part of something far greater than myself, a concept that beforehand I had not considered. Such was the role of music and the military. Surely, this transformation of young, inexperienced men into soldiers with the help of such music was not lost on General Stuart as he had marched on the plains of West Point for four years, and had passed in review hundreds of times during his career in the United States Army. Nor was the concept lost on the United States Army which in 1862 had spent four million dollars to support six hundred and eighteen bands, one for every forty one soldiers in service. Thus that fateful meeting in 1862 was destined to provide one of the most unique relationships of that war.

The retelling of this unique relationship should, perhaps, begin by bringing to the forefront two important points. First, that young Samuel Sweeney was not an itinerant, backwoods banjo picker that General Stuart rescued from obscurity, but rather was an experienced, accomplished musician. And secondly, the musical background of the Sweeney family must be briefly examined to underscore the former assertion. John and Tabitha Sweeney produced four children of unusual musical ability. The first, Joel Walker born in 1810, Richard Alexander born in 1818, Samuel Decatur born in 1832 and a daughter Missouri whose birth date is unknown. The leader of this musical family was Joel Walker who, on the family farm, situated adjacent to the hamlet of Appomattox Court House, Virginia, was an apt student of the black farm workers from whom he learned to play a crude form of the banjo. He began to play, sing and dance and imitate animals in the manner his Negro friends did in their performances in the barnyard. It was not long before he began to perform in public wherever an audience gathered at county court sessions,

A STATEMENT

By: THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS
J.E.B. STUART PRESERVATION TRUST INC.

The Board of Directors of the J.E.B. Stuart Birthplace Preservation Trust would like to thank everyone who continues to support the preservation of Laurel Hill. It is our mission and responsibility to preserve the history of the site and the man that made it famous, J.E.B. Stuart. Over the last year or so, a former board member has made incorrect statements on his "blog" and website about the Trust, which we find disheartening and unproductive to the overall mission. We have never publicly addressed the statements and it is our desire to "take the high road." We do not wish to make a statement now, but have reluctantly agreed to do so only after much thought and debate. We felt that in the interest of Laurel Hill and Patrick County in general we chose to respond in this manner.

This individual has not been a part of this organization for over ten years and it is unclear why this person has decided to make inappropriate comments that only serve to injure the community at large. We, as a Board, totally refute these comments. The public at large knows the value of our activities and we will continue to work for the enhancement of Laurel Hill and Patrick County. We do not engage in unfounded accusations and will not begin here.

What we will do is give you factual information and decide for yourself what are the true facts. Truth can only prevail then. We will enclose in the newsletter a copy of a letter from J.E.B. Stuart IV, which fully supports the Trust and recognizes

and recognizes the importance of preserving Laurel Hill as Patrick County's historical treasure. All of our activities go to support the site and this will continue. Recently, we had one of our most successful reenactments. We are currently planning another exciting activity, the Highland Games at Laurel Hill. These activities not only help with the preservation of Laurel Hill but also bring tourism dollars to the area. Many individuals that attend came from out-of-state from as far away as Arizona and Florida. One couple was visiting the country from Germany and had made Laurel Hill one of their locations to visit.

The Trust wants you to know that we fully support an open and honest system of accountability. To that end, we invite anyone to call or visit our website. Talk with board members and find out about us. This is an important resource that cannot afford to be lost. "Blogging" is a new phenomenon in our society and the American consumer of this information should find out the facts and not rely on inaccurate statements that seek to damage groups or individuals. We hope that this statement gives you, the supporter an understanding of our position. We hope for and desire your continued support with the preservation of Laurel Hill. Upon learning of the mortal wounding of General Stuart, Robert E. Lee made these statements - General Stuart has been mortally wounded - a most valuable and able officer." Then he added, "He never brought me a piece of false information" Let us all be valuable and able and never bring pieces of false information.



L-R John Broughton, Brian Jessup, Shirley Keene, Amy Sawyers, Coates Clark, Chris Corbett, Richard Murray, James Epperson, Ronnie Haynes, Lester Harrell, Kneeling Dr. James Keese. Not pictured: Dr. Roger Morris, Chip Slate, Peggy Iroler, Tom Bishop, Mike Pendleton, Jonathan Large

STATEMENT

By: J.E.B. STUART IV, Great-Grandson of Major General J.E.B. Stuart C.S.A.

