

An Integrated Curriculum For The Washington Post Newspaper In Education Program

## To Preserve or Not To Preserve?

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# Case Study: Walmart-Wilderness Battle

**Place:** The Wilderness Battlefield

**Location:** Orange and Spotsylvania counties, Virginia

**Proposal:** Walmart and its partners proposed construction of a 240,000-square-foot project, expanding existing retail buildings at the intersection of Routes 3 and 20.

**The Issue:** Would the expanded retail space destroy battlefield land and encroach on the Fredericksburg & Spotsylvania National Military Park?

## The Questions

Who determines what is of historical significance?

Would the proposed building lie within the boundaries of the Wilderness Battlefield as established in 1933 by the federal Civil War Sites Advisory Commission?

Is the proposed building site historic and worthy of preservation?

Since permission was given for the current retail businesses, why should Walmart be denied?

## Background

- A group of seven investors, calling themselves 3&20 partners, in the 1970s purchased a large tract of land, hoping to develop it into town houses and a small shopping center. None of the seven is alive to witness the controversy.
- When 51 acres were sold to JDC Ventures one of the heirs says, “We did not know of the intentions at the time to build a Walmart. I think it would bring a lot of revenue and jobs.”
- In August 2009, the Orange County Board of Supervisors approved the special-use permit Walmart needed to build the store. Walmart had met all conditions for landscaping and how close to Route 3 the store would be built.
- The Walmart store will be built on a vacant lot a couple miles from the historic land.
- “It will generate revenue and bring jobs,” said District 3 Supervisor Teel Goodwin. “I don’t see it as impeding the battlefield, if anything, it has increased interest in the battlefield.”

## Experts Express Points of View

- Princeton University’s James McPherson wrote on May 3, 2009, that: “With Civil War battlefields we have a true tool for determining historic value: the findings of the congressionally-appointed Civil War Sites Advisory Commission. I was privileged to serve on this distinguished panel of historians and lawmakers, and I stand by our decision to include the area Walmart is considering within the battlefield’s historic boundary.”
- Jonathan Jarvis, Director of the National Park Service, wrote on January 21, 2010, that: “The current intersection of Routes 3 & 20 is within yards of the original intersection of the Germanna Plank Road and the Orange Turnpike. This intersection is of immense tactical importance, being used to shift Union troops from one wing of the battlefield to the other and being the site where Grant directed his army south after the battle thereby determining the future course of the war. ... This area is eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places.”

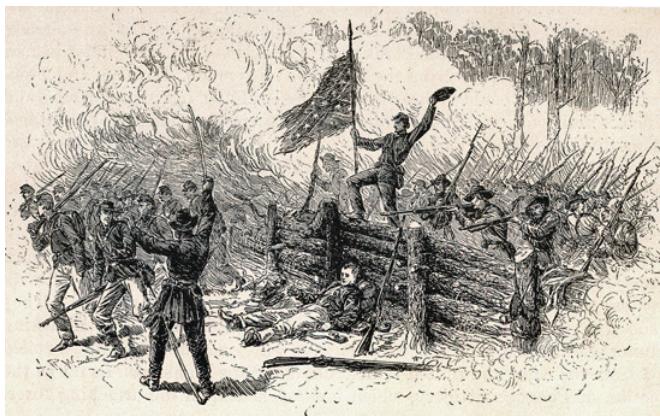
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## Wilderness Battlefield



TRACY A. WOODWARD/THE WASHINGTON POST

A view from the Salem Church Wilderness Battlefield site looking east down Route 23. On the right is the New Jersey Regiments statue.



NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

Capture of a part of the burning Union breastworks on the Brock Road on the afternoon of May 6. From a sketch made at the time.



NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

The Germanna Plank Road trace used by troops in 1864.

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## Glen Echo Park Streetcar



COURTESY TIMOTHY JONES

A 1947 Philadelphia streetcar, which has sat in front of Glen Echo Park for years, is removed by General Machine, a rigging company. It is now at General Machine's Landover headquarters.

