

BELLE HAVEN CITIZEN'S ASSOCIATION

SUMMER (LATE) 2009 NEWSLETTER

DEVOTED TO MAKING YOUR COMMUNITY A BETTER PLACE IN WHICH TO LIVE



Annual Meeting September 23

The Belle Haven Citizens Association's annual dinner meeting will be held at 6:00 p.m. on September 23, 2009 at the Belle Haven Country Club. We hope you can join us for this neighborhood gathering, which is a wonderful and well-attended tradition. It has been held each September for the past eighty or so years. If you haven't sent in your RSVP, please email us at bellehaven@bellehaven.org.

Board nominations include:

Heather Cox, President
Chip Ambrose, Vice President
Camp Kaufman, Secretary
Mary Elizabeth Duke, Treasurer

New Members:

Chris Crane
Denise Constandy
Steve Pritsios

Renewal member:

Bobby Avary

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Fort Willard Circle Progressing – History of the Site Amazing

-- Inaugural Fort Willard Day, November 7 (see page 6 for details)

Following the surrender of Fort Sumter in Charleston, SC, on April 14, 1861, President Lincoln declared that "an insurrection existed," and called for 75,000 troops to quash the rebellion. The move sparked resentment in many other southern states, which promptly moved to convene discussions of secession. The Virginia State Convention passed an ordinance of secession and ordered a May 23 referendum to decide whether or not the state should secede from the Union.

The U.S. Army responded by creating the Department of Washington, which united all Union troops in the District of Columbia and Maryland under one command. Brigadier General J.F.K. Mansfield, commander of the Department of Washington, argued that Northern Virginia should be occupied as soon as possible in order to prevent the possibility of the Confederate Army mounting artillery on the hills of Arlington and shelling government buildings in Washington. He also urged the erection of fortifications on the

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Virginia side of the Potomac River to protect the southern terminuses of the Chain Bridge, Long Bridge, and Aqueduct Bridge.

Over the seven weeks that followed the occupation of northern Virginia, forts were constructed along the banks of the Potomac River and at the approaches to each of the three major bridges (Chain Bridge, Long Bridge, and Aqueduct Bridge) connecting Virginia to Washington and Georgetown.

While the Potomac River forts were being built, planning and surveying was ordered for an enormous new ring of forts to protect the city. Unlike the fortifications under construction, the new forts would defend the city in all directions, not just the most direct route through Arlington.

Fort Willard was constructed during the latter part of 1862 and early 1863 as Redoubt "D" to Fort Lyon (Virginia) by detachments of the 34th Massachusetts Infantry.

The fort was named in honor of Colonel George L. Willard, who was killed at the Battle of Gettysburg, on July 2, 1863. The fort was a small, unflanked enclosure with a bombproof and a magazine. The fort had emplacements for fifteen guns, and its armaments consisted of two 24-pound siege guns, two 12-pound howitzers, four 4.5-inch ordnance rifles, four 6-pound guns, two 10-inch siege mortars and two 24-pounder Coehorn mortars.

It originally contained three barracks, a guardhouse, officers quarters, a cook house and ordnance sergeants' quarters. Two detached batteries supported the fort. These features have all been displaced by construction of the community around the fort in the 1930s.

Some of the regiments garrisoned at Fort Willard

included:

- 34th Massachusetts Infantry
- 2nd Connecticut Heavy Artillery
- 10th New York Heavy Artillery
- 1st Wisconsin Heavy Artillery

George Willard was born in New York City on August 15, 1827. He served in the Mexican War, and by the war's end, Willard had reached the rank of sergeant in the 15th U.S. Infantry. For his part in the war, he was made a second lieutenant in the 8th U.S. Infantry. He remained in the regular service until the outbreak of the Civil War, rising to the rank of captain in the 8th Infantry. At the outbreak of the war, Willard was unwilling to give up his regular commission—by then a major in the 19th U. S. Infantry, and so he missed



for a time any chance to command a regiment of volunteers. Willard became colonel of the 125th New York Volunteer Infantry Regiment. In this case Willard was allowed to retain his commission in the regular army.

He suffered misfortune while commanding his regiment at Harpers Ferry, West Virginia, in 1862. His raw recruits did not distinguish themselves in the Battle of Harpers Ferry, in which they fell apart under fire during the fighting on Bolivar Heights. They were too frightened, especially by the enfilade fire coming in from Loudon Heights to rally. When the garrison was surrendered to Stonewall Jackson by Col. Dixon S. Miles, Willard and his men became prisoners of war.

When the 125th was paroled in early 1863, Willard was in charge until it was exchanged for

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captured Confederate troops. During that period, these New Yorkers were encamped at Camp Douglass in Chicago, Illinois. Then they were assigned to the defenses of Washington, D. C. in the division of Brig. Gen. Silas Casey, part of a brigade of New York veterans of Harpers Ferry led by Brig. Gen. Alexander Hays. The brigade became the third in Casey's division of the XXII Corps in February 1863.

Willard also testified before the military commission that investigated the surrender of Harpers Ferry. He was critical of the conduct of Miles and was quoted by another officer as thinking the garrison's commander unfit to be in charge.