It is with great pleasure that I communicate with you my knowledge of the administration of Laurel Hill, the birthplace and boyhood home of my great- grandfather, General Stuart, as conducted by the Board of Directors of the J.E.B. Stuart Birthplace Preservation Trust Inc. The task undertaken by this organization to transform what essentially had become a subsistence farm over the many years that have passed since my great-grandmother sold the property in 1859. into what is today an historic site, open to the public, was truly a monumental one. Over the past nearly two decades, the men and women of this organization have by their unceasing dedication wrought a minor miracle. With no public funding, the Trust has managed year by year to improve the physical appearance of Laurel Hill. With such milestones as the archaeological survey of the property by the College of William and Mary, the placement of the property on the Virginia Landmarks Register and the National Register of Historic Places, the construction of the Stuart Pavilion with its exquisite series of interpretive signs by the renowned Stuart author Robert J. Trout, to the more mundane paving of its interior roads, the Trust has consistently striven with but one goal in mind to transform Laurel Hill into a permanent memorial to a great American soldier. I welcome this opportunity to express my gratitude, on behalf of the Stuart family, to these men and women of the Trust who have given so much of their time and talents to this great quest. The integrity of this organization is of the highest caliber, its devotion to its mission is unquestioned, and as a result the day is not far off when Laurel Hill will take its rightful place as one of America's finest landmarks. Signed: Colonel J.E.B. Stuart IV (USA Ret.)

THE LETCHER HOME

SOLVING THE MYSTERY OF ITS LOCATION
BY: COATES CLARK

One of the most enduring mysteries surrounding the tragically short residence of William Letcher and his family on the banks of the Ararat River opposite present day Laurel Hill is that of the location of the original Letcher home. In the year 1778, at the height of the American Revolution, William Letcher and Elizabeth Perkins were wed, and shortly afterward left in search of a suitable location to establish their home together. Little is known as to why they selected this particular site to build their home, nor is there any existing evidence to demonstrate that they ever owned the property. But whether they were squatters on the land, or simply never undertook the rather long trip that was required to file a deed in what was then Henry County, it is a certainty that their home existed somewhere on the property now owned by the J.E.B. Stuart Birthplace Preservation Trust Inc. Shortly before Mr. Letcher's untimely death in 1780, the couple was blessed with the birth of a daughter whom they named Bethenia. Mr. Letcher was widely known as an advocate of the patriot cause for independence from Great Britain and was constantly under threat of harm from neighboring Tories. In August of 1780, Mr. Letcher was foully murdered by a Tory by the name of "Nichols" who was later apprehended and executed for his crime. Shortly thereafter Elizabeth and her new baby left the home in the company of one George Hairston whom she later married and settled in a new home "Berry Hill" in present day Henry County. In late 1799 or early 1800, Bethenia married David Pannill and they were the parents of two children, Elizabeth Letcher Pannill and William Letcher Pannill, named for their maternal grand-parents. Later Elizabeth was to marry Archibald Stuart and became the mother of James Ewell Brown Stuart of Civil War fame. William Letcher was buried on the property now owned by the Trust, and the grave site is maintained by the Trust. The grave is the oldest known marked grave in Patrick County and may be visited by the public.

The Stuart family arrived about 1825 to settle on the property inherited by Elizabeth Letcher Stuart later to be named Laurel Hill. It is believed that they resided in the old Letcher home until about 1830 when the new Stuart home was completed across the Ararat River. There is no historical evidence as to the location or the final fate of the Letcher home. About 1905, a house was built on the property by one John Mitchell which continues in existence to this day. Whether or not the house built by John Mitchell was erected on the foundation of the old Letcher home is not known. Thus, the mystery of the location of the Letcher home remains, at least until now.

