

# The Dispatch

The newsletter of the  
Monocacy National Battlefield Foundation

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meeting that mission.



MNBF gifted a CDV of Confederate Brigadier  
General Bryan Grimes to MONO on February 14,  
2026. The CDV and information on Grimes is  
archived in the MONO research center.



## **From the Desk of the Superintendent – Winter and Spring Updates from Monocacy National Battlefield** **by Derek Carter**

As winter begins to give way to spring, Monocacy National Battlefield has been busy preparing for another active season of visitors, research, preservation, and programming. While the quieter winter months often provide time for planning and behind-the-scenes work, this year has also brought several exciting milestones and new opportunities across the park.

One of the highlights this season is the upcoming grand opening of the park's new museum on April 3. Our Interpretive Division has been working closely with the Facilities team to finalize exhibit spaces and prepare the museum for the public. From constructing exhibit platforms and completing finishing touches to carefully installing artifacts and interpretive elements, a great deal of coordination has gone into bringing this space to life. As opening day approaches, staff continue to complete final exhibit preparations, including rotating artifacts, finishing exhibit areas, and ensuring the visitor experience is ready for opening day.

Interpretation and education staff are also preparing a full slate of programs for the upcoming season. Popular events such as Painting the Past have already returned, and additional programming is in development. One upcoming program will offer a Classic Car driving tour tracing the route of Confederate General Jubal Early's advance toward Frederick before concluding at the battlefield. Staff are also planning a special America 250-themed program that will feature military units representing different eras of the nation's history. Living history demonstrations, including black powder demonstrations and pop-up interpretive programs, will also continue to provide engaging experiences for visitors throughout the season. In addition, the park is partnering with the Civil War Center at Shepherd University to host an interpretive intern this summer, helping mentor the next generation of National Park Service professionals.



*Allie participating at the Monarch Watch in ANTI*

The park's Natural Resources program has also had an exciting winter. We are pleased to congratulate Allison "Allie" Radin, who recently completed her Master of Science in Environmental Biology and a GIS Certificate from Hood College. After completing the requirements of the Pathways Student Trainee Program, Allie has officially joined the park as our Park Biologist. Her work will help guide resource stewardship and research efforts across the battlefield.

Monocacy has also been selected to host two fully funded Washington Office internship programs this year. One internship will focus on documenting and assessing the health of the park's legacy trees, updating historic records while providing valuable field experience in natural resource management. The second internship will support efforts to better understand and map the spread of Beech Leaf Disease, an emerging threat to American beech trees. These projects represent important steps in strengthening the park's ability to monitor and protect its natural resources while also providing hands-on learning opportunities for future conservation professionals.

This spring also marks the second and final year of our partnership with the University of Virginia's Dr. T'ai Roulston on an inventory of spring ephemeral wildflowers and pollinators. Two Scientists in Parks Ecology Assistants, Brooke Bellmar and Zoie Andre, will assist with pollinator monitoring, field surveys, and invasive species management throughout the season. Their work will contribute valuable data to our understanding of the park's pollinator communities and seasonal plant diversity.

In addition to natural resource research, Monocacy is hosting two National Capital Region Preservation Services interns who will conduct historic structure inventory work at both Monocacy and Antietam National Battlefields. Through a partnership with the National Council for Preservation Education, interns Caitlin Hall and Harrison Taylor will help document and assess historic structures as part of the Cultural Resources Inventory System for Historic Structures (CRIS-HS), an important tool for preserving the park's historic buildings and landscapes.

Looking ahead, the park is also beginning early planning for its first Ethnographic Overview and Assessment (EOA). This study will help identify and document the relationships that living cultural groups have with the battlefield landscape. By examining traditions, beliefs, and cultural practices connected to the site, the project will help ensure that the park continues to recognize and interpret the many perspectives and stories associated with Monocacy.

Behind the scenes, the Facilities and Maintenance Division has been busy completing a number of important projects throughout the winter. The rehabilitation of the sidewalk at the Gambrill Mill visitor area has recently been completed, improving visitor safety and accessibility. Maintenance staff also constructed a new ADA-accessible entrance ramp at Thomas Farm, helping improve access to this important historic area.



*Gambrill Mill Rehabilitated Sidewalk*

Crews have been preparing the landscape along Thomas Farm Lane for upcoming tree planting efforts by removing old stumps, and they have completed numerous finishing tasks and punch-list items in preparation for the museum rededication event in April. Winter storms this season also required several rounds of snow removal and plowing operations to ensure the park remained accessible to visitors.

