September 27, 1987 - NEXT MEETING October 8, 1987

On October 8 we will feature Dr. Harold Alford who will tell us of "A Cavalry Skirmish at Obion Creek." Too often we think of major battles and their dramatic implications. Individual skirmishes brought the war home to the people. On October 8 we will hear of the drama of a single skirmish and what it meant by an outstanding speaker.

NEXT MEETING - Thursday, October 8, as usual will be 6:00 pm for discussion and refreshments. Dinner at 7:00 pm at Naval Station Puget Sound. Menu will include: London Broil or Poached Halibut in wine sauce.

DOOR PRIZES - We will have a surge of activity at our next meeting. Bring in your extra books and even some that are not so extra! Tickets - 2 for $1.00. Our display table is going well! Keep the items coming.

PROGRAM SCHEDULE:

October 8 - Dr. Harold Alford - A cavalry skirmish at Obion Creek

November 12 - Dr. Tom Pressly - "Relationship between the Civilian and Military during the American Civil War"

December 10 - Individual member presentations

We are happy to welcome Dr. Maclyn Burg, an associate of Dr. Pressly who will discuss the "Disaster of the Sultane" early in the spring.

DECEMBER 10 - Send in your topics - be first on the list! Round Table Presentations by Volunteeers. We are calling on six volunteers to give ten-minute presentations on any Civil War related subject. We still have openings, so please call Loren (365-8216) immediately.

REMINDEERS - Dues for 1987-88 are in order - $10.00.
- Reservations/menu selection cards should get in the mail as soon as possible for dinner and essential for the gate list.

As you know, our interests not only include learning Civil War history but also learning of the needs in historical military park preservation. One more problem in Battlefield Preservation was reported in the CIVIL WAR TIMES ILLUSTRATED September 1987.
(see article on reverse side)

WILL SEE YOU ON THURSDAY, October 8
NEWS FROM THE FRONT

Action continues fast and furious in Prince William County, Virginia. Supervisor of Prince William's Gainesville District Guy A. Guiffre has proposed widening four legs of the intersection of Routes 234 and 29, roads that crisscross the Manassas National Battlefield but are owned by the State of Virginia. During the First and Second Battles of Manassas in 1861 and 1862, these routes were known, respectively, as the Sudley Road and the Warrenton Turnpike. The intersection in question sits just several hundred feet away from the national battlefield's historic Stone House, a popular visitation site.

National Park Service Director William Penn Mott, Chief Historian of the National Park Service Ed Bearss, and Manassas Battlefield Superintendent Roland Swain have objected to the intersection expansion. First, they state, it will make access to the Stone House parking lot more difficult for visitors. Secondly, and more importantly, the meeting of the wider roadways, accompanied by electric traffic signals and signs, will have an adverse visual impact on the national battlefield. Deep in the interior of a national historic site that is carefully manicured to maintain a rural nineteenth-century appearance, the new, wider, brighter spot where the roads will meet will be in plain view of park visitors in the vicinity, who will look down on the twentieth-century crossroads from higher ground.

The Prince William County Board of Supervisors, of which Mr. Guiffre is a member, counters Park Service arguments by stating that increased local, tourist and business traffic requires expansion of the intersection. Firm in its belief, even after having two expansion plans rejected by the National Park Service (which has a firm legal hold on ground abutting 234, ground necessary for the expansion), the Board of Supervisors submitted its expansion plans to state authorities. Officials in the state capital, Richmond, approved the expansion, and through a state administrative discretionary fund provided Prince William County with half the money needed for the roadwork. No state legislative debate or approval was required.

At this writing, a letter from Director Mott citing Park Service objections to the expansion plan has been sent to Virginia Governor Jerry Baliles. Meanwhile, citizens and government employees are speculating on why traffic passing through the park is so heavy. "It's I-66," says one Interior Department employee, referring to the federally-maintained highway than runs near — but not through — the battlefield park. Traffic on 66 is so heavy and moves so slowly that drivers leave it and take rural Route 29 to avoid the entanglements, the employee explained. A private citizen intimately familiar with county business claims commercial traffic and gravel trucks are major contributors to the problem; several quarries are located in the area, and their trucks traverse the park using Routes 29 and 234. "We're considering moving the Stone House parking lot to the east side of the house," says Manassas Battlefield Superintendent Roland Swain, who complains that traffic noise has become virtually unbearable for Park Service Historians, who give their interpretive lectures from the front parking lot.

In subsequent issues, we'll provide updates on this and other developments at Manassas, the historic site under siege.

John E. Stanchak
EDITOR