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# SAVE THE FRANKLIN BATTLEFIELD

June 2009

[www.franklin-stfb.org](http://www.franklin-stfb.org)

**Dedicated to the preservation, protection, and promotion of  
Civil War sites in Williamson County, Tennessee**

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## President's Message

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In the weeks since the discovery of remains of a Civil War soldier in Franklin, it has been encouraging to see the resolve by the City of Franklin, especially mayor John Shroer and alderman Michael Skinner, to treat them with dignity. This has not always been the case. In past years, found remains were seen as an impediment to progress and, it is sad to say, that many have been hastily recovered or discarded in secret.

In this month's newsletter you can read the latest on what is known concerning the soldier and plans for re-interment in "Franklin's Unknown Soldier" by STFB board member Sam Gant, who has been closely involved in planning since the remains were discovered. New information is also posted to the STFB web site to keep our membership abreast of events.

Meanwhile, threats to the Franklin battlefield and Civil War sites continue. See "Roper's Knob Threatened" to understand why the work to preserve and protect Civil War battlefields never ends.

And one last reminder – the Franklins Charge seminar is scheduled June 18-20. In conjunction with that event, STFB has organized an encampment at the eastern flank park with small battle demonstrations on Saturday and Sunday. Both days are free to the public. See you there.

Mike Walker - President

## Roper's Knob Threatened

A new threat to Roper's Knob is being promoted by a local developer. The site is one of Franklin's real Civil War treasures which was the location of a Federal signal station. The unmarred hill is easily visible from all points around Franklin. Although the summit and the south flank of the hill is owned by the State of Tennessee and City of Franklin, much of the land on the north slope and the hills to the west are in private hands.

One of the owners, developer Charles Mitchell, reportedly is requesting to build an access road onto his land from Mack Hatcher Parkway as an extension of Cool Springs Blvd. He apparently has offered to pay the \$1.4 million estimated cost of the road.

Clearly, the proposal is much more than a driveway and could easily become a public road which would open the land to development of the Roper Knob hillsides. Construction of the road itself, which would require considerable blasting, could endanger the fragile slopes of the knob including the ramp, constructed and used by Federal troops to haul heavy artillery to the summit.

Mitchell has reportedly been working with TDOT for months on plans for the road since Mack Hatcher Parkway is owned by the State. Presently, the City of Franklin is studying the proposal and must approve the project before the road most likely would become a city street.

As always, STFB will continue to speak out against development that infringes upon and

endangers our few remaining Civil War sites in Williamson County. We believe that Franklin does not need townhouses and office buildings on the hillsides of Ropers Knob and its neighboring heights. We will keep you informed as events develop.

Visit [www.franklin-stfb.org](http://www.franklin-stfb.org) to see photographs of the STFB October 2008 tour of Roper's Knob. You can also read an archaeology report by Dr. Benjamin Nance of the Tennessee Division of Archeology featuring photographs and historic sketches. The report summarizes research conducted in the Fall of 2000 which "exposed Civil War period fortifications and features" including "a redoubt as well as the rare example of an excavated blockhouse."

### **New & Renewing Members May 2009**

Gene Andrews	Nashville, TN
Mark & Mary Aulman	Woodland, CA
Robert Briggs	Fairview, TN
Dan Brown	Nashville, TN
Andy & Mike Cullison	Oklahoma City, OK
Austin CWRT	Austin, TX
South Bay CWRT	Mountain View, CA
David Dale	Nashville, TN
Robt Yvonne & Bobby Foster	Brentwood, TN
Betty Herbert	Brentwood, TN
Rob Hodge	Sterling, VA
Bill Kennedy	Columbia, TN
Karen Emerson McPeak	College Grove, TN
Arthur Mellor	Franklin, TN
William & Cynthia Morelli	Brentwood, TN
John & Carol Petty	Wartrace, TN
Michael Skinner	Franklin, TN
Ann Stover	Glendale, AZ
Gary & Paula Waddey	Nashville, TN
Greg Wade	Franklin, TN
Billy Lou Wright	Franklin, TN

### **Skirmish Demonstrations June 20-21 Saturday & Sunday**

In conjunction with the Franklins Charge seminar this year, STFB has organized a small re-enactment of the Franklin Battle of November 30, 1864. Several hundred re-enactors in period dress will participate, along with artillery and an authentic encampment, at the Franklin Battlefield Park just north of Carnton.

The engagements are scheduled for 2:30 PM on Saturday and 1:00 PM on Sunday. Both events and parking are **free to the public**. Attendees are encouraged to visit the re-enactors in their encampments after the events. Come see history at its best.

The re-enactment groups are members of the Tennessee Valley Battalion and other supporting groups, and we greatly thank them all for coming to Franklin to assist our efforts. For more information on the re-enactments, please visit the STFB web site at [www.franklin-stfb.org](http://www.franklin-stfb.org)

### **Franklin's Unknown Soldier - Update -**

Mysteries and many questions surround the Civil War-era soldier whose remains were found last month on the Franklin battlefield. Who was he? Was he a Federal or Confederate soldier? When did he die? Why was he buried in a coffin?

The soldier, who most Franklin historians think was a Federal, was buried just a few yards west of Columbia Pike near the site of the McNeely house. He had been buried in a wooden coffin wearing a frock coat. The buttons found in the site were Union eagle and "I" buttons. These buttons were the means of identifying him as a Federal soldier. The non-regulation mix of additional buttons, however, cause some to contend that this could leave open the possibility of a Confederate wearing a Federal coat.

