

James Robinson Papers

Found in the Robinson House
Manassas National Battlefield Park
Manassas, Virginia

Transcribed by
Jim Burgess, Historian
National Park Service
1994

MANASSAS NATIONAL BATTLEFIELD PARK
JAMES ROBINSON PAPERS

#	CAT #	ITEM/DATE
1.	21438	Account Statement (22 Jan-10 June 1827)
2.	21439	Contract (1 Jan 1828?)
3.	21440	Promissory Note (5 May 1828)
4.	21441	Promissory Note (1829)
5.	21442	Receipt (10 April 1829)
6.	21443	Memorandum (n.d., c.1830)
7.	21444	Letter of Recommendation (Aug 1831)
8.	21445	Bill (17 Jan 1832)
9.	21446	Account Statement (12 Dec 1832)
10.	21447	Note (? April 1833)*
11.	21448	Receipt (3 Apr 1833)
12.	21449	Receipt (22 April 1833)
13.	21450	Account Statement (18 Dec 1837)
14.	21451	Ledger (1837-1838)
15.	21452	Memorandum (18 Feb 1839)
16.	21453	Receipt (5 Oct 1840)
17.	21454	Receipt (n.d.)*
18.	21455	Voucher (1841)
19.	21456	Receipt (21 Jan 1841)
20.	21457	Bill (11 Dec 1841)
21.	21458	Promissory Note (9 Feb 1843)
22.	21459	Bill of Sale (3 Dec 1844)
23.	21460	Contract (2 Jan 1845)
24.	21461	Promissory Note (1845)*
25.	21462	Tax Bill (1845)*
26.	21463	Account Statement-Fragment (1846)*
27.	21464	Account Statement-Fragment (1846)*
28.	21465	Contract (1 Feb 1846)
29.	21466	Bill (7 Sept 1846)
30.	21467	Account Statement-Fragment (1847)*
31.	21468	Receipt (1 Feb 1847)
32.	21469	Letter (5 March 1847)
33.	21470	Bill (14 March 1847)*
34.	21471	Receipt (31 Aug 1847)
35.	21472	Account Statement (11 Nov 1847)*
36.	21473	Bill (10 Dec 1848)
37.	21474	Receipt-Fragment (1849)*
38.	21475	Contract, Lease (7 May 1849)
39.	21476	Receipt (6 Nov 1849)
40.	21477	Contract (29 Nov 1849)
41.	21478	Invoice (1850)*
42.	21479	Receipt (12 Jan 1850)*
43.	21480	Memorandum (2 March 1850)
44.	21481	Promissory Note (8 April 1850)
45.	21482	Account Statement (29 Jan 1851)
46.	21483	Promissory Note (29 Jan 1851)
47.	21484	Account Statement (10 Feb 1851)
48.	21485	Promissory Note (10 Feb 1851)
49.	21486	Account Statement (16 Sept 1851)
50.	21487	Promissory Note (16 Sept 1851)

JAMES ROBINSON PAPERS (CONTINUED)

#	CAT #	ITEM/DATE
51.	21488	Promissory Note (2 Oct 1851)
52.	21489	Invoice (18 Oct 1851)
53.	21490	Account Statement (22 Dec 1851)
54.	21491	Promissory Note (10 Jan 1852)
55.	21492	Summons (8 Aug 1852)
56.	21493	Account Statement (21 Feb 1853)
57.	21494	Promissory Note (19 Dec 1853)
58.	21495	Memorandum (24 Apr 1854)
59.	21496	Bill of Sale (24 Nov 1854)
60.	21497	Bill of Sale (13 Dec 1854)
61.	21498	Tax Bill (1854)*
62.	21499	Account Statement (10 Jan 1855)
63.	21500	Bill of Sale (13 [?] 1860)
64.	21501	Receipt (27 April 18??)*
65.	21502	Receipt (12 Nov 18??)*
66.	21503	Invoice-Fragment (n.d.)*
67.	21504	Bill of Sale (n.d.)*
68.	21505	Bill (n.d.)*
69.	21506	Bill (n.d.)*
70.	21507	Promissory Note (n.d.)*
71.	21508	Promissory Note (n.d.)*
72.	21509	Account Statement-Fragment (n.d.)*
73.	21510	Account Statement-Fragment (n.d.)*
74.	21511	Account Statement-Fragment (n.d.)*
75.	21512	Account Statement-Fragment (Feb-April 18??)*
76.	21513	Voucher (n.d.)*
77.	21514	Receipt-Fragment (n.d.)*
78.	21515	Letter-Fragment (n.d.)*
79.	21516	Letter-Fragment (n.d.)*
80.	21517	Letter-Fragment (n.d.)*
81.	21518	Letter-Fragment (n.d.)*
82.	21519	Book-Fragment (c.1850)*
83.	21520	Book-Fragment (c.1850)*
84.	21521	Book-Fragment (c.1850)*
85.	21522	Misc. Unidentified Papers (Fragmentary/Illegible)*

(* Not transcribed: Too fragmentary and/or illegible)

JAMES ROBINSON PAPERS
MANASSAS NATIONAL BATTLEFIELD PARK

Catalog # MANA 21439: Contract

"Memorandum of Agreement between James
Robinson and Thomas R Hampton

The said James Robinson is to serve the said
Thomas R. Hampton till the 1st January 1829 at
the option of the said Hampton as a waiter in
his house of entertainment conducting himself
industriously and soberly and to the best
of his ability any business demanding
his attention : For which the said Thomas
R Hampton is to pay him /at the rate of/ Seventy five [dollars]
[?] per annum and allow him
[?] days to visit his wife in the course of
[?] year Witness our hands the 1st Jany
[1828?] his

James X Robinson
mark

A Copy Teste
Jno. F Moore

Th. R. Hampton"

JAMES ROBINSON PAPERS
MANASSAS NATIONAL BATTLEFIELD PARK

Catalog # MANA 21443: Memorandum (n.d.)