Our Law Enforcement Rangers continue to provide essential support across the battlefield through visitor assistance, resource protection, and emergency response. During the quieter winter months, rangers maintain patrol coverage, assist visitors exploring the park's trails and historic sites, and help ensure that the battlefield remains a safe and welcoming place for all who visit.

As spring arrives and visitation begins to increase, these collective efforts across the park help ensure that Monocacy National Battlefield remains well-prepared to welcome visitors while protecting the resources and stories that make this landscape so significant.

On behalf of the entire staff, we look forward to another rewarding season and thank the Monocacy National Battlefield Foundation and its members for their continued support of the park and its mission.

### **Brigadier General Bryan Grimes by Matt Borders (1)**

Brigadier General Bryan Grimes was a North Carolinian and commanded North Carolina troops for most of his service in the Civil War. Present at the majority of the battles of the Army of Northern Virginia, his North Carolina brigade was part of Major General Robert Rodes Division here at Monocacy. Rodes took over the fighting around Jug Bridge after the initial push by Brigadier General Robert Lilley's brigade was stymied and redirected to the Georgetown Pike (Rte 355).

Grimes and his men, while present, were primarily in a supporting or reserve role during the Battle of Monocacy along what is today Rte 144. It is possible that picked men were pulled from the ranks to aid the sharpshooting that was going on at Jug Bridge, similar to what was happening with the North Carolina troops around Best Farm. I turned the Foundation on to the image of Grimes due to his presence on the field and the Foundation's recent push to do more with the Jug Bridge portion of the battlefield.

(1) The MNBF is excited to deepen the focus on the Jug Bridge area—an often-overlooked yet vitally important part of the battlefield landscape. The CDV connects us more directly in our interpretation and preservation of the Jug Bridge history. The MNBF thanks Matt Borders for notification of the artifact for purchase.



*Gambrill Mill – Stop 4 – Wallace and his staff came under artillery fire during the battle while riding from the mill to his command post – (center background)*

### **“Walk He Would” by David M. Hall**

The effect on soldiers’ morale when under artillery fire was a subject of great interest and comment, especially among combat veterans, during and long after the American Civil War.

Henry J. Hunt, a preeminent artillerist of Union Army of the Potomac, wrote: “What is called the moral effect of artillery is proportional, not to the noise it makes, but to its actual destructive effects...If they are great and sustained..artillery becomes a terror to the enemy and wonderful inspirer of confidence to its own troops. If not, then artillery became an object of contempt with both friend and foe.” A Union infantry officer wrote his wife in 1864 that the sound of incoming rounds gave the impression that “all the Demons were turned loose at once & were certain to kill every body any wheres near.” But he also admitted that “they scare a great deal more...I am not so afraid of them as I am of musket balls.” (1)

Notwithstanding the gruesome lethality of Civil War combat, there was an ethic of proper behavior under fire, especially among the officers as expressed in 1861 by Col. Isaac Stevens after a successful US skirmish a few months after the Union debacle of First Bull Run: “[the]...steadiness and good conduct [of the men]..under fire...were most gratifying...There was no flinching from fire.” (2)

The history of Major General Lew Wallace at the Battle of Monocacy, on July 9, 1864, is well chronicled. In his autobiography, Wallace describes his experience as a field commander with chronological and anecdotal precision. He reveals remarkable personal details of being a soldier in mortal combat -torn between duty and self-preservation. (3)

He wrote of his first experience under artillery fire at the Battle of Shiloh in 1862:

*"No one unless he has been in a cyclone, the air above him filled and darkened with stones, fencing, the fragments of trees, and the debris of collapsed houses can form an idea, even the faintest, of the violence of the tempest thus let loose...It was an iron sleet to drive an iron wall in...it was not in human nature to stand in the way of its fury." (4)*

Like many combat veterans who wrote of their experiences under fire, Wallace was still haunted, forty years later, by his memory of a man being mangled by a shot that had just missed him:

*"It was at that moment a round-shot tore past me traveling on a line lower than the horn of my saddle, and with a sound half swish, half roar, more vicious even than that of a rocket let loose. My horse swerved; yet I heard a noise behind me as if some one were pounding a sand-pile with a maul – a dull heavy noise, a thud – and turning involuntarily, I was in time to see an arm torn from the shoulder of a soldier and stiffened like a stick, its fingers all outspread, revolving end over end in the air. It was our first casualty" (5)*

In 1864, most field officers were experienced combat veterans. However, Wallace had run afoul of Generals Ulysses S. Grant and Henry Halleck over his alleged dilatory performance as a division commander on the first day of the Battle of Shiloh. Wallace was stripped of field command; consigned to recruiting in his native Indiana, sitting on various courts-martial and trying every way he could to return to the battlefield and redeem his reputation. When he finally did in early July 1864, he was still less inured to the stark ordeals of combat than many under his command that day at Monocacy.

