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History and Traffic Battle in Manassas

Park Service Won't Surrender Land To Widen Intersection at Civil War Site

By DAN EGGEN
Washington Post Staff Writer

Two momentous Civil War battles were fought on the rolling countryside just north of a little village called Manassas Junction, waged 13 months apart and each time changing the course of history.

More than 130 years later, fighting of a different sort goes on.

The Manassas National Battlefield Park, a sprawling, 5,100-acre monument run by the National Park Service, is again at the center of skirmishes, this time between preservationists and those who argue that history must give way a bit for the future.

The dispute began as a spat over whether to widen an intersection for safety—which park officials say is unnecessary—but since then has raised the ire of a congressman, embattled the park's superintendent and sparked an audit by the inspector general at the U.S. Department of the Interior.

"I don't want to see someone's child get killed or maimed just because the Park Service won't be reasonable on this," said Rep. Frank R. Wolf (R-Va.), who accuses the park superintendent of "ad-

ministrative abuses, inconsistencies and public safety deficiencies. That intersection is just a disgrace."

State and local officials want to widen the intersection of Routes 29 and 234 in the middle of the park, saying it's become an increasingly perilous spot on commuters' routes as the population in Washington's western suburbs has surged. They have proposed eventually rerouting one of the roads to a rural area north of the preserve.

The Park Service and its allies, meanwhile, are fighting those suggestions, and say they won't give up any historic land to widen the intersection when it isn't necessary. They've also upset some residents by conducting a survey that could result in private property near the park being placed on the National Register of Historic Places, which can restrict development.

Such heated passions have long swirled around the land known among locals as simply "The Battlefield," driving away the Walt Disney Co. and its plans to build a history theme park nearby, and

defeating a series of shopping centers, subdivisions and other developments proposed over the years.

"A lot of people feel very strongly about the place," said Martha Hendley, a longtime activist. "Civil War buffs will tell you it's one of the few places left where you can actually stand in the middle of the battlefield and it feels and looks pretty much like it did. It's like standing in the past."

But critics say the preservationists are stuck in the past themselves, using the park as a weapon to thwart development in an area fast giving way to suburbia. Prince William's population has risen by 18 percent in seven years, and the roads running through the battlefield are becoming busier commuting routes as a result.

"If you're going to call every spot historic where Robert E. Lee's horse set foot, you'd have to declare most of Virginia a historic site," said Thomas G. Underwood, a Manassas lawyer who lives near the battlefield. "The bottom line is that these are no-growthers. They're using the battlefield issue as a growth issue."

The Battle of Manassas in 1861—what the Yankees called the Battle of Bull Run—was the first major land battle of the Civil War and earned Confederate Brig. Gen. Thomas J. "Stonewall" Jackson his nickname. On nearly the same spot the next year, the South again drove back the North—marking the peak of rebel power and paving the way for Lee's first thrust across the Potomac River. More than 27,000 soldiers were killed, wounded or lost at the battles.

The battlefield park was founded in 1941 and designated a National Historic District 40 years later. In 1988, Congress expanded it by spending more than \$118 million to buy 558 acres slated for a shopping center. Several years later, the Disney theme park plan was torpedoed after a national campaign by preservationists.

The latest battles over the park, which had more than 1 million visitors last year, also center on development concerns.

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The Route 29/234 intersection is near the historic Old Stone House in the middle of the park, a largely rural landscape crisscrossed with horse trails and bounded by weathered split-rail fences. The high accident rate at the intersection led state and federal officials to designate it "very hazardous," and a crash north of the crossing in 1991 killed the teenage daughter of Prince William Supervisor Edgar S. Wilbourn III (R-Gainesville). Wolf and Wilbourn, along with the Virginia Department of Transportation, are

campaigning to have turn lanes added to the intersection.

But the Park Service has not agreed to cede property for the project, arguing that simply adding turn signals and adjusting stoplights will improve safety, keep traffic speeds low and minimize the impact on historic lands.

Eventually, the Park Service would like to see both Routes 29 and 234 removed entirely, part of a long-running attempt to return the area to how it looked in the 1800s.

That leads to a second controversy: the Route 29 bypass, part of a proposed realignment from Centreville to Warrenton. Park allies want it made part of the Interstate 66 corridor that already hugs the

"For most of the battlefield, you see what you saw in the 1860s."

— Robert K. Sutton,
park superintendent

battlefield to the south, while others—including Wilbourn and some other county supervisors—have suggested that it makes more sense for the road to curve around the park to the north, which critics say would trample historic land.