"George W. Fitzhugh has a warranty press
ing against James Robinson for some
amount not recollected. This is to show
that if Fitzhugh receives [?] much of
Robinson I am to pay of it Fifteen
Dollars or whatever less/amt he does recover
Th R Hampton"

JAMES ROBINSON PAPERS
MANASSAS NATIONAL BATTLEFIELD PARK

Catalog # MANA 21451: Ledger

"Hire of Henry for 1837 -----	\$20.00
Hire of Nimrod for [?] -----	40.00
Hire of Mencer & Sanford [?of] farm	<u>97.50</u>
	\$157.50

	1838	
Hire Mencer -----		50.00
Hire Henry -----		24.00
Hire Sanford -----		50.00
Hire Nimrod -----		<u>37.50</u>
		\$161.50
		<u>157.50</u>
		\$319.00"

JAMES ROBINSON PAPERS
MANASSAS NATIONAL BATTLEFIELD PARK

Catalog # MANA 21475: Contract (Lease)

"Memoranda of agreement between L. Carter and Jas. Roberson (Free Man) Witness the That the said Landon Carter has this day promised & agreed to permit the said James Robison to cultivate all the land not sowed in wheat contained in this West or Barn Field, in oats or any other grain, provided that said Carter has full & entire possession of the field as soon after harvest as the oats & wheat can be taken together after harvest The said Roberson to be permitted to hawl his whole crop off this land, & binds himself to pay said Carter as rent for said land twenty Dollars in Money on or before the first day of November 1849 Witness our hands & seals this 7th day May 1849 Landon Carter J (seal)
First his
Edwin S. Carter Jas X Robison (seal)
mark"

Paul A. Snackel, Stephen R. Potter, and Matthew Reeves

The University of Maryland and the National Park Service

A Formidable Partnership in Historical Archeology

J. Robinson House
HISTORIC SITE FILE:
PRINCE WILLIAM PUBLIC LIBRARY SYSTEM
RELIC/Bull Run Reg Lib Manassas, VA

Historical archeology has been a major component of the Department of Anthropology, University of Maryland, College Park (UMCP), for more than 16 years. Many training opportunities attract students from around the country and around the world. Several students have been trained in the ongoing project "Archaeology in Annapolis" under the direction of Mark Leone. As of January 1997, a renewed cooperative agreement between the National Park Service (NPS), National Capital Region (NCR) and (UMCP) has generated additional historic preservation opportunities in historical archeology. This agreement has been an important step to generate student support in the Anthropology Department's B.A. and M.A.A. program.

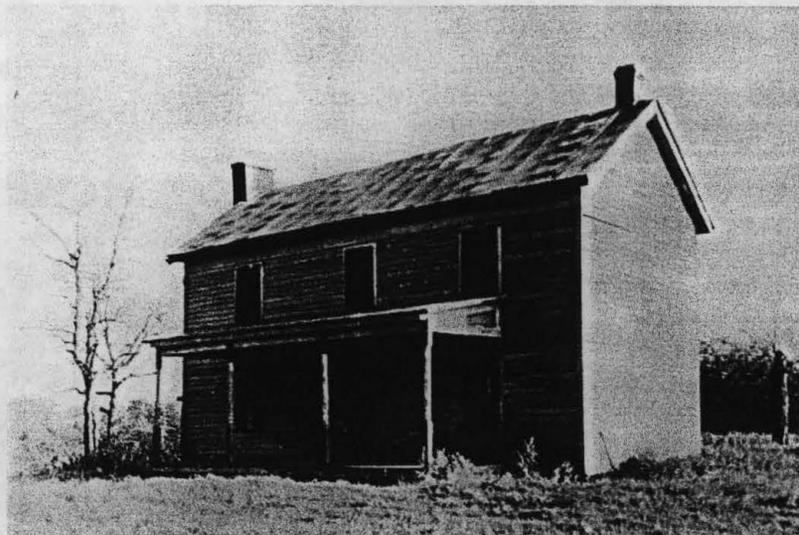
While education is a major emphasis of the NPS, the agency has become a unique partner to UMCP. The two institutions have created a productive working relationship that supports student training and internships. In return, students have generated valuable research for the NPS, allowing it to interpret, monitor, and protect cultural resources in new and innovative ways. The projects generated by the students also help sustain the agency, because sparse base funding and staff limitations have curtailed many necessary projects.

The cooperative work between the two organizations is facilitated by the Master of Applied Anthropology (M.A.A.) program, developed in the Department of Anthropology in 1984. The M.A.A. is a two-year professional degree for those interested in the practice and application of anthropology in careers outside academia. Skills are developed through internships with professionals in related and complementary fields. The archeology program has consistently worked with archeologists in federal, state, and local governments, and those in the private sector. The M.A.A. program works well because traditional masters theses are replaced with projects. Students are expected to produce a product related to the internship, instead of a thesis.