*“We’ve got three acres. We can stick it next to our 747 cockpit.”*

— Ken Rinehart,  
head of General Machine  
and the new owner  
of the PCC model streetcar

Read “Glen Echo’s trash is one man’s treasure,” by John Kelly, to learn what happened to the 1947 streetcar. To see a Washington streetcar, visit the National Capital Trolley Museum in Colesville. It has three PCC cars in its collection.

Still, it’s doubtful any of those things are as sentimental as the 1947 streetcar, a stylish, streamlined model known as a PCC. It’s of the type that used to ply Washington’s rails. Ken [Rinehart] used to ride the streetcar to Glen Echo as a boy from his father’s Foggy Bottom service station.

He never rode this particular car, though. It spent its career in Philadelphia before being donated to Glen Echo in 2005 by the Southeastern Pennsylvania Transport Authority.

The national park — and the suburb — exist because of the streetcar line. But it sat uncovered in the elements and ended up looking rather forlorn, mottled with rust and primer. The National Park Service said the car needed an outlay of about \$100,000 to restore it.

— excerpt from “*Glen Echo’s trash is one man’s treasure,*”  
John Kelly’s Washington

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

# Propose an Adaptive Reuse

**Adaptive Reuse:** Conversion of properties for a new function while maintaining the historical significance. Factories and warehouses take on different functions as art galleries, restaurants and private dwellings as they maintain their exterior architecture, for example. An abandoned grain elevator or tobacco warehouse becomes a small hotel, indoor rock-climbing facility, roller rink, library or museum.

Look around your neighborhood, places near your school or the blocks adjacent to Nationals Park. Do you see a building exterior that is appealing, but the interior needs help? The property has been abandoned; the building has been vacant for months. Or few people shop there because the products are outdated, the interior is bleak and maintenance has been neglected. This is the perfect place for adaptive reuse.

Use your imagination. Consider the everyday needs of your community, the demographics and economics that could influence how you make a change. Propose an adaptive reuse of the property.

