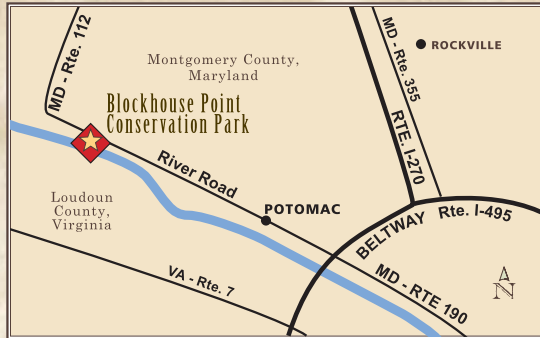


Blockhouse Point Conservation Park



14750 River Road, Darnestown, Md

Directions to Tour Starting Point

From the Beltway (Rte. 495) take exit #39 west, River Road (Rte. 190) towards Potomac. Proceed 10 miles on River Road through Potomac Village to Petit Way. Park in small designated parking area on left across from Petit Way.

Guided Tours

Guided tours are offered on special occasions. For more information, contact:

The Archaeology Office

Montgomery Parks
Monday through Friday, 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.
Phone: 301-840-5848

This program is made possible in part by funding from the Heritage Tourism Alliance of Montgomery County.

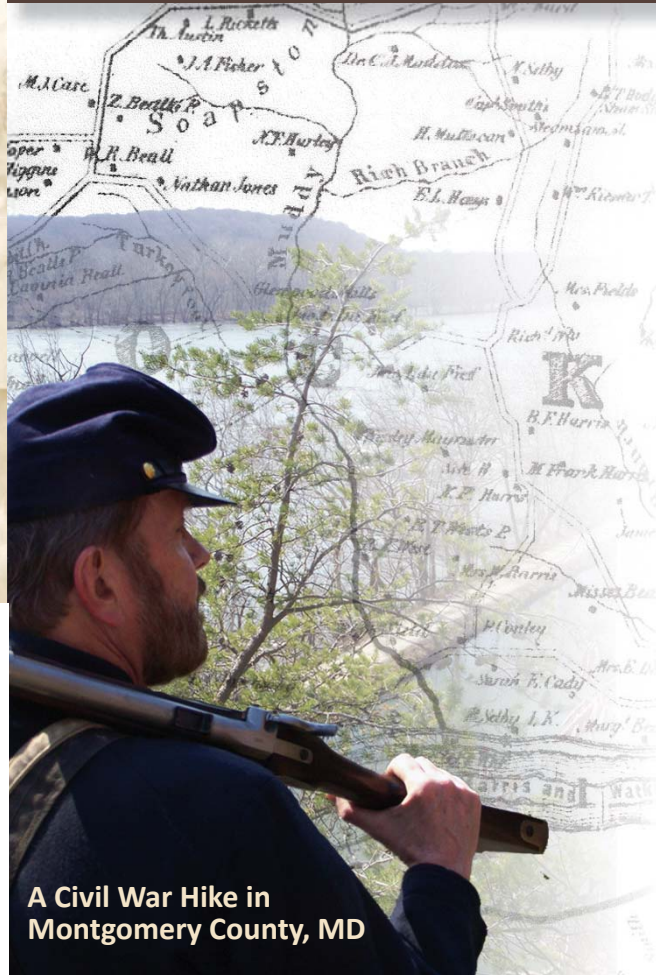
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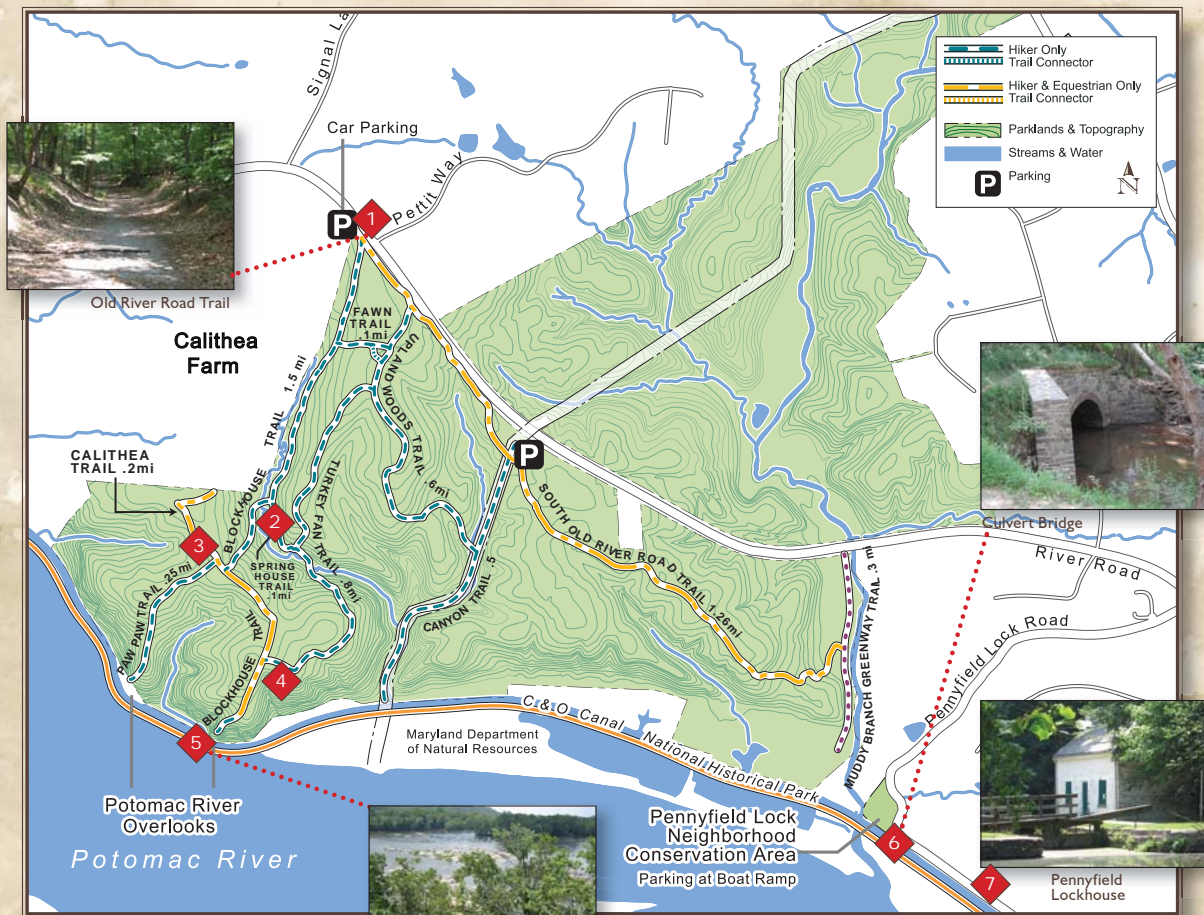