Regional Archeologist Stephen R. Potter has generated several archeology projects carried out by the NPS and the Department of Anthropology, UMCP since the beginning of 1997. Many projects go beyond Section 106 compliance needs and add an additional dimension to NPS archeology projects.

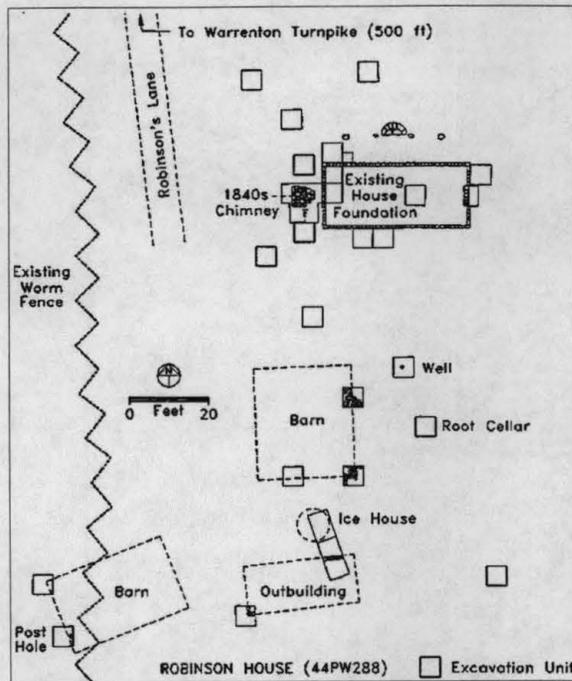
One such case is at the Robinson House, at Manassas National Battlefield Park. The Robinsons were a free African-American family that occupied the same house from 1840 through 1936. The house is recognized as a significant

landscape feature since it was part of the Civil War battlefield landscape during the First and Second Battles of Manassas. Arsonists burned the structure in 1993, and it was dismantled. The stone foundation and chimney remain, symbolizing an African-American family's life and struggle to survive during Jim Crow (Martin et al 1997:157). An M.A.A. intern is currently expanding on the Park's General Management Plan (MANA1983) by investigating domestic life within a battle area. The project, being



The Robinson House at Manassas National Battlefield Park housed the same free African-American family from the 1840s through 1936. It was burned by arsonists in 1993. Photo courtesy Manassas National Battlefield Park.

Site plan of the excavation units placed round the Robinson House and yard. Illustration by John Ravenhorst.



done by Erika Martin, includes ceramic and glass vessel analysis, currently in progress. This work will allow the park to place the Robinson family's consumer behavior within the changing social relationships of Northern Virginia and "enhance understanding of the shifting social relations found within a community inhabited by both African Americans and whites" (Shackel et al. 1995; Little and Potter 1995; Potter 1997b).

In another project at Manassas National Battlefield Park, the park is proposing to stabilize the one-story Sudley Post Office. Because the stone foundation needs repair and repointing, the work will require ground disturbance around the structure. Before any fabric treatment, archeological work and analysis are being undertaken around the building. The purpose of the project is to locate, identify, evaluate, and recover a sample of any archeological resources that may be impacted by the stabilization of the building (Potter 1997a). Matthew Reeves, a recent Ph.D. graduate from Syracuse University, is the project director, and as many as six UMCP graduate and undergraduate students are working under his direction in the field and in the laboratory. This interdisciplinary project has shed new light on the history of the property and related structures. Historical research shows that the building was probably present much earlier than anyone had previously suspected. The structure is considered nationally significant since it housed injured soldiers during the First Battle of Manassas. In 1871 new owners constructed an extension that housed a post office to cater to the growing community, thus the name—Sudley Post Office. The Sudley Post office became an important center for the community and many

Excavations along the walls of the Sudley Post Office, Manassas National Battlefield Park. Photo courtesy University of Maryland and National Capital Region, NPS.

local residents still reminisce about the post office. After 1903 the structure was inhabited by an African-American family (Reeves 1997). While the archeology has unearthed little related to the mid-19th-century occupation, a large feature that later served as a trash pit has been uncovered and the materials are related to the early-20th-century African-American family. The feature corresponds to the same time as the materials under analysis for the Robinson house. It is quite significant that the archeological investigations at the two areas in the park provide a much broader analysis of the sites. They go beyond the park's traditional battlefield interpretations and contribute to more inclusive histories of the community.

Three students are also learning the NPS Automated National Cataloging System (ANCS), under the direction of Marian Creveling. They are cataloging archeological collections from several national parks. These collections have been uncataloged for many years and this work allows the agency to become more accountable for the material culture that they oversee and monitor. While learning this complicated cataloging system, students will also learn storage and curatorial techniques.

An M.A.A. project has also been completed by UMCP graduate student, Jennifer Moran, at Rock Creek Park. Established in 1890 Rock Creek Park is one of the oldest national parks in the national park system. It is also one of the largest forested urban parks in the United States. The archeology done in the 1890s by William Henry Holmes provides an example of some of the earliest professional and scientific archeology work performed in the country. As part of a larger Cultural Landscape Inventory project, Moran's work documented the presence of prehistoric and historic archeological sites, assessed the conditions of



University of Maryland interns, Jenn Moran and Erika Martin, discuss distribution of archeological artifacts at Rock Creek Park. Photo courtesy Paul Shackel.



archeological collections, and placed this information on a GIS database. This information will become a valuable tool to help park staff monitor archeological resources.

