

RECONNAISSANCE

October 2021

NEWSLETTER OF THE J.E.B. STUART BIRTHPLACE PRESERVATION TRUST, INC.
P.O. Box 1210, STUART, VIRGINIA 24171 276.251.1833 WWW.JEBSTUART.ORG



1833-1864

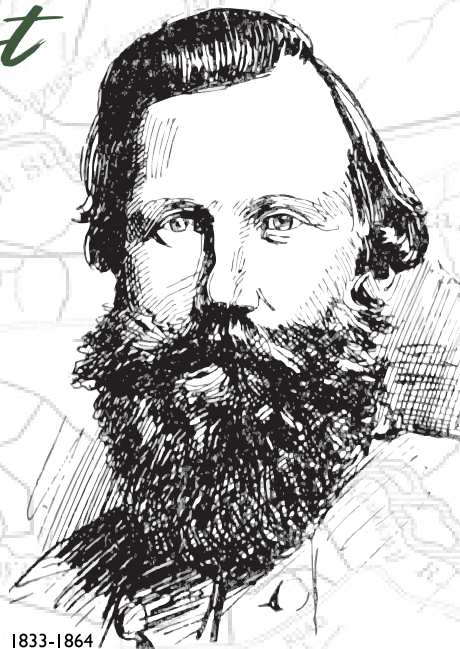
J.E.B. Stuart Birthplace Preservation Trust

**Annual Civil War Encampment
& Living History Weekend
October 2nd & 3rd 2021**

Laurel Hill

*Birthplace of Major General J.E.B. Stuart,
CSA*

**1091 Ararat Highway Ararat, VA 24053
Opens at 9:00 am Free Parking
Admission \$8/person - 12 & under Free
Food & Specialty Vendors**



1833-1864

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**Has Virginia
Turned It's Back**

Meet the
Civil War Generals



Enjoy the Ladies Tea



Civil War Sutlers



String Band Music



Saturday
Night
Dance



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Morn
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Battle Scenes
on Saturday & Sunday



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Walk Back In Time... Come Join Us... Experience the Simple Life

The JEB Stuart Birthplace Preservation Trust is an all volunteer non-profit organization and all proceeds go to the preservation of Laurel Hill

Has Virginia Turned It's Back

by Ronnie Haynes



For those of us who are into history and historic preservation, know its importance, and have a decent understanding of the complexities of it, this past year has been most difficult to endure. The violence, vandalism, destruction, and removal of historical monuments to all walks of history, much of it backed by our political leaders, and in many cases against the will of the people, is unlike anything we have seen in our lifetime. Activists and politicians with no real knowledge or appreciation of history, and most importantly, how to view our history and its historical figures from the context of its time, have used racial unrest as justification for these actions. Not sure who coined the phrase, "never let a good crisis go to waste", but it surely applies here.

With the gutting of the long-standing War Memorial Protection Act by the Virginia General Assembly, nowhere is there more evidence of these destructive actions than here in the Old Dominion, the mother of all states, with more history than any other. The vilification of the honor and integrity of Robert E. Lee seems to be at the forefront with the removal of Lee's name and statues around the state. The old House of Delegates chamber in our state capitol, which is now a museum, removed the Lee statue due to political motivation. Are not museums where historical statues should be? There was even an attempt to remove Lee's name from Washington and Lee University, the college that he saved. When asked to be president after the War, it was Lee who put the school on the road to become the successful institution it is today. When Lee took over what was then Washington College, he set the example of reconciliation for the country. He felt education was the key to rebuilding the South. The College recognized his contributions by adding his name to the school after his death in 1870. With the recent court ruling the Governor wasted no time in removing the vandalized Lee statue on Monument Avenue in Richmond. The only statue of Lee left in the state is the one of the General asleep in the field, at the soon to be renamed Lee Chapel, at Washington and Lee University, which now has limited public access. I would urge all to view the late Dr. James I. Robertson Jr. on C-SPAN in probably one of the last talks he gave entitled, "Confederate Icons", to get a real understanding of Lee and what guided him in the decisions he made.

Another view of Lee comes from a letter written in 1960 by Supreme Allied Commander of World War II and President of the United States, Dwight D. Eisenhower. Eisenhower, who was a student of history, and made a little himself, sums up precisely who Lee was. During Eisenhower's two terms as president one of the four portraits of great Americans hanging in the oval office was of General Lee. Dr. Leon W. Scott questioned the president, negatively, why a portrait of Lee should hang in the office of the President of the United States. The following was Eisenhower's response.