All of which leads to a third point of tension: the historical survey. Last fall, the Park Service hired a research firm, Traceries Inc. of Chevy Chase, to document notable historic sites. The \$22,000 study could lead to the listing of some areas on the National Register of Historic Places, which in turn can slow or even derail construction of roads and other projects.

The survey includes newer sections of the park as well as private property outside it, particularly an area called Stony Ridge that figured prominently in the Second Battle of Manassas. Most of the property owners like the idea, but a few are complaining that they weren't properly notified and fear that their land values will plummet. Some also allege the study is part of a plot to halt future highway projects or expand the park's boundaries.

"Quite frankly, that's my retirement, that property," said Underwood, 60, who has lived on his 85-acre Pageland Lane farm since 1949. "If they designate this as some sort of historic monument, I won't be able to do anything with it. It ain't fair."

But officials with Traceries and the park say property owners can choose not to be listed on the National Register—as Underwood

and a half-dozen others have done—and that historic designation often raises a property's value. Park Superintendent Robert K. Sutton says there are no plans to expand the park or halt road projects using the survey.

"If there are roads scuttled, it won't be because of historic designation," Sutton said. "It's perfectly normal to do this kind of survey."

Said Traceries researcher Laura V. Trieschmann: "They're fighting the Third Battle of Manassas right now, and I'm right in the middle of it."

The sparring has prompted the Prince William Board of County Supervisors to demand a presentation by Sutton.

And Wolf, who considers himself a strong friend of the battlefield, ordered the Interior Department audit of the park, criticizing Sutton for not keeping the park in better shape, as well as for his opposition to widening the road crossing.

"The park is a gem," Wolf said last week. "It ought to be taken care of, but I don't think they're doing a very good job. . . . You look at the way the battlefield is run, compared to a place like Gettysburg, it's just a mess."

The Park Service disagrees, saying Sutton is just doing his job.

"This superintendent is doing the job required of any superintendent, and that's to protect the park," Park Service spokesman Earle Kittleman said. "We feel the management of Manassas National Battlefield is going to be vindicated. But that's not the issue. The issue is whether you take land from nationally hallowed land to accomplish something the Park Service feels can be accomplished by other means."

Sutton, who has headed the park for about three years, declined to comment on the Interior audit or most allegations made by Wolf. But he said he's not surprised that the battlefield provokes strong feelings.

"It's a lot of land in a fairly developed area," Sutton said. "For most of the battlefield, you see what you saw in the 1860s. You don't see McDonald's and high-rise offices. . . . The pristine nature of the battlefield has been largely preserved. That's important to an awful lot of people."

FOR MORE INFORMATION

To see photos and historic background on the battlefield from the National Park Service, click on the above symbol on the front page of The Post's Web site at www.Washingtonpost.com.

Va-Pa Wm / Manassas Battlefield

10-25

VIRGINIANA FILE

PWC - Historic Sites
(MANASSAS NAT'L
Battlefield Park)

Prince William Public Library
Manassas, Va.

C8

Wednesday, June 25, 1975 THE WASHINGTON POST

1,500-Acre Expansion Urged For Manassas Battlefield

By Helen Dewar

Washington Post Staff Writer

Northern Virginia's 3,000-acre Manassas National Battlefield Park would be expanded by 1,500 acres, including several historical sites and land sought for commercial development, under legislation to be introduced today by Rep. Herbert E. Harris (D-Va.).

The bill would authorize the Interior Department to acquire the land by purchase, donation, exchange for other properties or easement, but not by condemnation.

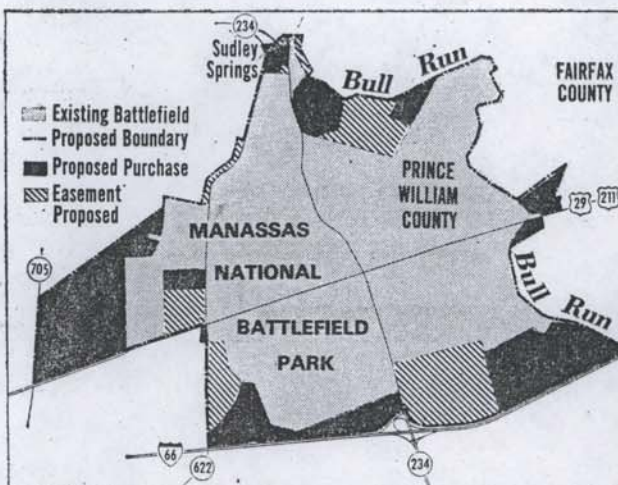
"Unless steps are taken now to save this historic area from commercial development, it could be too late," said Harris. He said land near the park has been sought for a variety of uses, including a sanitary landfill, a truck garage and a national cemetery.