On December 3rd, 2008, the Letcher site was visited by Dr. Cliff Boyd, Professor of Anthropology at Radford University located in Radford, Virginia. The purpose of Dr. Boyd's visit was to evaluate this site, along with other historic sites in the region, one of which will be selected for examination and excavation by the archaeology students at Radford University under the tutelage of Dr. Boyd in June of 2009. Should the Letcher site be selected for examination, it may well reveal a picture of rural Virginia during the Revolutionary War period as well as that of the later period of occupancy by the Stuart family, and will, perhaps, write a final chapter to the long unresolved question of where the Letcher home actually stood. Present day archaeological practices are a far cry from those used over a century ago. Today's archaeologist has strong connections to both sociology and the humanities as well as such tools as sub-surface radar which can detect anomalies in the ground without the turning of a single shovel of soil. All of these tools will be brought to bear should it be our good fortune to be selected as next year's site for Dr. Boyd and his team to bring the past to the present. The summer edition of your newsletter will bring the answer.

holidays and the like. He became the star of a small circus that toured Virginia and North Carolina for several years. Next, he invaded the northern states playing in New York and many of the larger cities along the northeast corridor. He soon became a national celebrity. Now, at the height of his career he went to England where he and his troupe played in the music halls of that country to overflowing audiences. This trip was culminated by a command performance before Her Majesty, Queen Victoria of England. He returned to the United States, relatively wealthy and with every intention of retiring from the business. However, show business was in his blood, and about 1845 he formed a new group called "Old Joe's Minstrels" using his younger brother Sam on the banjo, brother Richard on the bass, and a cousin Bob Sweeney a left handed fiddler, along with Negro dancers from his area. They were an overnight sensation. They continued touring until the deaths of both Joel and Richard in 1860 brought an end to their musical group. Joel was recognized as the "father of American minstrelsy" a title richly deserved.

By this time, war clouds gathered over the nation, and the country was plunged into Civil War by April of 1861. It was not until 1862 that Samuel Sweeney joined the Confederate Army. Records reveal that he enlisted as a private in Company H (Appomattox Rangers), Second Regiment, Virginia Cavalry on January 12, 1862 at Centerville, Virginia. This placed Sweeney under the command of Colonel T.T. Munford, who quickly became aware of his musical talent and permitted Sweeney

to entertain the troops of the Second Regiment. Sometime in 1862, the Second Regiment was visited by its commander J.E.B. Stuart who heard Sweeney play and from that moment on the general would not rest until he had secured the transfer of Sweeney to his headquarters. The words of Colonel Munford tell the story. "Stuart's feet would shuffle whenever he was in Sweeney's presence, or even at the calling of his name. He issued an order for him to report at his quarters and detained

him. It was a right he enjoyed but not very pleasant to me or my regiment." Esten Cooke liked to tease Munford about his loss: "why don't you come over and enjoy our music, Colonel?" Munford raged helplessly. Sam Sweeney's personality was much the same as his fun loving general and for the short remainder of his life he followed the dashing cavalier playing and singing the songs that he and his brothers performed for many thousands of people. Wherever Stuart went, Sweeney was not far behind, his banjo ready. Among Stuart's favorite songs were: Her Bright Eyes Haunt Me Still, The Corn Top's Ripe, Lorena, Alabama, Alabama and inevitably the anthem of the gray cavalry, Jine the Cavalry. Sweeney's music made Stuart's headquarters the most popular in the army, and there was always a contingent of pretty women to enliven the festivities. Sweeney, the fiddle players and the dancers were inseparable from Stuart's headquarters and were an important part of the morale of the mounted troops. Robert E. Lee also recognized the value of such entertainment, once saying "I don't see how we could have an army without music." This kind of entertainment lasted until the end. Sam Sweeney died on January 13, 1864 of smallpox at Orange Court House, Virginia. He was followed in death by his beloved commander in May of the same year. The remains of the band were transferred to Stuart's successor, Fitzhugh Lee, its days of fame were past.

The author of this article happily acknowledges his indebtness to the late, great historian and author, Mr. Burke Davis for the historical facts contained herein.



This drawing by Frank Vizetelly appeared in the "Illustrated London News" in 1862 and depicts Sam Sweeney (seated in tent) playing the banjo at General Stuarts, Headquarters.