A Civil War Hike in Montgomery County, MD



THE MARYLAND-NATIONAL CAPITAL PARK AND PLANNING COMMISSION

Walk in the footsteps of Union Soldiers



Trail Guide

- 1 Here Old River Road joins with the Blockhouse Trail. This trail was the original military road used by troops heading to the blockhouse and camp.
- 2 On your left, just past the bridge and at the base of the hill, are the springs used by the troops as a water supply. Continue uphill.
- 3 Turn left at top of hill. Follow this trail to intersection with the Turkey Fan Trail.
- 4 Turn right at intersection and follow trail to overlook.

- 5 From overlooks like this, Union sentries kept watch for any Confederate movements across the river or at area fords.

To get a closer look at the C & O Canal and the area of one of the Camps at Muddy Branch retrace your steps to your car. Drive south on River Road and turn right at Pennyfield Lock Road and follow to end.

- 6 Turn right at end of road. This is the location of a Camp at Muddy Branch and a sentry post guarding the culvert.
- 7 To see Pennyfield Lock and Lockhouse (owned by the National Park Service), follow the road along the canal.



C & O Canal and Potomac River

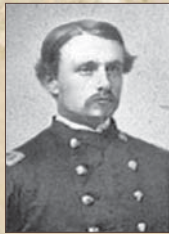


The Camps at Muddy Branch

On July 10, 1861, General Robert E. Lee wrote Colonel Eppa Hunton, commanding troops in Loudoun County, Virginia:

"It is necessary to destroy the navigation of the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal, to prevent its being used by the enemy..."

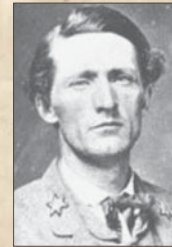
Long hours of picket duty and drill. Swampy camp conditions and muddy drinking water. Forays into Virginia chasing Confederate raiders. These military experiences were not what Union troops expected when sent to protect the fords of the Potomac River and the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal in Montgomery County. Now considered some of the most scenic sites in the Washington area, the C & O Canal, the Muddy Branch stream valley and the Blockhouse Point Conservation Park were home to scores of Union troops.



Lieutenant Robert Gould Shaw

These troops camped near Muddy Branch, a stream which flows into the Potomac near Pennyfield Lock. Troops guarded the Potomac crossings and canal towpath to prevent Confederate raids into Maryland and the destruction of canal locks and boats.