While still in its early stages, the cooperative program between the NPS-NCR and UMCP has already enjoyed several successes. The cooperative programs generate opportunities for students to work within an applied setting in an archeological context. Their work is funded by the NPS. In turn, the agency receives a product that will help them to interpret, monitor, and protect cultural resources under its jurisdiction.

References

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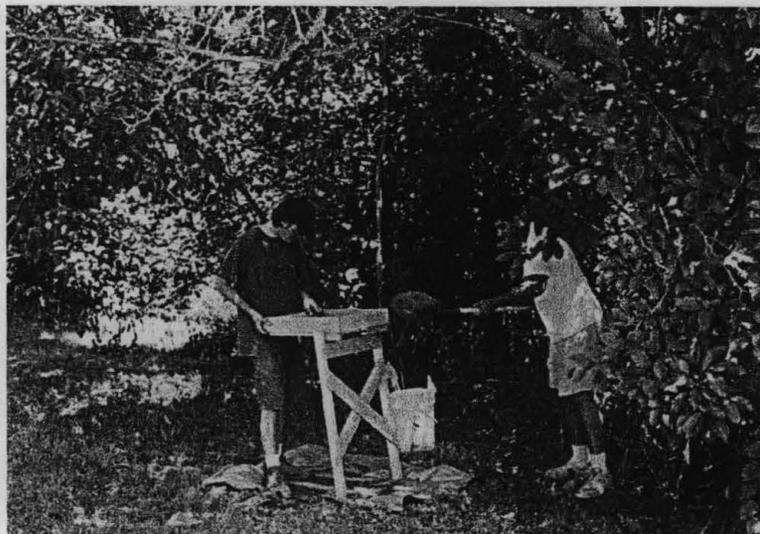
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 1997 Commemorating a Rural African-American Family at a National Battlefield Park. *International Journal of Historical Archaeology* 1(2): 157-177.
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 1997b Attachment #2: Description and Nature of Project Work: Robinson House Site Minimum Vessel Analysis for the National Park Service, National Capital Region, Washington, D.C. On file, System Support Office, National Capital Region, Washington, D.C.
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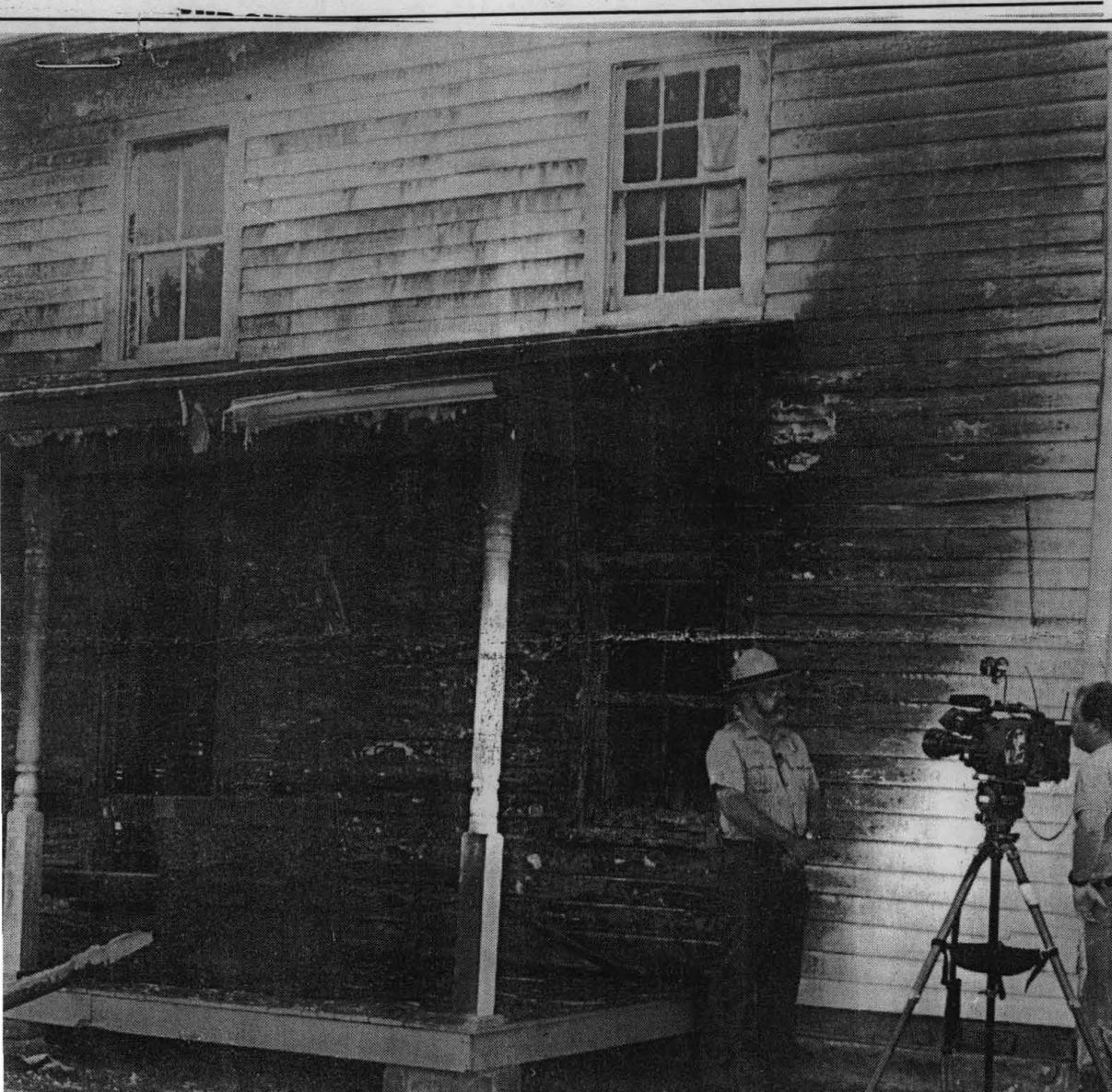
Paul A. Shackel is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Anthropology, University of Maryland.