Two theories are proposed on why his remains were at this location about a quarter mile north of Winstead Hill. The first theory, suggested by the historians first on the site, placed the soldier as a member of the advanced Federal forces pursuing Hood in the December 17 retreat from Nashville. The second suggests that he may have been part of Conrad's or Lane's forward line which was overrun during the November 30 attack, the soldier was wounded and then carried as a prisoner to this location where he died. But unless he died some time after the battle, neither theory explains the burial in a coffin.

Efforts are underway to give this unknown soldier a burial which pays honor to the all of the Fallen at the Battle of Franklin .

Immediately upon the discovery of the remains, the City of Franklin under the leadership of Alderman Mike Skinner set out to protect the soldier and to make arrangements for placing him in a suitable burial site. Mayor John Shroer, in his Memorial Day Address, recognized this unknown soldier from the Civil War as symbolic of all of those who are lost in battle. The Wesley Wolfe Construction Company, the developer on whose property the soldier was found, has underwritten the total cost of the archeological study, the removal of the remains, and the re-interment of the soldier. The State of Tennessee is holding the remains until all legal requirements are met and arrangements for reburial are complete.

Preliminary plans call for the soldier to be re-interred at Franklin's historic Rest Haven Cemetery. An appropriate ceremony will be organized incorporating Civil War re-enactors. Current plans call for the Civil War soldier to be laid to rest with the honor due: "Unknown: Battle of Franklin, November 30, 1864."

## News in Review June 2009

**Franklin's Charge hosts Symposium 2009 — *Franklin Life* — May-June 2009 — FRANKLIN** — Franklin's Charge is hosting its third annual Symposium on the Battle of Franklin, June 18-20. The Symposium focuses on the "Last Days of the Army of Tennessee" and follows General John Bell Hood's footsteps into Franklin and onward to Nashville. Info at 615-595-0636

**40 more things every Tennessean should do — *The Tennessean* — 3/14/09 — NASHVILLE — PUT YOUR FINGERS IN THE CARTER HOUSE BULLET HOLES, FRANKLIN:** Commandeered as a Federal Command Post during the Civil War, this residence offers evidence of the bloody Battle of Franklin with the most bullet damaged building from the entire war still standing — **SEE A CIVIL WAR RE-ENACTMENT:** The state's great battlefields come alive in modern times as soldiers don the blue and gray in memory of those who fought on the ground below them.

**Civil War era bones unearthed at Franklin construction site — *The Tennessean*, "Williamson A.M." — 5/15/09 — FRANKLIN** — Franklin police say they believe human bones found Thursday at a construction site along Columbia Avenue belongs to a Union soldier. A worker discovered the remains while digging a trench at the site.

**Construction halts after Civil War-era remains found — *The Tennessean*, "Williamson A.M." — 5/19/09 — FRANKLIN** — Construction at a 29-acre development on

Columbia Avenue is on hold after the remains of a Civil War soldier were uncovered there last week. Archeologists continued excavating where more bones were found.

**Carnton's Fleming Center should be ready by summer — *Williamson Herald* — 5/21/09 — FRANKLIN** — named for the late Sam Fleming, a Franklin native and influential banker, the Fleming Center will have 3,500 square feet to be used as a visitors center, meeting and event space, bridal changing room, as well as an expanded gift shop, exhibit and restroom areas and offices for staff. Completion of the facility is expected in June by Century Construction Co.

**Sons of Union Veterans Camp to honor African American soldiers June 13 at Toussaint L'Ouverture Cemetery — *Williamson Herald* — 6/4/09 — FRANKLIN** — On June 13, as part of the Flag Day ceremonies across the nation, the Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War, Fort Donelson Camp 62 will hold a ceremony to honor three U.S. Colored Infantry veterans buried at Toussaint L'Ouverture Cemetery in Franklin. Those soldiers being honored are Privates John Dubuisson, Co. B, 100<sup>th</sup> USCI; Peter Ratcliffe, Co. B, 15<sup>th</sup> USCI; and Freeman Thomas, Co. B, 12<sup>th</sup> USCI. A separate ceremony will be held for Private Gabriel Capley, Co. E, 10<sup>th</sup> TN Inf, U.S. at the Capley Cemetery in western Williamson County.

**Soldier's remains to be held by state — *The Tennessean*, "Williamson A.M." — 6/4/09 — FRANKLIN** — The bones of a Civil War-era soldier recently found on a construction site in Franklin will stay with state archaeologist Mike Moore until a new burial place is determined.

**Preservation, growth unite rural residents — *The Tennessean*, "Williamson A.M." — 6/7/09 — TRIUNE COMMUNITY** — In the 1800s, Triune was a thriving plantation community. Today, there are several historic homes, two Civil War-era churches and a former school. Triune resident Karen Emerson-McPeak, who is on the Triune Community Club historical preservation committee, said Triune has one of the most well-preserved fortifications left from the Civil War and she embraces the club's rich history. "I feel like we should embrace the past and combine with the future, creating a better Triune."

**Hometown Tourist — Civil War played out across Tennessee sites — *The Tennessean* — 5/17/09 — NASHVILLE** — From Franklin to Ft. Pillow, devastation was dealt. Although it is the Eastern Theater that often gets the recognition, it's the Western Theater—the geographic area that includes Tennessee—that is often considered the more important Civil War battle zone because control of its vital waterways offered a gateway into the Deep South for Union troops.

# Save The Franklin Battlefield

PO Box 851  
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## June 2009

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QTY	Item	Price	Total
	Annual Membership: Individual \$20 ~ Family \$30 ~ Corporate \$50 (circle one)		
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	"Eyewitness to the Battle of Franklin" ~ David Logsdon, paperback	\$12.00	
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