REFLECTIONS ON A YEAR PAST

By: Ronnie Haynes

On October 26, the Board of Directors of the J.E.B. Stuart Birthplace Preservation Trust held their final meeting of 2008 at the mountain home of William and Coates Clark near Lover's Leap in Patrick County, Virginia. The Clark home along with Stuart's birthplace near Ararat, share the name of Laurel Hill. This mountaintop home with all of the fall colors beginning to appear offered magnificent views of the ridges and valleys of southern Patrick County into North Carolina as far as the eye could see. The day offered the perfect setting for the Board to make acknowledgements, reflect on the past year, and to make plans for the coming year of 2009.

The two major events of 2008 were the Highland Games and the J.E.B. Stuart Encampment and Living History program. The Laurel Hill Highland Games Festival was held in April, and the public turned out in large number and showed great enthusiasm for this first time event. Mr. Glen King of Woolwine, Virginia deserves much of the credit for the success of this festival. Plans are already underway for the next Highland Games to be held on April 25th, 2009. The Board sincerely hopes that the Games will become an annual event. Our 18th Annual Encampment and Living History program was held in October, and despite the turndown in the economy, patrons came out in large numbers. Many traveled great distances to attend and support our efforts at Laurel Hill making this two-day event another huge success. Other activities the Trust participated in was General Stuart's Birthday Party hosted by Just Plain Country Antiques Mall in Stuart. The Trust maintains a booth at the mall where it displays a large number of items for sale as well as information about Laurel Hill all made available to the public. The Trust was also represented at Fast Track 2008 in Martinsville, Virginia hosted by the Henry County Chamber of Commerce, the Tourism Day program at the I-77 Virginia Welcome Center at Lumburg and the Patrick County Fair where our booth won the Peoples Choice Award. Information about Laurel Hill and our activities were distributed at these events.

The Trust has been fortunate to be the recipient of several important donations this past year. The first was a large forty year collection of Civil War material, much of it relating to General Stuart, from Ms. Janet K. Pease, a retired history teacher from Arvada, Colorado, and a long time supporter of the Trust. An original Civil War era letter was donated by Katherine Vance Clark of Abingdon, Virginia that was

written by her great-great grandfather Captain James Vance, Co.K 37th Virginia infantry. This letter dated July 3, 1861 was coincidentally written at a Laurel Hill encampment which was then in Virginia but became West Virginia after it was formed in 1863. This gift is now displayed on the wall of the Visitors' Center at Stuart's birthplace. Two Civil War reproduction quilts, a gift from Historic Reproduction Clothing were made with reproduction fabric and required many hours to hand stitch. These have proved a great asset to the Trust in enhancing our displays.

There have been a number of improvements made to the grounds of Laurel Hill in 2008. The interior of the Visitors' Center has been renovated with a number of artifacts, souvenirs and other items on display. Picnic tables have been painted and placed at various locations on the grounds for the enjoyment of our visitors. Hiking trails have been cleared and marked, with an additional trail to be opened in the coming year. An index has been placed at the Stuart Pavilion to assist people to locate the commemorative brick dedicated to their ancestor or loved one on the Pavilion floor. New and improved interpretive signs at various points of interest on the site have replaced those that had deteriorated over time. A new entrance has also been installed at the Birthplace, replacing one that has served well over the years but needed to be updated. A new cedar rail fence and rock columns now adorn both sides of the entrance. These columns with granite plaques greet visitors welcoming them to Laurel Hill birthplace of Major General J.E.B. Stuart C.S.A. More landscaping is in the planning stage for the coming year. The labor and much of the materials for many of these improvements was donated. Many thanks to all who contributed to these projects. New brochures about Laurel Hill have been printed and placed throughout the area to better inform tourists interested in visiting the site. This is an ongoing process and the Board is committed to the future improvements and interpretation of the property.

The New Entrance to Laurel Hill

The Board of Directors wishes to take this opportunity to express our heart-felt thanks and deep appreciation to our many supporters, volunteers, spouses, relatives and friends without whom our efforts here at Laurel Hill would not be possible. The Board, along with the help of these many fine people, is dedicated to the future of Laurel Hill for the enjoyment of visitors and tourists for many years to come.