Sen. William L. Scott (R-Va.) has sponsored legislation for several years to authorize the Veterans Administration to take land within the park or adjacent to it for a national cemetery.

Presumably, passage of the Harris bill would not block the Scott proposal, which is expected to come up for hearings shortly in conjunction with other cemetery proposals.

"The park, commemorating the site of two major Civil War battles in 1861 and 1862, is about 30 miles west of Washington in Prince William County. The site for the proposed Marriott Corp. Great America theme park is nearby, but would not be affected by Harris' bill.

Harris said the property sought under his bill would include the site of the opening shots of the 1862 battle, the only remaining building of the Civil War-era village of Grove-



By Joseph P. Mastrangelo—The Washington Post

ton, the headquarters of Confederate Gen. Joseph E. Johnston during the 1861 battle, Conrad House, used as a field hospital during both battles, and a wooded area where trees still are imbedded with shrapnel from the shooting.

Most of the land now is being farmed, held for open space or used for residential purposes, Harris said, but

some is zoned commercial and targeted for development.

Owners of land acquired for the park expansion would be permitted to continue using the land for 25 years or until death.

While the Interior Department has not formally endorsed the expansion proposal, it has shown "strong interest" in the bill, Harris said.

Maryland Approves New Doctors' Insuror

BALTIMORE, June 24 (AP)—America's first statewide doctor owned and operated insurance company officially came into being today and promptly proposed lower malpractice rates for most Maryland physicians.

State Insurance Commissioner Thomas J. Hatem certi-

fied the Medical Mutual Liability Insurance Society of Maryland, which then filed its proposed rate schedule. Hatem set a hearing on it for 2 p.m. Thursday.

A check of proposed rates for several classifications of physicians showed Medical Mutual's rates to be lower for each class.

Insurance Division actuary Eugene Graham said Medical Mutual proposed charging a

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7 P.M. EST June 24

Data From NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE,
NOAA, U.S. Dept. of Commerce

VIRGINIANA FILE

PWC - Historic Sites
(MANASSAS Battlefield Park)

Va - Prince Wm 10-30-69

Prince William Public Library
Manassas, Va.

Panorama Landmark

Stone House Marks Manassas Battles

By Nancy Cabot Heyer

Standing at the northeast corner of the intersection of Lee Highway and Manassas-Sudley Road is a 2½ story structure built in 1805 known as the Stone House.

It is in Manassas Battlefield National Park and was built of irregular blocks of varicolored native stone. It is reputed to be the best-preserved wartime residence in the fighting area.

The Stone House was surrounded by fierce action in both the first and second Manassas campaigns. Like many buildings at the time, it was converted into a field hospital.

Running through the fields in the environs of the house are gullies emptying into Young's Branch. These are believed to be washed-out trenches where the Confederates buried the Union dead.

One of the first owners of the Stone House was Benson Pridmore, who enlisted as a private in May, 1861, in Col. Wickham's 4th Virginia Cavalry.

While Lee's army was located along the Rappahannock River as far west as Warrenton, Gen. Jeb Stuart found his cavalry officers and men in dire need of fresh mounts. The ones they had were in poor condition because of insufficient food and rest.

Pridmore had trained his black horse "Dixie" to hunt silently and he volunteered to scout Prince William County to obtain horses, using the guerrilla tactics of Col. John Mosby.

On an expedition to Cedar Run near Brentsville, Pridmore halted at gunpoint five Union cavalymen, relieved them of their saddled mounts, crossed the Orange and Alexandria Railroad and returned to Warrenton without firing a shot.

The Stone House was sold in 1902 to Henry J. Ayres. He lived and kept store in it until 1947. The old structure now stands as a monument to those who served during the Manassas campaigns.

Garden Flash

By Tom Stevenson

Gardeners, take heed. There is a heavy drop of needles from many pine, spruce and hemlock trees this fall. Some of it is probably due to the dry weather we have had. If you haven't had a good soaking rain recently and haven't been watering, better get out the hose and go to work.