Soon after the opening shots of the Battle of Monocacy, sometime around 10 a.m., Wallace and his staff rode to see General Ricketts and the dispositions of his battle seasoned Sixth Corps soldiers. Wallace observed their deployment on the reverse slope of the Thomas Hill Field, sheltered from the in-coming Confederate ordnance, he recounted their remarkable response to enemy fire:

*"Behind the summit, well down on the north face, we came upon the two brigades of Ricketts' division fronted westwardly, and lying down. With a splendid contempt for the shells streaming above them, and sharp explosions...the whole command seemed in mid-enjoyment of a morning nap." (6)*

Perhaps, it was a soldier's contempt for ineffective fire as Hunt wrote, or more likely, exhausted soldiers taking advantage of the opportunity to rest while they could, despite "all the Demons turned loose."

After leaving Ricketts, as Wallace and his retinue were returning to his headquarters, on the river bluff at the east end of the B&O railroad bridge over the Monocacy River, they came under cannon fire. He remembered his visceral reaction to being under fire for the first time since Shiloh and the discrete response of his staff to the alarm of their commanding officer:

*The road we took from the [Gambrill's] mill to gain the height above the block-house led across a stretch in plain view of the able [CS] gunners giving us such a worry from the other side of the river. Hardly had we begun the sloping rise when they saw the party and turned all their guns-upon it – how many we had not time to count. The noise overhead became deafening, and the whiz of flying iron incessant. Up all around us sprang little gushes of gravel and yellow dust. There was not an instant I did not look to a horse, possibly a horse and rider go down."*

*"Finally I called to my men: "Go ahead! As you love your lives, gallop on!"*

*They looked everywhere but at me.*

*"Do you hear? Go ahead!" I again yelled at them.*

*"Don't you see they are making a target of the crowd?"*

*"Not a man showed a sign of hurry. They would have died first. So at a slow walk...we rode through the most searching artillery-fire I ever encountered – a confusing fire – and that no one of the party was hit appears to me even at this long belated hour is miraculous."*

Wallace, recorded how his horse's calm response, like that of his aides and adjutants, induced him to mind his own flinching:

*I thought to make haste, and plied spurs to quicken my steed. I beat him with the flat of my sabre in vain. He could not be brought to discern his danger or ours. Walk he would."  
(7)*

History remembers Wallace both as the general who rose to the occasion as the leader of the "forlorn hope" defense of the Monocacy line, thus saving Washington, as the post war author of *Ben Hur -A Tale of the Christ*, and a distinguished politician and diplomat. Wallace's account touches us at a more human level by the confession of his mortal fear under fire while fulfilling his duty. It is also a fitting tribute to an equine warrior, that calmed a general's nerves and earned his grudging respect.



*Lew Wallace and his favorite warhorse*

- (1) Hunt and Captain Alexander Miller Ayres quoted by Hess, Earl J., CIVIL WAR FIELD ARTILLERY – Promise and Performance on the Battlefield, Louisiana State University Press, Baton Rouge, 2023, pp. 403-404.
- (2) Report of Col. Isaac I. Stevens, THE WAR OF THE REBELLION – A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies, Series I, Volume V., Washington Government Printing Office, 1881, p. 171.
- (3) Lew Wallace: An Autobiography in Two Volumes, Volume II, Harper and Brothers Publishers, New York & London, 1905, pp. 763, 765.
- (4) Lew Wallace: An Autobiography in Two Volumes, Volume I, Harper and Brothers Publishers, New York & London, 1905, p. 535.
- (5) *Ibid.*, Wallace, Vol. I, p. 350.
- (6) *Ibid.*, Wallace, Vol. II, p. 762.
- (7) *Ibid.*, Wallace, Vol. II, pp. 763-764.

## **Foundation Business Report**

### ***Calendar of Events for 2026***

**April 25, 2026**, annual park clean-up sponsored by American Battlefield Trust.

**May 25, 2026**, Memorial Day at MONO with MNBF American Legion poppy give-away (*new MNBF event*).

**July 11, 2026**, 162nd anniversary weekend at MONO.

**September 12, 2026**, "In the Streets" celebration of Frederick's non-profit organizations, sponsored by Celebrate Frederick.

**December 11, 2026**, Kris Kringle Procession, sponsored by Celebrate Frederick.

### ***Thank You to Our Editors***

The expert editorial assistance of Charley Miller and Clinton Eppleman is greatly appreciated

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P.O. Box 3404  
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