The units of the "Harper's Ferry Brigade" were joined the Army of the Potomac on June 1863. They were assigned to II Corps, where they became the 3rd Brigade, 3rd Division under General Hays. Maj. Gen. William H. French having been assigned to detached duty in the Middle Department, Hays became division commander in his place. Willard duly succeeded by seniority to command of the brigade. The veterans of II Corps did not greet the "Harpers Ferry Cowards" kindly until they had proven their courage in combat.

The 3rd Brigade marched northward in heat and dust of the summer of 1863, halting at Uniontown, Maryland, on June 30. Late on July 2, when Maj. Gen. Winfield S. Hancock had been placed in charge of the Army's endangered left flank, he sent back to his II Corps for reinforcements. A courier found Hays and Willard together. Hays ordered Willard to take his brigade to the left and "knock the Hell" out of the Confederates.

Willard's men stopped the victorious advance of Brig. Gen. William Barksdale, which had captured the Union position at the Peach Orchard and then pressed forward toward Cemetery Ridge. Willard ordered the two regiments on his right forward, pushing the Confederate back. Some of Willard's men are reported to have yelled, as they charged,

"Remember Harpers Ferry!" The New Yorkers recovered abandoned Union guns, but they came under heavy fire from Confederate artillery after crossing Plum Run. Willard had just ordered his men back to their start line when he was hit in the face by an artillery round. Colonel Willard died on the spot, leaving command of the brigade to Col. Eliakim Sherrill. Lt. Col. James M. Bull, 126th New York Volunteer Infantry Regiment, who filed the brigade's report, gives a detailed account of this counterattack.



The text to the Willard Marker states: Col. G. L. Willard 125th N.Y. Inf. was killed at this place on the evening of July 2D 1863 while leading in a charge the 3D Brigade 3D Division 2D Corps."



Willard's body was brought back to Troy, New York where it was buried with honors and laid to rest in Oakwood Cemetery.

Summer Fun – Celebrating Independence Day!



July 4, 2009 at Fort Willard Circle

Behind These Doors Once More Goes to Print this Fall

The Belle Haven Women's Club cookbook is hot on the burner. (Get it?)

Eight years ago, their first edition of "Behind These Doors" hit kitchen counters and stovetops across Alexandria. The key to its immediate success was the people who contributed the recipes: cooks who, as friends and neighbors, share meals and recipes as generously as they share the joy of an old-fashioned neighborhood.

This long-awaited second edition of "Behind These Doors" continues a tradition nurtured by the Belle Haven Women's Club since its inception in 1936. In 1959, the first cookbook was produced by the

Welfare section of the Women's Club to raise money for a scholarship fund. Ten years later, another collection, "Favorite Recipes," was published.

Inspired by the neighbors who came before us, the first "Behind These Doors" was compiled in 2001 and met with rave reviews. So it is with great pride they will publish their fourth cookbook this fall.

Over 125 people have submitted recipes and numerous members of the community have worked to type, edit, organize, index and order this next edition. It has been a truly collaborative process. We hope to have the book for sale later this fall.

Mount Vernon @ Home Looking for Help

As you may know, Mount Vernon at Home is a nonprofit membership organization designed to provide residents of the Mount Vernon area with the services and support to remain in their own homes and continue to participate in neighborhood and community life. Many folks in Belle Haven have made financial contributions that enabled the Mt. Vernon village to become a reality. Mt. Vernon at Home has recently acquired office space, an executive director, and a web page (www.mtvernonathome.org).

A membership drive starts officially in October, but already 30 households, including three from Belle Haven, have become charter members. The organization has a need to recruit volunteers now. Almost any skill or ability you have ranging from driving to filling out insurance forms to light handyman tasks to visiting the homebound or walking the dog will be welcomed.

Please contact Kae Wells at 703-360-6159 or wells2600@cox.net if you or your teen can lend a hand.

Winning Themes for the No Speeding Contest

Slow and Steady Wins the Race,
And keeps our streets a safer place!

Belle Haven --
A Haven for Safe Drivers

Strive for 25

15 mph for 15 seconds

But the winner is...

Slow down in the haven, it's your neighbor you're save'n!



Board Members

Larry Stack, President
Chip Ambrose, Vice President
Camp Kaufman, Secretary/Treasurer

Bobby Avary
Frank Chrzanowski
Heather Cox
Caulley Deringer, Past President
Mary Elizabeth Duke
Marybeth Dyson
Kate Goelz
Rick Murphy
Ellen Walter

bellehaven@bellhaven.org

We're on the Web!

Visit us at:

www.bellehaven.org

Fort Willard Celebration Day Planned

With the Fort Willard circle taking shape, we want to create a new tradition for the "hood". The inaugural Fort Willard Day will be November 7th from noon to 2 p.m. The Belle Haven Citizen's Association is hosting a specially catered hot dog lunch loaded with your favorite condiments. We'll also have beer and variety of soft drinks. Please join fellow neighbors at the new Ft. Willard brick plaza for some outdoor camaraderie, lunch and a few laughs.

For the kids, we'll have the first ever "Circle Races" for the young ones to compete in running races around the circle. The contestants and individual races will be divided by age or other such determinations of the "Race Committee" Prizes for top achievers!!!!

Please plan to join us for lunch November 7th and help kick-off a new tradition at Belle Haven – Fort Willard Day!!!

Belle Haven Citizen's Association
PO Box 7519
Alexandria, VA 22307