Stephen R. Potter is the Regional Archeologist, National Capital Region, National Park Service.

Matthew Reeves is a Research Associate in the Department of Anthropology, University of Maryland.

Excavations in the yard of the Sudley Post Office, Manassas National Battlefield Park. Photo courtesy University of Maryland and National Capital Region, NPS.





Journal Messenger 7/28/93

Harold Miller—Journal Messenger

A television crewman interviews Battlefield Park Superintendent Kenneth Apschnikat at the site of the Robinson House fire. Officials are reviewing options which include reconstructing the exterior to its original shape or tearing down the charred skeleton and exposing the original foundation to mark the home's site. Apschnikat said

Too early to say if house will be fixed

Prince William Public Library
Manassas, Va.

J. Robinson House

By VONDA K. WOLCOTT
Staff Writer

Manassas Battlefield Park officials said restoring the historic Robinson house to its pre-fire conditions could cost \$250,000. They are reviewing options which include reconstructing the exterior to its original shape or tearing down the charred skeleton and exposing the original foundation to mark the home's site, said Park Superintendent Kenneth Apschnikat.

Apschnikat could not estimate how much it would cost to leave only the foundation. "It's too early to say when we'll make a decision," Apschnikat said. "We don't even know what all of our options are."

Apschnikat said the interior of the house will not need to be rebuilt because it is an exterior exhibit.

A fire which investigators deemed "suspicious" broke out in a first-floor room and gutted the home Monday night, said Lt. Tim Hattwick of the Prince William County Fire Marshal's Office.

The fire started about 8 p.m. in the only room which had an unlocked window in the home, Hattwick said.

The house was built in 1926 on the site of the original home and

See HOUSE on Page A6

Local, federal investigators studying fire

By VONDA K. WOLCOTT
Staff Writer

Investigators sifted through the charred skeleton of the Robinson House Tuesday but have not determined what caused the fire.

County fire fighters, who battled the blaze that broke out about 8 p.m. Monday at the historic home on the Manassas Battlefield, said a preliminary investigation indicated the fire may have been arson.

"We're very anxious to find out what happened," said Park Superintendent Kenneth Apschnikat. "There's a lot of people who want to know. We hope to have something soon."

The National Park Service, which is leading the investigation has asked for assistance from county, state and federal agencies, reportedly including the FBI.

Apschnikat would not confirm if the FBI was participating in the investigation. However, the Manassas

See FIRE on Page A6

VIRGINIANA FILE

FIRE VIRGINIANA FILE

Continued from Page A1

Battlefield is federal property which comes under FBI jurisdiction.

The Robinson House, as well as other historical sites at the Battlefield have been victims of vandalism this year. During the July 4 weekend vandals spray-painted graffiti on the house.

Apschnikat said the vandalism and the fire are "not necessarily related."

The fire broke out in a first-floor room which had the only unlocked window in the house, said Lt. Tim Hattwick of the county Fire Marshal's Office. Hattwick called the fire "suspicious" and it had no apparent accidental cause.

The county Fire Marshal's Office has since turned the case over to the park service, but is continuing to assist them with the investigation, said fire Capt. Matt Smolsky.