"Dear Dr. Scott:

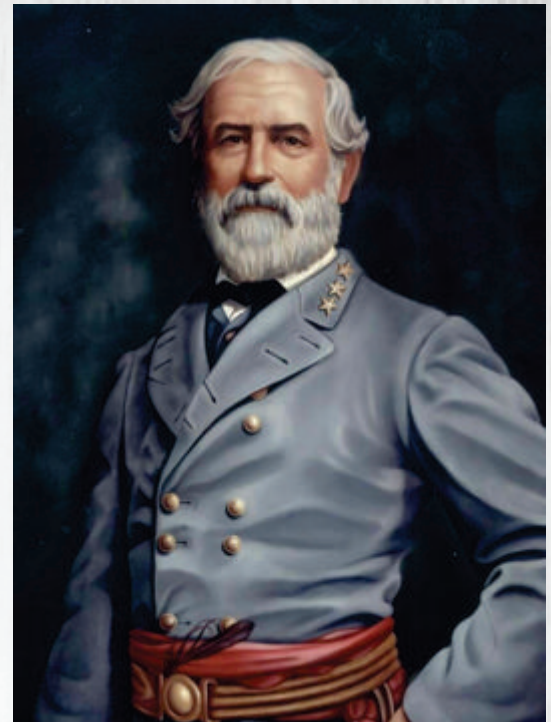
Respecting your August 1 inquiry calling attention to my often expressed admiration of General Robert E. Lee, I would say, first, that we need to understand that at the time of the War Between the States the issue of secession had remained unresolved for more than 70 years. Men of probity, character, public standing, and unquestioned loyalty, both North and South, had disagreed over the issue as a matter of principle from the day our Constitution was adopted.

General Robert E. Lee was, in my estimation one of the supremely gifted men produced by our nation. He believed unswervingly in the Constitutional validity of his cause, which until 1865 was still an arguable question in America; he was a poised and inspiring leader, true to the high trust reposed in him by millions of his fellow citizens; he was thoughtful yet demanding of his officers and men, forbearing with captured enemies but ingenious, unrelenting, and personally courageous in battle, and never disheartened by a reverse or obstacle. Through all his many trials, he remained selfless almost to a fault and unfailing in his faith in God. Taken altogether, he was noble as a leader and as a man and unsullied as I read the pages of our history.

From deep conviction, I simply say this: a nation of men of Lee's caliber would be unconquerable in spirit and soul. Indeed, to the degree that present day American youth will strive to emulate his rare qualities, including his devotion to this land as revealed in the painstaking efforts to help heal the Nation's wounds once the bitter struggle was over, we, in our own time of danger in a divided world, will be strengthened and our love of freedom sustained. Such are the reasons that I proudly display the picture of this great American on my office wall.

Sincerely, Dwight D. Eisenhower"

Winston Churchill, who was a great admirer of the General, stated "Lee was the noblest American who ever lived and one of the greatest commanders known to the annals of war". Churchill also said "when the present starts to quarrel with the past, you have lost the future". Now, that's something to think about. Dr. James I. Robertson Jr., noted historian and Civil War professor who passed away in 2019, made this comment, "from the perspective of our own history, academia has failed the country, and we are the worst pupils in the class". Dr. Robertson's motto was "history is the greatest teacher you will ever know". We are in sore need of educators like him today. It seems that the people today who are making these decisions about statues and our history, don't know history at all. The most troubling part is that they don't seem to care that they don't know it.



Of the many quotes from Lee, these best explain his decision to stay with his state at the time of secession. "Duty is the most sublime word in the English language; do your duty in all things, you cannot do more, you should never wish to do less", and also, "I can take no other course without dishonor, I will share in the fate of my state and save in its defense hope never to draw my sword". He had the courage of his convictions and when it came to his home state of Virginia, Lee did his duty, the only honorable choice he could make. Some may feel that Lee, who was a career U.S. Army soldier, was a traitor when he chose to stay with his state. Yet, that is not how he saw it. Although the Lee family had been in Virginia for over 225 years, the United States itself was barely 70 years old. The young country was experiencing growing pains in those early years. The dispute over state sovereignty versus strong central government was still being debated. Most believed secession was a constitutional right and as a result, there were numerous secession threats. There were also tariff disputes, wars, Westward expansion, slavery, and Native American issues, cultural differences between the North and South; and the list goes on. In short, the country we know today did not exist between the Revolutionary War and Lee's surrender at Appomattox on April 9th, 1865.

Robert E. Lee was a flawed man as he stated many times, as we all are in the history of mankind. Lee was a product of his times, but when ones looks at his life from beginning to end, especially the last five years, he was one of the finest examples of a citizen-soldier this country has ever produced. During Lee's life the country experienced unprecedented change and turmoil, but Lee never lost sight of who he was. He stated, "The march of providence is so slow and our desires so impatient; the work of progress so immense and our means of aiding it so feeble; the life of humanity is so long, that of the individual so brief, that we often see only the ebb of the advancing wave and we are thus discouraged. It is history that teaches us to hope".

Robert E. Lee was a Virginian to his very core and never, not once, turned his back on his beloved Commonwealth. Today, it appears Virginia is now turning its back on Lee. Is this the sad state of affairs in which we now live?

Latest from Richmond

At present there has been little positive news concerning the Stuart Monument. It appears the Governor and city organizations have asked that the process be delayed for other possible uses the pedestals. We do not know at this time how that will affect the statues themselves. Please note that all donations to bring JEB Stuart to Laurel Hill have been put in a separate account awaiting a favorable decision from city council. As one supporter stated, all we can do is be patient and keep the gunpowder dry. We will keep you updated.



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