In the fall of 1861, some 5,000 troops under Brigadier General Alpheus S. Williams, occupied the Muddy Branch area. During their stay, one Massachusetts soldier, Lieutenant Robert Gould Shaw, later the colonel of one of the first black regiments, summed up his stay at Muddy Branch:



Colonel John S. Mosby

"We are in the worst camp we have ever had. It is in a hollow, where the dampness collects..."

The 19th Massachusetts Infantry followed the brigade and built three blockhouses during the winter of 1862.

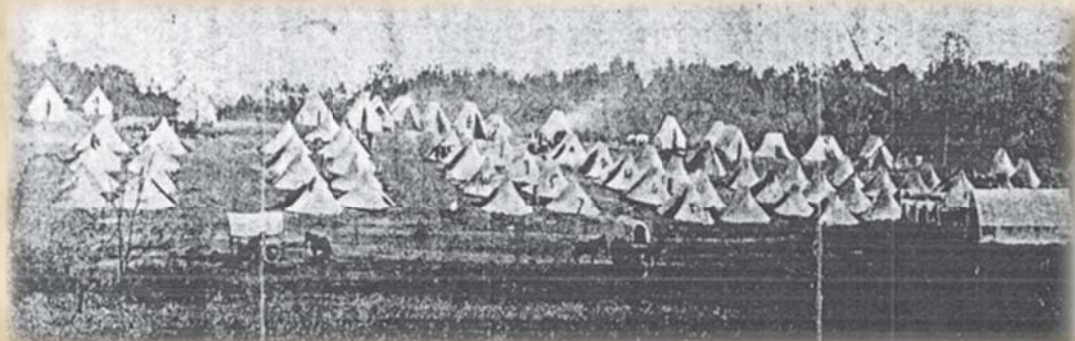
For nearly a year after Gettysburg, a battalion of the 2nd Massachusetts Cavalry, under Colonel Charles Russell Lowell, tried to stem the raids of Confederate units led by Colonels John Singleton Mosby and Elijah Veirs White.

The most significant event at Blockhouse Point was the result of Confederate General Jubal Early's attack on Washington, D.C. in July of 1864. The Muddy Branch troops left the area a day or so before Early's attack to aid in the defenses of Washington. With Early's forces on the doorstep of the nation's capital, Mosby burned three abandoned blockhouses and camps along the Potomac, including the blockhouse at Blockhouse Point. The blockhouse was not rebuilt.

The last troops stationed at Muddy Branch were cavalry units used to protect the area from further Confederate raids, search for the Lincoln assassination conspirators, and parole Confederate troops returning to Maryland at the end of the war.



Colonel Elijah V. White



Camp of the 5th Connecticut Volunteer Infantry, October 31, 1861 at Muddy Branch

Photos courtesy of USAHI

The Archaeology

Blockhouse Point Conservation Park gets its name from one of the blockhouses associated with the Muddy Branch camps. Because the site is one of the few undisturbed Civil War camps in the Washington area, it gives us a unique opportunity to use the tools of archaeology to learn more about life at a small outpost. Park archaeologists and volunteer associates have begun a program to search written records and conduct field work.

Written records have told us when and how the blockhouse and camp were built and when it was finally burned. Fieldwork started with a scientific survey and computer mapping of the site. Since archaeology is history from the ground up, the gridded squares of the excavation have uncovered artifact-bearing soils which reveal changes over time. Archive and field research will then give us the tools to interpret and display the story of the officers and soldiers at Blockhouse Point.

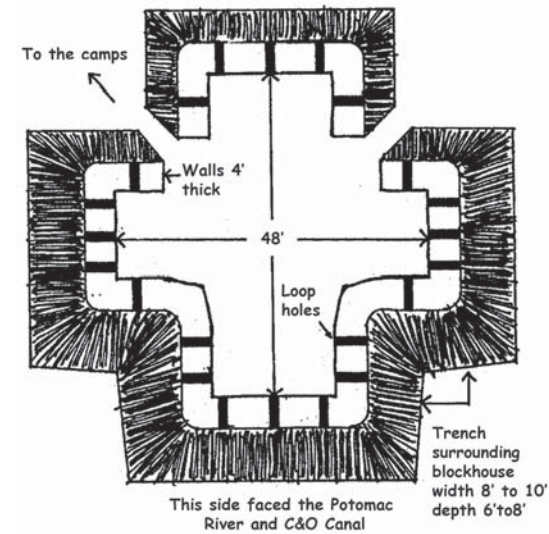


Diagram of Blockhouse



Ink Well



Patent Medicine Bottle



Archaeologists and Volunteer Associates Working at Site

Photos By Vivian Eicke



Pipe Bowls



Dyottsville Glass Whiskey Bottle



Water Filter