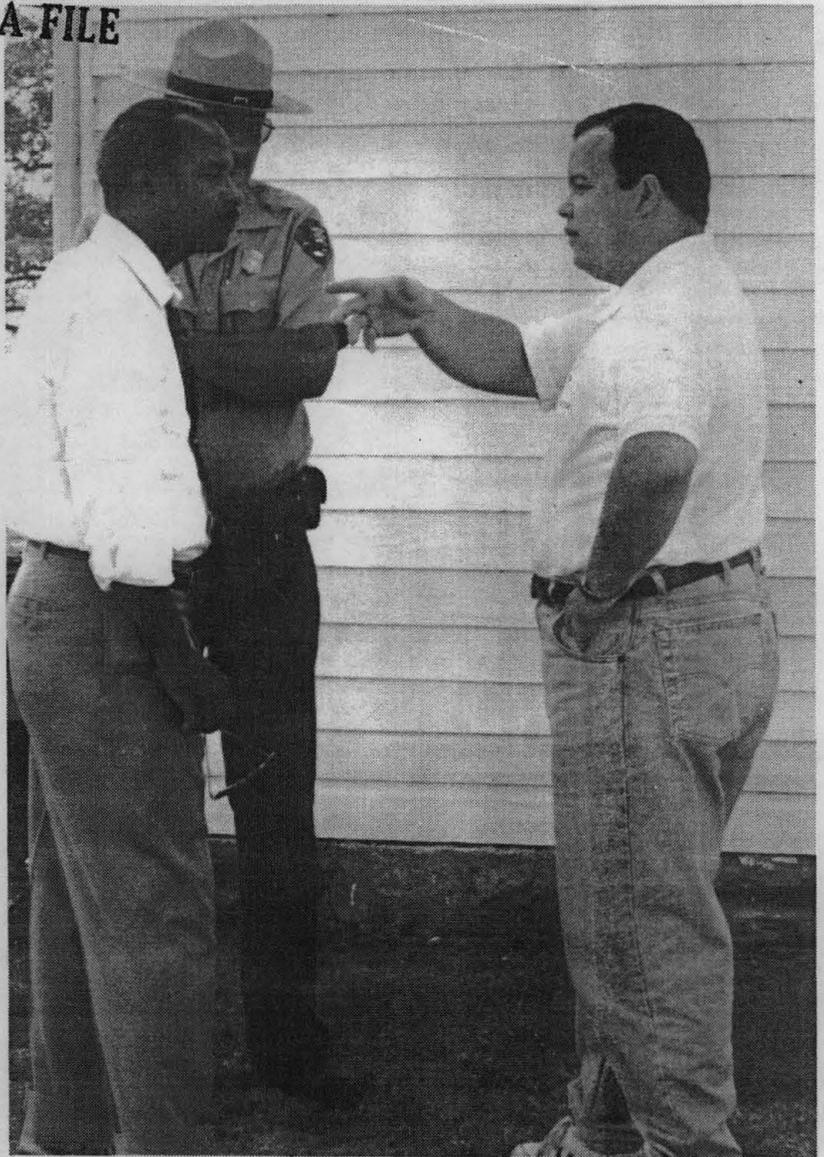
HOUSE

Continued from Page A1

tavern of James "Gentleman Jim" Robinson, a freed slave whose descendants still live in the area. That home survived two Civil War battles, including pillaging by Union troops in the second battle of Manassas in 1862.

The park service bought the home and land more than 50 years ago from the Robinson's.

Robinson's great-grandson Bladen Oswald Robinson, 83, told reporters he had planned to use his childhood home in mid-August for a family reunion.



Harold Miller—Journal Messenger

U.S. Park police discuss the fire which gutted the Robinson House with Mark Robinson, right, a grandson of James "Gentleman Jim" Robinson who owned the historic home.

Residents worry over vandalism at the Park

By TERESA MATTICK
 Staff Writer

Vandals spray-painted graffiti on several historic sites at the Manassas National Battlefield Park sometime during the July Fourth weekend. The James Robinson House, which survived the First Battle of Manassas and served as a field hospital during the Second Battle of Manassas, and several interpretive signs in different areas of the park were marred with black paint.

According to the Park Superintendent Ken Apschnikat, all the graffiti has been removed. "We try to get to it as soon as possible so it doesn't encourage more," he said.

Last weekend's vandalism came after several gravestones at the park's Confederate Cemetery were desecrated with cult symbols in June.

While some neighbors of the park point to recent vandalism as another sign of a crime problem in the 5,000-acre national park, Apschnikat said that vandalism problems usually come in spells — "There will be a rash of vandalism and then for a long time nothing," he said.

"It's not that unusual either. (Vandalism) happens at national parks across the country," Apschnikat said.

Betty Duley, however, feels that the recent vandalism could indicate the start of a more serious problem.

Duley lives on land abutting the Battlefield Park and in February she became involved in forming an organization called Park for All Americans. Duley is the vice chairman of the group.

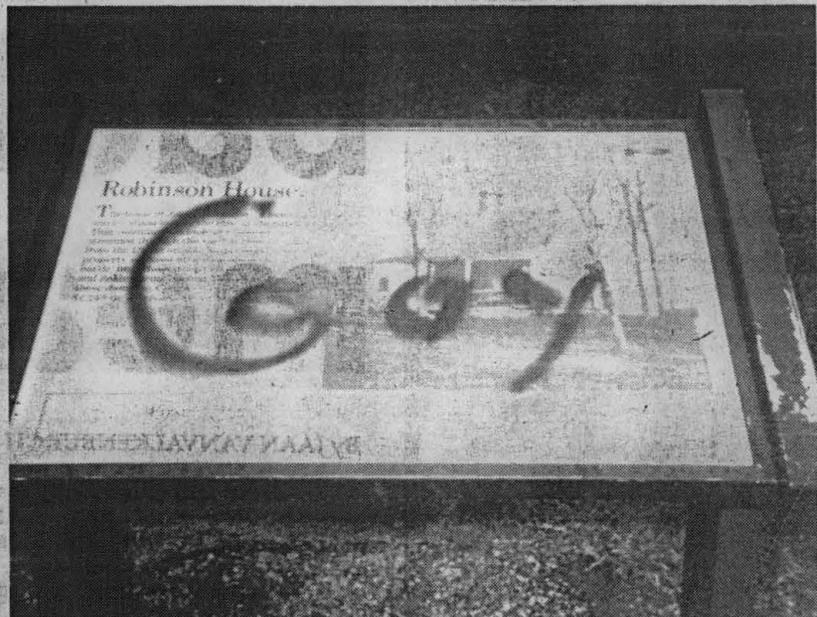
"It was formed as part of the neighborhood watch program," she said. The organization's goal is to make the park safe and accessible to everyone.