It is natural for evergreens

foliage. When there is a deficiency of water in the root zone and the roots are unable to supply the top with enough water, the tree is likely to drop some of its leaves or needles. It is an act of self preservation.

When you water, do it thoroughly. Daily sprinkling that wets only the surface is of little value. But don't

Sears

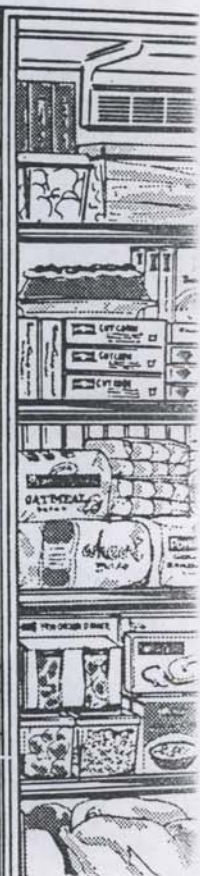
Colds

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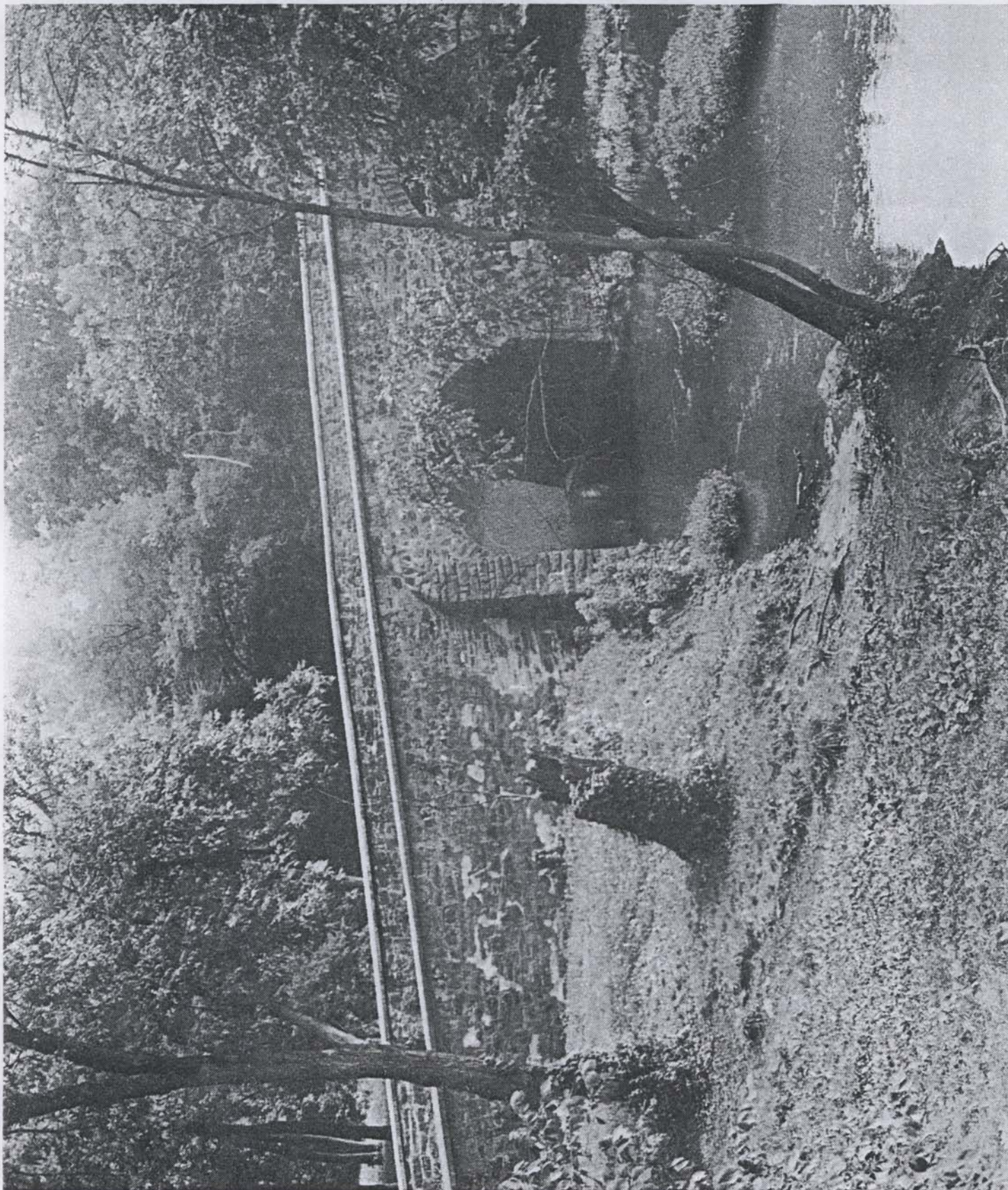
③ Door Shelf
Storage



