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Page B-3

Odd tale of why Stonewall is buried in 2 places

By Sean Scully
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Most of Gen. Stonewall Jackson is buried in Lexington, Va.

The rest of him is buried more than 100 miles away, on a windswept hill in a nearly forgotten corner of rural central Virginia.

The tale of Jackson's wounding is well known — on the night of May 2, 1863, Jackson and a party of aides went on a moonlit reconnaissance in front of Confederate lines after a hard day of fighting near Chancellorsville. His troops, spooked by rumors of a Union cavalry raid, mistakenly opened fire on the officers as they returned.

Jackson was hit by three shots. Doctors amputated his left arm early the next day at a field hospital near Wilderness Tavern, a few miles from the battlefield. Despite initial hope that he would recover, the exhausted Jackson died of pneumonia a week later.

What is not well known is that Jackson's left arm did not make the trip back to his adoptive home town of Lexington, where he is buried. Nor was the arm lost, dumped in a common grave as were so many bodies and body parts during the bloody Civil War.

Shortly after the amputation, Jackson's corps chaplain, the Rev. Beverly Tucker Lacy, found the arm near Jackson's tent. He took the limb to the home of his brother, coincidentally less than a mile away. He buried it in the family cemetery while Jackson was still alive.

"It was kind of a gruesome shock" to realize that Jackson is buried in two places, said Ed Freewater, staring at Jackson's grave in Lexington on a rainy day in October.

Mr. Freewater, an Ohio ad agency owner on a historical tour of Virginia, first learned of the arm's grave site a few days before while visiting the Chancellorsville battlefield.

"People who've never known [about the arm] before kind of look at you twice," Chancellorsville park historian Janice Frye said. "It does sound a little bizarre."

Adding to the oddity of the story, the farm where the arm is buried, known as Ellwood, served as headquarters for Union Gen. Gouverneur K. Warren during the brutal Battle of the Wilderness a year after Jackson's death. Union soldiers likely walked over or even



While Gen. Stonewall Jackson is buried in Lexington, Va., his amputated left arm has its own grave near Chancellorsville.

camped on the arm, then unmarked by a gravestone.

In 1903, James Power Smith, one of Jackson's wartime aides, erected a series of granite markers at Chancellorsville and other nearby battlefields. One of the 10 markers was over the site of his old commander's arm.

The simple stone marker says only "Arm of Stonewall Jackson, May 3, 1863."

Jackson's marker is the only stone in the family cemetery, which sits on a small knoll in a cornfield just out of sight of the house. The cemetery is ringed with a rail fence and a grove of trees, the only trees for hundreds of feet around.

Except for the faint sound of trucks from nearby routes 3 and 20, the scene seems like it has not changed in the 134 years since Jackson's death.

Although the National Park Service owns the site, it does little to advertise the presence of the historical limb. The area is not generally open to the public, although if anyone asks about Ellwood or the arm, park employees will give out a parking pass and directions to visit the site.

There has been some talk of opening Ellwood as a visitor center, but tight budgets mean that the Park Service cannot do much but keep the historic home from falling down.

The lack of publicity, or of easy access, makes Ellwood and the cemetery one of the most peaceful places on the otherwise crowded battlefields around Fredericksburg.

But things have not always been so placid around the arm's resting place.

In 1921, the commandant of the Marine Corps, Gen. Smedley D. Butler, conducted massive war games across the fields of Spotsylvania and Orange counties — including a demonstration of the use of air power against ships.

For no immediately obvious reason, he picked the deep creek bed that marks the edge of the Ellwood property to build a dummy

ship. He invited President Warren G. Harding and state and federal dignitaries to watch the bombing demonstration from the front lawn of the house.

During the mayhem, the owner of the house told Butler that Jackson's arm was buried just a few hundred feet away. The general refused to believe the story and sent a detachment to dig up the cemetery. Near the base of Power's monument, the stunned Marines found arm bones buried in a small box.

Butler reburied the arm in a metal box. With a characteristic flourish, he added his own plaque to the original granite marker: "A tribute to the memory of

Resting place for Jackson's arm

THE WASHINGTON TIMES

To visit the historic Ellwood plantation — and the final resting place of Gen. Stonewall Jackson's left arm — drive to the Chancellorsville Battlefield visitor center and ask for a parking permit.

Park employees will provide directions to the site, which is a few hundred yards from the intersection of routes 3 and 20 at the north end of the Wilderness Battlefield.

From Washington, drive south on Interstate 95 about 50 miles to Fredericksburg. Take Route 3 west toward Culpeper. The Chancellorsville visitor center is about 10 miles west of Fredericksburg on the right.

To see the final resting place of Jackson's body, visit Lexington, Va., where he is buried in a historic cemetery in the middle of town.

From Washington, take Interstate 66 west toward Front Royal. Turn south on Interstate 81 to Lexington. Or take I-66 west to Gainesville. Turn south on Route 29 to Charlottesville. Take Interstate 64 west to Lexington.

Stonewall Jackson, by the East Coast Expeditionary Force, U.S. Marines, Sept. 26-Oct. 4, 1921."

Fearing that the plaque could become the target of ruthless relic hunters, the Park Service keeps it safely locked up at Chancellorsville. Visitors can, however, ask to see it.

It is strangely fitting that the arm was once disturbed — its original owner has not enjoyed undisturbed peace either.

Jackson's body originally was buried under a modest gravestone a few blocks from his Lexington house. It was later unearthed and moved to a nearby crypt under the towering Jackson statue that stands at the center of the cemetery today.

There is no mention at the Lexington grave site that Jackson's body is, to put it bluntly, less than complete.

Sean Scully reports on the Maryland General Assembly for The Washington Times.