Duley along with other citizens point to the recent vandalism as proof of the necessity for the mounted horse patrols — currently a controversial issue which had been under study by the Department of Interior during February and March.

In March nearly 70 park users and area residents attended a public session with the task force which was assessing the horse patrols. Most supported the patrols saying



The historic James Robinson House, above, located at the Manassas National Battlefield Park, was spray-painted by vandals over the holiday weekend. The house survived the First Battle of Manassas and served a Union hospital during the Second Battle of Manassas. Below, one of the signs which provides historic information to park visitors, is one of the several signs also marred by graffiti.



that the only way to deter crime in the large park is through the mounted patrols. Crime problems they cited include drug dealing, illegal sex and poaching.

"It is my opinion that horses are the only way to go," Duley said. "And apparently this (vandalism) shows that the park needs 24-hour patrol."

In a letter to the editor supporting the horse patrols, Gregg C. Jones, a nine-year volunteer with the Battlefield Park states, "You can clean up some of the vandalism

(those gravestones will need a sandblaster) but can you afford to wait until the damage is irreversible and the possibility of harm to innocent park visitors occurs?"

The Journal Messenger filed a Freedom of Information request for the horse patrol study, which was rejected by the Department of Interior. The newspaper then filed an appeal, which is currently under consideration. The Department asked for an extension of the 20 days it had to respond to the FOI appeal because of the large number of FOI actions filed with the agency.

Battlefield "VA" house being dismantled

Artifacts could give clue
to life of freed slaves

By MIKE FUCHS
Manassas Bureau

Gainesville resident Bladen Oswald Robinson and his son Richard peered at the newly discovered notes handwritten by their ancestor, a freed slave whose farm was caught in the bloody crossfire of two Civil War battles.

Preservation officials at Manassas National Battlefield Park on Tuesday had carefully placed the notes inside a plastic bag to be examined later.

Most of the scraps were too crumpled, torn and creased to decipher. But the Robinsons could make out the neatly written signature of James Robinson, better known as "Gentleman Jim," the great-grandfather of 84-year-old Bladen Robinson.

The notes were discovered after officials with the National Park Service's Williamsport Preservation Training Center recently began photographing and removing pieces of the vacant Robinson House, which was mostly gutted in a fire caused



By Chris Moorhead-Potomac News

Workers dismantle the historic Robinson House behind Bladen Oswald Robinson, right, and son Richard. A 1993 arson nearly destroyed the house, built on the site of their ancestor's log cabin.

by an unknown arsonist last summer.

It was the first step toward the eventual piece-by-piece dismantling of the 68-year-old house by the end

of July. Though unnecessary, the Park Service sought and received the Robinson family's written approval of the move last December.

Park Superintendent Kenneth

Apschnikat said removing the house was more appropriate than trying to restore a mostly ruined structure.

See ROBINSON, Page A3

Historic house being dismantled

ROBINSON From Page A1

The Robinsons and park officials said taking apart the house may also reveal valuable clues, such as the notes, that will better piece together scant information on how freed slaves coped during and after the Civil War.

They added that the house's removal will also unearth the foundation of the original Robinson House, a log cabin Gentleman Jim built before the Civil War.

James Robinson, son of his white owner and a black woman slave, was freed in 1850 and eventually married and raised six children there.

"The background of a freed black family caught up in this war and right in the midst of two terrible battles of that war is part of a story I think is very important and certainly has not gotten that much attention," said Brian Pohanka, former president and co-founder of the Association for the Preservation of Civil War sites and a television consultant on Civil War history.

He added that focusing more on freed blacks' travails is timely when much attention of late has concentrated on commemorating Monday's 50th anniversary of the World War II D-Day invasion.

That battle left thousands of soldiers dead on the beaches of Normandy, France, while scores of French civilians perished in the midst of the fierce fighting.

"Our own people experienced similar horrors 130 years ago," Pohanka said.

"There was this family that was in the gist of all this turmoil associated with the war and all of its horrors, and it managed to survive and prosper," added Richard Robinson, 56, a retired Army colonel and retired U.S. Census Bureau security director. "I think it's the strong will and fortitude of our ancestors."

At the house Tuesday, several park officials began peeling off the yellow-pine siding. Scraps of plaster and boards lie in heaps around the two-story white frame house, with half its exterior charcoal black from last year's fire.

Leaning on a cane several feet from the house, Bladen Robinson said his ancestors lived on a strategically sensitive site during the five-year Civil War that began in 1861.

The house overlooks rolling hills that stretch to Bull Run Mountain to the west. A park statue of Confederate Gen. Thomas

The house overlooks rolling hills that stretch to Bull Run Mountain to the west. A park statue of Confederate Gen. Thomas "Stonewall" Jackson stands less than a mile to the south. The house sits several hundred feet west of U.S. 29, a major thoroughfare used by Confederate and Union forces during the Civil War.

"This is the only true example of a minority population being pinpointed at a pivotal spot during the war and the part they played in it," said Robinson, a retired teacher and retired principal at Louise Archer Elementary School in Vienna.

James Robinson's 180-acre property was part of rolling farm fields and woods that stood between Union troops seeking control of the prized Manassas Gap Railroad junction to the south and defending Confederate soldiers, according to historians.

