



Save Historic Antietam Foundation

JULY 2008

WWW.SHAFONLINE.COM

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Save Historic Antietam Foundation (SHAF)

The mission of SHAF is the preservation and protection of historic sites within the Antietam valley that are related to the Battle of Antietam, the Maryland Campaign, or other Civil War activity in the region. We will accomplish our mission through public education, solicitation of funds, promotion of protective easements and advocacy.

SHAF was incorporated in 1986. It is chartered in Maryland as a non-profit corporation and is exempt from federal tax by Section 501 (c) of the Internal Revenue Code. Contributions are tax deductible.

President's Letter

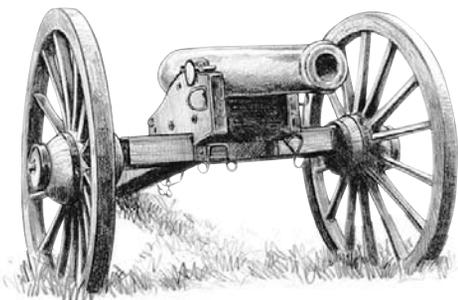
Valued SHAF Members,

One of the most important things we do is keep you informed of what we're doing with the money you have entrusted to us. It is both a blessing and frustrating that we have not had a land purchase opportunity for some time. The Shepherdstown Ford property owners do not feel any urgency to deal with us, particularly with a slow but steady movement towards including it in the National Park Service. The successful easement purchases of the past two decades have secured preservation of much of the land surrounding the NPS land inside the boundary of the park. That leaves us with few chances to buy land. We do keep a reserve in case something suddenly arises, but we don't think it is wise to keep holding funds in the bank waiting for a rainy day.

To that end we have met with Park Superintendent John Howard to address critical needs within the battlefield. Government funds are tight and the needs are great, and so from time to time we help out. Supt. Howard has always gratefully acknowledged the SHAF donations for the restoration and interpretation of the battlefield. The most recent, and one that I want to tell you about, is the Joseph Poffenberger House, which is located just north of the North Woods. This house, perhaps the oldest on the battlefield, came into NPS possession a few years ago. Park staff members have begun stabilizing and restoring some of the outbuildings and barn, but the house needs immediate attention. Supt. Howard offered us a challenge. He needed funds to paint and repair the exterior wood siding of the house. He said he could come up with \$10,000 from his budget to do the work this summer, if SHAF could match that figure. We have taken on this challenge.

We need donations to meet this challenge as the house desperately needs repair and paint to protect it from the elements. We know you have helped us in the past, and we hope you can help us again. As always, we are grateful for any and all help that you can provide.

Thank you,
Tom Clemens,
President, SHAF





The Joseph Poffenberger Farm

By Antietam NBP Ranger Mannie Gentile.

Find yourself on the Northern edge of Antietam National Battlefield. Your feet are planted on Mansfield Avenue, the saplings of the newly replanted North Woods are at your back, highway 65 is a long shout off your left shoulder, and directly in front of you is the Joseph Poffenberger Farm. Usually it'll be just you and the cows with the occasional visitor momentarily stopping nearby while listening to the audio tour before continuing toward the east.



Photo credit: Mannie Gentile

The acreage of the Poffenberger Farm is some of the most charming of the battlefield, very rolling with the usual rock ledges, hills and swales dominated subtly by a commanding ridge just beyond the majestic Pennsylvania bank barn. The house is perched on high ground affording those who, long ago, lounged on its front porch a delightfully detached view of the old Hagerstown pike.

The view from that porch in the wee hours of September 17, 1862 would have been altogether different; both eerie and disconcerting. In the predawn murkiness of first light an onlooker from that front porch would have had the impression that the ground itself was moving, slowly and lethargically at first, accompanied with occasional busts of coughing. And as the gloom just began to barely lighten in the eastern

sky the ground would seem to roil as dark spectral shapes, by the thousands, arose and began to stumble into formation as orders rang out in the early hours and the long roll was sounded on countless field drums.

This was the last morning for many of the men of Hooker's first Corps of McClellan's Army of the Potomac. The last evening prior to this last morning was spent by these nearly 8,600 men on the grounds of the Poffenberger Farm where they passed the damp darkness in bivouac – camping without shelter or, in this instance, cooking fires. These men would be the spearhead of the Union effort on this historic day. And the silent buildings of the Poffenberger Farm that remain to this day would be witness to the passing of the First Corps.

Later that morning the Farm would again play host to Union soldiers, as terrified and battered survivors of Sedgwick's Division fresh from the so-called "Disaster in the West Woods" would seek shelter, succor, and solace among the gentle swales of the farmstead. Some of those men would receive aid from a volunteer nurse from Massachusetts; that nurse would provide the last kind voice heard by many of those young men.

Joseph Hooker was there, Sedgwick was there, Meade was there, and Clara Barton was there; and, this morning, I was there.

The armies have moved on, time has moved forward, but on the grounds of the Poffenberger farm it could all have happened a week ago, or a week from now. Although today, while the buildings still stand and comprise the most intact of the original battlefield farmsteads, much work must be done to preserve them.

Acquired by the park fairly recently, the farm is in its second year of a five-year initiative to restore it to its 1862 appearance. Already the wagon shed and washhouse have been stabilized and restored with rebuilt foundations, replaced timbers, and a fresh coat of white wash. Original fence lines are again graced with post and rail fences. And now the effort is on to restore that magnificent barn as well as the Poffenberger house.