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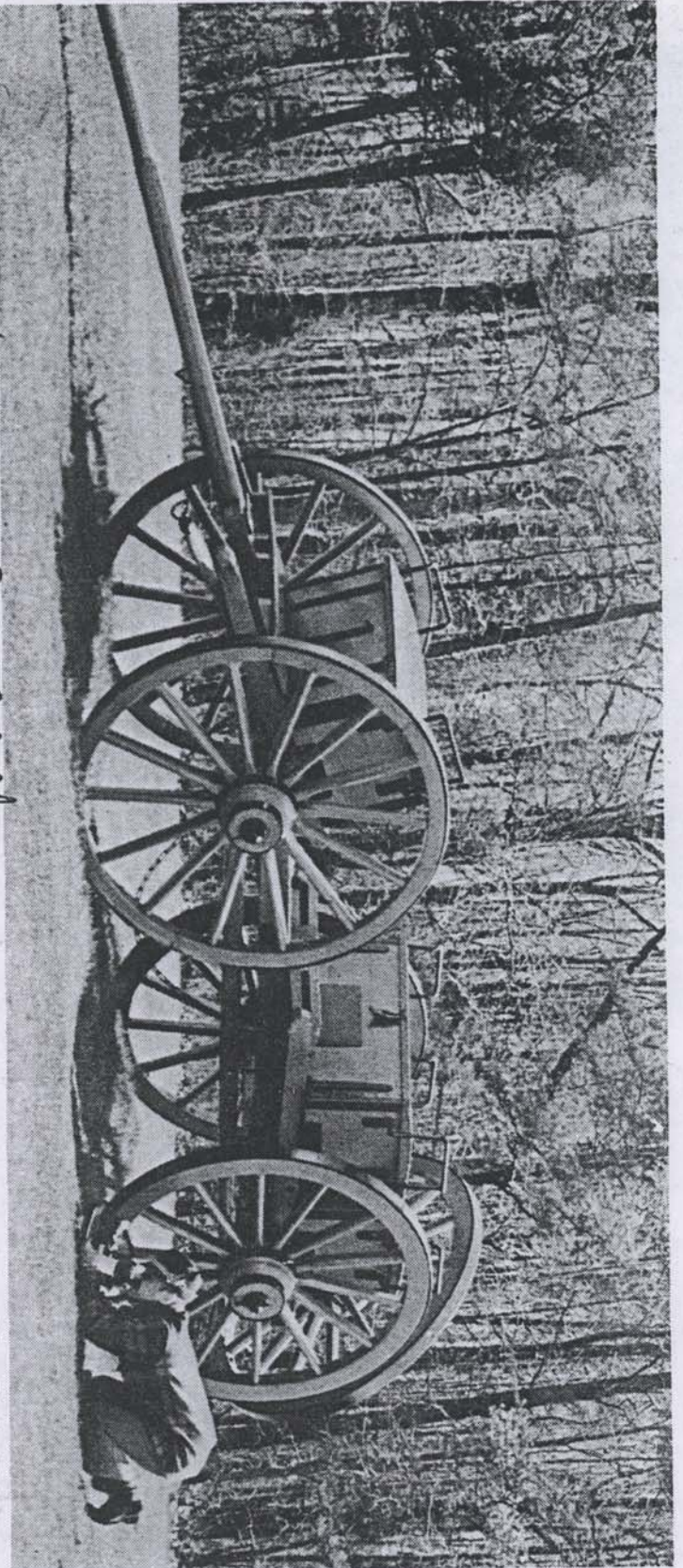
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JOURNAL MESSANGER
4-29-73



Picturesque Prince William

BULL RUN PASSES UNDER HISTORIC STONE BRIDGE



Jerry Eaton - The Journal Messenger

Manassas Battlefield Camera Angle

Camera angles are located almost anywhere--on top of, inside of, near to, and far from. A cameraman visiting the Manassas Battlefield Park struggled to obtain a worm's eye view of a

wagon whose every inch is crammed full if history. It was a low angle shot indeed.

Joe Mag 4-9-74

IN COMMUNITY CALIFORNIA