Confederate soldiers successfully fended off the advancing Union army during the July 21, 1861, First Battle of Manassas. The Robinson House sustained little damage from the surrounding battle.

The home was ransacked, however, by Union troops during the August 1862 Second Battle of Manassas. Congress later compensated the Robinson family for property damages.

During the war, Union soldiers used the house as a field hospital. Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis's great-grandfather, Union Lt. John V. Bouvier, was cared for by the Robinsons after being wounded during the second battle, according to historians.

The Robinsons hope the Park Service will build a replica of the original log cabin as a tribute to their distinctive heritage.

Apschnikat said it's too early to tell whether the agency will build a replica or use some other means to recognize the site.

The genetic evidence supported Dedrick's microscopic analysis that the hair was authentic, Dedrick said. He added that all 11 hairs appeared to be genuine. "I would say there's a good chance that all of them could have come from George Washington," he said. The hairs from Williamsburg

1111 1111 1111 1111 "VA"

J. Robinson House

VIRGINIANA FILE

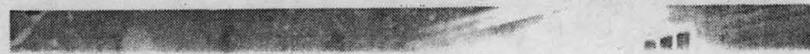


Maureen Lariviere—Journal Messenger

Stonewall Jackson Co. 11 volunteer firefighters battle the blaze that engulfed the Robinson House Monday night.

Suspicious fire mars Battlefield landmark

By the Associated Press
Portions of a historic landmark at



Suspicious fire mars Battlefield landmark

By the Associated Press

Portions of a historic landmark at the Manassas National Battlefield Park were destroyed in a suspicious blaze, fire officials said.

The fire Monday night swept through the Robinson House, built on the site of the original home and tavern of James Robinson, or Gentleman Jim, a freed slave whose descendants still live in the area.

"It's a real tragedy," park Superintendent Kenneth E. Apschnikat said. "You can't put a value on history."

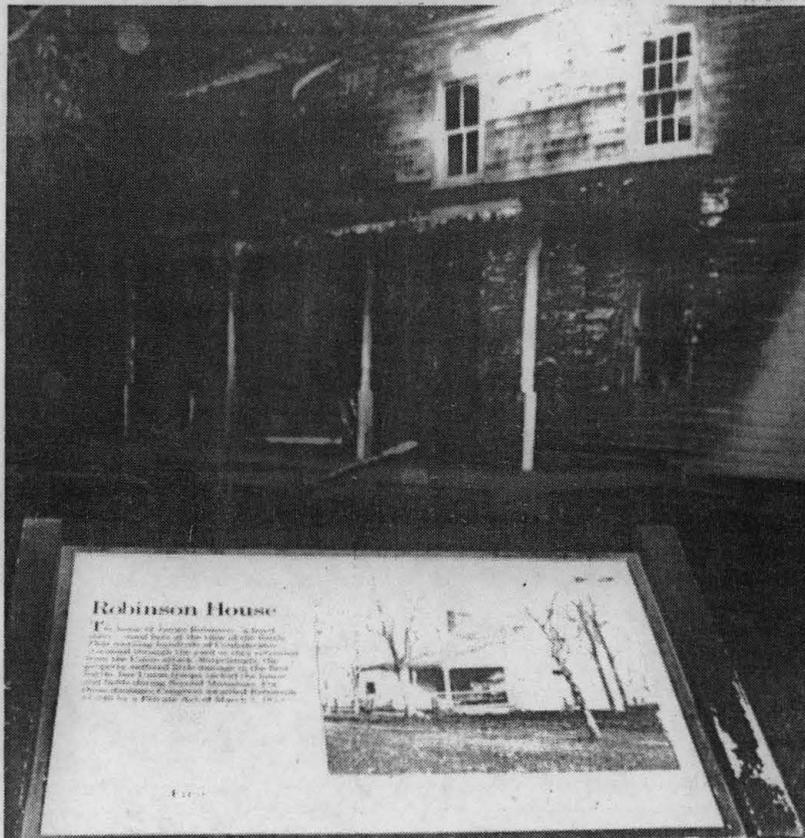
The fire started in a first-floor room, which had the only unlocked window in the house, said Prince William County fire Lt. Tim Hattwick. He said he was unable to determine if the heat from the blaze broke the window from inside, or if someone broke it to enter the home before the fire.

Hattwick said he found no apparent accidental cause of the blaze, which was reported shortly before 8 p.m. He estimated damage at a minimum of \$100,000.

A group of Park Service officials were scheduled to visit the house to assess historical and architectural damage. Repairs will be costly because the home would have to be reconstructed to match its pre-fire appearance, Apschnikat said.

Robinson's great-grandson, Bladen Oswald Robinson, was stunned Monday night after the fire at his childhood home. The 83-year-old Manassas resident planned to use the old house and its grounds for a family reunion in mid-August.

"Oh, I had many a meal in that house, all of us did," Robinson said. "It's all history now. That's all it is. It's a shame. The family will be devastated."



Maureen Lariviere—Journal Messenger

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Park rangers had arranged for special tours inside the old home for the reunion, and planned to spruce up the place for the event.

Confederate troops passed by the site during the Battle of First Manassas in July 1861. But hundreds of Union troops pillaged the home

during the Battle of Second Manassas in August 1862. In 1873, Congress gave \$2,080 to the Robinson family to compensate for the damage, Robinson said.

The park service purchased the home and land from the Robinsons more than 50 years ago.