**Building Name:**

**Type of Building:**

**Address:**

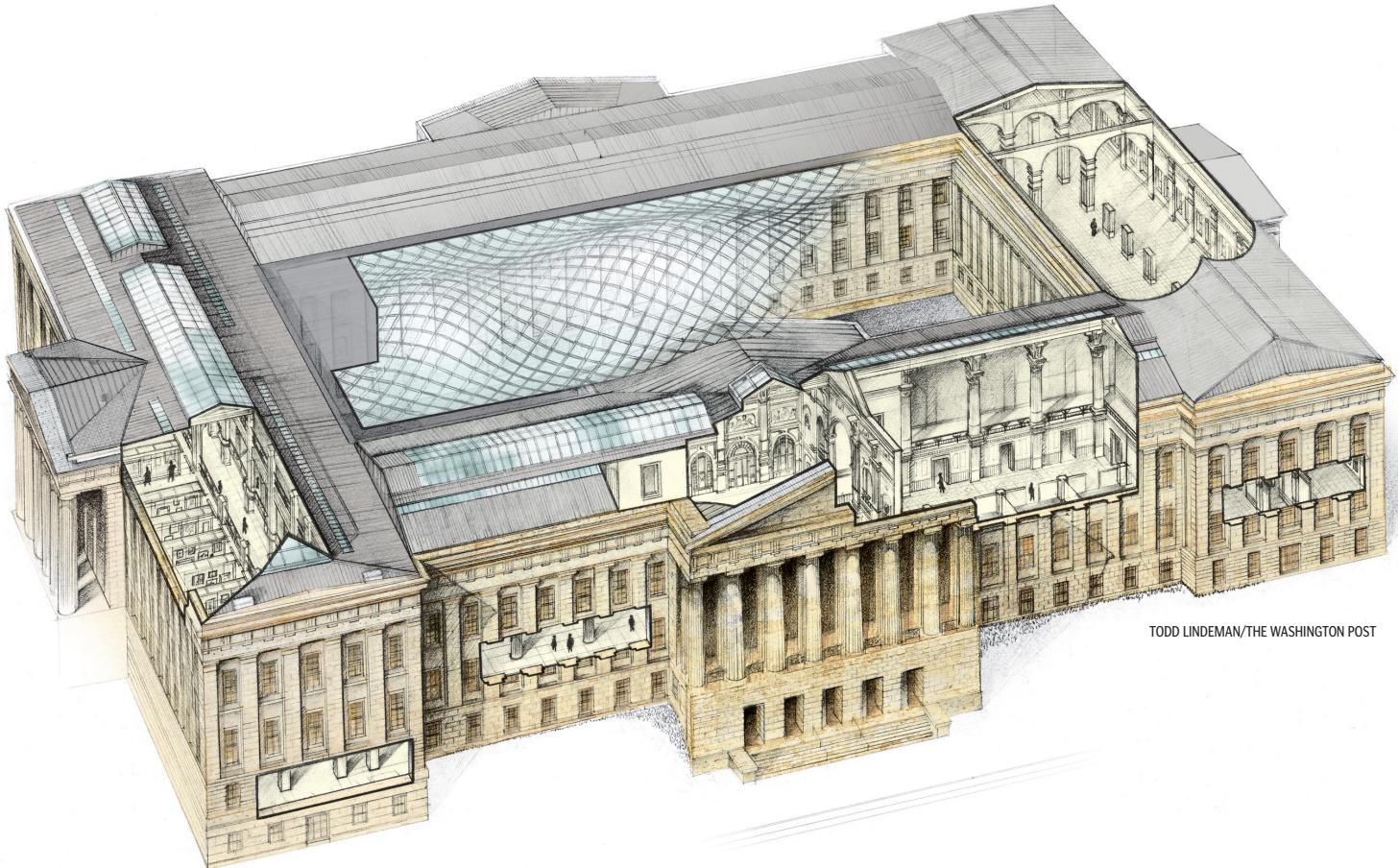
## Its Current Use and Condition

## Your Proposal for Adaptive Reuse

Include photographs and sketches of the interior and exterior. What are the reasons the location is ideal for your proposed use? What are the aesthetic, historic and economic benefits of saving the building? How will the proposed use meet community needs?

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## National Portrait Gallery: Adaptive Reuse



The U. S. Patent Office ca. 1885 shown in a photographic print on stereo card taken by William M. Chase.

The impressive building with the glass canopy was not always an art museum. Although construction of the entire building was not completed until 1867, the Patent Office opened there in 1842. As the building was completed, bureaus of the Department of the Interior occupied sections beginning in 1847 to 1917.

In 1854 Clara Barton became the first woman to work at the Patent Office. During the Civil War Walt Whitman nursed the wounded there when it became a military hospital. It was also the barracks for the

### Rhode Island Militia.

Happier times came in March 1865 when President Lincoln's second inaugural ball was held there.

In 1932, the Civil Service Commission moved in. Twenty-six years later President Eisenhower saved the building from demolition. Congress gave the building to the Smithsonian Institution as the home of the American Art Museum and National Portrait Gallery. This dream was fulfilled, after three years of renovation, when the doors opened in January 1968.

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## *Southern Aid, a snippet of black history, survives on edifice*



John  
Kelly's  
Washington

I recently attended an event at the newly renovated Howard Theatre. Nearby on Seventh Street NW is the old Dunbar Theatre building, now a Wells Fargo bank. Etched in stone at the top of the building along the T Street side are the words: "Southern Aid Society of Virginia" and the years, 1893 to 1920.

I'm curious about what this society was and did, and what became of it.

— Joe Keyerleber, Washington

The Southern Aid Society of Virginia was the country's first black-owned and black-operated insurance company. It was founded in Richmond in 1893, a time when many white-owned insurance companies wouldn't write policies for black businesses or people.