This nearly \$400,000 effort, undertaken by the Park, is being actively supported by the Save Historic Antietam Foundation. A \$10,000 gift from SHAF will go toward the painting of the Poffenberger house.



Stabilized and painted, the house will provide a “scene setter” for the restored farmyard and outbuildings presided over by that incredible barn.

The Maintenance and Cultural Resources Divisions of Antietam National Battlefield are moving ahead with both care and enthusiasm on this very challenging undertaking. Craig Cartwright, head of park maintenance, is emphatic when he says that he enjoys “the challenge of restoring such a valuable and historic structure”.

The work continues apace with three highly skilled maintenance personnel detailed to the project, and already the progress on the site is remarkable. And soon, thanks to SHAF the repaired and repainted Pofenberger house will be restored to its 1862 appearance, again a welcoming beacon, though this time not to weary soldiers, but to history loving visitors.

*Come see for yourself, I'll meet you on that porch,
just north of Sharpsburg.*

Sharpsburg

Heritage Festival

Sept. 13th & 14th

Check our website for details:

www.shafonline.org

Tolson's Chapel Ownership Transferred!

Those of you who have been members for several years may recall that in 2003 we acquired a very important historic structure in Sharpsburg called Tolson's Chapel. It was built shortly after the Civil War and served as an African Methodist Episcopal church...in fact one of only two Freedman's Bureau Schools in Maryland still standing. Long neglected, and recently shuttered by the United Methodist Church, SHAF was willing to take ownership of the building, even though it was a bit tangential to our mission. Luckily a number of fine people took an interest in the building, including Dean Herrin of the Catoctin Center in Frederick and the recently-chartered Friends of Tolson's Chapel.

While we held title to the building Dean and others applied for grants to stabilize, and now begin restoration of the chapel. Slowly it is coming together and was featured in the Preservation Maryland Conference in late May. Although SHAF paid a few minor bills in the beginning, most of the effort came from the grants and the Catoctin Center, along with the Friends of Tolson's Chapel. Now that they have a tax-exempt status, FTC is willing to take the title and continue restoring the building. Plans call for it to be open to the public at a future date. In the meantime, the restoration work proceeds nicely.

The Board of Directors is thrilled that the building is saved, and more so that a local group of concerned citizens is saving it. We are proud to have played a small part in saving this structure, and now we are happy to “to turn over the keys” to the fine folks of the Friends of Tolson's Chapel.



SHAF President Tom Clemens turns over the deed to Edith Wallace of the Friends of Tolson's Chapel.



SHAF MEMBER PROFILE:

ROBERT C. STOLLER

By Mary Abroe

During Bob Stoller's undergraduate days at the University of Illinois (from which he graduated in 1971 with a B.A. in history), he did not take any courses on the Civil War. Rather he concentrated on European history, earning membership in Phi Alpha Theta history honorary. Bob went on to law school at Oklahoma City University, graduating in 1975 and gaining admittance to the Oklahoma bar that same year. Upon returning home to the Chicago area in late 1975, he worked as a clerk in the Cook County Public Defender's office until passing the Illinois bar in 1976; he then worked as an assistant public defender for three years. Since 1979 Bob has worked in the field of personal injury law, from 1984 through the present as a solo practitioner with offices in several Chicago suburbs; his caseload also covers the areas of workman's compensation and criminal law.

When asked about the evolution of his interest in the Civil War and its battlefields, Bob states that he "walked into the Abraham Lincoln Bookstore sometime in the summer of 1988, spoke to [proprietor] Dan Weinberg and started going to CWRT [of Chicago] meetings that fall." His fascination with Antietam dates from his first battlefield tour with the Chicago Round Table—to Harpers Ferry and Antietam—in May 1990; at Antietam Bob was struck by the dichotomy of "the beautiful countryside [set] against the carnage of the battle." Also contributing to the memorable nature of his experience were "images of these places fired by the descriptions and oratory of one Edwin C. Bearss...and Dennis Frye." And time spent for lunch one day in Pleasant Valley impressed him yet again with the contrast between past and present--"the wonderful hospitality against the backdrop of the bloodiest day in American history."

In addition to his memberships in SHAF (since c2001) and the CWRT of Chicago, Bob also belongs to the Civil War Preservation Trust and Central Virginia Battlefields Trust. (While not the main reason that he joined either SHAF or CVBT, he indicates that the headgear offered by each organization was a factor.) He and his wife of twenty-five years have two children; they live in Buffalo Grove, one of Chicago's northwestern suburbs, where Bob has volunteered with the local high school baseball league for the past four years. His involvement in sports also includes running a Fantasy Football League for the past twenty years and admitting to being a "die-hard Cubs fan."

In discussing "the plight of America's battlefields," Bob concludes with interesting--and very personal--observations about the difference between European and American perceptions of history as well as his fellow professionals: "Earlier in my life I had a much greater interest in Europe. In Europe history is revered; for example, aqueducts that are 1800-2000 years old still exist. Our battlefields must continue to exist so we can give our past some of that same reverence. (Give a lawyer a forum and we don't know when to stop.)" Joining Bob Stoller in his concern for preservation at Antietam and elsewhere, Americans from a variety of backgrounds and different parts of the country make SHAF the effective, activist force it has been for over twenty years.

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DON'T FORGET!

Sharpsburg Heritage Festival Sept. 13-14, 2008

SHAF workday Nov. 1, 2008

See our website, www.shaf.org, for details

**Save Historic Antietam Foundation
P.O. Box 550
Sharpsburg, MD 21782**