Though the company's primary aim — aside from turning a profit, of course — was to help African Americans get adequate, reasonably priced insurance, there were secondary benefits, too. As a writer for the NAACP magazine the *Crisis* pointed out in 1940, Southern Aid offered "to some of the hundreds of young men and women who were then graduating from high and normal schools employment in keeping with their training rather than forcing them to resume employment of a menial character."

At that time, Southern Aid employed about 300 men and women, primarily in Virginia and



JOHN KELLY / THE WASHINGTON POST

The building at 1901 Seventh St. NW once housed the Dunbar Theatre and the offices of the Southern Aid Society of Virginia, the country's first black-owned, black-operated insurance company.

the District.

And as the Seventh Street building illustrated, Southern Aid also built properties that could rent space to black-owned companies. At that time, there were apparently those who felt that insurance companies should not invest in real estate. However, the *Crisis* writer argued that constructing office buildings not only "filled a pressing need of business and professional activities, but gave both the company and the race in these cities a higher status, and its business a degree of permanency which counteracted the harmful effects which the failures and disappearances of many organizations had left in such communities."

The Seventh Street building was designed by Isaiah T. Hatton, an African American architect who also designed the Dunbar Theatre within it. Hatton also designed many homes and buildings in the area, including the Whitelaw Hotel on 13th Street NW, which opened in 1919 as the city's first luxury hotel for African Americans. (Today, it's subsidized housing.)

In 1975, Southern Aid, then called the Southern Aid Life Insurance Co., was bought by Atlanta Life Insurance Co. Atlanta Life, founded by a former slave named Alonzo F. Herndon, was the second-oldest black-owned insurance company in the country. It's still in operation today.

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## **Alert! | Preservation Taking Place**

You can be in the know about preservation programs, projects and concerns. Conduct a search of *The Washington Post* in the e-Replica format to locate coverage of preservation topics over the last three months. You can also receive alerts when coverage takes place in the future.

### **Use the Search Feature**

Begin at the top of the page at the My Services tab. Under it, select “My Monitors.”

1. Determine the search term and type it in the search string box.
2. Select the date range of the search: “Today,” “Last 3 days,” “This week,” “This month,” or “Anytime.”
3. Indicate author if you want articles written by a particular reporter or guest commentator.

If you put “preservation” in the search box, you may get results such as these during an advanced search:

Scaffolding is in place for preservation work on the U.S. Capitol’s Freedom statue. The work is being done in conjunction with restoration of the Capitol’s dome skirt, which is the very bottom of the dome.

JOHN KELLY/THE WASHINGTON POST

*The Washington Post* Sunday | 29 Apr 2012 | | | Released: 5d. 6h. ago | Page: 31

### **Page 65 Grants to help preserve neighborhood history**

The Humanities Council of Washington, D.C., is offering Community Heritage Project grants of as much as \$2,000 to projects that document and preserve the history of the city’s neighborhoods.

*There will be free one-hour workshops on the grant process...*

*The Washington Post* | 12 Apr 2012 | | | Released: 22d. 6h. ago | Page: 65

### **Page 24 America’s cultural past, stacked and categorized**

Not only *Rise of the Dragon*, but also “Dexter,” “American Reunion” (the new “American Pie”; don’t pretend you don’t know), the home movies of nobody citizens, cached and abandoned Web pages, and defunct technologies. Let us honor the preservation of the...[hessem@washpost.com](mailto:hessem@washpost.com)

*The Washington Post* | 23 Apr 2012 | | | Released: 11d. 6h. ago | Page: 24

### **Use the Monitor Feature**

After conducting a search to see what has been written recently, set up a new monitor. Begin by clicking on the “My Monitors” button and the “Add new monitor” bar.

- Type in your search term. For the most results, your search criteria should indicate the result is located “Anywhere in the article.”
- Select the method of notification
- Indicate the frequency of notification.

You will receive alerts to your selected notification method whenever the topic appears in a *Washington Post* article, editorial or commentary.